



Relation of farm tenancy to size of farm, farm practices and soil grades  
by Homer E Brunk

A THESIS Submitted to the Graduate Committee in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Agricultural Economics at Montana State College  
Montana State University  
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Abstract:

The growth of farm tenancy in the last half century has been one of the outstanding problems of agriculture. This growth has been the same in times of prosperity as well as during seasons of low prices. Various causes have been given for our tenancy situation such as over valuation of land, uneconomical farming units, farming of submarginal land, drouth, high taxes, high interest rates, poor management, and low prices for farm products.

Tenant farmers in many parts of Montana have a low standard of living. They do not have adequate farm machinery. Many of these tenant farmers have very few livestock. They plant a large percentage of their farms to soil depleting crops, which are conducive to soil erosion. In many parts of the state, the land is owned by absentee owners who have purchased the land for speculative purposes, and are not interested in the land except for its monetary returns.

In the area studied, consisting of Roosevelt, Gallatin, and Musselshell counties, farm tenancy was among the highest in the state, Gallatin County had almost two-thirds of the farmers as tenants and Roosevelt and Musselshell almost fifty per cent farm tenants. These tenants (except Roosevelt, 1936-57) farmed larger farms than did the owners. In Roosevelt County the tenants operated less of the second and third grade farming land but had more of the fourth grade farming land, and also more of all grades of grasping land except grade three which showed a larger percentage to the owner.

The tenants plant more soil depleting crops and less soil conserving crops. The tenants also plant less feed crops such as corn, oats, barley, and the sorghum crops which would indicate that they have less livestock on their farms than have the owners.

Farm tenancy is not undesirable in itself but can be made so by misuse. We need a certain percentage of tenancy because all farmers cannot own land. In recent years, the United States government has been helping many worthy tenants to become land owners. This has been done through loaning of money at a low rate of interest and a long period of time in which to pay.

The tenant farmers make up a large part of the farming population. Their situation is one that cannot be overlooked. It behooves society to recognize these problems and to offer aid in their solution.

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FARM PRACTICES AND SOIL GRADES

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Approved:

  
In Charge of Major Work

  
Chairman Examining Committee

  
Chairman Graduate Committee

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ABSTRACT

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PART I. INTRODUCTION

A Comparison of the Growth and Causes of Farm Tenancy  
in Various Parts of the United States

Tenancy in the United States has increased from 25.6 per cent in 1880 to 41.2 per cent in 1935 (figure 1, also table 1). This increase has been caused by:

1. Inheritance laws in the United States which give each heir a portion of the land. This necessitates selling the land or putting heavy mortgages on it to pay the heirs their equity.

2. Economic depressions which caused prices to drop while operating costs remained constant, or declined very little. The results were dwindling savings, declining equity in the farms, and finally foreclosure sales.

3. Speculation and high land values in all parts of the United States, but especially in the settling of the West, in relation to farm income. Land speculation has the effect of raising land prices to levels considerably above the prices justified by the productive capacity of the land. During the land settlement of the West, Congress tried in every way possible to eliminate speculation but was not very successful.

4. High taxes and interest rates.

5. High railroad rates (especially true in regions long distances from central markets).

6. Farm practices not adapted to the region.



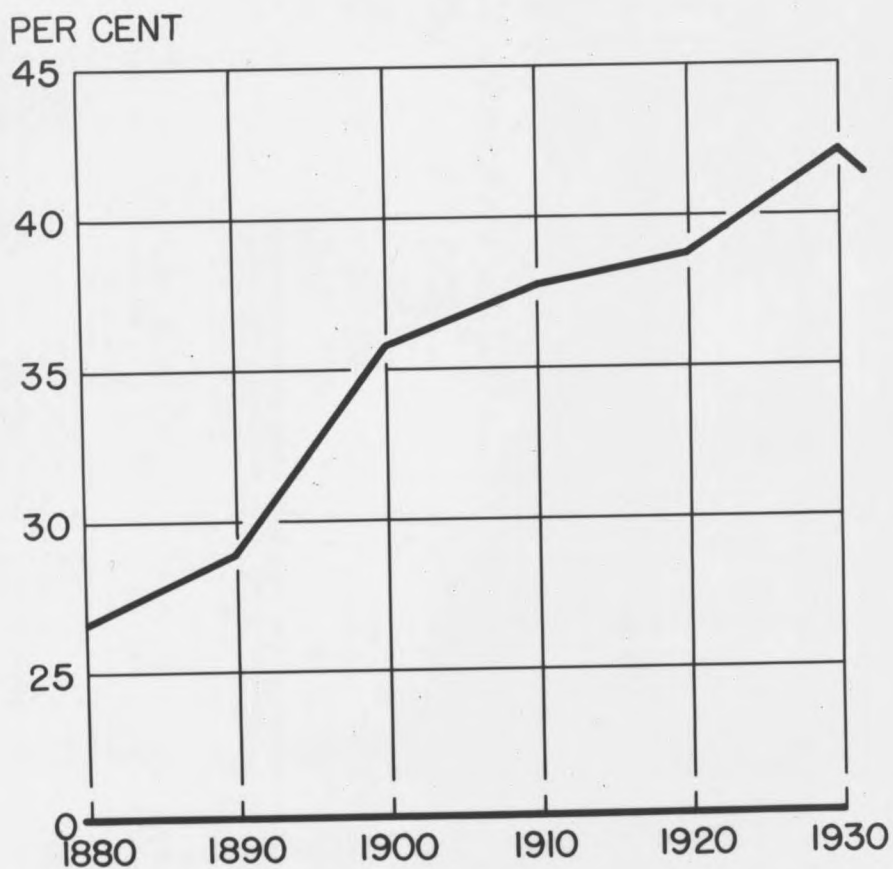


Figure 1.--Rise in farm tenancy in the United States, 1880 to 1930 1/

1/ Farm Tenancy Report of the President's Committee, 1937, prepared under the auspices of the National Resources Committee, Washington.

TABLE I.--PER CENT OF FARMS OPERATED BY TENANTS,  
BY GEOGRAPHIC AREAS, 1880 TO 1935 <sup>1/</sup>

Areas	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1935
The North	19.2	22.1	26.2	26.5	28.2	30.0	31.8
New England	8.5	9.3	9.4	8.0	7.4	6.3	7.7
Middle Atlantic	19.2	22.1	25.3	22.3	20.7	14.7	16.2
East North Central	20.5	22.8	26.3	27.0	28.1	27.3	29.4
West North Central	20.5	24.0	29.6	30.9	34.2	29.9	42.6
The South	36.2	38.5	47.0	49.6	49.6	55.5	53.5
South Atlantic	36.1	38.5	44.2	45.9	46.8	48.1	46.3
East South Central	36.8	38.3	48.1	50.7	49.7	55.9	54.8
West South Central	35.2	38.6	49.1	52.8	52.9	62.3	59.5
The West	14.0	12.1	16.6	14.0	17.7	20.9	23.8
Mountain	7.4	7.1	12.2	10.7	15.4	24.4	26.6
Pacific	16.8	14.7	19.7	17.2	20.1	17.7	21.2

<sup>1/</sup> Taken from "Farm Tenancy Report of the President's Committee", February, 1937.



































































































