

Historical Formation of Urbana-Champaign UP 199_06-01, UP 199_06-02 & UP 199_06-03

EVOKE

About the Ethnographer

About UP 199_06-01

I am a senior at the University of Illinois majoring in urban and regional planning. I was born and raised in Chicago Illinois on the southside of the city in a neighborhood called Beverly. I have always been interested in looking at the history of a place and how it has evolved over time. It is really important to look at where a space has come from to understand its current state and where it is going in the future. In another urban planning class I am taking currently enrolled in, I am doing a project looking at an area adjacent to the downtown particularly its evolution over time and making a plan for the future use of the site so my research for this project coincides with looking at the historical formation of Urbana Champaign.

About UP 199_06-03

I am also a senior at the University of Illinois in urban and regional planning. I was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois near Midway Airport but now I live in a suburb called Brookfield, Illinois. When choosing this topic regarding the history of Champaign-Urbana, I figured it would be a great opportunity to learn more about the place I have called my second home for the past 4 years. Over the past 4 years I have seen this place change and I am greatly interested to see how this place first came to be and how the University affected the area as a whole. Through the completion of this project I am also working on a project that looks at the First Street Corridor and how one can come up with a plan for the site in the near future.

My name is UP 199_06-02 and I am a student here at the University of Illinois. I am a senior studying Urban and Regional Planning. We have chosen to study the historical formation of the Champaign-Urbana area. I am specifically interested in how the University has affected the two cities and how they have affected the University. I would also like to find out how many people came from other places to study at the University and then found jobs close by the made them become full time residents of this area. I feel this project will better help me understand the place where I spend a good portion of my young adult life and maybe help me see better how myself and people like me fit in to the ethnography here.

EXPLORE

Question

What questions is your inquiry contingent upon?

Our overall aim is to chronicle the historical formation of Champaign Urbana from the time of the early Native American tribes to present. The aim of our ethnographic research is to gain insight into what factors Champaign residents feel have shaped the change in

the built environment over the past 100 years. Only so much can be learned from facts and figures in a history book, the living history of people who have experienced the change over time is an invaluable source for understanding how Champaign has evolved. We will use these personal narratives to complement and strengthen the research conduct through archives and other sources

Plan

How will you go about answering your inquiry?

In addition to archival research we will interview Champaign residents using the following questions as the basis of our interview.

Research Questions:

1. How has Champaign changed both physically and demographically in your life time?
2. Where there any major factors that caused these changes?
3. How do you feel Champaign has changed over time due to the University?
4. Do you like/dislike the impact that the University has on Champaign?

As a group we have done some browsing online and through the University's online catalog to find possible sources it seems like there is a wealth of information and our biggest task will be going through it all and condensing what is relevant to our topic of study. We plan on visiting the archives and Urbana free library to look for information this week Monday and Wednesday. The oral history online sounds like a really great source for us, if we are not able to find all the various types of people to interview this would be a good source for filling in those gaps, we will be sure to ask about this when we go to the library. Since we are not from Champaign it is a major challenge for us to find people to interview. Since we live on campus our interaction is limited mainly to students who are all in the same age range and not from Champaign. We discussed a possible good place to go for interviews would be a retirement home. There is actually one behind my apartment building so I considered going there but then I found out it was a home for people with Alzheimer's so that is an obviously large obstacle to obtaining an oral history.

In choosing people to interview it will be important that we include a diverse group of people from all over champaign and to make sure to have a broad spectrum of race, gender, and age. Since all of these factors effect a persons experience of a space it will be important to look at all of their differnt viewpoints. It might be a good idea to interview several people from several age groups for example parents of baby boomers, baby boomers, children of baby boomers. These generations will have a very different memory of Urbana Champaign as it has changed so much so they each will bring a fresh outlook on the historical formation.

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[199 paper outline.doc](#) (Sun 10/22/2006 22:21)

In researching our topic, regarding the history of Champaign-Urbana, we felt it necessary to conduct key person interviews to get a better feel of people's perspectives rather than

what we can only find online and in books. In doing so, one of the people we wish to interview will be a resident of Champaign, named Jack Baker. Jack is a retired architecture professor who has lived in Champaign his entire life. We felt it was necessary to speak with Jack so that we can obtain some knowledge of what it was like for a person growing up in Champaign and how it has changed. We also are lucky in the sense that Jack was a professor for the University of Illinois and will hopefully allow us some insight on the changes that took place here at the University, and the changes that the University had on the towns of Champaign-Urbana. When interviewing Jack we feel the following questions will help us in obtaining the information that we are looking for:

1. What was it like growing up in Champaign-Urbana?
2. How has Champaign changed from the time you were born to now? Positively and negatively?
3. Did the University play a large role in shaping Champaign-Urbana. If yes, then how so?
4. Did the University play a large role in you becoming a teacher or did you always want to pursue a teaching career?
5. Can you recall Champaign or Urbana ever being racially segregated?
6. Was one race more populated when you grew up to another race now?
7. Would you rather grow up in Champaign today or years back when you were a kid? Why?
8. Do you recall any childhood stories of what Champaign-Urbana was like before you were born?

At the Urbana Free Library I found the interview of Carrie Nelson, a long time Champaign resident. Information contained in her interview will be a great inclusion in our project. Questions that Carrie answered included:

1. Why did you or if you grew up here your parents move to Champaign?
2. During the 1960's urban renewal came along how do you feel about that?
3. What kind of work do you think most African American people in Champaign have done?
4. What kind of work did they have when they first came here?
5. What do you think brought people to Champaign?
6. Who are some of the important people that helped in the development of Champaign? Some that you might think of and what they did?

Carrie's interview is useful because it goes into a lot of detail and speaks a lot about segregation and the experience of African Americans in Champaign.

I received an email response from the Native American House today concerning my request to obtain information about Native Americans in the area. They said that the NAH does not really have any specific information about Native Americans in the area but they did give me the names of a couple of books that they thought might be useful. I will have to look on the online library catalog to see if the university has those books in their collection. I don't know if we still want to try and interview someone at the NAH house, like what we might ask them that would be useful and might not be contained in the books they suggested. This is something we will have to discuss as a group.

After researching at the Urbana Free Library I found a number of previous interviews from different residents of the Champaign Urbana area. Because race and race relations were one of the topics that we wanted to examine in our study we got incredibly lucky with the fact that all of these interviews were with black residents. I found a particularly interesting interview with a man named Henry Mears, a principal at Urbana High School. I had a number of questions that I wanted to ask anyone that I wanted to interview and his book was able to answer a few of them.

My questions are as follows:

Have you always been a Champaign resident?

How and when did you come to the area if you were not born here?

What was the demographic make up when you came here?

How has that changed?

Did the local government help or hurt the plight of minorities in your time here?

What were the job opportunities available at the time?

Did race matter with jobs here?

How does the University affect the area?

How does the area affect the University?

I began my research about the Champaign area by going to Lexus Nexus and looking for articles and other literature on the history this place. I looked for Native American tribes, when the first settlers began to inhabit the area, and when the city began to sprawl. I was able to find a few interesting topics that will help with the project. Also, we will begin contacting people for interviews in the coming days.

OBSERVE

What observations, or findings are you encountering in your research?

I went on LexusNexus today to research some background information on Champaign-Urbana. In researching material I am finding it harder than I expected for the history of Champaign-Urbana has much to cover. The process of trying to distinguish what and what not to use in our report is difficult. Yet, I am hoping that the interviews we will be doing will act as a guide in what subjects we should pursue and which subjects we should only briefly cover. All in all I am happy with our progress and look forward to finding out more about the place I have called home the past 4 years.

I went to the Urbana Free Library on Friday and browsed through the archives. I looked at transcripts from the oral history project. Most of the interviews were taken in 1983 and were with African Americans. They gave interesting insight into why people moved to Champaign, opinions on segregation, and observations about changes in Champaign over time. These oral histories combined with others we collect will be an invaluable resource for our analysis of the formations of Champaign/Urbana.

Since class was cancelled today, we went to the Undergraduate Library and then to the Main Stacks to research and locate all the books that we had found on Library Gateway. In doing so we found a lot of useful information that should help us in compiling a very good and thorough research paper. We also had a chance to talk with a man who worked in the History department of the library. Although this man did help us in finding our books, he was very busy and was not able to conduct an interview with us. However, we will be heading back as a group in the next few days to gather more information and to hopefully interview this man on his thoughts and knowledge of the History of Champaign-Urbana.

Going along with what others said in their postings, our visit to the graduate Illinois Lincoln Collection in the library yesterday was really helpful in our research. The man who works in there had a lot seemed very knowledgeable about Champaign Urbana. Although he would not agree to giving us an interview informally talking to him was helpful because a lot of the conclusions we have drawn about why Champaign formed the way it did were corroborated by him. For example the importance of the railroads in forming the two towns. We asked him if he knew of a good book that was a comprehensive history and the book he suggested by Bial is a book that I had already checked out from the library so that was good to hear.

DISCUSS

Discuss your inquiry, taking care to separate speculation from fact or data

With the new sources that we have received this week from the NAH and Illinois Lincoln Collection I think we have sufficient resources to complete our historical analysis of Champaign Urbana. An invaluable resource for us are the oral histories at the Urbana free library. I told the librarian at the Lincoln Collection about them and he said that would be really one of the only resources we would find talking about segregation and urban renewal in Champaign Urbana as it is fairly recent history that wouldn't necessarily be in history books, and history books certainly wouldn't have the same personal detail that the oral histories contain.

REFLECT

Link

Connect with other resources and materials.

Here is our group's final product, the report "The Historical Formations of Champaign Urbana."

Files:

[199 report.pdf](#) (Tue 12/05/2006 20:06)

This week I received emails from 3 different people from the Native American house giving me feedback about where our group could find information about native Americans in the area. I learned that there is really not a resource that talks specifically about native Americans in Champaign but rather a couple which are about Indians in Illinois in general. Below is a list of resources that the NAH sent me. I have browsed the websites and plan on going to try and get some of the books tomorrow before class. In addition to the sources listed below the NAH gave me the name of a man to contact, Dr. Robert Warren of the Illinois state museum. Dr. Warren emailed me a website of an Illinois state museum web module on native Americans in Illinois such as the Illiniwek which is http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/post/index.html. I don't think it would be feasible to interview Dr. Warren as he is in Springfield and it would be difficult for us as a group to get down to see him considering the transportation issues and the deadline for the project, but the website I think will tell us a lot of what he would tell us himself.

Recommended Sources on American Indians in the Illinois Region, past and present.

Web sites:

Illinois State Museum Web site --for archeology and history
http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/index.html

American Indian Center in Chicago web-site -- <http://www.aic-chicago.org>

<http://staff.imsa.edu/socsci/skinner/frenchregime1.html> This is the website of a remarkable collection of documents related to early contacts between the French and Indians in the Illinois country.

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/greenvil.htm>. This is the text of the Greenville Treaty.

Books:

Terry Straus, Native Chicago, 2nd Edition. Chicago. Albatross Publishers. 2002.
[Includes essays by Native authors on the Chicago American Indian community its history and current issues.]

Helen Hornbeck Tanner, Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1987). Paperback edition.

Discover Illinois Archaeology. Springfield, IL. Illinois Association for Advancement of Archaeology and Illinois Archaeological Survey. 2001.

Cahokia: City of Sun. Collinsville, IL. Cahokia Mounds Museum Society. 3rd Printing. 1992.