

## THE LAND UTILIZATION OF TOWANDA TOWNSHIP MCLEAN COUNTY, ILLINOIS

BY

MARGARET MEANS

*Bloomington, Illinois*

Towanda Township is located in the central part of McLean County, Illinois. It is a congressional township, six miles square. The first settlers came between 1840 and 1850. The early occupations were typical of other agricultural communities of the open prairies. The first settlements were made in the groves where fuel, water, shade and shelter were found.

Cattle raising was introduced in the first decade of settlement. After the Civil War a more scientific agriculture was introduced, including a rotation of crops, especially corn, oats and wheat, and livestock production, including hogs, cattle and sheep.

The topography of Towanda Township is that of a gently rolling prairie with very little variation of relief, brought about mainly by the formation of glacial moraines and stream erosion. The main drainage system is that of Money Creek.

Soils are largely loessial in character. The upland prairie soils comprise about 95 per cent of the area. They are rich in organic matter and were covered originally with wild prairie grasses.

The native vegetation consists of forest and grasslands. The forests covered but a small portion of the total area and were found mainly along the stream valleys. Much of the prairie land was wet and marshy with coarse high grass. On the uplands the grass was short and wiry.

The climate is continental in character with cold winters and warm summers. The growing season is approximately 173 days. The precipitation averages 37.41 inches per year, well distributed for the growing of crops.

The early settlers of Towanda Township came from Indiana, Ohio, Virginia and Kentucky. Settlements were first made along the streams and then on the open prairie. The population is almost entirely native born and has been chiefly rural since the first settlement to the present time.

Two railroads cross the township and excellent concrete highways cross various parts of the area.

The city of Bloomington furnishes a good local market for agricultural and dairy products while Chicago is the chief grain and hog market.

At the present time corn occupies 50 to 60 per cent of the cultivated area with oats, hay, barley, soybeans and wheat occupying the remaining acreage.

There were 126 farms in Towanda Township in 1928 with an average size of 184 acres. At the present time there is no woodland whatever in the township; 81.4 per cent is in crops, and 18.6 per cent is in pasture.

Farm facilities such as tractors, telephones, automobiles, furnaces, radios and running water, are common throughout the township. The farm homes are well built and well kept. The rural schools are better than the average.

The animal distribution shows that hogs are becoming important, that cattle feeding is not profitable, that sheep show a notable increase, that the work usually done by horses and mules is being carried on by machinery, and that poultry raising is important.

A large percentage of the land is still held by descendants of the original owners. The farmsteads are attractive and well equipped.

Towanda Township is a typical well developed region of the Corn Belt and it represents a well-to-do community in the open country.