



**Social Factors
of Farm Ownership
in Oklahoma**

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Experiment Station Bulletin No. B-289 November, 1945

S U M M A R Y

Is the Family Farm in Danger?

The belief that agriculture and the nation are best served when a goodly proportion of those who till the land own the acres they work is deeply rooted in American life. In recent years some have feared that this ideal of the family farm is endangered. This bulletin analyzes a large collection of factual data relating to farm ownership in Oklahoma, for the purpose of finding out what are the most important factors which accelerate the rise to ownership on the one hand and which hinder it on the other. The results are summarized below. These summary paragraphs state only the more common tendencies. *Individual initiative and effort are the most important elements in the achievement of farm ownership at the present time. However, the study shows that farmers will need assistance at the hands of the public, particularly in the form of enlarged credit facilities, if farm ownership is to increase relatively in the future.*

The following statements summarize the findings of this study of farmers who achieve farm ownership in Oklahoma:

1. Fewer farmers born in the South than elsewhere achieve farm ownership in proportion to numbers.
2. Farmers whose parents were landless only rarely become farm owners themselves. Farmers whose parents were landowners achieve farm ownership in far greater than expected proportions.
3. Smaller proportions of children of nonowners than of owners of farms remain in agriculture.
4. Farm classes are recruited almost exclusively from children of open country families.
5. In the past, the average grade completed in school by male and female heads of families has not been closely related to the achievement of farm ownership.
6. The proportion of ownership tends to increase with age of farmers. Between 1930 and 1940 there was an increase in the proportion of farm ownership which was due to the increasing proportions of older farmers more than to any other known factor.
7. Early marriage tends to limit the chances of farmers in achieving farm ownership, and the trend is toward earlier marriage in the open country.

8. The number of children born to a family is an insignificant factor in the achievement of farm ownership, except for very large families which tend to check the rise to ownership.
9. Farm owners tend to migrate less during their earning lives and to begin their careers at higher tenure levels than nonowners.
10. Inheritances are becoming an increasingly important factor in the attainment of farm ownership.
11. Excepting cases in which income is derived from non-farm sources, the proportion of farm ownership tends to increase with size of farm. There is a general tendency toward an increase in the size of Oklahoma farms.
12. Relatively, farm ownership tends to be greatest among livestock farmers and least among cotton farmers.
13. Whether or not the proportion of farm ownership increases in the future depends to a large degree on the numbers of persons engaged in agriculture. If the latter decreases, the proportions who are farm owners conceivably could increase. If the number of agriculturists remains the same or increases, the probability of a long-term increase in the proportions of farm owners is not regarded as favorable.

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By ROBERT T. McMILLAN and OTIS DURANT DUNCAN*

This bulletin summarizes research undertaken to determine what factors are important in the achievement of farm ownership by open country families in different areas of Oklahoma. The factual information used was gathered by the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station at various times since 1934 in the areas shown in Figure 1, and was supplemented by the federal census.¹ The study organizes evidences bearing upon the ascent to farm ownership and formulates the conclusions which appear justifiable. The data have been standardized statistically for differences in the age composition of population groups, and adjusted to take out the effects of extreme or erratic variations in other factors which might invalidate the conclusions.

A popular belief of long standing is that farmers should own and operate family-size farms. This conviction originated and developed during a period when there was an abundance of free or low-priced land available to settlers.

Since 1880, landlessness has increased among the agricultural population almost continuously. This offers a serious challenge, not so much to the belief in universal farm ownership as to the means of realizing it more fully.

* Respectively, Associate Sociologist and Head of Department of Sociology and Rural Life. This report is based, in part, upon data collected as a part of the Regional Land Tenure Research Project under the sponsorship of the Southwestern Land Tenure Research Committee composed of representatives of agricultural economics and rural sociology in the Land-Grant Colleges of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas, and one representative each from the U. S. D. A. Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Farm Foundation. The Regional Land Tenure Research Project has been financed jointly by the institutions represented and the General Education Board.

Assistance in the field work in one of the studies used as a basis for this bulletin was given by K. C. Davis, Raymond E. Page, William Hudson, and Clint C. Drury of the Department of Agricultural Economics, Robert L. Fisher of the Department of Sociology and Rural Life, and personnel of the Regional Staff.

¹ In 1934, a survey was made of 750 or about 80 percent of the farmers, in the Stillwater Creek Watershed, comprising parts of Logan, Noble, and Payne Counties. A second study was made in 1937 of a near-random sample of 1200 open country white farm families in Cotton, Craig, Haskell, and Major Counties, to determine the main social aspects of farm tenure (identified in the text as "four-county survey.") In 1940, a third study was made of migration of population (referred to as "five-county survey.") This study covered all resident families in one township respectively of Beckham, Craig, Haskell, Lincoln, and Major Counties, and includes 976 families. The fourth study is a portion of the Southwestern Regional Land Tenure Survey, begun in 1943, and includes 324 families in 17 townships of Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, and Tillman Counties, (referred to as "Southwestern Oklahoma") the greater part of whom resided in Jackson County. The families interviewed were determined by a sampling procedure called the "grid method," i. e., by the intersection of diagonal lines drawn mathematically through township maps of the counties. Finally, in 1944, a study was made of a near-random sample of 372 families in regard to health, housing, and farm labor in 9 townships of Choctaw, Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain, Pittsburg, and Pushmataha counties (identified as "Southeastern Oklahoma.")

TABLE 1.—Percentage of Male Heads of Families of Different Tenure Groups, According to State of Origin.*

State of origin	SOUTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA		SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA	
	Number of heads	Percent owners	Number of heads	Percent owners
All states	320	49.4	366	43.2
Oklahoma	90	36.7	206	39.3
Other southern states	200	52.0	146	48.6
Other states	30	70.0	14	57.1

* Refers to state of birth for heads in southwestern Oklahoma and to state where reared for heads in southeastern Oklahoma.

native culture, including agricultural tenure differences. The differences arising from state of origin have now diminished greatly and probably will disappear relatively soon unless an unforeseen wave of migration from outside Oklahoma should occur.

Among 320 male heads of families surveyed in 1943 in southwestern and 366 in southeastern Oklahoma, 71.9 percent and 43.7 percent respectively migrated from other states (Table 1). The smaller proportion of immigrants in the southeastern area probably is due to a higher natural increase of population, to the presence there of many persons wholly or partly of Indian extraction, and to an infiltration of white traders, adventurers, ranchers, government agents and missionaries as early as 1825.² Southeastern Oklahoma, being an area of high natural increase of population, has a higher proportion of young adults than is found elsewhere in the State.

The Oklahoma population originating elsewhere in the South settled mostly in the southern portion of the State. They were accustomed to renting land, and tenancy spread rapidly from the first despite the abundance of free or low-priced land. The cotton culture called for great amounts of labor, which in turn pushed farm wage rates above the going levels in the old South, and this further accelerated the flow of landless people into Oklahoma.

The data in Table 1 show that farmers who came to Oklahoma from the South proper have not become farm owners in as large proportions as those who came from regions where the pattern of ownership is more firmly established.³ Farmers

² See Otis Durant Duncan "The Fusion of White, Negro, and Indian Cultures Converging of the New South and the West," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, 1934, pp. 357-369.

³ For further discussion on this point, see Robert T. McMillan, "The Relationship of Selected Social Background Factors to Farm Tenure Status," *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, March, 1943, pp. 321-322.

who came to Oklahoma from the Midwest brought with them larger accumulations of wealth than those who migrated from the South, and hence were able to purchase farms more quickly than southern-born farmers after free land was exhausted.

The small proportions of Oklahoma-born owners are undoubtedly due to the fact that, since it requires a long time to become an owner, they are in the majority of cases only beginning to reach ages at which ownership is possible. Presumably, the proportions of ownership among native Oklahoma farmers will increase in the future. When the age factor is taken into account, it may be observed that farmers born in Oklahoma who are 45 years of age or over comprise a higher percentage of farm owners.

TENURE OR OCCUPATION OF PARENTS

One of the most important factors which determine whether a farm-reared individual will become a land owner is the farm tenure status of parents. The question involves both economic considerations and a number of important attitudes or habits which may determine whether one will want to become an owner. If ownership and a sense of the responsibilities it involves are not well recognized ideals of the family, the youth may never regard it as essential.

Where parents of both mates were farm owners at the time of the marriage, 61.6 percent of the family heads in southwestern and 56.5 percent of those in southeastern Oklahoma are now farm owners (Tables 2 and 3). The percentage of farm ownership was higher (only in southeastern Oklahoma) for those marriages in which one set of parents owned farms and the other was nonfarmers. This may be attributable to chance in sampling. The tenure status of the wife's parents is as important in this connection as that of the husband's parents. Generally, higher percentages of tenants with wives coming from owner parents achieved farm ownership than when the relationship was reversed. About 80.0 percent of family heads with tenant parents on both sides were also landless. There were relatively more husbands than wives with landowning parents which is a result of the well known tendency for proportionately more sons than daughters of owners to remain in agriculture. This agrees closely with an earlier Oklahoma study.⁴

The foregoing facts have negative as well as positive implications. There is a prevailing tendency for the children of landless parents to be landless relatively more often than for owners' children to be owners. Apparently, this follows from

⁴ Robert T. McMillan, "Farmer Ownership Status of Parents As a Determinant of Socio-economic Status of Farmers," *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 9, June 1944, pp. 153-155.

TABLE 2.—Tenure Distribution of Families by Farm Tenure Status of Parents of Heads, Southwestern Oklahoma.

Combination of tenure status of parents*	Number of families	PERCENT OF FAMILIES		
		Owners	Tenants	Others
All combinations	277	48.0	38.3	13.7
FO-FO	117	61.6	33.3	5.1
FO-T	38	36.8	55.3	7.9
T-FO	33	54.5	30.3	15.2
T-T	32	18.8	50.0	31.2
FO-AO	24	54.2	41.7	4.1
AO-FO	13	53.8	38.5	7.7
T-AO	13	7.7	30.8	61.5
AO-T	3**	--	--	--
AO-AO	4**	--	--	--

* First symbol refers to tenure status of parents of male head, and second symbol refers to tenure status of parents of female head. FO—Farm owner. T—Tenant. AO—All other occupations reported, including farm laborer.

** Inadequate sample.

TABLE 3.—Tenure Distribution of Families by Farm Tenure Status of Parents of Heads, Southeastern Oklahoma.

Combination of tenure status of parents*	Number of families	PERCENT OF FAMILIES		
		Owners	Tenants	Others
All combinations	330	44.5	33.7	21.8
FO-FO	108	56.5	23.1	20.4
FO-T	49	42.9	34.7	22.4
T-FO	38	44.7	42.1	13.2
T-T	86	22.1	48.8	29.1
FO-AO	16	81.3	18.7	0.0
AO-FO	11	72.7	9.1	18.2
T-AO	9**	--	--	--
AO-T	10**	--	--	--
AO-AO	3**	--	--	--

* First symbol refers to tenure status of parents of male head, and second symbol refers to tenure status of parents of female head. FO—Farm owner. T—Tenant. AO—All other occupations reported, including farm laborer.

** Inadequate sample.

an increasing difficulty in achieving ownership which younger farmers must face as land becomes more scarce.

As has been mentioned, tenure selection in marriage is highly important. It facilitates the establishment of group status, and helps, or hinders, the rise to farm ownership. In Table 4, these relationships are brought out clearly.⁵

In about 60.0 percent, or more, of the cases, mates marry within their own tenure class. Such marriages occur most frequently where large proportions of the population occupy

⁵ The data in Table 4 are derived from surveys conducted in different parts of Oklahoma at different times, and the marriages included have been selected so as to assure comparability.

TABLE 4.—Characteristics of Tenure Selection Among Husbands and Wives.

Tenure characteristic of persons marrying	Southwestern Oklahoma (N=277)	Southeastern Oklahoma (N=330)	Selected couples surveyed in 1937 and 1940 (N=618)
1. Percent of husbands and wives who married within their own tenure class	61.0	65.5	64.9
2. Percent of farm owners' sons who married owners' daughters	65.4	62.4	70.2
3. Percent of farm owners' daughters who married owners' sons	71.8	68.8	78.2
4. Percent of nonowners' sons who married nonowners' daughters	53.1	68.8	52.0
5. Percent of nonowners' daughters who married nonowners' sons	46.5	62.4	41.5

relatively low economic status with class lines sharply drawn.⁶ This is also associated with geographic isolation and limited human contacts.

Two principles vitally affect the rise of farmers to ownership through marriage. First, persons who remain on the farm prefer to marry mates of farm origin.⁷ Second, there is almost a continual migration of young unmarried persons (mainly in the 18 to 25 year age period) from farms to cities. This is preponderantly a migration of young women. These facts, especially selective migration from the farms, disturb the sex balance of different social and economic strata of the farm population of marriageable ages. As a result, considerably higher proportions of sons than of daughters of farm owners obtain mates from among nonowners' daughters, and much higher proportions of nonowner daughters than of sons marry mates from the owner group.

⁶ Tenure differences in housing, acreage per farm, and other variables are greater in southeastern than in southwestern Oklahoma. See Robert T. McMillan, *Social Factors Related to Farm Housing in Southern Oklahoma*, Oklahoma AES Tech. Bull. No. T-22.

⁷ In another Oklahoma study it was found that over 93.0 percent of the male and 90.0 percent of the female heads of families were farm reared. Thus, the chances are about 85 out of 100 that for any given marriage union both mates will be of farm origin. See Otis Durant Duncan, *An Analysis of Farm Family Organization in Oklahoma* (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Louisiana State University 1940) pp. 244-245.

The sex ratios of male and female heads of families according to their paternal tenure status are as follows:

Area Surveyed*	MALES TO 100 FEMALES	
	Owners	Nonowners
Southwestern Oklahoma	109.0	86.0
Southeastern Oklahoma	110.2	90.0
Four and Five-county Areas	111.4	79.9

* See footnote 1, page 7.

These data indicate that large proportions of the male children originally in nonowner farm families left the farm upon arriving at maturity, and other studies have shown that migrants to cities from these classes most frequently enter the ranks of unskilled and semiskilled labor in preference to accepting the economic disadvantages placed upon them by their tenure status in agriculture. Probably, the daughters of farm owners, because of superior educational advantages, have better opportunities for either employment or marriage outside of agriculture than those of nonowners. Thus, one of the best opportunities for the daughters of nonowners who remain on the farm to improve their tenure and economic status is to marry sons of farm owners. Likewise, many sons of owners find wives among the daughters of nonowners because the supply of marriageable daughters of owners is limited.

Large proportions of both owner and tenant husbands and wives originated in landowning families (Tables 5 and 6). In southwestern Oklahoma, the parental status of either the husband, wife, or both was that of landowner among 93.1 percent of owners, 80.1 percent of the tenants, and 42.0 percent of the "others." In southeastern Oklahoma the proportions were 81.6 percent for owners, 55.8 percent for tenants, and 55.5 percent for "others" respectively. In southwestern Oklahoma, 18.8 percent of the male heads of owner families are sons of tenants as compared with 25.9 percent of those in southeastern Oklahoma. The data indicate that marriage accelerates movement toward ownership somewhat more often than toward landlessness.

SCHOOLING

The relationship of schooling to the achievement of farm ownership is obscured by factors of greater influence, such as tenure status of parents, age, and possibly others. The influence of schooling probably will be manifest to a greater degree with the passage of time, after the effects of homesteading and low land values no longer favor older farmers. Moreover, the traditions of the past were that a youth should have an

education so he would not need to farm, and little effort was made by the educational system to prepare him for a career as a farmer. More recently, vocational agricultural courses in high school have been designed with a view toward remedying that condition.

Among families in which the husband is 45 years old or older, the percentage of farm owners increases fairly regularly with each increase in amount of schooling (Table 7). On the other hand, the percentage of "others" with less than eight

TABLE 5.—Farm Tenure Status of Parents of Husbands and Wives Classed According to Tenure Status, Southwestern Oklahoma.

Combination of tenure status of parents*	PERCENT OF FAMILIES			
	All tenures (N=330)	Owner (N=147)	Tenant (N=111)	Other (N=72)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
FO-FO	42.2	54.1	36.8	15.8
FO-T	13.7	10.5	19.8	7.9
T-FO	11.9	13.5	9.4	13.1
T-T	11.6	4.5	15.1	26.3
FO-AO	8.7	9.8	9.4	2.6
AO-FO	4.7	5.2	4.7	2.6
T-AO	4.7	0.8	3.8	21.1
AO-T	1.1	0.8	0.0	5.3
AO-AO	1.4	0.8	1.0	5.3

* First symbol refers to tenure status of parents of male head, and second symbol refers to tenure status of parents of female head. FO=Farm owner. T=Tenant. AO=All other occupations reported, including farm laborer

TABLE 6.—Farm Tenure Status of Parents of Husbands and Wives Classed According to Tenure Status, Southeastern Oklahoma.

Combination of tenure status of parents*	PERCENT OF FAMILIES			
	All tenures (N=277)	Owner (N=133)	Tenant (N=106)	Other (N=38)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
FO-FO	32.7	41.5	22.5	30.5
FO-T	14.9	14.3	15.3	15.3
T-FO	11.5	11.6	14.4	6.9
T-T	26.1	12.9	37.9	34.7
FO-AO	4.9	8.8	2.7	0.0
AO-FO	3.3	5.4	0.9	2.8
AO-T	3.0	3.4	0.9	5.6
T-AO	2.7	1.4	4.5	2.8
AO-AO	0.9	0.7	0.9	1.4

* First symbol refers to tenure status of parents of male head, and second symbol refers to tenure status of parents of female head. FO=Farm owner. T=Tenant. AO=All other occupations reported, including farm laborer

Erratum: In Tables 5 and 6, column headings showing number of cases ("N") are reversed; i. e., those shown in Table 5 are for southeastern Oklahoma, and vice versa.

grades of schooling is high. Schooling and tenure status are related but the degree of association is not large.

Farmers under 45 years of age have not achieved farm ownership to the same degree as older farmers, although they possess more schooling. This is due partly to the older age at which farm ownership is now being accomplished, and until recently, partly to the tendency toward increasing landlessness. While older farmers in Oklahoma often became owners through homesteading, younger men must now buy their farms, and depression prices for farm products between 1930 and 1940 did not favor a rapid acquisition of land by purchase.

AGE AT MARRIAGE

The data in Tables 8 and 9 furnish some proof for the popular belief that early marriage acts as an economic handicap to farm people, but this assumption should be tested further. Farm owners tend to marry slightly later than nonowners, and there is a uniform tendency for larger proportions of families to become farm owners when the age of the husband at marriage is over 21 years. In the four-county sample, the chances of achieving farm ownership show some tendency to increase as age at marriage increases.

Farmers under 40 years of age married from three to four years younger on the average than those 60 years old and older

TABLE 7.—Percentage Distribution of Families in Farm Tenure Classes, Average Schooling of Husband and Wife.

Average grades completed in school	PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION					
	SOUTHERN OKLAHOMA*			FOUR-COUNTY SURVEY		
	Owners	Tenants	Others	Owners	Tenants	Others
	All families					
All grades	40.6	38.7	20.7	37.6	48.9	13.5
Under 8	36.7	37.4	25.9	34.0	49.4	16.6
8	50.0	36.6	13.4	41.8	45.4	12.8
9 and over	41.3	42.5	16.2	42.4	51.0	6.6
	Families with husbands under 45 years of age					
All grades	29.1	47.9	23.0	24.0	59.3	16.7
Under 8	19.8	51.5	28.7	16.3	59.4	24.3
8	38.6	38.6	22.8	30.1	54.2	15.7
9 and over	33.6	48.3	18.1	30.0	63.0	7.0
	Families with husbands 45 years of age and over					
All grades	49.3	31.8	18.9	52.5	37.6	9.9
Under 8	44.8	30.7	24.5	46.5	42.2	11.3
8	57.3	35.3	7.4	60.4	31.3	8.3
9 and over	55.6	31.7	12.7	70.0	24.4	5.6

* Southwestern and southeastern Oklahoma.

TABLE 8.—Percentage of Farm Owners Among All Families, Classified by Age at Marriage of Husbands.

Age of husbands at marriage, years	PERCENT OF FARM OWNERS AMONG ALL FAMILIES		
	Southwestern Oklahoma	Southeastern Oklahoma	Four-county survey
All age groups	50.0	44.1	36.2
Under 20	33.3	42.6	23.0
20-21	46.9	37.0	26.5
22-23	51.7	50.8	38.0
24-25	46.3	52.9	41.6
26-27	58.3	44.4	43.1
28-29	50.0	37.5	40.5
30 and over	74.2	42.9	52.2

TABLE 9.—Average Age at Marriage of Husbands, Classified by Farm Tenure Status and Age.

Present age of husbands, years	AVERAGE AGE OF HUSBANDS AT MARRIAGE			
	All tenures	Owners	Tenants	Others
	Southwestern Oklahoma			
All age groups	23.9	24.6	23.2	22.1
Under 40	22.3	22.2	22.7	21.1
40-59	23.7	23.8	23.5	23.6
60 and over	24.9	27.0	23.9	*
	Southeastern Oklahoma			
All age groups	23.8	23.6	22.9	24.1
Under 40	22.6	23.2	21.6	22.1
40-59	23.1	22.1	22.6	23.7
60 and over	25.8	26.3	25.4	26.9
	Four-county survey			
All age groups	24.3	25.3	23.7	23.9
Under 40	22.8	23.6	22.7	22.4
40-59	24.8	25.2	24.3	24.9
60 and over	26.6	27.0	26.1	26.4

* Inadequate sample.

(Table 9).⁸ Increased proportions of younger farmers married within a year or two after leaving home to work for themselves.

If the age at marriage is earlier now than a generation ago, and if farm ownership is achieved by larger percentages of men who defer their marriage until the late twenties or early thirties, then the prospects for an increase in the relative amount

⁸ This should be accepted cautiously because there may be a selective process operating which has eliminated from the older open country population, through migration and death, an underprivileged or marginal element who married at an earlier age than those remaining. Also, whether a marriage may be described as "early" or "late" depends somewhat upon the prevailing age pattern at the time it occurs. For over 100 years now there has been a gradual trend in the direction of lower ages at marriage for both sexes.

TABLE 10.—Changes in Age Composition of Farm Owners in State of Oklahoma, 1910-1940.*

Age group, years	Percent of farm owners in State				Percent change in farm owners		
	1940	1930	1920	1910	'30-'40	'20-'30	'10-'20
All owners re- porting age	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	4.2	-18.7	7.8
Under 25	1.5	1.8	3.5	3.8	-14.9	-58.6	-0.6
25-34	9.9	11.0	15.8	20.7	-6.2	-43.5	-17.8
35-44	19.8	21.6	25.3	29.1	-4.6	-30.5	-6.1
45-54	25.5	26.7	28.0	24.9	-0.2	-22.2	21.3
55-64	23.9	24.1	18.4	14.9	3.5	6.4	32.9
65 and over	19.4	14.8	9.0	6.6	36.3	33.6	46.9

* SOURCE: *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Agriculture, Vol. I, Part 5, p. 218.*

of ownership can be considered as unfavorable with respect to the factor of age at marriage.

AGE COMPOSITION

The age composition of farmers is, next to farm tenure status of parents, the most important social factor associated with the amount of farm ownership in Oklahoma. This may help to explain the increase in percentage of ownership among all farm operators between 1930 and 1940, both in Oklahoma and in the country at large, as shown by the Census of 1940.⁹ The considerable increase in the proportion of owner operators in Oklahoma during a depression decade possibly can be attributed to significant changes in the age composition of all farmers. Also a heavy migration of nonowner operators and farm laborers away from the farm occurred during the latter part of that decade.

The whole net increase in number of farm owners in Oklahoma since 1920, and nearly all of it since 1930, has been among owners 55 years of age and older (Table 10). With each decrease in age below that level, the proportional decline in ownership generally increased during that period.¹⁰ The heavy concentration of owners in the higher age groups is partially attributable to the later age at which farmers have become owners in recent years and to the fact that those who became owners earlier have grown older. Thus are shown the cumula-

⁹ Farm ownership had decreased proportionally at every decennial census in the United States between 1880 and 1930 and in Oklahoma the proportion of owner-operated farms had followed a generally downward trend since 1890 and 1900.

¹⁰ The average age of farm owners in Oklahoma has risen sharply during the period since statehood. In 1910, 21.5 percent of the owners were 55 years of age or over in contrast with 43.3 percent in 1940.

tive effects of advancing age of owners and a higher proportionate acquisition of farms at later ages.

The average age of farm owners as well as that of all farmers has advanced since 1910. Changes in the general tenure pattern have been significantly associated with these changes in age, and may be direct effects of them. Table 11 shows that (1) the proportional decrease in the total number of farm operators between 1910 and 1940 varied little between owners and nonowners (tenants and managers) of farms; (2) the proportional decrease in the number of owners under 55 years of age has been greater than the loss among nonowners; and (3) the proportional increase in number of owners 55 years and over exceeds that of nonowners. This may suggest that younger persons are discouraged from entering agriculture, probably because of relatively small chances of becoming farm operators, especially farm owners. Anyway, *it is a clear indication that achieving farm ownership is becoming increasingly a slow and difficult process in Oklahoma.*

One means of judging the effectiveness of the "agricultural ladder" by which a young man rises from tenancy to ownership is to observe the percentage of farm owners among all farmers in specified age groups. Since 1910 there has been a regular increase in the proportion of owners among all farm operators which accompanies each advance in age (Table 12). Only in the age groups over 44 years old do owners exceed tenants in numbers. Due to the increasing age of farm operators and to the concentration of farm ownership among older farmers, the frequency of ownership among operators under 45 years of age has been relatively small since 1920.

TABLE 11.—Changes in the Age Composition of All Farm Operators in Oklahoma, by Tenure Status Between 1910 and 1940.*

Age group, years	PERCENT CHANGE IN FARMERS BY AGE GROUP, 1910-1940		
	All farmers	Owners	Tenants and managers
All ages	— 8.8	— 8.6	— 8.9
Under 25	— 49.3	— 65.0	— 45.3
25-34	— 33.5	— 56.4	— 21.4
35-44	— 22.8	— 37.8	— 8.8
45-54	— 1.3	— 5.9	+ 3.8
55-64	+ 38.1	+ 46.2	+ 27.8
65 and over	+133.5	+167.6	+ 71.8

* SOURCE: *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Agriculture, Vol. I, Part 5, p. 218.*

TABLE 12.—Percentage of Farm Owners Among All Farm Operators, by Ages, Oklahoma, 1910 to 1940.*

Age group, years	PERCENT OF FARM OWNERS AMONG ALL FARM OPERATORS			
	1940	1930	1920	1910
All ages	45.0	37.9	48.5	44.9
Under 25	14.1	8.0	22.6	20.4
25-34	22.8	20.4	33.0	34.8
35-44	39.0	34.3	47.1	48.4
45-54	50.1	45.0	58.4	52.5
56-64	58.9	56.3	64.7	55.6
65 and over	73.8	66.0	70.1	64.4

* SOURCE: *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Agriculture, Vol. I, Part 5, p. 218.*

TABLE 13.—Number of Farm Owners per 100 Males 20 Years Old and Over in Specified Age Groups of the Rural-farm Population of Oklahoma, 1920-1940.*

Age group, years	NUMBER OF FARM OWNERS PER 100 MALES 20 YEARS OLD AND OVER		
	1940	1930	1920
All age groups	28.9	27.6	36.1
Under 25	2.8	2.8	7.6
25-34	12.1	13.3	22.7
35-44	29.1	29.3	41.6
45-54	42.8	41.4	55.3
55-64	51.0	51.4	59.9
65 and over	49.7	46.4	47.5

SOURCE: *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, Characteristics of the Population, Vol. II, Tables 7, 8, and 9 and Agriculture, Vol. I, Part V, State Table 10.*

The census data used in Table 12 takes into account only farm operators. A much more realistic picture of the degree of farm ownership in Oklahoma is given in Table 13, where farm laborers are included.¹¹ In 1920 there were 36.1 and in 1940 only 28.9 farm owners per 100 rural farm males 20 years of age and over. The ratio of owners to all males increases as age advances, except in the highest age group, because old men often retire from active farming. Only in the age group from 55 to 64 years do owners exceed nonowners in number; but since 1920, the proportions of owners in the age group above 65 have been higher than in any age period below 55 years. Yet, it is an error to maintain that if a man remains in agriculture all his life eventually he will become a farm owner. *The farmer in southern Oklahoma has only a little more than an even chance of achieving and maintaining ownership of a farm.*

¹¹ Because a complete summary of tenure composition is not available from the Census, in compiling Table 13 the number of farm owners per 100 males 20 years old and over in the rural-farm population was calculated by age groups for three census periods.

Summarizing, the increase in the proportion of owners between 1930 and 1940 was due (1) to the aging of farmers generally, and (2) to a heavy emigration of young farmers, mainly tenants, croppers, and laborers. Also, landlessness appears to have increased relatively among the younger farmers who remained on the farm during this period. However, one aspect of this situation is favorable toward an increase of ownership among younger farm operators. During the next ten or twenty years the turnover of older farm owners will be accentuated as a result of deaths and retirements. There are reasons for believing that the heavy drain on young men brought about by the war forced an unusually large proportion of older farmers to remain on the farm. Now that hostilities have ceased, it should not be long before these older farmers will retire. *This will create many new opportunities for young men who may wish to become farmers, provided favorable postwar markets for farm products can be maintained.*

NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY

The belief is widely held, and often specifically asserted, that large families tend to be poor families economically. Nearly all studies of the relief population in recent years show a relatively high incidence of large families. One authority has even made the generalization that children cause poverty.¹²

In this study, the specific question to be answered is: Does the relatively large family have as good a chance of achieving farm ownership as the relatively small family? To test this question carefully, *completed* families in which the wife had passed the childbearing age were studied. Incidentally, as later inquiry shows, farmers who achieve ownership usually acquire a farm before their wives cease having children.

The data available for nearly 1300 open-country families in Oklahoma furnish suggestive but by no means conclusive evidence (Table 14). The percentage of owners is smaller among families with more than six or seven children than among those with fewer children. Married farmers without children do not achieve farm ownership much more easily than those with not more than three or four children, although they become owners much more frequently than farmers with six or more children. Families with one to five children tend to exceed the average of all farmers in the proportions of farm owners. Apparently children do not handicap families in the achievement of farm ownership un-

¹² Alva Myrdal, *Nation and the Family*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941, Chap. IV.

til their number reaches at least six or seven. It should be stressed that this generalization applies to a period when land values were rising generally. Traditionally children have been regarded as economic assets on farms, but with increased mechanization of farming the need of a large family labor force, if it existed previously, may tend to disappear.

The absolute number of children per family is not the all-important factor in this matter. As long as the annual net spendable income received for family living exceeds consumption requirements, the number of children in a family will have little bearing upon the achievement of ownership. Otherwise, increases in the size of the family will of necessity retard the achievement of ownership because the farmer must then use savings for living rather than for buying land and equipment. *As in all other aspects of this general problem, then, it is plain that efficiency of farm management, misfortune, and other influences besides the number of children per unit of land area in a farm must be taken into account.*

Under ordinary circumstances farm families in Oklahoma are likely to suffer privation if the number of children is greater than five or six, assuming a farm of 160 acres as the average size in the most general types of farming areas. Under such conditions the available evidences accumulated through many

TABLE 14.—Percentage of Farm Owners Among Families With the Wife Over 44 Years of Age, According to Number of Children Born Per Family.

Number of children born per family	PERCENT OF FARM OWNERS AMONG FAMILIES WITH WIFE OVER 44 YEARS OF AGE			
	Southern Oklahoma N=389	Four-county survey N=437	Stillwater Creek survey N=261	Five-county survey* N=291
All families	56.4	54.7	66.7	52.6
No children	66.7	57.6	66.7	70.4
One	57.1	75.0	84.2	49.2
Two	71.1	53.8	66.7	54.5
Three	80.0	59.6	66.7	52.5
Four	52.4	69.2	73.5	58.7
Five	48.5	55.6	62.2	47.6
Six	53.8	39.5	73.7	52.9
Seven	54.2	50.0	61.5	46.5
Eight	41.2	57.1	57.1**	52.0***
Nine	38.1	42.9	--	--
Ten and over	51.4	36.6	--	--

* Refers to surviving children.

** Eight and over.

***Nine and over.

TABLE 15.—Percentage of Farm Owners Among All Families, According to the Age of Family Heads and Number of Moves During Past Ten Years.

Age of family heads, years	PERCENT OF FARM OWNERS AMONG ALL FAMILIES					
	SOUTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA			SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA		
	No moves	1-3 moves	4 moves and over	No moves	1-3 moves	4 moves and over
All ages	71.6	42.1	7.7	71.1	40.1	23.9
Under 35	*	26.7	12.5	66.7	28.1	12.8
35-44	66.7	52.5	7.1	66.7	41.7	33.3
45-54	67.4	39.4	*	71.4	45.0	38.5
55-64	62.9	33.3	*	87.5	44.7	16.7
65 and over	95.2	*	*	55.0	31.2	*

* Inadequate sample.

years of study seem to point to the need of stabilizing the size of the family at some point in the neighborhood of five children for movement toward farm ownership to be the least hindered.

MOBILITY¹³

Generally, the proportion of owners in farm populations decreases when migration is excessively frequent. This relationship is brought out pointedly in Table 15, which shows that in all age groups of family heads the proportions of owners decrease as the number of moves made during the previous ten years increases. The proportion of farm owners is much higher among nonmovers than among movers; and it is higher in southwestern than in southeastern Oklahoma where migration occurs with greater frequency (except for those who had made four or more moves).¹⁴ The relatively higher percentage of farm owners among families in southeastern Oklahoma who made four or more moves during the past ten years is partially

¹³ The term "mobility" refers to movements of population geographically and socially. Movement in geographic space is migration if it involves any significant change in place of living. This is also called territorial mobility. Social mobility is any movement of an individual, collection of individuals, or family from one group to another. There are two kinds of social mobility, *horizontal* and *vertical*. Horizontal mobility is any change of identity of persons between groups of equal rank, such as a change of registration in political parties. Vertical mobility is a change of persons between groups of unequal rank or status, such as from one tenure or economic group to another. There are important differences in both the migration and tenure, or occupational mobility, of the open-country population, which should be accounted for in any study of land tenure.

¹⁴ This comparison between areas should be accepted with reservations. During the decade of 1930 to 1940, southwestern Oklahoma lost population consistently by emigration which left behind the more stable elements of the farm population, particularly land owners, while southeastern Oklahoma received hordes of incoming population including mostly unstable landless people going there to find new footholds on the land.

attributable to recent efforts of migrant farm families to that area to become owners through the purchase of small farms, some of which may have been tax delinquent.

Geographic mobility rather generally tends to decrease as age increases, especially if the mover's economic position becomes more secure. It will be noted in Table 15 that farm ownership increases with age especially between the ages of 35 and 55, and that moving begins to slow down in these ages.¹⁵

The study shows rather conclusively that farm owners move less than tenants and "others." It implies that improvement in farm tenure status leads to less migration, but it does not mean that reducing the amount of migration through the application of restrictive measures would result automatically in the elevation of tenure status. Furthermore, some moving is necessary in making initial adjustments, and may be conducive to ownership. It is unrestrained wandering during the productive years of life that is most likely to hinder a farmer from becoming an owner.

Social mobility likewise bears an important relationship to farm ownership. Most farmers must make a more or less gradual ascent up "the agricultural ladder," serving apprenticeships as farm laborers, farm tenants, or as nonagricultural workers while acquiring the necessary resources for making the first direct step toward becoming farm owners.

There are marked differences between various tenure groups of farmers in respect to the previous tenure or occupational experiences of family heads. Approximately 75 percent of the farm owners in southern Oklahoma had experience as tenants prior to becoming landowners (Table 16). Relatively few owners, 25 percent in southwestern and 12 percent in southeastern Oklahoma, passed through the farm laborer stage. In

¹⁵ In southeastern Oklahoma the percentage of ownership declines sharply after the age of 65. With a corresponding increase in moving, the situation is somewhat different. The lag in ownership by older farmers in this area may be due to several factors: First, the early restrictions on Indian lands there promoted tenancy more than ownership, which accelerated moving. Second, a rapid change of ownership in southeastern Oklahoma is associated with frequent moving. Third, mining, sawmilling, and oil fields offer alternatives to agricultural employment in times of business activity, which to some extent stimulates moving. Fourth, it has been contended that a large proportion of farms in southeastern Oklahoma are too small to form adequate economic units which, if true, would contribute to a rapid turnover in ownership and to insecurity in ownership during old age. The high rates of old age assistance and the high proportions of the population on relief between 1934 and 1940 are evidences that there are economic dislocations of some kind in the area which militate against farm ownership by farmers who have reached old age. A tentative explanation of this may be that if large proportions of the farms in southeastern Oklahoma are uneconomically sized, they will not produce enough income during earning life to provide savings for old age; nor will the rents from them, under these conditions, carry their owners through old age. Hence, the logical conclusion is that when the owner becomes too old to work, he will sell land and use the proceeds for living. This will mean also that relatively few farmers of the next generation can become owners through inheritances. In other areas where the farm is an economic unit, the owner often keeps his land and lives from its rent in retirement.

TABLE 16.—Percentage Distribution of Farmers According to Tenure or Occupational Experience During Earning Life.

Combination of tenure or occupational experience*	PERCENT					
	SOUTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA			SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA		
	Owner (N=142)	Tenant (N=118)	Other (N=36)	Owner (N=151)	Tenant (N=125)	Other (N=77)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
T-FO	45.8	--	--	44.4	--	--
NF-T-FO	14.1	--	--	25.2	--	--
FL-T-FO	14.1	--	--	4.6	--	--
FO	10.6	--	--	9.3	--	--
NF-FO	6.3	--	--	7.9	--	--
Others—FO	9.1	--	--	8.6	--	--
T	--	41.5	--	--	43.2	--
NF-T	--	26.3	--	--	24.8	--
NF-FL-T	--	11.0	--	--	6.4	--
FL-T	--	8.5	--	--	6.4	--
Others—T	--	0.0	--	--	1.6	--
FL-T-NF	--	--	47.1	--	--	22.0
T-NF	--	--	13.9	--	--	26.0
FL-NF	--	--	13.9	--	--	9.1
Others—NF	--	--	25.1	--	--	42.9

* FO=Farm owner. T=Tenant. FL=Farm laborer. NF=Nonfarm occupations.

both areas about 10 percent of the owners began their earning lives as owners, and had uninterrupted experience as such. Higher percentages of tenants and "others," especially the latter, worked as farm laborers, and larger proportions also spent time in nonfarming occupations.

If only farm operators are considered, experience in nonfarming occupations is not a handicap in achieving farm ownership.¹⁶ When "others" are taken into account, the percentage of farm owners is much lower among family heads experienced in nonfarming occupations than among those spending all their earning lives in agriculture (Table 17).

Approximately 12 percent of the nonowners in southwestern and 20 percent of those in southeastern Oklahoma formerly owned farms. This difference suggests that it is more difficult to maintain a farm owner's status in southeastern than in southwestern Oklahoma and that it is easier to shift into and out of agriculture in the former than in the latter area.

¹⁶ Twenty-six percent of the owners and 43.2 percent of the tenants in southwestern Oklahoma, and 40.4 percent of the owners and 38.4 percent of the tenants in southeastern Oklahoma worked at nonfarming occupations some time during earning life.

TABLE 17.—Percentage of Farm Owners Among All Families, Classified According to Specified Tenure or Occupational Experience During Earning Life.

Tenure or occupational experience	PERCENT OF FARM OWNERS AMONG ALL FAMILIES	
	Southwestern Oklahoma	Southeastern Oklahoma
All combinations	48.0	42.8
Tenant only	54.6	57.8
Farm labor and/or tenant	58.6	55.9
Others, including nonfarming	31.1	35.5

METHOD OF ACQUIRING FARM

In Oklahoma, more than in most other southern states, farm ownership is affected by the governmental allotments of Indian lands and homesteads to farmers.¹⁷ In southwestern Oklahoma, 55.2 percent of the owners, 13.7 percent of the tenants, and 9.5 percent of the "others" received at least one of these forms of assistance. In the four-county survey made in 1937, the corresponding percentages were 48.5 for owners, 15.4 for tenants and 3.6 for "others" (Table 18). Stated in another way, 82.0 percent of the farmers in southwestern Oklahoma and 71.0 percent of those in the four-county survey who received capital assistance were farm owners.

The age of the farmer influences the type of assistance received in three ways:

FIRST, larger percentages of older than of younger farmers received capital assistance, headrights, Indian allotments, and homesteads, due to historical differences between periods of earning life.

SECOND, inheritances and gifts are relatively more important means of subsidy for younger than for older farmers.

THIRD, and most significant, the relative difference between the proportion of owners and nonowners who received one form of assistance or another increases sharply with age.

The indications are that in Oklahoma farm ownership is being achieved increasingly as a result in inheritances or gifts.¹⁸ From this and other data studied, *the inference is*

¹⁷ Only a negligible number of farmers interviewed on this point stated that bonuses for military service were used to purchase farms or to reduce farm mortgage indebtedness.

¹⁸ In northwest Oklahoma, this trend has been observed for a long time, and it has become so widespread there that farmers are beginning to regard it as an incipient social problem of considerable importance.

that an even greater proportion of farm owners will be children of farm owners in the future than in the past.

The most common method used in becoming an owner of a farm in Oklahoma is through purchase (Table 19). More than 80 percent of the farms studied were acquired in this way. Of the remaining owner-operated farms, approximately equal proportions were obtained through inheritance or mar-

TABLE 18.—Percentage of Families Receiving Specified Forms of Assistance, According to Age of Family Head.

Farm tenure status and age, years	Number of families reporting	PERCENT OF FAMILIES RECEIVING ASSISTANCE		
		All forms	Inheritance or gift	Homestead or Indian land grant
Southwestern Oklahoma				
Owners	165	55.2	36.4	18.8
Under 35	14	57.1	57.1	0.0
35-54	77	44.2	41.6	2.6
55 and over	74	66.2	27.0	39.2
Tenants	117	13.7	10.3	3.4
Under 35	31	3.2	3.2	0.0
35-54	61	9.8	9.8	0.0
55 and over	25	36.0	20.0	16.0
Others	42	9.5	7.1	2.4
Under 35	13	0.0	0.0	0.0
35-54	20	15.0	15.0	0.0
55 and over	9	11.1	0.0	11.0
Four-county survey				
Owners	449	48.5	27.6	20.9
Under 35	40	45.0	27.5	17.5
35-54	215	46.0	32.6	13.4
55 and over	194	51.5	21.6	29.9
Tenants	540	15.4	10.5	4.9
Under 35	191	8.4	8.4	0.0
35-54	235	18.3	14.0	4.3
55 and over	114	21.1	7.0	14.1
Others				
Under 35	70	1.4	1.4	0.0
35-54	65	4.6	1.5	3.1
55 and over	33	6.0	3.0	3.0

TABLE 19.—Distribution of Farm Owners by Method of Acquiring Farm.

Method of acquiring farm	Southwestern Oklahoma N=161	Southeastern Oklahoma N=111	Four-county survey N=626
Total, percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Purchase	81.4	90.1	78.7
Inheritance or marriage	9.9	6.3	10.1
Homestead	8.7	0.0	5.0
Allotment or headright	0.0	3.6	6.2

riage, and through homesteads or Indian grants. Few farms are occupied by original homesteaders and Indian grantees. Obviously a rapid turnover in farm ownership and occupancy of agricultural land, as well as a progressive mortality of settlers, has taken place during the formative period in the history of the State. Purchases and inheritances probably will increase in importance as these prior owners disappear from the ownership pattern.

Examination of the data by counties reveals an absence of homesteads in areas of the former Indian Territory and of Indian grants in that part opened to white settlers for homesteading. The proportions of inherited farms tend to be highest in those counties which were settled first. Also, in those counties where cotton traditionally has been the major cash crop, high proportions of purchased farms suggest that changes in ownership have been more frequent there than in the winter wheat and general farming areas. This is partially confirmed by high rates of tenancy in the cotton-growing counties as contrasted with other counties of the State.

AGE AT ACQUISITION OF FARM

Several studies besides this have indicated that the average age at which farmers are becoming owners is increasing.¹⁹ Table 20 shows that an increase of approximately ten years has occurred in the average age at the time of acquiring farms between owners who came into possession of their first tract²⁰ 30 years ago or longer and those who became owners less than ten years preceding the date of survey.

Several factors contribute to this trend:

¹⁹ Leonard A. Salter, Jr., *Land Tenure in Process*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, AES Res. Bull. No. 146, February, 1943, p. 39; L. C. Gray and Others, "Farm Ownership and Tenancy," *U. S. D. A. Agriculture Yearbook 1923*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924, pp. 555-561.

²⁰ First tract now owned.

TABLE 20.—Average Age at Acquisition of First Tract of Present-owned Farms, by Duration of Ownership.

Number of years first tract owned	AVERAGE AGE AT ACQUISITION OF FIRST TRACT		
	Southwestern Oklahoma	Southeastern Oklahoma	Four-county survey
All periods	36.4	40.7	31.2
Under 10	38.7	43.0	37.1
10-19	35.9	39.5	31.4
20-29	37.3	32.2	30.0
30 and over	30.4	30.1	26.9

FIRST, the homesteader period has passed, and the time required to accumulate sufficient capital to purchase an equity in land has increased.

SECOND, the increased use and high cost of farm machinery necessitates larger amounts of capital and delays the purchase of a farm.

THIRD, older owners own larger farms than younger owners, which with the concentration of farm ownership in the older age groups tends to limit the number of farm-buying opportunities.

FOURTH, farmers must compete for land with village and city people who buy it for investment or for mineral rights. This in many cases leads to inflation of land prices and overcapitalization of land values.

Relatively few farmers became farm owners under the age of 25 years or over the age of 54 years (Table 21). More farms were acquired between the ages of 25 and 44 years than in any other age group. Approximately 80 percent of all owners acquired an equity in their first tract before reaching the age of 45 years. Probably a large turnover in farm ownership during the next few years may retard the trend toward the increasing age at acquisition of farms.

SIZE OF FARM

NUMBER OF MAN-WORK HOURS PER FARM

The number of productive man-work hours is a more accurate measure of size of farm than is acreage. This measure is determined through multiplying the average number of hours of labor required to produce an acre of a given crop or specified unit of livestock by the acreage in crops and number of livestock on each farm surveyed.²¹

²¹ These calculations were furnished by the Department of Agricultural Economics, Oklahoma A. and M. College.

TABLE 21.—Distribution of Farm Owners by Age at Time of Acquiring First Tract of Present-owned Farm.

Age at acquisition of first tract, years	Southwestern Oklahoma N=156	Southeastern Oklahoma N=113	Four-county survey N=489
Total, percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 25	10.9	8.0	17.0
25-34	33.3	25.0	39.3
35-44	35.9	32.1	24.5
45-54	16.1	17.9	13.3
55 and over	3.3	17.0	5.9
Mean age	36.4	40.7	31.2
Standard deviation	±10.0	±11.6	±12.0

Among the farms surveyed in southwestern Oklahoma, there is a fairly constant relationship between the size of farm as measured by productive man-work hours and the percentage of farmers who own their farms. As the size of farms increases, the proportion of farm ownership tends to increase (Table 22). Apparently, smaller farms do not make as efficient use of labor and other operating resources as larger farms.

ACREAGE IN FARM²²

Farm ownership is more prevalent on large than on small farms, but the farms acquired in recent years tend to be smaller than the average.

Among the selected families studied relative to acreage per farm, the farms acquired by owners were only slightly larger than those operated by tenants (Table 23). However, since World War I there has been a definite shift in size, and first farms purchased or otherwise acquired are smaller than those operated by tenants. Probably this is a result of increased land values. Also, many small farms of late have been purchased by subsistence and part-time farmers.

Although increases in the proportion of farm ownership are not associated directly with increases in acreage per farm except in the four-county survey, relatively more large farms, 200 acres or over, are operated by owners than by tenants (Table 24). The lack of a uniform tendency toward ownership of small farms is due to a number of factors. For example, in southwestern Oklahoma there is little economic justification

²² The acreage in farms of owners is compared with that of farms operated by tenants at two different intervals during earning life: (1) at time owners acquired their first tracts of present owned farms, and (2) at the time of the survey.

TABLE 22.—Percentage of Owners Among All Farm Operators, by Number of Productive Man-work Hours Per Farm, Southwestern Oklahoma.

Productive man-work hours per farm	Percent of farm owners among all farm operators
All farms	56.0
1-1001	50.0
1001-2000	54.8
2001-3000	51.5
3001-4000	58.2
4001-5000	66.7
Over 5000	76.9

TABLE 23.—Comparison of Average Acreages in Farm Acquired by Owners and in Tenant-operated Farms in Specified Periods, Selected Families, 1937.*

Period and farm tenure status	Number of farms	Average number of acres per farm
All periods		
Owner	310	141.8
Tenants	1073	134.0
1928-1937		
Owner	107	138.5
Tenants	593	143.4
1918-1927		
Owner	96	120.1
Tenants	278	142.4
1908-1917		
Owner	54	173.8
Tenants	143	95.0
Before 1908		
Owner	53	155.3
Tenants	59	91.9

* Based on migration and tenure histories of heads of families surveyed in Cotton, Haskell, and Major Counties.

TABLE 24.—Percentage of Farm Owners Among All Farm Operators, by Acreage Per Farm.

Acres per farm	PERCENT OF OWNERS AMONG ALL FARM OPERATORS			
	Southwestern Oklahoma	Southeastern Oklahoma	Four-county survey	Five-county survey
All farms	56.2	56.7	40.1	47.4
1-50	20.0	57.1	20.3	50.7
51-100	58.3	44.7	27.0	44.9
101-200	50.0	56.1	42.0	42.1
201-300	52.9	69.0	43.2	51.7
301-400	62.7	88.9*	57.9	53.3
401-500	65.4	—	71.4	70.8**
Over 500	69.2	—	88.9	—

* Over 300 acres.

** Over 400 acres.

for the small farm. Self-sufficing agriculture is not practiced and part-time farming has not developed there. Furthermore, land is high in price and the small farmer cannot become an owner easily. In southeastern Oklahoma, land is relatively cheap, self-sufficing agriculture widespread, and part time farms are numerous. Probably the smaller percentage of owners with farms of 51 to 100 acres than of those with smaller farms is due to fewer of these operators working off the farm. These are small cash crop (usually cotton) farms which seldom produce sufficient income above family living requirements to make possible the purchase of an equity in a farm.

TYPE OF FARMING

Whether or not a farmer becomes a landowner depends to a rather large extent on the type of farming in which he engages. Other factors, such as size of farm, grade of soil, crop yields, efficiency in use of labor, and personal ability enter the picture to determine the relative success of individual farm operators within various types of farming. The object at this point is to compare the degree of farm ownership among farms classified by type.

Wide differences characterize the proportions of farm ownership by type of farm (Table 25). The percentage of farm owners among livestock farms is sharply higher than the average in most areas of Oklahoma. In southwestern Oklahoma, farms which include combinations of cotton, small grain (usually wheat) and some livestock, are more frequently owner-operated than those farms which depend chiefly upon cotton

TABLE 25.—Percentage of Farm Owners Among Farm Operators, Classified by Type of Farm.

Type of farm	Southwestern Oklahoma	Type of farm	Southeastern Oklahoma
All types	56.7	All types	55.6
Livestock	87.9	Livestock	81.1
General cotton and small grain	60.0	Part-time	78.0
General cotton	54.8	Large crop	57.7
Crop	36.0	Small general	41.4

and some livestock. The proportion of farm ownership is far below the average on single cash-crop cotton and wheat farms.²³

In southeastern Oklahoma, there is a high percentage of owner operators in a small group of part-time farmers who derive a large portion of their incomes from nonfarm work (country-store proprietors, loggers, road maintenance foremen, carpenters, miners, and other workers above the grade of unskilled labor). Operators of large crop farms are owners in a greater proportion of cases than the operators of small general, or self-sufficing, farms.

To generalize, farms devoted either chiefly to the production of livestock products or to drawing a fairly large share of cash income from these sources are those most likely to be owner operated. At the other extreme, nonownership is associated with small self-sufficing units and single, cash-crop farms.

²³ Other available data indicate that farm ownership is reliably greater on single-crop farms producing wheat than on those producing cotton.