

History of Cook County, Illinois : from the earliest period to the present time / By A. T. Andreas.

Andreas, A. T. (Alfred Theodore), 1839-1900.

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PHYSICAL AND SCIENTIFIC DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTY.

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY.

Of the primitive descriptive geography of the county the following is interesting to the antiquarian: * "Chicago, a village in Pike County, situated on Lake Michigan, at the mouth of Chicago Creek. It contains twelve or fifteen houses and sixty or seventy inhabitants. From this place to Green Bay, by way of the lake, the distance is two hundred and seventy-five miles, and four hundred to the island of Michillimackinac. On the south side of the creek stands Fort Dearborn." Schoolcraft in his "Travels" thus describes the country: "The country around Chicago is the most fertile and beautiful that can be imagined. It consists of an intermixture of woods and prairies, diversified with gentle slopes, sometimes attaining the elevation of hills, and irrigated with a number of clear streams and rivers, which throw their waters partly into Lake Michigan and partly into the Mississippi River. As a farming country, it unites the fertile soil of the finest lowland prairies with an elevation which exempts it from the influence of stagnant waters, and a summer climate of delightful serenity; while its natural meadows present all the advantages for raising stock of the most favored part of the valley of the Mississippi." Beck also states that: "Chicago Creek, an arm of Lake Michigan, divides itself into two branches at the distance of one mile inland from its communication with the lake. The North Branch extends along the west side of the lake; is about ten or eleven miles in length, and is supplied from the prairies. The South Branch has an extent of several miles, and communicates with a lake. In wet seasons boats of considerable size pass from this stream to the Desplaines, and thence down the Illinois. The entrance of the Chicago into the lake is about eighty yards wide. At present it is obstructed by a sand-bar, which will only admit *boats* to pass over it." "Several expedients have been proposed," says Schoolcraft, and "one of the most ingenious, and perhaps practicable, is that of turning the Konomic (Calumet) by a canal of sixteen miles into the Chicago above the fort, and by the increased body and pressure of water to drive out the accumulated sands." These extracts combine the facts of sixty years since with the facts of to-day; some have merged into tradition by the lapse of time and the changes wrought by the hands of commerce and immigration; others, descriptive of the features of the country and its arable condition, are as true now as then. The geography is changed by the circumscription of the limits of Cook County and the alterations made in the Chicago *Creek*. Cook County at present comprises the townships of Barrington, Palatine, Wheeling, Northfield, New Trier; Hanover, Schaumburg, Elk Grove, Maine, Niles, Evanston; Leyden, Norwood Park, Jefferson, Lake View; Proviso, Riverside, Cicero, Chicago; Lyons, Lake, Hyde Park; Lemont, Palos, Worth, Calumet; Orland, Bremen, Thornton; Rich and Bloom. The townships as cited, are given in tiers from the north, each tier separated by a semicolon. The county of Cook is bounded on the east by

*Beck's Gazetteer of Illinois, Albany, N. Y., 1823.
†At Summit.

the southern extremity of Lake Michigan and the State of Indiana; on the north by the county of Lake; on the west by the counties of Kane and Du Page, and on the south by the county of Will. It is forty-eight miles from its northern to its southern extremity; it is twenty-five miles wide at its northern line, fourteen miles wide at the southern extremity of the two northern tiers of townships, twenty-six miles wide at the northern extremity of its two southernmost tiers of townships; thence it has a width of nineteen and one-half miles across the three townships of Orland, Bremen and Thornton, and a width of fifteen and one-half miles across the townships of Rich and Bloom. Its area is about nine hundred and forty square miles. The rivers traversing the county are the Desplaines, Dupage, Calumet and Chicago, and the county is intersected by the feeders of those streams. The surface of the land is prairie, with heavily timbered ridges thrown up by the lake during its various periods of recession. The following matter is compiled from the *Geological Survey of Illinois: "The soil of the prairies is usually a black or dark brown mold, varying from one to four feet in depth, and is underlaid by a lighter colored sandy or gravelly clay subsoil. In the dry timbered tracts this subsoil comes very nearly to the surface, and generally throughout the county supports a growth of black, white and red oak, butternut, black walnut, bitternut and shell-bark hickory, cottonwood, etc., with an undergrowth chiefly of hazel. In the damp woodlands of the central portion of the county, we find, in addition to the above species, burr-oak, elm, black ash and locally sassafras, forming a considerable portion of the timber. On the sandy ridges which skirt the shores of Lake Michigan the timber is almost entirely composed of the various species of oak—black, white, yellow, red and burr—with an occasional clump of red cedar or white pine, with cottonwood on the edges of the narrow sloughs which separate the ridges. The surface deposits of Cook County are the Drift proper, and subsequently alluvial and lake deposits." The following table gives the most reliable data concerning the deeper geology, taken by Johnston Ross at the boring of a well at the Union Stock Yards:

Surface soil, lake deposits, Quaternary forest } From one to seventy feet.
and soil bed and boulder drift, } enty feet.

NIAGARA GROUP.

1. Bluish-gray limestone..... 16 feet
2. Limestone—light-gray 138 feet
3. Limestone—nearly white..... 20 feet
4. Limestone—buff or drab..... 80 feet—254 feet.

CINCINNATI GROUP.

5. Shale—soft and fine..... 104 feet
6. Limestone—light-gray 20 feet
7. Shale—coarse and sandy..... 126 feet—250 feet.

TRENTON GROUP.

8. Brownish ferruginous limestone.... 25 feet
9. Grayish limestone..... 305 feet—330 feet.

ST. PETER'S.

10. Whitish-brown sandstone..... 155 feet—155 feet.

LOWER MAGNESIAN LIMESTONE.

11. Light-colored limestone—very hard. 60 feet
12. Gray limestone..... 10 feet— 70 feet.

*Geological Survey of Illinois, by A. H. Worthen; article: Cook County, by Henry M. Bannister; 1868.

ECONOMIC GEOLOGY.

The supply of building stone in the county is very large, and in the lower division of the Niagara group in the Athens quarries is found one of the best building stones in the State, technically known as Athens marble. The limestones quarried on the western banks of the Desplaines in the Lyons quarries furnish good material for rough walls and, provided the beds are of sufficient thickness, good rock for general building purposes. The bituminous limestone quarried in the vicinity of Chicago is also used for building purposes. The upper beds of the Niagara group furnish good material for rough walls, culverts and flagging, and this material is sometimes utilized in buildings. The Thornton quarries furnished a large proportion of the stone used by the Illinois Central Railroad in the construction of their culverts in Cook County.

The beds of limestone in the southern part of the county furnish abundant facilities for the manufacture of excellent quick-lime; the gray limestones of the Niagara group being principally used for this purpose.

The clay found throughout the county presents an excellent material for the manufacture of brick. The brick yards at Pullman* display the extent of one series of yards, and the excellence of the manufacture attained there of the natural raw material. Sand is abundant all over the county, placed there by the lake as in a storehouse until the amplitude of Chicago's building necessities required it.

There are large beds of peat throughout the county; one at Rose Hill and another in the vicinity of Blue Island are the best known; and in the northwestern section of Lyons Township occurs a bed of marl in a marsh which appears to have been at one time a shallow lake. The marl was found underneath a thin layer of peat while the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad was being constructed.

The presence of petroleum and mineral pitch in some of the upper parts of the Niagara group has been discovered, and occasionally small masses have been found in the cavities of large fossil corals. Neither substance has been found in remunerative quantities; and the experiment of boring for petroleum at W. T. B. Read's, corner of Chicago and Western avenues, was only saved from being a failure as a commercial enterprise by striking water.

Any metallic minerals that occur are immigrants from northern localities, and came with the drift. There are two exceptions to this rule: The pyrites of iron which is sometimes found in small quantities in the limestones of the Niagara group, and bog-iron ore, deposits of which may be found in the marshes and peat-bogs. Green stains have been frequently perceived in the limestone, analysis whereof showed them to be salts of chromium, but not in sufficient quantity to be remunerative. Although no minerals are discoverable in the county, yet the distribution of the geological formation was such as is particularly applicable to the city of Chicago; and no questions can arise as to the economic utility of building material for Cook County being of infinitely greater value than coal measures or metalliferous deposits.

One other factor of the utilization of *terra firma* remains to be mentioned—the successful boring of artesian wells throughout the county, whereby a plentiful supply of water is procured to relieve the necessity which occasioned the enterprise. These wells range in depth from a few hundred to two thousand feet.

Vide article on Pullman.

Thus, with building material, water and possibly fuel, Cook County has not been neglected in the distribution of prizes in economic geology.

AREA OF THE COUNTY.

Alexander Wolcott states, under oath, the following facts relative to the county:

That the Government survey of Cook County, as appears from a certified copy of the original survey, shows the total number of acres in Cook County to have been (less fraction) 596,831.

That the total number of acres in Cook County liable to assessment for 1873, not subdivided into town or city lots (except the property of railroad companies) is (less fraction) 524,610.

That the total number of acres of railroad property in Cook County liable to assessment for 1873, and not subdivided into town or city lots, is (less fraction) 1,567.

That the total number of acres (including town and city lots reduced to acres) in Cook County, occupied by churches, cemeteries, schools, Poor House farm, Reform School, charitable institutions, Bridewell, engine houses, Illinois Central Railroad and public grounds, exempt, by law, from taxation, is (less fraction) 4,665.

That the total number of acres in the city of Chicago, subdivided into lots (not including property exempt by law) is (less fraction) 18,413.

That the total number of acres in the county of Cook, outside of the city of Chicago, subdivided into lots (not including property exempt by law) is (less fraction) 47,570.

The original number of acres in Cook County was 596,831.

Since which compilation by Mr. Wolcott there has been no similar one made.

GOVERNMENT SURVEYS.

Following is an authentic statement of the various Government surveys in Cook County. They are given in chronological order:

The first surveys were made in 1821, five years after the treaty of St. Louis by which a strip of land twenty miles in width and extending from Ottawa to Lake Michigan was ceded to the United States, preparatory to the construction of the Illinois & Michigan Canal. For precision and brevity the various surveys are described by townships and ranges.

In 1821 the following portions were surveyed: Township 35, Range 13; Township 36, Ranges 12, 13 and 14; Township 37, Ranges 11, 12, 13 and 14; Township 38, Ranges 12, 13 and 14; Township 39, Ranges 13 and 14; Township 40, Range 13; and Township 41, Range 12.

In 1828 the following: Township 42, Range 10

In 1834: Township 35, Ranges 14 and 15; Township 36, Range 15; Township 37, Range 15; Township 40, Range 14; and Township 41, Range 14.

In 1837: Township 38, Range 15.

In 1838: Township 42, Range 11.

In 1839: Township 40, Ranges 12 and 13; Township 41, Range 13; Township 42, Ranges 9, 12 and 13.

In 1840: Township 41, Ranges 9, 10 and 11.

In 1843: Township 39, Range 12.

In those cases where the same territory was surveyed more than once, as in Township 40, Range 13, the later survey was made because of inaccuracies in the first one.