

PART II

WHITMAN COUNTY POPULATION

Geographically, the rural population of Whitman County is rather thinly scattered throughout the area because farming operations are large and dwellings are far apart. Topography has never been a handicap to settlement as is the case in many other counties in the state. Settlements have taken place on the upland areas as well as in the valleys and bottomlands. The main incorporated places are located in the east-central part of the county but numerous small farm communities are found in the northern, central and eastern sections.

Population Growth

The growth of population in the area now within Whitman County was slow prior to 1870. Lack of roads and distance from the East kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility also prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858. During the late 1860's, cattlemen from the Walla Walla Valley began moving into the Palouse country. County population began to rise rapidly when it was discovered that the area was well suited for growing wheat. According to the Census, there were 7,014 persons living in Whitman County in 1880.

Population grew rapidly from 1880 to 1900. New transcontinental railroads brought large numbers of immigrants from eastern United States and Europe. The extension of railroads into Whitman County stimulated rapid population growth and encouraged expansion. By the turn of the century, the county population was 25,360.

The period 1900 to 1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the county gained 7,920 people, increasing over 31 percent to a total of 33,280 persons. Railroads continued to open the area for distant markets as well as bringing new settlers into the county. Population also increased with the improvement of local agriculture resulting from the use of new varieties of wheat, better farming practices and the use of more efficient farm machinery.

Between 1910 and 1940, the county's population decreased. Low prices, the depression in the wheat market and farm mechanization during this period resulted in a surplus of labor in the county. Population dropped from 33,280 to 27,221 in 1940.

Since 1940, the number of inhabitants again increased but there were fewer people in the county in 1950 and 1960 than in 1910. In 1950, the county population reached 32,469, then dropped in the next decade to 31,263. The main reason for the increase in population after 1940 has been the growth of the city of Pullman caused particularly by the expansion of Washington State University. In the decade after 1950, Pullman's population growth was offset by county losses in some of the smaller towns and in many rural areas. In 1960, Whitman County accounted for one percent of the state population of 2,853,214.

Urban and Rural Population

Until 1910, Whitman County was entirely rural with all persons living in cities or villages under 2,500 persons, on farms or in country residences. In 1910, two places--Colfax and Pullman--reached populations of over 2,500 and were classified urban by the Census. Of Whitman County's population in 1910, 84 percent was rural and 16 percent was urban.

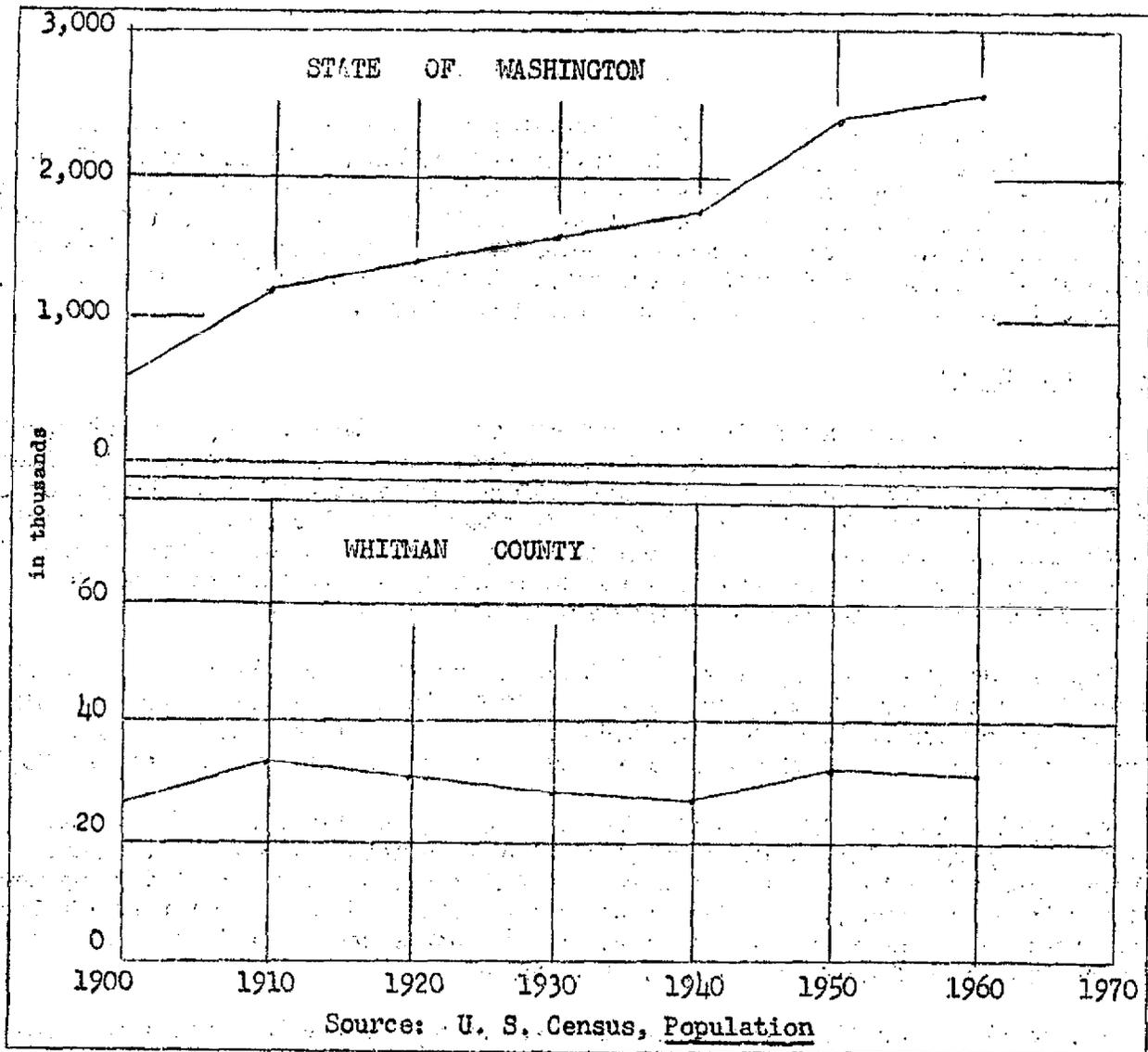


Figure 1. Population Trends: 1900-1960

Table 1. Population of Whitman County, 1900-1960

Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1900	25,360	100	0
1910	33,280	83.8	16.2
1920	31,323	90.3	9.7
1930	28,014	78.2	21.8
1940	27,221	73.3	26.7
1950	32,469	53.5	46.5
1960	31,263	49.4	50.6

Source: U. S. Census, Population

Between 1910 and 1920, Whitman County's urban population declined when the city of Pullman dropped to 2,440 residents and was considered rural by the Census. By 1930, Pullman with 3,322 persons again joined Colfax with 2,782 residents to form the total county urban population. Since 1930, the urban proportion of the county population has continued to increase from 22 percent to 51 percent in 1960. In 1960, the county still had only two urban places--Pullman (12,957) and Colfax (2,860).

In 1960, the rural population was predominantly rural-nonfarm, consisting of 9,065 persons who lived in the country or in the small towns but not on farms. The rural-nonfarm persons represented about 59 percent of the total rural population.

Rural-farm population has decreased in the three decades between 1930 and 1960. Persons living on farms numbered 12,613 in 1930, 11,221 in 1940, 8,509 in 1950 and 6,381 in 1960. The drop in farm population during this period represents a decline of almost 50 percent. In 1960, Whitman ranked seventh among the counties of Washington in farm population. Both farms and people living on farms are becoming fewer, whereas the production of farm products continues to increase. Whitman County finds itself in a period when technology fashions economic and social changes.

Table 2. Population of Incorporated Places
Whitman County, 1910-1960

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
Albion	276	252	236	206	256	291
Colfax	2,783	3,027	2,782	2,853	3,057	2,860
Colton	393	382	269	262	207	253
Elberton	330	244	125	151	145	66
Endicott	474	634	512	495	397	369
Farmington	489	479	344	341	239	176
Garfield	932	776	703	674	674	607
LaCrosse	--	--	471	475	457	463
Lamont	--	165	130	135	101	111
Malden	798	1,005	375	325	332	292
Oakesdale	832	816	637	576	590	474
Palouse	1,549	1,179	1,151	1,028	1,036	926
Pullman	2,602	2,440	3,322	4,417	12,022	12,957
Rosalia	767	714	633	596	660	585
St. John	421	597	471	526	542	545
Tekoa	1,694	1,520	1,408	1,383	1,189	911
Uniontown	426	404	360	332	254	242

Source: U. S. Census, Population

There are seventeen incorporated places in Whitman County. Pullman is the largest city in the county. From 1910 to 1940, it increased from a population of 2,602 to 4,417. In the decade after 1940, Pullman gained 7,605 residents to reach a population of 12,022 in 1950. This increase was largely caused by the expansion of Washington State University located in the city. In 1960, Pullman's population was 12,957 and accounted for over 41 percent of the county residents. Colfax, the county's second largest city, has grown very little since 1910. Its population was 2,783 in 1910 compared with 2,860 in 1960.

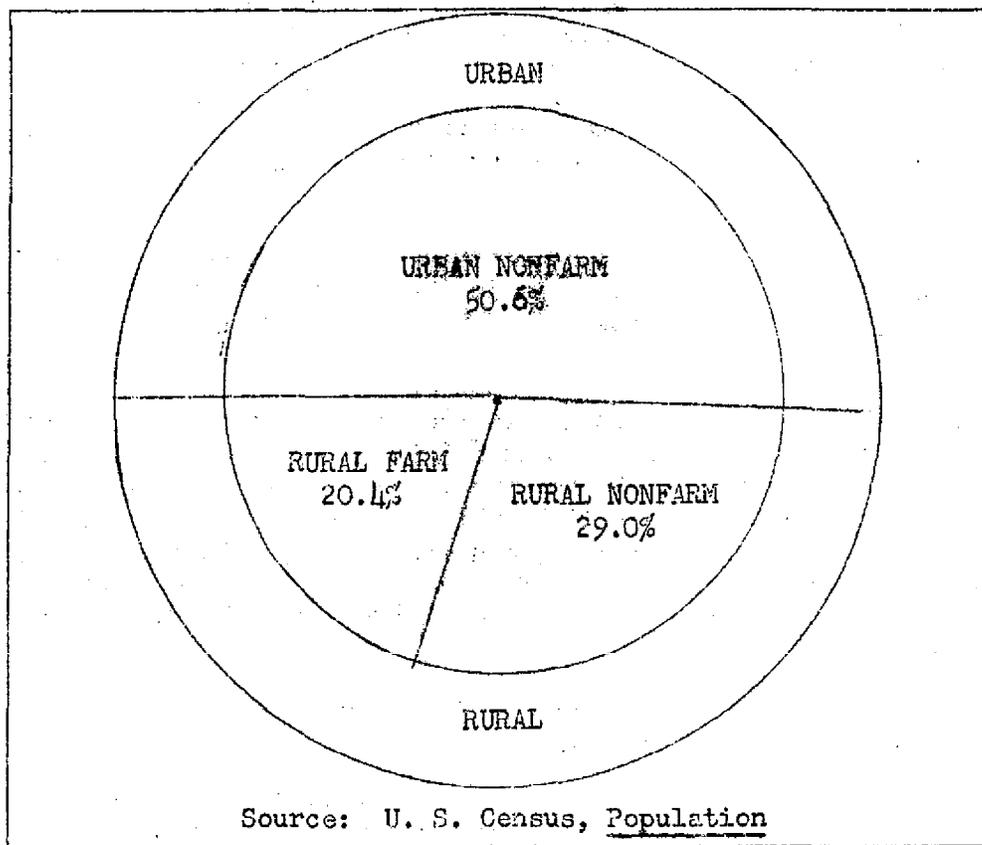


Figure 2. Urban and Rural Population, Whitman County, 1960

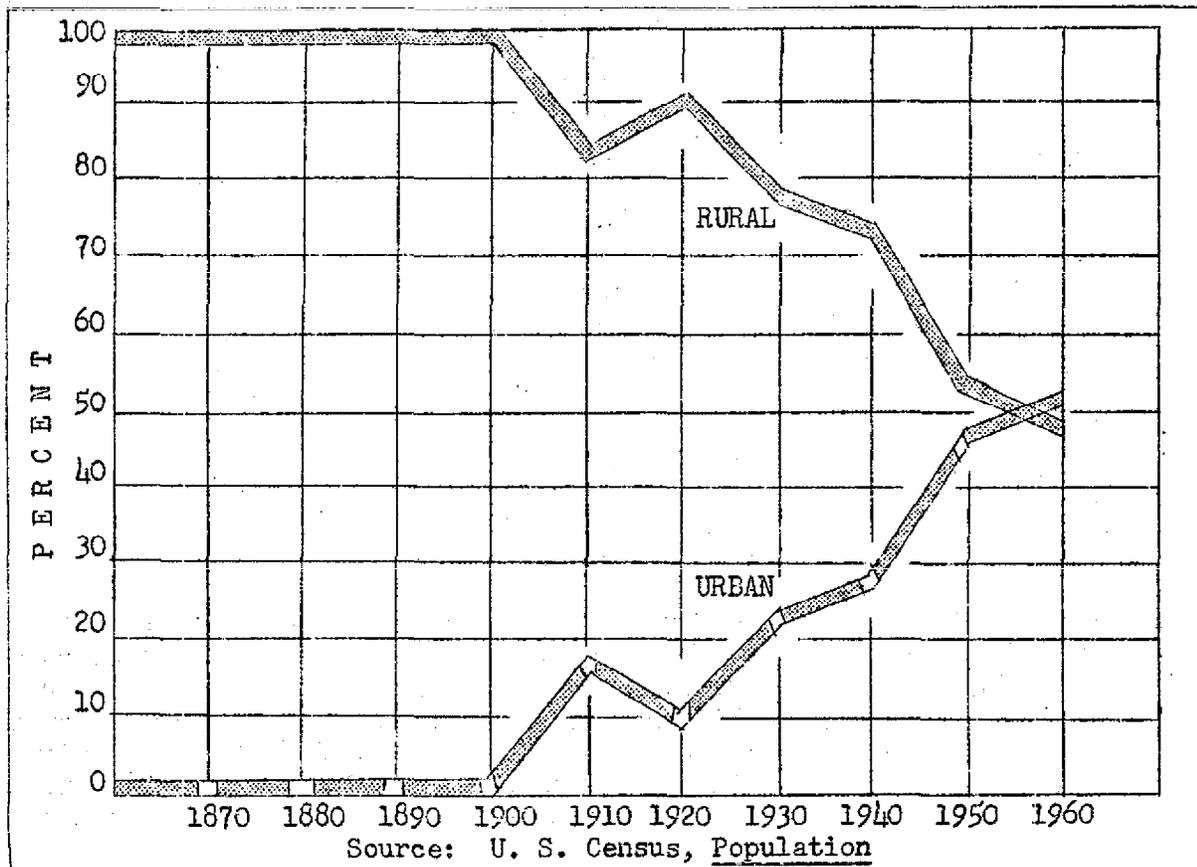


Figure 3. Rural and Urban Population Trends, Whitman County, 1870-1960

Each of the other incorporated places in the county was under 1,000 in the number of inhabitants in 1960 and all were considered part of the rural population by the Census. In 1960, these small towns ranged in size from Palouse with a population of 926 to Elberton with only 66 persons. Most of the county's smaller communities have declined in population since 1910.

Cities and towns in Whitman County serve as local farm centers and as sites for grain storage facilities. Also, some farm families reside in town rather than on the farm. In 1960, the combined population of the seventeen incorporated places amounted to 22,128, representing about 71 percent of the total county population.

Population Characteristics

Typical of many counties of the western United States, Whitman County has been a melting pot of many nationalities from Europe and eastern sections of the United States. Free homesteads, low land prices and the productivity of the land attracted many immigrants from agricultural regions of midwestern United States, Canada and Europe. Over 10 percent of the population in 1890 was foreign born. Prior to 1890, immigrants from Germany, Canada, England, Ireland and Sweden were the most numerous. Later in the 1920's, the largest group of immigrants came from the Ukraine in Russia. They were farmers and farm laborers attracted to the wheat lands of eastern Washington. Many of these were refugees from the Russian Revolution of 1917-1919. In 1920, Ukrainians numbered 798, accounting for nearly one-third of the county's foreign-born population. Immigration from foreign lands decreased greatly after 1924 because of a restrictive quota system established by Congress.

In 1960, foreign-born persons residing in Whitman County numbered 1,004 and represented only 3 percent of the total population. The largest foreign-born groups were English and Germans followed by lesser numbers of Chinese, Norwegians, Russians and Hungarians. In 1960, about 16 percent of the county inhabitants were of foreign stock (all first and second generations). There were 5,142 persons of foreign stock in the county in 1960.

The nonwhite population of Whitman County was 278, according to the Census of 1960. Races included 76 Chinese, 58 Japanese, 41 Indians, 24 Negroes and 10 Filipinos. Nonwhite residents represented less than one percent of the total county population in 1960. Many of the nonwhite and foreign persons counted by the Census were associated with Washington State University.

In 1960, a total of 12,212 persons were employed in the county. Miscellaneous services and agriculture were the two leading types of employment. The Census counted 5,262 working in miscellaneous services covering many trade, professional and educational activities. Educational services alone involved 3,327 employed persons largely because of the location of Washington State University within the county. There were 2,693 persons working in agriculture which represented 22 percent of all self-employed and employed persons in the county. Retail and wholesale trade was third in the number of employed persons with 1,710. The Census enumerated 678 working for a living in manufacturing, making it fourth in rank. A large segment of the manufacturing employment involved food and kindred products and in printing, publishing and allied products. Also of relative importance in the number of persons employed was transportation, communication and other public utilities with 669, construction with 472 and public administration with 390. Forestry and mining were minor occupations in 1960.

Table 3. Employment of the Population
Whitman County, 1960

Types of Employment	Total Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	12,212
Agriculture	2,693
Forestry and Fisheries . . .	28
Mining	14
Construction	472
Manufacturing	678
Transportation, Communications and other Public Utilities .	669
Retail and Wholesale Trade .	1,710
Miscellaneous Services . . .	5,262
Public Administration (govern- ment employment)	390
Other employment	296

Source: U. S. Census of Population

According to the 1930 Census, there were over 109 males per 100 females in Whitman County. In 1960, the county's population consisted of 16,240 males and 15,023 females, which was a ratio of 108 males per 100 females. The number of women relative to men tends to increase as a county becomes older and more settled. Other factors such as war and industrialization also tend to increase the proportion of women. In 1960, rural men numbered 7,976 and rural women 7,470--a ratio of 107 males per 100 females.

Whitman County's population is slowly aging. The percentage of older people has been increasing steadily since 1870. The 1930 Census showed that only 7 percent of the people in the county were 65 years and older, whereas, in 1960, they accounted for 9 percent of the total. Improved health practices and greater medical knowledge have played an important part in lengthening the life span. According to the 1960 Census, the age groups with the largest number of persons were those between 20 and 24 years old and between 15 and 19 years old. Students attending Washington State University provide the main reason for the high numbers in these age groups. Children under four was third in number among the age groups

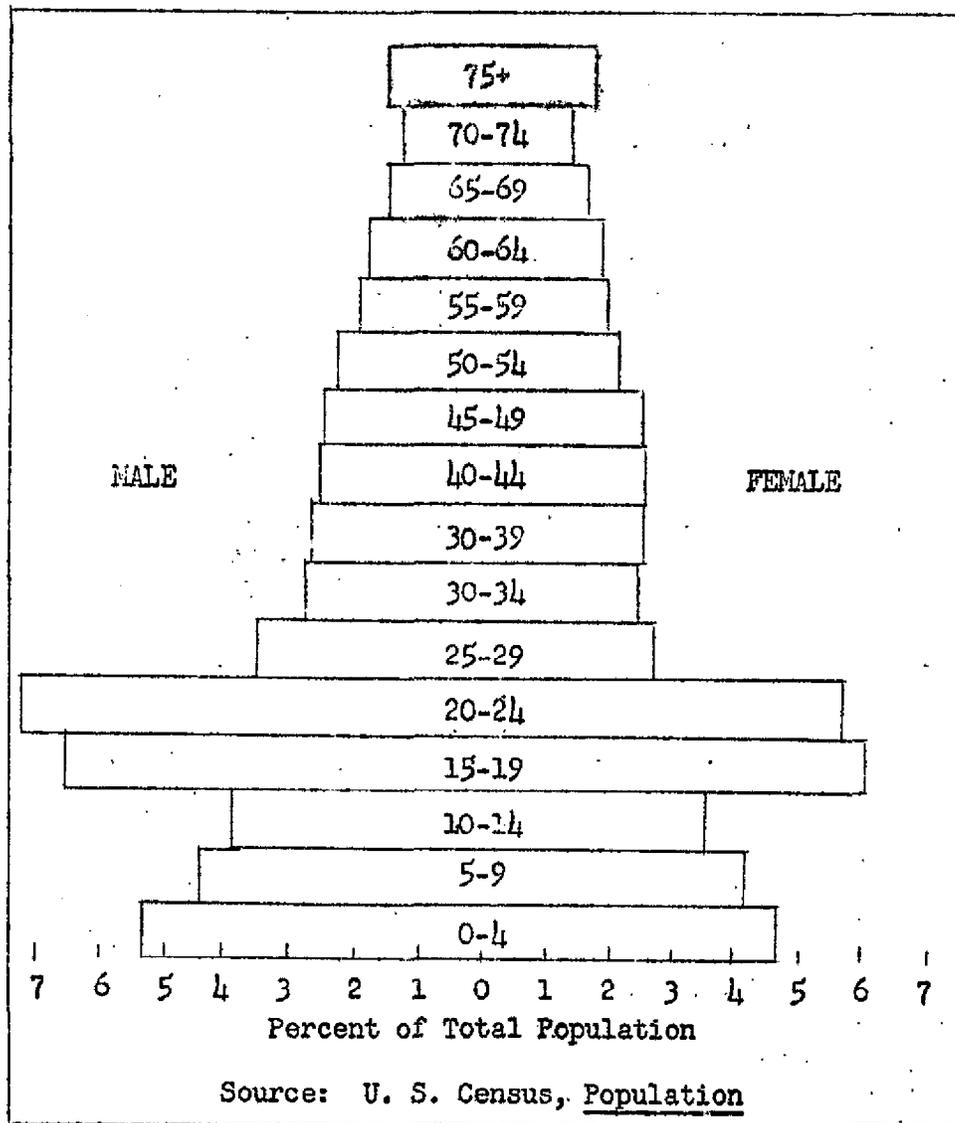


Figure 4. Age Distribution of Population, Whitman County, 1960

Table 4. Whitman County's Rank Compared With Other Washington Counties, 1959

Item Compared	Rank	Quantity
<u>General</u>		
Land area	10	1,386,880 acres
Number of farms	9	1,824 farms
Land in farms-percent	1	107.1 percent <u>1/</u>
Average size of farms	11	814.5 acres
Cropland harvested	1	669,672 acres
Irrigated land in farms	16	8,662 acres
Rural farm population	7	6,381 persons <u>2/</u>
Total county population	18	31,263 persons <u>2/</u>
<u>Cash farm income</u>		
Value of all farm products sold .	2	\$1,030,918 dollars
Value of livestock sold	12	7,398,484 dollars
Value of crops sold	2	43,632,434 dollars
<u>Livestock on farms</u>		
All cattle and calves	6	48,623 head
Milk cows	21	2,091 head
Hogs	1	24,293 head
Chickens	14	66,961 birds
Horses and mules	5	1,689 head
Sheep and lambs	3	35,018 head
<u>Dairy and poultry products sold</u>		
Value of dairy products sold	26	366,143 dollars
Whole milk sold	27	6,276,827 pounds
Value of poultry products sold ..	16	288,924 dollars
Chickens sold	16	80,321 birds
Eggs sold	14	568,239 dozen
<u>Important crops harvested</u>		
Winter wheat	1	336,025 acres
Barley	1	152,184 acres
Dry peas	1	112,438 acres
Lentils	1	16,938 acres
Oats	3	12,210 acres
Alfalfa	8	19,723 acres
Spring wheat	14	4,414 acres

1/ The excess of farm acreage over approximate land area is due to the fact that the entire acreage of a farm is tabulated as in the county in which the headquarters is located, even though a part of the farm may be situated in an adjoining county.

2/ U. S. Census of Population, 1960.

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.