

RELOCATION PROSPECTS - KANSAS, MISSOURI, IOWA, NEBRASKA

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There are plenty of opportunities for employment in the area served by the Kansas City office, both in the larger city centers and smaller towns, as well as the rural districts. The wages are not as high as in some of the industrial centers where there are large war contract plants, but offsetting this is the fact that the cost of living is lower.

There are five metropolitan districts -- Kansas City, Wichita, St. Louis, Des Moines, and Omaha. Suitable housing can be secured with some effort in all these cities but is readily available only in Des Moines. The attitude of the people generally toward evacuees is particularly good in Des Moines and the surrounding area and in many of the smaller cities and towns of Iowa and Nebraska. This is largely because of the excellent support given the relocation program by the Des Moines Register which is an unusual newspaper with a circulation of 360,000 in a city of only 170,000.

In the smaller cities and towns there are plenty of opportunities in office and industrial employment. From five to ten evacuee families can be placed in each of these communities with very little difficulty and with reasonable assurance of public acceptance and an opportunity for the people to be accepted. The work available may not pay the top wages of wartime, but will be more permanent. People who go to these communities will be in a much better position to weather a depression than those who go to the highly industrialized centers.

The pattern of farm labor in the area served by the Kansas City office is entirely different from the distinctly seasonal picture in California. For the most part, the farm jobs represent year-round employment and greater security.

The normal method of employment on the farms is at a monthly wage which will range from \$60 to \$90 a month with a tenant house provided, the use of a cow, garden space and opportunity to raise chickens. The farmer usually kills several hogs and the tenant ordinarily gets some of the pork. The wife probably will have a pressure cooker and there will be ample opportunity to can a great deal of food. If there are other employable members of the family, they can generally get work nearby at hourly or daily rates of pay.

Schools and recreational facilities are good. School bus transportation is available in most of the rural areas. Most of the farms are not far distant from smaller towns or cities.

Many of the farmers have indicated to me their willingness to make some arrangement with satisfactory workers which will go beyond that of a salary basis of employment. This cannot be done, however, until the evacuees have proved themselves. They must first work on a monthly wage arrangement.

There are practically unlimited opportunities for relocation in this section on a family basis. This is true not only in the rural areas but in the small towns and cities. The residents of the smaller towns are able to raise gardens and can foods. They have much lower rents to pay than the large city dwellers and for the most part, greater security in employment.

I want to report a few instances which I believe will be interesting to people in the relocation centers. High wages when obtainable in this section are usually in the industrial centers where housing is almost impossible to find. Furthermore, since most of these high wage jobs are in lines of work directly connected with war production, those accepting them will be the first casualties of the change in our industrial program which is bound to come and may come even before the end of the war. Living costs outside these high wage centers are not excessively high. In Iowa, for example, you can get meals for 35 to 50 cents.

Recently I had an interesting experience visiting the town of Pella about 35 miles from Des Moines. Five evacuee girls are employed there in the Pella Overall Company. They are making 40 cents an hour with a certain amount of overtime, making their weekly earnings about \$20 a week. They were able to rent a four-room apartment for \$25 a month. The price of furnished rooms in the community -- there is no housing shortage -- is \$1.50 a week. Food is plentiful and cheap. I had a good dinner in the hotel dining room, including steak, vegetable and dessert, for 45 cents.

The evacuee girls say they have never been treated better. The other forty girls in the factory and the townspeople have completely accepted them. This same town has a roll screen factory which employs about 200 workers at wages ranging from 35 to 70 cents an hour. There is also a cannery which cans tomatoes, beans, peas, and corn.

I have mentioned Pella as a typical example of the smaller towns in this area. There are hundreds of jobs in communities much like Pella. The particular work opportunities may be different in each different town, but the general pattern is the same. People who get established in communities of this kind can ride through any sort of post-war adjustment and become a direct part of the community.

I can appreciate the feelings that many of the evacuees have about wages and their desire to make just as much money as possible. If I felt that the wage offers here were in any way sub-standard, I would be the first to complain. They are not sub-standard, but represent the wages everyone else is making in the locality. As a matter of fact, in many cases, employers seem to be anxious to make even a better deal for the evacuees than they would for local labor in the community. Possibly this is because they have been impressed by stories of the intelligence and ability of Japanese-Americans, and also in many instances, by a genuine desire to help out the program and do what they consider to be their patriotic duty as citizens of a democracy.