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DANIEL C. ROPER, SECRETARY

BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

WILLIAM LANE AUSTIN, DIRECTOR



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PART-TIME FARMING

IN THE

UNITED STATES

PREPARED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

Z. R. PETTET

Chief Statistician for Agriculture

SPECIAL STUDY

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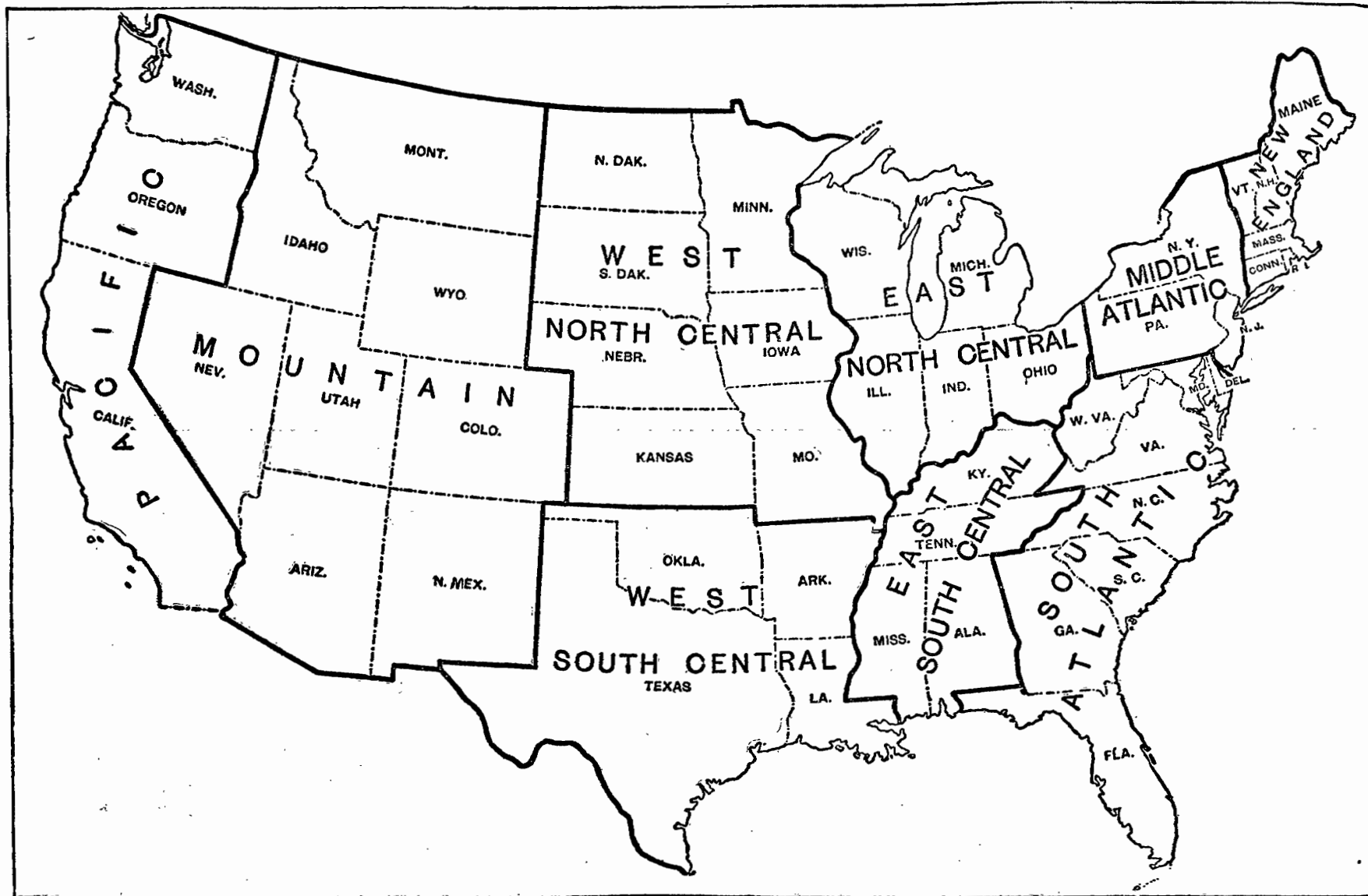
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MAP OF THE UNITED STATES SHOWING GEOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS



PART-TIME FARMING

By WARDER B. JENKINS AND HILTON E. ROBISON

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Some concepts of part-time farming.—The concept of part-time farming varies somewhat according to the whims of the researcher and possibly to the data at hand, or to data which may be made available for a particular study. The most popular or prevalent view seems to be that it is a mode of living whereby a family resides on a farm but receives income, in a more substantial degree, from nonfarm sources; briefly, it usually connotes a combination of industry and agriculture.

Other restrictions or amplifications are often made. Not all interpretations have made an occupation outside of farming a prerequisite, as income from agricultural work not connected with the farm on which the family resides or outside income from nonoccupational sources such as pensions, interest, dividends, etc., may be a part of the interpretation. Some have conceived that the term "part-time farming" is broad enough to include those farms on which some member or members of the operating family engage in quasi or strictly non-farming activities at-the-farm, such as operating roadside stands and filling stations, maintaining boarding and lodging accommodations, and custom grinding, sawing, cider-making, sirup-making, etc. Or, again, part-time farming may be thought of from the standpoint of the amount of farming activity without any reference to an outside source of income.

As the term implies, any interpretation of part-time farming must include farming activities of some sort. Some of the surveys which have heretofore been made have set maximum and some have set minimum limitations on the amount of farming activities required for the enterprise to be classified as part-time farming.

Historically, part-time farming probably first appeared from attempts of families engaged in agricultural pursuits to supplement their farm income. Gradually, through better transportation and power distribution and more recently given added impetus by the depression, the one-foot-in-the-country idea has thrived as a plan for providing greater economic security to city and other nonfarm workers, whether engaged in factory or clerical work, mining, fishing, lumbering, etc. It is possible, therefore, to approach the concept of part-time farming either from the standpoint of the agricultural enterprise or from a nonfarm point of view. In the first instance outside income supplements the farm income, while in the latter farm income supplements the income from nonfarm sources.

Explanation of terms.—Before continuing, certain terms should be clarified for a clear understanding of the data included in this report.

A farm, as defined in the 1935 Farm Census schedule—

Is all the land which is directly farmed by one person, either by his own labor alone or with the assistance of members of his household, or hired employees. The land operated by a partnership is likewise considered a farm. A farm may consist of a single tract of land, or of a number of separate tracts, and these several tracts may be held under different tenures, as when one tract is owned by the farmer and another tract is rented by him. When a landowner has one or more tenants, renters, croppers, or managers, the land operated by each is considered a farm. Thus on a plantation the land operated by each cropper or tenant should be reported as a separate farm, and the land operated by the owner or manager by means of wage hands should likewise be reported as a separate farm.

The enumerator was also instructed not to report as a farm any tract of land of less than 3 acres, unless its agricultural products in 1934 were valued at \$250 or more.

Supplemental instructions to the enumerators emphasized that ranches, nurseries, greenhouses, hatcheries, feed lots, and apiaries were to be considered farms, but establishments keeping fur-bearing animals or game, fish hatcheries, stockyards, parks, etc., were not to be considered farms.

A "FARM OPERATOR", according to the census definition, is a person who operates a farm, either performing the labor himself, or directly supervising it. Therefore, the number of farm operators is identical with the number of farms.

Some of the information in this report relates to the attributes of the farm, while the remainder relates to the characteristics of the operator of the farm. This should not be confusing since the number of farms and the number of operators is the same. Thus the terms "part-time farming", "part-time farms", and "part-time farmers" are used somewhat interchangeably.

The two following 1935 Farm Census Schedule inquiries provided the basis for classifying farm operators as "Part-Time Farmers":

5. How many **days** in 1934 did you work **for pay** or income at jobs, business, or professions not connected with farm you operate? (Omit labor exchanged.) (If no days, write "None")-----Days-----
6. Principal **occupation** on **days** worked as reported above in question 5-----

One of the instructions to enumerators stated that the **principal occupation** is that at which the operator worked the most days. The replies to question 6 where possible were divided into two general categories;

viz, those which could be classified as "nonagricultural" and those which could be classified as "agricultural." Where the occupation was not reported or the general classification could not be made, the occupation was designated "unclassified."

Hereafter, for convenience, the term "work off the farm" or "off-farm work" is usually used in place of the much longer term "work for pay or income at jobs, business, or professions not connected with the farm operated."

Many of the data herein have been classified according to the color of the farm operators and according to the tenure under which the farms were operated. On account of the close relationship of these two classes of data, the information by color of operators has been subclassified, in some instances, by the tenure under which such operators conducted their farming activities. Two main color groups have been used; viz, "white" and "colored." "White farm operators" include Mexicans and Hindus, while "colored farm operators" include Negroes, Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and all other nonwhite races. The several tenure classes used in the 1935 Farm Census were as follows:

Full owners are farm operators who own all the land which they operate.

Part owners are farm operators who own part of the land which they operate and rent and operate additional land. Part owners, therefore, have some of the characteristics of full owners and some of the characteristics of tenants.

Managers are farm operators who operate farms or ranches for the owners, receiving wages or salaries for their services.

Tenants are farm operators who operate hired or rented land only. If, on tenant-operated farms, the answers to the schedule inquiry, "Does the person from whom you rent this farm furnish all of the work animals?" were "yes", such operators were subclassified as "croppers", whereas, if the answers were "no" or if the inquiry was not answered and with no evidence to the contrary, such operators were subclassified as "other tenants." In this report figures for these two subclasses of tenants are presented only for the Southern States.

When the term "owners" appears without the qualifying adjective "full" or "part", it is used as inclusive of both subclasses.

Limitations of census data.—The most reasonable concept of a part-time farm seems to be one where a part of the family living is contributed by farming activities and a material contribution to the family support from outside income is made by any immediate member of the operating family. In a strict sense, the family does not need to reside on the land where the farming activity takes place. What, then, are the limitations of the census data relating to the farming activities and the outside income as outlined in this concept?

It is apparent from an inspection of the census definition of a farm and of the two schedule inquiries relating to days of work off the farm that the data are restricted to those tracts of land, meeting the rather arbitrary test of what constitutes a farm, whose operators worked one or more days off their farms for pay or income at nonfarm work or at work on another farm. It is obvious that many tracts of land of less than three acres in total extent, which contributed to the family living or perhaps had a small surplus of products for

sale, were not included as farms through their failure to have produced \$250 of products.

A considerable group of bona-fide farms were not classified as "part-time farms" where the operators did not work off their farms but some member contributing to the family support did work off the farm for pay or income. Other farms were excluded from the part-time group when the operators did not work off their farms even though they, or members of their families, had another source of income such as from interest, dividends, pensions, etc.

And, finally, it is a matter of conjecture to what extent such at-the-farm activities as conducting roadside stands, filling stations, boarding and lodging places, and custom work had been reported as outside work under the question wording "----- jobs, business, professions not connected with farm you operate? -----."

One of the obvious disadvantages of including farms whose operators had only a few days of off-farm work with those of operators who spent practically the full time away from the management of their farms has been corrected in part by making the tabulations by time groups; i. e., according to the number of days each operator spent off his farm for pay or income. A more serious fault of the data is the inclusion of residential and suburban tracts of land, with enough farming activities to be classified as farms, with commercial and semi-commercial farms. However, while recognizing the limitations of the data, it is believed that it is possible to rather accurately point out the areas where part-time farming is most prevalent regardless of the varied interpretations of part-time farming.

Purpose of study.—The delimiting of the areas where part-time farming occurs is, then, one of the primary purposes underlying this study. As an aid in accomplishing this purpose comparative data from the Census of 1930, in many instances, are presented alongside those from the Census of 1935. It is hoped that the tabulated data and the charts presented herein will be useful to those making further studies or those planning part-time farming programs.

It has been possible to extend the report somewhat further by the use of data secured from answers to the 1935 farm-schedule inquiries relating to total acreage, uses of land, value of farms, crops harvested, livestock on hand, etc. This widened scope makes it possible to contrast the farms of those operators working off their farms a few days with those of operators working off their farms a considerable number of days; to contrast, within areas, part-time farms by color and tenure of operator and by agricultural and nonagricultural off-farm work; and further, to contrast part-time farming between areas. Also this broadening of the range of information provides a basis for contrasting some organization factors for part-time farms with those for farms whose operators did not work off their farms. Further discussion of all of these factors is deferred until a later chapter.