

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Stephen Scates

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Illinois
State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project
Interview # AIS-V-L-2008-054

Stephen Scates, a large-scale grain farmer from Shawneetown, Illinois, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and IL State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: June 5, 2008

Location: Shawneetown IL

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Michael Maniscalco, IL State Museum

Technical Support: cameraman, Dr. Robert Warren, IL State Museum

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Service, Boston, MA

Edited by: Michael Maniscalco and Amy Moore

Video indexed by: James Oliver

Total Pages: 18 Total Time: 1:30 + 0:34 / 1.5 hrs + 0.57 hrs = 2.07 hrs

Session 1: A family's story of acquiring, owning & operating a large farm

Session 2: Walking tour of the Scates farm and operation

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 08/04/2009.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in
Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Stephen Scates, *Oral History of IL Agriculture*, AIS-V-L-2008-054

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Stephen Scates was born on May 8th, 1937 in Shawneetown Illinois, one of nine children born to Patrick and Geneva Scates. The Scates family has lived in the Shawneetown area since the early 1800s. Portions of the current farm can be traced back to the original homestead granted to the Colman family shortly after they came to America from Ireland. During his youth the farm was a diverse operation, including a dairy herd, beef cows, swine, and numerous crops. Stephen recalls plowing with a team of horses. Over time the farm evolved, reducing its focus on livestock and focusing more on crop production.

The current farm consists of approximately 15,000 acres and is mostly planted in corn and soybeans. Stephen is not the sole owner; that each brother has received an equal share of land from their father. As each generation proceeds they too will become equal share holders in the Pat Scates & Sons farm. The farm also sells its well-known Shawnee Sweet corn through local farm stands in the area. The majority of the crops from the farm are sold through large brokers who in turn sell to both New Orleans and St. Louis markets.

Beyond being a farmer, Stephen was appointed by Bill Clinton as the Director of the Illinois FSA (Farm Service Agency). He was the chair of the Soybean Association and most recently worked closely with Barack Obama on his 2008 presidential campaign.

Topics Covered: Farm History, Family History, Current crop production, Irrigation systems, Labor, Government Policy; agricultural politics; Farm Service Agency; President Bill Clinton; Barack Obama

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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