

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Raymond J. Ackerman

Part of the Illinois State Museum's and Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture*

Interview # AIS-V-L-2008-049

Ray Ackerman, a highway engineer born on a farm in Morton, Illinois, was interviewed on the date listed below *History of Illinois Agriculture* project of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and the Illinois State Museum

Interview dates & location:

Date: January 19, 2007

Location: Morton, Tazewell County, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Robert Warren, Illinois State Museum

Technical Support: Doug Carr, recording engineer

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

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Abstract

Raymond Ackerman, *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture*
#AIS-V-L-2008-049

Biographical Information / Overview of Interview: Ray Ackerman was born on January 7, 1918, on the Ackerman family farm near Morton, Illinois. He was the third of four children and lived on the farm until he went off to college in 1939. Ray attended grade school at a one-room country schoolhouse located 0.8 mile east of the farm. The road to school was paved in 1924, and Ray generally made the trip on roller skates, a scooter, a bike, or a horse. At home, Ray and his older brother Clyde helped with the chores. Ray's jobs included milking cows by hand, gathering and tabulating chicken eggs, and, at age 12, working as a water boy for neighborhood farm crews threshing wheat, oats, and barley. The Ackerman's used horses for planting, cultivating, and harvesting until about 1930, when they purchased a Case tractor. Ray's father had to refinance the farm during the Great Depression (1929-1940). The family never went hungry. They adapted to the crisis by increasing the size of the dairy herd and by raising beef cattle, hogs, and chickens to supplement their cash income. Brother Clyde took over the farm when their father retired, and turned it over to his son, John, in 1983. Ray took a different path. He obtained a Civil Engineering degree from the University of Illinois, served as a Merchant Marine in World War II, and then worked as a highway engineer for the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Ackerman Farms; Centennial Farm; drainage tile; alfalfa, clover, corn, wheat, oats, barley; thresher; crop rotation; milk cows, beef cattle, horses, pigs, chickens, sheep; manure; one-room schoolhouse; Great Depression; Apostolic Church; chinch bugs; Case tractor; Ford Model T; trapping; University of Illinois; World War II; Merchant Marines; gender roles; environmental impact; family farm; 4-H.

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