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The Significant Cultural Changes in

Clinton, Illinois from 1937 to 1964

(TITLE)

BY

Phillip J. Kendrick

PLAN B PAPER

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION
AND PREPARED IN COURSE

Geography 590, Special Problems

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY,
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1965

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS PLAN B PAPER BE ACCEPTED AS
FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE DEGREE, M.S. IN ED.

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8/6/65
DATE

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DEPARTMENT HEAD

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PREFACE

This study had its genesis in a regional geography course, "The Geography of Illinois." Dr. Dallas A. Price, the professor of this course, had written a study in 1937, "Clinton: An Urban Area in the Prairie Province of Illinois." After reading Dr. Price's paper on Clinton, I became extremely interested in the city of today as compared to the city of 1937.

Dr. Price, who had lived in Clinton as a boy, became a student of geography. Clinton was viewed by him as a budding geographer when he went to the University of Illinois as an undergraduate. He had first-hand information that was readily available to him. The awareness and keen foresight that he had in 1937 can be observed: Many of his projections, even predictions, these past twenty-eight years, have come to pass. The impact of the motor vehicle, as Dr. Price foresaw, has made its mark on the economy of Clinton. The larger cities of the surrounding area today receive many of the shoppers because of the good highways that are extended through the city. The farmer with the aid of large trucks can transport livestock great distances.

This writer fully appreciates the personal interest, invaluable suggestions, and constant encouragement that Dr. Price has given throughout this study. Only due to the 1937 study was

it possible to gain as much information as needed to write this study from a geographical, historical, and comparative point of view.

PURPOSE

This is an analysis of Clinton, Illinois comparing the city as it is today as it was in 1937. The 1937 study, "Clinton: An Urban Area in the Prairie Province of Illinois," by Dallas A. Price, was chosen for comparison because it was the year in which the only known study from a geographical point of view was written on the city.

This study (1965) considers the major geographical changes to the city since 1937. Questions on a comparative basis come to mind. What has happened to the city since 1937? What is the nature of the economy now (1965) as compared to 1937? Has the economy grown? Has its base changed? At what rates have the economy and population increased or decreased? What is the economic role of the railroad, which once was the dominate industry, now as compared to 1937? Where do the local and rural consumers trade? How important is agriculture today as compared to 1937 to the Clinton community?

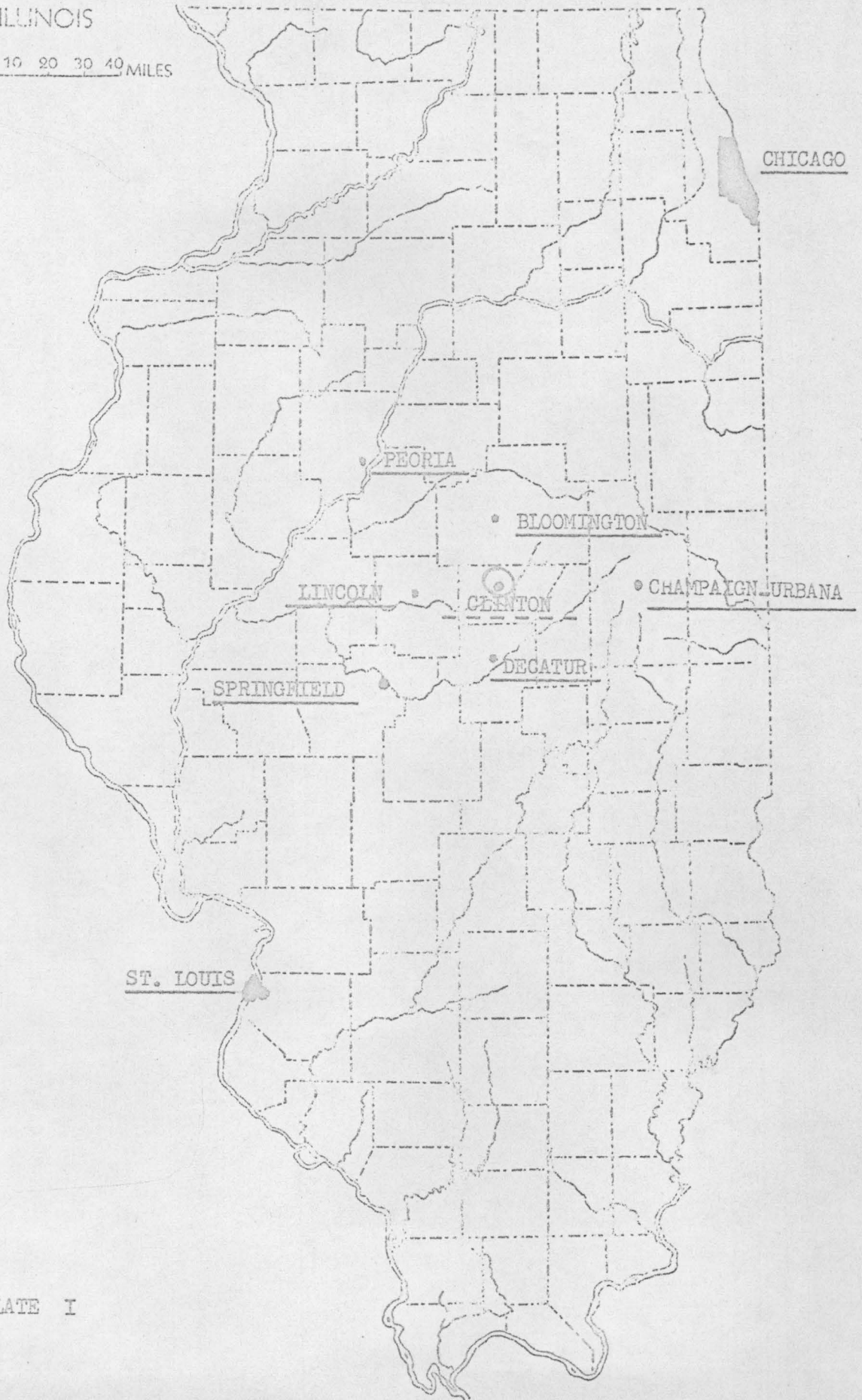
In order to find answers to these questions, field work became the chief tool used in this study. Personal interviews were utilized extensively (general public, employee, and employer). Population statistics over a twenty-eight year period (1937 to 1965) were used from research. Maps (highway, railroad, topographic and city) were of value in making this analysis.

LOCATION

Clinton is centrally located in the very heart of Illinois: Chicago is one hundred and fifty miles northeast, St. Louis is one hundred and fifty miles southwest, Indianapolis is also one hundred and fifty miles east of Clinton. Nearby cities are; Decatur, twenty-two miles south; Bloomington, twenty-one miles north; Lincoln, twenty-one miles west; Champaign-Urbana, forty-three miles east; Springfield is forty-five miles southwest and Peoria is fifty-five miles northwest from Clinton. Some of these cities today are just minutes away and none, except Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis, is more than an hour's drive from Clinton.

ILLINOIS

SCALE 0 10 20 30 40 MILES



CHAPTER I

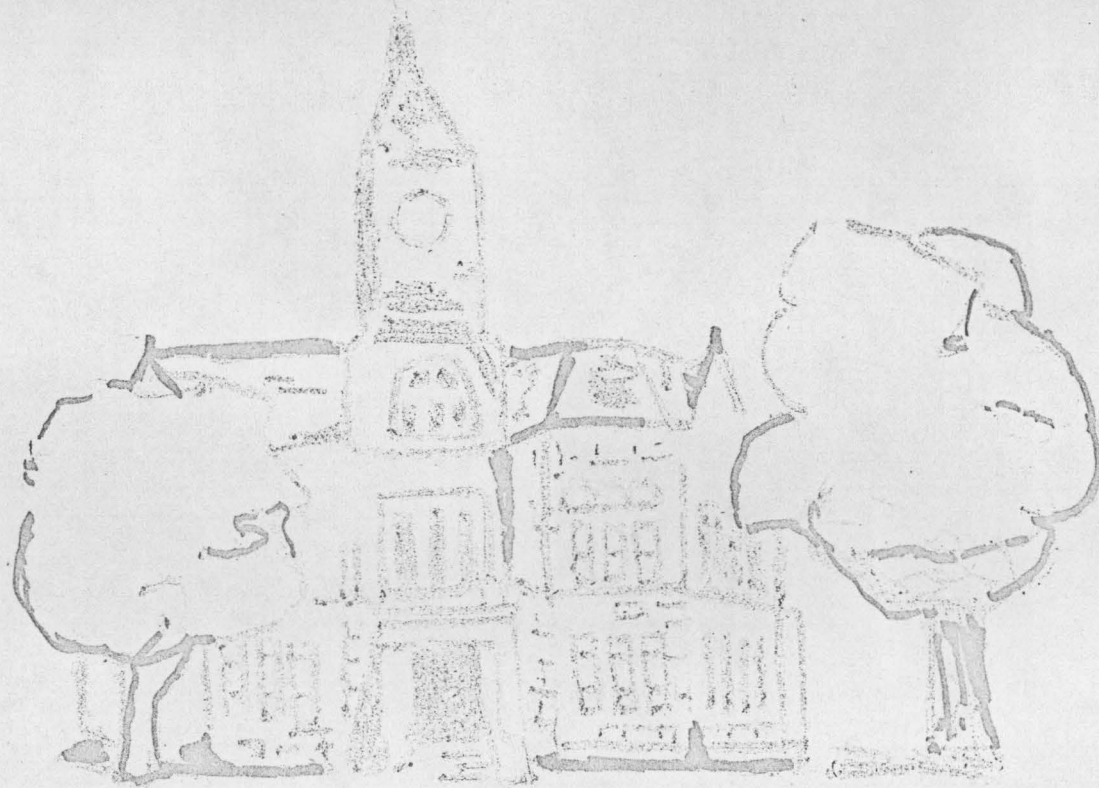
SERVICE FUNCTIONS

The DeWitt county seat is Clinton, a typical Midwest county seat with a castle-like structure located at the focus of the central business district, commonly referred to as the "square." In 1937 the steeple and large clock on top of the courthouse served as a landmark which could be seen for a few miles (see figure 1-1).

Clinton, 1937, was an important service center for the farmer in the community. The city served as a transportation center, where carloads of grain were assembled and shipped to larger centers; it served as a distribution point to supply farmers with lumber, coal, repair services for machinery, banking, and other services.

The "square" was an active place on Saturday night because it was the night the farmer and townspeople mingled together and did their shopping. Most of the businesses remained open late on Saturday night and traffic was a critical but pleasant problem on the courthouse square. Every bit of available parking space within a radius of several blocks of the business district was used by the Saturday crowd. Still, local merchants keenly felt the effect of the automobile and accompanying paved highways,

DEWITT COUNTY SEAT IN CLINTON, ILLINOIS



1937

Fig. 1-1 This is the way the court house looked in 1937.

because local citizens as well as farmers did at least a part of their buying in nearby larger cities. Evidences of such overlapping of trade territories were shown by the number of sales bulletins, circulars, radio and newspaper advertisements distributed by Bloomington and Decatur merchants in what had formerly been exclusive Clinton trading territory (see figure 1-2).¹

With advances in technology in Clinton the surrounding community changed. The coming of the automobile and paved roads threatened the shopping center as well as the railroad. However, by making several adjustments, the city retained its function as a service center for the farming community. Friday replaced Saturday night as the shopping night. Some people suggest that this change may have been caused in part at least by television. Actually, the changing of the work's weekend from Saturday to Friday brought about the shift so that more workers could have a longer weekend. Friday, the end of the work week, also became payday; so, the stores remained open to serve the local citizens. The number of automobiles increased each year after 1937, as well as before; but the intense traffic problem eased because three of the four grocery stores, located on the square in 1937, moved to new more commodious locations. This move provided space for increased parking facilities.

¹Dalias A. Price, "Clinton: An Urban Area in the Prairie Province of Illinois," (unpublished term paper, University of Illinois, 1937), p. 5.

DEWITT COUNTY

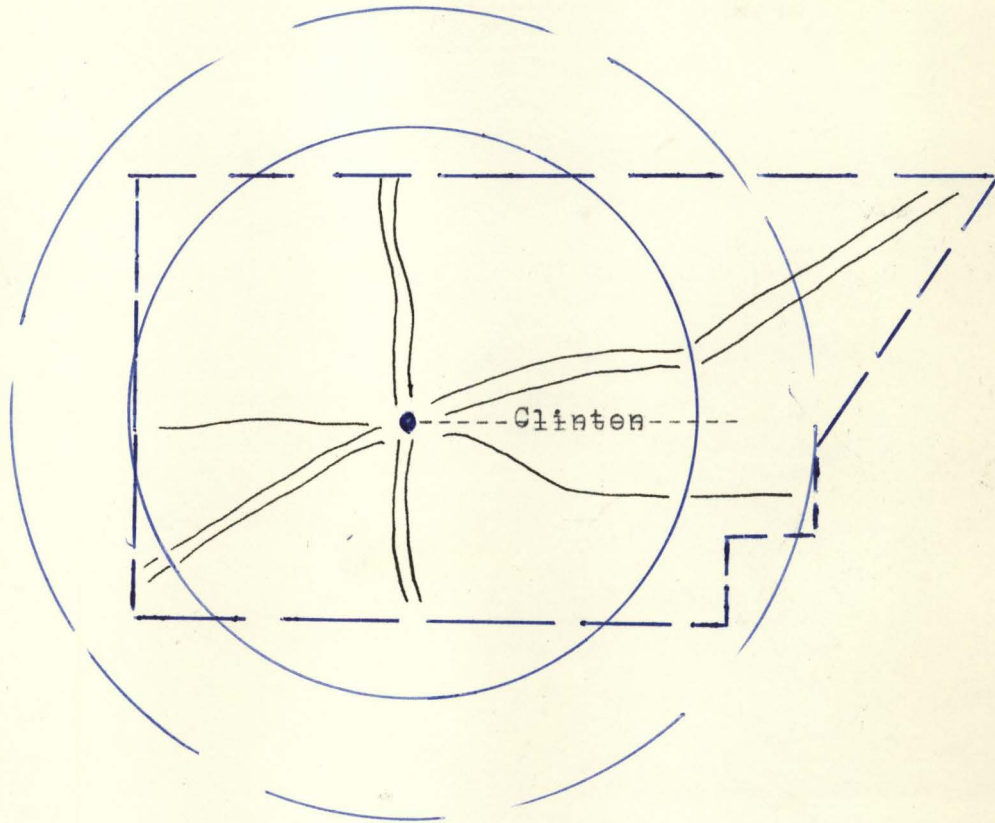
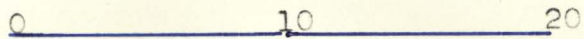


Fig. 1-2 The trading area of Clinton.



Grocery stores employ about one hundred employees; however, the large chain stores, IGA and Eisner, account for the bulk of these employees. At present Kroger is trying to relocate in Clinton; Kroger had a store in Clinton in 1950, but as the railroad left, Kroger left in 1959 (see figure 1-3).

The courthouse with its steeple and clock had served as a landmark in 1937; now, however, the steeple and clock, since condemned, have been removed--but the government functions continued unabated giving to Clinton an edge in attracting possible business from the county at large (see figure 1-4).

Shift of Emphasis to Cash-Grain

The farmers, who did their shopping in Clinton, came from an area endowed with fertile rich soil. This agricultural area constitutes a part of the Corn Belt and more specifically also constitutes a part of the cash-grain subdivision of Illinois. Mostly corn, oats, and wheat were raised in this farm community in 1937. Soybeans, though almost unheard of then, have become prominent in this part of the cash-grain area today (see figures 1-5, 1-6). Usually grain, in this area, is not transported more than five miles because storage elevators are distributed at regular intervals throughout the area. Such regular spacing was the result of thoughtful planning during the primary railroad building era of the nineteenth century.

As the shift in emphasis from corn to cash-grain occurred and as motor driven vehicles replaced draft animals, the farmer



Fig. 3 --This was the former location of Krogers, one block from square and in the central business district.

DEWITT COUNTY COURT HOUSE IN CLINTON, ILLINOIS



1965

Fig. 1-4 THIS IS THE COURT HOUSE OF TODAY.

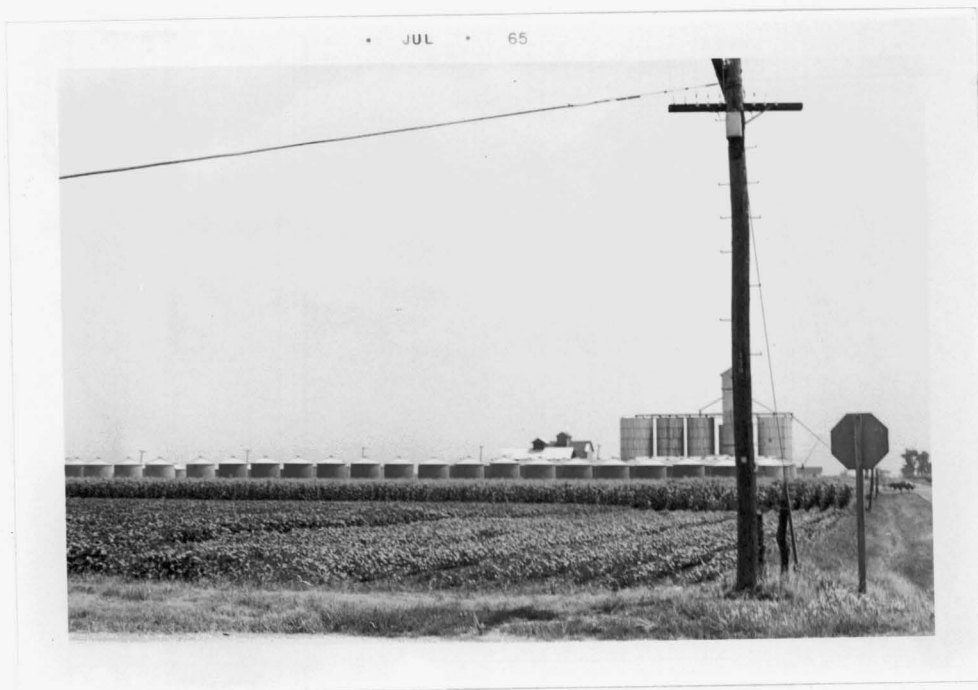


Fig. 5. --Evidence of cash-grain farming: Soybeans, corn, storage bins, large grain elevator, and truck coming onto the highway serve as evidence of the type of farming in this area.



Fig. 6 --Even at great distances along the railroad, grain elevators can be seen in the Clinton farm community.

experienced three changes; fewer hours spent in the fields, shortage of manure, and governmental crop acreage allotment which had some impact on Clinton. Changing technology and the shift to cash-grain economy together with governmental restriction on crop acreage encouraged farmers to emphasize fertilizer chemical which produced higher crop yields on fewer acres. Marco Chemicals is the largest chemicals processor and distributor of farm fertilizer in Clinton today, employing twenty-five persons (see figure 1-7).

The stockyards that had once served Clinton as well as the sales barn entered an era of decline in usefulness. Today, however, the city has just recently gained a new sales barn located east of town on Route Ten (see figure 1-8). So the function is witnessing a modest revival.



Fig. 7 --Marco Chemicals serves the farmer with chemical fertilizers which produce higher crop yields per acre.



Fig. 8 --Clinton has a new sales barn located on Route 10.

CHAPTER II

BASIC ELEMENTS OF ECONOMY

In 1937 many citizens in Clinton directly or indirectly depended on the railroad for service as well as a source of income for the city was clearly a railroad town. Evidence of function could be seen several miles from the city as smoke emerged from the great smokestack at the railroad roundhouse which loomed even higher on the horizon than the courthouse or anything else (see figure 2-9).² The old coal chute at the roundhouse remains because it was too costly to remove. The coal chute reportedly was constructed in 1946, apparently someone believed that steam power was there to stay (see figure 2-10).

Without a doubt the Illinois Central Railroad has far more persons on its payroll than all the other industries put together in Clinton at present (May, 1937) about 620 employees working for the railroad live in Clinton. Of this number 525 are heads of families. This means that approximately 2600 people or almost half of the total population are supported by railroad pay checks. One million dollars is distributed annually in salaries by the Illinois Central Railroad in Clinton.³

Clinton, today, is no longer a strong railroad town as described above; there are, today, only about four hundred and fifty employees of the Illinois Central even though their salaries

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid.



Fig. 9 --The smokestack at the roundhouse is no longer used; for diesel has replaced steam power.



Fig. 10 --Today the old coal chute, too costly to remove, remains as a landmark of an almost forgotten era.

are three times higher than salaries earned in 1937. There are many transit employees included in the total number employed today. Now, many of these transit employees must either travel to other points on the railroad's line or move to other towns on the Illinois Central.

Technological changes caused the railroad to decline as a leading source of income in Clinton. The diesel replaced the steam engine and this shift brought about a decrease in the number of employees at the roundhouse (see figure 2-11). An excellent example of technological changes can be cited; in 1950 there were three hundred employees at the roundhouse, now, there are only fifty-three. In 1937 the Division Offices were on the second floor of the depot in Clinton, now these offices have been consolidated and moved to Champaign. Also, as the railroad modernized it indirectly offered an excellent opportunity for other industries to locate in Clinton (see figure 2-12). These new industries could choose from the surplus labor force, in part a result of the railroad decline.

There were a number of small businesses in the immediate vicinity of the Illinois Central depot in 1937: Rooming houses and restaurants were readily available for the railroad crews (see figure 2-13); however, most of them have ceased their services. Many small neighborhood grocery stores were scattered on the eastside of Clinton in 1937; today only a few still remain (see figure 2-14).



Fig. 11--The roundhouse and the diesel which brought
its demise.



Fig. 12.--This is Clinton's industrial section.



Fig. 13.--There are only a few rooming houses in Clinton today--still near the railroad and the train crews they cater to.



Fig. 14.--A small neighborhood grocery on the east side of town.

The railroad functions as a major transporter of freight, today, with eight trains daily. There is a passenger train to Chicago in the morning and then to St. Louis in the evening; although passenger service has declined, Clinton still has freight trains running in six directions (see figure 2-15) and is a busy hub for the system.

Industries of Clinton

As one approaches the city of Clinton today, one can see the city's Blue Water Tower. Coming within ocular discernment of the lettering on the tower, one sees: Clinton: THE MID-WEST HOME OF THE REVERE COPPER AND BRASS COMPANY on the eastside of the tower and viewed from the westside, the lettering: THE MID-WEST DIVISION OF WALLACE PRESS. There is no mention of THE HOME OF THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL: OLD MAINLINE OF MID-AMERICA (see figure 2-16). The reason for the humiliating omission of the railroad can be summed up by stating that the city advertises the current major industries. This actually does not take any credit from the railroad; for without a good means of transportation new industry would definitely not locate in Clinton.

As the era of railroad changeover became more and more evident, between 1940 to 1950, it was an opportune time for these new industries to locate in Clinton. Thus, in 1951 the Revere Copper and Brass Company, producing kitchenware and copper tubing located on the former plant site of Goodyear Footware Company; Goodyear Footware, not of the national known Goodyear Tire



Fig. 15. Tracks extend in six directions through Clinton.



Fig. 2-16--The city's Blue Water Tower advertises the current major industries.

Company, remained in Clinton for two years, 1948 through 1950.

Today Revere is one of Clinton's leading industries reportedly employing four hundred and twenty employees who earn about one and a half million dollars annually; therefore, Revere has only one half the payroll, but as many employees as the railroad. At the present time Revere is expanding and by the fall of 1965 will obtain approximately one hundred and fifty additional employees. This will not be an all time high for employment at Revere in Clinton because in 1956 while under a government contract Revere had six hundred employees on the payroll (see figures 2-17, 2-18). Employment at Revere is not as stable as railroad employment. Revere often employs the husband and wife of the same family; during slack periods the wife is laid off.

Wallace Press located in Clinton in 1954; in 1963 the name was changed to Wallace Business Forms. Wallace Business Forms employs approximately one hundred and forty employees and produces multiple business forms. These employees earn approximately three-quarters of a million dollars annually; compared to Revere this is fifty per cent less than paid for annual salaries and compared to the railroad this is seventy-five per cent less than their annual salaries paid.

As the railroad declined between 1940 and 1950, which was due primarily to the war and modernization of the railroad, so did the population (see figures 2-19, 2-20). The city today is growing again, for its rate of growth from 1950 to 1960 was greater



Fig. 2-17.--The north entrance of the Revere plant in Clinton.



Fig. 2-18.--Revere is now expanding.

EUGENE DIETZGEN CO.
MADE IN U. S. A.

NO. 340-L110 DIETZGEN GRAPH PAPER
SEMI-LOGARITHMIC
1 CYCLE X 10 DIVISIONS PER INCH

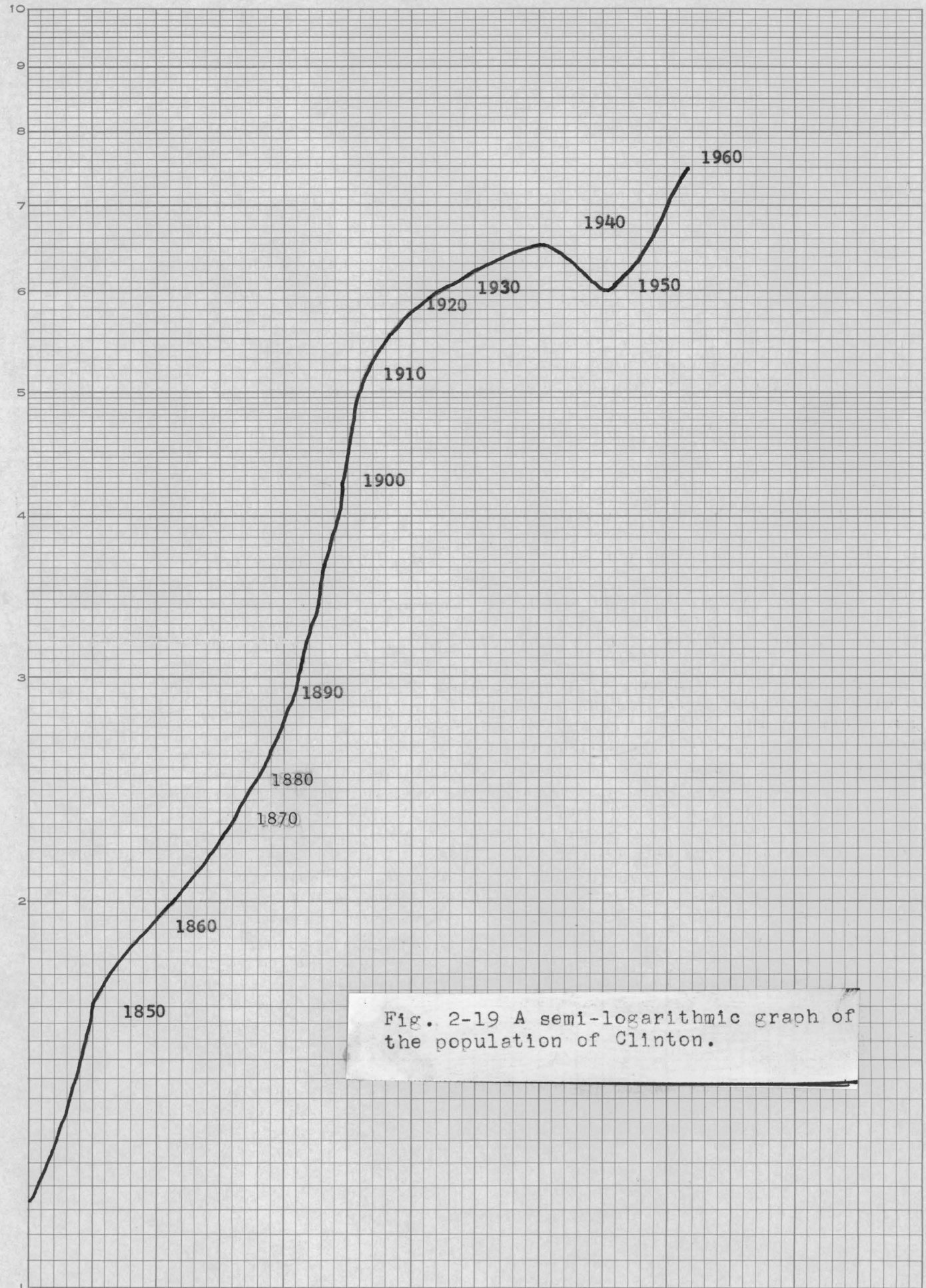


Fig. 2-19 A semi-logarithmic graph of the population of Clinton.

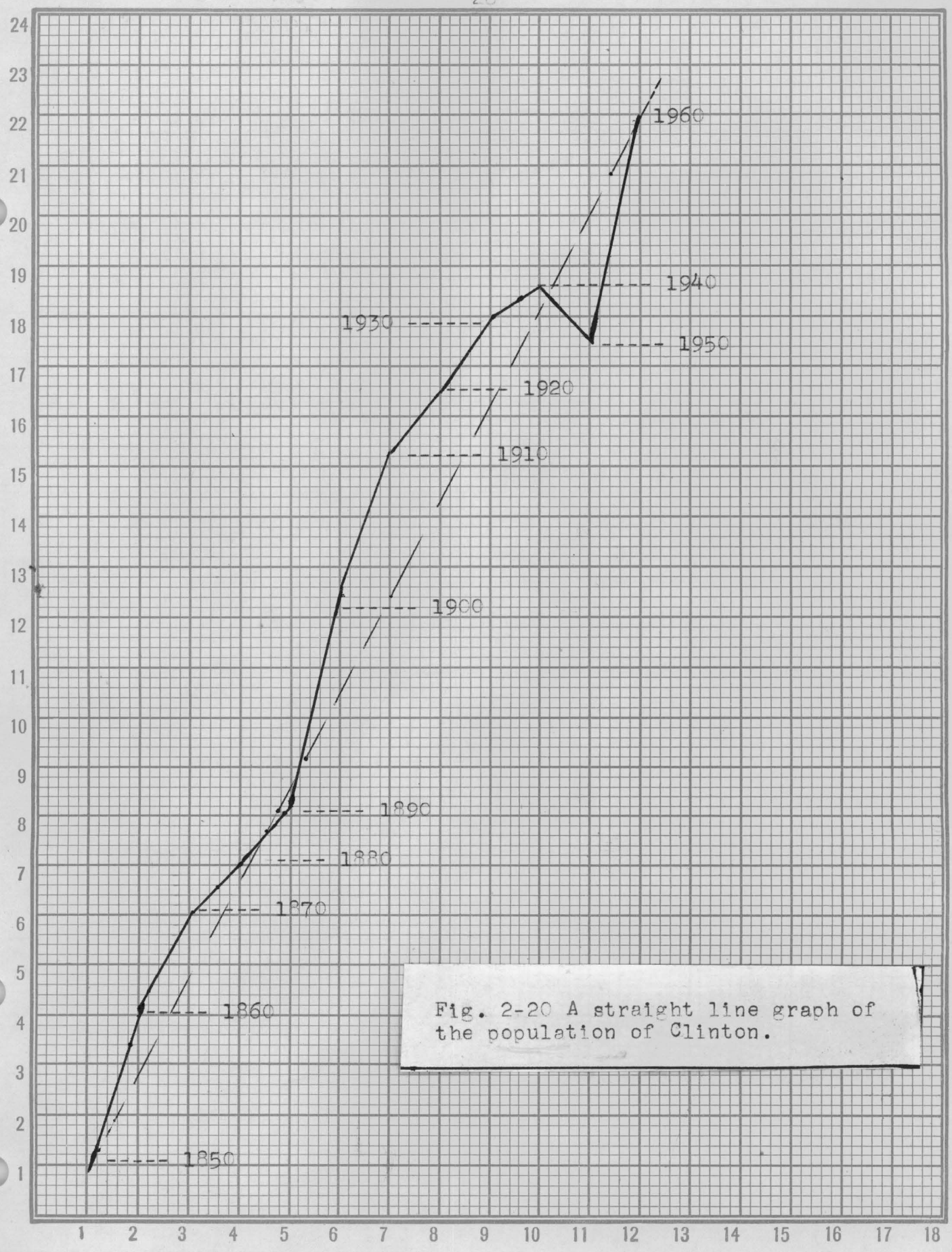


Fig. 2-20 A straight line graph of the population of Clinton.

than any preceding decade. Clinton has started to grow out of its old bounds to many new subdivision developments, which are the direct result of this population increase: Hillcrest, Cedar-side, Evans and Stone, Sunset Drive, Madison Park; and the most exclusive residential section of the city today, Violet Valley. In the 1937 study the most exclusive residential section was located on the westside of the city in order to avoid the smoke from the railroad. Violet Valley is located southwest of the city on Route 51.

Just to the south of Violet Valley is a large furniture store. Wayside Furniture, located a half mile south of town on High 51, employs twenty people. Wayside's trading area extends for approximately a fifteen mile radius. However, shipments have been made to Washington, D. C., California, Florida, and to Wyoming. Wayside sells lamps with bases that are produced at the Clinton China Company.

Clinton is served by three highways; two federal highways, Route 51 and Route 54, and one state highway, Route 10. These highways extend in six directions (see figure 2-21). Highways were stressed as avenues of concern in 1937, because with greatly improved roads the local citizen and the farmer became mobile. Local businesses likewise became mobile and many relocated on these paved highways which paralleled the railroad lines. Evidence of this expansion can be seen along the highways as more businesses locate on them. Just recently Town and Country Motel opened a new location on Highway 54 where it could serve traffic moving through



Fig. 2-21--Highways serve as crossroads in Clinton today.

Clinton from Chicago and St. Louis (see figure 2-22).

These highways, in competition with the railroads, now serve as freight transportation routes as well as passenger. The farmer in the community owns several trucks that are used to transport grain to the elevators. The city's schools are served by school busses that extend out into the community and bring students to schools and serve to keep residents of the area looking toward Clinton.

The recently proposed Kroger store has been unfavorably received because of the suggested new location. The old Kroger store (see figure 2-23) was located on North Center, a street one block from the square only fifty feet wide. Thirty-four parking spaces adjacent to the store were not adequate. At the proposed site on East Main Street, forty feet wide, five blocks from the square, ignoring the old ideas of central business district, the new store will be twice the size of the old store with fifty parking spaces.

Industries of Note from the 1937 Study

Most of the industries mentioned in the 1937 study have fallen victim to changing technology. The old icehouse remains only as a landmark, although it serves the lowly function of a family garage (see figure 2-24). Clinton has one blacksmith shop which is a repair shop for farm machines (see figure 2-25).

The P. J. Gillen's patent medicine company remains, although Dr. Gillen is dead. Dr. Gillen's son still produces Kreamo Mentho



Fig. 2-22.--The city extends westward along Route 54.



Fig. 2-23--This was the location of Krogers, one block from the square and in the central business district.



Fig. 2-24.--The old ice-house still remains.



Fig. 2-25.--One blacksmith shop remains--serving farmers.

(commonly referred to as K-M) and it is sworn by for its curative power by loyal users.

The most important industry of the 1937 study that has gone was the Blue Valley Dairy and Creamery. This dairy and creamery was of great importance to the farmer then. However, the farmer is strictly a cash-grain operator; he has milk, butter, and eggs delivered to his door daily. Clinton is serviced by refrigerator trucks for dairy products delivered at night from the dairy in Decatur and Bloomington to local distributors. The Clinton farm community is highly specialized as a cash-grain area with many tenant farmers. Dairying is based on a full time land occupation. Milking is a twice-daily chore. The initial capital investment is tremendous (let us face it, dairy farming is hard work). On the other hand, cash-grain farmers, to quote Dr. Dalias A. Price, are C. B. F. farmers . . . corn, beans, and Florida.

SUMMARY

The railroad gave impetus to the growth of Clinton, for the city in 1850 had a population of three hundred and fifty and in 1960 the city's population was 1,200. The railroad also permitted the farmer to extend his market to the larger cities-- Chicago and St. Louis. As the farmer's market was extended the Clinton farm community became known as "the garden spot of the mid-west."

As is the case in most Midwest county seats the court-house "square" serves as the central business district. In Clinton this traditional pattern is followed. The "square" remains as the basic center of the central business district. However, new business, as well as old, are now located off the "square." The locating or relocating of businesses off the "square" has helped solve the traffic problems. The railroad served Clinton for many years as the city's more important source of employment; but technological changes caused a decline in the number of railroad employees. When steam power was used, Clinton served as a mid-point between Chicago and St. Louis. Crews were changed and passengers refreshed in Clinton. As the crews waited for their next run, they stayed in local rooming houses in the railroad vicinity which catered to railroad workers.

In 1950 the railroad shift in emphasis and modernization became evident and this decline was an excellent opportunity for

new industries to locate in Clinton. These new industries took advantage of the surplus labor force. Revere soon had six hundred employees and the city looked forward to further industrial expansion. Nonetheless, the railroad still has a more stable working force than Revere.

True, the railroad caused the city to grow; however, it was the rich farmland that caused settlement in this area originally. This farm community is located in a part of the corn belt in Illinois which specializes in cash-grain with corn and soybeans as the major crops. Clinton could have played an important role to the cash-grain farmer as a processor of soybeans; however, the proposed processing plant was located in Farmer City, after the most influential citizens strongly objected to the plant being located in Clinton.

The city has three highways which faithfully follow the railroads extending in six directions. The highways have attracted several businesses to locate along them. Just recently, Town and Country Motel opened on Highway 54 on the westside of the city. In their new location Town and Country plans to serve travelers to and from Chicago and St. Louis. The city has grown out of its old city boundaries and new housing developments have spread all over.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to extend my appreciation for the excellent cooperation given by those persons interviewed in Clinton, Illinois.

I also wish to acknowledge the members of the committee who read the paper: Dr. Elwyn Martin, Dr. Dalias A. Price, and Dr. Rex P. Syndergaard.

I was indeed fortunate to have a wife who was understanding and cooperative; for it was Gloria who critically proofread and typed this paper.

August 6, 1965

Phillip James Kendrick

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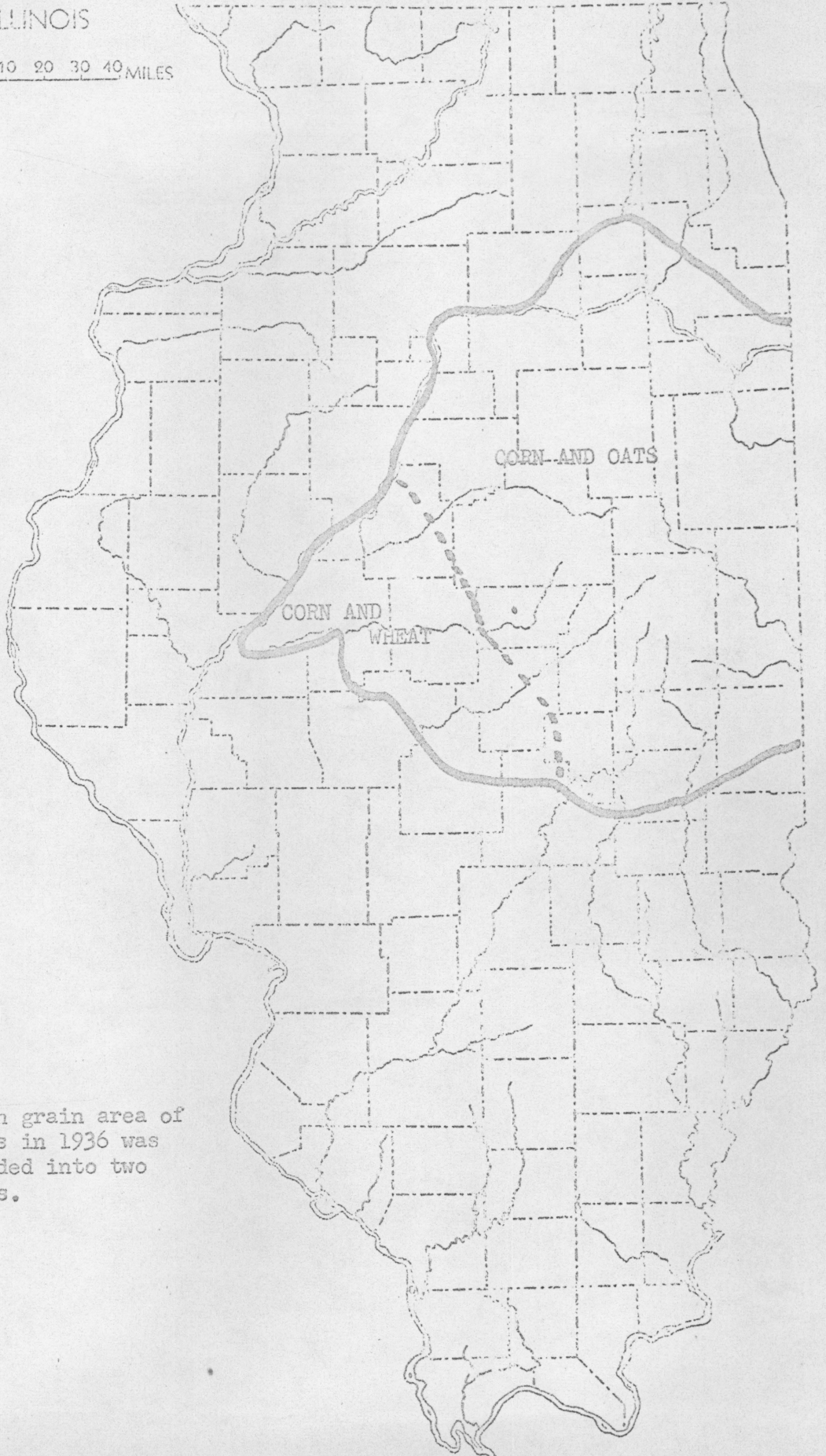
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In this appendix there are additional graphic illustrations.
Two maps of the agricultural area of Clinton--1936 and 1956.

ILLINOIS

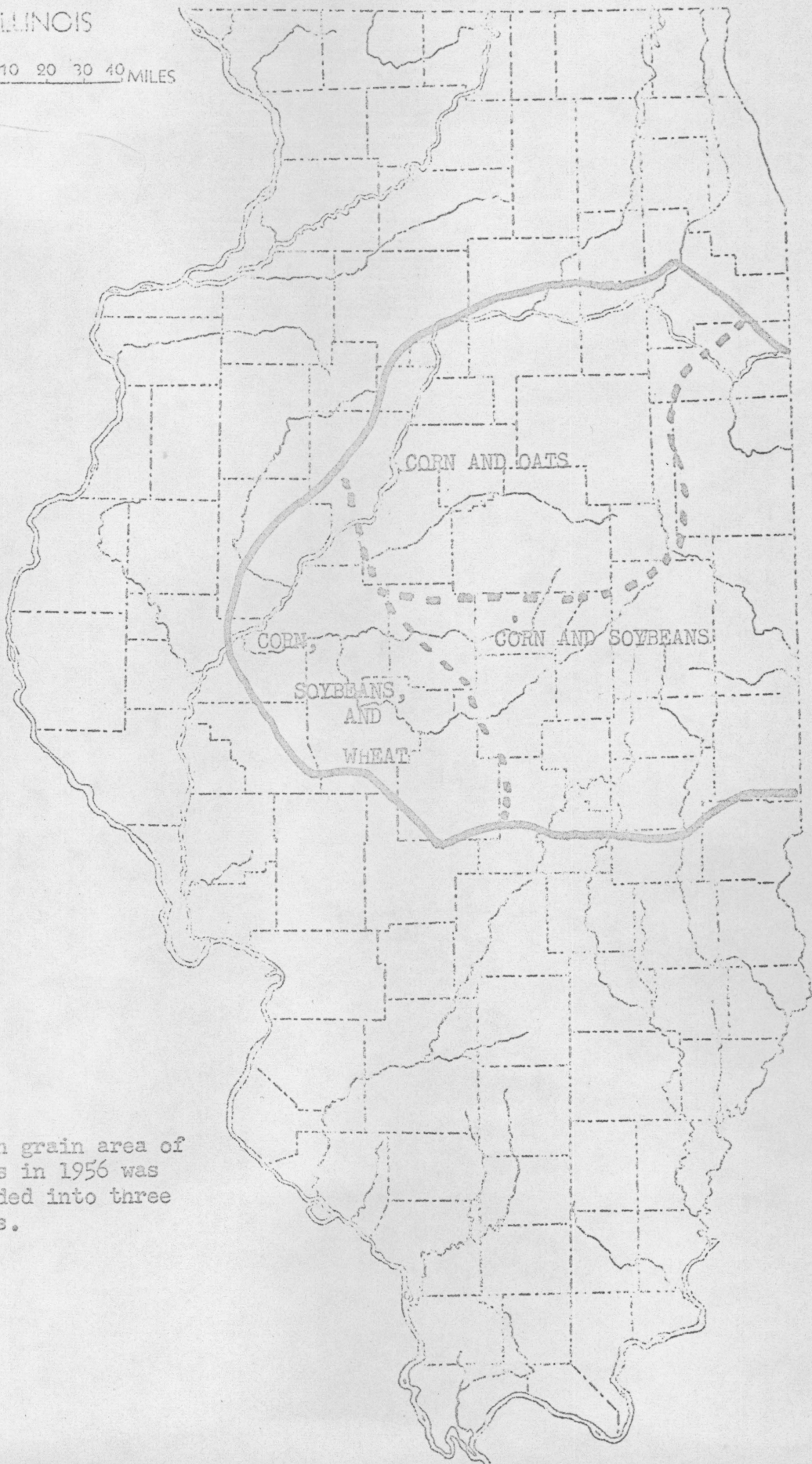
SCALE 0 10 20 30 40 MILES



The cash grain area of Illinois in 1936 was subdivided into two sections.

ILLINOIS

SCALE 0 10 20 30 40 MILES



The cash grain area of Illinois in 1956 was subdivided into three sections.