

# Rediscovering ILLINOIS

by LESTER COLBY

Come with me today and we will journey into the Black Hawk country. We will drive over concrete into the rolling farm lands once occupied by White Cloud and his band. White Cloud, history recalls, was Black Hawk's "prophet," the aboriginal seer whose faulty prophecies and bad advice led Black Hawk's band to destruction.

On rubber tires we dart swiftly through the valleys where Abraham Lincoln, soldier, Dixon his headquarters then, guided his plodding militia only to complain a bit bitterly when it was done that he "fought a war and never saw an Indian." We reach Morrison and find a new-day story; a composite of the tale of the cucumber, the tale of the refrigerator and the tale of the cow.

**Hothouse Cucumber**  
Morrison is the birthplace of the hothouse cucumber. It was in Morrison, Illinois, that J. W. Davis, cucumber king, grew his first cucumber and it was here that he came to market, in fact, the five Davis brothers, scattered now, who all in the march of time became cucumber barons in various parts of the United States.

Morrison is headquarters for the Kay Bee company with cucumber greenhouses in Morrison, Ottawa, and Streator, each plant in a way lineal descendant of the original Davis plant; three plants with fourteen acres of cucumbers growing under glass.

The Kay Bee company has long since ceased to be a part of the Davis organization but J. W. Davis' original cucumber dream gave its beginning. Morrison every year ships cucumbers in winter and spring and early summer to points as far west as Oregon and as far east as Boston. Snow-ridden folk in Edmonton, Canada, with thirty per cent import duties and \$1.25 express charges for a box of two dozen to pay, often give up seventy-five cents for a cucumber at top-season prices. February visitors in Florida munch Morrison glass-grown cucumbers and marvel at mid-winter dainties of the Southland! And probably they ask no questions.

**Million Dollar Cucumbers**  
J. W. Davis lives today in Davenport. One of his greenhouses, at Terre Haute, Ind., has twenty-nine acres under glass and, it was told, represents an investment of more than \$1,000,000. Citizens of Morrison remember him as a barefoot boy, son of a poor, struggling market-gardener, and tell of him peddling "roots and green stuff" from door to door.

Somehow or other J. W. Davis, the dreamer of the family, got the idea of raising cucumbers under glass for the commercial market. He knew that it was being done in a small way in the east, for high class hotels and for wealthy epicures.

J. W. Davis envisioned the great mass of common people as consumers of out-of-season cucumbers. So he began his life work and his climb to riches. There's romance even in cucumbers. It's a long story how Davis and those who followed in his footsteps bread, over a period of many watchful years, choicer and crisper varieties; introducing English strains and crossing them with American varieties.

**Seeds in Demand**  
Seedsman, I am told, many times have offered fabulous sums for seeds of these cucumbers but in vain. The breeds are guarded with care. Because cucumbers are sold green the seed can't be had from the marketed fruit.

The story of the work of bees in hothouse cucumber growing is another chapter. Bees are necessary to fertilize the blooms, else no cucumbers. Swarms of bees are placed in the greenhouses when blooming starts about January 1. The bees work with frenzy for their little nectar in cucumber blossoms. No honey comes as a byproduct. Each swarm, no matter how it toils, finds less honey each nightfall until finally its stores dwindle to nothing.

The market price of cucumbers this year ranged from twenty cents to \$4.50 a dozen. That's what season does. The first hothouse cucumbers in 1926 went on the market on Jan. 18 and the last on August 25.

**Other Noted Sons**  
Morrison has also given to the world some noted sons who had nothing to do with cucumbers — Will Payne, the author; Frank Ramsey Adams, the short story writer; Dr. E. V. L. Brown, the famous eye specialist; Dr. Will Logan, eminent surgeon, and others.

The town has always been rather keen on education. And music. With 3,000 inhabitants it has 248 students in its high school. Of these 110 are tuition pupils from the country round. Last year tuition receipts at the high school totaled \$12,700. There are more teachers in the Morrison high school than in the grade schools, a rather unusual situation. The high school has a band of forty pieces; the grade schools a band of twenty-two pieces.

The Morrison municipal building, built by special tax, cost \$100,000. It is more than a city hall. It includes a theatre that seats 1000 and its dining room can serve 500 persons at a time. Morrison was named for John

R. Morrison, a settler who never got there. He was a New York capitalist and had planned big things for the town but before he could come west he died and that was that.

First settlers arrived in Morrison just after the Black Hawk war. Prophetstown, where lived White Cloud, the "prophet," mentioned in the beginning, is on the Rock River just south of Morrison. White Cloud's picture, painted from a sketch by Catlin, pioneer artist, hangs in the county court house.

**First Newspaper**  
Morrison's first newspaper, the Sentinel, was established in 1837. It still survives. The county seat of Whiteside county was established here in 1838. Legend says that when commissioners came seeking sites Mrs. James Gridley, pioneer mother and cook wonderful, stuffed them with such an amazing dinner that they felt under eternal obligations to the entire community, succumbed to the arts of the wise lady, and voted the courthouse here forever.

So I pause, nearly a hundred years later, to pay tribute to Mrs. Gridley's cooking.

**Seat of Famous Fair**  
Morrison is about fifteen miles beyond the Rock river and about fifteen miles east of the Mississippi, almost directly west of Chicago. It is here that the Whiteside county fair has been held every year for fifty-four years.

And it was here that fifty-two years ago James Sargent, inventor of the time lock, installed the first lock of the kind ever placed on a bank door anywhere in the world. He came from Rochester, N. Y., to attach it himself. With a bit of ceremony I was shown that lock, prized property of the First National Bank of Morrison. Dr. Leander Smith bought it in 1874.

Smith, a New Englander, physician, lumberman, platel of townsites, one of the original "forty-niners" who sought gold in California, landed finally in Morrison and added banking to his repertoire.

Because Dr. Smith came Morrison ships out between 60,000 and 70,000 refrigerators every year. Morrison is the home of the Illinois Refrigerator company.

That business was started in 1893 with six stockholders and a capital of \$50,000. Its capital today is \$500,000 and its sales about \$1,500,000 a year. Wood, steel and porcelain boxes are made. A full working crew is about 250 men. The plant was built by Edward A. Smith. He puts in most of his time at the "Smith bank," now leaving Frank Smith, his son and grandson of Leander, to guide the destiny of the plant.

**Dairy Country**  
Whiteside county used to be grain, cattle and hogs. Grain elevators stood thick in the countryside. Now they are out of style. Cash grain disfavored. Today the farms market mostly dairy products, hogs and chickens. Four hundred farmers bring their milk daily to the Morrison plant of Libby, McNeil & Libby. Its output is sweetened and unsweetened evaporated milk.

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Edward A. Smith, the friendly and genial banker who has spent his sixty years here, who retains boyish enthusiasm and youngish vigor, stands at my side. We watch automatic machinery and fifty persons doing the work in the milk plant that 150 used to do. And Banker Smith delivers himself of this philosophy:

"When you find plenty of dairy cows, hogs, and chickens — and don't forget the chickens — on a farm today you can find prosperity. If a man is a good dairy farmer any bank can safely make him any reasonable loan. Good dairy farmers meet their obligations. Good dairy farmers mean prosperity in any community. The price of corn doesn't matter much to the farmer who owns fifteen cows." I've been thinking something like that for a long time. It has rather seemed to me, visiting many places as I do, that one can pretty well measure the prosperity of a countryside by the number of its dairy cows. Cows never ask the price of the grains they eat.

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**  
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a public hearing will be held in the Council Chamber in the City Hall in the City of Highland Park, Illinois, on Tuesday, the 1st day of November, 1927, at eight o'clock P.M., which said public hearing will be conducted by the undersigned, the Zoning Committee for the City of Highland Park, designated and appointed by the Council of the City of Highland Park for that purpose, to consider amending an ordinance entitled:

"AN ORDINANCE to regulate and limit the height and bulk of buildings; to regulate and limit intensity of the use of lot areas, and to regulate and determine the area of open spaces within and surrounding such buildings; to classify, regulate and restrict the location of trades and industries and the location of buildings designed for specified industrial, business, residential and other uses; to divide the entire City of Highland Park into districts for the purpose of this ordinance; to fix standards to which buildings or structures shall conform; to prohibit uses, buildings or structures incompatible with the character of such districts respectively; and to prevent additions to and alterations or remodeling of existing buildings or structures in such a way as to avoid the restrictions and limitations lawfully imposed hereunder and to provide penalties for violation hereof" in the following manner:

It is proposed that Lot 8 Block 22 all in the City of Highland Park, County of Lake and State of Illinois, and classified on the use map of said city as Class "B" Residential District be changed to a local Business District;

It is proposed that Lots One (1) to Twenty (20) both inclusive; Lots Twenty-two (22) to Forty-two (42) both inclusive; Lots Forty-seven (47) to Fifty-one (51) both inclusive

and Lots Three Hundred Fifty-nine (359) and Three Hundred Sixty (360) in Kenna & Dato's Highland Park Addition, Highland Park, Illinois, being a subdivision of parts of Sections Two (19) and Fifteen (15) in Township Forty-three (43) North, Range Twelve (12) East of the Third Principal Meridian, in Lake County, Ill., all of said premises being situated in the City of Highland Park, Lake County, Illinois, and classified on the use map of said City as Class "A" Residential District be changed to a Local Business District and

It is proposed that all of that portion of Section 27 lying south of the south side of Deerfield Road, between the west boundary of the Chicago and North Western Railway Company's right-of-way and the east boundary of the Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad Company's right-of-way, all of said premises being situated in the City of Highland Park, Lake County, Illinois, and classified on the use map of said City as Class "A" Residential District be changed to a Commercial District.

At said public hearing an opportunity will be afforded to all persons interested in the changes above mentioned or any other changes in said ordinance to be heard in relation to said proposed amendments.

L. M. BISSER,  
S. ST. PETER,  
L. E. LEVERONE,  
E. S. HALL,  
X. VIGIANT  
Zoning Committee of the  
City of Highland Park

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**  
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a public hearing will be held in the Council Chamber in the City Hall in the City of Highland Park, Illinois, on Thursday, the 10th day of November, 1927, at eight o'clock P.M., which said public hearing will be conducted by the undersigned, the Zoning Committee for the City of Highland Park, designated and appointed by the Council of the City of Highland Park for that purpose, to consider amending an ordinance entitled:

"AN ORDINANCE to regulate and limit the height and bulk of buildings; to regulate and limit intensity of the use of lot areas, and to regulate and determine the area of open spaces within and surrounding such buildings; to classify, regulate and restrict the location of trades and industries and the location of buildings designed for specified industrial, business, residential and other uses; to divide the entire City of Highland Park into districts for the purpose of this ordinance; to fix standards to which buildings or structures shall conform; to prohibit uses, buildings or structures incompatible with the character of such districts respectively; and to prevent additions to and alterations or remodeling of existing buildings or structures in such a way as to avoid the restrictions and limitations lawfully imposed hereunder and to provide penalties for violation hereof" in the following manner:

It is proposed that Lots 3, 4, 5, and 6, Block 60, all in the City of Highland Park, County of Lake and State of Illinois; also

Lots 13, 14, 15, and 16, Military Academy Subdivision, all in the City of Highland Park, County of Lake and State of Illinois; also

Lots 21 to 28 inclusive in Block 1 and Lots 21 to 28 inclusive in Block 2 Compton's Addition to Highland Park, all in the City of Highland Park, County of Lake and State of Illinois and classified on the use map of said City as Class "B" Residential Districts be changed to Local Business Districts.

At said public hearing an opportunity will

be afforded to all persons interested in the changes above mentioned or any other changes in said ordinance to be heard in relation to said proposed amendments.

L. M. BISSER,  
S. ST. PETER,  
L. E. LEVERONE,  
E. S. HALL,  
X. VIGIANT  
Zoning Committee of the  
City of Highland Park

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