

Martinsville, Indiana, a Satellite Town

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Martinsville, the county seat of Morgan County, lies 35 miles south, southwest of Indianapolis just east of the White River. It has become the cultural, financial, political and industrial center of the county and its service area includes most of the county.

Martinsville is, however, included in the area serviced by Indianapolis. This fact is most evident by the flow of many people into Indianapolis. There is also a movement in and out of shoppers and of people seeking recreation or professional services. Conversely there is a movement of goods from Indianapolis to Martinsville, including newspapers, certain perishable goods and representatives of business agencies which render service.

Before pointing out the essential features which help determine Martinsville's role as a satellite, it is wise to examine the city geographically, for these facts more than anything else help to explain why Martinsville is a satellite of Indianapolis.

Martinsville has a fairly extensive service area. Certain geographical features have been essential in its growth. The relatively fertile agricultural area surrounding the city is situated partly on an extensive flood plain which has been influenced by past glaciation and later by flooding of the White River. The wide diversification in agriculture of the area is due partly to the fact that it has diverse soils: unglaciated, glaciated, and alluvium. Intensive farming practices were encouraged by the fertile soils and by the development of advanced farm machinery and large consumer markets in Indianapolis and other nearby centers.

The abundance of local natural resources of forests, fresh and mineral waters, and building clay, have further enhanced the growth of Martinsville. The forests played a major role in the early growth of the city when furniture factories, cooperages, and sawmills were important. With the drastic depletion of local supplies, the woodworking industries declined sharply but they still remain relatively important with the aid of importation of lumber. Woodworking factories still employ a major group of the employed people, both men and women.

Mineral water found in geological strata deep beneath the city formed the basis of a health resort industry. Although the health resorts which commenced in the 1880's reached a peak in popularity about 1915, four resorts still operate at near capacity.

An abundant supply of pure fresh water is found in fluvioglacial sands and gravels beneath and near the city. It provides adequately for the needs of domestic and industrial utilizers. It was the basis for the development at Martinsville of the largest goldfish hatchery in America, The Grassyfork Goldfish Hatcheries.

Large deposits of clay located just north of the city limits have been important in the manufacture of brick and tile. The relatively short distance of Martinsville from the coal fields of southwest Indiana and its

position on the railroad, facilitated the importation of fuel. Nearby growing urban centers have provided ready markets for brick and tile.

The White River Valley, for a long time during glaciation, carried off the runoff of much melting ice—was a great glacial spillway. It provides a natural passageway for roads and railroads leading north through Martinsville to Indianapolis. State Roads 37 and 67 extend from Indianapolis south through Martinsville to Vincennes, Bloomington, Bedford and Louisville, Kentucky. The Pennsylvania Railroad connects the coal fields of southwest Indiana and the markets of Indianapolis via Martinsville. The facilities offer quick and efficient transportation of local manufactured goods and agricultural produce.

Approximately midway between Indianapolis and Bloomington, Martinsville's relative location has advantages and disadvantages. Some advantages are: Its residents can reach Indianapolis by automobile, trucks, or bus in less than an hour over all weather roads. Many work there, while others shop or market local products including livestock, farm produce, and bricks. Others use Indianapolis' excellent railroad and airplane facilities, seek entertainment, or attend one of the institutions of higher education. Consequently in this era of quick transportation, both Indianapolis, and in a smaller way, Bloomington, are "crowding" Martinsville, and the "trade shadow" influence of these two is becoming increasingly important. For example, advertisements of employment possibilities in both larger cities appear in the Martinsville paper, and more people each year commute to these two nearby cities to work.

Disadvantages of Martinsville's location include: The loss of young men from the city to industries of Indianapolis and Bloomington has recently become pronounced with the result that local industries have resorted increasingly to the employment of women. The men seek the higher wages offered in the larger centers while still enjoying a lower cost of living by residing in Martinsville. Many residents and local rural people travel to the larger cities for shopping or recreation and thus the local retail district suffers. The trade area of Martinsville is limited in extent to the north and to the south by the proximity and influence of Indianapolis and Bloomington respectively.

Martinsville's advantages include: 1) Choice building sites at relatively low cost. 2) Relatively low cost of living. 3) Fairly satisfactory city services. 4) A suitable labor supply, mostly female, which is available for light industry. 5) The fact that Martinsville is the political center of Morgan County is an asset of value. 6) Pleasant environmental conditions influence the settlement of many people in the city.

This short geographical survey of Martinsville reveals a close relationship with the economic and social functions of Indianapolis. Indeed Martinsville is a satellite of Indianapolis.

All the essential features of a satellite town are present in Martinsville. It is far enough away from the central city to have its own self-contained public utilities and local transportation systems. The majority of the employed inhabitants work in Martinsville. However, perhaps one-fourth work in Indianapolis and a smaller number in Bloomington. These facts are of major significance in the development of a satellite town.

Another important consideration is industry. In Martinsville, industry largely dependent on local natural resources, is sufficient to provide for a solvent local government. Recreational land use is also large enough to satisfy most of the inhabitants.

The city is linked closely by road to Indianapolis and Bloomington. The Pennsylvania Railroad links the city to Indianapolis to the north and to the coal fields a short distance southwest.

People realize that satellite towns are growing near most major metropolitan centers. Industrialists themselves are showing recognition of the frequent desirability of movement of plants from the large center to satellite towns.

Several plants in Indianapolis are moving or expanding by building in smaller cities to escape high real estate taxes and crowded conditions while remaining close to markets and raw materials and near a labor supply. For example the Basca Manufacturing Company has located in Martinsville. Moreover, Alcoa has its main assembly plant there.

This satellite town not only is benefitted by the movement of industry and people from the large urban center but also helps the large center. It offers a practical solution for the expanding urban growth of Indianapolis. For with a movement of people to a smaller nearby city, the larger urban center is relieved from spreading beyond present economic bounds.

On the basis of the above short survey and personal observation made during 1953 of Martinsville and its environs, it appears that this city should grow. In the last three decades it has expanded from 4,962 residents to over 6,500 inhabitants. It should become more and more of a home for commuting workers because of lower costs of living, of more available building sites at moderate cost, good shopping districts and proximity to the nearby Indianapolis. Several subsidiary and branch industries have located in the city and with the trend for industry of Indianapolis to seek new building sites in nearby small cities, Martinsville doubtless will continue to benefit from this outward movement. Thus the town will continue to play an important part as a satellite for Indianapolis and the role will benefit both centers.

A new element of cooperation between the two cities is desirable, so as to carry out a regional plan of urban development. Desirable also is a great deal more thought by the town council in regards to the financial status of their smaller urban center in order to extend desirable urban services and other facilities. Martinsville has a strategic site and is blessed with good local natural resources, and by importance as a major satellite. Geographical factors will continue to play an important role in its progress.