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UA94/6/1 The Economic & Social Status of Boyce Rural Community

Thelma Glasscock

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THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STATUS
of
BOYCE RURAL COMMUNITY
by
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Foreword

My aim in this study is to present in a brief manner the economic and social status of the community or school district in which I live. My data have been collected through observations over a period of twenty years and contacts made with the people of this district, through conferences with those much older than I, from records and reports of others, and a house to house canvass of the district. The pictures, illustrating certain features, were made during the spring of 1935.

I am indebted to my family and the older people of the community for valuable information and suggestions. It is my wish to present the data I have collected in a form that will do credit to the community and the people living in it.

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Introduction

Warren County is located in southwestern Kentucky somewhat in line between two metropolitan centers, Louisville, Kentucky and Nashville, Tennessee. (See Fig. 1). From the standpoint of land utilization it is typical of a rather extensive part of both Kentucky and Tennessee. Its location as the second county north of the boundary between the two states places it well within the state in a physical and cultural environment typically Kentuckian. Warren County lies near the center of the Pennyroyal, a well recognized regional sub-division of the Interior Low Plateau, and one of the three major agricultural regions of the state. (See Fig. 2). The Pennyroyal is the most transitional in character of all the major natural regions of Kentucky. Surface and soils exemplify almost the entire range of conditions found elsewhere in the state. Broad belts of rich limestone soil compare well with soils of the Bluegrass, while sections of thin, sandy soil and rugged relief are quite suggestive of the mountain topography. Cultural conditions within the Pennyroyal likewise have a wide range, from those of the poor farmer of the more remote hilly section to those of the wealthy tobacco and livestock farm owners of the fertile limestone country.

The Warren County section of the Pennyroyal lies between the Tennessee and the Ohio sub-divisions, which Ward makes on the basis of rainfall, of the east coast humid mesothermal climatic province recognized by Köppen. But its close proximity to the Tennessee region both when considered in terms of latitudinal distance and frequented storm tracks, gives the area a striking
similarity to the Tennessee region in temperature and rainfall regimes. In locating Warren County in terms of climatic provinces then, it will suffice to state that it is Tennessean.¹

These general remarks for Warren County as a whole are quite typical of the Boyce school district located in the extreme southeastern part of the county completely enclosed by natural boundaries, namely: Allen County line on the south and southeast, Trammel Creek on the east and northeast, Drakes Creek on the north, and Middle Fork Creek on the Northwest and West. (See Topographic Map, Fig. 3). The northern and southern parts of Warren County stand in direct contrast to each other, both physically and economically. The Pennyroyal contains no better land than the deep, fertile, undulating limestone plain of the southern part of the county; while in the northern part rugged hill country with thin infertile, sandy soil has perhaps as low agricultural potentialities as any part of the region.²

The Boyce district belongs to the southern and southeastern parts of the county, which belong to the Pennyroyal Plain, and are characterized by level or slightly undulating relief except in a few karst areas and in the vicinity of the drainage channels. The best part of the district is the Clarksville soil, developed from the St. Louis limestone that underlies most of the area, and is in most places a deep, fertile, red silt loam with high productive capacities. Other portions of the district are rough, hilly, rocky

¹ Gibson, J. Sullivan, "Land Economy of Warren County" Economic Geography, January 1934, pp. 76-78

² Ibid. p. 79.
and a thin layer of poor soil covers these portions. The relatively narrow creek bottoms are the regions of highest productivity.

The average farmer in this section does not practice the strict economy necessary in subsistence agriculture; but prompted by a motive to make money by investing heavily in cash crops of tobacco, grain, and livestock, he has developed a rather extravagant system of living.
Economic Status

Number of Farms

The Boyce School District comprises approximately twelve square miles or seven-thousand six-hundred and eighty acres, the whole of which has been subdivided into ninety-four separate farms. In some instances the farms are separated by natural boundaries as creeks or roads; others have artificial boundaries which are recorded in deeds. Arbitrary boundaries which were made by mutual agreement have later become a point of contention between the children of the men who set up arbitrary lines. During the years that I have been old enough to observe closely, there has been a minimum turn-over of farm ownership, that is, the children merely take over the farm when the father dies, then their children take it so that the same farm remains in the hands of the same family on and on.

The average size of farms is approximately 81 acres. The largest in size being 250 acres, while there are a few small ones of only 10 acres. The estimated average value per acre of the farm land is $80. The best land is valued at $200 an acre, while the poorest regions would bring only around $10 an acre.

Approximately fifty per cent of the tillable land has been improved—largely through the use of barnyard manures, commercial fertilizers, legumes, such as peas, soy beans, Korean Lespedeza, clovers and alfalfa. The acreage devoted to alfalfa is only a small per cent as yet, due to the expense of once getting started—that is, preparing the soil so it will grow alfalfa by liming. Only the most progressive farmers have attempted growing it. (Fig. 6 shows one field of alfalfa growing on a medium grade soil).
The lime was obtained mainly from the limestone rocks in the community which were crushed in the community by a rock crusher at a small amount per ton. A few obtained the needed lime from Bowling Green. To get the lime on the soil, a wheat drill is used to spread it to save the expense incurred by buying a lime spreader. The same wheat drill is used by all showing a cooperative attitude. Those who produce enough alfalfa hay to feed their stock through the winter and spring are lucky. Farmers who feed their cows on alfalfa hay get the largest returns from milk sold, cream, and veal calves. Then, those who have a surplus are very fortunate as there is a demand for the product.

Fully one-third of the entire 7,680 acres is covered by forests. In some areas the trees are valuable for lumber, in others the valuable timber has been cut leaving the immature trees to be cut later. Recently the mature trees from a plot of about 20 acres were sold for $2000. The trees from other plots are being sold at various intervals. Also, much timber is used each year for fuel in the home as this is the chief source of fuel. Only
a few families use coal and that is on rare occasions. Many trees which would make fairly good lumber are quite often used to burn a tobacco bed, make posts, axe handles, or some other minor use. The farmer owning valuable trees is often unable to dispose of them profitably due to distance from market, expense of transportation and inaccessibility to area containing trees. Much lumber is used locally for many other things such as rails, fence lumber, boards, and lumber for constructing buildings such as houses, barns, and small buildings. During the spring of 1935 several barns, chicken houses and two new homes were built. In every instance the lumber and labor were furnished locally. On the farm of the person who built the new home a portable saw-mill was brought (Fig. 7) and the lumber was furnished for the entire building with the exception of floor and roof. (Fig. 8) While the mill was stationed in the community, various ones hauled logs to be sawed into lumber for use around their own homes. When the demand for lumber was satisfied the person owning the engine moved on to areas needing grain threshed, rocks crushed, or some other use for the engine.

The idea of conservation has never become a necessity with people of this area; consequently, much waste occurs each year. The leading varieties of trees in this area are oak, walnut, cedar, chestnut, maple, hickory, elm, beech, ash, sycamore, poplar, and dogwood. Practically every farm has an orchard, some are old and diseased trees due to failure to prune and spray, while others are young and well-kept. The production of apples, peaches, pears,
Fig. 7

The location of the saw-mill.

Fig. 8

The new home constructed by local carpenters from lumber which was sawed from plot shown in Fig. 7.
The type of farming predominating in this district, as well as the entire county, is mixed. Practically all crops which are grown in this section of Kentucky are grown in this district. The leading money crop is tobacco, and the production is heavy each year. Two varieties are grown—burley and dark tobacco. The yield per acre varies from a small amount of a poor grade on the less productive areas to a larger yield of a higher quality on the most fertile land. The yield is also proportionate to the amount of labor, fertilization, and season, whether wet or dry. The average yield per acre of burley is about 900 pounds; the yield per acre on good areas is 1500 pounds, while a yield of only 500 pounds is realized from poor land. The average yield of dark is 1200 pounds; the yield on best ground is 1800 pounds per acre, while that of the poorest ground devoted to dark tobacco is only 800 pounds per acre. Overproduction is quite evident in this district to all except the farmer—he still produces the largest amount possible from his land. To check this overproduction, the farmers have been urged to sign government contracts which limit the amount to be grown. Many farmers in this community have taken advantage of the contract and on the whole, have been rather well satisfied with results. Some of the tobacco produced never reaches the market, but is utilized on the farm—that is, many residents in this section keep out at least 20 or 25 pounds of tobacco for chewing and smoking. The tobacco stalks are used for fertilizer.

Corn is a leading crop of this section—being produced mainly to be used on the farm as a feed for livestock and to furnish bread for the family. The creek bottoms are almost wholly devoted
to this one crop while a large portion of the upland is planted in the same crop. The average yield per acre is 20 bushels, while a yield of 65 bushels or more is often realized from the best bottom land. On the poorest land devoted to corn a yield of only 5 bushels is realized. If a farmer is thrifty enough to have a surplus of corn he may find a ready market locally—either his neighbor or the man who grinds the corn into meal. In addition to having meal ground at this mill situated near the center of the district, the farmer may have almost any form of corn feed ground or chopped for his livestock or poultry.

The amount of wheat produced in this district is negligible, due to topography, lack of machinery with which to plant and harvest, and distance from market or a flour mill. The amount produced in this community is utilized either as bread for the family or feed for the livestock and poultry. There is only one binder in the district and usually the wheat is cut with a scythe. The thresher tours the regions growing wheat and the straw is used for bedding for stock and it is quite common to see a farmer with two or three well-filled straw "ticks" or mattresses on a wagon leaving the straw stack.

Aside from tobacco as a main money crop, a number of farmers, especially those owning farms situated on upland along the main highway, grow strawberries and watermelons as cash crops. The strawberry crop not only brings a fairly good return to the owner but furnishes a job for the younger boys and girls of the community by which they are able to help out in buying their school clothes and books. Also the truckers of the community are given
the job of hauling the berries to Woodburn or Bowling Green to be shipped.

In addition to the crops named, many others are grown—most of these are consumed on the farm either as food for the farmer or his livestock. Only in a few cases do such products reach an outside market, then it is often in exchange for a similar product to be used for seed. The most important crops are small grains, oats, rye, barley-rye being used mainly as a cover crop, and hay, such as timothy, clovers, peas, alfalfa, lespedeza, and various grasses. Many varieties of vegetables are grown, mainly in the farm garden. Every farmer has a garden which is situated near the house, not only for convenience for getting vegetables but so the house wife may work in it during her spare time. It is from the garden that a large amount of food for the winter is obtained by canning, drying and storing during summer months.

Industries

It is easy to conclude from the previous discussion that mixed farming is the leading industry of this community. Only a few farmers attempt specialized farming, as the risk is too great—that is, devoting all his land and capital to truck farming or fruit growing. Climate is a determining factor in regard to this as well as distance from market and a cheap means of transportation.

In connection with general farming most all farmers have some livestock in addition to work horses or mules. These consist chiefly of hogs, cattle, both beef and dairy, sheep and goats. Sheep predominate over goats and many lambs are sold each spring (Fig. 9, 10, 11) as well as several pounds of wool, the shearing being per-
formed by the farmer according to the old saying "The first day of May is sheep shearing day." Some of the wool is utilized on the farm, that is, it is picked by hand, washed, carded, spun, and knitted into sweaters, shawls, mittens, and caps or woven into blankets. There are a number of ladies in the community whose chief delight and work during the long winter days is knitting. There are several spinning wheels in the community and one loom.

Also, each year, if the season permits, many farmers plant a few rows of cotton in the garden to be used in making new quilts. The cotton is also picked, seeded by hand or a home-made gin, and carded into bats for the quilts.

The hogs are raised mainly for meat and lard supply for the family for the entire year, however, some of the farmers who have a surplus of corn and near to a market often feed as many as fifty hogs for market and realize a nice profit. (Fig.12)
Cattle raised in the community are mainly dairy in type. The leading breeds are Jersey and Holstein, but others are raised by some. Most every farmer has a cow, while many have from ten to twenty. Some sell whole milk to the Pet Milk Plant at Bowling Green, which opened in 1927, while others sell cream at the local station where it is tested and shipped to the Nashville creamery. Most of the calves are sold for veal, but a few of the best heifers are kept by the farmer to enlarge his group of dairy cows. Only a few farmers are at all prepared to care for the cows in the modern way, consequently, their profits are smaller than those who read bulletins, consult the county agent, and feed their cows properly. Much of the land is well suited to pasturing; so feed is a small problem during the spring and summer. Practically every year, beginning about September, some of the leading farmers form a "beef club"—that is, each week one farmer furnished a beef and so on until each member has furnished a beef and each has received an equal amount of beef.

Another industry is trucking. In the entire district, only two men own trucks. One is the man whose business it is to haul the milk to Bowling Green to the milk plant, but when that is done, he is free to do general hauling. (Fig 13) The other person does general hauling altogether. This consists of livestock, such as cattle, hogs, calves and lambs, strawberries, merchandise for local merchants, farm machinery, seeds and supplies, tobacco,
coal and the like. Due to cost of transportation by truck, many farmers have their individual trailers in which they haul goods to and from market.

There are five general stores in the community which handle both groceries and dry goods. Figure 14 shows the picture of the Boyce Post Office and general store. Much direct exchange is carried on—that is, the farmer exchanges eggs, meat, potatoes, butter and other farm products for things he needs and cannot produce on the farm. In spite of the fact that much bartering is done, many farmers have a huge store account at the end of the year—if the storekeeper is willing to trust him. As soon as he receives his tobacco check, he pays this account—if the check is sufficient to cover it.

There is no keen competition between the stores, in that the part of the community nearest a certain store trades there in most instances. The merchants cooperate with
the truck drivers in that they give them the job of hauling their produce to the market and bringing to them the goods they need for their store.

**Machinery and Equipment**

Due to size of farms, topography, climate and nearness to market, all farming is done on a small scale, as it would be a serious mistake for any farmer in this district to purchase a large amount of high priced farm machinery (even on the installment plan). The farmers realize this, therefore, if each farmer has a few good plows, a mowing machine, a corn planter, a disc-cultivator, a hay rake and a good wagon he considers himself well supplied. Many farmers are not able to buy their own tools, so they either borrow from neighbors or pay for the use of machinery by working for the person from whom it was borrowed. Not all machinery is properly housed during the winter, but is allowed to set out in bad weather and much damage results.

**Social Status**

**People**

Of the 124 separate families, making a total population of 474 persons, 94 own farms and 30 are renters. In general both owners and renters show a progressive attitude toward improvements in general throughout the community, whether they benefit directly or indirectly. For example, on practically all farms, as soon as spring has come, the farmers are very
enthusiastic in getting their farm work under way. During fair weather, they are busy plowing, while on wet days, they mend fences, repair machinery and harness and perform other odd jobs which they cannot afford to do during plowing weather. This same enthusiastic spirit is characteristic of work in and around the house at this time. Here, the women of the family are busily engaged in spring cleaning, painting, white-washing, seeing to baby chicks, turkeys and geese, making flower beds and doing most of the garden cultivation. So, in practically every case in this community, the people take pride in their occupation, home, work, family life, school, church, and community activities. (Fig. 15, 16, 17 are examples of buildings on one of the best farms.) (Figure 18 on a poorer farm)
The people of this community are typical rural farmers. In general, the conditions of progress are about average. In some instances, for example, the type of homes and the school the community is a little above the average.

The School

The Boyce High School, situated approximately in the center of the district, was started exactly twenty years ago. I was not old enough to remember, but I have been told that there was strong opposition to consolidation of the two one-room rural schools into a consolidated two-room rural school. Only the broad-minded, progressive citizens of the two districts worked for consolidation—the others pulled against it. Finally, due to local initiative and leadership, the consolidation program was achieved and the new building was constructed. Those who were not in favor of consolidation helped in no way to get the building ready for school, while the ones who had spent a lot of time working for consolidation gave much of their time and money to get the building finished by July. Due to their tireless efforts, the task was accomplished, and the first school term at Boyce opened July 1915. There was no high school work offered until 1918, when the building was enlarged and a two-year high school was created. Miss Graham Sherry, of Warren County, was principal from 1915 to 1918. Due to a strong cooperative attitude on the part of
the leading patrons of the district the school continued to
grow, and the narrow-minded ones were gradually won over.
Today, there is a three-year high school at Boyce and prac-
tically every citizen in the entire district is exceedingly
proud of it and shows that he is by cooperating with the
teachers and his fellow citizens.

Of all the pupils who have attended Boyce High School,
only two have ever received a college degree; however, about
twelve or fifteen have attended college. Of this number
eight have taught school at Boyce. Each year more and more
parents are realizing the value of a higher education; con-
sequently, more pupils from this district will be attending
college. The majority of the people show an earnest and
ready spirit of cooperation in practically all school activ-
ities. They demand well-trained teachers, but are not
always supplied. The children are sent to school regularly
and show by their attitudes and work both toward teachers
and fellow pupils that they have had some "bringing up" at
home. There are only a few parents in the district who hold
to the "What-was-good-enough-for-me-is-good-enough-for-my-
child-" idea; consequently, criticism and discouragement
come from these rather than cooperation and encouragement.
This narrow-minded viewpoint or attitude toward school im-
provements is probably due to ignorance, lack of education,
prejudice, and heredity. For example, when the game of
basket-ball was first introduced in the Boyce High School, there were those who threatened to stop their children if they were allowed to even go on the ball court. Others offered special prayers for the teachers who encouraged or promoted such games in which the pupils were dressed in such "indecent garb", meaning the athletic suits. Never once has a teacher dared present a program in which simple folk dancing and drills were included. Only a few times at High School Plays have these so called "borned thirty years too soon" people seen evening dresses—then they almost covered their eyes in horror. These conditions are not typical of the community at large and are gradually being broken down by the younger inhabitants attending other schools, some going to college and bringing home new ideas which are not always accepted.

During the last two school years, the Boyce High School has improved in attendance and has secured better equipment. During the school year of 1933-34 there were twenty-three pupils enrolled in the two-year high school, which was an increase of fifteen pupils over the previous year. During 1934-35, there were thirty-four high school pupils in attendance in the three-year high school. There is a possibility of having the school increased to a four-year high school in 1935. Figure 19 shows the pupils in attendance at Boyce High School in 1934-35. Figure 20 shows the building as it is today.
The Church

There are five churches in the community and four different denominations. The work in each church is separate from the others, coordination and cooperation are absent. The old time "Revival" or "Protracted Meeting" takes up about two or three months in the summer and fall as each church has a separate session. One often wonders if these revivals do the good that is intended for them to do when he observes neighbors who will speak to each other only during the period when the meeting is in session.

Leadership in the church and Sunday School by young people is discouraged. There is not a single church organization for the young folks in the entire community with the exception of Sunday School. The older inhabitants are severely critical of the younger generation, especially the activities and sports indulged in by them.

There is one sermon each month at each church. In most instances the preachers are poorly paid; consequently, they are poorly trained, unprogressive, and reside outside the community. Figure 21 shows the Missionary Baptist Church, Mt. Lebanon.
Roads

In general the roads are about average for a rural community. There is about twenty-five miles of pike or gravelled road in the entire community and it is in a poor condition, the others are merely dirt roads, which by the annual grading are kept in fair condition and furnish employment to some fifteen or twenty local men. Only a few miles of road in the remote sections of the district become impassable with cars, and this is during the late winter and early spring months. All of the roads are maintained by the county. Some of the gravel for road improvement is obtained locally—from creek beds in the district—thus helping the person from whom it is bought and giving employment to several men of the district in getting it hauled to the road.

Fig. 22

The community blacksmith shop, garage and mill.
Conclusion

In this short study of my home community, I have endeavored to present in a true light the existing economic and social conditions and activities which prevail. My attitude toward my community is one of loyalty and high regard. The facts which I have presented were collected with the intention of helping in some way to better both economic and social conditions, rather than leaving the impression that my attitude is critical. One attitude that I have tried to develop while getting what education I have is to try to make others happier and thereby, be happier myself. I consider it a high honor to have the privilege of working with these rural people of my own community, and it is my desire to be such a leader and encourage such activities that will make for a better citizenship in this small community, thus making for a better society at large.

Gradually, through a better education for more people, a contact with educated people through books, magazines, daily papers and radio, and general improvement throughout the community, I firmly believe that a higher social order will be brought about.

Respectfully submitted,

Thelma Glasscock

Thelma Glasscock