

# A Rural Survey in Illinois



MADE BY THE  
DEPARTMENT OF CHURCH AND COUNTRY LIFE  
OF THE  
BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
IN THE U. S. A.

Rev. Warren H. Wilson, Ph.D., *Superintendent*  
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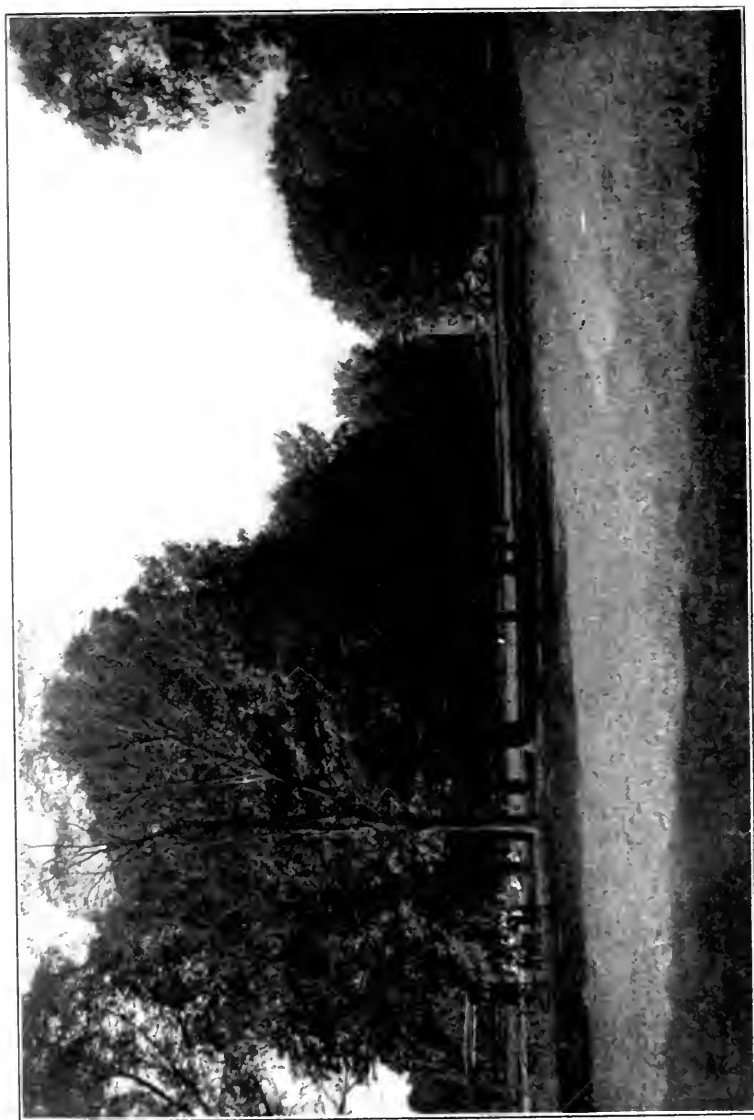
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The Field Work in this investigation was done by Rev. Clair S. Adams

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## An Illinois Survey

Dr. Henry Wallace, editor of *Wallace's Farmer*, chairman of the committee on rural churches of the United Presbyterian Church, appealing for the facts brought out in a survey of rural religious conditions, adds this word: "We do not know what this survey will reveal, but we suspect that it will show that from 30 to 50 per cent. of the families living within the bounds of our country congregations are churchless, and could well say, 'No man careth for my soul.'"

The accompanying survey of forty-four communities within the bounds of Bloomington and Springfield Presbyteries, Synod of Illinois (the eastern central part of the State), is an effort to get at these facts which are essential to any knowledge of the field and necessary to any solution of the problems of the rural church.

This investigation was carried on under the direction of the Department of Church and Country Life of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, but was interdenominational in interest, no more information being secured from a Presbyterian Church than from any other. The results are published for all churches interested in the rural church problem.

Three months were spent in this work. A leave of absence was granted by the session of the Bement Church to the pastor, for that period, on request of the Home Board. Every effort was made in counsel with leading farmers, merchants, bankers, teachers and ministers, that we might have a concensus of opinion as nearly accurate as possible. During this three months' survey thirty-two addresses were given, ten sermons preached and thirty-two conferences held. All the ministers of all the churches in the communities visited were personally interviewed regarding their own church statistics (including Roman Catholic). Where there were no ministers the leading officers were interviewed. The investigator was helped by the most hearty cooperation on the part of all the churches and by hundreds of laymen, when they understood the purpose of our survey. No effort was spared to obtain in every possible way the most accurate information obtainable from all sources.

This survey does not take the place of a parish survey, which ministers are urged to make of their own fields, but it does give some facts which surely show the need of such work, and the knowledge of such facts secured in such a thoroughgoing way will do much to help in solving our rural problems, for there has been altogether too much guesswork and theory thus far regarding the rural-church problem. Of course, a longer

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time spent in each community would have given more detailed facts, but the facts that follow are sufficient to show the conditions representative of many communities in Illinois and neighboring States. The work was a pleasure, because so many interesting facts were brought out by the questions, and so many people were intensely interested and helpful in the work.

This survey covers four general topics: First, *economic*; second, *sociological*; third, *educational*; fourth, *religious*. These communities are fairly representative of our Illinois towns and rural districts, ranging in size from distinctively rural fields to towns of 3,000 population. Thirteen counties are represented in this survey, as follows (figures in parentheses give number of communities surveyed in each county): Iroquois (4), Vermilion (8), Ford (4), Champaign (7), McLean (5), Piatt (2), Macon (2), Sangamon (5), Menard (3), Cass, Morgan, Woodford and Scott, 1 each.

## ECONOMIC

The average area of each community surveyed is 54 square miles. Our farm land in central Illinois, in the "corn belt" of the world, is for the most part a rich black loam. It is level prairie except for a little way along the streams, where there is some rough land given over to forests and pastures. In only twelve of the communities is coal mined, either privately or by companies. The chief products of this region are corn, oats, hay and wheat, in the order given. The average corn crop for last year was forty bushels per acre, or a little above the average for the State. There are evidences of prosperity on every hand, in increasing rents and doubling of land in price in ten years. One hundred and ninety dollars per acre is the average price now, and it is rapidly increasing. In some communities coal rights are being sold for \$100 per acre. The average size of farms is 143 acres, about the average for the entire United States. The smallest farms are of 40 acres and the largest 600 acres. In one-half the communities the tendency for the last ten years has been to enlarge the farms, while in about one-fifth of the communities the tendency seems to be to break up the farms into smaller ones. The very best of machinery is used on the farms, and the most modern, but in 20 per cent. of the communities it is poorly cared for.

There is no more than the beginning of improved scientific farming in this region. The rotation of crops has almost wholly developed in the last decade; 72 per cent. of the farmers now rotate their crops. Sixty-three per cent. of the communities report a loss in fertility of the soil, all the way from 10 per cent. to "rapidly going down." Only 23 per cent. of the places report an increase in production, due in large measure to drainage, better cultivation and choice seed.



# THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE ON THE FARMS

**OWNERS**

**47  $\frac{1}{4}$  %**

**TENANTS**

**52  $\frac{3}{4}$  %**

*1764 Square Miles  
In Illinois.*

Not so much stock is fed on the farms as formerly; 80 per cent. of the communities are now devoted to grain farming. This change in farming activities is affecting the fertility of the soil. Wheat is raised more than formerly it was, as a part of crop rotation.

#### *The Renters and Hands*

The greatest change in this region is in the status of the men who run the farms. Only a few years ago this region was entirely farmed by the owners themselves, but within the past few years many of the owners have moved to the cities and towns or sold their farms to speculators and large land owners, until now 53 per cent. of the farms are run by tenants, and only 47 per cent. by the owners themselves. About two-thirds of these tenants, however, we might call long-time tenants, as they remain on one farm for several years, though with only one-year leases. The wage of farm hands is about \$27 per month. Two-thirds of farm laborers have good prospects, and many become land owners, buying land where it is cheaper. Within the past year or two there has been quite an exodus of farmers and tenants back to Indiana and Ohio, where cheaper land, partly worn out, offers better inducements. In some communities there is a scarcity of farm labor. Many of the young men prefer to work in the factories which are springing up in our middle Western cities and towns. During the corn harvesting many laborers come up from the southern part of the State and Kentucky to work. There is a great scarcity of women to work in the homes. This fact has driven some farmers into the towns, where there is not such severe work for the women. On the other hand, many women on the farms work from early morning till night, doing the work in the house, and then working in the fields.

Summing up, then, our agricultural conditions, farms are increasing in size, price and per cent. of tenant farmers, and decreasing in fertility, owing to soil mining and wasteful methods of husbandry.

### SOCIOLOGICAL

The population of these communities is about evenly divided between the towns and villages and the distinctively rural districts. The last census reveals the fact that some of these counties have lost in population in the last ten years. There are 42 persons to the square mile, or twenty-one in the rural parts alone. In eight communities there is an increase in population, due to the opening up of coal mines, growth of manufacturing, draining of the land, and consequent increase of farms. In eight communities there is a decrease in population, due to removals, farm consolidation and improved machinery, enabling more land to be farmed with the same amount of help. The remaining communities are about stationary in population. Ninety-seven per cent. of the population are

regularly industrious, half of them being farmers and the other half laborers.

The principal occupation is farming, with some railroading, and considerable mining by foreigners in and about the mining towns. Sixty-six per cent. of the population are of American stock, related by intermarriage or descent to the old pioneer families who came into this region from the East and the South. About 10 per cent. of the population are foreigners, and 24 per cent. are the first generation descendants of foreign parents. In the order of their number, the foreigners are German, Irish, Swede and Italian, with a scattering of other nationalities. English is the only language spoken, save in a few places where a considerable number of Swedes or Germans in farming communities still hold to the mother tongue, and in the mining towns, where there is a babel of tongues. In one mining town there are eleven languages spoken.

Almost all the people are conveniently near to railroads, which in this level country run in all directions, making communication very easy and access to markets good. Twenty per cent. of the communities have trolley lines, 90 per cent. have telephones, and 97 per cent. of the people living outside of towns have rural free delivery. In 25 per cent. of the communities there is a beginning of better roads of stone and gravel, while in all the communities there is some improvement over the old ways of caring for the dirt roads. Wherever hard roads are being introduced they are being built just as fast as possible, and under no condition would the people go back to the old dirt road.

### *The Pioneers*

We must remember that this region we are considering is not an old-settled country, but still young; the pioneers are still living in every town who looked upon the virgin prairie just as it came open and new to the settler's hand. This first generation is now passing away. Their task was no light one: to conquer the soil, build fences and homes, plant trees, drain the swamps, lay out roads, organize towns, schools and churches. All their time and thought were taken up with the foundation work of civilization here. Life was stern and severe with these fathers, so there was little time for the more refining things of life—the embellishments and luxuries, the conveniences and attractive features; so that we find very little town pride or unity of mind or purpose. In a few places in the country there are community improvements, and in the towns there is a strange admixture of the old careless, self-centered spirit of the pioneer and the new ideals of a progressive age. Twenty per cent. of the communities are ruled by this old spirit almost entirely, and in them there is but one standard of life, as measured by wages, dress, manners and amusements. In the rest of the communities there are from two to six distinct



A COUNTRY PARSONAGE IN A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

standards of living. In 39 per cent. of the places the most influential man is the banker, and in 36 per cent. the farmer. These two classes of men lead all others in popularity.

The places where people meet are as follows, given in the order of preference: stores, restaurants, pool rooms, saloons, elevators, barber shops. Labor unions are found in 25 per cent. of the communities. The political situation is a little stronger Republican than Democratic, with quite a growing Socialism, especially among the foreign element. Three of the communities have saloons and sixteen have pool rooms.

Seventy-five per cent. of the homes and families are in a prosperous condition, 12 per cent. are fair, and 13 per cent. are poor.

There is a growing mail-order business in nearly all of the communities with Chicago and other neighboring cities. Where this condition prevails business men are discouraged. This "mining method" of business seems to go hand in hand with the same methods in agriculture, school and church, all suffering together; one of the unvarying conclusions of this survey being this—that in a prosperous community such institutions as school and farm prosper, but where the reverse is true, this "mining method" *saps the life out of* home, farm, school, church and social well being.

### *Recreation*

In making a study of the recreations and amusements in the territory

covered it was found that in 58 per cent. of the communities there was absolutely nothing in the way of amusement or recreational life. To supply this natural demand the young people make use of the Interurban, going to the neighboring cities of Danville, Bloomington, Decatur and Springfield for their play and good fellowship, sometimes securing it in ways which are neither helpful nor wholesome. In 63 per cent. of the communities the churches provide some social life, mostly for members only. Nearly all of these affairs have on them the dollar mark, as though created for revenue only. Few outsiders attend such functions. In 37 per cent. of the communities there is not even this small provision for the social life of the people provided by the churches.

In the way of commendable recreation and amusement provided by other agencies than the church, fifteen communities have lecture courses, with about five numbers each winter. These are promoted by business men. Four have Chautauquas in summer, from one to two weeks, and eighteen have "picture shows" going on throughout the year of a reasonably high grade. In twenty-seven communities there are literary clubs of various kinds, all of them confined to women. Although all of the communities are in agricultural districts, only six have any kind of a club or organization which might be called agricultural. Cooperation or fellowship among farmers seems to be confined exclusively to the grain elevators, ten communities having farmers' elevators, whose shares are owned by the farmers themselves, and to the yearly farmers' institute of one or two days, held in the country town.

The great American game of baseball has its usual popularity. In 75 per cent. of the communities where the game is indulged in with any regularity games are played on the day of rest and worship, usually just outside the corporation limits of the town, so that church and town people are helpless to prevent this by direct means.

The grade of public dances is low, usually showing immoral tendencies. A hall is rented by individuals or clubs and everybody invited to the dance. In some places dancing is kept up all night, and often ends in a riot. This is especially true in mining towns, where American young people are strongly influenced by the license of an alien population.

Although most of the communities studied are nominally "dry towns," there is much "wet goods" coming in by express or freight and sold by traveling agents of distillery and brewery. Not as much is sold as in the old days of the saloon. Now it has a dishonest, secretive accompaniment which discredits the practice. There still remains in spite of the banishment of the saloons pool and billiard rooms. These resorts are the lounging places of the same class of men who formerly patronized the saloon and lived by its business. In several places these rooms are on

second floors, where it is easy to be secretive, thus making them attractive places for gamblers.

Vitality is high in every community, in spite of some unsanitary conditions, which in a city would not be tolerated. It is interesting to note here that while the average life has been lengthened in the United States during the past years, this has been caused by better sanitation in the cities, and conquest of contagious and children's diseases by medical men, rather than to prolonged life on the farms. Here vitality remains the same as for past years, and whereas improved machinery might make the farmer's life much easier, it has been an implement in his hand to farm more acres and become more and more like the machine he runs.

Secret societies prevail in all the communities, but, contrary to the usual opinion, not as large a percentage of lodge men attend their lodges as churchmen attend church, and where lodge men attend their lodges regularly there is generally a good church attendance also. Twenty per cent. of lodge members attend with some regularity their lodges.

In nineteen communities there is an improvement in morals and in fifteen moral change seems to be at a standstill. In ten communities there is a deterioration of morals, and in nine of these last communities there is a growing tendency to immorality on the part of the young men and boys.

## EDUCATIONAL

There is less than 5 per cent. of illiteracy among these people, and in most communities there is an increasing number of papers and magazines coming through the mails. Agricultural bulletins, either from the agricultural college or the Government, are not read much by the farmers. There are ten public libraries in these communities, quite well patronized, but the reading matter is mostly light, popular fiction, 85 per cent. of the books taken from the library being of this nature, according to one librarian.

All of the high schools have libraries, some very good, averaging 415 volumes, and most of the rural schools have libraries ranging from 50 to 300 volumes.

Owing to the fact that quite a number of the county superintendents of schools were new men, just entering upon their duties at the time the survey was made, the data regarding rural schools is not as full as desired.

*School Buildings*—In the towns they are mostly brick and quite modern. Few are provided with ample grounds for play, and only one or two with any play rooms. Rarely did we find any ornamentation in the way of shrubbery or flowers about the buildings. Sanitation is unsatisfactory. Thirty per cent. of the schools have surface wells for the water supply. Seventy-three per cent. of the buildings are heated by steam. Equip-

ment and apparatus for carrying on school work are very diverse, some having fine equipment and some poor.

*Rural School Buildings*—These are for the most part old and out of date—one room, low ceilings, dingy and dark. Large grounds surround these buildings, but are bleak and, for most part, bare of any attractiveness or beauty. Where the most of the population are tenant farmers, the buildings are poorly kept, and there is often strong opposition from the landlords to any improvements. The surroundings and inadequate equipment of most of the rural schools have much to do with driving the young people to the towns and cities. Wherever, in the last few years, conditions have compelled the erection of a new building it is modern in construction and equipment and the pride of the community. On account of the waste of money for buildings and salaries in districts where there are but few pupils, there is a great need of rural-school consolidation. In a few communities public sentiment is growing toward this step, and in several places township high schools are in operation. Until we have better roads, however, there cannot be much done in this direction.

*Teaching Force*—The salaries of teachers in the town schools range from \$40 to \$166 per month, the last being for superintendent or principal. Eighty per cent. of the teachers in the schools are women, 14 per cent. of whom have had a college education. The average number of pupils to each teacher is 35. In two towns manual training has been lately introduced. Athletic organizations are more numerous than lit-



ROCK CREEK SCHOOL

erary or musical, according to the data given. In 59 per cent. of the communities one or more entertainments are given by the school each year, to interest the parents in the education of their children. In Lexington there is a very successful Mothers' Club, which meets once each month in the school building, just after school. Here the mothers and teachers discuss school problems, thus binding home and school together. The average attendance at this meeting for the past year was 35. It might be interesting to know that a larger proportion of young people are going from this high school to other institutions of learning than from any other community surveyed. There is little visiting done in the town schools by the parents.

*Rural Schools*—The salaries of teachers range from \$35 to \$100 per month, only a few receiving \$100. Owing to the small salaries, there is a steady decrease in the number of men teachers in the schools of our State. The majority of these teachers are town-bred girls, who have no interest or sympathy in the affairs of rural uplift. The average number of pupils to the teacher is 18. Only in part of the counties could data be obtained. Agriculture is being introduced in almost all of the rural schools, as a part of the State course of study, with graded work in the classes, examinations and some literary work; all this under the conscientious and faithful supervision of the county superintendents. More interest, however, is needed on the part of the farmers, and more attractive buildings, better equipped, that the rural school may take its place in rural uplift.

*Pupils*—In the town schools the attendance of pupils is 94 per cent. of the enrollment, and the average number of days of attendance for each pupil for the year is 146 days, with but little truancy. In the mining communities, however, among foreigners, false returns are often given that the boys may be taken out of school to work in the mines. In high schools, there are two boys to every three girls in attendance; in the grades boys and girls are about equal in number. In the rural schools the attendance is only 80 per cent. of the enrollment, and the average number of days' attendance for each pupil is only 98. Of course, rural schools have a shorter term of school for the year than the town schools, the difference being from six to ten weeks, but this will not explain away the fact that rural schoolchildren are taken out of school for the most trivial excuses, and made to do an adult's work—a present gain, perhaps, in wealth to parents, but a crippling of the pupil's life in suitable preparation for the world's work.

There are some very small schools in a few of the counties, schools where there is but one scholar, and yet imposing all the expense upon the taxpayers that would carry on a large school. In the entire State there are 97 schools with five scholars or less, but a growing interest is seen



in these matters, and we look for great improvements in the near future for the rural schools.

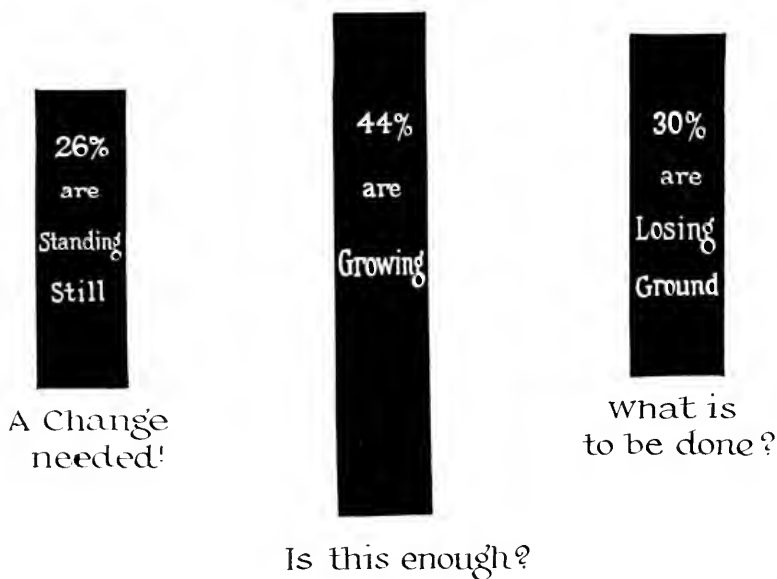
## RELIGIOUS

### *Churches Live and Dead*

In these 44 communities there are 225 churches of twenty denominations, including the Roman Catholic, only 77 of which have grown any in the past ten years, 45 are at a standstill and 56 have lost in membership, while 47 have been abandoned in the last ten years. Many more church buildings have been torn down and sold in this time, so that we are only counting in this number churches that are still standing. Deserted, weed-surrounded, falling into decay, unfrequented by the community, the steeple still pointing like a finger toward heaven, the abandoned church is a silent witness to a community's decadence of faith in God and love of His House. If the same proportion of abandoned churches prevails over our entire State, exclusive of Chicago, there would be over 1,600 in Illinois alone abandoned within the past ten years. To sum up these figures: In the past ten years 34 per cent. of our churches have grown and 66 per cent. are at a standstill, dying or dead. Of these 47 abandoned churches 29 are rural and 16 are in towns. Few of these abandoned churches in the country could be spared, for most of them are several miles from any other church. In the towns with abandoned churches there is no especial religious substitute, nor is there any manifested paganism that would explain it. On the contrary, there are 30 rural communities about the towns surveyed that have no churches or are within five miles of a church. All union churches are dead. Almost without exception churches where languages other than English are spoken in the regular services are not growing. Foreigners, working in the mines, are neglected by our Protestant churches, which are under the impression that they are all Roman Catholics. After investigation and conference with Roman Catholic priests we found that only a small number of these people attend church at all. Coming to this land of liberty they throw off all religious restraint, and "non-Catholic" and "pagan" are the names given them. Of course, the many languages spoken hinder our bringing them the gospel (thirteen languages being spoken in one mining town), but our churches are guilty of neglect in not bringing to these "strangers" the enlightening influences of Christianity.

We have heard it said often that Roman Catholic churches are growing more rapidly in this country than Protestantism, but we find in the seventeen Roman Catholic churches in the region surveyed that in the past ten years six have grown, six are at a standstill and five are dying; in other words, their condition is just about the same as the Protestant churches. We found the Roman Catholic clergy interested in this survey work and glad to give statistical information. The younger

# 163 Country Churches in Illinois



clergy, especially, were concerned in these problems common to all the churches of Christ.

The kinds of service which the church furnishes to the communities is appreciated in the following order: Worship, Revivals, Sermon, Ceremony. The attitude of the entire population toward the church is as follows: 35 per cent. are reverent, 30 per cent. sympathetic, 30 per cent. are indifferent, and 5 per cent. are hostile.

### *The Unchurched*

In the communities surveyed 31 per cent. of the population are church members (including Roman Catholics and Lutherans, who count every baptized child a member), while only 19 per cent. of the population attend church with any regularity. Since there is an exceedingly small proportion of non-church members who attend church, we see that nearly half of the church members do not go. As these figures include the Roman Catholics and Lutherans, who are exceedingly faithful in church attendance, we believe it fair to say that 50 per cent. of our Protestant church members do not attend church. Only 13 per cent. of the population attend Sabbath School regularly (including catechism classes of liturgical churches), or only 3 per cent. more of the population attend Sabbath School than there are enrolled in the public schools of the towns alone. In a few communities we found less scholars attending the Sabbath Schools of the town than attended the public schools. The Sabbath Schools having all ages to draw from, both in town and in the country surrounding the town, did not have as many attendants as the public school in the town, confined as it is to children of school age, and to the corporation limits, and this was in Protestant communities. There is one church to every 511 of the population, the average membership of each church being 168, and the average attendance at church 93. The average membership of Sabbath Schools is 105, and of attendance 67.

Forty-eight per cent. of the population is unchurched. We mean by that people who do not attend church, or the people on whom the church has no influence, and to whom the church is dead (preachers being needed for funerals only). Of the living churches 13 pay no regular salary, while the average salary of the ministers in this rich corn-belt land, which often sells at \$225 per acre, is \$837.35 a year. In one church, where a consecrated young minister is giving his very life blood for his people, his salary is \$500 per year, while in this same congregation this past year six automobiles were bought by farmers belonging to this church, and all of them high-priced machines. Speaking of "autos," there are very few of them that have the church-going habit. There is need of conversion here.

The dirt roads of this region are given as excuse for the small attendance, but in the two communities where there are the best stone and

gravel roads we find the lowest percentage of church attendance, there being only 9 to 15 per cent. of the population who attend church. Good roads seem to encourage Sunday automobiling and visiting.

In the last communities surveyed some questions were asked regarding the prayer meetings, and in 68 churches out of 101 that have this mid-week service of prayer, testimony and praise the average attendance of the men is 3.4 per cent. and of women 6.7 per cent., or 10 per cent. of the church.

### *Welfare*

The majority of the ministers are housed in comfortable manses, and the church buildings are commodious and modern. The salaries paid are not sufficient, however, for the proper education of the children of the manse, nor to provide for old age.

Wealth is increasing rapidly in all this region, but with the exception of one denomination it is a rare instance where there has been any increase in the minister's salary. The Methodist denomination pays the highest salaries in the communities surveyed, there having been an increase in salaries in almost all of their churches in the past few years.

In only eight communities is there any kind of a ministerial association among the churches, or any united effort for community uplift. Where these ministerial associations are found the churches are more thriving and united, a larger proportion of the people are church members, and a larger percentage attend church. In several communities there has never been a united effort, even of a revival nature, among the churches, and here denominationalism runs riot, and, consequently, spiritual life is weak and dying. In general, the welfare of the people represents itself in the welfare of the churches. Actual, not merely financial, welfare sustains the churches. Financial gains, so long as they are not translated into rural welfare, destroy the churches. The exploitation of the land exhausts the churches, and the retirement of the farmers who are successful in selling their farms destroys them. Divided farmers mean divided churches; country people united for farming make possible federated churches.

Solid agricultural prosperity expresses itself in permanent country churches. The church stands as the symbol of real farming prosperity, and the abandoned or dying country church is a danger signal of spurious gains through superficial culture.

The following table gives the religious status of the church by denominations, indicating the number of each church growing, standing still, dying or dead:

TABLE (F)

## CHURCH STATUS

Denomination	Church Growing	Church Stands Still	Church Losing	Church Abandoned	Total Churches
*Methodist Episcopal.....	12	17	8	18	55
Baptist.....	4	6	8	4	22
Baptist, Primitive.....	..	..	2	2	4
Disciple.....	13	5	4	5	27
Apostolic Christian.....	..	1	..	..	1
Christian Advent.....	..	..	1	..	1
†Presbyterian.....	30	6	7	5	48
Presbyterian, United.....	..	..	2	..	2
Presbyterian, Cumberland.....	..	..	1	..	1
Roman Catholic.....	6	6	5	..	17
United Brethren.....	..	..	4	2	6
Congregational.....	1	..	1	3	5
Lutheran.....	5	1	4	..	10
German Evangelical.....	1	1	3	1	6
Protestant Episcopal.....	..	2	..	1	3
Swedish Mission.....	1	..	1	1	3
Baptist, German.....	..	..	1	1	2
Friends.....	..	..	2	..	2
Holiness.....	1	..	2	..	3
‡Nazarenes.....	3	..	..	..	3
Union.....	..	..	..	4	4
Totals.....	77	45	56	47	225

\*The Methodist Church has suffered loss more than any other in this part of the country, because this was the church that ministered particularly to the rural communities. In the changed conditions of rural life, through tenantry and the abandonment of her class meeting and circuit system, we can see how such conditions prevail.

†There was a Presbyterian Church in every community surveyed. This was because, as a Presbyterian minister, I could have an entree into the community. This explains why there are more Presbyterian Churches than the real proportion in this territory, as compared with the other churches.

‡A new sect springing up within the past few years.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Conserve the Soil*

In this part of Illinois the fertility of the soil has been wasted. This survey shows that the value of the land is going down, while the price of the land is going up. The church goes down with the value of the land. The speculative price of the soil never helps the church, but, rather, hinders it. If the country churches in Illinois are to be bettered the improvement must begin with the farm land. In self defence the Illinois country churches will be forced in the early future to promote the conservation of the soil. If they do not save the soil they will lose their right to save the soul.

In an Illinois community where the churches are struggling hard to survive a farmer gave this testimony: "Fifteen years ago my land was producing 90 bushels of corn per acre; now it is producing 48, and I cannot get more out of it. At that time it was worth \$75 an acre; now it is worth \$190 an acre." In this community the decadence of the church has been parallel to the falling value of the land. The Almighty does not intend that the churches shall profit by speculation. The stern law of the country church is that it shall be just as good as the power of the land to produce.

Indeed, the speculative price of the land kills the country church, for it reduces the interest which the farmer gets on his invested capital. In a prosperous country community the farmer ought to receive a profit on the market value of his land as good as the investor receives who puts his money into railroad stocks, but in these parts some Illinois farmers get only 2 or 3 per cent. on their money. This compels them to sell and retire to the town, or go westward or eastward for cheaper land. Their departure weakens the country church. The process being long continued kills the country church.

The investigator discovered that through central Illinois 53 per cent. of the farmers in these communities are tenants. These tenants, though they have remained in some instances for years, have generally a one-year lease on the land. Their chance of purchasing land is very small, so that their interest in the community is at the lowest point. Churches among such tenants must be sustained from above. These men cannot maintain a strong country church. That fact of itself is enough to condemn the system. If there is a class of Americans who cannot maintain an independent church something is the matter. The most conservative citizen should recognize the vicious character of this system of leasing the land.

But even the land owners in central Illinois have given up the feeding of cattle. Instead of enriching their land by the process of feeding



FARMERS' ELEVATOR, TALLULA, ILL.

cattle, they are too often following the easier path of "straight grain farming," which steadily reduces the fertility of the soil. This shows that even among the land-owning farmers the standards of tilling the soil are very low. These low standards threaten the future of the church. No piety and no good preaching and no excellence of supervision can insure the future of the churches in central Illinois unless the farmers consecrate themselves to the soil. A man is not a good man who robs the land that his son is to inherit. If the Christianity of the New Testament does not forbid such soil robbery, then the Judaism of the Old Testament should be preached in these country churches. Such sins are forbidden, even in the Book of Deuteronomy. The country churches in Illinois, therefore, in the interest of the whole population must wage a campaign for the preservation of the soil. It will be a campaign in self-defense. The country church will thus become a champion of the whole people. Indeed, she is the people's exponent today. For as the country church goes down the grade of the farmer and the character of the typical countryman is lowered. As the country church survives it will indicate the survival of the sterling American farmer, an independent and intelligent citizen, the master of his own situation.

### *Village Improvement*

The survey shows that while the pioneer settlers of this territory remain there is little local pride. The towns are not improved. A New Englander, resident in central Illinois, recently exclaimed at the lack of

beauty in the Illinois town. New England is poor and Illinois is rich, but the Massachusetts country town is beautiful and the country town in Illinois is ugly and repellent. A movement is needed for the beautifying and improvement of the streets, the sidewalks, the lawns, for the removal of unsightly bill boards and the cultivation of town pride. The movement ought to honor the early settlers of the country, for moral self respect of the town must begin with respect for its past. The churches which are interested in moral welfare will find a fruitful field in the cultivation of local self-respect. This self-respect must move in a love of beauty, and while its beginnings are esthetic its ends are highly moral, especially in the influence of the town upon its young people and upon immigrants. It must clean its own streets and impress the child and immigrant with a sense of order, decency and cleanliness. At the present time these things do not appear in the middle Illinois country town. Nobody seems to care for the common concerns of the place. The churches talk in vain about the beauty of the heavenly streets, if they pay no attention to the untidiness of the town streets. If the churches mean business they will lead in making heaven intelligible by removal of filth and weeds from the neighboring earth.

### *Sanitation in the Rural Home*

On the farm the mother of the house is the health department. She has to know for the farm group all that the departments of health, police and schools in the cities need to know about sanitation. Indeed, she must have the knowledge which the department of correction possesses. The lack of this knowledge among farming women is the cause of the retarded sanitary development of the country. The cities for all their great difficulties are surpassing the country in their attention to sanitary reform. The death rate is controlled in the city. It is still increasing in the country. The time will come, if present processes go on, when men will flee to the city for good health and in fear of the unrestrained diseases of the country. That time will not come if the farm mother can be taught sanitation.

These farm women are very generally in the churches. The churches should be the centers of interest in matters of health. The Master healed disease. The study of health, therefore, is a spiritual duty. The churches should be opened for lectures on health and the women of the community should be organized in the interest of public sanitation. Societies of women should take up these topics. It is not necessary to get lecturers from afar. The country doctor would be glad to talk on questions of hygiene. A specialist could be secured from the near-by town to talk about diseases of the eyes, or about tuberculosis, or about the drainage and sanitation of the house and farm. As soon as these





BRINGING THE CHILDREN TO SCHOOL

questions are clearly faced it will be seen that many people in the country live in atrocious disregard of the elementary principles of health. There is nothing in good air and hard work that will fortify a man against a continued neglect of these principles. Country people are constantly suffering from sicknesses, small and great, against which they feel themselves helpless. The spirit of rebellion against these sicknesses is general in the cities and towns. People expect there to be well. In the country they expect to be sick. It is for the church to heal this expectation of sickness and arouse the people in the country to a determination to be well.

### *Better Schools*

The findings of the survey are very thorough and complete in reference to the public schools. These findings are commended to the reader. The country ministers who are doing well in Illinois are convinced that without the improvement of schools no betterment of the country church is permanent. Better farming and sanitation cannot be permanently taught in the one-room country school. There are distinguished country churches in Illinois whose efficiency is an example over the whole country. The future of these very churches is in peril, because of the deficient and inferior schools about them. The church may inspire, but the common school has to train men in modern living. The country churches of Illinois should support the policies embodied in the John Swaney Consolidated School. The work of Miss Mabel Carney at



AN ATTRACTIVE SCHOOL GARDEN

Illinois Normal University, at Normal, is commended to country churches. When the time comes the legislature of the State must be constrained by public opinion to take needed action for the improvement of the country schools. The principle in this improvement is the consolidation of schools in the country and the providing of a higher standard of education in the graded school out in the open country. Such consolidation as this has been effected by the people of Rock Creek, Illinois, and the leaders in this work are the leaders of the country church at that place.

### *Recreation*

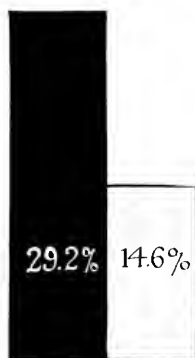
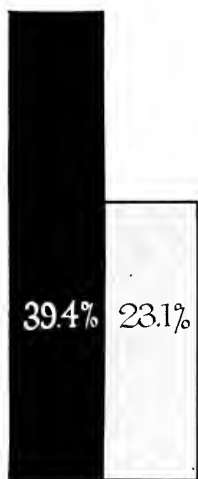
It appears that 58 per cent. of the country population in these communities surveyed have no facilities for recreation. Remembering that these people work hard for long hours, it is natural that the young men and women and that the working people should seek recreation. When a man works he sweats. When a community works, just as infallibly it turns to recreation. The result is in central Illinois that the interurban trolley takes the people out of the country into the town. Recreations are provided for them in the towns for one reason only—namely, profit. Moreover, the countryman who seeks his pleasure in the town accepts a dissipation or endures a degradation which he would not allow at home. Recreation should be enjoyed in the community where work is done, for organized play is an essential part of systematic labor.

In Hanover, N. J., the country church has organized the recreative

# Social and Recreational Life:

Here

Not here



Percentage of the population who are  
Church Members



Percentage of the Population who  
attend Church on average Sabbath.

life of the countryside. The minister, Mr. Augustine, has discovered that, whereas his people used to go to Madison for their holidays, they now stay at home, because these holidays are celebrated in the community. In a similar way, at Rock Creek, Ill., the celebration of the Fourth of July has now come to be a local custom. Fireworks are excluded by means of providing a substitute and the people of the community stay at home, while others drive from afar for the celebration in the open country of the national holiday in a sane and helpful manner.

This work should be done for every countryside. The people of this part of Illinois are unprovided with places of meeting. They gather in stores, grain elevators and other places of commercial resort, because they have not as yet thought well enough of themselves and of their neighbors to make public provision for the casual meetings and the social assemblies in which the life of a community flows. This is the task before the churches. If it is worth while to save souls in Illinois it is worth while to make them respect themselves after they are saved. Let the minister who preaches salvation teach the people to live it; let them build up the social life, make occasions for casual, frequent and natural meetings, dignify the common enterprise, find means of bringing the people together. Recreation does not mean gymnasium sweat and field-day contests alone. Indeed, in the country these should be among the last things provided. But it means that whatever common meeting and common task there is in the community the people will find in it a refreshing restoration of the common life. If it was worth while for the Almighty to create the world it is worth while for the country church to recreate the country community.

### *Evangelism for Landlords*

This section is central in the influence of the landlord over the farmer. The American system of farming has resulted in this, that wherever the soil is richest there the proportion of tenants is the greatest. Middle Illinois, whose soil is famed for its richness and resources, has brought forth a landlord class whose numbers and representative character give them a central place in the whole country. Fifty-three per cent. of farmers in the communities surveyed are tenants. The landlords live in the towns where the churches are strongest. The opportunity of the church to influence this whole territory through the landlords is very great.

The necessity for this should be stated. The middle Illinois landlord is not a friend of the improvement of the country community. He is in a position to exert a great influence, and in time, as his mind matures, he will be a great influence for good. At the present time he is indifferent, as a rule, to the welfare of the country community. In many cases he is a

# WHERE MEN MEET

*{ 44 Communities in Ill. }*

STORES	_____
RESTAURANTS	_____
POOL ROOMS	_____
SALOONS	_____
TOWN HALL	_____
ELEVATORS	_____
SHOPS	_____
BARBER SHOPS	_____

**SHOULD NOT<sup>THE</sup> CHURCH  
PROVIDE ROOMS?**

mere absentee, drawing his rent from the farms he owns, caring nothing save for the increasing of his rent with the rising price of the land. These landlords, wherever they live, in city or in town, should be called to account by the churches. Public opinion should be aroused so as to influence them, and the power of the church to appeal to public sentiment should be brought to bear in such a way as to lay public responsibility upon these owners of farm land.

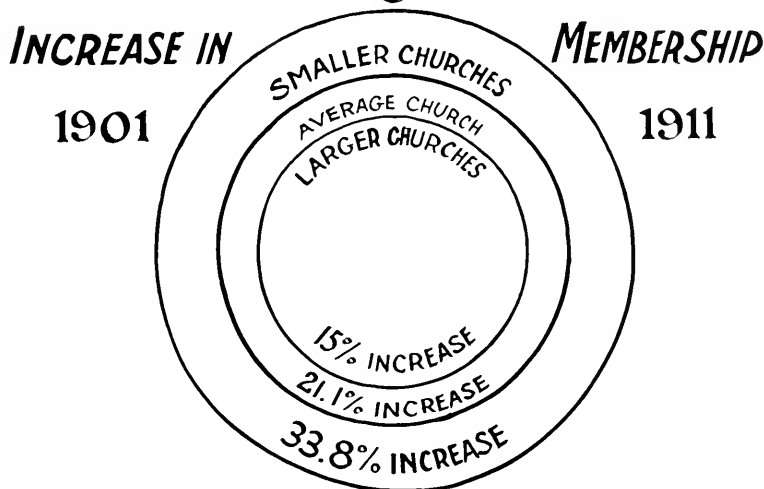
But many landlords are aroused to a duty through the diminished fertility of the soil. They are already following the farmers' institute and studying the lessons set by the State university. These men have not generally awakened to the importance of improving the human stock. They have come to recognize the necessity of improving the soil and the brutes by which they get their profit. A finer opportunity could not be presented to ministers of Jesus Christ than is involved in the privilege of preaching to these landlords. These men and women have the resources. They are in a position of relative leisure, so that they can become intelligent. All the power of Gospel appeal should be made with the authority of the Kingdom of God to cause them to devote themselves to the welfare of the communities from which they bring their income.

Mere evangelism, with talks about the saving of the soul and promises of heavenly life, is not enough in these towns and cities where land owners live. Such evangelism is itself deceptive. In central Illinois the unlimited promise of heavenly salvation is false to the Kingdom. Owners of land in a country in which the soil is producing less every year, in which the churches and schools are deteriorating, where the human stock is being exploited, and an American rural peasantry is being produced, are responsible men. They can save their souls only as they save the soil and the people who till it. For them the Gospel speaks of the Kingdom and hardly shall they enter into the Kingdom; not easily.

#### *A Serviceable Church for Foreigners*

The survey discloses many settlements of foreigners engaged in mining. These people are beyond the help of the Catholic Church. They must be reached with Protestant ministry, or not at all. Present conditions are breeding atheism among them. They know nothing of the legitimate history of American religious institutions. To bring them into Protestant fellowship is to Americanize them. The resources for so doing are amply provided in the leading churches of this region. The Lord has prospered the farmer and the merchant and the manufacturer of this region, and the mine owner as well. This prosperity should be consecrated in a definite ministry suited to the needs of foreigners in this region. Their need is of a serviceable church. They live a life of emergencies. They own no land, they are working in a changeable,

# THE **VALUE** OF THE **SMALL CHURCH** in Evangelization



*The small Church has made the most rapid growth IN THE last 10 years.*

{ 44 Communities in Ill. }

# NEEDED!

## Education in Religion

(Graded Sunday Schools)

## Religion in Education

(Religious and Moral Instruction in Day Schools)

Average Membership of 163 Churches in Ill.

776	Sunday School
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1689	Church Membership
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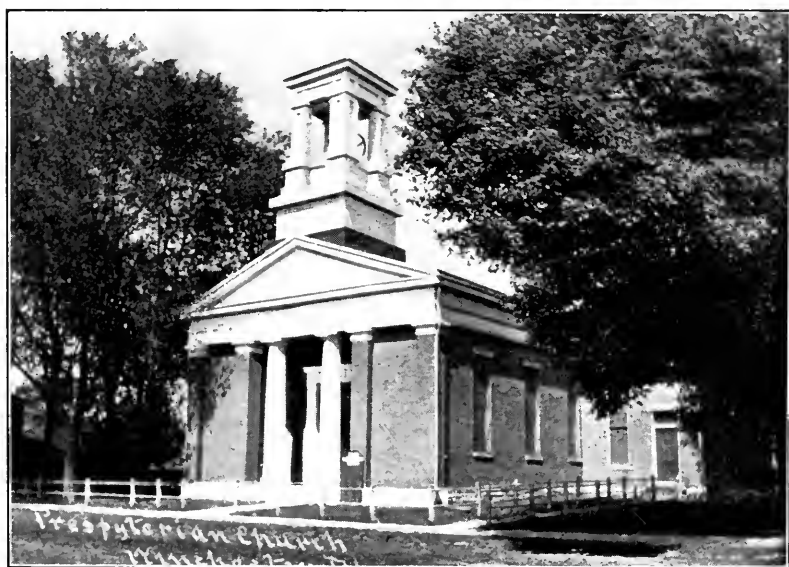


inconstant industry, and the church which ministers to them must broadly care for their present state. It must serve them in the needs of their intelligence, of their social and economic life. Their church should be a social center.

It is a mistake to suppose that only foreign-speaking ministers can evangelize the foreigner. The chief necessity with them is of the English language. They have come to an American community and American-speaking ministers can bring them to a clearer conception of religious truth than they can receive from a foreigner. Initially the task is harder, but with the same devotion greater results are attained by an American-speaking minister in ten years than by one of foreign speech. This is a call for the consecration of some ministers in this territory to the needs of future Americans.

### *Sunday-School Activity*

Generally throughout these communities surveyed the Sunday Schools are markedly smaller than the churches and their total membership in the town is smaller than the school attendance of that town. There is a lost quantity in the Sunday-School membership. Numbers of children are obviously neglected. Considering that the Sunday Schools should be the feeders of the churches, remembering that religious education is the foundation of Protestant membership, it is obvious that the duty of the churches for an aggressive Sunday-School policy is a chief duty.



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WINCHESTER, ILL.



PROSPERITY, THE RESULT OF INTERDENOMINATIONAL HARMONY

If only the Sunday-School leaders knew it, they have a vehicle in their hands for ministry to the whole population. Through the Sunday School the immigrant can be brought in. In the downtown sections of New York City, where the task of the Church is most difficult, the Sunday School aggressively used is proving a most efficient agent for evangelizing and Americanizing the foreigner. Its utility with American country people, with tenant farmers and other marginal people has long been known. The need is of the consecration of men and women in these country churches to the teaching of Scripture truth.

### *Readjust the Ministers' Salaries*

Throughout this region the salaries of ministers are good indices of the growth of the church. Churches which are doing well have recognized the necessity for a better salary for the minister. The home-missionary forces of this territory should devote their energies to improving the salary of the minister. This cannot be done by the minister himself, and very often his people are equally helpless in approaching the task. It is properly a task of supervision. It should be accomplished by a common movement throughout all the churches. The reason for this is that the prices the minister has to pay have been increased in recent years and the calls upon him are greater, while his income has not been increased to meet them.

### *Dying Churches*

In these Presbyterian communities five Presbyterian churches have died in the past ten years. None of them was a United Presbyterian or a Cumberland church. In the whole territory surveyed 47 churches have died, of which 29 were country churches, the great majority of the whole. As elsewhere, the larger proportion of the churches which are stationary, dying or dead are in the country. This is due in part to the fact that in the country there were too many churches to begin with. It is due, also, to the diminishing population of the country, for without loss of productive power the farm population can be diminished along with the use of modern machinery. This process is bound to continue even further than it has gone at present. It points to the necessity of readjustment of country-church life. Federations of churches should be formed, the weaker churches eliminated and the territory distributed by general consent among churches of different denominations. In many places the ideal condition of one church serving a whole community will be realized. This survey shows that union churches do not prosper in middle Illinois. The situation is likely to approach that at Rock Creek, on one side of which a Presbyterian Church serves a whole population, and on the other side of the creek a Baptist Church is equally acceptable

to all. These two churches live in mutual respect and cultivate a spirit among their people of respect for the boundary between them.

This is the new evangelism needed in central Illinois. The converting of the souls of men must be its first note always, but this conversion should be accomplished through the Sunday School all the days of the year, and by the evangelist only at a proper season in the year.

It should be a training of men in religious knowledge rather than a shocking of men through religious fear. It should be a constructive doctrine that shall build the Church on the foundations of the Kingdom. It should lay responsibilities on them who have and make demands of those who are prospered. There is need of the rebuke of the proud and the law must be laid on the shoulders of those who exploit the labor of the poor and rob the soil of its fertility. The churches in central Illinois ride on the tide of prosperity. As wealth is distributed among the people, as the ownership of land comes to those who labor, the Church will prosper. As the common schools are improved and as sanitary conditions are bettered, as country life is made worth while and attractive to the young and to laboring men, in just so far will the Church do well, and if these things are not done the present condition of blight and degeneration of the churches will continue. As the people deteriorate their churches will run down.

It is a very bad sign for central Illinois that only 34 per cent., only about one-third, of the country churches are doing well. There is every indication that not more than one-third of the people in central Illinois are prospering, in the sight of the Lord.

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