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## Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota: III. Community Organizations

W. F. Kumlien

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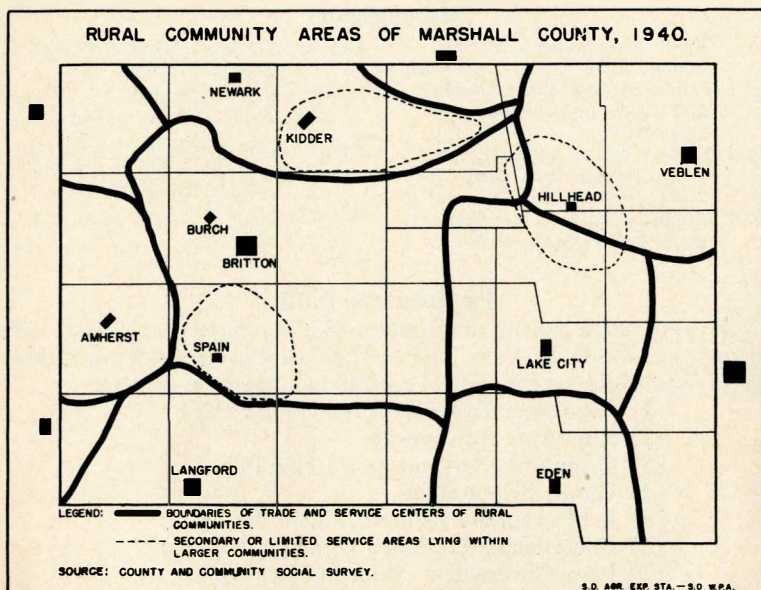
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# Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota

## *III. Community Organization*

W. F. Kumlien



The rural community under present South Dakota conditions, usually includes a village or town center and its surrounding open-country trade or service territory. The boundaries of this open-country trade area are informally determined by the residence location of the farm families who patronize the business and institutional services of the village center. This definition is well illustrated by the location of communities in Marshall county. In addition to the large communities there are a couple small communities within these having small inland towns as their centers.

Department of Rural Sociology  
 AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION  
 South Dakota State College  
 Brookings, South Dakota

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### Explanatory Note

This is the sixth bulletin to be published in a projected series of 10 carrying the general title of "Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota." Appropriate subtitles for each field covered will appear as follows:

- (1) Population Tendencies (Bulletin No. 327)
- (2) Rural Life Adjustments
- (3) Community Organization (This Bulletin)
- (4) Family Relationships
- (5) Public Health Facilities (Bulletin No. 334)
- (6) Education in Transition (Bulletin No. 338)
- (7) Local Government (Bulletin No. 347)
- (8) Religious Organization (Bulletin No. 348)
- (9) Recreation Activities
- (10) Social Welfare Service

The timeliness of the study is occasioned particularly by the fact that the recent extended period of drouth and depression has made the people of the state increasingly conscious of the need for economic and social planning for the future.

In such planning it is imperative that what has happened in the past be carefully scrutinized. This series of bulletins, which will be published during a period of several years, is being prepared so that federal, state, county and local planning agencies, as well as individuals, operating in the state may obtain a clearer view of the direction and implications of the more definite trends of social change in each of the fields listed above.

Data were obtained concerning various phases of community organization from the early days of settlement to the present time.

# Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota

## *III. Community Organization*

By W. F. Kumlien<sup>1</sup>

### I. Introduction

**The Problem.** South Dakota was originally settled by people from eastern states where the isolated farmstead was already well-established, and the government's policy of dividing the land into townships and sections also was conducive to this pattern of settlement. The towns developed as trading centers, and were not centers of social institutions for country people. The country neighborhoods developed as an answer to the needs of the farmers for work exchange and for social institutional life. In early days before the advent of the automobile this was a satisfactory organization of community life since contacts were limited by horse and buggy travel.

Maladjustments in this pattern of community organization arose, however. With faster means of transportation and better roads people could go far beyond the neighborhood boundaries for social institutional services as well as trading. As drouth and depression made money scarce and, in some areas, caused many people to move out, the support of many small social institutions has become almost prohibitive. Adjustment to this situation is gradually taking place, but there has been a definite lag between maladjustment and the resulting change.

Community organization in South Dakota is gradually changing and adjusting so as to eventually become well-integrated, with well-balanced social institutions giving adequate services to both town and country people. These changes are now in process and the broad outlines can be seen.

**Purpose.** It is the purpose of this study to analyze and portray as simply as possible the basic trends of change in community organization in South Dakota.

**Scope and Method.** This study attempts to cover the main changes in community organization from the early days of settlement to the present time. Data have been secured for the state as a whole and for selected counties. The sources of data included the federal census, the reports of Dun and Bradstreet and county studies of community organization.

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1. Acknowledgments. This study was made possible by the cooperation of the State and Federal Work Projects Administration (formerly Works Progress Administration), and the Division of State and Local Planning, BAE, U. S. D. A. with the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station. The original WPA project was designated as No. 665-74-3-143, and the official name has been "Basic Trends of Social Change in South Dakota." The WPA furnished clerical helpers, while the Experiment Station provided the general project supervision and bore the cost of publishing the manuscript. The author gratefully acknowledges the faithful assistance rendered by all those working on the study. Particular mention is made of the valuable contribution given by Vera Petheram Woolbert, analyst.

## II. Changes in Community Organization

Physical environment, population and culture are the three general factors that have had the greatest effect on the development of the community organizational pattern of South Dakota.

1. **The basic pattern of community organization has remained "the pure isolated form type."** The basic pattern of rural organization as found in South Dakota is fairly typical of the entire midwest. It conforms to what sociologists call "the pure isolated farm type." It is a network of isolated but adjoining farms with villages or towns located at fairly regular intervals (Fig. 1). These rural communities have a definite but informal pattern. First of all their trade and social institutional services are now becoming village or town centered. The village or town furnishes these services to what is commonly thought of as the trade or service areas, which consist almost entirely of family operated farms. There are only relatively few people living in the open country who work in town and have no connection with the land.

Two factors were mainly responsible for the original land settlement pattern. First, it was the general pattern with which most of the early settlers were familiar. Approximately two-thirds of the South Dakota settlers were native-born Americans from states east and southeast of South Dakota. (Fig. 2.) The majority of the settlers were from the east and west central states where the land had been settled following the Ordinance of 1787. In these states the land has been surveyed by the government into townships and sections. Thus settlers had purchased these tracts of land without particular ref-

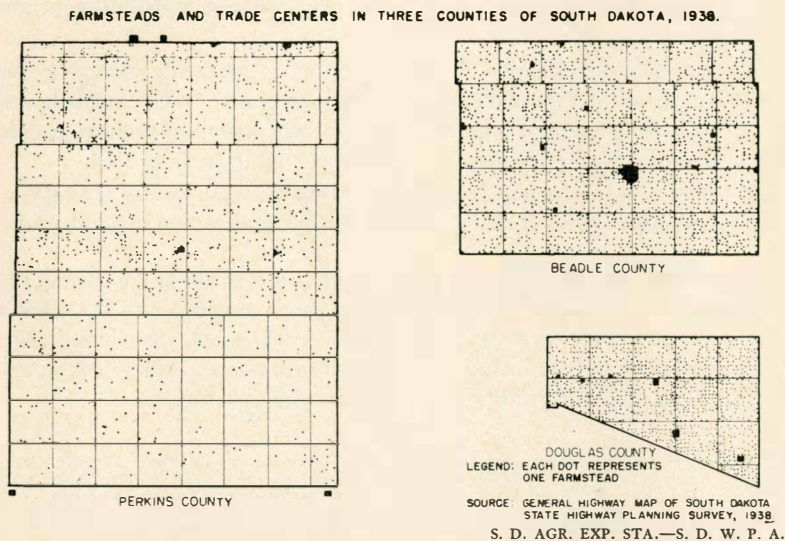


Fig. 1. Location of farmsteads and trade centers in three representative South Dakota counties, 1938,

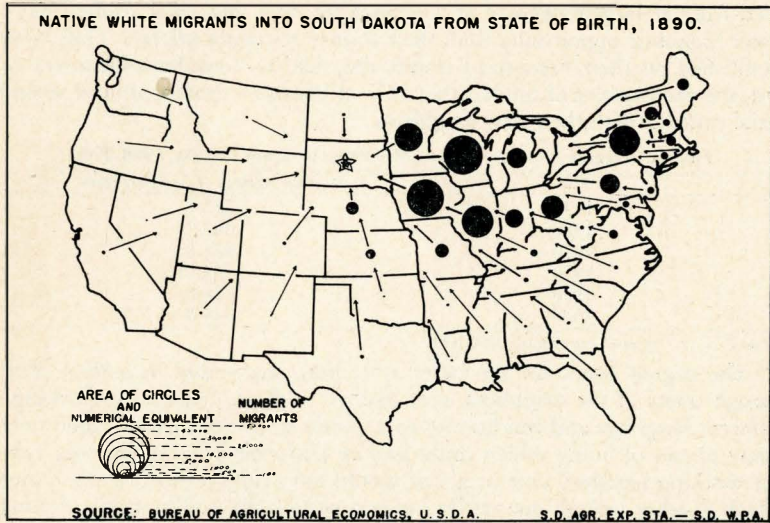


Fig. 2. Number of native-white persons migrating into South Dakota from state of birth, 1890.

ference to villages or towns. In fact, in most cases the land was purchased and occupied prior to the establishment of villages and towns, thus developing a distinctive pattern of rural organization throughout the midwest. It therefore was natural that most of the American born settlers had merely transferred their idea of rural organization to this new frontier of Dakota territory.

The passage of the Homestead Act in 1862 tended to fix this same open-country pattern. Prior to that date only a few isolated settlements had been established. The census of 1860 states that there was a total of only 4,837 people in the whole Dakota territory. It is true that many of the foreign born had come from countries in North Europe where agricultural and fishing villages were the prevailing types of community organization. While some occasional traces of that pattern have been carried over into South Dakota life, the effect has been negligible for the state as a whole. One of the first major adjustments made by the early settlers was to enlarge the operating unit from the 160 acres set by the Homestead Act. By 1890 the average size farm in the state had reached 227.2 acres (Table 1). The trend has been to enlarge the operating unit as the settlers have better understood the Northern Great Plains environment.

2. **Country neighborhoods have declined in importance.** The social and economic need for country neighborhoods arose out of the method of land settlement and the limitations of transportation. It is important to keep in mind that in most cases the land was settled before the establishment of the villages. Settlers coming either from North European countries or from the states east of South Dakota had formerly been citizens of an older and more highly developed cultural life. They were now pioneering in a new undevel-

oped frontier largely because of a hunger for land and what seemed like a better economic opportunity than their former residence offered. Thus when established on their homestead claims they had to consider adjustment to: first, the peculiarities of the Northern Great Plains environment; and second, social contacts with their new neighbors.

**Table 1. Average Number of Acres Per Farm in South Dakota, 1890-1940.**

Year	Average Number of Acres Per Farm
1890	227.2
1900	362.2
1910	335.1
1920	464.1
1930	438.6
1940	544.8

SOURCE: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1890-1940.

The urgent needs for the latter were both many and important. Even though many of the neighbors were strange to them, frequently speaking a different language and conditioned to a different cultural pattern there were many phases of living which could best be performed by neighboring families working together. One neighbor would have certain farming equipment which another lacked; one settler knew how to build sod houses and others did not. The meat ring arose because it was found to be uneconomic for one family to butcher in the summer time when fresh meat would spoil. Borrowing and exchange of labor developed freely on all sides. It was not long therefore before intimate working and social relationships sprang up among groups of neighbors to take care of such social and economic needs as individual families could not satisfy within themselves.

The size of such a neighborhood was obviously limited to the distance that oxen or horses could travel in the working day and still leave sufficient time for such social and economic contacts as the occasion demanded. Thus most neighborhoods consisted of from 10 to 30 families who lived from two to six miles apart.

The early neighborhoods were usually small and included only a few families held together by some special bond. Kinship was an important cohesive bond frequently resulting in relatives filing on homesteads adjoining to each other. Another factor of importance was the settlement of a locality by families with the same former place of residence. Even today it is not unusual to find whole neighborhoods and sometimes communities with settlements whose forebears came from the same county in Minnesota, Iowa or Wisconsin. County Old Settlers' Picnics are frequently held in South Dakota in which hundreds of families occasionally get together because they still feel some attachment to the same former place of residence which they call "back home."

South Dakota settlers have been mostly of Northern European background, although many nationalities were represented. In 1890 some 34 percent of the settlers were born in Europe while the balance came from eastern and middle western states. This has made the problem of adjustment much easier than it would have been had several races been represented. Studies dealing with rural community organization are now in process in several counties of South

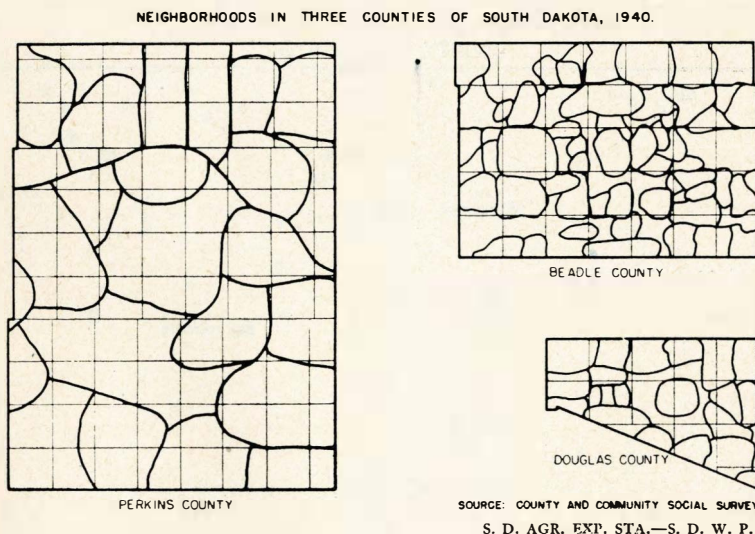


Fig. 3. Boundaries of the neighborhoods in three representative South Dakota counties, 1940.

Dakota. One phase is the location of the present neighborhood boundaries. These boundaries for three counties representative of South Dakota conditions are shown in Fig. 3.

In one county, Brookings, a similar unpublished study was made of neighborhoods which were in existence in 1893. There were then 97 different neighborhoods whereas in 1940 there were only 61. Many neighborhoods have disappeared and the boundaries of others have changed somewhat. Clearly something has happened to cause the number of neighborhoods to decline in the last two decades. The principal cause of the change can be traced to the advent of the automobile, which reached its greatest number in the state in 1930 (Table 2). The shift from unimproved to graded and graveled earth roads started about 1919. It is well established that basic changes in farm life have always been peculiarly dependent on improvements in transportation. The decline in importance in the neighborhood therefore seems to be closely associated with automobile and truck traffic.

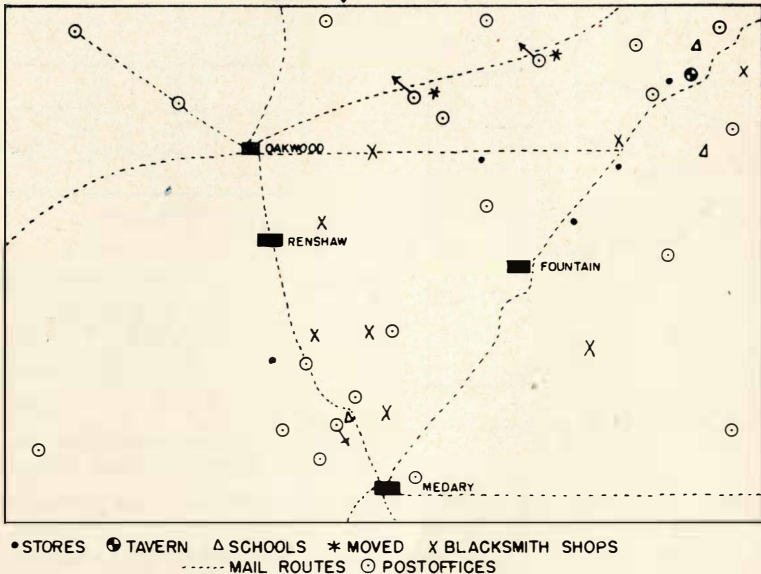
Table 2. South Dakota Motor Vehicle Registrations, 1915 to 1939 Inclusive.

Year	Automobiles	Trucks
1915	28,725	*
1920	112,589	7,807
1925	154,141	13,887
1930	180,353	25,047
1935	152,280	26,910
1939	158,998	30,284

\* From 1915 to 1920 all truck registrations were included with the automobile registrations.  
SOURCE: South Dakota State Highway Commission Reports.



EARLY SERVICE CENTERS IN BROOKINGS  
COUNTY, 1869-1879.



SOURCE: COUNTY AND COMMUNITY SOCIAL SURVEY.

S. D. AGR. EXP. STA.—S. D. W. P. A.

Fig. 4. Location of the early service centers in Brookings county, 1869-1879.

3. Hamlets, villages and towns have continued to function primarily as farm trade centers. The land settlement pattern in South Dakota was an important factor in determining that villages, towns and cities would be farm trade centers rather than agricultural villages as found in most North European countries. The Ordinance of 1787 prescribed that free lands disposed of by the government were thereafter to be surveyed into townships of six miles square and these in turn into 36 sections each of one mile square.

Probably most families settled on their homesteads without particular regard to the details of town development. Many homesteads were taken up before the railroads and railroad towns were built. Thus farm people, generally speaking, had only a slight feeling of responsibility toward trade centers.

As it became evident that certain needed types of economic services could not be supplied through neighborhood effort, inland trade centers were established to serve surrounding settlements (Fig. 4). A case study of a few of these inland villages shows that even in the earliest period many had a few professional practitioners, such as a lawyer, doctor and dentist. Another type of service commonly found in these trade centers was a branch land office which was frequently combined with a small newspaper maintained largely for purposes of publishing legal notices of land filings and later for the "proving up"

of claims. In addition most trade centers had a general store or two, a drug-store, hotel, blacksmith shop, postoffice, livery barn and occasionally a lumber yard. Of the social services the elementary school and the church were the most common. Almost without exception the early trade centers in South Dakota except in the Black Hills region, existed primarily to make a profit in supplying farmer needs.

An analysis of data from the ratings of Dun and Bradstreet for the year 1936 shows a total of 649 trade centers in the state with 16,204 trade units. The classes of services found were broken down into trade units for purposes of comparison with two former studies made by Dr. Paul H. Landis covering the period from 1901-1931<sup>2</sup>. It was found that many new services had been added and some types of services discontinued. Because of changes made in the policies of collecting data by Dun and Bradstreet between 1931 and 1936 it does not seem valid to compare closely all of the data for 1936 with those of earlier years. However, there are some general trends which may be noted. There were decided increases between 1901 and 1936 in transportation and communication facilities, in stores connected with shelter and building, in food stores, especially restaurants, and in decorative and luxury stores. Stores selling farm supplies also increased.

Despite changes, the trade centers, particularly those of less than 5,000 population, still continue to depend largely on farm trade. Towns, which have over 5,000 population, have more trade from within the town itself, and thus usually have a slightly different distribution of services. Even so, these towns attract farm trade from a considerable distance, and more people come to the larger towns for those items which cannot be supplied by the smaller trade centers.

**4. Fewer but larger trade centers now serve a wider territory with more patrons.** Table 3 shows the number of trade centers in South Dakota from 1901 to 1936, and also whether or not they were located on a railroad. The number of trade centers reached a peak in 1911, after which there was a decline. Between 1921 and 1931 the number of trade centers was practically stationary, but there was a further decline between 1931 and 1936. After 1911 the number of towns on railroads remained practically constant, but the number of inland towns fluctuated. Many of these inland trade centers consisted

**Table 3. Number of Trade Centers and the Population Per Trade Center in South Dakota, 1901-1936.**

Year	Total Trade Centers	Trade Centers on Railroads	Inland Trade Centers	Population per Trade Center
1901	490	275	215	820
1911	737	430	307	792
1921	671	450	221	949
1931	672	444	228	1031
1936	649	443	206	1040

SOURCE: Dun and Bradstreet ratings for the years indicated.

2. The first study covering five year intervals from 1901 to 1931 was made in 1932 by Dr. Paul H. Landis, and is summarized in S. D. Agr. Exp. Sta. Bul. 274 published in Sept. 1932. A second study was made in 1933 entitled "The Growth and Decline of South Dakota Trade Centers," S. D. Agr. Exp. Sta. Bul. 279, April 1933, p. 10.

merely of a general store or in more recent years of a filling station with a lunch counter and a supply of groceries. Some of these have disappeared and, in some instances, new ones have been started within a short distance of those disappearing. Some 573 trade centers appeared and 398 disappeared between 1901 and 1933.

The population served by each trade center increased every decade after 1911. Much of this, no doubt, was due to the great increase in transportation facilities. Since people can now go much farther than formerly in the same length of time, there is no longer the necessity for as large a number of trade centers as there was before the automobile became generally used.

Changes occurred between 1901 and 1931 in the population served by each trade unit of different types of mercantile enterprises. Some types of stores showed an increase of population per trade unit, while others showed a decrease. Only transportation, food stores, farm produce stations which handled merchandise, department stores and chain stores, showed an increase in numbers in relation to population. Other services did not increase as rapidly as did the population. This is a logical development of the greater facilities for transportation, as well as of the great increase in factory-made goods replacing those made by hand in small shops.

**5. Trade centers and their surrounding open-country farm areas are tending to combine informally into village-centered rural communities.** Since 1930 trade centers and their surrounding trade territories are also tending to combine their social institutional interests. Many country people are now going to villages or towns for high school, church, and recreational services. All patronize the professional services located in the towns.

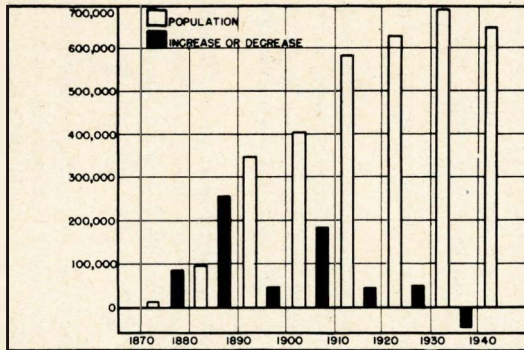
A definite trend is now in process within certain social institutions. Almost all high schools are located in villages or towns, except in the case of a few consolidated schools. Even where consolidated schools are located in the open country there is a tendency for a new trade center soon to appear, consisting of a few business places established around the school. The larger schools seem to be increasing in size and the smaller ones are more likely to lose out. The automobile and better roads have made it possible for students to go much farther to school, and they often prefer to go to a larger school where the curriculum is more varied and there are more extra-curricular activities.

There also seems to be a tendency for open-country people to attend church in town rather than in the open country. In general, it appears that the churches are gradually being centered in the towns and villages. This is particularly true of the minister's residence. Very few open-country churches now have a resident minister. They are usually yoked with a town church with whom they share a minister. Most ministers prefer to live in town even if their churches are in the country. They desire to have more modern living conditions for their families as well as to share in the better school facilities.

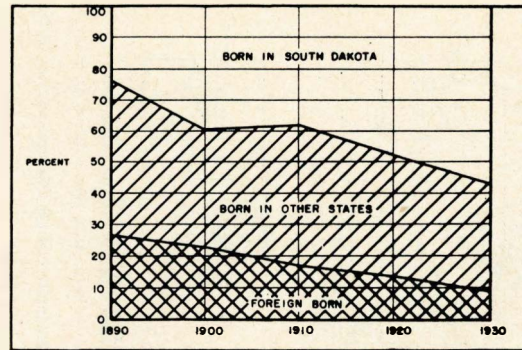
Usually the size of the surrounding country area, in the rural community having a village or town center, varies directly with the size of the latter. The cover page figure shows this variation for Marshall county in north central South Dakota. Fig. 5 shows this variation for three other counties of the state. Much also depends on the distance between towns. A medium size



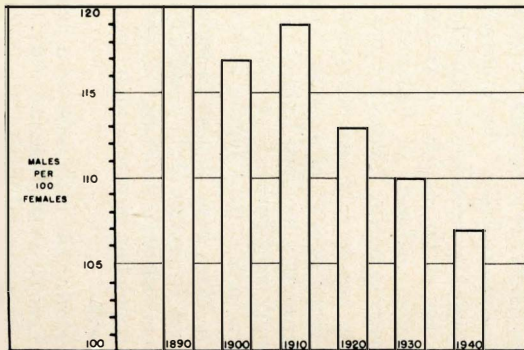
POPULATION NUMBERS, 1870-1940.



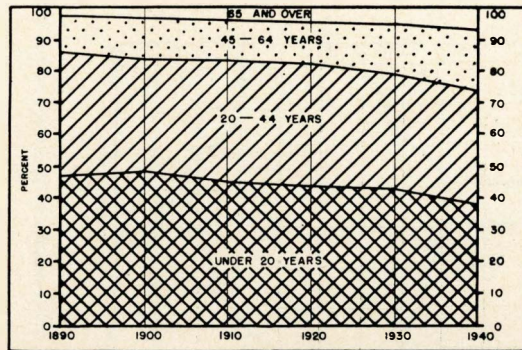
NATIVITY ELEMENTS, 1890-1930.



SEX RATIO, 1890-1940.



AGE DISTRIBUTION, 1890-1940.



SOURCE: U. S. CENSUS, 1870-1940.

S. D. AGR. EXP. STA.—S. D. W. P. A.

Fig. 6. Changes in four selected population characteristics in South Dakota, 1870-1940.

the reverse has been true of native-born South Dakotans. They have increased consistently until in 1930 they reached the high point of 56.5 percent (Fig. 6). The rapid increase in native-born South Dakotans has been rather marked. Without a doubt this has been one of the most outstanding factors in bringing about greater similarity of population from the standpoint of cultural pattern. Residents of the state who have been born and reared in this Great Plains physical and social environment have found it easier to make adjustments than have those first conditioned elsewhere and then settled here as mature people.

Another crucial point in population has been age distribution. The most important trend is toward fewer young and more aged in the population. In 1890 those under 20 constituted 47.8 percent and by 1940 this same group constituted only 38 percent. Those 65 years and over increased from 2.4 percent in 1890 to 6.8 percent in 1940 (Fig. 6).

A third important characteristic in population make-up has to do with the proportion of each sex. Again the trend is definite and consistent with what might be expected in the development from a pioneering agricultural society to one of greater maturity. In 1890 the proportion of males per 100 females was 119. This has declined until in 1940 there were only 107 males to 100 females (Fig. 6). This decline will doubtless continue toward an approximate equality between the sexes unless some unlooked for development should occur such as mining, oil drilling, etc., which for the time being might bring in more males than females. It is interesting to note that our South Dakota cities are following the same general trend in sex distribution as cities in a more urban territory, there being slightly more females than males in our urban population. This is true in practically all cities of 2,500 population and over.

Perhaps the most important phase of all in population changes which affect community organization is that of population growth and decline. South Dakota has shown unusually large population gains during two 10-year periods since 1870. The first of these periods was between 1880 and 1890 and the second between 1900 and 1910. The first of these was a period of intensive settlement while the second was the beginning of the expansion period (Fig. 6).

The only period of loss occurred between 1930-1940. This has come about as a major adjustment following a period of maladjustment in 1921-1929. Over 90 percent of the townships lost population although the west river country showed much greater losses than did the eastern part of the state.<sup>3</sup> Reference is made only to the rural farm sections. The villages and cities have shown much greater stability. One factor which has contributed to this situation is employment furnished through the Work Projects Administration which is limited to village, town and city residents. The farm areas of the state lost over 100,000 people or 21 percent of their 1930 population during the past 10 year period. The loss for the state as a whole was just two or three hundred short of 50,000. This major migration out of the state represents one of the greatest adjustments made by South Dakota in the 84 years since its first

3. U. S. Census of Population, 1930 and 1940.

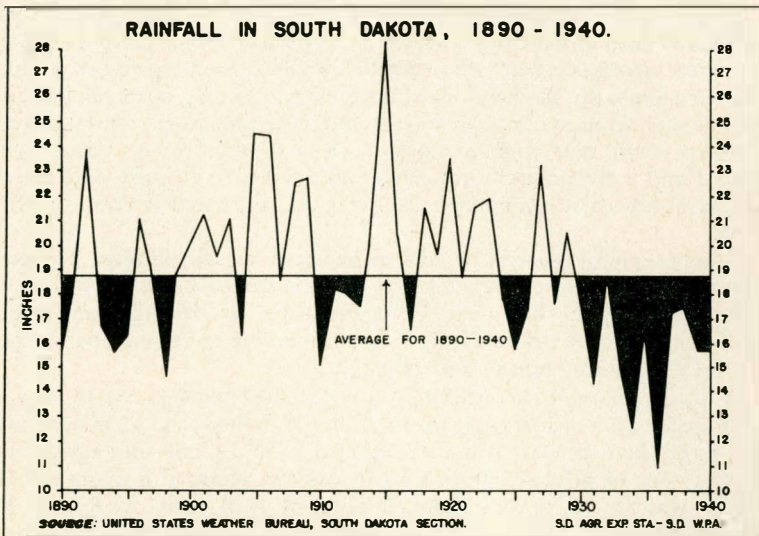


Fig. 7. Variations in rainfall in South Dakota by years, 1890-1940.

settlement. This does not mean, however, that this is the first time that counties have decreased in population. Table 4 shows clearly that 12 or more counties have lost population in every decade since 1890.

Table 4. Number of Counties Declining in Population Each Decade, 1890-1940.

Year	Number of Counties
1890-1900	16
1900-1910	12
1910-1920	13
1920-1930	18
1930-1940	61

Source: U. S. Census, 1890-1940.

**7. Prolonged periods of drouth and economic depression have usually been followed by adjustments in community organization.** Drouth periods have been a major factor in causing adjustments in South Dakota. The settlement period from 1857-1899 was, generally speaking, a period of rainfall shortage. There are no official rainfall records for the state as a whole prior to 1890 but the testimony of early settlers seems to indicate that drouth prevailed for considerable periods of time. The last nine years of that period confirm this impression. The expansion period from 1900-1920 was the golden period of agriculture in the state. The rainfall was with few exceptions about normal. Even from 1920 to 1925 the rainfall was plentiful but a crisis in agriculture followed the drop in prices after the World War. The period of maladjustment from 1920-1929 was one of low prices and high production. As an agricultural state, South Dakota could not compete with the better agricultural states during a period of over production. From 1930 to the present South Dakota has been

suffering not only from an economic depression that was nation wide but also from a 10 year drouth that was practically unbroken. All these periods show a close relationship to variations in rainfall (Fig. 7).

As a combined result therefore of drouth and economic depression many adjustments took place. Changes in land use were numerous and far reaching. Among these was a decided reduction in the number of farms in the state from a peak of 83,157 in 1930 to 72,454 in 1940. This took place in spite of an increase in the percentage of all land in farms. Correlative to this change was a considerable increase in the average size of farm. Farm tenancy increased from 44.7 percent in 1930 to 53 percent in 1940.

Not only did the average size of farm increase, but the number of farms of 1,000 acres and over increased from 2.8 percent in 1910 to 9.9 percent of the total in 1940.<sup>4</sup>

Population changes have already been discussed. One point not mentioned, however, was the age composition of migrants from the state. It seems to be a well established fact that youth predominated among the migrants that left South Dakota during the past 10 years. It is estimated that approximately one-half of the heads of households migrating were under 35 years of age and more than three-fourths were under 45 years of age.<sup>5</sup>

Drouth and economic depression have also precipitated far-reaching changes in the social institutional life, especially in the open country. In the farm family such definite long-term trends as the decline in size, the decline in birth rate, a slow rise in the death rate and an increase in the average life expectancy are found.

In farm life, families have tended to definitely shift their social activities from locality neighborhoods to village or town trade centers. The number of contacts with the village has expanded tremendously along economic lines and in various social, educational and religious services. As one sociologist has recently commented, "the villages and small towns are the economic capitals of the rural hinterland."<sup>6</sup>

One can detect very little external change in local government. The township still exists but is definitely weakening in function and now is principally a voting precinct for farm people, although townships still levy taxes and build some local roads. The adjustment in this respect has been to shift the functions formerly exercised by townships to the county unit of government. The enrollment in the country school is rapidly declining. The average number of pupils per school has been approximately cut in two while the total number of common schools in the open country has been reduced fully one-third from their peak number in the early 20's.

A large proportion of the churches are now located in the villages and towns since the open-country churches have not been able to finance them-

4. U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1910 and 1940.

5. Kumlien, W. F. and Sauer, Howard M., "Population Migration to and From South Dakota 1930-1940." Rural Sociology Department Pamphlet 2, S. D. Agr. Exp. Sta., p. 9.

6. Jenkins, Ross David, "Growth and Decline of Agricultural Villages," Columbia University, N. Y., 1940.



selves in many cases. Services and activities of the church have often been curtailed. In many cases there have been very definite declines in church membership.

The reader should not infer that a complete transition has taken place in the social institutional trends cited, but the trends are very definitely in process.

**8. Mechanical improvements in transportation and communication have rapidly extended the sphere of influence exerted by trade centers.** The influence of a trade center is now exerted over a much greater distance than formerly. This has been made possible largely by improvements in transportation and communication facilities.

When the state was first settled the distance which farm families traveled to do their trading was largely limited by the distance which a team of horses could comfortably travel back and forth in a day. Thus the trade area in most cases reached out from a radius of 3 to 10 miles. With the coming of the automobile the distance which could be traveled conveniently increased rapidly. Hard surfaced roads and improvements in automobiles in effect brought the town and farm much closer together. In 1921 there was only 87 miles of graveled roads in the state. There were no oil nor concrete roads at that time. By 1940 there were between five and six thousand miles of improved roads. People now think very little of traveling from 15 to 25 or even 50 miles in order to do the week's shopping in an afternoon or evening. If some special buying is to be done farm families frequently travel even further to a large consuming center.

Certain communications like the telephone, daily newspaper and more recently, the radio, have also tended to bring the town and country closer together.

One of the most important adjustments among farm families that has taken place because of the automobile and truck is in regard to the marketing of farm products particularly to home markets within the state.

It is difficult to measure the long term effects which have been introduced as a result of the automobile, hard surfaced roads and other improvements in communications. Under South Dakota conditions it has had the effect of not only shortening the distance to large consuming centers but also of greatly accelerating the process of urbanizing rural life.

### Conclusions

1. The early settlement of the state resulted in a "pure isolated farm type" of community organization, which has persisted with little modification to the present day. When towns were established they were merely farm trade centers and have continued as such. A dual system of social institutions developed, although there now seems to be a tendency for a village-centered rural community to be formed. In this community the social institutions are located in the towns and villages and serve both town and country people.
2. The development of the automobile and good roads have had the most far-reaching effects upon community organization in South Dakota. They have

overcome the obstacle of distance and made possible the enlarging of community areas, and the reduction of the number of small trade centers. It has been a most important factor in decreasing the importance of the country neighborhood.

3. Many basic changes in population have occurred since the state was first established. There are more old persons and fewer young; more native-born South Dakotans; more women; and a slower rate of population growth. During the last 10 years there has been a decided loss of population. All of these changes have had marked effects upon the social institutions of the state.
4. Although improvements in transportation have no doubt had the greatest effect, the occurrence of unusual periods in the state's history, such as prolonged drouth or economic depression, have usually given an impetus to adjustments in community organization.

### III. Implications

Below are listed the more significant trends in community organization in South Dakota between 1890 and 1940. Following each trend are the factors believed to be responsible for it and the probable results.

#### 1. The basic pattern of community organization has remained "the pure isolated farm type."

##### a. Factors responsible for this trend.

- (1) The federal government, through the Homestead Act, encouraged the settlement of the land in non-contiguous farmsteads, since each quarter section was required to have buildings.
- (2) A second important factor was that the people who came here from the eastern states were accustomed to this type of settlement pattern.
- (3) Since there are only a few natural resources for industries other than agriculture in the state, there has been little or no incentive to change this type of settlement to conform to the needs of some other industry.
- (4) This type of settlement provided considerable privacy, which many of the settlers found very desirable.

##### b. Probable results of this trend.

- (1) This general pattern will probably persist indefinitely, but with farm families participating more actively in the social institutions of the village-centered community.
- (2) Town and country rivalry will probably continue, but the emphasis may shift largely to differences growing out of occupation and residence in the two groups.
- (3) It is not unlikely, that as farms are enlarged and reorganized in the future, that new farmsteads will be located on the main county, state or federal highways. Such gradual adjustments will help to solve the question of "farm to market" roads without making taxes confiscatory.

#### 2. Country neighborhoods have declined in importance.

##### a. Factors responsible for this trend.

- (1) The great improvements in means of transportation and communication, together with the lack of topographical barriers in the state have been the most important reasons for the decline in the importance of the country neighborhood.
- (2) The increased urbanization of the state has tended to decrease the importance of neighborhood contacts.

- (3) Greater mobility of the population due to increasing farm tenancy has also tended to break down neighborhood ties.

##### b. Probable results of this trend.

- (1) Country neighborhoods may continue to function informally for certain limited purposes for some time to come. Mere proximity within a

- given locality is bound to exert some influence.
- (2) Most social and economic interests will probably be organized around special interest groups.
  - (3) The decline in importance of neighborhood locality groups, will likely
- increase the number of contacts between town and country thus diffusing a more liberal attitude among farm families. In the past, their relative isolation has resulted in conservatism.
- 3. Hamlets, villages and towns have continued to function primarily as farm trade centers.**
- a. Factors responsible for this trend.
    - (1) Since there are few industries in the state except agriculture, the typical town services are those based primarily on the needs of the farmers.
    - (2) The increasing specialization of agricultural production has made it necessary for farmers to secure most of their goods and institutional services from the towns. Manufactured goods have greatly increased and are in many cases cheaper, than those which can be made at home.
    - (3) The rise in the standard of living of farm people has caused them to buy more goods and services.
  - b. Probable results of this trend.
    - (1) While this has been true in the past, it is probable that the villages and towns which survive in the future, will evolve into social institutional service centers as well. This trend is already in process, and is not necessarily contingent on large future increases in population.
- 4. Fewer but larger trade centers now serve a wider territory with more patrons.**
- a. Factors responsible for this trend.
    - (1) The greatest factor in making this possible is the great improvement in transportation and communication.<sup>7</sup> People can now go much farther to town and there is a tendency for them to go to the larger towns. There is a gradual loss in very small trade centers, while the larger trade centers increase in size. The very few topographical barriers make it possible for people to travel much farther.
    - (2) The depression of the 1930's made it necessary for people to buy their goods where they were the cheapest, and as a rule the larger towns could supply less expensive goods and services.
  - b. Probable results of this trend.
    - (1) If this trend continues into the future many small and poorly located trade centers may disappear in competition. This is especially true of small inland centers with few business units. In a study made in 1933 it was discovered that out of 398 trade centers which disappeared between 1901 and 1933 only 10 ever had at any time more than four business units.<sup>8</sup> It should not be taken to mean, however, that all small towns are losing out as trade centers. In fact the opposite is true in many cases.
- 5. Trade centers and their surrounding open-country farm areas are tending to combine informally into village-centered rural communities.**
- a. Factors responsible for this trend.
    - (1) The depression has made it necessary for people to secure their trade and institutional services as cheaply as possible. At first they went to the town or village only for economic services. As many farm people migrated from the open country as a result of the drouth and depression, the expense of maintaining neighborhood social institutions, such as the school and church, has become prohibitive. As a consequence, many of these institutions are now being centralized in town.

7. This also has been a very important factor in the formation of village-centered rural communities.

8. Landis, Paul H., *The Growth and Decline of South Dakota Trade Centers, 1901-1933*, S. D. Agr. Exp. Sta. Bul. 279, April, 1933.

- (2) A desire for better services than local neighborhoods could secure or support has also been a strong factor in making the village the center of the community.
- b. Probable results of this trend.
  - (1) Neighborhood social institutions such as elementary schools and churches are gradually closing up for want of sufficient patronage and support. In some instances the remaining patrons are attending other nearby country institutions that still

**6. Many basic changes in population have occurred since the settlement period.**

- a. Factors responsible for this trend.
  - (1) The pioneer stage of settlement in South Dakota has passed, and the state is becoming more industrialized and urbanized.
  - (2) The birth rate is declining rapidly, although it is still higher for the farm than for the non-farm population.
  - (3) Many of the families, who have recently (1930-1940) moved out of the state, were young. This is a factor which has helped to increase the proportion of aged persons in the population.
  - (4) Foreign immigration has ceased and migration from other states has decreased. The effect of the two trends has tended to increase the proportion of native-born South Dakotans.
- b. Probable results of this trend.
  - (1) The rural population, particularly the farm population, will probably continue to decrease until a workable man-land ratio is reached.
  - (2) The trend towards smaller families will probably continue until a stationary population stage is reached.
  - (3) School enrollments will probably

**7. Prolonged periods of drouth and economic depression have usually been followed by adjustments in community organization.**

- a. Factors responsible for this trend.
  - (1) Increased economic pressure speeds up adjustment.
  - (2) Small and weak trade centers and business firms may be crowded out.
  - (3) Increased inventions may speed up this process during an economic depression.
  - (4) Excessive mobility and migration have made adjustments in community organization necessary.
- b. Probable results of this trend.
  - (1) Improvements in land management,

remain open, while other farm families in increasing numbers are participating in nearby village or town institutions. There are growing evidences that this latter trend may increase rapidly in the future and develop "rural municipalities" somewhat similar in organization to the New England town.

- (2) Such community services should either become more elaborate or else the cost should be less per family.
- (3) The trend towards smaller families will probably continue to decline for some time in the future. There are two main factors at work, first, the declining birth rate, and second, migration of population out of the state. The latter factor will tend to accelerate the former as a large proportion of the migrants now going into the defense industry are young people of child bearing age.
- (4) The trend towards an increased proportion of aged people will doubtless continue for some time. This will cause a greater problem of old age assistance, and may also tend towards greater conservatism in the state.
- (5) The emphasis in the services of social institutions may be shifted somewhat from youth to aged persons.
- (6) Population may become more stable in the future after the present drastic reduction has run its course.
- (7) The excess in males over females may be reduced to where the two sexes are approximately equal. While agriculture may continue to use more males, the larger towns already show the reverse.

with greater use of machines, will doubtless affect the farm labor problem in the future. Class and social status will emerge more greatly, as more capital is required for land and machines. Under efficient management, the percentage of land operated by owners or managers may increase, and more farm people, now renter operators, may be reduced to a farm labor status, especially on a seasonal basis.

**8. Mechanical improvements in transportation and communication have rapidly extended the sphere of influence exerted by trade centers.**

## a. Factors responsible for this trend.

- (1) The low density of population and the excessive mobility and migration of the last 10 years have tended to make it necessary for the trade center's influence to be broadened.
- (2) The means of transportation is the crucial point in determining how far customers will go to a trade center.
- (3) There has also been a desire to lower the cost of needed services.

## b. Probable results of this trend.

- (1) Because education takes one-half of

local farm taxes, open-country areas may see fit to close rural schools and send the pupils in to town as tuition students. A similar turn may take place in township taxes for local road purposes. As nationality consciousness becomes less, country people may prefer to let the towns take over all churches, cut out land tax monies for institutional purposes, and let the towns carry them. Each family would take care of its own transportation problem.