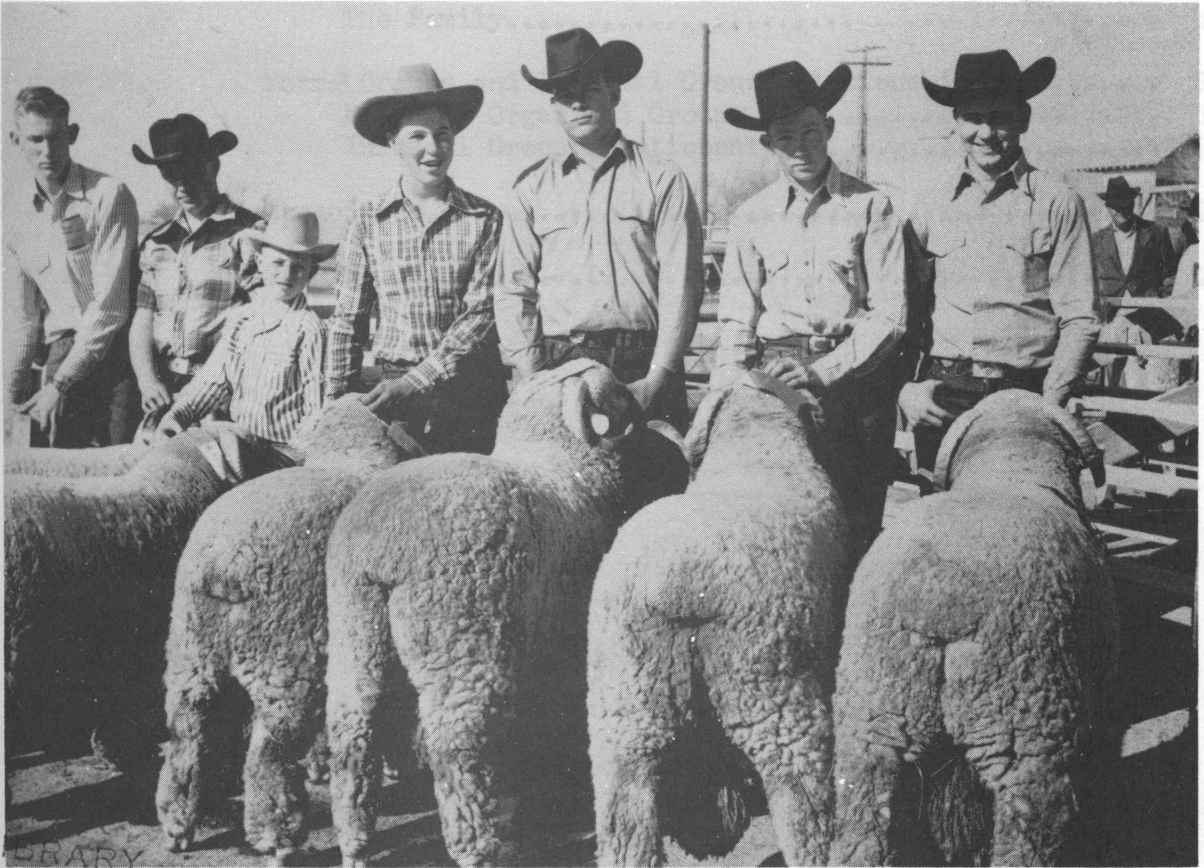


Rural Organization in Val Verde County, Texas

By

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Val Verde County 4H Club ram lamb class.
Left to right Henry Mills, David Fawcett, Seldon Cummings, Tuffy Whitehead, Harold Dissler, Perry Clark, Fred Rose.

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The nature of the land was a problem on water, and the location of water was the location of the people. It was the water of San Felipe Springs which was the county's first settlement, and helped to make certain the dominance of the cattle over other population centers throughout the county and beyond. Water is a factor in the life of the ranchman to a large extent where his ranch land can be irrigated. He will not irrigate before any construction is started. The relation of water to the size and position of his land is fully indicated by the fact that he can run, and how he will fence his land and distribute his flock.

Profitable sheep ranching in such a region requires the use of considerable stock of land. The size of farms (all the large ones ranches) and the value and percentage distribution of products sold, stored, or used in farm households varies to some extent with varying size, the predominance of livestock ranching in the county. Of \$2,574,442 value of products, 1239, \$1,422,256, or 55.3% was for livestock and livestock products.

Table 1. Number of farms by size, Val Verde County, Texas, 1945

Farm Size	Number	Percent Distribution
1-10 acres	109	100.0
11-20 "	66	21.4
21-30 "	42	16.8
31-40 "	5	1.6
41-50 "	1	.3
50 acres and over	189	58.9

PART I

VAL VERDE COUNTY, TEXAS--A PART OF THE RANGE-LIVESTOCK AREA

The County of Val Verde ("Green Valley") is not especially large as counties go in the Range-Livestock area, but its 3,242 square miles make it the seventh largest in Texas. It is sparsely populated, with about five inhabitants per square mile, and has a topography and semi-arid climate suited to extensive rather than intensive land use. Located at the edge of what is known as the Edwards Plateau, its more than 75-mile southern boundary fronts on the Republic of Mexico. These physical factors, directly and indirectly, have had a strong influence on the patterns of rural organization in Val Verde County.

The combination of climate and soil makes the county suited to the raising of livestock, particularly sheep and goats. All but a negligible part of the land is used for that purpose, and the fortunes of the people of Val Verde rise and fall more or less with the prices of wool and mohair. To be sure it was the presence of farm land and a source of water with which to irrigate that first brought settlers to the county in the 1860's. But ranching--and ranchmen--have long dominated the economy, and "farming" has played a minor part. Today the commercial farm produce is entirely absorbed by Del Rio itself. Although the ranchmen are a numerically small part of the total population, they own by far the greater part of the property in the county. As a group, they are admired by others in the community, and it is a rare Anglo-American boy in this area who does not share the ambition some day to become a ranchman.

The nature of the land puts a premium on water, and the location of water affects the location of the people. It was the water of San Felipe Springs which drew the county's first settlers, and helped to make certain the dominance of Del Rio over other population centers throughout the county and beyond. Where a ranchman can find water determines to a large extent where his ranch home can be built, and the well is drilled before any construction is started. The relation of deep wells to the size and position of his land mainly determines how much stock he can run, and how he will fence his land and distribute his flocks.

Profitable sheep ranching in such a region demands the use of considerable tracts of land. The size of farms (all the large ones ranches) and the value and percentage distribution of products sold, traded, or used in farm households combine to show, better than anything else, the predominance of livestock ranching in the county. Of \$2,573,909 value of products, 1939, \$2,442,206, or 94.9% were for livestock and livestock products.

Table 1.--Number of farms by size, Val Verde County, Texas, 1945

Size Group	Number	Percent Distribution
Total	309	100.0
Under 10 acres	66	21.4
10 - 99 "	52	16.8
100 - 499 "	5	1.6
600 - 999 "	1	.3
1000 acres and over	185	59.9

The average size of ranches in the county covered by the Agricultural Conservation Program in 1944 was 12, 127 acres. Under such conditions, land becomes "country", and the section (640 acres) replaces the acre as the customary descriptive unit of area. It means that population will be extremely sparse and settlements widely scattered. The ranch family takes more or less for granted the necessity of frequent travel over distances which in other regions would be regarded as major excursions. The people of Val Verde County have as a result of their environment developed a casual disregard for distances.

The coming of highways and fast transportation has made the resident of Val Verde even more contemptuous of distance, although he cannot entirely ignore it. The possibility of traveling considerable distances without too much inconvenience has strengthened the dominance of Del Rio over other smaller population centers. This matter of distance and the attitudes people have toward it has conditioned the functioning of all rural organizations in the county.

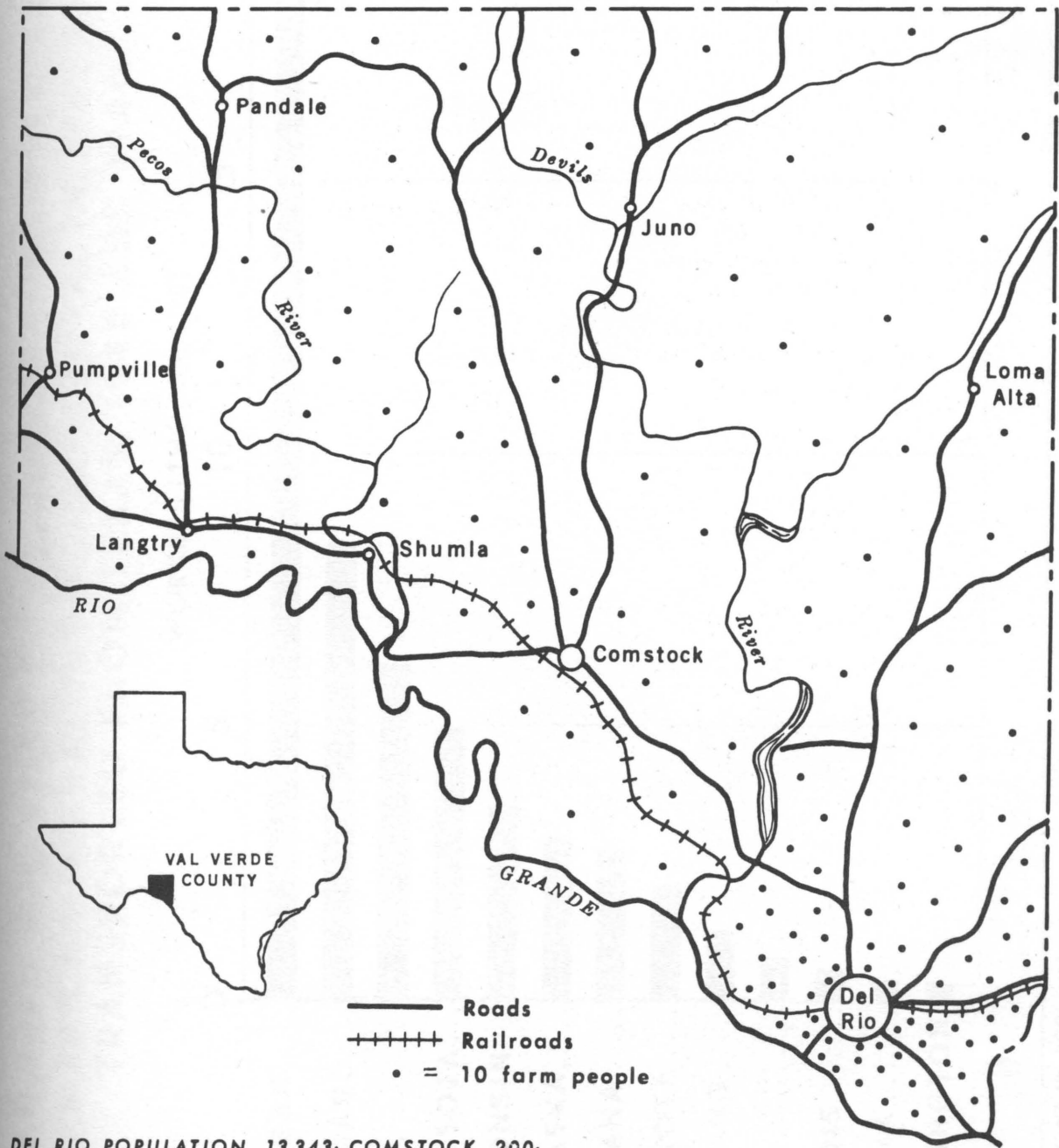
Sheep and goat raising is a year-round business, but the different parts of the process are seasonal, and there is a yearly cycle of activity. Lambing is timed to occur in February and March, and lamb-marketing is done from March to April. Shearing comes in the spring and again in early autumn. Lambs are sold through the summer, and breeding is done in late September and October. Ranch families count on a good deal of leisure time, with the slackest period from November through January; they also count on some extremely busy seasons. For many families there is also a seasonal residential change coinciding with the school term.

For a total of perhaps three months, the individual shearer makes wages up to \$15.00 a day, and with current wages may net \$600 to \$700 in a good season, depending on his skill, how well his capitan has arranged the itinerary, and how much delay there is getting away from each ranch. Sheep-shearers are not wealthy; but being potential high-wage earners may have the effect of making them less attracted than to lower-paid jobs during the long slack season.

Like other concentrations of Spanish-American population along the Rio Grande, Del Rio constitutes a pool of agricultural labor. Farm laborers in Val Verde County go elsewhere for spring and summer employment, and all but a small number who work on Val Verde farms are migratory, some of them covering tremendous distances during the combined crop seasons of a half-dozen States (see Figure 2). Like ranch hands and shearers, agricultural workers are never solely that, but must combine part-time farm work with other sources of income to piece out the year's work. But unlike the ranch workers, most of the migrants live in family groups, and often the entire family works as a unit in harvest operations. They leave the community beginning as early as March, drifting back from early fall until well into November. Although it is hard to get an accurate estimate of the numbers involved, the exodus includes a substantial proportion of the Spanish-American population. Local store proprietors with a large Spanish-American trade say that their sales are depleted by almost a half during the summer. One worker puts it that "we clean out the town." Under favorable conditions, the harvest work pays better than any other day labor except shearing; consequently the agricultural labor market drains the pool of ranch workers at the time when the ranchmen need them most.

Farm workers often return year after year to work at the same places. Although some of them are formally recruited by labor contractors, the greater number of them do not depend on organization or direction of any kind. Each year the tide of families moving out of Val Verde and moving back leaves behind a certain number of the workers, so that there is a slow turnover of the migrants in the Spanish-American population in the county.

TRADE CENTERS AND POPULATION OF VAL VERDE COUNTY, TEXAS, 1945



DEL RIO POPULATION, 13,343; COMSTOCK, 200;
ALL OTHER TRADE CENTERS, 50 OR LESS

FIGURE I

NUMBER AND STATE OF DESTINATION OF SPANISH AMERICAN MIGRATORY AGRICULTURAL WORKERS TRANSPORTED FROM TEXAS, 1945 AND 1946

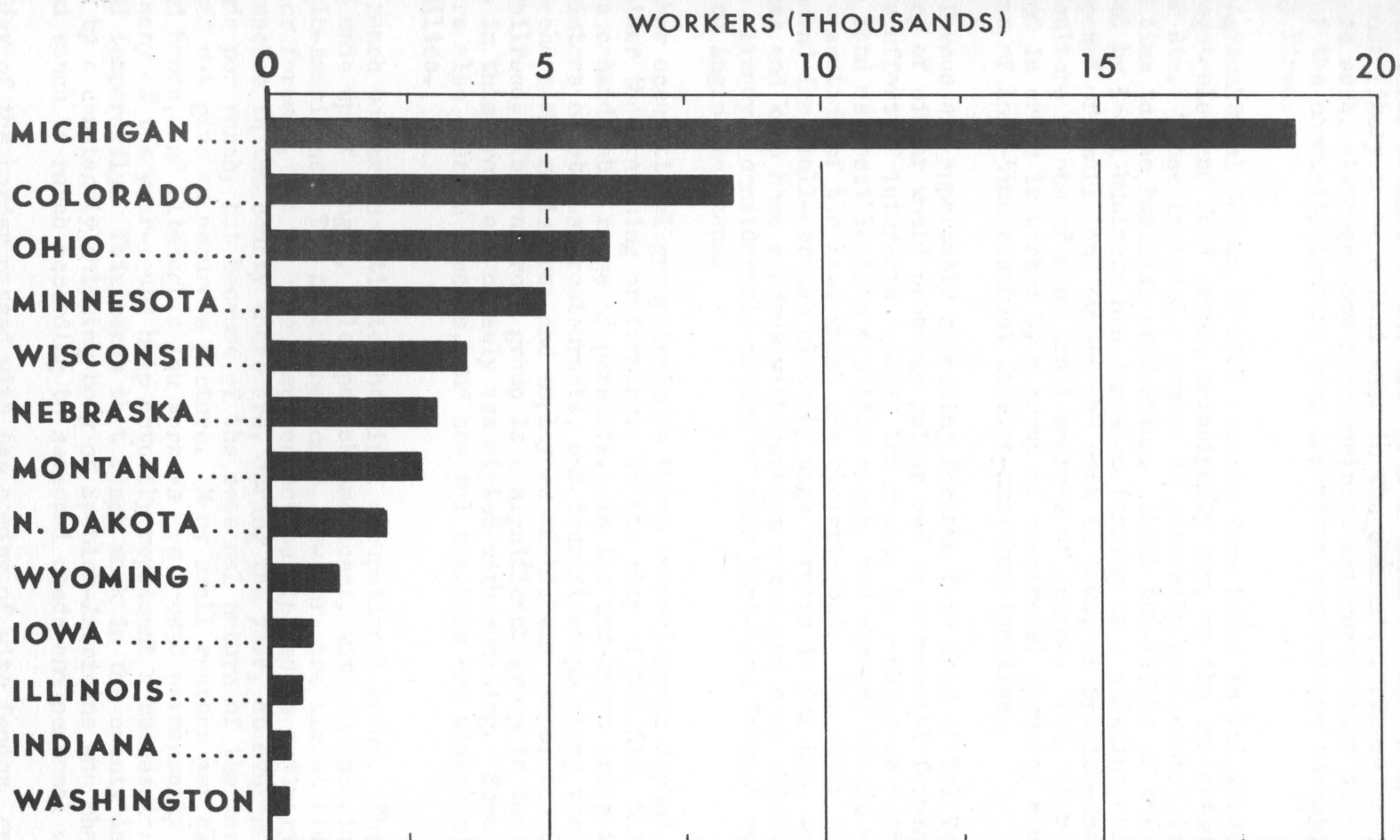


FIGURE 2

Assured of its place in the community, the ranchmen group is, understandably, rather a stable one. Those who have gotten into ranching generally stay in, and continuity of ranch ownership is usually assured by the fact that most ranchers' sons succeed their fathers in the enterprise. When a ranch changes hands, the buyer is most likely to be a landowner in the community. There are no part-time ranchmen, as such, although many have business interests other than ranching, and many of the community leaders have important connections reaching far beyond the county lines.

The Agricultural Census of 1945 reports some farms in Val Verde County which produce vegetables and feed crops, principally hay, on the irrigated lands in and around Del Rio. These included a number of extremely small establishments devoted only part time to the business of farming. About two-fifths of the cropped land is operated by local business men for whom farming is a sideline, and by another group composed of small land owners who work in town, or Spanish-Americans for whom agriculture is one of many small sources of income. The other three-fifths of the land in crops is worked by a group of commercial farmers, many of whom are members of long-time resident Italian-American families.

Two forces are apparently competing for the farm land of Val Verde, and the victory of either would probably put an end to commercial farming as such. One is the effort of interests outside the county to combine as much of the irrigable land as possible into a cattle ranch, and already cattle are running on a sizeable section of the land which can be irrigated. The other force is the steady demand for small-acreage plots by wage earners in Del Rio, who would build homes and keep home gardens with perhaps a cow and some chickens for each. There are already a considerable number of such part-time "farms" owned by both Spanish and Anglo-Americans.

Another occupational group includes those whose incomes depend directly on sources other than ranching or farming. In the city of Del Rio, this of course involves a considerable range of pursuits. In the non-urban areas it includes the proprietors of stores, restaurants, and tourist camps along the highways; school teachers and ministers; and employees of highway camps, the Border Patrol, and the railroad. The railroad group is a significant group in the county. Even some in this group are closely associated with ranching. Some of the store proprietors also operate ranches, and several teachers are wives and daughters of ranch families.

The ranch workers constitute the final occupational group. They are for the most part made up of single, male Spanish-Americans, with an occasional Negro and a few Anglo-Americans. The Anglo-Americans, however, are almost always ranch managers or foremen, and in some cases cannot be classed as ordinary hired workers. For all ranches in the county there are, during the year, an average of perhaps three hands per ranch, but because of the seasonal nature of the work, this figure does not give an accurate picture. Many small ranches get along with no year-round hands, and although a few workers are housed permanently on the ranches, many of the year-round help actually represent a succession of workers, each hired temporarily. This means that ranch work in the county is mostly performed by a constantly shifting body of Spanish-Americans who change from job to job and ranch to ranch according to seasonal needs and personal wishes.

The day of the herder passed with the coming of wire fences, and there is now no open range in the county. But on every ranch, the work that must be done, either partly or entirely by hired ranch workers during the year, will include fixing windmills and keeping in repair the system of water supply; "cutting pear"

and burning or removing other noxious plants from the range; mending fences, roads and corrals; moving the flocks from one pasture to another or to corrals; riding the range to observe conditions of flocks, range, and physical improvements on the land; feeding stock, spreading salt, and administering drenches, medicines, and dips; shearing, and "tagging" the ewes before lambing time; and marking the lambs as well as loading them later for the trip to market.

Of the 15,453 persons who lived in Val Verde County in 1940 only 1,384 were enumerated as farm population; 13,343 were in the city of Del Rio, the only urban center in the county. The remaining 726 were listed as rural nonfarm, most of whom lived in the small trade centers (see Figure 1). This distribution of the population sharply conditions the rural organization of the county. Most major organizations center in Del Rio; a few center in the smaller towns and a very few in the open country.

The farm population is not only sparse but in its composition it is typical of areas in which a grazing type of agriculture prevails; many more males than females and a relative high percent of both males and females between the ages 20 and 45 and below 10 years of age. Most ranch families--fathers, mothers, and children--live on the ranches until children begin attending school after which many of the mothers move to town with the children. Thus more males than females are numbered in the farm population. Two other population elements increase the number of males in the farm population--a relatively large number of single hired men and a larger number of boys than girls who return to ranches after they have completed school or college and before they establish families of their own. These facts of age and sex distribution also condition rural organizational behavior.

Figure 3 presents the farm population pyramid of Val Verde County superimposed on the farm population pyramid of the United States, and shows the following differences between the farm populations of Val Verde County and the total farm population of the United States:

1. An excess of children under 10 years of age.
2. A deficiency in the age groups 10 to 25.
3. An excess in the age groups 25 to 45.
4. A deficiency in all age groups above 45.
5. The deficiencies in most age groups accounted for by the relative few females in the farm population.
6. The exceptions are the cases of children under 10 years, and the middle age groups, 25-45, when whole families are living on ranches.
7. The deficiency in females is cumulative from age 40 upward. Females constitute less than 38% of the farm population in all ages 40 years and over.

The distribution of the total population of the county is shown in Figure 1. The significance of the population size of Del Rio is not solely the fact that most of the population of Val Verde County is located there but also the fact that Del Rio is the trade center for a large area which lies outside Val Verde County. (See Figure 4).

In addition to the influences of sparse population which makes difficult the operation of schools and churches, the age and sex distribution of the population greatly influences rural organizations. Relative fewer women than men in the farm population and fewer girls than boys partly account for the fact that there are 4-H Clubs for boys but not for girls and that the county has never employed a Home Demonstration Agent. Other results will be pointed out

AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF RURAL FARM POPULATION OF VAL VERDE COUNTY TEXAS, 1940

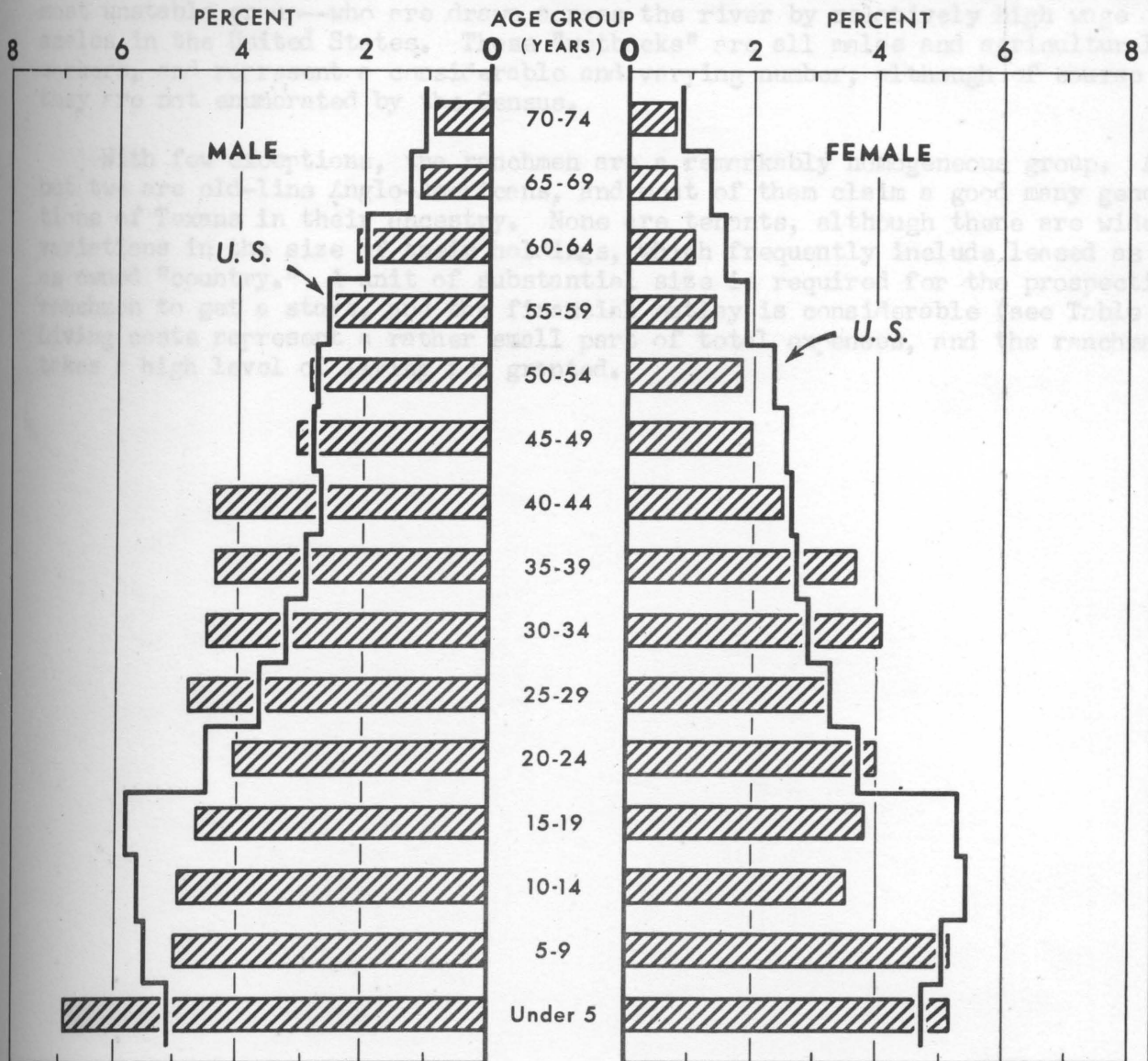
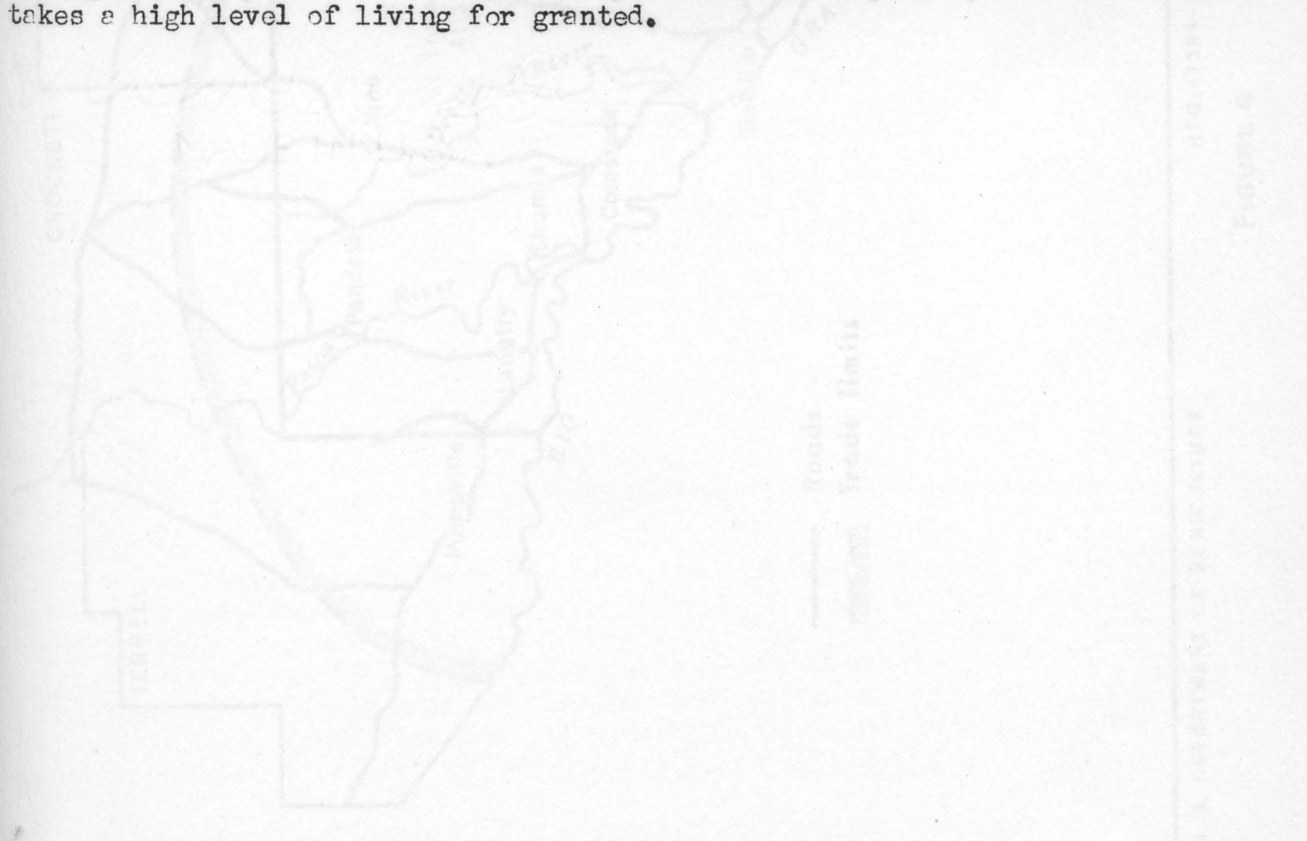


FIGURE 3

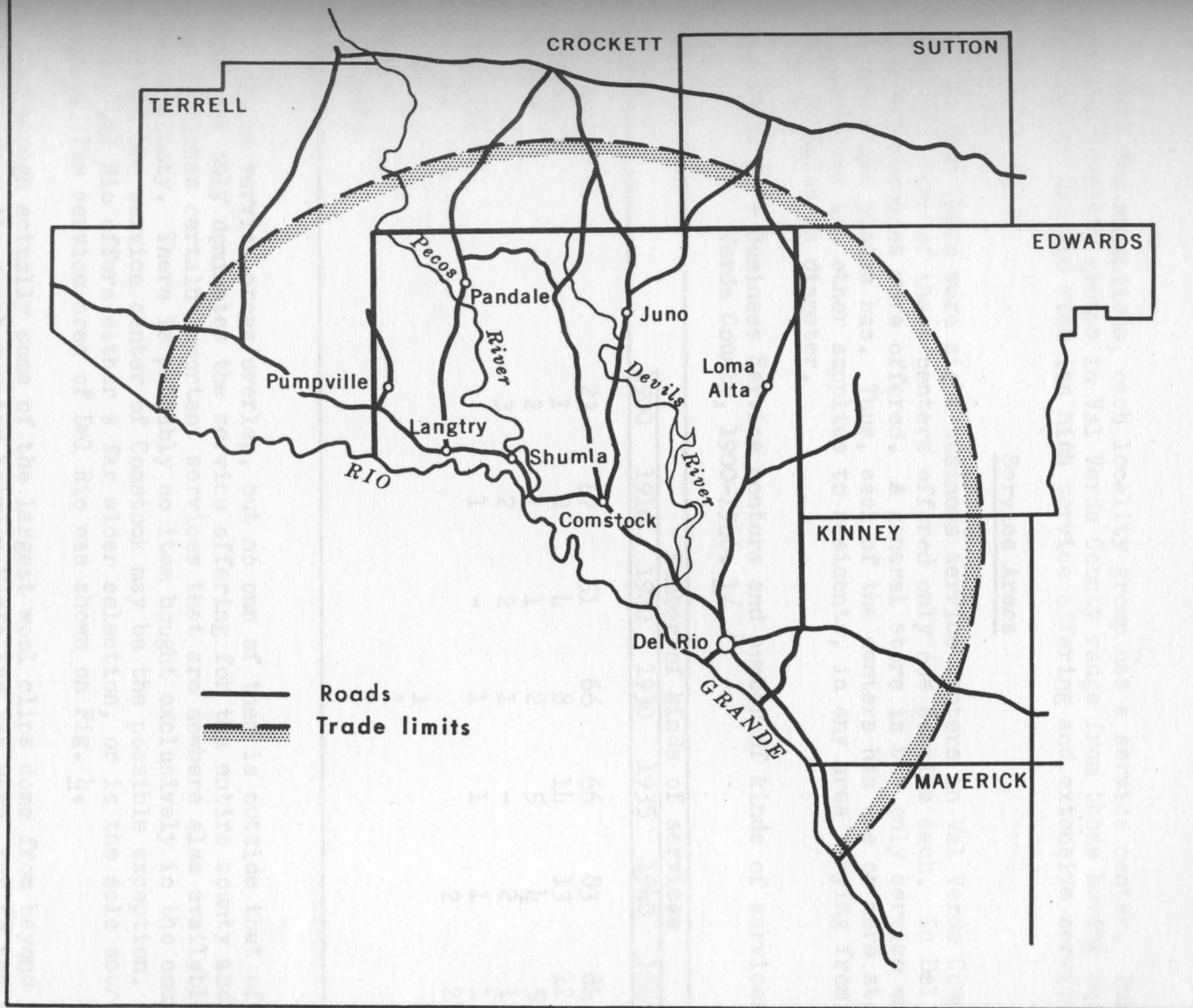
in other sections of this report.

There are two important elements, Anglo- and Spanish-Americans, within the population and frequently separate institutions and organizations serve these groups. About two percent of the population are Negroes, most of whom live in Del Rio. There are, in addition, the "Wetbacks", or illegal immigrants--the most unstable group--who are drawn across the river by relatively high wage scales in the United States. These "wetbacks" are all males and agricultural workers, and represent a considerable and varying number, although of course they are not enumerated by the Census.

With few exceptions, the ranchmen are a remarkably homogeneous group. All but two are old-line Anglo-Americans, and most of them claim a good many generations of Texans in their ancestry. None are tenants, although there are wide variations in the size of their holdings, which frequently include leased as well as owned "country." A unit of substantial size is required for the prospective ranchmen to get a start, and the financial outlay is considerable (see Table 1). Living costs represent a rather small part of total expenses, and the ranchman takes a high level of living for granted.



APPROXIMATE LIMITS OF TRADE AREA OF DEL RIO



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FIGURE 4

PART II

LOCALITY GROUPS

With few exceptions, each locality group has a service center. The service-centered locality groups in Val Verde County range from those having one or a few services to Del Rio with its high service offering and extensive service area.

Service Areas

In 1946 there were eight business service centers in Val Verde County (see Table 2). Four of these centers offered only one service each. In Del Rio 86 different services were offered. A general store is the only service which each of the eight places has. Thus, each of the centers has one or more stores, selling groceries and other supplies to residents, in any area varying from a few to over 30 miles in diameter.

Table 2. - Business Service centers and number of kinds of services, Val Verde County, 1900-1946. 1/

Place	Number of kinds of services							
	1900	1910	1920	1930	1935	1940	1945	1946
Del Rio	23	47	51	66	66	83	84	86
Comstock	1	2	4	8	14	13	12	12
Langtry	2	1	1	2	5	4	5	5
Juno	3	2	2	1	-	2	1	1
Pumpville		1	-	1	1	1	1	1
Pandale						2	2	2
Pinto				1				
Shumla				1				1
Loma Alta				1				1

These service areas overlap, but no one of them is outside that of Del Rio, which not only dominates the service offering for the entire county and beyond, but furnishes certain important services that are nowhere else available in the entire county. There is probably no item bought exclusively in the county stores, although the service center of Comstock may be the possible exception. For most items, Del Rio offers either a far wider selection, or is the sole source of supply. The service area of Del Rio was shown on Fig. 4.

Although actually some of the largest wool clips come from beyond this semi-circle, (from the ranch country between Marfa and Van Horn, far to the west) the area shown is the territory within which most or all of the wool and mohair is produced goes to Del Rio, and is the area dominated by its markets. In this area, Del Rio has the only medical facilities, doctors, dentists, and nurses, legal services, banks, drug stores, theatres, and wool houses, as well as the only barber shops and beauty parlors. Its dry goods and hardware stores are much more fully stocked, and it carries a wide variety of feed and ranch supplies (see Table 3).

Source: Reference Book, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1935, 1945 and 1946. Dun and Bradstreet, New York

Table 3.-Number of services available in the county and in Del Rio (for certain segments of the county classified) by type of service 1900 - 1946. 1/

Type of Service	Number of Services							
	County				Del Rio			
	1900	1920	1940	1946	1900	1920	1940	1946
<u>Foods, drinks and tobacco</u>								
Grocery	4	18	44	32	4	17	38	28
Grocery and meat	-	3	8	21	-	3	8	20
Meat	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	-
Baking	1	1	4	5	1	1	4	5
Confectionery	2	3	6	4	2	3	6	4
Fruit	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-
Restaurant	-	3	16	21	-	3	15	19
Soft drinks	-	3	-	-	-	3	-	-
Bottling	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Beer	-	-	7	7	-	-	6	7
Liquor	-	-	3	4	-	-	3	4
Cigars	1	5	1	-	1	5	1	-
<u>Clothing, Sales and Upkeep</u>								
Clothing	-	3	2	2	-	3	2	2
Hosiery	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Men's furnishing	-	2	1	2	-	2	1	2
Women's wear	-	1	2	1	-	1	2	1
Millinery	1	1	1	-	1	1	1	-
Tailor	-	4	2	-	-	4	2	-
Cleaning and pressing	-	-	3	4	-	-	3	4
Laundry	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	1
Shoe repair	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	1
<u>Household Supplies</u>								
Furniture	-	3	4	6	-	3	4	6
Household furnishings	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Refrigerators	-	-	2	1	-	-	2	1
Appliances	-	-	1	6	-	-	1	6
Telephone	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Utilities	1	4	2	5	1	3	1	4
Stoves	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Wood	-	-	2	2	-	-	2	2
Coal	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
<u>Farm Produce, Marketing and Processing</u>								
Grain	-	2	-	1	2	2	-	1
Feed	-	1	3	2	-	1	2	2
Flour and feed	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	2
Miller	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
Seed	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Dairy products	-	-	4	4	-	-	4	4
Produce	-	1	1	2	-	1	1	2

Continuation of Table 3.

Type of Service	Number of Services							
	County				Del Rio			
	1900	1920	1940	1946	1900	1920	1940	1946
<u>Special Services</u>								
Jewelry and repair	1	3	4	1	1	3	4	1
Electrician	-	2	2	3	-	2	2	3
Electric supplies	-	1	2	4	-	1	2	4
Optician	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	2
Photographer	-	2	1	2	-	2	1	2
Florist	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	2
Hotel	-	2	4	4	-	2	4	4
Undertaker	-	2	4	3	-	1	4	3
<u>Transportation</u>								
Saddle and Harness	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
Gasoline and oil	-	-	4	3	-	-	4	2
Filling station	-	-	29	22	-	-	24	18
Service station	-	-	1	9	-	-	1	8
Garage	-	10	11	5	-	7	10	4
Auto repair	-	1	1	2	-	1	1	2
Auto sales	-	2	8	7	-	2	8	7
Auto accessories	-	-	4	-	-	-	4	-
Auto camps	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	1
Auto supplies	-	-	3	5	-	-	3	5
Batteries	-	-	3	3	-	-	3	3
Tires	-	1	1	3	-	1	1	3
Trucking	-	-	4	6	-	-	3	6
Motor transport	-	-	2	2	-	-	2	2
<u>Farm and Building Service</u>								
Blacksmith	1	2	3	2	1	2	3	2
Contractor	-	1	4	3	-	1	4	3
Hardware	-	2	2	2	-	2	2	2
Implements	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Plumbing	-	3	4	6	-	3	4	6
Machine Shop	-	-	2	1	-	-	2	1
Lumber	1	2	4	4	-	2	4	4
<u>Education and Recreation</u>								
Printing	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	2
Publishing	-	2	3	2	-	2	3	2
Periodicals	-	-	3	2	-	-	3	2
Radios and repairs	-	-	6	3	-	-	6	3
Sporting goods	-	4	1	1	-	4	1	1
<u>Miscellaneous</u>								
General store	11	9	6	6	6	5	3	2
Department store	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
Dry goods	-	9	5	4	-	-	4	3
Variety store	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	1
Novelties	-	3	1	1	-	-	1	1
Drugs	3	5	5	9	3	5	4	9
Ranch supplies	-	-	1	4	-	-	-	3

1/ Source: Reference Book, 1900, 1920, 1940 and 1946. Dun and Bradstreet, New York

Del Rio itself is within a wider service area for certain goods and services. Ranchmen throughout the county and the people of Del Rio depend on San Antonio, Texas, for their "luxury" buying of clothes and house furnishings and to some extent for entertainment and medical services. With the completion of the highway to San Angelo, that city is now attracting some trade from Del Rio.

Because of the economic dependecny of the smaller places, with the possible exception of Comstock, none of them approaches self-sufficiency from either the viewpoint of economic services or the satisfaction of the normal social and recreational needs. Except for Comstock, the attachment to the smaller areas is not pronounced. The only area having high service offering and which functions on an area basis approaching the service-centered rural community is Del Rio.

Although Del Rio's listed population was above 15,000 in 1945, it gives the impression of being much smaller. In reality Del Rio is a city of five to six thousand, plus two large "Mexican" villages located in Mexico. Its economic and social sphere of influence encompasses an area of some 30 miles in diameter, including part of the Mexican province of Coahuila. None of the other centers supply more than very limited needs of the rural families. It is therefore necessary for the families within the smaller service areas to make rather frequent visits to the city. Increasingly, these "town" visits are taking on more and more of the flavor of primary contacts, and the families tend to look to Del Rio as their major "community" center. A large proportion of the ranch families who are legally residents of the smaller settlements spend a large part of their time in Del Rio and are more truly a part of that center than of their "home" service area. Most ranch families (particularly the mother and children) in the county with school-age children live in Del Rio for the school term, spending only weekends, holidays, and summers at the ranch. In actuality, Del Rio is the "community" center for the ranch families and is increasingly becoming such a center for all rural families.

The village of Villa Acuna located in Mexico just across the river from Del Rio is in a very real way also a part of the community. There is regular and frequent bus service to Villa Acuna, hindered only slightly by formalities at the border. Its population mingles freely with the Spanish-Americans of Val Verde County, and many of the families are related. Businessmen of Villa Acuna are members of the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce. Marketing is habitually done in Del Rio by Villa Acuna families.

With the exception of Comstock, none of the other service areas furnishes more than a few requirements of a community. Except for Del Rio, all are small population centers (see Table 4). In the case of several small settlements, the only visible evidence of their existence is the presence of a few buildings.

Table 4.-Population for service centers in Val Verde County for selected periods

Places	Selected Periods		
	1900	1920	1940
Del Rio	2,000	10,589	13,343
Comstock	100	200	200
Langtry	50	50	50
Juno	100	75	*
Pumpville	*	*	10
Pandale	*	*	10
Pinto	*	*	*
Shumla	*	*	*
Loma Alta	*	*	*

* No figures given

Source: Dun and Bradstreet

Loma Alta appears to be a general store at the side of the highway. Shumla is a service station, grocery store, and some tourist cabins also along the highway together with some weathered wooden buildings which might once have housed some railroad hands. Pandale is a fork in the country road, with a ranch home, a store, and a schoolhouse the only buildings in sight. Pumpville consists of a general store, some stock pens, a combination church and school building, a pumping station and a railroad siding, with four or five homes and a few buildings housing railroad workers and their families.

Comstock, with a Dun and Bradstreet listed population of 200 in 1940, has many aspects of a community. Its trade area includes ranches as far west as the Pecos, as far north as the crossing of the Juno road over the Devils River, and east about halfway to the lower part of the Devils River. This is a combination of the extent of its service area, the zone from which its schools draw pupils, the voting precinct of which it is the balloting place, the area in which people's mail goes to Comstock, and the limits of the space within which people more or less regularly attend its social functions.

Comstock has a rather well stocked grocery and general store, two grade schools (one for Spanish-Americans and one for Anglo-Americans), and a high school for both. It has one Protestant church with a resident minister, and a tiny Catholic Chapel where services are held by a priest from Del Rio. Its social life is dominated by ranch families, and there is a fair range of social functions. Formal organizations, however, are limited to the Anglo-American population. The significant services it does not provide are banking, markets for wool, and ranch supplies, barber shops, beauty parlors and places of entertainment, all of which are available in Del Rio. Comstock's population has remained rather stationary, while Del Rio has grown. Although the range of services provided has grown slightly since 1900, no new type of services has been added in the last ten years.

Shumla and Loma Alta can be summed up as locality groupings, although each claims a service area several miles in diameter. The former is merely a stop between Comstock and Langtry, and although Loma Alta is the voting place for a precinct, the service area and precinct boundaries do not coincide. There is little or no group cohesion, and area identification is indistinct.

Three other places provide only a few services and with just enough drawing power to be the focal point of a relatively weak self-conscious locality group. Langtry, in the western part of the county, was once the home of Judge Roy Bean who in the lawless early days is said to have claimed responsibility for "law west of the Pecos." Its population is listed by Dun and Bradstreet as 50. The village itself is a small cluster of frame houses around a grocery-and-dry goods store, a school building with an auditorium for church and other services, and the restored adobe-and-frame saloon of Judge Roy Bean. The services it provides are a school, intermittent church services, a Post Office, a voting place, and a store. There is a formally organized parent-teachers' association of Anglo-American parents, although children in the school are predominantly Spanish-Americans. There are no other formal organizations.

Pumpville, still farther west, is off the paved highway, at a railroad crossing. Aside from the families who work for the railroad (both Anglo- and Spanish-American) it has no non-rancher population. The family which operates its one place of business (a general store unusually well-stocked with ranch needs) also operates a ranch, and the present school teacher is the wife of a ranchman. Its school building is the voting place, and is the church on Sundays when a Protestant minister flies up from Del Rio to hold services. But its principle drawing power is the store which furnishes a post office substation, some feeds, certain ranch

supplies, and as much as half their food supplies to families with ranches opening on the dirt road for about ten miles to the north, and the main highway toward Langtry, as well as into Terrell County to the west.

Juno, near the county's northern border, was once a stopping place for wagon trains hauling supplies north from the railhead at Comstock. Automobiles and the dwindling importance of Comstock have taken away some of its functions, and it has lost both population and number and kinds of services it offers. In addition to a state highway camp, it has one general store and service station, with a trade area including ranches north into Crockett County, and south to where the road crosses the Devils River. There is a school, all of whose pupils are of Mexican descent, a voting place for the precinct, and a branch post office. In the immediate vicinity there are a number of homes of families of Spanish-Americans who work on the roads and on nearby ranches.

Randale is on the dirt road 30 miles north of Langtry and as a locality group is similar to Pumpville. Its one store is rancher-operated, and the members of the "neighborhood" are all ranchmen. The store also furnishes a post office address, and the school serves as polling place for the precinct. At present there are only Anglo-American children in the Pandale school, and the common interests of parents furnish one means of bringing together, socially, certain of the families. Like the service areas of Langtry, Juno, and Pumpville, the area around Pandale is a definable area only in the sense that families living in the general vicinity share a place of business that furnishes some of their needs, are taxed for the same school, and vote at the same place. In the summer, when more families move from Del Rio to the ranches, informal social bonds knit the families into self-conscious locality groupings. The principal significance of these place names is nevertheless as a place near which people live. Ranchmen will say, not that they are from Pumpville or Pandale, but that their ranches are "out Pumpville way", or "near Pandale." Thus, they are located in space, without necessarily being identified with a locality center.

The County As a Locality Group

In addition to the service-centered locality areas, the county is also a distinct locality group, possessing set boundaries. Because of the combination of its functions--governmental, administrative, and social--the patterns of interaction have over the years resulted in the people developing strong attachments to the county.

Most Texan's principal identification is with the Lone Star State, and there are a variety of ways in which they are constantly reminded of their membership in that highly self-conscious locality group. If they do not live within a city--which will invariably have a Chamber of Commerce whose major concern is to create and stimulate self-awareness--their next most important identification is with the county. A Texan writer says: "In Texas we do things by counties. I was born and raised in Milam County...went to academies in Brazos and Tarrant Counties, universities in Williamson and Harris Counties. I courted in Jefferson County, and honeymooned in Webb . . ." 1/

There are frequent reminders of one's identification with the county. Upon reaching the county boundary on any of the highways, there is a sign calling attention to this fact. County lines become somewhat less important as one moves away from them. People with ranches at a county's edge can tell to within a few yards "where the line runs," while the people living in Del Rio will often have trouble remembering that, say, Carta Valley lies in the neighboring county.

1/ From the jacket of Texas, A World in Itself, by George Sessions Perry.

The people in Val Verde County are keenly interested in matters of local government. Every two years the citizens elect or reelect the fourteen officials who will levy and collect taxes, register marriages, births, deaths, and other matters, enforce law, administer justice, provide for public education, and perform the other duties necessary to the county's welfare. Elections are as a rule hotly contested.

The ranchmen of Val Verde take personal interest in matters of local government. Since they are a comparatively small, yet influential group, those seeking office solicit their support and welcome their counsel in administering their office. As a group they are particularly concerned about cost of government, for on the shoulders of a few falls the tax burden.

In addition to its governmental functions, the county is an area for the administration of a number of programs including the Cooperative Extension Service, Production and Marketing Administration, Welfare, Red Cross, County nursing service, Public health, and County Superintendent of Education. In the case of several of these agencies, the law makes it mandatory that there be created a county advisory board to integrate the program into the county and give advice and direction to its operations. Since Del Rio so completely dominates the county as a service center, it is natural that all these public agencies should be located there and render service to the entire county. Seldom, if ever, is the county divided into sub-groups in the administration of these programs.

Val Verde County is also a unit of social organization in that increasingly organizations are set up to function as county-wide with headquarters in Del Rio

Footnote:

"Anglo-American" and "Spanish-American" mean different things to people in different parts of the United States. Literally, Anglo means English. But in this report, Anglo is used in the sense common in the southwestern States. That is, it includes Americans descended from western or northern Europeans who speak the English language and follow the general customs prevailing throughout most of the United States. "Spanish-American" is used to describe people who are, for the most part, of Spanish origin or descent. Some are descended from residents of Texas before it declared its independence from Mexico. Some are descendants of early immigrants from Mexico. They range from almost pure Indian blood through varying mixtures to almost pure Spanish blood. They may include mixtures with descendants of other nationalities. For that reason, no one term describes them with complete and literal accuracy and the term "Spanish-American" has been chosen arbitrarily as the most descriptive. They are distinguished locally from "Mexicans" who are recent immigrants or transients.

PART III

INSTITUTIONALIZED ORGANIZATIONS

The three institutions included in this analysis of institutions are the school, church, and family.

The School

Ranch families because of their relative isolation in Val Verde County have experimented with a variety of ways of organizing their educational systems, including home instruction under a correspondence-school plan, hired tutors, public schools, and boarding schools. The consolidated school is not one of these, however, and attempts to push such a system have met implacable opposition. No one of the methods has proved completely satisfactory, and the system now in operation can be called "transitional." The county educational system which was presumably set up for the ranchmen and for which they are taxed, is not the one that educates most of their children, but is operated mainly for the children of the Spanish-Americans and transient railroad workers.

The county is divided into nine school districts differing widely in area, number and composition of the population, and the proportion of school-age children who attend school (see Fig. 6). One common school district is 90 miles in length. Two are independent districts--both in Del Rio--and seven are administered by the county school superintendent. Of the seven common school districts, one, adjacent to Del Rio closed its school in 1943 and in another, the school has been closed for 15 or 20 years. One district has two schools, but the remaining three have one school each, and probably not more than a half-dozen families are represented among the pupils in each. They are families whose houses are closest to the schools. Most of the students are Spanish-Americans, with a handful of Anglo-American youngsters, most of whom are children of "railroad people," in temporary attendance. Nearly all the remaining ranch children go to the independent school districts of Val Verde County, the only exceptions being those sent away to private schools and academies.

(Figs. 5 and 6)

SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN VAL VERDE COUNTY, TEXAS

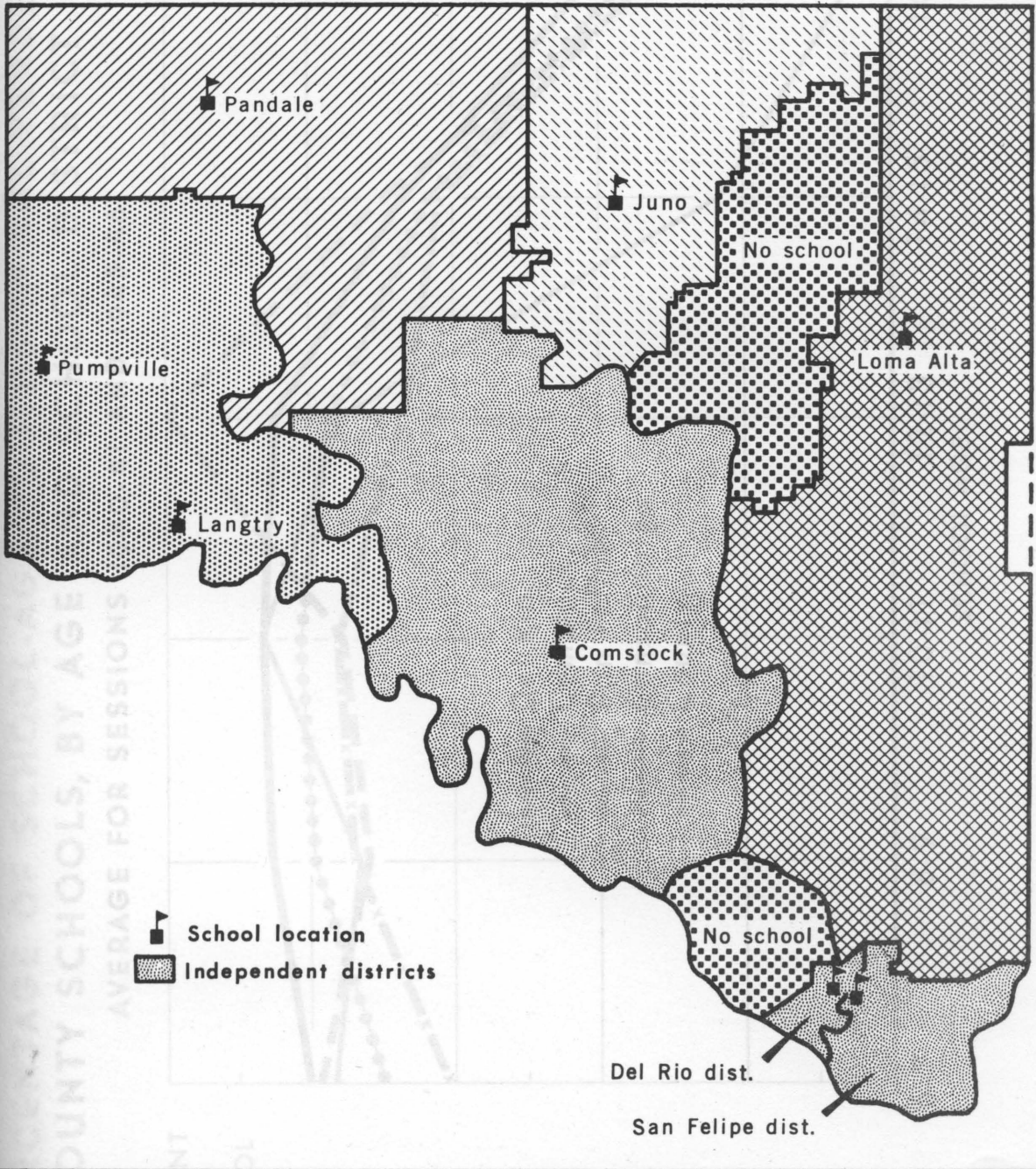


FIGURE 5

**PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL-AGE YOUTHS IN VAL VERDE
COUNTY SCHOOLS, BY AGE AND SCHOOL DISTRICT
AVERAGE FOR SESSIONS 1940-41 AND 1945-46**

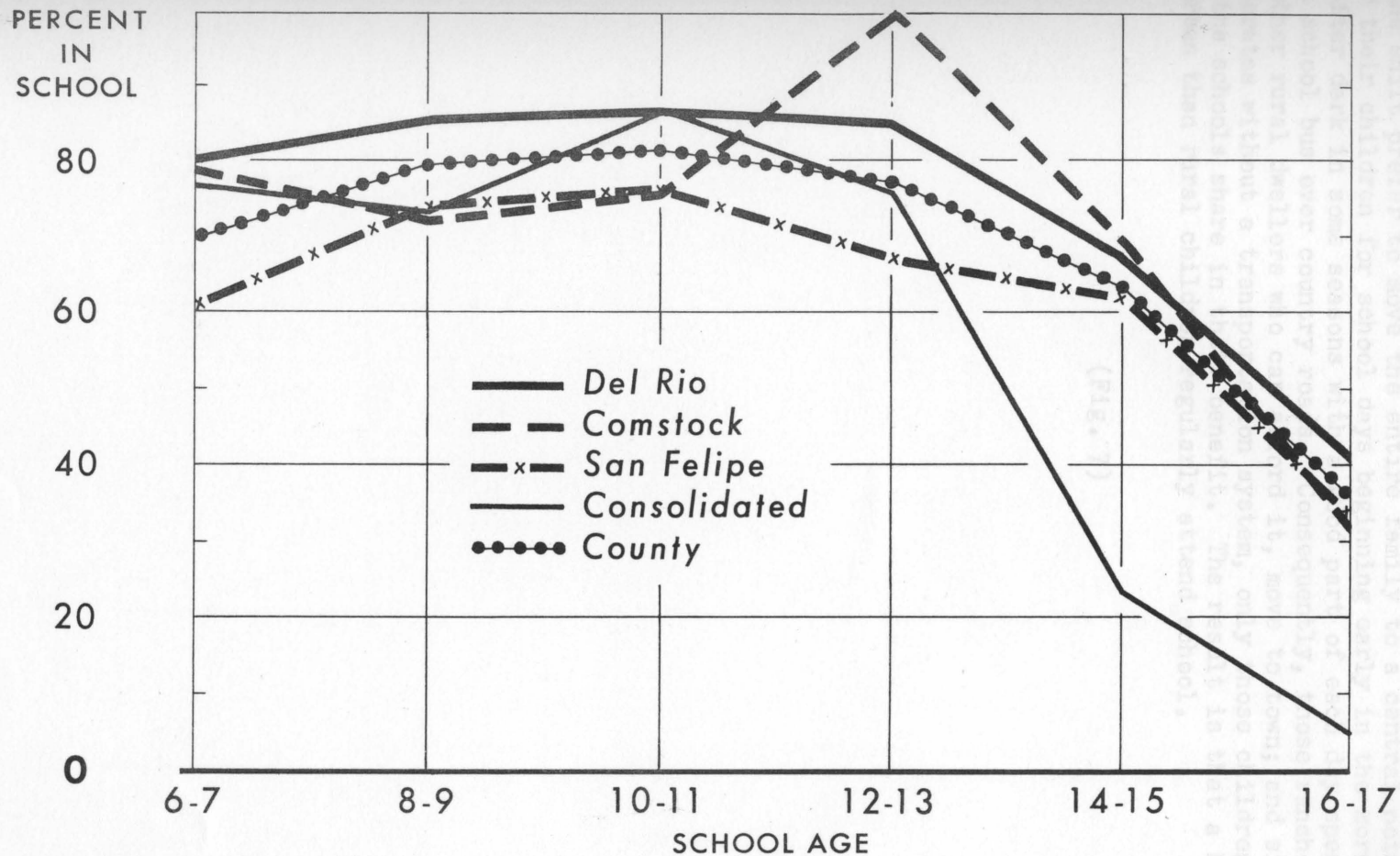


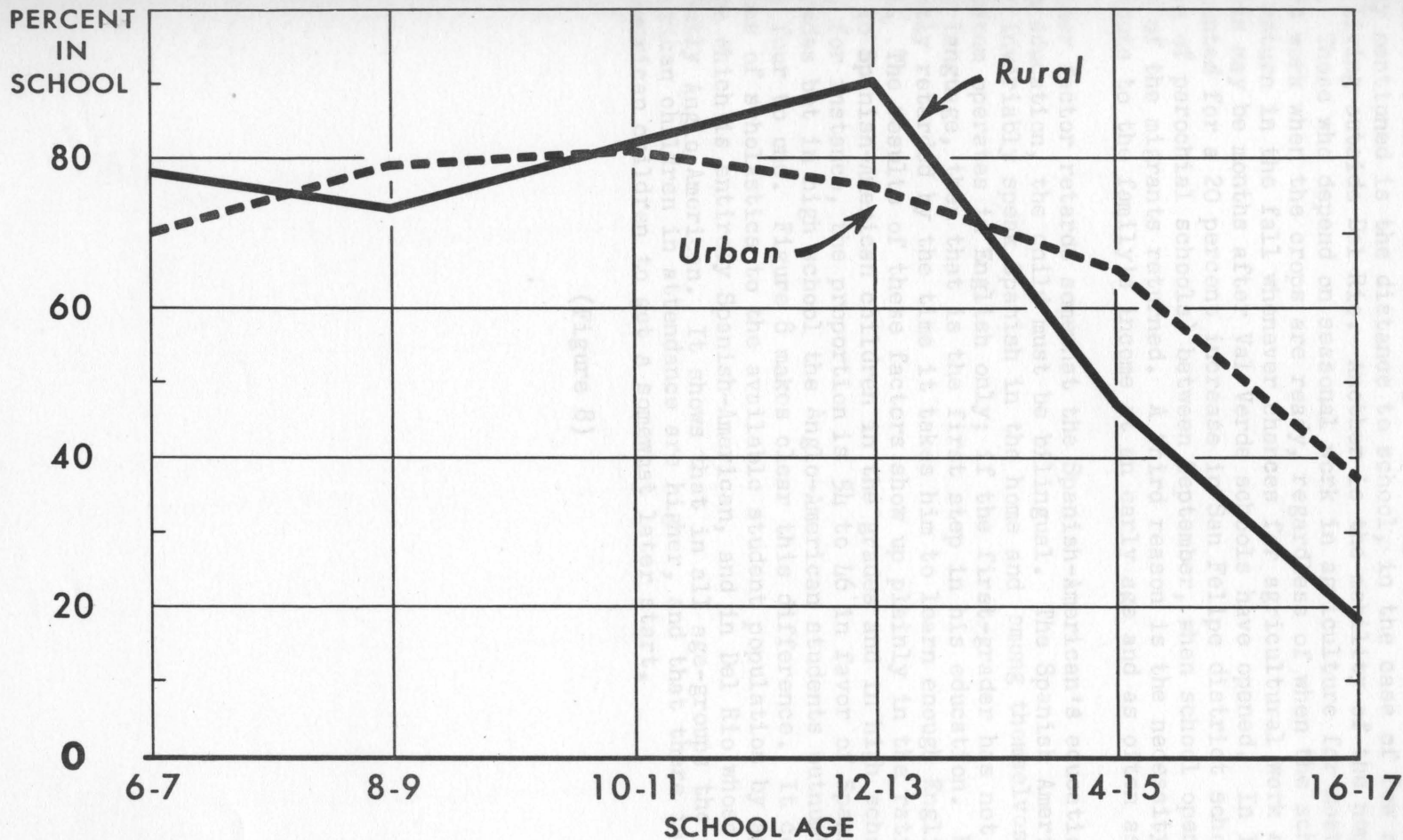
FIGURE 6

The principal reasons for this situation is the size of school districts, sparseness of population, and the great distances involved. The common school district, 90 miles long, has few children. Many parents who are financially able to make the shift prefer to move the entire family to a central point, rather than surrender their children for school days beginning early in the morning and extending after dark in some seasons with a good part of each day spent in a long ride in a school bus over country roads. Consequently, those rancher families and all other rural dwellers who can afford it, move to town; and since the school system operates without a transportation system, only those children within easy reach of the schools share in their benefit. The result is that a higher proportion of urban than rural children regularly attend school.

(Fig. 7)



**PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL-AGE YOUTHS IN VAL VERDE COUNTY SCHOOLS, URBAN AND RURAL, BY AGE GROUPS
AVERAGE FOR SESSIONS 1940-41 AND 1945-46**



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

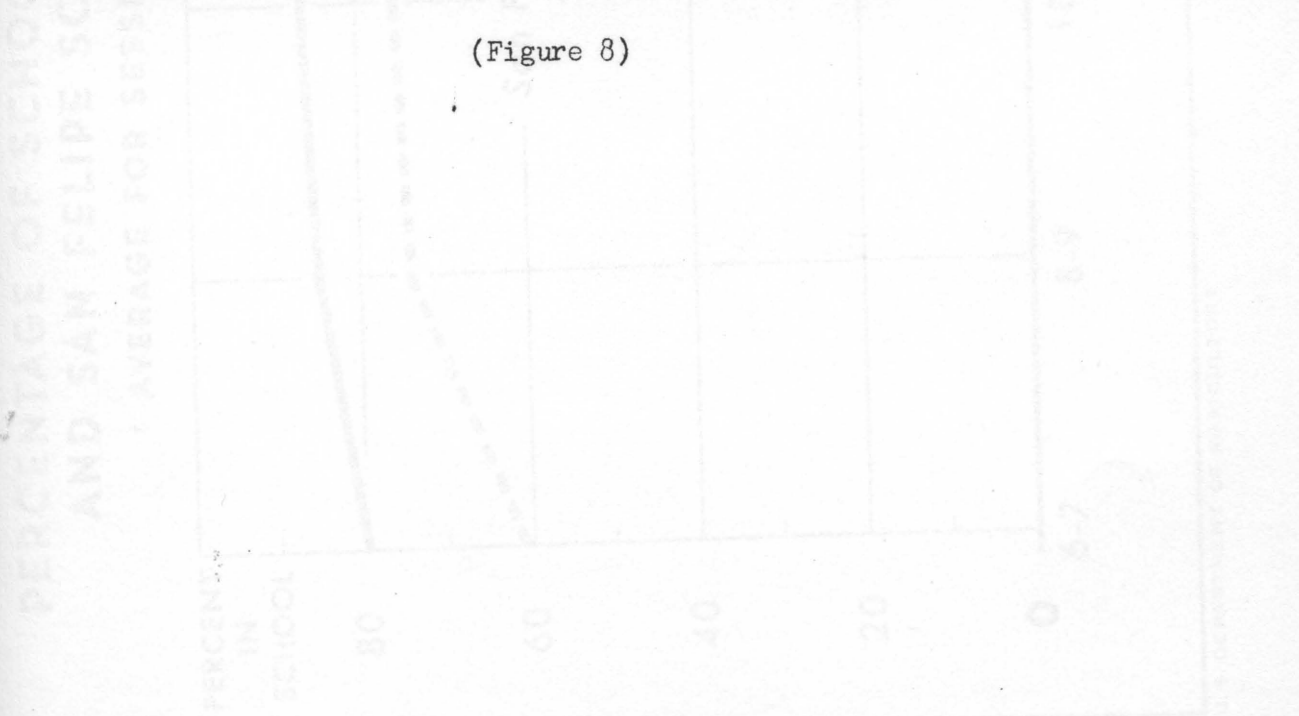
NEG. 47402-X BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

FIGURE 7

Among the Spanish-Americans less emphasis has always been placed on formal education. And although the tendency is toward further education, several things still operate to retard the schooling of most Spanish-American children. One previously mentioned is the distance to school, in the case of few ranch-worker families living outside Del Rio. Another is the mobility of the non-ranch workers' families. Those who depend on seasonal work in agriculture for most of their income start work when the crops are ready, regardless of when the school term ends. And they return in the fall whenever chances for agricultural work are over, even though this may be months after Val Verde schools have opened. In 1946, for example, this accounted for a 20 percent increase in San Felipe district school enrollments (exclusive of parochial schools) between September, when school opened, and November when most of the migrants returned. A third reason is the necessity for the youth to contribute to the family's income at an early age and as often as possible.

Another factor retards somewhat the Spanish-American's educational progress. To get an education, the child must be bilingual. The Spanish Americans in this community invariably speak Spanish in the home and among themselves. But the school system operates in English only; if the first-grader has not mastered this secondary language, then that is the first step in his education. His progress is consequently retarded by the time it takes him to learn enough English to get along in school. The results of these factors show up plainly in the ratios of Anglo-American to Spanish-American children in the grades and in high school. In one district, for instance, the proportion is 54 to 46 in favor of Spanish-Americans in the grades but in high school the Anglo-American students outnumber Spanish-Americans four to one. Figure 8 makes clear this difference. It compares the proportions of scholastics to the available student population by age groups, in San Felipe which is entirely Spanish-American, and in Del Rio whose students are predominantly Anglo American. It shows that in all age-groups the proportions of Anglo-American children in attendance are higher, and that there is a tendency for Spanish-American children to get a somewhat later start.

(Figure 8)



PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL-AGE YOUTHS IN DEL RIO AND SAN FELIPE SCHOOLS, BY AGE GROUPS

AVERAGE FOR SESSIONS 1940-41 AND 1945-46

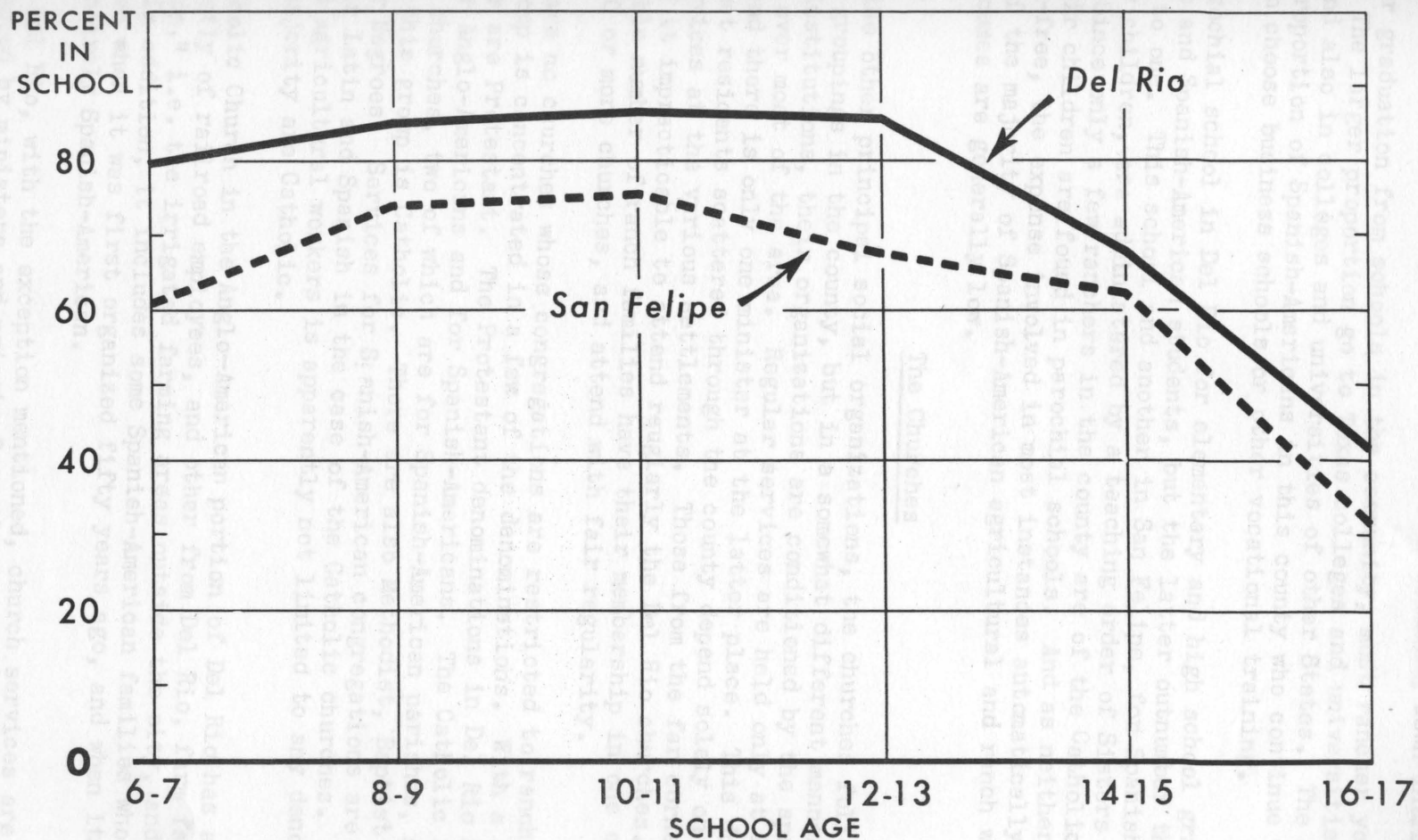


FIGURE 8

In the Del Rio and Comstock school districts, the lingual difference was made the basis some years ago of a separation of the two groups in the lower grades. So these districts have maintained separate schools through the sixth grade. Public education has probably been a major influence in breaking down intra-group barriers.

After graduation from schools in the community, most rancher youth go on to college. The larger proportion go to Texas colleges and universities, but they are to be found also in colleges and universities of other States. The small but slowly growing proportion of Spanish-Americans in this county who continue their education most often choose business schools or other vocational training.

A parochial school in Del Rio for elementary and high school grades accepts both Anglo and Spanish-American students, but the latter outnumber the Anglo-Americans four to one. This school and another in San Felipe, for Spanish-American elementary children, are administered by a teaching order of Sisters from San Antonio. Since only a few ranchers in the county are of the Catholic faith, very few of their children are found in parochial schools. And as neither of the schools is tuition-free, the expense involved in most instances automatically eliminates the children of the majority of Spanish-American agricultural and ranch workers, whose family incomes are generally low.

The Churches

Like the other principal social organizations, the churches follow the major population groupings in the county, but in a somewhat different manner. And like the other institutions, their organizations are conditioned by the sparseness of population over most of the area. Regular services are held only at Del Rio and Comstock, and there is only one minister at the latter place. This does not mean, however, that residents scattered through the county depend solely on the intermittent services at the various settlements. Those from the far corners of the county find it impracticable to attend regularly the Del Rio churches. Nevertheless, a considerable number of ranch families have their membership in one or another of Del Rio's 20 or more churches, and attend with fair regularity.

There are no churches whose congregations are restricted to ranch families, but this group is concentrated in a few of the denominations. With a few exceptions, the ranchers are Protestant. The Protestant denominations in Del Rio have separate churches for Anglo-Americans and for Spanish-Americans. The Catholic faith maintains three churches, two of which are for Spanish-American parishes, since the majority of this group is Catholic. There are also Methodist, Baptist and Holiness churches for Negroes. Services for Spanish-American congregations are conducted in Spanish or Latin and Spanish in the case of the Catholic churches. Membership of ranch and agricultural workers is apparently not limited to any denomination although a majority are Catholic.

The Catholic Church in the Anglo-American portion of Del Rio has a membership composed mostly of railroad employees, and other from Del Rio, farm families from "the loop," i.e. the irrigated farming areas outside the city, and some ranch families. In addition, it includes some Spanish-American families who were members of this church when it was first organized fifty years ago, and when its membership was almost entirely Spanish-American.

Outside Del Rio, with the exception mentioned, church services are intermittent, and are conducted by ministers and priests from the regularly established churches. Thus, the Comstock minister preaches in Langtry, a Del Rio minister conducts services at Pumpville on alternate Sundays, and a Catholic priest from the Chihuahua church holds monthly mass and communion at Comstock. Services are held occasionally

in the school building for families in the vicinity of Pandale.

The churches represent one of the institutions responsible for partly overcoming group barriers. There is a conscious effort on the part of ministers to make their common religious beliefs the basis for closer association. Services open to both groups are occasionally held, and the official boards of two churches have experimented with the idea of holding joint meetings. Also, the church-sponsored Boy Scout troops include some whose members are mixed.

The Family

With certain exceptions, the typical ranch family in the county is characterized by stability. At an early age, the youngsters of both sexes enter enthusiastically into ranch life and can help at shearing, lambing and marking times. The ranch business is most frequently handed down from father to son, and tends to expand, usually at the expense of ranches that have less able managers, or with no male heir to carry on. Several groups of large ranches in the county bear the same family name.

The residence-pattern which has developed is rather uniform, depending somewhat on the economic status of the wool business. The young family makes its headquarters at the ranch, with frequent visits "in town," until one or more children are of school age. At this point, if its finances permit, the family moves to where the school is--usually Del Rio or possibly Comstock--and rents, buys, or builds a home there. After their children are through school these families usually continue to maintain a town house and a ranch home. Exceptions are the few families which remain on the ranch and send the children to schools which maintain pupils in residence. For a considerable period, the family then keeps two households, with the man of the house spending a good deal of his time at the ranch, and the rest of the family joining him there on weekends and during the summer. This pattern is so well established that at times there is a noticeable movement out of Del Rio on weekends, in distinction to the "normal" rush toward the city from agricultural communities.

When the youngest child has reached college age, or for some other reason moves away from home, the family is likely to move back to the ranch. On the other hand, it is possible that the rancher may be so occupied by this time with town affairs that he chooses to stay in town, and become a "main street rancher."

When he retires, the rancher is likely to do so gradually, either by leaving more and more of the running of the ranch to a son, or by gradually cutting down his stock and leasing out more of his "country." This will be done a unit at a time, however. Retired ranchers in the county are not found keeping a few sections and few hundred head of stock merely for a pastime.

Riding comes naturally to ranch sons and daughters, and they participate willingly in the summer work on the ranch. More than one ranchman's wife also "rides the range," and it is generally because of the pleasure she takes in it rather than because of any economic necessity.

The family situation is quite different in the families of Spanish-American ranch and agricultural workers. Spanish-American ranch workers are usually single men. Of the married ones, the greater number now house their families in Del Rio or in one of the other settlement points, returning periodically from the ranch as the job permits. Some live with their families on the ranches, with food and housing provided. This may mean that one or more members of the family will work in the ranch home as domestic help.

It is difficult to generalize regarding the agricultural migrant workers, but the pattern is about as follows: Through the winter the family lives in Del Rio or Comstock. The wage-earner getting what odd jobs he can on the ranches, the railroad the highways, or in town. He may also keep some chickens or a few goats or sheep, on a small plot at the edge of town, and thus become one of the "farmers" enumerated in the census. With the coming of early spring--sometimes as the result of a formal commitment with a licensed labor contractor, but more often not--the family takes to the road, working north as the crops mature, and returning during the next fall. By this time the family may have worked as far north as the Michigan beet fields, and in a very good season will frequently accumulate sufficient cash for the winter. However, because of seasonal employment and low wages, many are likely to be in need of money long before the next season.

are regularly enumerated as farms, their operations have always been clearly distinguished between ranching and farming, and it is said no ranchmen are to be found in the national farmers organizations. The ranch organizations to which they belong seem few, but this is apparently because the needs of ranchmen are stiller. The organizations which have been developed to supply these needs cover many of them so that the number and variety of organizations has been kept small.

Probably the most important single organization necessary to the ranchman's business is the Wool Warehouse, of which there are three in Val Verde County. In form it is a limited stock corporation, and nearly every ranchman owns stock in one or more of the houses. Almost all of them do business with one or more. The officers of the wool warehouses are largely ranchmen, mainly from Val Verde, but with liberal sprinkling of men from surrounding counties. Services which the wool warehouses are designed to supply are the marketing and storage of wool, but in practice they supply several other important services as well.

During the period of the National Emergency, all wool was purchased by the Federal Government, through the Commodity Credit Corporation. Before this period, almost all wool and mohair from Val Verde went to the Boston market, and buyers came to Del Rio wool warehouses to appraise and bid on the clips. As far as the ranchman is concerned the Federal purchase program made two differences in his life. First, he was guaranteed a set price for his wool; and second, the price he received was directly related to the fineness and quality of his own individual clip. Before Commodity Credit accepted the wool supply, it was customary to divide and sell the wool in three general grades according to fineness and percentage, so that those with the poorest and the best quality wool in each division were respectively rewarded and penalized by receiving the price determined by the average.

From the practice of granting short-time loans secured by the wool they held, the wool warehouses developed into convenient and efficient livestock credit institutions for their client-members. At the time of the field study, credit was obtained by these companies from the Federal Intermediate Credit Bank. The extremely close and important association between ranch enterprises and the wool warehouses was illustrated during the lean years of the 30's, when nearly every ranchman in the county went into debt. At that time the wool warehouses became in effect the guardian of the ranch industry, making loans to each rancher on the basis of a strict budget designed to provide essential credit for his business and home expenses without placing on him an excessive indebtedness. To the ranchman this was a burdensome restriction, but it is the consensus of the ranchmen that the wool warehouses in their capacity as lending institutions were a major factor in saving the ranch business. Its place in the economy was certainly greatly strengthened, and it is said that only one ranch in the community was lost during the depression.

PART IV

FORMAL GROUPS AND INFORMAL GROUP RELATIONSHIPS

By informal group relationships is meant the many things people do together outside of formal and institutionalized organizations, ranging all the way from individual and family contacts to informal group activities. Formally organized groups include here all groups which have elected or appointed officials, planned meetings and programs.

Formally Organized Groups

Although the ranches of Val Verde are regularly enumerated as farms, their operators have always clearly distinguished between ranching and farming, and it is said no ranchmen are to be found in the national farmers organizations. The formal organizations to which they belong seem few, but this is apparently because the needs of ranchmen are similar. The organizations which have been developed to supply these needs cover many of them so that the number and variety of organizations has been kept small.

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The third major service supplied by the wool warehouses is a source of ranch supplies. They are a convenient supply point for feeds, medicines, and certain hardware supplies.

The organization to which nearly all ranchmen in the county belong is the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association, dues for which ("a dime a bag") are collected appropriately enough, at the wool warehouse. It is devoted to furthering the interests of wool growers in many ways, both locally and nationally. It has been able to exert considerable influence, and various cities compete for the privilege of entertaining its annual convention delegates. The names of influential ranchers in Val Verde County are well scattered through the list of committee members, and their wives figure prominently in the Women's Auxiliary. Membership in the organization includes automatic subscription to a monthly publication issued by the Association, which reports on topics of general interest to the industry, including personal items from all over the sheep and goat country.

Individual ranchmen, who are necessarily skillful animal husbandmen, are also members of several breeding associations, of which there is one for most of the principal breeds of sheep and goats, as well as other animals. The principal breeds in the county are combination meat and wool-producing Rambouillet and Delaine-Merino sheep, and the mohair-bearing Angora goat. Membership in such an organization carries the privilege of registering stock and exhibiting at the livestock shows. Each of them is primarily an interest-group, but membership also increases the opportunity both to buy and sell among those interested in the breed.

About half the ranchers are members of two Quarter-Horse Breeders Association. The quarter-horse is a currently popular breed in the region, both as a "workhorse"--which has entirely different connotations in ranch country than in farm areas--and as a racer. Many ranchers have bred these horses for years, and the rancher is somewhat of a horse-racing enthusiast. Membership in the quarter-horse associations has about the same significance as in other breeding associations. It means the rancher identifies himself with others in the country who have similar interests. It gives him the opportunity to exhibit his animals at the horse shows and it widens his market for them as well.

The local counterpart of these associations is the Del Rio Livestock Association. Its members are not, however, limited to ranchers as are the others discussed so far. The association was formed as an interest-group, of a non-profit nature, of ranchers and business men who were interested in horseracing, rodeos, baseball, livestock, shows, football, and other events of community interest, and the completion of a racetrack north of the city. When it was organized, the immediate purpose was to raise enough money to finish the grandstand, stables, and track, and the enthusiasm of several influential ranchers carried along many others who joined the association. Now that it has been in existence for a number of years the organization has broadened its functions and includes committees on racing, rodeo, shows, athletics, and publicity. Its members benefit indirectly by the increased business in Del Rio while the races and shows are in progress.

There is one type of outstanding formal organization having to do with ranch life which is devoted to the younger rancher generation. This is the boys' 4-H Club sponsored by the Agricultural Extension Service. It is peculiarly well-suited to ranching country, and receives enthusiastic support. There are two such organizations in the county, one at Comstock and one at Del Rio. In both clubs the membership is primarily teen-age ranch sons, but in Del Rio there are non-rancher members as well. Effectiveness of the group depends largely on the extension agent, but the interest in matters of sheep raising, and in marksmanship with the rifle,

are not too difficult to maintain in this county. Activities of the club center around instruction in animal husbandry and sheep-goat raising enterprise by the county agent; in addition, each club member takes on a demonstration--almost always the raising of a lamb furnished by one of the ranchmen. Climax of this part of the program is the showing of the lamb by the club member at a public contest, at which awards were made for the finest animals. The seriousness with which the ranch business takes such preparation on the part of sons to step into their fathers' shoes is shown by the fact that the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association considers it important enough to provide awards personally presented by the president to successful young 4-H Clubbers. There is no comparable group for girls in the county. Del Rio also has a chapter of the Future Farmers of America in the local high school with activities similar to the 4-H Club. There is no farm shop work.

One other formal ranchman group is the Eagle Club, in which the members' only participation is usually a financial one. The eagles which nest in cliffs along the Pecos and Devils' Rivers, and the Rio Grande are a considerable menace to lambs during the spring and summer, but hunting them is an arduous matter. The Eagle Club is an attempt by about 70 ranchers with "country" along the rivers, to combat the pest by use of the airplane; so far the attempt seems quite successful. A light cabin plane is flown from a Del Rio airfield by one of the pilots, who descends into the river valleys at low altitude, and as his 90 m.p.h. cruising speed allows him to overtake the birds rather easily, they can be shot by a passenger. The Eagle Club finances the arrangement, paying the pilot by the hour.

Among the farmers of Val Verde there is no marketing organization comparable to the wool warehouses, and indeed no other identifiable formal groups but one. This is the San Felipe Ditch Company. One of the most venerable organizations in the county, it grew out of the San Felipe Agricultural and Manufacturing Company, and from a cooperative society of landowners in the irrigated section. Membership carried the right to a specified number of hours' use of the San Felipe Springs' precious irrigation water, depending on the size of the holdings. It also carried the obligation to help in the annual ditch-cleaning, when the water is shut out of the system of ditches, and they are cleaned and repaired. From this organization evolved the present one--a limited stock corporation without the cooperative features, which sells water at a specified rate per hour to users of the system. Stock in the company is customarily sold when the land changes hands, but this procedure has not always been followed, and some concentration of stock shares has resulted. The major stockholder at present is a concern outside the county which owns, but does not farm, a large section of the tillable land.

The Southwest Cattle Raisers Association has a few members but is not as strong in the county as in other cattle ranching areas of the State.

In Texas agricultural areas it is customary for Spanish-American workers to form loosely organized crews, each with a recognized leader. This is not the case, however, with Val Verde agricultural migrants; when they are registered for work it is by family groups or as single individuals. With the sheep-shearers, though, there is a fairly well-defined organization which persists through the shearing season. Depending on the size of his power supply, each shearing-boss or capitan has a crew of around 25 men and boys, each with well-defined rights and responsibilities. The capitan is entrepreneur, business manager, and overseer, and provides food and equipment, except for the actual "shearing heads" or clippers, owned by the shearers. He bargains with the rancher, and determines the order in which ranchers along the route shall be visited. And since he pays his sharers a flat rate--say ten cents--for each fleece, and provides their food for the entire trip, he must bear the losses occasioned by bad weather and other delays at the ranch.

Besides the shearers, each crew has a cook; a llanero or wool picker, who also pays each shearer as he finishes with a fleece; a tecolero, the boy who applies healing and fly-repelling medicine to cuts and nicks on the sheep's skin; an empacador or wool-tier, when fleeces must be tied individually; and perhaps an extra hand who acts as mechanic and cutter-sharpener.

Forty to fifty such crews work out of Val Verde, travelling as far as Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Montana. It is customary for many of the crews to return to the same ranches on a nearly identical schedule each year, and the ranch business depends heavily on their efficiency and dependability. As it is not thought profitable to put shearing equipment on the ranch, only an occasional ranch is so provided. During the slack season there is no persistence of the crew organization, whose members scatter to other occupations. The capitanes have interests such as farming, trade in San Felipe, a taxi service, and one owns a ranch. The shearers, who are the elite of day laborers during the shearing season, revert mostly to odd jobs.

There is no over-all organization embracing the 1,200 or so men who work as members of shearing crews, and the organizational aspects end with the crew. There was apparently an attempt on the part of capitanes to form an organization to further their mutual interests, but it failed to materialize.

Since all but about 700 of the more than 15,000 or so people in Val Verde County live in Del Rio, it is not surprising to find most organizations centered there. Ranchers play a prominent role in the Del Rio centered organizations. There is in fact no significant type of "sociable" group in which they are not found. They are members of some of the Lodges, though there are no ranch wives in either the Rebekah Lodge (the Odd Fellows Lodge similarly include no ranchmen) or the Women's Benefit Association, an organization formed around the function of benefit insurance. No ranchmen's wives work in town, so none are found in the local chapter of Beta Sigma Phi, a national organization of business women. But a few are found in the Order of the Eastern Star, just as some ranchmen are Masons; a few are members of the American Legion Auxiliary, and some of the younger women and girls are members of the local "court" of the Catholic Daughters of America, as well as some of the Altar Societies for women in the church.

Other men's groups in which ranchers are in minority are Knights of Columbus, the Rotary and Lions luncheon clubs, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the American Legion.

A chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars was being organized at the time of the field study in 1946 and included some ranchers. For the Spanish-Americans the Catholic Church has sponsored a group of Catholic War Veterans, a club affiliated with the national organization, and devoted to sociable gatherings of the young men under the aegis of the Catholic Church. A few of its members are in the category of ranch workers.

Another Spanish-American men's group, which includes no ranchers or ranch workers except one or two shearing-crew capitanes is the local chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens. Limits of the parent organization go beyond even the State lines. Its aims are in general self-improvement of the Spanish-American element as well as the upholding of its rights. But the local chapter, which has been in existence for 20 years or more, has declined in its activity, and suffers perennially from the mobility of its members.

In Del Rio there are two Country Clubs. One, with only an occasional rancher's son representing the group, is organized around the use and maintenance of the

town's one golf course. The other includes a high proportion of the younger rancher couples, and centers around the use of the club building at the edge of town.

Membership of the Anglo-American women's clubs in Val Verde shows most plainly the place of ranch people in the county's "urban society." There is none which is exclusively for ranchers' wives, and there is none drawing membership from the higher economic levels which does not include ranch folk as an important part of the organization. This type of formal organization is not unique, so a brief summary will suffice to identify them.

The Del Rio Garden Club is probably the largest women's group (the newspaper account of one meeting lists a hundred names) and includes women of all ages. Most of the women are married, and their husbands represent a wide range of merchandising, service, ranching, and professional occupations. The present president is the wife of a rancher. It is one of several groups whose monthly meetings are held in a Women's clubhouse converted for the purpose.

Four "study clubs", affiliated with statewide or national women's organizations are the New Century Club and the Fine Arts Club in Del Rio and the Del Rio and Comstock Music Clubs. Like the others, all of these special-interest groups include ranch womenfolk, and in the one in Comstock, they predominate. In Del Rio there is a federation of all the women's clubs which was largely responsible for the conversion of their common meeting-place.

Parent-Teacher associations are found in connection with all but a few schools in the county. As in most places, the participating membership is largely female, and the function differs only slightly. Membership is along group lines, even for schools where both Anglo-and Spanish-American children attend. Thus, in the school outside Del Rio and Comstock, although students are mostly Spanish-American, the Spanish-American parents do not have associations, and consequently the PTA's are Anglo-American organizations except in the San Felipe district.

Organizations of the young folk show the same concentration in Del Rio, and the same prevalence of ranch people in the membership. For girls, Del Rio has several high-school-age groups like the Sub-Deb Club, which is nationally affiliated and contains a generous sprinkling of ranch young folk and Theta Tau Theta which emphasizes community service. For boys there are the Seven-Come-Eleven Club and the Kappa Gammas, with about the same generous proportions of young future ranchers. Meetings and social affairs of all these young people's groups are regularly reported in Del Rio newspapers; much of the account is written by youthful club reporters. For Spanish-American young folk there are no groups with the permanence of those just described. But several have been formed temporarily for single functions like dances or parties.

The national organization of Boy Scouts is well represented in the county, but all of the dozen or so troupes are in Del Rio. They are sponsored by churches, parent-teachers associations, the League of United Latin American Citizens, and other organizations. Ranchmen sons are to be found in practically every Anglo-American troop.

Girl Scout troops at the time of the field study were being extended, and will probably draw on the rancher population in about the same proportions as the Boy Scouts. The present organization does not include Spanish-American girl scout troops, but it is now anticipated that these will be formed. Scout leaders observe that the Spanish-Americans "take to" scouting with as much enthusiasm and success as do the Anglo-Americans, and sometimes even more.

Also in Del Rio are two Teen Town Clubs, one for Negroes and one for Anglos, sponsored by progressive-minded business men in the old U.S.O. Clubs. Much activity centers around these during the school term.

Informal Group Relationships

There are significant differences between the groups in the functions performed by formal and informal groups. Among the Anglo-Americans a greater proportion of social interaction is carried on through clubs and societies for both men and women. The Spanish-American population, on the other hand, relies more heavily for exchange of opinion and information on the informal visiting in the plaza, stores, and homes. For information on ranch jobs there are two or three employment agencies in Del Rio but the important exchange of fact and conjecture on summer agricultural work is passed along informally. For Spanish American women there are no clearly defined informal groups, but for the younger male members, one corner of Del Rio's main street and the amusement place on that corner is the cite of a more or less permanent informal group. Its present membership is dominated by the veterans. As the economic level of Spanish-Americans has risen, more of them have been seen congregating in informal groups in the main streets of Del Rio. A similar but generally older male group is to be seen in and around the plaza of San Felipe, where there are a few stores, a hotel, barber shops, and a number of amusement places.

Temporary day-visiting groups of Anglo Americans form and dissolve in every country store. Informal neighborhood visiting groups, which meet in the members' homes to play dominoes or other games, are also found in the places like Langtry, Pandale, and Juno, the groups being larger and the functions more elaborate during the summer when ranchmen families live on their "country." But the outstanding informal group for the ranchers is one which meets on all weekdays, and can be observed during most of the daylight hours in the center of the business district along the main street of Del Rio. This is north of where the Spanish-American young men are found. The section contains several barber shops, a hotel, a bank, a drugstore, two recreation parlors, a news stand, a grocery store, and two establishments, one handling general insurance and one handling livestock medicines, as well as livestock sales and the County Agricultural Agent's office. Most all of these places open directly on the sidewalk, and provide easy chairs in the part of the office nearest the sidewalk. Consequently, a more or less continuous, leisurely discussion group, participated in at one time or another by practically every rancher in the county, meets in this area, and moves from one place to another.

This group constitutes a significant adjunct to ranching and ranch life in the county, and a thorough understanding of its function would yield a great deal of information on the structure and functioning of this ranch society. It performs the usual services of the town discussion-group in the exchange of information and opinion, the fixing or strengthening of attitudes, the determining and emphasizing of leadership and status within the community. But in Val Verde, it also acts, almost as the sole vehicle by means of which information on prospective sales of lambs, sheep, and horses is exchanged. Public advertising of livestock sales account for only a small part of the total market, and usually concerns the sale of individual animals only. Also, ideas concerning ranch enterprise, and related agency programs are given a thorough airing in this group, and the accomplishments and shortcomings of organizations are weighed and reweighed in its discussion. Its existence probably balances and supplements the services of all formal organizations of the ranchers.

PART V

AGENCIES

By agencies is meant those public and private administrative units which have organized programs serving the general public.

It is frequently through the operation of agencies in the community that influence of the larger society is felt most plainly; but on the other hand, characteristics of the local community invariably condition the functioning of agencies and modify the working of their programs. In Val Verde County, as in most of the surrounding part of Texas, most agencies' programs do not provide for geographical division smaller than the county, and frequently embrace several counties. This last is true of the State Employment Service, State Department of Public Welfare and the Veterans Administration, for example. Most agencies operating in Val Verde have their headquarters and all their personnel in Del Rio but this is not true of the border patrol, the highway department, the vocation rehabilitation service, the crippled childrens division, and perhaps others. The actual number of agencies at work in Val Verde County depends on how they are defined, but at least the following are recognizable: the State Department of Public Welfare, the Crippled Childrens Society, the T.B. Society, the Veterans Administration, the Texas Employment Service, the Farm Credit Administration, the Production and Marketing Administration, and the Agricultural Extension Service.

Welfare bodies include the City-County Welfare Board, the Red Cross, the County Nursing Service (no nurse at time of writing), the County Health Officer and the City Health Officer. There is no public health department. It is through the State Department of Public Welfare that the state programs for aid to dependent children, needy blind, needy aged and state child welfare are administered. By far the larger part of the work of the city-county welfare board is with the aged, infirm, and destitute in the Spanish-American portion of the population, many of whom are unnaturalized citizens and not eligible for the state rehabilitation program. The Red Cross functions in the county for families of servicemen, in some cases ex-servicemen, and its work is likewise nearly all with Spanish Americans.

The employment service, which also dispenses unemployment compensation, maintains an office in Del Rio which services several counties. Most hiring of ranch workers, however, is done through private employment agencies, with the Extension Service aiding during the war years. The State Employment Service was, at the time of the field study, confined to Del Rio proper.

The Veterans Administration serves an area larger than the community around Del Rio. Above 60 percent of the ex-servicemen in the county are Spanish-Americans, so that a large part of the agency's work is with members of that group.

Five agencies have a most direct bearing on ranching in the county. The Commodity Credit Corporation is one of these, and its program in the county concerned every rancher during the War years. Under federal regulations, all wool was purchased at the wool warehouse by Commodity Credit which maintained buyers and appraisers there, paid for storage of the wool pool, and enforced a system of accounting by which prices were determined by shrinkage and fineness of the individual wool clip of each rancher.

Agencies providing federal credit are also significant in Val Verde. One, the Federal Intermediate Credit Bank of Houston, extends credit to the wool warehouses

in their agricultural lending operations. The Federal Land Bank is responsible for the most long-term mortgage credit in the country, having displaced to a large extent the credit facilities of commercial banks and insurance companies. As in other counties, the Federal Land Bank operates through the National Farm Loan Association, composed of member-borrowers, and under the supervision of the Farm Credit Administration. All officers and directors are townpeople who are members of the association, but the bulk of the members are ranchmen. Seasonal or short-term production loans are made to borrow-members of the Uvalde Production Credit Association which serves Val Verde and seven other nearby counties. These credit agencies have become stabilized as to function in the county, and there has been no apparent conflict in the adjustment of local institutions.

Another agency whose program concerns ranching is the Production and Marketing Administration. It centers in Del Rio, with headquarters, like the Extension Service, in the downtown area where the informal ranchmen discussion groups are to be found. Personnel concerned with the program are local people, and the county chairman is one of the larger ranchmen. Nearly all ranches and most farms are cooperators in one or another of the programs which are still known to local people as "Triple A" programs.

Programs of Soil Conservation Service and Rural Electrification Administration have so far not operated in the county, but Val Verde has a representative on the State Soil Conservation Committee and has recently formed a Soil Conservation District, elected officers and formulated a program.

The relation of the Extension Service to other agricultural agencies and their programs in the county is close, and the offices of the Extension Service and the Production and Marketing Administration are in the same room. Agents of the Extension Service have worked in Val Verde County at one time or another since 1909, but there has never been a home demonstration agent.

The oldest established of these agencies is the Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service. The county agent is a joint employee of the county, State, and Federal Government, but his entire function is to serve the farm and ranch people of the county. This is so thoroughly recognized by everyone and so completely practiced that few people within the county ever think of the agent's State or Federal connections.

The position of the county agricultural agent in Val Verde is somewhere between that of an agency representative, and a county officer, since a sizable portion of the agent's salary is provided by the county. The agent's name is included in formal organizations of ranch people although he is also said to be readily available to all farmers in the county. At the time of the study in 1946, the Service through its county agency, was fostering a variety of programs aimed at ranch improvement, and the 4-H Club for ranch boys, which has been described. The Extension Service's state-wide program of placement of farm and ranch labor also had its counterpart in the Val Verde program, through which one ranchman was designated to centralize negotiations between sheep-shearing capitanes and the ranches. The program was aimed at coordinating the movements of shearing crews, and making more efficient the whole shearing process in the community.

Agricultural agencies which operate in Val Verde County are, in general, those which are demonstrably helpful to ranching. Ranchmen have been quick to recognize and take advantage of programs which would benefit them, either by bringing in new contributions, or by supplementing one or more functions or practices already well-rooted in local custom. Established leaders in the community move naturally into positions of importance in such agencies.

Agencies as specific types of organization are of recent origin, most of them coming into the county since or during the Thirties. They came in with the development of specialized services which are rendered by agricultural specialists, health and welfare specialists, credit specialists, etc. These specialists frequently work with individuals, but find that their effectiveness and coverage can be greatly stepped up by working through the already established organizations or newly organized groups.

Without exception the role of the agent, the specialist serves to make the functioning of an agency different from that of an institution or a formal organization. In many agency programs, the agent is the bridge over which, or a channel through which, the ranchers of the county get expert services which stem from State, regional, or national centers. In most cases, the knowledge that such services exist and the desire to use them causes the ranchmen to employ agents, experts, and specialists. The agents are local and their function is to serve the people of the county, and in rendering this service, they often secure expert services through State and Federal connections that would otherwise be unavailable.

PART VI

SUMMARY

One of the striking features of social organization in Val Verde County is that there is so little distinction between rural and urban residents. Ranch owners and operators alternate between rural and urban existence, and their families although strongly identified with the ranch homes, may spend the greater part of the year as "urban" residents of Del Rio. Even those few ranch families which choose to or feel they must make their ranches their sole place of residence, may and usually do participate actively with groups and functions in Del Rio.

A second feature which Val Verde County shares with much of the Range-Livestock area is found in the adjustments which its people have made to space. Val Verde's pale, stony, limestone soils are thinly spread over massive layers of cretaceous limestone, except where the floors of rivers and draws have caught some silt loams. The rainfall chart (see Figure 9) shows a variation between the county's borders of almost 8 inches in annual precipitation, but it is the 20-inch line which runs through the middle of the county that is average. This light rainfall combined with a high evaporation rate makes for an arid climate, and the sparse vegetation is consequently dominated by arid-land shrubs, grasses, and weeds--scrub oak in the stream beds, sparse but very nutritious range grasses, and desert plants and cedar scrub on the uplands.

The economy made necessary by climate, soils and topography involves the ownership and management of huge tracts of land, so the spaces to which residents must adjust are impressive. The principal adjustment appears to have been to learn to treat space lightly. Instead of setting up many small, highly self-sufficient communities, the people of Val Verde County have chosen to make one center the focus of activity for an area larger even than the county. They did this, apparently, at a time when horses set the pace for travel and transportation. With the coming of high-speed vehicles, the tendency to adjust to great space has been accentuated. Every ranch has its own cars and trucks, and about thirty of them in Val Verde have space cleared for landing strips.

It has been shown, however, that the factor of space could not be completely disregarded; and although the churches and schools of Del Rio provide for educational and religious needs of almost the entire county, the ranch families have had to develop a pattern of ranch-to-town mobility within the county in order to adjust to the system of public education.

A third feature of the county's organization is that it represents a meeting-place of two different population groups and is composed of two distinct and mutually homogeneous population elements. There is a very small third group--the Negroes. Of the two main divisions, the largest one numerically is composed of Spanish-Americans (Mexicans and American nationals of Mexican descent). Distinctions between the two groups, though numerous at present, are gradually becoming less sharp. The process has been affected most by educational and religious institutions; it has received added impetus from conditions arising out of the recent war. The characteristics which now distinguish most plainly between Anglo and Spanish Americans are types of occupations, education, levels of living, language, participation in governmental programs, and mobility, both occupational and residential. In the process of accommodation, several types of occupations have come to be filled almost exclusively by members of one group or the other. In general, social organizations of all types are duplicated. A wider range of formal groups, with a high degree of participation, is characteristic of Anglo Americans in the community, while some social needs of Spanish-Americans are met by informal, impermanent groupings.

VAL VERDE COUNTY IN RELATION TO PRECIPITATION BELTS IN TEXAS

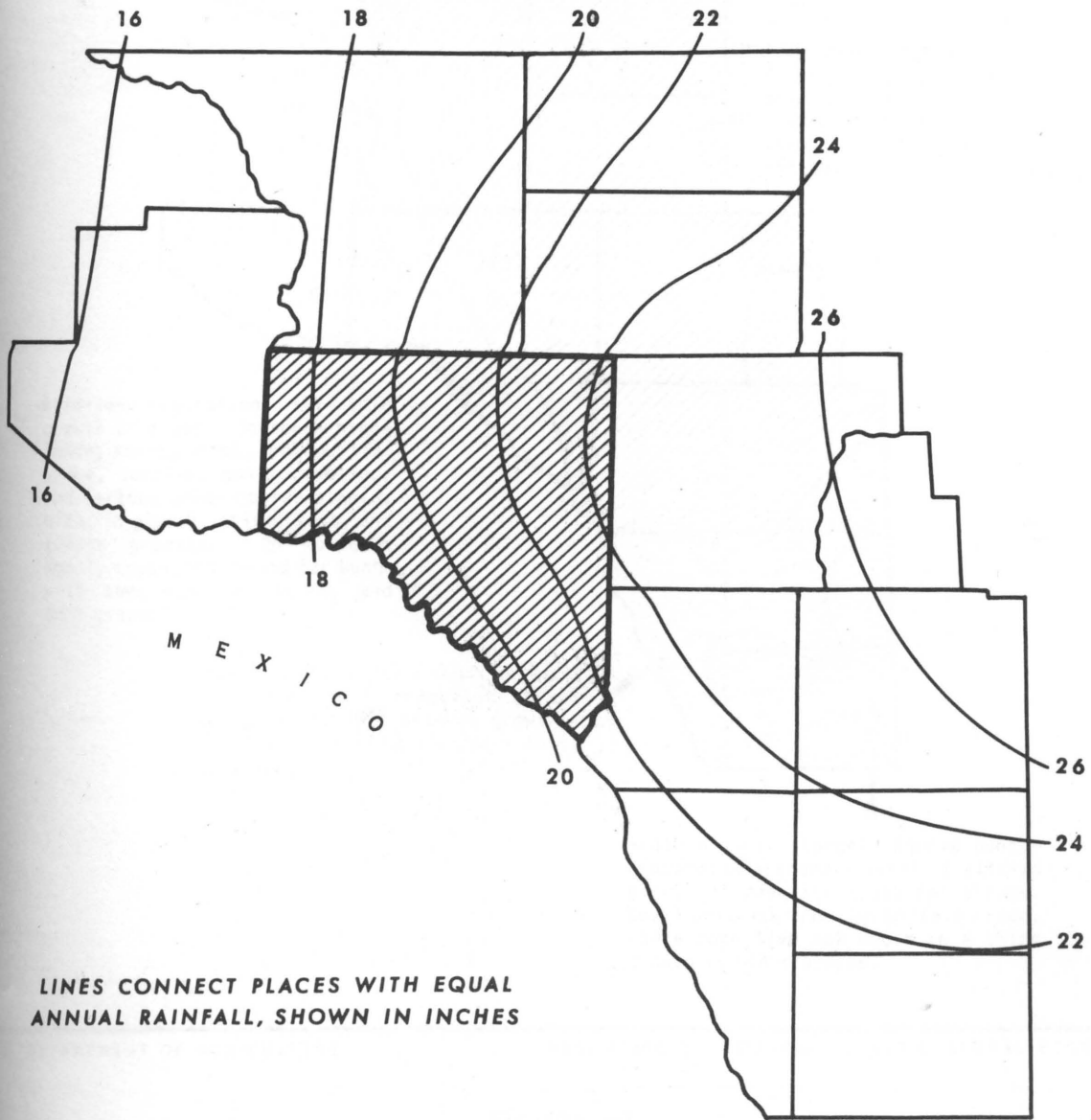


FIGURE 9

NATIVE VEGETATION TYPES IN VAL VERDE COUNTY, TEXAS, AND ADJACENT COUNTIES

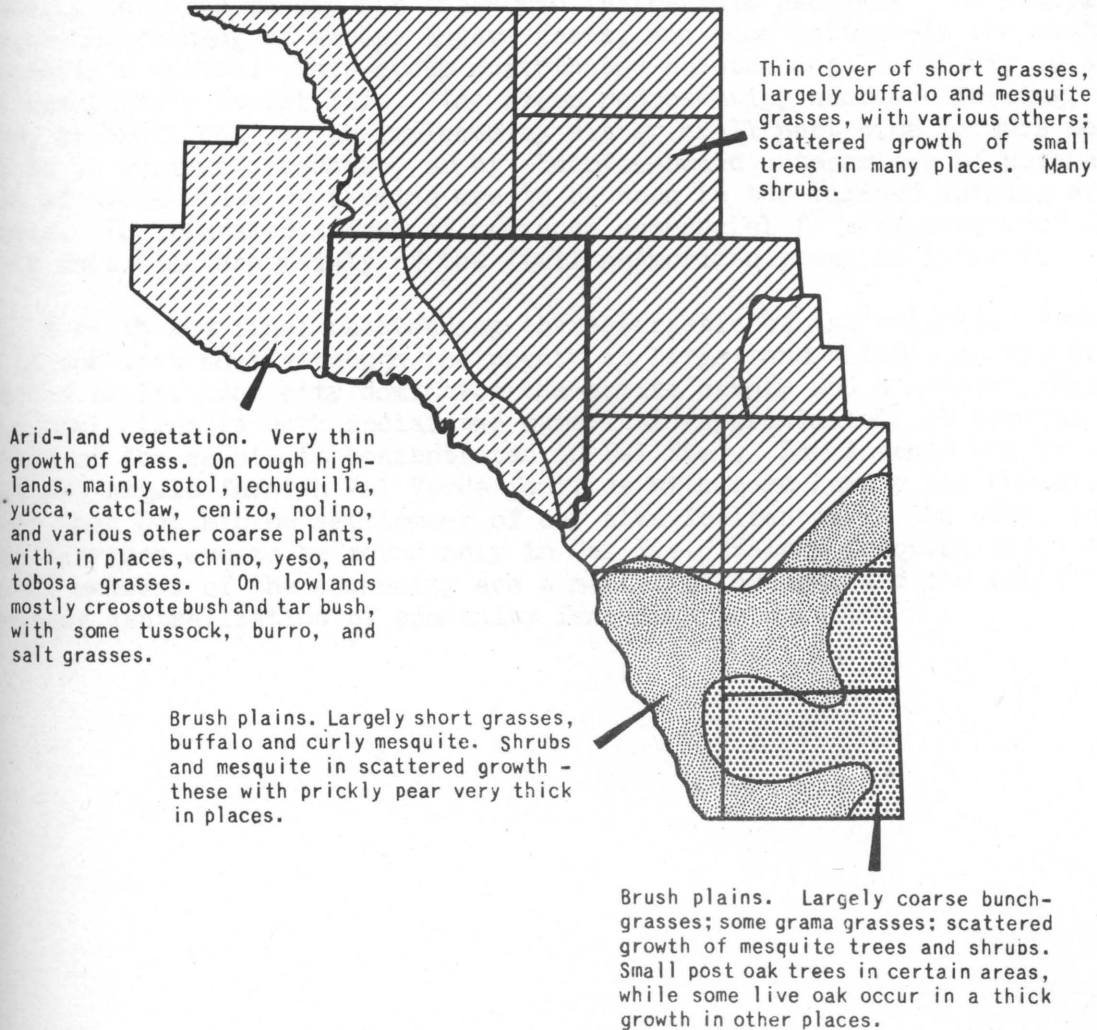


FIGURE 10

A fourth characteristic of social organization in the county is that within the Anglo American population, ranchmen and their families form a distinct and easily identifiable segment of the social organization. This group is characterized generally by a relatively high level of living, and by a high degree of stability and homogeneity. It is the group most greatly influenced by the ranch-to-town mobility pattern brought about partly by the local educational system and the physical limitations imposed by space; and resulting in the frequent maintenance of two homes, within the county for those who follow this pattern. The livelihood of this group--the raising of sheep, Angora goats, and some cattle--is the basis of the community's wealth. This group contributes outstanding leadership to all types of the community's social life. The group representing nonranch farming, on the other hand, is small and may be replaced by either small part-time farmers whose main income is derived elsewhere, or by absentee-owned enterprises of several types. Both of these kinds of farming are to be seen in the limited farming area of the county. The representatives of nonranch commercial farming practiced in the county up to this time are mainly of the Italian-American group of farmers.

A fifth and final outstanding characteristic of the organized life in the county is the fact that although the county is large, and Del Rio is far from centrally located in it, that city dominates the entire county and a considerable area beyond. This domination is both social and numerical (approximately 90 percent of the population of the county is concentrated in Del Rio). San Antonio and to a lesser extent San Angelo furnish Val Verde families with some luxury and durable goods. Other than Del Rio no settlement of any size is located in the area, and many necessary services are to be found only in Del Rio. Fairly frequent trips to that city by all members of the community are a matter of course, and the trend is toward increasing centralization of community functions in Del Rio.