

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS  
IN PUSHMATAHA COUNTY

By

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CHAPTER I  
THE AREA AND ITS RESOURCES

Introduction

Pushmataha County is located in Southeastern Oklahoma about 20 miles north of the Red River and 40 miles west of the Arkansas line. It is one of five counties which make up the Kiamichi Mountain region of Oklahoma. It is in the area settled originally by the Choctaw Indians, and the county was named after a famous Choctaw Indian Chief, Pushmataha.

The county contains 910,720 acres of land. The topography is largely rolling hills to mountainous. Two rivers, Little River and Kiamichi River, traverse the county. Numerous creeks originating within the area are tributaries of these two rivers.

Antlers, the county seat, is located 70 miles from McAlester, Oklahoma, 70 miles from Durant, Oklahoma and 45 miles from Paris, Texas.

The purpose of this study is to set forth and more clearly define some of the resources and the problems of Pushmataha County and particularly those resources and problems related to rural areas and to agriculture.

The purpose of the report is to provide a vehicle for focusing the attention of interested organizations in the county upon common problems and goals so that an effort can



be made to develop the human and economic resources of the area to their fullest potential for yielding human satisfaction.

It is from a broad, comprehensive Economic Development plan that this committee can best launch a program of action.

#### Human Resources

Pushmataha County has, according to the 1960 census, a total population of 9,088 inhabitants with 2,085 living in Antlers, the county seat. The remainder of 7,003 inhabitants live in communities of less than 1,000 population or on farms.

The total population of the county for 1960 is classified by the census as rural, as shown in Table I. This indicates that there is no urban population for the county in 1960. To be classified as urban a town must exceed 2,500 population. Antlers, the largest town in the county, had only 2,085 residents in 1960.

TABLE I  
POPULATION IN PUSHMATAHA COUNTY FOR SELECTED YEARS

<u>Classification</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>
Total	19,466	12,001	9,088
Urban	3,254	2,506	--
Rural	16,212	9,495	9,088

Source: U. S. Census

Contrary to many other principal towns in Oklahoma, the principal town in Pushmataha County has lost population since

1940. This is not difficult to account for considering the 53 percent loss in total county population from 1940 to 1960. The economy of the area was based at one time upon timber industries. During that time, a heavy labor force was supported. After the cream of the timber crop was exploited, lumber production diminished rapidly and the population turned to production of field crops. Finally, unable to compete with other field crop production areas and having no other employment opportunities, much of the population was forced to leave. Projections by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission<sup>1</sup> indicate that a further 25 percent drop in population will be experienced from 1960 to 1970.

TABLE II  
 MAJOR AGE GROUPS OF COUNTY POPULATION  
 BY SELECTED YEARS

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Year</u>			<u>Percent Total Population</u>		
	<u>1940</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>
Under 18	8364	4624	3185	43	38.5	35
65 & Over	974	1196	1425	5.0	10.0	15.7

Source: U. S. Census

The census also tabulated the population according to age groups. This shows that there is a decreasing percentage of young people and increasing percentage of older people. This

<sup>1</sup> The Manpower Report for Pushmataha County, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Oklahoma City, June, 1963.

is shown in Table II. The younger, more able-bodied persons are leaving to seek employment while older persons remain.

The age and sex of persons in the labor force are listed in Table III. Fifty-four percent of the male labor force and 47.4 percent of the female labor force are between the ages of 14 and 45. Appendix Table 1 shows the population by minor civil divisions.

TABLE III  
EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR FORCE DATA,  
PUSHMATAHA COUNTY, 1960  
LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

Age of Persons in Labor Force:

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
14 - 17 years	71	4.0	21	3.4
18 - 24	205	11.6	47	7.7
25 - 34	318	17.9	91	14.9
35 - 44	371	20.9	131	21.4
45 - 64	713	40.2	271	44.3
65 & Over	96	5.4	51	8.3

Source: U. S. Census

According to the U. S. Census, the number of married women in the labor force with husband present is 394. The number of women in the labor force with own children under six years of age is 105.

The population of Pushmataha County is predominately white.

Age by color and sex is listed in Table IV and Table V.

TABLE IV  
POPULATION BY RACE, PUSHMATAHA COUNTY, 1960

	Male		Female	
	<u>All Ages</u>	<u>21 &amp; Over</u>	<u>All Ages</u>	<u>21 &amp; Over</u>
White	4150	2552	4184	2693
Median Age	36.6		37.9	
Non-White	381	179	373	208
Median Age	18.8		29.4	

Source: U. S. Census

TABLE V  
POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY RACE, PUSHMATAHA COUNTY, 1960

	<u>Entire County</u>	<u>Antlers</u>
Indian - all ages, both sexes	573	156
Negro - all ages, both sexes	180	98
Other Non-White - all ages, both sexes	1	-

Source: U. S. Census

#### Employment

The 1960 population 14 years old and over numbers 6,614, with 2,386 in the labor force. Of the labor force, 149 are unemployed. Of all males under 65 who were not enrolled in school, 546 were not in the labor force. A study of the data in Table VI reveals that those 546 males comprise six percent of the total population as compared to two percent in

Pottawatomie County, two and one-half percent in Pontotoc County, and three percent in Pittsburg County; counties which are similar in a number of respects to Pushmataha County. It will also be noted that the 546 males under 65 years of age and not enrolled in school is nearly one-third as great as the entire number of employed males. It is probable that this group includes mentally or physically disabled persons who perhaps are supported by welfare payments. The high incidence of this group can be accounted for by massive out-migration of employable persons over the past 20 years.

Agriculture employed 53 percent of the employed population in Pushmataha County in 1960. Other employment categories and their percentages are: Services, 12.2 percent; manufacturing, 11.9 percent; government, 8.1 percent; trade, 7.6 percent; utilities, .6 percent; mining, .2 percent; and other, 6.1 percent.

TABLE VI  
EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR FORCE DATA FOR PUSHMATAHA COUNTY

Labor Force Characteristics, 1960

Employment Status:	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
14 years old and over	3,258	3,356
In Labor Force	1,774	612
Employed	1,629	608
Unemployed	145	4
Not In Labor Force	1,484	2,744
Enrolled in School	298	388
Other, Under 65 years old	546	1,744
Other, 65 years old and over	640	654

Source: U. S. Census

The major occupation groups of the 149 unemployed persons in the county during 1960 are listed in Table VII, while the distribution of employment skills for the total labor force are listed in Table VIII.

TABLE VII  
MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP OF UNEMPLOYED,  
PUSHMATAHA COUNTY, 1960

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Total Experienced Unemployed	145	4
Farmers and Farm Managers	4	-
Managers, Officials and Proprietors, except farms	-	4
Clerical and Kindred Workers	12	-
Sales Workers	4	-
Craftsmen, Foremen and Kindred Workers	19	-
Operatives and Kindred Workers	39	-
Service Workers, except Household	4	-
Farm Laborers and Foremen	17	-
Laborers, except Farm and Mine	46	-

Source: U. S. Census

It can be seen here that farm operations employ more persons than all other skills combined, while unemployment is largely among laborers other than those possessing agricultural skills. Operatives and kindred workers make up 39 percent of the unemployed males but since this is a grouping of assorted occupations it has no real significance. A

major educational needed is pointed up in the fact that non-agricultural laborers make up almost one-third of the unemployed. These persons are perhaps next in line to out-migrate, but are not really qualified for jobs existing elsewhere.

TABLE VIII  
DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT SKILLS  
FOR TOTAL LABOR FORCE, 1960

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>
Professional and Technical	230	7.8
Managers	235	8.1
Clerical and Sales	215	7.4
Craftsmen	183	6.3
Operatives	275	9.4
Private Household and Services	11	0.4
Farm Labor and Other	1,759	60.5

Source: Bureau of Business Research, University of Oklahoma

Physical Resources

Soils - Pushmataha County has a total land area of 910,720 acres, with a varied stratigraphy and many kinds of soils growing many different types of vegetation. There are three main basic resource areas in the county; the Ouachita Highlands, the Forested Coastal Plains, and the Cherokee Prairies. They are described as follows.

Ouachita Highlands - The Hector-Pottsville-Linker soils area covers a large percent of the northeast two-thirds of the

county. The shallow to very shallow stony Hector-Pottsville soils occupy the steep hills to rolling mountains. The moderately deep Linker soils occurring on the lesser slopes are often tillable. Forest and forestry products are very important rural enterprises along with woodland grazing of livestock.

Forested Coastal Plains - The Bowie-Ruston-Kirvin soil area is found in the southern part of the county and represents the most intensive agricultural area of Pushmataha County. These deep, moderately sandy soils are capable of supporting many kinds of agricultural enterprises.

Cherokee Prairies - The Talihina-Collinsville-Dennis-Parsons soil area occurs in the northwest part of the county. This area supports many species of native grasses for livestock production.

Throughout the county there are many creeks and rivers that have narrow to wide bottomland of deep, moderately fertile soils. Many of these soils have great capabilities for agricultural production.

For an overall view of the agricultural potential of Pushmataha County it is necessary to consider the present land use as well as the future demands that will be made upon the land to support an increasing population. A stable agricultural economy will require the use of all agricultural land within its capabilities and that it be treated in accordance with its needs to maintain its productivity.

At the request of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, a conservation needs inventory of Pushmataha County was completed



in 1958. All agricultural agencies participated.

There were, at the time of the study, 23,693 acres in cropland in the county. Of this amount, 5,400 acres were deep, well drained, medium textured loamy upland soils, gently sloping with light to moderate erosion. Erosion is the dominant problem. There were 12,300 acres of deep, moderately sloping, medium textured land with slight to moderate erosion whose dominant problem was erosion. There were 1,200 acres of deep, medium textured loamy upland and bottomland soils whose dominant problem was excess water, due to lack of slope for drainage or too slow permeability. There were 6,100 acres of deep, medium textured loamy upland soils on moderate to steep slopes whose dominant problem was erosion due to excess slope. It was considered best suited for pastureland.

There is a vast potential for livestock production in Pushmataha County. Pasture and rangeland development approaching its full potential would increase livestock production several-fold. The livestock enterprise system of farming is most feasible for the area and has become the county's main agricultural industry. It could be expanded from the present 76,904 acres to a possible 200,000 acres.

This increase of 123,096 acres of improved pasture could come from the 114,121 acres of wet, but fertile bottomland by clearing or simple drainage, or both, to develop it to its full potential as highly productive tame pasture.

Forest and Woodland - Forests and forestry products rank as

the second major agricultural industry in Pushmataha County. With the development of stable markets for all woodland products, the forest industry of the county could be increased many times. The conservation needs inventory, completed in 1958, showed the area in woodland to be 768,841 acres.

Most merchantable hardwood timber species are located in the first and second bottoms of the two principal rivers or their tributaries. Pine is found generally above the flood plains of the drainages and throughout most of the hill and mountain areas. Two townships in the extreme southwest corner of the county (Antlers township) are almost devoid of pine timber due to consistent burning and overgrazing.

Except for 250,000 acres owned by the Dierks Lumber Company, woodland ownership is largely private, ranging from only a few acres to a few holdings of 10,000 or more acres. There is an inventory of 183,600,000 cubic feet of total growing stock in the county of which 111,500,000 cubic feet are pine. Likewise, there are 608,100,000 board feet of sawtimber from all species, with 155,300,000 being hardwood.

Other Land - There remains at present 29,520 acres of other land in state parks, lakes, game refuges, county roads, railroads, federal and state highways, and municipalities with much of the area suitable for recreational development.

Crops - Corn, cotton, peanuts, and sorghum crops have been of economic significance to Pushmataha County, but acreages of these crops have dropped rather consistently and significantly over the past 20 years. (See Appendix Tables 1, 2, 3, and 6). Factors contributing to this decline are low soil

fertility, small crop units, failure of operators to adopt improved practices and a tendency for farmers to have more interest in cattle. None of the cash crops are now considered of major economic importance, nor is it expected that they will be.

Small grain crops have always been of little significance. (See Appendix Tables 6 and 7).

However, hay crops have been and will continue to be of major importance to the livestock industry and to the economy of the area. Value of hay produced in 1960 was \$374,000.00 which is over two and one-half times the value of the combined total of corn, cotton, peanuts, sorghum, wheat and oats for the same year. Hay acreage has held rather steady since 1950 as shown in Table IX.

Another crop, vegetables grown for sale, should be mentioned here. Although the acreage dropped from 119 acres in 1954 to 46 acres in 1959, the potential for increased production exists. Resources for increased vegetable production include 5,400 acres of suitable cropland (deep, well drained, medium textured loamy soil); a feasible market through the new Campbell Soup plant located at Paris, Texas; and many small streams which, with small impoundment structures, would provide irrigation water.

The most important crop in Pushmataha County is pasture. While it is difficult to place a specific value on pasture production, it may be concluded that the 1960 income from livestock and livestock products, amounting to \$1,900,384, was possible largely because of pasture crops. It is considered

most significant that acreage of improved pasture doubled during the years of 1954 to 1959 (Table X).

TABLE IX  
PUSHMATAHA COUNTY HAY ACREAGE HARVESTED  
FOR SELECTED YEARS

Year	All Hay (Acres)	Production (Tons)	Total Value (Dollars)
1948	12,000	16,680	330,264
1950	13,500	19,321	347,778
1955	14,900	17,880	370,116
1960	14,200	18,700	374,000

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Source

TABLE X  
PUSHMATAHA COUNTY: PASTURE LAND, ACREAGE, 1954 and 1959

	Farms Reporting		Acres	
	1954	1959	1954	1959
Cropland used for pasture	473	259	20,864	18,649
Woodland pastured	1,011	758	213,530	251,577
Other pasture (not crop or woodland)	573	629	56,307	78,536
Total land pastured . . . .			290,701	348,662
Improved pasture	151	210	6,935	13,471

Source: U. S. Census

Livestock and Poultry - Cattle numbers have remained rather constant over the past 20 years (Table XI). This is significant

considering that there are now less than half as many farmers as there were in 1940. Another significant fact is that quality of cattle has risen, resulting in higher production today than was obtained in 1940 from the same number. This improvement in quality is made apparent only through the knowledge that in 1940, livestock were largely free-range cattle with no controlled breeding. By 1960, many ranches were grazing fenced land and were using improved bulls.

TABLE XI  
CATTLE NUMBERS FOR SELECTED YEARS

Year	All Cattle & Calves (Numbers)	Value Per Head (Dollars)	Total Value (Dollars)
1940	30,100	31.00	936,110
1945	31,000	51.40	1,593,400
1950	25,700	104.00	2,672,800
1955	34,300	66.00	2,263,800
1960	30,000	119.00	3,570,000
1961	32,000	116.00	3,712,000

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service

It is especially revealing to note that 92 percent of the income from agricultural products sold came from livestock and livestock products. This was primarily from the sale of beef cattle (Table XII). Indications are that further developments in agriculture in the county will be in the beef cattle industry. It appears that, because of lack of alternatives, much of the

TABLE XII  
 VALUE OF PRODUCTS SOLD - PUSHMATAHA COUNTY

	<u>1939</u> <u>Dollars</u>	<u>1939 %</u> <u>of Total</u>	<u>1949</u> <u>Dollars</u>	<u>1949 %</u> <u>of Total</u>	<u>1959</u> <u>Dollars</u>	<u>1959 %</u> <u>of Total</u>
All farm products sold	420,770		1,566,692		2,064,668	
All crops sold	114,182	27	249,149	16	164,284	8
Field crops	99,078	24	209,189	13	121,768	6
Vegetables	6,438	2	16,121	1	3,149	.2
Fruits & Nuts	5,093	1	5,016	.3	8,554	.4
Forest products & horticultural spec.	3,573	1	18,823	1	30,813	1
All livestock & livestock products	306,588	73	1,317,543	84	1,900,384	92
Dairy products	28,550	7	81,029	5	30,800	1
Poultry & poultry prod.	20,021	5	63,480	4	7,285	.4
Other livestock & prod.	258,017	61	1,173,034	75	1,862,299	90
Average value of products sold per farm - Pushmataha County	219*		1,002*		2,058*	
Percent of increase			358%		105%	
Average value of products sold per farm - Oklahoma	812		3,311		6,134	
Percent of increase			308%		85%	

Source: U. S. Census

\* Has to be figured by dividing number of farms into total value of products sold.

agricultural land of Pushmataha County will lay idle until the livestock industry has expanded sufficiently to utilize it.

Although the place of forest products and horticultural specialties in the economy remained constant between the years 1939 and 1959, field crops and vegetables lost practically all of their importance, relatively speaking, as a source of farm income.

Swine numbers have dropped by 75 percent since 1940 (see Table XIII). However, since there are only half as many farms

TABLE XIII  
SWINE NUMBERS

Year	Hogs & Pigs (Numbers)	Value Per Head (Dollars)	Total Value (Dollars)
1940	20,600	4.90	100,940
1945	17,100	15.10	258,210
1950	14,200	18.00	255,600
1955	4,500	22.10	99,450
1960	5,000	13.70	68,500
1961	4,300	19.80	85,140

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service

now as then, numbers per farm have decreased only 37 percent. Quality of swine has improved considerably due largely to a trend toward a confined hog system, away from free range. However, free range is still prevalent enough to stand in the

way of making the progress that is needed. It is virtually impossible to make desirable progress toward range swine disease eradication. Swine, of course, have been of economic significance and may still be considered so, with 4,300 head listed for 1961.

Sheep have been of minor economic importance in the county. (See Table XIV). Total numbers of sheep and lambs have shown a downward trend since 1940. Sheep and lamb production is not expected to be of major economic importance in the foreseeable future. The timber covering much of the land creates special predator problems, and high rainfall creates an internal parasite hazard. More tedious care is needed for sheep than for other classes of livestock, and ranchers seem unwilling to accept this responsibility.

TABLE XIV  
SHEEP NUMBERS

Year	Sheep & Lambs (Numbers)	Value Per Head (Dollars)	Total Value (Dollars)
1940	2,800	5.30	14,840
1945	1,500	7.90	11,850
1950	1,100	14.50	15,950
1955	800	12.60	10,080
1960	1,000	13.30	13,300
1961	900	12.60	11,340

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service



The number of chickens on farms has dropped about 80 percent since 1940 (see Table XV). Commercial broiler and turkey production is not an important source of farm income in Pushmataha County. Small flocks and a low margin of profit have been contributing factors in this sharp decline. Poultry numbers will increase only if suitable markets and larger units can be developed.

TABLE XV  
CHICKEN NUMBERS

Year	All Chickens (Excl. Com'l. Broilers)	Value Per Head (Dollars)	Total Value (Dollars)
1940	81,000	.40	32,400
1945	91,000	1.06	96,460
1950	69,000	1.01	69,690
1955	30,000	.75	22,500
1960	23,000	.79	18,170
1961	16,000	.92	14,720

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service

The trend in dairy cattle numbers has been downward since 1940. (See Table XVI). About the only explanation offered by local residents is that dairying is too much work--too confining. The trend has continued to the point that almost all of the remaining dairy cattle produce for home consumption only.

TABLE XVI  
DAIRY COW NUMBERS

Year	Milk Cows (Numbers)	Value Per Head (Dollars)	Total Value (Dollars)
1940	5,600	42.00	235,200
1945	5,900	70.00	413,000
1950	4,600	141.00	648,600
1955	2,900	92.00	266,800
1960	1,600	170.00	272,000
1961	1,600	168.00	268,800

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service

Economic Class of Farms - A study of the economic class of farms (see Table XVII) shows that only 44 percent of the farms of Pushmataha County are classified as commercial farms, compared with the state figure of 60 percent. Commercial farms are classified on the basis of earnings. In general, farms with value of sales amounting to \$2,500 or more are classified as commercial. However, farms with a value of sales of \$50 to \$2,499 are classified as commercial if the operator was under 65 years of age and (1) he did not work off the farm 100 or more days during the year; and (2) the income received by the operator and his family from non-farm sources was less than the value of all farm products sold. There are almost as many part-time farms as commercial farms and 17 percent of the farms are operated by farmers in partial retirement. Of the county farms, 2.6 percent earn \$10,000 or above,

compared to 16 percent for the state. No detailed data are available describing those operations earning above \$10,000.

TABLE XVII  
FARMS BY ECONOMIC CLASS, PUSHMATAHA COUNTY & STATE, 1959

	County		State	
	No. of Farms	% of Total Farms	No. of Farms	% of Total Farms
<u>Commercial Farms</u>	440	44	56,937	60
Class I (\$40,000+)	1	.1	1,373	1
Class II (20,000-39,999)	5	.5	4,053	4
Class III (10,000-19,999)	16	2	10,636	11
Class IV (5,000-9,999)	114	11	15,859	17
Class V (2,500-4,999)	93	9	16,801	18
Class VI (50-2,499)	211	21	8,215	9
<u>Other Farms</u>	563	56	37,741	40
Part time	397	40	28,153	30
Part retirement	166	17	9,534	10
Abnormal	-	-	54	.06

Source: U. S. Census

Type of Farms - Pushmataha County is well below the state of Oklahoma in percent of farms in the cash-grain, cotton, and

dairy farms. On the other hand, the county has a significantly higher number of livestock and miscellaneous farms. (See Table XVIII). Almost all farms which can be classified are exclusively livestock operations. Most farmers are not equipped to produce row crops even if they desired to do so. It has been said that "Most Push County farming will be done from a saddle or not at all." Cattle are adaptable to many kinds of land but such crops as cotton are confined to specific land suited to them.

TABLE XVIII  
FARMS BY TYPE - 1959

	<u>Pushmataha County</u>		<u>Oklahoma</u>	
	Number	%	Number	%
Cash - grain	5	0.5	14,816	15
Cotton	15	1.5	5,379	6
Other field crops	30	3.0	1,423	2
Dairy farms	5	0.5	4,676	5
Livestock farms	378	37.8	23,223	24
Miscellaneous or unclassified	570	57.0	38,051	51
Estimated total number of farms	1,003		94,678	

Source: U. S. Census

Value of Investment Per Farm - Pushmataha County farms averaged \$10,279 investment per farm in 1959, with an average investment of \$26.63 per acre for land and buildings. This was

an increase in per acre value of 87 percent over ten years earlier, and a 233 percent increase in value for the average farm. This compares to a state average increase in value per farm of about 140 percent. (See Table XIX). Pushmataha County shows a significantly higher rate of increase in value per farm than does Oklahoma as a whole. This increase in rate parallels the popularity of the livestock enterprise among farmers which resulted both in substantial increases in size of amount as well as value per acre. Such popularity has improved the county's position for competition with other areas because of the inability it had to compete under a cropping system.

TABLE XIX  
VALUE OF LAND & BUILDINGS - PUSHMATAHA COUNTY

	1939 Dollars	1949 Dollars	% Increase 39-49	1959 Dollars	% Increase 49-59
<u>Pushmataha Co.</u>					
Average per farm	968	3,086	219	10,279	233
Average per acre	7.50	14.26	90	26.63	87
<u>Oklahoma</u>					
Average per farm	4,625	13,045	182	31,157	139
Average per acre	23.88	51.42	115	84.65	65

Source: U. S. Census

Investment per acre for the county, however, is less than one-third that of the state. Farms are underdeveloped, providing

an opportunity for future development if certain obstacles can be overcome. Low investment per acre puts the county in a favorable position to compete economically with the rest of the state and nation in farm enterprises which are well adapted, particularly beef cattle.

#### Agricultural Marketing Facilities

Livestock - The county has adequate facilities for the marketing of cattle, hogs and sheep. There is a local sale barn which operates one day per week, and other sale barns in the area which operate six days per week. The Oklahoma City Central Market and the Fort Worth Central Market are 165 miles away.

As the number of livestock in the county and area increase, the local sale barn is expected to improve its facilities and operations. The nearness of central markets tend to keep the efficiency of the sale barns up.

Dairy - (The) North Texas Producers Association has a route which serves the south end of the county and takes all graded milk in the area. A few small producers sell milk door to door. The north three-fourths of the county has no dairy market. There is no cream-buying station in the county.

Poultry - There is no poultry buying station in the county. A few merchants buy live poultry as a service to customers.

Crops - At the present time there is no organized buying nor selling of crops in the county.

Hay - Local sales take most of the hay. Texas truckers take the rest. Good quality grass and legume hay can readily be sold to Texas dairymen.

Cotton - Gins are located in Paris, Texas, 45 miles; Idabel, 60 miles; and McAlester, 70 miles.

Peanuts - Buyers sometimes have a local station. Usually they are sold at Hugo 20 miles or Durant, 60 miles.

Grain - Local use takes all production.

Melons - Truckers will take load lots.

Truck Crops - Several cannaries are within a 150 mile radius and a large one is to be built within 45 miles of Antlers.

In general, the products which are in large supply (live-stock) have good markets, while the crops which are grown in small volume have none or at best poor markets.

#### Local Financial Institutions

Pushmataha County has three banks, two located in Antlers, the county seat, and one in the town of Clayton which is located in the north part of the county. The Farmers Exchange Bank, located in Antlers, is a state bank, having total resources of \$995,143 and deposits of \$788,363, with a loan limit of \$11,250. The First National Bank, located in Antlers, has total resources of \$2,098,799 and deposits of \$1,841,353 with a loan limit of \$15,000. The Clayton State Bank, located in the town of Clayton, has a total resource of \$1,231,206 and demand deposits of \$802,361, with a loan limit of \$15,000.

The Farmers Home Administration, with offices located in Antlers, services the county in making rural housing, farm ownership, soil and water, and chattel loans. Most of the soil and water loans are made for pasture improvement. The Federal Land Bank, with offices in Durant, Bryan County, approximately 58 miles from Pushmataha County, services Pushmataha County in making real estate loans. The Commissioners of the Land

Office service Pushmataha County in the making of real estate loans. The Farmers Home Administration, The Federal Land Bank and the Commissioners of the Land Office carry light caseloads of real estate loans in Pushmataha County due to the very low appraisal of land in this county and in many cases the suspected inability of the land to repay the loan in its present state of development. The Production Credit Association located in Atoka, Oklahoma, 32 miles from Pushmataha County, also services the local area in making chattel loans.



CHAPTER II  
BASIC PROBLEMS OR NEEDS

Income Situation

In 1959, per capita income in Pushmataha County was \$1,154, compared to the state per capita income of \$1,839 for that year. Total personal income in the county was \$10,487,552. Pushmataha County ranked 65th in the state in terms of total personal income and 62nd in terms of per capita income. There are 77 counties in the state.

The most serious implication of the county's low income situation is suggested by the cash income of family units. In 1959, 20.2 percent of all Pushmataha County families had an average annual income of less than \$1,000 and 50.4 percent had annual incomes of less than \$2,000. Fewer than 20 percent of the families in Oklahoma as a whole had incomes of less than \$2,000 in 1959.

Sales of agricultural products accounted for \$2,064,668 of the income of Pushmataha County farmers in 1959 (see Table XII). Sixty percent of these families had income from off-farm sources which exceeded the value of agricultural products sold from the farm that year.

Land and Pasture

The county is blessed with resources which have not been developed. According to a land use inventory made of the

county in 1958 by local agricultural agencies, 70,000 acres of potentially productive pasture land were covered by undesirable timber; 11,000 acres of potentially productive pasture land needed drainage; 69,000 acres of land with field crop history were idle; and 30,000 acres of present pastures other than woodland were producing less than 20 percent of potential.

There are at least four primary factors which contribute to the lack of land development. First, there is the high cost of controlling brush. Trees are the dominant plant in the area. Most land areas left unattended will quickly cover with brush, making it necessary to mow annually with a brush cutter for several years. Purchase costs of brushland, which lends itself to improved pasture production, run from \$20 to \$75 per acre, with most of it selling for about \$40 per acre. The cost of the initial brush-clearing practice runs as high as \$60 per acre, with typical costs of \$40 per acre, making this cost about equal to the purchase price of the land in most cases.

The second factor which contributes to the lack of land development is the high cost of establishing pasture crops. After brushland is cleared native pasture plants provide only enough forage for one cow per 10 to 20 acres, even with continued brush control practices. This can be improved some with establishment of annual lespedeza and hop clover. However, most successful ranchers find this insufficient. Sodding to bermuda grass seems to be the only satisfactory practice

to increase carrying capacity to an acceptable level. Several ranchers in the county have been able to increase carrying capacity to the point where three to five acres will carry a cow. Costs of establishing bermuda grass run in excess of \$17 per acre over and above fertilizer costs. Overseeding with legumes costs in excess of \$3 per acre.

The third factor which contributes to the lack of land development is the low soil fertility level. Most land in the county is deficient in one or more nutrients. The typical soils tests are: low to medium in organic matter; very low in phosphorus; low in potassium; and moderately to strongly acid. This makes it necessary in most cases to apply two tons of agricultural limestone, then about 200 pounds of a mixed fertilizer such as 10-20-10 when bermuda grass is planted. Then to maintain the grass and to permit successful establishment of clovers in the grass, it is usually necessary to apply the equivalent of 150 pounds of 0-20-20 each fall. These are essentially the practices used by ranchers who have increased carrying capacities to around three acres per cow.

County ranchers who have had experience in land and pasture development seem fairly well agreed that costs of land procurement, brush clearing, bermuda grass sodding, initial fertilization, overseeding with legumes, developing a water supply, and fencing exceed \$135 per acre. Added to this are the annual maintenance costs of brush mowing and fertilizer application, with perhaps an occasional re-seeding of legumes.

A fourth factor which contributes to the lack of land development is small farm units which result in incomes too low to permit development of the potential. While many of the ranchers own in excess of 300 acres, in its original condition this much land simply will not provide a suitable living, let alone provide additional money for development. It is necessary that additional development capital be available either in the form of extra capital in the beginning, a farm development loan, or off-farm income from other sources. Most operators have no extra capital. Very few are using farm development loans to any extent. Most of the development is being done by part-time farmers with some member of their family providing an income from an off-the-farm job. Most off-the-farm jobs consist mainly of work such as school lunchroom cooks, school bus drivers, working in filling stations, working on county roads, and clerking in stores. Income from this type employment runs from \$4 to \$8 per day on the average. Off-farm jobs which provide a greater income than this are not available in the county. It can easily be seen that land development will proceed rather slowly until some system is adopted which provides for greater capital inputs.

#### Forests

By far the largest portion of Pushmataha County is land considered most suited for forests, wildlife and recreation purposes. Of approximately 700,000 acres in this category, 250,000 acres are in the hands of a commercial lumber company, leaving 450,000 acres in private hands and small holdings.

There is an apparent lack of interest in proper management of this resource due partially to the fact that long-time capital is required. Forest owners are discouraged by annual fires and thievery. Most of the fires are blamed to free-range cattlemen who claim they are ridding the land of brush and ticks. And yet the brush thickens and ticks get worse annually. This is not only a detriment to commercial timber production but it also discourages the tourist.

A heavy pine seed crop was produced in 1957 and three, fair to light seed crops were produced within the next five-year period. As a result of these crops a good to excellent stand of pine reproduction is to be found throughout the pine area. Commercial production of forest products can be expected to be increased a minimum of five times over production of the past ten years. This potential production is dependent upon the prevention of woods fires, overgrazing, and judicious cutting practices.

Economic conditions have forced discontinuation of several small sawmill operations within the county during the past five years. Except for a brief period of about two months during the 1961-62 winter period, pulpwood purchases were discontinued in 1959.

High freight rates and increasing supplies of wood chips from sawmill waste and increasing use of hardwoods in the pulping process were all factors contributing to the loss of the pulpwood markets in this and other Oklahoma counties. Lack of an industrial water supply is another important factor

hindering market development.

Five portable-type mills operating in permanent locations operate on a rather steady basis. Two mechanical post-peeling establishments, one in the north and one in the south part of the county, operate on an intermittent to steady basis.

Markets are available for all merchantable wood products but buying competition is not keen enough within the area to create the most desirable price levels.

#### Water

Although Fushmataha County receives over 45 inches of annual rainfall, it is ironic that lack of water stands in the way of the economic development in the area. Industrial supplies of water are non-existent. The major resource which appears to offer considerable opportunity for industrial development is timber. The county is considered in the heart of a timber area which would adapt itself to paper mills, but such a development is out of the question until major reservoirs are provided to supply large quantities of water. Preliminary inquiry from prospective paper mills indicate a water-use storage of at least 13,500 acre feet would be necessary. Until ample water is provided, it appears that timber, the greatest existing resource, will not be properly utilized.

#### Other

There are a few other problems which should not be overlooked here. First, it appears that there are real possibilities for tourist development. Low population density, large uninhabited areas, mountainous terrain, clear running streams

and excellent scenery provide a combination to be envied. Yet most local citizens fail to appreciate the real opportunities to be realized by a well developed tourist program. Or it may be that they don't really want it, or fail to understand how to go about developing it. Recent improvement in lodging and eating facilities indicate however, that there may be real progress in this direction.

A very important factor interlacing most of the other problems in the county is a negative outlook by many county residents. While it may be difficult for a person with an annual income of less than \$2,000 to have anything other than a negative outlook, the situation has blinded some to the real opportunities which might exist and has dulled their persistence in the task of extricating themselves from their predicament. Another key factor here may be the high percentage of the population in the older age group. Persons 65 years of age and over have increased from 974 to 1,425 during the period of 1940 to 1960, while persons under 18 years of age decreased from 8,364 to 3,185 during the same period.

CHAPTER III  
PROGRAMS FOR DEVELOPMENT

A program for the development of Pushmataha County logically contains the four points of <sup>(1)</sup> water, <sup>(2)</sup> pasture and cattle, <sup>(3)</sup> forestry, and <sup>(4)</sup> tourist development. These points are somewhat interdependent upon each other.

Water

Perhaps the most essential step to expedite development would be construction of a dependable major water reservoir. This move would do several important things. It would provide the water necessary to attract a paper mill or other industry requiring heavy water utilization. Industrialization would provide the job opportunities and income so badly needed. Timber industries would provide a market for products from hundreds of thousands of acres not now being utilized. The recreation and tourist potential of the area would be improved. Capital would become available for use in pasture and land development.

Both Kiamichi and Little River have sufficient flow to provide for a major reservoir. Both rivers run wild in the spring and occasionally completely stop flowing in the summer. With the multiplicity of uses which such a reservoir would have, its costs could be shared by other projects. It is not likely that a water supply of this proportion will be provided



except with the aid of the federal government.

Proposals have already been made by the U. S. Corps of Engineers for three dams on the Kiamichi River in Pushmataha County. Local support is needed however, to encourage and speed up these projects.

#### Pasture and Cattle

In 1959, livestock accounted for \$1,900,184 or 92 percent of the agricultural income for Pushmataha County, with most of this derived from cattle sales. Total cattle numbers ran slightly in excess of 30,000 head. Ranchers in general are interested in enlarging their cattle numbers, but are limited by carrying capacity. The opportunity to increase carrying capacity is in turn, limited by land and pasture development costs which approach \$100 per acre on brushland. In view of the consideration established in Chapter II that carrying capacities can be increased to around three acres per head, this appears to be economically justified. Money spent on development secures better returns than the same money paid for more undeveloped land. Nevertheless, incomes do not provide enough capital for a very rapid rate of development.

The cost of developing the 70,000 acres of brushland suitable for pasture at the rate of \$100 per acre would be \$7,000,000; and 110,000 acres of open land at the rate of \$60 per acre would be \$6,600,000, totaling \$13,600,000. The increased carrying capacity on the woodland from 20 acres to three acres per cow would provide for 19,500 head of additional cattle; and the increased capacity on the open fields from ten

acres to three acres per cow would provide for 26,000 head of additional cattle, making a total of 45,500 head. Pasture development costs would, then, under this schedule total around \$300 per head of increased carrying capacity.

It would appear that the additional costs of annual inputs to maintain the higher level of production would be more than off-set by increased livestock efficiency. Calf crops on brushy rangeland in many cases, run under 50 percent, while calf crops on improved pastures usually exceed 80 percent. Better breeding and parasite control would be greatly enhanced over that possible on range conditions.

Methods to speed up land and pasture development rely mainly on increased off-farm income as a source of investment capital, on increased use of land development loans, and on the development of a market for forest products.

### Forestry

Two-thirds of the area in private holdings in Pushmataha County consists of commercial forest land with an inventory of 183,600,000 cubic feet of total growing stock. Ability to market this product would provide an immense stimulus to the economy of the area. In addition to income from sales, the salary income from the handling and processing of wood products can be from three to as much as 12 times the value of the trees as they stand in the woods. Considering this, the total potentials of wood production and employment income from harvesting and processing the wood produced in the county appear to be greater than the income from all other agricultural enterprises combined.

However, the problem of marketing is a stumbling block. Marketing is being hindered by lack of local wood utilization industries and by lack of organized marketing efforts. Recent developments in manufacture of paper provide brighter prospects for utilization of timber such as exists in Pushmataha County, than ever before. But the process requires one other thing that the county doesn't have and that is a large reliable water supply.

Programs for improving incomes from forestry include development of water resources, increased effort toward timber stand improvement, fire control, and the development of a private or cooperative yards for concentration of high value forest products.

#### Tourist Development

Pushmataha County has a real potential for increased tourist trade. Aside from the development of lakes, there are several steps which would assist in realizing this potential. A continued effort toward the improvement of lodging and eating facilities is needed. Improved road facilities through the area are needed to make travel more appealing to tourists. Improvement of recreational facilities on farms would add to the attractions of the area. This would include development of small lakes and ponds by proper stocking, control of brush, weeds, ticks, and chiggers in developed picnic areas around the bodies of water. A campaign is needed among local people making them more tourist minded. People should be trained how to be helpful and to make the tourist feel wanted. Points of

interest in the area should be developed and pointed out. Pushmataha County should work with the Southeast Oklahoma Recreation Association for an overall plan to unite and build the Kiamichi region through coordinated efforts in development and promotion.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY

Fushmataha County is a land with a past history of timber production. Following the decline of lumber mills, the population attempted to shift to crop and livestock production. Not being able to compete, many of the better educated, more able-bodied persons migrated away, resulting in a population drop of 53 percent from 1940 to 1960.

Four areas offer significant opportunities for stabilization of the economy. They are water development, forest industry development, improved pasture development, and tourist development. The need for capital investment is great.

APPENDIX TABLE 1

## PUSHMATAHA COUNTY CORN: ACREAGE, PRODUCTION AND VALUE

Year	Harvested Acreage (Acres)	Production (Bushels)	Total Value (Dollars)
1940	19,500	350,900	192,995
1945	14,200	196,700	234,073
1950	6,200	142,600	185,380
1955	1,700	40,600	52,224
1960	1,500	45,000	48,600

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service

APPENDIX TABLE 2

## PUSHMATAHA PEANUTS: ACREAGE, PRODUCTION AND VALUE

Year	Harvested Acreage For Nuts (Acres)	Production (Pounds)	Total Value (Dollars)
1940	3,500	1,970,000	70,920
1945	4,200	1,925,000	159,775
1950	1,800	936,000	93,600
1955	1,860	1,767,000	197,904
1960	1,020	775,200	77,520

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service

(Note: 1962 allotment of peanuts was 2,000 acres. Two-hundred farms planted 946 acres)

APPENDIX TABLE 3

COTTON  
 PUSHMATAHA COUNTY: ACREAGE, PRODUCTION,  
 AND ESTIMATED VALUE SINCE 1940

Year	July 1 (Acres)	Production 500 lb. Gross Weight Bales (Bales)	Total Value (Dollars)
1940	4,840	1,600	72,800
1946	630	220	33,110
1950	1,100	35	6,738
1955	550	155	22,553
1960	350	75	10,312

Source: Oklahoma Crop and Livestock Reporting Service Reports

APPENDIX TABLE 4

PUSHMATAHA COUNTY WHEAT: ACREAGE, : YIELD & PRODUCTION

Year	Planted Acreage (Acres)	Harvested Acreage (Acres)	Yield Per Planted Acre (Bushels)	Yield Per Harvested Acre (Bushels)	Oklahoma Average Price (Dollars)	Production (Bushels)	Total Value (Dollar)
1945	20	20	8.0	8.0	1.45	160	233
1956	20	20	20.0	20.0	1.97	400	788
1960	50	30	12.0	20.00	1.74	600	1,044

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service Reports

APPENDIX TABLE 5

## PUSHMATAHA COUNTY OATS: ACREAGE, YIELD, AND PRODUCTION

Year	Planted Acreage (Acres)	Harvested Acreage (Acres)	Yield Per Planted Acre (Bushels)	Yield Per Harvested Acre (Bushels)	Oklahoma Average Price (Dollars)	Production (Bushels)	Total Value (Dollar)
1940	300	300	21.0	21.0	.29	6,300	1,764
1945	700	700	15.9	15.9	.72	11,100	7,992
1950	300	200		17.0	.84	3,400	2,856
1955	1,200	500		20.0	.69	10,000	6,900
1960	300	200		18.5	.64	3,700	2,368

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service Reports

APPENDIX TABLE 6

PUSHMATAHA COUNTY: SORGHUMS ACREAGE, YIELD, PRODUCTION,  
AND ESTIMATED VALUE SINCE 1939

Year	Planted For All Purposes (Acres)	Harvested For Silage & Forage (Acres)	Acres For Grain (Acres)	Yield Per Acre (Bushels)	Harvested For Grain Oklahoma Average Price (\$ Cwt.)	Production (Cwt.)	Total Value (Dollars)
1940	8,300	8,000	1,000	11.6	.91	6,496	5,911
1945	5,900	5,600	500	8.6	2.14	2,408	5,153
1950	1,300	1,000	300	11.0	1.88	1,848	3,474
1955	1,300	800	300	15.0	1.64	2,520	4,132
1960	1,500	900	500	23.2	1.41	6,496	9,159

Source: Oklahoma Crop & Livestock Reporting Service Reports



APPENDIX TABLE 7

PUSHMATAHA COUNTY - VEGETABLE CROPS SOLD

Year	Farms Reporting	Acreage (Acres)	Value (Dollars)
1954	21	119	12,623
1959	13	46	3,149

Source: U. S. Census

VITA

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MASTER OF SCIENCE

Report: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS IN PUSHMATAHA COUNTY

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