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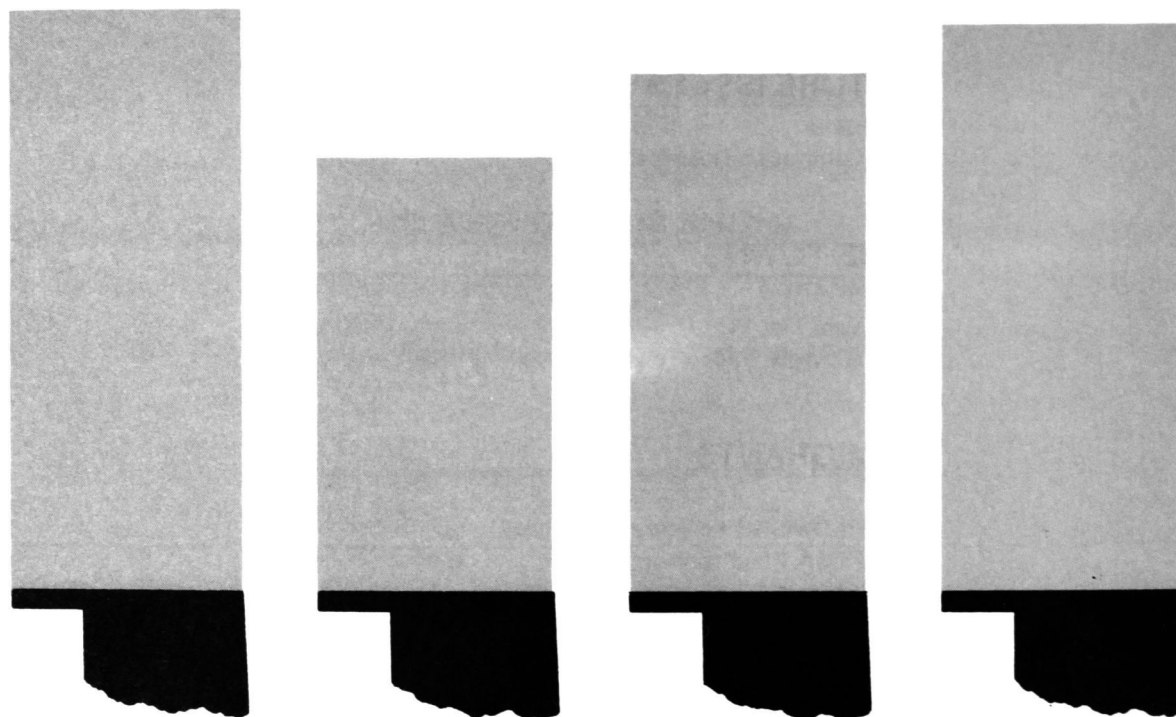
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Population Changes In Western Oklahoma

By Dr. Donald Hamm



a statistician's perspective

During the last three decades, the population in Oklahoma has grown just as it has in the United States. Population in Oklahoma in 1950 was 2,233,351. Population increased 4.3 percent by 1960 (to 2,238,284), an additional 9.9 percent by 1970 (to 2,559,463), and an additional 18.2 percent by 1980 (to 3,025,290).

However, population change in Oklahoma is very uneven, as is probably the case in most states. This article reports on the population changes which have occurred in sixteen Southwestern Oklahoma counties since 1907. Data are provided for four tiers of counties. The western tier includes Roger Mills, Beckham, Greer, Harmon, and Jackson counties. The west middle tier includes Custer, Washita, Kiowa, and Tillman counties. The east middle tier includes Caddo, Comanche, and Cotton counties. The eastern tier includes Canadian, Grady, and Jefferson counties. (Counties in each tier are listed from north to

south.)

Among these counties, eight (Roger Mills, Greer, Harmon, Washita, Kiowa, Cotton, Tillman, and Jefferson) had a smaller population in 1980 than they did in 1907 prior to statehood! Twelve counties, all but Jackson, Comanche, Canadian, and Stephens, had a smaller population in 1980 than they did in 1930. In general, counties in Southwestern Oklahoma have not shared in the population growth seen in the state as a whole.

Details of population changes in the sixteen counties follow. Census data are taken from the *DIRECTORY OF OKLAHOMA--1981 EDITION*. Values for 1907 were taken prior to statehood, when the counties were still in Oklahoma Territory (and to a much smaller extent in Indian Territory).

Census data for the counties in the western tier are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Year	Roger Mills	Beckham	Greer	Harmon	Jackson	Total
1907	13,239	17,758	23,624	11,328	17,087	83,036
1910	12,861	19,699	16,449	11,261	23,737	84,007
1920	10,638	18,989	15,836	13,834	22,141	81,438
1930	14,164	28,991	20,282	10,019	28,910	102,366
1940	10,736	22,169	14,550	8,079	22,708	78,242
1950	7,395	21,627	11,749	5,852	20,082	66,705
1960	5,090	17,782	8,877	5,136	29,736	66,621
1970	4,452	15,754	7,979	4,600	30,902	63,687
1980	4,709	19,197	6,893	4,517	30,323	65,639

No county in this group exhibited its largest population in 1980. Two counties, Greer and Harmon, exhibited their smallest populations in 1980. The 1980 population in Roger Mills County was 36 percent of the 1907 population. Corresponding figures for Greer and Harmon counties are 29 percent and 40 percent respectively. Only two counties, Beckham and Jackson, have larger populations in 1980 than in 1907. The total population for these counties in 1980 was almost 20,000 less than it was in 1907, and about 37,000 less than it was in 1930. Census data for the counties in the west middle tier are shown in Table 2.

No county in this group exhibited its largest population in 1980. Tillman County exhibited its smallest population in 1980. Only Custer County had a population in 1980 larger than its population in 1907, although the 1907 and 1980 populations for Tillman County vary by only 459. The 1980 populations in Washita and Kiowa counties were 62 and 57 percent, respectively, of the corresponding 1907 values. The total population for these counties in 1980 was almost 11,000 less than it was in 1907, and about 46,000 less than it was in 1930.

Data for the east middle tier counties are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 2

Year	Custer	Washita	Kiowa	Tillman	Total
1907	18,478	22,007	22,247	12,869	75,601
1910	23,231	25,034	27,526	18,650	94,441
1920	18,736	22,237	23,094	22,433	86,500
1930	27,517	29,991	29,630	24,390	110,972
1940	23,068	22,279	22,817	20,754	88,918
1950	21,097	17,657	18,926	17,598	75,278
1960	21,040	18,121	14,825	14,654	68,648
1970	22,665	12,141	12,532	12,901	60,239
1980	25,919	13,731	12,670	12,408	64,728

TABLE 3

Year	Caddo	Comanche	Cotton	Total
1907	30,241	31,738	?	61,979
1910	35,685	41,489	?	77,174
1920	34,207	26,629	16,679	77,515
1930	50,779	34,317	15,442	100,538
1940	41,567	38,988	12,884	93,439
1950	34,913	55,165	10,180	100,258
1960	28,621	90,803	8,031	127,455
1970	28,931	108,144	6,832	143,907
1980	30,777	111,973	7,306	150,056

(Cotton County was organized August 28, 1912 from the southern portion of Comanche County.) We see sharp contrast in the population changes in this group. The Comanche County population in 1980 was more than three times greater than it was in 1907 and 1930. The population in Caddo in 1980 was slightly larger than it was in 1907, but only 61 percent what it was in 1930. The population in Cotton County has continued to decline since the first census was taken in 1920. The population in 1980 was less than half what it was in 1930. The total population for the three counties in 1980 was about 2½ times what it was in 1907, and about 50 percent larger than it was in 1930.

Data for the counties in the eastern tier are shown in Table 4.

(Grady, Stephens, and Jefferson counties were formed from portions of both Oklahoma and Indian Territories.) In this group, two counties, Canadian and Stephens, exhibited their largest populations in 1980. The 1980 population in Grady County was exceeded only in 1930 and 1940. Jefferson County population has declined progressively since 1930. The total population for the four counties increased from 1907 through 1930; decreased from 1930 through 1960; showed a small increase in 1970; and then increased 40 percent in 1980.

Total populations for the sixteen counties for selected years are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 4

Year	Canadian	Grady	Stephens	Jefferson	Total
1907	20,110	23,420	20,148	?	63,670
1910	23,501	30,309	22,252	13,439	89,501
1920	22,288	33,943	24,692	17,430	98,356
1930	28,115	47,638	33,069	17,664	126,456
1940	27,329	41,116	31,090	17,392	116,927
1950	25,644	34,872	34,071	15,107	109,694
1960	24,727	29,590	37,990	11,122	103,429
1970	32,245	29,354	35,902	7,125	104,626
1980	56,250	39,043	43,021	8,256	146,580

Although the seven counties on the east had an increase in population of 70,000 from 1930 to 1980, this was more than offset by a population decrease of 83,000 in the nine counties on the west during the same period. In 1930, all four groups of counties had populations between 100,000 and 26,000. In 1980, the two groups of counties on the west had populations of about 65,000 each, while the two groups of counties on the east had populations of about 150,000 each. In 1980, the population in the seven eastern counties was 2.3 times that of the nine western counties!


Table 6 shows the ranks and populations of the sixteen counties in the selected years. 

TABLE 5

Year	16 Counties
1907	284,286
1930	440,332
1940	372,459
1980	427,003

TABLE 6
Population Rank

County	1907	1930	1980
Comanche	1-(31738)	3-(34317)	1-(111973)
Caddo	2-(30241)	1-(50779)	5-(30777)
Greer	3-(23624)	12-(20282)	14-(6893)
Grady	4-(23420)	2-(47638)	4-(39043)
Kiowa	5-(22247)	5-(29630)	10-(12670)
Washita	6-(22007)	6-(29435)	9-(13731)
Stephens	7-(20148)	4-(33069)	3-(43021)
Canadian	8-(20110)	9-(28115)	2-(56260)
Custer	9-(18478)	10-(27517)	7-(25919)
Beckham	10-(17758)	7-(28981)	8-(19197)
Jackson	11-(17087)	8-(28910)	6-(30323)
Roger Mills	12-(13239)	15-(14164)	15-(4709)
Tillman	13-(12869)	11-(24390)	12-(12408)
Harmon	14-(11328)	16-(10019)	16-(4517)
Jefferson	?	13-(17664)	11-(8256)
Cotton	?	14-(15442)	13-(7306)

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