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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS
POTENTIAL OF CHOUTEAU AND TETON COUNTIES

By

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B.B.A., Baylor University, 1974

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the degree of

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This report is a descriptive study of the economic and business potential of two Montana counties: Chouteau County and Teton County. They are located in North Central Montana.

Chouteau County is surrounded on the south by Cascade, Judith Basin, and Fergus Counties; on the east by Blaine County, to the north by Hill and Liberty Counties; and on the west by Pondera and Teton Counties. Chouteau County has an area of 4,032 square miles, the tenth largest in the state.¹ Geographically, the county is located on low hills with the Highwood Mountains in the south and the Bear Paw Mountains in the north. Three rivers--the Missouri, the Teton, and the Marias flow through the county. The Missouri River is by far the largest and most navigable river. The County Seat and only city is Fort Benton. Located in the center of the county on the Missouri River, it represents the single concentration of business in the county. There are also two towns of note--Geraldine, to the southeast of Fort Benton, and Big Sandy, northeast of Fort Benton. The county has a total population of 6,500 people.² Fort Benton is located

¹U.S., Department of Commerce, County and City Data Book 1972, Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972, p. 296.

²"Survey of Buying Power 1978," Sales and Marketing Management, New York, 1978, p. 56.

forty-two miles from Great Falls, 131 miles from Helena, 225 miles from Billings, and 210 miles from Missoula.

Teton County is surrounded on the south by Lewis and Clark, and Cascade Counties; on the east by Chouteau County; on the north by Pondera County; and by Flathead County on the west. Teton County has an area of 2,297 square miles. Geographically, Teton County is located on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. The terrain runs from the very rugged mountains in the west, foothills on the eastern mountain slopes, and a prairie to the east. Two rivers--the Sun River and the Teton River traverse the county, originating in the mountains. The County Seat and only city is Choteau, conducting a large portion of the county business. There are also two towns of note--Fairfield, southeast of Choteau, and Dutton, east of Choteau. The county has a total population of 6,600 people.³ Choteau is located 55 miles from Great Falls, 101 miles from Helena, 274 miles from Billings, and 161 miles from Missoula.

In this paper, the counties are evaluated to determine their past development, current situation, and potential for growth. County data such as size, population, amount of cultivated land, taxation base, mean income, wholesale sales, and retail sales are investigated. The counties are compared physically according to such characteristics as quality of landscape and soil, climate, quantity, quality and usefulness of water, and mineral resources. They are then compared according to amount of manufacturing taking place, agricultural activity, and public and non-public services available. Because of the dominance of Fort Benton in Chouteau County and Choteau in Teton County, these two cities are used to

³Ibid.

represent their counties in services and manufacturing available. The cities have been broken down into their various business types and discussed according to the facilities, products, number in each group, sales, profits, and future business outlook and plans.

The history of both Chouteau and Teton Counties is rich in the lore of the opening of the West. Chouteau County, one of the original nine counties of Montana, was formed by the Montana Territorial Legislature, February 2, 1865. At one time the largest county in Montana, second largest in the U.S., Chouteau County was repeatedly subdivided until 1920 when it reached its present form. The original inhabitants were the Blackfeet Indians. After a couple of early ill-fated attempts at building a permanent fort on the Missouri River, Fort Benton took its present site in 1847. Fort Benton thrived as a trading post with steamboats bringing in goods from the East. Only when the railroad intersected the country in 1887 did Fort Benton wane as a center of trade.⁴ The rest of the county was being settled by cattlemen. This condition continued until 1908 when the homesteaders started to settle the land. By 1913, the open ranges were essentially gone and wheat production began its dominance in the county. Repeated droughts in the early 20's, 30's and 50's forced out the small farmer (less than 300 acres) leaving the majority of today's wheat farms at more than 1,000 acres. Today, Fort Benton still serves as the center of small retail purchases and government services in the county. Most large consumer purchases are made in Great Falls. Farms have become highly mechanized, requiring vast amounts of capital and acreage to make them profitable.

⁴Joanne M. McCafferty, History of Chouteau County, 1976, p. 1.

Teton County was formed from Chouteau County on February 7, 1893. The county took its present form in 1920. The early history of the county centers around a Catholic Mission just south of Choteau in 1859. The Blackfeet Indians forced the closure of the mission and it was not until 1868 that the Indians gave their permission for a fort on the Teton River. In 1879, a small trading post was constructed four miles south of the fort. In 1883, a tract of land around the store was plotted and Chouteau (later to be spelled Choteau so as not to be confused with the county of the same name) was born. Choteau became the county seat when the county was formed and has remained the predominant supplier of goods and services in the county. Cattle raising was overshadowed by farming by the early 1910's. Again, various dry periods have reduced the number of farmers cultivating the existing acreage. Today, agriculture is still the number one income producer. Cattle grazing still thrives in the foothills of the Rockies, with a small amount of oil development, outdoor recreation, and lumbering. While Choteau serves as the major source of daily needs, Great Falls overshadows it in high cost, low demand consumer items.

This study focuses on the strengths and weaknesses that currently exist within the counties based on analysis of data, trends, and personal observations. In a parallel treatment, each county is examined to show the activities taking place, their economic contribution, and their potential for further development. Activities that might be de-emphasized or relocated are attitudes of residents, businesspeople, and governmental officials, and new or planned activities will be presented. The study is descriptive in nature, relying a good deal on personal observations and interviews. Resource material on much of the county activities and plans has been obtained at the county court houses. Various federal agencies

such as the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the County Extension Office, have been consulted.

The study has been limited to that area within county borders, except where an outside influence, such as the City of Great Falls, has a definite bearing on county activities. The business community of Big Sandy, in northern Chouteau County, will not be included because of its economic link to the market area encompassing Havre, Montana. The area in discussion is concentrated around a fifty mile radius of Great Falls. Information obtained is, in some cases, limited by the degree of expertise, and willingness to openly discuss topics by those persons interviewed. Some of the public information is limited in its currency because of difficulty in obtaining consolidated data and the lack of recent census. As noted, the study has revolved mainly around the county seats, which represent a dominant influence on the county economic/business situation and future potentials. The study is geared to an overview of general economic/business activity and future potentials.

The paper is organized in four chapters including the Introduction, (Chapter I). Chapter II focuses on the forces that have shaped the county. The counties are discussed in detail emphasizing governmental services, business activity, residential data, and conditions influencing the present situation. Chapter III concentrates on the strengths and weaknesses that currently exist. Areas of potential opportunity for further development, activities that might be de-emphasized or relocated, and selected attitudes of residents, businessmen, and government officials are included. Chapter IV is a summary of the most important variables related to development. A comparison of the two counties and conclusions about which has had the better economic fortune in the past and which is expected to have the brightest economic future, is included.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHOUTEAU AND TETON COUNTIES

Choteau County

Climate

The climate is usually classified as "Continental," cold and dry in the winter and warm and wet in the summer, with certain exceptions to the classification. The "chinook" winds interrupt the cold winter weather for days, causing warm periods and snow dissipation. Another exception is the arctic cold front invasion which brings extremely cold weather, snow, and northerly winds, putting winter temperatures at -40 degrees F. Summer temperatures can vary at from 70 to 95 degrees F.

The topography has a significant effect on the climate in Chouteau County. The plateaus will differ from the coulees, as will the high elevations in the mountains differ from the low points on the river. A freeze-free season may vary from 116 days in Big Sandy to 132 days in Geraldine. Precipitation is highly varient, from 10 inches in Brady up to 40 inches in the upper Highwood Mountains. To the benefit of agriculture, 70 to 80 percent of the precipitation occurs during the growing season. Snowfall averages 30 to 50 inches per year, with up to twice that amount in the Highwood Mountains.

Government Agencies

The County Court House in Fort Benton was built in 1884. It is the center for all county government activities. While the building is

of historical note, it requires refurbishing and painting. The county is administered by three commissioners, each representing a specific district. The county is run from tax money collected through a mill levy tax system. Real property and a few personal items are taxed by the county based upon individual property value and mill levies in effect. In 1975, the county collected \$3.9 million.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture office in Fort Benton regulates agricultural output, runs the farm utilization program, and provides soil analysis and agricultural information.

Education

There are fourteen school districts in Chouteau County with a total of eleven schools. Geraldine and Highwood have combined elementary and high schools, Warrick, Loma, Carter, Knees, and Benton Lake are rural elementary schools, and Fort Benton and Big Sandy have separate elementary and high schools. Presently, about sixty cents out of every property tax dollar goes toward the county education system. In 1970 the U.S. Bureau of Census reported that of Chouteau County's population aged 25 years and older (2,255), 606 had completed only elementary school, 1,364 had completed high school, and 296 had completed college. The Census Reports over three decades show that the median school years completed has risen from 9.9 in 1950 to 12.3 in 1970. However, school enrollment in Chouteau County has shown a gradual decline since 1971. This is due to a declining number of births and migration of young families from the county. There were 1,334 students enrolled in the 1976-77 school year, a decline of 19 percent since 1971. The drop in the number of elementary students from 1,068 in 1971 to 824 in 1976 exemplifies the declining trend of students for the future.

Fort Benton Elementary School is a brick structure of fourteen classrooms, including a resource room. The school was built in 1939 and is in need of preventive maintenance. The high school and the junior high school are connected. The high school was completed in 1958, with the junior high addition completed in 1969. Together there are thirty classrooms. In the last couple of years the student-to-teacher ratio has averaged 12:1. All rural children in the county are transported in buses to their school.

Water Systems

The water system in Chouteau County communities are designed strictly for domestic use as there is little industry and fire control systems are economically infeasible. The community water system is spreading to the rural farm areas. The Tiber Reservoir is being used to supply water to the farm districts.

Fort Benton receives its water from the Missouri River. The water is pumped to a treatment station and then to the distribution lines. The maximum capacity is approximately three million gallons per day, with present usage averaging two million gallons per day. There is also a well from which 100,000 gallons can be pumped. There is storage capacity for 1,177,000 gallons in three steel storage tanks. Farmers can haul water from a tank filler line.

Big Sandy and Geraldine both use wells to supply their needs. Big Sandy has twenty wells and Geraldine has three wells, providing adequate water for each community.

Waste Disposal

All of the larger communities in Chouteau County except Highwood have sanitary landfills for solid wastes. Highwood is serviced by Great

Falls once a week. The landfills are located close to the communities and are easily accessible. Refuse is either thrown in a hole or down a hill where it is periodically covered over with dirt. The Fort Benton dump, located northeast of town, is maintained regularly by a private refuse collector who has a contract with the city. The garbage truck comes to each residence once a week and to each business daily.

The treatment of sewer wastes in Chouteau County is handled by wastewater stabilization ponds (lagoons) at the major communities. Only Highwood, which installed a wastewater treatment plant in 1974, uses another method. The systems are adequate for present and expected future needs. Most of the rural residents use septic tanks.

Sheriff and Fire Departments

The Chouteau County Sheriff's Department is staffed by a sheriff, an undersheriff, five deputies, and two dispatchers. The sheriff's office is located at the Chouteau County Jail in Fort Benton. There is one deputy in Big Sandy and one in Geraldine, each with a patrol car. The other three patrol cars are for use by the other deputies. The City of Fort Benton has a separate police force, employing three policemen and a county/city shared dispatcher.

The county dispatching unit has a very sophisticated radio service that can link any part of the county, county road maintenance equipment, and fire trucks.

The county jail was built in 1881 and is in need of replacement. The jail has eight cells and they are occupied most of the time.

The fire control systems throughout the county are on a volunteer basis. Highwood, Carter, Loma, Geraldine, Fort Benton, and Big Sandy have fire equipment within each community. The equipment in Big Sandy

and Geraldine is in good working condition, while the equipment in Loma, Highwood, and Fort Benton is in bad condition and needs to be replaced. Communications to all of the fire stations are by telephone. Geraldine and Fort Benton have organized fire departments, taxing themselves in order to support their fire departments.

Communications

Chouteau County has two locally printed newspapers. The River Press is printed weekly in Fort Benton and the Mountaineer is printed weekly in Big Sandy. The Great Falls Tribune and Havre Daily News are also available daily for local and national news.

The county has no radio or television stations. Several radio stations in Great Falls and Havre serve the county. The two television stations in Great Falls relay their shows to the county, but there is no cable television service available.

Chouteau County is served by the Mountain Bell Telephone Company and Three Rivers Telephone Cooperative. Telephone services are available to all rural areas.

Postal Service

There are postal offices in Fort Benton, Big Sandy, Geraldine, Shonkin, Loma, Carter, and Highwood. All of the rural areas are served from these post offices. Mail is delivered Monday through Saturday. There is home delivery in town and postal boxes for rural residents.

Transportation

There are 3,085 miles of rural roads and 34 miles of municipal roads in Chouteau County. U.S. Highway 87 intersects the county from the southwest to northeast, running from Great Falls through Fort Benton and Big Sandy to Havre. State Secondary Road 230 runs southeast from Fort

Benton through Geraldine to Stanford. State Secondary Road 223 runs northeast from Fort Benton to Chester. The other roads are primarily gravel or dirt and connect most of the outlying areas. The roads (except for the State and U.S. Highways) are maintained by the County Highway Department, located in Fort Benton, Big Sandy, and Geraldine.

The Burlington Northern and the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroads are the only railways running through Chouteau County. These are only freight ways, no passenger trains stop in the county. The railroad serves as the first important link in transporting the farm produce across the country.

Burlington Northern Railroad runs from Great Falls to Havre, with stops in Fort Benton and other communities along U.S. Highway 87. It usually runs every other day. During the harvest, another train is usually added to the route. There are no freight loading/unloading facilities along the route. The Milwaukee Railroad runs from Great Falls to Lewistown with six switching stations in Chouteau County.

There are four airports in Chouteau County but they are only intended to be used by small planes, mostly private planes and commercial spray planes. Carter has a grass runway, while Fort Benton, Geraldine, and Big Sandy have paved runways. The Fort Benton runway is 3,600 feet, and the Geraldine and Big Sandy runways are 2,900 feet. Commercial air services are located in Great Falls.

There are four ferries within the county which cross the Missouri River. However, there is only one bridge that crosses the Missouri in Chouteau County--at Fort Benton. The ferries are owned and operated by the county. They run from about April to the middle of November. Large maintenance costs and frequent dangerous crossing conditions make the

ferries less than ideal crossing modes. The county commissioners claim that infrequent use keeps the county from replacing these facilities with bridges.

Health Care

Chouteau County has two hospitals--the Chouteau County District Hospital is in Fort Benton, the other hospital is in Big Sandy. The District Hospital has 39 beds (17 convalescent beds and 22 full care nursing home beds). While the hospital needs at least two doctors, there is currently only one doctor, and the hospital administrator, Chuck Eckberg, is having a very difficult time getting another one. The hospital was originally built for the Catholic nuns in 1959. Financial difficulties almost closed it in 1974, when the county came to the rescue. The hospital has an x-ray machine, a small operating room, and a delivery room. Occupancy has been approximately 30 percent for the last couple of years. Because of the low number of doctors, many patients have been referred to Great Falls hospitals. The hospital nursing home is going strong and maintaining a 99 percent occupancy. Mr. Eckberg believes that the hospital will do fine if it can just keep two doctors and maintain a little larger patient volume. The Big Sandy hospital has eight beds and one doctor.

There are five ambulances throughout the county. Included are fully equipped modern units in Big Sandy and Geraldine, an older unit in Fort Benton, and two other vehicles that could be used. In 1976 there were seventeen people who were licensed emergency medical technicians (EMTs) capable of handling emergency situations until a doctor could arrive.

There are three private retirement homes in the county. Two are in Big Sandy--an intermediate care facility and a personal care facility,

as well as a personal care facility in Fort Benton. The Big Sandy homes are near peak capacity, while the Fort Benton home is near 60 percent full. The Fort Benton home is the newest (opened in 1977) with air conditioning, game rooms, cafeteria, two beds per room, and exercise equipment.

Chouteau County has one veterinarian, two dentists, one optometrist, and five pharmacists. Three of the pharmacists have their businesses in Fort Benton, two live in Big Sandy.

Manufacturing

While agriculture is the foremost employer in Chouteau County, manufacturing is taking place and is serving a vital need in the county. There are presently four businesses of an industrial nature. They are all located in or around Fort Benton. Naeseth Gravel, Tutts Metal Production, and Fisher Metal are family-owned and operated, while Clark Equipment, Melroe Division, is a corporation. Presently, there are thirty-eight people employed by the four industries, with an average wage of \$4.12 per hour. There is no organized labor in the county. All four businesses are employed in work related to agricultural needs and are thus geared to the economic situation of the farmer. Naeseth Gravel produces gravel at a rate of about fifteen to eighteen thousand yards per year, ready-mix concrete, and also manufactures cement septic tanks.

Tutts Metal Production produces custom fabricated metal products and large storage tanks. Of particular interest is their work on metal spiral staircases for export throughout the Northwest. This is the newest manufacturing firm (1975) and provides the greatest opportunity for obtaining custom metal products in the county. They are presently located in an old drive-in theatre. They have plans to add a new facility in the summer of 1979. They grossed \$100,000 in 1977. Jerry Tutt, owner and operator,

used to work for Fisher Metal Products and, because of the volume of work available, he began his own business.

Fisher Metal Products produces custom tanks and does limited metal fabricating. The tanks are used essentially for tractor gas tanks and water troughs; thus, there is little competition between Tutts Metal and Fisher Metal. Lawrence Ledgewood owns the business, while his son now operates it. They sell their products throughout the North Central Montana region. They had \$200,000 in gross sales in 1977.

Clark Equipment, Melroe Division, produces various models of chisel plows. These are exported throughout the United States. The plant is located in Fort Benton because it was once a family-owned business (which was eventually bought by Melroe). The firm has just survived a bad year and is only operating at one-quarter its full capacity. The plant superintendent, Larry Lambatt, sees the future looking brighter, however, concedes that he expects to see Melroe move the plant into North Dakota, close to the company headquarters. In his opinion, no employee would make the move. The plant does not sell direct, but through Clark Equipment dealers.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the prime source of income and the main employer in Chouteau County. Ninety-nine percent of the total land area is devoted to agriculture. Chouteau County produces the largest wheat crop in Montana (17,255,700 bushels in 1975) and also ranks number one in barley production (2,772,800 bushels in 1974). Cow and calf production ranks fairly high (19th out of 56 counties) as a source of income. As a result of this high production, agricultural income per capita for Chouteau County is the highest in the state.

Between 1969 and 1974 there had been a four percent drop in the number of farms, while average farm size had increased by two percent (see Table 1). This goes along with the nationally established trend of fewer, but larger, farms. There has also been a trend to put more undeveloped acres into cultivation (43,411 more acres of land had been put into farming between 1969 and 1974).

During the period 1969 to 1974, farm production expenses increased 190 percent (see Table 1). This represented an average per farm increase of 200 percent (\$38,254 in 1974 compared to \$19,495 in 1969). While expenses have increased, receipts have increased at an even greater rate. The market value of agricultural products increased 260 percent, 280 percent per average farm. While recent national attention has been focused on the economic plight of the farmer, the situation in Chouteau County is such that only those farmers that have recently purchased land are having trouble making ends meet. The large increases in land values in the past ten years cut deep into budgets of those farmers expanding their land holdings.

While cattle numbers are increasing slowly, the unstable cattle market has forced stockmen to adjust their herds up and down during the past eight years. There are nine feedlots in the county--five commercial lots with approximately one thousand head each and four private lots. Cattle prices are directly linked to meat prices. This situation will probably continue to exist, making county stock values and numbers fluctuate with national meat prices.

The farming in Chouteau County is primarily dryland. Because of this fact, farming in the region is very dependent on the weather. A moderate weather pattern is necessary to have a good harvest. Too much

TABLE 1

COUNTY AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

	Chouteau County		Teton County	
	1969	1974	1969	1974
Number of Farms	901	793	695	657
Number of Farms Over \$100,000 in Value	141	171	91	64
Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold (000) of Dollars	26,515	60,437	15,577	33,768
Average per Farm from Products Sold (dollars)	30,199	70,769	22,413	49,153
Farm Production Expenses (000 of dollars)	17,565	34,322	12,005	25,313
Average per Farm Expenses (dollars)	19,000	40,190	17,000	36,846
Market Value of Machinery and Equipment in (000 of dollars)	27,645	43,292	13,297	25,175
Number of Cattle	65,261	93,354	51,485	67,666
Number of Sheep	2,619	1,449	12,663	24,872
Number of Poultry (in 000)	10,657	5,012	32,225	37,000
Wheat (bushels)		14,504,060		3,494,961
Hay (tons)	7,179	60,997	18,206	141,784
Barley (bushels)		2,861,400		2,805,292

SOURCE: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census of Agriculture 1974, Statistics by State, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1974), pp. II-1 to II-38, IV-49 to IV-54, and IV-301 to IV-306.

or too little rain spells high crop losses. The weather in the past eight years has been good, with only one drought year--1976--that directly affected the harvest. Wheat, both spring and winter varieties, barley, oats, and some safflower are produced in the county. The main money crops, however, are winter wheat and barley. Summer fallow has been a farming practice for over forty years. This practice of growing a crop one year and letting it sit for the next year has caused drainage problems. This results in saline seep which destroys the productive use of the land. To resolve this problem, many farmers on the Highwood Bench have gone to continuous cropping.

Primary Services

The primary service businesses are those that directly support the agricultural production sector--the primary source of income in the county. They are directly influenced by the economic situation of the farmer. If farmers have a good year, they will generally have a good year, and vice versa.

There are four auto dealers in Fort Benton. Ken Boggs' Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, and GMC, Inc., is the newest auto dealer. The dealership came from Geraldine, where they still maintain a small branch. The dealership is housed in a remodeled bowling alley on the outskirts of town. Ken Boggs averages about twenty vehicles per month. Half of these vehicles are usually pick-up trucks. Power Motors, the Ford Dealer, is located in a new building. Presently, 70 percent of their sales are pick-up trucks. They have been averaging forty vehicles per month. Fort Benton Motor Company sells Chrysler, Plymouth and Dodge vehicles. They were the first auto dealer in Fort Benton, and are still housed in an old building near the river. They sell about twenty vehicles per month, seventy percent of

which are autos. Midlestadt Pontiac is the smallest auto dealer. They are located in a small building in the center of town. They sell only cars and average about five vehicles per month. There are no foreign auto dealers in the county.

People in the farming community do a lot of their own vehicle repair. To meet the demand for parts, there are a couple of parts supply stores in Fort Benton. K's Auto Parts distributes NAPA parts and they have a full line of parts and accessories for both private and agricultural vehicles. They are located on Front Street (parallels the river) in an old building. H O Parts Supply Company distributes Delco, AC, and other name brand products. The store is part of a regional chain of H O Auto Supply Company stores. They are higher priced than K's Auto Parts, but provide a more extensive inventory and stock. Customers can get parts from the auto dealers, but unless it is a highly unusual part they will go to the parts supply house.

In the same manner as repairing vehicles, the farmers generally do their own building repair and construction. They also do a lot of minor metal fabricating for making existing equipment meet their particular needs. There are three stores that sell primarily wood and metal hardware and one store that sells mostly lumber. There is a new Coast-to-Coast branch store that sells a full line of hardware and most sports equipment. Farmers Union Oil Company (CENEX), while mostly a wholesale gas distributor, also supplies hardware used specifically for gas and water fittings, and farm equipment. Gambles, while mostly a department store, also supplies hardware. They are geared more to the home repair type of hardware than to heavy use items. The Missouri River Lumber Company emphasizes retail lumber and light sheet metal. They also supply

paint, carpet, and other sundry items used in construction. They provide custom-cut lumber at a price that matches Great Falls lumber prices, their primary advantages being service and locality.

There are several farm implement dealers in Fort Benton. The largest in terms of sales and services is Green Line Implement who sells John Deere equipment. They sell a full line of farm implements, the large four-wheel-drive tractors, and irrigation equipment. They had \$1 million in sales last year, a low year, and expect 1978 to go over the \$2 million mark. Howard Artman, the manager, sees his main competition coming from the other John Deere dealers in the region. He believes the farmers are usually brand loyal, and it is the crossing-over into the other dealers' market areas that tends to alter projected sales (disregarding the farm economic situation).

Case Power and Equipment, a company-owned firm, sells and services the complete line of Case equipment. The firm has divided its operations into tractors and farm implements, and then into power units and associated hardware. These operations are run by different managers and maintain separate books. Haas and Associates Implement Company sells Massey-Ferguson farm equipment. They also handle various brand lines of specialized farm equipment. The newest dealer in Fort Benton is Power Motors, who sells Minneapolis Moline. They sell a full line of all-purpose engines and a limited line of tractors. They represent the "new boy in town" and, as such, are having to cope with farmers conditioned to the more established farm implement brand names.

There is a full complement of fuel suppliers in the county. There are two wholesale fuel distributors in Fort Benton and one in Geraldine. They all sell wholesale gasoline, diesel fuel, and propane. They take

orders by phone and deliver to the farm or site in the case where tanks are located near their fields. There is a retail gas station for each major brand name and a couple that supply regional or independent gas. They practically all provide minor service repair and a few have towing service. Retail gas is approximately five cents higher per gallon than in Great Falls, due mainly to lower volume and delivery costs.

The county has a number of firms that sell various brands of feed and fertilizer. All are located in Fort Benton except for one in Geraldine. There is Farmers Union Oil Company that sells CENEX fertilizer and GTA feed. The company also runs a CENEX fertilizer plant in Fort Benton which provides soil analysis and can mix up a custom blend for a specific soil. The other feed and fertilizer supplies are primarily geared to grain storage. This group includes Cargill, Inc., General Mills, Inc., and Farmers Elevator and Trading. Cargill, Inc., does provide limited fertilizer blending, however, these firms primarily sell pre-blended fertilizer. Because of crop seasonality, fertilizer sells best in the spring and fall, and feeds sell best in the winter months when grazing is not possible. The feeds are pre-packaged and generally geared toward cattle-raising. The farmer raising a small herd will buy from these feed suppliers, but the large cattle feedlot firms will usually buy by the truckload from a Great Falls dealer.

The grain dealers provide a vital link for the farmer. The farmer brings his grain to be stored, graded, and eventually sold. Because grain storage elevators are located in conjunction with the railroad, the grain can then be easily loaded upon grain cars and shipped throughout the nation. The grain dealers act, then, as middlemen between the farmer and the food producer. There are four grain elevator companies

in Fort Benton and four in Geraldine. The future looks very bright for this group--in Fort Benton one firm recently put in two new storage bins and another plans three new grain bins in the near future. The trend is toward more dealer services and greater concern that top prices be obtained by the dealers. Thus, competition between the dealers has increased.

There is one building contractor in Fort Benton. F. L. Kuglin Building Contractor does commercial, farm and private building, remodeling, and all types of concrete construction. New home construction south of town has provided additional work for Kuglin. They employ up to twenty carpenters and masons in the summer months, but drop down to five employees in the winter months. Concrete is obtained from Maeseth Ready Mix with Kuglin Building doing all the forms and finish work. Most of their labor is local farm hands that do carpentry work on the side.

There are no horticultural spraying companies in the county. However, there are numerous itinerant spraying companies in the early summer months to do spraying of fertilizer and various insecticides. They usually set up their operations in a rented hanger at the Fort Benton Airport and use the various rural roads throughout the county as local landing strips for obtaining fuel and fertilizer.

Chouteau County electrical service is provided by Montana Power. Electrical power is available to all county residents. The service headquarters for the region is in Fort Benton. Natural gas is not available presently, but recent discoveries of underground gas pools makes the future look bright for conversion to gas. Electrical capacity throughout the county is presently used at a peak with little hope for relief unless additional hydroelectric or coal power plants are put into service.

Secondary Service Businesses

There are four restaurants in Fort Benton. While some bars claim to have cafes, their main business pursuit is selling liquor. Because there are no theatres in Fort Benton, people tend to go to Great Falls for a night out of eating and entertainment. This leaves the eating establishments in Fort Benton mainly concerned with breakfast and lunch business. Sheffi's Landmark Cafe is the nicest restaurant. They have approximately thirty tables and about three waitresses generally on duty. There is a full menu for breakfast and another for lunch and dinner. Business is good, with a fifteen minute wait for service during peak meal times. The restaurant's interior is at least fifteen years old--well kept, but showing age. The exterior is brick, although it too shows wear. It seems that the familiarity of the restaurant and its home-style food keeps the restaurant going.

The Banque Club is a combination lounge and restaurant. It is not a family-type establishment and as such caters to those persons frequenting the lounge. Their menu is rather basic and business is generally low. The interior and exterior is old and worn. Jeannie's Cafe is a coffee house geared to those persons taking a business break. It has a breakfast and lunch menu. There are ten booths and one waitress. Business is good, although most sales are below three dollars. The Tastee Freeze is strictly a fast food establishment, selling mainly Cokes, shakes, hot dogs, and hamburgers. They have only window service and business is mainly from school children. The building is about fifteen years old, but well kept and attractive. The Tastee Freeze closes during the winter months.

There are three bars in Fort Benton. All are relatively small, run by a single bartender and with four to seven tables. There are numerous

such bars throughout the county. They serve as a watering hole where farmers drink and socialize. Essentially, there is at least one bar per town, each serving its community area. They do just enough business to provide the owner a meager income for his family.

There is a good mix of grocery stores in the county. There are four grocery stores in Fort Benton, including an IGA, Thriftway, Circle K, and an independent food store. The Circle K food store is relatively new. Built in standard Circle K fashion, they sell most basic food products, magazines, medicines, and some hardware. They base their business on quick service and being open when the other stores are closed. The other food stores are small supermarkets selling a larger variety of products and brands. They provide most food needs of the community and nearby farming area. There are two retail grocery stores in Geraldine. They provide essentially the same service as do the grocery stores in Fort Benton.

The county has only two clothing stores and one of the two sells only women's clothes. Because of this, most people usually go to Great Falls to buy their clothing. The Pioneer Mercantile Company, located in Fort Benton, sells all types of clothing, shoes, and other accessories. The store boasts of being the first mercantile store in the state. The store has recently had an exterior facelift. The interior still shows its early 1900 decor. The store is still used by the community, mostly for its work and children's clothing needs. Recently, a women's clothing store opened in an old home. The owner is a former Great Falls women's clothing salesperson. She moved to Fort Benton with her husband and has decided to open her own store. She is working on a very low budget, stocking the store with the latest fashions and accessories.

There is one shoe store in Fort Benton that sells all types of

shoes. They gear their selections to the community--inexpensive shoes and work boots. Shoes can be repaired by a combination shoe repair and dry cleaners in Fort Benton. A new furniture store will open soon in Fort Benton. The firm's store name has yet to be published (as of December 1978). They will sell couches, lounge chairs, beds, and dining sets. Their furniture is priced for the middle income family. The store is located in an old hardware store on Front Street, and the firm has a lot of work ahead to improve the property.

There are two banks in the county, the First State Bank in Fort Benton and the First National Bank in Geraldine. The First State Bank is housed in a new modern facility. They provide a good portion of the banking services for the county. They have full loan service--auto, home, commercial, and agricultural.⁵ They are a member of FDIC and an affiliate of the First State Bank Association. They have reported 1978 assets of \$23.8 million (1978 Financial Balance Sheet). The First National Bank in Geraldine reported total assets of \$7 million in 1978 (Financial Balance Sheet).

There are six lawyers in the county. They are all located in Fort Benton, which gives them easy access to the county court system. Schmidt, Gilbert, and Jungers are partners. They are located on Front Street in an old office building. There is also an independent lawyer sharing the building. The other two lawyers have their offices in the county court house. They are retained by the county to handle county related business.

Fort Benton is also the headquarters of the insurance and realty

⁵ Many of the farmers, however, go to the Great Falls farm loan associations for agricultural loans because of the availability of obtaining capital.

groups for Chouteau County. Pioneer Insurance and Morger Realty and Insurance Company have combined real estate and insurance so as to take advantage of the inherent similarities and complementary features in these two fields. Schmidt Company is strictly a real estate firm. These three firms focus mainly on residential property. They do handle some smaller ranches and farms, but leave most of this specialized work to agricultural real estate brokers located in Great Falls. There are six insurance offices in Fort Benton. They are all independent insurance dealers except Holm Insurance Agency which is affiliated with Hartford Insurance. All except one are located on Front Street in separate, small offices. The county also has a title company, Chouteau County Abstract Company, located across from the court house in a converted house.

Chouteau County has only one motel and one hotel, both located in Fort Benton. The motel, Fort Motel, is old fashioned and in need of remodeling. It has fifteen rooms, featuring double beds, heating and bathroom. There are old black and white TVs and no air conditioning or pool. It personifies the late fifties type of motel. The hotel, the Grand Union Hotel, is a virtual historic site. Built of red brick, it is two stories high and overlooks the Missouri River. Built in the early riverboat days (1865), it retains its early atmosphere. If it is to be returned to its earlier splendor, it requires extensive restoration. The present owners are nearing retirement and are trying to sell the hotel. Various local interest groups are trying to get a federal, state, or a private historical group to buy the hotel and restore it. They have as yet not been successful. The hotel has thirty guest rooms.

There is one bowling alley in the county, Norm's Lanes, located in Fort Benton. There are ten lanes, a snack bar, and a sales and/or

rental desk. The alley is located on Front Street in an old store. The bowling alley has been in operation since 1960 and has not been remodeled. The lane machinery has been overhauled a number of times.

Chouteau County has four beauty parlors, three in Fort Benton and one in Geraldine. They generally have two beauticians on duty. The shops are housed in older facilities which need some basic maintenance. There are no barber shops at the present time. Men must either do their own hair or go into Great Falls to have their hair cut. Riverview Greenhouse is the only florist in Fort Benton, and the only florist in the county. They provide full flower and plant services. They are members of two national flower organizations that allows long distance flower delivery. They will deliver flowers within a twenty-mile radius of Fort Benton. Next to the Riverview Greenhouse is the Voyageur Art Gallery. Located in an old home on Front Street, they sell original western art and sculpture. Their art is very good and quite expensive. Most of their customers are from outside the county. Because the artists represented in the gallery are nationally known, there are customers throughout the nation.

Chouteau County has a church of nearly every denomination. There are six churches in Fort Benton--Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, Mormon, and a nondenominational church. Geraldine has two churches--a Catholic church and a Methodist church. The churches in the county are not very large, with memberships between 50 and 300 persons. The Catholic church is the largest, due mainly to the county's large Catholic population. The churches are well kept and have been moving into new facilities the last ten years. It appears that the churches are growing.

Recreation and Tourism

Most of the recreational facilities in Chouteau County are centered along the Missouri River. The recreational facilities are geared to mesh with the historical interests along the river, mainly in Fort Benton. The facilities are oriented to summer vacationers. Canoes can be obtained for touring the Missouri River. The canoes are rented in Fort Benton and they can be paddled at the user's own leisure. The Fort Benton Community Park (Scott Field) is on the site of the original Fort Benton. A small portion of the original wall and one of the lookout towers still remains, but is in poor condition because of considerable neglect. The park also houses a small museum of early river travel, picnic tables, barbecue pits, and restrooms. There are a number of large shade trees that help keep the park cool. The museum houses artifacts from the early history of the Fort and steamboat period. It has not been added to in ten years. There are no facilities for overnight camping in or near the park. Next to the park, a new public pool has been completed. The pool is 25 meters long by 15 meters wide, has full dressing rooms, and a high and low diving board. In the county, the only other community pool is located in Big Sandy. The County Fairgrounds are located in Fort Benton. The fair and rodeo are held in mid-August. There are full rodeo, horseracing, and booth and facilities available. The grounds are kept very clean and freshly painted.

There are a number of historical sites in Fort Benton worthy of seeing. On River Street, the original street that borders the river, there is the steamboat landing station, the old Grand Union Hotel, an exact replica of one of the early flatbottom boats used by Lewis and Clark, and a full-size bronze of Lewis and Clark. The only other site of

significance is the County Court House with its court room and adjacent jail house.

The Highwood Mountains have limited access for campers in the summer. There are areas for pitching tents, setting up trailers, and for picnics, but there is no water available. The mountains are ideal for the casual hiker as well as for backpackers. They also provide good big game hunting. There are deer, elk, and black bear. There are also antelope and many species of game birds throughout the county. Trout fishing on the Missouri River and in the mountain streams is very good. In the winter, the roads into the mountains are impassible, except by snowmobiles, snow shoes, or cross-country skis. The area provides excellent opportunity for those attuned to these activities.

Teton County

Climate

The climate in Teton County is essentially the same as that of Chouteau County. It is a continental type of climate with cold and dry winters, and warm and wet summers. The chinook winds temper the cold in the winter and the heat in the summer. Due to the close proximity to the Rockies, Teton County generally has colder weather and shares higher precipitation figures than Chouteau County. Winter temperatures range from -40° to 50° F, and summer temperatures from 60° to 90° F. The topography drastically biases any average figures because of the much colder and wetter weather experienced in the mountains.

The freeze-free season varies from 100 days in the foothills to 132 days in Dutton. Precipitation varies from as much as 40 inches in the mountains to 15 inches on the plateau. Snowfall has been averaging 30 to 50 inches with up to 100 inches in the mountains.

Government Agencies

The county seat is in Choteau. The County Court House, located in the center of town with a traffic circle going around it, houses all county government offices. The county is administered by the commissioners, each representing one of the three voting districts. County services are financed through a mill levy tax system. The total county tax valuation in 1977 was \$17 million. The total budget that year was \$2 million, exclusive of the school budget which represents 60 cents of each tax dollar.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a soil conservation service and a Farmers Home Administration office in Choteau. There is also a Forest Service ranger station and a Federal Highway Administration office in Choteau.

Education

Teton County is divided into ten school districts, with a total of sixteen schools. There are four high school districts in the county, with high schools located in Choteau, Fairfield, Dutton, and Power. The four communities listed also have their own elementary schools that provide education through eighth grade. Farmington, Bynum, Golden Ridge, Pendroy, and Greenfield are considered rural county schools that provide education through junior high school. There are also three private schools for the three Hutterite colonies in the county. These schools are administered by the county.

The county school system is financed through federal, state, and county funds. County funds are obtained through a separate tax levy, different from the general county services tax levy. Each school district has its own tax levy.

School enrollments have been decreasing in recent years due to a declining birth rate and migration of young families from the county. The 1965-66 school year total enrollment was 1,834, in 1974-75 enrollment was 1,649, and in 1977-78 enrollment had dropped to 1,570. This trend is expected to continue in the future. Many of the smaller schools are being threatened with closure because of the trend in lower numbers of school-age children.

In 1970 the U.S. Bureau of Census reported that of Teton County's population aged 25 years or older (3,498), 775 had completed only elementary school, 1,081 had completed high school, and 317 had completed college. The Census reports over two decades show that the median school years completed has risen from 10.0 in 1950 to 12.2 in 1970. Much of this increase is due to increased efforts to keep people in school and the requirement to cope with the very technical nature of modern farming and ranching. All rural children in the county are transported in buses to their schools.

The Fairfield and Choteau schools have well equipped sports facilities, including full size football/track stadiums, gyms, and weight rooms. The school systems provide music lessons and concert orchestras and a full complement of after-school activities. The schools are well maintained and adequately staffed.

Water Systems

Approximately 50 percent of the 6,116 people in Teton County are served by a central water system and the remainder are served by private wells and springs. The Choteau water supply is obtained from a series of wells and springs that have been upgraded from time to time to meet rising demand. There are water restrictions imposed during the summer growing

period when the water table goes down. Fairfield obtains its water from a series of wells. The yield from these wells is not constant and has been a recurring problem for residents.⁶ The Dutton community receives its water from a well located six miles north of the town near the Teton River. The system adequately serves the community needs, but is in need of revamping old wooden transmission lines which are rotting and breaking. Most of the other rural communities receive their water from private wells. Some residents haul in their water from the larger communities.

Waste Disposal

The solid waste disposal sites are located near the incorporated population centers. The three sites are in Choteau, Fairfield, and Dutton. The sites are hillside landfills requiring occasional site maintenance. As present sites become filled, the problem of finding new sites is becoming apparent. Land owners do not want sites on or adjacent to their property. Many potential sites also have ground water problems or are too small to accomodate a sufficient site.

A problem exists in the county with individual farmers developing their own disposal sites. These sites are not being maintained and pose health problems.

The best solid waste disposal site is located at Choteau. Funded for \$4,000 annually by the county, the site is meeting all government operating standards and providing adequate services for the community. The Fairfield disposal site is adequate, but is having problems meeting

⁶Fairfield officials say the current water system is at full capacity now and that further town expansion cannot be possible until both new water sources are found and water mains enlarged. Present attempts at finding new water have not been successful.

regulatory standards.⁷ The Dutton site has developed a good operation but has a poor location next to Interstate 15. Because of the good agricultural land surrounding Dutton, a substitute site is next to impossible to find. The site is funded for \$2,000 annually for maintenance. All three communities have a private refuse collector that does weekly garbage pick-up.

Choteau, Fairfield, and Dutton all have a community sewage treatment facility. Only the facility at Dutton is meeting all current demands. The Choteau system desperately needs enlarging as half of the city is required to use septic tanks. At the present time, major revisions are being planned to provide one additional trunk line to serve additional residents and take pressure off the main trunk line. The present system has been a barrier to population and industry growth. The Fairfield system is adequate most of the year except during the irrigation season when run-off gets into the sewer lines and causes sewer back-ups.⁸ The remaining towns in Teton County are serviced only by private septic tanks.

Sheriff and Fire Departments

The Teton County Sheriff's Department is staffed by a sheriff, undersheriff, five deputies, and four dispatchers. The location of the sheriff's office is across the street from the court house. The office contains the jail facilities, offices for the sheriff and deputies, and a radio dispatcher's console. The sheriff's office has also assumed police

⁷The site is funded for \$4,000 annually by the county for maintenance.

⁸Enlarging sewer lines in Fairfield would be less trouble because the roads in the residential area are gravel.

duties within the corporate city limits of Choteau. There is one deputy in Fairfield and Dutton, each with a patrol car. The other three deputies are located in Choteau and there are three patrol cars for their use. The county recently replaced its old radio equipment with new modern radios. The dispatcher also has responsibility for emergency phone calls and ambulance dispatch.

The jail facilities are quite old and need refurbishing. The patrol cars and other law enforcement equipment are relatively new and in good working order.

The Teton County fire control system is manned on a volunteer basis. There is fire-fighting equipment at Choteau, Fairfield, Pendroy, Power, and Dutton. Choteau and Fairfield have some equipment assigned to the county and other equipment assigned to the city. Both cities have a city fire truck and a county fire truck. They both have a fully equipped fire department. Pendroy, Power, and Dutton each have a county truck and are basically equipped. The county road department has two trucks with water tanks that can be quickly converted for fire fighting. The weed control department also has three 4x4 pick-up trucks that can be used for fighting fire. The main point of contact for fire department dispatch is the sheriff's department dispatcher.

Communications

Teton County has three newspapers--the Fairfield Times, Choteau Acantha, and the Dutton Wheat Center News. All are distributed throughout the county, along with the Great Falls Tribune.

The county has no transmitting radio or television stations. However, all of the Great Falls radio stations, plus KSEN Radio Station in Shelby, are received. Both of the Great Falls television stations

are received in the county. There is no cable television service available.

Telephone service, either Mountain Bell or the Cooperative Telephone Company in Fairfield, is available to all county residents.

Postal Service

There are postal offices in Choteau, Fairfield, Dutton, and Power, and all of the rural areas are served from these post offices. Mail is delivered daily Monday through Saturday. There is home delivery in the town and postal boxes for those residents in the rural areas.

Transportation

Two railroads run through Teton County. The Milwaukee Railroad runs through Choteau and Fairfield and the Great Northern and Burlington Northern Railroad run through Choteau and Dutton, with weekly freight service to Great Falls. The railroad performs the important function of transporting wheat from the rural area into the processing centers. There are freight unloading facilities in Choteau.

Choteau and Fairfield are on the Glacier Line bus route out of Great Falls. There is bus service twice daily--a morning bus going north and an evening bus returning.

There are three airports in the county capable of handling light airplane service. The Fairfield and Dutton strips are unimproved and only provide refueling services. These strips are intended mainly for agricultural spraying aircraft. The Choteau Airport has lights, a mechanic on duty, and telephone service. There are no provisions for instrument landings and no established air service in the county.

Teton County has approximately one hundred miles of paved roads and 14,500 miles of gravel and dirt roads. The county is served by the county, state, and federal road system. U.S. Highway 89, Interstate 15, (U.S. Highway 91), and Montana 287 go through the county. Of the 14,500 miles of gravel and dirt roads, approximately one thousand miles are graveled and are kept in good condition. Roads are kept open 99 percent of the time.

The bridge system is very good. There are 215 bridges which are 10 feet to 200 feet in length, with five to ten bridges being replaced each year. The newest bridge is the all-steel Lowery Bridge crossing the Sun River. The roads and bridges are maintained by the county road service located in Choteau.

Health Care

Teton county has made great efforts in the last five years to improve its health care services. It can be said that Teton County has one of the finest rural health care programs in the state.⁹ The county recently opened a new medical facility which includes a 44-bed hospital and a doctors' clinic. The hospital is utilizing the most modern equipment and facilities. There are 20 recovery beds and 24 full-care geriatric beds.¹⁰ The hospital has full x-ray and laboratory facilities. There is a surgery room and equipment for cardiac care. There are four general practice doctors in Choteau. One is semi-retired, but still has a reduced

⁹All of the county medical services, except the volunteer emergency medical technicians, are located in Choteau.

¹⁰An interview with Thomas Dunlop, Hospital Administrator, on August 15, 1978, revealed that currently, there is a 50 percent occupancy for the recovery beds and 80 percent for the geriatric beds.

patient load. Another doctor is working on contract on a federal grant for rural area populations. He is building a clientele and is expected to remain after the termination of this contract. The other two doctors have opened their offices in the clinic, next to the hospital. They have a very close relationship to the hospital, making possible many health programs. The hospital also has the availability of several specialists that will provide in-residence consultation on a recurring basis. There are two ambulances available, one in Fairfield and one in Choteau.

There are two retirement homes in Choteau. The county nursing home is a full service nursing home with fifty beds. The home is supported by the county. The facility has been open five years and appears to be in very good shape. The Skyline Lodge is a private facility for minimum care tenants. The home has space for eighty individuals, but presently has sixty residents. The home opened six years ago and has excellent facilities and programs for the retired.

Fairfield, Choteau, Dutton, and Power have a number of trained emergency medical technicians for handling emergencies that do not allow time for a doctor's immediate attention. The teams are strictly volunteer and their continual training is provided through the county hospital.

There are two dentists in Choteau, along with an optometrist. There are two veterinarians, each with mobile clinics available for "ranch calls."

Manufacturing

Teton County has several small, low capital industries. Meyer Ditcher Company in Fairfield produces irrigation ditch diggers and bale sweeps. The company is presently shut down because of an overstock of units. The plant had been producing as many as 700 ditcher units and 50

bale sweeps per year up until 1974. The present emphasis on sprinkler systems has drastically reduced demand for the ditcher. Production for 1977 was down to 250 units, of which many are still in stock. The bale sweeps have had a recent surge because of renewed interest in hay production. While demand for their bale sweeper is up, plant operating costs and required lead times have forced them to turn away potential customers. Don Meyer, owner and manager, had been employing from two to seven full-time employees, all of whom are of retirement age. The plant facilities are old and the equipment dated. Don Meyer is contemplating closing down the business in the next year or two.

Eisenman Seed Company of Fairfield merchandises malting barley and sells and cleans grain and grass seed. The company employs twenty people, over half of whom are salesmen and bookkeepers. The company is owned by Montana Merchandising, Inc., based in Great Falls, Montana. The company operates office facilities and a seed cleaning plant in Fairfield, and has four grain elevators in the county. Sales generated in 1977 were greater than \$10 million. With wheat prices down, they have been expanding the barley operations. The facilities are brand new and seem to be employing modern business techniques. Management appears to be doing a good job.

Bouma Post Yards, Inc., in Choteau produces fence posts and rails for farm and ranch use. The company has its operations in the Helena National Forest. The parent company is located in Lincoln, Montana. Business is very good, since most new fences being constructed are using these improved quality fence posts.

Richem Construction Company of Choteau does residential and light commercial construction. They are a small company doing construction

mainly within the county, employing between four and ten workers, depending on the season.

Agriculture

Teton County is primarily in an agricultural region. Eighty-five percent of the county's land area is devoted to agriculture--the remainder being forest land, urban development, and roads. There are approximately 121,000 acres of irrigated land under five irrigation systems. While most of the irrigation has been done with ditches, seepage and ditch loss has resulted in growing use of sprinkler systems. The major field crops produced in the county are wheat (both spring and winter), barley (for feeding and malting purposes), and hay. In 1974, the county produced 3,494,961 bushels of wheat and 2,805,292 bushels of barley. Progressively lower wheat prices are bringing about a reverse in the traditional dominance of wheat over barley. Eisenman Seed Company is predicting more barley acreage than wheat acreage within a couple of years. Farmers are also trying other crops such as mustard and safflower to supplement wheat.

The past ten years has seen little change in the number of farms in the county. Consequently, the average farm acreage has remained relatively constant. Farm land in Teton County is often handed down in the family and kept intact, some families having been in the area close to a hundred years. The proportion of cropland to pasture land has remained relatively constant the past ten years. Much of this is due to the general topography that often prevents any conversion of pasture to cropland.

Farming in Teton County is primarily dryland. Only a quarter of the total cropland (569,000 acres) is irrigated, thus, the region is very dependent on proper weather conditions to insure a profitable crop. The moderate weather the past eight years has brought prosperity--and in turn

lower prices due to oversupply. The summer fallow practice is followed throughout the county. While many farmers would like to cultivate their entire acreage, cost and supply of fertilizer has thwarted those plans. Saline seep has been a major problem in the county. Approximately 6,000 acres have been put out of production due to saline seeps, with such areas increasing at a rate up to 10 percent per year. While crop receipts have been very good, costs continue to outrun receipts, making it progressively harder to run a profitable farm.

Livestock income is slightly under half of the agricultural income for Teton County. Most of this income is from production of beef cattle and the selling of feeder calves. In 1974, cattle and calves numbered 67,666; milk cows, 1,051; sheep, 24,822; swine, 9,268; and poultry, 45,376, (see Table 1). During the past eight years, there has been a constant increase in beef cattle, with decreases in dairy cows and poultry. Trends in Teton County show that it is one of the few counties in which a number of sheep is remaining constant. The majority of the swine and poultry is from the Hutterite colonies in the county. While most of the livestock had been in the western portion of the county, increased pastures and hay production, along with new feed lots, have helped to increase total livestock production and spread livestock operations out. There are two large feedlots which feed about 9,000 head per year on a custom basis.

Primary Service Business

There are five automotive dealers in Teton County. Mills' Ford Motor Company and Dirkes' Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, have dealerships located in Fairfield. Choteau Ford Sales, Taylor Plymouth, Dodge, and Chrysler, and H&H Implement Company GMC Trucks are located in Choteau.

In Fairfield, Mills' Ford Motor Company has their showroom in a

modern metal frame building capable of holding thirty cars. There is also a small lot in front for used cars. A small service facility is located downtown in an old gas station/garage. The facility is small, but well kept, and thoroughly adequate for customer demand. They sell, on the average, four new cars and six new trucks monthly. About one-third of their sales are to customers from Great Falls looking for quicker delivery and lower price. There are two salesmen and three mechanics working in this dealership. Dirks' Chevrolet has a service facility, small sales lot, and a body shop located in Fairfield. The service facility is located with a bulk gas station, while the body shop and sales lot are located in an old building on the east end of town. They sell, on the average, two cars and five new trucks monthly. There are two mechanics and two body repairmen working this dealership.

Choteau Ford Sales has full auto services. They are housed in a new metal frame building, permitting five show vehicles and ten vehicles in for repairs, selling, on the average, five new cars and ten new trucks each month. Choteau Ford Sales also maintains a twenty-vehicle used car lot and a body shop located downtown. They employ two salesmen and five mechanics. Dirkes' Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, located next to the Ford Dealership, is housed in a ten-year-old facility, with a capability of showing four cars and working on ten vehicles. They have a used car lot in front capable of exhibiting thirty vehicles. They employ three salesmen and four mechanics. Eighty percent of their sales are Chevrolets, selling on the average three new Pontiacs and Oldsmobiles per month. Taylor Plymouth, Dodge, and Chrysler is located downtown in an older building and has a small showroom and a service area for ten vehicles. There is a small lot to the side of the building for new cars. The

dealership sells on the average ten new cars per month and employs two salesmen and three mechanics.¹¹ There are no foreign car dealers in the county.

Besides dealer parts departments, there are three auto parts stores in the county. While many businesses sell some auto parts, few make it a mainstay of their business. The Greenfield Farmers Oil Company in Fairfield, while majoring in oil products, fertilizer, and hardware, do a substantial amount of business in auto parts. While not specializing in any one brand line, they maintain various name brands for customer preference. They do not handle motors or major engine components,

There are two auto parts stores in Choteau, K's Auto Parts and Choteau Auto Parts. Both are located west of town near the auto dealerships. K's Auto Parts is housed in a brick building. They are the area dealer for NAPA parts and have a full line of parts and bolt-on accessories. They employ two people and do approximately \$100,000 business yearly. Choteau Auto Parts, located across the road from K's Auto Parts, is housed in a refurbished brick building. They are the dealer for Delco parts, but handle numerous other brand line parts and accessories. Employing two people, the store does \$150,000 worth of business per year. Both parts stores are often used by the auto dealers for hard to find parts. The farmers and stockmen use these stores for most of their needs because of the relatively low prices and greater variety of parts.

Because Teton County is primarily rural, most of the people do their own building and repairs. The county has two lumber companies and

¹¹H & H Implement Company sells GMC trucks as a sideline to their primary job of selling farm implements. They keep only two to three trucks on hand, selling, on the average, about two per month.

four hardware stores. In Fairfield, UBC Lumber Company provides retail and wholesale lumber as well as nails, paint, and prefabricated kitchen cabinets. Situated off Main Street, they have an older small wooden building for displaying their paint, nails, and cabinets. The lumber is kept in covered parallel wooden bays. They have a forklift and two one-ton delivery trucks. Knudtzon Lumber in Choteau is located on Main Street in a modern two-story metal frame building. They sell retail and wholesale lumber, paint, nails, and carpet. They keep their lumber in a multi-tier covered bay. They have a forklift and a two-ton truck and two one-ton trucks. Both lumber companies provide custom lumber cutting service.

Fairfield has two hardware stores, a brand new Coast-to-Coast store and the Greenfield Farmers Oil Company. The Coast-to-Coast opened in August 1978 in a completely refurbished department store just outside the Main Street business district. The store is very attractive and well laid out. They sell a variety of types of dishes, appliances, gifts, sporting goods, and most hardware equipment. Though geared mainly to the suburban resident, they do provide much of the hardware that the farmer might need. Greenfield Farmers Oil Company provides hardware materials mainly for farming use, maintaining large bins of nails and screws, and most tools of the heavy duty variety. In Choteau, the Coast-to-Coast provides essentially the same type of goods as the one in Fairfield. Located downtown, they are housed in a refurbished building shared with a men's clothing store. They employ three persons and have been grossing approximately \$100,000 annually. Gambles is the oldest hardware store in the county. They are still located downtown in a new run-down building. They sell mainly household hardware tools and materials. They also sell a line of appliances. The business is run by an older couple and does not appear very viable.

There are four farm implement dealers in the county, all located in Choteau. Abbott Implement Company sells Massey-Ferguson farm implements. Located downtown in an old rundown garage, the dealership also sells paint, small garden tractors, lawnmowers, and chain saws. They keep their tractors and combines on a small lot behind the building. The firm generally sells ten tractors, five swathers (hay cutters), and two combines a year. Eighty percent of the tractors are of the smaller two-wheel-drive variety since the smaller fields can be handled with smaller tractors, not the large four-wheel-drive variety.

Choteau Feed and Seed, while primarily selling farmers' and stockmen's supplies, handles the New Holland brand of swathers and other small farm implements. These machines are geared around hay production. Because of the recent upsurge in hay, they have sold twenty swathers this year (1978). They maintain a good stock of machines for immediate sale and display.

E. P. Ekegren, Inc., sells John Deere implements. They are located east of town in a modern metal frame building. They have a large showroom for smaller John Deere tractors and various parts and accessories. There is a large enclosed repair bay on the side. They have very few display models because of a nationwide shortage of John Deere machinery. They sold fifteen tractors last year, ten of which were two-wheel-drive. They sold five large combines and ten swathers.

H & H Implement, located on a side street in the downtown district, sells International Harvester farm implements. They also sell sporting goods and Honda motorcycles. They have a large single story building with an extensive supply of implement parts and accessories. They sold ten tractors and five swathers last year. The firm does a large amount of

parts business, because the various implement brands use a lot of standardized parts.

There are seven bulk oil suppliers in Teton County. Greenfield Farmers Oil Company in Fairfield sells CENEX oil products for farmer use. They maintain a delivery truck and an overhead gas pump. Dirkes' Chevrolet in Fairfield has a large bulk station in the rear of their car dealership and sells both gasoline and diesel fuel. They have two delivery trucks and two overhead pumps.

In Choteau, Breen Oil Company sells Exxon gas and oil products, as well as Union 76 gas and oil products. They have four pumps and two delivery trucks. Kelly's Husky station, located east of town, sells mostly retail gas, but does maintain one outlet for wholesale use. Luinstra Oil Company sells Texaco oil products, but because Texaco is in the process of moving out of the state, they are planning to change to the Sinclair Oil Company. There is also a Phillips 66 bulk oil plant and a Standard Oil bulk station. Both primarily sell retail oil products, but do sell some bulk gas for the farms. Petrolane has a large propane and butane gas plant in Choteau. They have large storage tanks located next to the railroad for easy delivery. Petrolane maintains four trucks of various sizes for delivery.

Cattle herds receive supplemental feed at the feedlots and during the winter months this is handled through four feed suppliers in the county. Western States Industries, Inc., located on the outskirts of Choteau, has a large feed production plant. The feed is custom mixed with various grain and mineral supplements. The local feedlots obtain their feed from Western States and feed is only sold in bulk quantity. Conagra-Montana, Inc., has a distribution center in Fairfield. They sell bagged Formax feed mainly

for cattle and horses. Customers must pick up their own feed, unless they have purchased a wholesale load. In this case, a truck from Great Falls will deliver the feed. Farmington Elevator in Choteau and Dutton Farmers Elevator sell a mixed feed supplement which is delivered to the elevator by railcar.

Chemical fertilizer for the fields is supplied by Greenfield Farmers Oil, Eisenman Seed Company, Dutton Farmers Elevator Company, and Conagra-Montana, Inc. Greenfield Farmers Oil handles the Cenex brand fertilizer. They have a delivery truck and do custom mixes. Eisenman Seed handles liquid and dry fertilizer, in bulk or bag. They also provide professional soil analyzing and custom blends. Eisenman will deliver and spread the fertilizer. The other companies only provide limited service--generally product information and bagged fertilizer.

The county has shown a substantial increase in their grain storage capacity in the past five years. Most of the grain storage facilities are located in Dutton and Fairfield. In Dutton there is the Dutton Farmers Elevator Company which owns three large grain bins with capacity for approximately 300,000 bushels. GTA in Fairfield has two elevators with an approximate capacity of 100,000 bushels. These bins are of the older wooden variety. Eisenman Seed Company has six new steel bins used for barley storage, with an estimated capacity of 300,000 bushels.¹² Teton Grain Company, the latest grain storage company in Fairfield, has eight bins with an approximate capacity of 200,000 bushels where they store barley and wheat. In Choteau, there are three elevators, GTA, Coast

¹²Eisenman Seed Company has two elevators located outside of Fairfield. Together, these have approximately 100,000 bushel capacity.

Trading Company, and General Mills. Each of these elevators is of the older variety and has an approximate capacity of 100,000 bushels.

The county has been experiencing a steady rate of housing construction. Most of these houses have been for either persons moving into the community for retirement, or for farmers moving into town. There are two concrete contractors. While house basements are their primary job, they pour concrete for any purpose throughout the county. The two companies, Richem Construction and Ramaker Construction, are in direct competition with each other. While house construction is consistent, there is not enough work for two concrete companies of their size. Each has three concrete trucks and a front-end loader with a rear end hole digger. Anseth Electric performs general electrical contracting work. There are no companies within the county that do general building construction, however, there are a large number of individually employed carpenters and plumbers that do commercial and residential construction.

During the spring and early summer, most farmers have their crops sprayed for insects and weeds. There are four air spraying companies in the county. Three of these are located in Choteau. All are based at the county airport. The airport has limited services, providing a single large maintenance hangar, gas pumps, a spotlight, and a 2,000-foot runway. There are small storage hangars for twenty planes. During the summer months, Choteau Flying Service, Farm and Ranch Aviation Company, and Mountaineer Aviation Company are active at the airport doing spraying for the area. These companies are single plane operations that employ a pilot, mechanic, and a spraying specialist. Frontier Aviation in Dutton provides a sprayer during the summer and air taxi service.

Teton County electrical service is provided by Montana Power and

Sun River Electric Co-op, Inc. The electricity comes from both hydro-electric power from the Missouri River and coal converted to electricity from Colstrip, Montana. They already are near the end of their present line capacity and will require additional power sources by 1981. Natural gas is provided by Montana Power. Natural gas, too, is getting scarcer and Canada is getting less enthusiastic about supplying Montana with natural gas. While gas discoveries have been made along the eastern slopes of the Rockies, environmental and development costs have delayed practical use of this new source until the mid-1980s.

Secondary Services

There are six restaurants in Teton County, with the Kopper Kettle being the only restaurant in Fairfield. The latter is situated in a small brick building on Main Street. The restaurant is divided into two sections--the lunch counter along with five tables up front, and the rear dining room section of fifteen tables. They keep four waitresses on duty during the meal times and then slack back at the other times. The place stays busy with many of the farming people stopping by when in town.

Choteau can boast of five restaurants. The Log Cabin Drive-In began life as a small drive-in, but through multiple expansions has developed into a nice family restaurant. The building is modeled around a log cabin motif. The same motif is carried through into the interior. The interior has fifteen tables, five booths, and a lunch counter. This restaurant too is divided between the dining area and the lunch counter area. All types of food are served. There are four waitresses, two cooks, and a manager on duty. The restaurant does very good business between the local farmers and the traffic from U.S. Highway 89 that passes by.

The Teton Valley Inn is a rather new restaurant situated on the

ground floor of an old boarding house. The restaurant has experienced a recent remodeling and is in top shape. All types of food are served and the prices are very reasonable. Clientele are mostly the city people, in particular the retired sector of the populace. There are three waitresses and a hostess on duty.

The Choteau Steak House is located in one of the sections of an old block of stores. While the restaurant appears at first to be quite small, it continues backward, comprising thirty tables. The main meal is steak, however, other dishes can be had. They do most of their business at night. The interior is in need of remodeling, but its homey atmosphere is a draw in itself. They keep three waitresses and a hostess on duty and do a good business.

John Henry's Pizza-Beer-and-Chicken Restaurant is a remodeled bar (the bar is still present) with five tables. They do a lot of take-home service and employ a bartender and two cooks. The bartender does all of the order-taking and waitress functions at the restaurant.

The Sip and Sup Cafe is a small cafe for the younger people. There are ten tables, a soda counter, and five pinball machines. They serve mainly sandwiches and soft drinks. The place does a good business from 3:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. when the school bunch is out on the streets.

There are three bars in Fairfield and five in Choteau, and all are nearly alike in their operations. A good example is the Silver Dollar in Fairfield. They have a small lighted sign outside. The building is a small affair providing room for a bar counter and four tables, with a juke box and a television for entertainment. The place is rarely crowded and usually has two to four patrons lingering around. The Antler Bar and Lounge in Choteau is an exception to the Montana bar stereotype. They

provide a full lounge, hot sandwiches, and pizza. The establishment is air conditioned and presents a nice appearance. Fairfield and Choteau each has a small Montana State liquor store. Run by one person, the stores have all the varieties of liquor placed on shelves rising to the ceiling. Mixes and soft drinks are not available.

Both towns have a couple of small supermarkets competing for grocery sales in their respective communities, Dave's Thriftway and Milt's IGA are in Fairfield, and Gary's IGA and Rex's Thriftway are in Choteau. These grocery stores are all basically the same type of store. They are approximately half the size of the typical supermarket, yet operate in the same manner as the supermarket. Each market is supported in advertising, product information, and price supports by its franchisor, selling company labeled goods as well as independent labels. The stores usually employ a manager, a stocker, a butcher, and a checker. While prices are higher than in Great Falls, these markets get all the local business because of the distance involved in going to Great Falls. This type of grocery store has been operating for about ten years. There are also a couple of small grocery stores in the county, surviving because of the variety of items they sell and because they keep longer hours than do the supermarkets.

In Fairfield, a Circle K store does a good business. Selling all types of foods, pharmaceuticals, and household items, they serve a real community need. The store is constructed in the typical Circle K fashion and has two gas pumps. Choteau has Fairfield's equivalent of the Circle K in Choteau Foods. Housed in a small, older store, the establishment has been there for thirty years. They sell the same variety of goods, but do not have gas pumps. Choteau Bakery produces and sells bread and pastry

goods; employing four persons. While they do sell their own bread and pastry at the store, they sell the bulk of their breads to the schools, hospital, and the IGA. They are a small operation, but command a loyal following because of their location and superior quality products.

The county has a good selection of clothing stores in which to browse and shop. While Great Falls is a definite influence on clothing operations, the stores in the county provide the local residents with sufficient selection to ensure their continual survival. Fairfield has only one clothing store and two clothing accessories stores. B and E Clothing sells women's and men's clothing in their newly remodeled building. While the women's clothes are of the latest fashion, the men's clothing is mostly work clothes and western wear. The interior is very plain, with a wall separating men's from women's clothes. They employ three persons and have averaged \$250,000 gross in recent years. The Calico Cat Fabric Shop does a good amount of business because of the rural popularity of making one's own clothes. The store has a good stock of fabric and accessories and has done \$200,000 gross the last couple of years, with two people running the shop. Stuff 'N Things is a variety store that sells primarily clothing accessories and handbags. They also sell potholders and custom upholstered items. The person running the shop does much of the custom work while relying on other local people to bring in their work for sale.

In Choteau, Isakson's Department Store sells men's and women's clothes where they have been located, in the same spot, for fifty years. Their building is in need of remodeling. Now aligned to the V-Store chain, they sell medium-priced clothes and all types of accessories, luggage, and cosmetics. They employ six persons, four out front and two in the office.

Ellen's Fashions, located in an old department store, is also in dire need of remodeling. They sell only women's fashions in the medium price range for mature adults, grossing \$150,000 per year. The Foothills is a new, modern clothing store, selling high fashion men's clothing from three-piece suits to decorative jeans. They also sell shoes and all men's clothing accessories. Run by two people, the Foothills is a very popular store with the area's junior and senior high school people, and grosses \$300,000 each year. The Corral is a clothing store devoted exclusively to western wear which is run by one person. The Corral sells men's and women's clothing and boots, in a store located off Main Street in an older building, along with two other shops. Norma's Fabric Store sells all types of fabric and accessories. They stay busy and sell approximately \$200,000 per year. There is only one shoe repair store in Teton County--Fairfield Shoe Store. Located in an old wooden structure, the sole proprietor repairs shoes and sells western boots.

Both Choteau and Fairfield have a barber shop and a beauty parlor. The barber shops are two-chair operations employing a barber who also sells insurance. The facilities are old and business is not very good. The beauty parlors are more modern and advertise current hair styles and men's hair styling.

Movies can be seen at the Star Theatre in Fairfield or at the Roxy Theatre in Choteau. Both are small theatres showing a single movie twice nightly, three days a week. The prices are fifty cents cheaper than in Great Falls.

During the winter months, the bowling alleys are popular spots for socializing. Both Choteau and Fairfield have a small bowling alley. The Argon Bar and Bowling Alley in Fairfield and A and K Lanes in Choteau

each has five lanes. The Argon is rather run down, while A and K Lanes is well kept and operating modern lane machinery. Both have a small grill, with alcoholic beverages being permitted in the Argon.

Teton County's close proximity to Great Falls deters the development of any large motels or hotels. The typical motel patrons are either truckers or traveling salespeople. The Motel '76 in Fairfield is a nice twelve-room ranch-style motel. The establishment is AAA rated, being very clean and attractive. The rooms are air-conditioned and there is a small office/lounge.

There are three motels and one hotel in Choteau. The Western Star Motel has ten older units with television, direct dial phones, and a laundromat. The rooms are mobile home construction. Big Sky Motel, across the street from the Western Star Motel, boasts color television, air-conditioning, direct dial phones, carpeting, and some kitchenettes in their fifteen units. The motel is styled after log cabins and is well maintained. The motel experiences relatively few nights that they have any vacant rooms. The Bella Vista Motel, on the other side of town, has thirty house-type duplexes with small garages. The motel was opened in 1945. There is color television, but no air-conditioning. The establishment is very well maintained, exhibiting a unique quaintness. Glenloyd Hotel is the only hotel in the county and most of the boarders are elderly. The 20-room facility is a two-story wooden structure that is kept immaculate.

Medicines can be obtained at Lloyd's Drug and Variety in Fairfield and at Choteau Rexall Drugs in Choteau. Lloyd's Drug and Variety is a completely remodeled store, employing two salespersons and the pharmacist. The store is very well layed out and sells quality merchandise, including

cosmetics, gifts, camera equipment, cards, magazines, and some animal medicines. Choteau Drug is located in an old bank building. The store has become run down and sells a lot of cheap items that have been on the shelves a long time. Choteau Drug has a pharmacist and two salespersons.

In Choteau there are two stores that sell a variety of quality gifts and personal items. Jandon's Home of Variety is a Radio Shack dealer, selling stereo equipment and records. They also sell gifts, writing supplies, and cards. The store is run by two persons. The merchandise is well layed out and the store appears to be managed properly. Jensen's is a small gift store run by Mrs. Jensen, whose husband sells insurance in the other half of the new brick building. She sells very high quality imported pottery, pictures, cards, candles, and miscellaneous decorative items.

Furniture may be purchased at Teton Furniture Store in Choteau. They sell high quality furniture, carpet, drapes, pictures, and other decorative pieces. The store has two floors and has been remodeled in recent years. There are two employees. Furniture can be reupholstered at the Roundup Shop which is in an old run-down building. They work with all types of fabrics and do some work on automobile upholstery.

Kitchen and laundry appliances can be purchased and serviced at three locations in Choteau. Choteau Electric deals in Hotpoint washers, dryers, stoves, and refrigerators. They have a small selection of each type of appliance on exhibit. General Electric Appliance sells GE and Zenith televisions and GE appliances. Located in an older brick building, they have a good stock of appliances and do minor repairs. The Sears Catalog Store has a number of laundry and kitchen appliances available for sale. They also provide full catalog service to all Sears products.

They are located off Main Street in an old store front. The interior has been remodeled.

Clothing can be cleaned at three coin-operated laundromats in the county. Two are located in Choteau, the other in Fairfield. All are basically alike--ten to fifteen washers and five dryers. They also have soap and change machines available. Dry cleaning can be done at Choteau Cleaners and Tailors and at Teton Cleaners. Both provide full cleaning services and basic tailoring needs. The stores are rather run down, but appear to be running efficiently.

Financial services are provided for in three institutions. In Fairfield, the First National Bank provides full banking services. They are an independent bank belonging to the FDIC, with \$10 million in assets.¹³ They were established in 1919, with their latest expansion in 1963. They employ a president, vice president, and four tellers. Many of their recent loans have been for retirement homes and farmers remodeling their homes. The Greenfield Community Federal Credit Union in Fairfield was established in 1942. They moved to their present location in 1970. The Credit Union provides savings and loan services, has assets of \$886,000, and employs three people.¹⁴ In Choteau, Citizens State Bank has assets of \$12 million, employs nine people and provides full banking services.¹⁵ The bank is located in an older building where they are presently quite crowded.

¹³Interview with William L. Olson, First National Bank, Fairfield, Montana, July 1, 1978.

¹⁴Interview with Betty Bales, Greenfield Community Federal Credit Union, Fairfield, Montana, July 1, 1978.

¹⁵Interview with Fred McBarribal, Citizens State Bank, Choteau, Montana, August 15, 1978.

There are five insurance agencies listed in Teton County--all of which are independent insurance agents. While they sell all types of insurance, their largest insurance type is farm and ranch insurance. They usually employ one other person for secretarial work. The offices are small and the agent is often in another line of business in addition to selling insurance.

There are six lawyers located in Teton County. They are all residing in Choteau, close to the county court house. Five of the six have their offices located in an older building that has been remodeled. The sixth is located nearby with a certified public accountant.

Automobiles can be washed at three locations in the county. There is one car wash in Fairfield and two in Choteau. They are all of the self-service, coin-operated variety. The Choteau car washes have two stalls, while the Fairfield car wash has only one stall. The stalls are large enough to wash pick-ups but not large trucks.

Northeast of Choteau there is a KOA Kampground. They provide the usual KOA conveniences of nice camp grounds, full hookup, showers, laundromat, and a general store. The facility is open only during the summer months. While its regional location is not the best, the camp ground does have five to ten campers nightly.

The importance of hunting season to the area is exhibited by the location of one of the finest taxidermists in the county. A. E. Masters, in his eighties, is still very active. He has his office and mini museum located in an old house. He does all big game, game birds, and fur rugs. He also does some wildlife sculpture in bronze.

Flowers, plant food, and accessories are available and can be purchased at Findorff Flowers in Choteau. They are members of FTC. There is

an adjacent greenhouse for growing their own plants and flowers year-round. They employ two people.

Fine jewelry and clocks can be found at Bob's Jewelry in Choteau. He is the only jeweler in Teton County. The store is located in an older building off Main Street. Run by the owner, the store has a good stock of watches, rings, earrings, and silver trays. Jewelry repair and embossing services are also provided.

In Fairfield, Country Rose Antiques provides a good stock of antique items. There is a showroom with nicely preserved or restored items, and then two large sheds full of items that require a degree of restoration. The owner does his own restoring in a large shop and his wife does most of the sales functions. The store has experienced good business, especially from Great Falls people.

Telephone service for the county is provided by Three Rivers Co-op who serves approximately 3,500 residents of the county. Located in a newly expanded and remodeled brick building, they have twenty-two employees with ten service trucks.

Teton County has nine churches serving the spiritual needs of the populace. The county's religious history had been primarily Catholic, and there are still three Catholic churches. There are two Mormon churches, two Lutheran churches, an Assembly of God church, and a Seventh Day Adventist church. Most of the churches have been in their present locations for over fifteen years. The church memberships are not very large, ranging between 100 and 300 persons. The newest church is a new Mormon church nearing completion in Fairfield. The facility is an all-brick construction with activity rooms located off the main sanctuary. It will be a very attractive facility.

Recreation and Tourism

The Rocky Mountains are the focal point for recreation and tourism in Teton County. The Lewis and Clark National Forest is located in the Rocky Mountains and the Forest Service has provided a number of campgrounds for picnics and overnight stays, as well as providing a number of established trails for those persons wanting to hike or backpack. The Upper Teton River drainage provides excellent trout stream fishing. The Teton Pass Ski Area is a privately run operation with a chairlift, a poma lift, and a rope tow. The present facilities need improvement and the rental equipment should be replaced. The road leading up to the ski area is not paved and this can be very difficult when the snow gets deep. The mountains also provide good hunting. There are large numbers of deer and elk, and sizable numbers of mountain sheep and mountain goats. Choteau, the county seat, experiences a business boom during the hunting season when hunters buy supplies, visit the bars, and stay over in the motels. Freezeout Lake, located between Fairfield and Choteau, is a waterfowl reserve which is maintained by the Forest Service. The lake is open to hunting during the duck season.

Teton Village in Choteau provides the only established historical site in Teton County. It has a small museum, a blacksmith, gift shop, and an ice cream parlor. All are housed in separate buildings. Teton Village is located on Highway 89, which is the major route between Great Falls and Glacier National Park. The village receives a good portion of its visitors from people visiting Glacier. The museum centers around pioneer life in the Teton River area.

The major towns in the county either own or have access to golf, swimming, tennis, and baseball. Both Fairfield and Choteau have well

kept swimming pools with dressing rooms and diving boards. Choteau has a nine-hole golf course on the outskirts of the city. The course is publicly operated and open from May until mid-September. Choteau, Fairfield, and Dutton have new tennis courts. There are two courts per facility. Choteau and Fairfield have city parks which are well kept with large shade trees, open pit barbecues, and picnic tables. The Choteau Park has a large indoor party hall for winter events and a full variety of swings for the kids. Fairfield has a relatively new community hall with a small stage for all types of community events. The hall is spacious, well lighted and heated. They have a good supply of tables and chairs available. There is also a large kitchen in the rear. Down the street from the community hall there is a Senior Citizen "Drop In Center." The facility is well furnished with tables, couches, chairs, a television, and a radio. The facility is used often as a community gathering spot for the elderly.

CHAPTER III

COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF CHOUTEAU AND TETON COUNTIES

A comparison of the economic development and potential of Chouteau and Teton Counties is a complex undertaking due, in part, to the similarities between the counties. However, while they are very similar, there are distinct traits that mark one of the counties for an increasing rate of growth, while the other county will retain a rather stable economic pattern.

Chouteau County is 1.7 times the size of Teton County in terms of square miles (3,927 versus 2,294). However, they are nearly equal in total population. Both counties experienced an initial upsurge in population in the early seventies. This was followed by a slump in 1974 and 1975 when agriculture experienced severe losses. The populations now appear to be leveling out at around 6,500 persons (see Figure 1). This is because of the higher concentration of farming in Chouteau County, where nearly ninety-four percent of the land is into agriculture and over two-thirds of the farms are over one thousand acres. Both counties have a community of particular economic note. In Chouteau County, there is Fort Benton and in Teton County there is Choteau.

The demographic characteristics of the counties are very similar. They each have a little over two thousand persons employed, with the greatest concentration in the wholesale/retail trade occupational area;

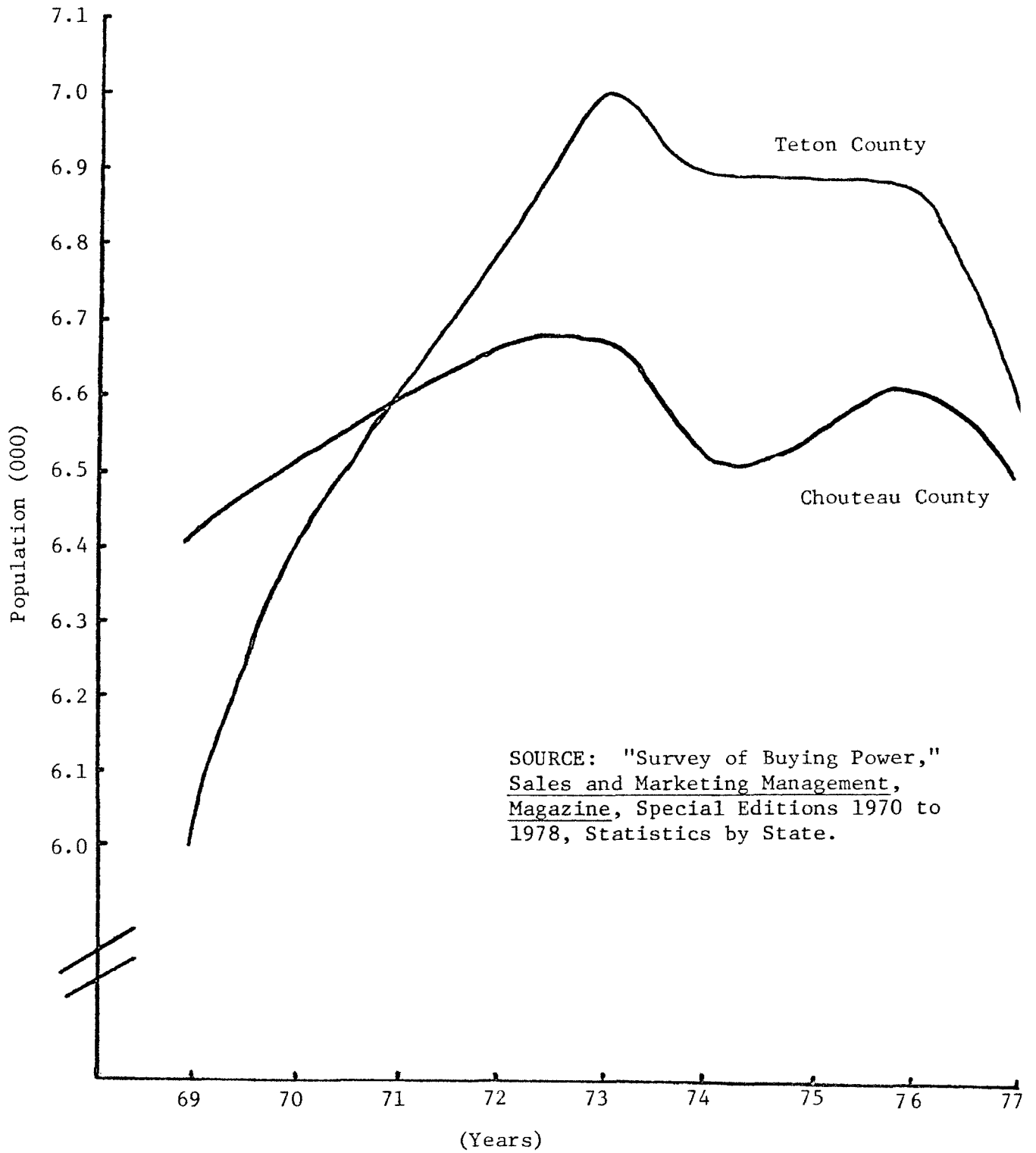


Fig. 1--County Populations from 1969 to 1977.

15 percent in Chouteau and 18 percent in Teton, (see Table 2). This occupational area includes the agricultural employed, reflecting a high concentration of agricultural employment in the counties. The 1970 Census of Population reports 1.4 percent more people in Teton County in manufacturing, but it is suspected that this figure has dropped with the near shutdown of Meyer Ditcher Company and the addition of Tutt's Metal Production in Chouteau County. Teton County reflects a higher percent of its population engaged in non-agricultural occupations. This is especially true in the construction, service, and craftsman trades where there is a two percent or greater difference.

TABLE 2
EMPLOYMENT STATUS

	Chouteau	Teton
Total Number of Employed	2,432	2,096
Percent Employed in:		
Wholesale & Retail Trade	15.0	18.2
Services	3.0	5.3
Manufacturing	2.8	4.2
Educational	10.7	10.1
Construction	3.8	5.7
Government	18.2	16.7
White Collar	17.4	19.6
Sales - White Collar	13.2	13.4
Craftsman	6.2	11.1
Work outside the county	8.6	6.4

SOURCE: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book 1972, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1972), p. 296.

There are greater numbers of Chouteau County residents employed outside the county than there are in Teton County. The poorer condition of the roads throughout the year contribute to fewer persons electing to work outside Teton County. The populations of both counties will eventually change their occupational dimensions with the increasing numbers of retired persons entering the counties and the dwindling number of farmers. The average age of the population in Chouteau County will probably increase due to the emigration of the youth to the larger cities. The average age in Teton County will remain relatively stable because the greater number of retired persons will counter the younger families remaining for either oil and gas work, or agricultural work. In 1972, the County and City Data Book listed the median family income for both counties within five hundred dollars of each other (\$8,700 versus \$8,203), with Chouteau County the greater. In comparison in 1978, "Survey of Buying Power" listed the median household effective buying income (EBI) for Chouteau County six thousand dollars higher than in Teton County (\$17,226 versus \$11,267). The projected household EBI for the counties will continue to rise assuming that current conditions continue. With the EBI spread over fewer households the result is a higher EBI per household. Some of the recent upsurge in EBI in Chouteau County has been due to its decreasing population. Chouteau County EBI shows nearly twenty thousand dollars more potential ability to buy than Teton County (see Figure 2).

The total number of households for both counties was approximately 2,300 in 1977; again with Chouteau County ahead by two hundred. While the population of the counties has decreased over the past five years, the number of households has actually increased showing that the average family size has decreased (see Table 2). The median value of these homes was

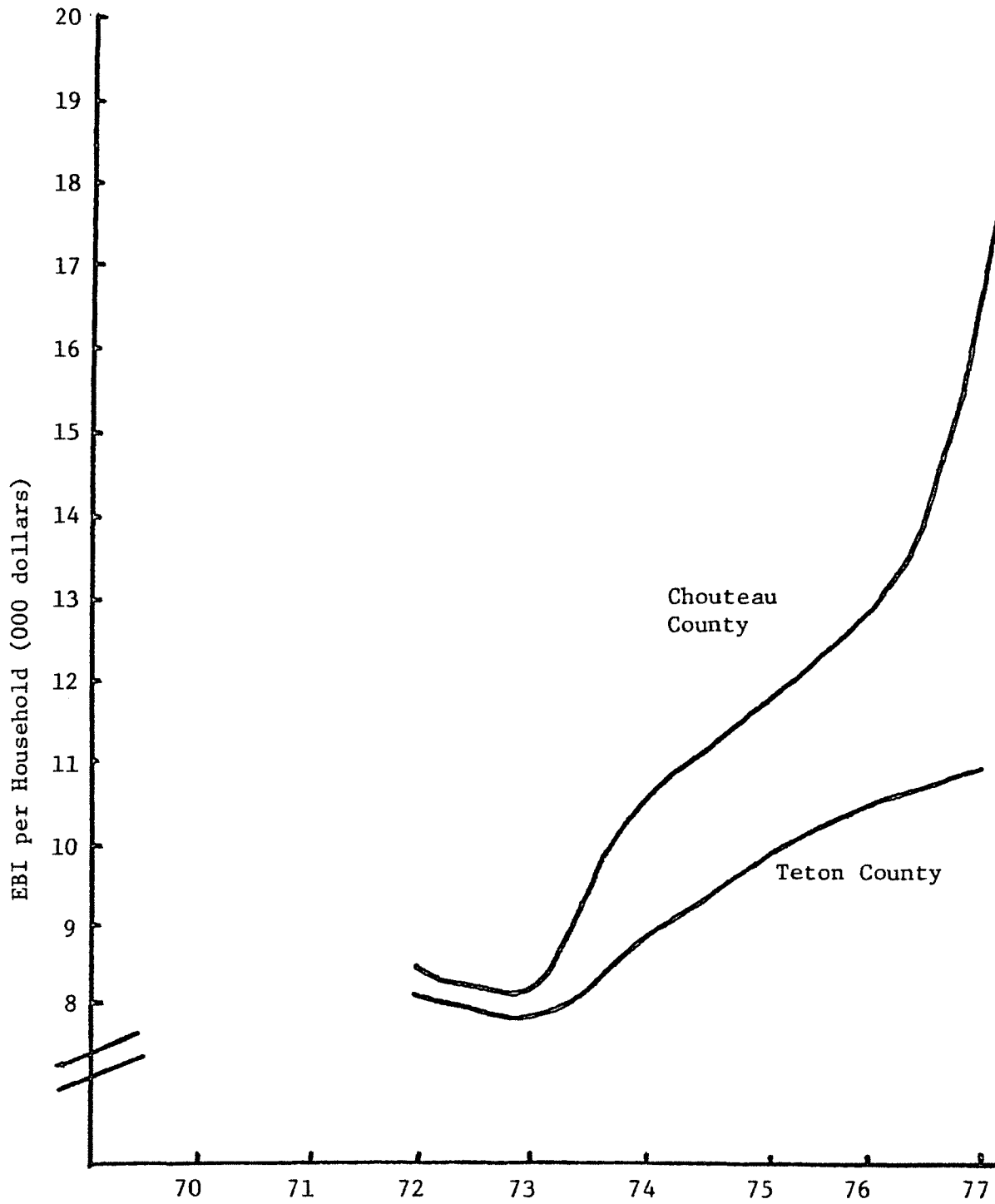


Fig. 2--County Household EBI from 1970 to 1977

higher, by \$1,000, in Chouteau County with a value of \$13,082 in 1977 as illustrated in Table 3. There were three hundred reported additional homes between the period of 1970 to 1977 for each county. This figure would have been greater for both counties if there has not been a number of home abandonments as a result of farmland consolidation. While the trend in farmers moving into the towns is ending, the influx of retirees and people looking to get away from Great Falls insures a bright future for housing construction and continual growth of urban housing.

TABLE 3
HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

	Chouteau	Teton
<u>1977</u>		
Median Home Value	\$13,082	\$12,109
Median Rent Per Month	\$ 92	\$ 78
<u>1972</u>		
Source of Water:		
Public	1,257	1,050
Well	610	997
Other	626	146
Sewage Disposal:		
Public	1,119	1,021
Septic Tank	1,113	1,007
Other	261	165

SOURCE: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book 1972, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1972) p. 299, and U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book 1977, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1977) p. 298.

Both Chouteau and Teton Counties have a "continental" type of climate. Teton County has a shorter growing period because of its lower average temperatures. However, they do experience more precipitation in

the form of snow in the winter months, and rain in the remainder of the year. The Rocky Mountains influence the weather in Teton County much more than do the Highwoods and Bear Paw Mountains in Chouteau County.

Both counties operate their governments on a three commissioner system. They have all their county offices located in the county court house. In each case, while the court houses are old, they provide adequate space and facilities to properly conduct affairs. The counties operate on funds obtained through a tax levy system based upon personal property, as well as upon State and Federal funds. In 1970, the U.S. Census showed both counties with government revenue of approximately \$2.3 million. Chouteau County was spending more than Teton County in health services, highways, and education (see Table 4). This picture has probably changed since then, because of the recent building of the new hospital, expansion of the interstate highway, and addition to most of the existing schools in Teton County. The tax revolt is making its introduction into the counties. Recent tax levies have been increasingly scrutinized by the tax payers.

TABLE 4
GOVERNMENT SPENDING

	Chouteau	Teton
Government Revenue (in millions)	3.7	3.7
Government Expenditures (in millions)	3.8	3.0
Percent spent in:		
Education	63.1	49.4
Highways	11.1	9.6
Public Services (includes hospital & Health)	5.6	6.9

SOURCE: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book 1977, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1977) p. 300.

In adjacent counties, tax levies have been turned down repeatedly prior to eventual passage. This situation on the whole will mean public funds will become increasingly more difficult to obtain, allowing projects operated by public funds to lose their effectiveness. The U.S. Department of Agriculture offices in Fort Benton and Choteau provide essentially the same services, with the Chouteau County branch specializing in wheat production and the Teton County office emphasizing livestock raising.

The counties are both experiencing a decline in the number of school age people migrating to other areas and from the general reduction in the average family size. This condition is forcing both counties to consolidate school facilities and bus children further distances. There are four high schools in each county, with only the Fort Benton and Choteau schools large enough to have separate elementary and high school facilities. The schools are generally thirty to forty years old, and need remodeling. There are presently no plans in either county to rebuild or remodel any of these schools. There have been additions to many of the schools to provide enclosed recreational facilities and additional classroom space. The teaching staff and resources necessary to operate a viable education system are provided to the students. The county school systems are on a par with the school systems of the rest of the state in terms of teacher-student ratio, educational facilities and materials available, and money available to support the various programs. The educational level of the county populations has risen just above the high school level (see Table 5). It is very doubtful that the educational level will ever rise much above that as long as the primary occupation in either county remains agricultural. There is not much incentive to go to college, and if a person goes to college, there is little job opportunity for them within the counties.

The school systems will encounter increasing difficulty in obtaining the funds necessary to operate. This could mean a decrease in teachers, supplies, and services provided.

TABLE 5
COUNTY EDUCATIONAL STATUS

	Chouteau	Teton
Persons 25 years old and over	3,602	3,498
Number of school years completed:		
Elementary		
0 years	28	33
1-4 years	45	77
5-7 years	174	229
8 years	606	775
High School		
1-3 years	543	521
4 years	1,364	1,081
College		
1-3 years	546	454
4 years	296	327

SOURCE: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book 1972, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1972) p. 295.

Both counties have their particular troubles with obtaining potable water. While Fort Benton has an unending source of water, in the Missouri River, it must be treated. Most of the underground water can be used only for household needs, because of its high alkaline content. Potable water must be obtained from Fort Benton. In Teton County, an area seems to either be floating in water or under severe water restrictions much of the year. Choteau has plenty of water, even though additional trunklines will be necessary for city growth. Fairfield is under water restriction during the winter months when there is no irrigation. The absence of water may be an unsurmountable obstacle to further town growth. The one

concession however, is that the water from the ground throughout the county is potable. Teton County has more water available for all purposes than does Chouteau County.

The solid waste disposal facilities for the counties are essentially the same. Both are beginning to experience problems of sites becoming filled. While new sites are relatively easy to find in Chouteau County, Teton County is having a hard time finding new sites. They are also having problems with individual farmers maintaining their own sites. The outlook for the future is that the Federal Government will increase their specifications on solid waste disposal facilities. This will outlaw most of the private sites and put additional pressure on the public sites. The counties will be tasked with increased supervision of the sites and greater demand for new sites as dependence on public sites increases.

Sewage disposal systems are used in the county seats and in the larger sites. While the Fort Benton system is presently meeting community needs, the Choteau system requires immediate enlargement. Much of the new building is presently being forced to use septic tanks, which the city feels are inadequate in light of future growth. The Fairfield system has flooding problems during the spring thaw, requiring some investigation. The rural populace of both counties must rely exclusively on septic tanks. Both Fairfield and Choteau will require improved sewage disposal systems if the communities are allowed to grow. The money necessary for these systems will probably be difficult to obtain.

The counties have similar sheriff departments. They are organized around the same premises. The departments are headquartered at the county seat with deputies at each of the major towns. The sheriff departments

are the communications centers for all emergency operations. Fort Benton has elected to have a separate city police force. A separate city police force is probably not necessary, due to the small size of Fort Benton and the location of the sheriff's office. An additional deputy sheriff could easily handle this territory. The counties are equally equipped, with adequate vehicle coverage and new radio systems. Both counties need desperately to replace their jail facilities that have become old and worn. The fire departments are not modern metropolitan fire fighting units, however, they do provide the services deemed appropriate by the taxpayers. Both counties are minimumly equipped to meet any normal threat, with established emergency procedures in light of any unexpected threats. The Teton County Fire Department is a little better equipped and more able to cover its territory. The counties will eventually be forced to replace their fire fighting equipment. Their operations will probably remain a strictly volunteer fire department.

The counties are virtually identical in regards to communications services available. There is essentially a small community newspaper for each major town that covers local news. The Great Falls Tribune covers the state, national and world news. Also, radio and television broadcasts are handled by the Great Falls and Havre stations. The ability to provide cable television would greatly improve the television reception in the counties. The cost factor of bringing this service to rural residents prevents its introduction. All county residences are capable of receiving telephone service from the Three Rivers Telephone Cooperative. This system is one of the most modern rural telephone services in the United States.

Postal services too are identical. There is a post office in

most of the larger towns with delivery service to many of the rural residences. The post offices are generally rather new and well equipped.

The road system in Teton County is much better than in Chouteau County. Much of this is because of the location of Teton County, between Missoula, Great Falls, Browning, Glacier Park, and the northern route across the Rocky Mountains to Kalispell. Because of these routes, the state and federal transportation agencies have spent a lot of money on the state and federal highways linking these areas. With the great amount of subsidized highway work, Teton County does not have to spend as much to maintain its road system. In fact, Chouteau County does spend a greater percentage of its tax dollar on roads than does Teton County (see Table 4). Due to Teton County being within a major transportation network, the road access in the county is much better than in Chouteau County (100 miles of paved highway versus 34 miles in Chouteau County). The needed improvements in the Chouteau County road system will probably never be done due basically to the inherent isolation of the county from any important travel routes. Similarly, the need for greater access through the county has sponsored a very good bridge system, while Chouteau County is stuck with trying to maintain four ferries they would like to replace with bridges. The isolated nature of Chouteau County leaves it with few paved roads and bridges. The railroad system for the counties is very similar. Both systems have experienced a lack of sufficient railroad cars to meet agricultural produce demand. This problem is being addressed at the state and federal levels. The outlook does not look good, as state transportation people expect the shortage to recur for the next couple of years. The counties have minimal bus service. A single lane serves the towns along the major highways. The airplane facilities are similar in purpose and

quality. They are geared to the needs of the spray planes and generally provide only a minimal runway. The Choteau Airport does provide overhaul facilities and a large area of enclosed hangars for small planes. The Great Falls International Airport is the nearest airport providing interstate service.

The health care services of both counties are geared around general medicine and geriatric care. While both county hospitals boast of an operating room, their use is limited by the qualified personnel needed to run the facility. The facilities and services in Teton County are superior to those in Chouteau County. This is most evident in the availability of doctors. While Choteau has four doctors, Fort Benton only has a semi-retired doctor and little hope of getting another doctor. The hospital in Choteau is brand new with a fully equipped modern laboratory, operating room and geriatric center. The Fort Benton hospital is nearly twenty years old and has seen little modernization. Teton County is capable of flying in specialists from around the northwest. Chouteau County often has to refer even some of the common ailments to the Great Falls hospitals. Part of the problem in Chouteau County is that the taxpayers are not willing to support a good health care program. A continued decline of the Chouteau County health care services is expected, with increasing dependence on Great Falls. This will greatly affect the geriatric care facilities that require continual medical help. The counties each have an adequate number of dentists, pharmacists, and veterinarians.

Neither county is conducting any large scale, capital intensive manufacturing. Where the basis of these counties is agriculture, the manufacturing too is geared toward the regional needs of farmers and stockmen. Due to the specialization in agriculture in these counties, the future

looks bleak for any sizable manufacturing. In most cases, the manufactured products remain in the county. While some do export a portion of their goods regionally, only Melroe Division exports nationwide.

Chouteau County has a definite lead in manufacturing over Teton County. Much of this edge comes from the expanding operations of the two metal fabricators. While Melroe Division is capable of increasing operations, it appears that the Clark Equipment Company is looking at relocating the entire plant. The metal fabricators are experiencing good business because of an increasing reluctance to spend time and money doing their own welding, and the lack of equipment necessary to perform the necessary work on modern farm machinery. The tanks they produce are necessary today in light of the cost and quantity of fuel needed to run the large tractors. Presently, it appears that manufacturing in Teton County is on a downward trend. Meyer Ditcher Company will probably close within two years and two other manufacturing firms have closed in the last five years. The only vital manufacturer is Bouma Post Yard; and they too may experience economic pressure from environmental groups, and find heavy competition from the stronger and easier to install metal posts. Only the construction oriented manufacturers have a chance of remaining unscathed, providing they do not attempt to expand beyond real building demand. At present, these companies are able to "hibernate" during a building recession. While both counties have the skilled labor to run small manufacturing firms, these counties are simply out of the mainstream of materials, transportation, and distribution to allow any major manufacturing. The small community oriented metal fabricators are meeting a need that will insure their survival, but they will not expand beyond their immediate region.

Agriculture is the primary occupation and source of income in both counties. While both counties have experienced a decrease in the total number of farms, Chouteau County appears to have experienced a greater decrease than Teton County (see Table 1). Much of this is because it takes a much larger farm in Chouteau County to make the farming operation profitable. There are nearly three times the number of farms over one thousand acres in Chouteau County than in Teton County (see Table 1). Due to its greater land area and more suitable topography, Chouteau County has greater agricultural output than does Teton County. While both counties have experienced high yields the past eight years, Chouteau County has had some of the largest wheat and barley crops in the state. In 1976 and 1977, Chouteau County was ranked number one in the state in crop production (see Table 6). The 1974 wheat crop in Chouteau County was four times larger than that in Teton County (see Table 1). The 1974 barley crop in the two counties was nearly identical in size. Because of rough terrain and recent experiences with harsh winter, the Teton County ranches have taken a lot of their pastures and turned them into hay production. By 1974, Teton County had a hay crop of 142 thousand tons, over twice the tonnage of Chouteau County. Chouteau County shows more cattle than Teton County (see Table 1). However, Montana agricultural statistics for 1976 and 1977 show dollar receipts from livestock being greater in Teton County than in Chouteau County (see Table 6). The receipts from livestock sales represents a more realistic figure in terms of final ranking, because of the arbitrary methods used in reporting cattle head counts. This is especially true in Teton County where there are a lot of range cattle. Chouteau County has most of its cattle located in its nine feedlots, while Teton County provides pasture for most of its cattle.

TABLE 6

AGRICULTURAL RANKINGS

	1976		1977	
	Chouteau	Teton	Chouteau	Teton
Livestock & Livestock Products	\$ 8,554,000	\$11,054,000	\$ 8,948,000	\$10,153,000
Crops	56,860,000	22,038,000	40,356,000	17,189,000
Cash Receipts per Farm	75,698	48,124	64,728	43,199
<u>Numerical Rankings, 1977</u>				
	<u>Chouteau</u>		<u>Teton</u>	
Crops	1		8	
Cattle	26		22	

SOURCE: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1978 Montana Agricultural Statistics, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1978), pp. 15-55.

Teton County leads Chouteau County in the production of sheep and poultry. Again, Chouteau County has specialized in wheat production, leaving little time, space, or money for other agricultural endeavors. Much of this is evident in the average value of farm machinery between the counties. The average value of farm machinery is \$43 thousand in Chouteau County, while in Teton County the value is nearly half that figure (see Table 1). The cost of production of farming is nearly the same however. The bottom line though shows that farming in Chouteau County is much more profitable than in Teton County. The average Teton County farmer probably wishes that he did not have to scratch-out an existence next to mountains, but had a couple of thousand acres of the flat wheat

land in nearby Chouteau County. At present, it appears that both counties are pretty well locked-in to their agricultural production. However, due to less specialization, Teton County is probably more adaptable to shifts in agricultural product demands. The future for agriculture in both counties looks bright as long as the weather remains mild. The price of wheat and barley will continue to decrease with the high yields and always greater surpluses. The world agricultural situation appears to be improving which will also depress prices. Potential looks good for introducing substitute crops such as safflower, mustard, and sun flowers to increase overall farm income. Hay production will continue to rise as long as the winters remain as harsh as they have the last two years. The cattle industry will continue to fluctuate with price. Cattle prices are projected to improve the next two years, which will bring about increased numbers of cattle with a resultant increase in overall cattle industry revenue.

The business communities in both counties are geared to the needs of their agricultural regions. Most of the community business leaders feel that they are far enough from Great Falls that they have a fair amount of autonomy and guarantee of future earnings. This feeling continues to be demonstrated with the recent opening of new furniture stores, clothing stores, and various other small businesses. This is not to say, however, that they are not affected by the large communities adjacent to them. Chouteau County in particular is experiencing increasing business pressure from Great Falls and Havre. County residents often mix their business buying with personal shopping. While Chouteau County is nearly twice the size of Teton County, and has more households; Teton County

shows larger total retail sales (see Table 7).¹⁶ The larger total retail sales in Teton County is probably due in part to the greater accessibility to outside buyers, and to the greater number of variety stores. Teton County also shows greater food sales (see Table 7). In all other sales categories: Eating and Drinking, General Merchandise, Furniture, and Auto, Chouteau County has reported higher sales.

The median household effective buying income (EBI) is much higher in Chouteau County than in Teton County, (see Table 7). Chouteau County has had one of the highest personal incomes per capita in the nation in recent years. While Chouteau County presents a superior rating in total sales, it is believed that it will see little growth in the future. The agricultural productivity of Chouteau County is nearing its peak of efficiency with present technology and has exploited most of its available cropland. Another breakthrough in wheat production would have to take place to sufficiently increase yields. This is not real likely considering the continued depressed price of wheat due to the tremendous surplus of wheat already existing in the United States.

Teton County is showing new potential as a retirement area, site for new natural gas production, and improved agricultural production. While none of these areas will ever cause a major boom in the economy, sales should show a steady growth pattern.

There is a complete line of automobile dealers in each of the counties. These dealers sell primarily light trucks and economical sedans. Luxury cars and foreign makes are not sold and must be obtained in Great

¹⁶Total Retail Sales - includes sales of store types not listed as a major type such as restaurants, furniture stores, automobile dealerships, etc.

TABLE 7
COUNTY BUYING POWER

	1977		1976		1974		1973		1972		1970		1969	
	Chouteau	Teton	Chouteau	Teton	Chouteau	Teton	Chouteau	Teton	Chouteau	Teton	Chouteau	Teton	Chouteau	Teton
Population in (000)	6.5	6.6	6.6	6.9	6.5	6.9	6.7	7.0	6.7	6.8	6.5	6.4	6.4	6.0
Households in (000)	2.4	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.8
Total Retail Sales ^a (000 of dollars)	10,587	11,456	9,372	11,327	8,152	9,870	7,645	9,220	6,881	7,898	6,507	7,307	6,983	8,405
Food in (000 of dollars)	2,386	3,752	2,070	3,693	1,733	3,060	1,326	1,721	1,278	1,553	1,268	1,516	1,311	1,684
Eating & Drinking Establishments (000 of dollars)	1,650	1,093	1,511	1,139										
General Merchandise (000 of dollars)	690	367	624	378	578	346	384	531	366	475	328	418	346	470
Furniture/Furnishings/ Appliances (000 of dollars)	169	373	161	402	150	370	100	200	84	157	85	157	96	189
Auto (000 of dollars)	4,110	2,781	3,544	2,679	2,937	2,252	693	1,190	594	957	493	780	588	998
Total EBI ^b (000 of dollars)	52,025	31,869	39,772	31,587										
Median Household EBI ^b (dollars)	17,266	11,267	13,204	10,724	10,774	9,165	8,437	7,735	8,439	7,980				

SOURCE: "Survey of Buying Power," Sales and Marketing Management Magazine, Special Editions 1970 to 1978, (New York, New York), Statistics by State.

^aTotal Retail Sales includes sales of store types not listed as a major type.

^bEffective Buying Income, disposable personal income.

Falls. Because of the rural nature of both counties, trucks generally outsell cars three to one. The dealerships are all basically alike in that they employ three to five persons, have a small service department and are housed in the modern fabricated metal buildings. Most of dealerships are less than thirty years old and have moved into their present facilities within the last ten years. The service departments are fully equipped and extensively used due to convenience and distance from the larger facilities in Great Falls. The dealerships average twenty vehicles sold per month, with the Chevrolet and Ford dealerships leading the pack. Chouteau County shows higher vehicle sales than Teton County (see Table 7). As long as the wheat production is profitable, this situation will probably continue. Both counties have greater sales than would normally be expected for counties of such characteristics. Their sales are boosted by people from outside the county, especially Great Falls, buying automobiles at a lower price and better order availability.

The stocks of on-the-lot new vehicles is low for all dealerships in the counties; basically in line with the low capital situation of these rural dealerships. The major dealers in both counties could improve their businesses by obtaining dealership rights for the more popular foreign vehicles. Many of the residents of these areas are going to these compact cars and trucks because of their economic operation in times of increasing petroleum prices.

The auto parts stores in both counties are very similar. There are two parts stores in each of the counties, one distributing NAPA parts and the other distributing DELCO/AC parts. The stores are operated essentially the same with similar product lines and prices.

The hardware stores in both counties provide very similar products.

In each county there is a lumber yard, a farm supply store, and a Coast To Coast store. There is an additional lumber yard and Coast To Coast store in Teton County. These stores provide the basic construction needs of the county residents. The Coast To Coast stores are the newest hardware businesses, providing a very wide selection of household gifts, entertainment products, and general hardware. The stores in Teton County have shown the most growth, with the opening of two Coast To Coast stores in the last two years and the remodeling of the Knudtson Lumber Company last year.

While the counties sell the same brand name farm implements, the size and consistency of operations is different. Farming in Chouteau County is both more capital intensive and on a larger scale than in Teton County. Because of this, there is a need for the most efficient equipment available. The machinery now being purchased is four-wheel drive diesel and forty foot discs and planters. In Teton County, the farms are smaller and more geared to hay production. This requires less expensive two-wheel drive gasoline tractors and smaller implements. These implements are generally used less frequently and in less strenuous conditions. As a result, the farm implement dealers in Chouteau County have higher sales figures and sell more new units. The dealer facilities are better equipped and more modern. The stocks of parts and equipment are also better.

The primary fertilizer dealer in both counties is CENEX. There is also a CENEX fertilizer mixing plant in both counties, with distributing stores in the smaller towns. Because of the greater farm acreage, Chouteau County has larger sales of fertilizer than does Teton County. Many of the grain dealers also sell packaged fertilizers. The CENEX dealer in both

counties are equally equipped to provide full soil analysis, and custom blending, and delivery.

Both counties have experienced a shortage in grain storage facilities the past three years due to the bumper grain crops and a shortage of grain cars to move the grain out of the region. Chouteau County has had a substantial storage capacity for the last five years, while Teton County is now in a period of adding substantial amounts of storage; especially for the increase in barley. The grain storage facilities are more consolidated in Teton County as a result of modern techniques in grain movement. Many of the storage areas in Chouteau County are remotely located along various railroad spike lines. Commercial grain storage is greater in Teton County than in Chouteau County because of the great amount of grain that is privately stored on the farms in Chouteau County. The Chouteau County farmer uses the commercial grain facilities only for transfer services.

Because most residents of the counties do their own carpentry work, there is little demand for general contractor builders. Chouteau County has only one such contractor firm and Teton County has none. Teton County has a number of individuals working for themselves, however. Most of the contractor work in the counties is concrete work on basements, ditches, and various agricultural needs. The two concrete construction contractors in Teton County do not have enough business for full time employment. There is not enough work available in Teton County for two concrete contractors. There is only the one concrete contractor in Chouteau County, more in line with demand.

Many of the spray plane firms in the counties are itinerant organizations, working in the immediate area only during a limited period of

the summer. A few of the firms in Teton County do stay open during the year with people flying cattle ranges and into the mountainous areas.

Electrical power is available to all residents in each county. Natural gas is available only in Teton County. Power in both counties is presently near its peak capacity. This is a state-wide problem and requires urgent action so that there will be power available for future expansion.

While both counties have a complete variety of restaurants for all needs, the restaurants in Teton County are more numerous, modern and generally experiencing greater success. Again this seems to be the case because of the greater traffic through Teton County. There is a trend to improve service and facilities in Teton County while the restaurants in Chouteau County are all showing wear and need to modernize. The Log Cabin Drive-In and the Teton Valley Inn are especially nice restaurants in Teton County, while the best that Chouteau County can offer is Scheffi's Landmark Cafe that requires complete remodeling. The one area that Teton County is lacking is a "true" drive-in, such as a Tastee Freeze. While the Log Cabin Drive-In was once such an establishment, they expanded above that status about two years ago. If recent history is any indication, the restaurants in Teton County will continue to improve while in Chouteau County they will remain as they are with little expansion or remodeling.

The grocery stores in both counties are operated essentially the same. The markets are identical and the franchisors have set up operations consistent with this market. The primary grocery stores in both counties are the regional supermarket chain stores. In both counties, these stores are really mini-supermarkets. Circle K grocery stores are

located in both counties. This highly successful chain operates these stores very profitably in Fort Benton and Fairfield.

Teton County overshadows Chouteau County in clothing sales. There are five clothing stores in Teton County while only two in Chouteau. The Pioneer Merchantile in Fort Benton is the only clothing store selling men's and women's clothes. The other store is a new women's fashion store on a very thin budget. In Teton County, there are three department stores and two men's stores. The stores in general are better stocked, more attractive and are experiencing better sales than in Chouteau County.

There is one furniture store in each county. The store in Fort Benton will open soon in an old store. The furniture store in Choteau is well stocked, selling a variety of furniture, pictures, carpet and other accessories. The Choteau store is very well established and has a history of good sales. Overall, sales of furniture in Teton County are over three times that of Chouteau County. I believe sales are higher in Teton County because there are more young married couples requiring furniture, and because access to outlying market areas is much better.

Teton County has three times more motels than does Chouteau County. Again, the reason has to do with Teton County's access to the North-South trucking and tourist routes. Hunters fill the motels in the Fall. None of the motels in either county is a large capacity facility. They are all based on the motel concept of the mid fifty's. They are all kept in rather good condition, with many boasting of color televisions, private phones, and carpet. There is little need for additional motels in Chouteau County, unless the historical attractions in Fort Benton were restored--which presently looks very unlikely.

Both counties have a hotel. While still in business after one

hundred and fourteen years, the Grand Union Hotel today is more of a historical building than a working hotel. Its restoration would greatly increase its patrons, and those who would visit the hotel. The hotels in both counties serve mainly older persons as an alternative to a retirement home.

The highly profitable wheat farms in Chouteau County have provided for a stronger financial system. The one bank in Fort Benton (total assets \$24 million) has more assets than the combination of all three financial institutions in Teton County. The banks in both counties provide complete banking services. Teton County residents also have the services of the Greenfield Community Federal Credit Union. As long as the wheat crops are good, the Chouteau County banks will continue to grow in assets and dominate the Teton County banks. If there should be a period of crop failures, this trend could possibly reverse itself.

On the whole, Teton County has more business activity in the areas of entertainment, convenience, and personal goods. This covers such businesses as the bowling alleys, drug stores, insurance, theatres, laundromats and jewelry stores. The residents of Teton County have shown through their votes that they are more willing to support county programs than the residents of Chouteau County. While many Chouteau County residents go to either Great Falls or Havre for entertainment, the Teton County resident is more willing to use the entertainment facilities of his community. This same type of thing also happens with many of the personal items people buy in the variety stores. There are two businesses of particular note in the counties. In Chouteau County, LeVoyageur Art Gallery providing quality paintings and sculptures from the unlikely location of Fort Benton. In Teton County, Rose Antiques in Fairfield,

supplies a large amount of quality American pioneer furniture and curios. Both of these businesses really do not belong in their present locations because of the low potential number of buyers in these areas. However, with interest from outside the counties these businesses are able to do a good business.

Recreation and tourism is oriented around the historical sites in Chouteau County and the Rocky Mountains in Teton County. Fort Benton is steeped in early western history, but because of the lack of money and interest, much of this history remains unknown to the nation. Fort Benton and the county could successfully turn this around and make it one of the historical highlights of the state. The Grand Union Hotel needs to be restored, along with the site of the Fort. The museum should be improved and a site for campers be provided. A paddle-wheel steamer could be purchased as a means of touring the lower Missouri River, along with a restaurant and entertainment. In Teton County, improvements in camping sites and Teton Pass Ski Area are necessary to increase recreation. In Choteau, Teton Village has room for improvement as two of the five buildings are vacant. This tourist site is in a good spot for attracting visitors going to and coming from Glacier National Park. The hunting and fishing is excellent in both counties, with Teton County having a slight edge because of the remoteness of the Bob Marshal Wilderness.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Both counties have demonstrated that they are viable agricultural regions, and there is good evidence that they will have strong economic futures. Teton County has demonstrated that its agricultural potential is great as they continue to improve in wheat and barley output, increased acreage, and enlarged cattle herds. Teton County's communities have been showing great strides in enlarging and improving housing, services, business, and recreation. These communities are becoming especially attractive to retiring persons who are looking for medium size communities with good health services yet with a lower cost of living than larger areas. Teton County is presently showing potential as a source of natural gas and has demonstrated a viable lumber industry. Recent discoveries provide good evidence that there is enough gas to last many years and become increasingly profitable. Teton County has one too many concrete finishing companies. Both companies claim the other is taking all of the business. In fact, both companies remain idle most of the time. The county needs to put more effort and money into obtaining new potable water sources, without which Fairfield and portions of Choteau will not be able to grow beyond their present size.

Chouteau County has had considerable growth in wheat production. Its future growth will be linked to this same crop. World demand for wheat will probably keep this county economically strong. Chouteau County

has specialized its production capacity in the growth of wheat and has experienced high crop yields and high prices during the last ten years. If the growth trend of this ten year period continues, the county would show a fantastic growth in income and prosperity. Recent evidence suggests though, that this growth rate will slow, showing a more modest rate of growth. The communities in Chouteau County have had some improvement in housing and recreation but little growth in the business community. Great Falls and Havre have affected business potential in Chouteau County. There have been few new businesses and not much upgrading of the older establishments. There is not a need for a city police force in Fort Benton. The County Sheriff Department could handle this work load with the addition of a deputy. This would also reduce taxes. The ferries along the Missouri River need to be replaced. They are dangerous and are major obstacles in travel in emergencies. The county should push the state and federal government to replace these ferries with bridges. Fort Benton is in need of more types of entertainment. Presently, there are not any movie theatres, or community youth centers. The schools do provide a gym for most sport and theatrical events, however, it is limited in its use during most of the school year for non-organized groups of youth. The city needs a small theatre and a facility for the youth to congregate socially. One of the most distressing problems in the county is the apparent apathy of the taxpayers in providing funds in support of a strong hospital and fire department. These two services are experiencing shortages of modern equipment and qualified operators. The doctor shortage in particular could result in unnecessary deaths in the face of major disasters. The fire department equipment is old and could prevent effective fire control. The county taxpayers should be educated on the

state of these services and be convinced to support their improvement. Fort Benton is full of historical attractions of the early West, that are not being operated at their full potential. The city should attempt to obtain state and federal funds to restore the court house, Grand Union Hotel, and the Steamboat landing area. This idea could be taken further by adding a new steamboat to tour the Missouri and provide a fine restaurant and entertainment. Fort Benton could provide additional camping areas and suitable motels. This whole scheme could really bolster the economy of the city.

There are a number of situations that both counties should attempt to change to enhance business and residential growth within the communities. The auto dealerships should obtain foreign vehicle dealership. Presently, there are no such dealerships, with people going to Havre or Great Falls to buy these small gas efficient vehicles. Even in the rural areas these vehicles are becoming increasingly popular. Both counties are at their peak capacity in electrical power. Additional power is required for future growth and a request should be made now to bring about the power that will be needed in the near future. The counties do not have cable television available. The additional channels and improved reception from cable television would greatly enhance this entertainment medium. In these rural areas only two stations are received. The newly received stations would add an educational station and a number of regional stations. This would greatly enlarge the population's scope of knowledge and interests. The counties have had a hard time obtaining grain cars at harvest time. The counties need to put pressure on the state to improve this situation. Without these grain cars there is a good chance that much of the grain crop would spoil from lack of facilities to store it.

The economic future of both counties looks bright. Teton County has a broader and more diverse economic base that improves its chances of weathering severe economic upheavals. The Chouteau County economy is based solely on wheat. This crop has been very profitable to the region and as long as current conditions continue this trend should also continue. However, there is always the possibility of weather destroying the crop, or prices falling off, or demand decreasing. Thus, while Chouteau County has experienced great success, its economic base is not as diverse as that of Teton County, making it more susceptible to financial ruin if that one product should be destroyed or lose demand.

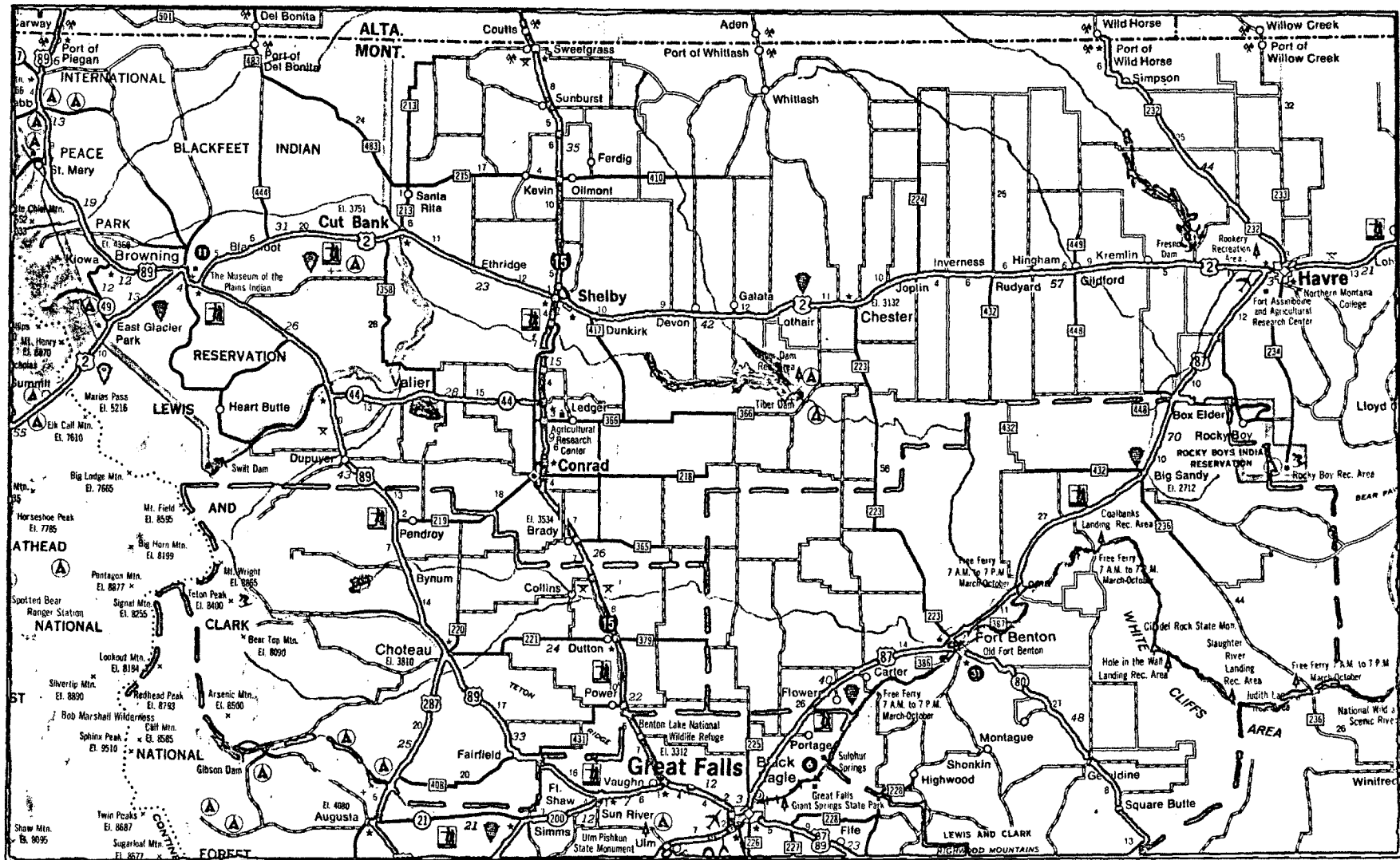


Fig. 4--Regional Map of Chouteau and Teton Counties

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