THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF DENTON COUNTY, TEXAS, 1900-1950

THESIS

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MASTER OF ARTS

By

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PREFACE

The essential problems of social science do not always manifest themselves on large national canvases, nor do the fundamental processes which direct social evolution often originate in capitols and legislative bodies or in national associations. These problems and these processes generally emerge in localities, in communities, and their nature, operation, and influence can be studied most effectively only there. No isolated problem or process can be truly understood without a complete and accurate picture of the complex which makes up the environment.*

In 1918 Edward F. Bates published his *History and Reminiscences of Denton County*, in which he attempted to write a complete history of the county from the time of its formation to the beginning of the twentieth century. While perhaps the work is sketchy, it nevertheless represents the only published volume of history recorded on a county-wide scale and provides the reader with a valuable view of Denton's past.

This current project continues the study started by Bates, with special emphasis on the economic growth and development of Denton County during the first half of the twentieth century. The terminal date at mid-century indicates a significant turning point in time when the economic structure of the county changed.

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CHAPTER I

THE SETTING

No where, perhaps, have the charms of nature been more prodigally lavished than in the lone star state; her mountains, with their bright aerial tints; her valleys teeming with fertility; her boundless plains, waving with spontaneous verdure, her rivers and creeks rolling in solemn silence; her trackless forests where vegetation puts forth all its magnificence; her skies kindling with magic of summer clouds, and glorious sunshine--no never need a Texan go beyond his own glorious country for natural and beautiful scenery. And in no county in the state, would you be more struck with the contribution of nature and her scenery than in many parts of Denton County.¹

Three counties of North Texas constitute what is termed locally the "Golden Triangle." Dallas and Tarrant Counties, well known for their populous metropolitan areas of Dallas and Fort Worth, form the base, while Denton County, a progressive and attractive area with the city of Denton as the county seat, constitutes the apex.

Denton County is in the second tier of counties south of the Red River, and is situated slightly east of the north central part of the state. Not being quite square, the county measures approximately thirty miles on its east and west boundaries, and approximately thirty-one miles on its southern and northern limits, forming a total area of approximately 941 square miles.² The county lies within the longitudinal lines 96° 26'

and $97^\circ 24'$, and latitudinal lines $33^\circ 26'$ and $29^\circ 55'$.\textsuperscript{3} Neighboring counties include the two mentioned above, plus Cooke and Grayson on the north, Collin on the east, and Wise on the west.

From north to south in the eastern half of the county flows the main water tributary, the Elm Fork of the Trinity River. The Lewisville Dam arrests this major stream to form the Garza-Little Elm Reservoir. Into this river and lake run most of the lesser streams. The Elm Fork originates in eastern Montague County near Saint Jo, then flows eastward for approximately twenty-five miles, where it bends southward near Gainesville in Cooke County. It continues for approximately fifteen miles, where it enters Denton County, and runs nearly eighteen miles more until it empties into the reservoir. Ten miles south of this point, beyond the dam, it resumes its course and eight wriggly miles later exits into Dallas County.

The Garza-Little Elm Reservoir is the largest lake on the Trinity River, with a surface area of 39,000 acres at maximum flood control level, and 23,280 acres with a shoreline of 183 miles at the top of the conservation pool. It has the capacity to retain 525,200 acre-feet of water at flood stage and 436,000 acre-feet at conservation level.\textsuperscript{4}

The following streams commence east of the Elm Fork and are listed as they empty therein or into the reservoir:


1. Wolf Creek rises in Southeast Cooke County, flows south for twelve miles, enters Denton County two miles northwest of Pilot Point, runs five miles, and empties into the Elm Fork.

2. Running Branch, a five-mile stream, rises south of Aubrey, flows south, and empties into the reservoir.

3. Pecan Creek, one of two in the county by that name, begins east of Pilot Point, flows south for twelve miles, and drains into Little Elm Creek.

4. Mustang Creek heads in the extreme northeast corner of the county, flows southwesterly for eleven miles, and empties into Little Elm Creek.

5. Little Elm Creek originates in northwest Collin County and winds its way southwesterly for fifteen miles to deposit itself in the reservoir two miles east of New Hope.

6. Doe Branch starts in west Collin County and flows southwesterly into the reservoir.

7. Panther Creek heads in west Collin County and flows westerly into reservoir.

8. Cottonwood Branch likewise heads in west Collin County and finds its way westward to the reservoir near the Little Elm Community.

9. Stewart Creek rises in east Denton County and runs a short five miles to the reservoir.

10. Office Creek begins in southeast Denton County and flows westward to discharge its water three miles later in the reservoir.

11. Indian Creek commences on the southern part of the east Denton County line and curves southwesterly for six miles to flow into the Elm
The following streams are located west of the Elm Fork and are listed from north to south as they empty therein or into the Garza-Little Elm Reservoir:

1. Pond Creek, seven miles long, heads in Denton County but immediately departs for Cooke County, changes its course, and returns to flow in a southeasterly direction to join the Elm Fork.

2. Duck Creek heads in southwest Cooke County and flows southeast for seven miles to drain into Clear Creek two miles south of Sanger.

3. Grasshopper and Flat Creeks both originate in southwest Cooke County and meet just inside the Denton County line to flow south for a mile into Clear Creek.

4. White Creek cuts through the extreme northeast corner of the county on its way from Wise County to Cooke County, where it empties into Clear Creek.

5. Clear Creek, one of the major streams of Denton County, originates in east Montague County and passes through Cooke County with a length of twenty-two miles before it penetrates the northwest corner of Denton County, where it rambles another twenty-five miles southeasterly to empty into the reservoir.

6. Moores Branch is a small creek which rises in the county and meets Clear Creek after flowing easterly for seven miles.

7. Milam Creek, six miles in length, heads three miles east of Krum in a northeasterly track and curves to an easterly direction to join Clear Creek.
8. Cooper Creek rises in the north Denton city limits and runs a southeasterly route to empty into the reservoir.

9. Pecan Creek, the second tributary by that name in the county, passes almost through the center of the city of Denton on a southeasterly course and empties into the reservoir after eight miles.

10. Hickory Creek, another major drainage system of the county, rises in northeast Denton County with three major branches constituting its headwaters: North Hickory Creek, South Hickory Creek and Dry Fork Hickory Creek. The total length of this system is about twenty-four miles, until it finds its depository in the reservoir.

11. Roark Branch, a small five-mile stream originates west of Pilot Knob, flows north, curves east and empties into Hickory Creek.

12. Timber Creek's source, north of the Grapevine Reservoir, sends that stream southeasterly for twelve miles for its rendezvous with the Elm Fork.

In the southwest section of the county the creeks find their ways to Denton Creek, which is also impounded to form the Grapevine Reservoir. This reservoir lies on the line between Denton and Tarrant Counties with two thirds of the lake in the former. Surface area of this body of water is 12,740 acres and full capacity is 435,500 acre-feet. The following streams are listed as they lie geographically from north to south:

1. Denton Creek, named for the county's namesake, John B. Denton, also a major tributary, heads in southwest central Montague County, flows

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southeasterly into Wise County, and transverses thirty-two miles through southwest Denton County to the Grapevine Reservoir.

2. Oliver Creek rises in east Wise County, journeys southeasterly into Denton County and empties into Denton Creek one mile northeast of Justin after flowing twenty-two miles.

3. Trail Creek begins in Denton County west of Justin near Wise County and pushes southeasterly for seven miles to unite with Denton Creek.

4. Harriet Creek empties into Elizabeth Creek in the southwestern sector of the county after rising in Wise County and flowing southeasterly for thirteen miles.

5. Elizabeth Creek, named for a daughter of John B. Denton, rises in southwest Wise County and empties into Denton Creek after flowing sixteen miles.

6. Henrietta Creek originates in Tarrant County and flows for five miles northeastward to join Elizabeth Creek two and a half miles northeast of Roanoke.

Most of Denton County's streams are nearly dry the greater part of the year, with all retaining some water in small pools, but when it rains they carry large volumes of water to their depositories. Denton and Clear creeks have more water in dry seasons than the other streams, owing to scattered springs which run most of the time.6

One readily notes from foregoing information that rainfall in the Denton County vicinity, which is surplus runoff, is not lost to other counties except through two major streams as they leave the county on

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the south: the Elm Fork of the Trinity and Denton Creek. The geographical lay of the land is such that water from neighboring counties on the north, east, and west gravitates to these two streams making Denton County an important area for water development and conservation, which to date is evidenced by the two large lakes found there and the plans for a third.  

Precipitation plays a fickle game with these many streams. It sometimes comes in deluges and overflows the banks; again it submits to unwelcome drouths leaving scarcely a trace of the purpose of the carved out streams and rivulets. Located on an imaginary north-south line or band through Texas, considered to be the bridge between the wooded expanses of East Texas and the grassy plains of West Texas, Denton County has a climate peculiar to that section of the country. "The average rainfall for this division of the State," avers Elmer H. Johnson, noted Texas geographer, "is not only less but its occurrence through the year is more irregular than that of the eastern portion of the State." Annual precipitation averages 31.56 inches. Winters are normally brief and relatively mild; however, cold blasts from the northwest, known as "northerns," bring a few uncomfortable days with sleet or snow storms.

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7 Area drained by the major creeks of Denton County, including the county itself and outlying counties is as follows: Clear Creek, 345,937 acres; Denton Creek, 520,437 acres; Hickory Creek, 123,083 acres; Little Elm Creek, 129,401 acres; and the Elm Fork of the Trinity River, 728,015 acres. See "Survey Report on the Trinity River Watershed," House Documents, 77th Congress, 2d Session, No. 708 (Washington, 1942), pp. 22-24.

8 Elmer H. Johnson, "The Natural Regions of Texas," The University of Texas Bulletin, No. 3113 (April 1, 1931), p. 32.
The average low temperature for January is thirty-four degrees Fahrenheit. Lengthy summers and high temperatures, accompanied by prevailing southerly winds and low humidity, combine to make them less oppressive than humid areas with lower temperatures. The average high temperature for July is ninety-six degrees Fahrenheit.  

No high elevations exist in the county where one might escape the summer heat. Only a 500-foot difference separates the lowest point from the highest point. The lowest, 500 feet above sea level, is found where the Elm Fork leaves the county in the southeast. In the northwest section on the divide between Clear and Denton creeks the elevation measures approximately 1,000 feet.  

Pilot Knob, a 900-foot protrusion of earth that stands alone four miles southwest of Denton on the eastern edge of the Grand Prairie, comes closest to qualifying as a mountain. One can easily see it from Denton.  

A distinctive feature of Denton County is the meeting of three physiographical regions of Texas: the Blackland Prairie, the East Cross Timbers, and the Grand Prairie. The scenic attractiveness of the Upper Trinity country in present Denton County caught the attention of an early visitor, Brevet Captain John Pope of the United States Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, who led an 1854 expedition to seek a possible railroad route from the Red River to the Rio Grande. In his report, Pope noted that

9Texas Almanac 1966-1967, p. 252. For more complete detailed information concerning all aspects of the climate of Denton County, see the monthly publication, Climatological Data: Texas, U. S. Department of Commerce, United States Weather Bureau, Asheville, North Carolina.

by far the richest and most beautiful district of the country I have ever seen, in Texas or elsewhere, is that watered by the Trinity and its tributaries. Occupying east and west of a belt one hundred miles in width, with about equal quantities of prairie and timber, intersected by numerous clear, fresh streams and countless springs, with a gently undulating surface of prairie and oak openings, it presents the most charming views, as of a country in the highest state of cultivation, and you are startled at the summit of each swell of the prairie with a prospect of groves, parks, and forests, with intervening plains of luxuriant grass, over which the eye in vain wanders in search of the white village or the stately house, which seem alone wanting to the scene.

The delusion was so perfect, and the recurrence of these charming views so constant that every swell of the ground elicited from the party expressions of surprise and admiration. 11

The area remains beautiful. The East Cross Timbers in impressive contrast, separates the two prairies. In a six-mile-wide strip extending east and west in the northeast part of the county, the band of trees and underbrush broadens out as one travels southward until it reaches a span of ten miles. Farther on, the timber curves to the southwest, barely brushing the city of Denton as it passes east and south. The belt remains ten miles in breadth for approximately fifteen miles to the vicinity of Pilot Knob. At this point the western edge arches southward, tapering off to a seven-mile width along the southern edge of the county. Robert T. Hill, noted geologist, commissioned by the United States government to make a geological survey of the Black and Grand Prairies wrote, that

When viewed from the White rock scarp, looking west, the Eastern cross Timbers appear to occupy a low valley plain, but when observed from the west, looking east, as from

Fig. 1. Streams, lakes, and physiographic regions

I GRAND PRAIRIE
II CROSS TIMBERS (HEAVY)
IIA CROSS TIMBERS (LIGHT)
III BLACKLAND PRAIRIE

The definitive lines are not intended to indicate abrupt changes from one area to another but to show the general physiographic regions. There usually is a gentle tapering off and merging together of each. Occasionally there is apparent overlapping of one area into another.
Fort Worth or any point on the eastern margin of the Grand Prairie region, they appear as a range of low but sharply rounded, wooded, mamillary hills, which in places, as in ... Denton County ... make conspicuous knobs capped by dark-brown arenaceous ironstone.12

In this strip of land the post oak is predominant, but one also finds blackjack, hickory, and Virginia Cedar. Common undergrowth of the area includes yaupon, crooked bush, agarita, and Mexican cedar. Triple awn, crab, Trioda, blue stems, bromes, gramas, buffalo, burgrass, sprangle top, needle grass, panics, hurrah, love grass, dropseed, Bermuda grass, and Johnson grass comprise the grassy vegetation.13

Varieties of sedges appear in generous assortments, especially where more moisture is present as in and around ponds of water. Wildflowers of this area are similar to those in other regions, but in many places blossoms peculiar only to these soils afford a different landscape of color. Nuttall's chickweed, pilose and slender Phlox, lanceleaved and deep red Gaillardia, red paintbrush, cottony Froelichia, umbrellawort, daisies, bitterweed (Helenium spp.), goat weed (Croton spp.), and many others contribute their individual colorful gifts to the prevailing oak-hickory-wildflower landscape.14


13Benjamin Carroll Tharp, The Vegetation of Texas (Houston, 1939), pp. 31-32.

14Ibid., p. 32.
This richly vegetated area is supported and nourished by "... deep permeable regolith and sandy soils."\textsuperscript{15} Soil analysts William T. Carter, Jr., and M. W. Beck note the soils "... represent unconsolidated non-calcareous marine sediments of sand and clay, geologically correlated with the Woodbine formation."\textsuperscript{16} Their color ranges from a grayish hue to reddish brown to red, depending upon the rock source.\textsuperscript{17} When not properly cared for this sandy loam will not produce well agriculturally. Past erosive and exhaustive practices have proven costly, but with conservative procedures marginal production is possible.\textsuperscript{18}

The Blackland Prairie occupies the eastern quarter of the county while the Grand Prairie covers roughly the western half. The two prairies differ little, and here are treated as one with the few dissimilarities noted.

Both prairies are characterized by undulating and gently rolling hills which are traversed by many streams and shallow valleys. In the Grand Prairie a few rough surface features exist, most commonly in the northwest corner of the county near Boliver.

Although the plains are relatively treeless, timber abounds along the creeks, especially where the streams intersect the Cross Timbers. This variety includes post oak, burr oak, Spanish oak, pecan, walnut,

\textsuperscript{15}Hill, "Geography and Geology of the Black and Grand Prairies," pp. 69-70.


\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{18}William T. Carter, "The Soils of Texas," \textit{Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin}, No. 431 (July, 1931), p. 40.
cedar, elm, locust, box elder, and cottonwood.19 Hackberry, found along
the water, also appears occasionally, as does mesquite, up on the prairie.20

Where cultivation is absent the grasses of the prairies are the most
conspicuous offerings of vegetation from mother nature. Dominating on
the east side of the county are grasses of the tall bunch type; on the
west these submit to shorter grasses. "Big and little bluestem, dropseed
and needlegrass are representative dominants eastward; gramas, Trioda
and buffalo grass increasingly so westward."21

Before the advent of the farmer the prairies were the haven for
myriads of beautiful brilliant blossoms. Many flowers still bloom but
on a much diminished scale. The following blooms appear in the spring
and summer months: day flower, spiderwort, rushes, wild onion, crowpoison,
wild hyacinth, rain lily, irids, pigweeds, four o'clocks, umbrellaworts,
chickweeds, sleepy catchfly, water lilies, Corydalis, mustards, dewberries,
sensitive briar, Acuan, Neptunia, senna, Krameria, Amorphia, bur clover,
ground plum, prairie clover, Psoralea, milk pea, Oxalis, flax, milkwort,
Croton, Ditaxis, spurge nettle, princess spurge, many milk spurges, balloon
vine, mallows, green violets, cacti, loose-strifes, evening primroses,
carrot relatives, milkweeds of many kinds, morning glories, Phlox, borages,
vervains, mints and sages, nightshades, figworts, Acanthus relatives,
plantains, madders, honeysuckle, Valerianella, cucurbits, rag-weeds,

19A. W. Spaight, The Resources, Soil and Climate of Texas: Report
of Commissioner of Insurance, Statistics, and History (Galveston, 1882),
p. 81.


21Tharp, Vegetation of Texas, p. 39.
cockleburrs, ironweeds, thoroughworts, Asters, everlasting, sunflowers, bitterweed relatives, squaw weeds, thistles, and dandelion relatives.  

The soils of the prairies differ considerably from the soils of the Cross Timbers. According to soil analysts Carter and Beck,

The soils of the Grand Prairie are derived from the rocks of the Lower Cretaceous and are composed of limestone and limestone imbedded with marl or chalky clays. The soils of the Black Prairie are derived from chalk, marly clays, calcareous clays and bituminous clays of the Upper Cretaceous age, and from alluvium from these areas.

Apparent differences between the two soil types are noted in depth, with the Blackland soils deeper; in color, with the Blackland soil having a black color and the Grand Prairie a chocolate brownish shade; in moisture content, with the Blackland receiving more rain; and in agricultural uses, with the Grand Prairie utilizing a higher percentage of the land for pasturing livestock. The most outstanding quality of these soils is their high fertility. "In fact," wrote Robert T. Hill, the noted Texas geologist, "these calcareous soils, especially those of the Black Prairie, are the most fertile of the whole trans-Mississippi region."

Endowed with this wealth of fertility and abundance of flora, Denton County became the native habitat of many representatives of the animal kingdom. In the early 1800's buffalo still roamed the prairies and as late as the 1860's antelope, bear, turkey, and deer abounded.

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22Tharp, *Vegetation of Texas*, p. 40.


25Ibid., pp. 60-61.
Predatory beasts that distressed early settlers were the jaguar, mountain lion, bear, leopard cat, lobo, prairie wolf, bobcat, wildcat, coyote, badger, raccoon, mink, skunk, and the opossum. In the 1858 issue of the Texas Almanac, Denton County's Tax Assessor and Collector, Daniel Strickland, reported that the overabundant population of bears produced a hardship on residents raising hogs and corn.

At the present time the largest game animals roaming the county are squirrel, raccoon, skunk, opossum, fox, and wolf. Ducks and geese make seasonal passages. Quail and doves are quite plentiful, as are jackrabbits and cottontails. In the larger streams the most common fish include the buffalo, bass, perch, and pike.

Nature bestowed few minerals on the county. Those worthy of economic development include a small oil field, some high quality clays, and limestone and gravel suitable for road building.

Another natural asset which is becoming more greatly appreciated is the presence of subterranean water in abundance to meet anticipated need. At a depth of 1,048 feet drillers have tapped the Trinity sand, an aquifer of extensive content. As a safeguard to assure continued water availability, the city of Denton has acquired the rights to 21,000 acre-feet

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26 James K. Greer, Grand Prairie (Dallas, 1935), p. 68.

27 The Texas Almanac for 1858; Giving Annual Statistics of the State (Galveston, 1857), p. 61. The short description of Denton County contained in this issue of the Texas Almanac clearly details early life in Denton County.

28 Spaight, Resources, Soil and Climate of Texas, p. 82.

of conservation storage space in the Garza-Little Elm Reservoir. 30

Prior to the enjoyment, development, and exploitation of the above mentioned resources by Anglo-American pioneers, earlier man found the area worthy of habitation. Prehistoric Indians roamed the area occasionally locating camps and villages in the county, but scarcely leaving a visible vestige of their activities.

No area of the United States, nor of the North and South American continents for that matter, has yielded evidence of human habitation that reaches as far back in time as the now well known "Lewisville Site" in Denton County. From 1951 to 1957 Dallas archeologists discovered and uncovered manifestations of human activity corresponding to the late Pleistocene Epoch. The find appeared in a "huge borrow pit" from which dirt was taken for the construction of the Lewisville Dam. The site was on the south side of Hickory Creek, a short distance from where the creek emptied into the then newly constructed lake. The location is now submerged under the lake water. 31

Twenty-one hearths of an early camp contained evidences of elephant, bison, camel, horse, glyptodont, antelope, bear, deer, wolf, coyote, badger, raccoon, skunk, rabbit, prairie dog, wood rat, field mice, birds, egg shells, snails, freshwater clams, mussels, terrapin, grass snake,

30 Water Resources Development by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (January, 1967), prepared by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Southwestern Division, Dallas, Texas, p. 21.

mud dauber nest and larvae, and charred hackberry seeds. The specimens, through the use of radio-carbon dating, indicated an age of 37,000 years plus.

Puzzled by the discovery, archeologists doubted the authenticity of the find, as previously held beliefs allowed no provision for human habitation in the Americas for that period. In 1962, teams from the University of California at Los Angeles corroborated the earlier test with a date of 38,000 years plus. According to Texas archeologists, Wilson W. Crook and R. K. Harris, "Unquestionably, in the light of today's knowledge this then is the approximate age of the Lewisville site...."

While Denton County can boast of the earliest find, it cannot pretend it has a complete history of Indian habitation from this early time to the coming of the first Europeans. Indeed, the picture is quite hazy. It is known that man lived in the area during the Archaic period from about 5000 B.C. to A.D. 1000, and that his trade and contact with outlying


33Radio-carbon dating has its limits. The Lewisville finds are indicated to be older than 37,000 years because the testing device has the ability to date back approximately that far, and indications that the specimens were older were evidenced. For an explanation and description of how radio-carbon dating works, see "Telling time with Atoms," The Humble Way, XII, No. 2 (July-August, 1956), pp. 1-4.

regions was rather widespread. However, the living habits, the culture
and other social elements are unknown.\textsuperscript{35}

The period from A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1500, termed the Neo-American, is
better revealed. The Caddoan group of Indians, including Wichitas,
Kichais, Wacos, and possibly Towakonies, occupied the Denton County area.\textsuperscript{36}
Similar to the geography of the area they tenanted, anthropologists con-
sider these Indians "transitional" between the rooted agricultural tribes
of the wooded east and the nomadic tribes of the plains.\textsuperscript{37} Their popu-
lation density equaled about one Indian for 5,000 acres of land.\textsuperscript{38}

These Indians lived in villages which probably varied in size from
one to five acres. Today's archeologist finds many rock hearths which
indicate extended habitation of favorite spots. These early inhabitants
established their villages on sites "located on grassy, anchored sand
hills and dunes on plains, and on sandy knolls and terraces overlooking
numerous large and small streams such as . . . [the] Upper Trinity . . ."
and its tributaries.\textsuperscript{39} The relative ease in which these areas could be
made comfortable for living as compared to the black waxy soils of the

\textsuperscript{35}Wilson W. Crook and R. K. Harris, "Traits of the Trinity Aspect
Archaic: Carrollton and Elam Foci," \textit{The Record}, XII, No. 1 (February,

\textsuperscript{36}A. L. Kroeber, \textit{Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America}
(Berkeley, 1947), see Map la, "Native Tribes of North America," at the
end of the book.

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Ibid.}, see Table 18, "Summary List of North American Culture Areas,"
at the end of the book.

\textsuperscript{39}Alex D. Krieger, "Culture Complexes and Chronology in Northern
Texas With Extension of Puebloan Datings to the Mississippi Valley," \textit{The
University of Texas Publication}, No. 4640 (October 22, 1946), p. 138,
hereinafter cited as Krieger, "Culture Complexes in Northern Texas."
open plains motivated the natives to locate here. Sandy soils were more friable and their surface would drain and dry much more quickly following a rain.

These Neo-Americans sometimes scattered their villages haphazardly about. They farmed, made pottery and wicker and twill basketry, built large domed houses of thatch, erected mounds, kept perpetual fire in a temple or communal structure, acknowledged the authority of an intervillage or intertribal religious head, celebrated a first maize harvest festival, [and] sometimes tortured or sacrificed captives on the frame.40

Jointly based, their economy depended on hunting and maize agriculture. They depended most on the bison but also hunted deer, antelope, turtles, turkeys, ducks, and other animals. Numerous fish bones found in middens and an occasional bone fish hook testify to early fishing endeavors. One can safely deduce from the native growth of the area that wild plants, seeds, nuts, berries, mesquite beans, and other foods found their way into the Indian diet since they are plentiful in the region. No evidence indicates that cultivable plants other than maize were grown.41

The first contact this group of Indians had with the European invaders probably came during the hot summer of 1542, described by Moscoso as he searched in vain for New Spain. In that summer Moscoso's party of 300 members passed from the southeast corner of Denton County north to approximately where Pilot Point is located. Their route continued into Cooke County.42 This excursion signaled the beginning of the strong

40 Kroeber, Cultural and Natural Areas, p. 74.
Spanish and French influences, followed by the invasion of the Anglo-American, which together altered the Indian tribal organization and culture, and in time removed the original inhabitant from the area to make way for the advance of a civilization of a new people.

The Anglo-American pioneer has recorded little that is favorable to the original Denton County inhabitants; a natural attitude, for he little understood the Indians and considered them an impediment to progress at best. The Indian in turn viewed the invasion of the obviously superior culture with distrust, alarm, and often open hatred, for it was dispossessing him of his claim to the land. The result was fighting, loss of life, and an inflaming of an already tense situation, a problem which perhaps was never justly solved--simply solved by eliminating one cause, the Indian.

When Texas declared independence from Mexico in 1836, the area now constituted as Denton County was part of a large governmental division called Red River County and still frequented by the native Indians. On December 4, 1837, the fledgling Republic subdivided Red River County into smaller areas, one receiving the name Fannin County. Denton County, as known today, was a portion of Fannin until April 11, 1846, when the first legislature gave it a separate identity. By this time the county already had new inhabitants who had been attracted to the area by land

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44 Ibid., Vol. II (Austin, 1888), pp. 1363-1364.
grants advertised by the Peters Colony.45

The Texas Legislature named the county in honor of John B. Denton, a Methodist revivalist, lawyer, and Indian fighter, who was killed in Tarrant County by a member of a group of thieving Indians. His companions buried his body the following day in a rock-lined grave near the waters of a stream since named for him.46 In 1860, John Chisum, a cattleman, retrieved his remains and reburied them on the Chisum Ranch near Bolivar. In 1901, the Old Settlers' Association moved the remains to their final resting place, the southeast corner of the present courthouse square.47

Early county residents, assisted by Texas Rangers, kept a constant vigil against Indian harassments. In 1847 the Texas Legislature established a line of posts called stations extending from the Red River to the Rio Grande. Four of these stations in the vicinity of Denton County included the Red River Station in Montague County, Elm Station near Gainesville in Cooke County, the Hickory Station on Hickory Creek south of Denton, and Johnson's Station in Tarrant County.

45See Seymour V. Connor, The Peters Colony of Texas: A History and Biographical Sketches of the Early Settlers (Austin, 1959), pp. 46-50, 66-72, 82-93, 98, 104-120. An early historian of Denton County, Edward F. Bates, in his History and Reminiscences of Denton County, contends that the Peters Colony maintained its headquarters for a time at Bridges, on Office Creek, and that citizens of Dallas County, angry because of dissatisfaction with sectionizing of the land, destroyed it and its contents; however, Texas historian Seymour V. Connor disagrees, stating that the headquarters was located in Collin County, was not destroyed, but that irate citizens of Dallas County raided the place, and removed the company's files to the Dallas County Court House, where they were burned sometime later (p. 149).


Every day from each Station, twenty men started and rode along a trail consisting of six bridal-paths, parallel with each other. Twenty men from one station passed twenty men from another station. Each twenty men cautiously and critically examined their trails to ascertain if any Indians had crossed in the night. They could detect immediately any horse or other track whether it was made by an Indian or white person, and almost to a minute how long it had been made by the condition of the track. . . . If they discovered where an Indian had crossed, which was frequently the case, whether on foot or on horseback, one-half of the men would immediately start at full speed on the trail of the Indians, and the other half would hasten to the Station, and then fresh parties would start in hot pursuit. The Indians were thus kept on the hop, step and jump, and the system worked effectually in protecting the frontier. 48

Marauding Indians continued to be a problem for Denton County as late as 1871, when the last raid in the Denton Creek community occurred south of Stony. 49

This ever-present threat of danger did not retard the progressive spirit of the new county's pioneer settlers. They immediately organized and established the county government, finding it proper that the county seat should proclaim the name of John B. Denton, too. In 1856 citizens chose the present city of Denton as the site for their county seat after three previous sites, Pinkneyville, Old Alton, and New Alton on Hickory Creek, had proven unsatisfactory. 50 The final move was prompted by the same reason as the first, accessibility to the county offices. 51

From this centrally located county seat elected officials carried out their duties and administered to the many outlying settlements.

48 Denton County News, December 8, 1905.
49 Bates, History of Denton County, p. 166.
50 Ibid., pp. 15-17.
51 Denton County News, December 8, 1905.
Earlier towns and their dates of establishment are Bridges (1843), Holford Prairie (1844), later called Lewisville, Stewart's Creek (1844), Teel (1850), Little Elm (1844), Hawkins (1853), sometimes called Kentucky, Rue (1854), Sand Town (1862), Key's School House (1858), Ballew (1856), Pilot Point (1846), French (1852), Alton (1850), Sullivan (1847), Chinn's Chapel (1845), Medlin (1847), Denton Creek (1854), New Icaria (1849), later called Justin, and Bolivar (1859). Later towns spawned by the coming of the railroads include Hebron, Ponder, Krum, Sanger, Aubrey, Argyle, Roanoke, and Garza, later called Lake Dallas.52

When the Civil War began, the inhabitants of all these communities rallied to the call to arms and rendered eight companies to aid the Confederate cause. Homeguards protected the communities against Indians, who became more belligerent during the absence of much of the male population.53

In 1862 a secret group of Union sympathizers was discovered in the North Texas area. Five counties most involved were Denton, Wise, Grayson, Collin, and Cooke.54

The organization was strongest in Cooke County, where citizens hanged approximately forty suspected conspirators and shot two prisoners trying to escape.55 Denton County citizens hanged no one but released the

52Bates, History of Denton County, pp. 32-84, 278.
53Ibid., pp. 98, 104.
54Thomas Barrett, The Great Hanging at Gainesville, Cooke County, Texas (Gainesville, Texas, 1885), p. 9.
55Ibid., p. 21.
suspects. One person, however, suffered death at the hands of a local gunman.56

Postwar experiences were the same as in other southern communities which had to undergo the Reconstruction program. A possible result of the unwelcome program was the burning down of the county courthouse on Christmas Day in 1875. Local residents theorized, but never proved, that someone, who feared the discovery of substantial evidence of corrupt governmental practices of carpetbaggers and scalawags, had been successful in erasing all damning evidence.57

County officials administered court from a brick structure located on the county square from 1877 until 1894, when the commissioners condemned it as unsafe. In 1895 the commissioners contracted for a new building of local limestone, which was completed the following year at a cost of $147,000.58

Horses and cattle provided early Denton County with its only produce which could be sold outside the county. Drovers guided horses and mules to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Cattlemen herded their cattle on the long trail north to markets in Saint Louis, Kansas City, and Baxter Springs. Sheep and hogs were easily raised but were too difficult to get to market, which resulted in farmers only raising enough agricultural products to meet the local need.59


57 Inventory of the County Archives of Texas: Denton County, prepared by the Historical Records Survey Division of Women's and Professional Projects Works Progress Administration (San Antonio, August, 1937), p. 6.

58 Bates, History of Denton County, p. 265.

59 Ibid., pp. 167-168.
When the railroads reached Denton County in the early 1880's residents rejoiced because the track brought outlets to state, national, and world markets at a relatively inexpensive rate.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., p. 170.
CHAPTER II

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Prior to 1850 economic growth in Texas reflected a self-sufficing economy based almost entirely on agriculture. Denton County was no exception to this development. Most early settlers in Denton County found the climate and soil favorable for agriculture and for stock raising. A few persons trapped fur-bearing animals for a living; some found a ready market for pottery items made locally by supplying needed containers for milk, jellies, and other foods. These early pioneers practiced these occupations, with the exception of cattle raising, on a limited scale to meet the demands of the local market. Lack of transportation prevented the shipping out as well as the shipping in of produce and manufactured goods. Consequently the early population concentrated in the central and southern sandy sections where water, timber, game, and wild fruits abounded, and where vegetables and domestic fruits could be easily grown.\(^1\) The few necessities came in from outside the county on ox-drawn wagons from East Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.\(^2\)

Shortly after 1850 a trend away from this self-reliant attitude began in Texas with the development of increased production of cotton, ranching, and lumbering. These economic developments depended almost

\(^1\)An Economic Survey of Denton County, Prepared for the Texas and Pacific Railway by the Bureau of Business Research, College of Business Administration, University of Texas (Austin, 1949), pp. 1.0301-02.

\(^2\)Ibid.
entirely on an outside market and transportation to it. The location of these developments was controlled by the specific advantages different areas and regions had to offer, such as natural resources, soil fertility, and transportation. The coming of the railroad assured rapid development of attempted industries if the potential was present. "It is evident," wrote the noted geographer, Elmer H. Johnson, "that railway centers early began to indicate the future leading cities and commercial centers. By 1900 it is obvious that such centers bore a definite relation to the regional setting in which they occurred." Denton became the focal point for Denton County as transportation in the form of the railroad began to release the county's economic potentials. The coming of the railroads to Denton County made it possible for settlers to expand agricultural output, and ship it out of the county with a profit—a most welcome development.

As early as 1853 the State of Texas gave a charter to the Memphis, El Paso and Pacific Railroad Company to begin the construction of a railroad which was to run from near Fulton, Arkansas, along the southern bank of the Red River, to the headwaters of the Trinity and then turn southwestward toward El Paso. In 1854 a group of engineers led by Brevet Captain John Pope of the United States Army Corps of Topographical Engineers

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4S. G. Reed, *A History of the Texas Railroads and of Transportation Under Spain and Mexico and the Republic and The State* (Houston, 1941), pp. 93-94; Charles S. Potts, "Railroad Transportation in Texas," *Bulletin of the University of Texas* , No. 11 (March 1, 1909), pp. 33-34.
Engineers passed through Denton County while surveying for a suitable route.\textsuperscript{5}

The company began construction in Bowie County along the Red River in 1857,\textsuperscript{6} which caused enthusiastic reactions from Denton County residents who hoped for the railway's arrival.\textsuperscript{7} But as the excitement reached a peak, problems of construction and the Civil War brought the project to a halt.\textsuperscript{8}

On June 12, 1873, the Texas and Pacific and Transcontinental Railway Company became the recipient of what remained of the Memphis, El Paso and Pacific. Disappointment for local citizens occurred again as the financial panic that followed almost caused the new company to go bankrupt. In 1874 and 1875 anonymous financiers interested in the railroad's success, aided by the United States and Texas governments, saved it from ruin.\textsuperscript{9} Finally in 1880 the transcontinental branch of the Texas and Pacific completed its line from Sherman to Fort Worth. The Denton County News of December 8, 1905, recalled:

Great was the excitement among the people when the blasting began in the hills south of the city. Game of all kinds fled in every direction, and it was several months before even a rabbit ventured near the vicinity of the blasting.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{5}See Chapter I, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{6}Reed, A History of Texas Railroads, p. 94.

\textsuperscript{7}Denton County News, December 8, 1905, hereinafter cited as DCN.

\textsuperscript{8}Reed, A History of Texas Railroads, p. 94; Potts, "Railroad Transportation," p. 34.

\textsuperscript{9}Reed, History of Texas Railroads, pp. 360, 364; DCN, December 8, 1905.

\textsuperscript{10}DCN, December 8, 1905.
Meanwhile citizens of Dallas in 1872 had financed and chartered a railroad named the Dallas and Wichita. Surveyors planned the route the same year but the panic of 1873 deterred its progress. Construction began in 1877 and by 1878 the railway reached the Denton County line and ran out of funds. S. G. Reed, railroad historian, relates that

In 1879 the road went into the hands of a Receiver and was bought at Receiver’s sale in February, 1880, by the Texas and Pacific Railway Company, then controlled by Jay Gould, who reorganized it under the original charter on July 16, 1880, and extended it 17 miles to connection with the T. & P. at Denton. Gould also controlled the M. K. & T. Missouri, Kansas, and Texas at that time and had sold to that road trackage rights over the T. & P. from Whitesboro to Fort Worth. The Katy then had its own line . . . from Denison to Whitesboro. So Gould, on December 15, 1881, for the T. & P., sold the Dallas & Wichita to the M. K. & T., thereby giving the latter road trackage from the north into both Dallas and Fort Worth.  

In 1887 the Santa Fe constructed its Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe line from Fort Worth to Gainesville, bypassing Denton seven miles to the west. And in 1901 the Red River, Texas, and Southern Railway (Frisco) route from Sherman to Dallas passed through the extreme southeast corner of the county. The construction of this latter road marked the conclusion of railroad building in Denton County for fifty years.  

The Texas Almanac noted that Denton County possessed the following railroad mileages in 1904: Texas and Pacific, 35.75 miles; Missouri, Kansas, and Texas, 20.33 miles, with joint track privileges on the

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12Reed, History of Texas Railroads, pp. 291, 427; Potts, "Railroad Transportation," p. 59.
Texas and Pacific; Gulf Colorado and Santa Fe, 32.875 miles; and the Texas and Southern, 10 miles.\textsuperscript{13}

Without railroads the city and county of Denton would have lagged behind the economic development of the state; the iron horse changed the county's economic potentials to realities and helped make the city of Denton its chief center of trade and marketing.\textsuperscript{14} The centennial commemorative publication, \textit{Centurama}, noted in 1957,

The coming of railroads may be called the most important single event in the first 50 years of Denton's history. Thereafter Denton was on one of the transcontinental railway lines. Items could be shipped into Denton that formerly were virtually prohibited by high transportation costs. Denton people could ship wheat, cotton, cotton seed, hides and other bulky products which formerly could hardly be sold. The railways brought Denton a new day. Denton never again was what she formerly had been.\textsuperscript{15}

At the turn of the twentieth century only the railroad provided fast travel to Denton County residents. Restricted as it was to the steel rails and time schedules, the train compelled the citizenry to plan according to its availability. While the automobile began to make

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1904}, p. 250.

\textsuperscript{14}Denton County received its last railroad in 1954. In 1953 the Santa Fe announced plans to build a line from Sanger to Dallas. When Dentonites learned that the proposed line would miss their city by four miles the Denton Chamber of Commerce successfully persuaded the Interstate Commerce Commission to order the route be directed through Denton. For the complete story of the Chamber of Commerce's endeavors, see \textit{Denton Record-Chronicle}, 1953 issues: April 13, p. 1; June 21, pp. 1-2; June 23, p. 1; June 26, p. 1; June 27, p. 1; July 2, p. 1; July 9, p. 1; August 7, p. 1; August 28, pp. 1-2; August 31, pp. 1-2; September 20, pp. 1-2; November 12, pp. 1-2; November 15, pp. 1-2; and 1954 issues: March 12, p. 1; April 27, p. 1; May 14, p. 1; June 4, p. 1; September 13, pp. 1-2.

\textsuperscript{15}Denton Centennial Commission, \textit{Centurama: Official Program, History of Denton 100 Years of Progress} (Denton, n. d.), booklet located in the Denton Public Library, Denton, Texas, p. 51. Much of the information for this publication was obtained from a manuscript prepared by Dr. C. A. Bridges, a local historian and former professor at North Texas State University.
its appearance ignorance and distrust of the machine did not win it quick popularity and the poor roads of the period could scarcely accommodate a car. For these reasons interurban trains became a common subject of discussion and proposition. Citizens reasoned that the interurban could tie together outlying communities and supplement the larger established railroads.

The first interurban proposition of serious intent involving Denton County came from a Dallas businessman, J. Mercer Carter, in 1906. He supposedly had ample funds with which to carry out the project. The undertaking designed to include other North Texas cities never materialized.16

In 1907 the Denton Mayor, T. J. Simmons, inaugurated the Denton Railway Service, which provided local street car service. In a year's time this company suffered financially, with four creditors suing for unpaid debts, among them the Allis Chalmers Company and Briggs-Weaver Machinery Company.17 The Commercial Club of Dallas, fearing the creditors would dissolve the company, urged "proper parties" in Dallas to purchase the company for the purpose of utilizing some of the equipment for an interurban line between Denton and Dallas.18 The company, however, managed to regain financial footing and the interurban proposal bore no fruit.

16Record and Chronicle, September 6, 1906, p. 3, hereinafter cited as RC.

17Ibid., August 1, 1907, p. 1; December 16, 1908, p. 1; February 5, 1909, p. 4; February 10, 1909, p. 4.

Meanwhile Denton County citizens became interested in forming an interurban line from Denton to Slidell in Wise County. In 1910 a movement began which expressed confidence that the line would be completed the following year. Promoters of the undertaking noted that the planned route would give a connection with the Santa Fe at Krum, and provide an easy route into Denton for the rich territory around Slidell. Owing to the lack of funds and broad-based support, this venture also failed. Interurban supporters, however, did not abandon hope.

In 1911 a clamor arose for a Dallas-Denton line which would pass through Irving and Grapevine. Involved communities laid plans, but construction never began. Then in 1912 came the most promising development to date, the proposition to lay a line between Denton and Fort Worth. On June 17, 1912, a leading citizen of Wise County, A. D. Rogers, outlined the plans initiated by four prominent Fort Worth businessmen, and promised that construction would begin in ninety days or less. Financial backing came slowly; nevertheless, by the end of 1913, enough stockholders had subscribed to shares in the undertaking and Dentonites rejoiced for the railway was an "assured fact." Shortly after the Fort Worth-Denton Interurban Company's organization, Stone and Webster Company of Boston, purchased it and agreed to erect the line. After a year of little progress, the stockholders learned that the New England company had suffered severe financial setbacks on other Texas ventures, brought on by the

19 Ibid., December 30, 1910, p. 1; DCN, January 13, 1911, p. 4.
20 RC, May 4, 1911, p. 2; DCN, May 5, 1911, p. 4.
21 RC, June 17, 1912, p. 1; November 21, 1913, pp. 1-2.
development of a new transportation medium, "jitney service," which used cars and buses. The World War also caused a financial pinch. The troubled company's offer to pay $30,000 for release from their contract proved acceptable to stockholders, each of whom suffered about an 8 per cent loss on his investment. Although Fort Worth and Denton people vowed to continue working for a local railway between the two cities, they achieved nothing.

The only interurban project eventually realized, at least in part, began in 1913. When it appeared the Fort Worth-Denton proposal would become fact, citizens of Dallas renewed their activities. Dallasites planned a company with designs to purchase the old Dallas and New Mexico railroad embankments and construct a line to Roanoke, where it would connect with the Fort Worth-Denton line. When this latter line folded so did the Dallas plan, but the idea still had strong support.

Toward the end of 1915, a Dallas promoter, E. P. Turner, announced that construction on a line from Dallas to Denton to Krum would begin in six months. By February, 1916, a new extended proposal, as reported in the Denton Record-Chronicle, dwarfed the earlier plan.

Blue prints of the proposed route of the Dallas Northwestern road have been received here. The route as shown touches Farmers Branch, Carrollton, Lewisville, Garza and Corinth using the Dallas and Wichita branch of the Katy or paralleling [sic] it. From Denton it runs northwest to Krum, thence northwest to Slidell, Greenwood, Dan, Newharp,  

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22Denton Record-Chronicle, May 28, 1915, p. 4; November 2, 1915, p. 1; November 3, 1915, p. 4; November 11, 1915, p. 1; hereinafter cited as DRC.

23DRC, April 10, 1913, p. 1; November 26, 1913, p. 1.

24Ibid., October 20, 1915, p. 4.
Dorsey and Bowie, while another route is shown projected from Krum north along the Santa Fe into Gainesville. A projection is also shown from Bowie to Wichita Falls paralleling [sic] the Denver road. The route includes Dallas, Montague, Clay, Wichita and Cooke counties.  

This grandiose scheme must have fired the traveling spirits of the inhabitants of these outlying areas, but the hard facts of the shortage of funds and the slim chances of financial solvency held it in check. The promoters realized that many fares would have to be purchased to operate successfully, but they continued to work with the interurban concept. By 1920 the grand plan had been pared down to include only a line from Dallas to Denton to Wichita Falls; however, the depressed economic conditions of 1920 and 1921 eliminated the latter city. In the spring of 1921 a Dallas company called Strickland, Calder and Hobson, later known as the Texas Interurban Railway Company assumed direction of the venture.  

A year and half later actual work began on the line that used the Katy's branch between Dallas and Denton after its electrification. Work progressed for a year. Expectations ran high; soon a dream would be realized. Then another snag appeared; a permanent injunction restraining the Texas Interurban Railway Company from laying seven blocks of track along Fairmont Avenue in Dallas threatened to ruin chances of completion. The company spent two months settling the suit with the blocking landowners. By the fall of 1924, workers completed construction of the

25Ibid., February 1, 1916, p. 4.
26Ibid., November 16, 1920, p. 1; December 1, 1920, p. 1; March 24, 1921, p. 1.
27Ibid., September 19, 1922, p. 1; November 15, 1922, p. 1; September 24, 1923, p. 1; November 27, 1923, p. 1.
line, and 230 officials initiated the long awaited service on September 30, when four cars carrying them arrived in Denton for celebration of the event. Regular service began the following day with a one-way fare costing $1.25, and a round-trip fare costing $2.40.

Poor response to the new service disappointed the company and those who had worked for the interurban’s construction. The company began to

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28 The Denton Record-Chronicle, September 5, 1924, Sec. 3, p. 1, quoted in part from a booklet entitled, "Making Neighbors of the People of Dallas and Denton Counties and the Towns of Denton, Garza, Lewisville, Carrollton, Farmers Branch and Dallas," which described the interurban as follows:

"The Dallas-Denton line of the Texas Interurban Railway is the second unit of this system. The first unit operates between Dallas and Terrell and was opened for the service to the public, January 13, 1923. The opening of the Dallas-Terrell line marked an innovation in electric railway operation in the southwest. For the first time in history, automatic substations were used in the Southwest for supplying power and for the first time the improved one-man type cars were used. These cars represent the latest product of a century of electric car construction and in matters of comfort, easy riding safety and roominess, they have no equal.

"The same general plan followed on the Dallas-Terrell unit has been carried out on the Dallas-Denton line. The line will be operated with equipment of the latest design and most improved features, assuring maximum comfort and safety to passengers. The cars will seat 56 persons and will be equipped with high-back comfortable, plush-covered seats. They are extraordinarily wide, providing a roomy aisle, which permits the easy movement of the passengers into and out of the car.

"The cars on the Denton line will carry a colored porter to take care of flagging and to render helpful service of every kind to passengers.

"Power for the operation of the line is supplied by the Texas Power and Light Company from a newly constructed 60,000 volt high tension line, serving three automatic substations, which transform and convert the alternating high tension current to 600 volts direct current supplied to the trolley system. Each of these substations contain a 300-kilowat rotary converter, with necessary transformers and automatic switching apparatus. These machines automatically start as power is required and likewise stop when power is not needed, thus eliminating the waste of running the machines when not necessary and doing away with the expense of substation attendants."

29 Ibid., October 1, 1924, p. 1.
seriously consider discontinuing service four months after the start of operation. During the many years it took to realize an interurban, the automobile industry had made tremendous progress; the county had built roads, and an interurban bus service between Dallas and Denton had become popular by 1925 because of lower fares. Another, and perhaps the chief reason for lack of sustained interest in the interurban, was the already established economic relationship with Fort Worth. Prior to the inauguration of the first railway to Dallas, Fort Worth had proven more accessible to Denton County residents, who considered themselves more in the Fort Worth trade territory. The habit of going to Fort Worth rather than Dallas had always been strong. This tendency effected a loss of $12,062.00 to the Texas Interurban Railway Company for its first year of operation to Denton. In 1926 the company reported that the loss on the Denton line wiped out the profit on its line to Terrell.

Service continued into 1930, but each year proved to be financially unsuccessful. On April 20, 1931, the Denton Record-Chronicle counseled the citizens to use the interurban, pointing out that for the seven years of service it had experienced many difficulties and that one could not expect it to continue. The warning went unheeded and in March, 1932, the Dallas Union Trust Company filed suit for foreclosure on the company. John W. Carpenter, president of the enterprise, announced

33 Ibid., April 20, 1931, p. 2.
suspension of service and requested bus lines to accommodate all rail passengers. The short-lived interurban came to an end with outstanding indebtedness of $1,200,000 on its Dallas-Terrell line and $780,000 on its Dallas-Denton line.\textsuperscript{34}

In addition to Denton County's unsuccessful attempt to provide a market for interurban service, it also failed to maintain a market for the regular train service. From 1925 to 1930, a considerable decrease in the number of passengers prompted the local station to eliminate the position of passenger agent and to turn over his duties to the freight agent.\textsuperscript{35} Rail passenger service, whether interstate or interurban, felt the pinch of two developments: the economic depression of the period and the growth of the automobile.

As the automobile made its debut at the turn of the century, far-sighted citizens saw the need of building good substantial roads to accommodate this new invention. Denton County's roads were in poor shape, even causing hardship at times for horse-drawn vehicles of the period. Although alert county leaders exhorted the people to raise the necessary monies to construct good roads, their advice fell short of popular support. Persons who took the opposite view believed that existing railroad service, the promise of interurban trains, present good road conditions, and disappointment in past road building projects, justified their position. On October 1, 1908, the Denton County News commented editorially on the latter reason:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., March 12, 1932, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., July 9, 1930, p. 8.
\end{quote}
Eight or ten years ago the Record and Chronicle agitated and supported the move for a special road tax of 10¢ on the $100, which the people afterwards voted, in the hope that it would improve the roads of the county. But if that extra 10¢ ever permanently improved a foot of road in Denton county we have not heard of it, and the failure of the tax to help a particle soured many people on the whole question of more road taxes for [sic] road bond issues.36

The editorial makes reference to roads that would have better accommodated horse-drawn vehicles, not automobiles. Two Dallas residents introduced cars to Denton County for the first time in 1904, when they drove two Oldsmobiles from Dallas, via Plano and McKinney, to Denton, covering the near seventy-five miles with an 8.5 miles per hour average. The following year one A. E. Graham registered the first car in the county, a Cadillac.37 By mid-1906 approximately a dozen cars travelled the dirt streets of Denton and a crusade for good roads by the 20,000 Club, a kind of Denton Chamber of Commerce, began.38

The two largest county newspapers, the Record and Chronicle and the Denton County News, became the chief sources of agitation concerning construction of new roads and maintenance of existing ones. The Record and Chronicle tried to educate the citizenry in the desirability and economics of road building; the Denton County News, using a different approach, chose to criticize present methods of road maintenance and intimated the possibility of fund misapplication. Segments of sample articles from each paper appear below. On March 7, 1907, the following story appeared in the Record and Chronicle:

36DCN, October 1, p. 2.
37Centurama, p. 57.
For some time there has been considerable discussion in this county as the best plan to improve our county roads. There is no question as to whether it ought to be done—all agree on that. The only question is how shall it be brought about. Some are in favor of issuing bonds to the amount of $200,000, payable in fifty years.

An annual tax of 13 cents on the $100 would pay the interest as it accrues and provide a sinking fund to pay the bonds when they are mature. Those who favor this plan say that the $200,000 should be distributed so as to have good roads for the farmers to the towns where they market their produce.

The issuance of bonds would distribute the cost so that it would not be a burden on any one. The man who owns 200 acres of land would have to pay about $2.60 a year to meet the expense of these bonds. But the advance in price of land by reason of good roads would more than offset this.

It is hoped that the question will be discussed until all are informed and that the commissioners court will be asked to give the people a chance to vote on the bond issue.

No bond election followed.

On September 11, 1908, the Denton County News reported:

The people are beginning to wonder what it costs to maintain the public roads of the county. That it costs a large sum everybody knows and that no one man is to blame for the excessive cost of the repair in maintenance.

A reporter of the News recently investigated the cost of maintaining and improving roads for the term of years beginning February 12, 1894, and ending February 12, 1908. If he made no error in his investigation, the sum that the people of Denton county has paid into the road and bridge fund during that period makes a total of $332,010.99.

Notwithstanding the expenditure of this large sum, there is not a mile of macadamized road in the county and not a mile that is well graveled for any width.

In the year 1909, the issue had gained county-wide attention; but, as related in the Record and Chronicle, the County Commissioners Court...

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39 Ibid., March 7, 1907, p. 1.

40 DCN, September 17, 1908, p. 1.
rejected a petition to order a bond election.\textsuperscript{41} The same year one George Sheridan established a "jitney" service between Sanger and Denton, which made two trips daily despite the poor roads.\textsuperscript{42}

Denton County residents registered sixty cars by 1910,\textsuperscript{43} but realized no appreciable gains in road improvement. In 1911, however, the county received its initial hard surface road, when it macadamized the area around the county court house,\textsuperscript{44} and increased its mileage of good graveled roads to a total of twenty miles.\textsuperscript{45} The \textit{Texas Almanac} for 1914 reported that Denton County had thirty miles of "paved highways" and 100 miles of "well-graded roads."\textsuperscript{46} The word "paved" was used then to describe well-graveled roads; "well-graded" meant dirt roads.

All these roadways remained passable in dry weather but in inclement weather the ungraveled roads became extremely hazardous and with excessive precipitation the graveled roads suffered also. In August of 1912, heavy rains fell. People traveling to the county seat from the west on one of the best roads complained that they could hardly travel with a single horse and buggy; furthermore, the unfavorable conditions rendered impractical the bringing of a wagon into town. Similar reports from other sections told of buggies bogged down to the wheel hubs and exhausted

\textsuperscript{41}RC, June 8, 1909, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., January 1, 1909, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{43}Centurama, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{44}RC, May 11, 1911, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{45}DCN, May 19, 1911, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{46}Texas Almanac 1912, pp. 278-279.
horses made to pull vehicles through the mud.\textsuperscript{47} By the end of 1912, car owners had registered 298 automobiles in the county,\textsuperscript{48} and a strong renewed interest for good roads from all segments of the county emerged.

In 1913, the county purchased gasoline tractors for roadwork in an attempt to alleviate the problem, but the heavy rains of December aroused the anxious road users again, especially car and farm owners. A group known as the "Good Roaders" pointed to progress being made in neighboring counties and agitated for positive action.\textsuperscript{49} Their efforts resulted in the county commissioners setting a road bond election for the spring of 1914.

Only the Mustang precinct approved bonds for road building in its area; the Denton precinct, most in need of good roads, defeated the issue handily.\textsuperscript{50} A petition to the county commissioners produced another election in mid-summer, but this time the bonds received a greater defeat. Two factors contributed to the latter rejection. First, this election preceded by only a few days county and state elections which county citizens considered more important. Citizens in outlying areas considered it a burden to travel to the polls twice in such a short period of time and voted only in the political election. Second, during times of dry weather it appears that the road users forgot the mud and mire of the past. At the close of 1914, Denton County had less good roads.

\textsuperscript{47}RC, August 9, 1912, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., January 10, 1913, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., December 12, 1913, p. 12; December 20, 1913, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., April 30, 1914, p. 2.
road mileage than any of its neighboring counties with the exception of Grayson County. 51

A road builder from Dallas came to Denton in April, 1915, at the invitation of the new Denton Chamber of Commerce, with a warning that unless the citizens began solving their road problems, the national highways that were fanning out over the country would bypass the county, denying it of untold economic gain. 52 The Denton County News having folded, the Denton Record-Chronicle became the chief agitator. It continued to urge people to produce some positive action and printed descriptions of conditions around the county. One concerned the Denton-McKinney road where it crossed the Elm Fork of the Trinity River. Almost every time heavy rain occurred the stream would overflow and people of the area had to act in concert to repair it. Work planned for September 17, 1915, typified these undertakings. The Chamber of Commerce directed all those volunteering help to gather at the west side of the square in Denton at 6:30 A.M., and asked for twenty-five teams of horses. The county promised to pay $3.50 a day to drivers of teams and wagons, while other citizens, interested in seeing a good river crossing, were to work with pick and shovel for no pay. Usually about 200 volunteers appeared for such operations. On these occasions the women of Denton prepared dinners and brought them to the laborers, making the day as much a holiday as possible. 53

51 Texas Almanac 1914, p. 143, the Almanac gave the following mileages of good roads for counties in the Denton County area: Grayson, 46 miles; Cooke, 62 miles; Wise, 100 miles; Dallas 470 miles; Tarrant, 500 miles; and Denton, 48 miles.

52 DRC, April 22, 1915, p. 1.

The only outcome of endeavors of the "Good Roaders" resulted in the first extensively graveled county road in 1916. The thoroughfare ran from Denton to Krum to Ponder and cost the county $1,000 a mile.\(^5\) Voters defeated two road bond elections late in 1916.\(^5\) The uncertainty of the war in Europe caused road building to halt while citizens focused their attention on the international scene.

Prior to World War I road work was the responsibility of local or state levels of government—a development brought about by Andrew Jackson's veto of a bill that would have built a turnpike completely within the state of Kentucky at the expense of federal funds. Jackson held the bill unconstitutional and subsequently all similarly planned projects were considered a violation of the constitution.\(^5\) As the War broke in Europe, Washington negated this belief and since that time has given monies to individual states for road building.\(^5\)

On April 4, 1917, the Texas Legislature established the Texas Highway Department, the Texas Highway Commission, and the office of State Highway Engineer. The statute instructed the new agencies to plan and adopt a comprehensive system of State Highways, and to promote the construction thereof by cooperation with the counties, or independently by the Commission; [authorized] a policy of State aid to counties in road construction intended to promote a greater uniformity in the construction of highways; [and directed] co-operation of the Department

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\(^5\)Ibid., July 15, 1916, p. 2.


with the Federal Government in the utilization of any funds appropriated by Congress in aid of road construction in this state. . . .58

During the economic upswing immediately after the war, roadwork started again in Denton County with unprecedented vigor. In the spring of 1919, the county received a grant of $225,000 for road construction from the Texas Highway Commission. In addition, the county applied for more state funds and the now available federal funds. Then the county voters went to the polls and approved $1,500,000 worth of bonds by a margin of five to one to get themselves out of the mud.59 It appears that the war years had forced complacent voters to observe modern developments on the state, national and international scenes and made them realize that a progressive attitude was necessary for their county's own modern development. As 1919 came to an end this attitude, boosted by general prosperity, promised a future of good roads for Denton County travelers and their 3000 automobiles.60

The year 1920 began with many Texas roads planned for construction. New automobile popularity, together with the development of the oil industry which provided fuel for the motor driven vehicles and accounted for the increase of heavier transports utilized for its production and marketing, brought increased traffic. The intensified vehicular movement demanded roads of superior construction and composition. Denton County joined the state-wide move assured that the recent $1,500,000

59 DRC, March 10, 1919, p. 1; March 17, 1919, p. 1.
60 Ibid., December 10, 1919, p. 8.
worth of bonds would build avenues of travel throughout the county. But economic reverses of 1920 had altered the value of money, and the services and goods that could be obtained with it. When the Denton County voter approved the road bonds in 1919, he did it with 1918 economic conditions in mind, and the hard fact that $1,500,000 would not build as much in 1920 as in 1918 hardly pleased him. The newspaper told him that the high cost of living had struck hard at road building and that previously voted bonds would build fewer and fewer roads as time passed. County leaders urged authorities to let contracts as soon as possible to realize as much mileage as attainable. 61 A remarkable amount of work followed.

The Commissioners' Court hired the services of Bryant and Huffman of Austin to act as county engineers to supervise all road construction. On April 21, 1919, they surveyed for the best route between Denton and Dallas, and on December 30, 1919, McElwrath and Rogers, of Corsicana, received the first contract for the road's completion. Construction commenced on March 15, 1920. 62 Meanwhile the county engineers conducted other surveys, locating other county roads. By April 2, 1920, the same contractors from Corsicana bid successfully for the Fort Worth highway project, as they did for all remaining work. They sublet the drainage structures on all roads, which included bridges and culverts, to the Denton Construction Company. 63 In two years the two companies completed most of the work, and the Denton Record-Chronicle described the results as follows:

61 Ibid., March 10, 1920, p. 2.
62 Ibid., May 1, 1922, p. 40.
63 Ibid.
All highways and lateral roads in the county have a right-of-way of not less than sixty feet. The highways are built on dumps that have a crown of twenty-eight feet and the gravel was placed to a depth of ten inches loose, making an average of eight inches packed. Rollers were not used to pack the gravel but as the gravel was spread in place the roads were open to traffic and packed under use, thus setting up from the bottom first. As traffic ironed them out it caused waves to appear that were eliminated by the contractors being required to maintain the roads under traffic for a minimum of thirty days, in which time the waves were bladed out.

The lateral roads were necessarily of a lighter type of construction. They have been built with a dump having a crown of twenty-four feet and with nine feet of graveled roadway. The depth of the loose gravel on the different roads varied according to the needs of traffic from eight to ten inches making six to eight inches packed.\(^{64}\)

Materials for the roads came almost entirely from the county itself. County gravel-pit owners received $26,400.54. After trucks proved unsatisfactory, farmers furnished their wagons and horses to haul much of the gravel for expended money that found its way back into county circulation where it aided local economy, particularly following a bad crop and low prices. Contractors' teams did the grading since the farmers' teams proved unsuitable for that kind of work.\(^{65}\)

After completion of the work virtually all communities in the county, with exception of those in the Lewisville road district, had good roads leading to the county seat, either directly or indirectly through other towns. Total cost for all construction came to $1,587,966.88.\(^{66}\)

\(^{64}\)Ibid.

\(^{65}\)Ibid.

\(^{66}\)Ibid., A breakdown of costs follows: Denton to Dallas, $188,863.34; to Fort Worth $275,603.94; to Gainesville $263,272.62; to Sherman $270,971.25; Aubrey-East and South $97,254.01; Denton-East $71,747.15; Denton-West $36,577.93; Lloyd-Little Elm, $28,028.60; Justin $135,022.94; Pilot Point-East and West $117,632.14; Sanger-East and West, $108,455.27; Experiment Farm, $4,546.70.
Soon after the construction of the Dallas Highway the federal government granted funds to Denton County for resurfacing that road and providing the county with its first macadamized road. J. E. Ward, a contractor, completed the undertaking in May, 1923, and state and federal authorities accepted it. This project, however, only included the existing road as far as the Lewisville district and did not provide Dallas-bound travelers with a direct improved route to Dallas, as they had with Fort Worth. Consequently they chose the easier route on the west when they wished to go to a big city. This circumstance promoted the custom of traveling to Fort Worth—a development that hurt Denton-Dallas trade for years.

Following one year's usage of the new roads, the *Denton Record-Chronicle* assessed the benefits and developments attributed to the highways:

Building of the roads of the county has been responsible for a largely increased number of trucks... as well as... other motor vehicles designed for business and commercial use. They have been responsible for relegating of the reliable but slow mules and horses to the fields and other places were [sic] the motor invasion has not reached its height as yet....

The farmer who wants to come to Denton... can use his automobile and make a trip in a short time that a few years ago would have taken much of the day over the old roads and have almost shaken his car to pieces, or if he came by wagon would have taken a whole day.

This is only one way the highways have moved the farmer nearer to Denton. If he has produce he wants to market he can come or send a son or daughter in the automobile or if he has a heavy load he can carry it on a truck at a low cost and be back... in time to get in a day's work.... For all practical purposes the man living 20 miles from the city of Denton now is as near... as the man living three or four miles away from town in the days of the wagon and buggy.

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The state highways have been the cause of many tourists coming through the county the year round and this has resulted in more transient business here. Garages have appeared in Denton and at other towns along the highways which cater to tourist trade.68

Smaller road projects continued in the county adding, to what had been begun, one of which was caused in 1924 by the construction of Lake Dallas east of Denton. To relieve the county burden of road rebuilding costs the city of Dallas financed the building of all necessary roads around the lake.69

In 1925 road construction allowed Denton County to proclaim that it had a network of 165 miles of good roads serving practically all of the county, with three roads being designated state highways: two north-south and one east-west.70 And in 1926 the county announced that it had spent $411,636.26 of state and federal funds for the road program.71

The last important road project of the period began in October, 1929, through the Lewisville district where the lowlands of the Trinity River had proved to be an obstacle too large to handle. Financially aided by state and federal funds, the county finally closed the "Lewisville Gap" in October, 1931, providing a completely paved road from Denton to Dallas.72 The next year construction crews finished Northwest Highway out of Dallas through Roanoke and the southwest corner of the county.73

69Ibid., July 17, 1924, p. 1.
70Texas Almanac 1925, p. 270.
71Texas Almanac 1926, p. 331.
72DRC, October 17, 1931, p. 1.
73Ibid., May 20, 1932, p. 1.
The only large undertaking immediately preceding World War II involved the acquisition of land eastward from Denton for relocation of State Highway 24, which then ran from Denton to McKinney through Lake Dallas, Little Elm, and Frisco. Maintenance and improvement programs financed by county and state funds, and projects awarded by the federal government through the Works Progress Administration, augmented previous accomplishments on the basic network of roads in the county. During the war road-building came to a halt; only necessary maintenance on existing roadways continued.

Once the war ended a vast program of farm-to-market roads ensued in Texas financed by Austin and Washington. Denton County readily approved bonds to buy the necessary right-of-ways—the county's only expense. The state and federal governments met remaining costs with the state retaining the duty of road upkeep. Authorities spent $250,000 on this program in 1946 in Denton County, $1,249,560 in 1947, and $2,507,200 in 1948 and part of 1949. Lesser funds had been allocated for state highway improvement also.

At mid-century, Denton County received the news that U. S. Highway 77, which provided a direct route between Dallas and Oklahoma City, would soon become a four-lane superhighway, and that the State was spending $900,000 improving State Highway 24 through the eastern half of the county, which would provide direct travel on a hard surface road from McKinney to Decatur. These developments complemented the county's State

74 General and Special Laws of the State of Texas: 1943, pp. 365-366, Ch. 244. Although this law was passed in 1943, large scale road building came after the war.

75 DRC, November 6, 1946, p. 1; January 4, 1948, p. 10; January 2, 1949; Sec. 1, p. 9.

76 General and Special Laws of the State of Texas: 1947, pp. 268-271, Ch. 164.
Highway 377 from Denton to Fort Worth, its State Highway 10 to Pilot Point and Sherman, and its continued construction of farm-to-market roads.  

After the big road building projects of the early 1920's, amid airplanes racing to Denton from Fort Worth to Dallas, and citizens dancing around the courthouse square, Denton's first municipal airport began operation three-fourths of a mile northwest of the center of town on October 2, 1928. A seventy-five-acre tract owned by Greene and Emery of Dallas and leased to the city for ten years served as the location of the establishment which brought air traffic to Denton. The Denton Record-Chronicle reported that

The field was leveled with scraper and the high grass and weeds moved in addition to a general cleanup of the ground. A circle 100 feet in diameter was traced with white rock near the center of the field and a sign "Denton" was located near the circle in white rock to guide airmen. A four-plane hanger, erected at the site in 1930, made the airport as modern as any located near cities the size of Denton. The facility served the city and county for over ten years.

The landing of a Douglas B18A bomber at the new municipal airport three miles north of Denton inaugurated service there on November 17, 1940. During World War II, the 25th Army Air Force Glider Training detachment utilized this facility for training pilots, while local and federal authorities planned a new military field about ten miles west of Denton. For the remainder of the war delay after delay prevented

77DRC, August 13, 1950, Sec. 3, p. 3.
78Ibid., October 2, 1928, p. 1.
79Ibid., April 16, 1930, p. 8.
80Ibid., November 9, 1940, p. 1.
81Ibid., October 6, 1942, p. 1.
actual construction, much to the disappointment of local observers. Hope for the air facility ebbed when the Army announced that it no longer needed additional training fields, but the federal government offered a grant of $400,000 to aid the city of Denton to build a more modern municipal facility. On July 6, 1947, Denton officials dedicated the landing strips and hangars located on 523 acres four miles southwest of Denton. Capable of handling commercial planes, the airport became the home for the Denton Aviation Company and the North Texas Aviation Company.82

Other developments that grew along with the various modes of transportation, and which conveniently eliminated the necessity of using travel to communicate, were the telegraph, telephone, radio, and television. Denton County's development in these areas certainly parallels those of other sections of the country. Telegraph service either accompanied or soon followed the building of railroads. Telephones came a short time later, followed by the radio and the television.

Actually, however, Denton County's first telegraph line preceded the railways when in 1877 the United States government constructed a line from Sherman to Pilot Point, past Sanger and Bolivar, on to one of its posts at Jacksboro. The road along which this line ran became known as "Wire Road," a name still used by citizens when referring to the Pilot Point-Sanger highway.83

The telephone made its appearance soon after the telegraph; however, citizens did not accept it as a worthwhile invention as quickly.

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82Ibid., July 6, 1947, p. 2.

83Ibid., September 22, 1946, Sec. 3, p. 2.
The first telephone line of importance constructed in the county, about 1885, ran from Denton to Grapevine to Dallas, providing long distance service between those points. H. M. Spaulding, president of the First National Bank in Denton, probably raised the first private line in Denton when he ran a line from his home to his place of business. The people looked upon the "gadget" as a kind of toy; slowly, however, they began to accept it as an important invention of communication. Around 1896 the city of Denton received its first telephone exchange, and by 1905 the businesses of Denton slowly began to subscribe to service. About this time also, crews erected lines in rural areas for limited service. In another fifteen years the telephone had become a Denton County necessity.84

Radio station K D N T, became another necessity for local listeners as it began its broadcasting eighty miles in all directions from studios located at the Texas State College for Women. One-hundred-watt airwaves carried the voice of Governor James V. Allred as he dedicated Denton County's first radio station in May, 1938. Later, K D N T moved to new quarters, and in 1946 the Federal Communications Commission allowed the station to increase output power to 250 watts.85

In 1948, with television transmission available in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, advertisements flooded the Denton County news media describing the receivers which could change electromagnetic waves into

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84 Ibid., January 23, 1926, p. 1; J. M. Harris, 112 Years in Little Elm Community (Dallas, 1957), p. 114.

85 Dallas Journal, May, 1938, p. 3; DRC, April 21, 1946, Sec. 3, p. 1.
pictures presented on private screens in one's home. Television sets won quick popularity and could be found in many homes by 1950.

Without its developments in transportation and communication, Denton County would have fallen behind the neighboring sections of the north Texas area. With the growth of these media the county was able to develop its natural potentials, and take its place particularly as an outstanding agricultural center during the first half of the twentieth century.
CHAPTER III

AGRARIAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

A particular region or area becomes what it is through economic exploitation and development of what it has to offer. Elmer H. Johnson, an esteemed Texas geographer, calls these offerings "regional advantages" which include

... availability of natural resources and raw materials, the possession of mechanical power and transportation, the availability of labor, and the accessibility of markets, as well as conditions that make a locality desirable as a place in which to live.¹

The single most prevailing "regional advantage" Denton County had to offer when early settlement began was its natural resource of fertile soils, which dictated an economy based on agriculture. Small-scale agriculture existed during the county's early development, but the arrival and growth of the other remaining "advantages" loosed residual agricultural potentials, bringing about maximum development. The unfolding of these potentials constitutes the economic story of Denton County from the coming of the railroad in the 1880's to 1950. Certainly achievements in other areas arose, but agriculture was the leading contributor to the county's economy during this period.

In 1900 inhabitants of Denton County numbered 28,318, of which 24,131 lived in rural areas. This population count demonstrated the

tremendous growth which accompanied the promise and building of rail
service to the county. The current figure had grown from an 1870 head-
count of 7,251.2 Prior to 1900 the people lived predominately in rural
areas, where their agricultural pursuits changed the county from a quiet
region of self-sufficient farming and ranching to one of active land
cultivation and livestock raising for maximum production of marketable
products.

By 1900, on land valued at $17.03 an acre, farmers of Denton County
had developed a widely diversified agriculture. For the year 1899,
wheat was the leading crop with 92,800 acres planted, followed by corn,
64,423 acres; cotton, 62,717 acres; oats, 22,032 acres. Farmers planted
crops such as alfalfa, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, and peanuts on
smaller acreages.3 In an average year wheat production averaged from
fifteen to twenty-five bushels an acre; oats, forty to seventy-five
bushels; corn, thirty to fifty bushels; and cotton, one fourth to one
half bale an acre.4 Livestock numbered 34,018 head of beef cattle, 7,926
dairy cows, 12,962 horses, 6,752 mules, 35,385 swine, 154,072 chickens
plus turkeys and other fowl. Value of all agricultural products reported
was $2,680,983.5

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2U. S., Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States

3U. S., Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States
Taken in the Year 1900: Agriculture, Vol. V, Pt. 1 (Washington, 1902),
pp. 185, 195, 299, 392, 434, 573, hereinafter cited as Twelfth Census
of the United States.

4Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1904, p. 250, hereinafter
cited as Texas Almanac.

5Twelfth Census of the United States, pp. 299, 480, 481.
When the Denton County farmer realized that cotton was the crop which he could grow easily at a minimum expense relative to its excellent economic return, he began more and more each year after the turn of the century to reduce acreages of other crops and numbers of livestock and substitute for them the fiber producing plant. By 1908, when cotton gins in every part of the county baled lint, Pilot Point advertised one of the largest gins in the world, with a capacity of 100 bales during daylight hours. The economic growth of the county from 1900 to 1910 was notable. Land values almost doubled. A population increase of 2,940 mostly occurred in the rural areas, where the number of farms expanded by 604, with an additional 80,812 acres put to the plow. Farmers planted cotton on 113,554 acres in 1909, almost doubling the acreage of ten years before. Corn was now its closest rival, with 91,344 acres, followed by wheat, which had been reduced to 35,279 acres, and oats 13,120 acres. Many less important crops and the varied livestock helped to boost the value of agricultural products to $4,724,200.

The farmers of the early 1900's in Denton County prospered. Although cotton became the chief crop, many farmers refused to place complete trust in it and continued to plant other supplemental and sometimes experimental crops. Alfalfa became more popular, as did peanuts and kafir. During the years that cotton produced little, the wise farmer

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6 The Post-Signal, August 21, 1908, p. 11.


8 See Record Chronicle, June 9, 1909, pp. 1, 2; January 1, 1910, p. 2; July 13, 1911, p. 2, hereinafter cited as RC.
found many times that his other crops saved him from financial loss. Other planters who failed to diversify took chances.

Land practices of the early 1900's were often poor. Much too often farmers devoted their land to the continuous cultivation of a one-crop economy, usually cotton. Lack of proper soil management caused widespread inadequate care of the soil throughout the county, state, and nation.

Around 1910, agricultural experts began to alert farmers in Denton County to conservation procedures. Articles in newspapers urged rural citizens to acquaint themselves with good farming practices. The state also began various programs to educate Texas farmers in an effort to better support a rural economy. In 1910 Denton County citizens persuaded the state to locate one of its first agricultural experiment stations in the county in order to teach regional agrarians diversified farming and intensive utilization of pasturelands for cattle raising. Officials first located the station southwest of Denton, then in 1913 moved it four and one-half miles west of Denton, and finally in 1920 located it five and one-half miles northwest of Denton on the Krum road.⁹

The same year the experiment station began its work, progressive farmers formed an organization called the Denton County Farmers' Institute of Texas. Its purposes were to propagate better methods in agriculture, horticulture, and livestock endeavors; to establish better markets; and, among other things, keep in contact with the Texas State

Department of Agriculture at Austin. The Department of Agriculture's district agent also established the Boy's Corn Club, a program aimed at educating the young boys of the county and encouraging them to study proper soil utilization and conservation.\(^\text{10}\)

Between 1910 and 1915 prosperity of Denton County farmers grew. During most years all crops produced well, particularly cotton and wheat, the big money crops,\(^\text{11}\) but corn began to lose popularity especially after the complete corn crop failure of 1911.\(^\text{12}\) Land prices moved up as high as $75 an acre when a local newspaper reported that no more undeveloped land existed in the county.\(^\text{13}\)

The remarkable success farmers had with cotton was not peculiar only to Denton County, but to the entire South, where its popularity made it the most widespread crop planted. The result was the flooding of cotton markets and the depressing of cotton prices. Acreage reduction would remedy the situation, experts agreed, so in 1912 Denton County farmers volunteered to plant oats in many of their cotton designated lands.\(^\text{14}\) This volunteer system never curtailed production as designed. The first year it was supposed to be in effect favorable weather conditions caused Denton County's total cotton output to surpass any previous

\(^{10}\)RC, January 4, 1910, p. 1; January 27, 1910, p. 1.

\(^{11}\)Ibid., January 4, 1911, p. 6; July 13, 1911, p. 8; January 2, 1912, p. 4; July 11, 1912, p. 1; May 10, 1913, p. 1; Denton County News, January 4, 1910, p. 4; May 24, 1912, p. 4.

\(^{12}\)RC, July 13, 1911, p. 2.

\(^{13}\)Denton County News, May 19, 1911, p. 1, hereinafter cited as DCN.

\(^{14}\)RC, March 4, 1912, p. 4.
year's total. Nevertheless, agricultural experts continued to urge Denton County farmers to plant less cotton. The experts reasoned that if they persuaded farmers to plant substitute crops, new crop markets would have to be created. Two of the suggested alternate crops were broom corn and peanuts. Consequently, the Denton Chamber of Commerce secured the Courtney Broom Factory for Denton, and busied itself with promoting growth and marketing of peanuts. Aiding the diversification drive, the newly organized Diversification and Marketing Association of Denton County named a special dairy committee whose purpose was to inaugurate a program to promote dairying and to secure at least 1,000 cows for a city creamery. A movement for agricultural variety continued to grow. It secured no reduction in cotton production, but it did hold acreage constant until 1920.

Perhaps no force was stronger in espousing good agricultural habits than the Denton Record-Chronicle, which regularly printed articles serving the agricultural community. No other means of communication to relay sound agricultural ideas to the farmers was as widespread. Characteristic of the paper's efforts was an article printed on October 14, 1915, which appears to have had a dual purpose. First, it pointed out to local land owners the vast possibilities of crop variety; second, it seemed to

15 Ibid., May 13, 1913, p. 1.
16 Ibid., January 13, 1913, p. 1.
17 Ibid., February 9, 1915, p. 2.
18 Ibid., January 22, 1915, p. 4.
19 The census reports of 1910 and 1920 show that almost identical cotton acreages were planted in the years 1909 and 1919.
be an advertisement aimed at potential outside markets or possible new county settlers. The article expounded upon the fertility of Denton County soils and the following crops they would support: Cotton, wheat, oats, corn, rye, barley, millet, alfalfa, maize, kafir, feterita, sorghums, broom corn, peanuts, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, cantaloupes, melons, pumpkins, most all known garden products, all kinds of fruit including peaches, apricots, plums, grapes, pears, strawberries, dewberries, and blackberries. The paper further pointed out that good pasture-lands, especially in the western part of the county, supported fine horses, cattle, and sheep; and that dairying and hog raising were popular, as well as poultry raising, which had produced almost a half million dollars worth of chickens, turkeys, and eggs in the previous year.20

Water control, as a soil conservation measure, appeared at the same time as the promotion of crop diversification. During the summer of 1915, one J. C. Olson, from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, came to Denton County and directed the work of laying the county's first terraces on six different farms. He invited other farmers to witness the terrace construction so that they might become interested in this conservation practice on their land.21 Response came slowly.

As the year 1915 ended a new development did catch the curiosity and interest of the local farmers. The gasoline motor tractor made its scattered appearance around the county, vying with the horse and mule as the source of farming power.22

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20 Denton Record-Chronicle, October 14, 1915, Sec. 2, p. 1; hereinafter cited as DRC.
21 Ibid., July 7, 1915, p. 3.
The promotion of crop diversification and soil conservation, by soil experts and business establishments interested in good returns for farmers, continued in the second half of the decade between 1910 and 1920.23 The war appeared to have little effect on agricultural habits in the county. With prices increasing, cotton remained the chief staple crop, holding a rather steady acreage, somewhat over 100,000 acres a year. Wheat and oats maintained their popularity but corn slipped. Peanuts became more common, with a considerable number of fields planted about the county. In 1916 production of peanuts was expected to equal 100 car loads.24 Despite poor crops of 1918 and 1919, the post-war economy of Denton County boomed. Tractors increased noticeably on farms,25 and a milk market opened in Denton at the Graham and Teasley Grocers, where fresh milk could be sold locally or sent to Dallas.26 Prices received for produce continued to climb, with the total value of agricultural products of Denton County for 1919 equalling $13,382,781 for crops and $4,470,590 for livestock,27 a fantastic increase over the 1910 report. Population made a modest gain of 4,097, most of which for the first time settled in urban areas,28 for most farm lands of the county had been occupied and non-agrarian economic opportunities had opened in the towns.

23Ibid., January 8, 1916, p. 5.
24Ibid., September 25, 1916, p. 4.
25Look through DRC, August 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 1919.
26DRC, October 8, 1919, p. 6; October 13, 1919, p. 6.
From the point of view of the small urban businessmen the year 1919 was extremely prosperous. Denton merchants reported that their volume of business had reached a new height, since farmers and laborers had more money now to spend than at any previous time. Bank statements reflected unprecedented increases in deposits. The only complaints of the period came from some shop owners who were concerned about the effects the bad roads of the county were having on trade; nevertheless, the citizenry enjoyed prosperity.29

More economic progress was made in the first half of 1920. Crop diversification made more advancements. Improvement in livestock and poultry production appeared. The new prosperity instilled a pride in the county, with citizens promoting local products and trying to obtain recognition for achievements through county fairs, community fairs, poultry shows, and livestock shows. Demonstrations at the experiment farm and the county agent's activities helped to advance better crops, conservation, terracing, dairying, and better livestock development and management.

Dairying developed rapidly in early 1920. Local herdsmen organized the Dairymen's Association with the goals of meeting the growing dairy market in Denton and neighboring counties, particularly Dallas and Tarrant counties. These opening markets demanded the doubling and tripling of Denton County dairy herds.30 With the objective of becoming a chief

29DRC, January 1, 1920, p. 5.

dairy center of Texas, the new association, assisted by the Agricultural Committee of the Denton Chamber of Commerce and the local County Agent, Frank Phillips, formed The Denton Milk Products Company, for processing and selling milk products for maximum return to the local dairymen.31

Beef cattle raisers also moved to improve herds. On March 1, 1920, the Denton County Purebred Livestock Association joined the ranks of the rapidly forming improvement organizations.32

The duty of improving and developing better varieties of crops for the county rested upon the shoulders of the men operating the county experiment station. In January, 1921, members of the Texas State Legislature paid the farm a visit to acquaint themselves with its agricultural activities. The solons learned that since its establishment, approximately one hundred different varieties of wheat had been tested, of which only four or five had proven valuable. Ninety different varieties of cotton had been tested, with nine meriting acceptance, and sixty varieties of corn, with six proving satisfactory. The station had tested many other crops also, including oats and barley. Its staff had conducted terracing demonstrations in an attempt to persuade farmers to recognize the value of water control, and it made tree seedlings available for planting on farms.33

In 1920 county merchants organized the Denton County Chamber of Commerce. With H. M. Russell of Pilot Point as its first president,

32 Ibid., January 1, 1921, p. 3.
33 Ibid., January 28, 1921, p. 2; January 29, 1921, p. 1.
this new organization dedicated itself to work for better relationships between businesses and between farmers and businessmen, the improvement of livestock, and the increase of better markets, roads, schools, and social conditions.\textsuperscript{34}

Notwithstanding the promotion of beneficial agricultural practices in Denton County, the nationwide depression of 1920 and 1921 began to offset the prosperity of 1919. Local farmers suffered as did farmers across the nation. Average wheat around the country, which sold for $2.15 per bushel in December, 1919, fell to $1.44 in December, 1920; corn from $1.35 to $0.68; oats from $0.72 to $0.47; and cotton from $0.36 a pound to $0.14.\textsuperscript{35} By the end of 1922 this recession had run its course and American industries in the main returned to a peacetime basis, with the exception of agriculture, which failed to revive. The American economist and author, Harold Underwood Faulkner, cites two reasons for agriculture's failure: "(1) overproduction in the markets of the world brought on by the demands of the war and by improved agricultural machinery, particularly the gasoline tractor, and (2) the world wide falling off in demand and the deflation of prices after the war."\textsuperscript{36}

Because Denton County's economy was based on agriculture, nearly everyone suffered. When the farmer's returns for crops and livestock were small his spending in the urban areas fell. Despite this economic slowdown the peoples' pride in their county and its varied agricultural industries carried them on in furthering progressive practices of soil and livestock management.

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}, July 17, 1920, p. 1.


\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 605, 625.
The farmers continued to market their crops, other than cotton and those not fed to animals, at the local mills, the chief of which were the Alliance Milling Company, founded in 1880, and the Denton Milling Company, established in 1904. At those places millers processed the grain into flour, shorts, bran, chops, mixed feeds, corn meal, breakfast food, and graham flour. The value of yearly output of the Alliance Milling Company ranged from $600,000 to $1,130,000 and the Denton Milling Company, approximately $250,000.37

The dairy farmers, although feeling the effects of the economic slow down too, now had a good market for their milk in the Dairy Products Company. The company employed ten men at its outset at a payroll of $1200 a month, and operated four delivery autos for the city of Denton. For 1921 the company estimated that it paid $90,000 to farmers within a ten-to-fifteen-mile radius of Denton. It processed the purchased milk and sold it as sweet milk, buttermilk, ice cream, and butter.38

In 1924, the first year the United States government took the Agricultural Census separately, the value of agricultural products in Denton County dropped sharply. The decline in value of crops to $8,779,454 and livestock to $2,960,570,39 however, did not prevent Denton County from ranking thirteenth in agricultural wealth out of the 254 counties in the state.40 By far the principal contributor to the value of crops was

37DRC, November 24, 1923, p. 4; December 1, 1923, Sec. 2, p. 1.
38Ibid., December 22, 1923, p. 2.
40DRC, October 10, 1924, p. 2.
In an apparent attempt to offset the bad crops and low prices of 1922 and 1923, Denton County farmers planted the highest cotton acreage in the county's history in 1924. Nearly 160,000 acres produced more than 50,000 bales valued at well over $6,150,000.\(^{41}\)

Needless to say, the high cotton production of Denton County and elsewhere continued poor prices, but diversification practices had saved most Denton County farmers. In 1926, when cotton farmers were hit extremely hard, the *Denton Record-Chronicle* reminded the local farmers that planting crop varieties, dairying, truck farming, and poultry raising had been their salvation.\(^{42}\)

"Prosperity has returned to Denton . . ." said the *Denton Record-Chronicle* on September 24, 1927.\(^{43}\) So it seemed as prices for farm products rose, particularly cotton and peanuts,\(^{44}\) and briefly held out a false promise of better times. The establishment of the Denton County Poultry Association and the celebration of the completed Lake Dallas Dam reflected a general optimistic view of the future.\(^{45}\)

More organizations appeared the next year. Onion farmers organized, and dairymen formed a new organization, the Denton County Dairy Improvement Association, with the purpose of improving dairy herds through the

\(^{41}\)Ibid., December 20, 1924, p. 1.

\(^{42}\)Ibid., October 16, 1926, Sec. 2, p. 2.

\(^{43}\)Ibid., September 24, 1927, p. 1.

\(^{44}\)Ibid., September 24, 1927, p. 1; November 12, 1927, p. 1.

\(^{45}\)Ibid., March 3, 1927, p. 1; November 9, 1927, p. 1.
testing of cattle for brucellosis. The county poultry and livestock shows were bigger and better than ever before.  

But as the economy began its upward swing the trend reversed. The difficult times of the mid-twenties, linked with the economic disasters of 1929, again caused a drop in farm product values. The 1930 census reported that Denton County crop values equalled $5,518,270, and livestock values totalled $3,872,628.  

The economic developments of the 1920's had a permanent effect on Denton County. The above figures reveal more than just dollar values. While the value of crops decreased, it should be noted that the value of livestock increased. This development was not caused by better prices for beef cattle, dairy products, and poultry products, but by farmers' beginning to withdraw land from cultivation and to utilize it as pasture for raising more livestock. The number of all cattle increased from 24,063 to 34,007 in 1929. Chickens increased from 363,486 to 509,546. This shifting of agricultural emphasis was to be a continuing trend.  

Other developments of trends can be observed. While the number of acres on farms had increased from 509,632 to 529,254, the number of farms declined from 4,255 to 3,963. From the 1920's forward small-scale...

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48 Ibid., pp. 1452-1453.  
49 Ibid., p. 1452.  
50 Ibid., p. 1336.
farmers realized they could not survive, and as they abandoned their agrarian pursuits, neighboring farmers purchased these lands and annexed them. Consequently population figures for 1929 showed rural population had declined 4,494 and urban residents increased almost 2,000.51

As farmers began to enlarge their farms, they reduced cotton acreage and substituted livestock production. The year 1929 was the last year that more than 100,000 acres of the fleecy staple were planted.52 Thereafter cotton production declined and the cattle raising increased, while other major crops maintained their past popularity.

The early 1930's proved more difficult than the early 1920's for all Denton County residents, but the farmers continued to fight the economic depression through more responsible agriculture. Livestock raising received additional promotion, especially from County Agent C. C. Morris, who replaced M. T. Payne in 1930.53

It would appear that the emphasis on livestock production resulted in the effort to provide a local market for grains produced. To sell the grains would produce little money,54 which in turn would have to be spent on foods for the farmer's family. If the farmer utilized his grains for the raising of animals he would be producing meat, milk, and eggs at a lower price than he could purchase them. Besides, he could


52Fifteenth Census of the United States: Agriculture, pp. 1472-1473.


54In 1930, wheat brought approximately $0.77 a bushel and oats $0.31, DRC, July 3, 1930, p. 1.
sell his surplus livestock for money to buy other items. In this system one recalls the self-sufficient conditions prior to the coming of the railroads.

As all segments of the American economy continued their decline, achievements in agricultural improvement in Denton County advanced. The county agent reported that during 1931 growth of diversification continued, the planting of legumes doubled, farmers terraced 10,000 acres of land, poultry, dairy cattle, and hog production improved, and beef cattle tripled.55 The local impression held that Denton County stood in a better position relatively than did most Texas counties because of its diverse agricultural practices.56

In spite of the optimistic view Denton County's economy went through its most serious decline on record. Prices continued downward. Wheat brought $0.37 a bushel in August, 1932; oats, $0.09 a bushel; and barley, $0.12 a bushel.57 In January, 1933, the County Commissioners' Court relieved the county agent of his post in an effort to curtail county costs, only to hire another one the following June to administer an agricultural program from Washington designed to alleviate the farmers' plight.58 The Congress had passed the first Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) in May, 1933, and the new President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, began to administer his farm program.

55DRC, January 1, 1932, p. 6
56Ibid., November 27, 1931, p. 8.
57Ibid., August 1, 1932, p. 1.
58Ibid., January 21, 1933, p. 1; June 24, 1933, p. 1.
Under this act the government initiated a cotton curtailment program in which Denton County farmers readily took part. By July 13, 1933, local agrarians agreed to destroy 31,085 acres of cotton, for which they would receive approximately $335,000. The government hoped that this program would reduce the surplus of cotton and at the same time raise the farmers' incomes.

Denton County farmers adopted a similar program for wheat. They agreed to curtail planted wheat by 3,000 acres, for which they would be paid $44,330, or approximately $14.34 an acre, a good return when one considers that wheat often produced only ten to twenty bushels to the acre and sold for less than fifty cents a bushel, and that out of this return the wheat grower had to subtract his costs of soil preparation, seeding, and harvesting, often leaving him with little or no profit.

Another program under the first AAA aimed at farm debt reduction. To help alleviate debts incurred during previous difficult years, Denton County farmers could apply for loans from the Production Credit Association beginning in February, 1934. The purpose of this program was to provide money for the production and harvesting of crops, for purchase of feeds for livestock in drought stricken areas, and for refinancing farm indebtedness. Those unable to qualify for this program could apply for relief loans under the Emergency Crop loan plan.

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59Ibid., July 13, 1933, p. 1; September 11, 1933, p. 1.
60Ibid., October 27, 1933, p. 1.
Government programs extended into other areas of agriculture, all with the purpose of alleviating the economic strain on the farmer. The government bought sheep and cattle, regulated the production of hogs and corn, placed restrictions on peanut acreage, and built terraces on farm land with labor from the Civilian Conservation Corps. 63

When President Roosevelt initiated his broad economic programs in 1933, the economy's rapid rate of decline diminished one's expectations of immediate success. Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace reported, however, that the American farmers' purchasing power in September, 1934, was 81 per cent of the pre-war level as compared with only 35 per cent in March, 1933. 64 So when one examines the 1934 census of agriculture one must remember that the data represent an improvement over the worst period.

The 1934 census failed to evaluate crops and livestock produced that year, but it did indicate that total farm property value had fallen from the 1920 high of $55,916,524 65 to $19,170,796 66 in Denton County, and that the value of land with buildings on the premises had dropped


from approximately $100 an acre in 1920 to $35.92 an acre. The census also confirmed the trends to larger farms, less cotton production, and greater cattle raising begun in 1929, which were probably reinforced by the government programs of curtailing cotton and buying cattle.

Just as the farmers of Denton County began to appreciate and profit from the programs administered through the AAA, the United States Supreme Court ruled its crop control activities as unconstitutional in January, 1936. From 1936 to 1938, when the second Agricultural Adjustment Act became law, a temporary program under the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act went into effect. This new act provided payments to farmers who planted soil conserving plants, a departure from the practice of paying landowners who allowed land to lay idle. The result was actually the same because the farmer simply substituted government-approved crops for his older established ones. By June 18, 1936, 1,365 farmers representing 36 per cent of the county's farms and 50 per cent of the county farm lands signed up for participation and the reciprocal payments. The following January, the government paid them $261,000 for their interest in the conservation program.

The partaking in the government programs brought other results, too, noticeably the increased market price as the crop production declined. By harvest time in 1937, wheat ranged as high as $1.15 a bushel and oats approximately $0.36. The planted conservation crops built soil fertility.

67Ibid.


69U. S. Statutes at Large, XLIX, Part I, 1148-1152 (1936).

and terracing in 1937 added 10,000 more acres of land protected from erosion. 71

A new agricultural program under the second Agricultural Adjustment Administration began in 1938. Actually more powerful than the previous AAA, it was honored by a now more cooperative Supreme Court. At the heart of the measure was its power to regulate both the production of crops and the prices paid for them. Each year both would be set. If a farmer produced more than his quota, he subjected himself to a penalty. And if prices fell below the set standard, the government promised to pay the difference. The second AAA also continued the soil conservation programs begun in 1936. 72

Administrators of this plan and previous programs found it necessary to educate the farmers in the provisions and options contained in them. They held periodic meetings year after year in various communities where the farmers acquainted themselves with the procedures whereby they could reap maximum economic gain. 73 Through these meetings the AAA won the approval and cooperation of the land owners and rewarded them with subsidies and price supports. In 1939 alone, for participation in the various programs, the government paid Denton County farmers $326,288.34 for conservation practices, and issued subsidy checks to maintain parity prices amounting to $162,789.15 for cotton, and $56,707.23 for wheat. 74

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71 Ibid., January 1, 1938, p. 3.
73 For a report on one of the meetings, see DRC, November 7, 1938, p. 1.
74 DRC, December 28, 1939, p. 1.
The farmer welcomed these monies because they improved his condition and slowly returned to him the purchasing power of years past.

The 1940 census confirmed the farmers' improved economic conditions. Farm property values by 1939 had risen almost $3,000,000, and land value had gained $5.00 an acre. Prices paid for produce had risen also; however, because no census had been taken of agricultural products' values in 1934, no comparison can be made.

It is interesting to recall that farmers had been giving more attention to livestock production since the economic problems of the 1920's, and to note further that the effects of this continuing development reached a new high level. For the first time, animals valued at $3,810,000 displaced crops valued at $3,713,079, as the leading component of the agricultural economy of Denton County. Two other trends begun in the 1920's reaffirmed their direction, also. Farms continued to decline in number and grow in size, and population continued to decrease in rural sections and increase in urban areas. All these tendencies have persisted to date.

As the decade of the 1940's began, economic conditions moved forward as government-sponsored programs continued. In December, 1940, Denton and Wise county voters approved the formation of the Denton-Wise County Soil Conservation District with the objective of engendering better

76 Ibid., p. 775.
soil conservation and utilization practices. The year had been one of progress in terracing, silo building, home orchard planting, and 4-H Club growth. On almost 3,000 farms Denton County farmers had received $423,555 for AAA program participation. The Dallas Morning News noted that growth in dairying, poultry raising, truck farming, and berry and fruit growing, especially in the Lewisville area, was leading to even greater diversification in agriculture.

The year 1941 was almost a repeat of 1940, but the bombing of Pearl Harbor gave it a new direction. Massive mobilization of the country's resources prompted a modification of all types of production in the United States. The first effect of the war experienced by Denton County farming efforts came on January 8, 1942, when the AAA requested farmers to take an inventory of all their machinery and apply through farm machinery dealers for any repair parts they anticipated needing for 1942. The government was to set up a parts rationing board. In addition the AAA asked that all scrap metal be turned over for the war effort.

Next came programs to increase the production of dairy and poultry products, and meats. This demand for more livestock production accelerated its popularity even more in the county. Controls remained on crop production on into 1943.

78DRC, December 16, 1940, p. 1; January 1, p. 1; January 7, 1941, p. 2.

79The Dallas Morning News, August 20, 1940, Sec. 1, p. 6, hereinafter cited as DMN.

80DRC, January 8, 1942, p. 10.

81Ibid., February 9, 1942, p. 1.
When in 1943 shortage of labor on farms threatened to hinder harvesting the county's grain crop, the Agricultural Committee of the Denton County Chamber of Commerce appealed to businessmen, salesmen, lawyers, housewives, high school students, and virtually anyone in good health to help. The citizens turned out in ample numbers and made their contributions to the "food for victory" effort. In addition to receiving these welcome laborers, the farmers enjoyed the highest prices for their produce in fifteen years. Wheat marketed at $1.28 a bushel, barley at $1.00, and oats at $0.70. Then a further boost came in the form of suspending acreage restrictions on cotton and all other crops for 1944, to ease the need for food and war materials.

Although the government lifted acreage allotments it abandoned none of its farm projects and programs. The AAA urged farmers to build more terraces and earthen water tanks for livestock, financing costs from 75 per cent to 100 per cent. It made loans available for major crops--on cotton up to 90 per cent and wheat up to 85 per cent. The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) handled peanuts in the same manner. The CCC also maintained egg prices and granted subsidies to meat packers in order to maintain lower prices for the consumer and higher prices for the producer. In addition it gave subsidies to dairymen to protect the consumer from the rising cost of dairying. These price control loans and subsidy programs were actually under the direction of the War Food Administration

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82 Ibid., June 16, 1943, p. 4; June 21, 1943, p. 4; DMN, June 18, 1943, Sec. 1, p. 3.
83 DRC, July 9, 1943, p. 1; December 10, 1943, p. 2.
and the CCC, but because the AAA was thoroughly set up in Denton County, it administered them. 84

When the government took its census for 1945, it learned that the farmer enjoyed better conditions financially than at any time since 1919. The value of agricultural goods produced in Denton County almost doubled the 1940 values, with livestock topping crops by almost $1,000,000. Land values rose almost $15.00 an acre and the total value of farm property skyrocketed to approximately $8,500,000. 85

Although the government lifted restrictions on cotton, total county acreage fell to a new low of less than 42,000 acres. Wheat and oats both ranked above it. Peanuts reached an all time high of nearly 13,000 acres and cattle numbers multiplied to approximately 60,000 head. 86 The Denton County farmer no longer paid fealty to King Cotton, and that staple commodity's popularity declined during the depression years as good markets vanished, and continued downward during the war because of labor shortages and high costs. 87 After the war it regained some of its popularity but after 1950 descended to a 20,000-acre annual crop.

In addition to the old rivals of cotton—wheat, oats, corn, and cattle—other diverse products contributed to its downfall. These new products included the increased production of pecans, alfalfa, sweet clover, cow peas, soy beans, strawberries, dewberries, melons, peaches,

84 Ibid., March 10, 1944, p. 3.
86 Ibid., pp. 124, 176, 280.
87 DRC, September 22, 1946, Sec. 2, p. 7.
pears, plums, grapes, apples, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, sorghums, and peanuts. In the true sense of the word, diversification had evolved.

After a brief expected postwar slump in 1946, the economic improvement of the 1940's continued. In its assessment of the past year the Denton Record-Chronicle in early 1948 commented:

The year 1947 was a good one for Denton. Greater population increased prosperity for farmers and merchants, increased enrollment in the colleges, more manufacturing payrolls, more civic improvements. Everything affecting sound growth, prosperity and development reached an all time high last year.

Prosperity persisted. The helpful farm programs administered by the AAA continued in 1948, but under a new agency, the Production and Marketing Administration. Farmers, appreciative of the government involvement for the previous fifteen years, found good markets for their produce.

Such markets available in the county included large milk plants which processed dairy products, produce houses that dressed and marketed turkeys, centers which bought chickens and eggs to be sold to the local schools, chain stores, and cities in the northeastern and midwestern states, and a meat slaughtering service which dressed beef either for the farmer himself or other local consumers. In addition, local produce markets bought pecans; a canning plant purchased meat and vegetables; planting-seed houses bought and sold wheat, oats, barley, corn, clover, Sudan grass, and other grass seeds; and a local potato chip factory.

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88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., January 4, 1948, Sec. 2, p. 4.
90 Ibid., May 23, 1948, Sec. 1, p. 7.
purchased locally grown potatoes. Also, the two large flour mills located in Denton bought wheat and other grains; scattered cotton gins still provided a market for cotton; buyers at local livestock auctions purchased all forms of livestock; and, many local merchants bought truck crops, vegetables, and surplus fruits from home orchards.  

Census takers reported the farmers' good fortune in 1950. The value of all agricultural products amounted to an unprecedented $7,216,323 for crops, and $12,071,449 for livestock, with land selling for approximately $100 an acre.  

Although agricultural value had reached an all time high, it failed to deter the developments in non-agrarian areas. The census of 1950 also revealed that for the first time in Denton County's history, more people lived in urban areas; the agricultural industry which had employed as much as 41 per cent of the county's population in 1940, now worked only 19.4 per cent, while percentages increased in all other major occupational areas.  

As a consequence, the value of non-agrarian products and services equalled the approximate value of agrarian products and services in 1950, bringing about a "balanced economy" in Denton County.  

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91 Ibid., February 1, 1948, Sec 5, p. 10.


94 DRC, August 13, 1950, Sec. 3, p. 4.
"advantages" begotten by the development and growth of the large metropolitan areas of Dallas and Fort Worth, and rapid modes of transportation began to replace the "advantages" of the first fifty years of the twentieth century. The decentralization of industry and its search for outlying areas, the growth of educational facilities, the ever expanding population in search for more private living areas outside urban and suburban areas, and the speculative land buying, served to place agriculture in the second role as an economic factor in Denton County for the second half of the century.
Fig. 2

Population of Denton County from 1900 to 1950

- Total
- Rural
- Urban

Year: 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950

Number of People: 5000, 10000, 15000, 20000, 25000, 30000, 35000

Fig. 2
Fig. 3

NUMBER OF FARMS AND NUMBER OF ACRES FARMED IN DENTON COUNTY FROM 1900 TO 1949.
NUMBER OF CATTLE
IN DENTON COUNTY
FROM 1900 TO 1949

Fig. 4
CHAPTER IV

NON-AGRARIAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Farsighted citizens of an agricultural community are aware that if their city, large or small, is to survive and prosper, they must continually work at providing maximum attractions for industry or other supplemental economic businesses. Industry adds economic activity to a community; agriculture once fully developed can actually impede or reverse economic growth, owing to modern technological advances which eliminate critical needs for manpower and thereby decrease the population as persons seek jobs in more favorable areas. The thousands of small rural towns and villages in America provide testimony for the growing urbanization as industry attracts laborers and communities dwindle to the ghosts of their former sizes.

The municipalities which have continued to grow are much fewer in number than those which have declined. The city of Denton belongs to the fortunate minority having an ideal location in Denton County and a history of able leadership. Consequently, when one cites non-agrarian activities in Denton County from 1900 to 1950, he must refer almost solely to Denton, for it is the only city in the county to maintain a steadily increasing population stimulated by economic developments other than agriculture.

During the first decade of the twentieth century the economic contributions of non-agrarian activities in the county were small. The
period was one of agricultural exploitation of the land. Consequently, the *Texas Almanac* of 1904 related that the county's only non-agrarian resources of import included North Texas State Normal, the State Industrial College for Women, the John B. Denton College, a pottery plant, and a brick factory.¹

The early establishment of the city of Denton as a center of education is of much significance in the non-agrarian development in Denton County. Two major institutions stand there today as a tribute to efforts of early citizens to obtain added life to the community: North Texas State University and Texas Women's University.

North Texas State University began as a private normal college in 1890.² The institution won state recognition and opened its doors on September 18, 1901, as the North Texas State Normal College, with an enrollment of 511 students and 14 faculty members.³ In fifteen years the enrollment equaled 1,275 students taught by a 41-member faculty, and by the fall of 1935 enrollment climbed to 1,984, instructed by a faculty of 125. The continued steady increase brought the student total to 5,093 in the fall of 1950, and the faculty total to 231.⁴ The state changed the name of the institution three times after 1901. In 1923 it became

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² James L. Rogers, *The Story of North Texas, From Texas Normal College 1890, to North Texas State University, 1965* (Denton, 1965), Chapters I and II passim.


known as North Texas State Teachers College, in 1949 as North Texas State College, and in 1961 it received its present title.\(^5\)

The sister institution, Texas Women's University, received legal status in 1901. The first regular session of the then named Girls Industrial College, however, began on September 23, 1903.\(^6\) A first enrollment of 183 girls taught by 12 faculty members rose to 2,381 students and 132 faculty members in the fall of 1935.\(^7\) During World War II enrollment neared the 3,000 mark but fell to 1,647 in the fall of 1950 owing to the low birth rate of the 1930's and the inability to attract post-war veteran enrollment. From that time, however, enrollment figures have risen.\(^8\) The state has also changed the name of this institution. Shortly after its formation the state renamed the school College of Industrial Arts. In 1934 the college received the title, Texas State College for Women, and in 1957 it acquired university status and its present title.

The third higher educational institution mentioned above was short-lived. John B. Denton College established in 1901, soon ran into financial difficulties and turned over its operation to the Church of Christ, which operated it as the Southwestern Christian College from 1904 to 1908, when it closed its doors and moved to Cleburne.\(^9\)

\(^5\)Rogers, Story of North Texas, p. 344.
\(^7\)Ibid., p. 11.
\(^8\)Stockton, Economic Survey of Denton County for 1953, p. 56.
\(^9\)Rogers, Story of North Texas, p. 34.
The exact economic influence that higher education has had on Denton and Denton County is incalculable. But simple logic tells one that growth from 788 students in 1905 to 6,740 in 1950 added much wealth to the community. A survey of advertisements in the Denton Record-Chronicle from 1905 to 1950 indicates the growing awareness of businessmen that students had money to spend off the two campuses. At fall enrollment time in 1910 only four advertisements appeared; at the same time in 1925 twenty-seven called for student patrons; and in 1945, sixty welcomed students back to Denton and encouraged their patronage.10

The schools not only added business to the community11 but also served as an attraction to new industrial development. As noted in John R. Stockton's economic survey of Denton County in 1953:

A company seeking a site for a new factory cannot but be impressed by the benefits that would accrue to both management and employee by locating in a community such as Denton. The educational level of the labor force is above average, factory workers can keep their children at home and give them a college education at low cost and citizens can take advantage of cultural and recreational facilities offered by the colleges in addition to those provided by the city.12

The money spent by students, salaries paid to teachers and administrators,  

10 Denton Record-Chronicle, September 20, 1910; September 25, 1925; September 10, 1945, hereinafter cited as DRC.

11 Stockton, Economic Survey of Denton County for 1953, p. 58. Payrolls at the two schools totaled $6,500,000 in the school year 1952-53, and combined plant valuation by early 1953 equaled $23,500,000. The Denton Chamber of Commerce estimated that students, during the school year 1952-53, had spent at least $4,500,000.

12 Ibid.
state expenditures on educational facilities, and the attractions of these facilities, all greatly helped to raise the value of non-agrarian services and products to the value level of agriculture by 1950.

The remaining two early economic activities mentioned in the Texas Almanac were nurtured by nature. Pottery making, perhaps the earliest non-agrarian industry in the county, never developed on a big scale. Traces of this early industrial endeavor can be found at the Old Alton site near the present community of Corinth four miles south of Denton. By 1908 J. Sublitz, D. B. Dougherty, and A. H. Moss, each operated pottery plants in the Denton area, while M. B. Griffith operated one at Lloyd. The Dougherty enterprise still operated in 1927, but five years later the first survey of the Directory of Texas Manufactures listed no such industry in operation in Denton County.

Brick-making capitalized on nature where the pottery ventures failed. A single plant successfully utilized the "almost inexhaustible" clays of the county. Organized in 1900, as the Denton Press Brick Company at

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13 In 1946 construction programs valued at $4,230,000 at Texas State College for Women and $5,934,910 at North Texas State Teachers College were in progress. *Dallas Morning News*, November 8, 1946, Sec. 2, p. 1.

14 Interview with Joe Jagoe III, President of Denton County Historical Society, Denton, Texas, August 1, 1967.

15 Heinrich Reis, "The Clays of Texas," *Bulletin of the University of Texas*, Vol. XII, No. 102 (February 1, 1908), p. 132.

16 *DRC*, August 26, 1927, p. 8.

17 *Directory of Texas Manufactures*: *Classified by Cities and by Products as of July 15, 1932*, published by the Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas (Austin, 1933), p. 12.

an expenditure of $25,000, the plant produced common brick for local and state-wide markets. For the first ten years the company prospered and doubled its assets. Then in 1911 the Acme Brick Company of Madison, Illinois, purchased the plant and replaced the old equipment with $100,000 worth of new machinery, bringing the physical value of the plant to $150,000. In addition to common brick, the new owners set about to manufacture facing brick. The company considered itself the largest and best equipped in the state, having a production of 60,000 finished bricks of high quality in 1915. By 1948 the company also produced asbestos tile, building tile, and drain tile, and employed eighty workers.\(^{20}\)

An additional economic development provided for by nature came much later after the first brick was fired in Denton County. Soon after the oil discovery at Spindletop in Southeast Texas, oil fever struck Denton County residents. Oil companies drilled wells near Pilot Point, Aubrey, Denton, Sanger, and other communities from 1906 to 1932.\(^{21}\) By 1933 all ventures had proved failures with the exception of a few low-production wells at Pilot Point.\(^{22}\)

\(^{19}\)DRC, October 14, 1915, p. 12.

\(^{20}\)Directory of Texas Manufactures: Classified by Cities and Products, Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas (Austin, 1950), p. 49; An Economic Survey of Denton County, Prepared for the Texas and Pacific Railway Company, Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas (Austin, 1949), p. 4.06.

\(^{21}\)Record and Chronicle, December 13, 1906, p. 1; August 17, 1912, p. 1; September 4, 1912, p. 4; November 11, 1912, p. 1; January 7, 1913, p. 1; May 20, 1913, p. 1; Denton County News, September 3, 1908, p. 1; May 19, 1911, p. 1; DRC, February 3, 1920, p. 1; November 23, 1926, p. 8; February 27, 1931, p. 1; April 14, 1931, p. 1; May 13, 1932, p. 3.

\(^{22}\)DRC, February 15, 1933, p. 1.
Unsuccessful drilling continued in the county until February, 1937, when the Carlisle, Freeland, and Tiner Company struck a gas well on the Knox estate near Bolivar.23 A discovery of oil by the Bolivar Drilling Company on the E. W. Forrestar ranch, also near Bolivar, followed in April. Proving to be Denton County's "first good well," rated at sixty barrels a day,24 the discovery signaled the development of the Bolivar oil field, which increased its production of 665 barrels in 1937 to a peak of 480,765 barrels in 1951.25

Two additional offerings from nature have proven worth economic development. Limestone deposits in the western and northwestern areas of the county are suitable "... for medium and light traffic water-bound macadam or bituminous roads; other types are good material for railroad ballast or concrete aggregate."26 Much of this limestone is also suitable for quarrying and use in construction. The county used some to build the present courthouse, but the cost of mining limestone for building purposes in Denton County has proved prohibitive in modern times.27 Also throughout the county many deposits of gravel suitable for road building and concrete production exist. Several concrete companies utilize the best deposits located in the central part of the

26Ibid., p. 28.
county for commercial purposes. These resources have not been a large economic factor in the history of Denton County but have provided periodic if not steady income to the landowner upon whose property nature located them.

It might be well to pause here and point out that the foregoing economic developments could very well have advanced without having been located in an agricultural area, or any other kind, whether heavily or lightly populated. Education, brick-making, and the other developments mentioned above could exist independently of other economic developments in the immediate area, for their intrinsic values lay in their ability to satisfy the needs of a society wherever it may be located. On the other hand, most of the remaining developments in the county to 1950, while not necessarily by nature agrarian, depend more or less upon the surrounding activities. For example, fuel companies, machine shops, automobile companies and repair shops, retail stores, and other businesses would decline in number or size without the farm population. In addition flour mills, meat packing and food canning plants, and similar enterprises would have to turn to other sources for produce or cease operations. It should be pointed out further that many establishments in earlier years depended more upon the agricultural community, but as the city of Denton continues to grow in population and varied industry this dependency decreases. With this understanding, therefore, the discussion of the remaining economic developments can be continued.

To list all non-agrarian economic activities and relate a short history of each is beyond the scope of this study. A general discussion

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of Denton County is better served by separating the business history of the local governmental unit into two basic categories: manufactures and trades.

Manufacturing has steadily played a more important roll in Denton County's history from 1900 to 1950. The census of 1900 reported that the value added by manufacturing in the county totaled $324,525, and that 224 factory workers earned $82,609 in 129 establishments. The count of factories included the many small shops which produced goods according to the needs of the local people. As modern inventions tended to create larger factories and provide goods for larger groups of people, at lower costs, these small shops abandoned their activities. The census reports of following years therefore show a decline in the number of factories while reflecting increased output.

The census of 1920 evidenced the post-World War I prosperity. Forty-two factories, hiring 233 workers, made products which added value equal to $864,227. Wages paid the workers amounted to $217,675. All these figures represented records for the county.

The depression years reversed previous gains. In 1929 wages paid to 125 workers in twenty-two establishments fell to $119,831, and value added by manufacture tumbled to $510,174. Slight gains by 1939 brought


wages paid to 181 workers to $146,079, while value added by manufacture rose to $668,218, a figure still below the 1919 report.

The 1947 census of manufactures showed the effect of World War II and post-war prosperity. The census stated that twenty-nine establishments paid wages totaling $2,311,000 to 910 workers, and that the value added by manufacturing in Denton County soared to $4,683,000, a sum almost seven times as great as the 1939 value. For the first time in the county's history value added by manufacture surpassed the million dollar mark. The federal government took no census of manufactures in 1950, but perhaps near $6,000,000 worth of added value accrued through manufacturing that year, because when the next census was taken in 1954, added value surpassed the eight million dollar mark. The quick increase of manufacturing value in Denton County in the 1940's thus clearly demonstrates the growing importance of non-agrarian industries in the economic picture of Denton County. The following account presents all manufactures of the county which helped to bring about this development as they were listed in the Directory of Texas Manufactures for 1950. Some manufacturers are agrarian by nature but are included to show the predominating number of non-agrarian enterprises. Information including the date of establishment and the concern's products are listed where available.

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35The Directory of Texas Manufactures includes certain establishments which are considered too small to qualify as factories by the Bureau of the Census; therefore this list indicates a larger number of concerns.
Denton manufacturers included:

Acme Brick Company, 1901--common brick, face brick, asbestos tile, building tile, drain tile
Baker, Floyd, Company, 1945--concrete blocks, ready mix concrete
Borden Company, 1934--dairy products
Brooks Dairy, 1911--dairy products
Burns, C. A., Manufacturing Company, 1945--furniture
Butler Mattress Factory, 1947--mattresses
Carruth Engraving Company, 1937--photo engraving
Coca Cola Bottling Company, 1905--soft drinks
Commercial Printing Company, 1944--commercial and job printing
Crable Bakery, 1938--bakery products
Day Venetian Blind Company--venetian blinds
Denton Dairy Cooperative Association, 1920--livestock feed, poultry feed
Denton Monument Works, 1904--monuments and memorials
Denton Planing Mill, 1939--saw mill and planing mill machinery
Denton Print Shop, 1946--commercial and job printing
Dixie Cream Donut Shop, 1947--bakery products
Grubes Reelie Fresh Foods, 1935--Mexican foods, potato chips, tortillas
Kimball Diamond Milling Company, 1949--livestock feed, poultry feed, flour, corn meal
Knight Venetian Blinds, 1945--venetian blinds
M. F. M. Combination Saw Machinery Company, 1946--agricultural machinery, saw mill machinery, metal, stone, and wood saws, tractors and parts
Maurice Malone Company, 1949--electric neon signs
Marshall's Planing Mill, 1945--cabinets, store fixtures
McNitzky Printing Company, 1909--directory printing, commercial and job printing
Mission Orange Bottling Company--soft drinks
Moore Building Products, 1946--building blocks concrete blocks, concrete products, ventilators
Moore Business Forms, 1945--books, records, bankbooks, blank books, business forms, tickets, sales slips
Morrison Milling Company, 1936--livestock feed, flour, corn meal
Mundy's Upholstry Shop--upholstering
Seven Up Bottling Company, 1928--soft drinks
North Texas Fixture Company--store fixtures
North Texas Tank Company, 1945--butane tanks, propane tanks, gas and oil tanks, iron and steel tanks, other tanks
Pitner Packing Company, 1925--meat packing, sausage packing
Public Ice Company, 1947--manufactured ice
Purity Bakery--bakery products
Rasco Bedding Factory--mattresses
Ratliff Upholstery Shop--seat covers, upholstering
Russell Newman Manufacturing Company, 1939--underwear
Scientific Office Products—pads
Twentieth Century Products—mortician supplies, shampoo, hair tonic and dressing
Whitson Food Products, 1932—canned meats, food specialties, Mexican Foods
Woodson Printing Company, 1927—announcements, booklets, books, catalogs, annuals, pamphlets, business forms, commercial and job printing

Manufactures located in other county communities included in Krum, the R. L. Cole Company, which produced chick feed, ground grain, livestock feed, and poultry feed; in Justin, Cabells Incorporated, which made dairy products, and Tanny and Moore company, which manufactured livestock feed; in Roanoke, the Community Standard Company, which did commercial and job printing; in Lewisville, the Dallas Engineering and Manufacturing Company, which made optical supplies; and in Pilot Point, the Pilot Point Planing Company, which fabricated lumber and timber products, and the Wood Products Manufacturing Company which built church furniture.

After manufacturers make a product, the next step is the marketing of the product usually accomplished through wholesale and retail distribution. Not all goods made in Denton County were sold there nor were all goods sold in Denton County made there; however, both wholesale and retail activities were present, dating back to the earliest business transactions of the 1900's. The earliest the United States government investigated the wholesale and retail business patterns was 1929. Prior to this date, with exception perhaps of the period immediately following World War I, the business transacted in these areas probably was less.

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36Directory of Texas Manufactures Classified by Cities and Products, Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas (Austin, 1950), pp. 49-50.

37Ibid., pp. 98, 101, 104, 127, 133.
It should be noted that as population in an area grew wholesale and retail activities in the immediate area increased, especially the latter.

In 1929 the first census of trade indicated that Denton County had thirty-six wholesale establishments, which employed and paid eighty-one persons $167,591, and sold produce valued at $2,129,472. While Denton had only thirteen of the wholesale companies, the city nevertheless employed and salaried fifty-five laborers for $117,591, and sold goods valued at $1,430,056.38 The predominance of the city of Denton as the wholesale center of the county became more clearly established as later census figures were revealed.

The county as a whole showed a decline in all areas cited above in 1935, but the city of Denton showed increases with the exception of wages paid.39 By 1939 all departments had risen again. Thirty-seven establishments throughout the county paid $104,000 to 104 workers and marketed products for $2,677,000. Denton lead by a wide margin with twenty wholesalers selling $2,191,000 worth of merchandise, while paying eighty-two people $89,000.40

As with the value of manufacturing, the calculation of the exact values of wholesale activities for 1950 cannot be attained. The government took the census of trade in the years 1948 and 1954, and while the

trend has been up since 1939 one can assume that the 1950 values lie somewhere between 1948 and 1954. The following figures give approximations for the county in 1950: number of establishments, forty-six; value of products sold, $10,000; number of employees, 170; salaries and wages paid, $320,000.\textsuperscript{41} The growth of wholesale values parallels the rapid growth of manufacture in the 1940's and adds to the evidence that non-agrarian developments forced agriculture into a secondary economic position in the county.

The census of retail trade always accompanies the wholesale trade census. The 1929 census of retail trade and later censuses denoted a more widespread distribution of retail businesses than wholesale around the county but the volume of business was always much greater in Denton. The county had 389 stores, which employed 558 people for $631,000 and sold goods for $7,989,000. Denton's share of this report included 177 stores, which employed 417 people for $476,000 and sold goods for $5,134,000.\textsuperscript{42}

The depression did not affect retailers as much as other businesses. The census of 1935 indicated increases in stores and employees and only a slight reduction in sales and payrolls.\textsuperscript{43} The census in 1939 revealed improvements in all areas. Businesses in the county numbered 469, employees


totaled 937, sales equalled $8,437,000, and payrolls amounted to $595,000. Of these totals Denton accounted for 237 stores, 767 workers, $6,138,000 worth of sales, and payroll of $498,000.44

Nine years later the census report of retail trade demonstrated more clearly than any of the reports of other areas of business the economic spurt of the 1940's. The increasing population in the urban areas and the improving economic conditions throughout the county were the primary reasons for this development. Approximate values for retail trade in 1950 given here are arrived at in the same manner as the wholesale values above. The following are approximate county values: number of stores, 500; total sales, $33,500,000; number of employees, 1,600; wages and salaries, $2,600,000. The following approximations are for Denton: number of stores, 280; total sales, $24,000,000; number of employees, 1,280; wages and salaries, $2,100,000.45

In the area of service trades, economic growth is demonstrable from 1935 only. Prior to 1935 the federal government did not survey the area of service trades extensively or separately, nor did it use uniform methods and standards on subsequent censuses. Comparisons of one census report with another, therefore, gives a less than exact picture of service trade development in Denton County. The ensuing data, nevertheless, demonstrate a general growth in this area which parallels the other segments of business.


The 1935 census indicated that Denton County had 137 service establishments which employed 133 persons for $70,000, and received $277,000 for services rendered. Again the city of Denton prevailed as the center of most of this activity accounting for 82 establishments which employed 107 persons for $58,000 and received $204,000 for services.46

By 1939 all the above figures improved,47 but the census of 1948 and 1954 demonstrated the unprecedented spiraling growth of the 1940's. Once more by utilizing the 1948 and 1954 figures an attempt will be made to approximate the 1950 values. The approximate values for the county include number of establishments 200; total receipts, $2,000,000; number of employees, 310; payroll, $475,000. Approximations for the city of Denton comprise number of establishments, 122; total receipts $1,500,000; number of employees, 260; payroll, $380,000.48 While the growth of service trades is not as impressive as the development of manufactures, wholesale trade, and retail trade, it nevertheless shows that as the population of the county increased, the demands for services intensified.

One other area of economic activity, which graphically illustrates the economic growth of Denton County as a whole, is banking. In 1909

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the county possessed fifteen banks with deposits equaling $1,577,662.\textsuperscript{49}

By the end of 1916 the number of banks grew to eighteen with deposits totaling $3,357,407.\textsuperscript{50} The prosperity after World War I brought deposits to $6,117,062 in 1919,\textsuperscript{51} but by 1930 many banks had gone out of business and deposits had fallen to $1,741,000.\textsuperscript{52} A steady but slow increase in deposits began in the 1930's and continued into the 1940's. In 1942 the county banks reported $4,505,000 in deposits. Thereafter, the growth spiraled upward. The banks reported deposits totaling $10,732,000 in 1944; $13,981,000 in 1945; $17,832,000 in 1946; and $19,078,084 in 1947. A leveling-off then set in and by the close of 1950 deposits in the current eight county banks totaled $19,098,729.\textsuperscript{53}

As 1950 ended, a new era for Denton County began. Agriculture had relinquished its first place position in the economic picture. The

\textsuperscript{49}Texas Department of Agriculture Bulletin: Year Book, 1909, published by the Texas Department of Agriculture (Austin, 1910), p. 483.

\textsuperscript{50}DRC, January, 1917, p. 2. A list of banks and deposits follows: First State Bank, Pilot Point, $193,947.29; Justin State Bank, $150,601.72; Exchange National, Denton, $565,714.63; First National, Denton, $313,927.11; Denton County National, Denton, $440,572.67; First Guaranty, Aubrey, $137,487.78; First National, Lewisville, $236,710.80; Hebron State, $24,185.24; Lewisville State, $191,224.77; F. & M. State, Aubrey, $99,352.18; Pilot Point National, $148,345.08; F. & M. State, Krum, $144,267.81; Continental State, Roanoke, $64,981.99; First Guarantee State, Denton, $198,601.62; Argyle State, $37,753.85; Ponder State, $85,988.42; Sanger National, $130,805.71; First National, Sanger, $192,938.63.

\textsuperscript{51}DRC, December 18, 1919, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{52}Economic Survey of Denton County for 1949, p. 4.1301.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid.; DRC, January 7, 1951, Sec. 1, p. 1. Names of the eight remaining county banks and their dates of establishment are Denton County National Bank, 1892; First State Bank, Denton, 1912; Justin State Bank, 1907; F. & M. State Bank, Krum, 1909; Lewisville State Bank, 1910; Pilot Point National Bank, 1892; First National Bank of Sanger, 1900; and the First National Bank of Lewisville, 1904.
expanding city of Denton with its varied industries was the chief if not the sole reason for the continued economic growth of the county. Denton had assured itself that it would not join the decline of the many early founded agricultural communities but would continue to add to and supplement its past agricultural heritage with non-agrarian activities.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Since 1950 Denton County has increasingly experienced non-agrarian economic growth. Agriculture, while remaining an important component in the economic structure, has relatively declined in value. The growing metropolitan area of Dallas-Fort Worth is the chief cause of this trend. As population and industry expand and search for new areas of settlement, they affect the economic values of the immediate and intermediate areas.

In the first fifty years of the twentieth century, Denton County's chief asset was the fertility of its land. Today the county's main asset is still its land but for a different reason. As industry decentralizes, as the city populace searches for new areas of settlement, as the county's educational institutions expand, as investors look for new tracts of land, as builders construct large interstate highways, and as digging machines create lakes and recreational areas, the principal asset of the county becomes the non-agrarian utility of its land. Accompanying this land value shift has been an occupational change.

The Texas Industrial Commission released a study in 1964 which examined the effects of non-agrarian developments on three basic occupational divisions: agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; manufacturing; and non-manufacturing, non-agricultural. The investigation clearly demonstrates the increasing differential between agrarian and non-agrarian
occupations for the years 1940, 1950, 1960, and 1964.¹

The agriculture, forestry and fisheries division accounted for 4,448 workers in 1940, 2,925 in 1950, 1,991 in 1960, and 1,500 in 1964. At the same time manufacturing used 416 laborers in 1940, 1,793 in 1950, 3,454 in 1960, and 4,200 in 1964. And for the same period non-manufacturing, non-agricultural pursuits employed 5,893 persons in 1940, 10,255 persons in 1950, 13,144 persons in 1960, and 15,500 persons in 1964.

The most recent census reports reflect the continuing economic shift also. All non-agrarian activities show tremendous progress. For example, value added by manufacture spiraled upwards from $4,683,000 in 1947 to $15,122,000 in 1963.²

Agriculture failed to respond likewise. The census reports for agriculture after 1949 failed to evaluate the total amount of agricultural goods produced; instead, census takers reported the value of products sold only. In the area of cultivative crops Denton County farmers received a constant $4,000,000 to $5,000,000 for marketed produce in the years 1949, 1954, 1959, and 1964. Livestock values, however, improved from $5,538,806 in 1949 to $8,906,849 in 1964. These agricultural developments are the result of decreasing acreages of cultivable crops and increasing numbers of livestock, especially beef cattle whose numbers reached almost 75,000 in 1964.³


Since 1950 the trend of decreasing number of farms and increasing acreages has persisted. By 1964 the average farm size was well over 300 acres as compared with less than 200 acres in 1949. The value of this land has skyrocketed as its worth has shifted from fertility to non-agrarian utility. In 1949 an acre of farm land sold for an average of $96.25, and in 1964 the same acre of land sold for $273.52.\textsuperscript{4}

If the present rate of population and industrial expansions continues in Denton County and adjacent to it, the next census report and all subsequent reports will show agriculture slowly succumbing to the accelerating growth of non-agrarian pursuits. One cannot presume to know how long it will take, but some day agriculture's economic role in the county will become negligible, because the county's future lies in its potential as a center of education, recreation, population, and industrial growth.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
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