

First Meeting of the American Sociological Society

Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

December 26-28, 1906

Under the auspices of the American Economics Association, the American Sociological Society held its first Annual Meeting Wednesday, December 26, 1906 to Friday, December 28, 1906 in Providence, Rhode Island. The American Historical Association, the American Political Science Association, the Biographical Society of America, and the New England History Teachers' Association also held their meetings at the same time and place.

The American Economics Association reported a registration of approximately 125 people for their meeting, including a number of prominent sociologists. It is unclear how many registered for and attended the first meeting of the American Sociological Society; a registration list from that meeting was not retained. The *Proceedings* of the first meeting do provide a membership list for the society, which reported 115 people as members.

The American Sociological Society held one session jointly with the American Economics Association from 3 to 5 pm on Thursday, December 27th in Rockefeller Hall Auditorium. The joint session was chaired by Walter F. Willcox of Cornell University and included two presentations:

1. Western Civilization and the Birth Rate
Discussion opened by Edward A. Ross, University of Nebraska; William B. Bailey, Yale University
2. The Extent of Child Labor in the United States
Discussion Opened by Samuel McCune Lindsay, University of Pennsylvania

From 5 to 7 pm that evening, a reception was hosted by Mrs. William B. Weeden of 158 Waterman Street for the members of the Association.

The schedule for the remainder of the first meeting of the Society has not been preserved. We do know that at least seven papers were presented. The first volume of the *Proceedings* contained the following papers from the first meeting:

The Establishment of Sociology Presidential Address by Lester F. Ward
(*Proceedings* pages 3 - 9)

How Should Sociology Be Taught as a College or University Subject? by
Charles A. Ellwood (*Proceedings* pages 10 - 28)

Western Civilization and the Birth Rate by Edward A. Ross (*Proceedings*
pages 29 - 54)

Points of Agreement Among Sociologists by Albion W. Small
(*Proceedings* pages 55 - 77)

The Fine Arts as a Dynamic Factor in Society by Mrs. J. Odenwald-
Unger (*Proceedings* pages 78 - 96)

Social Consciousness by Charles H. Cooley (*Proceedings* pages 97 - 116)

Social Darwinism by D. Collin Wells (*Proceedings* pages 98 - 138)

In addition, the first volume of the *Proceedings* contained an editorial on the founding, nature, and mission of the new Society (presented in its entirety immediately below); the Constitution of the Society; and the membership of the Society. If a meeting of the Society's Council was held, or if a Business Meeting was conducted, no minutes or report from those sessions have been found.

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The American Sociological Society

In December, 1905, a number of persons interested in promoting the study of sociology met at Baltimore, during the sessions of the Historical, Economic, and Political Science Associations, and organized the *American Sociological Society*. The first annual meeting of the society was held in connection with the meetings of the cognate societies at Providence, R.I., December 27-29, 1906. The proceedings of that meeting are contained in the following pages.

The establishment of the *American Sociological Society* marks a notable stage in the positive investigation of human conditions. Not many representatives of the older forms of social science are ready to admit that there is a function for sociology. A sufficient nucleus of scholars has been differentiated from the traditional social sciences, however, to give sociology the prestige of a visible personal following. Together with the *Institut International de Sociologie*, and the *Sociological Society of London*, the *American Sociological Society* bears

witness that a few men and women, in full possession of their senses, are convinced that something is lacking in methods of interpreting human experience, and that the most effective means of supplying the lack must be sought without rather than within the older sciences of society.

The organization demonstrates, in the first instance, merely that its members have the courage of their convictions. Since those convictions have now taken corporate form, they must henceforth command a somewhat heightened degree of attention. More will be said, and more definitely, and with more confident emphasis, from and about the sociological point of view. What is said from this point of view will necessarily attract more notice from both theorists and practical men who have hitherto regarded sociology as negligible. The sociologists do not imagine that they are appointed to destroy the vocation of other investigators of society. They feel themselves called to represent factors in the problems of human association which have thus far received less than their share of attention. IN organizing a society they are not beginning, but continuing, the work of winning for those neglected factors the appreciation they deserve. The society makes no appeal for credit. It simply proposes to encourage sociological inquiry and to await competent judgment of results. It believes that it can add an essential factor in promoting both special research and correlation of special investigations among the phenomena of human association. It maintains that our last attainable insight into the meaning of life must be derived from organization of such special researches. It heralds the faith that all the social sciences are unscientific in the degree in which they attempt to hold themselves separate from each other, and to constitute closed systems of abstractions. It demands correlation of the social sciences, to the end that real knowledge of human life as it is may increase; that insight into the quality of life as it is capable of becoming may expand; and that effort to realize the possibilities of life may grow more concerted and more intelligent.

Pages 1-2, *Papers of Proceedings*, Volume 1 (May 1907)