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SOCIAL CHANGES IN SHELBY COUNTY, MISSOURI

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COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

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Shelby County Court House, Shelbyville, Missouri

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I. SIX SCORE YEARS

The six score years during which the white man has inhabited Shelby County is a short period of time to those who, like the Europeans, are accustomed to think of their towns and neighborhoods in terms of centuries; but to Americans it seems like a long time, even extending back to ancient history. However, it does not seem so long when one remembers that it covers the period of time from great grandparents to great grandchildren. The early settlers in Shelby County were the grandparents of several older persons still living there, while the great grandchildren of the pioneers are today directing the affairs of the county, and preparing to turn them over to their own children. A number of changes in the county are vivid memories to many residents, as well as matters of historical record.

Social scientists have analyzed social changes so that they may be understood, and may furnish information which can be used in planning transformations in society. A single invention or change of attitude may produce effects in all phases of a culture and extend through generations. So far, man has been able to see the obvious trends and factors in the complicated process of social change, but he is not sure that he completely understands the process or that he can engineer it successfully. The following analysis of social changes in Shelby County, Missouri, was made to interpret some of the significant trends and some of the important factors involved in them. What are these changes? What factors seem to have produced them? What are the directions of change at the present time?

First Settlement, Oak Dale, 1833. A visit to Oak Dale today will give a few clues to the past and some signs of the direction of change. The early buildings erected on the site of Oak Dale are gone, but to the north is the Broughton farm and to the east is the road that was used for transportation between Palmyra and Oak Dale. To the south is a cemetery in which some of the pioneers rest from earthly labor, and beyond the cemetery there stands a church building which is a material symbol of the first congregation organized in the county. Just south of the church is a schoolhouse, like the many schoolhouses that served then and serve now the needs of the people.

Although early records show that some white explorers were in the area of Shelby County in 1817, the first actual settlers arrived in 1831. By 1833 there were some 26 families in the vicinity of Oak Dale, and in 1833-34 William B. Broughton opened the first store with a small stock of goods he had purchased in Palmyra. The first post office in the county was located at Oak Dale, where mail was received once a week from Palmyra. Broughton was the first postmaster, and his home was the site of the first session of the county court in 1835. When the county was organized in 1835, however, Shelbyville was selected as the county seat. Migration into the area continued at a rapid pace, so that by 1840 Shelby County had a population of 3,056.

It is difficult now to picture how the geographical environment looked to the early settlers, so a contemporary sketch is presented. Shelby County, comprising an area of 502 square miles, is located in the north-east quarter of Missouri on U. S. Highway 36, 35 miles west of Hannibal. The topography varies from level prairie to rolling and rough upland. Predominant soil types are Putnam and Lindley silt loam. Approximately 60 per cent of the farm land is prairie, varying considerably in fertility. One-third of the county is upland, much of which today is characterized by serious sheet erosion and gulying. The remaining portion is bottom land, the majority of which is productive.

The life history of Shelby County may be analyzed in terms of four periods. The first is that of pioneer settlement which lasted from 1831 to 1860, followed by one of expansion, 1860-1900. A third period of transition from 1900 to 1940 leads to the fourth or contemporary period, 1940-1949. The characteristics, changes, and reasons for indicating these approximate dates and periods are presented in this section.

Pioneer Settlement 1831-1860. The first permanent settlers began arriving in what is now Shelby County in 1831, and by 1860 the population had grown to 7,301. The early pioneers came chiefly from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, bringing with them their Negro slaves. In 1845 German migrants from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Iowa settled at Bethel to form a communal colony. Dirt roads and transportation by horse limited the area in which neighboring could take place, but neighboring and mutual aid were essential to enable the pioneer to get a spot cleared, a house raised, and his farming operations started. His household contained some articles he had bought, but for the most part they were homemade. Although his contacts with the outside world were limited, his hunger for sociability was satisfied in part by the social gatherings that were held in pioneer homes. A house raising, a wedding, or a religious service was an opportunity to meet and visit with other people.

The average size of the farm household was approximately seven persons. The adult population was young, and each family reared several children. In fact, the small family pattern was rarely found among the pioneers. The large family pattern had a definite advantage, in view

of the crude implements and laborious methods that were used in early agriculture. Self-sufficiency was the goal of these early farmers, as they had few market outlets for any surplus produced. The provision of food, clothing, and shelter for the large family consumed a large part of their time and energy. They had to contend with short growing seasons, cold winters, chinch bugs, and low prices, but they needed little cash. During this period a cow sold for \$10.00, a horse for \$25.00, a hog for \$1.25 to \$1.50, wheat at 35 cents a bushel, corn at 18 cents a bushel, and bacon at 2 cents a pound. The farmer had to pay 7 cents a pound for sugar, 10½ cents a pound for coffee, and 25 cents a gallon for whiskey. He grew his own tobacco, selling some for the cash he needed. Generally honey and molasses were substituted for sugar, and coffee, as a rule, was served only once a week, on Sunday morning for breakfast. (It is difficult to determine whether this custom developed as a result of Saturday night celebrations, as fortification for the three- and four-hour sermons of the pioneer circuit rider, or whether it was merely an indulgence in the limited luxuries of life on the one day of rest before a new week of toil began.)

Many of the villages in the county were started during this period. Shelbyville, the county seat, was organized in 1835, and Bethel was established in 1845. While the railroad between Hannibal and St. Joseph was not finished until 1859, it was completed through the southern part of Shelby County in 1857, and the villages of Hunnewell, Lakenan, Shelbina, and Clarence were started. Many new settlers arrived following the completion of the railroad. New market outlets also resulted from the railroad and the establishment of trade centers. This was also the period of establishing the first schools in the county, as well as organizing the first religious congregations.

Expansion 1860-1900. Social changes do not come to a halt and then start out in a different direction. They are continuous, and when they change direction it is like rounding a curve instead of turning a corner. The rate of change may be slowed down or accelerated, but like a river it flows on, carrying many factors in its current, and sometimes depositing factors that are no longer a significant part of the stream. The period of pioneer settlement, likewise, did not come to a sudden halt, to be followed by an epoch of expansion. Rather, the period of expansion consisted in an acceleration of the rate of change already in motion, and in the new areas and directions toward which that change was moving. The year 1860 was selected as the end of the pioneer period because by that time it was apparent that the socio-economic life of Shelby County was moving in a different direction.

Not only did the railroad bring an increase in the number of settlers, but the coming of the steel plow soon made it possible for those settlers to put the prairie land into cultivation. With more market outlets available, farming on a self-sufficiency basis declined, while farming for cash returns increased. The value of farm land increased, as well

as the volume of products shipped out of the county. Since a greater investment of capital was necessary to operate farms that were fast becoming commercialized, many farms were mortgaged by 1900. When the cheap land of the pioneer period was no longer available, it became more difficult to climb the agricultural ladder.

The curve of total population growth continued to climb until it reached a peak of 16,167 in 1900. The maximum number of persons in the incorporated villages was not attained until 1910, but the peak of 11,960 persons living on farms was reached in 1890. During this forty-year period the total population increased 121 per cent, or an increase from 7,301 in 1860 to 16,167 in 1900. Birth rates were high, and the large family pattern of the pioneers continued as a characteristic of the expansion period. To this peak population, three types of socio-economic adjustment were made: migration from the county, removal from farms into the growing villages, and division of large holdings into smaller farms. Indeed, the number of small farms increased throughout the period until in 1900 the average size of farm was only 124 acres. (See Table 3.) The maximum number of farms was reached in 1900 when there were 2,475 in the county. Of this number 23 per cent were under 50 acres in size.

The villages started in the pioneer period continued to grow as trade centers. Two new villages, Leonard and Emden, were established during this period. The public school system as organized in 1875 has remained for the most part the pattern of schools in the county to the present day. The maximum number of one-room schools was reached during the time of expansion, as was also the case with the number of churches. In spite of depressions and poor crop years, the population was increasing and the people were optimistic about the future, assuming that eventually villages would become cities and that the number of schools and churches organized was a minimum for the future needs of the county. The growth of urban centers had provided markets for agricultural products, so it seemed that all the farmer had to do was to produce the goods for the market, and a measure of prosperity would be his.

Transition 1900-1940. The first four decades of the twentieth century brought changes which required many new adjustments. The population began declining after 1900 and continued its downward trend until there were only 11,224 persons in the county in 1940, a decrease of approximately 31 per cent of the 1900 population. The birth rate declined during this period until in 1940 the average size of farm family was three persons. However, in 1940 the birth rate was still high enough to replace the population and account for a slight increase. The non-farm population was failing to replace itself by 17 per cent, but the farm population birth rate was sufficiently high to make up this deficit and show an increase for the county. In spite of the favorable birth rate, the population declined because of the net migration from the county. Since the length of life has been increasing, in 1940 there was a greater proportion of the population in the upper age categories than

had been the case at any time during the history of the county. Once a county of young adults and children, Shelby County had become one with relatively few children and many adults 65 years of age or older.

Commercialized agriculture, which began before 1900, was continued and expanded during the transition period. Farming became more mechanized, particularly as the result of the introduction and adoption of the tractor. There was a decrease in the amount of row crops cultivated, while there was an increase in livestock production. The per capita farm production, which increased during the period, was accompanied by a decreased number of persons employed in agriculture. In the last decade of this period conservation farming was begun, and year by year more farmers have come to adopt these practices.

The period from 1900 to 1920 was one of rising prices and expanding production. World War I had brought an era of prosperity, but the agricultural depression beginning in 1920 gradually became worse, and relief did not come until around 1940. The industrial depression and the drought during the 1930s brought many foreclosures and forced many families to accept public assistance. Before this time welfare work in Shelby County was of the informal type, the result of mutual aid and neighboring. The county court had around 1890 started an infirmary to care for the indigent aged persons and those physically and mentally handicapped, but the number of such persons was never large. The demands for relief became so great during the 1930s, however, that churches and neighbors were unable to cope with the situation. The Civil Works Administration, the Public Works Administration, Social Security, general relief, old age assistance, and aid to dependent children were new concepts to Shelby County; they presented a sharp contrast to the freedom and self-sufficiency of pioneer days. Assistance, charity, and relief at first carried a stigma; self-respecting people did not accept such aid. But, as the number of needy persons increased, a measure of "respectability" came to be attached to receiving relief. The relatively large number of persons 65 years of age or older has made old age assistance an important phase of the Social Security program in Shelby County. These changes have produced modifications in the attitudes and values of many people in the county.

Several inventions became available during the transition period, and the effects of adopting many of them will continue for many decades. The automobile was invented and, following World War I, was rapidly adopted. This invention produced a demand for good roads, and for two decades many roads were improved and some state and federal highways built across the county. The development and adoption of trucks and busses meant that the farmer used motor transportation instead of the horse and wagon, and the railroad. The tractor revolutionized farming operations. While telephones had been developed before this period, it was during this time that extensive use was made of them. Newspapers, which had developed in the nineteenth century, continued as one medium of communication, but motion pictures and the radio

made it possible to extend the range and variety of contacts, all of which developed a new communication pattern. Although some of the villages had electricity early in the period, it was not until the 1930s that the REA came to the open country of the county and farmers generally began using it as soon as lines were built near enough to their homes. By 1940 electric power was being used for radios, refrigerators, and washing machines by many farmers, while some were using it for cooking stoves and hot water units. Many uses were found for the electric motor on the farm, not the least of which was pumping water, making possible the installation of water systems in many farm homes. Near the end of the transition period farmers began adopting and using hybrid seed corn.

Any one of the above inventions would have brought about many new adjustments, but the combination of them during a forty-year period practically revolutionized farm and village life in Shelby County. By 1940 the stream of social change had carried Shelby County a long way from the days of pioneer settlement. Trade centers not only had to adjust to a declining population, but their economy had to be modified in terms of the new types of goods and services demanded by the people. Instead of need for more one-room schools, the enrollment declined until schools had one-third to one-fourth of the number of pupils they had before 1900. Some had so few pupils that they were being transported to other districts. Some eight new religious congregations were organized between 1900 and 1940, but during the same period 19 congregations either disbanded or consolidated with other churches. In 1940 the 11,224 persons in the county were trying to maintain 73 school districts and 60 religious congregations. The new means of communication and transportation broke down the geographical barriers that had limited neighboring to those families living within a few miles of one another, and made it possible for neighboring to be on a more selective basis and to include families living several miles apart.

Contemporary Period 1940-1949. A person looking at social changes in Shelby County from the perspective of the year 2000 may include the years 1940 to 1949 in the transition period. The revolutionary changes during 1900-1940 are still operating in this decade, and, no doubt, will continue to influence society in the future. However, the 1940s may well be another curve in the direction of change to the pattern of life that will characterize the last half of the twentieth century. It is difficult to predict in an atomic age what that pattern of life will be during the next fifty years. At this moment, it seems best to indicate some of the probable directions of change, and be content to let others predict or record later what change actually occurs.

Shelby County is rural in the sense that it has no incorporated center with as many as 2,500 persons, and it has been rural throughout its history. In this respect it resembles 57 other counties in the state. Its socio-economic characteristics make it one of the better counties in Rural Social Area B, an area in which the level of living is above the

average for the state.¹ The type of farming in the county is predominantly meat production, approximately 70 per cent of the value of agricultural production in 1944 being derived from livestock and livestock products. The number of farms has declined until in 1945 there were only 1,660, a decrease of 33 per cent since 1900. Conversely, the average size of farm increased from 124 acres in 1900 to 183 acres in 1945. While mechanization and commercialization characterize many farms, according to the Census of Agriculture in 1945 two-thirds of the farm families produced less than 25 per cent of the total value of farm products for the county. With the current trend toward livestock farming, it seems likely that the average size farm will continue to increase somewhat.

By the end of 1950, REA lines will be within reach of all farm families who have applied for this service, and in the future additional lines will be constructed whenever there are sufficient demands for power to justify building the lines. Farm families have been adopting many types of electrical equipment as soon as they obtain electricity, and it may well be anticipated that, in the future, electrical power will be used more extensively in operating dairy equipment, small workshops, water pumps, and home appliances on the farm. Electricity has made it possible for many farm homes to be made completely modern and has aided materially in making farm work easier.

World War II brought an era of farm prosperity and with it village prosperity, which has continued into the postwar years. The increased farm production in response to war demand brought about some reduction in conservation practices, but these practices are now being restored and extended. The birth rate increased slightly during the decade, but the population continued to decline as a result of migration out of the county. Defense and war industries attracted many persons, while the war took a great many young men from the county. During this decade, per capita farm production reached an all-time high for the county. As farms increase in size and become more mechanized, fewer persons will need to be employed in agriculture, and those entering agriculture may find it increasingly difficult to obtain sufficient capital with which to start farming. Thus, commercial farming may come to be the heritage of relatively fewer families.

The educational and religious institutions that were established to meet the needs of a much larger population with less adequate means of transportation are becoming more difficult to maintain. It seems unlikely that the population will increase to a point where it will be possible to maintain 66 open country one-room schools in the future. Likewise, some of the 60 religious congregations may not find it feasible to continue indefinitely. Neighboring within a radius of 4 or 5 miles has changed to a pattern of selective neighboring in terms of interests of people and covers a much larger area than was the case in the nine-

¹Lively, C. E. and Gregory, C. L., *Rural Social Areas in Missouri*. Columbia, Missouri. Agricultural Experiment Station Research Bulletin 414, College of Agriculture, University of Missouri, 1948.

teenth century. More special interest groups are likely to be formed in the future than have been organized in the past. Greater use of print, radio, and film as media of communication will probably be made, but at present it does not seem likely that they will soon replace communication in informal associations.

Oak Dale 1949. A visit to Oak Dale provided some clues to the past history of the county, but there is more to be seen there than the site of an early settlement. Along the road there are poles sticking in the ground and on them wires are strung on crossbeams. These wires carry messages from one telephone to another and electric current to the farm homes. There is a speck moving across the sky that the pioneers might have mistaken for an extremely large eagle, but it is just an airplane on its daily scheduled crossing of north Missouri. The gravel road which would have seemed like a king's highway to the pioneers is likely to be criticized by contemporary Shelby Countians because it is not smooth like a paved highway. To the west of the site of Oak Dale, dust seems to rise from the ground and there is a great noise in that direction. It is not an Indian raid as the pioneers might have thought, but simply the crushing of lime to be hauled in numerous trucks and spread upon fields throughout the county. All-weather roads, tractors, motor transportation, air transportation, telephone communication, radios, electric power, conservation, hybrid seed corn, livestock, the school, the church, neighboring: changes brought about by these and other factors may tax the ability of Shelby Countians to make adjustments during the last half of the twentieth century.

II. POPULATION

The Growth and Decline of Population. According to the 1840 Census, which was the first to report the population of Shelby County, there were 3,056 persons in the county at that time. The population increased steadily, as may be seen in Table I and Figure 1, until it reached a maximum of 16,167 in 1900, and then declined each decade until there were only 11,224 persons in 1940. From 1840 to 1880 was the period of greatest growth, the population increasing 358.9 per cent during this forty-year period. While there was a 30.6 per cent decrease in population during the forty-year period 1900-1940, the greatest loss occurred in the decade 1920-1930, when there was a 12 per cent decrease. The 1940 population was slightly larger than that of 1870, but considerably smaller than the 1880 population. The decrease in the rural-farm population as reported in the 1945 Census of Agriculture indicates that there will likewise probably be a decrease in total population in the 1950 Census.

The maximum population on farms was achieved in 1890, at which time the number of such persons amounted to 11,960. This portion of the population declined to 6,532 persons in 1940, and by 1945 had decreased to nearly five thousand. In 1910 the maximum number of 4,959 was

TABLE 1--TOTAL POPULATION, POPULATION DENSITY, AND RURAL-NONFARM AND RURAL-FARM POPULATION, SHELBY COUNTY, 1840-1940.

Year	Total Population		Population Density (Persons per sq. mi.)	Rural-nonfarm Population		Rural-farm Population	
	Number	Percent Change During Decade		Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
1940	11,224	- 6.3	22.4	4,831	43.0	6,393	57.0
1930	11,983	-12.0	23.9	4,933	41.2	7,050	58.8
1920	13,617	- 8.4	27.1				
1910	14,864	- 8.1	29.6				
1900	16,167	3.4	32.2				
1890	15,642	11.5	31.2				
1880	14,024	38.6	27.7				
1870	10,119	38.6	20.0				
1860	7,301	71.7	14.4				
1850	4,253	39.2	8.4				
1840*	3,056	----	6.1				

Adapted from U. S. Bureau of the Census.

* Not strictly comparable with 1850 because present boundaries of county were established in 1843.

reported for the population in incorporated villages, but by 1940 the number had declined to 4,692. It is evident that the loss in farm population has been much greater than that in the villages. While 73 per cent of the county population lived outside incorporated places in 1900, only 58 per cent lived in such areas in 1940. The village population in 1940 was 95 per cent of its previous maximum, but the farm population was only 53 per cent of its previous maximum.

Virgin land, as long as it was cheap and available, provided a strong impetus for population growth. Except for the period of the Civil War, the total population increased rapidly until 1880. Although many immigrants to Shelby County left in search of land opportunities still farther west, the population increased as a result of the continued stream of migration into the county and a relatively high birth rate. Following the completion of land settlement, the expansion of village centers resulted in an increased nonfarm population.

The major factor in the decline of the population since 1900 has been migration from the county. There is evidence that decade by decade the population has been producing more than enough children to maintain itself at a stationary level. Although exact data before 1920 are not available, the actual loss in numbers must, in a large measure, be attributed to migration.

Between 1920 and 1930, a period of rapid depopulation of north Missouri counties, the net result of migration was a loss of 2,170 persons. A number equal to approximately 16 per cent of the total population of 1920 left the county during the subsequent 10-year period. The depressed economic conditions existing throughout the country during the 1930s retarded migration throughout rural Missouri. Shelby County, however, continued to lose population, chiefly as the result of net migra-

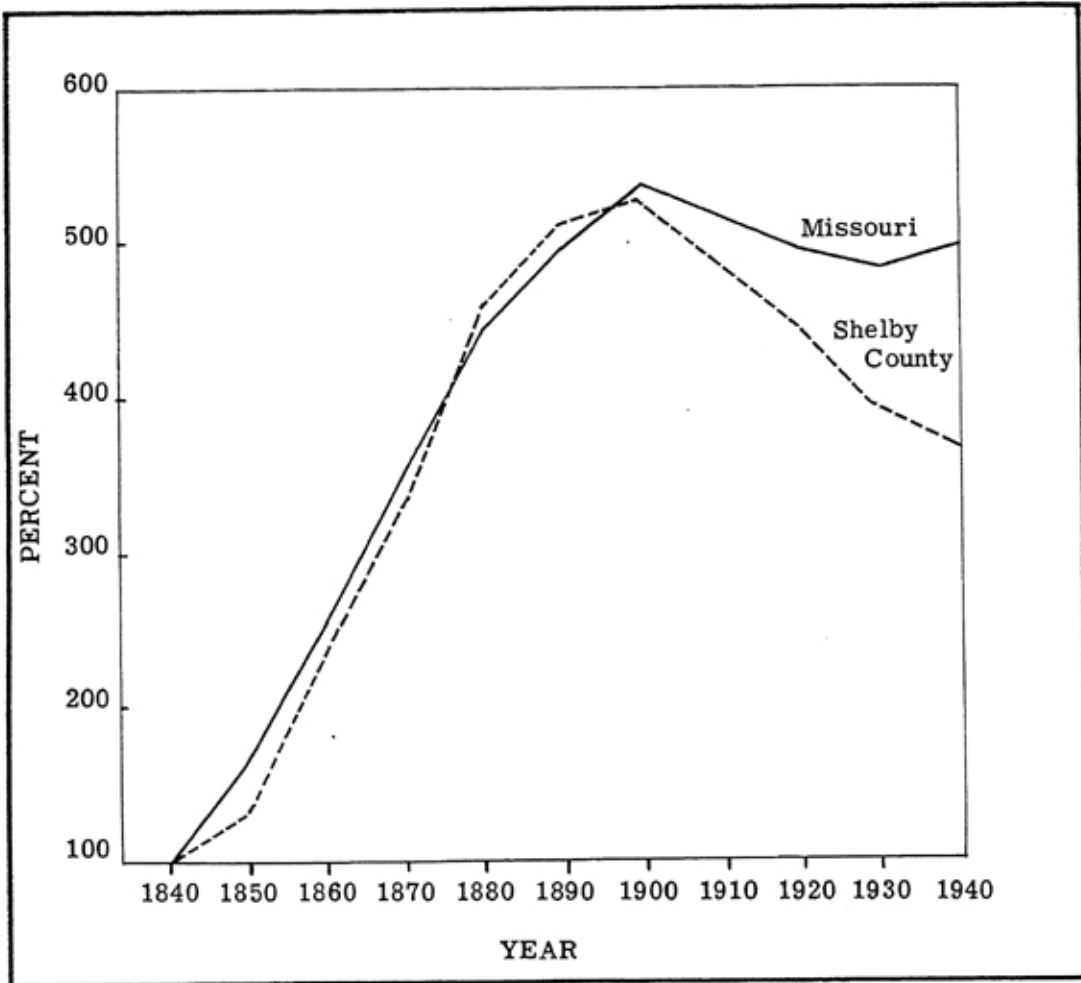


Fig. 1.—Percentage change in the rural population of Missouri and Shelby County, 1840-1940. (1840=100)

tion from farms. It is estimated that 14 per cent of the rural-farm population of 1930 migrated from farms during the decade, 1930-1940.²

Nationality and Racial Characteristics. Throughout the history of Shelby County the population has been predominantly native-born white. The largest number of foreign-born whites, 570, was reported in 1880, but this comprised only 4 per cent of the total population. However, the proportion of foreign-born whites was higher in 1860 and 1870 when the percentages were 4.7 and 5.3, respectively. Since 1870 the proportion of the foreign-born has decreased until in 1940 only 0.6 per cent of the total population were in this category. The majority of these persons came from the British Isles and Germany. In 1845 German migrants, most

²Bernert, Eleanor H., "County Variation in Net Migration from the Rural-Farm Population, 1930-1940", Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Washington, D. C., December, 1944.

of them from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Iowa, settled at Bethel. They had purchased 21 sections of land in Bethel Township, and under communal arrangements this colony continued in existence until 1878.

The early settlers who came chiefly from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, brought their Negro slaves with them. In 1840 Negroes comprised 15.3 per cent of the total population and until the Civil War the majority of Negroes were slaves. For example, in 1860 only 12 of the 736 Negroes were free. In 1860 the proportion of the total population classified as Negro was 10.1 per cent, but by 1870 this had declined to 5.6 per cent. The Negro population has continued to decrease in numbers as well as in the proportion of the total population. There were 377 Negroes in Shelby County in 1940, representing only 3.4 per cent of the total population.

The Number of Births Has Declined. During the early days of settlement in Shelby County, the average woman bore many children. It is estimated that the same number of women today produce less than one-third as many children as did women three generations ago. Not only is the number of children born to each woman fewer than formerly, but there are fewer women of childbearing age. The decline of population, especially the out-migration of young adults, has reduced the number of mothers and prospective mothers. In 1940 there were living in the county probably less than two-thirds as many women of childbearing age as in 1900.

High birth rates prevailed during most of the nineteenth century. The birth rate probably began declining before 1900, and was lowest during the 1930s. However, in 1940 the total population was still reproducing itself; that is, the birth rate was high enough for the population to maintain itself and even increase slightly, if no migration in or out of the county occurred. Since 1900 the net migration out of the county has more than offset the natural increase (surplus of births over deaths), which has been steadily declining.

Although the birth rate was high enough to maintain the total population in 1940, assuming no migration, the nonfarm population was failing to replace itself by 17 per cent. The farm population was producing children at a rate of 22 per cent in excess of its replacement needs—a rate high enough to more than balance the nonfarm deficit. The birth rate increased during World War II, but this was probably only a temporary increase. With the farm population decreasing, and the nonfarm birth rate likely to remain low, Shelby County may reach a point of stationary or even declining population as a result of its birth rate. At present, the actual decline may be attributed to migration out of the county.

The Length of Life Is Increasing. Today the average Shelby County resident lives longer than did his predecessors. At birth his chances for survival exceed those of his parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Although expectancy of life at middle age has not appreciably increased, the chances of an infant reaching the age of 30 or 40 years

are much better than they were fifty years ago. Probably the most important factor in the increased expectancy of life is the decline in the infant mortality rate which is today lower than it has ever been during the period for which infant deaths have been recorded. The average annual infant mortality rate (the number of deaths of children under one year of age per 1,000 live births) for the years 1939-1941 was 27,³ only two-thirds as high as the rate for the state as a whole.

Death rates are low for persons in the lower age categories, but they increase as age increases. Shelby County, with a concentration of its population in the upper age classes, would be expected to have a fairly high general death rate. But, in spite of an unfavorable age distribution, the general death rate for the county remains moderately low. The average annual death rate (the number of deaths per 1,000 population) for the years 1939-1941 was 12.5,⁴ a rate about 10 per cent above that of the state as a whole. In 1942-43 approximately 40 per cent of the deaths of Shelby County residents were attributed to cancer and diseases of the heart, causes of death which most often occur to older persons.

The Population Is Aging. The population that settled Shelby County may be characterized as one of young people. Immigrants were composed chiefly of the young who could withstand the rigors of pioneer life. But time has changed immigration to emigration, and now the young people move away from the county, while the older persons remain. Children, once an important element of the population, have declined steadily in relative numbers. In 1850 approximately 32 per cent of the total population was under 10 years of age. By 1910 the proportion of persons in this age category was only 19 per cent; in 1940 it was only 13 per cent. Table 2 and Figure 2 show the age distribution of the population of the county from 1840 to 1940.

In 1850 only 40 per cent of the population was 21 years of age or over. By 1910 the proportion had increased to 58 per cent, and by 1940 it had reached 70 per cent. Whereas in 1850 every third person was under 10 years of age, in 1940 every third person was under 21 years of age. In 1940 the population of the county was not only made up chiefly of adults, but these adults were concentrated in the upper age brackets; for example, 40 per cent of the population was 45 years of age or older, and 15 per cent was 65 or over. For every three persons in the age span 20-44, there were four persons 45 or over. For every four children under 15 there were three persons age 65 or over. In the villages there were many more persons 65 or older than children under 15, whereas a century earlier only two persons in 100 were as old as 65.

Because of the tendency for elderly persons to retire to the villages for convenience of living, sociability, and social security, these centers

³Based upon registered births and deaths. It is not known whether all were registered.

⁴*Ibid.*

TABLE 2-- POPULATION CLASSIFIED BY BROAD AGE GROUPS, SHELBY COUNTY, 1849-1940.

Year	Total Population	AGE							
		Under 10 yrs.		10-20 yrs.		21-64 yrs.		65 & over	
		Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent	Number	Per Cent
1940	11,224	1,439	12.8	1,890	16.8	6,202	55.3	1,693	15.1
1930	11,983	1,849	15.4	2,269	18.9	6,494	54.2	1,371	11.5
1920*	13,617	2,457	18.0	2,674	19.6				
1910*	14,864	2,851	19.2	3,345	22.5				
1900*	16,167								
1890*	15,642								
1880*	14,024								
1870*	10,119								
1860*	7,301								
1850	4,253	1,365	32.1	1,189	28.0	1,618	38.0	81	1.9
1840**	2,587	1,025	39.6	561	21.7	969	37.5	32	1.2

Adapted from U. S. Bureau of the Census.

* Comparable age categories not available for these years.

** Whites only.

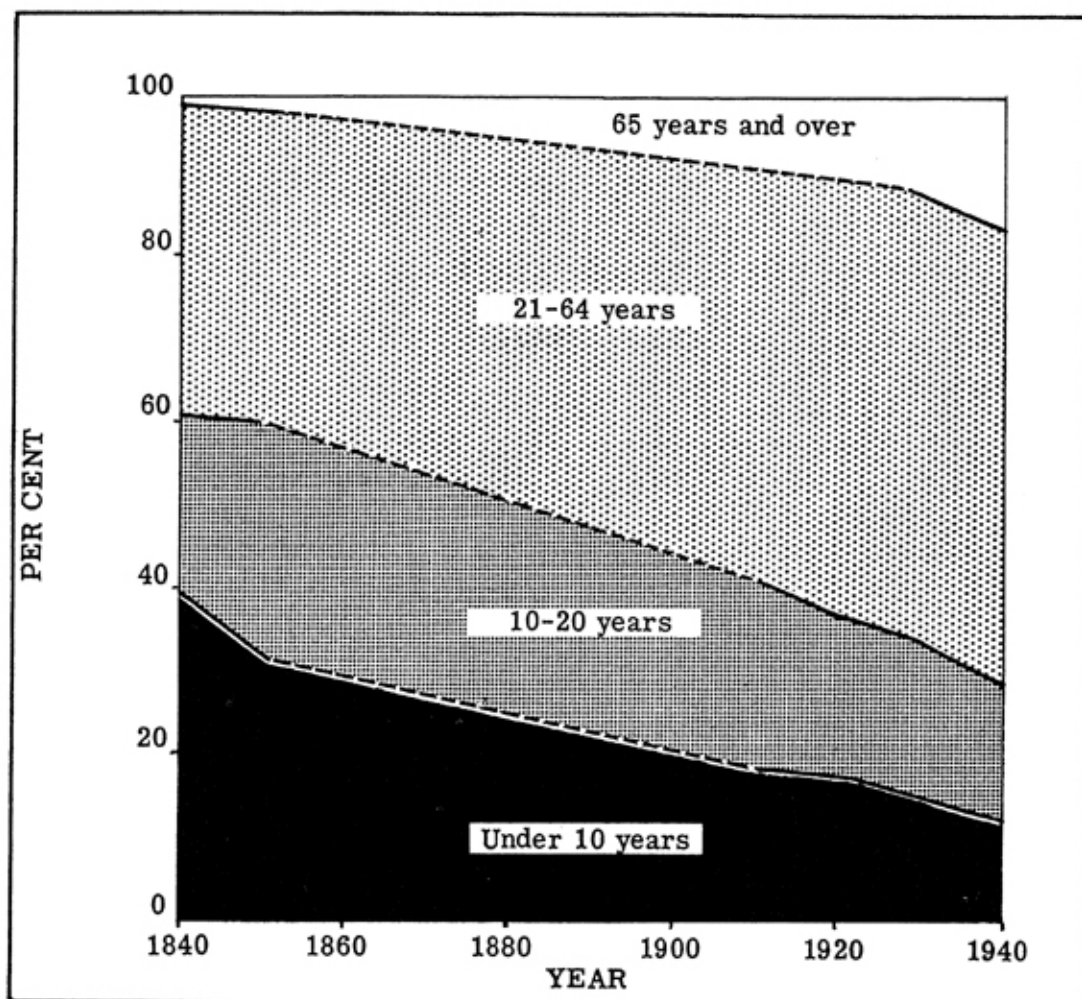


Fig. 2.—Percentage of population in different age groups, Shelby County, 1840-1940.

contain a larger share of the aged than the open country. While the villages contained only 43 per cent of the total county population in 1940, they contained approximately 58 per cent of all persons 65 years of age or over. Approximately 20 per cent of the total nonfarm population was 65 years of age or over.

The villages of Shelby County had a larger proportion of the aged than the villages of Missouri as a whole, among which only 10 per cent of all persons were 65 or over. The same may be said for the farm population. In 1940 persons aged 65 and over constituted 11.6 per cent of the farm population in Shelby County, whereas such persons comprised only 8.6 per cent of the farm population of Missouri as a whole.

The age structure of the population of Shelby County undoubtedly exerts considerable influence upon the economic and social life of that area. The tempo of life is slower, risks are likely to be more carefully calculated, and changes tend to come more slowly. The need for medical service and hospitals is relatively high and old age assistance becomes the chief phase of the Social Security program. The proportion of all persons gainfully employed is low. These and other characteristics may be noted with increasing clarity as the aging process continues and will have to be taken into consideration in planning county programs.

III. AGRICULTURE

Self-sufficiency Farming. Early farming in Shelby County was simple, self-sufficient, and highly diversified. Because of crude implements, laborious methods and no market facilities, production was low and much of the land in the modest-sized farms was not cultivated. Sizeable holdings were sometimes purchased because land was cheap and available. However, only a small portion was improved and cultivated. Land in quantity was a psychological asset, but not a necessity for the meager ends to be realized from it.

The farming ambitions of the pioneer were modest. The activity of the early family centered about the task of providing food, clothing, and shelter for its members. A truck patch was cultivated to supply the family with the staple food products, corn, potatoes, and a few additional vegetables. Additional small acreages of corn, wheat, and oats were grown to provide for flour ground at local "corn cracker" mills, and for feed for livestock. Cattle and hogs which fed on the open wild mast provided dairy products and meat for family consumption. To supplement the food supply, local wildlife was exploited. Hunting expeditions afforded wild meat and added variety to food produced on the farm. Honey, obtained from hives in the abundant woods, was a common substitute for sugar. Small patches of flax were raised and sheep were kept to yield linsey and wool for making clothing. The pelts, fats, and feathers obtained in hunting were put to a variety of uses. Furniture and household conveniences were hewn from blocks and logs. Farm implements were crudely fashioned, thus making farm work slow and tedious. The plow, the pioneer's most valuable tool, consisted of an iron point, a

wooden moldboard, or simply a fork cut from a tree. Tobacco, a crop which could usually be sold, returned the small amount of cash needed for money transactions. Little money, however, was needed by the farm family, which was economically self-sufficient and independent.

Beginning and Growth of Commercialized Agriculture. As the pioneers became settled and new migrants arrived, the land was cleared more rapidly. Some farmers forged ahead to produce more than the essentials for subsistence. Cattle were sometimes driven long distances to market, but this involved many risks on the part of the farmer so that frequently the venture was unprofitable. Likewise, corn was sometimes hauled by wagon to market, but, in general, surplus farm production awaited the building of the railroad and the emergence of shipping points in the southern part of the county which provided market outlets.

The Hannibal-St. Joseph railroad was completed in 1859. The coming of the "iron horse" to Shelby County not only meant more settlers, but provided the much needed outlet for surplus farm products. About this time another significant invention, the steel plow, appeared. With it the tough prairie sod, productive land which had been largely untouched by the early settlers, could be brought into cultivation. The first steel plow was invented by John Deere in 1837, but early records seem to indicate that it was adopted in Missouri only after transportation facilities were available. In all probability the adoption of the steel plow in Shelby County was associated with the 87 per cent increase in farm acreages between 1850 and 1870, and the increase in improved farm land from 22,522 acres to 77,849 acres.

The philosophy of the later stream of immigrants with respect to farming differed from the self-sufficiency of the pioneers. Accustomed to market outlets, the new settlers forged ahead to explore the economic potentialities of the cheap prairie land. Emphasis was placed on cash returns by raising those crops and commodities for which markets existed. The growth of eastern cities became rapid after 1870, and with it came a great demand for farm products. By 1900 the value of farm property had increased more than 400 per cent above the 1870 valuation. During this thirty-year period the value of implements and machinery on farms increased 65 per cent. In the August 31, 1904, edition of the *Shelby County Herald* it was reported that \$1,432,654 worth of surplus products were shipped to markets outside the county during the previous year. This expansion was not all clear gain, however, for it required more capital than the farmers could supply, and indebtedness on the farms was incurred. By 1900 six farms in every ten carried a mortgage. The railroad, the steel plow, settlers with a background of prairie farming and an interest in cash crops, and the growth of urbanism with its markets for farm products combined to bring commercialized agriculture to Shelby County.

The period 1900 to 1920 was one of rising prices, expanding production, increasing output per worker, and shifting to livestock production.

Specialization became more evident. Farms increased in size while the farm population decreased steadily. Land values soared and the automobile appeared on farms. World War I ended, and it looked as if a new day of prosperity had arrived. However, the collapse of prices in 1920 brought an agricultural depression that gradually deepened, and was not lifted for nearly two decades. Low prices and drought during the 1930s brought decline of property values and numerous foreclosures. Many farm families were forced to accept public relief, and government programs for the welfare of agriculture were put into operation.

After 1940, a series of productive years and rising prices again brought prosperity with its accompanying effects to Shelby County. By 1945, as may be seen in Table 3, the number of farms had decreased to 1,660 and the farm population had declined to what it was before 1900. The average size of farm, 124 acres in 1900, had risen to 183 acres in 1945. Work animals had decreased sharply, but one-third of the farms reported tractors used. The relative value of machinery and implements was below that of 1920 for two reasons: (1) in 1920 more row crops were cultivated, and (2) since 1920 there had been an increase in livestock farming. The value of livestock production constituted 64 per cent of the total value of products sold or traded in 1929; in 1939 it constituted 70 per cent, and by 1944, 78 per cent.

As compared to the 1870s, the agricultural industry in Shelby County has been expanded and has become more mechanized and more commercialized, but the expansion has not been uniform among all farmers. Farm land is variable in quality, and the resources and level of living of farm families vary considerably. While in 1945 only 9 per cent of the products raised were consumed on the farms, some families that produced relatively little consumed a high percentage of their products. In terms of value, over three-fourths of the farm products were produced by one-third of the farms, leaving less than one-fourth to be divided among two-thirds of the families.

The Number of Persons Employed in Agriculture Has Declined. When agricultural production is on the level of "hoe culture", or in the early stages of "plow culture", a great many workers are required because most of the labor is done by hand and by using the work animals

TABLE 3--DISTRIBUTION OF FARMS BY SIZE, SHELBY COUNTY, 1870-1945.

Size of Farm (Acres)	Number of Farms										
	1945	1940	1935	1930	1925	1920	1910	1900	1890	1880	1870
Total Farms	1,660	1,816	2,106	1,946	2,116	2,195	2,377	2,475	2,058	1,911	1,040
Under 10 acres	97	93	131	87	89	93	85	52	14	8	16
10 - 49 acres	166	199	299	218	276	312	417	529	384	417	451
50 - 99 acres	286	347	417	430	561	552	684	729	589	470	322
100 - 174 acres	(569	652	648	721	698	697	673	(((
175 - 259 acres	(766	325	347	330	288	319	268	269	(1,023	(929	(248
260 - 499 acres	266	228	228	199	157	183	200	177	(((
500 - 999 acres	74	50	29	29	20	33	24	42	41	73	2
1000 acres and over	5	5	3	5	4	5	2	4	7	14	1
Average size of farm	183	165	143	149	132	137	126	124	138	157	154

Adapted from U. S. Bureau of the Census.

available. During the pioneer period of self-sufficiency farming in Shelby County the per capita production was low, which means that a relatively large number of persons were employed in agriculture. Since then, mechanization and more scientific methods of farming have so increased the capacity of labor that a relatively small number of persons employed in agriculture can now produce more than a much larger number of persons fifty years ago. The number of persons employed in agriculture has declined since around 1900. In 1945 there were only two-thirds as many farm operators as in 1900, but they farmed approximately the same amount of land.

During most of the nineteenth century, farm youth became farmers. The capital necessary to start farming was not large, and there was plenty of land available either in the county or farther west. Since there were limited opportunities for nonfarm employment in the county, only a small number of farm youth continued their education and entered a profession, or settled elsewhere to follow a nonfarm occupation. The agricultural ladder, the stages from hired man to farm owner, were short and not too difficult to climb. Thus farming became a traditional occupation of farm families.

As farming became more mechanized, the capital investment necessary to start farming increased. As the county became settled, farm land was not readily available, and so increased in price. It became more difficult and took a longer period of time to climb the agricultural ladder. Fewer persons were required to operate the farms, because mechanization had increased the per capita production, and there had been an increase in livestock farming. The growth of urbanism paralleled these agricultural changes and provided nonfarm occupational opportunities for youth who were no longer needed on the farms. Since these opportunities were outside the county, young people migrated to the towns and cities and entered a wide variety of occupations. During this decade, 1940-1950, it has been estimated that only 58 per cent of the farm youth reaching the age of 20 are needed to replace the farmers lost as a result of death and retirement. Thus approximately four out of every 10 farm youth reared in the county likely moved into nonfarm occupations or migrated to an area where there were better farm opportunities.

Conservation Farming Is Being Adopted. Throughout a century of farming in Shelby County, folk knowledge and tradition guided the farmer in his occupations. Rarely was he concerned with returning to the land what he had taken from it. Lacking knowledge and the techniques of land husbandry, he followed an exploitative system of agriculture. In 1935, the year Shelby County celebrated its centennial, it was estimated that 43.2 per cent of the farm land was characterized by serious sheet erosion and serious gullying, with a subsequent loss of from one-half to three-fourths of the original surface soil. An additional 37.6 per cent showed moderate erosion with occasional to moderate gullying, and a loss of from one-fourth to one-half of the original surface soil. Severe sheet erosion with serious gullying and a loss of over three-fourths

of the original surface soil was characteristic of 2.5 per cent of all farm land. Only one-sixth of the total area had little or no sheet erosion and gullying, and had maintained three-fourths or more of its original surface soil.⁵

The exploitation of the land, the loss of soil resources, and reduced crop yields which had been accumulating for years caught up with the farmer in the 1930s. Since 1934, through programs of federal and state agencies, a system of agriculture more adapted to the soil resources has been developing. Table 4 shows the distribution of farm land in Shelby

TABLE 4--PERCENTAGE OF FARM LAND, CLASSIFIED BY USE, SHELBY COUNTY, 1924-1944.

Use of Land	Year				
	1944	1939	1934	1929	1924
All land on farms	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cropland harvested	39.9	38.2	34.2	48.0	50.3
Crop Failure	0.6	0.9	5.1	2.0	3.3
Cropland, Idle or Fallow	2.1	3.5	5.9	4.7	1.2
Plowable Pasture	41.5	41.9	35.2	26.9	25.7
Woodland	10.5	7.8	14.4	12.0	11.0
All Other Land	5.4	7.7	5.2	6.4	8.5

Adapted from U. S. Census of Agriculture.

County according to use. The proportion in cropland harvested declined from 50.3 per cent in 1924 to 39.9 per cent in 1944. This decrease was primarily the result of a reduction in the acreage planted to corn. More suited to much of the farm land in the county, and complementary to livestock production, are improved pastures. In 1924 only 25.7 per cent of the farm land was devoted to plowable pasture, but in 1944 this had increased until it constituted 41.5 per cent of the farm land. While the change is not complete, it is apparent that the trend is in the direction of conservation. This is true in regard to the use of fertilizers as well as land use. In 1944 it was estimated that 650 tons of commercial fertilizer, chiefly superphosphate, were applied to farm land in the county. In the period 1937-1944, approximately 156,000 tons of lime were applied to 52,000 acres of farm land in Shelby County.

The high prices during World War II and the demand for more agricultural production temporarily slowed down conservation practices. While there are still some farm families on the fringe of conservation farming, the establishment of the Shelby County Soil Conservation District and the increased number of families practicing balanced farming are evidences of the favorable attitude of the majority of farmers toward

⁵Baver, L. D., *Soil Erosion in Missouri*. Columbia, Missouri, Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 349, College of Agriculture, University of Missouri, 1935. p. 9.

conservation. The transition is not complete, but the contemporary situation is a significant agricultural revolution when compared with the farming practices that were followed in the early part of the nineteenth century.

IV. VILLAGES

Today, Shelby County has eight villages, all but two of which were incorporated by 1940. Shelbyville and Bethel developed early in the county's history, while Shelbina, Clarence, Hunnewell, and Lakenan developed with the coming of the railroad to the southern portion of the county. Leonard and Emden were not established until the latter part of the last century. The maximum population living in these villages was reached between 1900 and 1910, as may be seen in Figure 3 and Table 5, with the exception of Clarence and Bethel, which reached their maximum size in 1920. The village population declined following the peak reached in 1910. However, Shelbyville and Shelbina had larger populations in 1940 than in 1930.

TABLE 5--POPULATION OF INCORPORATED PLACES, SHELBY COUNTY, 1870-1940.

Incorporated Place	Year							
	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900	1890	1880	1870
Total	4,692	4,607	4,732	4,959	4,392	3,682	2,902	2,446
Bethel	217	251	254	235	225	----	----	----
Clarence	1,157	1,286	1,400	1,322	1,184	1,078	570	444
Hunnewell	312	342	348	406	473	427	424	327
Lakenan	----	----	----	137	----	----	----	----
Leonard	143	198	231	----	----	----	----	----
Shelbina	2,107	1,826	1,809	2,174	1,733	1,691	1,289	1,145
Shelbyville	756	704	690	685	777	486	619	530

Adapted from U. S. Bureau of the Census.

Shelbyville, located in the approximate geographical center of the county, was organized as the county seat in 1835. Town lots were first sold in 1836; a post office was established during the same year, and soon afterward, two grocery stores, a tavern, a court house, and a hotel were added. With the establishment of villages on the railroad, particularly Shelbina, Shelbyville lost its opportunity for becoming the most important trade center in the county. In fact, Shelbyville actually lost population between 1880 and 1890, while Shelbina and Clarence were having a marked increase in population. However, Shelbyville is the largest village serving as a trade center for the northern half of the county, and has also the advantage of being the county seat.

Bethel, located 5 miles north of Shelbyville, was for many years a thriving trade center. Before the arrival of the Bethel colonists, it was merely a mill center, a "corn cracker", serving that portion of the county. In 1845, Dr. William Kiel and his followers established the village of Bethel, which grew rapidly under the communal organization of the

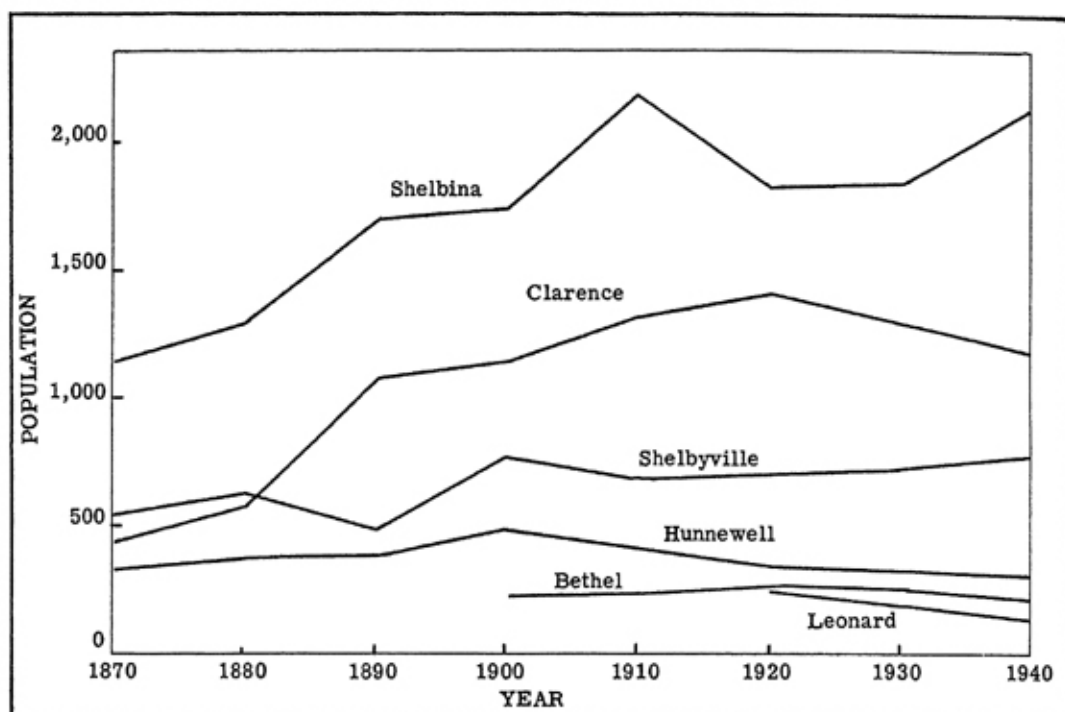


Fig. 3.—Population of incorporated places, Shelby County, Missouri, 1870-1940. Note: Lakenan, incorporated at only one date, 1910, not included here.

colonists. Various services and industries developed to supply their needs—a common school, used also as the colony's school, a distillery, shoe and hatter's shops, blacksmith shops, a glove factory, and fulling and cording mill. The communal arrangements came to an end in 1879 when the land and property were divided among the colonists. While many of the businesses in Bethel have remained in the hands of Bethel colonists and their descendants, it has declined in importance as a trade center largely through the competition of other trade centers in the county.

Leonard and Emden, located in the northwest and northeast parts of the county, were established later. Both of these villages developed at some distance from other villages, and have served rather limited trade areas. Leonard was established in the early 1870s, but was not incorporated until around 1920, when it had a population of 231. Emden, an unincorporated village, started with a store and post office in 1888. In 1905 a bank was organized, and soon other businesses were added.

The building of the Hannibal-St. Joseph railroad across the southern part of the county was the significant factor in the development of four villages, Hunnewell, Lakenan, Shelbina, and Clarence. Shelbina, a typical railroad village in its early days, was established in 1858 and had a population of approximately 500 at the outbreak of the Civil War. Although it had a difficult time during the Civil War as a result of

guerilla gangs and economic instability, it grew rapidly following the war. It was incorporated first in 1867, and made a fourth class city in 1878, at which time the village had five churches, three schools, a newspaper, a flour mill, a tobacco warehouse, a bank, a wagon and plow factory, a nursery, and approximately 20 other business houses. Located on the railroad, Shelbina became a processing center for tobacco and wheat, and a principal shipping point for portions of Shelby and Monroe Counties. Shelbina reached its maximum population of 2,174 persons in 1910, and declined to 1,809 persons in 1920. Since 1920 there has been some gain in population, and in 1940 the population was 2,107. From the perspective of population, services offered, and trade area served, Shelbina is the most important village in the county today. A part of its growth has been at the expense or decline of other villages in the county. However, its favorable location has been an important item in its growth. It is the center for bus and freight transportation. It has the only industry of importance in the county. The Producer's Produce Company, a Missouri Farmers Association processing plant for eggs, poultry, and wool, receives produce from approximately 125 exchanges and stores in north Missouri. The community sales which began in 1937 are held each Wednesday. They have increased the attractiveness of Shelbina as a trade center for Shelby as well as adjoining counties.

The early growth and development of Clarence was similar to that of Shelbina. For a period of time it was an important shipping point for grain and livestock. It reached a maximum population of 1,184 in 1900, and has steadily declined since that time. In fact, Clarence has had the greatest decline in population of all the villages in the county. U. S. Highway 36 which crosses the southern part of the county does not run through the business center of Clarence. The increase of trucking business, the growth of Shelbina to the east of it, and of Macon to the west, have combined to reduce the significance of Clarence as a shipping and trade center.

Hunnewell and Lakenan in the southeast section of the county were established as railroad villages. Hunnewell, laid out in 1857, grew rapidly until the Civil War, at which time its population was approximately equal to that of Shelbina. By 1878 there were a dozen stores, a flour mill, a grain warehouse, a grade school, and two churches in the village. Considerable shipping was carried on at Hunnewell for a while, but Hunnewell declined as Shelbina and Monroe City grew. Lakenan, laid out in 1858, increased in population after the Civil War. Lakenan did not achieve a status comparable to that of the other villages in the southern part of the county. Being located between Hunnewell and Shelbina, the growth of these trade centers deprived Lakenan of the chance to expand. Today it is an open country center serving only a small trade area with limited goods and services.

The decline in the village population accompanied the decline in the open country population. Such centers supply the surrounding farm

area with types of merchandise that formerly were supplied largely by the country stores. In increasing numbers, farm and village people travel to Hannibal and Quincy and other large trade centers for specialized types of goods and services. The most common types of businesses remaining are food, hardware, general merchandise, drug stores, and the local exchanges of the Missouri Farmers Association. An increasing proportion of the village residents have already attained middle age or are within the upper age categories. In 1940, for example, 36 per cent of the residents of Clarence and 29 per cent of the residents of Shelbina were 55 years of age or over.

V. NEIGHBORING AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Nineteenth Century Neighboring. Pioneers in Shelby County settled in clusters along the wooded areas adjacent to streams in the eastern part of the county. Occasionally one settler would locate apart from the others and form the nucleus of a new group. While he was willing to leave his old ties behind, he was equally anxious to establish new ones. Survival among the pioneers depended upon neighbors. They not only depended upon one another for companionship, but they rendered one another invaluable service in getting started in the new area. It was an obligation that neighbors should help neighbors; such obligations grew out of the necessities and problems which confronted families in isolation. According to the customs, a newcomer was heartily welcomed, and it was at his "house raising" that neighbors from all around gathered to assist him in establishing his new home and to become acquainted with the family. It was the newcomer's initiation into his newly adopted social group.

Mutual aid activities were a characteristic pattern among neighbors. Work was commonly exchanged, and a farmer would borrow the services of his neighbor or his neighbor's son and later return the favor. In the event of sickness or death the afflicted family was certain of the unsolicited aid of the neighbors. The widow with a family was assisted in farm work by the men of the locality and aided in other ways until a child reached an age at which he was capable of assuming the responsibilities of a man. Shiftlessness on the part of a man was subject to severe censure, but the neighbors refused to let the children starve. The aged were assisted by whatever means available and were sometimes taken into the homes of non-relatives when there was no close relative to care for them.

During the nineteenth century the distance of a "team haul" from a trade center was a good measure of the boundaries of a community. A trip of such distance was not made frequently, however, and the condition of roads and the means of transportation made it unlikely that all of the people within a community would know one another well. As a result of the isolation of farm families, social interaction was limited in extent, and took place within a small number of families. The families neighboring with one another were likely to be those living within a

school district, or near a church, or near a store. The transportation system necessitated a large number of schools and churches. A child of six could not be expected to walk more than 2 miles, and the church could not be much farther if good attendance were to be had during the winter months. Hence, schools were generally located so that children would not be required to walk more than about 2 miles. The density of farm population was sufficiently high to support a school and a part-time church for such a small geographical area. Most of the educational, religious, recreational, political and occupational contacts of the people outside of the immediate family were with persons living within a radius of a few miles.

Twentieth Century Neighboring. Since 1900 many changes have occurred in Shelby County to alter the pattern of neighboring. The farm population has declined, requiring a larger geographical area to maintain a school or church. The automobile and good roads have decreased the degree of isolation, and made it possible for people to travel greater distances for shopping and trading, as well as to satisfy recreational and other interests. The improved mail service, the telephone, and the radio have increased both the potential and the actual number of contacts for the farm family. The increased mechanization and use of electrical power on the farm have reduced the drudgery and also the number of occasions when a farmer needs the help of his neighbor.

Today, in many localities which were once centers for neighboring, there is little of the informal activity that once existed among families. There are fewer families, because the size of farm has been increasing. Much of the former interest in children is absent, because fewer children are born and some households are without children. Formerly, all families within a short distance were well-acquainted and visited among themselves, but such is not necessarily the case today. There are fewer occasions to bring people together on a social basis. Newcomers may or may not have much opportunity to become acquainted with other farm families. Trips to village centers or outside the county absorb the time once devoted to visiting one's neighbors. Indeed, it is often said, "the only time one sees his neighbor is in town".

The predominant pattern of exchange of farm work is indicative of the impersonal features of mutual aid which exist today. Formerly, during the rush seasons, such as threshing, neighboring farmers worked in rotation on the farms of all to complete the work of the neighborhood, and the wives gathered to prepare the meals for the men. Heavy labor demands are somewhat less frequent now, but much of the exchange of work today is on a contractual basis. Sometimes farm workers carry their own lunch or obtain food at a village restaurant. Most of the exchange of work on a mutual basis is confined to father and son, or to other kin. Machinery "rings" have in recent years been organized, but such arrangements are strictly business ventures. For the money invested in renting or purchasing the machinery, the farmer may expect a propor-

tionate use. These "rings" are not confined to farmers living near one another, as they include all those who are interested in the project. The changing philosophy of cooperation among farmers seems to be away from concern for one's neighbors and toward more efficient means of agricultural production at a lower cost. This change is related to changes in agriculture, particularly the trend toward greater commercialization of farming in Shelby County. It is also related to the increased diversification of interests and methods among individual farmers.

Neighboring, borrowing and lending goods and services, and visiting still form a part of the farm life of Shelby County. However, it is carried on less today on the basis of physical proximity, and rather more on the basis of selection. Selective neighboring is neighboring with persons of similar interest who may be contacted by our present means of communication and transportation, persons who may or may not live within a radius of a few miles, or what is sometimes called the geographical area of a neighborhood. Selective neighboring, which is increasingly becoming a characteristic of farm life, is the type or pattern of neighboring most often found in urban communities. While nineteenth century neighboring may have been to some extent on a selective basis, yet the means of communication and transportation made it necessary that the selections be made within a radius of a few miles.

Special Interest Groups. Throughout the history of Shelby County there have been special interest groups. In the past most of them, such as numerous fraternal orders, civic clubs, and women's clubs, were centered in villages. Many of them are still functioning in the villages; so also are numerous church organizations and bridge clubs. In general, however, the farm people have not become active in these village organizations. While there are numerous special interest groups at present, there are three farmers' organizations, the county association of the Missouri Farmers' Association, the Grange, and the County Extension Association, which are especially significant for farm life. On the local level, there is virtually no competition among these groups; membership is frequently overlapping, but each organization represents a division of labor with respect to the total farm program.

The county association affiliated with the Missouri Farmers' Association was organized following World War I and now maintains six exchanges in the county. Foremost among its activities are cooperative purchasing and marketing. However, the group maintains a farmers' hall in Shelbina which is used for business meetings of the county association, for social affairs of the families of members, and by other groups. More strictly educational and social are the two auxiliaries of this organization, the Womens' Progressive Farmers' Association and the Junior Farmers' Association.

The present local Granges in the county have been organized since 1933. However, at two earlier times the Grange movement had extended to Shelby County for brief periods. Four local Granges, with a maximum

membership in 1878 of 194 persons, were in existence from 1878 to 1881. Another attempt to enlist the interest of farm people in the Grange was made in 1911, but only one Grange functioned until 1914. For nearly two decades the county was without any local Granges. In 1933 two chapters were organized, and by 1943 Granges had been established at Leonard, Bethel, Kellerville, Emden, Maud, Walkersville, Lakenan, Oak Dale, and Fairview. In 1949 seven local Granges were still active.

The Extension Association is promotional in nature, having been organized as an incorporated body in 1941 to sponsor the county program of the Agricultural Extension Service, as required by law. Prior to that time an extension board and an unincorporated association carried the responsibility of the extension program. Unlike the other two farmers' organizations, the Extension Association is autonomous, except that a minimum of 250 paying members must be maintained to meet the legal requirements established by the state legislature for obtaining the service of extension agents. The governing body of the association is a board of directors elected at the annual meeting. An executive committee of the board meets monthly to discuss problems which arise, and to disburse funds.

The special interest groups functioning in connection with the county agricultural extension program—home economics extension clubs and 4-H clubs—afford an opportunity for many farm persons to participate in their activities. The organization of home economics clubs was begun in the early 1920s, but only one club was functioning in 1934. Since 1934, following the obtaining of a home demonstration agent, the number and membership of these clubs have increased. The activity of these groups varies from one club to another. Demonstrations are held and service programs are planned, but perhaps the most important function which they perform is to afford farm women an opportunity for social gathering. Meetings sometimes last the major portion of a day. Business and formal activities occupy only a part of the meeting; a dinner or refreshments and "visiting" are the important parts of the gathering. Membership includes young and old, but generally the club is small enough to permit the women to become more than casually acquainted in case they are not at the time the club is formed.

The organization of 4-H clubs was begun in 1922 as a part of the agricultural extension program, with local sponsorship by the Farm Bureau and the Missouri Farmers' Association. In 1924 there were eight clubs with a membership of 65, but these disbanded with the suspension of the extension program. The organization of clubs was started again in 1935, and during the past 15 years several groups functioned in different parts of the county. Like the home economics clubs, some of the 4-H clubs have lasted only a few years and then disbanded. Many special interest groups may have a short life-span, because membership and participation depend in large part upon the amount of interest and motivation individuals have in the specific organization and its program. This

instability of special interest groups may be a characteristic of farm life in transition. The trend, however, seems to be in the direction of more such groups, and more participation in activities that are organized and function in terms of the interests of the individuals.

VI. MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication among Shelby County pioneers consisted almost wholly of conversation in face-to-face contacts. News from the rest of the state and country came by means of the printed page, but in turn a large amount of this information was transmitted when people gathered together to talk or gossip. Many inventions relating to communication, such as the telephone, the radio, the automobile, and the movie have come to Shelby County since the pioneer period. What effect, if any, have these inventions and other changes in the county had upon the communication pattern? The following discussion of media of communication is taken from a recent study made in Shelby County by H. R. Long of the University of Missouri.⁶ Long analyzed schedules taken in 357 representative village and open country households, as well as data he was able to obtain from local newspapers, schools, libraries, theaters, and other sources. He was primarily interested in the availability and use of print, radio, and film in the county.

Four weekly newspapers are published in Shelby County: the *Shelby County Herald*, the *Shelbina Democrat*, the *Clarence Courier*, and the *Hunnewell Graphic*. Each paper serves a particular section of the county. However, the *Shelby County Herald*, with a circulation of 2,776 in 1946, is widely distributed throughout the county, and the *Shelbina Democrat*, with a circulation of 2,172 in the same year, also has considerable circulation beyond the village itself. Most of the space in all these papers is devoted to local news. Of the households interviewed, 95 per cent received a weekly newspaper. Three daily newspapers, the *Hannibal Courier-Post*, the *Quincy Herald-Whig*, and the *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, are distributed in the county. Although the first two daily newspapers arrive in Shelby County one day late, the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* is delivered on the day of publication.

Although a variety of periodicals is received, most of them are rural in nature. In fact, none of the periodicals, other than the rural, circulated in as many as 10 per cent of the households studied. In addition to the school libraries, there are public libraries in Shelbina, Shelbyville, and Clarence. The Shelbina library rates among the best in small towns in north Missouri. There are no stores handling books other than textbooks, so people must either order books or depend upon the facilities available in their libraries. There are numerous types of miscellaneous print available in the county, such as the funeral notice, candidate cards,

⁶Long, H. R., *Rural Communication Patterns: A Study in the Availability and Use of Print, Radio and Film in Shelby County, Missouri*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, 1948.

sale bills, posters, circulars, mail order catalogs, the Bible, almanac and calendar, and agricultural bulletins.

Largely as a result of their location and the location of radio stations, the people of Shelby County listen for the most part to programs from four radio stations: WHO, Des Moines, Iowa; WTAD, Quincy, Illinois; KSD, St. Louis, Missouri; and WDAF, Kansas City, Missouri. Listening profiles for the 357 households studied were made for these four stations. The first peak in listening occurs at 7:00 a.m., and then declines to a low at 9:00 a.m. There is an increase from then until 10:00 a.m. The second peak is reached at noon and continues until 1:00 p.m. There is a decline during the afternoon, except for a high point around 3:00 p.m., until after 5:30 p.m. Many persons listen to their radios between 5:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.; the largest radio audience is at 8:30 p.m. After 9:30 p.m. radio listening declines, and ends for many people between 10:00 and 11:00 p.m.

Radio programs were classified into 14 categories, with the following the order of preference of open country households: variety programs, serials, news bulletins and commentaries, old time and cowboy music, dance music, quiz programs, sports, religious programs, farm and home talks, market reports, complete plays, talks and discussions, classical music, and religious music. Village listeners had a different order of preference for programs. It ran as follows: variety programs, news bulletins and commentaries, serials, dance music, quiz programs, complete plays, religious programs, old time and cowboy music, sports, classical music, talks and discussions, farm and home talks, religious music, market reports. Listening to the radio was generally done while the individual was doing something else. In fact, 97 per cent reported that they listened to the radio while engaged in some other activity.

Some use of motion pictures is made in the schools, but this is limited for the most part to the larger high schools and to films that the county superintendent takes to the rural schools. Within the county, theaters are located in Clarence, Shelbina, and Shelbyville. Shelby Countians many times attend movies in Hannibal, Quincy, Macon, Moberly, and St. Louis because there they have a chance to see first run pictures. These same pictures will eventually be shown in the county, but it will be only after they have made the rounds of larger communities. On the basis of attendance, people in the county prefer pictures depicting rural life, their second choice being western films. The weekly attendance cycle, when not affected by holidays and the weather, is as follows: Saturday is the peak day; Sunday is next, followed by considerable decline on Monday; Tuesday has the lowest attendance, Wednesday and Thursday are better, and Friday generally has a fair attendance. The attendance cycle seems to fit in with the work cycle. Saturday is a shopping day for farmers, and is also the peak day for motion picture attendance. During the week attendance is generally low unless a picture with much appeal is shown.

With the exception of the weekly newspapers and miscellaneous

printed matter, these media of communication in Shelby County are not of local origin. The subscription to daily papers is low because of the factors of cost and delivery. The lack of daily papers is undoubtedly related to the radio listening behavior of the people. Little use is made of the movies. People in the upper socio-economic groups make greater use of these media than those in the lower. It was found, however, that if a person used one medium of indirect communication, it was likely that he would use others also. This was particularly true of a person using the medium of film, for he was likely to use also the radio and print. Likewise, persons using the radio generally used print also.

Long's study showed that although radio, print and film are readily available in Shelby County, improvements might make them more attractive and more used by a greater number of people. While we do not have standards for measuring maximum use, or ideal use, of these media, it is apparent that they are not being used to the extent of their availability. Analysis of the use of these three media showed that most people depend upon printed matter. Newspapers are used most, with radio next; motion picture films are used least of all. The study made no attempt to measure the effectiveness of each medium of communication, however. Therefore it is not possible to conclude whether the newspaper is more or less effective than film as a means of communication in Shelby County.

One conclusion of the study deserves particular attention. After analyzing the availability and use of print, radio, and film, Long concluded that most of the communication in Shelby County is still on the primary level of face-to-face contacts. Since this was the characteristic pattern of communication during the pioneer period, one might be led to conclude that Shelby County people are conservative and resist change. This interpretation would hardly be correct, as they have, in fact, accepted a great many changes, both in agriculture and in other phases of community life. A better interpretation might be that Shelby County people are less hurried, perhaps, than urban dwellers, permitting them to find time for selective neighboring and to retain face-to-face contacts as a means of keeping informed and of formulating opinion. Under these circumstances such means of secondary communication as books, film, and radio are used, but they are supplementary to the more direct personal means.

VII. EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

The Little Red Schoolhouse. After selecting his farm, the pioneer's first task was to build a home and get his farm in operation. Although he was largely self-sufficient, he needed to purchase some things he could not produce and to have some means of contact with the rest of the world. Roads were built and stores and postoffices were started to meet these needs. He satisfied his need for fellowship and worship through social gatherings, weddings, and religious services conducted in pioneer homes. In all cultures man has been concerned about transmitting his social heritage to his children and Shelby County was no exception. In

pioneer days, education of the children was primarily a function of the family, but, as community institutions developed and more education was required, it was gradually turned over in large measure to schools.

Many of the southern families settling in the county were not sympathetic to the public school system and favored private schools. Several private schools were established in different parts of the county, some of which managed to operate for a few years. Some of the religious organizations started schools, but most of them did not survive longer than five to ten years. As population was increasing rapidly during the nineteenth century, there were increased demands for more public schools. As the number of schoolhouses increased, private and religious schools either merged with the public school system or went out of business. The present rural school system was established in 1875, and not many changes have been made in the number of schools since that time.

There are seven special school districts in the county, centered in the villages. In the open country there are 66 schools. While these 66 schoolhouses are hardly sufficient for the traditional "one on every hill-top", they do make an average of one for every 7 or 8 square miles. They were established at a time when children of school age were numerous in the open country and when schools had to be erected within walking distance of all pupils. But the maximum number of children of school age was reached before 1900 and has declined since that time. Consequently, the enrollment in country schools has declined in spite of laws concerning compulsory attendance and the increased proportion of persons of school age attending school.

After comparing the qualifications for teaching in Shelby County schools during the nineteenth century with present day standards, it is easy to conclude that teachers were inadequately prepared for their jobs. And many of them were not as well prepared as they should have been. However, the transportation system of the last century required a large number of schools to be established, and it was difficult to find enough teachers at any price the districts could afford to pay. The one-room, one-teacher schools provided the only educational opportunities for most people, since the first public high school in the county was apparently established near the end of the century. The social heritage of democracy was transmitted through them, and they provided opportunities for training in living with and getting along with people. The one-room school, a product of the conditions of the nineteenth century, ministered to the educational needs of the people to the best of its ability.

Since 1900 the population of the county has been declining with a resultant decrease in school enrollment. In 1948-1949, 26 of the 66 open country schools were transporting their pupils to another school. Of the 40 schools in operation, 21 had an enrollment of 10 or less. The average enrollment for the 40 schools was approximately 12 per school.

There had been an increase in the amount of formal training received by the teachers of these schools up to the time of World War II. Because

of relatively low salaries in the teaching profession and employment in occupations related to the war, the level of training of Shelby County teachers reached a low level in 1944, but since 1946 some improvement has been made. However, of the 40 teachers employed in 1948-1949, 23 had received less than 30 college hours credit, and only 9 had 60 or more hours of college credit. As a rule few improvements have been made in the open country school buildings and equipment during the past quarter of a century.

Improvements in the curriculum have been related to dependence upon state aid, a fact that has resulted in the adoption of the state's prescribed course of study. However, the course of study must be completed in an eight months term in the open country schools as compared with a nine months term in the village schools. As a result of the competition for teachers, the salaries of open country school teachers are now at an all-time high.

The village schools have a longer school term, and better buildings and equipment. The teachers have received more college training and generally have had more experience when first employed than is the case with the open country teachers. The high schools are all located in villages. This makes possible a school system with several teachers supervised by a school superintendent. In general the salaries of teachers in the villages are higher than those in the open country.

In spite of reduced enrollments, rural school districts have tended to resist the consolidating of schools. Before 1937-1938 only six districts had failed during one or more years to maintain a school. The acute teacher shortage during World War II made it necessary for more schools to transport their pupils to other districts, but this has generally been looked upon as a temporary arrangement during the emergency. However, in 1948-1949 the number of districts transporting pupils reached 26, and it is questionable whether the present can be regarded as an emergency. The present system of roads and motor transportation in the county make it seem unlikely that many of these schools will start functioning again. In fact, it may become increasingly difficult for the 40 open country schools now in operation to keep going. Present conditions do not require the number of one-room schools that was necessary fifty years ago. It seems likely that the consolidation of some of them will occur, but which schools will be involved and where the united schools will be located must still be determined. The people of Shelby County voted down, on October 25, 1949, a plan for redistricting the county in terms of three proposed districts. This vote may have represented in part the habitual conservatism of some of the people, but it may also have resulted from a failure to plan districts in terms of neighboring groups, informal associations, trade areas, and attitudes of the people. The elementary school enrollment in 1948 was 1,232, and the three proposed districts would have had approximately 400 elementary pupils per school. This, no doubt, did not appear satisfactory to persons accustomed to having 20 to 30 elementary pupils per school. It is also

quite possible that the proposed consolidation was interpreted as a change from "grass roots" democracy to centralized control of education by a few.

The school system of Shelby County is in a period of transition. The one-room, one-teacher schools which have predominated in the system were developed in view of the apparent educational needs, the population, and the means of transportation of the nineteenth century. As the school population has decreased, the means of transportation have been improved. During the period of these changes the interpretation of educational needs has been broadened. A reduction in the number of schools does not indicate a failure of the educational process, nor of the school as an institution. A new type of school does not mean that the one-room school was a failure for the period it was developed to serve. Shelby County is now faced with the necessity of developing a type of school to meet current needs, and of determining the number and location of these schools so as to serve best the people of the county. This should be done with care so as to meet community needs and preserve the essential democracy of the schools. Shelby County will then have a school system that it can view with pride.

The Church in the Nineteenth Century. The pioneers began organizing and building churches soon after their arrival in Shelby County. Unfortunately the records of many churches are not complete, and in some cases not available, but of the 82 churches that apparently were organized during the history of the county, 19 of them were started by 1860. In that year there was approximately one church for every 384 persons in the county. The period 1861 to 1900 was one of intense church activity and evangelism, and 67 per cent of the churches ever organized in the county were started during these forty years. While 19 churches had been started by 1860, 55 additional ones had been started by 1900. Of the 74 churches organized during that period, 71 were still in operation in 1900. Although the population grew rapidly from 1860-1900, the establishment of churches more than kept pace with the population increase, for in 1900 there was approximately one church for every 228 persons in the population.

Of the 82 congregations organized, 45, comprising 55 per cent, were in the open country, while 37, or 45 per cent, were in the villages. The denominations represented were the Assembly of God, Baptist, Catholic, Christian, Church of the Brethren, Evangelical, Holiness, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, and Nazarene. However, the Baptist, Christian, and Methodist churches organized 78 per cent of all the congregations formed. The remaining Protestant churches organized 16 per cent of the total, while the Catholic Church established 6 per cent of the total. The Baptist, Christian, and Methodist churches comprised 84 per cent of the open country churches and 70 per cent of the village churches.

The church situation in the nineteenth century must be understood in terms of the type of church and the conditions that then prevailed. Practically all of the open country churches and several of those in

villages were on a part-time basis. While the majority of those located in the open country had preaching services only once a month, most of them managed to keep a Sunday school going every Sunday. The records of church membership available indicate that the majority of these churches have never had more than 100 members at any time during their history. They were organized and served by circuit-riding ministers who usually lived in the villages. The means of transportation, dirt roads and the horse and buggy, made it extremely difficult for people to travel many miles to church. For that reason, churches were located so there would be one within 4 or 5 miles of each farm family. This was also a time of rapid growth in population and of optimism concerning the future. Churches were organized to serve the expected population of the years to come. In view of the part-time church served by a circuit-rider, the means of transportation, the growth of population, and the optimism concerning the future, the number of churches established in the nineteenth century was in line with the conditions and the interpretation of religious needs for that period.

The Church in the Twentieth Century. Only eight churches, or 10 per cent of the total number, have been organized since 1901, most of them by the Assembly of God, Holiness, and Nazarenes. While these groups have at various times conducted meetings in the open country, they have generally established their churches in the villages. On the other hand, 19 churches have ceased to exist as the result of the consolidation of some and the disbanding of others. There are still other churches that do not function regularly and probably will be disbanded in the future. In 1940 there were 60 churches in the county, or one for approximately every 187 persons in the population. If one-half of the population may be classified as church members, then there were 94 members per church in 1940. However, many village churches have memberships above 94, while there are many open country churches with memberships below 50. Only 16 per cent of the village churches established have ceased to exist, while 36 per cent of the open country churches have been disbanded. Of the 60 churches in 1940, 30 were located in the open country and 30 were in the villages.

The Baptist, Christian, and Methodist denominations have lost 33 per cent of the churches they started. The Christian church has had a 7 per cent loss, while the Baptist has lost 32 per cent, and the Methodist 50 per cent. The other Protestant organizations have lost only 8 per cent of their churches. The Catholic churches have been largely confined to villages and all of the Catholic congregations formed in the county are still functioning. Statistics are not available, so it is not possible at present to indicate loss or gain in membership. What information is available indicates that there has been a decline in membership.

Approximately one-half of the village churches have the services of a full-time minister, while others do not have regular services. Approximately one-fourth of the open country churches have either occasional

or no services, and the majority of the others have services only once a month. Not only has church attendance decreased, but so also has the attendance at Sunday school. Some Sunday schools have been discontinued. The number of revivals, as well as attendance, has declined. Revivals that are still being held are usually more like regular church services and are conducted by the regular minister rather than the evangelistic and emotional type formerly conducted by an evangelist. While the number of churches has not declined as much as the population, many of them are either inactive or carrying a limited program.

The loss of some churches and the reduced programs of others does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in religion, or failure on the part of the church. The church is simply in a period of transition, trying to make adjustments to the twentieth century. The present means of communication and transportation no longer require that there be a church within 4 or 5 miles of every farm family. While more farmers are attending village churches today than 25 years ago, many farm people still prefer to attend church in the open country. The people of Shelby County face a situation in regard to churches that is similar to the current school problem, namely, to determine the number, type, and location of churches that will best serve their religious needs.