

Curves of Population Change in Indiana 1850-1950

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The record of population change for the State of Indiana in the period 1850-1950 has been one of constant growth. Actually the population curve closely approximates a straight line (Fig. 1), reflecting the gradual transition in the state from a predominantly agricultural to a more and more industrial economy. However, different sections of the state have contributed unequally to this growth and shared unequally in its fruits. One of the most significant aspects of the geography of a region is the study of such changes, their classification and as far as is possible, their explanation. The object of this article is to classify the changes in a preliminary way. Explanations and the drawing of relationships have not been attempted except incidentally. These will come later when sufficient material has been gathered.

Population change is best shown by the population curve which graphically portrays two very important items—total numbers and the change in numbers from one census year to another. For this study, population curves were drawn for each of the 92 counties in the state for the period 1850-1950, the curves compared and finally the counties grouped on the basis of similarities in the curves. The grouping then has been in terms of (i) total population numbers and (ii) the change in these numbers between census years. The groupings follow:

I. Counties with more than 100,000 population in 1950. There are five counties in this group, three in the northern part of the state (Lake, St. Joseph and Allen), one in the central part (Marion) and one in the southern part (Vanderburgh) (Fig. 2). Growth has been continuous and steady and directly related to increasing industrialization. These counties contain the largest cities—Indianapolis, Gary, Fort Wayne, Evansville and South Bend. The curve for Marion County (Fig. 1) is shown as an example of the group. In 1950 these counties had more than one-third (37.4%) of the state population.

II. Counties with 50,000-100,000 population. There are eight counties in this group. In two of them, both in the northern part of the state (LaPorte and Elkhart) growth has been steady. In the remaining six, all in the central part of the state (Fig. 2), there was a decline in growth for a short period around 1900. The curve for Wayne County (not illustrated) is typical. The group had seventeen per cent of the state population in 1950. As in Group I, these are counties with large urban populations.

III. Counties under 50,000 population.

A. Counties with a population peak before 1910. This group contains 43 counties with a little less than one-fifth of the state population in 1950 (19.2%). Rural population predominates in all the counties, in marked contrast to the situation in the first two groups.

There are three divisions within this group. In the first, the population curve indicates a continuous decrease since the year of the popula-

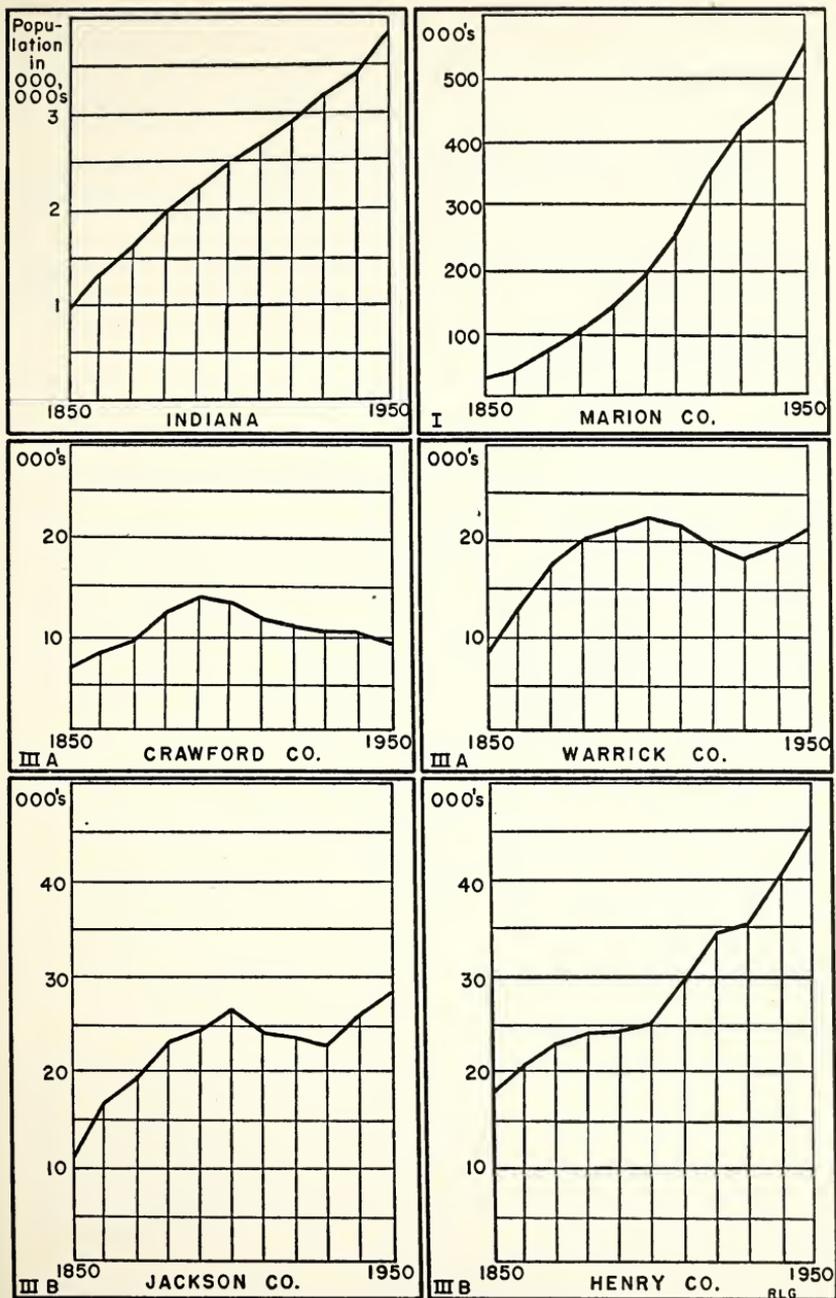


FIG. 1. POPULATION CURVES FOR INDIANA AND FOR COUNTIES REPRESENTATIVE OF POPULATION GROUPS I, III A, III B.

tion peak. There are fourteen counties in this division. Seven are in the southernmost part of the state (Fig. 2) where decline has accompanied the loss of timber and soil resources. The other seven are in the coal producing sections in the west central part of the state where decline has followed the abandonment of mines. The curve for Crawford County is typical with its peak in 1890 and decline since then (Fig. 1).

Counties in the second division show a significant rise in population in the period 1930-1950. There are eighteen counties scattered throughout the state with no concentrations in any particular area (Fig. 2). It would appear that a number of factors varying probably from one area to another has been responsible for the surge in the last twenty years. Typical of the group is Warrick County with its peak in 1900, a decline to 1930 and an increase to 1950 (Fig. 1).

Counties in the third division have population curves intermediate between those of the two divisions just mentioned. The pre-1910 peak is obvious and the decline is continuous to 1930 but between 1930 and 1950 there is a very slight rise. The increase amounts to less than five per cent of the figure for the peak population year and thus sets these counties apart from those in the previous division where the increase has been much more significant. In some cases, the rise has taken place only since 1940. There are eleven counties, again scattered throughout the state with no more than two contiguous in any area (Fig. 2). Many of these counties contain productive farmland but increased mechanization may have been responsible for population decreases. The curve for Tipton County is typical (Fig. 1). The population peak is in 1900; there is a decline to 1940 and a slight increase to 1950.

B. Counties with a population peak in 1950. This group embraces 31 counties and accounted for more than one-fifth (22.7%) of the state population in 1950. There are two divisions. In the first which has 24 counties a secondary peak of population was reached before 1920. The curve for Jackson County is typical (Fig. 1). There is a definite peak in 1900, followed by a decline to 1930 and an increase from 1930 to the highest population in the county's history in 1950. Two concentrations of counties in this division appear from the map (Fig. 2)—one in the central part of the state, extending south to the Ohio River, and the other in the north, extending as an east-west band south of the northernmost tier of counties.

The second division within this group has no secondary population peak. Increase has been constant to 1950, although rates have varied. The curve for Henry County is typical (Fig. 1). Most of these counties contain at least one fairly large city (Kokomo in Howard County, New Albany in Floyd County and New Castle in Henry County) which has dominated or controlled the curve of growth. With few exceptions, this is not the case with counties in the first division. Here rural population has been predominant throughout.

C. Counties with a population peak 1920-1940. This group is made up of the "left-overs," those counties which do not fit into any of the other designations. A slight change in definition, however, may result in their inclusion in one of the above groups. The counties include Lawrence with

POPULATION GROUPS IN INDIANA (COUNTY BASIS)

I OVER 100,000

 GROWTH CONTINUOUS

II 50,000-100,000

 GROWTH CONTINUOUS

 GROWTH VARIED

III UNDER 50,000

A. PEAK Pre 1910

 DECREASE SINCE

 SIGNIFICANT RISE-1930-50

 MINOR RISE-1930-50

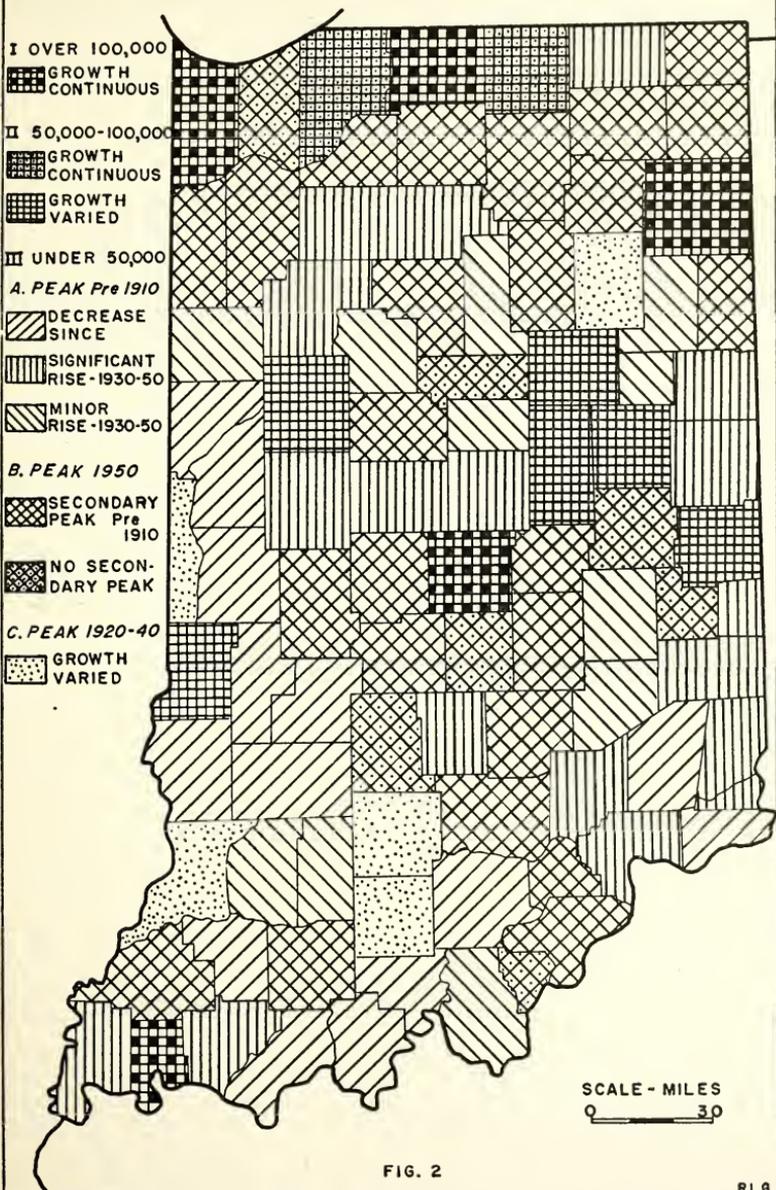
B. PEAK 1950

 SECONDARY PEAK Pre 1910

 NO SECONDARY PEAK

C. PEAK 1920-40

 GROWTH VARIED



SCALE - MILES
0 30

FIG. 2

RL9

a peak in 1930 and a gradual decrease since; Vermillion and Knox in the coal mining section of the state with peaks in 1920 and a general decrease (especially striking in Vermillion) since; Orange, which is rural only, with a peak in 1930 and a decrease since and finally Huntington which is similar to the rest in its population peak (1920) but differs from them in that its population has been increasing since 1930.

Appendix

COUNTIES IN POPULATION GROUPS

- I. Over 100,000. Allen, Lake, Marion, St. Joseph, Vanderburgh.
- II. 50,000-100,000
 - Growth Continuous. Elkhart, LaPorte.
 - Growth Varied. Delaware, Grant, Madison, Tippecanoe, Vigo, Wayne.
- III. Under 50,000
 - A. Peak pre-1910
 - Decrease Since. Clay, Crawford, Fountain, Greene, Owen, Parke, Pike, Perry, Ripley, Spencer, Sullivan, Switzerland, Warren, Washington.
 - Significant Rise 1930-50. Boone, Brown, Dearborn, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Jay, Jefferson, Jennings, Lagrange, Montgomery, Ohio, Posey, Pulaski, Randolph, Union, Warrick, White.
 - Minor Rise 1930-50. Benton, Blackford, Carroll, Daviess, Decatur, Harrison, Martin, Miami, Rush, Tipton, Wells.
 - B. Peak 1950
 - Secondary Peak Pre-1910. Adams, Bartholomew, Cass, Clark, Clinton, DeKalb, Gibson, Dubois, Hancock, Hendricks, Jackson, Jasper, Kosciusko, Marshall, Morgan, Newton, Noble, Putnam, Scott, Shelby, Starke, Steuben, Wabash, Whitley.
 - No Secondary Peak. Fayette, Floyd, Henry, Howard, Johnson, Monroe, Porter.
 - C. Peak 1920-1940. Huntington, Knox, Lawrence, Orange, Vermillion.