



1974

Patterens of Urbanization in a Midwestern Community: Bloomington, Illinois, 1850-1870

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Recommended Citation

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PATTERNS OF URBANIZATION IN A MIDWESTERN COMMUNITY:

BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS, 1850--1870

by

JAMES A. PARROTT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF NEWSPAPER ABBREVIATIONS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
I. NINETEENTH CENTURY URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN ILLINOIS	10
II. BLOOMINGTON AS A FRONTIER TOWN	20
III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PRAIRIE CITY'S ECONOMIC BASE	33
IV. TO MAKE A CITY GROW	45
V. CITY—BUILDING: 1850—1870	67
VI. THE TRANSFORMATION OF COMMUNITY	80
CONCLUSION	91
APPENDIX	94
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	102

LIST OF NEWSPAPER ABBREVIATIONS

Bloomington, Illinois

WW Western Whig (1849-1852)

BI Bloomington Intelligencer (1852-1853)

WP Weekly Pantagraph (1853-1870)

DP Daily Pantagraph (1857-1870)

Springfield, Illinois

ISJ Illinois State Journal (1851-1860)

INTRODUCTION

A few days before the first railroad entered Bloomington, Illinois, in 1853, the weekly Bloomington Intelligencer described the changes the transportation link would usher in:

A new era in the history of our little city will open . . . Hitherto known only to a few who have occasionally strayed in this direction, to the great body of travelers and emigrants this beautiful interior portion of the State has been as a sealed book. But the throbbings of the great hearts of the commercial world will henceforth send their pulsations into our midst; and this community will necessarily sympathize with the movements of the day--be they felicitous or disastrous. None of us are prepared for the changes which are soon to be effected by this great triumph of toil, of wealth, and of energy. The domesticity of our modes of thinking and acting--the limited and conventional character of our business manners and customs--and the temporary and shabby construction and appearance of our public and private buildings must be so modified as to be, in some degree, in keeping with the busy world with which we are about to be intimately connected.¹

The remarkable foresight of this frontier editor reflects the dynamic reverberations of cities and urbanization in the mid-nineteenth century. American development in the nineteenth century is generally considered as the westward-moving agricultural settlement of an ever-diminishing frontier. However, the movement west was accompanied by the growth of towns and cities. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century the rate of urban population increase consistently eclipsed the rate of increase in the rural population.² That urbanization entailed dramatic consequences for frontier ways of life

¹BI, May 18, 1853.

²Adna Ferrin Weber, The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), Table II, p. 22.

is abundantly evident from the above quote as the railroad signalled the embarkation of Bloomington upon its urban career.

Prior to the development of railroads, Bloomington was a slowly growing county seat, whose population of nearly 1600 ranked it twentieth in the frontier state in 1850. Situated on the east central Illinois prairie, Bloomington was without access to water transportation and had little opportunity to grow before the advent of railroads. Bloomington's rapid growth in the 1850's and 1860's was greatly influenced by its location on two of the major north-south railroads in Illinois, the Illinois Central and the Chicago & Alton. As the fertile agricultural hinterland of Bloomington underwent settlement and development with the stimulation of the railroads, the city advanced to eighth in rank among Illinois cities in 1860, and by 1870 was surpassed in population only by Chicago, Quincy, Peoria, and Springfield.

Richard Wade has emphasized the influence of the urban impulse on the Ohio Valley frontier in the early nineteenth century.³ A prominent characteristic of the Ohio Valley urban frontier that would also mark the early urban history of the middle West in the two decades following mid-century was the "struggle for primacy and power."

Like imperial states, cities carved out extensive dependencies, extended their influence over the economic and political life of the hinterland, and fought with contending places over strategic trade routes.⁴

³Richard Wade, The Urban Frontier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

⁴Ibid., p. 336.

In periods of rapid settlement accompanied by the growth of cities, many upstart towns cherished aspirations of metropolitan status. Only a very few, however, actually achieved any substantial degree of urban prominence. Daniel Boorstin has discussed the "successful" promotion of Cincinnati, Chicago, and Denver in urban imperialism.⁵ Many of the upstart towns survived and became respectable cities of the middle range, while a great number of ambitious town-promotion schemes ended in village or ghost-town status.⁶ The intense competition that developed among rival towns contributed to the urgency of urban promoters and stimulated the growth of cities in periods of rapid settlement.

As Charles Glaab has observed, it is frequently considered that the "pattern of city location" is geographically prescribed as being "in accord with 'natural' factors."⁷ Although strategic location is an important component of urban success, perhaps the most influential, it is not a sufficient condition. The "failure" of Cairo, Illinois, despite an envious situation at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, furnishes a convenient example that illustrates the necessity of human effort in order to convert favorable location into urban prosperity. For Illinois cities, it certainly seems that what Robert Dykstra termed, the "opportunities for recruiting the

⁵Daniel J. Boorstin, "The Businessman as an American Institution," in his The Americans: The National Experience (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 115-123.

⁶Lewis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), describes the "losers" in the race for city status in his history of midwestern small towns. For a case study of "community failure" in Illinois, see Herman R. Lantz, A Community in Search of Itself: A Case History of Cairo, Illinois (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972).

⁷Charles N. Glaab, "Historical Perspectives on Urban Development Schemes," in Urban Research and Policy Planning, ed. by Leo F. Schnore and Henry Fagin (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc., 1967), p. 197.

acknowledged attributes of city status--population, major transportation facilities, capital investment--⁸ were greatest during the period of rapid settlement following the advent of railroads.

The competition among communities for the "attributes of city status" was directed by a new breed of American businessmen--the "city boosters."⁹ Promotional efforts by the city booster were designed to enhance the prosperity of a peculiar combination of public and private interest. These boosters were predominantly land speculators, early comers on the urban frontier who acquired vast tracts of land and began efforts to attract population and various forms of public improvements which, if effective, would create a market for their town lots and increase the value of the land they held for future sale. Clearly, the initial development of the midwestern cities is "rooted in an economic experience."¹⁰

The success of the upstart town was largely measured in terms of population numbers and increasing land values.¹¹ The acquisition of state institutions, municipal improvements, and commercial, and later, manufacturing enterprises were all desirable objectives in the pursuit of increased numbers and inflated land prices. In the early development of a community the most

⁸Robert R. Dykstra, The Cattle Towns (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 3.

⁹Boorstin, pp. 115-123. See also Glaab, pp. 197-219.

¹⁰Peter G. Goheen, "Industrialization and the Growth of Cities in Nineteenth-Century America," American Studies, XIV (Spring, 1973), 57; S. G. Checkland, "Toward a Definition of Urban History," in The Study of Urban History, ed. by H. J. Dyos (London: Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1968), p. 352.

¹¹According to Atherton, numbers and real estate values were the recognized measuring sticks of progress for the mid-western small towns. Main Street on the Middle Border, passim. See also Boorstin, p. 162.

valued asset is its transportation access. Transportation facilities are crucial for a city in the initial period of developing a trade region in competition with other cities. In the pre-railroad era, location on a navigable waterway was almost a prerequisite for city growth. The growth of land-locked prairie cities depended immensely on the expansion of the railroad system.

Generally not limited by topographical hazards on the mid-western prairies, the selection of railroad routes was little constrained by existing trade patterns since they were only tentatively established, if at all, in the early stages of scattered settlement. Local initiative was an important influence in the routing of railroad lines. To finance favorite schemes the urban entrepreneurs contributed greatly in capital, tracts of land, and organizational effort. Railroads--the cherished prize of city boosters--were tremendously expensive. The development of a road frequently depended on large amounts of municipal aid which had to be voted by the public. Many promoters were successful in persuading communities of the benefits that would accrue from a particular railroad. The public was so convinced of the prosperity that railroads would bring that Illinois municipalities contributed approximately twenty-two million dollars in aid to railroads in the period, 1848-1870.¹²

Boosterism and intense competition for the attributes of city status were much in evidence during Bloomington's formative period. Promotional activities by a handful of local boosters were influential in locating railroads and public institutions in Bloomington. Municipal aid was approved for two east-west railroads and a branch line of the Chicago & Alton. Large

¹²Kathleen Bessie Jacklin, "Local Aid to Railroads in Illinois, 1848-1870," (unpublished master's thesis, Cornell University, 1958), pp. 245-246.

private subscriptions of money and land were offered by individuals to acquire public institutions, usually on a site near land owned by the subscribers. Indeed, Bloomington promoters in the crucial period of initial development were established residents who owned substantial quantities of land in and around Bloomington.¹³ Whatever the results of their efforts, Bloomington boosters seemed to have an insatiable appetite for public improvements and other city-attributes in their quest for urban prominence.

It is, of course, impossible to determine what Bloomington's growth would have been like were it not for the promotional activities of early, established residents. They were, however, among the entrepreneurs who created the employment opportunities that populated the city. Owning the land upon which the city was built, the early residents were also in a position to influence the direction and character of the spatial development of the city.

Bloomington experienced dynamic changes in the period of its most rapid urbanization, 1850-1870, when its population increased from 1600 to 14,500. The urbanization¹⁴ of Bloomington in this period is, perhaps, the most significant aspect of the city's evolution. Responding to the widespread settlement of McLean County, the economic base of Bloomington and the city's transportation facilities that developed in this period dictated, to a certain extent, the city's subsequent growth behavior. The phenomenon of population concentration was accompanied by dramatic alterations in the qualitative composition of the community's social structure. In the search

¹³ Bloomington's most active promoters in the fifties and sixties were Asahel Gridley, Jesse Fell, and David Davis. Gridley settled in Bloomington in 1831, Fell in the following year and Davis in 1836.

¹⁴ When I speak of "patterns of urbanization" for Bloomington, I am using the word "urbanization" in a strictly local context. The term is frequently used to denote the "multiplication of the points of (population) concentration." Hope Tisdale, "The Process of Urbanization," in Social Forces, XX (March, 1942), 311.

for private economic gain, entrepreneurs created a city occupied by people of diverse cultural backgrounds engaged in an expanded range of occupational pursuits. This period is also the formative phase of the physical development of the city. The internal spatial arrangement of people and activities created by the "city-building"¹⁵ process in this period not only circumscribed location decisions in ensuing periods but also had significant implications for the social organization of the community.

This study is concerned with significant patterns of urbanization for Bloomington, Illinois, in the period, 1850-1870. The first chapter is a discussion of urban development in Illinois in the nineteenth century, with specific reference to Bloomington's emergence in a hierarchy of regional cities and its relative stabilization in the post-1870 period. The next chapter discusses the settlement of Bloomington up to the early fifties, noting the explanations for the paucity of development in the prairie regions in the period, 1830-1850. The development of Bloomington's agriculture-related economic base with the advent of the railroads on the prairies is the subject of the third chapter. In chapter four, the promotional efforts of Bloomington boosters to acquire east-west rail connections and public institutions are treated. The fifth chapter is concerned with the city-building process in this formative period. And finally, chapter six deals with the social structure of the acquired population.

¹⁵Roy Lubove prefers the term "city-building" over "urbanization" in order to emphasize "the process of environmental formation." "The Urbanization Process: An Approach to Historical Research," Journal of the American Institute of Planners, XXXIII (January, 1967), 36. This consideration by Lubove will be incorporated into the concept of urbanization utilized in this paper.

Concerning the Sources

It is necessary to inform the reader that the conclusions presented in this paper are tentative and only of a suggestive status. The limitations of the sources relied upon should be kept in mind. General histories of Bloomington have been written covering this period; however, they are largely sentimental and provincial with their emphasis on the "successful" segment of the populace and their narratives of a laudatory and promotive nature. Nevertheless, these local histories are invaluable since they provide an historical perspective of the city's development and have captured many incidents that remain buried in, or absent from, local newspapers.

Of these local histories, the 1879 Burnham volume¹⁶ on Bloomington and Normal has been most heavily relied on. The 1874 Duis volume¹⁷ is more genealogical in orientation, primarily concerned with early settlers and discusses local affairs among the various biographies. The section on Bloomington in the two volume set edited by Bateman and Selby (1908) was partially written by Burnham and contains virtually no additional information on this period (1850-1870). The 1879 Burnham work is most useful for its period and topical sections.

The major primary sources utilized in this project include: the Bloomington Pantagraph, 1853-1870, its immediate predecessors, the Western Whig, 1849-1852, and the Intelligencer, 1852-1853; city directories for the

¹⁶ J. H. Burnham, History of Bloomington and Normal in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: J. H. Burnham, 1879).

¹⁷ Etzard Duis, The Good Old Times in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: Leader Publishing & Printing House, 1874).

¹⁸ Newton Bateman and Paul Selby (eds.), Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of McLean County (2 vols.; Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1908).

1855, 1866, and 1870; and manuscript census records. The utility of the newspapers as an indicator of actual community life is undermined by their generally uncritical portrayal of Bloomington as a strife-free assemblage of honorable citizens ceaselessly endeavoring for the betterment of the entire community. The papers, however, are an extremely useful guide to market conditions and real estate development and are invaluable as a representation of city-promotional thrusts. The city directories, except for 1855, also contain brief narratives on selected commercial and manufacturing enterprises, a directory of voluntary associations, and a classified business directory.

CHAPTER I
NINETEENTH CENTURY URBAN
DEVELOPMENT IN ILLINOIS

Frontier Illinois

Illinois lands comprise three general categories: river bottom lands, timbered lands, and prairies. The latter two are most common, with timber lands predominating in southern Illinois and prairie lands in central and northern Illinois.¹ The earliest pioneers settled along the bottom lands of the Wabash, Illinois, and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries. As settlement expanded, it remained confined to the wooded areas that could supply lumber for shelter construction and wood for fuel. Southern Illinois contained large timbered areas; however, much of it was marsh and swamp land, some counties having more than a third of their area under water. The prevalence of ague, or malarial fever, in the poorly drained sections of southern Illinois deterred extensive habitation. Gradually settlement was forced northward to timberland regions, for the most part paralleling rivers and streams.²

Throughout most of the frontier period--loosely defined as the first thirty years after statehood, 1818-1848--the prairies that comprised the greater portion of central and northern Illinois were avoided for settlement. Among the factors that contributed to the unattractiveness of the prairie

¹Paul Wallace Gates, The Illinois Central Railroad and Its Colonization Work (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 4.

²Ibid., pp. 7-11.

regions were: 1) the absence of wood for building purposes and for use as fuel; 2) the difficulty in breaking the dense, matted prairie sod with crude, wooden moldboard plows; and 3) the lack of interior transportation facilities, a condition that limited the ability to market surplus agricultural products.³ Up to 1830, the settlement in Illinois that progressed northward was confined to wooded areas, generally bordering streams and rivers. Overland transportation was limited due to its prohibitive cost and the wretched conditions of early roads.⁴ Stage routes, frequently impassable and obstructed by swollen streams, were little more than enlarged Indian trails providing short connectors with rivers.⁵ Extensive settlement in this early period was invariably located on navigable rivers--the only significant arteries of commerce and communication until railroads were constructed.

For Illinois, the early 1830's was a period of increased prosperity, bouyant optimism, and wild speculation in lands and towns. Emigration was on the rise with settlers streaming in from Kentucky, Tennessee, and the states east of Illinois. With government lands selling for \$1.25 per acre, land speculation was rampant, far out-distancing settlement. Much of the speculation was in the form of town-site promotion. Over five hundred paper towns were laid out in Illinois in this period, their potential advertised throughout the East and their lots bought and sold widely. Large-scale land speculators

³Ibid, pp. 11-13; Arthur Weldon Watterson, Economy and Land Use Patterns of McLean County, Department of Geography Research Paper No. 17, University of Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 4.

⁴C. A. Harper, "The Railroads and the Prairie," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXX (1923), 106. Ten to twenty miles was as far as bulky goods could be transported overland with any degree of profit.

⁵Gates, p. 15.

extolled the advantages of Illinois broadcast in an attempt to induce settlement--customers for their prairie acreage and town-lots.⁶

It was widely recognized in Illinois that transportation improvements, particularly railroads, were necessary to facilitate the development of the prairies. By the mid-thirties, internal improvements were advocated by both settlers and speculators. Characteristic of the ebullient optimism prevailing at the time, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Internal Improvements Act in 1837, providing for the expenditure of ten million dollars for railroads, canals, and plank roads. As part of the vast railroad network projected for the state, roads were planned to extend from Galena to Cairo, and from Alton to Chicago, both passing through Bloomington, with another line to connect Bloomington with Pekin. But, the Panic of 1837 and the collapse of state credit halted the construction of the great Illinois central railroad and slowed work on the Illinois and Michigan Canal (to connect the Illinois River with Lake Michigan.) The Panic ushered in a period of general depression--state banks closed, debtors defaulted, real estate values fell, prices plummeted, and merchants were bankrupt.⁷

With transportation improvements at a standstill and financial depression widely felt, immigration into Illinois proceeded at a greatly reduced rate in the late thirties and early forties. The mania for town-lot speculation dissipated and halted the premature promotion of paper towns in pre-settlement regions. Land entered at the government price of \$1.25 an acre often failed to command as much as a dollar per acre when put on the market.

⁶Gates, p. 121; The History of McLean County, Illinois (Chicago: William LeBaron, Jr. and Co., 1879), p. 487.

⁷Kathleen Bessie Jacklin, "Local Aid to Railroads in Illinois, 1848-1870," (unpublished master's thesis, Cornell University, 1958), p. 1. See the map of the projected Internal Improvements in Illinois in 1837 . . . (Philadelphia: S. Augustus Mitchell, 1837.)

Recovery from the paralyzing effects of the Panic was gradual, and not until the late forties did Illinois once again exhibit signs of prosperity. The immense debt resulting from the Internal Improvements Act of 1837, which had discouraged immigration to Illinois for many years, had been greatly reduced by 1846.⁸ As the depression came to an end in the mid-forties, a new internal improvements movement gathered momentum. Railroad schemes began to reappear, for it was still generally believed that the lack of adequate transportation facilities alone held back the development of Illinois. Two projects initially surfaced; a great central railroad to open up the resources of the unsettled prairies of Illinois, and another to connect Alton and Springfield, with eventual extension northward to Chicago. A massive federal land grant was obtained by Illinois' senators in 1850 to assist in the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad.⁹ Work resumed on the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1845 and its completion three years later gave a great impetus to development in northern Illinois, especially in the region through which it passed.¹⁰

With railroad projects in the embryonic stages, settlement in 1850 had not advanced to any great extent into the large prairies of Illinois. In some areas, extremely fertile land little more than twenty miles from the canal or rivers remained unsettled. Without transportation facilities, the rich soil of the Grand Prairie in east central Illinois could not compete with the less fertile lands on northern or southern Illinois.¹¹

⁸Gates, p. 23.

⁹Arthur Charles Cole, The Era of the Civil War, Vol. III of The Centennial History of Illinois, ed. by Clarence W. Alvord (5 vols; Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1917-1920), pp. 32-52.

¹⁰Gates, pp. 17-18.

¹¹Gates, p. 20; Cole, p. 32.

The largest cities in Illinois in 1850 were, in descending order, Chicago, Quincy, Galena, Peoria, Springfield, and Alton.¹² Situated on Lake Michigan, Chicago was the terminus of lake traffic from the east. The Illinois and Michigan Canal connected Chicago with the Mississippi River via the Illinois River. The canal's completion initiated the diversion of central Illinois trade away from St. Louis to Chicago. Galena's prosperity was largely due to the lead mines in Jo Daviess County. Springfield's position resulted primarily from its location as the state capital. The other ranking cities, Quincy, Peoria, and Alton, were prominent because of their advantageous locations on waterways. Interior, land-locked towns--including Bloomington--without water access or an exploitable supply of natural resources, remained modest settlements in the pre-railroad era in Illinois.

The Railroad Era and Agricultural Development in Illinois

The appearance of the railroad on the Illinois prairies signified the passing of the frontier and the beginning of a generation of rapid growth and dynamic settlement in towns and cities as well as on farms. When commercial agriculture became feasible with the introduction of railroads, migration swept into Illinois to occupy the prairies. Stimulated by agrarian prosperity, cities grew rapidly as shipping and shopping centers for their agricultural hinterlands. With slightly over one hundred miles of trackage in 1850, Illinois experienced remarkable railroad development in the following decade. In the period, 1851-1857, Illinois built more miles of railroad than any other state in the nation. By the end of the fifties there were

¹²See Table I, "Ranking Cities in Illinois, 1850-1900," in the Appendix.

more than 2,800 miles of rail lines crisscrossing the state.¹³

As the hub of this network of railroads, Chicago had become the greatest railroad center in America by 1860. Well-established as a result of its water transportation facilities connecting the Great Lakes with the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, Chicago experienced tremendous growth in the fifties and sixties with the development of the railroads.¹⁴ The convergence in Chicago of the majority of the rail lines traversing Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, accelerated the diversion of trade away from St. Louis, and succeeded in establishing Chicago as the unrivaled metropolis of the mid-west. The vast agricultural hinterland which had previously shipped its produce down the rivers to St. Louis and New Orleans, now sent the great majority of it by rail to Chicago for processing or transfer to the east.¹⁵

As the primary emporium in the mid-west, Chicago developed as the manufacturing station for processing agricultural produce. The tendency for manufacturing to concentrate in large cities was evident from the commencement of industrialization in the mid-west. For example, with a large supply of seasonal labor, financial institutions capable of providing the capital necessary to purchase livestock in large quantities, and with its superior shipping facilities, Chicago had become the greatest meat-packing center in the west by 1860.¹⁶ As the middle west was settled, Chicago

¹³Cole, p. 46; Gates, p. 88. See Map I in the Appendix, "Railroad Development, 1850-1860." By 1872, all but one-and-a-half percent of the total area of the state was within fifteen miles of a railroad line and nearly three fourths of the state was within five miles of rail access. Report of the Railroad and Warehouse Commission, 1872, pp. 19-20, 168-169.

¹⁴Gates, pp. 138-139. Chicago's population grew from 29,963 in 1850, to 109,260 ten years later, and by 1870, 298,977.

¹⁵Cole, p. 5; Wyatt Winton Belcher, The Economic Rivalry Between St. Louis and Chicago, 1850-80 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), pp. 61-66.

¹⁶Cole, p. 85; Fred Lee Nesbit, "A Survey of Manufacturing in the

became the leading export assembler for agricultural produce and the primary distributor of eastern manufactured goods.¹⁷

Although dominated by the metropolitan hegemony of Chicago, numerous towns and cities developed along the railroads to service the agricultural interests of the state. The remarkable increase in town population along the Illinois Central in the fifties and sixties is characteristic of Illinois development with the railroads. In 1850 the population of towns (excluding Chicago) in the vicinity of the Illinois Central route was only 12,000; by 1870 it had mushroomed to 172,000.¹⁸ Of the numerous towns and cities along the Illinois Central--many of them relatively small--Bloomington was the largest with a population of 14,500 in 1870.

The regional network of cities that emerged with the agricultural development of the Old Northwest has been ably described by David Ward:

Grain production required numerous but relatively small marketing and service centers and the rapid expansion and increased density of railroads encouraged a highly decentralized commercial organization. . . Although the external commerce of the staple-producing periphery demanded the services of several large metropolitan centers, service at the local level was provided by extremely small centers. Consequently, the emerging hierarchy was characterized by unusually large proportions of both large and small urban centers.¹⁹

The growth of the small centers resulted from the agricultural

Old Northwest, 1850 to 1860," (unpublished master's thesis, Illinois State Normal University, 1963), pp. 50-52, 108-109.

¹⁷David Ward, Cities and Immigrants: A Geography of Change in Nineteenth Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 36.

Ward attributes Chicago's rapid growth, in part, to the city's close connection with Eastern capital. "Eastern capital not only financed the construction of railroads across Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, but apparently was responsible for the development of the city as a marketing and exchange center." Ward, p. 36.

¹⁸Gates, p. 147.

¹⁹Ward, p. 37.

settlement of their farming hinterlands; their expansion responding proportionately to the increase in agricultural development. However, as the prairie regions of Illinois became widely settled the small centers ceased to grow. They could expand only up to the limits of their immediate hinterland, a limit that was reached in Illinois by 1870.

Industrialization in Illinois

Its population having increased remarkably in the fifties and sixties with the expansion of its railroad network, Illinois experienced a much slower rate of growth after 1870.²⁰ Although population continued to increase in absolute terms, the percentage growth for Illinois was less than that for the nation as a whole in the 1870's and 1880's. By 1870 Illinois was widely settled and was being passed over by the tide of migration. Transcontinental railroads assisted in transporting settlers past Illinois to an area of relatively free land further west. Not until the desirable public domain was practically exhausted did Illinois again experience a significant increase in population.²¹

When rapid population growth resumed in Illinois in the 1890's, the distribution of the population was radically different than in the fifties and sixties. Chicago, as the mid-continental entrepôt, attracted sixty percent of the total population increase for Illinois in the last decade of the nineteenth century. With industrial development displacing agricultural development as the source of population expansion, Chicago and other

²⁰ See Table II, "Population Increase by Decade," in the Appendix.

²¹ Ernest L. Bogart, "The Movement of the Population of Illinois, 1870-1910," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXIII (1917), 68-71.

Gates reports that by 1880, 358,000 Illinois natives had emigrated and settled in the states of Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska. Gates, p. 310.

Illinois cities with industrial functions absorbed the great majority of the population increase. The shift in employment opportunities from the country to the city even resulted in a decline in the population of many rural areas of the state.²²

The dynamic growth of large cities in the late nineteenth century was due, in no small portion, to the centralizing tendency of industrialization. Although the factors responsible for this development are by no means simplistically delineated---indeed, detailed explanation would probably invoke a principle of circular or cumulative causation---Adna Weber has persuasively argued, (in summary form):

If nearness to consumers is the most important advantage in a manufacturing site, then it might be expected that the great commercial centers would also be the manufacturing centres, for they not only contain a rich and numerous body of consumers, but apparently afford superior facilities for distributing goods to the remaining consuming population. The tendency in manufacturing would then be toward centralization, and the great cities would grow at an enormous rate. Such, indeed, has been the actual tendency.²³

It has previously been stated that manufacturing was centralizing in Chicago as early as the 1850's. This trend accelerated in the late nineteenth century and, after the Illinois agricultural land had been widely settled, accounted for population increase occurring in the large cities to the relative disadvantage of communities without substantial industrial functions.

²² Ernest Ludlow Bogart and John M. Mathews, The Modern Commonwealth, 1893-1918, Vol. V of The Centennial History of Illinois, op. cit., p. 5.

In Iowa and Indiana nearly one-half and in Illinois and Ohio more than one-half of the townships were less populous in 1890 than in 1880, while the population of each of these states had increased absolutely. Henry J. Fletcher, "The Doom of the Small Town," Forum, XIX (April, 1895), 214-223.

McLean County was among the areas losing population in the eighties. The county as a whole experienced a lesser population increase than Bloomington in the decade of the eighties. See Table II, Appendix.

²³ Adna Ferrin Weber, The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), pp. 198-199.

The relative decline of Bloomington's rank among Illinois cities in the nineteenth century seems attributable to its limited manufacturing capacity.²⁴ The industrial base developed by 1870 was significantly dependent on Bloomington's agricultural hinterland. Since its hinterland was largely settled by 1870, and growth thereafter was in modest increments, Bloomington's future prosperity was circumscribed and limited to its function as a market-service center. Another student of local development has written that, in the late nineteenth century, many of the city's factories "succumbed to the changing economic measures of mergers, specialization, and centralization. The city's failure to rise industrially was not due to its inability to prevent these losses, but rather because the lost industry was not replaced."²⁵ From its fifth ranking position in 1870 and 1880, Bloomington dropped to seventh in 1890, and was ninth among Illinois cities in 1900.

²⁴ See Table I, Appendix.

²⁵ Joseph E. Crawford, Jr. "The Paul F. Beich Company, 1854-1937," (unpublished master's thesis, Illinois State University, 1967), p. 71.

CHAPTER II

BLOOMINGTON AS A FRONTIER TOWN

Although predominantly prairie land, the area of east central Illinois that eventually became known as McLean County was interspersed with timbered tracts. First inhabited by whites in 1822, settlement proceeded slowly along streams and among the many groves of the region. Blooming Grove, containing approximately six thousand acres of timber, was the most important settlement when McLean County was separated from Tazewell and organized as a distinct county in 1830.¹

In 1829, James Allin moved from Vandalia, then the state capital, bought a quarter section of land on the north side of Blooming Grove and opened the settlement's first store. Allin, formerly a Fayette County Commissioner, knew of the impending subdivision of McLean County, and in 1831 donated twenty-two-and-a-half acres of land for the location of the county seat. The land was to be divided into lots, those not needed for public buildings were to be sold for the benefit of the new county.² On the fourth of July, 1831, the lots of the donated plot were auctioned off with the proceeds being used to erect the first county building. The "original town" of Bloomington, located on the prairie immediately north of Blooming Grove, was bounded by North (later Monroe), East, West (now Roosevelt), and Front Streets. The southern border, Front Street, was near the edge of the grove.³

¹ J. H. Burnham, History of Bloomington and Normal in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: J.H. Burnham, 1879), p. 10; Etzard Duis, The Good Old Times in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: Leader Publishing & Printing House, 1874), p. 8.

² Burnham, p. 11,20; Duis, p. 213.

³ Burnham, p.21,27; Duis, p. 40.

As the seat of county business, the survival of Bloomington was assured from the start. Although its growth was slow, as the center of the county's political, administrative and judicial activities it was patronized by the area settlers and early established as the service center for the slowly developing agricultural region. Within a year of its founding, the village of Bloomington had approximately eighty people and the adjoining Blooming Grove about three hundred.⁴ From the sale of town lots, Allin soon began to receive compensation for his donation and his enterprise in establishing the county seat on his land. In August of 1831, he made the first addition to Bloomington, consisting of a tier and a half of squares to the south and two tiers of squares to the west of the original town. The growth of the little settlement was such that by 1832, Allin made a second addition to the east of the young town.⁵

As the first speculator associated with Bloomington, Allin encouraged settlement in the new county and did all in his power to enhance the prosperity of the town he had established. In common with other town promoters of the urban frontier, Allin emphasized the "geographic inevitability" of Bloomington's location as the site of a great future city.⁶ Allin observed that the town was located at the intersection of the route from Chicago to St. Louis and a line from Columbus, Ohio, to Flint Rock (Burlington), Iowa. It was naturally destined, according to his geographic theory, to become the center of commerce as the west settled.⁷

⁴Burnham, pp. 26-27. Burnham estimated the population of the county at this time to be approximately 2,000.

⁵Burnham, p. 31; Duis, p. 12,40.

⁶Charles N. Glaab, "Historical Perspectives on Urban Development Schemes," in Urban Research and Policy Planning, ed. by Leo F. Schnore and Henry Fagin (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc., 1967), pp. 203-204.

⁷Burnham, p. 21; Duis, p. 40.

Local histories, while acknowledging Allin's pecuniary interest in the success of the upstart town, portray his real estate transactions as being carried out in a very liberal fashion.

He used every honorable endeavor to induce emigrants to locate in this county. If they wished to settle in the new town, Mr. Allin would sell them lots at a low price if they had money, and would sell them at a lower figure if they had a little money, or would give lots outright if they had no money, always stipulating that improvements should be made.⁸

During the period of intense optimism and large-scale land speculation in Illinois in the early thirties, at least a dozen towns were laid out in McLean County.⁹ Among the many real estate speculators active in the county were Allin and two other early Bloomington settlers, Asahel Gridley and Jesse Fell. As extensive land-holders in Bloomington and the surrounding counties, these men were aggressive promoters of settlement. In 1836, they established the first newspaper in McLean County, the Bloomington Observer, with the purpose of "attracting attention to McLean County of emigrants and others seeking locations in the West."¹⁰ As agent for the Philadelphia speculator, John Grigg, Gridley advertised a large number of McLean County tracts in the Observer.¹¹ Allin, Gridley and Fell were also actively engaged in the promotion of Decatur. In 1838, they advertised in the Observer their offer for property

⁸Originally appearing in the Bloomington Pantagraph in 1866 (then edited by Burnham), the quote was repeated in Burnham, p. 22 and Duis, p. 214.

⁹The History of McLean County, Illinois (Chicago: William LeBaron, Jr. and Co., 1879), p. 487. Between 1831 and 1837, twenty-nine towns and additions were laid out in McLean County, with a total of 4,871 town-lots. Newton Bateman and Paul Selby (eds.), Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of McLean County, II (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1908), p. 903.

¹⁰Jesse W. Fell to Etzard Duis, (n.d.) cited in Duis, p. 266. The Observer lasted approximately two-and-a-half years. In 1846, it was revived by C. P. Merriman as the Western Whig, Duis, p. 33.

¹¹Bloomington Observer and McLean County Advocate, Jan. 13, 1838. For information on the extent of Grigg's land operations in central Illinois,

valued at between six hundred and a thousand dollars in Decatur to anyone who would erect a saw-mill there.¹²

Gridley located in Bloomington in late 1831 and began a mercantile trade with his brother-in-law, Ortugul Covel. Covel and Gridley laid out the town of LeRoy, sixteen miles east of Bloomington, in November of 1835. With James Robinson, Gridley planted the town of Lexington, sixteen miles northeast of Bloomington, the following January. The reckless speculation of the times increased the value of Bloomington lots to as high as \$150 per lot in 1836. In that year, Gridley sold between \$20,000 and \$30,000 worth of Illinois town-lots in Philadelphia. Following the Panic of 1837, the same lots would seldom bring any price and were frequently let go for taxes.¹³

Like Gridley, Fell dealt widely in speculative enterprises involving land and town-promotion. In 1833, he opened the first law practice in Bloomington and began extensive land operations. Initially as an agent for eastern investors, Fell constantly extended his own holdings. Reputed to be the wealthiest man in Bloomington by 1835, Fell possessed large tracts of land in Illinois and Wisconsin, and between 1834 and 1837, acquired land in and around Milwaukee and Chicago. With James Allin, he secured a large tract of land in DeWitt County, laid out town-lots and founded the town of Clinton in 1835. Like all the other extravagant speculators of the time who dealt extensively on credit, Fell and Gridley lost all of their wealth as a result of the financial crash of 1837, and took advantage of the Illinois bankruptcy law.¹⁴

see Paul Wallace Gates, "Frontier Landlords and Pioneer Tenants," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXVIII (June, 1945), 151-152.

¹²Burnham, p. 34. ¹³Gridley to Burnham, cited in Burnham, p. 43.

¹⁴Frances Morehouse, "Jesse W. Fell," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXI (1915), 71-72; Frances Morehouse, The Life of Jesse W. Fell (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1916), pp. 22-29; Burnham, p. 35.

Actual settlement in central Illinois in the early 1830's occurred almost entirely among the groves and timbered regions. James Latta surprised his Bloomington neighbors when, in late 1831, he began enclosing with a rail fence a tract of prairie land northeast of the village and began farming it. Gridley reminisced that at the time, "No one then supposed that the prairie would ever be cultivated more than a mile distant from the timber, and the only farms were those skirting the groves."¹⁵ Agricultural technology had not yet produced an efficient means of farming the prairies. Timber land could be entered at the government price of \$1.25 per acre and it was largely taken up by 1835.¹⁶ Farmers entered only as much land as they could cultivate; speculators entered large tracts of prairie land between 1834 and 1836, only to abandon it later instead of paying the property tax.

Despite the difficulty involved in breaking the tough prairie sod with crude agricultural implements, the greater impediment to commercial farming and settlement in the interior was the lack of adequate transportation facilities. Because of the prohibitive cost of overland transportation, regions without direct access to navigable waterways were limited to selling their surplus to modest home markets. As the center of trade for the land-locked McLean County, Bloomington's growth was slow. By 1836 its population had reached only 450.¹⁷

Bloomington's growth has always been largely dependent on the agricultural development of its hinterland. Improvements in farming implements in

¹⁵ Burnham, p. 29; Duis, p. 263.

¹⁶ Bateman and Selby, I, p. 651. Compare the land entry map for McLean County as of 1835 and the map depicting the timber land in McLean County in Arthur Weldon Watterson, Economy and Land Use Patterns of McLean County, Department of Geography Research Paper No. 17, University of Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 31, 50.

¹⁷ Burnham, p. 32; Bateman and Selby, I, pp. 651-652.

the early forties increased the feasibility of developing the prairie acreage away from the groves. Cultivation of the prairies was slow and arduous with the wooden and cast-iron plows of the early pioneer. A farmer could not get very far before it was necessary to stop and clear the implement of the soil that had accumulated on it. By the early forties a steel plow had been developed that would "scour" more easily and could move freely through the prairie soil. Bloomington's first manufacturing enterprise, the shop of Bunn, Ellsworth & Brokaw, began the production of these improved plows in 1848.¹⁸

The prairie counties of Illinois began to attract attention in the early forties with advances in agricultural technology and the gradual revival of the economy. Lacking transportation facilities, the prairies were cautiously developed by the early settlers. Since the cost of overland transportation was exorbitant, grain was fed to livestock which could be driven to market. Without railroads, grain was an "inert commodity;" thus livestock raising predominated among early McLean County farmers. Since its diminutive population did not qualify Bloomington as a primary market, swine were driven to Pekin and cattle herded to St. Louis, Galena, Chicago, and Cincinnati.¹⁹

As noted in the first chapter, the majority of the sizeable towns in Illinois in 1850 were located on navigable waterways. Without transportation facilities, abundant natural resources, and before the acquisition of state institutions, it is clear that Bloomington's early growth up to 1850 was solely due to its function as a service-center and county seat for the agricultural McLean County. At mid-century its population of nearly 1600 ranked it twentieth in the state. It could provide merely a local market for the expanding agricultural interests of the area since without transportation

¹⁸ Burnham, pp. 32, 37, 86-87.

¹⁹ Watterson, p. 4; Burnham, pp. 32-33.

connections it could not serve as a collection and transfer point for agricultural commodities.²⁰ Besides local service and retail industries, the industrial pursuits of Bloomington residents--blacksmithing, coopering, wagon-making, milling, and the manufacture of agricultural implements--were all directly dependent upon agriculture. The largest enterprise in Bloomington before the era of the railroads was the factory of Ewing and Flagg, employing as many as one hundred men in the production of reapers.²¹

Improvements in cultivation methods and the renewed promise of railroads stimulated interest in prairie farming in the late forties. As settlers came in large numbers to take up the relatively cheap prairie lands, the McLean County population increased to over 10,000 by the end of the forties. With the surge in area settlement, Bloomington began to grow again in the latter part of the decade. Despite losing a sizeable number of its young men in the course of the California gold rush in 1849, Bloomington's population doubled from 800 in 1845 to almost 1600 by the census of 1850.²²

Before 1847, residences were concentrated south of Jefferson Street in Bloomington. The influence of James Allin's early additions and the pioneer preference for the wooded areas largely accounts for this initial pattern

²⁰ William Vipond Pooley, The Settlement of Illinois from 1830 to 1850, University of Wisconsin Bulletin no. 220. History Series, I, no. 4 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1908. Reprint edition, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1968), p. 459.

²¹ Bateman and Selby, II, p. 748; Burnham, pp. 36-37; Charles Capen, "Semi-Centennial Celebration of Bloomington Lodge No. 43, A.F. & A.M.," in War Record of McLean County and Other Papers, Vol. I of McLean County Historical Society Transactions (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Co., 1899), p. 411.

William F. Flagg, co-proprietor of Ewing and Flagg's, was sued for infringing on Cyrus W. McCormick's reaper patent--damages set at \$20,000. With Abraham Lincoln as his counsel, Flagg was victorious after two years of court litigation in the U.S. Court at Springfield. Duis, p. 337.

²² Burnham, p. 37.

of settlement.²³ The more substantial homes were located in the grove south of Grove Street and east of Main. Between 1847 and 1850, settlement occurred northward. With a growing mechanics and laboring class employed in the agricultural implement shops, modest homes were erected northwest of the public square. Apparently a small settlement of blacks appeared along Center Street between Locust and Mulberry,²⁴ three or four streets north of the northernmost street on the 1838 map.

The slough area south of Olive Street, undesirable for residences, was the location of various saw and flour mills. In this district, Flagg built a saw mill and machine shop where he and Ewing manufactured reapers. Bunn and Brokaw's plow factory faced the courthouse square from its location at the southwest corner of Washington and Center. Although the shops of blacksmiths, coopers, and wagon-makers were generally scattered throughout the area encompassing the original town, the center of commercial activity before 1850 was around the intersection of Main and Front Streets. Almost entirely of a wooden construction, stores, law offices, taverns, and other service-oriented structures lined the streets in this vicinity.²⁵

Under the influence of renewed hopes for transportation connections, Bloomington experienced a surge of economic activity and promotional efforts. With firm belief in future growth, Bloomington citizens obtained a city charter in 1850.²⁶ The local paper observed that "things are on the upward

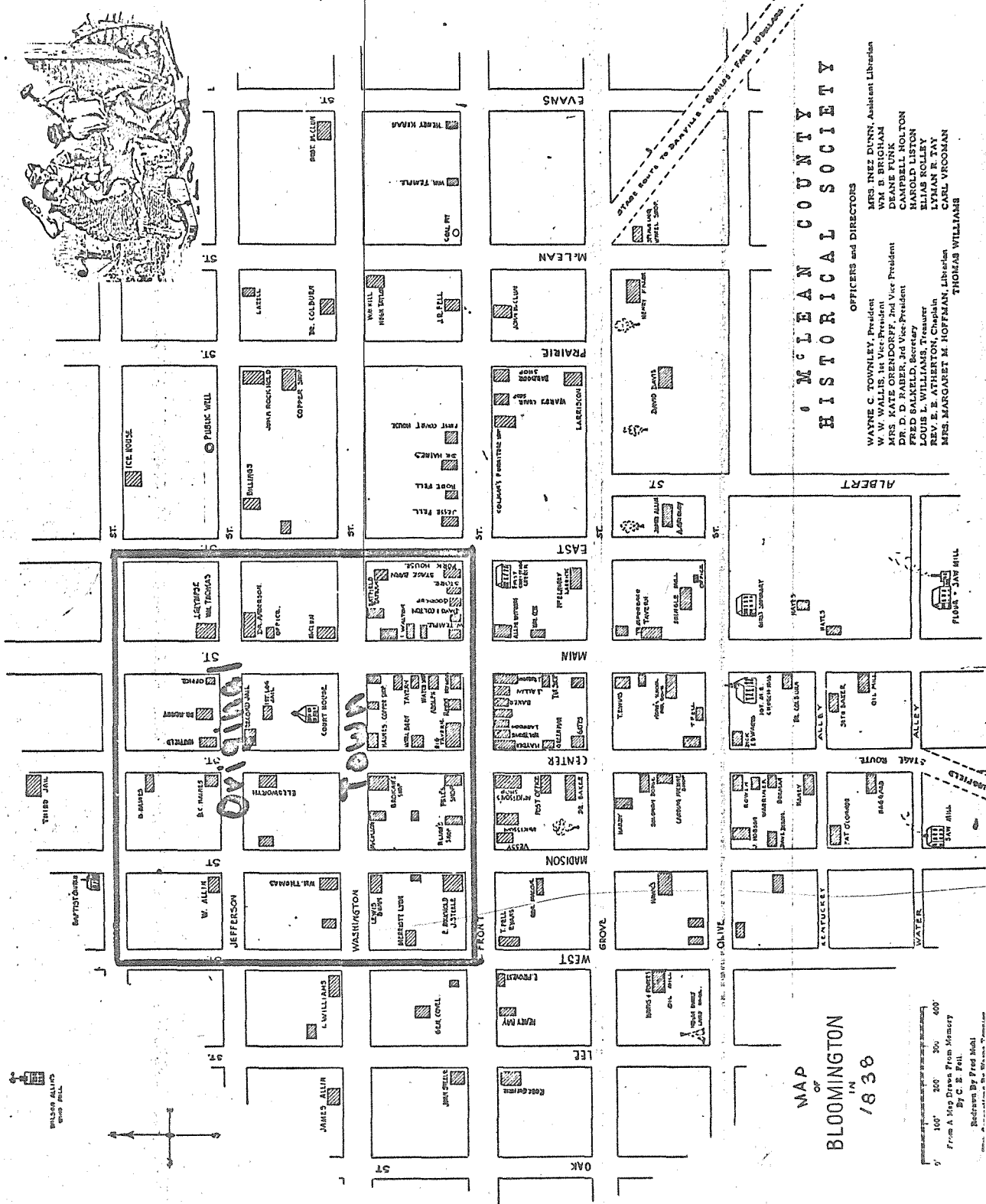
²³ See the map on the next page for the layout of Bloomington in 1838.

²⁴ Capen reported that this area was known as "Nigger Hill," Capen, p. 413. According to the Census there were forty blacks in Bloomington in 1850.

²⁵ Capen, pp. 411-412; Burnham, p. 29.

²⁶ Burnham, p. 37. The corporate limits were designated as encompassing a territory one-and-a-half miles square, extending three-fourths of a mile east, north, west, and south of the northeast corner of Front and Main streets. Revised Ordinances of the City of Bloomington . . . (Bloomington: Wm. E. Foote, 1855), p. 97.

BLOOMINGTON IN 1838



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MAP OF BLOOMINGTON IN 1838

Scale: 0' 100' 200' 300' 400'
 From a Map Drawn From Memory
 By C. S. Fell
 Redrawn By Fred Mohl

tendency" and the city was making "increasing strides to maturity" when it reported the construction of eighty-five new dwellings in the spring of 1850 and the erection of over one hundred in the following year.²⁷ In early 1850, Gridley and Davis addressed a public meeting held for the purpose of discussing the need for a plank road from Bloomington to Pekin in order to induce settlement in that area by providing a means of marketing surplus produce.²⁸

The need for railroads had long been an abiding concern of Illinois residents and speculators. Once their construction was assured, speculators worked incessantly to secure the location of the roads that would be most advantageous to their interests. Gridley, Fell and Davis were influential in ensuring that the Illinois Central railroad would pass through Bloomington.²⁹

Although wiped out by the financial crash of 1837, both Fell and Gridley were successful in amassing large tracts of land throughout the forties and early fifties.³⁰ From inspection of the Danville district land tract books, Paul Wallace Gates reported that Fell and Gridley had each acquired approximately fifteen thousand acres of land in McLean and the surrounding counties.³¹ The deluge of litigation during the bankruptcy proceedings of the early forties provided lawyers with much business and ample opportunity to acquire land at their own price. As lawyers, Gridley and Fell acquired much land by purchasing it cheaply from desperate merchants who had large debts with Eastern wholesale

²⁷ WW, May 18, 1850; June 30, 1851. ²⁸ WW, Apr. 13, 20, 1850.

²⁹ Burnham, p. 61.

³⁰ A political dodger circulated when Gridley was a candidate for the State Senate in 1850 claimed that his debts totaled \$52,599--which were entirely erased when he declared bankruptcy in 1842. Besides speculating on a grand scale and largely via credit, the flyer accused Gridley of "selling and conveying lands to which he had no clear title." His opponents appealed to the voters: "Look at his present comfortable condition and then to that of the widows and orphans whose scanty pittance went to swell the purse of Mr. Gridley, and maintain him in ease and luxury." from "To the Voters of Tazewell, McLean, Logan, DeWitt, and Macon," (n.d.), on microfilm reel with Bloomington newspapers, Jan. 13, 1838--Nov. 16, 1853, Withers Public Library.

merchants.³² Davis reflected the heightened interest in land speculation in the early 1850's; he remarked that he had invested all his money and entered all the land he could, "These lands must rise in value--it is clear as light."³³

In 1850, Congress passed an act granting the right-of-way for the Illinois Central railroad and made a grant of public lands to the States of Illinois, Mississippi and Alabama to aid in the construction of the line from Dunleith (across the Mississippi River from Dubuque, Iowa) to Cairo and on to Mobile, with a branch line in Illinois connecting Chicago. Gridley was in the state senate at the time the charter for the road was to be granted and the route specified by the state. The Illinois portion was generally patterned after the Illinois central line of the 1837 Internal Improvements Act--Bloomington was on this route. When a move was made to locate the line by way of Peoria and Springfield, Gridley maneuvered to prevent the change and secured the construction of the central road through McLean, DeWitt, and Macon counties, and their principal cities, Bloomington, Clinton and Decatur.³⁴ It is not clear to what extent Bloomington was actually in danger of being by-passed by the railraod since the purpose of the federal land grant in aiding the railroad was to open up the great prairie region east of the Illinois River in central Illinois.³⁵

³¹Paul Wallace Gates, The Illinois Central Railroad and Its Colonization Work (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 59, 117, 161. Gridley purchased 3,800 acres on June 11, 1850, at a tax sale in McLean County, WW, Feb. 19, 1851.

³²When Gridley's mercantile enterprise failed in 1840, he began practicing law. Fell had sold his practice to Davis when the latter moved to Bloomington in 1836, but returned to it after petitioning for bankruptcy. Burnham, p. 30; Morehouse, Life of Fell, p. 27, 29.

³³David Davis MSS, Davis to Walker, Oct. 17, 1852, cited in Helen Cavanaugh, Funk of Funk's Grove (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing Co., 1952), p. 123.

³⁴WW, Mar. 5, 1851; Duis, p. 44; Burnham, p. 61.

³⁵Gates, p. 60.

Shortly after the passage of the Illinois Central charter, an editorial in the Bloomington Western Whig reflected the influence of the railroads on prairie settlement:

The attention of the entire east is now directed with eagerness to our own prairie state. An unceasing tide of immigration is pouring into our borders from almost all quarters of the globe, and the marks of industry and enterprise are stamped upon every brow. We heartily welcome the industrious farmer and enterprising mechanic to enjoy the fragrance of nature's richest garden--the prairies of the West.³⁶

Heretofore, a meager-sized frontier town on the sparsely settled Illinois prairie, Bloomington began to boom with the promise of railroads. The distribution of emigrants throughout the prairie state was greatly facilitated by the same rail lines which made commercial farming on the prairies a lucrative enterprise.

As with the Illinois Central railroad, Bloomington would have to compete with rival Illinois cities for railroads and the public institutions the state government would bestow in the next two decades. The main protagonists of Bloomington's position in Illinois' era of urban imperialism were established residents who owned considerable amounts of land in and around Bloomington. The promotional enterprises of these city boosters--increasing individual fortunes while enhancing community prosperity--exemplify the materialistic preoccupations that dominated frontier urban life.

. . . the Deity of Science and Invention is dividing fast the worship of mankind with the deity of dimes, while in the eastern horizon is slowly rising another ruler of the human mind, in whose splendor, united with that of Art and Discovery, the burning luster of the gold god will be eclipsed forever--the Divinity of Literature and Philosophy. There is, hereafter to be a commerce of mental commodities, which shall rival that of material productions. But of this, hereafter.

Determined energy, untiring perseverance, willingness to labor, practical business talent, devotion to accumulating money, and a keen attention to purely commercial literature--these are among the most impressive characteristics of WESTERN MEN!³⁷

³⁶ WW, May 28, 1851.

³⁷ WW, Aug. 8, 1851.

The motivating factor in the settlement of the West was largely economic. Americans migrated westward and foreign immigrants deserted their homelands to seek a better living on the prairies and in the towns and cities of the West.³⁸ The early settlers in Bloomington who owned the land upon which the city was eventually built, however, were in a position to benefit economically from the settlement of newcomers. Through the American institution of private ownership of land, these early residents stood to reap the rewards of socially-created increased land values.

³⁸ Donald F. Tingley, "Anti-Intellectualism on the Illinois Frontier," in Essays in Illinois History . . . ed. by Tingley (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. 5.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PRAIRIE CITY'S ECONOMIC BASE

The coming of the railroads in the 1850's signified the passing of the frontier characteristics of Illinois settlement. With the Illinois Central first opening the way down the middle of the state, the railroads stimulated cultivation of the fertile prairie lands and encouraged the growth of supporting towns and cities. By 1871, a pamphlet extolling the advantages of Bloomington would proclaim.

Less than half a century has passed, and Illinois has become the fourth State in the Confederation. What was then the far West has become the center of civilization. What was then a wild, unbroken and but partially explored territory, has become the Garden State of the Union. . . Cities have been built, rivalling in beauty, wealth, and population, the oldest settled portions of the country. Towns and villages have sprung up on every hand, and farms, orchards and vineyards adorn the hills and valleys of our lovely prairies.

As early as 1855, the first Bloomington city directory--itself an unmistakable indication of approaching urban-status--attributed the recent rise of the city to the completion of two railroads through Bloomington.² Construction on the Illinois Central Railroad northward from Bloomington began in the spring of 1852, and by May of the following year trains were running from LaSalle to Bloomington. Shortly after granting the IC charter, the state legislature authorized the extension of the Alton & Sangamon railroad from Springfield to Bloomington. In October of 1853, cars were running

¹R. S. Lawrence, The Evergreen City: Past, Present and Future of Bloomington, McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: R. S. Lawrence, 1871), p. 9.

²J. R. Freese, Bloomington City Directory, for the Years 1855-6 (Bloomington: J. Wesley Wolfe, 1855), p. 3; see also ISJ, May 4, 1854.

from Springfield to Bloomington.³

Telegraph lines, spread in the wake of railroad expansion, contributed to the transformation of frontier ways of life. At the end of January of 1854, a telegraph connection was completed between Bloomington and the state capital, initiating a new era of instantaneous communication.⁴

The Chicago & Alton Shops

A development closely following the advent of railroads that would similarly assume a significant role in the city's prosperity was the location in 1854 of the machine shops of the Chicago & Alton Railroad. James Allin, his son William, and the nucleus of Bloomington boosters--Gridley, Fell and Davis--directed a campaign in order to secure the establishment of the shops in Bloomington. A tract of land of over six acres on the west side of the tracks at the western edge of town was donated to the railroad for its repair shops and a one acre plot on the opposite side of the line, designated as the site of the passenger depot, was deeded to the company by William Allin for three dollars.⁵ An unsuccessful attempt was made by Bloomington promoters to acquire the railroad shops of the IC to further boost the industrial interests of the city. Its shops were located instead at Wapella, a town established by the

³1855 City Directory, pp. 3-4; Etzard Duis, The Good Old Times in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: Leader Publishing & Printing House, 1874), p. 83; J.H. Burnham, History of Bloomington and Normal in McLean County Illinois (Bloomington: J.H. Burnham, 1879), pp. 62-63.

In 1852, the Alton & Sangamon was authorized to extend to Chicago and the name changed to the Chicago & Mississippi. The Joliet and Bloomington extension linked up with the Joliet and Chicago Railroad and by August of 1854, Bloomington was connected with Chicago by rail. These lines combined became the Chicago, Alton & St. Louis Railroad in 1855, with the name changed to the Chicago & Alton Railroad in 1861. (As a matter of convenience, this railroad will be referred to as the C&A.) Burnham, p. 63; Duis, p. 84. The C&A passed through Bloomington to the west; the IC to the east, intersecting at what is now Normal.

⁴ISJ, Jan. 30, 1854.

⁵Burnham, pp. 83-84.

IC on land it acquired in the huge land grant by the state.⁶

The repair shops, the foundry, and the car shops of the C&A provided employment for a large number of mechanics and laborers. Many of the workers induced to locate in Bloomington because of the C&A shops were recent Irish immigrants who were previously engaged in the construction of railroads in central Illinois. As a central point between the termini of the road, numerous conductors, brakemen, firemen, and engineers resided in Bloomington and further added to the growth of the city. By January of 1856, 320 Bloomington residents were involved in the operation of the C&A railroad.⁷

In the early period of railroad excitement (1850-1857), aspiring Bloomington promoters contemplated various east-west rail routes in order to establish their city as the railroad center of Illinois and to further prairie settlement in those directions. An eastern connection was desired with Lafayette, Indiana, with eventual extension to Peoria and the Mississippi River to the west. Early in 1853, the State Senate passed a bill introduced by Bloomington's Senator Gridley incorporating the Bloomington and Wabash Valley Railroad. Although efforts in this direction were strenuously exerted by many Bloomington lawyers and merchants, this line was not completed to Lafayette until 1872; the extension to Peoria was not in operation until 1885.⁸

Leading Bloomington citizens took an interest in another movement to establish their city on a route extending from Peoria to Lafayette. Through

⁶Ibid., p. 62.

⁷WP, Jan. 23, 1856. In 1866, 500 men were employed in the various shops of the road and by 1874, at least 680 men who resided in Bloomington were employed by the road. A Gazetteer of McLean County . . . To Which is Added a City Directory . . . 1866 (Chicago: Bailey & Hair, 1866), p. 13; Duis, p. 88.

⁸BI, Jan. 19, 1853; ISJ, May 4, 1854; Burnham, p. 62.

the efforts of Peoria's promoters, however, the line passed through El Paso and Chenoa to the north of Bloomington when the road was completed in 1857.⁹ Another road projected in the fifties which failed to materialize until much later was the Danville, Urbana, Bloomington, and Pekin Railroad. First proposed in the period of intense railroad fever during the construction of the IC and the C&A, the road was chartered by the state in 1857. However, the last rail in Bloomington was not laid until May of 1870. Thus, Bloomington's rail connections for nearly two decades were on north-south roads alone.¹⁰

Railroads and Agriculture

The introduction of the railroads on the prairies encouraged the agricultural development of McLean County and enhanced the value of its lands. The most rapid settlement in the county's history occurred in the three years following the completion of the IC and the C&A railroads. Land that had been entered only a few years previously at the government price of \$1.25 per acre commanded between five and twenty-five dollars in 1857. Some acreage that was bought for four dollars in 1853 was bringing three times that only three years later.¹¹

Before 1850, the land that had been officially entered in McLean County was almost entirely in the vicinity of the timbered areas. By 1855, the only remaining lands for sale--besides a few sections in the extreme southeast corner of the county, far removed from railroads--were held by the Illinois

⁹Helen Cavanaugh, Funk of Funk's Grove (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing Co., 1952), pp. 117-118; Burnham, p. 62.

¹⁰BI, May 18, 1853; DP, Mar. 9, 1857; Duis, p. 94. Promotional efforts to establish east-west railroad connections will be discussed more extensively in Chapter IV. The Daily Pantagraph was first issued regularly in 1857. The Weekly Pantagraph was continued for sometime thereafter.

¹¹Newton Bateman and Paul Selby (eds), Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of McLean County, I (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Co., 1908), p. 652; Cavanaugh, p. 128.

Central Railroad.¹² As part of its two-and-a-half million acre land grant in Illinois, the IC received almost 110,000 acres in McLean County in 1852. Although the price of the remaining government lands within six miles of the railroad was increased to \$2.50 per acre to compensate for those sections transferred to the railroad, the public domain rapidly dissipated in the years before the IC opened its land offices.¹³

The IC land office in Bloomington opened on September 27, 1854. Due to his own extensive land operations in the area, Asahel Gridley was appointed the road's agent for McLean and Woodford Counties. Within a month, Gridley reported the sale of over fifteen thousand acres in McLean County at an average price of \$9.97 per acre. The rush for prairie lands in the wake of railroads assured the steady rise of land prices. By January 15, 1857, the Bloomington land office had recorded the sale of over 107,000 acres--three-fourths of which were in McLean County--at an average price of approximately fifteen dollars per acre.¹⁴ Then the race for western lands subsided temporarily with the depressed economic conditions of the late fifties. But following the

¹² Compare the land entry maps for McLean County as of 1850 and 1855 in Arthur Weldon Watterson, Economy and Land Use Patterns of McLean County, Illinois, Department of Geography Research Paper No. 17 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), pp. 53-54.

¹³ Bateman and Selby, I, p. 652; II, p. 745. On June 4, 1852, the State of Illinois granted the IC railroad 109,035 of the 751,360 acres in McLean County. Entry Book #3 (Nov. 3, 1851--July 31, 1858), McLean County Recorder's Office. For the location of the IC lands in the county, see the map in Bateman and Selby, II, opposite p. 752.

¹⁴ Paul Wallace Gates, The Illinois Central and Its Colonization Work (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 161-162; Arthur Charles Cole, The Era of the Civil War Vol. III of The Centennial History of Illinois, ed. by Clarence W. Alvord (5 vols; Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1917-1920), p. 87; WP, Jan. 21, 1857.

Gates reports that Gridley was accused by contemporaries of "having sold large amounts of land under his charge to bogus purchasers who assigned their contracts over to him." Gates, p. 165.

Civil War, the intensity of Illinois settlement resumed and by 1870, almost all of the acreage in McLean County had been entered.¹⁵

Innovations in agricultural technology contributed to the flourishing interest in prairie farming in the 1850's and 1860's. Improvements in the self-polishing steel plow, the one-handed corn planter, the corn-cultivator, and the reaper and mower completely revolutionized the cultivation of the prairies. By 1854, according to one local history, farming required approximately half the manual labor it had just ten years previously.¹⁶

Prairie farming became increasingly commercial with the advent of railroads and improvements in grain production. The early livestock raising primacy of McLean County agriculture gradually gave way to a predominantly cash-grain economy. The railroads provided the first economical means of transporting grain crops. Elevators appeared at short intervals along the railroads, providing farmers with ready access to storage and shipment facilities. By the end of the decade of the fifties--when Illinois had achieved first rank among corn-growing states--the center of the corn belt had shifted from the Illinois River valley to the prairies of the east central counties.¹⁷

Bloomington developed into a transshipment and market center as the surrounding county filled quickly in the fifties and sixties. The increase in Bloomington's population corresponded to the rise in the county's population

¹⁵ See the land entry map for McLean County as of 1870 in Watterson, p. 57. The 1900 Census reported that over fifty percent of the farms in McLean County were operated by tenants. Gates' article, "Frontier Landlords and Pioneer Tenants," discusses how the policies of the government and the IC encouraged large-scale land-holding and furthered tenancy on the prairies of central Illinois. Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXVIII (June, 1945), 143-206. See also Gates, Illinois Central, passim.

¹⁶ Bateman and Selby, I, p. 744.

¹⁷ Watterson, pp. 4-5, 67; Cole, p. 75.

in this period of prodigious settlement. A young city of 1600 in 1850, Bloomington's population tripled by 1855, and reached over 7,000 by 1860. In this same decade, the county's population nearly tripled, expanding rapidly from 10,000 to almost 29,000. Although the rates of increase were lower in the sixties, the numerical gains in population in this decade were the greatest in the nineteenth century for both the city and the county. Bloomington's population more than doubled--reaching 14,600 by 1870--while the county's population grew by 25,000 to nearly 54,000. The remarkable growth of Bloomington and the county in the period, 1850-1870, resulted in prominent ranking in the state. Among Illinois cities, Bloomington's population ranked fifth in 1870, while in the list of leading counties, McLean stood in fourth rank, surpassed only by Cook, LaSalle, and Adams.¹⁸

Shipping

The foundation of Bloomington's economic base in the second half of the nineteenth century was its rich agricultural hinterland. Traversed by two of the earliest railroads in the state, Bloomington was the central collection point for the shipment of grain and livestock produce for the more than one-thousand square mile McLean County. Large quantities of corn and wheat and lesser amounts of barley and oats were shipped from Bloomington. The 1870 Census reported that the eleven million bushels of corn raised in McLean County were more than any other county in the nation. Much of its corn was marketed in the form of hogs and cattle. Nearly half a million bushels of wheat were shipped from Bloomington in 1857. Although wheat shipments fell off sharply in 1858 due to the failure of the crop of winter wheat,

¹⁸Population figures from Table II in the Appendix, "Population Increase by Decade." See also Table III in the Appendix, "Population: McLean County, Bloomington, and Normal."

shipments of corn increased to 128,000 bushels. Livestock shipments from Bloomington in 1858 totalled 14,349 hogs, 5611 cattle, and 1628 sheep.¹⁹

The remarkable growth of Bloomington's function as an agricultural shipping station by 1869 is evidenced by the appearance of a weekly review of Bloomington's markets in the Daily Pantagraph and by weekly tabulations recorded in terms of railcar-loads instead of bushels or heads of stock. In the first few months of 1869, the Pantagraph reported weekly shipments of hogs averaging approximately five car-loads and corn averaging ten car-loads. By 1869, the great majority of the local wheat crop was being processed in Bloomington flour mills. Flour shipments averaged over five hundred barrels weekly in the early months of 1869, compared with a total shipment of only 2200 barrels in the year 1858. With the north-south orientation of the railroads traversing Bloomington, Chicago and St. Louis were the primary destinations for shipments originating in Bloomington, the larger portion being sent to Chicago.²⁰

Manufacturing

In 1870, Bloomington claimed sixty manufacturing establishments that each produced more than a thousand dollars worth of manufactured articles yearly.²¹ With the exception of the shops of the C&A railroad, the largest of these manufacturing firms were almost entirely limited to agriculture-related industries. The relationship of agriculture to Bloomington manufactures--primarily, grain processing and agricultural implements--was either as a direct supplier of raw materials or as a consumer of finished products for farm use.

¹⁹ ISJ, Jun. 2, 1859; Cavanaugh, p. 151.

²⁰ DP, Feb. 9, Mar. 9, 23, Apr. 20, Jun. 8, 1869; ISJ, Jun. 2, 1859.

²¹ Louise A. Lange, "The Social and Economic History of Bloomington, Illinois," (unpublished master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1939), p. 16.

The rapid increase in wheat production in the fifties made Illinois the leading state for flour milling in the nation by 1860. The second ranking manufacture in Illinois behind flour milling was the distilling and brewing industry, also dependent on the grain production of the Illinois prairies for its raw materials. Mirroring this trend, by 1871, Bloomington had five flour mills, a distillery and three breweries.²²

In the early years of industrialization in Illinois, the location of factories engaged in the production of bulky commodities, such as agricultural implements and wagons, was usually closely connected with the markets for those goods. In 1870, the firm of Brokaw, Ellsworth & Co. was annually producing over two thousand of the "celebrated Bloomington Clipper Plows." In the production of cultivators, mowers, and reapers, the Bloomington Manufacturing Company employed between seventy and eighty people, and ten firms were engaged in the manufacture of wagons in Bloomington.²³

Two Bloomington-based enterprises that benefitted immensely from the city's early advantageous rail connections and were able to secure extensive trade connections for the distribution of their goods were Wakefield & Company and the F. K. Phoenix Nursery. Dr. Cyrenius Wakefield established a drugstore in Bloomington in 1850 and six years later built a large medicine factory on East Washington Street. His various patent remedies for ague, fever and other frontier maladies were sold widely in Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, and southwestern states.²⁴

²²Fred Lee Nesbit, "A Survey of Manufacturing in the Old Northwest, 1850 to 1860," (unpublished master's thesis, Illinois State Normal University, 1963), pp. 61, 101; Lawrence, p. 45.

²³Holland's Bloomington City Directory, For 1870-71 (Chicago: Western Publishing Company, 1870), pp. 32, 34, 232, 311.

²⁴Ibid., p. 34; Burnham, pp. 87-88. In 1860, Wakefield began publishing an almanac as an advertising circular. By 1879, his in-house presses were printing a million-and-a-half almanacs in English, German, Norwegian, and Swedish.

Franklin Phoenix located his nursery business in Bloomington in 1854 primarily because of the city's promising shipping facilities. By 1858, Phoenix had eighty acres under cultivation, planted with a variety of fruit trees, ornamental shrubbery and evergreens. He did an extremely thriving business in many states in the period, 1866-1870. During that time his six-hundred acre nursery northeast of Bloomington was the second largest in the nation. In the peak season in 1869, he employed nearly four hundred hands and shipped as many as sixty-five car-loads of trees in one week. However, his business began to decline after 1870, largely as a result of the increase of nurseries in Iowa, Kansas and Missouri.²⁵

Service Industries and Prospects for Expansion

The rapid growth of the city and its hinterland supported a considerable number of service-related activities in Bloomington, including grain shipping and storage facilities, commercial enterprises, construction trades, financial institutions, the professions, and other service industries.²⁶

These service-related industries arose to serve a consuming population engaged in farming and manufacturing. Thus, Bloomington's development followed a typical sequence of growth for agricultural market-centers. Under the stimulus of the railroads, growth was initiated by the expansion of the agricultural settlement and productivity of McLean County. Manufacturing

²⁵ School Record of McLean County and Other Papers, Vol. II of McLean County Historical Society Transactions (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Co., 1903), p. 660; Burnham, p. 79; DP, Apr. 28, Aug. 4, 1869.

²⁶ In 1870, there were 143 retail dealers selling between \$1000 and \$25,000 worth of goods annually, and 41 wholesale dealers with sales over \$25,000 yearly. Lange, p. 16.

The 1870 City Directory listed: 8 grain dealers, 4 planing mills, 9 lumber dealers, 5 banks, 15 insurance agents, 45 lawyers, over 40 physicians and dentists, 5 hotels, 30 boarding houses, and 8 newspapers.

activities developed that were largely agriculture-related, either as a consumer of grains or as a supplier of agricultural implements and farm supplies. And those engaged in farming and manufacturing supported a variety of service-related industries.²⁷

The economic base that had evolved in Bloomington by 1870 was largely attributable to the filling up of the surrounding county. The observation that the population growth of Bloomington and the county after 1870 came in modest increments, both absolute and relative, suggests that the future prosperity of the city was circumscribed and limited to its function as a market-service center.

McLean County lands were almost entirely entered by 1870, and although utilization would expand with improvements in drainage techniques in the 1880's, the farming population would increase only slightly. The expansion of agriculture-related manufacturing would be closely dependent on marginal increases in agricultural productivity and increasing mechanization. The location in Bloomington of manufacturing establishments not tied to agriculture would depend on accessibility to natural resources or proximity to sufficient markets. Transportation advantage was the crucial component here, but as we have seen in the first chapter, by 1870, Bloomington was dominated by the metropolitan hegemony of Chicago and the tendency in the industrializing national economy was toward the agglomeration of manufacturing concerns in

²⁷ Any refined analysis of the relative proportions of those engaged in farming, manufacturing or service industries is hampered by the absence of essential data on Bloomington's economic base. The published census manufacturing returns for this period contain only aggregate figures for McLean County, statistics are not available for Bloomington. The sources that have been used here--city directories, newspapers, and Lawrence's promotional publication (The Evergreen City)--contain only variable, imprecise data on selected economic activities. For an idea of the limitations on the reliability of the published census returns, see Margaret Walsh, "The Value of Mid-Nineteenth Century Manufacturing Returns: The Printed Census and the Manuscript Census Compilations Compared," Historical Methods Newsletter (1971), 43-51.

large cities. The growth of service industries would, of course, depend on the continued viability of farming and manufacturing.

The trend toward population stabilization, or even lower rates of growth, was the fear of all ambitious city boosters. In order to assure a sustained growth atmosphere, and deflect warnings that the "city was out-growing the country,"²⁸ aspiring Bloomington promoters endeavored to help the community to acquire the "attributes of city status" that would attract new residents and enhance land values. Promotive efforts were in evidence throughout the period, 1850-1870; periodic setbacks would not dissipate entirely their urban optimism. Despite vague measures for gauging the benefits accruing to the city--i.e., increasing land prices and additional population--attributable to specific "successful" booster efforts, promotional schemes were continually advanced. In this period of rapid settlement in Illinois' history, the potential for local initiative in urban imperialistic competition was greater than it would ever be again.

²⁸DP, May 21, 1869.

CHAPTER IV

TO MAKE A CITY GROW

The rapid and wonderful growth of Western towns and cities is a subject of general conversation, not only among ourselves, but all over this broad Union! A wild prairie to-day and a city to-morrow! . . . To those used only to seeing the slow, snail-like pace of Eastern towns and cities, the hurry, bustle, seeming-confusion and railroad speed of Western progress seem strange and unaccountable; and, not until they themselves have fully entered into the strife, do they realize that things can be done as well by the steam and lightning principle, as upon the snail and ox principle.¹

The rapid pace of growth of Illinois prairie cities with the construction of railroads in the early 1850's stimulated the imagination of city boosters and gave birth to prospects of urban ascendancy. Promoters sought to acquire for their respective cities a generous share of the immense tide of migration that was quickly populating Illinois. Bloomington's boosters, seeing their city treble in population from 1850 to 1855, were especially optimistic of Bloomington's potential for greatness. The Weekly Pantagraph, after extolling the attributes of Bloomington, posited with great certainty, that, "it requires no prophet's eye to see that Bloomington is to rapidly rise to the first rank among the cities of Illinois."²

Although rhetorical claims of Bloomington's urban potential appeared frequently throughout this period (1850-1870), it is doubtful whether serious hopes of primacy among western cities were ever cherished in Bloomington. St. Louis was, by 1850, a well-established urban center with a population

¹J. R. Freese, Bloomington City Directory, for the Years 1855-6 (Bloomington: J. Wesley Wolf, 1855), p. 1.

²WP, Mar. 14, 1855; see also WP, Jul. 4, 1855.

of 78,000. Chicago had, among other assets, the advantage of an early lead among Illinois cities--its 1850 population of nearly 30,000 was many times greater than that of other Illinois contenders--and would mushroom in the fifties to over 100,000. There was, however, considerable opportunity for a modicum of urban success. The railroad instigated large-scale development of the Illinois interior; new trade routes would evolve, market facilities and industrial establishments would be needed to service the vast agricultural community. But cities did not simply rise out of the prairies organically. Competition among inchoate cities to become regional centers of commerce and manufacturing precipitated intense rivalry. City boosters worked incessantly to secure advantages that would attract population and assure the continued prosperity of their cities in the period after the initial widespread settlement of Illinois. In 1855, J. R. Freese, a Bloomington physician and businessman, appealed to his fellow citizens to maintain a competitive advantage for Bloomington in the race with other aspiring prairie cities.

We, of Bloomington, have been wont to think that our place was par excellence, the Prairie City of the State, and, on the principle that "every crow should think her own young ones the whitest," it was and is right that we should think so; nevertheless; it is well for us to bear in mind that other places have entered the field against us, and nothing short of continued exertion, perserverance and "eternal vigilance," can secure to us, eventually, the palm of victory.³

³Letter from J. R. Freese, WP, Dec. 12, 1855. Freese, a self-appointed appraiser of American cities, traveled widely, assessing the attributes and prospects of towns and cities. This particular letter was written from St. Louis while on a southward journey to New Orleans and Galveston. The specific rival Freese had in mind in this letter was Decatur, through which he had passed on his way to St. Louis by rail.

In his 1855-6 Bloomington city directory (p. 4), Freese "reported:" "I have myself travelled through sixteen states, and visited many of the principal towns and cities in each, and give it as my calm, and settled

With their criteria of urban success uniformly expressed in population numbers and land values, those most actively engaged in city promotion included land-holders, businessmen, and newspaper editors. If a city could continue to attract new residents, the sustained demand for town-lots would enhance land values, the market capacity of the community would increase, and newspapers would be guaranteed long lives. (Newspapers depended substantially on the advertising revenues of business.) The primary commodities that city promotional activities sought were railroads, manufactures, and what public institutions the state could bestow. The perspective of the booster-minded was characteristically future-oriented; the appeal was for present advantage and liberality in enterprise in order to secure future prosperity. The editor of the Weekly Pantagraph represented this outlook in an admonishing note to land-holders.

Real estate owners should not be so anxious to secure a good bargain today as to forget the future and injure themselves. A practice of "skinning" all those who may wish to settle in a certain region will divert emigration to a more liberal quarter, and thus the "skinners" will eventually discover that they have taken off their own hides. We would not by any means charge any of our real estate owners with being among those "skinners," but it should be a question too with them all, how far a liberal tendency toward enterprising eastern emigrants will be to their own and the city's and their county's benefit. They should take a broad view of the subject, and not confine themselves down to the present moment; but look off into the future.⁴

conviction that in beauty and location; healthfulness of climate; richness of surrounding country; enterprise and urbanity of its citizens, there is no place in the whole United States which excels, or even equals our own beautiful city; and we venture to predict that in less than ten years from this date our city will contain a population of not less than 20,000, with manufactories and Public Institutions equal, if not superior, to any city of like size, in the mighty West!"

⁴WP, Mar. 14, 1855.

East-West Railroads

The most crucial component of urban achievement for prairie cities was transportation access. Without railroads, the possibility of growth was extremely remote for interior, land-bound towns. The acquisition of railroads would induce marketing and commercial facilities and enable the city to be considered as a location for manufacturing establishments. Rivalry among competing cities was common in the scramble to secure rail connections in the fifties and sixties. After the two major downstate, north-south railroads--the Illinois Central and the Chicago & Alton--were assured for Bloomington, promotional efforts were directed to securing east-west roads. David Davis expressed the desire of many Bloomington boosters, "If we could get a railroad from Peoria to Lafayette through here I would be satisfied. Three railroads intersecting here would make this a large town."⁵

Various east-west railroad projects were advocated by Bloomington promoters in the mid-fifties to make Bloomington the rail center of central Illinois and provide direct communication with the East. Rail extension in an easterly direction was considered essential, connection being desired with Danville and Indianapolis by one route, and Lafayette, Indiana, by another. From those points in Indiana, Bloomington would be connected with the chains of railroads stretching eastward to Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore. Access to the timber and coal regions of Indiana would provide building materials and fuel at reduced prices.⁶ A railroad from Danville was emphasized for the effect it would have on the development of the

⁵Davis to W. P. Walker, Mar. 14, 1853, cited in Helen Cavanaugh, Funk of Funk's Grove (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing Co., 1952), p. 116.

⁶BI, Nov. 2, 1853.

southeastern portion of the county, and the concomitant increase in land prices it would induce.

Heretofore that portion of the county has been destitute of railroad communication, and has remained comparatively unknown to the outer world. The construction of this road will at once open a ready route to market, and the stream of travel which will roll over it will bring within view of its attractive wild lands many who are seeking homes in the West--securing their speedy settlement. The immediate and continuous rise in the value of property through all that quarter will of course be great.⁷

And with the extension of the routes in a westerly direction through Peoria or Pekin to the Mississippi River and Burlington or Keokuk, Iowa, Bloomington would become an important point on the migration channel to the West. By 1856, Bloomington businessmen were beginning to feel that the lack of an east-west railroad would confine their city's future to a satellite dependence on Chicago. The Weekly Pantagraph presented this view in an editorial urging community cooperation in the construction of an east-west road.

We are here very nearly upon the same parallel of latitude with Pittsburg, but the great tide of travel which sets westward from that point can only reach us by a long circuit. The living river which continually rolls through Chicago into Northern Illinois and Central Iowa would readily yield us a portion of its current, were a convenient channel opened to tap its tributary streams. And surely we have inducements enough to present in this magnificent country, to draw off a goodly portion of this tide of life for the inundation of our fertile prairies, were it once directed through us. . . we believe a good East and West road, judiciously located, would not be less important in its influence upon our prosperity than either of the completed lines.⁸

The construction costs of railroads were formidable; a projected road from Bloomington to Pekin was estimated to require \$25,000 per mile.⁹

⁷DP, Mar. 9, 1857.

⁸WP, Nov. 26, 1856.

⁹WP, Feb. 6, 1856.

Capital was difficult to obtain from private sources within the state or from Eastern investors, and state support for the expansion of the transportation system was prohibited.¹⁰ In order to facilitate construction, the state passed legislation enabling municipalities--cities, counties, townships, incorporated towns--to subscribe up to \$100,000 for shares of the capital stock of railroads. Local subscriptions were contingent on approval by a majority of the qualified voters.¹¹

Public meetings were frequently held in the towns and cities along projected roads to drum up interest, to solicit private subscriptions, and mobilize to secure municipal aid. In the newspaper reports of these meetings, the names of Asahel Gridley and Jesse Fell consistently appear as the organizers and speakers at these meetings.¹² Fell was the most aggressive promoter of Bloomington's railroad interests. To propagandize projected roads,

¹⁰Kathleen Bessie Jacklin, "Local Aid to Railroads in Illinois, 1848-1870," (unpublished master's thesis, Cornell University, 1958), pp. 1-3.

The Internal Improvements Act of 1837 over-extended the state's resources and was a major factor in the collapse of state credit during the depression following the Panic of 1837 when it left the state with a massive debt. From this experience, state assistance for railroads was prohibited by the Illinois Constitution of 1848. Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 6-7. In 1870, the people of Illinois voted to prohibit further local aid to railroads. In the two decades of municipal subsidization, \$22 million of public funds went to implement the construction of Illinois railroads. Ibid., pp. 244-246.

¹²For reports of meetings, see BI, May 8, Sept. 14, 1853, and WP, Feb. 6, 1856.

The majority of the Bloomington citizens that appeared in reports of public railroad meetings and as incorporators of east-west railroads were long-time residents of the city with considerable land-holdings in and around the city. Besides Gridley and Fell, David Davis, William F. Flagg, John W. Ewing, William T. Major, Kersey Fell (Jesse's brother), James H. Robinson, Allen Withers, William H. Temple, John Moore, and John E. McClun were some of those most frequently appearing. See the incorporators of the Bloomington and Wabash Valley Railroad, BI, Mar. 23, 1853; and the incorporators of the Danville and Bloomington Railroad, DP, Mar. 9, 1857.

Fell often presented a list of resolutions he had prepared before-hand to be voted upon by those attending such meetings and to be published in the newspapers of the cities along the proposed route. The following is an example of the resolutions presented by Fell at a well-attended meeting of Bloomington citizens in September, 1853, to promote the Mississippi and Wabash Railroad.

Resolved, That however important to the future growth and prosperity of our infant city, the two Railroads intersecting at this place, and now in rapid process of construction are, we cannot but regard the projected Mississippi and Wabash Railroad, as an enterprise of higher importance in the development of our agricultural and manufacturing resources, and as the "crowning leaf" in that system of railroads that is to constitute Bloomington the Railroad Metropolis of Central Illinois.¹³

At this meeting Fell urged the city to subscribe fifty thousand dollars stock in the railroad. Following a vigorous campaign directed by Fell, the city voted 340 to 5 on October 15, 1853, to approve the recommended subscription.¹⁴ Despite the efforts of Fell, Gridley and others, the railroad encountered difficulties in acquiring the necessary capital and did not succeed until the late 1860's.

Similar efforts were exerted by Bloomington entrepreneurs in the mid-fifties to secure the construction of the Danville, Urbana, Bloomington, and Pekin Railroad. Meetings were held along the route in 1856 and 1857, with Gridley addressing the assemblies and Fell offering resolutions to be approved. By the time a vote was held on local aid in November of 1857, economic depression had set in and the proposal to grant \$100,000 from the proceeds of the sale of county swamp-land was defeated 1570 to 1166.¹⁵

¹³BI, Sept. 14, 1853.

¹⁴BI, Oct. 19, 1853.

¹⁵J. H. Burnham, History of Bloomington and Normal in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: J.H. Burnham, 1879), pp. 63-64.

It is difficult to derive from the newspapers and the local histories very precise reasons for the failures of these two roads in the fifties. Indeed,

East-west railroad projects, dormant in the late fifties and postponed by the Civil War, resumed in Bloomington and the surrounding country in 1866. By this time a new dimension had been added to the expressed need for east-west rail facilities. Agitation appeared among McLean County farmers against the freight-rate structure of railroads and the exploitative warehousing policies of Chicago grain magnates.

The closing of the Mississippi River during the Civil War had forced all of the grain shipments of central Illinois northward, creating monopoly conditions for the Chicago & Alton and the Illinois Central and the grain-handling facilities in Chicago. Although Chicago was not the terminal point for grain shipments, the lack of direct eastern rail connections forced McLean County farmers to route their grain through Chicago, where elevator charges and transfer costs reduced their profit. The exorbitant freight-rates and Chicago handling charges widened the gap between the market price of grain in the east and the price received by the farmers. In 1866, the New York wholesale price for grains averaged twenty-four cents more per bushel than what the McLean County farmer received.¹⁶ East-west railroads were now advocated not only to enhance the competitive advantage of Bloomington in acquiring manufactures and access to raw materials, but also to increase competition among railroads and reduce freight-rates.¹⁷

using the local histories it is very trying to trace the development of what appears to have been at least two distinct proposals for east-west roads traversing Bloomington; the Peoria-Lafayette route and the Pekin-Danville-Indianapolis route. The names of the roads seem to change with but the slightest variation in the proposal. Frances Morehouse appears to have confused these roads in what seems to be her discussion of efforts for a single east-west route in the fifties. The Life of Jesse W. Fell (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1916), pp. 87-88.

¹⁶ Newton Bateman and Paul Selby (eds.), Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of McLean County, I (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1908), p. 742.

¹⁷ DP, Jun. 18, 1866.

Interest in the Danville, Urbana, Bloomington, and Pekin Railroad (DUB&P) and the Lafayette, Bloomington and Mississippi Railroad (LB&M)¹⁸ revived with widespread popular support, both in Bloomington and the rural areas of the county. In 1866 and early 1867, the Pantagraph carried several editorial pleas for east-west railroads and for all new rail projects in general. There was also a movement at this time to secure the Jacksonville branch of the C&A--the St. Louis, Jacksonville & Chicago Railroad. This road would run southwest from Bloomington to Jacksonville, passing through the towns of Covell and Stanford in McLean County. Gridley and Fell were the prime movers in this effort, both having close connections with the C&A railroad. At a meeting in support of this road--at which Fell once again presented a set of resolutions and Gridley offered to personally subscribe \$10,000--a plan was adopted to urge the city to vote a \$100,000 subscription in aid of the railroad.¹⁹

Many people in the community believed that the Jacksonville branch of the C&A would come to Bloomington without local assistance, considering that the company's repair shops were located here. The McLean County Journal, a rival of the Pantagraph, emphasized that this road was already part of a monopoly and that the city's interest would be better served by assisting east-west roads. Finally, the Journal warned citizens to be "cautious about supporting the chimerical schemes of those capitalists who are financially interested in these public enterprises."²⁰

¹⁸The Lafayette, Bloomington and Mississippi succeeded the Bloomington and Wabash Valley and the Mississippi and Wabash proposals.

¹⁹DP, Dec. 31, 1866.

²⁰McLean County Journal, as cited in the DP, Jan. 17, 1867.

Adamantly in favor of all new acquisitions for the city, the Pantagraph editorialized: "(W)e must still continue to seize every opportunity for still further increasing the importance of Bloomington. Let us stand ready to lend a helping hand to every railroad that points toward this city."²¹ The Pantagraph, Fell and Gridley promoted the Jacksonville branch in terms of the increased business activity that would redound to the repair and car shops of the C&A in Bloomington. The paper estimated that the road would bring \$10,000 per month in increased wages to the mechanics and laborers of the shops. The promoters were successful in this regard; on April 15, 1867, the voters approved a \$75,000 subscription to aid the road, \$37,500 by the city and a like amount by Bloomington township.²²

The two east-west routes were chartered in 1867. By the time elections on approving financial assistance for these roads were held in June, support was almost unanimous in the city and the county. Bloomington township voted \$100,000 to both the DUB&P and the LB&M by overwhelming majorities; only a half-dozen votes were cast in opposition on each proposal.²³ Other townships and incorporated towns in McLean County aided the LB&M in the amount of \$165,000 and the DUB&P, \$125,000.²⁴

The railroad to Jacksonville was opened for traffic in late 1867.²⁵ Construction on the DUB&P began in October of that year and was completed by May of 1870. In the interim, a road had been constructed from

²¹DP, Jan. 21, 1867.

²²DP, Apr. 17, 18, 1867. The greatest support in the 1198 to 266 election came from the second and fifth wards of Bloomington, those nearest the shops. Allin township, through which the road would pass, voted \$25,000 to aid the St. Louis, Jacksonville & Chicago.

²³DP, Jun. 4, 1867. The vote was 900-6 for the DUB&P and 904-6 for the LB&M.

²⁴Jacklin, p. 282.

²⁵Morehouse, Life of Fell, p. 89.

Indianapolis to Danville; the two roads were consolidated in August of 1869 under the name of the Indianapolis, Bloomington and Western Railroad.²⁶

The I&B&M, of which Gridley was president and Fell a director, was slow in acquiring the requisite capital for construction and was not completed until 1872.²⁷

The rationale for acquiring railroads employed in the mid-fifties--largely an amorphous appeal to enhance Bloomington's future--met with little success in attaining sufficient municipal aid to capitalize railroad programs. Only when the near-unanimous support of the city and the county could be enlisted would Bloomington promoters realize their railroad expectations. The east-west rail projects did not become reasonably viable until the specter of rail monopolies galvanized the patronage of the Bloomington and county citizenry in subscribing the requisite municipal aid. It is doubtful whether the roads would have succeeded without the assistance of the outlying townships and small towns of McLean County. Even though the Jacksonville branch of the C&A did not enjoy such enthusiastic popular support, Fell and Gridley succeeded in convincing the large portion of the west-side community affiliated with the C&A operation of the benefits that would accrue to them from the rail line and the vote for municipal assistance passed with their overwhelming support.²⁸

²⁶ Etzard Duis, The Good Old Times in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: Leader Publishing & Printing House, 1874), p. 94.

²⁷ Morehouse, Life of Fell, p. 89.

²⁸ When the C&A shops burned in 1867, and Chicago, Joliet, Springfield, and Alton, contended for their relocation, the city voted \$55,000 in bonds to reimburse the company for land it purchased for enlarged shops. DP, Nov. 4, 5, 1867; Burnham, p. 39. Fell and Gridley addressed a meeting called for the purpose of taking steps to retain the shops for Bloomington. Morehouse, Life of Fell, p. 90.

Manufacturing

One of the prime purposes in promoting railroads was to enhance the city's ability to attract manufacturing in order to increase employment opportunities and population. Early Bloomington boosters of the fifties expressed concern that the city could not grow very large if its economic base remained wholly commercial.

Enterprise will accomplish much toward Bloomington; and enterprise should not all be shown in trade. It is easy to overburden a place with traders, and thus reduce all to a state in which enterprise is out of the question. The mechanic arts should be fostered and cultivated. So should manufactures. No place in the State affords a better location for steam manufactories of all kinds.²⁹

It is evident that the growth of our little city must necessarily be very gradual, for a new place in a new country, unless manufacturing interests can be concentrated here.³⁰

The expansion of manufacturing in Bloomington was constrained, local businessmen believed, by the apparent absence of natural resources, especially coal. The promotional pamphlet, The Evergreen City, retrospectively portrayed the early state of affairs in Bloomington when all its coal had to be imported from DuQuoin and LaSalle: "The best financier in the county couldn't figure successful manufacturing, with coal at figures so disproportionate to other towns. Capitalists visited us--said Bloomington was a beautiful place--and went away."³¹

²⁹ WP, Mar. 14, 1855.

³⁰ WP, Feb. 27, 1856. In his comparative study of mid-nineteenth century urbanization among five Great Lake cities, Bayrd Still wrote, "A predominant concern for trade and commerce gave way in the middle sixties to the encouragement of manufacturing." "Patterns of Mid-Nineteenth Century Urbanization in the Middle West," in American Urban History, ed. by Alexander B. Callow (New York: Oxford University Press, Second Edition, 1973), p. 128.

³¹ R. S. Lawrence, The Evergreen City: Past, Present, and Future of Bloomington, McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: R.S. Lawrence, 1871), p. 45. See also WP, Feb. 27, 1856.

The appeal for coal as a part of the general encouragement of manufacturing in the fifties by the nucleus of Bloomington promoters seems to have resulted in a paucity of productive action. As in the promotion of railroads, rhetorical reference to Bloomington's future greatness would yield little until a significant segment of the community felt a direct economic need to pursue the boosters' lead. Finally, when the price of coal received in Bloomington rose to seven and eight dollars per ton after Civil War, Bloomington businessmen initiated a concerted drive to locate coal reserves in the vicinity.

Extremely reluctant to incur a municipal deficit, the Bloomington city council furnished two thousand dollars in 1865 to search for coal on the west side of Bloomington. Although the city's effort was futile, a multitude of Bloomington businessmen continued to support boring projects with private subscriptions. With improved drilling equipment, coal was finally discovered in February of 1867.³² Private coal companies very soon were providing Bloomington with cheap coal; the initial shaft was located near the C&A tracks in the northwest section of town, the second at the junction of the C&A and the IB&W railroads. By 1870, the two companies employed nearly seven hundred miners.³³

Although the grandiloquent Bloomington pamphlet, The Evergreen City, attributed the city's prosperity to its discovery of coal,³⁴ it is difficult

³²Burnham, pp. 79-80. The city showed its first municipal indebtedness in 1865. School Record of McLean County and Other Papers, Vol. II of McLean County Historical Society Transactions (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Co., 1903), p. 590.

³³Louise A. Lange, "The Social and Economic History of Bloomington, Illinois," (unpublished master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1939), p. 18. Because of its low productivity, the north shaft was abandoned within a few years. The Bloomington City Directory, . . . for 1872-73 (Bloomington: Edward Arntzen, 1872), p. 41.

³⁴"With the discovery of coal and the successful mining thereof in

to ascertain precisely the impact the new energy source had in influencing manufactures to establish in Bloomington. Certainly coal prices were reduced by fifty percent--in 1869, the price was \$3.50 per ton--³⁵, the mines were sufficiently productive to enable existing agriculture-related manufacturers to expand and prosper, and Bloomington began exporting coal.³⁶ But there is little evidence to indicate the addition of new manufactures to the city as a result of the local discovery of coal. It is questionable whether the availability of a cheap fuel alone would enable Bloomington to become "a great manufacturing center like Lowell, Manchester or Birmingham."³⁷

The Pantagraph pointed out in one of an elaborate pair of editorials appearing in December of 1868, that "the production of raw materials is not one of the chief functions of cities."³⁸ These editorials, written while Fell was editor, went to considerable lengths to demonstrate the "direct influence of manufactures upon the growth and prosperity of the city." The editor emphasized the necessity of expanding manufacturing in industries beyond those largely dependent upon agriculture in order for the city to grow in population.

The corresponding growth of cities and manufactories is one of the best demonstrated propositions of modern times. The building

our city, an impetus was given to manufacturing interests, and the future prosperity of Bloomington insured. When the smoke of the furnaces began to cloud the sky, the sun of future commercial greatness dawned upon the city." Lawrence, p. 45.

³⁵ DP, Feb. 9, 1869.

³⁶ In early 1869, Bloomington shipped an average of six train car-loads of coal per week. DP, Feb. 9, Mar. 9, 23, Apr. 20, 1869.

³⁷ Holland's Bloomington City Directory, For 1870-71 . . . (Chicago: Western Publishing Co., 1870), p. 29.

³⁸ DP, Dec. 7, 8, 1869.

up of cities by commerce alone, if it ever occurs, is one of those rare events which reasonable men will not expect to see often repeated. And the reason for the truth of both of these propositions is that cities must produce as well as consume. A city which produces nothing may act as a commercial agent in buying, selling, exporting and importing for the procurers who reside in its vicinity, and thus maintain its own limited number of inhabitants. But unless that city shall produce something by the capital, skill and industry of its citizens, it will soon find the limit of its growth.³⁹

The efforts of Bloomington promoters in the late sixties and after to extend the city's manufacturing base were less than successful. Although Bloomington had an east-west railroad and abundant coal reserves by 1870, the trend in the national economy toward the agglomeration of industrial concerns in large cities apparently operated to the detriment of Bloomington's future growth and to the dismay of ambitious Bloomington boosters.

Educational and State Institutions

Colleges and public institutions were fervently promoted, not so much for their stimulus to the local economy, although that aspect was frequently invoked, as for the urbane air of moral and intellectual superiority it was believed they would confer on the city in which they were located. If this is true, some promoters evidently considered such an attribute a substantial asset for, as one author has reported, the leading citizens of Bloomington raised \$70,000 in 1850 for the establishment of Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington.⁴⁰ In addition, many of the established residents of Bloomington who were active in city promotional efforts contributed significantly

³⁹DP, Dec. 7, 1868.

⁴⁰Florence Fifer Bohrer, "John McLean and the County that Bears His Name," Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXXVII (1930), 155.

to the college in its early years.⁴¹ The Pantagraph urged Bloomington citizens to subscribe \$50,000 of a \$150,000 endowment drive in 1856, saying: "Bloomington has much to gain intellectually and socially from a college as well as an additional revenue of several thousand dollars."⁴²

The competition was intense among rival communities seeking to secure state institutions. Several cities and towns entered into competition when the state legislature passed an act establishing a State Normal University in February of 1857. Local promoters, led by Fell, worked zealously to make Bloomington's bit the greatest. Private contributions took the form of money, land, and town-lots. The majority of the individuals liberally offered tracts of land, a commodity of which they held in abundance, much of it in the vicinity of the proposed site. In an editorial urging Bloomington citizens to contribute to the city's offer, principal emphasis was on the positive effect the institution would have on land value.

We believe the material advantages conferred on the town selected as the site of this institution will many times exceed the cost of a suitable site and buildings. Everyone knows the influence of good society in a neighborhood, in raising the value of real estate in that locality. And the addition to the best class of society, which this school will bring with it, will be such as even Bloomington, excellent as her society is, should not despise. . . . Hence a rapid advance in both the number and quality of population, and a more than proportional increase in the cash value of property.⁴³

⁴¹ For the years 1854-1856, Jesse Fell, Kersey Fell, and William H. Allin each contributed more than \$100 per year. "A Copy of a List of Notes." solicited by S. Rigler (?), MSS copy, Illinois Wesleyan University Archives, box 5/2/1.

David Davis, William Flagg, William and James Allin each gave \$500 in 1854 to acquire land upon which to build the university. (This is discussed more extensively in Chapter V.) Elmo Scott Watson, The Illinois Wesleyan Story, 1850-1950 (Bloomington: Illinois Wesleyan University Press, 1950), pp. 201-202.

⁴² WP, Jan. 23, 1856.

⁴³ DP, Apr. 16, 1857.

Bloomington was granted the school in May of 1857, evidently since its bid far out-distanced the offers of its competitors--Peoria, Washington, and Batavia. The successful bid consisted on \$70,000 in proceeds from the sale of county swamp lands and \$71,000 in money and property from individuals. Included in the bid was a 160-acre tract of land near North Bloomington (later Normal), at the time little more than a town-site at the junction of the C&A and the IC railroads. Many of the contributing individuals owned land in the vicinity of this site, and made their subscriptions contingent on the school being located on this tract.⁴⁴

As predicted, the state's decision to locate the Normal University in North Bloomington had an immediate impact on land prices. A little more than a month after the decision, Edwin W. Bakewell--one of the contributors of the 160-acre tract--sold his 320-acre farm located just north of the university site for an average of \$100 per acre. Adjacent land had brought only \$65 an acre earlier in 1857.⁴⁵ Fell, the major organizer in Bloomington's bid, had acquired large quantities of land in and around North Bloomington from 1854-1856. Anticipating the growth of a community around the Normal School, Fell laid out the first addition to North Bloomington in August of 1857.⁴⁶

⁴⁴DP, May 8,9, 1857; Burnham, p. 122. David Davis, William Flagg, Kersey Fell, and others offered alternative tracts adjoining lands they held.

The 160-acre tract consisted of parcels donated by Joseph Payne, Meshach Pike, Edwin W. Bakewell, and David Davis. DP, May 13, 1857. Davis had purchased several thousand acres in Normal township at a very early date. Burnham, p. 131.

⁴⁵DP, Jun. 16, 1857; Harold K. Sage, "The Beginnings of Normal, Illinois," (Normal, Illinois: Harold K. Sage, 1971), p. 7.

⁴⁶Sage, pp. 4-5. The town plot that eventually became Normal was originally surveyed in May, 1854. There were few residences there in 1860, the year the first university building was completed. The name of the town was changed to Normal in 1858.

Their speculative appetites not fully satisfied by the acquisition of the Normal University, an unsuccessful attempt was made in 1867 by Bloomington promoters to acquire the State Industrial College (University of Illinois). City boosters in Lincoln, Jacksonville, Champaign, and Bloomington aggressively contended to secure the school by amassing huge private subscriptions and enlisting municipal support. David Davis contributed \$25,000 and Jesse Fell, \$15,000 to the Bloomington and McLean County bid of \$470,000. Although Champaign's official pledge was the smallest among the rivals, it was designated as the location for the university. Success in this instance was owed more to tactics than to the size of the purse. Champaign was represented by C. R. Griggs, who, instead of advocating a large official bid, extravagantly lobbied the members of the state legislature with the money he had raised.⁴⁷

Not all of the sought-after state institutions could deliver direct economic rewards. Some of the government prizes were desired largely because of the air of respectability with which it was believed they would endow the community. The venture to acquire the Soldiers' and Orphans' Home in 1867 would likely fall in this category. Individuals contributed significantly in outbidding rival efforts by Rock Island, Decatur, Irvington, and Springfield, and the Home was secured for Normal. The major portion of the private subscription consisted of Davis' donation of sixty-five acres for the site (valued at \$12,000) and Fell's \$10,000 cash subscription.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Burnham, p. 133; Paul Wallace Gates, The Illinois Central Railroad and Its Colonization Work (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 135-137.

⁴⁸ Burnham, pp. 128-129. The present name of the home is the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's School.

Advertising the City

Promotional efforts were publicized in a variety of printed media. Two primary emphases appear in the issues of the Pantagraph in fulfilling its booster role. Besides providing a channel for organizing and encouraging local promotional activities, the Pantagraph repeatedly extolled the attributes of Bloomington to arouse the attention of outsiders. The community was portrayed as possessing a healthful climate, "superior free schools," an efficient and intelligent (read passive) working class, and a moral and beneficent character. In the effort to attract immigration, emphasis was frequently placed on Bloomington's relatively low taxes and its freedom from debt--that is, in the early period before the city incurred a large deficit from its railroad subscriptions.⁴⁹

Attempting to convey a sense of prosperity, exaggerated local population figures were frequently advertised. Official census enumerations were consistently ignored by the compilers of the city directories. For instance, the 1868 city directory reported Bloomington's population to be 14,980, the 1870 publication, 17,019, while the U. S. Census in the latter year placed the population figure at 14,590.⁵⁰

The city directories, in part, served as an instrument for the promotion of the city. Besides containing an exhaustive directory of the local citizenry, lists of social and benevolent organizations and churches as well as classified business directories, it presented a review of "manufactures and prominent business houses"--purportedly "not paid for in any instance"--

⁴⁹WP, Mar. 14, 1855; Jan. 16, 1856; DP, Sept. 16, 1858; Dec. 8, 1868.

⁵⁰See the chart containing population figures as reported by the city directories and local censuses in the 1870 City Directory, p. 5

which acclaimed the thriving condition of local economic activities. In its promotional function, the 1870 directory expounded the prospects for the city's future prosperity.

Possessing a situation second to none, and commanding the trade of a region richly blessed by nature, with all the resources of climate, and a soil of inexhaustible, and as yet, almost undeveloped fertility, improved by the hand of science and practical talent, abounding in an industrious and educated population, Bloomington has every advantage which her intimate connection with the great Agricultural interest of the county and State can bestow.⁵¹

The promotional activities of the early land-holders were the beginning of a continuing program in which the Pantagraph and the business community combined efforts to maintain a prosperous growth atmosphere in Bloomington in competition with rival central Illinois cities. As the original energetic boosters grew in years, formal organization was sought to provide a recognizable focus for promotional activities. Toward the end of 1870, Bloomington manufacturers and businessmen formed the Bloomington Board of Trade; the intent of the organization is evident from its stated purpose:

The citizens of Bloomington and vicinity, interested in the future welfare and business prosperity of our city and county, and believing that by organized action and association and combined effort, we can in greater degree promote that welfare and prosperity, do organize ourselves into an association to be known as "The Bloomington Board of Trade."⁵²

The following year Bloomington businessmen supported the publication of a pamphlet that was singularly promotional in nature--"to throw all light possible upon our city." The pamphlet is saturated with bombastic references

⁵¹ 1870 City Directory, p. 10. Interestingly, this promotional statement appeared in identical form in the 1866 city directory, A Gazetteer of McLean County . . . To Which is added a City Directory of Bloomington (Chicago: Bailey & Hair, 1866), p. 17. See supra, n. 3, pp. 46-47 for a similar statement in the first city directory.

⁵² DP, Dec. 30, 1870

to Bloomington's potential, but is careful to assure the reader that the information included is "furnished from official sources." The reader is cautioned in regard to the "puffing and blowing of western towns" instigated by "designing speculators to furthur their own ends."⁵³

Not all of the public improvements advocated by the core of Bloomington's promoters received the widespread popular support of the community. For example, a system of water works was repeatedly recommended throughout the fifties and sixties in an attempt to make the city attractive for manufacturing. But, not until 1875, did the city council believe it expedient to undertake the construction of such a system.⁵⁴ In Bloomington's early years, public improvements requiring municipal funding--for instance, water works or the public school system--received modest support from city councils traditionally reluctant to incur a debt. The projects of Bloomington boosters that succeeded were those in which private individuals would subscribe land and funds in order to enhance the value of property they held or those in which a significant portion of the community felt a direct economic connection and would approve municipal aid.

Certainly, local promoters played a fundamental role in acquiring the State Normal University and the Soldiers' and Orphans' Home for Bloomington and Normal. Although extremely influential in acquiring the east-west railroads and the Jacksonville branch of the C&A in the late sixties, these efforts were successful when the interests of the community were directly apparent. The largely amorphous appeals to a "community interest" in the

⁵³Lawrence, p. 18.

⁵⁴For example, see the letter in WP, Feb. 11, 1857, "We must have Water Works to reach our practicable eminence as a city." Burnham, p. 82.

effort to secure manufacturing resulted in a nominal amount of business backing, but failed to animate widespread community support. Indeed, it is doubtful whether a unanimous local effort would have been effectual in securing extensive manufacturing for the city. The late acquisition of east-west rail connections, after Bloomington had already become substantially tributary to Chicago, constrained the growth of the city. The industrialization of the nation in the last third of the nineteenth century would occur almost entirely in the larger cities.

CHAPTER V

CITY--BUILDING: 1850--1870

In this period of rapid transition from frontier town to prairie city, the spatial dimension of Bloomington developed that would impose a relatively permanent structure upon the city's physical environment. With the stimulus of the railroads, Bloomington's meager settlement expanded outward, developing quasi-distinct residential, commercial, and industrial districts. The urbanization process and the increasing specialization of economic functions in mid-nineteenth century America involved the separation of place of residence and place of work. The increasing division of labor in Bloomington was accompanied by the segregation of residential environments embracing segments of the acquired heterogeneous population.

Just as the rapid growth of the city dates from the inauguration of railroads, the location of the first railroads would delineate the city's spatial development. Predictably, the land-holders involved in the promotion of the city would attempt to influence the direction of settlement in order to create specific demand for their town-lots. When the engineers of the Illinois Central were plotting the exact route of the railroad, a group of Bloomington residents--including Fell, Gridley, Davis, and John McClun--offered to donate the right-of-way provided a certain location was adopted. The eventual route of the IC in passing Bloomington to the east very closely approximated the original line preferred by the Bloomington influentials.¹

¹WW, Mar. 5, 1851; John H. Burnham, History of Bloomington and Normal in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: J. H. Burnham, 1879), pp. 61-62.

A number of Bloomington citizens sought to locate the depot of the Chicago and Alton Railroad near the Illinois Central station, but Jesse Fell used his influence with the former company to have the railroads intersect near his large land-holding at what is now Normal. Fell, William Allin, and others donated some of their land on the western edge of Bloomington for the depot and repair shops of the C&A.²

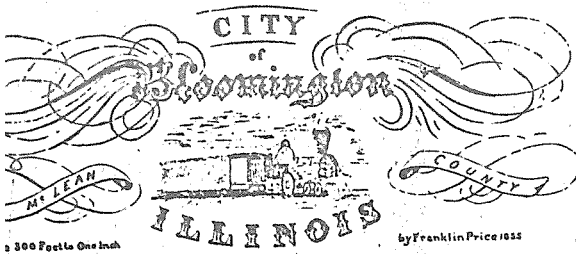
The two railroad depots, each approximately three-fourths of a mile from the courthouse square in Bloomington, were nearly out of town when they were constructed in 1853. An 1854 map of Bloomington (Map 2 on the following page) indicates, however, that they were within the city limits established in 1850, and that city additions had been made in their vicinities. Prior to the railroads, the residences of the approximately two thousand Bloomington citizens were generally concentrated in the central portion of town south of Jefferson Street. Actual settlement occupied but a fraction of the area enveloped by the city limits. Many of the numerous city additions before the coming of the railroads that gave the city the map-appearance of extensive development were apparently made during the frenzy of town-site/town-lot speculation in the mid-thirties.³ The two large additions to the northwest

²Frances Morehouse, The Life of Jesse W. Fell (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1916), pp. 86-87; Burnham, p. 63.

³The list in the lower left-hand corner of Map 2, and the corresponding numbers refer to additions made to the city before 1855 (number 1 is the original town.) It is possible that these are in chronological order. According to Charles L. Capen, nine additions (i.e., up through Evans' 1st addition) had been made by 1847. "Semi-Centennial Celebration of Bloomington Lodge No. 43, A.F. & A.M.," in War Record of McLean County and Other Papers, Vol. I of McLean County Historical Society Transactions (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Co., 1899), p. 411.

Additions made from 1848 to the entrance of the railroads in 1853 were to the south and southeast. It is suspected that the last few additions appearing on the 1854 map were made in the boom period after the locations of the railroads were fixed and/or service introduced.

MAP 2: BLOOMINGTON IN 1854



300 Feet One Inch

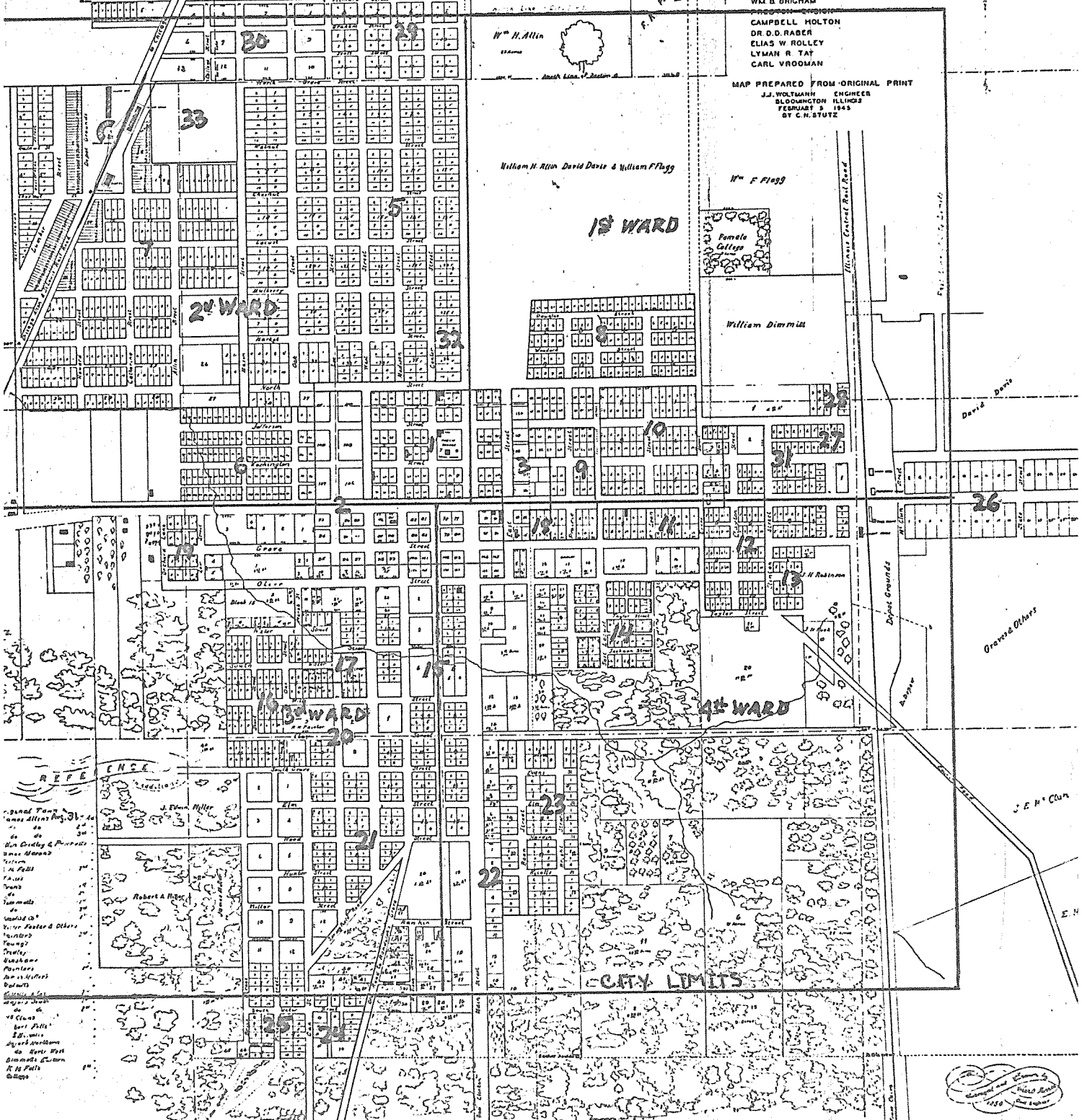
by Franklin Price 1855

MCLEAN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

- WAYNE C. TOWNLEY PRESIDENT
- J. L. HASBROUCK VICE-PRESIDENT
- MRS. KATE ORENDOFF 2D VICE-PRESIDENT
- W. W. WALLIS 3D VICE-PRESIDENT
- FRED SALKELD SECRETARY
- LIOUS L. WILLIAMS TREASURER
- DR. C. E. ATHERTON CHAPLAIN
- MRS. MARGARET M. HOFFMAN LIBRARIAN
- MRS. INEZ DUNN CUSTODIAN
- WM. B. BRIGHAM

- CAMPBELL HOLTON
- DR. D. D. HABER
- ELIAS W. ROLLEY
- LYMAN R. TAY
- CARL VROOMAN

MAP PREPARED FROM ORIGINAL PRINT
 J. J. WOLTMANN ENGINEER
 BLOOMINGTON ILLINOIS
 FEBRUARY 3 1945
 BY C. N. STUTZ



of the original town were sparsely settled before 1853. Burnham writes that at the time of the construction of the C&A depot and repair shops, "they were so far out of town that people going there from where the Ashley House now stands (corner of Jefferson and Center) made a straight cut across the prairie most of the distance."⁴

A description by an editor of the Illinois State Journal shortly after Bloomington was initiated into the railroad era, succinctly captures that stage of the city's development:

The appearance of the place (Bloomington) from the Central railroad depot is citified and beautiful. From the Chicago & Mississippi (C&A) road, it looks like an ambitious, upstart village. . . . Within town, one is first struck with the great number and scattered appearance of the shops and dwellings. The buildings are generally one or two stories and mostly wooden. Some of the stores and cottages are handsome, but too many belong to the genus of "old shanties." . . . The business part of the town takes in three or four squares . . . The Central railroad side of town is filling up fast, and is singularly beautiful for residences. Towards the Chicago and Mississippi depot the orchards are striped (sic), lots measured and stakes set for hosts of new buildings . . . This part of town they say is to come up.⁵

Although residential development initially occurred to the east, the repair shops of the C&A attracted many laborers and mechanics to the northwest section of Bloomington. While low-priced homes rapidly filled the second ward/northwest area in the vicinity of the railroad shops, higher-priced residences dominated the gradual development to the east. The extremely rapid growth of Bloomington in the period, 1853-1857, stimulated the demand for town-lots, increasing land values and rewarding handsomely

⁴Burnham, p. 39.

⁵ISJ, May 4, 1854.

the early settlers-promoters who held the land.⁶

Similar to the participation of the North Bloomington land-holders in the effort to obtain the State Normal University, large land-owners in Bloomington attempted to direct the expansion of residential development through donations of land for public purposes. The efforts of David Davis, William F. Flagg and William Allin to arouse interest in the large tract of land they owned in the northeast section of Bloomington are especially noteworthy.

Although Illinois Wesleyan was given a tract of land for the college site in the northwest part of Bloomington in 1852, the lot was considered too near the tracks and shops of the C&A to appropriately accommodate the college building when construction was being considered in 1854.⁷ Among the competitors for the new site, James Miller offered a tract of land in the southwest part of town (in what is now Miller Park) and Linus Graves offered land east of the IC railroad. The site eventually chosen was located in the northeastern section of Bloomington. At the time, it was owned by Franklin Phoenix as part of his nursery acreage. Davis, Flagg and the Allins (both William and James) agreed to each contribute five hundred dollars to purchase the property from Phoenix in order to have the college community

⁶WP, May 10, 1854; May 23, 1855; Dec. 12, 31, 1855; Apr. 23, 1857. Inspection of the Entry Book for this period (#3, Nov. 3, 1851--Jul. 31, 1858) reveals the extensive land transactions of Gridley, Fell, Davis, and William Allin (son of James Allin.) For example, these men each owned large quantities of lots in the Western Addition (#7 on Map 2), see the period Nov. 5-18, 1853 in the Entry Book. McLean County Recorder's Office.

In late October of 1853, William Allin auctioned 108 lots in the Western Addition for an average of \$160 per lot. BI, Nov. 9, 1853.

⁷James Allin deeded a ten-acre site to Illinois Wesleyan University on Jan. 27, 1852. Entry Book #3. This plot was later entered as the College Addition (#33 on Map 2.)

develop near their land.⁸

In 1856, Flagg, Davis and William Allin laid out the tract of land they owned in the northeast section as the Durley Addition. In the same year they donated to the city a block of land in the northern portion of this addition for use as a public park--Franklin Park. At the time, there were no residences in the vicinity. Although a few houses began to appear in the Durley Addition in 1857, residential growth in general subsided with the economic recession of the late fifties. When development was renewed in the sixties, the northeast portion of Bloomington filled rapidly.⁹

The commercial center of Bloomington expanded rapidly in the mid-fifties with the courthouse square eventually superceding the Front Street area a block each way from Main Street as the focus of business. Two extensive fires in 1855 and 1856 levelled all of the wooden buildings in the block immediately south of the courthouse and resulted in a city ordinance requiring all buildings in the vicinity of the public square to be constructed of brick. Residential structures, which in 1852 faced the courthouse on the public square, were removed to other parts of the city and replaced with blocks of two- and three-story brick buildings. Numerous hotels, grocery stores, saloons, and other shops were constructed in the center portion of

⁸ J. H. Burnham, "Street Names in Bloomington," War Record of McLean County and Other Papers, Vol. I of McLean County Historical Society Transactions (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Co., 1899), pp. 454-455; Elmo Scott Watson, The Illinois Wesleyan Story, 1850-1950 (Bloomington: Illinois Wesleyan University Press, 1950), n. 12, p. 201; WP, Jun. 28, 1854.

⁹ Burnham, History of Bloomington . . . , p. 60; DP, Jun. 12, 1857; Dec. 9, 1858; Jan. 5, 1869.

William F. Flagg bought 170 acres northeast of Bloomington in 1840 for \$4000 (considered an exorbitant price at the time.) He was very successful in making additions to the city, receiving as much as \$2000 for a single acre laid out in town-lots. Etzard Duis, The Good Old Times in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: Leader Publishing & Printing House, 1874), p. 337.

town in the mid-fifties to serve the growing needs of the city. A smaller business section developed in the vicinity of the C&A shops, including a hotel operated by the railroad company and stores to serve the large population employed in that area.¹⁰

Although Bloomington's population increased from 1600 in 1850 to 7,075 ten years later, the greatest increase in one decade in Bloomington's history occurred in the sixties, when the population more than doubled, reaching 14,590 by 1870. War prosperity revived McLean County farmers and Bloomington from the recession of the late fifties and sustained the city's growth in the early sixties. By the close of the war in 1865, Bloomington was experiencing a building boom that would not subside until the early seventies.¹¹

Residential expansion in the sixties accentuated the patterns established in the mid-fifties. The largest growth occurred in the second ward/northwest section. The development around the C&A shops had extended substantially to the north and west of the shops. In 1862, a fifth ward was created by the division of the second ward at Chestnut Street. Significant expansion also characterized the development of the northeast quadrant in this decade. The large addition made by Flagg, Davis and Allin in 1856 and the area around Illinois Wesleyan were rapidly filled in the sixties. The intensity of northern development in the sixties is reflected by the

¹⁰J. R. Freese, Bloomington City Directory, for the Years 1855-6 (Bloomington: J. Wesley Wolfe, 1855), pp. 4-5, 11-12; WP, Dec. 12, 1855; DP, Apr. 23, 1857; Mar. 27, 1869.

¹¹The Pantagraph reported that 600 homes were built in 1865, 500 in 1866, 440 in the twelve month period following Mar. 1, 1868, but only 100 in 1871. DP, Nov. 23, 1866; Jan. 16, 1867; Mar. 5, 1869; Louise A. Lange, "The Social and Economic History of Bloomington, Illinois," (unpublished master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1939), p. 34.

construction statistics for the year following March 1, 1868. In that period, the largest number of houses constructed was in the fifth ward (126), second most in the first ward (117), followed closely by the second ward (112). Building activity in the southern wards, three and four, was meager in comparison; half the number of houses erected in the fifth ward was built in the third (59), and less than half this number raised in the fourth ward (26). By 1870, a sixth ward would be created out of the first and fifth wards, encompassing the area north of Chestnut and east of Lee Street.¹²

The efforts of land-holders to influence development to the north were extended further in 1867 with the organization of the Bloomington and Normal Horse Railway Company.¹³ Among the original incorporators, Jesse Fell and David Davis each subscribed five thousand dollars of capital stock in the company. In operation by September of 1867 with two miles of track, the horse-drawn street car system was essentially oriented toward connecting the settlement that had developed in Fell's Normal around the Normal University with the business center of Bloomington. For nearly fifteen years the only line in operation extended from Grove Street in Bloomington along Main, and Park and Franklin east of Main to Normal.¹⁴ Following the inauguration of

¹²DP, Mar. 5, 1869.

¹³The Pantagraph earnestly promoted the street railway: "If we have a railroad from depot to depot, and another to the town of Normal, the value of our property will be benefitted at least a million dollars. Our city will rise at once in dignity, and it will doubtless continue its wonderful growth for an indefinite time longer." The anti-monopolist sentiment of the period is evident in the city council's extreme reluctance to grant the company an exclusive franchise. DP, Jan. 16, 18, 1867.

¹⁴For a partial history of the street car line, see DP, Dec. 13, 1936, and Jacob L. Hasbrouck, History of McLean County, Illinois (2 vols; Topeka--Indianapolis: Historical Publishing Co., 1924), I, pp. 224-225. See the

street car service, town-lots in Normal were advertised as being situated on the Bloomington-Normal line and advantageous for the residences of businessmen. The street car made it possible for people who worked in Bloomington to live in Normal, and contributed to the expansion of the settlement of elite families in the northern suburb.¹⁵

The segregation of economic classes by residential district was clearly developed by the late sixties in the division between the east and west sections of the city. For instance, in 1869 a sale oriented toward the "Working Man," over a hundred lots were sold in the northwest section of town, averaging between fifty and sixty dollars per lot. At about the same time, a sale of lots in the fourth ward/southwest quadrant ("one of the most pleasant portions of the city for either Business or Professional Men") averaged \$317 per lot. A few weeks later, fifty lots located southeast of the Normal business center brought an average of \$308.¹⁶

A very elite residential district along East Grove and East Washington Streets had extended well beyond the Illinois Central tracks by 1870. The Pantagraph reported in 1869 that in this vicinity "several parties are improving five acre lots" and that the Bloomington Driving Park (east of the IC tracks) would soon be "laid out in from one to ten acre lots and disposed of for residences." In 1871 David Davis would complete a \$50,000

1895 map of Bloomington (Map II in the appendix) for the location of the street car system. In 1881, the first branch line was opened, extending west from Main on Chestnut to the C&A railroad, and two years later, a line was extended on Front Street east to the IC depot.

¹⁵ DP, Dec. 9, 1868; Apr. 20, 1869; Burnham, p. 136. A January, 1869 real estate advertisement offered houses in Normal ranging in price from \$4000 to \$25,000. DP, Jan. 23, 1869.

¹⁶ DP, Jan. 27, 28, Feb. 16, 18, Apr. 15, 21, 1869.

mansion in this area.¹⁷

The central business district expanded greatly in the sixties, frequently displacing houses to the outskirts of the city. By 1870, the downtown encompassed roughly twenty city blocks, extending north and south from Olive to Mulberry and from Madison to East Streets in an east-west direction. The commercial district in the vicinity of the C&A shops had developed with the expansion of activity in that area. By the late sixties, the northwest district resembled a separate community unto itself; indeed, its character was distinctive. A Pantagraph editor observed:

. . . as our city is getting so large, the main body being at the Court House, it has pushed one of its limbs so far through its unmentionables, near the Western Depot as to make quite a respectable sized town of about 4000 inhabitants round there, who have their dry goods stores, clothing stores, meat markets and groceries . . .¹⁸

The topography of the gently rolling prairies imposed few constraints on physical development^{except} in the two slough areas.¹⁹ For many years, these poorly drained areas often resembled swampy swaths meandering through the city. The land along these sloughs was by-passed for development until vast ditches were cut to drain these depressed areas. Generally undesirable for residences, the south slough region in the vicinity of the 400-block of South Main was the location of various manufacturing establishments--saw,

¹⁷DP, May 26, 1869; Burnham, p. 40. In 1859, Gridley built a \$40,000 house in the 200-block of East Grove. By comparison, in 1858, the majority of all houses constructed in Bloomington averaged between \$300-\$400, while a few ranged as high as \$4000. DP, Jan. 29, 1859.

¹⁸DP, Jan. 23, 1869.

¹⁹The North slough was between Market and Mulberry Streets and not quite as extensive or hazardous as the South slough. The latter followed from the southeast to the northwest, winding through the southern portion of the city, two blocks south of Olive Street at Main (see Map 2.)

flour, and planing mills, a foundry and machine shops, and other small factories. When the Indianapolis, Bloomington and Western Railroad was constructed in 1870, it passed along the southern slough region since there was little development in that sector.²⁰ Except for a few factories in the downtown vicinity--the major ones were Wakefield's and the Bloomington Manufacturing Company--the other industrial enterprises were scattered along the trackage of the IC and the C&A railroads. Grain dealers and lumber dealers were also predominantly located along the railroads. Common to the east of the IC railroad were nurseries and vineyards. The coal shaft was located at the intersection of the C&A and the IB&W roads (the north shaft was abandoned) with the majority of the miners residing in the Stevensonville area south and west of the junction of these two roads--an area not annexed until 1885.²¹

Two decades of extensive development since 1850 had left in Bloomington considerable evidence of a small, maturing city. Many miles of sidewalks had been laid since 1852, when only two hundred yards of sidewalks existed, all in the vicinity of the public square. Street maintenance and improvement was usually a major preoccupation of the city government; streets had been paved in the business portion of the city and leading to the depots on opposite sides of town. Since the opening of Gridley's gas works in 1855, 350 gas lamp posts lighted sixteen miles of city streets.²²

²⁰ See the 1895 map of Bloomington for the routes of the two east-west railroads through Bloomington.

²¹ The location of businesses, factories, etc. derived from Holland's Bloomington City Directory, For 1870-71 . . . (Chicago: Western Publishing Co., 1870), passim.

²² R. S. Lawrence, The Evergreen City; Past, Present, and Future of Bloomington, McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: R.S. Lawrence, 1871), p. 18; DP, Mar. 27, 1869.

The city limits were extended in 1867 to the west, north and east, the south boundary remaining at the 1850 limit, Lincoln Street. Although the city's population had increased markedly, residential settlement spread throughout the two-mile-square city with fairly dense development evident only in the downtown business center. The population was scattered over too large an area, the Pantagraph claimed in 1869, for a system of water works to be practical.²³ There were few geographical limitations to expansion and land-holders were usually eager to make additions to the city, laid out in town-lots. Subdivision generally preceded settlement; thus, it was a simple matter to preserve the grid street pattern and the monotonous uniformity in lot-sizes.

The availability of room for expansion permitted development to occur without transitional-neighborhood-succession so typical in the larger cities of the Eastern United States in the mid-nineteenth century. The only area in Bloomington that experienced drastic change was the early residential cluster in the center of town that was replaced with commercial uses when the business interests of the city expanded. For the most part, economic-homogeneous residential districts developed in their respective directions as the city grew. The location of the C&A shops in 1854 on the northwest periphery of town enabled the extensive development of laboring class homes within walking distance of the shops. Higher-priced homes predominated on the east side of town with the elite eventually seeking suburban locations to the east of the IC depot and in Normal along the horse railway line.

The patterns of physical development established in this period of

²³DP, Jun. 30, 1869.

intense city-building prevailed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries until the advent of the automobile revolutionized city-scapes all across the country. The spatial extent of development expanded relatively little in the period after 1870 when population growth occurred in smaller increments.²⁴ The environmental setting formed before 1870 not only circumscribed location decisions in ensuing periods but also had significant implications for the social and political organization of the community during and after the city-building period.

²⁴The current "City Evolution Map" (1973) indicates few annexations to Bloomington until the 1950's. The copy of this map included in the appendix (Map III) has been cropped; the extensive growth to the east beyond the eastern edge of this map has occurred largely since the early 1950's.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRANSFORMATION OF COMMUNITY

Bloomington's rapid economic development and the city-building process that accommodated the influx of population yielded a complex social fabric with profound consequences for community social order. In the search for private economic gain, entrepreneurs created a city occupied by people of diverse cultural backgrounds engaged in an expanded range of occupational pursuits. The quantitative and qualitative changes in Bloomington's social structure produced a conglomeration of divergent interests.

Etzard Duis, author of the first local history (1874), reflected on the changed nature of community interaction:

The truth is, there are too many of them to be all neighbors. When only a few are gathered together in a village, the affection and good feelings of the people can go out after each other; but when a person is obliged to extend his affections over twenty or twenty-five thousand people, his kind feelings become thin and elastic everywhere. The change in feeling is due to the change in circumstances. People have their friends now as they had in the early days, but their friends do not at present consist of all Bloomington.¹

The "change in circumstances" alluded to above, while obviously referring to the nearly ten-fold increase in population in the two decades since mid-century, acquires new meaning when applied to the ethnic diversity of the acquired population in accounting for strained community relations. The frontier Bloomington of 1850 consisted almost entirely (96%) of native-born Americans, a homogeneous body with well over half the population derived from the

¹Etzard Duis, The Good Old Times in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: Leader Publishing & Printing House, 1874), p. 49. Note: the population figure is slightly inflated.

states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois alone.² One of the most remarkable of the changes Bloomington experienced in the course of urbanization in the fifties and sixties was the great influx of foreign immigrants, mostly Irish and German.

The number of foreign-born in Bloomington increased dramatically from only 61 in 1850 to over 1800 by the 1860 census--in percentage terms, an increase from less than four percent to more than twenty-five percent. Irish and Germans predominated among Bloomington's foreign born, the Irish comprising nearly 57% and the Germans over 27%. Together with English, these three groups accounted for 93% of the foreign immigrants in Bloomington in 1860, with the remainder consisting primarily of Canadians, Scots, and French.³ Keeping pace with Bloomington's rapid growth in the sixties, the number of foreign-born increased to almost 3900 by 1870.⁴ That year, however, represented the zenith among census years for Bloomington's foreign-born. From 26.7% of the city's population in 1870, the proportion of

²Calculated from: U.S. Census Manuscripts, Seventh Census, 1850. Schedule 1 (Population), McLean County, Illinois. Approximately 34% of the 1850 Bloomington residents were born in Illinois.

³Joseph William Struhs, "Location and Influence of Illinois Foreign-Born, 1840-1860," (unpublished master's thesis, Illinois State University, 1972), pp. 74-75; Ninth Census, I, pp. 116, 308.

Prior to 1870, the published U.S. Census reports only listed the total number of foreign-born persons within each county. Struhs counted each foreign-born person individually within each of the leading twenty-five counties in terms of their total foreign-born population in 1850 and 1860 from the manuscript schedules. McLean County was not included in Struhs' 1850 list.

⁴Ninth Census, I, p. 116. The published census reports list only the total foreign-born for Bloomington throughout the nineteenth century. However, in the sample populations (taken from the manuscript census) referred to below, nativity was among the characteristics tabulated. Although the samples include only adult males, the distribution among the foreign-born is remarkably similar in both 1860 and 1870. Thus, it may be tentatively inferred that the proportions of Irish, German, English, etc., among the foreign-born population of Bloomington remained relatively constant in the sixties.

foreign-birth declined steadily throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, reaching 15.5% at the turn of the century.⁵

In the sixties, roughly one out of seven of the McLean County residents were foreign-born, with approximately half living in Bloomington.⁶ While there were significant numbers among them who farmed--particularly German--much of the county foreign population resided in Bloomington and Normal townships outside of the city limits and possibly could have been employed in the city.⁷ Reflecting the relative decline in the portion of the city population foreign-born, the percentage of foreign-born in the county diminished after peaking in 1870, so that by 1900, only ten percent of the total county population was of foreign-birth.

Construction work on the Illinois Central and the Chicago and Alton railroads attracted many Irish to central Illinois in the fifties. Although some purchased land along the railroads, the majority of the Irish that settled in McLean County located in Bloomington, many finding employment at the shops of the C&A railroad or as operatives in Bloomington industrial concerns. From their initial appearance in large numbers in the mid-fifties, the Germans were generally more prosperous than the Irish. A greater percentage became farmers--of the 1200 Germans in McLean County in 1860, only two-fifths resided in Bloomington.⁸ While some worked at the C&A shops (and later, in the Bloomington coal mines), many Germans established themselves

⁵Ibid.; Tenth Census, p. 448; Eleventh Census, I, p. 454; Twelfth Census, I, Pt. 1, p. 613.

⁶Struhs, pp. 74-75.

⁷The History of McLean County, Illinois (Chicago: William LeBaron, Jr. and Co., 1879), p. 1064.

⁸Struhs, p. 97.

in Bloomington as skilled craftsmen and merchants. By 1870, there were several German businesses in Bloomington; the majority of the bakers, butchers, clothiers, and saloon-keepers appearing in the city directory for that year bore distinctly German names. Despite the large number of Irish settling in Bloomington in the mid-fifties, it was not until 1859 that an Irishman began a business.⁹

Throughout this period (1850-1870) the Irish and the Germans sought to preserve a certain degree of cultural identity emodied in social, educational, and religious organizations. Numerous voluntary associations were formed by the Germans for various social, self-improvement, and benevolent purposes. With a strong desire to maintain their native language, all of the meetings of their associations were transacted in German. By the late sixties, the German community supported three German-language weeklies.

For many years the Irish Catholic church--St. Mary's (established in 1853--was the only non-Protestant religious denomination in Bloomington. A Catholic school opened in 1858 at the corner of Locust and Main, where construction was begun a decade later on an expansive cathedral. Separate Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, and Catholic churches were established by the Germans in Bloomington. Besides the German Free School, organized in 1863, to teach the German language, parochial schools were operated within many of the German churches.¹⁰

Bloomington's partially diversified economic development expanded the occupational universe and resulted in an enlarged continuum of income levels. The major distinction separating social as well as economic classes

⁹Rt. Rev. Msgr. S. N. Moore, History of Holy Trinity Parish, Bloomington, Illinois (Rt. Rev. Msgr. S. N. Moore, 1952), p. 49; Rev. J. J. Burke, "The Irish in McLean County," manuscript, McLean County Historical Society, p. 4; Holland's Bloomington City Directory, For 1870-71 . . . (Chicago: Western Publishing Co., 1870), passim.

¹⁰1870 City Directory, pp. 13-27; Moore, pp. 76, 84-88.

was between those individuals who owned and managed the means of production and those whose labor was contracted for.¹¹ The lot of the large number of Bloomington mechanics and laborers associated with the C&A shops, the factories and mills, and the construction trades was subject to seasonal fluctuations in economic activity and periodic national recessions. Unemployment during the winter months involved severe strain upon the workingman's financial ability to be self-sufficient.¹²

As discussed in the previous chapter, residential sections of the city developed along class lines. Examination of the 1860 census manuscripts reveals that many Irish residents were concentrated in the second ward. Germans and Irish frequently appeared as residents of the many boarding houses in the west-side business district. Indicative of its working-class character, the second ward had a lesser degree of property ownership than any other ward in the city. In a ten percent sample from the 1860 manuscript census, less than 46% of the adult males owned real estate. The ownership of real property was extremely concentrated; five of the twenty-six property-owning individuals in the second ward sample accounted for more than ninety percent of the wealth in real property.¹³ The wealthy second ward residents appear to have been grouped close to the downtown business district and along Main Street.

A very pronounced distinction existed between the well-to-do area

¹¹Peter Goheen, "Industrialization and the Growth of Cities in Nineteenth-Century America," American Studies, XIV (Spring, 1973), 58.

¹²The workers of the C&A Railroad struck for eight months back-pay for a two-week period in January of 1859. A relief committee was formed during this time to assist the families of the workers. See DP, Jan. 10-31, 1859.

¹³Real property ownership was most widespread in the first ward with 68% owning property. Similar samples were taken from the 1850 and 1870 manuscript censuses; however, only in the 1860 census is ward residence consistently discernible.

on the east side of Bloomington (around the downtown business center and to the east) and the laboring class district around the C&A shops in northwest Bloomington. A Pantagraph editor recognized this sense of social distance in introducing an article describing his tour of the C&A shops.

One half the world scarcely knows how the other half live. This has often been remarked, and now may be said of our city, as we who live near and around the courthouse eat our beef-steak, roast chicken and fixings day after day, know very little about those who live on their "mush and milk," bread and molasses, occasionally meat and potatoes, eating with a gusto always to be had gratis with a well-earned mean.¹⁴

The small black population--only 235 in 1870, less than two percent of the total population--was greatly segregated, residentially and socially, from other groups in Bloomington. From addresses in the 1868 city directory, it appears that blacks, largely laborers and barbers, were concentrated in two areas southwest of the public square bordering the south slough. A minor concentration was evident in the 800-block of North Madison and Center Streets. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was located in this northern district, while the Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church and the segregated black school were established in the southwestern district.¹⁵

Besides the ethnic and class heterogeneity of the population, a third characteristic that undermined the possibility for community social order was the remarkable transience of Bloomington's population. The rapid growth of the fifties occurred in a social environment that was extremely fluid. Of all the males aged 18 to 25 in 1850, three-fourths left Bloomington in

¹⁴DP, Jan. 23, 1869.

¹⁵Location and occupations of blacks based on a compilation of blacks listed in the 1868 city directory, contained in "The Background of the Negro in McLean County," Economic History Project, W.P.A. # 40186, McLean County Historical Society, pp. 12-13.

the first five years of the fifties. The newness of the population is apparent in an 1860 sample of males aged 30 years and over among whom less than five percent had been in Bloomington as long as ten years. Perhaps indicative of a tendency toward stability as the community settled, a relative degree of permanency (compared to the fifties) characterized the following decade. Of the 1860 sample between the ages of 20 and 45, 53% could be found in the 1866 city directory and 46% in the directory for 1870. Laborers and semi-skilled workers overwhelmingly constituted the transient population.¹⁶

The heterogeneous and fluid quality of Bloomington's population provided a tenuous foundation for building community order. A growing middle class composed of professionals and businessmen assumed positions of leadership in local government and social organizations in seeking to establish internal order among the diverse fragments of community. While the early (pre-1853) Bloomington settlers monopolized the mayor's office¹⁷,

¹⁶The age groups of the sample were varied to approximate the active work years (roughly 18-55) for the years in which the sample members were traced. The sample originating in the 1850 Census included all males aged, 18-25, a total of 109. The sample (N=107) from the 1860 Census traced backward to 1850 were 30 and over in 1860. The sample (N=117) traced forward to 1870 were between the ages of 20 and 45. Both of these were taken from a ten per cent sample of male heads-of-household and occupants of boarding houses from the 1860 manuscript schedules. The sample members were traced in the city directories, except for 1850, for which an indexed transcript was utilized: Verda Gerwick (compiler), 1850 Federal Census, McLean County, State of Illinois (Danville, Illinois: Heritage House, 1971.)

The persistence rates for Bloomington for the sixties roughly correspond to those of Eastern cities surveyed by Thernstrom and Knights, while those for the fifties seem rather extraordinary. Stephan Thernstrom and Peter R. Knights, "Men in Motion: Some Data and Speculations about Urban Population Mobility in Nineteenth Century America," in Anonymous Americans: Explorations in Nineteenth-Century Social History, ed. by Tamara K. Hareven (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 17-47.

¹⁷Of the 13 mayors in the period 1850-1870, all had been established in Bloomington prior to 1851 except one, who arrived in 1854. School Record of McLean County and Other Papers, Vol. II of McLean County Historical Society Transactions (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Co., 1903), pp. 569-580.

city aldermanic positions were dominated by the post-1853 class of professional and business men.¹⁸

A multitude of voluntary associations were formed for benevolent and temperance purposes; their primary function, however, was social. In the pluralistic society that had developed in Bloomington in these two decades of rapid growth, these voluntary associations provided a means of "sorting people out and assigning them a place in the local structure of status and leadership."¹⁹ Merchants, business and professional men largely comprised the association leadership positions in 1870.²⁰

This very sketchy analysis of Bloomington's social composition has primarily consisted of a description of demographic characteristics that would seem to suggest a fragmented and contentious state of community disorder. Nothing, however, has been said concerning the actual resolution of social conflict, the process of local decision-making, or even issues of disharmony, assuming these existed. The paucity of substantive information on the "live" matters of social existence in Bloomington in the period, 1850-1870, results, to a large degree, from the historical sources utilized. The Pantagraph and its predecessors and the amateurish local histories consistently portray the community as harmonious and orderly. Indeed, this

¹⁸In the first five years of city government, 1850-1854, artisans held a majority of the aldermanic offices. In the decade of the sixties, roughly four-fifths of the aldermen were professional or businessmen. The list of aldermen for this period is from: McLean County Historical Society Transactions, Vol. II, pp. 565-566. Occupations of aldermen were determined from the 1850 manuscript census (Gerwick transcript) and the city directories for the years 1855-6, 1866, and 1870.

¹⁹Don H. Doyle, "The Social Order of a Frontier Town: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870." Paper presented to the Organization of American Historians Convention, Apr. 1974, p. 6.

²⁰Association leaders listed in the 1870 City Directory, pp. 21-27; occupations from the same directory, passim.

genus of reportage is characteristic of the Pantagraph's function as a booster organ, representing the business community and its interests. Elaboration on the meaning of community in mid-nineteenth century Bloomington must await the revelations of heretofore unearthed sources, or the artistry of a perservering historical craftsman.

However, the issue of temperance affords a degree of opportunity to explore the implications for community consensus of the qualitative change in the ethnic and class composition of the acquired population. Temperance forces were active throughout this period in their effort to regulate the moral behavior of fellow citizens. Agitation in this direction by many of the established residents of the city intensified with the large influx of Germans and Irish. Temperance-related issues became the subject of many city elections in the fifties, usually prefaced by heated exchanges among the contending forces. In the mid-fifties, temperance candidates were consistent mayoral victors. Although a local prohibition ordinance was passed in 1855, enforcement was found to be nearly impossible and the ordinance was eventually repealed. When the city resumed its licensing control of saloons, temperance forces continually mounted efforts to increase the fee required.²¹

Prohibition politics surfaced repeatedly in the late sixties. The large concentrations of Irish and Germans in the second and fifth wards in northwest Bloomington figured prominently in the city referenda on the issue of prohibition or license. In an 1867 vote, wards one, three and four favored prohibition while the overwhelming support of license in the

²¹ WP, Apr. 26, 1854; DP, Mar. 20, Apr. 22, 1857; McLean County Historical Society Transactions, II, p. 416.

second and fifth wards was sufficient to defeat prohibition.²²

The city election of 1869 was a hotly contested battle between the prohibition and license forces. The prohibition issue so preoccupied the candidates that the business community felt their interests endangered.

A letter from a businessman expressed this fear:

. . . there is danger that our city and welfare will be committed to wholly incompetent hands, and that unless the people, without regard to party issues, prohibition or license, shall combine for the public weal in the nomination and election of first class business men, all our interests of a material character must suffer disaster. We have streets to improve, sewers to build, railroads to regulate, police to provide, walks to build, and all the manifold duties of our rapidly growing city to be attended to.²³

The election that April was split rigidly along both prohibition and ward lines. The first, third and fourth wards elected prohibition candidates and the second and fifth, their license candidates. As in the 1867 election, the large numbers in the second and fifth wards prevailed and elected the license candidate, John Stilwell (second ward resident), as mayor.²⁴ With the hold-over councilmen duplicating the positions of the newly-elected aldermen--two aldermen represented each ward, elected in alternate years--the resultant council consisted of six aldermen favoring prohibition (representative wards 1,3,4), and four in favor of license (representing wards 2 and 5).²⁵

²²DP, Apr. 18, 1867. Earlier that year, the state legislature approved a bill incorporating Normal. At the insistence of Jesse Fell, the charter contained a perpetual "no-saloon" clause. In disposing of town-lots in Normal, Fell always stipulated in the deeds that no alcohol could be sold on the premises. Frances Morehouse, The Life of Jesse W. Fell (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1916), pp. 73-74.

Prior to incorporation, Fell circulated a petition urging the passage of a village ordinance prohibiting the sale of liquor. The petition bore 938 signatures, purportedly all of the Normal residents "old enough to comprehend the import of the petition." DP, Dec. 17, 1866.

²³DP, Apr. 12, 1869.

²⁴DP, Apr. 20, 24, 1869.

²⁵Although the prohibition faction controlled the new council,

With the issue of temperance at least, the transformation of the population of the community--the substantial increase in Germans and Irish, and the expanded working class--seems to have some very disruptive implications for community consensus. Although no ward was unanimous in favor of, or in opposition to prohibition, that the wards voted consistently (and by significant margins), suggests that a degree of residential segregation played a crucial role in defining the social order (or disorder) of the community. And when the objection of businessmen to the preoccupation with the temperance issue is injected into the field of diverging interests, it certainly seems that the basis for community consensus was extremely fragile.

abstinence was not compelled upon the community. The local sources are characteristically vague on the ensuing political maneuverings, but it seems that the council only doubled the license fee to \$50 per month for the sale of liquor.

APPENDIX

TABLE I

RANKING CITIES IN ILLINOIS, 1850-1900

RANK	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	
1	Chicago	29963 Chicago	109260 Chicago	298977 Chicago	503185 Chicago	1099850 Chicago	1698575 Chicago
2	Quincy	6902 Peoria	14045 Quincy	24052 Peoria	29259 Peoria	41024 Peoria	56100 Peoria
3	Galena	6004 Quincy	13718 Peoria	22849 Quincy	27268 Quincy	31494 Quincy	36252 Quincy
4	Peoria	5095 Sprgfld	9320 Sprgfld	17364 Sprgfld	19743 Sprgfld	24963 Sprgfld	34159 Sprgfld
5	Sprgfld	4533 Galena	8196 Bloom'ton	14590 Bloom'ton	17180 Rockford	23584 Rockford	31051 Rockford
6	Alton	3585 Belleville	7520 Aurora	11162 Rockford	13129 Joliet	23264 Joliet	29655 East StL.
7	Ottawa	3219 Joliet	7104 Rockford	11049 Aurora	11873 Bloom'ton	20484 Joliet	29353 Joliet
8	Waukegan	2949 Bloom'ton	7075 Galesburg	10158 Rock Is.	11659 Aurora	19688 Aurora	24147 Aurora
9	Belleville	2941 Rockford	6979 Jacksnvl	9203 Joliet	11657 Elgin	17823 Elgin	Bloom'ton 23286
10	Jacksnvl	2745 Ottawa	6541 Alton	8665 Galesburg	11437 Decatur	16841 Decatur	Elgin 22433

120 Bloom'ton 1594

Sources: U. S. Bureau of the Census: The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850, pp. 703-717. Population of the United States in 1860, pp. 88-107. Vol. I. The Statistics of the Population of the U.S. (1870), pp. 108-121. Report on Population of the U.S. at the Eleventh Census, pp. 101-117. Census Reports, Vol. I. Twelfth Census of the U. S., Pt. I, pp. 114-133. Pt. II, pp. 642-643.

TABLE II
POPULATION INCREASE BY DECADE

Census	National		Old Northwest		Illinois		McLean County		Bloomington	
	% increase	% increase	total population	% increase	total population	% increase	total population	% increase	total population	% increase
1800	35									
1810	36	434	12,282							
1820	33	191	55,211	42,929	350					
1830	34	85	157,445	102,234	185					
1840	33	99	476,183	318,738	202	6,556				
1850	36	55	851,470	375,287	79	10,163	3,607	55	1,594	
1860	35	53	1,711,951	860,481	101	28,772	18,609	183	7,075	5,481
1870	27	32	2,539,891	827,940	48	53,988	25,216	88	14,590	7,515
1880	26	23	3,077,871	537,980	21	60,100	6,112	11	17,180	2,590
1890	25	20	3,826,352	748,481	24	63,036	2,926	5	20,484	3,304
1900	21	19	4,821,550	995,198	26	67,843	4,807	8	23,286	2,802

Note to Table II, "Population Increase by Decade"

The states of the Old Northwest are: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois.

National and Old Northwest increase from: U. S. Bureau of the Census. Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960), pp. 7, 12-13.

McLean County and Bloomington population increase from: U. S. Bureau of the Census: The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850. (Washington: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, 1853), pp. 702, 712.

Population of the United States in 1860. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), pp. 86, 97.

Vol. I. The Statistics of the Population of the United States . . . Ninth Census, (June 1, 1870). (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), pp. 24, 308, 116.

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Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), pp. 16, 110.

Census Reports, Vol. I. Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900 (Population, Part II.) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), p. 613.

Percentage increases for McLean County and Bloomington calculated.

TABLE III
 POPULATION: McLEAN COUNTY,
 BLOOMINGTON, and NORMAL

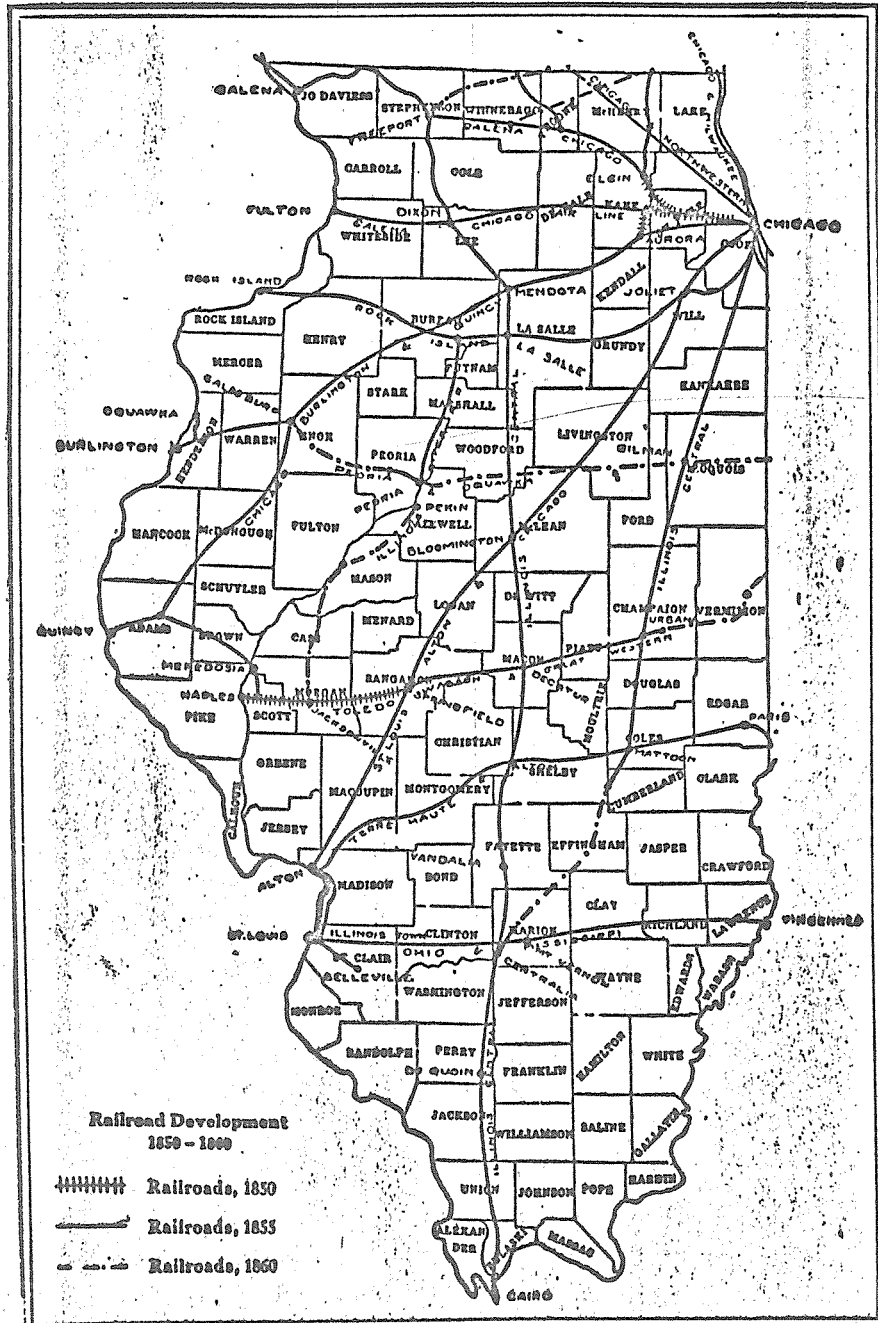
	McLean County	Bloomington's population as % of county	Bloomington	Normal
1834	----	----	180	---
1836	----	----	450	---
1840	6556	9.2	600	---
1845	----	----	800	---
1850	10163	15.7	1594	---
1855	-----	----	5000	---
1860	28772	24.6	7075	847
1870	53988	27.0	14590	1116
1880	60100	28.6	17180	2470
1890	63036	32.5	20484	3459
1900	67843	34.3	23286	3795

Sources:

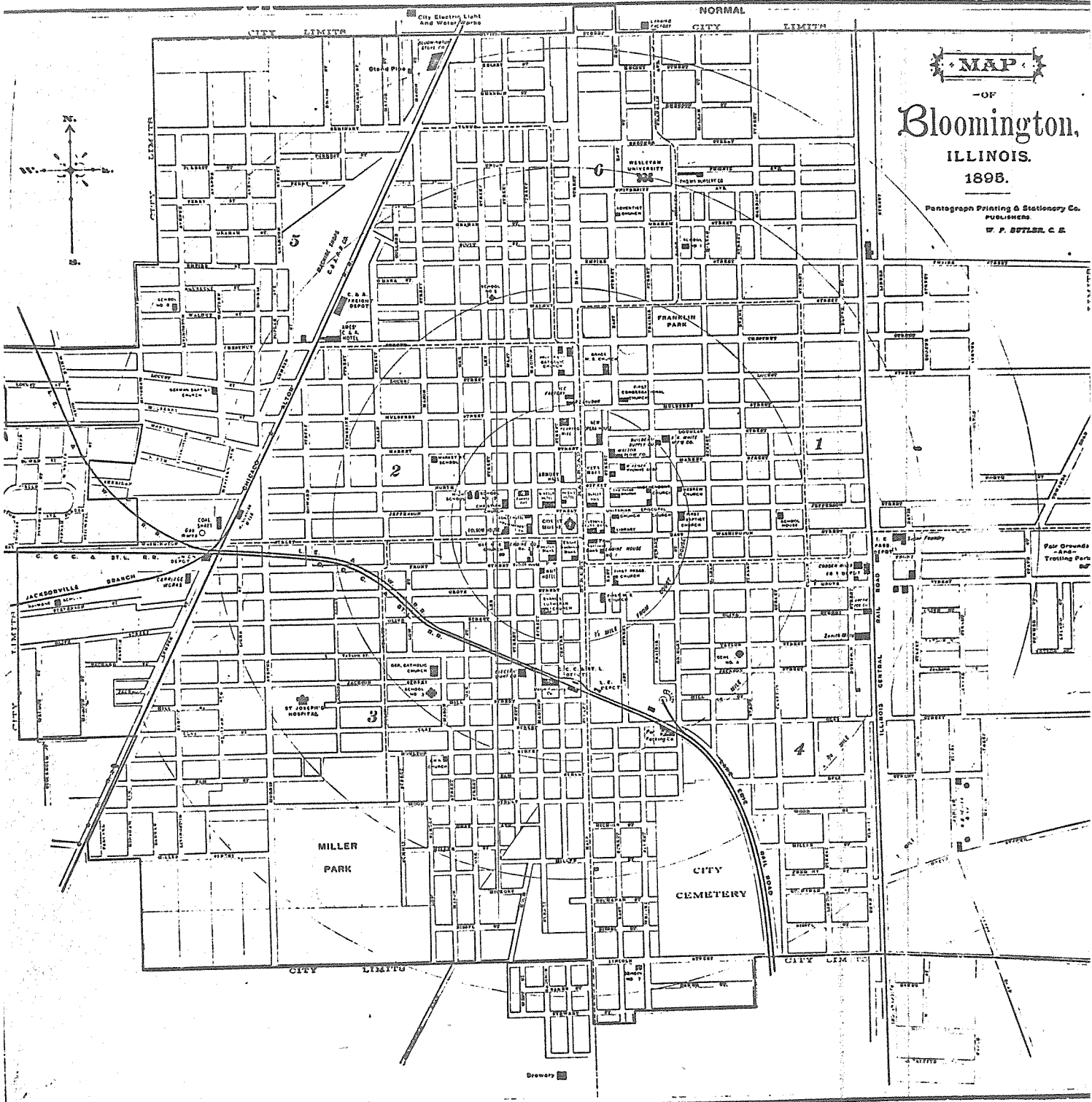
- Column 1 see Table II, supra.
- Column 2 calculated
- Column 3 census year figures from Table II; non-census year figures from J. H. Burnham, History of Bloomington and Normal in McLean County, Illinois (Bloomington: J.H. Burnham, 1879), pp. 36, 49.
- Column 4 William B. Brigham, The Story of McLean County and Its Schools (Bloomington: William B. Brigham, 1951), p. viii.

MAP I

ILLINOIS RAILROAD DEVELOPMENT, 1850--1860

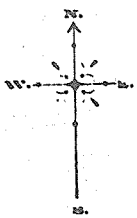


Source: Arthur Charles Cole, The Era of the Civil War, Vol. III of The Centennial History of Illinois, ed. by Clarence W. Alvord (5 vols; Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1917-1920), opposite p. 34.



MAP
-OF-
Bloomington,
ILLINOIS.
1898.

Pentagraph Printing & Stationery Co.
PUBLISHERS
W. P. BUTLER, C. E.



JACKSONVILLE BRANCH
CARRIAGE WORKS
ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL
CATHOLIC CHURCH

MILLER PARK

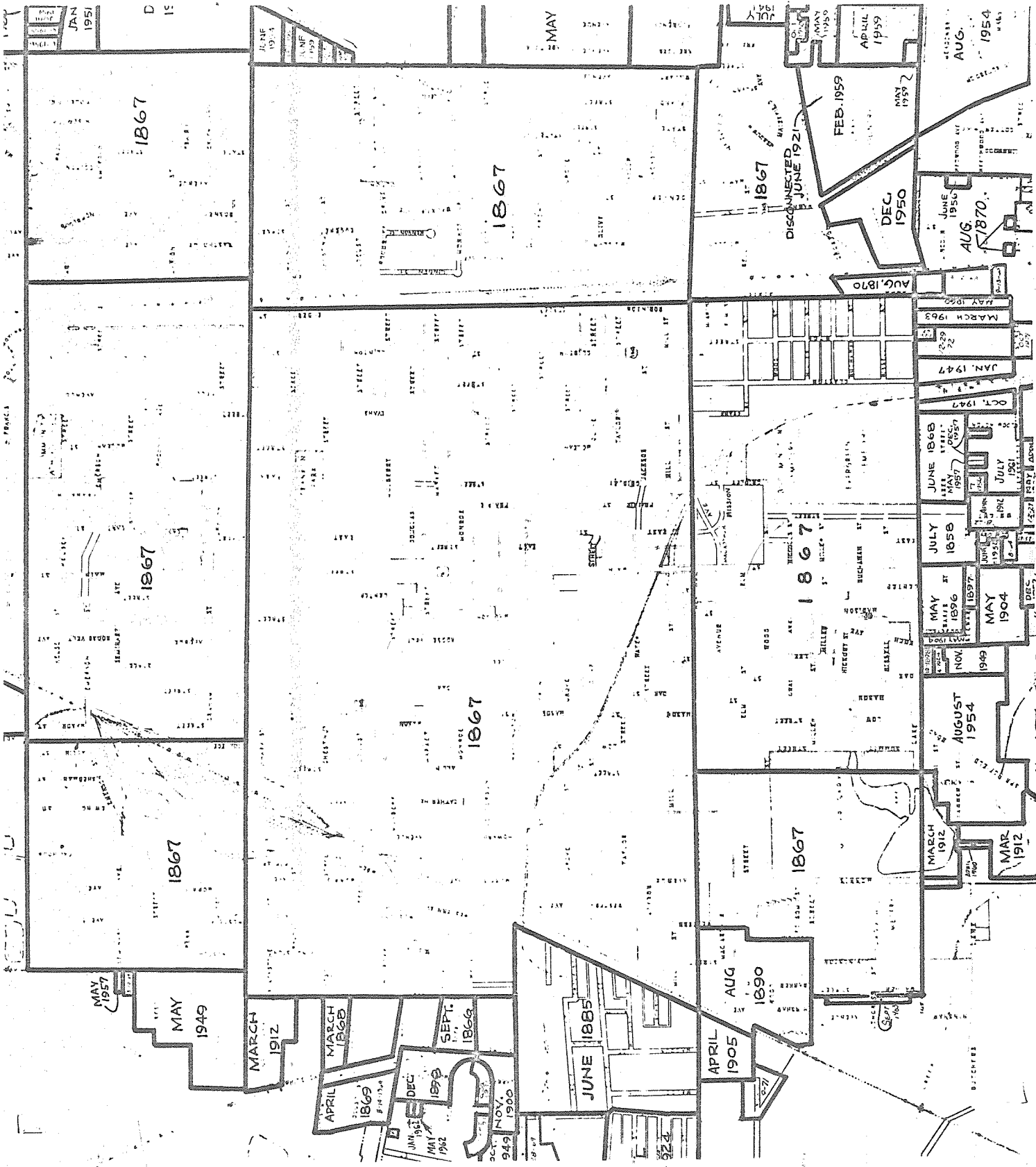
CITY CEMETERY

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

FRANKLIN PARK

Drovers

CITY EVOLUTION MAP: BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS



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