

## Some Geographical Factors Affecting the Industrial Expansion of Columbus, Indiana

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### Location

Columbus is located at  $39^{\circ} 13'$  north latitude and  $85^{\circ} 56'$  west longitude. It is about forty miles south of Indianapolis, seventy miles north of Louisville, seventy-five miles northwest of Cincinnati and two hundred forty miles east of St. Louis.

Columbus has numerous advantages of its general location. (1) It is located near the nation's center of population. (2) It is located in



Fig. 1. Columbus—its location with respect to other midwestern cities.

**Industrialization**

the more progressive eastern half of the United States. (3) The city is located in one of the best corn and wheat belts of the world. (4) It is close to all the major markets of the Middle West. (5) The climatic conditions are favorable for agricultural crops, human energy, and general progressiveness of the people.

Columbus has numerous specific locational advantages for industrial concerns. (1) Proximity to Indianapolis is an advantage as it furnishes a market for various finished products. Indianapolis also supplies wholesale goods to the Columbus area at a relatively low cost. (2) Columbus is favorably located in regard to railroad and highway transportation facilities. (3) Geologically, Columbus is located on the Scottsburg Lowland. The lowland is an erosional and glaciated plain with little local relief which facilitates mechanized agricultural activities and communications. (4) It is situated on a fertile outwash plane formed by the overflowing of Flatrock and Driftwood rivers. This outwash plain is one of the most fertile areas in Indiana. (5) Its location along the East Fork of White River furnished an early means of transportation and has been a source of the city's water supply for many years.

Columbus had 87 industrial concerns in 1947. These industries are well diversified and include metal industries, furniture factories, canneries, plating companies, tanneries, meat packers, and clothing manufacturers. A few of the many various products are auto parts, building supplies, construction tools, electric fans, flour, paper, toilet articles, radios, and Diesel motors.

In 1947 there were 7,768 persons employed in industries. This is about 45 percent of the estimated population of Columbus and about 23 percent of the total population of Bartholomew County. Industrial concerns have increased from 41 in 1940 to 87 in 1947 and the Columbus Chamber of Commerce claims to have more industries per thousand population than any city in Indiana.

The total employment has increased from 3,705 in 1940 to 6,484 in 1943 and to 7,768 in 1947. In 1940, Columbus ranked second in the value of manufactured products per inhabitant in Indiana cities.<sup>1</sup>

The land use map of Columbus (Fig. 2) shows the distribution of the industrial concerns. About one square mile is included in these industrial zones. The industries are scattered since the city has had no city planning commission or city zonation program. The industries are usually found next to the poorer residential districts and the newer industries are usually farther from the general business area although few industries are found outside the city limits.

The payrolls of the industries have increased from \$7,969,200 in 1940 to \$13,794,892 in 1944 and to \$16,794,892 in 1947.

Why have 87 different industries come to Columbus? Why can the Columbus Chamber of Commerce boast of more industrial concerns than any other city in Indiana per 1,000 inhabitants? There are many

<sup>1</sup> Freeman, Otis. "Major Cities in Indiana." *Economic Geography*. 1945. p. 120.

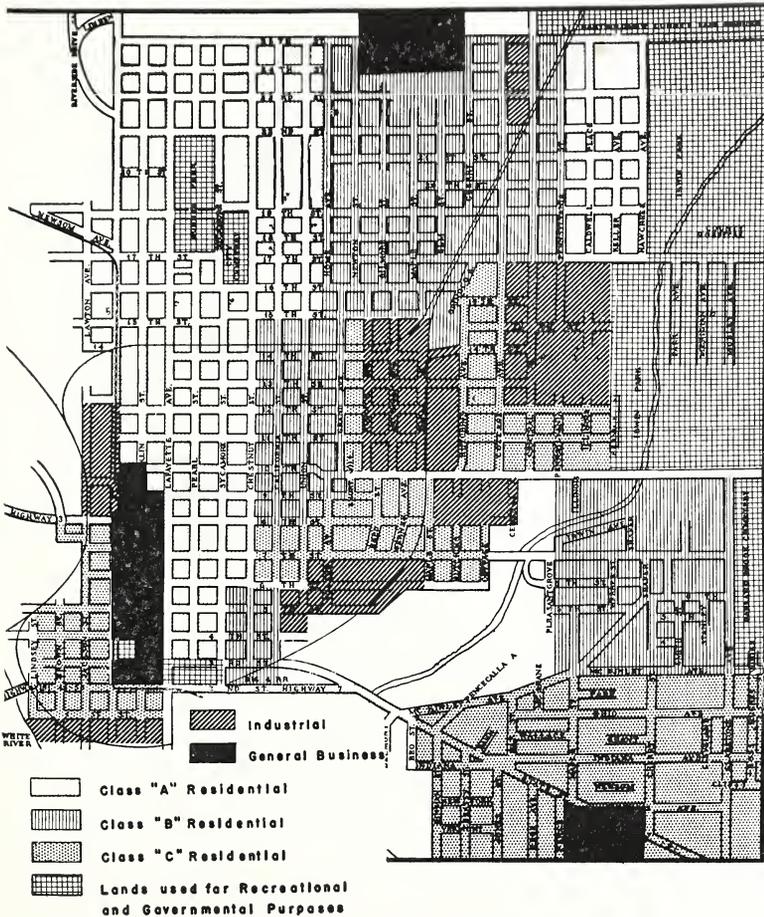


Fig. 2. City land use map of Columbus.

different reasons given by local citizens, but it is generally agreed, that Columbus has the basic conditions for a large industrial development.

### Raw Materials

First, Columbus is in a favorable position to obtain raw materials. The canneries, milling companies, paper producers, lumbering mills, dairies, stockyards, chick hatcheries, and tanneries obtain a major portion of their raw materials from the surrounding agricultural area in Bartholomew and adjacent counties. The various metal industries are near the coal deposits in southwestern Indiana, and also fairly near the steel producing areas of Gary, Hammond, Youngstown, and Pittsburgh. Various engineering companies favor the position between Indianapolis,

Chicago, St. Louis, Louisville, and Cincinnati from which they secure a major portion of their raw materials to be finished. The nearness to large mid-western packing centers is a favorable factor for the tanneries, and the plastics companies like the location mid-way between Tennessee and Michigan for the securing of their raw materials.<sup>2</sup>

### Labor

Since the population of Columbus is only about 15,000 and there are 7,768 people employed in the 87 industrial concerns of Columbus, it is necessary that the industries obtain a considerable amount of their labor from the surrounding area.<sup>3</sup> Although the industrial workers are usually unskilled at the time of employment, most industrial employers agree that the laborers are relatively easily trained and now most industries have a sufficient supply of skilled and semi-skilled workers.

Camp Atterbury has played an important part in the recent population growth and labor supply of Columbus. Camp Atterbury is located about eight miles northwest of Columbus and occupies about 42,000 acres in Bartholomew, Brown, and Johnson counties although about four-fifths of the camp is in Bartholomew County.

Camp Atterbury added to the labor supply of the Columbus' industries primarily by three methods: (1) In the site selected for the camp were about 700 families who had to sell their farms. So about 700 families were faced with no means of earning an income; consequently many obtained employment in industry. (2) During the period of extensive operation the camp averaged about 25,000 soldiers. Many of these men lived "off post" with their families in Columbus and since the war has ended many have stayed in Columbus and have gained employment in industry. (3) Camp Atterbury employed about 14,000 carpenters, plumbers, painters, and other types of construction workers to get the camp into operation. Many stayed in Columbus after the construction work was completed and today they are a part of the industrial labor supply. So Camp Atterbury has been a part of the reason for the excellent labor supply which has been helpful in the notable industrial expansion of the city.<sup>4</sup>

### Market Areas

Columbus is centrally located for marketing the finished products. Many of these products are sold within Bartholomew County as many

<sup>2</sup>Of the returned questionnaires from industrial concerns, a favorable location for the securing of raw materials was the most frequently mentioned advantage of Columbus as a permanent location for their industrial concern.

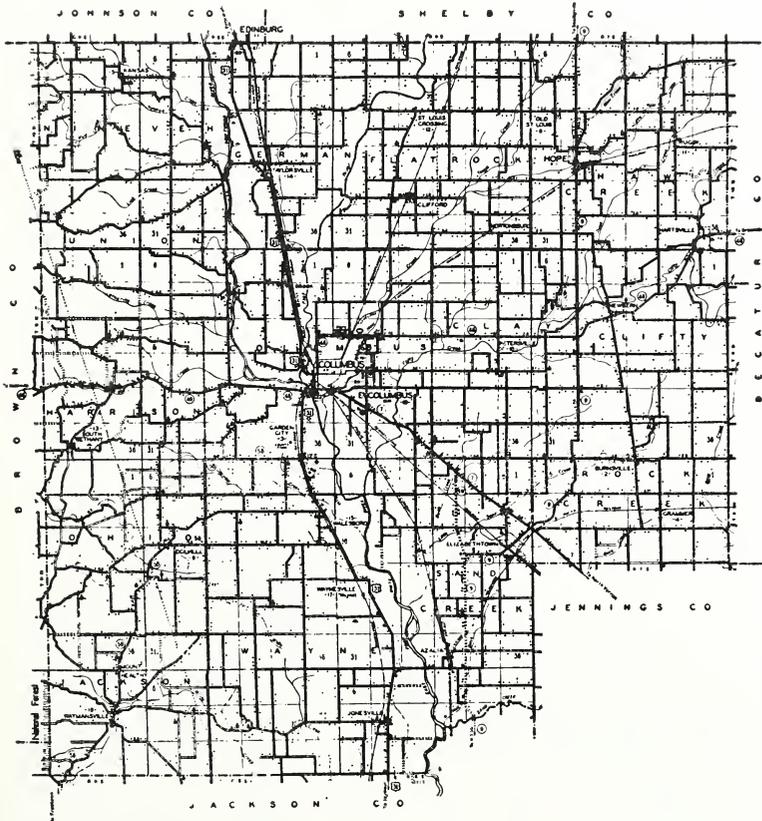
<sup>3</sup>One employer estimated that about forty percent of the city's employees are from out of town.

<sup>4</sup>In the questionnaire returns, a good labor supply was the second most frequently mentioned advantage of Columbus as a permanent location for their industry. Only two industries listed labor as a disadvantage and each stated that there was a tight labor market in the city. Both companies paid less than the average wage for labor in the city.

industries are dependent upon local consumption as a principal market. However, most of the metal industries supply finished products to various mid-western cities. Indianapolis, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Louisville, Cleveland, Dayton, and Detroit are all market areas for various industries of the city. One industry has attained such marked customer diversification that it supplies every volume builder of cars and trucks with at least one item for standard equipment.

### Transportation

Columbus is located on United States Highway 31 which extends from the Gulf of Mexico at Mobile to the Great Lakes at Chicago;



GENERAL HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION MAP  
 BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY  
 INDIANA

Fig. 3. General highway and Transportation map of Bartholomew county.

also, State Highways 46, 7, and 58 converge at Columbus, and State Road 9 begins near the city and extends into Michigan (see Figure 3). With these highway facilities, nine truck routes, and six bus routes pass through the city.

Today the most used method of transporting raw materials to the industries is by truck. One reason for the predominant use of trucking facilities by the local industries in the excellent highway facilities, and numerous industries own a major part of their trucking facilities. The

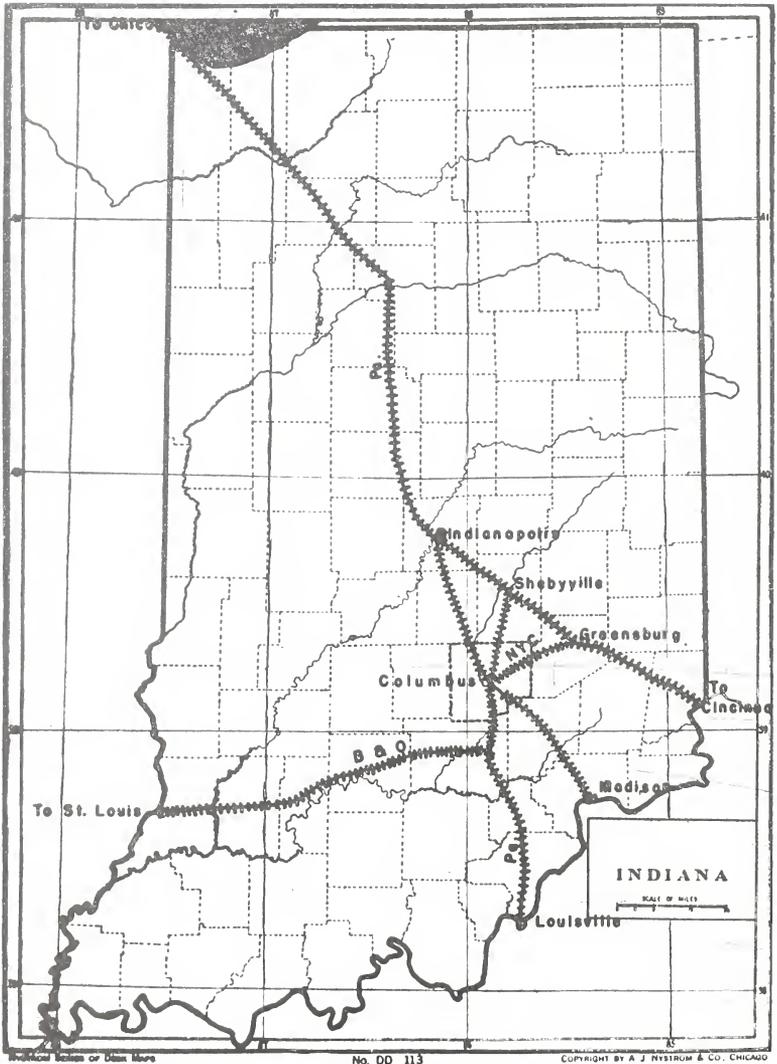


Fig. 4. Railroad pattern of the Columbus area.

good road system converging at Columbus is indicative of the desirability of its location and also of the transportation facilities required to service its needs.

Columbus is also located favorably in regard to railroads, since it lies on the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad which runs from Chicago to Louisville and is also located on the Madison and Richmond branches of the same railroad (Figure 4). The New York Central Railroad extends from Columbus to Greensburg, where it joins the main line from Chicago to Cincinnati.

Railroads are used by the industries to almost as great a degree as the trucking facilities. Most industries consider the railroad facilities of Columbus to be good, although some complain of the high cost of transporting raw materials from the eastern part of the United States. Also, a few other concerns mentioned the fact that the rates to Columbus were not as low as they were to some other nearby but larger cities.

### Tax and Utility Rates

The tax rate of Columbus in 1944 was \$3.30, in 1945 and 1946 was \$3.72 but increased to \$5.02 in 1947. The average of other Indiana cities of similar size was \$3.91 in 1944, \$4.14 in 1945, and about \$4.50 in 1947. The sharp increase was caused by the city's attempt to construct and repair streets, change the source of city water, install a sewage disposal plant, and repair or replace other municipal facilities. Since the tax rate was below the average for Indiana cities of similar size before 1947, tax rates were also a definite locational advantage.

The city's utility rates are about the average for Indiana cities, and industrial concerns no longer consider them an advantage, as they were for several years; although since they are about average they are not a serious disadvantage.

### City Benefits

One of the most striking evidences of the thriving economy of the city is the large class "A" residential districts (see figure 2). The newer, more expensive houses are located in the northern portion of the city, and are largely homes of industrial officials. However, the unusually large portion of the city in class "A" homes is not the only benefit derived from the recent industrial expansion. Other benefits are: (1) Employment for the people of the city and surrounding area. (2) Increased buying power for the city and its population. (3) City improvements made possible. (4) Industrial diversification, and (5) decreased individual tax load.