Frontier to Heartland
Imaging the Spaces of Central North America

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17 November 2010
When did they start calling it the “Heartland”?

Use of "Heartland" in Chicago Tribune and New York Times
(Based on ProQuest Historical Newspapers and NewsBank Databases accessed on 12/28 and 12/29/2006)
Google News Archive:
All hits for “heartland”
Iowa Becoming More Heartlandy

1960-69
- heartland AND Iowa
- heartland AND Illinois
- heartland AND Ohio
- heartland AND Indiana
- heartland AND Nebraska

1980-89
- heartland AND Iowa
- heartland AND Illinois
- heartland AND Ohio
- heartland AND Indiana
- heartland AND Nebraska

Search results in New York Times for “[state name] AND heartland”
Heartland according to the Trib.
Searching for the heartland
Search for “heartland church”
Making History in Central North America

Based on the world-renowned collections of the Newberry Library in Chicago, "Frontier to Heartland" offers access to historical primary sources, scholarly perspectives on the past, and resources to help you use the site.

**Perspectives**

Essays with a point of view

In words and pictures Perspectives explain how central North America came to be known as a 'frontier' and then a 'heartland.' You can trace the history of the region over 400 years, consider the cultural power of images, or learn how to read historic maps.

**Galleries**

Thematic collections of images

Galleries are a quick way to view a range of themes in Frontier to Heartland. Each gallery presents eight related images and links to the image collection.

**Browse Images**

**Woman with child in Union Station**

Easter Bushley

A woman and child sit in the waiting room of Chicago's Union Station, 1946.

**Pitch In and Help! : Join the Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps**

Morley Hubert

At harvest time during World War II domestic labor shortages became particularly difficult. U.S. government posters recruited women to join the Women's Land Army of the U.S. Crop Corps to ensure that...

**Cover to The Charge of the Rough Riders: Grand Galop Militaire**

This song celebrated the role of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders in the Spanish American War of 1898.

**Composite of Chicago**

A view of Chicago showing ships in the harbor, surrounding the cityscape are images of prominent buildings. The city's motto "Urbs in Horto" is surrounded by symbolic images.

Four More Random Images

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About
In words and pictures Perspectives explain how central North America came to be known as a 'frontier' and then a 'heartland.' You can trace the history of the region over 400 years, consider the cultural power of images, or learn how to read historic maps.

**Four Centuries**
Life in central North America, and the way people imagine the region, have changed dramatically over the past 400 years. This essay provides a chronological overview of the region from 1600 to the present.

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**Rethinking the Heartland**
Re-imagine the history of central North America through six themes that highlight different approaches to the past and present.

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**Two Visions of the Frontier**
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**The World of the Dill Pickle Club**
In the Dill Pickle Scrapbooks we find fragments of the social, artistic, and intellectual ferment that churned in the cities of the industrialized world during the first decades of the 20th century. The nightlife invited patrons to "Step high. Stoop low. Leave your dignity outside."

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**Making Sense of Historic Maps**
Maps tell us much more than how to get from here to there. Historians use maps as evidence of the ways people in the past imagined the lands they lived in, dreamed of, and fought over.

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Imagined Heartland

This essay offers six thematic approaches to the history of the region we often call the “Heartland.” Taken together they suggest the varied images of the region over time, and the varied experiences of its inhabitants. But first, let’s explore when and why central North America became known as “America’s Heartland.”

The U.S. Census Bureau declared the frontier of settlement closed by 1890, but the term “Heartland” was not regularly applied to the American Midwest until the late 20th century. Coined by a British geographer Halford Mackinder in 1904, the term “heartland” originally referred to the land-locked regions of Eurasia, which he believed were important to the international balance of military powers. The term gained fame in World War II when Germany used MacKinder’s ideas to justify its expansion into Eastern Europe, and after the war people used “heartland” to refer to places on almost every continent.

Slowly journalists, businesspeople, and politicians started calling the Midwestern U.S. the “American Heartland.” At times, the term denoted the region’s strategic role as a center of population and industrial production. But over time, the term more frequently evoked a particular image of the region associated with farms and small towns, rather than its busy and diverse urban areas. By the time it became a popular term for the region, especially after the 1980s, writers used “Heartland” to capture the idea that Midwesterners were more stable, cautious, and traditional than folks in other regions.

Of course, this is only the latest image makeover for a region that Europeans considered practically the ends of the Earth when they arrived in the 1600s. When the era of European settlement drew to a close in the late 19th century, Americans formulated a set of ideas about the
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**Food, Farming, and Community**

The way we grow food crops and raise animals have changed radically over the past 300 years. The original inhabitants of central North America grew field crops like corn, and they also gathered wild rice, maple sap for sugar, and hunted a variety of animals. European settlers brought different farming styles, family structures, and material expectations linking agriculture ever more closely to distant markets and consumers. In the 20th century, machines replaced human and animal labor on the farm, making the farms of central North America among the most productive in the world, but also undermining rural communities.

**Waterways**

The Great Lakes and the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio River Systems have long served as avenues of transportation, as sources of fresh water, and as convenient places to dump the leftovers of human enterprise. The collection allows visitors to consider the state of the region’s waterways before large-scale European settlement, and the impact of urbanization of lakes and rivers.

**Working on the Railroad**

Railways have stitched together central North America since the 1850s. They were the largest organizations of the time, managing complex flows of commodities, people, and information. Farmers, workers, and manufacturers relied on railroads, and many communities were literally created by railroad companies to serve the industry. Not surprisingly, railroad companies became the object of great protest as well as a subject of fascination and romance.
All 255 items

**Carte geographique de la Nouvelle France**

Champlain's 1612 map suggests how little Europeans knew about the interior of North America at the time. For instance, only two of the five Great Lakes are visible.

**Lac Superieur et autres lieux ou sont les missions des peres de la Compagnie de Jesus, comprises sous le nom d'Outaouacs**

This map of the upper Great Lakes shows several Jesuit missions as well as American Indian communities.

**Fur trade contract, 1692**

Fur trade contract, dated Sept. 15, 1692 in Ville-Marie, Québec, concerning transport of merchandise to Michilimackinac and Chicago to be traded for beaver pelts. The contract describes an agreement between François Françoise dit Lavalle—represented here by his wife Marie Magdeleine St.-Jean, authorized by him to conduct their joint business affairs while he was away "aux Illinois"—and four voyageurs: Simon Guéron, Jean Baptiste Jarry, Louis Roy, and by proxy, Simon Roy. For 500 livres each in beaver pelts, and their food, the voyageurs agreed to make the journey to Michillimackinac and "Chicago" (one of the earliest references to Chicago in a voyageur contract) the following spring, in two canoes to be furnished by them, to transport merchandise, and to make the return with beaver pelts. At each of the trading centers, the four voyageurs have permission to use one of the canoes to trade 300 livres of merchandise each for personal profit. There are also provisions concerning voyageurs "plovers," those who spend the winter out in trapping country in Illinois. The contract includes Françoise's footnotes in margins, marked in the text with a square of color and style. Each addition is signed by name.
Dubuque in Iowa

Lewis Henry, 1819-1904


A long time site of lead mining, in the 1840s Dubuque was a commercial center along the upper Mississippi river. Artist Henry Lewis sketched and painted scenes along the upper Mississippi river between 1840 and 1848. He compiled them into a panoramic painting nearly half a mile in length, which was a popular theater attraction in the U.S. and Europe. Later he settled in Germany where he published a book based on his panoramas.

— This item is featured in

Perspectives
- Revisiting the Heartland (Environment)
- Four Centuries (Introduction)

Galleries
- Waterways

— More information

Source: VAULT Auer 165.5 M76 16

Date: 1857

Subjects: Industry
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  Theater

Places: Iowa
  Mississippi River Valley

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