Interview Themes: Interviewers are encouraged to select one or several of the themes or subjects listed below for your interview, incorporating these into interview outline. We’ve also provided an interview shell for your use, below. The outline is meant to serve as a guide only. Add and delete to this outline as appropriate. Interviewers are cautioned against rigidly following a specific set of questions during the interview itself.

1) Land
   - From family farms to corporate farms
   - Land management practices: low till, no till, drainage management, etc.
   - Land prices & purchasing land
   - Farm buildings & their evolution; Farm layout
   - Organic Farming
   - Drainage (especially early years) and tiling
   - Weather (especially severe weather, draughts, hail, flooding, etc)
   - Annual cycle of plowing, planting, cultivating & harvesting

2) Plants
   - Crop rotation
   - Hybrids
   - Fertilizers and Herbicides

3) Animals
   - Feeding, housing & disease control
   - Impact of Genetics
   - From diversity to specialization
   - Marketing

4) People
   - Farm culture
   - Relationship to the land (Ownership, Tenant, renter, migrant labor)
   - Finances
   - Gender and farm roles
   - Impact of rural depopulation
   - Relationship between town and country
   - School consolidation
   - Fairs, 4-H, etc
   - Country Churches

5) Technology
   - Rural Electrification
   - Equipment/Machinery
   - Communications revolution
   - Impact of drainage & irrigation
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Storage
GPS technology
Computer technology & the internet

6) Institutions
State & federal legislation and impact on farming
Farm subsidies
Agricultural Industries
Markets & Marketing
Impact of rural cooperatives on farming
Role of education in Agriculture
Chicago Board of Trade
Chicago Mercantile Exchange

Introductory Information: State at the beginning of the interview:

- Your name as interviewer
- Date and place of the interview
- Name of the person being interviewed
- “This interview is being conducted as part of the …
  o Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library’s Agriculture in Illinois Oral History project”  OR
  o Illinois State Museum’s Oral History of Illinois Agriculture project”

1. Background: When and where you were born?
   a. Parent’s background?
      1. Father
      2. Mother

2. How family came to settle in Illinois?

3. Other siblings & immediate family?

4. Growing up on the farm:
   a. Chores, etc?
   b. School(s)?
   c. Religious activities?
   d. Holidays?
   e. Career aspirations?
Oral History of Illinois Agriculture Interview Outline

f. Interests / activities / hobbies?

d. Extracurricular activities?

5. Life beyond high school.
   a. Finding a career or choosing a college?
   b. Why did you decide to go into (farming/agriculture/teaching …)?

6. How you met your spouse.

7. Your early years in (farming/agriculture/industry, etc)?

   xx. Family gatherings.

   xx. Final thoughts:
   a. What do you think is the most significant and transformative change in agriculture during your career?
   b. How do you feel about changes in farming and farm life?
   c. What do you see as the future for farming?
   d. What advice would you give to someone thinking of pursuing a career in agriculture today?
   e. What advice or wisdom would you give to future generations?

At this point, the interview outline should be tailored specifically to meet the particular circumstances of your interview subject. Refer to the list of topics provided at the front of this outline for suggested topics to pursue.