# CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE TWELVE RICHEST AND POOREST INDIANA COUNTIES

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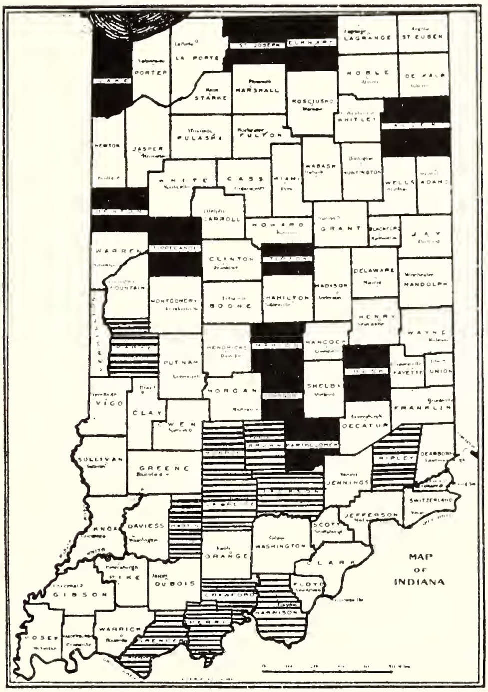
Comparative wealth is not easy to ascertain because many areas that are rich in one respect are poor in another. But by considering a large number of criteria, it is possible, however, to determine which counties are poorest in most significant respects, and which richest. The data presented by counties in the




= richest
= poorest

Fig. 1

Fig. 1—Indiana, showing the counties that are richest and poorest in most respects.

recent official summary of census data and other reliable data, "The Market Data Handbook of the United States," U. S. Dept. of Commerce, 1929, has been of great service in this respect, but in addition, numerous other criteria have been used. Maps showing the contrasts among Indiana's 92 counties in respect to more than a hundred criteria have been made. The following is a summary of some of the more distinctive of these criteria as they apply to the twelve counties considered to be richest and the twelve poorest. These counties are indicated on Fig. 1.

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**Crop Yields and Land Values.** The 1925 agricultural census reported a crop production valued at an average of $3,000,000 for each of the twelve richer counties, slightly more than twice that of the twelve poorest ($1,400,000.) This is despite the fact that in the poorer counties agriculture is the predominate source of income to a degree not true in the richer counties. The per capita value of farm products per farm person, for the average of 1922-1925, was $539 in the richer counties but $308 for the poorer. In other words, each average person on the farms of the richer counties had 63 percent more income from the farm than did the average farm person of the poorer counties.

Tenancy is nearly twice as great in the richer counties as in the poorer (24 percent vs. 19 percent). This is partly due to the fact that in the poorer counties few farms can support a tenant and also yield much rent to a landlord. Furthermore in the richer counties the land is less likely to be injured by tenants than is true in the poorer, which have considerable areas of sloping land and thin soil.

The average value per farm was $19,200 in the richer counties in 1925, but less than one-fourth as great, $4,720, in the poorer. This reflects not only higher values per acre in the richer counties, but also better improvements.

In the richer counties 37 percent of all farms were mortgaged in contrast to 29 percent in the poorer counties. Not only were a larger percentage of the farms mortgaged in the richer counties, but the mortgages were for a larger percentage of the assessed values, 37.8 percent vs. 35.7 percent. Although these contrasts in mortgages might be thought to be in favor of the poorer counties, the opposite is in fact true. Rich land gives a greater surplus over cost of production, which surplus can be used to pay interest and reduce indebtedness. Furthermore in the richer counties the land is more salable. Also the interest rates average more than one-eighth lower.

**Contrasts in Manufacturing.** Not only did the richer counties reap twice as much from the soil as did the poorer counties, but their wealth producing activities in other directions are even more impressive. The richer counties in 1927 added to the value of goods by manufacturing an average of $50,470,000 per county and a total of one-half of the state's total. In contrast the poorer counties added only one-nineteenth as much, $2,680,000 per county.

The difference in value added by manufacturing per capita, $396 in the richer counties, $109 in the poorer counties, gives a ratio of three and one-half to one, not nearly so great as the above nineteen to one ratio, largely because of the richer counties having an average population density five times as great as in the poor counties.

**Contrasts in Bank Deposits and Loans.** The greater soil productivity and industrialism would cause us to expect evidences of greater pecuniary resources. The richer counties in 1920 had bank deposits of $340.75 per capita while the poorer counties had $166.75 per capita. Loan companies have found the poorer counties less attractive than the richer as the average combined capitalization of loan companies in the poorer counties is $2,320,000, as compared with an average of $40,280,000 for the richer counties. Capital flows most freely and is most used where the chances of reward are best.

**Taxable Property.** In taxable property, the richer counties had in 1922 an average of $2,320 per capita in contrast to $780 for the poorer counties. Furthermore a much larger fraction of the wealth of the poorer counties is railroads, and other items of wealth not owned by the people of the poorer counties than is true in the richer counties.

**Income Tax Returns.** In 1926 the income tax returns from the richer counties were at the rate of 27 per 1,000 people, or more than three times as many proportionately as from the poorer counties, in which only 8.4 returns were filed per 1,000 population.

**Rural vs. Urban.** The poorer counties are distinctly more largely rural than is true of most of the richer counties, which have about 82 percent of their population living in places of over 2,500 in contrast to about 33 percent living in places of that size in the poorer counties.

**Proportion of Adults.** Adults are relatively numerous, 65 percent of the total population, in the richer counties while in the poorer counties they make up about one-fifth less, 53 percent of the total. Children under ten years of age, however, are most numerous in the poorer counties where they comprise 23.2 percent of the total population as compared with 17 percent in the richer counties. Since many of the one-third more children reared in the poorer counties later go to the richer counties when the children are youths, the richer counties received, without any expense, many of the more ambitious mobile young people in which the poorer counties have made a large investment. The poorer counties average slightly larger families, 4.32 persons per family as compared with 4 persons per family in the rich counties. But the census "family" does not mean the same thing in country and city. In the country, most "families" are the type ordinarily thought of when the term is used, parents and children. In the city, however, the persons rooming in the same home are all grouped as a family, even though they be strangers. The actual families in the cities relatively are considerably smaller than in the country.

**Literacy.** In literacy the poorer counties had in 1920, 3.7 percent illiterate over ten years of age, the richer counties approximately half as many, 1.9 percent—that in spite of having a larger percent of its people not native born. Literacy might be expected to correlate with reading habits and such is the case. In respect to Sunday papers the ratio is three to one: for daily newspapers, three plus to one; national magazines three and one-half to one; state and national farm papers, two to one, all in favor of the richer counties. Only in one class do the poorer counties excel, that of the weekly, semi or tri-weekly, of which they take five times as many in proportion to population as do the richer counties. These of course are substitutes for the more costly daily and Sunday newspapers. Not only reading matter received but outgoing postal expenditures are an index of cultural wealth. The average family in the twelve richer counties, had postal expenditures in 1927 three and one-half times as great as the average family of the twelve poorer counties.

**Criminality.** A negative means of determining wealth is the number of commitments to the various state penal institutions. During the years 1917 to 1927 inclusive the average poorer county had 28,100 persons so committed. But the average richer county had only 16,700 persons committed in spite of having an average population five times as great and more largely composed of adults. (Children are not committed to the penal institutions studied.)

Insane commitments also show a tendency in the same direction, though not so noticeable. The years 1918-27 show 2,200 persons so committed from the average poorer county with its small population, in contrast to 1,900 persons from the average rich county.

**Summary.** Thus the twelve richest counties, largely in central and northern Indiana, offer important contrasts and comparisons with the twelve poorest counties, nearly all of which are in southern Indiana.

The population of the richer counties averages five times as dense, is much more urban, has slightly smaller families, fewer children but more adults, less illiteracy, and fewer commitments to state prisons and penal institutions, and asylums.

The people of the richer counties use more reading material of several classes, spend much more for outgoing postage, have three times as much taxable property per capita; and, in proportion to population, three times as many persons who made income tax returns.

The richer counties are greater borrowers, mortgage a larger percent of the farm land for a larger percent of its value; they have double the percent of tenants, and per capita bank deposits that are twice as large. The richer farm land of the richer counties gives a product having twice the value of the poorer counties and a per capita farm income of half again as much. The farms also average five times as high a value as those of the poorer counties.

Lastly, in value added by manufacturing the richer counties are far in the lead, both as to total value and per capita value.

**Conclusion.** Although there are some exceptions, most of the criteria of wealth point in the same direction. Areas that stand high in one respect are likely to stand high in another. The poorer counties are badly handicapped in numerous respects and their people should wisely be helped in the rearing and educating of their children, many of whom later migrate to the richer counties, and as wealth producing adults, contribute to the exceptional wealth of those counties.