

**CENTENARY OF THE FIRST SOCIOLOGY DOCTORATE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN (UNL)**

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On June 10, 1905, the Faculty of the Graduate School in the University of Nebraska formally recommended that Anderson William Clark “receive the degree of Doctor of Philosophy” in Sociology (Graduate College, Faculty Meetings: Minutes, p. 40, RG 6/2/1, Box 1, University of Nebraska Archives). Clark, who completed a dissertation on “State Control and Supervision of Charities and Corrections” (University Studies 5 (October 1905): 357-400), was a Baptist minister and the founding Superintendent of Omaha’s Child Saving Institute. Based on extensive firsthand observations, interviews, and examinations of records in Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and other states, Clark concluded that, “Immediate state control is demanded in order to save the lives of thousands of infants and small children who are to-day in the hands of ignorant and sentimental nurses and caretakers, where they suffer from poor ventilation, unsuitable food, and bad sanitary conditions State control is required to correct such abuses”(pp. 398-399). Clark’s dissertation exemplified the practical applications of sociology emphasized by Amos G. Warner, a former Nebraskan, in his influential work on American Charities: A Study in Philanthropy and Economics (1894).



A.W. Clark

Other models for A.W. Clark’s work included Martin Brewer Anderson, the president of Rochester University - where Clark took the A.B. degree in 1877. Anderson, in 1878, accepted appointment to the New York state board of charities. Years later, Clark successfully agitated for the creation of a state board of charities in Nebraska. Clark’s religious training was completed in 1880 at Baptist Union Theological Seminary (now the Divinity School of the University of Chicago).

At Nebraska, Clark embarked on sociological studies at an auspicious moment, during a short, extraordinary period when Edward A. Ross, George Elliott Howard, and Roscoe Pound were all members of the Graduate Faculty and together promoted a vigorous, interdisciplinary approach to sociology. Ross and Howard later became presidents of the American Sociological Society/Association in 1914 and 1917, respectively, and Pound rose to the deanship of the Harvard Law School. Conceptually, Ross contributed a “social control” perspective (Social Control, 1901), Howard (who had been A.G. Warner’s former mentor) offered the methodology of “institutional history” (History of Matrimonial Institutions, 1904) and Pound was then drawing the framework for an American version of “sociological jurisprudence” (A New School of Jurists, 1904) combining energetic “hands on” field work with rigorous classificatory logic. In writing his dissertation, Clark drank deeply of this exciting frontier sociological environment.

A colloquium on November 4, 2005, an updated bibliography of all UNL sociology theses and dissertations completed since 1905, and an exhibit commemorating Clark’s landmark accomplishment are planned in the UNL Department of Sociology during the autumn 2005 semester.