

Population Trends in Indiana's Villages of 1,000-2,500 Population in 1950

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This paper analyzes the population trends in the incorporated villages of Indiana with a population of 1,000 to 2,500 in 1950 since 1900 and attempts to discover the patterns of distribution of the villages with the different trends.

Contrary to the common notion that the villages in Indiana are decadent, the incorporated villages in this size group are showing, by and large, a trend towards an increase in population. There were 110 such villages having 11% of the total rural population of Indiana in 1950. Their population increased about 38% and 15% during 1900-1950 and 1940-1950 respectively in comparison to an increase of 3.3% and 11.5% for the total rural population during the same periods. It is quite significant that 17 villages, not included in this study, of this size group in 1940, had crossed the 2,500 population mark in 1950, showing an increase of 58% over their population in 1940.

Out of 110 villages under consideration, 86 villages showed a net increase of 62% during 1900-1950 and of 19% between 1940-1950. As against this, there were only 24 villages which registered a net decline of 19.6% during 1900-1950, but a gain of 3.5% during 1940-1950.

An examination of the distributional pattern of the villages with a net increase (Fig. 1), shows that they are concentrated in five regions of Indiana, i.e., Northern, East Central, South Western, West Central and South Eastern Indiana. The villages with a higher rate of increase were found to be concentrated within the first two regions, while those with lower rate of increase were scattered all over the five regions (Fig. 2).

The villages with a net decrease between 1900-1950 (in no case more than 50%) are distributed along the Ohio River in southern Indiana, two western counties of Sullivan and Clay and in east-central Indiana. In northern Indiana, there are a few villages scattered widely.

However, a consideration of net increase and decrease during a long interval of five decades does not give an idea of the actual trends in the population. On the basis of the decennial changes, these villages have been classified into six categories and the distribution of each category is discussed as follows:

- I. Twenty-three villages with a continuous increase, which include:
 1. Four villages with an increase of 10% or more every decade.
 2. Thirteen villages with an increase of less than 10% during one or two intermediate decades.
 3. Six villages with an exceptional increase during 1940-1950.

In their distribution, we find that they are mainly concentrated within North and East Central Indiana (Fig. 3).

Figure 1

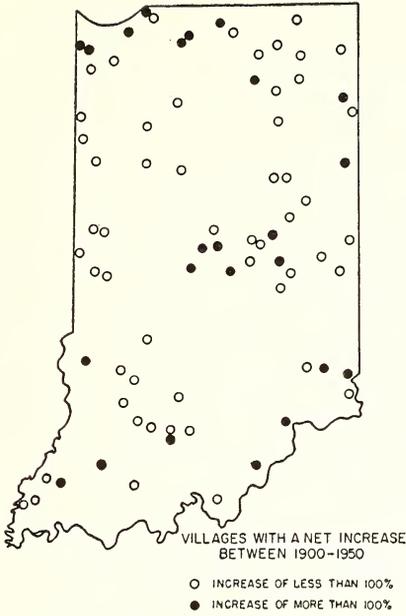


Figure 2



Figure 3

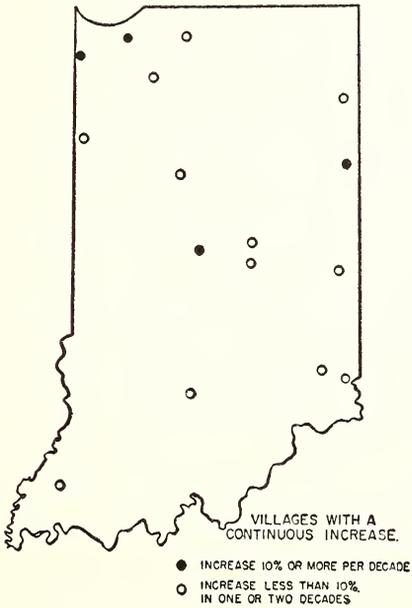
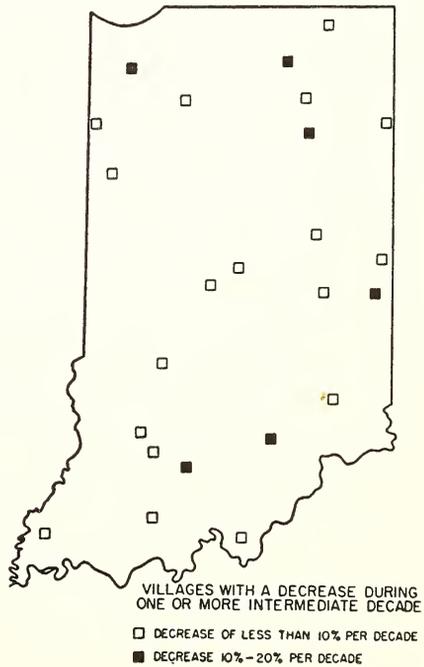


Figure 4



- II. Twenty-four villages with a decrease in population during one or more intermediate decades. The decennial decrease was less than 10% in the case of 18 villages and 10-20% in the case of six villages. These villages were scattered all over the state, without any particular regional pattern (Fig. 4).
- III. Thirty-three villages with an earlier decrease but an increase since or after 1920.
This category is significant by virtue of the number of villages included, their distributional pattern and the year of peak population. In this category there are two classes of villages, i.e., 1) 20 villages with a peak population in 1950 and 2) 13 villages with a peak population in 1900. There is a concentration of these villages in East Central Indiana and Northern Indiana, with a minor concentration in the South Eastern Indiana. Significantly all the villages, except two, of this category in North Indiana had a peak population in 1950, while in East Central Indiana the villages with a peak population in 1900 and 1950 were equally divided in number. In South Eastern Indiana three out of four villages had a peak population in 1950 (Fig. 5).
- IV. Twenty-five villages with no definite trend, that is with a fluctuating population. On the basis of their peak population, they come under three sub-classes:
1. Fifteen villages with a peak population between 1910-1940.
 2. Six villages with a peak in 1900.
 3. Four villages with a peak in 1950.
- Their distribution is equally significant on account of their concentration in South West Indiana, west of a line between Warren County and Harrison County. Almost all of them reached a peak between 1910-1940. This is the only dominant category in South West Indiana. There are few scattered villages of this category in Northern and East Central Indiana, where they are outnumbered by the villages of the first three categories. Secondly, the villages in these regions had their peak in 1900 or 1950 (Fig. 6).
- V. Four villages with an earlier increase but decrease since or after 1920. Although their population in 1950 was still above 1900 level, yet the trend towards decrease, started in the intermediate decades, does not seem to be encouraging. Three of these villages are located within South West Indiana and one in North Indiana.
- VI. One village with a continuous decrease, except minor recovery during one intermediate decade. This village is also located in South Indiana.

This review brings out the following facts:

1. South West Indiana is a region of villages with unstable population showing a tendency towards decrease.

Figure 5

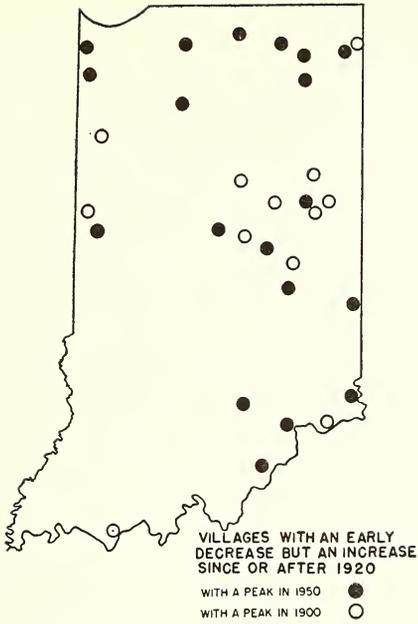


Figure 6

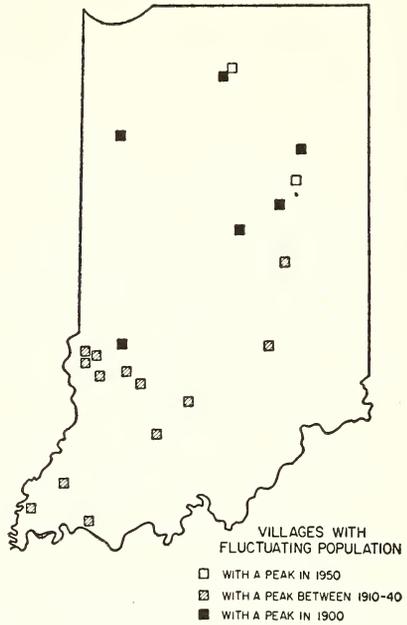
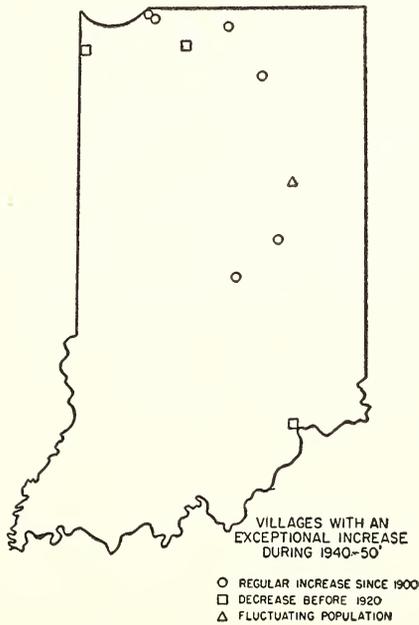


Figure 7



2. East Central Indiana is a region of villages showing trend towards increase particularly since or after 1920. However, some mixed tendencies were visible.

3. North Indiana has been a region of progressive villages since 1900.

4. South East Indiana is also a region of progressive villages.

An additional indication of the progressive nature of the villages in North Indiana is the concentration of all the villages with an exceptional growth (of more than 50%) during 1940-1950 (Fig. 7).

It is not within the scope of this review to go into the socio-economic and geographic causes for such trends and patterns of distribution, but an intensive study is highly desirable.