AMERICAN REGIONALISM

A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH TO NATIONAL INTEGRATION

BY

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AND

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THE MIDDLE STATES AND THEIR "MIDDLE WEST"

Of these "six Americas in search of a faith," the great region which we have called the Middle States may be characterized as the most American of them all. This is not to say that there will not be found in each of the other regions special character traits easily identified as extremely "American" but that this region combines a larger number than any other region and therefore approximates the first place in any picture of the nation to be envisaged through its major regions. By "America" we mean this particular geographic area—map of the United States—which is the nation. It is an actual physical part of the world, different from the rest of it, and sufficiently isolated boldly to try its own experiments. It is that separate reality characterized by these authentic, historical episodes and developments, which through the nurture of established institutions, in the framework of capitalistic democracy, has set the nation apart. Of realistic "Americanisms" there are two major sorts: one the earlier, authentic, historical, and the other the later, composite technological.

The basis for the characterization of the Middle States will appear with the gradual unfolding of our brief outlines for the appraisal of each of the several regions. Yet before proceeding to the consideration of the areal boundaries of our Middle States it may be well to indicate some of the region's many "American" traits which symbolize the drama and struggle of the American people. The very names which have characterized the region are eloquent of the frontier nation in the making, as distinctive from the earlier historical seaborne nation, the offshoot and expansion of European cultures. For here are symbol and reality of "West" and "The Great Northwest"; "Middle West" and "Middle America"; "Midlands" and "The Middle Border"; "Midwest" and "Midwestern Empire" and all that "West," the supreme symbol so bitterly attacked by "The East" in the earlier frontier reconstruction of the nation. Here, too, was the great valley of the Upper Mississippi Basin comprehending most of the area between the Missouri and the Ohio and typified by the Mississippi River, "The most eloquent symbol of space and unity in America." Here, again, are symbol and reality not only of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier America, but of the living land and people, of the man himself, bred and born in and of it. Here were epitomized the two great motivations of the nation—migration and westward movement, where first Europeans became in reality Americans rather than Europeans transplanted. Here were symbol and reality of rivers and forests, of land and prairies, of plain people and democratic patterns, symbols of the American dream. In the quality and number of its people, the nature and number of its occupations, its small industries and great agriculture, in the best examples of balanced industry and agriculture, are typified the heart of America and the backbone of its national framework. And here are American manners and morals, folkways and customs, religion and politics. Finally, here too are emerging industrial and metropolitan regions challenging the East, set in the midst of a vast wealth of natural resources, with all that train of social and economic problems which follow so naturally in the wake of a complex of technology, industrialization, and urbanism built upon an agrarian nation. Here, then, are at once symbol and reality, test and promise of American regionalism in all its manifestations and implications.

We must proceed, however, more immediately now to the task of outlining briefly some of the prevailing characterizations of the great Middle States. This will be followed, as also in the chapters on other regions, with brief outlines of historical development, cultural traits, economic and social indices suggestive of further study, and special regional factors basic to realistic action. Manifestly, an outline must not be interpreted as a complete exposition of so great a theme, which, as must be self-evident, would require volumes for treatment.

In this major eight-states region described as the Middle States are
included Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. In terms of the United States Census classification the region comprehends all of the states of the East North Central Division together with Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri of the West North Central Division. Its metropolitan regions, in addition to Chicago, include the St. Louis area, the Twin Cities area, together with the Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and many lesser urban areas later catalogued. As a natural physiographic major region it coincides fairly well with the framework of what Marion I. Newbigin, in her *New Regional Geography of the World*, terms the “Central Lowlands,” and describes as follows:

“This region may be defined as extending westwards from the slope of the Cumberland-Alleghany Plateau till, round about longitude 100°, the climate becomes too arid for cultivation without irrigation, and the surface rises to the Great Plains, the beginning of which in the Dakotas is indicated by the scar of the Missouri Plateau. Northwards the region extends to the international boundary, and if it is difficult in the South to draw a sharp line of demarcation from the Gulf Plains, the presence of the Ozark Mountains in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas affords at least a convenient landmark. This great area may be said to possess as its main feature the fact that it contains large tracts admirably fitted for temperate crops, but that upon its agriculture has been superimposed, especially in the Northeast, a certain amount of industry as a result of the mineral wealth. . . .”

Within this major natural region are numerous subregions. Of these, important for the present purpose, are three groups, namely, those designated by J. Russell Smith in relation to “men and resources,” the river valley regions, and the agricultural subregions. Of Professor Smith’s 29 subregions the Middle States comprehend all of one and nearly all of three others. These are the *North Central Dairy Region*, the *Lake Region*, the *Corn Belt*, and the *Lower Valley of the Ohio*. Of the *River Valley Areas*, the region includes most of the *Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Group*, exclusive of Ontario and parts of Huron; the *Wabash* and parts of the *Lower Ohio*; nearly all of the *Upper Mississippi-Red River of the North.*

The Middle States are especially adaptable to analysis in terms of agricultural regions, industrial and trade areas, and communities of ethnic groups of people. Most of the state planning boards have made excellent subregional analyses of land, resources, people, and communication agencies. Of special significance are the reports of the Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin planning boards showing the Great Lakes Region as the focus of a great mineral distribution throughout the northern and eastern part of the nation, and pointing up ways and means of developing natural resources. In addition to the major agricultural regions, there are within its borders approximately 138 sub-farming areas designated in the national map.


The Middle States Region ranks second only to the Northeast in the number of its metropolitan areas, or districts, as designated by the United States Bureau of the Census. On the basis of McKenzie’s thesis that population movements tend toward deep water centers, the Middle States will afford in the Great Lakes concentration a

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3 Types of Farming Areas in the United States, 1930. Division of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.
major area for the testing of such a hypothesis. The whole region contains no less than 23 of the 93 metropolitan districts, each with a population of 100,000 or over. These centers are in the order of size: Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Kansas City (Missouri), Indianapolis, Toledo, Columbus, St. Paul, Akron, Dayton, Youngstown, Grand Rapids, Flint, Des Moines, Peoria, South Bend, Evansville, Duluth, Gary.  

W. F. Ogburn has made special studies of the character of cities and finds regional variations enough to note. Of the cities of the Middle States he says: "The traits of the middle western cities lie in the middle, between those of the South and those of the Northeast in many cases. Hence in only a few cases do they rank highest or lowest. In general the middle western cities are closer to those of the Northeast than to those of the South."

"The cities of the Middle West have higher wages than do cities of the Northeast and, of course, than of the South. Western cities, being new, may have developed a practice of higher wages. The middle western cities also have the largest number of home owners. The cities are more recent in origin and perhaps more rapidly growing, in which case home ownership is associated with the expected financial reward of the unearned increment from increasing land values. Not only are the wages highest, but more members of the family earn a money income than is the case in the other two regions. This employment, however, is not based on the employment of children, since the cities of the Middle West have the lowest amount of child labor. Correlated with the scarcity of child labor is the largest percentage of children in school. These middle western cities spend slightly more also on their libraries. In the occupations there are few marked distinctions. The percentage of the working population engaged in the clerical occupations and in the professions is high. So also is the percentage in industry. The proportion in architecture is high. There seems to be also a slightly larger proportion engaged as musicians, partly a function of the school system, though the tradition of music is quite strong in some of these cities, particularly where the German element is large."  

With reference to the people, the Middle States rank high in "American" quality, both in the earlier historical and in the later
stages. With reference to the present population and its reproductive character, the Middle States approach the great American mode. There is an approximate balance between land in farms and farm population. The Region supplies a considerable proportion of the total annual natural increase, and in several states the last two decades showed an increase in the ratio of children under five to \textit{native} white urban women of child-bearing age. In the counties with a high plane of living, however, there is an actual deficit in children needed to replace the population. Other population facts show that, in proportion to the 1930 population, this Region stands second only to the Northeast; in proportion to the average annual natural increase (1930-1934) it stands second only to the Southeast; in percentage deficit of children under five relative to the number needed to maintain population permanently in counties having a high plane of living, it is exceeded only by the Far West, and ranks about the same as the Northeast and the Northwest.

With reference to the region’s early settlement, its people were of, for, and by the settlers from the East and South; and of, for, and by the immigrants of northern Europe; while in later years Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit and others of the urban centers have gathered abundantly of the melting pot of the great flood tide of the early twentieth century. We have called attention to the drama of the traders and hunters and explorers where frontier roadways were for the most part rivers. It is, accordingly, important to recall that the earliest white men to settle there were the French traders, but their number was never very large; and when the Anglo-Saxons began to seek homes in this section of the country during the early part of the nineteenth century, the French either left or were completely outnumbered by the new arrivals. These new arrivals in the old Northwest Territory were the Ulster Scots (Scotch-Irish) and the Germans from the piedmont section of the South and they met those of Puritan descent who had come by way of the Erie Canal to Albany. These two groups, one from the north, the other from the south, co-operated in the early conditioning of the great “Middle West.”

These native pioneers were soon joined by the immigrants from across the sea who hastened to this country when they heard of the opening of the Northwest Territory. They came in the main from northwest Europe, and the larger number of them were British, German, Scandinavian (Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes). Although the Irish clung to the Northeast more tenaciously than any other of the group, still a considerable number of them were scattered through the Middle States Region in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. Of lesser numerical importance were the Welsh who settled primarily in Ohio, while the Dutch concentrated in Iowa and Michigan, and the Finns preferred the rural sections of the Middle States. So long as there was free land, this region was the favorite destination for the immigrants coming to this country, especially for those interested in agriculture. Thus, even of the Second Immigration group, many Poles and Bohemians became farmers in the Middle States. But, after most of the free land was filled up, the urban centers, such as Chicago and Cleveland, were second only to the cities of the Northeast in offering inducements to the immigrants, who began to come from southeastern Europe, often with little money, education, or cultural background. First, there were the Italians from southern Italy, then the Slavs from Austria-Hungary and Russia, the Lithuanians, the Magyars, the Greeks, the Persians, the Syrians, the Jews, and many other races of the motley group found in southeastern Europe. In fact, they were the same people, that is, the same races and classes, who crowded into the urban centers of the Northeast.

Of the total of nearly twelve million foreign-born population of the United States in 1930, the Middle States had a little more than three and a half millions, the Northeast a little more than six and a quarter millions, and the Far West a little more than a million. Of these, there were in the Middle States nearly 700,000 Germans and about 300,000 Swedes, yet also more than 400,000 from Poland, and more than 200,000 each from Russia, Czechoslovakia, and Italy.

One other regional factor should be noted in that the larger percentage of the immigrants of the “Old Immigration” settled in the rural sections of the Middle and the Northwest Regions. Thus, they played an important part in developing the territory between the Appalachian and the Pacific. Further, from a racial and cultural standpoint, they were little different from the original settlers of the country. They could thus be easily assimilated and in fact have been to a surprising degree. On the other hand, the immigrants of the “New Immigration” have settled primarily in the industrial and mining centers, most of which are in the Middle States and the North-
The Middle States and Their "Middle West"

Above: Regional Distribution of Industry and Wage Earners Showing the Preponderance of the Industrial Belt Comprising Parts of the Northeast and the Middle States.

Below: The Statistical Distribution as Shown from Census Figures of Manufactures.

**NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF WAGE EARNERS IN MANUFACTURING, BY STATES AND REGIONS, 1929**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>Number of Wage Earners</th>
<th>Per Cent of Total Wage Earners in U.S.</th>
<th>Per Cent of Total Population</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>Number of Wage Earners</th>
<th>Per Cent of Total Wage Earners in U.S.</th>
<th>Per Cent of Total Population</th>
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<td>22.8</td>
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<td>Indiana</td>
<td>1,012,609</td>
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<tr>
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<td>22.11</td>
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<td>Illinois</td>
<td>1,167,987</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
<td>1,637,112</td>
<td>18.50</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<td>16.22</td>
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<td>15,650</td>
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</table>

**The Middle States and Their "Middle West"**

east Region. Racially and culturally they are far different from the earlier immigrants and they have not been easily assimilated.

One of the basic features of regionalism is found in its emphasis upon the realism of the people, both creators and creatures of the changing nation. Nowhere perhaps is this more true than in the great "middle empire," the story of whose development and the character of whose civilization can almost be epitomized in the coming of its people. Here indeed is America de luxe, the expansion of the nation symbolic of the metamorphosis of its people. New Englanders there were, and Puritans in abundance, influencing the fabric of the new nation but somehow transformed into the new democratic pattern. Germans and Swedes and Norwegians there were but loving the flat lands of the new world more than the mountains of the old. And everywhere the tempo of the pioneer and the pattern of the democrat, strong builders, sturdy fighters, dominant explorers, common men pointing to the aristocracy of achievement and worth. Here soil and climate, forests and rivers, transform men of all ranks and origins into the citizens of Middle America through which and from which would flow other men and resources and forces to perpetuate that union which comes through the unity of diversities.

Beverley W. Bond, Jr.'s characterization of the region as of the earlier historical epoch is good. Says he, "Late in 1787 an emigrant wagon left New England with the legend, 'For the Ohio,' painted in large white letters on its black canvas cover. This wagon was the vanguard of a migrating host which was eventually to take possession of some 248,000 square miles that lay roughly between the Ohio, the Mississippi, and the Great Lakes. The Old Northwest, as this region came to be called, had been ideally fashioned by Nature to become the home of a thriving population. A gently rolling country for the most part, it had few elevations that even approximated 1,500 feet. The eastern section and the northern tips extending along the Great Lakes were heavily forested. In what is now northern Indiana, however, in southern Michigan, and to the south in the main body of the land there were broad stretches of prairie that broadened out toward the West until they finally covered the landscape, except for a few trees along the watercourses. Usually the soil of the Old Northwest was

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6 This summary is largely that of Martha Edwards.
exceedingly fertile. South of the Lakes stretched the great Corn Belt where the glaciers, as they receded, had left behind deep deposits of rich earth that was almost entirely free from stones, and once the trees had been cleared away, or the tough prairie sod had been broken up, this fertile stretch was easily cultivated by the primitive tools of the settler. Both in soil and climate this area between the Great Lakes and the Ohio was peculiarly suited to settlers from the original states. Here the Georgian or the South Carolinian, as well as the New Englander, would find a climate that was neither so warm as that of the South, nor so cold as that of the North, and a soil that in general was well adapted to the varied grain and stock agriculture of the Middle States and Maryland." 7

Professor L. M. Larson thinks that the three outstanding elements that went into the molding of American life represented in this vast expanse of forest and prairie, a thousand miles wide and a thousand miles deep and comprising the most richly endowed region of large dimensions in the world, were the Puritan of New England, the cavalier of the South, and the Scotch-Irish of the frontier. Each of these, of course, had important contributions to make and made them. There were, later, the contributions of the many other foreign ethnic groups but these were primarily symbolized in the culture of the great cities.

Arthur Train recalls a popular estimate that 70 percent of the people of the United States have a strain of Puritan inheritance evolved through 250 years of emigration from the Northeast which has disseminated both Puritan blood and Puritan traditions. He points out the fact that "As the frontier was pushed back from the seaboard, the frontier Puritans—as differentiated from the coast Puritans, who had developed an aristocratic leisure class—went with it. These frontiersmen, trekkers on wheels and runners, sweeping across Lake Champlain, over the Hudson to the Susquehanna, and up the Mohawk to Genesee and Buffalo, carried New England with them and planted it along Lake Erie, in the 'Western Reserve,' in Indiana and Illinois, so that today the Middle West is more like old New England than New England itself. . . ." And "finally the tide swept over Wisconsin, which from the very first until today has been dominated in its history and institutions by persons of Puritan descent. . . ." 8

8 Arthur Train, Puritan Progress, p. 177.

Bond reminds us that similarly the settlers from the South introduced a 'southern element that was in strong contrast to the Puritans of the Ohio Purchase and to the Middle States settlers of the Miami Purchase. Strongly Republican in their politics, and ardent followers of Thomas Jefferson, they had the Southerner's talent for politics, and they quickly assumed the leadership in local affairs. The many native Virginians among them came chiefly from the Piedmont yeomanry rather than from the landed aristocracy of the Tidewater, an origin that easily explains their intense democracy and their religious affiliations, which were chiefly Methodist and Presbyterian." 9

The cumulative product of all this was "American" and democratic. Professor Ernest R. Groves in tracing woman's influence in the nation emphasizes the trend on the frontier toward the democratic attitude, as contrasted with the New England and the southern tendency toward class distinctions. Then in the Middle States frontier men and women were expected to stand on their own achievements rather than those of their ancestors. Furthermore, "There was more than an indifference to eastern ways. On the part of many who went into the frontier there was a positive antagonism. They wanted to be rid of traditions that had irritated them back in the old settlements. It would be misinterpretation to insist that the frontiersmen maintained social equality. It is rather that they refused to accept artificial or vicarious distinctions. It was obvious that there were genuine differences between people and there was a disposition to credit individuals with their superior merits, but the basis for determining character traits rested upon personal behavior. The methods for giving or denying prestige were distinctly frontier measurements. The Westerners were willing to follow leadership, but only as it was supported by qualities that they approved and admired." 10

Professor Larson generalizes the westward movement in terms of Americanism, democracy and protestantism, the latter two qualities being symbols of the earlier authentic historical Americanism. "The movement," says Professor Larson, "was American not only because the pioneers were commonly of native birth, but also because they usually had no interests beyond their own country. . . . It was a

The Middle States and Their "Middle West" democratic movement. The pioneer host was unique in this, that it recognized equality not only as a theory but as a fact. In the strenuous battle with untamed nature, a battle that raged on a front of more than a thousand miles, privilege could not flourish and there could be no leisure class.

"It was a Protestant movement. Far to the front on the skirmish line rode the Methodist preacher and the Presbyterian elder, industriously gathering their adherents into societies and churches. The Baptist minister and the Congregational missionary were not far behind, the one finding an unusually fertile field in the South, the other achieving a greater success in the North. The Lutheran, the Anglican, the Quaker, the Mennonite, and the Catholic, with many other types of believers, were all represented in the new settlements." 11

So abundant are the testimonies to the distinctive development of the Middle States that it is difficult to omit many of the historical passages which so aptly describe the situation. At least two other types of cultures and influences must be presented before turning to the measures of social economic factors which characterize the present region. The first of these is the subregional ethnic-group culture to which reference has been made and the second is the urban movement, which in this case must be typified by Chicago, itself symbolic of the old Middle West. For the illustration of the early ethnic-group subregion we select the Norwegian element as described by Professor Larson in the new volume on The Changing West.

Beginning in 1833 "about 60 miles southwest of a little forlorn village called Chicago" there was formed in the half century following "a geographical unit which has sometimes been called the 'New Norway.'

This area extends from Lake Michigan westward into the Dakotas and well on toward the Missouri River, or to the margin of the land with insufficient rainfall. A somewhat irregular line drawn westward from Chicago to Sioux City will approximately mark the southern boundary. The area thus delimited will include half a dozen counties in northeastern Illinois, a dozen counties in northern and central Iowa, nearly all of Wisconsin and Minnesota, and the eastern parts of the two Dakotas, approximately one-third in either case. Within these boundaries 80 percent, and possibly more, of all the Norwegians who have come to the United States have found their homes. To a great extent their descendants still have their homes in this region. Their

number is variously given, but a million and a quarter, or possibly a million and a half, seems to be a conservative estimate.

"The Norwegian immigrant came with a strong attachment to the soil. He hungered for land; he felt the need of a home. A home, however, could not be a mere abiding place: home, as he saw it, was something to which one has the title of ownership. In his attitude toward society he was often stubbornly individualistic. It was his great pride that he came from a land of democratic freedom. In his quiet, somewhat unemotional way he was deeply religious. In the Lutheran faith he had found a religion that brought responses from his inner being; he was a strenuous defender of the traditional faith. In the homeland he had frequently acted in opposition to his superiors; but he usually believed in yielding obedience to law. Finally, like most aliens, he suffered from a troublesome suspicion of inferiority, and to disguise this he spoke freely and sometimes boastfully of his fatherland and of its glorious past."

Finally, there is the great capital of the Middle States, Chicago, candidate for Professor Merriam’s first American city-state, distinctively American in all that sense in which the Middle West is American. Louis Wirth has described the whole Middle West as Chicago’s hinterland and he makes a good case of it. The social-ecological studies of the University of Chicago have pictured its ethnic groups and their culture as well as the structure of the great metropolis. Merriam and White and others have depicted its government and politics while the world at home and abroad has characterized its erstwhile Mayor Thompson, the 102 percent American, and its racketeering patterns as the new urban America so much feared by Thomas Jefferson. Its universities and its center of public administration and public welfare study and education have stamped it again the symbol of America’s progress. As for this center and symbol of the Middle States and the other metropolitan regions, McKenzie and others have provided materials for their adequate appraisal. These constitute a separate episode.

Perhaps it is permissible, however, to present one more composite picture of the region in terms of the Chicago center of it—even if Count Keyserling thought it was not American. “Surely,” writes Waldo Frank, “no other American city lives so close to its earth. You must 18 Larson, op. cit., pp. 71-73.

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think of prairie. Beyond the flatness of Lake Michigan another flatness. A thousand miles of it, rising with incalculable leisure to the sudden climax of the Rocky Mountains. This is the prairie. Rich black earth spread like the sky. The Mississippi and his legion of waters make it fecund.

“The train flows over the flatland. Green farms, the warm, brown lurch of country roads wither away. Here is a sooty sky hanging forever lower. The sun is a red ball retreating. The heave of the prairie lies palpably still to the grimed horizons. But on it, a thick deposit: gray, drab, dry—litter of broken steel, clutter of timber, heapings of brick. The sky is a stain: the air is streaked with runnings of grease and smoke. Blanketing the prairie, this fall of filth, like snow—a storm that does not stop. . . . The train glides farther in toward the storm’s center. Chimneys stand over the world, and blackness upon it. There is no sky now. Above the bosom of the prairie, the spread of iron and wooden refuse takes on form. It huddles into rows: it rises and stampedes and points like a lay of metal splinters over a magnet. This chaos is polarized. Energy makes it rigid and direct. Behold the roads without eyes wrench into line: straighten and parallel. The endless litter of wood is standing up into wooden shanties. The endless shanties of wood assemble to streets. Iron and smoke and brick converge and are mills and yards. The shallow streets mount like long waves into a sea of habitations. And all this tide is thick above the prairie. Dirt, drab houses, dominant chimneys. A sky of soot under the earth of flaming ovens. Rising into a black crescendo as the train cuts underneath high buildings, shrieking freight-cars, to a halt. But on all sides still, with vast flanks spreading and breathing and inviting, the unburied prairie. . . .”

Rich sources of recent appraisals of the culture of the Middle States, in addition to other appropriate documentation by authors already cited, constitute a small library in themselves. Dixon Ryan Fox’s Sources of Culture in the Middle West is indispensable for its critique of the Turner Frontier Theory, pros and cons, and for brilliant description of the region by Avery Craven and others. James Truslow Adams’ Provincial Society, 1690-1763, as well as his The Epic of America, America’s Tragedy, and The March of Democracy, all provide comprehensive historical backgrounds for the regions of the nation and convincing specific illustrations. Arthur M. Schles-
The above graphic illustration shows the general regional distribution of commodity production at a glance.
suffice. Creative writing, to borrow a none too lovely term from our departments of literature, seems to be somehow associated with the highest good, and by the last half of the nineteenth century Middle Westerners had reached even this coveted goal. Now the birth of a literary genius is not a matter of transit across the Atlantic or across the Appalachians, nor of the advance of civilization from one place to another. It may happen any time, anywhere. Possibly genius may be suppressed by unfavorable surroundings, and conditions of life in the early Middle West may so have operated. Abraham Lincoln, however, grew out of these primitive conditions, and only a few critics would deny him a place among the masters of English prose. Two decades after Lincoln assumed the presidency, Englishmen were according recognition to another western writer, Mark Twain, and a little later even New Englanders conceded with some reluctance that at last books worth reading were being written by a man who came out of the West. It is indeed hard to see how a writer could have been more closely associated with his environment than the author of *Life on the Mississippi* and the *Innocents*. Mark Twain was educated, as were so many other Middle Westerners of his time, primarily in the school of experience, he wrote of the life which surrounded him, and yet few, if any, American writers of his generation deserve to be set above him. From his time forward the West continued to produce writers of merit. William Dean Howells, whose Ohio birth and training he at least did not forget, stood far more consciously than Mark Twain, and perhaps with greater sophistication, for the same sort of realism, the same insistence on truth in fiction. Hamlin Garland, too, came out of the West, and although he, like Howells, owed much to the East as well as to the West, his youthful experiences gave him the materials with which to work, and possibly the inspiration to write.”

Turning now to the sampling of regional character as measured by socio-economic indices, we may begin with some of the larger measures of agricultural, industrial and general cultural facts. Subsequently other detailed indices may illustrate further the range and richness of such data both for more inclusive study and for incorporation of any special interpretations desired. First of all the Middle States comprise the greatest agricultural-industrial group of states

14 John D. Hicks, “The Development of Civilization in the Middle West, 1860-1900,” in Dixon Ryan Fox, *Sources of Culture in the Middle West*, pp. 85, 90, 93-94. (Quoted by permission of D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc.)

15 This is the substance of an unpublished appraisal on “Characteristics of the Middle States,” by Dwight P. Flanders.
weekly newspaper circulation is within the Middle States. They also lead in the percentage of farms having telephones.

From this brief description it might erroneously be assumed that the region is devoted solely to agriculture. This is far from the truth, however, since the center of industry has been constantly shifting westward until it is now in eastern Indiana. While it is common knowledge that the center of the nation's agricultural commodity markets are in this region, it is likewise common knowledge that the industrial tide has far from completely ebbed from the Northeast. These highly industrialized states lead the nation in most of the manufacturing indices. In the number of establishments, however, the Middle States lead all in the production of machinery, not including transportation equipment, with 40.1 percent of the total number of establishments. They are first, too, in the production of transportation equipment, land and water, with well over a third of the total, and have 34.5 percent of the railroad repair shops. There is laid in this region close to 50,000 miles of railroad, excluding switching and terminal companies; this mileage is 28 percent of the total in the United States. The largest number of trucks is possessed in the Middle States. These together with the railroads form a highly efficient web of transportation knitting the region together. Such miscellaneous industries as broom making, dairying, poultry raising, creamery and factory supplies, and roofing, have more establishments in the Middle States than in any other region. The disparity between the Northeast and the Middle States is very small in most of the indices in which the former is superior. One-third of the total number of wage earners are in this region. The wages paid were approximately four and a quarter billion dollars and the value of the manufactured product about twenty-five and a half billion dollars. The Middle States lead, however, in the average wage per wage earner. They are second to the Northeast in the amount of horsepower, having 32.9 percent of the nation's total.

Considering now the number of establishments as the index for industry, the Middle States are second to other regions with 12.9 percent of the textiles, 28.6 percent of the paper and allied products, 32.1 percent of the printing, publishing, and allied products, 27.3 percent of the products of coal and petroleum, 19.9 percent of leather and its manufactures, 32.2 percent of stone, clay and glass products, 38.2 percent of iron and steel and their products, not including machinery, 31.1 percent of the nonferrous metals and their products, and 27.4 percent of miscellaneous industries not included in the above classifications. The Middle States have a little over one-fourth of all the manu-
facturing establishments in the country. They are well supplied with the basic raw materials to industry: coal and iron.

Thus, in the combination of both agricultural and industrial indices the Middle States are unsurpassed by any other combinations of states which form a homogeneous region. The vigor of their industry, the close association with the soil and the tillers thereof, have had their effects on the life of the people. What we have discussed thus far are the material aspects of the culture; now let us turn to the more immaterial aspects. With almost a third of the material wealth of our land concentrated in these eight states, the people possess a considerable stream of income with which to purchase the material comforts and leisure to develop the arts. Significant of the democratic atmosphere is the predominance of coeducational institutions. This region has the greatest number of such accredited and unaccredited institutions of higher learning. There exists among the young men and young women a great demand for business training; consequently there is found the largest number of collegiate schools and departments of commerce and business. Also, there is the greatest number of member schools of the National Association of Accredited Commercial Schools.

The greatest number of motor vehicles, one-third of the total in the United States, are centered in this region. There are over seven and a half million registered, which is an easy explanation of the $140,000,000 of receipts collected from the gasoline tax. From these taxes and for these cars and trucks, the greatest mileage of high-type surfaced highways are in this region. Approximately one-third of the nation's total miles of high-type surface are in the Middle States. Ninety-four and five-tenths percent of the state highways are surfaced and over half of these have a high type of surface, which is the finest record of any group of states. A survival of the days when every man not only owned but had to build his home is the fondness for home owning, since the Middle States rank first in the number of homes occupied by home owners.

Some of the absolute figures may be tempered a little when it is known that over one-fourth of the population lives in this region. Furthermore, there are some distinctly undesirable qualities which the Middle States have in abundance. These include the second lowest per capita farm income, a high degree of mortgaged indebtedness on farms operated by their owners, while the region is the recipient of the second largest amount of relief funds. The loss by interregional migration is over one million a year, being second to the Southeast in net loss. The Middle States have had the lowest increase in percentage of high school graduates of any region.

However nearly we may approximate a composite region, flexibility is of the essence of regionalism; and, however closely knit a region may be, there are intraregional differences and subregions that illustrate such flexibility and variety. On the basis of growing season and soil there are agricultural belts across the Middle States. Chief among these is the corn-hog belt, stretching from Ohio across Indiana and Illinois to Missouri and Iowa. South of this in these same states, excluding Iowa, is the winter wheat belt, and north of this the corn-hog belt is the spring wheat belt. These belts are intermingled as they approach each other, but the clustering is strong along the line of their focal points. The north-central hay and dairy region, which replaced the lumber and later the wheat region, includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and parts of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. The focal point of this subregion is Wisconsin. The wooded and plains areas are also subregions.

The industries have a decided pattern with Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois having the largest part. The net income from corporations, the percentage of population that is urban, the wages paid, and the value of the manufactured product may all be used to set apart this industrial belt. It is contiguous with the industrial belt of the Northeast. The lumbering industry has moved from Michigan across Wisconsin into Minnesota, leaving behind a vast cut-over region of the Great Lakes. Copper and iron center about the upper lakes, with 80 percent of the pig iron from these great ranges. Coal underlies the Ohio Valley, Illinois, Iowa, and Michigan.

These large subregions might be broken down into still smaller subregions that spread across and ignore man-made political boundaries. These in turn have their focal points from which the homogeneity is gradually diffused. Minneapolis is the center of the milling business, Chicago the center of the meat industry, and Detroit the center of the automotive industry. This might easily be carried
out for most of the different industries. Each state might be broken down into districts. In Illinois, for example, if a line were drawn across the middle of the state, with the exception of one county, it would divide the state into counties that receive more from the state distributive fund for education from those counties which receive less from the fund than they put in. The southern counties depend upon the northern counties to help them with their education.

We have, to some extent, found the general character of the people and their culture summarized in some of the descriptive passages of the historians. We have assumed the Main Street characterization of the village and town life. We have enjoyed Carl Sandburg's Chicago, "stormy, husky, brawly, city of the big shoulders," and we have learned from London all about the criminals and racketeers. We have romanticized two world fairs and have pointed out the great contrast between the cultural contribution of the first World's Fair to architecture with the Chautauqua-esteeming people of those days. We have watched a picturesque Bryan swing the "West" into a populist tempo and have watched the conflict between urban and rural counties. We have rejoiced when our European visitors marveled at the great plains of corn and wheat and railroad tracks bedecked with grain elevators and miniature stock yards for loading millions of livestock. We have echoed "American," "American," "Middle West," "Middle West." And perhaps we have yet to seek the perfect "American" portraiture in the agrarian people of the Middle States, pictured through their socio-economic folkways—folkways of the individual, of the family, of the community, of politics, of "Americanisms."

Here are genuine regional Americanisms as estimated by a group of eager students seeking to characterize the Middle States, and summarized by Eugene Link. First, individualistic folkways: Individual competition, or rugged individualism... A real sense of what is "mine." The farmers, still vestige from the pioneer, are individualists... It is "my farm, I run it." Willing to co-operate, even join cooperatives, providing it is beneficial and does not talk of group management. Will fight "be sorry" to maintain their own and their neighbors' individual rights. So the industrial magnate fights the closed shop, too... Get ahead in life, improve oneself... Rise from farm-boy to President of the country... Thrift and hard
work the roads to success. Anybody can succeed if he follows this formula. "Hoe your own row," and it is your own fault if you turn up in your old age a dependent. . . . Man gets out of life exactly what he deserves. . . . Doles are immoral. They make the working man dependent, he won't "get down and dig." . . . We need the money incentive to make us work. . . . Therefore, we look up to the rich man as smarter and a better man than the poor. He got what he rightly deserved, too. . . . "Keep a stiff upper lip." Adversities are bound to come, good days with evil, drought, flood, dust, cyclone. Take it. Adjust yourself and try again. Look at Grant Wood's pictures of the faces of the farmers. Written all over them is hardship and grim determination to live despite it all.

The family-economic folkways of the Middle States are, again, American de luxe. For instance, a strong sense of family, harking back to the essential familism of frontier days. "Tsch, tsch, those people have been divorced. Shameless." Divorced men and women are wicked. Even though father and mother are completely incompatible, unhappy, they continue on each doing an expected task in silence. . . . Family status is measured by wealth. A fine family is one "with some means." Each family has arrived when a new car is purchased; they have securely arrived when they own property. . . . Father is the "good provider." He supplies the raw materials. Mother is the fabricator; she "puts up" some peaches, apple-butter, corn, beans. The children do the "chores," with each one an after-school assignment daily. Fathers don't retire so often as in other regions; they "die with their boots on." Mothers can products even though they no longer need to, for after all at Thanksgiving "how can you be thankful out of a tin-can?" . . . Men dress in shirtsleeves, rolled above the wrist or elbow; or overalls, or odd pairs of pants. In the Winter the suit is worn only for warmth, baggy, shiny, wrinkled, and then many times only on Sunday. Women dress in calico; they wear stockings not rolled below the knees. In general the family front is carried around by the women; they dress a little better than the men, for "by their wives ye shall know them."

Again, here are community folkways, early American vintage. A community spirit. Even though you may have the old division between the haves and have-nots, Pepville vs. Stringtown, as William Allen White calls the division, still the community has a oneness. No

native is allowed to starve; therefore they believe that "during a depression nobody actually goes without food." . . . The civic clubs where oil station attendants sit down with bankers is typical. "They profit most who serve best," say the Rotarians. So they all sing about serving together, go through the motions at church and civic club, and the rest of the time count the profits. . . . Community friendliness. A democratic spirit. You speak to strangers more often on the street. "High hat" does not go. How the West dislikes the snob, the one who "puts on airs." The young Lochinvar who goes East for an education and returns "needs to be taken down a notch or two." The minister always gets an invitation, or more often several, to Sunday dinner; it would be an insult for him to eat in a restaurant where he was visiting for a Sunday. . . . The community leader is the community booster. He talks of white-ways, memorial drives, new school houses. He is a simple, "hail fellow, well met" sort. He knows lots of people, and has probably been mayor two or three times. . . . "The Spit and Argy Club" meet around the courthouse, discuss the weather, politics, and "conditions." Every smart lawyer or business man must take time at least once a day to fraternize with the boys, otherwise he is "stuck up." These groups spread the economic folkways of the Middle States. . . . "Buy at home" and beware of the chain stores. Patronize your own community; be a community booster. The chain stores have gotten such a bad name for running out the solid citizen of Main Street that they now hire a community booster to head the store, and keep the fact that it is a chain absolutely silent. Poor "Piggly-Wiggly" couldn't overcome the folkways of the Middle West! . . . A rigid cultural pattern. If you do things differently you are a little "cracked." If your tastes are not the community's tastes, if your ethics are a bit off color, if you stay up after 11:00 o'clock, if you don't go to church, if you don't have children, if when you do you dare to be frank and not hypocritical with them, you are sure to set in motion a babble of tongues second to no other on the globe. . . . These folks look askance at change. "Give me the old-time religion; it's good enough for me." They fear change and want to whip the changer into line by social ostracism. Radicals are feared and unwelcomed in the community. They are "ferriners and outside agitators." The word "communist" is synonymous with blood, a sort of superbeast. Any talk of a new social order is at once considered un-American. Try to bust Main Street, and Main Street will bust you.

And here are several socio-economic folkways: Hard times and prosperity are often caused directly by politicians. "Dirty, rotten
politics” is responsible for our ailments, while “Teddy and his Big Stick” clean things up and bring good times. . . . The East is crooked and the West is honest. It is the “Wall Street gamblers” or the “international bankers” that are wrecking the country. Father Coughlin and the people never get any more specific than that. “Down with the banks” is popular, and that is about as far as a criticism of the economic system goes. . . . “Good times” and “bad times,” prosperity and depression, are entirely natural and to be expected. You can’t change the laws of God’s universe and His will by any man-made regulations. You must learn to accept hardships as inevitable, whether flood or fifteen cent wheat. . . . Closed shops are un-American. Unions are a foreign product and break up the partnership between capital and labor. Only troublemakers come in and cause dissatisfaction and strikes. “Wages are low because industry can’t help it”; hard times hit them, too; we just have to grin and bear it.”. . . Capital is to be thought of as the accumulated savings of a thrifty, industrious individual. He has a complete right “to what is his own.” Even then, American business is the best in the world, making the best products, under the best conditions, for a better America. . . . Vote Republican and keep up the tariff which protects American business, which prospers, which benefits the farmer secondarily. Let the “smart,” the “cautious,” the “thrifty,” the man from log-cabin to white house run the country. . . . Foreigners are inferior to American stock. More, they are not to be trusted, they may stick a knife into you. The Mexican laying the Santa Fe road-bed never fraternizes with the natives. Most of them never even learn to speak English. . . . The ideal is a city of small business men, each working hard to live and let live. Classes are not rigid. The Middle West is still largely classless and democratic. All men are equal (except the Mexican, Negro) economically and socially. Hence out of these states come the protests against trusts and monopolies, the plea for a reformistic return to economic equality.

This is the great Middle States agrarian American, “backbone of the nation,” for whom the Harvard economist prescribed a formula that unless he could show, even in the depression, a profit on his farm by standard accounting methods, he should be deprived of his land and put on the dole. This is the Middle America of geography and of history, heart of the nation’s bigness and complexity. This is the America against whom urban consumers protest. This is the land of “the sons of the wild jackasses” as seen by the Northeast and its New England, to which we now turn as the next “most American” of the regions.