

THE EVOLUTION OF FARMS IN RUSH COUNTY, KANSAS,  
FROM 1920 TO 1968

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Statement of purpose. The purpose of this thesis is to give a picture of Rush County, Kansas, farms from 1920 to the present, and also to give some idea of what the farms might be like in the future.

Settlers came to this part of Kansas with agricultural ideas in mind. Although the county was never thickly populated, there were considerably more farmers living there in the past than is now the case. In fact, Rush County's total population has dwindled by more than one-third since 1930, and statistics show that most of the people leaving the county are farmers. This paper will probe into some of the reasons for farmers leaving the county in such large numbers.

Organization of the thesis. First, the history of the county will be presented briefly, so that the reader may better understand what kind of land this is, what kind of people settled it, and what its towns and villages are like. Next, population statistics will be discussed.

The following two chapters will give livestock and crop statistics for the years 1920 to 1960, showing that the average farm has become more specialized and less self-sufficient. Size of farms, value of farms, and farm owner-



ship will be discussed in succeeding chapters. Farm legislation, since it affects the farmer so directly, will also be touched upon.

The life of the farmer has changed in the past forty years. New technology which has made life easier for him has also served to replace him. Chapter X will discuss some of these new inventions to see just what effects they have had on the farmer of Rush County. The farmer's social life and attitudes will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter XII of the paper will deal with one Rush County farmer's own solution to the farm problem. It is evident, however, that what has worked for him might not be successful for most farmers of the county. Each must work out his own problems, and most of them will probably find their solutions in work off the farm.

Importance of the study. If present trends continue, most boys and girls growing up on Rush County farms today, whether they want to or not, will be spending their futures in urban settings far removed from their rural childhoods. It is important that they be made aware of this, so that they will be able to prepare for the years to come. To my knowledge, a study of this kind has never been made for Rush County.



Sources of information. Information for this paper was obtained mainly from agricultural statistics of the United States Bureau of the Census, from local newspapers, and from interviews with farmers throughout the county.

## CHAPTER II

### CLIMATE, TOPOGRAPHY, AND HISTORY OF RUSH COUNTY

Topography. Rush County lies close to the center of Kansas. It is the fourth county south of Nebraska and the fifth north of Oklahoma. There are five counties west between it and the Colorado border and nine counties east to the Missouri line. Ness County borders it to the west, Barton to the east, Ellis to the north, and Pawnee to the south.

The county is crossed by only one main stream, the Walnut Creek which flows from west to east through almost the center of the county. The Smoky Hill River touches briefly the northern border of the county.

Altitude in Rush County ranges from 1,920 to 2,300 feet above sea level. The surface of the land is gently rolling, with 80% being upland, 20% bottom, and 1% timber. The timber is found mainly in thin belts of ash, elm, walnut, cottonwood, and hackberry bordering the streams.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alvin R. Leonard and Delmar W. Berry, "Geology and Ground-Water Resources of Southern Ellis County and Parts of Trego and Rush Counties, Kansas," State Geological Survey of Kansas, Bulletin 149 (Topeka, Kansas: The State Printing Plant, 1961), p. 16.

The area is rich in natural gas, and there is also some oil activity. Sand, gravel, silt, clay, sandstone, and limestone are found throughout the county. The latter proved very useful to early settlers as they used them for building materials since timber was so scarce. Many of the early stone homes and stone fence posts are still in existence today.

Climate. The climate of Rush County is classified as subhumid, with abundant sunshine, moderate precipitation, and a high rate of evaporation. The summer days are hot with moderate wind velocity, low humidity, and generally cool and comfortable nights. Only occasional periods of severe cold occur in the winter. Approximately twenty inches of snow falls annually, and the ground is covered with snow for an average of about twenty-five days each year.<sup>2</sup>

The United States Weather Bureau gives the following description of normal weather conditions in this area:

The mean annual temperature. . . is 54.7 degrees Fahrenheit. The hottest month is July, which has a mean temperature of 80.6 degrees Fahrenheit; the coldest month is January, which has a mean temperature of 29.6 degrees Fahrenheit. The average length of the growing season is 168 days; the average date of the last kill-

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

ing frost in the spring is April 29, and the average date of the first killing frost in the fall is October 16.<sup>3</sup>

The mean annual precipitation is approximately 22.90 inches. Luckily, 78% of this falls during the growing season, from April to September. June is usually the wettest month with a normal of 4.27 inches, and January is the driest, with a normal of only .46 inches. The annual precipitation was less than normal in 47 years out of the 89-year period on record, and during 27 years it was less than 20 inches. It appears that periods of drought follow a definite cyclic pattern, and they are generally balanced by periods of excessive precipitation.<sup>4</sup>

Discovery of the area. Although agriculture is now the main industry of Rush County, and, in fact, of Western Kansas, the first white people who saw the land probably could not imagine that it would ever be so.

Traders, eagerly looking for new avenues of commerce; explorers, searching to find out what secrets were kept by the little-known world west of the Missouri River; Kearney's soldiers, looking greedily toward New Mexico; Mormons, running away from religious persecution; and gold-hunters, on

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

their way in search of sudden wealth in California--this was the mob, varied and intermittent, that came through what is now Kansas in the early years.<sup>5</sup>

To these early explorers, Kansas did not present a very attractive picture. They did not expect it to promise anything of a future. Although the beautiful prairies of the eastern border did appear very inviting, they looked upon the western part as a hopeless stretch of desert that was fine for the Indians but uninhabitable for white men. Early maps designated the plains as a desert and it took years for this reputation to be overcome.<sup>6</sup>

Although the soil of the plains is very fertile, it is not surprising that these people did not think it so. They were used to many trees and lush, green grass, and here, in western Kansas, they saw only short brown grass and hardly any trees at all.

In reality, of course, the factor limiting the growth of vegetation was not the soil, but the lack of moisture and the irregularity of its fall.

However, by 1856, Sara Robinson, who visited Kansas,

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<sup>5</sup>Leverett W. Spring, Kansas in American Commonwealth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1906), pp. 21-22.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



had these words of praise for the state:

The soil for richness can be surpassed in no country. It is of a black color, with a sub-soil of clay and limestone basis. Vegetation is most luxuriant. The soil and climate are most admirably adapted to the raising of grains of every known variety.<sup>7</sup>

Prophetically she told of the agricultural future of Kansas.

First settlers. The first people to live in the region where Rush County is now located were the Shawnee, Pawnee, and Kansas Indians. William Basham was the first white settler in the county. He settled on the banks of the Walnut Creek near the east line of the county in 1870.<sup>8</sup> Other white settlers, mostly agriculturalists and coming for agricultural reasons, soon followed.

Settlers found here a rolling prairie covered with buffalo grass, with bluestem along the draws. . . . These prairies were trackless. There were no roads, bridges, or fences. The section lines had been marked a few years before by government surveyors who planted stones at the corners of each section.<sup>9</sup>

By 1874, the area was populous enough to be officially organized into a county. Walnut City (now Rush Center) was

<sup>7</sup>Sara T. L. Robinson, Kansas; Its Interior and Exterior Life (fourth edition; Boston: Crosley, Nichols and Company, 1856), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>The Rush County News, Kansas Centennial Edition, 1961.

<sup>9</sup>William Crotinger, "History of Bison" (Typewritten for Barnard Library in LaCrosse, Kansas).

designated by the Governor as the county seat. Rush County was named in honor of Alexander Rush, Captain of Company H, Second Colored Infantry, who was killed in battle April 3, 1864, at Jenkins' Ferry, Arkansas.<sup>10</sup>

The county was settled rather rapidly with the population increasing from 451 in 1875 to 2,794 in 1878. By the end of 1878, almost all of the land in the vicinity which was subject to homestead entry had been taken. The towns had a population of 279, while the rural population was 2,515, showing the percentage of rural to town population to be 90%.<sup>11</sup>

Originally, the county was to be the same size as Barton County; however, by an act of the legislature, March 20, 1873, the southern tier of townships was taken off and its area was reduced from 900 to 720 square miles. It is now 30 miles from east to west and 24 miles from north to south.<sup>12</sup> (See map on page 21 for location of towns, railroads, and main highways.)

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<sup>10</sup>The Great Bend Tribune, February 21, 1954.

<sup>11</sup>Crotinger, "History of Bison."

<sup>12</sup>The Rush County News, Diamond Jubilee Edition, 1949.

## CHAPTER III

### DEVELOPMENT OF TOWNS OF RUSH COUNTY

Alexander. The oldest town in Rush County is Alexander which began with a trading post on the north bank of the Walnut Creek on the Hays-Fort Dodge trail in 1869.<sup>1</sup> This trading post consisted of a log store building with a lookout built above with port holes through the walls where the defendants could shoot and frighten any hostile Indians. The trading post served also as a refuge for the early traders, trappers, and buffalo hunters between Fort Hays and Fort Dodge.<sup>2</sup>

In 1872, J.C. Young and his family settled on a homestead a short distance up the valley, and a few months later several other families settled on their homesteads near the trading post. This settlement later became the town of Alexander.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Harry Grass, "Historical Review of Rush County, Kansas" (Typewritten for Barnard Library in LaCrosse, Kansas, 1965).

<sup>2</sup>The Rush County News, Kansas Centennial Edition.

<sup>3</sup>Sherla Lee Fisher, "The Development of Education in Rush County" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Wichita, Wichita, Kansas, 1935), p. 50.



Liebenthal. In 1762 and 1765 Catherine II of Russia invited many Germans to live in her empire. They were willing to do so because she guaranteed them freedom of religion, the right to build schools and churches, tax exemption for a limited period, and permanent military deferment. More Germans moved to Russia in 1768.

In 1874, however, Czar Alexander II decreed that all residents of Russia would be subject to conscription. Many Germans then decided to leave Russia, and many came to Kansas.

In 1875, Nicholas Schamme brought the first party of German-Russians to the United States. Agents of the Kansas Pacific Railroad led them to Ellis County. In 1876, fourteen families arrived and settled in Rush County to found the town of Liebenthal.<sup>4</sup>

Loretto, a small unincorporated community consisting mainly of a Catholic church and school and a small cluster of houses, was also founded by the German-Russian immigrants to Rush County.

Otis. Otis was founded when the Missouri Pacific

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<sup>4</sup>William F. Zornow, Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), p. 181.

Railroad was built through that part of the county out of Salina in 1886. The founder was Major E. C. Moderwell of Salina who named the town after his son, Otis. Major Moderwell donated the plot where the grade school now stands for the first school building.

In its early days, the town was "glorified" by three saloons. One of them, "Repp's", was owned by a man who also operated a cigar factory as one of the town's first industries.<sup>5</sup>

Otis was settled mostly by Germans and German-Russians. They founded two churches--German Methodist and German Lutheran--both of which are still in existence today.

Bison. Bison's inhabitants are the descendants of Germans who migrated from Missouri. The town was founded in 1886, just a year and a half after the Missouri Pacific Railroad was completed. Henry Rages, a farmer, was one of the leading founders of Bison.

The natural environment of the times gave Bison its name, for numerous herds of buffalo once grazed over this section. It was originally intended that the town would

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<sup>5</sup>The Rush County News, Kansas Centennial Edition.

be called Buffalo. This name was turned down by the Post Office Department, however, since a town by that name had been established in Wilson County in 1867. In a last minute change, the name was switched to Bison. A block-square park is still called Buffalo Park for the original town name.<sup>6</sup>

Three religions are represented in Bison--Baptist, Methodist, and Adventist.

Rush Center. Of all the towns in Rush County, Rush Center, earlier known as Walnut City, seemed to be the one destined to become a big city. By June of 1887, Walnut City had a population of 2,000 and its own seven-column newspaper, The Blade.<sup>7</sup>

An editorial in this newspaper predicted that Walnut City would become the greatest central market of that section. A portion of this editorial is as follows:

The growth of Walnut City has equalled if not surpassed any inland town, away from the railroad, within the scope of our knowledge. Today Walnut City has fine dwellings, two hotels, four grocery stores, two dry goods stores, a hardware store, one drug store, two blacksmith shops, one wagon-makers shop, one meat market, two real estate offices, one livery stable, and one printing office; all of which compare favorably with many of the older eastern towns. Quite a

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>The Great Bend Tribune, February 21, 1954.

number of persons are either now at work erecting dwelling houses or store rooms or are planning to do so at once. The town hall, about half finished, will be completed this winter. If, as we have every reason to believe, the growth of the place continues at the same rates for a few years, it will indeed be the pride of Rush County and Western Kansas. A steam mill will be erected next spring and other business institutions have promised to come.<sup>8</sup>

Railroad growth was anticipated. It was predicted that as soon as the CK & W (Santa Fe) Railroad was completed through to Denver and Colorado Springs many new businesses would move into town. Everyone thought that the future of Walnut City was secure.

On June 20, 1887, J. B. Mullyay, editor of the town's newspaper, wrote that the Santa Fe Railroad had given assurance that Walnut City would become the end of division for the railroad. This meant that it was to have a round house and all the facilities pertaining to the end of division.

The railroad had been built into Walnut City in 1886, and the Santa Fe Hotel with a Fred Harvey restaurant had already been built at the time of the June 20, 1887, publication of the paper. The hotel had over ninety rooms, and all trains stopped there in order that passengers could eat

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<sup>8</sup>Fisher, "The Development of Education in Rush County", p. 41.



at the Harvey House.

Early day settlers rated the Santa Fe Hotel as a beauty spot. It had a dignified veranda and well kept grounds and croquet grounds. Its banquet rooms and recreation rooms were frequently used by the early day politicians as a caucus center.<sup>9</sup>

The Walnut City newspaper of July 5, 1887, describes how the hotel was used as a place for entertainment and celebration:

Among the many who entertained company yesterday in royal style was J. W. Latimer, of the Depot Hotel. To say that "Jimmie" knows how to cater to the wants of his guests is but reiterating what we have many times said. Croquet, ball and shooting were among the pleasures of the day. Ed Knowles and "Billie" carried off the honors in the shooting match as they repeatedly broke the glass held in the hands of one another.<sup>10</sup>

The life of the hotel was not too long, however. According to Ed Shiney, an early day Rush Center resident, the hotel was divided into three sections in about 1910. These sections were moved to various parts of the county and used as residences.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The Rush County News, Diamond Jubilee Edition.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Personal interview with Ed Shiney at Otis, Kansas, July 14, 1968.

At one time Rush Center was near the center of the county, and, as was mentioned before, it was proclaimed the county seat by the governor. When the southern tier of townships was removed, the center of the county shifted north to LaCrosse.

Residents of LaCrosse wanted the county seat moved to their town. From 1876 to 1887, the two towns battled over where the county seat would be permanently established. During this time, court was held in a small, frame, one-story, twenty-foot square building. This building had no permanent foundation, and it could be easily moved back and forth between the two towns. In the course of the county seat quarrel, the structure was shunted from Rush Center to LaCrosse and back four or five times.<sup>12</sup> Finally, in 1888, LaCrosse became the permanent county seat of Rush County.<sup>13</sup> This brought the Rush Center boom to a halt.

LaCrosse. LaCrosse was founded by David and Denman Stubbs, pioneers from Missouri. They learned that the border of Rush County had been changed by a legislative act,

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<sup>12</sup>Federal Writers project of the Work Project Administration for the State of Kansas, A Guide to the Sunflower State (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), p. 364.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

and they foresaw the fact that Rush Center would most likely lose its designation as a county seat since it was no longer the center of the county.

In 1876, the Stubbs brothers surveyed two roads across the county, dividing it from north to south and from east to west. At the junction they laid out the town site of LaCrosse, which is French for "the crossing."<sup>14</sup>

LaCrosse received a tremendous boost when the Missouri Pacific Railroad was built through the town in 1886. The Santa Fe Railroad (at Rush Center) and the Missouri Pacific were racing for railroad supremacy, and the large sums of money given by the railroad for construction and labor did much to help expand the town of LaCrosse.<sup>15</sup>

Naturally, the moving of the county seat to the town provided further impetus to its growth, and LaCrosse soon became, and still is today, the largest town in the county.

Six churches are represented in LaCrosse: United Brethern, Methodist, Catholic, Christian, Lutheran, and

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Fisher, "The Development of Education in Rush County", p. 46.

Assembly of God.

Timken. The Santa Fe Railroad provided the impetus for the founding of another town in Rush County--Timken, which was established in 1886. The town was named after Henry Timken, who became well-known for the Timken Roller Bearings and Timken Elyptic Springs.

The Timken family emigrated to St. Louis from Manneheim, Germany, about 1840. The family consisted of the father, six sons and one daughter. One of the brothers, Henry, remained in St. Louis, but the others moved elsewhere. Jacob finally settled on a homestead about two miles west of Bison.

Henry worked as a blacksmith in St. Louis, and it was while working at his trade that he invented the Timken buggy spring. Later he bought the patent to the roller bearing which bears his name. Henry invested some of his surplus cash in Rush County land.

Jacob Timken later went into partnership with him, fenced a part of the land and stocked it with longhorn cattle. This became known as the Timken Ranch, and Jacob with his six sons lived there and operated it.

A section of Henry Timken's land was sold to a town-site company with the understanding that the town was to



be named Timken. The town-site company surveyed and platted a large part of the section into city lots, but the town never did really prosper.<sup>16</sup>

The first settler in Timken was Joseph Kraisinger, who served as the first depot agent for the Santa Fe Railroad.<sup>17</sup>

McCracken. Another town that was established in 1886 when the Missouri Pacific Railroad was built was McCracken. It was named for J. K. McCracken, the railroad contractor who was in charge of building the railroad through the town.

The first stake for the new town was driven on December 3, 1886. Selected as town officers were J. K. McCracken, B. F. Coughenour, E. S. Chenoweth, and E. C. Moderwell. A few lots were measured off and sold the same day.

McCracken started to develop and boom from the beginning, and within a year and a half, it could boast of a bank, three hotels, two hardware and farm machine establishments, two lumber yards, a weekly newspaper, a drug

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<sup>16</sup>The Rush County News, Kansas Centennial Edition.

<sup>17</sup>Fisher, "The Development of Education in Rush County", p. 56.

store, a picture gallery, a theater and dance hall, and several other business establishments.

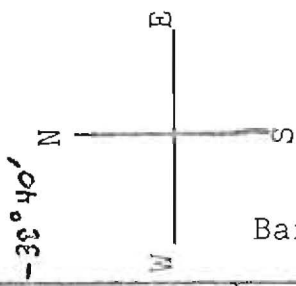
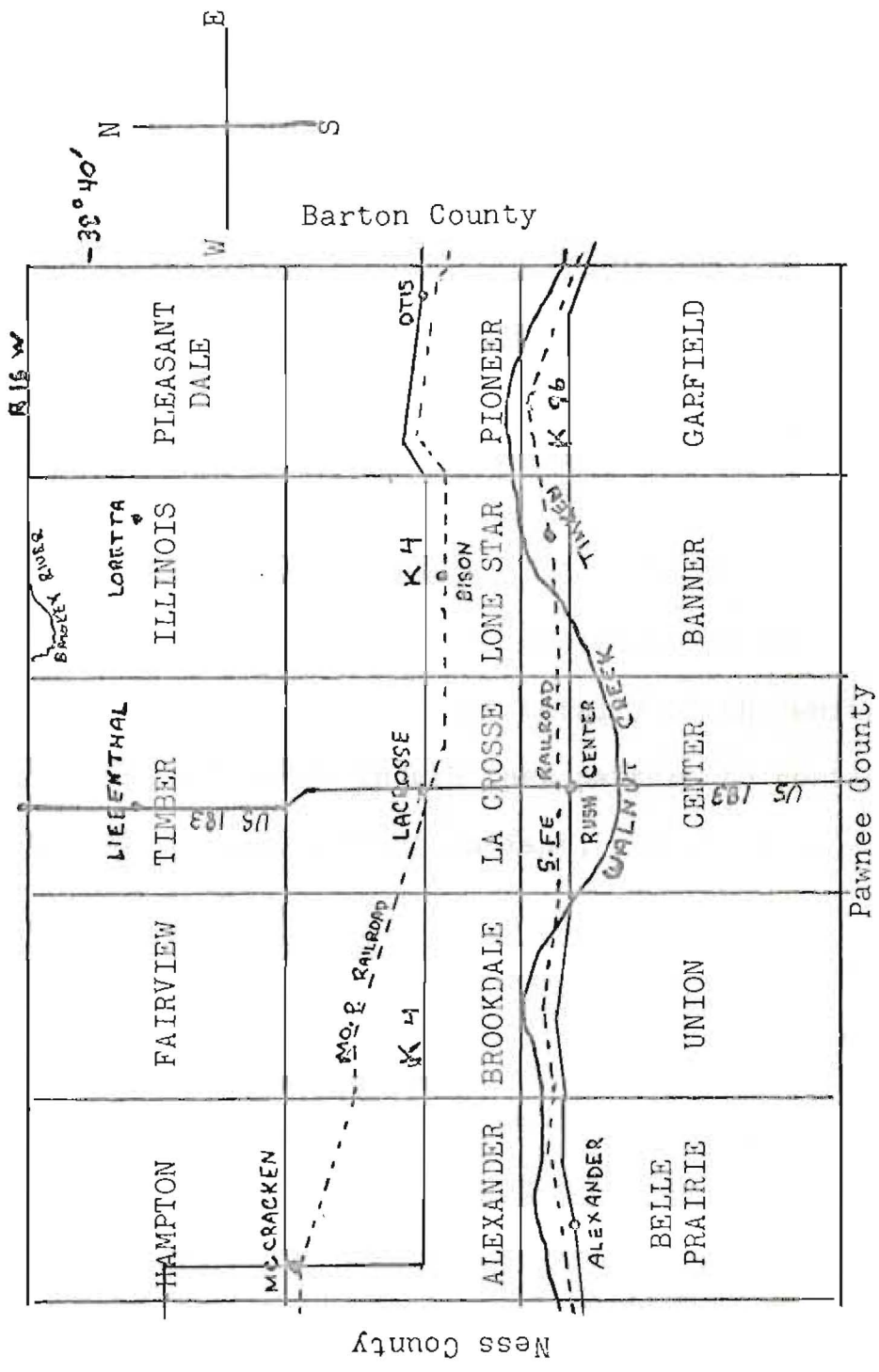
Churches represented in McCracken are Methodist, Catholic, Assembly of God, and Evangelical United Brethern.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>The Rush County News, Kansas Centennial Edition.

MAP OF RUSH COUNTY, KANSAS

Ellis County



## CHAPTER IV

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION

Rush County population from 1920 - 1960. Rush County, once part of the "Great American Desert", was soon settled. Almost every European country was represented by at least a few inhabitants; but, mainly, Rush County residents were, and still are, descendants of immigrants from Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Russia.<sup>1</sup> The population of the county was from the very beginning almost totally of the white race, and the 1960 census showed that pattern to continue with only three Negroes, eight Indians, and one Japanese residing in the county.<sup>2</sup>

The important thing, however, is not from where the people came, but that they did come. They came, eager for a future that would bring better things than had the past. The great majority of them thought that they would find such a future in the farms of Rush County.

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<sup>1</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1933), Vol. VI, p. 859.

<sup>2</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population: 1960, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), Vol. I, Part 18, p. 140.

Evidently many of the people did not find such a future, for a look at the population statistics of Rush County shows a steady decrease from 1930 to the present time. The peak of Rush County's population came in 1930, when the county's number of people rose to 9,093, a gain of 733 over the 1920 census count of 8,360.<sup>3</sup> This was the last time the county was to witness any population growth, for from then on, statistics show a continual drop in the number of Rush County residents.

By 1940, Rush County reported a population decrease of 8.9% with 8,285 residents, and by 1950 the number of people had declined to 7,231, a 12.7% drop from 1940.<sup>4</sup> This decline continued into 1960, when the census showed the total of all people in Rush County to be only 6,160.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the county lost 14.8% of its residents in the ten-year period from 1950 to 1960, and 36.4% in the thirty-year period from 1930 to 1960. In all, this amounted

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<sup>3</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Vol. VI, p. 846.

<sup>4</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population: 1950, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), Vol. II, Part 16, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>United States Census of Population: 1960, Vol. V, Part 18, p. 140.



to a loss of 2,875 people.

. Age of the population. While the population of Rush County is steadily declining, it is at the same time getting older.

Persons under 18 years of age comprised approximately 45% of the population in 1930, while in 1960 they made up only 34.8% of it.<sup>6</sup> By the same token, the number of those 65 years of age and older steadily increased. In 1930, only 5.2% of the people in Rush County were 65 years old or more.<sup>7</sup> By 1940 this percentage had increased to 6.6%, and by 1950 it increased to 9.4%.<sup>8</sup> By 1960, the population census showed that 13.9% of Rush County's residents were 65 years old and over.<sup>9</sup> Those in the age group between 18 and 64 showed a slight increase between 1930 and 1960, going from 49.4% of the total population to 51.3%. Probably this gain can be

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<sup>6</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Vol. VI, p. 884; and, United States Census of Population: 1960, Vol. I, Part 18, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Vol. VI, p. 884.

<sup>8</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), Vol. I, Part 3, p. 61; and, United States Census of Population: 1950, Vol. II, Part 16, p.32.

<sup>9</sup>United States Census of Population: 1960, Vol. I, Part 18, p. 37.

accounted for by the increase of those from 55 to 64 years of age.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, Rush County is losing its young people, who are being forced to go elsewhere to find their "brighter future."

Comparison of farm to non-farm population. All persons living in Rush County are classified as rural, since the largest town in the county has a population of only 1,767. Those living in small towns and villages are classified as rural non-farm.

Statistics show that this rural non-farm population is growing, percentage-wise, while the farm population is decreasing. In 1930, when the county's population had reached its peak, the non-farm population was only 39.7%.<sup>11</sup> In 1940, it had risen to 45.7%, and, by 1950, the non-farm population had surpassed the farm population with 55.8%.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Vol. VI, p. 884; and, United States Census of Population: 1960, Vol. I, Part 18, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Vol. VI, p. 846.

<sup>12</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1942), Vol. I, Part 2, p. 61; and, United States Census of Population: 1950, Vol. II, Part 16, p. 18.

Although the non-farm population had declined in number by 1960, with the smaller towns losing population, the percentage of non-farmers was even larger--63.4%.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>United States Census of Population: 1960, Vol. V, Part 18, p. 166.



## CHAPTER V

### POPULATION OF TOWNS

LaCrosse. The rise in the percentage of non-farmers in the county is due mainly to the growth of LaCrosse. Although most of the other towns of the county have lost some population since 1920, LaCrosse, the largest town of Rush County, has shown a steady gain.

The 1920 survey listed in the Kansas State Board of Agriculture's Twenty-Second Biennial Report showed the population of LaCrosse to be 942.<sup>1</sup> By 1930, the number of people in the county seat had risen to 1,316, and, by 1940, 1,521 persons resided there.<sup>2</sup>

A gain of 210 people was shown in 1950 when the survey showed 1,731 residents; but the population of LaCrosse remained fairly stable for the next ten years,

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<sup>1</sup>Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twenty-Second Biennial Report, (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1921), p. 476.

<sup>2</sup>Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1931), p. 486; and, Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Thirty-Second Biennial Report, (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1941), p. 440.

with the 1960 census showing 1,767, a gain of only 36 persons.<sup>3</sup>

In all, LaCrosse has added 925 people to her population since 1920, almost doubling her size.

McCracken. The overall change in the population of McCracken between 1920 and 1960 was only 11 persons, with the 1920 population being 415 and the 1960 population being 404.<sup>4</sup>

However, the population of this town did fluctuate more than that, for in the ten years between 1920 and 1930 it gained 126 people for a population total of 541.<sup>5</sup> In 1940 the population dropped to 494 persons, but by 1950 it was back up to 534.<sup>6</sup>

McCracken lost 130 people between 1950 and 1960, a loss of 24.3%, with the population census showing 404 people in 1960.

<sup>3</sup>Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1951), p. 324; and, United States Census of Population: 1960, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 476; and, United States Census of Population: 1960, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 486.

<sup>6</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 440; and, Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 324.

Otis. The population of Otis in 1920 was 364 and in 1960 it was 362.<sup>7</sup> A look at just these two statistics would imply that the town had remained the same size all through this forty-year period. However, it too had its fluctuations in population.

By 1930, Otis had gained in population, with the survey showing 408 persons living in the town, and in 1940, there were 413 people living there.<sup>8</sup> Another gain was shown by 1950 when the population reached its peak of 422 people.<sup>9</sup>

Between 1950 and 1960, however, Otis lost 14.2% of its population, or 60 persons, and its population went back to approximately its 1920 size, with 362 people.

Bison. Bison shows a rather large loss of population between 1920 and 1960. The 1920 population census showed Bison to have 356 residents, but the 1960 population was only 291.<sup>10</sup> This is a loss of 65 persons, or 18.3%, for the forty-year period.

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<sup>7</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 476; and, United States Census of Population: 1960, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 486; and, Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 440.

<sup>9</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 324.

<sup>10</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 476; and, United States Census of Population: 1960, p. 22.

In 1930, Bison's population was 407; by 1940 it was 50 persons fewer, or 357.<sup>11</sup> Between 1940 and 1950 the population declined by 22, with the 1950 census showing 333 people, and between 1950 and 1960 Bison lost 42 persons, leaving a total of 291 people in the town.<sup>12</sup>

Alexander. Between 1930 and 1960, Alexander lost 23% of its population. The 1930 census shows Alexander to have a population of 199 persons.<sup>13</sup> The town's population declined to 170 by 1940, but by 1950 it was back up to 188. Between 1950 and 1960, Alexander lost 35 residents, and the 1960 census showed its population to be 153 persons.<sup>14</sup>

Timken. The population of Timken dropped from 170 to 141 in the ten years between 1940 and 1950. In the next ten-year period, between 1950 and 1960, the population of Timken remained relatively stable with a gain of only 6 persons.<sup>15</sup>

Liebenthal. Liebenthal lost 20% of its population between 1940 and 1960. In 1940 Liebenthal's population was

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<sup>11</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 486; and, Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 440.

<sup>12</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 324.

<sup>13</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 486.

<sup>14</sup>United States Census of Population: 1960, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

265. By 1950 the total had dropped to 211, and by 1960 the number of people residing in Liebenthal totaled 191.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.



TABLE I

RUSH COUNTY POPULATION, 1920-1960					
TOWN	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
Total of Rush County	8,360	9,093	8,281	7,231	6,160
Alexander*		199	170	188	153
Bison	356	407	357	333	291
LaCrosse	942	1,316	1,521	1,731	1,767
Liebenthal **			265	211	191
McCracken	415	541	494	534	404
Otis	364	408	413	422	362
Timken**			170	141	147

\*Statistics are not available for 1920, because town was unincorporated.

\*\*Statistics are not available for 1920 and 1930, because town was unincorporated.

## CHAPTER VI

### CHARACTERISTICS OF RUSH COUNTY FARMS

Number and size of farms. From the preceding statistics, it is evident that people in the country are leaving the farms in great numbers. This situation is, of course, not unique to Rush County or to Kansas, but is occurring throughout the entire United States.

Every year in this country at least 100,000 farmers are forced to give up farming and sell their farms.<sup>1</sup> In 1965, President Johnson stated in his message to Congress on agriculture that more than seven million families lived on farms in the 1930's. He noted that today there are fewer than half that many farm families, and that, furthermore, "only about one out of ten boys now growing up on farms can expect to earn a good living as a full-time farmer."<sup>2</sup>

Rush County has followed closely the overall pattern of the farm population movement.

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<sup>1</sup>Diana L. Reische (ed.), U. S. Agricultural Policy, (Vol. 38, No. 3 of The Reference Shelf. New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1966), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

In 1920, farms in Rush County numbered 1,170; and in 1930, when the population of the county was at its peak, there were 1,174 farms in the county.<sup>3</sup> From 1930 until 1964 there has been a steady decline in the number of farms, until in 1964 statistics show that there were only 771 farms left in the county.<sup>4</sup> In other words, in the period between 1920 and 1964, Rush County lost 399 farms. This is a loss of 34.1%.

This reduction in the number of farms is in direct relation to the drop in total population of the county over the forty-year period. Also, the increase in size of farms in the county is relative to the decline of population and to the reduction in the number of farms; for, as the number decreased, the size of farms increased. In other words, most of the farms which "disappeared" were added to other operating units.

Thus, in 1920, the average farm of Rush County was made up of 363.8 acres, and by 1964 it had grown to 593

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<sup>3</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), Vol. II, Part 1, p. 1380.

<sup>4</sup>The Center for Regional Studied, Kansas Statistical Abstract: 1967, (Lawrence: The University of Kansas, 1968), p. 49.

acres.<sup>5</sup> This was an increase of 229.2 acres per farm.

It is interesting to note that in 1920 there were only 16 farms over 1,000 acres in the county; but, by 1964, that number had increased to 113.<sup>6</sup>

Some reasons for farm migration. The fact that United States farmers are leaving the farm in such great numbers at first seems incongruous when one realizes that they are considered to be the agricultural experts of the world. Each year they produce more abundant and better crops on the same amount of acreage. According to the Department of Agriculture statisticians, one hour of farm labor today produces more than five times as much food and crops as it did in 1920. Crop production is up 70% per acre, and, on the average, every United States farmer produces enough to feed himself and twenty-seven or twenty-eight others.<sup>7</sup>

Why, then, is there a farm problem when farmers are

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<sup>5</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 1298; and, Kansas Statistical Abstract: 1967, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 1306; and, United States Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1964, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), Vol. I, Part 21, p. 233.

<sup>7</sup>Reische, U. S. Agricultural Policy, p. 10.



producing crops so efficiently? Two major causes are mechanization and fierce competition.

Although farm machinery has paid off in many ways, enabling farmers to double and triple their production, it has forced them to buy more and more acreage in order to make efficient use of it. The small farmer finds himself needing more land and equipment to farm more effectively. It takes money to buy land and equipment, and, more often than not, the small farmer has already borrowed as much as the bank can lend him.

"Thirty years ago," stated President Johnson, "a good farm in the Midwest could be operated with a capital investment of \$18,000. Today, nearly \$100,000 is needed."<sup>8</sup> What happens is that the little farmer, unable to compete, ends up selling out to the big farmer.

Another cause of the present farm problem is the fact that, while production costs have risen sharply, the price of wheat and other grains has remained the same. For example, in 1920, wheat was \$1.85 a bushel and, in 1959, it was only \$1.76. In the same period, grain sorghums went from \$.79 to \$.78 a bushel, and silage went from \$7.35 a

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 11.



ton to \$7.43.<sup>9</sup> According to one Rush County farmer, "the margin of profit has simply become too narrow."

The farmer receives \$.38 out of every \$1.00 spent for food in the United States, says the United States Department of Agriculture. On many crops, however, his share is much smaller. In 1949, the farmer got approximately 3.3 cents for the wheat in a \$.14 loaf of bread. By 1965, the farmer received only about 2.6 cents for the wheat in a loaf of bread which sold to the public for \$.21.<sup>10</sup>

With these statistics at hand, one should not be surprised to learn that Rush County farmers are having a difficult time making finances reach.

Farm programs. Farm programs originated during the great depression of the 1930's, when the prices for farm goods sank so low that millions of farmers faced ruin. It was then that the Federal Government decided that it had to do something to help the farmer realize a reasonable profit from his investment of time and labor on his farm. Since then every president has searched, rather

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<sup>9</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 487; and, Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Forty-Third Biennial Report, (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1961), p. 283.

<sup>10</sup>Reische, U. S. Agricultural Policy, p. 12.

unsuccessfully, for an answer to this problem.

Starting in the 1930's, a method of assistance called price support was set up for what came to be known as the "basic commodities": wheat, feed grains, rice, cotton, peanuts, and tobacco. Later, dairy products were added. Basically, the method was the same for all crops--the government set a floor price for each crop, and, if a farmer could not get that price in the market, the government could pay him for his crop and take that part of the supply off the market. Eventually this was accompanied by acreage controls. However, the government-held surpluses and costs piled up.

In 1962, the program changed slightly. First, crops were now treated somewhat differently instead of having the same program for all. Second, farmers could choose whether or not they wanted to belong to the farm program. Third, floor prices were lowered and the government paid a straight cash subsidy to make up the difference between the new floor and a "fair" price. The reason for this change was to reduce the market price for home users and, perhaps more important, for export. Basically, this program is still in existence today.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-86.

Mainly because of government restrictions on the planting of wheat, the number of acres planted to crops in Rush County declined greatly in the thirty years between 1930 and 1960. In 1920, 283,875 acres were planted to crops, with 268,951 acres harvested and 14,924 acres of crop failures.<sup>12</sup> In 1930, the total number of acres planted reached a peak of 291,138. Of these, only 1,564 were crop failures and a total of 289,574 acres were harvested.<sup>13</sup>

In 1940, 240,100 acres were planted, but, because of the drought, 145,274 acres were crop failures and only 94,826 acres were harvested.<sup>14</sup> In 1950, 281,602 acres were harvested.<sup>15</sup> By 1960, there were only 215,322 acres planted to crops. Eighty-three farmers reported crop failures on a total of 2,972 acres, and 212,350 acres of crops were harvested.<sup>16</sup>

This large reduction in the number of acres planted

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<sup>12</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>13</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 1298.

<sup>14</sup>Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Agriculture, p. 725.

<sup>15</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Agriculture: 1954, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1956), Vol. I, Part 13, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1954, p. 217.

to crops shows the participation of Rush County farmers in the farm program. Most of them still participate, even though they have a choice of taking part or not.

According to one farmer, government controls and subsidies do help the small farmer to stay on the farm since, "it takes all the money a farmer can get from his wheat crop for the farming operation, and many times all he can pocket is what he gets from Uncle Sam."

Still, the program has its drawbacks. First of all, it must be understood that the big farmer profits the most from federal aid. Nowadays, the top 9% of all the nation's farms produce as much as the bottom 91%.<sup>17</sup> Since government bonuses and subsidies are granted not according to need but according to capacity to produce, it is understandable that the bigger the farmer, the more aid he will get. While the small farmer is barely sustained by the price supports, the big farmer realizes large profits from them.

Second, acreage control is really no solution for overproduction. The idea behind production controls is that if the number of acres farmers may plant is restricted,

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<sup>17</sup>Reische, U. S. Agricultural Policy, p. 70.



this will make crops scarce enough to raise their prices above the government-guaranteed support level. It has not worked. Farmers simply take their poorest land out of production, pour fertilizer onto the fewer acres permitted them, and produce almost as much as before.

Most farmers have mixed emotions about the government supports. They do not like being told what they can and cannot plant, but they realize that many small farmers simply could not make it without a wheat program. Many of them think it would be best to get away from planting just wheat and diversify, but statistics show the trends to be going in the opposite direction. Besides, unless irrigation is possible, there are not many crops besides wheat that will do well in Rush County.



## CHAPTER VII

### STATISTICS OF CROPS RAISED IN RUSH COUNTY

Specialized farming. According to statistics, farming in Rush County has become less diversified in the forty-year period between 1920 and 1960. The farmer no longer plants small acreages to varied crops, but instead plants wheat and grain sorghums almost entirely.

It used to be that most farmers raised their own vegetables, milked their own cows, butchered and processed their own meat; but, to a great extent, this is no longer the case. It is now as likely as not for the farmer to buy most of his groceries and meat from the local grocery store.

The farmer argues that because of the efficiency of specialization it is no longer worth the effort for him to grow his own food. In other words, it is almost as cheap and much more convenient for him to obtain vegetables, meat, and milk from someone who specializes in their production than it would be for him to produce his own. Too, the farmer, like everyone else, enjoys the convenience and variety of ready processed food.

Changes have occurred in other facets of farm pro-

duction, also. The following products have always played a major role in the economy of the Rush County farmer.

Because of specialization, decreased acreages, and other factors, however, some products have gained in importance while others have become less important.

Wheat. Wheat has always been the main crop and the chief means of income for the farmer of Rush County. However, in the forty-year period between 1920 and 1960, wheat production has dropped by approximately one million bushels. This decline in production has been due mainly to government controls on the amount of wheat allotted to each farmer. Of course, it must be remembered that the number of bushels produced per acre each year depends largely on moisture factors, and a certain amount of fluctuation in production from year to year is inevitable.

In 1920, 203,093 acres of winter wheat were harvested, but by 1959 this number had declined to 171,000.<sup>1</sup> Statistics show that the 203,093 acres harvested in 1920 produced 3,249,488 bushels of wheat, which meant a yield of a little over 15 bushels per acre.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 477; and, Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 477.

In 1930, wheat acreage increased to about 263,000 acres; however, yield per acre decreased from 15 bushels in 1920 to 11 bushels in 1930. The price of wheat dropped from approximately \$1.85 a bushel to \$.63, and although wheat production gained 400,000 bushels, the cash value of the 1930 crop was \$4,198,685.59 less than that of 1920.<sup>3</sup> The farmer of Rush County had a decrease in production with an increase in acreage; therefore, he had an increase in expenses while the actual cash worth of the product dropped.

In 1940, acreage in wheat in Rush County declined to 83,000 acres, and, because of weather conditions, production dropped to 622,000 bushels. This meant an average yield of only seven and one-half bushels of wheat per acre for the Rush County farmer. The low price of \$.63 a bushel was carried over to 1940, and this fact, plus the low yield and acreage caused the cash value of the crop to be more than a million and a half dollars less than in 1930. In 1940, wheat acreage dropped, production declined, yield per acre was less, and the cash value of the crop was lowered considerably.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 487.

<sup>4</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

The year 1950 presented a brighter picture for the wheat farmer of Rush County. In that year, wheat acres harvested had risen to 215,000, an increase of 132,000 acres over 1940. Production also rose over a million and a half bushels to a total of 2,172,000. Also, the farmer was getting a better yield with an average of approximately 10 bushels per acre, an increase of 2 1/2 bushels per acre over 1940. Price of wheat in 1950 was \$2.00 a bushel, and the total value of the crop jumped to \$4,365,700.<sup>5</sup>

In 1960, with improved weather conditions, the Rush County farmer had a better yield per acre, with wheat averaging approximately 12 bushels. However, wheat acres harvested declined to 171,000, a drop of 44,000 acres from 1950. Also, the market price of wheat was down \$.34 a bushel from 1950. These two factors combined accounted for a drop in value of the Rush County wheat crop to \$3,611,500. This was \$754,200 less than in 1950, despite a yield of two more bushels per acre.<sup>6</sup>

It must be remembered, however, that these prices do not tell the complete story of the profit or loss made

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<sup>5</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>6</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.



by the farmer in these ten-year periods. After the thirties, profit or loss in wheat production has been primarily decided by governmental controls. These statistics do not show the amount of governmental subsidies given to the farmer, nor do they show high and low yields in dry and wet years between the ten-year intervals. What they do show is that, although wheat is still the principal crop of Rush County, the number of acres planted to wheat has definitely declined, and the number of bushels of wheat harvested has also declined in the past forty years.

Corn. The dry climate of Rush County is not conducive to corn production except during an exceptionally wet season; therefore, corn has never been grown extensively in the county.

During the 1920's and 1930's, corn was somewhat important to the Rush County farmer as a feed grain to fatten cattle and hogs, but corn production decreased greatly over the years as more refined strains of milo or grain sorghums have been replacing it as feed.

Statistics show that in 1920, 12,312 acres of corn were planted in the county, producing 209,304 bushels of grain. Yield per acre was 17 bushels, and the cash value of the Rush County corn crop for the year of 1920 totaled



\$156,978.<sup>7</sup>

In 1930, corn acreage dropped approximately 4,000 acres to 8,359. Yield per acre also declined to only 5 bushels, and the total value of the crop dropped over \$126,000 to \$30,092.<sup>8</sup>

Only 900 acres were planted to corn in Rush County in 1940, and the yield was only 4 bushels per acre. The total cash value of the entire Rush County corn crop for 1940 was only \$2,800.<sup>9</sup>

Although there were even fewer acres planted to corn in 1950 than in 1940, that is, only 400 acres, production was up by over 6,000 bushels. Farmers received \$14,500 for their corn crop that year.<sup>10</sup>

The increase in yield was due mainly to the advancement of irrigation in the Walnut Creek valley. As more and more farmers in the valley installed irrigation systems, the corn acreage also increased.

In 1960, 590 acres in Rush County yielded 15,300

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<sup>7</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 477.

<sup>8</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 487.

<sup>9</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>10</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

bushels of corn for a total cash value of \$16,800.<sup>11</sup>

It can be safely said that the only corn raised in Rush County now is on irrigated land since past experiences have shown the farmer that, unless it is an unusually wet year, corn cannot be a profitable crop.

Grain sorghums. Grain sorghums have become a very important crop for farmers of Rush County both as a feed grain and as a cash crop second only to wheat. The use of new strains of milo, better adapted to the soil and climate of this part of the state, has helped to increase production.

Much of the grain sorghum raised during the 1920's was of the various types of crooked necked kafir corn that was tall and difficult to harvest. The new varieties of sorghum and also the new types of combines with a rasp cylinder instead of the old spike tooth cylinder have made it possible to harvest this crop with much more efficiency.

In 1920, Rush County produced 266,722 bushels of grain sorghum from 14,436 acres planted. This was an average yield of 18 bushels per acre.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.

<sup>12</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 477.

During the year of 1930, the acreage of grain sorghum decreased to 5,469 acres with a production of 75,879 bushels; that is, 13 bushels per acre.<sup>13</sup>

The acreage increased to 7,500 for the year 1940, and production rose to 81,000 bushels.<sup>14</sup> By 1950, the production of grain sorghums had increased to 231,490 bushels, although only 140 more acres were planted.<sup>15</sup>

Statistics show that the acreage planted to grain sorghum increased to 33,000 acres that produced 996,600 bushels of grain sorghum in 1959.<sup>16</sup> The federal farm program was restricting the production of wheat, and farmers began to plant more and more acres of idle land to grain sorghums.

As with corn, the production of grain sorghum has been increased with the use of irrigation in the Walnut Creek valley; but most of the grain sorghum in Rush County is grown on dry land. Farmers have found that, unlike corn, sorghums can be a profitable crop even without irrigation.

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<sup>13</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 487.

<sup>14</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>15</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>16</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.

Oats. Oats have greatly declined in importance as a crop in Rush County. In 1920, 11,619 acres of oats were planted, yielding 255,618 bushels and valuing \$171,264.<sup>17</sup> By 1930, the acreage had been cut by more than half to 4,184 acres which produced a crop of 104,600 bushels valued at \$37,656.<sup>18</sup> In 1940, there was a slight jump in acreage to 5,330 acres, but the production and the cash value of the crop was even lower--84,210 bushels totaling \$26,100.<sup>19</sup>

The year 1950 saw the acreage again cut more than half to 2,300 acres producing 26,450 bushels with a cash value of \$22,480.<sup>20</sup> By 1960, only 570 acres in Rush County were planted to oats. The yield was 9,120 bushels valued at \$5,900.<sup>21</sup>

In the forty-year period, the value of the oats crop decreased by \$175,364 in Rush County. Oats are no longer an important crop for Rush County farmers.

Barley. In 1920, barley was a rather important cash

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<sup>17</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 477.

<sup>18</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 487.

<sup>19</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>20</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>21</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.



crop for farmers of Rush County. They planted 9,970 acres to it and yielded 209,370 bushels worth \$171,683.<sup>22</sup>

In 1930 the acreage was cut drastically to 1,913 acres producing 40,173 bushels valued at \$16,470.<sup>23</sup> By 1940, when the production and value of most crops had been greatly reduced because of drought factors, Rush Countians increased their barley acreage to 7,680 acres yielding 107,520 bushels which were worth \$38,700.<sup>24</sup>

In 1950, acreage was again cut down to only 1,800 acres. Production was down to 11,160 bushels, and the value of the crop was \$12,050.<sup>25</sup>

However, in 1960 acreage was back up to 3,600 acres producing 64,800 bushels worth \$48,000.<sup>26</sup> Although this was the most valuable barley crop in Rush County since 1920, it was worth approximately \$130,000 less than that year's crop.

Irish potatoes. A study of the Irish potato crop

<sup>22</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 477.

<sup>23</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 487.

<sup>24</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>25</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>26</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.



in Rush County shows rather plainly that the farmer is becoming less diversified.

In 1920, 270 acres were planted to Irish potatoes, yielding 16,200 bushels for a value of \$29,160.<sup>23</sup>

In 1930, 230 acres were planted, yielding 13,800 bushels with a \$16,422 value.<sup>24</sup> By 1940, there were only 35 acres being planted to Irish potatoes, and the value of the crop dropped to \$1,050.<sup>25</sup>

Only 15 farms reported raising potatoes in 1950, and by 1960 there were no farms at all in Rush County that were growing potatoes for sale.<sup>26</sup>

Hay (prairie and tame). The number of acres in hay production has declined greatly between 1920 and 1960, going from 9,727 acres to 3,900 acres; and, the value of hay crops also decreased approximately \$90,000, from \$192,638 to \$103,300.

In 1930, 5,848 acres were put into hay production which yielded 9,492 tons of hay for a total cash value of

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<sup>23</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 477.

<sup>24</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 487.

<sup>25</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>26</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1954, p. 161; and, United States Census of Agriculture: 1964, p. 361.

\$87,727.<sup>27</sup> The acreage declined to 3,240 acres in 1940, which yielded approximately one ton per acre for a value of only \$22,770.<sup>28</sup> Acreage again declined in 1950 to 2,690; However, production went up to 5,040 tons and the value of the hay crop climbed to \$88,200.<sup>29</sup>

By 1960, acreage went back up to 3,900 acres yielding about two tons per acre for a cash value of \$103,300.<sup>30</sup>

Tame hay in Rush County consists mainly of alfalfa, with some sweet clover and sudan grass also being raised. The wild or prairie hay acreage has dropped from 6,715 acres in 1920 to 400 acres in 1960.

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<sup>27</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 487.

<sup>28</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>29</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>30</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.

## CROP STATISTICS FOR 1920-1960

TABLE II

WHEAT					
Year	Acres	Production (Bushels)	Bushels per Acre	Value (Dollars)	Price per Bushel
1920	203,093	3,249,488	16	6,011,552	\$1.85
1930	261,597	2,877,567	11	1,812,867	.63
1940	83,000	622,000	7	391,900	.63
1950	251,000	2,172,000	10	4,365,700	2.00
1960	171,000	2,052,000	12	3,611,500	1.76

TABLE III

CORN					
Year	Acres	Production (Bushels)	Bushels per Acre	Value (Dollars)	Price per Bushel
1920	12,312	209,304	17	156,978	\$0.75
1930	8,359	41,795	5	30,092	.72
1940	900	4,320	4	2,800	.64
1950	400	10,900	27	14,500	1.33
1960	590	15,300	25	16,800	1.09

TABLE IV

GRAIN SORGHUM*					
Year	Acres	Production (Bushels)	Bushels per Acre	Value (Dollars)	Price per Bushel
1920	14,436	266,722	18	210,902	\$0.79
1930	5,469	75,879	13	51,346	.67
1940	7,500	81,000	10	32,400	.40
1950	7,640	231,490	30	240,750	1.04
1960	33,000	996,600	30	785,900	.78

\* This includes feterita.

TABLE V

HAY, FORAGE, SILAGE					
Year	Acres	Production (Tons)	Tons per Acre	Value (Dollars)	Price per Bushel
1920	21,925	53,499	2	393,368	\$7.35
1930	13,321	30,248	2	194,383	6.42
1940	17,860	25,160	1	106,170	4.21
1950	74,640	56,260	3	359,970	6.39
1960	19,900	80,760	4	600,500	7.43



TABLE VI

OATS			
Year	Acres	Production (Bushels)	Value (Dollars)
1920	11,619	255,618	\$171,264
1930	4,184	104,600	37,656
1940	5,330	84,210	26,100
1950	2,300	26,450	22,480
1960	570	9,120	5,900

TABLE VII

BARLEY			
Year	Acres	Production (Bushels)	Value (Dollars)
1920	9,970	209,370	\$171,683
1930	1,913	40,173	16,470
1940	7,680	107,520	38,700
1950	1,800	11,160	12,050
1960	3,600	64,800	48,000



TABLE VIII

IRISH POTATOES			
Year	Acres	Production (Bushels)	Value (Dollars)
1920	270	16,200	\$29,160
1930	230	13,800	16,422
1940	35	1,750	1,050
1950	20	1,200	1,500
1960	None	--	--

TABLE IX

HAY ( Prairie and Tame)			
Year	Acres	Production (Tons)	Value (Dollars)
1920	9,727	16,825	\$192,638
1930	5,848	9,492	87,727
1940	3,240	3,230	22,770
1950	2,690	5,040	88,200
1960	3,900	7,660	103,300

## CHAPTER VIII

### LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY STATISTICS FOR RUSH COUNTY

Dairy cows. The dairy business has never been a major undertaking in Rush County because, since the county lacks access to large cities, there is a shortage of a ready market for milk and milk products.

Before the exodus of farmers from the county and while farm families were large, milk was produced for home consumption, and the surplus was sold to produce cheese and other milk products. In 1920, the number of milk cows in the county totaled 5,523, with a cash value of \$414,225.<sup>1</sup> By 1930, milk cows increased to 5,926, but the value decreased to \$302,226.<sup>2</sup> This increase in the number of milk cows and the decrease in value indicates that the dairy business was not prospering.

The number of milk cows increased until 1940, when there were 6,520 cows valued at \$365,100 in the county.<sup>3</sup> This was an increase of 594 cows and a \$5.00 increase per

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<sup>1</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. <sup>3</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

cow in value.

With the advent of World War II, diversification began to leave the Rush County farm because of the adaptability for the production of wheat with high wartime prices. The farmer, therefore, put his efforts into the more lucrative, but all eggs in one basket, wheat production.

By 1950, the number of milk cows was down to 4,260, but the value of the cows was up to \$768,300.<sup>4</sup> The higher value of the milk cows in 1950 might indicate that dairy farming was prospering as a small farm operation; however, the truth is that by this time health and sanitation laws were strict enough to force most milk producers to operate on a large, refined, and non-diversified basis.

These restrictions placed on the dairy business caused the number of milk cows to decline to 2,100 by 1960, a decrease of over 50%, with a value of \$470,400.<sup>5</sup>

Most milk sold by farmers now goes either to individual families or is used as a cheese milk by area cheese manufacturers that operate on a small scale.

Other cattle. Rush County has good cattle production

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<sup>4</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>5</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.

because of the availability of nourishing short grass pasture. Except for a drop in production during the drought of the 1930's, the raising of cattle has increased steadily since 1920.

Statistics show that in 1920 there were 12,162 cattle in Rush County with a value of \$547,290.<sup>6</sup> By 1930, the number increased to 15,370, although their value dropped approximately \$55,000.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the drought of the 1930's, cattle production was down in 1940 with 11,660 cattle on Rush County farms with a value of \$379,000.<sup>8</sup> From then on, however, cattle production and value has risen greatly.

By 1950, there were 23,240 cattle in Rush County, with a value of \$2,370,500.<sup>9</sup> By 1960, the total had climbed to 28,900, with a value of \$4,103,800.<sup>10</sup> Cattle raising had become an important way for the Rush County farmer to supplement his income.

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<sup>6</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 476.

<sup>7</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 486.

<sup>8</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>9</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>10</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.



The production of cattle has not been affected by specialization as have other facets of farm production. The farmer, however, has been practically put out of fat cattle production in Rush County by incorporated feed yards in neighboring territories. The production of silage and hay feeds and the operation of feed yards has become a business separate from general farm operations.

Swine. In 1920, the number of swine in Rush County totaled 3,611, and by 1930, the total raised had increased to 3,763.<sup>11</sup> Nineteen-forty saw the swine population decrease to 2,030, but by 1950 it was back up to 3,150.<sup>12</sup>

By 1960, however, the number of swine was at an all-time low, with only 2,000 of them raised in the county. Total value of the swine in Rush County in 1960 was \$60,400.<sup>13</sup>

Although this was \$17,068 higher than in 1920, there was a decrease in value of about \$9,000 between 1950 and 1960.

Sheep and lambs. The number and value of sheep and lambs in Rush County has increased slightly in the forty-year

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<sup>11</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 476; and, Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 486.

<sup>12</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441; and, Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>13</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.



period between 1920 and 1960.

In 1930, there were 2,233 sheep and lambs in the county with a total value of \$13,959.<sup>14</sup> By 1940, the total had decreased to 1,779 with an \$11,400 value.<sup>15</sup>

By 1950, however, the number of sheep and lambs was back up to 2,460, and their value jumped \$32,000 to \$42,790.<sup>16</sup> The year 1960 was even better for the sheep business in Rush County as the number of sheep increased to 3,120 with a total value of \$56,050.<sup>17</sup>

Chickens and eggs. In 1920, the number of chickens raised in Rush County totaled 188,251. The value of the chickens and eggs produced that year amounted to \$146,897.<sup>18</sup>

In 1930, 1,052 farms reported raising a total of 258,539 chickens. Eighty-nine percent of Rush County farmers raised chickens on their farms. Value of chickens and eggs that year totaled \$174,076.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 486.

<sup>15</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>16</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>17</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.

<sup>18</sup>Twenty-Second Biennial Report, p. 477.

<sup>19</sup>Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 486.

In 1940, the number of chickens raised dropped to 177,377, with 83% of the farmers reporting chickens. The value of chickens and eggs produced dropped by approximately \$7,000 to \$167,480.<sup>20</sup>

Only 52% of Rush County farmers reported raising chickens in 1950, and the total number of chickens declined to 92,261. However, due to a jump in prices, the value of the chickens and eggs produced rose to \$387,820.<sup>21</sup>

By 1960, less than 20% of Rush County farmers reported raising chickens on their farms. The number of chickens raised dropped by almost 17,000 to 76,000, and the value of chickens and eggs produced decreased over \$100,000 to \$258,150.<sup>22</sup>

Where once it was the usual thing for almost every farmer to raise chickens and produce eggs for sale, it is now rather unusual to see chickens on Rush County farms.

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<sup>20</sup>Thirty-Second Biennial Report, p. 441.

<sup>21</sup>Thirty-Seventh Biennial Report, p. 325.

<sup>22</sup>Forty-Third Biennial Report, p. 283.

## LIVESTOCK STATISTICS FOR 1920-1960

TABLE X

DAIRY COWS		
Year	Number	Value (Dollars)
1920	5,523	\$414,225
1930	5,926	302,226
1940	6,520	365,100
1950	4,260	768,300
1960	2,100	470,400

TABLE XI

BEEF CATTLE		
Year	Number	Value (Dollars)
1920	12,162	\$ 547,290
1930	15,370	491,290
1940	11,660	379,000
1950	23,240	2,370,500
1960	28,900	4,103,800

TABLE XII

SWINE		
Year	Number	Value (Dollars)
1920	3,611	\$43,332
1930	3,763	56,445
1940	2,030	13,090
1950	3,150	69,300
1960	2,000	60,400

TABLE XIII

SHEEP AND LAMBS		
Year	Number	Value (Dollars)
1920*		
1930	2,233	\$13,959
1940	1,779	11,400
1950	2,460	42,790
1960	3,120	56,050

\* Statistics not available for 1920.

TABLE XIV

CHICKENS AND EGGS		
Year	Number of Chickens	Value of Chickens and Eggs
1920	188,251	\$146,897
1930	258,539	174,076
1940	177,377	167,480
1950	92,961	387,820
1960	76,000	258,150



## CHAPTER IX

### FARM OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

Farms by tenure of operator. Between the years of 1920 and 1960 some changes were seen in the tenure of farm operators. There has been a definite decrease in the percentage of tenant farmers, while a greater percentage of farmers have become part owners. The number of full owners has declined by 5%, and the number of farm managers has always been negligible.

According to the United States Agricultural Census, a full owner is a farmer who owns all of the land he farms, while a part owner owns part of the land he farms and rents part of it.

A farm manager is someone who operates a farm or a ranch for the owner, receiving wages for his services. A tenant is a farmer who operates hired land only. He may be a cash tenant, who pays cash rental, so much an acre or so much for a whole farm; or, he may be a share-cropper, who gives a share of the product for the use of the land, or perhaps a share for part and cash for part.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 3.

In 1920, full owners totaled 313, or 27%, of Rush County farmers. Also, 27% were part owners. There were only nine farm managers in the county. However, almost half the farmers, or 45%, were tenant farmers.<sup>2</sup>

By 1930, full owners had declined 4% to 23%, and part owners increased 4% to 32%. The number of farm managers declined to three, and the percentage of tenant farmers decreased 1% to 44%.<sup>3</sup>

In 1940, full owners remained at 23%, part owners decreased to 31%, and the number of tenant farmers returned to 45%. Only two farm managers remained in the county.<sup>4</sup>

Full owners decreased to 22% in 1950, part owners rose to 38%, tenant farmers decreased to 39%, and the two farm managers remained in the county.<sup>5</sup>

Full owners remained the same in 1960, but part owners increased to 43%. Tenant farmers decreased to 34%. There was only one farm manager left in the county.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1298.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Agriculture, pp. 786-787.

<sup>5</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1954, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1964, p. 239.

Over the forty-year period, we see, therefore, full owners decreasing by 5%, part owners increasing by 16%, tenant farmers decreasing by 11%, and the number of farm managers dropping from nine to one.

These statistics show that the tenant farmer is the one who is leaving the farm by the greatest numbers. With the cost-price squeeze greatly reducing his margin of profit, he simply cannot afford to pay rent to or share part of his crops with a landlord. Generally, he begins his exodus from the farm gradually, usually by holding down a part-time job. Then, finding that he can probably make a better living by working off the farm full time, he eventually leaves his rented land altogether.

This makes more land available for the farmer who owns some land, but finds his acreage inadequate to provide him with a decent income. He rents the land once farmed by the tenant and farms the land he owns, thereby spreading his production costs over more acres and reducing his per-unit expenses.

Through this process, we see the full owner becoming a part owner, and the tenant being squeezed off the farm to seek his livelihood elsewhere.

Average value of land and buildings per farm. Due

somewhat to inflation and to general increases in prices and also due to the fact that the size grew by approximately 200 acres, the value of the average Rush County farm increased greatly between the years of 1920 and 1960.

In 1920, the average value of the land and buildings per farm in Rush County was \$18,464, and, by 1930, the average farm was worth \$19,727.<sup>7</sup> The economic depression of the 1930's with its years of drought and crop failures caused the value of the land and buildings to drop by over \$5,000, and by 1940 the average farm in Rush County was valued at only \$13,179.<sup>8</sup>

During the next ten years, as farms grew bigger, crop yields became larger, and prices, in general, increased, the value of the average Rush County farm jumped \$49,207 to \$62,386.<sup>9</sup>

This was a "golden period" for farmers. In contrast to the extended drought which had aggravated the farm problem during the 1930's, the weather was perfect for farming

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<sup>7</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 1313.

<sup>8</sup>Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Agriculture, p. 725.

<sup>9</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1954, p. 217.



during the 1940's. Farmers' incomes increased, and they were able to purchase the labor-saving machinery which previously they could not afford. Mechanization became very important since so many of the young men were in the armed services and the farmer found himself short of help. New fertilizers, sprays, and hybrid plants developed during this period combined with the favorable weather to produce several years of bumper crops.

This prosperity was short-lived, however, and it is interesting to note that in the next ten-year period, between 1950 and 1960, when farms were even larger and inflation even greater, the value of the farm decreased by over \$7,000, leaving the average value per farm in Rush County in 1960 at \$54,871.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1964, p. 51.



FARMS BY TENURE OF OPERATORS

TABLE XV

Year	Full Owners		Part Owners		Tenants		Managers
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
1920 (1,170)*	313	27%	318	27%	530	45%	9
1930 (1,174)	272	23%	376	32%	523	44%	3
1940 (1,128)	267	23%	348	31%	511	45%	2
1950 (996)	221	22%	380	38%	393	39%	2
1960 (871)	193	22%	375	43%	302	34%	1

\* Total no. of farms.

AVERAGE VALUE OF LAND AND BUILDINGS

TABLE XVI

Year	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
Farm	\$18,464	\$19,727	\$13,179	\$62,386	\$54,871

## CHAPTER X

### MODERNIZATION OF THE RUSH COUNTY FARM

Electricity. The scientific revolution has changed, to some extent, the life of the average Rush County farmer, his wife, and his children. Through the years he has enjoyed more and more modern conveniences in his home and in his work.

Probably the convenience that has brought about most of the changes in his home life is electricity, brought about mainly through the Rural Electrification Program.

In 1930, only 13% of the farmers in Rush County had electricity in their homes.<sup>1</sup> By 1940, the percentage rose to 23%, and, by 1950, it was up to 53%.<sup>2</sup> Virtually all farm homes in the county were lighted with electricity by 1960.<sup>3</sup> This, of course, made it possible for the farmer

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<sup>1</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 1380.

<sup>2</sup>Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Agriculture, p. 800; and, United States Census of Agriculture: 1954, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1964, p. 285.

to enjoy all the other electrical inventions designed to make life more pleasurable and decrease the work load.

By 1960, 79% of Rush County farmers reported owning a television set and 60% had a freezer in their homes.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, they were no different from most farm families across the nation, since statistics show that even the very poor farm families seem to do well with reference to mechanical refrigeration and television.

Indoor plumbing. Some farm families in Rush County are still forced to do without piped running water inside the house, flush toilets, showers or bathtubs. However, the problem here is mainly one of a lack of available ground water, not of finances, and the percentage of farm families lacking these facilities is small.

Telephones. Another invention which added greatly to the convenience of the farmer was the telephone. In 1930, 77% of Rush County farmers enjoyed this means of talking to their friends, calling a doctor, and doing business.<sup>5</sup> But, when the depression came about, people evidently thought of the telephone as a luxury item that

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 1380.

could be omitted. Therefore, by 1940, the percentage of farmers with telephones in their homes had dropped to 54%.<sup>6</sup> As times grew better, more and more telephones were installed. By 1950 the percentage had climbed back up to 65%, and, by 1960, 90% of Rush County farmers were enjoying the convenience of a home telephone.<sup>7</sup> In this respect they were much better off than some of the other farmers in the nation, since statistics show that, as an entire group, less than 66% of United States farmers had telephones in their homes in 1960.<sup>8</sup>

Automobiles and trucks. The automobile was another invention that helped to make the farmer less isolated and make things much more convenient for him. By 1930, 92% of the farmers in Rush County had automobiles and 36% owned a motor truck.<sup>9</sup> In 1940, again because of the long years of depression, the percentage owning automobiles dropped to 86%, but 54% owned motor trucks.<sup>10</sup> Evidently, the farmer

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<sup>6</sup>Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Agriculture, p. 800.

<sup>7</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1964, p. 285.

<sup>8</sup>Reische, U. S. Agricultural Policy, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 1380.

<sup>10</sup>Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Agriculture, p. 800.



thought of the automobile as a luxury item and the motor truck as more of a necessity.

Eighty-nine percent of Rush County farmers owned automobiles in 1950, and 83% of them owned motor trucks.<sup>11</sup> By 1960, virtually all farmers in the county owned both automobiles and motor trucks.<sup>12</sup>

Tractors. One implement that is practically indispensable to the modern farmer is the tractor. In 1930, farmers were still using horses to a limited extent, but those owning tractors already totaled 75%.<sup>13</sup> Despite the depression, the percentage had risen to 85% by 1940.<sup>14</sup> By 1950, virtually all farms in Rush County were equipped with tractors, and, of course, the same holds true for the 1960's.<sup>15</sup>

Through the years, the farm tractor has changed to keep up with the modern farm.

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<sup>11</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1954, p. 88.

<sup>12</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1964, p. 285.

<sup>13</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Agriculture, p. 1380.

<sup>14</sup>Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Agriculture, p. 800.

<sup>15</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1954, p. 88.



"As the farm becomes larger and the number of farmers decreases, it becomes necessary for the farm tractor to become more powerful," states a Rush County farm implement dealer. "Tractors sold in Rush County have increased in power and size according to the wants and needs of local farmers."<sup>16</sup>

Most tractors sold during the 1920's were considered to be two and three plow tractors while the later models run from four to seven plows.

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<sup>16</sup>Personal interview with Lester B. Schneider at Otis, Kansas, May 15, 1968.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RUSH COUNTY FARMER

Jobs off the farm. Besides adding conveniences to their farms, Rush County farmers have changed their lives in other ways, too.

The frequently heard statement is that the cost of living is very much lower on the farm than it is in the city. This is becoming less true as time goes by. As was stated before, farm families now grow less of their food than they did in the past. They have to pay just as much as the city dwellers for medical care, education, insurance, automobiles, household durables, and other items. They no longer build their own homes. They, too, have to pay taxes. In other words, their living expenses are just as high as those of the city family.

To help finance these expenses, many farmers find it necessary to hold down part-time jobs to supplement their farm incomes. Statistics are not available about the number of farmers in Rush County who worked off their farms for pay in 1920 and 1930. However, by 1940, 396 Rush County farmers, or 35%, added to their incomes

by finding part-time jobs elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> This percentage dropped to 32% in 1950, during the period when farming was quite profitable; however, by 1960, 337, or 44%, of all Rush County farmers were working off their farms for pay.<sup>2</sup>

Education. When it comes to education, Rush County residents lag behind the rest of the state. In 1960, median school years completed by those twenty-five years of age and older were 9.3. The overall average for the entire state was 11.7 years, showing Rush Countians to be more than two years behind.<sup>3</sup>

Marriage and divorce rates. Marriage rates in the county have changed slightly over the years. In 1920, 79% of the population over 15 years of age was married, but by 1960 the percentage was down to approximately 71%.<sup>4</sup> The change is probably due to the fact that by 1960 more people were finishing high school before marriage, and, therefore, less 15, 16, and 17 year-olds were married.

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<sup>1</sup>Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Agriculture, p. 792.

<sup>2</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1964, p. 273.

<sup>3</sup>United States Census of Population: 1960, p. 167.

<sup>4</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Population, p. 846; and, United States Census of Population: 1960, p. 140.



Divorce rates for Rush County are still low, although they have increased slightly in the same period of time. In 1930, only .7% of those over 15 were divorced, but by 1960, the percentage had risen to 1.1%.<sup>5</sup>

Recreation. Through the years the social life of the farmer has also undergone some changes. Although the thinning of the population and the elimination of the country schools and some churches has done away with much neighborhood social life, the automobile and good roads have made frequent trips to town for shopping and visiting possible. The consolidated schools bring the town and country students together, making them much closer than they formerly were. This is a good thing, since few of those farm children, whether they desire to or not, will remain on the farm when they are grown.

Yet, in some ways, there are many similarities between the social life of the past and present:

. . . the farmer, although he gets to town oftener and the memorable "Saturday night" is dead, has merely shifted his interests from horseflesh and cornshucking prowess to machines and how much each new attachment adds to production. Far from observing factorylike hours, he will drive 100 miles to look at

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<sup>5</sup>Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. Population, p. 846; and, United States Census of Population: 1960, p. 140.



a new or improved piece of machinery, or spend half a day at a quitting-farming sale, musing at the fast depreciation of the items on the block. Just as often he sits for hours in a livestock auction pavilion (a fairly recent innovation itself) without the slightest intention of buying. However, in the planting and growing and harvesting seasons he is extremely busy--if possessed of enough land, which is the rub.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Reische, U. S. Agricultural Policy, p. 22.

## CHAPTER XII

### ONE FARMER'S SOLUTION

Irrigation in Rush County was of small importance until approximately 1950, when the census showed that 28,538 acres of farm land along the Walnut Creek valley were being irrigated.<sup>1</sup> The number of irrigated acres rose to 68,356 by 1959, and, by 1964, 68,924 acres were being irrigated.<sup>2</sup> This is still only 12.2% of all the farms in the county; and, it is doubtful that the percentage will grow much larger since the Walnut Creek is the only stream that actually flows through the county.

On the irrigated land of the Walnut Creek valley, farming is much more diversified than in other parts of the county. As was stated before, corn can be grown successfully there, and other vegetable crops can also be produced.

One farmer who is trying hard to prove that diversified farming can be more profitable than just wheat farming is Maynard Glantz, who with his father, H. E. Glantz, has gone into the production of vegetables and fruit on a large-

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<sup>1</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1954, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>United States Census of Agriculture: 1964, p. 223.

scale basis.<sup>3</sup>

Living on a 300-acre farm which was developed for irrigation, they found that the return on growing wheat and feed grains was "just too small", so they decided to try planting something which would give a larger return per acre.

Glantz's Gardens, as the farm is known, started out with seven rows of corn 100 feet long, but has been expanded to the extent that no wheat is planted at all, and the entire farm is devoted to produce.

"I just can't afford to plant wheat," Glantz says, "since the cost of irrigation is high and the return on wheat per acre is so small. I am not a participator in the government wheat program."

Glantz states that he does not believe in controls and subsidies by the government. However, he does not think that most other farmers share his views, for, if they did not want them, "they could have voted them out years ago."

Glantz sells mainly corn, potatoes, and onions to wholesale outlets, but he also grows beans, tomatoes, peas,

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<sup>3</sup>Personal interview with Maynard Glantz at Otis, Kansas, May 6, 1968.

cucumbers, cantalope, and watermelons which he sells retail to people in surrounding towns and counties.

In 1963, Glantz started an orchard of hundreds of fruit trees--forty acres in all--which were to have produced their first fruit in 1965. That year, however, the blossoms were nipped by a late frost and the trees yielded no fruit. The same thing happened in 1966 and 1967.

Glantz said that he had counted on one fruit crop out of three, and he still thinks that it will probably average out that way over a period of years. If so, peaches should be joining corn, potatoes, and onions on the wholesale market.

Glantz feels that this type of farming is one way out for the farmer with a relatively small acreage who cannot make an adequate living growing wheat.

"But", he says, "three things are needed if it is to be a success: availability of water, inventiveness to adapt machines and methods to this type of farming, and initiative to undertake a project which calls for hard work together with the usual trials and errors which come from new undertakings."

Whether or not the project will be successful remains to be seen, since it is still too young to be judged.



At the present, it seems to be working well.

Perhaps, as Maynard Glantz says, this is one way out for some farmers; but for most Rush County farmers it is not feasible, since water is impossible for them to attain.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSION

The farmer of Rush County, Kansas, by heritage, choice, and necessity, is by and large a wheat farmer. In the past, if the wheat crop gave a good yield, the farmer prospered; if the wheat crop failed, the farmer was broke.

The present wheat farmer, however, has to have more than a good yield per acre to make his operation succeed. He must have a large acreage planted, a good business head, and capital to see him through bad times.

Although the Rush County farmer is mostly concerned with the raising of wheat as a cash crop, the grain sorghums and corn produced are marketable products to nearby feed lots. The local farmer does not attempt to compete with the corporate feed lot in the production of fat cattle, since, as with most everything he does, it is only profitable if it is done on a large scale. Although the county contains much pasture land, the farmer, for the most part, keeps only a breeding herd and sells the calf crop each year. During a drought year, when the pasture is short and the feed supply is not adequate, the farmer of Rush County does not want to be caught with large feeder stock on hand.

The raising of cattle remains the main livestock production enterprise, but a few farmers along the irrigated belt are beginning to go into pork production in an attempt to gain more profit from their feed grain production.

The production of other farm animals and poultry in Rush County is of such a small scale that it cannot be judged as successful. Any enterprise in stock or poultry production that would show any promise of being a successful venture would probably be a large operation somewhere within the county by now.

The farmer that owns some land is more apt to stay on the farm and become a large farm operator than the farmer who is attempting to rent without any ownership of land. As the number of tenant farmers decrease, the land that they tilled will become a part of the organization of the part owners. The rising value of land prohibits all but the large operator from being able to purchase additional acreage.

As the farm operation enlarges, it must of necessity become more efficient, and the easiest way to become more efficient is to purchase more modern machinery. The farmer is less dependent upon his back muscles and more dependent on his brain than ever before. Machines now do the work that was once considered possible only if the farmer applied

much "elbow grease."

The Rush County farmer, like his colleagues throughout America, loves farm machinery. He will buy new machinery to make life easier and more efficient even at the sacrifice of modern conveniences in the home.

The desire and need of modern machinery is good for the labor force in the machine-producing factories; but, the bigger, newer, and more efficient machines that he purchases and uses, the less need there is for the farmer.

Land owners who have land for rent want a tenant who is industrious and has the machinery to get a crop in and harvested at the right time and with speed enough to beat the elements. Competition among farmers to rent land is great enough to force the farmer to buy good machinery or to get out of the business.

The Rush County farmer has changed from being the backward "country bumpkin" to a more sophisticated rural urbanite. His contact with the outside world has given him the awareness of, if not the experience of, city living and its assets as well as its liabilities. With the coming of electricity and the modes of communication and rapid transportation, he has been able to get acquainted with some of the things that the future holds in store for him.



Some farmers believe that the solution to their ills is diversification. However, the Rush County farmer can diversify only to the extent that he is able to control the climate. Irrigation is relatively new in Rush County, and at present it is an impossible venture for most of the county farmers. Crops that they plant and harvest must be, for the most part, dry land crops. Those farmers who do have a supply of water with which to irrigate and diversify their crops and plant crops that are more profitable to raise will be able to continue as small acreage operators. Those farmers who cannot become larger operators and have found it impossible to irrigate will become dependent upon off the farm jobs.

According to President Johnson, "farming alone cannot be expected to provide a decent living in the future for more than about 1 million farm families even with continued Government assistance."<sup>1</sup> If this is the case, the young people of Rush County should be made aware that their futures lie in the cities; for evidently, the exodus from farm to city can be expected to continue for some time.

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<sup>1</sup>Reische, U. S. Agricultural Policy, p. 54.

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