

## Chapter X

### POPULATION TRENDS IN POLK COUNTY

The census of 1860 showed a total population of the original land area of Polk County to be only 240 souls. While this figure was supposedly the white population, it was thought by many to include some Chippewa and half-breed Indians. While there were no means at that time of ascertaining the Indian population of the area, yet with the White Earth and Red Lake bands of Chippewa Indians with tribal headquarters within the confines of the county it was estimated by many people of that day that the Indian population greatly exceeded the white population.

No census figures were given for Polk County in 1870 but in 1880, 11,433 persons were listed with 5,607 reported as native born. In the interim between 1860 and 1880 the county lost the land area south of what is now the southern boundry of Norman and Mahnomen counties and lost all of the land area east of what is now the eastern boundry of Polk County. The land to the east was attached to Beltrami County and the land to the south was added to the new county of Clay. The most rapid growth in population of the county occurred between 1880 and 1890. Even with the loss of 1,432 square miles of land area to Norman County in 1882, the population of the county mounted to 30,192 in 1890. During the period 1890 to 1900 Polk County lost an additional 1,039 miles of land area to Red Lake County but showed a remarkable population figure of 35,429 in 1900.

The United State Census figures for the period 1900 to 1950 inclusive are shown in the following table:

1900	-	-	-	-	35,429
1910	-	-	-	-	36,001
1920	-	-	-	-	37,090
1930	-	-	-	-	36,019
1940	-	-	-	-	37,734
1950	-	-	-	-	35,900

The decade 1920 to 1930 was a period of readjustment of population in the county. With the increase in mechanization on the farms following World War I, poor wheat crops in the early twenties due to rust, and opportunities in industrial centers for the returning soldiers, the farms, villages and towns of the county all showed that migration from the county had taken place. The decline in population of the smaller villages of the county began during that period. Villages and towns with good schools, food processing plants or other industries to give employment, have maintained or increased their population. World War II and war industries shrunk the county population during the forties but the rural areas and the small villages suffered mainly in the permanent loss of persons. During the fifties all of the principal towns and villages have been experiencing the most rapid growth in their histories.