

PART II

LEWIS COUNTY POPULATION

Geographically, the population of Lewis County is very unequally distributed. A clustered pattern of population is found in the Chehalis River Valley, concentrated largely in the cities of Centralia and Chehalis. The Cowlitz Prairies, extending southward and southeastward from the City of Chehalis, contain a fairly evenly distributed rural and urban population on the river deltas and glacial drift plains. In the eastern part of the county a predominantly rural population extends up the Cowlitz River Valley. Mountainous areas, such as the Willapa Hills and the Cascade Range, have but few people. Upland areas in the Cascade foothills are very thinly settled.

Population Growth

The growth of Lewis County was slow before 1870. Lack of roads and distance from the East kept immigration to a minimum. Early settlers were discouraged by the dense forest growth, damp climatic conditions and remoteness from markets. The Lewis County population was only 888 in 1870 according to the Census. Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1900. New transcontinental railroads brought waves of immigrants from eastern states and European countries. The extension of the Northern Pacific Railroad through the Chehalis River Valley and Cowlitz Prairies brought new settlers and encouraged rapid expansion. By 1900, the county population was 15,157.

The period 1900 to 1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the county gained 16,970 people, increasing more than twofold to 32,127. New markets for lumber and agricultural products were opened by the railroads. Large numbers of settlers arrived to work in the mills and logging camps. Many became interested in part-time farming on logged-over lands. Between 1910 and 1940 the population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase averaged about 309 per year. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in the slower rate of population growth. The population by 1940 was 41,393.

The 1940-1950 decade brought a slight increase in Lewis County population. Primarily because of the growth of food processing and marketing of farm products, there was an increase of 2,362 people in ten years, raising the county population to 43,755. The rate of population increase for the decade was 5.7 percent. Most of the new growth occurred in the cities and towns of Centralia, Chehalis, Morton, Mossyrock and Toledo. By 1960, however, the total population of Lewis County dropped to 41,858, reflecting a decrease of 1,897 or 4.3 percent for the decade. This was mainly the result of a decline in the local lumber industry.

Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Lewis County was in rural areas either in villages or on farms. Of Lewis's population in 1910, 63.3 percent was rural and only 36.7 percent was urban. After 1910, the percentage of rural population began to increase and urban population (persons living in incorporated places of 2,500 or more) declined steadily. This increasing tendency for people to live in rural areas does not follow the state or national trend. In 1960, according to the Census, 13,785 persons or 32.9 percent, were living in urban areas. Rural population increased to 67.1 percent or 28,073 persons. With farming, forest

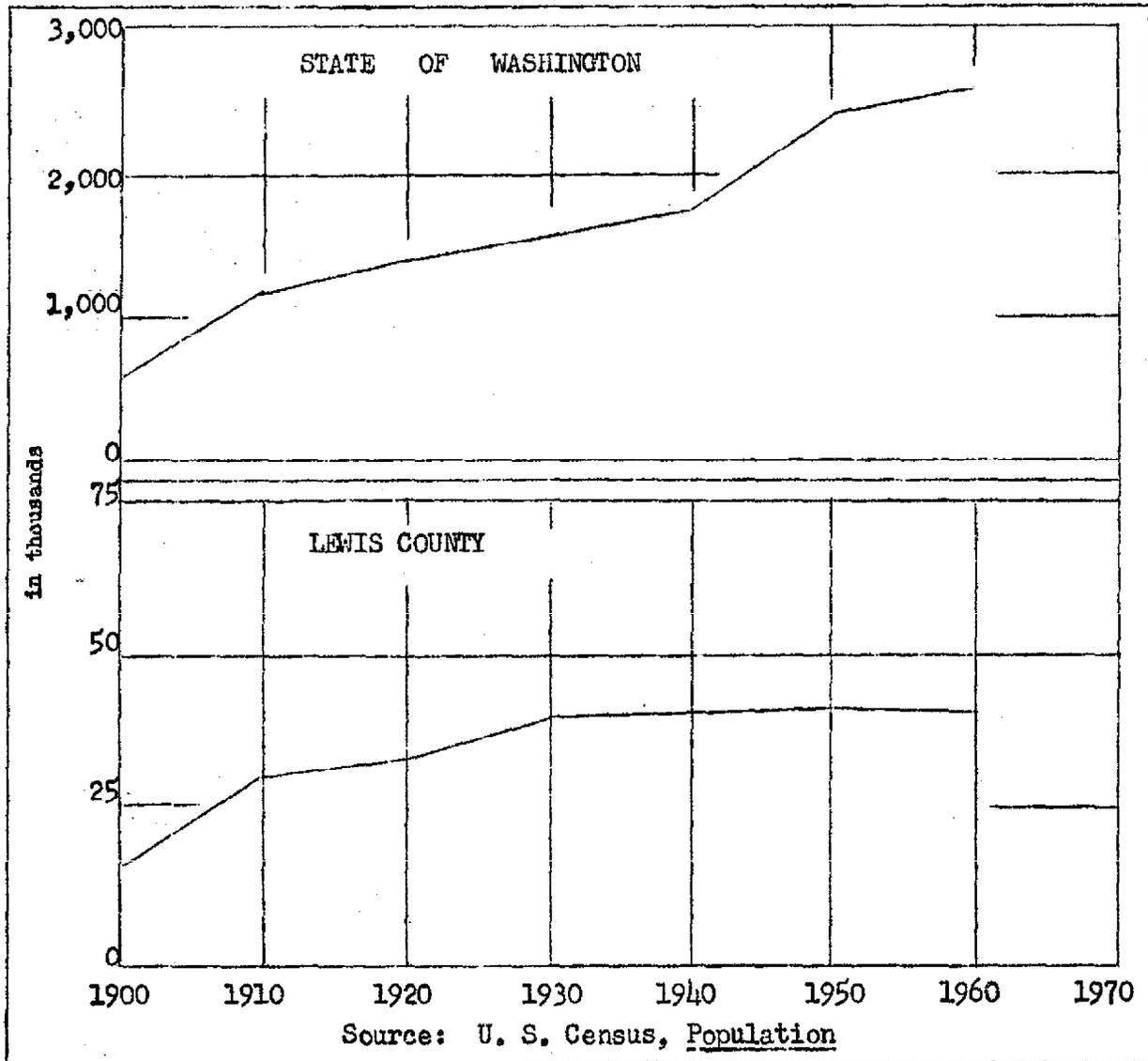


Figure 1. Population Trends: 1900-1960

Table 1. Population of Lewis County, 1870-1960

Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1870	888	100	0
1880	2,600	100	0
1890	11,499	100	0
1900	15,157	100	0
1910	32,127	63.3	36.7
1920	36,840	67.2	32.8
1930	40,034	67.6	32.4
1940	41,393	70.4	29.6
1950	43,755	67.2	32.8
1960	41,858	67.1	32.9

Source: U. S. Census, Population

industries and some mining being the principal occupational outlets, the population has remained predominantly rural.

The rural population is largely rural-nonfarm, consisting of 21,770 persons who live in the country but do not operate farms. Rural-farm population actually has decreased in the last twenty years. Persons living on farms numbered 14,686 in 1930, 15,919 in 1940, then dropped to 13,104 in 1950 and to 6,303 in 1960. Lewis County, however, ranks eighth among the counties of Washington in farm population. Since 1940, the trend in farm population has been clearly downward. The U. S. Census in 1960 counted 6,801 fewer people on farms than in 1950, a decline of 51.9 percent. Both farms and people living on farms are becoming fewer, whereas the production of farm products continues to increase. Lewis County finds itself in a new period where technology fashions great economic and social changes.

The lumber and logging industry has caused local areas and incorporated towns to rise and fall in population as camps and mills moved from deforested areas to other forested sections. Incorporated places in the western section of the county particularly show the influence of shifting forest industries and the mobile labor force. As the Willapa Hills were logged, the towns of Pe Ell, Vader, Napavine and Winlock grew and then declined in population. Several small mill towns such as Doty, Dryad and Walville were almost abandoned. On the other hand, as sawmilling and logging moved into the eastern Cascade Mountain section, population increased at Morton, Mossyrock, Kosmos, Randle and Packwood.

Table 2. Population of Incorporated Cities and Towns
Lewis County, 1910-1960

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
Centralia	7,311	7,519	8,058	7,414	8,657	8,586
Chehalis	4,507	4,558	4,907	4,857	5,639	5,199
Morton	—	522	461	778	1,140	1,183
Mossyrock	—	—	—	—	356	344
Napavine	—	340	181	220	242	314
Pe Ell	838	861	891	825	787	593
Toledo	375	324	530	523	602	499
Vader	631	500	465	479	426	380
Winlock	1,140	832	864	861	878	808

Source: U. S. Census, Population

The two major cities, Centralia and Chehalis, have been relatively stable since 1910, each gaining in population during the last 50 years. Chehalis is the county seat. It is a food processing center as well as a commercial center serving farmers. Centralia, the largest city, was started as a lumber and railroad center and has recently become the location of some food processing industries. Centralia and Chehalis are only a few miles apart and are often called the "Twin Cities". Residents of both commute and work in urban area industries.

In 1910, there were six incorporated places in Lewis County comprising a total population of 14,802. By 1960, there were 9 incorporated places with a combined population of 17,906. Only Centralia and Chehalis have populations

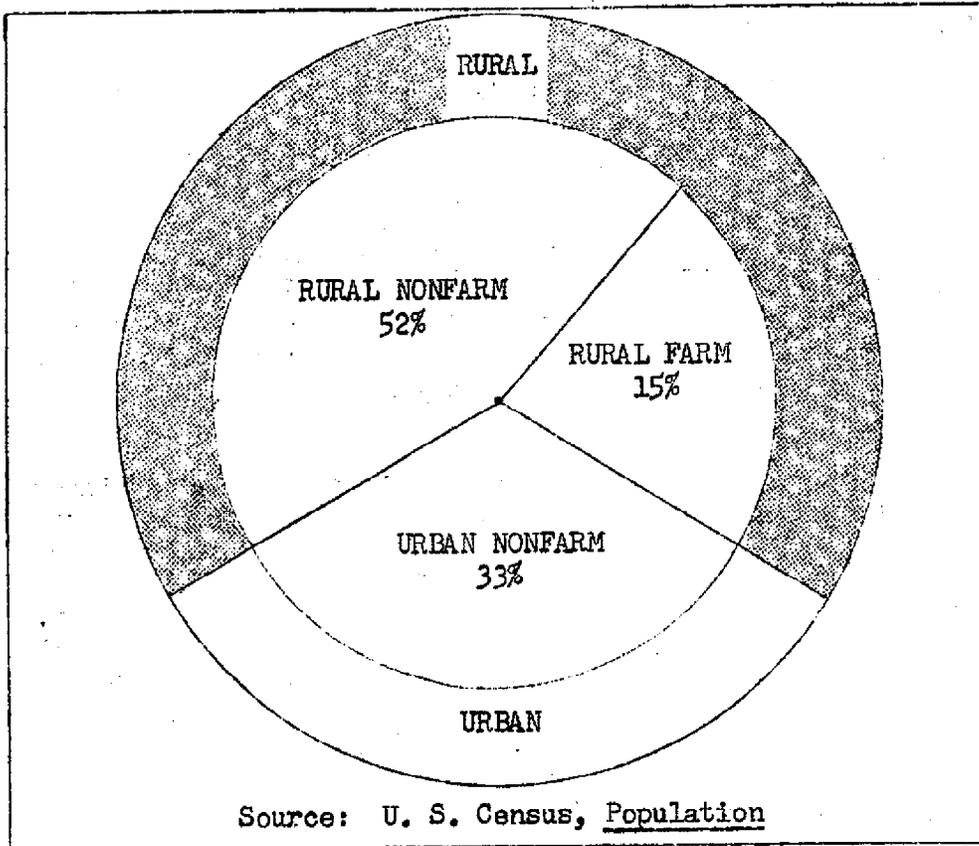


Figure 2. Urban and Rural Population, Lewis County, 1960

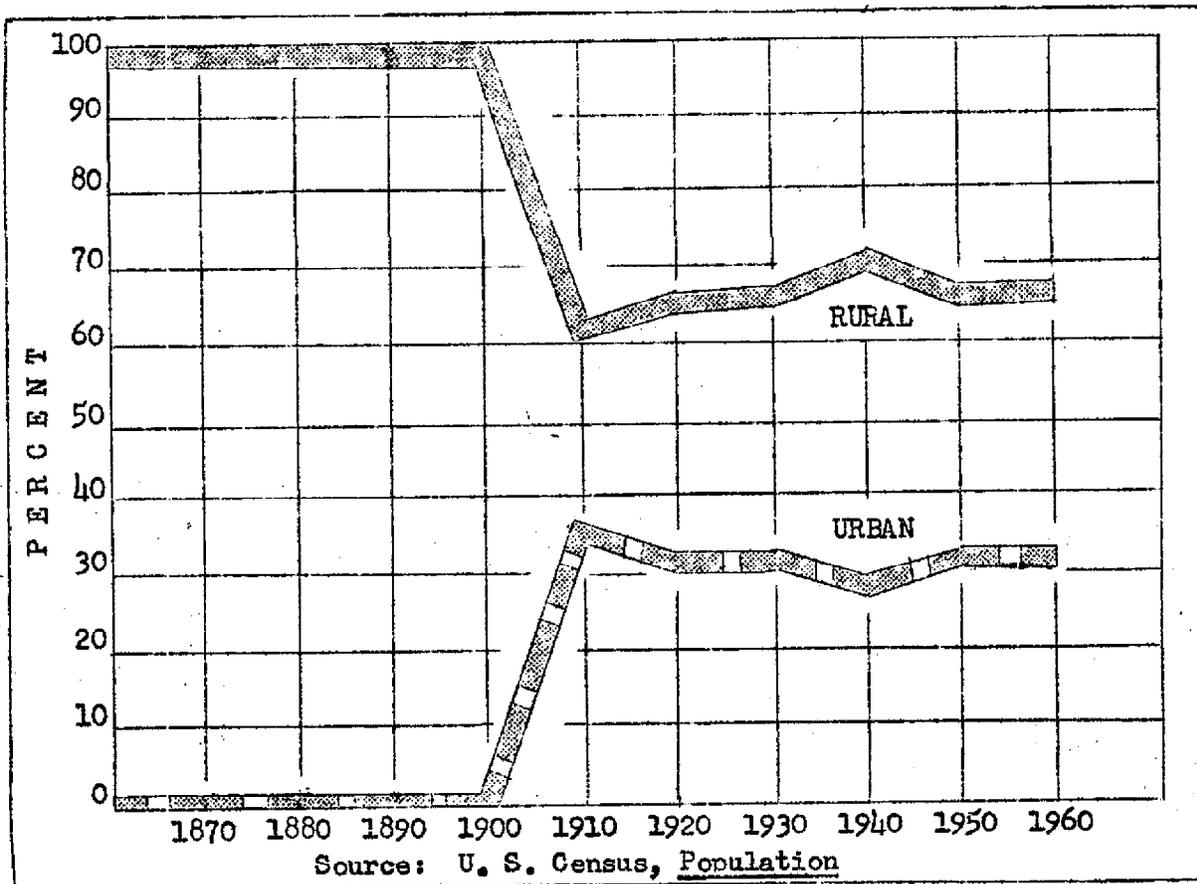


Figure 3. Rural and Urban Population Trends, Lewis County, 1870-1960

exceeding 2,500 persons and, therefore, were the only two incorporated places considered by the Census to be urban population.

Population Characteristics

Agricultural and trade opportunities in Lewis County have attracted settlers of varied origins and backgrounds. Recent overland migrants from eastern states and foreign immigrants from Europe add to a mixture which is typical of many West Coast counties. In 1960, there were 1,708 foreign born, amounting to 4 percent of the county's total population.

In 1960 a total of 14,259 persons were employed in the county. According to Census figures, 3,923, about 27 percent, of all self-employed and employed persons were in manufacturing--in logging camps, lumber mills, dairy food processing plants, etc. The next largest field was in miscellaneous services covering many trades, followed by retail and wholesale trade. Agriculture ranked fourth, employing 1,500 people or 10 percent of all employed persons.

Table 3. Employment of the Population
Lewis County, 1960

Types of Employment	Total Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	14,259
Agriculture	1,500
Forestry and Fisheries . . .	127
Mining	17
Construction	804
Manufacturing	3,932
Transportation, Communications and other Public Utilities .	863
Retail and Wholesale Trade .	2,586
Miscellaneous Services . . .	3,143
Public Administration (govern- ment employment)	731
Other employment	565

Source: U. S. Census, Population

Typical of many counties in the western United States, Lewis has been a melting pot of many nationalities who have migrated from Europe to seek new lands and opportunities. Germany and Canada lead as countries of origin of the foreign stock. Major immigrant groups ranked in numerical order were as follows: German, English, Swedish, Finnish and Polish. In 1890, about 15 persons out of each 100 were immigrants from Europe. By 1960, foreign-born persons numbered only 4 in 100. Agriculture and lumbering in the county were influenced and helped considerably by these immigrants.

The nonwhite population of Lewis County was only 154 according to the Census of 1960. The races included 94 Indians, 26 Negroes, 9 Chinese, 8 Japanese and 3 Filipinos, residing mainly in rural places.

According to the 1920 Census, there were 122 males per 100 females in Lewis County. In 1960, Lewis' population consisted of 20,906 males and 20,952 females, which was a ratio of 99.7 males per 100 females. The number of women relative to men tends to increase as the county becomes older and more settled. Other factors such as war and industrialization also tend to increase the proportion of women. In rural-farm and rural-nonfarm areas, however, men still outnumbered the women in 1960. Of the county's rural population in 1930, 14,819 were males and 12,250 were females, a ratio of 121 men per 100 women. In 1960, rural men numbered 14,430 and rural women 13,643—a ratio of 106 males per 100 females. The exodus of women from the farm to the city continues following the state and national trend.

Lewis County's population is aging. The percentage of older people has been increasing steadily since 1870. The 1930 Census showed that only 6.4 percent of the people in the county were 65 and over, whereas in 1960, they accounted for 14 percent of the total. Improved health practices and greater medical knowledge have played an important part in lengthening the life span. In 1960, the largest single age group was that of young people 5 to 9 years of age. Children from 10 to 14 years of age formed the second largest group, while those under 5 years were third. Children under 15 years of age accounted for over 29 percent of the county's population.

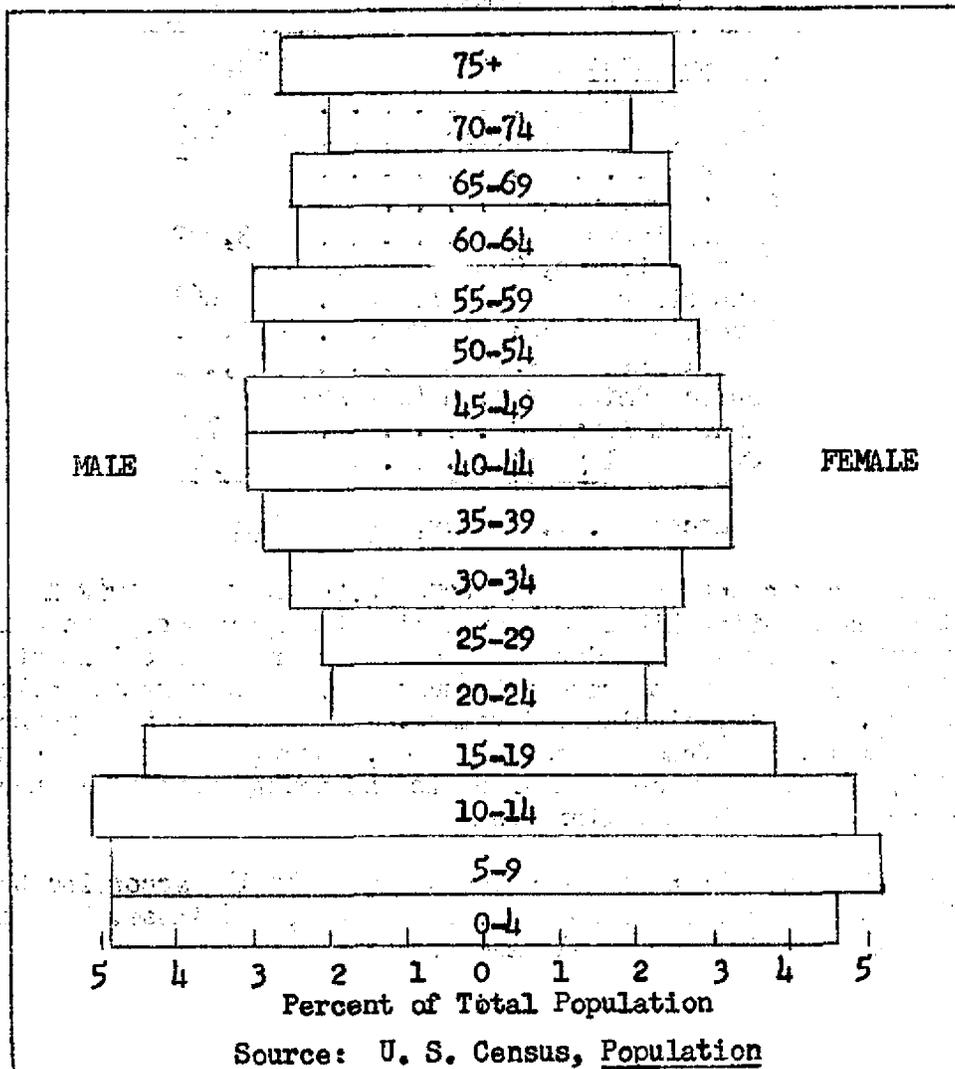


Figure 4. Age Distribution of Population, Lewis County, 1960