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## Industrialization in Chickasaw County, Mississippi, a study of plant workers

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Industrialization in Chickasaw County, Mississippi

# A Study of Plant Workers



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY  
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION  
CLAY LYLE, Director

STATE COLLEGE

MISSISSIPPI

In cooperation with Agricultural Marketing Service,  
U. S. Department of Agriculture



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## FOREWORD

This report is based on a survey conducted by the Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with the Agricultural Marketing Service of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The President, in a message to Congress in January 1954, expressed the need for a concerted attack on the problems of low income areas. The Rural Development Program was conceived to meet this need through the combined efforts of interested local and State organizations with coordinating assistance from the Federal Government.

Much interest has been engendered in recent years in the possibilities of rural industrialization as one means of raising levels of living in low income rural areas.

This study is one of several now under way under the joint sponsorship of the Agricultural Marketing Service and State Agricultural Experiment Stations. In addition to Mississippi, State Experiment Stations involved are Louisiana, Ohio, Iowa and Utah. Brigham Young University is also participating in the Utah project jointly with USES and AMS. It is hoped that these studies will shed some light on the social and economic changes involved in the establishment of industrial plants in rural communities and their implications for rural development.

## SUMMARY

This study attempts to appraise the effects of industrialization on selected residents of a rural Mississippi community. Specifically, this report examines some demographic and socio-economic characteristics of employees of a factory which has recently been established in the town of Houston, Chickasaw County, in north central Mississippi. It focuses mainly on plant employees with a few comparisons with a cross section of rural residents living in the survey area. A later report will enlarge upon these findings and will also include an intensive comparative analysis of the sample of rural residents.

The factory workers were comparatively young (over 50 percent were under 30 years of age), most were heads of families and the majority had children of school age or younger.

One-fourth of the plant workers were also operating farms and another fifth of the workers had operated farms within the last ten years. Only a small number of the farms currently operated by the plant workers would qualify as "commercial" enterprises. About 40 percent of the workers lived in towns or villages, the rest divided about evenly between farm and open-country nonfarm residences. Factory workers exhibited a greater tendency to change residence than the average rural resident in the community.

Workers in the plant also had changed jobs more often than rural residents. However, workers who had the greatest number of job changes were those who had worked in other factory or nonfarm jobs; only about 20 percent of the workers had shifted directly from farm to factory work.

The industrial workers, in general, had a higher level of living as indicated by such items as electric lights, running water, refrigerators, etc., than a cross-section of rural residents. They also had increased their level of living at a faster rate in the last few years than rural residents in the community. Median income of plant worker families from all sources was higher than that of local rural families in 1956. Plant workers who had shifted directly from farming to factory work had lower average incomes than those who had shifted from other factory jobs, indicating that earlier industrial experience tends to increase the workers' earning power.

Practically all plant workers were agreed that the factory had benefited the community. A majority of rural residents also thought the factory had helped the community but about 25 percent had formed no opinion on the matter. The most frequently named reason given for the favorable attitudes toward the factory was that it had brought more money and jobs to the community.

Differences in the patterns of social activity of plant workers and rural residents were largely inconclusive. Rural residents showed a slightly greater tendency to join organizations than did plant workers. Religious activities were the primary or only social activity of a majority of plant workers and rural residents in general.

About a fourth of the plant workers also operate farms, and about the same number have operated farms in the last ten years. For most workers now operating farms, farm income represents a minor share of their total earnings. Most of the part-time farmers apparently consider their farming as a temporary addition to their income; very few intend to continue farming indefinitely.



# Industrialization In Chickasaw County, Mississippi

## A Study of Plant Workers

Sheridan T. Maitland and George L. Wilber\*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most striking developments in the South in recent years has been the rapid growth of industrialization. For the most part, new industries have located in the larger towns and cities where industrial and shipping facilities are abundant and the labor force is skilled in industrial crafts. Some industrial plants have been established in the smaller towns and villages. Because these plants are an important new economic force in an increasing number of rural communities, the effects of this development are significant to those interested in the changing patterns of rural living in the South and elsewhere. Analysis of the impact of industrial development on farm families and rural communities was the basis for a study conducted in the Spring of 1957 in Chickasaw County, Mississippi. This bulletin is a report of the findings developed in one phase of the study: the effects of industrial employment on levels of living, scale of farming operations, participation in community affairs and attitudes toward the community of rural area residents who had taken jobs in a new local factory. A final report will provide a more intensive analysis of these effects and a comparison with results of a parallel investigation of a representative sample of local rural residents.

#### Need for the study

For over two decades the State of Mississippi has been engaged in a program to balance the State's agricultural base with an industrial base. During this period Mississippi's population has remained relatively stable at slightly more than 2,000,000. Meanwhile, the proportion of the population living on farms had declined from two-thirds to one-half. Over one-half

of the farmers in Mississippi had gross incomes from the sale of farm products of less than \$1,200 in 1949. The exodus from farms has been encouraged by the condition of almost unbroken full employment since early in World War II.

The Rural Development Program, inaugurated by the U. S. Department of Agriculture in 1954, has focused attention on low-income farm families and helped to crystalize action in the form of State and local community programs designed to raise rural incomes. One course of action suggested is the encouragement of location of industrial plants in rural communities to provide jobs for underemployed rural labor. Industrial payrolls in turn will stimulate the growth of trade and service enterprises, strengthen the economic base of the local community and provide additional jobs for the local labor force. This study provides an excellent opportunity to assess the effectiveness of Mississippi's industrial development program and similar programs elsewhere in raising the levels of living in low-income rural areas and the effects of new industries on farm families, the farm enterprise, and rural community institutions.

#### Objectives of the study

While the initial effect of a new industry is to increase employment and income within the community, the plant's effects on the rest of the local economy and on local institutions is less obvious. A new plant in a predominantly rural area can usually meet or better the prevailing wage scale and compete for the most skilled workers available. How does this affect farming operations in the community? Will farm operators seek jobs in the factory and if so, will they continue to operate

\*From the Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Sociology and Rural Life, Mississippi State University respectively.



their farms? Will part-time farming become more prevalent? Does the new industry help to bring about a change in the social life of the community; for example, do people take part more or less in social and civic functions as a part of a new pattern of living? What is the attitude of the people toward the factory and does the coming of the factory alter their outlook toward their community? What are the implications of the influx of industrial plants in rural communities for action programs of the State and Federal governments, such as the Extension Service, Public Health agencies, the Social Security Administration, and the Rural Development Program? Answers to these questions were the general objectives of this study. Findings produced from interviews with workers in the Jackson Manufacturing Company, a furniture factory established in the town of Houston in 1954, will be presented in this report.<sup>1</sup>

#### The survey locale—Chickasaw County

Chickasaw County is located in north central Mississippi, on the edge of the Black Prairie. Because of the difficulties of maintaining cotton acreages due to soil erosion, insects and increasing competition, farming in the area has evolved from the old plantation cotton economy to mixed cotton, dairy and cattle production. The livestock and dairy farms are modest in size. Cotton farms are somewhat larger than in the Black Prairie area to the East. Despite the great changes in farming which have occurred in the past generation, it has been estimated that an efficient agricultural economy in the area would require and support little more than half of the farm families

living in the area in 1950.<sup>2</sup> The average farm was about 100 acres in 1954. County farm land including buildings was valued at about \$48.00 an acre. The proportion of tenant farms dropped from over 53 percent in 1950 to 47 percent in 1954 following the general nation-wide trend.

The population of Chickasaw County was 18,951 according to the 1950 Census. Nearly 45 percent of the county's population was nonwhite in that year. About 65 percent were living on farms and the rest were classified as rural-nonfarm residents. The estimated population in 1956 was 17,100. Allowings for births and deaths during the period, a net loss due to migration of over 3,600 was estimated between 1950 and 1956, of which over 2,000 were nonwhite (table 1). There are no urban places in the county. Houston, population 1,800, is the county seat.

Educational attainment in Chickasaw County compared favorably with the U. S. average for the rural farm and nonfarm population in 1950 and was higher than the average for the State of Mississippi.

Variations in participation in the labor force gives some indication of the way in which local socio-economic institutions affect the labor market. Seventy eight percent of the males in Chickasaw County, 14 years of age and over, were in the labor force at the time of the 1950 Census, about the same percentage reported for the United States as a whole. Only 21 percent of the Chickasaw women were working or looking for work, however, compared with 28 percent throughout the country. Considering the rural population separately, the women of Chickasaw County

Table 1. Population and Migration in Chickasaw County, Mississippi, 1950 and 1956.

	Total	White	Nonwhite
Estimated Population, July 1, 1956 .....	17,100	9,800	7,300
Enumerated Population, April 1, 1950 .....	18,951	10,525	8,426
Natural Increase, 1950-56 .....	2,094	875	1,219
Net Migration, 1950-56 .....	-3,648	-1,450	-2,198
Loss to Armed Forces, 1950-56 .....	205	105	100

Sources: Table 6b, Supplement to Mississippi Counties, Sociology and Rural Life Series No. 6. 1950 Census of Population, Vol. II, Part 24, Mississippi.

<sup>1</sup> The furniture factory had been operating about two years and employed approximately 130 workers. An attempt was made to interview all employees except the plant manager and his secretary. One hundred-six usable schedules were obtained from the plant workers.

<sup>2</sup> Parvin, D. W., "The Nature of an Efficient Agriculture in the Northeast Prairie Area of Mississippi," Miss. Agr. Exp. Station Bulletin 459, Jan. 1949. p. 20.

ty had a slightly higher rate of labor force participation than rural women for the entire State.

About 57 percent of all employed persons in Chickasaw County were working in agriculture at the time of the 1950 Census; only nine percent were employed in manufacturing; and the rest were engaged in trade and service occupations.

### How the survey was made

Because the study design called for a unique combination of conditions, none of which could be controlled by the researchers, the selection of a suitable survey area required a careful examination of possible sites. Although many rural communities in Mississippi had some of the required conditions, none was found which met all of the requirements of the survey. Chickasaw County came nearest to meeting the ideal conditions for a survey of the impact of industrialization in rural areas. It was predominantly rural, average farm income was low and a new industrial plant had recently been established in Houston, the county seat. Although the new factory payroll was small, it was expected that the economic and social effects of over 130 new jobs would be substantial in relation to the size and general economic level of the community.

A schedule containing a series of questions on personal and family characteristics, work experience, income, level of living, farm operations, and attitudes toward the factory and community was administered to two groups: (1) all of the workers on the payroll of the furniture factory in Houston, and (2) a sample of rural residents living in the area surrounding Houston.<sup>3</sup>

A total of 414 persons were interviewed, 106 employees of the furniture plant and 308 heads of rural families. As nine of the plant workers also were rural residents, the number of rural households surveyed was 317. Some of the rural household heads interview-

ed worked at industrial plants or other nonfarm jobs in nearby communities. The occupational and household components of the samples are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Major Components of the Sample, Chickasaw County, 1957.

	Plant Sample*	Open-Country Sample**
Respondents .....	106	317
Household Heads .....	79	317
Adult Family Members .....	273	781
Furniture Plant Workers .....	106	9
All Other Nonfarm Workers		
Wage and Salary .....	—	88
Self-Employed .....	—	18
Not Reported .....	—	55
Farm Operators .....	27	202
Farm Wage Workers .....	—	2

\*Includes nine furniture plant workers who also were selected in the open-country sample.

\*\*Includes nine open-country residents who were also employees of the furniture plant.

## Characteristics of Plant Workers

### Who works in the plant?

An industrial plant brings many new and different job opportunities to a rural community. What people in the community seek jobs in the plant? Do the people taking employment differ essentially from the rest of the employable population? Does the new plant tap a particular segment of the labor force? Answers to these questions will provide some hint of the impact of an industrial plant on a predominantly rural community. Table 3 shows the

Table 3. Distribution of Plant Workers by Age and Sex, Chickasaw County, 1957.

Age	106 Plant workers	Sex	
		89 Males	17 Females
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100	100
Under 25 .....	39	42	24
25 - 29 .....	16	18	6
30 - 34 .....	21	20	29
35 - 39 .....	13	11	24
40 - 44 .....	6	5	11
45 - 49 .....	4	3	6
50 and over .....	1	1	—

distribution of plant workers by age and sex. The most striking fact is the predominance of young males on the plant payroll.<sup>4</sup> Nearly two out of five workers were under 25 years of age

<sup>3</sup> Beat 3, the eastern portion of Chickasaw County, was not included in the survey area because the employment and commerce of that part of the county centers largely in Okolona, the only population center of over 1,500 in county other than Houston.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout the report, the 106 workers interviewed are assumed to be representative of the entire plant work force of approximately 130.

and less than one in ten was over 40. Less than one-sixth of the plant work force were women. The median age of female workers in the plant was 33.5 years, the median age of males was 27.3 years. Women in their thirties are likely to have children of school age and to be relatively free to take jobs compared to mothers of pre-school age children. Most of the women in the plant were probably holding their first nonfarm jobs.

The great majority of the plant workers were family breadwinners. Less than a fifth of the work force was single. About 80 percent of the men and nearly all of the women in the plant were married. About two out of three workers had children of school age or younger. Most of the rest were heads of young, all-adult families. There were no Negroes employed in the plant.

One of the important questions arising with the advent of industrial job opportunities in rural areas is the extent to which farm operators seek plant jobs and how such off-farm work will affect their farm operations. One-fourth of all the plant workers interviewed were also operating farms. About half of the 27 workers who operated farms had been farming for ten years or more. Most of the farm operators (21) owned their farms. Seven farm operators had operations of sufficient scale to be classed as commercial farms, 16 classified as part-time and the remaining four were simply "residential" farms according to the U. S. Census of Agriculture definitions of farms by economic class.<sup>5</sup>

Equally important to an appraisal of the effects of industrialization are the workers who are former farm operators. An additional 24 workers had operated a farm at some time during the preceding ten years. Of these 24, eight had owned their farms and the rest had been tenant operators.

#### Where do the plant workers live?

Industrial plant operations are governed by exacting time schedules for manufacturing processes and for the workers as well. Before rapid public

transportation was available and private automobiles were common, factory workers had to live close to their places of work. In most rural communities, the private automobile offers the plant worker the only means through which he may remain on the farm or in the open country and commute to his place of employment. Choices concerning a place to live and the likelihood of changes in residence as a result of new job opportunities are important facts to all persons concerned with the implications of rural industrialization.

Places of residence of plant workers are compared with those of all open-country residents in the area in table 4. Two-fifths of the plant workers lived in Houston and other nearby towns.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents by Residence, Chickasaw County, 1957.

Residence	106	317
	Plant workers	Open-country residents
	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100
Farm .....	29	69
Open-country, nonfarm .....	31	30
Town or village .....	40	—
Not reported .....	—	1

Almost a third lived on farms and the rest—a little over a third—lived in the open country but not on farms. Workers with school age children were distributed about evenly among farms, open-country nonfarm, and village residences, with slightly more living in villages.

#### Earnings of plant employees

Farm income and farm wages are relatively low in Chickasaw compared with many areas in Mississippi and with averages for the United States as a whole. One would expect wage rates in a newly established plant to be fairly close to the existing (nonfarm) rates in the local community. The prevailing wage in the plant was about \$1.00 per hour. The majority of the workers, including all but three of the female workers, reported weekly earnings between \$35 and \$44 (table 5). Older workers, as a group, did not receive the highest weekly earnings. Workers

<sup>5</sup> Residential farms are those with a value of farm products sold between \$150 and \$250 during the year.



**Table 5. Distribution of Plant Workers by Weekly Earnings, Chickasaw County, 1957.**

Weekly Earnings*	106 Plant workers
	Percent
Total .....	100
25 - 34 .....	4
35 - 44 .....	59
45 - 54 .....	28
55 - 64 .....	4
65 and over .....	4
Not reported .....	1

\*All of the female workers earned between \$35 and \$54 per week.

**Table 6. Classification of Residence According to Most Recent Move, Chickasaw County, 1957.**

Type of Move (Most recent)	106 Plant workers	317 Open-country residents
	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100
To farm .....	26	25
To open-country, nonfarm .....	11	17
To town or village .....	33	—
No move in last 10 years .....	30	57
Always farm .....	4	44
Always open-country, nonfarm .....	20	13
Always town or village .....	6	—
Not reported .....	—	1

**Table 7. Residence Classification Prior to Last Move, Chickasaw County, 1957.**

Residence prior to last move	106 Plant workers	317 Open-country residents
	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100
Farm .....	23	28
Open-country, nonfarm .....	11	9
Town or village .....	36	5
No move in last 10 years .....	30	57
Not reported .....	—	1

aged 25-29 had the highest proportion earning more than \$45 per week, about 59 percent. Only a little over a third of the workers over 35 years of age earned \$45 or more per week.

### Recent Changes in the Lives of the Plant Employees

The central objective of this study is to appraise the changes in a rural community wrought by the introduction of an industrial plant. In a final report, changes in the lives of plant employees will be compared with changes noted among a representative sample of residents of the rural community. In this report, changes among plant employees

will be described. Only a few general comparisons to the open-country residents will be made.

### Residential mobility

Over two-thirds of the plant employees had moved at least once during the preceding ten years; nearly three out of ten employees had made four or more moves. Setting aside for the moment the plant employees who reside in villages we find that only two in five of the plant workers who now live in the open country have not moved in the past ten years. The average open-country resident appears to be much less mobile, over half of the rural households sampled had not moved in a decade; only one in ten had moved four or more times.

Is the tendency of plant workers to be more mobile than a cross-section of rural residents in the same community associated with acceptance of industrial jobs? The survey data cannot answer this question directly but information on the coincidence of residential moves with job changes among the plant workers may provide additional light. Over one in five employees changed residences at the time they took a job in the factory. An additional 16 percent changed residences after taking their present job. However, two in every five workers moved before changing jobs and the rest (one in five) made no residential change.

### Occupational mobility

A factory job involves a rather sharp departure from rural ways. Employees of a new industrial plant in a predominantly rural community would be expected to have exhibited a greater tendency to change jobs than the average rural resident in the area. Well over half of the open country residents had held the same job or made only one change of occupation in the last decade. In contrast, more than four out of every five plant workers had changed jobs at least twice in ten years and about 30 percent had changed jobs four or more times. Only about six out of a hundred open-country residents had held four or more jobs in the last ten years.

If the plant workers show a greater willingness (or ability) to change jobs, what are the implications of this tendency for the rural community as a source of industrial labor? Table 8 indicates that only one in five plant work-

**Table 8. Distribution of Plant Workers According to Previous Job Held, Chickasaw County, 1957.**

Previous job	106 Plant workers Percent
Total .....	100
Farm .....	20
Factory .....	25
Other nonfarm .....	41
All other (including first job) .....	14

ers made the change directly from farm work to factory. A quarter of the workers came from other factory jobs and two-fifths from other nonfarm jobs. If most of the "all other" group are farm residents, about one third of the plant workforce made the jump from farm work directly to factory jobs. These findings are in line with those of a companion study recently completed in Louisiana<sup>6</sup>, where it was found that about one-fifth of the occupational shifts made by employees of a rural industrial plant who were living on farms involved a direct shift from farm to factory.

### Changes in levels of living

One of the central objectives of the Rural Development Program, inaugurated in 1954 by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, was the achievement of higher levels of living in low-income rural areas. It is generally assumed that the development of industry is one of the chief means to generate employment and raise incomes in depressed areas. Information was obtained in this study on the number of a list of household items possessed by the workers in 1950 and 1957. The items were electric lights, hot and cold running water, mechanical refrigerator, power washing machine, radio, television, telephone and automobile.

Table 9 compares the number of items the plant employees had in 1950

and 1957. One in every seven workers now employed at the plant possessed none of the listed items in 1950 and over half of the employees had three items or fewer in that year. By 1957, almost two out of three workers had six items or more and 15 percent possessed all eight items.

The period 1950-1957 was one of generally increasing prosperity throughout most of the United States. To obtain a better appraisal of the influence of the new plant on levels of living in the community, we should compare the rise in employee levels with those of a cross-section of the same rural community. Table 10 shows how the open-country residents fared in the period 1950-1957.

Almost one-quarter of the rural residents interviewed had none of the items on the list in 1950 and two thirds had three items or fewer. However, the proportion of households in the rural sample having six items or more in 1950 was not significantly different from the proportion of employee households with six or more in that year.

**Table 9. Change in Levels of Living Among Plant Employees, 1950-1957, Chickasaw County, 1957.**

Number of items possessed	106 Plant employees	
	1950	1957
	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100
1 .....	16	—
2 .....	12	1
3 .....	15	3
4 .....	24	6
5 .....	11	27
6 .....	5	27
7 .....	1	21
8 .....	2	15
None .....	14	—

**Table 10. Socio-economic Status of Plant Workers and Open-country Residents, 1957.**

Socio-economic status score* (Belcher)	106 Plant workers	317 Open-country residents
	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100
Under 25 .....	2	18
25 - 34 .....	24	33
35 - 44 .....	61	32
45 and over .....	13	17

\*Low score represents low socio-economic status and high score higher status.

<sup>6</sup>The Effects of Industrialization on Rural Louisiana: A Study of Plant Employees, Price, Paul H.; Bertrand, Alvin L.; and Osborne, Harold W. Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, LSU, 1958.

By 1957, about 30 percent of the open-country households had six items or more, only about half the proportion of employees' households having that many. The greatest difference between the groups appears at the extremes. Every household in the employee sample reported at least two items in 1957; about ten percent of the open-country households were still without any of the facilities on the list in 1957, and about a fourth had two items or fewer. Clearly, the plant employees as a group enjoyed a substantially higher level of living than did a cross-section of rural families in the county, both in 1957 and in 1950. The average number of items possessed by plant employees rose from 2.9 in 1950 to 6.0. For rural residents in the community, the average number of level-of-living items increased from 2.5 to 3.9 between 1950 and 1957.

Plant employees ranked higher on the socio-economic status scale (table 10). Half of the open-country residents had scores under 35 in contrast with only one out of four of the plant workers. Higher scores among plant employees were associated with residence in or close to town and with greater occupational mobility.

One additional attempt to appraise the effect of industrial jobs on level of living was made through the use of a standard socio-economic status scale.<sup>7</sup> All households in the employee and open country samples were assigned scores on the basis of certain standard

items in and around the home, such as type and quality of house construction, articles of furniture and appliances, bathroom and fixtures and similar items. The higher the score achieved, the higher the socio-economic status of the household in so far as it can be measured by items on the scale.

Higher scores among plant employees were associated with residence in or close to town or village and with greater occupational mobility.

### Income of plant employees and open-country residents

The average plant worker earned far more than the average rural resident in the area in 1956. One-half of the plant workers earned \$3,000 or more in 1956 from all sources, including farms; only 13 percent of the open-country residents did as well (table 12). The middle income group among open-country residents was \$1,000 - 1,999 but nearly two out of five reported total incomes of less than \$500 in 1956.

Table 12. Total Family Income in 1956, Chickasaw County, 1957.

Total income, including farm income	106	317
	Plant workers	Open-country residents
	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100
Less than \$500 .....	2	18
\$ 500 - \$ 999 .....	8	14
\$1,000 - \$1,999 .....	15	18
\$2,000 - \$2,999 .....	25	9
\$3,000 - \$3,999 .....	18	8
\$4,000 - \$4,999 .....	19	3
\$5,000 - \$6,999 .....	8	1
\$7,000 and over .....	5	1
Unclassified .....	—	28

These findings appear to indicate that family incomes in rural communities are raised substantially through industrialization. However, information on plant workers classified by income and previous job held suggests that the process may be slow or that persons in the rural community taking factory (or other nonfarm) jobs tend to come from higher income groups within the community (table 13). Plant employees shifting from farm work had a median nonfarm income about \$1,200 lower than workers who had transferred from

Table 11. Change in Levels of Living Among Open-country Residents, 1950-1957, Chickasaw County, 1957.

Number of items possessed	317 Open-country Residents	
	1950	1957
	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100
1 .....	19	8
2 .....	12	6
3 .....	10	8
4 .....	9	15
5 .....	15	17
6 .....	7	19
7 .....	3	11
8 .....	—	1
None .....	24	9
Unclassified .....	1	6

<sup>7</sup> Sewell, William H., "A Short Form of the Family Socio-Economic Status Scale," *Rural Sociology*, VIII (1943), 161-169; and Belcher, John C., "Evaluation and Restandardization of Sewell's Socio-Economic Scale," *Rural Sociology*, XVI (1951), pp. 246-255.



another factory and \$550 lower than those from other nonfarm jobs.

Apparently some employees were able to take higher paying jobs in the factory because of skills learned at earlier industrial jobs. Whether we include family income from farm sources or consider nonfarm family income separately, plant workers who shifted from another factory job had a higher median income than workers who had shifted directly from farm jobs, or than workers who had shifted from other nonfarm jobs.

Table 13. Total and Nonfarm Family Income in 1956 of 106 Plant Employees by Last Occupation Held, Chickasaw County, 1957.

Last Occupation	Per cent	Family income, 1956 (Median)*	
		Total	Nonfarm only
Total .....	100		
Farm .....	20	\$2,639	\$2,298
Factory .....	25	\$3,749	\$3,500
Other nonfarm ..	41	\$3,055	\$2,953
All other (including first job held) .....	14	\$1,874	\$1,874

\*Computed from grouped data.

Table 14. Attitude of Plant Workers and Rural Residents Toward Changes in "Chance to Get Ahead" in Recent Years, Chickasaw County, 1957.

Attitude toward chance to get ahead	317	
	106 Plant workers	Open-country residents
	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100
Same .....	22	35
Better .....	68	39
Worse .....	4	17
No opinion .....	6	9

#### Attitudes toward industrialization

Everyone reacts to changes in his customary ways of living. The coming of an industrial plant to a rural community would be expected to bring about rather sharp changes in the lives of many residents of the community and especially in the lives of persons taking jobs in the factory.

All persons interviewed were asked whether they thought the factory had helped the community. Practically all (97 percent) of the plant workers answered "yes" to this question, and most of these gave as a reason that the factory had brought more money and jobs to the community. As might be expected, open-country residents were less sure of the beneficial aspects of industrialization than were the plant

workers. Nevertheless, over two-thirds of the sample of open-country residents believed the factory had helped the community by bringing more money and jobs to the area. Only about four percent thought that the factory had not helped the community and the remaining 25 percent had no opinion.

Workers were also asked for their comments on any change in economic opportunities within their community or "the chance to get ahead" within the last few years. In this case, feeling was more divided among both plant workers and open-country residents than in attitudes toward the factory. As before, more plant workers than open country residents could see a change for the better in possibilities for economic advancement in the community. The reverse was true among those who thought "a chance to get ahead" had worsened; 17 percent of the rural residents were of the opinion that economic opportunities were fewer now than a few years ago, while fewer than four percent of the plant workers were pessimistic about their chances to get ahead. Most of those in both groups who thought that economic opportunities had improved gave reasons based on industrial expansion: "more jobs and payrolls" or "industries have come in."

#### Changes in social activity

If an industrial plant introduces fundamental changes in the economy of a rural community, it could be expected to influence the community's social fabric as well. To appraise the effect of industrial work on rural residents, respondents were questioned concerning their present and past memberships in such organizations as churches, social clubs, fraternal groups, P. T. A., etc. Table 15 indicates that fewer than one out of five workers are taking a greater part in social activities now than before the plant was established and about two out of five reported no change. Changes in social participation of respondents in the open country sample are not significantly different from those of plant workers.

Looking at the extent of present participation in social activities highlights

Table 15. Changes in Participation in Organizations Among Plant Workers and Open Country Residents, Chickasaw County, 1957.

Type of Change	106 Plant workers	317 Open- country residents
	Percent	Percent
Total .....	100	100
Taking greater part ..	19	17
Taking less part .....	8	13
No change .....	39	41
No answer .....	34	29

Some differences between the plant workers and the sample of open-country residents, however. Two in every five plant workers were not members of any organization compared with about seven percent of open-country residents. At the other extreme, over one in ten rural residents claimed membership in six organizations; only one in a hundred among plant workers had as many. However, over 60 percent of the plant workers were members of from one to three organizations compared to 50 percent of the open-country residents.

Very little difference was noted in the type of social participation reported by plant workers and rural residents, except that, somewhat surprisingly, a higher proportion of plant workers than rural residents reported active membership in religious organizations: 60 percent versus 51 percent. Church affiliated activities were the only social participation of one-half of the plant workers and about 43 percent of the open-country residents.

### Farm operations

As was noted earlier, 27 plant employees were also operating farms at the time of the survey and another 24 had operated farms before taking a factory job. Table 16 shows the distribution of plant workers according to farm tenure. The number of cases is too small to support conclusions based on differences between present and former operators; however, the preponderance of owners among workers now operating farms and the opposite tendency among former operators suggests that the landlord-tenant relationship discourages off-farm work and invites instead a clean break with farm operations when off-farm work is undertaken by the farm tenant.

Table 16. Distribution of Plant Employees by Farm Tenure, Chickasaw County, 1957.

Tenure classification	Plant employees	
	Now operating farms	Former farm operators
	Number	Number
Total .....	27	24
Full owner .....	21	8
Renter .....	6	15

How extensive are the farm operations carried on by the plant workers? Only seven workers had farms which qualified as "commercial" under Census of Agriculture definitions: sale of products of \$250 or more and income from farm greater than off-farm income. Most of the plant workers who had farms reported between \$250 and \$1,200 in value of products sold during 1956 but their nonfarm income exceeded income from sale of farm products. However, factory workers with farms appeared to be doing as well as a cross-section of farm operators in the area; one half of the farmers in the open-country sample reported value of products sold of under \$1,200 in 1956.

This is not to say that all or even a large number of farm operators can take full-time factory jobs and continue farming as before. When questioned as to whether they had made any changes in their farm operations after taking a job in the plant, eight workers reported a decrease in acreage or other reductions in scale.

It is likely that many who have made no changes in their farm operations since taking a factory job may decide to cut down as they adjust to a new mode of living. When asked whether they intended to continue farming, only seven replied in the affirmative; in the sample of rural residents, nearly nine out of ten farm operators intended to stay on the farm. Perhaps opportunities for industrial employment tend to draw away from farming those who have the weakest attachment to agriculture, or factory experience tends to weaken farm ties and dependence on the farm for economic security. Rural persons with lesser attachment to agriculture tend to be younger, to be tenants rather than owners, and to be members of lower income farm families.