

POST SEASON

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FARM LABOR REPORT

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MICHIGAN EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION

POST SEASON FARM LABOR REPORT

1954

Prepared by
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A
Michigan Employment Security Commission
Publication

"The Commission shall take all appropriate steps to reduce and prevent unemployment; to promote the reemployment of unemployed workers throughout the State in every other way that may be feasible; and to these ends to carry on and publish the results of investigations and research studies."

Michigan Employment Security Act.

FOREWORD

This post season report is a resume of the Farm Placement Service activities during the 1954 calendar year. It also covers items of interest to employers, agencies and organizations concerned with farm labor problems.

A major part of the report is devoted to the seasonal farm labor activities since seasonal farm placements constitute over 98% of the total labor placed on Michigan farms.



Multiple Purpose Signs for Recruitment and Guidance of Seasonal Farm Workers.

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**ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS
OF THE
FARM PLACEMENT SERVICE**

The Farm Placement Section, United States Department of Labor, provides a uniform policy for States and makes possible a coordinated recruitment and movement of farm labor throughout the nation. (Each state, however, is free to develop a program which meets the requirements for successful operation within its own boundaries.) This national office also has the only delegated authority to grant permission to employ foreign agricultural workers whenever a sufficient number of qualified workers cannot be recruited in this country.

To provide a means of quicker coordination of the program and interpretation of policy among the states, staff personnel from the Department of Labor operate regional offices. Each region is made up of a few states having common problems. Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky are in Region V with headquarters in Cleveland.

The Farm Placement Section, Employment Service Division of the Michigan Employment Security Commission, formulates farm labor programs in Michigan. The Chief of the Section plans the programs and supervises the activities of the field staff. The field staff is composed of Crop Area Supervisors who plan, supervise and assist in the operational activities within a specific large area. They supervise Farm Placement Specialists who provide service to employers and applicants in smaller areas in which exist a large amount of agricultural activity. Commission branch offices also assist in the program by giving service to employers and applicants. The map on page 5 shows the boundaries of each Crop Area and the location of Crop Area and other offices where service may be obtained.

Functions of the farm placement service include aids on a wide variety of labor problems affecting agricultural workers and employers. Generally, referral, placement and employment counseling were the predominant services rendered to job applicants. The more common services given to employers included labor market information, assistance in recruitment of qualified workers and job development for employees during periods when employers did not have sufficient work to keep them busy but wished to retain such workers for the season.

SEASONAL FARM LABOR

COMPOSITION OF LABOR FORCE

The seasonal farm labor force consisted of local, migratory and foreign workers.

Youth predominated in the local labor supply but a significant number of family groups were also a part of this labor force. Local sources supplied over 35,000 workers. However, only 26,700 were employed during the peak because many were interested in working on only one crop activity and very few workers would travel more than 30 miles to and from work each day.

The migratory labor force, in general, consisted of family groups and crews who left their homes to live at the place of employment. Michigan supplied 3,900 migrant workers and other states 48,300. Since many migrants were interested in working on only one crop activity and for one employer, no more than 3,100 from Michigan and 34,150 from other states were employed at the peak. Of the total migrant labor force, 40% were of Latin American descent, 37% white and 23% non-white. Nearly 100% of white migrants as well as those of Latin American descent worked as family groups. About 40% of the non-white migrants were adult crews. Family groups amounted to 90% of the total migrant work force. Children under 6 years of age constituted 12.4% of the total number of migrants in family groups and those 6 to 16 years of age 28.2%.

The foreign labor force consisted of 6,300 adult males from Mexico and 300 from British West Indies. However, not all of these workers were employed during the same period. At the peak, this labor force did not exceed 6,250 workers.

The table on page 32 shows the number and source of seasonal farm workers employed during each month of the year.

MOBILIZATION

Michigan's agriculture required a labor force of seasonal farm workers which was equal to the total employment at one of the largest industrial firms in the state. Both skilled and unskilled workers were needed. The labor demands were not concentrated at

one location but spread out over most of the state. Further, the needs varied from area to area, at different periods and for a limited time in each area.

The mobilization of this work force demanded very early and careful planning. Every factor affecting recruitment and movement of this labor was considered at both area and state levels. These factors included:

1. Number of workers required by area for each crop activity and period.
2. Number of workers expected for each crop activity as a result of prearranged plans between employers and workers, source of this labor and dates of proposed employment.
3. Number of "free-wheeling" migrant workers who generally arrive for the various crop activities without any prior agreement. (On some activities the bulk of labor needs is obtained from this source.)
4. Number of workers who usually fail to meet their prearranged commitments.
5. Usual labor turnover rate by crop activity.
6. Number of workers limiting job acceptance to a single crop activity and even to a single employer. (A survey conducted among migrants in the southwestern section of the state during 1954 revealed that 31% of the strawberry pickers, 12% of the cherry pickers, 28% of the blueberry pickers, 22% of the raspberry pickers and 19% of the peach pickers were not available for other work in Michigan upon completion of one crop activity.)
7. Dates on which migrants generally start their movement northward.
8. Highly perishable crops which may reflect serious losses if periods of acute labor shortages last up to 48 hours.
9. Distance of fields from local labor sources and condition of available housing.

Recruitment operations were started after it was determined how many additional workers would be needed for each crop activity. Recruitment of local labor commenced early in the spring although an appreciable number was not available until the school year ended. It was important to know how many would be available by activity, area and dates since local labor is generally given first consideration.

Local labor was moved into the fields through the day-haul program (daily transportation from point of concentration to the field and return furnished by employer, public transit or transportation owned by workers). 80 day-haul points were established in the Lower Peninsula.

Maintaining a sufficient number of workers to handle a crop activity that was largely dependent upon local labor proved to be a problem. As soon as workers were not afforded a full day's employment the drop-out rate would rise. It was necessary for the farm placement representative to maintain daily contact with the workers and coordinate transportation facilities with work schedules to maintain an effective day-haul program.

Recruitment of migrant workers also started early in the spring. Orders for workers were transmitted to employment service offices of labor supply areas where qualified workers most likely to accept work offers on the various crop activities were generally found. For example, orders for berry and fruit pickers were sent to Missouri, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana and Oklahoma while orders for workers on sugar beet, chicory, pickle and muck crop activities were sent to Texas. Once migrant labor left their homes, it became increasingly difficult to contact and recruit qualified labor.

Migrant labor moved from their homes to places of employment using personal vehicles or traveling in commercial vehicles of crew leaders. The condition of these conveyances has shown a marked improvement during the past few years. A recent survey conducted by the farm placement section revealed that 80% of the vehicles were less than 10 years old. 43% of the total vehicles were under 5 years old. 78% were passenger cars and the balance commercial vehicles (trucks and buses). Less than 3% traveled with house trailers.

Commission branch offices also assisted employers in recruiting specific leaders and groups whenever names and addresses were known. These orders were cleared through channels and authorized employers or group leaders to contact and move these workers. (Many southern labor supply states have emigrant agent laws which prohibit recruitment of labor for out-of-state employment without obtaining a license, working through a licensed private employment agency or using the free service offered by the employment service)

As soon as recruitment operations were well under way, it was known that a sufficient number of workers could not be obtained from sources in this country to meet the demands of some crop activities. Arrangements were made to obtain permission to employ foreign workers as permitted by law. Before the Secretary of Labor would authorize employment of foreign workers, the Commission had to submit proof that the employer requesting the authorization met the following conditions:

1. That the employer made a reasonable effort to utilize available qualified workers who resided in this country. (A reasonable effort is defined as: (a) employer cooperation and participation in recruitment of qualified local workers including offer of transportation from pick-up point to place of employment and return each day, and (b) acceptance of positive recruitment of qualified workers within a reasonable distance from place of employment after being notified that workers are available and willingness to make necessary transportation arrangements. Positive recruitment means that the employer or his representative interviews and selects workers in areas in which they are living. To test the availability of qualified workers in this country, employers were instructed to place their orders for workers with the nearest Commission office offering farm placement service at least 30 days prior to date of need.)
2. Wage rates and working conditions offered foreign workers were at least equal to that offered local and migrant labor in the area for the same job.
3. Available housing met the minimum standards established by the Secretary of Labor.

As the season progressed, transfer of migrant labor from surplus areas to one of need was an important part of the mobilization program. However, labor surpluses generally existed on crop activities highly preferred by most workers. It was impossible to transfer any significant number to activities experiencing labor shortages. (Those activities having labor shortages required labor to work in a stooping position for long periods of time. The majority of workers cannot adapt themselves to this physical demand.) The transfer of workers commenced in June and ended to a large extent in August upon the completion of the cherry harvest. Slightly over 70% of the workers in the cherry orchards were found to be unavailable for referral to other work in Michigan. Of those available about 93% accepted referrals to job offers on snap bean and tomato harvest and only 7% on pickle harvest.

Foreign workers could not be transferred from employer to employer but had to remain with the contracting employer for the length of the contract period. The minimum contract period was 4 weeks and the maximum 6 months. The minimum contract period of 4 weeks generally precludes the use of this labor source as a means of preventing crop losses when labor shortages occur after the harvest of a crop is 50% or more complete. Further, foreign workers could be employed only on specific farm activities as authorized by the Secretary of Labor.

Condition of housing offered migrant workers as well as the level of community acceptance of migrants affect future recruitment and transfer possibilities. The majority of migrants are capable and trustworthy workers. These better workers expect and generally obtain good housing. The greater portion of Michigan employers are aware of this and have built new or improved old housing. Since 1948 these employers have expended over \$2,800,000.00 on new permanent housing and over \$500,000.00 on improvements. However, the non-worker factor was not considered in their original plans. Between 10% and 70% of the housing facilities for family groups was occupied by non-workers. As a result many employers did not have sufficient space to house the actual number of workers needed. In addition, over 2,100 employers hiring seasonal workers did not have permanent housing. Many communities have taken steps to make the migrant feel that he is welcome. Fiestas, field days, freemovies and other recreational programs were provided specifically for migrant workers. Church groups operated nursery schools and other educational programs. A few counties

assumed the responsibility of paying medical and hospital service of indigent migrants. Blue Cross - Blue Shield organization is continuing research study to cover migrants under group rates. However, some communities have not taken any steps to make the migrant feel that he is welcome. It proved to be more difficult to recruit labor for farms in such communities.

The practice of migrant labor arriving very early in areas having crop activities that are preferred by most workers is a serious problem affecting the mobilization program. A large percentage of the labor leave undesirable crop activities before completion. Therefore, temporary labor surpluses are created in the areas having the preferred activities while labor shortages occur in other areas. Local newspaper and radio announcements revealing the condition of the preferred crops have not proved effective in controlling this situation. However, the new program of providing a full employment schedule for each group before they leave their home state may help to curtail this problem. This program should prove beneficial to the migrant worker since he will not have to waste time looking for work everytime he moves from area to area. At the same time it will afford a method of weeding out unscrupulous crews or groups.

The Employment Service in Michigan assisted in the recruitment of 8,100 local workers and over 18,000 migrant workers.

LABOR MARKET DEVELOPMENTS BY MONTHS

Sorting and packing stored apples, potatoes, and onions is performed periodically. It started during the harvest season and continued through June of the following year. Such general activities as pruning, dormant spraying, and cleanup of orchards, vineyards and fields of bush fruit started in the winter and continued into the spring if weather permitted. These activities did not require many workers but the physical demands of the jobs made it necessary to use only adult males. Some of the activities required prior experience. Further, some farms were located too far away from possible sources of local labor. Migrant labor could not be recruited for such employment because it was not steady employment and whole families could not be employed. Problems of labor supply could not be solved at all times and it was necessary to use a few foreign workers.



back to the workers remaining in the Benton Harbor area that the crop yield was very good in the northern areas. As a result many workers left the Benton Harbor area before completion of the strawberry harvest. The labor situation in the Benton Harbor area changed from a surplus to a temporary shortage. However, the continued flow of migrants into this area from other states was sufficient to prevent crop losses.

July: Workers were arriving in the cherry orchard areas around the first of the month. Cherries in the Manistee and Traverse City areas were not ready for harvest for another three weeks. These workers were from other states who normally come for the cherry harvest only and migrant workers who left the less desirable crop activities before completing their work. Newspaper articles and radio announcements telling workers about the rate of cherry maturity and condition of crop did not appear to stop these migrant workers from leaving the other work early. This caused a temporary labor-surplus to develop in the Muskegon, Manistee and Traverse City crop areas for a two to three week period. The early frost damage reduced labor needs for the cherry harvest in areas north of Bear Lake by about 13,000 workers. No foreign workers were authorized for the cherry harvest. However, growers with a light crop experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining workers to pick their cherries while others who had a good crop were able to obtain more workers than was actually necessary. During the latter part of the month, when the pickle and snap bean harvest began, labor shortages developed on these activities. Additional foreign workers had to be brought in to avoid serious crop losses.

August: The cherry harvest ended in early August. A large number of migrants who came for the cherry harvest left the state. Those who were available for work on other crop activities were offered jobs picking snap beans, pickles and tomatoes. Most of these accepted referral to bean or tomato fields but only a few accepted a job picking pickles. The weather throughout the month was not favorable for pickle and bean yields or tomato maturity and earnings on these crops were irregular. That is, a couple of good days followed by a few poor ones. This, plus reports of a good cotton crop in Missouri and Arkansas, caused many workers to leave Michigan for cotton harvest during the latter part of the month. As a result spot labor shortages developed which could only be relieved by transfer of workers from areas where they could be

spared. It is believed that the unfavorable weather conditions reduced the labor requirements for the pickle, bean and tomato acreage by some 12,000 workers during this month.

September: The start of the school year closed most sources of local labor. It was necessary to transfer migrant labor into areas depending upon local labor to finish the crop activities which were still in progress. Migrant labor flow from Michigan fields to the southern cotton fields increased considerably. Labor shortages developed in many localities on pickle and tomato harvesting, but transfer, loan, and exchange of available labor prevented serious crop losses. Apple, onion and potato harvest started during the last half of the month. Onion harvest used workers who usually remain for the entire season from weeding through harvest and no serious problems developed. The potato harvest was aided by school vacations of one to two weeks in the potato growing areas. The apple harvest required male adults because of the physical demands. It was not possible to recruit a sufficient number of workers and it was necessary to bring in some 250 foreign workers to aid in the harvest of this crop.

October: Heavy rains throughout the state during the first three weeks curtailed potato, onion, apple and sugar beet harvest. Many workers were dissatisfied because steady work was not available but the majority remained. Some losses in onions and potatoes were experienced but it was attributable to the weather and not to shortage of labor. Sugar beets have been harvested almost entirely through mechanical means during the past few years but the rains prevented the use of this heavy machinery. During the last week of October when the rains ceased, shortages of workers developed for onion, potato and sugar beet harvest activities. Some of the shortage was alleviated by transfer of workers from other crop activities which ended.

November: The clear weather helped to dry out the fields very quickly. Apple, potato and onion harvest was completed early in the month. Sugar beet harvest was not completed. The end of the month saw some 3,000 acres to be harvested. Work on some of these fields could not commence until the ground froze two to three inches as they were too wet to permit the use of tractor and/or harvester.

MAJOR CROP ACTIVITIES

The following paragraphs describe the most important crop activities:

Apple Harvest: Commercial orchards were located in all areas but the heaviest concentration was on the western side of the state. The acreage of commercial orchards dropped about 1% from the previous year. The yield was about 31% less. Harvest operations consisted of picking, sorting, packing, handling and storing. Picking of early varieties started around July 20 and ended with the late varieties about November 5. The peak harvest period occurred during the latter part of September when 8,900 workers were employed.

Asparagus Harvest: The largest asparagus acreage was located in the Benton Harbor area but commercial acreage were also grown in Muskegon, Manistee and Traverse City areas. The commercial acreage was about the same as the previous year but the yield was much lower due to unfavorable weather conditions. Harvest operations consisted of cutting, snapping, tying, packing and handling. Harvest started the last week in April in the southern sections and ended during the first week in July in the northern parts. The peak period occurred in May when over 2,500 workers were employed.

Blueberry Harvest: Most of the cultivated blueberry fields were located in a 20 mile-wide strip along Lake Michigan extending from South Haven to Muskegon. The acreage has increased. The yield per acre was about the same as the previous year. Harvest operations consisted of picking, packing and handling. Early and late varieties were grown. The harvest season started around July 20 and ended September 1. During the peak in August over 8,000 workers were employed.

Cherry Harvest: Large commercial plantings were located all along the western part of the state from St. Joseph to Petoskey. There was a 4% increase in acreage in the southwestern part of the state and a 9% increase in the northern sections. The early spring frosts damaged the 1954 crop a little in the southwestern area and severely damaged the crop north of Bear Lake. As a result the state yield in 1954 was 36% under 1953. Harvest opera-

tions consisted of picking (with and without stems), packing and handling. Both sweet and tart varieties were grown with the sweet variety amounting to only 2% of the total. Harvest of sweet cherries started in the Benton Harbor area around July 4 and the tart varieties about 10 days later. It ended with the tart varieties in the northern areas about August 15. The peak was reached during the latter part of July when over 18,500 workers were employed.

Muck Crops - (Weed, Hoe and Cultivate): Cultivated muck lands were located in Muskegon, Manistee, Lansing and Bay City crop areas. Although onions were the predominate crop, mint, celery and lettuce were also grown on the same farms and these required the services of a large number of seasonal farm workers. The operations of this activity consisted of pulling weeds with fingers, chopping out weeds more distant from plants and/or pushing a hand cultivator to kill the weeds in between the lines. The season was later than usual because of unfavorable weather conditions in the early spring. Workers were employed on this activity from the first week in May until July 17. The peak month for this activity was June, when over 2,500 workers were employed.

Onion Harvest: Onion acreage was largely confined to the mucklands in Muskegon, Manistee, Lansing and Bay City crop areas. The acreage was under that of 1953 because of less planting and damage to the crops due to rains in early June. Harvest operations consisted of pulling, topping, sorting, packing, handling and storing. Both sets and seeds were planted with the onions from sets maturing early. Harvest of set onions started August 20 and seed onions September 10. Seed onion harvest ended about November 5. The peak harvest period occurred during the latter half of September when over 3,000 workers were employed.

Peach Harvest: The bulk of commercial peach orchards were largely confined to the Benton Harbor crop area. Significant acreages were also grown in Muskegon, Manistee, Traverse City, Bay City and Pontiac crop areas. This acreage was reduced by some 11% from the previous year but new plantings should wipe out this reduction in the future. The yield per acre was below 1953. Harvest operations consisted of picking, sorting, packing, handling and storing. Early, midseason and late varieties were grown. This extended the season from August 6 in the southern sections to September 25 in the northern areas. The peak was reached during the latter half of August when over 6,800 workers were needed.

Pickle Hoeing and Vine Training: Large acreages were grown in all crop areas but the more concentrated acreages were located in Muskegon, Lansing and Bay City areas. The planted acreage was slightly under 1953. Operations on this activity consisted of hoeing around the vines, pulling out weeds close to the plants and training the vines so that they would follow a row. The peak on this activity was reached during the first part of July when over 1,800 workers were employed.

Pickle Harvest: Continued unfavorable weather conditions which started at the beginning of harvest sharply reduced the yield as compared with the previous year. No real harvest peak was reached. Harvest operations consisted of picking and handling. The harvest season started in volume during the last week in July and ended about September 20. Over 19,000 workers were employed during the last week of July. This number was drastically reduced as the season progressed.

Potato Harvest: Large potato acreages were grown in all crop areas except Benton Harbor. The planted acreage was slightly under that of 1953. The heavy October rains further reduced the acreage to be harvested. Harvest operations consisted of picking, handling, grading, packing and storing. Both early and late varieties were grown. The planting of early varieties was largely confined to Bay City and Pontiac crop areas. Harvest of early varieties commenced around July 20. The harvest of late varieties ended during the first part of November. Harvest peak was reached during the latter half of September when 3,890 workers were employed.

Raspberry Harvest: The larger acreage of raspberries was concentrated in the southwestern part of the state but significant acreage was also grown along the western part of the state as far north as the Traverse City area and around Alpena and Bay City. The acreage harvested was about the same as a year ago but unfavorable weather conditions reduced the yield by some 26%. Harvest operations consisted of picking, packing and handling. Both red and black cap varieties were grown. Harvest commenced in the southern sections during the first half of July and ended in the northern sections during the first half of August. The peak harvest was reached during the latter half of July when over 9,600 workers were employed.

Snap Bean Harvest: Large acreages of snap beans were grown in

Muskegon, Manistee, Lansing, Alpena and Thumb areas. A significant acreage was also grown in the Traverse City area. The acreage planted was slightly above a year ago. However, poor weather considerably reduced the yield for second and third picking. Harvest operations consisted of picking and handling. The first picking started in the southern portions around July 20. Harvest ended September 15 in the northern sections. The peak of harvest occurred in August. About 15,000 workers were employed during the peak.

Strawberry Harvest: The larger strawberry acreage was grown in the Benton Harbor, Muskegon and Manistee areas. A significant acreage was also grown in the Traverse City crop area. There was a slight increase in the total state acreage. The early spring frosts and weather conditions reduced the yields in Benton Harbor and Muskegon crop areas from that of a year ago. A good crop was harvested in the areas further north. Harvest activities consisted of picking, capping, packing and handling. The harvest season commenced in the southern sections about June 6 and in the extreme northern sections July 3. The season ended during the fourth week in June in the southern sections and during the third week in July in the extreme northern sections. The peak harvest period was reached during the last part of June when over 17,600 workers were employed.

Sugar Beet Blocking and Thinning: The larger acreages were confined to Lansing and Bay City crop areas. Acreage was increased by 50% over 1953. Weather conditions were favorable for early growth in May but the plantings were a little later than usual. The operations on this activity consisted of cutting out excessive plants and weeds and completing by hand thinning to leave single plants 8" to 10" apart. This activity started around May 10 and ended July 10. During the peak month of June, 9,400 workers were needed to handle this crop activity.

Tomato Harvest: The larger acreages of tomatoes were grown in Benton Harbor, Bay City and Pontiac crop areas. The acreage planted was a little higher than in 1953 but the weather was not favorable for maturity. This postponed the peak period about three weeks. Harvest operations consisted of picking, grading, packing and/or handling. The harvest started around July 20 for fresh market and the latter part of August for processing. During the peak period of the week of September 15 over 4,700 workers were employed.

MECHANIZATION

No new mechanized equipment was introduced on the market in 1954 to materially reduce the volume of seasonal farm labor required. However, farmers have been busy engineering devices of their own. Among the more popular units were the celery harvester, asparagus harvester, tomato grader and the cucumber and sweet corn harvesting units. While these do not displace the seasonal worker completely, they do reduce labor requirements.

At present, only the celery harvester has caught the eye of a manufacturer. This firm is located in Grand Rapids and intends to manufacture this machine for the market. It will retail for about \$7,000.00. Information as to production dates and numbers has not as yet been released.

The sugar beet harvester has replaced most of the labor needs for sugar beet harvest. The thinner and weeder has not been accepted by the growers to the extent predicted. However, a new type has been designed to fit soil conditions in Michigan. Experimental research carried on by the sugar processors in 1954 revealed that with proper use these machines can reduce man hour requirements for blocking and thinning by as much as 50%. Plans were also made to reconvert the old type machines now in the possession of farmers to make them suitable for Michigan.

MIGRANT WORKER SURVEY

Migrant workers were the greatest source of seasonal farm labor for Michigan's agriculture. In order to improve farm placement services, it was felt that more had to be known about these workers. A survey was conducted in Bay and Van Buren Counties from May through October. If the workers remained in the county, they were reinterviewed monthly to determine changes in original work plans and why, changes in size of groups, and other factors which might affect availability of these workers, placement, earnings, etc.

These counties were selected because they represented the types of migrants normally coming to Michigan. The migrants in Van Buren County were mainly berry and fruit harvesters who usually work on

the western side of the state. Those in Bay County represented those who generally accept job offerings on row crops where stooping is required to a large extent. Such jobs are common to the central and eastern portions of Michigan.

The data related to the subject matter of the other sections of this report has been extracted and tabulated. The conclusions are revealed in the appropriate sections. The following paragraphs show additional data obtained from interviews of migrants in each county without recommendations or conclusions.

BAY COUNTY - Most of the migrants were housed in camps and were largely under the supervision of one employer organization. The survey covered 99% of the migrants in this county. 246 groups were interviewed. These groups included 279 families, totaling 1,887 persons. About 30% were in Michigan for the first time. Of the total persons, 305 were under 6 years of age, 577 between 6 and 16 and 1,005 were 16 or over. The size of groups and number of each size follows:

| Number of Persons in Group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 or more |
|----------------------------|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------------|
| Number of Groups | 1 | 7 | 19 | 30 | 19 | 27 | 22 | 18 | 29 | 25 | 15 | 13 | 21 |

Over 97% of these workers were of Latin American descent and claimed Texas as their home state. They were recruited primarily for sugar beet blocking and thinning, sugar beet hoeing as well as pickle harvesting. The work season for these activities started around May 10 and ended September 10. Initial interviews indicated that most of these workers planned to go into cotton harvest activities after finishing pickle harvest in Michigan. Reinterviews revealed that over 50% changed their original work plans as the season progressed.

Over 45% of the total groups left the county to pick cherries on the western side of the state. Of these, only 50 groups returned to hoe sugar beets, harvest pickles, potatoes, beans, etc., although nearly all stated in the initial interview that they would return. 53 groups worked on only one activity and left the state. 23% left the beet or pickle fields to harvest early potatoes and

tomatoes and then left the state. Only six groups remained after October 30. The number of migrants living in Bay County by month were as follows: May - 1411, June - 1713, July - 1760, August - 1572, September - 972, October - 125, and November 82.

The educational background of the migrant children is shown in a table on page 27. All rural schools in Bay County were closed for summer vacation by June 10 and reconvened by September 8. The number of migrant children of school age included in the survey follows: April - 78, May - 413, June - 518, July - 533, August - 472, September - 298, October - 44. Only 78 of these children were ever enrolled in a Michigan school. The majority of families stated that they did not leave their home state until the school term ended.

VAN BUREN COUNTY - Migrants were supervised by individual employers and housed in housing belonging to individual employers. This made it much more difficult to obtain a wide coverage. It was possible to obtain only a representative sampling for each crop activity. The total number of migrants in Van Buren County from May through November was estimated to be as follows: May - 5141, June - 12,183, July - 11,197, August - 12,958, September - 9,859, and October - 4,366. The number of migrants covered by the survey was as follows: May - 378, June - 958, July - 1189, August - 1020, September - 596, October - 482.

A total of 394 groups were interviewed. These consisted of 398 families, totaling 1,497 persons. Of the total migrants interviewed, 214 were under 6 years of age, 377 from 6 to 16, and 906 were 16 or over. The size of groups and number of each size follows:

| Number of Persons in Group | Number of Groups | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|----|----|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 or more |
| Number of Groups | 11 | 110 | 87 | 73 | 43 | 34 | 16 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

These migrants came from 17 states but the majority claimed Alabama, Tennessee, and Florida as their home state. Most of the migrants were employed during prior seasons by the same employers. Less than 5% came to Michigan for the first time. Many were only available for work on one crop activity and for one employer.

NUMBER OF MIGRANT CHILDREN, AGES 6 TO 16,
AND GRADE COMPLETED IN HOME STATE

| AGE | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | TOTALS |
|-----------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------|
| B A Y C O U N T Y | | | | | | | | | | | |
| GRADE | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 1 | 27 | 20 | 7 | 2 | | 1 | | | | 58 |
| 2 | | 5 | 19 | 18 | 11 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 59 |
| 3 | | | 5 | 12 | 21 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 57 |
| 4 | | | | 3 | 10 | 16 | 11 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 56 |
| 5 | | | | | | 6 | 14 | 8 | 13 | 8 | 49 |
| 6 | | | | | | 2 | 1 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 37 |
| 7 | | | | | | | | 2 | 18 | 20 | 40 |
| 8 | | | | | | | | 1 | 3 | 5 | 9 |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 2 |
| 10 | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| TOTALS | 1 | 32 | 44 | 40 | 44 | 32 | 34 | 32 | 57 | 51 | 367* |
| V A N B U R E N C O U N T Y | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 10 | 24 | 5 | 1 | | | | | | | 40 |
| 2 | 2 | 15 | 21 | 9 | 1 | | | | | | 48 |
| 3 | | | 9 | 23 | 10 | 2 | | | | | 44 |
| 4 | | | 1 | 6 | 18 | 9 | 1 | 1 | | | 36 |
| 5 | | | | | 5 | 18 | 6 | 7 | | | 36 |
| 6 | | | | | | 6 | 14 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 34 |
| 7 | | | | | | | 5 | 14 | 13 | 2 | 34 |
| 8 | | | | | | | | 2 | 4 | 11 | 17 |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| 10 | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| TOTALS | 12 | 39 | 36 | 39 | 34 | 35 | 26 | 30 | 24 | 23 | 298** |

*This total does not include children who had not attained at least the first grade level. Almost all of those below the first grade were less than 9 years old.

**This total does not include children who had not attained at least the first grade level.

Their employment generally ranged from 3 to 5 weeks. The percentage who followed their original work plans was much higher than in Bay County. Only about 20% accepted work on other activities or moved northward to work on the same activity.

The educational background of migrant children covered by the survey is shown in a table on page 27. All rural schools were closed by May 31 and reconvened by September 7. The number of school age children included in the survey were: May - 113, June - 266, July - 302, August - 242, September - 134, October - 98. Only 25 of these children were ever enrolled in a Michigan school.

WAGE DATA

Workers were paid on a piece rate basis on a majority of seasonal crop activities. The hourly rate prevailed whenever a piece rate could not readily be used. Cash earnings were usually below the wages paid in other industries for comparable work. However, in the agricultural field the migrant's earnings were usually augmented by free housing, use of basic furniture and appliances, lights, heat and farm products in season. In many cases transportation costs of migrant workers were paid by the employer if the group remained and finished the work for which they were hired. In other cases bonuses were paid.

Local workers were usually furnished transportation or were paid for the cost of transportation if it wasn't furnished. Also, many received farm products in season in addition to earnings and transportation.

During the past 10 years the hourly wage rate has risen about 45%. Piece rates have risen only 10% on the majority of the seasonal farm activities. However, new farming methods and varieties of crops have increased crop production and made greater earnings possible on piece rates.

The range of wage rates paid on selected crop activities are shown on page 29. Michigan employers paid over \$10,000,000 in wages to seasonal farm workers in 1954. Average daily earnings cannot be readily ascertained because in many instances children were considered as workers and their daily output is usually below that of an adult. A survey of some adult crews revealed average cash earnings from both hourly and piece rates to be between \$35.00 to \$36.00 per week for each worker during the season.

WAGE RATES BY CROP AND ACTIVITIES

| CROP | ACTIVITY | WAGE RANGE |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Apple | Picking (stripping) | 12¢ - 25¢ bushel |
| | " (Spot picking) | 80¢ - \$1.25 per hr. |
| | Handling and Storing | 75¢ - 85¢ per hr. * |
| Blueberry | Picking | 5¢ - 8¢ lb. |
| Celery | Harvest | 70¢ - 85¢ per hr. |
| Cherry (Red Tart) | Picking (stripping w/o stems) | 2¢ - 5¢ per lb. |
| | " (with stems) | 4¢ - 8¢ per lb. |
| Cherry (Sweet) | " (stripping w/o stems) | 2¢ - 4¢ per lb. |
| | " (with stems) | 6½¢ per quart 4¢ - 6¢ per lb. |
| Currant | Picking | 2½¢ lb. or 4¢ quart |
| Dewberry | Covering, Raising and Tying | 70¢ - 80¢ per hr. |
| | Picking | 5¢ quart |
| Grape | Pruning and tying | 70¢ - 80¢ per hr. |
| | Harvesting | 20¢ lug |
| Nursery | General Work | 70¢ - \$1.00 per hr. |
| Onion | Weeding and Cultivating | 65¢ - 75¢ per hr. |
| | Topping (Large Yellow) | 8¢ - 10¢ bushel |
| | " (Large White) | 10¢ - 12¢ bushel |
| | " (Small White) | 18¢ - 20¢ bushel |
| | Handling, grading and storing | 60¢ - 75¢ per hr. |
| Peach | Thinning | 70¢ - 85¢ per hr. |
| | Picking | 15¢ - 20¢ per bushel 75¢ - 85¢ per hr. |
| | Grading and packing | 60¢ - 85¢ per hr. |
| Pickle | Hoeing and Training | 60¢ - 75¢ per hr. |
| | Picking (Harvesting) | 50% of value of pickles |
| Plum | Picking | 25¢ - 70¢ bushel |
| Potato | Pick up | 7¢ - 12¢ bushel |
| | Handling, Grading & Storing | 70¢ - 90¢ per hr. |
| Raspberry | Pruning and Cleaning | 70¢ - 90¢ per hr. |
| | Picking (Black Caps) | 4¢ pt. or 7¢ quart |
| | Picking (Red) | 5¢ - 6¢ pt. or 10¢-12¢ qt. |
| Snap Bean | Picking | 2½¢ - 3¢ lb. 50% of value of beans picked |
| | | |
| Strawberry | Mulching and Removing | 70¢ - 80¢ per hr. |
| | Picking (uncapped) | 6¢ - 7¢ qt. |
| | " (capped) | 9¢ - 10¢ qt. |
| Sugar Beets | Blocking and Thinning | 70¢ hr. or \$11. - \$13. Acre |
| | Hoeing | \$3.00 - \$5.75 Acre |
| | Lifting and Topping | 70¢ per hr. or \$9.20 - \$31. per acre |
| Tomato | Transplanting | 70¢ - 75¢ per hr. |
| | Picking | 8¢ - 15¢ hamper |
| Tree Fruits | Pruning, Cleaning & Spraying | 60¢ - \$1.00 per hr. |
| Vegetables (Fresh Mkt.) | Weeding, Thinning & Hoeing | 60¢ - 75¢ per hr. |
| | Harvesting | 60¢ - 80¢ per hr. |

FOOD PROCESSING

Between 700 and 800 workers were required for plant and receiving station maintenance, processing of brined stock, packing, labeling and shipping before 1954 crops were received.

Receiving, sorting, packaging, freezing, preserving, brining and canning operations required the greatest number of workers to take care of new crops. The first seasonal crop to be processed was asparagus. It was followed by spinach, berries, pickles, beans, tomatoes, beets, currants, cherries and other tree fruits. The last major crop was sugar beets. The crops requiring the greatest number of workers were strawberries, cherries, raspberries, pickles, snap beans, peaches, tomatoes and sugar beets.

Peak labor requirements were reached in August when over 8,000 workers were employed to handle the crops. About 81% of this labor were local residents and the balance migrants. No foreign workers were employed on food processing. For monthly labor force figures see table on page 32.



OUTLOOK FOR 1955

The table on page 33 indicates the expected needs of seasonal workers in agriculture and food processing in 1955. No significant changes are expected in the over-all state requirements from those estimated for 1954. Some shifting in area requirements is expected, however, due to changes in area acreage on some crops.

Many workers, employed on sugar beet blocking and thinning and hoeing as well as on cherry and pickle harvest activities for the first time, have indicated that they will not again accept employment on these jobs. These workers were employed on farms having a high weed content or poor crop yield in 1953 and will have to be replaced by other workers during the coming year.

The problem crops, again, are expected to be sugar beets, pickles, muck crops and apples. If the cherry crop in the northwestern section is up to the 10 year average, it will aggravate the labor supply problem for pickle and snap bean harvest because the harvest of these crops commences in volume about three weeks before the cherry harvest ends. Under the same conditions Michigan employers were short some 5,000 cherry pickers in 1953. The 1954 labor supply did not indicate that this additional number was available from national sources. The apple harvest will continue to be a problem since the trees are large and the physical demands require male-adult workers and sources of such labor from migrant labor sources appears to be diminishing rather than remaining stable.

About 300 more workers will be needed for processing crops during July and August of 1955 than were employed during the same period in 1954 if crop yields are near the 10 year average. Recruitment of female help is not expected to be a problem as it appears that local sources will meet the requirements. However, jobs requiring male-adult workers may become a problem if the over-all employment conditions in other industries improve.

EMPLOYMENT OF SEASONAL HIRED WORKERS IN
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING AND
AGRICULTURAL PLACEMENTS, BY MONTH, 1954

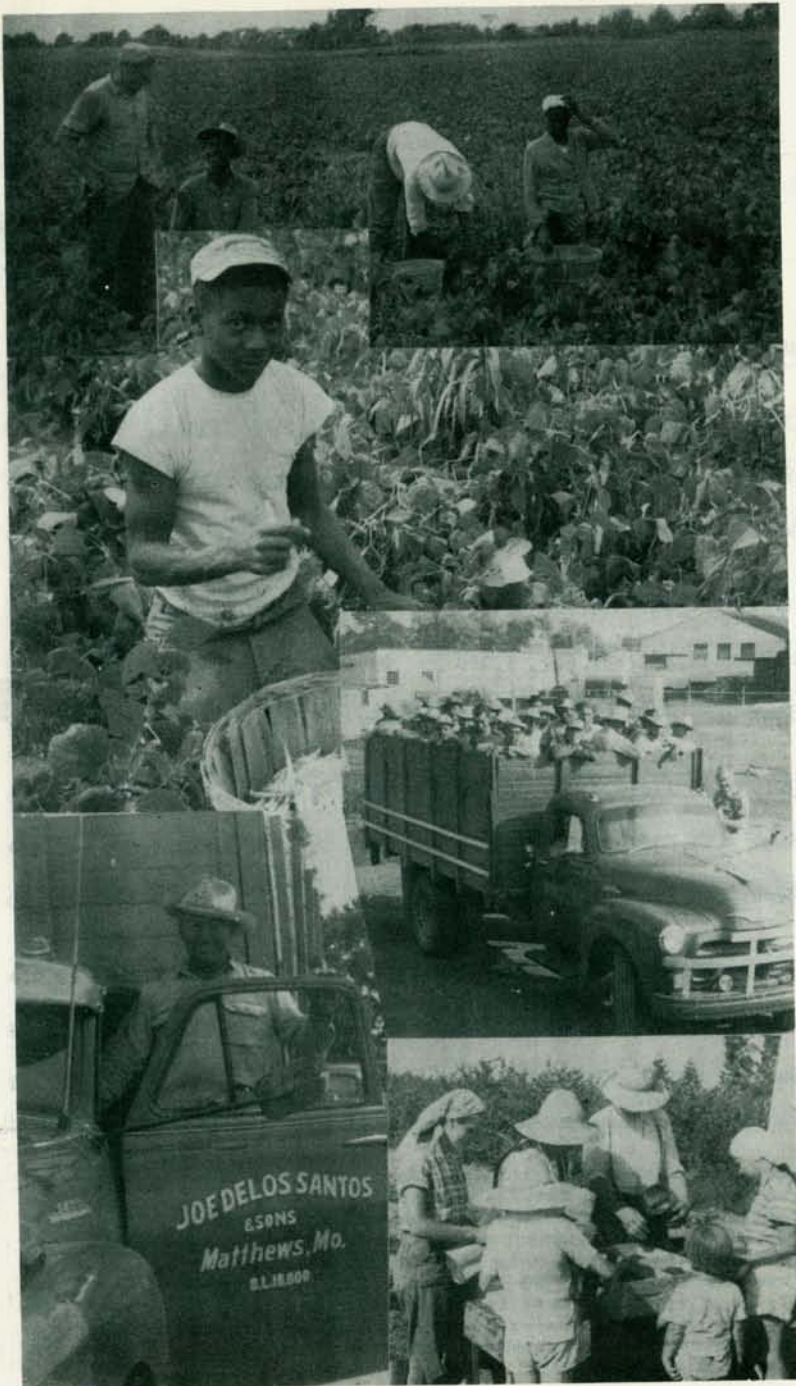
| MONTH | AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT | | | | AGRI- CUL- TURAL PLACE- MENTS | FOOD PROCESSING EMPLOYMENT | | |
|-------|-------------------------|----------|---------------|---------|---|-------------------------------|-------|---------------|
| | Total | DOMESTIC | | Foreign | | Total | Local | Non- Local |
| | | Local | Non- Local | | | | | |
| Jan. | 2,240 | 1,997 | 152 | 91 | 83 | 1,150 | 1,150 | 0 |
| Feb. | 2,200 | 2,035 | 92 | 73 | 133 | 1,050 | 1,050 | 0 |
| Mar. | 2,640 | 2,455 | 110 | 75 | 469 | 1,050 | 1,050 | 0 |
| April | 6,241 | 4,584 | 1,577 | 39 | 1,342 | 1,120 | 1,120 | 0 |
| May | 10,665 | 7,589 | 3,040 | 36 | 2,859 | 1,555 | 1,355 | 200 |
| June | 46,385 | 18,419 | 31,425 | 3,823 | 8,936 | 4,750 | 2,750 | 2,000 |
| July | 63,425 | 22,453 | 36,930 | 4,042 | 35,183 | 6,200 | 4,150 | 2,050 |
| Aug. | 66,580 | 25,171 | 35,092 | 6,312 | 44,447 | 8,000 | 5,550 | 2,450 |
| Sept. | 40,970 | 15,939 | 23,340 | 1,691 | 17,818 | 8,100 | 5,650 | 2,450 |
| Oct. | 29,480 | 19,102 | 9,630 | 748 | 8,157 | 7,350 | 6,100 | 1,250 |
| Nov. | 12,715 | 9,154 | 3,380 | 181 | 2,774 | 7,025 | 6,975 | 50 |
| Dec. | 5,720 | 5,402 | 300 | 18 | 593 | 5,700 | 5,650 | 50 |

NOTE: January, February and March agricultural labor force figures incomplete for the State because not all areas were required to submit farm labor reports. Employment figures represent the number of seasonal hired workers employed on the 15th of the month. The peak agricultural employment occurred during last half of July when 68,625 were employed.

EXPECTED USE OF SEASONAL HIRED WORKERS IN
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING, BY MONTH, 1955

| MONTH | EXPECTED EMPLOYMENT | | | | | | | EXPECTED SURPLUS FOR OUT- OF- STATE MIGRA- TION* |
|-------|---------------------|----------|---------------|---------|-----------------|-------|---------------|--|
| | AGRICULTURAL | | | | FOOD PROCESSING | | | |
| | Total | DOMESTIC | | Foreign | Total | Local | Non- Local | |
| | | Local | Non- Local | | | | | |
| Jan. | 3,600 | 2,600 | 940 | 60 | 1,150 | 1,150 | 0 | 0 |
| Feb. | 3,600 | 2,600 | 940 | 60 | 1,150 | 1,150 | 0 | 0 |
| Mar. | 4,910 | 3,500 | 1,250 | 60 | 1,200 | 1,200 | 0 | 0 |
| April | 6,630 | 4,590 | 1,600 | 70 | 1,300 | 1,300 | 0 | 0 |
| May | 11,880 | 7,600 | 4,080 | 200 | 1,600 | 1,400 | 200 | 0 |
| June | 54,600 | 18,500 | 32,050 | 4,050 | 4,950 | 2,950 | 2,000 | 0 |
| July | 75,170 | 23,000 | 43,170 | 9,000 | 6,550 | 4,350 | 2,200 | 0 |
| Aug. | 75,800 | 26,540 | 39,100 | 10,160 | 8,300 | 5,650 | 2,650 | 5,000 |
| Sept. | 43,500 | 21,960 | 20,340 | 2,200 | 8,200 | 5,750 | 2,450 | 25,000 |
| Oct. | 29,840 | 19,200 | 9,540 | 1,100 | 7,350 | 6,100 | 1,250 | 12,000 |
| Nov. | 12,800 | 9,200 | 3,400 | 200 | 7,025 | 6,975 | 50 | 6,700 |
| Dec. | 5,725 | 5,400 | 250 | 75 | 5,700 | 5,480 | 220 | 0 |

*Also includes contracted foreign workers and domestic migratory workers who leave the State due to prior commitments. Only about 30% expected to be available for other jobs. Figures represent the number of seasonal workers expected to be employed on the 15th of the month. Peak of labor requirements expected to be reached around July 25 and last through August 18. The rise in foreign workers, despite a reduction of domestic workers, is due to that many cherry pickers are not interested in pickle or snap bean harvest which normally reaches its peak around the first of August.



YEAR-ROUND FARM LABOR

Over 1,200 persons were referred to year-round farm jobs. Of these, over 1,025 were hired. These consisted of farm hands and farm couples. They were referred to jobs requiring experience on various types of farming, but dairy, general, livestock, vegetable and fruit farming required the largest number of workers.

There was a constant shortage of qualified year-round farm workers. More job applicants were available than in 1953 but a greater percentage of applicants did not meet the employers' requirements. The most difficult jobs to fill were for fruit and vegetable farms located near large industrial centers. To meet the needs of these farm operators, permission to use foreign workers was asked and granted. The authorizations to employ foreign workers were reconsidered at intervals of from 15 days to 6 months. 54 foreign workers were employed at the peak.

Wages paid to farm hands ranged from \$40.00 to \$170.00 per month plus board and room or from 70¢ to \$1.10 per hour without room but plus meals. The predominate monthly rate was \$125.00 per month and the hourly rate 95¢. Farm couples received from \$125.00 to \$250.00 per month plus a house and other perquisites with \$170.00 per month predominating. Specialists, foreman and farm managers received proportionately higher rates.

During the last 10 years the average wages for farm hands has risen from \$70.00 per month to \$125.00 and for farm couples from \$100.00 per month to \$170.00.

The labor demand and supply outlook for 1955 appears to indicate continued shortages of experienced farm hands and couples. Agricultural economists feel that there is a slight indication that wage rates may take a slight dip.



Photo courtesy of Buran County Tribeswood Inc.