

Population Censal Maxima in Indiana Townships

JAY LEWIS MEISEL, Indiana University

It is the purpose of this paper to determine the censal year in which each Indiana township attained its maximum population, and to describe the patterns of areal distribution of those groups of townships which attained their maximum population at the same period of time. A theoretical analysis of these patterns is suggested for further research.

The censal year of maximum population for each township was determined from the decennial censuses between 1850 and 1950 inclusive. Contiguous groups of townships appear to have reached population maxima in four distinct periods: 1850-1870, 1880-1900, 1910-1940, and 1950 (Figure 1).

Most of the townships attaining their peak population in the period 1850-1870 are found on the Dearborn Upland and the Scottsburg Lowland, with a secondary concentration at the junction of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers. For the most part, these areas were declining in population in 1950.

Townships reaching their peak population in the period 1880-1900 include the majority of Indiana townships. These predominantly agricultural townships are evenly dispersed throughout the state with no particular concentration.

Townships reaching their maxima in the period 1910-1940 are largely localized in strip mining areas in the southwestern part of the state with a smaller concentration in the northwestern corner. Many individual townships reaching maxima in this period are scattered through the eastern portion of Indiana, commonly found in association with townships which reached their maxima in 1950.

The townships reaching their peak in 1950 appear to be the most highly dispersed, although there are several large groups that appear to be related to industrialization and/or spreading urbanized areas. This is especially noticeable around Indianapolis, around Evansville, and in the northern tier of counties associated with South Bend and metropolitan Chicago.

The dispersion of the other townships reaching their maximum population in 1950 is not as patternless as it might first appear. Although most of these townships are in counties in which three or fewer townships reached their peak population in 1950, almost invariably the county seat is in a township which hit its peak in 1950. It would appear that county seat towns are increasing in population whereas surrounding townships are decreasing.

In summary, it would appear that the vast majority of townships which do not contain any urban center had reached their maximum population by 1900 or before, whereas virtually every township containing an urban center was at its peak population in 1950. It would be

interesting to see whether the same pattern appears in other Mid-western states. It would also be interesting to see whether the same pattern applies to Indiana at the time of the 1960 Census.

