

Print Resources About Agriculture – Non-Fiction

Here are some books you may want to consult if you are doing research into the history of Illinois agricultural topics. They relate to topics in the AVBarn Oral Histories and provide a background and context for them.

Adams, Jane [1990] *The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois, 1890-1990*. University of North Carolina Press. ISBN: 0-8078-2168-3. 321 pages. Research based on historical and ethnographic studies and oral histories of people from Union county, IL.

Ibid, ed. [2003]. *Fighting for the Farm: Rural American Transformed*. University of Pennsylvania Press. ISBN: 0-8122-1830-2. 338 pages. Sections on N. American Agriculture in the World System, Foundations of 20th Century U. S. Pollicy, the Political Implications of Daily Life, and the Politics of the Environment.

Boewe, Charles [1999]. *Prairie Albion: an English Settlement in Pioneer Illinois*. Southern Illinois University Press. ISBN: 0-8093-2283-8. 317 pages. Excerpts from Birkbeck's and Flowers' journals, letters, and articles from contemporary periodicals. It lacks Table of Contents and Index.

Bogue, Allan G. [1963, 1994] *From Prairie to Corn Belt: Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century*. Iowa State University Press. ISBN: 0-8138-2218-1. 309 pages. It presents a picture of the prairie environment, the farmers, their reasons for coming, land acquisition, prices, development, improvements, and technology.

Bogue, Margaret Beattie. [1959] *Patterns from the Sod: Land Use and Tenure in the Grand Prairie, 1850-1900*. Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library vol. 34, Land Series, vol. 1. Part I: The Frontier Heritage in Landownership. Part II: East Central Illinois in Transition, 1850-1900.

Dahlstrom, Neil and Jeremy Dahlstrom [2005] *The John Deere Story: a Biography of Plowmakers John & Charles Deere*. Northern Illinois University Press. ISBN: 0-87580-336-9. 204 pages. It relates the life and business acumen of John Deere and his son Charles as they developed their business from plow making to manufacturing large farm machinery.

Danbom, David B. [1995, 2006] *Born in the Country: a History of Rural America*. 2nd edition. The Johns Hopkins University Press. ISBN: 978-0-8018-8459-7. 301 pages. It spans from Pre-Columbian America and Rural Europe to the 21st century, explores the development of farming, industrialization, and the production revolution of today, and speculates on the demise of agriculture and rural lifestyle in the near future.

Davis, James E. [1998]. *Frontier Illinois*. Indiana University Press. ISBN: 978-0-253-21406-5. 515 pages. The history of Illinois from the Ice Age to the Civil War.

Egan, Timothy [2006]. *The Worst Hard Times*. Houghton Mifflin, NY, 340 pp. ISBN-10: 0-618-7734709. Traces the agricultural growth of the area surrounding the Panhandle region from 1901 to 1930, the coming of the Dustbowl and Depression, and the long years of suffering during those years to 1939. Many oral histories are used of the people who experienced the tragedy. Statistics and press reports add to this powerful narrative that makes the reader appreciate the scope and depth of the man-made ecological disaster.

Hostetler, John A. [1993] *Amish Society*. 4th edition. The Johns Hopkins University Press. ISBN: 0-8018-4442-8. 435 pages. Chapter 6: Agriculture and Subsistence, in addition to the history and beliefs of the Amish in Europe and America.

Leifel, Dan [2005] *“Improving the Economic Well-being of Agriculture:” a History of the Illinois Farm Bureau*. Illinois Agriculture Association. 206 pages.

Mabry, Rebecca [2008]. **The Amish of Illinois’ Heartland**. The News-Gazette, Champaign, IL. ISBN: 978-0-9798420-1-6. 112 pages. Sympathetic look at Illinois Amish communities and lifestyle. Unposed, long-distance photographs.

Meyer, Carrie A. [2007]. *Days on the Family Farm: from the golden age through the Great Depression*. University of Minnesota Press. ISBN: 978-0-8166-5033-0. 251 pages. Narrative based on the diaries of May Lyford Davis and interviews in Guildford Township, Winnebago County, IL.

Oliver, William [2002]. *Eight Months in Illinois with Information to Immigrants*. Southern Illinois University Press. ISBN: 0-8093-2437-7. 260 pages. Originally published in 1822 as a practical guide for prospective settlers.

Sutton, Robert P., ed. [1976]. *The Prairie State: Colonial Years to 1860* (a documentary history of Illinois). William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, Grand Rapids. ISBN: 0-8028-1651-7. 383 pages. Part I. 8000BC to 1818: prairies, Indians, French, English, territory. Part II: Prairie years, pioneer life, passing frontier, mid-century expansion. Journal entries, speeches, reports.

Terkel, Studs [1986]. **Hard times: an oral history of the Great Depression**. The New Press, NY. ISBN: 978-1-56584-656-2. 462 pages. Oral histories of people from many walks of life. The section The Farmer is the Man, p213-234.

Tillson, Christiana Holmes, edited by Milo Milton Quaife [1995]. *A Woman’s Story of Pioneer Illinois*. Southern Illinois University Press. ISBN: 0-8093-198-1-0. 169 pages. Excerpts from Tillson’s diaries about life in 1820-30s Illinois during the land boom.

Web Resources for Oral History

Oral History

<http://oralhistoryeducation.com/education> Useful website on teaching students how to conduct oral interviews. Power Point presentations for teacher, students, and lesson plan. Kelly Philpott Brisbois, J.D., Principal and Creative Director. [My Storycatcher, Inc.](http://www.mystorycatcher.com) Email: brizkel@aol.com www.mystorycatcher.com Tel: (415) 515-5111 Her blog keeps one up to date on her projects.

Literature Related to Agriculture

Garland, Hamlin [1893]. *Main-traveled Roads*.

Very memorable stories about the difficult lives of small farmers in Wisconsin in the late nineteenth century. He wrote it to dispel the myth about the romantic pastoral life of pioneers. His style evokes the rich colors and sounds of rural life and the struggle for survival both physically and emotionally of farmers, particularly of women, whom he felt were often prisoners of farm life. Available free on Manybooks.net as an e-book.

Grey, Zane [1919]. *Desert of Wheat*. A man travels to the Southwest to start a new life in agriculture. He studies the farming situation of rented and owned land, the amount of land one needs to succeed, the access to water, access to financing. He has to fight land speculators, drought, illegality, and helplessness of neighbors to finally succeed in growing wheat in the desert area. Written with a strong sense of place with string characters. Available free as an ebook on Manybooks.net.

Kirkland, Joseph [1887]. *Zury: The Meanest Man in Spring County*. Kirkland recreates the dialect and details of life near Danville, Illinois through an amazing character—a farmer who builds up a fortune. Available as an ebook from archives.org. Many of the characters in this book are the same or similar to those in Harold Sinclair's *American Years*, which takes place in the same geographical area.

Oppenheim, E.P. [1921]. *The Profiteers*. During WWI a British industries investment firm tries to buy all the world's wheat to increase prices and profits. Two enemies are involved. The more ethical one believes the scheme is wrong because poor people are the ones that get hurt. Coercion and kidnapping force one to sell stock. The other avoids arrest by leaving the country. Available as an e-book on Manybooks.net.

Peck, Richard [1998]. *A Long Way from Chicago*. Puffin Books, NY. ISBN: 0-14-24-110-2. 148p. A brother and sister from Chicago take an annual vacation at their grandmother's house in a very small town in Piatt County, Illinois. The novel is in the form of stories of the adventures the kids had each year, 1929 – 1935. Grandmother's character is hilarious, as are some of the town's inhabitants. The reader learns a good deal about the society and life in a rural town during the Depression. Newberry Honor Award winner.

IBID [2000]. *A Year Down Yonder*. Puffin Books, NY. ISBN: 0-14-230070-5. 130p. Sequel to *A Long Way from Chicago*, this novel has Mary Alice going to live with Grandmother during the Depression when her father lost his job and her family lost their Chicago apartment. She enrolls in school, finds a few friends, and follows Grandma on her adventures that include stealing produce from fields to make pies, poaching fish traps, and setting traps for vandals. Newberry Medal winner for 2001.

Quick, Herbert [1922] *Vandemark's Folly*. This novel follows the adventures of a boy of Dutch extraction from New York state as he runs away from an abusive step-father to try his luck on the Erie Canal trading boats. He eventually works his way west to Wisconsin and Iowa, where he finds the land he was given is mostly swamp. He builds his farm and life there. This book is available in many formats as an ebook on manybooks.net, Internet Archives, and other book sites.

Rölvaag, O. E. [1927] *Giants in the Earth: a Saga of the Prairie*. Translated from the Norwegian. This book can be found as a pdf downloadable from Gutenberg Australia. This novel follows the settling of Norwegian immigrants in Iowa and South Dakota. Per Hansa is a strong, determined man who wants to tame the prairie, build a farm, and thereby help build America. His wife Beret, becomes frightened of the prairie, isolated by her choice not to speak English, and worn down with work. The story follows the Norwegian community of friends as their farms grow despite hardships of drought, plagues of grasshoppers, and fire. It tells of a less romantic side of pioneer life with a very strong story. 500p.

Ibid: *Peder Victorious* [1929]. This sequel to *Giants in the Earth* is about Per Hansa's son, and how the experience of the second generation of immigrants differs from the first. Peder is expected to become a preacher, but he finds politics and farming more attractive. His mother, Beret, plays a strong role in the novel, of dark foreboding that Americanization is equated with sin.

Sinclair, Harold [1938] *American Years*. Literary Guild, Doubleday, NY. 411p. This historical novel traces the development, events, and residents of a town called Everton, Illinois from 1830 to 1861. It introduces characters and families and follows major events. The location is the area around today's Bloomington/Normal. Founding pioneers, immigrants, emerging leaders, business owners, and politicians people the pages. The main plot is the growth of the town from frontier settlement to town. The climax is the coming of the Civil War after Lincoln wins the Presidency. Locally famous characters such as David Davis, Abe Lincoln, Jesse Fell, Leonard Swett and others (also found in this website: <http://www.mrlincolnandfriends.org/index.asp>) appear. It is interesting to compare the stories the friends tell in their own words with the stories in the novel to see how the author wove his research into a story with dialog.

Sinclair, Upton [1906], *The Jungle*.

A Lithuanian immigrant family moves to Chicago, after having read advertisements that salaries are high. Prices are also high. They meet lots of con men, intermittent work and conditions that are physically challenging, even dangerous. They suffer one disaster and death after another. Local unions seem to be as corrupt as the business owners. The author stresses Socialist activism as a remedy. Publishers made Sinclair edit the novel to remove the most disagreeable incidents and references. The author was hoping that in exposing horrible working conditions, the public might rise up and demand reforms and regulations. The public was upset about the impurities in their food, but not about the bad conditions for the workers. This book is available free on Manybooks.net as an e-book.

Webster, Henry Kitchell. *The Banker and the Bear*.

A Chicago banker leaves his father's old-fashioned bank to be mentored by a vicious, manipulative dealer. He learns well, and strikes out on his own after learning the business. His old mentor spies on him, challenges him about a customer who borrowed a million to corner the lard market. Continuing their feud—at the crucial moment, the mentor is arrested and a bank run is averted. This book is available as an e-book at <http://www.manybooks.net>