

PART IV

The Pattern of Agriculture

Farms: Number and Size

According to the United States Census of Agriculture, 1954, there were 1,766 farms in Thurston County which was 256 less than reported in 1949. The trend in the county has been toward fewer and larger farms since 1945. Consolidation of farms through purchase and lease has increased the average size from 54 acres in 1945 to 89 acres in 1954. This is below the average of 270 acres for the state as a whole. In 1954 Thurston County ranked 14th in the state in number of farms, but in average size of farms was twenty-eighth.

The large number of small farm units compared to the state average is primarily the result of land purchase methods, the popularity of part-time farming, increasing land prices, cut-over land clearing costs and suburbanization. During earlier settlement, logged over land and subdivisions of large homesteads were commonly purchased in units of 10, 20 and 40 acres by part-time farmers. Small-farm ownership for growing berries, small scale dairying and raising poultry became common. Heavy costs of clearing stump and forest land have tended to discourage development of large holdings. These and other factors have created the present pattern of farming in which over 45 percent of the holdings are less than 30 acres in size. Farms of 10 to 30 acres were most common in 1954, numbering 537. There were only 40 farm units exceeding 500 acres in size in the 1954 Census.

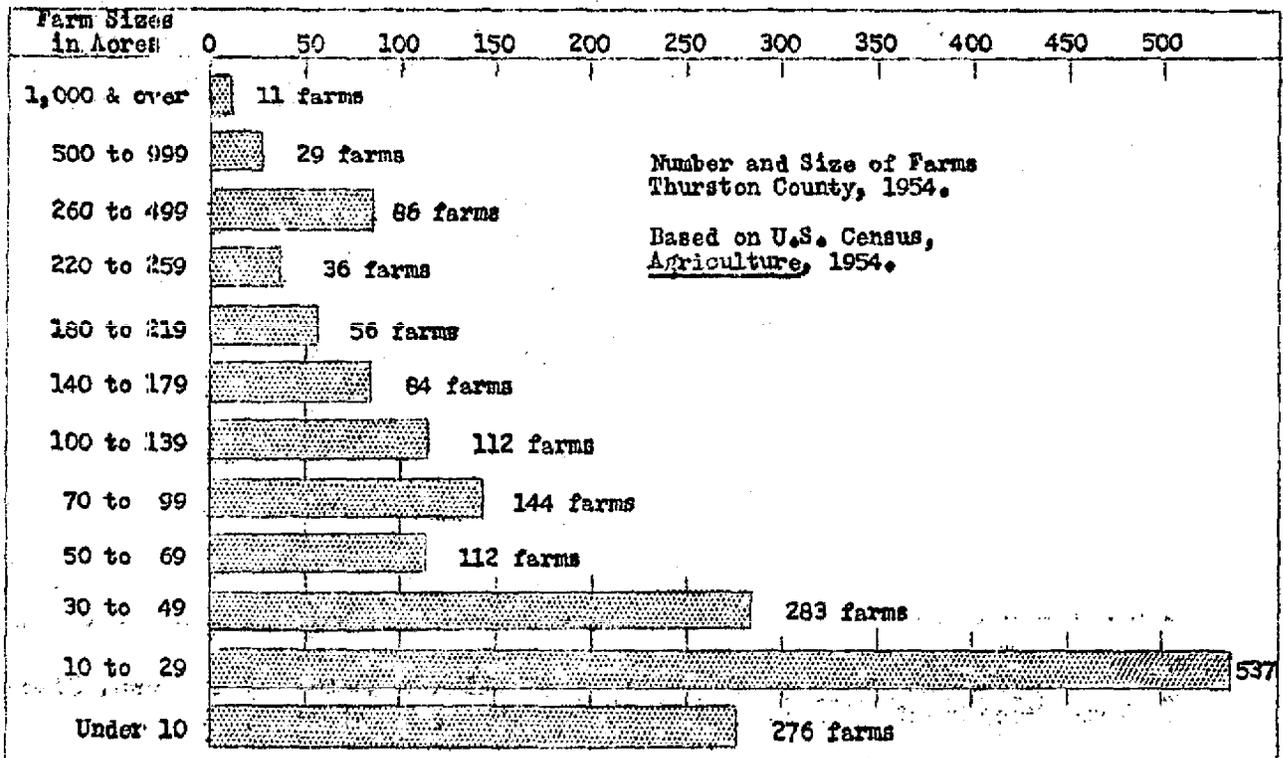


Figure 7.- Number and Size of Thurston County Farms, 1954.

Table 9.- Thurston County Farms: Number, Total Land in Farms and Average Size of Farms, 1900-1954.
(Source: U.S. Censuses, Agriculture)

Census Year	Total Farms in County	Total County area in farms (acres)	Average size of farms in the county (acres)
1900	665	128,822	194
1910	1,173	151,243	130
1920	1,490	140,040	94
1925	2,069	142,479	69
1930	2,082	143,378	69
1940	2,876	177,885	63
1945	2,848	154,835	54
1950	2,022	170,640	84
1954	1,766	157,202	89

Land in farms has decreased since 1940. In 1954 all land in farms was down to 157,200 acres compared to 177,885 acres in 1940. In this 15 year period over 20,000 acres of farm land went into non-agricultural uses such as urban, residential and industrial property and into tree farms and woodlands owned by non-farmers.

Farm Values

The value of Thurston farm land and buildings has more than doubled since the low values of the 1920's and 1930's, when \$4,000 to \$6,000 was about the value of an average farm. By 1955, persons interested in taking up farming in Thurston County found that land and buildings averaged about \$165 per acre and that a typical farm was valued at over \$14,000.

Table 10.- Value of Farm Land and Buildings
Thurston County, 1900-1954

Year	Total Value in County dollars	County Average Values	
		Per Farm dollars	Per Acre dollars
1900	\$ 2,176,020	\$3,330	\$ 17
1910	7,681,745	6,550	50
1920	11,793,340	6,690	71
1930	12,488,970	6,000	87
1940	11,415,530	3,970	64
1949	19,930,850	9,860	122
1954	24,962,410	14,135	165

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Types of Farms

Dairy farms predominate in Thurston County agriculture. Over one-fourth of all farm places in 1954 specialized in dairying. Poultry farms were the

second most numerous and livestock farms raising non-dairy cattle, sheep and other animals were third. Specialty crop farms growing principally berries and vegetables numbered about 60. The most common type of holdings are part-time, non-commercial and general farms classified as miscellaneous by the Census. Nearly two-thirds of all farming operations fall into this miscellaneous classification.

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

Type of Farms	Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county
Total farms in county.....	1,781	
Field-crop farms.....	20	
Cash-grain.....	10	.6
Other field-crop.....	10	.6
Vegetable farms.....	10	.6
Fruit-and-nut farms.....	30	1.7
Dairy farms.....	248	13.9
Poultry farms.....	140	7.9
Livestock farms other than dairy and poultry	121	6.8
General farms.....	40	
Primarily crop.....	25	1.4
Primarily livestock.....	5	.3
Crop and livestock.....	10	.6
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms.....	1,172	65.8

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Farm Ownership and Tenancy

The large majority of Thurston County farmers own all of their land and buildings. About 86 out of 100 farmers were full owners in 1954. Tenancy, or the renting or leasing of entire farms from absentee owners is not common. In 1954 only about 5 farms out of 100 were operated by tenants. Since 1925 full ownership of farms has increased while tenancy has gone down. A noticeable upward trend is in part-ownership of farms. Since 1925 part-owned farm

Table 12.- Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms By Tenure of Operator, Thurston 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	2,069	1,733	83.8	60	2.9	12	.6	264	12.8
1930	2,082	1,772	85.1	105	5.0	17	.8	188	9.0
1935	2,967	2,483	83.6	120	4.0	9	.3	355	12.0
1940	2,876	2,398	83.4	141	4.9	9	.3	328	11.4
1945	2,848	2,601	91.3	98	3.4	9	.3	140	4.9
1950	2,021	1,746	86.4	177	8.8	5	.2	94	4.7
1954	1,762	1,510	85.7	171	9.7	5	.3	80	4.5

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

operations have gone up from 3 percent to nearly 10. In the part-owner system a portion of a farm is owned and land is rented in addition to that which is owned. Many elderly people live in retirement on farms and contract part of their land to a neighbor or a younger farmer who wishes to expand his operations.

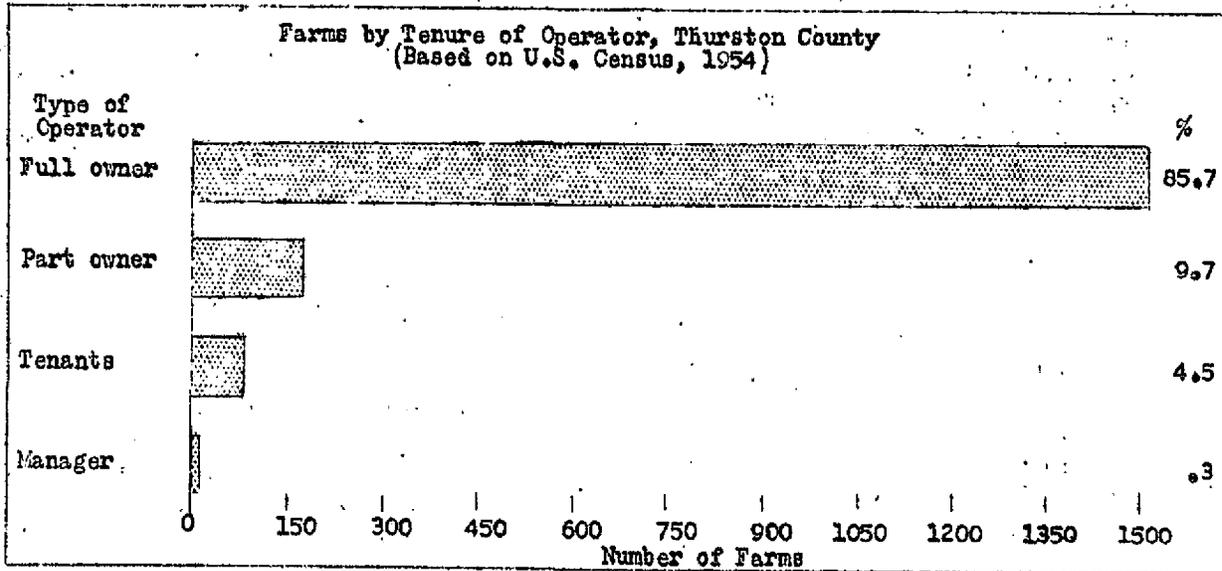


Figure 8.- Farms by Tenure of Operator, Thurston County, 1954.

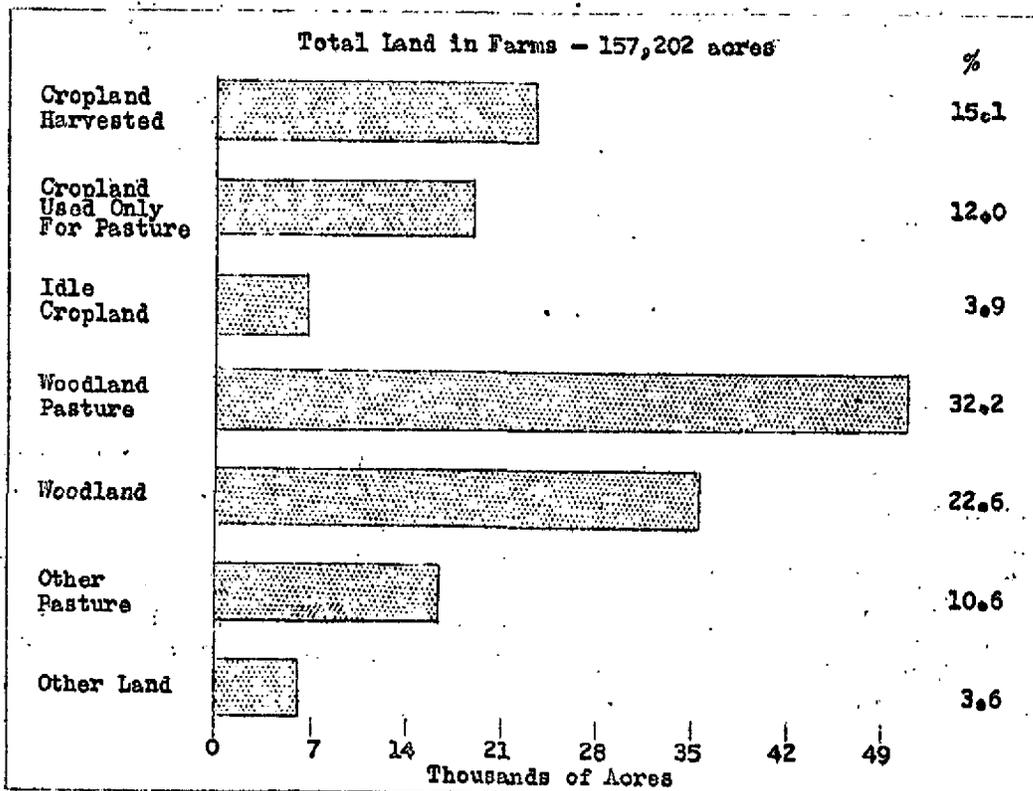


Figure 9.- Utilization of Farmland in Thurston County, 1954

Farmland Utilization

Over one-half of Thurston County farmland is woodland pasture and woodland. This type of land use is somewhat typical of all the lowland cut-over region of western Washington. Over 580 farms, or one-third of the total have some land classed as woodland. About one-fifth of the farms are managing woodland tracts as farm forests and have curtailed grazing in these woodlands in favor of growing salable timber and pulpwood. Heavy costs in clearing cut over and fir-forested land in sloping and hilly areas have caused farmers to leave woodlands undisturbed or to use them for rough pastures. Cropland harvested for hay, grain, berries and vegetables occupies only about 15 percent of the farmland in the county.

Irrigation Facilities

Because of the dry summer climate and the porous glacial soils on the prairies of Thurston County, there has been an increasing use of irrigation equipment. In the 1920's and 1930's the Yelm Prairie area was irrigated by a system of canals and flumes. This was a privately owned irrigation system which was abandoned later in the early 1940's. Since 1945 irrigation by means of wells, pumps, pipe and sprinkler systems has been greatly increased. By 1954 there was a new high in irrigation. There were 247 farms using modern, privately owned irrigation systems and over 5,245 acres of crops and pasture was being irrigated.

Table 13.- Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage
Thurston County

Farms and Acreage	1940	1945	1950	1954
Number of Farms Reporting Use of Irrigation	223	64	198	247
Acreage Irrigated in the County <u>1/</u>	1,738	545	2,278	5,245

1/ Includes land irrigated by sprinklers.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Farm Facilities

Farm families in Thurston County are using more home conveniences and machinery than in the 1940's. The use of electricity, telephones, modern plumbing and labor-saving equipment has gone up greatly since 1939. By 1954 over 74 percent of farm homes had telephones and 96 percent were served with electricity. The use of milking machines increased and 263 dairy farms had this type of equipment. Television sets were on over half of all the farms. About two-thirds of all the farms were equipped with tractors and half of all the farms used motor trucks.

Table 14.- Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms
Thurston County, 1954

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone.....	1,309	74.1
Electricity.....	1,706	96.6
Television set.....	936	53.0
Piped running water.....	1,641	92.9
Home freezer.....	521	29.5
Electric pig brooder.....	5	.3
Power feed grinder.....	89	5.0
Milking machine.....	263	14.9
Grain combines.....	73	4.1
Corn pickers.....	---	---
Pick-up balers.....	83	4.7
Field forage harvesters.....	32	1.8
Artificial ponds, reservoirs and earth tanks.....	82	4.6
Mototrucks.....	923	52.3
Tractors.....	1,180	66.8
Automobiles.....	1,479	83.7

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Table 15.- Thurston County's Rank Compared With
Other Washington Counties

Item Compared	Rank	Quantity	Year
<u>General</u>			
Land area.....	32	458,880 acres	1954
Number of farms.....	14	1,766 farms	1954
Land in farms--percent.....	21	34.3 percent	1954
Average size of farms.....	28	89 acres	1954
Cropland harvested.....	28	23,779 acres	1954
Rural farm population.....	13	8,615 persons	1950
Total county population.....	12	44,884 persons	1950
<u>Cash farm income</u>			
Value of all farm products sold..	25	4,000,277 dollars	1954
Value of livestock sold.....	15	3,136,333 dollars	1954
Value of crops sold.....	26	643,200 dollars	1954
<u>Livestock on farms</u>			
All cattle and calves.....	20	19,700 head	1954
Milk cows.....	13	6,865 head	1954
Hogs.....	8	4,439 head	1954
Chickens.....	10	145,222 birds	1954
Horses and mules.....	22	755 head	1954
Sheep and lambs.....	26	1,125 head	1954
<u>Dairy and poultry products sold</u>			
Value of dairy products sold.....	13	1,494,132 dollars	1954
Whole milk sold.....	12	35,695,000 pounds	1954
Value of poultry products sold...	11	966,051 dollars	1954
Chickens sold.....	10	329,378 birds	1954
Eggs sold.....	12	1,140,681 dozen	1954
<u>Important crops harvested</u>			
Clover and timothy.....	8	7,700 acres	1954
Oats.....	14	4,600 acres	1954
Silage.....	9	2,390 acres	1954
Tree fruits.....	11	738 acres	1954
Strawberries.....	8	250 acres	1954
Clover seed.....	7	125 acres	1954

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture, 1950, 1954.