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MAN AND LAND: A GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF  
THE CENTRAL WISCONSIN FARMS PROJECT.

The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1975  
Social Geography

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

MAN AND LAND: A GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF  
THE CENTRAL WISCONSIN FARMS PROJECT

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY


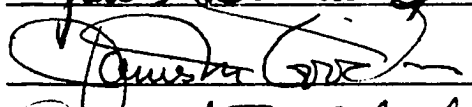
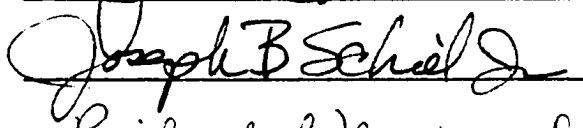
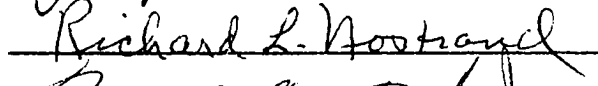

TODD ARNDT FONSTAD

Norman, Oklahoma

1975

MAN AND LAND: A GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF  
THE CENTRAL WISCONSIN FARMS PROJECT

APPROVED BY

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

DEDICATION

To the one who made this possible:

Karen--wife, mother, geographer - extraordinaire

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MAN AND LAND: A GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF  
THE CENTRAL WISCONSIN FARMS PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

What are the long-range impacts of federal intervention in the resettlement process? The objectives of this study are to determine the effect of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project upon the subsequent organization of the landscape and its impact on the settlement history of those families participating in the project.

A generation has passed since the Central Wisconsin Farms Project was carried out. Perhaps it is time to analyze the outcome of this federally directed program with the data and hindsight now available. As A. D. Wilson (1938), Manager of a similar project in Minnesota remarked, "Many years will necessarily elapse before a fair appraisal of results of these projects can be made" (p. 402).

Such an appraisal can be oriented so that it lies well within the scope of geography. S. W. Wooldridge (1967) notes that "In broad terms it is evident that geography concerns land and man" (pp. 27-28). More specifically, Rhoads Murphy (1973) identified "the distribution and relationships of mankind over the earth and the spatial aspects of human settlement and the use of the earth" (p. 5) as one of the distinct areas of analysis explored by geography. Carl Sauer (1967) noted that the geographer's approach to a problem is likely to differ from that of his fellow social scientists (pp. 100-115). "There is a strictly geographic way of

thinking of culture; namely as the impress of the works of man upon the area." Sauer views the cultural landscape as the "geographic area in the final meaning," and that "its forms are all the works of man that characterize the landscape." Among these "forms" which compose the cultural landscapes is housing. He writes, "Housing includes the types of structures man builds and their groupings, either dispersed as in many rural districts, or agglomerated into villages or cities in varying plans." In this context, then, the process of settling is a genuine concern of geography.

#### Importance of Rural-Oriented Research

Despite the increasing urbanization in this country, renewed attention has focused upon the rural component of society. This is not only due to the importance of farm agricultural production in these times of economic upheaval, but also because there is an urban to rural counter-migration. Currently, for example, the state of Wisconsin is conducting a series of public seminars to "sound out" the citizens to discover the best way for the state government to guide the "back to the farm" movement.

Large scale rural resettlement projects have, in recent decades, been carried out in many underdeveloped countries in Asia, Africa, and in Latin America. Few of these have achieved genuine success, particularly because of inadequate attention to the settler's social needs.

Scoring the need for rural-oriented research, T. W. Freeman (1964) writes:

The recent advance in urban geography has been remarkable, but much more remains to be done. . . . and this is hardly less true

of the rural areas of the world: in almost every country there are changes of production, farm population, the relations of the farmers to villages and towns and the like. Any who have known some country-side intimately over a period of twenty or more years will know that changes are numerous. (p. 203)

The United States, in particular, has historically had a strong agrarian tradition in which the ownership and working of one's own land has become an American ideal. This tradition

. . . is rooted in the nature of romanticism of the eighteenth century. Nature here is not wild, but tamed by the husbandman. . . . political economists and agricultural reformers, by taking agriculture to be the nation's primary (if not only) source of wealth, contributed to the bucolic ideal. (Tuan, 1971, p. 35)

This ideal is even now capable of provoking movements of people from the city to the country. If an understanding of this settlement process can be gained, and those factors responsible for viability and stability can be identified, then perhaps the movement can be effectively planned and guided. Unfortunately, little information is available to guide planners today. "Even in the United States, where scattered farm settlement is almost universal on the rural landscape, there appears to have been a more active interest in the study of nucleated rural service centers" (Birch, 1967, p. 68). Referring to the 1930's federal resettlement projects specifically, ". . . little analysis has been completed on the importance of such projects in the historic and contemporary landscape or to the concepts or procedural methods of settling" (Bohland, 1967, p. 186).

Yet the dichotomy between "rural" and "urban" may be more apparent than real. Mark Jefferson observed that urban and rural, city and country, are really one thing; not two. If this be true, at least in

terms of settlement processes, then perhaps knowledge gained from the appraisal of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project may fit a larger and more universal conceptual model.

#### Analogies Between Rural and Urban Settlement Programs

Government-directed urban renewal projects closely parallel the planned rural settlement schemes of the 1930's. Functionally, the urban renewal program has provided local renewal agencies with federal funds and the power of eminent domain to condemn slum neighborhoods, tear down buildings, and resell the cleared land to private developers at a reduced price. Slum dwellers are to be relocated in "decent, safe, and sanitary housing" (Gans, 1968, p. 261). Significantly, the relocation, or resettlement, of displaced persons has proved to be the most difficult element of the urban renewal goals (Greer, 1965, p. 99). Similarly, the rural settlement programs carried out during the Depression years by the federal government in many cases involved the identification and purchase of marginally-productive agricultural land, transfer of this land to local governmental units to be put into non-agricultural use, and the relocation of displaced persons.

The framework of the two programs also shows a striking parallel. Each has a three-tiered hierarchy (Greer, 1965, p. 9). The highest level is represented by the federal government through the Urban Renewal Authority or the Resettlement Administration (and later the Farm Security Administration). The function of this tier is to formulate the goals and principles to be implemented at the local level. The "Regional Office" is the middle stratum in both programs and serves mainly to review

applications for programs initiated at the local, or lowest, level. This lowest tier is represented by the local municipality and the resettlement "project". Their chief function is to carry out the program at the "grass roots".

Policy which is rigidly directed from the federal level may prevent a settlement program from being ultimately implemented as conceived. The pitfalls of inflexibility have often been documented. Referring again to the American agrarian ideal, Yi-Fu Tuan (1971) writes:

Beginning in Thomas Jefferson's time, the cardinal image of American aspirations was a rural landscape, a well-ordered garden magnified to continental size. The image's power extended far beyond literary and scholarly circles: it led congressmen to pass the Homestead Act with impractical and inflexible provisions, and it encouraged farmers to venture into arid lands ill suited to the bucolic life. (p. 35)

Scott Greer (1965) notes that:

Urban renewal legislation and principles make no distinction among cities and . . . project requirements are supposed to apply to all alike. To protect the integrity of the program, it is necessary to check carefully each major decision beforehand against the rules set up by the administration. The result is an extreme degree of rigidity in principle, modified in an 'ad-hoc' fashion as a response to local political conditions. (p. 101)

G. S. Wehrwein (1937), Region II Director of the Resettlement Administration, described the rigidity in that agency at the time the Central Wisconsin Farms Project was being initiated:

Decentralization of authority and of responsibility must definitely be a part of the [proposed] reorganization of the Administration, not because this is a question of state's rights but because the nature of the job demands it. There is still too much direction from Washington and too little adjusting of the program to local needs, institutions and conditions. In some cases there is also too little cooperation with state agencies in research and in carrying out the programs. It is impossible to build rural communities--lay out farms or even build houses by long distance control. Whenever such jobs



are done by the people with their feet on the ground, literally and figuratively speaking, the job will be done by simply going about and doing it! (p. 202)

Rarely, however, are the federally-dictated principles implemented at the local level without some measure of local adjustment and modification. This may occur because the federal goals are too idealistic and divorced from reality. Local conditions which created the need initially for the federal program may also change, thereby requiring a change in policy. Local interests, too, exert pressures on the agency responsible for the program. For example, federal urban renewal policy may be locally modified by the local urban renewal planners themselves, the municipal government and its departments, and private business interests. The rural settlement projects of the 1930's were likewise changed in varying degrees at the local level by the same groups: local project administrators, local governmental units and, to a lesser extent, private businesses.

Federal intervention, therefore, is usually a mixture of adherence to the stated federal policies and flexibility due to local conditions. This research is concerned with the impacts of federal intervention on the resettlement process, particularly with the role played by federal policies on the history of the individual settlers and on the landscape of central Wisconsin.

## CHAPTER I

### EVOLUTION OF FEDERAL SETTLEMENT POLICIES

The creation of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project was rooted both in the national depression of the 1930's and in state attempts to regulate land use through rural zoning ordinances. Rural poverty, although a problem before the 1930 decade, had become a major emergency as continued drought and economic collapse joined forces. Thousands of farmers and their families were displaced from their farms and forced to seek relief. With the advent of the New Deal early in 1933, the federal government initiated a variety of programs to bolster the faltering economic system of the nation (figure 1).

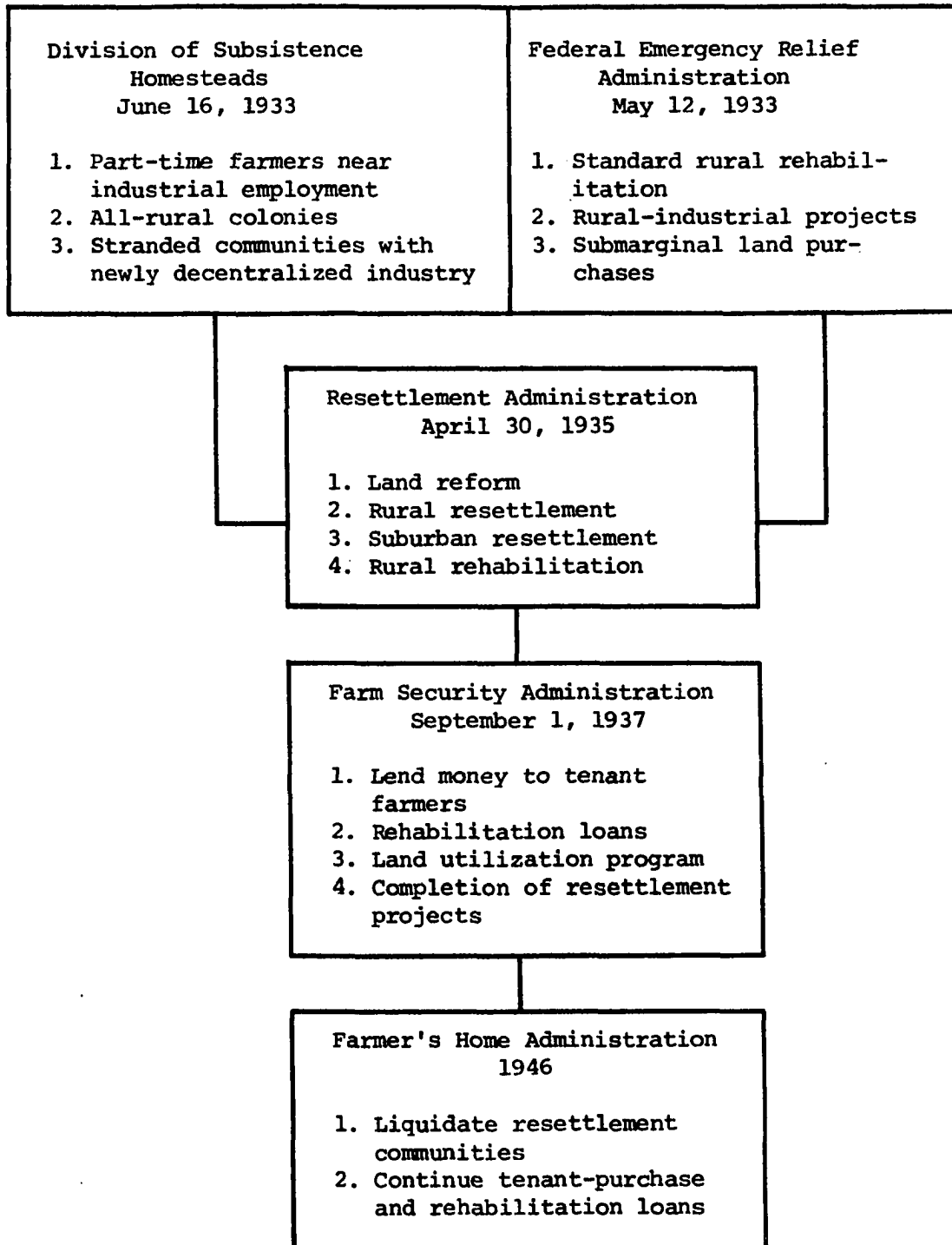
#### The Division of Subsistence Homesteads and The Federal Emergency Relief Administration

The Division of Subsistence Homesteads of the Department of the Interior was the first agency to deal with poverty-stricken families through a program of resettlement. Among its goals, the Division of Subsistence Homesteads was to develop rural colonies for farm families displaced from submarginal farming areas. However, this purpose was never achieved as it was ruled that the establishment of rural resettlement colonies was not provided for by Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act (Conkin, 1959, p. 128).

Although the Subsistence Homesteads programs never achieved fruition, the idea of resettling people to improve their economic lot

Figure 1

NEW DEAL RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES  
(C. Williams, 1973, p. 35)



began to gain acceptance in government circles. Concurrent with the development of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads came the creation of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). For the first time in the history of the nation, funds were allotted to the states for relief purposes through the FERA.

Among the eligible recipients of FERA relief monies were rural families who were living on submarginal land. According to a report of the National Resources Board, an estimated 450,000 rural families were living on about 75,000,000 acres of land which should have been withdrawn from arable farming (Christiansen, 1954, p. 7). This report served to dramatize the plight of those eking out an existence on marginally-productive land.

It was hoped that new opportunities presented to the families by the FERA would be sufficient incentive to cause them to move from the submarginally productive areas onto better land. The chance to actually move families as a part of permanent rehabilitation appealed to many responsible officials. In an address delivered in August, 1935, before the Annual Conference of Farmer and Agricultural Extension Workers, Dr. Carl C. Taylor, Director of the Rural Resettlement Administration, stated:

Thousands of families will need to move. The resettlement program is not a program for moving these families but an attempt on the part of this agency of government to create alternative opportunities which these families may select. In any case, resettlement will always mean that the family finds itself living at a different place, and we hope, under quite different circumstances than the ones under which it is not living. (Christiansen, 1954, p. 8)

Planning for large-scale resettlement by the FERA, including acquisition of land and relocation of families, began in May, 1934.

However, before any work beyond the planning stage could be accomplished rapid changes occurred in the structure of federal agencies responsible for administering the resettlement activities in Wisconsin.

The Resettlement Administration  
and Rexford Tugwell

In his presidential campaign of 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt relied upon men with expert knowledge in their fields to research material for campaign topics. This so-called "Brains Trust" included a Columbia University Professor of Economics, Rexford Tugwell. Tugwell had made intensive studies of agricultural problems in the United States and Europe during the 1920's. After FDR's election to the presidency, Tugwell was appointed as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture in 1933, and later became Undersecretary of Agriculture in 1934.

Rexford Tugwell believed that not enough was being done about poor farmers and poor land. The activities of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads, the FERA, and other federal agencies had not solved the problem of farm poverty, despite the expenditure of funds and innovative experimentation that had been undertaken in these first years of the "New Deal". Tugwell advocated the creation of a new, superceeding federal agency to coordinate resettlement functions on a national scale.

Tugwell believed that the establishment of this new agency which would have concern for the farmer and his family, as well as for his means of production, could circumvent much potential antagonism from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Many USDA officials viewed chronic farm poverty primarily as a "problem of productive efficiency and business management" and believed New Deal innovations to be

"dangerous thinking" (Baldwin, 1968, p. 86).

The agency could also expedite land-use planning which had lacked coordination in the numerous agencies during the 1932-1934 period. Roosevelt was convinced by August, 1934, that such coordination was necessary and on May 1, 1935, established the Resettlement Administration (RA) by executive order.

The new agency was headed by Tugwell who as Resettlement Administrator saw its primary purpose as "the rehabilitation of poor people and poor land together in one federal agency" (Sternsher, 1964, p. 265). Tugwell emphasized land reform, for he believed that "he who controls the land has leverage over the lives of the people upon it, and without such control, rehabilitation and resettlement would be unable to achieve basic reforms" (Baldwin, 1968, p. 104).

The work of the Resettlement Administration was carried out in its four Divisions (Sternsher, 1964, pp. 269-277):

1. The Suburban Resettlement Division was concerned with the movement of farmers to cities and with the resettlement of urban slum dwellers. Three greenbelt communities were built (Greenbelt, Md.; Greenhills, Ohio; and Greendale, Wisconsin).
2. The Rural Rehabilitation Division carried out several duties: loans and grants for debt adjustment to heavily-mortgaged farm operators; educational assistance to those lacking technical expertise; and loans to drought-stricken farmers.
3. The Land Utilization Division was charged with restoring a correct "man-land" relationship. Utilization of correct land-management techniques and the raising of the right crops

would allow "rehabilitation in place" for many of the families. For others, land retirement and relocation of the families was the only answer. This division retired over 9,000,000 acres of submarginal land in all, turning it to such non-agricultural uses as wildlife preserves, recreation facilities, and reforestation. It was the Land Utilization Division's responsibility to plan resettlement of the displaced farm families from the land-use projects.

4. The Rural Resettlement Division was responsible for the creation and subsequent supervision of model rural communities. Among their varied purposes, communities accommodated "stranded" industrial workers, displaced farmers, and Negro tenant-farmers. Most of the approximately 100 community projects were in the South.

In the early months of the Resettlement Administration, the primary intention of its leaders was to emphasize land reform. Large-scale land acquisition and retirement proved to be costly and difficult; however:

Farm people on submarginal lands may have been imprisoned and victimized by their barren acres, but their subjective attachments to home and community and their terror at the prospect of being uprooted made them reluctant to participate in resettlement. . . . many small-scale farm operators were proven to be technically and emotionally unprepared to readily operate larger farms or to adopt different farming methods. Finally, it became apparent that the idea of large scale land acquisition and resettlement was hopelessly chained to unpopular connotations of government regimentation. . . . charges that the leaders of RA were conspiring to 'socialize' the land in America and 'collectivize' the people rose to a crescendo. The RA, Tugwell confessed in retrospect, 'was thus faced with a task it would not possibly do well.'  
(Baldwin, 1968, p. 106)

By fall of 1935 Tugwell, in the face of the difficulties just described, shifted the emphasis of the RA to "rural rehabilitation". It has been suggested in the final analysis, that rural rehabilitation was simply a general rural welfare program devoted to "relief of human suffering, permanent self-sufficiency, preservation and reinforcement of the family farm, achievement of a more rational man-land relationship, full utilization of manpower among low-income farmers, and a wider participation in democracy" (Baldwin, 1968, p. 107). By June, 1936 the RA was serving almost two million farm people through its rehabilitation program. The shift from land-use planning to rehabilitation was so pronounced that Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, declared, "It would have been better if [the RA] had been given a name more accurately describing it--Farm Security Administration, or the Tenant Security Administration, or something like that" (Baldwin, 1968, p. 108).

Throughout the 1935-1936 period, criticism of the RA had increased as a result of resentment by other agricultural agencies, questioning of the RA's mode of funding, attacks by the press, and disapproval of Tugwell's rather unorthodox ideas. Also, the program, having been established by executive order, had never had any congressional approval. Although various proposals to improve the problem of farm tenancy, especially in the South, had been presented to Congress since 1935, none had passed. Both of these situations led Tugwell and his assistants to the belief that it would be necessary to seek Congressional sanction and funding of the Resettlement Administration programs.

During the fall of 1936, when it became apparent that Rexford Tugwell would soon resign as head of the RA, the future of the RA became



an important question. Tugwell urged Wallace that the RA be transferred to the USDA. Wallace and his assistants favored the idea not only because it might strengthen the "institutional balance" of the USDA, but would also strengthen its "sociological balance" in contrast to the USDA's prevailing concern with commercial farm operations.

On December 31, 1936, President Roosevelt signed an executive order implementing the transfer of the RA to the USDA. This consolidation had negligible impact at first upon the existing resettlement projects.

July, 1937, finally saw the passage of Congressional legislation in the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act. The Act provided for the following programs to be administered under the auspices of the Secretary of Agriculture (Baldwin, 1968, p. 182):

1. loans to farm tenants, sharecroppers, and laborers to become owner-operators;
2. rehabilitation loans to assist borrowers in purchasing livestock and farm equipment, and refinancing indebtedness;
3. submarginal land retirement and development;
4. completion and administration of resettlement and land projects already initiated.

The immediate impact of the bill was debatable. Some believed that because it was designed to complete rather than to initiate settlement programs, the Act was a "kiss of Judas". On the other hand, the Bankhead-Jones legislation did grant sufficient authority and funding to permit continued exploration of programs designed to deal with the current rural poverty situation.

The Farm Security Administration

On September 1, 1937, Henry A. Wallace, following his own advice, issued a memorandum which changed the name of the Resettlement Administration to the Farm Security Administration (FSA). In a subsequent reorganization of the program, all functions relating to the retirement of submarginal lands were transferred to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) of the USDA. Most of the remaining RA programs were administered under three divisions (Baldwin, 1968, pp. 195-216):

1. The Tenant Purchase Division was responsible for the tenant purchase program, designed to aid "qualified" landless low income farm families and farm tenant families become owners of family-sized farms. The program was administered through a balance of credit and technical assistance to the clients. Although the tenant purchase program was politically popular, it was but a small part of the overall FSA program.
2. The Rural Rehabilitation Division comprised a "cluster" of activities inherited from the Resettlement Administration. Eight programs were administered under the auspices of this Division, ranging from loan and grant programs to promotion of cooperative associations.
3. The Resettlement Division inherited 150 resettlement projects from the RA, only thirty-eight of which had been completed. The FSA was committed to undertaking no new projects and to turning over the farming units within each project to the tenants as soon as they demonstrated their ability to become successful operators.

The resettlement project program was minor in comparison to that proposed in the Rural Rehabilitation Division, partially because the resettlement idea had been soft-pedaled during the last year of the RA. The resettlement project program has often been judged a failure, and it drew an increasing storm of congressional criticism in the early 1940's.

Complaints developed against several Farm Security Administration policies. One was the slow pace in liquidating resettlement projects. The advent of World War II signalled the end of New Deal experimentation, and by 1943 congressional appropriations to the FSA were only a fraction of what had been budgeted to it a few years before.

Although the FSA remained an agency in name until 1946, the resignations of many of the top officials by the end of 1943 left the FSA a shadow of its former self. As Baldwin (1968) writes:

Since the essence of the FSA was the evangelism and . . . zeal of its leaders and personnel, the agency that emerged from this process of dissolution and consolidation was a very different organization. . . . the era of experimentation had come to an end; the "new" FSA was very business-like indeed. (p. 398)

#### The Farmer's Home Administration

On August 14, 1946, President Truman signed the bill creating the Farmer's Home Administration (FHA) in place of the FSA. Although the tenant purchase program and some of the activities of the rural rehabilitation program of the FSA were retained, any "experimentation" was avoided. While the aim of the FSA had been the elimination of poverty on a family basis, the new agency attempted to attack economic problems which affected an entire region as a whole. The FHA declined in vigor during the

Eisenhower years, but revived in the 1960's under Kennedy and Johnson as part of the "war on poverty".

## CHAPTER II

### EVOLUTION OF THE CENTRAL WISCONSIN FARMS PROJECT

#### Initial Goals

To reform the manner in which land was being used was a primary objective of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and its successor, the Resettlement Administration. It was hoped that new opportunities presented to the families would be sufficient incentive to cause them to move out of submarginally productive areas and on to better land.

#### Rural Land Use Zoning

Wisconsin found itself in an advantageous position at the time Washington was ready to launch its resettlement venture. In 1923 counties had been given the power to zone their lands in general, and in 1929 this power was enlarged to permit zoning for agriculture, forestry, and recreation. By 1933 over one-third of Wisconsin's seventy-two counties had zoned their rural lands, and, as a result, more than 5,000,000 acres of tax delinquent and non-agricultural land was closed to future agricultural development and settlement (Ely & Wehrwein, 1964, p. 187). For most of these counties, the primary incentive for adopting rural zoning within their borders was to reduce public cost incurred by isolated settlement, particularly in the realm of such services as schools and roads.

If rural zoning were to achieve its objectives, the "isolated settler" would have to be moved from the newly zoned submarginal lands and resettled elsewhere. George Wehrwein, in discussing the federal

resettlement program then in its infancy (1934), wrote:

This program of the federal government finishes the work begun by zoning . . . zoning does not affect the isolated settler who established his residence before the zoning ordinance was passed. Unless he is given an invitation and an inducement to move to better land in an unrestricted zone, his standard of living will not be raised and public costs will not be reduced. (Christiansen & Staniforth, 1968 b, p. 17)

#### Submarginal Lands in Wisconsin

By 1934 two areas within the state were identified as problem areas regarding land use and were expected to produce a large number of potential resettlement clients (map 1). Much of northern Wisconsin having been stripped of its timber resources during the last decade of the 1800's had been occupied by settlers attracted by land company advertisements of inexpensive land. Maintenance of public services to these families, as well as rapidly depleting soil fertility, made this northern "cut-over" region an early object of rural zoning.

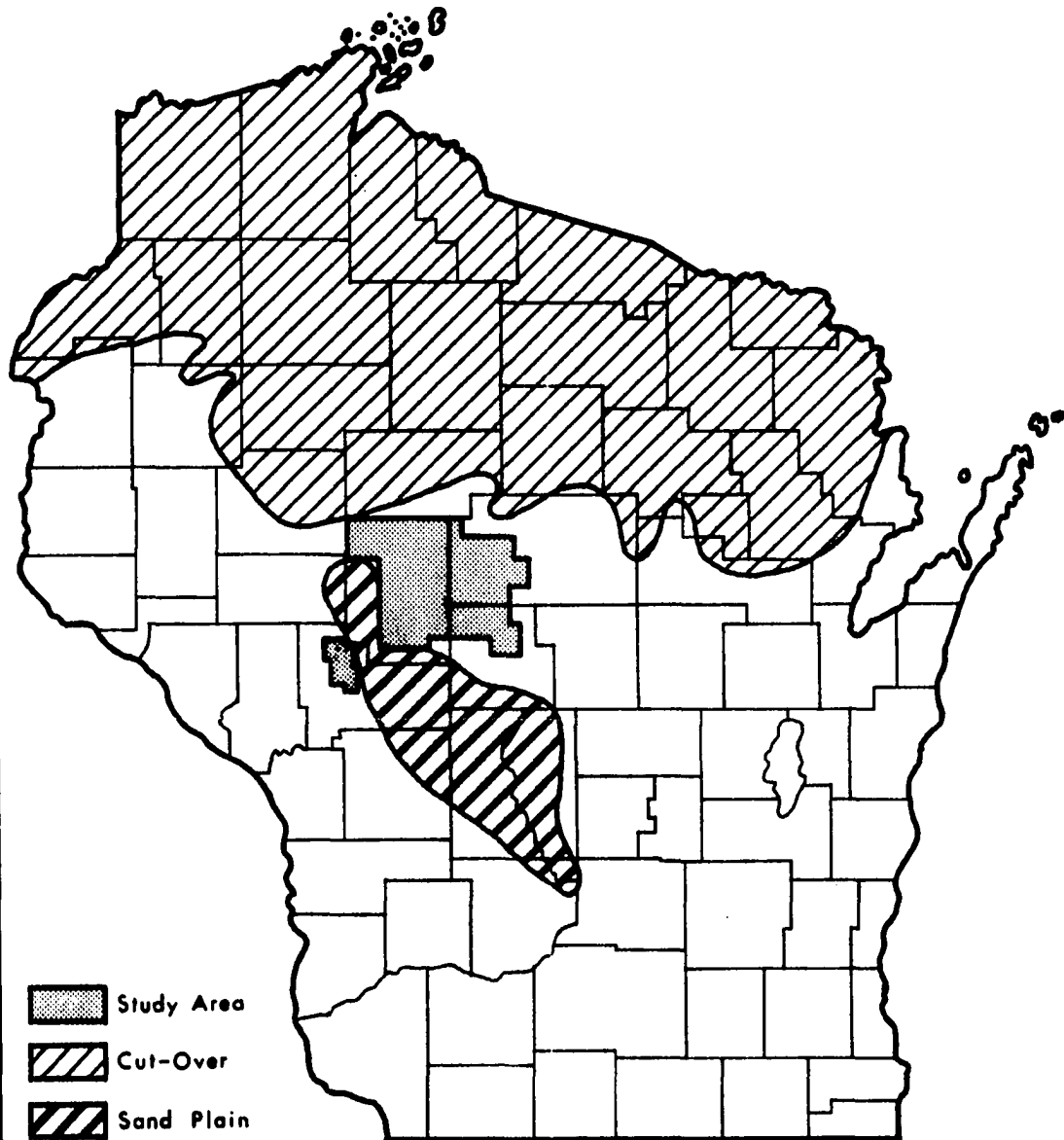
Farther south in the west-central portion of Wisconsin was a second problem area. Much of this district, once the floor of a shallow ice-front lake created by the melting of the Wisconsin Glacier some 12,000 years ago, is a flat, sandy, poorly-drained plain. Some scattered settlement had taken place here around the turn of the century, but frost damage and recurring forest fires wracked havoc with man's attempts at agriculture.

Aldo Leopold (1972) spoke of man's futile efforts in this region when he wrote:

The new overlords . . . envisaged farms not only around, but in the marsh. An epidemic of ditch-digging and land-booming set in. The marsh was gridironed with drainage canals, speckled with new fields and farmsteads.

# MARGINALLY PRODUCTIVE LANDS AND CENTRAL WISCONSIN FARMS STUDY AREA

Map 1



SOURCE: Christiansen, 1954, p. 19.

But crops were poor and beset by frosts, to which the expensive ditches added an aftermath of debt. Farmers moved out. Peat beds dried, shrank, caught fire. Sun-energy out of the Pleistocene shrouded the countryside in acrid smoke. . . . The cranes were hard put, their numbers shrinking with the remnants of unburned meadow. For them, the song of the power shovel came near being an elegy. . . . What good is an undrained marsh anyway? (p. 106)

Man had battled nature quite unsuccessfully in both areas. Leopold describes the sand region as

. . . a pale blank area, of pleasing shape and size, on those polka-dot maps where each dot represents ten bathtubs, or five women's auxiliaries, or one mile of black-top, or a share in a blooded bull. . . . In short, the Sand Counties are poor. (p. 108)

During the depression this "have-not" area seemed to attract the "have-not people." "The problem is made difficult primarily because submarginal men are often closely associated with submarginal land" (Nowell, 1937, p. 216). "For them the cheap land was an attraction, for they believed that they could at least grub out a subsistence living until the economic depression subsided" (Christiansen & Staniforth, 1968 b, p. 9). A large percentage of these late arrivals came from towns and cities where they had been unemployed; most of these had little or no prior farming experience.

The effects of the depression, droughty periods, and the poor land base combined to create a chaotic economic crisis in the sand region. During the 1934-1935 fiscal year Jackson County, most of which is a part of the sand plain, had the dubious distinction of being the number one county in the state in the proportion of its residents receiving public welfare. Over forty-seven percent of that county's population relied upon federal and state relief monies (Christiansen & Staniforth, 1968 b, p. 13).



Tax delinquencies increased during the 1930-1935 period. By 1935 because of nonpayment of real estate taxes, over sixty percent of the land in the sand region had reverted back to the respective counties, and only about half the privately owned lands were improved and occupied (Christiansen & Staniforth, 1968 b, p. 43). As the tax base continued to contract, the burden of maintaining essential government services was carried by a declining number of residents. The times were ripe for basic changes both in the economy and in man's use of the land.

#### Early Attempts at Resettling Families from the Wisconsin Submarginal Areas

The Wisconsin Forest-Farm Homesteads Corporation. The Division of Subsistence Homesteads of the Department of the Interior in late 1933 began to develop plans nationally for relocating isolated settlers to more favorable locations. In Wisconsin the Wisconsin Forest-Farm Homesteads Corporation was organized by that federal agency. The basic goal of this state corporation was that:

. . . isolated families would be resettled to small compact farming communities where they would receive sufficient acreage to provide an adequate 'live-at-home' program. In addition, they would be able to supplement their farming by working in nearby federal forests. . . . The corporation would acquire good land in already established agricultural communities. (Christiansen & Staniforth, 1968 b, p. 22)

The failure of the Subsistence Homesteads programs at the federal level meant that the Wisconsin Corporation, despite the detailed planning it had undertaken, did not last long enough to have any immediate tangible impact. However, some ideas which were generated from the planning of the Corporation regarding resettlement of isolated rural families later were incorporated into those projects actually carried out

in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Resettlement Plan. Concurrent with the rise in federal interest in relocating families living on submarginal lands in 1934 was the development of a cooperative state and local program. The original properties of the resettlement client would be exchanged for state or county-held land nearby under the goals of this program. Relief labor was to be used to develop farms from "scratch" by clearing forest land and constructing farm buildings. No other project, either proposed or implemented in the state, embraced the concept of constructing new farms. Instead, already-existing farmlands and buildings were to be utilized.

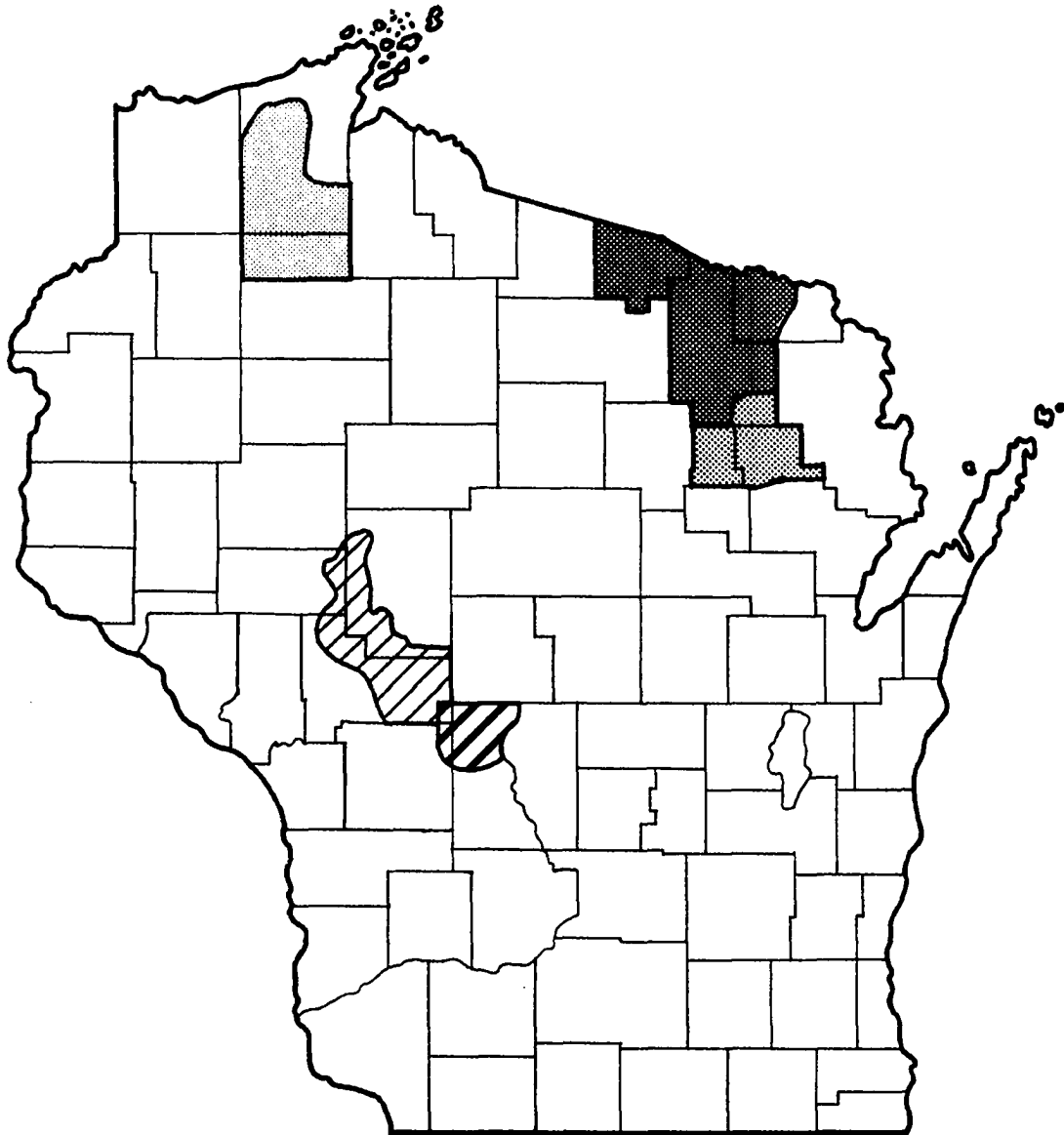
With the exception of one demonstration project, the "Wisconsin Plan" never reached fruition, for the federal government ruled that relief labor could not be used to develop privately owned farms. Had the "Wisconsin Plan" been allowed to proceed, the resettlement ventures in the state probably would have had strong "grass-roots" support.

The Central Wisconsin Settler Relocation Project. In May, 1934 the Land Policy Section of Agricultural Adjustment Administration began planning for submarginal land acquisition and resettlement of families. Federal land purchases in Wisconsin were to be confined to zoned counties on the insistence of the Wisconsin State Planning Board.

Two major land retirement projects were planned (map 2). The first, known as the "Northern Wisconsin Settler Relocation Project" was to consist of three sites within the submarginal cut-over lands in the northern part of Wisconsin (Christiansen & Staniforth, 1968 b, p. 30). The second area encompassed portions of the Central Sand Plain in two

# WISCONSIN SETTLER RELOCATION PROJECTS

Map 2



Northern Wisconsin  
Settler Relocation Project

-  Site 1
-  Site 2
-  Site 3

Central Wisconsin  
Resettlement Project

-  Site 1
-  Site 2

SOURCE: Christiansen, 1954, p. 67.

contiguous sites. Between the two localities, it was estimated that nearly 2,000 isolated settlers would have to be relocated (Christiansen, 1954, p. 66).

The latter area was known both as the "Central Wisconsin Game Refuge and Reforestation Project" and the "Central Wisconsin Settler Relocation Project" (Christiansen & Staniforth, 1968 b, p. 30). The names reflect the two interrelated facets of the programs, land retirement and settler relocation. The Wisconsin State Conservation Department had worked with the Land Policy Section of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and was responsible for purchasing the submarginal land in compact blocks and developing it into game preserves. Original plans called for the purchase of 300,000 acres of land and, as a consequence, 1,446 families "were to be removed" (Christiansen & Staniforth, 1968 b, p. 44).

The Central Wisconsin Farms Project. The Resettlement Administration inherited the responsibility of settler relocation from the Wisconsin land use projects. A detailed resettlement plan was submitted in the spring of 1936 by the RA to accomodate displaced settlers from the Central Sand Plain of Wisconsin (CWF Project File). The program was initially known as the "Central Wisconsin Resettlement Project," but was later termed the "Central Wisconsin Farms Project" and given the designation RR-WI-17.

Although it had been estimated two years previously that nearly 1,500 families would have to be relocated from the areas purchased by the Wisconsin Conservation Department, later plans indicate that 380 families would require resettlement. Families were to come from the two

sites of the Central Wisconsin Game Refuge and Reforestation Project, according to the 1936 plans.

The Central Wisconsin Resettlement project headquarters was located initially at Black River Falls. Resettlement clients were to be relocated on scattered farms within Clark, Wood, and Marathon counties with seven other counties also available for resettlement in case the required farms were not available.

A letter of Mr. Leon Pike, Project Manager at Black River Falls, from W. B. Swenson, Assistant Farm Management Chief of the Rural Rehabilitation Division of the RA, gives an insight into the project as of May, 1936:

. . . there will be 150 farm units of 40 to 120 acres with a cultivated area of 40 to 80 acres. There will be 15 retirement units comprised of 1 to 5 acres . . . the farmer will be occupied with the full extent of his time. No outside income is anticipated. No community or close settlement project is contemplated. . . . We believe it more economical to purchase improved going farms than to purchase and develop large acreages of land . . . good improved farms can be purchased for but little more than the present value of the improvements thereon . . . practically all our clients . . . will be merely taking the place of former owners or tenants in the community; will therefore have no troubles in fitting themselves into the social and economic life of the community. (CWF Project File)

RR-WI-17 was designed to be an infiltration-type project inasmuch as families would be reestablished in already existing farms. Swenson's letter stresses that no work other than repairs to farm buildings was contemplated. All farms were located on established and maintained highways in developed farm areas.

Mr. R. A. Kolb (1973), later the Project Supervisor of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project, participated in the earlier attempts at carving farms out of "raw" land. His statement indicates the reason for

utilizing existing farms:

What they started out to do was to take cut-over land and clear it and move relief families onto it. It was to find places for people who were on relief. I don't think we ever admitted it, but we found out you just can't do that . . . costs more to make a farm than the farm is worth in cash value.

Modification of the Central Wisconsin  
Farms Project

Between 1936 when the project began and 1938 the mission of RR-WI-17 changed. Instead of serving as an outlet for families displaced by rural land-use zoning, the project had become a device for local farmers living precariously close to financial collapse to purchase their farms.

This change in basic philosophy was articulated in 1940 by the Project Manager, Mr. R. A. Kolb:

The first objective was to bring in families from the sub-marginal areas . . . and by means of long time credit and careful planning, provide home ownership, security and comfort. But it is worthy of comment that only six families from outside the counties mentioned were settled on these farms, and of these, three remain.

The story then becomes a story of families in these four counties establishing themselves on typical farms in the area. The project families now are no different than a thousand other families except that they did not have the cash for a down payment. The farms selected are representative of an area typical in a dozen counties in Wisconsin. (p. 3)

Thus, RR-WI-17 came into being under a different set of objectives than when it was first envisaged. Nonetheless, the move to return agriculturally unproductive land to better use provided the necessary impetus for the creation and subsequent implementation of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project.

### Factors Causing the Change in Objectives

The shift in objectives behind the Central Wisconsin Farms Project between 1936 and 1938 can be attributed to two factors: (1) nationally, the shift in emphasis of the RA and FSA from "resettlement" to "rehabilitation" and (2) an insufficient number of prospective clients from the zoned game project area to be resettled by the government.

Although it is difficult to document, the Central Wisconsin Farms Project as originally conceived during the 1934-1936 period was not likely to be "dropped" even though the initial need for it had disappeared. It seems to be a general rule that institutions and their programs tend to be self-perpetuating; that new programs are created but rarely closed-out without some external pressure to do so. At the federal level the RA and its successor the FSA, searched for new goals after large-scale land acquisition and retirement proved to be costly and difficult. In much the same manner, the Central Wisconsin Resettlement Project searched for a new "raison d'etre."

What had happened to the several hundreds of families who were to have been relocated with government aid from the sand areas? R. A. Kolb (1973) emphatically states that "none of the project farmers were moved from the Black River State Forest area [the former Central Wisconsin Game Refuge and Reforestation Project sites]." It appears that these families either resettled themselves or refused to move from their properties.

Kolb (1974) writes ". . . it is the established fact the government forces moved so slowly on all levels that the competent families were able to reestablish themselves by their own efforts and hence were

no longer our problem." Some families "will either retire, move from the state, or return to their former trades" (CWF Project File). A few families were already permanent relief cases because of age, or physical and mental disabilities. These persons would not have been eligible in any case for resettlement.

Many refused to move from their lands. George Wehrwein stated in 1940 that:

Since zoning is not retroactive, those who established their farms before the ordinance was passed are permitted to stay. Roughly 2,000 such "non-conforming users" live in the Wisconsin zoned areas. . . . Progress is being made by trading land and by other measures. . . . (Ely & Wehrwein, p. 188)

Aldo Leopold (1972) wryly noted the resistance of these families to being moved:

. . . in the 1930's, when the alphabetical uplifts galloped like forty horsemen across the Big Flats, exhorting the sand farmers to resettle elsewhere, these benighted folk did not want to go, even when baited with three percent at the federal land bank. (p. 109)

Leopold suggests that "there are some who cannot live without wild things" (p. 109), that many who elected to remain in the sand areas were poor economically but rich from an esthetic viewpoint. On the other side of the coin, there were also those who were never bonafide farmers in the first place and who were virtually terror-stricken at the prospect of operating a "commercial" farm as they would had they been resettled.

#### The Central Wisconsin Farms Project As Ultimately Implemented

Settlement area. Land and farm purchases for the Central Wisconsin Farms Project began in 1936 initially under the auspices of the Resettlement Division of the Resettlement Administration. The land



purchased for the project had already been developed and in use for farming activities. All but seven of the seventy-two farms eventually purchased by the government were located in an area of "older" Wisconsin glacial drift in Wood, Marathon, and Clark Counties (map 3). Consisting of silt loam and clay loam soils, this fertile and agriculturally productive land forms an east-west bridge between the less desirable sands of the former glacial lake plain to the south and the submarginal cut-over lands to the north. The landscape is gently rolling, well-drained, and without significant problems except for occasional areas of rocks and stumps (figure 2). Portions are still forested, consisting of oaks, maples, birches, and other hardwoods.

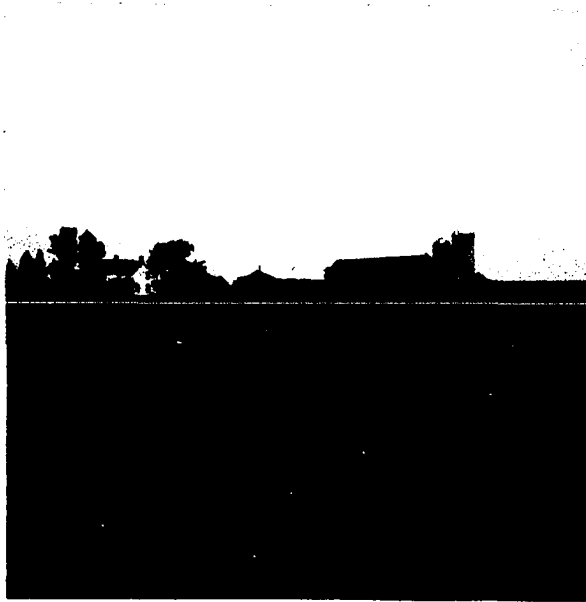
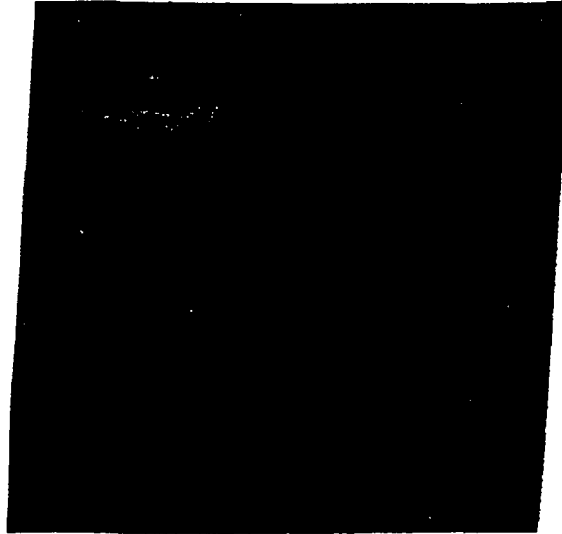


Figure 2--Dairy herd on "Old Drift" landscape.

A second and much smaller district in western Jackson County contained seven of the resettlement farms. Lying to the west of the primary settlement area, it consists of gently to steeply sloping land

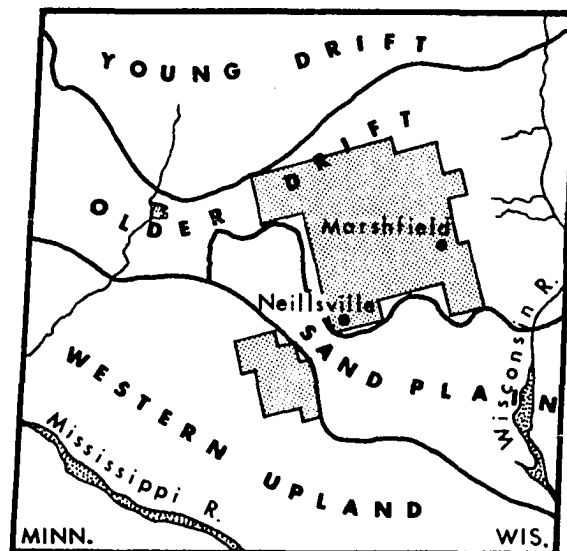
# CENTRAL WISCONSIN FARMS PROJECT AREA PHYSIOGRAPHY

Map 3



**SATELLITE VIEW**

Source: EROS Data Center, 1974.



**KEY**



Study Area

0 10 20 30 Miles



(figure 3). The landscape here has not been glaciated and owes its configuration to fluvial dissection of underlying Cambrian sandstones. Physiographically it is both a portion of the so-called "Driftless Area" and Wisconsin's "Western Upland" province. Because of the greater proportion of land in slope, farms here are larger than in the area of older glacial drift.

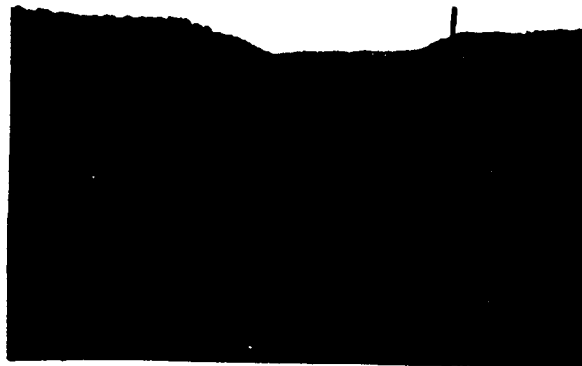


Figure 3--Rolling and steeply sloping landscape of the Western Upland.

Dairying provided the major portion of the farm income at the time the Central Wisconsin Farms Project was undertaken and continues to the present to be the mainstay of the rural economy in these areas of Wisconsin. Ninety percent of the milk in the late 1930's was marketed as cheese. The importance of cheese is scored by the fact that Colby cheese, internationally-known, was developed near the town of Colby within the project area. Hogs, poultry products, potatoes, and other

fruits and vegetables supplemented the earnings of the local farmer and his family.

Selection of farms. RR-WI-17 consisted chiefly of the purchase of farms which had been lost by former owners. Most were scattered throughout the previously-mentioned four counties. R. A. Kolb states:

Suitable farms were difficult to find in the Black River Falls area [Jackson County]. In fact the first farm purchased turned out to be the poorest unit on the project. . . . It was decided to transfer operations . . . to the Marshfield area. Available farms here were largely offered by retired farmers, bankers, and loan companies. (1974)

. . . we could buy units that were economic . . . there we developed farms--some partial, some pretty well established. I don't think we bought any more land after the project was started. (1973)

Seventy-two farms, purchased at a cost of \$354,100 and encompassing 6,784 acres of land, were selected (map 4), (CWF Project File). Former Project Manager Kolb (1973) states that "we took those farms that were available," and that "the price paid was probably the lowest we could get it for."

The actual process of transferring the land to the Central Wisconsin Farms Project was contractual.

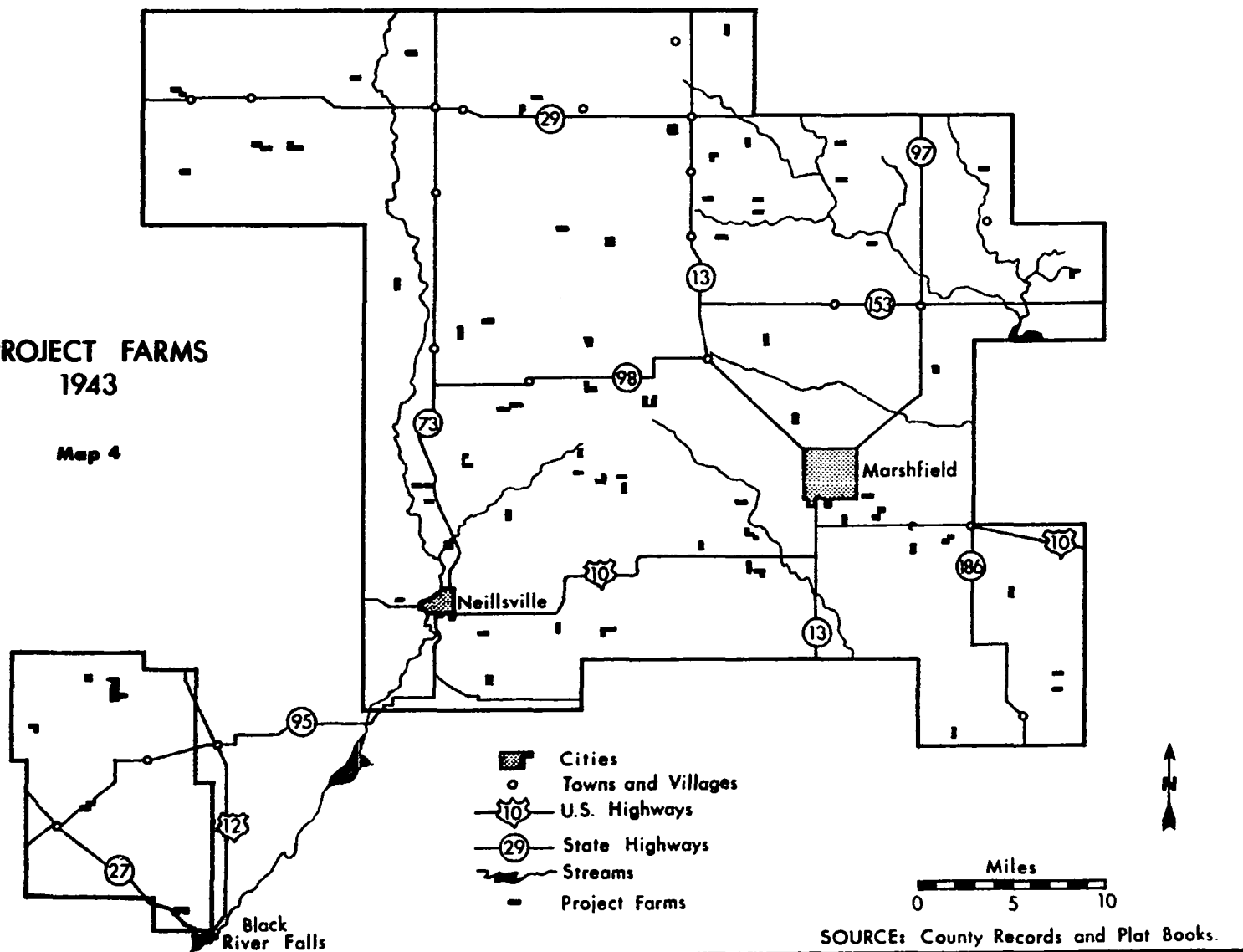
Contacts were established and by agreement our state administrator met on the farm with representatives of the Federal Land Bank. Oral agreements were established regarding price, date of transfer, etc., and thus carried out later via the state office. (Kolb, 1974)

All told, over \$7,000 per farm unit was eventually spent. This figure included the cost of land and building acquisition, construction and repair costs, and salaries for the project administration.

Size of farms. The project farms initially ranged from 40 to 240 acres in size, the mean acreage being 94.5 for the RR-WI-17 farms as a

# PROJECT FARMS 1943

Map 4



whole. Approximately two-thirds of the farms were 80 acres. It was thought that such farm sizes would be sufficiently large to occupy the operator's time fully and allow the family to live without engaging in outside employment. At the same time, however, large acreages were discouraged to prevent the hiring of additional workers.

Thomas Schmidt (1973), Region II Director of the RA and FSA recalls that on the issue of farm size there was:

. . . considerable discussion. At that time economists and the College of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin were recommending an 80-acre farm as a good farm unit. We didn't want anything large enough to require any additional help except maybe at harvest time. Attitudes changed later with the advent of farm machinery and hybrid seeds.

Kolb (1973) remembers that "We were honest in our belief that every 80 acres would support a farmer." However, a 1942 report written as the project was nearing completion stated that farms consisting of only 80 acres must have at least 50 crop acres of exceptionally high yielding soils in order to have earning capacity to provide certainty of real estate debt payment. The report adds that the 80 acre units "present limitations of income that are difficult to remedy except by special intensity of operation and most conservative money management on the part of the operator." (CWF Project File)

Repair and construction of farm buildings. It was considered good economic planning to put the buildings in satisfactory condition so that no expenditure for repairs would have to be made by the settler-purchaser during the first five to ten year period of the contract (figures 4 and 5). All major construction and remodeling of buildings was carried out between 1936 and 1938.

Only one home was entirely new (figures 6 and 7), although many



Figure 4--Unit 48 house before remodeling.



Figure 5--Unit 48 poultry house before renovation.

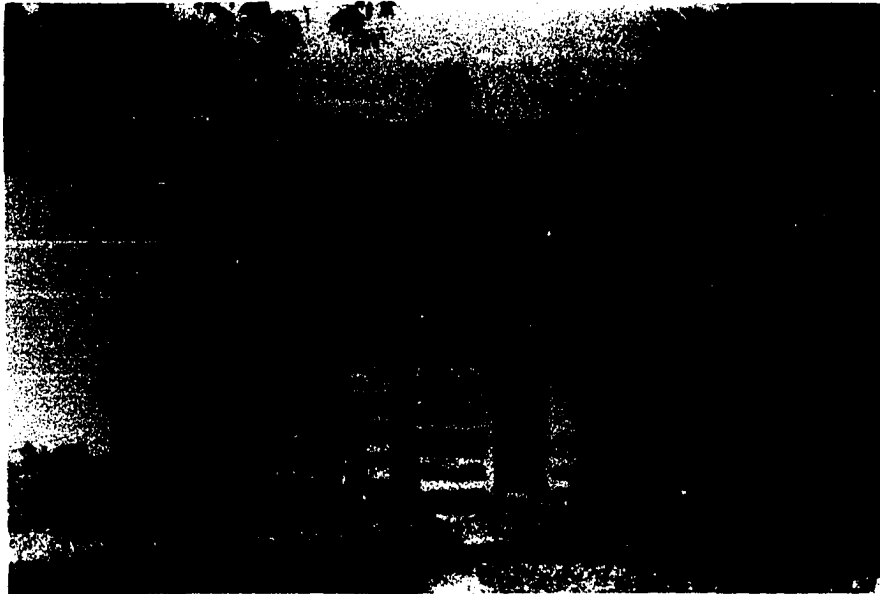


Figure 6--This log house on the Rogstad farm was replaced.



Figure 7--Mrs. Rogstad in the kitchen of her new home.



outbuildings were constructed. All houses and most previously-existing farm buildings were partially renovated. The average cost of new construction and remodeling was \$1,045.29 per farm unit (CWF Project File).

The extent of repairs and remodeling work on each unit was determined from standards set by the Region II architectural and engineering staff. The Resettlement Administration's Land Utilization Division was responsible for making a detailed appraisal of each farm including building quality as well as land productivity potential before the government purchased the farm for inclusion into the project (appendix 1).

Selection of settlers. The dearth of prospective settlers from the newly-zoned sand areas and the new goal of the "rehabilitation" of the nation's rural poor created a different class of eligible clients. Even in the good agricultural lands encompassed by the boundaries of the Central Wisconsin Farm Project, many farm families were in financial distress as a result of the depression. Essentially they were in a position where capital was not available for production of agricultural goods, lacking the resources to buy seed, fertilizer, etc. Many were virtually unemployed on their own farms.

The selection of settlers from this group was based on several criteria, foremost of which was that the applicant had demonstrated a satisfactory farming ability. The family was to have been in a low income bracket, unable to secure necessary financial assistance from private or public sources other than the Farm Security Administration to enable them to purchase the farm. Potential settlers had to furnish evidence of good character and were to be capable of close cooperation with the FSA and the local project administration (figure 8). It was

desired that the family should be "typical" with the husband and wife in the "prime" age (figure 9).

Most of those who settled on the project farms "were in the contiguous area. We tried not to have any more transient movement than necessary" (Schmidt, 1973). Despite the inducements for the financially-marginal farm families to move onto the project, "there weren't many applicants. We looked on relief rolls. We didn't advertise" (Kolb, 1973). All, however, were not on public welfare. Many families who eventually bought project farms had either rented nearby farms or had lived with their parents. For them, the opportunity to buy their own farm was almost too good to be true.

Project Manager Kolb (1974) revealed another source of settlers, those families already renting the farms which were to be purchased by the project. "These were occupied by renters who would need to be displaced and so would offer a problem of their own. However, they were found to be of a quality well suited for project material. Hence, they were 'resettled' by leaving them on the project farm they were already occupying and operating."

Sale of farms. Farms were sold on lease and purchase contracts whereby the purchase price with three percent interest was to be amortized over a forty year period. No down payment was required. Families living on the project farms "are leasing the land for one or two years on probation with the understanding that they have the first opportunity to purchase the farm if the trial period is satisfactory" (CWF Project File).

Approximately thirty-seven tenants on the project during the



Figure 8--Ralph Monroe interviews prospective settlers.

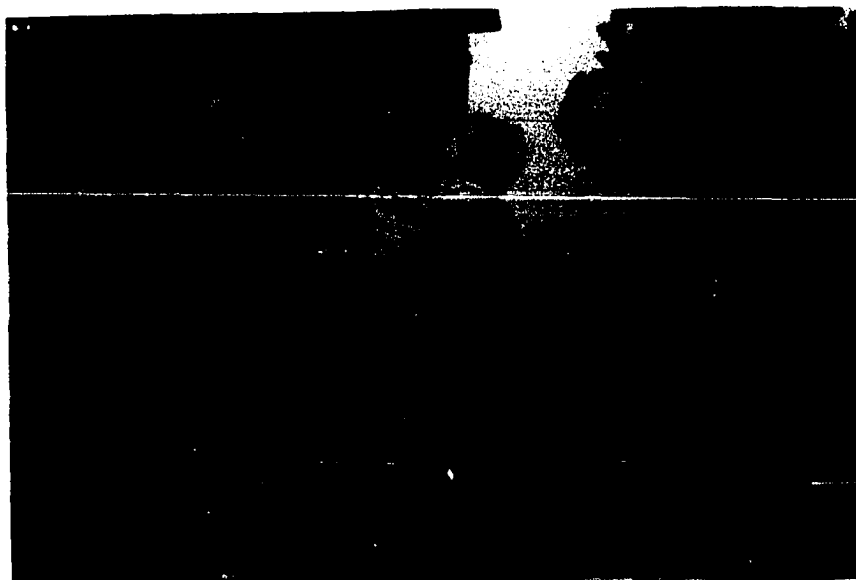


Figure 9--The Walter Bartz family.

1936-1943 period did not purchase the farm on which they were living. The reasons were varied; some found that farming was not to their liking; others failed their probationary period because of their inability to cooperate with the Project Manager and his staff.

Congressional investigations into the FSA in 1942 and 1943 brought pressure to bear on that agency to complete the sale of its project farms throughout the nation. During these final months, local welfare rolls were actively utilized to solicit settlers for those farms which were as yet unoccupied and unsold.

Kolb (1973) admits that the projects:

. . . were semi-socialistic projects . . . so Congress got excited and they had to be sold out. . . . In the final analysis there were a number of "left-over farms". There were two [FSA] divisions: the Resettlement Division and the Rehabilitation Division (they were jealous of each other). We were short some farmers when Congress told us to sell, so we borrowed some people [clients] from the Rehabilitation Division . . . just a few families. . . .

By early 1944 when the project was "liquidated", all 72 farms were occupied and sold to the settlers through lease-purchase agreements.

Supervision of the project and its settlement families was an important and ongoing process (figure 10). Supervision consisted of working with the purchasers, attempting to have all clients follow approved practices in agriculture and keep records of expenses and receipts. Although dictatorial rules were not to be imposed, the Project Manager once resorted to personally managing a family's checkbook. In addition to the Manager, a Home Management Supervisor (home economist) worked with the wives to assist with clothing and foods.

It has been previously quoted that the project settler was just like any other farmer in the area except that he did not have the down

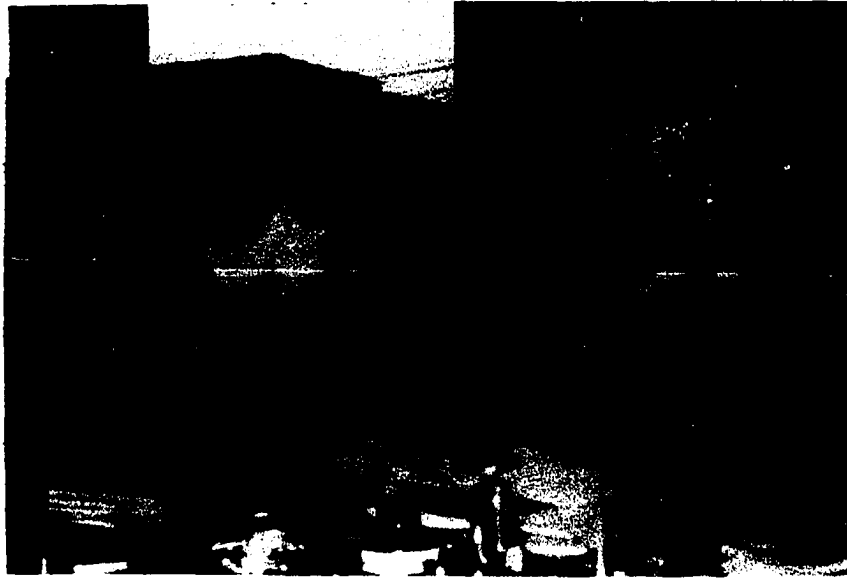


Figure 10--R. A. Kolb, Project Manager, and Catherine Canney, Secretary.

payment necessary to purchase his own farm. It would be erroneous to suggest that the furnishing of a "down payment" was the only difference between the RR-WI-17 settler and his non-project neighbors, however. Government aid included family budgetary planning, as well as advice on agricultural and home management operations. Clients were often given rehabilitation loans averaging \$1,000 each to procure additional livestock and equipment.

## CHAPTER III

### EXPECTED IMPACT OF THE CENTRAL WISCONSIN FARMS PROJECT, RATIONALE AND TESTING

#### Expected Impact

The long range impacts of federal intervention in the resettlement process are examined in detail from the chronological record of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project from its inception in 1936 through 1973. Two themes are developed in the analysis. First, the impact of the resettlement process on the organization of the rural landscape is examined. Since the resettlement process involved altering existing landholding patterns and provided capital and administrative support for improving the structures on the farmstead, there existed the potential for significant landscape modification. The second question examined is the effect of the resettlement experience on the lives of the families involved in the project. If resettlement is a viable process, it must be measured in terms of its effectiveness on the persons involved in the process. A major portion of this research is devoted to an examination of the behavior and attitudes of families participating in the Central Wisconsin Farms Project.

The impact of the resettlement process upon the organization of the landscape is tested by determining whether there were any significant differences in landholding characteristics between the project farms and non-project farms in the area. Several aspects of the landscape are readily measured. These include: (1) the number and quality of buildings on

those farms which still constituted a functioning farmstead in 1973, (2) the number of times the project and non-project farms were sold during the 1943-1973 period, (3) the acreage added during the tenure of the project settlers and the non-project owners who bought their farms at the same time, (4) the proportion of farms which expanded between 1943 and 1973 by the addition of other landholdings to their operations, and (5) the proportion of farms which were absorbed into other farm operations at some time between 1943 and 1973.

The anticipated positive influence on the settlement history of those participating project families can be evaluated by examining certain measurable attributes. These are: (1) comparison between the length of farm tenure of the project settlers and that of the non-project families, (2) determination whether the majority of those project settlers who had been on welfare prior to their participation in the Central Wisconsin Farms Project ever returned to requiring public assistance between 1943 and 1973, and (3) analysis of attitudes to ascertain whether the majority of project settlers have realized satisfaction from their participation in RR-WI-17.

#### Rationale

Settlement programs, both urban and rural, have typically had a distinct and visible impact upon the organization of the landscape, while often concomitantly having had an adverse effect upon the settlers. The nature of these characteristics of settlement projects and their causal factors is examined briefly in the following pages. Subsequently, a case is developed to demonstrate why the Central Wisconsin Farms Project, in contrast, had no significant impact upon the organization of the rural

landscape but had a positive influence on the settlement history of those participating families.

#### Evolution of the RR-WI-17 Project, 1936-1943

Figure 11 illustrates several components inherent in the chronological development of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project during the 1936-1943 period which bear heavily on the subsequent influence that the project exerted. The process begins with the conditions which influenced the creation of RR-WI-17: national economic conditions and Wisconsin rural zoning.

Between 1936 and 1943 previously family-run farms were appraised and purchased by the federal government. The criteria used in the selection were to ensure the adequacy of those farms to provide a livelihood for the subsequent operators. Like their neighboring farms, these were no different in size, were dairy-oriented, were architecturally similar, and fit in the local dispersed pattern of farmsteads. As R. A. Kolb (1940) put it, "The farms selected are representative of an area typical in a dozen counties in Wisconsin" (p. 3).

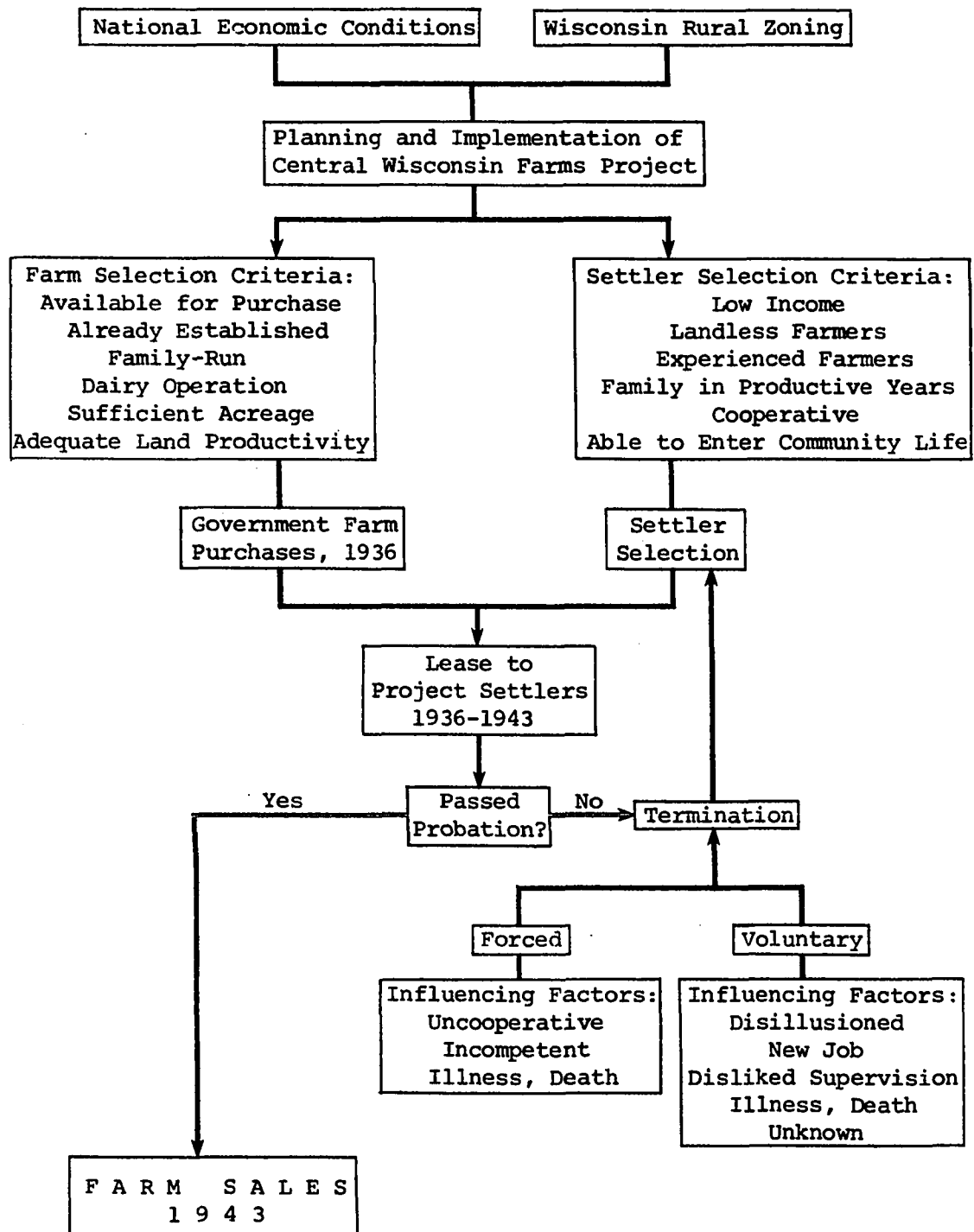
As the mission of the program was modified in the 1936-1943 period, it allowed local farm families living precariously close to financial collapse to lease these farms. Some of these families were already receiving public welfare assistance; none was a farm owner at the time. The selection of settlers was a continuous process in the period 1936-1943 and, at least initially, prospective settlement families were stringently chosen:

In Wisconsin, for example, eligibility for a full-time commercial farm in a resettlement project was limited to normal families (husband, wife and children), of which the head was



FACTORS IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE CENTRAL  
WISCONSIN FARMS PROJECT, 1936-1943

Figure 11



over 21 and under 50 years of age, with farming experience. The family had to give evidence of resourcefulness and ability to enter community life, and give reasonable assurance of meeting the costs of resettlement. (USDA, No. 85, 1965, p. 21)

Furthermore, farm families were in their prime years when they settled. Probably the majority of the farmers were between 35 and 45 years of age, which ". . . is apparently the prime of life from the standpoint of the farmer's earning ability" (Holt, 1937, p. 9).

The families' suitability was determined during the probationary lease period. If termination occurred, it was often the result of a decision on the part of the settler, and his leaving the project was voluntary. Much less frequently the settler and/or his family did not perform satisfactorily in their farming operations or did not cooperate with the project administration, and their lease was terminated. A new family was brought onto the project in their place. As indicated in the diagram, those settlers who gave satisfactory demonstrations of their farming and managerial abilities during the initial probationary period were given title to their farms in 1943.

#### Resettlement Program Shortcomings Contrasted With RR-WI-17

Typical shortcomings of resettlement programs. Much of the failure of urban renewal projects has resulted from the destruction of family and neighborhood ties of those persons relocated because of slum clearance (Gans, 1968, pp. 215, 263). The displaced moved, in varying distances, from familiar environs to oftentimes sanitary but "sterile" high-rise housing units. These "boxes," so distinctive on the periphery of the central city, tended not only to segregate their inhabitants physically and psychologically from other residents, but retarded the

development of community spirit, and within the complexes themselves retarded social cohesiveness (Greer, 1965, pp. 15-16). Perhaps it was because such projects concentrated relocatees in distinctive, easily identified housing instead of dispersing the clients throughout the city in existing houses that urban renewal has generally had less than an enviable record.

Many of the New Deal resettlement programs are also viewed today as having had deficiencies. Discontent regarding social conditions on the projects by the families, the existence of unfavorable physical site characteristics on the farms, and insufficient government assistance to the settlers have been identified as factors often having detracted from the viability of the projects.

C. Williams (1973) identified sources of discontent among settlers in several Texas resettlement communities during the early 1940's. Most families in Woodlake were allowed to purchase homesteads of only ten acres or less. Husbands were required to labor equal hours on the communal farm while earning unequal wages based on family needs. In the Sam Houston Community, as at Woodlake, farms were originally too small to provide an adequate living. Settlers in the Sabine Community were responsible for clearing their land of trees. Once cleared, some of this land was found to be of insufficient fertility for adequate agricultural production. In other communities, repairs to many dwellings were considered to be insufficient (pp. 57-88). Williams summarizes, "Local advisory committees could have been more select in their choice of resettlement sites and should have established larger individual farms than were originally created" (p. 71).

Edward Banfield (1949) examined shortcomings in the Farm Tenant Purchase Program, concluding:

Many tenant purchase loans have been too small to make efficient use of family labor or to yield a minimum-adequate income when farm prices are not extremely high. . . . It has frequently not been possible, even with the useful devices of farm planning and supervision, to create what can be called adequate units. (p. 469)

Pointing out the likelihood that few of the resettlement clients could ever achieve socio-economic parity with their neighbors, Banfield said:

There were political forces . . . which did influence the size of Tenant-Purchase loans by influencing the 'family-type farm' standard itself. In the south, especially, public and Congressional opinion opposed setting the Tenant Purchase borrower above his neighbor; if the neighbor's status was woefully low, the borrower's would have to remain low, too. Moreover there was a widespread feeling shared by many FSA personnel . . . that a very modest improvement in the position of the borrower was all that should be expected. These opinions markedly influenced the local administration of the 'family-type farm' standard and they account in large measure for the fact that the average loan was not larger. (p. 475)

C. Williams (1973) has shown that shortcomings inherent in the Texas resettlement communities have had a lasting impact on the landscape. For example, most of the resettlement homes were small and lacked indoor bathrooms and attached garages. As families and their requirements grew with the passage of time, these were added to the structures so that the homes "have architectural styles of both the 1930's and later periods" (p. 82). Another landscape change involved the Woodlake Community. The small landholdings, most of which were ten acres or less in size, later proved inadequate to provide the settlers with a satisfactory income, and by 1953 only eight percent of the project lands remained in original ownership (p. 102).

Although Williams' research did not involve a comparison of

project and non-project settlements, the impacts which the Texas projects subsequently had on the landscape could be analogous to impacts created by the RR-WI-17 program. If the RR-WI-17 program had been plagued by problems of other projects, project farms would have been handicapped compared with neighboring non-project operations. Project farmers would have earned less income from their farms and thus would have had less capital to invest for future production and expansion. As project farms and neighboring non-project farms evolved, their differential rates of growth and development would have produced differing impacts on the landscape. Fewer project farms would have continued to exist as functioning entities, a larger number having been absorbed into nearby farms. The remaining project farms would have incorporated less additional acreage into their holdings. Qualitatively, the structures on project farmsteads would have been in more need of repair than those on neighboring farmsteads. Finally, the project farms, inadequate in size and soil fertility, would have been sold more often than non-project farms during the period following the initiation of the project.

The Central Wisconsin Farms Project. The preceding description of differential project and non-project farm evolution did not apply to the RR-WI-17 study area. In contrast to many of the New Deal resettlement schemes the Central Wisconsin Farms Project appears to have been more carefully conceived and carried out. Although the project created a different organizational infrastructure for the project farmstead, RR-WI-17 was different from the other resettlement projects.

The farms selected for inclusion into the project had already been established and were representative of the area. Repairs were

made to already existing structures, but little actual construction of major buildings was undertaken. Unlike the resettlement communities in Texas, there were no distinctive or "period" buildings constructed within the RR-WI-17 area. A visitor there in the sale year (1943) would have had great difficulty in identifying those farms which were part of the project.

In most ways the relocated settlers were also typical farm families. Those who participated in the project did not constitute a distinct cultural group with the potential of bringing with it new social patterns and technology.

Earlier, it was noted that in those urban renewal projects where those who were relocated were moved out of familiar surroundings long distances into new forms of housing, the programs have been regarded as less than successful. Much of this is due to the destruction of ties between the clients and relatives and friends. Perhaps this would have been the case with RR-WI-17 if the initial project goals had been implemented; namely the removal of families eking out livings on marginal lands in the Cut-Over and Sand Plain regions. These people would have been moved long distances away from friends and family into an unfamiliar location.

The subsequent modification in the project goals meant that relocated families moved only a few miles locally to their new farm. Social ties were retained, and the families' life styles were essentially preserved. The farmsteads they occupied were indistinguishable from their neighbors', and the farming operations with which they were familiar were utilized on their new farms.

Evolution of the RR-WI-17 Study Area,  
1936-1973

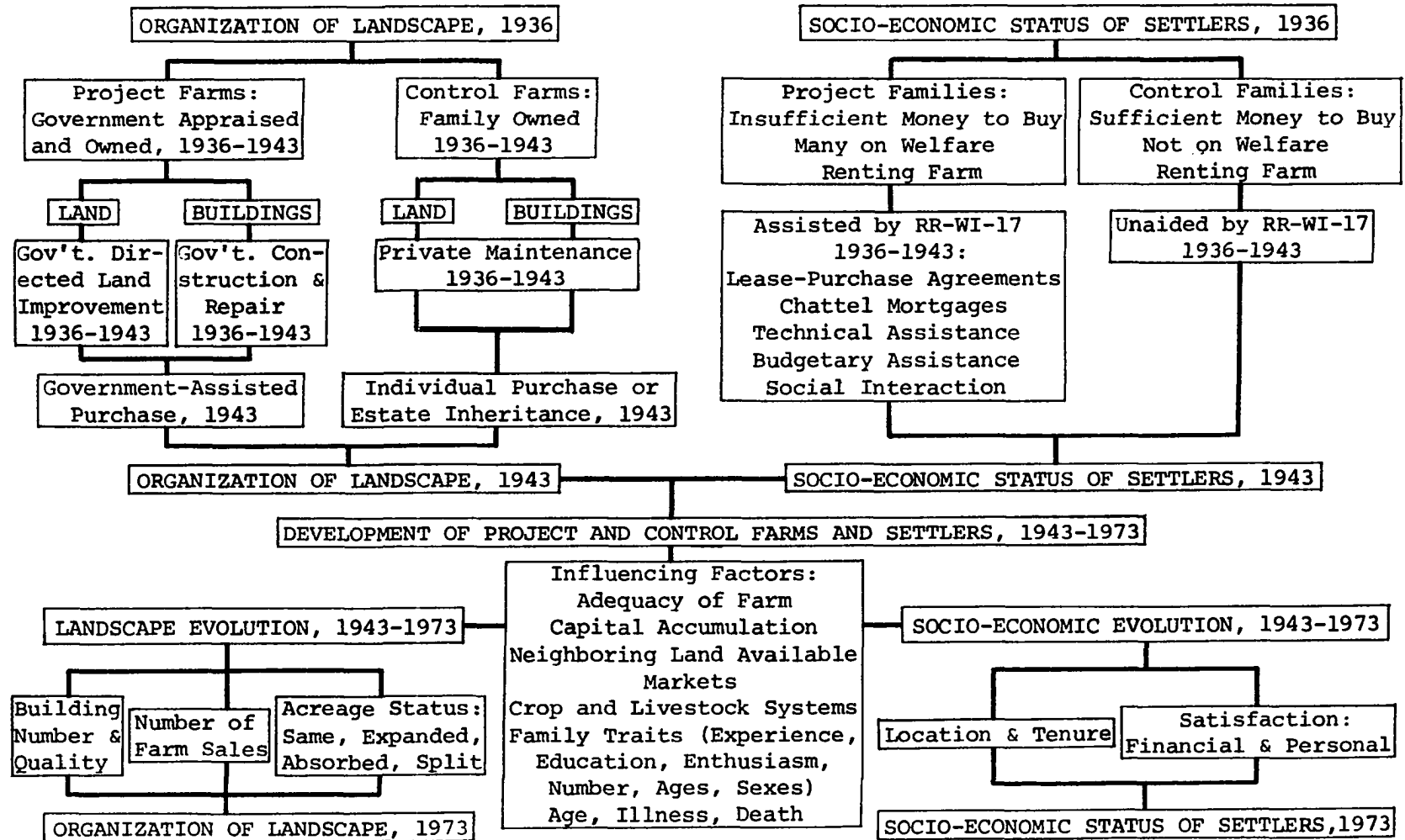
Figure 12 illustrates the flow of events from 1936 to 1973 which have influenced the organization of the landscape and socio-economic status of the settlers. In order to determine the impact of RR-WI-17, a control group of farms was selected for comparison purposes. Like the project farms, the control farms were purchased in 1943 by persons who were not operating their own farms and who did not own land in the area. During the 1936 to 1943 period, the RR-WI-17 program aided in the renovation of the farmsteads and land, and assisted the project settlers. The control farms and families had little or no government support.

Organization of the landscape, 1936-1973. On the basis of the analysis, it was concluded that the Central Wisconsin Farms resettlement project had no significant impact upon the organization of the landscape. Five measurable attributes were used to determine the impact of the resettlement project versus the impact of non-project farm development. Each criterion was selected either because it constituted a major and visible facet of a farm (e.g. number and quality of buildings) or because it involved processes which may ultimately have had ramifications on the landscape.

Since 1943 there has been parallel development of resettlement and control farms and families (figure 12). Once government assistance was effectively terminated with the liquidation of RR-WI-17, neither group enjoyed any significant advantages over the other. As figure 12 illustrates, a number of "influencing factors" contributed similarly to the evolution of both groups of farms and families. No attempt was made to draw up an all-inclusive list of causal factors nor were the relative

MODEL OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE RR-WI-17  
STUDY AREA LANDSCAPE AND FAMILIES

Figure 12





values of such variables estimated.

Because of the similarity of the farms and their families in 1943 and their subsequent parallel evolution, no significant impact upon the organization of the landscape should have been exerted by the RR-WI-17 project. Building numbers and quality on the project and control group farms in 1973 should have been similar. In neither group should the farms have been sold more frequently, resulting in shorter farm tenure between 1943 and 1973. Acreage changes to the landholdings should not have been significantly different. Finally, the proportion of farms which have remained unchanged or had their status modified by being expanded, being absorbed into other farm operations, or being split should not vary.

Socio-economic status of the settlers, 1943-1973. While the project settlers' economic status was originally low (figure 12), it was felt that the financial and technical assistance provided by RR-WI-17 would have an immediate and lasting effect. The expected positive influence on the settlement history of the participating families was predicated in part upon the assumption that the families had already resided and farmed in the immediate area; that the prospective settlement families were stringently chosen; and that government assistance nurtured and sustained the settling families in the first critical years of project participation.

Given this positive financial and social influence, the RR-WI-17 settlers' status should have been raised to one near that of their neighbors. The project farms were representative of the area, and the project farmers were located in a familiar environment with agricultural

practices and knowledge similar to that of their non-project neighbors. Because of this one might expect that the project and non-project families would have realized similar economic and social benefits in the following three decades (1943-1973). Consequently, settler satisfaction and their length of tenure on project and non-project farms should be comparable. Figure 12 lists several interrelated factors which might have influenced either group.

The improved socio-economic status of the settlers would also be evidenced in the fact that of those who had actually been on welfare, few ever returned to the public dole. If the project improved the lives of the settlers, the majority of those families who were on welfare prior to their project participation should never have returned to requiring public assistance. It is recognized that the criteria employed, that of "majority" is arbitrary. However, as R. I. Nowell, Region II Director of the Resettlement Administration, said in 1937 of the projects, "Frankly, we must expect a rather high economic mortality among our resettlement clients. In my opinion the program can be justified if only 50 percent succeed and we reduce the public subsidy on the balance" (p. 220).

Although the project settlers were initially at an economic disadvantage compared to their non-project neighbors, their participation in RR-WI-17 soon elevated them to a similar status (figure 12). Consequently, one would anticipate that both control and project group families and farms would have developed in a parallel manner since the project was terminated. As a result, minimal impact on the organization of the landscape would be expected to have been created by RR-WI-17.

TestingReconstruction of the Landscape  
and Family Status, 1936-1943

Reconstruction of the landscape in 1943, the year in which the FSA sold most of its project farms to the settlers, was based primarily on government records. Information regarding size and shape of the original land units as well as transportation networks and service centers was available at the County Register of Deeds Offices in County Plat Books of the 1940 period. Grantor Books and Deed Records at those offices provided settler names, dates and prices of land purchases, and detailed legal descriptions of the properties. These records also allowed the tracing of the property sales from 1943 to the present time.

Original Central Wisconsin Farm Project files were deposited at the Washington National Record Center in Suitland, Maryland. In-depth appraisals of each farm, made in 1936 when the government bought the properties from private individuals, banks, and sheriff's auctions, were part of the files. Detailed information regarding the project as a whole, from the initial planning stage to final disposition, was contained within a multitude of correspondence, official news releases and departmental memorandums.

Personal interviews constituted another source of data. About half of the project settlers were still living in the area in 1974. Of the thirty settlers interviewed, twelve lived on their original farmsteads (although four retained only the farmstead), five resided on other farms, four lived in rural non-farm homes, and nine lived in towns. Several RR-WI-17 administrators and employees, including the Project Manager,

Secretary, and Home Management Supervisor, as well as several Region II administrators, were still living and were interviewed.

#### Delineation of the Study Area

An analysis of the impact of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project upon the landscape and the settlement families from 1943 through 1973 was undertaken by comparing the project farms with a non-project group of farms. A study area was delineated within which control farms were selected. The following criteria were established for selecting the boundaries:

1. Maintain at least one mile of distance from any RR-WI-17 settlement farm.
2. Maintain at least one mile of distance from any nucleated settlement along the periphery of the area.
3. Avoid crossing a physiographic boundary, particularly when it involves a major change in land use.
4. Maintain simplified and straight-line boundaries, preferably along township and range lines.

The study area derived from this procedure consisted of two portions, the larger being north of the Central Sand Plain in Wood, Marathon, and Clark Counties, and the smaller located in the Western Upland in Jackson County. A forested belt of little farming activity separated the two portions.

#### Selection of the Control Group

The control group was comprised only of those farms which were purchased in the same year (1943) as the project farms. Both groups of

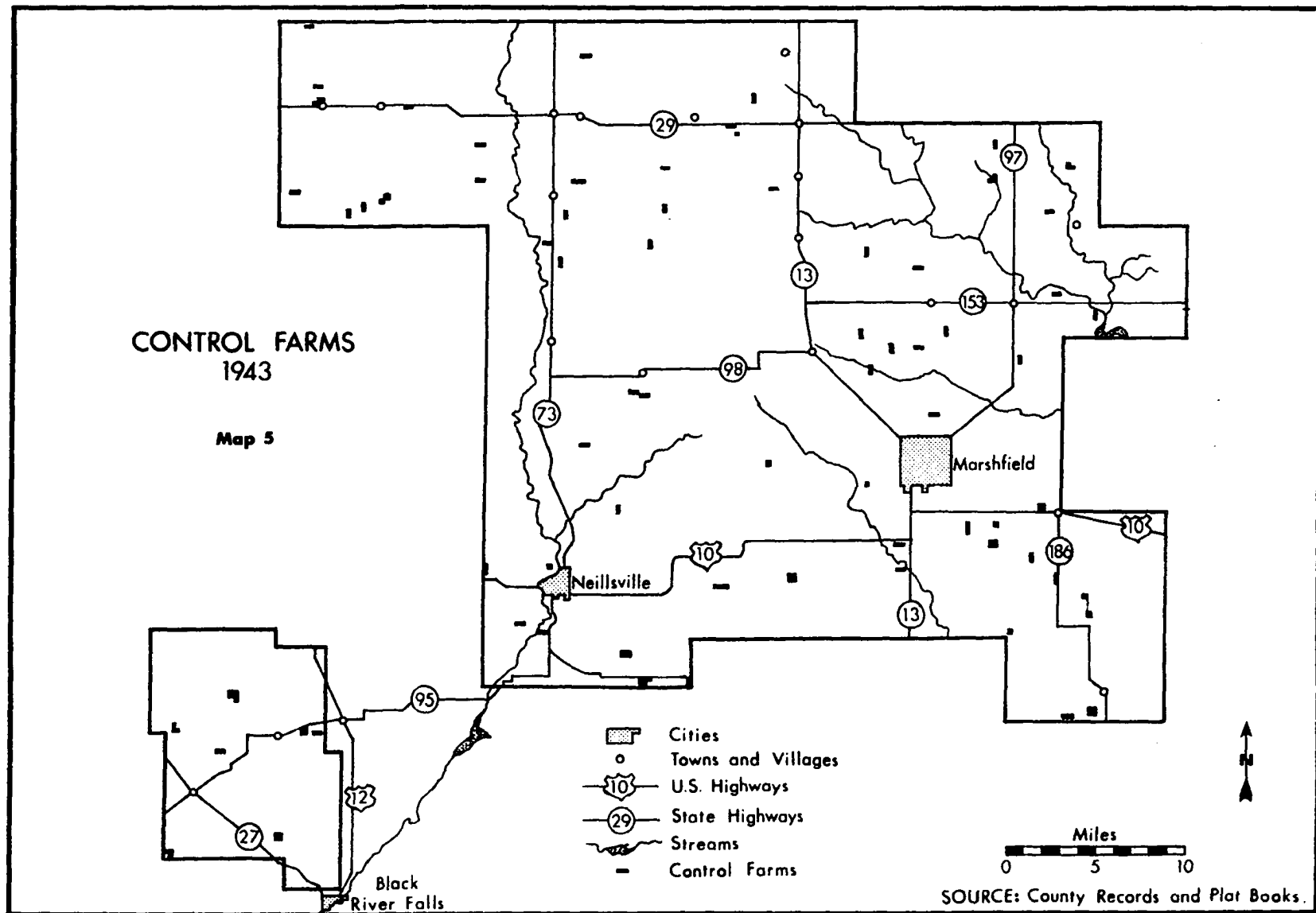
farmers had no additional land at the time they purchased their farms. The lack of previous farm ownership indicated that the control families, like the project families, were purchasing their first property and therefore were not near retirement and probably had little equipment and capital.

The number of project farms in each of the four counties determined the number of control group farms to be selected from each county. The seventy-two control group farms within the study area were therefore proportioned in the following manner: thirty-six from Clark County, fifteen from Marathon County, fourteen from Wood County, and seven from Jackson County (map 5).

The control group farms were selected in this manner:

1. List the Grantor Book page numbers which record land sales in 1943.
2. Randomly select a series of page numbers.
3. Beginning with the top of the first page selected, eliminate all sales:
  - a. outside the study area
  - b. to persons already owning land
  - c. to corporations
  - d. of non-agricultural land
  - e. of less than forty acres
  - f. of federally owned land
  - g. of RR-WI-17 farm units.

The first farm on a page which was not eliminated by the preceding method was chosen for the control group. If all sales on a page were



eliminated, the second page in the series was used and the procedure was repeated until the required number of control group farms was reached.

#### Reconstruction of the Landscape, 1943-1973

Data obtained through the utilization of County Deed Records and personal field observation were used to compare project and control group farms. Field observation was used to determine the comparability of the number and quality of buildings on those farms which still constituted a functioning farmstead. The house and barn on each of the 144 project and control group farms were judged according to their structural condition by the use of a structural quality scale (table 1).

Other attributes of farm quality were also recorded (appendix 2). On a scale of one to five (excellent to poor), overall quality of the building ensemble and quality of land on each farm were judged. Simple counts of the number of structures comprising each farmstead were made. Additionally, the number of original homes and barns still remaining in each of the two groups were noted.

Changes in acreage, ownership, and expansion or absorption of the farm were determined through the Deed Records:

1. Utilizing Tract Indexes and Deed Records, each sale from 1943 through 1973 was listed.
2. To establish the number of ownership changes, each sale to a new owner was counted, excluding those sales to a person or persons who held the land for less than one year (probably a real estate agent). If the property were "split", i.e. only one parcel sold, or the farm broken into two or more parcels, the number of changes for each parcel was counted

TABLE 1

## STRUCTURAL EVALUATION

	Minimal	Major	Critical	Point Total
Roof	2	4	6	
Exterior walls	4	8	12	
Openings	1	2	3	

Quality Total =

Exterior walls include siding materials, paint, and foundation. Openings include doors, windows, porches, and steps. "Minimal", "Major", and "Critical" refer to the degree of repair needed to each portion of the building. Each farm home and barn was assigned to "score" which could range between seven (if needed repairs were all minimal) and twenty-one (if needed repairs were all critical).

Source: Henderson and Bohland, 1974, p. 123.

and the results were averaged. Sale of any parcel five acres or less in size was not included. Sale of such small acreages has had no demonstrable impact on farming operations. Many of these included the granting of easements for public utilities traversing property or for the widening of roads along a property line.

3. Each farm was classified as "same", "expanded", "absorbed", "split", or "miscellaneous" by the following process:
  - a. Same. If no additional properties were ever shown on the deeds or in the plat books, the property description was the same on each deed (excluding changes five acres or less), the farm was classed as "same".
  - b. If the legal description on the deed of sale included any property in addition to the original farm, or if the



1973 Plat Book showed additional properties held by the current owners, the deeds for the new properties were checked to ascertain when the additions were made.

1. Expanded. If the additional property were purchased by the farm owner after his purchase of the study farm, the study farm was classed as "expanded", i.e. serving as the economic base and functional farmstead core of the expanded landholdings.
  2. Absorbed. If the additional property were purchased by a given owner prior to that person's purchase of the study group farm, the original farm was classed "absorbed", i.e. probably no longer forming the core of the total landholdings as the purchaser would most likely stay on his earlier farmstead.
  3. Miscellaneous. If a combination of changes occurred, the property was classed "miscellaneous".
- c. Split. If only part of the property were sold, and the parcels remained separated through 1973, the property was considered to be "split".

A difference of means test was employed in order to ascertain whether the project and control group farms differed significantly in their building quality, number of sales recorded throughout the study period, and changes in acreage. A chi-square test was used to determine whether a significant difference existed between the two groups of farms regarding the proportion of farms falling into the "same", "expanded", "absorbed", "split", and "miscellaneous" categories.

Determination of the Socio-Economic  
Status, 1943-1973

It was proposed that the project has had a significant positive influence in the settlement history of the participating families. Testing of this hypothesis involved a comparison between the project and control groups as well as solely within the project group itself. The first postulation was that the length of tenure on their farms did not differ significantly between the project and control group families. This was tested through the utilization of a difference of means test. Data were derived from county deed records.

To determine the number of project settlers returning to public assistance requires the availability of public records. Limited state and county welfare records still exist, but recipients are protected by confidentiality laws which prevent access by private individuals to clients' welfare histories. However, "group statistics" which do not include clients' names or any information which could lead to their identification can be released, as these protect their anonymity.

These data were obtainable only from Clark County. However, inasmuch as one-half the project settlers resided in that county, findings would be based upon a reasonably large sample of the participating project families.

To measure satisfaction, personal interviews with thirty original settlers still living in the area were used to ascertain personal attitudes toward the success of the project. Although twelve original settlers were still residing on their project farms, the remainder had moved either to different farms or to non-farm residences. Their addresses were determined via a search of telephone directories, plat

books, and county directories, as well as personal references.

At each home, the husband and/or wife were asked several questions and requested to respond to a series of statements (appendix 3). The primary goal of the questions was to collect information about the project family, as no sociological data were available from the RR-WI-17 files. The series of thirty written statements was designed to elicit the settler's perception of the project and his participation in it. Included were statements regarding: (1) farm suitability, (2) ease of intercommunication with neighbors and relatives, (3) reaction to the local project administrators, and (4) satisfaction with the intent and actual implementation of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project. The participant was requested to complete the questionnaire by himself without interpretation from the interviewer. The responses to each statement were then analyzed.

## CHAPTER IV

### IMPACT OF THE PROJECT ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LANDSCAPE

Unlike other previous resettlement schemes the Central Wisconsin Farms Project had no significant impact upon the organization of the contemporary rural landscape. Since all the project farms were built prior to their incorporation into the project and no new architectural innovations or settlement patterns were implemented by the project administration, the factors leading to change were never dominant. Moreover, the settlers were typical farm families, having resided in the local area and having brought to their project farms few or no new social patterns and technology.

#### The Changing Landscape, 1943-1973

In the generation which has elapsed since the completion of RR-WI-17, many changes have occurred on the local landscape. However, no significant difference exists between changes observed occurring within the group of project farms and the group of control farms. An experienced observer would find it virtually impossible at any time to identify the original project farms by noting characteristics of either the buildings or land.

#### Reconstruction of the 1943 Rural Landscape

Farm function. Kolb and Sansum (1942) indicate that the typical

project farm, like its neighbors, was a family-run dairy operation (p. 7). Each RR-WI-17 farm kept milk cows; herd sizes averaged 12.5 cows and ranged from 6 to 18 cows ("Accumulative Reports," 1942). Almost two-thirds of the total farm income was derived from the sale of milk, while a diversity of other activities supplemented this source of income (table 2). These commonly included the production and sale of calves, hogs, poultry and eggs. Crops, rarely grown for direct cash income, were oriented toward the feeding of dairy cattle. In 1943 fodder crops such as clover and timothy hay, corn, oats, barley and rye predominated.

TABLE 2  
PROJECT FARM INCOME, 1942

Source of Income	Average Project Farm <sup>a</sup>	Range <sup>b</sup>
Milk	\$1714	\$747 to \$3001
Cattle	363	64 to 911
Hogs	275	0 to 776
Poultry	40	0 to 154
Eggs	230	0 to 520
Crops	69	0 to 135
Other Farm Income	34	0 to 141
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2725</b>	<b>\$1745 to \$4964</b>

SOURCE: Kolb and Sansum (1942), p. 7, and "Accumulative Reports" (1942).

<sup>a</sup>Based on forty-nine project farms (Kolb and Sansum).

<sup>b</sup>Based on twenty-one Clark County project farms ("Accumulative Reports").

Building ensemble. The ensemble of buildings comprising the project farmstead was remarkably similar from one farm to the next (figure 13). The house was most commonly a two-storied frame dwelling. Nearby

was the "outhouse", as indoor toilet facilities were rare. A red wooden barn on a foundation of cemented field stones with its accompanying small wooden, cement, or field stone silo stood within a short distance of the farm home. The remaining outbuildings reflected the importance of dairying in the farm operations, as well as the diversity of its activities. Nearly every farm had a granary and machine shed, as well as a windmill and chicken house. A garage and woodshed were on about half of the project farms. Less than a quarter of the farms had separate corn cribs, milk houses or hog houses. When these separate structures were absent their function was often provided in lean-to wings of other buildings--most commonly the barn or machine shed. This was especially true of the milk house/barn combination.

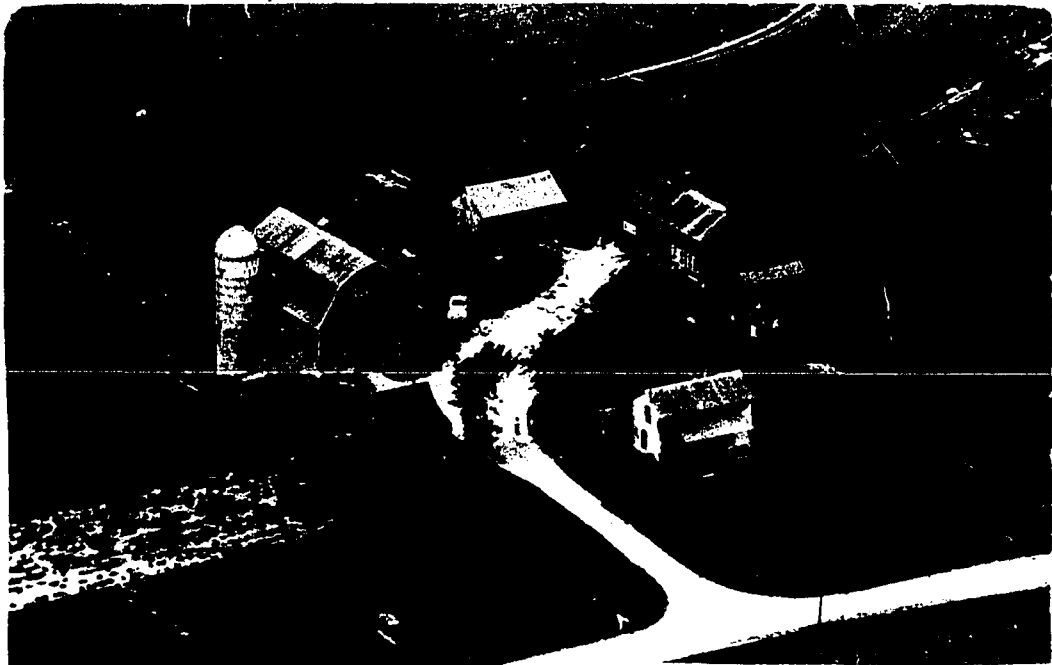


Figure 13--Project Unit #24, the Gordon Dunlap farmstead, was a representative building ensemble.

The quality of farm buildings and land in 1943 was low. Unpainted

structures, leaking roofs, uncompleted rooms, and crumbling foundations were all common. Family farming has rarely brought a considerable profit to the operator, and this was especially true during the implementation of RR-WI-17 in the midst of a national depression. The image of thousands of sturdy, well-kept farms colorfully dotting the Wisconsin landscape is more a perception of the tourist industry than of reality.

Farm situation and services. Farms were situated along a dirt or gravel road and were served by at least one creamery or cheese plant truck route for milk pick-up. Although the prevailing farm pattern was one of scattered farmsteads, essential services were rarely more than a few miles distant. For the group of RR-WI-17 as a whole, the mean distances to the nearest "town", church, and school were 4.6 miles, 2.5 miles and 1.1 miles respectively. These distances did not usually constitute a significant barrier to the mobility of the settlers, for virtually all families, even those who had been on welfare, owned an automobile despite their low cash incomes. As early as 1931 over ninety percent of all farmers in Wisconsin reported the ownership of an automobile (Baker and Wehrwein, 1937, p. 264). All of the project families for whom the "Accumulative Reports" are available owned automobiles in 1942. Mobility was seasonally decreased during winter when roads were not always quickly "plowed out" and in the spring when melting snow often rendered dirt roads impassable. Milk-processing plants and retail establishments, as well as public institutions were located along transportation routes in rural areas or within one of the many small hamlets and villages situated throughout the region.

Farmsteads were served in varying degrees by public utilities.

Rural mail delivery (RFD) came to each farm. Telephones were a part of almost two-thirds of the project farms, while less than one-quarter had electrical service. Only one of the seventy-two project farms was on a school bus route. Such "luxuries" were to come to the majority of the rural populace only in the post-World War II period.

Farm appraisals. The detailed appraisals made by the United States government in 1936 and 1937 prior to purchase for the Central Wisconsin Farms Project included location and production information as well as description and evaluation of both land and buildings. An example of these is this summarization of Unit #98:

This farm is fairly well located, an average distance to the usual advantages in this section such as schools, churches, and markets. Good gravel and cement roads for the purpose of transportation.

Soil is fairly fertile Marathon Silt Loam, inclined to slow drainage. The various renters and owners have reduced the fertility considerably by the stock kept on the farm always pastured on uncultivated land and the number of head was less than would keep up the barnyard manure. It has been cropped and little has been put back to replace the fertility. Thistles and crab grass have not been controlled as they should be. Of the 120 acres, 50 are uncultivable, 36 being fair pasture land with hardwood stumps and the rest woods--hardwoods and poplar.

Buildings are adequate and appropriate with repairs as have been recommended at an approximate cost of \$500.00. This includes all buildings shingled, minor repairs on nearly all out-buildings, and some should have paint.

The selling price of the Central Wisconsin Farms project farms to the settlers was often several hundred dollars lower than the government had paid for the farm several years before. This price differential occurred in all fourteen RR-WI-17 farm sales to settlers in Marathon County, for example, and ranged from \$50.00 to as high as \$2,049.00. In that county, the average project settler paid \$1,125.00 less for his farm than the government had paid. This practice was widespread through



out the project area. Although Project Manager Kolb (1973) felt that the prices the government paid "were probably the lowest we could get them for," he acknowledged that those prices were somewhat above what the farm was actually worth based on its productive value.

The higher prices paid by the government may have also reflected the limited time available for the administration to locate and purchase suitable farms for new settlers. The need for immediate purchase was particularly urgent during the spring of the year, as plowing and planting had to be undertaken then for the farmer to realize any income from his operation during the remainder of the year.

Mr. R. A. Kolb, former manager of RR-WI-17, felt that the farms selected were representative of an area typical in a dozen counties in Wisconsin (1940, p. 3). Appraisers classed most farms as "average" for the area. Moreover, seventy percent of the settlers believed their farms were much like other farms in the area (table 7). The resettlement client perceived little difference between his farm and his neighbors'.

#### The 1973 Rural Landscape

Since 1943 the farms of Central Wisconsin have changed in size and in functions and types of structures constituting the farmstead (appendix 2). This change is due to at least three factors (table 3). Income from farm products has increased ten-fold between 1940 and 1969. Increased emphasis has been placed on the use of machinery, hybrid plant types and specialized livestock breeding. The value of farm implements, for example, in the four study area counties increased almost twelve times during the period 1940 to 1969. The proportion of farms relying on dairying as the prime source of income has decreased from ninety-two

TABLE 3

FARM PRODUCTION CHANGES IN CLARK, JACKSON,  
MARATHON, AND WOOD COUNTIES, WISCONSIN

Category	1940	1969
Mean value of farm products per farm	\$1,269	\$12,491
Mean value of farm implements per farm	\$ 798	\$ 9,332
Farms keeping milk cows	92%	71.2%
Farms keeping hogs	58%	17.6%
Farms keeping chickens	57%	17.3%

SOURCE: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1940, pp. 32-37; 1945, pp. 98-105; 1969, pp. 81-88, 217-224, 297-304, and 569-576.

percent in 1940 to seventy-one percent in 1969.

Farm function. In 1943 all the project farms and most if not all control group farms derived the majority of their income from dairying. In 1973 eighteen percent of the seventy-two project farms and twenty-one percent of the seventy-two control group farms had no livestock. The raising of fodder crops including corn and alfalfa and cash crops such as soybeans and peas dominated these acreages. The trend away from dairying has accelerated in recent years in the state, due largely to the depressed price of milk to the farmer and to the inordinate time and attention needed to maintain a dairy operation.

As farming becomes more a business rather than a way of life for farm families, mixed agricultural activities have almost disappeared from the area farms. In the four counties the number of farms raising hogs declined by seventy percent between 1940 and 1969. Similarly, the number of farms raising chickens declined seventy-one percent (table 3). In 1943 twenty-two percent of the project farms counted a hog house as

part of the farmstead. Today only six percent of project farms and eleven percent of control farms have hog houses, most of which are not in use. This is a seventy-three percent decrease for the project farms. Likewise, chicken houses were found on eighty-five percent of the project farms in 1943, but in 1973 only twenty-one percent of the project farms and thirty-one percent of the control group farms have such structures. The number of project farms with chicken houses has therefore decreased seventy-five percent. All of these signal a shift from a more general form of farm to a more specialized type.

Building ensemble. The most visible facet of the central Wisconsin rural landscape is the scattering of farmsteads throughout the region. If the Central Wisconsin Farms Project has had no significant impact upon the organization of the landscape, no differences should be observable between the number and quality of project and control buildings.

Despite the changing function and character of the central Wisconsin farm, the numbers of buildings have undergone little change. At the time the project farms were sold to the relocated settlers in 1943, the average number of buildings per project farm was 7.12. In 1973 the project mean was 6.83 and the control group mean was 7.14 (table 4; see appendix 2 for complete data). This resistance to change is probably due to three factors: (1) buildings whose functions have changed are easily adapted to new uses, (2) buildings whose functions have changed and are no longer needed are most easily left standing vacant rather than being demolished, and (3) new buildings are often constructed on the site of a previous structure which has been razed, resulting in a

simple "one-for-one" replacement. Consequently, as the function of the farm economy has changed; the function, but not the number, of outbuildings has changed.

Since the termination of RR-WI-17 few new homes have been constructed on either the project or control group farms (figure 14). Sixty-six of the original project houses and fifty of the original control group houses still exist. Sixty-three and forty-eight, respectively, are inhabited today. Although the original dwellings are still inhabited, there have been changes. Most renovation and remodeling has occurred in the interior, consisting of such modifications as wall paneling, enclosing of porches, and enlargement of the kitchen. Rooms have been often added to the structure. Exterior upgrading is also apparent in many farm homes as exemplified by new siding (most often aluminum or steel) or painted exterior, and new or repaired roofing. The farm of 1973 has the services available to the urban dweller: electricity, indoor plumbing (although sixteen percent still retain the unused outdoor structure), telephone service, postal delivery, and a school bus to take children to school in a nearby town.

On a scale of 7 (house needing minimum repairs) to 21 (repairs needed are critical), project farm home quality ratings averaged 9.65; while control group farm homes were judged to be 9.20 (table 4). The means are almost identical and indicate that the project farm homes of today are structurally quite sound in contrast to their quality at the time the Central Wisconsin Farms Project was initiated. Improvements have occurred.

The barn appeared to be a permanent facet of the farmstead, for

TABLE 4

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 1973 FARM

Category	Study Group	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Difference of Means	
					Critical t (0.05)	Calculated t
Number of Buildings per Farmstead <sup>a</sup>	Project	59 farms	6.83	1.96	1.96	0.76
	Control	48 farms	7.14	2.24		
Quality of House <sup>b</sup>	Project	61 houses	9.65	2.51	1.96	0.97
	Control	51 houses	9.20	2.39		
Quality of Barn <sup>b</sup>	Project	67 barns	10.87	2.88	1.96	0.78
	Control	50 barns	10.44	2.99		
Quality of Building Ensemble <sup>a</sup>	Project	59 farms	2.83	0.92	1.96	0.54
	Control	48 farms	2.94	1.12		
Quality of Land	Project	72 farms	2.58	0.76	1.96	0.86
	Control	72 farms	2.53	0.91		

SOURCE: Author's fieldwork and calculations.

<sup>a</sup>This includes only those farmsteads which were being utilized at the time of the survey.

<sup>b</sup>This includes all houses and barns on those farmsteads which were being utilized at the time of the survey

over ninety percent of the project group farms still retained the original (pre-1943) barn. No substantial difference in barn quality existed between project and control groups. On the structural quality scale, the project barns averaged 10.87 and those of the control group, 10.44 (table 4).

There appeared to be three classes of barns on the project and control group farms. No difference between the two groups of farms, however, was noted regarding barn types. A number of farmers have



Figure 14--This new house was constructed on project unit #15, Aloys Brusky farm, after the original home was destroyed by fire.

recently built new "low-profile" barns, usually of metal construction, for their cattle and machinery. Often these are joined to already-existing wooden barns (figure 15). Tall concrete, steel, or fiberglass silos usually exist side-by-side with the barn groupings. This barn type is associated with the successful commercial farmer who is expanding his agricultural operations. Fifteen percent of the barns of both groups were of this type and had a mean quality rating of 7.28.

A second class, the most numerous in the study area (figure 14), consists of the original wooden barn and accompanying medium-size concrete silo which are maintained in good repair. The roof is resingled and exterior walls painted when needed. Most family-operated farms retain the old barn, as the cost of constructing a new facility today can

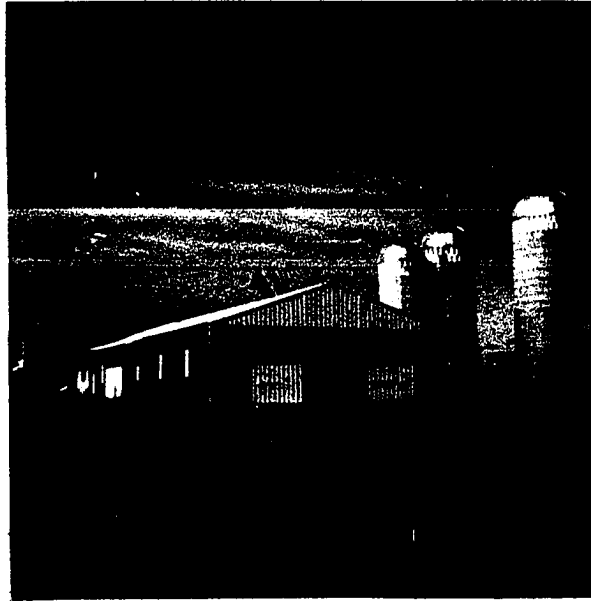


Figure 15--The original project unit #14 barn (right rear), of the Frank Shortell farm, has two newer wings, including a low-profile metal cattle barn.

be prohibitive. Sixty percent of the barns surveyed were of this class and had a mean quality rating of 11.06.

A third class of barn, comprising twenty-five percent of the barns evaluated, exists where there is little or no need for its function. If a farm has been absorbed into another operation, for example, cattle may be housed in the new owner's barn. If the farm no longer has livestock or if livestock are kept in newer buildings, barns in this third grouping may be utilized as temporary storage places for hay or machinery. These are evidently too unimportant to merit repair. Leaking roofs, partially missing boards or whole portions of walls, and crumbling foundations characterize this group. The accompanying silos may be

structurally sound if of stone or concrete, but few have remaining roofs. The mean structural quality rating for this class of barn was 14.42. As might be expected, the quality of outbuildings in this class was poorer than for the others.

The overall quality of the building ensemble comprising the farmstead was judged on a scale from one (excellent) to five (poor). It was recognized that although the two most important structures of the farmstead, the house and barn, could be of excellent quality, the overall appearance of the farmstead could be much lower if unused, dilapidated buildings were not razed. Both project and control farms were near the midpoint (2.83 and 2.94 respectively) of this scale (table 4).

Land quality. Land quality has greatly improved since 1943. Increased use of herbicides, fertilizers, and better crop management procedures have increased soil productivity. Much of the pastureland has now been cleared which previously was crowded with stumps of trees cut around the turn of the century. This required many painstaking laborious days of stump-pulling, often by informal neighbor cooperatives.

Current land quality was evaluated on the scale of one (excellent) to five (poor). Among the criteria taken into account were slope, drainage characteristics, degree of erosion, presence of stumps and/or rocks, and evidence of good conservation practices. The means for the two groups of farms are almost identical (2.58 for the project farms; 2.53 for the control farms) and a difference of means test reinforces the contention that these means do not differ significantly (table 4). It is noteworthy that the range of land quality within the project and control groups is likewise similar as evidenced by standard deviations



of 0.76 and 0.91 respectively. It appears that the generally high level of land maintenance is largely reflective of the fact that most farms are family-owned and operated.<sup>1</sup>

### Farm Ownership Trends, 1943-1973

#### Trends in Farm Sizes

The acreage added to project farms during the tenure of project settlers did not differ significantly with that added to farms by non-project owners who bought farms at the same time. The absence of difference was partly because the size of the project farms (95.0 acres) as a group initially was not significantly different from that of their neighbors (86.4 acres), (table 5). The perceived need to add additional land to their farms was therefore probably shared to a like degree by farm operators of both groups.

From 1943 to 1973, twenty-one of the project farmers and twenty-two of the control group farmers added acreage to their original holdings (table 5). This similarity indicates that not only were the settlers' perceived needs to purchase additional land probably alike, but that the opportunities (e.g., the availability of neighboring land parcels when purchase was desired), and the settlers' abilities to pay for that land were also probably similar. These project farmers increased the size of their farms by an average of almost 100 acres, while the average increase control farms was 105 acres. No significant difference between these means is suggested by the results of the difference of means test (table 5).

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<sup>1</sup>Tenancy is rare in this area of central Wisconsin. Approximately ninety-six percent of the farms in the four counties concerned are currently operated by their owners (Wisconsin Blue Book, 1973, p. 569).

TABLE 5

## FARM OWNERSHIP TRENDS, 1943-1973

Category	Study Group	Number of Farms	Mean	Standard Deviation	Difference of Means	
					Critical t (0.05)	Calculated t
Acreage, 1943	Project	72	95.03	32.12	1.96	1.09
	Control	72	86.44	34.58		
Acreage Added by Original Settler <sup>a</sup>	Project	21	99.38	84.03	1.96	0.26
	Control	22	105.41	68.49		
Acreage Change, 1943-1973 <sup>b</sup>	Project	55	39.05	85.02	1.96	1.30
	Control	57	58.56	73.88		
Acreage, 1973 <sup>b</sup>	Project	55	131.00	88.03	1.96	1.07
	Control	57	148.20	78.41		
Number of Farm Sales, 1943-1973	Project	72	1.83	1.07	1.96	0.41
	Control	72	1.94	1.86		

SOURCE: Author's calculations based on data from county record books of Clark, Jackson, Marathon, and Wood Counties, Wisconsin.

<sup>a</sup>Only those settlers who actually expanded their original property are included.

<sup>b</sup>This excludes farms absorbed by other farm units. Split units were averaged for acreage.

Although the control group farms were smaller in size than the project farms in 1943, their acreage (excluding farms absorbed by other units) was larger than the project farms in 1973 (table 5). The control farms expanded their holdings an average of 58.6 acres while the project farms enlarged their size by an average of 39.0 acres. Thus, by 1973 the relative position of the two groups had changed. Although the growth differential between groups was not significant, it does nonetheless

indicate that project farms did not exhibit as much growth as the control farms.

The growth in both groups was accompanied by an increase in variability of farm size during the 1943 to 1973 period (indicated by the standard deviation of "Acreage, 1943" and "Acreage, 1973" respectively, table 5). This is due to the differential growth rates within each group of project and control farms. For example, of those farms not absorbed by other units, less than forty percent of the project farms remained constant in size, while twenty-nine percent increased their acreage. Concurrently, seven percent actually decreased in size. Farm sizes were more uniform in 1943 (project farms ranged from 50 to 240 acres and control farms from 40 to 180), but became more diverse by 1973 (project farms ranged from 40 to 400 acres, and control farms from 20 to 320 acres in that year) primarily because many farms expanded their operations.

#### Ownership Changes

A change in the ownership of a farm may have an impact upon the landscape. New owners bring with them the increased likelihood of modification and renovation of farm buildings, as well as construction of new structures, particularly if they are to use the farmstead as the center of the farming operation. In cases where the farm is absorbed into the new owner's previous landholdings, some or all of the buildings may be abandoned. An empty, dilapidated farmhouse is certainly a stark feature on most rural landscapes (figure 16).

The sale of a farm may also be accompanied by a division of the property so that more than one landowner is present where there was only one before. Land use changes commonly result, particularly near urban



Figure 16--Control farmstead # 16, originally the Evan Evans farm, was sold to an expanding farm in 1959, and the farmstead was subsequently abandoned.

areas where residential subdivision of rural farm land has been an ongoing process. Even without major changes in land use accompanying the change in ownership, splitting of property becomes a tangible facet of the landscape through the construction of fences and additional buildings.

Because the Central Wisconsin Farm Project had no significant impact upon the organization of the rural landscape, as expected, there were no major differences between the number of times the project and non-project farms were sold during the 1943 through 1973 period. Analysis of county deed records indicates that throughout the 1943 through 1973 period, the average project farm was sold 1.83 times and therefore had a new owner every 16.4 years. Control group farms were sold an

average of 1.94 times, once every 15.5 years. The means appear to be virtually the same, a contention which is borne out by the application of a difference of means test (table 5).

Similarities in farm acreage and land quality characteristics, the latter already shown not to differ significantly between the two groups, probably account in large part for the like frequency of project and control group farm sales. The comparability of farm sale frequencies indicates once more that the project and control group farms have undergone corresponding changes since 1943 and that landscape modification has not likely therefore proceeded at different rates between the two groups.

#### Continuation of the Farm as an Entity

Project and control group farms have, in the period 1943-1973, either remained as independent units of production or have lost their identities as foci of their respective farm operations. Those which have continued as independent units have either remained constant in size or have expanded by adding acreage into their operations. Those farms whose original identities were lost did so either by being absorbed (incorporated into previously-existing farm operations), by being split into two or more separate parcels, or by becoming non-agricultural in function (table 6).

Farm remains as an independent unit of production. During the thirty years since the completion of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project, twenty-eight of the project farms and twenty-three of the control group farms retained their original size and continue as independent entities (an example is shown in map 6). This difference in proportions between

TABLE 6

## STATUS OF THE FARM, 1973

Data Category	Study Group	Same	Expanded	Absorbed	Split	Miscellaneous
Observed Frequencies	Project	28	21	17	5	1
	Control	23	27	15	6	1
Chi-Square Test <sup>a</sup>						
Critical $\chi^2$ (0.05) = 9.49						
Calculated $\chi^2$ = 1.36						
"z" Test <sup>b</sup>						
Critical $z^2$ (0.05)		3.84	3.84	3.84	3.84	3.84
Calculated $z^2$		0.76	1.13	0.16	0.06	0.00

SOURCE: Author's calculations based on data from county record books of Clark, Jackson, Marathon and Wood Counties, Wisconsin.

<sup>a</sup>The chi-square test is to ascertain whether the frequency distributions are significantly different.

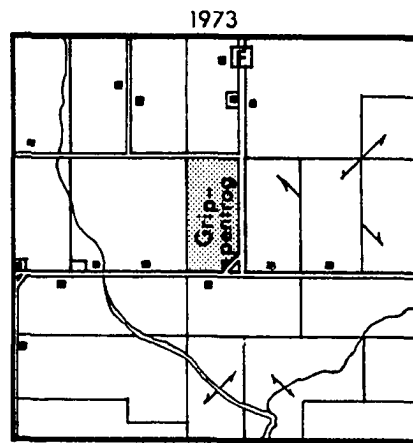
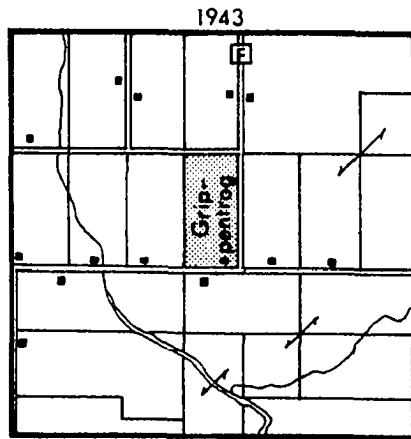
<sup>b</sup>The z test is to ascertain whether the values within the categories are significantly different.

the two groups is not significant (table 6). It is probable that there have been similar factors influencing both project and control groups which have encouraged the continuation of these farms at the original acreage.

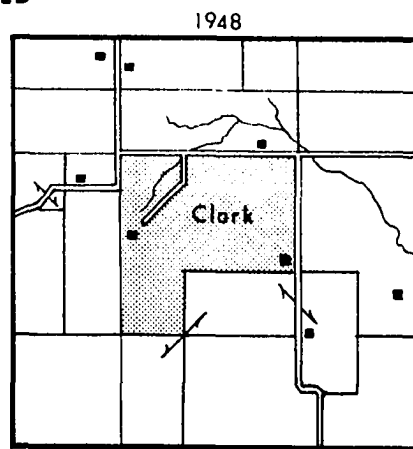
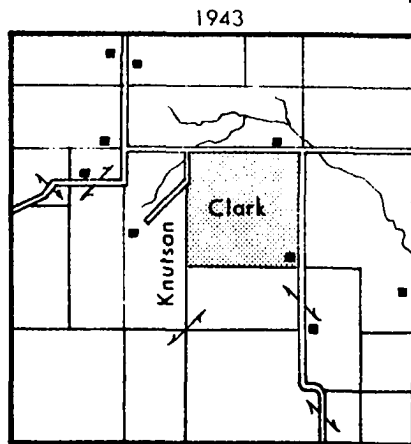
About one-half of the respondents to the questionnaires given in 1974 to the original project settlers indicated that the "farm was large enough to make a satisfactory living" (table 7). Conversely, the possibility that the "farm was [originally] too large for us to manage without hired help" was refuted by all but one of the project settlers interviewed (table 7). Only when the settlers were aging and their

# FARM STATUS CHANGES

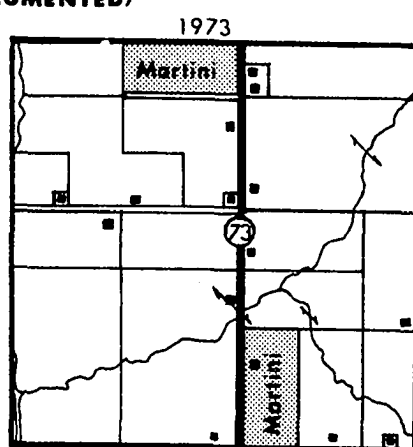
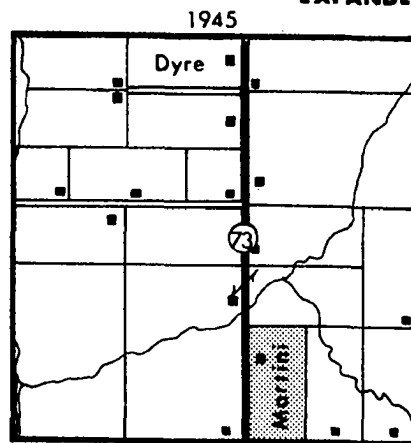
**SAME**  
Map 6



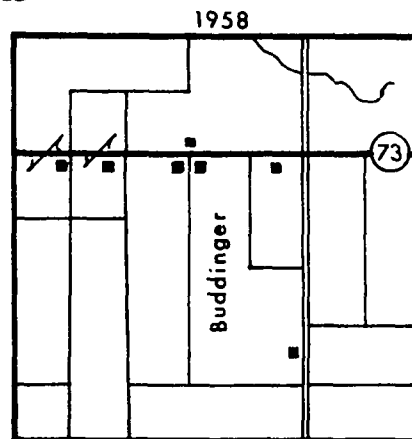
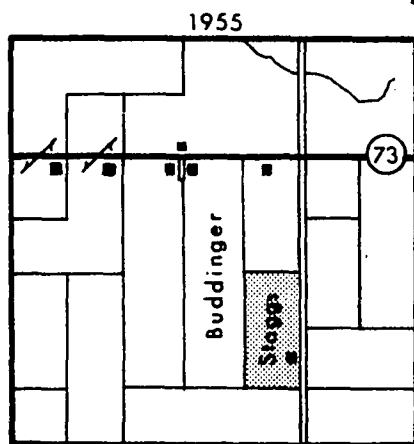
**EXPANDED**  
Map 7



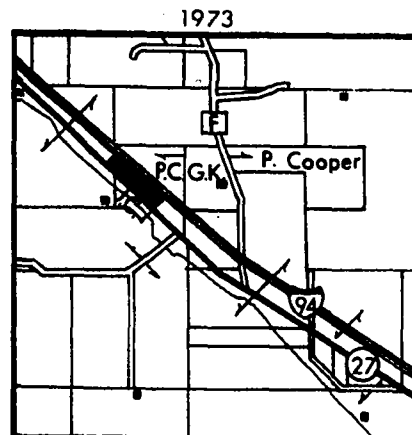
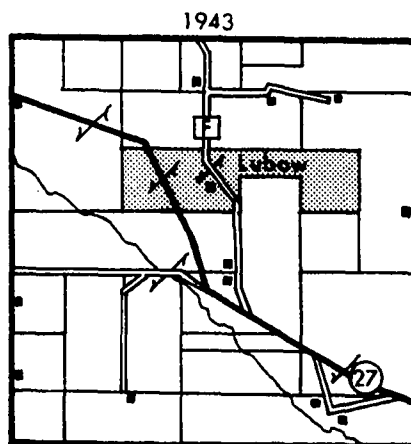
**EXPANDED (FRAGMENTED)**  
Map 8













**ABSORBED**  
Map 9



**SPLIT**  
Map 10



**LEGEND**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Study Farm     |  Interstate Expressways |
|  Small Tracts   |  State Highways         |
|  Property Lines |  County Highways        |
|  Same Owner     |  Other Roads            |
|  Farmstead      |  Streams                |

Miles  
0 .5 1

**SOURCE:** Plat Books of Clark, Jackson, and Wood Counties, Wisconsin.



children had left home did this become a problem. The interview responses suggest that most project farms were "large enough" and yet not "too large to manage", so many owners felt it unnecessary to either add to or subtract from the size of their farm.

TABLE 7  
SETTLER OPINION OF THEIR PROJECT FARMS

Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know or Does Not Apply	Statements
10%	60%	7%	20%	3%	0%	Our farm was much like other farms in the area.
7	50	7	17	17	3	Our farm was large enough for us to make a satisfactory living
0	3	0	53	43	0	Our farm was too large for us to manage without hired help.
7	43	3	40	3	3	There was enough pasture.
3	47	3	37	7	3	It was <u>easy</u> to find land for sale <u>close</u> to our farm.

SOURCE: Author's fieldwork.

Not all of those whose farms remained constant in size and identity appeared to have been satisfied with the capacity of their farming base. The reasons for not enlarging their acreage were varied. The wife of one of the original RR-WI-17 settlers whose farm was and still is sixty acres, said, "It should have been an eighty . . . but we

couldn't afford it [more land]" (Thur, 1974). Rental, not purchase, of land was the answer to increased needs given by some settlers, resulting in a de facto expansion. "We would have liked more land and machinery . . . so we always rented a forty down here" (Schommer, 1974). Some simply did not add more acreage because of the added work load which would have been involved. As another of the original project farm wives commented, "We didn't have to kill ourselves . . . like on those big farms" (Zuther, 1974).

Twenty-one project farms and twenty-seven control farms added parcels to the original acreage (table 6, examples are shown in maps 7 and 8). The primary motive for farm expansion is the creation of a larger economic base. This desire is shared by the farmer who is barely subsisting and the already successful farmer who is attempting to change his family operation into a more commercial venture, perhaps even a corporate or "factory" farm. An example of the former is the widow of one RR-WI-17 settler who, although wanting to purchase more than the original eighty acres, has been unable to do so. "I always told Kolb we needed forty acres to live on, forty acres for farm expenses, and forty acres for profit . . . and we never made much profit" (Meyer, 1974). Conversely, one particularly successful farm operator commented that he "could have run twice this much [acreage] if we'd had more money" (Hebert, 1974).

Perhaps more expansion would have taken place if nearby land had been available. About half of the settlers queried indicated it was difficult to find land for sale close to their farms (table 7). Six project farms and ten control farms expanded their acreage by adding non-contiguous land parcels, and therefore became "fragmented" (an example

is shown in map 8). John Fraser Hart (1974) points out that this process of fragmentation, defined as the ownership of two or more nonadjacent parcels of land, is common in the American Midwest. He believes fragmentation occurs for two reasons: (1) the necessity for a farmer to travel a considerable distance to find a suitable tract of land, and (2) the high density of section line roads enabling farmers to travel to those tracts with ease (pp. 86-88). Among the sixteen fragmented RR-WI-17 study farms no farmer owned parcels separated by more than 5 miles along a rural road, and the mean distance between parcels of fragmented farms was 1.2 miles.

The fragmentation, and consequently the expansion, of farms in the area may have been discouraged by the predominance of family-run dairy operations. Few farmers purchase two detached parcels of land with the intention of maintaining a separate herd of dairy cattle on each. Neither is it common practice to move the herd back and forth between two widely-spaced land units. Expansion of farms in this portion of Wisconsin is therefore likely to entail consolidation of adjacent parcels of land. Of the sixteen study farms which were fragmented four had no livestock. The remainder raised fodder crops on the most distant parcels and pastured their herds on land adjacent to the farmstead.

Farm no longer functions as an independent unit of production.

Between 1935 and 1972 the average farm size in the state of Wisconsin climbed from 117.4 to 185.2 acres, while the number of farms decreased from almost 200,000 to 108,000 (Wisconsin Blue Book, 1973, p. 568).

Likewise, during 1943 to 1973, the mean size of the project farms rose from 95 to 131 acres, and that of the control farms from 86.4 to 148.2

acres (table 5). Meanwhile, the number of project farms which had all or a part of their original holdings still serving as the core of a functioning farm decreased from 72 to 55. Independent control farms decreased from 72 to 57.

The growth of farms in terms of size has not occurred by bringing previously unused land into production, for the study area has been almost entirely in agricultural use for more than three-quarters of a century. Farms have grown larger by absorbing others (an example is shown in map 9). In the period 1943 to 1973 farm absorption within the study area was primarily a process where a neighboring farmer purchased the study farm for inclusion in his own operations. The original study farm would no longer exist as a separate entity, although the actual use of land and perhaps of some of the buildings would continue as before.

Since 1943 seventeen project and fifteen control farms have been absorbed, with two in each group having been added to farms with non-adjacent holdings. The difference is not significant (table 6), and therefore the supportive hypothesis that the proportion of project farm absorptions is not significantly different from the proportion of non-project farm absorbed into other properties is accepted. It appears that factors leading to absorption are at work equally in both groups.

One common reason for the sale of project farms has been illness or death in the family, particularly involving the husband. As death is no respecter of persons, control farm families may have been equally afflicted. Dairying is a time and labor demanding occupation, and the temporary or permanent loss of a working family member may have proved sufficiently disruptive to force the sale of the farm.

The similar proportion of farm absorptions between the project and control group farms supports the contention that the project farms were representative of the area initially and that the settlers were typical local farm families. Had the Central Wisconsin Farms Project units been substandard with respect either to land quality or building adequacy and suitability, the number of project farm absorptions might logically be expected to have been greater than that of the control group. Likewise, if the project families were less well-prepared to operate their farms than their non-project neighbors, absorption of their operations might be proportionally higher. Such could have been the case if the standards for the initial selection of RR-WI-17 settlers were minimal.

Change of farms to non-agricultural functions has been rare. Only one farm from each group falls within this category. In both cases the farmstead was totally deserted and the land converted from the production of crops to a Christmas tree plantation (figure 17). Other land uses, such as the routing of highways and the construction of residential subdivisions, have resulted in the splitting of existing farm operations (an example is shown in map 10). None of these had caused a land use change of an entire farm, and only a few farms in each group have been involved. Both the Central Wisconsin Farms Project farms and control group farms have shared to a like degree the task of landscape modification in this manner.

Of the 144 original farms, over half are now part of a larger acreage. A ninety year old settler recalled wistfully that "Practically ever' eighty had a family on it and they was making a livin'. [Now] this

feller up here has 600 acres" (Phillips, 1974). The process of farm expansion has truly changed the face of the rural landscape within the study area.



Figure 17--Project unit #24, formerly the Gordon Dunlap farm, was one of the two study farms which is no longer a functioning agricultural unit. Note the Christmas trees in the background.

## CHAPTER V

### IMPACT ON THE RESETTLEMENT FAMILIES

The second major question posed regarding the Central Wisconsin Farms project was that the project has had a significant positive influence in the settlement history of those participating families. Rehabilitation of poor people and poor land had become the guiding principle of the Resettlement Administration and its successor agency, the Farm Security Administration. This chapter examines the impact of RR-WI-17 in the lives of the settlers throughout the resettlement period and during the generation that has passed since the institution of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project.

#### Settler Selection for the Project

##### Profile of the RR-WI-17 Families

Between 1936 and 1938, the mission of RR-WI-17 changed from one of relocation to rehabilitation. The project, originally designed to resettle families from submarginal lands, now emphasized aiding financially troubled farmers already living within the local area.

The unavailability of the Central Wisconsin Project files on sociological data of the settlers precludes the construction of a precise profile for the group of seventy-two families. Interviews (appendix 3) taken in 1974 with thirty of the original project families does, however, enable one to make reasonable assumptions regarding the entire group.

Only three families from outside the area were residing on project farms in 1940 (Kolb and Sansum, 1940, p. 3). Of the original settlers interviewed in 1974, ninety-three percent indicated that they had lived within the study area prior to their participation in the Central Wisconsin Farms Project. The other families, although initially residing outside the RR-WI-17 project locality, needed to "resettle" a distance of only a few miles. Relocation in most cases, then, meant that the families simply changed their addresses within a familiar rural neighborhood.

All those heads of household who participated in the Central Wisconsin Farms Project had had farming experience prior to their moving onto the project farm. Ninety-three percent of the wives had lived and worked on farms prior to the move to their RR-WI-17 farms, according to interviews. First-hand knowledge of farm operation by the wives, particularly of its time and labor demands upon family members, was probably instrumental in aiding the longevity of the family on its new farm. At the time the settlers moved onto their farms they were prepared for the rigors of farm life.

The settlement families were in their productive years, a major criterion for their selection initially. The sample of original project farmers indicated that the mean age of the husband in 1943 was 37.4 years (range 22 to 57), while that of his wife was 33.6 years (range 19 to 55). The average number of children for those thirty families in 1943 was 2.6 (range 0 to 6). The average family size, consisting therefore of less than five members, did not differ from that of the average household in the study area. In 1940 the mean rural farm family size ranged between



4.21 and 4.75 persons in the four counties comprising the study area (U.S. Census of Housing, 1950, p. 49-7). The project families were relatively young when the Central Wisconsin Farms Project was terminated, as only ten percent of the children in 1943 were sixteen years of age or older.

The education level of the settlers prior to their joining the project closely paralleled that of their neighbors. In rural Wisconsin most students finished their formal education between the eighth and twelfth grades. Further schooling was uncommon and rarely necessary for a life on the farm. "Beyond this minimum, increased years of general education do not appear to be correlated with success" (Holt, 1937, p. 7). Technical expertise in agricultural operations, gained chiefly through experience, provided the basis for a future farm livelihood.

The Central Wisconsin Farms Project, as modified, aided in the removal of people with farming experience from the relief rolls by providing farms to them on a lease-purchase agreement. It was impossible to ascertain the exact number of families who had been receiving public assistance prior to their entering the resettlement program. According to the Clark County Department of Social Services, sixteen of the list of seventy-two settlers had received assistance from that county previous to 1943. Because one-half of the RR-WI-17 families resided in Clark County, it would appear that almost half of the project participants required public assistance either prior to the initiation of RR-WI-17 or in its initial years.

Three general categories of families participating in the Central Wisconsin Farms Project can be identified (table 8). Seventy-three

percent of the interviewed settlers had previously rented farms but had not accumulated sufficient money to buy their own farm despite their length of tenure as farm operators. The couples in this first "previous renters" category averaged over thirty-six years of age at the time they purchased their farms in 1943.

TABLE 8  
PROJECT FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS, 1943

Category	Number of Families	Mean Family Size	Mean Age of Couples	Mean Age of Children
Previous renters	22	4.3 persons	36.4 years	9 years
Newly established	5	3.4 persons	24.3 years	2 years
Previous owners	3	4.6 persons	44.6 years	8 years

SOURCE: Author's fieldwork.

A smaller group of settlers, comprising seventeen percent of those interviewed, had worked on either the husband's or wife's parents' farm prior to their participation in RR-WI-17. The five couples in this second "newly established" category averaged twenty-four years of age when they entered the project. Only one couple were newlywed. The others had been married between three and five years by that time. All of these families joined the project in 1943 when the project administration, in its "eleventh hour" search for settlers, relaxed its eligibility restrictions.

Ten percent of those contacted had been "previous owners" of farms, but were unable to retain ownership of them during the economic depression

of the thirties. Two of the foreclosed farms in this third group were located immediately to the south of the study area on marginally-productive sandy soils. The settlers were older people, averaging almost forty-five years of age in 1943. They moved onto the government farms throughout the project period.

The Central Wisconsin Farms project mission emphasized the rehabilitation of financially troubled rural families living within the study area. Most of those resettled had not been able to progress beyond renting farms, while others were either just beginning their farming careers, or had "lost" their farms through foreclosure of mortgages.

#### Admittance into the Central Wisconsin Farms Project

Families who joined RR-WI-17 learned of the project from a variety of sources (table 9). R. A. Kolb (1973), former Project Manager, stated that "We didn't advertise." Kolb and his administrative personnel perused local relief roles for prospective settlers. Six settlers

TABLE 9

#### METHOD BY WHICH SETTLER LEARNED OF PROJECT

Method	Settlers	
	Number	Percent
Read newspaper advertisements	3	10
Contacted by government	6	20
Told by neighbor or relative	8	27
Told by tenant or previous owner	3	10
Could not remember	10	33

SOURCE: Author's fieldwork.

of those queried in 1974 by the writer had been contacted by the government in this manner.

Not all families were chosen through an examination of welfare records, however. Some couples applied for a project farm after learning of the existence of RR-WI-17. Word-of-mouth appeared to have been the prime method by which news of the project was spread. Many of those interviewed were informed either by knowledgeable neighbors and relatives, or by the previous tenant or owner of farms purchased by the government for inclusion into RR-WI-17. Not surprisingly, in view of the passage of time, over a third of those interviewed could not remember how they learned of the project.

The opportunity to own one's farm and enjoy some measure of financial security was the primary motivation for farm families' applying for a project farm during the 1936-1943 period. Over eighty percent of those interviewed indicated they would not have been able to purchase a farm without the assistance of the project (table 10).

Most project settlers identified RR-WI-17 with the plethora of federal programs born during the depression years. Despite the inability of many to say exactly why they were chosen for the project, the vast majority recalled that they had been told what the purpose of the project was (table 10). As one original settler remarked, "This wasn't only to help us . . . it was to make work, too" (Phillips, 1974).

Although most of the settlers still agreed that it was easy for them to get on the project after they had applied (table 10), almost half were unable to state definitively why they had been selected (table 11). As one settler observed, "We wondered" (Steltenpohl, 1974). It was

TABLE 10

## SETTLER OPINION OF RR-WI-17 IMPLEMENTATION

Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know or Does Not Apply	Statements
13%	60%	0%	10%	3%	13%	We were <u>clearly</u> told what the <u>purpose</u> of of the project was.
0	10	0	43	40	7	If we had not participated in the project, we could have bought another [non-government] farm at that time anyway.
30	53	0	13	0	3	It was <u>easy</u> for us to get on the project.
0	13	3	17	7	60	There were about 25 other farm families also on the project.
7	20	7	47	3	17	The federal government didn't <u>really</u> know what our problems were.
27	53	7	3	0	10	Mr. Kolb and Miss Sansum knew our problems.
0	13	10	60	7	10	They could have helped more with our farm problems.
3	0	13	63	13	7	The project manager and home management supervisor, Mr. Kolb and Miss Sansum, visited too often.
0	20	0	43	30	7	They forced their ideas on us.
0	3	0	33	3	60	The government should have let us purchase the farm earlier.
0	13	7	47	30	3	The price we paid for the farm was <u>too high</u> .
3	50	10	23	0	13	The government lent us enough money to start our farm.
0	20	10	30	17	23	The loan repayment period was too long.

SOURCE: Author's fieldwork based on thirty interviews.

TABLE 11

SETTLER EXPLANATIONS OF THEIR  
SELECTION FOR RR-WI-17

Reason	Settlers	
	Number	Percent
Were in poor financial condition	7	23
Had no debts	1	3
Believed FSA needed more tenants	2	7
Believed there were not many applicants	2	7
Had good farming experience	1	3
Were already renting project farm	2	7
Had no children and project farm was small	1	3
Did not know or gave no answer	14	47

SOURCE: Author's fieldwork.

believed initially that most would indicate their poor financial condition to be a major factor, particularly in view of the responses to the statement regarding their ability to purchase a farm without government assistance. Seven of the thirty did indicate the reason to be their poor economic status at the time. Typifying this group are such comments as, "I was dead broke" (Grippentrog, 1974), and "We had farming backgrounds, and only had \$275.00 and were in debt" (Meyer, 1974). Others perceived their selection to have resulted from not many other farm families applying (Kier, 1974), or from the fact they actually had no debts and therefore were a good risk (Bredlau, 1974). Another indicated, "They wanted the tenant [a probationary settler] off" (Brusky, 1974). The variety of answers is perhaps reflective of the changing goals of the resettlement programs both at the national and local levels in the 1936-1943 period.

Once chosen, the settlers moved onto their project farms through

out the period during which the Central Wisconsin Farms Project was implemented, 1936-1943 (table 12). The lack of data for all of the seventy-two project families makes determination of the year in which each moved onto their farm an impossible task. Interviews, however, indicate larger numbers of settlers moved onto project farms in 1938 and 1943 than in the other years. These figures may only be indicative of an apparent difference, as they are based on a sample of the RR-WI-17 settler population. On the other hand, 1938 is evidently the year that the project, having passed through the planning stages, began to attract more settlers than it had previously. The higher total in 1943 is a result of the RR-WI-17 administration's successful attempt to complete settler selection in anticipation of the project termination which was to come early in 1944.

TABLE 12  
YEAR THE FAMILY MOVED ONTO THE PROJECT FARM

Year	Families <sup>a</sup>		Year	Families	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
1936	3	10%	1940	0	0%
1937	2	7	1941	4	13
1938	6	20	1942	3	10
1939	2	7	1943	7	23

SOURCE: Author's fieldwork.

<sup>a</sup>The table excludes two families which had been renting the farms prior to 1936 which were later incorporated into the project, and one family who could not remember.

In many cases the settlers were given a choice of the farm on which they desired to live. Twenty of thirty settlers interviewed

indicated that they were able to choose to some degree the farm they wanted. Either Kolb or one of his field men would drive the client and his wife to three or four nearby farms. One couple, for example, given "three choices . . . took the one closest to family and town" (Hoffman, 1974). Undoubtedly the procedure of offering the settlers a choice of farms led to a higher level of satisfaction within the group of RR-WI-17 participants.

### The Lease Years, 1936-1943

#### Interaction With the Administration

Attempt at group cohesion. A sense of community spirit and cohesion was an important factor affecting the long-term viability of agglomerated settlements in Texas (C. Williams, 1973, p. 131). The Central Wisconsin Farms Project, however, selected settlers who had lived on farms dispersed throughout the area and "resettled" them on scattered farms. Consequently, families in the project did not develop a strong sense of relating to one another. The scattered farms and the distances between them provided a real and perceived barrier to the development of social cohesion. Few of those interviewed in 1974 were aware, for example, of the magnitude of RR-WI-17 (table 10). Only one settler of the thirty knew approximately how many families were involved with his answer of "sixty-seven" (Bredlau, 1974). Two others believed the number to be "more than twenty-five" and four thought the project to have been comprised of "about twenty-five."

A common feeling of "belonging" to the project group was of minimal consequence to families familiar with residing on isolated farms.



Despite this, the local project administration did attempt to instill some measure of group allegiance. Annual meetings were held in various cities such as Marshfield and Neillsville during the 1936-1943 period. Summer picnics, to which all the families were invited, also reinforced group spirit. The meetings and picnics, beyond their obvious recreational aspects, were ideal times to announce policy changes and discuss general problem areas.

Perception of the federal administration. Administration of programs at the federal level often appears rigid and detached from reality by local participants. However, despite the changing goals within Resettlement Administration and the Farm Security Administration, most RR-WI-17 families perceived those agencies as being reasonable in the administration of the project. One-half of the thirty settlers interviewed felt the government was aware of their problems (table 10). One man remarked, "It seems as though there was somebody at the head of it that kind of understood it because they had a program that was real-well worked out" (Schommer, 1974). Yet not every project farmer viewed the federal government's role in a favorable light. A Clark County settler, referring to local Project Manager R. A. Kolb, stated, "I think he knew what the needs were, but I don't think he got the cooperation from headquarters" (Bredlau, 1974). In any case, it is doubtful that settler perceptions of the federal resettlement programs were as strong as their feelings toward the local RR-WI-17 project. Most, if not all, project families came in contact only with the lowest, i.e. local, level of the administrative hierarchy.

The local administration. The passage of a generation since the termination of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project has not dimmed the

impression the settlers have of the local project administration. Two people--Mr. R. A. Kolb, the Project Manager, and Miss Elizabeth Sansum, the Home Management Supervisor--worked most closely with each of the seventy-two families and therefore were the administration to most of the settlers.

Most of the thirty persons interviewed agreed that "Mr. Kolb and Miss Sansum knew our problems" (table 10). Both had had extensive training for their administrative roles. Kolb was among the first graduates of the University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture and subsequently became one of the initial County Agents in the state. Miss Sansum had graduated from what is now the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point with a degree in home economics before joining the project. Both had farm backgrounds, a requirement imposed by the government of those seeking similar positions in the Farm Security Administration.

R. A. Kolb was totally competent, an intellectual with practical ideas who strove to acquaint his clients with the most recent agricultural practices. From a detached viewpoint, it appears that he was probably the closest thing to the ideal administrator of a program such as RR-WI-17 as could be found. Although he was a "driver" and perhaps a perfectionist, Kolb was far from being a machine. He knew the needs of people and empathized with them, but at the same time could impose discipline when necessary. If Kolb felt some aspect of the federal resettlement policy was not applicable to the RR-WI-17 project, he would voice his concern to his superiors (Muir, 1943). In this way, flexibility rather than rigidity became a dominant force in the operation of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project at the local level.

Settler interviews illuminate the foregoing aspects of the Kolb and Sansum administration. "Kolb was a man who knew I knew my own business" (Elstrom, 1974). "Kolb was an awful smart man. He had good ideas" (Damert, 1974). "Mr. Kolb was about as broad-minded a man as you could find . . . Miss Sansum too" (Schommer, 1974). "No one could treat you any better than they did" (West, 1974).

The local administration seemed personally concerned with the welfare of each family on the project. Few of the RR-WI-17 settlers in the area in 1974 believed that the local administrators could have offered them greater assistance (table 10). "They helped us . . . explained everything" (Damert, 1974). "We could have asked for more help if we'd wanted it" (Grippentrog, 1974).

#### Acceptance of local implementation of federal requirements.

Because most of those on the project had been on the brink of personal financial disaster, one of the chief duties of Mr. Kolb was to demand a strict accountability for receipts and expenses from each family. Budgets had to be made and followed; fruits and vegetables were to be canned in quantities to sustain the family throughout the year. Farmers had to be shown the "best way" to repair a farm building or apply fertilizer; while the wife, despite her practical background, was shown how to make pillows, patch trousers, or use a pressure cooker. Families reacted differently to the frequent visits by Kolb and Sansum and to their explanations regarding the most desirable methods of doing things on the farm.

Criticism of the administration of the project at the local level may have indeed reflected poor judgment at times on the part of Kolb and Sansum, or dislike of the federal policies with which they were charged;

but more often it was probably indicative of the inability or unwillingness of the settlers to accept guidance and constructive criticism. "So many were so mad because he came so often. . . . I was used to landowners doing the same thing, so I didn't figure it was any different" (Bredlau, 1974). The vast majority of those interviewed disagreed that Kolb and Sansum visited too often or forced their ideas on the settlers (table 10).

The following statements are fairly representative of the type of negative reaction to the RR-WI-17 administration. Typically such criticism had arisen because of the need for strict budgetary practices during the initial years of the project. "They wouldn't have had to ride us so hard. . . . They were very strict. . . . They wouldn't let us put bathrooms in the house" (Mueller, 1974). "Mr. Kolb scolded us once when we put in electric lights. . . . I told him he ought to go out there and try to milk those cows by lantern!" (Elstrom, 1974). "I didn't like to keep track of every can of fruit" (Elmhorst, 1974).

Conditions of the sale. The terms of the farm purchase plan advanced by the Farm Security Administration to the Central Wisconsin Farms Project participants were given general approval by those settlers. Criticism had often been leveled at that agency in the early 1940s because farms on settlement projects throughout the country were not being sold at a sufficiently fast rate to the settlers who were renting the farms under a lease-purchase agreement. Although most of the warranty deeds transferring title from the government to the RR-WI-17 families were made in 1942-1943 toward the end of the project, there appears to have been little local criticism of the practice as was common in the Texas resettlement communities during the same period (C. Williams, 1973). The

date of actual farm purchase was not an issue within the group of RR-WI-17 settlers (table 10). This largely reflects the competence of the local administration and the trust which it received from the families that the farms would be sold to them.

The price paid by the project settlers was viewed by them as being reasonable (table 10), probably because they realized the government was in effect partially subsidizing their payments by lowering the appraised value of the farms. A 1942 RR-WI-17 administrative memo stated:

In each case the actual selling price recommended represents an amount equivalent to the production value of the unit, reasonable allowance and deductions having been made for the adequate repair of buildings and soil improvement. (CWF Project File)

However, the magnitude of "deductions" by the project administration was not as great at the beginning of RR-WI-17 as it later became. This did lead to some initial settler dissatisfaction. The wife of one farmer, for example, stated, "At first the price was too high, then they reappraised it and lowered the price" (Meyer, 1974). Another commented, "I complained to Kolb about other farm prices being cut and Mr. Kolb got our price cut \$1,000.00 and got \$300.00 cash and fourteen gallons of paint for us besides" (Elstrom, 1974).

In addition to the sale of the farm to the settler, the RR-WI-17 program provided small loans for the purchase of livestock and machinery, and the repair of structures. The recipients of those loans were not in agreement regarding their sufficiency (table 10). Two factors seem to have created this mix of opinion among the project participants. The depression years produced a psychology among many of the farmers that the owing of money could lead to financial disaster, as indeed it had in many cases. Those who felt this way were loath to take on any additional debt

beyond the farm mortgage. Typical of this group are the comments "We wasn't able to go any deeper into debt" (Elstrom, 1974), and "We just got along the best we could" (Zuther, 1974). Others believed, perhaps more in accordance with modern business theory, that borrowed money could be "put to work." One settler in this vein of reasoning believed "The government had more money. If he [Kolb] could have given it to us we would have progressed faster" (Brusky, 1974).

To what degree the settler should have been given assistance on his project farm is debatable, but the RR-WI-17 financial aid probably was situated between two perilous extremes. On one hand, insufficient assistance could retard for many years the commercial operation of the farm. On the other, unlimited availability of loans could obligate the farmer to debt repayment throughout his productive years. The latter situation becomes even more risky when one recalls that the majority of project participants, although able farmers, had been unable to successfully manage their own finances.

Reaction to the length of the loan repayment period was also diverse (table 10). Under the provisions of the purchase agreement the loan was to be amortized over a forty year period. Initially, it was not possible for a family to satisfy the debt in less time than the forty years. The wife of one settler believed "That was to keep people from buying and living there a couple of years, then selling" (Damert, 1974). The Farm Security Administration probably believed that the lengthy amortization period would prove advantageous to the project families who might even have difficulty paying the low three percent rate of interest during the early years of the project.

Criticism of the mandatory forty year debt repayment period later resulted in a change of the rules. Although the settler was still offered the option of amortizing his mortgage over that period, the debt could be wholly satisfied at any time. The favorable response to this modification is evident from opinions expressed by two of the RR-WI-17 participants. "We didn't want to buy it if we couldn't pay it off for forty years, but we was poor so we chanced it anyway. But later they changed that and that made us happy" (Thur, 1974). "It would have been too long if you couldn't have paid it off early" (Grippentrog, 1974).

#### Interaction With the Rural Community

Psychologically the settlers' feeling of "fitting in" with the rural landscape may have been an important factor in the viability of the project farms and families. Over two-thirds of the settlers interviewed believed their farms were much like other farms in the area (table 13). Project family perceptions of what was typical of farms within the study area and the view of how their project farms compared with the average did vary. Diverse comments, such as the following, do not necessarily contradict the feeling project settlers as a group had that their farms were representative. Regarding their farmsteads and land, project operators stated it was "maybe a little better" (Elstrom, 1974), "more run down" (Pischer, 1974), and "the best one in the area, land-wise" (Thur, 1974).

Absence of physical isolation. There appears to have been little sense of isolation among the settlers who, prior to moving onto their RR-WI-17 farms, had already lived on farms dispersed throughout the area. More than three-quarters of those interviewed disagreed that they lived

TABLE 13

## SETTLER SATISFACTION WITH THEIR PROJECT FARM

Strongly Agree	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know or Does Not Apply	Statements
10%	60%	7%	20%	3%	0%	Our farm was much like other farms in the area.
10	7	7	63	13	0	We lived too far from town.
7	3	3	53	20	13	We lived too far from friends and relatives.
0	3	0	73	7	17	Our neighbors disapproved of the government helping us.
13	23	17	30	13	3	The farm <u>buildings</u> were in good condition when we moved in.
13	17	13	33	20	3	The farm <u>land</u> was in good condition when we moved in.
13	63	0	20	0	3	We didn't have much trouble meeting our loan payments.
20	40	0	23	3	13	Our standard of living while we were on the farm was as good as our neighbors'.
53	43	0	0	0	3	Our participation in the project was certainly worthwhile, now that we look back on it.

SOURCE: Author's fieldwork based on thirty interviews.

too far from town, and nearly as many indicated they did not feel isolated from their friends and relatives (table 13).

The perceived lack of isolation was due largely to the relatively high degree of mobility enjoyed by the project families. Virtually all owned a car or truck, although gasoline was never plentiful due to the



low incomes of the farmers as well as fuel rationing during World War II. The gently-rolling landscape was criss-crossed at one mile intervals with good quality gravel section line roads. Federal, state and county highways connected service centers throughout the region. As early as 1936 a preliminary RR-WI-17 plan stated that "practically all state and county highways are surfaced with concrete or oil" (CWF Project File). These roads were built initially for the rapid movement of milk from farms to markets.

Physical isolation was also minimized because the Central Wisconsin Farms Project area had a relatively high density of family farms and service centers. The average project farm was situated less than five miles from a town or village which offered basic services. The small size of the majority of the area's farms meant that neighboring farms were located close to the project farms. At the time RR-WI-17 was being implemented, the density of family farms averaged between five to seven per square mile.

Central Wisconsin Farms Project settlers evidentially have been rather acutely aware of the "cost" of distance to needed services and friends. "I bought for good farm and for location . . . wanted close to school" (Elstrom, 1974). "We wanted to be close to town so we could be closer to Sister [parochial] School" (Schommer, 1974). "We were right in the middle of them [friends and relatives]" (Zuther, 1974).

Absence of social isolation. Acceptance of the project farm families into the rural community was accomplished with little difficulty. It might be expected that the new settlers would have been looked at with disdain by their neighbors who had had little or no governmental

assistance in the purchase of their farms. This feeling could have been heightened had the non-project families identified the RR-WI-17 program as a "giveaway", much in the fashion as some of the current welfare programs are identified by the citizenry. In addition, neighbors who had planned to expand their operations by annexing the project farm, believing it would be available on the open market, might have vented their frustrations on the new project settler who "took their land."

It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that although most families had neighbors who knew they were "on the project," only one settler believed his neighbors disapproved of the government's assistance (table 13). Much of this absence of censure was due to the "times", for the period 1936 to 1943 was one of economic depression and saw widespread governmental assistance in many forms to large numbers of people. Many neighbors of the project settlers had themselves received some form of assistance. The Central Wisconsin Farms Project program required the project families to work hard and follow rather specific guidelines in the operation of the farm and household. Other families did not therefore view the project settlers as freeloaders. Because the project families and farms were representative of the area, the project simply was not visible and could not easily become the object of neighborhood scorn.

The integration of the new families as they infiltrated the rural community was not without its problems, however. Sometimes neighbors did not understand the reasons for, and the scope of, the Central Wisconsin Farms Project. Typical quotes include: "They knew we was on something and they didn't understand what" (Schommer, 1974), and "They wondered how we could do that" (West, 1974). Despite the limited competition

among prospective clients for seventy-two project farms, some enmity was directed toward those who were selected by a few of the unsuccessful applicants. "There was a lot of them after this place, but they had a 'start', and they wouldn't even talk to us after we got this" (Zuther, 1974).

Economic stability. The federal administration stated that the project farms should have been sufficiently large to occupy the operator's time fully and allow the family to live without engaging in outside employment (CSF Project File). It is the writer's opinion that the majority of the RR-WI-17 farms were indeed large enough and of sufficient quality to adequately provide a livelihood for the settlers, particularly with regard to the first years of residency of their farms. The period during which the project was implemented was one of great economic uncertainty, and project farm income, although adequate, certainly was meager by today's standards (table 14). It is doubtful that the financial status of neighboring non-project farm families was much different.

Settler reaction to the adequacy of their farm was mixed. There appears to have been no general agreement among those interviewed whether or not the farm buildings or land were in good condition or were sufficient for an economic farming operation at the time the settlers moved onto their farms (table 13). Some dissatisfaction with the adequacy of the farm income can be attributed, however, to the strict attention paid by the project administration to the settler's debt payments. Repayments were designed to satisfy the loans within a reasonably short period of time, and the administration made debt retirement a priority item in the family budgets. As table 14 indicates, very little money

TABLE 14

## RR-WI-17 FARMS FINANCIAL STATEMENT, 1942

<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Average Project Farm</u>
Farm income	\$2725
Outside income	195
Cash from loans	<u>68</u>
Total cash available	\$2988
<u>Expenditures</u>	
Farm operating expense	\$1334
Home expense	665
Capital goods purchased	432
Debt payments	<u>489</u>
Total expenditures	\$2920
<u>Balance</u>	\$68

SOURCE: Kolb and Sansum, 1942, p. 12.

remained for "luxury" purchases after basic expenses had been met.

Table 14 does indicate that "outside income" was necessary in order for the average family to realize a favorable cash balance throughout the year, a condition which ran counter to the ideal that families should not have to engage in outside employment. However, fewer than half of those settlers interviewed said they had outside jobs in the first few years of living on their project farms. Although some of this work was done to increase the families' "spending money", often it became a necessity for the continued survival of the farm and its family. "It was rough . . . did lots of winter work" (Brusky, 1974). "He took a job in the evenings just to get a-going" (Zuther, 1974). "I needed to get more money and Kolb suggested it. Hauled coal for a couple of months,

then worked in a feed mill for thirty-five years" (Grippentrog, 1974).

Most supplemental employment was part-time or seasonal in nature and involved unskilled laboring. Working at logging or in a lumber mill, particularly during the winter when a farmer is normally not as busy as in other seasons, was cited by a third of those employed. Driving a truck was another source of income. This situation is still commonplace in rural Wisconsin, and these data should not be interpreted as meaning RR-WI-17 was in the main inadequate in providing for the financial needs of the settlers during the early years.

#### The Ownership Years, 1943-1973

If, through the years, the project settler perceived his farm and standard of living to be like his neighbors, and if economic factors influenced each to a similar degree, it is probable that the settler's length of tenure would be no different from his non-project neighbor's. This section examines the comparative lengths of tenure, the reasons for the sale and retention of project farms, and the writer's analysis as well as the settlers' retrospective views of the worth of RR-WI-17.

#### Length of Tenure

The length of farm tenure did not differ significantly between project and non-project farm families. A significant difference in the mean length of tenure between the groups, if it were to exist, could be interpreted in two contradictory ways. If the project families had lived a shorter length of time on their farms, a deficiency in the Central Wisconsin Farms Project program might have been indicated. On the other hand, a shorter length of tenure could be a sign that the

resettlement program was so successful in its rehabilitative aspects that the farm families were able to move from their original farms either to larger operations or to well-paying non-farm enterprises.

The 72 project families had averaged 17.3 years on their original farms while the control group families had resided an average of 15.0 years on theirs during the period 1943 through 1973. Results of a difference of means test indicate that no significant difference exists between the two groups in their mean length of tenure (table 15). The equivalence between the project settlers and their neighbors in this aspect of settlement is particularly impressive considering the initial economic plight of many of the RR-WI-17 families.

TABLE 15  
MEAN LENGTH OF TENURE

Study Group	Number of Farms	Mean	Standard Deviation	Difference of Means	
				Critical t (0.05)	Calculated t
Project	72	17.29	10.24		
Control	72	14.99	12.56	1.96	1.56

SOURCE: Author's calculations based on data from county record books of Clark, Jackson, Marathon, and Wood Counties, Wisconsin.

An analysis of the chronological distribution of sell-out dates does show significant differences between the two groups of settlers (table 16). More than twice the number of control group farmers sold their farms in the first six years (1943-1948) than did the project farmers. This may indicate that the RR-WI-17 program attained its objective of rehabilitation at an early date and that the financial and

TABLE 16

## CHRONOLOGICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SELL-OUT DATES

Year	Project Farms		Control Farms	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1943-1948	15	21%	32	44%
1949-1953	11	15	8	11
1954-1958	8	11	3	4
1959-1963	12	17	3	4
1964-1968	5	7	3	4
1969-1973	13	18	6	8
Did not sell	8	11	17	24

Chi-square test

Critical  $\chi^2$  (0.05) = 12.59

Calculated  $\chi^2$  = 20.61

SOURCE: Author's calculations based on data from county record books of Clark, Jackson, Marathon, and Wood Counties, Wisconsin.

technical assistance offered to the settlers "nurtured and sustained" them throughout the difficult initial stage of the ownership period.

More than twice the number of control group operators still own their original farm compared with the project farmers. No reason for this discrepancy is readily discernable. It may be significant, however, that as late as 1968, an almost identical number of original owners of both groups (twenty-nine percent of the project settlers and thirty-two percent of the control settlers) still retained the farms they had purchased in 1943. It was during the subsequent five years (1969-1973) that over sixty percent (thirteen) of the remaining project owners sold their farms, while only twenty-six percent (six) of the control group settlers sold theirs. The large proportion of project settler farm sales during this period was probably due to the husbands' reaching retirement age.

In 1943, the average age of the project farmers was 37.4 years. The average project farm operator would therefore have reached the retirement age of sixty-five in 1970. Although the mean age of control farm operators in 1943 is not known, they may have been younger than the typical project farmer. More than fifty percent of the RR-WI-17 families of those interviewed were already on their farms by 1939. Most of these had been operating farms prior to their resettlement. In contrast, all that is known of the control group families is that they purchased their farms in 1943 and probably had not resided on those units prior to that year. If the control group farmers were a few years younger, the number of farm sales by this group should show a marked increase during the post-1973 period as they reach retirement age.

#### Reasons for Sale or Retention

The original RR-WI-17 settlers contacted by the writer were asked why they had sold the farm. Twenty-two of this group had sold their farms and, of these, two-thirds cited age, illness, or death of a spouse as the prime reason (table 17). Such factors were largely independent of the conditions inherent in the initial selection of project families and farms or of the administration of the project. It is unlikely that the project and control residents' ages differed significantly in 1943 inasmuch as all those families were apparently purchasing their first farm then. Age, illness, and death, therefore, were likely to have affected project and non-project families similarly.

The burden of operating a farm with illness in the family can be seen in the following comments made by two of the project settlers: "My husband had arthritis and milking cows was too hard" (Steltenpohl, 1974),



TABLE 17

## RR-WI-17 REASONS FOR FARM SALE

Reason	Settler Families	
	Number	Percent
Too old	6	27%
Illness	5	23
Death of spouse	3	14
Better farm	4	18
Non-farm job	1	5
Unspecified	3	14

SOURCE: Author's fieldwork.

and "My husband had gall bladder surgery. The children were married and gone. I couldn't handle it alone and couldn't find help" (Hansen, 1974). The crisis which death created is likewise exemplified by a widow's statement that ". . . husband died and sons had other jobs" (Thur, 1974). Aging produces its physical and mental limitations, also. "The machinery and we got old" (Elstrom, 1974). "We were too old and help was too expensive" (Kraus, 1974).

It is noteworthy that few of the project settlers sold their RR-WI-17 farms because they had found better farms elsewhere (table 17). This serves to reinforce the initial contention of the project administration that the farms were adequate for the settling families. One of those who bought another farm commented that his eighty acre farm "was too small . . . equal to about a sixty acre farm because it had a slough in the middle" (Damert, 1974). Another, referring to her parents' homestead, ". . . sold when our home farm was available" (Dunlap, 1974).

The eight project families who remained on their farms expressed contentment with the quality of life there. Some of this satisfaction

was based on aesthetic grounds, probably of the same nature that has always attracted people to an idyllic life in the country. The wife of one RR-WI-17 farmer summed up this feeling as she recollected her changing perceptions, "Then [ca. 1945] I wanted to live in the city. Now, I could leave the farm, but where would I walk in the woods?" (Wenzel, 1974).

People commonly resist change to unfamiliar surroundings, and many rural families perceive changing their residence even to a small community to constitute a disrupting influence on their living patterns. Those RR-WI-17 families still on their farms in 1973 resisted parting with them because they practically regarded the farmstead and land as part of their whole being. The families had established strong neighborhood social ties as well and were still active in local social institutions.

The force of "inertia," of "staying put" is so great that most of the project families who remained on their farms had done so despite having had to make economic sacrifices which would perhaps not have been necessary if they had moved into a nearby town. Four of the eight derived sufficient income from renting the land to other farmers or by having the son work the acreage. "Since 1963 we have rented out the land" (Schommer, 1974). "Our oldest son was twenty-one when Herman died. He quit his job in town and farmed until the other boy graduated" (Meyer, 1974).

#### Continuing Economic Stability

Despite the Central Wisconsin Farm Project settlers' original history of financial problems and the attendant vagaries of the uncertain

economic climate of the 1930s and 1940s, the large majority of participants did not experience undue difficulty in meeting the terms of the loan. Over three-quarters of the settlers agreed that they did not have much trouble meeting their loan payments (table 13). Several factors helped to create this favorable situation, among them the improving economic picture of the post-depression period and the liberal amortization terms given the project families. Most of the project settlers appear to have been imbued with a "puritan work ethic" and had inherited from the depression years a dislike of indebtedness. "Most of us paid that farm debt in ten or twelve years, but it was because we were so debt-shy" (Wenzel, 1974).

The RR-WI-17 administration worked closely with each family during the lease period to ensure a good record of debt repayment from the beginning. For some, this accomplishment was gained initially through a good deal of discipline and belt tightening. "It was scratch all the way . . . \$200 per year plus chattel mortgage on the cattle" (Mueller, 1974). Flexibility in the repayment schedule shown by the local administration helped tide the families through the first difficult years. "If we did have trouble, we'd just tell 'em about it and they'd kinda work with us" (Zuther, 1974).

One of the chief goals of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project was to take farm families off public assistance. The assistance given the settlers during the 1936-1943 period effectively constituted "welfare", although the families may have officially been removed from the relief rolls. If the project did have a positive influence upon the settlement history of the participating families, it should be revealed

in the permanent reduction of numbers of families who required public assistance to sustain themselves. Accordingly, it was postulated that the majority of those families who were on welfare prior to their project participation never returned to requiring public assistance.

Only data from Clark County where thirty-six of the seventy-two families resided was available. According to records maintained by the Department of Social Services, sixteen (forty-four percent) had received public assistance prior to 1943. Only one of the thirty-six RR-WI-17 families subsequently appeared on the welfare rolls in the period 1943-1974. Financial rehabilitation of the project settlers was an integral part of the RR-WI-17 goals. The elimination of project family reliance upon welfare strongly implies that the project attained this end.

#### Reflections

The "look back" on the years of residence on their project farms by the RR-WI-17 settlers is primarily one of satisfaction. This perception has evolved despite the hard work invested in the operation of the project farms and marginal incomes, particularly during the first years of the program. Much of the feeling of satisfaction which people may have is based on a comparison of people in similar circumstances. If one perceives he is on an equal plane with others, he is likely to be satisfied with his lot, despite the fact his actual income may be low and his time and labor input are high. Seventy percent of those interviewed did believe their standard of living was as good as their neighbors (table 13). Although income figures for the project and control families were not available, the similar nature and evolution of farms on the landscape suggests that the standard of living among these dairy

farmers of central Wisconsin did not vary greatly.

Of course, the perception of "rank" with regards to living standards could and did change as a family remained on its farm. "We were a little low. . . . After World War II we came up--maybe we were even a little better" (Wenzel, 1974). Although external conditions such as the state of the economy played a large part in the changing level of satisfaction derived from the operation of project farms by the settlers, much change in this perceived status is due to the role of individual drive and accomplishment, or "gumption" as one settler described it (Meyer, 1974). It is the writer's observation that the poorer farming operations within the RR-WI-17 group were developed in the 1943-1973 period by settlers who, when interviewed, appeared to be unrealistically critical of the project administration. These people probably used criticism to cover up for their own inadequacies. On the other hand, success breeds satisfaction and the development of better farms was largely a result of the exertion of much time and labor on the part of their owners. Thus, the perceived level of satisfaction among the group of RR-WI-17 families was not wholly determined by the organizational structure of the Central Wisconsin Farms Project.

A recurring wish on the part of many of the remaining project settlers is that such a program be available today. Those interviewed feel that RR-WI-17 was important in their lives and believe, often with an evangelistic zeal, that others should be given a similar opportunity. They envision the need for a present-day "Central Wisconsin Farms Project" because of the prohibitive costs entailed in becoming established in farming and the need to stem the rural to urban flight.

The two thoughts are mirrored in the following comments. ". . . one of the best things they ever done . . . they really made it easy for me to buy this. . . . should do it today, especially with these young men that's in the service" (Phillips, 1974). "I think they should have a program for the young farmers today" (Grippentrog, 1974). "We would never have got started if it hadn't been for that. They'll have to do that again if they want to keep people on the farm" (Zuther, 1974).

These strong feelings are significant for at least two reasons. First, they appear to be at odds with what one would expect from participants in other "New Deal" settlement programs because of the poor initial organization in those projects and the subsequent dissatisfaction rampant among the families. This again speaks well for what in retrospect appears to have been careful planning and implementation of the RR-WI-17 project. Second, most government programs have been evaluated on "external" factors such as their political assets or liabilities and budgetary considerations. The rapidly-changing political and economic climate of the country has caused innumerable government programs and agencies to be terminated not long after they were instituted. If the continued existence of programs were dependent upon the results attained by the programs in their impact upon the people who were assisted, "successful" programs might continue beyond changes which presidential administrations commonly bring. The country might be spared the increased costs of burgeoning agencies which appear to be decreasing in their effectiveness.

The majority of project settlers realized satisfaction from their participation in the project. In view of the fact that the families had

already resided and farmed in the immediate area, that they were stringently chosen, and that the program of government assistance was adequate for the settlers to sustain them through the first critical years of project participation, settler satisfaction is not surprising. Virtually all settlers agreed that their participation in RR-WI-17 was certainly worthwhile (table 13). Although operating and living on a project farm was fraught with hardships and long hours of labor, the majority of participants believed they enjoyed a standard of living at least equal to that of their neighbors. Finally, in retrospect, nearly all harbored the conviction that RR-WI-17 was so worthwhile that programs like it should be reinstituted today.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary

The economic and social chaos of the national depression was a catalyst for the creation of numerous innovative and somewhat radical programs at the federal level of government. Among these, the resettlement of poor rural people residing on marginally-productive lands was seen as a panacea to curing their economic ills as well as a means to effect a subsequent and better use of those lands. Under the initial auspices of the Resettlement Administration, one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" agencies, a variety of resettlement projects were begun. One of these, the Central Wisconsin Farms Project, has been analyzed in this research.

The Central Wisconsin Farms Project, also referred to as RR-WI-17, was primarily an instrument of federally-directed policy. At first it was to have provided a means by which hundreds of farm families, displaced by the closing of submarginal lands to agricultural production, could be resettled on productive farms. This goal was later changed, however, and RR-WI-17 served to "rehabilitate" financially-troubled farm families already living in the local area.

This research has shown that while the Central Wisconsin Farms Project had little distinct impact on the organization of the landscape it did have an influence on the lives of the participants. Project farms



are today indistinguishable from neighboring farms. Both the project and non-project farms appear to have evolved similarly during the period 1943-1973. Such evolutionary trends include a common percentage of farm sales, expansions, and absorptions; an increase in farm sizes; a continuance in the numbers of buildings on farmsteads; and a similarly rising level in the quality of farm buildings and land.

The positive influence on project settlers was measured in a number of ways. The seventy-two families have resided on their farms a comparable length of time relative to their non-project neighbors. Although almost half of the settlers had received public assistance prior to their joining RR-WI-17, all but one family were able to shun further reliance upon welfare. Furthermore, it appears that the great majority of the project settlers have realized a satisfactory standard of living from their participation in the project.

The following are suggested as reasons why the Central Wisconsin Farms Project evolved as it did.

1. The farms selected for inclusion into RR-WI-17 had already been established and were representative of those in the locality. Farmstead buildings were numerically, architecturally, and qualitatively similar to surrounding farms. Land quality and acreages were also typical.
2. The prevailing settlement pattern was one of individual farms dispersed throughout the rural landscape. Project farms conformed to this pattern.
3. Project farms centered on milk production as the major source of income. Dairying was and has continued to be the

prevailing system of agriculture in the region.

4. Virtually all project farms were situated in close proximity to needed services.
5. Families selected for the project had all had experience in farming operation--primarily dairying.
6. Virtually all the project families had resided on farms within the Central Wisconsin Farms Project area. Physically and culturally, therefore, the settlers were "resettled" in familiar environs. Most were located close to friends and relatives.
7. The project families were grateful for the opportunity to "get started" on a farm which they were able to purchase in a time of great economic distress. Having had a background in farming, few settlers harbored unrealistic illusions concerning probable income levels, work loads, and living standards which would result from operating a project farm.
8. The terms which the Farm Security Administration extended to the settlers for the purchase of the farm were realistically balanced against the earning power of those families.
9. The project administration offered financial and expert technical assistance to the project families and supervised them closely during the difficult first years of the project.
10. The local project administration adapted itself both to the changing goals of the national agencies and to the varied needs of the settlers. Flexibility, rather than rigidity, marked its day-to-day dealings with the RR-WI-17 families.

This research has focused upon a government-guided settling process and its impact upon the organization of the landscape and those families who participated in the program. The study is by nature geographical for, as Wooldridge (1967) has stated, "Geography concerns land and man" (pp. 27-28). The changing landscape patterns created by the evolution of both project and non-project farms dispersed throughout a portion of central Wisconsin has been traced. This "impress of the works of man upon the landscape" is viewed by Sauer (1967) as a basic component of geography (pp. 100-115). More specifically, the primary theme of the study lies within the realm of settlement geography, to a great extent because the initial phases of the project involved the occupation of dwellings, a process which Stone (1965) characterizes as a focus of settlement geography (pp. 346-355). In addition, environmental perception studies have, in recent years, become a recognized facet of geography. This study has measured some of the perceptions project settlers harbored concerning their farms and the rural community into which they settled.

#### Implications

The thought that government should promote resettlement schemes today is still alive in some government circles (C. Williams, 1973, p. 11). Also, many of the original RR-WI-17 settlers interviewed in 1974 would strongly advise the government to carry out another "Central Wisconsin Farms Project" at the present time.

The writer believes that social and economic conditions in 1975 are antagonistic to the development of a large-scale rural resettlement scheme such as RR-WI-17, at least in the state of Wisconsin. This conviction is held as the result of the analysis of conditions existant

during the 1930s which created a need for such projects and comparing them with the political, social and economic environment of today. The reasons for this view are:

1. Present-day economic and social conditions are not as severe as those of the 1930s. Although farm operators of today are financially pressured, virtually no farms have gone on the auction block for default on mortgage or tax obligations. Today there are not great numbers of "unemployed" farmers who have little opportunity to change vocations.
2. Rural zoning, a prime precipitant of the RR-WI-17 project, was effective in the late 1930s in removing poor and marginally-productive land from agricultural use, and has not allowed agriculture to be reinstituted in these areas. Therefore, there is no group of "displaced" farmers to be resettled.
3. The functions which RR-WI-17 performed a generation ago are largely carried out by other government agencies today. At the federal level, for example, the Farmer's Home Administration offers the farmer credit and supervision. State organizations such as the University of Wisconsin Extension provide technical assistance through its county offices.
4. The implementation of another Central Wisconsin Farms Project today would probably be prohibitively expensive. In the late 1930s and early 1940s representative dairy farms in the study area sold for between \$5,000 and \$10,000. At the present time such farms sell for an average of \$150,000

(Ringstad, 1975). Capital investment needs for machinery, buildings, and cattle have also risen sharply. Although the farmer of a generation ago could make a satisfactory living milking fifteen head of dairy cattle, the 1975 Wisconsin farm operator needs to maintain a herd of approximately forty cows in order to realize a satisfactory income from dairying.

5. People in general hold a "level of expectation" concerning the amount of material wealth and possessions which they perceive should rightly be theirs as members of society. This level has risen greatly in the past thirty years concomitantly with the rise in personal income. Thus, few families would be satisfied with eking out a living on a small farm today as indeed was the lot of the typical RR-WI-17 family in the early 1940s. Any new resettlement project would need to satisfy the higher income desires of its settlers.
6. The continuance or establishment of family-operated farms on a settlement project would run counter to current trends in farming in the United States and particularly in Wisconsin. Agricultural production has increasingly come from fewer but larger farms, many of them corporate or "factory farms," which can operate much more efficiently than can smaller family units. The number of family farms in Wisconsin has accordingly been halved during the past forty years. These trends are apparently a natural response to competitive

forces at work in the agricultural sector of the economy.

7. The values with which the family farm may have been imbued by society in the past are now being re-examined and questioned. If the family farm no longer deserves a special effort toward its preservation as a social institution, then the decline in its numbers may actually be desirable from a social as well as an economic viewpoint.
8. Alternate means of gaining a satisfactory living from agriculture from other than the traditional working of one's own land are now available. On the sandy outwash deposits of central Wisconsin, for example, the production of vegetables for processing such as sweet corn, snap beans, peppers, and potatoes has become an important segment of the state's agriculture. Land is readily available for rent, and persons with farming backgrounds could continue in agriculture without incurring massive debt for the purchase of a farm. Risks to the operator are reduced somewhat relative to the traditional systems of farming, as the local processors and farmers usually sign contracts during the late winter period for delivery of the produce later in the season, thus guaranteeing a market for those vegetables.

A chief benefit of retrospection is the value it may have regarding future developments. Settlement of people, whether it be government-sponsored or privately initiated, requires the recognition of certain values in order for the program to attain some measure of viability and permanence. The demonstration of positive influence upon the families

who participated in the Central Wisconsin Farms Project has implications for planners and administrators of other resettlement schemes. Although government-directed rural resettlement programs are currently negligible in this country, much attention is being directed at solving problems of the nation's cities through urban renewal.

If a close analogy exists between the processes occurring within the Central Wisconsin Farms Project and urban renewal programs, as this writer believes, then planners should consider the following as being necessary for the well-being of those persons who are to be resettled:

1. The dwellings to which persons are to be moved should be architecturally representative of the general neighborhood and should not be easily identifiable as "resettlement housing."
2. As much as possible, the dwellings would best be dispersed throughout an area to facilitate integration of the settlers into their new neighborhoods.
3. Families should be moved only into neighborhoods where they perceive a similarity with their former neighborhood and where their new neighbors are of a similar socio-economic status to their own. In this manner, the resettlement clients could more easily make social contacts and feel they are an integral part of that neighborhood.
4. Social trauma created by moving families can also be reduced by ensuring that they retain family ties. Observance of this principle may often require "resettling" families a minimal distance from their former address.

5. Local project administrators should be carefully selected and be familiar with social and economic conditions in the area where they will be working.
6. Programs should allow some flexibility at the local level to aid in gaining support of the community and to meet the needs of the resettlement clients, while continuing to implement the general goals of the program.

Settlement projects which are to come may be spared avoidable expense, both in the economic and social realm, if planners can learn of past successes and mistakes. It appears that all too often, new ventures are conceived and implemented without the advantages of hindsight. Here in the United States the large number and variety of New Deal settlement projects provide an ideal source of information for such analysis of settlement processes.



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## APPENDIX 1

### RR-WI-17 PROJECT FARM DATA, 1936-1943

Source: Federal Record Center

1. Number of farms	72	
2. Size of project farms		
a. mean	95.03 acres	
b. standard deviation	32.12 acres	
3. Structures of farms		
<u>Type of structure</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
a. house	70	1.00
b. barn	78	1.15
c. silo	62	0.91
d. garage	35	0.51
e. granary	49	0.72
f. corn crib	12	0.18
g. chicken house	58	0.85
h. hog house	16	0.24
i. milk house	13	0.19
j. machine shed	52	0.74
k. smoke house	1	0.01
l. woodshed	28	0.41
m. other structures	11	0.15
n. outdoor toilet (not mentioned in appraisals; probably on most)		
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL STRUCTURES	484	7.12
4. Appraised value		
a. mean value of land	\$2,434.20	
b. mean value of structures	\$2,483.85	
	<hr/>	
TOTAL MEAN VALUE OF FARM	\$4,918.05	
5. Mean dairy herd (from forty-seven farms)		12.5 cows
6. Location		

a. mean distance to nearest town	4.6 miles
b. mean distance to nearest church	2.5 miles
c. mean distance to nearest school	1.1 miles

7. Services (from seventy farm appraisals)

a. farms served by Rural Free Delivery (RFD)	67	95.7%
b. farms served by telephone	42	60.0
c. farms served by electricity	16	22.8
d. farms served by school bus route	1	1.4
e. farms served by milk route	64	91.4

## APPENDIX 2

### PROJECT AND CONTROL FARM SURVEY, 1974

The following data are derived from evaluation of farmsteads which appeared to be in use in the summer of 1974, whether they constituted the "core" of functioning farms or served as supplemental building ensembles. There were sixty project farms and forty-nine control group farms which were therefore included.

<u>Freestanding Structure</u>	<u>Project Farms</u>		<u>Control Farms</u>	
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Mean</u>
a. house	60	1.00	51	1.04
b. barn	67	1.17	50	1.02
c. silo	69	1.15	50	1.02
d. garage	35	0.58	33	0.67
e. grainery	21	0.35	8	0.16
f. corn crib	13	0.27	17	0.35
g. chicken house	12	0.20	16	0.33
h. hog house	4	0.07	11	0.22
i. milk house	35	0.58	31	0.63
j. machine shed	56	0.93	53	1.08
k. smoke house	0	0.00	0	0.00
l. outdoor toilet	9	0.15	11	0.22
m. other structures	29	0.48	19	0.39
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL STRUCTURES	410	6.83	350	7.14

### APPENDIX 3

#### RR-WI-17 SETTLER INTERVIEWS, 1974

##### General Questions

1. What did you do before moving onto the project farm?
2. Did you live in the [study] area before moving onto the project farm?
3. Did you have farming experience before moving onto the project farm?
4. How did you hear of the project?
5. Why do you feel the government chose you to purchase a project farm?
6. When did you move onto the project farm?
7. What ages were the family members in 1943?
8. What is the main reason you sold your project farm?
9. What is the main reason you have kept the project farm if you did not sell it?
10. Did you have any outside jobs in the first years you were on the project farm?

##### Statements

Following are statements relating to your participation in the Central Wisconsin Farms Project. As you read each statement, please indicate your reaction to it by placing a number, 0 through 5, in the blank at the beginning of that statement. Use this scale:

Strongly Agree = 5  
Agree = 4  
Indifferent = 3

Disagree = 2  
Strongly Disagree = 1  
Do Not Know or  
Does Not Apply = 0

- \_\_\_1. We were clearly told what the purpose of the project was.
- \_\_\_2. It was easy for us to get on the project.
- \_\_\_3. The farm buildings were in good condition when we moved in.
- \_\_\_4. The farm land was in good condition when we moved in.
- \_\_\_5. There was enough cropland.
- \_\_\_6. There was enough pasture.
- \_\_\_7. The price we paid for the farm was too high.
- \_\_\_8. Our farm was much like other farms in the area.
- \_\_\_9. We chose the farm we wanted from the project.
- \_\_\_10. We lived too far from friends and relatives.
- \_\_\_11. We lived too far from town.
- \_\_\_12. Our neighbors knew we were on the project.
- \_\_\_13. Our neighbors disapproved of the government helping us.
- \_\_\_14. There were about twenty-five other farm families also on the project.
- \_\_\_15. The Project Manager and Home Management Supervisor, Mr. Kolb and Miss Sansum, visited too often.
- \_\_\_16. They forced their ideas on us.
- \_\_\_17. The federal government didn't really know what our problems were.
- \_\_\_18. Mr. Kolb and Miss Sansum knew our problems.
- \_\_\_19. They could have helped more with our farm problems.
- \_\_\_20. The government lent us enough money to start our farm.
- \_\_\_21. Our farm was large enough for us to make a satisfactory living.
- \_\_\_22. If we had not participated in the project, we could have bought another farm at that time anyway.
- \_\_\_23. The government should have let us purchase the farm earlier.
- \_\_\_24. Our standard of living while we were on the farm was as good as our neighbors'.

- \_\_\_25. We didn't have much trouble meeting our loan payments.
- \_\_\_26. The loan repayment period was too long.
- \_\_\_27. After we bought our farm, we wanted to buy more acreage.
- \_\_\_28. It was easy to find land for sale close to our farm.
- \_\_\_29. Our farm was too large for us to manage without hired help.
- \_\_\_30. Our participation in the project was certainly worthwhile, now that we look back on it.

## APPENDIX 4

### STATISTICAL TESTS EMPLOYED

1. Difference of means test (Frederick Williams, 1968, p. 79).

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{\left( \frac{\sum d_1^2 + \sum d_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2} \right) \left( \frac{n_1 + n_2}{n_1 \cdot n_2} \right)}}$$

2. The chi-square test ascertains whether the frequency distributions are significantly different (Gregory, 1968, pp. 172-175).

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where O is the observed frequency, and E (expected frequency) is calculated as follows:

$$E = \frac{(\text{row total})(\text{column total})}{\text{overall total}}$$

3. The z test ascertains whether the values within the categories of the frequency distribution are significantly different (Freund and Williams, 1965, p. 282).

$$z = \frac{\frac{x_1}{n_1} - \frac{x_2}{n_2}}{\sqrt{p(1-p) \left( \frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

$$\text{where } p = \frac{x_1 + x_2}{n_1 + n_2}$$