A Pilot Study of the Economic Status

OF THE

Free Hill's Community

CLAY COUNTY, TENNESSEE

BY

GEORGE ROACH

TENNESSEE A. AND I. STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
NASHVILLE

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FOREWORD

This study by the Department of Agricultural Economics of the Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University, Nashville, Tennessee proposes to establish a record of the economic level of a disadvantaged community in Clay County, Tennessee. The purpose is to establish a benchmark in a low-income community so that the long-range effects of community motivation and agency assistance in raising the economic level of the community can be measured in the future.

The study grew out of a desire on the part of several agencies and individuals to collect some factual information about the economic status of a community of people that, for the most part, has escaped the affluent society that America is identified with. These people and their problems are representative of individuals and groups that for one reason or another have been by-passed by governmental agencies that give assistance to low-income people.

This study and the ones to follow will be of inestimable value in measuring the economic impact of assistance from governmental and local agencies on low-income people that have had a history of very limited participation in such programs. This study should also serve as a guide for leaders to explore other "boxed in" communities that make up a large segment of our American population.

Fred E. Westbrook, Head
Dept. of Plant Science
Tennessee State University
Nashville, Tennessee
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The writer is indebted to the people of the Free Hol's Community, Clay County, Tennessee, who furnished the information on which the data for the study are based; to Mr. Ralph Sasser, State Conservationist, Mr. D. K. Springer, State Soil Conservationist, and Mr. Obie Masingale, Assistant to the State Soil Conservationist of the Soil Conservation Service, who encouraged the study and assisted in making and carrying out many of the details involved in conducting this study. The writer is further indebted to Dr. Fred Westbrook, Head, Department of Plant Science, Dr. Robert L. Hurst, Director, Economics Research Service, and Dr. Ozie L. Adams, Director, Agricultural and Home Economics Extension Services, Tennessee A. & I. State University, for their critical appraisal of this study; and to all others who helped in any way to make this study possible.

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A Pilot Study
of
The Economic Status
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Free Hill's Community
Clay County, Tennessee
By George Roach*

Introduction:

Low income people are generally characterized as the disadvantaged ones in today's society. Their educational attainments which are usually limited, have a direct affect on their employment opportunities. Because these people do not fully participate in the economy, they do not enjoy many of the benefits from various Government Programs that are available to their communities. Most low income communities are characterized by run down buildings, eroded and idle land, low-quality livestock, poor diets for the people, poor health, very low family income, and inadequate training and education opportunities for their children. The Free Hill's Community has all of the above disadvantages and therefore was selected for this study.

We are concerned in this study about those families who have low incomes, and will generally remain in Free Hill's Community because of age, lack of skills for better employment, and lack of desire to leave their present way of life. Therefore, it is the writer's opinion that, we have a moral obligation to assist these people in finding a better

* Director, Farm Records and Accounts and Instructor of Agricultural Economics, Tennessee A. & I. State University, Nashville, Tennessee.
way of life for themselves. Moreover, it is assumed that as the people acquire more productive abilities, they will contribute to the general economy of the country, possibly creating jobs and economic opportunities for those who leave the Community, as well as attaining a minimum acceptable standard of living for themselves.

Since approximately 75 percent of these people have not completed high school, assistance must be, provided at a level that they can utilize. A desire must be stimulated in these people so that they will want to raise their living standards. Utmost faith and confidence in their leaders must be developed in a manner to insure maximum participation. The people must believe that their leaders are sincerely interested in them, their problems and well being.

**Purpose of the Study:**---The purpose of this study was to ascertain sufficient data so as to make an adequate determination of available economic opportunities in this area. It is further intended to seek reasons as to why these people do not take advantage of the available local, state and federal programs that are designed to help them. The study does offer suggestions and encouragement to elicit the concern and participation in self help efforts.
Procedure in Collecting Data---In an effort to ascertain the type and quality of data needed to make a valid determination of the socio-economic conditions of a minority group in the Tennessee Appalachia, the Free Hill Community of Clay County was selected for study. A random sample of all residents in this area was taken, affording an above average representation due to the limited universe.

After several meetings with planning groups of the County, including the County Technical Action Panel, schedules were devised to collect the data sought. A pre-trial was rendered to test the capability of the instrument before enumeration was begun. Personal interviews were made in collecting data in order to assure the highest possible return. Enumerators were instructed to address their inquires to heads of households and make as many as three tries to find a selectee before the effort was discontinued. This method yield a 63.3 percent response from the total universe.

The Area:

Location. ---The Free Hill's Community is geographically located in Clay County, Tennessee extending approximately three miles by air course, Northeast of the town of Celina. The road route is by Neeley's Creek, and it is about six miles from the public square of Celina to the Free Hill's Community.
Topography. ---The topography of the Free Hill's Community consists of steep, deeply dissected V shaped valleys with narrow winding ridges.

Soils. ---Most of the soils on the narrow winding ridge crests are (mountview series) silty in the upper part and cherty in the lower part; they are well drained and moderately productive. Associated with the silty soils are lesser areas of clayey soils (Baxter series); because of clayey subsoils, they absorb water slowly and they have been damaged by erosion.

The steep hillside slopes have cherty, drouthy (Bodine series) soils. These soils have poor natural fertility and low water supplying capacity and therefore are not very productive. Some of the very steep areas immediately above the valley streams are nearly vertical rock bluffs.

There are narrow bands of alluvial soils (Ennis Series) along the drainageways. When these areas are large enough, they are cultivated and are quite productive.

About 25% of the area is cleared and 75% is in cut-over hardwood forest. The cleared land is largely confined to the narrow bottoms and ridge crests.

Because the Free Hill's area consists largely of steep slopes and drouthy soils, the land is used predominantly for forest and pasture.
**Climate:** ---The average annual temperature is 58 degrees with a monthly average of 37 degrees in January and 78 degrees in July. The annual precipitation is 51 inches of rain and 15 inches of snow. Of this amount of rainfall about 30 inches occur during the months of April through November. March is the month of greatest precipitation, having an average rainfall of 6 inches. The driest month is October with an average of 3 inches. The average growing season is 190 days per year. Usually the latest killing frost is between April 20 to 29 and the earliest killing frost is during the latter part of October.

This investigation revealed some of the characteristics of the family.

**Size:** ---The family averages five members, with 53 percent males and 47 percent females. Several family groups are composed of members other than the immediate family. Such members include grandparents, uncles and other relatives.

**Age:** ---The ages ranges from less than one year to 122 years of age. However, since the primary purpose of this study was to gather information about household heads and other adult members of family, minor age groups were not included in the distribution. The average age (arithmetic mean) for males was found to be 56; and that of females was 55 years of age. Although there were household heads in the community who were younger than 25 years of age, they were not included in the study.
A substantial number of this study group was in the senior citizen range. Thirty-one percent of the males and 4 percent of the females were found to be over 60 years of age.

**Education:** ---The educational level of this group ranges from no formal school training to one college graduate. The average level was 7.2 grades for the group.

**TABLE 1.** Age Range of 32 Families (Heads of Household and Adult Family Members) in Free Hill's Community, Clay County, Tennessee 1967

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. Male</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. Female</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-46</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47-57</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38.50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-66</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69-79</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|   | 26 | 100.00 | 23 | 100.00 |
Levels of Living: ---One indicator for measuring economic well-being is the quantity of household equipment and facilities available to family members. A substantial number of these families have many of the household facilities such as televisions, radios, freezers, telephones, electric refrigerators, automobiles and trucks. Some families have hot and cold piped water, toilets and private baths. However, it is interesting to note that 25 families or 78 percent used spring water which is carried by plastic pipe, barrels and pails. In mid summer, when the springs dry up, they carry water from a central pump which is owned by the School Board.

TABLE II. Available Facilities - Indicators of Levels of Living of 32 Families In Free Hill's Community, Clay County, Tennessee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power Washer</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Freezer</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>87.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure Cooker</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Iron</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Refrigerator</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Water:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pump</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are 21 families or 65.6 percent of the sample who live in unpainted frame houses. There are 5 homes or 15.6 percent of the sample who live in painted frame houses; and 6 houses or 18.8 percent are either brick or stucco type structures.

**Annual Income:** --The total range in income of the people studied in the 32 family sample in Free Hill's Community is: six families (7 adults) make $499.00 or less per year; seven (9 adults) make between $500.00 to $999.00; five (6 adults) have income of $3,000 to $3,499.00 per year; only three families make above $3,499.00 per year. The findings of this study indicate that the majority of the people in Free Hill's Community are making less than $3,000.00 per year. Table 3 presents incomes of individuals in families. It is interesting to note that the female plays a major role in the total income for their families.

**TABLE III. Income Level of Individuals in the Sample of 32 Families in Free Hill's Community, Clay County, Tennessee, 1967.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income</th>
<th>No. Male</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. Female</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$ 499 or less</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 -- 999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 -- 1,499</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500 -- 1,999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 -- 2,499</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500 -- 2,999</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 -- 3,499</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Government Agencies: ---From 60 to 70 percent of the people in the 32 family sample were aware of the opportunities offered for self-improvement through government agencies and their programs. However, they had no knowledge of the methods used in getting the agencies to assist them.

Present programs and policies such as FHA, ACP, RAD, and others are rapidly changing to serve the low income people. This information needs to be presented to these people, so that they will know the changes and opportunities available to help them.
SUMMARY

The 32 families included in this study were somewhat similar in family composition and work experience.

The average age of the males was 56 years, the females was 55 years.

There were five members per family, three adults and two children. The educational level of the parents average 7.2 grades.

Very few of the families had piped water in their houses. There were 25 or 78.1 percent of the families using spring water.

Most of the houses were the unpainted frame type, with 21 or 65 percent unpainted, 5 or 15.6 percent painted, and 6 or 18.7 percent either brick or stucco type.

The total family income ranged from a low of $499.00 or less per year, to a high of over $3,499. Only three families were making more than $3,499.00 per year.

The largest concentration of the males fell in the age range of 47-57 years and the females fell within the ranges of 36-46 and 47-57 years of age.

This is a community of extremely young and extremely old people, totalling approximately 55% of the total population in the sample study. Because of the lack of economic opportunities present in the Free Hill's Area, many individuals of the productive age group have left the area to find other employment and better living conditions.
Recommendations

1. That immediate steps be made to improve water supply.

2. That plans be initiated and developed to provide more job opportunities for the citizens in the community and area.

3. That low cost housing information be provided by the Agency responsible for housing.

4. That programs and activities for senior citizens be planned.