

DICKENSON COUNTY, VA.

Dickenson is in the most westerly tier of counties of Virginia. It was chosen for study as being representative of a coal mining area. Along with it, to represent such an area, were selected McDowell County, W. Va., and Pike County, Ky., both of which are nearby. Data for these other two counties are given, in somewhat less detail, on the immediately succeeding pages. The additional data given for Dickenson County relating to crop and livestock organization may not be representative of the other two counties.

Dickenson has much rough terrain so that of its approximate 208,000 acres, or 325 square miles, only 59.1 percent was in farms in 1935. In 1930 Dickenson had a population of 16,163 persons, all of which was classified as rural population, i. e., there were no incorporated cities of 2,500 or more persons within the boundaries of the county. About two out of every three persons at that time were classified as living on farms. Males 10 years old and over engaged in gainful occupations in that year numbered 3,834, of which 1,864 were engaged in nonagricultural pursuits distributed as follows:

	Number	Percent
Nonagricultural.....	1,864	100.0
Forestry and fishing.....	227	12.2
Extraction of minerals (all coal mining).....	890	47.7
Manufacturing and mechanical industries.....	234	12.6
Lumber and furniture.....	144	7.7
Other manufacturing and mechanical.....	90	4.8
Transportation.....	150	8.0
Trade.....	166	8.9
Professional service.....	90	4.8
All other and industry not specified.....	107	5.7

As may be noted, slightly less than one-half of these males in this county were engaged in coal mining. This compares with about three-fourths in McDowell County and about two-thirds in Pike County.

All of the 2,264 farms enumerated in 1935 were in the control of "white" operators. The average size of farm was 54 acres, the average value per farm was \$1,259, and the average value per acre \$23, while the median size of farms was but 30 acres and the median value \$775. The acreage per farm was particularly low for a strictly rural county and the average value per farm was the lowest for any county in the State of Virginia, with two exceptions, viz, Buchanan and Wise, both adjoining counties.

Two-thirds (66.3 percent) of the operators performed off-farm work for pay or income in 1934 and about one-half (47.9 percent) of these were gainfully occupied 100 or more days at such outside jobs or businesses. Part-time farmers had smaller acreages and lower valued farms, though of higher value per acre, than the non-part-time group. However, the differences in the acreage per farm and value per farm were not so large as in some of the other counties. The median size and the median value, however, for both groups were much

lower than the corresponding arithmetic averages. The median size of the part-time farms was 29 acres as compared with the arithmetic average of 50 acres, whereas for the non-part-time farms, the corresponding figures were 38 acres and 63 acres.

Farm families, as an average (based on the total number of the farm population divided by the number of occupied dwellings), consisted of 5.5 persons. This corresponds with 5.4 persons in Pike County and 5 persons in McDowell County. In Dickenson County families averaged 5.7 persons on the part-time farms and 5.2 persons on the non-part-time farms. Six percent of the former group of farms reported persons moving back to the land as compared with 3 percent of the latter group of farms. Fifty-one percent of the part-time farmers and 32 percent of the non-part-time farmers had been on their farms less than 5 years.

A lower proportion of the full owners were engaged in off-farm work than of the tenants, the proportions being, respectively, about three-fifths (59.2 percent) and three-fourths (75.2 percent). Of those with outside work, about one-half of the total in each tenure group (49.7 percent for full owners and 45.6 for tenants) had additional income from at least 100 days of their services. The median size of the full owner part-time farms was 35 acres as compared with 20 acres for the tenant part-time farms.

There seems to be no outstanding difference between the part-time group of farms and the non-part-time group as to crop and livestock organization. In the first place, 16.8 percent of the farm land for the former group was in crops in 1934 as compared with 15.8 percent for the latter group, though the former had a slightly smaller proportion of its farms reporting crop production of any kind than was true for the latter. Again, while relatively fewer farms in the former group grew corn, oats, hay, Irish potatoes, sweetpotatoes, or kept horses and/or mules, and sheep, and while a slightly higher proportion had cattle, cows milked, and chickens than was true of the latter group, the differences were not particularly significant where the item was of importance. With somewhat smaller farms, the part-time farms had slightly lower average numbers of the various classes of livestock than had the non-part-time farms.

Attention is directed to tables 48, 49, and 50, in which the nonagricultural group is subclassified according to a more detailed break-down of the occupation. "Laborer" was most frequently reported, followed closely by reports which could be classed as "mining." Wherever there was evidence that the class of labor was "mining", "forestry", or "relief", it was grouped with one of the latter and not with "laborers." Definite conclusions should be guarded where the farms in a suboccupational group or for a time group thereof are limited in number.

DICKENSON CO., VIRGINIA

