

The Midwest

MOVING FROM THE FARM

BEFORE YOU READ

Reach Into Your Background

Have you ever introduced a new food or activity to your family? Can you think of a time when you pursued a new

interest on your own? In the Midwest, many people are building ways of life very different from the ways their parents lived.

Questions to Explore

1. How is technology changing agriculture in the Midwest?
2. How is the change in agriculture affecting the growth of cities?

Key Terms
mixed-crop farm
recession
corporate farm

Key Places

Chicago
Detroit
St. Louis
Minneapolis-St. Paul

Camille LeFevre grew up in Black River Falls, Wisconsin. Her family included many generations of farmers. Camille spent her childhood on her parents' sheep farm.

“As a skinny, pigtailed youngster, I spent a lot of time naming lambs, . . . falling off horses named Ginger and Lucky, building hay forts, riding tractors, stuffing freshly sheared wool into gunny sacks and perching on fence gates staring dreamily into space.”

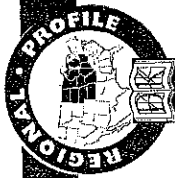
Camille remembers her childhood with deep affection. Yet, like thousands of farm children who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s, she did not follow in her parents' footsteps. Farming in the Midwest changed, and Camille chose a different path.

Technology Brings Changes to the Midwest

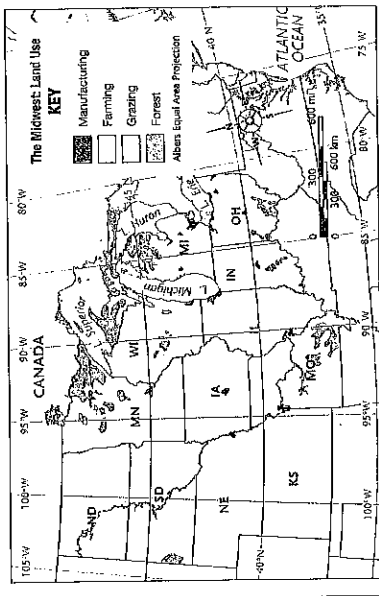
The Midwest is often called “the heartland” because it is the agricultural center of our nation. The soil is rich, and the climate is suitable for producing corn, soybeans, and livestock. Technology helped make farms productive. Inventions like the



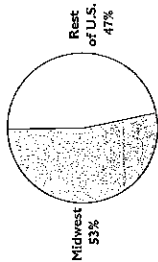
▼ On most farms, sheep-shearing takes place once a year. The wool from this breed of sheep—the Suffolk—is used to make industrial and upholstery fabrics.



The Midwest: Land Use

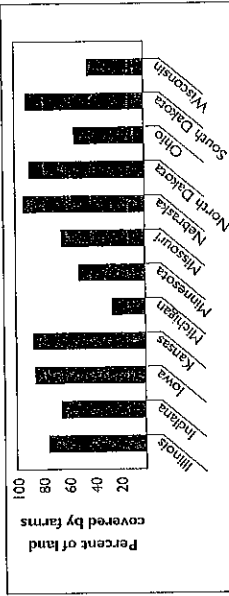


Wheat Production



Source: The World Almanac, 2001

Farmland in Midwest States



Source: Census of Agriculture

The map, photograph, and charts highlight the importance of agriculture and farming in the Midwest. **Map and Chart Study** (a) Describe the way the land is used in Ohio. (b) List two pieces of evidence that prove farming and agriculture are important in the Midwest.

steel plow, the windmill, and barbed wire helped settlers carve out farms on the plains. Today, technology continues to change the way people farm the land.



Take It to the NET Data Update For the most recent data on the Midwest, visit www.phschool.com.

Family Farms Dwindle Until the 1980s, small family farms operated in this region. Many of these farms were mixed-crop farms. That is, they grew several different kinds of crops. This was a sensible way for farmers to work. If one crop failed, the farm had others. Camille's family, for example, sometimes raised cattle as well as sheep. In the 1960s and 1970s, family farms prospered. The world population was rising, and demand for American farm products was high. Farmers felt that they could increase their business if they enlarged their

farms. To build bigger farms, farmers bought more land and equipment. But all of this cost money. Many farmers borrowed from local banks.

In the early 1980s, there was a country-wide recession (rth sesh un), or a downturn in business activity. The demand for farm products dropped. At the same time, interest rates on loans increased. As a result, many farmers were not able to make enough money to pay their loans. Some families sold or left their farms. Over one million American farmers have left their land since 1980.

Corporate Farms Expand What happened to the farms that were sold? Many of them were bought by agricultural companies. Small farms were combined to form large ones called corporate farms. These large farms could be run more efficiently. Large agricultural companies could afford to buy the expensive land and equipment that modern farming requires. And they could still make a profit.

Corporate farmers rely on machines and computers to do much of the work. This means that corporate farms employ fewer workers. Kansas offers a good example of corporate farming—having fewer

United States Farms, 1965-1999

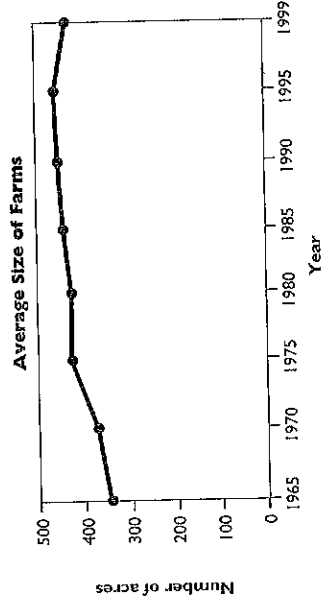
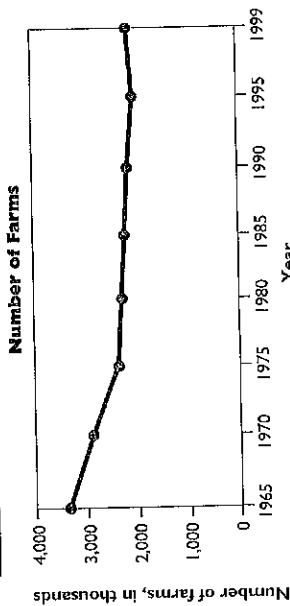


Chart Study As this graph shows, farming in the United States has undergone major changes since the 1960s. The number of farms has decreased, while the size of farms has grown. These changes came about because many owners of small family farms could not make enough money to cover their

expenses. As a result, they sold their farms and left the land. In some cases, the buyers combined the small farms to create huge corporate farms. **Critical Thinking** When was there the greatest change in the number of farms and farm size in the United States—between 1965 and 1975 or between 1980 and 1995?

workers and larger farms. In Kansas, 90 percent of the land is farmland, but less than 10 percent of the people are farmers.

Not every farm in the Midwest is a corporate farm. But most small farms do not earn enough money to support a family. Family farmers usually have another job as well. Camille LeFevre's father, for example, advises other farmers on the best foods for their livestock.

Camille's parents did not lose their farm, but they did sell all their livestock to send Camille to college. When she graduated, she did not go back to the land. Farming these days is a very difficult way to make a living, she explains. She felt that she would have more opportunities in the city.

The Midwest Grows Cities

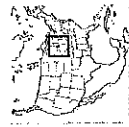
Camille is not alone. Most people in the Midwest today live in towns and cities. Yet many of these cities got their start as places to process and ship farm products.

Chicago: At the Center of Things Chicago, Illinois, is a good example. Located on Lake Michigan, it was surrounded by prairies and farms in the mid-1800s. Farmers sent their corn, wheat, cattle, and hogs to Chicago. Mills and meat-packing plants turned these products into foods and shipped them east on the Great Lakes. When railroads were built, Chicago really boomed. By the late 1800s, it had become a steel-making and manufacturing center. What was one of the most important manufactured products made in Chicago? You probably guessed it: farm equipment.

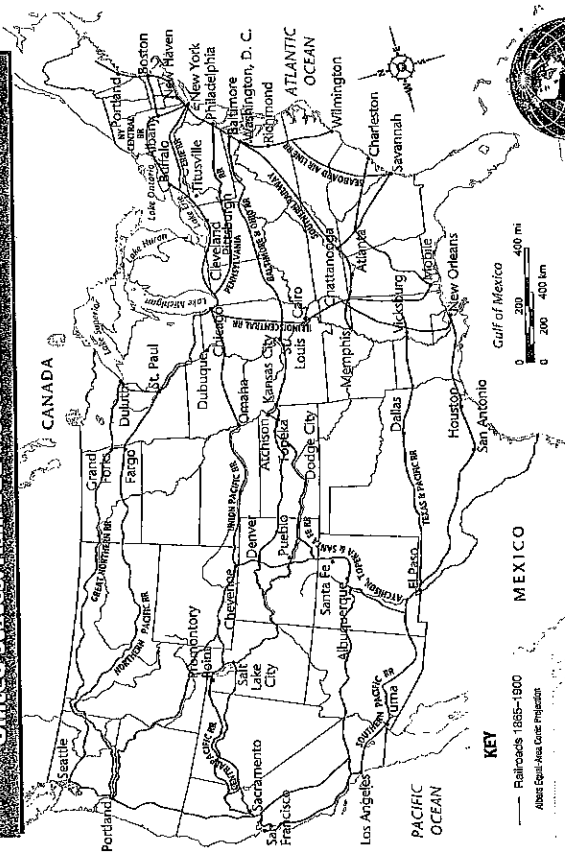
READ ACTIVELY

Ask Questions What questions would you like to ask a person who grew up on a farm and later moved to a city?

This view from the shores of Lake Michigan shows the many skyscrapers in Chicago's downtown area. The Sears Tower to the left is the tallest building in the United States.



United States Railroad Routes of the Late 1800s



Map Study In the late 1800s, the Midwestern cities that grew the fastest were the ones located on railroad routes. Chicago, because of its central location in the region, became a railroad junction—a place where a number of railroad lines meet. Movement Find Chicago on the map. In the late 1800s, how many railroad routes met in Chicago?

Today, Chicago is the biggest city in the heartland. It is known for its ethnic diversity and lively culture. It is the hub of major transportation routes—highways, railroads, airlines, and shipping routes. Chicago is also the home of the first skyscraper—and many other architectural wonders. For a bird's-eye view of Chicago, go to the top of the Sears Tower, one of the tallest buildings in the world.

Other Cities The Midwest has other large cities. Two of them—Detroit and St. Louis—have played an important role in the country's history. Why do you think Detroit, Michigan, is called "the Motor City"? Here, you will find the headquarters of the American automobile industry. General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler have plants here.

Covered wagons, not cars, used to roll through St. Louis, Missouri. Located on the Mississippi River, this city was the starting point for pioneers heading west. Today, a huge stainless steel arch beside the river marks St. Louis as the "Gateway to the West." St. Louis is also a banking and commercial center.

Higher and Higher Until 1996, Chicago's Sears Tower, at 1,454 feet (443 m), was the world's tallest building. Now, the Petronas Twin Towers in Malaysia holds that title. It is 1,483 feet (452 m) high. But the world record may change again soon. When completed, the World Financial Center in Shanghai, China, will top out at 1,509 feet (460 m).



Suburban Minneapolis-St. Paul



The metropolitan area of Minneapolis-St. Paul covers about 5,051 square miles (8,129 sq km) around the point where the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers join. The area's population stands at more than 2.8 million people and is growing steadily. The greatest population growth has taken place in Minneapolis-St. Paul's suburban areas, like the one pictured here. **Critical Thinking** Compare this photograph with the photograph of Chicago earlier in this section. How are the two scenes different? What similarities, if any, do you see?

Camille LeFevre moved to another Midwestern city, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. These "Twin Cities" face each other on opposite sides of the Mississippi River. Publishing, medical, computer, and art businesses are flourishing here. The city's suburbs have replaced the fertile land once used for farming. But the city has offered Camille the opportunity to build a career as a journalist. Camille's father still has his farm, and she visits him on the weekends. Perhaps Camille enjoys the best of both worlds.

Activity

6. Writing to Learn

Suppose you are a farmer and you have decided to sell your farm and move to a city. Write a letter to a friend explaining your decision.

4. How are mixed-crop farming and corporate farming different?

Critical Thinking Central

5. Identifying Central Issues Think of how farming has changed with the development of corporate farms. List the advantages and disadvantages of corporate farming.

1. **Define** (a) mixed-crop farm,

(b) recession, (c) corporate farm.

2. **Identify** (a) Chicago, (b) Detroit, (c) St. Louis, (d) Minneapolis-St. Paul.

3. Why did family farmers face hard times in the 1980s?

SECTION 3 REVIEW