

## SHELBY COUNTY

### A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the component society known as Shelby County with reference to its social structure; to trace the development of the original elements to their present state of differentiation and combination; and to give a general outline of the structure as it now exists. It must be recognized at the beginning that a fairly adequate analysis of the social groups with some of their relations to the social whole involves possibilities beyond the scope of this study.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE LAND

Shelby County is the second county east from the Missouri river in the fourth tier of counties north from the southern boundary of Iowa. It contains sixteen congressional townships numbering from township seventy-eight north, range thirty-seven west, to township eighty-one north, range forty west, of the fifth principal meridian.

The surface is gently undulating, well drained by streams which run through broad valleys. The forms of some of the largest valleys suggest the probability that once they were beds of chains of lakes. Only a few years ago some of these bottoms were wide swamps which could not be

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<sup>1</sup> The plan followed is that indicated by Small and Vincent in their *Introduction to the Study of Society*, modified according to the suggestions of Professor I. A. Loos, under whose direction the work has been done at the State University of Iowa.

crossed easily. In its original condition the rolling prairie was covered by tall grass and myriads of flowers. Natural groves dotted the landscape and animal life was abundant—ducks and geese found the swamps a very satisfactory nesting place; quails and prairie chickens were disturbed only by the cayote, deer, or occasional elk. Squirrels and rabbits, crows, hawks, and many varieties of songsters formed a natural society as yet unmolested by civilization. Fifty years have wrought great changes. God's beautiful prairie has become man's habitation. The whole scene is changed. Civilization has claimed the land by placing it all under cultivation. Looking out over the country from the hill tops one may see scores of country homes surrounded by trees and a village of farm buildings. Great herds of cattle graze on the hill sides. Yellow fields suggest the wealth of the harvest.

#### THE SOIL

In the valleys the soil is black loam resting on a bed of clay beneath which is found sand and gravel. The hills vary—some have a black soil, others reddish brown and many are yellow clay. There is very little sand and almost no stone in the soil. Hazel brush and dwarf oak trees grow on the hills. The soil is very fertile and is well adapted to extremes, producing crops in times of drought and flood.

An abundance of good water is easily obtained. Wells vary in depth from ten feet in valleys to one hundred fifty feet on some hills. Springs are frequent. The water of the streams is often sought by stock in preference to water from wells.

There are a half dozen natural groves containing oak,

ash, elm, walnut, hickory, and basswood trees among others. Galland's Grove, named from the first settler, is the largest in the county, containing about one thousand acres.

The climate is diversified. The temperature varies from thirty degrees below zero to one hundred twelve degrees Fahrenheit. Changes come very rapidly making a difference of fifty degrees in twenty-four hours. From the dry summers and almost snowless winters to floods and heavy snows, the climate varies from year to year. Snow falls about Thanksgiving, and the ground is rarely snow covered after Easter Sunday.

The altitude of the county seat is twelve hundred feet above sea level. The average annual rainfall is about 38.29 inches.

#### THE POPULATION

In 1848 Abraham Galland made the first permanent settlement in Galland's Grove. In 1849 some of the families from the scattering Mormons, pleased with the shelter of the grove, made cabins for themselves. Many of the early settlements of Pottawattamie, Harrison, Cass, and Shelby counties were effected by the Mormons who left the Mormon Society at Kaneshville because of its polygamous practices. In 1854 there were one hundred forty-seven people in the northwest corner of the county on an area of thirty-six square miles now known as Grove Township.

In 1857 there were only six families in the southern part of the county—people from Pennsylvania and Ohio, who in 1853 had come by boat down the Ohio River to the Mississippi, thence westward and north on the south and west side of the Missouri to where Blair, Nebraska, is now

located. They crossed over into Iowa and started out across the prairie to find a home. A grove in the beautiful valley of the Nishnabotna River afforded shelter for the party over night, and in the morning the father announced that "here is the spot, the beautiful land shall be our home," and immediately he began to make preparations to build a cabin. The cows which the boy had driven behind the wagon were allowed to graze, the horses were tethered out, the fowls so long in their crate were given liberty, and a permanent union between the land and population was begun.

By 1857 Monroe Township had acquired Danish population. Much as the others they came to find homes in the new country of opportunity. In 1868 Clay Township gained a Danish settler, an Adventist and a Republican who was very influential in persuading other Danes to come to this country. Each new comer induced some of his friends to join him in the new country—thus began the greatest rural colony of Danes in America.

In 1882 Elkhorn Post Office was established in the northeastern part of Clay Township. It is in the midst of the heavy Danish settlement of Audubon, Cass, and Shelby counties. In addition to the usual stores and other business places of a village it fosters an orphan's home and a college—both institutions of the Danish Lutheran church.

The German colony in Westphalia Township owes its origin to an advertisement in a newspaper. Emil Flusche came from Grand Rapids, Michigan, in September, 1872, and undertook the task of selling railroad land in this township. The railroad company contracted to pay a commis-

sion of one dollar per acre on all land sold to German Catholics who became actual settlers, provided that there were forty settlers within eighteen months from the date of the contract. The commission was to be shared equally by the promoters and the church; and so from the beginning of the enterprise the church has played an important part in influencing the colony.

Blood-relationship or kinship aided the founders of the colony. In October, 1872, Joseph Flusche came from Minnesota, and about a month later Charles Flusche came from Grand Rapids. On March 16, 1873, August Flusche, Emil Zimmerman, and John Rueschenberg came from the province of Westphalia, Germany. Within two years the township was organized with a population of two hundred seven. It was named Westphalia for the old home province.

It must be remembered that the Danes and Germans have not confined themselves to the townships mentioned. Both nationalities have been energetic in gaining possession of the soil until the Danes occupy Clay, Monroe, Jackson, and Center townships with many Danes in the townships bordering on these, and the Germans possess Westphalia, Washington, Cass, parts of Lincoln and Shelby townships with German farmers in adjoining townships.

While these foreign elements were finding their homes, men from other States and other counties of this State were rapidly claiming the land. Many of the counties in the eastern part of the State sent enough people here to warrant their designation as groups—"the Jones County settlers," "the Mahaskans," "the Clinton County folk." Johnson County furnished a colony which settled near Shelby, a vil-

lage on the Rock Island railway, almost in the southwestern corner of the county. Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois each furnished its quota of home seekers who have made the prairies yield great wealth while they established happy homes and the proper public institutions.

#### THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT<sup>1</sup>

In 1854 Galland's Grove Township was organized with a population of 174. Round Township was organized in 1856 with a population of 188. These two townships contained all of the territory of the county. Harlan, Jackson, and Fairview Townships were created in 1860 and Round township lost its existence in the three new ones.

Clay Township, organized in 1867, was called Indian Creek until June, 1869. It took Township 78 north, range 37 west and the east half of Township 78 north,

<sup>1</sup> The following statistics indicate the organization of the townships and the territory as it was divided for purposes of local government:

#### ORGANIZATION OF TOWNSHIPS

NAME	TOWNSHIP	RANGE WEST	DATE	POPULATION
Grove . . . . .	81	40	1854	174
Harlan . . . . .	79	38	1860	
Jackson . . . . .	79	37	1860	30
Fairview. . . . .	79	39	1860	130
Clay. . . . .	78	37	1867	80
Cass . . . . .	79	40	1869	120
Shelby. . . . .	78	40	1870	190
Washington . . . . .	80	40	1871	163
Union . . . . .	81	39	1871	87
Douglas. . . . .	80	38	1871	164
Polk. . . . .	79	37	1871	120
Lincoln . . . . .	79	39	1871	129
Jefferson. . . . .	81	37	1871	30
Monroe . . . . .	78	38	1873	550
Greeley . . . . .	81	38	1874	770
Westphalia . . . . .	80	39	1874	207

range 38 west from Fairview Township, and the south one-third of Township 79 north, range 37 west from Jackson. Cass Township was taken from Harlan Township in 1869.

Shelby Township was taken from Fairview in 1870; Washington and Union from Grove in 1871; Douglas from Harlan and Jackson in 1871—the west one-half of what is now Douglas Township, and section 34 from Harlan and the remainder from Jackson. During the year 1871 Polk was separated from Jackson; Lincoln from Cass and Harlan; and Jefferson from Grove and Jackson. Monroe Township was taken equally from Fairview and Clay in 1873. The next year saw the part of Jefferson Township, which formerly had been a part of Grove, organized under the name of Greeley. Westphalia Township was organized in 1874 with its boundaries those of congressional Township 80 north, range 39 west.

For the purpose of better administration the city of Harlan was separated from Harlan Township in 1898. The part outside of the corporation limits was named Center Township.

While the population of the entire county has increased fifty per cent in the last twenty years, that of several townships has decreased since 1890. This is due to three causes: (1) farmers are retiring and moving into the towns; (2) others are buying out their neighbors, thus decreasing the numbers of families in the township; and (3) the young men and women are leaving either to find cheaper land or other employment. Often the homestead is left in charge of a son or son-in-law. The rising generation is not given

to large families. The birth rate is not enough greater than the death rate to offset emigration. Ten years ago the floating population of farm laborers was much greater than to-day because the farmers' boys have grown up and displaced the hired men in many instances. Another decade will bring about the necessity of more immigration of farm labor, for the tendency is to enlarge the farms. This causes decrease in the number of families and consequently a lower rate of increase in the population. The towns are growing steadily through the coming of day-laborers and retired farmers who desire the advantages of the town schools for their children. A few industries mentioned later furnish employment for several families.<sup>1</sup>

In 1900 the total population of the county was 17,932, of which 9,455 were males and 8,477 females. Of this num-

<sup>1</sup> The following table shows the growth of the county by townships since 1880:

TOWNSHIP	1880	1890	1900	TOWNSHIP	1880	1890	1900
Cass . . . . .	498	1025	1073	Jefferson . . . . .	351	993	1042
Clay . . . . .	850	1080	1147	Lincoln . . . . .	88	935	725*
Douglas . . . . .	677	9925	857*	Monroe . . . . .	1012	932	894*
Fairview . . . . .	919	873	722*	Polk . . . . .	443	809	835
Greeley . . . . .	334	877	871	Shelby . . . . .	1299	1457	1443
Grove . . . . .	818	721	798	Union . . . . .	538	1212	1209
Harlan . . . . .	2172	2563	2422	Washington . . . . .	506	952	931
Center . . . . .			740	Westphalia . . . . .	597	1265	1357
Jackson . . . . .	800	1009	806*				

\* Townships having decreased in population.

The following table taken from statistical reports shows the population of the county and the per cent of increase from 1854 to 1900:

YEAR	POPULA- TION	PER CENT OF INCREASE	YEAR	POPULA- TION	PER CENT OF INCREASE
1854	326		1875	5,664	123.15
1856	456	39.	1880	12,696	124.15
1859	784	72.	1885	16,306	28.43
1860	818	4.33	1890	17,611	8.
1865	1,900	132.3	1895	17,798	1.06
1870	2,540	33.7	1900	17,932	.75



ber 14,535 were native born and 3,397 foreign born. There were 7,898 native born of native parents and 6,627 native born of foreign parents. Thus the entire population of foreign extraction was 10,024. The following table shows the number that various countries have contributed to the population:

Germany — 1,419. Denmark — 1,404. Norway — 134. Ireland — 111. England — 103. Canada (English) — 100. Sweden — 37. Austria — 21. Switzerland — 16. Scotland — 10. Russia — 10. Bohemia — 6. France — 6. Holland — 7. Poland — 1 (Russians), other Poles — 6. Italy — 2. Australia — 2. Belgium — 1. Canada (French) — 4. China — 0, and 10 Negroes.

#### THE MOTIVES FOR SETTLEMENT

Inquiry of the early settlers of this county concerning the motives for settling here brings many answers. Home-seeking, usually, is the predominating one. Of the possible motives—health, wealth, sociability, knowledge, religion, morals, and desire for beauty—wealth is the reason generally given, although the other motives were satisfied in a measure.

The settlers who followed Abraham Galland to Galland's Grove left the Mormon train at Kanessville, now Council Bluffs, because of differences in religion and morals. Polygamy was not in accord with the moral sentiments and religious feelings of these separatists and it formed a motive for them to find homes where they could associate with those who were likeminded with regard to marriage.

The motives which prompted the settlement of Westphalia were two-fold—an opportunity to make money and to do a service to the Roman Catholic church at the same time. Cheap homes in a fertile land among those people who were of the Roman faith were in brief the motives inducing settlers to come to Westphalia. After a few families had settled in the colony their friends and relatives were urged to come, and so sociability became a strong motive in building up the population.

The Danish people who came here did so mainly through the efforts of their friends who had come before. This has not yet stopped. Letters still go back to the fatherland describing the beauties and possibilities of this fair land. Money is sent, and the United States receives another immigrant. In the experience of the colony of Danes, one member of a family—the first to come here—has been the means of bringing over all the other members of the family.

In several instances young men have sent money back to sweethearts to bring them to this new home where the temptation was too great—the money was kept and the girl stayed in the old country. In January, 1903, the papers noted a case in which the young woman refused to marry the man after she came.

Many of the Danes and Germans visit the fatherland; but almost invariably return to America. One of these visitors writes from Copenhagen as follows: "People don't believe me when I tell them about the liberty we enjoy in America and the possibilities and opportunities which abound there. I am sick of home and homesick for my adopted country, America. I am coming back glad to realize my good for-

tune in being a citizen of the United States. I am bringing with me a young man, a future citizen."

The early population showed other motives than the mere keeping of health and the gaining of wealth. A certain amount of both health and wealth is necessary to existence.

Knowledge as a motive was shown in the building of school houses. Very early in the settlement of the county subscription schools put opportunities before the children. Schools were held in cabins or in other log buildings, a log granary serving in one instance. Frequently schools were held in dwelling houses, with the children of the family the only pupils and the mother their paid teacher.

Religious societies were organized and meetings held in groves, cabins, school houses, in the county court house later, and anywhere that a group of people could be gathered to worship God. The Danes attended long services regularly; the Germans followed their priest through various services on Sunday; the Americans went visiting by dozens and scores. For them the motive of sociability asserted itself strongly.

The desire for beauty was present from the very earliest time. Muslin hangings to cover the rude walls of the log cabin were unmistakable signs of æsthetic feeling. Even the careful removal of the bark from the parts of the logs which showed on the inside of the house and the smoothly worked chinking showed æsthetic tendencies which in a score of years expressed themselves in beautiful houses surrounded by fine lawns and flowers.

## SEGREGATING INFLUENCES

Among the Danes one of the first settlers was an Adventist. He worked hard to induce his fellow church-men to come to this country, and a flourishing church grew up in Clay Township. Lutherans and Baptists came also, and the segregating effect of the difference in sect is noteworthy. The Lutherans are strongest around Elkhorn which is the center of the great Danish settlement.

In the western part of Clay Township and eastern Monroe we find the Baptists. About a quarter of a mile west of the Danish Baptist church was once a Union church which stood as a monument to the fact that there must be some vital connection with a living organization with its traditions to insure its perpetuity. In this Union church were Lutherans and Presbyterians from Pennsylvania; Methodists from Ohio and Indiana; Campbellites, as they were called, from Illinois; and men and women who had no church affiliations other than those established by the Union church.

Among the Danes the political parties offered a segregating influence. The Lutherans were Democrats; the Adventists and Baptists were Republicans.

The agitation of the slavery question brought about conditions which separated men in every relation of life. The feeling was strongly anti-slavery, and the few men who were in sympathy with the south, or were Democrats, were listed by some of the county officers as "Copperheads."

Nationality was a strong segregating element in the county group and an equally strong unifying force in the natural group.

## UNIFYING INFLUENCES

The unifying influences were almost solely of two kinds, a common ancestry or nationality, and the necessity of union for protection and progress. The men planned to journey to mill and market together. It was forty-five miles to Council Bluffs, and the denizens of the county went there to trade until 1869 when the Rock Island railroad was completed across the State. Avoca then became a trading point and post office.

All attended the county conventions without regard to party. On one convention day a group of men on their way to the meeting found a young Republican breaking prairie with his four yoke of oxen. They invited him to accompany them, and on his refusal because of the urgency of his work, they threatened to put him "on the ticket." Accordingly he was given the nomination on the Democratic ticket for the most important county office. His Republican friends were greatly amazed at his election. The fact still remains that in county politics the ability and character of the man stands for more than party allegiance.

In the early history of the county we find extensive coöperation in many things which promoted good feeling and a wholesome spirit of sociability. The building of houses and barns found a group of men hauling the lumber from Avoca or earlier hauling logs to the nearest sawmill in Bowman's Grove or Harrison County and returning with lumber—cottonwood, poplar or hard wood of some sort, oak, walnut or ash. Neighbors helped build the cabins; and later when the family had become larger and prosperity warranted a new house, they raised the frame. Barn rais-

ing, butchering, threshing, and working the roads united the men and women of each neighborhood. While the men were at their tasks, the women were preparing a bounteous dinner. After the work was done the men engaged in friendly bouts, wrestling, racing, and other feats of strength. These occasions were the real holidays of early times. Contract road-working leaves threshing the only remaining gala day of its kind. In view of the fact that in some localities the population changes so rapidly the personnel of the threshing crew changes so much from year to year that much of its value as a unifying influence is lost.

In Harlan the people have long been unified in their sport. Since 1878 there has existed some form of organized athletics, varying from hose teams and association football to roller skating, base ball, and rugby. It is no wonder that this county furnishes its share of college athletes.

We find the Germans unified most thoroughly in their religion. The colony is Roman Catholic, and in the county there are five Catholic churches. A common faith and a common nationality provides a strong unifying influence. In addition to this there is but little difference of opinion in politics, the Germans being nearly all Democrats.

In other parts of the county we find marked tendencies to unity in the endeavor to accomplish something for the good of the community. The defunct societies known as Farmers' Alliance and the Coöperative Association were intended to supply the economic wants of the community at less expense than local merchants would. These associations were short lived because the people would not fully carry out the plans of the organizations. There was not continuous and constant coöperation.

## THE FAMILY

The men who came to this county in its beginning brought their families with them in many cases; and if there was no family to bring, one was established as soon as the man could get possession of enough land and sufficient capital to start to farm for himself. Those who came here were home seekers and they have proved themselves to be home builders. It is a noteworthy fact that not men alone came either from other States or foreign lands; but men and women both came from the very first. Many Danish and German girls came to this country because their brothers, cousins, or friends had told them of its opportunities. These girls first worked as domestics in families needing help, and many of them went to homes made for them by their prosperous fellow countrymen who had saved their months' earnings until a small farm could be rented and a team and machinery provided. A housekeeper was then sought. Even to this day such beginnings are crude and accomplished by many privations and hardships.

The family established now knows nothing of the independence which was necessary for the early family to take upon itself. The family which came here in the early fifties or in 1860 had to be a miniature society in itself. Not only did the husband provide the food and fuel and the wife prepare the meal, but all the economic functions were discharged by the family. It was forty miles to mill, and many times when the snow made travel impossible the women ground grain in coffee mills. During one very severe winter, that of 1856-7, one family ground sixteen bushels of buckwheat on an ordinary hand coffee mill. It was often

necessary to pound corn or grind wheat for food. During such times families practiced all possible coöperation; but it was miles between neighbors.

Great contrasts may be drawn between the conditions of family life of the present and the years just before the war. By 1860 there were only 818 people in the county. They lived in rough houses, log cabins with thatched roofs, dug-outs, or cabins with a sod coating outside the logs. They worked hard to wrest enough more than a living from the soil to pay for land and improvements. The methods of production—the ox team plow, the reaping by cradle or by the hand rake reaper drawn by horses, the binding of the grain by hand, its stacking, its threshing by flail and by tramping or by means of the crude threshing machine—all were processes which were harder labor than the present methods of grain raising impose on the farmer. Add to these things the distance to market, the lack of bridges and good roads, and the waste which all of the difficulties mentioned caused in time, strength, and material, and we see under what disadvantages the early families labored. All the members of the family assisted in raising the crop. The women did anything from raising vegetables to stacking wheat and husking corn.

Family life of those days is marked by the way the families did or did not observe Sunday. Whatever had been the custom of the family in the old home was followed here. In most cases some religious service was held, if only the dust were removed from the old family bible. Many Sundays were spent in holding meetings in groves or at some of the larger houses. Neighborhoods gathered in Sunday



schools; and where there were school houses they were used for church purposes.

As a rule the Danish people all went to church. Their services were long, but the people were devoted. The Americans were not as faithful in church attendance as their brethren from Denmark.

The Americans spent many of their Sundays in visiting. They went by the wagon load and stayed all day. These Sunday gatherings of genial spirits did much to unify the community. The Danes, when they came, visited each other after divine service and because of difference in language and customs did not associate with the Americans to any great extent. Many of their families became unsocial because of the great effort by which wealth was to be acquired. There was no time for sociability in the family, and this determined the unsocial character of many of the people. Even to this day the Danes show a preference for their own nationality in matters of business, although they disown such attitude if they are questioned concerning it. The Danes who were born in America and who have been reared under the influence of our institutions are thoroughly American.

The Danes are a happy, contented, hard working people. Conservative, they love order; yet they are not sluggish in their conservatism and will defend their rights vigorously. They do not burden the courts with suits.

Most of the Danes have been here less than twenty-five years. Many earned their passage money after coming. Scores of men who landed in America penniless, hired out, saved their wages, bought a team and farming

implements, and by constant economy and industry have come to own large farms.

Untiring in industry, rigidly economical, they permitted no waste of material or supplies. All the nooks and corners were utilized. This practice often led to serious offence to the more æsthetic and often less prosperous. An onion bed is not an ideal front yard, nor does a cabbage or potato patch make an acceptable substitute for a nicely kept lawn. But front yard gardens are certainly preferable to pigs and poultry before the door. Happily this stage in the evolution of the Dane was passed sometime ago by the more prosperous ones. Every community, however, has and will continue to have a few inhabitants who prefer the uncouth and unsanitary environs of the pig sty.

As a citizen the Dane is a desirable addition to the community. He thinks, is usually conscientious, and votes intelligently. Allegiance to party is about equally divided between Republicans and Democrats. When the prohibition question was before the people, church affiliation seemed to have had some bearing on politics. The Lutherans were for beer, while the Baptists were for no beer.

The Danes are very sociable and hospitable among themselves. They visit each other frequently and groups often assemble for picnics. There are numerous Sunday afternoon festivities.

The fifth of June is celebrated as their national holiday on account of the royal grant of greater liberties. The Danish flag and the Stars and Stripes are unfurled, speeches are made, and demonstrations such as are common on the Fourth of July are indulged.

Sunday picnics are common in the summer, and public dances in the winter. These picnics and balls are often not exclusive. Usually they are given on the subscription plan by two or three of the enterprising young men. The balls are not held on Sunday, although the entertainment differs but little from that of the Sunday picnic and platform dance.

The Danes quickly adapt themselves to American ways of business but the family life remains much the same as it was in the old country, especially among the early settlers. There is one family at least which carries on all the domestic manufactures common to the family in Denmark. Wooden shoes, yarn, homespun cloth, and the ordinary domestic utensils are all made in that home—unconsciously the arts and crafts are thus fostered.

In the heart of the German settlement is maintained a little Germany where the manners and customs of the fatherland flourish unmolested among the older people. The young generation is American, and it adapts itself readily to the customs and usages which prevail outside of the colony. In spite of his beer and Sunday games of base ball, the German is a good citizen who upbuilds the social cause and does his part to improve conditions in which he lives. The home life is the last to yield to the influence of the new country.

[TO BE CONTINUED]