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J. H. LONGWELL, *Director*

# RURAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN DENT COUNTY, MISSOURI

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## INTRODUCTION

The Ozark highlands are well known for their contributions to the history and literature of the United States. Equally important, but perhaps less well known, has been their contribution to American life in terms of physical resources and manpower. At present they are rapidly coming to the fore as one of America's great recreational playgrounds.

Originally settled by sturdy pioneers from the states further east, they long remained highly isolated from the outside world and developed ways of living that seemed colorful to outsiders. Today, the tourist, the radio, and the County Extension agent have penetrated the innermost recesses of the highlands and the typical Ozark family has lost most of its colorful uniqueness. In spite of that, traces of the earlier culture of the region may still be noticed in the folkways and attitudes of the people. They may be expected to persist for some time.

Dent County is, in many respects, typical of that group of counties which includes the more rugged portion of the Missouri Ozarks. In this bulletin, the authors attempt to describe some of the more evident aspects of the social organization of the county. Mr. Almack, the senior author, spent much time in the county over a period of more than two years, and became well acquainted with the local scene. Dr. Hepple, a native Missourian, has contributed valuable insight and technical skill in preparing the report. I believe it presents a reliable word-picture of the rural social organization of Dent County.

C. E. Lively

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction .....	2
I. The Land and the People .....	3
A. Geographic Environment .....	3
B. Population Characteristics .....	6
C. Historical Background .....	9
II. Life and Labor .....	12
A. In Agriculture .....	12
B. In Business and Industry .....	22
III. Family Life .....	27
IV. Government, Education and Religion .....	36
A. Government .....	36
B. Education .....	38
C. Religion .....	42
V. Patterns of Association .....	44
A. The Extension Service and Informal Association .....	45
B. Other Types of Informal Association .....	49
VI. War Years and After .....	55
A. The War Years .....	55
B. Three Years After the War .....	58

# RURAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN DENT COUNTY, MISSOURI

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## I. THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

### A. Geographic Environment

Dent County lies near the heart of the Missouri Ozarks, in the southeastern quarter of the State. Salem, the county seat, is about 125 miles southwest of St. Louis, and 95 miles southeast of Jefferson City. The county is not a large one, as Ozark counties go; it contains 756 square miles of land area, three-fifths of which is in farms.

The physical environment sets the stage for the socio-economic life of Dent County. During the years since early settlement some alterations have been made. Large amounts of timber have been cut. Some soils have been enriched through conservation and fertilization practices and others eroded by too much plowing. Iron ore has been removed from the earth, and the vegetation cover has been changed through adoption of different farming methods. Yet much persists unaltered. The hills and the valleys, the rough land and the prairies, the streams and the springs, the temperature and the rainfall—the basic features—have remained the same.

**Topography.** The topography ranges from undulating land to rugged hills. Generally speaking, the eastern parts of the county are rougher than the central and northwestern sections. In the latter the land is rolling prairie; in the former are found steep hills and narrow creek bottoms. The average elevation is 1,100 feet, ranging from 879 feet near Sligo in the central northeast to 1,379 feet at Bunker in the extreme southeast. Through the center of the county from east to west runs a ridge. North of this dividing ridge, all drainage flows into the six forks of the Meramec River northward; south of the ridge, all drainage flows into the four forks of the Current River southward. All of these 10 forks of the two rivers have their sources in Dent County. Springs are numerous throughout the area, the most noted being Montauk Spring located in the southwestern tip of the county and serving as the source of the Current River.

The topography of Dent County affects the farming practices of the area. Steep hillsides remain out of cultivation as pasture, woods, or open range. In the more level sections a higher proportion of land is cropped. The topography also affects the social life of the people. Hills tend to curtail social contacts—visiting with neighbors, frequent trips to town, attend-

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ance at neighborhood meetings, going to church. Roads in the hilly areas are often rough, long, and difficult to travel. It is often easier to stay at home than undergo the rigors which travel entails. Topography, too, indirectly affects attitudes and behavior patterns through the relative social isolation which it tends to produce. To many, this is a satisfactory situation, one which offers easy rationalization for their desire to live to themselves. To others, this resultant isolation is a strong determinant in the desire and decision to migrate from the county.

**Soil Resources.** Practically all of Dent County is located in two main soils areas: Clarksville and Hanceville. The Clarksville soils cover the eastern and southern section, with a large strip in the north-central area, and a segment along the northwestern border of the county. Top soil ranges from a gravelly condition to one that is excessively stony. It is naturally low in nitrogen, phosphorus, and organic matter. These deficiencies, unless remedied, tend to limit crop yields. A large portion of this soil area in the east-south central section is held in a National Forest and a smaller portion in the northeast central section is entirely contained within a State Park. Much of the central and western sections of Dent County are covered by Hanceville Loam soils. The surface is dominantly a loam, but varies from stony sand to sandy clay loam in texture. In general, the soil is thin, needing an additional supply of organic matter, lime and fertilizer. When this is done, small grains and legumes can be grown with proper management. Cultivation of land in this soil area is confined principally to the valleys and valley slopes. Along the Meramec River in the northeast and along the Current River in the southwest are two small areas of Huntington Loam soils. Together these areas cover only a very small portion of the total land area, yet in them is found the best crop land in the county.

The soils of Dent County set certain limits to agricultural production. Crops, yields, and usage determine in part the cycle of activity and income. The cycle of activity and income have a direct bearing on the total cultural life of the county. Since the days of early settlement farmers have been gradually turning from row crops, mainly corn, to the raising of pasture and hay which produce a much higher income per acre. This change has also been accompanied by a shift to livestock production—hogs and beef cattle. The change from row crops to pasture and livestock to best utilize the soil resources would indicate that the area would be suitable to dairy production. And so it is, even to being within the milkshed of a large metropolitan area, but a local experience of the early 1930s has tended to make the farm people wary of dairying. Thus the favorable aspects of utilization of soil resources have been partly offset by an unfavorable socio-economic experience.

**Climate.** The climate is temperate. The mean temperature for January is 32.3° and for July, 77.4°. Approximately six months of the year are frost free, from April 20 to October 19. Usually, the weather is sufficiently open for livestock to be kept on pasture about nine months, from the first to middle of March until the first to middle of December. Annual rainfall averages approximately 43 inches. Precipitation is distributed



throughout the year, ranging from 2.18 inches in February to 4.69 inches in May. The climate determines in part how fruitful the soil will be in its production capacities—crops, pastures, gardens, fruits. Climate also has a direct bearing on the social life of the county. Hard rains make it impossible to ford streams, until they subside. High winds blow down telephone and electric wires. Deep snows make roads impassable. Thaws make mud disagreeable. An excessively rainy season means more intensive work when the fields dry out. In countless ways, social activities are affected by the whims of the weather.

**Relation to Socio-Economic Life in Dent County.** In the eastern and southern parts of the county, the residents often have to travel considerable distances to get to their nearest neighbors, or to go to the nearest country store. Many children must follow long roundabout routes to get to school. The hillsides are covered with timber and underbrush unsuitable to cultivation, so that only a small proportion of the farms is in crop land. Due to the distance between farm residences, and to the rough terrain, REA lines have been slower coming into these sections of the county than to other areas. With the scattered population, informal contacts between individuals and families are infrequent and it is difficult for organizations and agencies to find a central meeting place within easy travel distance of a large number of persons. But the ruggedness of these sections has some beneficial attributes. The timber becomes a source of income when sold from the farm and a source of "off-farm" employment to supplement farm earnings. The soils covering these areas are more fertile than those covering the more level sections in the central and western part of the county. River bottoms produce high yields to offset their small size. The hillsides, unless too steep, provide good pasture, and since it is usually possible to pasture livestock for nine months a year, the rate of return per acre is high. Ponds are easily constructed to provide adequate water supply for the livestock. Roads may be rough and winding, but the natural rocky condition of the soil makes them passable throughout the year.

The central and western sections are more level. Farm residences are readily accessible to each other and to the outside world. As a result, social life flourishes with greater physical ease here than in other parts of the county, although as elsewhere it is largely informal in character. Many farms have been able to connect with REA lines and thereby become part of the "electrical age." A high proportion of the land in farms can be cultivated. This is offset, however, by the fact that the soils covering these areas are not too fertile, and to produce profitably, they must be carefully managed.

And so the people of Dent County have adjusted to the physical environment of the area. Sometimes these adjustments have taken the character of manipulations. Farm pastures have been improved through the introduction of lespedeza, a drouth resistant strain of clover. Gradually livestock production is superseding crop production as the point of emphasis in the pattern of general farming. Within recent years poultry and dairy production, both utilizing environmental factors, have increased.

Sometimes the adjustments fail. Drouth or storms destroy the crops; the planting season is late; the frost season is early; or there is too much moisture during the growing season. But in good times or bad, through years of experience, the residents have learned to accept the results of their adjustments calmly.

### B. Population Characteristics

**Size and Location.** Dent County is a rural county. Of the 11,763 inhabitants in the area in 1940, more than three out of every five were farm residents. Only a little more than one-fourth of the population was urban and all these people lived in the one incorporated place in the county, Salem. Excluding Spring Creek township, which contains Salem, and Sinking township, which has the smallest proportion of land area in farms and is located in the roughest topographical section, all townships had more farm than nonfarm residents. One person in nine lived on open-country sites not classified as farms, or in the numerous small hamlets scattered throughout the area.

**Density.** Dent County is not a thickly populated area. There were 15.6 persons and 4.4 habitable dwellings per square mile in 1940. Excluding Salem, the number of persons ranged from 6.4 per square mile in Short Bend township to 16.3 in Franklin township, while the number of habitable dwellings varied from 1.8 per square mile in Short Bend and Meramec townships to 4.2 in Franklin and Watkins townships. In general, there is a definite relationship between density of settlement and the topography of the county. Density of population and homes is lowest in the eastern and southern sections where the land is steep and rugged, and highest in the central and western sections where the topography is undulating to gently rolling.

**Age Groupings.** Dent County population contains a relatively large proportion in the productive ages—persons aged 15-64 years. For every person in the dependent groups, children under 15 years of age and old people 65 years and over, there were two persons 15-64 years of age. On farms this ratio was lowered to 3 to 2, due mainly to the larger number of children. However, Salem contained the larger proportion in the productive and old age groups and the smaller proportion of children. The rural-nonfarm areas contained a larger proportion of children and aged than did either the farms or Salem.

These differences between the various segments of the population may be partially explained in terms of birth rates and job opportunities. Birth rates are lower in Salem than in the rural areas of the county; hence, the proportionate number of children is larger in the open country and hamlets than in the city. The job opportunities available in Salem tend to hold many of those in the 15-64 year group. On the other hand, many persons 15-64 years of age, particularly 18-30, in the rural areas migrate to Salem and to other cities for jobs.

**Sex Ratios.** In numbers, Dent County is a man's world. Based on the 1940 Census there were 107.1 males per 100 females. However, the ratio

between males and females varied greatly between certain segments of the population. Salem was predominantly female and the rural areas predominantly male. In Salem there were only 95.6 males for each 100 females, while on farms the ratio was 112.4 men for 100 women. The proportion in the rural-nonfarm areas of the county was 107.8 to 100. These differentials are more pronounced in certain age groups. In the productive class, 15 to 64 years of age, there were 109.4 males to 100 females on the farms of the county, while in Salem the ratio was 92.1 to 100. This difference between the rural-farm areas and Salem was even greater in the groups aged 15-34 years. In this class there were only 85.5 men for each 100 women in Salem as compared with 110.8 to 100 on farms. In rural-nonfarm sections the ratio was 112.5 to 100 in the productive class and 108.2 to 100 in the 15-34 year group.

The heavy ratio of males on farms is a result of the greater availability of job opportunities for men than for women. Real needs or the traditional ways of doing things permit two or more men (or youth) to stay on the farm. The same patterns dictate that grown girls and women, other than the homemaker, marry or secure employment, in any case become self-supporting. In Salem the job opportunities for women are more numerous than for men, since most employment is obtained in the garment factory or as clerks in stores or service establishments.

**Reproductive Capacity.** The rural areas of Dent County produce a surplus of people. Many more children are born than are necessary to replace the population.<sup>1</sup> In 1940 the rural areas were producing three children for every two that were needed to meet actual replacement needs.<sup>2</sup> The farming areas were producing seven for every five needed and the rural-nonfarm sections, 19 for each 10. In 1930, the fertility ratios were somewhat higher for the rural and rural-farm segments and lower for the rural-nonfarm groups than they were in 1940. At that time there were five children born for every three needed to replace the rural population, 12 for every 7 in the rural-farm population, and three for every two needed to replace the rural-nonfarm population.

This surplus condition is alleviated by migration from the rural areas to Salem or other urban areas. Salem does not produce many more children, if any, than necessary to maintain a stationary population. Its growth has been the result of in-migration, much of which has come from the surrounding rural territory. Most of the movement from the rural sections stems from individual initiative. It has long been the custom for rural youth to seek at least temporary employment in towns and cities, most commonly, Salem and St. Louis. In a large number of cases, temporary employment "to see the world" turns out to be permanent employment with

<sup>1</sup>This fact is based upon a measure called the "fertility ratio". The fertility ratio is the number of children, 0-4 years of age (under 5 years), per 1000 women aged 20-44 years. It is not a birth rate but a measure of fertility, i. e., fertility reduced by the average mortality of children under five years of age. The correlation of this ratio with actual birth rate is so high that for ordinary purposes it may be used as a substitute when the true birth rate cannot be obtained.

<sup>2</sup>These ratios are obtained by dividing the fertility ratios for the various populations by the replacement ratio. The replacement ratio is the actual fertility ratio needed to maintain a stationary population, assuming that no in-migration or out-migration took place.

a change of residence. During recent years as labor in industry and agriculture became scarce, public agencies, particularly the Farmers Home Administration, the Agricultural Extension Service, and the U. S. Employment Service, have recruited labor from the county for work elsewhere—in industry—St. Louis, Kansas City, the various war centers; in agriculture—from the corn fields of northern Missouri and Iowa to the fruit ranches of Washington and Oregon.

**Nationality.** Practically all Dent Countians have been born in the United States. In 1940, only 58 persons were classified as foreign born, which is about one-half of one per cent of the total population. Thirty-three of the 58 resided in Salem. Even in 1880, when the largest number of foreign born were living in the county, they comprised less than three per cent of the residents. Prior to the Civil War a few land owners in the area possessed Negro slaves, but since that time few Negroes have lived within the boundaries of the county. At present there are none.

**Growth.** The population of Dent County has fluctuated from 1860, the date of the first U. S. Census report for the county, to the present time. Between 1860 and 1940 the number of people living in the area more than doubled. The population reached its peak in 1910. From 1860 to 1910, the number of people living in the county constantly increased, showing the greatest growth between 1870 and 1880, when the population rose more than 67 per cent. Beginning with 1910 and continuing until 1930 there was a decline, followed by an increase from 1930 to 1940 and then another decline from 1940 to the end of World War II.

The pattern of change differed among the various segments of the population. Salem increased in size constantly from 1890, the date of first separate count, to 1940, with the exception of 1910 to 1920 when a very small decrease took place. Between 1940 and 1943 the population decreased. The number of people living in the county outside of Salem declined constantly from 1900 to 1943, with the greatest drop occurring between 1920 and 1930. The farm population of the county became smaller between 1930 and 1943.

Many factors have affected the growth or decline of the population of the area. During 1870-1880, the period of greatest increase, the timber industry reached its peak of activity. Labor was in demand for the timber industry and in the ever increasing number of service establishments that were being started. Dent County became the mecca of many migrants, in spite of a birth rate which was sufficient to produce a sizable natural increase. On the heels of timber came the iron industry around Sligo, starting its activity around 1880 and demanding a large supply of labor in its expansion during subsequent years. During the latter part of the 19th century as the land was cleared more farms were established and more farm families migrated to the county.

After 1910, the market for the low grade iron ore produced locally began to decline and many of those who had been employed in this industry left the county. More than 1,000 persons lived in the Sligo community where the furnace was located when the local production of iron was at

its height. Today Sligo is an unincorporated hamlet of less than 25 residents. During the 1920s, when industrial areas were booming and agriculture was undergoing a depression, many persons sought their livelihood and fortunes in the outside world. The opportunities in the cities plus the pressure of population upon the resources of the local farming areas made migration most attractive. Often the outside world for the rural residents of the county was Salem, the county seat town.

During the depression years of the 1930s, a return migration began to counterbalance the outward movement of the people. Many persons found that making a living (in terms of subsistence) was easier in the hills than in the city. Rural residents continued to migrate to Salem and the cities outside the county, but others returned to take their places. The industrial boom of the National Defense period of 1940-41 again speeded the tempo of outward migration. Hundreds of workers were recruited to work in the construction of Fort Leonard Wood, some 60 miles distant. Many of these people remained as permanent employees. Others went to St. Louis for work. World War II demanded men—more men. Around 1,000 youth from the area entered the armed services.

### C. Historical Background

**Early Settlement.** There is evidence that those who resided in the county at the time of the coming of the white man were Indians who belonged to tribes which inhabited the Ozark region during the latter part of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. The information concerning the first white settler is somewhat vague. Early records indicate that three surveyors of the federal government were in the area prior to 1821, the date of a report issued on the work done by these men, but whether they found any permanent white settlers was not recorded. Land was first cleared for cultivation in 1828 by a man named George Cole, either on the banks of the Meramec River or one of its forks which originate in the county.

A great majority of the early settlers of the county came from the southern Appalachian mountain states: Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and Maryland. Migrating in search of better land, these first settlers, mountaineers by birth and temperament, found in the Ozarks, in Dent County, an environment to which they were thoroughly accustomed. Here, they could use their past knowledge, their skills, their ways of doing things; here, their attitudes, their ways of thinking would provide an adequate adjustment to the environment. Home sites, farmsteads, were first established along the river and creek valleys. Accustomed to hard work, the early residents found these locations most suitable in getting a new start. Here the land was more fertile and crops would give higher yields; here there was less to do to clear the land; here the topography made it easier to control their livestock; here the water supply was plentiful; here an abundant meat supply was close at hand. Settlements back in the hills came later, with few exceptions, after the choice bottom sites had been occupied.



**Activities of First Settlers.** Keeping alive, providing food, clothing, and shelter occupied a major portion of the time of the first inhabitants. The early pioneer was of necessity a hunter and fisherman. Wild fowl, small game, venison—all were within easy access. For variety and to supplement the food supply many kinds of fish could be caught in the streams. If the early pioneer was to become a permanent settler, his immediate task was the erection of a suitable home. The first houses were built of logs, with a stick and dirt chimney, frequently without windows or floor, and many times without a hanging door. Furniture was made by hand, often during the spare hours, by the father and mother. After completion of the home, the next task facing the settler was the clearing and cultivating of land in order to be assured of a living beyond the dependence upon fish and game. Corn was usually the first crop grown on the cleared land and the grain was prepared for home use by the family. The father of the family was, besides a cultivator of land and a hunter and fisherman, also his own blacksmith, shoemaker, and anything else as the occasion might require. The mother took care of weaving, spinning, and sewing, in addition to the regular household duties. Children were assigned family tasks as sex and age permitted.

Social life was confined to the family and immediate neighbors except at rare intervals. There was not much time available for leisure activities and play was often combined with business. There were contests of skill and strength in connection with routine tasks, of marksmanship while hunting. Outstanding social events were house or barn raisings and log rollings. While the men were thus employed, the women would have a quilting or sewing party. In the evening, after the work was done, all would join in a neighborhood dance to the tunes of an "expert" fiddler. Holidays were frequently celebrated by neighborhood barbecues. Nor was there much time for travel, and journeys were taken only in cases of necessity. The first roads were mere trails blazed through the wilderness and travel over them was arduous and difficult. Usually travel was by horseback, for fortunate indeed was the settler who owned a two- or four-wheeled cart.

**Post-settlement.** Although the first families in the county were largely self-sufficient, it was not long before stores and other service establishments appeared. The first store within the present limits of the county was started in the 1840s about three miles northeast of the site where Salem is now located. Other stores soon followed on Dry Fork Creek and the Meramec River. None of these stores, however, became the nucleus of a town; no town existed in the area until Salem was established and built as the county seat in the early 1850s. The 1840s also saw the establishment of the first post office at a place that is now called Lake Springs. At first, education was regarded as purely a family matter and children were taught by older members of the family as time, interest, and ability permitted. Soon, however, certain individuals in the various neighborhoods began to set up subscription schools which were held in private homes. Public school money was used to support these subscription schools for many years. In 1845 there were only three or four public schools operating in the area. Reli-

gious observances, too, were family matters at first. Then came informal worship services in the homes of the neighborhood. The first organized religious services in the county were held by the Primitive Baptists sometime prior to 1837. Shortly afterwards the Methodists and the Missionary Baptists began to meet as organized groups.

Thus, family life, informal social life, and organized socio-economic life got started in Dent County. From that period until the present many developments have taken place, some of which have been permanent, while others have been transitory. The post-settlement migrants continued to come largely from the Appalachian mountain regions. In 1889, 50-60 years after the first settlement, a study of the biography of 84 prominent citizens in the county revealed that only seven had been born in the county and 23 in Missouri. Of the 61 born outside the state, 40 came from the Appalachian area.

Individual family settlements continued along valleys and streams rather than in clusters, later to become villages and towns. Land continued to be cleared and cultivated. Corn remained the staple grain along with some wheat and hay. These grains together with the pasture and garden produce provided the essentials of life for the early families and their livestock. Dent was organized as a county by the State Legislature in 1851 out of portions of Crawford and Shannon counties and received its present boundaries in 1868. Peculiarly, there were no towns started in the area until Salem was laid out as the county seat in 1853.

**Timber and Iron.** When the residents of the county began to "catch their breath" from getting a foothold, they soon discovered that the county had natural resources in much demand by the outside world, timber—timber to build homes and cities in the fast developing Mississippi Valley. In the 1850s the timber business began to thrive and for many years provided employment for many residents of the county. The climax of this period was reached around 1870-1885 when a railroad to Salem was completed and several branch lines to haul timber and iron ore were constructed. But the timber industry declined as the area was cut-over. No one knew or cared about conservation methods; everyone worked on the theory—let's make a killing while the time is right—and waste was rampant.

In looking around, the early inhabitants also discovered that a low grade of iron ore was to be found in several places in the northern part of the county. In 1881 the Sligo Furnace Company was organized with a capital stock of \$100,000 and the town of Sligo was laid out. The iron industry thrived and Sligo grew. Using a charcoal furnace, the company employed from 300 to 500 men at the furnace and in mining, quarrying, hauling, cutting, and the making of charcoal. The furnace produced from 40-50 tons of iron per day and the town of Sligo became a thriving community of more than 1,000 persons. However, this heyday was destined to be short-lived. Higher quality ores were found and developed in other parts of the nation, the iron industry in Dent County declined, and the furnace ceased operations in 1921.

During the Civil War, the county furnished men to both sides of the



conflict and is said to have lost an appreciable proportion of its male population during the conflict. Both sides engaged in a terror campaign of burning homes. The courthouse was used as the military headquarters for the Union troops and several skirmishes took place within the area.

**Agriculture.** Throughout the years when timber, iron, and the Civil War were in the limelight, agriculture was the most stable occupation and the major way of making a living. Since the era of timber and iron, agriculture has dominated the scene, but it has not been developed under a strong spotlight for a time and then tumbled into oblivion. Rather, agriculture has slowly plodded ahead, without fanfare or notice.

Farming in Dent County is not an easy occupation. The land is poor, holdings have been generally smaller than desirable for the type of agriculture suitable to the area, and the methods and types of farming have not been conducive to obtaining the best returns from the land. Many farmers have tried to be cash grain farmers, but with little success; others have been content with self-subsistence farming.

During the past several years, however, great changes have been effected in the ways of farming in the county. Through the Agricultural Extension Service, the Farmers Home Administration, the Production and Marketing Administration, the Production Credit Association, and other agencies, the local farmers have had considerable assistance in changing their farming operations to get better returns. Effecting this change has not been an easy task for the various agency personnel and local leaders interested in improving the agricultural situation of the county. Overcoming suspicion, ignorance, and inertia of many people has been difficult. Chief among the changes have been the switch from a grain to livestock type of farming, introduction of improved pasture crops such as lespedeza and Balbo rye, the development of terraces and contour farming, the increase in fertilizing and liming of the land, and the construction of ponds to provide an adequate water supply for the livestock the year around. These changes—improvements—have brought agriculture out of the realm of “doing it that way because that’s the way it’s always been done,” into the realm of scientific practices and procedures.

## II. LIFE AND LABOR

### A. In Agriculture

Whatever truth there is in the somewhat common saying that “farming is not only a way of making a living but also a way of life” is well borne out in Dent County. Here farming is the most important means of livelihood. More people depend upon the land, directly and indirectly, as a means of making a living than any other occupation. Approximately one-half of those employed in the area in 1939 were engaged in agricultural pursuits. More people live on farms than in the town and other non-farm sections of the county combined. And farming, too, has a greater effect upon the daily lives of the people than most other types of jobs, for farm work is more demanding and confining. On the farm the individual works much of

the time alone on routine tasks in contact solely with his own thoughts, attitudes, and behavior patterns.

**Size of Operating Units.** In 1945, there were 1,641 farms in the county averaging 165.8 acres in size and having a property valuation of land and buildings of \$2,970. Since 1900, there has been considerable fluctuation in the number of farms, average size of farms, and land values<sup>3</sup> in the area. The number of farms grew from 1,748 in 1900 to 1,859 in 1920 despite the loss of around 8.0 per cent in the population of the county outside of Salem. Between 1900 and 1910 about 10,000 additional acres were placed in farms and the size of the average farm decreased 3.6 acres, from 157.2 acres to 153.6 acres. The extensive migration from farms during the 1920s was reflected in the large decrease in the number of operating units and the significant increase in average size of farm. The number of units decreased 8.7 per cent and the size of farm increased 7.7 per cent. With the depression came a reversal of the migration trend and people "took to" the land in Dent County. The number of farms grew to 1,929 operating units which represented an increase of 13.7 per cent over 1930. Average size of operating unit was the smallest in 1935, 151.7 acres, of any time during the four decades. After 1935, as economic conditions bettered, people began to leave the farms, the total number of units in the area decreased and there were more acres in the typical farm.

**Land Values.** At the turn of the century, land values in the county were comparatively low, \$7.14 per acre, \$1,122 per farm. During the next 10 years, 1900-1910, the value of land and buildings per acre took a terrific jump, increasing more than double—117.4 per cent—and continued to rise during the decade 1910-1920. Following the inflation at the end of World War I farm property started down hill in value, a trend which continued until 1935, when the land and buildings in the area were worth \$12.63 per acre, the lowest since 1900. After 1935, the valuation began to increase and the trend has continued until the present time. In 1944 the average farm in the county was worth \$2,970, increasing approximately one-third since 1940.<sup>4</sup> The valuation of land and buildings during the four decades, 1900-1940, corrected for the change in price level of farm products, presents a much different picture.<sup>5</sup> During the first 10 years land increased 73 per cent in per acre value, corrected for price level, and decreased one-third during the following decade. The period 1920-1930 showed an increase of slightly more than one-half, while in the next ten-year span, 1930-1940, land values per acre, adjusted for the price level of farm products, slipped downward about 25 per cent.

**Farm Income.** On the farms of the area, where land values are not high and the size of farm not large, the value of farm products is not high. In 1940, one-half of the farms produced less than 400 dollars worth of products and only one-sixth produced 1,000 dollars or more. At the same time three of every five farms used 50 per cent or more of what they produced

<sup>3</sup>Land values here include value of land and buildings.

<sup>4</sup>U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1945.

<sup>5</sup>Price indexes obtained from unpublished data of the Agricultural Economics Department at the University of Missouri.

at home, thus leaving only a small proportion of products to be sold to provide the necessary cash for family living expenses such as clothing, health, education, recreation, and other running expenses. To supplement the farm income approximately one-third of the farm operators worked off the farm an average of 130 days in the year—on neighbors' farms, in the timber, in industry, and in other types of labor. Usually off-the-farm work is for cash, but sometimes it is on an exchange of labor basis.

During the war years, 1940-45, the income of farm families increased greatly. In 1940 approximately one-half of the farms produced products worth less than \$400, but in 1945 only 21 per cent of the farms were in this category.<sup>6</sup> This improvement in farm income was probably the result of higher prices. On the other hand, the family income was no doubt increased by work off the farm. At the same time, mortgage indebtedness had been reduced. In 1940 two out of every five farms in the area carried a mortgage. Between 1940 and 1945, local sources estimate that these property debts were reduced 40 per cent.<sup>7</sup> This would indicate that a large number of farms have been cleared entirely of mortgage indebtedness.

**Tenancy.** The last U. S. Census showed that only 13.3 per cent of the farms were operated by tenants.<sup>8</sup> During the last 40 years, there has been almost a steady decrease in the proportion of farms operated by tenants, with the exception of the great increase between 1930 and 1935, when people were hurrying onto farms in order to provide at least a food-and-shelter living. Tenant-operators in the area are usually younger than owner-operators. In 1945, tenants averaged 46.5 years in age as compared with 52.2 years for owners. Many young men in the county get their start up the agricultural ladder toward ownership of land through farming as tenants until they have accumulated some capital or the home farm is available to them through retirement or death of their fathers.

Tenants have less attachment to the land than do owner-operators, but no less social status if they are reputable and reliable individuals. Usually they move frequently, either as a result of their own desire to secure a better farm or at the request of the owner in his desire to secure a better tenant. Most of the renting is done on a share rather than a cash basis. This enables the owner to take advantage of good crop years and the tenant avoids fixed charges and so takes advantage of poor crop years.

**Types of Farmers.** The farmers of Dent County may be classed as commercial farmers, general farmers, and subsistence farmers. The operations of the commercial farmers are geared to producing for the commercial market. In this group fall about one-sixth of the farmers of the area. Their holdings generally range from 350 to 400 acres upward, depending upon the fertility of the soil and the proportion of land available for culti-

<sup>6</sup>U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1945.

<sup>7</sup>Based on decrease in loans on farm property held by local banks.

<sup>8</sup>U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1945.

vation. Livestock is their main source of income which in the gross ranges from \$5,000 to \$6,000 and over.

The general farmer group includes about one-half of the farmers. With them farm operations are designed to make a good living, with plenty of food, good shelter, and the opportunity to sell surplus products, if and when they are available. Size of holdings for this group averages 150-200 acres, and their gross income at the price level ranges from \$2,000 to \$5,000. Among this group, the motive of farming as a way of living is on a par with or more important than the motive of farming as a way of making a living. Some of these farmers may supplement the farm income by working off the farm.

Around one-third of the farmers of the area are subsistence farmers. Farming small operational units, this group produces little more than can be consumed by the farm family in one form or another. Good crop years may find them having a small amount of surplus crops to sell. Many of the farms of less than 100 acres, which comprise two-fifths of the farms in the county, are operated by farmers of this group. Likewise many of the farms where one-half or more of the products produced are consumed by the farm family, which include three-fifths of the farms, are manned by subsistence farmers. Farm income for this group is usually less than \$2,000 gross per farm. Most of the subsistence farmers supplement the farm income through off-the-farm work by one or more members of the family.

**Farming Operations.** Livestock is the major agricultural product of the area. Beef cattle are the most important single source of income although more farmers raise hogs for sale than cattle. About two-fifths of the farmers raise beef cattle, while four-fifths raise hogs. Sale of livestock accounts for approximately two-thirds of the value of farm products produced in the county. Poultry and poultry products ranked second in 1940, followed by dairy products and crops.<sup>9</sup> With current subsidies and the increased milk production during the war years on a large number of farms that formerly produced little or none, dairy products currently rank second as a source of farm income with poultry and poultry products third.

The livestock is home grown; few feeders are shipped in to be fattened for the market. However, the county is a feed deficit area and depends upon outside sources for a larger proportion of the necessary feed. Pride in livestock production centers in getting the livestock to market at the highest price possible at the lowest production cost possible. To facilitate this efficient production, two significant developments have taken place during the past few years: improvement in the quality of livestock and the expansion of pasture improvement programs. The Agricultural Extension Service and the Farmers Home Administration, formerly the Farm Security Administration, particularly, have done much to show the local people the increased income obtainable through improvement in the quality of their livestock. Purebred strains are now common throughout the area, and many farmers are members of the Registered Beef Cattle Association. The Extension Service and the Farmers Home Administration together

<sup>9</sup>Excludes values of farm products used by the households in determining the rank order.

with the Production and Marketing Administration<sup>10</sup> have also taken the lead in demonstrating the greater long-time returns to be obtained by using the rougher land areas for pasture rather than for crop production. In this connection, the Production and Marketing Administration has paid benefits to the farmers of the area for soil conservation practices, including pasture improvement. Balbo rye and lespedeza have had wide adoption and provide excellent pasture in the county.

Somewhat in contrast, six townships in the eastern and southern part of the county (Osage, Franklin, Linn, Sinking, Current and Gladden) are not covered by a stock law. Here, the land is open range and all livestock is permitted to run at large. However, a large number of farmers have fenced their land and control the livestock in pastures rather than permit them to forage as they may. Yet support for the open range law is strong. In 1944, a candidate for the County Court from the southern half of the county placed a paid ad in the local weekly papers declaring that he was opposed to placing the area under stock laws to close the open range.

Although the area is definitely suited for dairying—pasture and hay provide the highest return per acre and the county is in the St. Louis milkshed—this type of farming was not extensively practiced until wartime subsidies made the production of dairy products a most profitable enterprise. During the early 1930s a dairy program was launched. However, the depression caused many foreclosures on farmers for their cows and since that time little enthusiasm has been in evidence for another dairy program. Before the war, many farmers sold milk, but few were actually in the dairy business. The increase in milk production during the war came from adding a few more cows on many farms rather than from the establishment of a few large dairies.

Practically all the farmers in the county keep chickens. Some may keep just a few to provide eggs for family use and as an ever present source of fresh meat. Others use chickens as an important supplementary source of income. It is not uncommon for eggs to be used to provide the running expenses, or part of them at least, of the family. From the egg money groceries and various household items are purchased. Often this egg money belongs entirely to the homemaker—to be used, of course, for family living expenses, but spent as she deems fit and necessary. During the war, poultry on the farms increased. The continued favorable price of eggs made the enlargement of flocks profitable, but frequently real risks were hazarded in that the farmers of the area were dependent upon the local stores as the source of supply of feed which many times was not available in any quantity.

**Basic Agricultural Techniques.** Basic agricultural techniques are pretty much the same throughout the county. Regardless of the size of operating unit or the degree of mechanization, the seasons, the fertility of the soil, and the topography of the land set limits within which all farmers much operate. These limits dictate emphasis upon the production of livestock rather than upon cash crops. Yields from cash grain crops are too

<sup>10</sup>Popularly known as the AAA.



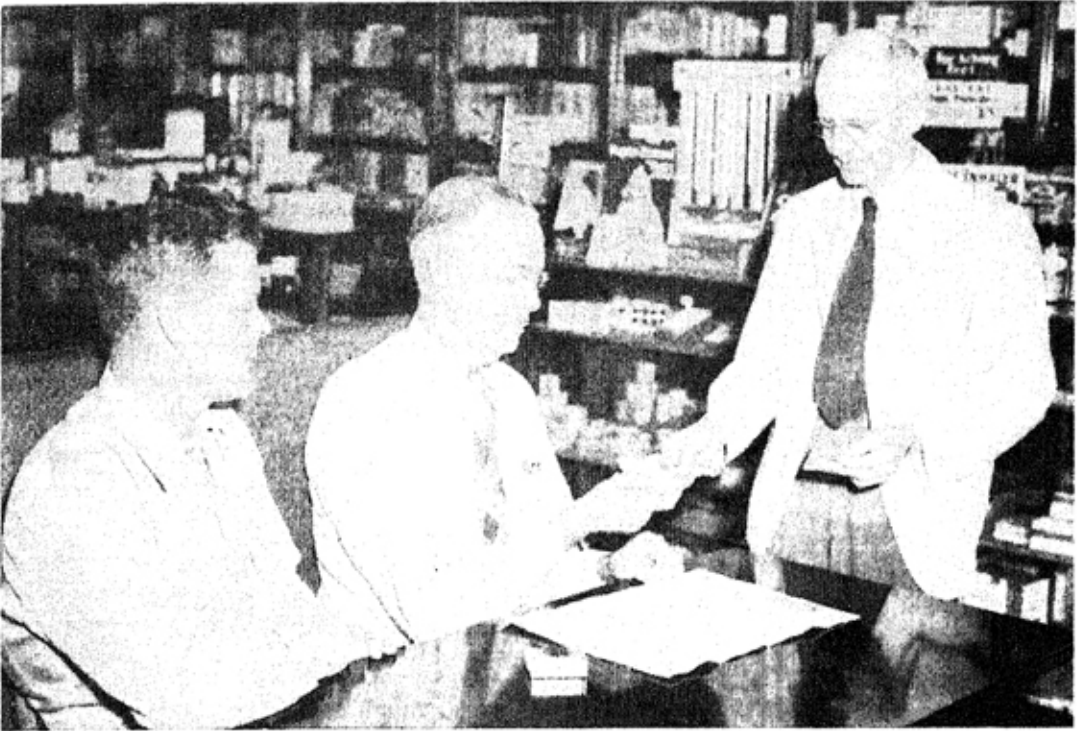


Fig. 1.—Farmers and businessmen work together in Dent County to promote agricultural education. Here C. M. Douglas (center), secretary of the Salem and Dent County Chamber of Commerce, accepts a gift of \$47 from L. D. Vandivort (right), Salem druggist, while County Agent C. M. Christy looks on. The gift became part of a fund which sent several Dent County farm people to Farm and Home Week at the University in Columbia.

small for even the large operator to go in for this type of farming on a commercial basis. The large amount of farm land necessary for pasture in raising livestock makes it impossible to produce all the feed required and the area must depend upon outside sources to make up this feed deficit.

Within these broad limitations there is considerable range in techniques of farming. Some farmers follow the traditional methods handed down by their ancestors, others, the latest scientific practices. Terracing and contour farming will be practiced on one farm, while on an adjoining farm steeper slopes are plowed up and down the hill. A farmer may follow terrace and contour farming, a balanced pasture and livestock plan, yet at the same time use scrub breeding stock and traditional feeding practices. However, there is little indictment on the part of farmers of the practices followed by their neighbors or friends. Desirous of following their own inclinations, they respect the same feeling in others.

To a large proportion of farm families a good farmer is one who does well on the type of farm he operates and a poor farmer is one who does not make the best of his opportunities. Hence, there are good and poor farmers among the commercial, general, and subsistence farmers. There is a recognition of the success obtained by the larger farmers in the area, but this judgment of success is predicated upon the size of his operations and the results are "sort of expected." There is little evidence of envy among the

smaller operators of the success of the larger operators. If it were possible, many would like to farm on a larger scale, but recognizing that such a situation is not possible, they try to do the best they can with what they have.

**Building and Equipment.** The amount and type of equipment—machines, tools, farm buildings—found on Dent County farms varies tremendously. Some farms are well equipped, always having the proper machine or tool or building for each farming operation. Others have only part of the essentials and must borrow or depend upon custom work to carry out the operation for which they are not equipped, or devise some makeshift to meet the situation. In the latter, many farmers in the area have proven themselves to be quite adept. The amount and type of equipment depends largely upon the farm income over a period of years—to enable the farmer to save money or to establish credit—and the type of farming in which the operator is engaged.

In general, the farmers in the commercial group have more equipment than the general farmers and the general farmers more equipment than the subsistence farmers. Many in the subsistence groups are almost hoe farmers. In addition to their hoes, they probably have a one-horse breaking plow, a one-horse cultivator, a harrow or drag, a one-row corn planter, a wagon, and incidental equipment necessary to carry on a minimum of farming operations. The commercial farmers will have a tractor—perhaps two—power equipment, breaking plows and cultivators, a disc and harrow, a binder, a couple of wagons, and all the many minor tools to carry out the farm program. In between these extremes there are many variations in the amount and type of equipment to be found upon a farm.

For power the subsistence farmer and a large portion of the general farmers depend upon horses or mules or both. Even on commercial farms animal power is still generally indispensable and one or more teams are available for various jobs. In 1945, the average farm in the county had two horses or mules.<sup>11</sup> There has, however, been a considerable increase in the use of power machinery in the area during recent years. The number of farmers owning tractors had increased to 120 in 1945, whereas in 1940 only 51 farms were reported as having these machines.<sup>12</sup> High farm prices for farm products have made it possible for many farmers to afford power machinery for the first time. Tractors, with breaking plows and cultivating equipment, hay balers, and combines have been the most common additions. Many farmers have constructed or purchased buck rakes. A large part of this increased mechanization has come as the result of the increased demand for custom work brought on by the shortage of farm labor in the county during the war years.

As with farm machinery, the amount and type of farm buildings found on Dent County farms also varies a great deal. In addition to the dwelling, practically all operating units have a barn and some sort of house for chick-

<sup>11</sup>U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1945.

<sup>12</sup>U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1945, U. S. Census of Population, 1940.



ens. To this minimum may be added tool sheds, grain bins, cattle sheds, and machine sheds, in many combinations and sizes. Barns and sheds may be loose board affairs, or they may be air-tight buildings constructed for a definite use and containing easily opened, tight-fitting doors and windows and electric lights.

**Marketing Practices.** When a farmer in the area gets ready to sell his livestock, he makes arrangement with a local trucker to pick up the stock and truck it to the St. Louis market. From the radio, from the newspaper, from gossip and conversation, he makes a decision that now is the best time to sell: he needs the cash; the price is good or getting ready to decline; the weight and condition of the animals is about the best he thinks he can get them. If he does not have a full load of stock, the trucker will hold him off until there is another part load from another farm close by ready for market.

Farmers may also sell some of their livestock at the community sale held in Salem on Tuesdays, and frequently they buy as well. The sale is conducted on an auction basis and in part becomes a game in which many farmers look forward to participating. Stakes in this game are not only the purchase or sale of a pig, a cow, or perhaps a mule or horse, but a matching of wits with one's friends or neighbors, and an exhibition of shrewdness of judgment as to value of a particular animal. Here, too, he exchanges ideas on care of stock, on farm practices—sometimes through bragging and tall stories in which successes are magnified and failures minimized; sometimes, not often, through understatement and modesty.

If he is interested in improving the quality of his herds—the personnel of the agricultural agencies serving the county and farm leaders are constantly advocating improvement of livestock—he may attend a local sale of the Registered Beef Cattle Association to purchase some of the quality beef cattle which members have placed on sale. Or he may go to purebred livestock sales, of both hogs and cattle, held frequently throughout the Ozark area and all over the State of Missouri. On the other hand, he and his friends may be members of the Registered Beef Cattle Association or raise registered hogs which they sell at the various public sales. Many marketing transactions not only of livestock but other farm items take place on a private exchange or sale basis. All the marketing practices described above are used interchangeably by Dent Countians. Many farm operators take considerable pride in figuring out the best market for themselves—at least what they think is the best market.

To supplement the feed they produce themselves, the farmers depend largely upon the local feed stores or exchanges. Here they market most of their surplus farm produce, particularly eggs and milk. Almost all of the general stores throughout the county handle feed and buy what their patrons have to sell. In Salem, the exchanges and feed stores are prepared to serve farmers from all over the area. Much of their business is done on Saturday or Tuesday when farm families come to Salem for other things, as well as to trade. One exchange, operated by the Dent County Farmers'

Association, is organized on a cooperative basis.<sup>13</sup> In recent years approximately three-fourths of the farmers in the county have received patronage dividends on their purchases made during the year. Some farmers sell their milk to a cheese factory located in Salem which markets its products outside the county.

**Credit.** To operate his farm, a man may have the necessary capital in his own right—savings from net income which he has accrued over a period of years, money earned in off-the-farm employment, or a stake which he has inherited from his family. From 1940-1945 with production at a high level, with farm prices at a high peak, and in the face of an ever increasing demand for farm goods, more and more farmers have been able to accumulate sufficient money to finance their own operations.<sup>14</sup>

But if he needs help to finance his farm business, there are several sources of credit available to him. He may go to his friend for a loan of a few dollars or a thousand or so. Security and terms are private matters. Perhaps, he may choose to deal with a bank, where if he shows himself to be a good risk he can get all the money he needs or desires. Interest rates are likely to be somewhat higher than exacted on a loan by a private individual. Dad or his brother may let him have a couple of hundred dollars without interest. Or he may choose to deal with the local Production Credit Association which maintains an office in Salem. From this agency he can get the money on his loan as needed and pay interest on only what he has received. Should he, however, be unable to secure a loan from any of these sources, he can apply to the Farmers Home Administration for help. After investigation by the Supervisor for the agency, he may be recommended for the loan to the county FHA Committee and, if favorably passed upon, he is granted the loan. Use of this loan must be in accordance with a farm plan worked out in advance and under the supervision of the FHA personnel.

**Exchange of Labor.** If outside assistance is needed to get their work done, the farmers depend upon hiring labor or exchange of work. Exchange of work has always been common and popular, particularly during the hay harvest and corn picking seasons. Since the outbreak of World War II and the resultant shortage of labor available for hire as needed, the practice of exchanging work to get everything done for every farmer has increased. Usually the exchange takes place among near neighbors whether related or not. Often the exchange is in terms of machine work for horse-power or manual labor. A farmer owning a tractor may plow the fields of his neighbor who does not own a tractor in return for so many days of labor during the hay or grain harvest season or at some other time mutually agreed upon. Patterns of exchange vary from section to section but are carefully understood by those who engage in this practice. An appreciable proportion of custom work is done on an exchange of labor basis rather than a cash basis.

<sup>13</sup>This exchange is affiliated with the Missouri Farmers' Association.

<sup>14</sup>Local banks report a 2-3-fold increase in the demand deposits of farm people 1940-1945, and a 75-100 per cent increase in time deposits.

**Yearly Cycle of Activity.** The farming business, making a living on the farm, dictates many of the yearly tasks of farm people in Dent County. The growing season of various crops, the habits of livestock, the whims of climate force close attention to the duties at hand. Mistakes, or missed opportunities, often have serious consequences. The failure to attend to many farm tasks at the proper time, or to stay with the job until it is completed, courts disaster in terms of loss or partial failure of crops, poor return on livestock, loss of soil fertility and lowered income.

For a vast majority of the farm families of all types there are four major segments to their yearly cycles of activities: (1) the slack winter months; (2) the busy planting and harvest months; (3) the slack time between hay-grain harvest and corn husking; and (4) the relatively busy corn husking season. During the winter months from December until the middle of March, care of livestock, odd jobs, and preparation for spring planting take up most of the time of the farmer on the farm. Other than care of livestock, no activity is really demanding upon his time. If other members of the family are available for these tasks, the operator may secure off-the-farm employment.

From the middle of March until the end of July the tempo of activity increases, reaching its climax in June and July during hay-grain harvesting, mostly of hay. This period is followed by a lull during August and September, occupied by the care of livestock, fall plowing and planting, but again not too demanding upon the time of the farmer. October and November activities center around corn husking which is done from the row and shock. Prior to the war, most farmers made strenuous effort to get corn husking done within a period of two or three weeks, often hiring supplementary labor to accomplish this end. As labor became scarce, many farmers made a discovery that corn husking could be spread over a much longer period of time than they formerly thought possible without loss of value of corn. Necessity broke a traditional custom.

**Influence of Custom and Tradition.** Tradition and custom exert a potent influence upon agricultural practices. In the routines of making a living, successful adjustments of the past are repeated over and over. In many cases the original pattern was not too successful when viewed in the long run. Take the production of corn and small grains, for example. The fertility and the texture of the soil cover and the topography of the land make the area more suitable to livestock farming than grain farming. Yet from the days of earliest settlement corn and small grains have been grown even though both the immediate and long-time results have been most unsatisfactory. Yields have been low and much damage has been done to the soil. Most of the commercial farmers and many of the general farmers, even a few of the subsistence farmers, follow some of the latest available knowledge relative to sound agricultural practice. But reliance upon traditional ways of doing things is still strong. Often a farmer will adopt a sound scientific agricultural practice, only to offset it by performing a compensating practice the way "pa showed me how." Since the typical farmer in all groups has a strong feeling of individualism, changes in prac-

tice are often slow in taking place. Many farmers acquiesce to the value of a new method only to continue with the old. Changes occur only when the operator is convinced that the new way is best. In this respect, years of custom, heritage, and tradition weigh heavily in the scales against "book" knowledge of scientific agricultural practices.

### B. In Business and Industry

In contrast to those employed in agriculture, those employed in non-agricultural occupations make their living by providing services for the families and individuals living in the county. The only exceptions are those employed by the small manufacturing concerns located in the area. Although more breadwinners make their living in the business of farming than in any other specific type of enterprise, over one-half of the employed workers were engaged in nonfarm work in 1939.<sup>15</sup> Since that time the proportion in nonfarm jobs has increased materially as many persons not normally in the non-agricultural labor force have secured employment in business and industry, in stores, in the timber industry, teaching school, in the local apparel factory, in domestic and personal services, driving trucks, and in building trades. Most of those working in business and industry are employed within the county, although a large number of persons hold jobs in St. Louis and other industrial centers. Many individuals working outside the area continue to maintain their residences in the county, returning home on weekends or on vacations between jobs.

**Types of Nonfarm Work.** In 1939,<sup>16</sup> there were 14 manufacturing establishments operating in Dent County. With the exception of the garment factory and the three largest lumber mills, most of these concerns were small both in number of persons employed and volume of business. Six were engaged in the production of food and kindred products, one in apparel products (the garment factory operated by the Eli Walker Company), five produced lumber and basic timber products, and two were in the printing business (the *Salem News* and *Salem Post*, both of which published weekly newspapers.) These 14 manufacturers employed an average of 254 persons who were paid approximately \$126,000 in wages during the year.<sup>17</sup> The value of the products which were manufactured slightly exceeded \$721,000, of which \$316,000 (about two-fifths) represented the value added through manufacture.<sup>18</sup>

In purchasing foods, drugs, clothes, gasoline, furniture, the myriad of items that are necessary or seem necessary to daily living, the residents of the county patronized 212 retail stores to the extent of more than two million dollars worth of business.<sup>19</sup> Most of the general stores in the open country had filling stations in connection; filling stations were owned by restaurant operators; feed stores were combined with grocery stores. Slightly less than one-half of the retail stores listed (46.6 per cent) were located

<sup>15</sup>Of the total number of persons in the county 14 years of age and over employed, excluding those on public works, 47.4 per cent were engaged in agriculture.

<sup>16</sup>U. S. Census 1940: Manufactures, Table 2.

<sup>17</sup>U. S. Census 1940: Manufactures, Table 2.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>U. S. Census 1940: Business—Retail Trade, Table 15.

in Salem, but these accounted for more than four-fifths of the dollar volume of sales. These retail stores were supplied in part by 12 wholesale houses in the area which had gross sales of \$657,000 in 1939.<sup>20</sup> Many of the wholesale firms were also engaged in retail trade. For services—movies, recreational facilities, beauty parlors, barber shops, personal services—the residents of Dent County patronized 72 service establishments which took in \$114,000 in receipts during 1939.<sup>21</sup> A large number of these service establishments were connected with or were a part of the retail stores.

**Changes in Services Offered.** The number of establishments in which those making a living in non-agricultural pursuits were employed increased from 1900 to 1930.<sup>22</sup> With the depression, many of the smaller businesses in the county were forced to cease operations and hence the number of establishments declined between 1930 and 1935. From 1935 to 1940 as the county partially recovered economically there was an increase which more than made up for the decrease during the previous five years. During the war years, however, many establishments were closed as the proprietors and sales help entered the armed services, secured other employment, or else did not have sufficient business to maintain profitable operations.<sup>23</sup> During the 45-year period, 1900-1945, Salem has strengthened its position as the location of the business and industrial establishments serving the area. While other places have remained stationary or declined in terms of the number of establishments, Salem has grown. In 1910, one-half of the various businesses serving the county were located in Salem; in 1945, almost four-fifths were situated in the county seat.

**Major Types of Employment.** Most of the persons who made a living in non-agricultural pursuits in 1939 were employed in services, retail trade, timber, manufacturing, construction, or transportation.<sup>24</sup> Nine of every ten workers held jobs in establishments classified in these groups. One of three was in services, two of ten were in retail trade, one of nine in timber, one of eight in manufacturing, and one of sixteen in either construction or transportation. The pattern of employment was somewhat different for males than for females. Approximately four-fifths of the men were employed in timber, retail trade, services, construction and transportation, while more than 95 per cent of the women worked in services, retail trade, and manufacturing. More than one-half of the women held service jobs.

Today the picture is somewhat different. Employment in manufacturing, transportation, construction, and timber has increased. In services there has been a slight decrease, while employment in retail trade has done well to hold its own. Beginning with the construction of Fort Leonard Wood some 55-60 miles to the northwest late in 1940, many of the local people found jobs at good wages outside the county. After the Fort was completed it was easy to move on to other construction jobs—as carpenters,

<sup>20</sup>U. S. Census 1940: Business—Wholesale Trade, Table 13.

<sup>21</sup>U. S. Census 1940: Business—Service Establishments.

<sup>22</sup>Data from Dun and Bradstreet, 1900 to 1945.

<sup>23</sup>Some establishments closed, too, because they could not secure goods for sale or were drastically curtailed by rationing restrictions.

<sup>24</sup>Basic data from the U. S. Census, 1940.



truck drivers, foremen, cement workers. Early in 1941, the movement of residents from the county into industrial employment in St. Louis and other metropolitan centers increased in momentum. Many men and women who were employed in service and retail jobs in the area, even some of those in manufacturing and timber, quit for better paying opportunities in the large urban centers. Locally, with the coming of World War II, the timber and manufacturing industries sought additional labor. With war contracts on hand, wages increased and attracted many persons from other non-agricultural industries, from the farms, and from other sources heretofore not in the labor force. Retail trade stores came to be operated by small sales staffs and services were curtailed as employees sought higher wages. Of course, many of the male wage earners in the younger age groups not engaged in occupations classified as essential to the war effort were drafted into the armed services.

**Wages and Earnings.** Most of the persons making a living through employment in business and industry (including services) work for wages, fees, or salary. Less than one in six employed in 1939 were proprietors whose income depended upon the profits of the enterprise which they owned and operated. About one-half of the wage earners worked at skilled and semi-skilled jobs.

Prior to the outbreak of the war, the individuals employed in business and industry—in manufacturing, in retail trade, in wholesale trade, in service—received a higher income from wages than the persons engaged in agriculture. Those working in retail trade establishments in 1939 received more income from wages than was paid to the workers in any other major industrial group, while employees in services received the smallest income. For every 100 dollars received in wages by the persons employed in agriculture, those in retail trade received 187 dollars, those in manufacturing, 143 dollars, in wholesale trade, 136 dollars, and those in services received 120 dollars. The differentials between the business and industrial groups were due in part to the differences in wage rates and in part to the employment patterns common to the area. In retail trade the employment was more steady and continuous than in manufacturing, wholesale trade, and services. Not only was employment in the service industry somewhat fluid and unstable, depending upon the demands of the consumers of these services at the particular moment, but many service employees received certain perquisites in addition to the wages paid to them. In manufacturing many employees did not work a sufficient length of time to advance to a higher wage rate.

During the war, income from wages in agriculture, as the result of the rise in prices of farm products and the high level of productivity, increased much more rapidly than did income from wages paid for non-agricultural employment in the area. In 1945 for every 100 dollars in wages paid in agriculture, manufacturing paid only 90 dollars, retail trade paid 112 dollars, wholesale 89 dollars, and services 80 dollars. Thus it was more profitable from the standpoint of wage income to be engaged in agriculture than in other types of employment with the exception of retail trade.

By going to St. Louis to work either in 1939 or 1945, wage income for

both agricultural workers and non-agricultural wage earners employed in the county could be materially increased. In 1939, a farm worker could receive three and one-third as much wage income from having a job in manufacturing in St. Louis as he could as an agricultural worker who remained in the county. If he secured a job in services or retail trade in the metropolitan center, his wage income would have increased about two-fold. The fortunate individual landing a job in wholesale would have received five times as much in wages as a Dent County agricultural worker. Although relative differences between agricultural wages and non-agricultural wages in St. Louis were somewhat less in 1945, wage earnings were still much higher in the city than on the farms of the area. For every 100 dollars in wage income in agriculture in the county, St. Louis manufacturing establishments paid 272 dollars, retail trade 181 dollars, wholesale trade 334 dollars and services 193. Small wonder that the young people look to St. Louis as the place to go to make "good" money.

But those who make a living from non-agricultural employment are not all employed as wage earners in manufacturing, retail trade, wholesale trade, or services. Many work for fees and salary, others are proprietors of business establishments of one kind or another. Among them are schoolteachers, physicians, lawyers, dentists, professional agricultural personnel, and salaried managers of business establishments. Most of the persons employed on salary or fee basis have a higher income than those working for wages. Proprietors of the larger concerns in the county rank at the top in terms of income from business or industry (exclusive of investments and other sources of outside income). Proprietors of the many smaller business establishments rank above a majority of the wage earners, but below those who work on a salary or for fees, particularly those who are employed in Salem. Salaried workers, except schoolteachers, paid wholly or in part from non-local funds, receive higher incomes from salary source, on the average, than those whose salaries come entirely from local sources.

**The Personal Element.** In making a living in business and industry in the local area, the human element, the personal touch, looms large. Most of the establishments are comparatively small so that it is possible for employees to have a personal as well as a business relationship. Except on certain days such as Saturday and Tuesday afternoons when the farm people flock to town, the employees in many stores have a great deal of time on their hands which they utilize in part by talking with each other or with customers or with those who have dropped in to visit. Since most of the persons engaged in non-agricultural employment are local people who have lived in the county practically all of their lives, their experiences have been largely developed in common. Many employees (a majority of whom are women) of the apparel factory live in the same rooming houses, come from the same section of the county or town, often take their meals together. Working together, living together, eating together, they develop little in-groups, membership in which depends largely upon place of employment. Outside of Salem, most of the concerns are operated by the owner alone with some occasional help from members of his family.



Since the patrons of business and industry are mostly Dent Countians, they usually become well known by the sales force. On coming into the place of business they are greeted by their names, sometimes by first name or nickname, depending upon the degree of intimacy that has been established. Time is spent not only in making a sale but in passing the time of day or in exchanging the latest gossip. After the purchase is made the customer may linger on for any length of time after the store opens until it closes, which in rural areas is from early morn 'til late at night.

In a majority of the business and industrial establishments the owners take a real part in conducting the business—in management, in contacting the patrons, in doing actual work such as selling a suit of clothes or a pair of gloves, loading a bag of chicken feed, serving a meal in a restaurant. In 1939 in 296 unincorporated retail, wholesale, and service establishments, there were 298 active proprietors. Such a situation brings the owner into close touch with his employees and enables him to serve his patrons on a personal basis. For many individuals this is a most desirable situation. Where the owner waits on the customer, there he can make the best buy.

With these personal relationships between sales staff and patrons, arrangement and order in many business establishments is of secondary consideration. This is particularly true among the general stores in the open country. In the larger stores in Salem, especially in the department stores, stocks are arranged and order and records kept much after the fashion of business concerns in large urban areas. But where the proprietor is also the only salesman, what need is there for strict attention to order and arrangement of goods when he can remember where things are. Besides, part of the enjoyment of the purchase may be the little game of hunting for the article requested, with the potential customer joining in the search. Handling of goods, on shelves, on tables, in boxes is within the rights of patrons in most establishments, almost to the point of self-service. Few owners or sales clerks expect the customers to rearrange articles in their original positions.

And because of the personal touch, many retail establishments carry a wide variety of items. Sometimes these varieties are carried in response to consumer demands but often they are minor sidelines handled for convenience of customers or bought from a high pressure salesman. In the general stores in the open country, and to a certain extent in Salem, are found a conglomeration of almost everything the residents need to eat, wear, and use—at least the basic essentials. Candy, long black licorice sticks, keep company with tobacco, aspirin, or letter writing sundries. Cotton goods may be piled on a keg of nails. Shoes and boots may be out of boxes near the canned goods, while overalls and dress shirts are piled neatly upon shelves. In the center of the store, or some other location where people can get around it, stands the stove, symbol of the friendliness of the store, focal point of group discussions, arguments, and tall tales. In some place there will probably be a refrigerator, usually mechanical, for cooling soft drinks and keeping smoked meats and cheese. Bakery bread, often the fastest moving item in the store, will be piled in a convenient location with-

in easy access to patrons and clerks alike. Possibly, too, a small cage in one corner will carry a sign: U. S. Post Office, where many people make regular trips to pick up letters from relatives and friends, circulars, magazines, the widely read weekly newspapers, and the ever present franked envelopes carrying information from the various governmental agencies serving Dent County.

It is not uncommon for wage earners to have more than one job in order to accumulate a satisfactory income. Many who are regularly employed do odd jobs during their time off from regular duties. This is particularly true of farm residents during normal times. In 1939 about one-third of the farm operators worked off the farm an average of 130 days. Much of this work is in nonfarm occupations. Not only do farm operators work off the farm, but surplus members of the farm family seek outside employment. Nonfarm employment frequently provides the needed cash income to keep the farm family solvent. From this point of view, the period of employment may be of relatively short duration—work a while, accumulate the needed amount of cash, go back to the farm for a while. As this off-farm employment is often an economic necessity, it is regarded as a normal practice. Even during the war years when the farm labor situation was tight, there did not seem to be any antagonism toward farm people securing nonfarm jobs.

To get a start in life, to search for adventure, to follow the accepted customs, youth from Dent County, especially young men, migrate to St. Louis and other places in their search of employment. The county produces far more children than are necessary to replace the population, and farm and nonfarm employment opportunities are limited, so that it is necessary for many persons to go outside the area for jobs. Even if a job is available in the county, the bright lights of the city, the high wages, and many other so-called advantages pull youth and others for at least short periods of time. Many of the persons securing outside nonfarm employment come into contact with labor unions for the first time, for no labor unions operate within Dent County. Few who are required to join a union in order to hold a job rebel at the idea. Those who join unions in St. Louis or other places do not bring home much "union" feeling upon their return to the county.

### III. FAMILY LIFE

For the residents of Dent County the family is the most important group in which they have membership. This is more particularly true in the open country but still holds good for Salem. In both areas, the family is quite frequently the only group in which both adults and children have a common experience. As a result of this situation, the family has the responsibility of providing for its members a multitude of things—from informal education to recreation, from religious attitudes to habits of dress—which are ordinarily found, in part at least, in experiences outside the family.

**Homes and Their Conveniences.** Home for the families of Dent County, where they spend a large portion of their time, working or resting, may

be a house of unfinished lumber, a finished lumber frame house, a brick house, a stone house (usually of native stone) or a log cabin. Houses of unfinished or finished lumber are most common to the area. Local timber is frequently used in their construction. Brick and stone houses are few and are found mostly in Salem. Each occupied home in the county houses an average of 3.7 persons. More persons live in homes in the rural-nonfarm sections of the area than in Salem or on the farms. Yet in most houses there are sufficient rooms to prevent overcrowding. Only one in six of the occupied dwellings in the county have 1.5 persons or more per room; in the open country the ratio is about one in ten.<sup>25</sup>

Most of the ultra-modern homes are located in Salem. But even in Salem, as well as in the other sections of the area, many of the homes are without certain conveniences of living. Approximately two homes in three depend upon kerosene or oil lamps to provide light, since only 35.1 per cent of the homes have electricity. In availability of this utility Salem has a decided advantage over the remainder of the county. Because of a municipally-owned power plant, more than nine out of ten homes have electricity. REA lines have come into the area, servicing only about 10 per cent of the rural homes. Most of them are in the central and western part of the county where dwellings are not too distant from each other and the topography is not too hilly.

As would be expected in an area where timber abounds, wood is the chief source of fuel for cooking and also the main supplier of heat for the houses. Three-fourths of the homes use wood for cooking. In Salem the proportion is smaller, as more families use oil or kerosene or artificial gas which is available in individual tanks. In burning wood for heat, stoves are used. Fewer than one in 20 families has furnace heat and most of these are located in Salem where the ratio is one in 10. In the open country, only 26 homes are heated by furnaces. Wood furnaces are more common than coal furnaces.

Around the kitchen stove and the living room stove family life revolves during the fall and winter months, in the rural areas particularly and to a lesser extent in Salem. In many families the kitchen stove is far more important than the living room stove. Around the stove younger members of the family dress on especially cold mornings. Around the stove the family sits to read, listen to the radio, converse, doze, "toast" their feet, take their Saturday night bath, or day dream. Near the stove the meals are eaten, and when visitors arrive room is made so that they may pull their chairs near the heat. The stove is the focus of daytime activities within the house.

Most of the families in Dent County carry water for their personal use. Fewer than one in four homes has water piped into the dwelling. Salem houses are much more convenient in this respect than those in the open country. In Salem seven in 10 have running water in the house; on farms, only one in 50. Two related household conveniences are also conspicuous

<sup>25</sup>U. S. Census 1940: Housing, Vol. I, Tables 5 and 6.

by their absence—inside toilets and bathrooms. These facilities are found in one-half of the city homes but in just two per cent of the farm residences.

Some means of preserving perishable foods is possessed by three of every five families, although only one in 10 uses mechanical refrigeration. Urban families use refrigeration much more than do rural families. Only one-third of the city homes lack refrigeration facilities as compared with approximately two-thirds on farms.

By use of the radio, three-fifths of the families in Dent County can keep up with daily news, serial stories, jive, educational programs. Slightly more than one-half of the farm homes have this important mechanism of communication as compared with four-fifths in Salem. Yet many farm families make more effective use of their radios in relation to daily activities than do urban families. Daily market reports and weather forecasts enable the farm people to plan their activities to fit predicted conditions.

Families living in Salem are much more favorably situated for social contacts than those living in rural areas. Neighbors are next door, across a lot 20 to 200 feet away, not one-half to two or five miles distant. The stores, the churches, the schools, the movies, doctors, lawyers, are close at hand. In rural areas cultural contacts depend not only upon the desire for such contacts but the facilities to take advantage of them. In this, the telephone, the automobile, and the type of road on which the farm home is located play an important role. Approximately two-thirds of the farm families possess an automobile to use as transportation and about one in three live on all-weather roads. The road situation, however, is much better than this proportion indicates. Many of the unimproved or dirt roads have a high rock content that makes them passable except in the worst kind of weather. Telephones are not widely scattered over the county. Less than one-third of the farm homes have this service available, and often the service is only a branch country line connecting a few families, offering no connections with the outside.

Typical room arrangement in the homes of Dent County where family life, the important life for the people, is lived consists of kitchen, dining room, living room, and two or more bedrooms. Except in the older houses, the parlor has largely disappeared. Often the kitchen and dining room are combined into one room, and frequently there may be a pantry or storage space off the kitchen. Few of the old-fashioned houses contain much closet space, the custom being to hang clothes and other items in the open or in cabinets made or purchased especially for them. Basements, too, are uncommon. The furniture within the homes is usually old, both in years and design, and possibly secondhand. Matching items in the dining room, living room, or bedrooms are found rarely in rural homes and not too frequently in Salem. Only the more well-to-do and the younger urban residents feel that matching furniture is a necessity; to most families furniture has only a practical physical use. Items are not replaced until worn out or broken, and new furniture is added only to meet the increased demands of a larger family. Auction sales give many a young couple a good start with the minimum essentials to set up housekeeping for themselves and

their expected company. Often older residents withhold bids to "give the young folks a chance to get it." Wallpaper, too, has a functional usage; design and blending qualities with the floor covering are secondary considerations. Paint is frequently used as a satisfactory substitute for paper. Floors may be bare or partially covered by a few throw rugs which are often handmade, but generally there is some type of over-all covering used. Farm families use linoleum extensively, not only in the kitchen but in other rooms as well. The comparatively low cost price and ease of cleaning makes this material particularly attractive to the farm homemaker. In Salem, rugs are more widely used in the middle and upper income houses, with linoleum the favorite among the lower income groups. Windows and doors are usually screened, most often by wire though occasionally the windows may be covered by mosquito netting.

In the farm areas the home is some distance from the remaining buildings, the barn and sheds, which are usually grouped into one cluster. Throughout the area the house is given care at least equal to that of any other building in possession of the family, such as barn, shed or garage. In most cases, the care of the home far exceeds that of any other building. Some of the smaller homes made of unfinished lumber are never painted during the lifetime of the building, but most of the frame homes have received a coat of paint at some time or other. Many homes, however, need repairs—one-half were reported in need of major repairs in 1940—but such repairs are usually postponed until it is impossible to avoid them longer.

To these homes, large and small, old and new, the families of Dent County have a strong attachment. A little more than one-half of the families in the county have lived in the same place 15 years or more. The farm families are much more stable as to residence than those living in Salem. One-half of those in the open country have been in their present location a minimum of 25 years, while in Salem about three out of five have lived in the present residence less than 10 years, 25 per cent making five or more moves. In the open country approximately one-half had not moved in 10 years and one-third had made only one move. Most of the families in the county have resided in the county for the duration of their lifetime. Movement for farm families means moving from one farm to another in the same neighborhood or section of the county. Movement for the Salem residents involves change of residence in the town.

**Food.** Variety may sometimes be lacking, quality may fall below par, but there is usually sufficient quantity—in prosperity and in depression, among the poor and the rich, in the city and in the country—to more than satisfy the hunger of members of the family. Vegetables and meat are the main items in the diet. The main vegetable, the potato, is basic to most of the meals, particularly for farm families. Other common vegetables are lettuce, radishes, tomatoes, onions, turnips, beets, cabbage, peas, beans and corn. Pork and beef are the staple meats, supplemented by poultry and wild game and fish procured during the hunting and fishing season. Eggs are also extensively used as a meat supplement. For fruits the families depend upon tree fruits, usually peaches, apples, cherries, and plums, upon



home-grown strawberries, and upon wild blackberries and raspberries.

Vegetables are grown largely by the families themselves. Gardens are a matter of considerable pride in both Salem and the open country. In part, family prestige is determined by the success of its garden, measured by the care given to it and the extent to which the produce meets the yearly needs of the family for vegetables. In 1944, seven of every eight families in the county had a vegetable garden and three of every five were producing all the vegetables they planned to use. Garden production is more extensive in the open country than in Salem. Four-fifths of the farm families produced all their vegetables, while a little more than two-fifths of the city families produced none. In both Salem and the rural areas vegetables are canned extensively, under both old and new methods. One of the most significant developments in adult education in the county has been the growth in use of modern scientific canning methods by farm and city homemakers. All members of the family work in the garden, although after the garden is readied for planting, the woman of the house assumes major responsibility, particularly for the vegetables, such as peas, beans, lettuce, radishes, and cabbage. The men and boys help with corn and potatoes.

Home production of meat is not as extensive as the production of vegetables. In Salem the lack of facilities for fattening livestock or for butchering precludes such activity. In the country home meat production is largely confined to pork. Beef is too difficult to butcher without considerable outside help and requires experience. The large amount of meat available when a beef is killed without proper storage facilities makes it impossible to consume it all without risk of spoilage. In 1944, only one in 10 Salem families produced meat at home and then one-half or less of the total amount used by the family. On the other hand, three-fourths of the farm families produced all their meat. Butchering is the man's job, but care of the meat is divided. Curing belongs to the man, canning to the woman.

For staples—flour, sugar, salt, all the various items—both city and rural families depend upon local stores. Bread making by farm families is declining and country stores now frequently report bread as the fastest selling article. From the stores, too, the families of the county supplement their meat and vegetable supply produced at home. Fresh vegetables during the winter, uncommon fruits and vegetables for special occasions, fresh meat, if money is "at hand", these items are purchased. If not, the families, both urban and rural, make out with what they have already available and usually in quantity sufficient to satisfy the hungriest member.

**Dress.** Coming into Salem on Saturday when practically all able-bodied members of families from all sections of the county are in town and when most of the Salem residents are also on the streets, a stranger would probably notice the sameness of dress of the people. In Dent County the social function of dress, particularly for adult men, has not been exploited to any great degree. For a man living in the country overalls are the common dress during the week. When going to town, or to a sale, or for a neighborhood visit, he usually goes "as is" or changes to clean clothes. He owns "dress-up" clothes, a suit made of dark cloth, but this suit is worn only on

Sunday to church and at other special times such as funerals and trips outside the county. The homemaker of the country family depends upon dresses of cotton or wool for daily work clothes. Often the wool dress is one that is considerably worn and has been demoted from "dress-up" status to that of an everyday dress. Many women make their own clothes and clothes for children, sometimes using printed cloth of feed bags for material. Like men, women have "dress-up" outfits and wear them much more frequently than do men—to Salem on Saturday, to sales, on visits. Sweaters and jackets are important items of wearing apparel for both men and women living in the country. In Salem, adult men and women dress better than their country cousins in terms of style. Men wear suits, although sometimes the coat and pants do not match. The women wear more stylish clothes—with more color and made more to the latest fashion.

It is youth, however, both urban and rural, that keeps pace with fashion. From magazines, from the radio, from movies, from visits to the city with attendant window shopping trips, from the variety of contacts which they have, the young people of the county attempt to keep up with the latest fads and fancies. Girls are able to do this more than boys. But when the young man gets dressed to go on a date—young people "date" not "court"—he prides himself on being fit for the role he chooses to play. Whether as tough guy with T-shirt, sportsman with jacket and slacks, or suave gentleman in freshly pressed suit, he aims to make an impression or help the girl friend make an impression upon her friends. Through youth, including young married couples, the social function of dress from the outside world is catching hold in the open-country areas of Dent County as well as in Salem.

**Sex Differences.** Social differentiation based upon supposedly inherent sex differences begins almost at birth. From infancy through the "walking" stage, childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age, members of the family are given roles based upon their sex. At an early age boy babies and girl babies are dressed differently, their hair is cut and combed in separate styles. Older members of the family, parents and children both, take different attitudes and behave differently toward infant girls than they do toward infant boys. Boys are permitted to be more active, while disapproved behavior of girls is corrected by the admonition "only little boys do things like that."

As the children grow, this sex division becomes more marked. Boys have their own groups and girls theirs. Attempts of girls to cross into the boys' mean subjection to ridicule and often harsh physical treatment. Boys who join with girls in play groups are teased and jibed by other boys as "sissies" or "panty-waists". In the farm families of the county, chores are assigned to children upon the basis of sex and also age. Boys learn the care of livestock and do small odd jobs around the farm. Girls help with the housework, garden and poultry. Often boys may assist with care of poultry, without loss of face with playmates. This differentiation of tasks continues for older youth on the farm, more and heavier tasks being assigned as the children grow older. Educational programs for farm youth



assume this social division of sexes. In 4-H Club and JFA projects, those dealing with homemaking are undertaken by girls, those with farming, by boys, although some girls do undertake livestock projects. In Salem boys form little play gangs and are fairly free from work activities as compared with boys on farms. Paper routes, odd jobs of mowing lawns and the like, errand or delivery boys, clerking in stores, offer opportunities for work activity and employment. Girls in the Salem families have household tasks assigned in much the same manner as their country cousins, sometimes moving into sales jobs in local stores and employment in the local garment factory as they grow older.

As youth reaches adulthood, woman's domain in both the rural areas and Salem becomes the house, the garden, and the poultry yard, if the family keeps chickens. Here she has the final responsibility in getting the required work completed, of assigning tasks to other members of the family, of seeking their assistance. Here she can assume authority as to when certain tasks should be completed, of what is needed in the way of new equipment, of the necessary changes that should be made. Man's domain on farms is the fields, the barn and other farm buildings, the livestock. Here he is supreme and makes decisions that correspond to those of the farm homemaker in her sphere. In Salem, man's domain is his business or his place of employment where responsibility for making decisions depends upon the authority vested in him. Yet, in over-all family policy, in major issues concerning the welfare of the family—Shall we buy a car? Can we afford a tractor? Shall Bill have his tonsils removed? Can Jane go to St. Louis?—the male head of the family in both the open country and Salem makes the final decision. In most families, democratic discussion of the situation with the particular member of the family affected or with the entire family precedes the decision, but the final say—yes, no, or maybe—belongs to the man of the house.

**Age Differences.** Among the families of Dent County five age groupings are roughly distinguished; babies, children, young people, middle aged, and old people. Each group plays a definite role in family life, each group has certain rights, certain duties, certain responsibilities. Babies are the objects of attention. All older members of the family give time and effort to helping care for the "baby" of the house. The term "baby", however, is sometimes used as a symbol of discipline or disgust; to the little boy who is crying—"quit acting like a baby"; to disapprove behavior of an older child—"a baby wouldn't do that". Children are assigned chores and odd jobs and are expected to be able to exercise some judgment. Just when the individual grows out of the status of being a child varies with the situation. It is easier to grow out of childhood stage in terms of work activities than it is in terms of social and recreational interests. Young people are those out of school, the unmarried employed and the young married couples. Progression from the status of young people to middle age depends upon looks, number of children, duties assumed or delegated, and actual age. Middle age is the most responsible age. At this age family members reach their greatest prestige and exert their greatest influence

over other members. Old people, like babies, are granted privileges not accorded to other members. Deference is shown by action and words, sometimes hurled in jest. Help is accorded when needed or desired.

**Family Responsibilities.** Since family life provides the main source of common experience for the members, the responsibility of the parents is tremendous. To them falls the job of providing the children with training which in many areas is given by groups, agencies, and organizations outside the family. Parents are expected to take care of the children until they are grown, married, or able to make a living. Care includes affection, feeding, clothing, home discipline, and teaching. In both Salem and rural families the mother is more demonstrative in affection toward the children than the father. Fathers have a tendency to show affection through indirect acts such as feeding the stock for the lad on a stormy evening, driving to school for the girl on a rainy afternoon, making countless little sacrifices unknown to any one but themselves. For the father to be openly affectionate toward a child is embarrassing to both. Children are passably dressed, in quality equal to or exceeding that of parents. In large families younger children frequently wear "hand-me-down" clothes from older children. As children grow older they become more clothes conscious—in style, in fit, in color combinations—and are prone to be a little better dressed than the parents, particularly in the farming sections of the county. In all families parents see to it that their children have an adequate and satisfactory amount of food. Often children are permitted to eat as they desire. More than that, parents frequently allot choice morsels—the best piece of meat, the last piece of cake, the largest potato—to their children. On trips to town most rural and Salem kids know that pa or ma is "good for" ice cream, candy bars, peanuts, soda pop—just for the asking or with the right amount of pressure in the form of teasing, crying, pouting, or ranting.

Family discipline is maintained by both parents. To the mother, however, falls the major burden, the task of correcting minor faults and small depredations. The father corrects those which he observes and when called upon the scene in a major breakdown of family procedures. Most of the children regard their fathers as more severe in terms of meting out punishment than their mothers. Deprivation is the most common form of punishment in both rural and Salem families. "If you do that, I won't let you go to the movie," "Since you were disobedient, you can't go out to play."

In terms of the experiences which the average resident of Dent County will have during a lifetime, the informal education received in the family group is of great significance. In family living, the individual learns the customs and traditions of the neighborhood, the expected codes of behavior, the acceptable attitudes, the value of individual freedom, the need for care in judging new ideas or strangers. From family contacts, the individual develops work techniques: how to run a tractor, to plow, to cook, to sew—how to meet customers, how to sell—to be industrious or to just get by—to do things as well as possible or to learn how to let things slide. In family living, the children learn and develop personal traits, the value of honesty, the penalty of dishonesty, control of temper, the importance of clean-

liness, all the traits that stamp them as individual personalities. From family contacts, the individual learns to be satisfied with his role, with his educational opportunities, with the choice of employment opportunities available to him, or develops a yen to seek his fortune in the outside world.

Basically, informal education is the same in a family living in Salem as one in the open country. Minor differences are the result of the daily experiences in living which the families undergo in their respective environments. Parents have greater hold on the children in rural areas than in the city, due to the work activities in which the farm child participates as compared with those available to the city child, activities which are vitally necessary to farm family welfare. City families have close at hand many more group activities in which they may participate—movies, church functions, high school programs, clubs. Farm families of the county are not excluded from these activities; distance makes it impractical to engage in active participation.

**Courtship and Marriage; Birth and Death.** Few young women or young men in the families of Dent County plan on becoming old maids or bachelors. Marriage is the status for which they plan, but some do not succeed in attaining it. On farms, a wife is almost a necessity. "Dating" begins in the middle adolescent years in both the open country and Salem. Some parents object when their children start "running around" with members of the opposite sex at an age they feel to be too young, but most adults regard attraction of a boy and girl for each other at this age as mere "puppy love", not to be taken too seriously. And the young people don't take it too seriously. As youth approach late teens or early 20s, intentions become more serious and marriages occur frequently during these ages. Choice of a mate is chiefly a matter of individual decision. Families may voice personal objections, but if they are able to "go it" on their own, with a minimum of help, no efforts are made to prevent the marriage.

Most families in the county have a strong desire for children, and several at that. Two to four are regarded as a nice number, "enough to make life interesting and help with the work; not so many that you can't provide for them". Most births are attended by a physician or midwife and take place in the home. The trend toward use of a physician for prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care, and having the child born in a hospital is growing, particularly among the Salem families. Birth is a big event in the family—an occasion of celebration, of joyous feeling, especially if the child is the first-born. Relatives and friends send gifts and good wishes come from all around.

Eventually, death occurs and with it comes a feeling of sadness and loss. Members of the family who have left home return, if it is at all possible. Funerals are "dress-up" occasions for the neighborhood, when final homage is paid to the departed and sympathy expressed to those who are living. Practically all deaths are handled by undertakers. In Salem the funeral directors take charge of making all arrangements and the funeral is as frequently held at the funeral parlor as at home or church. Morticians service rural families at time of death, but the funeral is more often held

in the home or neighborhood church so that neighbors, old-time friends, may be able to attend. Mourning is largely an individual family matter. Many observe a certain definite period of mourning, others attempt to get back to normal life as quickly as possible.

**Kinship.** In an area such as Dent County where family residence is stable, many families are related to one another in some manner either by blood or marriage. Unless there is "bad blood" or "trouble" between families, kinship is recognized in both the rural areas and Salem. A place to sleep and a seat at the table can be expected of a relative almost anywhere. Some families take great pride in being able to trace out the exact manner in which they are kin to other families. Familial bonds, however, are not strong beyond the immediate family unless the relative happens to live in close proximity so that daily contacts may be established. Even where the relatives live near one another, the firmest kinship ties are among members of one's own immediate family, particularly between parents and children. Non-related families are often closer to one another than families who are kin one generation removed.

#### IV. GOVERNMENT, EDUCATION AND RELIGION

##### A. Government

The typical Dent Countian does not spend much time in contact with the various local governmental units: county, township, city, school district, special road district. He pays taxes, records deeds, votes for various officials, takes a case to court—participates in the various legal activities of the several units. But these are commonly "once a year" jobs, jobs which do not involve any great amount of time. Yet these local government units are of vital importance to all persons living in the county. They provide the mechanisms through which the local residents comply with the law, through which they are assured of protection of both life and property, and through which they select representatives to carry out their decisions.

**The County.** Dent County as a governmental unit is primarily an agent of the State of Missouri for the administration of state laws. Only secondarily is it an area of local self-government. The form and functions of the local county government, the powers of the officials and the method of their selection are determined by the State. The State also prescribes the maximum rates of property taxation and to a large extent the content of the budget.

The more important functions performed by Dent County are those of property tax administration, election administration, road administration, and law enforcement. Over-all administration is in the hands of the County Court, a body of three elective officials, to which all other county officials are directly or indirectly responsible. The presiding judge of the County Court is elected by the entire county. One of the associate judges is elected by the northern half of the county and the other by the southern half.

The county administers property taxes not only for itself but also for the State and for the local school districts. This is the duty of three elective officials—the assessor, collector, and treasurer. Election administra-

tion is almost entirely in the hands of the county clerk and County Court. To the sheriff, coroner, and prosecuting attorney falls the primary responsibility in the field of crime control. The constables, elected on a civil township basis but having authority throughout the county, are local police officers and also the executive officers of the justice of peace courts.

The court system includes the justice of peace courts, circuit courts, and probate courts. Justice courts handle minor civil cases, try persons accused of minor offenses and afford preliminary hearings for persons accused of more serious offenses. The circuit court for Dent County includes five other counties. This court has general jurisdiction in the district. The probate court is county-wide.

**The City: Salem.** Salem is the only incorporated area in Dent County. Peculiarly, Salem did not grow out of a store or trading center patronized by the early settlers, but was laid out in town plots as the county seat shortly after Dent County was established by the State Legislature in 1851. For almost a decade, Salem functioned solely under the laws of the state and county. By the fall of 1860, however, the town had sufficient population to become incorporated.

The government of Salem differs somewhat from the county government. Salem has the power to make its own laws to supplement the state laws in governing its residents, while the county only carries out the provisions of the state laws. The duties of the city government are performed by the mayor, clerk, collector, and four aldermen, two of whom are selected from each of the two wards into which the city has been divided. All officials are elected to two-year terms. For the protection of life and property of its residents, Salem maintains both police and fire departments. The police department is manned by full-time paid personnel, while the fire department is operated by men who are paid on the basis of the number of calls made and who function only at the time of an alarm. The city school system is under the control of an elected board of education. Certain reports are made to the office of the county superintendent of schools but the Salem schools are not within his jurisdiction.

Salem provides many services for its residents which are not available to those living in the rural sections of Dent County. Electricity is supplied from the municipally-owned light plant. Water, approved by the State Board of Health, is also supplied by the city. Sewage is disposed of through a city-wide system. A large portion of the streets are hard surfaced and the remainder are covered with gravel, making them passable the year round. Through these facilities the Salem residents are able to have conveniences which are denied to the vast majority of rural residents unless they are willing to stand the expense of having their own units. As a result, the city folks have daily use of a multitude of laborsaving devices which tend to make the physical aspects of living a great deal easier, and in many instances provide more leisure time to engage in activities not dictated by or connected with the daily routine of living.

**The Township.** Dent is one of 90 counties in Missouri without township organization. The 12 townships in the county are used as divisions for



election purposes, for the apportionment of jurors, and for the election of two justices of the peace and a constable. As pointed out previously, the jurisdiction of the justices of peace and of the constables is county-wide.

**The Rural School District.** The rural school districts serve not only as the units for providing education in the rural sections of the county, but also as the organizational units for many other activities. County-wide membership drives of the Red Cross, the various salvage programs during the war, and many other activities are usually organized on a school district basis. Experience has shown that this insures the most adequate coverage of the rural sections of Dent County. Boundary lines of school districts are definite and usually well known to both participants and solicitor; the schoolhouse is frequently the most suitable gathering place, if meetings are to be held; and an element of competition between districts can sometimes be introduced if the program has a competitive angle to exploit. However, school district boundaries are not neighborhood or natural grouping boundaries and for many situations are inadequate to secure attendance at meetings or active participation in one form or another.

**The Special Road District.** In addition to the common road districts which are merely administrative boundaries determined by the County Court for the maintenance and supervision of county roads, one Special Road District exists in Dent County. Covering the entire area of Spring Creek township and known as the Spring Creek district, its administration is in the hands of three road commissioners appointed by the County Court. All "county road and bridge" and "special road and bridge" taxes collected from the owners of property within the district must be allocated to the district. The district has no power to levy taxes, but may borrow money for road purposes. Since Salem is within the Spring Creek district, part of the money is spent upon the maintenance of the streets of the city, especially using the equipment to open up the ditches along the unpaved streets. During the past years other sections of the county have maintained Special Road Districts at one time or another, but have dropped the organization on account of inability to finance the maintenance costs or lack of interest in the results which might be obtained.

### B. Education

**Number and Size.** Next to the family the school is probably the most important social institution in the county. In many rural sections the school is the only organized agency and often the schoolhouse is the only available public meeting place for any neighborhood meetings which may be held. During the 1948-49 school year, there were 65 rural and five high school districts operating in the area.<sup>26</sup> Most of the rural schools are small, 63 of the 65 districts operating in one room. Rural schools, too, are run pretty much the way the residents of the various districts and the teachers desire.

<sup>26</sup>One Hundredth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri.

The high school districts contain both grade and secondary schools. To complete a four-year high school course—to become a graduate of a first-class high school—all youth, rural as well as urban, must either attend school in Salem or go outside the county, as Salem maintains the only first-class high school within the area.

**Buildings and Equipment.** The rural districts do not need large buildings to accommodate the pupils who may attend—a one-room school usually has plenty of room to “house” the students. Sixty-three rural schools were manned by one teacher each in the 1948-49 school year and one school employed two teachers. Most of the rural district buildings are of frame construction. Without basements, they are heated by a stove in the center of the room so that whatever warmth it radiates may benefit the maximum number of pupils. Water supply and toilet facilities are outside the school-house. Beyond the texts used in the various classes and supplied by the school district, reference materials include dictionaries, maps, encyclopedias, atlases, and other standard reference books. Such materials are not extensive for there is little room for filing such items. Playground equipment usually consists of swings, slides, and teeter-totters located in the school yard which is also large enough for baseball and other active games. The teacher is the custodian of the school, keeping it clean, building the fire in the mornings and tending to other janitorial chores. Both the elementary school and the high school buildings in Salem are constructed of brick and contain inside toilets and running water. The high school has a gymnasium attached to the main building. The four high school districts of the county employed 33 elementary and high school teachers, 27 of whom taught in the Salem schools.

**Teachers.** In terms of college training the teachers in Salem have better qualifications than those in the rural districts. Rural teachers had an average of one year of college work while 21 of 25 Salem teachers had completed 120 college hours, the equivalent of a four-year course. Most of the school teachers have had considerable teaching experience. One out of every five teachers in the county, in both grade and high school, was teaching for the first time, while 27 per cent in the area had 10 or more years of experience. During the war many teachers who had been out of teaching for some time came back “into the harness” to fill vacancies in many schools. As a result of this situation 50—more than one-half—were working in their present positions for the first time. Salaries of teachers in rural districts were not high in 1948-49 in comparison to the income which a man or woman could earn in other work, particularly in employment outside the county. Salaries of the Salem teachers were somewhat higher. In the rural districts the salaries averaged \$1323 per year for men and \$1190 for women. For Salem the average was \$2325 for men and \$1686 for women in the grade school and \$2445 and \$1880 respectively in the high school.<sup>27</sup> The war forced the salaries of both rural and Salem schools upward.

**Enrollment.** By State law all persons aged 6-19 years inclusive are eli-

<sup>27</sup>Average salary for males in grade school included the salary of the principal who taught in addition to his administrative duties.

gible for free public instruction. In 1948-49 approximately four-fifths of the persons in this age group in the rural school districts of the county and in Salem were enrolled in the public schools, but Salem students were more regular in attendance. In the rural areas three out of four enrolled were in average daily attendance as compared to nine of ten in Salem. Salem pupils were more likely to continue their schooling beyond the eighth grade than those living in the open country. In the rural school districts two-thirds of those graduating from the eighth grade in the spring of 1948 entered high school the following school term. In Salem 96 per cent of this group continued on to school. Part of this difference is due to the relative nearness of a high school to those finishing elementary school in the city as compared with those completing their course in the rural schools. But part is due to the difference in the emphasis placed upon educational training by the urban and rural areas of the county.

**Curricula and Procedures.** The curricula of the one-room schools stick pretty close to the "time tried" fundamentals—reading, writing, and arithmetic. To become proficient in these fundamentals, the pupils are taught such things as Arithmetic, Reading, Spelling, Writing, English, History, and Geography. Under the supervision and guidance of one teacher, little tots have their first school experience, and older boys and girls complete the grade school course, and perhaps end their formal schooling. Recitations are held for one class while other grades study, usually by having that class come to the front of the room. Often two grades in the same course recite together, so that the teacher can hear all subjects in all classes during the day. Of necessity class recitations are of short duration, frequently not more than 10 minutes in length. Sometimes, too, a pupil is given the work of a grade ahead. For example, a fifth grade pupil takes the sixth grade work in order to participate with a larger number of students, then the following year he goes back for the fifth grade work. Little homework is assigned, especially for the older students, who probably have farm chores and other work to do. Besides there is usually plenty of time for all the study that is necessary during the school day.

The morning program is interrupted by a recess period of 15 minutes or longer duration. At noon lunch boxes come forth and the food brought from home is gulped down as quickly as possible so that play activities may be started. Only a very few rural schools operate a hot lunch program. In the afternoon there is another recess period, and then finally the day ends and the pupils start their trek homeward—a half mile, a mile—some hurrying, others loitering.

If the teacher is interested in developing school programs, she provides an important socializing influence for the area. In some districts, the residents look forward to attending school functions as the urban resident in the county seat looks forward to going to the movies. Only one rural district supports an adult group similar to the PTA which is interested in school programs. In the remainder of the areas, the schoolteacher is on her own, receiving advice from the parents and other adults when she makes a direct request for help. And often such requests are misinterpreted.

ed by the local residents as evidence that the teacher is unable to cope with the situation.

In the Salem schools the picture is somewhat different. Each elementary grade is handled by one teacher who gives full time to the students in hearing recitations and supervising study and play. The elementary curriculum contains the same basic subjects as those in the open country, but is enriched by access to a much larger variety of facilities and teaching aids. The high school is operated upon a departmental basis, with the teachers handling subjects rather than the grades. The high school curriculum is fairly typical for cities the size of Salem. Included are such subjects as Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Geography, English, Latin, Vocational Home Economics, and Vocational Agriculture. The Salem schools engage in various extra curricular activities during the year. Each grade and high school class presents at least one program—some of which are open to parents of the children in the grade, others, for which admission is charged, to the public. In addition the high school is represented by a basketball team which plays surrounding schools of similar size.

**As They View Education.** Two types of educational attitudes and values prevail in Dent County. One type pertains to the formal education available in the schools and necessary to help make the youth into capable adults. The other type pertains to the informal education dealing with adjustments to the physical and social environments, handed down from one generation to the next. Of the two classes, Dent Countians probably regard the latter class as the more valuable. Particularly is this true in the rural neighborhoods.

The attitude toward education varies greatly among the residents of the area. Some of the more enlightened and progressive people (not necessarily the "well-to-do"), are constantly working to better their schools. Others are apathetic, believing that the current school situation is good enough for their children. This point of view is based upon their own limited experience, and in the light of this experience an elementary education is all that is necessary.

The educational viewpoint of Dent Countians is also partially reflected by the fact that there are no consolidated districts in the area. Such a proposal meets opposition from the rural sections of the community in the fear that they will lose control of their school. Somehow, the one-room building with all its shortcomings is a symbol of local self-determination and freedom from control outside the neighborhood. Even those who desire better educational opportunities for their children are anxious that control over the local school be retained.

The families of the area take real pride in educating their children in the ways of farming, business, and homemaking. Most youth are well versed in these skills. As with the case of formal schooling, the limiting factor is the experience of the adults. This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. Where family customs are as strong as they are in this area, youth learn to perpetuate good practices or bad practices as the case may be.

### C. Religion

Religion is largely a personal matter in Dent County. Most of the residents have a respectful attitude toward the church and believe in the teachings of the Bible, but sometimes their beliefs take a definite individualistic interpretation which permits leeway in engaging in "unorthodox" behavior without necessity of rationalization. Religious services are held in 36 churches, five of which are located in Salem and the rest in the rural areas. Nineteen of the churches are affiliated with the Baptist denominations, five with the Methodist, while 5 are community churches having no denominational tie-up. The other churches are affiliated with several different groups—Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, Catholic, Holiness.

**Rural Churches.** There is a vast difference between the churches in Salem and those in the open country. In almost every respect, the churches of Salem are considerably stronger. A large number of church buildings in the rural sections are small one-room affairs, comparable in many ways to the one-room school serving the same neighborhood. Equipment is meager—pews, altar, pulpit, hymnals, organ or piano. Services are sometimes held in a church arbor—a shelter made of boughs covered with hay or straw. Membership in these rural churches may reach 150 or so, depending upon the manner in which membership is counted. However, attendance and financial support is usually not commensurate with the size of membership. Some churches do not draw more than 25-50 to their services and many have less. In some instances contributions amount to little more than the amount taken in through collections during the service. This lack of attendance and poor financial support is a result of the whole rural church situation in the county. On the other hand, this lack of attendance and poor financial support also tends to make the situation as it is. In the rural sections, services are usually held once or twice per month, or irregularly, depending upon the source of ministerial supply, the type of church organization, and the season of the year. Frequently rural churches have no definite organization and are served by lay preachers who conduct services when the "spirit moves them", or when the local people express a desire for such services.

**Sunday Schools and Other Church Groups.** In addition to the services held regularly or irregularly as the case may be, many churches support a Sunday school. If this service is offered at all, it is usually held regularly each week. Whether a rural church has a Sunday school or not depends in part upon the lay leadership within the area and upon the number of children available to attend. Both rural and urban residents like to have their children go to Sunday school at least occasionally. Midweek prayer services are held in all the Protestant churches in Salem and also in a few open-country churches. Usually the meetings are held on Wednesday nights and are attended, in the main, by the older members of the congregation. Benevolent societies—Ladies' Aid and the various Missionary groups—form a part of the church organizations in Salem. Only the largest rural churches have such groups. The younger folk have their own organiza-



tions in the city churches, holding their meetings prior to the evening church service.

**Ministers.** Except in a half dozen or so churches, most of the worship in the open country is conducted by non-professional ministers—ministers who have had little if any theological training and who have other employment as a main source of livelihood. One rural minister is a salesman in a store in Salem, another is a schoolteacher, still another a part-time farmer. The ministers of the three largest churches in Salem are all professionally trained. The sermons of most of the preachers, both professional and lay, with few exceptions, deal primarily with religious rather than social problems and needs. With two exceptions, the Methodist and Christian churches in Salem, the general official church attitude toward socio-economic conditions in the county is conservative. Ministers of these churches have recently taken an active part in promoting a youth program in Salem which has produced definite results.<sup>28</sup>

**Social Aspect of Church Attendance.** Many rural residents go to church in Salem. By so doing, they can attend on the Sunday suitable to themselves and not be obliged to go only on the day services are held at the local church. Then, too, they can participate in many more religious activities, if they are so inclined. The urban ministers recognize the rural element in their congregations but have not done much in the way of developing programs that are of special value to rural people. Church services of various types—preaching, Sunday schools, young people's meetings and so on—have a social as well as religious function. Before and after church, and during the meeting of the Ladies' Aid, news and gossip are exchanged and general "neighboring" takes place. To many persons church activities are the main social events, events which take precedence over all other neighborhood and community affairs, events which are second only to their family obligations.

**As Dent Countians Regard Religion.** Generally speaking, the local people have definite religious convictions. In the main, they hold to a rather strict interpretation of the Bible and their thinking and behavior with respect to religious and socio-religious issues are conservative. Frequently these beliefs are expressed in individual terms and adjustments rather than in terms of denominational dogma. Several factors serve as a background for the development of these strong conservative religious beliefs. Primitive Baptists have long been strong in the area. This denomination is conservative as to dogma. Isolation has made individuals well aware of the forces of nature and in return brought a dependence upon a higher power than themselves. Religious gatherings are a source of social contacts—contacts that provide release for the emotions of those who live partially to themselves a larger share of the time. Ministers of all denominations, both professional and lay, have tended to accentuate religious fervor and dogma in their sermons rather than the social aspects of religious experience. Yet, as with most other things, religious experience is a

<sup>28</sup>Both have actively backed the formation of the Tiger Claw, a club room for teen-aged town boys and girls.

personal matter and the form it takes is neither praised nor condemned but accepted as is.

### V. PATTERNS OF ASSOCIATION

The most unique element in the socio-economic life of Dent County is the prominent part played by intimate personal relations. Informality is the keynote in much of the association between and among Dent Countians. In family and neighborhood store visiting, in going to Salem on Saturdays and Tuesdays, and in many other activities, Dent Countians have accentuated this trait. Most meetings and associations between two or more persons take place without benefit of formal rules and regulations. However, the patterns followed in these meetings are sometimes more rigid than those of organized groups.

The great importance of informal association is deeply rooted in the past. When the early settlers came to the area, they were kept busy providing the essentials of life. Outside of the family circle, contacts were in connection with work that needed to be done—the raising of a barn, a visit to a trading post to purchase needed items, husking or quilting bees—but on such occasions recreation and conversation were combined with work. The temperament and attitudes of these people were also conducive to informality. Taciturn and quiet in disposition, they did not need extensive social contacts. Accustomed to hard work, they met the demands of the environment without too much complaint. Democratic in their relationships with others, they found their best expressions in activities in which give and take rather than following formal procedures was the prize asset. Their simple demands could be satisfied by hard work and minimum of contact with the outside world.

Topography has played and still plays an important part in accentuating informal association in Dent County. Since the days of the first settlement, free and easy contacts between families, groups, and organizations have been curtailed by the ruggedness of the area. Hills, long winding roads, and great distances between clusters of homes have given personal association among members of small groups of families greater significance than attendance at meetings outside the neighborhood. As previously pointed out, the family has played a dominant part in the social life of the county.

The growth of Dent County into a one-town area and the subsequent monopoly by Salem as the location of most of the socio-economic services has been conducive to the development of informal association in the rural sections. Public agencies have established their offices in Salem, and the majority of meetings are held in Salem. This arrangement has made it difficult for many rural residents to attend many meetings. Salem is the trade center for the county as well as the county seat, and Dent Countians go to Salem to see a physician or dentist, to visit the welfare office or see the county agent, as well as to transact their business.

If there were a limited number of public agencies and organized groups in Dent County, one might conclude that informality is characteristic of the

area because of limited opportunities for the people to participate in secondary groups. On the contrary, there are many opportunities for membership in such organizations, as may be seen in the following list of Dent County organizations: Dent County Farmers Association, Women's Progressive Farmers Association, Junior Farmers Association, Dent County Farmers Improvement Association, Registered Beef Cattle Association, Lake Springs Conservation Association, Chamber of Commerce, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Women's Federated Clubs, Home Economics Clubs, 4-H Clubs, and numerous secret fraternal orders. Such public agencies as Extension Service, Farmer's Home Administration, Production and Marketing Administration, Farmer's Production Credit Association, Forest Service, Conservation and Park Board, Social Security, and health services are in the county. Many rural people as well as people in Salem participate in these organizations and agencies, but their participation is primarily on an informal basis.

Instead of analyzing each agency and organization separately, a review of the Extension Service and the Home Economics and 4-H Clubs will illustrate the informal association that characterizes the area. It is not implied that the other agencies and organizations are not important or that the Extension Service is the most important. This illustration is used because it affords an opportunity to observe informality in the participation in a public agency and in two closely related organizations.

#### A. The Extension Service and Informal Association

**Organization.** Many farm families in the county receive considerable information and assistance in farming and homemaking from the Agricultural Extension Service. This organization maintains an office in Salem which is staffed by an agricultural agent, a home demonstration agent, and clerical staff. Financial support comes from national, state, and local funds. Local sponsorship comes from the Missouri Farmers' Association organization in Dent County, called the Dent County Farmers' Association. Extension work has been available to the area since the early 1930s but the county was first serviced by agents who covered both Phelps and Dent counties and whose offices were in Rolla, Missouri. Dent County received a county agent of its own in 1939 and a home demonstration agent in 1941.

**Program of Work.** In order to determine the most practical problems to attack, the professional staff meets yearly with the County Program Planning Committee to discuss the agricultural situation in the county. This committee sets up general problems facing farm people in the area, and then the Extension personnel decide upon the problems with which they will work during the year. In this manner, the local leaders, both men and women, who comprise the Program Planning Committee give valuable assistance to the agents in developing a program of work suitable to local needs.

**Methods of Procedure.** To assist the rural residents with their problems the agents hold demonstration meetings throughout the county, at which the problems are discussed and the methods of solution explained

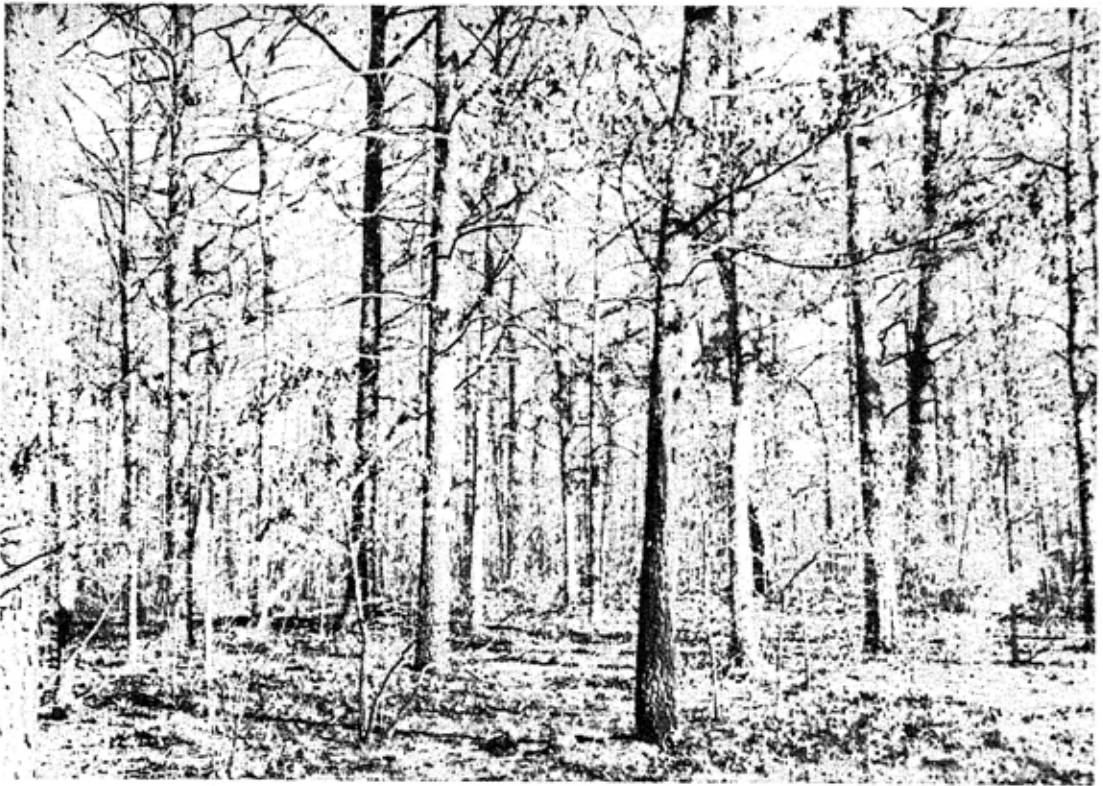


Fig. 2.—A well managed stand of hardwood timber in Dent County. This county is the first in the state to have a graduate forester as assistant county agent. Under this set-up, more than 10,000 acres of farm woodlands are under scientific forest management. In addition, some 79,000 acres of state and federal owned forest and park lands in the county are under forest management.

and illustrated. Farms and farm homes are visited to help with the individual agricultural and homemaking situations of the family. Many calls for assistance are received at the office in Salem by persons desiring advice on this or that problem. Periodically, news stories are published in the two weekly newspapers reviewing the results of experiments or demonstrations of interest to farm people or explaining a method of procedure in some farm or homemaking situation—recipes, directions for culling poultry flocks, yields obtained by a group of farmers following certain cropping practices. Every now and then circular letters are sent out to a county-wide mailing list, containing announcements of meetings, availability of materials, or explaining a new farming practice. Bulletins are distributed at meetings, from the office, and sent through the mail. 4-H Clubs and Home Economics Clubs hold county-wide Achievement Days when the projects of members—canned goods, pillow slips, pigs, calves—are judged on a competitive basis. A few 4-H Club members also attend the annual 4-H Club Round-Up, a three-day camping trip usually held at Meramec State Park in Crawford County. In addition to all these activities, the agents frequently appear at meetings held under the auspices of other organizations to give information on some pertinent farm or farm home problem.

**Personal Relationships.** Informal contacts play a vital part in the





Fig. 3.—A group of Dent County farmers attend a demonstration in farm woodland management conducted by Assistant County Agent Harold Gallaher.

promotion of the Extension program. The personal touch looms large. Much of the work of the agents in giving the people pertinent information is done in an informal, personal manner. The county agent goes over the farm with the operator to help him select a proper site for the livestock pond and then makes soil tests to see whether the selected site will hold water. Farmers seek advice as to how to handle this or that crop, such as "What will happen if I cut that field a little bit early?" "How can I get rid of that cheat? It's spreading all over the farm." Or information is desired on how to handle livestock: "What is the best way to feed beef cattle this year?" The home demonstration agent helps the homemaker with fitting slipcovers for furniture, in making a dress, in canning food, explaining and demonstrating so that the housewife can "go it alone" the next time.

This personal instruction is the backbone of Extension teaching in the county. To this mode of education the rural residents react much more favorably than they do to meetings. Having learned through experience, backed up by heritage, to operate on an individual basis, the rural people are prone to be interested in getting help at the time when the situation is at hand, not at some prior time. In personal contacts with the Extension staff they are much more at home, free to ask what they may feel to be embarrassing questions in public, to explain the details of how they think the situation ought to be.



**Local Leaders.** In helping farm people with their problems the Extension agents are assisted by local leaders—laymen who have received some training along a particular line and whose job it is to explain methods and procedures, to give the latest information to their friends and neighbors. Much of the 4-H Club and Home Economics Club Work is carried out in this manner. The leaders are sometimes elected by members of their own groups, at other times selected by the agents themselves. Success of the leaders in helping others depends upon a multitude of factors—training, education, experience, interest in helping others, to name but a few. And some success is achieved, for the agents have evidence to indicate that many farm people in the county have received help from these leaders. Generally speaking, the local lay leaders function successfully as long as they do not set themselves up as knowing the last word and as long as they offer their knowledge and help in the form of suggestions. Many farm families also receive help from the Extension Service through the “grapevine” system—not clandestinely, but by the passage of ideas by word of mouth from one interested person to another, persons who are not listed as leaders in the formal Extension organizational setup.

**Home Economics Clubs.** To aid in carrying out the homemaking phase of the program, the Extension Service sponsors 10 home economics clubs scattered over the area. Nine of these clubs are local neighborhood groups, members of which live within a comparatively short distance of one another. The remaining club is organized on a county-wide basis to provide home economics activities for those not near a neighborhood club. Although these organizations are primarily educational in character, the social life which they provide for their members is very important. For many of the women who belong, the club is the only social organization in which they have membership. Meetings of all the clubs except the county-wide group are held in the homes of members, and memberships, although not restrictive, are sufficiently small (ranging from 6 to 19) to permit personal acquaintanceship—and the opportunity “to neighbor” during club meetings. Programs of these clubs include project work in clothing, textiles, food and nutrition, home management, child development, gardening, poultry, and health. During the war, members participated in various war activities such as fats salvage, paper salvage, sewing for the Red Cross, and rolling of bandages.

For the training of project leaders to give lessons to the club members, these groups depend upon the home demonstration agent. The home demonstration agent also provides other information which the clubs need, from subject matter to administration. Most of the projects involve the manipulation of materials, working with the hands as well as the mind. Discussion of local, state, national, or international problems are incidental to the main features. Direction of club affairs is in the hands of officers elected yearly. Project leaders for various programs are also elected by the members.

**4-H Clubs.** An important phase of Extension work in the area is the 4-H Club program. Currently there are nine 4-H Clubs in existence striving to provide training for the head, heart, hands, and health of the boys and

girls aged 10-21 who are members, to the end that they may become better farmers, homemakers, and citizens. Under supervision of local sponsors, local leaders and the county Extension workers, the clubs select their own projects and plan their own programs. Insofar as possible actual life situations on the farm, in the home, school, or neighborhood of which the club members are a definite part, are used to make the projects real and valuable experiences.

Meetings (usually on a monthly basis) are held at schoolhouses or at the homes of members under the supervision of the leader and frequently with the direct assistance of one of the Extension agents. Projects of the clubs are set up either on an individual or group basis. Individual projects include the raising of livestock, making of clothing, and canning of fruits and vegetables. Group projects on which all members of a club work involve social activities, the practicing of everyday courtesies, development of exhibits for the Ozark Fair at Springfield and learning the uses of the flag. Achievements in completion of projects are recognized at an Annual Achievement Day when entries from the various clubs are judged upon a competitive basis in which progress made during the time spent on the project is given important emphasis.

Many more rural families recognize the value of 4-H Club work than is evidenced by the number of boys and girls actually participating in clubs. The physical terrain and the lack of adequate meeting places tend to work against the organization of 4-H Clubs. Long distances to other homes over rough roads or paths in lieu of a place near the center of the neighborhood make for apathy on the part of the parents toward the formation of a local club. Leadership for the clubs presents another problem. Many of the persons who would make excellent 4-H Club leaders are unable to assume such responsibilities for one reason or another. Nevertheless, the 4-H Club movement is gaining momentum in the area.

### B. Other Types of Informal Association

**Family Visiting.** Visiting between families, either as individual members or as entire family groups, is one of the more extensive types of informal associations in Dent County. In the rural sections and in Salem "going to the neighbors" is almost as common as eating three meals a day or going to bed at night. Although the fundamental features of family visiting are the same in both the open country and Salem, the patterns of operation are somewhat different. The informal contacts are usually more frequent over a given period of time in the city than in the rural areas. In the county seat many families maintain contact with one another on a daily basis and any interruption, not explained beforehand, brings queries as to whether there is illness. On the other hand, in the rural areas, distance, plus the pressure of work, sometimes curtails or postpones family visitation.

In all sections of the county borrowing of needed household items frequently provides the "reason" for going visiting. This is more particularly true in the open country than in the city. Few Dent Countians pass up the

chance to exchange gossip, news, or discuss problems of the day, when borrowing flour, eggs, or what have you. In the rural sections exchange of work also makes it possible for families to get together not only for business but also for social contacts. However, in both the rural and urban areas, family visiting continues whether borrowing and exchange of work take place or not. In Salem children at play often provide the means for family visiting among older members. Children of one family bring those of another into the house, mothers begin to talk to one another, adult members are called upon to settle children's quarrels. From this begins or continues a series of informal contacts among all members of the families involved. In the rural areas children provide the means for establishing informal contacts to a lesser degree than in Salem. Here contacts are more infrequent and children are more likely to accompany adults in family visitation. Family visiting in Salem involving a trip to the home of another family is done more frequently by women and children than by men. "Yard to yard" visiting is also more commonly done by the homemakers and kids. In the open country areas, men do more visiting in homes than do men living in Salem, but still less than the womenfolk and children.

Visiting between families takes on added significance in both Salem and the farming areas of the county if there is kinship involved. Since many Dent Countians live in the area throughout life, these kinship groupings are rather frequent. In them the relationships between individuals are more intimate and more personal than in groupings where kinship is not involved. Non-kinship family visiting occurs most often among families living in close proximity to one another. Kinship visiting takes place over a much wider area.

The main items of discussion in family visiting have to do with personal situations. Maude tells Jane about the baby having colic last night. That reminds Jane of the time her oldest son, Bill, almost died from eating too many green peaches. From this start, outstanding ailments of members of the families are reviewed, always eliciting proper responses of "ohs" and "ahs" or "that was terrible" at the proper times. Perhaps this recounting of illnesses has been done many times before, but each retelling brings forth sympathetic reactions and understanding. From ailments the conversation drifts to other personal situations—how the gardens are coming along, happenings on the farm, in business, or in the home since the last visit—a review of events to bring friends up to date. All these situations are treated in personal terms, since all participants are operating on a personal basis.

From personal events, the talk shifts to news and gossip of the neighborhood—perhaps the family visit started with a choice bit of new or old gossip. Jean asks Maude if she has heard about the Jones' buying a new tractor. Maude opines that George and Edith are "going pretty steady" and must be "going to get married soon". Interwoven through the visit will be talk of news of county, state, and national events. But as with the more familiar situations, all will be given the personal touch—the type of relationship that makes family visiting worthwhile to those who participate.

**Neighborhood Store Visiting.** As the scene shifts from family visiting to visiting at the neighborhood store or in a store in Salem, the patterns of association are somewhat different. In the first place, the modes of procedure will be more definite and more rigidly followed. Those who go to the stores to visit and loaf recognize that their friends and neighbors will be doing the same thing. Since more people will be involved, roles which the various participants play will be more definite. Some will lead in the discussion, others will alibi, still others will just listen. A few will pretend to be in a great hurry after making a small purchase only to stay for a long period of time, unable to pass up the chance to express their opinion and to find out what's going on.

The conversations of such a store congregation are personal but lack the sympathetic intimacies so common to family visiting. Part of this may be due to difference in the sex composition of the two groups. Family visiting is predominantly carried on by women and children; store visiting is largely a male pastime. Store congregations confine their discussions to situations of interest to men—how many hogs John sold, the price Henry got for his old cow, the high price of feed. Talk runs the gamut from neighborhood to national situations but every item is informally tossed back and forth among the participants to the satisfaction of everyone. Gossip, too, plays a part, but upon somewhat different, though not necessarily higher, plane than found in family visiting. Gossip is generally concerned with those who are absent.

At the store men find it easier to meet their neighbors than in going to their homes only to find them out in the field. Then, too, it gives each individual a chance to meet with a larger number of people than in family visiting. To male Dent Countians this is of great significance. The problems which interest the men in the area go beyond food, children, illness—proper items of interest to women. Not particularly interested in family intimacies, men find more satisfaction in meeting with several men than with just one or two. Approval of a large group—opinions of a large group—mean so much more than those of a small group.

**Saturdays in Salem.** Going to town on Saturday is a major experience in the lives of many Dent Countians both young and old. It breaks into the humdrum routine of farm life. It provides the chance to get in touch with the outside world—a world that provides many new and vastly different experiences. In town, the people are able to establish contacts with a wide group of people. They meet with friends and acquaintances from all over the county. They see people who have returned to the area from the city for a visit—and probably pick up new ideas and opinions. They participate in the recreations of the pool rooms and movies which are available only in Salem. They eat at restaurants, an experience which delights both parents and children, even though they tend to brag about how much better "Maw" can cook. Probably most important of all, they can mill around with people—feel and sense the human contacts, satisfy that basic need for human companionship. And as they meet and contact those who have the same common experience, they become more confident that they



are not different from others after all—that their ideas and opinions, their ways of doing things are pretty much like those of others, and with this feeling they go home with boosted morale plus news, new ideas, gossip, and, most likely, many items which have been purchased.

When the weather is favorable, a large portion of the informal meetings on Saturdays take place on the Salem streets. Some take place inside stores and service establishments, on street corners, in front of stores, wherever groups chance to meet. Special meeting places are likewise the custom. Through years of experience individuals and families expect to meet with other families and individuals at certain stores or on a certain corner. In the winter most meetings take place within stores and other service establishments. Proprietors regard this loafing as a matter of course. In fact many of them relish it, for as pointed out in the section on making a living, the participation in these informal associations is one of the foremost ways of doing business and of creating good will. It is also one of the satisfactions derived from being in business. Many stores become the focal points of informal groups as the result of deft and subtle management by the owner and sales staff to produce such a situation. It is good business for both the proprietors and patrons.

Conversations in these informal congregations on Saturday on the streets, in the stores, and in Salem homes are quite similar to that which takes place in family visiting and country store visiting which have been described previously. Contacts are wider and the subject matter more varied as a result, but the relationships are on a personal basis and exchange of news and ideas is done informally.

**Tuesdays in Salem.** To a lesser degree Tuesday is also a red letter day in Dent County. Rural residents come to town and city residents go to the business section. The main attraction for the rural people is the Community Sale of livestock, held under private auspices at the Sale Barn at the edge of town. For town people the attraction is to meet with their rural friends and relatives. The sale is patronized mostly by farm operators and men interested in livestock trading. Few women attend the sale, preferring to shop or visit with friends in stores or on the streets of Salem. The men who attend the sale do not spend all their time buying and selling livestock. Exchange of ideas on many subjects, hearing the latest news, occupies a large portion of their time. In fact many persons attend the sales who have no intention of buying. They go to see their friends and to learn from them what is going on in their neighborhoods and on their farms. The community sales congregations behave and react like the "Saturday in Salem" groups. In addition, men have the opportunity of testing their judgment of livestock in competition with their friends and neighbors. A good buy is also a boost to personal pride.

**Auction Sales.** Auction sales usually attract buyers and visitors from not only the immediate neighborhood but from all over the county. A large sale will attract hundreds of people, most of whom come out of curiosity and to meet with their friends from a wide area rather than to buy. An auction attracts people as Salem attracts them on Saturdays and Tues-



days. In addition to providing a chance to exchange news, ideas, and gossip as they are wont to do in other types of informal meetings, there is opportunity to buy on an informal basis and to pick up a desired item at comparatively low cost. The competitive angle of buying at auction sales must not be overlooked. To be able to buy an article at a price which friends regard as an exceptionally "good" buy means an enhancement of prestige among fellow men. Or being able to outbid another gives a lift to the morale—a feeling of satisfaction. Curiosity, likewise, is sufficient motive for attending an auction. Mary and Bill look everything over, buy little, but have plenty of "meat" for conversations with neighbors for their next several visits together.

**Recreational and Leisure Time Activities.** Practically all recreational and leisure time activities in Dent County are informal in character. In fact, participation in the many types of informal association are recreational in character for many Dent Countians. Recreational activities such as the movies, hunting, fishing, picnicking, dancing, and card playing have wide appeal. Few if any residents do not participate in one or more leisure time or recreational activities at one time or another. The old folks go in for the quiet type of leisure pursuits such as reading, listening to the radio, or perhaps just day dreaming. For the sportsman, and most Dent Countians except the aged and incapacitated may be classed as sportsmen, the area abounds with opportunities to test their skill in hunting and fishing. From small game to deer, from jack salmon to mountain trout, Nimrods and Isaac Waltons can keep themselves busy a large portion of the year. Sometimes it would seem that the business of making a living is relegated to a secondary place.

The appeal of recreation and leisure time activities to the residents of Dent County, as to most all people, rests upon the fact that these activities provide a different experience and an opportunity to relax. At the same time they also provide opportunities for companionship and fellowship with the neighbors and friends. The movies not only let those in attendance live in a land of make believe for a period of time, but give new ideas of fashions and codes of ethics, and news of the outside world. Individual supremacy can also be tested in recreational activities. A poor farmer may gain prestige with his neighbors by being an excellent shot or through having firsthand knowledge of the best fishing spots. Participation in recreational and leisure activities is a matter of personal choice. Hence, individuals know that those who join them are desirous of having the same common experience. With this common experience base, it is easy to act and react in an informal manner.

**Characteristics of Informal Associations.** Family visiting, visiting at neighborhood stores, going to Salem on Saturdays and Tuesdays, attending auction sales, congregating informally at meetings of organized agencies, and recreational activities; these are the major types of informal activities in which Dent Countians take part. There are many other informal groupings in which the residents may participate. These, however, are the most frequent and universal, the types which people plan for and expect to join.

Membership in these informal groupings is fluid. At the same time, however, the membership in certain groups is limited to certain individuals. Exclusion from such membership does not come by ballot, but by letting it be known that the newcomer who attempts to join is not wanted. This is done indirectly—by changing the subject from personal matters to impersonal situations, by breaking up the meeting, by maintaining long periods of silence. However, membership lists, though never actually listed, are usually well known and only the most brazen attempt to crash groups in which they are unwelcome. In fact there is little need to crash such groups, so unimportant are the informal groupings throughout the county. Rare indeed is the individual who has a boring personality which excludes all personal and informal relationships with his neighbors and acquaintances.

Although elections are not held, informal groups which meet regularly (regularly in the sense that meetings will be held when convenient, irregularly in terms of specific date and time for holding meeting) have leaders. These may be regarded as natural leaders, individuals who get their recognition through the willingness of others to follow them along this line or that. Sometimes these leaders play a superficial role, merely serving as foils for the real behind-the-scenes leaders. But whatever the leadership capacity may be, others follow until they deem it necessary to change leaders. Since informal groupings are so numerous, roles of leadership and of followership may shift from one group to another just as they do among formal organizations. The addition of one or two new individuals may change the roles of the various participants in an informal congregation a great deal.

Regular informal groups follow customs and tradition in carrying out their meetings. Like membership lists, these customs and traditions are not printed, but they have the force of Roberts Rules of Order in parliamentary procedure. Any violation of these rules is noticed and the violator required to make amends in the manner common to the group. To a degree, all informal groups have some sort of customs which they follow, regardless of how infrequently they meet or how little they mean to the participants. Courtesies are expected and the right of free opinions and expression recognized. "If you don't agree or don't like it, you don't have to stay around," seems to be a fundamental rule.

It has been briefly mentioned and implied in the preceding discussions that informal groupings have both definite and indefinite places of meeting. Regular groups, the types described in detail, usually have a set place or places to meet—the variety store, a particular filling station, the neighborhood store. But a multitude, perhaps the majority of those informal associations developing out of contacts each day, have no definite place of meeting. They take place largely where chance dictates.

**Functions of Informal Associations.** The informal associations and congregations which loom so large in the daily experience of the residents of the area have many functions. First, they serve to satisfy the need for human contacts and companionship. Much of this is found within the fam-

ily group which in itself operates largely on an informal basis. But such relationships are not all satisfying. In filling the desires and needs of Dent Countians for relationships beyond and outside the family, informal groupings play a major role. Through them members of the family get something new, yet at the same time the experience provided is somewhat similar to what they already know.

In informal groups ideas are sifted down to the commonplace. They are discussed, analyzed, and changed to bring them to the place where the people can understand them and then either reject or select them. Through this same process important decisions are made and public opinion formed. Conduct, economic procedures—all things that may be valued and judged—are brought down to a personal, intimate basis. This enables the members to understand how any violation of decisions would be judged by others. Ideas are stripped of all trappings and examined with all biases and prejudices and individual ethical standards operating in full force. Opinions and attitudes resulting from such a procedure may be colored. But Dent Countians in their informal associations recognize that they as well as others live by biases and prejudices and ethical standards. From informal groupings, in their examination of all kinds of human experience, stem forces of social control which are stronger than law. From these associations develop customs of behavior, standards of conduct, standards of judgment of personal worth—most all of the basic patterns of living. Back of these informal associations, the base upon which they rest, is family experience. Upon these informal associations rests the organizational life of Dent County.

## VI. WAR YEARS AND AFTER

### A. The War Years

**Into Industry and Armed Forces.** Late in 1940 a new pull to work off the farm began to be felt in the area, the construction of Fort Leonard Wood, about 55 auto miles distant from the county seat. In response to the demand for skilled, semi-skilled, and common labor, and clerical jobs in the sparsely settled Ozark area surrounding the Fort, many Dent Countians found employment at relatively high wages. This employment was even more attractive than working in St. Louis, as wages were as high or higher and it was often possible to commute from home to work.

As the boom construction period at Fort Leonard Wood passed, many who were employed continued to work in some type of maintenance job. Others followed the construction crews to other camps in the middle western and southwestern states. However, this boom was superseded by the growing demand for workers in industrial plants in St. Louis and other large cities. This demand continued the pull on the local people to seek outside employment. Added to the pull from St. Louis and other large cities to engage in essential war production was the increased demand for non-farm labor by the industries operating in the county. One of the larger lumber companies and the local garment factory both secured war contracts. Employment in either industry was classified as essential.

By and large the same general trend of short periods of employment common during peace times was continued during the war period. Employment for the migrants from the area was still on a short-time, temporary basis. Rarely did entire families leave the county; some members still kept the home place going. Single men and women were predominant in this movement. Men who would otherwise have been classified as non-essential workers, had they remained on the farm, found essential jobs in industry. Most of these, however, were employed in non-farm occupations before the situation relative to meeting draft quotas became critical.

Reliable estimates indicate that around 1000 persons were drafted or enlisted in the armed services. Very few of these were women. The local draft board faced a difficult situation during the latter part of the war in meeting quotas. Many eligibles had entered industry prior to the outbreak of the war, thereby becoming essential workers and subject to draft deferments. This, however, depleted the population eligible for draft so that "barrel scraping" was necessary to make available to the armed services the required number of men from Dent County.

It was not necessary for the typical Dent Countian who was not taken into the armed services or who did not enter industrial employment to make many changes in his ways of doing things in order to fulfill his patriotic obligations during the war. The local residents made their contribution by doing what they had been doing before more intensively and extensively.

**Wartime Programs.** To assist in the war effort, many wartime programs were sponsored in the county. The local chapter of the American Red Cross held meetings to make surgical dressings and bandages. The various civic groups in Salem, Home Economics and WPFSA clubs in the open country, and individuals participated in this program. The Red Cross also sponsored first aid and home nursing classes which enjoyed the assistance of the same groups mentioned above. Air raid wardens selected by the Council of Civilian Defense were trained for possible air raids.

Salvage drives were county-wide. Paper, scrap, rubber, and fats were salvaged throughout the county. Quotas in these drives were often allotted on a school district basis to provide an element of competition. Throughout the war Dent Countians bought war bonds. The county quotas were usually met in each drive, although in some, individual purchases fell below their goal. The Extension Service sponsored nutrition classes to train homemakers in methods of conserving food. This organization joined with the Farmers Home Administration and the Lions Club in promoting victory gardens throughout the county.

In 1942 the Dent County Council of Civilian Defense was organized. Made up of civic and rural leaders, this organization served as a spearhead in getting wartime programs under way. Its biggest job was the appointment of ration panels—to get members who would serve under the continued pressure of consumers. As the war progressed and war programs became more definitely the "property and function" of individual agencies responsible for a particular program, the Council became less and less important.

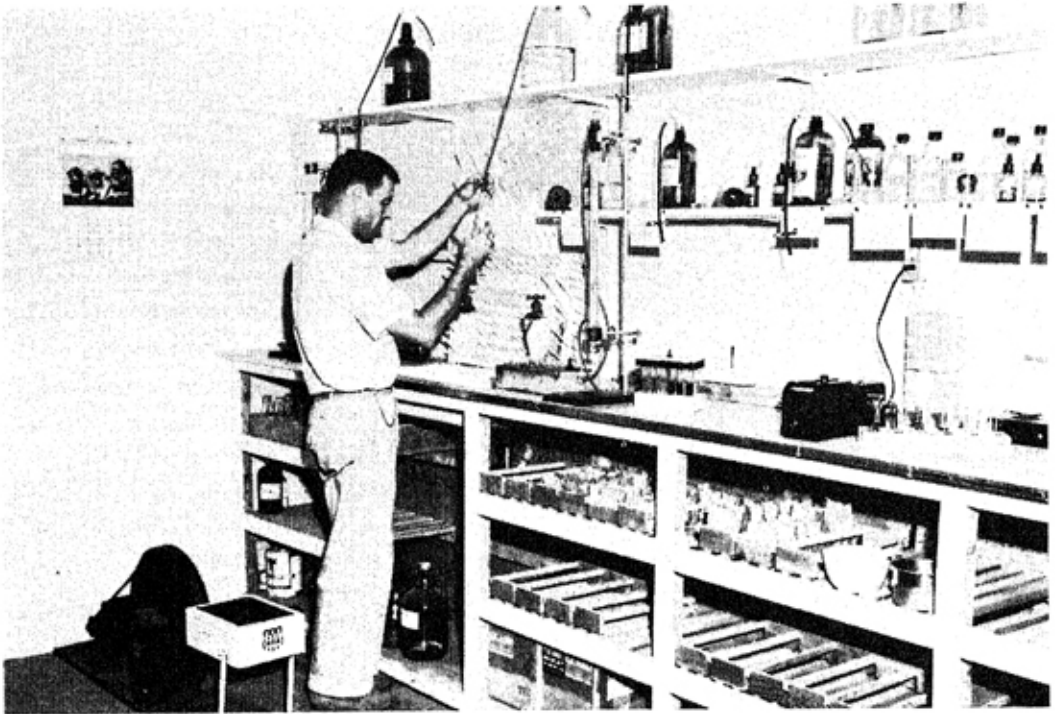


Fig. 4.—The Dent County Soil Testing Laboratory is equipped and housed by the Dent County Farmers Association and operated by the County Extension office. One of 70 such county laboratories in the state, supervised by the Missouri College of Agriculture, this service is available to any farmer in the county or nearby counties.

**Civilian Adjustments.** No drastic changes took place in production and cropping practices as a result of the reduced labor supply due to migration into industry or entry into the armed forces. The changes which occurred were the result of educational, promotional, and subsidy programs designed to increase agricultural production. Several changes in the pattern of farming operations did take place. These included increase in custom work, increase in exchange of labor, more extensive use of family labor, and the spread of a given operation over a longer period of time.

Since the beginning of the war, even with rationing restrictions, the amount of power equipment of the farms of Dent County has greatly increased. Applications have always exceeded the allotment quota. Many applications provided a particular piece of equipment on the farm for the first time. In several instances allotments were made to those showing best use of equipment in terms of custom work or exchange of labor. In addition, farmers who had regularly done custom work expanded their operations. Exchange of labor has always been practiced in the county. The reduced labor supply of the war period made exchange more extensive both as to period of time and type of job to be done. Many farmers who revived the exchange of work idea felt this practice to be more advantageous than hiring the type of labor available at the particular time. Family labor was used more extensively.

Women and older men took an increasing part in farming operations, doing jobs beyond their regular activities. Probably the biggest change in



farming operations was the spread of a given activity over a longer period of time than formerly thought possible or desirable. In an area such as Dent County time is not as pressing as in the more commercial farming areas. To some farmers time is their biggest resource. Hence, it was possible to do a job such as corn husking alone in four weeks, instead of in two weeks by hiring outside help, with no loss. The spreading of other farming activities worked equally well.

Dent County long has been regarded as a labor surplus area. During the war labor was recruited in the county to work in "critically short" farm labor areas, in the corn belt and other sections. Most of these recruited workers returned to their homes after their "recruitment" period ended. Few efforts were made to secure farm labor from Salem. Most all employables in the county seat were either employed in the town or had already gone into industry or the armed forces. Distances from the town to farms were too great to make it practical or profitable to hire inexperienced urban youth. A volunteer adult group from Salem organized for the harvest seasons found few takers among the farmers of the area. Distance and time available did not make it feasible to gear operations for such labor.

#### **B. Three Years After the War**

The foregoing sections describe the geographical environment, population, basic social institutions, social organization, and culture of Dent County and its people from the beginning of the county until 1946. Since the end of World War II some changes have occurred that will continue to affect the social life of the county in the future. On the other hand, some of the distinctive traits of the county, as already described, persist in spite of other changes.

Many new houses have been built in Salem, but the population has continued to grow until there is no excess of housing. Some new store buildings have been built and others have been remodeled and enlarged. The Baptist Church recently completed a \$40,000 educational plant, and at present an addition is being built to the elementary school. The International Shoe Company established a factory in Salem in 1948 which has provided employment for approximately 225 persons, and has a capacity for employing 450. The Hart Clinic, including a 17-bed hospital, has been established in Salem. The number of physicians and dentists, all residents of Salem, has remained the same, but two new optometrists have recently opened offices in Salem.

Several changes have occurred in agriculture or in closely related fields. A program of vocational agriculture was started in the Salem school in 1946. Several classes of veterans have been or are now enrolled for itinerant training in vocational agriculture. Livestock farming has increased; so has dairy farming, influenced, no doubt, by plants for the pasteurization of milk established in Salem in recent years. More REA lines are being constructed in the county, and in all probability additional persons will not only use electricity, but will purchase many electrical appliances, as this was the pattern of those who first received electricity. Mechanization of farms, in particular, use of tractors, has spread rapidly in the last three

years. The timbering industry has declined somewhat from the wartime peak, but through the work of the Forest Service, a long-time program of harvesting timber is under way and timbering will be a factor in the economy of the county in the future.

Dent County is still an area of surplus population, and migration continues from the county into St. Louis and other areas. As previously indicated, some of these persons later may return to the county. In recent years there has been some migration into the county of urban people who have retired from their city occupations. The recreational facilities available in the county have attracted some of these persons and may well become a factor of increasing importance in the future.

In 1949 Dent County voted 19 to 1 against a proposed plan for the consolidation of schools. While the people of Dent County throughout their history have tended to be slow to adopt new ideas, the defeat of the proposed plan cannot be entirely explained in terms of this conservatism. It appears that many Dent Countians are convinced that some type of consolidation is advisable and will take place, but they defeated the recent proposal because it did not seem to them to represent a workable plan.

Until the end of World War II it appeared that Dent Countians were slow to change their ways, but in the last three years they have adopted many innovations in regard to mechanization of farms, and have shown an increase in livestock farming, in dairy farming, and in the use of information made available through the Extension Service and other public agencies. No doubt a great many factors are involved in producing these changes. It may well be that this is the period in which the many years of service of these agencies are bearing fruit. On the other hand, other factors involved in the situation may be the result of the war period. During the war Dent Countians in the armed forces or in defense industries not only observed and brought back new ideas, but also saved the money they earned and brought back to the county more capital than they had ever had before. The changes adopted the last few years may be partly the result of their having enough money to enable them to adopt changes and experiment with them. Perhaps they would have adopted them earlier if they had had the capital with which to do so.

There are now more organizations in the area and more participation in organized groups than at any time in the past. However, informal association still characterizes the majority of the meetings. It is still evident in the Saturday contacts in Salem and in the numerous neighboring groups throughout the county. Exchange of labor is not only still being practiced, but may be increasing as a result of the emphasis placed upon it in the veterans courses in agriculture. Whether or not the Ozarkian trait of informal association will characterize the county in the future is a question that can be answered only in the future. Today, in spite of the changes of recent years, the pattern of informal association is still a distinctive characteristic of Dent County.