

**Selected Documents in the History of
the Rural Sociological Society**

**The
American Sociological Society's
Section on Rural Sociology**

For Display Only

The American Sociological Society's Section on Rural Sociology

This publication is one of five display volumes created for the
75th Anniversary of the Rural Sociological Society.

The idea for the volumes came because of a request from the conference program chair, Keiko Tanaka, that artifacts from the history of the Society be on display during the 75th Anniversary celebration. Given the fragile nature of the original documents and a need to contextualize their importance, a decision was made to create this series of display volumes.

Most of the documents included herein were originally copied from the RSS Archives for the 6-part series on the history of the Rural Sociological Society written by John Holik and Edward Hassinger for the 50th Anniversary of RSS. The series was published in *The Rural Sociologist*.

“The Rural Sociological Society: Its Beginnings.”

1986. 6(5):331-340.

“The RSS: Coming to Formalization.”

1986. 6(6):407-420.

“The RSS: Ties that Bind.”

1987. 7(1):3-18.

“RSS During the Depression and World War II Years.”

1987. 7(3):154-165.

“RSS in Midlife: 1950-1962.”

1987. 8(1):5-31.

“The RSS: Reaching Outward and Inward, the 1960s and 1970s.”

1987. 8(5):385-404.

Complementing the archive documents are copies of documents from the RSS Historian's Files and selections from journals including the *American Journal of Sociology*, the *American Sociological Review*, *Sociologia Ruralis*, and *Rural Sociology*.

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*By seeing and reading the words of those who created our history,
it is hoped that these documents will help to bring
our organization's history to life.*

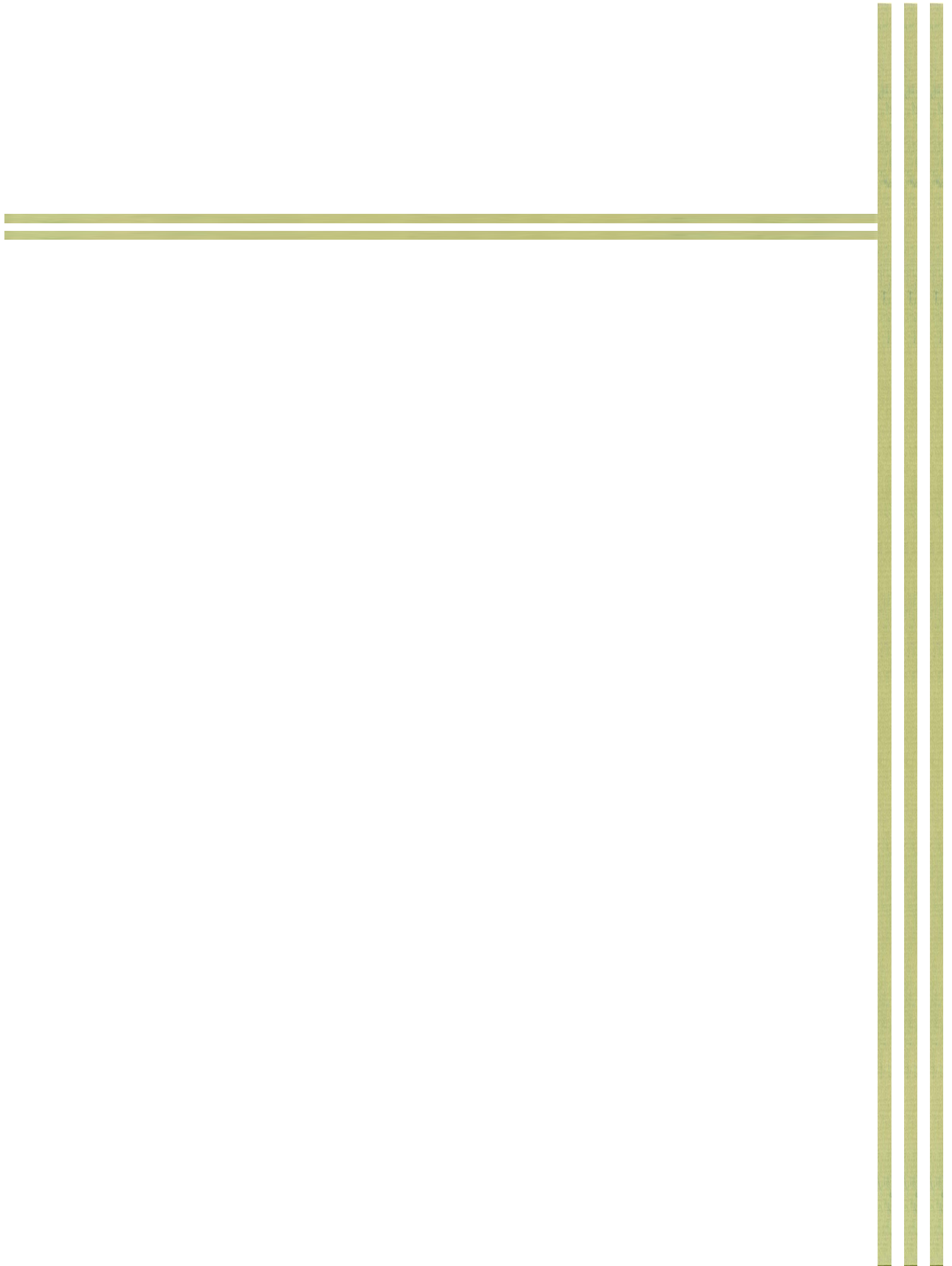
This booklet is for display purposes only.

Unless otherwise indicated, documents included herein are from
the Archives of the Rural Sociological Society.

Located at the University of Missouri,
the collection is managed by the State Historical Society of Missouri.

<http://shs.umsystem.edu/manuscripts/descriptions/desc-socsci.html>

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The American Sociological Society's Section on Rural Sociology

In 1921, the first Section of the American Sociological Society (ASS) was formed by a group of rural sociologists. On December 28th, Dwight Sanderson spoke before the ASS Executive Committee requesting that a Section on Rural Sociology be established as a formal part of the national Society [Tab 1]. As a result, “an invitation” was “extended to the rural sociologists to become a section of the Society.” And so began the first Section of the American Sociological Society.

Sanderson’s proposal for a Section did not come from out of the blue. It was formed after about a decade of informal gatherings by those interested in rural sociology (the first of these dates back to about the same time that the Country Life Commission report was published).

While it would be through the ASS that rural sociologists created formal organizational structures, the ASS was not the only opportunity for rural-oriented professionals to gather. The American Country Life Association, USDA sponsored conferences on rural social research and methods, the USDA’s Division of Farm Population and Rural Life, Rural Life Conferences, and the Federal Council of Churches all provided mechanisms for increased communications among rural sociologists.



Dwight Sanderson

Moreover, the growth of rural sociology also held a close relationship with the development of agricultural economics during this time. For instance, the Social Science Research Council Fellowships were awarded through the Council’s Advisory Committee on Research in Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. In addition, early agricultural economists such as Henry Taylor were instrumental in rural sociology’s early years. Indeed, it was Charles Galpin whom Taylor tapped to head the Division of Farm Population and Rural Life in his USDA’s Bureau of Agricultural Economics and Galpin had begun his work in rural sociology with Henry Taylor at the University of Wisconsin. (Later, Galpin was recognized for his pioneering role in rural sociology [Tab 7].)

The ASS Section on Rural Sociology held its first meeting in 1922 and even though it took 2 years before a formal place on the ASS conference program was arranged [Tab 3], the Section quickly became recognized as the oldest in the ASS and as “displaying remarkable vitality” [Tab 2]. Referring to the success of the Section’s joint meeting with farm economics during the 1924 ASS conference, the sponsored luncheon was filled to capacity (about 125 people), with others having to be turned away [Tab 2].

The 1924 conference was also consequential in that in only two years, the Section was already faced with needing a stronger governance structure. Reflecting the different interests within the group, the Section created ongoing standing committees on research, teaching, and extension (a structure that continued in the Rural Sociological Society until 1962) [Tab 2].

Four years later, John M. Gillette was elected ASS President – the first rural sociologist to be elected president of the national Society. For the conference, Gillette chose the theme “The Rural Community” and most of the papers presented that year were by rural sociologists.

The year 1928 was also important in that it was the first time that members of the Section on Rural Sociology formally considered creating an organization separate from the ASS. While the decision was made to remain with the Society – one that would not be repeated nearly a decade later – Section members did decide to use a more formal governance structure including electing its first Secretary [Tab 3]. (There is some suggestion in the 1925 newsletter that a similar discussion might have happened as early as 1924 [Tab 2].)

The American Sociological Society's Section on Rural Sociology

Over the years, the ASS Section on Rural Sociology organized committees to direct its governance and to consider various issues. The 1933 meeting minutes indicate that there was a “Reviews Committee,” a “Committee on International Relations,” and a “Nominating Committee.” In addition, the role of secretary was now that of “Secretary/Treasurer” [Tab 4]. As many of the social sciences met at the same time, not only did the Section on Rural Sociology hold its meetings during the ASS annual conference, they also held joint meetings with other organizations and federal agencies. With the passage of the Purnell Act, many of the Purnell Conferences of Research Workers in Rural Sociology were also held in conjunction with the Section meetings.

While the ASS Section provided a mechanism for rural sociologists to formally organize, it was not without its limitations. The ASS, for instance, required that all members of Sections first be members of the larger Society. As a result, nonsociologists or those with few interests in the larger academic field of sociology, had no mechanism through which to join the group. In addition, there were also restrictions placed on section members' ability to participate in the larger conference program [Tab 4]. Limited to presenting only one paper meant that if a person presented a paper in the Section on Rural Sociology (or any other section), they were not allowed to present a paper in any of the general sessions or in another sections' sessions.

As opportunities within the ASS were increasingly seen as not keeping pace with the growth of rural sociology, so too did frustrations grow. In 1935, concerns with the lack of publication outlets led Section members to create their own journal: *Rural Sociology* (the first issue was published in 1936). In 1937, a minority report was accepted by Section members and the Rural Sociological Society of America was begun with a provisional Constitution and By Laws.

The next year, 1938, exactly one decade after they first formally considered creating an organization separate from the ASS, the permanent national society was formally begun as the Rural Sociological Society (RSS). Despite a departure narrative that persists to this day, not only did all of the original members of the Section on Rural Sociology retain their membership in the American Sociological Society, they also continued to serve in ASS leadership positions (including ASS President).

Forming the RSS meant that nonsociologists and those outside of academia were now welcome to join the professional association. And, in just its first year, the group grew from 71 to just over 300 members.

ASS Section on Rural Sociology Chairs

1922 Dwight Sanderson	1927 E. L. Kirkpatrick	1932 Edmund deS. Brunner
1923 Carl C. Taylor	1928 Eben Mumford	1933 Carle C. Zimmerman
1924 John H. Kolb	1929 B. F. Coen	1934 Fred C. Frey
1925 C. E. Lively	1930 W. A. Anderson	1935 B. L. Hummel
1926 E. L. Morgan	1931 Theodore B. Manny	1936 Lowry Nelson
		1937 George H. Von Tungeln

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Reprints

Tab 1.

- a) Minutes of the ASS Executive Committee where Sanderson requested formal section status for the rural group. *Publications of the ASS*. Vol. XVI.
- b) Report in AJS on first meeting of the Section on Rural Sociology. *American Journal of Sociology*. 1922. Vol. XXVII. No. 4.
- c) By Laws of the Rural Sociology Section of the American Sociological Society. (could be from *Publications of the ASS*).

Documents

Tab 2. The Early Years...

- a) Newsletter from ASS Section on Rural Sociology. Includes the report on the 1924 Conference, report from the Committee on Future Policy recommending standing committees of Research, Teaching, and Extension (C. E. Lively, chair). Feb. 1925
- b) Rural Sociologists' News Letter. Includes info on the Purnell Act, and reports from the Committees on Research, Teaching, and Extension. June 1, 1925.

Tab 3. Meeting Organizational Needs... (1928-1929)

- a) Report of the Resolutions Committee (includes recommendation to elect a secretary). No date (likely 1928).
- b) Report from ASS Section Secretary H. J. Burt includes meeting minutes from 1928 and 1929 as well as a history of participation by rural sociologists in ASS conferences. No date.
- c) Section Committees for 1929. (RSS Historian's Files).

Tab 4. 1931-1933

- a) Letter to Section members about changes to increase participation in larger conference. May 1930.
- b) Letter to Section members about changes to increase participation in larger conference. May 1931.
- c) Membership list of the Section on Rural Sociology for 1931.
- d) Minutes of the Executive Committee and the Annual Business Meeting. 1932. (RSS Historian's Files).

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Documents (continued)

Tab 4. 1931-1933 (continued)

- e) Financial Statement of the Rural Sociology Section for the year 1932.
- f) Report of the Committee on Future Policy. No date.
- g) Minutes and financial statement of the annual meeting of the Rural Sociology Section. December, 1933.

Tab 5. 1934-1937

- a) Meeting minutes, Executive Committee, and financial statement for 1934. (RSS Historian's files).
- b) Membership list, 1934.
- c) Membership list, 1935.
- d) Financial statement. 1936-1937.

Tab 6. New Beginnings...

- a) Letter to Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace (incls note and telegram). Feb/March 1936.
- b) Wakeley letter reflecting on the new journal and potential for an new professional organization. Feb. 1936.
- c) Membership drive letter from T. Lynn Smith. Jan 1938.

Tab 7. Tribute to Charles Galpin

- a) Letter from Polson to Galpin regarding planned dinner, etc. Jan. 1935.
- b) Galpin replies. Jan 1935.
- c) Program of ASS conference Section on Rural Sociology Sessions (incl Galpin Dinner).
- d) Galpin's speech at the dinner. No date. (RSS Historian's Files).

**Copies of Archive
and other documents**

Archives of the Rural Sociological Society

State Historical Society of Missouri
Social Sciences and Humanities Collection Descriptions
<http://shs.umsystem.edu/manuscripts/descriptions/desc-socsci.html>
(List Downloaded: March 2012)

- Rural Sociological Society of America Archives, (WUNP4618)
2 linear feet. Addition. Development Committee materials, presidential papers of C. Milton Coughenour, and RURAL SOCIOLOGIST manuscripts for volume 4.
- Rural Sociological Society of America Archives, (WUNP4585)
2 linear feet. Addition. Includes material from Daryl Hobbs, Willis J. Goudy, 1983 program materials and copies of publications.
- Rural Sociological Society of America Papers, (WUNP4244)
2 linear feet. Addition to professional organization's archives. Detailed inventory in accession folder. Addition. Files on OUR CHANGING RURAL SOCIETY, edited by Tom Ford.
- Rural Sociological Society of America Papers, (WUNP4296)
1 folder(s). NEWSLINE, 1979 issues; 1979 annual meeting program; RSS annual meeting abstracts; preliminary program for 5th World Congress of Rural Sociology.
- Rural Sociological Society of America Papers, (WUNP4358)
2 linear feet. Addition. See accession folder for inventory.
- Rural Sociological Society of America Papers, (WUNP4463)
2 linear feet. Addition. Correspondence, committee and council meeting minutes, printed material from Society.
- Rural Sociological Society of America Papers, 1910-1973 (C3305)
Inventory: <http://shs.umsystem.edu/manuscripts/invent/3305.pdf>
MICROFILM
9.6 linear feet. 2 volumes, 2 audio tapes, 27 rolls of microfilm
The papers of the Rural Sociological Society of America contain presidential and committee correspondence and includes accounts of how some of the first rural sociologists became interested in the profession. Microfilm is available for Rural Sociology, the official quarterly.

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(List Downloaded: March 2012)

(continued)

Rural Sociological Society of America, Archives, (WUNP5646)

8 linear feet. INVENTORY. Addition of research project files; committee files; presidential papers; secretarial papers; annual meeting records; publications; endowment committee materials; audio and visual materials; histories; and miscellaneous.

Rural Sociological Society of America, Archives, (WUNP5223)

0.4 linear feet. INVENTORY. Addition of annual meeting materials, administrative records, publications and other materials.

Rural Sociological Society of America, Archives, (WUNP5071)

MICROFILM

1 linear feet. INVENTORY. Addition to records of the Society. Includes correspondence, photographs, meeting materials, publications, and records of the International Rural Sociological Assn.

Rural Sociological Society of America, Archives, (WUNP4971)

MICROFILM

0.8 linear feet. INVENTORY. Addition to the correspondence, records, and publications of the Society.

Rural Sociological Society of America, Archives, (WUNP4787)

MICROFILM

7.9 linear feet. INVENTORY. Publications, directories, programs, pamphlets, conference files, video tapes, photographs and minutes of the Society.

The American Sociological Society's Section on Rural Sociology



The **Rural Sociological Society** is a professional social science association that promotes the generation, application, and dissemination of sociological knowledge. The Society seeks to enhance the quality of rural life, communities, and the environment.

For additional information and resources on the history of the Rural Sociological Society or Rural Sociology, visit the Historian's page at www.ruralsociology.org

This publication was created by
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Any questions, comments, or suggestions can be sent to:
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May, 2012

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Creating the Journal: *Rural Sociology*

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Establishing the Rural Sociological Society

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Congress Strikes Again: The Era of the Big Chill

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Organizing the 1st World Congress of Rural Sociology: The Beginnings of the International Rural Sociological Association