

**Texas-Mexican Migratory Agricultural
Workers In Wisconsin**

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by
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War and Food Production

AMONG THE MANY ACHIEVEMENTS of the American people in fighting World War II, none is more remarkable than that of food production by the American farmer, and its subsequent canning or processing by the fruit and vegetable processing establishments. Each year of the war saw a steadily diminished regular farm labor force produce food and fibre in larger quantities than in the preceding one.

Every annual increase in the size of our armed forces and those of our allies, saw a greater burden placed upon the farmer for increased production. Each successive country liberated from enemy occupation but added to the already swollen need for food on a world wide scale never before duplicated. The ravaged condition of most of postwar Europe and Asia as a result of global warfare had permitted no let-up in the demand for capacity food production in the early postwar period.

Producers and Processors Solve Labor Problems

While many factors combined to make the unprecedented food production achievement possible, one of the chief contributive factors was the way in which the farmers and food processors solved their labor problems. Each year of the war found them steadily increasing their labor efficiency notwithstanding the constantly changing make-up of the labor force. And this bulletin is concerned with attempting to tell this part of the farm production achievement; it is concerned only incidentally with the story as it developed in the war years, and more specifically with the years that lie ahead.

Starting with 1943 and continuing through the harvest season which closed in the fall of 1947, Wisconsin farmers used workers of the foreign governments of Mexico, Jamaica, Bahamas, Honduras, and Barbados to supplement local labor in the harvesting of farm crops. Prisoners of war, captured in campaigns against the German and Italian armies, were also added in large numbers to the heterogeneous farm labor force.

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Recruit Helpers From Many Sources

In addition to these somewhat colorful foreign workers farmers and food processors used high school boys and girls from small towns and large cities by the thousands, and adult city workers who were able to volunteer their services temporarily to help out in the most critical harvest periods. In other words, the farmer and food processor used any and every type of labor that was available. The army and navy had taken the cream of the crop of able-bodied men, and all but a few of the remainder who had formerly been available for seasonal farm work had taken employment in the war plants of city industries.

Farmers Compete With Industry for Helpers

Yes, wartime and postwar labor experiences of the farmer have been interesting, but they have been unique, too. This marks the first time in the history of American agriculture that farmers have experienced a genuine labor shortage. It is true that in the last war certain flash crop areas had to have some imported labor but never in the quantities required in World War II.

Traditionally, the farmer has been in a most favored labor position. He used to be able to supply much of his own labor from his own large family labor force. Likewise, extra labor for harvest periods, was generally available on other small neighboring farms or in the farmers' trading centers, the villages and towns of the countryside, and usually at the farmer's own wage. This has been the farmer's first experience in a competitive labor market.

Why, then, the labor shortage? The explanation, which has several aspects, lies chiefly in the word "migration."

Farmers Contribute Millions of Workers to War Effort

During the span of years which started with 1940 when we were "tooling up" for war, and which continued through the first full year of warfare, namely 1945, the total American farm population shrank by more than five million. To be exact, the figure was 5,079,000, and this was a net shrinkage. The actual "loss" of farm population during these five years was 1,850,000 young men to the armed forces and 5,136,000 other civilians, or a total of 6,986,000. In this same period farm births outnumbered farm deaths by 1,907,000, thus accounting for the "net" shrinkage of 5,079,000.

In 1945 we saw, in the nation as a whole, a net return of 703,000 from military life to agriculture and a net return of 603,000 from civilian non-farm jobs. In 1946 the return of service men was less than in the previous year, totaling only 547,000, and apparently more of the former civilian farm population had by then made up their minds that farming was not their way of life, because the number who returned to agriculture was smaller than the number who migrated out. We had a net loss of 266,000 from the national civilian farm population in that year.

Rural Population Declining

Now Wisconsin's farm population had been declining long before the war set in. It declined consistently in the decade of the 1920's, grew a little with the earli

years of the depression under the influence of a back-to-the-land movement, but resumed its decline after reaching peak numbers in 1933. Insofar as seasonal farm labor is concerned this used to come not only from the small, less productive farms but from the rural villages and small towns as well. And it is in the decline by migration of our total rural population - rural in the sense of farm people plus those who live in the small towns which cater to farmers' needs - that we can look to for the primary cause of the labor shortages experienced on Wisconsin farms in the 1940's.

Employing the data gathered in every annual school district census, and the records of the number of people who were registered for sugar rations in the state, we have made some estimates of the extent of migration from Wisconsin's rural areas. This amounted to 27,000 in 1940; 28,000 in 1941; 43,000 in 1942; 28,000 in 1943; and 14,000 in 1944. In line with the national scene there was a reversal of the trend in the state in 1945, resulting in an increase of 12,000 over the previous year.*

Rural Wisconsin Lost 140,000 During 1940-46

In other words, rural Wisconsin lost in the seven-year span, 1940-46, approximately 140,000 people. We don't know precisely how many of this 140,000 were farm workers, but again using the best available indirect method of computing we have reason to believe that a conservative estimate is in the vicinity of 25,000.

Large as these figures may appear, they do not yet tell the whole story. There was another "loss" of workers which worked against the agricultural employer, in favor of urban industry. This was the change of jobs by people living on farms or in hamlets and villages, but who did not change their residences. This group dropped out of agriculture as a source of employment, but continued to live on or near farms, and went on the payroll of non-farm industries.

Many Lived in Country Worked in Cities

Now, again as in the case of other aspects of the problem which we are attempting to discuss, we do not know the exact number of these losses in terms of agricultural workers. We have evidence, however, which suggests that the number of workers in this group may have been as large as the number who actually moved away from rural Wisconsin.

We know this from the number of workers who were recruited from rural Wisconsin and assigned to work at the Sauk Ordnance Plant, the ship building yards at Manitowoc and Sturgeon Bay, the arsenal at Eau Claire, the powder plant at Washburn, the airport at Madison, the docks at Ashland, and the host of other industries stimulated and expanded by war contracts in Milwaukee, Madison, Janesville, Beloit, Beaver Dam, LaCrosse, Waukesha, Racine, and many other industrial centers. Many thousands of these workers commuted daily from their rural residences to urban employment. Some still continue the practice.

*The migration away from the rural areas was just about evenly balanced with the number who moved in. Preliminary data suggest that 1947 will show the return of the long time pre-war trend, a gradual net decline in rural and farm population.

Foreign Workers Called In

Since most of the workers which Wisconsin agriculture lost, both through residential moves and occupational shifts, were adults who secured more attractive jobs in industry, their replacement became impossible after the migration reached the mass proportions which it did in 1942. It was in an attempt to substitute for these lost workers that 1,300 foreign workers were imported in 1943; 3,000 in 1944; 3,200 in 1945; 3,600 in 1946, and 2,800 in 1947. Prisoners of war were likewise imported during these years, totaling 100 in 1943; 275 in 1944; 350 in 1945; and 300 in 1946. Finally, in addition to these two classes of workers and over and above the help recruited by farmers locally, the Agricultural Extension Service placed 31,000 different men, women and youth on Wisconsin farms in 1943; 42,000 in 1944; 45,000 in 1945; 37,000 in 1946; and 36,000 in 1947.

Texas-Mexican Workers to 23 Counties in One Year

There appeared in the 1947 farm season a new addition to Wisconsin's farm labor force, which may well prove to become its most substantial element in the future. We refer to migratory workers of Spanish or Mexican origin who have their permanent homes mostly in Texas and who are commonly referred to as Texas-Mexicans.

Texas-Mexicans had come to Wisconsin before 1947, in fact, they have formed a part of the labor force of the sugar beet industry for many years. But 1947 was the first time that they were spread around the state in large numbers attempting to fit into the many-sided farm labor pattern which is now characteristic of Wisconsin. Texas-Mexican workers were reported in 23 of Wisconsin's 71 counties during the summer of 1947 and their peak numbers were estimated at 5,000

In earlier years Texas-Mexicans who came to Wisconsin used to find little employment in the intervening period after the early summer thinning and hoeing of sugar beets and their late fall harvest. Some found employment in picking cucumbers and a few worked in the vegetables in the southeastern part of the state; but most of them migrated to other states for employment in the slack labor season. It was not until this last year that a combination of circumstances in the ever-changing supply of labor and the tremendously expanded acreage of vegetable crops created opportunity for as many to try continued employment in Wisconsin as was estimated above.

Furthermore, World War II had brought about changes in their home communities in Texas making it possible for greatly increased numbers to join the ranks of the seasonal migrants. Because of the social and economic changes which have permanently altered their status in Texas the number of Texas-Mexicans who will migrate in the post-war years from the Rio Grande area may be several times larger than the number who migrated before the war. Likewise, as will be discussed later, each year will find larger and larger numbers who will break away permanently from their Texas communities.

Farmers Learn Ways of Foreign Laborers

To most Wisconsin farmers they represent a new type of worker, a type not known before. They likewise will be a new element in many communities. They come in family groups, seldom as single workers. Whereas formerly they came almost wholly under sponsorship of the sugar beet industry, in the future larger numbers will come "on their own" in search of job opportunities.

They will make another link in the long chain of strange laborers with whom our farmers have already had to become acquainted. In order to help employers understand these workers so as to be able to work with them more efficiently, likewise in order to help the workers overcome some of their more common problems in their new environment, a study was made of the Texas-Mexican workers who were in the state during the summer and fall of 1947. The remainder of the bulletin is a report on this study.

Who Are These People?

Texas has about three-quarters of a million people of Spanish background. Some of them are the result of four centuries of intermarriage between descendants of the early Spanish colonizers and the native Indian population of Mexico. Others are still of pure Indian stock. In this respect they are similar racially to the Indians and the French-Indian mixture found in Wisconsin, the only difference being in the language mixtures. In one case the languages were Spanish and Indian, and in the other, French and Indian, with English tending to supplant both combinations.

During the course of the study ten per cent of the workers in the state were interviewed, and a family history was filled out for 105 family groups. It will become evident from the discussion why the family was the unit of study.

Table 1 - Age, Sex, and Nativity of Family Heads

Nativity	Age and Sex of Head								
	Total M:F	Under 30		35-39 M:F	40-44 M:F	45-49 M:F	50-54 M:F	55+ M:F	Unknown M:F
		M:F	M:F						
Born in Mexico	45:6	0:0	2:0	5:0	11:3	11:2	5:1	9:0	2:0
Born in Texas	50:4	13:0	8:1	9:0	6:1	6:0	2:0	4:1	2:1
Totals	95:10	13:0	10:1	14:0	17:4	17:2	7:1	13:1	4:1

From table I we find that both male and female family heads were about evenly divided with respect to nativity. Slightly fewer of the male heads were Mexican-born than Texas-born, whereas the reverse was true among the women who were reported as family heads. The average male head was 42.3 years of age, three and one-half years younger than the female heads who averaged 45.8 years. The Texas-born male head was 37 years old on the average, whereas the Mexican-born male head was 48.

Few of the Mexican-born heads could or would speak English. They would only do so through a younger member of the family. Also, except in rare cases, the Texas-born head insisted on speaking in Spanish. That is their mother tongue. It is used always among themselves, and only in case of extreme necessity is English employed.

Table 2 - Migratory History of Family Heads

Migratory History	Number of Families
1947 was first year of work in Wisconsin	45
(a) Previously worked in some other state	14
(b) Had never worked outside of Texas	31
1947 was second year of work in Wisconsin	21
1947 was third year of work in Wisconsin	17
1947 was renewal of migration stopped several years earlier	10
Worked in Wisconsin from 5 to 7 years	9
Worked in Wisconsin year-round	3

From Table 2 we find that 45 of the 105 families were new-comers to Wisconsin; furthermore, 1947 was the first year of work away from Texas for almost a third of the group. Only a fourth of the migrants had worked here three or more seasons. While only three of the families in our sample had become year-round residents, several times as many additional young family heads expressed a desire to stay in Wisconsin if they would make appropriate arrangement for a job and suitable housing.

Fifty-two of the 102 migrant family heads claimed to have full time winter employment in Texas after they were ready to leave Wisconsin in November or December. Forty-nine reported that they would expect to have only part-time winter employment in Texas, or no employment at all. The latter would try to live on their summer earnings without winter work and will no doubt be the first in line waiting for the Wisconsin or other non-Texas employer who will advance their transportation money in the spring, and after arrival in the state, make further advances in the form of credit at the neighborhood grocery store.

Table 3 - Education of Family Heads and Wives

	Grades Completed								Unknown
	None	1	2	3	4	5	6	6+	
Family Heads (Includes 6 females)	38	6	12	15	9	5	4	2	14
Wives	39	6	9	13	11	3	3	9	3
Total	77	12	21	28	20	8	7	11	17

Most of the family heads and their wives had either had no schooling or their education was so limited that they have to be classified illiterate. Generally it was found that one who reported less than four years of education was to all intents and purposes illiterate. The troqueros and crew leaders were usually the ones who had had more than four years of schooling.

Table 4 - Usual Occupation of the Head of Family in Texas

Occupation of Head	Number
Farm Laborer	30
Trucker	25
Skilled Labor	5
Odd Jobs	9
Miscellaneous	18
Factory Work	8
Railroad	5
None or Unknown	5
Total	105

Not all of the workers are agricultural workers at home. In fact, only 30 of the 105 family heads were regularly employed as farm laborers in Texas; 25 claimed to be truck drivers, 5 were skilled laborers, the remainder worked at odd jobs or had no usual occupational designation.

In line with their non-farm occupational background, sixty-three of the 105 families came from small Texas towns ranging in size from three to six thousand population; thirty-four came from cities of ten to thirty thousand; only five came from farms.

Sixty-one of the migrant families claimed to be home owners in Texas. In about half of the cases some close relative occupied the house during their absence, and in the remainder of cases the house was closed during their stay in Wisconsin.

A One Way Ticket

Table 5 - Arrival Date in Wisconsin and Probable Departure Date of Migrant Families

Date of Arrival	Number of Families	Probable Date of Return to Texas		
		After cucumber or sweetcorn harvest	After sugar beet harvest or vegetable harvest in Kenosha area	Undecided as to departure date
April 1-30	10	1	7	2
May 1-15	16	3	13	-
May 16-31	33	2	30	1
June 1-15	10	7	3	-
After June 16	31	24	4	3
Not known	2	-	2	-
Totals	102	37	59	6

Wisconsin, in common with other states in this region, had a late spring in 1947 which delayed planting. Notwithstanding this about half of the Texas-Mexicans came to the state long before there was any possibility of their finding employment in agriculture. Apparently the southern region of Texas experienced an unusual crop season in the winter months of 1946-47 so that the normal winter harvest work was reduced drastically. This made for considerable uneasiness among the migrants and caused them to want to start on their northern trek earlier than usual.

In addition to this, however, many of the early arrivals were the direct result of recruiting promises of Wisconsin employer representatives stationed in Texas. Those representatives compete with many others from other states and they naturally can be expected to become somewhat concerned about getting their share of workers.

Foreign Workers Seek Better Housing

However, the final determining reason for early arrival was uncovered only after repeated questioning of the families, especially the women-folk. And the answer that was finally uncovered is most significant for the Wisconsin farmer, they came early for a very good reason - to get the best housing! They knew from their own experiences, or that of their friends or relatives, that good housing was a rarity, but, "first come first served." This was especially true of those who had their own means of transportation, or when the torqueros happened to be one of their blood family. He could then be cajoled into leaving a few days earlier than other drivers.

There is additional information which the date of arrival reveals. A large proportion, as can be seen from Table 5, came at a time when the harvest season was under way. They are the "professional" harvesters, and if the data from this table are read together with Table 6, it will be seen that such workers follow the crops from state to state. These workers are not interested in such farm chores as hoeing, weeding or cultivating. They want harvest work, seasonal work with a piece wage system. Most of those who arrived after June 15 came to harvest cherries, cucumbers, and tomatoes. They leave with the completion of these harvests to continue the process in some other state, finishing the cycle of their migration in the winter cotton harvest of Texas and the southwest.

Table 6 - Migration Pattern of Families

Route of Migration	Number of Families
From Texas direct to Wisconsin	75
To Wisconsin after working in some other state	37
Year-round in Wisconsin	3

Nine out of ten migrant families had their transportation cost advanced to them when they started their move to Wisconsin. Only one out of ten came strictly "on his own." (See Table 6) The most common mode of travel was in the truck of a recognized truck operator, called a troquero, who is paid a stipulated sum by a Wisconsin employer per head of his pay-load. This system of transportation and travel "advances" were found to be the source of continual complaints and disagreements between workers and employers. The elaborate system of recruiting and transportation arrangements made for many loop holes and potential misunderstandings.

Table 7 - Means of Transportation to Wisconsin

Means of Transportation	Number of Families
Cost advanced by employer:	91
By common carrier	0*
Transported by licensed <u>troquero</u>	43
Used own truck	30
Used own automobile	18
Cost not advanced by employer:	11
By common carrier	4
Used own truck or automobile	7

*Late in the harvest season some workers were transported by airplane.

The state laws of Texas call for state employment licenses before any non-resident can offer even a single worker an out-of-state job. Counties and municipalities have additional legal restrictions. To fit into this system obviously any out-of-state employer needs an official agent in Texas. He in turn operates through the natural local leader system of the Texas-Mexican, and before an agreement to work and subsequent arrangements for transportation are completed with a potential worker, negotiations have proceeded through many many individuals, each getting his reward from the system.

It would be miraculous indeed if there was more than just an accidental resemblance between the actual job opportunity as it originally existed in Wisconsin and the conception of this potential job as it registered in the mental processes of the worker who has finally "agreed" to a work contract and transportation agreement

Travel Long Distances by Truck

In discussing this intricate system of negotiations with the families not a single family brought in by a troquero was found where any of its members had even the remotest advance idea of the kind of work that was to be expected of them,

its location, name of employer, etc. They had only the vaguest kind of notion of their responsibilities; they were completely ignorant of any rights which their "contracts" may have given them.

The trucks as they journey from Texas are jammed with as tight a human load as it is possible to get into them. Thirty to forty "passengers" is not unusual. Once in the truck it's a non-stop trip until the first unloading station is reached in Wisconsin - 1,200 miles, thirty-eight to forty-eight hours of continuous riding, stopping like fugitives at an isolated filling station only when an empty gas tank or desperate nature protests. The troquero doesn't like to stop because some of his pay-load may drop out or perchance join up with another truck going elsewhere. Custom has instilled fear into the passengers; they are afraid to stop and be seen away from the truck. They may not have the proper "identification;" they may lack the authorization to travel on a public highway. Yet all, or most all, are American citizens.

Contract Misunderstandings Arise

The tarpaulin covered truck finally manages to reach its destination and unload its cargo. They are now ready for work. After their arrival and sometime after they have commenced their work the workers learn gradually to piece their "contracts" together. They find that, in reality, their's is a one-way transportation agreement. Transportation costs are advanced, not prepaid as they thought. The final awakening comes when they comprehend that not only is the cost of their transportation to Wisconsin withheld from their earnings, but the return costs too are withheld from their early earnings until they have stayed through the season and lived up to their contracts, according to the interpretation of the employer.

Naturally, in any activity as changeable and unpredictable as agriculture, with the chief element of weather completely uncontrollable, there is but a slight chance of the terms and conditions of employment being fulfilled to the satisfaction of worker and employer. Added to these factors are the misunderstandings that inevitably creep in where agreements have to be reached through as devious a route as is the case with Texas-Mexicans.

It was this series of circumstances which caused many hundreds of Texas-Mexicans to leave Wisconsin in mid-summer of 1947, and to thereby change what, to the farmer, had been a favorable labor balance to a labor shortage, which characterized the fall harvest period.

Los Hijos Son la Riqueza del Pobre

The truth of the Spanish proverb that "Children are the riches of the poor" was fully demonstrated in this study. A family without children is handicapped indeed. It has no workers if it has no children!

When we consider Texas-Mexican migrants we are compelled to think in terms of family groups. They move as families and they work as families. During the course of the survey only two work units were encountered which were composed entirely of adult male workers.

Table 8 - Worker Resources of Families

Worker Resources	Number of Families
Head only worker	5
Head & wife only workers	9
Head, wife & other workers	87
Head not a worker, but family has other workers	5
Total	105

As Table 8 indicates, more than eight out of ten families have both the head and wife and other workers in the unit. It is rare to find a Spanish family of the working class where the head of the family is the only worker. The number of workers per family ranged from one to ten, the average number being five per family.

Table 9 - Sex and Age of Workers, Other than Head and Wife

Age of Workers	Male	Female
21 and over	55	26
18 - 20	31	24
16-17	23	27
14-15	27	28
10-13	37	33
6-9	12	10
Total	185	148

From Table 9 we can see what the worker resources of the family are. They consist of the children. More than fifty per cent of the male workers were children of the family under 13 years of age. Two-thirds of the female workers, other than the wife, were girls under 18.

Among those workers over 21 years of age, in the case of both males and females, there were included brothers and sisters of the head and wife, other relatives and sometimes just friends. A Spanish worker just does not "batch" if there is any possibility of his joining a family unit. If there aren't some of his kin around he joins some other family.

Children Used on Lighter Work

Children under 14 were classified as workers only if they were observed working or if the parents considered them as workers. There were times when children under ten could not fit into the employment picture, but they apparently gave

gave a good account of themselves when harvesting cucumbers, tomatoes, potatoes, and cherries. They likewise were used in weeding and hoeing sugar beets and other vegetables.

The housewife was usually classified as a worker because only imminent child birth or care of a recent arrival kept her from joining the others if the current harvest operations were conducive to her employment. These people live as families in the real meaning of the word, so that there was always a grandmother or other person to function as the ninera, or in our language, baby-sitter.

Table 10 - Types of Family Groups

Family Type	Number
Normal:	53
Husband and wife only	4
Husband, wife & children	49
Doubled-up families	14
Broken families	7
Irregular families	31
Total	105

One-half of the families were "normal" in our meaning of the word; that is, the unit consisted of the husband and wife alone or with their children. Almost a third belong to the "great family" group, but they are listed as irregular because many of them have not only blood kin - grandmothers, nephews, cousins - but every possible type of relative by marriage, and even completely unrelated friends. Yes, familism is a strong characteristic of these people and something the Wisconsin farmer has to reckon with who has been accustomed to a "hired man," or, during the war, single men, Jamaican, Mexican nationals, etc.

Had housing of more substantial proportions been available, the survey would not have listed one-half as normal families. Many of these were only kept from merging with others of their kin by the physical limits of crowded housing.

Schooling Often Inadequate

Naturally, education in a group having no roots in a permanent community, is a haphazard affair. Table 11 is constructed in detail by single age groups from age 6 to 20 by sex and according to current school attendance. None of the children in the camps visited were found attending school in Wisconsin, nor had they attended school in this state except in the case of three families who live here now permanently.

Apparently age seven is when a Spanish child is introduced to the school system. Before then he is not too young - he is "too small." The detrimental influence of child labor and of migratory life on education begins to show up in the eight-year old. According to Wisconsin standards the normal child of eight should have completed the second grade.

The rate of retardation increases with each successive grade. By the time they are ten, the boys are retarded about a grade and a half and the girls have fallen back at least two grades. By the time they are thirteen or fourteen, school attendance is just about a thing of the past. At this age they are three or four years retarded so school attendance becomes meaningless. The boys now are men and the girls are women.

Table 11 - Educational Status & Grades Completed by Children at Home

Age	In school - grade completed									Not in school - grade completed								
	None	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 & over	None	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 & over
6 M	14	1																
6 F	6	1																
7 M	3	2	1															
7 F	6	3	1															
8 M	0	4	8	1														
8 F	1	5	5	2														
9 M	2	6	2	0	1													
9 F	1	1	3	1														
10 M	0	1	4	4	1	0												
10 F	0	2	6	2	0	1												
11 M	0	1	0	4	1	0												
11 F	1	0	1	2	2	1												
12 M	1	0	3	0	4	1	2											
12 F	0	1	3	3	4	5	0	0	0	0	2							
13 M	0	0	2	3	2	2	2	0	0	0	1							
13 F	0	0	0	1	0	1	3											
14 M	0	0	2	2	2	0	4	1				2						
14 F	0	0	2	2	3	2	3	2	0	0	1							
15 M	0	0	1	0	1	2	2	4	1		1		1			1		
15 F	0	0	1	0	3	0	2	3	3			1			1	2	1	
16 M	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
16 F				1			2			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
17 M					1				1		1	2	2	0	3	1	0	1
17 F				1	1				2			1			3	1	2	2
18 M										1	0	2	2	1	0	3	2	2
18 F							1			2	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	0
19 M										2	1	1	3	2	1	1	0	1
19 F												1	0	1	0	2		1
20 M												1				1		
20 F																		
over M										9	1	4	3	2	3	4	2	3
20 F										6	2	1	3	5	0	0	3	1
total M	20	16	23	14	13	5	10	5	3	13	5	11	14	6	8	12	4	8
F	15	13	22	15	13	10	10	6	5	9	7	6	6	7	9	5	8	5

Among the children living at home, but not attending school, the largest group is that which never attended school. While these figures paint a discouraging picture, there is no doubt but that it would be even worse if the actual school records of the children were available. This information was secured through a visit with the family and while careful questions were asked and every possible check was made, accurate records were not possible. The errors all tended to be toward an overstatement, which is the reason why it is believed that information in Table II is an understatement of their educationally handicapped condition. Likewise we know that the information given us by the heads and wives concerning their own schooling (Table 3) is an overstatement of the real facts. It is not easy to admit to a stranger that you have never gone to school, that you are illiterate.

Economic Needs of Family Handicap Youth

Most of the families were more or less familiar with the principles of compulsory education and child labor regulations. Coming, however, from a background where poverty and downright hunger have made even the meagre earnings of child labor necessary, they cannot be expected to reconcile the prohibitions which society has placed against child labor. And, they ask, "How can we send our children to school without food, without suitable clothes?"

The rest of us may speculate on the suffering undergone by young children from too early and from excessive labor. Obviously they have been denied what we consider a normal childhood environment, community life, and education. But until the Texas-Mexicans as a class can achieve a degree of economic security, which they have not had before, the Spanish proverb must remain for them a reality: child labor must be resorted to if the family income is to be adequate.

Social Adjustment Becomes Necessary

Undoubtedly may a resident of Kenosha, Racine, Fond du Lac, Sturgeon Bay, DePere, Beaver Dam, Columbus, and Waukesha turned around more than once to look at the Mexican family groups whom they passed on the streets of their cities during the summer of 1947. In some smaller localities, such as Wautoma, Rosendale, Oconto, Fox Lake, and Lomira local residents must have thought their towns were taken over completely by these strangers, especially on Saturday afternoons and evenings. Yet by actual count only a third of the Texas-Mexican families interviewed could be classified as frequent visitors in the neighboring towns. Most of them had no means of transporting themselves to town on days when they desperately wanted to make such trips. Only those with their own transportation could indulge in this pastime because those who were transported to Wisconsin via troquero had to remain at home on rainy days, Saturdays and holidays. This lack of social contacts and isolation was a constant source of complaint in the camps visited. Some troqueros operated a bus service for a charge, but most of them were otherwise occupied.

Visitors Interested In Our Ways

When they were questioned regarding their reasons for wanting town visits the answers turned out to be very simple. They wanted to see a movie, to go window shopping. Just a normal curiosity to see how the Americanos lived and to get a taste of this new environment in which they found themselves.

There was very little mention of racial discrimination by the workers. There was no evidence of discrimination found in any of the smaller towns. The only workers who brought up the subject were those located near the large cities, but even in these cases it was evident that recalcitrant members of the group were usually partly responsible for precipitating undesirable situations.

Social isolation likewise extended into their religious life. Less than two-fifths of them had attended church services during their stay in Wisconsin, and this proportion would not have been as high as it was except for camp services held by several lay preachers among the people who belonged to a few Protestant sects. The majority were of Catholic faith and, except for a very few, they had attended no religious services.

One in six family units only had had any social contact with its farm employer or members of his family. The others knew him not at all and were never any more than a work unit on the farm on which their temporary summer home was located.

Home Life Is Substandard

For many families the word home belongs in quotes. For these families their homes served as such, but regardless of the measure one employed, they were substandard in every respect.

In general, there were two types of housing which these people occupied. There was the housing provided by those employers who had formerly been users of Mexican National or Jamaican farm labor. Most of them had learned that adequate housing means a given amount of space per person, it means having the units located on a well drained piece of land, it means that they are weather proof, that they have lighting, windows that can be opened, screens to keep out flies, accessible running water, garbage disposal facilities, adequate toilets, heating units, beds and bedding.

In short, this type of housing reveals a group of employers who know their laborers as fellow human beings, and, who have them employed as respectable partners in an honorable enterprise. This is the type of housing found on the larger farms in the lake shore vegetable area and among the majority of canners in the central Wisconsin area.

But in these same areas, many times on adjoining farms, there were found hovels which defy description and which passed as "housing." There was a direct relationship to be observed between the prevalence of sub-human housing and the farmer who had no contact with his labor family and who had it literally delivered and dumped off in his backyard from the truck of a sugar beet company, a canning company or other processor for whom he had contracted acreages under cultivation. Any type of shack, worn-out building, abandoned dwelling might do. It made no difference if it stood in an undrainable area of the farm, had no drinking water, had no windows but need we go on?

According to our estimate, one-third of the housing where the work units ranged from one to five families was classified undesirable and unfit for human occupancy.

Many of the Visitors Need Medical Aid

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One out of six families contacted had members who were suffering illness or injury during the interview. Many of these had no knowledge of how to go about getting medical attention, or in the case of injury they knew nothing about any probable claim they might have had under workmen's compensation. In strong contrast to the majority were those few who had employers who assisted their incapacitated workers or their families.

Eternal loyalty was cemented by the employer who took the ailing worker, his wife or his children to his own family doctor. It was not that the Mexican worker was unwilling to pay for medical services. He merely needed simple assistance in a strange community in getting competent medical care, which in turn would have saved many days lost in needless unemployment.

Earnings Vary Widely

Up to this point nothing has been said of family earnings. An attempt was made to compute family earnings but repeated attempts produced discouraging results. Almost every type of farm operation had a different system of determining earnings and method of payment. There were hold-backs, end of season bonuses, piece work rates and other systems which made it impossible to arrive at any reliable estimate of total season earnings.

Only with thirty-four families was it possible to compute what seemed to be a reliable estimate of their season's earnings. These estimates ranged from a low of \$400 to a high of \$2,000 for earnings in Wisconsin. The most consistently repeated amount ranged from \$1,200 to \$1,600.

Naturally there was much misunderstanding as to the correctness of earnings. The most uniform satisfaction was found in the canning crop areas where operators were following daily time slip and earnings reports which the workers received at the end of each day's operation. This system allowed little chance for misunderstanding.

A piece rate system of payment was most uniformly agreed upon as the most satisfactory. As to time of payment, a weekly pay envelope was most preferable. There was almost unanimous discontent with pay coming at the end of a seasonal operation. Memory is too uncertain to let it be the only manner of recording hours worked or hours lost, and the illiterate Mexican has no other method of keeping time.

Fully Resigned To Weather Interruptions

Forty percent of the families claimed to have had steady work during the season. The remainder complained of work shortage. Steady work with the Mexican must not be confused with full employment. They give full credit to freakish nature, as a matter of fact, they are more appreciative of the uncontrollable elements than are we. They have a somewhat fatalistic attitude, or naturalistic attitude, and know that agricultural work must mean intermittent employment. So when about three-fifths of their numbers did not feel they had steady employment, this is a factor to be considered.

The Mexican's traditions are not ours. He knows he should work to eat, but after all his culture tells him that work, too, should be performed in moderation. It was not surprising therefore to find him doing quite a bit of complaining at the height of the corn pack when they had to work fifteen to sixteen hours a day and earn twelve to thirteen dollars doing so! Their lives run at a much slower speed than do ours and they couldn't understand why some of the corn couldn't be packed tomorrow - manana, instead of today.

T-M Workers Want More "Time Off"

The incentive payment system is an American product; it is not Spanish. We do not mean to say the Mexican does not want a fair wage. He was observed bargaining for it during the summer. But he also wants some time for living; that's why he has his family and his large circle of friends. More production could have been gotten from him in rush seasons by having more workers to share the earnings, and letting him have his Sundays and Saturday evenings at least for a quiet fiesta.

The Mexican is a strange person. He is an extremely emotional individual. In one camp that was visited there had been three marriages. Yet, there had not been a single fiesta. Apparently the Wisconsin employers were afraid that their celebrating might have gotten out-of-hand; they might have indulged themselves excessively.

Yes, he is strange, but he also has his ideas regarding our behavior. Why, they asked, do we have so much crime? Why do we need so many and such large prisons for our people as they saw in the state?

So far, intermarriage between them and us is almost totally absent. When asked about its possibilities they frankly hoped it would not happen. Why? "American women are too immoral," they replied, "look at the number who ask for divorce." Spanish culture tells them there is nothing more immoral than for a woman to seek a divorce. That is only a man's prerogative!

Most Workers Appreciate Kindly Treatment

Life apparently is what each of us thinks it is. The average Wisconsin employer looks on the Mexican as queer, as having a peculiar sense of values. He has. But they think the same of us. They, too, are humans, but brought up in an environment where one looks at life's same events with a different viewpoint. Inestimable good will, loyalty, and service - employer-employee relations in the finest use of the term - follows naturally when a Wisconsin farm employer appreciates in foreigners the universality of human nature, regardless of its outward expression.

One of the outstanding examples of this type of employer was found in a cucumber grower in Waushara county. He had eight or ten families housed on his farm. The housing was not the best that had been observed, but it was only fair. But, it was located so that the families could live together in a group, make use of two common power driven washing machines, electric irons, sanitary piped-in water, covered sewage disposal facilities, etc. Above all, the employer seemed to

know every worker by name, the children had a place in the play yard. This farm was visited during the drought which at that time was threatening Wisconsin's cucumber crop, in fact, this farm was visited just the day before the summer drought was broken by Thursday's rain. Discouraged workers and operators on many other similar farms in Wisconsin's two major pickle areas had been visited earlier. Many families were in the process of leaving the two areas. In contrast, every family was sticking with this Waushara farmer. They knew they might not be paid for picking many pickles at five dollars per hundred weight, but their Padron was in trouble too. They would stick by him. They did.

Conclusions

Most Wisconsin farmers who have to hire seasonal labor are asking themselves what their labor problems will be in 1948 and in the years ahead. It is not proposed that the present study can answer all the questions that might be raised on such a complicated subject. It is believed, however, that certain broad elements of the problem can now be formulated.

First, the workers who left agriculture en masse in the 1940-46 year period will not return. Some of them will, yes, but not a major portion of them so long as the nation keeps reasonably near to a level of full employment. And if it does not hold to this level the workers won't be needed in agriculture. Workers the country over have a habit of climbing up the ladder and not down, and there is no such thing as reversing the process. They feel they are making progress when they have found non-agricultural employment.

Second, it is not necessary that a replacement be made man for man for those who were lost in the 1940-46 period. Many of them have been effectively replaced - not displaced - by labor saving machinery. Many a harvesting device, hay bailer, potato digger and picker, sugar beet harvester, multiple-row cultivator, milking machine and other machinery was necessitated by departed labor. Chemical spraying and weed control have made effective reductions in the man hours of weeding and cultivating of vegetable crops. The use of hybrid seeds and of effective fertilizers has increased productive out-put per labor unit. Further expansion and improvement of machines and techniques will go on.

A point is reached, however, where machine operations can no longer be multiplied and a hired man or a family becomes necessary to share the load. We believe the Texas-Mexican family will play an ever-increasing part in the Wisconsin family farm labor picture.

When Mexican Nationals were first introduced into this country they were used only for stoop labor. They didn't know how to do anything more, said the American farmer. Out of necessity because of the increasing severity of manpower shortages, it was found that, given a chance, the National was a fairly good all-round worker. We predict this will be even more true with the Texas-Mexicans.

Many skilled and semi-skilled workers were found among the Texas-Mexican workers who were interviewed. Some of them had experience as truck drivers, tractor operators, machine repair men, line men, carpenters. This was especially true among the young veterans in the group. Only a few farmers seemed to have found this out in 1947. Most of them expected the workers to wait around and

be ready to perform a single crop cultivating or harvesting job, yet complaining at the same time that they had no help for other tasks on the farm when idle, qualified manpower was at their command.

While some of Wisconsin's largest employers of labor, especially those who combine processing and farming, may be able to make private contracts with foreign governments for some labor, the employer needing only two or three or four workers cannot do this. There is no reason, however, why he should not cooperate more effectively than in the past with larger employers and thus share this labor. Any realistic appraisal of the amount of labor from this source, however, must place the potential number of such workers very low in comparison to the numbers under the previous foreign labor program. More farmers will have to change over to the use of family labor, either Texas-Mexican or others who might be available.

One of the most obvious implications from this change-over is the need for a change in housing. Barracks which might have been excellent for a group of single workers will not do for families. And, if there is any one thing which this study bears out it is this: adequate family housing will go a long way to assuring a steady and dependable labor supply. This housing need not be fancy, it needs only to measure up to honest standards of decency.

We are convinced that the troquero system, and large scale recruiting is going to decline rapidly. The dishonest troquero is dishonest with both the employer and employee. He works one against the other. The Wisconsin employer, whether he has need of one family or ten, whether he needs these families all season or just part of the season will break down the dishonest troquero system and will do his recruiting "on the job." If he will make an honest effort to understand the emotional nature of the Texas-Mexican and will give him fair working conditions, he won't have to worry about the Mexican not returning in succeeding years. This was demonstrated time and again by the minority portion of workers who had been returning to the same farm year after year. They knew precisely where they were going each year and why; they kept in touch with their favored ring of employers throughout the year. These employers had no recruiting costs and were not dependent on the troquero.

More and more Mexican families are providing their own transportation. The Wisconsin employer who needs seasonal help will do well to concentrate his recruiting among these families and drop those who are under the control of professional troquero.

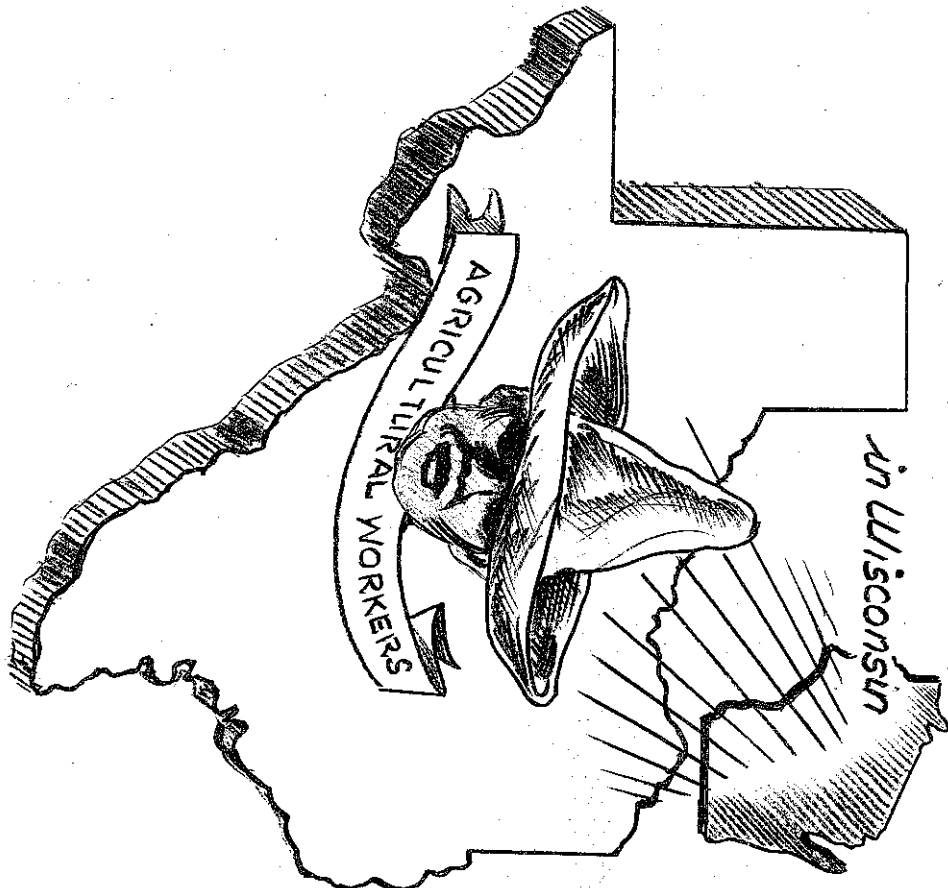
The level of education, as we indicated, is not high among the Mexican, but it is rising and the worker is becoming more discriminating. To draw the better workers some employment practices and payroll systems of previous days should come in for overhauling. "Hold-backs" have never been condoned by other industrial groups, there is no excuse for them in agriculture. Bonuses must qualify as meritorious payments above and beyond the basic wage structure, they should not be delayed payments of earned wages as some in reality have been. Likewise a contract, if there is one, needs to stipulate clearly the responsibilities and considerations of both contracting parties, not only those of the laborer.

How many Texas-Mexican families will migrate to Wisconsin in 1948 we, of course, do not know. From the evidence gathered in the study it was pretty clear that most of the first-year families who were here in 1947 were giving the state a trial. And from the way some employers have gotten their workers to return for many years there is reason to believe that more employers can do the same thing. Furthermore, the Texas-Mexican group appear to constitute the largest existing body of workers who are interested in having steady farm work from the opening to the close of the season.

We believe that the number of Mexican workers who will migrate to the state will depend upon the activities of Wisconsin farmers themselves. Furthermore just how successfully they work into the Wisconsin scene will be determined by local employers. If they are to be full partners in the enterprise then the Texas-Mexican worker will have to have the same considerations that other workers on Wisconsin farms have had in the past. The necessary considerations have been mentioned - housing commensurate with the substantialness of our agriculture, wages and methods of payment that are reasonable, opportunity to participate in community life, educational facilities for their children, recreational opportunities that all normal people require. Above all, Wisconsin farmers will have to help this group of migrant workers to move as honorable American citizens wherever the season's needs might dictate that they migrate. This will mean the organization of employers according to complimentary crops so that the workers will be assured of the maximum amount of employment which Wisconsin's agriculture provides from the time of the earliest spring activity through the latest fall harvest. Employer associations worked effectively in the utilization of foreign workers. The same pattern of voluntary organizations can function with the Texas-Mexican migrant families.



Texas-Mexican MIGRATORY AGRICULTURAL WORKERS



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