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**Massachusetts Gave Leadership to America's
Country Life Movement:
The Collaboration of Kenyon L. Butterfield
and Wilbert L. Anderson**

By

Gerald F. Vaughn

Kenyon L. Butterfield, president of Massachusetts Agricultural College and a prominent Congregationalist lay leader, and Wilbert L. Anderson, his pastor at First Congregational Church in Amherst, were major figures in the nationwide movement to improve the quality of life of rural Americans in the early decades of this century. Butterfield, who gave substantial direction to the movement, was an agriculturist, rural sociologist, and educator, not a clergyman. This article is intended to document the fact that Butterfield's efforts to mobilize the nation's rural churches were greatly strengthened by guidance and strong support from his pastor, Anderson, who well understood the problems of the rural church and thought often and deeply about solutions. Anderson was Butterfield's "strong right arm" in this regard, assisting him to organize the nation's rural clergymen as a significant force in the country life movement.

Anderson's key role in support of Butterfield has not been previously documented. How did these comrades collaborate, and what was their collaborative impact on the country life movement? The following account is offered to help complete the historical record of Butterfield's outstanding leadership in the country life movement and to recognize Anderson's notable contributions.

The agricultural college, Butterfield held, "must not hide its light under a bushel, but it must carry to the great mass of rural people, and to all those interested in country life, the knowledge and inspiration that gather about the work of the institution." Anderson independently was pursuing country life objectives, and he was ideally suited to assist Butterfield. Authors of First Congregational's church history wrote: Dr. Anderson was "attracted to Amherst, in part at least, by the existence here of the Agricultural College.... The movement back-to-the-land is under way, and Kenyon Butterfield is its prophet."¹

The basis of the Anderson/Butterfield association was Anderson's book *The Country Town: A Study of Rural Evolution*, published in 1906. It was a seminal analysis of forces affecting the future of America's rural towns, forces largely obscured by the nation's urbanization and industrialization. Anderson's study of the rural town, which proved to be a seminal work of the country life movement, was inspired by fellow Congregational clergyman and social reformer Josiah Strong and his studies of the industrial city. Strong revealed the need for someone to make a similar study of the country town, and Anderson applied himself arduously to the task. Strong wrote the introduction to Anderson's book, declaring: "This is a much needed and valuable book."²

Lowry Nelson, in his history of the development of rural sociology, observes,

Although by the turn of the century members of the clergy had become aware of the impact upon the church of the changes taking place in rural society, it was rare for anyone to present the church as an institution in the broad context of the rural community. One of the earliest to do this was Wilbert L. Anderson.

¹ Kenyon L. Butterfield, "The Leadership of the Agricultural College," *The Independent* 65(July-December 1908), 369; John A. Hawley and Frank Prentice Rand, *The First Congregational Church in Amherst, 1739-1939* (Amherst, 1939), 22.

² Josiah Strong, "Introduction" in Wilbert L. Anderson, *The Country Town: A Study in Rural Evolution* (New York, 1906), i.

In a lengthy review for the *New York Times*, Edward Cary found Anderson's study to be an "extremely interesting and informing work."³

Even six years later, Anderson's book (reissued in 1911 and again in 1914) was praised by George Frederick Wells, Assistant to the Executive Secretary, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, as the "leading book thus far upon the religious phase of the country church problem..." In 1913 Professor Henry K. Rowe of Newton Theological Seminary, in an annotated bibliography of the rural church and country life, described Anderson's work as "The best book on the country problem. Sets forth conditions in fair, sane fashion, and is optimistic in tone and practical in suggestions." Also in 1913, in compiling a special reading list on the country church and the rural problem, Butterfield and Elmer K. Eyerly identify Anderson's book as: "A scholarly work, setting forth with a hopeful outlook rural changes in their historical, scientific and social aspects." Upon Anderson's death in 1915, Albert E. Roberts, County Work Secretary of the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, began his tribute with these words:

With the passing of Rev. Wilbert L. Anderson, D.D., the rural church and its allied agencies lose a most ardent and efficient champion. Doctor Anderson was among the pioneers in rural life literature, and his book, *The Country Town*, published ten years ago, is of permanent and constructive value.⁴

From May of 1907 to August of 1913 Anderson served as pastor of the First Congregational Church of Amherst, Massachusetts, while Butterfield served as president of the Massachusetts Agricultural College

³ Lowry Nelson, *Rural Sociology: Its Origin and Growth in the United States* (Minneapolis, 1969), 103; Edward Cary, review of Anderson, *New York Times*, March 10, 1906, 11:142.

⁴ George Frederick Wells, "The Rural Church," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 40 (March 1912), 132; Henry K. Rowe, *A Select Bibliography on the Rural Church and Country Life* (Philadelphia, 1913), 8; Kenyon L. Butterfield and E. K. Eyerly, "Special Reading List, No. 13, The Country Church and the Rural Problem," *Bulletin of the General Theological Seminary* 5, No. 2 (January 1913), 12; Albert E. Roberts quoted in *Rural Manhood* 6 (May 1915), 237.

also located in Amherst. Butterfield, previously president of the Rhode Island College of Agricultural and Mechanical Arts, took on the presidency of Massachusetts' "small and struggling college of 250 undergraduates and a dozen graduate students" in 1906 and within a decade brought it to national prominence. But in Butterfield's first years, with a woefully inadequate budget, the Massachusetts Agricultural College was not strong in the rural social sciences, apart from Butterfield himself. Facing the demands on his time as president, Butterfield needed all the help he could get toward solving the problems of country life.⁵

Butterfield and his wife had joined the First Congregational Church, the largest Protestant congregation in Amherst, on September 2, 1906. As a prominent member of the First Congregational Church and one whose thinking ran along lines so similar to Anderson's, Butterfield undoubtedly influenced and may have engineered Anderson's call to that pastorate. While Butterfield himself was not a member of the committee to select a new pastor in 1907, the chairman of that committee was Professor Frank A. Waugh, head of the division of horticulture in Butterfield's Massachusetts Agricultural College, one of the College's two main divisions. Since Butterfield and Anderson were known to hold a shared desire to improve country life, it seems certain that Waugh and Butterfield discussed the church's negotiations with Anderson. Church officials offered substantial inducements to attract Anderson: a comparatively high annual salary of \$2,000, the parsonage as a residence, and four weeks of vacation yearly.⁶

⁵ Harold Whiting Cary, *The University of Massachusetts: A History of One Hundred Years* (Amherst, 1962), 103, 111, 112.

⁶ Personal communication from Jean K. Tucker, the present church archivist, October 12, 1996; W. R. Brown, "Amherst," *Western New England* 2 (October 1912), 267; records of First Congregational Church in possession of The Jones Library of Amherst; *Amherst Record*, June 19, 1907; Joseph A. DiCarlo, Jr., "Monograph on Dr. Frank A. Waugh and His Influence on the Development of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning" (M.L.A. thesis, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1973), 6-7. Waugh became a leading figure in landscape architecture and rural community planning; his book *Rural Improvement* (1914) quotes both Anderson and Butterfield. Regarding Anderson's comparatively high salary, note that the previous pastor received a salary of \$1,650, according to Tucker, personal communication, November 15, 1996. Further note that annual salaries of pastors in rural villages then ranged from \$400 to \$1,000, according to the *Report of the Commission on Country Life*, 141.

In Anderson, Butterfield would have the valuable aid of a widely respected scholar of country life whose salary would not have to come from the college budget. While Anderson's first obligation was to the church congregation and the Amherst community, he would be available to advise Butterfield on a frequent basis. He also could take an active part in Butterfield's college, state, and regional involvements on some limited basis, and Butterfield wasted no time in increasing his involvement. Anderson spoke on "The New Rural Life" at Butterfield's much-publicized Massachusetts Conference on Rural Progress, held at the Massachusetts Agricultural College from October 2 to 5, 1907. The Amherst newspaper reported on Anderson's speech with approval: "The progress in the past, the accomplishments of the present, the possibilities of the future furnished him with a most inspiring theme to which he did full justice."⁷

Anderson's personality suggests he inclined toward the relative obscurity of a country pastorate and a behind-the-scenes activist role, which would complement Butterfield's leadership role. Anderson was characterized by S. H. Dana, a former ministerial colleague in Exeter, New Hampshire, as a man whose "natural shyness kept him silent often and made him seem reserved..." Yet when Anderson spoke, Dana reported that "he talked well and entertainingly on large themes, and was always worth listening to. A public spirited citizen, he was ready to give of his time and strength to the promotion of public interests."⁸

Born in East Berkshire, Vermont, on July 21, 1857, to Ira Stone Anderson (1831-1909) and his wife Elvina Perley (1832-1924), Wilbert Lee Anderson had two younger sisters, Annette (1862-1943) and Mary Perle (1864-1945). Anderson recalled that "from the first he had lived in a sphere of strong Christian influence." His father and also his grandfather, Seth P. Anderson, were deacons of East Berkshire's First Congregational Church and Wilbert took church membership in May of

⁷ *Forty-fifth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Agricultural College* (Boston, 1908), 63; *Amherst Record*, October 9, 1907, 8.

⁸ S. H. Dana, "Rev. Wilbert L. Anderson," *The Exeter-News-Letter* (Exeter, NH), April 2, 1915.

1872, at the age of 14. Many years later, Wilbert had the honor to preach at East Berkshire's First Church, on August 16, 1903.⁹

The Anderson family had a large house in East Berkshire and also a farm just outside the village. Wilbert grew to manhood with a keen appreciation of rural life, instilled by his father and mother as he states in the dedication of *The Country Town*.... His adult appreciation of rural life was enhanced by his sister, Mary Perle, who was exceptionally well trained in botany and became an outstanding teacher of natural science and nature study in colleges and schools. From 1908 to 1917 she taught nature study at the renowned Horace Mann Elementary School in New York City, the demonstration school of the Teachers College of Columbia University. Anderson credits Mary Perle with substantial contributions to his book, not only in the chapter he devoted to the value of nature study, but also throughout the entire book.¹⁰

Prepared for college at the Saint Albans Academy in Saint Albans, Vermont, and for two years at the Preparatory Department of Oberlin College, Wilbert Anderson entered Oberlin College as a freshman in 1875. Graduating in 1879 with his Bachelor of Arts degree, he was a member of the Oberlin chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. His future wife, Dorinda Ann Beattie (1858-1953) of Sandusky, Ohio also graduated from Oberlin in 1879, with a diploma in the Literary Course.

Anderson spent the next three years at Yale Divinity School, graduating with his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1882. Yale was a center of the new theology, a departure from the fundamentally Calvinistic and rigid "New England Theology" of Jonathan Edwards. The new theology represented an American theological renaissance from about

⁹ Minutes of the First Congregational Church, Amherst, Mass., Council of Installation of Rev. W. L. Anderson, June 12, 1907, in possession of The Jones Library, Inc., of Amherst; information from East Berkshire's First Congregational Church records provided by Alice S. Woodward, Church Clerk, and her husband Donald H. Woodward; *General Catalogue of Former Students*, Oberlin College, questionnaire completed by Wilbert L. Anderson, April 11, 1908.

¹⁰ Gerald F. Vaughn, "Mary Perle Anderson: *Herald of Ecology*", Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly 81, No. 1 (1997): 14-15; Anderson, *The Country Town*..., 1, 4-5.

1850 to 1920, and Anderson soon found the rural church a fertile field for it. After many years of pastoring he wrote:

To expect a sudden acceptance of critical dogmas is folly; there must be patient waiting for the work of time, and our contention is that the interest in theological thinking is so keen in the rural church that the preparation for new light, always in progress, affords an unrivalled opportunity for the thoughtful and wise Christian teacher.¹¹

Ordained as a minister at Stowe, Vermont, in February of 1883, Anderson was pastor of the Congregational church there until September of 1890. While at Stowe, he and Dorinda were married in Sandusky, Ohio, on August 14, 1883.

Also during his ministry at Stowe, Anderson began to think about and form some conclusions regarding the future of the church in rural towns that were losing population. In his book he wrote:

As long ago as 1886, the author reached the conclusion that a church might hope to grow in a declining town, and all that has come under observation since has failed to overthrow the conviction that more depends upon the vitality and the activity of the church than upon the fortune of the town in keeping or losing its people.

He was impressed by statistics for Vermont showing that, in towns losing population, nearly half the Congregational churches gained membership.¹²

From 1890 to 1894, Anderson was pastor of the First Congregational Church in Muskegon, Michigan. He and Butterfield may have become acquainted at that time. Butterfield, born and reared in Michigan, was

¹¹ Wilbert L. Anderson, "The Critical View of the Bible in Churches and Sunday Schools," *The Congregationalist and Christian World* 90, No. 41 (October 14, 1905), 520-21; Anderson, *The Country Town...*, 270-71.

¹² Anderson, *The Country Town...*, 273.

assistant secretary of the Michigan Agricultural College in 1891-92 and editor of the *Michigan Grange Visitor* from 1892 to 1896.

From February of 1894 through April of 1907 Anderson was minister of the First Congregational Church at Exeter, New Hampshire, and it was during this period that his more definitive thinking about the future of the country town took shape. The rural church had lost its vital place in many communities by the turn of the century, first in New England and then farther west and south as the American frontier closed and economic expansion slowed. How should a rural minister respond in his community?

Anderson fortunately found a role model in George Edward Street, who was minister of the Second Congregational Church at Exeter from 1871 to 1899. From 1894 to 1899, Anderson observed Street constantly as both men moved about the community serving their respective congregations. In a memorial published in 1905, two years after Street's passing, Anderson expressed his admiration for Street's work toward community improvement, quite apart from preaching, visiting the sick, and the other usual pastoral functions. He wrote that Street "had an untiring interest in devising plans for public improvement and for the intellectual and moral development of communities." He noted that Street was fascinated by "schemes of social advancement" and "inclined toward public affairs." He stated that Street

had the impulses of a reformer, and again and again he took his place in front of the battle line. He was indefatigable in his efforts for temperance, and from him came the incentive that finally drove the saloons from Exeter. He was an agitator for parks, and better streets, and every public improvement.

Those were traits that to Anderson marked the effective clergyman in a country town, as population shifted to the industrial cities and their suburbs.¹³

Anderson was optimistic about the future of the country town. His

¹³ Wilbert L. Anderson, memorial introduction in George E. Street, *Mount Desert: A History* (Boston, 1905), ix, x, xiii.

interpretation of statistical data indicated that averages obscured the reality: While some country towns were declining, others were thriving and many others could thrive with aggressive community improvement efforts, particularly with leadership from the local church(es). Anderson writes, in his book's final chapter "The Church as a Social Centre": "Public opinion, the social conscience, the common ideal, are as important in the town as nerves in the body. Apart from the churches there is no adequate provision for these necessary elements of the social life." He concludes:

The community needs nothing so much as a church to interpret life, to diffuse common standards of morals, to plead for the public interest, to inculcate unselfishness, neighborliness, cooperation, to uphold ideals, to stand for the supremacy of the spirit.¹⁴

Anderson believed the worst had passed, at least in New England. He wrote: "In the main rural depletion is over. In its whole course it has been an adjustment of industrial necessity and of economic health; everywhere it is a phase of progress and lends itself to the optimism that discerns deeper meanings." As Warren H. Wilson observed:

The process described by Anderson in 'The Country Town' is shown to be very general in the sifting of the country population. The bolder and more enterprising individuals, both good and evil, have gone to the city. The country church, therefore, has to deal with an unprogressive, healthy, satisfied, and American population.¹⁵

¹⁴ Anderson, *The Country Town...*, 290, 299.

¹⁵ Anderson, *The Country Town...*, 76; Warren H. Wilson, "The Church for the Working Farmer," in The New England Country Church Association, *Papers Read at the Conference on the Problems of the Rural Church Held in Boston March 13 and 14, 1911* (Cambridge, 1911), 3.

Anderson contended: "By studying the times, by catching step with the movement of the age, by winning adaptation to the new environment, rural communities may make the great transition from the outworn to the coming civilization with safety and high hope." Thus the overarching message of Anderson's book is: if a country town declines, in many cases it's not from lack of ability to improve but from lack of will.¹⁶

Anderson's ideas about the future of the country town were well thought-out and well written. He was a clergyman, not an academic sociologist, and his work was deductive at a time when social scientists sought more inductive research. Nonetheless, his book attracted considerable attention and gained much acceptance. He became a more prominent public figure, and in 1908 Oberlin College conferred upon him the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

That same year Butterfield, with assistance from Waugh and Anderson, moved aggressively to offer training for religious leaders of rural communities. Butterfield strongly felt that "the country clergyman of the future will be a man who has had part of his training at least in an agricultural college." In the summer of 1908 the Massachusetts Agricultural College, with Waugh serving as dean of the summer school, added four courses "to interest country clergymen in rural affairs." According to Butterfield, this was probably the first such college offering to rural clergymen in the United States. The General Association of the Congregational Churches of Massachusetts' special committee on Morals and Rural Conditions, of which Anderson was a member, stated regarding expectations for the summer courses: "The aim is to enlist ministers in those comprehensive plans for rural progress for which the Agricultural College stands." The summer courses were sponsored by the College in cooperation with the Massachusetts Federation of Churches, with Anderson serving as the liaison between the College and clergymen interested in attending. Anderson gave a report on this summer school to the Massachusetts Federation of Churches in November.¹⁷

¹⁶ Anderson, *The Country Town...*, 116.

¹⁷ Butterfield, "The Leadership of the Agricultural College," 369; *Forty-sixth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Agricultural College*, Part I (Boston, 1909), 8-9; The General Association of the Congregational Churches of Massachusetts, *Minutes of the One Hundred Sixth Annual Meeting* (Boston, 1908), 88; *Announcement, Massachusetts*

A further example of Butterfield's and Anderson's complementary roles in this training comes from the 1910 summer school for country clergymen. Butterfield, in a series of lectures on "The Development of the Rural Community," discussed "the question of community building in rural neighborhoods, community ideals, forces to be utilized, and general programs for betterment." Anderson's course of lectures on "The Church and the Rural Problem" opened with a review of the country life movement in relation to the community church. Next he traced the church's contribution to economic and social life, then he examined the special task, difficulties, problems, and ideals of the country minister. The aim of Anderson's lectures was "to show how the church and the minister might aid, or lead, the forces engaged in solving the rural problem."¹⁸

Anderson continued to support the summer school programs for rural clergymen that Butterfield had initiated. Anderson observed:

Now it is not any thought of the agricultural college that the college should supersede the seminary in the teaching of the great truths of the Christian religion, but it is the thought of the agricultural college that there is a great new movement coming on in country life, and that persons who are interested in that great new development call to the country church for help.¹⁹

At the same time Anderson saw the need for better seminary training of country pastors. For this purpose he was invited to deliver a series of special lectures at Yale Divinity School during 1908-09, as part of a course in pastoral functions. Substantial parts of his lectures were

Agricultural College, Summer School of Agriculture 1908, Special Term for Country Pastors; "Alumni Notes," Yale Divinity Quarterly 5 (February 1909), 254.

¹⁸ "Courses of Study for Country Clergymen, July 25th to August 12, 1910, in connection with the Summer School of the Massachusetts Agricultural College," *Massachusetts Agricultural College Bulletin 2*, No. 3(March 1910), 3.

¹⁹ Anderson commenting as part of discussion session in County Work Department, Young Men's Christian Association, *The Rural Church and Community Betterment* (New York, 1911), 50.

published as a chapter, titled "The Minister and the Rural Community," in the book *The Christian Ministry and the Social Order* (1909) edited by Charles S. MacFarland. This compilation of practical guidance to young ministers in a changing social order was reissued in 1913.

Henry K. Rowe calls Anderson's Yale lectures "a well-analyzed chapter on the rural community" placing emphasis on local initiative and the social service of minister and church. A reviewer in *Rural Manhood* wrote of Anderson's chapter: "No more discriminating analysis of the rural community has come under our attention." Regarding the quality of the analysis, a reviewer for *The Survey* noted, "Rev. Wilbert L. Anderson in so doing amply sustained his reputation for insight and vision richly earned by his volume on *The Country Town*."²⁰

Anderson placed the function and training of the rural clergyman in proper perspective. To the ministerial students he asserted: "it is not the province of the church to teach directly the new agriculture, but rather to awaken the mind of the farmer, and arouse in him the spirit of idealism so that he will seek the new agricultural knowledge." Further, "you will know less of farming in detail than your parishioners, but you should know more than they of the spirit of progress."²¹

Anderson was one of several experienced pastors and others invited to address the Yale ministerial students on social questions and tasks facing Christian ministers, within the framework of modern theology and social service. This came at a crucial juncture in the history of the Yale Divinity School, when under Dean Edward L. Curtis the curriculum was drastically revised. Theological education, it was felt, had lost its relevance, and enrollment at the Yale seminary was declining. With greater emphasis on equipping young pastors for meaningful service, enrollment again increased. These efforts by Yale and other seminaries notwithstanding, Warren H. Wilson, Director, Town and Country Department, Presbyterian Church of the United States of America,

²⁰ Rowe, *A Select Bibliography...*, 5; *Rural Manhood* 1(January 1910), 38; *The Survey* 22(September 25, 1909), 854.

²¹ Wilbert L. Anderson, "The Minister and the Rural Community," in Charles S. MacFarland, ed., *The Christian Ministry and the Social Order* (New Haven, 1909), 207.

observed twenty years later that the agricultural colleges had done more than theological seminaries to meet the training needs of country pastors.²²

Drawing from his Yale lectures, in 1909 Anderson also wrote a discerning article titled "The Rural Mind". In studying the progressive country town and church, Anderson was acutely concerned with the mind, both the individual person's and the community's, as it directs day-by-day rural living. Identifying the main forces that determined thought patterns of the country resident, he concluded: "if we suppose that we can carry a full set of urban institutions into the country and win favor for them, we will come to grief. We will be compelled to adapt our methods to the limits set by individuality which is the natural product of isolation." Anderson had a keen insight into rural psychology and character, and Albert E. Roberts said of him: "There has probably been no greater authority on the rural mind than Doctor Anderson."²³

Butterfield and Anderson shared a common concern for country life and remained associated until Anderson's death. Something of the two men seemed to rub off on each other. Butterfield became imbued with the centrality of the country church in rural progress, and Anderson became more of a leader in his own right. Butterfield was wholly convinced, with Anderson, that there could be no rural progress without stronger churches.

Opportunities for dialogue and interaction between the two men were enlarged as Butterfield sought a close relationship between his own church and his college. He served as a member of the church's Prudential and Religious Education committees and also as a deacon during Anderson's pastorate. The Prudential Committee, at its meeting of October 12, 1908, upon Butterfield's recommendation appointed "a committee of three to confer with the committee from the college." Anderson was named as one of the church committee's three members. At the same meeting the Prudential Committee also voted to "secure the names and addresses of

²² Roland H. Bainton, *Yale and the Ministry* (New York, 1957), 202-04; Warren H. Wilson, "Twenty Years Country Church Observations," in Henry W. McLaughlin, ed., *The Country Church and Public Affairs* (New York, 1930), 74-75.

²³ Wilbert L. Anderson, "The Rural Mind," *Homiletic Review* 58 (July 1909), 39; Roberts quoted in *Rural Manhood* 6, (May 1915), 238.

the new Professors at the Agl [sic] College at once, that some of our members might call on them."²⁴

One can see Anderson's influence upon Butterfield in the recommendations regarding the country church in the 1909 report of President Theodore Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life, of which Butterfield was one of the seven members appointed in 1908. Butterfield had been concerned about the country church for some years and wanted the Commission on Country Life to thoroughly study the country church problem. He was thwarted when Henry Wallace argued that this would violate separation of church and state and Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson threatened to withdraw the Commission's postal privileges if such a study was attempted.²⁵

Since Anderson's study of the condition of country towns and churches was the best available in 1908/09, interaction between Anderson and Butterfield on the Commission's work is virtually certain. It is inconceivable that Butterfield did not discuss the work of the Commission on Country Life with his close associate Anderson and draw upon his pastor's expertise. The Commission's recommendations regarding the country church are quite consistent with Anderson's thinking.²⁶

In its final recommendation, the Commission on Country Life sought to suggest the proper training of a rural clergyman. To conduct it, "Ministerial colleges and theological seminaries should unite with agricultural colleges in this preparation of the country clergyman." Butterfield and Anderson knew that rural clergymen needed special training. They also knew that agricultural colleges could do only part of the job; the theological schools were equally or more essential to the task.

²⁴ Records of First Congregational Church, at The Jones Library, Amherst.

²⁵ The other six Commission members were Liberty Hyde Bailey (chairman), Gifford Pinchot, Walter Hines Page, Henry Wallace, Charles S. Barrett, and William A. Beard.

²⁶ Philip Dorf, *Liberty Hyde Bailey: An Informal Biography* (Ithaca, 1956), 152; Clayton S. Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission," *Agricultural History* 34 (October 1960), 163; William L. Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920* (Port Washington, 1974), 26; Merwin Swanson, "The 'Country Life Movement' and the American Churches," *Church History* 46 (September 1977), 361.

Creating a regional country church association was an expedient means to involve the seminaries to provide this training.²⁷

Thus the New England Country Church Association was formed at Amherst by those present on the final day of the Massachusetts Agricultural College summer school for clergymen in 1908. Harvard University economics professor Thomas N. Carver was named the association's first president: "One result of the meeting was the organization of the New England Country Church Association. I was asked to take the presidency and at Dr. Butterfield's urging I accepted, holding the position until I went to Washington in 1913."²⁸

To get started, the New England Country Church Association held two significant conferences in Boston during the following winter, focusing on the problems of the rural church in New England. Butterfield opened the first day of the conference on January 18, 1909, with an address entitled "A New England Campaign for Rural Progress." Anderson opened the second day with an address entitled "The Duty of the Church in Times of Social Change."²⁹

For some years the New England Country Church Association offered a successful series of institutes for rural ministers, held at diverse locations throughout the region. A local church would furnish the meeting place. Every pastor within about a 40-mile radius was invited to come and enjoy free board, lectures, and entertainment for three days. Of these institutes Carver recalls: "Each of the theological schools of New England (Harvard, Andover, Boston, Baptist [Newton], Episcopal [Cambridge], Tufts, and Yale), was invited to send one member of its faculty as a lecturer. This assured a worth-while program." George Frederick Wells observed that the institutes of the New England Country Church Association afforded the opportunity for "free expression of opinion and

²⁷ *Report of the Commission on Country Life*, reprint (Chapel Hill, 1944), 143-44.

²⁸ Napoleon S. Hoagland, "A Summer School for Clergymen," *The Outlook* 93 (1909), 517; Thomas Nixon Carver, *Recollections of an Unplanned Life* (Los Angeles, 1949), 173.

²⁹ *Program, The New England Country Church Association Conference on the Problems of the Rural Church in New England, Tremont Temple, Boston, January 18 and 19, 1909.*

conviction in regard to the best means of meeting country church problems." Other such associations quickly formed throughout the nation, and Wells regarded such associations as helping "the church to its vital place in rural community welfare."³⁰

The association approach, known as the Amherst Movement, thrived for many years. Hawley and Rand observed, "The Amherst Movement is a program to revitalize the rural churches of New England, and the one to originate it, to be its great leader, is Dr. Butterfield." Anderson stood at his side.³¹

At every opportunity Anderson continued to advocate the church as a social centre of the country town. Another such opportunity came in December of 1910, at the Rural Church Conference convened in New York City by the County Work Department of the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations. It was attended by representatives of the major theological schools of the East, agricultural colleges, the federal Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Education, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, denominational bodies, and the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations.

That conference was essentially a forum for organized discussion, under rules prepared by a committee comprised of Anderson, Warren H. Wilson (Presbyterian Church of the United States of America), Edwin L. Earp (Drew Theological Seminary), and D. Hunter McAlpin (Young Men's Christian Association). Anderson spoke only briefly at the conference, but he clearly placed the future of country towns and churches in the hands of rural ministers: "The country minister is perhaps the only one in command of the forces that can solve these problems.... We want the country church to furnish ideals to the community."³²

The following year Anderson took part in the Young Men's Christian Association's conference on the country church and rural welfare. On the church's integral relation to the country life movement, Anderson said:

³⁰ Carver, *Recollections of an Unplanned Life*, 173-74; Wells, "The Rural Church," 134.

³¹ Hawley and Rand, *The First Congregational Church...*, 22.

³² County Work Department, Young Men's Christian Associations, *The Rural Church and Community Betterment*, 19, 50-52.

It has given me unspeakable satisfaction as a Christian minister that the leaders of this new social development, who approach the problem from the economic side, have called to the Church, asking it to assume the responsibility, summoning it to leadership, declaring that the Church is the central agency, and that it must come to the rescue.³³

During this time the International Sunday School Association appointed a Commission for the Study of the Adolescent Period as Related to the Country Sunday School. The Commission was chaired by Butterfield, with Anderson among the twenty-three other rural experts who were its members. Though several members were ordained clergymen who worked in related capacities, only Anderson was primarily a pastor of a local church. Butterfield, Anderson, and Albert E. Roberts comprised the Commission's Executive Committee to oversee the study of boys and girls in towns with population under 2,500 and in the open country.

Part of the study, conducted by a sub-commission headed by Anderson, was focused on the individual adolescent. Building on Anderson's previous consideration of the rural mind, the new study was an inquiry into the differences between the rural and the urban adolescent. Survey questionnaires were completed by 44 educators, YMCA staff, pastors, and others knowledgeable about both rural and urban youth.³⁴

The commission's findings were published in the book *The Teens and the Rural Sunday School* (1914). Anderson contributed the chapter on "The Individual," a condensation of which appeared in the periodical *Rural Manhood*, in advance of the book's publication. The periodical's editor, in an introduction, observed that the book "is the first of its kind in our Sunday School literature" and "will come as a great blessing to those

³³ Wilbert L. Anderson, discussion in International Committee, Young Men's Christian Associations, *The Country Church and Rural Welfare* (New York, 1912), 60-61.

³⁴ The other two members of Anderson's sub-commission were George A. Hubbell, president of Lincoln Memorial University, and Anna Seaburg, Office Secretary of the National Board of Young Women's Christian Associations.

who have so long and faithfully labored in behalf of the rural Sunday School."³⁵

Anderson's concern for the Christian nurture of rural youth had characterized his own pastoral ministry. Upon resigning from his Amherst pastorate, he wrote to the congregation:

From the beginning of my ministry here I have seen the hope of the future in the children, and the young people, and my heart is filled with gladness as I recall their growth into faith and their coming into the church by confession of their Master and Savior, and their interest and devotion shown in worship and in faithful service.³⁶

During that period Anderson and Butterfield also worked together as part of the Massachusetts Federation of Churches' Committee on the Rural Church, with Anderson as chairman and Butterfield as one of approximately twelve members. In 1912 and 1913 this committee was asked to address the new task or opportunity of the country church in Massachusetts, what more should be done in religious and social service, how the committee could aid such developments, and what alliances with similar committees would be helpful.³⁷

Among Anderson's other important involvements in the country life movement was his connection with the schools for rural leadership at Cornell University, where Liberty Hyde Bailey was Dean of Agriculture. Anderson's lectures at the June 24-July 4, 1913, Cornell School for Leadership in Country Life will illustrate this relationship. Before he and

³⁵ John L. Alexander, ed., *The Teens and the Rural Sunday School* (New York, 1914); Wilbert L. Anderson, "A Study of Rural Youth in Teen Age," *Rural Manhood* 5 (May 1914), 187-91.

³⁶ From Wilbert L. Anderson's letter of resignation from his Amherst pastorate, June 29, 1913, provided by church archivist Jean K. Tucker.

³⁷ *Facts and Factors* 4 (January 1913), 4; excerpts of letter from Edward Tallmadge Root to Wilbert L. Anderson, December 30, 1912, in Butterfield's file memorandum of January 14, 1913, University of Massachusetts Archives, RG-3/1 Butterfield 1906/Series 4, Box-23, FF-6, Organizations - Massachusetts Federation of Churches, Committee on Rural Problems, 1909-21.

his wife left his pastorate at Amherst that summer, he served the ten-day Cornell conference as Lecturer on Rural Ethics, teaching courses in "The Development of Rural Character," "Rural Personal Ideals," and "The Family and the Rural Problem." He was part of a faculty of twelve, also including such notable educators as Thomas N. Carver of Harvard and Edwin L. Earp, professor of sociology at the Drew Theological Seminary. Attending the conference were ninety rural leaders from twenty-two states, Washington, D.C., and Canada.³⁸

Anderson's interests and energy had been increasingly directed, through association with Butterfield, to improving country life in broader realms. Evidently he felt he could be of greater service to the kingdom of God by research, writing, lecturing, and consulting, than by continuing as pastor at Amherst, or accepting a call to another pastorate. Resigning from his Amherst pastorate in the summer of 1913, Anderson and his wife spent a year of study and travel in Europe. In his letter of resignation, he wrote that for many years he had desired extensive travel abroad "that I may be better equipped to interpret the great Christian obligations in the changing life of our times." He expressed his deep interest "in the readjustment of the life of the church that it may make the contribution to social progress to which it is now called...."³⁹

Returning from Europe the following summer, the Andersons made their home at East Berkshire, Vermont, as he prepared to undertake his larger mission. Immediately ahead was scheduled participation by Anderson and Butterfield in the Young Men's Christian Association's training institute for rural YMCA workers, to be held at Silver Bay, New York, in August of 1914. Anderson was to give a course of ten lectures on "The Rural Mind," with attention to overcoming rural inertia and discontent, cultivation of the rural spirit and social mind, degeneracy and the perils of the village, rural adolescence and pedagogy, the church and the rural mind, wider relations of the country people, and the call for expert leaders. Butterfield would give an equivalent course on "The Statesmanship of Rural Affairs," with attention to the farmer and society and the rural problem, the confused suggestions for rural policy, getting

³⁸ *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University and the Agricultural Experiment Station*, 1913, 1914, xvii-xix.

³⁹ Anderson's letter of resignation.

the facts and rural community building, division of labor and correlation of agencies, nationalization of rural progress and the world view, the question of leadership, and a concluding summary of his argument.⁴⁰

In early 1915 Anderson was preparing for work with the industrial committee of the Congregational National Council and lecturing at summer schools and universities. He also was getting ready to assist the International Sunday School Association in preparing Sunday school literature adapted to the needs of rural people. Unexpectedly Anderson died in the church parsonage on March 25, 1915, after preaching at the Congregational church in Methuen, Massachusetts, where he was a guest speaker.⁴¹

But the story of Anderson's impact on the country life movement did not end here. When Anderson died he also was working with Butterfield on a major policy analysis for the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. The results of Anderson's analysis had far-reaching policy implications, and the attention his analysis received after his death gives final testimony to his influence on Butterfield and on the country life movement.

Organized in 1908, the Council represented most of the major Protestant denominations. In 1915 the Council formed a Commission on Church and Country Life, and statements of proposed policy were sent to 150 pastors, organization leaders, and professors throughout the nation, who were closely associated with the work of the country church.

Proposed were "a definition of function, an outline of a country church policy, and a program of detailed work for the local church." Approximately one hundred replies were received, of which nearly seventy were exceptionally helpful. Kenyon L. Butterfield, chairman of the committee responsible for studying the comments, stated

⁴⁰ "Recharging Rural Leadership at Great Summer Institute Centers," *Rural Manhood* 5 (June 1914), p. 254; *Program, The Eastern Association School for the Training of Employed Officers of Young Men's Christian Associations, Department of Rural Leadership, Ninth Annual Session, Silver Bay, Lake George, New York, August 14 to August 28, Inc., 1914.*

⁴¹ "Dr. Wilbert L. Anderson," *Exeter-News-Letter*, April 2, 1915; Roberts in *Rural Manhood* 6 (May 1915), 237.

your committee is fully warranted in saying that it is doubtful if there is any other collection of opinions about the country church so valuable as those contained in these seventy replies.

Proper analysis of these replies was imperative, and Butterfield indicates: "The committee secured the invaluable service of Dr. Wilbert L. Anderson, author of *The Country Town*, to edit this important material." Anderson died before completing his final editing, but Butterfield says

fortunately, a few days before his death he had completed the first draft of his study of these replies, and had formulated new statements in the light of his study. Your committee has considered this material carefully, and while rearranging Dr. Anderson's edition of the statement, has made little change in the substance.

Charles O. Gill, Field Secretary of the Commission on Church and Country Life, predicted, "This report and the material upon which it is based should become an important factor in Rural Church progress." The product of Anderson's analysis, with a final revision by the Committee on Direction, was entitled "The Function, Policy, and Program of the Country Church" and published in the proceedings of the Conference on the Church and Country Life held in December of 1915 in Columbus, Ohio. Addressed by Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, the conference may have been the most important gathering on country life held up to that time.⁴²

In 1919 the American Country Life Association was established with Butterfield as president, and the country life movement continued to advance the principles of rural community organization that have undergirded rural development to the present. Working independently and as Butterfield's "strong right arm" from 1907 to 1915, Anderson was a herald of the progressive country town and church. Together Butterfield and Anderson were instrumental in helping to shape America's country life movement.

⁴² Paul L. Vogt, ed., *The Church and Country Life* (New York, 1916), 113-125, xi.