public health that had been realized, he acknowledged that the issue of population size and reproduction nevertheless remained. Moreover, Ross argued, the possibility of creating more tillable land through reclamation overlooked the fact that soon even that reclaimed land would be filled. Similarly, “safe, speedy, and cheap” long-distance travel opened up the possibility of migration and population redistribution but forgot that new lands could be filled just as old lands were. Despite opposition from “nationalists,” “militarists,” “employers,” and “socialists,” Ross championed family limitation and the conscious regulation of reproduction until his death in 1951 at the age of eighty-five.

Edward Ross’s vision of the ideal American was firmly rooted in his version of middle America. New immigrants from Europe and Asia threatened this vision, as did the migration of his cherished rural Midwesterners to the cities. Couched in terms of race suicide and standards of living, Ross objected to Japanese immigrants in California because they would not assimilate the “American” values he idealized. Ironically, the rural midwesterners who were leaving their farms in record numbers were not assimilating Ross’s American values either. Ross was striving to regulate the nation’s population, but his vision of the American family was so firmly rooted in an idealized past that even the majority of white farm families chose not to realize it.

Conservation and rural-life policies are really two sides of the same policy; and down at bottom this policy rests upon the fundamental law that neither man nor nation can prosper unless, in dealing with the present, thought is steadily taken for the future.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, “Rural Life,” 1910

The first National Conservation Congress in 1909 featured what in retrospect may seem like a surprising variety of papers on subjects ranging from conservation in lumber and electricity production to the conservation of child life and manhood. In addition to the expected papers on forestry, the public health and child labor efforts undertaken by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) were both represented at the congress. The DAR speaker was Mrs. J. Ellen Foster, chair of the DAR Committee on Child Labor. In her address on the conservation of child life, Foster argued that child-labor legislation was essential for the conservation of children as a national resource. In her words, “just as surely as a big tree is worth more than a growing slip, so a man is worth more than a child. . . . It is not only that we love the child and want him for ourselves, but it is because we know he is worth more to the country, if he is allowed to grow up. He makes a better tree out of which to cut lumber to build a house or a church or a school if he is allowed to grow up to full stature and to develop himself fully. He cannot do that if he is put in a factory at too early an age.” As the analogy between forests and children made clear, children were a natural resource that needed management as much as forests did to insure future prosperity.

For Theodore Roosevelt, conserving the nation’s natural resources was integrally connected to the idea of conserving the “race.” As a proponent of irrigation and land reclamation, Roosevelt had championed putting homes on the land. As he moved to nationalize his conservation policies beginning in 1907, however, he articulated his agenda for conservation in tandem with his agenda regarding country life. The country life movement, which Roosevelt supported, was a modernist program to economically and socially improve rural life. Roosevelt presented his case for conservation and country life by appealing to a racialized agrarianism that argued for the superiority of the small rural farmer and his family. Invoking nostalgic ideals of the farmer and the rural family allowed Roosevelt and his compatriots to claim that both the conservation and country life movements were relevant to the future of the “American race.” The managing of natural resources were thus brought to bear on the management of the “race.”

Born in 1858 to a wealthy New York family, Theodore Roosevelt developed his early interest in natural history into a real affinity for the countryside and the strenuous life he discovered there. Roosevelt’s father encouraged his son, who was afflicted with asthma as a child, to improve his health and body, building a gymnasium on the second floor of their house. At Harvard in the late 1870s Roosevelt had his eye on a lightweight boxing championship, but he was soundly defeated. More successful at romance, Roosevelt met Alice Lee and married her soon after his graduation in 1880. Roosevelt was schooled in the exclusionary racial theories emerging in the social sciences following in the wake of Darwin’s theory of evolution. Through his Harvard professor Nathaniel Shaler, Roosevelt learned theories of the social evolution thought to produce an “American race.” The “old stocks” that made up this “race” constituted an “American type” whose character had been shaped by their experiences in the American environment. Though he was not enrolled in Henry Adams’s famous 1873 seminar that rooted American democratic practices in the tribal practices of the Anglo-Saxons and their German ancestors, Roosevelt was exposed to Teutonist theories during his years at Harvard through political science professor John Burgess. Burgess argued that Teutonic germ brought from the Black Forest to Great Britain could also be traced to Puritan New England. In addition, Roosevelt ascribed to the romanticization of historical and literary Anglo-Saxon roots of both American practices and individual genealogies as professed by the Harvard faculty. The end result for Roosevelt was a view of northern European racial superiority based on the profound influence of the frontier on the development of American character.

Roosevelt gave over his interest in science to study law, but he was soon swept up into politics and was swiftly elected to the New York state assembly. Alice’s death from complications during childbirth in 1894 had a devastating effect on Roosevelt, who left New York politics for the ranch he had purchased the year before in South Dakota. Roosevelt threw himself into ranch life and remade his image into that of a western hero. The transformation from Harvard-trained New Yorker to western ranchman
The status and development of American racial character was a particular concern for Roosevelt. As his political star began to rise again after his excursion in the West, Roosevelt's thinking about racial competition and race progress was expressed publicly in his imperialist vision of the “white man's burden” to advance civilization around the globe. Intertwined with his advocacy of virile masculinity and the “strenuous life,” Roosevelt's imperialism was intended to demonstrate American racial superiority. Racial competition was not restricted to the international arena, however. Roosevelt had long been concerned with race struggles within the United States, especially with increasing immigration. As I discussed in the preceding chapter, Roosevelt had shown concern over declining birthrates. As president after McKinley's assassination in 1901, Roosevelt developed his concern over race competition within the United States into an attack on race suicide.

As part of his campaign against race suicide, Roosevelt's pronouncements on national character and race were often generalized descriptions of men and women who embodied “decency, morality, virtue, clean living,” as well as “the power to do, the power to dare, and the power to endure.” However, in his sixth and seventh annual addresses in 1906 and 1907, Roosevelt privileged the farmer as the typical American and the exemplar of American racial character. Acknowledging the rising prominence of the city and the increasing migration from the country, Roosevelt argued, “We cannot afford to lose that pre-eminently typical American, the farmer who owns his own medium sized farm.” Roosevelt applauded the growth of American cities, but would not allow the growth of the cities to be “at the expense of the country farmer.” The full scope of Roosevelt's advocacy was spelled out in a speech celebrating the founding of America's agricultural colleges.

In “The Man Who Works With His Hands,” Roosevelt clearly equated the status of the nation with the status of the rural family. “If there is any one lesson taught by history,” Roosevelt argued, “it is that the permanent greatness of any state must ultimately depend more upon the character of its country population than upon anything else.” “It would be a calamity,” Roosevelt continued, “to have our farms occupied by a lower type of people than the hard-working, self-respecting, independent, and essen
tially manly and womanly men and women who have hitherto constituted the most typically American, and on the whole the most valuable, elements in our entire nation.\footnote{14}

Roosevelt's fears were based on the high rate at which young men and women were leaving the countryside for the city. Like others, Roosevelt feared that the country was losing its best and brightest. The dispersal of sons and daughters to jobs outside the home had challenged the patriarchal family of the nineteenth century and resulted in the creation of family reform groups who wished to restore "order." Roosevelt wished to restore the order by reforming the rural family.\footnote{15} The key, he thought, was to make country life as socially and culturally attractive as urban life, to build a sense of community in the countryside, and to improve the economic prospects of farm families.

An absolutely crucial element of his plan was the farmer's wife. After arguing that special attention should be given to the improvement of women's lives on the farm, Roosevelt fell back into a familiar celebration of motherhood and the home. "The best crop is the crop of children," Roosevelt proclaimed; "the best products of the farm are the men and women raised there."\footnote{16} These "pre-eminently American" farm women were charged to engage in the one "really indispensable industry," the "industry of the home." By arguing that nothing could take the place of the home, Roosevelt made clear that women's duty was within that home "doing her full housewife's work." Of course, the other duty to which Roosevelt felt all "American" women were bound was the duty to bear children in order to preserve the "race."\footnote{17} That Roosevelt would end this speech on the farmer with an overtly pronatalist proclamation of women's duty to the state and the race speaks to the extent to which his ideologies of the home and the rural family had been racialized. The year after this speech, Roosevelt put his racial ideology to work politically.

"ONE ORGANIC WHOLE": THE COMMISSIONS FOR CONSERVATION AND COUNTRY LIFE

In 1908, Theodore Roosevelt officially launched two major commissions: the National Conservation Commission and the Country Life Commission. Conservation of natural resources and the improvement of country life were conceived of as interdependent efforts by Roosevelt and by commission conveners Gifford Pinchot, the chief forester for the Department of Agriculture, and Sir Horace Plunkett, an Irish member of Parliament and sometime Wyoming rancher.\footnote{18} According to Plunkett, he and Pinchot regarded conservation and country life as "one organic whole."\footnote{19} A fact with which Roosevelt agreed when he wrote, "Conservation and rural-life policies are really two sides of the same policy; and down at bottom this policy rests upon the fundamental law that neither man nor nation can prosper unless, in dealing with the present, thought is steadily taken for the future."\footnote{20} Under Pinchot's direction, Roosevelt's conservation program promoted the development of natural resources as efficiently as possible for the common good. From Plunkett's perspective, Pinchot argued that "every National resource must be husbanded." He did not view his job as "mere forestry administration," but "seemed to see men as trees walking."\footnote{21} Pinchot was explicit in The Fight For Conservation (1910) that the livelihood and living conditions of the farmer were of paramount importance. For Pinchot, the farmer was of special value to the nation by virtue of his "attachment to the soil." This relationship to the land gave the farmer "his steadiness, his sanity, his simplicity and directness, and many of his other desirable qualities."\footnote{22} What was needed was a way of preserving and maintaining that relationship.

Using Plunkett's experience organizing the Farm Cooperative System and the Department of Agriculture and other Industries and for Technical Instruction in Ireland, both Pinchot and Plunkett advocated education as a means to teach farmers the value of a cooperative system of agricultural production. This Irish model directly addressed economic issues such as land tenancy and the distribution of wealth away from producers. Cooperative organization was thought to offer greater economic stability and a greater sense of community.\footnote{23}

Plunkett did not expect to be able to apply directly the techniques he had used in Ireland to the United States. In fact, he expected to meet with significant resistance because of the American ideology of the individualism of small yeoman farmers.\footnote{24} Plunkett also imagined he would have more success if he approached groups whom he believed would be more pliable and less entrenched in their individualism. Early on, he advocated organizing African American farmers in the South, claiming they were a
group in which “clan and tribal instincts seem to survive.” Because of this vision of American individualism, Plunkett and Pinchot tended to emphasize a social agenda based upon community building and education.

The National Conservation Commission was appointed in 1908 following Pinchot’s well-orchestrated Governor’s Conference on Conservation. This conference was extremely successful at rallying support for conservation and produced a mandate for a national, as well as thirty-six state, conservation commissions. The National Conservation Commission was comprised of four sections—Waters, Forests, Lands, and Minerals—with W. J. McGee, Overton Price, George Woodruff, and Joseph Holmes as the respective section secretaries. Pinchot was the chairman of the Commissions Executive Committee and organized a systematic inventory of the nation’s resources as the first order of business.

The Country Life Commission, like the National Conservation Commission, was a group of carefully chosen experts. Liberty Hyde Bailey, soon to be dean of the College of Agriculture at Cornell University, was appointed chairman. Other members included Henry Wallace, publisher of Wallace’s Farmer; Kenyon Butterfield, a founder of rural sociology; Walter Hines Page, editor of the World’s Work; C. S Barrett, president of the Farmer’s Cooperative and Educational Union; William Beard, chairman of the National Irrigation Association and the Sacramento Valley Improvement Association; and Gifford Pinchot. The commission was charged with reporting on conditions in the countryside, available remedies for any problems, and the best means of organizing a permanent investigative body. To compile their report commissioners surveyed country residents, toured and held hearing in twenty-nine states, and encouraged local meetings whose results could be forwarded to the commission.

Conceived as “one organic whole,” the Country Life and National Conservation Commissions both undertook surveys or inventories of the state of the nation. With significant overlap in their leadership, these two movements exerted a mutual influence on each other that created in each an element of what Samuel Hays has characterized as a “moral crusade.” This emphasis on the social and cultural aspects of each movement would eventually create a rift in each as more economically oriented groups were founded.

At a time of increasing migration to the cities from the countryside and from abroad, country life reformers thought it was essential to keep future generations on the farm. Plunkett argued that “the people of every State are largely bred in rural districts, and... the physical and moral well-being of those districts must consequently determine the quality of the whole people.” If America continued to drain the best and brightest from the country, Plunkett continued, “the raw material out of which urban society is made will be seriously deteriorated.” Plunkett’s and Pinchot’s plan to avoid this “national degeneracy” was to improve the conditions of rural life economically, socially, and culturally.

Economically, country life reformers wanted to make the farm more organized and efficient. A number of means for this revitalization were proposed, including the introduction of scientific and mechanized agriculture, improved public roads, and improved systems of distribution of farm products using state and federal farm agencies. Education programs were also proposed on topics such as water and soil conservation and cooperative organization. Intensive agriculture of high-cash-value crops was proposed to bolster the small farm. In addition, new farm-credit programs were introduced in order to reduce tenancy and increase the number of farmers who were also farm owners.

These economic issues were not completely separate from the social issues of the country life movement. In the case of tenancy, the transient nature of tenant farmers was connected to the decline of the rural church, opposition to rural community improvement, and the deterioration of the physical appearance of rented farms. In many cases, tenant farmers were recent immigrants and became a target as a result of their “foreign ways.” Increasing numbers of immigrant tenant farmers also contributed to fears that native-born Americans were abandoning the countryside. Tenant farms seemed to accelerate the process of folk depletion and racial decline. In the words of country life reformer William Rossiter, immigrant tenant farmers were not “in harmony with the spirit of the institutions created by native stock.”

More generally, country life reformers addressed social and cultural
conditions with efforts directed at the country church, school, and home. These kinds of efforts were all overlaid with the agrarian myth of the yeoman farmer and farm family. While country life leaders urged rural churches to become more community oriented and include farmers as part of that community, educational efforts emphasized the farmer’s relationship to the land through programs in nature study and agriculture. Efforts directed at the rural home sought to make it more convenient, less isolated, and more sociable.

As part of his involvement in the country life movement, Gifford Pinchot collaborated with Charles Otis Gill to reach a scientific assessment of the status of the country church. Gill and Pinchot as well as others within the leadership of the country life movement had identified the country church as a key institution in the reform of rural life. As Gill and Pinchot put it, “Among the institutions available for the great task of restoring country life to its proper and necessary life of the nation, the country church holds or should hold a commanding place.” The country church represented an important bulwark against the migration of the “best people” from the countryside and the subsequent “decline in the quality of the country population.” The country church was credited with determining and vitalizing the “religious, moral, and social life of rural communities in the United States during whole periods in our national development,” especially among the Pilgrims of New England. This was a recognition of the social role played by the church in defining a rural community by bringing people together regularly and focusing community resources. The problem was that the country church had declined and needed to be “restored to its old-time vitality.”

Gill and Pinchot took their task to be an accurate assessment of the condition of the country church since the 1880s. Focusing on a rural county in Vermont and another in New York, Gill, who had been a country minister in Vermont, systematically surveyed the Protestant rural churches in order to get an accurate accounting of their membership, involvement, and income in terms of both dollars and purchasing power. This survey method was a hallmark of the Country Life Commission’s approach to studying the problems of rural life and agriculture. It characterized their approach to problem solving and planning as a scientific endeavor. Incidentally, this was the same approach taken by Roosevelt when he ordered an inventory of the nation’s resources in order to evaluate how best to conserve them. In this study of country churches, Pinchot used his experience surveying and assessing forest resources to prepare a plan of investigation that Gill then executed in the field.

The results of their survey confirmed Gill and Pinchot’s fears regarding the country church. In the twenty-year period they analyzed, church expenditures in both counties had increased in dollar amounts but had decreased when figured in terms of purchasing power. Moreover, small gains in membership did not make up for the “alarming reductions” in church attendance. In Gill and Pinchot’s words, “the vitality and power of the country church in these two counties is in decline.”

Because the causes of the decline of the country church were numerous and varied, Gill and Pinchot were careful not to overgeneralize their proposed remedies. Instead they first presented an exemplar of the successful country church and built their general recommendations from this example and others in the two counties they studied.

The most successful church in Gill and Pinchot’s study was a Vermont church oriented toward the community and governed by “principles of democracy and social service.” Instead of promoting what was seen to be in the narrow interests of the church, this church put itself in service to the community by founding a civic league and boys club. More important for Gill and Pinchot, when the church ministers began to participate in the country life movement and extended their idea of community into the countryside, farmers began to attend regularly and “gave the church a new vitality and a new appeal.” For Gill and Pinchot, the successful country church was a force for community improvement.

When they began to generalize their remedies, social service and cooperation were acknowledged as crucial aspects of the revitalization of the church as a force within the community. Naturally, the improvement of country life was at the top of the list of remedies. In the past, according to Gill and Pinchot, the country church, the press, and the schools “helped to direct the attention of the country boy and girl to the city as a place of success.” The country church could take a role in making rural life a success by organizing cooperative ventures in crop production and marketing, milling, banking, and the purchasing of supplies. For Gill and Pinchot, country churches had to realize that part of their job was, using
Horace Plunkett’s slogan, to promote “better farming, better business and better living”—to promote the country life movement. Economic cooperation was the means to retain and promote the physical, intellectual, and moral health of the country population.

Improving farm conditions, agricultural practices, and business skills required reaching an adult population that was in many ways resistant to urban authority. The Country Life Commission decided that its best means to reach adults was through the home demonstration and extension system being established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Started in Texas by Seaman Knapp, extension work brought farm experts to the farmers, teaching them “economy, order, sanitation, patriotism, and a score of other wholesome lessons.” While farm agents dealt with agricultural issues, home demonstration agents usually addressed themselves to farm wives about home and family life. From its beginning in 1902, the extension system grew quickly and was federally supported by the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, which provided matching funds for farm and home demonstration programs.

Agricultural extension and home demonstration was also strongly supported among African American educators and farmers. Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute established its Movable School in 1906. Thomas Monroe Campbell, who directed the Tuskegee effort, described the object of these Movable Schools as placing “before the farmers concrete illustrations proving to them that they can do better work; make more produce, on a smaller number of acres of land, at least expense, and at the same time, beautify their homes.” Campbell’s vision for this type of educational outreach was motivated by his desire to help the people to whom he dedicated his autobiography: “the millions of rural dwellers of the nation, now struggling desperately to attain the established ‘American standard of living,’ and to the most costly, yet the most priceless commodity that any farmer can grow, namely a ‘crop’ of children.” While Campbell clearly celebrated the farm family, as an African American his work should be considered as part of a wider program of racial uplift promoted by Washington and other African American leaders at the time. Roosevelt famously supported Washington’s efforts at Tuskegee, but it is not clear that his comments on race suicide and country life were intended for rural African Americans.

Perhaps the largest piece of social reform undertaken on behalf of country life concerned education for children. When the Country Life Commission filed its report, fewer than one in four rural children completed the eighth grade. According to David Danbom, “unstandardized and locally controlled, marked by primitive physical facilities and unsanitary conditions, plagued by unprofessional instruction and poor attendance, the nation’s one-room schools epitomized educational inefficiency to urban educators.” The proposed answer was to use professional supervision to enforce changes in curriculum, the school calendar, teacher qualifications, and school conditions. Beyond improvements in efficiency, country life reformers wanted to alter the goals of rural education. In order to keep children on farms, education stressed cooperation, technical agricultural training, and nature study.

Keeping the rural child, who was perceived to be closer to the earth and nature, in his or her environment was a fundamental goal of the Country Life Commission. Cornell University College of Agriculture dean Liberty Hyde Bailey advocated nature study as a way of celebrating the farmer and country citizen as a naturalist. Reinforcing rural children’s relationship to nature, Bailey thought, would keep them on the farm and out of the city when they got older. Bailey believed that one should start with the child’s sympathies and develop the child, not the subject. Using the example of a children’s garden, Bailey wrote that “the child is first interested in the whole plant, the whole bug, the whole bird, as a living, growing object. It is a most significant fact that most young children like plants, but that most youths dislike botany.” For Bailey, nature study was an appeal to make school match life. Something as simple as planting a garden would not only beautify the farm and possibly keep young people there as a result, it would help link them to the objects of their study. This connection to nature and to the land was what Roosevelt, Pinchot, and Bailey celebrated as the source of the farmer’s character.

If the rural family was the foundation of the race or the nation, the farm wife was the foundation of the rural family. As they did for other aspects of rural life, country life reformers tried to ease the burdens of country women by introducing organization and efficiency into the rural home. Labor-saving devices such as washing machines, more-efficient cleaning, and simpler meals were promoted. Farmer’s wives’ courses became a
to generate popular support and bring it to bear on Congress, Pinchot organized the National Conservation Association in 1909.\textsuperscript{56} However, as public interest increased, the emphasis in the National Conservation Association shifted from primarily economic concerns regarding resources to a “moral crusade” dedicated to preserving nature in the face of the increasing artificiality and social instability of urban life.\textsuperscript{57} As was forcefully expressed at the National Conservation Congresses, the conservation of children was taken to be a crucial part of the goal of ensuring the future well-being of the country by assuring an abundance of natural resources.\textsuperscript{58}

After the summer of 1908, the scope of the conservation movement expanded dramatically.\textsuperscript{59} This expansion to encompass issues of national health and vitality was encouraged by Roosevelt and backed with academic authority by the contributions of Irving Fisher, a professor of political economy at Yale. Although an expert on income and interest, a bout with tuberculosis beginning in 1898 left him with a keen interest in the value of healthy living. Public health became an agenda item under Fisher’s direction.\textsuperscript{60} Fisher advocated a eugenic program to improve the nation’s heredity but emphasized the need to address public health concerns that would lower rates of infant mortality. Fisher framed his discussion by illustrating differential mortality rates among native-born Americans and immigrants, among different races, and between urban and rural populations. Fisher was concerned with issues of race degeneracy as a cause of poverty. Conserving natural resources, including the “national stock,” were seen as a means of preventing that degeneracy and the host of social ills associated with it. Fisher’s extensive report on national vitality published in the 1909 Report of the National Conservation Commission led to the establishment of a standing committee on vital resources at the 1910 National Conservation Congress.\textsuperscript{61} By 1912, the entire annual meeting of the congress was devoted to the “conservation of human life.”\textsuperscript{62}

The broad scope of the early conservation movement was widely supported by women drawn from the General Federation of Women’s Clubs to the DAR and the Audubon movement. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs had forestry and waterway committees that lobbied for protective legislation and informed the federation’s 800,000 members of the most pressing conservation issues. Women addressed national conferences and congresses and penned articles, editorials, and letters in sup-

THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

Under Roosevelt’s administration, conservation efforts succeeded as individual pieces of legislation, such as the Reclamation Act of 1902. However, by 1909 Congress began to seriously oppose Roosevelt’s conservation legislation. The National Conservation Commission had compiled a massive inventory of the nation’s natural resources and argued for a comprehensive conservation policy.\textsuperscript{64} Tensions between Congress and Roosevelt’s allies over who should control conservation legislation reached a high point in 1909 when Congress refused to appropriate funds to support any further work by the commission. Despite support from President Taft and members of the Senate, Congress put an end to the National Conservation Commission.\textsuperscript{65}

Pinchot had begun rallying popular support for forestry and conservation in 1905, when he first experienced resistance from Congress. In order
In 1927, Leon Whitney, executive secretary of the American Eugenics Society, began a study of four Massachusetts towns: Shutesbury, Prescott, Pelham, and Leverett. The motivation for Whitney's study in Massachusetts was "to make a study of a degenerate community and compare it with a prosperous one." Indeed, he was probably drawn to the region by its reputation as a rural area in decline. Unlike earlier Country Life Commission surveys that had helped established the patterns and effects of rural to urban migration, Whitney sought to understand the eugenic consequences of migration for rural life.

In the early twentieth century, a favorite device of eugenicists was the family study. Because they were interested in demonstrating the hereditary basis of social ills ranging from feeblemindedness to poverty, the study of the supposed patterns of inheritance across several generations was taken to be compelling evidence for both a eugenic diagnosis to the problem as well as a eugenic solution. Henry Goddard's infamous study of the Kallikak family, for instance, purported to demonstrate the hereditary basis of their feeblemindedness and the necessity of segregating feebleminded individuals in institutions such as the Vineland Training Home, which Goddard just happened to direct. The vast majority of family studies were of families from rural areas.

The Swift River valley, and the town of Shutesbury in particular, first became an object of eugenic investigation in 1912 when Isabelle Kendig was asked to research the family of "Sammy Huck" so that he might be committed to a local hospital. A field worker trained at the Eugenics Record Office, Kendig conducted a "careful study" of the Huck family during the summer of 1913. As was the practice in these kinds of eugenic family studies, Kendig had invented the name "Huck" in order to protect the identity of her subjects. Historian Nicole Rafter has shown that these pseudonyms also protected field-workers from criticism by making it more difficult to discover that the "families" or "tribes" they discussed were often composites of individuals from different families.

Kendig described the "notorious Huck family of ---" as a "net-work of degeneracy." Of course, one of the distinguishing features of the family studies undertaken by field-workers for the Eugenics Record Office is that...
they never failed to find degeneracy once they set out to look for it. Despite the commitment of Sammy Huck, it took considerable effort for Kendig to substantiate her “net-work of degeneracy.”

According to Kendig, the Huck family was descended from Pilgrims who came to Plymouth in 1623. Two Huck brothers settled along the coast, and their descendants became “eminent men of affairs” who were “honored throughout the State.” The family of a third brother went west and settled around what is now Shutesbury. Indeed, Kendig found the Hucks to be “a sturdy race” well known for their “shrewdness” and their “iron constitution.” If not for “an appalling amount of alcoholism and immorality,” Kendig wondered whether the Hucks could be “called degenerates at all.”

Kendig’s family study placed 436 individuals in the Huck genealogy. The most “conspicuous” degenerate trait in this genealogy was alcoholism. Kendig counted 50 members of the family, or 11.4 percent, as “intemperate.” Because the Hucks were unwilling to discuss how much they drank with her, Kendig “adopted an arbitrary rule and pronounced everyone alcoholic who has been known on more than one occasion to drink to the point of intoxication.” The second “degenerate” trait of the Huck family was “immorality.” Although Kendig did not have an “arbitrary rule” to define immorality, she apparently meant having sex and/or children out of wedlock. By her count the Huck genealogy included 52 “immoral individuals,” or 11.9 percent of the family. This percentage is not higher than that found in a number of other eugenic family studies, but what made it stand out for Kendig is that despite their immorality the Huck family enjoyed good social standing. The “fact that such a situation excites little comment” was taken by Kendig to be an indictment of the morality of the entire community, where almost everyone was a Huck or was related to one.

When Leon Whitney came to Shutesbury in 1928, he had read Kendig’s report on the “Hucks” but preferred to call them by their proper name, the Pratts. It was the Pratts who had captured Whitney’s imagination. As he explained to a professor at the Massachusetts Agricultural College, “there are a few most excellent families which have gone out of Shutesbury and that vicinity and there is a direct connection between, so I am told, the Standard Oil Pratt family and the Pratts of Shutesbury. We expect to make a study of both the minus and plus families, therefore, and learn the reasons of their present condition.” Where Kendig focused her attention on degeneracy, Whitney was more interested in the contrast between “good” and “bad” branches of the Pratt family. This contrast was valued because it bore on the question of the impact of migration on rural decline. The decline of Shutesbury could be explained in part by those Pratts who were left behind.

To reformers and politicians who idealized rural life in a kind of romantic agrarianism, rural decline resulting from the migration of the “best elements” of the country to the city was cause for alarm—witness Edward Ross’s description of certain “depleted” midwestern communities which remind one of fished out ponds populated chiefly by bull-heads and suckers.74 Addressing the causes of rural decline led Roosevelt to form the Country Life Commission. It led eugenicists to places like Shutesbury.

Whitney’s study of Shutesbury, Leverett, Prescott, and Pelham may have started with the Pratts, but it quickly diverged from the typical eugenic family study. In early family studies, the environment was not seriously considered as a cause of degeneracy. Whitney, however, defined eugenics as “a study of the effects of environment upon the quality of human stock.” In other words, he believed that eugenics was as much about environment as heredity. Whitney made it clear that he was not studying the Pratts per se; he was studying the four Massachusetts villages in their entirety. In Whitney’s words, “We were observing Shutesbury. . . . The town was the people and their properties and their activities. . . . There were the forces of the environment acting upon the quality of the stock and that was why Shutesbury . . . makes to us so fascinating a history.”

Shutesbury itself was acknowledged to be in decline. In correspondence, Whitney commented that “at one time there were 1,100 people there, but at present only 200 due to the adverse environment.” His description of the town in the introduction to his study is even more dramatic.

Shutesbury, now consists of a large number of cellar holes, a few new homes and many older ones in process of becoming cellar holes. These cellar holes and houses reflect to a remarkable degree the entire tenor
of the town. Indeed it is possible, almost, to indicate the character of the people at various times, even the general character of the town itself by the rise and fall of the homes. Something happened which caused the beginning of Shutesbury. Something happened which caused its rise and something happened which caused its depletion. Some internal and external forces were exerted which made the town what it was in progressive periods.77

Whitney attributed this decline to a combination of economic, environmental, and hereditary factors. On the one hand, Whitney conceded that "there was no good way to earn a living so the ambitious young folks drifted away." On the other hand, Whitney described the remaining inhabitants as unmotivated and disorderly. To illustrate this judgment, Whitney told the story of Carry Pratt, who during court testimony was asked by the judge, "What do you raise in Shutesbury?" She answered, "Judge, in summer we raise blueberries and in winter we raise hell." Whitney noted that blueberries grew wild in the untended pastures around Shutesbury. The moral that he drew from this story was that this kind of rebelliousness was an undesirable, constitutional feature of the inhabitants of Shutesbury. Shutesbury residents did not share Whitney's interpretation of Carry Pratt's answer. In fact, soon after Pratt's testimony, "Hell'en Winter" became the local nickname for Shutesbury. In addition, some residents founded a "Hell'en Winter" Club that held meetings during fishing and hunting season.79 Local pride in their reputation for rebelliousness was also traced back to Shay's Rebellion.

Daniel Shays had lived in Shutesbury and then Pelham. A veteran of the Revolutionary War, Shays led an armed rebellion in 1787. "Shay's Army" was a group of local farmers and veterans who opposed an increasing tax burden that they could not meet without having their property seized by the state.80 In the spirit of the Sons of Liberty, they closed courthouses and marched on Springfield, Massachusetts, before the militia put them down.

Contrary to Whitney's judgment, the residents of Shutesbury had "village pride," but they were proud of the kinds of traits and history that Whitney believed to be undesirable. Whitney held an ideal of rural life and the New England village that he expected towns such as Shutesbury to live up to. Whitney's praise for Shutesbury's fine church and village green located on a small hill at the center of the town suggests that Whitney held a ideal of the New England landscape common to urban reformers in the Northeast. Whitney was invoking an invented tradition of the New England village that depicted the ideal colonial or Puritan settlement as an agricultural village with two-story houses neatly ordered around the village green.81 This village ideal transformed Thomas Jefferson's praise for the yeoman farmer into a regionally based ideal of the community, which preserved the equally idealized values and heritage of Puritan colonists.

In the hands of eugenicists such as Whitney, the New England village became a biological ideal as well as a geographic or environmental ideal. Maintaining the New England village was therefore a means of maintaining the "old stock" of New England. Whitney was not so much of an idealist, however, that he thought villages such as those to be flooded by the Quabbin Reservoir ought to be maintained at any cost.82 Instead, Whitney's analysis of successful New England villages such as Sunderland and declining New England villages such as Shutesbury advocated the relocation of farmers and rural residents to better farmland and more prosperous villages.

As executive secretary of the American Eugenics Society, Whitney had been working closely with Henry Perkins, who would become the society's president in 1931. Perkins was a native of Vermont and especially concerned with implementing a eugenic program to preserve the rural "old stock" Vermonter. Drawing on Elin Anderson's study of three Vermont towns, in 1931 Perkins proposed the relocation of Vermont farmers from "declining" towns to "progressive communities."83 In Perkins's report to the Vermont legislature, he wrote: "Deterioration can take place only in poor isolated communities where the potential capacities of the people are not challenged into use. If then Vermont wishes its future citizens to have the same fine qualities of character that marked the early builders of the state, it must . . . provide a social environment that will continue to bring out all the fine qualities in the character of its people."84 In the mid-1930s the Federal Emergency Relief Administration's Rural Rehabilitation Division advocated this resettlement plan, but the Vermont legislature was unwilling to fund the proposed program. Perkins did successfully gain legislative support for a number of other rural eugenics efforts in Ver-
mont, however. Significantly, the organization that coordinated and advocated these efforts was the Vermont Commission on Country Life.

Roosevelt idealized the past and sought to manage the conditions of rural life in order to maintain the rural family as the “reservoir” for the nation and the race. In the words of Samuel Hays, Roosevelt “faced two directions at once, accepting the technical requirements of an increasingly organized society, but fearing its social consequences ... he sought Jeffersonian ends through Hamiltonian means.” The national conservation and country life movements combined social and economic agendas in an effort to organize and efficiently manage the nation’s resources. The nationalization of resource management was a significant expansion of the scope of government. More important, because of the interconnection between conservation and country life, management of the rural family became part of the national regulation of resources. The scale of this intervention and its intrusion into the lives of rural families was masked and made more acceptable by framing it in terms of nostalgia for the farm family. The racial and agrarian image of the family Roosevelt deployed was meant to invoke a sense of stability, a sense of naturalized order to be recreated by governmental management on a national scale.