

PART IV

The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size:

Spokane County is an area of large and small farms. A total of 3,594 farms were being operated in 1954 according to the Census of Agriculture. Their average size was 230 acres, which is below the statewide average of 270 acres. Following a general state trend, the number of farms has been decreasing while the average size has been increasing. Consolidation of farms through purchase and lease has increased the average size from 152 acres in 1925 to 230 in 1954. There are two principal groups of farms by size--those under 30 acres common to the specialty and part-time agriculture district surrounding Spokane, and those 260 acres and larger which are found in the full-time farming grain and livestock region in the southern part of the county. About one-third are of the small type under 30 acres. Another one-fourth of the farms are large operations exceeding 260 acres. There were 132 farms in 1954 which were 1,000 acres and larger, specializing in grain and livestock; but Spokane has considerably fewer of these extra-large farms than its neighboring wheat counties, Lincoln and Whitman.

Significant since 1930 has been the increase in the total acreage in farms. In 1954 there were about 79,500 more acres in farms than in 1930. Land in farms reached a peak in 1945 at the end of World War II. High prices for wheat

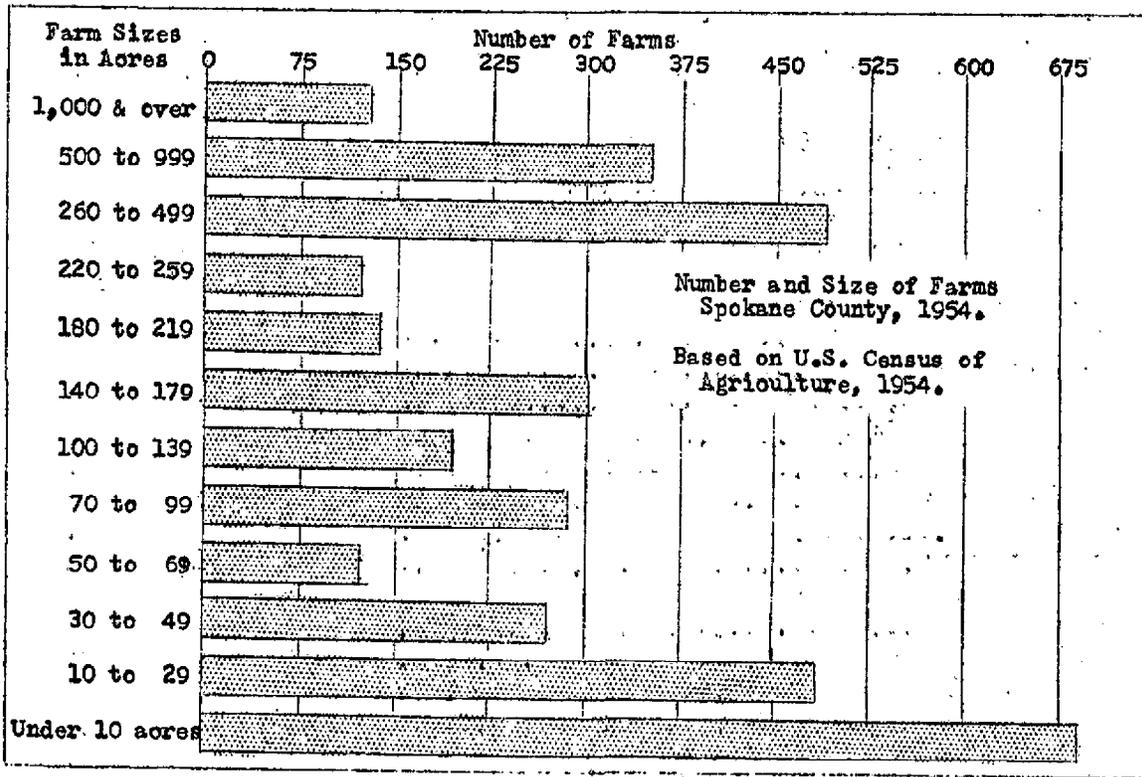


Figure 7.- Number and Size of Spokane County Farms, 1954.

and beef and improved farming equipment caused an expansion into dryland areas formerly uncultivated. Some forest land in the northern highlands was also developed into farm units and other upland areas became livestock farms.

Table 10.-Spokane County Farms: Number, Total Land in Farms and Average Size of Farms 1900-1954.  
(Source: U.S. Censuses, Agriculture).

Census Year	Total Farms in the County	Total County area in farms (acres)	Average size of farms in the county (acres)
1900	2,911	655,372	225
1910	3,947	682,330	173
1920	4,830	811,206	168
1925	5,035	765,973	152
1930	4,268	763,772	179
1940	4,999	828,880	166
1945	4,683	848,576	181
1950	3,594	825,785	226
1954	3,727	843,335	230

#### Types of Farms

Field crop farms specializing in cash grain crops of wheat, barley and oats are the most numerous type of farm, including about one-fourth of the total farm operations in 1954. Livestock farms--406 dairy and 198 other livestock units--are next in importance. The large urban market in Spokane has induced nearly 600 farms to specialize in dairy farming and poultry raising. Spokane's 190 poultry farms make it the leading poultry county of eastern Washington.

Table 11.- Types of Farms, Spokane County, 1954

Type of Farms	Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county
Total farms in county.....	3,594	
Field-crop farms.....	888	24.7
Cash-grain.....	883	24.6
Other field-crop.....	5	.1
Vegetable farms.....	45	1.2
Fruit-and-nut farms.....	25	.7
Dairy farms.....	406	11.3
Poultry farms.....	190	5.3
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry..	198	5.5
General farms.....	215	6.0
Primarily crop.....	101	2.8
Primarily livestock.....	16	.4
Crop and livestock.....	98	2.7
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms	1,631	45.4

Source : U.S. Census, Agriculture

It is also second to Yakima County in eastern Washington in dairy farms, having 406 operations of this type. Spokane agriculture, according to farm types, is more diversified than the other neighboring "wheat counties" of eastern Washington.

### Farm Values

The value of land and farm buildings has increased greatly since 1900. With the exception of the period between 1930 and 1940, the sale price and appraised value of farm property has continued to rise. The average value of farm property has about tripled since 1940. During the 1930's an average farm was in the \$7,000 to \$10,000 price range. By 1954 the average farm was in the \$23,000 to \$32,000 range. By the acre, land values have gone from \$45 to \$140 since 1940. Important factors contributing to this rise have been increased demand for wheat-growing acreage, more profitable conditions for wheat farming and some demand for suburban and part-time farm acreage near Spokane. The estimated total value of all farm property in Spokane County in 1954 was nearly \$115,000,000 dollars. This is about equal to the construction cost of one of the Navy's Essex class aircraft carriers.

Table 12.- Value of Farm Property  
Spokane County, 1900-1954

Year	Total Value All Farm Property in County	County Average Values	
		Per Farm (dollars)	Per Acre (dollars)
1900	\$ 11,828,612	\$ 4,063	\$ 18
1910	47,521,952	12,040	72
1920	75,504,489	14,142	84
1930	45,500,787	10,661	60
1940	36,372,082	7,276	45
1950	85,877,534	23,042	105
1954	114,986,842	31,993	140

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

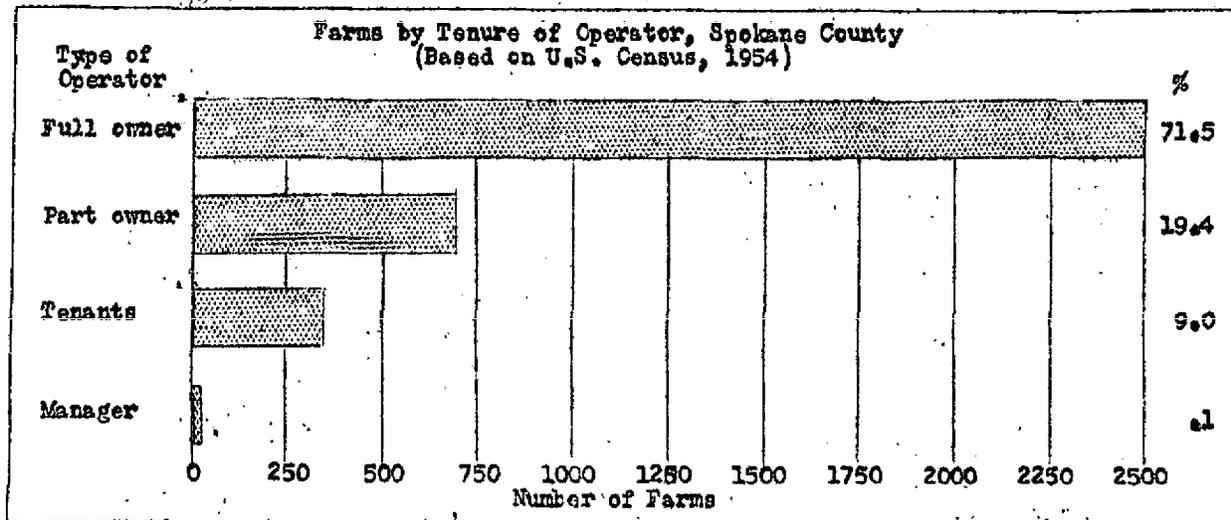


Figure 8.- Farms by Tenure of Operator, Spokane County, 1954.

### Farm Ownership and Tenure

A majority (about 71 out of each 100 farmers) own their land and buildings. Tenancy, or the renting and leasing of entire farms, is the system on only about one-tenth of the farms. The part-owner system in which portions of farms are rented on a share-crop, share-profit, or rental basis is becoming quite common, being found on about one-fifth of the farms. Many large units are owned by several heirs or by elderly people who permit other neighboring farmers to operate all or a portion of the holding. Tenant and partly-owned farms are most common in the wheat and livestock farming region of southern Spokane County. Some high-value land near Spokane is also rented for truck crop farms.

### Farm Residence and Operation

Spokane County agriculture is characterized by a large amount of part-time agriculture. The northern part of the county is industrialized and is also a forested region. There are numerous opportunities for farmers to find supplemental work during slack periods in the operation of the farm. A total of 2,124 operators reported doing some off-farm work, according to the 1954 Census. This number was nearly three-fifths of all farmers in Spokane County. Of this group, 1,626 or 45 percent of all the farmers in the county work in other jobs more than 100 days during the year. On about one-half of the Spokane County

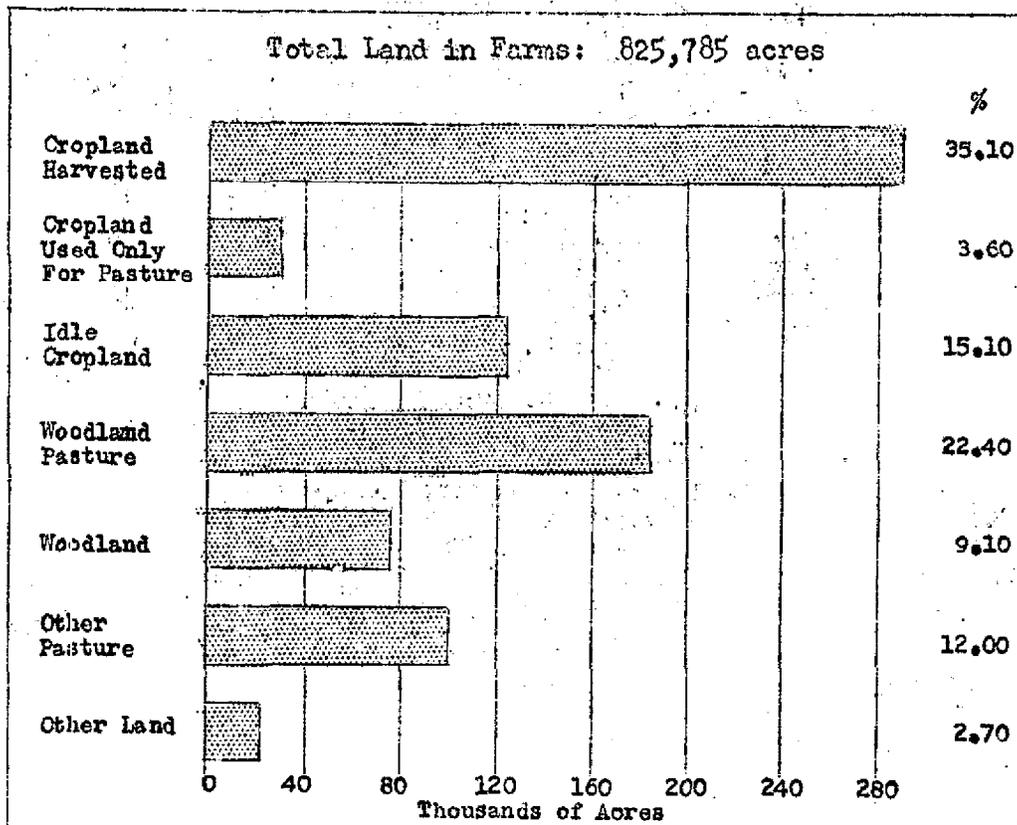


Figure 9.- Utilization of Farmland in Spokane County, 1954.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

farms more income was derived from industrial and other off-farm employment in 1954 than from sales of crops and livestock. Part-time agriculture of the type found in northern Spokane County is common to all industrialized and forested regions of Washington.

### Farmland Utilization

The land utilization pattern shows the influence both of forests in the north and dry climate in the southwest. Over one-third of the farmland is used for crops. The remainder is in woodland pasture, woodland, idle cropland and other pastures. In the forest-land belt of northern Spokane County a large percentage of farmland remains in woodlands or in uncleared cut-over land which is classified as woodland pasture. Extensive use of the dry-fallow or summer-fallow system in the semi-arid southern wheat growing belt results in about 15 percent of the farmland being in idle cropland.

Land utilization trends since 1949 show considerable increase in fallow land, woodland, and unforested range land used for grazing. Cultivated summer fallow amounted to 104,390 acres in 1954 compared to 89,000 acres in 1949. Pastured range land also increased from 81,600 acres to 99,300 acres in the same period. In the northern districts considerably more land was put into woodland. The acreage of woodland went up from 59,400 to 74,300 acres since 1949.

### Farm Facilities

The 3,593 farms of Spokane County are above the state average in a number of home appliances, conveniences and labor saving equipment items enumerated in

Table 13.- Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms  
Spokane County, 1954.

Facility of Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone.....	2,990	83.2
Electricity.....	3,535	98.4
Television set.....	2,287	63.6
Piped running water.....	3,363	93.6
Home freezer.....	1,307	36.4
Electric pig brooder.....	55	1.5
Power feed grinder.....	548	15.2
Milking machine.....	599	16.7
Grain combines.....	885	24.6
Corn pickers.....	--	--
Pick-up balers.....	508	14.1
Field forage harvesters.....	97	2.7
Artificial ponds, reservoirs and earth tanks.....	221	6.1
Mototrucks.....	2,355	65.5
Tractors.....	2,593	72.1
Automobiles.....	3,087	85.9

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

the last Census. In 1954, 98 percent of the farms were served with electricity from rural power lines by public and private utilities. About 83 percent had telephone service. According to the 1950 Census, farm electric service bills averaged \$8.70 monthly, slightly above the state average. Over three-fifths of all farms had television sets in 1954, the highest density of rural TV receivers in eastern Washington. The farm districts are in the receiving zone of three stations in Spokane.

Mechanized agriculture has advanced greatly since 1945. The number of grain combines, tractors, hay balers and motor trucks continued to increase between 1950 and 1955. Grain combines numbered 971 in 1954 as an additional 74 farms added combines to their equipment. In 1954 Spokane was third in the state behind Whitman and Lincoln Counties in combines, having 885 farms so equipped. Tractor power was added to 274 more farms between 1950 and 1954 with over 72 percent having tractors by 1954. Spokane agriculture ranks fourth in the state in number of farms with tractors. Pick-up hay balers have increased 60 percent and more motor trucks and automobiles are now owned by more farmers than in 1950.

#### Irrigation and Facilities

Since 1949 there has been a strong trend toward sprinkler irrigation to improve crop yields. Sprinkler and other irrigation systems have been added to 63 farms from 1949 to 1954 and over 6,000 additional acres were being irrigated in 1954. Pasture irrigation to improve grass yields on dairy and livestock farms is receiving attention. More wells are being drilled and more water pumps and sprinklers are being purchased to overcome the low grass yields of dry upland areas. A larger number of vegetable and berry crops are now being irrigated to insure reliable yields.

Table 14.- Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage  
Spokane County, 1950 and 1954

Item	1950	1954
Number of irrigated farms.....	632	695
Land in irrigated farms.....	37,791 acres	90,398 acres
Land irrigated <sup>1/</sup> .....		
Irrigated land in farms according to use:		
Farms irrigating crops.....	566	609
Farms irrigating pasture.....	200	271
Acres of crops irrigated.....	7,947	13,272
Acres of pasture irrigated.....	1,131	2,330

<sup>1/</sup> Includes all land irrigated by sprinkler systems.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.