The Illinois State Historical Society

The mission of The Illinois State Historical Society, founded in 1899, is to publish the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* and through this journal, other publications, services, and programs to promote the preservation, writing, publishing, teaching, understanding, and awareness of Illinois history.

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The *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, formerly *Illinois Historical Journal* (1984-1998), publishes articles relating to Illinois' political, social, and cultural history. The editor also welcomes manuscripts in American and Midwestern history that explore important themes related to Illinois' past. Articles should not exceed 7,000 words and should be submitted in duplicate, double spaced, with endnotes, and where possible, disks with word processing programs compatible with IBM formats and supported by MS-DOS should also be sent.

Full-length articles receive a double-blind, peer review; research notes and documents are reviewed in house. The *Journal* uses the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th edition (University of Chicago Press), in matters of style. Manuscripts and all correspondence concerning editorial matters should be addressed to: Dr. Robert McColley, Editor; *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Department of History, 309 Gregory Hall, 810 South Wright Street, Urbana, Illinois 61801-3611. E-mail: rmccolle@uiuc.edu

Articles appearing in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* are abstracted and indexed in both *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*. The *Journal* is a member of the Conference of Historical Journals.

Neither the editors nor The Illinois State Historical Society assume any responsibility for statements, whether of fact or opinion, made by contributors.

The *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (ISSN 1522-1067) is published four times a year (Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter) by The Illinois State Historical Society, 210 1/2 South Sixth Street Suite 200, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1503, and is printed by William Street Press, Decatur, IL. Periodical postage is paid at Springfield, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Illinois State Historical Society, 210 1/2 South Sixth Street Suite 200, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1503.

A copy of the Society's publications list is available upon request.

Journal
of the Illinois State Historical Society

Vol. 92, No. 4 Winter 1999-2000

Editorial Advisory Board

To the Editor:

"African Americans in Illinois," a special issue of the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Summer, 1999), addressed important and often overlooked aspects of Illinois history. In both urban and rural settings African Americans have been essential actors in state history.

Shirley J. Portwood's "In Search of My Great, Great Grandparents: Mapping Seven Generations of Family History" evocatively demonstrates the value of family history to the scholarly study of African American social history. Her archival research and oral interviews reveal influences of kinship, education, and economics on African Americans in southern Illinois, Arkansas, and Mississippi.

Just as Portwood's article articulates the benefits of family history, Christopher Robert Reed's "Beyond Chicago's Black Metropolis: A History of the West Side's First Century, 1837-1940" illustrates the analytical merit of local history in an urban context. His description of Chicago's west side African American community complicates and enriches the emblematic black urban experience of St. Clair Drake's and Horace Cayton's *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1945). Reed found the west side more rural and provincial as compared to the south side's cosmopolitanism.

Finally, Anthony Q. Cheeseboro's "Conflict and Continuity: E. Franklin Frazier, Oliver C. Cox, and the Chicago School of Sociology" improves our understanding of black intellectual life in Illinois. The experiences of these two black sociologists explain much about politics and race relations in twentieth century America.

I commend the *Journal* and guest editor, Shirley J. Portwood, for this fine work of scholarship.

Sincerely,
Timothy B. Neary
Loyola University, Chicago

Farm Women, Class, and the Limits of Nostalgia

Jane Adams

A note to the reader: I wrote this essay as a talk at the banquet at the Illinois State Historical Society Annual Meeting, December 1998. As such, it has a certain informality of tone that varies considerably from the usual academic presentation. I decided, as I revised it for publication, to retain the original talk, and to provide the amplifying scholarly references in extended footnotes. I'm inspired to do this by the new work with hypertext formats made possible by the World Wide Web. Think of the note numbers as hypertext links.

One day, a while after I'd begun field work in Union County, I struck up a conversation with a woman in the shoe store in Anna. I told her I was interested in the history of the area, and particularly old farm houses. She reminisced about the farm she'd grown up on. It turns out the old house was gone; they'd built a new one when she was a young child, back in the fifties. There was a story: Her mother had long nagged her father for a new house. He invested in all kinds of other things for the farm, but the house stayed decrepit. Finally, one day, her mother had enough. While the father was in town, she recruited her son and together they chopped down one wall of the house. Needless to say, she got her new home.

I had long known that women did not have first call on the farm's resources. My mother had told me about a neighbor woman who threatened to divorce her husband if he didn't take some of the money he was spending on big farm equipment and build her a new house. But when I began to research the changing farm life in southern Illinois, I knew very little about farm women. I was born during World War II and grew up during the period when farming changed from horse to tractor, from largely self-provisioning to completely dependent on purchased inputs. One of my earliest memories is watching electric lines being strung to the house – the single biggest technological change in farming. The women I knew cooked and gar-

dened and canned and sewed, and they worked in the factories and offices in town. But agricultural producers were men.

The story my shoe store acquaintance told me was not inconsistent with this division of labor. Men were producers, responsible for the cash income, while women were consumers, responsible for caring for the family's needs in the home.[1] But, I was to find out, this story was flawed. It was the present read into the past – the worst mistake a historian (or an anthropologist) can make.

I know that many of you are only vaguely interested in farming. The great wars which mobilized the passions of the citizenry often seem more significant in leaving imprints on the present. In the twentieth century, popular movements in labor, civil rights, and women's rights have reshaped the contours of daily life. Nonetheless, a nostalgia for an agrarian past permeates much of our culture. Go into any small town cafe, and even some chain family restaurants, and you will see icons of our agricultural history decorating the walls. Relics of the past – sad irons, harness pieces, iron kettles – fetch outrageous prices at auctions, causing old folks to shake their heads in wonder at the junk younger people value. Many of those who buy these old things are professional antiquers, who search the backroads for artifacts to sell to upscale city folk. So I know the story I sought to understand was broadly interesting, not just the province of people living in a "backward," dying culture.[2]

There are highly practical reasons for trying to understand agricultural history, as well. Farmers produce the raw materials for virtually everything we eat, and agricultural products provide a major part of our international trade. Rural areas also preserve much of the wildness that remains, and the uses of these lands are one of the most contested areas of environmental politics. Farming and rural life are, therefore, central to our future, as much as they have formed our past. For all these reasons, I hope that you find this story interesting.

I want to share with you today some of my journey of discovery and some of what I've learned. You might find it instructive – how one teases out the "hidden history" of a region – a history fondly

but unsystematically told locally, but largely invisible in the documentary record. I also want to trouble this nostalgia that I share with so many of my compatriots.[3]

I began my research somewhat hastily. I'd grown up on a farm in southern Illinois, but all my graduate work – in anthropology – was oriented toward Latin America. I was worried about the opening of the Amazon basin, and what was happening to the indigenous people there. However, family intervened, and at the last minute I could not go. So I went home. Or near home. The problems were not dissimilar: Southern Illinois is historically poor. It is a region that has, from time to time, produced considerable wealth, but little of that wealth has stayed in the area.[4] It is also very beautiful. My sentimental attachments are great, even as I have been one of the many young people it produced that left on graduating from high school.

I began my research aiming to understand the way that farming had changed in my lifetime. I used the tools of an anthropologist, rooting my research in people's lives and oral traditions. However, as soon as I told people that I was interested in the history of the area, they pointed me to their parents or grandparents. What would a 40 or 50-year old know of history? History, after all, was long ago.

That unanticipated cultural peculiarity opened the door to a world I had only the most superficial knowledge of. And many misconceptions. The first, and most important, misconception was that women were not agricultural producers. As soon as I started interviewing elderly women, I found that they had raised chickens and milked cows. Some had raised daffodils – Easter flowers – or strawberries, sold corn shucks to a local tamale factory, boarded school teachers. In one way or another, the farm women I interviewed had earned enough money to "set the table" and clothe the family. No woman I interviewed ever referred to her earnings as "pin money."[5] Their income was integral to the family budget; without it, the family would not have made ends meet.

Edith Rendleman, for example, whose memoirs I edited, marveled that her mother was able to put every one of her six sons in a suit, in addition to buying all the food they did not produce on the farm. Another woman told me she paid for her new (very small)

house out of her earnings from her poultry and Easter flowers. Another woman was reported to have earned enough money from her strawberry field to buy a car.

I mostly talked with relatively prosperous farmers. However, many people in Union County were very poor, with no property other than their labor power. This was the other major misconception I had carried into my research. I recalled a farming community made up of farm owners. A few young families rented farms, but most of them worked in town. I came to find out that farming before the War had required lots of labor, and these folk were, in general, very poor.

Not many people talked to me about day laborers. They are not part of the "official history" of farming.[6] But one of the things I did, to learn the history, was to create "biographies" of old farms. Working with the Union County Historical Society, and with the support of a major grant from the Illinois Humanities Council, I surveyed about 100 old farms in the county, from which we selected five to document in-depth. The people who owned these farms opened their houses and their photo albums. They took me on tours of the farm and barns, and dug in their old records to find building records and other documents.[7]

An aside to those of you who are high school teachers: Researching the histories of farms turned out to be a gold mine. People are deeply curious about the places in which they live. They store odd items about the place and the people who have inhabited it. Buildings and the landscape seem to encode memory, giving it something concrete on which to hang facts that otherwise would float free and disappear. The biography of a place also creates a ready-made narrative line, a plot, that anyone – at least anyone from our culture – finds innately interesting. Old buildings and places are, therefore, intrinsically wonderful material for local history projects.

To return to my story of discovery. As I learned about the farms, I learned that all of them had old house sites. Sometimes these showed up in the spring when the daffodils bloomed; sometimes ruins remained, and other sites were simply pointed out to me by my hosts. All these places had housed laborers. One 300 acre farm that I documented some years later, as part of a field school, had 7 houses

on it, in addition to the big house. Women reminisced about the laborers who had lived in the main house, as well, pointing out the room that had once been the hired hand's room. Edith, for one, had always chafed under this arrangement: A laborer was paid $1.00 a day; however, if he lived in the house, he was paid only 75c a day. The quarter difference, theoretically, went for room and board. However, Edith complained, the wife did not get that money. All she got was an added burden, cooking, cleaning, and washing for the hired hand. Plus the lack of privacy. The thing that had griped Edith the most was a workman who found it more convenient to relieve himself into mason jars than get up in the middle of the night. When he left, she found the jars neatly balanced on the rafters under the eves where he slept. Pee-u! She, of course, had to clean up what he had left behind.

My growing awareness that women had been important agricultural producers, and that farming required a steady supply of low-paid labor, made me seriously re-think the history of farming. And the idealized image I had had of it.

I would be dishonest if I denied that I carry a deep nostalgia for an imagined agrarian past. I drive through farm country and grieve for the emptied out neighborhoods. I cannot help but see the farmsteads that not so many years ago dotted the landscape. I see old post-and-beam barns sinking into the ground, the occasional one-room school house that has been converted to other uses and so survives, and a sense of enormous loss sweeps over me. I envision bucolic country life, with crops ripening in the fields, large, happy families breaking bread around a groaning table, livestock comfortable in the barnyard.[8]

But the nostalgic story is not the one most people told me. In fact, sometimes people's memories were so grim that they declined to recall them for me. They were stories of hard work and, often, privation. Women's memories of their childhoods seemed to have less joy than men: Women recalled Mother switching them if they did not iron well, or sweep the house quickly enough. Being put to balling rags for rugs if they misbehaved. Living in fear of their fathers. Being shamed about boys, as they became old enough to flirt. Men recalled

hard work, but also boisterous play, fishing and hunting and walking with friends to dance halls (where good girls did not go). Driving down to Cairo to fetch liquor for the workmen (this from a man who reported he was so young he could barely reach the pedals or see over the steering wheel of the Model A, but young enough not to be suspected of hauling liquor, this in the 'twenties).

I collected stories from people who had lived in the laborers houses, of boys waking up in their beds in the loft with snow on their frozen blankets, where it had sifted through the shakes. Of the wind that whistled up through the floorboards. Of winters when there was no money for Christmas presents. Of landowners who bought shoes and coats for the workers' children so the children could go to school, because their parents could not afford them.

These stories exposed both the bitter privation that characterized too many people's lives, and the kinds of bonds that to some extent ameliorated those privations. Some people with means shared with those with less, though some did not. During the Great Depression, people recalled being taken in by siblings, or given vacant houses on someone's land. "We were the fattest people ever going to the poor house," one woman recalled. Illinois did not suffer the drought of the Dust Bowl, and rural areas, in general, became refuges for people who were thrown out of work as factories shut down and commerce ground to a near halt.[9]

I used many conventional sources of data, in addition to oral histories – the Census, newspapers on microfilm, archives held by the Extension Service. But much of what I learned is invisible, or nearly so, to the documentary record. Women are not listed in the Census as part of the labor force, despite the significant amount of income they earned and the vitally important role they played in the farm economy.[10] Nor is their role easily seen in other sources. Home Extension, which was staffed by graduates of Home Economics, promoted the notion that women were primarily homemakers. Women were not recognized as income-earners: in the ideology of the period, that was man's role. It gives one pause to realize how much of the reality of people's lives vanishes when memory expires.

The social arrangements between laborers and farm operators was also largely invisible in the documentary record. I teased them out, trying to understand the complexity of the social economy that no economist would every see. People told me about generous landlords, and stingy, mean ones. I heard about shiftless workers, and loyal, hardworking families who stayed three generations on a single farm. I learned about migrant laborers who camped along the roadside and slept in abandoned sheds.

As my research wound down, after I had written my books, I learned some tidbits about these arrangements that cast things in an entirely different light: Some of the men in the "big house," it turns out, had long-term affairs with some of the women in the worker's houses. Such liasons have been well-documented on southern plantations, but I had no inkling that puritanical midwestern men carried on in such a way. And these relationships – and their offspring - were not deep secrets, either. How, I wondered, did the wives of the philandering husbands, and the husbands of the adulterous wives, deal with this? I guess differently, depending on the people involved. One woman told me that her mother and the other woman (who lived not a hundred yards away) once had a hair-pulling fight in the chicken yard over who the man loved the most. He, apparently, was carrying on with other women, as well – perhaps even his wife's sister! Another woman pointed to a man her brother's age. This man was born and raised on the farm and was a special favorite of their father's. Rumor had it, she said with a small laugh, that they shared their father.

This is not the stuff that gives rise to nostalgic memories. Privation, discomfort, early deaths, philandering men … But yet, but yet. Alongside these bitter recollections lie the rich experiences of the senses: of the smells of plowed earth and mown hay, the close sweet smell of cows; the tastes of traditional foods cooked on a woodburning stove – women will spend hours swapping recipes, regaling a willing listener with vivid memories of foods their mother, their aunt, or their grandmother preserved and cooked. There is a virtue in making much of what you consume, and that virtue is certainly lost. And in the necessity that care of other animals – the horses, pigs,

chickens, cows – entails. People often abused themselves, their animals, the land, but most people did not.

One old man recalled, with enormous fondness, a balky horse he once owned. But he outsmarted her: He came to know when she was about to balk, and just as she got ready, he'd say, "Woa," and pull her up. They'd stand there a few minutes and then pretty soon, he'd set her to plowing again. "She forgot all about it," he said, laughing. Those memories, that more than a half century later bring chuckles, are worth a lot.

So where did it all go, and why? That's another talk entirely, and frankly, I don't have a definitive answer. I have traced the history of *what* happened – the New Deal, the massive investments in agriculture after the War, the booming industrial and service economy that sucked people from the land.[11] But why? Why did farming and rural people assent to policies that ensured their elimination? Why did they concur with programs that emptied out their neighborhoods and left their roads bereft of children? Why did farm women not argue with the experts and demand on-farm sources of income, instead of quietly finding work in town when the farm economy sagged in the '50s? I expect if I understood that, I'd be able to prophesy the future, as well.

But I do believe that our nostalgia is inflected with this apprehension: As one man observed, "After you seen it, you knew you'd seen it coming." But before the fact, we failed to see what was plain as could be. A denial. A backward looking vision. A failure of imagination.[12] But inside that nostalgia is a deep regret – that we could have "modernized" and retained the rural. That we did not have to sacrifice so much to gain so much.

I like to end on a hopeful note, but as we speak, another farm crisis is emerging, and the last vestiges of this rurality are being obliterated by high-tech agriculture. Historians and anthropologists will not create whatever will come next, though as citizens we will be part of it. But that is the challenge, as we use the past to understand better our times and the potential the future holds.

And, I would like to recollect – to re-collect, our history in order to undergird our own and our sons' and daughters' lives. It seems important to remind ourselves that farm women, like the vast majority of women today, helped earn the income and do the work that put food on the table, clothes on the family, a roof over their heads. With their wit and energy and imagination, they, along with their menfolk, earned the money and time to provide some of the finer things of life.

If I may take up what church people call the "prophetic voice," I would like to exhort us all gathered here today, students of our history, to cherish what those before us did. We bear an unredeemable debt to those who are gone, for they – for better and for worse – bequeathed us the world we now live in. We cannot do justice to our forebear's' lives if we look at them through rose-colored glasses, diffusing the hard realities of their lives with soft focus lenses. We belittle the tough moral struggles they engaged in if we depict them only through our sentimental longings. We live in difficult times now. It is hard to understand our world, to make good moral judgments, to act as responsible citizens. Physically, our lives are easier than they ever were. But the moral choices we face are no easier – and no more difficult – than those of our ancestors.

We take up this challenge – as scholars, as teachers, as citizens – with the expectation that through the study of the past, we will gain a better sense of how we came to create the world we live in now. More important, we hope, through this study, to gain greater wisdom with which to make the hard decisions that always, inevitably, confront us. Collecting and retelling our history makes us mindful of the precious legacy those who went before us left us, a legacy we inherited, but did not earn. That is the challenge we face – to gaze upon our past with an uncompromising, but loving, gaze.

Notes

1 Nineteenth century reformers promoted this division of labor as progressive and evolutionary. It seems to have resulted from two currents in America's heritage: the traditional New England division of labor in which women were responsible for running the household and for manufacturing household-based goods, like yarn and fabric (Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity.*

(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973); Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing on Domesticity 1830-1860* , New York: Hayworth Press, 1982), and the southern tradition of the planter elite, in which men displayed their wealth and status in part through the leisured, "ladylike" behavior of their wives and daughters (Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *Midcontinent American Studies* X(1):5-15, 1969; William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and the American National Character* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1983 [1961]).

As manufacturing replaced handicraft production, women lost many of their productive functions. Salary and wage-earning men earned the family income outside the home and, particularly in urban areas, women managed the provision of their families' day-to-day needs in the home as intelligent, frugal consumers. In the newly developed urban middle class, advice books, educators, and others promoted a division of labor in which men went out into the harsh, competitive environment of the economy, while women created a "haven in a heartless world" (Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World*, [New York: Basic Books, 1977]), cultivating the moral and aesthetic aspects of their families. Despite the varied divisions of labor in different ethnic groups, educated elites based their modernizing theories on these old American norms. By the 1950s the notion that men were producers and women were consumers had become the "common sense" that was taught in schools, represented in the media, and generally accepted as "natural." I have expanded this analysis in other writings, including Jane Adams, *The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois 1890-1990* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); *All Anybody Ever Wanted of Me Was to Work: The Memoirs of Edith Bradley Rendleman* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1996); "Resistance to 'Modernity': Southern Illinois Farm Women and the Cult of Domesticity," in *American Ethnologist* 20:1 (1993)89-113; "Government Policies and the Changing Structure of Farm Women's Livelihood: A Case from Southern Illinois," in Elizabeth M. Brumfiel, ed., *The Economic Anthropology of the State* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994); "'A Woman's Place Is in the Home': The Ideological Devaluation of Farm Women's Work," *Anthropology of Work Review* , combined issues 12:4 and 13:1 (1991-2) 87-110; "The Decoupling of Farm and Household: Capitalist Development and U.S. Agriculture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30: 3: 453-482.

These works draw on historians and anthropologists Ruth H. Bloch, "Untangling the Roots of Modern Sex Roles: A Survey of Four Centuries of Change," *Signs* 4:2, 237-252, 1978; Nancy F. Cott *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Nancy F. Cott, "Passionless: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850," *Signs* 42:2, 2 (1978)19-236; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983); Carl Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Sarah Elbert, "Amber Waves of Gain: Women's Work in New York Farm Families," in Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, eds., *"To Toil the Livelong Day"* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987) 250-268; Sarah Elbert, "Women and Farming: Changing Structures, Changing Roles," in Wava Haney and Jane B. Knowles, eds., *Women and Farming* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988) 245-264; Deborah Fink, "Sidelines and Moral Capital: Women on Nebraska Farms in the 1930s," also in Haney and Knowles, eds., *Women and Farming* , 55-72; Deborah Fink, *Open Country, Iowa* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986); Kathryn Jellison *Entitled to Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Julie A. Matthaei, *An Economic History of Women in America: Women's Work, the Sexual Division of Labor, and the Development of Capitalism*) New York: Schocken Books, 1982), Glenna Matthews, *"Just a Housewife": The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing on Domesticity 1830-1860*, (New York: Hayworth Press, 1982), Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and the American National Character* (New York: G. Braziller, 1961), Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" *American Quarterly* XVIII (vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 151-174, 1966), Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), and Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986). Many sources testify to the vigor with which this division of labor was promoted in the early years of the twentieth century: see home economists' advice to farm women published in the *Illinois Farmers' Institute* (1911), 283-4; home economists Mary Meek Atekson, *The Woman on the Farm* (New York: The Century Company 1924); Isabel Bevier and Susannah Usher, *The Home Economics Movement* (Boston: M. Barrows and Co., 1906); Maria Parloa, *Home Economics* (New York: The Century Co. New and Enlarged Edition. [First edition, 1898], 1910); Margaret Gilpin Reid, *Economics of Household Production* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1934); and other works by home economists of the period.

2 The success of the *Foxfire* books testifies to the deep interest in this receding heritage, as do the many books on local history published by local historians.

3 This paper is not the place to delve deeply into the difference between the kinds of history published by academic presses and journals and the historical accounts published by genealogical societies, local history groups, and motivated but untrained individuals. However, there are definite differences, and sometimes tensions, between these different forms. Scholarly history tends to deal with materials more systematically and to try to place the historical data in a framework that includes the work of other historians; vernacular history tends to be tied intimately to place or, in the case of genealogies, to kinship; the stories told are presumed to be intrinsically interesting. The intended audience is generally quite different: scholarly historians seek at least a regional and national audience that includes professional scholars, while local historians write primarily for people whose own biographies are in some way caught up in the stories told. In recent years genealogists have come to adhere to extremely high standards of citation and accuracy; their scholarship in that regard often exceeds that of professional historians and other social scientists. However, few genealogists seek to use their data to tell a story about their ancestors and ancestral lines that would be significant to people not linked to their genealogies – for example, the migration of a particular ethnic group to a specific region, the

causes of migrations, the nature of the social order the immigrants created, and so forth – the stuff that is the meat of scholarly works. Local historians sometimes feel that the academic concerns held by professional historians and social scientists overwhelms the actual historical story being told; scholarly historians are often frustrated by the lack of rigor regarding uses of data and sources, as well as by the unsystematic and anecdotal narrative form that characterizes many local histories. They are, however, two distinct genres, and are intended to do different things. I suggest that local histories should be treated more as oral histories, rich with the textures of meaningful lives whether or not the data is precisely accurate; the audience is intimate and familiar, sometimes barely comprehensible conversations overheard by an outsider. Scholarly histories, in contrast, aim at a far more impersonal audience, and aim to explicitly impose meaning and coherence on the messiness of everyday life.

4 After World War II, as agriculture in general fell on hard times, farmers in hilly regions like southern Illinois had great difficulty adapting to the new technologies. These changes in the structure of agriculture coincided with changes in coal mining, which reduced the number of miners needed, and the increasing importance of manufacturing that was largely concentrated in urban areas. Despite its historic abundance of timber and coal, and excellent conditions for fruit and vegetable production, the region's economy sagged. Experts concerned with economic development attempted to diagnose and develop programs to ameliorate the increasing gap between southern Illinois and richer parts of the state, as indicated in several publications, including Baker Brownell, *The Other Illinois* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1958); Charles C. Colby, *Pilot Study of Southern Illinois* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1956); The Executive Committee on Southern Illinois, *Southern Illinois: Resources and Potentials of the Sixteen Southernmost Counties* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949); Robert G. Layer, *The Fundamental Bases of Southern Illinois, 1879-1959* (Regional Studies in Business and Economics Monograph No. 1 Carbondale, IL: Business Research Bureau, Southern Illinois University, 1965); Melvin Levin, *The Depressed Area: A Study of Southern Illinois* (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago 1965), Ray Wakeley, *Population Changes and Prospects in Southern Illinois* (Carbondale: Division of Area Services, Southern Illinois University, 1962); and several community self-studies instigated by Southern Illinois University's Department of Community Development (the reports and other materials are held at SIUC Morris Library).

5 Deborah Fink, in her pioneering study of women's agricultural production, reports that at least some analysts termed the smaller flocks of chickens (50-100 hens) "pin-money flocks" (Fink, *Open Country, Iowa* ,142. She documents the importance of women's agricultural production, particularly poultry production, in maintaining farm income before the post-World War II transformation of agriculture.

6 Willard Cochrane's comprehensive history of U.S. agriculture, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979) barely mentions the existence of wage laborers as an integral part of most U.S. farms; David Danbom's recent, extremely readable history of rural America, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) does not even have an entry in the index for labor. Agricultural economists deal with labor, but as a category of wages, rather than as the social relationship between employer and employee (see, for example, Luther Tweeten, *Foundations of Farm Policy.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970).

7 Copies of the interviews, copy negatives of some 600 photographs gleaned from family albums, and copies of other family documents collected during my research are deposited at SIUC Morris Library Special Collections.

8 Nostalgia is a complicated emotion. One man recalled his father, who had owned a steam engine and threshing rig. Every year as he hauled it around the threshing route he would curse the machine, fight its balky gears and belts, gripe about the heat and dirt and noise. But then when the combine replaced the thresher, and the internal combustion engine replaced the steam engine, he would wax nostalgic thinking about the "greasy smoke." His son recognized the irony of his father's fondness for the antique machine, a fondness that is widely shared, as testified to by the prevalence of threshermen's fairs around the midwest.

9 The number of farms in Union County increased during the 1930s, an indication of this trend. These farms were more diversified than those of the 1920s, when agriculture was becoming more specialized. This is indicated by an increase in the percentage of farms with dairy cows and chickens tallied in the 1935 Census of Agriculture (see Adams *Transformation of Rural Life,* Chapter 7).

10 Nancy Folbre, in "The Unproductive Housewife: Her Evolution in Nineteenth Century Economic Thought" (*Signs* 16:3 (1991) 463-484, analyzed the debate over women's classification in terms that would indicate their productive role in the domestic economy or in terms that would view them as non-productive dependents of the men in their families. Although many nineteenth-century feminists and some labor groups argued that women's unpaid domestic labor should be recognized and considered productive, most state and federal censuses used classifications that recognized unwaged male productive labor but did not recognize women's.

11 The second half of my book, *Transformation of Rural Life*, deals with these processes.

12 My interviews with older members of the community, as well as research in local newspapers, suggests to me that the old elites sought to reestablish their status after the War. During the Depression, most local elites suffered considerably; some were so impoverished, as one woman recalled, that they did not have money for a 3 cent stamp. However, those who retained their property seemed to believe that with economic recovery, the old social order would be reestablished. Instead, the New Deal and post-War reforms created a new middle class, built on largely government-funded jobs and on commerce, rather than on agriculture and small-scale manufacturing. Some individuals and organizations more or less successfully rose to the challenge. But for most, particularly given the limited opportunities available in the region, the change was largely resisted. I have traced this complicated response to the new order as it played out in a community festival, the Cobden Peach Festival (*Illinois Historical Journal* 83:2 (1990), 97-108. Festivals, as anthropologists have long known, like other rituals often provide key insights into underlying, durable patterns in a society. They create, as Clifford Geertz argues, models *of* and models *for*

social meanings and the interactions entailed in these meanings (*The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973), 142. However, they also create arenas in which people, who may have different notions of how their community should be constructed , can argue about their relationships and the meanings of the important symbols (Victor Turner is the anthropologist who most influenced my thinking in this regard; see *The Ritual Process* [Chicago: Aldine, 1969]). The Peach Festival was created in the depths of the Great Depression, as an attempt by Cobden business people and leading farmers to raise money for community improvement. They worked to overcome the many lines of division among them (Catholic/Protestant, farm/town, Democrat/Republican, wet/dry, as well as personal antagonisms and animosities), creating in the process a venue through which a specific set of Cobden's populace enacted their leadership role. The Queen, elected through financial donations, generally belonged to the Catholic or Presbyterian churches, as did her court and the most active members of the sponsoring committee. They were, in short, the local elite. Their legitimacy weakened after the War, and through the decade of the 1950s various individuals challenged the procedures organizing the particular structure of the festival, and most importantly of the queen contest. Voting through donations gave way to formal judging using beauty queen standards; the sponsoring organization was enlarged and then restricted; the queen's court changed form as non-elite residents sought entry; and business sponsorship replaced individual (family) sponsorship. A decade later the contest became county-wide, although local partisanship remained strong. Some of the elderly members of the community, when I interviewed them in the 1980s, regretted the shift from a festival that showcased the daughters of the leading families and the locality to one that was more inclusive, first in terms of class and later in terms of geographic scope. This undertow, of trying to retain and recreate a social order that was familiar and, at least to the privileged members, comfortable, along with a culture of public civility and limited economic possibilities, seems to have made it difficult for people to imagine the scope of the changes that were occurring in the larger world and to respond to them vigorously.

Getting its Wings: Chicago as the Cradle of Aviation in America

David V. Wendell

With photographs by, or from the collection of Ted Koston

Octave Chanute of Chicago was the first man to successfully navigate a heavier than air "plane" when he designed and launched a glider off the hundred foot sand dunes of Gary, Indiana in 1896. The wealthy businessman and engineer had observed birds in flight and, upon discovering that a single wing could not support the weight of a human, invested much of his fortune in developing a twin wing configuration that provided the added lift necessary to carry him over the soft layers of sand upon which he could safely land. This configuration of one wing directly above the other and connected by thin vertical wooden sticks, proved successful, and he was hailed as a pioneer in manned flight. As much lift as the "bi-wing" was capable of achieving, however, it still did not possess enough buoyancy for flights of practical distance and so Chanute, at age 70, left the project for another generation to complete. All the glider needed was a stronger and more sustained windflow over its wings. With this simple addition, the dream of controlled flight could become reality.

Two brothers from Dayton, Ohio had paid close attention to Chanute's breakthroughs and shortly thereafter, combined their skills as bicycle manufacturers with the lessons learned by their esteemed elder. Their resolution to the windspeed problem was to install a gas engine at the center of the lower wing and string two bicycle chains from it to a pair of five foot long wooden blades facing forward and mounted aside the engine. The chain spun a gear directly attached to the midpoint of the blades causing them to rotate and pull air above and under the wings. So long as the blades spun,