

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Agriculture in Illinois Oral History Project

Interview Outline

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 ...**
 - **Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library’s *Agriculture in Illinois Oral History project*” OR**
 - **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?

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- 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)?

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.

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?