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Population Changes in South Dakota

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W. F. Kumlien

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Population Changes in South Dakota 1930 - 1940

Vera Petheram
W. F. Kumlien






U. S. Depart

Population Gains or Losses
1930 - 1935



Legend:

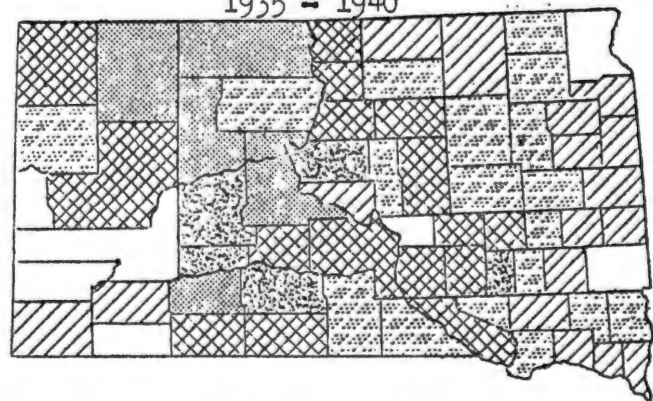
Decrease

-  0-4.9%
-  10.0 - 14.9%
-  5 - 9.9%
-  15.0 - 19.9%
-  20.0% and over

Increase



Population Gains or Losses
1935 - 1940



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Population Changes in South Dakota
1930 - 1940

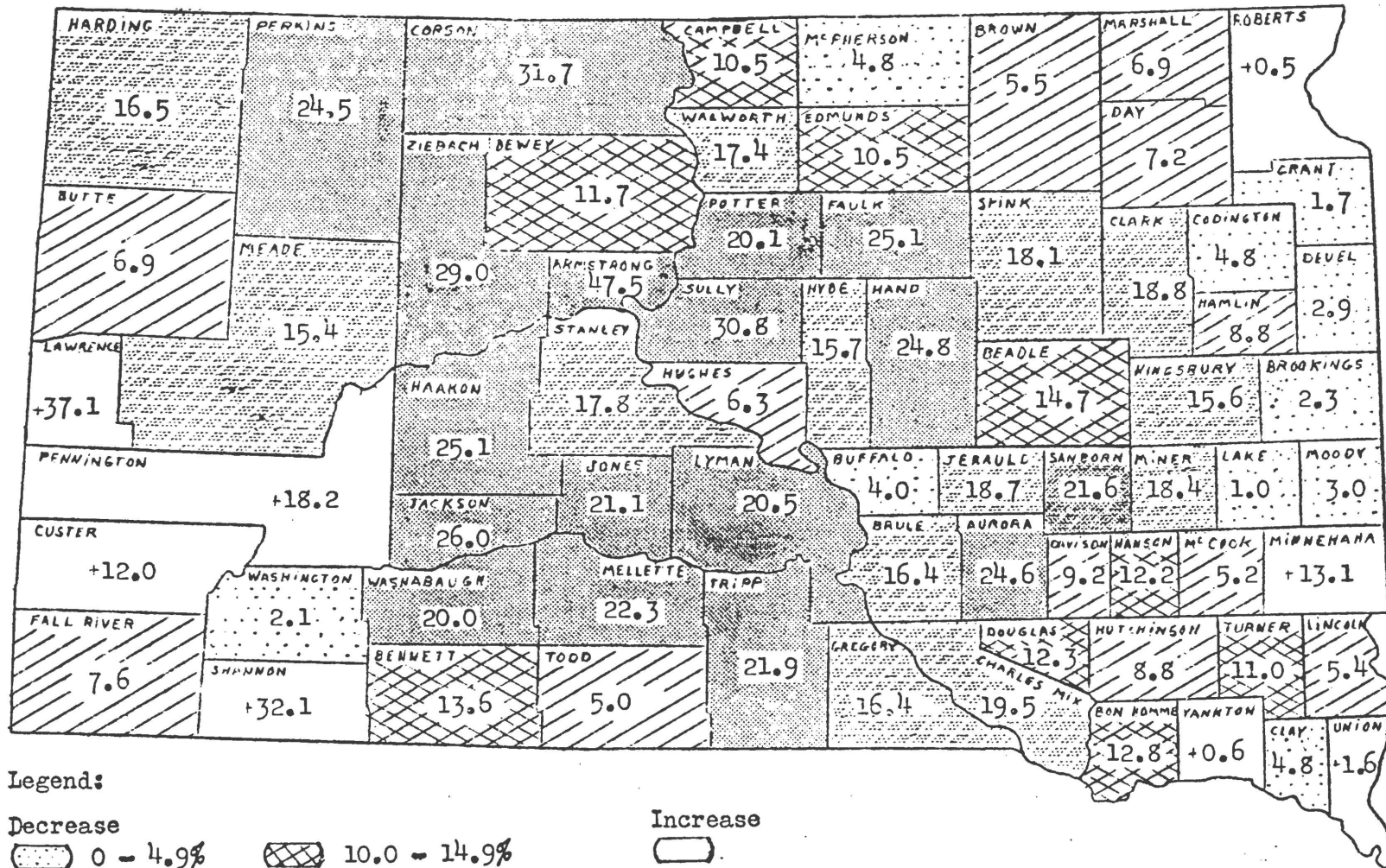
Preliminary releases from the Bureau of the Census show that all but 8 of the 69 counties in South Dakota have lost population since 1930, the total loss being 51,715 persons. The farm population suffered the greater loss. Although the farm population figures for 1940 have not been released, an estimate* shows a loss of 82,631 persons from farms in South Dakota. On the other hand out of 100 towns in all parts of the state, for which preliminary figures have been released, 63 showed a gain, 36 showed a loss and one town had the same population.

The greatest losses in population occurred in the central counties, especially those immediately east and west of the Missouri River. These are counties in which most of the population lives on farms or ranches. It is interesting to note that none of the heavy losses occurred in the counties along the eastern edge of the state, and there were no heavy losses in the Black Hills region.

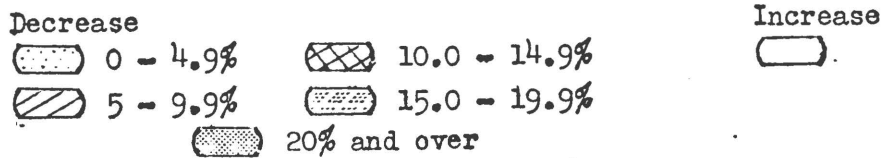
Three of the eight counties which gained population, Custer, Pennington and Lawrence were in the Black Hills. Lawrence showed the greatest gain, 37.1 percent, due to the boom in gold mining. Pennington and Custer Counties have attracted many persons from counties farther east. Rapid City gained 3378 people during the 10 year period. One other west river county, Shannon, in the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, also showed a heavy gain. Of the four counties east of the river which showed a gain three were in the southeast corner of the state, while one was in the northeast corner. Minnehaha County showed the largest gain, which was largely due to the 7284 person increase in the city of Sioux Falls and gains in some of the smaller towns of the county.

* Made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture from data collected by the Rural Sociology Department of the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with the Agricultural Conservation Committee of South Dakota.

Fig. 1. Gains or Losses in South Dakota's Population by Counties, 1930-40



Legend:



Source: 1930 - U.S. Census of Population
 1940 - Preliminary release of the Bureau of the Census

It appears that the loss in population has been greater since 1935 than it was between 1930 and 1935. In 1935 the farm population was 358,204 which represented a loss of 31,224 persons as compared with an estimated loss of 51,404 persons between 1935 and 1940. The severe droughts of 1934 and 1936 gave a great impetus toward movement out of the state, especially from the central and western counties.

Table 1 shows the estimates made for the state for the last three years.

Table 1 Estimated Farm Population Movements in South Dakota, 1937-1940.

	1937	1938	1939	1940
Farm population, Jan. 1	327,800	311,700	307,900	306,800
Births	6,500	6,500	6,000	—
Arrivals from city, town or village	3,000	6,000	4,000	—
Arrivals from other farms	20,000	16,000	15,000	—
Departures to other farms	27,000	19,000	16,000	—
Departures to city, town or village	16,000	11,000	8,000	—
Deaths	2,600	2,300	2,100	—

Source: Estimates made by the Division of Farm Population & Rural Welfare of the U.S.D.A. from data collected by the Rural Sociology Department of the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with the Agricultural Conservation Committee of South Dakota.

These figures indicate that the migration from the farms has been slowing down. The loss in farm population per year has been about as follows:

1937 - 16,100
 1938 - 3,800
 1939 - 1,100

Migration both to farms in other states and to cities, towns or villages apparently has been checked to a great extent.

At the same time the migration, especially the migration out of the state, appears to be taking on a different character as shown in Table 2. The percentage both of families and of total persons moving to the Pacific Coast states declined abruptly between 1937 and 1938, while there was a corresponding

increase in the number of persons moving to neighboring states.

Table 2 Farm Families and Persons Moving From the State by Place of Destination

	1937		1938		1939	
	Families	Persons	Families	Persons	Families	Persons
Total moving out	414	1612	172	623	95	329
Moving to neighboring states	137*	535	89	356	45	172
Percent moving to neighboring states	33.1	33.2	51.7	57.1	47.4	52.3
Moving to Pacific States	175	671	44	134	23	74
Percent moving to Pacific States	42.3	41.6	25.6	21.5	24.2	22.5

* Includes one family whose number of persons was not reported.

Source: Schedules secured by the Rural Sociology Department in cooperation with the Agricultural Conservation Committee of South Dakota.

In 1939 half of the farm people moving from the state to neighboring states moved from the border counties, which would indicate that much of the migration out of the state may have been merely movement from farm to farm in the same community even though a state boundary was crossed.

From the information here presented it is evident that there has been a heavy loss in the total population of the state since 1930, with the greatest loss from the farms. However, there are indications that migration from the farms has now been considerably checked and there seems to be some movement back to the farms from cities and towns. It also seems that fewer of those leaving the state go as far as formerly, particularly to the West Coast.