

COLORADO EXPERIMENT STATION

Colorado State College

Fort Collins, Colorado

in cooperation with

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics

COLORADO'S FARM AND RANCH POPULATION

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by

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Colorado's farm and ranch population increased by 5,000 persons during 1938, according to estimates made by the Colorado Experiment Station in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture.^{2/} This is the first year an increase in the farm and ranch population has been reported since 1930. The number of people living on farms and ranches on January 1, 1939, was 270,200, while 1 year earlier the number had been estimated at 265,200, an increase of 1.9 percent. The all-time high record of farm and ranch population for the State was reported as 282,827 in 1930. The population for selected years since 1920 was as follows: 1920, 266,073; 1930, 282,827; 1935, 276,198.

The 1938 increase was due to (1) a greater number of births than deaths and (2) a net migration of farm people into the State. According to estimates 5,000 babies were born and 2,000 persons died on Colorado farms and ranches in 1938.

During the year there was considerable movement from farm to farm within the State, from farms within the State to those outside and vice versa. The net result was an increase of 3,000 persons for Colorado. In other words, there were 3,000 more farm people from other states who moved onto farms in Colorado than who left Colorado farms for other states.

Drought Migrants Predominate

Drought migrants were the most important source of the influx of people from 19 states who moved to farms and ranches in Colorado during 1938. Slightly over 3 out of every 5 persons (61.8 percent or 1,857 people) came from the drought areas lying to the south and east. The states which are indicated in the survey as having contributed the greatest percentage of migrants were Kansas 21.9 percent, Missouri 12.8 percent, New Mexico 12.5 percent, Oklahoma 7.5 percent, and Arkansas 6.3 percent. People from other states which according to the survey added to Colorado's farming population came from California, Oregon, Wyoming, Texas, Utah, Idaho, Kentucky, Illinois, Maryland, New York, South Dakota, Michigan, Montana, and Nebraska.

^{1/} Collaborator, U. S. Department of Agriculture and assistant in sociology, Colorado Experiment Station. Acknowledgements are due R. W. Roberts, assistant supervisor of rural research, whose assistance in making this study was provided through the cooperation of the Federal Work Projects Administration, Division of Research, Rural Section.

^{2/} These estimates are based on information furnished by farm women and school officials who reported changes on 2,377 farms and ranches in 48 of the most populous rural counties in the State.

Rural-Urban and Urban-Rural Migration

Had it not been for the fact that more people left the farms and ranches for villages, towns, or cities than moved to farms and ranches from these areas, there would have been a still greater increase in the farming population. According to estimates, approximately 9,000 people left the farms and ranches while only 8,000 people moved to them.

This net migration of people from rural to urban areas is a continuation of the old process which has been characteristic of the population movement in the United States during the last half-century.

Changes Not Uniform Throughout the State

The increase in the farming population was not uniform throughout the state when changes are considered on a county basis. Some counties gained population while others lost. Population changes for Colorado counties during 1938 are shown in figure 1. Comparisons between 1937 and 1938 are given in figure 2. Generalizing briefly, one may say that population increases occurred in counties of the lower San Luis Valley, in the extreme western part of the state, in the northern irrigated area, and in the Arkansas River Valley. Decreases in farm and ranch population were most prevalent in the eastern and southern dry land counties as well as in certain mountain areas.^{3/}

Some Implications

Although the change has been rather small, population mobility creates problems and presents challenges to service and research agencies and institutions that function in areas to which or from which people move. The necessity of recognizing the new problems and adjusting to meet the emergencies becomes imperative. The depopulated areas are confronted with the problem of an insufficient population base to support the institutions which have been established to serve the people. The alternatives which confront the remaining people are to discontinue certain services, to secure aid from other sources, or to assume an additional financial burden in order to maintain them. The areas which have experienced an increase in population are confronted with the problem of providing such services as school, church, recreation, and welfare. This task becomes increasingly significant when it is realized that the economic assets of the average migrant of late years have been a minimum. The problems of mobility, however, are not limited to the

^{3/} The writer acknowledges the probable error involved in calculating changes in counties on the basis of small samples. Regardless of the small number of cases in some counties upon which reported changes are calculated, the writer has some confidence in the material given in fig. 1, because the general direction of changes which are presented in many counties is confirmed by figures from various governmental agencies and the opinion of informed people living in the respective areas.

economic phase or institutional services; they include such factors as farming conditions and practices, new social customs and traditions, the breaking of family ties, the selection and development of new bonds of friendship and acquaintances.

The report for 1938 shows that the increase in population usually occurred in what are generally thought of as the more prosperous areas of the State. In a sense this may be considered desirable, but it raises the very practical question of what the resources of any county or area are and the maximum population which can be maintained without sacrificing desirable standards. In the last few years much stress has been placed upon the problem of man-land and cattle-land adjustments in problem areas. In light of the present trends, is there a question of more importance to the State, the county, or other planning groups than that of the correct ratios and adjustments between the population of any given area and its resources as a means of preventing the development of new problem areas?

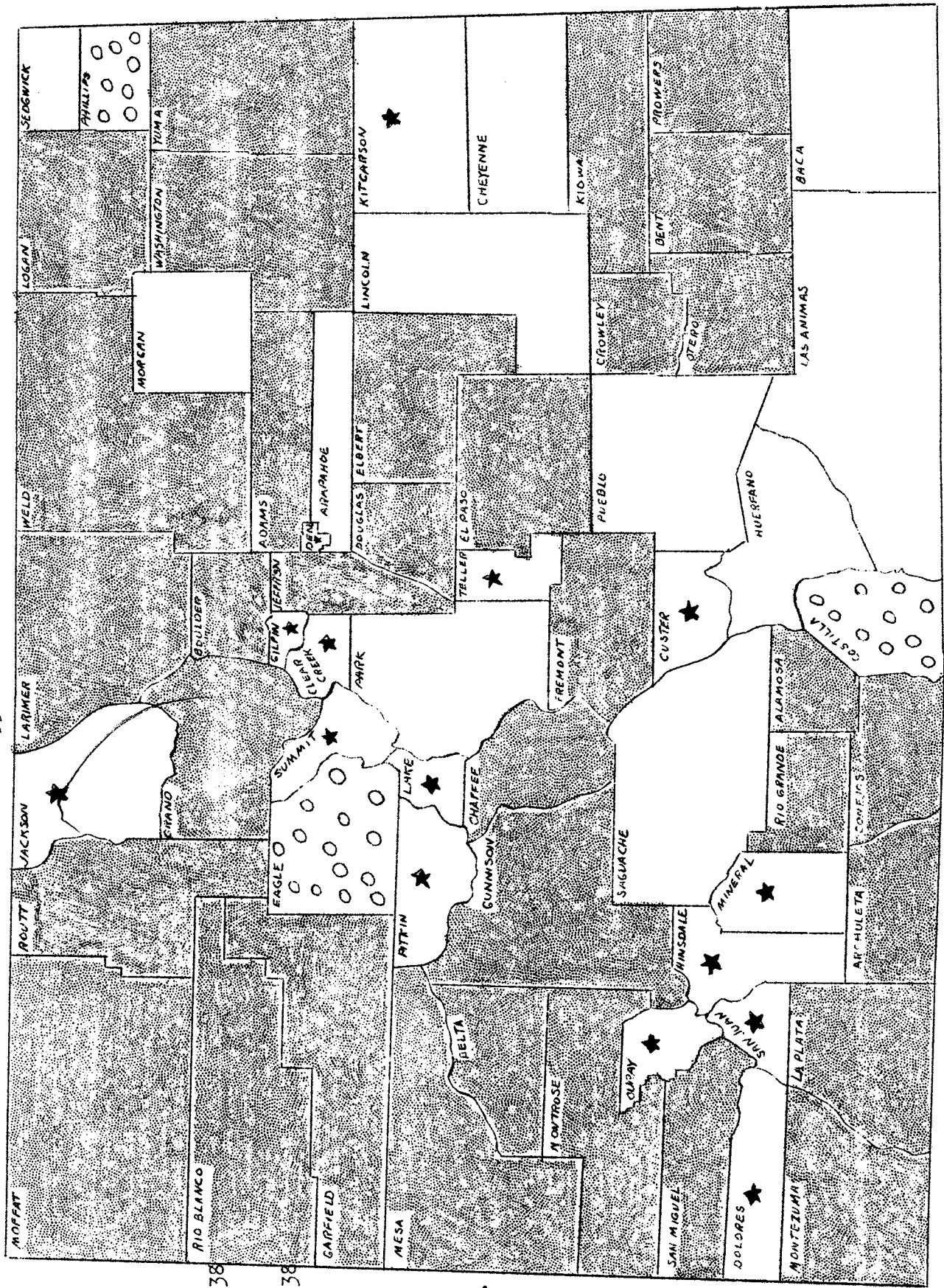
The following table summarizes the changes during 1938:





Population living on farms and ranches January 1, 1938....	265,200
Number of babies born on farms and ranches.....	5,000
Number of deaths on farms and ranches.....	2,000
Excess of births over deaths.....	3,000
Number of persons moving <u>onto</u> farms and ranches from cities, towns, and villages.....	8,000
Number of persons moving <u>off</u> farms and ranches to cities, towns, and villages.....	9,000
Net loss of farm and ranch population to cities, towns, and villages.....	1,000
Number of persons moving <u>onto</u> farms and ranches from other farms and ranches.....	24,000
Number of persons moving <u>off</u> farms and ranches to other farms and ranches.....	21,000
Net gain of persons moving <u>onto</u> farms and ranches from other farms and ranches.....	3,000
Population living on farms and ranches January 1, 1939....	270,200

Farm Population Changes in the United States

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics reports that the farm population on January 1, 1939 of 32,059,000 was close to the largest on record. This compares with 31,819,000 on January 1, 1938 and is approximately 18,000 less than the all-time high record of January 1, 1910. The increase in farm population during 1938 of 240,000 persons or about three-fourths of 1 percent was small, yet it was the largest reported since 1932. This increase was due to the fact that there was a greater number of births than deaths and would have been larger were it not for the fact that more people moved from farms to towns, villages, and cities than left these places to live on the farm. All major geographic divisions in the United States reported an increase with the exception of the West North Central States where a slight decrease was reported.

FIG. 1—CHANGES IN COLORADO'S FARM AND RANCH POPULATION DURING 1938



 Increase 1938
 Decrease 1938
 No change 1938
 Either not sampled or no usable returns

