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Samantha McDonald
Pittstburg State University, smcdonald@gus.pittstate.edu

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INTO THE WEST AND BACK OUT AGAIN: AN EXAMINATION OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL EXCHANGE IN THE GILDED AGE UNITED STATES

A thesis submitted to the graduate school in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Arts

Samantha McDonald

Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg, Kansas

May 2020

INTO THE WEST AND BACK OUT AGAIN: AN EXAMINATION OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL EXCHANGE IN THE GILDED AGE UNITED STATES

Samantha McDonald

APPROVED:

Thesis Advisor: ______________________________
Dr. Kirstin L. Lawson, Department of History, Philosophy, and Social Sciences

Committee Member: ______________________________
Dr. Robert C. Childers, Department of History, Philosophy, and Social Sciences

Committee Member: ______________________________
Dr. Gary Wilson, Department of History, Philosophy, and Social Science

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This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.
Samantha McDonald

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An Abstract of the Thesis by
Samantha McDonald

The purpose of this study is to provide a historical analysis of American culture and society at the turn of the twentieth-century, challenging the conceptualization of social isolation, cultural subjectivity, and urban conflict of the rural Midwest. Detailed research utilizes a synthesized mixture of primary sources, contemporary to the Gilded Age, and a volume of academic analysis of Midwestern and American history to establish the significance of rural, Midwest communities in the development of social and cultural standards in the United States. A flipped historical focus shifts the rural Midwest from an urban periphery to the center and nexus of social and cultural exchange, development, and expression. Sources and scholarship on rural America highlight voluntary participation in activities, opportunities, organizations, and behaviors, all which demonstrate the reciprocal development of a national culture, standards, and ideologies. As active participants in a variety of social movements, economic practices, sponsored programs and policies, demographic and occupation shifts, rural Midwesterners were at the heart of prevailing cultural and social standards. Late 19th and early 20th century associations, organizations, programs, and activities throughout the country reflected and contributed to national cultural and social standards. There was not a prevailing urban-rural conflict in cultural development or social reform, as some analysis has argued. The codependent relationship between national organizers and local participants challenges the misconception that Eastern or urban influences dictated Western or rural modernity, social reform, and cultural development. A mutual cultural exchange between multiple centers of influence created

American society. The rural Midwest was a key component in the formation and expression of Gilded Age American institutions, ideologies, values, and practices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	MODERNIZING RURAL AMERICA	12
III.	THE MYTHICAL AND THEORETICAL RURAL AMERICA	24
IV.	MANIFESTING RURAL AMERICA	33
V.	TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES	42
VI.	A NATIONAL COMMUNITY	51
VII.	RURAL INSTITUTIONS	60
VIII.	EDUCATING THE RURAL FAMILY	69
IX.	ORGANIZING AND ENTERTAINING RURAL FAMILIES	77
X.	THE RURAL ECONOMY	94
XI.	CONCLUSION	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY		106

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rural Midwest has long been associated with a distinct identity and culture separate from urban and coastal society. Recent presidential elections, national events, and emerging scholarship have begun to challenge the assumptions of an isolated, backwards, subjugated rural America. Research shows the deep historical and contemporary significance rural Midwestern communities have in the development and dissemination of social constructs, institutions, identities, values, and standards in American society and culture. The power of Midwestern voluntarism and rural adaptation of opportunities, information, and ideologies were significant in the establishment of a national culture as well as the development and alterations of social institutions and political policies. The cultural transfusion illustrated in formal and informal associations, organizations, programs, and activities throughout American society at the turn of the twentieth century was a marriage between the West and the East. It was not, as some scholarship has implied, a one-way conquest of the urban Eastern civilization over a deficient rural, Midwestern society. The codependent relationship between national organizers and local participants challenges the misconception that Eastern or urban influences dictated Western or rural development and prosperity. The shaping of American society has been a multifaceted and multimodal cultural exchange between centers of influence.

A variety of scholarship has covered many aspects of American culture at the turn of the twentieth century and provides a basis for the analysis of the rural family in a broader social context. In his article "Theoretical Perspectives on the New World History: From Environmentalism to Modernization," Robert P. Swierenga provides "the standard operational definition of rurality" as having "two criteria- residence in an area of low population density and chief livelihood earned in agriculture. But ruralness is more than location or an occupation; it is a way of life."[1] David D. Danbom's *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* provides a synthesized applied definition of "rural America" utilized within this thesis. Danbom examines rural America through social, political, and economic institutions, philosophies, and agendas. He argues the transformative cultural exchanges led to a decline of a distinct rural American characteristic.

In conjunction with numerous other historians, Danbom maintained that agricultural modernization in the early twentieth-century altered the characteristics of the average rural community. Danbom asserted the "pressure of financial stringency [placed upon] the structure of agriculture" made two certainties clear to farming communities in the early 1900s: "[t]he farmer was no longer the average American, and…the average American could no longer hope to be a farmer."[2] Danbom argued outer influences transformed the qualities that distinguished farming as an average occupation that was open to the average citizen at the turn of the twentieth-century. The outer cultural influences included economics, religion, education, and

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[1] Robert P. Swierenga, "Theoretical Perspectives on the New World History: From Environmentalism to Modernization," *Agricultural History* 56 no. 3 (July 1982): 496.

[2] David D. Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 187.

modernization all intimately entwined with pervasive national standards, valuations, and practices. However, Danbom placed the alterations to rural communities, lifestyles, identity, and occupation solely on the farmers' and rural citizens' own desire to modernize.

In *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America,* David Danbom adopted the case study model to highlight the changes in occupation, community involvement, and personal identity. He selected Union County, Illinois as his comparative model of a representative rural community. He used similar qualifying factors as the social anthropologists Robert and Helen Lynd and historian Thomas Morain. Like other scholar and case studies, Danbom utilized *average* American characteristics as the primary justification in his selection process. Danbom emphasized that Union County was "unique in the sense that every place is, but its history parallels the history of much of rural America."[3] Union County exemplified the common contextual conditions that altered American society beginning in the late 1800s. He specified that rapid technological, economic, demographic, political, and cultural developments transformed farming from "an occupation that was at least as much of a way of life as it was a way of making a living" to a political "interest group jostling with other interest groups in competition for economic benefits."[4] He reasoned the communal changes resulted from rural America's participation in urban and national cultural and social practices, valuations, standards, and ideologies. According to Danbom, the long-term changes in cultural and community markers, such as occupation and production highlighted the contextual conditions and personal choices that created and destroyed a distinct rural America.

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[3] Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 261.

[4] Danbom, *Born in the Country,* 2, 187.

In their ground-breaking project, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture,* Robert and Helen Lynd applied social anthropology to evaluate the culture change of the small Midwestern industrial city, Muncie, Indiana. The Lynds designed the "pioneer" study as an objective, anthropological observation of a "typical" small industrial city in the 1920s. [5] However, they stressed, "a typical city, strictly speaking, does not exist, but the city studied was selected as having many features common to a wide group of communities."[6] The Lynds chose Muncie, Indiana because it fit specific criteria: "the city be as representative as possible of contemporary American life," with "the absence of any outstanding peculiarities or acute local problems which would mark it off from the mid-channel sort of American community" and "the city should, if possible, be in that common-denominator of America, the Middle West." [7] The case study provided a model of a small Midwestern industrial city and helped establish the cultural and social significance of the community in shaping the values, activities, production, occupation, and identity of the individual residents. What distinguished Muncie as *Middletown* was the fact that it was indistinguishable from the profile of hundreds of other industrialized small cities. It was homogenous, of middling size, multi-industrial, had an artistic element to the community, and there was no unusual local history or issue to set it apart.[8] As a cross-sectional, objective case study, *Middletown* was the first of its kind but became a standard format for later

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[5] Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1929), 3-6.

[6] Lynd, *Middletown,* 3.

[7] Lynd, *Middletown,* 7.

[8] Lynd, *Middletown*, 6-9.

scholarship and community case studies.[9] Numerous academics followed *Middletown's* case study approach generating and influencing a volume of research into specific city and regional histories.

Social and cultural historians in the 1970s and 1980s revisited and expanded upon the concept of community as a social and cultural institution. Historians utilized the case study analysis developed by the Lynds, no longer a thesis-less cultural examination, to construct historical arguments. Almost a half-century after *Middletown's* publication, historian Thomas Morain employed a format like the Lynds in his 1988, *Prairie Grass Roots*. Like the Lynds, Morain compared and contrasted the living conditions of one town in two distinct historical and cultural periods.[10] He argued "three developments in the latter half of the nineteenth century:" outer cultural influences on social institutions, entering the market capitalist economy, and the rapid settlement and industrialization of the prairie frontier "significantly molded the nature of the community."[11] Scholastically, the rural community has been viewed as the primary means for the acculturalization of rural America into urbanistic social standards.

While the Lynds did not explicitly put forth a thesis, they indirectly argued several points throughout the study. The primary argument was that technology, access, and propinquity beget

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[9] Community case studies began to enter historical and the social sciences' scholarship during the 1920s and 1930s. Other urban-based sociologists' case studies include: Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto* (University of Chicago Press,1928) a sociologist examination of economic and social isolation in urban ghettos; Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1929) a sociological examination of Chicago's "slums." The Lynds were the first to apply social anthropology methodologies in an examination of a Midwestern city.

[10] Thomas Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots: An Iowa Small Town in the Early Twentieth Century* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998), 249-50.

[11] Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots,* 4.

cultural change. The authors lamented "that we today probably live in one of the eras of greatest rapidity of change in the history of human institutions [as] increasingly frequent and strong waves sweep over us from without, drenching us with the material and non-material habits of other center."[12] Noticeably influenced by their contemporary environment, the Lynds reasoned the best way to interpret a community or individual was to appreciate that the "outstanding characteristic of the ways of living of any given people…is that they are in the process of change, the rate and direction of change depending upon proximity to strong centers of cultural diffusion."[13] The Lynds portrayed the industrial town as a receptor and reflection of outer cultural influence rather than the center. *Middletown* placed the small Midwestern city within the periphery of larger urban and national social and cultural influences.

Morain followed the Lynds' change of time analysis as the primary cultural development, arguing the "most significant change over the entire period (1900-1930) was the size of the community." Morain selected the city of Jefferson as the community model for the "typical" Iowa small town during the first three decades of the twentieth-century. Morain clarified that the "term 'typical' [was] a slippery slope" and "Jefferson [was] typical by default in that it lack[ed] the unique." Like Muncie, it was predominantly white with "no foreign ethnic flavor," it lacked a distinctive industry, it was separated enough from a larger city to maintain its autonomy but not "completely immune from urban influences," local businesses "provided the same basic services."[14] The increased access to modern technologies and ideologies from outer influences

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[12] Lynd, *Middletown,* 5.

[13] Lynd, *Middletown,* 5.

[14] Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots,* 4.

sparked rapid growth and significantly altered the function, expression, and organization of the community.

During the early 1900s, most American communities had rapid shifts in occupation, residence, and social organization. Morain and the Lynds argued that even though Midwestern communities experienced similar growth and modernity the demographic changes indicated an "integrat[ion] into national networks in which the centers of power were far beyond the local city limits."[15] He stated that to Jefferson residents in the early 1900s, "it was obvious that the urban centers, not the farm and small town were coming to dominate American life."[16] Morain contended that as Jefferson became more modern it began to lose its distinct rural characteristics. Morain stressed that individual and communal identity was contingent upon how it compared to, contrasted against, and interacted with the prevailing characteristics of the local and broader community and its inhabitants. Between *Middletown* and *Prairie Grass Roots* character, condition, and change became the three Cs in academia's establishment of the community as a key factor in defining, modifying, and exemplifying human behavior within a specific yet universal conditional context.

Rural historian, who coined the phrase "new rural history," Robert Swierenga in answering the question "[w]hat is farming?" asserted "[f]arming is a business enterprise of course, but it is also a way of life, a "calling," an expression of ultimate commitments."[17] In an examination of rural historiography, Swierenga concludes "Rural life, [is] distinct from urban

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[15] Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots,* 259.

[16] Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots,* 255.

[17] Robert P. Swierenga, "The Little White Church: Religion in Rural America," *Agricultural History* 71, no. 4 (1997): 421.

living, traditionally involved physical if not social isolation, extended family networks, simplex social organizations, seasonal labor patterns and increasing handwork, and an attitude of complacency in the face of nature's forces."[18] Historian David Danbom queried: "In the absence of an occupation and a style of living that defined rural America over most of its history, can we even talk about rural life as distinct any longer, or is it just 'life?'"[19] This thesis argues the regional development and modernization was not distinctly divergent, outside, subject to, deficient, or isolated from national, policies, culture, or society but rather the rural Midwest has always been a contributor to and reflection of a modern American "life."

Between the late 1800s and the mid-1900s, America experienced a series of transformative events which many scholars dubbed an era of "tragedy and triumph." Agriculture, radio, bureaucracy, and capitalism all experienced periods of substantial popularity, public power, and expansive growth earning them the moniker of the "Golden Age" of various events or eras. These "golden ages" captured the attention of their contemporaries and historians as they stand in conjunction with dark periods of American history as well. Steve Craig's *Out of the Dark* and Randall Hall's *Lum and Abner,* in addition to a number of other historians, demonstrate how popular media connected the isolated rural home to national products, services, and ideologies. A volume of historical works establishes the radio as a primary means of rural cultural inclusion of and influence upon American values and practices. The radio created an immediate and intimate connection between the home and American culture and society. Entertainment became an indoctrinating avenue of American culture. Historians and works

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[18] Swierenga, "Theoretical Perspectives," 496.

[19] Danbom, *Born in the Country,* 263.

contemporary to the Golden Age have marked the era as the introduction, and integration of rural communities into modern American culture and society.

The social reform movements in the early 1900s spawned a variety of community organizations reflecting a national improvement culture. Beginning in the Progressive era, social reformers placed an emphasis on measurable normative criteria, and health care experts and government agencies identified women and children as being both the cause of and cure for national health issues. In conjunction with local and federal support, professionals set out to improve the health of the nation by educating mothers and the next generation. The early 1900s saw the emergence of the well-fare state as well as national club and health movements that relied on both professional experts and public acceptance, participation, and promotion for the programs' success. Members learned new skills and recognition through socialization and shared practical knowledge and experience.

Through the system of voluntary participation, national affiliations and individual participants transmitted cultural values in an effort to elevate social standards. Scholarship in the 1900s started to incorporate the study of what people did within the framework of the community as a social unit; academics redirected scholarship and research to include the social sciences. The modernization theory of rural American social and cultural development during the Gilded Age unites historical scholarship across a spectrum of subfields and is the focus of a variety of historians' area of concentration. Modernization in the early twentieth century can be defined as the adoption and adaptation of the American standard. Standards in health, behavior, and appearance accompanied technological advances and the commercial market in shaping the modern American culture in the early 1900s.

A vast terrain of rural historical scholarship covers a broad spectrum of specialized areas of focus from politics to entertainment however, most rural historical scholarship can fit into three categories. The first argument about the relationship between regional centers of influence is an urban-rural conflict: urban and bureaucratic reformers' forceful infiltration of rural American to improve and protect national interests often at the expense of the farmers. Within this framework, farmers are either portrayed as compliant in their subjugation to outer pressures or actively resisting. David Danbom and Mary Neth strongly argued for a resilient yet ultimately susceptible rural American political platform. The second scholastic argument presents a cooperative relationship between a region in need and a responsive government coupled with urban philanthropy. In this interpretation, rural Americans recognized their own shortcomings and asked for assistance, viewing the government and urban reformers as another part of rural America's community, network culture. Numerous historians cite the voluntary aspect of the federal relief and urban reform programs asserting the level of rural participation indicates a lack of conflict or cultural opposition arguing the deliberate personal participation demonstrates the willing assimilation of social standards. Mary Neth argued the farmers were active in the local and national community. According to Neth, rural acceptance and participation promoted the unintended consequences of dissolving the familial and communal networks that supported the economic structure of agricultural families and communities.

The third and most pervasive argument is that the isolation of rural America prevented access to and from broader cultural and social constructs, standards, institutions, and influences. Many historians have explored the political and economic events of the time offering a variety of nuanced arguments with isolation as a key component in a variety of scholarship on the history of rural America. Regardless of what side of the consensus versus cooperative debate over rural

history a historian falls under, almost every one argues modernization in one form or another marked the incorporation of rural America into the mainstream national culture. In almost every analysis, cultural isolation is a significant factor in the marginalized perspective of rural America sitting on the fringes of urban and national culture. Some historians say rural acculturation was voluntary while others a natural process and still others a submission to urban, commercial, and bureaucratic influences. The one thing rural historians seem to agree on is once rural America came "out of the dark" and into the "Golden Age," rural America was a market and producer for a consumer economy and part of the national consumer culture.

CHAPTER II

MODERNIZING RURAL AMERICA

Historical scholarship illuminates the dual concepts that surround the perception of the modernization of rural America in the late 1800s and early 1900s. On one hand, modern culture has portrayed rural America as deficient and isolated and on the other, it is a romanticized section of America, tinged with nostalgic myths. However, studies that focus on the adherence to national standards and ideology have begun to reconcile the seemingly contradictory relationship between urban and rural centers of influence, highlighting the dualistic quality of social and cultural transmission and establishment of a national identity and standards of living, health, and prosperity. Much scholarship addresses how local participation connected and invited the ever-evolving American pop culture into rural homes and rural citizens into vast integrated national networks.

Like many of his contemporaries, Danbom writes from an urban to rural direction of social and cultural transmission. His monograph, *Resisted Revolutions,* detailed the urban efforts of the modernization of rural America as the industrialization of agriculture motivated by a desire for efficiency, organization, and production. Danbom analyzed the Country Life Movement in the early 1900s as an indicator of an urban-rural conflict. Rejecting William Bower's urban anxiety analysis in *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920*, Danbom

assigned a more sinister motivation to the urban reform movement in rural communities.[20] He often refers to the reform efforts as self-serving urban and bureaucratic manipulations at the expense of the American family farm. Danbom asserted that governmental policy and urban reformer's "primary motivation was not to aid the farmer" but "a systematic exploitation."[21] He argued rural families resisted urban efforts to improve the standard of living because rural self-identity prevented them from seeing themselves as deficient. He portrays rural America in the early twentieth century as rebuking a collaborated effort of the State and urban centers. Danbom's analysis of urban and rural cultures being simultaneously separate and at odds implies that a shared national culture did not exist as a reflection of a mutual exchange but as a cultural conquest, east over west, urban over rural, politics over people, industrial over agriculture, and modern over traditional. With the conflict analysis format national culture is one of top down cultural transmission in which cultural and social standards reflect the victors' values, practices, and beliefs.[22] It discounts the shared conditions, ideologies, and standards that shaped American

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[20] William Bower, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1974). Bower argued the Country Life Movement was based on a legitimate concern of urban centers for rural development. He builds his analysis on an economic basis. He emphasized a middle-class desire to protect the established order through rural reform. He argued the efforts were ineffective as rural America was ill-equipped for industrial production. He perpetuates the urban to rural spheres of influence and through a class based social history. Bower's scholarship supported the arguments that economics were the primary mitigating factor which became a social ill and class concern.

[21] Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1990-1903* (Ames: Iowa State Press, 1979), viii, 138.

[22] Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) Levine argued the fluidity of cultural transmission transcended geographic and social boundaries. American society created "highbrow" and "lowbrow" to distinguished between refined and crude forms of shared cultural practices, knowledge, and expression; Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992) Bushman argues that cultural diffusion and power is a top down process with the rural poor holding positions of "cruder traditional values" in the refined American culture; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in*

society in which urban and rural citizens were equaling transformed by, subject to and influential over a national culture and identity. The popularity of public programs and social movements indicates the common national culture, values, and ideologies that transcended the illusionary divisions between distinctly urban and rural cultures and societies.

Randal Hall asserted the rural setting in the popular radio program *Lum and Aber* appealed to both rural and urban audiences, speculating some of the urban listeners were rural transplants. The program's popularity highlights that the material presented resonated with both rural and urban audiences as it related to and reflected contemporary conditions unique to the economic, social, political, and cultural conditions during the Progressive Era. Hall's speculation suggests a nostalgic tinge to the program's popularity in urban settings as little more than rural emigrants' cure for home-sickness yet it hints at a larger cultural shift; American production was becoming increasingly mechanized, traditional labor practices and social organizations adopted to the changing environment, and people were moving from the country to the city. Numerous other historians have also examined the emigration of rural Americans to urban centers in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Gabriel N. Rosenberg maintained that one of the motivating factors of the Country Life Movement in rural reform was to improve the quality of life for rural youths and make country life more appealing. Rosenberg's organizational history maintains that in conjunction with other federal programs and urban reform movements, the 4-H attempted to check a youth exodus from the countryside.

Turn-of-the-Century New York. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) Peiss argued modern society altered yet was influenced by traditional social institutions and cultural values. Cultural transmission was generational as well economic in how society defined crude and refined entertainment and employment.

Hall provides a simple definition of the Country Life Movement's social reform program as "scientific planning" during the Progressive era "that acknowledged (and tried to improve) lackluster conditions among country dwellers."[23] William Bower argues the reformers designed the Country Life Movement specifically to address an economic threat to middle-class stability. Bower's scholarship supported the arguments that economics were the primary mitigating factor which became a social ill and class concern. He argued the reform efforts were ineffective, as rural America was ill-equipped for industrial production. David Danbom attributes the reform movement to a "systematic exploitation" of a manipulative bureaucracy and self-serving urban reformers. To many reformers, the Country Life Movement was a concentrated, orchestrated attempt to improve economic stability, as they viewed current rural practices as threatening to the established order. Through the class based, economically and socially fueled social histories, both historians perpetuate the urban-to-rural spheres of influence and cultural transmission.

Danbom's research identified rural self-interest, economic shifts, and war-prompted agricultural development and modernization rather than farmers submitting to urban and governmental pressures and influences. According to Danbom, therein lies the paradox of the conflict: urban and bureaucratic reformers identified an agricultural inefficiency as a threat to national prosperity, yet agriculturalists were experiencing an "unusual degree of tranquility."[24] Therein lies the cultural paradox, to reformers the rural issues were a threat to society but to farmers the perceived threat was strictly an urban issue. He stressed the reform movement as a "classic urban-rural confrontation, in which the countryside resisted urban-born changes which

[23] Randall Hall, *Lum and Abner: Rural America and the Golden Age of Radio* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 4.

[24] Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution,* vii, 144.

were largely irrelevant to rural people and which attacked traditional practices and institutions." Danbom utilized Samuel Hay's perspective of politics in the 1920s as "representing some men by 'shaping and ordering the lives of other men." Danbom indicated the urban-rural conflict brought to light a significant "normative question, whether such a government, even if it does express the will of a majority or has the best interests of that majority at heart, is justifiable in a free society." In the prevailing scholastic focus on an urban-rural conflict, the question then becomes who held and governed the "will of the majority," urban industrialism, traditional rural agriculture, or political mechanisms and agendas. [25]

The rural historical scholarship generated in the 1990s expanded the urban-rural conflict paradox by examining the farmer as the active human agency of structural change. Historians began to question the validity of previous arguments of a rural passivity and defense against unyielding urban and political pressure to conform to national standards. In *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940,* Mary Neth also examined the industrialization of agriculture and its impact on the family farm. Building on Danbom's analysis, she equated the rural response as resistant towards urban pressures. Neth echoes Danbom's argument that urban and rural occupants identified themselves as separate and distinct from the other in expression, organization, purpose, and virtues. *Preserving the Family Farm* portrayed the farmers as complicit in the industrialization and gendered roles of agriculture. Her analysis demonstrated the countryside was significant in the development of industrial capitalism and the farmer actively participated in the modernization of agriculture and the reorganization of the family farm and the roles of its members. Farmers

[25] Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution,* 141, 144.

adopted and adapted the policies, practices, and investments that benefited them economically, which Neth argued weakened the familial and communal ties integral to the foundations of rural society, culture, economics, politics, and identity. To Neth, the paradox lies with the rural farmer's willing investment in capital agriculture that dissolved the economic system upon which the family farm functioned and flourished.

The concept of the farmer as the active agent in the rural-urban relationship and social reform movements was not exclusive to Neth's analysis. Political historian Richard Hofstadter argued the American farmer "had innocently sought progress from the very beginning, and thus hastened the decline of many of his values."[26] Hofstadter wrote a political analysis of the period between the late 1800s and early 1900s. He divided the political activity into three eras of influence: Populism in the 1890s, Progressivism between 1900 and 1920s, and the New Deal beginning in the 1930s. As part of the consensus theory of historical interpretation, He argued the New Deal was a sharp divergence from Progressive era scholarship that traced a continuum of social reform. Sarah Philips, in *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal,* directly contradicted Danbom's analysis of a rural resistance to a sinister bureaucratic modernization. She detailed how many of the policies and programs were "voluntary rather than coercive." Philips contended that the New Deal era demonstrated the

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[26] Sarah Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 240; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960). Hofstadter wrote a political analysis of the period between the late 1800s and early 1900s. He divided the political activity into three eras of influence: Populism in the 1890s, Progressivism between 1900 and 1920s, and the New Deal beginning in the 1930s. As part of the consensus theory of historical interpretation, He argued the New Deal was a sharp divergence from Progressive era scholarship that traced a continuum of social reform. He directly challenged the Progressive ideology, criticizing the agrarian myth as "backwards" and rural influences as manipulative. He argued that the loss of status prompted the elite class to actively seek reform.

conflict as a distinctly diverse society's attempt to "embrace both progress and restraint ideologies." She argued the government intervention and rural reform efforts were "genuine efforts…to help the farmer remain in place… [and] the New Dealers honestly believed that rural modernization and rational resources would save the family farm and balance the ideals of efficiency, equity, and sustainability."[27] Philips portrayed the political policies of the New Deal as a responsive government meeting the needs of rural demands.

Numerous historians outlined how integrated networks were avenues for cultural modernity during the Gilded Age. Academic examinations of the widespread public participation in entertainment venues, local and national contests, scientific preeminence, and community involvement identify turn-of-the-twentieth century society's cultural standards of what was acceptably "all-American." The popularity and public participation of national, local, and organizational programs demonstrate how there were extensive interconnected networks between rural communities, the federal government, social reformers, and professional experts in the inclusion of the American standard in the American home and a welcomed acceptance of cultural ideology that crossed regional, social, and cultural boundaries.

Rural communities, institutions and culture are often depicted as lacking in commodities and services available to city inhabitants. However, many of the social and cultural qualifiers used to identify "rural" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century America were present in contemporary industrial cities. One of the notable characteristics of Muncie in the 1920s and similar cities in the same era was the lack of paved roads connecting it to a bigger city. The distance, lack of a hard surfaced road to a metropolis and relative isolation between it and an

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[27] Philips, *This Land, This Nation,* 14, 238-40.

even larger urban center are often synonymous with rural living. Population density, industrial variety, and cultural diversity prevented demographics from labeling Muncie as rural. Morain also contradicts the perceived deficiency in rural communities. He notes the medical facilities, social services, economic and social opportunities available within the small town of Jefferson Iowa, a town significantly smaller in population density and occupational diversity and representative of the typical rural community.

Rural adherence to national standards and ideology of living, health, and prosperity reflects a mutual social and cultural transmission in the establishment of a national identity and rural identity. A number of studies address the combination of education, entertainment, participation, and incentives. Robert W. Rydell in *All the World's a Fair* and Annette Vance Dorey's *Better Baby Contests* argued education, entertainment, social reform, and scientific standards beginning in the early 1900s blended professional expertise with public venues and were popular avenues of cultural transmissions. Gabriel Rosenburg's *The 4-H Harvest: Sexuality and the State in Rural America* argued the fairs and health contests were part of an ominous government eugenics program. He argued participation in the contests provided the country with a strong, perfected male and female rural breeding stock. Mary Neth presents the rural youth as a familial resource providing indispensable economic, labor not as breeding stock.

Historians such as Samuel Hay, Nancy Tomes, and Sarah Phillips argue the increase in public health initiatives beginning in the Progressive era and reemerging during the New Deal era resulted from the cultural significance placed on "scientific" methodologies, measurements, and applications. In conjunction with other historians, Annette Vance Dorey's analysis reflects the inward influences of the germ theory and national standards on the rural family and the outward influence of the popular event on American culture and society. In *The Gospel of*

Germs: Men, Women and the Microbe in American Life, Nancy Tomes maintains the private practices that developed out of public fear ingrained the germ theory into American culture. She argues the Gospel of Germs was a social scripture that directed individual behavior. The Gospel of Germs indoctrinated American culture with a personal and social responsibility to health.

Various historical scholars argued how local organizations introduced and invited the American government into the rural home and became the avenue to rural cultural inclusion. Historians have identified how the 4-H, and other clubs incorporated the local families into broader community interests, bureaucratic reform agendas, and national cultural standards. The establishment of the 4-H in 1914 and The Women's Club movement in the 1920s were supported by federal bureaus and social reformers who encouraged and enticed communities, families, and individuals to join or create local chapters. Nancy Tomes, Annette Vance Dorey, and Robyn Muncy illustrate the vital role voluntarism played in the diffusion of expert advice to the public. A volume of scholarship has connected the virtues and values placed on the perceptions of female role within both domestic and public sphere. Tomes argued women adopted the germ theory as gospel to maintain a familial standard of health. Dorey illustrates the parents desire to maintain a medical standard of their child's health. Muncy denoted the local organizations, agents, and providers as the bases for maintaining Progressive social reformer's professional standard of "values and strategies." Muncy identifies these local women's organizations and clubs as the bottom tier of a cooperative relationship between local organizations, state agencies, professional women, and federal departments. Debate remains between scholarships on the underlying agendas of the multiple founders, public leaders, and government agents with some historians arguing more sinister motivations than improving the standards of rural living to elevate and reflect domestic principles. Other scholarship suggests the 4-H was a product of

New Deal mentality of social reform and others as an example of increased cultural awareness of public health issues in the early 1900s.

Gabriel Rosenburg and Robyn Muncy focus on the relationship between the participants and federal programs and the bureaus and question the motivations behind establishing standards of personal health. Muncy argued that professional women created a *Female Dominion* to maintain their own autonomy and authority contingent upon them being viewed as experts of contemporary feminine issues and purveyors of exclusive and vital information. Both historians argue it was an intentional effort of self-preservation under the guise of philanthropy and legitimized by bureaucracy mandating cultural standards. Rosenburg and Muncy maintain bureaucratic and public health experts secured their position within the welfare state through the dissemination of vital information to the public. Agents specializing in home economics provided values and demonstrations to educate women on the best way to utilize and manage all the essential elements to achieve personal, familial, and national health. Dorey and Muncy challenge Gabriel Rosenburg's assertion there was a sinister government plot to regulate, control, and harvest the perfect specimen by utilizing the 4-H and rural families in the name of American health. Muncy argued the standardization of children's health was the efforts of ambitious professional women trying to reconcile conflicting ideologies of professionalism and women's roles and male legislatures deferring to feminine expertise on women and children's issues. Muncy echoes David Danbom, Mary Neth, and Steven Craig in their assertion that the popularity and success of acculturalization consequently resulted in the erasure of the distinctive qualities.

Steve Craig and Randall Hall, along with other communication historians, detail the expansive commercial networks that used radio programs to broadcast mass consumerism into national and local markets. Newspapers, advertisements, and promotional material published in

the early 1900s highlight the variety of services, activities, opportunities, and professions available to most rural citizens within the rural community. The large number of locally and nationally published material widely distributed throughout the rural Midwest challenges the misconception that rural communities were socially deficient in opportunity, necessities, professionals, and services. The popularity of mail order catalogues from manufacturing companies like Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward represents the variety and popularity of manufactured commodities available to rural consumers. Lawrence W. Levine in his examination on American culture shows that even rural Americans far removed from urban cultural centers knew of Shakespeare were actively responsible for his incorporation into the national culture. The number of fraternal, social, federal, and denominational programs shows the popularity, availability, and influence local, individual participation had on social and cultural development and expression. A closer examination of voluntary rural participation in local and national programs, practices, and standards and how rural citizens identified themselves argues rural America was not culturally or socially in the dark and significantly contributed to the "Golden Age" of American society at the turn of the century.

In the early 1900s, local and national clubs, organizations, and agencies combined the public, bureaucracy, entertainment, and education. Personal practices united with professional expertise to promote progressive standards of national health. Community organizations focused on social improvement and reform, with women and children central to their cause. Health reformers and initiatives promoted health standards through demonstrations, activities, and personal application. Participation provided members with a variety of social opportunities including education, modernity, and economic incentives. By becoming mainstream, the unique qualities no longer existed that had once allowed fringe sectors of American society power and

authority over public policy, social institutions, and national culture. American households successfully incorporated into cultural standards of practices, theories, and beliefs. Families open to the ideas, products, and opportunities for them to meet the American standard welcomed the government, social reform, and modern culture into their homes. The voluntary acceptance, adoption, and adaptation to the American standard transformed "modern" cultural tastes through a reciprocal exchange of personal and social preference.

CHAPTER III

THE MYTHICAL AND THEORETICAL RURAL AMERICA

The biggest challenge in identifying rural America is separating history from romanticized and mythological depictions of an isolated and "backwards" rural culture on the fringes of contemporary American society. This portrayal comes from rural America's association with the concept of the frontier. The prevailing imagery, symbolism, and ideologies associated with farming and settlement do not emphasize rural America as a nexus of cultural and social influence, but rather the popular conceptualizations depict the romanticized, mythic rural Midwest as outside of *modern* progress. Popular authors, scholars, and leaders shaped and perpetuated "*myths* ... to explain and dramatize the significance of the frontier … dramatizing historical laws and processes, of choosing exemplary heroes and actions, and deriving from history, moral imperatives for present action."[28] The myth of a pure frontier and the settler as a symbol and protector of American values and ideologies surrounds rural America.

Influential historical scholars and authors created a popular interpretation of the American frontier. Those writers included the academic Frederick Jackson Turner, the former President Theodore Roosevelt, who wrote a multi-volume frontier history as well as semi-

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[28] Richard Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier," *American Quarterly* 33 no. 5 (1981): 610.

biographical and fictionalized *Hunting* narratives, and Laura Ingalls Wilder, who wrote the enduring Little House on the Prairie series. Even though few are familiar with Turner's theories and Roosevelt's literary works, almost every modern American carries a *Little House* memory as a talisman for a nostalgic and innocent past. Whether it was learning to read alongside the series' spunky Laura or sharing intimate family moments with the Ingalls family during its syndication, the *Little House* novels and television series have become an integral component to modern understanding of frontier life. The popularity of the glorified series made Laura Ingalls Wilder emblematic of the American frontier emigrant.

The fictionalized Ingalls family provides a glimpse into deeper, broader cultural factors influencing the movements and successes of American settlers. Biographer Caroline Fraser researched the Ingalls' extensive family genealogy. Her research plants the fictionalized character firmly in American history. Wilder's genealogy supports the analysis of the unique social and environmental factors that shaped the American frontier culture. Volumes of personal documents, official records, and public literature speak of the universal driving desire to risk everything to obtain the illusive American dream of freedom and prosperity. For generations and reflecting the actions of numerous other contemporary American families, Laura's family lived on or beyond the settled boundaries of *civilized* American society in a series of continual migrations. From pre-colonial America to squatting on Indian territories, the Ingalls family, for generations, perpetually lived outside established areas of settlement, yet still reflect the evolving modern American culture. As Wilders proclaimed in her first novel, while living on the frontier, their family "did not know where [the Ingalls family] were…no one knew what might have

happened in the Big Woods. There was no way to find out."[29] Unfortunately, Wilder's lamenting leaves the reader with the impression of total social isolation of frontier settlers, rural living, and production. However, Wilder was only one of many popular interpretations that contributed to the isolated, mythic frontier.

Popular publications printed and widely distributed in the late 1800s and early 1900s "extoled the value" of the frontier in both its production potential and its "isolate[ion] from civilization."[30] The popular expansion culture of the mobile American society in the nineteenth century depicted the frontier as "fertile and resource rich." In a society and culture driven by progress and prosperity, available resources were a fundamental "basis of democracy in upward mobility," as well as "restorative of endangered values."[31] Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* postulated a pervasive theory on the identity and development of American society and culture, both created through the process of settlement. He argued the repeated process of adapting to and civilizing new environments created American institutions. The frontier was an ever-moving edge where wilderness met civilization. The "perennial rebirth" marked the "fluidity of American life" and was the basis for America's political, social, cultural, and economic institutions, practices, values, beliefs, and identity.

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[29] Laura Ingalls Wilder, *The Little House on the Prairie* (New York: Scholastic Inc., 1935), 77.

[30] Diana Seave Greenwald, "The Big Picture: Thomas Moran's The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and the Development of the American West," *Winterthur Portfolio* 49 no. 4 (Winter 2015): 186; Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 622.

[31] Greenwald, "The Big Picture," 177; Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 609-10.

Turner's frontier theory lent legitimacy and endurance to the agrarian myth in which "property [was] regarded as the basis of civilized political economy."[32] In the economic and social mobility culture of the late 1800s, "the West was often treated as a space that could be made open for settlement adhering to a Jeffersonian agrarian ideal." The agrarian myth sparked by Jefferson's ideology "believed that farmers should be independent yeomen and that these men would be the backbone of the American citizenry."[33] Turner's theory emphasized the agrarian ideologies of the yeomen farmer "not an individual hero but a kind of Whitmanian hero *en masse."* His theory was developed in the East based on an "abstract… and increasingly distant West."[34] Theodore Roosevelt's mythology of the frontier depicts the white "hunter-Indian fighter function[ing] as the hero" in American settlement and mission. Diana Seave Greenwald describes Roosevelt's interpretation of "the frontier and its people existed as fantasy-projections" rather than historically accurate analysis void of personal agendas. Wilder provided popular culture an endearing character upon which to drape the myth of nobility and purity of frontier settlement. Both the popular scholastic and literary works published in the late 1800s reflect the prevailing contemporary cultural interpretation and understanding of American social organization and ideologies.

As a well-received scholastic analysis that presented his contemporary cultural interpretation of the frontier, Turner's theory published in the late 1800s has become a

[32] Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 609-10.

[33] Greenwald, "The Big Picture," 178; Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *Frontiers: A Short History of the American West (*New Haven: Oxford University Press, 2007), 330-61.

[34] Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 611.

cornerstone in American historical scholarship and rural historiography influencing generations of historians and academia. The Lynds' social anthropological argument of cultural diffusion is strongly influenced by Frederick Jackson Turner's interpretation of social and cultural development. Turner did not incorporate minorities or regional influences into his analysis. The Lynds focused their study on a city with a population that was predominantly "native whites," expressing a Eurocentric view of American settlement patterns. This echoed the prevailing sentiment that white settlement equated to civilization and modernity. Morain also applied Turner's frontier theology in his social history of an early twentieth-century Midwestern agricultural community. *Prairie Grass Roots* quantified that a "new civilization grew up together on the Iowa prairies," advancing the ideology of white preeminence in settlement patterns, social and cultural development, and agricultural practices.[35] He conducted his research to address what he saw as a gap left by the prior scholastic tendency to "think of history in terms of wars, famous people, and important events," expanding historical analysis "in[to] larger terms of changing patterns [in which] annals of the community offer a rich and fascinating historical resource."[36] Turner's theory and Roosevelt's depictions are significant in understanding that common conditions unique to time and place became the defining characteristics of the American community and identity. Both authors encapsulate an era that embraced western expansion, frontier isolation as significant in social and cultural development, ethnic and race distinctions in human and American evolution.

[35] Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots,* 3.

[36] Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots,* 4.

The cultural propensity in the late 1800s and early 1900s to depict the settlement of the frontier and the significance agriculture had in civilizing rural areas reflects a broader national culture of civilization equating to white settlement and production and American ideologies. In a society that defined and valued civilization as settled and profitable, the frontier and its people, and consequently rural Americans, were viewed as on the fringes of or isolated from the more civilized society of the urban centers. Removing the eastern cities as the preeminence of American civilization and looking at the national culture that supported, encouraged, and responded positively to frontier settlement places the rural Midwestern farmers not on the edges of American society but at the heart of prevailing cultural influences.

For western expansion to occur and rural development to exist people had to be willing to emigrate. The homesteader was essential in the popularity and realization of the national expansion culture. The frontier farmer was symbolic to the "homesteading ideal" and was pivotal as the driving cultural influence in the late 1800s and early 1900s. For western expansion to become a national movement "one aspect of the homesteading ideal was necessary: permanent settlement." The American economy and culture that embraced expansion needed farmers and settlers because "long-term income, stability and success… could only come from a settled population."[37] As embodiment to an expansionist productive settled culture, rural citizens were central and formative in economic and political policies and in shaping American social institutions. By placing the frontier and the rural family as the center of cultural and social influences reflects the popularity of a national movement to spread American ideals and production westward.

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[37] Greenwald, "The Big Picture," 186.

Turner and Roosevelt based a significant amount of their arguments on successive development. Turner argued an "environmental theory" focused on "geographic determinis[m]," in which he "stressed the environmental givens and the necessity of human adaption in the early stages of settlement."[38] Under Turner's frontier theory, the unique environment repeatedly encountered through the process of successive settlement shaped American democracy, social institutions, and culture. Roosevelt presented an argument of "Darwinian economics" in which he stressed "the classes who could not adjust to the necessity of labor to earn bread" would succumb to those that could. He echoed the cultural sentiment pervasive in the early 1900s of "all Americans must 'work or starve.'"[39] In both theories, white settlement of the West was identified as an inevitability as American culture in the Gilded Age believed "the law of nature required that less progressive races- and classes- give way to those that embodied the germs of progress."[40] Those more fit succeed those of primitive modes.

Settlers on the frontier represented the context of broader social beliefs and cultural practices at the turn of the twentieth-century. Frontier settlement theories developed alongside other pervasive race and class theories of the same era. The concept of an inevitable conquest of the frontier and white settlement as a natural order of social development echoed other theories of "stages of civilization" that determined the inevitable "succession of savage by civilized' followed by the "succession of different classes ... of the white or Anglo-Saxon race." Settlement

[38] Swierenga, "Theoretical Perspectives," 497-9.

[39] Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 618.

[40] Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 624.

of the frontier equaled "racial *elan,* and 'republican virtue.'"[41] The Darwinian conceptualization of American development popular in the turn of the twentieth-century, delineated that "'races' representing different phases or principles of socioeconomic organization contended for survival and mastery."[42] The hierarchal organization of race and class is also evident in the national culture of the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the Gilded Age, American culture extolled American virtues and exceptionalism. Popular theories emphasized an anthropological divergent development in race, class, and gender promoting an exceptionalism explanation for the culture that embraced social progression as a natural succession of savage to civilized or primitive to modern.

A close examination of the World's Fairs and their exhibits highlights the ethnic, social, and cultural classifications prevalent in the American culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Alongside agricultural exhibits, each international exhibition included ethnic villages or displays introducing Americans to the variety of races.[43] Ethnological exhibits were displayed at the Smithsonian in 1875 and all the World's Fairs from 1876 to 1916. Charles Rau, the leading ethnologist in the late 1800s, argued these ethnic exhibits, like the Indian exhibits at the Centennial Fair in Philadelphia and the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha, were significant to historical understanding as Americans could "glory in our having

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[41] Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 615.

[42] Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 616.

[43] *Official Guidebook to Omaha and Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition: Illustrated with Fifty Half-Tone Plates, and Indexed Map of Omaha*. Omaha: Megeath Stationery Company, 1898; Horace H. Morgan, *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide ... Illustrated from Official Drawings*. St. Louis; Pacific Publishing Company, 1892; Kurtz, Charles M. *The St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, in Commemoration of the Acquisition of the Louisiana Territory.* St. Louis: Gottschalk Printing Company, 1903.

advanced so far above them, and recognize the great truth that *progress* is the law that governs the development of mankind."[44] Gilded Age contemporary ideology emphasized these different races developed along-side whites but were inferior species of humans lacking the adaptability and application of progressive thought and practices evident in succumbing to or failing to have evolved as the superior race and class of white America. The prevailing American culture in the Gilded Age embraced social organization as "[t]he law of nature required that less progressive races-and classes- give way to those that embodied the germs of progress."[45] Turner's and Roosevelt's theories on frontier settlement as a *civilizing* evolution of American identity, social institutions, and culture by the succession of inferior races, classes, or practices to those more evolved was one component to a larger cultural and social understanding in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Leading academic and public figures encapsulated American's cultural explanation for social development by determining frontier settlement was an inevitable succession of primitive falling to progressive adaptation and application of a superior race or class. Whether it was the muscle of the farmer that tamed a wild and savage land or the brawn of settlers conquering a wild and savage race expansion of white settlers was a natural social evolution of American progress and virtues.

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[44] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 23-27, 111-2.

[45] Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 624.

CHAPTER IV

MANIFESTING RURAL AMERICA

Western expansion is an integral part of the American story often stylized as a culmination of a national destiny to expand liberating democracy. For years entertainment and educators have instilled Wilder's and Turner's works as a foundation for a variety of educational goals integrating her values and his theory into generations of schoolchildren and scholars and the mythologized image of an isolated rural culture. Unquestionably, their interpretations have influenced generations of Americans, shaping modern images of frontier life. The classic literature encapsulates a time of Manifest Destiny, national prosperity, and personal pride making it widely applicable for a quick glimpse of America's past. Manifest Destiny is a term frequently encountered in American history to provide a simple explanation of expansion. It has become synonymous with an ideal of American's believing that they had a God-given right to expand the borders and influences of the United States. However, upon closer examination Manifest Destiny was the manifestation and justification for a long-standing American practice of land acquisition under the guise of "national spirit" perpetrated for political and personal means.

In *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History, a Reinterpretation*, Fredrick Merk beautifully fleshes out the intangible concept of a perceived ordained progression into a living

embodiment of national expression and "public opinion." Fredrick Merk in *Manifest Destiny* defines the "repetition…of the old frontier process" that seized the nation in the early American Republic as "state-making through migration and compact."[46] Merk is very forthright in his assertion that it is nearly impossible to identify a universal acceptance or expression of the American citizenry yet, his sound analysis and careful research of speeches, newspaper articles, and congressional records gives voice to a ringing cry of public passion for Americanism and democracy, not expansion exclusively. He states that mission is a more apt description of American expansion in the 1840s. Mission as a deeper motivating force was more enduring than the shallow political façade of Manifest Destiny. He correlates the national sentiment as a zealous drive to preserve, promote, and advance democratic ideologies regardless of the form or platform upon which it stands.

The title of his fundamental historical scholarship is perhaps a misnomer in contemporary historiography on Manifest Destiny. Numerous monographs echo his argument; it has become one of the main interpretations of Manifest Destiny. His assertions on political agendas and key players who shaped public policy, national boundaries and precedents is evident in later politically-focused historical studies. Sean Wilentz and Timothy Henderson substantiate the significance Merk places upon the roles politics and national leaders played in the formation of an expansive democratic republic. Whether it was a national mission or "destiny" western expansion was a prevailing cultural norm during a socially mobile and expansive era in American history that transcended regional, social, economic, and political boundaries in a popular national movement. American ideologies of progressive prosperity in the late 1800s

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[46] Fredrick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History, a Reinterpretation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 22.

linked the economic opportunities present in frontier settlement to social stability and cultural civilization.

A pervasive fear surrounded the closing of the "frontier" in the late 1800s. The fear "that the reservoir of cheap, undeveloped land was exhausted, and that with the loss of the agrarian frontier, America might be losing the material conditions that had underwritten its form of republican democracy" permeated popular culture, politics, and historical scholarship. Frontier settlement had been part of the American culture and social structuring for 400 years. The ending of the "frontier" brought into question economic and social foundations and cultural assumptions that frontier settlement had generated. In Roosevelt's and Turner's theory of American development, the frontier echoed the popular contemporary sentiments, the frontier was "a 'safety valve' for social and economic discontent."[47] Their theories and those of other leading figures in American culture and society had a lasting impact on future interpretations of the frontier and the "myth of initiation." In this understanding, the frontier was pristine land "ripe for settlement and economic profit" while the American settler was symbolic of "role models as well as heroic ideals…embodying …essential energies and virtues" of American culture and society. The imagery of the frontier specifically "designed to show the frontier as the source of exemplary tales . . . a model of social behavior." American society, which promoted American values of independence and production, romanticized the frontier as outside the corruptive cultural and social influences that had been "soiled with commerce."[48] In almost every analysis of rural America at the turn of the twentieth century, historians have indicated a point of

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[47] Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 609.

[48] Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress," 609-19; Greenwald, "The Big Picture," 186.

inclusion in which rural America entered the nation's cultural and social development and expression.

Research on western development, city building, beyond the bookends of a mythic frontier supports the argument that Midwest development was not an isolated, finite East to West process. The argument of Midwestern significance to American culture incorporates and challenges Frederick Jackson Turner's argument on frontier development and the importance of non-urban settings. Rosenberg demonstrates how society viewed rural America as the ideal cure for the nation's decaying cities. He challenges the perception of the virtues associated with the country-side and the philanthropic government intervention as an antithesis to urban centers and as outside direct measured authority. Caroline Fraser, in *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder*, illuminates the harsh realities of living on the American frontier. Fraser argues a myriad of internal and external factors influenced successful frontier settlement. Her biography highlights a rather average life during a period of national expansion, economic hardships, social reform, and cultural shifts, and in doing so, she offers a practical portrait of the frontier family. Personal choices and aspirations, both dramatic and mundane, illustrate the powerful persuasion the shared cultural concepts of freedom and prosperity had on American ideology and practices.

Although the topics of rural scholarship often appears disjointed, it reveals that a myriad of internal and external factors influenced successful settlement, often beyond the individual's control or knowledge. Fraser artfully ties international, environmental, political, and economic factors to the cyclical boom and bust of multiple generations of Laura's family. Geographic conditions exposed the Ingalls family to unique regional difficulties that significantly impacted their economic stability. Conflicts over land ownership, weather patterns, infestations, and

access to resources shaped the frontier environment in which Laura and her family tried to prosper. Placed in a broader context, the regional variants that altered settlement and resource acquisition places the frontier settler at the heart of national culture emblematic of the "homesteader ideal" and American virtues. As western development occurred people sought legislation to address local issues. The Homestead Act passed in 1862 was the "principle blueprint for the settlement of the west." However, the Homestead Act did not ignite westward expansion but was a formal effort to manage a pre-existing pattern of settlement in non-urban areas and it was not universally applicable to the geographical and environmental variations. It was local, Western legislators requesting specific adaptations to federal law to reflect local conditions, and economic priorities and resources prompted the alteration of national legislation. Over a sixteen-year period, Congress passed subsequent acts to reflect "the geographic challenges and heterogeneity of the West."[49] The Ingalls family moved, as did numerous other Americans seeking stability.

Personal choices and aspirations, both dramatic and mundane, illustrate the powerful persuasion the concepts of freedom and prosperity had on American emigration. While Fraser challenged the myth of a pure American frontier and Laura's glossed over narrative, she is guilty of perpetuating a few historical myths. In her enthusiasm Fraser overstates Laura's significance as "perhaps our best path to the past" elevating her fictionalized literature over historical scholarship in our understanding of frontier settlement.[50] Laura Ingalls Wilder is perhaps the

[49] Greenwald, "The Big Picture," 175, 181-2.

[50] Caroline Fraser, *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder (*New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017), 7

most popular female frontier settler but she is not the only American known for migrating to and within the expansive West.

Fraser's biography and the series popularity has depicted the Ingalls family as the prototypical white settlers. To Fraser the males' "willing[ness] to press their advantage" and the women's "assent to the rigors of life" embodied the American spirit.[51] However, most immigrants were seeking stability; swayed by opportunity not available anywhere else. Men often moved their families based on perceived necessity. Laura's own fondness for the seemingly uninhabited frontier indicates a desire for rather than a mere acceptance of frontier living. Fraser describes both Laura and Charles as "watch[ing] as a parade of Western iconography passed by… the spirit of manifest destiny … emblematic of all western settlement."[52] Fraser's biography supports the assumption that white settlement of the American frontier was merely a small episode in a series of conflicts and that Western expansion was a product of determinism and the seizure of opportunistic gambles. Other scholarship contradicts the inevitability of frontier and cultural development so carefully laid out in Wilder's, Turner's, and Fraser's iconic works.

The social paradoxes of American expansion and those that governed it reveal progression was also a form of acculturalization. In *Facing East from Indian Country,* Daniel K Richter challenges the prior victory culture that surrounds the great deeds of conquering white men. Western expansion is an integral part of the American story often stylized as a culmination of a national destiny to expand liberating democracy. Richter dates this pattern of white

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[51] Fraser, *Prairie Fires,* 28, 59.

[52] Fraser, *Prairie Fires,* 58-9.

demands turning to white rights manifesting into white acquisition to well before the American Revolution. Historian Seth Rockman plainly states that the early American Republic was a "very particular society that predicated white male equality on the enforced inequality of virtually every-one else.''[53] Under Richter's skillful approach Native Americans were anything but "passive victims."[54] Richter expresses that the two cultures had to "learn" racism and the learned behaviors altered the relationship between the two and the trajectory of the nation.[55] Richter in conjunction with other contemporary historians exposes the systematic aggressive acquisition of land by white settlers. Richter's shift in centrality and periphery exposes the inevitable flow of Eastern expansion and western assimilation was, instead, a multifaceted exchange of cultures between two different societies.

Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher explore American frontier development and settlement in the shaping of rural, regional, and national identities. They argue against Turner's bookend theory of frontier as exclusive to land settlement. They also expand western development beyond a predetermined Manifest Destiny to a cultural and social exchange. They frame the frontier as a region blending the old and the new. *Frontiers: A Short History of the American West* places fringe groups and areas as the center of the analysis and highlights both the east to west and west to east significance of regional conflicts and national ideologies. Patricia Nelson Limerick provides a "synthesized" history of the American West beyond the

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[53] Seth Rockman. "Jacksonian America," in *American History Now,* eds. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), *72.*

[54] Richter, Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of America.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 67.

[55] Richter, *Facing East,,* 2.

bookends of Turner's frontier framework. Inspired by other historians and the expansion in scholarship, Limerick tackles prevailing theories and misconceptions that restrict our understanding of the significance of the American West beyond the frontier. Her work challenges the assumptions of frontier settlement as a destined and finite process. Limerick skillfully argues that western conquest reaches well beyond the opening and closing of the frontier. It began with the first Europeans that stepped foot on what was to become American soil and swept across the nation into the present day. Expanding the parameters of Western expansion allows for a deeper understanding of the patterns of settlement and cultural exchange.

Historical scholarship covering business, labor, development, and migration supports the argument that the settlement of the west was an "economic habit" legitimized by the American ideal of prosperity.[56] The cultural conflict theory suggests the transmission, application, and expression of individual values and practices with a predominant cultural unity built and continues to build American society. Shifting the boundaries of the frontier elevates the West out of obscurity and plants it firmly in a regional and national culture. Academic scholarship shows that the romanticized legend of the American West and the frontier was more than "noble savages and noble pioneers struggling quaintly in the wilderness."[57] A regional approach highlights that lacking a cohesive framework beyond the bookends of the frontier, western history is lacking. An analysis of contemporary scholarship shows that the conquest of the west did not end as Frederick Turner argued. Nor was it just a bunch of white men defeating a savage land and people like Turner's theory and other popular depictions of the frontier suggests.

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[56] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West.* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), 28.

[57] Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest,* 19.

Rural development was not a systematic process of inevitable east-to-west land acquisition by white settlers that ended when property was no longer available. The focus on place rather than process opens the frontier to economic, social, and geographic components that shaped and continue to shape a unique regional environment. Focusing on the West as a center rather than peripheral to the East highlights the complexity and vitality of the West as a cultural nexus and the cultural exchange required for social progress. American culture and society are comprised of and influenced by a variety of regional, familial, and occupational expression. How an individual identifies and supports themselves is directly linked to the environment in which they live and is not isolated to a finite location, structure, or source of cultural and social influence. Logically, the agrarian lifestyle and production requires a vastly different spatial, familial, and social organization than the industrial manufacturing of consumer goods helping to create a perceived separate rural identity.

CHAPTER V

TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES

Many noted historians, historical figures, and Gilded Age contemporaries have touted the rural lifestyle and the farmer as either symbolic to traditional American values or emblematic of obsolete practices, a stalwart to modernity. An overwhelming majority of American historians identify these seemingly opposing conditions and relationship of urban and rural as separate spheres of cultural expression and societal institutions. Both the country and the city folk adapted to their unique environment, each believing they were reflecting as well as protecting cultural and societal norms, national values, and personal obligation while the other did not. Both identified themselves as American and the keepers of American virtues. Popularly, urban settings and urbanites are often associated with modern standards, practices, and ideologies. Historical studies highlight that early twentieth century businessmen, bureaucrats, and urban reformers identified themselves as the purveyors of the American values of progress, organization, and standardization. Conversely, the countryside and rural folks are more frequently connected to traditional American values, behaviors, and customs. Historical research suggests farmers often saw themselves as upholding a distinctly American foundation: agriculture. There lies the most common picture of the modern versus traditional variation between urban and rural, city and farm in American development and history. Whether it was a

contradiction, a targeted victim, corroborator, threat, protector, or beneficiary the family farm was at heart a resource both in national identity and historical scholarship.

The visual indicators contingent upon agricultural production's spatial requirements that distinguish rural America has contributed to the mythological view of the "backwards" farmers. Hofstadter directly challenged the Progressive ideology, criticizing the agrarian myth as "backwards" and rural influences as manipulative. He argued that the loss of social authority and cultural status prompted the elite class to actively seek rural reform. Philips agreed with Hofstadter and Neth in that the paradox of modernization of agricultural and rural reform was that "if one seeks both stability and modernity, progress can easily outrun traditional habits, in this case the traditions of conservation, social cooperation, and entrepreneurial restraint."[58] However, Phillips's conservation-framed historical analysis assigned a conservator role to the early twentieth century farmer, reformer, and the government. She built upon Samuel Hay's argument in *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*: "[p]rogressivism could best be explained as a struggle between people and concentrated business power."[59] Philips expressed that the urban-rural conflict oriented historical perspectives in previous scholarship have failed to identify the primary motivating factor of Progressive reform and the New Deal: "It was poverty -

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[58] Phillips, *This Land, This Nation,* 240.

[59] Phillips, *This Land, This Nation,* 5-7; Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution*, 141; Samuel Hay, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*: *The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1959). Hay examined the reorganization of agriculture as a social prerogative. Efficiency was the primary aim of Progressive era modernization reform efforts. He argued the conservation movement at the turn of the twentieth century had been historically interpreted and promoted as a "moral struggle between the virtuous 'people' and the evil 'interests.'(1) He contended the conservation movement reflected a sociological, cultural, and ideological shift towards a scientific, professional application and methodology to achieve efficiency and progressive development in the utilization of resources.

in particular - rural poverty."[60] Neth supported the argument for self-identified differences, asserting "people living on family farms see their values and history as lying outside the cultural and economic mainstream of industrialization and urbanization."[61] Neth delineated the conflict as rural resistance to an urban interpretation of farmers as "backwards."[62] However, she challenges the isolation and victimization myths of the rural farms being separate from or powerless to urban aims and bureaucratic agendas. The farmers participated in a capitalistic market economy and culture that altered social values, structures, organization, and institutions.

Danbom addressed prior historian's perpetuation of the "agrarian myth." He contradicts what he stated was Hofstadter's "deceptively simple" trivialization of rural America. Danbom argued against the romanticized portrayal of an isolated, subversive, and nostalgic rural America. He stressed that while it was true "the United States *was* born in the country and remained emotionally attached to it long after it moved away," sentimental connections to the land did not restrict or subjugate rural America to broader urban and national prerogatives, citing numerous examples of rural America's powerful "influence on the American mind and public policy far out of proportion to the number of farmers in the population." Danbom judged the analytical errors in previous scholarship was because Hofstadter's generation of historians had "discovered urban history and considered it the disciplinary wave of the future." He noted that Hofstader "was too good a historian to discount [mythic rural America's] power" "over our national life;" however,

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[60] Phillips, *This Land, This Nation,* 9.

[61]Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 17.

[62] Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution,* 74; Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm,* 485; Phillips, *This Land, This Nation,* 40, 44, 63.

according to Danbom few of Hofstadter's "contemporaries were wise enough to share that observation."[63] *Born in the Country* asserted that the industrialization of the rural America was an active, voluntary acclimation, accusation, and adaptation of conditional economic, technological, social, and cultural opportunities and standards rather than a rural America clinging to traditional values, fighting an overbearing wave of modern, urban and national influences. He noted that rural America's culture and communities changed because events beyond their control prompted farmers to seek change. Danbom equated the cultural transition in the first half of the twentieth century to "a series of events [which] imperiled the local agricultural system" and compelled average citizens to voluntarily reform the structure of vital rural social institutions, the family, the farm, and the community.[64] The most significant factor in establishing a national culture is understanding the cyclical acceptance, application, and adaptation between multiple sources.

A significant number of historians have categorized the separateness of the two communities as a paradoxical social, political, or cultural conflict. Neth, as part of the "new rural history" movement, focused on the social relationship within the farm household and its relationship to the broader community. Neth argued a system of reciprocity developed and maintained agrarian families and communities. Evidence suggests that agricultural stability and prosperity was contingent on familial labor and communal cooperation. Aaron Lane Lanning's "Household Expense Ledgers" details how he exchanged his labor and farming skills for wages to purchase commodities not produced on the farm. Lanning was one of many Midwestern

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63 Danbom, *Born in the Country*, ix-xv.

64 Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 262.

farmers that participated in the local economy through the barter system and the exchange of labor for wages.[65] According to Neth, rural voluntary participation paradoxically contributed to the decline of the fundamental interdependent relationships within the family farm and rural community. She asserted that the decline in the farm family was a result of reforms' inadvertent alteration to the interconnected and codependent relationships that organized and support agricultural production. Modernity increased individualism, which decreased integral familial and communal organization, production, and stability.

Extended kin networks were foundations to the community both rurally and nationally. Neth's *Preserving the Family Farm* portrayed the farmers as complicit in the industrialization and gendered roles of agriculture. Her analysis demonstrated the countryside was significant in the development of industrial capitalism and the farmer actively participated in the modernization of agriculture and the reorganization of the family farm and the roles of its members. Farmers adopted and adapted the polices, practices, and investments that benefited them economically, which Neth argued weakened the familial and communal ties integral to the foundations of rural society, culture, economics, politics, and identity. To Neth, the paradox lies with the rural farmer's willing investment in capital agriculture that dissolved the economic system upon which the family farm functioned and flourished. Neth also delineated the conflict as rural resistance to an urban interpretation of farmers as "backwards."[66] The farmers participated in a capitalistic market economy and culture that altered social values, structures,

[65] Aaron Lane Lanning, Household Expense Ledgers. May 1926. Kansas Historical Society, Kansas Memory, https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/309259

[66] Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution,* 74; Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm,* 485; Phillips, *This Land, This Nation,* 40, 44, 63.

organization, and institutions. According to Neth, their voluntary participation paradoxically contributed to the decline of the fundamental interdependent relationships within the family farm and rural community.

Neth isolates the family farm from the broader national cultural shifts towards modernity and the resulting alterations of gender roles and generational values. Industrialization transformed the production, output, value, and wages of textile goods shifting the American economy from agricultural to a market capital economy. Piece work had been a form of household income prior to mechanization and continued into the twenty-first century. Unemployment, inflation, and limited access to credit in the 1930s required many families to seek alternative sources of employment and income. Home piece work became a viable option as American manufactures expanded production outside the factory, circumventing labor laws that governed factory production. Industries capitalized on the increased access to cheap labor depressing already low wages by enlisting home laborers. Labor activists began challenging what they viewed as exploitive behavior that damaged the health of the individual laborer and the economy. National campaigns were launched to gain public attention and government support. Labor movements called for the regulation of industrial capitalists to protect the wage-earner and adjust wage rates to reflect a more accurate economic landscape.[67] It was a transition in the wage culture and labor structure during the first half of the twentieth century that accounts for the alterations in communal, labor, and familial structures.

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[67] Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, "Women in the Economy of the United States of America: A Summary Report," *Women's Bureau Bulletin*, no. 155. United States Women's Bureau (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937): 66-7.

Occupation significantly determined the behaviors and participation of community members, created social divisions, and distinguished group identities. According to Robert and Helen Lynd, the industrial community was divided into two categories: the "working class [who] address[ed] their activities in getting their living primarily to *things,* utilizing material tools in the making of things and the performance of services," and the business class who, "address[ed] their activities predominantly to *people,* in the selling or promotion of things, services, and ideas."[68] The Lynds point out that "the mere fact of being born upon one or the other side of the watershed roughly formed by these two groups [was] the most significant single cultural factor tending to influence what one does all day long throughout one's life."[69] *Middletown* expanded historical interpretations of Midwestern development beyond frontier settlement patterns, incorporating class and occupation as contingencies on individual identity, behaviors, and values. However, the early-1900s community was more complex than the labor and wage opportunities, structure, production and expression. A community shared homogenous values, practices, consumption patterns, wage distribution, and social structures. Members provided reciprocal relationships within the group and distinctive cultural identifiers associated with communal networks. Participation in community activities and group affiliation were the primary means and reflection of cultural transmission and the reformation of social institutions.

The community as a social and cultural institution provided the foundation for a variety of scholarship trying to identify the characteristics that defined people and practices within a specific place. Beginning in the Progressive Era, historians and sociologists linked community

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[68] Lynd, *Middletown* 21.

[69] Lynd, *Middletown,* 23.

to cultural expression and dissemination. Academics in the early 1900s labeled the unique conditions and characteristics that created a distinct environment and shaped human behavior as a "social phenomena."[70] Beginning in the Progressive era, academics redirected scholarship and research to include the social sciences. Danbom, Morain, the Lynds, and other scholars established the community as pivotal in shaping what, how, where, and why people do the things they do. However, the community is not limited to a localized focus or isolated from broader cultural and social pressures and influences. As a social institution, the community acts as both a source and a recipient of pervasive American ideologies in values, standards, practices, and opportunities. Logically, the agrarian lifestyle and production requires a vastly different spatial, familial, and social organization than the industrial manufacturing of consumer goods. This creates a distinct visual representation to the unique differences between the city and the country and their inhabitants. Scholars, in their hunt for "average America" labeled Muncie, Indiana, Jefferson, Iowa, and Union County, Illinois as prototypical communities. The cities met one specific criteria: they were unique in that they were not distinguishable from the profiles of a multitude of other American communities. The case study format became an academic archetypal for comparative analysis. The three case studies display the community as a social network of group affiliations, as the networks expanded the distinctive features of the individual became one part of a larger whole. In its "Forward," Clark Wissler exclaimed that Robert S. Lynd's and Helen Merrell Lynd's *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* "is a contribution to history, not the usual kind of history, but the kind coming more and more in demand, a cross section of activities of a community today as projected from the background of

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[70] Lynd, *Middletown* vi, 3-7, 501-2.

yesterday."[71] His statements highlight the then growing scholastic trend to expand beyond political and economic scholarship and explore social institutions as a reflection and avenue of cultural change. The community was a means through which voluntary participation incorporated rural citizens into the local and national citizenry as integral cultural components in American social development. As Clark Wissler proclaimed in 1929, "Whatever else a social phenomenon is, it is a community affair."[72]

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[71] Lynd, *Middletown,* vi.

[72] Lynd, *Middletown*, vi.

CHAPTER VI

A NATIONAL COMMUNITY

The Roaring Twenties was a decade of economic excess, culminating in the stock market crash in 1929. Overproduction in agriculture contributed to the economic conditions that lead to the Great Depression. The post-war speculation spurred increased capital investment in company stocks and American production. Poorly regulated investments and agricultural management were blamed for significantly contributing to the economic hardships and widespread foreclosures of the Great Depression.[73] The commercialization of agriculture and the increased production of Midwest agriculture during the early 1900s created an environmental disaster. The Dust Bowl ravaged the Great Plains region as the topsoil was exposed and consequently dispersed.

Most Americans have been introduced to the Dust Bowl through classic literature assigned in high school English class. Images and descriptions of dirt, poor farmers, and vagrants personify modern concepts of the agricultural disaster during the 1930s. An examination of the economic, ecological, and cultural factors that significantly contributed to the environmental and social catastrophes that devastated the Great Plains provides a deeper

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[73] American Security and Trust, "Duty to Daughters" Anna Kelton Wiley Papers. Homemaker-Consumer Life in Washington, D.C., 1922-23. Advertisement. Library of Congress, Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929.

understanding of the complex nature of the Dust Bowl beyond limited contemporary ideologies and challenges the mythological image of the pristine, expansive frontier and the purity of rural America. Daniel Worster's accurate depiction of two "typical" rural communities in *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* details a less remote region. A closer inspection of the rural landscape exposes icons of industry and capitalism infiltrated the sanctity of the Great Plains. Massive machines and fertilizer tanks, "vitamins" to an infertile land, dot the Plains.[74] *Dust Bowl* defies the victorious imagery of noble pioneers conquering an isolated, untamed land that persists in American minds by pointing to man as the greatest contributing factor in the Dust Bowl.

Unlike other scholars, Worster details the event not as an environmental catastrophe but a cultural failing. He argues that it was a cultural maladaptation to a "volatile land" that resulted in the tragedy.[75] Migration statistics illustrate the increased population in the strains placed on marginal lands. More land equated to more production and, in turn, more profit. People were encouraged to capitalize on the availability of international markets. The desire for profit created a unique cyclical system of industrialized agricultural production for maximum gain. Years of "reckless farming" practices stripped away more than just the grasses and exposed more than just top soil.[76] People lost their ability to subsist, and society was exposed to the detrimental forces of overspeculation and confidence.

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[74] Daniel Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 235.

[75] Worster, Dust *Bowl*, 234.

[76] Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 232.

Farmers as investors contributed to the economic bubble and the resulting economic and ecological disaster. Their poor personal investments spurred by the economic culture prior to the Great Depression, pushed famers to actively seek financial and political assistance within the market economy. In contrast to the sinister depictions historians and contemporaries have attached to government economic intervention, the social structure and culture of the Great Depression invited national government, regulations, agents, standards, and assistance into the individual homes. Many of the New Deal policies and programs were "voluntary rather than coercive."[77] Part of the New Deal era the Agricultural Adjustment Act was enacted to adjust agricultural production and prices. To alleviate growing disparities, the federal government expanded its authoritative and administrative powers. Several new federal agencies were established to address a variety of social ills created during the Great Depression. The 1933 agricultural law allowed the United States government to control agricultural output in an attempt to regulate the struggling economy and create a more equitable financial platform for farmers in a capital market. Under this new political, economic schema, farmers were paid subsidies by the government for their products and the funding generated by the taxation of companies manufacturing agricultural products.[78] The farmer took on more political and social significance during a period of environmental and economic insecurity pervasive in American culture during the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and the New Deal eras.

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[77] Philips, *This Land, This Nation,* 14, 238-40.

[78] United States Congress. "Public—No 10—73D Congress H. R. 3835". *Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933.* House of Representatives. Washington D.C., May 12, 1933. From Federal Reserve, *William McChesney Martin, Jr., Papers,* Government Publications Box 54, Folder 1. https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/archival/1341/item/457089.

In the early 1900s, rural Midwestern families were significantly impacted by the regional environmental conditions and the notional economic environments. The American economy was booming after WWI. Optimism in American manufacturing and agriculture led to speculation and ultimately contributed the Stock Market Crash and in turn the Great Depression. The changes in the American economy expanded into the world market. Many international markets were impacted by the downturn in American capital and production. The global consumption and price rates shifted as a result. The economic instability of the 1930s created noticeable fluctuations across a variety of staple food prices.[79] Commercial food production was altered, and small gardens helped offset the financial burden of feeding the family.[80] Widespread unemployment decreased disposable income restricting the family food budget. It was customary for laborers to reside with their employers. The hired rural laborer would be provided room and board which was deducted from his wages. The farmer's wife would provide meals and laundering services to the boarders. Hired labor and the extra food consumption was factored into the family budget as well as the laborer's wages.[81] Mass produced food was not

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[79] United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Retail Prices of Food, 1923-1936: Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, No. 635," Retail Prices of Food (October 1937). https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/3963/item/494370

[80] Earl J. Allen, "4-H Club Manual in Gardening." Extension Circular No. 359. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville, Ar., reprint December 1939. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars.

[81] U.S. Department of Labor. "Farm Workers: Harvesting Crops," Handbook of Labor Statistics 1936 Edition. Government Record. U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1927. Bulletin 616. University of Missouri Libraries. "Prices and Wages by Decade: 1930-1939." https://libraryguides.missouri.edu/pricesandwages/1930-1939.

typically consumed by rural families in the early 1900s. Rural families depended on the family farm to produce the food required to feed the family.

Food was easier and cheaper to maintain, preserve, and consume when the individual grew it.[82] Excess food was preserved for the winter months when fresh produce was limited. There were known dangers associated with the consumption of poorly canned foods. Science and education introduced the public to the hazards of microorganisms. Sterilization, proper handling, and quality products prevented bacterial growth in food.[83] In the early 1900s Americans were focused on the health of the individual, community, and nation. Nutrition and food consumption patterns were altered based on scientific information and academic research. Science became fundamental in prescribing the best foods and the proper amounts to achieve optimal health. Foods were divided into groups based on their measured nutritional values and biological needs of the human body.[84] The farm was a source of subsistence living and wages. The same was not the case for urban industrial laborers, yet similar alterations of familial and

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[82] Earl J. Allen, "4-H Club Manual in Gardening." Extension Circular No. 359. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville, Ar., reprint December 1939. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars.

[83] Ruby Mendenhall Smith, "4-H Club Manual in Food Preservation: Demonstration No. 1." *Extension Circular No. 363*. Manual. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville Ar., January 1938. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars.

[84]Gertrude E Conant, "4-H Manual in Foods and Cookery: Demonstration No.1" *Extension Circular No. 367.* Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville, Ar., reprint June 1940. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars.

labor organization are evident in urban populations during the early 1900s. However, similar patterns of social transition are evident in urban communities of the same era.

In *Cheap Amusements* Kathy Peiss examines the cultural elements that influenced urban culture. She focused her study on the activities of second-generation immigrant working women. She argued the transition towards industrial labor altered the social institutions and cultural practices. Urban youths were also subject to familial structures that regulated the young women's ability to earn and govern her wages. Urban families were dependent upon youth labor and financial contributions. The economic and gendered roles were altered as familial finances required young women to enter into paid labor. The evolving popular culture altered the familial economic structure further as more youths began to govern their own wages and labor. Neither industrial and urban or agricultural and rural production was separate from, but rather key components to, the ever expanding and complex national economic system and cultural climate.

The scientific and expert recommendations for food handling and consumption was also evident within urban communities. Neighbors would gather together to share labor and resources and urban women were focused on nutrition and sanitation within their homes. Cases studies and secondary scholarship show that urban mothers were just as concerned about the proper methods of cooking and cleaning as rural mothers. Neth highlighted the changes in familial roles of the rural family in the Gilded Age in American history. She detailed the structure and function of the farm, farm family, and family members. Her research of the family farm analyzed the urban ideologies and political policies designed to restructure rural household gender roles. Her gender analysis focused on the function of the family farm as an economic unit and social institution. Neth asserted the reform movement in the 1920s and 1930s altered those gender spheres transforming the economic, cultural, and social value of female farm labor.

Domestic gender roles were shaped through the alterations of familial labor and wage productions. However, these voluntary role adaptations did not shatter communal ties but incorporated the individuals into other social networks.

Similar patterns of voluntary adaptations of familial roles caused by alterations to labor and production are also evident in urban areas. Nancy Cott in *Bonds of Womanhood* examined the personal writings of middle-class urban women. Cott exposed that through their own descriptions of religion, family, education, work, and social issues women had shouldered the responsibility of creating a moral, progressive society by utilizing their unique influences, positions, and bonds as women. It was women who accepted and altered their roles within their families and communities contributing to the establishment of pervasive cultural and social normative behaviors. According to Cott, women regardless of class share the distinct condition inherent to their gender which prepared them to develop a "group consciousness," the seeds for feminism. The bonds of Sisterhood are the foundation to Cott's argument. Cott artfully argued that it was this unified connection between women that transcended barriers both social and economic.[85] The same framework that Cott utilized in her analysis of urban women during the industrial revolution is also evident in how the common or shared conditions at the turn of the twentieth century created a unified cultural condition that transcended social and geographic barriers. Rural farmers and urban industrialists influenced and were influenced by economic and political conditions, both actively accepting and altering to the new roles and shaping a shared

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[85] For 19th Century feminine virtue, domesticity, and women's gender roles see Barbra Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer, 1966),151-74; Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

culture through individual practices. The traditional values and identity of the urban community and family were challenged by the cultural shift in social institutional organizations as much as rural populations. Yet, the voluntary participation and alterations of familial and communal roles influenced the creation of the challenging cultural shifts and resulting social reorganization. The community, whether it was within an urban or rural setting was an integral component to cultural development, dissemination, and transmission at the turn of the twentieth century.

Rather than being a bulwark guarding traditional values, the community merged the individual held beliefs, values, and practices with prevailing cultural customs. The community connected its members within a national framework and a vast system of overlapping local networks. Both the national and local community created "ties that bind" in which "[a]ll were tied together in a network of personal, spatial, and institutional relationships and experienced change simultaneously or sequentially in a sort of ripple effect."[86] The community shared and transmitted information, resources, and values in interlocking familial and communal groups. The reciprocal exchange connected the individual members and communities into a broader national culture. Morain challenged the prevailing focus of prior historians on political, economic, and big men, big events scholarship. His focus was on the local history of a "typical" small Midwestern town. His work demonstrates that the community was a source of cultural affiliation, distribution, regulation, and identity. He argued the three main cultural influences in Jefferson, Iowa in the early twentieth century were the "school, the pulpit, and the press."[87] He explores how each significantly united the community in a network of congregations,

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[86] Swierenga, "Theoretical Perspectives," 497.

[87]Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots, 13.*

classrooms, and editorials. The community provided both an avenue of cultural expression, broad socialization and economic opportunity.

CHAPTER VII

RURAL INSTITUTIONS

In *Born in the Country,* rural historian David Danbom stressed the importance of community networks. Along with Mary Neth and Kevin Lowe, Danbom argued "neighborliness" was an integral cooperative element in rural social structures, culture, and economy. They argue rural communities were neighborhood and familial networks of social support and cooperation essential to the stability of the family farm. Local histories and other historians such as Lowe indicate the church was the center of the community and the cooperative congregational networks supported family farmers. In *America Learns to Play; a History of Popular Recreation, 1607-1940*, Foster Rhea Dulles cited churches as social and recreational spaces beyond their direct religious purposes. Scheduled church activities provided citizens with social opportunities. Dulles shows that beyond Sunday service the rural church offered a variety of activities in which to participate including the "small-town church social."[88] Robert P. Swierenga's article, "The Little White Church: Religion in Rural America" details the significance of the religious institution to the rural community. It provides multiple examples of

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[88] Foster Rhea Dulles, *America Learns to Play; a History of Popular Recreation, 1607-1940*. (United States: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1940), viii, 206, 248-50.

church activities and the participants to highlight the integral role the "Little White Church" played in the socialization of the often-remote citizenry. The article argues that the iconic church was symbolic to communal identity through socialization.

The local churches were cultural hubs denoting social civilization and communal unity. In a society that had rapid emigration and immigration patterns, individuals were able to find identity within the local religious institutions. American society experienced a demographic shift in the 1800s and again in the 1900s. The Civil War and western expansion displaced and prompted the migration of a significant position of the population. In the 1930s, the economic disparities again altered living patterns. It was common for children to be born in one state and then migrate to another. Farming was the primary vocation of migrant families and settlers. Typically, displaced farmers found avenues to establish themselves within the wider community as members of local chapters of national organizations and religious denominations. Even small rural communities offered more than one religious institution some specific to distinct ethnic groups much like those within urban communities. Religious organization was directly linked to the communal cultural customs.[89] As an avenue for socialization, "it gave members a cultural identity and status" and integrated them into the local community through its national denominational organization, associations, and agendas.[90]

Local historian Morain and religious historian Lowe assert the church was the center of a rural community's social network. Kevin M. Lowe, in *Baptized with the Soil: Christian*

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[89] Swierenga, "The Little White Church," 415-41; Morain, *Prairie Grassroots*, 13-4; "*Harriett Alma Rigby."* Obituary. *The Annals of Iowa 20 (1936), 319-319.* State Historical Society of Iowa. Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.

[90] Swierenga, "The Little White Church," 417.

Agrarians and the Crusade for Rural America, examines the religious connection to farming. He evaluates the Protestant movement in the early 1900s to protect rural farmers. He details spiritual as well as economic motivation behind the cooperative promotion of agrarianism. He argues the efforts, practices, and beliefs of Christian Agrarians helped define American culture through their ideology of farmers' obligation to national health. He details the conservation efforts and financial aid that protected the land, the farmers, and the nation through moral farming practices. While Lowe spoke only of the church, Morain named the community triad of "school, the pulpit, and the press," as the most influential network of a rural town's social organization.[91] Morain identified the church as "the strongest institution" and was "a considerable force in defining local standards of conduct on a statutory as well as a personal basis."[92] Lowe stressed Christian agrarians were "by no means opposed to the modern world" they believed "making the countryside scientific went hand in hand" with the modernization of family farms.[93] Swierenga agreed that "the preacher and the schoolmaster worked hand in hand" in a collaboration that "indoctrinated the adults…and…educated the children."[94] Through voluntary participation in community production, education, and religion rural citizens gained access to and were introduced to scientific standards and professionals and national cultural and social values. Turn-of-the-century American culture associated science with modernity.

[91] Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots,* 13.

[92] Morain, *Prairie Grass Roots,* 13-4, 22.

[93] Kevin M. Lowe, *Baptized with the Soil: Christian Agrarians and the Crusade for Rural America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2, 6.

[94] Swierenga, "The Little White Church," 415.

"Scientific" applications, theories, and standards in the Gilded Age culture allowed scholars to construct science into sets of social scriptures. Kevin Lowe detailed the "social gospel" in which turn-of-the-twentieth century Christian agrarians assigned a moralistic responsibility to land stewardship that "promoted environmental conservation."[95] Sarah Phillips explained how New Dealers designed conservation policies to promote scientific sustainability. Samuel Hay in *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* contended the conservation movement reflected a sociological, cultural, and ideological shift towards a scientific, professional application and methodology to achieve efficiency and progressive development in the utilization of resources. David Danbom argued rural reform movements sought to elevate rural "standard of social and economic organization and efficiency-preeminent values…of the modern age and the keys to national success and even survival."[96] Nancy Tomes, in *The Gospel of Germs*, argued proper cleanliness was a social scripture that directed individual behavior. The Gospel of Germs indoctrinated American culture with a personal and social responsibility to health. Muncy outlined the development of public health professionals in "a culture that increasingly granted respect, financial resources, and effectiveness to those who could convince their public that they possessed esoteric knowledge on which the public depended."[97] Community religious practices reflected a cultural transition towards professionalism and standardization.

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[95] Lowe, *Baptized with the Soil,* 2.

[96] Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution,"* vii.

[97] Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935 (*New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), xvi.

The image of the one-room schoolhouse is iconic of rural education. Popular stylizations of rural education such as Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series have helped mold the image of the one-room school house, all grade levels taught by one individual in the same room. Unfortunately, the imagery of the small country school has been one of isolation and deficiency. The perceived isolation contributed to the association with a rural deficiency. Rural education at the turn of the twentieth century has been depicted as lacking in attendance, quality, availability, educational supplies, and materials. Educators contemporary to the one-room schoolhouses and fictionalized descriptions of the one-room school house promote the myth of an isolated and deficient rural citizenry. By placing rural education within the demographics of the region rather than in contrast to urban facilities shows population limited the availability, size, supplies, and attendance of educational facilities, but there was no educational cultural marginalization.

Regional, economic and occupational factors were formative in educational facilities and structure yet reflective of a national culture. Laura Ingalls Wilder noted several times the importance her mother placed on education. Laura recalled numerous times throughout her fictionalized narratives and other writings on country living, the significance the school played as part of her family and the larger community. She attributed the availability of formal education was one of the primary reasons her mother, Caroline, wanted to remain within more settled areas. While the work is a stylized and often glorified portrayal of Wilder's childhood as a western settler, it denotes the cultural significance youth education was nationally and locally regardless of the size of the school house. Education was a foundation to the local community and reflective of the labor and occupational culture of its citizenry. It is true rural areas were lacking in an abundance of higher education facilities as population density did not support or require substantial educational facilities beyond the one-room school houses in most rural communities.

University education was still regionally available as state and private colleges were in Midwestern urban centers. Rural scholars were not forced to go east for an advanced education nor were they subpar to their eastern academic contemporaries. However, it is important to note "the Midwest was always the 'special home' of one-room schoolhouses" with approximately "90,000 in 1918 almost as many as the rest of the nation combined."[98] The popularity of the one-room school house and its adaptability to provide educational services to rural children denotes the significance of education in the Midwest on par or above national averages. Rural youths were part of the familial and communal social and economic structure and their valuable labor took priority over formal education.

School attendance reflects the influence regional, cultural, and geographic environment had on the availability of education. Census data compiled by Missouri's Secretary of State indicates the percentage of rural attendance and student teacher ratios was comparable to Eastern states. States classified within the North Atlantic region had on average over a seventy-five percent attendance rate of enrolled students, New York with seventy-six percent and Massachusetts with eighty-one percent of all enrolled students attending "common schools." New York had an estimated student teacher ratio of thirty-four pupils per teacher with a more accurate ratio of twenty-five students per teacher. Massachusetts had an estimated thirty-six to one ratio and an applied ratio of twenty-nine pupils per one teacher. States listed within North Central region had a broader range of attendance rates. Wisconsin had a low sixty-three percent attendance rate and Illinois had an eighty-two percent of students enrolled. Estimated student teacher ratios based on enrollment and available instructors are comparable as well. North

[98] Swierenga, "The Little White Church," 415.

Central common schools projected approximately thirty to thirty-five students per one educator with an applied ratio of approximately twenty-five to thirty students per one teacher. Iowa held one of the lowest student teacher ratios at approximately twelve students per one educator half of the national average of twenty-five students per teacher. Iowa had one of the highest enrollment percentages of the population and was equitable to the national attendance rate, both at sixty-nine percent of enrolled students attending on a regular basis.[99]

Rural education was limited not in quality but was adapted to fit its regional population. Labor and transportation took priority over formal education requirements in rural attendance. Most rural students had to travel a distance either on foot or by wagon to attend school. Inclement weather or labor demands altered the number of students who attended formal classes and the total number of school days but they did not prevent the availability of formal education for most rural students. Weather, harvest, and local or personal conditions determined the attendance of school but did not restrict the cultural evolution of educational opportunities available with the rural communities. During the Progressive Era, educational reform became a national prerogative and part of the ongoing cultural development of the professionalization and standardization of American society. Rural educators prior to the educational reform movement often did not receive formal higher education beyond locally available resources. However, rural educational resources were not as limited as the rural isolation and deficiency myth would make them appear. Every official state had at least one accredited university, each in turn accredited numerous other state-wide educational facilities. Rural educators in the early 1900s had access to volumes of educational material and opportunity. Correspondence courses were widely

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[99] John E. Swanger, *Official Manual of the State of Missouri: For the Years 1907-1908.* Missouri Secretary of State (Jefferson City: The Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1908), 440-2.

available to those seeking higher certifications and instruction. The distance learning methodology provided an alternative to the standard on-site instruction available in formal universities and colleges. Lectures and short courses connected professional and local educators. Scholarly and occupational literature were published and distributed. Liberty Hyde Baily "presumed that rural school teachers were dedicated…but isolated" and distributed instructional manuals to educators across the United States. His idea was to provide all educators with a means that "covers many methods and practices, stands everywhere for the opening of the mind directly to the phenomena of nature."[100] As educational professionals, teachers actively sought the expert advice and instruction. Baily received requests for material, advice, and lectures from Kansas and Illinois. Participation in educational programs like the ones developed by Bailey and other leading experts signifies the active participation of rural educators and farmers as part of the national educational standards and cultural emphasis on professionalization, standardization, scientific observation, systematic mythologies, and adaptable application.

The popularity of educational reform movements such as the "nature study movement" and the establishment of agricultural colleges, experts, and extension programs marks a transition in the national educational culture during the turn of the twentieth century. Rural citizens participated in the acceptance, distribution, and standardization in American education. In the late 1880s, universities such as Cornell formalized agricultural education and sciences. Extension courses, agents, and education connected seemingly remote schools to the national standards. Experienced farmers became university consultants, public lectures, and policy makers. "College-level courses for future farmers included botany, geology, natural philosophy

[100] Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, *Teaching Children Science: Hands-On Nature Study in North America, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 78.

or physics, chemistry, and zoology, because such sciences were viewed as integral to agriculture in a modern industrial society."[101] Progressive-era farmers, educators, and extension agents, as agricultural professionals, helped create a contemporary cultural emphasis on scientific application to aid farmers and educators in addressing "specific problems to improve their methods" and "how to improve the quality."[102] Scientific methodology and the formal corroboration of educational and agricultural professionals were key components to the Progressive era culture as it connected the individual to the national standards.

Farmers became leading professionals contributing to the professional standardization of modernization of American culture and education. The introduction of science into American school curriculum through programs such as the nature study movement demonstrates a national transition in educational practices and priorities. The movement was designed to be easily integrated and adapted for rural children as they were more familiar with domestic and wild livestock and natural resources. The transition in education highlights national cultural shifts toward professionalism, female authority, and social reform. The nature study movement found local and national support as "advocates offered a vision of activities that would enhance struggling rural schools and simultaneously improve the quality of life in the schools' communities."[103] The popularity and prevalence of the nature study movement reflects the influence rural citizens had on the national cultures. Rural acceptance, cooperation, and expertise was integral to the cultural development of the social institution.

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[101]Kohlstedt, *Teaching Children Science*, 79.

[102] Kohlstedt, *Teaching Children Science*, 77-79.

[103] Kohlstedt, *Teaching Children Science*, 78.

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATING THE RURAL FAMILY

A social movement swept through the nation generating legislative support to elevate living conditions in the early 1900s. The American government established several federal agencies and enacted a variety of laws to address social disparities. There was an emphasis placed on the health and stability of rural America. Reformers believed education was the best means to introduce new methods and technologies into the average home. The 4-H was established to provide rural children and families the opportunity to learn through demonstration and expert advice. Children introduced the education they gained from their activities in the 4-H program to their parents. Both boys and girls were encouraged to participate in the free national program.[104] National experts and local leaders provided knowledgeable advice and instruction throughout the Midwest.

In 1914 Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act establishing the agriculture extension program and the 4-H youth organization.[105] The legislation was created to promote the 4-H

[104] W.J. Jernigan, "4-H Club Information That All 4-H Boys and Girls Should Know," *Extension Circular 276*. College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating. Fayetteville, Ar. December 1930. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars.

[105] 63rd Congress, *Smith-Lever Act*, Statute 372 by Hoke Smith and Asbury Lever. Washington D.C. May 8, 1914.

vision of rural youths as productive, cooperative, democratic American citizens.[106] The mission of the federal government and social reformers was to connect isolated families with educational opportunities precisely designed to target regional specific issues, "[i]n order to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture…home economics, and rural energy, and to encourage the application of the same."[107] Local extension agents introduced the rural family to modern technologies, techniques, and concepts. 4-H members were taught the "newest, latest, best methods of farm and home making."[108] The groundbreaking project prescribed standardized practices in agriculture, home-economics, economics, and leadership in a bid to improve rural growth along national ideals. This pivotal piece of legislation intimately tied eastern government with western rural development.

The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 or National Vocational Arts Act established home economics, agriculture, and industrial trades as foundations in the instruction of vocational education.[109] The examination of home economics spotlights the significance of rural integration, application, and adaptation of national ideals and agendas. Bailey, noting the

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[106] United States Congress, House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture. *4-H Club and Rural Youth Act: Hearing before the Committee on Agriculture, House of Representatives, Seventy-Seventh Congress, First Session. on H.R. 4530, a Bill to Promote the further Development of the 4-H Clubs and Other Extension Work with Rural Youths. November 17 and 18, 1941*. United States: 1941.

[107] 63rd Congress, *Smith-Lever Act*.

[108] Jernigan, "4-H Club Information."

[109] 64th U.S. Congress, *Smith-Hughes Act*, Washington D.C. February, 1917. Library of Congress.

significant position women held in cultural transmission within social institutions, hired women and "made his college a leader in the emerging field of home economics." Capitalizing on an expansive network "as rural free postal delivery advanced in the 1890s," Bailey and other home economic experts introduced more households to the concept as "extension leaflets were distributed free to farm families and educators."[110] Women became experts of the home in the turn of the twentieth-century.

Through their own personal choices rural women adopted, adapted, and advanced cultural and social standards such as the germ theory through their participation in home economics. Home-makers were awarded prizes and recognition in their application of frugal, clean home management and organization. Local communities praised rural women for their application and adaptation of home economics.[111] A 4-H organizational newsletter from the national chapter in 1930 held in Girard Kansas details a variety of activities available to club members including demonstrations of home economics and prizes awarded for best application.[112] The promotion and expression of national values and progress was a result of a collaboration between organizational leaders and local communities. For home economics to be a national standard it had to be accepted and applied within the individual home. Its universal

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[110] Kohlstedt, *Teaching Children Science*, 89-91.

[111] "Five Women Selected as Best Homemakers." *The Topeka* February 11, 1928. Kansas Historical Society, Kansas Memory, *Kansas Master Farm Homemaker; "Harriett Alma Rigby."* Obituary. *The Annals of Iowa.*

[112] *4-H Club News*. Round-up, Crawford Co. ed. Girard, Kan.: published by the 1930 delegation, 1930. 630.6 F825. Axe Kansas Collection Axe Library Pittsburg State University.

application and malleability to regional conditions denotes its popularity in and out of rural homes connecting rural home-makers' practices to a national culture.

The widespread application of home economics incorporated the scientific methodology popular in the early 1900s blended with frugal economics from the late 1800s. The voluntary participation of home economics denotes its popularity and reflects the dualistic nature between the home, the outer economy, and a professional, scientific culture in setting new social standards in home and personal management in the Gilded Age. Scholarship on western development, the Dust Bowl, and American culture in conjunction with studies in rural social environments, national economics, and organizations highlights the success of the home economics movement in the context of the boom bust cycle of the early 1900s, establishing the shared economic ideologies and the significance of the Midwestern family to national stability and prosperity.[113] Manuals, instruction guides, and newspaper articles generated at the time outline the significance of rural acceptance and influence on the proliferation of the concept of social health through prudent approaches to financial, personal, and familiar practices. Home economics incorporated contemporary scientific theory on sanitation and healthy living.

Nutrition met economics and the germ theory in popular instruction manuals, pamphlets, and guidebooks widely distributed throughout the United States. However, the 4-H and regional specific publications specifically designed for rural audiences focused on farm resources and application. At the turn of the twentieth century a dairy cow was more than just a cow. It was a long-term economic and nutritional investment. Cows were viewed as a farm staple, as milk was promoted as being scientifically proven as a vital component to the health of the human body.

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[113] American Security and Trust, "Duty to Daughters."

Most rural families depended on their dairy cow to produce milk as well as additional offspring to increase milk and monetary supply. Knowledge in the biological processes increased the importance placed on disease management in both humans and livestock. Thrift and detailed accounts directed the maintenance of the livestock for optimal production focusing on the potential for maximum profit.[114] Popular culture emphasized a healthy society was developed by healthy citizens.

The focus on personal health and nutrition made standardization in meal preparation and food handling popular as it was viewed as mutually beneficial. Canning classes offered to rural residents served to instruct the participants on the nutritional benefits of the food as well as the proper procedures for safe preservation techniques. Federal agents and public health professionals specializing in home economics provided nutritional values and quantities to educate women on the best way to retain all the essential nutrients and vitamins in canned foods.[115] The focus on sanitation and sterilization reflects the national understanding of the three D's, dirt, disease, and death. Nancy Tomes argues that the germ theory became ingrained in American culture through private practices that developed from public fear. Since rural families were dependent on growing and storing their own food, they invested in learning techniques to improve food storage for economic and nutritional purposes. Tomes illustrated the vital role the voluntary participation played in the diffusion of expert advice to the public rather than a

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[114] T. P. Head, and Andrew Leon Holley, "4-H Manual in Dairying." Circular No. 455. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville, Ar., May 11, 1949. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars.

[115] Conant, "4-H Manual in Foods and Cookery"; Ruby Mendenhall Smith, "4-H Club Manual in Food Preservation."

government controlling individual behaviors. Individual choices on the local level identifies national concepts of what was acceptably American during the Gilded Age.

Inclusion of the rural family in national culture went beyond governmental integration, organizational membership, and scientific methodology in the development of America's dualistic cultural and social canons and exchanges between rural and urban centers of influence. A volume of scholarship identifies the role personal choice in voluntary participation had on cultural transmission. A child's participation in the 4-H club became the conduit for health, livestock, crops, and domestic production to become a source of familial, communal, and national investment. Through education, demonstration, and aid national experts connected isolated rural homes to contemporary standards. The 4-H organization became the prime vehicle for national experts to instruct and engage with rural youths through local and national club activities. Extension agents with full support of the federal government provided material and instruction as national guides to local youth activities.[116] Community leaders were utilized as club instructors guiding club members through prescribed benefits and procedures of proper execution of health, agriculture, and domestic arts. Labor and income statistics of the Gilded Age interwoven with advertisements, club promotions, incentives, and participation rewards define the dual significance and application of home economics within the rural home and the national economic frame-work. The popularity of home economics highlights that the family and the nation invested in the American home.

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[116] Kiera Butler and Rafael Roy, *Raise: What 4-H Teaches Seven Million Kids and how its Lessons could Change Food and Farming Forever*. 1st ed. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2014); Gabriel N. Rosenberg, *The 4-H* Harvest*: Sexuality and the State in Rural America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

The federal government invested in the advancement and education of rural youths by supporting directly and indirectly the 4-H organization and university extension programs. The 4-H youth organization introduced and invited the American government into the rural home. Through the 4-H the local families were incorporated into broader community interests and national aims. There is still debate on the underlying agendas of the multiple founders, public leaders, and government agents with some historians arguing more sinister motivations than improving the standards of rural living to elevate and reflect domestic principles. Other scholarship suggests the 4-H was a product of New Deal mentality of social reform and others as an example of increased cultural awareness of public health issues in the early 1900s. Regardless of the mitigating factors in its formation, the 4-H and accompanying legislation was formative in incorporating cultural standards of practices, theories, and beliefs into rural American households. By 1930, the 4-H Club had approximately 750,000 national members with some states such as Arkansas boasting around 30,000 members; a testament to the organization's popularity.[117] Without the willing participation of rural families the 4-H would not have become a wildly successful national and international organization. The government had become a trusted community member and rural families welcomed federal agents, programs, and consequently the United States government into western homes.

The club meeting, designed to instruct the youths opened the doors to connect to the isolated farm family to the broader community. Club meetings become a unifying community event. Children's voluntary participation in the organization became a family affair. Club members were encouraged to "urge parents to attend" meetings and to "secure full consent and

[117] Jernigan, "4-H Club Information."

cooperation of parents."[118] Entire families would become involved in the attendance and participation in club meetings. Some parents were local 4-H instructors and leaders, interlacing the club with family activities. Typically, parents would accompany their children to 4-H events and assist in 4-H projects. Economic incentives and the allure of earning prestige through competitions drew non-club member involvement and interest. Club members were encouraged to yield quality products made more attractive by the added potential for additional personal income and pride.[119] Whether it was for the individual's or the public's gain, the goal was crafting the perfect specimen. Even though it was educational in nature and gender segregated it offered rural youths an opportunity to interact with their peers under less structured conditions but with the active support of parents, community leaders, and businesses.

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[118] Jernigan, "4-H Club Information."

[119] Sue Marshall, "4-H Club Manual in Clothing: Demonstration C-For Older Girls," Extension Circular No. 402. Manual. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating Fayetteville, AR June 1937. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society.

CHAPTER IX

ORGANIZING AND ENTERTAINING RURAL FAMILIES

While the community was a means to indoctrinate its citizens through educational and spiritual rhetoric and practices, it was also a platform for acculturalization and expression beyond the social institutions of family, occupation, education, and religion. Community associations illustrated the power in local hegemony over cultural transmission of national values and practices. Membership in fraternal organizations, associations, and auxiliaries connected remote communities to outer alliances, affiliations, and domestic networks. The standardized meetings, rituals, and social structure of officially sanctioned activities tied individual local members to a national association, agenda, and group consensus in a mutually beneficial relationship. The popularity of many of these organizations and activities is notable in their continued existence into modern society and have become integral parts of American culture.

The Grange officially named the National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry was founded in 1860 in Washington D.C. as a political group. Members of the organization participated in both localized and national activities encouraging community unity to promote economic, social, and agricultural stability. Various scholarship documents that farmers joined the Grange to actively influence local and national politics. The Grange was so popular it

attracted more than 850,000 members by 1875.[120]The Grange actively participated in political and social lobbying addressing both regional and national concerns.[121] The social activism of the members on a local level generated public support for pro-agricultural legislation such as the Granger Laws, *Munn v Illinois* and the Wabash Case.[122] Farmers unified under the guidance of a formal organization contributing to the popularity and influence of the Grange as both a social and political force in American culture.[123] The popularity of formal organizations such as the Grange illustrates that rural Americans utilized the power in organization and national affiliation, signifying the ability for the rural West to influence Eastern politics.

The Fraternal Order of the Eagles, founded in 1898, is another example of West to East influence. Beginning in Seattle, the organization quickly spread east. The Order was founded on the principle of people helping people. The self-proclaimed "Order of Good Things" was organized locally under a national affiliation. The Aerie became a special meeting house for local and national events and members to socialize with one another formally and informally. Even though women participated unofficially in the Aerie, they were not full members of the all-

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[120] Hine, *Frontiers,* 141; National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry. "About Us," *National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry Online.* Home page on-line.

[121] Hine, *Frontiers*, 141-3.

[122] Fraser, *Prairie Fires,* 117; Hine, *Frontiers*, 141-3; Morrison Remick Waite and Supreme Court of the United States, *U.S. Reports: Munn v. Illinois, 94 U.S. 113*. 1876. Periodical; Miller, Samuel Freeman, and Supreme Court of the United States. U.S. Reports: Wabash, &c., Railway Co. v. Illinois, 118 U.S. 557. 1886. Periodical.

[123] Ellsworth A. Holden, *Souvenir, National Grange in Michigan. Lansing, November 12 1922*. Lansing, Michigan: R. Smith Printing Co, 1902. Library of Congress. *Pioneering the Upper Midwest: Books from Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, Ca. 1820 to 1910*. General Collections.

male organization for years.[124] The first Eagle's Auxiliary was formally founded in Pittsburg, Kansas in 1927, the second in Frontenac, Kansas a few days later. Women were not officially recognized until the early twentieth century, reflecting a cultural acceptance in division of gender roles. However, both the Eagles and the women's auxiliaries have participated in political activism. The most notable being organizational support of the Social Security Law in 1935 reflecting a cultural desire for social welfare programs. The Order was an extended national community comprised of local members.

The Loyal Order of the Moose is another popular fraternal organization that coordinated national aims into local efforts in shaping society. Founded in Louisville Kentucky in 1888 as a men's social organization it provided members with social opportunities, sports and recreation. Originally membership was restricted to white males of good social standing.[125] The fact that by 1912 over a thousand lodges hosting almost a half-million members speaks volumes of the Order's national and regional appeal. Unofficial fringe groups developed at the chapter level highlighting the Order's popularity. In the 1920s, the Women of the Moose had almost sixty thousand female members and the Junior Order of the Moose boasted a membership around five thousand youths. Charities, philanthropy projects, and volunteer work encouraged community improvement through individual action. Many of the governing doctrines of the Order's rituals, meetings, and activities reflected Christian moralistic tones and context. The "9 o'clock

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[124] Fraternal Order of the Eagles, "History," *Fraternal Order of the Eagles Online*. Home page; Proceedings from the Grand Aerie Fraternal Order of Eagles Convention, 1951; Fraternal Order of the Eagles, *Mrs. Eagle, Special Issue* October 1951; Alvin J. Schmidt, *Fraternal Organizations: The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Institutions* (Westport, CT; Greenwood Press, 1980), 25–26, 95-96.

[125]Loyal Order of the Moose, "About Us" Loyal Order of the Moose Online; Schmidt, *Fraternal Organizations*, 220-3.

Ceremony" blessing the organization and encouraging reverence is religious in context as is said as a prayer. National Moose activities promoted active community involvement and Christian values as pivotal to personal and social health.

The organization was so popular in the late 1800s that its relocated headquarters provided the foundation for the modern town of Mooseheart, Illinois. The Moose collected donations from national members and bought farmland in rural Illinois. The initial aim was to establish a school for orphans. The success of the Order transformed the farm into an organizational hub and headquarters. Mooseheart developed into its own incorporated village with an approximate population of thirteen hundred in the 1930s.[126] Although Moosehead is unique in its foundation, almost every town across the nation had some form of local social association to a national organization.

Beginning in the Progressive era, social reform placed an emphasis on measurable normative criteria. The social reform movements in the early 1900s spawned a variety of community organizations reflecting a national improvement culture. During the Progressive era, women and children were identified as being both the cause and the cure to national health issues. Professionals, in conjunction with local and federal support, set out to improve the health of the nation by educating mothers and the next generation. The early 1900s saw the emergence of the welfare state as well as national club and health movements that relied on both professional experts and public acceptance, participation, and promotion for the programs' success. Members learned new skills and recognition through socialization and shared practical

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[126] Mooseheart, "Our Story," *Mooseheart Online:* Alvin J. Schmidt, Fraternal Organizations: The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Institutions (Westport, CT; Greenwood Press, 1980), 220-3.

knowledge and experience. Through the system of voluntary participation, national affiliations and the individual participants transmitted cultural values to elevate social standards.

Local and national leaders encouraged women to utilize their unique feminine qualities to help mold society. Social reform movements in the early 1900s spawned a variety of community organizations reflecting a national improvement culture. Women's Social Associations grew in the 1920s. The Women's club movement saw an increase in membership as women joined organizations to address state and local issues that directly impacted rural families. Homemaker's clubs and other organizations sponsored community activities. The aim was two-fold; to ease isolation and to improve the quality of life of the individual, the family, and the community.[127] Rural women were actively involved in national social reform through their voluntary participation in crusading organizations popular in the 1920s during a national women's club movement. Local newspaper articles contemporary to the social movement illustrate that many women joined a variety of organizations to address state and local issues that directly impacted rural homes, health, and economy.[128] Some of the formal women's organizations were nationally recognized and organized while other women's groups were informal gatherings of concerned female citizens.[129] Organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union were popular in rural communities as women crusaded against the social,

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[127] Lola Clark Pearson, "Women and the World's Work." *The Household Magazine* 26, No. 2. Topeka Kansas: February 1926 (30). Article. Library of Congress, *Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929.*

[128] "Five Women Selected as Best Homemakers," *The Topeka* February 11, 1928.

[129].Swierenga, "The Little White Church," 415-441; Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion,* xii-xvii, 158-9; Thomas R. Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), 58-80, 167-70.

cultural, and environmental ills that posed a threat to their families, communities, and nation. On a mission to support the Omaha fair, the local Women's Club mobilized Nebraskan women to promote the Fair's economic, educational, and cultural benefits to the local communities. Women as active voluntary members of the formal and informal organizations helped craft modern American standards.

The popularity of these formal and informal women's organizations reflects the prevailing ideologies of women and their roles within the family and the community. A large portion of American culture in the Gilded Age portrayed the "women's unique interest in home, religion, and family" as uniquely positioned, responsible, and qualified to protect and promote American prosperity.[130] The popular women's clubs and their large female memberships reflect the corroboration between the local participants and the organizations in a mutual beneficial relationship. The women were able to utilize the networks, opportunities, and instructions available to them through the social organizations to promote their values. In return, the organizations capitalized on the vast social networks of their member to promote their ideologies. The associations provided members with a variety of social activities including meetings, lectures, and displays. Members learned new skills through socialization and shared practical knowledge and experience. Membership in local and national organizations eased isolation and improved the quality of life in rural America.

Rural women created social opportunities by establishing "homemaker's clubs," denominational and charity-based associations promoting their ideals back into the wider community. Women's organizations promoted volunteerism, communities, and families through

[130] Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum,* 69.

personal action and demonstrations. Women in the early 1900s were honored for their adherence to cultural standards and community involvement, praised for their home-making skills and thrift, and awarded for exceptional performance as modern upstanding American women.[131] Participation in organized community activities connected the individual with a broader network to provide a local and national identity. Cultural values were transmitted through national affiliations incorporating the individual into a national community.

Much scholarship addresses how local organizations introduced and invited the American government into the rural home. Historians have identified participation in local clubs incorporated the local families into broader community interests, bureaucratic reform agendas, and national cultural standards. The women's club movement in the 1920 backed by federal bureaus and social reformers promoted volunteerism, communities, and families joined organizations to address state and local issues. Nancy Tomes, Annette Vance Dorey, and Robyn Muncy illustrate the vital role women played in the dissemination and development of personal and public health. A volume of scholarship has connected the virtues and values placed on the perceptions of female role within both domestic and public spheres in cultural transmission and social standards. Tomes argued women adopted the germ theory as gospel to maintain a standard of hygiene. Dorey illustrates the participations of women as healthcare professionals and as mothers aided in the establishment of a medical standard of health for children. Muncy denoted the local women organizations, agents, and participants as integral in maintaining Progressive

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[131] Pearson, "Women and the World's Work"; Edna Pearson and Mrs. Laurence Erlach, *Mrs. Laurence Erlach*. Interview. United States Work Projects Administration, Federal Writers' Project. Nebraska, 1938. Library of Congress Folklore Project, *Life Histories, 1936-39*.; "Harriett Alma Rigby," Obituary. *The Annals of Iowa.*

social reformer's "values and strategies" as professional standards. Muncy identifies these local women's organizations and clubs as the bottom tier of a cooperative relationship between local organizations, state agencies, professional women, and federal departments. Debate remains between scholarships on the underlying agendas of the multiple founders, public leaders, and government agents. Some historians suggest more threatening motivations behind the schema to improve the standards of rural living as more than a philanthropic desire to elevate and reflect preferred domestic practices. Other scholarship suggests the 4-H and other clubs were products of New Deal mentality of social reform and others as examples of increased cultural awareness of public health issues in the early 1900s.

Gabriel Rosenburg and Robyn Muncy examined the development of federal programs and bureaus to aid in improving personal health and raising national standards. Muncy argued professional women created a *Female Dominion* and had to promote themselves as keepers of knowledge and experience unique to them to maintain their own autonomy and authority. Both argue it was a direct effort of bureaucratic self-preservation mandating cultural standards. Bureaucratic and public health experts secured their position within the welfare state through the dissemination of vital information to the public. Home economics agents and other experts on home and health prescribed to women the best way to retain, utilize, and optimize all the essential elements to achieve personal, familial, and national health. Dorey and Muncy challenge Gabriel Rosenburg's assertion there was a sinister governmental plot to cultivate the perfect human specimens, employing the 4-H to regulate and control rural families under the guise of improving American health. Muncy argued the standardization of children's health was the effort of ambitious professional women capitalizing on the shifting cultural significance and deference to the female expertise who were so successful they ultimately also created the

dissemination of their own social and cultural authorities as the exclusive experts. Muncy argument echoes David Danbom, Mary Neth, and Steven Craig in their assertion that the popularity and success of acculturalization consequently resulted in the erasure of the distinctive qualities.

In the early 1900s, local and national clubs, organizations, and agencies combined the public with bureaucracy, entertainment, and education. They introduced the private person to the public professionals in addition to promoting progressive standards of national health. Community organizations focused on social improvement and reform, with individual and national health central to their cause propagating the new standards of health through demonstrations, activities, and personal application. Participation provided members with a variety of social opportunities including education, products, acclaim, and economic incentives. By becoming mainstream, the unique, qualifying qualities no longer existed that had once allowed fringe sectors of American society power and authority over public policy, social institutions, and national culture. Regardless of the multitude of factors that contributed to the public health movement and its accompanying legislation, American homes and families were integral components in the mutual transmission and development of social standards and cultural practices, theories, and beliefs.

Families open to the ideas, products, and opportunities for them to meet the American standard welcomed the government, social reform, and modern culture into the home and integrated modern culture and personal preferences through voluntary acceptance, adoption, and adaptation to the American standard. The success of the nationally-sponsored programs was contingent upon voluntary membership and acceptance of the rural and western communities. It is important to note that federal agents did not barge into the farm house barking orders.

Children were not forced to join clubs. Women were not prisoners of their homes. Rural America was not isolated from the rest of the nation. The west was not a test ground for eastern government. Whether federal agents and reformers involvement within the rural community was an act of oppression, assimilation, philanthropy or cooperation, they were invited by and asked for by rural families to assist them in elevating quality of life and American standards.

It was the common household that accepted and integrated the education, technology, values, and beliefs into their daily practices, improving upon them and in turn elevating the national standard. It was the individual application that transformed the information into a tangible product rather than merely an idea. Rural families living in the American West at the turn of the twentieth century were unquestionably active agents in shaping American society. Placing the rural family as the center of the cultural exchange pushing the urban centers into the outer fringes illuminates the significance of the rural Midwest. The shift in periphery challenges the perceived notion of Midwestern and rural isolation and subservience to Eastern and urban authorities. The careful analysis of the rural family and their habits, practices, and participation in national activities and ideologies provides a deeper understanding of the vital and equal role of the Midwest. Rural participation in national organizations and entertainment venues such as the Grange, the 4-H, and various fraternal and local organizations shows the dualistic cultural exchange and influence between the rural individual and the national standards. The popularity of organizations, entertainment opportunities, and social standards denotes the significance of voluntary rural participation in the development of American culture on a local and national level.

Rural living was not all work and no play. Volumes of historical research have been conducted on urban entertainment and society. However, there remains a gap in the complex

nature of turn of the twentieth-century American entertainment culture. An exploration of community-based venues in the late 1800s and early 1900s defines a correlation between population density and social opportunities and participation. Larger cities and populations can support a variety of paid entertainment. Smaller towns, in contrast, lack the population density to provide a multitude of entertainment platforms conducted by professionals and are more reliant upon local organizations for rural socialization and acculturalization. The question then becomes how did rural Americans entertain themselves and how did rural centered entertainment contribute to the national culture?

A leisure-work balance was emerging in American culture during the Gilded Age and entertainment became a national prerogative. However, as Kathy Peiss in *Cheap Amusements* argues, entertainment venues went far beyond mere amusement. She shows how urban young men and women were encouraged to become healthy active participates in the prosperity of America's capitalistic system. Robert W. Rydell argued in *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions* organized entertainment such as fairs demonstrated national standards utilizing entertainment as an educational and indoctrinating venue of American culture. Steve Craig's *Out of the Dark: A History of Radio and Rural America* Randall Hall's *Lum and Abner: Rural America and the Golden Age of Radio* argue popular entertainment connected the isolated rural home to national products, services, and ideologies. Both works establish the radio as the primary means of rural cultural inclusion of and influence upon American values and practices. Deliberate personal participation demonstrates the assimilation of social standards through popular entertainment venues.

State and county fairs were undoubtedly popular events among rural communities. Competitions and demonstrations were often conducted as part of the fair venue. The Annual

events typically occurred in the fall after harvest so all family members were freer to attend and socialize outside the family unit. Rural families saw it as an opportunity to connect with other community members. Businesses and government officials seized the popularity of the fairs as a chance to associate themselves with the citizenry.[132] Judges for the competitions were viewed as local and state experts, awarding prizes for the best products. County extension agents became both friendly guides and strong critics of personal achievements based on national guidelines, drawing them closer to the community through friendly competitions.[133] The fairs were more than just competitive arenas for socializing.

The casual yet exciting environment of the fairs unified the attendants as active members of a prosperous society with a "shared cultural faith in American progress."[134] Most fairs displayed new technologies, such as plows and seeds. Lectures and exhibits were designed to educate the masses as well as entertain. Even though the 4-H competitions did not enter the fair arena until decades after the first World's Fairs, the organization and popularity of the social celebrations were part of turn of the century American culture. Economic incentives and the allure of earning prestige through competitions drew non-club member involvement and interest. Club members were encouraged to yield quality products made more attractive by the added potential for additional personal income and pride.[135] Whether it was for the individual's or the public's gain, the goal was crafting the perfect specimen. Local, regional, and national

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[132] Jernigan, "4-H Club Information."

[133] Jernigan, "4-H Club Information."

[134] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* 151.

[135] Marshall, "4-H Club Manual in Clothing."

competitions with tempting awards enticed agricultural families to invest in seed, land, supplies, and time dedicated specifically to the youths' projects. Classes and samples were provided to encourage participation in tested agricultural advancements with astonishing success and popularity.[136] To the farm family, winning coveted corn competitions demonstrated agricultural intellect in production through skilled application of crop management. Livestock such as cattle, sheep, and pigs became prized family achievements, a testament to prosperous husbandry practices.[137] Entire families participated in fair events reflecting personal and national standards of health, prosperity, and perfecting the American standard.

Health even became a competitive event with national fitness contests. Competitions blending professional expertise with public venues were popular avenues of cultural transmissions of public health initiatives beginning in the early 1900s. Families aiming to achieve high national standards, monetary awards, and bragging rights invested heavily in personal health as winners of these contests earned local and national attention and acclaim for their high personal achievements of ideological cultural standards.[138] Annette Vance Dorey's *Better Baby Contests: The Scientific Quest for Perfect Childhood Health in the Early Twentieth Century* argued education, entertainment, social reform, and scientific standards shaped the

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[136] Jernigan, "4-H Club Information."

[137] Head, "4-H Manual in Dairying."

[138] Pearson, "Women and the World's Work"; Annette Vance Dorey, *Better Baby Contests: The Scientific Quest for Perfect Childhood Health in the Early Twentieth Century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, 1999); Conant, "4-H Manual in Foods and Cookery"; Laura L. Lovett, "'Fitter Families for Future Firesides': Florence Sherbon and Popular Eugenics," *The Public Historian* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2007), 69-85.

creation and popularity of the better baby contests beginning in the early 1900s. Her analysis reflects the inward influences of the germ theory and national standards on the rural family and the outward influence of the application, and participation in the popular event on American culture and society. Dorey illustrates the rural parents' desire to get a medical evaluation of their child's health prompted parents to enter their babies into health competitions helping create health standards. Baby contests began as a friendly competition in Iowa. Local women created the contest to connect health care professionals and families, providing a means of physical examination to evaluate the health of the child. The baby contests that began in a rural Iowa fair quickly became a popular fair event throughout the country as it embodied the Gilded Age's emphasis on eugenics.

Dorey examined the social and cultural context of baby contests highlighting the popularity of the competition in local and state fairs. She focused on the cultural significance entertainment had on the dissemination and importance society placed on scientific standards of health. Gabriel Rosenburg's *The 4-H Harvest: Sexuality and the State in Rural America* argued the fairs and health contests were part of an ominous government eugenics program. He argued participating in the contests provided the country with a strong, perfected male and female rural American specimens of textbook health. Mary Neth presents the rural youth as a familial resource providing indispensable economic labor not as breeding stock. A variety of scholarship challenges the existence of a menacing government, professional paradigm, or urban scheme to harvest the perfect specimen or the malicious exploitation of the 4-H and rural families in the name of American health. Some scholarship suggests the health competitions and the baby contests were products of the ideologies of bureaucratic social reformers. Other scholars argue they were the result of an increased scientific and cultural awareness of public health issues in

the early 1900s. Either way there was present a national focus on youth and familial health during the Gilded Age. The fair in conjunction with the 4-H health competitions and the popular baby contests provided a public service as well entertainment reflecting both local and national influence and voluntary participation in the dissemination of popular ideologies of American standards and vitality.

By the time the 4-H was founded fairs had become an avenue for social and cultural interaction and dissemination as well as social celebrations. Promoted as celebrating an illustrious anniversary of an exceptional nation, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition drew together almost twenty million visitors into the Midwestern community.[139] The centennial celebration was honored by an illustrious display of American prosperity encapsulated by the Saint Louis World's Fair in 1904. Organizers spent a whopping fifteen million on the fair; the same amount paid in the original purchase of the entire Louisiana territory.[140] Over twenty million visitors were awed by the impressive exhibition halls of the 1893 Chicago fair. The World's Columbian Exchange Exposition celebrated American agrarian production in dedicated horticulture and Agriculture buildings and displays.[141] One historian argues that "the most important result of the Centennial was simply its success," prompting more cities to collaborate with federal agents in

[139] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* 155.

[140] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* 155; Charles M. Kurtz, *The St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, in Commemoration of the Acquisition of the Louisiana Territory* (St. Louis: Gottschalk Printing Company, 1903).

[141] Horace H. Morgan, *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide … Illustrated from Official Drawings*, (St. Louis; Pacific Publishing Company, 1892).

developing their own fairs.[142] Millions of visitors were incorporated into both local and national culture by attending fairs.

The world fairs outside the East, such as those in St. Louis, Chicago, Omaha, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, and San Diego, challenge the concept of Eastern cultural superiority. The world fairs in western states were social hubs "providing industrialized America with a cultural synthesis" exhibiting all that "was good in American life."[143] Organizers saw fairs as "cultural touchstone[s] for the nation" where "education and entertainment waltzed hand in hand."[144] State buildings, exhibits, and lectures demonstrated America's agricultural excellence and captivated visitors rural and urban alike. The public venues of the fairs made them ideal platforms to demonstrate American advancement and superiority regardless of their geographic location.

Fairs were not universally accepted as good for the rural community. The appropriation bill intended to fund the International Exposition in Omaha met with Populist opposition. Charles Wooster, a Populist leader, questioned the "benefits the fair would have for Nebraska's farmers" as most exposition directors were from Omaha.[145] He proposed the funding be utilized to reduce state debt. Wooster failed to sway other legislators but he was able to reduce the amount appropriated. The Trans-Mississippi Exposition was approved with ambitious displays

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[142] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* 27.

[143] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* 39, 40.

[144] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* 151, 155.

[145] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* 110.

and exhibits.[146] Even though the exposition had gain approval there was still a popular opposition held against the Omaha fair and women's clubs were enlisted to boost rural support for the fair.[147] Promoters latched onto the educational values of the fairs and "Women's clubs endorsed these values," encouraging mothers to instill American prosperity in their children via fair attendance. Local opposition in Omaha illustrates the power of rural priorities stemming urban influences. The fairs combined local and national interests in which success was contingent upon the fairs being mutually beneficial and acceptable to both sets of priorities. Fairs had to serve a higher purpose other than being merely entertaining or beneficial to urban and outside influences for rural acceptance and support. The value of the fairs blended entertainment with education and economics gaining the essential local rural support. Entertainment became an indoctrinating avenue of American culture.

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[146] *Official Guidebook to Omaha and Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition: Illustrated with Fifty Half-Tone Plates, and Indexed Map of Omaha* (Omaha: Megeath Stationery Company, 1898).

[147] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* 110, 123.

CHAPTER X

RURAL ECONOMY

Entertainment in the Gilded Age took on a higher social significance as a vehicle for cultural expression and a two-way social investment dependent on both rural and urban acceptance for it to become integrated into American culture. A volume of historical works establishes the radio as a primary means of rural cultural inclusion of and influence upon American values and practices. Craig examines how radio impacted rural society. For several decades the radio connected rural America to outer influences and broader social and cultural content. Information, services, and products were introduced to the rural home and family in a more rapid and direct manner than prior to the advent of the radio. Craig argues the introduction of the radio dramatically impacted rural and national standards. He examines the two-way social and cultural transmissions via the radio in the early 1900s.The radio created an immediate and intimate connection between the home and American culture and society.

Popular radio programs in the "Golden Age" of radio incorporated their audiences into members of a mass consumption culture and entertainment networking. Randall Hall examined the integration of rural America into the national culture through a case study of a popular radio program that aired from 1931 through 1954. In *Lum and Abner: The Golden Age of Radio,* Hall shines a light on how the popularity of the radio program capitalized on a series of social

networks and cultural contexts to appeal to a broad audience. *Lum and Abner* introduced the nation to "two gentle old-timers who embraced economic change." Crafting relatable characters who entwined tradition and modern, Chester (Chet) Lauck and Findley Norris (Taffy) Goff "created a vision immensely popular with listeners, urban and rural, southern and northern alike." Hall argued the popularity of the program was not because of the distinctive rural context but the universal content, the fictional Lum and Abner: "dealt with the difficulty of being manly providers in a time of scarcity, of fighting for political representation amid corruption and pressing local needs, and maintaining faith and neighborhood ties in times of social disjunction." Hall accounts for their popularity because "[e]ach program captured essential truths about being on the margins of America in the Great Depression."[148] Randall Hall underlined the rapidly changing and uneven social conditions that simultaneously united and divided America culture in the Gilded Age.

Craig and Hall's scholarship illuminates the dual concepts that surround rural America culturally and scholastically; on one hand, rural America has been portrayed as deficient and isolated and on the other, a romanticized section of America, tinged with nostalgia. Most media images of rural America created during the Great Depression era portrayed the regional hardships as "rural depravity."[149] Hall argued the program Lum and Abner offered a contrasting image to the popular depiction, which, according to Hall, "dwelt on the negative side."[150] Hall's interpretation of pop culture during the depression era contrasts other more specific studies.

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[148] Hall, *Lum and Abner,* 4-5.

[149] Hall, *Lum and Abner,* 44.

[150] Hall, *Lum and Abner,* 2.

Historians Collen McDannell and Gabrielle Esperdy, in detailing the extensive reach of New Deal policy on cultural movements illustrated the cultural innovation in architecture and art during the Depression era.[151] Craig argued the rapid acculturalization of rural America as seen through the rapid development of rural broadcasting and programs, was so effective that rural America's "distinctive nature" had essentially vanished.[152] David Danbom in *Born in the Country* also remarked on the demise of a separate rural culture and identity that was different from the broader, national culture.

Numerous historians have clarified how contemporaries to the New Deal era reasoned consumption rather than thrift would stimulate the economy. Sarah Phillips argued that to New Dealers "industrial recovery…was initially assumed to depend on the revival of agricultural purchasing power." Americans were encouraged to purchase and were provided the opportunity to enter the commercial culture. Many historians have remarked that a primary motivation behind a variety of legislation and social reform was to tap into a rural reserve; rural America would save the economy by "correcting the imbalance between urban and rural." [153] Craig and Phillips establish that to New Dealers economic stability was contingent upon establishing and opening rural America's market to capitalize on its participation in consumerism. Rural consumption rather than rural production was the answer to national economic problems. With governmental support, the radio connected companies such as Alka-Seltzer and the Ford Motor

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[151] Colleen McDannell, *Picturing Faith: Photography and the Great Depression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Gabrielle Esperdy, *Modernizing Main Street: Architecture and Consumer Culture in the New Deal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[152] Steve Craig, *Out of the Dark: A History of Radio and Rural America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 23.

[153] Phillips, *This Land, This Nation,* 2.

company to a national and previously underutilized rural market. Various historians have noted the transition of luxury goods, such as radios and cars into familial necessities. Mass marketing and mass consumption marked the transition into the modern market.

The commercialization of radio and rural America was not a forgone conclusion. Craig, Hall, and Susan Smulyan all acknowledge non-profit organizations were also interested in developing the budding medium. Craig noted legislation such as the Radio Act of 1927 grew from industrial leaders pushing for regulation that favored commercialization. Hall mentioned that by the 1930s "radio broadcasting had become a thoroughly commercial enterprise, disappointing many idealistic observers who had hoped the new medium would primarily serve artistic, educational, or other public ends."[154] Smulyan argues that the commercialization was not merely a disillusionment to "idealistic" non-profit organizations or an inevitability. In conjunction with other historians, Smulyan emphasizes commercially sponsored broadcasting was not "natural" nor was it without opposition. She demonstrates that many organizations and citizens initially viewed commercialized broadcasting as socially unacceptable. However, by the 1930s, for-profit organizations with federal support commercialized radio broadcasting. Entertaining and popular radio programs, corporately sponsored, increased the incorporation of rural homes into modern mass consumer culture.

Numerous historians pinpoint the commercialization and popularity of the radio as the introduction of rural America to consumerism. However, widely distributed mail order catalogs indicates rural America's access to and purchase of manufactured and cultural goods was not a sudden occurrence resulting from rural radio. Manufacturing company Sears and Roebuck

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[154] Hall, *Lum and Abner*, 3.

published and distributed free catalogs utilizing and capitalizing on the advances in the rural postal services. The *Household Magazine* was one of many publications that tied national production and culture to the rural families made popular because they provided a variety of advertisements and entertaining content. Advertisements were utilized to promote sales to a wider audience outside a company's geographic location. Manufacturers offered families the opportunity to subscribe to their mail-order catalogs altering American consumption patterns. By the early 1900s, most rural families were able to obtain merchandise previously restricted by geographic location. Sears and Roebuck was one of many companies that expanded their sales outside of department stores targeting rural families and female consumers. The focus on the price and quality of the goods was part of the national thrift movement of the early 1900s. Household Magazine publisher and Kansas senator, Arthur Capper, supported McNary-Haugen farm legislation and sponsored a "truth-in-fabric" bill.[155] Numerous printings of Shakespeare were available through Montgomery Ward.[156] While it is true that the Ford Company, through its sponsorship of popular radio programs, companies had access to the rural market and had capitalized upon it prior to the radio. It also regulates the rural audience as a consumer rather than a producer in a mutually beneficial relationship.

The popular radio program Lum and Abner got its start as a popular skit in the local community. Capitalizing on the extensive networks of integrated communities the program gained national popularity. The program, a rural product, and its popularity provided the Ford

[155] *The Household Magazine* 26, No. 2. Topeka Kansas: February 1926. Advertisement. Library of Congress, *Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929.*

[156] Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow*, 17-20.

Company a supply of potential customers in exchange for monetary compensation. Without the popular rural program, the company would not have had the same level of access to a national audience and individual consumers. Without the sponsorship of the Ford Company the program would not have had the same level of access to a national audience and individual consumers. Consumerism was a co-dependent relationship, with both sides contributing both supply and demand which grew the popularity and commercial success of both.

Placed in a broader context, the consumption patterns of the rural Midwest signify the influence rural citizens held as a center of influence rather than peripheral to American culture and society. Numerous historians have pointed to the radio and the automobile as indicators that rural America was succumbing to urban culture and the Gilded Age as "a time when urban society was achieving overwhelming dominance in every facet of life."[157] The analysis of rural consumption from an urban-to-rural transmission perspective delineates certain consumer goods as "luxury items" to which the rural indebted themselves to "aspire to that standard" of "middle-class urbanites" because outer influences "told them they should."[158] To rural consumers certain goods were not luxury items but small term investments and economic opportunity.

While the radio did connect the rural home to commercial advertising to a greater extent than available print material did, it also provided the farmer with pertinent local and national information. In conjunction with entertainment and advertising, rural radio audiences gained quicker access to current environmental, economic, and political conditions.[159] Automobiles in

[157] Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution,* viii.

[158] Danbom, *Born in the Country,* 190.

[159] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Great Communicator" August 13 Minneapolis, MN Campaign Speech. The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945 Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Political Ascension File No. 136 1920, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum,

urban settings might have been a luxury item but to rural citizens they were an opportunity. In the late 1800s, transportation in and out or rural areas was primarily limited to traveling by rail, by horse, or by foot. Automobiles expanded the availability and versatility of personal transportation. In the late 1800s, American culture embraced tourism in which rural areas capitalized on the popular "pursuit of the spectacular." Artists extoled the virtues of "the magnificent American landscape." Rural areas and private land owners capitalized on the growing trend in "America's interest in seeking out spectacular natural phenomena." Places like Yellowstone National Park and the Ozark Mountains benefited from transportation improvements as a new revenue stream opened around tourism. On a more practical scale automobiles simply offered the rural citizens quicker access to markets as well as equipment customized for a specific rural industry decreasing the cost of rural production.[160] Rural citizens "committed themselves to higher taxes to pay for roads" as improvements in the transportation benefited them in a multitude of ways. [161] Rural communities were at the forefront of a social mobility culture and actively chose to invest, participate, and capitalize in growing cultural trends and social transitions.

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration; Susan Smulyan, *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting 1920-1934* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994); Craig, *Out of the* Dark; Hall, *Lum and Abner*.

[160] Greenwald, "The Big Picture," 176-8; Cliff Edom and Vi Edom, eds. *Twice Told Tales and an Ozark Photo Album: With Emphasis on Taney County, Missouri* (Republic, MO: Western Printing Company, 1983).

[161] Danbom, *Born in the Country,* 190.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

American history at the turn of the twentieth-century is marked with multiple transformative events. Mass emigration, two world wars, an ecological disaster, economic instability, public and private intervention, and government expansion dramatically altered American social, cultural, and political institutions, practices, and beliefs. For decades these events dominated historical scholarship on the era. Prior to the social history movement in the 1970s, rural scholarship was rather limited and regulated to agricultural history as an economic or political practice rather than a lifestyle. The most common thread of social historians' criticism has been the lack of secondary research and analysis of rural America beyond the overshadowing political and economic events in the Progressive and New Deal eras. However, as an essential part of any lifestyle, rural economics must be considered. Consumerism requires supply and demand, a basic economic principle. It is also important to note that the individual retains purchasing power. If the consumer is not interested in the product they will not purchase the product. The same theory can be applied to cultural transmission. Nothing will become a part of a national or communal culture unless it is socially accepted.

American political policy and social institutions have reflected the American values of opportunity and progressive adaptation of natural resources for personal gain. In a market

economy production took on a higher level of social and cultural significance in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The industrialization of production and the economy created a capitalistic connection to ideologies of personal and national prosperity. When production and the economy fluctuated, producers and practices became a threat as well as a solution. American farmers in the early 1900s were no exception. The family farm in the first half of the twentieth-century became the focal point in an era in which the identity, stability, and prosperity of the individual and the nation was questioned. Early twentieth-century family farms also became a primary focus of expanding historical research in the latter half of the century. The family farm has provided historians a unifying social institution in which to examine the complex relationship between the rural community and national culture. A multitude of historical subfields have utilized the family farm to enrich the contextual understanding of the Gilded Age in American history. In almost every analysis, American historians framed the family farm as a resource. Economic opportunity was a backbone to American prosperity and identity.

Rural communities are often viewed as lacking in both opportunity and options. Economic opportunities appear restrictive within the rural demographics as being primarily agriculture with farming as the main occupation available. The goods and services available within rural towns that provided for the local farmers' needs were considered "basic" by *modern* standards. However, demographic data, labor statistics, and federal legislation generated at the turn of the twentieth century in conjunction with their contemporary local and national publications and organizations, supported by a volume of scholarship designates that the rural Midwest was not outside national averages. The small population did limited diversity and create homogeny in occupation and ethnicity. Similar homogeny can also be seen within urban communal groups as well. The community regardless of its size was a network of expansive and

overlapping social networks. Rural communities were primarily all agriculture or directly supporting agriculture. The communities supplied the goods and services the farmers required to continue a specific type of production. Just because the production was not of manufactured goods does not mean rural America was lacking in economic opportunity but was geared towards a specific form of production that required specific special, familial, and communal organization.

Agriculture was a significant national economic component, dependent on and subject to the consumption of urban and foreign markets. Popular opinions during formative events in the United States viewed agriculture as the solution to national economic crisis. From the settlement of the frontier that opened vast areas for agricultural development to the Great Depression that created high levels of unemployment, the rural Midwest held social and cultural significance as the public view was a well-fed labor force contributed to the national economic and communal health. Farmers as consumers and rural America as a commodity market, national leaders encouraged increased rural consumption of manufactured goods to help stimulate the national economy. The change in rural consumption and production patterns signifies a shift in national economy, occupation, and culture that was generated within and pressed upon the rural Midwest. The changes in production patterns highlights the farmers actively altering their practices to meet their specific needs while reflecting the broader cultural influences that governed social institutions responding to the unique conditions of time, place, and production. Agricultural production and the transition towards industrial production and the service industry reflects a shift away from agriculture being the primary national occupation yet wages remained comparable to urban production. This transition was part of a sweeping cultural and social trend towards business class, investment, consumerism, and market speculation.

Farmers as Owner-operators had the opportunity to be independent businessmen, professionals. Farmers were both the business owners and supplied the labor. Rural heads-of-household managed the family farm as a profit generating operation, dependent on familial and communal labor and networking. Farmers as investors were key to the national economic and social stability. They purchased equipment, supplies, seeds and adopted machinery and practices to increase crop yield, decrease cost of human labor, and increase personal profit. Farmers participated in the prevailing economic practices by obtaining loans to purchase land and technology. More land was required to produce beyond subsistence levels farmers purchased land and equipment to generate a larger profit. Farmers incorporated marginal land areas into agribusiness. Farmers as speculators contributed to the national economic climate. Loans were taken in anticipation of market demands that were used to purchase land, seeds, and livestock according to trends. The speculation was a national tendency of increased investment in anticipatory yield and return but was contingent on the national and international markets. As consumers they contributed to and were subject to national economic events that altered consumption patterns.

Rural families as community members contributed to the development and distribution of common ideologies and standards through their voluntary purchases, participations, and practices. They were instructors in youth programs and social institutions and organized social events and activities. As parents, rural Midwesterners helped establish national educational and health standards. Parents entered, supported, and encouraged the participation of their children in health contests, educational programs, economic practices, and local activities. Rural citizens as professionals were asked for their expertise in agricultural production, home-economics, and business. Farmers were consulted on and aided in the establishment on American standard of

agricultural production. In every facet of American cultural shifts and social movements of the Gilded Age through the New Deal Era the rural Midwest was an active participant. From the first settler to the formation of agribusiness the rural Midwest helped create and reflects the American way of life.

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The 1920s saw a national women's club movement. Local and national leaders encouraged women to utilize their unique feminine qualities to help mold society. Women's organizations promoted thrift and style through personal demonstrations. Some of the formal women's organizations were nationally recognized and organized while other women's groups were informal gatherings of concerned female citizens. Rural women created social opportunities by establishing "homemaker's clubs," denominationally and charity-based associations. The associations provided members with a variety of social activities including meetings, lectures, and displays. Members learned new skills and recognition through socialization and shared practical knowledge and experience. Cultural values were transmitted through national affiliations connect the rural family to a national identity.

"Harriett Alma Rigby." Obituary. *The Annals of Iowa 20 (1936), 319-319.* State Historical Society of Iowa. Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.5853.

American society experienced a demographic shift in the 1800s and again in the 1900s. The Civil War displaced and prompted the migration of a significant position of the population. In the 1930s the economic disparities again altered living patterns. It was common for children to be born in one state and then migrate to another. Farming was the primary vocation of migrant families and settlers. Typically, displaced farmers found avenues to establish themselves within the wider community as members of local chapters of national organizations. The Women's club movement in the 1920s continued into the 1930s. Women were very active in the local community.

4-H Club News. Round-up, Crawford Co. ed. Girard, KS, 1930. Axe Kansas Collection, Axe Library, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg KS.

This organizational newsletter details the activities and announcements from the national chapter in 1930. A variety of activities that included application and demonstration of home economics and agricultural programs.

Allen, Adam. *Dynamo Farm: A 4-H Story*. New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1942.

Starting in the 1920 the 4-H approved and published youth literature. Dynamo Farm is one such novel. Allen details rural life through fictional 4-H members. A fictional character named Tim joins the local 4-H and the narrative follows Tim through his many activities as a member. While it is a fictional piece it serves as a beautiful example of the sanctioned activities and values of the 4-H as an "approved" text.

Allen, Earl J. "4-H Club Manual in Gardening." Extension Circular No. 359. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville, Ar., reprint December 1939. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. http://digitalcollections.uark.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ArkExt/id/11382.

Over production in agriculture contributed to the economic conditions that lead to the Great Depression. Widespread unemployment decreased disposable income restricting the family food budget. Food was easier and cheaper to maintain, preserve, and consume when the individual grew it. The commercialization of agriculture and the increased production of Midwest agriculture the early 1900s created an environmental disaster. The Dust Bowl ravage the Great Plains region as the topsoil was exposed and consequential dispersed. Rural families were significantly impacted by the dust storms. Commercial food production was altered, and small gardens helped offset the financial burden of feeding the family.

American Security and Trust. "Duty to Daughters." Anna Kelton Wiley Papers. Homemaker-Consumer Life in Washington, D.C., 1922-23. Advertisement. Library of Congress, Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=amrlm&fileName=mk03page.db&recNum=15

The Roaring Twenties was a decade of economic excess culminating in the stock market crash in 1929. The post-war speculation spurred increased capital investment in company stocks and American production. Poorly regulated investments and agricultural were blamed as significantly contributing to the economic hardships and widespread foreclosures of the Great Depression.

Conant, Gertrude E. "4-H Manual in Foods and Cookery: Demonstration No.1" *Extension Circular No. 367.* Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville, Ar., reprint June 1940. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. http://digitalcollections.uark.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ArkExt/id/11401.

In the early 1900s Americans were focused on the health of the individual, community, and nation. Nutrition and food consumption patterns were altered based on scientific information and academic research. Science became fundamental in prescribing the best foods and the proper amounts to achieve optimal health. Foods were divided into groups based on their measured nutritional values and biological needs of the human body.

Edom, Cliff, and Vi Edom, eds. *Twice Told Tales and an Ozark Photo Album: With Emphasis on Taney County, Missouri.* Republic, MO: Western Printing Company, 1983.

Local photojournalists collected thousands of photographs from the local Ozark communities. They compiled a photo album that provides numerous pictures of rural life in the early 1900s in the Ozark region. It does provide brief background and contextual information about the photographs and the region but is not an in-depth historical scholarship. However, it is full of local legends, landmarks, and legacy.

Fraternal Order of the Eagles, "Fraternal Order of the Eagles, Mrs. Eagle, Special Issue October 1951. Proceedings from the Grand Aerie Fraternal Order of Eagles Convention, 1951," *History,* Fraternal Order of the Eagles Online. Last modified, 2020. https://www.foe.com/About-The-Eagles/History.

This article is part of the organizational newsletter. It was written as a special edition. It lists the various activities of the annual convention in 1951. It details the organizations agendas and highlights strategic members of the organization including female auxiliary members.

Head, T. P. and Andrew Leon Holley. "4-H Manual in Dairying." Circular No. 455. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville, Ar., May 11, 1949. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. http://digitalcollections.uark.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ArkExt/id/11591.

Milk is a vital component to the health of the human body. A dairy cow became a long-term source for nutritional needs. The dairy cow was a long-term investment and a farm staple. Most rural families depended on their dairy cow to produce milk as well as additional offspring to increase the milk supply. Knowledge in the biological processes increased the importance placed on disease management in both humans and livestock. Thrift and detailed accounts directed the maintenance of the livestock for optimal production while a potential for profit. Women were often involved in the milking and care of the family cow.

Holden, Ellsworth A. *Souvenir, National Grange in Michigan. Lansing, November 12 1922*. Lansing, Michigan: R. Smith Printing Co, 1902. Library of Congress. *Pioneering the Upper Midwest: Books from Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, Ca. 1820 to 1910*. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. https://www.loc.gov/item/04007812/.

A booklet produced for the 1922 National Grange meeting in Michigan. It provides a detailed list of the organization's leaders. It contains a brief history on the Grange and Michigan. The booklet was created as a souvenir as well as an organizational pamphlet. Resources, government agencies, and Michigan production is covered extensively demonstrating the significance the Grange placed on agriculture and politics.

Jernigan, W.J. "4-H Club Information That All 4-H Boys and Girls Should Know," *Extension Circular 276*. . College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of

Agriculture Cooperating. Fayetteville, Ar. December 1930. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. http://digitalcollections.uark.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ArkExt/id/11249.

In the early 1900s the American government established several federal agencies and enacted a variety of laws to address social disparities. There was an emphasis placed on the health and stability of rural America. Reformers believed education was the best means to introduce new methods and technologies into the average home. The 4-H was established to provide rural children and families the opportunity to learn through demonstration and expert advice. Children introduced the education they gained from their activities in the 4-H program to their parents. Both boys and girls were encouraged to participate in the free national program. National experts and local leaders provided knowledgeable advice and instruction throughout the Midwest

Jones, Harold E., and Kansas State University. Cooperative Extension Service. *Collecting Rocks, Minerals and Fossils: Unit 1: Beginning Geology, Ages 9-11*. Vol. 303; 303: Manhattan, Kansas: Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, 1971.

Jones outlines the education aims of one 4-H program. He structures the examination and classification procedures in the Geology course offered to 4-H members. The manual introduces the 4-Her to the science of geology broken into sections based on age and participation. This is the first manual in the series.

Jones, M. P. *4-H Club Insect Manual. no. 65*: Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1954.

Jones provides a detailed guide to an organizational project. The manual was designed to instruct 4-H member on the scientifically prescribed structure, identification, and collection of insects. The manual is broken down into three sections which cover the three years it takes to complete the project. A yearly calendar outlines the activities and information to complete to stay on task. Part of the third year is dedicated to exhibits and demonstrations.

Kurtz, Charles M. *The St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, in Commemoration of the Acquisition of the Louisiana Territory.* St. Louis: Gottschalk Printing Company, 1903. Last modified, August 12, 2011. https://archive.org/details/stlouisworldsfai00kurt/page/n10

This volume of information of the St. Louis World's Fair lists the exhibits, including architectural sketches of the buildings and site maps. Kurtz provides a detailed list of the Fair's founders, board members, and government departments. He states the "little book" is an attempt to provide those interested with the best information available from reliable sources in a simple format. Kurtz dedicates a section of his book the contributions of the department of agriculture.

Lanning, Aaron Lane. Household Expense Ledgers. May 1926. Kansas Historical Society, Kansas Memory. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/309259

Aaron Lane Lanning moved to Mound City, Kansas after he was discharged from military service after the Civil War ended. He and his wife Sara Emma Preston moved with their five children to a farm near Melvern, Kansas. He was one of many Americans who migrated during the Reconstruction era. A number of emigrants to the Midwest employed themselves as farmers and exchanged their labor and farming skills for wages to purchase commodities not produced on the farm.

Loyal Order of the Moose, "About Us" Loyal Order of the Moose Online. Last modified, 2016. https://www.mooseintl.org/about-us/

The official website provides a brief organizational history. It provides the date of organization and the structure of the Order. The Order's mission statement and demographics are also available. The Order is comprised of local chapters under a national organizational structure.

Marshall, Sue. "4-H Club Manual in Clothing: Demonstration C-For Older Girls," *Extension Circular No. 402*. Manual. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating Fayetteville, Ar., June 1937. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. http://digitalcollections.uark.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ArkExt/id/11509.

Clothing was part of the housewife's responsibilities. With limited income rural women made garments within the home. Mass produced attire did not comprise the bulk of rural wardrobes. Thrift was encouraged as it ensured the families were getting durable, quality garments at a reduced cost to the household allowance. Fabric locally purchased or recycled was utilized to reduce clothing costs. Flour and grain companies aware of the cultural utilization of their produce packaging started printing designs on their fabric bags.

Michelson, Truman ed. Selections from Autobiography of a Fox Woman. Autobiography. Washington D.C. Government Printing Office. 1925(299-303). State Historical Society of Iowa Historic Iowa Children's Diaries. Last modified, November 2006. https://www.iowaheritage.org/items/show/16798

Written anonymously a Native American woman details her life in Iowa. She was a pivotal member within her tribe as well as the larger Iowa community. It is believed that she was part of the Meskwaki tribe on their settlement near Tama Iowa. Mid 1800 Iowa legislation allowed tribal members to purchase land and remain in the area. Like regional production, Meskwaki tribal production was agricultural in context with many members being farmers. The autobiography details rural life and illustrates the instructions her mother gave her in preparation for womanhood.

Miller, Samuel Freeman, and Supreme Court of the United States. U.S. Reports: Wabash, &c., Railway Co. v. Illinois, 118 U.S. 557. 1886. Last accessed March 22, 2020. https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep118557/.

Supreme Court case concerning transportation rates charged in Illinois. A significant case for agricultural businessmen and pressure groups. The case was brought before the Supreme Court on the grounds of discriminatory practices. The verdicts altered further agricultural legislation. The Grange was significant in gaining public attention to the case.

Mooseheart, "Our Story," *Mooseheart Online.* Last modified, 2020. http://www.mooseheart.org/history/;

The official website provides a brief organizational history of the Fraternal Order of the Moose. Mooseheart began as the Order's headquarters and grew into town. It provides the date of organization and the structure of the Order, the Order's mission statement and Mooseheart demographics.

Morgan, Horace H. *The Historical World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago Guide … Illustrated from Official Drawings*. St. Louis; Pacific Publishing Company, 1892. Last modified, October 28, 2017. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.c006736490;view=1up;seq=1

Horace provides a detailed map and description of the World's Fair in Chicago. Exhibit information and location comprise the bulk of information. Agricultural departments, technologies, and demonstrations are listed as prominent features of the fair.

National Archives Museum. "Displays Original Smith-Lever Act." April 28, 2014 Washington, D.C. Last accessed, March 22, 2020. https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2014/nr14-61.html

On May 8, 2014 the Smith-Lever Act that officially connected the land-grant universities and its extension programs to the rural household celebrated its 100th anniversary. In honor of its profound impact on society and its longevity, the congressional bill was prominently displayed in the National Archives Museum in America's capital, Washington D.C. Situated among other formative documents the featured display of the statute highlights the fundamental pride American citizens have in their unique nation and the enduring partnership between the United States government and its citizens.

National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry. "Our Roots," *National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry Online.* 2019, Last accessed, March 21, 2020. https://www.nationalgrange.org/about-us/

Official website of the Grange. The website provides a brief history of the organization. The mission statement and the organization's demographics, leaders, and founders are provided. The Grange is an organization with agricultural and rural connections and has political influence.

Official Guidebook to Omaha and Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition: Illustrated with Fifty Half-Tone Plates, and Indexed Map of Omaha. Omaha: Megeath Stationery Company, 1898. Last modified, December 31, 2014. https://archive.org/details/officialguideboo00mege.

A pamphlet published for the World's Fair in Omaha for visitors. Information on exhibits are provided. A map of the fair and the city of Omaha are available within the guidebook. It details the numerous agricultural exhibits and technologies.

Pearson, Edna, and Mrs. Laurence Erlach. Mrs. Laurence Erlach. Interview. United States Work Projects Administration, Federal Writers' Project. Nebraska, 1938. Library of Congress Folklore Project, Life Histories, 1936-39. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. https://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh001022/

From 1936 to 1940 the Works Project Administration collected thousands of interviews, documenting the personal history of Americans living at the turn of the twenty first century. Over 300 writers were employed by the Folklore Project, a division of the larger Federal Writer's Project, created during the New Deal Era. The vast collection details the political, social, cultural, regional, national, and economic conditions in 24 states. As part of the interview process the writers provided identifying information of the individual informant and their immediate surroundings, including details about appearance and condition.

Pearson, Lola Clark. "Women and the World's Work." *The Household Magazine* 26, No. 2. Topeka Kansas: February 1926 (30). Article. Library of Congress, *Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929.* Last accessed, March 21, 2020. http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/amrlgs.hm1

Social reform movements in the early 1900s spawned a variety of community organizations reflecting a national improvement culture. Women's Social Associations grew in the 1920s. The Women's club movement promoted volunteerism, communities, and families. Women joined organizations to address state and local issues that directly impacted rural families. Homemaker's clubs and other organizations sponsored community actives. The aim was to two-fold: ease isolation and improve the quality of life of the individual, the family, and the community.

Pidgeon, Mary Elizabeth. "Women in the Economy of the United States of America: A Summary Report," *Women's Bureau Bulletin*, no. 155. United States Women's Bureau. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1937: 66-7. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/5429

Industrialization altered the production, output, value, and wages of textile goods shifting the American economy from agricultural to market capital. Piece work had been a form of household income prior to mechanization and continued into the twenty first century. Unemployment, inflation, and limited access to credit in the 1930s required many families to seek alternative sources of employment and income. Home piece work became a viable option as American manufactures expanded production outside the factory circumventing labor laws that governed factory production. Industries capitalized on the increased access to cheap labor depressing already low wages by enlisting home laborer. Laborer activists began challenging what they viewed as exploitive behavior that damaged the health of the individual laborer and the economy. Nation campaigns were launched to gain public attention and government support.

Labor movements called for the regulation industrial capitalists to protect the wage-earner and adjust wage rates to reflect a more accurate economic landscape.

Randolph, Blanche. "4-H Canning Demonstrations." Extension Circular 450. Manual. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville, Ar., February, 1948. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars. Digital Collections. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. http://digitalcollections.uark.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ArkExt/id/11583.

Home economics focusing on improving the quality of the rural home and family was a foundation to 4-H instruction and part of the expansion of government in the early 1900s. The Smith-Lever Act in 1914 established the extension service program connecting universities with rural families via county agents. Extension service experts disseminated vital information to the rural public. Agents specializing in home economics provided nutritional values and quantities to educate woman on the best way to retain all the essential nutrients and vitamins in canned foods.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. "The Great Communicator" August 13 Minneapolis, MN Campaign Speech. The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945 Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Political Ascension File No. 136 1920 Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum. Linked to National Archives. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/msf/msf00139

World War I ended in 1918 with America as an international economic power. During the 1920s Presidential campaign Senator Roosevelt was nominated as the running mate on the Democratic Party's national ticket. The 1920 election so soon after the end of WWI addressed how incorporated the American political system and economy was in the international markets. Local issues such as production, consumption and transportation became national economic issues. Document highlights Roosevelt support of the League of Nations and the Wilson Administration.

Sears and Roebuck. *The Household Magazine* 26, No. 2. Topeka Kansas: February 1926. Advertisement. Library of Congress, *Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929.* Last accessed, March 21, 2020. http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/amrlgs.hm1

Household Magazine was one of many publications that tied national production and culture to the rural families. Advertisements were utilized to promote sales to a wider audience outside a company's geographic location. Manufacturer offered families the opportunity to subscribe to their mail-order catalogs altering American consumption patterns. By the early 1900s most rural families were able to obtain merchandise previously restricted by geographic location. Sears and Roebuck was one of many companies that expanded their sales outside of department store targeting rural families and female consumers. The focus on the price and quality of the goods was part of the national thrift movement of the early 1900s. Household

Magazine publisher and Kansas senator, Arthur Capper, supported McNary-Haugen farm legislation and sponsored a "truth-in-fabric" bill.

Smith, Ruby Mendenhall. “4-H Club Manual in Food Preservation: Demonstration No. 1.” *Extension Circular No. 363*. Manual. Extension Service College of Agriculture, University of Arkansas U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating: Fayetteville Ar., January 1938. University of Arkansas Libraries in association with Arkansas State Historical Society. Arkansas Extension Circulars. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. http://digitalcollections.uark.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ArkExt/id/11394.

Mass produced food was not typically consumed by rural families in the early 1900s. Rural families depended on the family farm to produce the food required to feed the family. Excess food was preserved for the winter months when fresh produce was limited. There were known dangers associated with the consumption of poorly canned foods. Science and education introduced the public to the hazards of microorganisms. Sterilization, proper handling, and quality products prevented bacterial growth in food.

Swanger, John E. *Official Manual of the State of Missouri: For the Years 1907-1908.* Missouri Secretary of State. Jefferson City: The Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1908.

Missouri Secretary of state John E. Swanger compiled statistics for the annual report. It covers a variety of demographic information. Attendance rates for the state, other regions, and the nation provides comparable data for the Midwest educational system. Swanger provides data for the number of schools available as well as a variety of other social institutions functioning within the state of Missouri and the nation in the first decade of the twentieth century.

U.S, House of Representatives, 113th Congress, second session, Resolution 86, *Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Enactment of the Smith-Lever Act, which Established the Nationwide Cooperative Extension System*. Washington D.C., 2013-2014. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/86/text

Congressional bill honoring the 100th anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act. The 4-H had been providing youth activities and educational projects and opportunities since the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914. The illustrious anniversary spawned a congressional resolution calling on the nation and the government to “recognize...celebrate…honor… [and give] thanks” to the Act and those that were involved in its durability and its success.

U.S. Department of Labor. “Farm Workers: Harvesting Crops,” Handbook of Labor Statistics 1936 Edition. Government Record. U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1927. Bulletin 616. University of Missouri Libraries. “Prices and Wages by Decade: 1930-1939.” Last modified, November 29, 2019.
https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015059391089&view=1up&seq=1

It was customary for laborers to reside with their employers. The hired laborer would be provided room and board which was deducted from his wages. The farmer's wife would provide meals and laundering services to the boarders. Hired labor and the extra food consumption was factored into the family budget as well as the laborer's wages.

United State House of Representative, 63rd Congress "Smith-Lever Act," *An Act to Provide for Cooperative Agricultural Extension Work Between the Agricultural Colleges in the Several States Receiving the Benefits of an Act of Congress Approved July Second, Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-two, and of Acts Supplementary Thereto, And the United States Department of Agriculture.* Statute 372 by Hoke Smith and Asbury Lever. Washington D.C. May 8, 1914. Last modified May 22, 2008. https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Smith-Lever%20Act.pdf.

Congressional Act that officially sanctioned the formation of the 4-H. The legislation outlined the cooperation between universities, government agents, and professionals. The Act was part of cultural transitions towards social reform and political support. The Act was passed in support of improving rural health through the voluntary 4-H program.

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Retail Prices of Food, 1923-1936: Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, No. 635," Retail Prices of Food (October 1937). Last accessed, March 21, 2020. https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/3963/item/494370

The American economy was booming after WWI. Optimism in American manufacturing and agriculture led to speculation and ultimately contributed the Stock Market Crash and in turn the Great Depression. The changes in the American economy expanded into the world market. Many international markets were impacted by the downturn in American capital and production. The global consumption and price rates shifted as a result. The economic instability of the 1930s created noticeable fluctuations in across a variety of staple food prices.

United States Congress House Committee on Agriculture. *4-H Club and Rural Youth Act: Hearing before the Committee on Agriculture, House of Representatives, Seventy-Seventh Congress, First Session. on H.R. 4530, a Bill to Promote the further Development of the 4-H Clubs and Other Extension Work with Rural Youths. November 17 and 18, 1941.* United States: 1941. Last modified, February 24, 2020. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89058788936&view=1up&seq=3

Congressional bill establishing further funding for youth programs. The 4-H was the primary focus and benefactor of the legislation. The 4-H program was provided with more government funding. Because of this Act, the 4-H was able to continue its youth programs and expand.

United States Congress. "Public—No 10—73D Congress H. R. 3835". *Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933.* House of Representatives. Washington D.C., May 12, 1933. From Federal Reserve, *William McChesney Martin, Jr., Papers,* Government Publications Box 54, Folder 1. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/archival/1341/item/457089.

Part of the New Deal era the Agricultural Adjustment Act was enacted to adjust agricultural production and prices. To alleviate growing disparities, the federal government expanded its authoritative and administrative powers. Several new federal agencies were established to address a variety of social ills created during the Great Depression. The 1933 agricultural law allowed the United States government to control agricultural output in an attempt to regulate the struggling economy and create a more equitable financial platform for farmers in a capital market. Farmer were paid subsidies by the government for their products. Funds were generated by the taxation of companies manufacturing agricultural products.

United States House of Representatives, 64th Congress, second session, "Smith-Hughes Act 1917," *An Act to Provide for the promotion of vocational education; to Provide for cooperation with the States in the Promotion of Such Education in Agriculture and the Trades and Industries; to Provide for Cooperation with the States in the Preparation of Teachers of Vocational subjects; and to Appropriate money and Regulate its Expenditure.* Public no. 347. by Hoke Smith Washington D.C. February, 1917. Library of Congress. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/79th-congress/session-2/c79s2ch725.pdf.

A Congressional Act to establish vocational education. It outlines the funding and regulation of expenditures of formal vocational instruction. It details the cooperation between the U.S. government and universities in establishing education for vocational arts instructors including home economics.

United States House of Representatives, 72nd Congress, first session. Chapter 509. *To protect the copyrights and patents of Foreign Exhibitors at A Century of Progress (Chicago World's Fair Centennial Celebration), to be held at Chicago, Illinois, in 1933.* An Act Washington D.C., July, 1932. Library of Congress. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/72nd-congress/session-2/c72s2ch120.pdf.

United Sates congressional bill establishing the legalities of foreign items. Tariffs were exempt on items imported for the Chicago World's Fair. Artifacts, exhibits, and building were part of the vast collection titled "A Century of Progress" for the centennial celebration.

United States House of Representatives, 79th Congress, second session, Appropriations 775, *An Act to Amend the Act of June8, 1936, Relating to Vocational Education, so as to Provide for the Further Development of Vocational Education in the Several States and Territories.* Washington D.C. August 1, 1946. Library of Congress. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/79th-congress/session-2/c79s2ch725.pdf.

United States. Congress. House. Committee on Agriculture. *4-H Club and Rural Youth Act: Hearing before the Committee on Agriculture, House of Representatives, Seventy-Seventh Congress, First Session. on H.R. 4530, a Bill to Promote the further Development of the 4-H Clubs and Other Extension Work with Rural Youths. November 17 and 18, 1941*. United States: 1941.

Congressional bill that establishes the 4-H Club and Rural Youth Act. It details the appropriation of incrementally increased funding over a six-year period beginning in June 1942 with 24 million. The legislation was created to promote the 4-H vision of rural youths productive, cooperative, democratic American citizens. It details how the millions of dollars were to be allotted and applied. Money paid from the Treasury provided education, health, arts and crafts projects.

Waite, Morrison Remick, and Supreme Court of the United States. *U.S. Reports: Munn v. Illinois, 94 U.S. 113*. 1876. Last accessed, March 21, 2020. https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep094113/

Supreme Court case. One of many that concerned agriculture and state politics. The Grange and other farmers' alliances were significantly impacted and influenced by the outcome of the court case. A rural interest group had significant influence on state and national political culture. It set standards in further agricultural laws and legislation.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *The Little House on the Prairie.* New York: Scholastic Inc., 1935.

A fictional novel intended for a young audience. Wilder portrays life on the American frontier. The classic work is a creative interpretation of Wilder's life as a settler in the 1800s. Her work provides a stylized and filtered view of day-to-day life and national events on the American frontier. It is not an academic or accurate description. It was written as fiction and as such glosses over much of the harsh realities of living on the "fringes" of American society. However, a close examination of the literature highlights that while the Ingalls home sites appeared isolated and removed from society, neighbors, news, and cultural influences were present.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Monographs

Bloch, Marc. *The Historian's Craft.* New York: Vintage Books, 1953.

Bloch provides a how-to guide for historical scholarship. He emphasizes the need to question the validity of sources. He instructs the reader on how to place sources within their cultural context. Bloch argues social and personal acceptance fosters the cultural reception and dissemination. He asserts, "social conditions must be such as to favor its circulation."

Bower, William. *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920.* Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1974.

Bower argued the Country Life Movement was based on a legitimate concern of urban centers for rural development. He builds his analysis on an economic basis. He emphasized a middle-class desire to protect the established order through rural reform. He argued the efforts were ineffective as rural America was ill-equipped for industrial production. He perpetuates the

urban to rural spheres of influence and through a class based social history. Bower's scholarship supported the arguments that economics were the primary mitigating factor which became a social ill and class concern.

Burnham, John C. *Health Care in America: A History.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015.

Burnham provides a detailed history of American medicine and healthcare. He examines the evolution of medical practices, science, and the culture in which they developed. He argues the emphasis on scientific and professionalism of health care "initiated and intellectual, social, and technical transformation" in American culture. His work demonstrates the national prerogative towards improving individual, social and national health that went beyond urban centers as a shared interest of almost all levels of American society, regions, and demographics.

Bushman, Richard L. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities.* New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Bushman examines the cultural impact, prerogative, and impact of cultural "refinement" of American society between 1700 and 1850. He focuses on the transition towards materialism and commercial consumptions that he asserts started in Europe and infiltrated first the upper and urban social elites. He argues that cultural diffusion, distribution, power, and influence "remains [with] people at the top." He qualified those individuals below the middle class and outside urban centers occupied positions of "cruder traditional values."

Butler, Kiera, and Roy Rafael. *Raise: What 4-H Teaches Seven Million Kids and how its Lessons could Change Food and Farming Forever*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2014.

Butler and Roy investigate agricultural education. They frame their study on the activities and members of the rural youth organization, the 4-H. The text details the preparations and concerns of five 4-H members, including fair competitions and livestock. Butler is a journalist rather than a historian, but her interview provides detailed personal descriptions of the long standing 4-H participation, activities, objectives, and traditions in rural communities.

Cott, Nancy. *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835,* 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

Cott exposes that through their own descriptions of religion, family, education, work, and social issues women had shouldered the responsibility of creating a moral, progressive society by utilizing their unique influences, positions, and bonds as women. According to Cott, women regardless of class share the distinct condition inherent to their gender which prepared them to develop a "group consciousness," the seeds for feminism. The bonds of Sisterhood are the foundation to Cott's argument. Cott artfully argued that it was this unified connection between women that transcended barriers both social and economic.

Craig, Steve. *Out of the Dark: A History of Radio and Rural America.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009.

Craig examines how radio impacted rural society. For several decades, the radio connected rural America to outer influences and broader social and cultural content. Information, services, and products were introduced to the rural home and family in a more rapid and direct manner than prior to the advent of the radio. Craig argues the introduction of the radio dramatically impacted rural and national standards. He examines the two-way social and cultural transmissions via the radio in the early 1900s.

Danbom, David D. *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Danbom examines the agricultural history of America. Families and the New Deal are a focus of his social, political, and economic analysis of rural America. His work is expansive, covering pre-European settlement through the mid-1900s. He argues the transformative cultural exchanges between the urban and rural, agriculture and business, as well as the government and the individual led to the decline of a distinct rural American characteristics as a separate part of American cultural and social constructs.

_____. *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1990-1903.* Ames: Iowa State Press, 1979.

Danbom details the modernization of rural America. He writes from an urban to rural perspective of social and cultural transmission. He argues rural families resisted urban efforts to improve the standard of living because rural self-identity prevented them from seeing themselves as deficient. He portrays rural America in the early twentieth century as rebuking a collaborated effort of the State and urban centers. His analysis is a rural versus urban conflict. He argues rural self-interest, profit, and war prompted rural development rather than farmers submitting to urban and governmental pressures and influences.

Dorey, Annette Vance. *Better Baby Contests: The Scientific Quest for Perfect Childhood Health in the Early Twentieth Century.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, 1999.

Dorey examines the social and cultural context of baby contests. She highlights the popularity of the competition in local and state fairs. She focuses on the cultural significance entertainment had on the dissemination and importance society placed on scientific standards of health. Education, entertainment, social reform, and scientific standards shaped the creation and popularity of the better baby contests beginning in the early 1900s. Her analysis reflects the inward influences of the germ theory and national standards on the rural family and the outward influence of the application, and participation in the popular event on American culture and society.

Dulles, Foster Rhea. *America Learns to Play; a History of Popular Recreation, 1607-1940*. United States: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1940.

Dulles explores the history of American recreation. He lists music and dancing as entertainment. Churches are cited as social and recreational spaces beyond their direct religious purposes. Scheduled church activities provided citizens with social opportunities. Dulles shows that beyond Sunday service the rural church offered a variety of activities in which to participate including the "small-town church social."

Freedman, Estelle. "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930." In *Women and Power in American History,* 3rd ed. Eds. Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, 162-173. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2009.

Freedman provides a synthesis of a volume of historical scholarship on feminism. She argues "female institution building" was a cultural product of 19th century middle-class women. She identifies a distinct "women's culture" and argues against it being "incompatible" with "female politics." Freedman asserts a "new woman" formed in the 1920s. The new woman according to Freedom "hoped to become equals by adopting to men's values and integrating into their institutions" which created a unique culture among middle-class women that filtered into social institutions.

Fraser, Caroline. *Prairie Fires: The American Dream of Laura Ingalls Wilder.* New York: Henry Holt Company, 2017.

Fraser goes beyond constructing a laudatory biography and masterfully crafts an exhaustively researched, contextual history of a quintessential American icon. She illuminates the harsh realities of living on the American frontier. She removes the beloved character of Laura Ingalls Wilder and replaces her with a real woman who loved, lost, and lived on the edges of an expanding and culturally diverse American society. Fraser exposes the harsh conditions experienced by numerous rural settlers in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Hall, Randall. *Lum and Abner: Rural America and the Golden Age of Radio.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007.

Hall examines the popular radio show titled "Lum and Abner" that aired from 1931 to 1954. He argues that the popularity of the program enhanced the connection between rural America to a national audience. He states the show was unique as it was a southern creation with a national audience. He demonstrates how the Arkansas based comedy show had an outward reach and influence on a national level and American culture and society.

Hay, Samuel. *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1959.

Hay examined the reorganization of agriculture as a social prerogative. Efficiency was the primary aim of Progressive era modernization reform efforts. He argued the conservation movement at the turn of the twentieth century had been historically interpreted and promoted as a "moral struggle between the virtuous 'people' and the evil 'interests.'(1) He contended the conservation movement reflected a sociological, cultural, and ideological shift towards a

scientific, professional application and methodology to achieve efficiency and progressive development in the utilization of resources.

Hine, Robert V., and John Mack Faragher. *Frontiers: A Short History of the American West.* New Haven: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Hine and Faragher explore the development and settlement of the American frontier and how it shaped rural, regional, and national identities. They argue against Turner's book end theory of frontier as exclusive to land settlement. They also expand western development beyond a predetermined Manifest Destiny to a cultural and social exchange. They frame the frontier as a region blending the old and the new. *Frontiers* places fringe groups and areas as the center of the analysis and highlights both the east to west and west to east significance of regional conflicts and national ideologies.

Hofstadter, Richard. *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955.

Hofstadter wrote a political analysis of the period between the late 1800s and early 1900s. He divided the political activity into three eras of influence: Populism in the 1890s, Progressivism between 1900 and 1920s, and the New Deal beginning in the 1930s. As part of the consensus theory of historical interpretation, He argued the New Deal was a sharp divergence from Progressive era scholarship that traced a continuum of social reform. He directly challenged the Progressive ideology, criticizing the agrarian myth as "backwards" and rural influences as manipulative. He argued that the loss of status prompted the elite class to actively seek reform.

Kohlstedt, Sally Gregory. *Teaching Children Science: Hands-On Nature Study in North America, 1890-1930.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Kohlstedt examines the introduction of science into American school curriculum. Her study on the nature study movement demonstrates a national transition in educational practices and priorities. The movement was integrated and adapted for rural children. She argues the transition in education highlights national, cultural shifts toward professionalism, female authority, and social reform.

Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Levine examines the development of American culture during the nineteenth century. He distinguished between refined and crude forms of cultural practices. He labels the variances as "Highbrow" and "Lowbrow." He argued that American culture not isolated from or subject to the influences of any one section of society. He demonstrates the fluidity of cultural transmission through examples of how Americans regardless of class or region knew of Shakespeare.

Limerick, Patricia Nelson. *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1987.

Limerick provides a "synthesized" history of the American West beyond the bookends of Turner's frontier framework. Her application of historical scholarship covering business, labor, development, and migration supports her argument that the settlement of the west was an "economic habit" legitimized by the American ideal of prosperity (28). Limerick's unique framing of cultural conflict proves American society was and is built through the transmission, application, and expression of individual values and practices with a predominant cultural unity. By focusing on the West as a center rather than a periphery, Limerick highlights the complexity and vitality of the West as a cultural nexus.

Lowe, Kevin M. *Baptized with the Soil: Christian Agrarians and the Crusade for Rural America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Lowe examines the religious connection to farming. He evaluates the Protestant movement in the early 1900s to protect rural farmers. He details spiritual as well as economic motivation behind the cooperative promotion of agrarianism. He argues the efforts, practices and beliefs of Christian Agrarians helped define American culture through their ideology of farmers' obligation to national health. He details the conservation efforts and financial aid that protected the land, the farmers, and the nation through moral farming practices.

Lynd, Robert S., and Helen Merrell Lynd. *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture.* New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1929.

Robert and Helen Lynd provide a sociological examination of a "typical" small American town in the 1920s. Middletown is a pseudonym for the average town of Muncie Indiana. They applied social anthropology to evaluate the culture of a small industrial. The study provides a detailed analysis of an industrial town in the Midwest and establishes the cultural and social significance of Midwestern production. *Middletown* places the rural and the east within the periphery of national cultural and social influence. It also provides a contrast between the rural and the industrial within the regional Midwest.

McCullough, David. *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011.

David McCullough provides another example of the intricate co-dependency of society and culture. He has written a sound narrative history of middle -class Americans traveling to France for professional development. While he is describing history rather than advancing a specific historical argument, the title does suggest how much further France has journeyed in social and cultural relationships in comparison to American social segregation. Medically France was more advanced because society was more accepting of science.

Morain, Thomas. *Prairie Grass Roots: An Iowa Small Town in the Early Twentieth Century.* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998.

Morain challenged the prevailing focus of prior historians on political, economic, and big men, big events scholarship. His focus was on the local history of a "typical" small Midwestern town. His work demonstrates the community was a source of cultural affiliation, distribution,

regulation, and identity. He argued the three main cultural influences in Jefferson, Iowa in the early twentieth century were the “school, the pulpit, and the press.” Morain identified the church as “the strongest institution” and was “a considerable force in defining local standards of conduct on a statutory as well as a personal basis.” He explores how each significantly united the community in a network of congregations, classrooms, and editorials.

Muncy, Robyn. *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Muncy studies the social reform movement over the first part of the 1900s that swept through American culture. She argues women were integral to the organization, success, and influence rural women had in shaping national policies. Women’s active participation in developing a network of organizations was based on promoting social welfare. Muncy argues the female participates established a “female dominion” which allowed them to influence values, methodologies, and policies to implement better health standards.

Neth, Mary. *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Neth, as part of the “new rural history” movement, focused on the social relationship within the farm household and its relationship to the broader community. Neth highlighted the changes in familial roles of the rural family in the Gilded Age in American history. She detailed the structure and function of the farm, farm family, and family members. She argued agricultural stability and prosperity was contingent on familial labor and communal cooperation. She asserted that the decline in the farm family was a result of reforms’ inadvertent alteration to the interconnected and codependent relationships that organized and support agricultural production. Modernity increased individualism which decreased integral familial and communal organization, production, and stability.

Pegram, Thomas R. *Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998.

Thomas R. Pegram builds on the argument established W.J. Rorabaugh in *Alcoholic Republic* and several other texts on prohibition. He successfully demonstrates that fears and anxieties compelled the individual to seek public avenues to secure social stability and prosperity. Within the undulating 19th century American society alcohol became a festering wound. Social elites proscribed Temperance and middle-class reformers tended to the ills of the masses.

Peiss, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.

Peiss examines the cultural elements that influenced urban entertainment. She focuses her study on the activities of second-generation immigrant working women. She argued the transition towards industrial labor altered the social institutions and cultural practices. Her work

demonstrates the cultural value placed upon entertainment and consumption of manufactured goods. She highlights the familial structures that regulated the young women's ability to earn and govern her wages. Peiss argued that many urban families were dependent upon youth labor and financial contributions.

Phillips, Sarah. *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Phillips provides a conservation lens to the New Deal historical scholarship. She argued New Deal conservation and work programs were the federal government's honest effort to meet the diverse needs of a struggling society. Phillips contended that the programs offered and the legislation passed during the New Deal era were offered in an attempt to create more equitable conditions and opportunities. She stressed the government activity was spawned as a response to public demands. She highlighted the shift in public opinion towards an interventionist government responsible for protecting American interests, producers, and individuals from the fluctuating capitalistic market.

Rosenberg, Gabriel N. *The 4-H Harvest: Sexuality and the State in Rural America*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Rosenberg details the history of the 4-H youth program, one of the benefactors of the Smith-Lever Act owing its legal formation, collaborations, and provisions to the statute. Federal legislation and agencies provided funding and instructions for youth programs in rural America. Rosenberg provides multiple examples of the activities available to 4-Hers and the popularity and success of the organization. Fairs, competitions, and demonstrations were a primary part of the 4-H mission. For most 4-H participants it was a source of entertainment rather than educational or profitable. It was an opportunity to engage with other members and develop a community connection.

Rydell, Robert W. *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Rydell details the World's Fairs that entertained millions throughout America. He describes each fair in depth focusing on the location, directors, and exhibits of each one. Fairs of all sizes were part of rural culture including the big ones in St. Louis and Chicago attracting visitors from across the nation. Within each fair was an exhibit dedicated to agriculture with demonstrations and displays.

Schmidt, Alvin J. *Fraternal Organizations: The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Institutions.* Westport, CT; Greenwood Press, 1980.

A collection of organizational histories. It covers a variety of fraternal organizations throughout the United States, many of which had their origins in the late 1800s- early 1900s. A number of national organizations began in rural or western communities. Almost every national fraternal organization has local chapters many of which are in rural areas including the Elks, the Eagles, and the Moose.

Smulyan, Susan. *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting 1920-1934.* Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.

Smulyan argued the commercialization of radio was a political debate between non-profit organizations and industrial capitalists. She challenges the inevitability of commercialization. She details the opposition of educational and communal groups that had differing agendas for the new media, they wanted a public platform to serve the public. She demonstrates the debate brought to question the regulation of networks and established the FCC. The for-profit versus nonprofit battle over radio control brought to question how advertising, programing, and the government related to the radio audience.

Tomes, Nancy. *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women and the Microbe in American Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Nancy Tomes details how the private practices that developed from public fear of the germ theory became ingrained in American culture. The Gospel of Germs is the social scripture that prescribe and govern the ritual, habits, and thoughts through which adherence is governed through the belief of an invisible force that dictates the health and well-being of the individual and society. Tomes illustrates the vital role the middle-class played in the diffusion of expert advice to the public.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History.* Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1894.

Turner wrote an enduring theory on the identity and development of American society. He argued both were created through the process of settlement. He argued the American institutions were created through the repeated process of adapting to new environments and transforming the environment from primitive to civilized. The frontier was an ever-moving edge where wilderness met civilization. The “perennial rebirth” marked the “fluidity of American life” and was the bases for America’s political, social, cultural, and economic institutions, practices, values, beliefs, and identity. Turner did not incorporate minorities or regional influences into his analysis.

Vaught, David. *The Farmers' Game: Baseball in Rural America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.

Vaught through his athletic handling of America’s favorite sport firmly slides baseball into the rural home. He illustrates how deeply rooted the sport was to rural communities through a detailed account of public interest and participation in the sport and booster organizations. He provides multiple examples of rural communities’ enthusiasm for baseball from towns constructing playing fields to dedicated fans’ statistical obsession.

Worster, Daniel. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Worster critically examines the economic, ecological, and cultural factors that significantly contributed to the environmental and social catastrophes that ravage the Great Plains during the Dust Bowl. Rural America has been portrayed as tranquil and quaint, untouched by the ills of industry. Worster's accurate depiction of two communities and of the landscape details a less remote region. Upon closer inspection icons of industry and capitalism have infiltrated the sanctity of the Great Plains. Worster points to man as the greatest contributing factor in the Dust Bowl and details the event not as an environmental catastrophe but a cultural failing.

Journal Articles

Edwards, Michael B., Jennifer L. Miller, and Linda Blackburn. "After-School Programs for Health Promotion in Rural Communities: Ashe County Middle School 4-H After-School Program." *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* 17, no. 3 (May/June 2011): 283-87.

This article argues that extracurricular activities would improve rural youth health. The 4-H addresses some of the isolating factors and disparities of rural communities by providing recreational opportunities. It focuses on the activities, personnel, partnerships, and goals of the Ashe County 4-H After-School Program. They state the program is essential to the community as well as the health and development of rural youths.

Greenwald, Diana Seave. "The Big Picture: Thomas Moran's The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and the Development of the American West." *Winterthur Portfolio* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 175-210.

Greenwald explores how art was utilized as promotional material. She highlights the economic investments companies and individuals put in the development of the west beyond settlement. She argued American culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth century dictated development required settlement, transportation, and promotion to capitalize on the resources available in the west. Artwork was both an enticement and a reflection of the national focus on tourism and American exceptionalism popular during the Gilded Age.

Lovett, Laura L. "'Fitter Families for Future Firesides': Florence Sherbon and Popular Eugenics." *The Public Historian* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 69-85.

Lovett examined the popularity in the health contests that began during the Gilded Age. She argued eugenics theories were pervasive throughout American culture influencing American standards of health. She asserts "fitter family" contest enthusiasts and creators emphasized and capitalized on a nostalgic symbolism for rural traditionalism and American exceptionalism. To Lovett the fitter family contests "fused nostalgia for the family farm with a modernist promise of scientific control."

Slotkin, Richard. "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier." *American Quarterly* 33, no. 5 (1981): 608-37.

Slotkin analyzes the historiography of the American frontier. He addresses the scholarship that has shaped the academic arguments of frontier and rural historians. He notes the significance Theodore Roosevelt and Fredrick Jackson Turner had on the development of the mythic American frontier and the ideologies associated with the frontier. He argued the creation of a symbolic frontier reconciled the traditional symbolism with modern prerogatives.

Swierenga, Robert P. "The Little White Church: Religion in Rural America." *Agricultural History* 71, no. 4 (1997): 415-41.

This article details the significance the religious institution to the rural community. It provides multiple examples of church activities and the participants to highlight the integral role the "Little White Church" played in the socialization of often isolated citizenry. The article argues that the iconic church was symbolic to communal identity through socialization.

Swierenga, Robert P. "Theoretical Perspectives on the New World History: From Environmentalism to Modernization." *Agricultural History* 56, no. 3 (July 1982): 495-502.

Swierenga provides a detailed historiography on rural scholarship. Danbom credits this article with coining the term "new rural history." It gives a working definition of "rural" and the significant scholarship. He addresses the two main divisions in rural historical scholarship: "geographic determinists" such as Turner and the "modernization theorists" such as Danbom and Neth. He stresses rural history goes beyond the popular frontier theory, the conflict analysis, and the political, economic historical scholarship available in the late 1970s. According, to Swierenga rural history is the study of change over time in a specific set of internal and external cultural and social conditions.