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A Study of One Hundred Farm Security Administration Grant Families in Ellis County, Kansas 1939

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FORT HAYS KANSAS STATE COLLEGE STUDIES

GENERAL SERIES

NUMBER THREE

SOCIOLOGY SERIES No. 1



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BY

CLAIR A. BONDURANT



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PRINTED BY KANSAS STATE PRINTING PLANT
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F. B. STREETER, *Editor*

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Acknowledgments	4
I. INTRODUCTION	
History	5
Population	6
Agriculture	9
Research	12
II. FARM RELIEF	
Early Methods of Farm Relief.....	13
Beginning of Federal Relief and Assistance.....	15
Explanation of Farm Security Administration.....	16
Number Receiving Farm Security Administration Grants.....	18
Government Set-Up for Administration.....	18
Plan for Administration of Grant Relief in Ellis County.....	19
III. FAMILY BACKGROUND	
Length of Residence	21
Language Spoken in the Home.....	21
Father	22
Mother	24
Children	26
Conclusions	27
IV. LIVING CONDITIONS	
The House	28
Special Furnishings	32
Other Buildings	33
Conclusions	33
V. ECONOMIC SITUATION	
Ownership of Farm	35
Tenant Farmers	35
Farm Laborers	36
Income	36
Livestock	39
Fowls	39
Garden	40
Fruit Trees	40
Conclusions	40
VI. SOCIAL LIFE	
Recreation	41
Clothing	43
Communication and Transportation	43
Conclusions	43
VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
Conclusions	45
Recommendations	46
Appendix	47
Bibliography	47

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Population of Ellis County 1870-1939.....	7
II. Nativity of Ellis County Population 1900 and 1930.....	8
III. Total Population and Age Distribution of Population Ellis County and State of Kansas 1930.....	8
IV. Acreage of Crops and Number of Livestock in Ellis County from 1880-1939	10
V. Wheat and Rainfall in Ellis County from 1883-1937.....	11
VI. Number of Grant Families	18
VII. Duration of Tenure	21
VIII. Age Variations of Men and Women.....	22
IX. Health of Grant Clients.....	23
X. Education of Men and Women in Grant Families and Children Reported by Families	24
XI. Number of Children Per Mother.....	25
XII. Diseases Afflicting the Children in the Grant Families Studied and the Average Number of Children in Families Reporting Diseases,	26
XIII. Number of Rooms Per House and the Average Number of Persons Per House	29
XIV. Number of Rooms Having More than One Bed Per Room.....	29
XV. Number of Beds Having More than Two Persons Per Bed.....	30
XVI. Facilities in the Houses.....	31
XVII. Number of Farm Owners and Tenant Farmers in Ellis County from 1900-1935	34
XVIII. Size of Farm, Wheat Acreage, Indebtedness for the Farm Owners, Tenant Farmers and Farm Laborers.....	35
XIX. Number of Grant Families and Amounts Received.....	37
XX. Reading Material in the Homes of the One Hundred Grant Families	41

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF FARM GRANT
RELIEF IN ELLIS COUNTY

In earlier years when land lost its fertility or crops failed the farmers could move West or find a little work to take care of subsistence needs. During the present depression there were no new lands to be obtained nor was there any new work to be found, so the government had to find a new way to handle the farm relief problem.

Drought and depression were not the only causes of the farmer's troubles. Poor farm management, the defeatist attitude on the part of some people, and the attitude that "others are getting it, I might as well get my share," have marched side by side with the depression in Ellis county.

Some of the land was losing its fertility and some of the people were trying to farm land not suited to agriculture; but probably the major trouble was poor farming practices. The one-crop system was wearing out the fertility of the land and it was failing to produce enough cash, due to low prices. Farm credit broke down and farm tenancy increased rapidly. Farm housing conditions were growing worse and along with this went poor health.

A short history has been prepared as an introduction to this study of Farm Security Administration grant families in Ellis county.

HISTORY

In the western part of the state of Kansas is a county by the name of Ellis, which was named after Lieutenant George Ellis of the 12th Kansas Infantry. The boundaries of this county were defined by the Kansas state legislature in 1867. It contains an area of 576,000 acres and is bounded by the following counties: Rooks on the north, Trego on the west, Rush on the south, and Russell on the east.¹

The first permanent settlement in Ellis county was a military post, called Fort Fletcher, established October 11, 1865, on Big creek about fourteen miles southeast of where Fort Hays now stands. This settlement was destroyed by a flood in the spring of 1867, and the fort, the name of which had been changed to Fort Hays, was moved to the new site farther up the stream.²

A good many settlers were attracted to Ellis county in 1872 when a new clause was placed in the Homestead Act of 1862, giving sol-

1. Andreas, A. T., *Kansas History*, p. 1289.

2. *Ibid.*

diers credit for the time spent in the army, on the time they must spend on their homestead before a clear title could be secured.³ Also the Kansas Pacific Railroad having been completed about this time made it possible for many settlers to come to the county.

Some early attempts to cultivate the prairie in the vicinity of Hays were made, but they failed and nothing further was done in this line until the summer of 1871, when an attempt was made at farming near Ellis, Kansas, but it proved very discouraging.

In 1872 a small colony of immigrants from Ohio located at Walker, Kansas, with the idea of establishing a townsite rather than settling for agricultural purposes. A second colony was established in Ellis, Kansas, in 1873 by a group from Syracuse, New York, and the same year a group from Pennsylvania settled at Fort Hays. The third group was the English colony headed by George Grant, who located at Victoria, Kansas, and who purchased 50,000 acres of land from the railway company for the purpose of colonizing it with English agriculturists and stocking it with improved sheep and cattle.⁴

Within the next two or three years hundreds of Englishmen came to settle on the Grant purchase; however, experience taught the English colonists that Ellis county was not an agricultural region, and most of them returned to England.

In the year 1875, and the two years following, large numbers of German Russians came into this country and located in colonies and regarded Herzog, Kansas, as the capital of this new territory.⁵ Thousands of people came to Ellis county thinking it a grain farming region, only to learn after years of effort, that their impressions were wrong, and to move away. Proof of this is shown by the decrease in population from 1,336 in 1870 to 940 in 1875.⁶ Also, a few years later the population decreased from 6,180 in 1880 to 4,699 in 1882.⁷

POPULATION

From 1870 to 1882 the population of Ellis county fluctuated according to the crop yields. The population in 1882 was 4,699 and has steadily increased since that time.⁸ The following table shows the population of Ellis county from 1870 to 1939.

3. Appendix. *Homestead Act*.

4. Andreas, A. T., *Kansas History*, p. 1289.

5. *Golden Jubilee of the German Russian Settlement of Ellis and Rush Counties, Kansas*, pp. 14-15.

6. U. S. Bureau of Census, *Compendium of the 9th Census of the United States*. 1872, p. 191.

7. *Ibid*.

8. *Ibid*.

TABLE I.—POPULATION OF ELLIS COUNTY, 1870-1939

YEAR	Population	Percent of increase
1870.....	1,336	—20.7
1875.....	940	557.4
1880.....	6,180	23.4
1890.....	7,628	13.3
1900.....	8,626	23.2
1910.....	11,233	25.8
1920.....	15,148	5
1930.....	15,907	.8
1935.....	16,042	.....
1939.....	17,106	6.6

The table shows that the population in 1890 was 7,628 and by 1900 it had grown to 8,626.⁹ It continued to increase from 1900 until 1930, when the population was 15,907.¹⁰ From 1930 to 1935 the population increased very little, it being 16,042 in 1935.¹¹ The assessors' books in 1939 showed a population of 17,106.¹²

NATIVITY OF POPULATION

Ellis county received its first settlers from Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania and its first foreign population from England and Russia.¹³ In the succeeding decades settlers from several different states and many different countries came to settle in the county. In 1930 there were twenty foreign countries represented in the Ellis county population.¹⁴ They were England, Scotland, Wales, North Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, France, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Yugoslavia, Russia, Italy and Canada. The following table shows the distribution and percentage gains and losses of native and foreign born population during the period from 1900 to 1930.

9. U. S. Bureau of Census, *Compendium of the 12th Census of the United States*, Volume I, Part I, p. 583.
 10. U. S. Bureau of Census, *15th Census of the United States*, Volume VI, p. 481.
 11. Ellis County Clerk's Office, *Assessor's Records*, 1935.
 12. *Ibid.*, 1939.
 13. Andreas, A. T., *Kansas History*, p. 1290.
 14. U. S. Bureau of Census, *15th Census of the United States*, Volume III, Part I, p. 861.

TABLE II.—NATIVITY OF ELLIS COUNTY POPULATION, 1900 AND 1930 *

	1900 ¹⁵	1930 ¹⁶	Percentage of increase
Native born.....	6,568	14,535	121.3
Males.....	3,347	7,409	121.36
Females.....	3,221	7,126	121.2
Foreign born.....	2,058	1,306	-57.6
Males.....	1,089	666	-63.5
Females.....	969	640	-51.4
Total population.....	8,626	15,907	84.4
Males.....	4,436	8,108	82.7
Females.....	4,190	7,799	86.1

* Nativity and sex of Ellis county population not available previous to 1900.

NUMBER OF FARM FAMILIES IN ELLIS COUNTY

In 1930 the age groups of persons under twenty-five years of age included a larger percentage of the total population in Ellis county than that in the state as a whole, while in the age group above twenty-five years, the reverse held true. The following table shows the age distribution of population for Ellis county and the state of Kansas in 1930.

TABLE III.—TOTAL POPULATION AND AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION ELLIS COUNTY AND STATE OF KANSAS, 1930¹⁷

	Total number	Total	Percentage in each age group							
			Under 5	5-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Over 64
Total population:										
Kansas.....	1,880,999	100	9.2	19.7	17.9	14.5	13.4	10.8	7.6	6.9
Ellis county.....	15,907	100	14.5	26.5	20.1	12.9	11.1	7	.43	.41
Rural farm population:										
Kansas.....	704,601	100	10.1	22.7	18.5	12.5	12.7	10.6	7.3	5.4
Ellis county.....	7,981	100	15.8	30.4	21.1	10.5	10.3	6.3	3.3	2.2
Rural nonfarm populat'n:										
Kansas.....	446,564	100	8.8	18.3	16.9	14.8	13	10.5	8.2	9.4
Ellis county.....	3,308	100	12	22.2	17.7	14.2	12.4	7.1	5.6	7.8
Urban farm population:										
Kansas ¹⁸	2,595									
Ellis county.....	60									

According to the United States census, unless a village has 2,500 residents, the population is classed as rural. Under this classification Ellis county had only ten urban farm families in 1930.¹⁹ Hays

15. U. S. Bureau of Census, *12th Census of the United States*, Volume I, Part I, p. xlii; p. 588.

16. U. S. Bureau of Census, *16th Census of the United States*, Volume VI, p. 481.

17. U. S. Bureau of Census, *15th Census of the United States*, Volume III, pp. 821-842.

18. Includes 0-1 percent unknown.

19. U. S. Bureau of Census, *15th Census of the United States*, Volume VI, p. 481.

had a population of 4,565 in 1930 and was the only city in the county with a population greater than 2,500. Out of the one hundred grant cases studied in 1939, it was found that there were sixteen families living in small villages, which was a total of sixteen percent.²⁰ This is a very high percentage of farmers living in villages. In 1930 the total rural population in Ellis county was 11,289 and the number of farm families at this same period was 1,280.²¹

The average size family in Ellis county in 1930 was 4.18 persons, which was the largest average size family per county in Kansas.²² While making the study of the grant families it was found that the average size family was 6.8 persons; however, the average size family at home was 6.5 persons. According to the findings in the families studied, the farm population is increasing more rapidly than is the total population of the county.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the principal industry of Ellis county, but the people have learned to adjust their farming practice by raising more live-stock. As droughts came and wheat crops failed many settlers left the country. Those remaining turned their attention to cattle raising as a substitute for wheat farming, and used the deserted claims for grazing purposes. Gradually, with the coming of more rainfall, and the producing of better crops, the farmers again turned their attention to wheat farming, and the cattle raising industry decreased.

In the year 1874 the Mennonite colonists introduced a drought-resistant variety of wheat called Russian, or "Turkey Red," hard winter wheat into Kansas.²³ About 1890 this type of wheat displaced corn in Ellis county as the principal crop, and principally due to this fact the wheat acreage increased from 42,851 in 1890 to 110,006 in 1900. During this same period the stock cattle industry decreased from 14,230 in 1890 to 12,302 in 1900.²⁴ The drought from 1893 to 1897 again created a favorable situation for cattle ranching as crops failed and farm acreage decreased. Cattle ranching then became the principal source of income until superseded by wheat farming about 1920. The following table gives detailed information on the different crops and number of stock from 1880 to 1939.

20. Disregarding classification of cities.

21. U. S. Bureau of Census, *15th Census of the United States*, Volume VI, p. 467.

22. U. S. Bureau of Census, *15th Census of the United States*, Volume VI, p. 481.

23. Edwards, A. D., *Influence of Drought and Depression on a Rural Community*, Social Research Report, No. VII, January, 1939, p. 116.

24. Kansas State Board of Agriculture, *Biennial Report*, 1900, p. 223.

TABLE IV.—ACREAGE OF CROPS AND NUMBER OF LIVESTOCK IN ELLIS COUNTY FROM 1880 TO 1939

Item	1880§	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1936	1939
Livestock:								
Horses.....		4,962	6,647	11,624	14,338	9,836	6,355	3,322
Mules.....		371	277	761	1,335	820	282	171
Milk cows.....		3,638	3,082	5,585	5,963	5,199	4,934	17,939*
Other cattle.....		14,203	12,302	16,471	21,225	19,859	21,912	.....
Sheep.....		1,304	61	1,680	906	160	10,638	322
Swine.....		3,116	2,987	4,410	6,249	6,055	3,995	1,225
Crop acreages:								
Winter wheat.....	21,976	42,851	110,006	159,305†	199,682	234,585	191,959	240,096‡
Sorghum.....	370	4,933	5,504	3,233	14,448	11,278	19,573	14,807
Kafir.....		.....	14,448	11,016	650	4,018	.....	.....
Corn.....	13,592	132	40,549	58,196	9,421	16,402	11,412	1,777
Barley.....	55	552	333	5,032	19,317	3,331	3,281	1,618
Oats.....	1,222	7,131	833	5,230	5,764	1,805	1,804	1,473

* Milk cows and other cattle.

† For 1909.

‡ Crop acreage for 1938, 1939 not available.

§ Information previous to this date not available.

During this period of cattle ranching, a rancher could pay the taxes on several adjoining tracts of land, or usually he just "turned out" on unoccupied land, thus giving his cattle a large range over which to graze. As the prairie land was plowed by incoming settlers, numerous disputes over damage to crops by stock accompanied the plowing of the range.

A constant danger to the early settler and rancher was the danger from prairie fires until most of the land was plowed. The fires did not affect the cattle rancher as much as they did the grain farmer, because there was much available grazing land over which the fires did not spread.

Beginning about 1920 there was a great demand for wheat, and from that date to 1930 most of the tillable land was plowed and planted to wheat. Low prices for wheat in 1931 and the crop failures that followed have created a major crisis and caused a readjustment in farming. The changes, of course, were in the direction of expansion of livestock enterprises, but due to the severity of the drought, this expansion has not been very great. Federal aid, which has enabled farmers to rehabilitate themselves partially by various subsidies, such as loans, grants and allotments, have had a stabilizing effect, but the condition still exists and probably will exist until the drought subsides.

The average rainfall over five-year periods in Ellis county, the number of crop failures during the periods, and the average yield per period is shown in the following table.

TABLE V.—WHEAT AND RAINFALL IN ELLIS COUNTY FROM 1883-1937

DATE	Precipitation in five-year average	Wheat yield ²⁵ per period	Crop failures per period
1883-1887*	23.61	15.6	0
1888-1892	21.89	16	0
1893-1897	19.41	5.2	3
1898-1902	27.42	10.4	0
1903-1907	24.43	9	1
1908-1912	21.42	9.4	2
1913-1917	21.36	10.4	2
1918-1922	21.69	10.6	0
1923-1927	21.66	10.6	3
1928-1932	27.85	16.2	0
1933-1937	17.59	4.9	3

* No data available on wheat yield before this time.

25. Fort Hays Experiment Station, *Records; Crop Yield, 1883 to 1937.*

The Fort Hays Experiment Station reported that a six bushel per acre crop or less was considered a failure.²⁶ Only two of the five-year periods produced an average of less than six bushels. The only complete crop failure was in the year 1893. The years 1894, 1895, 1896, 1902, 1906, 1911, 1917, 1923, 1925, 1934, 1936, and 1937 produced less than six bushels per acre. Six bushels per acre were produced in 1909, 1913, and 1927. The average yield for all other years was above six bushels.

RESEARCH

In view of the fact that droughts, crop failures and economic depression have brought about such a government program of spending for the relief of the citizens of the United States and especially to aid the farmers in this section of the country by allotments, grants and several other subsidies, it became a desire on the part of the writer to make a study of the living standards of the farm families who are receiving emergency grants from the government.

There are approximately 160 emergency grant families in Ellis county, and from this group one hundred families were selected at random to include all parts of the county. A questionnaire was worked out and used in collecting the data found in chapters three, four, five and six. The information was gathered by visits to the homes of eighty of the families; by studying the case records in the Social Welfare Office in Hays, Kansas; by interviews with: Isadore Schmidt, Farm Security Emergency Grant home visitor; Ralph Furst, district welfare supervisor; Walter Crosson, district Farm Security Administration supervisor; and John Dreiling, county welfare director. Chattel and real estate mortgages taken from the case records were verified at the register of deeds office.

²⁶. Many factors enter into this average and cannot be used strictly, but was arrived at by considering cost of production under normal conditions.

CHAPTER II

FARM RELIEF

Farm relief as a national problem has grown enormously in the last few years in the United States. The governmental assistance received during this recent drought is not an entirely new experience to the farmers in Ellis county. Aid, mostly in the form of direct relief, has been given from time to time to relieve distress. Today benefit payments have taken the place of much of the direct farm relief. This plan of aiding the farmer was found to have started along in the eighties when farmers were compensated for plowing their own land, and section lines were purchased by the local government for the construction of roads. By the authority of the Kansas legislature roads were established on each section line and damages were allowed for land taken to build roads.¹

Direct relief at that time was in the form of grocery orders and clothing. These commodities were distributed to the needy by the trustees of the various townships who were overseers of the poor. According to the Commissioners' proceedings, as of January 7, 1891, all township trustees were to give food, clothing and shelter to all needy farmers. Later in the same year economic conditions were improving and more stringent rules were adopted by the commissioners in regard to giving aid.²

In 1891 the Kansas legislature appropriated \$60,000 to buy and distribute grain for seed to the destitute farmers in the western counties of the state, but the county commissioners of Ellis county refused to heed a petition from a few farmers of the county, saying that this was only an excuse for them to procure cheaper seed than they could buy on open market. The same feeling about outside aid seemed to exist here as did in Haskell county when the local newspaper opposed this proposal:³

Such talk should not be countenanced. It would do the county receiving such aid vastly more harm than good. In Haskell county, most people either have or will raise their seed wheat and those who are not able to buy will be supplied some way by their neighbors and friends. It, Haskell county, neither asks nor expects outside aid.

1. Ellis County Commissioners, *Proceedings*, April 13, 1889, p. 250.

2. Ellis County Commissioners, *Proceedings*, April 13, 1889, p. 250.

3. Edwards, A. D., *Influence of Drought and Depression on a Rural Community*, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Social Research Report, No. VII, January 1939, p. 83.

The drought beginning in 1893 lasted about five years and was so severe that the county of Ellis "purchased seed wheat to be sold to the farmers on one year's time, from the first day of October, 1893, to be taken with good security bearing six percent interest from date." Each farmer was not to receive more than seventy-five bushels with the understanding that the wheat must be planted.⁴

According to records of the board of county commissioners, on February 19, 1895, Ellis county was still furnishing seed.

An act of the legislature of Kansas, approved February 9, 1895, entitled "an act to provide seed for the needy farmers of parts of the sixth, seventh and fourth congressional districts"—and to make appropriations thereof, and pursuant to the apportionment made by you, we hereby make requisition for seed and amounts as follows: corn, 750 bushels; millet, 500 bushels; potatoes, 1,000 bushels; kafir corn, 500 bushels.

The basis for these amounts was determined beforehand on application of 500 farmers who were to receive the seed.⁵

An important element in the early local program was the provision for medical care. A county physician was paid out of local taxes to give medical attention to those who could not afford to pay for it. Bids were let each year for a county doctor. According to the Ellis County Commissioners Proceedings on Tuesday, July 6, 1886, three doctors put in their bids. The bids were \$100, \$120, and \$125. The one making the lowest bid was appointed by the commissioners.⁶ Today a county doctor is not chosen to take care of the needy families, but on prescription from a doctor medical aid is furnished to all needy families.

Insofar as the writer can determine no assistance was received by the farmers in Ellis county between the years 1897 and 1933. Since the beginning of the federal relief program in 1933, the county has coöperated with the program and has assisted in relieving the distress of its citizens. The county provides aid for those not adequately provided for by the federal government, also for those who are not eligible for federal assistance.

4. Ellis County Commissioners, *Proceedings*, Volume C, July 8, 1893, p. 137.

5. Ellis County Commissioners, *Proceedings*, Volume C, February 19, 1895.

6. Ellis County Commissioners, *Proceedings*, July 6, 1886. Dr. Deffenderfer was selected as county physician to give his "services as medical attendant and furnish medicine to the poor of Ellis County, Kansas," for the sum of \$100 per year.

BEGINNING OF FEDERAL RELIEF AND ASSISTANCE

Although the federal government has given assistance in the Great Plains area on a much larger scale during the recent drought than at any previous time, it has been interested in the development of this area for many years. The homestead and timber culture acts have been amended from time to time to make it easier for the earlier settlers, during drought periods, to prove up on their claims. At first there was to be forty acres of timber planted on the timber quarter,⁷ but the number of acres was lowered from time to time until ten acres would suffice, if kept in good condition for eight years. At the end of this period the settlers word was taken for the condition of the timber.

Although the federal constitution makes no mention of agriculture, it has come to be the most highly individualistic form of enterprise in which the people of Kansas have engaged, and it has turned to the state and federal government for encouragement and protection, and assistance during severe drought periods. In 1862 the Morrill act was passed granting tracts of land for the establishing of agricultural colleges in the states, and in 1889, after agricultural interest demanded the establishment of an agricultural department in the president's cabinet, their point was granted.

In 1918-'19 in certain sections of the West, loans were made to wheat farmers who had no resources due to successive crop failures. Ellis county did not need to participate at that time. Until the present drought conditions came on, crop and feed loans were made by the federal government as the need arose to relieve distressed conditions caused by droughts or floods in certain areas.⁸ Beginning in the year 1931, such loans were made on a national scale to relieve conditions brought about by the widespread economic depression.⁹

The principal lines of federal relief and assistance to agriculture before 1933 were: providing the farmer with land at little cost until the public domain was disposed of; increasing the production of agricultural products by carrying on scientific studies of soils, crops, weather conditions, and livestock; and summarizing results and in many ways promoting agricultural education.¹⁰ Direct relief and assistance, however, had been left entirely to local units.

7. United States Statutes, *Act of June 14, 1879*, Volume 20, p. 113.

8. United States Department of Agriculture, *Yearbook, 1918 to 1919*, p. 403-5.

9. Edwards, A. D., *Influence of Drought and Depression on a Rural Community*. U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Social Research Report, No. VII, January, 1939, p. 84.

10. Ogg and Ray, *Introduction to American Government*, p. 543.

Probably the federal program that played the most important part in Ellis county was the conservation program of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration which started in 1933, and the Farm Credit Administration of the same year which issued seed and feed loans, and financed farm mortgages through the Federal Land Banks.

The farmers who operated a large acreage were able to keep from receiving direct relief by receiving the benefit payments, but the farmers who operated a small acreage were soon in need of relief, so in May, 1933, the program of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration was inaugurated into the county.

In December, 1933, the Civil Works Administration gave employment to relief clients and other unemployed persons. This was the first set-up where farmers were permitted on the work program.¹¹ On March 1, 1934, the Civil Works Administration was discontinued, and the work was continued in Ellis county by the Kansas Emergency Relief Corporation. About the same time the Kansas Homestead Rehabilitation Corporation was inaugurated into the county for the purpose of aiding the farmers. In November, 1934, the Rural Rehabilitation program was organized to make loans to destitute farmers to enable them to become self-supporting on their own farms. When the loans came due, the farmers were unable to pay them so were given employment on work projects.

In July, 1935, the Rural Rehabilitation Division was transferred to the newly established Resettlement Administration, and this took over the work of the Kansas Homestead Rehabilitation Corporation. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration was superseded by the Works Progress Administration in November, 1935, and gave many of the farmers work. The National Youth Administration has given employment to youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four. A few of these have been farm boys and girls. In addition to this, the Civilian Conservation Corps has given aid to the young men of the county.

In 1935 the Resettlement Administration was transferred to the newly established Farm Security Administration.¹²

EXPLANATION OF FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

"The Farm Security Administration was created to help needy and low-income farm families to become permanently self-supporting. (Since 1935 it has helped more than 1,000,000 families—many of them from relief rolls—to get back on their feet.)¹³ Many of

11. Crosson, Walter W., (Interview), *FSA District Supervisor*, Ellis county.

12. Crosson, Walter W., (Interview), *FSA District Supervisor*, Ellis county.

13. U. S. Department of Agriculture, *The Work of the Farm Security Administration*, p. 2.

these families had been ruined by flood or drought or were victims of overwhelming burden of debt, poor farming practices, or worn-out land. Their credit was nearly gone and they would have been permanently dependent on relief if the government had not helped them to get a new start.

Various types of loans are provided by the Farm Security Administration to farm families who cannot get credit on reasonable terms or cannot get credit at all.¹⁴ Guidance is given in sound farming methods to make sure that the money is used to the best advantage.

In cases of extreme need, small grants are made to farm families for the purchase of food, fuel and other urgent necessities. Ordinarily these grants are made where immediate aid is needed to prevent starvation in areas stricken by drought, flood or other disaster. Ellis county, being in the drought area, has received large grants to meet this emergency.¹⁵ "Every effort is made to help families who receive grants to get on a self-supporting basis as soon as possible."¹⁶

There are three different types of grants which the Farm Security Administration offers:

The Standard Rehabilitation Loan case, who receives a loan from the government repayable over a period of from one to five years at five percent interest. The borrower signs a note for the amount of the loan which is secured by a chattel mortgage on livestock, crops and machinery. Due to reverse conditions the farmer finds himself without any income and must ask for a grant to buy urgent necessities. Ordinarily the Standard Rehabilitation Loan client does not receive a grant, but in some very unusual cases it is found necessary to give him one. This type of client is not included in the one hundred cases studied.

The emergency grant is one given to farm families who have received a loan, often a seed or feed loan, and were unable to work out a farm rehabilitation plan and so will be classed with the grant only cases in this study.

The grant only, usually called emergency grant case, is about past rehabilitation under present conditions. This type of case was not considered a good risk so was not given a rehabilitation loan but was given a subsistence grant to meet the immediate necessities of life.

14. Hereafter FSA will be used in place of Farm Security Administration.

15. U. S. Department of Agriculture, *The Work of the Farm Security Administration*, p. 5.

16. U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, *The Work of the Farm Security Administration*, p. 5.

The three different groups of people who are eligible for FSA grants are the farm owner, the tenant farmer, and the farm laborer.

NUMBER RECEIVING FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION GRANTS

It was found that the number of grant cases has been increasing in Ellis county ever since the FSA grant was first made. With drought conditions still existing it is quite difficult to rehabilitate the farmer.

The following table shows the number of families in Ellis county who received grants for February, March and April of the years 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939.

TABLE VI.—NUMBER OF GRANT FAMILIES, 1936-1939 ¹⁷

MONTH	1936*	1937	1938	1939
February.....	146	178	116	157
March.....	178	178	116	157
April.....	180	175	104	137

* Standard grant cases are included in chart for 1936 and 1937; 1938 and 1939 are "grant only" cases.

The field survey of the one hundred grant families was made during February, March and April of 1939. The corresponding three months are shown for the three previous years as a comparison.

GOVERNMENT SET-UP FOR ADMINISTRATION

In order to receive FSA grant funds the state must present a plan approved by the Federal Social Security Board, at Washington. Before a state gets assistance every county must approve the plan and agree to operate under the plan.

According to the Kansas constitution poor relief is to be administered by the county.¹⁸ Poor relief, according to the Kansas Statutes, was formerly administered by the township trustees, but this law was later repealed and the poor fund is now to be administered by the county commissioners. They are given power to appoint a poor commissioner who shall receive a salary of not more than \$125 per month.¹⁹ When the Kansas Emergency Relief Administration was created in 1933 under the social security act of the United States government, a provision was included that the poor

17. FSA Office, *Grant Card Files*, Hays, Kansas.

18. Kansas Constitution, *Constitution of 1861*, Art. 7, Sec. 4.

19. Kansas Statutes, *Statutes of 1935*, Chapter 39, Sec. 510.

commissioner should have a college education and some experience in social work. The case workers were also required to be college trained with some experience in social work. The counties were not required to meet these standards, but if they did not their federal appropriations could be cut off. The FSA emergency grants of less than \$30 are to be administered by the county, and are handled through the county director, with the approval of the FSA supervisor. All emergency grants in Ellis county are less than \$30. If the grant is above \$30 it must be approved in the regional office of the Farm Security Administration.

PLAN FOR ADMINISTRATION OF GRANT RELIEF IN ELLIS COUNTY

The county welfare director of Ellis county is appointed by the county commissioners and is subject to their pleasure for the tenure that he enjoys.²⁰ The county welfare board consists of the county commissioners, the county director and the county attorney.

The administration of the grants is more or less routine work. The client comes to the office and makes application for a grant. He is assigned to the case worker, who has charge of that particular phase of the work. The home visitor visits the home of the applicant and then makes collateral calls to verify statements of the client. These collateral calls always include the verifying of statements in regard to taxes and mortgages. Notes are taken on all interviews and written up in the office.

A budget is worked out by the home visitor, guided by a budget manual prepared by the State Board of Social Welfare, Topeka, Kansas. The home visitor and the county director pass on the budget, and approve the amount of the grant. If the client is not satisfied with the amount of grant, he may appeal to the county welfare board, and if he is dissatisfied with the decision of the county board, he may appeal to the state welfare board. This is all entered on the case history and filed away.

At the end of each three-months period the Farm Security grant recipient must call at the welfare office, where he will be reinterviewed, a new application blank is filled out, and a new budget figured out for the next three-months period. If facts disclosed at this time indicate a change in family situation and a need for reinvestigation, the case will be assigned to the home visitor for investigation. If there is no need for reinvestigation, the budget for the next

20. Dreiling, John, *Welfare Director of Ellis County, Hays, Kansas.*

three-months period is filled out and passed on as was done in the initial investigation.²¹

All possible means are used to encourage and aid the client to become self-supporting and initiative is encouraged in the client. Only a few families appear to be beyond the point where encouragement will be of benefit.

Visits to the client's home with the home visitor have led the writer to believe that a qualified worker is of prime importance, as many facts must be estimated, and a personal evaluation is often necessary. Every entry in the case history is substantiated as far as possible and any indication that there might be a relative who could possibly help is checked and traced to its source. It has been found that often a client's statement is untrue and several home visits may be necessary to get straightened out on the facts.

As the years pass the trial and error method is being supplemented by more valuable statistics and facts in compiling case histories, and social planning is becoming more of a reality in the United States.

21. Dreiling, John (Interview), *Administration of Farm Grant Relief in Ellis County*, June 3, 1939.

CHAPTER III

FAMILY BACKGROUND

One who receives relief is often thought of as being shiftless and on the move most of the time; however, this is not the case with the FSA families in Ellis county. They are the permanent residents who have lived here all or most of their lives. The necessity of having a permanent home in one county in order to receive the benefits of the poor law may hold some within the county.

LENGTH OF RESIDENCE

Eighty percent of the grant families have made their permanent home in the county from one to sixty-five years; however, many of the families have done considerable shifting around within the county. The following table shows the length of residence of the families on the farms where they were residing.

TABLE VII.—DURATION OF TENURE

TENURE	Families	
	Number	Percent
Total families.....	100	100
Less than two years.....	20	20
Two to five.....	16	16
Six to ten.....	13	13
Above ten.....	51	51

Of the one hundred families included in this study, twenty percent had been on the farm they were occupying less than two years. Thirty-six percent had operated the same farm five years or less.

LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE HOMES

It was found that seventy-three percent of the families spoke German in the home. Twelve percent spoke German and English, while fifteen percent spoke English entirely. A few of the parents were not teaching their children to speak German at all because they felt the children learned better in school if English was spoken in the home.

FATHER

The nationality of the father was predominately German. Ninety percent of them were of German stock; yet all but three percent were American citizens. The problem then is not a problem of providing for the foreigner, but a problem of providing food and work for our own people.

MARITAL STATUS

The marital status appeared to be better than in the average American community. There were no divorces in the families studied. Three were bachelors, two were married the second time and one was a widower.

The religion of the people enters the picture here. The Catholic Church can be complimented on the training it has given its people in regard to family relations and divorces. This training is well illustrated in the study of these families, as there were no divorces.

AGE

The age of the men showed a large percentage of them to be young men in the prime of life. The following table shows the age variations of the men and women.

TABLE VIII.—AGE VARIATIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN

AGE	Percent in each age group	
	Men	Women
Under 21 years.....		3
21-30.....	21	28
31-40.....	34	41
41-50.....	25	17
51-60.....	17	10
61-70.....	3	1

The table shows that none of the men were under twenty-one. The highest percentage of the men fell between the ages of thirty-one and forty years. Thirty-four percent were of this age group. The next highest age group was between forty-one and fifty with twenty-five percent in this group. There were only three percent above sixty years of age. As the majority of the men were comparatively young men, it appears that the plan of rehabilitation being worked out by the government is the best way to reduce the number of grant cases to a minimum.

HEALTH

The health of the men as a whole was good. There seemed to be a high percentage of both men and women enjoying good health. With the terrible living conditions of many of the families, and the depressing spirit which many of them seemed to have, it is hard to believe so few reported poor health. The following table shows the health of the grant families.

TABLE IX.—HEALTH OF GRANT CLIENTS

HEALTH	Percent	
	Men	Women
Good.....	72	74
Fair.....	16	20
Poor.....	12	6

The above table shows that seventy-two percent of the men reported good health, sixteen percent reported fair health, and only twelve percent reported that their health was poor. One noticeable thing was that there were more men reporting poor health than women.

RELIGION

The church membership was very much as one would expect to find in any German-Russian community. Ninety-three percent belonged to the Catholic church, two percent were Lutherans, two percent were Episcopal, and three percent were nonchurch members. Those of the Catholic faith reported more regular attendance than did those of other denominations.

EDUCATION

A summary of the education which the individuals reported shows very clearly that the men were not educationally equipped to make a living in many lines of business and may reflect why so large a number were receiving grants. The following table shows the education of the families.

TABLE X.—EDUCATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN GRANT FAMILIES, AND CHILDREN REPORTED BY FAMILIES

GRADE	Percent		
	Men	Women	Children
No schooling.....	5	2	16*
1-8.....	83	90	68
One year high school.....	6	2	4
Two years high school.....	3	5	5
Three years high school.....	2	1	3
Graduated.....	1	.....	3
Business College.....	.....	.....	1

* In this group were found families with no children or the children were too young for school.

Five percent had never attended school and forty percent had not as much as an eighth-grade education. Twelve percent had gone beyond the eighth grade, but only one percent had graduated from high school. One of the clients had one year of college. The opportunity for attending school was not as good for the older men, but most of the men of this generation and the children of these families reflect the same lack of education.

MOTHER

The women in these families were the first to suffer and they often presented a pathetic picture because they were the first ones in the family to be denied many of the necessities of life. The average size family in Ellis county would indicate that these women labor and die in their effort to reproduce children and care for them with few of the necessary means which the family should have.

NATIONALITY

The nationality of the mothers was predominantly the same as that of the fathers. Most of them were German or of German stock, but eighty percent were born and reared in Kansas.

MARITAL STATUS

All of the women, except one, were married at the time of the interview. In this one case the husband had died a few years earlier. Two percent had been married the second time. The lack of divorces again reflects the religious training of the women.

AGE

There was a higher percentage of young women than of young men. Three percent were below twenty-one. Twenty-eight percent were between the ages of twenty-one and thirty, as compared to the twenty-one percent of the men. There were twenty-five percent of the men between the ages of forty-one and fifty, while there were only seventeen percent of the women in this age group. Three percent of the men were above sixty, but only one percent of the women was above that age.

HEALTH

The number of the mothers reporting good health was surprising as compared with the number of children in the family and the living conditions of many of the families. Seventy-four percent reported good health as compared to seventy-two percent of the men reporting good health. The number of women having fair health was higher than the number of men having fair health. Twelve percent of the men reported poor health as compared with six percent of the women in poor health.¹ Thirty-four percent of the mothers had a child one year or younger. It would seem that the women have learned to adjust themselves to hardship and pain with less complaint than the men. The following table shows the number of children produced by each mother.

TABLE XI.—NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER MOTHER

MOTHERS	Children	MOTHERS	Children
2.....	0	4.....	7
10.....	1	10.....	8
16.....	2	5.....	9
9.....	3	8.....	10
13.....	4	2.....	11
13.....	5	2.....	12
3.....	6		

On examination it will be found that two percent of the mothers did not have children. Ten percent of the mothers had one child each, sixteen percent of the mothers had two children each, thirteen percent of the mothers had four children and thirteen percent had five. Two percent of the mothers had eleven children, and two percent had twelve.

1. Table IX.

RELIGION

A smaller percentage of the women belonged to the Catholic church than did the men. Eighty-seven percent of the women belonged to the Catholic church, two each to the Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, and one percent to the Christian. Four percent reported no church membership.

EDUCATION

Table X shows that two percent of the women had never attended school as compared to five percent of the men who had never attended. Fifty-two of the women failed to reach the eighth grade as compared to forty-one percent of the men who failed to get that far in school. Forty-six percent of the women and forty-five percent of the men reached the eighth grade. Only eight percent of the women attended high school and the farthest any one of them went was the junior year.

CHILDREN

As stated in chapter one, the average size of the family in Ellis county is the largest for any county in the state. Thirty-three percent of the families reported that their children were in poor health, and the larger percentage of the children in poor health came from the larger families. The following table shows the diseases afflicting the children in the grant families.

TABLE XII.—DISEASES AFFLICTING THE CHILDREN IN THE GRANT FAMILIES STUDIED AND THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FAMILIES REPORTING DISEASES.*

DISEASE	Percent by families reporting diseases	Average number of children in families reporting
Itch.....	3	9
Eye trouble.....	2	7
Adenoids and tonsils.....	3	6
Mentally unsound.....	2	9
Epilepsy.....	2	5
Paralysis.....	2	4
Disease unknown.....	3	6
Kidney trouble.....	3	7
Rupture.....	1	4
Undernourishment.....	11	7

* Source: Word of the parents, and case records in the welfare office.

On examination of the table it will be found that three percent of the families reported children with itch, two percent reported that their children needed glasses, three percent reported their children needed their adenoids and tonsils removed, mental unsoundness claimed two percent and epilepsy two percent. Two percent reported paralysis, three percent reported disease unknown and three percent had kidney trouble. One percent was ruptured and eleven percent of the families reported undernourishment as the difficulty.

EDUCATION

The education of the children is practically indetical to the education of the parents. There were sixty-eight percent of the families with children in the eighth grade or below. In only fifteen percent of the families did the children ever attend high school and only three percent graduated from high school. Table X shows the education of the children by families. On examination of the table it will be found that very few of the families were furthering their children's education beyond that which they themselves had received.

DELINQUENCY

Delinquency is a factor which does not show in the case records and is something about which little is said. This was a very difficult matter to handle in making the interviews. There might have been cases of delinquency or illegitimacy, but none was reported or found in the case records.

CONCLUSIONS

The average grant client was born and reared in Ellis county. He is thirty-nine years of age, in good health, and has about a seventh-grade education. His religion is Catholic and his marital status is good.

Two important facts which should be mentioned in conclusion are: first, there were no divorces, due to the training of the Catholic church; second, the education of the children is not being advanced any farther than that of the parents.

The writer feels that the problem of education is an important factor in the number receiving grants and will have to be remedied before the program of rehabilitation will ultimately remove all from the grant rolls.

CHAPTER IV

LIVING CONDITIONS

In studying living conditions of the grant families in Ellis county many of them were found to be living under conditions that we would not like to think are according to our American level of decency and well-being. Many of the homes were badly in need of repair, and a few of them were inadequate as shelter. They were isolated quite often, run down, devoid of household facilities and did not inspire any joy of occupancy.

It is possible to measure standards of living by tangible things, such as the number of homes having electricity, radios, running water, automobiles, and many other things of this nature, but things of far greater importance are food, health, clothing, recreational activities, religion, and opportunity to participate in community life. It would be impossible to measure living conditions by these more or less intangible things.

THE HOUSE

STRUCTURE OF HOUSE

A man's financial standing, his group relationships, his cultural achievements, at least partially, can be judged by the house in which he lives. The equipment and furnishings of that house offer further evidence of economic status and social rank. Eighty-nine percent of the houses of the grant families studied were frame, seven percent stone, two percent stone and frame, one percent brick and one percent tile. There were no sod houses left in the county.

STATE OF REPAIR

Some of the houses were barnlike and dilapidated, with no paint and it was possible in some to see daylight through the roof. In some of the houses the wind whistles through from around the windows and doors and from under the floor. A few of the floors had linoleum covering, but most of them were bare and unvarnished. Thirteen percent of the houses had some of the windows broken out, five percent of which were boarded shut and eight percent were covered with cardboard, gunnysacks or stuffed with rags.

According to statements of the occupants and in the opinion of the writer, thirty-six percent of the houses were in good condition, twenty-nine percent in fair condition, twenty-eight percent in poor condition and seven percent in exceptionally poor condition.

NUMBER OF ROOMS

Many of the houses were inadequate in size, and four families were found to be using the attic as sleeping quarters. Only two of the houses had a basement. The following table shows the number of rooms per house, and the average number of persons per house.

TABLE XIII.—NUMBER OF ROOMS PER HOUSE AND THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER HOUSE

NUMBER OF HOUSES	Number of rooms per house	Average number of persons per house
15.....	2	5.9
24.....	3	6.4
21.....	4	7
19.....	5	7.3
9.....	6	6.4
9.....	7	6.6
3.....	8	9

In studying the table it will be found that fifteen percent of the houses had only two rooms, twenty-four percent had three, twenty-one percent had four, nineteen percent had five, nine percent had six, nine percent had seven, and three percent had eight rooms.

NUMBER OF BEDS PER ROOM

It was difficult to get information on the number of beds per room. In the smaller houses beds were made on the floor, or on cots for the night and were removed during the daytime. Instead of giving percentages of these, the number of rooms containing more than one double bed and the number of beds per room will be given. The following table shows the number of beds per room where more than one bed was in a room.

TABLE XIV.—NUMBER OF ROOMS HAVING MORE THAN ONE BED PER ROOM

ROOMS WITH MORE THAN ONE BED	Number of beds per room
45.....	2
18.....	3
2.....	4
2.....	5

On examining the table it will be found that forty-five rooms had two double beds per room, eighteen had three, two had four, and two rooms had five beds per room.

As was reported, sometimes it was necessary for more than two persons to sleep in one bed due to the lack of beds, but more often the reason given was lack of bedding. It was found that as many as six persons were crowded into one bed at night during cold weather in order to have an adequate supply of bedding to keep them warm. The following table shows the number of beds with more than two persons in a bed.

TABLE XV.—NUMBER OF BEDS HAVING MORE THAN TWO PERSONS PER BED

Beds	Number of persons per bed
20.....	3
4.....	4
1.....	5
2.....	6

In studying the table it will be found that twenty beds had three persons per bed, four beds had four, one bed had five and two beds had six persons per bed.

BEDDING

Much of the bedding was in a sorry state. On many of the beds there were no pillowcases or sheets and some of the mattresses were filled with straw or corn shucks. Forty-four percent of the families reported bedding as poor or inadequate or a combination of both. Seventeen percent reported their bedding as fair, while thirty-nine percent reported their bedding as good and adequate.

LIGHTING

The use of electricity or gas for lighting purposes was exceptional among the grant families studied. The following table shows the different lighting facilities in the houses.

TABLE XVI.—FACILITIES IN THE HOUSES

FACILITIES IN THE HOUSES	Percent
Number of families, 100	100
Lighting:	
Kerosene lamps	90
Electricity	7
Gas	3
Heating:	
Heating stove	59
Cook stove	41
Furnace	0
Cooking:	
Range	73
Oil	27
Gas	0
Water supply:	
Well	79
Spring	2
Water piped into kitchen	2
Other supply	17

Only one family had an individual lighting system, six percent had electric lights, and three percent of the families lighted with gas. The other ninety percent, who did not rely upon gas or electricity to provide light for their home, used kerosene lamps.

HEATING AND COOKING

Heating in many of the homes was a problem, with eight, ten or twelve persons crowded into a two-room house, where means for proper ventilation was poor. Fifty-nine percent of the families had heating stoves, the other forty-one percent used the cook stove for both heating and cooking. Sixteen percent used coal exclusively for heating, while five percent used oil. In two percent of the homes chips were used exclusively while eight percent used chips and wood.¹ Thirty percent used wood for fuel.

One difficult situation which some of the ones using wood or chips had to face was the distance they had to go to procure the fuel, some traveling as many as eight or ten miles. In one unusual situation which we visited, we were informed that the large pile of sunflowers in the yard was used for fuel.

Cooking facilities were poor in many homes. Seventy-three percent used ranges for cooking, but some reported baking in them nearly an impossibility. Twenty-seven percent of the families used oil stoves for cooking and three percent used chips.

1. Chips as used here means cow-chips.

WATER SUPPLY

Of all the families studied, only two percent of them had water piped into the kitchen. Seventy-nine percent used well water, twelve percent hauled water, two percent used spring water, and five percent of the urban farm families carried water from their neighbors. Table XVI shows the different sources of water supply.

DISHES

Dishes were reported as adequate by eighty-six percent of the families. In some of these reporting adequate, it was observed that often times more than one child was drinking from the same cup at the table. The plates used were old pie pans with the enamel cracked off, or just ordinary tin pie pans. Thirteen percent reported dishes inadequate, while only one family reported dishes as being very inadequate.

TOILETS

Of the one hundred urban and rural farm families studied only one had an inside toilet, ninety-two percent had outside toilets, and seven percent reported no toilets.

SPECIAL FURNISHINGS

The furniture in a majority of the homes was poor and inadequate. In many homes benches and boxes were used for chairs and in only a few was there a rocking chair. Three of the families had pianos and seven families had organs. Twelve percent reported musical instruments other than pianos and organs. Only three children were taking music lessons and two other children were playing in school bands.

WASHING MACHINES

In visiting the homes, it was very plain to see which member of the family suffered and must pay in extra and harder work when economic conditions were poor. In only forty-six percent of the homes was there a power washer.

Several times on our visits to the homes we saw the mother doing the family wash over a tub and washboard, pausing in her work once in awhile to look after the baby or to prepare the one victual which was to be had for dinner.

REFRIGERATORS

None of the families studied reported refrigerators; however, two reported ice boxes, but stated they did not use them.

WIND CHARGERS

A wind charger, which might be used in several ways to provide conveniences in the home for the mother, was found in only four homes, and the only use made of them was to charge the batteries for the radios.²

OTHER BUILDINGS

On a majority of the farms the buildings other than the house were in poor condition and in several cases were about to tumble down. Generally, there was a car shed, chicken house, granary and barn, which were usually in poor repair with no paint. There was seldom a shed for the farm machinery.

CONCLUSIONS

The living conditions of the farm grant families in many ways were very unpleasant. The houses usually were too small, were unkept, and the conveniences which make home-making desirable were mostly lacking.

2. Radios will be discussed under social conditions in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC SITUATION

The granting of free land under the homestead act was intended to make it possible for each family to own a farm. The success of this plan was shown by the fact that 591 of the Ellis county farm operators enumerated in the United States Census of Agriculture for 1935 were tenant farmers and only 497 were farm owners. The following table shows the number of owners and tenant farmers in Ellis county from 1900-1935.

TABLE XVII.—NUMBER OF FARM OWNERS AND TENANT FARMERS IN ELLIS COUNTY FROM 1900¹ TO 1935²

YEAR	Owners	Tenants
1900.....	869	146
1910.....	1,041	266
1920.....	646	369
1930.....	421	510
1935.....	497	591

As droughts came many of the homesteaders mortgaged their claims and left, never to return, and as the mortgages were not paid the mortgage companies took the claims. The companies found the land practically worthless, so were forced to sell it for taxes, as did many individuals. In this way many wealthy land owners were able to acquire large land holdings at a very low price. From 1901 to 1915 the rancher and the land speculator were acquiring all the land they could. The farmers who arrived during this period possessed greater resources and were able to acquire larger holdings of land. As power machinery took the place of horses on the farm and it became a "patriotic duty" to raise more wheat, the prosperous farmer doubled his acreage and gradually crowded the little farmer out. Between 1920 and 1930 land was purchased by the prosperous farmers who desired to increase their acreage and by bankers and lawyers as an opportunity for financial venture. "As these people swarmed out to buy this Western land, prices soared as speculation

1. U. S. Bureau of Census, *13th Census of the U. S.*, Vol. VI, p. 580.

2. U. S. Bureau of Census, *U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1935*, Vol. I, p. 354.

got under way.”³ Thus, came about the nonresident, or “suitcase” farmer who, with the modern machinery, plowed most of the prairie land and planted it to wheat. As the wheat acreage increased surpluses began to accumulate and the price of wheat dropped as low as twenty-five cents a bushel in 1931 and was nearly a complete financial loss. The drought, beginning in 1932, combined with the economic depression, brought a major crisis in the economic life of the country.

OWNERSHIP OF FARM

The majority of families studied in this survey did not own their farms, and those who did had been forced to place heavy mortgages on them. Only thirty-one percent of the families visited owned their farms. The average size of these farms per family was 245 acres with an average wheat acreage of ninety-eight acres. The indebtedness per family on each farm was \$3,355.08. The following table shows the average indebtedness per family of the farm owners.

TABLE XVIII.—SIZE OF FARM, WHEAT ACREAGE, INDEBTEDNESS FOR THE FARM OWNERS, TENANT FARMERS AND FARM LABORERS⁴

	Farm owners	Tenants	Laborers
Number.....	31	61	8
Average:			
Farm acreage.....	245	219	.....
Wheat acreage.....	98	98.2	.....
Indebtedness.....	\$5,268.19	760.87	745.41

The different items of indebtedness include real estate, chattel mortgages, feed loans, interest, taxes, rent, medical bills, grocery bills and miscellaneous items. Fifteen percent of the families reported delinquent taxes of from one to four years. Seventy-four percent had unpaid doctor bills, and sixty percent unpaid grocery bills.

TENANT FARMERS

Sixty-one percent of the families studied were tenant farmers. This is a large percentage and creates a social problem which must be worked out constructively, for farm tenancy is a disadvantage in the lives of those who live and work on that plane. Not all of these families were tenants due to drought conditions. Several were working on a farm which they expect to inherit later, and some were

3. Carlson, A. D., Dust Blowing (in *Harpers Magazine*, Vol. 171, July, 1935) p. 156.
 4. Ellis County Welfare Office, *Case Records*, April, 1939.

young couples just starting out on the farm and through successful farming may gradually become farm owners.

The average size of farm which the tenant operates is 219 acres with an average wheat acreage of 98.2 acres. Although the size of the tenant's farm is smaller than that of the owners, his wheat acreage is larger. This is due to the fact that owners expect their tenants to sow as much wheat as possible. Many of the tenants have little grass land for cattle, so have no means of income when the crop fails. Table XVIII shows the average for size of farm, wheat acreage and indebtedness of the tenant farmers.

FARM LABORERS

The farm laborer stands at the bottom of the economic ladder, and during periods of drought and depression labor on the farm is not as necessary as in better times, and he suffers a great decline in annual income. Eight percent of the families studied were farm laborers with little chance for income except from the grants they received. The average indebtedness of the farm laborers is shown in Table XVIII.

INCOME

It is difficult to determine the income of the families. Most of them keep no record of their incomes and of course the less income the families have the greater chance they have of receiving a grant. Very few of the families studied raised farm crops last year, and those who did failed to make a profit on the crop.

FSA GRANTS

The direct money grants, supplemented with food and clothing commodities, provided most of the family living. The following table shows the number receiving grants and the average amount of the grant for three months periods in the years 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939. This method of aiding the farmer began in November, 1935.

It will be seen in the table that the average grant for the three-months period for 1939 is less than any previous year, which indicates that the administration of these grants is being checked more carefully and the families are doing more to become self-supporting.

The number receiving grants and the amount received vary with the season of the year. During the summer months the number may drop fifty or seventy-five percent when more income can be realized from farm products. Of the approximate 160 families who had received grants during February, March and April of 1939, only fifty-

TABLE XIX.—NUMBER OF GRANT FAMILIES AND AMOUNTS RECEIVED ⁵

YEAR	Number	Amount	Average
1936*			
February.....	146	\$2,975.50	\$20.38
March.....	178	2,607.00	14.65
April.....	180	3,535.30	19.64
1937			
February.....	178	3,435.00	19.29
March.....	178	3,515.00	19.74
April.....	175	3,492.00	19.95
1938			
February.....	116	2,710.00	23.36
March.....	116	2,723.00	23.47
April.....	104	2,114.00	20.32
1939			
February.....	157	2,965.00	18.88
March.....	157	2,938.00	18.71
April.....	137	2,327.00	17.20

* Standard grant cases are included in chart for 1936 and 1937; 1938 and 1939 are "grant only" cases.

five were still receiving grants in June and only thirty-five of the families were still on the grant rolls.

At the time the home visits were made the average grant of the farm owner was \$19.32, the average grant of the tenant farmer was \$17.93 while the average grant of the farm laborer was \$15.62. The average for all families studied was \$17.62 per family, but by June the amount was reduced from ten to fifteen percent when the average grant was \$15.37.

ALLOTMENTS

Thirty-nine percent of the farm owners and sixteen percent of the tenant farmers received allotments for 1938, or twenty-one percent of the total number of families. The average amount for the ones receiving allotments was \$177.56. The outlook for a wheat crop determines to a great extent the number who participate in the farm program. If crop conditions are very favorable when the application is to be made in November there is a tendency for the farmer not to comply, especially the owner, if he has a tenant farming his land.

LOANS

When crop failures continue, many of the farmers are unable to purchase seed to plant or are unable to buy feed for their stock and so are given a seed or feed loan. Forty-one percent of the families studied had a seed or feed loan which ranged from \$16 to \$900. The average loan of the forty-one families was \$215.17.

5. FSA Office, Hays, Kansas, Grant Card Files.

OIL LEASES

Within the last few years there has been a great deal of oil play in Ellis county; however, only nine percent of the farm owners reported having leased their land for oil. Not one reported receiving more than one dollar per acre.

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORP

Four percent of the families had boys in the Civilian Conservation Corp and were receiving financial help at home from them. The amount received by each boy was \$25.

Some of the families were skeptical about their boys going to the CCC camps, saying they did not wish to make soldiers of them; however, the boys who had been in the camps were favorably impressed with the program.

NATIONAL YOUTH ADMINISTRATION

The National Youth Administration gives employment to boys and girls of deserving families. Eleven percent of the families were receiving assistance from this source. Six percent of these families had one child on the NYA and five percent had two, thus making a total of sixteen children who were receiving \$14 each through this program.

EGGS

At the time of year the visits were made there should have been some income from the selling of eggs; however, only fourteen percent of the families reported having eggs to sell, and only one of these families reported receiving as much as \$5 per month from the eggs sold. The other families having chickens reported that they used all the eggs produced.

MILK

The particular time of year the home visits were made reflects on the amount of milk and cream sold. The average number of cows being milked was two, but several of the farmers reported that they would be milking more cows within the next month or two. Seventeen percent of the families reported selling milk or cream and the others who were milking cows reported they used all the milk produced. Twenty-one percent of the families were not milking cows.

It is evident in a number of cases that the heads of the families would rather receive a grant than to go to the trouble of milking cows or raising chickens, even for household use. When such a con-

dition prevails, it would appear that the client needs some education and instruction in farm planning.

LIVESTOCK

The drought and feed shortage during the past few years has made the prairies practically barren of livestock. The fact that the farmers have been unable to raise feed for their cattle, or money-crops by which they might purchase feed, has made it impossible for them to keep many cattle. Most of them have sold what cattle they had, with the exception of a few milk cows, in order to keep them from starving or to raise money for some immediate family need.

CATTLE

Eighty-five percent of the farmers reported having milk cows, and the average number of cows per family was three. Forty-five percent reported cattle other than milk cows and nine percent reported having butchered calves during the year.

PIGS

About sixty percent of the farmers reported having pigs on the farm and fifty-seven percent reported butchering pigs during the year. The fifty-seven percent who butchered pigs stated that they raised only enough to supply meat for the family needs.

HORSES AND MULES

Few horses or mules are found on the farms today, for the reason that power machinery has taken the place of horse power. In this survey it was found that fifty percent of the farmers had either horses or mules or both, and on the average they owned four for each family.

FOWLS

CHICKENS

Twenty percent of the farm homes visited had no chickens, while the average for those who did have was forty chickens per family. One reason for the small number of chickens found on the farms, or for none being found at all, in some cases, was the fact that the chickens supplied the family's meat until there were none left.

TURKEYS, GEESE AND DUCKS

There were few turkeys, geese or ducks on the farms, and the economic value was negligible.

GARDEN

Forty percent of the families reported that they had no garden in the summer of 1938. Eleven percent reported that they had raised a garden, while forty-nine percent stated that they had tried to raise a garden but had failed.

Several of the families reported that their gardens were nearly destroyed three different times during the summer of 1938. At first the hail damaged the gardens; then the grasshoppers nearly finished them, and finally the drought destroyed all that survived the hail and grasshoppers.

FRUIT TREES

There was not a fruit tree reported on any of the one hundred farms studied.

CONCLUSIONS

The income of these families was very low. About one-fourth of them received an allotment and less than one-fifth of them had either milk or eggs to sell. The major part of the family living came from the grants and commodities given through the welfare office.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL LIFE

The various churches in the communities, usually located in the small inland towns, are the centers for most of the group meetings and social life. Eighty-two percent of the families reported attending church regularly and twelve percent reported attending school programs.

RECREATION

Recreation in the homes as reported by the families consisted of games, reading, and listening to the radio. One stated they "pray once in awhile," while others reported they "sit and think." The principal social gatherings are an annual bazaar, and annual picnic in some localities, and weddings and wedding dances.

GAMES

The card games played, in order of frequency, were: pinochle, bridge, solitaire, cribbage and rook. Other games reported by the families were checkers and dominoes.

READING

There was little recreational reading in the homes. The following table shows the different papers, magazines and books in the homes as reported by the families.

TABLE XX.—READING MATERIAL IN THE HOMES OF THE ONE HUNDRED GRANT FAMILIES

READING MATERIAL*	Number of homes
Magazines:	
Country Gentleman.....	5
Successful Farming.....	4
Capper's Farmer.....	7
Country Home.....	10
Household.....	4
Farm Journal.....	5
Western.....	4
Kansas Farmer.....	2
Kansas Farmer Mail and Breeze.....	1
American.....	1
Collier's.....	1
Newspapers:	
Catholic Register.....	40
Weekly Kansas City Star.....	33
Ellis County News.....	42
Capper's Weekly.....	10
Wichita Beacon.....	1
Sunday Wichita Beacon.....	1
Hays Daily News.....	1
Books:	
Doctor book.....	1
Veterinary books.....	1
Library books.....	4

* One family may take more than one paper or magazine or both.

The table shows that only two take a daily newspaper, twenty-seven percent did not take a paper and sixty-seven percent did not take a magazine. Only five percent reported that they had books in the home to read; however, a few reported reading the children's schoolbooks.

RADIOS

Most of the radios found in the homes were small table models. Forty-eight percent of the families had radios, ten percent of which were not in working order.

BAZAARS

Usually about Thanksgiving time an annual bazaar is held which includes a day of festivities and ends with a dance in the evening. The Catholic people in the community donate food which is prepared and sold, the proceeds of which is placed in the particular church or school fund of the church conducting the bazaar. Non-catholics are welcome to the bazaar and many usually attend the evening meal and dance.

PICNICS

In some localities an annual picnic is held in June before harvest or in the fall while the weather is still favorable. This is carried on in about the same manner as the bazaar, each church member donating food, or a cash donation may be given which is used for the purchase of food to be sold during the day or to buy soft drinks. Many people other than Catholics attend the picnic and take part in the festivities of the day.

DANCES

Few of the parents in the grant families attend public dances; however, they stated that the children frequently attend them. Both parents and children usually attend the wedding dances.

The church in some of the communities has a dance platform which is rented for wedding dances. If there is no church platform a dance hall is rented which may or may not be in the local community. The parents of the bridegroom usually finance the wedding dance and refreshments for the occasion; however, this depends on financial circumstances and may be taken care of by the bride's parents, or may be shared by the parents of both the bride and bridegroom.

The traditional three-day wedding celebration of the German-Russian people, brought from the old country, is disappearing, due to economic conditions. Only a few three-day wedding celebrations have been held in Ellis county within the last five years, and within

the last two years there have been many Catholic weddings without wedding dances.

One traditional dance brought from the old country is enjoyed by the old as well as the young, and if the elderly folk do not dance any other dance they "trip the light fantastic" in this particular one. It is called "Hochzeit," a very lively German folk dance.¹

MOVIES

Few of the parents reported that they attended the movies. Several stated they had attended some free farm implement shows, others reported they had attended the movies two or three times in their lifetime, and about ten percent stated they attended shows once in a while.

The Victoria, Kansas, Catholic church has its own picture machine and has shows in the school building where a small fee is charged to attend, the proceeds of which goes to the general church fund.²

CLOTHING

Clothing was an important item in the social life of the families. The children as a rule had better clothing than did the parents. Ninety-one percent of the families reported Sunday clothing as adequate. Quite often, though, the father reported that his Sunday suit had been purchased ten or twelve years before. Twenty-three percent reported work clothing as inadequate. In a few cases, at the time the visits were made, the clothing worn by the families was almost in shreds.

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION

Only eight percent of the families had a telephone, while eighty-three percent of them had an automobile or truck, or both. The others stated they traveled by wagon, on horseback or on foot. Those who traveled on foot depended on catching a ride whenever it was necessary to travel any distance.

CONCLUSIONS

The social life of the families is centered entirely around the church, and all community gatherings and social functions are directed and supervised by the church people. Other than on a few special days each year, the parents have little opportunity for social participation.

1. Sr. M. Remigia Neder, (Interview) Principal, Girls Catholic High School, Hays, Kansas, June 29, 1939.

2. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to discover through the use of a questionnaire the living standards of the farm families who are receiving emergency grants from the government.

The aim in this chapter is to sum up the significant features of the study and make a few suggestions which appear to be important.

There seemed to be dissatisfaction among some of the recipients with this method of aiding the farmers as was expressed by several of the families. They seemed to think the whole setup was wrong, but were unable to give a satisfactory plan which might better the situation.

The writer believes this method of aid should be supplemented by a broader program of public works which might be carried out during times of depression and which could be supported by the government withdrawing large expenditures during times of prosperity and saved for the time when there is a general economic depression; or some practical form of crop insurance might be worked out to carry the farmers over the drought years. If wheat farming will pay over a period of years, such a plan might remove the need for emergency drought relief.

The writer also believes the plan of rehabilitating the farmer is a good plan since the majority of the men are comparatively young, but before the plan works very satisfactorily there will have to be an educational program carried out in farm planning and farm operating for and with these submarginal families who are receiving grants.

Another important factor which enters into farm rehabilitation in Ellis county is the fact that a majority of the farmers are tenants. The heavy burden of taxes has fallen on the farm owner. Improvements on the farm make the taxes so high the dwellings are not kept in a very good condition. An exemption up to a certain amount of improvements on the farm would encourage the construction of better dwellings and make living conditions better for these low-income families.

Conclusions relative to this research, and some suggestions which may be applicable to remedy certain situations, follow:

CONCLUSIONS

1. Most of the grant families are of German-Russian stock, but the majority of them were born and have lived all their lives in Ellis county and are American citizens.
2. The farm population is increasing more rapidly than the population of the county as a whole.
3. Ellis county has the largest average size family of any county in the state.
4. Farm relief is not a new problem in Ellis county, but dates from the years soon after the county was organized.
5. The average grant client is in the prime of life and should be self-sustaining, and probably a great percentage of them would be if given a fair chance.
6. The average grant client has about a seventh-grade education, usually acquired in a parochial school.
7. The education of the children is advanced very little beyond that of the parents.
8. Few of the men are socially handicapped or unable to do farm work.
9. The living conditions of the families were poor, with an average size family of 6.8 persons crowded into a four-room frame house, which in most cases was in need of repair and which contained few household facilities.
10. The farm buildings on most of the farms were unkept and uncared for.
11. Fifty-four percent of the farmers in Ellis county in 1935 were tenant farmers, and sixty-one percent of the families studied in this research were tenant farmers.
12. Fourteen percent of the families sold eggs and seventeen percent sold milk or cream.
13. Twenty percent of the farm families visited had no chickens, and twenty-two percent milked no cows.
14. The grants and commodities given the families supply the major part of the family living.
15. Forty percent of the families did not try to raise a garden. The ones who did try were able to raise very little, due to hail, drought and grasshoppers.
16. The grant families, especially the parents, have little recreation, card playing being the principal pastime.
17. Over three-fourths of the families had an automobile.

18. One-fourth of the families took no newspapers, and only two families received a daily paper.
19. The training received from the Catholic church has been an important factor in reducing the number of divorces to a minimum.
20. It is the belief of the writer that several of the emergency grant families will not attempt to become self-supporting and will want to remain on the grant rolls after the immediate need is passed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the compulsory school attendance law be made to include persons up to eighteen years of age or until they have completed four years of high school, and that they be taught vocational agriculture or other vocations in which they are interested. Girls should be instructed in sewing, cooking and home-making. Children who are unable to carry the work of the upper grades or high school should be required to take one of these courses. The state should assume a greater responsibility for this education.
2. That diversification of farming be increased and that fifteen to twenty percent of the present crop land be returned to grass.
3. No farmer be given a grant who does not live on his farm, milk some cows, raise some chickens, try to raise some garden, or who does not endeavor to become self-supporting.
4. A farm planning program by duly qualified civil service men, in coöperation with the local office be worked out with each of the grant recipients.
5. That contour farming and summer fallowing be used more to conserve moisture and to control dust blowing.
6. To the writer the most immediate important problem is increasing the effectiveness of agricultural training through organizations for discussion and study of common problems by organized groups. These might be worked out in community meetings through the Farm Bureau Office, or through the local FSA Office.

The writer has had very little source material to guide him in making this research and he realizes there may be many imperfections. He hopes that other studies may be made along this line which will help to bring to light the dream of our forefathers that this great land of ours is large enough and has wealth enough for all to have a respectable living and a desirable home in which to live.

APPENDIX

HOMESTEAD ACT

Every person who is head of a family, or who has arrived at the age of twenty-one years, and is a citizen of the United States, or who has filed his declaration of intention to become such, as required by the naturalization laws, shall be entitled to enter one quarter section, or a less quantity, of unappropriated public land; but no person who is the proprietor of more than one hundred and sixty acres of land in any state or territory, shall acquire any right under the homestead law, and every person owning and residing on land may, under the provisions of this section, enter other land lying contiguous to his land, which shall not, with the land so already owned and occupied, exceed in the aggregate one hundred and sixty acres.

(R. S. 2289; act May 20, 1862, C. 75, § 1, 12 Stat. 392 Mar. 3, 1891, C. 561, § 5, 26 Stat. 1997.

The soldier will receive credit for the time served; he must render one year to service title.

R. S. 2304-06; acts June 8, 1872, C. 338, § 1, 2, 17 Stat. 333; Mar. 1, 1901, C. 674-81 Stat. 847.)

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