

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

**Establishing the
Rural Sociological Society**

For Display Only

Establishing the Rural Sociological Society

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*.

In addition to these volumes, posters with photographs of past presidents, editors of *Rural Sociology*, editors of *The Rural Sociologist*, Distinguished Rural Sociologist award winners, previous archivists/historians, and a 75-questions trivia game were also created and displayed during the 2012 conference.

Establishing the Rural Sociological Society

*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>

**Contents should not be used without
proper attribution**



Establishing the Rural Sociological Society

One year after creating their own journal *Rural Sociology*, members of the American Sociological Society's (ASS) Section on Rural Sociology again took up the question of forming a professional organization separate from the ASS. In December, 1936, a committee was formed to consider the possibility [Tab 1a; Tab 2a]. Chaired by Dwight Sanderson, this committee was later referred to as the "Sanderson Committee."

When the committee was formed, only one member (O.D. Duncan) favored creating an organization separate from the ASS. The others, including Dwight Sanderson and Carl C. Taylor, were reluctant to make the move [Tab 5]. Part of their reluctance stemmed from concerns over the financial future and viability of the ASS. At this time, not only was the ASS in financial straits, the growth in regional sociological associations appeared to be threatening national Society's membership base. As a result, all but one of the Sanderson Committee recommended in a majority report that the group seek concessions from the ASS instead.

But, a new generation had been growing within rural sociology – one that had a different vision and a different viewpoint about staying with the ASS. While creating the first Section of the Society had provided for a more formal organization of rural sociologists, its place within the larger academically-oriented organization increasingly proved to be ill-suited for the growing field. During its 16 years, frustrations within the Section grew in part as opportunities within the ASS were not seen as keeping pace with the growth of rural sociology.

O.D. Duncan, the youngest on the Sanderson Committee solicited the assistance of T. Lynn Smith at Louisiana State University (LSU) [Tab 2d]. To help the cause, Smith organized a memorandum of support from the faculty at LSU and sent it not only to members of the Sanderson Committee, but to other leaders within the rural group [Tab 3; Tab 4]. With this support, O.D. Duncan drafted a minority report to be presented to Section members.

In December, 1937, both the majority and minority reports from the Sanderson Committee were presented to the ASS Section on Rural Sociology [Tab 1b; Tab 7]. In the end, the members accepted elements of both and provisionally established the Rural Sociological Society of America.

As Duncan later recalled in his 1953 presidential message: "It was a case of men who were then young, at least younger than they are now, loading a meeting while the elder brethren slept on their own rights" (1953. 18(4):412).

The provisional nature of the Constitution and By Laws were intended to allow time for Sanderson to pursue the amendments to the ASS Constitution needed for the organization to be both separate while also remain within the ASS [Tab 2c]. Even though Sanderson presented his proposed amendment to the ASS Executive Committee (and it was published to the ASS membership), in the end, the question was shunted to the ASS Committee on Regional Societies where it died.



O. D. Duncan



T. Lynn Smith



Dwight Sanderson

Continued →

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In December 1938, members voted on and accepted the permanent Constitution and By Laws [Tab 1d]. At this time, the organization's name was changed to simply:

The Rural Sociological Society

Even though he had been reluctant to form a separate organization, Dwight Sanderson, who had also been the first chair of the ASS Section on Rural Sociology, became the first president of RSS [Tab 1c]. The next year, Carl C. Taylor, who had been the second person to chair the ASS Section on Rural Sociology, followed Sanderson as the second president of the RSS.

One of the key advantages to establishing a society separate from the ASS was that it allowed for a greater diversity of membership than that possible as a section of the ASS. In its first year, the group grew from 71 to over 300 members [Tab 6; Tab 10]. Moreover, while concerns for the future viability of the ASS drove some of the reluctance to create the RSS, all of the members of the Rural Sociology Section remained members of the ASS, they continued to serve in leadership positions within the ASS, and several went on to be elected president of the ASS.

Members of the "Sanderson Committee:"

Dwight Sanderson, Chair; John H. Kolb; Carl C. Taylor; B. O. Williams; and O.D. Duncan.

First Officers of the Rural Sociological Society

(Elected: December 1937)



President
Dwight Sanderson
Cornell University



Vice President
John H. Kolb
University of Wisconsin



Secretary-Treasurer
T. Lynn Smith
Louisiana State University

Additional Members of the Executive Committee



C. E. Lively
Ohio State University



Carl C. Taylor
Division of Farm Population and Rural Life, USDA

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Reprints

Tab 1.

- a) Announcement of committee formed “to consider measures and seek ways and means for perfecting a more satisfactory organization of rural sociologists” *Rural Sociology* 2(1).
- b) Published minutes of Committee’s report and minority report were presented. Originally published in *Rural Sociology* 3(1), reprinted in 1985, 50(1).
- c) First Presidential address. *Rural Sociology* 4(1):123-125
- d) Minutes of first business meeting. Incl. permanent constitution. *Rural Sociology* 4(1).

Documents

Tab 2. Getting started...

- a) Minutes of the “special meeting” where the committee was formed to “formulate plans for the organization of rural sociologists.” December 1936.
- b) Ray Wakeley’s letter reflecting on the new journal and the potential for forming a separate professional society. February, 1936.
- c) Dwight Sanderson’s letter to the American Sociological Society’s President (Ellsworth Faris) and Secretary (H. A. Phelps) on the potential of forming a separate professional organization while remaining affiliated with the ASS. January 1937.
- d) O.D. Duncan’s letter to T. Lynn Smith lamenting his inability to convince the committee to separate from the American Sociological Society. November, 1937.

Tab 3. T. Lynn Smith’s campaign to garner support for forming a separate organization:

- a) T Lynn Smith’s letter to O.D. Duncan with a memorandum of support developed and signed by faculty at Louisiana State University. December 10, 1937.
- b) Smith’s letter accompanying the memorandum sent to leaders of the Rural Sociology Section and members of the committee. December 10, 1937.
- c) Smith’s letter accompanying the memorandum sent to Dwight Sanderson, chair of the committee. December 10, 1937.

Tab 4. O.D. Duncan’s letter of thanks to T. Lynn Smith. December, 1937.

Tab 5. Responses to the LSU memorandum:

- a) C. E. Lively, Ohio State University; Bonney Youndblood, USDA; Carl C. Taylor, USDA Division of Farm Population and Rural Life. December, 1937.
- b) Committee members: Dwight Sanderson, Cornell University; B. O. Williams, Clemson. December, 1937.
- c) T. Lynn Smith’s response to Dwight Sanderson. December, 1937.

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Documents

Tab 6. Membership list. ASS Section on Rural Sociology. December 21, 1937. (71 members).

Tab 7. Creating the organization...

- a) Report of the committee to “formulate plans for the organization of rural sociologists” and O.D. Duncan’s minority report.
- b) Official minutes of meeting where the committee report was presented and the following “special meeting called for the purpose of organizing a national society of rural sociologists. December 29, 1937.
- c) Transcript of the “special session” and handwritten notes on the ensuing discussion.

Tab 8. First financial statement of the Rural Sociological Society of America. 1938.

Tab 9. Membership drive (Sanderson’s letters to Lowry Nelson). January, February, 1938.

Tab 10. 1938 Membership of RSS (303 members).

**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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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.

Establishing the Rural Sociological Society



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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The American Sociological Society's Section on Rural Sociology

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Creating the Journal: *Rural Sociology*

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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