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A STUDY OF SOUTHWEST JASPER COUNTY, ILLINOIS

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A Paper

by

Kneffler V. Fulk

Presented to the Faculty

of

Eastern Illinois State College

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

* * * * *

Approved:

Professor of Social Science

Professor of Education

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PREFACE

The writer has been privileged to teach the children in the southwest area of Jasper County for the past twenty-nine years. During that time, he has kept records of the movements, educational progress, and marital status of all those who have passed through his classroom. He felt that the information he has gathered during the years might throw some light on the general pattern of migration, education, and marital status of a segment of young people reared in South-Central Illinois. The area studied is one in which population has been declining rapidly. In this respect, it has much in common with other rural areas which are primarily agricultural in nature. It is the hope of the writer that he may demonstrate in his small way that such areas as his are educating the young, not for life within their home communities, but for service and labor in communities other than those that trained them.

HISTORY

Jasper County Illinois was created by an act of the State legislature in 1831.¹ At that time, the area that is now Jasper County was claimed by the Federal government, but it was in the possession of the Piankashaw Indians. This land was a part of the territory that had been discovered, explored, and claimed by the French. In 1763, France gave her claims to England. During the Revolutionary War, soldiers from Virginia invaded the territory and conquered the few French settlements. They claimed the region for Virginia. In 1784, Virginia ceded her claims to the Federal government. In 1795, the Federal government, through General Wayne, negotiated a treaty with the Piankashaw Indians and some other tribes giving them \$210,000.00, with the understanding that they were to give up their claims to 11,809,499 acres of land. In 1805, General Harrison made a second treaty with them in which they were given \$4,100.00 for claims to 2,676,103 acres. They did not give up the land until after 1812.

Jasper County was originally a part of Crawford County.² In 1816, all the territory between the Wabash and Kaskaskia Rivers and the present southern boundary of Illinois to the northern limits of the United States was Crawford County.

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1. Martha Robbins, Jasper County Illinois, 1938, West Liberty, Illinois (Mimeographed.)
 2. Olney Daily Mail, Tuesday, October 19, 1954. Vol. 56

Illinois became a state in 1818. In 1831, the state legislature, which had been dividing the giant Crawford County into smaller counties, formed what is now Jasper County and called it by that name. It also declared that its County Seat, whenever selected by Commissioners Nathan Moss, William Magill, and Asahel Heath, would be called Newton. These names were selected in honor of two South Carolina heroes who served under General Marion in the Revolutionary War.

The Federal Land Policy, which brought about the great western movement in the nation as a whole, was of great significance to Jasper County during the pioneer period.³ The Federal Land Ordinance of 1785, provided for a rectangular system of survey to be used in the territory north of the Ohio River. Town units, each containing 36 square miles, were formed by meridians drawn north and south and base lines drawn east and west. Each range, town, and section was numbered in a definite pattern so that a tract of land could be exactly located.

Land offices were established. The individual could purchase land directly from the Federal government. The terms of purchase were changed from time to time. When Jasper County was created, land could be purchased for \$1.25 per acre. Most of the people living in the County were "squatters". They had come into the County and selected suitable spots for their homes without the formality of purchase. The increase in population forced them to procure title for their land from the

3. Ibid. P. 12

Federal government. They were protected in their claims by the Pre-Emption Act. This Act gave the individual who had improved the land the opportunity to buy it. Paying for the land was difficult, due to the fact that there were few methods of marketing products.

Michael Grove, an early settler in what is now Grove Township, recorded in 1863 that the first settler, in what is now Jasper County, was a man by the name of Lewis.

Newton was founded in 1826, when James Jordan and his family settled there and built the first cabin near where the present courthouse stands. Other early settlers were John V. Barnes, Benjamin Reynolds, L. W. Jordan, Benjamin Harris, a Wilkes, and a Wade. Two of the streets were named after Jordan and Reynolds. There is a Wade Township which includes the County seat of Newton. James Jordan entered his claim to the land in 1831. Newton continued as a non-incorporated village until 1865, when it received its state charter of incorporation.

Most of the early Jasper County Pioneers were from Kentucky and other Southern States. They came by way of the Ohio and Wabash Rivers. They used a route called the Palestine-Vandalia road. Their economic and political sympathies were with the South. This was due to the fact they had common agricultural interests. They had common grievances against the money lenders of the East. There were many conflicts between farming areas, especially over slavery, which brought about a migration from the North and East and increased markets and commerce. Jasper County grew very little in population until the completion of the Illinois Central Railroad. The railroad was planned during the

the mid 1850's and was completed through the County in 1876.

The transitional years of the County may be listed as 1870-1890, during which there were changes in political life and institutions. Eleven township governments were established. Villages with post offices were built at convenient points along the railroads. These were centers of social and economic life. Agriculture remained as the outstanding industry. It was subsistence farming. Group activities increased.

The period, from 1910 to the present, has been marked by improved roads and a tremendous increase in the number of automobiles and tractors. In 1911, as many as five automobiles passing through a village ^aday was unusual. In 1919, there were 970 licensed automobiles in the County. There were 1,120 in 1920. In 1956, there were 3,966 automobiles and trucks.

The first hard-surfaced road was Route 33 which extended west from Newton approximately seven miles. It was built in the early 1920's. Later roads built included one north and south and another east and west across the County. They cross at Newton. Besides these main highways, many miles of secondary highways have been built some of which are paved, some are black top, and most of the rest are graveled. Only a few homes are still dependent on oiled or unimproved roads.

The improved roads brought about great changes in transportation. Trucks supplanted trains as common carriers, except for exceptionally heavy goods and items being shipped long distances.

MOBILITY OF POPULATION

Mobility in this study was confined to horizontal movement only. The school districts were two miles square, and each had a one-room school building. In these one-room school districts very few former pupils are now found. Three have two. One has none. Two have four. Those that remain are either living with or near their parents. Those who remain are all men except one. They are usually the youngest of the family. Three live on large farms. They are in partnership with their parents.

Sixty-seven of these former pupils have moved to adjoining areas or counties. These people are predominately farmers or are in work related to farming. A few work as mechanics, clerks, or employees of small factories. Thirty-four have moved north and have spread out over a large area. A very small number of these are farm workers or renters. The greater part, however, are employed in industrial plants, such as bean mills, steel mills, oil refineries, and defense plants. Seventeen live in other states. Three of these are women whose husbands work in the steel mills. One man lives in Indiana where he is employed in the steel mills. One lives in Missouri and works in a shell factory. Three live in Colorado. One of these is an industrial worker, another is a pilot and the third is a housewife. Six live in Texas. They went there as employees of oil companies. California has three. One is a housewife and real estate agent, another is an industrial worker. The third is a city fireman in Los Angeles.

This study shows that six of these pupils are deceased, four are

serving in the armed forces, and seventeen remain in the old school district areas. Only twelve per cent of all pupils studied can remain in the home area and progress. The farms have become larger units. There are thirty-six building sites from which buildings have been moved or torn down. A few buildings are still there but abandoned. This is an area with a diminishing number of farms of increasing size. The change has been from diversified to grain and livestock farming. Twenty-nine years ago each farmer produced a variety of products. He produced many types of poultry, dairy products, meat, animals, lumber, fur, wool, and fruit, some of which he was able to sell. There was one field crop in particular that was a cash crop. This was a grass called "Redtop". It grew best on wet, sour land. We find very little of this crop today. Its disappearance was due to draining the soil and the use of limestone. Many horses and mules were formerly raised.

The pupils who have moved away have migrated for the most part to urban areas. It is interesting to compare 1928 pupils in this writer's study with the 1928 sample studied by Baker and Wright and reported in their book, "Midwest and Its Children". The comparison shows that the mobility pattern followed by "Midwest" children is very similar to that followed by Southwest Jasper County children. In order to make the samples correspond, the writer tabulated the movements of his 1928 pupils and compared them with "Midwest's" sample of 1928. In both groups, the percentage of those who remain in the home district is very low. The number who move from the home district

to another district in the same county is still smaller. However, the subjects in the "Midwest" study were more likely to move farther from home than the writer's 1928 group. In the "Midwest" study, 71.6 per cent settled in either "Midwest" State or a bordering state. Of the writer's 1928 group, 90 per cent settled in either Illinois or a bordering state. In both groups, the subjects show a tendency to move out of their home community, but they do not move in great numbers to far-away sections.

Tables I and II, page 9, shows the comparative migration away from the southwest area and midwest area.

Many of the pupils in the 1946-1955 group are still in school. The rest of the pupils in this group show the same general pattern of mobility as the older group. They, too, move from rural to urban areas, especially to the north. Thirty-eight ^{For the most part,} have moved away. ~~they~~ are employed in industrial plants or transportation. One, an industrial worker, lives in California. One girl is a nurse. One girl is in nurse's training. Four men are in the armed forces. One is a mental patient in a state hospital. Two, because of health, live in Arizona. The men and women had to move in order to find work.

Here is the mobility record of a typical "Southwest area" family: three daughters married and moved to Indiana where their husbands work in the steel mills; two daughters married oil field workers and live in small villages in adjoining counties; one son lives in California; and six younger children are still at home and five of these are still in school.

Population figures show that the population of "Southwest area" declined steadily from 1900 to 1940.

The following figures from the pamphlet, Wartime Influence on Jasper County, Illinois,⁴ shows this decline:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>
1900	1,477
1910	1,310
1920	1,052
1930	726
1940	759

4. Wartime Influence on Jasper County, Illinois (University of Illinois, Urbana, 1946) p. 2

TABLE I
 COMPARATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE 1954 RESIDENCES
 OF PUPILS ENROLLED IN MIDWEST AREA
 AND SOUTHWEST AREA SCHOOLS
 IN 1928 BY NUMBERS

	Midwest Area	Southwest Area
Home District	5	4
Home County	3	3
Bordering County	0	4
Home State or Bordering State	15	7
Other States	6	1
Foreign Country	1	0
Deceased	2	1
Total	32	28

TABLE II
 COMPARATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF THE 1954 RESIDENCES
 OF PUPILS ENROLLED IN MIDWEST AREA
 AND SOUTHWEST AREA SCHOOLS
 IN 1928 BY PERCENTAGE

	Midwest Area	Southwest Area
Home District	15.6	20.0
Home County	9.4	15.0
Bordering County	0	20.0
Home State or Bordering State	4.68	35.0
Other States	18.7	5.0
Foreign Country	3.1	0.0
Deceased	6.4	5.0

EDUCATION

The educational history of this area may be divided into two periods. The first is the era of one-room schools, the other is the period since school consolidation. One hundred-forty-three pupils compose the group before consolidation. Eighty-one of this group entered a three-year high school in the adjoining county. In order to take the fourth year, they had two alternatives. They could board and room away from home or, in a few instances, the parents did move to an area having a four-year high school. It was twenty miles to a four-year high school. The roads were all "dirt". They were very muddy during rainy weather or when freezing and thawing. The group that entered high school was a fraction over fifty-six per cent. Fifty-one of those entering high school graduated. This is about sixty-three per cent of the entering group. Most of the dropouts came at the end of the eleventh grade.

This dropout rate is about the same as that for the United States as a whole, but Chart I, page 13, shows that schools in "Southwest Areas" holds pupils longer than do schools in the United States as a whole. It also shows that in "Southwest Areas" pupils tend to stay in school through the eleventh grade. They then tend to drop out, probably because they must go much greater distances to do twelfth grade work.

Fourteen of the high school graduates continued their education. This was about twenty-nine and four-tenths per cent of all high school graduates in their group. Three of this group completed a two-year

college course which qualified them to teach in the elementary schools. All three did teach for a time and one is still teaching. Of those who left teaching, one is a farmer and the other is a housewife. Two graduated from a four-year college and became high school teachers. Later they also earned their Master's Degree. Neither is now teaching; they are housewives. There are three other four-year college graduates. One high school graduate attended an Electronics School. One is a graduate of a Deisel School. One graduated from a Technical School and now is a jeweler. Two are Business College graduates. One is attending a Bible College. One entered a School of Theology, but soon dropped out. One is a Beauty School graduate.

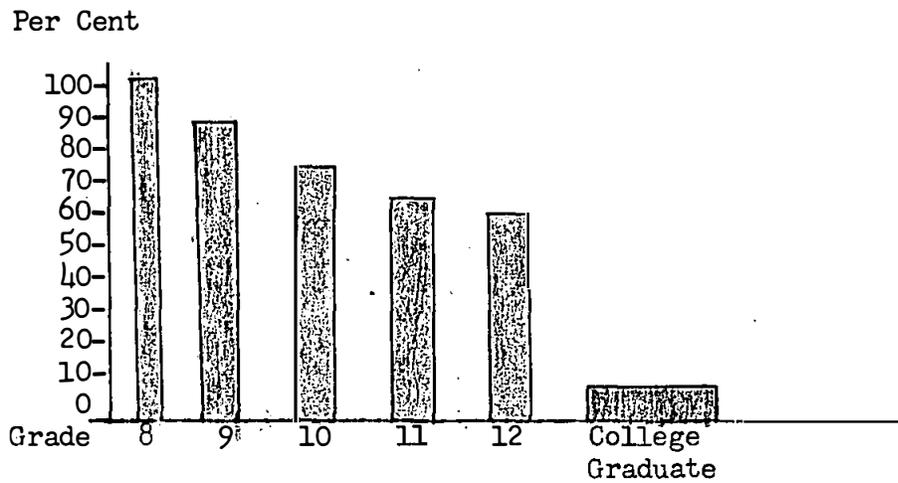
Fourteen and two-sevenths per cent of the college entrance group earned their Master's Degree. Thirty-five and two-sevenths per cent of the entering group are four-year college graduates. Four dropped out before completing college. This is twenty-eight and four-sevenths per cent of the college entrance group. The remaining twenty-one and one-seventh of the high school graduates attended deisel, electronics, beauty culture, business college, or Bible School.

School consolidation began in Jasper County in 1940. The group, since 1940, consists of one-hundred-fourteen pupils. Ninety-four of these entered high school. There is only one high school in the County. Buses transport all pupils from this area to high school at school district expense. Fifty of this group are still in high school. Thirty-two have graduated from high school. One of the high school graduates is in nurse's training. Twelve of these pupils dropped out

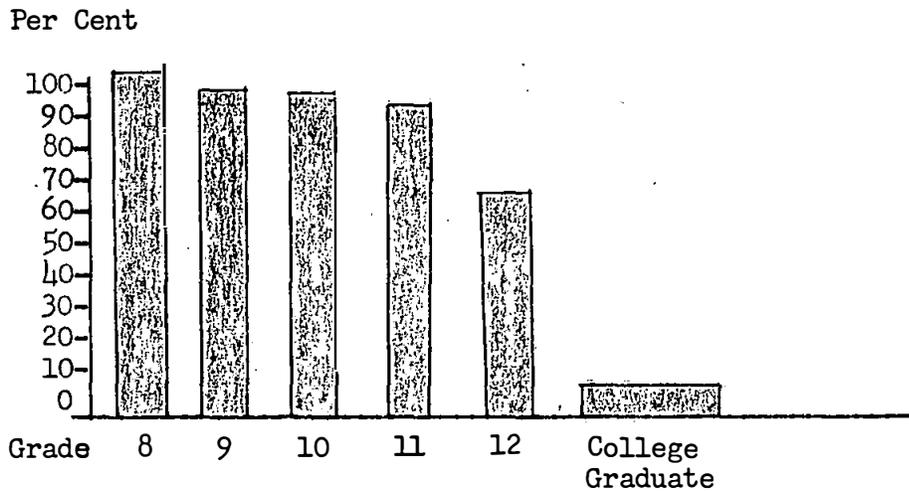
of high school before graduating. Five of these went to work. Seven are married. A greater per cent of the eighth-grade graduates have entered high school since consolidation than did before consolidation. A greater per cent of post-consolidation eighth-grade graduates complete high school, too.

It is interesting to note that before consolidation, a few privately-operated buses transported pupils to and from high school at the pupil's own expense. Because of bad roads, even this limited transportation was not available to many pupils.

CHART I

EDUCATIONAL SURVIVAL OF THE UNITED STATES¹

EDUCATIONAL SURVIVAL OF SOUTHWEST AREA PUPILS



1. Blough and Sweitzer, Fundamentals of Citizenship (Laidlaw Brothers, New York, 1951) p. 147

MARITAL STATUS

Of the one-hundred marriages of subjects in this study, seven have ended in divorce. This is seven per cent. The divorce rate of the United States is about ten per cent.¹ Four of the divorces were in the same family. There have been no divorces in the Catholic group. The greater number of marriages have been within their own ethnic group. Marriages have also usually been within their own religious group. The average number of children per family is 3.2. The average for the United States is 3.0.² This differential is in accordance with national findings which show that rural areas and certain ethnic groups have larger families than others.

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1. Paul H. Landis, Population Problems (Row Peterson and Co., Chicago, 1955.) p. 67
 2. Kliplinger Report (Newton Press, Ninety-Fifth Year, January 24, 1956.)

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