Heir Property at the Micro, County, Level: An Example Using a New Deal African American Resettlement Program

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George Washington Carver Agricultural Experiment Station
Policy: Resettlement Program

Resettlement Administration,
- Executive Order 7027, April 30, 1935
- Administrator, Rexford Tugwell

Functions
- Resettlement of “destitute or low income” families
  - Infiltration
  - Community
- Administration of programs dealing with erosion, pollution, reforestation and flood control
- Management of farm ownership and operating loans

Successor Agencies
- Farm Security Administration (1937-1946)
- Farmers Home Administration (1946-1994)
- Farm Services Agency (1994-present)
Focus: Macon County, AL
Submarginal Land

This proposed purchase area is representative of serious mal-adjustment in the use of lands….Erosion has robbed the land of its natural fertility. The families living within this area are stranded on lands unsuited for cultivation.
The homes not only lack the essentials of sanitation, convenience and comfort but present the appearance of dilapidation and despair. The disheartening conditions have caused many of the younger people to migrate to urban centers. Others, having been inured, settle down, in the only place they know, to live the same hand-to-mouth existence of their foreparents.
Moving Day

Moving Day, Polk Studios, Tuskegee University Archives

Moving Day, Polk Studios, Tuskegee University Archives
Result 1: Reforestation

Work on Reforestation Project, Tuskegee Project,
A. Rothstein Library of Congress
Prairie Farms has been described as “a Government answer to the plea of the late Booker T. Washington, Tuskegee’s founder, for a live-at-home, crop-rotated salvation for the American farmer. USDA/FSA, LAW 2/13/41
Farmsteads

Prairie Farms represents the Government’s effort to preserve the lands of America and the people who till it. Thus began this new community within an old community. And thus began a new life for the thirty-four families which comprised the [Prairie Farms] project. Deborah Cannon Partridge [Wolfe]
Community

Community and School Building, Prairie Farms,
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress

Classroom, Prairie Farms,
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress

Cooperative Grist Mill, Prairie Farms,
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress

Cooperative Store, Prairie Farms,
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress
Prairie Farms Today
Community
PRAIRIE FARMS
RESETTLEMENT COMMUNITY

History

Beginning in the mid-1930s during the Great Depression, the Federal New Deal provided land resettlement to assist farmers recovering from the effects of the Dust Bowl. The federal governmentimplemented a program called the Resettlement Administration, which included the establishment of small farming communities.

In Alabama, various Resettlement Community Projects were initiated, including Prairie Farms. The Project was established in 1936 on 1,280 acres in Hale County. The goal was to provide employment and opportunity for families who had been displaced by the Great Depression. The community was designed to be self-sufficient, with a focus on agriculture, education, and social support.

The project manager was Project Manager. The Prairie Farms Resettlement Project included 40 households and provided assistance such as

- Housing
- Education
- Health care
- Employment opportunities

The community thrived, and today Prairie Farms is recognized as a historic site. It serves as a reminder of the challenges faced during the Great Depression and the role of the government in providing assistance to those in need.

(continued on following page)
Prairie Farms Land Ownership: 1940, 2017
## Changes in Land Ownership

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</table>

*This total includes two pastures of 431 and 230 acres

**Heir Property “Owners” represent ownership entities and not necessarily individual owners owners
Focus

• Determine if there was a difference in the dollar value of heir property versus titled property.

• Determine if there might be other variables involved in how property in general, and heir property specifically might be treated differently and thus affect the value of the property.

• Use GIS technology and data from the Macon County Revenue Commissioner’s Office
Heir Property in Macon County

Source: Macon County Revenue Commissioner’s website
Heir Property in Macon County

Source: ArcMap Software. Heir Property is Highlighted in Blue, and Schools and Churches are Indicated in Purple
Prairie Farms Heir Property
Other Variables: Residence of Ownership

1. In Macon County
2. In Alabama but Out of Macon County
3. Out of Alabama
Results

**Titled Property Land Owners by Land Owner Residence Location**
- In Macon County: 67%
- Out of Macon County/In AL: 22%
- Out of State: 11%

**Heir Property Land Owners by Land Owner Residence Location**
- In Macon County: 56%
- Out of Macon County/In AL: 31%
- Out of State: 13%
Results

Total Acres Owned Per Landowner Residence Location

- **Macon County**: 1227 acres
- **Out of County**: 410.86 acres
- **Out of State**: 378.79 acres

- **Titled Property**
  - Macon County: 378.79 acres
  - Out of County: 410.86 acres
  - Out of State: 441.41 acres

- **Heir Property**
  - Macon County: 14.4 acres
  - Out of County: 14.4 acres
  - Out of State: 434.9 acres

Legend:
- Green: Titled Property
- Purple: Heir Property
Results

Average Amount of Acres Owned Per Landowner Residence Location

- **Macon County**: Titled Property - 9.99 acres, Heir Property - 21.04 acres
- **Out of County**: Titled Property - 10.02 acres, Heir Property - 3.6 acres
- **Out of State**: Titled Property - 22.07 acres, Heir Property - 43.49 acres
Results

Total Value of Acres Per Landowner Residence Location

- **Macon County**
  - Titled Property: $5,758,900.00
  - Heir Property: $1,040,920.00

- **Out of County**
  - Titled Property: $1,002,021.00
  - Heir Property: $30,500.00

- **Out of State**
  - Titled Property: $892,820.00
  - Heir Property: $742,580.00
Results

Average Value of Acres Per Landowner Residence Location

- Macon County: $4,693.00
- Out of County: $2,438.00
- Out of State: $2,023.00

Value

Macon County
Out of County
Out of State
Results

**Total Improvement Value Per Landowner Residence Location**

- **In Macon County**:
  - Titled Property: $3,233,700.00
- **Out of County**:
  - Titled Property: $194,721.00
  - Heir Property: $-  
- **Out of State**:
  - Titled Property: $52,380.00
  - Heir Property: $2,720.00

Value:
- $3,500,000.00
- $3,000,000.00
- $2,500,000.00
- $2,000,000.00
- $1,500,000.00
- $1,000,000.00
- $500,000.00
- $-
Results

Average Improvement Value Per Landowner Residence Location

- **In Macon County**: $52,156.00
- **Out of County**: $36,015.00
- **Out of State**: $4,989.00

**Landowner Residence Location**

- Titled Property
- Heir Property
Discussion – Land

• There is more titled property than heir property, but more titled property owners.

• The majority of both titled property owners and heir property owners live in Macon County, Alabama.

• 1/3 of heir property owners lived out of state, while only 10% of titled property owners lived out of state.
Discussion – Land Value

• Titled property, on average has a higher per acre value than heir property.

• Residence of owner(s) plays a role in the value of both titled property and heir property.
  – The greater the distance from the property, the less value attached to the land.
  – A major source of this difference is found in the improvements attached to the land.
Caution: Sample Size and Type

<table>
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<th>Residence\Title</th>
<th>Titled Property</th>
<th>Heir Property</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>18</td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Alabama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out of Alabama</td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>184</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>216</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type: Agricultural
- Forestry
- Residential
- Commercial
Acknowledgements

• USDA/AFRI Project ALA-SLACD2015 "Securing the Land for Agricultural and Community Development: Addressing Heir Property as an Asset Building Strategy" and colleagues at Auburn University

• George Washington Carver Agricultural Experiment Station, Tuskegee University