

Walfred Albin Anderson

November 26, 1892 — November 11, 1961

Walfred Albin Anderson, Professor Emeritus of Rural Sociology, died in Ithaca of a heart attack on Saturday, November 11, 1961. For twenty-nine years prior to his retirement in June 1960, “Andy” Anderson had been a prominent member of the rural sociology staff of the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell. His passing marked the end of a distinguished career, which had its influence on the science of sociology and its application throughout the world.

Professor Anderson was born in Kansas City, Missouri, November 26, 1892, the son of Andrew J. and Anna Rosenlof Anderson. He graduated from Garrett Theological Seminary in 1917 and served for five years as a rural minister in Iowa. In 1921 he received the B.S. degree and in 1922 the M.S. degree from Iowa State College. From 1922 to 1924, he taught rural sociology at North Carolina State College and in 1925 became head of its Department of Sociology. In 1929, he was awarded the degree of Ph.D. at Cornell University. During 1930-1931 he was a member of the research staff of the Laymen’s Foreign Missionary Inquiry, which made a special study of rural conditions in China. In September 1931, Professor Anderson joined the staff of the Department of Rural Sociology at Cornell, and from 1943 to 1945 he was acting head of the department.

Professor Anderson’s career at Cornell was devoted to teaching and research. Some 6500 students in agriculture and home economics were in his undergraduate course in general sociology. He also served as chairman and member of many graduate student committees. He offered seminars in sociological theory and developed courses dealing with farmers’ organizations, rural life in other countries, and research in rural sociology. He also contributed frequently to the special training programs held annually for rural missionaries.

His research interests were wide. He pioneered in the areas of social participation and the urban fringe, and he specialized in social change. Researchers in several countries have used the value scales, which were developed by him. His publications number approximately one hundred. His bulletins on the population of New York State prepared after each decennial census have been widely used. A few days before his fatal heart attack, he completed the manuscript for an introductory textbook in general sociology, which will be published posthumously. During a sabbatic leave in 1939-1940, Professor Anderson studied rural communities in England and Scandinavia. In 1947-1948 he investigated rural reconstruction projects in the Middle East and Asia for Agricultural Missions, Inc. In 1950-1951, at the request of the Economic Cooperation Administration, he served as consultant with the

Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction in Taiwan. For his services leading to the reorganization of farmers' organizations vital to the economic development of Taiwan agriculture, he was awarded a gold medal by the Chinese Nationalist government.

In 1947, he was elected president of the Rural Sociological Society. He was a Fellow of the American Sociological Association, and also a member of the Population Association of America, Sigma Xi, Phi Kappa Phi, and Gamma Sigma Delta.

While devoted to his teaching and research, Professor Anderson also contributed generously of his time to civic and community projects in Ithaca and Tompkins County. He was a past president of the Ithaca Rotary Club, and during the year 1960-1961, he served as governor of Rotary District 717. At the time of his death he was chairman of the Ithaca City Planning Commission. A testimony to Professor Anderson's influence on the field of rural sociology is the large number of outstanding sociologists who were his students.

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