

The Early Years of the PAA

John R. Weeks
PAA Historian

The Beginnings

The stock market had recently crashed, the Depression was settling in, and Warren Thompson had already defined (even if he hadn't named) the Demographic Transition (see Thompson 1929), on the cold, gray December day in 1930 in New York City when the Population Association of America was conceived. We know that there were 13 people at that meeting at Town Hall Club in uptown Manhattan, on 43rd Street near Times Square, where Henry Pratt Fairchild (who became the first PAA President) was a member. Fairchild was Professor of Sociology at NYU and was a close friend of Margaret Sanger. The two of them are generally given credit for having inspired the PAA, but the organization would likely not have been formed had it not been for the separate, albeit interrelated, efforts of Ed Sydenstricker at the Milbank Memorial Fund (which funded the early activities of the Association) and Frederick H. Osborn (who provided much of the political muscle that allowed the Association to prosper and who became, in turn, PAA President and then the first President of the Population Council).

The PAA was born partly as a result of, but also in the shadow of, the International Union for the Scientific Investigation of Population Problems (now the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population—IUSSP). In 1927, Raymond Pearl, biologist at The Johns Hopkins University, had helped to organize a World Population Congress in Geneva and this led to the creation of the permanent organization. Actually, Margaret Sanger was the principal organizer and she edited the Proceedings of the Conference, which were published in London, but she was not an

academician and so she received less credit than perhaps she thought she deserved. Originally, the IUSSP was not an organization of individual members, but rather an organization of national committees. Thus, each member nation was asked to create a national committee, and that committee would select representatives to attend the international meetings, with the second international meeting being scheduled four years later (still the IUSSP pattern) in 1931. Pearl (who was a PAA board member, but never PAA President) asked Louis Dublin at Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, to chair the American National Committee. Dublin had been interested in population issues for a long time. In 1917 he had been elected to the chairmanship of Section I (Social and Economic Sciences) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In Dublin's own words, "This honor automatically made me a vice president of the Association, a member of the governing council for the year, and a principal speaker at the annual convention held that December in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The subject had to be worthy of the occasion. I chose to explore a relatively new phenomenon in American life--the serious decline in the birth rate. Little did I appreciate where the exploration would lead and the significance of the some of the findings we would explore along the way" (Dublin 1966:134).

Dublin (who later served as PAA President) was joined on this committee by Professor Fairchild, Alfred Lotka (also at Metropolitan Life and also a subsequent PAA President), Constantine E. McGuire (who never played a major role in the PAA—he was an economic researcher at the Carnegie Corporation in NYC and had written a book in 1926 on "Italy's International Economic Position" and had met Corrado Gini who had been visiting at Johns Hopkins—Gini was a friend of Pearl and that was probably the connection), Lowell J. Reed (who became President of The Johns Hopkins University and also served as PAA President during World War II), Clarence C. Little (President of the University of Michigan and a member of the original

PAA Board, but he never served the PAA after that), and Pascal K. (Pat) Whelpton (Warren Thompson's colleague at the Scripps Foundation for Population Research at Miami University, Ohio, and who later served as PAA President).

During the early part of 1931 following the Town Hall meeting at which the idea of an American Population Association been laid out, the development of the American National Committee of the IUSSP and the PAA progressed in tandem. The meetings to organize the American National Committee were typically held at the offices of Louis Dublin at Met Life on Madison Avenue. The committee members would then adjourn that meeting and head either over to Professor Fairchild's office at Washington Square East on the NYU campus or uptown to the Town Hall Club where the group would reconvene as the organizers of the Population Association of America.

The Milbank Memorial Fund provided funds for both efforts, including a \$600 grant (apparently given to Margaret Sanger) to help fund the first official meeting of the Population Association of America on May 7th, 1931. That meeting, also held at the Town Hall Club (which space is now occupied by a school, above the still extant Concert Hall) was attended by 38 people, including Margaret Sanger, who expected to be named to the Board of Directors. Margaret Sanger was, of course, a social activist, and Frederick Osborn spoke up at the meeting to suggest that she not be named to the Board of Directors because he felt that the organization should be devoted specifically to the promotion of scientific research and should not be influenced by activist pressures. This is an attitude that has continued to pervade the PAA (leading to conflict especially during the 1970s).

Osborn was not a professional academician by training (although he had a degree from Princeton and had also spent a year at Cambridge). He was a wealthy man from an influential

family and he had retired from business in the 1920s to pursue his intellectual interests as an associate at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City (the same institution that later provided Paul Ehrlich's inspiration for population studies). It was there that he discovered the field of demography and was attracted to the demographic work being initiated in the 1920s by the Milbank Memorial Fund. Osborn's influence on the field of population studies was enormous, more because of his influence on resources (his social capital) than on his academic contributions. He knew people with money, and he knew how to convince them to use their resources for the things that he believed were important.

At that first meeting of the PAA in May of 1931, Henry Pratt Fairchild was elected President, and the Vice-president was William Ogburn (of the University of Chicago and an important contributor to the development of American demography although he never served as PAA President). The Second Vice-president was Robert Rene Kucynski (then at the Brookings Institute, but he left the US in the following year to return to the London School of Economics and asked in 1932 that he not be reelected), and the Secretary-Treasurer was Alfred J. Lotka. Following that meeting, a great deal of work went into developing a constitution for the organization, preparing incorporation papers, and defining the field of demographic studies. This work was presented to what is now usually called the First Annual Meeting of the PAA in April of 1932, once again at the Town Hall Club in New York City.

Milbank, Princeton, and the War

From this distance in time it is difficult to tell what might have become of the Population Association of America and of population studies generally in this country without the early efforts of the Milbank Memorial Fund, orchestrated by Frederick Osborn [PAA President in 1949]. The

PAA had languished somewhat under the initial four-year Presidency of Henry Pratt Fairchild, but in 1934 Frank Lorimer [PAA President in 1946], then a Research Fellow at the Eugenics Research Association, was named Secretary of the PAA. Lorimer, who had completed his doctorate at Columbia in 1929 after a short career in the clergy, had co-authored an influential book "Dynamics of Population" with Frederick Osborn. Osborn was well known to Albert Milbank, Chair of the Board of the Milbank Memorial Fund. Milbank and Osborn's father were both trustees of Princeton University. So, it was not a coincidence that The Milbank Memorial Fund, which after all had funded the initial meeting of the PAA, provided money to pay Lorimer's salary as a "permanent" Secretary to the PAA, in the interest of helping to launch the organization.

Lorimer responded to the challenge with two important initiatives. First, he recognized that the association could materially benefit its members by producing a bibliography of population literature and so, with the assistance of Irene Taeuber [PAA President in 1953] (whose time was paid for by a private donor), he published such a volume in 1935 and 1936, appropriately called Population Literature, but soon after to become Population Index. This work was undertaken in Washington, DC, where Lorimer's wife, Faith, held a high position in the US Department of Labor. He found space for the project at the office of the American Genetic Association in the Victor Building (only a block from the site of the 1997 PAA Annual Meeting). That office was headed up by Robert Cook, editor of the Journal of Heredity, and he had also granted desk space to Guy Burch, founder of the Population Reference Bureau and a former graduate student of Henry Pratt Fairchild at NYU. Cook later became President of the PRB after Burch's death in 1951, but he never served on the PAA Board.

Being in Washington facilitated Lorimer's second important project as PAA Secretary, which was to organize an annual meeting of the PAA to take place in Washington, DC in 1935 at

the Willard Hotel. In conjunction with that meeting, the PAA sponsored a three-day Conference on Population Studies in Relation to Social Planning. Washington was deep into planning the New Deal, and the purpose of the conference was to focus attention on the importance of population studies in public policy. The meeting was very successful and was attended by Eleanor Roosevelt. Subsequent to this meeting, Lorimer was asked to be the Technical Secretary of the Committee on Population Problems of the National Resources Planning Board, and Irene Taeuber assumed responsibility for the population bibliography—which was about to move from Washington to Princeton.

In 1935 Fairchild became President of the American Sociological Association and Louis Dublin, another New Yorker, assumed the PAA Presidency. Meanwhile in New York City, Frederick Osborn had been encouraging the Milbank Memorial Fund to set up a University-based program in research and graduate study in population. His first choice was Harvard, but President Conant was not interested, so he turned his attention to Princeton University, to the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, which his father, along with Albert Milbank, had helped to establish. In 1936, The Milbank Memorial Fund signed the papers setting up a five-year grant to Princeton to establish the Office of Population Research. The University provided office space in a building on University Place near the student center and Milbank paid the salaries. Milbank chose one of its own to head up the office, Frank Notestein [PAA President in 1947]. He was a research scientist at Milbank, and his being at Milbank had itself not been entirely accidental. Notestein had received his doctorate at Cornell under Walter Willcox, who was a member of the Advisory Council of the Milbank Memorial Fund (as was Louis Dublin). Willcox had helped Notestein to secure the job at Milbank working on a project dealing with differential fertility. In going to Princeton, Notestein was put in charge of the Office of Population Research with the title

of Lecturer (and an academic appointment in the Department of Economic and Social Institutions). His budget included funding for a research assistant, a secretary-statistical clerk and an annual graduate fellowship. Notestein's first two assistants were Henry Shryock [PAA President in 1955] and Dudley Kirk [PAA President in 1959], and his first three fellows were John Durand [PAA President in 1961], Ansley Coale [PAA President in 1967], and George Stolnitz [PAA President in 1983].

When Lorimer left the position as PAA Secretary, the Milbank Memorial Fund transferred the funding to Princeton to enable the Office of Population Research to hire Irene Teauber to continue the population bibliography, which was revamped and renamed Population Index. The first issue from Princeton was published in January of 1937. In addition to the bibliographic items, the Index contained two new sections: "Current Items" and "Statistics." For many years the "Current Items" section served as the unofficial newsletter of the Population Association of America.

The Princeton Inn was the focal point for the PAA Annual Meetings in 1936 and 1938 (no meeting was held in 1937 because of the IUSSP meetings in Paris). Indeed, Princeton was the venue for 9 of the 16 annual meetings held between 1936 and 1955. The latter year was the last one for meetings in Princeton because the organization had by then outgrown the available space. Having a locus of activity also stimulated new research activity in the field. Shortly after the Office of Population Research was established, Osborn talked the Carnegie Corporation of New York into making a grant to the Milbank Memorial Fund, which would then cooperatively coordinate a study of Social and Psychological Factors Affecting Fertility—the famous Indianapolis Study. The point person for this project was Milbank's Clyde Kiser [PAA President in 1952], whose wife, Louise

Venable Kennedy (a noted sociologist and statistician), not coincidentally had been hired at the Office of Population Research to assist Irene Taeuber with the Population Index.

The US was drawn into World War II before the data for the Indianapolis Study could be fully analyzed, but the war created new population issues and opportunities. The end of the war was going to bring a new era to Europe and Kirk and Notestein began laying out a plan of research to study Europe's population. At about the same time, the League of Nations economic group moved from Geneva to Princeton and they commissioned a series of studies designed to enhance the quality of postwar planning. These studies, conducted at Princeton and funded by Carnegie and Milbank, included The Future Population of Europe and the Soviet Union by Frank Notestein, Irene Taeuber, Dudley Kirk, Ansley Coale, and Louise Kiser; Economic Demography of Eastern and Southern Europe by Wilbert Moore [a PAA Board member in the 1950s, but never PAA President]; Europe's Population in the Interwar Years by Dudley Kirk; and The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects by Frank Lorimer. As these projects were unfolding, the US Department of State asked that the studies be extended to Asia. This produced the two well-known volumes, The Population of India and Pakistan by Kingsley Davis [PAA President in 1962]; and The Population of Japan by Irene Taeuber. The basic findings were summarized in a series of articles published in 1945 in the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. The issue was titled "World Population in Transition" and was edited by Kingsley Davis, who began his introductory article with this well-known blockbuster sentence: "Viewed in the long-run perspective, the growth of the earth's population has been like a long, thin powder fuse that burns slowly and haltingly until it finally reaches the charge and then explodes."

These studies firmly established the field of population studies at Princeton, which in turn helped to secure the future for the PAA. Frank Notestein was also convinced that their success was later instrumental in encouraging the United Nations to establish a Population Division.

The war caused travel to be limited and so the annual meetings of the PAA were canceled for 1943-1945, although "local meetings" were held in Washington, DC in 1943 and 1944. Since there were no annual meetings, the officers retained their positions throughout the war, awaiting a new slate of officers to be decided upon when the war ended and life returned to normal. But, life would never return to the pre-war norm because, as Kingsley Davis noted in that seminal 1945 article, there was an abundance of "population possibilities that lie ahead."

Looking ahead, we can see that at the same time that Rockefeller was worried about population, the Rockefeller Foundation was funding the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (now CIMMYT) in Mexico City under Normal Borlaug. Plus, Syntex and Searle were already beginning their studies of the reproductive system that led to the development of the pill. In the 1960s Ford added to this by funding the Rice Institute in the Philippines and they helped fund the development of Norplant and RU-486. Improving rice production through the Green Revolution and helping with family planning were also the core activities of Rafael Salas, the founding Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Demographics of the Early PAA Boards of Directors:

The paragraphs above take the PAA through the end of World War II, and so we have covered the history from 1931 through 1945. During these initial 15 years of the organization, there were 48 different people who served on the PAA Board. The average age of Board members at the time of initial election to the Board was 43 (both mean and median), with the youngest person being

Edward Hutchinson of the University of Pennsylvania—elected in 1936 when he was only 30. At the other extreme, four Board members were 55 when first elected to the Board. Three-fourths of the Board Members during this period had been born in the 19th century. The first Board member to have been born in the 20th century was Frank Notestein, elected in 1933 at age 31 while he was still with the Milbank Memorial Fund.

Only three of the 48 were women. The first woman elected to the Board was Dorothy S. Thomas in 1937. She was teaching at Yale at the time. Margaret (Marny) Hagood was elected to the Board in 1942, while she was at the US Department of Agriculture. In 1945 Irene Taeuber of Princeton was elected to the Board. All three women eventually were elected PAA President. Dorothy Thomas was also President of the American Sociological Association, as were eight other early PAA Board Members (Henry Pratt Fairchild, Frank Hankins, Philip Hauser, William Ogburn, Samuel Stouffer, Carl C. Taylor, Rupert Vance, and Donald Young).

Columbia was the predominant school from which the early Board members had received their doctorates, accounting for 9 of the 48 (19%), followed by Chicago (5), Minnesota (5), Harvard (4), Wisconsin (4), Yale (3), Cornell (2), London School of Economics (2), North Carolina (2), and Pennsylvania (2). I have tabulated places of employment only by lifetime, not specific to this period, but the data show that among these early Board members the most often occurring place of employment was the US Bureau of the Census, followed by the US Department of Agriculture, Princeton, and Michigan. I have data on 76 jobs held by these 48 early Board members, and 64 percent of the jobs are in the eastern seaboard corridor between New York and Washington, DC (including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland). Dorothy S. Thomas was the most distant Board member, serving as Second Vice-President during the early 1940s while she was teaching at the University of California, Berkeley.

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