

A Rural Survey in Arkansas



MADE BY

The Department of Church and Country Life

BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF THE U. S. A.

W. C. WILSON, D. D., *Superintendent*

A. C. F. FULTON, *Assistant Superintendent*

110 Fifth Avenue, New York

A Rural Survey in Arkansas



MADE BY

The Department of Church and Country Life
BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE U. S. A.

Warren H. Wilson, Ph.D., *Superintendent*

Anna B. Taft, *Assistant Superintendent*

156 Fifth Avenue, New York

The Field Work and Narrative of this investigation was done by Rev. J. O. Ashenurst



MR. ASHENHURST READY FOR THE DAY'S WORK

A Rural Survey in Arkansas

This Rural Survey of Benton County, Arkansas, made under the direction of the Department of Church and Country Life of the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, was undertaken at the request of the Synod of Arkansas. In the conduct of the survey, a broad study has been made of economic, social, and religious condi-



MAP OF ARKANSAS SHOWING LOCATION
OF BENTON COUNTY

tions as well as the educational life of the country, including with the schools an investigation of all ecclesiastical denominations and social organizations.

GENERAL FACTS.

Benton County is situated in the northwest corner of the State, with Missouri on the north and Oklahoma on the west. It is in the Ozark Mountain region and has an average elevation of 1,341 feet. The area of the county is 876 square miles, or 563,000 acres. Of this entire area, 235,000 acres are under cultivation. In its topography it is rolling, hilly, and mountainous with about 35% of prairie land. Numerous streams supply it with an abundance of water. Mineral springs abound and the water is unexcelled for purity and healthfulness. The climate is of a mild type; the mean temperature in January being 30°

above zero. Cold spells there are, but they are brief, the coldest being about 5° below zero. Such conditions make this county desirable as a health resort and hotels and sanitariums have been established in various places.

THE SURVEY.

This survey was begun November 15, 1912, and with the exception of thirteen days in January, continued steadily until March 17, 1913. I traveled by railroad, buggy, on horseback, and on foot about 500 miles. I called at many homes, cabins in the woods or pleasant coun-



A FORD IN BENTON COUNTY

try residences on prosperous farms, talked with men I chanced to meet on the roads, conversed with groups of men at railroad stations, in country stores and hotels, interviewed bankers, merchants, railroad officials, real estate men, newspaper editors, representatives of commercial clubs, and consulted county officials and examined county records. I visited personally more than eighty churches and as many schools, interviewing pastors and church officers, and going over the church records with them, and securing information from school teachers and school directors.

An abounding and simple hospitality was everywhere extended to me and it was always an inspiring experience to sit before the open wood fire with the family in one of these hospitable homes and hear the story of the community life. Although we met as strangers, these

brief friendships would be broken with a sense of regret. This universal kindness and courtesy offset the difficulties which I met in the work. All were ready to impart information and to render assistance when once they understood the purpose of the investigation. Even those who were incredulous at first afterward expressed their pleasure and assurance of the good results possible in the survey.

In making the survey, the general unit of the community observed was the township. The townships are not organized as they are in many states and there are no official records kept of township affairs. Many of them are very large, making their study as a unit very difficult. In many cases I was able to study in detail several school districts in a township and these were my most interesting and satisfactory studies.

THE PROBLEM.

The problem of the evangelization and Christianization of the rural districts of America, in its human elements, is resolved into three factors involving conditions, equipment, and co-operation:

- I. THE CONDITIONS OF THE FARMING COMMUNITY.
- II. THE EQUIPMENT OF THE CHURCH FOR MEETING THESE CONDITIONS.
- III. THE CO-OPERATION OF THE DENOMINATIONS IN EFFICIENT SERVICE FOR CHRIST.

It is the purpose of a survey to learn accurately what the conditions are, to measure the value of the work that has been done, and to lay the foundations for future advancement and permanency in the results of the work of the Church.

THE CONDITIONS OF THE FARMING COMMUNITY.

The Church in the country is the servant of the farming community and receives its support from the farming community. The conditions of the farming community are therefore of vital importance to the Church. If the Church is to carry its message to the farmers in the most effective manner it must be interested in the farmers' business, home, school, and social life. Accordingly, we take up the study of the economic, educational, and social conditions of Benton County.

Population.

The original settlers of Benton County came from Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Alabama, and South Carolina. Many of them were from the mountain regions and brought the sentiments and modes of life which prevail in the eastern mountains. The population by the census of 1910 is 33,389. There is an average of 34.8 persons to the square mile. The population of the distinctly rural parts has increased 3.8% in ten years while the population in cities of over 2,500 (two) has increased 30.7%. Fifteen townships have decreased in population and sixteen have increased in ten years. The total population has in-



BARN ON THE CLAPP FARM NEAR SILOAM SPRINGS

creased 5.6% in ten years. There are 460 illiterate persons, according to the census report. This is 1.4% of the population. The school population is 12,328 and 73% of persons of school age are in school.

There are 7,605 families and the average size of families is 4.5 persons. There are 110 negroes and one-half of one per cent. of the people are foreign born. The social and religious problems of Benton County are, therefore, distinctly American problems and are not complicated by the presence of different races.

Resources and the Farmer's Income.

This is one of the best all-round farming counties in the Ozark regions. As a rule the farms are small, the average size of improved farms being 51 acres. The county has 4,640 farms, 77% of which are

cultivated by their owners. The average value of farm land is \$28.00 an acre, an increase in ten years of 128%. The total value of farm land in the county is \$12,136,000. The assessed valuation of real and personal property for 1912 was \$7,734,117.

The soils are cherty loam, sandy clay, and alluvial. The land is stony in the hilly parts but there is much prairie and bottom land that is easy to cultivate. The older farms have been depleted in their fertility by continuous cropping but are capable of great improvement by careful cultivation. The length of the crop season is 200 days and the annual precipitation is 40 inches.



A WELL KEPT APPLE ORCHARD

Benton County is known as "the Home of the Big Red Apple," and has more than a million and a half apple trees. More apples are raised here than in any similar area in the world, it is claimed. As high as 1,500,000 bushels have been shipped in one year and a thousand carloads in a single season from one shipping point. Many carloads of peaches and strawberries are exported each year.

While fruit is the chief product, this county is exceeded by one only in Arkansas in the number and value of domestic animals. This stock consists of cattle, horses, mules, and hogs, aggregating more than two million dollars in value. Benton is third in the list of the counties of the State in the production of wheat and eighth in the production of corn. The average yield of wheat is 9.6 bushels an acre and of corn is 14.6 bushels an acre.

Other industries carried on in the county are: drying apples in

numerous evaporating plants, the manufacture of cider and vinegar, and brandy; there are also charcoal works, preserving plants, canning factories, lime works, and stone quarries.

A study of average farms in various parts of the county show that while some farmers are making money, there are very many who are barely making a living. An average farm in the rough hills in the eastern part of the county has under cultivation 43 of its 80 acres. It has 20 acres in pasture, 15 acres in meadow, and 8 in corn. No wheat is raised, partly on account of the difficulty of hauling a threshing machine through the mountains. This is a bottom farm and will raise



A FARM HOME

30 bushels of corn and a ton of hay to the acre. A highland farm in the same community of the same size has 25 acres of corn, 15 acres of pasture and 10 acres of meadow. This farm will produce 15 bushels of corn to the acre and $1\frac{1}{2}$ ton of hay to the acre. The bottom farm produces \$525 worth of corn and hay and the highland farm produces \$220 worth of corn and hay. Practically nothing is sold off the farm beyond what is necessary for a bare living.

Another illustration is a farm in the same township (Roller Ridge), which was said to be the poorest in the neighborhood. This farmer cultivates 15 acres of corn which averages a yield of 10 bushels to the acre, and 5 acres of wheat which averages 5 bushel to the acre. He has 2 head of cattle, 4 hogs, and 2 horses. The products of this farm total a sum of \$110 a year.

The best farm in this particular neighborhood has 200 acres. There is a good frame house, good fences and barns, and signs of prosperity. The farmer who cultivates this farm is a native of the township, and is a skillful and progressive farmer. He cultivates 40 acres of corn, with an average yield of 20 bushels to the acre; 35 acres of wheat, with an average yield of 10 bushels to the acre. In addition to this, he has 35 acres of orchard which produces 2,000 bushels of apples annually. He has 40 head of cattle, 6 horses, and 30 hogs. Products worth \$2,000 are sold each year from this farm.

A very large number of the farmers of the county belong to the



THE NEW AND THE OLD

class first mentioned and barely make a living. The "best farmer" just referred to is a type of farmer that is not the most common. Conditions are so different that it is impossible to estimate the average farmer's income for the whole county. There is a great diversity in methods, soil, products and profits. Yet in spite of the large number of poor farmers the aggregate of the products of the farms is very large as shown by the record of shipments from various shipping points.

From the station of Garfield, situated in a great fruit district where trees are badly injured by the scale and a very small per cent. of orchards are cared for properly, 35 carloads of apples are shipped annually.

From Rogers, the largest city in the county, the annual shipments are as follows: 500 head of mules, 50 carloads of hogs, 50 carloads of

cattle, 460 carloads of vinegar, 125 carloads of railroad ties and 1,000 carloads of lime.

Decatur, in the western part of the county, shipped last year:

33	cars	of	strawberries,	equal	to	17,356	crates
18	"	"	peaches,	"	"	6,840	crates
15	"	"	apples,	"	"	7,500	bushels
100	"	"	wood,	"	"	1,400	cords
5	"	"	vinegar,	"	"	1,000	barrels
8	"	"	canned goods				
35	"	"	stock.				

From Gravette, in the same part of the county, were shipped last year:

50	cars	of	cattle,	valued	at	\$	68,400
90	"	"	hogs	"	"	108,000	
4	"	"	sheep	"	"	2,000	
			Horses and mules	"	"	8,000	
						<hr/>	
						\$186,400	
			Eggs and poultry	"	"	136,000	
						<hr/>	
						\$322,400	
			40 cars of apples	"	"	14,400	
						<hr/>	
						\$336,800	

Within a radius of six miles around Centerton, in the central part of the county, there are six evaporators which handle a total of 200,000 bushels of apples, exporting annually \$600,000 worth of dried apples.

These shipping figures, quoted from points in different parts of the county, serve to show the varied products and the wonderful possibilities of this country which have not yet been developed. Comparing them with the average farm products on the poor farms given above, these figures show, also, that a great difference in the prosperity of farmers must exist. While there are large orchards and fruit farms which realize to their owners from \$300 to \$800 an acre, the great majority of farmers are poor. They have a saying in Benton County that "Arkansas is a poor man's country": it is easy to make a bare living, but few get rich. They realize that their lot is cast in a country

of great resources and that they are not making the most of their opportunities. A friend living in a cabin out in the hills said that a man can make enough by working three months to keep his family for a year. It is safe to say that a majority of Benton County farmers act on this theory.

Tenancy and Farm Labor.

As in other states, the relation of tenants to the problem of country life in Arkansas has become important. One-fourth of the farms are occupied by tenants. The custom of giving one-third of the crop is general, but 10% of the farms are rented for cash rent. The length of the lease is generally for one year. Farm laborers receive from 75 cents to \$1.50 a day and \$18 or \$20 by the month.

Specialization.

Fruit raising is the special industry of the county. In the early days the value of the Ozarks as a fruit country was discovered and for a long time orchards required no special care.

The virgin soil,
Touched by human toil,
Blushed with a harvest of fruit.

Then came the scale and did its deadly work before the farmers awoke to the knowledge of the ruin wrought. Of the millions of trees in Benton County, many are now dying or dead. Through the efforts of the Agricultural Department of the State as well as that of the Federal Government, the Agricultural College of the State, and progressive farmers, the people are being educated slowly to the value of cultivating, pruning, and spraying orchards. Great progress has been made in the past three years and farmers are convinced by such demonstrations as occurred near Garfield recently where an orchard that was sprayed produced apples that sold for 40 cents more than the fruit from an orchard on the opposite side of the road which had no care.

The farmers are convinced that stock raising is the most profitable industry in which they could engage and that their country is admirably fitted for this business. Yet very few are engaged to an extent worthy to be classed as specialization. The improvement of the land depends upon the extension of the stock industry as rapidly as possible.

Progressive ideas in regard to the rotation of crops, the value of clover, the methods of soil building, and the importance of stock are advancing rapidly among farmers. In spite of the natural conserva-

tism of the people and the difficulties of cultivation, the increase of the value of lands and of farm products in ten years, as shown by the census report, is very encouraging.

The Social Mind.

Means of communication.—The St. Louis and San Francisco (Frisco) Railroad traverses the eastern part of the county. A branch



THE DEADLY WORK OF THE SCALE

of the same road runs from Rogers to Grove, Oklahoma, and another branch from Lowell to Monte Ne, a summer resort. A new road connects Rogers and Siloam Springs, the two largest towns in the county, and is projected westward into Oklahoma and eastward into the undeveloped portions of the central Ozarks. The Kansas City Southern Railroad traverses the western part of the county. The principal towns

on these railroads are, Rogers, with a population of 2,820; Siloam Springs, with a population of 2,405; Bentonville, the county seat, with a population of 1,956, and Garfield, Monte Ne, Cave Springs, Springtown, Gentry, Decatur, Gravette, Sulphur Springs, Hiwassee, Center-ton, having each from 100 to 700 population.

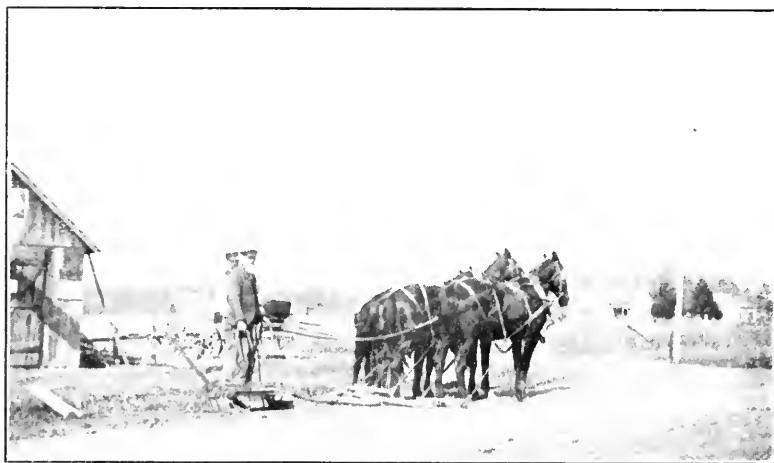
There are 200 miles of graded roads and a few miles of graveled roads. Approximately \$95,000 has been expended in road building within the last five years. Mr. King, the inventor of the split log drag, visited the county in February and addressed the farmers at Rogers and Bentonville. Under the spell of his eloquence in telling the romance of the split log drag, 300 farmers were held for two hours, and at the close of his addresses scores of men agreed to go home and make drags and drag their roads. As a result of this campaign many roads in different parts of the county were dragged within a few weeks and the effects were so apparent that the movement gained rapidly and the split log drag has become, in this brief time, a fixed institution.

The rural free delivery reaches the great majority of the farmers. Bad roads and bridgeless streams in the White River hills prevent the operation of the system in parts of that county. The telephone, however, leaps these obstacles and is found in all parts of the county. In many cabins in the hills, the telephone box and the banjo are the only evidences of luxury. The system of local farmers' lines prevails and is conducted with efficiency and economy. In an inaccessible part of the county such a volunteer system was installed three years ago under the leadership of a public spirited farmer-preacher. The system is connected by call bells in certain homes, thus dispensing with the expense of a central. I spent the night in the home of the minister referred to and he spoke warmly of the advantage of the telephone and the success of their organization. He gave me a practical illustration of its use by calling up the doctor who lives twelve miles away and asking him to give me some music on the phonograph. The good doctor got out of bed in the sweet spirit of sacrifice which characterizes his profession and set up the phonograph near the telephone, and as I stood listening with the receiver to my ear, there came over the wire the sweet strains of "Nearer My God to Thee." It was a delightful sensation to realize that this music floated through the dark forest across mountains and streams into the firelight of this quiet home.

Leadership.—In some communities there are ministers, merchants, physicians, teachers, or farmers at the head of movements for the general welfare. In other communities there are men and women who have thoughtful and serious ideals for the improvement of their neigh-

borhoods and country life in general but, who, by the inertia of their own habit and the drag of existing customs, are unable to initiate any effective enterprise for the good of the community.

There are features of life in Benton County which indicate that conditions are calling for an efficient leadership. The population is homogeneous; there are no striking social distinctions or classes. But there are difficulties that arise from this dead level of social conditions. There is a general satisfaction with things as they are—a lack of ambition which has given the world some ground for its jokes and jibes about the "Arkansawyer." A group of people were discussing the im-



THE ROAD DRAG

provement of schools and social conditions when one of the company—a native of Arkansas who boasted that he had never been out of the State—said, "We don't need improvements; we are living at the top of the pile." Too many are satisfied with this narrow view of life and oppose all progress.

Social Organizations.—There are some successful examples of co-operation among the farmers and fruit growers in Benton County. One of the most successful of these is the Ozark Fruit Growers' Association. Through these associations the farmers are learning the necessity of co-operation and are developing an aptitude for it. An apple association has organized recently at Rogers which will buy spraying material and other supplies and will grade the fruit produced and put it on the market. It will inspect orchards with respect to spraying, cultivation, and fertilizing. The most of the organizations for co-

operating among the farmers and fruit growers have a precarious existence owing to the difficulty of keeping farmers in line.

The most prevalent form of social organization is the lodge. The Masons and Odd Fellows are the most common in rural districts. They do not profess to be organizations for general community service and



NEEDING THE ROAD DRAG

seldom engage in such forms of work. But the orders have a considerable effect upon the life of the community. At Monte Ne the Odd Fellows Lodge has had some definite results in the social life of the neighborhood. It has a membership of 40. There is no church in this community. At Cherokee City where there are three dead churches there is a live Odd Fellows Lodge. The average attendance, however, is 20. The liveliest thing in the Cherokee City community is the Anti-Horse Thief Association. A horse was stolen in that community a year ago and the detectives of this association followed the thief and cap-

tured him and recovered the horse in the White River hills. This society has 70 members, all dues paid up, and \$150 in the treasury. It has a claim on the community because it has done something. It is possible that these dead churches might be living and enjoying the confidence of the community if they had done something.



"THE RURAL FREE DELIVERY" REACHES
THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE
FARMERS

There is no feeling of hostility between the church and the lodge. On the contrary, they are bed-fellows and generally both are freezing. In most of the places canvassed, it was found that the attendance of the lodge was far below the enrollment. In various places the report was that the lodge was a "drag."

There are few organizations of a social nature outside the towns.

Here and there Farmers' Unions have a feeble existence but they do not often have definite effect on the social life of the people.

Social Centers.—There is not much loafing at the small country stores which are quite common in the rural districts. Few of them are kept open at night. But the people meet casually at these stores and they constitute the chief social centers that exist in the country. Men meet at blacksmith shops, barber shops, and in the streets and stores of the towns and villages. A few school houses are used for the meetings of the Farmers' Union. In many communities there is an utter lack of social life. In some lonely hill districts there is not even a dance. In places destitute of social life the question in regard to the dance was often met with a decided negative. The merchant at Monte Ne has acted as agent for the graphophone and has sold a hundred instruments in the community. He believes that these instruments have had a great moral effect upon the homes of the people. The big sellers are the records of sacred stuff. The heaviest selling records are "Nearer My God to Thee" and "Shall We Gather at the River?" Dancing and carousing have fallen off. They used to have a dance once or twice a week. When they have their social gatherings now, it is to listen to the music of the graphophone.

Recreations and Morals.—A few schools in the open country have out-door basket ball and baseball. A few of the teachers take an active interest in the games of the pupils but for the most part the pupils are left to play the old games in their own way. Some communities have dances while others regard them as a relic of barbarism. A few have debating and literary societies at the school houses. In some churches the people meet on Sabbath afternoon for singing. Schools have an occasional pie supper or box social to get money for a library or other school supplies. Perhaps 5% of the communities have some event in which all the people take part. Some of the towns have Old Settlers' Day or Founder's Day which are observed with enthusiasm by the people of the territory. The Annual Confederate Reunion at the battle field of Pea Ridge is a yearly event that attracts people from every part of the county. It is observed in a wholesome manner.

Benton County has no saloons and the most of the communities are free from the grosser forms of evil. Bootlegging exists. Men and boys are addicted to the use of tobacco and in many parts of the county women use the weed and the snuff stick. Boys smoke and chew tobacco at an early age unfearing and unrebuked. In a church where the young people attended the prayermeeting in full force and were respectful and interested, the people stood about the stove after the

close of the meeting, exchanging greetings and talking quietly, and boys of seventeen filled their pipes and began sucking them with great satisfaction, unconscious of any impropriety in smoking in the church. A shocking amount of liquor is received by express at small railroad stations in quiet rural districts. Young boys often order these wet goods and receive the express packages themselves.

A review of the probate court record shows that out of 138 marriage licenses issued in six months in 1912, the average age of marriage was 26 years for males and 21 for females. Of this list, eighteen males were under 21 and forty-seven females were under 19. The oldest



MASON SCHOOL NEAR SILOAM SPRINGS

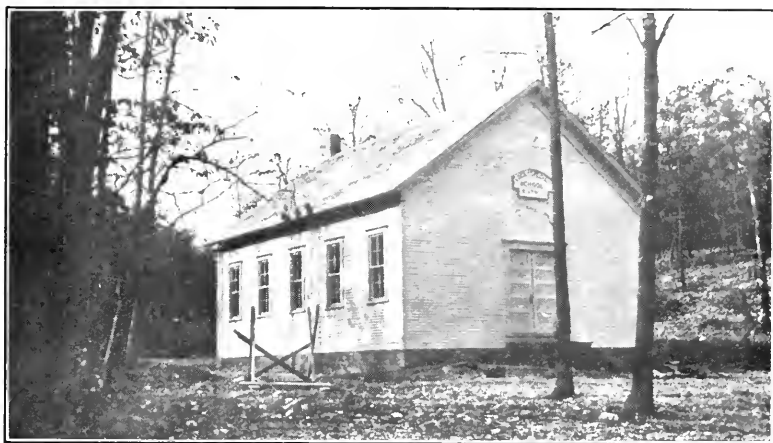
couple was a man of 50 with a woman of 60. There were three girls under 15. Thirteen of these couples were from the mountainous part of the county and their average age at marriage was 23.5 for males and 19 for females, $2\frac{1}{2}$ and 3 years respectively below the general average for the county.

Education.

The early white settlers of Arkansas established schools and "academies" for the training of their children. As early as 1827 the Federal Government made large grants of land for the support of public schools in Arkansas, but these lands were wasted through mismanagement; and the chief means of education before the Civil War and for some years after it were the private schools and academies. The present

Public School system developed gradually and has recently made great advancement. Recent legislation has provided for the consolidation of school districts and compulsory education. The constitutional limitation of the school tax to seven mills in the district and three mills from the general State funds makes it difficult to secure sufficient funds properly to supply the schools. The assessment of property to one-third the value and the low valuation put on property complicates the taxation problem.

There are 145 public schools in Benton County and a Normal or Teacher Training School supported by the State. Nine of these



SCHOOL LOCATED IN THE WOODS WITHOUT SUITABLE PLAYGROUNDS

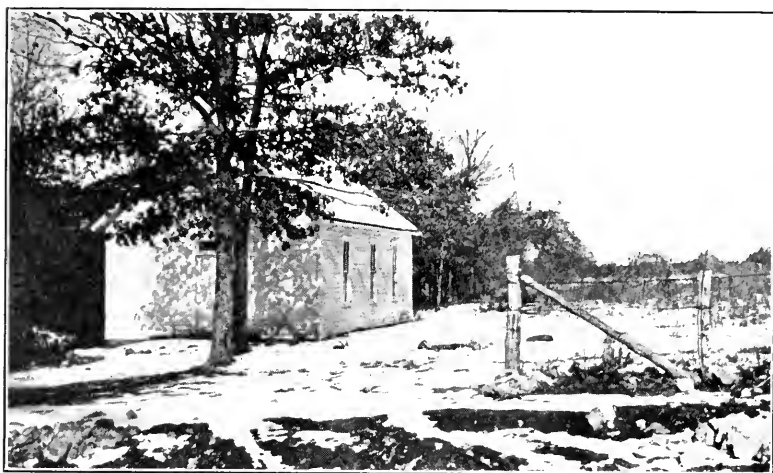
schools are high schools. There are three academies, one at Pea Ridge, known as the Pea Ridge Masonic College, one at Rogers under the Synod of Arkansas of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., and one at Siloam Springs, the Arkansas Conference College of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

Material Equipment of Schools.—Most of the schools are poorly equipped, the houses being of the old fashioned rectangular type with no special adaptation to the needs of a country school. Many of them located in the woods without suitable play grounds. Most of the buildings are frame. The walls are ceiled and there is little effort to relieve their dullness. But there are some school houses which present a pleasing contrast to this general lack of care. I found one standing in a lonely place which gave me a delicious shock when I entered. For its walls were covered with well chosen tints of ingrain wall paper and the

windows were curtained tastefully, and many beautiful framed pictures adorned the walls. Another school yard showed the remains of a school garden and reports given by patrons of the school indicated that the teacher and pupils had taken an active interest in agriculture for three years. Such incidents are signs of improvement in the care of houses and grounds.

Teaching Force.—The majority of the teachers of the schools visited in this survey manifested fitness and efficiency.

Superintendence.—The State Board of Education is active in its efforts to improve the schools. There is a State Supervisor of Rural



SCHOOL SHOWING FLOWER BEDS IN FRONT AND REMAINS OF GARDEN TO RIGHT

Schools, and an effort is being made to standardize the rural schools. For this purpose the County Superintendent of Schools is provided with a score card for his use in overseeing the schools of the county. This schedule includes grading on grounds, buildings, equipment, teacher, and community activity. Teachers' salaries have increased from an average of \$25 ten years ago to about \$45 at the present time.

Other Schools.—The Masonic College at Pea Ridge was started in 1876 by Prof. Roberts and was conducted as a private school. In 1892 it was incorporated as a college under the control of a local board of trustees. The charter places it under the patronage of the Masonic Fraternity. It has had a wide influence.

Some years ago an arrangement was made by which the public school fund was placed at the disposal of the college on condition that it would

take charge of the public school pupils. This arrangement has created some dissatisfaction because it is claimed that it is a misappropriation of the public school funds. There were 175 public school pupils in the school during the term just closed and about 25 "college" students. The school now employs six teachers and is doing only high school and normal work.

In the city of Rogers is located Rogers Academy. It was founded thirty years ago by the Rev. J. H. Harwood, D. D., a Congregational minister. Two years ago it was decided to dispose of the school and by the combination of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches



METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AT HIGIFILL

of Rogers the school was transferred to the Synod of Arkansas of the latter denomination. It has an enrollment of 160.

The Arkansas Conference College is in the southwestern part of the county. It was founded in 1899. It has an excellent plant beautifully located. It has dormitories for boys and girls. It has seventy students. The school is embarrassed by a debt of \$5,000 and suffers from inadequate financing.

THE EQUIPMENT OF THE CHURCHES FOR MEETING THESE CONDITIONS.

What has been said in regard to the economic conditions of the country, population, resources, the social mind, and the schools is very inadequate as a complete consideration of the field. It makes no pre-

tion to completeness. And yet the facts presented thus far in this study are sufficient to point out the most striking conditions of the farming population of Benton County which must be met and dealt with by the Church if this growing social life is to be impressed permanently with Christian truth and vital religion. We now face the question whether the Church, as represented by the denominations found in this county, is adequately equipped for the work of evangelizing and Christianizing the people of this territory.



PLENTY OF CHURCHES FOR FEW PEOPLE

Congregations and Buildings.

Religion is a social institution in essential respects and therefore a tent of meeting, a place of assembly, or a house of worship is necessary. A community, in order to express its highest functions, must unite in worship, its essential bond. The Church needs a building fitted to the requirements of its work in order that it may meet the conditions of the community and accomplish its office in the most effective manner.

When society in this county was in its earlier stages of development, schools and churches were combined for sake of economy. Many of the school houses that are still in use were built by voluntary subscription for the double use of church and school. These buildings are usually too large for school purposes and are not furnished in the most suitable manner. The usual type of country churches is the old rectangular kind. The average value of churches in the rural districts

is \$870 and of those which belong to the open country, \$620. They range from \$300 to \$1,200.

The church is not so often combined with the lodge hall as with the school house but there are a number of examples of this class of duplex buildings. A good illustration of this is the picturesque building at Bloomfield. The lodge occupies the upper story. The church that once occupied the lower story is extinct. The situation is suggestive of the fact that the lodge often flourishes where the church is dead.



CHURCH COMBINED WITH LODGE HALL

In the open country and including small villages there is a church to every $13\frac{1}{2}$ square miles. In the eastern part of the county there is an area of 228 square miles in which there are nine churches with an aggregate membership of 570 and these churches minister to a population of 3,500. This is an average of one church of 63 members to every 25 square miles.

In the northern central part of the county is an area of 96 square miles in which are five organized churches with an aggregate membership of 125. This is one church to every 12 square miles, each church having on an average 25 members. The population of this territory is about 1,400. Dug Hill in this district illustrates the inadequacy of human judgment in equipping a given territory with centers of gospel light. At this point there stand two churches in a lonely place in the edge of the woods grimly looking at each other. The people once worshipped in one building but something happened and under the pres-

sure of sectarian strife the second Zion was set up. Neither one has a regular pastor, the members are widely scattered over this sparsely settled district and neither one has more than 25 members. Yet both are striving to "keep up the ordinances," and each has a Sabbath School and a few earnest people are trying to do their best under these unfavorable conditions.

There are ten abandoned churches in the county.

Ministers.

The "vivisection of ministers" flourishes in Arkansas. A pastor's time is divided between a number of churches. Many of them have



AN ABANDONED CHURCH

four places of preaching and some as many as six. It is not surprising that they call such a pastoral charge "a work." Some of these men live in a town and go to their various churches by rail or drive across country. The most of them are themselves farmers. Some of them have city charges and preach also in country places.

The pioneer custom of ministerial support survives in theory but breaks down in practice. An earnest layman said that this whole territory had been brought up under the old idea that "the preacher should wear a hickory shirt and maul rails and preach for nothing." The old pioneers shared their products with the preacher but did not give him much money, for in the days of barter money was not a great factor in the lives of the people. Now they give him little money and forget

to share with him their products. One of these ministers who is a good farmer and a good preacher receives no salary and the theory of the system is that his people will give him a "free will offering"; but this they fail to do unless fifteen dollars in the course of a year could be called a free will offering.

Of eighty country churches studied, ten have resident pastors. Two of these are in the open country and their pastors have other appointments that require them to be absent three-fourths of the time. Of 35 pastors 10 have one place of preaching, 8 have 2 places, 4 have 3 places, 8 have 4 places, 2 have 5 places, 2 have 6 places, and 1 has 7 places. Of the ten who are counted as having one place of preaching, one is in town and the others give one-fourth or less time to the churches of which they are rated as pastors.

The old type of mountain preacher is to be found here. An intelligent layman said that his pastor could not read anything but the Bible and could not read writing at all. A few of these preachers are proud of their illiteracy and some people profess to believe that a lack of knowledge is a qualification for preaching. But there are some godly men who have not learned in the schools, colleges, and seminaries, yet who possess a great deal of intelligence, common sense, and a good knowledge of the Bible. Few of them have large libraries but their reading is often adequate to the needs of their field. One old Baptist minister who described himself as a "cornstock preacher"—meaning that he was unlearned—showed a fine spirit of simple devotion, a good degree of intelligence, and a clear conception of his relation to the church and community as leader and pastor.

Church Membership.

Taking the gain or loss of membership as a measure for a period of ten years out of 61 churches, it appears that 20 have gained, 18 have lost, and 19 are standing still and 4 are dead.

Twenty-one churches show an increase by profession of 15%. They have 510 men and 746 women.

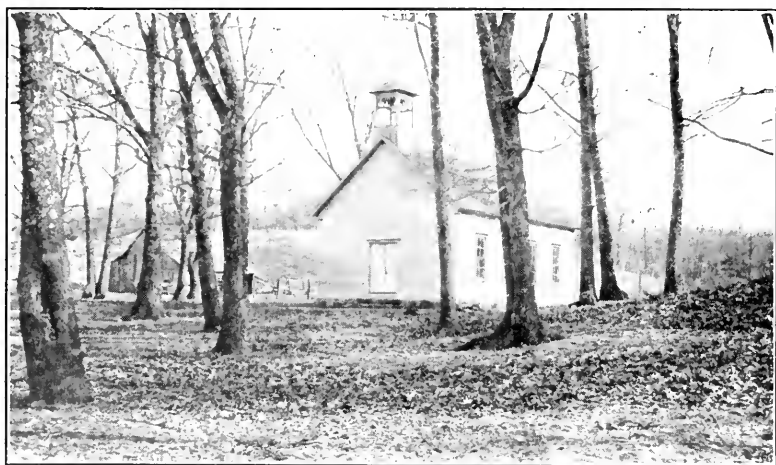
Of 43 churches located in towns and in the open country, 25 have all or nearly all their members in the country.

Few churches outside the towns have organizations connected with them, except Sabbath Schools, and some have Ladies' Aid or Missionary Society, and Young Peoples'.

A study of 489 families shows that out of the total number of persons, 1,723, there are 596 who are not members of any church.

Contributions.

In many country churches of the Baptist denomination, the support of an orphanage seems to be the only benevolence that appeals to them. A study of 34 churches shows that they gave an average of \$40.20 each for benevolences and \$196 each for pastors' salary. The total annual expense of these churches, including benevolences, salary, Sabbath School, and other expenses, was \$9,744.74, an average of \$4.77 per member. The people of these churches give for the preaching of the gospel in their own churches the sum of \$1.77 per member annually, and for general benevolences, including missions, the sum of 67 cents per member annually.



BAPTIST CHURCH AT SPRINGLAWN

Although the churches are poorly equipped financially, their distinct influence for good is remarkable. A Free Will Baptist church in the mountains, worshipping in a log school house, with an uneducated preacher holding services at irregular times, and a Sabbath School conducted by a farmer 76 years of age, is a type of many Arkansas churches. It costs \$2.00 to run this entire church for one year. This sum is spent for cards which are used in the children's class of the Sabbath School—and some of the brethren think that this outlay is unwarranted. This church is a social and religious force in the community. It has a restraining influence on evil and affords the people of the community an opportunity to engage in social worship, and the

meeting of the people in the Sabbath School and church service is their chief opportunity for social fellowship.

A Methodist minister receives a total salary of \$250 from the five places where he preaches.

Truly, It is not by might nor by power but by My Spirit, saith the Lord!

CO-OPERATION OF DENOMINATIONS IN EFFICIENT SERVICE.

There are 20 different denominations in Benton County, as follows:

Baptist, Missionary
" Free Will
" Primitive
" Land Mark
" Seventh Day
Presbyterian, U. S. A.
" U. S.
" Cumberland
" United
Methodist Episcopal
" " South
Disciples of Christ
Church of Christ
Episcopalian
Congregational
Christian Science
Holiness (2)
Apostolic
Millennial Dawn (and others)

Here are five kinds of Baptists and four kinds of Presbyterians, two kinds of Christians, two kinds of Methodists, and two or three kinds of Holiness.

All these different churches (denominations) are on friendly terms and observe certain rules of war. There is a great deal of interdenominational church attendance. Services are held in the school house churches freely, by all denominations; but they must observe the etiquette of polydenominationalism which requires that each "church" shall arrange its service so as not to interfere with any other "church." It is thought a very nice thing that, in the course of a month, every-

body in the community can have an opportunity, by this brotherly arrangement, of hearing his own particular creed duly expounded. It certainly must be a great comfort. I asked an old man in the mountains what denominations were working in that particular neighborhood, and he replied: "Wall, the's Baptists 'n Methodists 'n Soul Sleepers 'n Seventh Day Adventists, 'n they aint none of 'em doin' nothin'."

Notwithstanding the comity that has been referred to, denominational feeling is pronounced and the average preacher, if not the average layman, is mighty "ready to give a reason for the faith that is in him" according to the injunction of Scripture. It is, at the same time, a breach of ecclesiastical courtesy for a preacher to "preach against other churches," although sometimes the "zeal of mine house" will consume a man and he will break over.

Union Sunday Schools are often preferred to denominational schools. Two or three denominations may survive in a community and minister to small sections, but a Sabbath School cannot well survive without a larger reach. The Sunday School Association is an important influence leading toward co-operation between the denominations. The Men and Religion Movement did permanent good especially in the towns.

In Bentonville and Pea Ridge divisions have occurred in the Presbyterian household arising out of the union of the Presbyterian and Cumberland Presbyterian churches. The results have left three weak Presbyterian churches in Bentonville—none of them strong enough to do efficient work. But the result at Pea Ridge was happier, for the part of the congregation that refused to go into the union withdrew and organized a Cumberland Presbyterian Church some distance in the country, in a needy field; and the new church has been active in its new field.

Another example of co-operation is in Rogers, where the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., have united and formed a Presbyterian Church. This is growing and is rapidly becoming a strong factor in the religious and social life of the city.

The rural communities are still fertile soil for denominational strife and sectarian divisions. The Baptists are naturally the strongest section of the Church in this county, but they are sadly divided into five denominations—each one claiming to be the original and only. By their zeal for distinctives, this great body has been shorn of its power. As administered in Arkansas, the Baptist organization is very loose and democratic. Local congregations are independent of each other and none recognizes any central authority. The constitution of one of

its associations says, "The Association having no power to lord it over God's heritage, nor to have ecclesiastical power over churches, reserving the right of withdrawing from any church that acts disorderly." This extreme spirit of independence and the emphasis of the duty of separation make united effort within the denomination well nigh impossible and encourage the splitting up of the body into sects. A progressive minister prepared a program for the meeting of the Baptist Association and included the discussion of such vital matters as Missions, the Laymen's Movement, Young People's Work, etc., and a conservative brother took him to task about it and said, "Say, look hyere, Brother Thomas, you haint doin' this thing right: why don't yo' have them speakers talk about the dawktrines?"

The Baptists are to the manor born: they are indigenous to the soil, perhaps more than any other denomination, and they have, consequently, a great responsibility. Nearly half the churches visited in this survey are Baptist churches of these five denominations. Of 33 Baptist churches, 5 are vacant, 21 have non-resident pastors and preaching only once a month, and 7 have resident pastors who, with one exception, preach once a month at their home churches. One of these seven had special training for the ministry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) A large proportion of the people are poor, have little ambition to better their lot, and are unconscious of the possibilities of a larger and better community life. Therefore the men of means, the men of larger thought and broader vision, must recognize the greater responsibility which God's bounty has laid upon them: they must be willing to pay the price of leadership and, at a personal sacrifice, must throw themselves into every effort for the public good and the common service of the people. Let every man of wealth identify himself with the needs of all, and let him know that the building of a community, the uplift of a race, the enlargement of human institutions and the enrichment of human life, are of the highest value.

(2) A campaign of education should be carried on through the press, the school, and the pulpit to increase the interest of all classes of people in the affairs of the home, the school, the church, and the community life—its morals, industries and recreations.

(3) Farmers, fruit growers, professional men, people in town and country, should study with enthusiasm the problems of the soil: every community should be linked up with the Agricultural Department of

the University and every possible effort should be made to increase the fertility of the soil, to adopt those industries for which the soil and climate are best suited, and to put into practice the best methods of cultivation.

(4) A series of Country Life institutes should be inaugurated in which Life in the Country may be idealized, its possibilities demonstrated, and the influence of these meetings should carry inspiration and courage and enthusiasm into every home in the county. These conferences should be on the broadest lines: they should include the discussion of farm methods, soil improvement, roads, schools, the consolidation of schools and transportation of pupils, school house building; social life, morals and recreations; churches, federation, community service, evangelism, and the duty of the community to the church, and other themes of interest in the advancement of our social life.

(5) There is great need of co-operation in Benton County for the promotion of community interests. This co-operation should be based upon the need of a better business life. It should be co-operation in the care of orchards, of the marketing of fruit; in the selection of better dairy animals, in the breeding of cattle or in the improvement of economic conditions of the people in any needed respect. But it should not stop with the securing of a better income. Indeed unless such co-operative income-getting is supported by spiritual co-operation it will fail. Its very success in getting money will lead to its dissolution, because co-operation is essentially moral and spiritual. We urge, therefore, the co-operation of the people in recreative life. The social life of each community should be under the care of leaders who will organize to provide facilities for play and for social meeting, for the celebration of holidays and for other exercises of joy and mutual affection among the people.

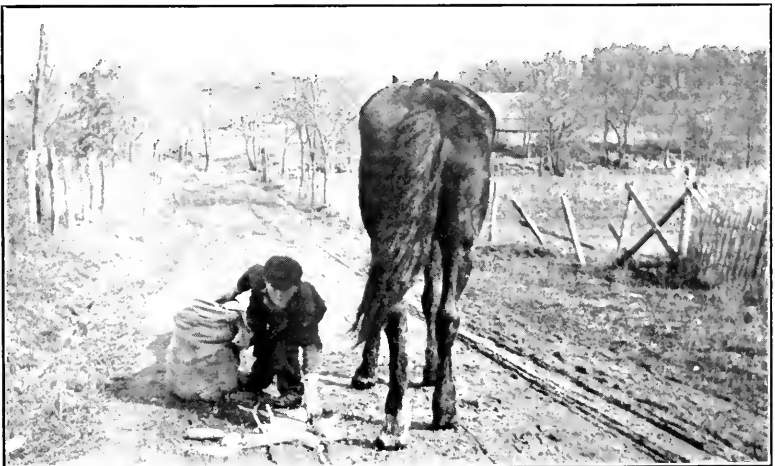
(6) The pastors of all denominations should organize a Pastors' Union of Benton County. All moral efforts and forces could be rallied around such an association for the Great Advance.

(7) Better schools are greatly needed in Benton County. The early provision of one-room schools was excellent in its day, but the state of the orchards, of the roads and of the business life practised in the county shows that a new education is needed for the growing youth of the county. Fortunately, Arkansas at this time has in the person of Superintendent Cook, of the State Department of Education, a statesman and a promoter of far-sighted vision and comprehensive

plans. We can do no better than to commend to religious people of Benton County that they follow his leadership and forward his plans in the development of the county schools.

(8) At some points in Benton County pastors should be settled in the open country to do work for demonstration purposes. These men should be located at churches which have a future. If possible, they should be at points at which the schools are to be consolidated or centralized. These pastors should reside in the community for which they are made responsible. They should have an adequate church building, a parsonage to live in and a sufficient income to enable them to meet the demands to be made upon them. It must be borne in mind that a few well-selected men in churches which may be called "religious experiment stations" are to be leaders and examples unto their fellows and the special expense undertaken in their case is justified by the value of their work unto others. But there is needed at the present time such a demonstration of religious work in various parts of the county.

(9) Let the Church sincerely seek the outpouring of the Spirit of prayer and supplication, let her arise and shine her Light having come; let her endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and to realize the unity which is dear to the great Head of the Church. Above all things, the spiritual equipment of the Church is essential to the winning of the world. Without the loss of this spiritual power, however, the Church should identify itself more closely with the interests of the farmers, should encourage good farming as a part of the Christian farmer's stewardship, and should sanctify the social life of the people by its purifying influence.



TAKING TROUBLE EASY IN ARKANSAS

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries



1 1012 01235 2946

