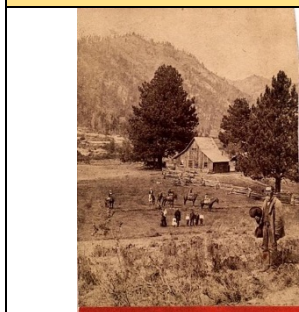


## Chapter 121e --The Northern States Gradually Become More Urban



**Dates:**  
1840

**Sections:**

- Life On The Farm Remains Dominant
- City Life Continues Its Slow Expansion Especially In The Northeast
- The Illinois Boom Town Of Galena

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Time: 1840

### Life On The Farm Remains Dominant



Despite the dramatic population shifts in the prior decades, nine out of ten Americans still make their homes in the countryside on family farms, as of 1840.

**“Home” In 1840**

|             | Urban | Rural |
|-------------|-------|-------|
| <b>1820</b> | 7%    | 93%   |
| <b>1830</b> | 9     | 91    |
| <b>1840</b> | 11    | 89    |

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This outcome is driven in large part by the abundance of rich agricultural land in the public domain and the government’s wish to quickly create new western states and make them an integral part of the Union.

Farm Scene With People On Horseback

Thus a policy is developed to sell this land off at prices affordable to average white citizens.

The Land Act of 1820 is one example. It allows a settler to buy a minimum plot of 80 acres for as little as \$1.25 per acre, or \$120 in total. This is not “dirt cheap” at a time when unskilled laborers are earning 75 cents a day, but it is within reach for anyone able to work out an equitable bank mortgage.

In the 1830’s, various “Pre-emption Acts” are also passed in congress to accommodate “squatters” who have moved onto public domain property without a formal purchase. As long as they can prove they have “cultivated” the land, they are allowed to subsequently buy it at the \$1.25 per acre price.

Of course, actual prices paid for land vary dramatically over time. Location and prospects for production of both subsistence and cash crops make a difference. So too does speculation, where bankers and joint stock corporations see the opportunity to make a fortune by cornering land intended for new cities or pikes or railroads.

But still, as of 1840, the American dream for the vast majority of citizens lies in saving up enough money to purchase and live on and work their own 40-80 acre farms.

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Time: 1840

### **City Life Continues Its Slow Expansion Especially In The Northeast**



A Street Scene In Brooklyn

The one region of the country where city life is beginning to really catch on is in the Northeast.

**% Of Population That Is Urban**

|             | <b>Total US</b> | <b>Northeast</b> | <b>South</b> | <b>West</b> |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>1820</b> | 7%              | 11%              | 5%           | 2%          |
| <b>1830</b> | 9               | 14               | 5            | 3           |
| <b>1840</b> | 11              | 19               | 7            | 4           |

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One of its cities – New York – is on the way to rivalling the great metropolises of Europe. With a population over 300,000 in 1840, it already matches Berlin in size. Only Paris, counting 900,000 inhabitants, and London, with just over 2 million, remain larger.

But other U.S. cities have also grown rapidly since 1820. Most are located in major ports along the Atlantic coast, but there are exceptions. New Orleans’ population has grown five-fold over two decades. Cincinnati has flourished along with trade on the Ohio River. Even the inland city of Albany, some 135 miles north of NYC, on the Hudson River, joins the top ten list.

**Top Ten Largest Cities In America -- 1840**

| <b>1820</b>     | <b>Pop.</b> | <b>1840</b>     | <b>Pop.</b> |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| New York        | 123,706     | New York        | 312,710     |
| Philadelphia    | 63,802      | Baltimore       | 102,313     |
| Baltimore       | 62,738      | New Orleans     | 102,193     |
| Boston          | 43,298      | Philadelphia    | 93,665      |
| New Orleans     | 21,176      | Boston          | 93,383      |
| Charleston      | 24,780      | Cincinnati      | 46,338      |
| No Philadelphia | 19,678      | Brooklyn        | 36,233      |
| So Philadelphia | 14,713      | No Philadelphia | 34,474      |
| Washington DC   | 13,247      | Albany          | 33,721      |
| Salem           | 12,731      | Charleston SC   | 29,261      |
| Average         | 39,987      | Average         | 88,429      |

In addition to Cincinnati, eight other cities in the original Northwest Ordinance territory fall into the top 100 on population – while only eleven cities across the entire South make the cut.

**Northwest Ordinance Cities In Top 100**

| <b>Rank</b> | <b>City</b>         | <b>Pop.</b> |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------|
| <b>6</b>    | Cincinnati, Ohio    | 46,338      |
| <b>40</b>   | Detroit, MI         | 9,102       |
| <b>67</b>   | Cleveland, Ohio     | 6,071       |
| <b>68</b>   | Dayton, Ohio        | 6,067       |
| <b>70</b>   | Columbus, Ohio      | 6,048       |
| <b>90</b>   | Zanesville, Ohio    | 4,766       |
| <b>92</b>   | Chicago, Illinois   | 4,470       |
| <b>99</b>   | Steubenville, Ohio  | 4,274       |
| <b>100</b>  | New Albany, Indiana | 4,226       |

### Sidebar: The Illinois Boom Town Of Galena



Main St. Running Horizontally Into The Town Of Galena, Illinois

The western state of Illinois joins the Union in 1818 and has a population of some 476,000 in the 1840 Census. One of its booming cities at that time is Galena.

This city takes its name from the mineral, “galena,” which is mined and converted into lead for use in making paints, ammunition, pipes, burial vault lines, and pewter.

By 1700 both native Sac and Fox tribes and French trappers have discovered and begun to mine the abundant lead deposits in the area. A century later, American pioneers arrive, and a trading post is established in 1819 to support transportation of lead ore down the Galena River and then over to the Mississippi. Once the port of Galena is opened, the city quickly becomes a key stopping off point along the great river, between St. Paul and St. Louis.

By 1840 Galena and surrounding Jo Daviess county are producing 70% of all the lead ore in America.

Agricultural production picks up, and surplus farm goods soon join lead ore on transport boats.

What was a frontier outpost has become an established and flourishing city, with a population of roughly 3,000 people.

The population has all the characteristics of a frontier mining town...with a mixture of peoples. Foreigners from all parts of the world and Americans from every state in the Union are thrown together indiscriminately. The miners get along well together. Some are men of questionable character, and all are adventurers, but in spite of these characteristics...little ‘claim jumping’ materializes, few infringements are made upon the law, and above all there seems to exist among

these people a thorough trust and goodwill toward everyone.

The only laws at first governing this part of the state are contained on a single sheet of foolscap paper posted up in most public places and dealing with disputes over mining claims. But as for ordinary transactions, the people rely among themselves entirely on the law of Honor.

Residents of Galena live in the 550 buildings that have been erected by 1840, with an estimated total value of \$1.6 million, or an average of about \$3,000 apiece.

They read local newspapers, *The Northwest Gazette* and *Galena Advertiser*. They make deposits and loans at a branch of the State Bank of Illinois. There are several churches in town, a fire department, a library of over 8,000 volumes. A temperance society springs up, as the religious reform movement gains support in the region. Entertainment arrives in the form of balls and theater.

For a time, Galena, like its Mississippi River neighbor, Quincy, 250 miles to its south, appears headed to becoming the dominant industrial city in Illinois. But this vision recedes in the late 1840's, when Chicago becomes the central railroad hub for the emerging west.

One enduring business in Galena is the Grant & Perkins tannery and leather goods store on Main St. A co-owner is Jesse Grant, who resides in Ohio and oversees such operations across several cities.



Jesse Grant (1794-1873) U.S. Grant (1822-1885)

In 1854, Jesse will offer a job in the Galena shop to his son, Ulysses, who has just resigned from a career in the military. But Ulysses initially turns down the offer to make his own way, first as a farmer and then as a bill collector. By 1860, however, these attempts have failed, and he is desperate for work to provide for himself, his wife, and their four children.

Thus former Captain U.S. Grant is working in his father's leather store in Galena on April 15, 1861, when Abraham Lincoln calls for 75,000 volunteers to suppress a rebellion. In time, the town once famous for lead, will be remembered for its favorite son.