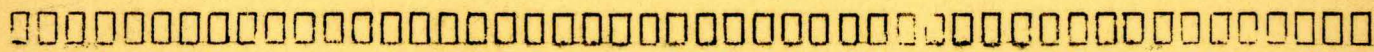


IOWA

PLANNING NEWS

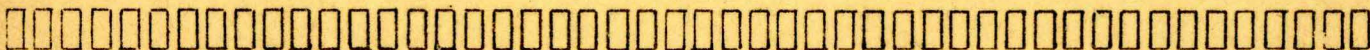


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IOWA

PLANNING NEWS

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FUTURE OF THE SMALL TOWN IN IOWA

By Prof. C. Woody Thompson, College of Commerce
State University of Iowa

WHAT IS THE FUTURE of the Iowa small town? Is it to pass entirely out of existence or does it have a permanent place in our economic future? Many would answer this question by saying that the small town is doomed. A study of any Iowa county will show the ghost remains of many an earlier prosperous small town, and it will show that several of its present small towns seem to be on the down grade.

This question of the place of the small town has been given serious attention by the Iowa State Planning Board. Everyone admits that the automobile has wrought the most significant change in American economic and social life since the invention of the steam engine. All America is on wheels. Whereas a trip to the county seat a few years ago was a breath-taking adventure to be prepared for days in advance, now a trip of a hundred or more miles is a mere evening's jaunt to be undertaken on the spur of the moment. Like it or not, "the horse-and-buggy days" are gone, never to return. With the disappearance of the horse and buggy, will the small town likewise disappear?

In the summer of 1934, the Committee on Business and Industry of the Iowa State Planning Board undertook to study the retail trading habits of both rural and urban folk. In 89 of our 99 counties enumerators were sent up and down the country roads asking farmers both where they bought their goods and sold

their produce. The same sort of procedure was followed in the Iowa towns of less than 5,000 population. The farmer was asked where he bought such goods as groceries, drugs and medicines, lumber, and cement, women's clothing, men's suits, men's and women's shoes, overalls and farm machinery. In town, the same list of goods was asked about, substituting furniture for farm machinery and kitchen utensils for lumber and cement. Both groups were likewise asked certain questions about their banking habits and preferences. The farmer was asked where he sold his hogs, cattle, grain, eggs and poultry, and cream.

The tabulation of the answers to the hundreds of rural and small-town interviews enables the Committee on Business and Industry to make certain very definite conclusions. The small town as a general institution is in no sense doomed to disappearance. It continues to have a very important place in our social and economic life, though of course the automobile has changed it very markedly from the small town of forty years ago.

First, let us see what the small town has lost. With minor exceptions, it is no longer the shopping center for either nearby rural folk or its own inhabitants for such things as are classed as shopping goods. Our survey showed that for such things as clothing and shoes a larger nearby town ordinarily controlled most of the trade of the

small town and surrounding open country. In fact, the fifteen largest Iowa towns control approximately 40 per cent of the open-country trading in these commodities (this refers to square mileage, not to population density). While the general store may still continue for years to come, it seems reasonable to conclude that the quantity of sales of things where styles and selection are important will ever be on the decline. The radio and the automobile have made the rural people of Iowa as style-conscious as are the people of the larger cities.

The future of the small town lies in its continued catering to what may be called the service-station aspects of trading. Almost every one of the 300 incorporated communities of Iowa controls its own inhabitants and the farmers of the surrounding countryside for the purchases of such things as groceries, drugs and medicines, and similar convenience goods. It likewise plays a part equal to the largest Iowa community in the sale of lumber and cement. Apparently, things which are frequently purchased, such as groceries, will continue to be bought indefinitely in the nearest town. Bulky commodities, such as lumber and cement, will likewise be purchased in the nearest town because of the mounting cost of transportation with increasing distance.

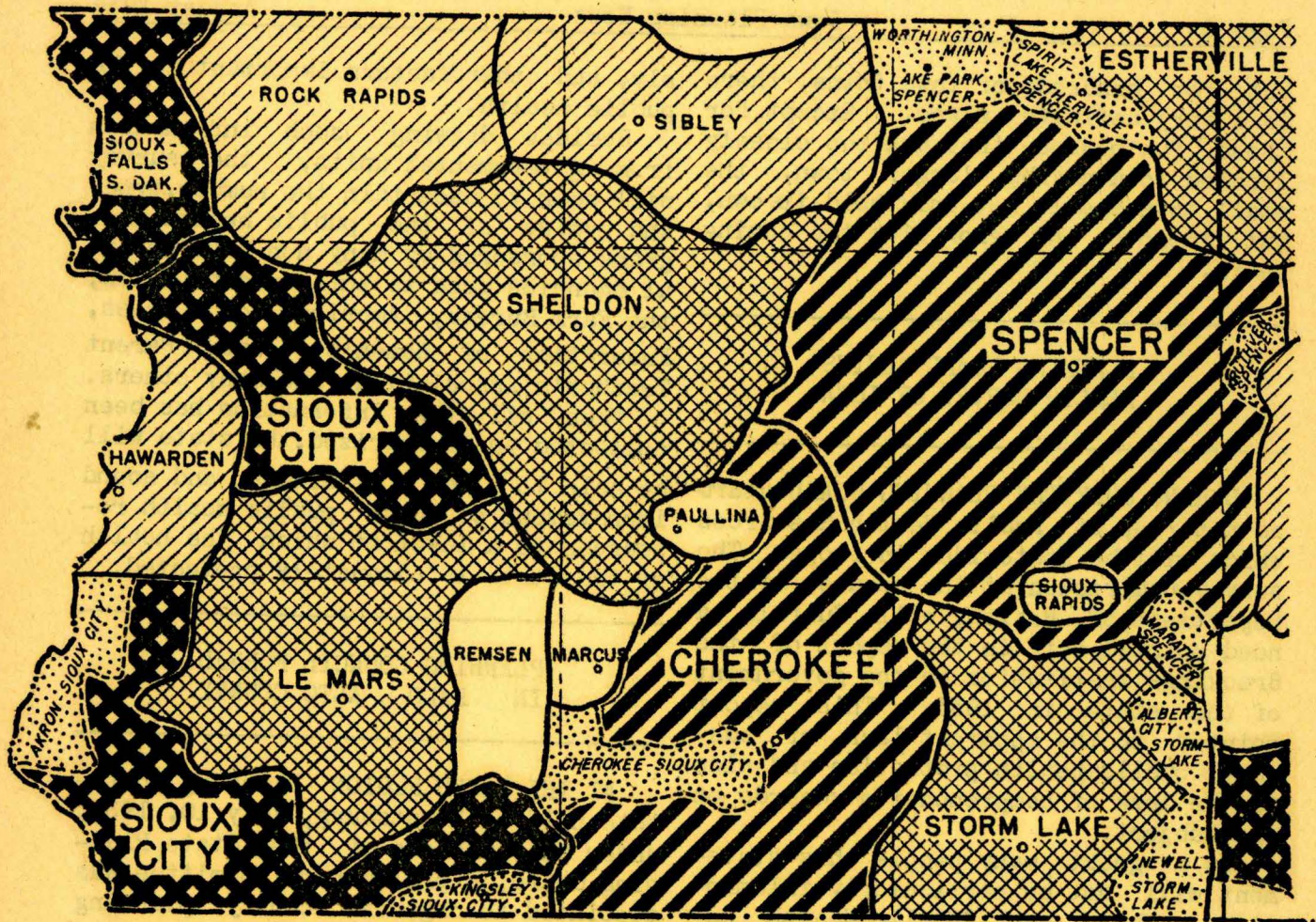
The returns from the open country on the two commodities, overalls and farm machinery, show the small town to be less secure in these semi-convenience goods. Overalls can be purchased at the same time clothing is being bought, and therefore often are not bought in the small town. Whether farm machinery is bought locally or in an adjacent large town depends on several factors, the most important one of which is the service facilities of the seller. Since an enterprising dealer in even the smallest Iowa hamlet can develop a high-class service organization, the small town has a definite place in this kind

of business. A study of a map for Iowa showing the size of open-country trading areas for farm machinery reveals a surprising number of small towns possessing an impressive area. In short, the success of a small town in this business depends essentially upon the dealer.

Where do the inhabitants of these small towns trade? Their trading habits are very similar to those of the rural folk. They buy such goods as groceries, drugs, and kitchen utensils at home. The smaller the home town, the greater will be their out-of-town trade in shopping goods.

So far our story has been mainly concerned with the economic aspect of the small town. Admittedly, however, any town is more than a place in which to buy goods. It is a place where one may transact his banking business, a place where one may go to while away his leisure hours, and a place where children as well as adults may be educated. The Committee on Business and Industry has, therefore, conducted an additional survey to inquire into these non-economic aspects of community life. While this survey has not as yet been finally tabulated, it shows a very definite place for the small town in many of these activities. Its schools, its athletics, its band concerts, its women's clubs, and its lodges are live drawing cards. Such institutions as these make the town's inhabitants and the farmers of the surrounding countryside feel that they are definitely a part of that community. While a visit to a nearby large town may be necessary and even enjoyable, it nevertheless does not give the visitor the feeling that this is his home town.

What has been said cannot be taken as a brief by which to defend every town and hamlet found across Iowa. Many of them are on the way out, and nothing can be done by either their inhabitants or outside agencies to prevent their ultimate decadence and disappearance.



RETAIL TRADING AREAS 1935

LEGEND

POPULATION OF TRADING CENTER

 UNDER 1,500	 1,500 - 3,000	 3,000 - 5,000
 5,000 - 10,000	 10,000 & OVER	 TRADING AREAS COMMON TO TWO OR MORE TOWNS

NOTE:

THIS SECTION OF IOWA SHOWING THE EXTENT OF OPEN-COUNTRY TRADING AREAS FOR WOMEN'S CLOTHING WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE IT ILLUSTRATES SEVERAL THINGS. FIRST, IT SHOWS SOMETHING OF THE NORTH AND WEST LIMITS OF THE SIOUX CITY AREA. SECOND, IT SHOWS WHAT CAN BE DONE BY AN ENTERPRISING GROUP OF MERCHANTS LOCATED IN ONE OF IOWA'S LARGER SMALL TOWNS. FOR ITS SIZE, SPENCER HAS THE LARGEST CONVENIENCE-GOODS SHOPPING AREA OF ANY TOWN IN THE STATE.

But for hundreds of Iowa towns, there is a very definite place. Except for those few places that are too closely located to a nearby larger town, the small town should not only hold its own, but improve and grow with the coming years.

PLANNING BOARD BEGINS HEALTH SURVEY OF IOWA

DURING JULY THE PLANNING BOARD started a survey of Public Health Resources which will be statewide in scope. The survey, undertaken at the request of the Department of Health, will fulfill a need pointed out in the report of the Brookings Institution on the government of the state in 1933. This report pointed to the apparent lack of adequate public health protection and also to the lack of comprehensive records on the subject.

To a great many people this statement will not be particularly illuminating. What are "Public Health Resources"? Why should these "resources" be surveyed? Of what value will the report be to the people of Iowa and their government?

In each of Iowa's ninety-nine counties one or more relief workers will in the next few months call upon every school superintendent, mayor, city clerk, township clerk, county superintendent, and county school board to obtain information pertinent to the measures taken by these agencies to protect the health of John Q. Public and his family.

Schools will tell what sanitary facilities are in use, what instruction is given in hygiene, what medical care is given to pupils, and what these various items cost during the years 1933-35.

Cities, towns and townships will tell of the activities of their health boards and health officers, and what these activities have cost. They will relate their practices in the matter of quarantine regulations, local water sup-

ply, and other factors important to the public health.

Besides drawing such information from governmental units, the survey will seek to ascertain the number, type, and value of the public health programs sponsored by many non-governmental agencies such as the American Legion, the Farm Bureau, American Red Cross, Federation of Women's Clubs, Parent Teacher's Association, and many others.

When all this information has been collected and summarized, the state will be able to plan a thorough and sound improvement of these public health resources to a level at which the health of the state is adequately protected.

PLANNING COUNCIL FORMED IN PALO ALTO COUNTY

AT THE LAKES REGION Planning Institute held in Emmetsburg, July 10, 1936, under the auspices of the State Planning Board, a preliminary committee was appointed to organize county planning for Palo Alto County. This committee met and after carefully canvassing the field, selected 27 representative men and women of the county as members of the "County Planning Council" for Palo Alto County. These members are as follows: Lost Island Township, Martin Simonson; Walnut Township, Alfred McCombs; Vernon Township, Mrs. John Farmer; Independence Township, G. V. Giffin; Highland Township, Lester Barringer; Emmetsburg Township, Henry Duhn; Freedom Township, Mrs. W. R. Schroeder; Fairfield Township, John Wegener; Silver Lake Township, John Swanson; Great Oak Township, Mrs. James Conlon; Nevada Township, Lawrence D. Brennan; Fern Valley Township, George Fandel; Booth Township, Stanley Cox; Rush Lake Township, Otto Lund; Ellington Township, Seymore Gidel and West Bend Township, A. B. Carter, Fred Spies, Graettinger, A. L. Bragg, Ruthven, Sam Bois, Jr., A. L. Bauch, Dr. F. X. Cretzmeyer, Dwight McCarty, Randall Hoffmann and Miss

Florence Wells, Emmetsburg, Wm. R. O'Brien, Ayshire, D. O. Hartssock, Mallard and Dr. P. O. Dorweiler, West Bend.

The Council was called to meet at the Court House at Emmetsburg, Friday evening July 24, 1936. The meeting organized at that time by selecting Martin Simonson, Ruthven, Iowa, as Chairman and Miss Florence Wells, Emmetsburg, Iowa, as secretary. It was decided to leave the selection of an executive committee until a later meeting.

AROUND THE WORLD IN PLANNING

WE SEE BY THE JUNE CIRCULAR of the Resettlement Administration that the third World Power Conference and the second Congress on large dams will hold concurrent meetings in Washington, D.C., September 7-12. Invitation to all the countries of the world has been extended by President Roosevelt.

* * * *

During the International Conference of Agricultural Economists to be held in Scotland August 30 to September 6, 1936, the subject for one day's discussion will be "The future of land tenure in relation to the development of agriculture," since, the committee points out, "at the basis of all farming lies the ownership and right of use of the land. Economic and social progress can be hastened or retarded by the system of ownership and rights of use in practice."

Other discussions will consider "The relations of agriculture to industry and the community"; "The future organization of farming for production in respect of size of holdings, capital, status of labor, etc."; and "The future of food consumption, in respect of purchasing power, health, dietics, etc."

* * * *

Under the land use program of the Resettlement Administration more than a half million acres of land unsuited for

agriculture are being purchased and developed for public recreation. Most of this land is included in 46 projects established in cooperation with the National Park Service, and is located largely within fifty miles of large industrial centers.

Several projects are located on or near historical sites - King's Mountain project, South Carolina; Bull Run in Virginia; French Creek near the site of the old Hopewell furnace where cannon balls were cast for the revolutionary army, and elsewhere, providing additional interest for visitors.

* * * *

Rural planning and zoning were made possible for the State of Washington in 1935 through an act sponsored by the State Planning Council. The law permits cities and counties to form planning commissions of 3-12 members, and provides the legal basis on which municipalities (including counties, cities, and towns) may be zoned in order that their development may be planned in line with the state's best interests.

Funds for carrying on the work are provided by the city or county. The commissions are non-partisan; members serve without compensation, make surveys of county resources, formulate plans for conserving and developing such resources, and cooperate with other public agencies in planning, conservation and development work. Regional organizations may also be formed to consider matters beyond the territorial jurisdiction of the municipality commissions.

The commissions have authorization for zoning, but specific provision for agricultural, forestry or recreational zoning was not part of the original act. The State land classification program now under way, however, has indicated the need for changes in the act, and it is believed that the present law will be amended or a new one passed to provide for agricultural zoning.

"HIGHLIGHTS BY DING" ON CONSERVATION AND PLANNING

(The following are some of the highlights of an address by Jay N. Darling at Lakes Region Planning Institute on July 10.)

WE HAVE LESS EACH YEAR of land to raise our bread upon, by 25,000 acres..

Oh, we have been a fortunate people. We inherited a continent that was the richest in natural resources on the face of the broad earth. We have just spent 200 years on it and have exhausted 75 to 80 per cent of the resources that are supposed to keep us here forever...

There are between seven and eight hundred million acres of land on this continent which were once very profitable and productive, but now are of no further use...

..Every year, Iowa dumps a cubic mile of the richest top soil in the world down the Mississippi Valley...

Our family has increased, our ice box is getting smaller and what is on our pantry shelves is being reduced gradually.. How are you going to have more abundant living that way? You can't get rich and have more abundant life by taking in each other's washings. You must have soil and water and the resources of nature to live abundantly...

..I have traveled this world around, and just as one of the kind of nut ideas that cartoonists get I thought I would like to travel in the path of civilization to see what it had done. The Gobi Desert, the cradle of the human race, was the first place where man lived. You couldn't pasture a grasshopper on a hundred square miles! That is what civilization had done to it.

There is some argument amongst students of archaeology as to whether that (the

Gobi Desert) was really the cradle of the human race or whether it was the Sahara Desert. So I went over there to look at the ruins of another garden spot that had been turned into a desert by man.

Go where the Garden of Eden is supposed to have existed. That is more desert. Mesopotamia! Persia! The Valley of Egypt! One of the richest valleys in the world is now lined by a little border of vegetation, all under irrigation, and people are dying from starvation by the thousands. Or consider Mongolia, where they died this year by the million. Then come over to Yucatan on our continent, and north to Arizona, the site of the oldest civilization we know of on the North American Continent. Where civilization has been the longest, the nearer a desert that region becomes.

..They talk about my being a conservationist, and what I have done for conservation. Nobody has done anything for conservation. If he had we wouldn't have less and less every year instead of more and more.

..All I have succeeded in doing is to utter a warning against continuation of our wasteful policies, but as to constructive conservation and real restoration there has been so little that all of it put together is practically negligible.

..I am a great advocate of planning and I have become more and more a convert as I have watched tremendous sums of money dissipated in the last few years, much of it wasted.

In 1932 and 1933 when millions of men and billions of money were offered to you people to put them to work for your own good, there wasn't a conservation plan that came to Washington to be performed. No state had a plan! No county had a plan in this broad land!

I am critical of you and of the people who call themselves intelligent who have seen all the emergency money and labor going down the "rat hole" and never busied yourselves with the problems of benefit to your own community.

The one thing that Iowa saved out of the emergency money we spent the first year came out of the 25-year program... When we got that plan laid out, it outlined projects in Iowa that could be built in the next 25 years if the same amount of money were appropriated that had been in the past 15 years. At the end of that time, we would have within 50 miles of every citizen a lake or a recreation project of some kind. It looked as if we might get something for the money more than just a hit and miss spending. That was the first real plan we had. It was a "Doctor's prescription" written by an expert for the State of Iowa.

What we do need in the way of county planning! I don't know of a county in Iowa that couldn't have game and recreation waters and all such advantages. If you would only take enough interest to have a plan ready so when somebody says, "Here is a billion dollars and a million men, put them to work," you can say with confidence, "We know just what to do with them."

Don't think that the days of emergency appropriations are over. They may not be brought about by depression. I hope they are not. But we have got another emergency, and that is saving our continent. Money has got to go into it. Without a definite and careful plan you may miss your share...I do hope that in this county you will commence to plan for your own good. The state will take care of you if you have some plan. It won't come here and plan for you.

..I have known most of the presidents since Theodore Roosevelt, most of the governors of Iowa and a lot of congressmen and members of the legislature. All of them--there isn't an exception -- would rather serve you folks and a good cause than they would a straw boss of a voting district, if you

folks would ask them. But you never do anything except "blame the government." Congressmen respond quickly to any demand. But they never hear from you folks about these things.

I want to say that you first must plan at home. Your county should plan. Your city must plan. The state must plan.

LOCAL PLANNING AND W.P.A.

AN IOWA NEWSPAPER EDITOR recently wrote, under the heading "Wise Coordinating", the following comment:

"It was a sensible move on the part of local civic bodies interested in the WPA program to convene and agree upon a ranking of projects.

"The proposed sewage disposal plant was made the 'No. 1' job, with the new down-town fire station second....."

Speaking at a planning conference on July 10, Mr. Jay N. Darling told the audience that congressmen have no prejudice against local planning, local interest in conservation, etc. They have no prejudice against saving our great national resources.

Now the point to all this is simply that really worthwhile programs are coming and will come out of the WPA and out of future congressional sessions insofar as the people want them, plan for them and work for them.

The WPA is essentially a machine for putting people to work, for operating work projects. If the present projects are not considered satisfactory or necessary by the communities in which they are operating, it is largely the fault of those communities.

Local people should study their needs and plan their projects, obtaining professional planning service where necessary. True, there are certain limitations to the WPA program. Most of the people employed through federal funds on WPA projects must be eligible for work relief. Most of the federal money must be spent for their wages. If a

building or bridge is to be erected, probably a large share of the materials cost must be borne locally. But there are plenty of good projects -- needed projects -- which the program will permit.

The WPA will operate acceptable projects. The community must plan them -- or admit a failure to do its part.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Supposing

Tax levies on real property should take into account: (1) the potential income of the property under its best social use, and (2) social hazards under its present use.

So that

Good farm land or urban property would be taxed relatively high because of its potential income, and relatively still higher if short-sighted cultivation or improper development practices were followed.

Then

The farmer on poor land would receive high sympathy and low tax assessments if he followed wise cultural practices.

The city realtor who owns a valuable down-town lot and who builds upon that lot a skyscraper which improperly congests sidewalks and streets and unnecessarily prevents neighboring properties from enjoying a proper amount of sunshine, would be taxed high for his valuable land and still higher because of a socially undesirable use.

The farmer on good land who penalizes posterity by wasting soil resources and allowing erosion to progress unchecked, would himself be penalized with a high tax.

The city owner of cheap property who allows fire hazards or unsightly junk yards to jeopardize and offend his neighbors, would be taxed at a high rate.

The decreasing order of taxes would be:

Highest - Good land, hazardous use
 Medium -- Good land, good use
 Poor land, hazardous use
 Lowest - Poor land, good use

A tax formula illustrating this idea might be $K(PI) \div R$, in which K is a constant depending on the local tax rate, PI is the potential income under the best social use of the property, and R is a variable penalty based on the social hazards or socially undesirable uses to which the property is put.

The National Resources Committee report of June 15, 1936 states rather well its own position and the position of like agencies in the states and communities. In the introduction this report says:

"The Public affairs of the American people are managed by some 175,000 different governments - Federal, State and local. In addition, many of the governments have separate departments working more or less independently on various kinds of public service. The chance for confusion, cross purposes, and wasted effort is almost unlimited. The National Resources Committee and similar state and local bodies throughout the country are organized to study public policies and to assist in cooperative endeavors among the various governmental units.

"The job of the National Resources Committee naturally includes several kinds of work. In order to understand public policies, it brings together the men in different departments of the government and in the world of science and engineering, to collect into one place the facts that underlie each kind of public work... Only by bringing the different programs into a single picture is it possible to find out where the duplications and conflicts are....

"Another duty is to encourage similar bodies in states and localities.... More important from the national point of view is the possibility of aiding states and localities to solve problems that require cooperation among themselves.

I O W A S T A T E P L A N N I N G B O A R D W . P . A . P R O J E C T S
Progress Report as of August 1, 1936

Tax Survey

State-wide tax survey to determine effects of proposed homestead exemptions on tax revenue of the state.

Field work and final tabulation approximately complete.

W.P.A. project No. 65-72-2928

Urban Land Use Traffic Studies

City traffic survey and land use surveys in 9 cities.

All field work now 80 per cent complete. Tabulations 45 per cent. A report on the Marshalltown survey is finished.

W.P.A. project No. 65-72-5053-66

Base Map Survey

Survey to obtain data to be used in checking township base maps showing roads, electric lines, telephone lines, farmsteads having public service, etc.

Field work approximately 20.2 per cent complete on state-wide basis, combined survey and spot checking field work is approximately 24.2 per cent finished.

W.P.A. Project No. 65-72-5048

Analysis of Farm Statistics

Studies based on available farm statistics, involving distribution of farm land in various uses, trends in acreage and yields of major crops and effects of various leasing systems on farm practices and on distribution of income and expense.

Project approximately 37 per cent complete.

W.P.A. Project No. 65-72-5321

Population and Social Trends

Analysis of field data gathered under I.E.R.A. to determine composition and characteristics of Iowa's population over 65, also to determine employment and unemployment in state.

Old age study completed. Under employment study, editing and transcribing of schedules is completed. Checking transcriptions 93 per cent; Coding 74 per cent complete; code checking 20 per cent; punching and verifying cards 16 per cent complete.

W.P.A. Project No. 65-72-2929

Survey of Public Health Resources

Purpose of project is to discover amount and character of expenditure for protection of public health in Iowa.

Field work commenced in District 4 and is about 5 per cent complete.

W.P.A. Project No. 65-72-2933

Biological Survey

Work in July has been largely confined to development of dry lake beds in Northern Iowa, including planting of trees and shrubs in shelterbelts for winter cover, eradication of Canadian thistles and installing permanent monument posts or fencing entire areas.

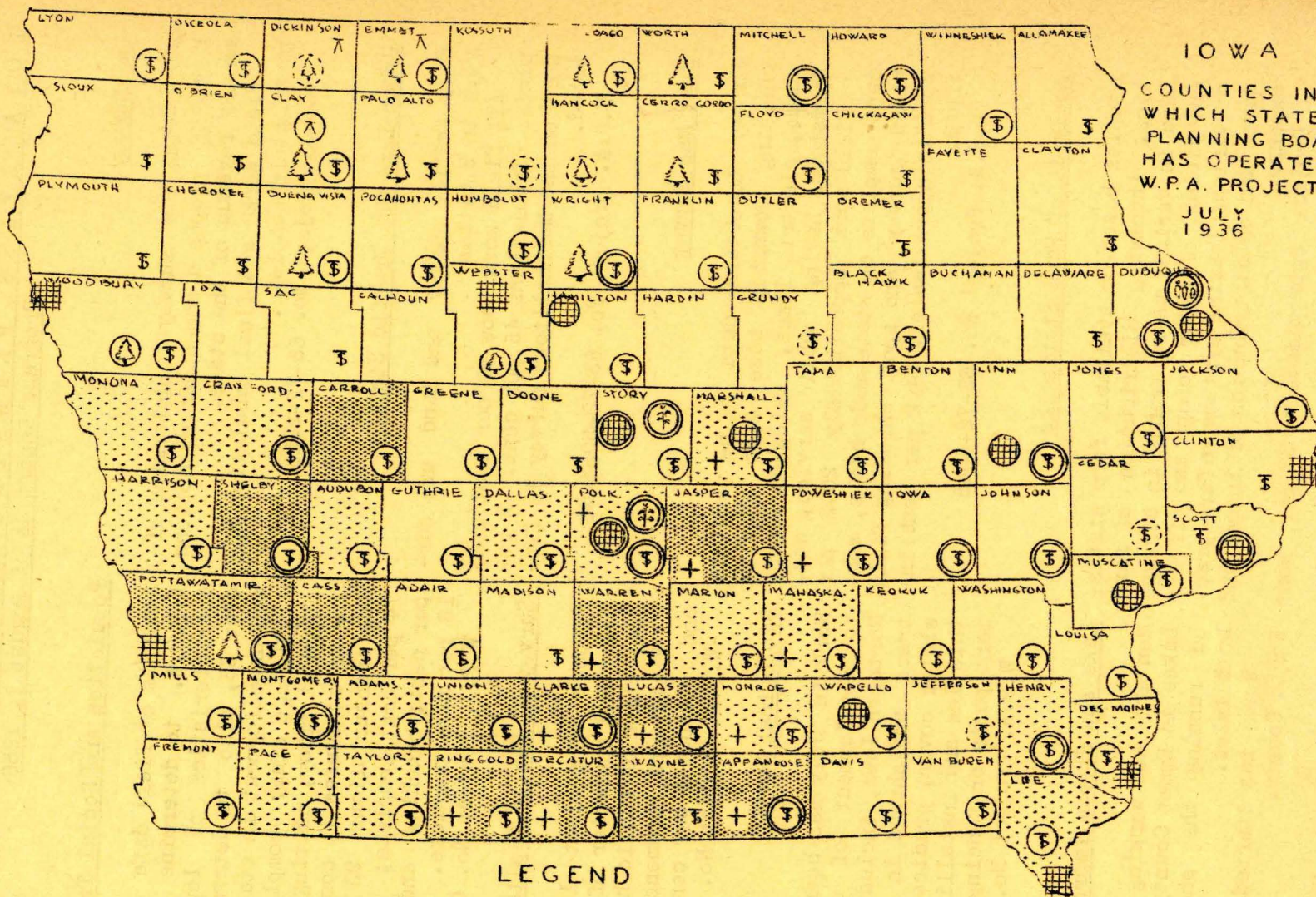
W.P.A. Project No. 65-72-2927

Lake and Stream Improvement

Men are now working on Grass and Birge Lakes in Emmet County and have completed running the shore-line levels on both lakes.

Work has started on Brights Lake, Worth County.

W.P.A. Project No. 65-72-5009-5013.



IOWA
 COUNTIES IN
 WHICH STATE
 PLANNING BOARD
 HAS OPERATED
 W.P.A. PROJECTS
 JULY
 1936

LEGEND

- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| \$ | TAX SURVEY | π | LAKE AND STREAM
IMPROVEMENT | ○ | FIELD WORK COMPLETED |
| ⋈ | POPULATION AND
SOCIAL TRENDS | ▣ | URBAN LAND USE
TRAFFIC STUDIES | ◌ | FIELD WORK INTERRUPTED
(TO BE CONTINUED) |
| ⌘ | ANALYSIS OF
FARM STATISTICS | ⋯ | BASE MAP SURVEY | ⊙ | TABULATING OFFICE |
| △ | BIOLOGICAL SURVEY | ▨ | BASE MAP COMPLETED | + | PUBLIC HEALTH |

I O W A S T A T E P L A N N I N G B O A R D

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STATE PLANNING BOARD