

Westview Geographies of the United States

ILLINOIS

A. Doyne Horsley

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A GEOGRAPHY

A. Doyne Horsley

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Geographies of the United States

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PREFACE

The geography of Illinois reflects the classic geographic settlement pattern found across Middle America, wherein a rural farming heartland functions within the sphere of influence of a larger urban core. An urban-rural traverse across Illinois highlights the environmental and social variation by viewing the scenic rural, forested, hill regions, the richest farmland in the United States, the sprawling suburban clusters with housing of up to 100,000 people, and finally the metropolitan heart of America—Chicago.

This book analyzes several urban-rural differences in Illinois by focusing on the changing environments with which Illinoisans interact. First, the urban-rural settlement patterns are studied historically and spatially. Second, the physical and agricultural environments serve as the bases for studying the context upon and within which the urban-rural pattern evolved. Illinois is regionalized in order to highlight these environments in comparing the interrelationships and interdependencies of urban and rural Illinois.

Third, Illinois energy and industrial environments are explored, and differences across the state are mapped. The Metro-East conurbation is a case study of an industrial environment. Finally, the city of Chicago and its suburbs, called by some the Illinois Urban Plain, are analyzed. Case studies of inner city and suburban communities of Chicago illustrate the character of this modern megalopolis.

Various geographic environments in Illinois are compared with nations outside the United States to illustrate the Illinois Urban Plain's hinterland of influence.

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A. Doyne Horsley

ILLINOIS

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PROLOGUE

The year was 1817. James Monroe began his historic eight-year term as president of the United States and Nathaniel Pope began his historic mission to convince the U.S. Congress to grant statehood to the territory of Illinois and to redraw its earlier borders. It is difficult today to recognize the impact upon images of Illinois made by those political decisions of 1817 and 1818, which expanded Illinois to the north. Without that change, we would speak of Chicago, Wisconsin. The highest point in Illinois would be in the southern end, not the northwestern corner. The Fox-Sauk Indian War would have been fought nearly entirely in Wisconsin. Approximately 8 million or 75 percent of present-day Illinoisans would live in Wisconsin. Illinois, instead of having the sixth largest population, would rank fifteenth, and Wisconsin would rank sixth, nearly reversing their current positions. However, Pope's efforts in logrolling in the Congress convinced it to grant statehood to a territory and to add a 60-mi (100-km) border on the Great Lakes. That historical action generated an immeasurable addition to Illinois, enriching, enlarging, and complementing the small population present in 1818.

A map of Illinois does not reveal these historical reconfigurations, rather, people

rely upon their "mental maps" of Illinois to refer to its characteristics and images. Those most familiar with the state hold "mental maps" that closely correspond to reality, reflecting their knowledge of Illinois. They recall that Illinois has common borders with five other states—Iowa, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, and Wisconsin—and with Lake Michigan. They may recall that Illinois is one of the longest north-south states in the United States, crossing the traditional North-South cultural division.

Because such mental images relate to regional comprehension, discussions, and behavior, those who have had more vicarious, indirect experiences with Illinois may perceive the state in a distorted way. They may position cities inaccurately, wrongly name sections of the state, miscalculate distances, and misrepresent patterns of prairie, black soil, population settlement, and rivers.

People's preferences about places, regions, and states are based on their mental maps. Preferences for sections of Illinois could perceptively influence travel patterns, residential desires, response to cultural and landscape attractions, and tourism. In this book I hope to allay any misperceptions and to reorient any inaccurate mental maps.

INTRODUCING ILLINOIS

In many ways Illinois is the central state—the crossroads state—of America's heartland. It holds a strong, interdependent, and cooperative relationship with each of the midwestern and upper southern states. Thousands of visitors from neighboring states travel to Illinois monthly, and thousands more commute daily to Illinois jobs. Skiers, vacationers, salespeople, businesspeople, farmers, and others from surrounding states leave and enter Illinois each week. Millions of dollars are spent to build, maintain, and rebuild bridges, highways, parks, and other accommodations to facilitate trade and travel in Illinois. O'Hare Airport near Chicago is one of the busiest in the world.

Illinois is the focal point of trade in the Midwest. Trade decisions, shipping routes, communication and computer networks, interstate pricing structure, media advertising, and business travel most often center on Chicago, its ports, banks, and exchange headquarters. Chicago's major newspapers are distributed in nearly every state in the Midwest.

Illinoisans are very proud of their economic progress. Throughout the state's history, a strong, prosperous economy has maintained steady growth. Illinois has man-

ufactured a widely diverse array of products and has nurtured a growing productive labor force. In 1985, Illinoisans boasted of nearly 1.2 million jobs in manufacturing, 1 million in trade, almost 1 million in services, more than 0.5 million in government, and about 175,000 in agriculture.¹ Illinois could stand as nearly the most economically diverse of all the fifty states. Others have more laborers and professionals in particular economic categories, but Illinois offers opportunities in nearly every category. Strong economic growth in services and high-tech industries and stabilization in other industrial groups are expected to continue in the near future.

Agriculture is the strongest long-term economic sector in Illinois. The state is one of the world's leading suppliers of field corn, feeder hogs, and soybeans, supported by the very finest mollisols (prairie soils) in the world. Illinois agriculturalists, aided by excellent transportation systems, ready markets, and dependable spring and summer weather, produce huge amounts of a wide variety of farm products, which places Illinois first or second among all states in the production and/or sale of those foodstuffs and accounts for about 25 percent of the state's exports. The original prairie