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Population Change
In
New Hampshire

By: William H. Wallace

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POPULATION CHANGE
IN
NEW HAMPSHIRE

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**POPULATION CHANGE
IN
NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**William H. Wallace
University of New Hampshire**

**STUDIES IN NEW ENGLAND GEOGRAPHY
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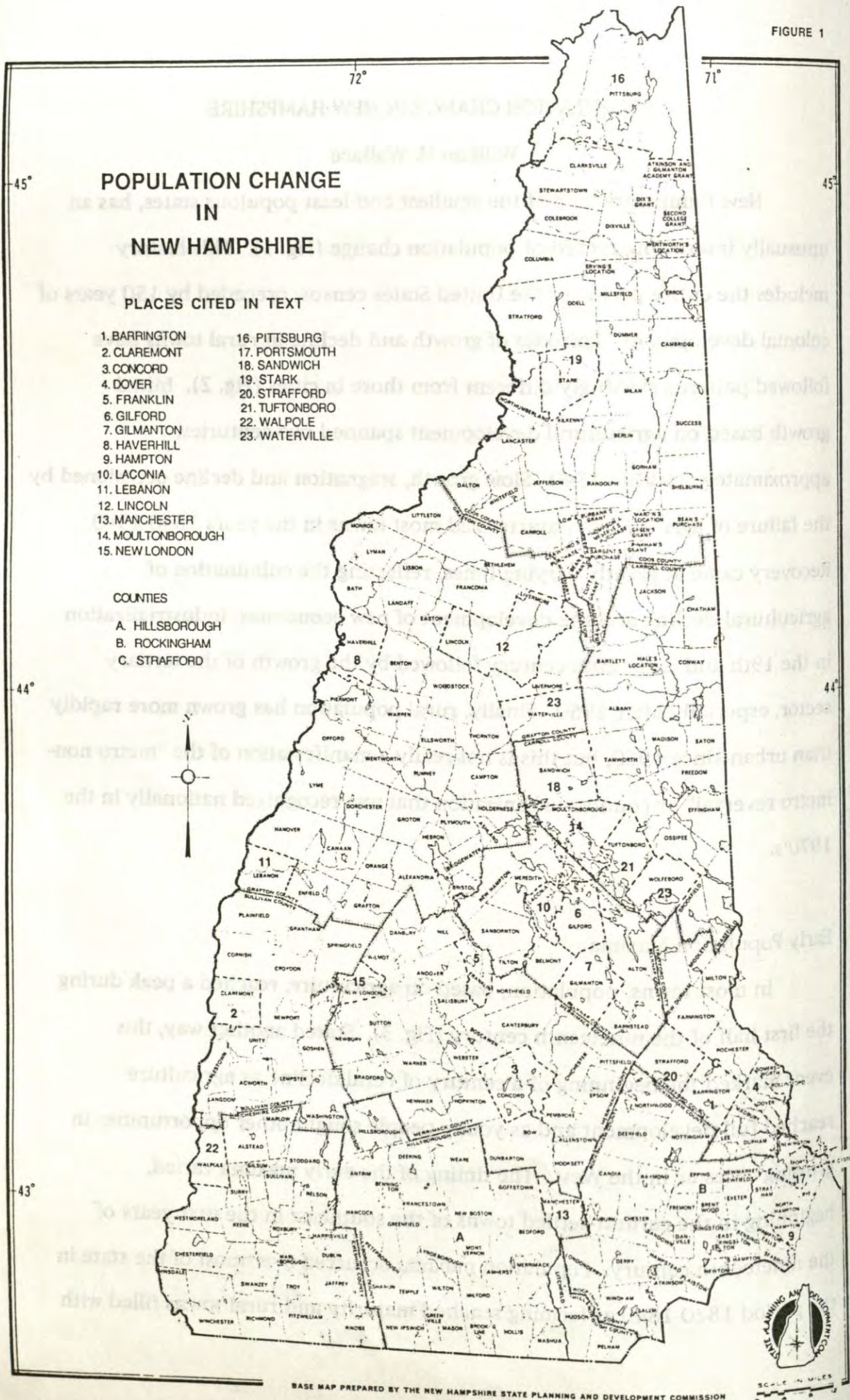
POPULATION CHANGE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

William H. Wallace

New Hampshire, one of the smallest and least populous states, has an unusually interesting record of population change (Fig. 1). This history includes the entire period of the United States census, preceded by 150 years of colonial development. Episodes of growth and decline in rural towns have followed patterns strikingly different from those in cities (Fig. 2). Initial growth based on agricultural development spanned two centuries, approximately 1640 to 1840. Slow growth, stagnation and decline occasioned by the failure of agriculture characterized most towns in the years 1840-1940. Recovery came at greatly varying times, reflecting the culmination of agricultural decline and the development of new economies; industrialization in the 19th and early 20th century followed by the growth of the tertiary sector, especially after 1950. Finally, rural population has grown more rapidly than urban since 1960, but this is not really a manifestation of the "metro non-metro reversal" or counter-urbanization that was recognized nationally in the 1970's.

Early Population Maxima

In most towns, population, based on agriculture, reached a peak during the first half of the nineteenth century (Fig. 3). Stated another way, this event marked the beginning of a century of rural decline as agriculture reached full development and as young people sought other opportunities in growing cities or in the West. The timing of the early maxima varied, beginning in the earliest-settled towns of the southeast in the first years of the nineteenth century. Population maxima occurred over most of the state in the period 1820-1840 as farming reached maturity and rural towns filled with



POPULATION 1790 -1990

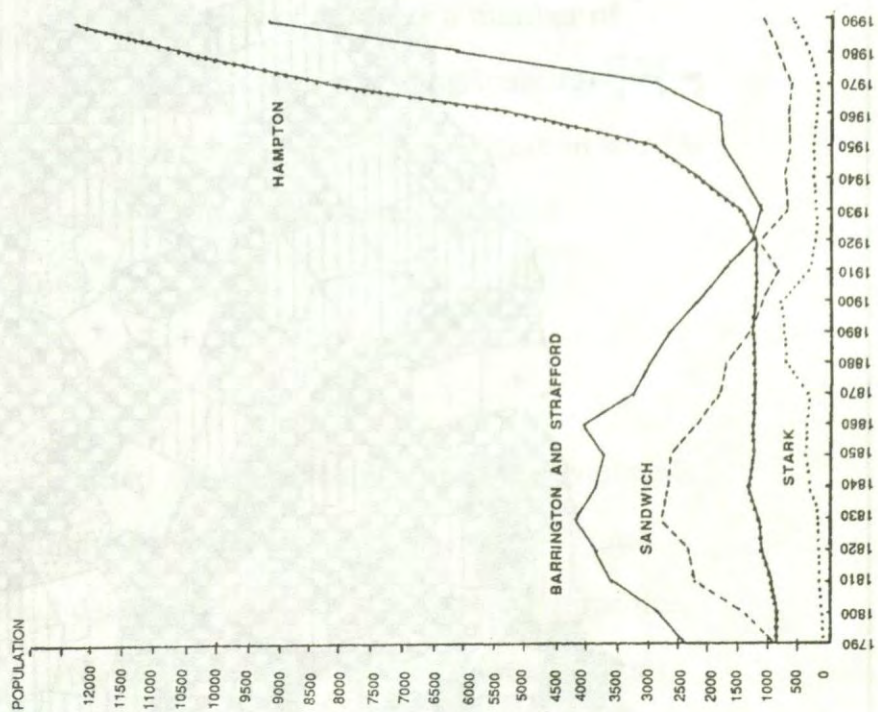
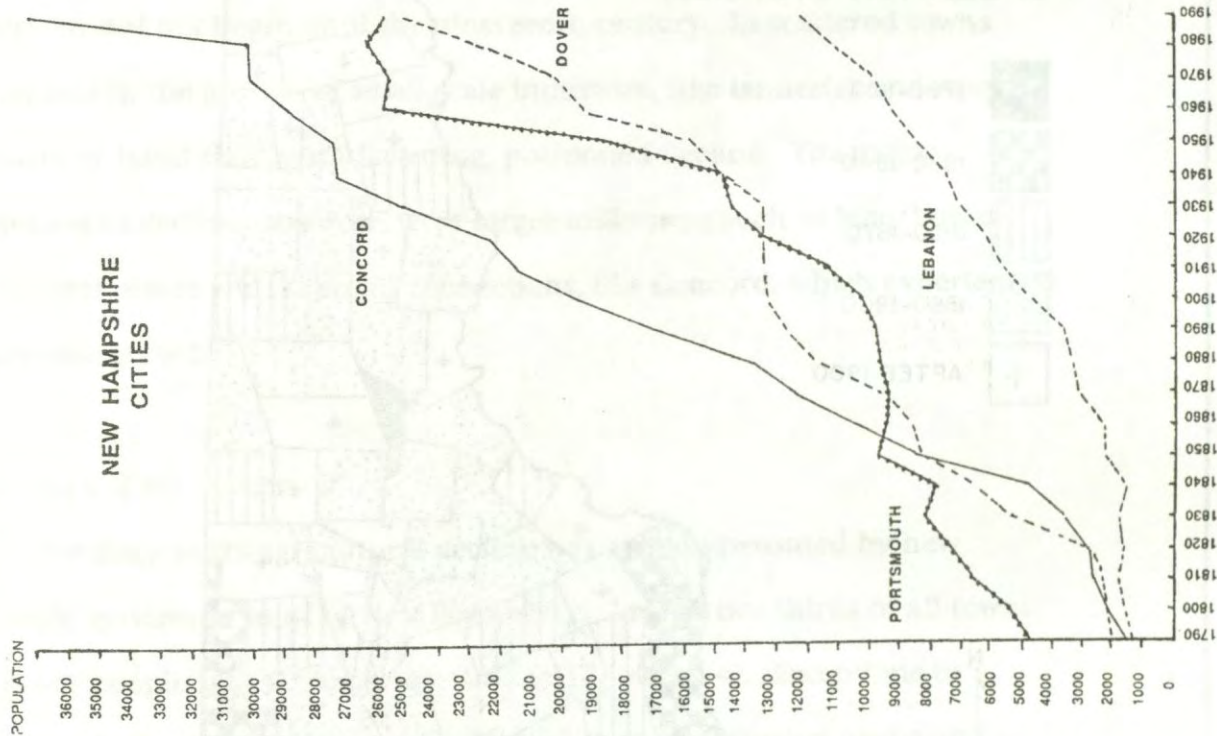
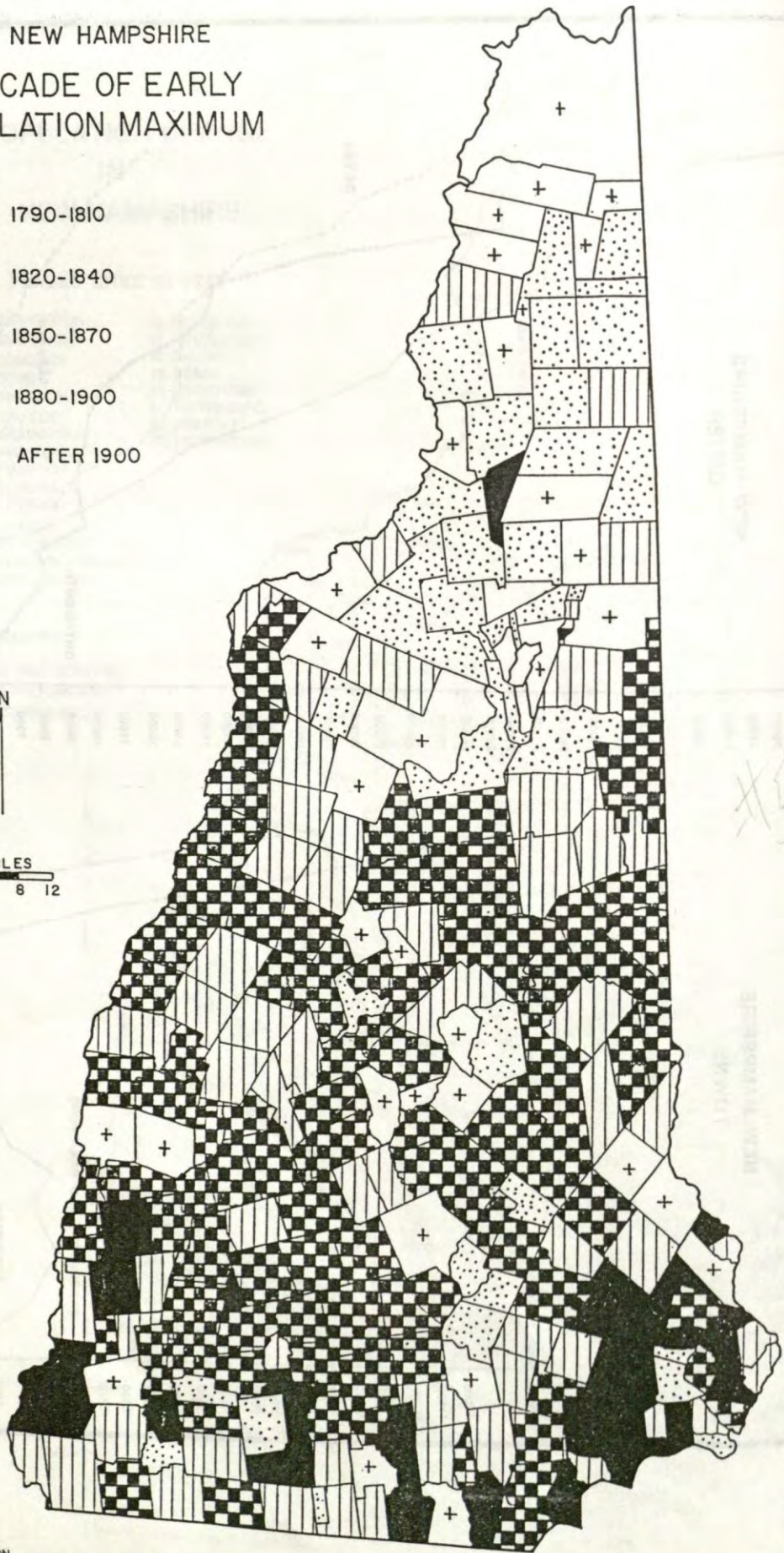
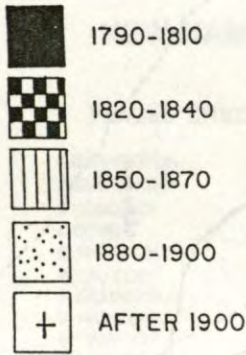


FIGURE 2

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NEW HAMPSHIRE
DECADE OF EARLY
POPULATION MAXIMUM



DATA FROM
U.S. CENSUS OF POPULATION

people. Later maxima occurred in the northernmost part of the state where settlement did not begin until the nineteenth century. In scattered towns farther south, the growth of small scale industries, like tanneries and wood products or hand shoe manufacturing, postponed decline. The major exceptions to decline, however, were larger mill towns such as Manchester and central places with railroad connections, like Concord, which experienced continuous growth.

Sixty years of Stagnation

For sixty years agricultural decline was not compensated by new economic systems in most of New Hampshire. Indeed two thirds of all towns had fewer people in 1920 than they had in 1860 (Fig. 4). Exceptions to pervasive decline or stagnation were limited to manufacturing towns and a few larger central places. In the northern part of the state a number of towns, like Pittsburg, were settled so late that the cycle of agricultural development, maturity and decline took place a century later than in southern New Hampshire and the expansion of commercial logging provided opportunities as farming declined.

Revival

The beginnings of revival based on the development of new economic systems can be dated by examining the occurrence of population minima (Fig. 5). The end of agricultural decline varied widely over New Hampshire. Early recovery, that is before 1910, was generally based on the growth of manufacturing. However, decline was also reversed by railroad activity in Walpole and Haverhill and by the beginnings of tourism in Lakes region towns such as Gilford and Wolfeboro. Recovery became widespread during the

FIGURE 4

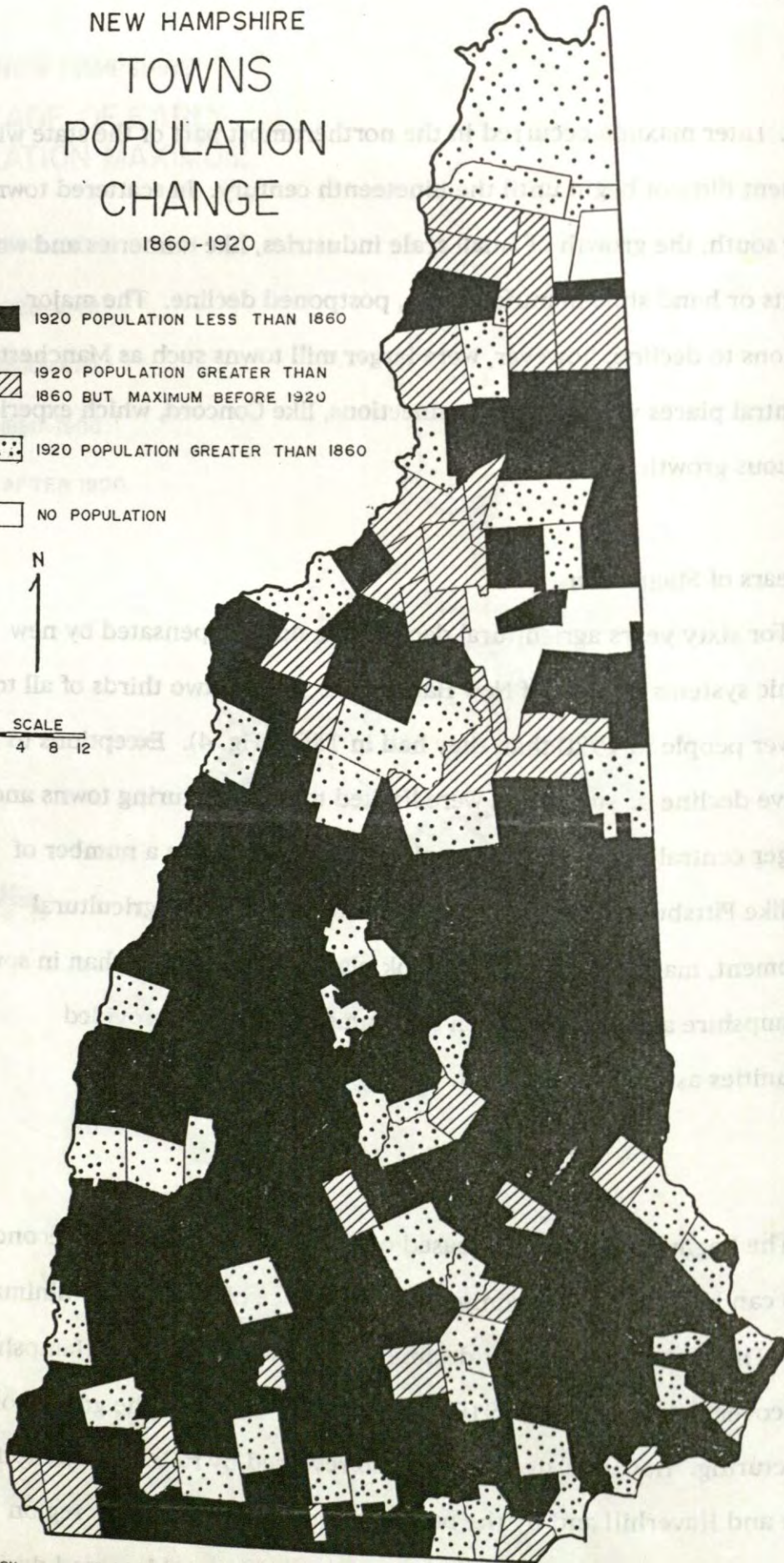
NEW HAMPSHIRE TOWNS POPULATION CHANGE

1860-1920

- 1920 POPULATION LESS THAN 1860
- 1920 POPULATION GREATER THAN 1860 BUT MAXIMUM BEFORE 1920
- 1920 POPULATION GREATER THAN 1860
- NO POPULATION



SCALE
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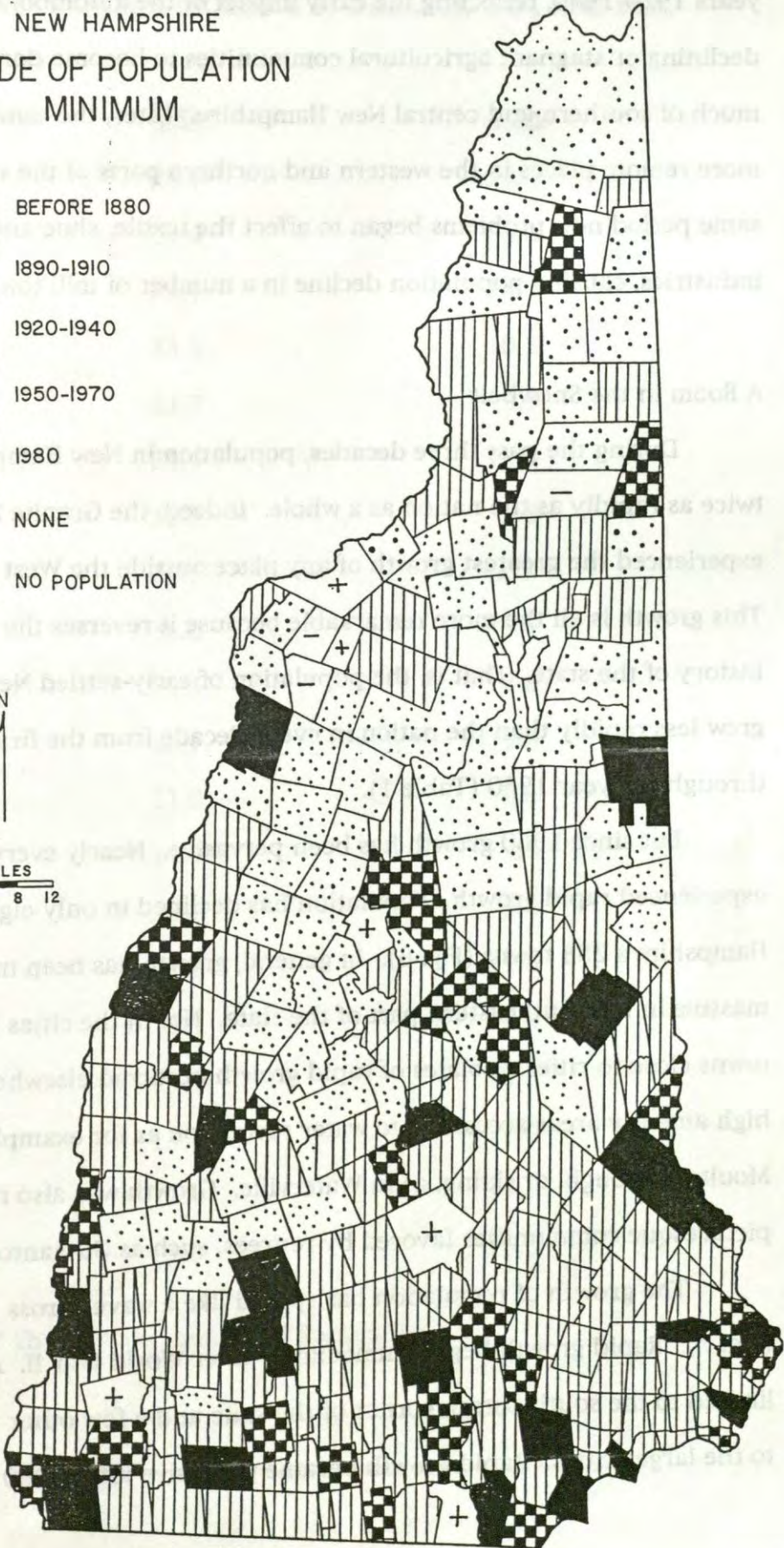
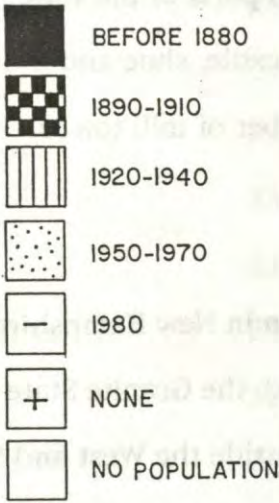


DATA FROM
U.S. CENSUS OF POPULATION

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FIGURE 5

NEW HAMPSHIRE
DECADE OF POPULATION
MINIMUM



DATA FROM
U.S. CENSUS OF POPULATION

WHW 1994

years 1920-1940, reflecting the early impact of the automobile which allowed declining or stagnant agricultural communities to become dormitory towns in much of southern and central New Hampshire. Later, the same forces affected more remote places in the western and northern parts of the state. But in this same period new problems began to affect the textile, shoe and other industries, causing population decline in a number of mill towns.

A Boom in the Snowbelt

During the past three decades, population in New Hampshire has grown twice as rapidly as the nation as a whole. Indeed, the Granite State has experienced the greatest growth of any place outside the West and Sunbelt. This growth is all the more remarkable because it reverses the entire previous history of the state. That is, the population of early-settled New Hampshire grew less rapidly than the nation in every decade from the first census in 1790 through the year 1960 (Table 1).

But since 1960 growth has been pervasive. Nearly every township has experienced rapid growth. Population has declined in only eight of New Hampshire's 258 towns (Fig. 6). In general, growth has been most rapid and massive in the southeastern part of the state. Not in the cities but in rural towns close to cities. Isolates of rapid growth occurred elsewhere, usually in high amenity areas accessible to water recreation as for example, Moultonborough, or skiing, as in Waterville. Growth was also rapid in picturesque communities favored by retirees, such as Gilmanston.

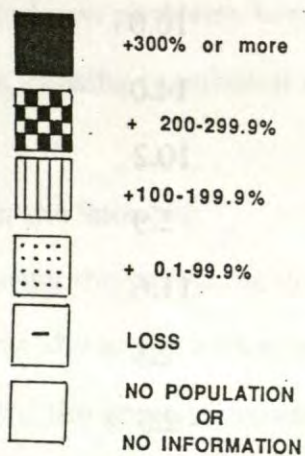
The growth of population has spread like a wave across New Hampshire (Fig. 7). Rapid growth began immediately after World War II. At first it was limited to the southeastern corner of the state and a few other towns adjacent to the larger cities. Rapid growth became pervasive after 1960 and by 1970

Table 1. PERCENT POPULATION INCREASE BY DECADES, USA, AND N.H.

	<u>USA</u>	<u>N.H.</u>
1790-1800	35.1	30.0
1800-1810	36.4	16.0
1810-1820	33.1	14.0
1820-1830	33.5	10.2
1830-1840	32.7	5.9
1840-1850	35.9	11.6
1850-1860	35.6	2.5
1860-1870	26.6	- 2.5
1870-1880	26.0	9.1
1880-1890	25.5	8.6
1890-1900	20.7	9.3
1900-1910	21.0	4.6
1910-1920	14.9	2.8
1920-1930	16.1	5.0
1930-1940	7.3	5.6
1940-1950	14.5	8.5
1950-1960	18.5	13.8
1960-1970	13.4	21.6
1970-1980	11.4	24.8
1980-1990	9.8	20.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census. Census of Population.

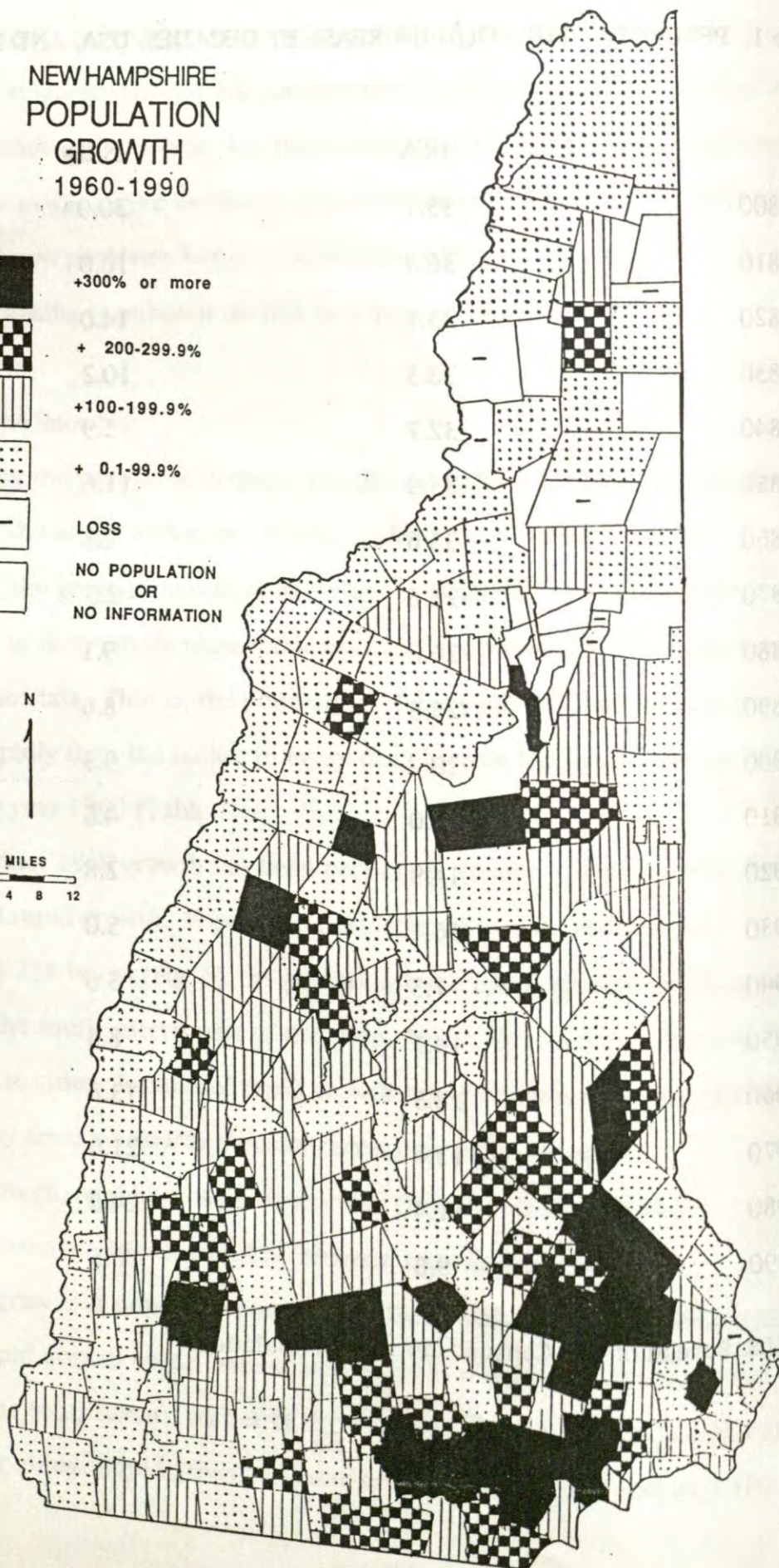
NEW HAMPSHIRE POPULATION GROWTH 1960-1990



N

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DATA FROM
U.S. CENSUS OF POPULATION

NEW HAMPSHIRE PERIOD OF POPULATION GROWTH

ABOVE
NATIONAL AVERAGE



1940-1990



1950-1990



1960-1990



1970-1990



1980-1990



NEVER

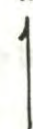


INCONSISTENT

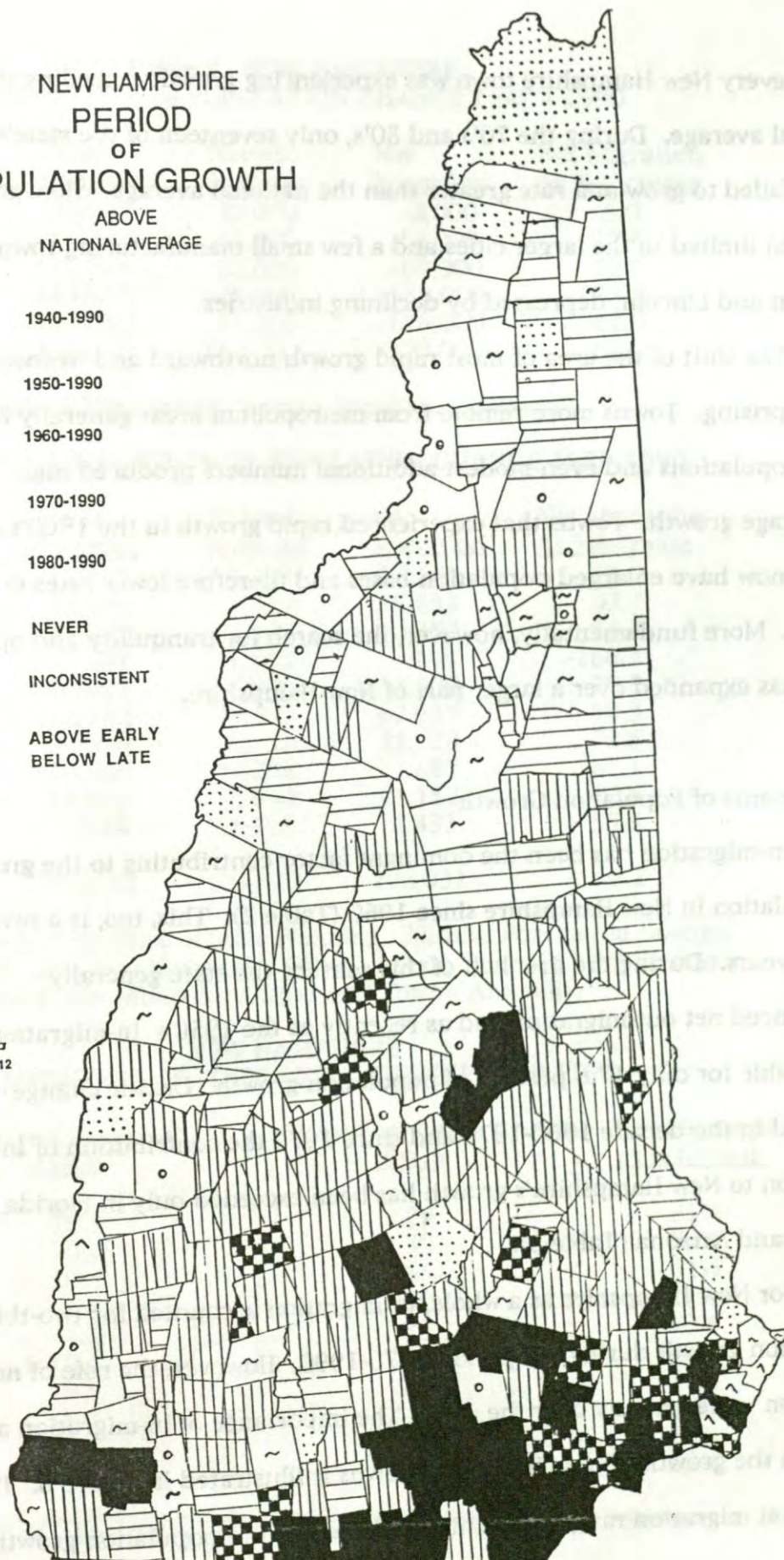
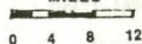


ABOVE EARLY
BELOW LATE

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DATA FROM
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nearly every New Hampshire town was experiencing growth exceeding the national average. During the 70's and 80's, only seventeen of the state's 258 towns failed to grow at a rate greater than the national average. Slow growth has been limited to the larger cities and a few small manufacturing towns, like Franklin and Lincoln, depressed by declining industries.

The shift of the area of most rapid growth northward and westward is not surprising. Towns more remote from metropolitan areas generally had small populations and even modest additional numbers produced high percentage growth. Towns that experienced rapid growth in the 1960's and 1970's now have enlarged population bases and therefore lower rates of growth. More fundamentally, however, the search for tranquility and open space has expanded over a larger part of New Hampshire.

Components of Population Growth

In-migration has been the dominant factor contributing to the growth of population in New Hampshire since 1960 (Table 2). This, too, is a reversal of earlier years. During the first half of this century the state generally experienced net out-migration and as recently as the 1950's in-migration was responsible for only 17.6 percent of population growth. Drastic change occurred in the decade 1960-1970 and since 1970 the contribution of in-migration to New Hampshire's growth has been exceeded only in Florida, Nevada and Arizona (Table 3).

For New Hampshire as a whole, in-migration accounted for two-thirds of population growth during the period 1970-1990. However, the role of net migration varies greatly over the state. The importance of in-migration as a factor in the growth of New Hampshire towns is illustrated in Figure 8. The role of net migration ranges from nil to 144 percent of population growth. In

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**Table 2. NEW HAMPSHIRE
COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE 1940 - 1990**

<u>State</u>	<u>Total Increase</u>	<u>Natural Increase</u>	<u>Net Migration</u>	<u>Net Migration As % Increase</u>
1940-50	40,000	42,000	-2,000	-5.0
1950-60	74,000	61,000	-13,000	17.6
1960-70	131,000	62,000	+69,000	52.7
1970-80	183,000	48,000	+135,000	73.8
1980-90	187,000	71,000	+116,000	62.0
1960-90	501,000	181,000	+320,000	64.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census: Current Population Reports

COUNTIES - COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE 1970-1990

	<u>Total Increase</u>	<u>Natural Increase</u>	<u>Net Migration</u>	<u>Net Migration As % Increase</u>
Belknap	16,849	3,703	13,146	78.0
Carroll	16,682	1,229	15,633	93.7
Cheshire	17,757	7,405	10,352	58.3
Coos	504	1,352	-848	-168.3
Grafton	20,015	5,906	14,109	70.5
Hillsboro	112,132	44,493	67,639	60.3
Merrimack	39,030	10,352	28,728	73.5
Rockingham	106,895	35,208	71,687	67.1
Strafford	33,802	12,650	21,152	62.6
Sullivan	7,946	3,513	4,433	55.8
State Total	371,612	129,911	246,031	66.2

Source: New Hampshire Office of State Planning. *Natural Population Change, Annually*, and New Hampshire Office of State Planning. *Population Estimates of New Hampshire Cities and Towns, Annually*.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE
COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE 1870-1970**

	<u>Est. Net Migration 1000's</u>	<u>Total Population Growth 1000's</u>	<u>Net Migration as % Growth</u>
1870-80	10.1	29	35%
1880-90	20.7	30	69%
1890-00	20.4	65	31%
1900-10	-3.2	19	-17%
1910-20	-3.6	12	-30%
1920-30	-10.2	22	-46%
1930-40	9.1	27	33%
1940-50	-1.0	41	-2%
1950-60	12.0	74	16%
1960-70	69.0	131	53%

Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census. Historical Statistics of The United States.

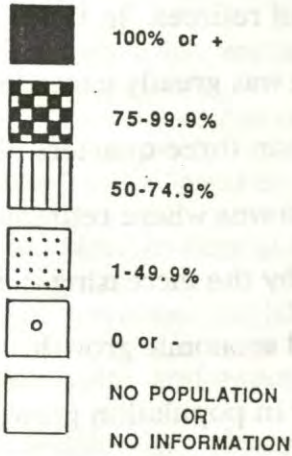
Table 3. UNITED STATES, COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

NET MIGRATION AS PERCENTAGE
OF POPULATION CHANGE, 1970-1987

State	Number (1000's)	Percent	State	Number (1000's)	Percent
ME	72	37.3	AK	199	42.8
NH	207	64.9	LA	26	3.2
VT	39	37.5	OK	297	41.7
MA	-312	-188.0	TX	2726	48.8
RI	-38	-105.6	MT	-13	-11.3
CT	-122	-68.2	ID	83	29.1
NY	-2144	-515.4	WY	57	36.1
NJ	-200	-39.9	CO	545	50.9
PA	-752	-557.0	NM	184	37.9
OH	-1257	-997.6	AZ	1093	67.8
IN	-413	-122.9	UT	117	18.8
IL	-1069	-226.5	NV	392	75.5
MI	-999	-314.2	WA	533	47.4
WI	-223	-57.3	OK	302	47.7
MN	-150	-34.1	CA	3740	48.6
IA	-316	-3950.0	AK	81	36.5
MO	-99	-23.3	HI	78	24.9
ND	-58	109.3			
SD	-65	-151.2			
NB	-105	-96.3			
KS	-91	-40.1			
DE	13	13.5			
MD	67	11.0			
DC	-200	-149.3			
VA	513	41.0			
WV	-28	-18.3			
NC	553	36.2			
SC	331	39.7			
GA	753	46.1			
FL	4526	86.5			
KY	47	-9.3			
TN	384	41.3			
AL	113	17.7			
MS	-14	-3.4			

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census. Current Population Reports.

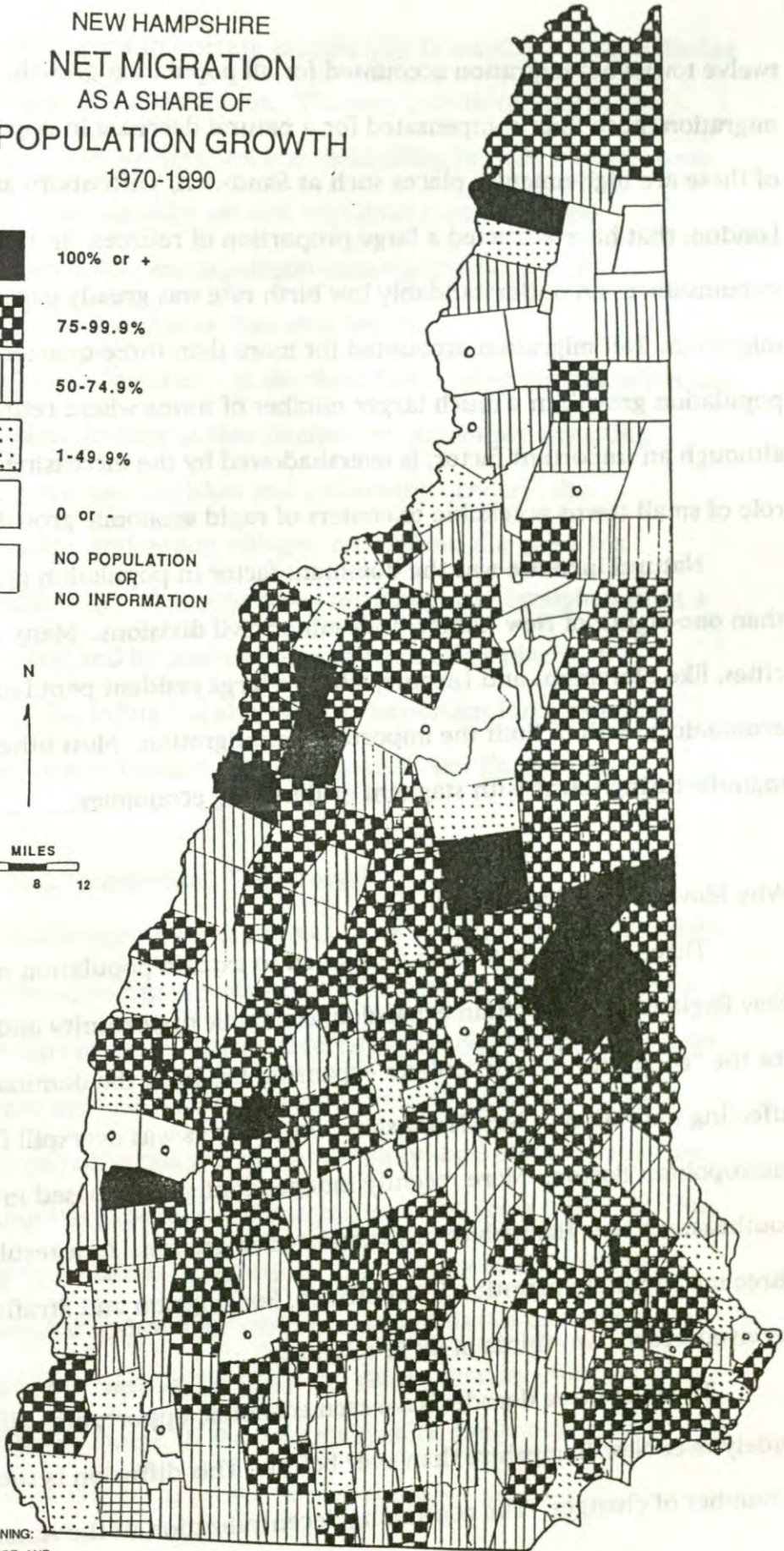
NEW HAMPSHIRE NET MIGRATION AS A SHARE OF POPULATION GROWTH 1970-1990



N



MILES



DATA FROM
N.H. OFFICE OF STATE PLANNING:
NATURAL POPULATION CHANGE, AND
POPULATION ESTIMATES OF NEW HAMPSHIRE TOWNS AND CITIES.

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twelve towns net migration accounted for all population growth. That is, in-migration more than compensated for a natural decrease in population. Most of these are high-amenity places such as Sandwich, Tuftonboro and New London, that have attracted a large proportion of retirees. In these circumstances an understandably low birth rate was greatly exceeded by in-migration. Net migration accounted for more than three-quarters of population growth in a much larger number of towns where retirement, although an important factor, is overshadowed by the increasing dormitory role of small towns accessible to centers of rapid economic growth.

Natural increase was the dominant factor in population growth in fewer than one-eighth of New Hampshire's minor civil divisions. Many of these are cities, like Claremont and Laconia, where a large resident population combined economic growth to limit the importance of migration. Most others are small manufacturing towns with stagnant or declining economies.

Why Move to New Hampshire?

Three models have been developed to explain population migration in New England: metropolitan expansion, economic opportunity and the search for the "good life."¹ Metropolitan expansion has been the dominant factor affecting migration in New Hampshire. At first this was overspill from metropolitan Boston. More recently independent growth based in southeastern New Hampshire has stimulated migration. As a result, the state's three metropolitan counties, Hillsborough, Rockingham and Strafford, have received nearly two-thirds of all in-migrants.

The past three decades have seen economic opportunity diffuse more widely over New Hampshire than ever before. This diffusion is the product of a number of changes. The continuing decentralization of the American

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The past three decades have seen economic opportunity diffuse more widely over New Hampshire than ever before. This diffusion is the product of a number of changes. The continuing decentralization of the American

economy permits businesses to operate successfully in smaller towns, reducing the historic advantages of concentration. The new growth sectors of the economy, particularly the services, are less demanding in their requirements for central location than the older sectors they have replaced. New technology in transportation and especially communication permit decentralization into smaller places than ever before.

The search for the "good life" is the third factor affecting migration and is of special importance to central New Hampshire. Amenities attracting migrants include recreation: the lakes and mountains; scenery: the picturesque countryside and quaint villages; retirement: the quest for tranquility and simple ways. Amenity-based migration has brought with it a large amount of capital and income transferred from other places. By stimulating demand this influx has also been an important force bringing economic opportunity into formerly-remote parts of New Hampshire.

The Metropolitan-Non Metropolitan Turnaround

Reversal of the historic migration from rural to urban areas was widely recognized as a national and international phenomenon in the decade of the 1970's.² However, this reversal, usually referred to as the "metropolitan-non-metropolitan turnaround", did not take place in New Hampshire. In New Hampshire, rural population has grown more rapidly than urban population since 1960, reversing the experience of the previous 130 years (Table 4). But this reversal is largely a central city-periphery dichotomy which elsewhere would be comprehended within metropolitan areas. This is a consequence of analyzing population by towns in New England rather than by counties as in other parts of the United States. If the New Hampshire metro-non metro

Table 4. NEW HAMPSHIRE - URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION

<u>URBAN</u>			<u>RURAL</u>		
<u>Number</u> <u>(1000's)</u>	<u>Numerical</u> <u>Increase</u>	<u>Percentage</u> <u>Increase</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>(1000's)</u>	<u>Numerical</u> <u>Increase</u>	<u>Percentage</u> <u>Increase</u>
1790	5	--	137	--	--
1800	5	--	179	42	30.7
1810	7	40.0	208	29	16.2
1820	7	--	237	29	13.9
1830	13	6	256	19	8.0
1840	29	16	256	--	--
1850	54	25	264	8	3.1
1860	72	18	254	-10	-3.9
1870	83	11	235	-19	-7.5
1880	104	21	243	8	3.4
1890	148	44	229	-14	-5.8
1900	192	44	219	-10	-4.4
1910	223	31	207	-12	-5.5
1920	250	27	193	-14	-6.8
1930	273	23	192	-1	-0.5
1940	283	10	208	16	8.3
1950	1312	29	221	13	6.3
1950	2307	--	226	--	--
1960	354	47	253	27	11.9
1970	416	62	322	69	27.3
1980	480	64	440	118	36.6
1990	566	86	544	104	19.1

1. Urban definition comparable with earlier data.
2. Urban definition comparable with later data.

Source: United States Bureau of The Census. Historical Statistics of The United States.

dichotomy is considered on a county basis, the rate (%) of population growth as well as the numerical increase in metropolitan counties exceeded that in non-metropolitan counties throughout the period 1960-1990 (Table 5). Most New Hampshire population growth is metropolitan expansion, occurring in the south-eastern part of the state. Here, three counties: Hillsborough, Rockingham and Strafford have accounted for 70 percent of all numerical growth since 1960 (Table 6). Finally, non-metropolitan growth in New Hampshire is not a true rural revival. The newcomers to rural New Hampshire have urban occupations. The number of farm operators and the amount of land used for agriculture continue to decline.³

Benefits, Causes

New Hampshire's rapid population growth has been accompanied by and augmented by unprecedented prosperity. The state's rank in per capita income, which was 24th in 1960 and 29th as late as 1974, rose to 5th in 1989.⁴ Unemployment, which had exceeded the national average ever since the 1920's, finally dropped below the national level in the mid-fifties and remained low for three decades.⁵ In the eighties New Hampshire enjoyed the lowest unemployment rate in the country for six consecutive years. The earnings of factory workers, historically among the lowest in the country, climbed steadily to reach the national level.⁶

The forces driving economic growth have varied with time. In the 1960's it was the search of manufacturers for lower costs. New Hampshire with its three-decade history of declining industries offered cheap factory space and a diligent labor force eager to work, even for low wages. In the 1970's the attractiveness of the state as a place to live came to be more widely appreciated, bringing an influx of vacationers, week-enders, summer residents and

Table 5. NEW HAMPSHIRE - METROPOLITAN POPULATION

1000'S

<u>Metropolitan*</u>				<u>Non-Metropolitan</u>		
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Numerical Increase</u>	<u>Percentage Increase</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Numerical Increase</u>	<u>Percentage Increase</u>
1960	337	---	---	270	---	---
1970	433	93	28.6	304	34	12.8
1980	522	185	27.5	369	65	21.1
1990	606	164	23.9	423	54	12.8

*Hillsborough, Rockingham, Strafford Counties

<u>Metropolitan*</u>				<u>Non-Metropolitan</u>		
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Numerical Increase</u>	<u>Percentage Increase</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Numerical Increase</u>	<u>Percentage Increase</u>
1960	194	---	---	413	---	---
1970	404	---	---	333	---	---
1980	511	107	26.5	410	77	23.1
1990	622	111	21.8	487	77	18.9

* Census Definition

Metropolitan areas defined in 1949, used in 1950 census.

Source: United States Bureau of The Census. Census of Population.

Table 6. NEW HAMPSHIRE - METROPOLITAN COUNTIES - POPULATION

	<u>Hillsborough</u>	<u>Rockingham</u>	<u>Strafford</u>	<u>New Hampshire</u>
1960	178,161	99,029	59,799	606,921
1970	223,941	138,981	70,431	737,681
1980	276,608	90,345	85,408	920,610
1990	336,073	245,845	104,233	1,109,117
1960-90	+157,912	+146,816	+44,434	Sum = 502,196
Percent of Total Population Growth in NH	31.4	29.2	8.8	Sum = 69.4

Source: United States Bureau of The Census. Census of Population.

retirees with purchasing power and capital which supported the boom in services and construction. In the 1980's the massive military buildup of the Reagan Years brought defense contracts to New Hampshire at the third highest per capita level in the country.⁷ The high wages paid in defense and related high technology industries had a powerful multiplier effect on the construction and tertiary sectors. New Hampshire became an exemplar of prosperity, 1980's style.

Limits Reached?

Will the 1990's bring a continuation of New Hampshire's 30-year boom? It doesn't seem likely.

Although the decade is still young, early indications are not promising. The state actually lost population in 1991 and experienced net-out migration for the first time since the 1930's. After six years of ranking lowest in the nation, New Hampshire's unemployment rate more than tripled from 2.5 percent in 1988 to 7.8 percent in mid 1992.⁸ Unemployment in New Hampshire exceeded the national average for the first time in three decades. Indeed, during the recession of the early 1990's, New Hampshire suffered the fourth highest rate of job loss in the United States.⁹ The booming real estate market with its dramatic escalation of property values collapsed. New Hampshire's banks, which financed much of the frenetic construction of the 1980's, became overextended and bank failures became common for the first time since The Great Depression. Five of the seven largest banks in the state failed during the early 1990's.¹⁰ It seems that the "good times" are over, at least for now.

What Happened?

Most of the forces propelling growth have weakened. New Hampshire, long a low-cost area attractive to industry was, in the 1980's, increasingly characterized by a tight labor market and rising wages. The second-home market that littered the lakes and mountains with condominiums was crippled by a slowing national economy and less favorable tax treatment. This further depressed construction, already slowed by the gross overbuilding of commercial and residential projects. Military spending, the mainspring of economic growth in southeastern New Hampshire has declined as the price of reduced international tensions. Indeed, defense contract awards declined by 45 percent between 1985 and 1990.¹¹ And, less easy to measure but equally important, many of the amenities that gave the state its reputation for the good life have been diminished by their very success in attracting new people. The search for a quiet and undisturbed countryside has moved on to other places.

Conclusion

Population change in New Hampshire may be viewed in two perspectives: as a part of the general history of population change in the United States, and in contrast to change elsewhere in the country. As a part of general change in America, population in New Hampshire reflected the shift of the economy from agriculture to manufacturing in the 19th century with resulting decline in rural population and growth of urban population. In this century, the decline of manufacturing and the growth of the tertiary sector was accompanied by stagnation or decline in older cities and growth on the fringes of metropolitan areas, as well as in high-amenity areas. Rural population has grown more rapidly than urban for the past three decades.

But New Hampshire also exhibits a number of distinctive features. The decline in agriculture and consequent rural depopulation began early, by 1830, and lasted for 100 years. The growth of manufacturing and resulting urbanization also began early, in the 1820's and continued vigorously for 100 years. The growth of the tertiary or service economy in New Hampshire has been very rapid since 1940. This has caused urban population growth since 1960, now in the form of metropolitanization. The growth of metropolitan areas is the dominant element in the growth of the state. In New Hampshire, rural revival began in the 1930's, accelerated greatly after 1960 and continues in the 1980's. Much of this is metropolitanization but decentralization of the economy and the increasing role of amenities as growth stimuli affect nearly all parts of the state except the far periphery, the North Country.

Footnotes

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