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FARM TENANCY IN THE
UNITED STATES

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE 1920 CENSUS
RELATIVE TO FARMS CLASSIFIED BY TENURE
SUPPLEMENTED BY PERTINENT DATA
FROM OTHER SOURCES

BY

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AND
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CENSUS MONOGRAPHS

IV

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CONTENTS.

	Page.
FOREWORD.....	9
CHAPTER I. Introduction.....	11
Ownership and tenancy.....	11
The farm tenant and the farm laborer.....	14
Tenancy and the farm.....	15
The social aspect of tenancy.....	16
CHAPTER II. The growth of farm tenancy: 1880 to 1920.....	19
CHAPTER III. Significance of increase in tenant farms and in leased land...	29
CHAPTER IV. Tenancy and type of farming.....	33
Farm land by tenure.....	36
Distribution of the farm investment.....	40
CHAPTER V. Geographic distribution of tenancy.....	45
CHAPTER VI. Tenancy and farm values.....	54
Relation between rent paid and value of farms rented..	65
CHAPTER VII. Tenancy and the speculative element in land ownership....	67
CHAPTER VIII. Race and nativity of farm tenants.....	71
CHAPTER IX. Tenancy and farm income.....	80
CHAPTER X. The agricultural ladder - Farmers by age.....	83
Farmers by age and tenure.....	83
Farmers by age and size of farm.....	97
CHAPTER XI. The agricultural ladder - Farm experience.....	102
Mortality among tenants and graduation into ownership..	110
CHAPTER XII. The agricultural ladder - Special surveys.....	115
CHAPTER XIII. Types of tenancy.....	117
Terms under which farms are leased.....	128
CHAPTER XIV. Stability of tenure.....	135
CHAPTER XV. Conclusion.....	138
GENERAL TABLES.....	143

TEXT TABLES.

	Page.
TABLE 1. Number of farms in the United States, by tenure, with increase and number of tenants per 1,000 farmers: 1880 to 1920.....	20
TABLE 2. Percentage of all farms operated by tenants, by geographic divisions and sections: 1880 to 1920.....	23
TABLE 3. Increase or decrease in number of farm operators, by tenure, by geographic divisions and sections: 1880 to 1920.....	24
TABLE 4. Average acreage of all land and of improved land per farm, for the North, South, and West: 1850 to 1920.....	25
TABLE 5. Percentage of tenancy among farmers in Canada and in selected border States: 1880 to 1920.....	26
TABLE 6. Acreage of all land and of improved land in farms in the United States, by tenure, with increase, and percentage operated by tenants: 1900 to 1920.....	29
TABLE 7. Number and acreage of farms operated by tenants and by part owners: 1900 to 1920.....	31
TABLE 8. Number, acreage, and improved acreage of farms operated by part owners, by geographic divisions: 1920 and 1910.....	32
TABLE 9. Percentage of tenancy among farmers classified according to principal source of income: 1900.....	33
TABLE 10. Farm tenancy and type of farming in the twelfth Federal reserve district: 1920.....	34
TABLE 11. Percentage of farm acreage improved, by tenure, by geographic divisions: 1920.....	38

	Page.
TABLE 12. Average acreage and average improved acreage per farm, by tenure, by geographic divisions: 1920.....	39
TABLE 13. Percentage of total value of farm property represented by each class, by tenure, by geographic divisions: 1920.....	41
TABLE 14. Average value of farm property per farm and per acre, by tenure, for the United States: 1920 and 1910.....	44
TABLE 15. Number of farms, by tenure, by divisions and States: 1920 and 1910.....	48
TABLE 16. Per cent distribution of all farms by tenure, 1920 and 1910; and increase in number of farms operated by owners and tenants, 1910 to 1920.....	49
TABLE 17. Number and percentage of tenants (including and excluding southern croppers), by color, for the United States and for the South: 1920.....	53
TABLE 18. Miscellaneous farm data for counties grouped according to percentage of tenancy, by geographic divisions, with figures also for Iowa and Kansas: 1920.....	55
TABLE 19. Percentage of farms operated by tenants, and average value of land per acre, with deviations from average, by States, for the North and West and the South: 1920.....	58
TABLE 20. Percentage of farms operated by tenants and average value of land per acre, with deviations from average, by counties, for Iowa and Kansas: 1920.....	60
TABLE 21. Value of farm products per acre and percentage of tenancy, for counties in four States, grouped according to value of products per acre: 1910.....	64
TABLE 22. Percentage which cash rent formed of value of rented farms (land and buildings) in selected counties, by States: 1920.....	66
TABLE 23. Farms and farm acreage in the United States, by color, nativity, and tenure of farmer: 1920.....	71
TABLE 24. Number of farm operators in the United States, by race, nativity, and tenure: 1920 and 1910.....	73
TABLE 25. Native and foreign-born white farmers in the United States, by tenure, by geographic divisions: 1920.....	74
TABLE 26. Increase or decrease in number of foreign-born farm operators in the United States, by country of birth: 1910 to 1920.....	76
TABLE 27. Foreign-born white population, 1920 and 1890, and foreign-born white farm operators and farm population, 1920, by country of birth.....	77
TABLE 28. Number of foreign-born farm operators in the United States, by country of birth and tenure: 1920.....	79
TABLE 29. Farm management data for owners and tenants in Chester County, Pa.: 1911.....	81
TABLE 30. Farm operators in the United States, by age and tenure, with per cent distribution by age: 1890 to 1920.....	84
TABLE 31. Percentage of tenancy among farm operators in each age group: 1890 to 1920.....	85
TABLE 32. Number of tenants per 1,000 farmers in each age group, with percentage of increase: 1890 to 1920.....	90
TABLE 33. Per cent distribution of farmers in each age group by tenure, arranged to show progression from one tenure to another, by geographic divisions: 1920 and 1910.....	94

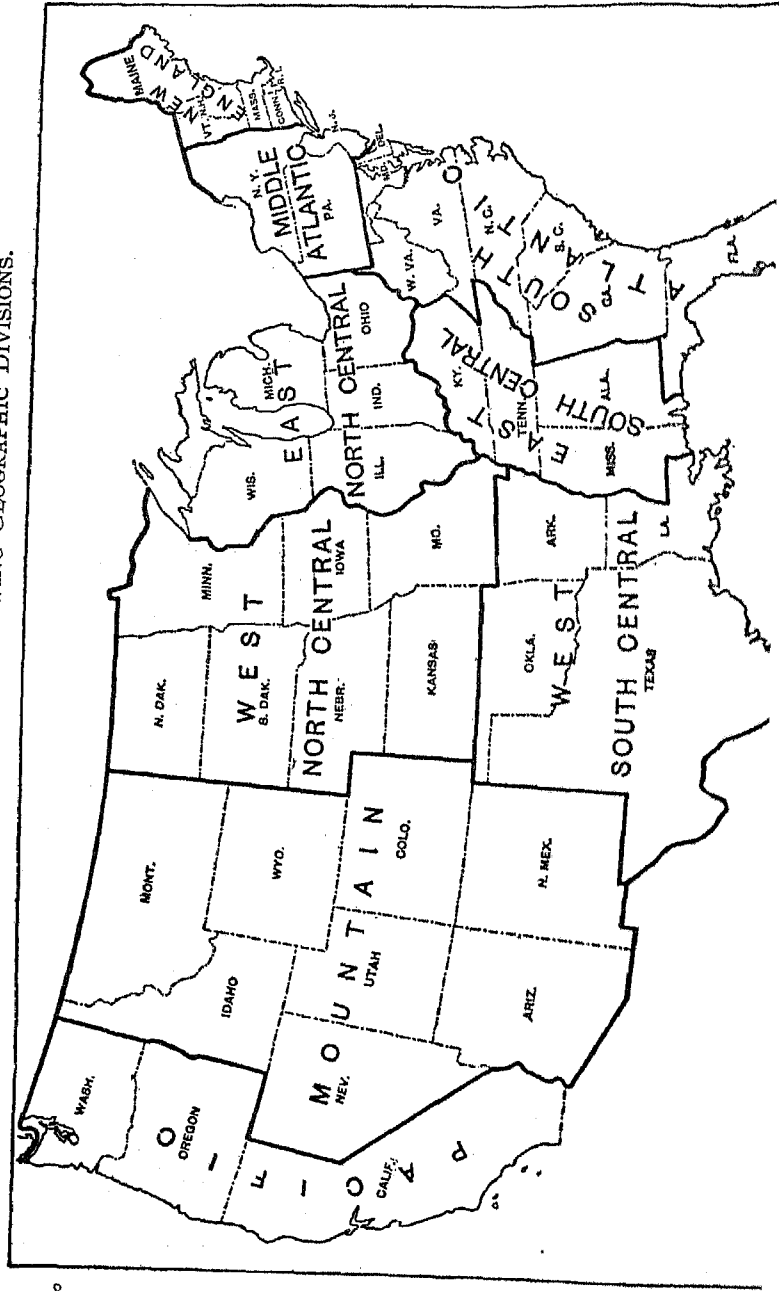
	Page.
TABLE 34. Farmers by age and by size of farm, for the North, South, and West: 1910.	98
TABLE 35. Per cent distribution of farmers in each age group, by size of farm, for the North, South, and West: 1910.	99
TABLE 36. Farm owners classified according to variety of farm experience, by geographic divisions: 1920.	103
TABLE 37. Average age of farm owners and tenants in the United States, and average time under present tenure: 1920.	104
TABLE 38. Average age and farm experience of farm owners in the United States, classified according to number of years as owner: 1920.	106
TABLE 39. Farm owners reporting previous experience as tenant, classified according to number of years as owner: 1920.	109
TABLE 40. Number and percentage of farm owners of less than 10 years' standing who reported previous experience as tenant, by geographic divisions: 1920.	110
TABLE 41. Number of farm owners and tenants in the United States in 1910 and 1920, with estimated mortality during the decade and increase over 1910 survivors.	111
TABLE 42. Number of white farm owners and tenants in the United States in 1910 and 1920, with estimated mortality during the decade and increase over 1910 survivors.	112
TABLE 43. Number of farm owners and tenants in the United States, excluding the South, in 1910 and 1920, with estimated mortality during the decade and increase over 1910 survivors.	113
TABLE 44. Number and acreage of farms in the United States, by tenure: 1920 and 1910.	120
TABLE 45. Number and acreage of farms in the South, with averages and percentages, by tenure: 1920.	121
TABLE 46. Number and acreage of tenant farms in the South, with averages and percentages, by color and form of tenancy: 1920.	124
TABLE 47. Value of all farm property and of the several classes, by tenure (detailed classification), for the North, South, and West: 1920.	125
TABLE 48. Value of lands and buildings, and average value of all classes of property per farm, by tenure (detailed classification), for the North, South, and West: 1920.	126
TABLE 49. Income on landlord's investment, in relation to tenant's labor income: Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, 1913.	131
TABLE 50. Labor income, in relation to method of renting: Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, 1913.	133
TABLE 51. Farm tenants classified according to number of years on farm, by geographic divisions: 1920.	136
TABLE 52. Per cent distribution of white and colored tenants by number of years on farm, by geographic divisions: 1920.	137
GENERAL TABLES FOR GEOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS AND STATES.	
TABLE 53. Number of farms, by tenure, with per cent distribution: 1880 to 1920.	145
TABLE 54. Farm acreage, by tenure, with per cent distribution and percentage of farm land improved: 1920 and 1910.	150
TABLE 55. Average acreage of all land and of improved land per farm, by tenure: 1920 and 1910.	155

	Page.
TABLE 56. Farms and farm acreage, with percentage of farm land improved and average acreage per farm, by tenure (detailed classification): 1920.....	156
TABLE 57. Value of all farm property and of the several classes, by tenure (detailed classification): 1920.....	169
TABLE 58. Value of land and buildings, with average per acre, and average value of all classes of property per farm, by tenure (detailed classification): 1920.....	182
TABLE 59. Percentage of total value of farm property represented by each class, by tenure, for the North and West: 1920.....	195
TABLE 60. Percentage of total value of farm property represented by each class, by tenure, for the South: 1920.....	199
TABLE 61. Farm operators, by age and tenure, with percentage of tenants in each age group: 1920 and 1910.....	202
TABLE 62. Farm operators by race, nativity, and tenure, with per cent distribution by tenure: 1920.....	211
TABLE 63. Farms, tenant farms, and share-tenant farms, 1920; and percentage of tenancy, 1920 and 1910, by States and counties.....	216

MAPS AND DIAGRAMS.

Map of the United States showing geographic divisions.....	8
FIGURE 1. Percentage of all farms operated by tenants, by geographic divisions: 1880 to 1920.....	22
FIGURE 2. Percentage of improved land in farms operated by tenants, owners, and managers, for selected States: 1920.....	37
FIGURE 3. Percentage of total value of farm property represented by each class, for owners and tenants in the North, South, and West: 1920.....	40
FIGURE 4. Average value of farm property per farm, and percentage represented by land, for owners and tenants in selected States: 1920.....	42
FIGURE 5. Per cent distribution of value of live stock, by classes, and average value per farm, for owners and tenants in selected States: 1920.....	45
FIGURE 6. Percentage of farms operated by tenants, by counties: 1920 (map).....	46
FIGURE 7. Percentage of farms operated by tenants, by counties: 1880 (map).....	47
FIGURE 8. Relation between quality of soil and percentage of tenancy: Monroe, Northampton, Lehigh, and Carbon Counties, Pa. (map)....	64
FIGURE 9. Number and percentage of tenants and owners, by age, for the North, South, and West: 1920.....	86
FIGURE 10. Percentage of tenancy in each age group, for selected States: 1920.....	87
FIGURE 11. Percentage of tenancy in each age group, for the North, South, and West: 1890 to 1920.....	88
FIGURE 12. Per cent distribution of farms and farm acreage, by tenure, for the North, South, and West: 1920.....	122
FIGURE 13. Return on landlord's investment, in relation to tenant's labor income: Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, 1913.....	132
FIGURE 14. Percentage of tenants in each labor-income group: Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, 1913.....	132

MAP OF THE UNITED STATES SHOWING GEOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS.



FOREWORD.

The past two decades have witnessed an increased interest in every aspect of agricultural life and agricultural industry in the United States. It is generally recognized that the prosperity of this great fundamental industry is not only essential to the success and prosperity of all other industries, but that it is to a large degree the economic basis of social progress and political stability. Like other industries, agriculture presents two classes of problems. These may be designated as the material and the human. As in other industries also, the former has until quite recently received far more attention than the latter. Scientific research and inventive genius have done much to solve the problems of agricultural technique and to increase the effectiveness of farm equipment and methods of operation. Far less, however, has been accomplished in the matter of improving living and working conditions or, in other words, solving the human problems.

Of these human problems, tenancy was among the first to be recognized and studied. Over forty years ago this question had come to be regarded as of sufficient importance to warrant a special census inquiry, and since that time agricultural economists and statisticians have been giving more and more attention to the matter. The agricultural schedules for each of the last five decennial censuses have contained inquiries concerning tenancy, so that now statistical data are available showing the growth of this form of farm tenure during four decades. Unfortunately the earlier censuses of this period did not include inquiries comparable in all respects with those of the more recent enumerations. As a consequence historical comparisons are not possible in regard to certain aspects of the question.

The authors of this monograph have found it necessary to draw upon other sources than the census schedules for information in interpreting the statistical data, but even with this supplemental material it has not been possible to present a complete picture of the present status of farm tenancy in the United States. It has been found even more difficult to trace tendencies or to predict the course of future developments. In spite of these difficulties, worth-while results have been obtained, and the conclusions arrived at are of an encouraging nature.

It is apparent that, outside of the South, where the cropping system of tenancy largely prevails, especially among colored farm operators, there is no indication of the existence of any large body of farmers whose permanent status is that of tenants. On the contrary, the evidence seems to prove conclusively that tenancy is generally a convenient way of approach to full ownership. It is, in fact, a part of the agricultural ladder. Moreover, there has been no alarming increase in tenancy during the past two decades, and such increase as the figures show is mainly accounted for by the great appreciation in land values, which tends to lengthen somewhat the time necessary for the young farm tenant to accumulate savings for the purchase of a farm.

This study, like all general statistical investigations, must of necessity leave many minor questions unanswered. It suggests many topics for more intensive studies. Some of these could be dealt with by a sampling process which would not require any large expenditure of effort or money, but which the Bureau of the Census is not authorized to undertake. Others—notably those having to do with the relation between tenancy and farm products, yield of crops per acre, etc.—call for the tabulation of more of the farm census data by tenure. This additional detail ought not to add greatly to the total expense of the tabulation or to the time required, and it is to be hoped that it may be included as a part of the program for the next census of agriculture.

CARROLL W. DOTEN.