Rural organization in process: A case study of Hamilton County, Iowa

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Rural Organization in Process
A Case Study of Hamilton County, Iowa

By Paul J. Jehlik and Ray E. Wakeley

Agricultural Experiment Station
Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts

Sociology Subsection
Economics and Sociology Section
Division of Farm Population and Rural Life
Bureau of Agricultural Economics
United States Department of Agriculture
Cooperating

Ames, Iowa
Fig. 1. Map of Hamilton County, Iowa.
FOREWORD

This study has been sharply focused on rural organization in Hamilton County. Its purpose is (a) to analyze the types of groups in which rural people are organized and the patterns of group relationships through which they participate in local and non-local programs and services, (b) to analyze the ways in which agencies relate themselves and their programs to these types of organizations and patterns of group relationships, and (c) to show pertinent changes in different types of organizations.

The study is one of a series conducted in counties selected to represent the major types of farming areas in the United States. The studies are being conducted cooperatively and through use of a common outline by the Division of Farm Population and Rural Life of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and various land-grant colleges and universities. Hamilton County was selected to represent Corn Belt counties which do not have a large city in them and which have a high level of corn-hog production.

The study will be useful: (1) specifically to farmers and leaders in Hamilton County and to representatives of the various public and private agencies and organizations operating there, (2) generally to similar groups in other counties in the state and in the stratum of counties similar to Hamilton, and (3) as one of the county series from which findings can be summarized for use by other organizations and agencies such as farm organizations, Extension Services, Farmers Home Administration, Soil Conservation Service, Production and Marketing Administration, public health and public welfare organizations. School, church and government officials and leaders will find this study especially helpful.

Carl C. Taylor
Head, Division of Farm Population and Rural Life
Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture

George F. Stewart
Associate Director, Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY

POPULATION AND PHYSICAL BACKGROUND

The population of Hamilton County has remained relatively constant since 1900. The open-country population is relatively uniformly distributed over the county. It represents a smaller proportion of the total population than it did in 1900, while the urban represents a larger proportion.

Descendants of the original settlers, who were predominantly English, American, Norwegian, Swedish and German in their nationality backgrounds, make up the bulk of the county's residents. Persistent and clearly defined vestiges of the early nationality patterns continue to influence the rural social organization in the county.

Uniformly favorable conditions of topography, soil and climate have contributed to the predominance of a highly commercialized, mechanized and scientific agriculture on family-type farms based upon the early development of corn-hog and cash-grain farming. The results have been a rather uniform standardization of basic agricultural techniques, an assured good income, a high level of living, the improvement of the home, development of new and broader social contacts, and a growing awareness of the importance of organized attention to the economic well-being of agriculture.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Nine trade area communities, centered in the towns and villages, offer trade, professional, institutional and organizational services and activities to residents of the county. Shopping and other specialized services are obtained in the county seat town or in nearby cities frequented by both town and country residents.

Sixteen primary communities and 108 neighborhoods play a role of declining importance in serving the people of the county.

The degree to which the people identify themselves with their locality group (neighborhood, primary community or trade area community) varies widely.

Hamilton County as a unit of government is important both because of decreased governmental functions of the township and because of the increased importance of state and national programs which function through agencies administered on a county basis.

Group relations on a county basis are largely second-
ary and impersonal, and often are carried on through locally elected representatives who act in liaison between the local units and the county functionary leaders.

The township is relatively unimportant for many social and governmental purposes. It is, however, used to obtain intensive coverage for some of the agency programs because it provides a local unit of suitable size for administration and reporting purposes.

Rural schools and churches which were organized in the county as rapidly as settlement took place are at an increasing disadvantage in the present-day competition with schools and churches in the trade centers.

Formal special interest groups are important in varying degrees to farm people. Greatest interest is shown in groups which fit into and further advance the economic development of agriculture and better living. Most such interest groups are sponsored and encouraged by the county Agricultural Extension Service and the county Farm Bureau.

There are numerous informal activities in the county. Many of them revolve about coteries and casual congeniality groups; they lack the internal cohesion and the solidarity characteristic of earlier groups. The rather widespread informality of these associations is frequently reflected in the relative informality of the local units of rural organizations.

Many of the administrative units of the county's public and private agencies seek to work with and use other agencies and organizations in promoting local programs. Such relationships range from 2 to 28 per agency. They frequently take the form of intergroup committee membership which may be merely advisory, or there may be participation in planning and accomplishing program objectives.

TRENDS AND PROCESSES AT WORK

Description of the present social organization must not hide the fact that the modification of social organization of the county is a continuous process. Among the important factors which have influenced this process are:

1. The highly productive soil.
2. The occupational homogeneity among open-country residents.
3. Traditional values and attitudes characteristic of the nationality backgrounds of the people.
4. Changing population characteristics.
5. Well developed means of communication and transportation.
6. Improvements in scientific and mechanized farming techniques.
7. A high level of living.

Farm families on family-size farms continue to be the most important units in the rural social organization of the county. Beyond that, changes in social organization have proceeded in closely related and dominant directions.

The larger trade centers are becoming increasingly important as centers for specialized trade and professional services.

Social and institutional services for farm people increasingly tend to concentrate in towns and villages.

Organized interest groups are becoming structurally more formalized in their relationships.

As local governmental units have become unable, or have otherwise failed, to cope with problems affecting them, dependence on private and government agencies at county, state and national levels has increased. The county seat has grown in importance as a focal point through which private and public agencies and county-wide organizations organize and operate their programs in the county.

The declining importance of neighborhoods and townships as effective units for local organization has increased the interdependence among agencies and between agencies and organizations in their efforts to reach people more effectively.

The amount and kind of rural social organization in the county are such as to give most segments of the population some opportunity to participate. The adequacy of these organizations will continue to be tested by ability to adapt to new situations and new needs as they arise.
A Case Study of Hamilton County, Iowa

By Paul J. Jehlik and Ray E. Wakeley

THE COUNTY, ITS PEOPLE AND THEIR ECONOMY

Hamilton County is located in the north central grain area of Iowa, in the heart of the Corn Belt. Its farm and market economy is based mostly upon producing and selling corn and livestock. Hamilton is usually designated as a “corn-hog” county; corn is the most valuable crop, and hogs are the largest single source of livestock income. Village residents, some of whom are retired farmers with their families, are about as dependent upon and concerned with the success of the system of farming as are the farmers themselves. Residents of the county seat also think in terms of Corn Belt agriculture, although many are engaged in work not directly related to production of corn and livestock.

White settlers first entered Hamilton County in 1846. They and those who followed came chiefly from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin. Some had their parental roots in New York and New England. Others came from Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Near the turn of the century small numbers were contributed mainly by neighboring states to the north, east and south of Iowa. The influx of foreign-born occurred in the 1860’s and 1870’s. They came either directly from northern Europe or from earlier immigrant settlements in the eastern part of the United States. By 1885 Scandinavian and German elements represented 85 percent of the county’s foreign-born and a quarter of the total population. Many of their children and grandchildren are still in the county.

1 This study was made by the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station (Project No. 860), Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. See Appendix—Principal Sources of Information. Cooperation in this study was given by numerous persons in Hamilton County. This is gratefully acknowledged. Special mention is made of H. M. Nichols and Majorle Fincham, former county extension director and county home economist, respectively, Charles Donchowe and Carol Molin, now of the county extension staff, Grace Bryant, county director of social welfare, and Edith Byerly, county superintendent of schools. Others whose earlier work in the county contributed appreciably to the development of this study include Drs. Nat T. Frame (deceased), Edwin J. Losey, agricultural sociologist, Purdue University, and Wayne T. Neeley, sociologist, Hood College, all former staff members of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics; and Miss Bertha Whitson and Mr. Farwell T. Brown, former sociology students, Iowa State College.

2 Paul J. Jehlik is social science analyst, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA. Ray E. Wakeley is head, Sociology Subsection, Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station.
The type of commercial agriculture which became firmly established by 1895 was accompanied by characteristic problems of rural living. The settlers organized to solve these problems. The county was organized in 1856. Townships, local school districts, churches and trade centers were quickly established. These patterns of organization, with some variation in group identity, still constitute the backbone of the basic social structure of the county.

**SIGNIFICANT POPULATION CHANGES AND CHARACTERISTICS**

In 1880 the population of Hamilton County was 11,252, all classed as rural by the federal census. During the next 20 years the population increased more than 73 percent. Of the total population of 19,514 in 1900, about 24 percent was classed as urban, all in Webster City. Between 1900 and 1930 the total population increased by 1,464 persons; that classed as rural decreased by 947. Between 1930 and 1940 total population decreased 1,056, rural population by 770, and urban by 286. Thus, for the 40-year period 1900 to 1940, which followed a 50-year period of rapid growth in population, the number of persons in the county remained relatively constant but the rural population slowly declined. From a standpoint of population growth, this was a period of developing maturity. Continued excess of births over deaths has meant, however, that more people have moved out of the county than have moved in. This outward movement may continue unless the birth rate declines still further or unless greater social and economic opportunities are developed locally to absorb an increasing population.

Along with the changes in growth have come marked
changes in composition of the population. The proportion of the rural population located in villages and towns increased. Urban population increased, and both age and sex composition of the farm population changed. In 1940, 28 percent of the rural population lived in eight centers ranging in population from 276 to 1,051. These, plus the 6,738 who lived in Webster City, made up 53 percent of the county's population. The rural farm or open-country population declined from 59 percent of the total in 1900 to 47 percent in 1940. During this 40-year period it declined in absolute number from 11,533 to 9,442. The 1945 United States Census of Agriculture showed a still further decline to 8,345 persons.

As might be expected, there were relatively more males in the farm population. The 1940 farm population consisted of 118 males for each 100 females. The small centers had 98 and Webster City 93 males per 100 females. Two-thirds of the farm population was in the productive age group 15-64. In the villages the proportion for this same age group was slightly less and in Webster City slightly greater (table 1). Persons 65 years old or over were underrepresented in the farm population; in the nonfarm population the proportion was twice as great. The rural farm population had the largest proportion of those under 15 years of age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Under 15 years</th>
<th>15-64 years</th>
<th>65 years and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural farm</td>
<td>9,442</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural nonfarm</td>
<td>3,742</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster City</td>
<td>6,738</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total county</td>
<td>19,922</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Computed from data in U. S. Census of Population, 1940.

Relatively uniform conditions with respect to topography and soils and a comprehensive drainage program in the county have contributed appreciably to the fairly uniform distribution of people on the land. More than 97 percent of the total acreage in the county is in farm land, and an equally high percentage of the farms are

3 Computed from data in Reference Book of Dun and Bradstreet and U. S. Census of Population for 1900 and 1940. Data in Reference Book of Dun and Bradstreet made it possible to exclude from computation the population of unincorporated centers.

4 By definition the 1945 Census of Agriculture excluded persons in dwelling units on farms rented to others than those connected with farm operations. However, in Hamilton County the inclusion of such persons in the 1945 total would change the figure very little.
on good all-weather roads. Average farm population per square mile for the county is 17.9 persons, ranging from 14.7 in Hamilton township to 22.6 in Scott township. In the main, persons of Scandinavian descent are found in townships with the greatest population densities. Those of Old American and mixed descent live in townships with the least population density. Townships having the greater population densities generally are those with the smaller farms. Also, they have shown the greatest loss through out-migration over the last 40-year period, 1900-1940.

**FAMILY FARMING AND GOOD LIVING PREDOMINATE**

Land in Hamilton County is gently rolling; it lies entirely within the Wisconsin drift soil area. Much of the soil is 50 to 150 feet deep. Short but precipitous slopes occur occasionally, as along the lower reaches of the Boone River. Many small morainic hills are found in the southeastern townships. Throughout the upland, numerous shallow, marshy lakes require drainage. On the whole, the topography is constructional rather than erosional. Rainfall averages 35 inches, and the growing season averages 146 days.

Original homestead farms of 160 acres proved to be family-sized units in corn and livestock farming during the days of horsepower, and for the most part up to the present time. In 1945, farms in Hamilton County averaged 168 acres in size. Slightly more than 62 percent of the farms were between 70 and 220 acres, and 12 percent were under 70 acres. Family labor supplied more than three-fourths of all persons doing any farm work, and only 19 percent of the farm operators reported doing any off-farm work during 1944. As a rule hired farm hands are fairly well schooled and many look forward to becoming farm operators. In 1945, the 49 percent of the farm operators who were tenants operated 60 percent of the land. Half of the operators were between 35 and 54 years of age. Average age of owners was 52

---

5 Williams, Blairsburg, Liberty, Independence, Hamilton, Webster, Freedom and Fremont townships all have fewer than the county average of 17.9 persons per square mile.


7 In each census period, 1890 to 1945, the average size of farm in the county has always been reported between 161 and 168 acres.
TABLE 2. POPULATION, SIZE OF FARMS, AND LEVEL OF LIVING INDEXES BY TOWNSHIPS, HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Township</th>
<th>Population not including places</th>
<th>Percentage change 1900-1940</th>
<th>Average size of farm, 1940</th>
<th>Farm operator level of living index 1945</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1500 Number</td>
<td>1940 Number</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blairsburg</td>
<td>519 **</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cass</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Lake</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>-25</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellsworth</td>
<td>1065 †</td>
<td>683 †</td>
<td>-32</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremont</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>-18</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>-29</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>-25</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>190</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>145</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rose Grove</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>192</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>-27</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>-47</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>11,865</td>
<td>9,442</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


** Blairsburg village could not be separated from the 1900 township population, therefore the year 1910 was used as a base.

† Includes the population of Randall, an unincorporated center, in both the 1900 and 1940 periods.

years, and of tenants, 41 years. Government estimates indicate that for the period 1940 to 1950, 179 rural farm men would reach the age of 25 for every 100 farm men who would reach retirement age or die. The predicted surplus of farm labor failed to develop, however, due to wartime migration from farms and the opening up of many nonfarm job opportunities.

Work cycles on Hamilton County farms are relatively fixed. As spring approaches, activities are governed by their relation to the major objective—to seed the oats and to plant the corn as soon in May as the ground is fit. Then soybeans are planted, after which alfalfa hay is put up and corn is cultivated. During this season, work hours are double those of the winter months; they keep up through May, June and July. In August and September, labor requirements are not much greater than in the winter. In October and November, harvesting and fall preparation of the ground is under way and the hours of work are whatever men can stand. Winter work is largely with livestock, and the work week runs from

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40 to 50 hours. Considerable time then is spent away from the farm, or in making miscellaneous repairs and relaxing at home.

As farming in the county is a full-time job, farmers who do not devote their full time to it are regarded as not attending to business. Cash-grain and general livestock farming here contrasts with other farming areas, not so much in the use of power but in competitive position, in assured income, and in the year-round economy, especially when linked with feeding and breeding of livestock.

Farm families in Hamilton County enjoy a high level of living. In this respect, the county is surpassed by only six others in the state, and Iowa ranks third highest in the nation on the national farm population level of living index. The indexes shown in table 2 reflect only the average level of living among farm-operator families in each of the townships. They throw no light on any differences to be found within townships. Even in this relatively homogeneous county, physiographically and occupationally speaking, marked variations in levels of living are evident. By townships, the index ranges from 156 in Rose Grove to 228 in Lincoln. In 1945, 81 percent of the farm homes of the county were wired for electricity, 86 percent had telephones, and 32 percent had running water.

Among many farm families, the plan of living and of gaining security calls for hard work and thrifty saving until retirement is possible. The head of the family often moves to a nearby town while a younger member of the family or a married relative takes over and operates the farm.

The nine centers in the county offer most of the primary and secondary goods and services needed by an average farm family. The United States census shows that half of the county's employed workers in 1940 were engaged in supplying these services and in working in the 19 small manufacturing establishments. Only a few town workers live in the open country. About half (142) of the total retail stores in the county are in Webster City; the other eight centers have a total of 149 retail outlets.

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9 Hagood, Margaret Jarman, Farm Operator Level of Living Indexes for Counties of the United States, 1940 and 1945. Bur. Agr. Econ., Washington, D. C., 1947. Items used to measure level of living included: automobile on the farm; telephone; electricity in the home; and mean farm income, all of which correlated highly with any other level of living measures that may have been used.
Movies, recreational facilities and personal-service establishments, such as barber shops, beauty parlors and bakeries, were supplied by 64 service establishments in Webster City and by 48 establishments in the other towns and villages. Varied trade and service agencies in towns, both small and large, continue to contribute to the services upon which farmers of Hamilton County depend for good living.

This brief introduction highlights the outstanding features which form a background for this study of rural organization in Hamilton County. In the following sections the means by which the people of this relatively prosperous county carry on their life within locality groups, in formal and informal groups, in institutional associations and in relationship to agencies, are analyzed from both structural and functional viewpoints. It is thus possible to see the changing patterns of organized relationships and the ways in which locality and special-interest groups and institutions have been developed and are used to bring about the results the people want.

TYPES OF RURAL ORGANIZATION
LOCALITY GROUPS AND THEIR SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Before presenting in detail the structure of social organization in Hamilton County, some explanation of the more important types of social structures may serve as a basis for a clearer understanding of the analysis. Society is made up of a constellation of many kinds of social groupings. Hamilton County is no exception to this truism. These groups vary widely in size, in structural characteristics and in function. Some groups are formally organized, even institutionalized; others are amorphous and informal. Some are organized to serve many purposes; others offer limited or specialized services. Some groups recognize not interest but locality as a major basis for their organization. Some, like schools, are a composite. These serve a set of specialized interests called public education, in specific localities known as school districts.

Neighborhoods and communities are emphasized in this analysis because traditionally they have been considered a basic part of any system of rural organization. Structurally, they are sometimes described as the
crossties which hold together the tracks of specialized interests; again as the warp which binds the threads of special interest into a social fabric. Today, rural organization is changing, and it is necessary to evaluate neighborhood and community structures in relation to new ways of meeting new problems.

NEIGHBORHOODS PERSIST AND CHANGE

Hamilton County has 108 open-country neighborhoods, identified by the families living in them as locality groups. Most of these small groups of families depend mostly upon proximity to hold them together. Few if any are as nearly self-sufficient social units as they were in settlement days or one or two generations ago.

A small number of neighborhoods were identified by the families by name. Two or three neighborhood names are occasionally used for the same unit. The more common is the family name and school combination. During the course of the study, persons interviewed indicated each neighborhood by naming families belonging to it and excluding those belonging to adjacent neighborhoods. They stated with fair definiteness the location of boundaries between the farms of their neighbors and the farms of families who lived in other neighborhoods. Such lines were adjusted and verified as dictated by interviews in succeeding and adjoining neighborhoods.

All or parts of from 5 to 13 neighborhoods were located in each of the townships. They ranged from 8 to 37 families each with an average of 19 families. Smaller neighborhoods tended to be concentrated in the southern half of the county.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3. NUMBER AND PERCENT OF FAMILIES IN NEIGHBORHOODS COMPLETELY WITHIN HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA, 1947.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly 8 percent of the area of the county lacks identifiable neighborhoods. In these interstitial areas, group

---

10 Eighty-one neighborhoods are wholly within the county; 27 extend across the county line.

11 Data given are for the 81 neighborhoods wholly within the county.
life is mostly informal and fragmentary. It lacks sufficient cohesiveness to be thought of as a neighborhood group.

Assuming that in the past each local school district was to some extent a neighborhood, the county probably had the most neighborhoods in the 1920's when 113 open-country schools were in operation. Closing of rural schools over the last 25 years has caused some realignments in open-country neighborhoods. With the moving out or passing of old-timers has also gone some degree of neighborhood consciousness and identity. As a result, old 2-mile-square school districts and the present neighborhoods seldom have the same geographical identity.

Throughout the county, old-time residents and those in the lower socio-economic groups were found to be most
specific about the metes and bounds of the neighborhoods in which they felt they belonged. Younger families and those in higher income brackets had less fully developed neighborhood affinities.

About a sixth of the neighborhoods are referred to by local residents as kinship groupings; a fourth as mixed groupings of kinship and nonkinship; and the remainder, or little more than a half, as of the nonkinship type. Kinship neighborhoods tend to be concentrated mainly in the three nationality areas. Within the kinship groups frequently occur neighborhood visiting, birthday clubs, exchange of work, and cooperative ownership of larger items of farm equipment, such as combines, corn pickers and hay balers. But in the nonkinship groupings, mutual farm operational activities become less important. Families of Scandinavian stock tend to practice cooperative ownerships and exchange farm work more frequently than other groups. In both kinship and nonkinship groupings, these practices have decreased in importance as families have become economically and physically more self-sufficient. Recent high farm incomes are resulting in even fewer of these cooperative arrangements among all farm families. Threshing and haying rings, present and past, and territorial proximity or neighborliness frequently were mentioned as forming the basis for the associational pattern of the people in the nonkinship neighborhoods, especially in the Webster City trade area.

Neighborhoods that lie near the various trade centers of the county are not as well defined. The families here
show less identity with the neighborhood area than do families in neighborhoods farther from the centers. Families who live near the centers do more of their informal family and individual visiting and have more workaday relationships in the trade center than in their own localities. As the distance people live from town centers increases, neighborhood attachments increase in proportion. Even so, other forces are at work to weaken the neighborhood ties. Decreasing interest in activities of local rural schools shows this. The county superintendent's office reported that only about a fourth of the open-country school districts have a local parent-teachers association. Informants point to small enrollments with few families having a direct interest in the school. Except for school programs, one-room school buildings are seldom used for neighborhood, community or township activities. Only four neighborhoods in the county have both an active school and an active church; 37 have a school only, and two a church only.

Neighborhoods along the lower reaches of the Boone River generally are tending to decline in social significance. They are characterized by an aging population and few children. Occupationally, some of the residents who live near the river are part-time farmers. Generally the families here are not affiliated with clubs or formal organizations.

The trade areas of the county's nine service centers have steadily become self-conscious entities furnishing essential organizational and institutional services to the open-country and town population alike. This transition from neighborhoods to trade-area communities by-passes the intervening open-country primary communities. The latter type of community was never strongly developed in Hamilton County, as is pointed out in the next section.

PRIMARY COMMUNITIES DECLINE

Service centers were early developed by farmers and promoted by others interested in meeting the needs of farmers. Business establishments, schools and churches led the way, supplemented by open-country neighborhood schools and churches. Business in some of these centers prospered. Towns and villages were established and grew into the town and village service centers of today. Other centers remained embryonic and some declined from their early promise. But communities do not die easily, even though they may be small and weak.
number of these communities remain; some have centers that furnish one or more primary services to the farm people. At present these communities are based upon primary services of local trade, organized sociability, an outgrowth of Farm Bureau and homemaker study group interest, and churches. Contacts are primary, personal or face to face; communities so constituted are classified as primary communities and are but slightly more complex than neighborhoods.

Sixteen of these open-country communities are located in the county; four are trade-centered, three are of the organized sociability type, nine are centered around open-country churches. Figure 6 (page 167) shows the location of the churches and areas of attendance. In table 4 the 16 primary communities are classified as to type. Flugstad is located 4 miles west and 1½ miles south, Highview 3 miles west, and Stonega 5 miles east of Webster City. Flugstad, Highview and Stonega have elevator cooperatives. In addition Flugstad has a grocery and Highview has both a grocery and a filling station. None of the three has a church or a school. No formally organized group can be identified with Flugstad. A local baseball and bowling club identifies itself with Highview, while there is a community club near Stonega. The people derive their sense of belonging from membership in the cooperatives and from informal contacts at the elevator and in the stores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Type of service</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Type of service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homer</td>
<td>Grocery and church</td>
<td>Oak Grove</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flugstad</td>
<td>Co-op elevator and</td>
<td>Mulberry Center</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>grocery</td>
<td>St. Paul</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highview</td>
<td>Co-op elevator and</td>
<td>Rose Grove</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>grocery</td>
<td>Stavenger</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonega</td>
<td>Co-op elevator</td>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cass Center</td>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>North St. Pat</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
<td></td>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Marion</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homer, in Webster township on the Hamilton and Webster county line, served for a short period in settlement days as the county seat of Hamilton County. Today it consists of a grocery store, a Methodist church and several residences. The store, aside from furnishing some of the primary necessities, is a convenient place for exchange of news happenings in the community. Regular Sunday evening services are held at the church. The church and the store provide an avenue of personal con-
tact for local people that leads to a sense of identification. Homer, with its church and the social life connected with it, has a somewhat higher degree of group identification than have any of the other three trade localities.

Pleasant Hill, Cass Center and Harmony Center communities located in Independence, Cass and Webster townships, respectively, center principally about community clubs. These locality groups tend to have a high degree of group identification. People in the communities know each other through visiting, meetings and mutual assistance even though the membership of the clubs tends to be rather widely distributed. Of the three communities, Cass Center is the most active. All are made up in large part of families who are members of the Farm Bureau.

The nine church-centered communities are considered by the local people as important locality groups. Some have fairly large areas. Others are much smaller. The churches are centers for religious interests as well as for many social events and activities. The primary character of the church groupings is most pronounced in two communities near Stratford and Kamrar, which have resident pastors.

A high degree of ethnic identification contributes to this situation as it does in the Norwegian open-country church communities of the southeastern and eastern parts of the county. The two communities in the northern part of the county lack ethnic support, and this, together with the fact that their position is competitive to Webster City, makes them the least cohesive of the church-community groups.

From the standpoint of trends, there has been no significant growth in the open-country primary communities, probably because they lack one or more of the four essentials of local trade, elementary education, church and organized sociability.

TRADE-AREA COMMUNITIES THRIVE

Trade-area communities in Hamilton County center in Webster City and in the villages. The service community consists of the center and the farmers who come regularly and mostly to the center to supply their needs for goods and services. The farmers themselves defined and delimited these tributary areas by indicating the
centers from which they obtained typical goods and services.

Local trade in groceries, hardware, grain, feed, machinery and farm supplies was principally used as a basis for defining the areas. High-school attendance, marketing, banking, farm organization, social clubs and churches also were used as criteria for delineating the community areas. County-seat services were not included in this part of the analysis because they are county-wide. Highly specialized shopping and professional services were not included because Webster City is the only center in the county which provides them.

Historically, the county's trade centers rose or declined according to the needs of the settlers, and developed according to their accessibility to railroads. As good roads and the number of automobiles increased, the trade areas again underwent a reshaping in accordance with the variety and type of services each center could render in competition with others both within and outside the county. Since 1900, seven of the villages have maintained a relatively stationary population. Jewell has had some growth and Webster City has grown rapidly.

With modern means of transportation, no trade center, not even Webster City, has had a complete monopoly on services rendered, either to farmers or townspeople who live in its primary service areas. Since commercial, institutional and professional services exist and survive to the extent that people use them, and because people go elsewhere to obtain services not available locally, some measure of the extent to which each town is adequate as a service center may be obtained by analyzing the number and types of services it offers.

In 1945, Hamilton County had 361 establishments providing 276 different kinds of services. Business establishments in the trade centers ranged from 10 in Blairsburg to 187 in Webster City. The number of kinds of services available was twelve in Blairsburg and 82 in Webster City. Table 5 presents comparative data on the trade areas and the services they render to farm people.

Centers which have the most adequate trade facilities do not always provide the most adequate institutional

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12 Unduplicated total is 96 different kinds of services.
services. Associational and organizational factors greatly condition the extent to which the people who reside in a trade area prove by behavior and attitude that they constitute a community.

A thumbnail sketch of the structure and function of each of the trade area communities in order of size is given below to illustrate the importance and place of each in the life of the farm people in the county. So that the analyses may be comparable the description of each is presented in five categories: (1) geographic location and shape of trade area; (2) population of center and number of farm persons in trade area; (3) commercial, institutional and professional services; (4) interre-
### Table 5. Population and Services Reported in Trade Centers and Trade Areas, Hamilton County, Iowa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population and services</th>
<th>Randall</th>
<th>Kamrar</th>
<th>Blairsburg</th>
<th>Stratford</th>
<th>Ellsworth</th>
<th>Jewell</th>
<th>Williams</th>
<th>Stanhope</th>
<th>Webster City</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population of trade center *</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>1,051</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>6,738</td>
<td>10,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm population of trade area †</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>1,086</td>
<td>1,124</td>
<td>1,133</td>
<td>3,295</td>
<td>9,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of trade establishments ‡</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>361</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of kinds of trade services ‡</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>276**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of banks in trade center ‡</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of churches in trade center §</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of churches in open-country trade area ‡</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3††</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidated schools in trade center §</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of lodges in trade center §</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of doctors §</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0§§</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of dentists §</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of picture shows §</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* U. S. Census of Population, 1940. Population of Randall obtained from Dun and Bradstreet, Inc.
† Estimated for the year 1945.
‡ Data from reference book of Dun and Bradstreet, Inc., 1945.
§ Data obtained from interviews of well-informed persons.
** Unduplicated total is 96 kinds of service.
†† Churches outside of county but within trade areas were not included.
‡‡ Does not include churches in the Kamrar and Blairsburg trade-area portions which fall into the Webster City trade area.
§§ One part-time.
relationships between town and farm residents; and (5) extent to which the trade area is or is not a functioning community.

The Randall Trade Area is the smallest in the county. East and west the area is long, and north and south it is narrow because of its competitive location among four larger centers: Jewell, Story City (Story County), Radcliff (Hardin County) and Ellsworth.

In 1940, Randall had a population of 320, and 472 farm people were estimated as residing in the area. Located 4 miles from Story City in Story County, it is near the center of an area which is predominantly of Norwegian descent.

Randall had only 13 business establishments and provided only 15 kinds of trade services in 1945. However, it had secondary service agencies such as a bank, a cooperative elevator with a membership of 253, and a cooperative creamery and butter factory. The center has a hardware store, a lumber yard, a blacksmith shop and a garage, all of which are important to farm people. Most specialized trade services and all professional services such as those of doctors, dentists and lawyers are obtained in other nearby centers. Because of distance, Webster City is visited infrequently by many people who live in the Randall trade area. The center has a consolidated school, one church, and a Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, but no lodges.

Interrelations between village and country people in the area are especially strong. A large majority of the people are Norwegian Lutherans. They maintain two strong churches in the area, a village church of 500 members and a country church of 125 members, both served by the Randall pastor. The Riverside Bible Camp, where a number of religious groups in this section of Iowa hold Bible schools, is less than 2 miles from Randall. The parent-teachers association meetings usually have a large attendance from both within and outside the school district.

Club and social activities for both farm and village people center mainly in the church societies. A few farm women belong to the federated study club. Church and school leadership follows a common pattern, and organized relationships between church- and school-sponsored

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13 Randall was incorporated in 1940, although it had existed as a trade center since 1882.

The 1940 population is given for each of the centers, while estimates of residents in the open-country portions of the trade area were made as of 1945.
activities are very good. Common nationality and church grouping, together with many kinship bonds, tie the people of the trade area together in a rather cohesive whole. A high degree of community consciousness and spirit is expressed. However, the community does not readily assimilate families of other nationalities.

Half of the trade area is in Scott township and half in Ellsworth township. Church and school areas are both larger than the trade area. The township Farm Bureau meetings in this section are held only intermittently and always in the homes of farm families. The people of the area go elsewhere for many of their services but, for the most part, they center both their economic concerns and their social interests in this trade-centered community. Local contacts are rather frequent, direct and personal, largely because of the homogeneous organizational and institutional interests of the people.

The Kamrar Trade Area is near the center of the county, near to Webster City and almost wholly within the secondary trade area of Webster City. Thus, it is a satellite community to the larger center. The center is not on a main highway. The elliptical northeast-southwest shape of the trade area is partly the result of the competing influence of Webster City, 7 miles to the northwest, and Jewell, 7 miles to the southeast. Also it is partly due to the settlement pattern of the families in the locality, most of whom are of German descent. Because it is located near the junction point of four townships, the center's sphere of influence readily extends into each.

In 1940 Kamrar had a population of 288, and 557 farm people were estimated as residing in its primary trade area in 1945.

The 16 business establishments furnish 17 different kinds of trade services. The center has no bank, picture shows, doctors, lawyers or dentists. Nor does it have any fraternal or civic organization to which farmers belong. All these services are obtained at larger centers near by, usually Webster City. Most secondary goods and commercial forms of recreation also are obtained there. However, there are two churches, one in the village, the other about 2 miles east of the village. The church area conforms relatively closely with the trade area, while the Kamrar independent school district is less than half as large. Trade services important to the local farmers include a cooperative elevator and one independently owned;
a hatchery, a blacksmith shop, a hardware store, and two lumber yards. All of the business establishments are independently owned, most of them by native inhabitants.

Interrelationships between village people and farm people are of average intensity. The largest of the two churches is in the open country, and it provides a number of social activities for its young people as well as for older members. The school provides the usual complements of athletic events and school programs. During 1947-48 the school team won the girls’ state basketball championship. One of the churches is strong because it has been and still is, to a considerable extent, the church of the leading group of original German settlers. It strongly influences the pattern of community activities and it ranks high as a community center and as a symbol of community identity.

In spite of its inadequate trade, professional and recreational services, the area has considerable community cohesiveness because of the nationality, kinship and religious relationships maintained among its people, most of whom are of German descent; because of the wide participation of all the people in the activities of the churches and the school; because most of the center’s businesses are owned and operated by locally born people; and because informal social life partly compensates for the lack of specialized services.

The Blairsburg Trade Area lies east of Webster City. It is rectangular in shape, about 10 miles long north and south, and 6 miles wide east and west. It is just east of the north central part of the county and extends slightly into Wright County on the north. Its geographic shape is the result of competition with Williams on the east, Webster City on the west, and little competition on the north and south. It is also a satellite trade-area community within the Webster City secondary trade-area community.

In 1940, Blairsburg had a population of 276. It is the smallest trade center in the county. The number of farm people in the trade area in 1945, however, was 576, a slightly greater number than in either the Randall or Kamrar trade areas. The nationality background of residents of the center and of the trade area is mixed; those of Old American and German descent predominate and there is a scattering of people of Norwegian, Danish, Irish, French and English descent.

Ten business establishments offering 12 kinds of services accounted for the center’s commercial activity in 1945. There were two lodges, but no banks, movie thea-
ters, doctors or dentists. The hardware store, garage, locker plant, produce house, lumber yard, a cooperative elevator and an independently operated line elevator offered special services to the local farmers. Two churches and a consolidated school are the center's leading institutions. The trade area has no rural churches. Local farm people go to Webster City for most purchases of large items of farm equipment, for dress clothes and for professional services. Commercial entertainment and recreation are found in Webster City or in the larger centers in adjoining counties.

Interrelationships between village and country people are of average intensity. The consolidated school district covers about two-thirds of the whole area. The school, which is the community's leading institution, with its educational functions, athletic contests, plays, programs and other extra-curricular activities, draws the largest proportion of village and farm people of the area. The parent-teachers association meetings, at which business is usually followed by refreshments and social visiting, are attended by families from the entire district and by some from outside. Night schools are well attended by farmers. Farm and village residents belong to the Odd-Fellow and Rebekah lodges and they regularly attend meetings. Few farm people attend the local churches; instead, a number from the area go to Webster City or Williams. Both of the Blairsburg churches are served by resident pastors.

Farming is the principal occupation of most of the people who live in the Blairsburg trade area, and it is the chief interest of the villagers as well as the farm people. Because of this, Blairsburg for many years has been known as a community center for farmers. It was originally established as a grain and livestock center and a shipping point for butter and eggs. The trade area lacks integration as a community; however, its schools and lodges are community institutions. Many of the activities in connection with these are promoted by the women. The people of the trade area do not think of it as a self-sufficient or effective community because they must obtain a large number of their trade and professional services elsewhere. Also, few farmers retire to Blairsburg, and the area has few kinship groupings to bring village and country people closer together.

_The Stratford Trade Area_ is in the extreme southwest
corner of the county. Approximately two-fifths of it is in Webster County on the west or in Boone County on the south. The geographic shape of the area is quite symmetrical because trade services here do not compete sharply with those of any other substantial trade center. Stratford is off the main highway. It is about 20 miles from Webster City and Boone and about 30 miles from Ames and Fort Dodge. The nearest trade center is Stanhope, a center of 425 population 8 miles to the east. The Boone River on the north and the Des Moines River on the west set natural limits to the trade area.

In 1940 Stratford had a population of 678. The number of farm people in the Hamilton County part of the trade area in 1945 was estimated to be 585, with 390 more outside the county.

Twenty-four business establishments furnished 26 different kinds of trade services in 1945. Stratford has a bank, a movie that shows once a week, a doctor, a dentist and a veterinarian. The Stratford Grain and Supply Cooperative has a membership of about 550, including an estimated 90 percent or more of the farmers in its service area. It deals not only in grains but in seed, fertilizer, feeds, coal, fencing materials, lumber, paints, hardware, tile, building supplies and petroleum products. It furnishes a seed cleaning and treating service. The cooperative does the largest business of any establishment in the center. A number of other business enterprises, three implement stores, two feed stores, a hardware store, a food locker and a hatchery reflect the extent to which Stratford is a farmers' trade center. Two churches are within the trade area and three others are located in Stratford. Sixty percent of the school pupils live outside the 4-square-mile independent school district and are transported from farm areas by school buses. Four lodges have headquarters in Stratford.

Organizations, schools and churches in the center serve both village people and country people, including a substantial number of farm families in those sections of Boone and Webster counties that are in the trade area. A considerable proportion of the community's leaders come from farm families. Nearly all of the residents are of Swedish descent, and approximately half are members of the same church. Family and church reunions are frequent, and church auxiliaries are strong and active. The parent-teachers association is one of the strongest organizations in the community. Its meetings draw the largest attendance
of any secular grouping in the trade area. Farm people are members of the lodges, and nearly every one in the trade area comes to Stratford for most of its trade and institutional services. The summer recreation program emphasizing organized baseball and girls' softball is carried on by the school. Night schools held for farmers of the area usually are well attended. School facilities are used by the churches and other community organizations for meetings and conventions.

This trade area is deficient in recreational facilities and in some specialized trade services. At the same time, the area is relatively more self-sufficient socially and economically than most rural trade-area communities in the county. The traditional spirit of cooperation is strong among the people of Swedish descent. Although farm people of the area visit and exchange work, many on an interfamily basis, they have joined increasingly with other families of the trade area in several types of community activities. These include school activities, the programs of the churches, fraternal organizations, farmers' night school, and cooperative business enterprises. The integration of the community has developed by the increasing feeling that problems of village and country are mutual, by kinship bonds between retired folks in the village and their younger relatives in the country, and by the fact that most of the people in village and country are of the same original nationality stock. This relationship between village and country has been easier to maintain because of the distance to larger trade centers.

The Ellsworth Trade Area is in the southeastern part of the county and near the northern edge of the Norwegian ethnic grouping. It is located between Jewell to the west, Radcliff (Hardin County) to the east, Randall and Story City to the south, and Williams to the north. Its rectangular shape and size, about equivalent to a township, are determined by the activity of these competing trade centers.

In 1940 the village of Ellsworth had a population of 444. It had 614 farm people living within its trade area in 1945.

Twenty business establishments and 21 kinds of trade services accounted for its commercial activity. The area has a bank but no movie theater, lodge, doctor or dentist. Business establishments of special service to farmers are the hardware store, garage, hatchery, poultry processing
plant, and two elevators, owned by one cooperative. A new cooperative turkey-processing plant, turkey hatchery and feed store are a special service to 50 turkey growers who live within about 6 miles of Ellsworth. The center has two churches, and the consolidated school district serves a little more than half of the trade area.

Interrelationships between village and country people are of average intensity. A number of rural schools have closed and pupils from these districts attend the village school. The parent-teachers association has a large membership, and meetings are attended by a number of farm families who live outside the consolidated school district. The Lutheran church in the village draws heavily from families of Norwegian descent. However, two Lutheran rural churches east of the trade area are attended by many of the older farm families. A small number attend a union church in Ellsworth. A small group of Jehovah's Witnesses is active within the Ellsworth area. Farm women and girls are active in all the church auxiliaries, and about a fourth of the members of the federated study club are farm women.

The Ellsworth trade area is especially lacking in professional and recreational services. But ethnic feeling and kinship bonds are strong between village and country areas. The school, church and cooperative enjoy substantial support from the farm people. Therefore, interdependence between farm and village people is strong, notwithstanding the fact that many persons go outside the area for secondary and specialized services. The area is small enough, insulated enough from Webster City and its institutional and organizational interests, and homogeneous enough, to encourage the development of local solidarity on a trade-area basis.

The Jewell Trade Area, in terms of both geographic area and total population, serves proportionately fewer farm people, though more completely, than the other trade areas which have much smaller village centers. The area lies in the south central part of the county on the northwest edge of a large Norwegian ethnic grouping and it is surrounded by other areas with villages which compete with Jewell for trade and service. Established in 1883, 26 years after Webster City, it is the second largest center in the county.

The village and the farm population of the area are
about equal, 1,051 for Jewell and 1,086 for the rural area. The people are of Norwegian, Danish, German and Old American descent, with the Norwegian generally predominating.

Forty-eight business establishments in Jewell, one-fourth as many as in Webster City, provided 52 kinds of trade services in 1945. These services are as diversified as their number indicates. They represent nearly two-thirds as many as can be obtained in Webster City, but they serve only a fifth as many people. Even so, for the last 45 years, Jewell has ranked first in population as well as in number of services and establishments among the village centers in the county. Two hardware and implement stores, two produce houses, a lumber yard, coal yard, cold storage plant, hatchery, and a cooperative elevator with 110 members rank Jewell as a substantial farmers' town. A bank, a motion picture house, two doctors and two dentists provide limited specialized and professional services. The Jewell General Hospital provides limited and emergency care and treatment. The center also has three churches, six lodges and an American Legion post. The Lyon Township Farm Bureau holds its meetings in Jewell. The independent school district provides high school services to the trade area, but it is limited by the Ellsworth consolidated school district, the boundary of which nearly reaches the incorporated limits of Jewell, and the Randall consolidated school district, the boundary of which comes within 2 miles of the center.

Only about 30 percent of the high school students in the local school come from rural areas. Farm people who attend churches in Jewell are mainly those who live west of federal highway 69, where there is less competition from other nearby centers and open-country churches. Much of the leadership in school, clubs and fraternal groups is in the hands of townspeople. Farmers supply a considerable proportion of the leadership in churches and Farm Bureau. The Bureau meets in the Legion hall, and the Lyon Township Homemaker Study Club meets in the basement of the Federated church building. Jewell is also a center for most of the extension meetings called for the southeastern part of the county. Farm people do their banking in Jewell, attend the movie theater and frequently have picnics and reunions in the town park. School

14 Period for which data were available.
athletic events, musicals and programs also are attended by many farm people.

Interrelationships between village and country people are of average number and strength. In terms of trade services, this area is a more complete community than any other in the county, except Webster City. The large number of farmer retirements to Jewell has drawn village and country together informally.

The Williams Trade Area lies just east of the Blairsburg trade area in the northeastern part of the county. It extends slightly into Hardin County on the east and into Wright County on the north. Elongated north and south and narrow east and west, it serves an interstitial area between Webster City to the west and Iowa Falls to the east. The southern part of its trade area reaches into the Norwegian ethnic grouping. The population of the northern part is largely of Old American and Irish descent.

The population of Williams in 1940 was 489. Its trade area in 1945 included 1,124 farm people, somewhat more than that of Jewell.

Twenty business establishments were providing 23 different types of trade services in 1945. A bank in the village, two hardware stores, two garages, a creamery, an independent elevator, a cold storage plant and a lumber yard render special services to farm people. There are, however, no movies, dentists or doctors in the area. Three lodges and an American Legion post serve the trade area. Farmers are occasionally invited to the meetings of the local businessmen's association. The area has six churches; the center has four churches, and two are located in the southern part of the trade area. The Williams independent school district consists of 8 square miles which represent less than a fourth of the trade area.

Many people from the Williams trade area community travel to Webster City, Dows and Iowa Falls for specialized trade and for their professional and recreational services. Only the churches and lodges are trade-area-wide in their functions, although there is limited participation in organizational life by village and country people together. Farmers make more use of the primary trade services offered than do those around Blairsburg, which is nearer Webster City. Some businessmen are members of the Farm Bureau, and fraternal organizations draw a part of their membership from farming areas. A number of pupils from closed rural schools attend the Williams school.
The trade area lacks complete recreational and educational facilities. The parent-teachers association was reactivated during 1947 after a lapse of 17 years. Williams was the only center in the county without a cooperative elevator or similar enterprise.

The Stanhope Trade Area is in the southern part of the county. It is bounded on the west by the Stratford trade area community, on the east by that of Jewell and on the north by that of Webster City. It is rectangular and is longer north and south than east and west. Its shape is determined in part by state highway 60, which runs north and south through its center to Webster City, and by Stanhope's competitive position in relationship to Jewell on the east and Stratford on the west.

In 1940, the population of Stanhope was only 425. It had an estimated 1,133 farm people in its trade area as of 1945. This trade area has the largest farm population of any village center in the county. Its population is of mixed ethnic stock, with persons of Norwegian descent tending to be in slight majority.

Twenty-three trade and business establishments in 1945 provided 28 different kinds of trade services. Important services available to farmers are the hardware store, two implement establishments, two lumber yards, two hatcheries, an elevator cooperative with 460 members, and a hybrid seed corn producing, processing and marketing cooperative. Two lodges and an American Legion post are active in Stanhope. There are four churches. Three of these maintain church buildings, and the fourth group holds services in private homes. However, none is flourishing, and two of the ministers divide their time with open-country charges outside the trade area. There is a bank but no doctor or dentist.

Community participation by farm people and townspeople is moderate. A consolidated school serves most of the northern half of the trade area, and both village and farm people participate in its fairly active parent-teachers association. Total enrollment in the consolidated grade and high school is about 220, higher than that of any other independent or consolidated school in the county except Webster City. Two-thirds of the pupils come from the rural areas. About 30 farm boys are enrolled in vocational agriculture. Five open-country rural schools serve the southern part of the trade area not included in the consolidated district. Farm people are members of the lodges, the Legion post and some of the center's social clubs.
The four township Farm Bureaus represented in the area, however, usually held their intermittent meetings in farm homes.

The trade area does not furnish within its own boundaries all the commercial, institutional, recreational and professional services that its population needs and uses. It is particularly short in professional and recreational services. Farmer retirements from the area frequently are to centers other than Stanhope, which has had the effect of retarding the integration of village and country in this community. The community is not homogeneous nor does it have a common religious background. The extent to which the Stanhope trade area is a self-conscious community is indicated chiefly by the school program, membership in the elevator cooperative, participation in fraternal activities and in the farmers' night schools.

The Webster City Trade Area occupies the northwestern half of the county. Actually, however, the trade-area community is that which is largely determined by secondary trade. Webster City serves farm people in about the same way as the smaller centers do elsewhere, but much more completely. Webster City stands out as one of the type of communities of growing importance in the Midwest—the "rurban" county seat. Aside from its position as the center of county government, it serves as a trade and service center for a widening area that encompasses Blairsburg and Kamrar, making of them satellite communities to the larger center. As determined by an intensive study made in 1944, this trade-area community has a generally square shape, and is slightly longer east and west than north and south. Paved highways, bituminous and gravelled roads make Webster City accessible to all parts of the trade-area community as well as to the entire county. Competition for secondary and specialized trade is mainly from county-seat centers of similar size in adjoining counties. Population of the secondary trade area, including Webster City and the satellite communities of Kamrar and Blairsburg, was estimated at about 13,000 in 1945. The trade area does not include a tier of townships on the east and the south, which make up an interstitial area between Webster City's secondary trade area and that of Dows and Iowa Falls on the northeast and east, and Ames and Boone on the south and southwest. The center's primary trade-area boundaries are set at those zones where it comes in competition with the small towns (Blairsburg, Kamrar and Stanhope, Woolstock in Wright County and
Duncombe in Webster County) for primary day-by-day trade services. As it is the county seat and as it has adequate banking, professional and recreational services, its business influence extends beyond primary and secondary trade, to the highly specialized services which form a basis for shopping trade.

The population of Webster City in 1940 was 6,738. The estimated number of farm people in its primary trade area within Hamilton County as of 1945 was 3,295. Because of its secondary trade functions and its function as the seat of county government, its ratio of town to country people is quite unlike that of the other trade areas.

In 1945, 187 trade establishments in Webster City provided 82 different kinds of trade services. In addition, 19 small manufacturing plants and a meat-packing plant were located there. Because of its secondary trade functions, establishments such as clothing and other dry goods stores, furniture stores, printing and publishing establishments, jewelry stores, photography shops, hotels, restaurants and small factories which usually do not exist in the smaller trade centers are found in Webster City. In addition to more adequate services of the same types as those found in the small trade centers, Webster City also has complete professional and institutional services and the largest hospital in the county. Several osteopaths and chiropractors are there, and the national professional house organ of the chiropractors is edited and published there. Webster City has two banks, a building and loan association, and a production credit association, all of which provide financial service to local residents. One newspaper is published. Of the trade establishments in Hamilton County in 1900, 42 percent were located in Webster City; by 1920 this had increased to 46 percent, and by 1945 to 52 percent. Similarly, the proportion of total services available in Webster City increased from 43 percent in 1900 to 49 percent in 1945. Thus its role as a service center is steadily becoming more important. Its trade area, especially since the advent of the automobile, has expanded, and it has given the smaller centers more competition. City governmental organization is under the city manager plan, while the other centers function through a mayor and town board.

Six public school buildings house the grade school, high school and junior college activities. The latter two annually

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15 More recent estimates place the population at 8,000 or more.
16 This is exclusive of the farm population within the primary trade areas of Blairsburg, Kamrar and Stanhope.
TABLE 6. PROPORTION OF SERVICES OBTAINED IN CENTERS WITHIN THE WEBSTER CITY TRADE AREA COMMUNITY, 100 RANDOMLY SELECTED FARM HOUSEHOLDS, HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA, 1944.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of service</th>
<th>Proportion of services obtained in:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Village or open country</td>
<td>Trade area community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware and machinery</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed, seed, fertilizer</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

enroll between 200 and 300 tuition students from the surrounding rural areas. The city has 13 church buildings, and several church groups have no buildings, but hold services in various places. A municipal swimming pool, 142 acres of parks, and a public library supported by a local endowment provide variety to the recreation and special education available.

In early days, considerable emphasis was placed upon denominational grouping within each nationality group. Fourteen denominations, most of them not connected with any ethnic group, are now quite well established in Webster City. Also, a Nazarene church and a small fundamentalist group operating the Gospel Tabernacle are organized within the community center. The Latter Day Saints and Jehovah’s Witnesses are small groups of relatively recent origin in the community. Only two rural churches are in the open-country trade area. Both are served by Webster City ministers. Four other open-country churches in the area were closed in recent years.

Interrelationships between town and country people are normal. Participation by farm people in the center’s organizations and activities is more pronounced for those living near by, but for the community as a whole farm people are greatly underrepresented in organizations which draw from both town and country.

The Webster City community lacks complete integration even though it contains all of the essential trade, institutional, recreational and professional services that its population needs and uses.

Practically speaking, the trade-area community is much too large for organizational purposes except as it fits into county-wide activities. Leadership for the trade-area community is chiefly confined to the county seat. Exceptions
are certain recognized neighborhood leaders, including those in the primary community areas of Harmony Center, Pleasant Hill, Cass Center and Stonega. All or parts of 60 identifiable neighborhoods, some latent and some fairly active, are located in the community. Within the area many visiting and exchange-of-work patterns are maintained.

Of the county's 58 open rural schools, 33 are within the trade area. This is a result of less school consolidation than in other communities in the county. Because of these factors, there is fragmentation of loyalties that ordinarily focus toward a common center and form the basis for strong community consciousness. Thus, the Webster City trade area is a community only in certain specified senses. The center is the focus for farm-organization activity for the county. Farm Bureau meetings, for example, are held twice as often in the townships within the Webster City community as in other parts of the county. Similarly, during the war years, membership in county-wide organizations was found to have increased 11 percent over 1940, compared with a 56-percent increase in membership in organizations within this community. Response of open-country residents to membership did not equal that of town residents, but it was better in the community than outside. Leaders and officers in county-wide activities also report better response from within the community than from outside. In Hamilton County, this suggests considerable secularization and many outside interests within the community, together with considerable dependence on and response to activities carried on by professional and functionary leaders.

Examination of the information presented in table 5 and in the foregoing discussion affords the following generalizations for the trade areas of the county:

1. A positive relationship obtains between size of center and number and kinds of services offered.

2. By and large, small trade centers tend to have high ratios of farm people in the trade area. Conversely, as the trade centers get larger, the ratios of farm people become smaller until the nonfarm population becomes the majority. Jewell's town and country populations are about evenly divided, while Webster City's population is twice as great as that in its open-country trade area.

3. In all of the centers except Webster City, the number of trade establishments is only slightly less than the number of kinds of trade services rendered, whereas in
Webster City the number of establishments is more than twice the number of kinds of services.

4. The smaller centers quite generally lack certain necessary or at least modernly demanded types of services. Two smaller centers do not have banks, six have no movie theaters, seven have no full-time doctors, and five have no dentists. There is a general absence of programs of organized activities for youth.

5. On the other hand, 27 of the 44 churches in the county are located in the smaller trade areas, 21 in the small trade centers. Also, four of the consolidated schools of the county are located in the small areas.

It has not been possible to present precisely the differences in degrees of community consciousness and cohesiveness which exist in the various trade areas or other types of locality groups. There are, however, such differences. They have been suggested. They are slightly reflected in the trade-service functionings of the towns, even more in the institutional participation of the people, and still more in types of behavior which can be discovered only from a knowledge of local customs, habits and traditions. These things have been sufficiently well identified by field observations to make possible a classification of the trade areas and other locality groups in the following sections.

LOCALITY GROUPS EVALUATED

Neighborhoods, primary communities and trade-area communities have been structurally described. It has been noted that the neighborhood usually is without a service focal point, but that its members live in an area that may be identified and they have a sense of belonging together. The primary community usually is hamlet- or institutionally centered, which gives it elemental special-interest characteristics in addition to the fact that the members living within it have a sense of belonging together. The trade-center community, with its various activities and services focusing around the village or town center, along with the formal organizations present, provides common business and social bonds that tend to develop a sense of identification of the members with the locality.

Within the three types of locality groups are various degrees of feeling of belonging to the group. This locality consciousness is present in any focused geographic area where people have face-to-face contacts with one another. To rate the various locality groups by summarizing the more important relationships, two charac-
teristics have been selected: (1) the number of different kinds of services in the center; and (2) the degree of group identification. The first is designated as factor "A"; the second, as factor "B". One point is assigned to each of the different kinds of services available in the center, plus a point each for medical services, dental services, banking service and movie theaters. If a center possessed an elementary school, it was assigned two points; if it had a high school it was assigned two points. If the center possessed both types of schools it was assigned four points. Public schools were assigned two points because actually they serve two functions: (1) educational, and (2) recreational and social. Class ranges in "A" scores were arbitrarily established as follows:

- **A⁴**—50-99 different kinds of services (relatively high service)
- **A³**—16-49 different kinds of services (medium service)
- **A²**—5-15 different kinds of services (relatively low service)
- **A¹**—1-4 different kinds of services (low service)
- **A⁰**—No different kinds of services (no service)

The degree of group identification, or "B"-factor rating, was obtained by examining each area for each of several factors. The factors were: (1) extent of visiting by families and individuals; (2) degree of mutual aid in emergencies, exchange of work, and loan of tools and equipment; (3) extent of neighborly recreation; (4) degree of interpersonal trust and exchange of personal confidences; and (5) expressions of ethnocentric or in-group feeling. It was realized that few if any of the groups would manifest all of these facets of primary social behavior. Therefore, some of the less personal and more formal types of social behavior also were considered, such as: (1) live locality spirit; (2) good cooperation between open-country and village families; (3) cooperation among organizations; (4) strong organization and effective leadership; (5) successful and adequate locality activities; and (6) ability of the locality to adjust to change. Thus rating was possible irrespective of the degree of transition of a locality from informal folk-type social behavior patterns to the more formalized or secondary types.

17 The scheme used in this study for evaluating locality groups is an adaptation of a scale used by Drs. Frank Alexander of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, and Lowry Nelson, Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station, St. Paul, for rating locality groups in a similar study of Goodhue County, Minnesota. In addition to examining selected ideal "primary group" factors as was done in the Minnesota study, consideration was given to some of the less personal and more formal types of social behavior in each of the localities in Hamilton County.
Assignment of the B rating to each locality group was made entirely by the authors. If a locality group exhibited a high degree of group consciousness and solidarity it was assigned a B³ rating; if group consciousness and identity were neither high nor low, a B² or medium group identification rating was assigned; if low, a B rating was given.

Using the technique described above, all centers offering one or more different kinds of services were assigned a service rating “A” and a group identification rating “B”.

Table 7 lists the centers of the county and other identifiable locality groups which were assigned ratings.

This table presents in summary fashion the status of all locality groups in the county whether they are neighborhoods, primary communities, or trade-area communities. The most obvious conclusion is that in the process of social change the various locality groups are in different stages of group identity and service importance. Generally, the scores indicate that residents of the county tend to patronize more strongly the larger localities where the satisfaction of many secondary and some specialized interests is possible. It is equally apparent that the people tend to identify themselves less completely with the larger service centers than they do with centers having a medium service rating.

**TABLE 7. SERVICE SCORES AND DEGREE OF GROUP IDENTIFICATION OF LOCALITY GROUPS, HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA, 1947.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Service Score</th>
<th>Service Identification Rating (A)</th>
<th>Group Identification Rating (B)</th>
<th>Combined Rating (AB)</th>
<th>Descriptive Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trade Area Communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster City</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>A³</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A³B³</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewell</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>A³</td>
<td>B²</td>
<td>A³B²</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratford</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>A³</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A³B³</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrar</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>A³</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A³B³</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>A³</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A³B³</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellsworth</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>A³</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A³B³</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanhope</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>A³</td>
<td>B²</td>
<td>A³B²</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blairsburg</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>A³</td>
<td>B²</td>
<td>A³B²</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>A³</td>
<td>B²</td>
<td>A³B²</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highview</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flugstad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonega</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cass Center</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony Center</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-country church communities (9)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Neighborhoods</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Rural School Districts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>B³</td>
<td>A¹B³</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LOW GROUP IDENTIFICATION

Webster City is the only locality group included in the relatively high service, low group-identification class. As indicated before, most basic and many specialized needs can be satisfied there. The social behavior associated with utilizing these services frequently is impersonal and highly secularized. In these relationships people interact without developing cohesion of the entire trade-area community. The interest in and personal contact necessary for understanding community relations, although common to the smaller centers, tend to be absent in Webster City. In reality, Webster City serves a primary service area, a secondary service area, a specialized service area, and finally the entire county for governmental purposes. Identification with the Webster City community then varies with the area with which residents identify themselves. It is least when the entire county is included and highest when only the primary trade community is concerned.

Only one center with a medium service rating, Williams, falls into the low group-identification classification. The trade-area community is based mainly on primary trade practices. Limited formalized activity is available to draw village and country people together. School contacts and trips to the village result in only a small degree of group consciousness.

Most rural school districts and three cooperative elevator-centered primary communities, Highview, Flugstad and Stonega, fall in the low group-identification as well as low service-rating group. In addition to being legal entities, the rural school districts are service areas furnishing one kind of educational service and on occasion a place for limited recreational and social activity. The principal basis of the people's sense of belonging in the three primary communities is the fact that one or more primary services can be obtained at an identifiable place.

Open-country church communities have a no-service and low group-identification score. Church communities in this study have been considered as primary communities because in an earlier day open-country churches were significant focal points for relatively strong group relationships and identification, and most of the church community areas are fairly large.

Most of the neighborhoods have a no-service and low group-identification score. Usually there is as much personalized relationship carried on outside the neigh-
TABLE 8. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE AND GROUP IDENTIFICATION RATINGS FOR LOCALITY GROUPS, HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA, 1947.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service rating (A)</th>
<th>Group identification rating (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A^4</td>
<td>B3 Stratford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A^3</td>
<td>Kamrar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A^2</td>
<td>Randall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A^1</td>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A^0</td>
<td>Cass Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harmony Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jewel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ellsworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stanhope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blairsburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Webster City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural school districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Flugstad, Highview and Stongea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open-country church communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is considerable evidence that individual self-sufficiency and participation in special-interest activities is increasingly fragmenting the spatial identification of these small locality groups.

**MEDIUM GROUP IDENTIFICATION**

Five centers—Jewell with a relatively high service rating, Ellsworth, Stanhope and Blairsburg with a medium service rating, and Homer with a low service rating—fall into the medium group-identification category.

The churches, local business establishments, the school, fraternal organizations, and the kinship between many residents of Jewell and those of the service area bring the farm people and the townspeople into many personalized relationships. Most organized channels through which contacts between farm residents and townspeople may be realized are dominated by village leadership. In this respect, the Jewell locality group is a trade-area community dominated by the center.

On the basis of somewhat formalized activities which provide opportunities for primary relationships, Ellsworth, medium service ratings, and three primary communities—Three centers, Stratford, Kamrar and Randall, with high group identification.
with no service rating but with a high identity developed through sociability, kinship and frequent personal contacts, rate a high group identification. The three service centers attain their high group identity because they are focal points at or near the core areas of three early-day settlements of Swedish, German and Norwegian settlers, respectively, whose descendants still predominate in these sections. All three show a strong in-group feeling in their churches, schools, and formally and informally organized activities. The many visiting, kinship and mutual assistance relationships of the farm and village families provide important bases for the many primary personalized contacts that give the people a strong sense of belonging together.

THE COUNTY AND LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT

In this report thus far, attention has been given to locality groups. They have been treated as operating within the arbitrarily established boundary of the county.

As a unit of government, created by state statute, the county has powers that are rather firm and inflexible. It is an agent of the state of Iowa for the administration of state laws. The county functions are law enforcement, road administration and administration of elections.

The county's 577-square-mile area closely approximates the 600 square miles of a typical county in the United States. Its 1940 population of 19,922 is almost equivalent to the estimated 20,000 persons in a typical county having no municipality of as many as 10,000 persons.\(^\text{18}\)

Below the county level of government is the township, an organization not completed in Hamilton County until 1884. It is a modification of the New England town, and Iowa is one of 16 states which have this type of minor civil division. Next to county and township governmental units the rural school districts are the main local political subdivisions. Each of Hamilton's townships is 6 miles square. Officers include the three trustees, a clerk and an assessor. Seven of Hamilton's townships still have justices of the peace, and six have constables.

Perhaps the most important phase of county government is the county board of supervisors, which is composed of three members, elected to serve 3 years each. The county system of general representatives was established under

law in 1870. Membership is commonly held by farmers. This is the one office in the county in which they pre-dominant. The board has major responsibility for the executive functions of the county government. Specifically, it manages county finances and property, establishes and vacates highways, constitutes a drainage board for the various drainage districts of the county, makes official canvass of the votes of the county at the primary and general elections, and has only minimum supervision over county officers.

Webster City's off-center location and consequent uneven travel distance to the four corners of the county has tended to make the northwestern half of Hamilton the "county." The interplay and competition of Webster City with dominating centers in other counties has placed the residents of the peripheral townships on the east and south in the unique position of having to divide loyalties among Webster City as a county-seat center, their own local community centers, and other centers in adjoining counties. However, as Webster City has offered increasing services to a widening area, it is evident that the Webster City community is slowly becoming more nearly coterminous with the county.

On the county basis, group relations are largely secondary. Herein, elected representatives, rather than the rank and file of such organizations as the township Farm Bureaus, homemaker study groups, 4-H clubs, fraternal, civic, patriotic and educational groups act in liaison between the local units and the county leaders. Except for the county fair, special county-wide events and meetings are attended mainly by representative leading citizens only. Chief participation of Hamilton Countians in county affairs is in voting and paying taxes, and their relations with county officials are on the whole impersonal.

As contrasted with any of the centers which are voluntary associations incorporated at the wish of the people, the county is an institution of the state. Its early function was that of collecting taxes and maintaining order. However, in keeping with the growing needs and demands of the people, no less than 50 readily identified nongovernmental, public and quasi-public county- and area-wide agencies and organizations reach out from Webster City to all parts of the county. The list is given in the section on Agency Organization and Relationship, page 184.

This imposing group of activities represents secondary
and specialized types which directly concern different segments of the county's population and then only certain facets of those segments. It reflects the extent to which an advancing level of living is bringing about a new concept of government as a means for performing services for the general welfare—services which local governmental units such as the township or local school district are generally unable to support.

INSTITUTIONALIZED ORGANIZATIONS CHANGE SLOWLY

Three types of organizational activity in Hamilton County which rise to the plane of institutionalization will be considered here: the family, the church and the school.

FAMILY

In a commercialized farming area such as Hamilton County, where secular influences are strong, farm families are held together more by internal cohesion than by external pressures. In the localities of German and Scandinavian population descent, enough of the characteristics of a folk society exist (such as kinship groupings and strong churches) to be significant in helping to maintain a strong and well-integrated family life. In the early days kinship and church ties were a significant part of the social organization of the county. Even today family groups and kinship groupings, particularly in the above localities, are believed to exercise much more control over organized efforts than is ordinarily suspected. Not infrequently, acceptance or rejection of an organization activity by key families often spells the difference between strength and weakness of that particular organized effort.

Although representation of the family in community and county organizations and activities is more likely to be through participation of one individual rather than of the family as a unit, organization membership is on a family basis. The special-interest Farm Bureau units, homemaker study groups, boys' and girls' 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America groups and cooperatives which are concerned with and contributing to different phases of the operation of the farm and household actually are believed by many residents to be responsible for strengthening rather than weakening the internal family bond. The function of these organizations is to educate individual family members and to supply special interests which are readily integrated and do not detract from the one occupation and interest—farming. Parents and
children supplement each other in operating the farms. Thus the young people still play not only a social but also an important economic role in the family.

**CHURCH**

The major churches in the county were established by the end of the settlement period 60 years ago, and formed the principal church area configurations and loyalties one finds today. Before the expansion of Jewell and Webster City, the open-country churches were vital integrating forces in the life of the neighborhoods and communities of the county. They were not only places of worship, but they served as catalysts for facilitating and integrating the social life of the locality. For immigrant groups the churches were the main focuses of social organization. Vestiges of the former importance of a number of the

![Map of Areas of Church Attendance, Hamilton County, Iowa, 1947.](image-url)
now closed open-country churches are still discernible. With the closing of many of the open-country churches, village and town churches have absorbed part but not all of the memberships of the closed churches, thereby strengthening themselves in terms of membership, financial support and programs.

Most open-country churches, especially those in the south and southeast parts of the county, continue to function. When open-country church community areas for the entire county were rated in terms of group consciousness, it was found that they rated only a low group identification in comparison with the higher indexes of group identities shown by most of the village-centered communities. Many persons who were interviewed expressed the opinion that as schools more and more are centering in village centers and are the institutions of learning and focal points for much social and recreational activity, the open-country churches likewise could consolidate to their advantage in these natural centers of increasing community life.

Open-country and town churches in the Webster City community for the period 1934-44 were relatively stable as indicated by a survey made of the community in 1944. Memberships increased proportionally with increases in population. Interrelationship with the formal organizations changed little during the period. Church-sponsored community activities consisted mainly of several peace forums, radio broadcasts, a cooperative vacation Bible school and a leadership training course. For the 10-year period other meetings held in the churches consisted of 4-H club meetings, mother-daughter and father-son banquets, plays, graduation exercises, girl scout meetings, showers, and cooperative-elevator meetings.

SCHOOL

Seventy-eight percent of Hamilton County's area is divided into numerous independent and township school districts usually serving a 4-square-mile area. Twenty-two percent is in independent town and consolidated districts. Despite the closing of half the open-country schools during the last 25 years, there exist in the remaining active open-country schools a low pupil-teacher ratio, and a high ratio of subjects per teacher. As in the case of the church-community areas, the school-district areas likewise show a

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19 Nearly all of the closings have occurred in the Webster City community which, except for the Kamrar locality, has no strong cohesive ethnic grouping.
low group identification. Much of this is due to the fact that children from only two-fifths of the families in the districts are enrolled in the local schools. This is important as social relations and interest in the school are directly correlated with the number of families represented and with the proportion they represent of the total community.

Some variation in interest in the open-country schools is evident, however. In the Webster City community greater interest is shown in the schools as educative units and more use is made of the buildings as community and neighborhood meeting places than in sections in which the church ranks high as a community institution. Uses of school buildings usually are confined to meetings of township units of the Farm Bureau, Production and Marketing Administration, Rural Electrification cooperatives, and a
few local community events. Few of the rural school buildings even in the Webster City community were used for more than four such events during 1946.

Schools in the village centers, particularly consolidated schools because they include larger geographic areas, represent a significant degree of integration of town and country. They have become important focal points not only for the social life of the district but for the trade-area community as well. Here the schools supplement and complement the social activities of the churches.

Traditional attachments to the local one-room school have tended to retard school district reorganization. Recent changes in state school laws calling for district reorganization will make it easier for farmers and townspeople to join in revising the structure of the school community.

FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT

Formally organized groups in the county are sometimes affected by locality group patterns but more often follow special-interest functions. These include occupational, educational, business, civic, patriotic, social and fraternal groups. They usually have constitutions and by-laws, or at least they have elected officers and scheduled meetings. Farm people in Hamilton County participate in these groups in varying degrees, according to the special interest of the organization, how it fits into the social pattern of the area, and the extent to which it serves their felt needs. The presence of such organizations indicates change, brought on by the specialized needs of commercial farming which were not met by the old established institutions.

FARM BUREAU

The Hamilton County Farm Bureau, established in 1917, is today the focal point for practically all phases of organized agricultural interest in the county. No other general farm organization is active. Under state statute a cooperative relationship is maintained by the county Agricultural Extension Service with the county Farm Bureau as the farm aid association which sponsors educational projects as part of the educational program developed in the county by the Extension Service. Iowa State College and the county Farm Bureau jointly employ the county extension director, the county home economist, and
intermittently an assistant in youth activities.

The 1947 county Farm Bureau membership of 1,300 members was fairly uniformly distributed over the entire county. Not more than a fifth of the members were non-farm. Each of the 16 townships has an organized Farm Bureau unit known as a township Farm Bureau. In seven townships, meetings are conducted in homes, in six in public centers such as schoolhouses or public meeting places in towns, and in three in the homes or in village centers, whichever are best adapted.

The best response of members to regular meetings generally has been in the townships within the Webster City trade-area community with the greatest response in the four sections which have community clubs. In the remainder of the county, the membership in large part tends to be less active. During the period 1940-45, township meetings within the Webster City trade-area community were held almost twice as frequently as in those townships which were outside this community. Two possible reasons were suggested as important: (1) the greater

Fig. 8. Selected types of farm and home organizations, by townships. Hamilton County, Iowa, 1947.
distance of many of the township Farm Bureaus from the county-seat headquarters with infrequent personal contact of members and officers with county officials and the consequent lack of activity stimulation and program planning; and (2) the important role played by the consolidated schools and particularly the churches in satisfying the educational and social needs of farm families outside the Webster City community area.

Although organized on a township basis and reporting activities on that unit, attendance at meetings generally is not confined to the township concerned, nor do meetings draw attendance uniformly from within the township in which they are held. When meetings are held in homes, attendance is best from the immediate vicinity; if at a center, from the immediate vicinity of that center. If refreshments and a social time are arranged to follow the business part of the meetings, attendance generally is good. Meetings at Jewell for Lyon township illustrate well the tendency for members from other nearby townships to attend. The habit of doing so traces in part to the fact that special meetings for lectures, demonstrations and conferences for the southeastern part of the county are held from time to time in Jewell. However, within the Webster City community, which is least characterized by dominant nationality and church affiliation, the township configuration is adhered to more closely.

On the basis of the 1944 Webster City community survey of a cross section of 100 open-country families, it was found that Farm Bureau memberships were in families with older heads, longer length of residence in the community, greater stability of residence and higher level of living.

The outstanding factor of the county's Farm Bureau is the use of townships as a unit of organization instead of the organized relationship units of the churches, consolidated schools or primary trade areas. As yet there has been inadequate experimentation in Hamilton County to determine whether or not such areas would be superior to the present arrangement.

HOMEMAKER STUDY GROUPS

Women's club work in Hamilton County is sponsored and directed by the county extension home economist and organized under the county Farm Bureau.

Homemaker study groups are organized in 10 townships.
Although there are members in all of the 16 townships, this membership is not so uniformly distributed, geographically speaking, as in the case of Farm Bureau memberships. Three of the eight townships outside the Webster City community and seven of eight within have organized clubs. Inside and outside the Webster City community, club memberships tend to follow natural grouping patterns like church areas or a combination of one or more neighborhoods. The following of church-area patterns is most pronounced in the east and southeast parts of the county, while in the Webster City community, townships take on more significance as units of organization, with local school districts playing significant roles in setting the pattern of member distribution. Although townships are considered units of organization, the tendency to follow natural groupings results partly from intent and design to facilitate the cohesiveness and effectiveness of each of the groups.

In the Webster City community, the one-fourth of the farm women who participate in homemaker study group activities were reported as attending three-fourths of the meetings. Slightly more than three-fourths of the members are from families belonging to the Farm Bureau.

On a socio-economic basis, differences between member and nonmember families were relatively minor. This indicates that study group memberships were fairly representative of the farmer families in the community. Leaders in the clubs frequently are or have been leaders in other types of organizations, particularly in church organizations and school activities. Functionally, however, there is little attempt to integrate the activities with those of other clubs or with those of church or school organizations.

Programs include demonstrations and project work in foods and nutrition, clothing, home furnishing and management, child development, and health. Although the programs are educational in character, the social life is a very important part of the service provided.

4-H CLUBS

Four-H club work is the third important phase of the county’s Agricultural Extension Service and Farm Bureau program. The 11 township clubs are more active than any other organization serving farm youth. Boys’ and girls’ club work was started in 1918 and 1923, respectively. Nine of the 10 northern, eastern and southern tiers of townships
have both types of clubs. Most of the central and central west part of the county is without 4-H clubs for farm youth.

About 98 percent of the boys and girls in 4-H clubs are from farms. Even with a total membership of 450, more than one half of the farm youth of club age do not belong. Location of the stronger clubs and memberships tends to coincide with those townships which also have strong and active homemaker study groups, reflecting the interrelatedness of the two types of activities. As in the case of the women's clubs, youth activities tend to follow a natural grouping pattern, school districts, church and kinship areas or a combination of two or more neighborhoods. These groupings tend to be even more restrictive, geographically speaking, than Farm Bureau or homemaker study groups. The best example are the clubs located at Kamrar with members coming from parts of four townships which fall within the center's trade area and ethnic configuration. Monthly club meetings are held in homes. Much club interest centers around livestock, especially the production of baby beef; a few boys have hybrid seed-corn plots. Girls' projects consist of homemaking activities—food preparation, clothing, home furnishing, conservation and gardening. Group projects which involve both boys and girls include social activities and preparation of exhibits for fairs or the annual achievement day.

**FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA**

The Future Farmers of America, associated with the vocational agriculture departments in the Webster City and Stanhope high schools, have a total membership of about 90 boys, 60 of them in Webster City. Stratford has 30 boys in vocational agriculture. Most of them are in 4-H clubs, therefore an FFA chapter has not been organized.

None of the other six high schools offer training in vocational agriculture. Although technically the FFA and 4-H clubs are competing organizations, there has been little conflict in the county over the province of each. Boys and girls who have projects under way in their 4-H club work generally are encouraged to continue those projects as part of their vocational agriculture work and vice versa.

**COUNTY FAIR ASSOCIATION**

Hamilton County held its first fair in 1857, only a few
years after settlement, intermittently thereafter until 1918, and annually since. For many years townsmen and farmers were at odds over the feeling that the fair was dominated by the interests of Webster City business people. Better distribution of directorships on the fair board between farmers and townsmen in recent years has contributed appreciably to making the fair an integrated country and county seat event. Attendance usually is equivalent to twice the county's population. The fair is the one organized effort in Hamilton County in which residents from all parts have an interest, either as participants or as visitors. Many people from neighboring counties attend the fair.

The 4-H club exhibits are an outstanding part. Much competition, interest and pride centers about the youth exhibits, and premiums paid to boys and girls amount to one-fourth to one-third of the total premiums paid. A horse show, livestock, poultry, crop, garden and home exhibits, as well as displays of the more modern farm and home equipment, complete the major showings. A natural amphitheater, completed in 1939, has added greatly to the attraction and excitement of the fair.

COOPERATIVES

Development of cooperative elevators was part of the pattern of reaction to old marketing procedures promoted by railroads and to terminal markets in large centers. At present, each of the county's centers except Williams has an organized cooperative elevator which competes with the independent or line elevator located there. Three open-country cooperative elevators in the county are located west and east of Webster City. All are members of the Iowa Grain Dealers Association. Cooperative memberships, ranging from 80 to nearly 600, include an estimated three-fourths of the farmers and represent all economic levels. Services offered include buying and selling of grain, feedstuffs, seed and coal. Some handle lumber, petroleum products, and even hardware and implements. Service areas generally have from 5 to 8 miles radius. Interest in elevator cooperatives has helped appreciably to reinforce the cohesiveness of the trade area of centers, and sometimes has helped to keep centers from decreasing in importance.
Cooperatives in the county are not limited to elevators. A cooperative creamery in Randall has 400 members, distributed over nearly two-thirds of the county and in parts of two adjoining counties. A cooperative turkey-processing plant at Ellsworth services 50 turkey growers near there. Two hybrid seed corn processing plants in Webster City and Stanhope, a shipping association at Stanhope, a countywide artificial breeding association, the Production Credit Association and petroleum products cooperatives located in several centers in the county swell the volume and variety of cooperative enterprises. Much of the rural electrification is obtained through cooperatively owned electric lines, with electricity supplied by centers within and outside the county.

The Farm Bureau has actively encouraged cooperatives of various types in the county. Enthusiasm for cooperation is apparently strongest among those who have a Scandinavian background. With them, cooperatives are a part of their social heritage.

FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

Fraternal organizations in the county number two to three times as many as any other class of organizations, exclusive of churches. Masons, DeMolays, Eastern Star, Knights Templar, Elks, Moose, Moose Auxiliary, Royal Neighbors, Odd Fellows, Rebekahs, Modern Woodmen of America, Past Noble Grands, Knights of Columbus and the P. E. O. Sisterhood all are represented. Most of the orders make some provision for aid to the sick, for burial assistance, and for homes for the aged. In 1944, 14 percent of the open-country families in the Webster City community reported one or more members in fraternal organizations. Areas in which religious feeling is strong, as in the Ellsworth, Kamrar and Randall localities, have no fraternal chapters. As fraternal orders are mainly town-centered, with nonfarm leaders, there is little occasion to work with farm organizations or with farmers' groups.

CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Because of Webster City's size as well as its leading place in governmental affairs, it is also the center of most civic groups in the county.

The Red Cross is the most widespread civic welfare activity, reaching in its drives and campaigns to all corners of the county. Other county-wide civic activities include
the crippled children's association, tuberculosis association, county health council, county welfare council, and county educational council. Most of the impetus and drive for these groups comes, however, from nonfarm members and from the professional, medical, health, welfare and educational personnel. Campaigns usually are conducted through the schools. When organized on a township basis, the lead frequently is taken by the village centers.

A Women's Christian Temperance Union is active in the Homer area. Its 35 members are predominantly from the farm, but several come from as far as Webster City.

All of the towns of the county except Blairsburg and Randall have some type of civic or businessmen's club. Only a small number of farmer members are included. Less than a tenth of the Webster City members of the Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis and Rotary Club are farmers. Agricultural extension emphasis on building up better town-country relations appears to be slowly taking root in the Webster City area where the stronger civic groups exist. More recently, the Webster City Chamber of Commerce has emphasized and promoted development of community-wide interests, a recreation center and an airport.

Cemetery improvement associations are organized and function locally throughout the county. The neat appearance of the cemeteries reflects the civic pride and the sacred values held by the people of the various communities.

Patriotic organizations

Only 5 percent of families in the Webster City community reported members belonging to one or more patriotic organizations.20 This proportion is roughly the same throughout the county. It is lower, however, than either that of the small centers or Webster City.

The American Legion has posts in all but the three smallest centers. The most recent was established in Stanhope. Randall claims the oldest Veterans of Foreign Wars unit in the county. Other patriotic organizations, including the American War Dads, War Aid Council, Women's Relief Corps, Daughters of the American Revolution, and Daughters of Union Veterans, center in Webster City.

These groups have always taken a leading part in sponsoring celebrations on national holidays. The American Legion, in cooperation with civic groups and with the

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20 Special tabulation from survey of Webster City trade area community, 1944, on file, Department of Economics and Sociology, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa. See Appendix.
county Agricultural Extension Service, was active in post-war planning efforts. The Webster City, Jewell and Stanhope American Legion posts sponsor Boy Scout troops.

PARENT TEACHERS ASSOCIATIONS

In the 1944 study, interest in parent teachers associations was found to be most pronounced generally among open-country families and least among Webster City families. Twenty-four percent of the former and 15 percent of the latter reported participation in parent teachers associations. Chapters are located in each of the county’s centers and in one-fourth of the open-country schools. Interest and activity tends to be most pronounced in the four consolidated village-centered school districts and least in the open-country school districts where few families have pupil representation in the local school and where meeting and program facilities frequently are inadequate.

INFORMAL GROUPS ARE SUPPLEMENTARY

In early days neighborly association for both work and sociability was a natural consequence of life in the new prairie country. United efforts of all members of the family were needed in the struggle to get established on a piece of land. Tasks beyond the family brought about a great deal of neighborly mutual aid. Leisure was a luxury for the pioneer and for his family, but building homes and barns, preparing the land, draining the swamps, building roads and harvesting crops frequently brought neighbors together in “bees.” Holidays were celebrated and pleasure was found in candy pulls, charivaris, gatherings and Sunday visiting via horseback, wagon, buggy, or on foot.

Commercialization of recreation and its transfer from neighborhoods to villages and towns, centralization of institutions, farm mechanization, decreasing importance of townships as governmental units, and surfaced roads have helped change the social spheres of farm people. County-wide problems of drainage, soil fertility, production, marketing, transportation, and educational and social activity have greatly reduced many local and informal activities which were formerly the agents that produced group cohesion and consciousness in the early neighborhoods of Hamilton County.

Informal groups today are numerous, fragmented, and smaller in size, but they are still important social agents even though much of their original purpose has been taken

21 Ibid.
over by formal organizations. Today, informal groups supplement the other rural social organizational units of this rural society.

A substantial segment of the informal groups is of two types: (1) the coterie; and (2) the casual congeniality group. The first are common to all age groupings, but in Hamilton County they are frequently common among young married couples who have become active participants in few, if any, formally organized groups; they usually have similar social status and interest and form a rather primary personal group.

The number of such groups in the county is unknown; however, they were frequently mentioned by informants in both the kinship and nonkinship locality areas. They are important in the organizational structure because usually members of these groups represent a youthful, progressive, liberal-minded segment of the rural population, and they offer a technique for greater participation in informal activities through association with other members of the group in question.

The casual congeniality groups are of several kinds: To mention a few there are those made up of retired men in the various villages; the young people or the businessmen who assemble at the town’s drug store or restaurant, and the segment of the sale-barn or farm-sale crowd that seldom misses a sale. Some of these groups are more persistent and cohesive than others. But they are important for the part they play in molding public opinion, in airing local community events and in transmission of local news. Not infrequently ideas and opinions developed in congeniality groups may be translated into group action within or outside of one or more of the formal groups.

Information obtained in the 1944 Webster City community survey showed that during the previous 12 months one or more members of each of the sample farm families visited another family 52 times. Village families visited another family 37 times, and Webster City families did so 33 times. However, this does not take into account that in the villages and Webster City, informal contacts on the street or over the telephone usually are more frequent than in rural areas.

Some comparison of the interest in selected types of informal activity may be gained from table 9. Open-country families reported participating to a greater extent in

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22 Ibid.
the picnic and reunion type of activity than either the village or Webster City families. Webster City families were more interested in achievement shows and cooperative picnics; village families participated most in church and school picnics. All of the families averaged two such events during the year.

### TABLE 9. FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN SELECTED INFORMAL ACTIVITIES, WEBSTER CITY COMMUNITY, HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA, 1944.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Families reporting attendance by entire family or some member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Webster City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement show</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old settler picnic</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reunion</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School picnic</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative picnic</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church picnic</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total families reporting participation</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total families in sample</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of different activities in which open-country and Webster City families participated varied little. On the other hand, village populations, most of which include a substantial proportion of retired families, confined their activities to two different types. Thus it was evident that, aside from the day-to-day contacts which nonfarm residents have, farm families reported participating in as wide a variety of informal activities as did the families in the centers.

### TABLE 10. PARTICIPATION OF OPEN-COUNTRY, VILLAGE AND WEBSTER CITY FAMILIES IN SELECTED INFORMAL ACTIVITIES, WEBSTER CITY COMMUNITY, HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA, 1944.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Number of different activities and families reporting participation</th>
<th>Number of different activities and families reporting participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of different activities and families reporting participation</td>
<td>Number of different activities and families reporting participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster City</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open country</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Informal associational patterns examined from other angles bring to light other groupings, some already discussed in preceding sections, which are not mutually exclusive of those already mentioned. Kinship groups as a basis for informal contacts are more numerous in the area settled by those of German descent and in the southern half of the county, which was largely settled by persons of Scandinavian descent. Intrafamily groups often jointly own large items of farm equipment. Canning, or cooking of dinners for the occasional harvesting or silo-filling crew is often done on a kinship intrafamily basis. During the spring and summer months, family picnics commonly occur.
Exchange of meals and potluck get-togethers are more common among families of Scandinavian extraction than among those of German and Old American stock. Nonkinship family visiting tends to be most frequent among families living near each other, but it covers wider areas as one goes up the socio-economic scale. Churches are important catalytic agents for establishing the various contacts, as they bring many of the families together each Sunday and thus make for some regularity in informal relationships.

Intrafamily work-exchange patterns are common in the southern half of the county. There nonkin neighbors are often by-passed. In the mixed-nationality and Old American areas work-exchange patterns are confined to more restricted areas. Generally, the patterns are those formerly set by an old threshing ring. Work is usually exchanged by operators of similar sized farms who are doing the same type of farming; in most cases from two to six farmers are involved. Long “runs” and big “rings” have been relegated to the past through the use of small individually operated combines, hay balers and corn pickers. Small machines, few jobs, some custom hire, and family combinations have made the present-day exchange efforts a very localized and limited feature of farming. One neighborhood may have several work-exchange clusters which, in the German and Scandinavian areas, are mostly organized on a kinship basis. As rapidly as income and availability of equipment permits, each farm is becoming operationally self-sufficient.

In Webster City and Jewell Saturday is farmers’ day in town. For other centers which lack many of the secondary and specialized services, Saturday is quiet. While the women do the household trading, the men attend to business, obtain machinery repairs, attend a sale at the sale barn, or congregate on street corners and visit. According to their own accounts, the men come mostly to bring the women to town. Politics, governmental programs, the big league baseball game, the markets, or national, state and local events may be discussed. After the shopping is completed, the wives may sit in their cars and watch the people go by, or they may visit with the people they know on the street and in the stores. Children attend a movie, or indulge in ice cream or candy. However, minor shopping done during frequent week-day emergency trips has
taken much of the burden from the week-end shopping day, leaving more time for any commercialized recreation in which the family may be interested.

For youth, the school is the center of activities. But following graduation the youth are faced with forming their own local informal associations. Some are outgrowths of 4-H club work. Shows and roller skating are popular commercialized types of recreation obtained usually outside the home community. Prosperous times have made even more of this possible. Eating a hot-dog or a noonday school lunch at the local restaurant or having a coke at the local drug store is the leading commercial recreation for the youth in the small town community. Webster City’s swimming pool is popular.

Scarcity of diversions seems to grow in many of the local communities and with increasing leisure time the problem grows with it. In the home, the radio does little in the traditional sense to cement farm family life. It does provide weather forecasts, livestock and produce markets, political speeches, big league baseball, football and basketball games, and religious programs on Sundays. However, entertainment shows are a great attraction. While the spring and summer seasons allow for picnics, reunions, hunting and fishing, some boating on local lakes and the fair and carnivals, the winter offers little recreation for the entire family. A number of farm families take vacations, but the majority do not.

In 1944, 35 percent of the farm families reported having members in one or another kind of social club. 23 In the northern half of the county a number of social clubs functioned on a school-district or combination of school districts basis, whereas in the southern part most tended to function in the church community areas. Some of the clubs operate for charitable purposes, for sewing or quilting; others are purely social. These formal-informal types of clubs carry such names as Rural Workers, Wall Street Society, 900 Club, Every Other Wednesday, Community, Neighborhood, Birthday, Get Together, Golden Hour, Aid Your Neighbor, Young Married Women, Saratoga Sunshine, Friendly Neighbor, Thimble Club, and others. Membership ranges from 10 to 35 persons a club. Most appear to be developments of interest and congeniality groups. Of 18 clubs studied, 11 were organized in the 1920’s or before and 7

23 Ibid.
in the 1930's. This attests to their persistence and functional importance in the lives of the participants.

Farm men take little part in informal club activity except as they are invited to special family events sponsored by the women's clubs. For the few who belong, informal associations at the lodge club rooms serve a more useful purpose.

The majority of the more informal clubs are made up of older members, usually from the middle and higher socio-economic strata of farm families. For some the original purpose, perhaps of child study or birthday celebrations, has changed to more sedate types of social functions along with increase in family responsibilities. The younger farm wives are more likely to belong to some informal coterie; those with children of school age to the PTA.

Membership in many informal groups is usually easier to attain through membership in a coterie. The social relationships place the individual in a status along with other members of that group. To understand better the social organization of any community, the effects of this form of group life need to be studied more thoroughly. More needs to be known of the social characteristics of the membership, the attitudes and values the group stands for, the strata of families represented, and the pressures they exert on formally organized activities.

AGENCY ORGANIZATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS INCREASE

Agencies are considered to be those public and private administrative units which generally but not always originate outside the county, and which operate within it. The ways in which agencies relate their activities to each other and to the people they serve depend upon how they fit into a social structure of the area in which they function.

As public agencies, Hamilton County has the Agricultural Extension Service, Farmers Home Administration, Iowa Employment Service, Production and Marketing Administration, Public Health Service, Social Welfare Department, Soil Conservation Service, and Veterans Service Office. All are tax-supported and administered by paid personnel. Program policies of the agencies at the county level, however, are adaptations of state and national policies to local needs.

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24 The Veterans Service Office was closed in 1948.
### TABLE 11. INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN AGENCIES AND FORMALLY ORGANIZED GROUPS, HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA, 1948.

#### AGENCIES

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture Extension Service</td>
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<td>Farmers Home Administration</td>
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<td>Iowa Employment Service</td>
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<td>Production and Marketing Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterans Service Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal Organizations</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Artificial Breeding Association (County)**

**Business and Professional Women**

**Cancer Society (County)**

**Cattle Growers Association**

**Chamber of Commerce (Webster City)**

**Commercial Clubs (Villages and Webster City)**

**Conservation League**

**Cooperatives (elevator, service, creamery, electrification, turkey processing, seed and farm supply)**

**Council of Social Agencies**

**Dairy Herd Improvement Association**

**Educational Council (Council)**

**Fair Association (County)**

**Farm Bureau**

**Federation of Women's Clubs (County)**

**Four-H Clubs**

**Future Farmers of America (Webster City and Stanhope)**

**Homemaker Study Groups**

**Kendall Young Foundation**

**Kiwans (Webster City and Jewell)**

**League of Women Voters (Webster City)**

**Machinery Dealers Association (County)**

**Medical Society (County)**

**Ministerial Association (County)**

**Ministerial Association (Webster City)**

**National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (County)**

**Parent Teachers Association (all centers)**

**Production Credit Association**

**Public Health Council (County)**

**Red Cross**

**Rotary (Webster City)**

**Salvation Army Service Unit (Board)**

**Sheep Growers Association**

**Shipping Association (County)**

**Society for Crippled Children**

**Soil Improvement Association**

**Soldiers' and Sailors' Relief Commission**

**Swine Growers Association §**

**Tuberculosis Association (County)**

**USDA County Council ‡**

**Veterans Organizations (Legion, VFW, AVC)**

**Veterans Service Committee**

**Veterinarians Association (County)**

**Women's Christian Temperance Union**

**Women's Relief Corps**

**Young Married Couples**

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● This association is only nominally active.

§ Association consists of chairman only. Membership is provisional.

‡ At present the USDA County Council is relatively inactive.
The direct influence of agency forces in the county has become increasingly important during the last 25 years, beginning about the time the Agricultural Extension Service began to get under way. Most of the agency origins are developments of the 1930's, a phenomenon of the depression, and they have come to be accepted, in prosperity as well, as part of the necessary pattern of social organization and of public service.

The Production and Marketing Administration is organized on a township basis although actually its relationships are with individual farmers. The Extension Service-Farm Bureau program operates on a township and commodity-group basis. More than any other one agency the Agricultural Extension Service maintains direct and indirect relationships with all other agencies that function in the county and with at least 28 formally organized groups. Such relationships take the form of interagency or inter-group committee membership, of active participation in planning and carrying out a program, or of merely acting in an advisory capacity. With some organized groups, the relationship is on a continuous basis. Examples are membership on the county council or the joint Extension Service-Farm Bureau arrangement. With others the relationship is intermittent or periodic like that with the Red Cross during its annual finance drive. The Extension Service emphasizes integration and working with other agencies and formally organized groups in its educational efforts. The Public Health Service, which in Hamilton County employs a public health nurse, works principally through the local schools, with individual cases as reported, and through various organized clubs. Public welfare work is a family case proposition. Both agencies are assisted in their work by county advisory councils whose purpose is to help the agencies better to integrate and correlate the effectiveness of their work with that of other welfare groups (such as the local Veterans Service Office, Iowa Employment Service, Red Cross, Crippled Children's Association, Tuberculosis Association, National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis) and with that of other private and charitable groups. The newly organized Hamilton County Soil Conservation district is serviced by a Soil Conservation Service technician who cooperates with the Extension Service in working with small groups of farmers,

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25 Commodity groups include the cattle growers', swine growers' and sheep growers' associations.
in a neighborhood or watershed area. The Veterans Service Office and the Iowa Employment Service, which are located in Webster City, maintain services for the entire county.

The extent to which agencies have become integrated into the organizational structure of the county may be seen in table 12 from the number of formal organizations with which they maintain some sort of relationship in their efforts to better serve the people of the county.

TABLE 12. AGENCIES AND NUMBER OF FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH THEY MAINTAIN RELATIONS, HAMILTON COUNTY, IOWA, 1948.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of agency</th>
<th>Number of formal organizations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agricultural Extension Service</td>
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<td>Farmers Home Administration</td>
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<td>Iowa Employment Service</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production and Marketing Administration</td>
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<td>Public Health Service</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare Department</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Conservation Service</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Service Office</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some agencies, because of their functions and programs, have fewer relationships with organized groups than have others. But the significant fact is that formally organized groups are increasingly used by agencies in their attempts to reach the people of the county more effectively.

The Extension Service-Farm Bureau activities are organized on a township basis. In practice, homemaker study group and 4-H club memberships particularly tend to fall into church, school district or neighborhood configurations. Attendance at Farm Bureau meetings likewise tends to conform to natural group areas in contrast to its township organization. Commodity group meetings often are county-wide and are frequently held in Webster City.

Most agencies in following out county, state and national policies and requirements tend to standardize their programs, and their operating procedures tend to be somewhat inflexible. With the array of agency and formalized activities, in addition to those of regular government, it is not unusual to find that the most prominent leadership is located in the county seat.

ANALYSIS OF RURAL ORGANIZATION

FACTORS THAT HAVE CONDITIONED OR MODIFIED RURAL ORGANIZATION

The various forms and degrees of association in the county and the various relationships among them have
resulted from interrelated factors which influence the functioning of the organization and the county's social order. Some of the more important factors are briefly discussed.

HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE SOIL

From the time of the first settlement to the present, the most characteristic physical feature of the county has been the fertile soil. Around it have developed and revolve many values affecting the rural social structure.

The good soil influenced the selection and made easy the adaptation of many of the farm enterprises. The land characteristics were ideally adapted to the fulfillment of the ideal of the family farm set forth in the Homestead Act. Within the framework of the family farm, settlers soon found they could have the home they sought and the living for which they had hoped. They soon found that the land would produce a surplus above family needs. It was well adapted for its commercial counterparts, the corn-hog and cash-grain types of farming. Thus, in effect, the stage was set for the family-type farms that generally have proved so successful. The highly productive soil rewarded work. It nurtured the idea reflected in the present social welfare philosophy that any ambitious person can succeed and that the lazy person shouldn't receive help. It encouraged the adoption of standardized farm practices throughout the county, as it did throughout much of the heart of the Corn Belt as well.

COMMON OCCUPATION

Much of the formal and informal social life of open-country and village people alike is conditioned by the prevailing occupation of farming. Village business people and retired village residents depend upon farm prosperity. Local business institutions are mostly of the service type adapted to serve farmers. Business and farming are closely integrated psychologically and actually.

With nearly all of the open-country families engaged in farming, the dominant rhythms of work and social life are the same for all. Time of scheduling organized events has become almost as institutionalized as have the dominant rhythms and cycles of work. Importance of holidays that come during the spring and summer has declined, partly because they come during the period of heavy farm work.

With commercialization of agriculture in Hamilton County and particularly with high mechanization, the
farmer's economic world enlarged rapidly. Farmers have become production specialists. As a partial result of selling in a market and money economy they dropped many of their rural local economic values for more urban ones. Commodities and the farmers' labor have come to be measured in terms of monetary returns. National and world situations have come to be evaluated in terms of the possible economic effect they may have locally. Rural residents support any organized or institutional effort that will further advance the economic aspect of agriculture but are less inclined to encourage advances or changes in the social aspects of their lives.

HISTORY AND TRADITION

Migration to the county was by families, not by large groups. The families came to build homes. They settled on dispersed farms under the provisions of the Homestead Act, a pattern that was ideally suited to the high-quality soil and to the type of farming they brought and developed. Other aspects of the local social system were conditioned by the mode of land division, location of roads and highways, open-country schools, churches and public utilities. The families now as before live as independent units one from another. Although they are not so isolated as formerly, distance from friends and community institutions has acted as a brake to the development of closely integrated groupings.

Contrary to the popular notion that the population of the county has been completely amalgamated, substantial cores of three major nationality-extraction groups still are readily identifiable within their original settlement areas. They have been held together by a common tradition, by the church groups, and by the highly primary nature of the small community centers within each of the nationality areas. Although the external symbols of assimilation are present in all the groups, many of the old-country values and personal attitudes survive and act as retarding factors in the assimilative process. Each of the three major nationality groups is bolstered by the cohesive effect of a large number of families. Thus, although outwardly there is considerable uniformity in the social structure of the county, enough of the traditional mores persist to give identification and some uniqueness of contrast to these nationality groups. However, there is no geographic group of farmers which is basically more skilled than any other.
Today, practically every farmstead is on a surfaced road. The ease with which the Hamilton County rural family gets about has been a potent factor in the development of the larger locality groups, based on trade and town-centered institutions. Each of the trade centers of the county is located on a railroad.

Because of the automobile and good roads, Hamilton County families have easy access to Des Moines, Waterloo and smaller nearby county seats in which contacts of the secondary and specialized types have become relatively frequent. Farm families frequently obtain goods and services for themselves or for the farm at more than one center, often on the same trip. Farm products are trucked for considerable distances and delivered directly to processing plants.

Frequent contacts outside the local community have decreased the frequency of neighborhood contacts. The more extensive contacts are based upon congeniality and choice rather than proximity. Just as larger towns have offered a wider selection of merchandise, good roads and automobiles have offered a wider selection of companions and activities.

The telephone is an important instrument of communication and social interaction for nine-tenths of the farm families. Much of the informal visiting pattern has been adapted to it, reducing the necessity for many personal contacts.

To keep abreast of improved farming practices, farmers have come to make wide use of weather, crop and market reports, the radio, and agricultural journals and bulletins of the state agricultural college and of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. In large part, they have replaced the informal neighborly word-of-mouth method of communicating information relating to and affecting farming.

CHANGING POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Before 1900, Hamilton County experienced little population loss that was not replaced, nor were there vital changes in the composition of the population. Since 1900 the county’s total population has remained relatively constant, but the proportion of nonfarm population has increased relative to farm population. This shift has been gradual and undramatic, with many people unaware of it.

The greatest decline in farm population occurred in the
southern half of the county, beginning with the shift to commercialized farming. The decline has represented an adjustment to farm resources not accomplished during the settlement period. Over the years, the open-country schools in this area have closed at a more rapid rate than elsewhere in the county.

Decline in the county’s farm population and in the birth rate have in recent years necessitated numerous school readjustments. Slightly more than a third of the open-country schools of 1925 are operating today. Enrollments have declined to nearly half of those of the earlier date, whereas town and country elementary enrollments combined have declined about a third over the same period.

As urban job opportunities have increased, many young women have left farm areas. As a result, there are now about six men and boys to every five women and girls in the county’s farm population. In Hamilton township, the ratio is nearly seven to five. All townships show high ratios of males to females. Webster City shows a higher proportion of persons in the productive ages 15-64, followed by that of the farm population and lastly that of the villages. Farm families have more children under 5; village families are next; and those in Webster City have the fewest.

The population characteristics show that the typical farm is likely to be operated by a family in which males and children predominate, whereas the nonfarm population is made up of larger proportions of adults in the productive ages, of females, and of aged persons.

SCIENTIFIC AND MECHANIZED FARMING

To the earlier pattern of rural living and organization was added continued expansion of markets, and continued adoption of scientific practices and of mechanization. Coupled with good soil and a favorable climate, the constantly improving farming techniques have resulted in a high level of living for the residents of the county. Part of this high level of living has been a broadening and specialization of the interests and contacts of the farm people.

Highly scientific and mechanized farming techniques characterize the operational pattern of practically all farmers in the county. This necessitates high capital investment which is related to credit, tenure, and the opportunity for farm youths to engage in farming as an
occupation. This has further heightened the necessity to provide that the economic returns commensurate the high investments in agriculture.

Much time saved through farm mechanization and standardization is spent in improving the farm and home. Cumulatively this improves the status of the farmers and their level of living. The typical attitude toward heavy manual labor is to buy or improvise machinery to do it or to hire custom workers and equipment. This leaves less need for neighbors to work together in primary relationships associated with exchange of work and equipment. A new series of relationships have been built up with farm cooperatives, Farm Bureau and government agricultural agencies. These groups are directed by a functionary leadership to which the farmers have tended to look more and more for stability, guidance and security.

Experimentation with new crops is not common. But most farmers of the county are ready to use improved varieties of the crops they are now growing. Farmers frequently attend demonstrations put on at Iowa State College, which is near by, and local meetings at which specialists discuss farm problems or new practices.

LEVEL OF LIVING

With the development of a high level of living, broader social contacts as well as a freer choice in off-farm activities have been made possible. Individual family members have had greater freedom in satisfying their needs and interests. Because they have gained a relatively high degree of economic security, particularly during and since the war, their freedom to choose and to buy material and social satisfactions has been expanded. The net result has been a tendency on the part of a number of families to develop a multiplicity of organizational interests, at the same time sacrificing some intensity of interest. This is seen in non-attendance or occasional attendance at organizational meetings and the tendency to let a few active leaders carry the organizational work load. Even so, interviews with families showed that they consider membership in formalized organizations an essential part of the family's level of living, partly because such membership is considered as carrying prestige. The whole situation appears to be one of ferment, wherein participation in formalized activity tends to conflict with a developing independence and an increasing reliance upon impersonal associations.
SIGNIFICANT ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES, FUNCTIONS AND INTERGROUP RELATIONSHIPS

Changes in social organization in Hamilton County have proceeded in several closely related dominant directions in response to the forces previously mentioned.

LOCALITY GROUPS IN STATE OF TRANSITION

The trade-centered village communities of the county are much stronger than they were 50 or even 25 years ago. Along with the weakening of the neighborhoods and their absorption into the larger trade-centered communities, enough of their vestigial forms still exist to fragment the larger communities into minor-interest groups which still condition social participation. These small groupings continue to display a limited differentiation along religious, ethnic, locality, informal social, and even economic lines. The degree and the number of such differences vary from one part of the county to the other. The folk bonds holding both communities and neighborhoods, together tend to be more prevalent in the southern part of the county, while the secular bonds are more prevalent in the north and especially around Webster City.

Even though the small centers of the county continue to offer a decreasing number of commercial services, their importance is enhanced by the increasing centralization of institutional services. At the same time, most of the small centers are increasingly becoming specialized towns made up of retired farm families, while they successfully retain their place as primary service centers for the farm population. The association of these primary social relationships with the village centers is rather effectively blocking the further encroachment of Webster City’s primary economic and social services, while the secondary and especially the specialized service area of the county seat continues to expand.

As yet, each of the county’s trade-centered communities must be considered as a loose, more or less informal area of association. But in any given community, the residents have a great deal in common with a much wider area. Face-to-face associations, much less secondary contacts, are not monopolized or even encompassed by individual communities. Thus far, each of the communities has evolved out of its own natural history, based on long-time stability of population, soil productivity, economic success, the impact of common necessities, and the growth of common practices.
INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES CONCENTRATING
IN TRADE CENTERS

Along with the developing trade-area community, Hamilton County is experiencing an increasing concentration of institutional services in the trade centers. With the exception of two large open-country churches served by resident pastors, none of the others reportedly has a large enough number of youth to carry on satisfactorily any type of young people's work. Most of the open-country churches continue to function because of the traditional and sentimental attachments which older members have for them. Church-attendance patterns show considerable by-passing of open-country churches in favor of the village-centered churches. Only in the three major ethnic areas are the open-country churches surviving, temporarily at least, in competition with sister institutions in the villages. Strong religious sanctions continue to give support to this situation. It is in those areas that religious influences cover a much wider aspect of life than in the Old American parts of the county where other agencies and influences such as the school, specialized groups, and impersonal media such as the radio and newspaper tend to play a somewhat more important role in the patterning of social behavior.

Necessity for reorganization of the open-country elementary schools has come as a result of changing composition in the farm population, the increasing influence of trade centers, good roads and adequate transportation facilities, plus greater awareness on the part of farm people of the need for more adequate and better adapted educational facilities and school support.

The presence of four consolidated schools in the county, plus the provision of bus transportation to village and town schools for pupils of a number of closed one-room schools, has helped to stimulate the new community consciousness as to schools. Although at present the extension of school facilities by the nearest school to the farm homes involved is a partial solution of the school problem in Hamilton County, this is regarded by many persons as a temporary expedient until the over-all pattern of school reorganization is finally determined.

INTEREST GROUPS MULTIPLYING

Along with the development of commercial agriculture in the county, the need for organizations to look after the
economic needs of the farmer was felt. It was at this point that economic interests began to increase their lead over institutionalized traditional patterns of social behavior.

Agricultural societies were formed in the county as early as 1857, the same year the first fair was held. Institutes and short courses before the first World War replaced the work of the earlier societies. At about this time the farmers began to feel that village and town schooling did not meet their needs. They pressed for the development of training in vocational agriculture in the high schools. The county Farm Bureau, representing the emergence of a new type of agricultural organization, was started in 1917, primarily to channel the work of the Extension Service to local communities. The 4-H club work began in 1918. The Farm Bureau is the only formal organization which has any sizable farmer membership in the county. As a consequence it has solidified its position in the determination of agricultural policies.

Along with and parallel to the growth of the Farm Bureau, increasing support has been given to (1) elevator, petroleum, turkey-processing, rural electrification, shipping and creamery cooperatives; (2) cattle, swine and sheep breeders' associations; (3) women's work, 4-H club, and older rural youth programs; and (4) fertilizer, farm equipment and soil conservation demonstrations, fire and farm-accident prevention, and adult evening schools.

Interest and participation in church, fraternal order, civic and educational organizations increased during the War II period, while they were linked with wartime activity. However, they largely reverted to prewar levels at the end of hostilities. Because such organized activities have been mainly of the nonfarm type, not intimately associated with or related to farm enterprises, interest of the farm people in these activities has tended to remain nominal at best.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES INCREASE IN IMPORTANCE

As new and wider economic, political and social relationships have entered the life of the county, public and quasi-public agencies have taken over more of the welfare work. In part, this was due to the inability or reluctance of local governmental units and local business to cope successfully with problems that arose during periods of crisis.
Some governmental units affect the entire population, others only certain segments. Most conspicuous of the agencies that deal with the farm population are the agricultural agencies with offices in the county—the Extension Service, Production and Marketing Administration, Soil Conservation Service, and Farmers Home Administration. Other agencies include the Public Health and Social Welfare departments, the State Employment Service, the Veterans Service office and the Production Credit Association, a quasi-public agency, also considered a cooperative.

As the role of most agencies is related to the pecuniary or secular aspects of rural welfare, their integration into the rural life pattern continues on an economic plane. Integration is somewhat more pronounced near Webster City and less pronounced outside the county-seat community. The presence of the agencies has served to further implement the secularization and standardization of the material aspects of life in the county. New social types such as paid professional workers and committeemen have been interjected on the local scene. New ideas have been brought into wider use—ideas that tend to improve farm practices, give a broader understanding of the relationship between national and local welfare, and lead to a formalized approach to solving local problems. A somewhat more indirect result is that the agencies frequently bring the families much that is new and that they want. This serves the interests of the agencies and costs little in terms of primary association and personal effort.

Dependence on Functionary Leadership Grows

Growth in number of agencies in the county and more particularly growth of the farm program has helped to develop new rural leadership. Leaders in educational and religious activities; in fraternal, civic and patriotic activities; and in town, township and county government are often much the same leaders who have been active before in offices of various organizations. On the other hand, local leaders in farm programs are to a considerable extent a new group, individuals who have come up from the ranks and who were not so completely identified with institutionalized types of activities.

Along with the increase in numbers of paid professional workers and as their names have become familiar to the people, a strong tendency has developed to depend more and more on such leaders for guidance in organized activi-
ties. Especially is this the case in county-wide or other large programs. Leaders in the county now function more and more as the elected officers of special-interest groups, as specialists in or administrators of one or another of the agencies and institutional groups. Professional people considered as leaders in each of the communities are teachers, school administrators and ministers. In farm programs, township PMA committeemen, Farm Bureau officers, cooperative managers and leaders of women's project groups are the principal sources of leadership.

Together with increasing dependence on the functionary leader to carry on the promotion of organized activity, there is developing a parallel and generally uniform acceptance of specialists and specialists' programs. Sometimes the work of these specialists has been more uniformly accepted than the work of the local functionary leaders who frequently are called upon to help facilitate the work of specialists in the county. Increasing acceptance is also being given to the specialist from outside the county. This acceptance is closely related to the growth of agencies in the county as well as the tendency to want information and assistance at its source.

**INTERRELATIONSHIPS WITH OUTSIDE INCREASE**

The effect of federal farm programs on the farmers of the county has been important in the county's history. While institutes, short courses and demonstrations brought contact with outside sponsoring groups, the more recent establishment of agencies and formally organized groups, both farm and nonfarm, has brought farmers and nonfarmers into closer, more intimate contact with and dependence upon organizational structures extending often from the county to the national level.

During the depression and during World War II there was greater emphasis on "national" direction with increased local responsibility. Problems of relief and production had become increasing concerns of the government. Soil conservation, extension education, benefit payments, rural electrification, vocational agriculture, old age assistance, organized charities and public health activities came to be approved by almost everyone.

Despite this approval, the prosperity of the war and postwar period has resulted in some feeling that shifting responsibility for local welfare to agencies may be going too far, and that some responsibility should revert to local
government. Advancement of credit, handling of services to veterans, and some of the soil conservation activity are typical examples. Reversion to prewar levels of organizational activity in nearly all types of formally organized groups is symptomatic of the psychological stability of the residents of the county and their love for many traditional habits of social behavior.

DYNAMICS OF COUNTY SEAT ORGANIZATION INCREASE

Two separate aspects of government service concern the Hamilton County farmers, the county and the township: (1) The position of the county is shown in the dominance of the county seat as an effective unit for administration of governmental, public and quasi-public agencies; (2) the county is close enough to the farmers for it to know what is going on. Conversely, however, the farmers feel that the county is too large for them to know about everything that is going on. Through the civil township network, practically every organization of any economic, social or political significance centers in the county seat, from which much direction and motivation emanate. Also concentrated in the county seat are most of the professional services, all of the manufacturing, half of all the business establishments, most of the secondary services, and practically all of the specialized services that serve the county.

The county unit has increased in importance. In fact, all state and federal activities are organized on the county basis. Integration of the county as an effective unit for organizational activity is still in process. This is shown by the fact that typical intergroup relations at the county level are not always completely cooperative, and community organization depends for its success upon the friendly responses of representative leading citizens.

Because the townships have partially or totally lost many of their earlier governmental functions like administration of roads, public schools, welfare, justice, elections and tax-levy, the principal role left to them is that of units of organization of a nonpolitical nature such as Farm Bureau-Extension activities, those of the Production and Marketing Administration, and during the war, wartime organization. Even so, the townships of the county generally lack effectiveness as natural units because social relationships more and more are gravitating toward
the community trade centers and much participation in organized activities is on this new basis.

INTERDEPENDENCIES BETWEEN AGENCIES AND FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS INCREASE

The decline in social importance of the neighborhood and township as effective units of organization has given increased impetus to the growing interrelationship between and among agencies, and particularly between agencies and formally organized groups. This type of approach offers them one way of reaching people not contacted through other avenues. The Extension Service, Public Health Service, Social Welfare Department, Soil Conservation Service and others are making increasing use of this technique in Hamilton County. Most of these interdependencies take place on the county level, some in the Webster City community, and fewest in other parts of the county.

PRESENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE ADEQUATE

The analysis of Hamilton County indicates a considerable transfer of function from locality groups to special-interest groups. Organization in the county varies all the way from the informal primary nature of the old neighborhood to the special interests of the new agency or group. The degree to which the people understand what is involved in the various organized activities likewise varies widely. As a result, the degree to which agencies and formally organized groups have become integrated into the social fabric of the county varies considerably.

A large enough number and variety of formally organized groups exist in the county to give most segments of the population an opportunity to participate, irrespective of whether their interests are economic, social, educational, religious, fraternal, patriotic or civic. Their adequacy, however, will depend upon the extent to which the organizational structure is kept in a continuous state of adjustment in line with local needs and interests.
APPENDIX

PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Data obtained and used in this study are of both quantitative and qualitative types. Many quantitative data from the U. S. Census were compiled and analyzed when Hamilton County was selected in 1942 by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics as typical of one segment of the Corn Belt. Use was made of some of these data and a wide range of secondary statistical and historical data regarding the county and the type-of-farming area of which it is a part.

In the description and analysis of the rural organization of the county, liberal use was made of interpretations from data compiled from a survey of a statistically selected sample of 273 families in the Webster City trade area community in 1944. The sample included 100 open-country families, 101 Webster City families and 72 village families. The open-country and Webster City families were selected within geographical strata through random selection of sections and blocks, respectively, within each geographical stratum, while in the villages one of every three families was selected for the sample. Delineation of locality groups in the entire county was completed in the fall of 1947 through informal interviews of 140 open-country, village and town residents.

Interviews with county officials, agency and organization representatives, and farm and nonfarm leaders in all parts of the county were important sources of information in developing the study and interpreting the results. Specific unpublished materials contributed measurably to this study. They include the following compiled jointly by the Division of Farm Population and Rural Life, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and by the Sociology Subsection of the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station:

1. Neely, Wayne C. A Report on Hamilton County, Iowa, 1944, which provides historical information on the development of social organization in the county.

2. Frame, Nat T. Rural Life Trends Reports, numbers 1-6 (1941-44), designed to provide information on trends as related to agricultural production and selected social factors in Hamilton County.