

THE URBANIZATION OF ILLINOIS: 1870-1950

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Illinois has more than three-quarters of its population in towns and cities. The state's degree of urbanization has thus greatly increased from the 24% recorded in 1870, the first usable, detailed census. (All data in this paper are calculated from U.S. Census reports for 1870, 1900, and 1950.) Nevertheless, there has been little movement of the center of urban population during the past 80 years. There have, however, been striking changes in the detailed patterns of urbanization of Illinois since 1870. There have been variations in the percentage importance of urban population within counties, in the share of the state's total urban population of the various counties, and in the timing of major changes in the degree of urbanization of counties. These changes are significant in the development of the present pattern of urbanization in Illinois, one of the highly urbanized states of the nation.

People living in urban areas (incorporated settlements of at least 2,500 persons) were a significant part of the total population in only a few Illinois counties in 1870 (Fig. 1). Only six counties, mostly in the northern one-half of the state, were more than 40% urbanized. Five of these six (Cook, Rock Island, Peoria, Adams, and Alexander; see Fig. 9 for county names) each contained one primary urban center—centers in which a transportation

function was dominant. In Chicago (Cook Co.) railroads were replacing water as the principal transportation medium; in the other four primary centers river traffic still was dominant. Kane County, the sixth one more than 40% urbanized, contained the old Fox River Valley settlements, none of which was clearly dominant and none of which was primarily a transportation center. The southern one-third of the state was practically devoid of counties significantly urbanized—a fact partly responsible for the northern position of the 1870 center of urban population. The majority of all urbanized counties, including most of those very highly urbanized and containing major transportation centers, was located in the northern one-half of the state. Nevertheless, no particular pattern or uniformity of urbanism had as yet emerged in 1870.

In 1900 (Fig. 2) six counties were again prominent as especially highly urbanized (now measured by at least 60% urban population). Five of the six noted for 1870 were still leaders; the one change in the group had been the substitution of Winnebago County (Rockford) for Adams County (Quincy). Five of the six were again dominated by one center (Kane was still the exception), but the primary cities had now become manufacturing centers. The substitution of Winnebago for Adams

County emphasized the decline of water transportation as a primary factor in urban growth in the state. Cairo (Alexander Co.) was the only one of the larger cities which was still primarily dependent upon transportation activities, and Alexander had the smallest net increase in urban population of these six counties. Chicago, on the other hand, had been the most successful manufacturing center of the state, and between 1870 and 1900 Cook County registered the highest net increase in urban population. By 1900, urbanism had increased throughout the state as a whole. By the same date, a group of secondary urban counties had developed to a level (40-59% urban) which would have put them in first rank only 30 years previously. These latter counties were primarily in the center and north of the state and the southeast quadrant was not significantly urbanized even by 1900.

Only two groups of Illinois counties remained completely non-urban as late as 1950—a tier along the Wabash-Ohio rivers and a cluster along the Middle Illinois River (Fig. 3). A third group (five counties) along the Lower Illinois-Mississippi rivers showed little or no urban population. The other exceptions were scattered. By 1950, the population of 16 of the 102 counties was 60% or more urban. All 7 of the highly urbanized counties recognized in 1870 and 1900 were in the group. Of the 16 highly urbanized counties in 1950, all but 3 had 40% or more of their population urban in 1900. (The three exceptions were DuPage and Madison, part of the metropolitan area growth of Chicago and East St. Louis districts, and Champaign, where different census techniques were responsible for an apparent change.) Only 3 counties which had been 40% or more urban in 1900 (Boone, Morgan and Will) failed

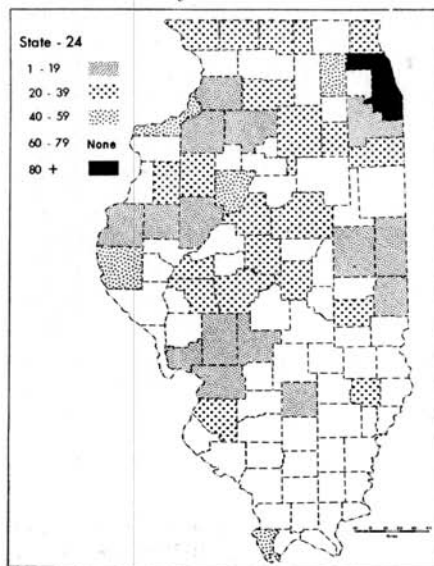


FIG. 1.—Per cent of population urban, 1870.

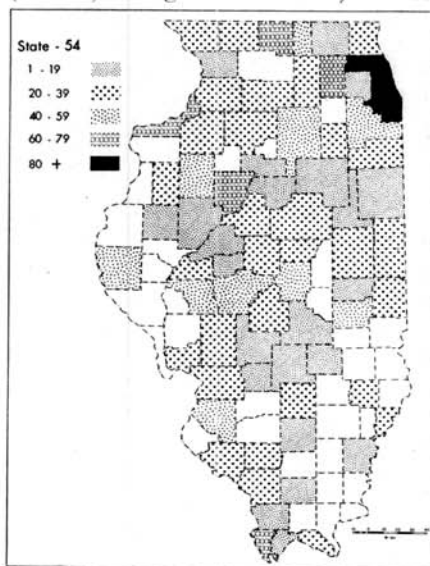


FIG. 2.—Per cent of population urban, 1900.

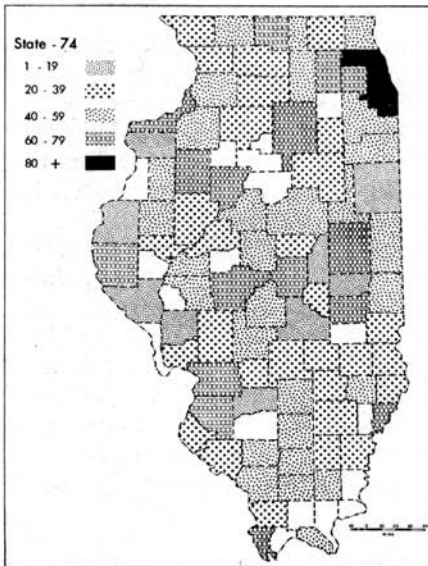


FIG. 3.—Per cent of population urban, 1950.

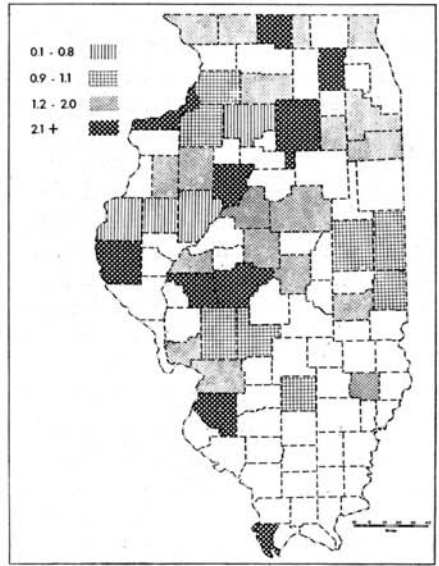


FIG. 4.—Location-quotient of urban population, 1870 (excluding Cook Co.).

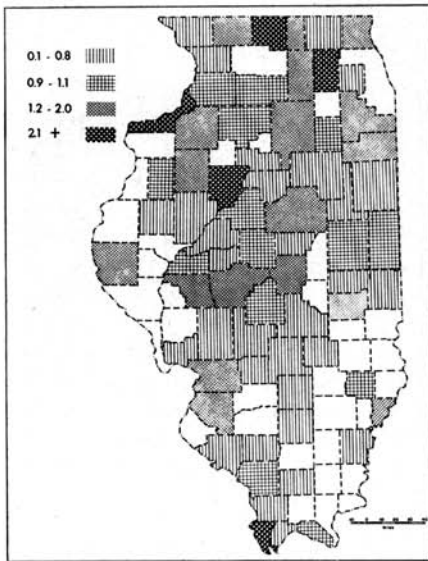


FIG. 5.—Location-quotient of urban population, 1900 (excluding Cook Co.).

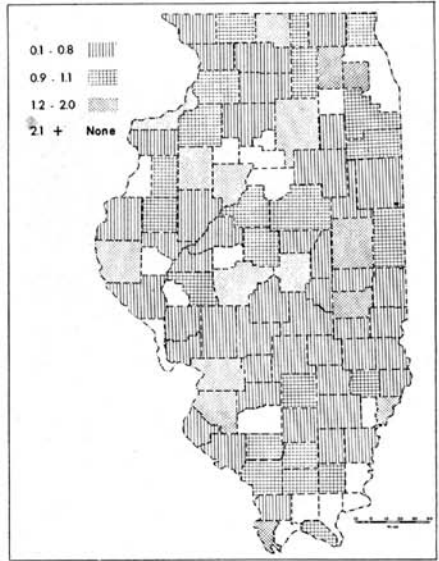


FIG. 6.—Location-quotient of urban population, 1950 (excluding Cook Co.).

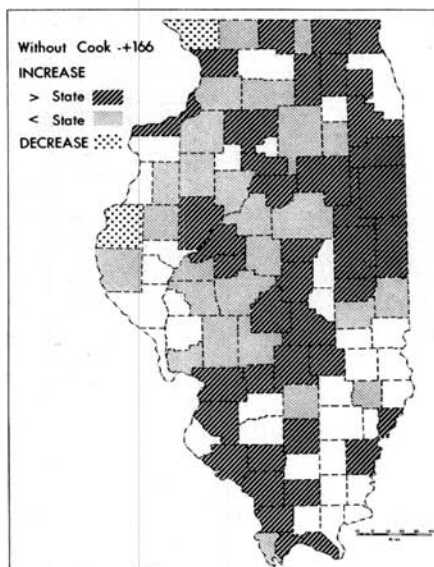


FIG. 7.—Per cent change in urban population, 1870-1900 (excluding Cook Co.).

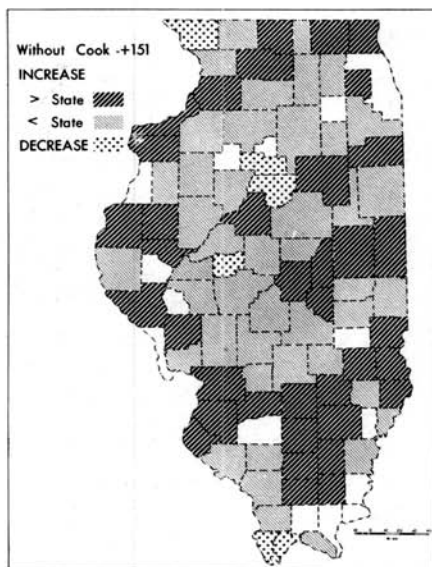


FIG. 8.—Per cent change in urban population, 1900-1950 (excluding Cook Co.).

to reach the 60% level in 1950. Thus, the main area of intensive urbanization had been established by the turn of the century. Few changes have been made in that pattern in the last 50 years.

By the end of the period 1870-1950, urban population was no longer confined to a few, mainly northern counties but was an important element in the total population of almost every county of the state. Patterns of the percentage of county population urban in 1870, 1900, and 1950 reveal the gradual spread of urbanism to all parts of the state and the increasing importance of city population in Illinois.

The gradual spread of urbanism throughout the state between 1870 and 1950 is particularly well shown by the analysis of urban population location-quotients for individual

counties. (Such a location-quotient—the ratio between the importance of urban population to the state as a whole and the proportion of urban population within each county—indicates the location of the urban population throughout the state, not, as on the previous maps, the importance of urban population within individual counties). Since the purpose of this study was to trace the spread of urbanism throughout the state and since in a ratio like the location-quotient a single county of overwhelming magnitude destroys the sensitivity of the measure, Cook County was not included in this set of calculations. In 1870, excluding Cook County, 10 counties had location-quotients over 2.1 (Fig. 4). The very small number of counties with high quotients indicated the general lack of urbanization in the state and the concentration of a



FIG. 9.—Centers of urban population.

large proportion of all urban population in a few large centers.

Some of these same centers were still prominent in 1900 (Fig. 5), when Kane, Winnebago, Rock Island, Peoria, and Alexander—all containing large urban agglomerations—had location-quotients above 2.1. But these five counties all had quotients smaller than they displayed in 1870; further, Adams, Morgan, Sangamon, St. Clair, and La Salle had dropped from the highest class. By 1900, the state had become more widely urbanized. Almost all counties had some urban population. More cities had developed by 1900, and they were more widely distributed throughout the state.

The more widely spread the urban population, the more unusual is a high location-quotient for any one county. By 1950 (Fig. 6) the urban population was so spread that no county showed a quotient above 2.1, and fewer counties were in the second highest group than had been the case in either 1870 or 1900. Illinois had become a dominantly urban

state which had practically no completely rural counties.

The transformation of various sections of Illinois from a rural to an urban status was not everywhere identical in timing. The percentage change in urban population is an excellent measure of the periods of intensive urbanization in various sections of Illinois. Between 1870 and 1900 (Fig. 7) 41 counties increased in urbanization at a rate greater than the state without Cook (166%); between 1900 and 1950 (Fig. 8) 37 counties urbanized more rapidly than the state (151%). In most instances, counties experienced major growth in urban population in one period or the other, not in both. Thus, only 14 counties in Group 1 (1870-1900) are also found in Group 2 (1900-1950). Since 9 of those 14 counties which became urbanized at a rate greater than the state in both periods are located in the northeast quadrant of Illinois, a net northeastward movement of the center of urban population is to be expected.

The greatest change in the pattern

of urbanization of Illinois came between 1870 and 1900. This was the period of greatest movement of the center of urban population calculated both with and without Cook County (Fig. 9). Even this movement (northeastward including Cook, southeastward excluding Cook) was moderate considering the extent of over-all urbanization of the state's population. Increasing urbanization was characteristic of all parts of the state and the "pull" of Chi-

cago and the eastern half of Illinois was to a considerable degree offset by the growth of urban populations in the major centers elsewhere on the periphery of the state. The basic pattern of distribution of urban population was established by 1900; the centers in 1950 showed practically no movement.

LITERATURE CITED

- U. S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS. 1870, 1900, 1950. *Census of Population*. Wash., U. S. Gov't. Print. Office.