

MCDOWELL COUNTY, W. VA.

McDowell County in the extreme southern part of West Virginia was one of three counties selected to represent coal mining areas. The other two counties are Dickenson, Va., and Pike, Ky. Since these three counties are in the same general area, the data for this county and for Pike are not shown in the same detail as for Dickenson.

McDowell is a rather mountainous county containing approximately 341,120 acres (533 square miles) of which only 80,249 acres, or 23.5 percent, were recorded by the Farm Census of 1935 as being in farms. The county in 1930 had a population of 90,479 persons of which all except 5.9 percent were designated "rural." Welch, the county seat, with a population of 5,376, was the only incorporated city of 2,500 or more persons. The rural population was largely rural-nonfarm as only 10.3 percent was considered rural-farm. The total number of males 10 years old and over gainfully occupied in that year was 26,461 of which 24,902 had as their main occupations nonagricultural pursuits distributed as follows:

	Number	Percent
Nonagricultural	24,902	100.0
Forestry and fishing.....	238	1.0
Extraction of minerals.....	18,894	75.9
Manufacturing and mechanical industries.....	1,365	5.5
Building.....	483	1.9
Other manufacturing and mechanical.....	882	3.5
Transportation.....	1,409	5.7
Trade.....	1,471	5.9
Professional service.....	561	2.3
Domestic and personal service.....	533	2.1
All other and industry not specified.....	431	1.7

The three-fourths of the males shown for the industry "Extraction of minerals" were, with a negligible exception, engaged in coal mining.

The 2,060 farms enumerated in 1935 were relatively small in acres per farm and of low total value, having the smallest average size and value per farm for any county in West Virginia. The arithmetic averages for McDowell were 39 acres and \$673 while the medians were 15 acres and \$400. About 15 percent of the farm acreage was used for crop production and of the harvested acreage nearly 70 percent was in corn. Smaller acreages of hay and Irish potatoes were grown. The type of farming, then, appears to have been largely "self-sufficing" which is in agreement with the 1930 type classification. Only 34 of the farms were in the control of "colored" operators, while upwards of two-thirds of all farms were operated by tenants.

A high proportion (60.3 percent) of the farm operators had income from work off their farms and all of the occupations which could be classified were non-agricultural in nature. Operators with off-farm work had considerably smaller farms of somewhat smaller

total value but of higher value per acre than was true for the non-part-time group. Thus, farms of the former group had a median size of 10 acres, a median value of \$400, and an average value per acre of \$19 as compared with 30 acres, \$500, and \$15 for the latter group. The difference in average value per acre may reflect in part a higher proportion of the total value represented by dwellings in one case than in the other. Farms of the former group had families that averaged 4.9 persons (that is, persons per occupied dwelling) and 9 percent of their population moved to the farm from a nonfarm place as compared with an average size of family of 5.1 persons and 3 percent of the population having moved back to the land for the other group. Thirty-nine percent of the operators in each group had been on their farms less than 5 years, while 31 percent of the part-time group had been on 5 to 9 years as compared with 22 percent for the non-part-time group.

Three-fourths (76.6 percent) of the farm operators engaged in off-farm work were so employed 100 days or more. As contrasted with the two other time groups, their farms tended to be smaller, having a median size of 8 acres as compared with 15 acres for each of the other two time groups though their median value was \$400 which exceeded that for each of the other two time groups.

Farms representing the "1 to 49 days" group had families averaging 5.7 persons, those of "50 to 99 days" 5.5, and those of "100 days and over" only 4.6. The average of 4.9 persons per family for the entire group of part-time farmers in this county was considerably lower than the 5.7 persons reported for Dickenson County, Va., and 5.6 persons reported for Pike County, Ky.

As between full owners and tenants, who represent nearly all the operators, the part-time farmers of the two groups had the same arithmetic size of farm (30 acres) but the median size for the former group was 18 acres as compared with only 8 acres for the latter group. The median value of the full-owner part-time farmers was \$600 and the average value per acre was \$27 as compared with \$400 and \$17 per acre for tenants. About 40 percent of the full owners and 73 percent of the tenants reported off-farm work. Of the operators with outside employment, 71.9 percent of the full owners and 78.1 percent of the tenants reported 100 days or more of such gainful work. Families averaged 5.1 persons on part-time farms of full owners and 4.8 on corresponding tenant farms. About 36 percent of the operators in the former group and 41 percent of those in the latter had been on their farms less than 5 years.

MC DOWELL CO., WEST VIRGINIA

