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Re-discovering ILLINOIS
by **LESTER B. COLBY**
ILLINOIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Have you ever heard of the place that is called the City of Good Times? It's a story of gray-headed laughter and play, old fashioned coolies with pink sugar on them, of black-berry pies, mothers and children, little mothers and dolls. It's the story of a city without destruction on Halloween.

It is also a story of Centralia, one-time strawberry center of the mid-west, once the annual Mecca for hoboes, today a city of, they tell me, 14,000. Centralia is becoming an industrial center. The city is growing. Evolution is on the march.

Is Sort of Gateway

Little things change destinies. I have been in Centralia several times since I started to prow the state of Illinois on these rediscoveries. It is a sort of gateway. The city calls itself the "Gateway of Egypt." More ambitious ones have dubbed it "Queen of the Egyptian Empire."

Last spring I visited Centralia in "Apple Blossom Time." Centralia is the center of a remarkable commercial orcharding district—apples, pears, peaches; countryside all a-bloom in springtime. In the late summer and autumn it is fruit-capital of southern Illinois. Here is the headquarters for organized fruit marketing for all the district. I spoke of strawberries—

Back thirty years or more ago all the country about Centralia was a great strawberry patch. Hundreds of acres of strawberries year after year. Many varieties of strawberries, like the Wardfield, originated here. There was work picking, for everybody who might come, at two cents a box. Men and women, boys and girls, all flocked to the fields. And that was why the hoboes came.

Strawberry Period

Mulligatawny brewed everywhere in the hobo jungles and at night time the hoboes' fires dotted the landscape like stars. Three factories were kept busy making strawberry boxes and crates. Printing houses worked overtime printing tickets. A business developed in "shaving" them; that is, buying blocks of tickets for cash at cut prices. People hated to stand in line to cash them in.

Wagons loaded with strawberries lined up for four or five blocks waiting turn at refrigerator cars. Today! The strawberry business, the hoboes and their jungles—all have vanished. Only a memory.

With the vanishing of the strawberry industry Centralia stepped into a period of inertia. There was depression. Years of inertia they tell me. Coal finally pulled the city out of it a bit. Coal boomed as did strawberries for a time. Then coal began to fade. And more inertia. Inertia, lack of hope, peeplessness so I've been told, was long the curse of Centralia.

But, as I've mentioned, evolution is on the march. When towns are in the dumps factions spring up. People split into groups. There are neighborhood hates. That was true of Centralia during the periods of inertia.

Play Helps

Organized play has done a world of good in bringing Centralia out of its

inertia. It has eliminated the factions and has wiped out the hates. I've been interested in Centralia and its play. I've been thinking of it since apple-blossom time a year ago as the city-of-good-times.

As I rode through aisles of bloom of gray-haired father, an aggressive and enthusiastic man—one who had worked hard and had never played—told me this:

His son had just come back from an eastern university. Student days were done, his degree won. The father pointed to him a glowing picture of his future in Centralia, a good and safe business, sure profits, active years ahead. But the boy replied:

"Yes, if one wants to work all his days and dream of work all his nights. But when and where do I play?"

Plans for the country club were launched the next day, the gray-haired man told me. Piles of brick, holdings in city lots, business houses and factories held less glory in his eyes. All these were good but not all important.

Gradually the idea of play was developed. A "play expert" was employed. Organized play was started among the children. Came the enacting by children of story-plays, songs and dancing, "dolls' tea-parties" for little mothers and their make-belief children. Folk-dancing and marching under trees.


Idea Grows

This brought the mothers out. Nor was that all. Soon fathers found themselves taking part in outings, the whole family joining in hikes and picnics. Grown-folk learned that there was a high-school gymnasium. It started with "adult play nights" and some pudgy, roly-poly business men, others with thinning hair and seamed faces, a few with double-decked

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chins and puffy girths, found that they could trot briskly instead of walking flat-footedly.

Finally the trot became a run and there was buying of athletic outfits and soft-soled shoes. Belts ran to smaller sizes. Lodges, industrial groups and parent-teacher associations perked up. Increased attendance was noted at church affairs. Basketball was developed. Horse shoe courts were established.

Groups of young women took training courses in story-telling. School board members soon saw that the play-scheme meant better school work. I am told that Centralia has carried organized play farther than any city of its size in America. I am told that this has led to other organized work; that Centralia is probably without parallel anywhere in its complete organization program.

Halloween Fiesta

Take the case of Halloween in Centralia. Nobody ever tips over any of the usually tipplable buildings or rips off gates or carries away sidewalks. Halloween in Centralia is a carefully-

planned fiesta, a sort of glorified mardi gras. Everybody turns out. An average year puts 2,500 marches in up on this situation and the amount of air circulating through the radiator may be controlled with shutters, as the engine gets too hot or too cold. On a thermostat may be used which operates a valve controlling the amount of water or the speed of the water that flows to the water jacket. Through these means the engine may be kept operating at the most efficient temperature.

The operator of a motor vehicle will do well to study whatever cooling system his car may have. Some automobiles are entirely air-cooled. No water is used. He should know what he has and how to get the best results in all kinds of weather.

Senator Brookhart says that Iowa now has no United States senator, but he doubtless knows where he thinks they can get one.

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The Judge's Joke

A WOMAN WHO TALKS TO HERSELF HAS A HARD TIME HAVING THE LAST WORD.



GOOD HEARTED
"Johnny, who took the cookies from the pantry?"
"Mother, I gave them to a poor little boy who was hungry."
"You have a heart of gold, dear. Who was the little boy?"
"I, mother!"

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