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Philip J. Nelson
University of Northern Iowa

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COMMUNITY DREAMING
IN THE RURAL NORTHWEST
THE MONTANA STUDY, 1944-47

PHILIP J. NELSON

On 28 April 1944, three intellectuals, each representing the views of different regions of the country, met in Chicago and laid the basis for an experimental program in adult education and community outreach. Ernest Melby, the newly appointed chancellor of the University of Montana system of higher education, Baker Brownell, a respected Northwestern University philosophy professor and leading advocate of the small community, and David Stevens, head of the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation agreed on the shape of a community action project that would later be called the Montana Study. They brought together the concerns and needs of the rural West, Midwest, and East, respectively, and reached consensus on the leading threats to and weaknesses of modern mass society. Melby voiced the West’s ambivalence over rapid wartime growth. He noted that cities expanded haphazardly, while rural areas seemed to wither. Brownell brought a midwesterner’s desire for stability and continuity of small communities and their presumed inherent cultural worth. Stevens contributed the initial funding, plus a sense of urgency about Americans’ ignorance of their own cultural identity—its people and regions—and their attendant lack of understanding about the geopolitical realities of the larger world. But beyond regionalism, and above all, they believed that small communities and local social awareness were the springs of the American character and its democratic culture. The Montana Study represented a propitious joining of the ideas of communitarian reformers with the entreaties of western ruralists who argued that their region had rapidly come of age, but was threatened by the very elements of progress that hastened its maturation.
As the watershed event in the history of the twentieth-century West, World War II generated deep uncertainties. In response, westerners sought to manage the enormous changes taking place, plan for future societal transformations, and in general, glimpse the shape of their regional culture to come. The rapid influx of people, capital, and industry during and immediately after the war partially constituted the genesis of the modern, urban West. But rural areas and their associated small towns were neither immune from these sweeping changes nor left out of the ongoing debate over the future of western communities. Observing that the West might free itself from its traditional “colonial” status only to lose its way in the developing national society, a handful of small community reformers challenged the direction of mass culture by tapping into the neo-Jeffersonian, decentralist, adversarial tradition. From this intellectual base, they posed an alternative vision of modernity based on the idea of the progressive small community, which in the West found its most noteworthy expression in the Montana Study. In essence, these reformers tried to do for the small town and rural West something akin to what the war was doing for urban areas, while rejecting the technocratic, urbanized, centralized nature of modern society.²

Melby conceived the Montana Study in 1943 as an experimental program mainly devoted to rural outreach by institutions of higher education. The nationally known educator feared that trends started by the war would lead to a growing cultural hegemony of urban over rural areas, as well as regional dominance of East over West. He cautioned that this process might lead to the impoverishment of the experience and practice of American democracy at the war’s end. Without active support for struggling small communities and their participation in a national culture that recognized and respected the identity of locales and regions, Americans ran the risk of tilting the cultural balance toward an increasingly sterile, suffocating, centralized, and politically irresponsible mass society. All of the Montana Study’s eventual principals agreed that the problems of America’s locals, states, and regions were more than economic. If America was to not only win the war but also be in a position to significantly influence the postwar world, it would require all its component parts to be healthy and vigorous. The reformers hoped that a disadvantaged place like Montana would be the test case for a program of rural cultural revitalization through public and private cooperation, and an example of stability for the entire nation. They hoped it would demonstrate a path of modernization that all of the rural West could take. For a short time during the 1940s, the Montana Study combined the efforts of a small but vocal group of academics, writers, and intellectuals with an assortment of Montana townspeople, who together created the “nation’s first conscious attempt to improve the quality of rural life by strengthening a sense of community.”¹

What appeared to some observers, both past and present, as an exercise in simplistic, sentimental Jeffersonianism or romantic agrarianism was actually a unique fusion of old-line progressivism, modern liberalism, and various ruralist philosophies into a radical critique of modern mass society. This blend of intellectual roots served as the foundation from which small community practitioners promoted the Montana Study as a champion of the modernized small town and a foe of urbanized, industrial society. Baker Brownell, the eventual director of the Study, argued that the ideal “human” community would emerge from a syncretic blend of the progressive doctrines of planning, efficient organization, and the use of expertise (where needed) with ideals of liberalism such as the belief in reason to inform policy, individualism, social activism, and social experimentalism. Communitarians (believers in the centrality of the small town to American society) gleaned other ideas from non-Marxist radicals who rose to prominence in the thirties. From agrarian philosophy they took the emphasis on rural independence and the efficacy of measured change in the creation of stable communities. Communitarians
borrowed the principle of the small-scale economy and local control of industry from the decentralists, such as Ralph Borsodi, Herbert Agar, and Bertram Fowler. The idea of community before all other things they assumed from the Catholic ruralist movement. Communitarians believed that small communities should stand on their own feet but could not be expected to stand alone in modern society; therefore, they should participate in networks of communities on an area-wide basis, as advocated by Lewis Mumford and the regionalist planners. To this end, small-town advocates hailed the Tennessee Valley Authority as their ideal. But the small town itself remained the communitarians’ most important intellectual root. Stripped of its boorishness, conformism, and sometimes misguided boosterism, the traditional small town could become a powerful instrument of cultural progress, uniting many of the best attributes of the countryside and the city. Thus, although they shared much in common with other radical groups and their social alternatives, the communitarians set themselves apart by attaching the qualifier of “small” to the concept of community, taking it literally, and making it the central part of their ideology.4

Much has been written about the penchant for reform in the 1930s, and scholars have eagerly studied many of the radical visionaries of that era. But they have largely ignored the flow of radical criticism into the 1940s, especially that emanating from these small communitarians. Furthermore, some historians have often facilely dismissed these critics as escapist, simple-minded reactionaries, or antimodernists who naively wanted to “turn back the clock.” In contrast, small communitarians never looked back to a golden age, and believed that the best was still to come through the use of modern social science, opportunities in higher education, decentralized industrial development, and enhanced civic participation. Moreover, the Montana Study can be viewed with greater utility by seeing it as an effort to rebalance the often competing cultural poles of locale and nation, rather than as a democratic crusade, as interpreted by its most enthusiastic historian.5

Since 1900, westerners had tried to create a distinct cultural life, free of the image of raw material supplier to the East. The impetus to overcome this colonial economic status took the form of regionalism in the 1920s, which concentrated on the identification of the elements unique to the western environment. In the 1930s, saddled with both Depression and Dust Bowl conditions, westerners endured an era of limited expectations. Gloom pervaded the oil, farming, cattle, and mineral sectors. After 1945, however, westerners initiated a flurry of planning activities, especially in urban areas. But the dreams of urban westerners became the nightmares of ruralists and agrarians, who feared the potential obliteration of small places by a juggernaut of large-scale development. The plight of the small community in mass society had become evident throughout America, but never more so than in the West, both during and after the war. In addition to these western examples of proto-communitarian thinking, ruralist critics of mass society visualized the Montana Study as a natural extension of a nationwide reform movement centering on the small community, replete with its own publications, conventions, information clearinghouses, leaders and personalities, and funding sources.6

Therefore, as the proponents of the Montana Study directed their efforts toward rural targets, they based their planning on work already begun in the thirties by both public and private agencies. These analysts demonstrated that the West was a special region, with unique needs derived from its climate, geography, economy, and traditions. Western farm economists such as M. L. Wilson and Howard Tolley had influenced New Deal thinking on how to manage the future transition from economies heavily dependent on tenuous agricultural production to ones more balanced between decentralized industry and farming. The US Department of Agriculture published a study entitled Water, Land, and People in 1941,
pointing out the need for more activist thinking on the part of planners, and the increasing importance of local, regional, state, and national interdependence. In terms of private organizations, the most notable was the Rockefeller Foundation, which in 1942 sponsored a study called *The Northern Plains in a World of Change*. Authored by extension personnel and rural sociologists, including Plains regionalist Carl Kraenzel, this near-manifesto took a more radical tone by equating regional development with community reorganization along collectivist lines similar to that of rural European villages. Moreover, it attempted to shift the cultural balance away from agendas dedicated to big-scale planning and national issues toward concerns with more immediate relevance to places small and local. In order to solve the unique economic problems of the Great Plains, its people would have to engage in regional planning to generate locally appropriate solutions, which they would implement through study groups. These in turn would be connected to local representatives of larger institutional networks, such as the county extension system.

The Rockefeller Foundation became involved in the genesis of the Montana Study when Melby brought his plains to Stevens in early 1943. The foundation’s rationale for aid to this kind of project stemmed from the fear that a postwar world order would unravel, with disastrous effects, if it failed to take into consideration the many diverse areas and localities that gave form and meaning to the human race. The officers of the foundation, especially those in the Humanities Division, focused on the regionalist concept as a means by which they could help direct scholarship, education, and even the American national consciousness away from the study of antiquities (where much grant money had formerly gone) toward the creation of an American studies deemed much more relevant and critical in a very dangerous and uncertain world. By 1943, the Humanities Division had authorized studies of four regions in North America: French Canada, the Eastern Maritime area, the Connecticut Valley, and the Northern Plains. In a report that year, the officers expressed satisfaction with the regionalist approach: “We know what before we had only believed to be true—that a lack of awareness of the cultural situations in the various regions of the continent on the part of . . . [those] in the fine arts, is a primary impediment to the cultural growth they might be fostering.”

The foundation recognized the increasing “smallness” of the world; it realized that more contact with other cultures was necessary, and believed that a new regional awareness of Americans’ roots would allow nations and people to see common ground. As a prerequisite, Americans had to identify and define their local traditions and customs. Fortuitously, Melby’s plan for getting more of the university’s education off the campus and stabilizing the family and the small community seemed to mesh perfectly with the Rockefeller Foundation’s desires for the articulation of regional identities. Stevens observed that “[Melby’s] hope is to apply the results of the *Northern Plains* work in a complete demonstration of educational service to all age groups.” As a result, Stevens moved the foundation closer to support of a program based on Melby’s leadership abilities, the opportunity that Montana offered for the realization of the *Northern Plains* objectives, and its good fit into the foundation’s larger plan of regionalist projects in the Northern Plains.

Of course, Melby was not the first to voice his concern for rural Montana or the West. Among a host of commentators, native Montanan Joseph Kinsey Howard wrote extensively about the need for balanced development as the only alternative to hard realities: that the East tended to exploit the West; that progress was often blocked by western industrial consortia themselves; and that westerners tended to be their own worst enemy by not taking time to build long-term bases of support for social welfare. Social critic Bernard DeVoto had written in the thirties about the West as a “plundered province,” and he observed that since then westerners seemed willing to do
anything to get development; this showed that they held themselves in low regard. Whatever their particular slant on western problems, most observers believed that by the forties the time had come for the West to take its rightful place as an equal part of the nation.  

Guided by these assessments, Melby announced that Montana's resources for higher education were underdeveloped and underused, and he was determined that they should become a focal point for local development in its fullest sense. By bringing the humanities to the people, he hoped to instill pride into the collective heart of a state that appeared to be demoralized and adrift. For Melby, democracy depended on "local integrity," a kind of libertarianism which spoke of individual freedom and proprietorships, and opposed dependence on external institutions and even internal large-scale consortia such as the Anaconda Copper-Montana Power combination. Yet, Montana needed outside help because it faced a history of commercial exploitation of both physical and human resources, excessive population mobility, and chronic social and economic uncertainty. World War II had drained off one-sixth of its population and hurt the economy and morale of its rural areas. Moreover, the rural West appeared unable to hold its youth in the face of a magnetic and tantalizing urban lifestyle. Given such conditions, the war's end would be a turning point in Montana history, and Melby urged that his vision of an enhanced participatory democracy be supported. Since he believed that small towns were the core of the American character and soul, he pleaded that those places especially should not be allowed to fail. In an era in which bigger was considered better, Melby pushed mass educational institutions to be accountable toward local and regional cultural needs. The main challenge would be to provide "for large numbers of our people to turn their attention to literature, music, art, and more creative human relations. . . . Education in the humanistic field . . . must be closely attuned to the cultural background and present environment of the people whose education we seek to further." Thus, he favored improvement in the "quality of living" in Montana as not just a pleasant luxury but a basic right of the people.  

With favorable Rockefeller Foundation opinions for a project in the humanities in hand by the fall of 1943, Melby was able to interest others in his plan. He put together a formal proposal to the foundation, with the help of H. G. Merriam, chairman of the humanities department at Montana State University, and his colleague, historian Merril Burlingame. Given that the planners' initial academic support and authority was restricted to educational institutions in Montana, they decided to limit the Study to their state, despite the common plight of the most rural areas in all the states of the Northern Plains. After a foundation appropriation of $25,000 for a three-year study in the life and traditions of Montana (later called the Montana Study) in March 1944, the project picked up speed, form, and an additional emphasis, especially after the appointment of its new director, Northwestern University philosophy professor and nationally known expert on rural affairs, Baker Brownell (1887-1965). A native Illinoisan, he brought to Northwestern a varied career, having been at times a reporter, English teacher, soldier in World War I, and editorial writer for the Chicago Daily News. He became best known, at least in academia, for starting an interdisciplinary course in contemporary thought in which he invited a steady stream of experts to speak in a field that touched on all aspects of human knowledge. In Brownell's view, modern society had fragmented so badly that it was up to young people to apply a new vision of the integrated community—he later called it the "human community"—in order to reclaim democratic human culture from domination by mass society. Brownell believed this could be achieved in Montana, perhaps because of the dearth of controlling urban centers.  

Melby had considered a number of individuals before deciding on Brownell as the best person for the job. For example, Melby
admired writer and lecturer Joseph Kinsey Howard, whose book *Montana: High, Wide and Handsome* (1943) had not only received good reviews in the *New York Times* but endeared him to many liberal Montanans. As director, Brownell subsequently hired Howard as the head of community studies and Northwestern University sociologist Paul Meadows as the third full-time staff member, all to be headquartered at the state university campus at Missoula but theoretically able to draw on the resources and sponsorship of all six branches of the university system.

Although Brownell echoed Melby's primary purpose of the Montana Study, he subtly changed the original objectives, methods, and direction of the program. Instead, it would concentrate on engaging the University of Montana in outreach efforts in small towns, developing mechanisms to stabilize the family and small communities, and on boosting the appreciation and enjoyment of small-town life. Thus, the Study was to be a research project in the application of the "humanities" to the lives of people in small communities, but not in such a way as to promote a regime of elitist control. In fact, as Meadows put it, "people should be trusted to do their own thinking" and their own planning for the vagaries of a postwar society. Nevertheless, Study leaders believed that many western communities would have to become more sophisticated in order to avoid unhealthy provincialism, sectionalism, and chauvinistic nationalism. 14

Further clarification of the Montana Study's principles emerged from the Conference on the Arts and Sciences College held at Missoula in May 1944. Brownell and Melby attended the conference, chaired by Merriam, as "visiting participants." Social critic and regionalist supporter Lewis Mumford delivered a key speech in which he noted that they were living in an "unprecedented age" of change. In addition to the traditional role of the college, which was the search for truth and the transmission of knowledge, the requirements of change now set new tasks for higher education. This new mandate consisted of fighting antireason, dispelling myths and acting against prejudices, boosting freedom and fighting bureaucratic organization, harmonizing disparate cultures that found themselves at odds, using science and technology responsibly, fostering self-realization through creative leisure, and bridging the gap between the university and the people. All of these actions taken collectively would theoretically restore and promote a society shaped to a more human scale. Brownell not only accepted these ideals in theory but believed in them as social laws. He then went beyond them to place the small community at the heart of the humanities and at the focal point in its defense against mass society. This became his prime contribution to communitarian thought. 15

Based on this small community "imperative," Brownell's philosophy became the paradigm for the Montana Study. He called for a new arrangement of the ways in which Americans constructed their culture. This was necessary because he believed that the rural community was under deliberate attack by the urban-based social system. This critique placed Brownell squarely in the midst of the debate over mass society. For him, fragmentation of culture at the top filtered down to individual psyches which found themselves responding to an "aggregate of specialized compulsions." Modern society called this freedom but Brownell labeled it escape. Endless details and events substituted for the natural unity of experience. The basic dimensions of life such as work, family, home, and voluntary association became segmented, specialized, ill-fitting functions. Mass society, in short, was a place of sterility, alienation, and spiritual incoherence. As characterized by urban life, it "is designed always to subordinate this moment to the next one. . . . It roars on toward endless futures which it never finds. It tips and staggers endlessly into postponed values that never are realized. . . . Or they make way briefly for corrupted consummations and pleasure seekings that have no element of production. This segregation of instrument from end is the
secret both of the city’s power and its human failure.”

Urbanism attracted Brownell’s wrath like no other aspect of mass society because he saw it as the great perverter of the modern age. Urbanism constituted the core of mass society, which in turn warped and corrupted its other aspects: the uses of machine technology, organizational centralization, bureaucratic institutions, large-scale structuring of specialized functions, both social and geographical mobility, secularization, and the separation of production and consumption. Obsessed with urbanism, the modern world allowed cities to destroy human nature because they were acquisitive, selfish, and impersonal—prime breeding grounds for aggressiveness. “The personal give and take, the mutuality of living, are replaced by power.” Cities took on an imperialist stance toward the countryside, sucking out its population, money, trade, and close associations. Mass entertainment and technological progress did not adequately compensate rural areas for their contribution to national society. Thus, urban areas acted like parasites on the countryside. Still, they could not achieve complete success. “The notorious crime rate, the terrifying increase in juvenile delinquency, insanity, neurones, the personal and social disintegration, the excessive rates of drunkenness, suicide, divorce, and abortion are primarily urban in origin or correlated with the increasing urbanization of life.” Brownell was a zealot in defense of the sacrosanct nature of the small community; he refused to acknowledge that it might exist in the midst of some cities, as Mumford maintained. Brownell declared that the city expanded at the expense of the rural regions. He saw this as neither desirable nor inevitable; it was premature to declare the rural community dead and gone as had some rural sociologists. The rural community had suffered a “critical decline,” and society should not turn away from the truth about the role of “modern forces” in this demise. Essentially, Brownell and other small communitarians called for modernization of society without mass characteristics.

The impact of “modern forces” on society was nothing new to westerners. Many concerned citizens of the rural West had already viewed with favor The Northern Plains in a World of Change and Howard’s book. But both Melby and Brownell wanted the Montana Study to go well beyond these analyses into the realm of application and even social change. Brownell was eager to investigate new approaches to home economics centering on home production being conducted by the Kellogg Foundation in Michigan, and the community art and folklore programs developed by the Wisconsin Folk School at the University of Wisconsin. Brownell also revived the concept of the community study group, first used extensively in Manitoba, and made it the key component of the small community research and demonstration projects. Other stated Study activities included applying new sociological research to small-town improvement, training teachers in community change, and conducting a “cultural survey” of the entire state. To this end, the staff put together an impressive list of publications and activities including two major conferences featuring population specialist O. E. Baker and small-community advocate and former Tennessee Valley Authority chairman Arthur Morgan. Morgan’s appearance was particularly significant, since he was the elder statesman of the communitarian reform movement. Thus, he validated the Montana Study’s work in a way that only the writer of the seminal localist text, The Small Community: Foundation of Democratic Life (1942), could. Nevertheless, some communitarian thinkers like Baker and even Brownell himself never managed to free themselves from a near-nativistic, almost reactionary attitude toward the issue of what we today call “cultural diversity.” Believing that successful communities became more homogeneous over time, Baker fretted about low rural birthrates, and Brownell argued against unlimited immigration to the United States. They worried about dilution of democratic
ideals and potential undermining of the American way of life by people of radically different cultural backgrounds and standards of living. 18

Montana residents often heard of the Montana Study through its many research projects into subjects dealing with the state’s cultural history such as the Indians’ heritage, folk origins, stories of Montana’s topographic regions, and institutional developments in government, education, communications, transportation, religion, the family, and voluntary associations. But the activity that caught the most attention both within and beyond the state was the community study group. It was a technique best adapted to the small town or rural community (under 2,500 people) which brought together townspeople interested in fostering greater community self-awareness and cohesiveness. Since Montana was a largely rural state of impressive size and regional variation, the study group seemed to be the logical process by which to foster cultural renewal. In Brownell’s words, “This modern version of the town meeting too often is forgotten amid current efforts to get mass results in social affairs by mass methods. The study group is a social and political, non-partisan body bound closely to the welfare of the small democratic community and the family structure that underlies it.” In practice, the Montana Study advised seven experimental study groups during its first year of existence, with the first study group acting as a pilot project. Over its life, the Study organized twelve study groups and indirectly influenced the creation of another dozen. Based on the experiences of the group organized in the remote hamlet of Lonepine, Brownell, Howard, and Meadows hammered out a standard study manual entitled Life in Montana, as Seen in Lonepine, a Small Community. Study groups met weekly for ten weeks and covered one topic from the manual per meeting. 19

Community study groups quickly became both the theoretical and popular core of the Montana Study. Its creators had hoped that the study group would become self-sustaining, and that the Study would be a “center of voluntary coordination” for these scattered cultural projects. At least the first year’s experiences with study groups seemed like ample confirmation. Brownell even proclaimed that “The study group has become the best instrument that has yet been tried in this experimental project.” Requests for help in establishing new study groups increased rapidly, and it became quickly apparent that the Study was understaffed. Already by June 1944, Brownell was concerned that the project would be spread too thinly. Headquartered in Missoula, the staff experienced difficulties in extending its activities into eastern Montana. Mountain roads, clogged by snow in winter, the great distances, and a tiny staff all but precluded any significant work in the eastern part of the state, especially since Brownell insisted on having a staff member in attendance at most meetings of the study groups. Plans called for work to begin in eastern Montana but were shelved when the primary funding ran out in 1947. In the minds of these planners, the problems of plains communities were essentially those of mountain towns—they were both places simultaneously bypassed and subverted by large-scale institutions. In many instances, volunteers aided or in some cases supplanted the paid staff and often functioned as well as the professionals in spreading the message of local and regional cultural enrichment. While not all study group participants agreed with Brownell that “the groups are a democratizing agency of importance . . . the education of the folk,” they at least raised new questions about their localities. Brownell’s faith in the importance of adult education and healthy communities was not misplaced, but sometimes he romanticized “the people” and ascribed to them too much solidarity and willingness to participate in collective activities. 20

The above quotation provides a window into the heart of the Montana Study’s mission, which was essentially to utilize a local approach, with critical support from key educational and governmental institutions, for the re-creation of the democratic small com-
munity within the ongoing evolution of mass society. Brownell and his staff presumed that a network of revitalized small towns could reflect the trajectory of modern mass society enough to allow its inherent instability to cause its ultimate demise. It is not at all clear whether this was devout revolutionary theory or just hopeful musing about evolutionary improvement. In some places the Study leaders implied that radical changes could take place within a few years. At other times they fell back on the usual communitarian line that change would be slow and incremental, based on the education of subsequent generations and the voluntary movement of people from the cities to the countryside. In any case, this goal would be accomplished by relying on the study group, education in the humanities, development of local leadership in the small community, and the democratic cultural experience. Brownell implied that these characteristics were interconnected and would develop naturally under the proper conditions, with special emphasis given to the role of appropriate leadership.21

One of the most well-known examples of the study group in action was in the village of Darby, nestled in the mountains near the Bitterroot River in western Montana. This forest and ranching area supported a population of almost 1,000 people at its peak but had dwindled to barely 500 in 1944. Depletion of the private timber lands threatened Darby with possible extinction. Despite the war-time boom in the rest of the country, Darby continued to lose jobs, as well as 75 percent of its young people. The only remaining timber near the town belonged to the US Government, and the Forest Service allowed logging only on a sustained-yield basis. Despite the war-time boom in the rest of the country, Darby continued to lose jobs, as well as 75 percent of its young people. The only remaining timber near the town belonged to the US Government, and the Forest Service allowed logging only on a sustained-yield basis. This amount equaled only one-third of the previous cut; in the face of this news, the last large logging operation went out of business. The closing served to hasten the demise of Darby’s Main Street retailers. Property values fell and civic morale plummeted. Most Darby citizens were aware of the interlocking problems the community faced, and many resisted the idea of letting the town die but were unable to agree on a unified approach to the crisis.22

Then in the winter of 1945, Dennis Gray, a forester and former lumberjack, plus several other interested townspeople, invited Baker Brownell to explain how the study group program of the Montana Study could help prevent Darby from becoming a ghost town. Thirty leading citizens, led by businessman Champ Hannon, began the series of weekly meetings using the study guide developed by the Lonepine study group. In addition, the group created three research committees, appointed by Hannon, to look at basic problem areas such as local industries, taxation, and recreational, educational, and cultural opportunities. Gray’s committee on making a living focused on the root of the problem—less harvestable timber meant fewer jobs. The only way to maintain the town’s economic viability would be to develop value-added timber industries, such as local planing mills. Based on the committee’s research, Darby had the potential for fourteen new industries. But the study group realized that they needed a civic spark to galvanize the rest of the townspeople in a common effort toward the rejuvenation of their town. The group hit upon the idea of a community wide pageant-drama, which would look at the theme of resource conservation versus traditional exploitive harvesting methods. Members of the community wrote, directed, and produced the play entitled “Darby Looks at Itself,” with the aid of Bert Hansen, professor of drama at Montana State University.23

In the afterglow of the play, which all the townspeople and many from the surrounding area attended, they exhibited a more constructive attitude and began to talk more deliberately about ways to improve the town. The optimistic atmosphere convinced a local lumb-erman to form a corporation for the building and operation of a new planing mill in town. Soon the plant employed twenty-six people, which showed that it respected the concept of sustained-yield forestry by purchasing a more efficient band saw rather than the traditional
circular saw. The idea of home industries caught on rapidly, and a number of new enterprises were started, including a wood-post treatment plant, a machine shop, a well-drilling business, a sporting goods and gun store, a small planing mill, a cabinet shop, and a dairy and pasteurizing plant. A few people began to move in from the outside and established several retail shops and a new sawmill. The town began a beautification program, which was inaugurated by cleaning up an area around the community hall. The local school district voted to increase its taxes and increase the effectiveness of its facilities. Local officials worked with the state highway department on a plan to develop new and better roads in the region, which helped to fulfill health and recreation needs by making hospitals, clinics, clubs, and leisure facilities more accessible.24

Hansen, as one might have expected, attributed much of the Montana Study’s success in Darby, Conrad, Stevensville, and other Montana towns to his role in organizing town plays, pageants, and community celebrations. In one place, he even said that the “people of Montana proved to be uninterested in the ‘town meeting’ democracy advocated by the Montana Study,” which of course was mainly Brownell’s idea. Yet later in the same evaluation of the Study, Hansen gave Brownell more credit: “It is also true that many of the good things that have come to Darby in the last two years were advocated both in the study-group meetings and in the community drama.” Darby’s experiences generated so much notoriety that other towns began to speak of “doing a Darby,” holding it up as a model to emulate. However, not all the achievements of the study groups, in Darby or elsewhere, became permanent. Ironically, as its leaders drifted away, Darby’s own study group did not endure. Because Darby’s was one of the first study groups, Study administrators and county, state, and even federal officials participated heavily in the meetings and undermined the stated objective of local control by their very presence. Some of Darby’s residents even claimed (after the fact) that the town did not need to be revived and that many of its improvements took place independently of the Montana Study. Nevertheless, this “out-in-the-field” educational transformation constituted exactly the type of community phenomenon that Melby, Brownell, and Hansen all believed was necessary to save America’s unique brand of democracy. Hansen claimed that “If this can be accomplished it may be possible to inaugurate an educational program in America which could go a long way in making possible the democracy it is our custom to associate with our form of government.”25

Sometimes successful community study groups took the form more of unifiers of town spirit and less that of economic savior. Another town of the Bitterroot Valley, and the oldest community in western Montana, had lost some of its economic prosperity, but most acutely by 1945, its civic gumption. Stevensville had a population of 700, ninety-six fewer than in 1910. Its surrounding area supported 2,500 people, most of whom depended on products from the land. Ranching and the lumber industry were the last stable income sources. Although the region was a natural tourist attraction, little had been done in that direction. The community’s biggest problems, however, were a lack of a coherent vision of the future and a destabilizing split of leadership into competing factions. This bifurcation was mirrored in a town and country division, as well as an agrarian split between the Grange and Farmers’ Union.26

Lacking initiatives from traditional leaders, a local forest ranger invited the Montana Study to help organize a study group. The initial eighteen members quickly realized that without support from the customary leadership, they had little mandate for change. The group also encountered opposition from local businesspeople, and even the school superintendent. They were labeled as “intellectual communists” and criticized as sympathizers of the controversial Missouri Valley Authority (MVA) concept. Many westerners feared the loss of their local and state freedoms and iden-
ties in such a regional project modeled on the Tennessee Valley Authority. Montanans were already aware of the debate and had drawn battle lines, since their own senator, James E. Murray, had introduced pro-MVA legislation in 1944. In order to deflect such criticism, the Stevensville group decided to play the role of local boosters. Having heard of Darby's successful play, the group turned to the idea of a locally written and produced pageant—a mechanism that could potentially bring harmony to the divided community.

The pageant concept, named “A Tale of the Bitterroot,” drew immediate support from townspeople, and they invited Hansen to direct. The pageant mushroomed into an elaborate production, replete with giant props on a one-acre outdoor stage, hundreds of participants in a historical pioneer drama, and a live orchestra. Pageant leaders convinced Indians from the Flathead tribe to participate as actors, giving the pageant a touch of authenticity. People came from miles around to watch the show, and it was successful enough to be replayed the next year. The biggest immediate result was a partial healing of social and ideological divisions in the town. In the long run, Stevensville residents identified land management as their most important local issue, and successfully lobbied for the inauguration of adult education courses in the community, especially those in conservation provided by the university system.

Influenced by Study success stories in places like Lonepine, Darby, and Stevensville, even communities whose problems were not acute took up the study group technique. One such town was Conrad, whose 1,600 people had fashioned a stable farming center in the northern wheat-growing area of Montana. In terms of the Study, Conrad's greatest distinction resulted from being the first community to create a viable study group without regular staff assistance. A local schoolteacher, Ruth Robinson, who later became director of the Study, led the formation of the Conrad study group. It perceived Conrad's main problem as not an economic one but a quality of life issue. In addition, the town was having difficulty retaining its young people and enticing new people or former residents who had left for the military or defense jobs.

During the initial study group meetings, members easily identified some of the more obvious community problems such as a paucity of recreation facilities and leisure-time activities. They began to see the problem as a loss of community vitality. They feared their town was “becoming a community of retired farmers.” Gradually it dawned on them that the entire local school system was only loosely connected to community life, and that both facilities and instruction were substandard. They concluded that the solution to these problems was one that would address deficiencies in education and community recreation simultaneously. The study group realized the need for community-wide action, and so organized a town meeting.

They laid the groundwork for the meeting by contacting all of the organizations and associations in the area, and discussing the community's needs. At the town meeting, the study group was pleasantly surprised at how strongly and positively the community embraced plans for creation of a permanent community council of nine members, an action agency for the town, and a bond issue that would allow the construction of a new high school. The building would house community-related facilities such as a gymnasium, library, pool, an auditorium, and conference rooms. The bond issue for $281,000 passed easily, but the citizens of Conrad had to wait a few years before construction commenced due to postwar materials shortages. In the meantime, they built a separate outdoor pool and other recreation facilities. The momentum of the new school project also led to the creation of an association to promote small business in Conrad. Aided by a healthy wheat economy, eight such businesses were started in the late 1940s; the population grew to 2,000 by 1950. 31

No matter how successful any one study group was, the Montana Study as a whole was constantly dogged by criticism, rivalries,
uncooperativeness, and institutional opposition. Before the Study had even been launched, ill will had been created within the Montana university system of six semi-autonomous institutions. Melby had been instrumental in soliciting Rockefeller Foundation support for the Study. But out of frustration over having his initiatives blocked by the other colleges within the system, he resigned on 1 July 1944, the same day funds became available to start the Study. Immediately appointed to the presidency of Montana State University, Melby began to distribute the grant money to the Study, thus giving the appearance of monopolizing the funds (which had been designated as going to the entire Montana university system), and creating jealousy among the other five institutions. Several academics and politicians began to harbor suspicions about Melby and this carried over to the Study as well. Subsequently, Brownell, Howard, and Meadows encountered an uncooperative attitude from many faculty members of the Montana university system, especially in resistance from university extension personnel, who believed that the community dramas were undermining the county agent’s position. This was a particularly troubling development since these were often the very professionals upon whom the Study had counted to help spread its program. 32

Institutional complications continued to haunt the Study and contributed to attenuation of its long-term planning. Brownell admitted to Stevens that the Study’s plans had been reduced to a year-by-year basis so that something could be accomplished. The future of the Montana Study itself was threatened by Melby’s abrupt resignation in June 1945 to take a job with New York University. Melby had given the Study an institutional home at Montana State University and had persuaded the other five state colleges to assume their shares of the Study’s funding during its second year of operation. The original funding arrangement had called for the state of Montana, through its colleges, to pay a larger proportion of the Study’s budget as time went on, eventually to assume the entire cost if it wanted to continue the program. Added to this, turnover in personnel began to impact the day-to-day operations. Meadow’s special grant from the Rockefeller Foundation ran out and he returned to teaching full-time. Hansen took a leave of absence from Montana State University to work full-time with the Study. A year later Howard resigned to devote more time to his writing career and was replaced by Frank H. Smith, a recreation specialist from Berea College. No evidence exists to suggest that Howard was dissatisfied with the direction of the Study or his relationship with Brownell, toward whom he was effusive in his praise. Brownell himself “saw the handwriting on the wall,” and returned to Northwestern University. He would direct a study partially funded by the Rockefeller Foundation designed to train educators in the philosophy and methods of the Montana Study, and develop similar programs in the Midwest. 33

Study staffers had hoped for support from other institutional entities as well, including big business interests in Montana. As the leaders of the state’s private sector, Anaconda Copper and Montana Power, referred to as “the Company,” were the two dominant forces in Montana economic scene. Brownell urged them to send a representative to the Montana Committee, a statewide advisory board set up to aid the Study in assessing the needs of the state and deciding on potential projects. But in what can be called the epitome of bad timing, Howard’s article “The Montana Twins in Trouble?” appeared in Harper’s in September 1944. Howard professed that the Twins (Anaconda and Montana Power) controlled not only the economy of Montana but also its political realm. “For almost a generation a pair of fat boys like Tweedledum and Tweedledee, an arm of each flung chummily across the other’s shoulders, have been running the show in Montana.” Howard continued that no opposition to “the Company” had a chance but that as a result of an investigation by the Federal Power Commission in March 1944, “political control may yet be wrested from the dominant
twins." Yet, he claimed that Montanans might never know the real truth of the situation, because the Twins controlled most of the media in Montana. Officially, “the Company” remained neutral toward the Montana Study but its enmity toward Howard was well known.34

Generally the Montana Study responded to political attacks indirectly by trying to spread the message of their work in a positive way. These attacks were seen as minor setbacks or nuisances, except in a few cases where even the Rockefeller Foundation found itself defending the Study against vituperative letters that called Howard a “troublemaker” and a card-carrying Communist. But again it was Howard and another article for Harper’s that touched off more opposition to the Study by means of “guilt by association.” His “Golden River” article appeared in May 1945, and although it was largely neutral in tone, it provoked protest much like the last article, and intensified when Howard heeded a request to testify before a Senate committee on the controversial MVA. Outside the business community, Howard generally had a high status. But fellow staffer Meadows was an outsider to Montanans and had no such standing. He foolishly used his half-time position as sociology instructor at Montana State University as a podium for preaching his beliefs and for debating MVA opponents. Meadows even antagonized Governor Ford of Montana, who warned Brownell that the growing bad names of some of the staffers were beginning to tarnish the Study itself. “When these men go out and speak on such subjects, it is mighty hard for the average citizen to draw a fine line of distinction and determine where the Montana Study ends and the individual’s views begins.” Worried, Brownell asked Stevens if he and/or Howard should resign. Stevens saw no reason to change the makeup of the staff. Nevertheless, the Study had made the mistake of getting noticed, in an unfavorable light, by the powers that ran Montana.35

The Study, however, faced more critical problems than institutional bickering or political attacks. The problem of funding ultimately doomed the Study. Even money for the third year’s operations was not assured, until study group participants themselves petitioned the state board of education. With the Rockefeller Foundation grant completed at the end of the third year, Montana would have to contribute all of the funding to continue the Study. The end came on January 1947 when a four-man subcommittee of the Montana legislature left out an appropriation for the Study, essentially closing it down for the next year. Writing in the late 1940s, budding community activist Richard Poston believed that the denial of continued funding stemmed from a lack of knowledge throughout the state as to its real goals and accomplishments: “with at least two-thirds of the state ignorant of the project’s existence, and with a small though powerful group of inherited enemies eager to dispose of it, . . . it is surprising, in light of these circumstances, that the program had been able to function at all.” Rockefeller Foundation officials took a slightly different view of the Study’s demise: “The Montana Study was criticized as ‘unrealistic’ and ‘based upon the unjust philosophic assumption that Montana was a folk art center.’ The real reasons, however, for letting the Study become inactive, were events growing out of intra- and interdepartmental feuds and political moves within the state to which the University was subjected.” Too, the resumption of greater prosperity and a more normal life in postwar Montana, plus the beginning of a national shift in power from rural to urban votes in legislatures of largely agricultural states, contributed to a lack of interest in funding more “social experiments.”36

For at least three years, “official” attempts were made to revive the Montana Study. In fact, the Rockefeller Foundation received so much interest concerning the Study that it entertained funding proposals from Chancellor George Selke for over two years after the Study’s end before finally terminating its consideration. It was not for a lack of trying that the Study died. Through a furious exchange of
letters late into the fall of 1949, Stevens, Brownell, Howard, Poston, and even Melby on occasion, pursued that perfect leader who could bring the Study back to life. Having given up on most of the leaders in Montana, Stevens looked to Howard, but realized that he was still too much of a liability. Brownell even endorsed Steven’s suggestion that the Catholic ruralists take over the Study, pointing to Father Luigi Ligutti’s success at Granger Homesteads in Iowa.

Montanans themselves voiced the most ardent calls for the Study’s return. Study group participants like state board of education member Guy M. Brandborg and Ruth Robinson, and “converted” citizens like attorney general R. V. Bottomly, demonstrated the existence of strong grassroots support. The staunchest journalist friend of the Study, the Great Falls Tribune (the one major newspaper not owned by Anaconda), criticized “The same brand of politics that drove Melby from the state chloroformed the program nearest his heart. The philosophy of the gold seekers, ‘clean up and get out,’ and of the lumber barons, ‘cut out and get out,’ still survives in the Treasure State. But one cannot visit Darby, Stevensville, Libby or Lewistown today without seeing that some dents were made in it by the [Study].” Even before its demise, newspapers both inside and outside of Montana praised it. The Ravalli Republic called it a “unique venture of the greater university system which has made this state history-conscious and future-minded.” The Spokane Review defended it by declaring “there is nothing new dealish about the enterprise . . . The nation can well profit by the type of leadership that the Montana Study has developed among our neighbors to the east.” The greatest criticism came from one particular newspaper in eastern Montana where the Study had done little work. The red-baiting Miles City Star referred to it as a “brand of parlor socialism” and hoped that the “good-sense” of James McCain and Selke had something to do with its downfall. Although gone from Montana for several years, Melby was attacked as an “elitist” in a review of Small Town Renaissance by the Missoula Times in 1950. Obviously, some Montanans resented being told in general terms what to do and how to best do it, especially by people they perceived as outsiders and radical intellectuals. The Study never emerged from its limbo, and the experience of its rise and fall left some people glad, some sad, and many more simply wondering what had happened.

Whatever the reasons for the cessation of the Montana Study, its legacy touched many people and places, particularly in Montana. In lieu of full state support, the state university appointed Bert Hansen to conduct a mini-version of the Study, but mainly dealing with community drama. Published as part of Howard’s duties at the Study, his anthology of Montana writers, Montana Margins, gained national attention and praise in literary circles, and was published in part due to the expressed needs of Montana teachers. Due to interest in the Darby play, a Missoula dramatics professor offered a class in playwriting technique. Dillon Normal School presented courses in community leadership training. Many new groups formed on the basis of impetus from the Study, including Montana Crafts, a state crafts society, and the Montana Association of Study Groups, consisting of seventy leaders from eight study groups. Regional cooperation was exemplified in discussions held by Bitterroot Valley communities concerning county-wide recreation possibilities, aided by Howard Beresford, a federal regional recreation specialist. Whereas some of the communities had merely gone through the motions of “filling in the blanks” in their study groups, others such as Lonepine continued their activities after the Study’s demise by collecting money for a youth center. Other towns maintained their planning council, and “craftsmanship” clubs were organized throughout the state.

The larger western region also felt the impact of the Montana Study, as some states attempted to replicate it in full or part. Meadows spent time in Nebraska trying to establish community study groups, and the
Oklahoma extension service expressed interest in a similar program. The University of Washington hired Poston to create a community development agency for that state. Launched in conjunction with university-sponsored community bureaus or state agencies for community development, Oregon, Colorado, and New Mexico provided other examples of these incipient programs. Kansas spent $500,000 on its version of the Study in 1947, part of which involved implementing Brownell’s idea of traveling “community colleges.” Changes in college curricula, teaching methods, and lecture topics appeared in many Montana and Rocky Mountain colleges as a result of the Study’s influence. The University Institute for Social Welfare recommended that “the Montana Study be recognized as productive of human welfare” and that it be restarted in the University of Montana system.

Howard continued to work for a rejuvenation of the Study in his Roundup of Regional Arts program, until his sudden death in 1951.40 Educators from a number of states and even some foreign countries began using material from the Study. For example, the US Office of Education sent copies of the study guide manual Life in Montana to Brazil for use in their work in adult education. Due to interest stimulated by an account of the Study in Reader’s Digest, requests for copies poured in from many other countries including Canada, Japan, Switzerland, and Australia. Even a visiting Chinese scholar, Mei-yun Li, who had traveled in the United States for fourteen months and observed 300 educational institutions, heard of the Study and went to Montana. Both before and after Brownell left the Study, he was besieged by requests to help set up similar studies all over the nation. Leaders throughout the Plains region and elsewhere, impressed by the achievements of the Study, made numerous proposals to the Rockefeller Foundation and other foundations for funding a variety of related programs like writers’ institutes, Ph.D. programs in the humanities, regional magazines, county-wide projects of community improvement, crafts and historical museums, and assorted study group and community history projects.41

During the next two decades, the Study’s influence reverberated throughout the West, and Montana especially, precisely because it had been such an ambitious and even audacious project. But, it was too big for its tiny staff and budget, and somewhat premature in that it attempted to bring together many of the welfare elements later provided mostly by state and federal governments. Despite the existence of a community of “intellectual interests” regarding the philosophy underlying the Study, some academics in the social sciences like Kraenzel moved a step away from communitarianism toward regionalism, which rose briefly in the 1950s as a trendy geo-cultural concept. For the most part, the Rockefeller Foundation was correct in its belief that the Study could never be replicated because it existed as a product of unique circumstances which involved inspiring leadership, a compelling utopian vision, a cause that empowered the people “passed by,” an activism that came out of the best populist and reformist traditions, and unstable wartime conditions that created the need for external intervention. It turned out that Montana was not such an odd place to try such a project, with its traditions of vigorous labor unions, agrarians of the Farmers’ Union, and national progressives like Joseph Dixon and Burton K. Wheeler. Of course, something similar can be said for most of the Northern Plains states.42

In the final analysis, the Study’s most durable legacy was the part it played in the process of modernization in the rural West. Its leaders encouraged the construction of linkages between small towns and university, philanthropic, and governmental bureaucracies (soil conservation districts, the Extension Service, and the Forest Service were most often mentioned). These communitarians believed they could utilize the expertise residing in such large-scale institutions without themselves getting sucked into the vortex of mass society. They helped refocus attention on the small community and laid the groundwork for the
rural development movements in the West, and thus stimulated governmental awareness of the problems of small towns. For example, although somewhat later than eastern states, Montana established its own department of community affairs in the 1960s. It even sponsored the application of an updated version of the Study to a few small towns in the 1970s (with mixed results). Other institutions trace some of their inspiration to the Montana Study, like the Center for the Rocky Mountain West. The Study's spirit lives on in contemporary communitarian efforts like the Montana Heritage Project, which involves educational research by public school students in collaboration with thirteen state and federal agencies, largely funded by the Claiborne/Ortenberg Foundation. These activities have encouraged the creation of other philanthropic initiatives like the Montana Community Foundation, the Montana Consensus Council, which administers the Sustainable Community Program, and the Montana Renaissance Fund.

The Montana Study must be given credit for being a precursor of the trend leading toward a resurgence of the contemporary communitarian movement. As part of a larger reform ideology based on the primacy of the small community and indefatigable critics of mass society, community advocates tried to resist the marginalization of small-town and rural culture, which was fundamental to most western states. They tried to stop the processes by which a substantial rural minority was being reduced to just one of the many small groups lacking in influence. In addition to this underlying theme, communitarians set forth a second and more activist proposition, which eventually took the form of nascent community development projects in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The relative success of the Study was instrumental in stimulating continued interest in the rehabilitation of the small community and the regional concept, and in allaying some of the concerns westerners had about falling behind the rest of the nation in terms of culture and education. The Study also seemed to point a way out of the extreme individualism that cultural observers of the West such as Howard, Kraenzel, and DeVoto had so harshly criticized. Through closer cooperation with civic associations, philanthropic organizations, and governmental agencies, locales could ideally attain a better balance with larger levels of cultural life, such as the region and the nation. In addition, the Study maintained the belief, which was common in the West, that through its widely spaced, sometimes isolated small communities, its people remained closer to the American democratic experience. Finally, the Montana Study became the first project of cultural renewal in the Northwest that was primarily oriented toward the small community, and as such, it offered small towns a way to modernize without necessarily sacrificing their local resources, individuality, or coherence.

NOTES


9. “RF Appropriations to Montana State University” (note 3 above), p. 2; Stevens to Melby, 24 May 1943, Merriam to Stevens, 16 August 1943, both from folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.


11. Melby to Stevens, 4 September 1943, Melby to Marshall, 9 October 1943, Marshall to Melby, 5 October 1943, Marshall to Melby, 25 October 1943, Melby to Marshall, 4 January 1944, all from folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC. Melby quoted in “Memorandum to the Rockefeller Foundation,” 4 January 1944, pp. 1-2, folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

12. Rockefeller Foundation to Melby, 13 March 1944, Melby to Marshall, 21 March 1944, both from folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Brownell, The New Universe (note 3 above) and Human Community (note 4 above).


15. “Conference on the Arts and Sciences College,” 19-21 May 1944, folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.


18. Melby to Marshall, 15 June 1944, Melby to Marshall, 23 June 1944, Brownell to Stevens, 6 July 1944, Brownell to Stevens, 28 June 1944, all from folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; “Montana Study Progress Report,” 7 December 1945, folder 3330.84, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.


24. Ibid.


29. Minutes of Conrad Study Group, folder 2, box 5, collection 270, MHS; Poston (note 5 above), pp. 87-89.


33. Brownell to Stevens, 1 January 1945, folder 3330.84, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Poston (note 5 above), pp. 128-37; Lewiston Daily News, 21 December 1947, (note 23 above); Howard to Brownell, 24 February 1946, folder 6, box 4, Howard Papers, MHS. Bernard De Voto, Howard’s close literary friend, characterized him as a “deeply lonely, melancholy, and tired” individual, but one of the greatest writers the West had ever seen, on p. 3 of De Voto’s preface to Howard’s Strange Empire: A Narrative of the Northwest (New York: William Morrow, 1952). Howard’s role in the Study was that of trusted lieutenant who ceaselessly propuglated the “party line” to such an extent that it may have compromised his health and contributed to his premature death in 1951.
35. Stevens to Brownell, 23 October 1944, Fosdick to Towne, 8 November 1944, both from folder 3330.83, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Great Falls Tribune, 2 May 1945, 5; Governor Ford quoted in Poston, ibid., p. 65-71; Brownell to Stevens, 20 January 1945, Dicky to Ross, 1 August 1945, Brownell to Stevens, 7 November 1945, all from folder 3330.84, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Joseph Kinsey Howard, "Golden River," Harper’s, May 1945, 511-23.
36. Poston (note 5 above), pp. 138-44; Stevens to Brownell, 3 January 1946, folder 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; "RF Appropriations to Montana State University" (note 3 above), p. 5; Poston (note 5 above), p. 186.
37. Stevens to Selke, 14 October 1949, folder 3330.88, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Poston (note 5 above), pp. 188-90; Brownell to Stevens, 18 January 1948, Brownell to Stevens, 28 January 1948, Selke to Stevens, all from folder 3330.87, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.
38. Dietert and Homstad, "Saving the Small Town" (note 25 above), p. 23; Great Falls Tribune, 7 May 1950, 8; Spokane Review, 28 July 1946, folder 32, box 7, collection 270, MHS, from Rockefeller Foundation; Ravalli Republic, 26 July 1946, Miles City Star, 19 September 1947, Missoula Times, 30 June 1950, all from folder 32, box 7, collection 270, MHS from Montana University (hereafter designated MU).
41. McFarland to Fahn, 12 September 1951, folder 3330.88, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Montana State University News Service, 7 August 1945, folder 31, box 7, collection 270, MHS, from MU; and Great Falls Tribune, 10 February 1946, both from folder 32, box 7, collection 270, MHS, from MU.
42. Meadows to Schwichten (note 14 above), p. 4; Marshall to Poston, 2 February 1951, folder 3330.88, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC. For Kraenzel’s move away from communitarianism to regionalism, see his Great Plains in Transition (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1955). A semic­cult following developed around Poston’s Small Town Renaissance (note 5 above), and became one of the lasting legacies of the Study. See Dorman, Revolt of the Provinces (note 5 above) for the attraction of regionalism for intellectuals in the 1950s.