

PART IV

Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

The 1954 Census of Agriculture reported 295 properties classified as farms. Farms in San Juan County have been decreasing in number. From a total of 338 farms in 1900 the number of farms reached a peak of 566 in 1925. Since then, farm numbers decreased to 327 farms in 1954. This indicates some farms have been abandoned or changed into resort, residential and other types of nonfarm use. Total area in farms has been decreasing since World War II. In 1954 the area in farms totaled 45,499 acres compared with 68,017 acres in 1940. Approximately 41 percent of the land in San Juan County was farmland in 1954.

Most of the agriculture in San Juan County is on medium-sized farms of 100 to 200 acres. Average size of farms has fluctuated from a high of 157 acres in 1945 to a low of 118 acres in 1925. The average farm size in 1954 was 154 acres, the largest in western Washington. In the state, San Juan County ranks twentieth in average size per farm but thirty-eighth in total number of farms.

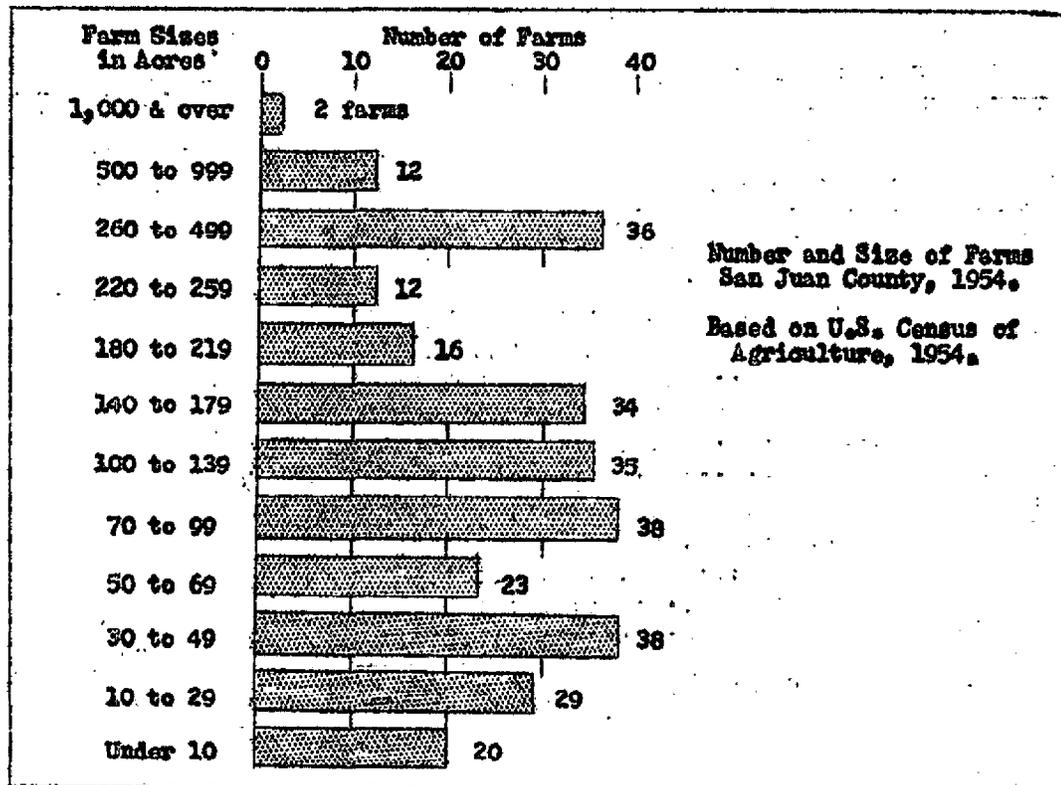


Figure 6.-- Number and Size of San Juan County Farms, 1954.

Table 10.- Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms  
San Juan County, 1900-1954

Year	Total Farms in County	Total County area in farms (acres)	Average size of farms in the county (acres)	Percent of County area in farms
1900	338	50,981	150.8	46.3
1910	483	66,612	137.9	60.5
1920	535	68,513	128.1	62.2
1925	566	67,042	118.4	60.9
1930	472	63,795	135.2	56.0
1940	497	68,017	136.9	61.8
1945	376	59,173	157.4	53.7
1950	388	56,716	146.2	51.0
1954	327	45,499	154.2	41.3

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

#### Types of Farms

San Juan County farms are of varied types but more than sixty-three per cent are classified as miscellaneous. Main types of specialized farms are livestock, dairy, poultry and fruit. The miscellaneous type farms are generally operated on a diversified basis of growing crops and raising livestock as a part-time activity, or are primarily residential, noncommercial farms.

Table 11.- Types of Farms, San Juan County, 1954

Type of Farms	Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county
Total farms in county	327	
Field-crop farms	5	1.5
Cash-grain	5	
Other field-crop	0	
Vegetable farms	0	
Fruit-and-nut farms	5	1.5
Dairy farms	30	9.2
Poultry farms	10	3.1
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry	67	20.5
General farms	5	
Primarily crop	0	
Primarily livestock	0	
Crop and livestock	5	1.5
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms	205	62.7

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

#### Farm Values

The values of land, farms and farm buildings in San Juan County have increased greatly since 1920. Farm property was at a low value of \$3,000,000

in 1940. However, by 1954 this figure more than doubled to a value of \$6,591,775. In 1954 the average value per farm was \$22,345 and per acre value was \$148.14. Demands for land by investors and real estate firms for residential sites, resorts and seashore homes have been important factors raising farm property values. An increasing tourist, summer residence and retirement home trend has raised property values. Value of farm land has also been increased by the large amount of labor and capital invested in land clearing and general improvement during the last thirty years. Another factor is the improved accessibility of the islands by ferries and private boats and yachts from the mainland.

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

Year	Total Value All Farm Property in County	County Average Values	
		Per Farm (dollars)	Per Acre (dollars)
1900	\$1,104,923	\$ 3,270	\$ 22
1910	3,120,947	6,460	47
1920	4,738,069	7,470	58
1930	3,471,375	7,355	54
1940	2,987,889	6,000	44
1950	5,602,332	14,440	101
1954	6,591,775	22,345	148

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

### Farm Residence and Operation

Part-time farming is a major characteristic of the area. About three-fifths of farmers divide their employment between farm work and wage earning in other occupations and industries. Seasonal work in fishing, lumbering, resort and tourist industries, construction and government services afford many farm owners opportunities to supplement their incomes. In 1954, 60 percent of farmers were working off their farms part-time. About 43 percent were employed away from their farms 100 days or more per year and 55 percent of all farm operators were earning more from their outside work than from sales of farm products. San Juan part-time farming exceeds the state average of 46 percent but is about average for western Washington.

### Farm Facilities

San Juan County farmers as a whole are below the state farm average in use of certain standard household conveniences and labor saving facilities. Many farms in the better agricultural areas of Lopez, San Juan and Orcas Islands are equipped to an average standard, but some farms on smaller islands and in isolated and less productive districts have less facilities. Electrical and telephone service are nearly up to state average, but use of television, farm machinery, trucks and automobiles are considerably below average. Since less than half of all farms are commercial operations, exceeding annual sales of \$250 per year, there is not wide ownership of machinery and investment in other facilities. Many farms without machinery have farm work done on a custom basis by those farmers owning equipment.

Table 13.—Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms  
San Juan County, 1954

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone.....	291	89.0
Electricity.....	307	94.0
Television set.....	177	54.0
Piped running water.....	292	89.0
Home freezer.....	202	62.0
Electric pig brooder.....	5	1.5
Power feed grinder.....	67	20.5
Milking machine.....	61	18.0
Grain combines.....	31	9.5
Corn pickers.....	—	—
Pick-up balers.....	26	8.0
Field forage harvesters.....	16	5.0
Artificial ponds, reservoirs and earth tanks.....	107	35.0
Motortrucks.....	162	49.5
Tractors.....	217	66.0
Automobiles.....	222	68.0

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

### Farm Tenure

A large majority (84 out of each 100 farmers) own and operate their farms. Only 7 farms out of 295 were operated by tenants in 1954. Part-owned farms are more common than rented and manager operated farms. The part-ownership system has been more common since 1940. This pattern is caused by elderly persons and part-time workers living on farms and maintaining ownership of farm residences while letting other farmers operate part of the land for a share of the crops.

Table 14.—Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms  
By Tenure of Operator, San Juan County  
1925-1954

Year	Number Farms in County	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		number of farms	percent of all farms	number of farms	percent of all farms	number of farms	percent of all farms	number of farms	percent of all farms
1925	566	504	89.0	22	3.9	2	.3	38	6.7
1930	472	363	76.9	36	7.6	6	1.3	67	14.2
1935	484	375	77.5	38	7.8	6	1.2	65	13.4
1940	497	364	73.2	61	12.3	2	.4	70	14.1
1945	376	304	80.8	44	11.7	4	1.1	24	6.4
1950	386	326	84.4	44	11.4	—	—	18	4.7
1954	295	245	83.6	42	14.3	1	.3	7	2.4

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

used or sold. Such farms with their crops and livestock divided among two or more owners are common in regions where farm property is not commonly leased or transferred to new owners. In this island region farms operated by managers for a company or an absentee owner are rare. There was only one farm under this system in 1954.

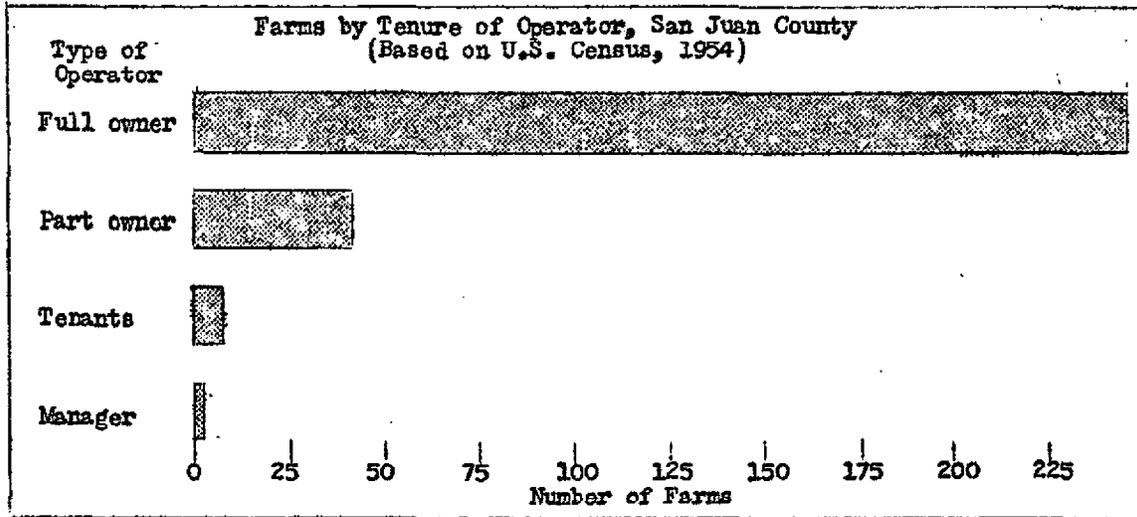


Figure 7.- Farms by Tenure of Operator, San Juan County, 1954

Irrigation Facilities

There is a limited use of irrigation equipment in the San Juan Islands. Only a few farms were using sprinkler equipment for irrigating crops and pastures in the early 1950's. Summer climate is dry and some farmers have applied water to increase yields of pastures and crops. Between 1950 and 1954 there was a slight increase in acreage irrigated.

Table 15.- Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage San Juan County, 1950 and 1954

Item	1950	1954
Number of irrigated farms.....	7	5
Land irrigated <sup>1/</sup> .....	25 acres	80 acres
Irrigated land in farms according to use:		
Farms irrigating crops.....	4	7
Farms irrigating pasture.....	3	1
Acres of crops irrigated.....	23	44
Acres of pasture irrigated.....	2	36

<sup>1/</sup> Includes land irrigated by canals, pipes and overhead sprinkler systems.

Source: U. S. Census, Agriculture

Farmland Utilization

Over two-fifths of all land in farms is being used for permanent pastures, woodland pastures and woodlands. Less than 16 percent of the island region's farmland was cultivated for crops in 1954. Permanent pastures for grazing

cattle and sheep are the largest single type of farmland utilization, making up over 24 percent in 1954. A considerable area owned by farmers in hilly, sloping and thin-soiled sites is in either pastured woodlands or undisturbed regrowth coniferous timber. Farmland in these wooded areas exceeds 19,000 acres and accounts for over 42 percent of all land held by farmers. For the last 25 years there has been a general practice of clearing only the best land of vegetation and stumps because of heavy labor costs involved. Pasturing of cut-over land has long been a common practice practiced for raising sheep and cattle. In recent years there has been more interest in farm forestry and in better management of land utilized for growing timber.

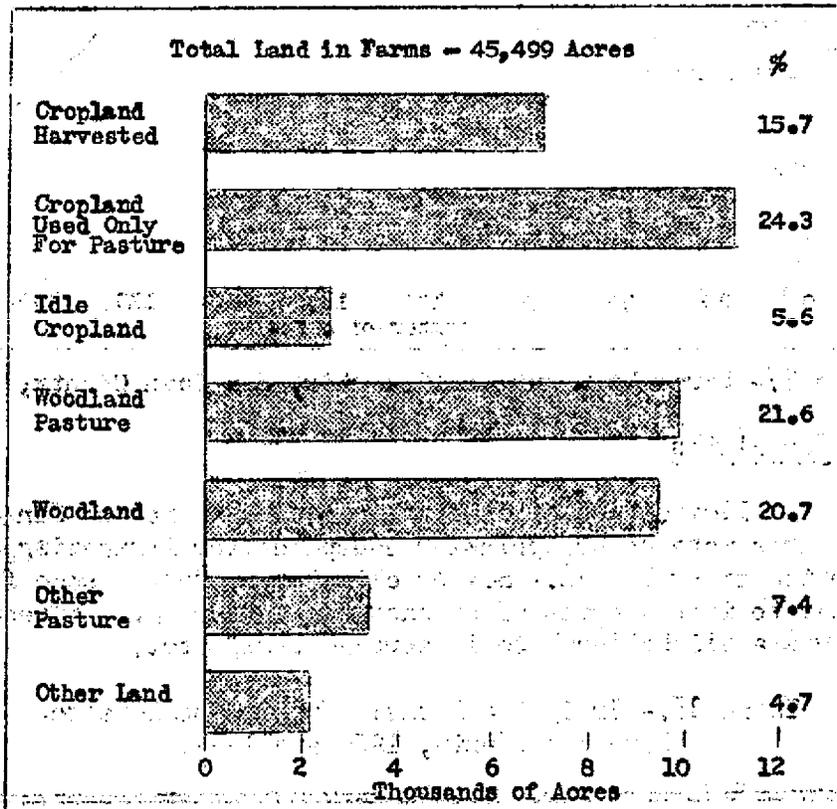


Figure 8.- Utilization of Farmland in San Juan County, 1954