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## ABSTRACT

### A SURVEY OF NONRESIDENT LANDOWNERS IN CLARE AND GLADWIN COUNTIES

By

Douglas Nelson McEwen

This exploratory study was designed to gather some selected characteristics of nonresident landowners in Clare and Gladwin counties. These characteristics were then used to: (1) test the amount of homogeneity within this group, and (2) show that nonresidents were not acquainted with the locale in Clare and/or Gladwin counties.

A 100 per cent sample of nonresidents owning ten or more acres was taken from county tax rolls. A questionnaire was then formulated and mailed to the above addresses. A total of 994 questionnaires were returned out of 1,986 mailed, giving a 53 per cent response.

The questionnaire was designed to sample four broad topics of information: (1) the respondent: exposure to conservation education, occupation, and childhood residence; (2) characteristics of ownership and use of property; (3) some characteristics of the property, and, (4) owner knowledge and opinions of the local counties.

The results show that nonresident landowners were a heterogeneous group. Some characteristics did receive a homogeneous response, but the number of these was small compared to the number of characteristics that received a heterogeneous response.



A SURVEY OF NONRESIDENT LANDOWNERS  
IN CLARE AND GLADWIN COUNTIES

By

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A THESIS

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Resource Development

1970

G-65119  
1-20-71

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At this point, I would like to thank the many persons who assisted me in the preparation of this thesis.

Dr. Leighton Leighty, who served as my thesis advisor was most cooperative. It was during the time I worked under his direction that this thesis took on its final form.

Dr. Milton Steinmueller, my academic advisor and thesis chairman, made many helpful suggestions. Also Dr. A. Allen Schmidt, who served on my thesis committee, made some excellent comments. Many thanks are due them both.

Dr. Raleigh Barlowe, Chairman of the Department of Resource Development, was instrumental in supporting this thesis, not only through financial assistance, but also by contributing the original interest that started this research project.

The original part of this research project was done under the supervision of Dr. George Graff.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of my wife, Kiva. She participated in every phase of this project, and helped me more than any other person in completing my thesis.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

#### Introduction and Problem

Whether explicitly stated by such American patriots as Thomas Jefferson, or implicitly shown in such writings as Grapes of Wrath, the American mind has historically revealed a special affinity for self ownership of land. "Unencumbered owner-operatorship has long been viewed as the foremost goal in American land tenure policy."<sup>1</sup> Within this context, nonresident ownership of the land, especially agricultural land, has been looked upon with much disfavor. Special criticisms have always been directed at this class of owners, but during the early days of the great depression, this criticism rose to a peak.<sup>2</sup> One of the areas hardest hit with this problem was the dustbowl region of southwest United States, and it was at this time that an abundance of literature started appearing on farm tenancy.

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<sup>1</sup>Raleigh Barlowe, Land Resource Economics (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 407.

<sup>2</sup>Morris Evans, "Nonresident Ownership--Evil or Scapegoat?" Land Policy Review, I, No. 2 (July-August, 1938), 15-20.



Many areas of the United States, aside from the Southwest, have experienced a high degree of nonresident ownership, one of these being the so called "cutover region" of the Lake States. Although no concrete figures can be given, it is known that nonresidents own a significant portion of the privately held land in this area.<sup>3</sup>

In looking at this group of nonresident landowners, care must be taken to distinguish them from the group of nonresidents that lived in the Southwest during the days of the great depression. What we have here is a new class of nonresident owners, and it would be very misleading to apply to these owners the experience gained from that class of nonresident owners that lived in the Southwest.

The reason for the distinction between these two groups is twofold. First, the land owned by the Lake State's nonresidents is primarily idle land--not intensively used agriculture land as in the Southwest. Secondly, these Lake State's nonresidents own their land primarily for recreational use, and not for income realized from renting to tenant farmers.

Given these two basic and very important distinctions, we find that the Lake State nonresidents have developed some characteristic land use patterns and problems.

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<sup>3</sup>Wilbur O. Hedrick, Recreational Use of Northern Michigan Cutover Land. Mich. Ag. Expt. Sta. Special Bulletin 247 (E. Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State College Press, 1934).

A review of the literature available helps outline these land use patterns in more detail. In the following paragraph, some of these features will be noted.

One of the first facts established in these previous studies is the importance of nonresident property, especially for recreation. Both in the Lake States and New England regions, it was shown that nonresidents own a significant amount of land, up to 25 per cent of the total private holdings in some cases.<sup>4</sup> It was also shown that nonresident ownership is increasing, but no specific rate was given.

The effect of this new group of owners on the locale where their property is located is multiple. In most areas, land bought by nonresidents was previously idle land; much of it abandoned farm or timber land. The purchase of land by the nonresidents is usually followed by an intensification of its use: more occupation of the properties, improvements etc. From this increased land use, several effects arise.

An increase in the tax base is one of the most immediate effects. The nonresident usually makes some improvements on the property, principally houses, and this further expands the tax base. This expansion of nonresident

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<sup>4</sup>Nathan L. Whitten and Victor A. Rapport, The Recreational Uses of Land in Connecticut, Storrs Ag. Expt. Sta. Bulletin 194 (Storrs, Connecticut: Connecticut State College, 1934).

tax base is very important for local government since agricultural and timber lands are decreasing in production, thus reducing the tax base.

The arrival of nonresident owners also presents many challenges to local government. Such functions as zoning, police protection, and other services take on new dimensions, of which the seasonal factor is very advantageous to the local community because they collect taxes for the whole year, but need to provide services to the nonresident for only part of the year. This is particularly true in respect to roads which are seldom used in winter, and require no maintenance during that season. On the other hand, when the nonresidents do arrive, they tend to expect a higher quality of services than is normally found in rural areas. This is probably due to the urban background of the nonresident. Disagreement over the quality of local services can lead to animosity between the two groups.

This brings up one of the more difficult problems for local government--the promotion of cooperation between the local people and the nonresident owners. This problem is hard to solve due to the seasonal nature of the nonresident's visits, and to the great difference between urban and rural customs.

In Michigan, the Cooperative Extension Service is very aware of these problems and has had a growing interest in conducting educational programs for the nonresident

landowners. Such programs could go far in promoting cooperation between this group of owners and the local community.<sup>5</sup>

Aside from the direct impact on local governments, other community benefits arise from the increase of non-resident owners. There is the demand for local labor to help in property improvements. Also, there is the demand for local products, mainly food, which helps support local retail trade. Lastly, there is some demand for local services such as lawyers, doctors, barbers, restaurants, etc.

In addition to community benefits, the literature discussed some of the characteristics of the nonresident himself. These characteristics are important, not only in explaining the present nonresident land use pattern, but also in predicting future patterns.

Unfortunately, none of the literature included a description of nonresidents in the Lake States region. Since nonresidents do own a significant portion of land in this area, and since characteristics of these owners are important in land use patterns, it was decided that this study would set as a goal a survey of these nonresident owners. A benchmark survey of this type will be very valuable background for future research in this area. It will

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<sup>5</sup>David Olsen, "An Educational Program for Absentee Landowners" (an unpublished paper on file at the Dept. of Resource Development, Michigan State University, 1970).

also provide helpful information for the design of non-resident educational programs of the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service.

### Assumptions

Several general assumptions were made in undertaking this study, and it seems appropriate to mention them at the outset. First of all, the author assumed that nonresident landowners own large amounts of land, and that identification of this group was necessary for: (a) study of land use patterns, and (b) development of educational programs.

Next, it was assumed that a survey of nonresidents holding parcels of ten or more acres would in fact include a large majority of nonresident land. In other words, it was felt that small parcel owners held less than 25 per cent of the total nonresident acreage. Also it was assumed that this class of small parcel owners differed from the class of large parcel owners in both physical aspects of the land and patterns of land use.

Thirdly, it was assumed that a mail questionnaire would give an accurate representation of nonresident land owner characteristics. This is a large assumption since many problems arise in the use of such questionnaires, but time and financial limitations made this type of sampling device mandatory.

### Hypothesis

The guiding hypothesis for this study can be stated as follows: nonresident landowners are a homogeneous group relative to certain select characteristics and lack accurate knowledge of the counties where their properties are located.

### Outline of Investigation

To test the above hypothesis, a group of selected items including the background of the nonresident, his present uses of the land, his opinions toward the locale of his property, and also a few questions from a previous survey in two other counties<sup>6</sup> was incorporated into the questionnaire.

Next, names of the nonresidents owning parcels of ten or more acres were taken from the Clare and Gladwin tax rolls. For the purpose of this study, a nonresident was defined as a person having a mailing address outside the two counties. The limit of ten or more acres was set so as to include only those who owned the bulk of nonresident land.

Then each of the above persons was sent a questionnaire. From this mailing of 1,986 questionnaires, 994 were returned: a 53 per cent response.

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<sup>6</sup>Robert Vertrees, "A Survey of Nonresident Landowners of Ten or More Acres in Antrim and Kalkaska Counties, Michigan" (unpublished Master's dissertation, Dept. of Resource Development, Michigan State University, 1969).

The returned questionnaires were then coded and the data entered on IBM cards. The data was then programmed on the CDC 3600 computer for statistical analysis. The results of this analysis are presented in the following chapter.

Aside from the information obtained in the questionnaire, several days were spent visiting the two counties. Inspection was made of nonresident tracts, interviews were taken of local officials, and time was spent talking to the county agents. These visits provided valuable depth and perspective to the information gathered by the questionnaire.

#### Background Material

Clare and Gladwin counties lie together in what is called a transitional zone between the southern farm land and the northern forests. Both areas have farm land along with extensive tracts of state and private forest land. The location of the two counties puts them within easy accessibility of southern Michigan's large cities. Grand Rapids, Lansing, Flint, Detroit, and other metropolitan areas are between one and a half and two hours away. Both Mt. Pleasant and Midland are within commuting distance for county residents. One reason for this accessibility to large cities has been the development of a free-way system that passes directly through Clare County.

In keeping with the transitional nature of the counties, the natural resources of the area present a heterogeneous composition. Slightly over one-half of the area is classified as commercial forest,<sup>7</sup> and from aerial photographs it appears that an even higher percentage of the area is covered by some type of trees. The forest is a mixture of conifers and hardwoods--all of which are second growth. Interspersed with the forests are several large pockets of farm and pasture lands. Soils of these pockets range from loams to sandy loams of medium fertility (Class II and III).<sup>8</sup> Poor drainage is a problem on these soils, with some Class III land being potentially Class I and II if proper drainage were provided. Soils of the forested areas are usually sands, occasionally mixed with a few loams of low fertility (Class III and IV), and not suited to farming.

The topography of the counties is typical of glaciated areas: a mixture of rolling ground moraines and flat outwash plains. Pothole lakes are found scattered throughout the counties and the drainage system is highly erratic. Clare County has a total of 355 natural and artificial

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<sup>7</sup>Timber Resource, Gladwin Block Lower Peninsula  
(Lansing, Michigan: Department of Natural Resources, 1957).

<sup>8</sup>J. O. Veatch, Soils and Land of Michigan (E. Lansing, Michigan: The Michigan State College Press, 1953).



lakes. Gladwin has fifty-four such lakes.<sup>9</sup> The combined total water area of the two counties equals 13,011 acres, a sizeable amount especially when combined with the 804 miles<sup>10</sup> of streams in this area.

In mineral resources, Clare ranked thirty-second, and Gladwin ranked thirty-seventh among all Michigan counties in terms of total value of mineral production.<sup>11</sup> Petroleum and natural gas accounted for most of this value, however some sand and gravel was produced. The 1970 population of the two counties was 23,200 or 20.9 persons per square mile.<sup>12</sup> However, this density figure does not reveal the uneven distribution present. The cities of Farwell, Clare, Harrison, Gladwin, and Beaverton plus five townships (farming areas) contain nearly one-half the total population. In some of the less populated townships, the population density drops to less than .36 persons per square mile. As characteristic of many northern Michigan counties,

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<sup>9</sup>C. R. Humphreys and R. F. Green, Michigan Lakes and Ponds, Lake Inventory Bulletin 18 and 26 (E. Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, 1962).

<sup>10</sup>C. J. D. Brown, "How Many Lakes in Michigan and Michigan Streams, Their Lengths, Distribution, and Drainage Areas," Michigan Conservation, XIII, No. 5.

<sup>11</sup>"Directory of Michigan Mineral Operators 1964" (Lansing, Michigan: Geological Survey, Economic Minerals Section, 1965).

<sup>12</sup>U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census of Population (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960).

the average median income of families and unrelated individuals is \$3,796 which is below the state median of \$5,534.<sup>13</sup> Also, the age distribution shows a heavy number of persons in the zero to nineteen and sixty-five plus ranges.<sup>14</sup> A low number of persons in the twenty to forty-four age bracket reveals that many of the counties' young people are migrating out of the area after reaching working age, leaving behind a relatively dependent, unproductive class of young or retired persons.

Being in the interior of the lower peninsula, the climate of Clare and Gladwin is not affected too much by the Great Lakes. Monthly temperature means range from 20.4° in January, to 68.9° in July. Yearly precipitation is 30.48 inches. Sixty per cent of this total falls during the period of April to September. Snowfall averages 43.8 inches during the winter with considerable season to season variation.<sup>15</sup>

The history of land use in Clare and Gladwin counties is typical of the northern lower peninsula. About ten years after the first settlers arrived in 1860, lumbering interests began buying land for logging. For the next thirty years (1870-1900), lumbering thrived in the area, but

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>U.S., Department of Commerce, Weather Bureau, Climate of Michigan by Stations, No. 20 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963).

by the turn of the century most of the standing timber had been logged off. With the clearing of the land, farmers moved into the area, and as early as 1880 there were 2,600 acres in farm production. The peak of farming was reached about 1910, but due to the low fertility of the sandy soil, many of the farms failed. Much of this land reverted to the state as tax delinquent and was resold several times before the state land commission started a policy of selling only land suitable for farming. A great deal of this area which contained poor soil has been dedicated to state forests.

As early as 1924, when large tracts of tax reverted farms began flooding the Michigan land market, hunting clubs were buying large cutover areas.<sup>16</sup> This trend has continued to the present, with many acres in the two counties being tied up by large hunting clubs. Presently, other non-residents are buying smaller tracts of land: 40, 80, and 160 acre areas as well as platted resort lots have increased markedly.

In viewing the present land use of the two counties, figures show that a little less than one-third of the area is farmland, but the total area of cropland harvested

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<sup>16</sup>Frederick Morley, Michigan and Its Resources (Lansing, Michigan: W. S. George and Co., 1881; Commission of Immigration).

is about one-tenth of the two county area.<sup>17</sup> Farming is now confined to those pockets of relatively fertile soil. Commercial forest land occupies a little less than two-thirds of the total area, but much of this is second growth hardwoods of poor quality.<sup>18</sup> The remaining acreage is devoted to urban sites, recreation, and other miscellaneous uses. Along with the land use pattern, it is important to notice the ownership pattern. In Clare County, approximately 14 per cent of the land is publicly owned. In Gladwin, 26 per cent is publicly owned. Of the remaining privately owned land, nonresidents holding parcels of ten acres or more owned 29 per cent in Clare and 39 per cent in Gladwin. Thus it is obvious that nonresidents control a significant acreage of the privately held land in these two counties.

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<sup>17</sup>U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, U.S. Census of Agriculture (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964).

<sup>18</sup>Timber Resources, Gladwin Block Lower Peninsula,  
op. cit.

## CHAPTER II

### HOMOGENEITY

Here we will look at the data to see the amount of homogeneity shown by nonresident landowners. This will be done by examining a number of selected characteristics to see if any of them elicit a high response.<sup>19</sup> Any characteristic that does yield a high response will be judged as homogeneous. Then after presenting all the data, an overall analysis will be made to see if nonresidents can be described as a homogeneous group.

#### Characteristics of the Property

Although this survey did not concentrate heavily on the physical aspects of the land, some characteristics of the nonresident's property were noted. These nonresidents own approximately 98,883 acres of land in both Clare and Gladwin counties. As stated before, this constitutes 29

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<sup>19</sup>The author wants to make clear at this point that no statistical tests were used in this study. All figures given are the raw data. Thus what, in this case, constitutes a high response is purely an arbitrary decision. Usually a figure greater than 80 per cent was considered a high response.

per cent of all privately held land in Clare, and 39 per cent of all privately held land in Gladwin.

### Size

First, we will look at the sizes of the properties. Figure 1 shows a distribution of the most frequently reported parcel sizes. From this graph, one easily sees that the majority of owners have parcels of forty and eighty acres. These two sizes constitute 27.5 per cent of the total nonresident acreage.

Forest acreage totaling 64,702 acres, covered 65.4 per cent of all the nonresident property. Figure 2 shows a distribution of the most frequently reported forest acreages--forty acres being the most widely held. Sizes of ten, twenty, and eighty acres were also frequently reported. This group, along with the forty acre group accounted for 2 per cent of the total nonresident forest acreage. It is obvious from the above that a minority of owners hold large acreages of forest land. Unfortunately, data is not available to further investigate this situation.

### Property Frontage

In regard to property frontage, approximately 12 per cent of the owners reported having no direct access to a stream or lake. Gladwin had more stream frontage (24%), compared to Clare's 15 per cent, but Clare had more lake frontage (8%), compared to Gladwin's 3 per cent. One reason

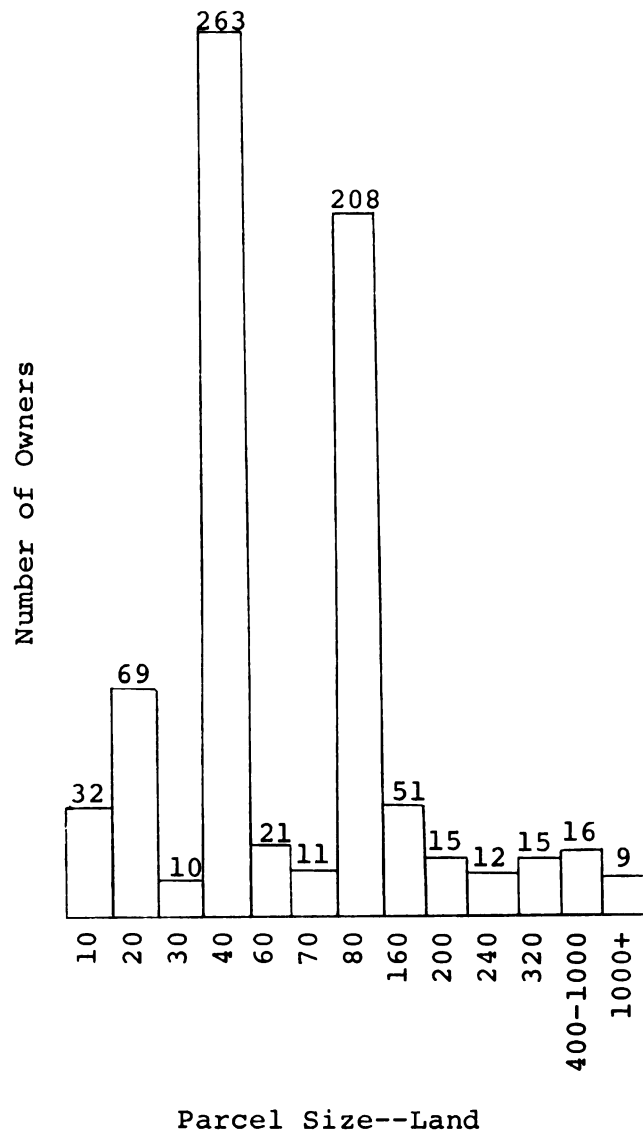


Figure 1.--Number of nonresident owners holding various sizes of land parcels in Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

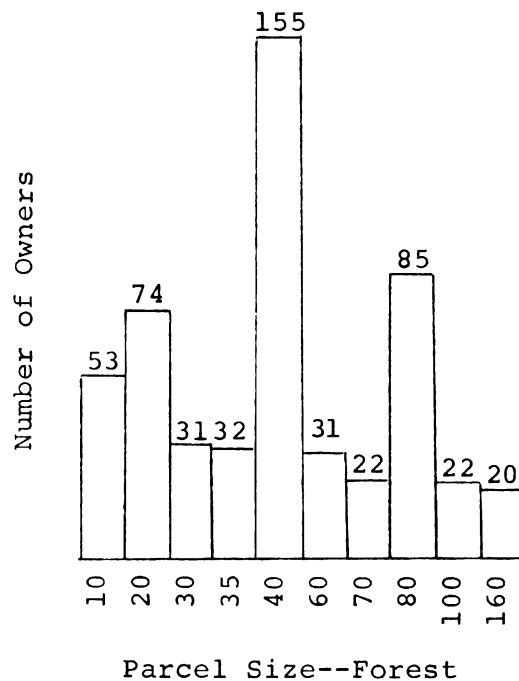


Figure 2.--Number of nonresident owners holding various sizes of forest parcels in Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

for the low percentage of water frontage is the exclusion of property owners of less than ten acres in this study. Presumably, the water frontage would have risen if the small parcel owner has been included. However, the important thing to note here is that the bulk of nonresident acreage has no water frontage.

#### Buildings

Sixty-three per cent of the owners reported having a living facility or were planning to build one. As shown in Figure 3, small cabins were by far the most common



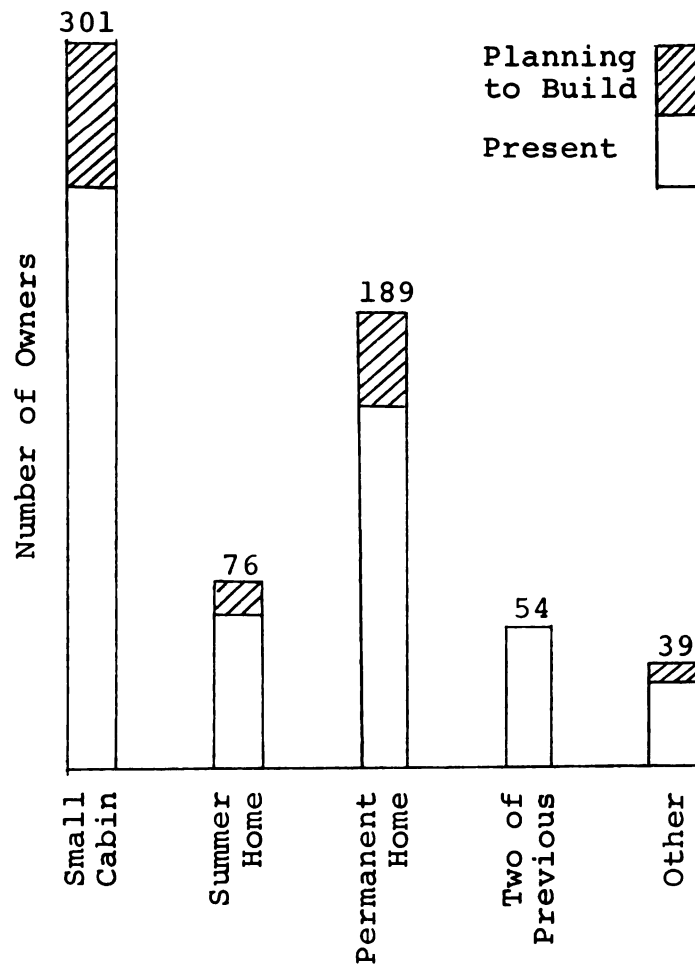


Figure 3.--Categories of living facilities on non-resident properties in Clare and Gladwin Counties as grouped by number of owners having or planning to build each type, 1966.

type, both in present structure, and in future plans for building. They were followed by permanent residences and lastly by summer homes. Also a certain number of owners had two structures. Clare County had a higher percentage of the small cabins and summer homes, while Gladwin had a higher percentage of permanent residences. This pattern

was followed both in present structures and in future plans for building.

### Summary

Summing up this section on physical characteristics, four points seem important. First, a majority of nonresidents own parcel sizes of forty or eighty acres. Secondly, the bulk of forest holdings are in blocks of forty acres. This small size poses some forest management problems as discussed in an article by Schallau.<sup>20</sup>

Thirdly, a low percentage (28%) of total nonresident holdings have water frontage. This would seem to preclude any great water use problems as far as nonresident property is concerned. However, the nonresident, visiting his property, could desire some public access to streams or lakes for recreational purposes. This seems to be an interesting problem that could be further investigated.

Finally, we noted that 63 per cent of the nonresidential properties had some type of building. This study asked only general information concerning these buildings, but it might be fruitful to do a more detailed study of them. Such information might show future pollution problems, zoning requirements, and changes in the property tax base.

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<sup>20</sup>Con H. Schallau, Fragmentation, Absentee, Ownership, and Turnover of Forest Land in Northern Lower Michigan, U.S., Forest Service Research Paper LS-17 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965).

### The Respondent

While this section was primarily directed at recording information concerning the nonresident himself, only four direct questions of personal information were asked. Obviously, there is a limit to which a mail questionnaire can pry into private affairs. Thus the small number of direct questions reflects the author's concern to not exceed the above limit.

### Previous Residence

Twenty-two per cent of the respondents reported they had previously resided in one of the two study counties. Gladwin had a higher total (27%) than Clare (17%).

The question concerning childhood residence showed that 67 per cent of the respondents came from farms or rural communities (refer to Figure 4). This high percentage was expected, but in the future we will certainly see an increase of suburban-city dwellers.

### Conservation Education

A question was inserted into the survey asking the respondents about their exposure to conservation education. One of the main reasons for inserting this question was to provide the Cooperative Extension Service with some background information that would help in formulating nonresident education programs. The response to this item was rather low. Only 22 per cent of the nonresidents indicated that they had received any form of conservation education.

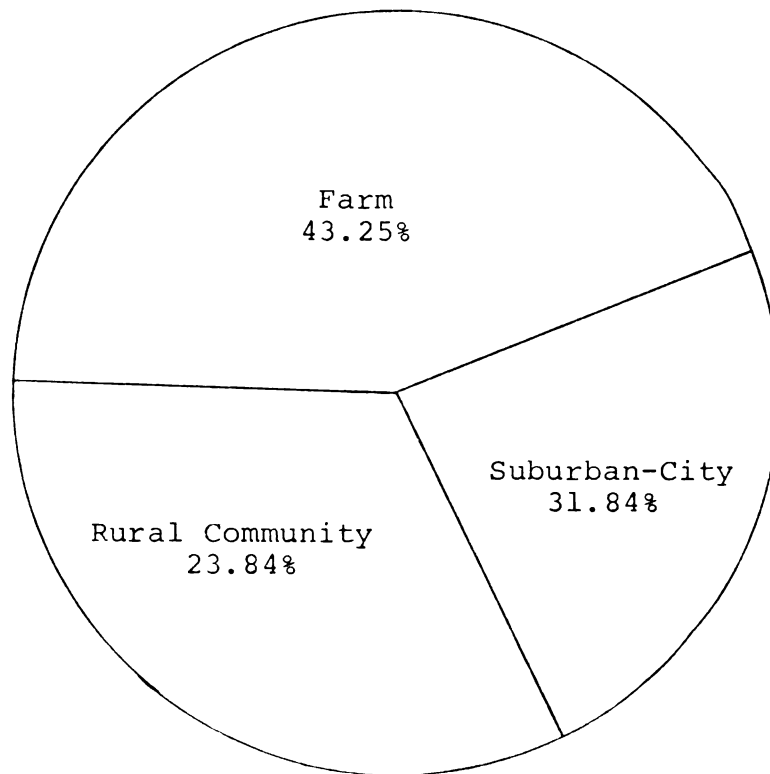


Figure 4.--Childhood residence of nonresident landowners in Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

#### Occupation

Occupation of the nonresident is shown in Figure 5. One sees that five categories predominate: laborers, craftsmen-foremen, retired people, professional-technical, and manager-officials. These five categories accounted for 76 per cent of the nonresidents.

#### Home Area

Figure 6 and Figure 7 show home areas for nonresidents owning property in the two counties. It is evident from the Michigan map that regions four, five, and seven

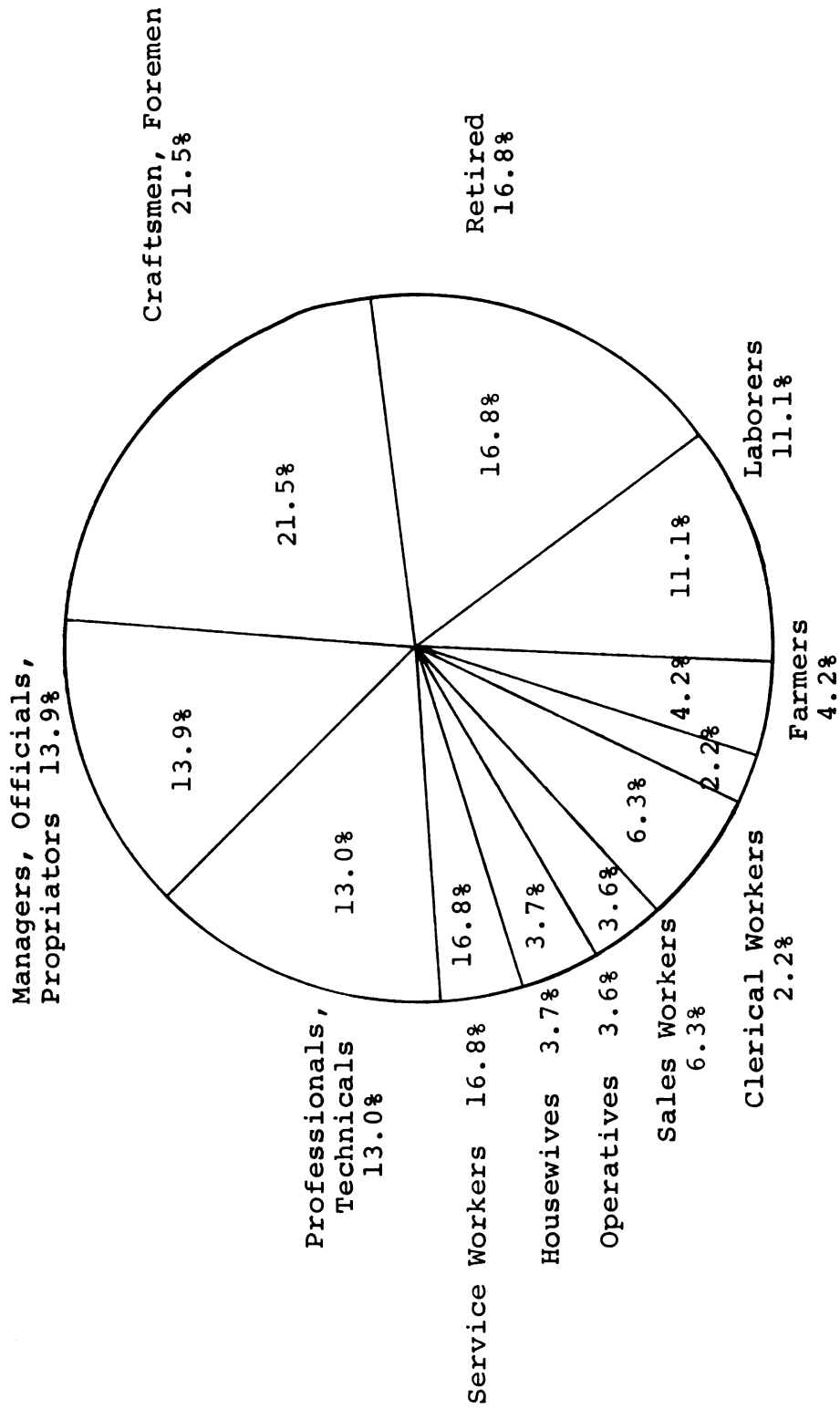


Figure 5.--Occupation of nonresidents owning property in Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

\*Based on 856 respondents.

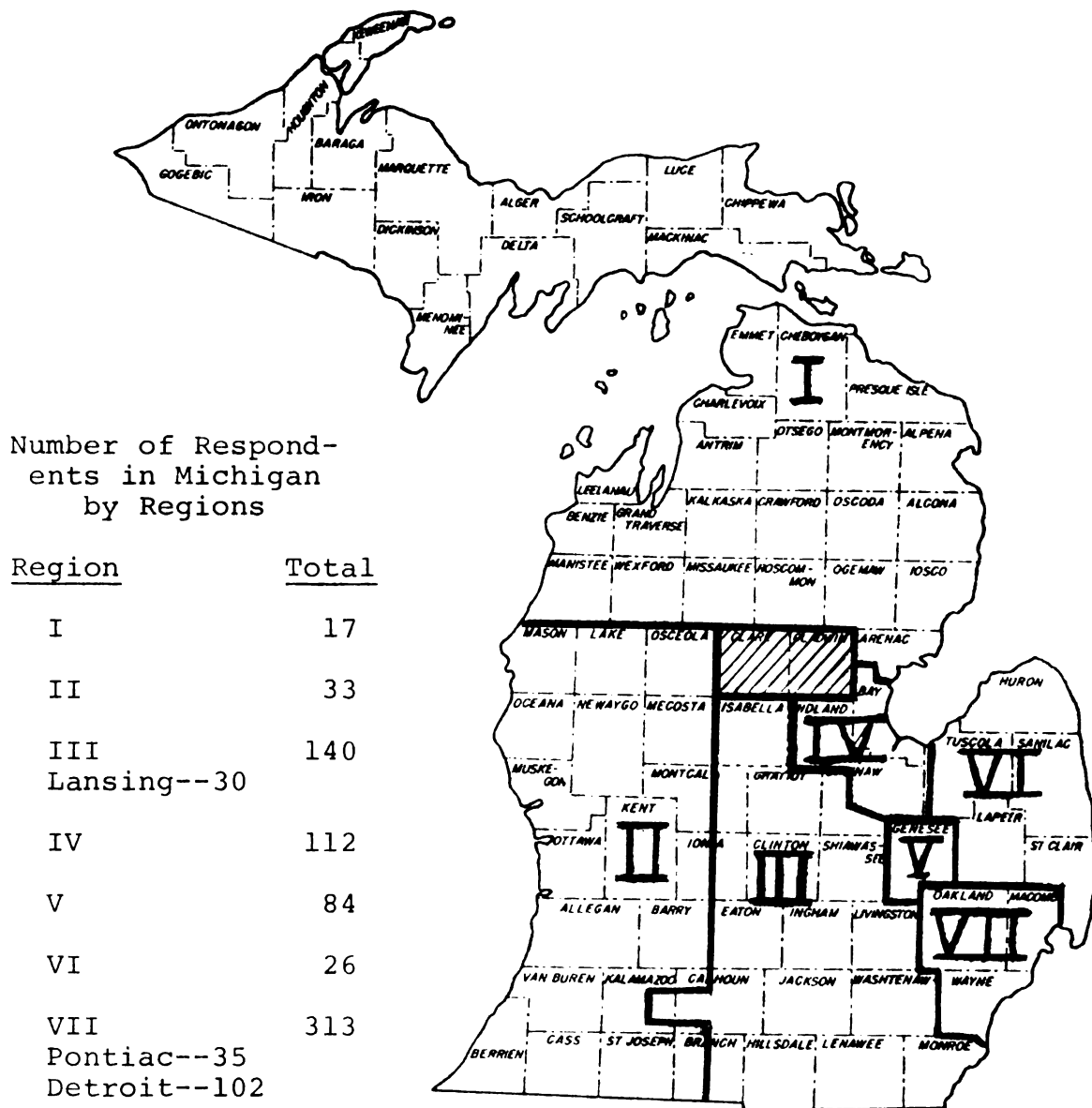


Figure 6.--Home residence distribution of Michigan nonresidents owning property in Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

Note: City totals were included in Regional totals.

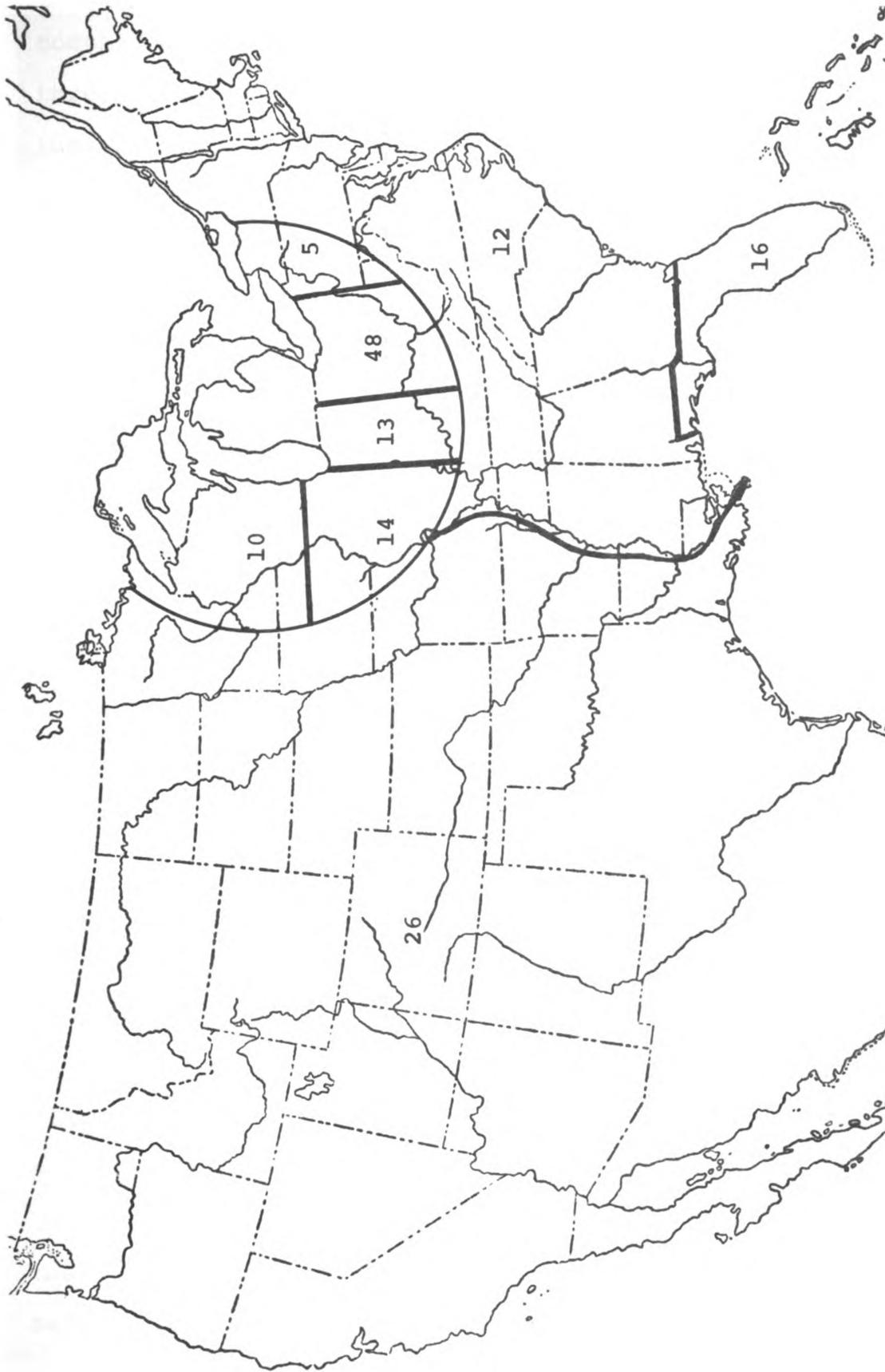


Figure 7.--Home residence distribution of nonresidents owning property in Clare and Gladwin Counties and living outside Michigan.

contain over one-half of the total respondents. These three areas lie in a southeasterly corridor extending from the two study counties to Detroit. Detroit and the tri-county area (Wayne, Oakland, Macomb), as expected, contained the largest number of respondents, nearly one-third of the total (31.5%).

Region three, which borders this southeasterly corridor, also had a significant amount of respondents. The pattern of cities within this region indicated the bulk of the respondents resided in the north and eastern part of the region. Surprisingly, region two contained a small number of respondents. Perhaps the lack of direct freeway connections to the counties was a factor here, but no substantiation of this idea can be made.

Region one, which included part of the upper peninsula, had a low count. This was expected since down state migration and the recreational land demand by metropolitan people leave little reason to expect residents north of the two counties to own land there. Also region six, somewhat isolated, had a low count.

The regions immediately surrounding Michigan were fixed within a 500 mile radius of the two counties. Supposedly, this is a reasonable one day car journey to the counties. These out-state regions had such a low count, that little discussion is warranted. The Ohio sector contained the most respondents of any of these bordering



regions. Easy access to northern freeways probably contributed to this high total.

### Summary

It was hoped that in this section on background, we would be able to derive an "average" nonresident landowner. Unfortunately, this cannot be done. The data shows that nonresidents are quite a heterogeneous group relative to the questions we asked. This brings up two interesting possibilities. First, it might be true that nonresidents as a group have a very heterogeneous background. Secondly, perhaps there are some common traits of nonresidents that cause them to own land in these northern counties and this study, due to its brevity, did not discover these traits. Furthermore, these traits, if they exist, might be very helpful in understanding the nonresident, especially when efforts are made to manage his land use pattern. The type of research required to answer the above possibility the author is not prepared to say. Perhaps such a study is not realistic; but in any case, the question seems interesting.

### Characteristics of Land Ownership and Use

In this section we come to an important part of the study. The previous sections have helped build a background profile of the nonresident and his property. Now we shall look at how this nonresident owner behaves toward his land.

### Type and Origin of Ownership

The first questions concerned the type of ownership, how the land was acquired, and date of occupancy. Eighty-three per cent of the respondents reported themselves as individual owners, while 15 per cent reported themselves as being in an ownership group.

In regards to origin of purchase, Table 1 shows that over two-thirds of the respondents purchased their property from a nonrelative. Purchases from relatives and inherited land were next, followed by the miscellaneous category. In comparing the two counties, Clare had a higher percentage purchased from nonrelatives while Gladwin had a higher percentage purchased from relatives.

TABLE 1.--Origin of nonresident land purchased in Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

	Percentage Response
Purchased from a relative	13.8
Purchased from a nonrelative	68.4
Inherited or gift	12.8
Other (debt payment, trade, etc.)	4.0

Figure 8 gives a good picture of the distribution of owners according to when they first occupied their property. As expected, the number of owners decreases as one progresses further back in time. The great bulk of present owners acquired their property since 1950.

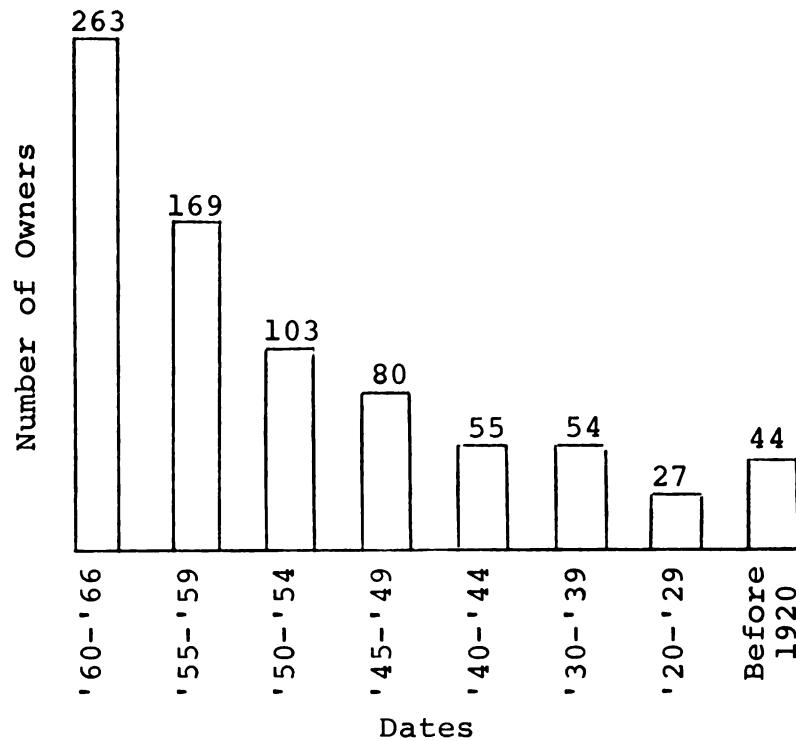


Figure 8.--Number of owners grouped by first date of occupancy of their properties in Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

#### Amount of Property Use

The next question, concerning number of days spent on the property provided an interesting pattern. Figure 9 shows the total number of days spent on the property during the various quarters of the year. The summer quarter had the highest total, but it was followed closely by the fall-early winter quarter. Contrasting the two counties revealed a similar pattern for each. However, Gladwin consistently showed a lower number of days in each quarter than Clare. Figure 10 probes deeper into the above pattern by showing a distribution of owners according to the number

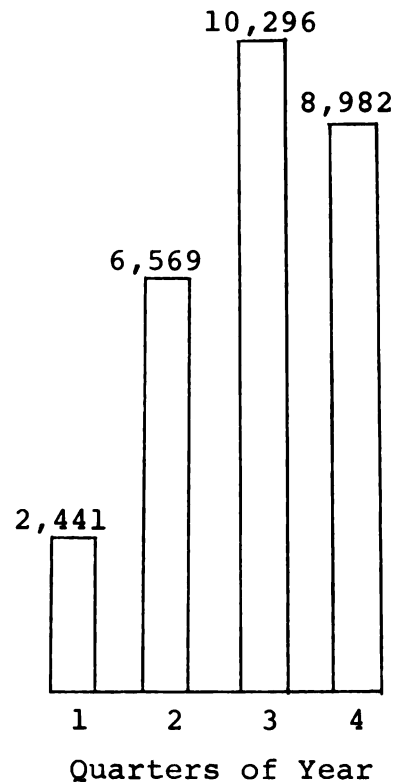


Figure 9.--Days spent on property during each quarter of the year by nonresidents of Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

of visits made during each quarter. In the first quarter, over two-thirds of the owners spent no time on their property. During the second quarter, most of the owners were split between zero days and one to fifteen day visits to the property. Moving into the third quarter, one sees a higher percentage in the fifteen plus category and a decrease in the one to fifteen and zero categories. In the fourth quarter, we see a decrease in the fifteen plus and the zero categories, accompanied by a sharp rise in the one to fifteen day category.

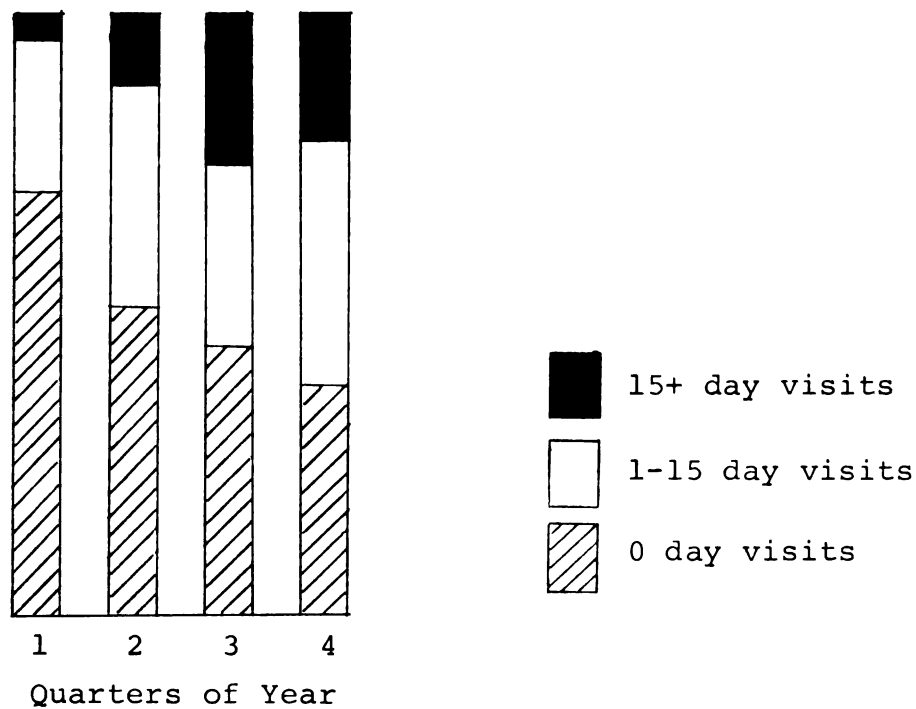


Figure 10.--Pattern of time spent on nonresident property in Clare and Gladwin Counties as shown by the number of visits in each category, 1966.

Perhaps a more simple way to understand Figure 10 is by viewing it horizontally, left to right. Doing this, we see that the percentages in the zero category constantly decrease, reaching a low point in the fourth quarter. The one to fifteen day category has a fluctuating percentage, but reaches its highest peak in the fourth quarter. The fifteen day plus category slowly climbs in the second quarter, rises sharply in the third quarter to its peak, and then drops off somewhat in the fourth quarter.

Now, combining the two figures (9 and 10), we can summarize the discussion. The first quarter has the lowest

number of property visits and total property days spent by the nonresident. The second quarter is next. However, in looking at the last two quarters, we see that although the third quarter exceeds the fourth in total property days spent, the fourth quarter has a higher number of property visits. This is because the fourth quarter had a higher percentage of short term visits, presumably by hunters.

In addition to the above data some correlations were done with home area, weekend vacations, and summer-long vacations. The original thought here was that those people living in regions close to the two study counties would be more inclined to use their property for weekends rather than for summer-long vacations.<sup>21</sup>

The results showed that weekend vacations were more popular than summer-long vacations in every region. However, in the regions more distant from Clare and Gladwin counties, the relative popularity of weekend over summer-long vacations declined. In region four (Midland, Bay City, and Saginaw Counties), weekend vacations were three times as popular as summer-long ones. But, in region five (Flint), this popularity factor declined to 2.5 times, then to 1.75 times in region seven (Tri-County), and became lowest in the out-of-state regions, 1.1 times.

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<sup>21</sup>Refer to the Figures 6 and 7.

Summarizing, one could say that while, for a bulk of the nonresidents (80%), distance from their property did not prohibit weekend vacations, those closer to their property have a greater tendency to spend weekends, rather than summer-long vacation on the land.

#### Types of Land Use

Next, we move into how the land is being used. The nonresident was asked to indicate the various uses of his land. Figure 11 gives a good picture of these uses. Hunting, by far the most frequent use, was followed by weekend vacations. Both of these activities involve short term visits, and since the two counties are easily accessible to large cities, one would expect a high use in these areas.

Two other large uses are retirement residence and forest products. Little comment can be made on these results. However, in connection with these uses, a separate question was asked concerning the growing of Christmas trees for a retirement income. Only 7 per cent reported "yes" to this question, while 45 per cent reported "no," and 45 per cent reported "haven't considered." Apparently, the idea that many people are planting Christmas trees on the myth of providing a retirement income is not true in these two counties.

Another significant point in Figure 11 is the number of owners indicating no specific use of the land, but little can be said on this topic. Also, the author should point

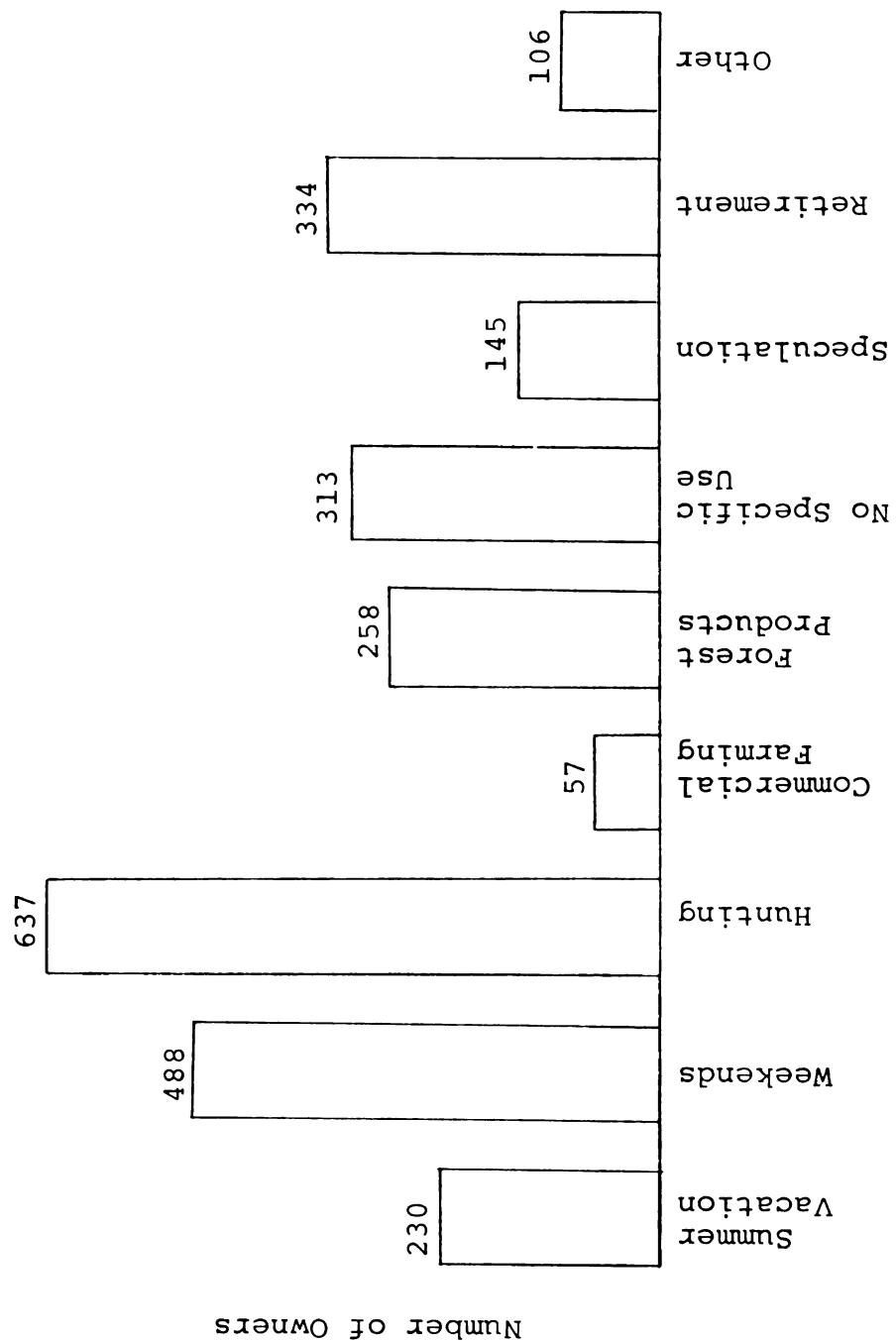


Figure 11.--A comparison of uses made on nonresident properties in Clare and Gladwin Counties as shown by number of owners in each type of use, 1966.



out that the number of owners holding land for speculation seems a little low. This leads one to believe that many did not respond to this point because it pried into sensitive financial information.

Contrasting the two counties, we find that Clare received more use in the weekend vacations and sporting trips. On the other hand, Gladwin had a higher percentage in commercial farming and retirement residence. Perhaps this latter fact explains why Gladwin reported a higher percentage of permanent houses on nonresident property.

Along with land use, two questions were asked concerning posting to prevent trespassing and the degree of seclusion preferred while on the property. In regard to the amount of seclusion the nonresident desires while on his property, 28 per cent reported preferring to be secluded, 50 per cent wanted some contact with neighbors, and only 7 per cent wanted close contact with neighbors.

As for fencing or posting to prevent trespassing, 54 per cent replied "yes" to this question, 32 per cent replied "no," and 11 per cent replied "no, but planning to fence or post in the future." A number of comments were received on this subject, and most respondents expressed their displeasure over chronic trespassing and the removal or destruction of fences and signs. It was obvious from these comments that fencing or posting had little effect and that constant occupancy, especially during the hunting season, was the only way to halt trespassing.

Aside from personal use, the nonresidents were asked if they had considered leasing their property for various uses. Forty-three per cent reported they had not considered leasing while 24 per cent indicated no desire to lease any part of the land. Six per cent considered leasing to a commercial logger, 6 per cent to a farmer, and 3 per cent to a hunting club. Comparing the two counties, one sees that 8 per cent would lease to a logger in Clare as opposed to 3 per cent in Gladwin, and that 3 per cent would lease to a farmer in Clare as opposed to 10 per cent in Gladwin. Other than the above, the two counties compared closely on leasing uses. Summarizing, one could say that two-thirds of the respondents showed a positive or indifferent opinion toward leasing their property. Thus if the demand ever arose, a sizeable amount of nonresident land could be available for leasing.

#### Property Improvements

Now that use of the nonresident land has been generally outlined, some questions regarding property improvements will be discussed. When the respondents were asked if they had considered making any improvements on their land, 45 per cent answered "yes" and 45 per cent answered "haven't considered."

Looking at Figure 12, we see which of the various types of improvements proved most popular among those owners desiring to make such improvements. Again the influence of

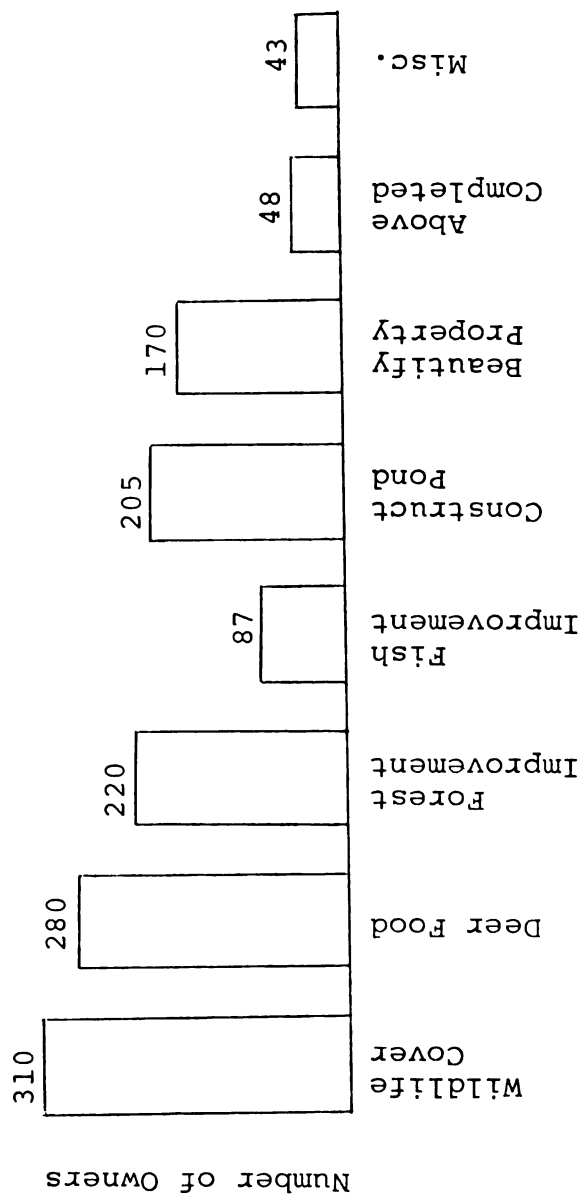


Figure 12.--Comparison of improvements made on nonresident properties in Clare and Gladwin Counties as shown by number of owners making each improvement, 1966.

the hunters is reflected by high totals in the areas of wildlife cover and deer food improvements. A surprising number indicated a desire to improve the forest. Viewing this particular response in conjunction with the number of owners indicating forest products as a use of their land, one gets the impression that a significant number of non-resident owners seriously desire to realize income from their timber resource.

Construction of a pond and beautifying the property also received significant response, but fish improvement was less popular. Also, as shown in Figure 12, some respondents indicated they had already completed one or more of the above improvements even though this information was not asked. In a future questionnaire, it would be interesting to ask a question on what type of improvements have been made on the property.

#### Importance of Ownership

There are two remaining questions concerning land ownership and use that need to be discussed. First, the respondents were asked if they planned to eventually transfer the property to someone in their family. Twenty-three per cent indicated "yes," 24 per cent indicated "no," and 51 per cent indicated "haven't considered." This question was inserted in the questionnaire as a device to discover how much value the nonresident placed on his property. It was assumed that those who more highly valued their property

would pass it on to their relatives while those who cared little for the land would not. However as one sees, the high percentage of response in the undecided category renders this question useless except to say that over half of the nonresidents have not decided the future of their land ownership.

The other question took a more direct approach than the above, simply asking the nonresident how important the land is to him. In response to this question, 30 per cent indicated ownership as being very important, 34 per cent as being important, 21 per cent as being somewhat important, and 12 per cent as not being very important.

The fact that nearly two-thirds of the people reported ownership as being important or very important presented one of the biggest surprises of the survey. The reason for this is that, as will be seen in part two of the analysis, a large number of nonresidents expressed indifference or ignorance towards such subjects as taxes, local services, and many other questions concerning the counties where their properties were located. Admittedly, there were other indicators, such as a high percentage desiring to build on their land that pointed toward a high value of ownership by the nonresident. However, the former results seemed to greatly outweigh the latter and provided an overall impression of nonresident indifference toward his property.

Perhaps this impression was wrong. It is entirely possible that the nonresident is intensely interested in owning his property, but has little interest in the surrounding area, local services, or even in integrating his property into the local economy. In short, a nonresident could own his northern property solely for his enjoyment on, and use of that piece of land--not being interested in any other aspect of the local region.

Also there is a possibility that the respondents, for various reasons, did not want to indicate the value of ownership as being somewhat important even though they really had little interest in the property. In this case, the indifference shown in other questions actually revealed the nonresident's value of his land.

### Summary

Looking back over this section, one sees some definite trends emerging. One of the more important of these can be summarized in one word--hunting.

Also 60 per cent of the residents indicated that they used their property for hunting. This fact was further revealed in the question on days spent on the property. The fall quarter had a large number of short term visits. Also, the question on improvement revealed that a large number of people were interested in providing deer food on their property.

Other questions in this section showed a high degree of homogeneity. Eighty-three per cent of the properties are individually owned and 66 per cent were purchased from a non-relative. A high percentage of owners were willing to lease part of their property, and a low percentage of these same owners were holding the property for speculative value. Lastly, over two-thirds of the owners regard their properties as being very important to them.

It might be mentioned in passing that the question on date of occupancy could be eliminated in future questionnaires. The results of this question were a distribution that is generally expected.

#### Comparison of Owner-Size Groups

From the previous three sections, it became apparent to the author that nonresident land owners are not a distinct stereotyped class of individuals. Although one could go through and pick out questions that showed a high degree of homogeneity, many questions received a wide distribution of responses. These latter responses would indicate that nonresident landowners cannot be generally characterized as a homogeneous group.

Given the above fact, it was thought that perhaps this heterogeneous group of nonresident landowners could be divided into several homogeneous subgroups. This idea resolved itself into the further question of what criteria

should be used to separate these subgroups. One such criteria used was the acreage size of the property. Based on the results shown in Figure 1, groups of owners having parcels of twenty, forty, eighty, and 160 or more acres were separated out and compared on a number of selected questions.

The comparison of the above groups proved somewhat disappointing. Rarely did differences on the various questions amount to more than ten percentile points. Also, similarity of responses among the groups varied from question to question. For example, on one question, the eighty to 160 acre groups had a similar percentage of response. On another question, the eighty and twenty acre groups had a similar percentage of response. In any case, the data will be discussed. Perhaps some reader will find a clue in these small differences.

### Ownership

The first question, that of individual or group ownership, had similar responses from the twenty, forty, and eighty acre groups: 80 to 85 per cent individual owners, and 11 to 18 per cent group owners. However, the 160 acre owner group, as would be expected, had fewer individual owners (26%), and more group owners (72%).

On the question concerning importance of ownership, there was little difference in the responses shown by all three groups. Approximately 60 per cent of the respondents



indicated ownership of their property as being "very important" or "important."

### Local Community

Moving on to aspects of the local community, the author found it difficult to draw any sensible pattern from the questions on assessment and tax rates. The eighty acre group seemed to be the most definite in their opinions with 40 per cent of this group indicating tax and assessment rates as appropriate. However, as just mentioned, no clear patterns emerged from comparing these various acre size groups and at best, one could say that the tax response was jumbled with a majority of the people indicating appropriate or no opinion toward this topic.

Two other questions on aspects of the local community: the county road system and the attitude of local people toward nonresident owners, yielded only a few notable contrasts. Concerning county roads, only 4 per cent of the twenty acre group responded "excellent" compared to 6 per cent for the forty and eighty acre group, and 14 per cent for the 160 acre group.

In connection with aspects of the local community, the question concerning formation of a nonresident land owner association was compared. But, as in the previous two questions on this subject, there appeared to be little notable difference between the response pattern of the three groups.

Looking at what the respondents felt the attitude of local people towards nonresident owners was, we find the twenty acre group showed the most favorable response, 50 per cent indicating a satisfactory attitude and 4 per cent indicating a poor attitude. The 160 acre group had a less favorable response to this question, 35 per cent indicating a satisfactory attitude and 14 per cent indicating a poor attitude. Of the forty and eighty acre groups, 40 per cent indicated satisfactory attitudes and 6 per cent indicated poor attitudes.

#### Property Characteristics

Next, two questions on characteristics of the property were compared. The question concerning presence of, or plans to build a living facility on the property brought similar response from the forty and eighty acre groups; 57 to 60 per cent answering "yes." But the twenty acre group gave a higher response, 72 per cent answering "yes," while the 160 acre group gave a lower response, 53 per cent answering "yes." As for the type of building, the small cabins were most popular, more so with the smaller size holdings. Conversely, the less popular permanent residences and summer homes appeared more often in the larger size holdings.

The question on fencing or posting to prevent trespassing revealed that more owners of the larger size parcels had fenced or posted their land. Only 39 per cent of the

twenty acre owner group had posted their land as opposed to 61 per cent of the 160 and eighty acre groups. Forty-seven per cent of the forty acre group fenced or posted their land.

### Property Use

The next four questions involve some aspects of nonresident land use. On the number of days spent at the property, all groups have a very similar pattern of response, and since these patterns closely followed the one described in the first overall analysis, no further discussion is necessary here.

Moving on to particular types of uses, we find some interesting comparisons. Weekend vacations proved most popular with the twenty, forty, and eighty acre groups (about 50% indicating this use), but less so with the 160 acre group (31 per cent indicating this use).

The realization of income from forest products was less popular among the twenty, forty, and eighty acre groups (around 20%) than in the 160 acre group (39%). Also, a higher percentage of the 160 acre group (21%) indicated speculation as a use compared to the twenty, forty, and eighty acre groups (around 10%).

For the use of retirement residence, approximately 33 per cent of the twenty, forty, and eighty acre groups responded positively while only 17 per cent of the 160 acre group checked this use. Also, the former groups had a

higher percentage indicating no specific use (around 32%), compared to the latter group (23%).

Hunting and fishing use presented some surprising results in that the percentage response was about even in all three groups with the twenty acre group having a slightly higher figure. Normally, one would think that hunting and fishing would be more popular among the larger size owners.

Summer long vacations, farming, and miscellaneous uses showed similar response pattern among all three groups and no comment will be made on these items.

Leasing, the next question, proved to be least popular in the twenty acre group (40% indicating "haven't considered" or "no desire to lease"). Seventy per cent of the forty and eighty groups indicated "haven't considered" or "no desire to lease," while only 59 per cent of the 160 acre group responded in these categories. This latter group had a higher response than the other two groups in leasing to a commercial logger or pulpwood cutter, and this coincides with its higher response in using the land for the harvest of forest products.

The consideration of property improvements was the last question examined. Approximately 44 per cent of the twenty, forty, and eighty acre groups, and 55 per cent of the 160 acre group indicated an interest in improving their land.

### Summary

Summarizing this section, one could say that while differences do occur between the various acreage groups of nonresidents, in the overall picture these differences seem rather small. However, this is not to say that some striking differences do not exist between the above groups and those owners having less than ten acres or more than 500 acres. Unfortunately, this study cannot touch on these latter two groups, but it would seem wise in future studies to survey owners of very small and very large holdings.

### Analysis

In looking back over all the data presented in this chapter, it is evident that the first part of our hypothesis has been proven false. Nonresident landowners in Clare and Gladwin Counties cannot be described as a homogeneous group.

It is true that some of the characteristics tested in the survey did show a high degree of homogeneity, but the number of these characteristics was small in comparison to the number of characteristics that showed little or no homogeneity.

In making this study, the author had assumed initially that the nonresident would prove to be homogeneous in almost all the characteristics tested. If this had been the case, then a tentative extrapolation could have been made saying that nonresidents are homogeneous in almost all characteristics. Such an extrapolation would have important

implications in any attempt to manage this group of owners through educational programs or other means.

A person interested in designing an educational program should first do a small survey of the nonresidents in the region in which he is working. Then he could proceed to design the educational programs with the assurance that they would be appropriate for most of the potential audience.

## CHAPTER III

### KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOCALE

In this part of the analysis we will now examine the second half of the study hypothesis: that among the landowners there is a lack of knowledge of the counties where their nonresident properties are located.

The form of the presentation will be very similar to that of Chapter II. First, a group of selected questions will be presented to show nonresident knowledge and opinions. Then, after presenting a few correlations to corroborate or amplify the previous data, some general conclusions will be drawn.

#### Familiarity with County History and Current Events

##### Amount of Familiarity

One of the first things sampled was the nonresident's familiarity with county history and current events. Figure 13 gives a good summary of the results. It is obvious from this chart that a large bulk of nonresidents are not familiar with any aspect of the local counties. Very few respondents considered themselves well acquainted with the

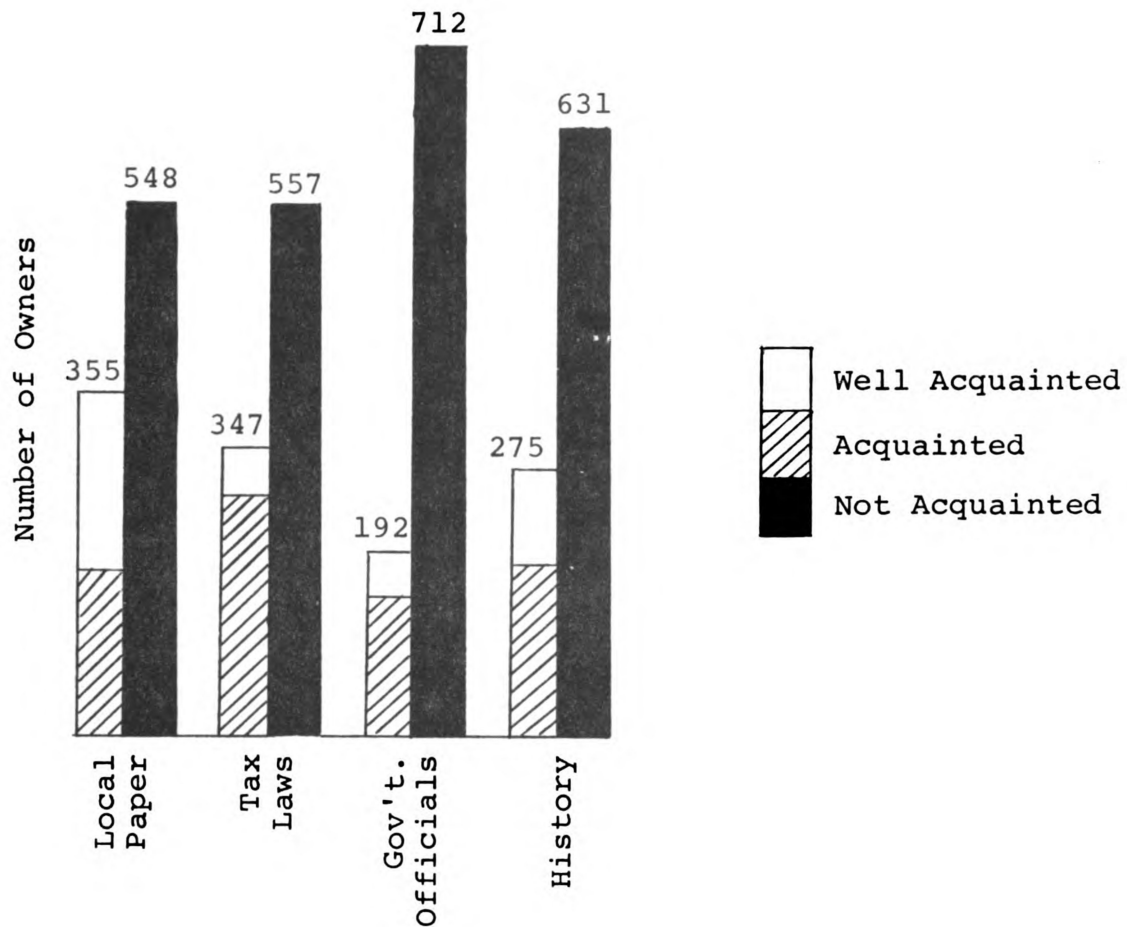


Figure 13.--Familiarity with some selected items of Clare and Gladwin Counties as shown by the number of owners in each group, 1966.

local counties and only a small number considered themselves to be acquainted with the local counties.

An interesting question posed by Figure 13 is the amount of property use made by those nonresidents not acquainted with the local counties. If it turned out that most of the nonresidents in this category made little or no use of their properties, then this would provide a



reasonable explanation for the high number of nonresidents not acquainted with the local counties.

#### Interest in Increasing Familiarity

Aside from directly asking the nonresident about his knowledge and opinions concerning the counties where his property was located, the questionnaire was designed to find out if the nonresidents were interested in finding out more about these two counties. Thus a question was inserted asking the respondent if he would like to see the formation of a nonresident's association to give closer contact with local events, governmental officials, etc. of the county where their property was located.

Again the nonresident's indifference showed in his reaction to such an association. Fifty-four per cent replied "haven't considered," while 32 per cent said "yes," and 9 per cent said "no." Comments seemed to indicate that those nonresidents that favored such an organization did so because they saw a solution to their particular needs or problems in such an organization. Judging from these comments and the above responses one could safely say that at the present nonresidents are not interested in becoming more familiar with the counties in which their properties are located.

Opinions Toward Selected Items of the  
Local Counties

People and Services

In this section we will look at some opinion held by nonresidents towards local people and services. Table 2 gives a good summary of the results. Looking down the "no opinion" column, we see a considerable amount of indifference. Two exceptions to this trend were in dealing with the road system and the attitude of local people toward the nonresident. In both these categories, a great majority of the nonresidents expressed a satisfactory opinion.

Taking a general overview of the whole table, one sees that the bulk of the people either checked "satisfactory" or "no opinion" on all items. A much smaller number of respondents checked the "excellent" or "poor" categories. Such a response pattern seems to indicate two facts: either nonresidents are not using local facilities and have no opinion concerning them, or they are just being typically noncommittal by checking "satisfactory." A future survey using a question on the amount of use made of local services would yield more light on the subject.

Written comments were numerous in this section but they seemed to come mainly from dissatisfied owners. Concerning governmental officials, comments portrayed them as discriminatory and uncoöperative toward the nonresident. However, one respondent mentioned that his impression was

TABLE 2.--Some selected opinions nonresident landowners hold towards people and services in Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

People and Services	Satisfactory	Excellent	Poor	No Opinion
Cooperation of local government toward nonresident land owners	37.92	4.22	11.36	34.60
Recreational facilities	30.98	8.04	8.24	38.83
Medical, dental, legal, and clerical services	30.58	4.12	4.72	46.68
Retail business	39.93	8.55	4.62	33.60
County road system	47.68	8.85	4.62	16.90
Gas, water, sewers, and electrical facilities	26.96	3.72	11.26	42.45
Attitude of local people toward nonresident landowner	42.25	11.97	7.54	26.65

based on contact with only one official. Roads came under criticism, especially in regard to their condition during the spring break up. Some respondents felt better recreational facilities were needed. Others thought Consumer's Power was unreasonable in its rates for providing power lines.

There was a wide range of comments on the attitude of local people toward the nonresident. Some felt local people had a good attitude, while others complained of

discrimination. Still others admitted local discrimination but expressed sympathetic understanding of this attitude.

Vandalism, although not included in the questionnaire, drew many written comments. The description of vandalism ranged from petty acts such as tearing down "no hunting" signs, to professional thievery. Some respondents reported having so much trouble with thieves, that they were discontinuing retirement plans on their property. Individual complaints were bitter, but the final tabulation shows that only 3 to 4 per cent of all the respondents reported any vandalism. The local sheriff also reported a relatively low amount of break-ins compared to the total number of cabins.

### Taxation

The next question dealt with opinions concerning assessment and tax rates and, as expected, there were numerous comments on this subject. In this case, the figures in Table 3 speak for themselves. There was a surprising amount of indifference expressed toward these money matters, but those who did have opinions expressed themselves freely.

Comments ranged over a wide spectrum of viewpoints. Some thought taxes were fair. Others thought the nonresident was discriminated against in taxation. Some complained of not knowing where or how the county money was spent, and others resented paying for schools since they had no

TABLE 3.--Opinions held by nonresidents toward taxation in  
Clare and Gladwin Counties, 1966.

	Appropriate	Too High	No Opinion
Assessment	35.11	20.42	33.29
Tax Rates	35.71	26.17	26.25

children in the area. These are only a sample of the comments. For a more complete list, the reader is referred to the appendix.

It must be admitted that in this area, the questionnaire was rather weak. The original intent of the question was to discover if the nonresident felt he was being discriminated against in his taxation as compared to a resident of the county. For this reason, a question on assessment was included along with the tax question.

However, it has been subsequently pointed out to the author that the terms "too high" and "appropriate" are very non-specific. What causes one to check appropriate or too high depends very much on his personal income, his general attitude toward taxes, the amount of taxes he is paying at his permanent residence, and a number of other factors. Thus we cannot tell from this response whether or not the nonresident felt discriminated against. In retrospect, a more direct question would have been better.

The best that can be concluded are the general feelings as shown in Table 3. Further investigation into the tax question could arise from some of the comments noted such as a lack of knowledge of how the tax money was spent. These comments are listed in the appendix. However, it is questionable whether such investigation is worthwhile since only 20 per cent of the respondents indicated taxes as too high.

#### Relationship Between Locale Familiarity and Opinions

In conjunction with the previous data a set of correlations was carried out. The object here was to see if familiarity with aspects of the local counties influenced the nonresident's views. Thus familiarity with county history, tax laws, etc. was correlated with the following: opinion toward taxes and assessment, opinion towards cooperation of government officials, and opinion of local people's attitude toward nonresidents.

In regard to opinions on assessment and tax rates, it is found that a higher percentage (45%) of those acquainted with county tax laws felt the assessments and rates appropriate than those unfamiliar with local tax laws (30-32%). However, whether the difference between these two figures is significant or not, the author cannot say. The percentage (22-28%) of respondents marking tax rates and assessments as too high was similar for those who were acquainted with county laws and those who were not.

The next topic concerned the cooperation of governmental officials in the two study counties. Fifty-seven per cent of those acquainted with local officials indicated a satisfactory opinion, while 33 per cent of those not acquainted with local officials indicated a satisfactory opinion. On the other hand, 17 per cent of those acquainted with local officials indicated a poor opinion of them, while 10 per cent of those not acquainted with these officials indicated a poor opinion of them. The remaining percentages were of the "no opinion" category.

The response pattern concerning the attitude of local people toward nonresident landowners followed exactly the one described above. Of those acquainted with all four aspects of the local county, 50 per cent indicated a satisfactory opinion, and 8 to 12 per cent indicated a poor opinion. Of those not acquainted with the four aspects of the local county, 40 per cent indicated a satisfactory opinion, and 7 to 8 per cent indicated a poor opinion.

#### Analysis

Looking over all the data just presented, it seems that the second half of the hypothesis has been proven true. The majority of nonresident landowners are not very knowledgeable of the counties in which their property is located. This lack of knowledge is further reflected in the large amount of indifference toward opinions concerning these two counties.

However, the correlations between opinions and amount of familiarity with the two counties proved inconclusive. Thus, it cannot be said that those nonresidents not familiar with the counties hold a different set of opinions as compared to those familiar with the counties.

Also, one can conclude that the nonresidents are not interested in becoming more familiar with the two counties, since little interest was expressed in forming a nonresident association.

A secondary purpose in designing the questions for this section was to identify some sensitive areas of the nonresident's knowledge and opinions about the two study counties. By sensitive areas we mean those particular pieces of information or opinions that, if changed, would greatly alter the nonresident's land use pattern. In attempting to derive this information, the study relied solely on the response to a number of questions that were arbitrarily judged to be in these sensitive areas. If, for example, 94 per cent of the respondents had indicated that taxes were too high, then it might have been concluded that this was a sensitive area.

Unfortunately, the results showed that the respondents were very noncommittal in their opinions. However, it should be stressed that these results are no guarantee that sensitive areas will not arise as conditions change in the future. The results show only the present.



## CHAPTER IV

### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Now that all the data has been presented, analyzed, and the hypothesis discussed, it seems appropriate to make a few comments on the general meaning of this study.

As mentioned in the introduction, to date little has been done to find out characteristics of nonresident landowners. Thus, one of the primary values of this study is its exploratory nature. The data presented here should serve as a bench mark reference for future studies.

Furthermore, it is due to this exploratory nature that none of the results were especially outstanding in the sense that they did not provide any keen insight into the nature of the nonresident. The task set by the author was the collection of some basic, straightforward characteristics of nonresident landowners; and in achieving this task, the study was quite successful.

Aside from a basic reference for future studies, there is another important use of the data collected in this study: the design of educational programs for this

class of owners. As shown in a study by Paul Fiske,<sup>22</sup> the design of any good educational program requires some knowledge of the group being worked with. This, in fact, is what is presently being done by county agents as they try to build a general educational program for nonresident landowners in their respective counties. Background information of this type is readily available in this study.

In reference to the above discussion the author would like to make a suggestion for continued research. In the future, as recreation and the importance of nonresident landownership increases, agencies will have to develop more meaningful contact with this group of owners. A good start in this direction would be a survey to find out the problems of this group. Using the information contained in this study and the one by Vertrees,<sup>23</sup> a random sample survey of, for example, the Lower Peninsula could be undertaken. The information collected in this survey would prove very helpful to extension agents and other agencies in their efforts to serve this important group of owners.

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<sup>22</sup>Paul Fiske, "Methods of Identifying the Potential Audience for Land Use Educational Programs in Urban and Urbanizing Areas" (unpublished Master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1968).

<sup>23</sup>Robert Vertrees, op. cit.

## CHAPTER V

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter is designed to give the reader a more detailed account of steps taken to obtain the data presented in Chapter II. A general outline of the procedure was given in the introduction.

#### Frame for the Survey

Since little information existed concerning the nonresident landowner in the Northern Lower Peninsula, a precise criteria for picking the area to be surveyed was not available. Gladwin and Clare counties were chosen on the basis of several general reasons: (a) they were recognized as transitional counties in close range of the large cities of Southern Michigan. Thus, special situations might be revealed that would not appear in the more northern counties. (b) Both county agents expressed interest in the survey and it was thought that local people would not be antagonistic toward such a survey, and (c) a similar survey of two more northern counties had already been made.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Robert Vertrees, op. cit.

As mentioned in the introduction, names of persons owning ten or more acre parcels and having an address outside the county were taken from the county tax rolls. The reasons for setting the ten acre limit were twofold: (1) this class of nonresidents should own a bulk of the non-resident land, and (2) taking names of all the cottage owners would have provided an extremely large census, beyond the financial limitations of this study.

Tax records are thought to be the only source for obtaining names of county nonresident land owners, but even the tax records did not prove wholly accurate in providing a complete list of such names. Three specific errors were encountered when taking names from the tax records. They are listed as follows: (1) home addresses shown were inaccurate resulting in 120 questionnaires being returned stamped "No such address known", (2) thirty-nine questionnaires were returned because the property had been sold but not indicated on the tax records, (3) home addresses shown were inaccurate resulting in thirty questionnaires being returned from people who had moved into Clare or Gladwin county and were presently permanent residents.

There was no specific reason for taking a complete census of names as opposed to a random sample except for the desire to obtain as much information as possible. However, the large number of names in the census proved bulky and hard to handle. Perhaps in the future a smaller

stratified random sample based on acreage or some other criteria as revealed in this survey would provide more fruitful information at greater ease.

### The Questionnaire

The step from surveying facts to surveying people's opinions is a very difficult one because in the latter case there is always a greater task of injecting your own prejudices into the data through faulty questionnaire design. A conscientious effort was made to construct an accurate questionnaire. Care was taken in working questions clearly and concisely. Also such items as the sequence of questions, the ease of answering, the placement of controversial questions, and the overall appearance of the questionnaire were considered. After pretesting with faculty members and fellow students and making five subsequent revisions, the final draft evolved.

But even after this painstaking process, it is now evident that the questionnaire still contained weaknesses. Why did 47 per cent of the land owners not respond? Perhaps the questions appeared too prying. Some specific two part questions proved confusing (Page 2; nos. 5 and 7) and resulted in incorrect answers. Some respondents did not follow directions, especially regarding questions three through five on page one. Interpretations of terms such as forested land, not previously defined, resulted in various answers to the same question. Questionnaire incompleteness,

such as not including minerals as one category for land use, likely resulted in some people reporting such information and some people not reporting it. A questionnaire is included in the appendix so that the reader may judge its value for himself.

### The Response

Appendix I shows the number of questionnaires received on the days following mailing. On November 28 a post card reminder was sent to all names included in the survey and a subsequent rise in questionnaires received is apparent after the sixth of December. After the seventeenth of December questionnaires were not grouped by days.

Unfortunately, due to outside limitations (financial and time), no follow up mailing of questionnaires was done. Also, no follow up personal interviews of the nonrespondents was undertaken. The total response from the first mailing and the reminder post card was 1088. This is a 58 per cent response but out of the 1088 questionnaires received only 994 could be used in the data analysis. This left a 53 per cent working response. While this percentage is considered good for mail questionnaires, the 42 per cent nonresponse is a large figure. Since no follow up was made to determine the nature of the nonresponse, the weight of this group casts serious limitations on the validity of the data collected. Perhaps some significant characteristics of these nonresident land owners, not revealed in the

returned questionnaires, caused them not to respond. In retrospect, it would have been better to have taken a smaller original sample and devoted some effort to a systematic follow up of the nonrespondents. However, one weak test was applied to determine if the nonrespondents and respondents were of similar traits.

The first quarter of the questionnaires received were compared to the last quarter of the questionnaires received. It is assumed in this test that if the comparison shows little difference between the two quarters, one can project trends of the respondents out into the area of nonresponse. If great difference appears between the two quarters, then one cannot make any objective statements concerning the nonresponse.

The comparison made here showed similar results for most items on the questionnaire. The following lists items containing unsimilar results.

1. Five per cent more signed their name in the last quarter of respondents than in the first quarter.
2. Four per cent more in the last quarter reported occupying their land before 1920 than in the first quarter.
3. In regard to days spent on the property, the last quarter had 31 per cent fewer days spent in Jan., Feb., Mar.; 27 per cent fewer days

spent in Apr., May, June; 30 per cent fewer days spent in July, Aug., Sept.; and 64 per cent fewer days spent in Oct., Nov., Dec., than the first quarter.

4. Nine per cent less weekend vacation use was reported in the last quarter than the first.
5. In the last quarter 6 per cent less reported their land ownership as being very important.
6. In the last quarter 11 per cent less reported having received conservation instruction.
7. In the last quarter 7 per cent more reported being less familiar with the local area.
8. Concerning leasing, first quarter respondents appeared more definite in their ideas towards the question. On the other hand, the last quarter respondents appeared less decisive in their answers with a large percentage indicating miscellaneous leasing.
9. As for improvements, 8 per cent less of the last quarter respondents indicated a desire to do any type of work on their land.
10. Concerning tax assessment, the first quarter respondents again appeared more definite in their opinions. In the last quarter 16 per cent less reported appropriate, 9 per cent less reported too high, and 7 per cent more reported no opinion.



11. The above pattern followed in question on tax rates. Of the last quarter respondents 19 per cent less reported appropriate, 9 per cent more reported no opinion.

Summarizing this comparison, one might say that the nonrespondents spent less time on their property, know or cared less about it, and were less concerned with the local activities of Clare or Gladwin Counties. These nonrespondents probably exhibit most of the characteristics of the respondents except in one area, that of interest in the property. The nonrespondents seem to have a higher degree of indifference towards their property and perhaps this is why they didn't return the questionnaire.

The reader is duly warned of the weakness embodied in the above test. The generalizations made are to be treated as such. It is highly possible that some one characteristic, not covered in the questionnaire, separated the respondents and non-respondents. In such a case, the above test is in great error.

### Coding

After the questionnaires had returned, numerical values were assigned to each possible answer and these values then entered on IBM cards. Many respondents did not complete the questionnaire as instructed, thus the coding process involved some interpretation by the author as to the "true meaning" of responses.

Some errors did occur in the coding process either by the author when transferring data from the questionnaire to a preliminary coding form, or by the punch card operator. These errors appeared in the frequency distributions as digits in nonexistent categories. Since such errors were relatively small and did not effect overall trends, they were considered as "no answer" and no effort was made to correct them.

### Analysis

As mentioned above, once data was entered on IBM cards, simple frequency distributions were made of each question. Several distributions were run, but all involved the same computer program.

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APPENDICES

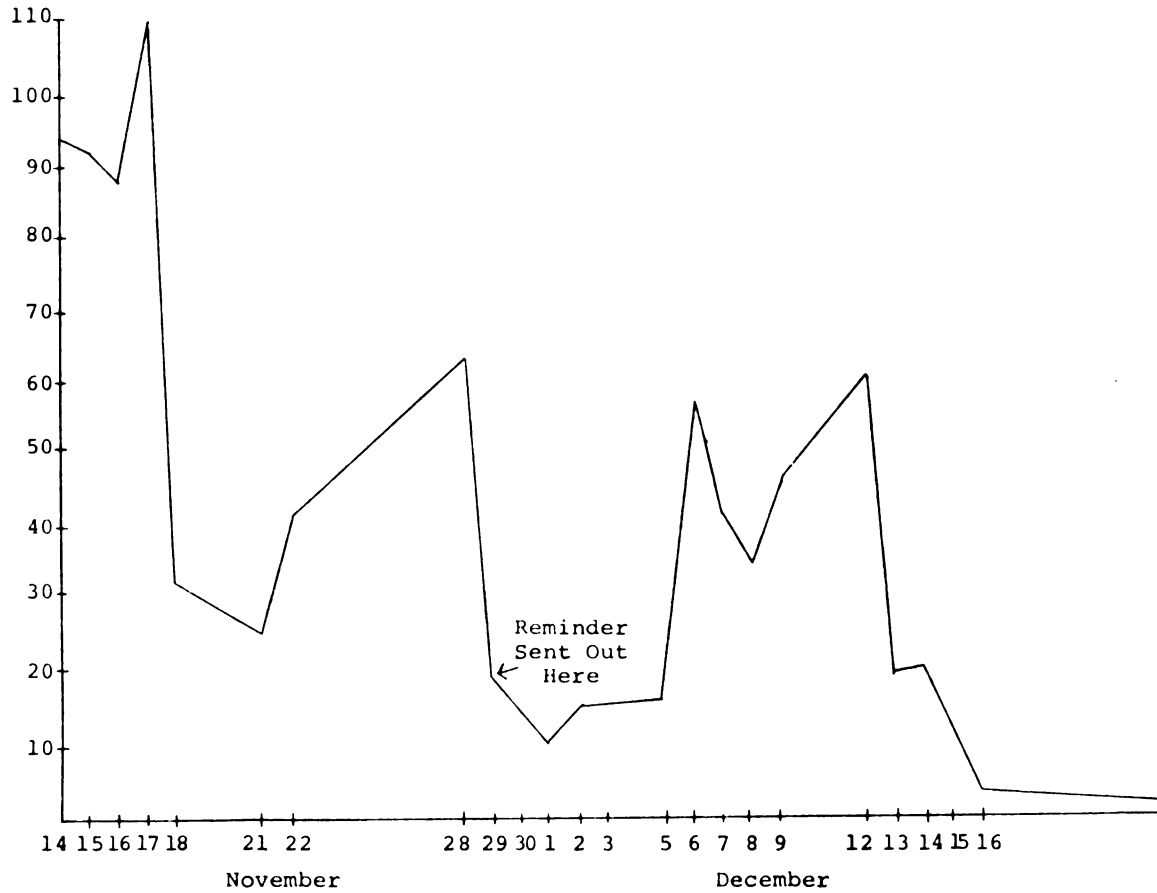
APPENDIX A

NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES RECEIVED BY DAYS



# APPENDIX A

## NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES RECEIVED BY DAYS



### Breakdown of Questionnaires Received

Usable Questionnaires . . . . .	994
Never Arrived, Returned by Post Office . . .	120
Property Sold . . . . .	39
Owned Less than Ten Acres . . . . .	9
"Irregular" Questionnaires . . . . .	16
Moved into One of the Counties . . . . .	30
Total	1088

APPENDIX B

WRITTEN COMMENTS

## APPENDIX B

### WRITTEN COMMENTS

A number of respondents expressed comments on various subjects. Those comments that could not be coded into existing questions were abstracted and grouped into similar topics. What this appendix will present in a listing, in the form of phrases, of the main points of these various comments. This list is only designed to give the reader an idea of the range of comments expressed. No attempt was made at totaling individual remarks on each topic.

#### Tax Rates

1. Rates fair and will build on property because of this.
2. Willing to pay his fair share but thinks nonresidents are being discriminated against--assessment too high.
3. Assessment fair, school rate too high--nonresidents should not have to pay school tax--levy school tax against residents.
4. Tax rates acceptable but irritating to pay them with no vote--do not know where the money is being spent--can't see any improvements.

5. Taxes too high--services paid for are of no benefit to the nonresident.
6. Tax increase is preventing him from building a cabin.
7. Wild land with no economical way of compensating for taxes should be tax free.
8. Nonresident taxed discriminately because he cannot defend himself.
9. Land used for animal shelter should be tax exempt.
10. Tax high because of oil fields.
11. Tax high for the amount of time the nonresident spends in the county.
12. Hunting land should have low taxes because it helps conservation.
13. Swamp and drained land should have different assessment.
14. Wants to find some information on rates of comparable property.
15. Protested high tax and got them reduced by the county review board--feels supervisor discriminated against him.

#### Cooperation of Government Officials

1. Depends on who dealt with.
2. Little coöperation from police on valdalism complaint.
3. Township supervisor made a personal visit to explain tax changes.

4. Assessor poorly trained--assessment more fair if done by an outsider.
5. Government should send information to the nonresidents on how county funds are spent.
6. No local coöperation in assisting an owner in getting some access to his property.
7. Officials regard the nonresident land owner as a tax source and want no problems from him.

#### Recreational Facilities

1. Better swimming facilities needed.
2. Need policing on the Tittabawassi River to stop race boats.
3. Need more trailer and camping grounds.
4. Need more roads and trails for walking.

#### County Road System

1. Conditions are impassable for three weeks in the spring.
2. If can get a road to his property he will build a retirement residence.

#### Utilities

1. Consolidated Power has little interest in servicing scattered cabins or even scattered residences.
2. The cost of putting in electricity is too high, especially for a weekend cabin.

Attitude of the Local Residents Toward the  
Nonresident Land Owner

1. Have established a good relationship by letting local people use the land for hunting.
2. Bad attitude from local residents--think all nonresidents are rich city people--hard on an average person who is not rich.
3. Sympathize with local dislike for the hunters who only come up for two weeks.
4. Good or bad impression of local residents depends on who one meets.
5. Not sure of local residents--thinks only a few dislike the nonresident.
6. Feel local residents have pride in the area and want to develop it in their own way.

Vandalism

1. Local people dump trash on the property.
2. Believes someone is stealing his timber and selling it on a commercial basis.
3. Cabin broken into and items stolen.
4. Thieves stole a whole log cabin--tearing it down and hauling away all the logs.
5. Vandalism is discouraging retirement plans.
6. Abandoned plans to build a cabin and plant Christmas trees because of vandalism.
7. Posting because of vandalism.

Leasing

1. Presently letting a farmer use the land for grazing in exchange for hunting privileges.

Nonresident Land Owner Association

1. Will join if it will help get some information on how to get federal aid for putting in improvements.
2. Will join if it will help represent the nonresident against local discrimination.
3. Good idea--a way of getting information on local events.
4. An association of residents and nonresidents would be better.

Trespassing

1. Chronic--nonresident land owner has no defense.
2. Discourages any land improvement.
3. Local town residents do most of the hunting trespassing.
4. Have removed "keep out" signs and now have a hunting agreement with the neighbors.
5. Land borders state forest and people do not realize they are trespassing--need better maps.

Zoning

1. Yes; prevent woods dumping--set minimum standard for buildings, lot size (except in subdivisions), and sanitary considerations.

2. No--another government infringement--hard to reverse a zoning law once it is passed.
3. Felt zoning was not needed.

#### Miscellaneous

1. Feel property value depreciated with selling of too many plots--false idea of open space--too many people
2. Poor cooperation from state (based on a conversation with a state highway employee).
3. State owns mineral rights--cannot be sure what to do with land.
4. Unfair for nonresident land owner to pay taxes and out of state hunting and fishing license.
5. Unfair. Clubs posting large hunting tracts and keeping local people off.
6. Want to know township land development plans so as to make decisions on property improvement.
7. Two reasons nonresident development is discouraged:  
(a) vandalism, (b) hunters. No seclusion. Too many people.
8. Deer hunting no longer any good.
9. Like to take a correspondence course in conservation.
10. Landlocked. Thinks there is no legal way to get access to his property.
11. Had trouble getting legal access to his property.
12. Own land because of sentimentality--relatives.



13. Age (old person) discourages development--would need concrete returns for any money invested in property.
14. Group effort might make some land improvements economically feasible.
15. Aimless owner--no purpose for ownership.
16. Reason for ownership--a hedge on inflation.
17. Would like to know how to make a profit from the land so as to pay taxes.
18. With more posting need more open land especially for hunting.

APPENDIX C

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Questionnaire for Non-Residence Landowners of Clare and Gladwin Counties, Michigan

PLEASE CHECK APPROPRIATE SPACE OR FILL IN APPROPRIATE BLANK FOR YOUR ANSWER

1. How many acres of land do you or your ownership group own that are located entirely within Clare and/or Gladwin county? \_\_\_\_\_ acres

a. How many of these acres are covered by forest? \_\_\_\_\_ acres  
Are you an individual landowner or a representative of an ownership group?

( ) Individual landowner ( ) Representative of an ownership group (two or more owners)  
( ) Includes husband and wife ownerships

NOTE: Questions 3, 4, & 5 are for INDIVIDUAL LANDOWNERS ONLY

3. How was the land acquired?  
( ) purchased from relative ( ) inherited or gift  
( ) purchased from a non-relative ( ) other (debt payment, trade, etc.)

4. Do you plan to transfer this property to someone in your family?  
( ) yes ( ) no ( ) haven't considered

5. When did you first occupy the land?  
( ) 1960-65 ( ) 1950-54 ( ) 1940-44 ( ) 1920-29  
( ) 1955-59 ( ) 1945-49 ( ) 1930-39 ( ) Before 1920

6. How many days do you usually spend on the above property?  
(zero will mean no days spent on the property)  
Jan., Feb., Mar., \_\_\_\_\_ days Jul., Aug., Sep., \_\_\_\_\_ days  
Apr., May, Jun., \_\_\_\_\_ days Oct., Nov., Dec., \_\_\_\_\_ days

7. Does your property have frontage on: ( ) a lake?  
( ) a stream?  
( ) neither of above

8. Please use check marks to indicate uses you are presently making or plan to make of your land. (check one or more)

a. Recreational Uses		Present	Future
1. summer-long vacations			
2. weekend vacations			
3. hunting and fishing trips			
b. For prospects of earning money in:		Present	Future
1. commercial farming			
2. forest products		Present	Future
c. No specific use--just believe it is good to own land			
d. Anticipating a rise in land value and/or planning to develop tracts for residences			
e. Land held for retirement residence			
f. Other(s)			

9. Do you plan to grow Christmas trees as a retirement income on this land?  
( ) yes ( ) no ( ) haven't considered

10. How important to you is owning this land?  
( ) very important ( ) somewhat important  
( ) important ( ) not very important

11. Where was most of your childhood (0-18 yrs) spent?  
( ) on a farm  
( ) in a rural community  
( ) in a suburban-city area

1. Were you at one time a resident of Clare and/or Gladwin county?

( ) yes ( ) no

2. What is your profession or occupation? (individual landowners only)

3. Have you ever taken classes or been in an organization where conservation information was presented? ( ) yes ( ) no

4. Since acquiring your property have you become acquainted with any of the following in Clare and/or Gladwin county?

	Well Acquainted	Acquainted	Not Acquainted
a. County history			
b. Local paper			
c. County tax laws			
d. Government officials			

5. Do you have a living facility or are you planning to build one on your property?

( ) yes ( ) no  
If yes, indicate the type of facility.

( ) None at present but plan to build a \_\_\_\_\_ (type)  
( ) Small cabin  
( ) Summer residence  
( ) Permanent residence  
( ) Other

6. Have you considered leasing part of your land to the following uses?

( ) Haven't considered leasing

( ) No desire to lease any part of the land  
( ) To a commercial logger or pulpwood cutter  
( ) To a farmer for pasture or cropping  
( ) To a club for hunting privileges  
( ) Other(s)

7. Have you considered making some improvements on your land?

( ) yes ( ) Haven't yet fully considered specific improvements

If yes, please check the area(s) in which you would like to do some work.

a. Plant trees or shrubs for wildlife food and cover	
b. Develop or improve areas specifically for deer food	
c. Improvement of present forest	
d. Stock fish and improve fish habitat	
e. Construct pond	
f. Beautify property (plant flowers, grass, etc.)	
g. Other(s)	

8. While on your property do you prefer:

a. Seclusion? ( )  
b. Some degree of contact with neighbors? ( )  
c. Close contact with neighbors? ( )

9. Is any of your property fenced or posted to discourage trespassers?

( ) yes ( ) no ( ) no, but plan to fence or post in the future

10. Do you think a zoning plan (i.e., designation of recreational, agricultural, and industrial areas) should be considered by Clare and/or Gladwin county?

( ) yes ( ) no ( ) haven't considered

11. Would you like to see an association of non-resident landowners formed perhaps giving you closer contact with local events, government, etc?

( ) yes ( ) no ( ) haven't considered

COMMENTS: YOUR COMMENTS ARE ENCOURAGED. FEEL FREE TO WRITE AS MUCH AS YOU WISH BUT PLEASE INDICATE THE QUESTION YOU ARE REFERRING TO. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

1. Please check the answer regarding each local regulation or community facility near your land that best expresses your opinion.

	Appropriate	Too High	No Opinion	See Comments
Assessment				
Tax Rates				

Comments:

	Satis- factory	Excellent	Poor	No Opinion	See Comments
Cooperation of local government towards non-resident landowners					
Recreational facilities					
Medical, dental, legal, and clerical services					
Retail Business					
County road system					
Gas, water, sewers, and electricity facilities					
Attitude of local people towards non-resident landowner					

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