

CHRISTIE CLINIC
ILLINOIS MARATHON'S
CRISS-CROSS
VIRTUAL CHALLENGE



GUIDEBOOK
NORTH-TO-SOUTH ROUTE

WELCOME FROM

EXPERIENCE CHAMPAIGN URBANA



With the return of the full marathon in 2024, it only makes sense to revive the Criss-Cross Virtual Challenge that kept so many of us going during the pandemic. This challenge provides a great opportunity to not only train for race weekend, but to also explore the many brilliant destinations in the greater Champaign-Urbana area, as well as so many other great communities in Illinois. C-U is ideally situated at the crossroads to the North-South and East-West routes. From scenic outdoor spaces—ideal for a run—to vibrant urban centers, we're a perfect spot to visit while getting your miles in. Don't miss your chance to fill up after your run in our award-winning culinary scene and kick back to some live music to re-energize. Welcome from all of us at Experience Champaign-Urbana!



Welcome from Director Jan Seeley

Welcome to the Christie Clinic Illinois Race Weekend's Criss-Cross Virtual Challenge! We're thrilled that you're joining us on this virtual journey through the state of Illinois! We originally created the Cross-Cross in 2020 during the pandemic when no in-person events were taking place anywhere in the country. Most single-distance events were pivoting to virtual versions of themselves.

We yearned for something more! The virtual Criss-Cross, with its 4-month timeline, hundreds and hundreds of miles to cover, and celebration of the state of Illinois, offered a running and walking experience unlike any other. Since most of us weren't doing much out-of-state travel back then, it was an ideal time to combine our love of running and walking with learning more about the state of Illinois.

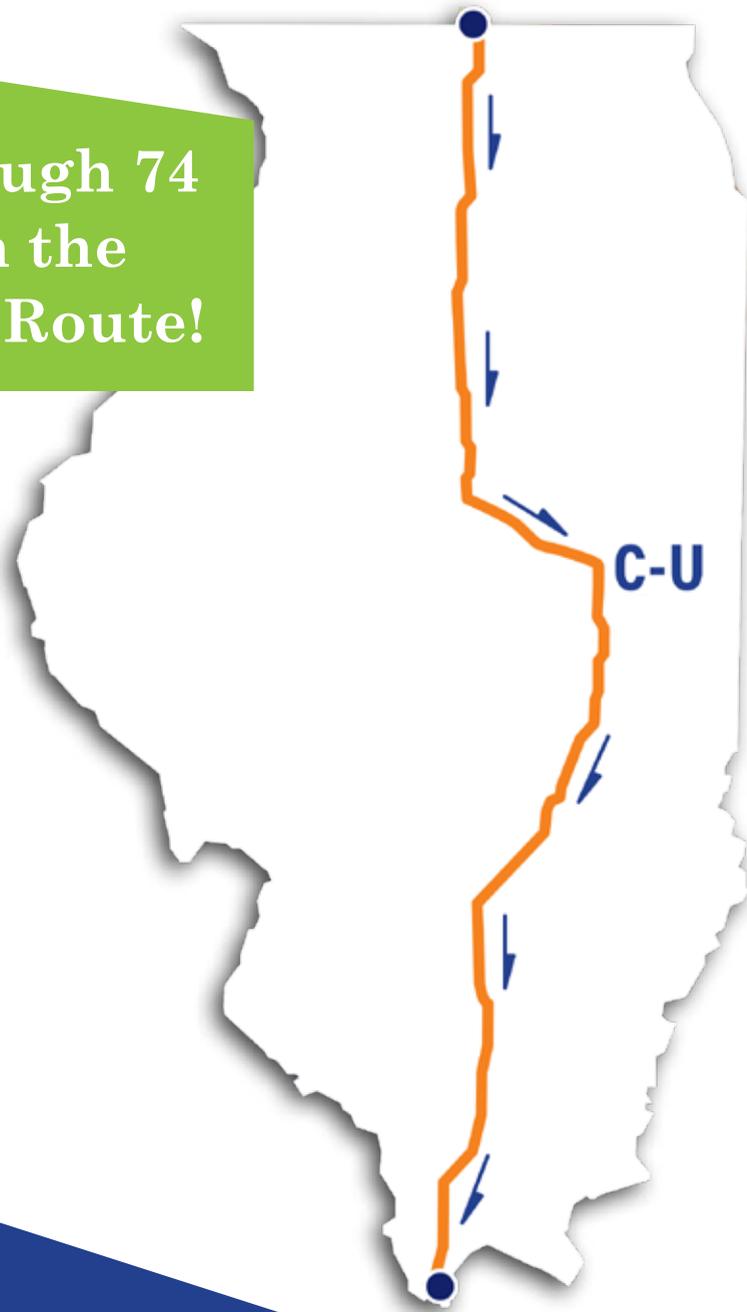
Now, as we prepare for our 2024 Race Weekend next April, when we will welcome our marathon friends back to town and celebrate our REUNITED theme, it seems like a perfect time to resurrect the Criss-Cross. While we train for Race Weekend, the Criss-Cross will provide a fun way to connect with other runners and walkers as we make our way across the two virtual routes.

Did you know there are towns in Illinois named Bonnie, Paradise, and Paw Paw? We didn't either, before the Criss-Cross Virtual Challenge! Let this Guidebook be your companion as you virtually pass through over 70 communities on the north-to-south route and over 30 communities on the west-to-east route. You will learn many fascinating facts about the "jewel" towns along the way. Perhaps you live in one of these towns! Keep staying the course! And remember: in 2024 we are REUNITED (and it feels so good!)



NORTH - to - SOUTH ROUTE

You'll pass through 74 communities on the North-to-South Route!



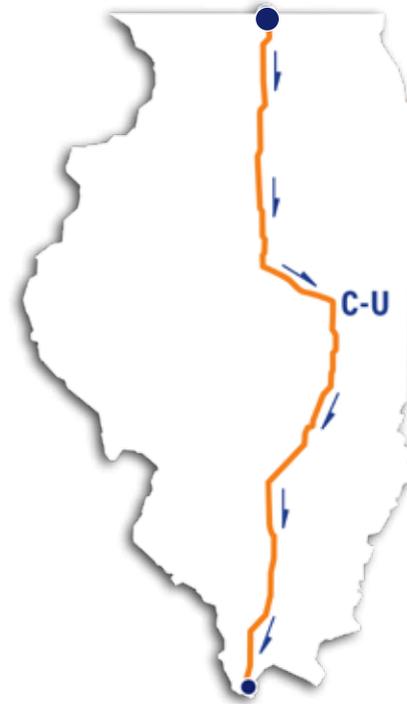
TOWNS ON YOUR ROUTE

- South Beloit
- Rockford
- Cherry Valley
- New Milford
- Monroe Center
- White Rock
- Hillcrest
- Creston
- Rochelle
- Steward
- Compton
- Paw Paw
- Meriden
- Mendota
- Troy Grove
- LaSalle
- Peru
- Oglesby
- Cedar Point
- Tonica
- Lostant
- Rutland
- Minonk
- El Paso
- Kappa
- Hudson
- Normal
- Bloomington
- Downs
- Le Roy
- Empire
- Farmer City
- Mansfield
- Mahomet
- Champaign
- Urbana
- Savoy
- Tolono
- Sadorus
- Pesotum
- Tuscola
- Arcola
- Humboldt
- Mattoon
- Charleston
- Paradise
- Neoga
- Sigel
- Effingham
- Watson
- Mason
- Edgewood
- La Clede
- Kinmundy
- Alma
- Tonti
- Salem
- Dix
- Mount Vernon
- Bonnie
- Spring Garden
- Ina
- Benton
- West City
- West Frankfort
- Johnston City
- Spillertown
- Marion
- Dongola
- Ullin
- Pulaski
- Mounds
- Mound City
- Cairo

SOUTH BELOIT

mile 0

Founded in 1917
Population...7,892
Geographic size...6.13 square miles



Known For

- Named Turtle for an important chief, Kau Rau Maw Nee (Walking Turtle), the area was looking to change the name in 1838, and by committee, the French word “bellotte” (meaning nice or pretty) was referenced, and from there Balloit to eventually Beloit. The name was approved, and South Beloit became the south part of that area, Beloit.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Sports cars, motorcycles, bicycles, and go-carts race around a two-mile track at Blackhawk Farms, which welcomes racers and spectators alike.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- North American Tool, a global company with headquarters in South Beloit, manufactures custom order cutting tools used to produce everyday items like eyeglasses as well as specialized items such as the Space Shuttle!

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...199 miles
- Number of 2020 Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon (CCIM) race participants who live in the town...0

Annual Events

- The South Beloit Historical Society opens the historic Bushnell Wheeler Home twice a year for two annual events: the final Sunday in June for an Ice Cream Social and the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday prior to Thanksgiving for a Christmas open house.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Originally, resources such as copper, lead, and bog iron comprised the area that is South Beloit today, and natural limestone formed the banks of the Rock River and Turtle Creek.
- Lake Victoria and Pearl Lake are former gravel quarries.
- South Beloit City Park and Lake Victoria provide walking paths, picnic shelters, fishing, and access to the Dorr Road Bike Path.

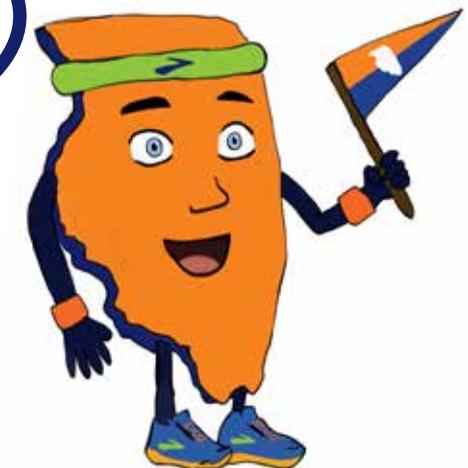
Unique Amenities

- History comes to life at the Bushnell Wheeler Home, an impressive Italian Villa that overlooks South Beloit.
- Nature at the Confluence, an urban environmental learning center located along Turtle Creek on land once used as a dump, reflects a success story of ecology and restoration.
- RVerS and campers looking for a “get-away” experience complete with scuba diving and swimming fun are sure to find it at Pearl Lake Resort.

Learn more about South Beloit, Illinois

- <https://southbeloit.org/>
- Convention & Visitors Bureau <https://www.gorockford.com/about/region/south-beloit/>
- South Beloit Historical Society <http://bushnellwheelerhome.com/>
- South Beloit Library <https://www.southbeloitlibrary.com/>

I'm Criss! I'll be here with you on your criss-cross journey!



Settled in 1834–1835, incorporated as a village in 1839, and chartered as a city in 1852

Population...147,881

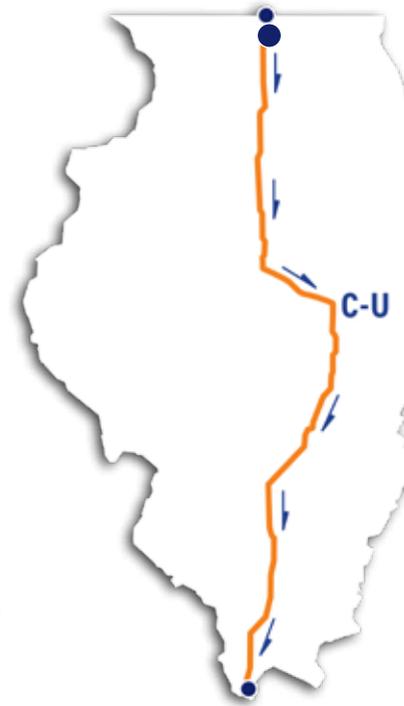
Geographic size...61.949 square miles

Known For

- Originally named “Midway” due to its geographic location of halfway between Chicago and Galena, it subsequently became Rockford, as it provided an exceptional ford across the Rock River.
- Early settlers called it “Forest City” for the abundance of forests, while today it is known as the City of Gardens, boasting a variety of prized, unique gardens complete with year-round tours, shows, concerts, and workshops.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Rockford has been home to a wide variety of recognizable figures from Nobel Laureate and Hull House founder Jane Addams to presidential candidate John B. Anderson, to a host of Olympic and professional athletes, actors, activists, and musicians to astronaut Janice Voss, and beyond.
- Baseball and Rockford share a strong history with Rockford gaining national recognition with the post-Civil War Forest City Baseball Club, producing early major league players, becoming a member city in the first minor league, and supporting the Rockford Peaches in the All American Girls Professional Baseball League (highlighted in the movie, *A League of Their Own*).
- Camp Grant, opening in 1917, put Rockford on the map as an important military city. The Camp trained thousands of soldiers for World War I until it was deactivated in 1921. When the state of Illinois took ownership, the Camp became a permanent training center for the National Guard and home to the Civilian Conservation Guard. Reactivated as a U.S. Army Base in 1940, it served as a reception area for draftees, medical training site, and living quarters for German prisoners of war. Today, the location spans the Chicago Rockford International Airport and Seth Atwood Park.



Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Early industry during the 1860s was marked by production of the John H. Manny reaper and other agricultural machinery while furniture making during the 1880s placed Rockford as the second largest furniture manufacturing center in the United States.
- Industry during the 20th century turned to machine tools, heavy machinery, fasteners, aerospace, hardware, packaging devices and concepts and spurred inventions such as the Nelson knitting machine, airbrush, electric brake, electric garage door opener, dollar bill changer, and electronic dartboard.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...183 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...19



Nicholas Conservatory and Gardens Fountain in Rockford, Illinois.

ROCKFORD

Public Art

- Rockford Letters, an initiative of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau can be viewed at Davis Park in downtown Rockford.
- Eleven murals, recently added through the 2019 CRE8IV Mural Festival, may be found in downtown Rockford.
- Sculpture enthusiasts will enjoy the Rockford Sculpture Park with an impressive 13 sculptures on display.
- Fresh air and art are found along a two-mile, self-guided tour of public art through the Rock River Art Walk.

Annual Events

- The annual Stroll on State kicks off the area's holiday festivities the first Saturday after Thanksgiving with a tree lighting, parade, entertainment, shopping, and more.

Natural Areas and Resources

- The area is rich in outdoor amenities with over 10,000 acres of natural areas, lakes, and rivers through the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County while Rock Cut State Park in nearby Love's Park offers two lakes, bird watching, and hiking opportunities for visitors.
- Experience outdoor learning at the Severson Dells Nature Center or water ski and wakeboard without a boat at the West Rock Wake Park.

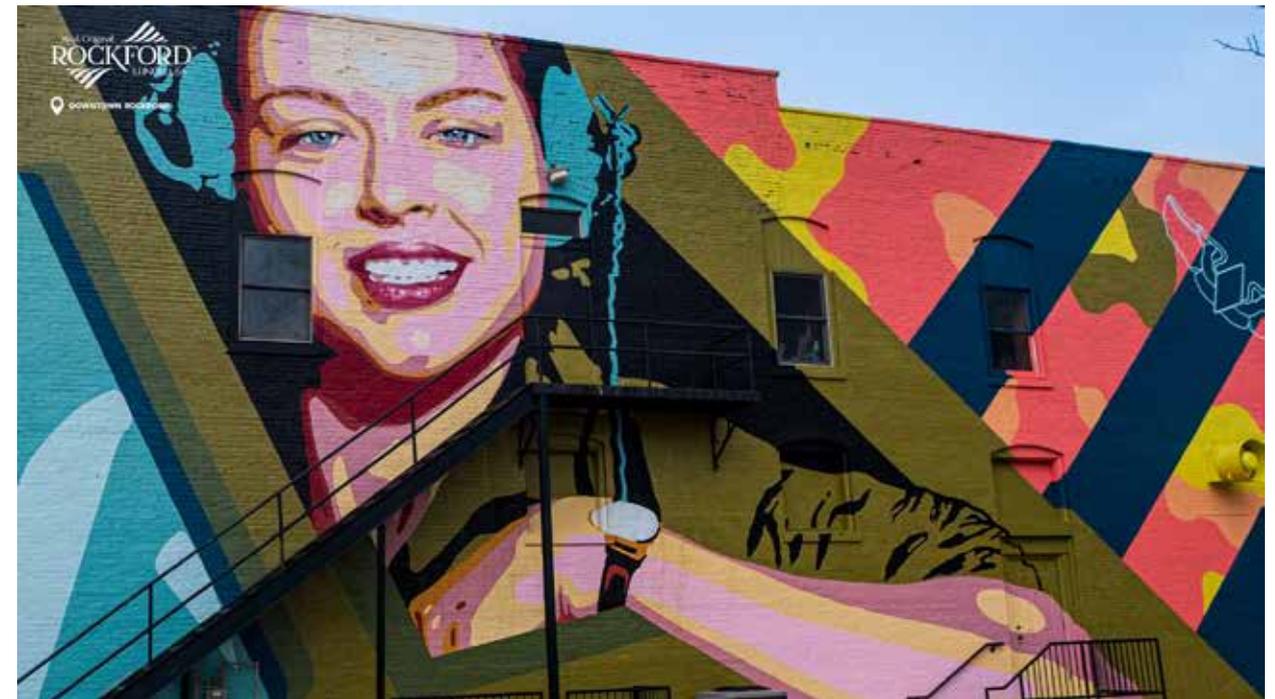
Unique Amenities

- Expansive in museum offerings, enrichment and discovery abound with a visit to the Riverfront Museum Campus where a dinosaur named Jane inhabits the Burpee Museum of Natural History, children explore at the Discover Center Museum, and an impressive collection of art resides at the Rockford Art Museum.
- Step back in time and get a glimpse of life during 1890–1910 at Midway Village Museum, experience the rich cultural heritage of the area at the Ethnic Heritage Museum, become immersed in a time capsule of Victoria-era life at the Tinker Swiss Cottage, honor those who served at the Veterans Memorial Hall and Museum, and travel to the Macktown Living History Education Center, one of the area's earliest settlements in nearby Rockton.

- Find outdoor inspiration at the Anderson Japanese Gardens, one of North America's top Japanese gardens, relaxation at Nicholas Conservatory and Gardens, and beauty for all seasons at the Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden.

Learn more about Rockford, Illinois

- <https://rockfordil.gov/>
- Convention & Visitors Bureau <https://www.gorockford.com/>
- Rockford Historical Society <https://www.rhsil.org/>
- Rockford Public Library <https://www.rockfordpubliclibrary.org/>



Downtown Rockford mural created by Jenny Roesel Ustick and Atalie Gagnet.

First settler arrived 1836, organized as a village in 1896
Population...3,162
Geographic size...8.70 square miles

Known For

- A gristmill along the Kishwaukee River, and the railroad traveling through in 1857 helped to secure a place for this area, originally known as Butler Precinct, on the map. When stagecoach mail arrived, it was discovered another Butler, Illinois existed and a name change was needed. Suggestions were put into a hat and Cherry Valley, submitted by a lady who hailed from Cherry Valley, New York, was selected.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

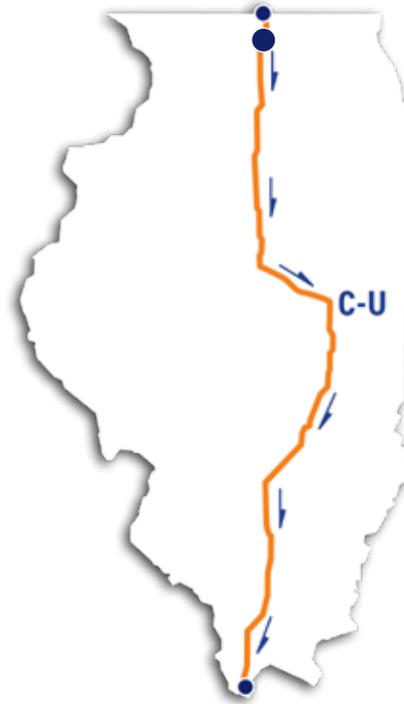
- Home to Cherryvale Mall (originally The Mall at Cherryvale), one of Illinois' first enclosed shopping malls.
- Notable people who have called Cherry Valley home include country music artist Mo Pitney; businessman, Illinois State Representative, and former Cherry Valley mayor (1945) John Baumgarten; and Virgil Abloh, artist, architect, creative and artistic director, engineer, designer, musician, and DJ.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- During the mid-late 1800s broom corn was an important crop in the area and provided a significant source of employment for both adults and children.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...180 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0



Natural Areas and Resources

- A community gem, Baumann Park, is a source of outdoor adventure with paved trails, a canoe launch, fishing, bird watching, and more.

Unique Amenities

- Kegel Harley-Davidson, the world's oldest family-owned Harley-Davidson dealership, has been serving the area for well over 100 years.
- Pick apples, raspberries, blueberries, and blackberries, take a tour, or attend a field trip at Valley Orchard, a 35-acre family-owned orchard.
- Six Flags Hurricane Harbor family water park is home to Tsunami Bay, the largest wave pool in Illinois.

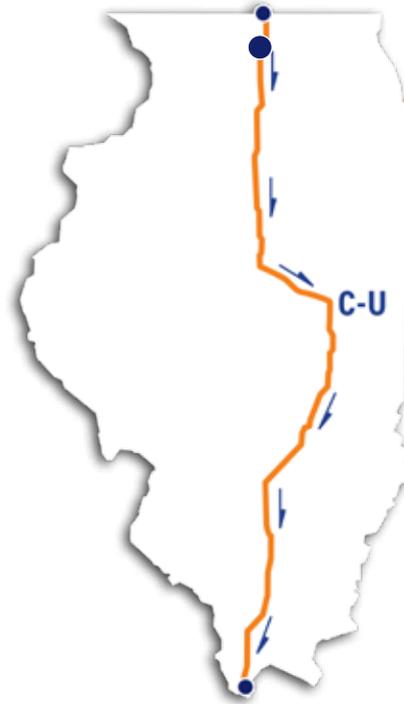
Learn more about Cherry Valley, Illinois

- <http://www.cherryvalley.org/>
- Convention & Visitors Bureau <https://www.gorockford.com/about/region/south-beloit/>
- Cherry Valley Library and Historical Society <http://www.cherryvalleylib.org/wpcherryvalley/>



Kegel Harley-Davidson, in Cherry Valley, Illinois, is the world's oldest family-owned Harley-Davidson dealership.

Settlers arrived 1834, and the earliest documented founding is noted as October 1835.
Population...689
Geographic size...2.57 square miles



Known For

- The origin of the name New Milford is not documented; however, it may be traced to early inhabitants from Milford, Connecticut; Milford, New York; or another Milford in New England.
- Starting out as a settlement perhaps as Old Shumway Place and/or Rib Town, it was officially recognized as New Milford in 1850.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- During a dig for new home construction in 1949, a mastodon molar was unearthed, which provided some of the oldest evidence of life in the New Milford area.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- James L. Fountain developed a revolutionary reaper, inventing exceptional cutting knives for it that did not require the use of long handled scythes at harvest time.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...175 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Natural Areas and Resources

- With proximity to the Rockford area, an abundance of natural areas, parks, and resources are nearby.

Unique Amenities

- Interesting family markers (a tree stump and a stack of logs), military graves, and fascinating stories can be found at the New Milford Cemetery.

Learn more about New Milford, Illinois

- Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau www.gorockford.com
- Rockford Public Library <https://history.rockfordpubliclibrary.org/localhistory/>
- New Milford Cemetery http://genealogytrails.com/ill/winnebago/cem/cem_new_milford_a_i.htm



New Milford, Illinois, Cemetery.

MONROE CENTER

mile 33

We could not determine when Monroe Center was founded.

Population...435

Geographic size...1.2 square miles

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location 169 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Natural Areas and Resources

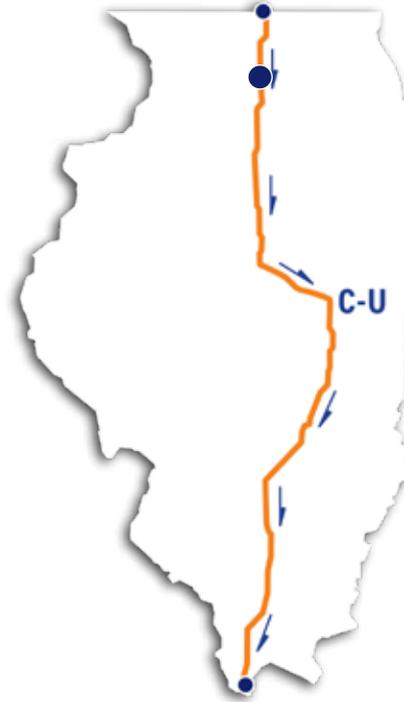
- Pack a ball, bat, and picnic basket for outdoor fun at MC Park.
- With proximity to the Rockford area, an abundance of natural areas, parks, and resources are nearby.

Unique Amenities

- Kilbuck Creek Resort is a hidden destination and getaway for special events and gatherings on 200+ acres of wooded land, complete with a flowing creek, walking paths, and a Tennessee Log Cabin.

Learn more about Monroe Center, Illinois

- Visit Northwest Illinois <https://www.visitnorthwestillinois.com/>
- Ogle County Illinois <https://www.oglecounty.org/>
- Ogle County Historical Society <http://www.oglecountyhistoricalsociety.com/>



Kilbuck Creek Resort in Monroe Center, Illinois.

Founded as part of White Rock Township in 1849
Population including White Rock Township...738
Geographic size including White Rock
Township...35.56 square miles

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Captain John Campbell, murdered by prairie bandits in 1841, was the first burial in White Rock Cemetery.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...168 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Annual Events

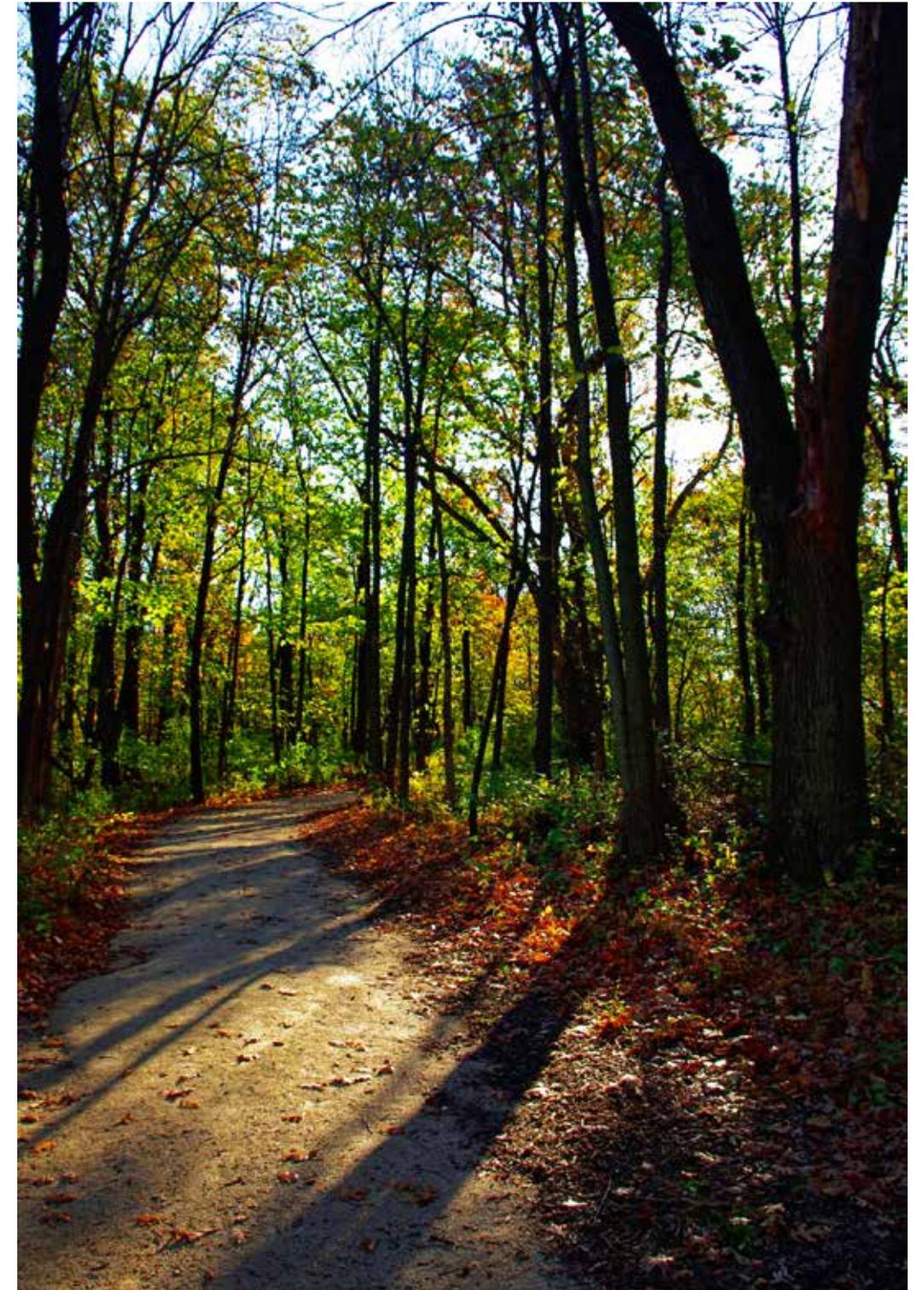
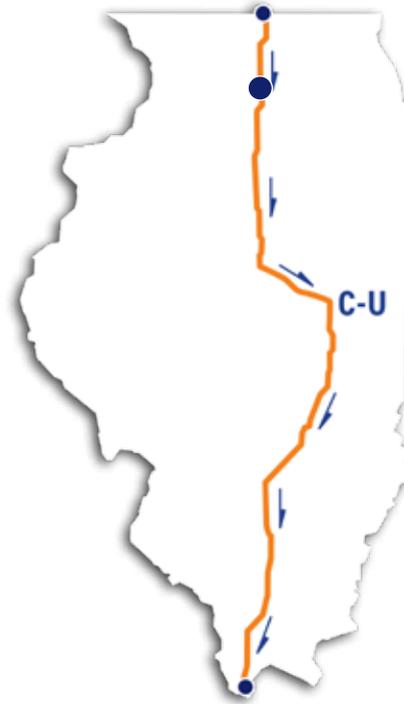
- Since 1937, nearby Stillman Valley has hosted an annual Fall Festival, a tradition for many in the surrounding communities.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Positioned within Ogle County, an abundance of natural areas and resources, including three state parks—Castle Rock, Lowden, and White Pines—are all within a few miles of one another.

Learn more about White Rock, Illinois

- Visit Northwest Illinois <https://www.visitnorthwestillinois.com/>
- White Rock Township City Data <http://www.city-data.com/township/White-Rock-Ogle-IL.html>
- White Rock Cemetery <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~ilogle/whiterockcem.htm>
- Ogle County Historical Society <http://www.oglecountyhistoricalsociety.com/>



A trail in White Pines Forest State Park near White Rock, Illinois.

© Jeff Heidrich

Formed in the early 1950s and incorporated in 1958
Population...1,237
Geographic size...3.17 square miles

Known For

- Named for its location and tucked in between park and agricultural land, the village was originally known as Bogue Addition after a prominent local physician, Dr. Arthur Bogue, who owned the large home on the “hill” and began development of the area.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...160 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Annual Events

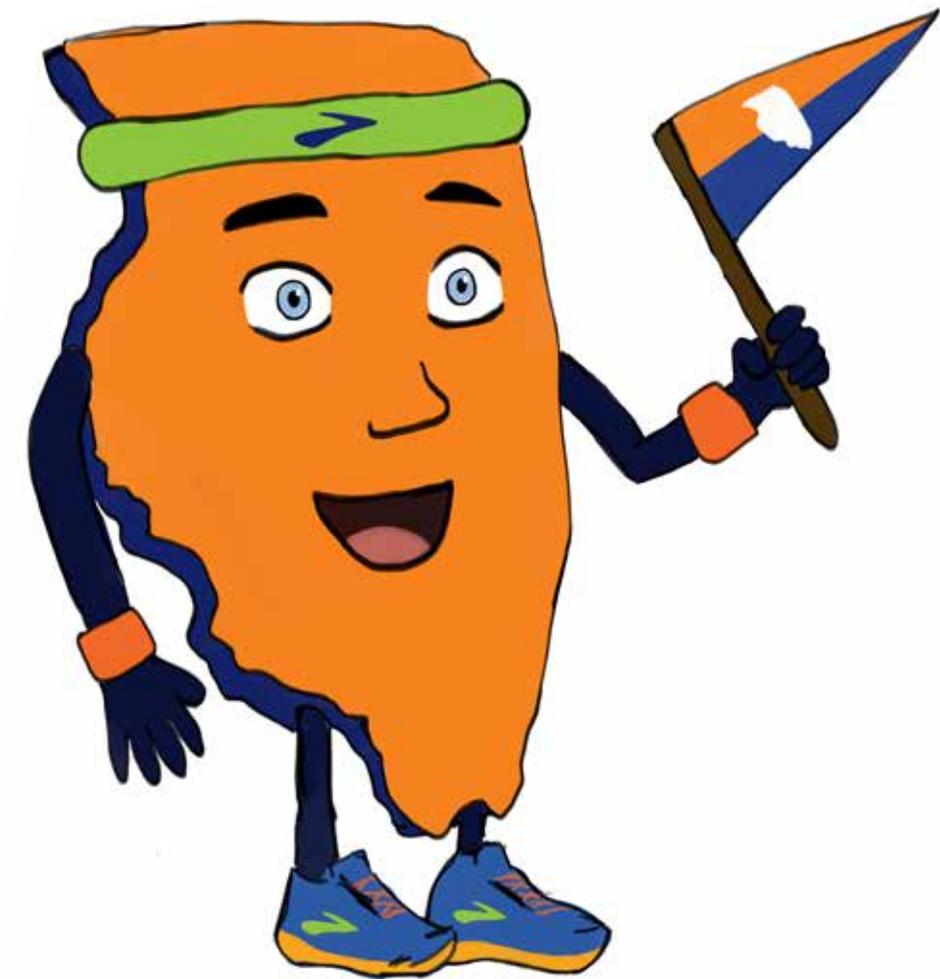
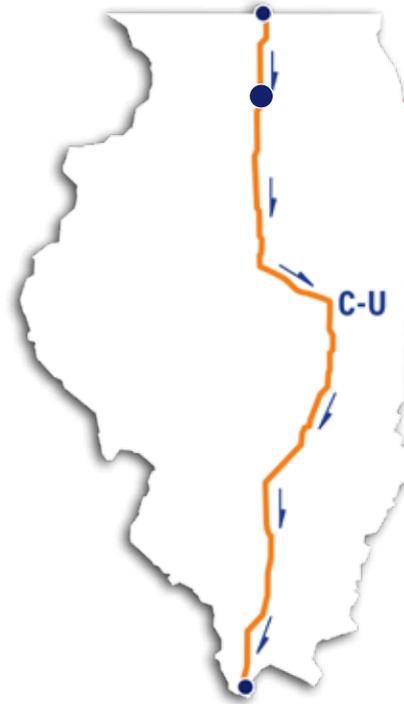
- An Old Fashioned Christmas Walk in nearby Rochelle is a destination for annual cheer.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Located in Ogle County, with Rochelle close by, state and local parks, walking paths, and a bike path provide ample outdoor opportunities for the region.

Learn more about Hillcrest, Illinois

- <https://www.hillcrestil.us/community/page/resources>
- Visit Northwest Illinois <https://www.visitnorthwestillinois.com/>
- Ogle County Illinois <https://www.oglecounty.org/>



Established in 1856
 Population...650
 Geographic size...1.15 square miles

Known For

- Located along historic Lincoln Highway, the first U.S. transcontinental road for automobiles, stretching 3,000 miles from New York City to San Francisco.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Birthplace of U.S. Representative Knute Hill of Washington, who represented Washington's 4th district from 1933–1943.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

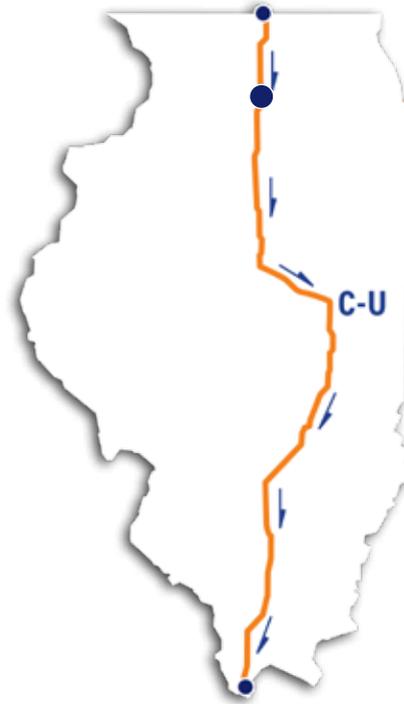
- The village boasts a vibrant and thriving agricultural base as a highlight of the community.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...159 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- The Creston Lincoln Highway Interpretive Mural and Gazebo depicts the drinking fountains along Lincoln Highway throughout Illinois, which was the only state along the Lincoln Highway to have drinking fountains along the route.



Annual Events

- Creston Booster Days, an annual event hosted by the village for more than 60 years, is renowned as one of the top small-town festivals in the region.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Natural areas, parks, and resources are nearby within Ogle County, including three state parks, hiking, biking, and walking trails.

Unique Amenities

- Home of the Creston Regulators Vintage Baseball Team, playing baseball according to rules of the mid-late 1800s in period uniforms, encountering fellow Vintage Baseball Association teams throughout the state.

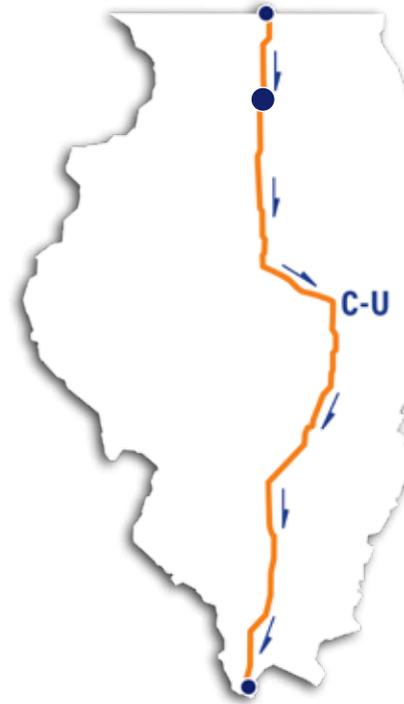
Learn more about Creston, Illinois

- <http://www.villageofcreston.org>
- Creston-Dement Public Library <http://crestonlib.org/>
- Visit Northwest Illinois <https://www.visitnorthwestillinois.com/>
- Ogle County Illinois <https://www.oglecounty.org/>



Creston, Illinois, is home to the Regulators Vintage Baseball Team.

Became a city in 1853
 Population...9,574
 Geographic size...12.919 square miles



Known For

- The city has been known by several names throughout history. Originally known as Land, then Hickory Grove, it became referred to as Hang Town by residents after the Civil War because of a vigilante action. Recognizing a need for a new name to attract residents and visitors, Rochelle was selected, having been suggested by a bottle of Rochelle Salts in the local pharmacy.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Located along historic Lincoln Highway, the first U.S. transcontinental road for automobiles, stretching 3,000 miles from New York City to San Francisco.
- Crossed by major roadways and railway lines, forming a visual hub of a wagon wheel on a map, Rochelle earned the moniker “Hub City,” a name seen in area businesses as well as the high school team name “Hubs.”
- Actors Joan Allen and Lloyd Ingraham; professional football player Stan Campbell; Olympian William W. May; and journalist and women’s suffragist advocate Mabel Craft Deering name a few notable residents who have called Rochelle home.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Home to a Bright Farms location that produces one million pounds of produce hydroponically, using beneficial bugs, such as ladybugs, in place of pesticides. Produce is available for purchase in supermarkets throughout Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...158 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- The Rochelle Lincoln Highway Interpretive Mural reflects the travels of Emily Post along the Lincoln Highway as she wrote about her experience for *Collier’s* magazine. Emily spent several days in Rochelle, enjoying the welcoming, sociable reception she received from the community.

Annual Events

- The Old Fashioned Christmas Walk complete with a lighted parade, horse and carriage rides, and community tree lighting brings warmth to the area even on the chilliest of December nights.
- Railroad Days celebrate the rich history and ties to the nation’s railway system and hub of rail transportation throughout the town.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Situated in Ogle County, an abundance of outdoor recreation is nearby with three state parks in the area.
- Closer to home, open space, hiking, boating, fishing, picnicking, and more can be found through the 25 parks located within the Flagg-Rochelle Community Park District.

Unique Amenities

- The Rochelle Railroad Park is the first park in the nation designed for visitors to view operating trains. The park is open year-round, complete with a pavilion, for railroad enthusiasts to view the approximately 80 to 90 trains that pass through Rochelle in a 24-hour period. Visitors can also tune in to live dispatcher communications.
- The Flagg Township Museum, located in an Italianate structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places, interprets the area’s local history through exhibit and events.

Learn more about Rochelle, Illinois

- <https://www.cityofrochelle.net/>
- Enjoy Rochelle <http://www.enjoyrochelle.com/>
- Flagg-Rochelle Public Library District <http://www.rochellepubliclibrary.org/home/welcome/>
- Flagg Township Museum <http://www.flaggtownshipmuseumrochelle.org/home.aspx>
- Visit Northwest Illinois <https://www.visitnorthwestillinois.com/>
- Ogle County Illinois <https://www.oglecounty.org/>

Founded in 1870
Population...256
Geographic size...0.2 square miles

Known For

- The village is named for Wesley Steward, who arrived in the area in 1855 and was instrumental in bringing the Chicago and Iowa Railroad (later Burlington Northern) through the area in 1870.
- For over 15 years, the village has been a Tree City USA, planting trees, celebrating Arbor Day, and establishing a committee to meet the requirements of this affiliation.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Birthplace of professional baseball player Leroy Hermann, pitcher for the Chicago Cubs (1932-33) and Cincinnati Reds (1935).

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

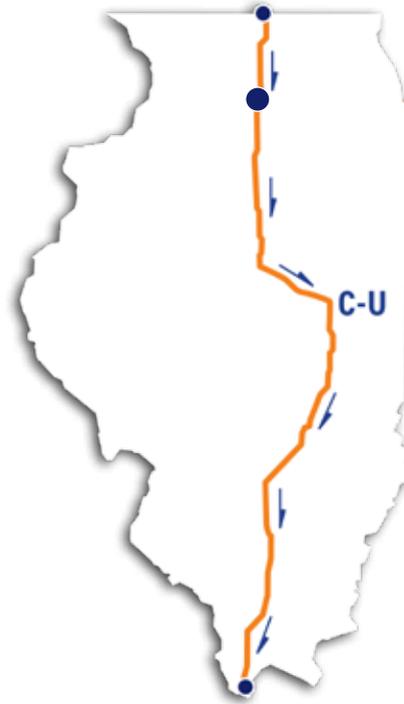
- Distance to C-U from the location...151 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- The Steward Celebration Garden honors and celebrates community residents in a peaceful garden setting.

Annual Events

- Stewardfest, a community celebration, is held annually the first Friday in August.



Natural Areas and Resources

- Located within Lee County, outdoor amenities such as the Franklin Creek State Natural Area with birding, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, and the Nachusa Grasslands where bison roam are within miles of this community.

Unique Amenities

- The Historic Train Depot, dating to 1896, provides a peek into the past and an appreciation for the present, housing a local history museum within its historic structure.

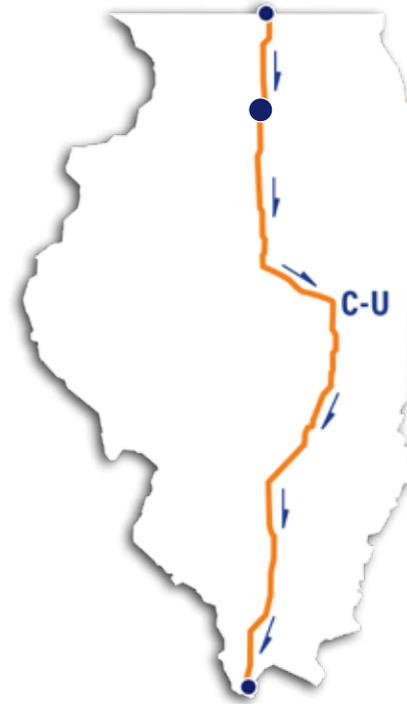
Learn more about Steward, Illinois

- <https://www.stewardil.com/>
- Lee County Illinois <https://leecountyfun.com/>



Steward, Illinois, has been a Tree City USA for 15 consecutive years. To keep this distinction, the town must have an Arbor Day Proclamation, celebrate Arbor Day, have a tree ordinance and tree committee, and spend at least \$2 per capita on trees each year. The town is supporting the Arbor Day Foundation's initiative for 2022—the 150th anniversary of Arbor Day—to plant 100 million trees and inspire 5 million new tree planters.

Founded in 1875
 Population...347
 Geographic size...0.16 square miles



Known For

- The village began as Melugin Grove in 1833, after Zachariah Melugin settled the area along the stage route between Galena and Chicago. During the period of railroad expansion, railroad tracks laid in 1872 surprisingly did not follow the stage route and instead were laid one mile away through property owned by Joel Compton. Businesses in town quickly moved closer to the land near the railroad, and the village of Compton was established in 1875.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- At one time in the community's development, one of the most prominent institutions in the areas was the Chandler Hospital, established by physician Dr. A.W. Chandler, which treated patients from throughout the country.
- Birthplace of professional baseball player Joe Zdeb, outfielder for the Kansas City Royals (1977–1979).

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...142 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- A quick trip through Lee County to Dixon leads to the Reagan Peace Park, home of a twenty-foot outdoor marble sculpture, "Wings of Peace and Freedom," and murals depicting President Reagan's "Tear Down This Wall" speech.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Mathesius Memorial Park offers a baseball field, picnic shelter, and playground for area residents.
- Located within Lee County, outdoor amenities such as the Franklin Creek State Natural Area with birding, hiking, fishing, horseback riding, and the Nachusa Grasslands where bison roam are within miles of this community.

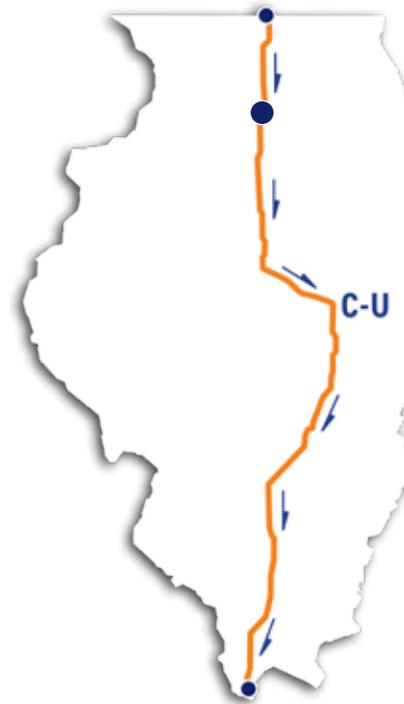
Learn more about Compton, Illinois

- <http://genealogytrails.com/ill/lee/leecitycompton.html>
- Lee County Illinois <https://leecountyfun.com/>



Mathesius Memorial Park in Compton, Illinois.

Settled in 1834 and official named in 1878
 Population...870
 Geographic size...0.59 square miles



Known For

- The village name was derived from a forest of Pawpaw trees that produce the largest edible fruits indigenous to the United States. Sweet and reminiscent of banana, mango, and pineapple, the fruits are most used in baked desserts and ice cream.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Located along the Frink & Walker stagecoach line between Galena and Chicago.
- Birthplace of major league baseball player George Bristow, outfielder for the Cleveland Spiders (1899), U.S. Representative Ulysses S. Guyer, football coach Jessee Harper, and educator Robben Wright Fleming.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...142 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- Within Lee County, a visit to neighboring communities are home to an historic arch, plaques, and sculpture.

Annual Events

- An annual car show, parade, and entertainment mark the annual Lions Club Labor Day Celebration in the community.
- Area runners, walkers, cyclists, and fitness enthusiasts can find events throughout the year within Lee County.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Lion's Park, with a baseball field and playground, provides outdoor opportunities close to home.

Unique Amenities

- The Stephen Wright House, an example of Queen Anne style architecture, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Learn more about Paw Paw, Illinois

- <https://pawpawil.org/>
- Lee County Illinois <https://leecountyfun.com/>



Pawpaw are native to North America, growing wild in 26 states. They taste like a combination of banana, pineapple, and mango; they are nutritional superstars, and they are great to cook with. Pawpaw meringue pie, anyone?

First settled in 1836, unincorporated and located within Meriden Township, and founded in 1849
Population...316
Geographic size...35.28 square miles

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Since 1954, drive-in movies have been a mainstay at the Route 34 Drive-In in nearby Earlville.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

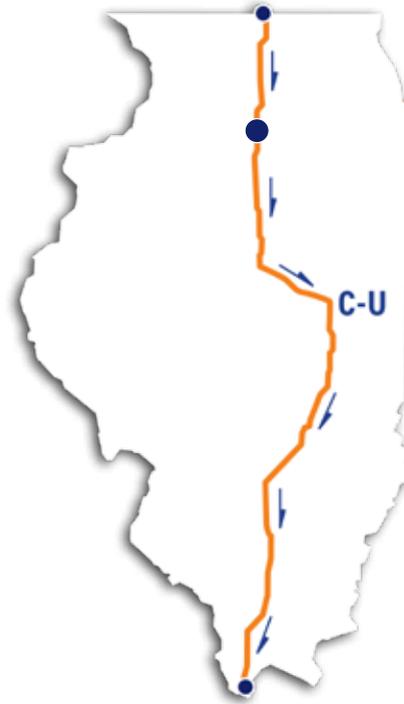
- Distance to C-U from the location...131 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Natural Areas and Resources

- Located within LaSalle County, four state parks, areas for running, boating, fishing, hiking, birding, camping, and exploring are abundant.

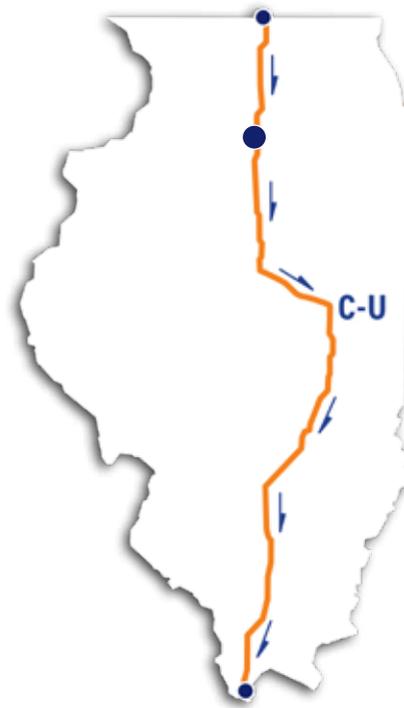
Learn more about Meriden, Illinois

- Meriden Township <https://www.toi.org/township/lasalle-county-meriden-township>
- Meriden History <http://genealogytrails.com/ill/lasalle/township/meriden.html>
- LaSalle County Illinois <https://lasallecounty.org/>
- Enjoy LaSalle County <http://www.enjoylasallecounty.com/>



Residents of Meriden, Illinois, have been going to the nearby Route 34 Drive-In in Earlville, Illinois, since 1954.

Incorporated in 1853
 Population...7,372
 Geographic size...5.15 square miles



Known For

- The name Mendota is derived from a Lakota word meaning “junction of two trails,” appropriate since there is a junction of the Illinois Central Railroad and Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Mendota has been home to several prominent residents, from inventor William P. Bettendorf to football players Bill Brown, Ray Jauch, Frank Seno, to professional baseball players Otto Vogel and Deacon White to cartoonist Helen Hokinson to motorcycle designer Jason Pohl and Illinois state legislator David C. Shapiro.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Early industry included Mother Hubbard washboards, Schaller and Goebel buggies and carriages, Extra Pale beer, and the manufacture of high-style pump organs.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...132 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...7

Public Art

- Silo art depicting an 80-foot ear of corn was established as one of the first silo art pieces in the area as part of the North Central Illinois ARTworks’ Silo Pathways Countryside Public Art Tour.

Annual Events

- The Mendota Sweet Corn Festival held every August treats visitors to corn cooked to perfection in a vintage steam engine.
- Each Labor Day, the Mendota Tri-County Fair hosts carnival rides, entertainment, and events at the fairgrounds where in 2013 the English rock band, the Arctic Monkeys, filmed a music video.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Lake Mendota and Lake Kakusha provide boating and fishing opportunities for the community.
- Snyder’s Grove is a 104-acre nature preserve complete with shelters and picnic areas for a full day of outdoor enjoyment.

Unique Amenities

- Home to three museums—the Hume-Carnegie Museum (featuring a small collection pertaining to Wild Bill Hickok), the Union Depot Railroad Museum, and the Breaking the Prairie Museum.

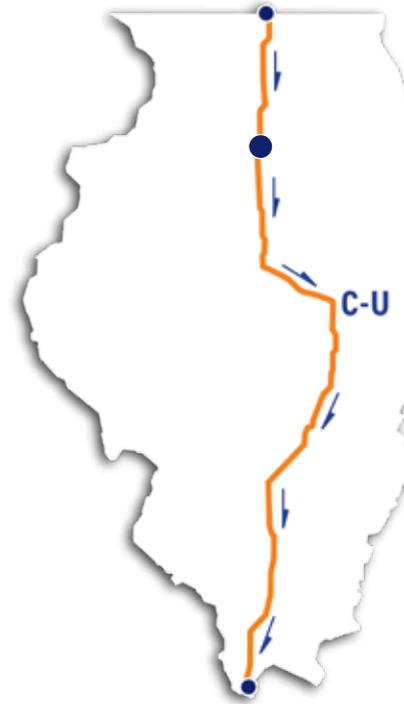
Learn more about Mendota, Illinois

- <https://www.mendota.il.us/>
- Mendota Area Chamber of Commerce <http://www.mendotachamber.com/>
- Mendota Museum and Historical Society <http://www.mendotamuseums.org/>
- LaSalle County Illinois <https://lasallecounty.org/>
- Enjoy LaSalle County <http://www.enjoylasallecounty.com/>



“Mendota Gold,” created by Ray Paseka and his team, is hand-painted on the southern silo at Northern Partners Cooperative in downtown, Mendota, Illinois.

Incorporated in 1886
Population...250
Geographic size...0.69 square miles



Known For

- Originally laid out by an early settler from Homer, New York, the town was called Homer for a time until it was noted that a post office already existed in Homer, Illinois. Taking its name from the local grove, named for an early settler, the area became known as Troy Grove.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Birthplace to Wild Bill Hickok, folk hero of the American Old West.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Silica sand, used for making glass, is mined in the area of Troy Grove. The raw material is transported from the active mines via the Union Pacific Railroad.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...124 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- Home to the Wild Bill Hickok Memorial, a state historic site operated by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Annual Events

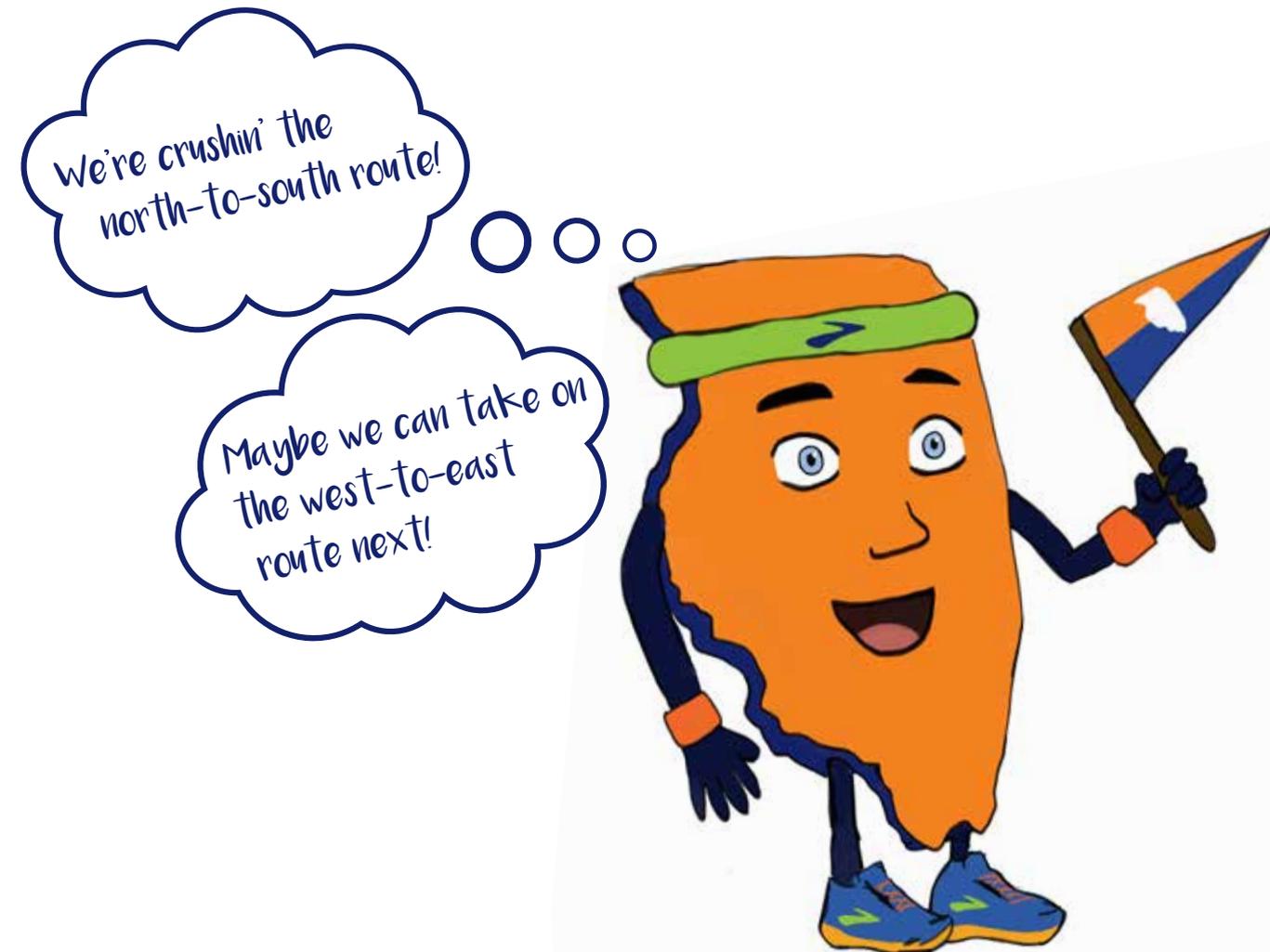
- Area events throughout LaSalle County in nearby Utica and Starved Rock State Park provide events and activities.

Natural Areas and Resources

- State and local parks, preserves, and trails dot the landscape throughout LaSalle County and are within a few miles from Troy Grove.

Learn more about Troy Grove, Illinois

- Troy Grove History <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~illasall/townhist/troygrove.htm>
- Mendota Area Chamber of Commerce <http://www.mendotachamber.com/>
- LaSalle County Illinois <https://lasallecounty.org/>
- Enjoy LaSalle County <http://www.enjoylasallecounty.com/>



Originally platted in 1838 and established as a city in 1852
 Population...9,609
 Geographic size...13.57 square miles



Known For

- Named in honor of the French explorer Robert de LaSalle.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- The Illinois & Michigan Canal was an original idea of the explorer Louis Joliet. When Illinois became a state, the idea of a canal connecting Lake Michigan to the Illinois River was well received with Abraham Lincoln one of the noted supporters.
- Many accomplished individuals have called LaSalle home. Professional baseball and football players, film directors, sports coaches, Illinois politicians, state and federal judges, an author, artist, architect, and journalists are just some of the professions represented by residents of LaSalle.
- Known as “Little Reno” after the era of Prohibition, gambling, though not legal nor sanctioned, became the primary commercial business from 1933–1953.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Coal mining under the city during the 1850s and the establishment of the first zinc smelting plant in the United States earned LaSalle and its twin city, Peru, the name Zinc City, spanning the years 1858–1978.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...116 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...1

Public Art

- Located in LaSalle County, nearby Ottawa’s downtown Ottawa Mural Walking Tour provides public art and history appreciation to area visitors to the county.

Annual Events

- Area events throughout LaSalle County in nearby Utica and Starved Rock State Park provide events and activities nearby.

Natural Areas and Resources

- The I & M Canal National Heritage Area is home to outdoor exploration along the canal by foot, bicycle, and boat.

Unique Amenities

- The I & M Canal Boat, a replica boat that was pulled by mule down the Illinois & Michigan Canal, takes riders on this boat pulled by mule during the summer months.
- National Historic Structures are abundant in LaSalle, with the Hegeler Carus Mansion, home of the owners of one of the largest zinc producers in the world; Hotel Kaskaskia; Julius W. Hegeler House; and the LaSalle City Building.

Learn more about LaSalle, Illinois

- <https://www.lasalle-il.gov/>
- LaSalle Public Library <https://www.lasalle.lib.il.us/>
- LaSalle County Illinois <https://lasallegcounty.org/>
- Enjoy LaSalle County <http://www.enjoylasallegcounty.com/>
- I & M Canal National Heritage Area <https://iandmcanal.org/>



You can take an I&M Canal mule-pulled boat ride in LaSalle, Illinois, aboard “Volunteer,” a replica 1840s canal boat.

The first settler arrived in 1830;
 incorporated 1851
 Population...10,295
 Geographic size...9.77 square miles



Known For

- Early home as a steamboat port along the Illinois River.
- Since 1915, Peru has been home to the Carus Chemical Company, one of the largest producers of potassium permanganate in the world.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- With access to the Illinois & Michigan Canal, railroad lines and four coal mines in the area, Peru enjoyed a position as a hub of industry for nearly 100 years beginning in the 1830s.
- Businesses thrived in the early development years with Maze Lumber, Maze Nails, Peru Plow and Wheel Works, Huse and Loomis Ice Co, Brunner Foundry, Star Union Brewery, Hebel Brewery, and Illinois Zinc.
- Charles F. Gunther, inventor of the caramel, has called Peru home along with professional football players, actors, Illinois politicians, a congressman, major league baseball players, state and federal judges, Civil War Generals, composers, musicians, inventors, and the oldest person to have called Illinois home, Wilhelmina Kott.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Coal mining and the establishment of the first zinc smelting plant in the United States during the 1850s earned Peru and its twin city LaSalle the name Zinc City, spanning the years 1858–1978.

- The Western Clock Company, which emerged from the bankrupt United Clock Company, gained national recognition with the alarm clock trademarked “Westclox.” The company was also nationally recognized as a model organization for employee benefits, insurance, and safety.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...114 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...2

Public Art

- Located in LaSalle County, nearby Ottawa’s downtown Ottawa Mural Walking Tour provides public art and history appreciation to area visitors to the county.

Annual Events

- Christkindlmarket festival in twin city LaSalle celebrates the winter season with a German holiday market.

Natural Areas and Resources

- The I & M Canal National Heritage Area is home to outdoor exploration along the canal by foot, bicycle, and boat.
- Baker Lake Park is a destination for fishing, picnicking, soccer, and a paved one-mile walking path.

Unique Amenities

- Westclox Museum preserving and exhibiting the history of the Western Clock Company, also known as “Westclox.”
- Location of the Igloo Diner founded in 1937 during the Great Depression.

Learn more about Peru, Illinois

- <https://www.peru.il.us/>
- LaSalle County Illinois <https://lasallemounty.org/>
- Enjoy LaSalle County <http://www.enjoylasallemounty.com/>
- I & M Canal National Heritage Area <https://iandmcanal.org/>

Officially became a town in 1902
 Population...4,483
 Geographic size... 4.11 square miles

Known For

- Originally referred to as Kenosha, after the Kenosha Coal Company sank a coal mining shaft there in 1865, and then named Portland because the cement manufactured in the area was similar to Portland Cement in England. Finally, in 1913, the citizens of Portland voted to rename the town after the former U.S. Senator and three-time Illinois Governor, Richard James Oglesby.
- Located near the confluence of the Illinois River and the north-flowing Vermilion River, Oglesby was a center for mining coal, limestone, and silica.
- Cement being a major industry in the town for over 100 years.
- Being home to Illinois Valley Community College, a top Illinois community college.
- Where friends and rivers meet.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- A number of athletes hail from the town, including Jim Bottomley, first baseman for the St. Louis Cardinals, Cincinnati Reds, and St. Louis Browns; Frank Lamanske, pitcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers; Bo Molenda, fullback (and later coach) for the Green Bay Packers and New York Giants; and Walt Tauscher, pitcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates and Washington Senators.



Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...112 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- A mural created during the Depression to boost the morale of the American people—*The Illini and Potawatomi Struggle at Starved Rock*—resides in the town's post office and received a restoration in 1988.
- A major city icon was demolished in 2001—the Shippingsport Bridge, a steel, lift bridge across the Illinois River that originally opened in 1929 and served as the main north and south road until the 1960s, when Route 51 was moved. Its demise left only two other steel, lift bridges in Illinois.

Annual Events

- Harvest Fest takes place the third Saturday in October and includes a craft and vendor fair, parade, trick or treating downtown, and more.
- Christmas Candyland celebrates the holiday season the second Sunday in December and invites residents to explore store fronts and stops throughout town for a winter treat.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Home to Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks, where you can hike among the beautiful sandstone canyons, see seasonal waterfalls, and much more. See pages 44–45 for more details.

Unique Fact

- Fay E. Davis's historic mural depicting the legend of the struggle at Starved Rock has been a bit of a lightning rod since its completion in 1942. In 1993, a post office custodian launched a complaint that the nudity in the mural created a hostile work environment. This led to the painting being covered, although viewable upon request. Townspeople joined forces to support uncovering the work of art and, after an investigation determined that the nudity was not offensive, the painting remains uncovered in the lobby of the Oglesby post office.

Learn more about Oglesby, Illinois

- <http://www.oglesby.il.us/newsite/>
- Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce <http://www.oglesby.il.us/newsite/chamber-of-commerce/>
- Oglesby Public Library <https://oglesbylibrary.org/timeline/>

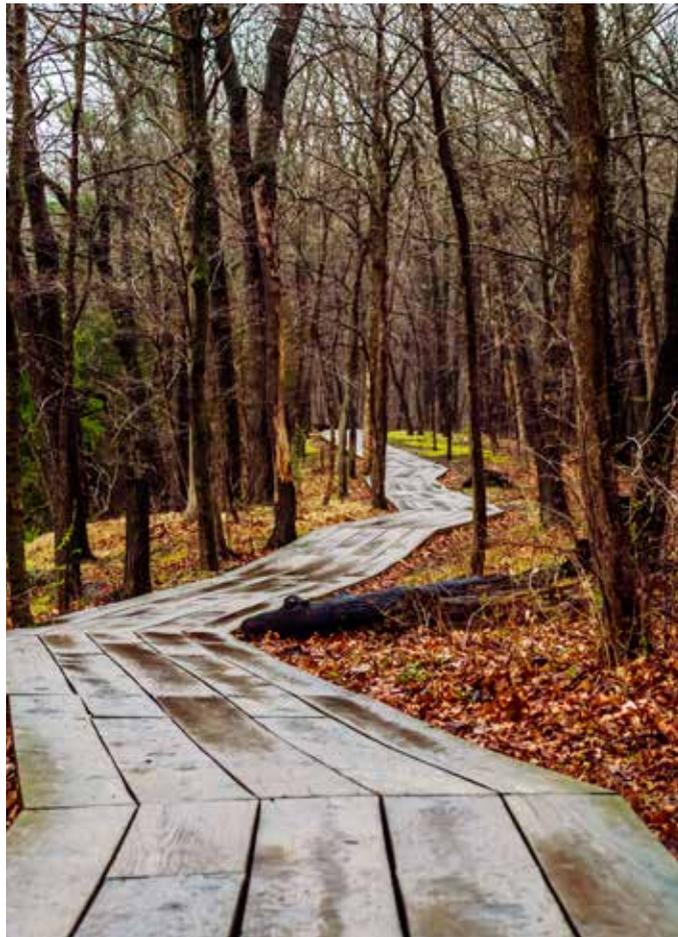
Starved Rock State Park & Matthiessen State Park

About Starved Rock State Park

- Starved Rock State Park encompasses 2,630 acres and greets over two million visitors a year, making it the most visited of any Illinois state parks. You'll find 13 miles of trails, 18 deep canyons, numerous waterfalls, and breathtaking Illinois River bluff overlooks. The far west side of the park has horseback riding trails. There's also a lodge/conference center, visitor's center, camping, fishing, boating, and many picnic areas. Birders flock to the park to see the bald eagles that are transitory to the area.

How the Park Got Its Name

- The area was originally home to Native Americans, particularly the Kaskaskia. The first Europeans arrived in the 17th century, and by 1683, the French had built Fort St. Louis on a large sandstone butte overlooking the Illinois River. According to local legend, in the late 17th century, a group of Native Americans of the Illinois Confederation who were being pursued by the Ottawa and Potawatomi took refuge on the butte. Around 1769, the Ottawa and Potawatomi attacked the butte until all of the Illiniwek had starved, and the butte became known as "Starved Rock." The area around The Rock was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960.



A winding trail in Starved Rock State Park.
© Jeff Heidrich

About Matthiessen State Park

- Matthiessen State Park is the lesser-known of the two parks. While smaller, at 1,938 acres, the park's fabulous trails, waterfalls, and spectacular geological formations—minus all the crowds found at Starved Rock—make it extra appealing. The entrance is also located on Illinois State Route 178, a few miles south of Starved Rock State Park.

How the Park Got Its Name

- The park is named for Frederick William Matthiessen, who had originally owned the 176 acres of property that makes the core of the current park. Two mansions, several cottages, a garage, and a private fire station were built here by Matthiessen for his family. Following Matthiessen's death in 1918, his heirs donated the park to the state. It was renamed in his honor in 1943, and in subsequent decades lots more land was added to the park.



The upper dell at Matthiessen State Park.

A LaSalle County village incorporated in 1922
Population...277
Geographic size...1.02 square miles

Known For

- Named after Cedar Point Mine, which operated north of town from 1906 to 1924.
- The LaSalle Carbon Coal Company, which sunk the Number 5 Mine in 1906. The mine closed in 1924.
- June Bug's Corral Inn, owned for the last 53 years by Charlotte Olson, who tells us that people come from far and wide to eat her fried chicken, ravioli, and fried turtle. The postmaster in Tonica, Illinois, confirmed that claim!! Located at 108 4th St in Cedar Point.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...111 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Annual Events

- There's an annual Cops for Cancer fundraiser each June.

Natural Areas and Resources

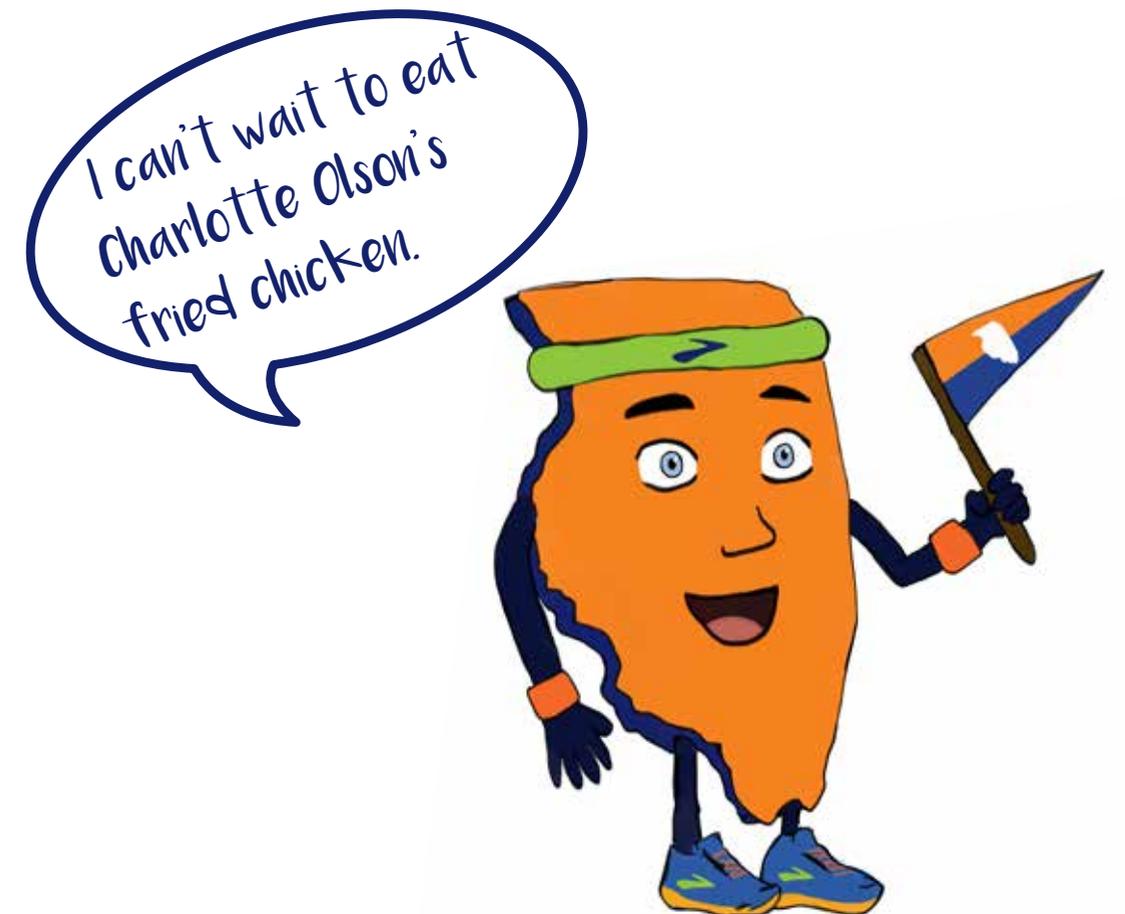
- The town has one park named Cerri Memorial Park.

Learn more about Cedar Point, Illinois

- LaSalle County Illinois <https://lasallecounty.org/>
- Enjoy LaSalle County <http://www.enjoylasallecounty.com/commerce/>



June Bug's Corral Inn in Cedar Point, Illinois.



Founded in 1853
Population...768
Geographic size...1.36 square miles



Known For

- Tonica was originally a small hamlet called Point Republic. The village was founded in 1853 by Andrew West, the local agent for the Illinois Central Railroad, which had started running its trains through the area in May of that year. When a bridge over the Illinois River was completed in 1854, Tonica gained access to trade and new business opportunities.
- The name Tonica derives from the Tunica people, a group of linguistically and culturally related Native American tribes in the Mississippi River Valley that West learned about while growing up in New York.
- An 1867 fire destroyed nearly every building in the business section of Main Street, except for one lone brick building. Armed by the lesson of the fire, the town rebuilt immediately, making sure to erect substantial brick structures, some of which still stand today.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- In its early days, Tonica's chief shipping interest was in livestock, principally hogs. The town had the reputation of shipping more pork than any village of its size on the Illinois Central Railroad.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...106 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Unique Fact

- Sadly, *The Tonica News*, which was established in 1873 and covered local news, sports, business, and community events in Tonica, Lostant, and the surrounding communities of LaSalle County, stopped publishing in May 2020.

Learn more about Tonica, Illinois

- LaSalle County Illinois <https://lasallecounty.org/>
- Enjoy LaSalle County <http://www.enjoylasallecounty.com/>

The Tonica News

*Serving the Tonica & Lostant
area since 1873*

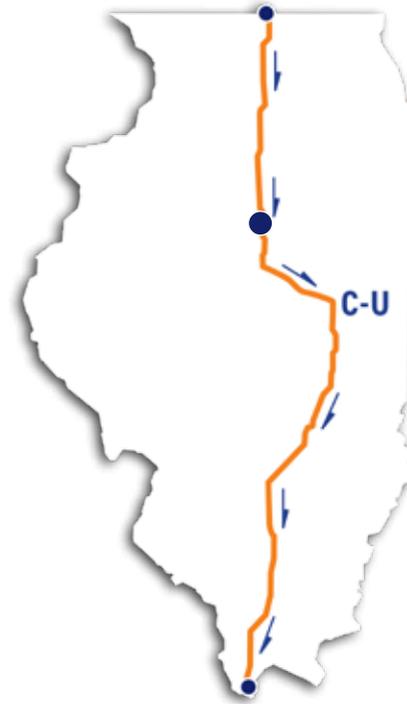
815-442-8419

The Tonica News
P.O. Box 86, Tonica, IL 61370

news@tonicanews.com

LaSalle County residents will miss The Tonica News, which stopped publishing in May 2020, after almost 150 years in print.

A LaSalle County village incorporated in 1867
 Population...484, including the cats and dogs
 Geographic size...1.124 square miles



Known For

- Lostant was sometimes known as L'Ostant in its early days. John M. Richey from Mushingum County, Ohio, laid out the village in September of 1861, and the citizens voted to incorporate in 1867.
- The first post office in the village opened in 1862.
- By 1886, the town was “booming” and had three general stores, two grocery stores, two hardware stores, a furniture store, two druggists, two millinery stores, three saloons, a restaurant, a boot and shoe store, two shoemakers, two harness shops, a wagon shop, two blacksmith shops, two grain elevators, two barber shops, a mill, two tile factories, two meat markets, a carpenter and a contractor, a lumber-yard, a broom factory, a music store, two physicians, and one lawyer. Today, just a handful of businesses remain.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- In the late 19th century, it is believed that more grain shipped from Lostant than any other station on the Illinois Central Railroad between Bloomington and Freeport. The two large elevators used to ship yearly between 600,000 and 700,000 bushels of grain.
- Today, Lostant is primarily a farming community. Ruff Brothers Grain Company has a grain elevator in Lostant and many towns in the area.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...101 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Annual Events

- An annual Lostant Fall Fest lasted about 15 years but is not held any longer.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Village Park, on the east side of town, is a small-town green space with playground equipment and a pavilion, perfect for friend and family gatherings.

Unique Amenities

- Dave’s Lost Ant Café, 1422 North US Highway 251, is a must-visit when you are in/near Lostant. David Holmes, who has lived in Lostant for more than 30 years, is described as the “nicest owner alive.” You’ll get great service, great food, and a cozy vibe. Dave opens early for the local farmers looking for a good breakfast to start their day and stays open late for folks who want to hang out at the bar. His noon lunches are popular. Be sure to try his fried chicken and his tacos.

Learn more about Lostant, Illinois

- LaSalle County Illinois <https://lasallecounty.org/>
- Enjoy LaSalle County <http://www.enjoylasallecounty.com/>



Dave's Lost Ant Cafe in Lostant, Illinois.

A LaSalle County village founded in 1855
Population...304
Geographic size... 0.69 square miles

Known For

- The village was founded as “New Rutland” in 1855 when about 200 members of the Vermont Emigration Association paid \$10 each for a plot of land. Rutland is a town in Vermont. Located in the southern panhandle of LaSalle County, the original location of the town-site was exclusively within LaSalle County, until 10 additional blocks of land were added in October 1856. The western border of the village is the LaSalle/Marshall County line.
- Other than homes, all we can find in Rutland is a post office, a park, and an American Legion Post 1121.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...89 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Natural Areas and Resources

- There is one park that seems to go by both the name Rutland Park and Stenger Park.

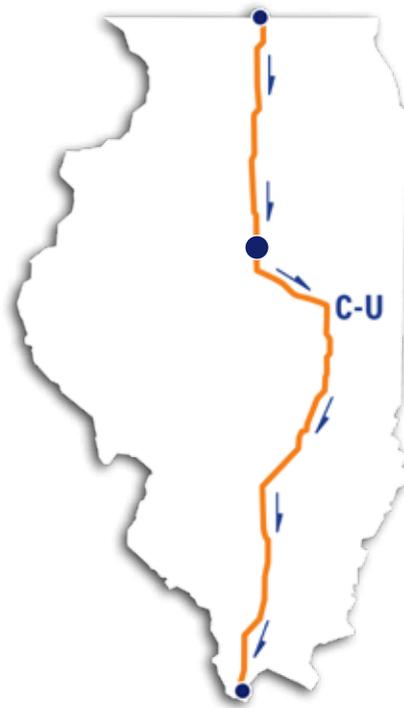
Learn more about Rutland, Illinois

- LaSalle County Illinois <https://lasallecounty.org/>
- Enjoy LaSalle County <http://www.enjoylasallecounty.com/>



The Rutland, Illinois, post office.

Settled in 1854; located by railroad engineer David Neal
 Population...2,078
 Geographic size...2.42 square miles



Known For

- The meaning of the town's name has been a source of controversy, with differing accounts as to its origin. Some say it is the Ojibwa Indian Tribe word meaning "a good place" while others reference "Minonk" as a Mohican term meaning "high point." Despite that historical controversy, the community agrees with the town motto, which is a "Good Place" to Live.
- With three railroad lines calling Minonk home over the years, the community grew with the railroad and earned an identity as a railroad town.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Minonk marked a significant place in history becoming the first city in the country to install incandescent lighting on both the city streets and within the homes of the city's residents.
- Birthplace of microbiologist and mycologist Charles Thom whose contributions were significant in the development of penicillin during World War II.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Lumber and coal mining were integral to the town's development, with several coal mines and four lumber yards established there.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...86 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...1

Natural Areas and Resources

- The city boasts a variety of beautiful and well-maintained parks for the community to enjoy. The community parks are operated by a Parks & Recreation Board comprised of all volunteers.

Learn more about Minonk, Illinois

- <https://cityofminonk.com/>
- Filger Public Library <https://minonklibrary.wordpress.com/>
- City Data for Minonk <http://www.city-data.com/city/Minonk-Illinois.html>



The Minonk town motto.

Founded with the larger township of El Paso in 1861
 Population...2,810
 Geographic size...2.13 square miles

Known For

- Named after El Paso, Texas, by founders George Gibson and James Wathen.

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- The city of El Paso used manual switching of telephone lines until 1975 and was the last location in the contiguous United States to do so.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- El Paso has been home to notable residents including an Illinois legislator and a college athletic coach.
- The city has also produced recognizable television faces as the birthplace of both Archbishop Fulton John Sheen of the Catholic Hour and actor Byron Keith of *Batman* and *77 Sunset Strip*.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location... 74 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...9

Annual Events

- The city hosts an annual National Night Out, the first Tuesday of August. As part of a nationwide event, the annual night promotes a sense of community through neighborhood activities and police-community relationship building.



Natural Areas and Resources

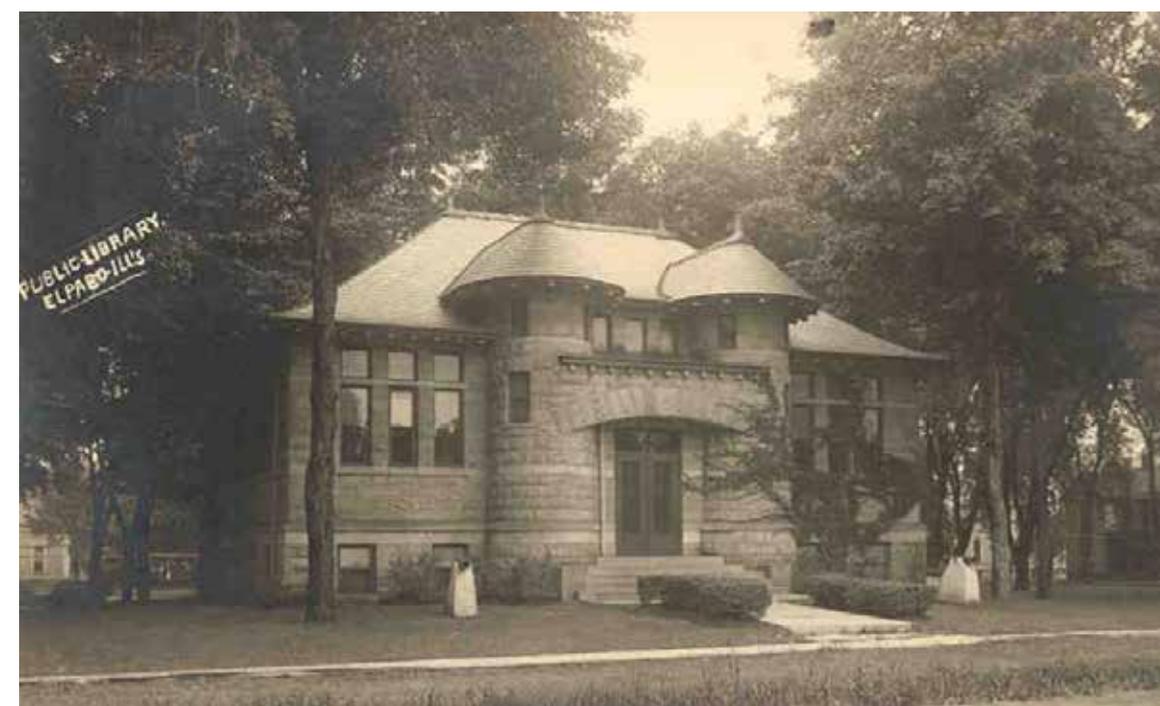
- Parks and outdoor activities are abundant through the city's Parks and Recreation department. Ball fields, playgrounds, and picnicking are easily accessible to residents.
- South Pointe Park boasts 40 acres of outdoor recreation with something for everyone, from ballfields and courts to a frisbee golf course and an Olympic-sized pool.

Unique Amenities

- The El Paso Public Library, built in 1906-07 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The library is a Carnegie library, built through funding by Scottish-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.
- Archbishop Fulton John Sheen Spiritual Centre, complete with a museum and located within a former depot.

Learn more about El Paso, Illinois

- <https://www.elpasoil.org/>
- Community History <http://www.allendrake.com/elpasohistory/>
- El Paso Public Library <http://www.elpasopubliclibrary.net/>
- El Paso Chamber of Commerce <http://www.elpasoilchamber.com/index.html>



The El Paso Library, as depicted on a postcard from a series of historic postcards that capture town history, dating back to the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The first settler arrived in 1833
 Population...227
 Geographic size...0.34 square miles

Known For

- Rail and postal service entered the area in 1853, with the first postmaster, William Jones, naming the village Montrose. The Illinois Central Railroad, however, did not care for that name and instead preferred Kappa because Kappa is the tenth letter of the Greek alphabet, and the town's location is the tenth town between Dunleith (East Dubuque today) and Bloomington.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location... 69 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Natural Areas and Resources

- Surrounded by area water sources, Kappa is situated on the north side of the Mackinaw River. Outdoor recreation, sport fishing, and boating can be enjoyed in nearby Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake, both just a few miles from Kappa.

Learn more about Kappa, Illinois

- Kappa City Data <https://www.city-data.com/city/Kappa-Illinois.html>



Historic photo of the railroad depot in Kappa, Illinois.

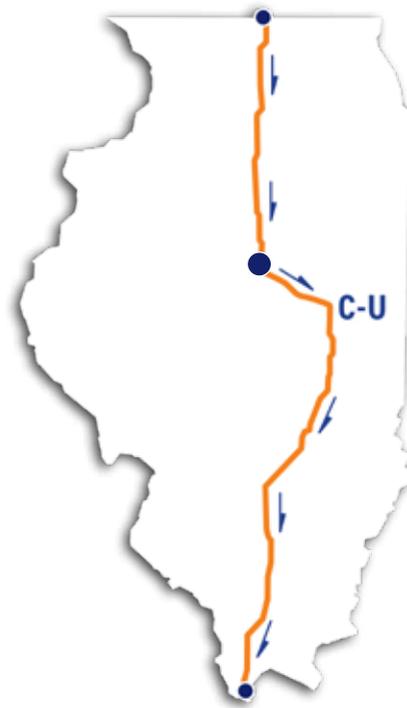
Founded in 1836
Population...1,838
Geographic size...0.83 square miles

Known For

- One of eight towns established during the 1835–1837 real estate boom of central Illinois.
- Created by the Illinois Land Association as a colonial settlement. The design of the colony allowed settlers to migrate as a group to a new location. The settlers would pool their money, purchase a section of land, and then divide it among the group. Hudson is one of two such settlements in McLean County with the Rhode Island colony being the other.
- The origin of the name may be attributed to Hudson, New York, or to the Hudson River.
- A spirit of community throughout the village, living their motto “Product of the Prairie, Pride of the People.”

Place of history, place of entertainment, product, person

- Unlike other central Illinois towns, Hudson does not have a town or public square. The town was designed on an “in lot” and “out lot” concept, modeled after a layout in New England that kept livestock and owners near one another. A rather antiquated design, it is unknown why the town was laid out in this manner.
- Birthplace to film actor Ben Corbet and *Chicago Daily News* owner Melvin Elijah Stone.
- Home to writer and artist Elbert Hubbard, founder of the Arts & Crafts Movement Roycroft community, who met an untimely death upon the sinking of the *Lusitania*.



Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Established in 1933 for and by local farmers, the Hudson Grain Company is a farmer-owned co-op that continues to meet the needs of today’s modern farmer.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...65 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...9

Public Art

- The Melville Stone historical marker was originally located on the Gildersleeve House, the first house in Hudson Colony. The Gildersleeve House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 but razed in 2000. At that time, the marker was relocated within the community.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Hudson is home to multiple parks and recreational areas for picnicking, grilling, and enjoying time outdoors. Complete with full-size baseball and soccer fields and along with a full-size basketball court, there is ample opportunity to play in this community.
- Fishers and boaters will enjoy a day at Lake Bloomington. Originally designed as a man-made lake to supply Bloomington-Normal with a reliable water source, the lake is a source of outdoor recreation for the area.

Unique Amenities

- Timber Pointe Outdoor Center, a joint effort of Central Illinois Easterseals and the Timber Pointe Charitable Foundation, provides inclusive and adaptive programming to meet the needs of individuals and families through a year-round camp and retreat center.

Learn more about Hudson, Illinois

- <http://my.hudsonil.org/>
- Hudson Area Library <https://hudsonarealibrary.com/>
- Hudson Township History http://genealogytrails.com/ill/mclean/history_hudsonwp.html
- Timber Pointe Outdoor Center <https://www.timberpointeoutdoorcenter.com/>

Founded in 1865, incorporated in 1867
 Population...54,742
 Geographic size...18.41 square miles

Known For

- Originally laid out as North Bloomington in 1854, with additions made by Jesse Fell, who had arranged for the new railroad (Chicago and Alton) to come through the area and ultimately toward land he either owned or controlled.
- The name is derived from the establishment of a “normal” school, a school based on French teaching schools. “Normal” was the general moniker for all schools established as teachers’ colleges. Today, the school is known as Illinois State University and provides educational opportunities in many disciplines.
- Adjacent to Bloomington, the communities are often referred to collectively as the “Twin Cities” in their shared metropolitan area.
- Beginning in 1999, Normal has earned and retained the designation of a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation. To achieve this recognition, a city must meet the following requirements: form a tree department; be accountable for the decisions that impact the community’s trees; establish a comprehensive tree ordinance, which provides clear guidance for planting, maintaining, and removing trees from streets, parks, and other public spaces; implement a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita; and declare an annual Arbor Day observance and proclamation.
- Winning the bid to become the site of the Illinois Soldiers’ Orphans’ Home (later known as the Illinois Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Children’s School), Normal became home to the first officially supported child welfare institution in Illinois.
- When incorporated under the State of Illinois charter in 1867, the sale of “intoxicating drinks” was prohibited. This prohibition remained in Normal through the 1970s.



- The town celebrated its 1865 founding in 2015 with a 150 celebration. Businesses, families, and organizations participated in a crowd-sourced History Board project that resulted in a rich collection of facts, photos, stories, and more through the creation of 50+ boards. The History Board and noted locations throughout Normal can be referenced on page 65 in the Learn More about Normal, Illinois section.
- Many notable residents from authors to educators to cartoonists to professional athletes to government servants to musicians have called Normal home.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Booming industry in the 1880s saw the rise of nurseries, canning, and the importing and breeding of Percheron horses. For a time, Normal was a shipping hub for berries, small fruits, and vegetables.
- After attaching a dining room to the side of their Shell gas station in 1934, Gus and Edith Belt began to sell shakes and burgers. By using choice cuts of beef to make ground hamburger, their burgers were known as “steakburgers.” Their restaurant idea really caught on and exists today under the familiar name of Steak ‘n Shake.
- Opening in 1937, the Normal Theatre was the first theatre in the area built for showing silent films. Complete with air conditioning and sound systems, the theatre rivaled New York City’s infamous Radio City Music Hall.
- From 1988 to 2015, a manufacturing facility of Mitsubishi Motors, earlier known as Diamond Star Motors, was a significant fixture in the community.
- DESTIHL Brewery, established in 1991, aims to “support flavor and boycott bland,” through the production of craft libations and unique food pairings using green and sustainable practices.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...53 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...130

Public Art

- “Meet me at the bird” is a phrase that may be heard on the Illinois State University campus, referencing Redbird Plaza, a gathering spot for students, a location for special events, and a place where everyone belongs. Meet at the bronze sculpture of the school’s Redbird mascot and be sure to rub the bird’s beak for luck!
- Throughout the Bloomington-Normal communities, public art and access to art is abundant.

NORMAL

Annual Events

- A calendar and planning are needed for the variety of events offered in the area through the Parks & Recreation Department and Uptown Normal.
- Locals and visitors alike can mark their calendars for several annual events, including the Sweet Corn Festival, Blues Festival, Sugar Creek Arts Festival, Gamma Phi Circus, Rock the Block, and Make Music Normal.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Considered one of the most treasured areas of recreation, the Constitution Trail, with over 50 miles of paved trails, welcomes runners, walkers, hikers, and cyclists of all ages to enjoy the outdoors.
- Just off the Constitution Trail, nature enthusiasts can find respite and wildlife amidst the 5.5 acres preserved in the Hidden Creek Sanctuary.
- With nearly 20 parks, shelters, golf courses, aquatic centers, courts, diamonds, and athletic fields, there is something for everyone to explore outdoors in the community.

Unique Amenities

- Ropp Jersey Cheese, a family-owned operation boasting seventh generation farmers and a “farm to fork” experience, producing creamy, delicious cheeses crafted on-site.
- Since 2015, the White Oak Brewing Company has been brewing up small-batch, hand-crafted libations such as The Brass Rail, brewed in honor of local area first responders.
- Find experiential hands-on fun and learning for children and families at the Children’s Discovery Museum in Uptown Normal.
- Step back in time at the historic Ryburn Place at Sprague’s Super Center, which opened in 1931 and provided a respite for travelers along Route 66, with a café, gas station, garage, and upper-level apartments. On the National Register of Historic Places, the building is also a Town of Normal Landmark and in the Route 66 Illinois Hall of Fame.

Learn more about Normal, Illinois

- <https://www.normal.org/>
- History Boards
<https://tongis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=32202703c8a24e329963c7d69fe6862a>
- Bloomington-Normal Convention & Visitors Bureau <https://www.visitbn.org/>
- Children’s Discovery Museum <https://www.childrensdiscoverymuseum.net/>
- Ryburn Place at Sprague’s Super Service <https://www.childrensdiscoverymuseum.net/>
- Ropp Jersey Cheese <https://roppcheese.com/>
- White Oak Brewing Company <http://www.whiteoak.beer/>
- DESTIHL Brewery <https://destihl.com/home-1>
- Illinois State University <https://illinoisstate.edu/>



Iconic Redbird Plaza on the Illinois State University campus.

Founded in 1822 and became an official town in 1831
Population...77,962
Geographic size...27,229 square miles

Known For

- Ordinarily settled as Keg Grove, then as Blooming Grove (for all the wildflowers in the area) in 1822, the area was laid out and renamed Bloomington in 1831. It remained a village until designated a town in 1831, when McLean County was created.
- Its location as the county seat of McLean County.
- Adjacent to Normal, the communities are often referred to collectively as the “Twin Cities.”
- The Evergreen Cemetery serves as the final resting place for many of Bloomington-Normal’s most respected citizens: Adlai Stevenson, 23rd U.S. Vice President; Dorothy Gage, the inspiration of Dorothy from the *Wizard of Oz*; professional baseball pitcher Charles Radbourne; and many more prominent figures.
- Several notable people have hailed from Bloomington, from actors to musicians to politicians to sports players to writers to game designers and beyond.
- The area is home to Illinois Wesleyan University, a private liberal arts college founded in 1850.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Early industry was agriculturally based with corn and soybean the primary crops along with raising livestock and producing seeds. Later, business ventures expanded into the insurance industry, candy manufacturing, and vacuum cleaners.
- The corporate headquarters of State Farm Insurance and COUNTRY Financial both call Bloomington home and provide employment for a large sector of the area.



- Birthplace and home of the sweet & salty Beer Nuts, Bloomington is the only location in the world to produce this lightly glazed skinned peanut.
- Brewing for the community, the Keg Grove Brewing Company, named for Bloomington’s original name of “Keg Grove,” is committed to the community and crafting beer for everyone.
- Home to the largest Dairy Queen in the United States.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...50.7 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...188

Public Art

- Discover some of Bloomington’s public art through the downtown murals, “Convergence of Purpose” (located in front of the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts) and “Lincoln Bench” (located in front of the Cruisin’ with Lincoln on 66 Visitors Center).
- A black granite war memorial honoring Korean and Vietnam War veterans is situated on the grounds of the Miller Park Pavilion. A red sidewalk surrounds the memorial and lists the names of Central Illinois residents who were killed or missing in action during Korean or Vietnam War battles.

Annual Events

- The American Passion Play, one of the oldest continuously performed passion plays in the United States, has been a staple in Bloomington for 97 consecutive seasons.
- The family-friendly Lincoln’s Festival on Route 66 each July mixes history, entertainment, a vintage baseball game, and some visits around town with Lincoln himself!
- For an experience that truly “speaks volumes,” be sure to get a ticket for the annual Cemetery Walk, a nationally recognized and award winning outdoor theatrical program suitable for all ages.
- The Illinois Shakespeare Festival, a professional repertory company reaching over 10,000 people each summer season, has been performing and sharing cultural arts in the community since 1978.
- Shop local for produce, wares, unique items, and more at Downtown Bloomington’s Farmers’ Market and be sure to discover some of the cultural gems in the community through a self-guided First Fridays adventure in Downtown Bloomington.

BLOOMINGTON

Natural Areas and Resources

- Runners, walkers, hikers, and cyclists have plenty to enjoy along the Constitution Trail, with over 50 miles of paved trails extending through both Normal and Bloomington.
- Look no further than Miller Park, Bloomington's first public park situated on 67.6 acres, complete with an 11-acre lake for outdoor fun. Residents and visitors can enjoy year-round amenities, from a zoo to paddle boating to a playground to music and entertainment.
- The community offers plenty of opportunity to get out and enjoy the great outdoors with over 38 park sites, three golf courses, two aquatic facilities, and an ice rink.

Unique Amenities

- Reindeer, flamingos, lemurs, red pandas, and more call Bloomington home at Miller Park Zoo, a facility operated by the city's department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Arts. Visitors can enjoy exhibits, special events, and even rent the Zoo for birthday parties and special occasions!
- Compare the travels of Abraham Lincoln with those who motored along Route 66 at the Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitor's Center through exhibits and interactive experiences. Be sure to pick up some valuable visitor information while you are there too.
- Serving up soft-serve ice cream and other cool, tasty treats, Gene's Dairy Delight is a must visit in the area. Open seasonally, so be sure to plan accordingly!
- A location on the National Register of Historic Places and situated on the square where a young Abraham Lincoln practiced law, the McLean County Museum of History shares the area's rich history with a diverse offering of exhibits, programs, events, and opportunities to explore their extensive archives and collections.

Learn more about Bloomington, Illinois

- <https://www.cityblm.org/>
- Visit Bloomington-Normal <https://www.visitbn.org/>
- Downtown Bloomington <http://downtownbloomington.org/>
- Miller Park Zoo <https://www.bloomingtonparks.org/facilities/miller-park-zoo>
- Evergreen Memorial Cemetery <https://evergreenmemorialcemetery.com/>
- Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitor Center <https://www.visitbn.org/visit/5897/cruisin-with-lincoln-on-66-visitors-center/>
- Gene's Dairy Delight https://www.facebook.com/Genes-Dairy-Delight-145542836595/community/?ref=page_internal
- McLean County Museum of History <https://www.mchistory.org/>
- Illinois Wesleyan University <https://www.iwu.edu/>
- American Passion Play <http://www.americanpassionplay.org/>
- Illinois Shakespeare Festival <https://illinoisshakes.com/>



Lincoln Bench mural in downtown Bloomington.

Founded in 1829
Population...958
Geographic size...2.97 square miles



Known For

- Community motto of “Growing Strong Since 1902.”
- Kickapoo Indians first discovered the land’s value and set up a trading post just west of the Kickapoo Creek along what is now U.S. Highway 150. Then in 1829, settlers migrated to McLean County and created a small community called Delta. In 1902, the town’s name changed to Downs after a local influential farmer, Lawson Downs.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Discover fine or specially designed unique, personalized, stamped, memorial, special occasion, and meaningful jewelry at 715 Jewelry.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...40.9 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...1

Annual Events

- The annual Downs Freedom Run, a tradition in the community for the past 10 years, welcomes runners and walkers of all abilities in a 5K, 1-mile walk or kids’ fun run.
- For those who are not faint at heart, the Downs Fright Fest will be sure to deliver with a haunted house, hayrack rides, and bonfire each fall.
- A lighted display and a visit from Santa ring in the holidays and round out the year each December in Dooley Park.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Maintained by the Downs Department of Parks and Recreation, Dooley Park and Kickapoo Park provide the community with beautifully maintained and accessible natural areas. The enclosed Dooley Park Pavilion, complete with a kitchen and bathrooms, may be rented for special events and gatherings.

Unique Amenities

- Providing for those in need, the community maintains and provides a food pantry to serve residents in the Tri-Valley School District area with monthly food boxes and other needs as they arise.
- “Produce and More” is the town’s motto and that is just what you’re bound to find each spring and summer at the Downs Village Market. Take time as you shop to enjoy the musical melodies provided by local area musicians and performers.
- Home to a Little Free Library location, the world’s largest book sharing movement, which creates access to books, improves community connections, and inspires a love of reading.

Learn more about Downs, Illinois

- <http://www.villageofdowns.org/>
- <http://www.city-data.com/city/Downs-Illinois.html>
- 715 Jewelry <https://www.715jewelry.com/>



Downs has a Little Free Library location.

Founded 1835, incorporated as a town in 1853,
and as a city in 1874

Population...3,544

Geographic size...2.336 square miles

Known For

- Founded by two Bloomington businessmen: Asahel Gridley and Merritt L. Covell. Both went on to serve in the Illinois General Assembly, and Gridley would eventually become McLean County's first millionaire.
- The community is proud to provide "something for everyone in Le Roy" with an abundance of park, recreation, and dining options, along with access to area amenities located on the hub of I-74 and state highways 150 and 136.
- After a costly and disappointing railroad venture with the Indiana, Bloomington, and Western Railway, the citizens joined together and built their own railroad, which opened in 1876 traveling to Rantoul and joining with the Illinois Central. It was referred to as a "Pumpkin Vine," a folk term referencing a small railroad. The line was eventually sold to the Illinois Central.
- Those who have called Le Roy home include professional outfielder Tim Hendryx, U.S. Representative John Allen Sterling, actress Betty Jane Watson, and current voice of Mickey Mouse, Bret Iwan.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Early industry included mills, a hotel, a "Pumpkin Vine" railroad, and a post office.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...34.6 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...33



Public Art

- Currently in the works, the Le Roy Veterans Wall of Honor has plans for an extensive tribute to those who served.

Annual Events

- Put a trip to the annual Fall Festival in August on the "to do" list, an annual event filled with food, fun, talent, entertainment, community spirit, and more. The 2019 event marked the 80th anniversary of this beloved tradition.

Natural Areas and Resources

- With seven parks in the community, complete with playgrounds, soccer fields, and picnic areas, there is even an amenity for dogs in the community with a designated Dog Park at Brickyard Field.
- The Howard Virgin Timer Park, an expansive 45-acre area established to preserve Illinois virgin timber lands on the site, also provides a meeting space for youth and community organizations, and is home to amenities such as walking paths, a picnic area, a fishing pond, campsites, and a mountain bike path. If you look closely, hidden within the timber you will find the Howard Cemetery, established by early area settlers and dating to 1850.
- Spend the day, but you may need more time to experience all that the Moraine View State Recreation Area has to offer. Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy archery, boating, camping, fishing, hiking, running, swimming, cross-country skiing, hunting, and horseback riding. Need to rent a boat or purchase bait? That is available here too. A visit to Moraine View or Walnut Point are great stops to enjoy lunch, a snack, or a cool ice cream treat.

Unique Amenities

- The Replex offers residents and area visitors the opportunity for fun and fitness with exercise equipment, pools (indoor and outdoor), a full-size basketball court, and a snack bar.
- Learn about Le Roy and the surrounding area at the Empire Township Museum on Center Street, "Where History is Alive."
- The Rike House Museum, built of red brick in 1853 by a blacksmith, provides a peek into life in the 1890s and is open by appointment and for special occasions.

Learn more about Le Roy, Illinois

- <https://www.leroy.org/>
- Moraine View State Park <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/Pages/MoraineView.aspx>
- Empire Township Museum <http://www.empiretownshipmuseum.com/>
- Rike House Museum <https://www.visitbn.org/visit/2943/rike-house-museum/>
- Downtown Le Roy facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/VisitDowntownLeRoyIllinois/>
- Le Roy Veterans Wall of Honor
https://www.facebook.com/LeRoyVeteransWallOfHonor/?ref=page_internal

Founded as Empire Township in 1858
Population...including all of Empire
Township, 3,845
Geographic size...49.41 square miles

Known For

- Located within Empire Township and McLean County, Empire Township, originally Le Roy Township, was officially renamed in 1858.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

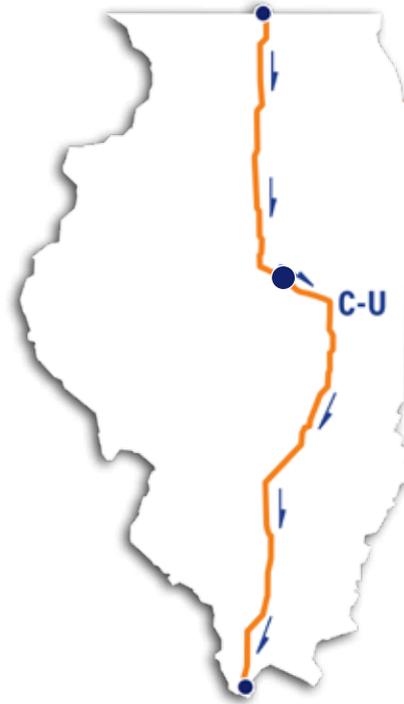
- Distance to C-U from the location...35 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Natural Areas and Resources

- With the Township's proximity to Le Roy and its location within McLean County, outdoor resources and natural areas such as the Moraine View State Recreation Area are nearby.

Learn more about Empire, Illinois

- City Data <http://www.city-data.com/township/Empire-McLean-IL.html>
- McLean County Fact Sheet – State Archives
<https://web.archive.org/web/20071024234417/http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/irad/mclean.html>



Moraine View State Recreation Area in Le Roy.

Officially named Farmer City in 1869
Population...2,055
Geographic size...2.449 square miles

Known For

- A 1980 linguistics study, “Sound Change in Farmer City: A Sociolinguistic Study Based on Acoustic Data,” which formed the basis of a dissertation using recorded speech of two opposing teenage peer groups and two older generations.
- With timber and proximity to Salt Creek, the area now known as Farmer City provided favorable amenities for the Kickapoo and Potawatomi Native American tribes as well as for early settlers.
- Illinois state representative Samuel B. Garver, Illinois Supreme Court justice Lott R. Herrick, and U.S. Representative Vespasian Warner have all hailed from Farmer City.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Farmer City is recognized as a community with a healthy agribusiness environment, and area employers include Monsanto, NextGen, ADM, and Heartland Ag.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...25.5 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...10

Annual Events

- All year long, there is plenty to do and experience in Farmer City. Hunt for Easter eggs, enjoy live music at Heritage Days, get in the Halloween spirit with a trip through the haunted forest, and participate in a 5K!
- The third week of July is filled with fun and festivities at the Farmer City Dewitt County Fair, complete with competitions and entertainment.



- Known throughout Central Illinois as the kickoff to the Christmas holiday season, the annual Christmas Parade has grown annually and has been an area tradition since 1975.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Outdoor amenities do not disappoint at Clinton Lake, where hiking, running, biking, fishing, boating, swimming, and picnicking are options. There is even a white sand beach area for sunbathers and sand lovers!
- Never tried water skiing? Give it a go at The Liquid Edge, a private water area specializing in water sports that makes water skiing accessible to beginners and beyond!
- Community parks, a swimming pool, playgrounds, and fields delight residents and visitors alike.

Unique Amenities

- Start your engines and head over for Friday Night Lights at the Farmer City Raceway.
- Sharpen your riding skills or learn new ones at the Farmer City BMX, complete with guidance on bikes, gear, riding, and tracks!

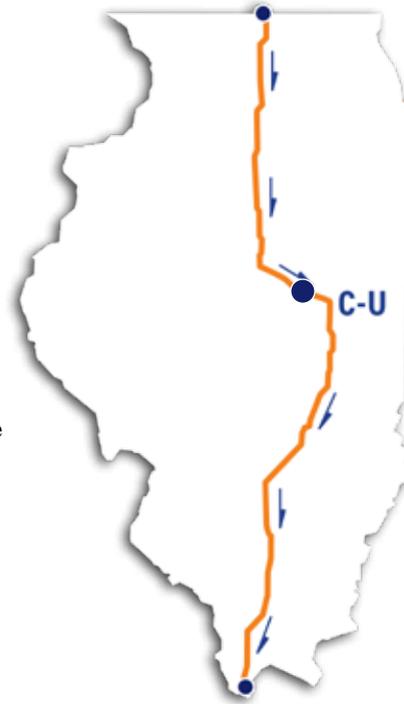
Learn more about Farmer City, Illinois

- <https://www.cityoffarmercity.org/>
- <http://www.farmercity.org/city/index.html>
- Farmer City Dewitt County Fair <https://www.facebook.com/farmercityfair>
- Farmer City Raceway <https://www.farmercityracing.com/>
- Farmer City BMX <https://www.usabmx.com/tracks/1910>
- The Liquid Edge <http://www.theliquidedge.com//index.html>
- Farmer City Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/CityFarmerCity/>



Farmer City Raceway.

A village in Piatt County, originally incorporated between 1750 and 1805
 Population...906
 Geographic size...0.555



Known For

- The origin of Mansfield’s name is not clear, but may be attributed to John Mansfield, an officer in the Civil War. Other ideas include the names of an unrelated surveyor or a local philanthropist, and even Mansfield, Ohio as possible sources.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Industry in the area today is comprised primarily of health care, social services, retail, and education.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...17.8 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...14

Annual Events

- The Mansfield Homecoming is a family-friendly event attracting visitors of all ages.

Natural Areas and Resources

- With Mansfield’s proximity to Mahomet, the Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve provides trails for walkers, runners, hikers, and nature enthusiasts alike.

Unique Amenities

- Serving the community since 1896, the Mansfield General Store is an historic destination in itself! Stop in for collectibles, snacks, re-sale items, and more.
- Step in and step back in time with a visit to the Mansfield Park Bed & Breakfast.

Learn more about Mansfield, Illinois

- <https://villageofmansfield.net/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/VillageofMansfield/>
- Mansfield General Store <https://www.facebook.com/MansfieldGeneralStoreIllinois/>
- Blue Ridge Township Library <https://www.facebook.com/BlueRidgeTwpLibrary/>
- Mansfield Chamber of Commerce <https://www.chamberofcommerce.com/united-states/illinois/mansfield/>
- Village of Mansfield facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/VillageofMansfield/>
- Mansfield Park Bed & Breakfast <https://www.facebook.com/Mansfield-Park-Bed-Breakfast-1053748331336621/>



The original Mansfield General Store.

Founded in 1832 as Middletown
and in 1871 as Mahomet
Population...8,628
Geographic size...9.61 square miles

Known For

- The original village name was Middletown, possibly because it is half-way between the towns of Danville and Bloomington. In 1871, the name of the village was changed to Mahomet because there was already another Middletown in Illinois, which was causing mail problems.
- Situated along the Sangamon River and filled with bountiful trees, Mahomet is well known for its natural areas.
- Mahomet's name is derived from Mahomet Weyonomon, a tribal chieftain from Connecticut.
- The prohibition of alcohol in Mahomet was established after World War II and remained in effect until 2007 when it was repealed by voters.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

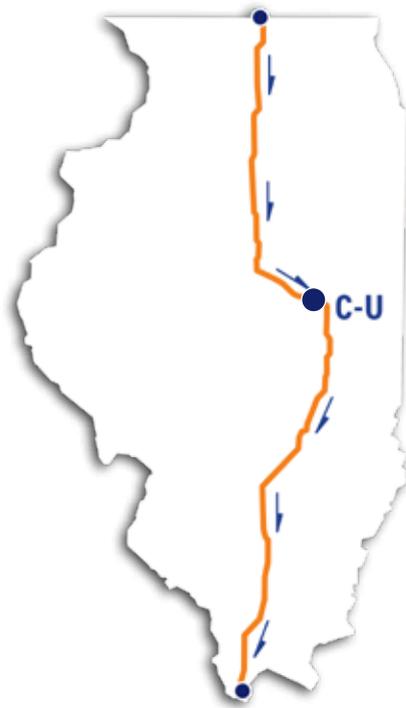
- Primary crops grown in the area consist of corn and soybean.
- The *Mahomet Daily* has served the Mahomet-Seymour community with local news since 2013.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...11.8 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...310

Public Art

- A run, walk, stroll, or drive through the downtown shopping district will reveal small murals scattered throughout.



Annual Events

- Special events throughout the year offer a little something for everyone, with the Mahomet Music Festival, Mahomet Auto Festival, and the Mahomet Soda Festival.
- A Thanksgiving tradition for many area runners and walkers is the annual Mahomet Turkey Trot, beginning the day with a 5K or 1-mile route before enjoying a holiday meal!

Natural Areas and Resources

- Discover some of East Central Illinois diverse flora covering nearly eight acres at the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden.
- Experience nature up close throughout the year at Lake of the Woods Park, on one the many natural areas of the Champaign County Forest Preserve, offering programs, trails, birding, and more.
- Log your miles immersed in the natural wonders of the River Bend Forest Preserve, once the site of a sand and gravel mine. The multi-use trail, parking lot, and roads leading to the preserve were all built with recycled paving material.



The Mahomet Forest Preserve Botanic Garden.

MAHOMET

Unique Amenities

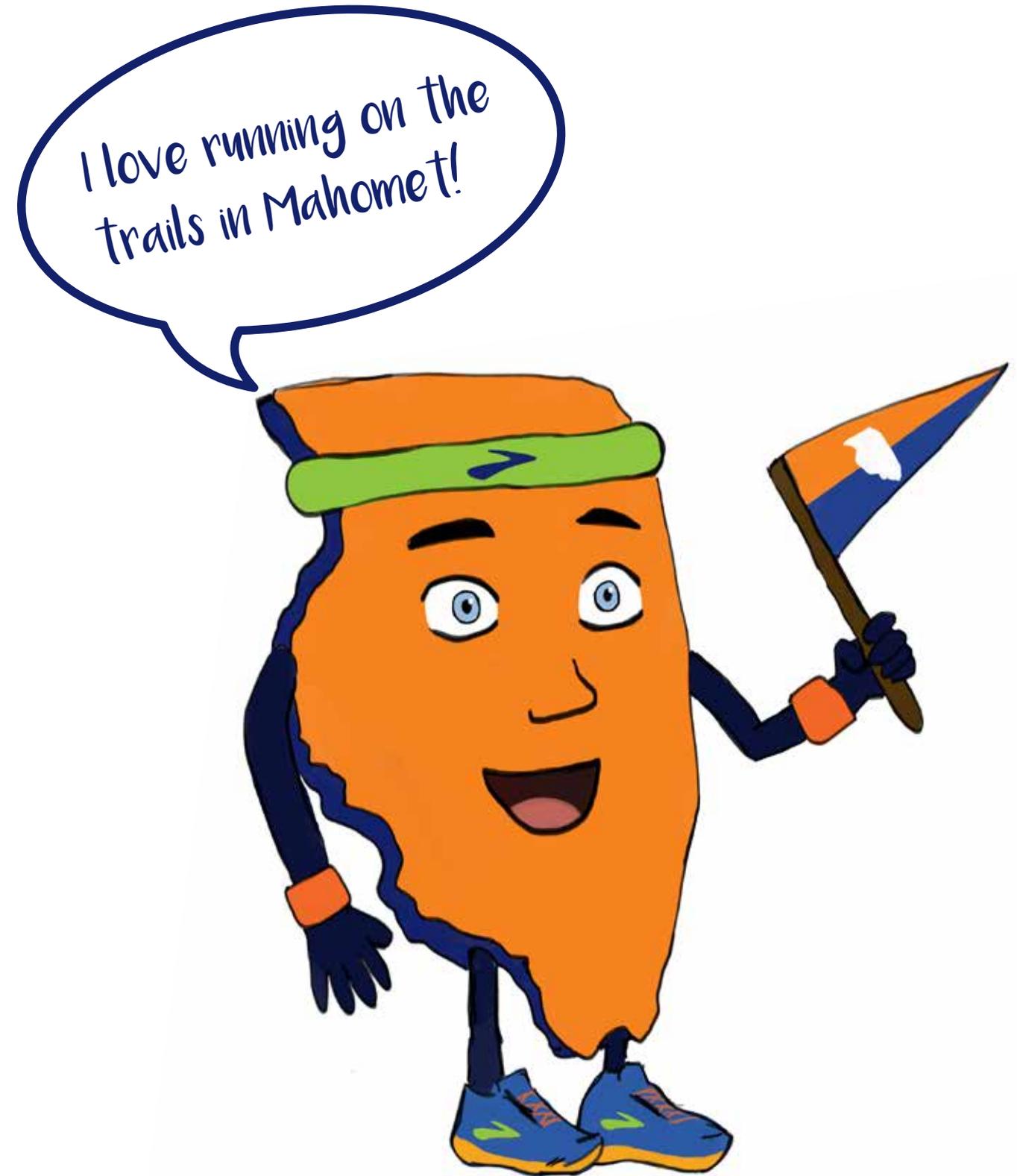
- Set a tee time to experience the award-winning Hartwell C. Howard Golf Course at the beautiful Lake of the Woods for an enjoyable morning or afternoon.
- A facility of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District, the nationally accredited Museum of the Grand Prairie shares the natural and cultural history of the area through diverse experiences and programs.
- Stop and shop at the many small and unique businesses in the growing downtown shopping district.

Learn more about Mahomet, Illinois

- <https://www.mahomet-il.gov/>
- Mahomet Area Chamber of Commerce <https://mahometchamberofcommerce.com/>
- Museum of the Grande Prairie <http://www.museumofthegrandprairie.org/>
- Mahomet Soda Festival <http://www.mahometsodafest.com/>
- Visit Champaign County <https://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/>
- Village of Mahomet Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/visitmahomet/>



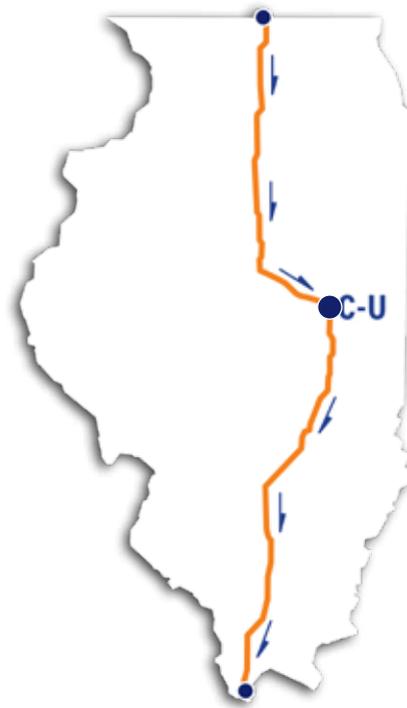
The nationally accredited Museum of the Grand Prairie is in Mahomet.



Founded in 1855
Population...88,909
Geographic size...22.98 square miles

Known For

- Because Champaign is often treated as one metropolitan area with its sister city, Urbana, the twin-cities are known as “Chambana,” “C-U,” or—as the locals sometimes say—“Shampoo-Banana.”
- Like many towns along the Criss-Cross routes, the location and creation of Champaign was impacted by the route of a railroad. In 1850, the Illinois Central Railroad Company began planning a massive railroad construction project, made possible by President Pierce’s approval of a land grant. The main line would run from LaSalle-Peru to Cairo, and the Chicago branch would connect via east-central Illinois to the main line at Centralia. Survey crews from Illinois Central mapped four possible routes for the branch across Champaign County, which was 80 percent prairie at the time. They selected the route that “ran across the open prairie two miles west of the Urbana courthouse.” Urbana had been established since 1833, was the seat of Champaign County, and would have been a ready-made town next to the new train line, but practicality ruled in the selection of the final route. Illinois Central Railroad historian Howard Brownson explains it this way: “the company selected the route entirely upon its economic and engineering merits and with exceptions, the line chosen was the most direct and shortest of the possible routes.” And as a result, the town we call Champaign was created in 1855.
- Originally called “West Urbana,” the town was renamed “Champaign” when it acquired a city charter in 1860. Both the city and county name were derived from Champaign County, Ohio, the area from where many of the first settlers came.



- In January, 1857, the Union announced the anticipated spring opening of the Cattle Bank. Today, restored with the help of the City of Champaign, the building stands on the northeast corner of University Avenue and First Street. It is the oldest surviving commercial structure in the twin-cities and houses the Champaign County History Museum.
- A culturally diverse community, Champaign features very diverse employment opportunities—from health care, banking, light manufacturing, retail, government, and social services to higher education with the University of Illinois and Parkland College.
- With a name like Champaign, the town never stops celebrating. There’s arts and culture, film and music festivals, collegiate sports, state high school tournaments, excellent local parks and youth sports, nearby area lakes and rivers for boating, fishing, canoeing, camping, and nature areas for hiking.

Place of History, Place of Entertainment, Product, Person

- The University of Illinois, founded in 1867, was one of the original 37 land-grant institutions and is today the #14 ranked public university in the United States, with over 47,000 students from all 50 states and over 100 countries. Originally called Illinois Industrial University, the school was renamed University of Illinois in 1885. There are 15 colleges and instructional units, and the library is one of the largest public university libraries in the world. U of I is also rated as one of the most “disability friendly” campuses in the country. 470,000+ living alumni make the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign one of the largest U.S. alumni organizations. The school has had 24 Nobel Laureates and countless other prestigious Prize winners among its alumni and faculty. Fighting Illini spirit is a huge part of the Chambana culture. “ILL...INI!”
- Virginia Theatre, owned and operated since 2000 by the Champaign Park District, is an historic performing arts center with 1,463 seats that was built in 1921 as a vaudeville house. Now fully restored, the venue hosts concerts, plays, dance, corporate events, and, most notably, is home to the annual Roger Ebert Film Festival—aka Ebertfest. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Home of Jarling’s Custard Cup and Papa Del’s Pizza.



CHAMPAIGN

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- The presence of the University of Illinois Research Park leads to abundant and thriving technology and innovation. Champaign-Urbana is known as the capital of the Silicone Prairie, a reference to a multi-state region comprising Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Kansas. Cofounders of Yelp, YouTube, Netscape, and PayPal are all graduates of the University of Illinois.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...0 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...1,790

Public Art

- 40 North | 88 West is dedicated to fueling the growth and well-being of Champaign County by nurturing its arts, culture, and education community.
- The Public Art League (PAL) focuses on the installation, maintenance, and promotion of public artworks throughout the twin-cities. As a result, you'll find pieces of art throughout the city and on campus, as well as some murals in downtown.
- A couple of notable statues in Champaign include the statue of Roger Ebert outside the Virginia Theatre and the Prayer for Rain fountain, in the likeness of an American Indian, a panther, and a door at West Side Park.



Hot Rod Power Tour vehicles outside the State Farm Center.



The Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon has been thrilling C-U since 2009.

Annual Events

- With 19 varsity sports and many state-of-the-art facilities, University of Illinois Athletics provide spectator entertainment year-round. Alumni Weekend, as well as Dad's and Mom's Day weekends, add more excitement to the annual University calendar.
- The 13-year-old annual Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon Race Weekend draws an average of 17,000 participants from across the country and abroad for a three-day running festival, featuring seven different distances and a health & fitness expo. There's a spectacular finish inside historic Memorial Stadium and a post-race 27-Mile Celebrate Victory Bash street fest outside the Stadium.



Roger Ebert statue outside the Virginia Theatre.

- Ebertfest was founded in 1999 by the late Pulitzer Prize-winning film critic Roger Ebert to celebrate films that were overlooked during their original runs by audiences, critics, and distributors. Hosted each April by Chaz Ebert, Roger's wife, business partner, and fellow film lover. Over the course of five days, about a dozen films are screened, followed by in-depth on-stage Q&A among the filmmakers, critics, and audience.
- Friday Night Live runs from late May to late August in downtown Champaign. Open to the general public, the weekly event features live street-side performances by an eclectic mix of musicians, from bluegrass, jazz, and blues to funk, pop, rock, and more.
- Hot Rod Power Tour comes through Champaign in August. More than just a traveling car show, Hot Rod Power Tour is the largest hot rod road trip in the world. Classic cars and hot rods travel city to city, more than 1,300 miles, enjoying the people and stops along the way. Hot Rod Power Tour is widely considered to be the finest high-end, hot rod-based automotive tour in the world, as performance car lovers join Hot Rod editors and photographers cruising through small-town America.

- Taste of Champaign in mid-August is the premier event of the summer, featuring food from some of the community's best restaurants. In addition to food, music, and beer, there's also a huge assortment of arts and craft vendors, activities for the kids, and an annual Pie Run.

Natural Areas and Resources

- The Champaign Park District manages 62 parks (over 700 acres) and 14 different facilities. CPD has year-round programs for residents of all ages. The list of parks to visit is endless. Some of our favorites are West Side Park, Hessel Park, Sunset Ridge Park, and Heritage Park.
- While not a park, no visit to Champaign is complete without a trip to Curtis Orchard & Pumpkin Patch in southwest Champaign. Curtis Orchard is part of an Illinois centennial farm founded when the Curtis family settled here in 1873. What started as prairieland became a farm and, for the past 40+ years, an apple orchard and much more.

Unique Amenities

- The Flower Island Program, sponsored by local businesses, adds splashes of color throughout the city with over 230 flower beds in front of public and private businesses.
- Downtown Champaign is the heart of a lively entertainment scene with over 35 locally owned restaurants and pubs, a full-service hotel, parks, outdoor cafes, and much more.
- Illinois Terminal serves a dynamic cross-section of East Central Illinois. MTD (bus) passengers and employees, community members, passenger rail and intercity bus riders, students, business travelers, downtown residents, and visitors to our area pass through Illinois Terminal every day.

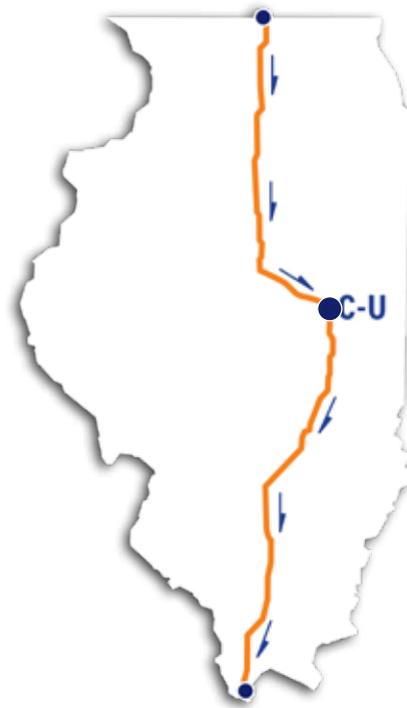
Learn more about Champaign, Illinois

- <https://champaignil.gov/about/about-champaign/>
- Visit Champaign County <https://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/>
- Champaign Park District <https://champaignparks.com/>
- University of Illinois <https://illinois.edu/>
- Champaign County Chamber of Commerce <https://www.champaigncounty.org/>

Founded in 1822
 Population...42,214
 Geographic size...11.58 square miles

Known For

- The Urbana area was first settled by Europeans in 1822, when it was called “Big Grove.” As Big Grove got bigger, settlers became interested in forming their own county, which would save them having to make trips to Danville, the county seat at the time. When Champaign County was organized in 1833, the county seat was located on 40 acres of land—20 acres donated by William T. Webber and 20 acres by Col. M. W. Busey, considered to be the city’s founder. The County was named after Champaign County, Ohio, where State Senator Joseph Vance grew up. A place was picked as the county seat, and it was named Urbana, after the Senator’s hometown in Ohio.
- When the Central Illinois Railroad made plans for a new train line that would pass through Champaign County, Urbana was bypassed as the location of the tracks. Instead, the new tracks ran “across the open prairie two miles west of the Urbana courthouse” (this led to the eventual creation of the city of Champaign). At the time of the railroad’s arrival, some settlers thought Urbana should move, to be next to the new train tracks, but in the end, the town stayed put.
- Both cities grew, with almost two miles of open, swampy land between them. Planks were laid to create a road to make traveling back and forth more manageable. This land between the two cities is where Illinois Industrial University, later renamed the University of Illinois, was built.
- Urbana is notable for sharing the campus of the world-renown University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign with its sister city of Champaign. More of the physical campus lies in Urbana than in Champaign.



- Urbana has received national recognition by being named a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters every year since 1976. Urbana’s trees are a source of shared pride in the community. The urban forest includes trees that are historic, unique, rare, and one-of-a-kind.



Place of History, Place of Entertainment, Product, Person

- Numerous Nobel Prize winners, including Philip W. Anderson, John Bardeen, Theodore Gray, Robert W. Holley, Edwin G. Krebs, Paul Christian Lautebur, Sir Anthony James Leggett, Hamilton O. Smith, and James Tobin.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

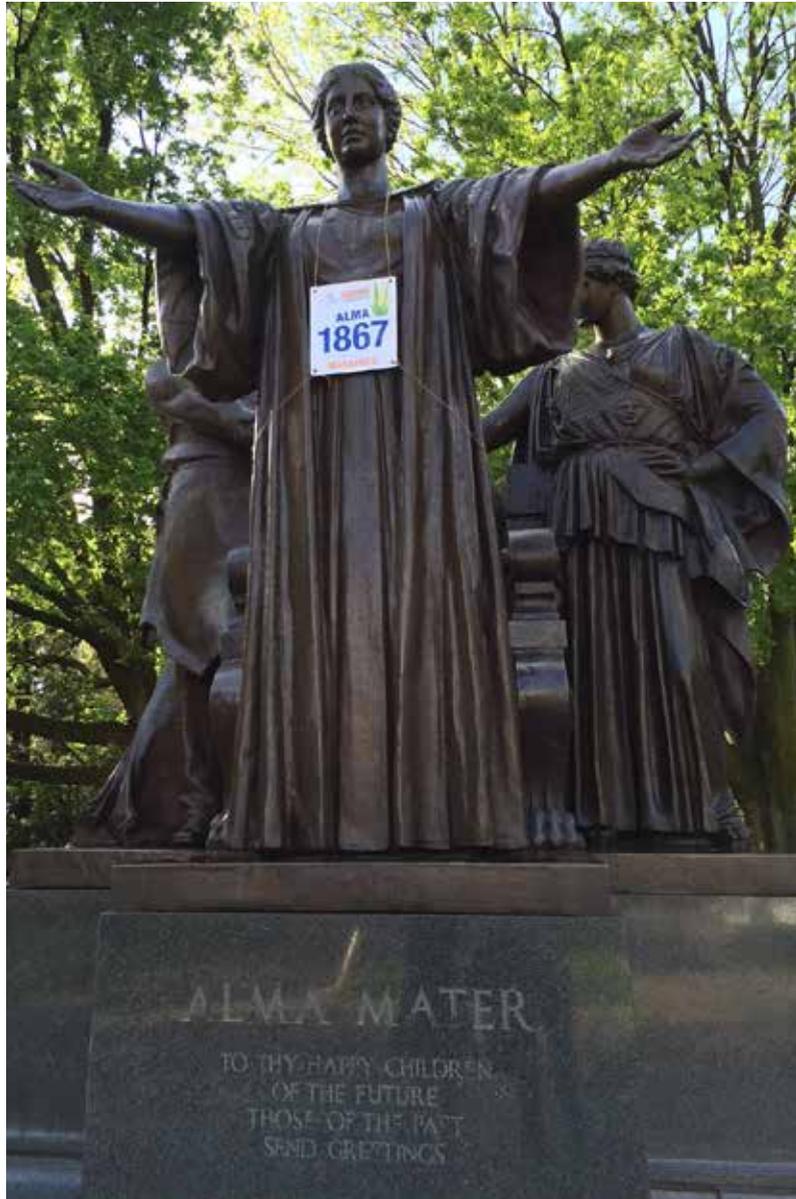
- Corn and soybeans are the crops grown on farms in Urbana (same as in Champaign).
- The presence of the University of Illinois Research Park leads to abundant and thriving technology and innovation. Champaign-Urbana is known as the capital of the Silicone Prairie, a reference to a multi-state region comprising Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Kansas. Cofounders of Yelp, YouTube, Netscape, and PayPal are all graduates of the University of Illinois.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...0
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...721

Public Art

- In 2008, Urbana was designated as an Illinois Arts Friendly Community by the Illinois Arts Alliance and Illinois Municipal League. There’s a wonderful array of art in Urbana, including sculptures, murals, art exhibits, and more.
- There is no better example of this than the Wandell Sculpture Garden at Meadowbrook Park, home to dozens of sculptures. Dedicated in June 1999, the garden was named in honor of Celia and Willet Wandell, who owned a local plant nursery and established a trust to give trees to neighboring communities. “Celia and Willet’s family saw the Urbana Park District’s plans for a sculpture garden in Urbana as a way to both honor their parents and support art in a natural setting.” Some sculptures are a part of the Urbana Park District’s permanent collection; other exhibits are on a two-year loan from the artist and are available for purchase.



- The iconic Alma Mater, a 10,000-pound bronze statue created by sculptor Lorado Taft, is situated in the heart of campus on the east side of Wright Street, which is the Urbana–Champaign dividing line of campus. The beloved symbol of the University of Illinois shows a mother-figure wearing academic robes, flanked by two attendant figures presenting “Learning” and “Labor.” Throughout the year, Alma Mater is dressed up for various events, including our Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon Race Weekend.

Annual Events

- Eleven-plus miles of the annual Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon route (and most of the half marathon route) pass through the city of Urbana, including downtown, Stone Creek, and the prairie wonderland of Meadowbrook Park. With the roads closed throughout the city, participants enjoy a carefree jaunt, with thousands of neighbors lining the route to cheer their efforts.
- Since 1979, Market at the Square has been a signature event in Urbana. Every Saturday from early May until November, dozens and dozens of vendors set up in the Lincoln Square parking lot in downtown Urbana. The Market connects local growers and artisans with the community. You’ll find the best selections of made- and grown-in- Illinois products, including produce, meat, dairy, honey, local beer and wine, flowers, handmade art and crafts, and more.
- The Urbana Sweetcorn Festival was first held in 1975, hosted by Busey bank employees in the parking lot of their downtown Urbana office. The Urbana Business Association now organizes the event, which has grown tremendously over the years to include live music on multiple stages, antique and collector cars, local food vendors, and an expanded family area, all in the heart of downtown. And, let’s not forget the corn! Guests consume some 20,000 ears of local corn each year. An antique steam engine is used to cook the corn, and all the corncobs are composted.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Since its formation in 1907 with one lone park, the Urbana Park District has grown to 21 parks and natural areas and several facilities.
- Crystal Lake Park features a mature urban forest, a scenic parkway drive, the Saline branch, and numerous amenities. It was the Urbana Park District’s first park.
- At the north end of Crystal Lake Park is Busey Woods, a 59-acre bottomland oak-hickory forest with an elevated boardwalk; and the adjacent Anita Purves Nature Center, Champaign County’s premier environmental education center. The nature area is known for its spring wildflowers and birdwatching opportunities.
- Meadowbrook Park offers 130 acres, including 80 acres of recreated Illinois tallgrass prairie. Three miles of wide concrete paths loop in and around the park, suitable for walking, running, and bicycling. Over 20 large and spectacular sculptures from local artists are spread out along the path. You’ll also find unpaved paths that wind through the prairie grass, plus a huge wooden playground, shelters, and various community gardens.
- The University of Illinois Arboretum is located on the south campus and includes 160 acres of gardens, collections, and habitats, creating an amazing “living laboratory” of natural beauty for students as well as the general public.

URBANA

- Carle Park is home to the famous Lincoln the Lawyer statue by acclaimed sculptor Lorado Taft. Originally sited in front of the old Lincoln Hotel, the statue was moved to the park in 1955, across the street from Urbana High School.

Unique Amenities

- The 300,000 square-foot Krannert Center for the Performing Arts opened in 1969 and is recognized as the nation's premier university-based performing arts center and academic facility. It has five indoor stages, each venue designed for a particular style of performance, plus an outdoor amphitheater.
- The Urbana Free Library, one of the first public libraries in Illinois, was founded in 1874 and is located in downtown. The historic building housing the library opened in 1918 and houses historical archives of Champaign County.

Learn more about Urbana, Illinois

- <https://www.urbanainillinois.us/>
- Visit Champaign County <https://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/>
- University of Illinois <https://illinois.edu/>
- Champaign County Chamber of Commerce <https://www.champaigncounty.org/>
- Market at the Square <https://urbanamarket.org/>
- Urbana Park District urbanaparks.org
- Urbana Free Library urbanafreelibrary.org



Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon participants stream through downtown Urbana.

A village in Champaign County,
incorporated in 1956
Population...8,418
Geographic size...3.29 square miles

Known For

- Savoy is just south of Champaign and north of Willard Airport and marks the south entrance corridor into the city of Champaign.
- The village is named after the Italian Princess Clotilda Maria Theresa Louisa of Savoie, who was married to Prince Napoleon Bonaparte of France. They visited the United States in 1861 and supposedly spent part of the trip traveling through Illinois.
- The quality of life in Savoy is quiet and peaceful, with uncongested neighborhoods, lower tax rates than Champaign and Urbana, acres and acres of undeveloped land, and a nimble and responsive village board. Board of trustee member Heather Mangian likes to say, "Savoy is a nice place to call home."
- The University of Illinois Regional Airport (Willard Airport) is located there.
- The first school in the Savoy community was built in 1872, and it was believed to be the first brick school building in Champaign County. For decades, students from Savoy attended Carrie Busey Elementary in Champaign. In 2012, Carrie Busey was relocated to Savoy, and the village now has a brand new, state-of-the-art academic facility.
- According to village history, after the Champaign City Council voted in July 1955 to stop the city's fire department from going to any fires outside the city limits, effectively cutting off protection to villages like Savoy, the community voted to incorporate, so they could get the funds needed to start a fire department. In essence, the village and the fire department have grown up together. Today, the Village of Savoy fire department provides firefighting, rescue, and emergency medical services to 15,000 residents in Savoy and neighboring communities.



- Dunlap Avenue, also known as Route 45, is one of the most important streets going through Savoy; the name carries significant historical weight. The most famous Dunlap was Senator Henry M. Dunlap, who served almost 40 years in the Illinois Senate, and in 1915 built a 25-room house/estate, which included farmland, apple orchards, and cattle. The home was used as a stop for the Underground Railroad. Today, parts of this historic homestead comprise the Senator's Extended Stay, Wellness, Business Center & Pub.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...3 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...277

Public Art

- There are small sculptures around Savoy's neighborhoods, and benches that were made-by-hand using wood from local ash trees are located in the parks.

Annual Events

- After six years of hosting Orchard Days, an enjoyable family event in Colbert Park with music, rides, food, and so on, the Village committed itself in 2020 to the "next generation" of festival called The Human Festival. Had the pandemic not intervened, it would have been a day-long, three-part event designed to connect the local business community with residents and visitors in a unique and fun celebration. With all events taking place in Savoy, the celebration would have included a 5K on the runway at Willard Airport and a postrun party and concert in the FlightStar hanger. When mass gatherings are allowed again, the Village leaders will revisit what the inaugural Human Festival will look like in 2021 or 2022.

Natural Areas and Resources

- As Savoy grows, so do the number of parks. Two favorites are Dana Colbert Park and Burwash Park. The 55-acre Dana Colbert Park includes an 8-acre stocked lake with a dock, bicycle and walking paths, playground, pavilions, sand volleyball courts, a cornhole court, and acres of spacious lawn. Burwash Park was constructed in 1979, is beautifully landscaped, and is home to a pavilion, ball diamond, tennis courts, sand volleyball court, walking paths, and a sizeable playground.

SAVOY



The Savoy bike path is a popular route for exercise enthusiasts.

Unique Amenities

- Most of the neighborhoods in Savoy have diverse cultures and homeowner's associations, which fosters communication between neighbors and helps to maintain well preserved green spaces.
- The Savoy Recreation Center offers a full-court gymnasium and an indoor walking/jogging track, as well as cardio and weigh rooms and an aerobics room for group fitness.
- Willard Airport flies internationally for personal planes through FlightStar, which shares almost half of the airport grounds, making it unique among regional airports in Illinois.

Learn more about Savoy, Illinois

- <https://www.savoy.illinois.gov/>
- <https://www.gosavoy.com/>
- Village of Savoy Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Village%20of%20Savoy/125367984183443/>
- Visit Champaign County <https://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/>

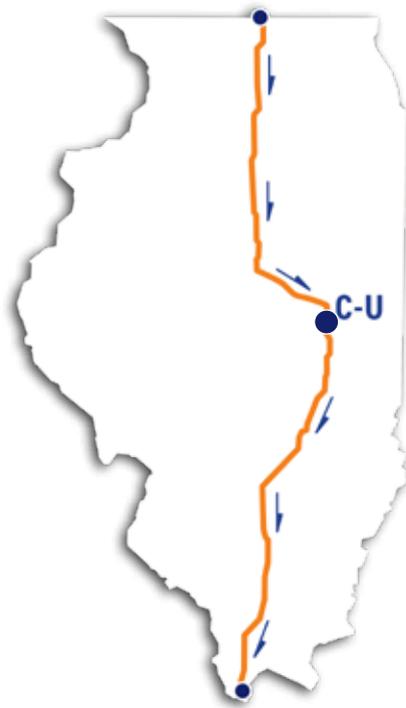


Burwash Park in Savoy, Illinois.

A village in Champaign County,
founded in 1848
Population...3,392
Geographic size...2.062 square miles

Known For

- Located just south of Savoy along Route 45, Tolono is one of five towns in the Unit 7 School District (Pesotum, Philo, Sydney, Sadorus, and Tolono). Unity West Elementary, Unity East Elementary, Unity Jr. High, and Unity High School are all located in Tolono, home of the Rockets! School spirit, expressed as Rocket Nation, is huge part of the Village culture.
- Tolono was founded in the early 19th century as the result of a land grant that made it possible for the Illinois Central Railroad to expand southward, and thus the Village became a major stop central to the project.
- According to the history of Champaign County, a surveyor for the Illinois Central who was looking for a division headquarters, surveyed the Tolono area and wrote on a map “too low, No,” and that became the name of the town established there. Another story says that the town name was fabricated by J.B. Calhoun, land commissioner of the Illinois Central Railroad, who wrote, “[I] placed the vowel o three times, thus o-o-o, and filling in with the consonants t-l-n.”
- Tolono was initially home to many railroad employees, with many street names named after railroad administrative staffers.
- With the intersection of an east-west railway with the north-south tracks, Tolono became a featured stop for early rail passengers. Tolono was the last Illinois stop for Abraham Lincoln as he bid farewell to his home state before assuming his presidency, in a speech given from the back of his coach.



The Tolono town logo.

- At one time, Tolono had two or three companies making tile used to drain the land around the town, resulting in swamps on the east side of the town, both on the north and south side of the train tracks.
- Former NBA forward Brian Cardinal is from Tolono, as is Mark Roberts, screenwriter, playwright, producer, actor, and comedian, best known for creating the American sitcom “Mike & Molly.”

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- In 1959, Tolono became home to the first Monical’s Pizza. While not housed in the original building, there is still a thriving Monical’s in the community, located just west of Route 45. Some members of the Monical family still live in the Village today.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...9 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...42

Public Art

- There’s a Veteran’s Memorial in West Side Park, near the pavilion.

Annual Events

- Since the mid-1970s, the Tolono Fun Day Festival has been taking place the last weekend in June. Festivities include the Friday night Twilight Trek 5K as well as inflatables, food vendors, and a Movie in the Park! The next morning there’s a prayer ceremony led by local religious leaders, a flag raising with local Boys and Girl Scouts, and everyone’s favorite, a parade! The Festival ends that night with an impressive 20-minute fireworks show.

TOLONO

- Each January, different local churches host a weekly service and reception, which all culminates with World Prayer Day at the end of the month.

Natural Areas and Resources

- The two biggest Village parks are West Side Park and East Side Park. Both get massive use by locals and include ball fields and courts, walking paths, pavilion, plenty of green space, and so on.

Unique Amenities

- Tolono is a golf cart-friendly community. Knowing how popular this perk is, the Tolono Fun Days Festival has an annual raffle, which helps fund the event, and the prize is, you guessed it, a golf cart!
- The Tolono Library is a gem. Begun in 1968 with 2,000 volumes, today the library has over 40,000 volumes, as well as audio books, large print books, videos, DVDs, CDs, and a variety of programs for children and adults.

Learn more about Tolono, Illinois

- <https://www.tolonoil.us/>
- Visit Champaign County <https://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/>
- Tolono Historical Society and Veterans Museum
<https://www.facebook.com/tolonohistoricalsocietyandveteransmuseum/>
- Tolono Library <https://tolonolibrary.org/>
- Tolono Park District <https://www.tolonoparks.org/>
- Village of Tolono Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/Village-of-Tolono-123145447741825/>



Aerial view of the Village of Tolono.

A village in Champaign County,
founded in 1824
Population...390
Geographic size...1.03 square miles



Known For

- Sadorus is recognized as the first settlement in Champaign County. The village was named after Henry Sadorus, who settled in Sadorus Grove on the Kaskaskia River in April 1824. He was the first permanent white settler in Champaign County, and in 1835, he built one of the first frame houses in the County.
- The Great Western Railroad arrived in 1857 and became the Wabash Railroad in 1889. Today, a freight line named Norfolk Southern Railway, runs trains through town more than 30 times a day.
- Abraham Lincoln defended Sadorus resident Thomas Patterson in a murder trial in 1859.
- A large rock originally called “Pioneer Rock” was renamed “Sadorus Rock” and dedicated to Henry Sadorus in 1932. It is believed that the rock wound up in Champaign County sometime during the end of the last ice age when melting glaciers deposited the rock in the area.
- Twice, tornados have hit the town—in 1963, destroying the century-old Sadorus Methodist Church; and in 1976, destroying many homes, barns, and buildings.
- Sadorus is the hometown of Dorothy Schroeder, an All-Star in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. The youngest founding member, Dottie is the only woman to play in the league for all 12 of its seasons. She is a member of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Sadorus is surrounded by miles of rich cropland, and agriculture remains the main occupation for the people who live there.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

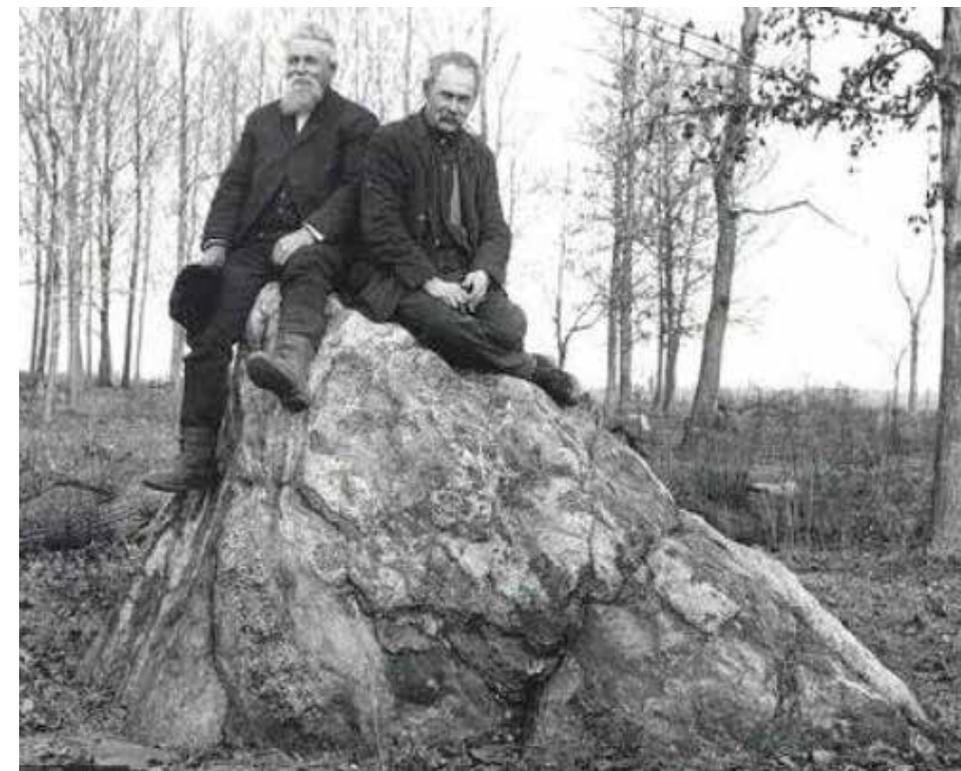
- Distance to C-U from the location...14.7 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...11

Public Art

- The Sadorus War Memorial commemorates those who served.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Sadorus has two lovely parks for residents and visitors—the Sadorus Community Park with its mature trees, ball fields for softball and baseball as well as picnic tables, a covered picnic pavilion, and an outdoor grilling area; and Mini Park, which is in downtown Sadorus next to the Village Hall.



The boulder-sized Sadorus Rock originally sat in a grove of trees on the 1800s Illinois prairie and today resides in the Sadorus Community Park.

SADORUS

Unique Amenities

- The National Museum of Ship Models and Sea History is a private non-profit museum, located in Sadorus. The emphasis of the museum is sea history as depicted through over 200 model ships, including movie models from *Cleopatra*, *Ben Hur*, *Tugboat Annie*, and others. The museum is located inside a 10,000-square foot, 130-year-old building.
- Buford's Pub, which opened in 2018, has quickly become a local go-to establishment located on E. Market Street, the main drag through the Village. Welcoming atmosphere, great food, and fun. Best of all is the Buford's Pub Burger Challenge, which invites willing competitors to out-eat each other on burgers and fries. The current record is a 24-patty burger (with cheese) and a pile of fries. That's almost 3.5 pounds of meat. The record holder receives special recognition, including a T-shirt, and the meal for FREE.

Learn more about Sadorus, Illinois

- <https://www.sadorus.com/>
- Visit Champaign County Visit Champaign County <https://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/>
- Village of Sadorus Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/VillageOfSadorus/>



Two patrons tackle the Buford's Pub Burger Challenge in Sadorus, Illinois.

A village in Champaign County, founded in 1856.
Population...534
Geographic size....0.58 square miles



Known For

- The village was named after Chief Pesoto, a Potawatomi Native American warrior who fought in the Battle of Fort Dearborn.
- Pesotum is located at the intersection of Interstate 57 and Route 45 and, conveniently, only 15 minutes from Savoy’s Willard Airport.
- The earliest settler in the Pesotum area was Squire Lee, who brought his family to the village in a covered wagon in 1850.
- The village is home to many friendly residents as well as a community building, Hartman Park, a post office, an American Legion building, a fire station, and Route 45 Wayside, the local watering hole.
- Back in the day, the village was a popular stop on the Illinois Central Railroad for farm workers.
- It is a golf cart-friendly community. Permit required!
- Luke Bryan’s 2018 Farm Tour performance took place on a farm in Pesotum.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Many Pesotum residents are farmers, with corn and soybean as their main crops.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...14 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...4

Public Art

- A tiny (unnamed) memorial park along route 45 features an antique fire truck. Efforts are underway to restore the truck to its original state. There are some picnic tables in the park as well.

Annual Events

- Village-wide cleanups and garage sales take place throughout the year.
- Water Day in the Park takes place in August. The local fire department provides water activities for the kids, while jump houses and food trucks provide additional fun.
- Several times during the summer, Pesotum also offers Movies in the Park, a family-friendly evening with a movie, popcorn, and snacks.
- The Village of Pesotum Halloween Party, aka SPOOKTACKULAR, takes place at the Community Building and includes games, a costume competition, and refreshments.
- “Light Up Pesotum” is a new annual event started in 2020 that invited residents to decorate their yards for the holiday season to help brighten community spirits during the pandemic. It was a huge hit. This new tradition brought smiles to young and old alike, and we’re pretty sure the event will be part of the village holiday season for years to come.
- Not to be missed: Santa’s annual visit to the Pesotum Fire Department building!

Natural Areas and Resources

- Hartman Park is the community’s go-to green space for all kinds of events, including movies, musical performances by local bands, and the annual Summer Water Day.

Unique Amenities

- The Pesotum Community Crew 4-H Club meets monthly for community service activities, and Fun Fitness ABS holds weekly exercise/dance sessions that also raise money for local charities and needy families.
- Pesotum is one of the best places in the area to store grain thanks to excellent outlets along the Wabash Railroad.

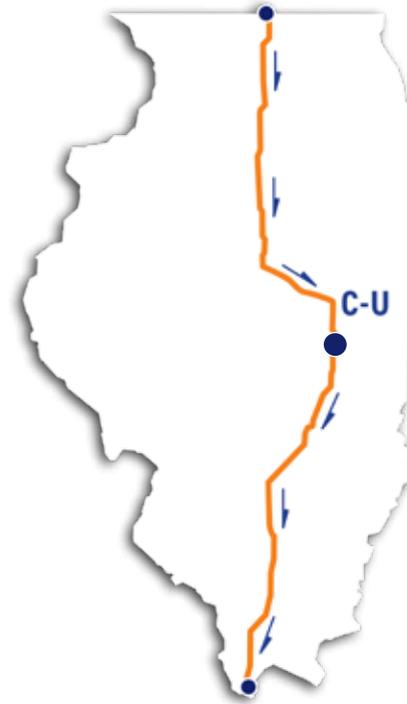
Learn more about Pesotum, Illinois

- <https://pesotum.org/>
- Visit Champaign County Visit Champaign County <https://www.visitchampaigncounty.org/>
- Village of Pesotum Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Pesotum/>

Founded in 1868
Population...4,630
Geographic size...2.884 square miles

Known For

- According to the Illinois Historical Society publication *Indian Place Names in Illinois*, the name Tuscola “comes of the Muskhogen language group of Native Americans, which includes Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole. The Choctaw word Tashka or Tushka, means ‘Warrior.’ The Choctaw word, ‘ola,’ means sound or many sounds. Hence, the name Tuscola could literally be taken to mean, ‘Warriors Cry.’”
- The earliest settler in Tuscola Township was William Brian and his horse, Tymo, in 1834. With a history rich in farming and industry, the arrival of the railroad helped the city thrive.
- More than 150 years after its birth, Tuscola remains a rural community positioned in the heart of Illinois Amish and farming country and offers its current residents warmth and small-town charm to go along with an historic downtown; great schools; world-class golf; trendy, designer brand shopping; and eclectic artisan offerings. The city’s mantra is “Trending Rural...in Tuscola, it’s a way of life.”
- Tuscola is the seat of Douglas County, which was the second to last county formed in Illinois.
- Positioned at the intersection of Interstate 57, U.S. Highway 36 and 45, the community has excellent road access. Tuscola also enjoys exceptional rail transportation assets for industry because the community lies at the intersection of three Class I mainline railroads that provide rail transportation to all parts of the United States as well as parts of Canada and Mexico.
- City mayor Daniel J. Kleiss has held the position since 1988.



Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Many farmers reside in Tuscola and manage corn and soybean farms.
- Standing up amongst some of the richest agricultural cropland in the world, Tuscola’s chemical manufacturing plants—LyondellBasell and Cabot Corporataion—produce essential building-block chemicals for a host of manufacturers and products, such as the alcohol produced for hand sanitizer.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...23 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...51

Public Art

- A group known as the Tuscola Cultural Alliance helps beautify the community throughout the year, especially the downtown, with hanging flower baskets in the spring and summer, and autumnal decorations in the fall.
- November 2020 saw the completion (by volunteers) of a 100-foot mural along the Douglas County Museum building that includes an element representing each town in the County.
<http://www.douglascountymuseum.org/mural.html>

Annual Events

- The Rural Life Antique Show takes place twice annually, in March and November. Hosted by the Douglas County Museum, the 10-year-old show features vendors from all over the country who sell antique furniture, home décor items, and other vintage gems.
- The Wheels Car Club “Spring Fling” Car Show has been taking place the first Saturday in June for 32 years. You’ll find over 100 antique cars lined up in downtown. A band plays 50s music, and Flesor’s Candy Kitchen soda shop is in full swing with their vintage vibe.
- Sparks in the Park is July 4 in Ervin Park and includes a 5K run/walk, 3 v. 3 basketball, mud volleyball, activities for the kids, a parade, and food vendors. The special day ends with fireworks.
- The Christmastown festival has been taking place for decades the first weekend in December, kicking off the holiday season in Tuscola with a parade, carriage rides, breakfast with Santa, and much more.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Ervin Park is an impressive recreational facility for all ages. Within the park you'll find different types of playgrounds as well as tennis courts, basketball courts, soccer fields, ball diamonds, sand volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, and a walking track. And there are two outdoor pavilions providing 7,000 square feet of space.
- Wimple Park provides a quiet getaway, a beautiful picnic area, and a manmade pond stocked with bluegill, catfish, and bass.
- Golfers can enjoy the Ironhorse Golf Club, an 18-hole links style championship golf course with bent grass tees, fairways, and greens.
- Tuscola also has an outdoor swimming pool with a diving area, wading pool, and a 72-foot tube water slide.

Unique Amenities

- The Tuscola Outlet Shops (formerly Tanger Outlets Tuscola) is made up of over 20 popular name-brand outlet stores. The center offers a good mix of leading designer and factory store brands.
- Tuscola offers five self-guided walking tours through their historic downtown that encompass historic homes, a cemetery, businesses, streets & subdivisions, and points of interest. Be prepared to stroll through the past!
- Flesor's Candy Kitchen is definitely one of our favorite stops on the north-to-south route. Founded in 1901 by Gus Flesor, today the multi-generational shop is run by his granddaughters, Ann and Devon. It's housed in the original building, which was constructed in 1871, a few years after Tuscola was founded. In addition to a restaurant, there's an old-fashion soda shop where you can get hand-dipped chocolates and house-made ice cream.
- Located in Historic Downtown Tuscola, Festival Corner brings back the old town square with a flair. The centerpiece is a beautiful, cedar Victorian gazebo, ringed with landscaping, benches, antique streetlights, and brick sidewalks.

Learn more about Tuscola, Illinois

- <https://tuscola.org/>
- City of Tuscola Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/cityoftuscola/>
- Tuscola Chamber & Economic Development <https://tuscola.org/business/chamber-and-economic-development>
- Tuscola Library <https://www.tuscolalibrary.org/>
- Amish Country of Illinois <https://amishcountryofillinois.com/>
- Douglas County Museum <http://www.douglascountymuseum.org/>



The Tolono town logo. © Rachel Ray Photography

Founded in 1855
Population...2,840
Geographic size...2.042 square miles



Known For

- The Illinois Central Railroad plotted a tract of land along both sides of the railroad line they had built through the area and named the new community “Okaw” after the Kaskaskia River, located about four miles west. When local officials applied for a post office and learn that Illinois already had a town named Okaw, a new name was needed. Local citizen James Kearney suggested the name Arcola.
- The original train depot built in the winter of 1854–55 was destroyed by fire in 1882 and was replaced by a brick depot on the east side of the tracks. That depot still stands today and serves as the Arcola’s Tourism Information Center.
- Modern-day Arcola is a quaint community that lies just off of I-57, serves as the entrance to Illinois Amish country, is slightly more than two hours from St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Chicago, and is located between the University of Illinois and Eastern Illinois University.
- Arcola is known as the “Broom Corn Capital of the World.”
- The largest Old Order Amish community lives in the country west of Arcola. They live simple lives without electricity or telephones, wear homemade clothes, and use horses and buggies as their mode of transportation. Farming and furniture-making, especially custom kitchen cabinets, provide their livelihood.
- Arcola is the birthplace, in 1880, of Johnny Gruelle, who created Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Broomcorn was one of Arcola’s most notable crops at the turn of the 20th century and was a hub for sales and markets during that time period. This gave rise to several companies, including the Thomas Monahan Company. Since its founding in 1922, the company has grown to become the world’s largest manufacturer of handles for brooms and mops. Through all of the growth, the Monahan Company has been able to remain a family-owned business for four generations.
- Farming remains a base industry, though farming styles are diverse: everything from the latest in farming technology for planting and harvesting to the horse-drawn machinery of Amish farmers.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...30.5 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...16

Public Art

- In June 2012, over 130 artists from across the county, Canada, New Zealand, Scotland, and Australia came to Arcola to create 15 historic murals, known as The Walldog Murals. The “loose affiliation of sign painters, graphic artists, and other talented individuals reunite annually to entertain and transform a community with their special brand of artistic interpretation, entertainment, and friendship.”
- Twelve brightly illustrated and whimsically-themed oversized fiberglass brooms strategically placed around Arcola’s historic downtown contribute to the unique public art in the community.

Annual Events

- Arcola celebrates its heritage as “broomcorn capital of the world” with its renowned Broom Corn Festival during Labor Day weekend each year. Highlights include arts and crafts, music, food, numerous broom activities, a 5K and 10K road race as well as a parade featuring the world-famous Lawn Rangers, who twirl and toss their brooms.
- The Raggedy Ann and Andy Friendship gathering occurs each June, to honor Johnny Gruelle, and to bring together collectors from all over the world to trade dolls and stories of Raggedy Ann and Andy.
- Heroes’ Day Festival is a hands-on experience in August, with local heroes— police, fire, EMS, 911 dispatchers, veterans, military, and more at the 65-acre Green Mill Village. Food and vendors, inflatables, face painting, K-9 demonstrations, obstacle course, Heroes versus Super kids water balloon fight, and a 9:00 p.m. lighted emergency vehicle parade!

Natural Areas and Resources

- At 2.4 acres, Arcola City Park was the first park developed in the community and is referred to locally as “Old Park.” Over the years, the park amenities have increased and now include picnic tables, a pavilion, playground equipment, restrooms, and a basketball court.
- The newer and much larger 26.5-acre Kelly Moore Memorial Park contains the community’s softball and baseball diamonds, two soccer fields, as well as tennis courts, pickleball, futsal and a basketball court, lighted for night use. Local school athletic teams as well as the recreational programs use all of the fields regularly.
- Rotary Gazebo Park was created as a centennial project in 2015 in honor of Rotary International’s 100th anniversary and contains a gazebo, commemorative brick sidewalk, ornate benches, decorative water fountain, and a clock.

Unique Amenities

- Many of the businesses owned by the Amish are open to the public, and you can get a map of the local Amish merchants at the Arcola Historic Depot and Tourist Information Center.
- Aikman Wildlife Adventure began as a dream on October 22, 2013, when James Aikman dreamt that he and his wife, Kelsey, would one day own and operate a wildlife park. Two years later, they purchased the former Rockome Garden site, and today there’s a wildlife park and refuge for animals of all kinds in rural Arcola. Enjoy the 20-acre drive-through park, a walk-through area with large habitats, budgie aviary, petting zoo, and playground. In 2020, the Aikman’s opened the Museum of Prehistoric Life at the park. The museum is currently being expanded and features a number of life-size prehistoric animals that visitors can see and learn about.
- Arcola is also home to the world’s only Hippie Memorial, created by the late Bob Moomaw, starting in 1962. Bob’s 62-foot-long piece of artwork is located next to the historic Illinois Central Arcola Train Depot.
- The Walk Through Time Museum inside the historic railroad depot highlights everything from the history of Raggedy Ann and Andy to history of the railroad in the area to section dedicated to local war heroes.
- Tri-County Auctions, hosted throughout the year by Vernon Yoder on his farm near Arcola, will give you an authentic auction experience mixed with Amish flavor.
- The Arcola Public Library is a “Carnegie Library” established in 1904 and now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is a must see!

Learn more about Arcola, Illinois

- <https://www.arcolaininois.org/>
- Arcola Chamber of Commerce www.arcolachamber.com
- Aikman Wildlife Adventure <https://aikmanwildlife.com/>
- A Walk Through Time Museum
<https://www.arcolachamber.com/a-walk-through-time-museum>
- Arcola library <https://www.arcola.lib.il.us/>
- Arcola facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/visitamazingarcola/>



One of many murals in Arcola, Illinois.

A village in Coles County,
incorporated in 1878
Population...418
Geographic size...0.34 square miles

Known For

- The village was named after Alexander von Humboldt, a German natural scientist.
- Modern-day Humboldt is a quiet community with a post office, a bar, an Amish furniture store, and one church.
- Humboldt is home to the Humboldt Treatment and Learning Center, which serves K-12 grade students who are eligible for special education and related services and have an Individualized Education Plan.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Farmland surrounds Humboldt. Most folks who live in the village work in the nearby towns of Arcola or Charleston.
- Total Grain Marketing, also known as TGM, a full-service grain company, has a branch office in Humboldt.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...42.3 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...2

Public Art

- There is a Veterans War Memorial outside the Humboldt township hall.



Natural Areas and Resources

- Adjacent to Humboldt TCL school are some ball fields and courts as well as playground equipment.

Unique Amenities

- Peace of mind!

Learn more about Humboldt, Illinois

- Coles County <https://www.co.coles.il.us/>



A memorial display honoring Humboldt Township military veterans was dedicated in 2010.

Established in 1855; the final charter adopted in 1861

Population...17,615

Geographic size...10.32 square miles

Known For

- Mattoon was named after William Mattoon, who helped construct the Terre Haute and Alton Railroad. The projected junction of this rail line with the Illinois Central in 1854 made it clear that the area that would be a perfect site for a community. Mattoon quickly prospered after rail lines arrived; by 1856 there were over 100 buildings in the city.
- A key to Mattoon's prosperity throughout the years has been its location in the Midwest farm belt, surrounded by abundant rich, black farmland.
- Manufacturing dominated the local economy between the two World Wars. The discovery of oil reserves near Mattoon in 1940 gave the city another economic boost.
- Modern day Mattoon "embodies everything good about life in Central Illinois: convenient location, small town cohesiveness, excellent real estate values; a strong economy, a working downtown area, history, wide variety of sports, and lakes; and housing opportunities to support a variety of contemporary and traditional lifestyles."
- The city is home to Lake Land College, a community college founded in 1966.
- The Burger King—unrelated to the Florida-based fast food chain Burger King—is a Mattoon restaurant originally owned by the Hoots family, who maintained it was the "original" Burger King. They sued the national chain in 1968. The federal 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that federal trademark registration has priority over state law, which gave the national Burger King chain rights to the name beyond a 20-mile radius around the original Burger King, which is now owned by the Drummond family.
- With the arrival in 1986 of the Lender's Bagel factory, Mattoon christened itself the "Bagel Capital of the World."



- Mattoon was home to several minor-league baseball teams in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, the city has a thriving junior league and has hosted many junior league regionals and World Series.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- For more than half a century before the city of Mattoon was founded in 1855, a solitary lone elm tree was a sentinel for those who traveled the prairie—a trail marker that provided shade for those pushing westward. It stood on the prairie that later became the west side of Mattoon. As time passed, the tree became known as the Historic Lone Elm. Unfortunately, this symbol of a primitive day perished from an elm disease in 1950.
- Mattoon is the headquarters for Consolidated Communications, incorporated in 1894 as the Mattoon Telephone Company. Today, through growth and acquisition, Consolidated provides telephone, internet, and fiber service in 24 states.
- The first Rural King, a large retailer for agricultural supplies, opened in Mattoon in 1960. Today, they have 120 stores in 13 states.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...47.8 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...60

Public Art

- A 100-foot mural in downtown Mattoon depicts some of the city's history.
- Two notable landmarks are the beautiful 1903 Carnegie Library and the 1918 Illinois Central Depot on Broadway.



A 100-foot mural in downtown Mattoon depicts city history.

Annual Events

- What started as a free bagel breakfast hosted by Murray Lender for the City of Mattoon evolved into the beloved multi-day Mattoon Bagelfest in mid-July in Peterson Park. There's live music, contests, a carnival, parade, and the Run for the Bagel road race.
- The Festival of Holiday Lights takes place each December in beautiful Peterson Park. Local churches also host a live nativity each Friday in December.
- Mattoon also hosts Fourth of July and Veterans Day parades.
- Celebrate Downtown Mattoon Christmas is always the first Friday of December and officially opens the holiday season with activities and fun for all.

Natural Areas and Resources

- The 35-acre Douglas-Hart Nature Center at the eastern edge of Mattoon was established to recreate and maintain two native habitats of Illinois—the prairie and deciduous forest.
- Nearby rivers have been dammed to form Lake Paradise (in 1907) and Lake Mattoon (in the 1950s), 12 miles southwest of the city. Boats are allowed on Paradise but it is a “NO WAKE” lake. The 1,050-acre Lake Mattoon is a popular recreational site for camping, fishing, and boating.
- Peterson Park is Mattoon's largest park.
- The Girls Complex is home of the Mattoon Pride Fast Pitch, Mattoon Cobras Fast Pitch, and Babe Ruth Softball, a premier softball program throughout the United States and Canada. It is designed for girls through the age of eighteen.

Unique Amenities

- Lawson Park Graham Field was chosen to host the first-ever Cal Ripken World Series, back in August 2020.
- Mattoon is home to the Coles County Speedway, one of the oldest dirt track facilities in the Midwest, with its challenging 1/8 th -mile dirt/clay oval.
- Take your pick of pumpkin patches and orchards—Buxton Garden Farm, The Great Pumpkin Patch, Moran Orchard, Okaw Valley Orchard, and Shady Crest Orchard.

Learn more about Mattoon, Illinois

- <https://mattoon.illinois.gov/>
- Mattoon Tourism & Arts Department tourism@mattoonillinois.org
- Mattoon Public Library <http://mattoonlibrary.org/>
- Mattoon Parks & Recreation Department <https://mattoon.illinois.gov/government/parks-recreation/>
- Mattoon Chamber of Commerce <http://www.mattoonchamber.com/>
- Coles County Speedway <https://www.enjoyillinois.com/explore/listing/coles-county-speedway>



Carnegie Library in Mattoon, Illinois.

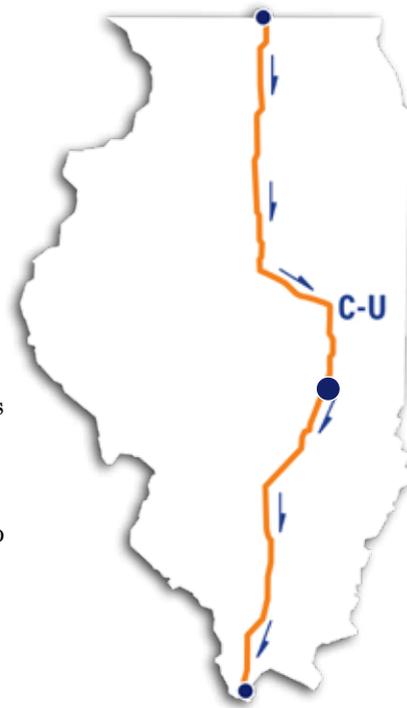
Established in 1831, and incorporated in 1865
 Population...20,117
 Geographic size...9.59 square miles

Known For

- Charleston was first settled in 1826 by Benjamin Parker, established as a city in 1831, and named after Charles Morton, its first postmaster.
- Abraham Lincoln was a frequent visitor to the area, as an attorney often to the Coles County Courthouse, but his father also lived on a farm just south of the city.
- The Downtown Square has been the site of the Coles County seat since 1835 and the area has many historic buildings displaying stunning architectural details.
- Charleston is home to Eastern Illinois University, founded in 1895, and known for its excellence in academics, the arts, and athletics.
- Like its close neighbor Mattoon, Charleston is one of downstate Illinois' biggest secrets. With arts and culture through EIU, diverse parks and recreation, great schools, Lincoln State Historical Sites, plus a vibrant downtown, Charleston "gives you the best of rural living in a friendly tight-knit community."

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Former Illinois Governor Jim Edgar (1990–1998) hails from Charleston and graduated from EIU.
- Jimmy John Liautaud founded the first Jimmy John's restaurant in Charleston in 1983.
- Sean Payton, head coach for the New Orleans Saints, was quarterback for EIU.
- Tony Romo graduated from EIU and went on to play in the NFL from 2003-2015.
- NFL's Jimmy Garoppolo also played for EIU and broke a number of Tony Romo's school records.



Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...55.4 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...38

Public Art

- Murals Around the Square, a series of seven murals in charming Downtown Square, showcases Charleston's connection with Abraham Lincoln, the Charleston Riot, a 1920s storefront, and its status as the Coles County seat. Be sure to take the seven-block tour.
- You can experience state-of-the-art architecture and design at the Doudna Fine Arts Center on the EIU campus.

Annual Events

- The 60-year-old EIU Celebration Festival celebrates jazz, past, present, and future each April.
- The University also has an annual Art Fair in April, featuring original works from local artisans and well as other Midwest artists.
- The 18th Street Farmer's Market takes place every Saturday morning during the summer and fall.
- Christmas in the Heart of Charleston takes place the first Saturday in December with a parade, carriage rides, refreshments, window displays, entertainment, photos with Santa, and much more.



Charleston's Square offers food, shopping, and plenty of history.

CHARLESTON

Natural Areas and Resources

- Fox Ridge State Park offers miles of rugged, scenic hiking trails, playgrounds, picnic shelters, fishing, hunting, and camping.
- There's great fishing in Lake Charleston as well as boating and nearly 10 miles of hiking and biking trails.
- Lincoln Prairie Grass Trail offers seven miles of paved surface and five miles of aggregate surface. Whether you are running, biking, or horseback riding, this trail is an excellent place to experience sights between Mattoon and Charleston.

Unique Amenities

- The tallest Abraham Lincoln statue is three miles east of Charleston on Illinois Highway 16.
- The Five Mile House, one of the oldest structures in Coles County (built in the mid to late 1840s), is a stucco-over-brick, two-room building that is a familiar landmark and part of educational and living-history activities.
- Charleston's newest heritage attraction is the Lincoln–Douglas Debate Museum, which commemorates the historic seven debates (one of which was in Charleston) between Democratic senator Stephen A. Douglas and Republican challenger Abraham Lincoln during the 1858 Illinois senatorial campaign, largely concerning the issue of slavery extension into the territories.

Learn more about Charleston, Illinois

- <https://www.charlestonillinois.org/>
- <https://www.charlestonillinois.org/tourism>
- Charleston Area Chamber of Commerce <https://www.charlestonchamber.com>
- Charleston Parks and Recreation Department www.charlestonillinois.org
- Charleston Carnegie Public Library <http://charlestonlibrary.org>
- Coles County <https://www.co.coles.il.us>



Enjoy Lake Charleston for its trails, wildlife, and incredible views in all types of weather! Even in the snow, people cannot resist! ©Abbe Marsmaker

Located within Paradise Township, Coles County, and established 1859
Population...1,308, including all of Paradise Township
Geographic size...as a location within Paradise Township, Coles County: 23.87 square miles



Known For

- An unincorporated community located along the south shore of Lake Paradise, which was formed in 1907 to supply water to the community of Mattoon.
- The area of Coles County was settled along a timberline and traveled by those heading west from Indiana and Kentucky. With expansion of the railroad, settlement and development grew in the late 1880s.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Within Coles County, early industry focused on agriculture with crops such as corn, oats, wheat, barley, rye, buckwheat, and tobacco.
- Later, corn emerged as a primary crop along with broomcorn used to make brooms. The crop was introduced after the Civil War and flourished from 1870–1939.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...58.3 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Annual Events

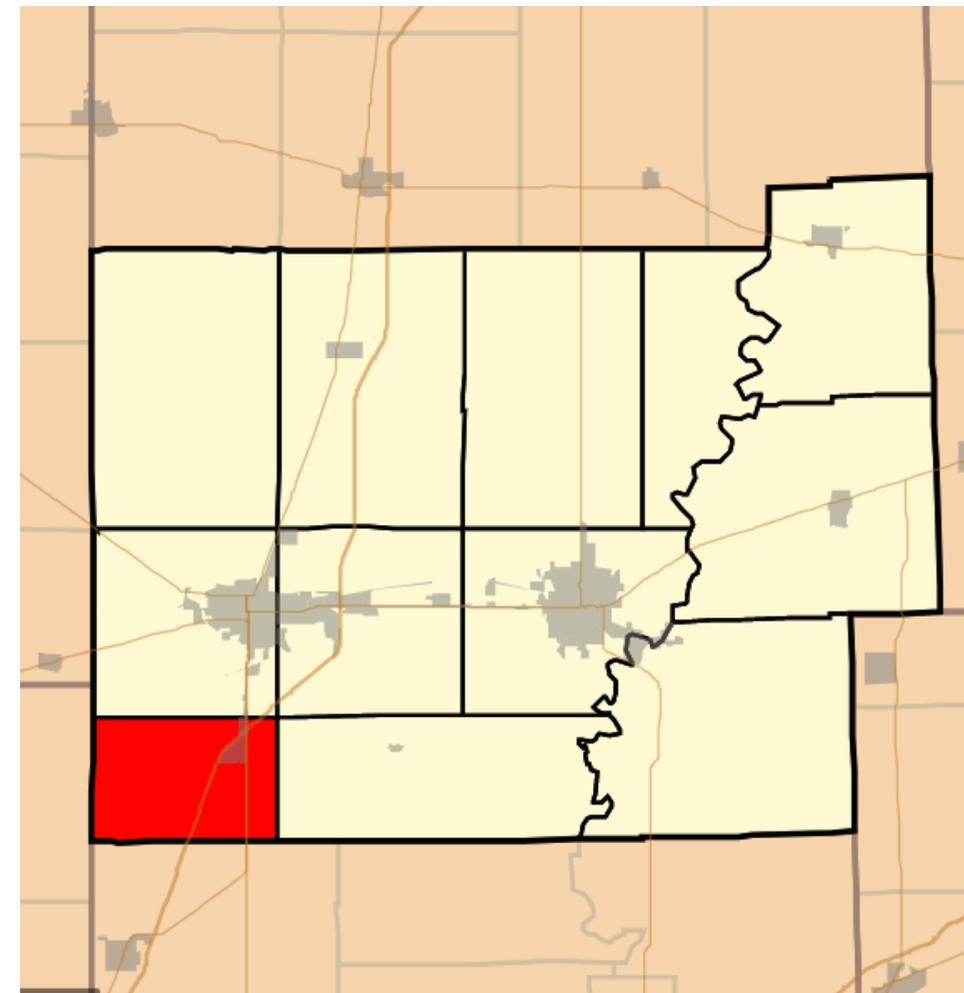
- Located within Coles County, and 6 miles from Mattoon, access to music, fun, and entertainment is nearby.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Lake Paradise, which grew with the addition of cottages and a recreation area in 1931, continues to provide options for outdoor enjoyment and boating on the lake.

Learn more about Paradise, Illinois

- <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US1702957615-paradise-township-coles-county-il/>
- Coles County <https://www.co.coles.il.us/genInfo.html>



Paradise Township, Coles County.

Platted in 1856. Created a charter in 1869 and became a city in 1933
 Population...1,636
 Geographic size...1.43 square miles

Known For

- The city's name is derived from the Native American word meaning "deer" in the Kickapoo language.
- Until 1869, the residents of Neoga governed themselves in a frontier style form of government. Eventually, with more governing structure needed, a charter was created in 1869. The community subsequently became a village, then a city, in 1933.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Originating as a station along the Illinois Central Railroad in 1855, Neoga grew and flourished as a direct result of railroad expansion throughout the state.
- Home to regional banks managed locally, the city boasts a robust banking and finance industry.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...59.2 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...2

Public Art

- Located on the grounds of Jennings Park and dedicated in 2016, the Veterans Memorial provides an area of solace honoring service personnel from all branches of the military.



Annual Events

- "Building on the past with a vision for the future," Neoga Days aims to preserve the traditions and customs of the region at this family-friendly event complete with entertainment, carnival rides, special themes, and activities.
- With an opportunity for community activities year-round, residents and visitors won't want to miss A Hometown Christmas, Sooeey Fest, and an annual softball tournament!

Natural Areas and Resources

- Jennings Park provides the perfect location to simply enjoy the outdoors on a quiet day or gather with the community for a special event.
- For a day at the beach, pack some sunscreen and look no further than the Lake Mattoon Public Beach, open Memorial Day through Labor Day.
- Campers are welcome at Campground East and Campground West, open to seasonal campers with both camper and tent sites available.

Unique Amenities

- The community group Neoga Partnership for Progress supports the community through events and resources with the mission: "To maintain what makes Neoga great and do what it can to make it even better."
- Fridays bring an edition of the Neoga News, a weekly publication of local events and topics to area residents.



Welcome to Neoga, Illinois.

NEOGA

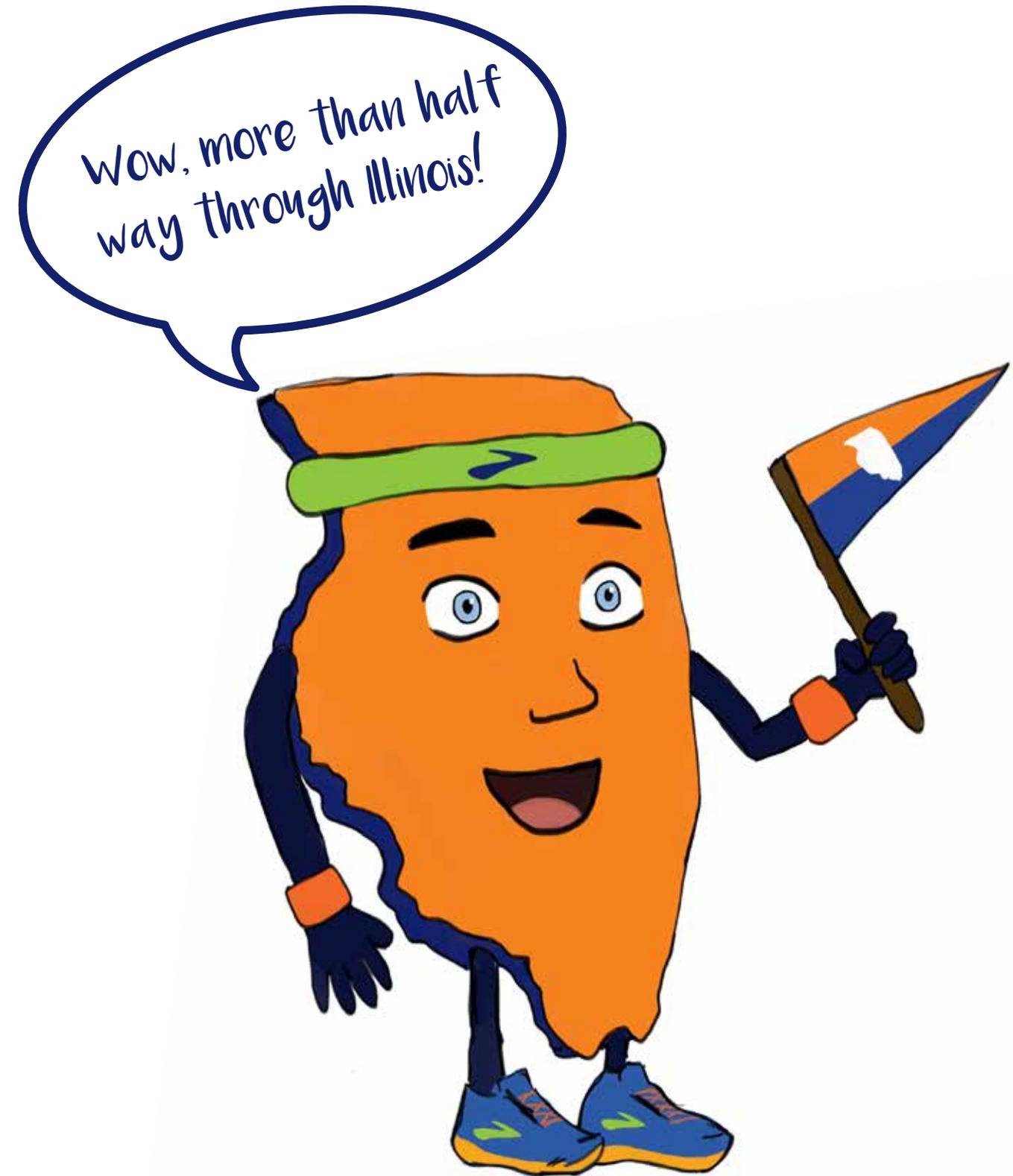
- There is an Illinois Central Railroad cemetery in Neoga.
- Diners looking for some “good old home cooking” will want to plan a visit to The Depot Restaurant—candy apple pork loin and loaded mashed potatoes—yum!

Learn more about Neoga, Illinois

- <http://www.neoga.org/>
- American Legion Veterans Memorial
<https://www.legion.org/memorials/240500/neoga-veterans-memorial>
- Cumberland County Development
<http://cumberlandcountydevelopmentcorporation.com/index.php/community-profiles-1/neoga-illinois>
- Neoga Days <https://www.facebook.com/NeogaDays/>
- The Depot Restaurant <https://www.facebook.com/The-Depot-Restaurant-100197126731690/>



Veterans Memorial in Neoga.



Incorporated in 1867
Population...373
Geographic size...0.288 square miles

Known For

- The town's name is derived from Franz Sigel, who served as a general for the Union in the Civil War.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Baritone singer and radio variety program host Jack Berch, star of *The Jack Berch Show* (aka *The Kitchen Pirate* and *The Sweetheart Serenader*), hailed from Sigel.
- Home to Sigel Equipment, a family-owned company founded in 1965, serving customers through equipment delivery/pick-up, repair, auction sales, and more.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...70.2 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...1

Annual Events

- Tractor pull enthusiasts won't want to miss the K of C Tractor/Truck Pull event each September.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Batter up and play ball at one of the ball diamonds located at Sigel Park.



Unique Amenities

- Bring an appetite when traveling through town for a stop at La Terraza Taqueria for delicious fajitas, sides, and more.

Learn more about Sigel, Illinois

- <http://www.city-data.com/city/Sigel-Illinois.html>
- Sigel Equipment <https://www.sigelequipment.com/>
- La Terraza Taqueria
https://www.facebook.com/La-Terraza-Taqueria-104171807853887/?ref=page_internal
- Sigel KC https://www.facebook.com/sigelkc/?ref=page_internal



Sigel_Tractor_Pull_Source_sigelkcfacebook

Settled 1814 and founded 1859
 Population...12,709
 Geographic size...9.921 square miles



Known For

- From the time of settlement through 1859, the town was known as Broughton. Becoming the county seat of Effingham County in 1859, the community was renamed Effingham after General E. Effingham, a local surveyor.
- Promoted as “The Crossroads of Opportunity” due to the intersection at Effingham of major roadways I-57, I -70, U.S. Routes 45 and 40, and Illinois routes 32 and 33 along with the major rail lines Illinois Central and the Pennsylvania Railroad as they travel through Illinois.
- Ranked by several organizations for livability, pet owners take note, Effingham was ranked in Millennial Personal Finance’s Most Pet Friendly Cities report, which reviewed 5,000 American cities with a population of 10,000 or more and ranked Effingham a solid 30 for pet friendliness!

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Operating continually since 1887, John Boos & Co. is the oldest industry in Effingham creating products known throughout the world and used by celebrity chefs. The company, beginning with the creation of what is now known as the Boos Block®, began as a special request by a local butcher. Today, John Boos butcher blocks are produced in Effingham along with additional wood and stainless-steel food service products for both the residential and commercial markets.
- Effingham is situated within the “nation’s breadbasket” and agriculture has and continues to be an important economy. Corn and soybean crops along with the raising of hogs are top producers for the area.

- In addition to Ada Kepley, the first American woman to graduate from law school, Effingham has been home to several professional athletes, politicians, a race car driver, and a singer.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...78.6 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...45

Public Art

- The city prides itself as an art friendly community and does not disappoint in the diverse options to explore its many cultural offerings.
- Enjoy fresh air and beauty through Sculptures on the Avenues, Effingham’s outdoor exhibition.
- The Effingham Art Guild provides an opportunity to experience art through traveling exhibitions within the community at Bonutti Clinic, the Effingham Performance Center, the Effingham Public Library, and Joe Sippers Café.
- For a live performance, school trip, theatre camp, and more, the Effingham Performance Center is another fine arts asset in Effingham.

Annual Events

- A visit to the area any time of the year is sure to coincide with one of the many annual events in the community. Get out and enjoy the warmer temperatures at the Effingham Farmers Market, Effingham Artisan Fair, Effingham Cruise Night, Fourth of July Fireworks, Effingham County Fair, and VW Funfest. Music enthusiasts will want to attend the Summer Sundown Music Festival, Moccasin Creek Festival, and EffingHAM Jam. Fall does not disappoint with the Hobnob Harvest Market, Corvette Funfest, Heart of the Hops, Chili Fest, and the Halloween Parade. Residents and visitors can round out the year and dive into the holiday spirit at the Hometown Christmas event held the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Natural Areas and Resources

- With several parks, including the fully accessible Harmony Playground, recreational teams, golf courses, a ball field, a swimming pool, and more, enjoying the outdoors is right outside your door in Effingham.
- Campers may delight in a retreat along Lake Sara, or Camp Lakewood along Lake Pauline, both complete with RV and cabin options.
- Getting up close with nature and feeling as though you’ve travelled a world away, the Ballard Nature Center is home to a natural prairie, wetlands, butterfly, and hummingbird gardens.
- Runners and walkers will want to be sure to step over to the TREC trail (Trail Recreation Effingham County) to get in your steps and log some miles while in the area.

EFFINGHAM

Unique Amenities

- Plan to stay for dinner and head to the Firefly Grill, a gourmet farm to table restaurant, take in some music and drink at the rooftop bar at Village Wine, or discover craft brews and burgers at the Effing Brew Company.
- The Tuscan Hills Winery, established in 2011, produces wines from grapes sourced in the Midwest and serves up some Italian favorites in their kitchen.
- The Thelma Keller Convention Center is host to weddings and events of all sizes, providing customized service and dining options.
- Standing at 198 feet, boasting a span of 113 feet, and visible for miles, the Cross at the Crossroads at the intersection of I-57 and I-70 is a landmark for those traveling through the area. Visitors can stop in at the Welcome Center or attend some of the special events offered throughout the year.
- Discover the history of the area and what life was like as a rural “crossroads community” at the Effingham County Cultural Center and Museum where the “emotional archaeology” of the area’s past is communicated through first-person interpretation, artifacts, programs, and reenactments. The museum is in the Effingham County Courthouse, a location on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Car enthusiasts can get a rare glimpse of some unique automobiles at My Garage Museum at the Mid America Motorworks’ facility complete with an actual 1910 gas station!

Learn more about Effingham, Illinois

- <http://www.effinghamil.com/>
- Effingham Visitor and Convention Bureau <http://www.visiteffinghamil.com/>
- Cross at the Crossroads <https://www.enjoyillinois.com/explore/listing/cross-at-the-crossroads>
- John Boos <https://www.johnboos.com/>
- Effingham Culture Guide
<http://www.visiteffinghamil.com/home/showpublisheddocument?id=11850>
- Tuscan Hills Winery <https://www.effinghamwinery.com/>
- Effing Brew Company <https://effingbrewco.com/#>
- Effingham County Courthouse Museum <http://www.effinghamcountymuseum.org/>
- My Garage Museum <http://www.mygaragemuseum.com/>



Locals gather in downtown Effingham for the annual Chili Fest.

Speculated founding sometime during the 1860s, incorporated by the Secretary of State in 1895

Population...754

Geographic size...1.12 square miles



Known For

- Named after George Watson, an Illinois Central Railroad executive. The railroad passed through the area during the 1860s.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Home to a location of TGM, Total Grain Marketing, a full-service grain company established in 2006 providing grain marketing options to customers while meeting the grain needs of producers and consumers.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...91.3 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...1

Annual Events

- A tradition filled with vendors, music, and community spirit to place on the calendar is the annual Watson Homecoming. Although traditionally held over the Memorial Day Weekend, a decision in 2020 to transition the event to the fall was made with the Homecoming to be held at Halloween.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Open space, a gazebo, and playground provide opportunities to enjoy the outdoors right within the community at Willow Park.

Unique Amenities

- With origins as the Watson High School and Gymnasium, today the Watson Civic Center is a community facility available for mixed use, rental, special events, and more.

Learn more about Watson, Illinois

- <http://villageofwatson.com/>
- History of Watson High School <http://www.illinoisglorydays.com/id177.html>

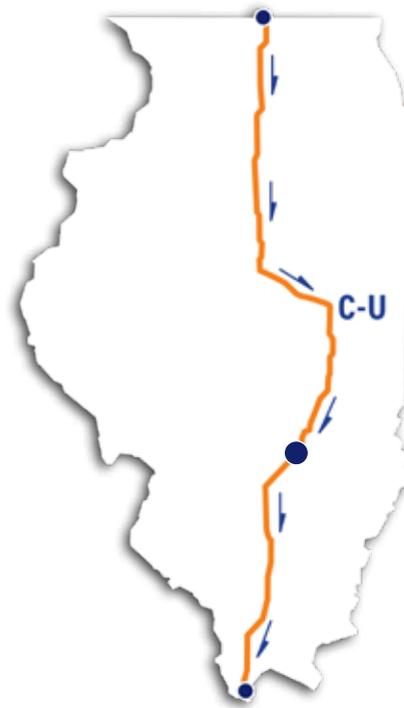


The Watson, Illinois, Civic Center is the go-to venue for the community.

Platted in 1853 and incorporated in 1865
 Population...336
 Geographic size...1.29 square miles

Known For

- Local historian Jerry Eident tells us that “the town was named Mason on September 27, 1856 (after railroad official Roswell B. Mason) when the last rail and last spike were driven there to complete the Illinois Central Railroad connection from Chicago to Cairo. Mason is famously known as ‘The place where the rails joined together’ to complete the line. The building of the rail line had begun on either end, and joined together at Mason.”
- The railroad’s arrival led to Mason becoming a booming town in the late 1880s. At one point, it was thought that the town might become “the Chicago of the south.”
- The town has had a disastrous history with fires. Fires in downtown in 1888 and 1899 damaged many buildings. The worst fire occurred in 1912, wiping out an entire block of one and two-story business buildings. Another fire occurred in 1924, and in 1989, the properties of the Mason Civic Center involving the old school gymnasium and adjoining classrooms went up in flames.
- Groundbreaking on the new Mason Civic Center was in November of 1989, construction made possible by a sizable gift from the Minnie Kluthe trust, which has aided many other community sponsored projects in the area. Managed as a not-for-profit building by a nine-person board of directors, the Civic Center remains the backbone of the community. The building is available for rent for family reunions, birthday parties, family dinners, dances, and so on.
- The arrival of Interstate 57 in the late 1960s three miles northwest of the town, with no exit into Mason, led to the eventual decline of commerce. Today, the post office remains, but only a few local businesses exist otherwise.



- Before there was a Civic Center, the hub for every type of community event as well as for roller skating and volleyball was the local school gymnasium, which the local Mason Civic Club purchased for \$1 from the school district. The Mason Civic Club was formed in 1967 and continues to this day due to the support through the years of many dedicated volunteers.
- Mason native Dr. James Newton Matthews, at age 16, was the first student to attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign when it opened in 1868. James became a country doctor and a successful poet known as the “Poet of the Prairie.”
- Ada Kepley, an early crusader for women’s suffrage, lived just a few miles north of Mason for a number of years in the late 1800s and into the early 1900s at the site of Kepley’s Sulphur Springs Resort.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Mason is surrounded by lush farmland and many residents own and manage large corn and soybean farms.
- Deja Brew is a small family café serving delicious coffee, breakfast, and lunch.
- Check out 37 & Main Resale Shop when you’re in town. You might find that perfect antique treasure.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...91.6 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- An impressive Civil War statue in the Mason Union Cemetery was dedicated on July 4, 1903, with a dozen local Civil War veterans on hand for the occasion. The statue is dedicated to “The boys who served from 1861–1865.”
- The Roswell B. Mason Monument along Route 37 where the road bends into the north end of town is dedicated to the memory of Roswell B. Mason, 1805–1892, Builder of the Charter Lines of The Illinois Central Railroad. The plaque on the monument says, “Dedicated to the memory of Roswell B. Mason, 1805–1892, Builder of the Charter Lines of The Illinois Central Railroad. Erected September 27, 1956 on the one hundredth anniversary of the completion of construction at this place which was thereupon named in his honor.”



The Roswell B. Mason Monument memorializes the completion of the Illinois Central Railroad in Mason, Illinois. © Tina Moore

MASON

Annual Events

- Every Memorial Day there is a dinner at the Civic Center followed by a short ceremony at the Mason Union Cemetery.

Natural Areas and Resources

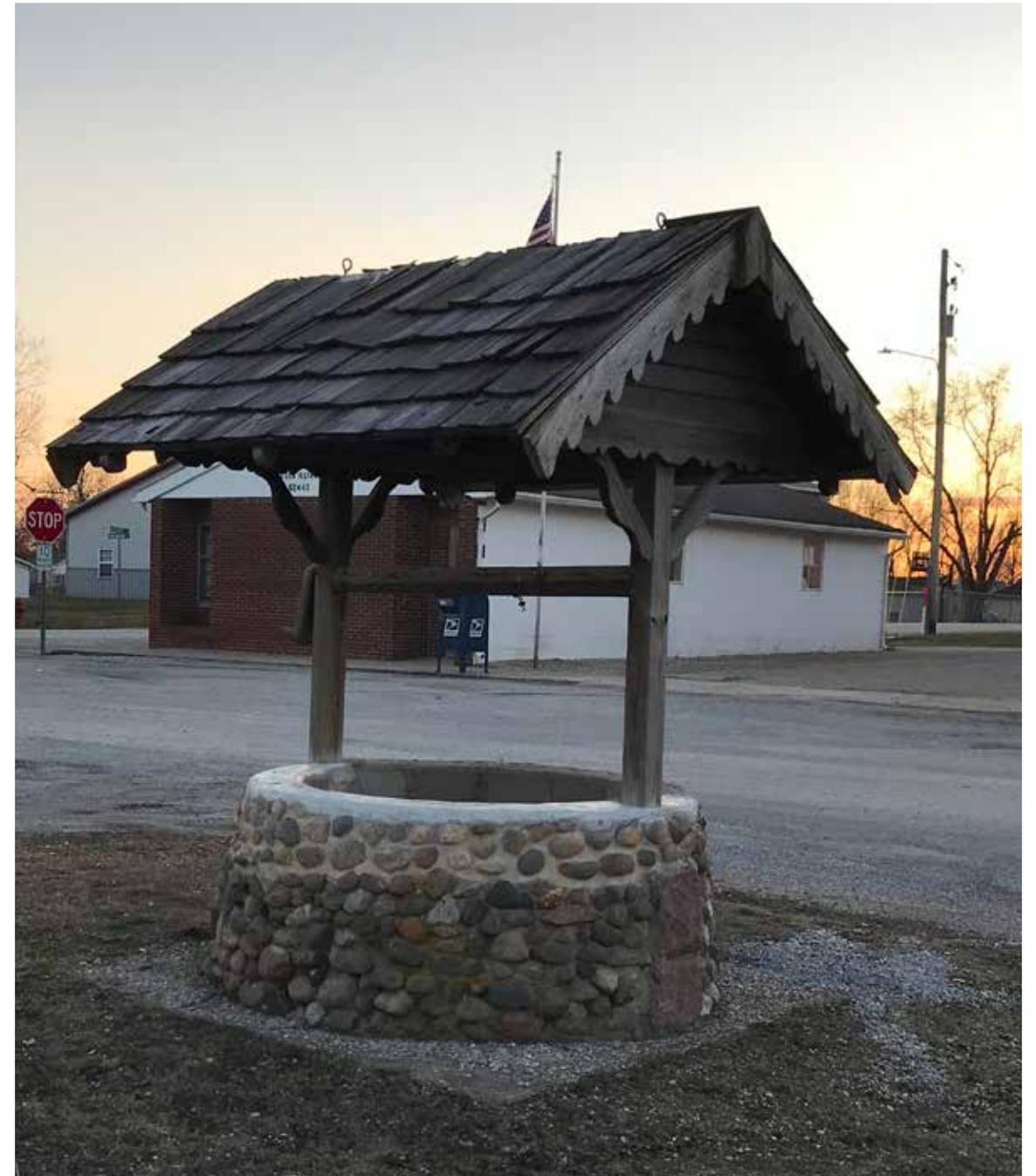
- The 680-acre Wildcat Hollow State Habitat Area, with three types of forests and prairie grasses, is a natural habitat for many animals and a wonderful place to hike.
- Mason Park includes some playground equipment, benches, and a pavilion. The Civic Center also has a basketball court.

Unique Amenities

- Mason is known for its Wishing Well, located near the Mason Post office, where one of the town's original town wells once existed. Local minister Glenn Iden built the stone-walled structure that today stands on the site of the old well, which was filled in sometime in the 1960s. Local historians believe the original well dates back to 1853 when the town was first laid out and platted. As Jerry Eident explains, "numerous carpenter/handyman over the years have made needed repairs to keep the old well standing in the heart of the town as an enduring connection to the past."

Learn more about Mason, Illinois

- Mason Township Park District Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/MasonTownshipParkDistrict>
- Mason Civic Center Facebook page
https://www.facebook.com/Mason-Civic-Center-107849743913414/?ref=page_internal
- Wildcat Hollow State Habitat Area
<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/FactSheets/Pages/WildcatHollowStateHabitatArea.aspx>



The Wishing Well in Mason, Illinois. © Tina Moore

A village in Effingham County, founded in 1857

Population...430

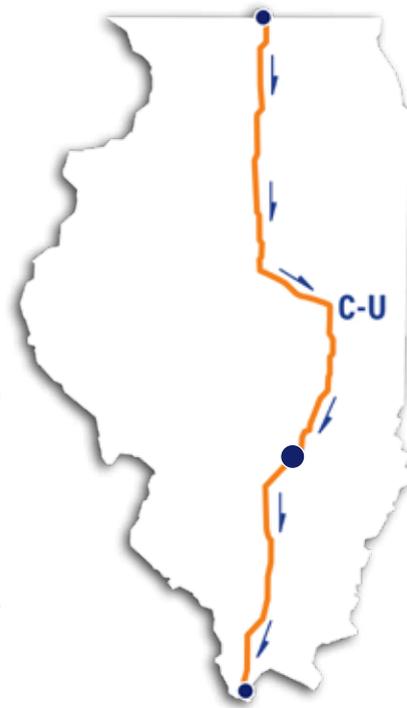
Geographic size...1.02 square miles

Known For

- Edgewood was founded in 1857 when the railroad extended to the area. The village got its name because of its literal location near the edge of a forest.
- A post office has been in operation in Edgewood since 1858.
- The Edgewood American Legion post is named after two local men who served in World War II—private first class Clyde Keeler and staff sergeant Donovan Adams.
- The tight-knit community includes many families that have lived in the village for decades.
- The Edgewood Country Opry started in 1985 and offers live music every Friday night in the Opry building.
- In 1991, a train derailment involving 28 of the 125-car train required the evacuation of the entire town for three days because of the resulting chemical spill of vinyl chloride and hydrochloric acid.
- Edgewood's Franklin P. Buyer went on to become a member of the Los Angeles City council from 1933 to 1939.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Edgewood remains true to its farming roots, with corn and soybean being the primary crops for local farmers.
- Nutrien Ag Solutions has a facility on the northeast edge of town, providing full-acre solutions to area farmers.



Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...94.7 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- A Veterans Wall of Honor was built in front of the American Legion building and displays the names of local service members from Edgewood.

Annual Events

- Edgewood Fest takes place on the last Saturday in June and features an evening parade, followed by the annual fireworks display.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Edgewood Park has playground equipment and two pavilions, which are popular spots for local cookouts and parties.

Unique Amenities

- The Park District building, which was formerly the Edgewood grade school until 2007, serves as a kind of community center for the village, where all kinds of events take place, from weddings and birthday parties to hunter safety courses.
- The Park District building is also the location of the unofficial village library, known as the WME Community Library, which has over 1500 volumes.
- A Dollar General is in the process of being built in Edgewood.

Learn more about Edgewood, Illinois

- History of Edgewood High School
https://www.effinghamdailynews.com/news/history/history-of-edgewood-high-school/article_8e044f2c-5c4e-11eb-b45f-a7902ac968bd.ml?fbclid=IwAR3UVPVHM4ROTV1CR6QwPQb3DF35EYvwtav5xnR9KRMMyAe2UTabsGyzEOVc#utm_campaign=blox&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social



Veterans Wall of Honor outside the American Legion Post in Edgewood, Illinois.

An unincorporated community in La Clede Township

Population...898 in the entire Township

Geographic size...a small sliver of the 36.84 square miles that make up the Township

Known For

- An unincorporated community in La Clede Township, Fayette County, La Clede was named after Pierre Laclède, a French fur trader who founded St. Louis.
- La Clede Township is one of 20 townships in Fayette County.
- The township contains Farina Cemetery.
- Interstate 57 and Illinois Route 185 go through the Township.
- Students in the Township are divided across three school districts: Altamont Community Unit School District 10, Effingham Community Unit School District 40, and South Central Community Unit School District 401.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

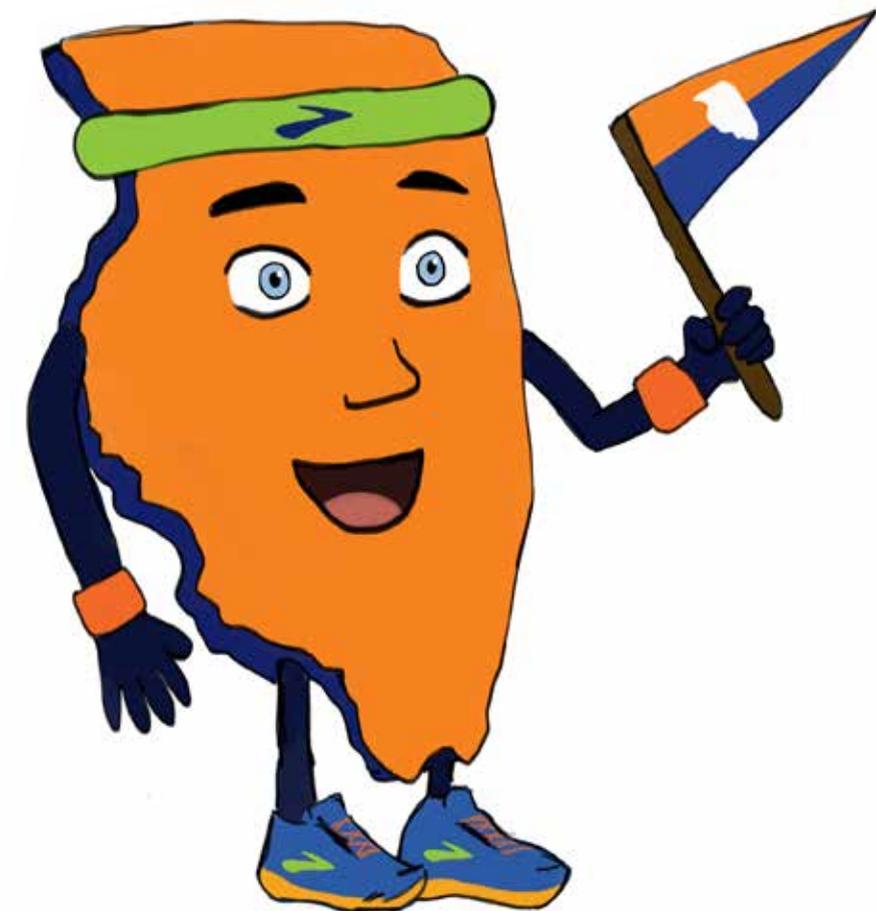
- Distance to C-U from the location...94.7 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Natural Areas and Resources

- La Clede is only 14 miles from the Stephen A. Forbes State Recreation Area with its 3,000+ acres and 18 miles of shoreline.

Learn more about La Clede, Illinois

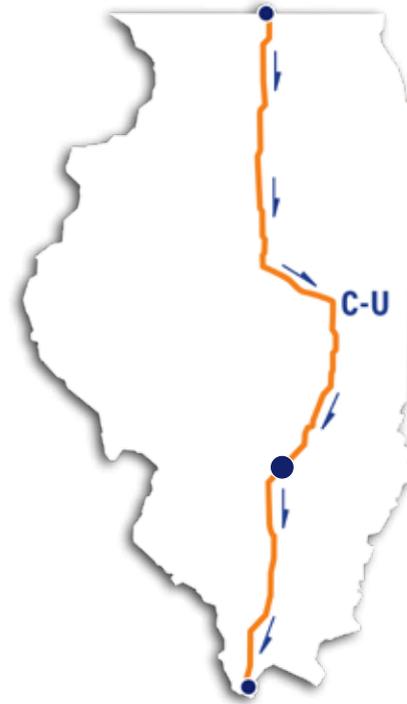
- La Clede Township/Fayette County Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/LaClede-Township-Fayette-County-Illinois-1402204116474422/>



Originally platted in 1857, incorporated in 1867

Population...881

Geographic size...1.33 square miles



Known For

- Like so many communities in Illinois, Kinmundy came into being as a result of the expansion of the Chicago branch of the Illinois Central Railroad into the southern part of the state. A depot was erected in 1856, and the station was named Kinmundy.
- The town was initially laid out east of the railroad, in 15 varying sized blocks, and the first houses were built in 1857, which led to the city's incorporation in 1867.
- The first inhabitants of Kinmundy were from Tennessee, and the town was named after the birthplace of William Ferguson, a native of Kinmundy, Scotland, who visited Illinois in 1856. He was a member of the firm that represented Illinois Central Railroad Company's agents in London.
- In its early decades the enterprising community flourished with restaurants, a general store, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a brick mill, a post office, and a drug store while the rich farming land surrounding the town allowed for abundant yields, including fruits of many varieties.
- In 1903, 1916, and 1940, fires in the business district nearly wiped out the town.
- The town has the rare distinction of being the only community in the United States named Kinmundy.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...109.6 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- Kinmundy is home to the Italianate-styled Calendar Rohrbough House, built in 1875 for local merchant and politician Calendar Rohrbough. The house was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.
- The Illinois Central Railroad Water Tower, located on the southern side of Illinois Route 37 in Kinmundy Township, was built in 1885 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Kinmundy Historical Society maintains a beautiful Serenity Garden along Third Street next to the Post Office.
- A not-for-profit organization, Madison Street Historic Preservation, was formed to save the old city buildings standing in the downtown area along "Main Street."



Historic Illinois Central Railroad Water Tower in Kinmundy.

Annual Events

- The Kinmundy Log Cabin Village Craft Fair has been part of the community for over 40 years. Held over two weekends each September on the grounds of the Log Cabin Village and organized by the Kinmundy Historical Society and Kinmundy Promotions, the fair features classic components like pony rides, funnel cakes, and kettle corn but also unique period interpretations and demonstrations like blacksmithing, pottery making, rope making, and crocheting. Local volunteers and crafts people dress in period clothing, and many of the restored cabins are open, with “homesteaders” sharing about life in the cabin. Some of the volunteers are descendants of the original residents of the historic cabins.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Named after world-renowned natural scientist Stephen Alfred Forbes, the Stephen A. Forbes State Recreation Area is a gem. In the past 70 years, this natural area has grown in size from 20 acres to 3,103 acres—1,150 of which are forests of oak and hickory surrounding a large man-made lake with 18 miles of shoreline that was completed in 1963.

Unique Amenities

- In the late 1950s, a pioneer log cabin village was the vision of Erma Ingram of Kinmundy. She realized the log structures of the 1800s were rapidly vanishing. She acquired authentic pre-Civil War cabins, and along with her son, Bob, started moving them to a 40-acre wooded tract on the north side of Kinmundy, where they were recreated. As time went on, more cabins were added from around the area, and in the mid-1970s Ingram’s “Pioneer Log Cabin Village” was opened to the public. After the passing of Bob Ingram in 2016, the land was sold, and a non-profit group was organized to keep this historic site going strong. The name of this site is now “Kinmundy Log Cabin Village,” and there are currently 12 pre-Civil War cabins standing. Three additional cabins from the area have recently been donated, and plans are for their reconstruction in the village as well. The annual Fall Craft Fair still continues today, as it has since the 1970s, and additional events are planned for the future.
- The Kinmundy Museum, featuring artifacts and history about the Kinmundy-Alma area, is operated by the Kinmundy Historical Society and is located on the east side of Madison Street in the downtown area.



Kinmundy Log Cabin Village is a collection of 12 original pioneer homes in Kinmundy.

Learn more about Kinmundy, Illinois

- <http://www.city-data.com/city/Kinmundy-Illinois.html>
- Kinmundy Historical Society <http://www.kinmundyhistoricalsociety.org/>
- Kinmundy Public Library <https://librarytechnology.org/library/17807>
- Kinmundy Log Cabin Village <https://www.kinmundylogcabinvillage.com/>

A village in Marion County, platted in 1854, incorporated in 1897
 Population...330
 Geographic size...1.13 square miles

Known For

- The Village of Alma was originally platted in 1854 by John S. Martin and named "Rantoul" after Robert Rantoul. In 1855, John B. Calhoun, a land commissioner for the Illinois Central Railroad, suggested that the village name be changed to Alma, after a stream in the Crimea by that name where an important battle took place. News coverage given to the Crimean War led to Alma becoming a popular place name and girls name in the middle of the 19th century.
- Land for the town was donated by some prominent citizens, including W. S. Ross, a wealthy landowner and merchant in the area.
- A post office was established in 1884 as Grand Mound City and then changed to Alma in 1885.
- Ten other states in the United States have a town called Alma.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- For well over a century, Alma was known as an excellent fruit region. Peach and apple orchards covered the area, and produce was shipped across the country starting back in the 1880s. The famous "Alma Gem" muskmelon was brought from Texas to Alma by fruit grower and nurseryman, W.S. "Uncle Billy" Ross. Neighbors began to grow this melon as well, and during harvest, wagons were lined up for miles on all five roads leading into town, as the melons were loaded in Alma onto the 1 o'clock train on the Illinois Central Railroad. The melons were transported by the carloads to places like Chicago and the Waldorf in New York City.



- When Keifer Pear trees were planted by the thousands in Alma, the village became the "Keifer Pear Capital of the World," and 200 to 300 railroad cars of pears moved out of Alma at harvest. Along the way, basket and barrel factories were built in town to help residents pack the produce.
- Uncle Billy Ross also imported daffodil bulbs from Holland. At one time, Alma had 65 to 75 acres devoted to daffodils, and 40 to 50 local children picked daffodils each morning before school. Other residents sorted and packed the flowers in containers for shipment. Among those who grew daffodils were the Mazanek brothers, who shipped 40 to 50 boxes of daffodils each day during the season.
- Today, the Mazanek family still has a peach orchard, which brings joy to the community each fall when a sign appears on Highway 37 announcing that peaches are ready for eating on the Mazanek farm. Come one, come all!

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...116.1 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- Where there once was a bank and a grocery store is now the Hester Garden and a World War II Veterans Memorial, near the post office on Main Street.

Annual Events

- The Ken Smith Memorial Car Show is held the second Saturday in September in the Alma ballpark. Over 100 cars are featured, everything from hot rods to Model Ts to tractors. Guests come from many neighboring communities for this annual event.
- One Saturday each spring features the annual village consignment sale, with all the money raised going to various village projects, like building City Hall. In most years, the money pays for the Christmas lights that the village puts up on Route 37, which comes right through Main Street Alma.
- The Alma United Methodist Church hosts another fun annual event each September. Using a big ole copper pot and eight bushels of apples, church members spend an entire day making 200 pints of apple butter and 100 pints of apple jelly.

ALMA

Natural Areas and Resources

- Gregory Park is a popular community venue, with picnic tables, playground and swing sets, as well as a basketball court, and, uniquely, a World War II cannon.
- The Alma ballpark at the north end of town is another village gem. Built in 1968, the field includes lights, which allows evening games to be played by various softball and baseball teams in the area.

Unique Fact

- Russell Swift has been the mayor for the last 10 years; prior to this, his father, Ron Swift, was the mayor for 18 years.

Learn more about Alma, Illinois

- Alma history
<http://www.kinmundyhistoricalsociety.org/Town%20Histories%20and%20Photos.htm>
- <http://www.city-data.com/city/Alma-Illinois.html>



Making homemade apple butter and jelly is an annual tradition for the Alma United Methodist Church.

An unincorporated community in Tonti Township, in Marion County
 Population...980 (entire Township)
 Geographic size...35.55 square miles (entire Township)

Known For

- Tonti is little more than a bend in the road and a sign near where the Illinois Central Railroad tracks cross Interstate 57.
- The community of Tonti was named in honor of Henri de Tonti, an early Italian/French explorer of Illinois.
- Adjacent townships are Foster, Kinmundy, Omega, Stevenson, Salem, Odin, Carrigan, and Patoka.
- The first settler in the township was William Pursley around 1820.
- Tonti was the site of a horrific Amtrak train derailment on June 10, 1971 that killed 11 and injured more than 160. The crash of the 14-car *City of New Orleans* passenger train was Amtrak's first and appeared to be caused by a seized axle bearing.
- The most well-known family in Tonti Township was the Borden family of Borden Condensed Milk, who lived in a beautiful mansion with a large farm. *The Salem Herald-Advocate* (Salem, Illinois) described the estate this way: "Seven miles northwest of Salem, near Tonti on the Illinois Central, is one of the most complete stock farms in the state. It is owned by H. Lee BORDEN, the millionaire condensed milk man of Chicago, and comprises 941 acres, beautifully located. The entire farm is enclosed with painted plank fence and is subdivided as follows: Thirty acres in orchard, 100 in oats, 300 in timber, and the remainder in pasture, meadows and hay. There are 22 buildings, all clustered near the palatial residence of the proprietor, and comprise two horse barns, two hog barns, cow barn, milk house, poultry yards and coops, slaughter house, storm house, dog kennels, and a large mill house in which is a 10-horsepower engine, the



power being used for grinding feed, sawing wood, pumping water, churning, etc. These houses and barns are all built in the best style, have every modern convenience, and the settlement has the appearance, when first approached, of a thriving little country village." Unfortunately, in March 1921, the Borden mansion went up in flames. In 1936, most of the remaining buildings were destroyed by a fire.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...123.1 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Learn more about Tonti, Illinois

- Tonti Township, Marion County <https://marioncountylil.angelfire.com/iTontiTownship.html>

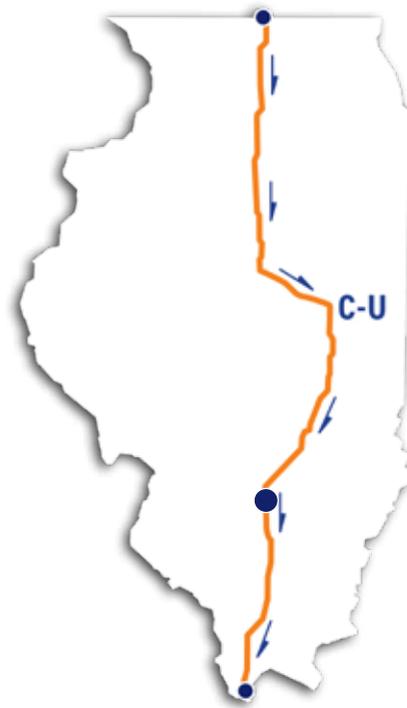


Historic photo of the H. Lee Borden mansion in Tonti Township.

Founded in 1823, incorporated in 1855
Population...6,971
Geographic size...7.11 square miles

Known For

- The first settlers arrived in what became present-day Salem after the New Madrid (Missouri) earthquake in 1811 sent Captain Samuel Young in search of a more hospitable place live. The first camp he built was on what is now the courthouse square.
- When severe drought hit northern and central Illinois in the 1820s, wagon loads of people began traveling to southern Illinois to obtain food grain for themselves and their animals. This migration was compared to the biblical story of the Israelites traveling to Egypt for food; hence, southern Illinois became known as “Egypt” or “Little Egypt,” and Salem became the “Gateway of Little Egypt.”
- Salem was founded in 1823 as the county seat of the newly formed Marion County. Situated halfway between the Indiana and Missouri borders on what was originally the Vincennes-St. Louis Road, now U.S. Highway 50, Salem became a stagecoach stop on the Vincennes Trail.
- Salem’s favorite famous son is William Jennings Bryan, who was an orator, lawyer, congressman, newspaper editor, lecturer, and three-time presidential candidate.
- John T. Scopes, the science teacher who defended the teaching of evolution against William Jennings Bryan, a prosecutor in the famous Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925, graduated in the Salem High School class of 1919. Coincidentally, Bryan delivered the graduation address.
- An “oil boom” in the 1930s really put Salem on the map, transforming the quiet-paced small town into a bustling community. And, the oil production was prodigious. In 1939, 93 million barrels of oil were pumped from Marion County’s farmland, the second highest amount of oil production in any one area.



- The G.I. Bill of Rights, also called the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, was drafted in the Luther B. Easley Post No. 128 of the American Legion in Salem, on November 4, 1943, and signed into law by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on June 22, 1944. The legislation provided benefits to World War II veterans like grants for school and college tuition, low-interest mortgage and small-business loans, job training, and so on.
- Modern-day Salem celebrates its rich history and beauty while aggressively building for the future. In recent years, Salem has developed several amenities in Bryan Park to enhance their citizens’ quality of life, including the Salem Family Aquatic Center, a disc golf course, and by spring 2021, an inclusive playground.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Salem lore maintains that Miracle Whip Salad Dressing was created in Salem by a local restaurateur, who called the condiment “Max Crossett’s X-tra Fine Salad Dressing.” Crossett supposedly sold the recipe to Kraft Foods in 1931 for \$300.
- Salem also has a thriving farming community.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...124 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...3

Public Art

- Three Salem homes are on the National Register of Historical Places: the Charles and Naomi Bachmann House; the Badollet House; and the William Jennings Bryan Boyhood Home, which Bryan donated to the city in the early 1900s, with the expressed wish that it become a museum, which it is today, operated by the city. Salem is proud to host a statue of William Jennings Bryan in Bryan Park, sculpted by Gutzon Borglum, the artist who created the Mt. Rushmore Memorial.
- Downtown Salem also boasts a large mural of the historical pharmacy/soda shop known as “Sweeney’s Drugstore.”



The William Jennings Bryan statue in the park in Salem that bears his name.

SALEM

- The Daffy Dill Garden Club, in collaboration with Keep Salem Beautiful, maintains the downtown planters and provides beautiful gardens at the Bryan statue and the entrance to Bryan Park. The Salem Historical Commission is in development of the Salem Area Historical Museum, which will showcase Salem's rich historical heritage. The Salem Community Theatre and Cultural Center hosts a variety of plays, concerts, and events for guests of all ages.

Annual Events

- The YMCA Run Your Heart Out Easter 5K/10K takes place in early April.
- The first County Fair in Marion County took place in 1855, organized by the Marion County Agricultural Society. Since then, the Fair has “survived tornadoes, windstorms, rain-out nights, drought, extreme heat, floods, the Great Depression, and wars.” The location of the Fair changed a couple of times over the years, but its permanent location since 1941 has been the former Salem Airport and 20 adjoining acres. The 2021 Fair in August will host farm exhibits, a motocross competition, horse pull, music, Fair Queen, Jr. Miss and Little Miss pageants, a talent show, Whipperwill Rodeo, demolition derby, and a tractor pull.
- The Applefest in mid-September at Bryan Memorial Park features music and a wide variety of craft and food vendors.



The Sweney's Drugstore mural in downtown Salem.

- The annual Little Egypt Festival and Parade will be hosting its 50th event the first Saturday in October, with a large parade, food and craft vendors, a car show, a 5K race, and events for children.
- The Downtown Christmas Celebration, held on the first Saturday in December in downtown Salem, showcases an official Santa welcome and a holiday film at the local theatre.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Bryan Memorial Park, named after William Jennings Bryan, is the largest park in Salem and offers everything from picnic shelters, an aquatic center, tennis courts, and ball fields to a disc golf course, a skate park, band stand with amphitheater seating, a walking trail, and a dog park.
- The Salem Reservoir features a 2-mile walking trail around the northwest corner of the lake, which is a popular spot for fishing from shore, and permits limited horsepower boats, canoeing, and kayaking.
- The Salem Little League organization has developed a large number of fields in Salem and offers baseball and softball programs for boys and girls ages 4 to 15. The City of Salem is currently working on developing a large soccer complex for participants from age 3 through high school on city-owned property at the west edge of Salem.

Unique Amenities

- According to local folklore, there's gold buried near the replica of the Half-Way Tavern on U.S. 50, just east of Salem, a property the state of Illinois took over some years ago and renovated. The tavern got its name because of its location halfway between St. Louis and Vincennes. Constructed in 1815, the building served as both an Inn and a livery stable. Historians say a stagecoach robbery in the early 1800s resulted in gold being buried by the fleeing perpetrators north of the tavern when a posse closed in on them. Though many have looked, no one has ever claimed to have found the buried gold. The building is closed to the public but it's visible to anyone traveling east from Salem on U.S. 50. One final fact: A young attorney named Abraham Lincoln was one of the more prominent customers of the tavern.

Learn more about Salem, Illinois

- <https://www.salemil.us/>
- City of Salem Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/City-of-Salem-Illinois-Municipality-183980713153>
- Greater Salem Chamber of Commerce <http://www.salemilchamber.com/>
- <http://www.geocities.com/salemillinois1823/index.htm>
- Bryan-Bennett Library <https://www.salembbl.lib.il.us/>
- Marion County Fair <http://marioncountyaifair.org/>

Platted as the Village of Rome in 1849,
 incorporated as Rome in 1873
 Village name legally changed to Dix in the 1960s
 Population...440
 Geographic size...2.10 square miles

Known For

- The Village of Dix, originally known as the Village of Rome, was laid out by Arba Andrews in March 1849 as four blocks, each one having five lots. The village's first name was the same as Andrews's hometown of Rome in the state of New York.
- Andrews established a post office in 1830, designated as the Jordan Prairie Post Office. In 1852, the post office was moved to Rome and renamed the Rome Post Office. However, it was discovered that another post office in Illinois had the same name, Rome, so a new name had to be selected. This occurred in 1865. Legend has it that someone named Dr. Jones named the post office after General John Adams Dix, a major general in the Union Army and a U.S. senator from the state of New York.
- Illinois Route 37 is the village's Main Street, leading south nine miles to Mount Vernon, the county seat, and north 13 miles to Salem.
- Dix is located on high ground that marks the boundary between the Big Muddy River and its tributary, Casey Creek. The Big Muddy River has been dammed near Benton, forming Rend Lake.
- Today Dix is an exit on Interstate 57, but when it was founded, the village was on Goshen Road, which was the main east/west road in Illinois, running from Old Shawneetown on the Ohio River to near East St. Louis on the Mississippi.
- Dix is the home of the Rome Community Consolidated (K-8) School District.
- Modern-day Rome is quiet and friendly, and recently launched a new village motto: "Where Strangers Become Friends."



Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Rich farmland in and around Dix once made the village a prosperous farming community. Today, most Dix residents travel to either Mt. Vernon, Salem, or Centralia for work.
- Though tiny, the Village has one of most businesses you need for convenience, so you'd never need to leave town if you didn't want to.
- The oldest business in town is Osborn Funeral Home, founded in 1907 by N.W. Osborn. In addition to the funeral home, he also had a furniture store, carpet, sheet flooring, wallpaper, and paint store in the same building. In the early 1970s, the family sold everything but the funeral home, which is still in business today.
- We hear a great new ice cream shop on Main Street—Yellin Helen's—is definitely worth checking out.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...136 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0



In Dix, Illinois, strangers become friends.

Annual Events

- The annual village rummage sale is the second to last weekend each May and is a very popular event that most residents participate in.
- The village recently created a new position—Community Organizer—and already that's leading to new events the community hopes can become annual events, like the Chili Dinner at the Village Hall and Truck or Treat. An Easter egg hunt is also in the works.

Natural Areas and Resources

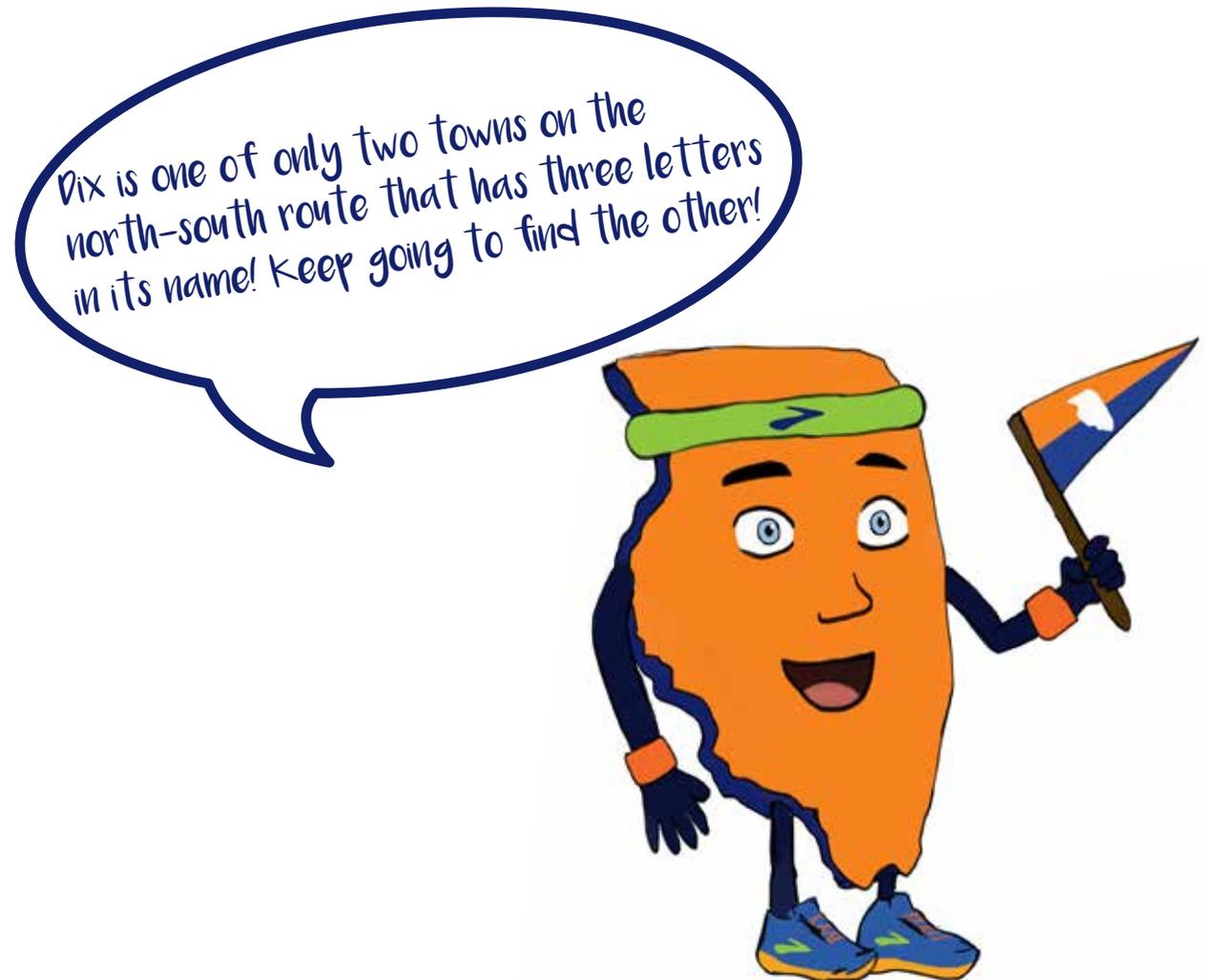
- Dix Village Park has mature, shady trees and includes a pavilion with picnic tables, a walking track, and playground equipment.
- Hawkins-Schwartz Orchard & Market on Route 37 North, just south of town, has fresh, in season, apples, peaches, pears, strawberries, blackberries, tomatoes, pumpkins, plus delicious baked goods. At their Centralia location, you can also pick apples in the fall.

Learn more about Dix, Illinois

- <http://villageofdixillinois.com/index.html>
- Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce [www. https://www.southernillinois.com/](https://www.southernillinois.com/)
- Village of Dix Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/VillageOfDixIL/>
- Yellin Hellin's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Yellin-Helens-100501788287577>
- Hawkins-Schwartz Orchard & Market <http://www.schwartzfruitfarm.com/>



The Dix, Illinois, Village Hall.



Founded in 1817, incorporated in 1819
Population...14,723
Geographic size...14.66 square miles

Known For

- Zadok Casey founded Mt. Vernon 1817, the year before Illinois was admitted as the twenty-first state of the Union. The city was originally known as Mount Pleasant but later changed to Mt. Vernon to pay tribute to George Washington and his ancestral home in Mount Vernon, Virginia.
- Mt. Vernon is the county seat of Jefferson County, which was founded in 1819 and named after Thomas Jefferson.
- In pre-settlement times, the area around Mt. Vernon was a swampy, heavily forested area, often surrounded by water on three sides. When Mt. Vernon was founded, no roads led into the town, which early settlers knew would doom the community to failure.
- In 1820–1821, two industrious settlers named Ben Hood and Carter Wilkey built a bridge over Casey Creek, to the southeast of town, and a road was built from there northwest into Mt. Vernon, which breathed life into the new town.
- Ultimately, what put Mt. Vernon “on the map” was the state capital being moved to Vandalia in 1819, which led to a road—Vandalia Road, now called Old Centralia Road—being built in 1823 northwest out of Mt. Vernon. This new road proved to be a better route than Goshen Road, which had been the main east/west road in Illinois. Once the new road was built, Mt. Vernon became a stop for travelers heading west.
- On February 19, 1888, a tornado tore through Mt. Vernon, killing 37 people and destroying more than 450 houses and the Jefferson County Courthouse. This event was one of the first disasters responded to by the American Red Cross, which had been created in 1881. Agency founder Clara Barton directed the relief efforts.



- Modern-day Mt. Vernon describes itself as “the perfect location for many industries, retail businesses, regional medical services, and tourism. Over one billion public and private dollars have been spent on development during the last six years. Under the guidance of a citizen/city-generated Comprehensive Plan, Mt. Vernon has made great strides in infrastructure improvements: roads, water and sewer lines; growth in economic development: new retail, expansion/renovation of existing businesses, the attraction of new businesses, growth in recreational facilities and community events, and the revitalization of our historic downtown area.”

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Building railroad cars plays a prominent role in Mt. Vernon’s history. By the early 20th century, the Mt. Vernon Car Manufacturing Company was the leading employer. Today, the plant thrives as a hub for the National Railway Equipment Company, which rebuilds and services diesel electric locomotives for rail lines across the globe.
- Mt. Vernon is home to a 48-acre facility for Continental Tire of North America. Major distribution centers for NAPA, National Railway Equipment Company, and Walgreens are also based in the city.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...147 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...2

Public Art

- Mt. Vernon is known as the “Festival Arts City” with a motto of “Creativity Redefined.”
- The Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, spread over 90 acres, has grown into a cultural mecca in the past 40 years. The Mitchell Museum houses the extraordinary 19th and 20th century art collection of John and Eleanor Mitchell. The campus also has an art center, the Mitchell Home, and the Goldman-Kuenz Sculpture Park.
- Goldman-Kuenz Sculpture Park, which opened in 1993, is one of the premier destinations for large-scale outdoor sculptures in the Midwest, with over 73 pieces.
- A 9-foot statue of Abraham Lincoln, depicting the president at the age when he was traveling the Illinois circuit as an attorney, can be found on the grounds of the Appellate Courthouse where Lincoln represented a major client, the Illinois Central Railroad.
- In 2011, the Illinois DAR dedicated a women veterans statue at the Brehm Library.
- Throughout the city and at every public school you can find contemporary as well as traditional sculptures.

MOUNT VERNON

Annual Events

- Midwestern Herb & Garden Show in February features more than 50 exhibitors with fresh herbs, dried flower arrangements, books, woodcarving, garden art, and more.
- The Southern Illinois Steel Guitar Show in April annually features some of the best steel guitar players in the world.
- Salute to Freedom is on July 4 at the Mt. Vernon Airport, with food, entertainment, vendors, and fireworks.
- The Fall Festival takes place the last weekend of September in downtown Mt. Vernon and includes a car show.
- September also features the Cedarhurst Arts & Craft Fair with more than 100 exhibitors featuring jewelry, pottery, and other collectables.
- The annual Downtown Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting occurs on the first Saturday in December and kicks off with a parade, followed by singing, cookie decorating, crafts, and a spectacular tree lighting.
- Mt. Vernon Market Days, an outdoor flea market and vendor fair, is also a several-month, annual event.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Hawkins-Schwartz Orchard & Market on Route 37 North, just south of town, has fresh, in season, apples, peaches, pears, strawberries, blackberries, tomatoes, pumpkins, plus delicious baked goods. At their Centralia location, you can also pick apples in the fall.
- Mt. Vernon's Veterans Park offers 86 acres of shaded playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, community gardens, in-line skating area, and a walking path around the lake.
- Mt. Vernon's favorite summer destination is the Aquatic Zoo Water Park, which has water slides, a lazy river, 25-meter pool, and other fun amenities.

Unique Facts

- In 1963, Beatles member George Harrison bought a Rickenbacker guitar from Fenton's Music store in Mt. Vernon that was used in the Abbey Road Studios recording of "I Wanna Hold Your Hand."

- The Jefferson County Hall of Honor pays tribute to local service people and veterans who served their community and country in times of war and peace. It's located at the Colonel R.D. White Veterans Museum at the Mt. Vernon Airport, and is the "home to hundreds of pieces of military memorabilia collected during all major conflicts. Authentic vintage uniforms, weapons, munitions, and even K-rations are on display with era newspapers, magazines, and letters from home. From the Civil War to present, relics from all areas of conflict are displayed in tribute."

Learn more about Mount Vernon, Illinois

- <http://www.mtvernon.com/>
- www.enjoymtvernon.com
- Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce [www. https://www.southernillinois.com/](http://www.southernillinois.com/)
- Hawkins-Schwartz Orchard & Market <http://www.schwartzfruitfarm.com/>
- Mt. Vernon Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MtVernonIL/>
- Aquatic Zoo Water Park <http://www.enjoymtvernon.com/aquatic-zoo>



Abe Lincoln statue in Mt. Vernon, Illinois.

Named in 1895, incorporated in 1914
Population...381
Geographic size...1.274 square miles

Known For

- George Washington Hayes donated some of the land that was originally Bonnie.
- Bonnie became a community when the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad was built through its land in the late 19th century, which led people and businesses to move there to take advantage of the rail depot.
- Bonnie was named after the daughter of P.M. Johnston, who along with his brother and another associate, founded the Chicago, Paducah, and Memphis Railroad, which they later sold to the Chicago and Eastern Railroad Company in 1897.
- In 1914, a petition was filed at the Jefferson County seat to incorporate Bonnie from a town to a village. Two months later an election was held to pick a council comprised of six trustees and a council president.
- April 14, 1966 was a sad day in Bonnie, one that made history in the state of Illinois as well. With all of Bonnie's Village board members having passed away, there was no official left to file for a general election to select new board members. This situation led the Illinois state legislature to pass a law permitting a Village or similar entity to have a workaround if this situation occurred in the future.
- Modern-day Bonnie, Illinois, is a quiet, family-oriented community where everyone knows—and watches out for—everyone else.
- Schoolchildren from Bonnie attend school seven miles north in Mount Vernon.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Be sure to stop by Bonnie Café when you're in town for one of their famous hamburgers.



Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...153.6 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Natural Areas and Resources

- Just west of Bonnie is the Rend Lake State Fish & Wildlife recreation area. Described as a “haven for outdoor sportsmen,” the site offers 20,000 acres of land and 18,900 acres of water, providing ample opportunities for hunting and fishing.
- Lester Keller Park is a favorite place for locals and includes a baseball field, picnic pavilion, and playground equipment. Back in the 1970s, the baseball field saw lots of action but not so much these days.

Unique Fact

- For over 125 years, Bonnie Campground, located a few miles west of town, hosted large religious outdoor gatherings. The Bonnie Holiness Camp (interdenominational) met for 10 days each July starting in 1892. Best we can tell, the last year for the Camp was 2017.

Learn more about Bonnie, Illinois

- <http://www.villageofbonnie.com/>
- Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce [www. https://www.southernillinois.com/](https://www.southernillinois.com/)
- Rend Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area
<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/FactSheets/Pages/RendLake.aspx>



The Sam Bennett community building in Bonnie, Illinois.

Settled in 1819, platted in 1848
Population...3,307, within and inclusive of
Spring Garden Township
Geographic size...38.09 square miles

Known For

- During the early-mid 1800s, the town flourished with rich agriculture, churches, and schools, becoming “quite a town” as quoted by John A. Wall in the *History of Jefferson County*. When the Chicago, Eastern & Illinois Railroad was built, the line just missed coming through Spring Garden, causing the bulk of trade, growth, and community to move to the newly formed town of Ina.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- The rich soil of the area created an ideal location for just about any crop to thrive. Plenty of farms have dotted the landscape producing successful agriculture, which at times included fruit.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...163 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- With the town being in close proximity to Mount Vernon, public art in the area is nearby.



Natural Areas and Resources

- Located within Jefferson County, Spring Garden is within easy reach of the nearby Wayne Fitzgerald State Recreation Area offering year-round outdoor amenities, activities, and adventures.

Learn more about Spring Garden, Illinois

- Jefferson County <http://www.jeffersoncountyillinois.com/>
- History of Spring Garden Township <http://genealogytrails.com/ill/jefferson/townshiphistory.html#Spring>
- Enjoy Mount Vernon <http://www.enjoymtvernon.com/attractions>
- Wayne Fitzgerald State Recreation Area <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/Pages/WayneFitzgerrell.aspx>



A cabin on Rend Lake in Wayne Fitzgerald State Recreation Area.

Settled in 1840 and incorporated in 1898
 Population...2,338
 Geographic size...2.45 square miles

Known For

- Developed on land owned by C.M Brown and his son S.E. Brown, the Chicago and Eastern Railroad established the village, with the village's namesake being one of S.E. Brown's daughters, Ina.
- The village proudly says, "Ina is a village that holds close to its small-town values."
- In the early 1840s, many Cherokee families, refugees of the Trail of Tears, settled in the area.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- From its beginnings as a railroad community, the village now boasts a post office, three active churches, a Love's Truck Stop and Travel Center, a McDonald's, Uncle Joe's restaurant, a school located in a new facility, an antique mall, and a bank.
- The Big Muddy Correctional Center operated by the Illinois Department of Corrections is a key employer in Ina.
- Established in 1981, family-owned and operated Clinton Electric, Inc. calls Ina home and provides electrical services for industrial and commercial construction.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...161 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- Ina is minutes from nearby Rend Lake College with its active art program, so art and art education for students and community members is close at hand.



Annual Events

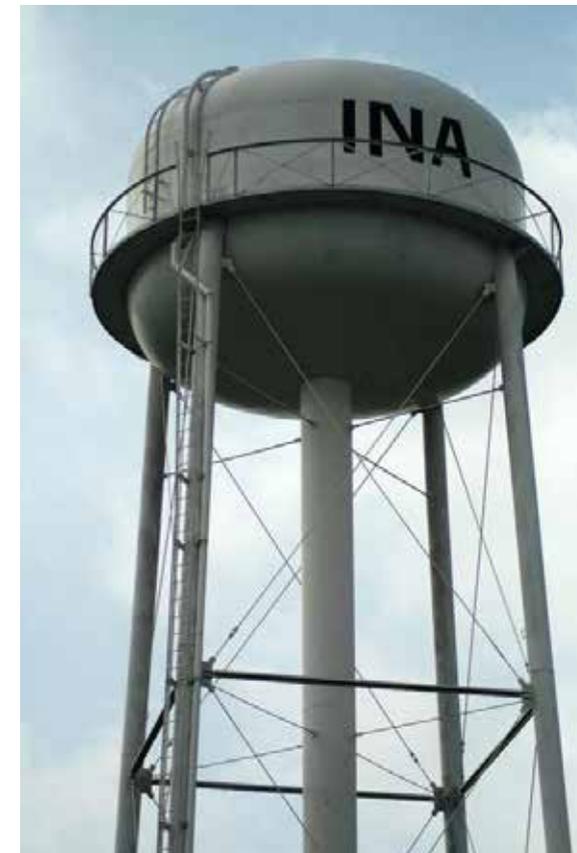
- Community events throughout the year offer fun and unique activities for residents and visitors alike. March brings a community Easter Egg Hunt; June welcomes both a Vendor/Craft Fair and Town Rummage Sale; the third week of September hosts Ina's Fall Festival along with a return of the Fair and Rummage Sale; cars and costumes abound in October for the Community Trunk or Treat; and a breakfast with Santa delights children and adults alike each December.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Nearby Rend Lake, deemed "Southern Illinois' Playground," provides year-round recreation and vacation get-aways for those near and far. Amenities abound for outdoor enjoyment, with sand beaches, water sports, trails, fishing, boating, camping, golf, and more.

Unique Amenities

- "Take Your BBQ to the Next Level" with Uncle Joe's ribs and creatively inspired rubs and sauces, which may be purchased for the at-home chef. Catering options are also available.
- Planning an event, meeting, or special celebration, the Ina Community Building provides rental space, tables, and chairs for both residents and non-residents.



Learn more about Ina, Illinois

- <https://www.villageofina.org/>
- Rend Lake <https://rendlake.com/>
- Rend Lake College <https://www.rlc.edu/>
- Uncle Joe's <https://eatunclejoes.com/>

The water tower in Ina, Illinois.

Platted in 1818, organized in 1841, incorporated as a village in 1875 and as a city in 1902

Population...7,087

Geographic size...5.66 square miles

Known For

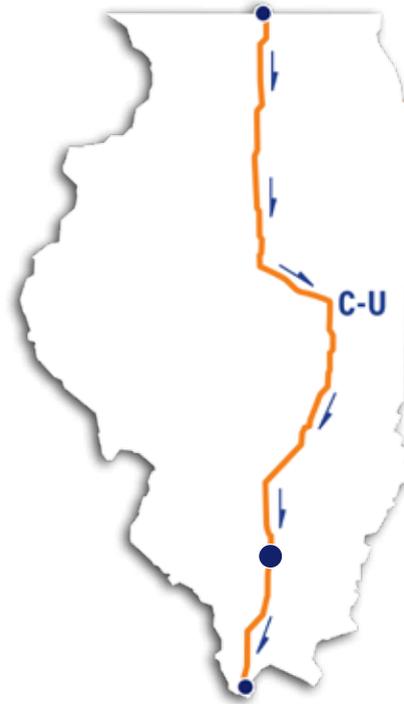
- The city was named for Missouri senator Thomas Hart Benton and serves as the county seat of Franklin County.
- The site of the last public hanging in Illinois, on April 19, 1928, when Charles Birger was executed for the murder of Joe Adams, mayor of nearby West City.
- City leadership through a non-political commission form of government consisting of a mayor and four commissioners.
- A September 1963 vacation visit by musician George Harrison of The Beatles, who stayed with his sister, Louise, in her home at 113 McCann Street in Benton.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Like many nearby communities, the growth of Benton can be attributed to the advancement of the railroad through the area.
- The abundance of high sulfur coal for mining and the rich agricultural soil in the area have been a source of industry, employment, and growth for the community.
- A lengthy list of names represents those who have called Benton home. From a bootlegger to a comedian to a national television executive to politicians to professional athletes to a justice to a horse race trainer to a Grand Ole Opry star to basketball player and coach Doug Collins to actor John Malkovich.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...173 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0



Public Art

- The “George Comes to Benton—1963” mural, created by California artist John Cerney, commemorates the visit by Beatles musician George Harrison to Benton and the surrounding area in September 1963. Facing southbound along I-57, the one-of-a-kind artwork was completed in 2017, just in time for travelers to pass by en route to viewing the solar eclipse of that year.



Don't miss this one-of-a-kind mural while driving on I-57 through Benton, Illinois.

BENTON

Annual Events

- For nearly 50 years, the Rend Lake Water Festival has been a tradition each May within the community and welcomes residents and visitors to the area for a carnival, entertainment, food, car show, events, and fun.
- Setting aside dates for community events is a must to take advantage of all the area has to offer. In addition to events at Rend Lake and within Franklin County, the Fall Festival each October, and the seasonal Festival of Lights to welcome Santa each year, are ones not to miss!

Natural Areas and Resources

- Benton Community Park is a true community treasure beckoning residents and visitors to the outdoors. Walk, run, hike, enjoy playgrounds, ball fields, courts, or reserve a picnic shelter on the grounds to complete your day.
- Rend Lake provides outdoor amenities year-round with access to trails, water sports, camping, fishing, dining, and more.

Unique Amenities

- Museum and historic markers dot the landscape of Benton and the Franklin County area with the noted “Museums of Exit 71,” a corridor of culture just off I-57. The Historic Jail Museum, dating to 1905, has been named to the National Register of Historic Places; the George Harrison “Beatle” Museum commemorates the impactful visit Harrison made to the community in 1963 with a detailed historical marker located at Capitol Park; and the Franklin County Garage Museum, dating to 1910, served as the first Ford dealership in Franklin County.
- For those looking for local flavor, The Buzz Café and Bistro delivers fresh coffee, fine dining with vegetarian and gluten-free options, great prices, and unique shopping with an assortment of available books and artwork by local artisans.
- Situated along Rend Lake, Jack Russel Fish Company serves up food, drink, fun, and more with live entertainment, drink specials, a diverse menu, and a must-try original “Old Tavern Fish Sandwich” prepared with secret recipes.

Learn more about Benton, Illinois

- <https://bentonil.com/>
- Benton City Hall Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BentonCityHall/>
- George Harrison Commemorative Mural https://bentonil.com/?page_id=2909
- The Buzz Café and Bistro <https://bentonil.com/>
- Jack Russel Fish Co. <https://jackrussellfishcompany.com/>
- The Museums of Exit 71 <http://www.historicjail.com/>
- Rend Lake <https://rendlake.com/>



The 2017 solar eclipse, as seen from Benton, Illinois.

Established in 1911
 Population...772
 Geographic size...1.63 square miles

Known For

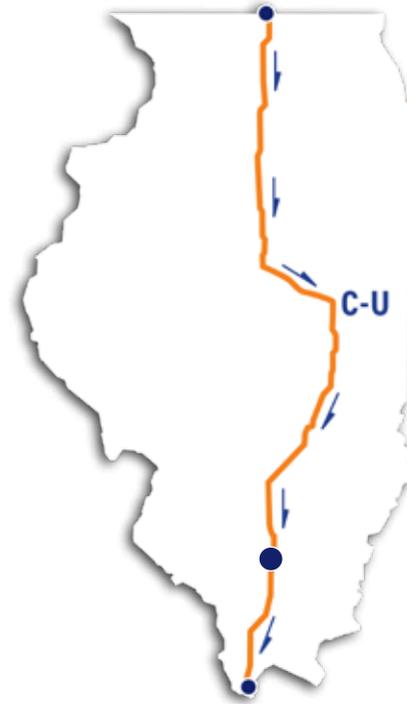
- When national prohibition was established in 1919, the community earned a reputation for bootlegging and gambling. With the rise of these activities, competition emerged to control them through the rival Birger and Shelton Brothers gangs. Tensions grew to such an extent that West City Mayor Joe Adams, who was aligned with the Shelton Brothers, was murdered by members of the Birger gang in 1926.
- After prohibition was repealed, legitimate businesses prospered in the area, especially during the 1940s and 1950s.
- Tragedy struck the community in 1951 with an underground coal mine explosion that claimed the lives of 119 coal miners.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- West City has abundant and rich natural resources, and mining has provided employment and growth in the region. During the late 19th century, these opportunities drew residents from abroad when families from Poland, Lithuania, and England settled the area.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...173 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0



Annual Events

- The Rend Lake Water Festival, an annual spring tradition, is a must-visit filled with food, entertainment, talent shows, and more!

Natural Areas and Resources

- West City's park offers a great space to enjoy the fresh air. Sit for a spell on a bench, take time to relax on a swing, or let the kids create their own adventure on the playground equipment.

Unique Amenities

- Plan a trip to view the 2024 solar eclipse when West City is expected to experience a visible partial solar eclipse on April 8, 2024.

Learn more about West City, Illinois

- <https://www.villageofwestcity.com/>
- Benton West City Chamber of Commerce <https://www.bentonwestcitychamber.com/>
- Franklin County History <http://www.franklincountyil.gov/county-history>
- Illinois Geological Survey – Franklin County Coal Mine <https://isgs.illinois.edu/research/coal/maps/county/franklin>
- Solar Eclipse <https://www.bentonwestcitychamber.com/solar-eclipse-2024.html>
- Rend Lake Water Festival <https://www.bentonwestcitychamber.com/rend-lake-water-festival.html>

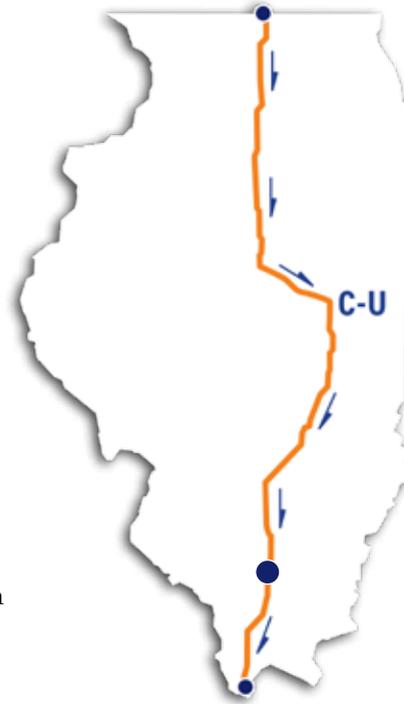


The park in West City, Illinois.

Founded in 1810, incorporated in 1906
 Population...8,812
 Geographic size...5.011 square miles

Known For

- Settled on land once the site of a tribal war over hunting rites where the Shawnee defeated the Kaskasians in the early 1800s.
- Early settlers arriving from Tennessee created three-sided pole sheds for homes in the area until then Illinois Governor Ninian Edwards required settlers to build block-house forts. Settler Francis Jordan along with family and other settlers built a fort on purchased land that became known as “Frank’s Fort” in 1811.
- With the passage of the national Bit Act in 1805, land prices became very inexpensive (\$5.00 for 40 acres) drawing an influx of settlers into the area known as “Frankfort” (derived from the former “Frank’s Fort”); the community grew and flourished between 1812–1815 when the population rivaled that of Chicago.
- With railroad expansion in 1894 to Chicago, Paducah, and Memphis, the tracks were laid four miles outside of Frankfort, forcing businesses and residents to move and create a new business center, known as West Frankfort. Eventually Frankfort and West Frankfort merged, becoming West Frankfort in 1906.
- Amidst resilience, growth, and innovation, tragedies have also befallen the area over the last century. A multi-day riot fueled in part by elements of The Black Hand Society, a branch of the Italian mafia, brought chaos, anarchy, death, and destruction to the community in 1920. Just a few years later, The Great Tornado in 1925 destroyed many lives, homes, and businesses, as it tore through West Frankfort on an unsuspecting March afternoon. Several years thereafter the deadly New Orient Coal Mine Disaster



claimed the lives of 119 area miners in an underground explosion in December 1951. The tragedy drew national attention to the poor conditions in which miners were forced to work and resulted in the creation of the Federal Coal Mine Safety Act of 1952, signed by President Harry S. Truman.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- Economic engines for the community in the 1800s included tobacco, castor beans for making castor oil, the castor oil business, and a flour mill.
- With the discovery of natural resources below the earth’s surface and development of mines, the mining of coal became key to the area’s economy and growth. With a population nearing 20,000 and coal mining booming in 1917, West Frankfort was the number one producer of coal in Illinois. Many ethnicities were represented in the population by 1920, including people from Hungary, Italy, France, China, and others who were attracted to the opportunities available in the area.
- A one-time home to the West Frankfort Cardinals (1947–1950), an Illinois State Class D baseball team that was an affiliate of the St. Louis Cardinals. Poor ticket sales and a disinterested fan base led to the demise of the organization. Today, there is virtually no trace of the existence of the ball club, sans a few photos, stories, and a preserved history.
- Politicians, World War II medal recipients, professional athletes, and an Illinois Supreme Court justice have all hailed from West Frankfort.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...180 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- A large statue depicting a World War I “doughboy,” inscribed with “Lest We Forget,” resides on the grounds of the Veterans Museum Depot and is the site of the annual Veterans Day memorial service held each November 11.

Annual Events

- A longstanding tradition dating to 1941, the Old King Coal Festival celebrates the coal mining industry on the second weekend in May. This family-friendly event offers fun, history, a sense of community, and an opportunity to honor both past and present coal miners. Before the annual event, nominations are sought, and one lucky individual is crowned “Old King Coal.” Joining the King through a selective scholarship application process is “Princess Flame” and a “royal court,” who are also crowned. All retain their titles for the entire year. The three-day festival delights all ages with live music, carnival rides, a parade, and a memorial ceremony at the city’s Coal Miner’s Memorial.

WEST FRANKFORT

- A memorial service is held outdoors at the Veterans Museum Depot on Veterans Day to honor area veterans.
- For a truly magical holiday experience, don't let December pass by without a trip down Candy Cane Lane. Originating in 1988 when Ted Murphy, his father, Leon, and a few neighbors created impressive and festive outdoor displays, the area today extends to five blocks filled with over 500 decorations and nearly 30,000 lights! Although a drive through experience is possible, walking is recommended to fully enjoy the displays at your own pace.

Natural Areas and Resources

- The appropriately named Frankfort Community Park is a true community gem with amenities for the West Frankfort area and beyond. Walkers and runners can log a mile or more around the scenic park, while fishing enthusiasts will want to explore the 3-acre pond onsite for year-round fishing. Fields and courts for a variety of sports, complete with concession stands and ample parking, are perfect for both player and spectator. Families can enjoy a picnic in one of the many shelters on the grounds and spend the afternoon playing at all four of the playgrounds on site.
- Tucked into a rural setting, the expansive Franklin County Country Club was established by railroad and business top brass in 1921 as a destination for holiday outings with families and guests. Today's full slate of amenities continues the mission of providing a beautiful setting for recreation and social events. In addition to a course welcoming golfers of all abilities, the destination boasts a full-service restaurant, banquet facilities, pro shop, locker rooms, and a swimming pool. Customizable memberships are available for families, individuals, young professionals, students, and businesses.

Unique Amenities

- Located within Frankfort Community Park, the Aquatic & Activities Center is a community destination for indoor recreation, fitness, and aquatic fun. Noting once again the true spirit of community, this indoor activity center was conceived in 2003 by residents who investigated the possibility of an indoor space and were successful in obtaining initial funding for the project. Programs, lessons, classes, and private parties are available for West Frankfort residents and the surrounding community.



West Frankfort's Veterans Museum Depot with the doughboy sculpture statue in front.

- The Gobel Patton Event Center, also located within the Frankfort Community Park, seats 250 guests, is equipped with a spacious kitchen and food prep area, and can be rented solo or in tandem with the Activities Center to double the fun!
- Situated on Main Street, the Coal Miners Memorial and adjoining Coal Miners Memorial Park are not to be missed. Like other community initiatives, the Park originated as an idea among area friends "to honor all coal miners, past and present, who sacrificed personal safety in order to provide a living-wage for their families." Be sure to stop and take note of the honor walk, comprised of inlaid bricks inscribed with the names of past and present coal miners.

WEST FRANKFORT

- Discover the stories and people of the area through West Frankfort's landmarks and museums—many operating through volunteer efforts. Strand Park Square, at the corner of Main and Anna Streets, marks the location where the Strand Theatre (the last theatre in West Frankfort) once stood; Veterans Military Museum, housed in a restored depot, is dedicated to area residents who have served their country in times of war from the Civil War through Desert Storm; and plan to visit the Frankfort Historical Museum and Frankfort Historical Society on a Wednesday for lunch in the Red Geranium Tea Room after a morning exploring the area's history in the former Logan School building.
- Earning recognition within Illinois, the West Frankfort Business Incubator, a 185,000-square foot facility on 16 acres, offers suites for lease to meet the needs of each individual client. Businesses from a bakery to a photography shop to a custom machine shop to a car wash to a sales facility to heavy manufacturing call the Incubator home.
- West Frankfort was located within the crossroads of the 2017 solar eclipse and is expected to be on the path for the next solar eclipse that will pass through the area on April 8, 2024.

Learn more about West Frankfort, Illinois

- <https://www.westfrankfort-il.com/>
- The Riot of 1920 <https://www.westfrankfort-il.com/riot-of-1920>
- The Great Tornado of 1925 <https://www.westfrankfort-il.com/tornado-of-1925>
- Mine Disaster of 1951 <https://www.westfrankfort-il.com/mine-disaster-of-1951>
- 1947 West Frankfort Cardinals <https://www.westfrankfort-il.com/1947-cardinals>
- Old King Coal Festival <https://oldkingcoalfestival.org/>
- Franklin County Country Club <http://franklincountycc.com/>
- Veterans Military Museum
<https://www.enjoyillinois.com/explore/listing/veterans-military-museum-depot>
- Frankfort Area Historical Museum
https://www.facebook.com/wfmuseum/photos/?ref=page_internal



A display at the Frankfort Historical Museum honors the city's coal mining history.

Founded 1894, incorporated 1905
Population...3,389
Geographic size...2.17 square miles

Known For

- Created as a result of railroad growth in 1894 when the Chicago, Paducah, and Memphis route was built from Altamont to Marion.
- Named for brothers Ben F. and P.M. Johnston of Johnston Brothers and Faught, the contracting firm responsible for the railroad expansion.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

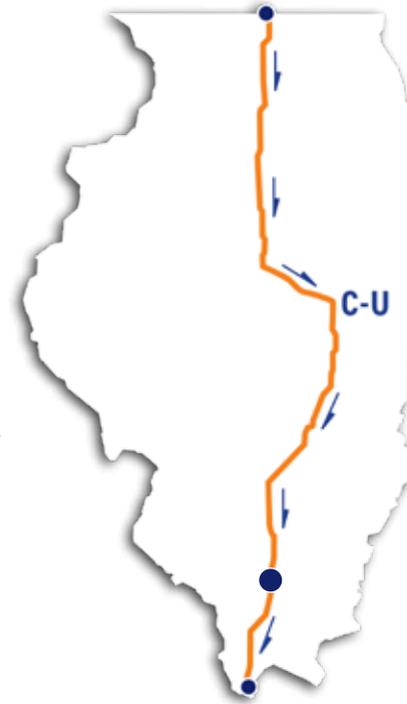
- The discovery of coal in the area contributed to the growth of Johnston City, drawing residents from Europe seeking employment in the coal mines. During the early 1900s, the community became one of the largest producers of coal in the region.
- Today, agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality, health care, and retail contribute to the region's economy.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...186 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- Situated on East Broadway, the Fallen Soldier Veterans Memorial Wall pays homage to local heroes with each individual's name inscribed on the wall. An annual Memorial Day event is held here to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice.



Annual Events

- Plan a visit to coincide with many of the events going on in Johnston City throughout the year and you'll want to return often. Come hungry and warm up with some good food for a good cause at the annual chili supper fundraiser each February, hosted by the Johnston City Fire Department; stop and shop downtown on Friday afternoons, April to October, at the Farmers Market, where vendors grow, raise, produce, and create all they offer; and be sure to celebrate the season at the Hometown Christmas celebration, complete with entertainment, food, fun, and a live nativity!
- If you are not a model power boat enthusiast, you may want to be. Remote control boats take to the waters of Arrowhead Lake in the spring for the Little Thunder on the Lake race, delighting "controllers" and spectators alike.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Just off I-57 at exit 59, the Arrowhead Recreation and Wildlife Area offers year-round activities for all ages. Pitch a tent, bring your RV, or stay in a cabin and experience the area's natural beauty and amenities. Run or walk on the paved paths; canoe across the 30-acre lake; fish for largemouth bass, bluegill, sunfish, crappie, or channel catfish; pick your own blackberries, raspberries, or wild strawberries; pack a good book (or a few) and kick your feet up; and stop by the on-site general store for a touch of nostalgia.
- For a round of nine-holes any time of year, book a tee time at the Stardust Golf Course & Country Club. A community staple since 1968, the course offers a welcoming experience and word has it, a great cheeseburger too!



The Fallen Soldier Memorial in Johnston City, Illinois.

JOHNSTON CITY

Unique Amenities

- Since 1927, Andersen's Café has been a destination for home-cooked food steeped in history and tradition. Enjoy a meal or a leisurely cup of coffee and slice of pie—always served with a smile and a heap of hometown hospitality.
- What began as sharing a few pumpkins with friends led to the start of a business in 1986, which today rivals a bustling county fair! At Bandy's Pumpkin Patch, you can pick a pumpkin, find festive fall decor, try the corn maze, enjoy a snack, take a hayride, visit the general store, and create a tradition for years to come! Open the third Saturday in September through the end of October each year, so start planning now.
- Looking for that vintage, unique, or one-of-a-kind item? Pickers Outlet Mall is the place for you! New items are always arriving so stay connected to their social media and you won't miss a thing!
- With its flagship location in Johnston City, Brooks RV World has served customers in the Manufactured Home business since 1966.

Learn more about Johnston City, Illinois

- https://www.facebook.com/pg/johnstoncityil/about/?ref=page_internal
- Williamson County Historical Society <https://www.wcihs.org/history/johnston-city-history/>
- Arrowhead Lake Campground
<https://www.enjoyillinois.com/explore/listing/arrowhead-lake-and-campground>
- Stardust Golf Course <https://www.facebook.com/StardustGolfCourse/>
- Bandy's Pumpkin Patch <https://bandypumpkinpatch.com/>
- Andersen's Café
<https://andresenscafe.weebly.com/> or
<https://www.facebook.com/Andresens-Cafe-452035340330/>
- Pickers Outlet Mall <https://www.facebook.com/Pickersoutletmall/>
- Brooks RV World <https://www.brooksrworld.com/>



Bandy's Pumpkin Patch is a popular destination in Johnston City, Illinois.

Incorporated in 1900
Population...272
Geographic size...0.35 square miles

Known For

- Named for early settlers Elijah N. Spiller and his three brothers, who in 1817 purchased land originally owned by Richard Bankston, who arrived in the area in 1812.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

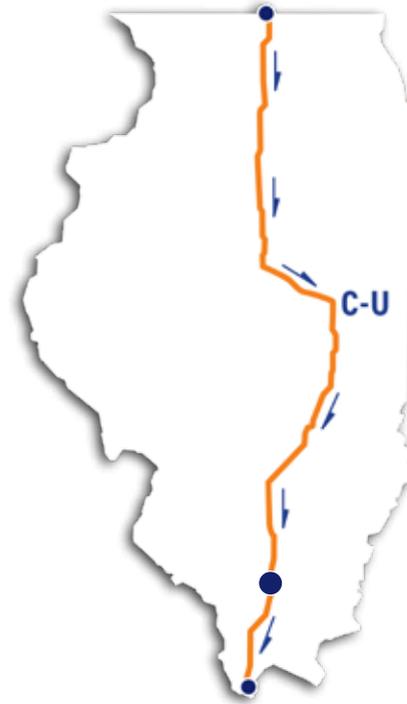
- In its early years of settlement, Spillertown had a school, a post office, and the first church of Christian denomination.
- The village continued to develop in tandem with the development of the Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railroad and the booming coal mining industry during the early 1900s.
- Home to Agnes Burns Wieck, “the Mother Jones of Illinois,” an educator, journalist, and social justice advocate, who was key in organizing the role of women in the coal mining industry.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...189 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- With the village’s proximity to nearby Marion, cultural and artistic opportunities are abundant.



Natural Areas and Resources

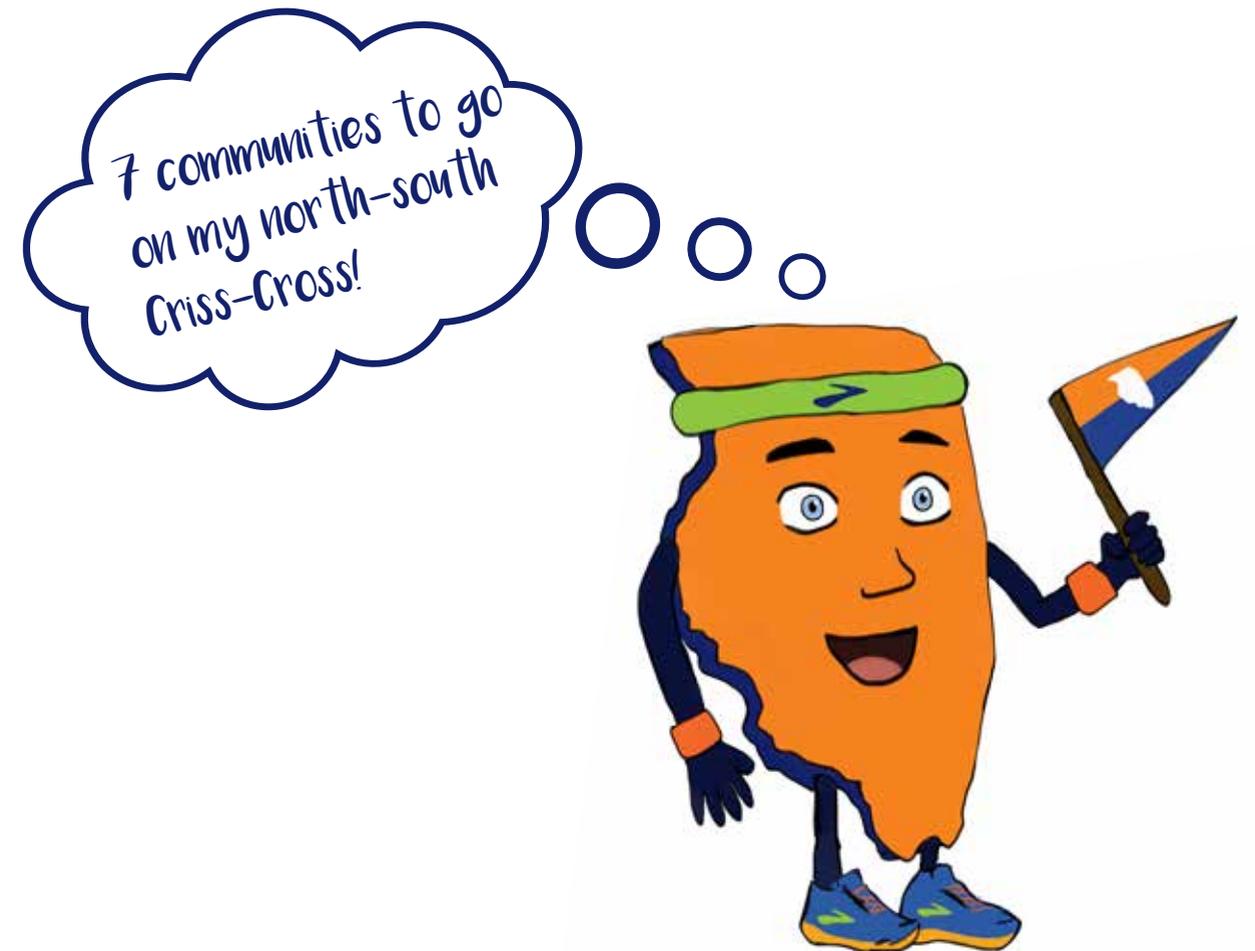
- Situated within Williamson County, national amenities such as the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge and Shawnee National Forest provide unique adventure in the region.

Unique Fact

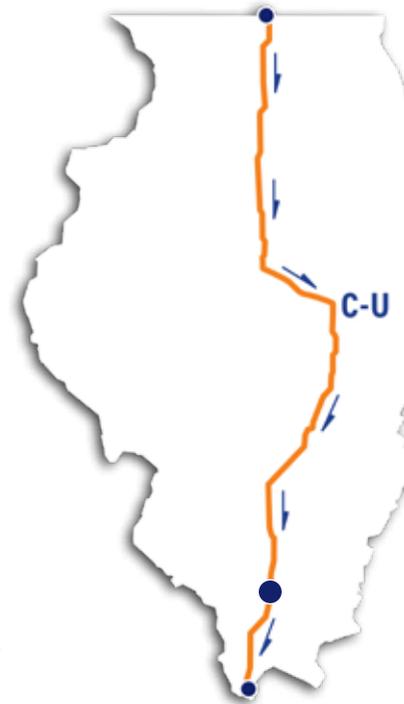
- In an interesting situation involving road maintenance and annexation, a vote was placed on ballots in 2019 to dissolve the village; however, the measure was rejected by voters in the April 2 election that year.

Learn more about Spillertown, Illinois

- Spillertown History <https://www.wcihs.org/history/spillertown-history/#:~:text=Spillertown%2C%20a%20village%20in%20section,Reid%20as%20postmaster.>
- Visit Southern Illinois <https://www.visitsi.com/>
- Williamson County <https://williamsoncountyil.gov/>



Founded 1839
Population...17,595
Geographic size...16.5 square miles



Known For

- Named for Revolutionary War military officer Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox, who is credited as one of the founders of modern guerilla warfare. A popular naming choice, multiple landmarks, municipalities, and locations throughout the U.S. along with a park in Washington D.C. share the name Marion.
- Marion serves as the county seat of Williamson County.
- Recipient of the 2018 GMIS Government to Citizen Award. GMIS International, a professional IT association of worldwide government IT leaders, annually recognizes excellence in public sector IT Projects and Leadership.
- Leadership by the state's longest serving mayor, Robert "Bob" L. Butler, who served in the role for nearly 55 years, from 1963 to January 2018.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- During the late 1930s, discovery and production of oil throughout Marion County and surrounding counties placed the area on the global map for oil production.
- Home to Pepsi MidAmerica, one of the largest privately-owned Pepsi Bottling facilities in the United States. Established in 1936 when founder Harry Crisp expanded his chick, egg, and produce delivery business, the business grew and has continued through three generations of the Crisp family.
- Dubbed by former Mayor Robert L. Butler as "The Hub of the Universe" with its location at the intersection of Route 13 and I-57, the city is a center of shopping, dining, culture, and entertainment.

- Today, large employers such as the Marion VA Medical Center, auto parts manufacturer Aisin, Southern Illinois Power Cooperative, and the United States Penitentiary in Marion contribute to the area's economy.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...188 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...5



The impressive mural initiative has begun in Marion's historic district.

Public Art

- Established in 1995, the Little Egypt Arts Association, the largest cooperative art center in Southern Illinois, provides a center for art activity in the region. From classes to workshops to a work room to a gift shop to a unique exhibit gallery, there is plenty to experience. Stop and shop for that perfect gift or take a class and hone your artistic skills!
- The Marion Cultural and Civic Center is a state-of-the-art theatrical venue, where you can enjoy a performance or become immersed in an exhibit of Southern Illinois artisans.

- A two-block radius of Marion's historic district is home to an impressive public art endeavor in its beginnings. In an effort to revitalize the downtown area and provide an art experience that is often only found in metropolitan areas, the Marion Mural District is being developed. Partnering with the Little Egypt Art Association and supported by the National Endowment of the Arts, the project's goal is to install 10 large murals in the area. Artist submissions are being sought and will be awarded through a juried selection process. Local and regional artists may wish to submit their talents, and visitors will want to be sure to track the progress of art unfolding through this project.

MARION

- Honoring those who have served is a cornerstone of the region. The Veterans Memorial on the grounds of the Rosehill Cemetery pays tribute to all branches of the military with a special area denoting two local Medal of Honor recipients, while the Williamson County Memorial in Marion's Town Square pays tribute to all in the county who have served along with those who perished in a 1982 tornado that devastated the area.

Annual Events

- With a thriving art scene, sports, history, farmers markets, and community presence, you'll find an abundance of events ongoing throughout the year.
- Lace up your running and walking shoes and get out in March to support the Kegan Johns Memorial 5K or 10K or the Hot Chocolate 5K.
- April brings the opportunity to discover gemstones, minerals, fossils, jewelry, shells, artifacts, and more at the annual Gem and Mineral Show. Hosted by the Southern Illinois Earth Sciences Club for over 50 years, this event boasts working exhibits, rare displays, education, and fun for all ages!
- Find your paddle in May and kayak, canoe, paddle, or even peddle at the newly established Lake of Egypt Paddle Fest.
- Experience a show like you see on television! For over 60 years, the Crab Orchard Kennel Club has hosted an AKC dog show in August.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Although there are many opportunities to explore the outdoors nearby, a true destination not to be missed is a visit to the Mandala Gardens, a seven-acre botanical wonderland experience. Created through the vision and dreams of its owners, the gardens are filled with herbs, flowers, heirloom vegetables, stone sculptures, benches, and mosaics. Perfect for exploration, photos, events, and family enjoyment.
- An abundance of parks maintained by the Marion Park District along with courts, fields, courses, and playgrounds beckon everyone to the great outdoors. Try disc golf on a specially designed course at Pyramid Park, cool off on a hot day at the Aquatic Park, or plan an outing for your favorite canine companion to play at the Bark Park.



Mandala Gardens in Marion, Illinois.

- Experience universally designed multi-generational play space at The Heartland Regional Medical Center Inclusive Playground at Fosse Park where all are welcomed and encouraged to play and be fit!

Unique Amenities

- Love to be creative and DIY? Not sure if you have the supplies or want the cleanup duties? Schedule a visit or book a private party at the Creative Getaway for step-by-step instruction, supplies, and no-mess! If shopping is more your DIY style, you'll find a unique selection of home décor, custom gifts, and handmade items from which to choose.
- Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and located on the grounds of the city's Rose Hill Cemetery, the Goddard Chapel is noted as one of the most beautiful historic sites in the area. Built with private donation, complete with a time capsule, the building is available for use as a site for weddings and special events.
- Marion is home to a Carnegie Library, established through the donations of American Philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Built in 1916, the library retains the history of its early beginnings while serving patrons through cutting edge and modern technological amenities.

MARION

- Gain an appreciation and understanding of the region at the Williamson County Historical Museum. Housed in a former jail and sheriff's home, the brick building dates to 1913 and brings the past to life through artifacts exhibited through 17 rooms.
- Batter up! Baseball enthusiasts of all ages will want to catch a game or two and cheer on the Southern Illinois Miners to a win. A member of the Frontier League, the oldest currently running baseball league in the U.S., the Miners play games at Rent One Park, a park unique in design with a sloped roof allowing foul balls to head back to fans in the stands.
- For fast-paced fun, a visit to The Pavilion to experience the SI Roller Girls, Southern Illinois' first and only all-female flat-track roller derby league, is a must!

Learn more about Marion, Illinois

- <https://cityofmarionil.gov/>
- Williamson County History <https://www.wcihs.org/history/marion-history/>
- Goddard Chapel <https://www.enjoyillinois.com/explore/listing/goddard-chapel>
- Pepsi MidAmerica <https://pepsimidamerica.com/>
- Marion Mural District Artist Request <https://cityofmarionil.gov/pdf/Marion%20Mural%20RFA%20Packet%20FINAL.pdf>
- Little Egypt Arts Association <http://www.littleegyptarts.com/>
- The Creative Getaway <https://www.thecreativegetaway.com/>
- Marion Carnegie Library <http://www.marioncarnegielibrary.org/>
- Southern Illinois Miners <https://www.southernillinoisminers.com/landing/index>
- Southern Illinois Roller Girls <http://www.soillrollergirls.com/>



Goddard Chapel in Marion, Illinois.

Platted in 1857, incorporated in 1884
Population...726
Geographic size...1.15 square miles

Known For

- Situated within Union County, the area was originally laid out as a stop along the Illinois Central Railroad. A post office known as “Unionville” had been established in 1855; however, the area was renamed Dongola, after the Sudanese city Dongola.
- One of seven states with a city named Dongola. Other locations include Arkansas, Indiana, South Carolina, Virginia, Missouri, and Kentucky.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

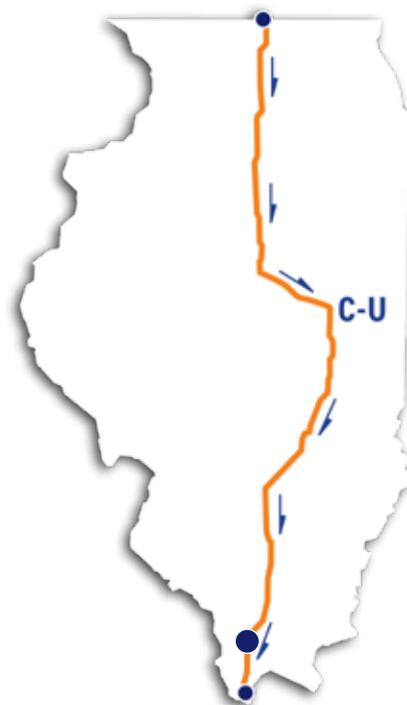
- The first Lutheran congregation in Illinois was established in 1816 with most Lutherans hailing from North Carolina. Organizing as St. John’s Lutheran Church, the congregation erected its first building in 1818, and a subsequent one dating to 1855 is today’s St. John’s Lutheran Church. The location of the earlier building is now the site of the cemetery.
- Both public and private school options serve the community with public elementary, junior, and senior high schools, in addition to the private Mt. Pleasant Mennonite school for students in grades 1 to 10.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...220 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- On the grounds of St. John’s Cemetery a marker denotes the burial site of four veterans of the Revolutionary War.



Annual Events

- Located within an area of the state known for its autumnal beauty, the annual Colorfest event is a celebration for all ages. The festivities are marked with a parade, food, vendors, a tractor show, “Little Miss Dongola” pageant, and a lot of fun.
- Holiday spirit is in full swing during December’s Country Christmas in the Village with a parade, food, vendors, and a community tree lighting!

Natural Areas and Resources

- Sport fishers and boaters will want to plan a day at Dongola City Lake. The 58-acre site is equipped with a boat ramp and dock and is home to largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill sunfish, redear sunfish, and channel catfish.

Unique Amenities

- The Dongola Public Library District “in the heart of Dongola” is a community treasure, with staff hosting programs, events, and of course sharing their love of reading!
- From po’boys to burgers to beignets and beyond, the Blue Fish Café is sure to make you a regular! The cafe specializes in Cajun and Creole fare, and this location delivers as a destination for “Good Food, Good Friends, Good Times.”
- Vintage vehicle enthusiasts and owners looking for a classic car or truck are in luck! Curt’s Classics LLC is a destination complete with classic inventory and a full restoration body shop where “no job is too big or too small.”



Curt’s Classics is a must-visit destination in Dongola.

DONGOLA

Learn more about Dongola, Illinois

- <http://www.city-data.com/city/Dongola-Illinois.html>
- St. John's Church http://genealogytrails.com/ill/union/stjohns_lutheran_church.html
- Colorfest <https://www.facebook.com/DongolaColorfest/>
- Dongola City Lake <https://www.ifishillinois.org/ssr/04826.pdf>
- Dongola Public Library District
<https://www.facebook.com/Dongola-Public-Library-District-366879153495396/>
- Blue Fish Café <https://www.facebook.com/bluefishcafedongola/>
- Curt's Classics <http://www.curtsclassics.com/>
- Enjoy Illinois' Southern Most Area
https://southernmostillinois.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/SITB_VisitorGuide_2020.pdf



Dongola's Blue Fish Café specializes in Cajun and Creole fare.

Platted in 1856, incorporated in 1900
 Population...463
 Geographic size...2.862 square miles

Known For

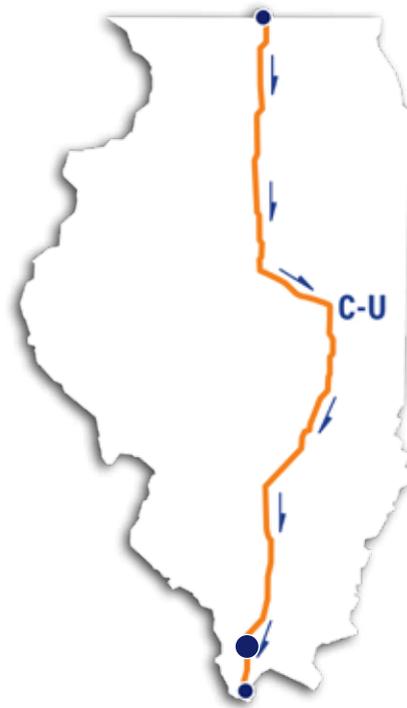
- Like many of its contemporaries, the community was established as a result of railroad expansion. It was initially positioned as a site along the Illinois Central Railroad during the mid-1850s. A post office arrived in 1855 and the village was platted the following year.
- The origins of the name Ullin differ, with some sources citing a reference to a Gaelic folk hero and others to Samuel Ulen, the first postmaster.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- A key location for the Illinois Central Railroad, three buildings throughout the village's history were constructed to serve as Ullin station. The station has provided for the export of lumber and limestone, passenger travel, and telegraph service. Stations dating to 1854 and 1863 were constructed and subsequently demolished; however, the building erected in 1867 remains today. Recognized as the Illinois Central Railroad Depot, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...228 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0



Public Art

- Shawnee Community College's art department and student art club host art shows featuring works from high school and intercollegiate artists. The College also supports an artist-in-residence program to the benefit of community and artists alike!

Annual Events

- Mark your calendar for September so you don't miss all the festivities Cache River Days has to offer. With a weekend of fun that includes a 5K, parade, pageants, music, food, cornhole and slow-pitch softball tournaments, night hikes, nature exhibits, wetlands educational opportunities, guided canoe rides, and more, there is something for all!

Natural Areas and Resources

- An Illinois natural wonder, the nearby Cache River State Natural Area is home to impressive cypress trees, wetlands, a slough, and a rich environment for diverse plant and animal species. Named a Wetlands of International Importance in 1996 by the Ramsar Convention, the area is key to both migratory and shore birds. Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy hiking, canoeing, biking, fishing, and seasonal hunting throughout the area.
- For those wanting to learn more about the wetlands, a visit to the Barkhausen-Cache River Wetlands Center will not disappoint! Through exhibits, films, and interactive experiences, visitors will be immersed in the rich history and splendor of the wetlands. Runners, walkers, and bike riders will want to plan a visit when traveling the full distance along the Tunnel Hill State Trail, a 48-mile path that extends to Harrisburg. The Center is located at the beginning/end of the trail and is part of the Rails to Trails system.
- The Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, a habitat for waterfowl, wildlife, and threatened and endangered species, welcomes visitors to explore and learn about this unique environment. Pack a camera for spectacular photos and your binoculars for a glimpse of the area's birds. Hike, fish, boat, or learn from the experts through programs and events. Be sure to stop into the visitor center and you'll find resources to maximize your experience.
- Within the area, the Frank Bellrose Waterfowl Research Center is nearby along with the Limekiln Slough Trail/Springs, where uncommon aquatic species thrive in a natural spring flowing through the area's cypress trees.

Unique Amenities

- A destination for the community from ball games to special events, the Ullin Ball Fields provide the perfect outdoor space for recreation and festivities.
- Shawnee Community College, established in 1967, serves the area through associate, degree, and certification programs, in addition to providing dual credit high school opportunities and work force development.
- The Cache Bayou Outfitters, located right along the river, provide opportunities to enjoy, learn, and appreciate the area's unique environment. Established as an Illinois not-for-profit with the mission "to promote, establish, develop, and preserve historic and ecological understandings and ancient ways of life, which will be beneficial in understanding and caring for our natural resources and the health and well-being of our people and community," the organization offers canoe and kayak rental along with guided tours by foot and water. Programs and special events supporting their mission are also available and provide exciting educational adventures for individuals, families, youth, and community groups.
- Hungry after a day on Illinois' bayou? Satisfy that craving with barbeque, a taco salad, warm bowl of chili, and other favorites with a lunch time stop at Triple E Bar-B-Q.

Learn more about Ullin, Illinois

- <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ullin-Illinois.html>
- Pulaski County History http://www.genealogytrails.com/ill/pulaski/school_ullinhistory.html
- Cache River State Natural Area <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/Pages/CacheRiver.aspx>
- Barkhausen-Cache River Wetlands Center
<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/VisitorCenter/Pages/CacheRiver.aspx>
- Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge
https://www.fws.gov/Refuge/Cypress_Creek/visit/visitor_activities.html
- Shawnee Community College <https://shawneecc.edu/about>
- Cache Bayou Outfitters <https://www.cachebayououtfitters.com/>
- Triple E Barbeque <https://www.facebook.com/TripleEUllin/>
- Enjoy Illinois' Southern Most Area
https://southernmostillinois.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/SITB_VisitorGuide_2020.pdf



The spectacular Cache River State Natural Area is short drive from Ullin, Illinois.

Founded in 1852, incorporated in 1898
 Population...235
 Geographic size...1.316 square miles

Known For

- Named in honor of Polish Revolutionary War hero Kazimierz (Casimir) Pulaski, killed at the Siege of Savannah.
- Located within Pulaski County, which is situated between the Shawnee National Forest on the west and the Ohio River on the east and rich in river heritage and natural beauty.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

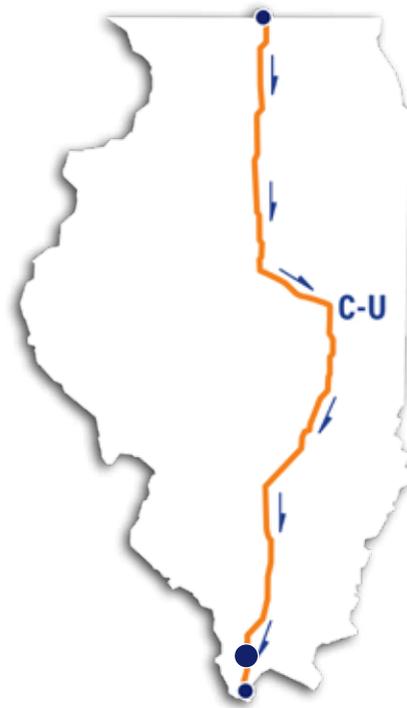
- Like many surrounding villages and towns, Pulaski emerged in response to railroad expansion. Unlike many contemporaries, however, it did not begin as a stop along the railroad but rather as a construction camp. A post office arrived in 1856, with the village being known as “Camp Pulaski” until 1872. At that time “Camp” was removed, and the village became simply “Pulaski” and incorporated as such in 1898.
- Reeves Feed & Grain, a provider of wholesale grain and field beans, operates a grain elevator in the community.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...232 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- A few miles from town, the Illinois State Soldiers and Sailors Monument on the grounds of the Mound City National Cemetery honors 2,637 unknown soldiers and sailors who lost their lives during the Civil War. The grounds are open daily, dawn to dusk.



Annual Events

- For nearly 60 years, August has marked fun for all ages at the Pulaski County Fair. With a parade, tractor pulls, animal shows, talent, music, food, and more, this event “where old friends meet” may be one to put on the calendar.
- An elaborate Memorial Day Service complete with Civil War re-enactors, a cannon salute, and Taps is held each May at the nearby Mound City National Cemetery.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Situated within Pulaski County and in a region of Southern Illinois rich in breathtaking beauty, the Cache River State Natural Area, Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, and the Tunnel Hill State Trail are easily accessible. With options from running to boating to hunting to biking to fishing to birding to photography, there are plenty of ways to savor and enjoy all the area has to offer.

Unique Amenities

- Spring Valley Farms & Vineyard, a fourth-generation family farm that provides produce to grocers throughout Southern Illinois and Southeastern Missouri, operates the Old General Farm Store & Market, where locals and visitors can access some of their high-quality products right in town!

Learn more about Pulaski, Illinois

- <http://www.city-data.com/city/Pulaski-Illinois.html>
- Pulaski County <https://www.pulaskicountyil.net/county-clerk.html>
- Pulaski County Fair <https://www.pulaskicofair.net/>
- Spring Valley Farm & Vineyard <https://www.facebook.com/svfarm/>
- Mound City National Cemetery <https://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/moundcity.asp>
- Enjoy Illinois’ Southern Most Area https://southernmostillinois.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/SITB_VisitorGuide_2020.pdf

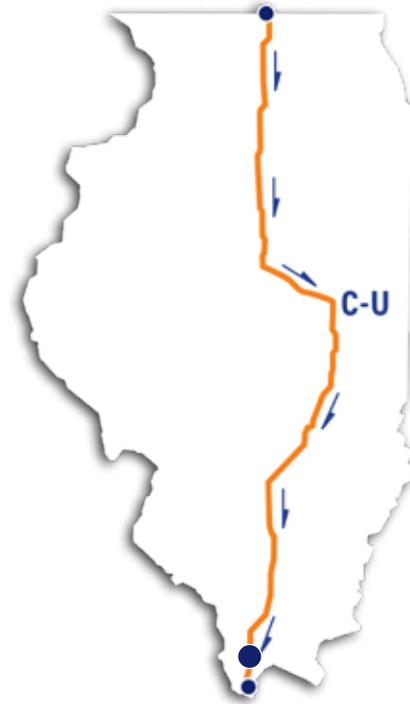


The Old General Farm Store & Market in Pulaski.

Founded in 1815; city charter first issued in 1907
 Population...684
 Geographic size...1.22 square miles

Known For

- Mounds was originally named Beechwood because there were so many beech gum trees in the area. Then the name was changed to Mounds City Junction because of all the railroad activity. In the early 1930s the city's name was permanently changed to Mounds.
- In its heyday as a railroad community, Mounds flourished. Over 2,000 people were employed at the Illinois Central Railroad Roundhouse located in Mounds, making it the second largest roundhouse in the country at that time. The kind of work conducted included servicing railroad cars and fixing railroad engines.
- The railroad industry led to a robust business community in Mounds. From restaurants, grocery stores, and clothing stores to dentists, doctors, churches, and banks, Mounds offered its residents everything they needed to live a comfortable life.
- While the railroad industry is no longer part of modern-day Mounds, the little community still offers locals most amenities. There's a great grocery store, a Dollar General, and a new SMART bus depot.
- The community is welcoming and progressive. Its local churches—and there are a lot of churches—are always organizing events and fundraisers to help the less fortunate in their community.



Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- The Mounds African American Museum includes exhibits about W.E.B. DeBouis, one of the founders of the NAACP and the first African American to earn a PhD from Harvard, an accomplishment he achieved in 1896. The museum opened in 2008 and is a symbol of local Black history in Mounds. “The original building was owned by Gwendolyn Chambliss. She was a prominent Black educator and entrepreneur in Mounds, and that’s the only building that’s left in our area that Black people owned,” said Josie Eason, the co-founder of the African American Museum in Mounds.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...233 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- There is a small Veterans Memorial at the local VFW.



Historic photo of the Illinois Central Depot in Mounds, Illinois.

MOUNDS

Annual Events

- The Mounds Fall Festival takes place the first Saturday in October and supports the all-volunteer fire department. There's a parade, vendors, gospel singing, and other activities.
- A new event on the calendar the First Baptist Church of Mounds hopes to continue in years to come is a LIVE nativity the weekend before Christmas. Over 500 folks came to see it this past year.
- This same church has also been hosting a community Thanksgiving dinner for the past 25 years, sharing their bounty with fellow residents, especially those in need.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Gwendolyn Chambliss Park, aka Mounds Park, was dedicated about 40 years ago to prominent resident Gwen Chambliss, who with her husband, contributed in so many ways to support the Black community in Mounds. Many events take place at the park throughout the year.
- Mounds is 19 miles from the Cache River Wetlands State Natural Area and Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge but worth the trip. See more info in the Ullin, Illinois, profile on page 207.
- The Egyptian Country Club offers a nine-hole golf course, lighted driving range, and PGA staff available for lessons. There's also a pro shop, practice facilities, and a bar and grill.

Learn more about Mounds, Illinois

- <http://www.city-data.com/city/Mounds-Illinois.html>
- Welcome to Pulaski County <https://pulaskicountyil.net/tourism.html>
- Southernmost Illinois www.southernmostillinois.com
- Egyptian Country Club egyptiancountryclub.com
- Mounds Public Library Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/Mounds-Public-Library-1456307834672359/>

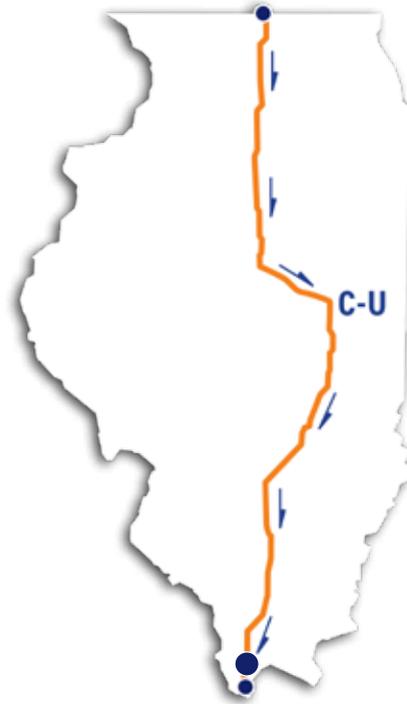


Illinois Central Yards, Mounds, Illinois in the 1930s.

Incorporated in 1857, the county seat of Pulaski County
 Population...588
 Geographic size...0.73 square miles

Known For

- Mound City came into being as a result of the union of two cities—Mound City, founded by Major General Moses Marshall Rawlings, and Emporium City, which was a project of Emporium Real Estate and Manufacturing Company, a group of Cincinnati and Cairo businessmen.
- The city's name derives from a Native American mound. Local lore says that guests at General Rawlings's hotel slept on the mound in the summer to experience cool breezes and to escape the mosquitoes.
- Located on the Ohio River just north of its confluence with the Mississippi River, the city played an important role during the Civil War, serving as the naval station for the Mississippi River Squadron based out of Cairo. In addition to a shipyard, the Mound City Naval Station included a foundry, barracks, supply offices, and hospital.
- Three ironclad ships—the *USS Cairo*, the *USS Mound City*, and the *USS Cincinnati*—were built at the Mound City Marine Ways shipyard in 1862.
- Modern-day Mound City is quiet and friendly, with a definite southern ambiance. Everyone knows everyone.
- There are only a few businesses in town—two grain companies, a convenience store, a pharmacy, and an electrical shop—so for the most part, residents drive to other communities to do most of their shopping.



Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- In 1861, the U.S. government converted a large warehouse into the Mound City Civil War Naval Hospital, staffed by the Sisters of The Holy Cross from Indiana. It was one of the largest hospitals in the western states during the war and treated Union and Confederate soldiers as well as freed slaves. The hospital was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. It has since been demolished.
- The Mound City National Cemetery is a United States National Cemetery located just outside the city, formally dedicated in 1864. It is a burial place for both Union and Confederate soldiers as well as soldiers from other wars. There's a walkway with markers inscribed with verses from Theodore O'Hara's poem, "Bivouac of the Dead."

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...235 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art

- A few miles from town is the Illinois State Soldiers and Sailors Monument erected on the grounds of the Mound City National Cemetery in 1874. It honors 2,637 unknown soldiers and sailors who lost their lives during the Civil War. The cemetery is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Annual Events

- The Saturday before Memorial Day an elaborate service takes place at the Mound City National Cemetery. Flags are placed on all 9,000 graves in the cemetery.
- The Mound City Women's Clubs holds a memorial service at the town's Memorial Park each Veterans Day.
- Each December Mound City is also part of the National Wreaths Across America Day, the mission of which is to "remember, honor, and teach...by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at more than 2,100 cemeteries across the United States, at sea, and abroad." The Mounds City National Cemetery Preservation Commission coordinates the event every year, selling the wreathes and placing them on the graves. In 2020, the group placed wreaths on 5,000 of the 9,000 graves in the cemetery.

MOUND CITY

Natural Areas and Resources

- Fifteen miles northwest of Mound City is the Horseshow Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area, a 10,65-acre state park. Much of the oxbow lake resembles a bayou and includes Bald cypress and Tupelo trees along the shoreline of the lake.
- Also nearby are the Cache River Wetlands State Natural Area and the Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge.

Unique Amenities

- A weekly paper is still published in the area. The *Monday's Pub*, produced in Anna, sometimes contains news from and about Mound City.
- An exciting development for the Mounds City National Cemetery Preservation Commission involves their acquisition (through donation) of the house that at one-time belonged to city-founder Major General Moses Marshall Rawlings. The house is unique in that it has the only iron roof in the United States. The home was built in the 1840s. The Preservation group is hoping to make it into a museum dedicated to local history.

Learn more about Mound City, Illinois

- <https://www.citydirectory.us/city-mound-city-illinois.html>
- <https://pulaskicountyil.net/tourism.html>
- Explore Southern Illinois <http://southernmostillinois.com/>
- Mound City Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/mcillinois1/>
- Mound City Public Library <https://librarytechnology.org/library/17537>
- Southern Five Regional Planning District and Development Commission <http://southernfive.org/sfcommunities.htm>
- General resource for Southern Illinois tourism information https://southernmostillinois.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/SITB_VisitorGuide_2020.pdf

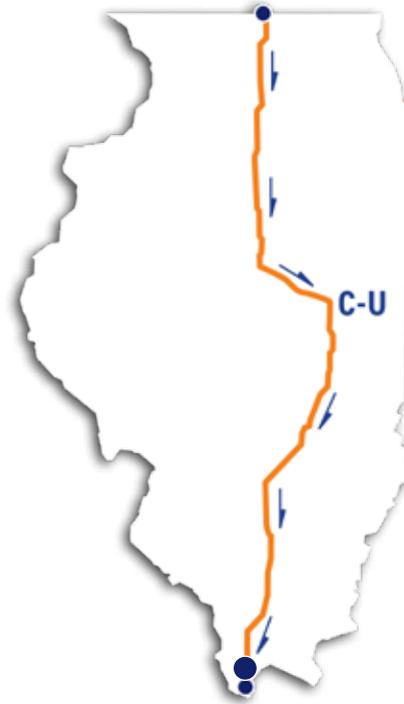


Historic Mound City National Cemetery.

City charter founded in 1857
 Population...2,082
 Geographic size...9.08 square miles
 (6.99 land, 2.10 water)

Known For

- Cairo is located on a low-lying delta at the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers. At 315 feet above sea level, Cairo is the second lowest point in the state of Illinois (the original location of Fort Defiance was lower). Cairo is also the county seat of Alexander County.
- The name of the city is pronounced “KAIR-oh,” like Karo Syrup, not “KY-ROH,” like the capital of Egypt.
- There is a connection with Egypt, however. It was thought the Illinois Cairo resembled the Egyptian Cairo because rivers flow along either side of the city, similar to how the Nile River flows along two sides of Cairo, Egypt; hence, the southern Illinois area where Cairo is located is known as “Little Egypt.”
- Several attempts to establish a town in the early 19th century ultimately led to 10,000 acres being purchased in 1846 by Cairo City Property Trust, which wanted to make the town the terminus of the Illinois Central Railroad, which arrived in the city in 1855, completing that goal and making Cairo a booming train town in its first half decade.
- During the Civil War, Cairo was named the naval station for the Mississippi River Squadron. With no land available, the navy yard repair shop was kept afloat aboard wharf-boats, tug boats, and other vessels.
- Because of Cairo’s strategic location, Congress designated it a port of delivery in 1854, and a Customs House and Post Office opened in 1872. At the height of Cairo’s prosperity, the post office was the third busiest in the United States.



- For decades after the Civil War, Cairo boomed and prospered as a port city and hub for railroad shipping, steamboat commerce, as well the operation of ferries. The population grew as commerce thrived and by 1920 reached its peak population of 15,203. An important segment of this population were freed slaves from the South. By 1900, thirty-eight percent of Cairo’s population was Black (about 3,000 people). Most of these citizens worked as unskilled laborers and were not given equal opportunity, treatment, or pay.
- After the Civil War, a number of mansions were built in Cairo, including the five-story Italianate Magnolia Manor in 1869 and the Riverlore Mansion in 1865, both of which still stand today on a street called “Millionaire’s Row.”
- As prosperous as Cairo was into the early 20th century, it has also suffered, deeply, perhaps more than any other community in Illinois. Since the 1940s, the city that once had everything has been slowly brought to the breaking point.
- Transportation changes and industrial restructuring led to massive job loss in Cairo starting in the 1940s. The population began declining steeply in the 1950s and then accelerated when Interstate 57 was completed, completely bypassing Cairo, which led to more businesses closing and more citizens leaving.
- With fewer jobs available, tension increased between white and Black citizens, reaching a boiling point in the late 1960s. With all city facilities segregated, Black citizens could not get work at white-owned businesses, which led to protests and boycotts, and, ultimately, violence, as Cairo’s white citizens attempted to maintain systems of segregation and discrimination.
- The economic downturn continued even as race relations improved. In the 1980s, the only hospital in town closed and rail traffic was halted; the last grocery store shuttered in 2015, and there is currently no gas station in Cairo. The demolition in 2019 of two condemned 1940s-era housing projects has created a housing crisis, and many citizens live below the poverty line. The population has dropped to around 2,000.
- Hope and faith run deep in Cairo’s veins, however. City leadership not only reflects diversity but also a renewed commitment to get Cairo back on its feet.
- In 2007, Cairo elected its first Black mayor in Judson Childs (his three successors have also been Black). Current mayor Thomas Simpson took office in May 2019. A former city council member with 29 years of service with Cairo Public Utilities, Simpson is also a board member of the Southernmost Illinois Delta Empowerment Zone board, an economic development entity serving Alexander, Pulaski, Massac, Johnson, and Union counties.
- In the best news ever, in late 2020, as part of the Rebuild Illinois capital plan, Governor JB Pritzker announced a \$40 million dollar investment in a port project designed to establish Cairo as a national hub for the shipping and logistics industry. Better days are clearly ahead for the proud city of Cairo. **See more about the port project on the next page.**

REDEVELOPING CAIRO AS A MAJOR RIVER PORT

“On Aug. 4, 2020, Governor JB Pritzker announced the state would invest \$40 million in the development and construction of the Cairo port through the Rebuild Illinois capital plan. The state’s investment will allow the Cairo project to take advantage of the container shipping opportunities created by an agreement between Alexander Cairo Port District, Plaquemines Port Harbor & Terminal District, and American Patriot Container Transport.”

The plan “would make the proposed Cairo river port terminal a model for 21st century inland waterway shipping and key logistics terminal for the newest inland waterway vessels that are larger, faster, and more efficient than anything on U.S. waterways,” according to Aileron Communications, a Solar energy equipment supplier in Chicago.

This project has been eight years in the making. Illinois State Senator Dale Fowler has been leading the effort to build the new river terminal in Cairo, stating, “When we have 80% of all in-land barge traffic flowing by the city of Cairo at the confluence of the Mississippi and the Ohio and we haven’t been taking advantage of that, well it’s time that we do. The container traffic coming up from New Orleans to Chicago is significant as it is coming from Chicago down to the Gulf, and Cairo is an ideal location to bring these containers in by train, load them onto a barge and take them down to the gulf and the inverse is true getting them back to Chicago.”

The River Port project, which will be on the Mississippi River side of the city, is projected to create nearly 500 jobs and boost the local economy. The project has already attracted developers who are planning to bring new homes, stores, and a truck stop to the area within the next decade. With river port transportation estimated to triple over the next 10 years, Fowler says “the confluences of the ‘great Mississippi and Ohio Rivers’ is perfectly situated to take advantage of that economic growth.”



The Alexander Cairo Port District project will begin in 2021.

Product Grown, Produced, Discovered There

- In January 1862 when General Ulysses S. Grant occupied Cairo, Fort Defiance (then known as Camp Defiance) was built to protect the confluence. It was originally located at the end of Cairo on 2nd Street—at 279-foot elevation, which made it the lowest point in Illinois—but because of annual flooding, Fort Defiance was moved to higher ground a mile and a half from its original position. The park is maintained by the State of Illinois as Fort Defiance Park.
- One of the few surviving U.S. custom houses is in Cairo. Opening in 1872, it served as a post office and a courthouse in addition to being a custom house. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Today, it serves as a museum, and housed there is the desk used by General Ulysses S. Grant at his headquarters while stationed in Cairo during the Civil War. In celebration of the 2018 Illinois Bicentennial, the Cairo Custom House was selected as one of the Illinois 200 Great Places by the American Institute of Architects.
- Darrell Shemwell’s Bar-B-Que has been a star Cairo restaurant for nearly 80 years! *Money* magazine once named it the “Best BBQ on the Old River Road.” Specialties include BBQ pork, beef brisket, ham, and turkey. Darrell has been making his own delicious BBQ sauce since the beginning to enhance the hickory flavor of his scrumptious meat. Sadly, Darrell passed away in January 2021. His award-winning BBQ and sauce tradition continues, however, because Emily Pace Meyer, one of his long-time employees, now owns the restaurant, which recently completed a remodeling job of the building, and Emily continues to provide the same wonderful BBQ enticements for everyone to enjoy.



The historic Cairo Public Library was built in 1884.

Ties to Champaign-Urbana

- Distance to C-U from the location...240 miles
- Number of 2020 CCIM race participants who live in the town...0

Public Art/Landmarks

- Sculptor George Grey Bernard created a bronze statue known as “Hewer,” first displayed at the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis. The statue depicts a nude man chopping and dragging wood to save people from death and destruction

CAIRO

from a flood. The statue was presented to Cairo in 1906 by the artist's friend Mary Halliday and her family, in memory of her father, William Parker Halliday, who died in 1889.

- The Cairo Public Library, located in the A.B. Safford Memorial Building, is an anchor and a gem for the city. In 1884 when Anna Eliza Safford presented the building to the city of Cairo in memory of her husband, who had died seven years earlier, she said, "More than six years ago, as soon as I could get beyond the thought of self, came the determination to erect a memorial building to the memory of the good and true man, one that, while perpetuating his memory, would also do the greatest good for the greatest number." More than a working library, it also houses a sizable collection of Civil War documents and museum-quality antiques and paintings donated by patrons. The ceramic water fountain in the front entryway is especially spectacular.
- The 14-room, red brick Magnolia Manor was built featuring Italianate architecture in 1869 by Cairo businessman Charles A. Galigher. The Cairo Historical Association operates the mansion as a museum. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Cairo officials purchased Riverlore in 1999 with the hope of creating a tourism destination, but those plans were never realized and the Victorian mansion sat empty and neglected. As a sign of good things to come in Cairo, a couple from Southern Illinois purchased the mansion from the city in 2019 and are developing it as a bed-and-breakfast that will open by the end of 2021.
- The Church of the Redeemer, first organized in 1840, built its second church building in 1888 at a cost of \$30,899. That beautiful brown stone edifice with ornate, stained glass windows and a gold-gilded cross remains home to parishioners today.

Annual Events

- The Cairo Blues Festival is held annually in downtown Cairo on the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday after Labor Day. Besides the amazing music, you'll enjoy vendors serving up fish, BBQ, home-cooked meals, funnel cakes, Creole cooking, baked goods, and much more.

Natural Areas and Resources

- Horseshoe Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area and Shawnee National Forest are northwest of the city and worth visiting when you're in the area.

Unique Amenities

- Cairo is completely enclosed by a series of levees and flood walls, which protect the city from the rising Mississippi and Ohio rivers on either side of it. The first levee was built in 1837. The

current levees have been built to protect the city from flood waters of up to 64 feet. Following the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, the levee system around Cairo was strengthened. As part of this project, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also established the Birds Point-New Madrid Floodway in Missouri, south of the confluence of the two rivers. When the Ohio River Flood of 1937 brought a record water level to Cairo (cresting at 59.5 feet), the Corps of Engineers closed the flood gate and blew a breach in the Bird's Point levee for the first time to relieve pressure on the Cairo flood wall. More recently, the entire city of Cairo was evacuated during the 2011 Mississippi River Floods, after the Ohio River rose higher than the 1937 flood levels. With the possibility of 15 feet of water inundating Cairo, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers again breached levees in the Mississippi flood zone at Birds Point to prevent flooding in Cairo and other more populous areas further upstream along both the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.



Cairo is located at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers.

- A bridge from Cairo east over the Ohio River takes you to Kentucky, and a bridge from Cairo west over the Mississippi River takes you to Missouri.
- The *Cairo Citizen* is published weekly in Cairo, dating back to 1868 (though it has had several name changes during its long life). The paper covers Cairo and the greater Alexander and Pulaski County region.

- Cairo loves its basketball. In 2017, the Cairo Pilots high school basketball team came close to winning a first-ever state championship, finishing 23-6 for the season, a notable accomplishment given that the school had only 97 students enrolled.

Learn more about Cairo, Illinois

- <https://www.citydirectory.us/city-cairo-illinois.html>
- Cairo Public Library <https://www.cairopubliclibrary.org/>
- Full-length documentary *Between Two Rivers* (2012) <http://www.betweentworivers.net/>
- Alexander County <http://www.alexandercountyil.com/home.html>
- Cairo Heritage Foundation Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/thecairoheritagefoundation>
- Alexander Cairo Port District project <https://wsiltv.com/2020/11/01/port-project-to-get-underway-with-4-million-in-initial-funding/>
- About the Alexander-Cairo Port District <https://www.alexandercairo.org/>

A BIG THANK YOU FROM JAN SEELEY

Our Criss-Cross journey from South Beloit down to Cairo has been quite the trip! Seventy-four different Illinois communities in this North-to-South Guidebook—plus 34 in the West-to-East companion guide—have touched me in ways I never imagined. I simply cannot wait to visit many of the towns we’ve virtually travelled through in the Guidebooks. We hope you feel the same urge to experience these communities up close and in person.

This entire project would not have been possible had I not partnered with the amazing Tina Heidrich from Oswego, Illinois, who researched and wrote the town profiles with me; and Staci Anderson, based here in Champaign, who tackled the design and layout. Tina is the museum manager of the Little White School Museum in Oswego, and also a busy mom and runner who found time to captain and run with her 10-person team doing the Double Crossing. At last count, her Sunday Zoomers team had crisscrossed both routes multiple times for a total of 2,146 miles. Ladies, it’s been a ton of fun, and I cannot thank you enough.,

And, then there are the countless community members across the Prairie State who took the time to let me interview them or review the profiles I had written about their towns. From the Bird City Boys in Griggsville to Paster Dave in Muncie, from John Gillmore in Edgewood (and his cousin, Tina, in Mason!) to Dolores Ford-Mobley in Kinmundy, Debby Severs in Mounds, and Monica Smith in Cairo. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

I’ve come to believe that the COVID-19 pandemic offers plenty of silver linings—if only you look for them. The Criss-Cross Virtual Challenge—and the Guidebooks—exist because we wanted a way to stay connected with all of you during the pandemic while the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon Race Weekend was on hiatus—and provide some fun, education, and motivation for your training. Look at the fun we’ve had! We are better for having made the journey.

As we move collectively toward a post-pandemic world, we all want to come back BETTER. How fitting that the last community in this guide is Cairo, Illinois, a city that has taken devastating knocks over the past several decades, but is on the cusp of a life-altering recovery. In Mark Twain’s 1883 classic, *Huckleberry Finn*, Cairo was Jim and Huck’s original destination. Twain called the city the “promised land.” The proud community of Cairo is again striving to be that place. I for one am rooting for them big time.

— March 2021



“May the road rise to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, and the rains fall soft upon your fields.”