

Utilization of Woodland Areas of Morgan County, Indiana

JAMES R. ANDERSON, University of Maryland

The woodland areas of Morgan County are utilized principally as (1) the basis for an important lumbering industry, (2) sites for part-time farms, rural residences, and summer and week-end cottages, and (3) state and classified forests. Most of the woodland is situated in the unglaciated and Illinoian glaciated areas of the county with some in the more rolling parts of the till plain. In these areas much of the land was never cleared for crops, although it was cutover for the timber—sometimes twice. Much that was used for cropland is now reverting to woodland.

The Lumbering Industry

Forests are sufficient to support a sizeable lumbering industry in Morgan County on the margin of rough unglaciated south-central Indiana. In the once-glaciated and the non-glaciated areas of the county, forests are the predominant land use, except in the White River and larger creek bottoms.

One of Morgan County's most abundant resources has been its forests. When the white settlers came, these luxuriant forests were so dense and widespread as to be a nuisance to the pioneer intent upon getting enough cropland to support his family; consequently, there was much destruction and waste. Following the Civil War, a greater utilization was made of the forests, since the demand for good hardwood lumber was considerable, particularly in the East. In 1870 Morgan County had some 97,000 acres of woodland according to the census; in 1939 only about 40,000 acres were so classified. Thus in seventy years, the forest area was approximately halved.

Morgan County has three main types of forest, the beech-maple, the oak-hickory, and the sycamore-willow-soft maple. The beech-maple type, which is the most valuable, originally occupied much of the northeast part of the county where Crosby-Miami soils predominate. Today less than one-tenth remains and that chiefly on slopes unsuited for farming.

The oak-hickory forest cover is the most extensive type. It is concentrated in the "knobstone regions" south and west of Martinsville, where the more hilly sections are as much as four-fifths forested. Here are found white and red oak, pig-nut and shell-bark hickory, with some ash, sugar maple, elm, and black gum on the lower slopes. Another area that has important stands of the oak-hickory type lies in the central part of the county north of White River. The ridges and slopes of these areas are predominantly forested. Another type is the sycamore-willow-soft maple forests of the river bottomlands; however, only small areas unsuited to farming are now forested.

In comparing Morgan's rank in the state as to forested area, the best available figures are the census enumeration of acres of woodland on farms. This excludes some commercial tracts of timber and also

the state and federal forests. In comparison with other counties, Morgan has a relatively high proportion of its area in woodland. Only 14 of Indiana's 92 counties had more woodland in farms in 1939 than did Morgan; ten of these 14 are in the unglaciated part of the state. In value of forest products Morgan County ranked ninth in 1939.

The importance of sawmills to the early settlers was considerable, for the fine timber was a major source of income to the farmers; and the logging jobs furnished them with employment during the winter months. These sawmills, often small and widely scattered, were set up and operated in many cases only during the winter season. They became so important that from 1850 to 1900 this industry employed more men than any other manufacturing industry in Indiana. Today eleven mills, concentrated in the southern part of the county, are operating; only one is located in the till plain.

Two principal factors have determined the location of the mills: (1) nearness to timber supply and (2) availability of transportation facilities. Eight of the mills have had permanent locations for many years, while three mills have shifted from time to time to keep near to the current timber supply. The eight permanent mills saw five-sixths of the lumber; nearly half of the production comes from the five mills situated in the southwestern part of the county. One of these, located at Whitaker, saws nearly one-third of the county's output. Approximately another one-third of the timber is sawed by three mills in Martinsville.

The Sanders mill at Whitaker, which has been in operation since 1900, is now the largest lumber producer in the county. This long period of activity is exceptional, for many of the mills have been moved or gone out of operation as local timber was depleted. Although the timber resources of the immediate area have now become comparatively small, sizeable forested tracts elsewhere have also been generally depleted; consequently there is little advantage in relocating the larger mills because such a transfer would not greatly facilitate the transporting of logs to the mills. Timber is hauled to some of the mills in Morgan County from points thirty to forty miles away, thus affording evidence that large tracts of good timber are now scarce.

A change in the methods of transporting logs has also been a factor in affording stability to the larger mills. Formerly when there were good tracts of timber close at hand, the farmers did much of the log hauling in the winter when farm work was slack. This gave the farmers a welcome supplementary income and solved the transportation problem for the mill owners. Today the truck has become the principal means of hauling logs. Several conditions, such as the improvement of roads, the introduction of tractors, with the resulting decline of horse and wagon, and the depletion of the forest resources of the immediate area surrounding the mills, have all aided in bringing about the change from wagon to truck. The truck has been an important factor in the survival of the sawmills of Morgan County by permitting them to draw upon a larger district.

Markets for the lumber are widespread. Less than five per cent of it is used within a radius of five miles of the mills, while approximately 15 per cent is sent outside of Indiana, chiefly east to Ohio. Rail shipments were formerly frequent, but improved highways and big trailer trucks have led to increased shipment by truck. Much of the lumber is sold to furniture plants, especially the walnut and much of the oak and maple.

State and Classified Forests

Although much land with rough terrain in the more isolated parts of the county is best adapted to forests, the present state forest preserve and classified forests on private holdings account for only a small part of such land. More understanding and cooperation among forest owners and more encouragement and purchase by state and federal government are needed to accomplish better land use adjustment on much of this land.

In the south-central part of the county where a contiguous area of unglaciated rough upland affords little agricultural possibilities a state forest preserve has been established. As of July 1, 1949 there were 4,410 acres of this preserve in Morgan County with more of it extending southward into Monroe. Since July, 1949 additional purchase of 2,891 acres of land has been made in the area immediately adjoining the Morgan-Monroe Preserve at an average purchase price of only \$10.24 per acre. Much of this land was in extremely bad shape. Re-planting some of the badly eroded ridges with pine during the thirties combined with years of protected growth is gradually improving the timber stands and holding the soil.

Classified forests on farms are an attempt to persuade farmers to protect and rejuvenate their timber stands by keeping out livestock. As of March, 1950 there were only 20 classified forest owners in Morgan County with 1,438 acres classified. When classified, the land is valued at a \$1.00 per acre. Indiana Department of Conservation records show that pre-classification values for these classified tracts varied from \$5.00 to \$35.00 per acre. However, the cost of fencing small tracts on the farm often keeps a farmer from classifying his woodland. Farmers are generally not aware that protected forests can become an important source of income on farms with much woodland. Growth studies indicate that the annual saw timber growth in Morgan County is about 6,000,000 board feet which growth has an annual value of about \$120,000 to the landowners. This does not include growth cut for fuel wood, fence posts, saplings for furniture, and other uses. A more widespread educational program along with further financial inducements are necessary to make classified forests effective.

Part-time Farms, Rural Residences, and Summer and Week-end Cottages

Since the depression years of the thirties, some significant changes in the rural landscape have been taking place in parts of Morgan County. Nowhere else in the county have changes been so rapid as in the largely wooded and more dissected areas of upland. The part-time

farm, the rural residence, and the summer cottage have greatly increased in number.¹ The "back to the land" movement of the thirties, stimulated by the great economic depression, has been followed by a period of war prosperity, during which years urban housing became critically short in many centers where war industries were developed, as in Indianapolis. Fast hard-surfaced highways, improved automobiles, the eight-hour day, and the five-day week have made it increasingly easy for more urban-employed workers to seek the amenities of rural living. The wooded uplands of Morgan County are well located as sites for rural dwellers. Here is land available for subdivision nearer to Indianapolis than any other area of cheap land. Furthermore, because this land is situated on the industrial side of Indianapolis, slow crosstown traffic is avoided and rapid commuting is favored. Lack of zoning laws in Morgan County makes it possible to erect any type of house. Certain restrictions on subdivision of land and building in Marion County have encouraged many to take advantage of the absence of rural zoning in Morgan County.

The preliminary releases of the 1950 census show a marked population increase of 3,911 between 1940-50. About 3,000 of this increase occurred in rural areas. This is the largest decade increase in the county in one hundred years. This marked increase is a notable reversal of trend for a county that had a population decline between 1910 and 1930 and only a very small gain from 1930 to 1940. This marked increase is owing largely to the movement outward from Indianapolis of people wishing to take up residence in the country.

A contiguous area of about 25 square miles in the wooded rough central part of the county was mapped as an area having a great concentrated influx of people during the past ten years. In 1936 there were 157 dwellings in the area. In August, 1949 there were 295 houses, only 41 of these were on full-time farms. The others were rural non-farm residences and part-time farmsteads many of which have been occupied only very recently. Of 51 rural non-farm families interviewed in different parts of the county, 33 had lived at their present residence five years or less; 22 families had lived in their present homes for only two years or less. Only nine had established their present home before 1940.

The motivation behind this shift of non-farm residents to the open country-side is a complex of several desires and necessities. Table I classifies the replies to the question "Why did you move to this location?" Many of the replies were in terms of strong convictions about the country being a better place to live and to rear children. The recency of the last depression combined with the opportunity and necessity of finding a residence on the countryside surrounding urban centers re-

¹The part-time farm as used in this discussion is one having over three acres of land or an annual value of products of at least \$250 and whose operator is engaged primarily in an occupation other than farming. A rural residence is a holding of less than three acres or on which less than \$250 worth of produce is produced by the occupant.

sulted in an accelerated movement into Morgan County. Practically all of those interviewed considered their present residence as permanent rather than temporary.

TABLE I. Replies to the Question: "Why did you move to this location?"

Classification of Replies	Number of Replies
Lower living costs	13
Desire for the amenities of rural life	12
To rear family away from urban influence	9
To get out of Indianapolis and Martinsville	7
To get a place to retire	7
Wanted a week-end and summer vacation place	6
To farm	5
Living on the old "homeplace"	5
Unable to find housing in Indianapolis	4
Security	2
Conveniently located near to work possibilities	2
For health	2

Rural non-farm residents have come from a wide range of income groups and have tended to concentrate in parts of the rough and wooded uplands for different reasons. Those with higher incomes often came seeking week-end and summer vacation homes. The scenery and isolation of the area have attracted many. Many discovered they liked living in the country and became permanent residents commuting to urban jobs.

Lower income groups have concentrated on the ridges of the dissected uplands because here was land that they could afford. Furthermore, there are no building codes specifying the type of house which can be built. Some of the ridge roads are lined at intervals of less than a quarter of a mile with small houses and shacks. Very few of the newly constructed houses are substantial and comfortable for the size of the family generally occupying them. Some parts of the wooded uplands may be appropriately designated as rural slums.

Nearly one-half of the residents over 18 years of age were reared in cities. Another one-third were reared in the rural communities where they are now residing. The remaining one-fifth were reared in other rural areas. Four-fifths of the residents over 18 years of age had lived in a city at some time or other. Thus there is a strong movement from the cities and a tendency to take up residence near the old homeplace. This high proportion of urban-reared residents has encouraged neglect of the land on which the residences are situated, because so many lack the know-how to use it properly.

Practically all of the rural non-farm residents and part-time farmers own their land. Only three out of 51 families interviewed are cash renters. The average size of holding is 21.9 acres. Most of the hold-

ings are less than 50 acres with about two-fifths of them less than ten acres. On the average only 5.8 acres of each holding is cleared land, the remainder being in woodland suitable for fuel but having very little merchantable timber. Only one-fourth of the owners are making any use of their woodland other than for recreational purposes. One-third of the residents are using some of their land for crops. However, only one-sixth of the total acreage in the 51 holdings is being used for crops. Most of the cropland is being used for corn and soybeans. Low yields are characteristic.

Three-fourths of the residents have gardens, but the benefits derived vary greatly. Practically all of the gardens are maintained only for home use with very little grown for sale. Production for sale is uneconomical because of competition with commercial farms, but food produced for home use assumes a retail value which if grown can mean a considerable saving. Most of the produce is consumed fresh, although some is canned and frozen. A big well-cared-for garden is the best single practical use that most of the residents can make of their land.

Nearly half of the residents have some fruit trees planted either for home use or small commercial production. From the standpoint of physical conditions these small orchards are generally well located, but they will be a financial loss to their owners as a commercial enterprise. Existing commercial apple orchards in areas where rural non-farm residents are numerous have probably encouraged many of the uninitiated to plant small orchards. Several are growing small fruits which are much better adapted to the average size of holding. Strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries yield well on some of the soil types found in the dissected uplands. These come into bearing much more quickly than peaches and apples; furthermore, they require less skill in caring for them. In addition to these advantages, market opportunities in Indiana for these small fruits have been exceptionally strong since the war. The increased demand for them is partially explained by their adaptability to freezing. Indianapolis offers a nearby market for commuters to sell a considerable share of their fruit as fresh produce through door to door sales. If only fruit for home use is all that is wanted, these small fruits likewise have special merit for small holdings on which farming is a secondary consideration.

Livestock kept without growing the feed is probably a waste of time on small holdings. A few chickens to dispose of garbage is a possible exception. If grain and pasture can be provided on the holding then a cow and a hog are likely to lower food costs. Two-fifths of the 51 families interviewed are keeping chickens. Practically all of the flocks kept were for home use, with sale of eggs and fryers only incidental.

Only nine of the 51 residents are keeping one or more cows per family. One-sixth of the families are keeping some other livestock, principally some rabbits and a hog or two per household. For many of the residents livestock other than chickens are too confining; particularly is this true of milk cows. Since one-half of those over 18

years of age were reared in urban centers, it is understandable why the livestock population is not greater among the rural non-farm residents. Furthermore, most of these residents do not have the capital or know-how to start raising livestock.

Since most of the residents are engaged in jobs having a 40-hour week and since commuting time from most of Morgan County to the outskirts of Indianapolis is an hour or less each way, there is considerable opportunity to make the land count for much more in boosting family income than it generally does at the present time. Many rural residents could provide themselves with a better living if more attention were given to the growing of better gardens and in some cases keeping some livestock. Lack of know-how, inadequate capital, and an unwillingness to be tied down by growing gardens and keeping livestock prevent many from benefiting economically from rural residence.

A heavy concentration of summer and week-end cottages has developed around the wooded shores of Lake Patton in the central part of the county. Since the late thirties this artificial lake has been much utilized for week-end and summer vacations of Indianapolis and other urban dwellers. However, marked increase in total number of cottages around the lake has occurred since World War II. Also several who first were only week-end and summer vacation visitors have now become permanent residents commuting to urban jobs.

Summary

Morgan County near Indianapolis should have a profitable lumbering industry so long as adequate timber remains available. Sizeable areas ill-adapted to farming but suitable for forest growth make it likely that lumbering will continue relatively important.

The state and classified forests are initial steps toward scientific forestry—the desirable land use for isolated rough areas.

Rapid recent population increase reflects nearness to Indianapolis, improved roads and automobiles, reduction in length of work day, scarcity of urban housing, and greater strictness of suburban building codes. People seek lower living costs, the amenities of rural life, a better chance to rear a family, a place to retire, a week-end and summer place, and security.

Greatest recent growth of rural population has occurred on some of the poorest, largely wooded land. Urban people of the higher income groups have been attracted by the scenery and isolation of hilly wooded areas. Those of the lower income groups have come to the rough uplands because the land is cheap.