

Historic Illinois From the Air

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Fell, a marine biologist, which actually tried to resurrect the Davenport frauds as evidence for thousands of years of European activity in the Midwest.

The Davenport Conspiracy Revisited is extremely well done, and it can be read with profit by anyone interested in the social history of science or, indeed, in a fascinating piece of Iowa's history. It is especially good at illuminating the radically differing viewpoints of the amateur and the professional communities during that exciting formative period in American archeology. While there is no doubt where the author's loyalties lie, he still deals sensitively with the amateur's position and conveys a real understanding of the issues involved. The pity is that those who now read Barry Fell and other members of the "fantastic archeology" school will probably not read this book, and if they do, will surely regard it as simply one more effort of the "establishment" to distort evidence in order to keep the amateur researchers out—exactly as the Smithsonian experts were thought to have been doing over a hundred years ago.

Historic Illinois from the Air, by David Buisseret. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. 232 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, index. \$34.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT L. REID, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA

The front cover of the dust jacket of *Historic Illinois from the Air* presents a stunning color photograph of the Chicago skyline. On the back, Cairo is depicted with the Mississippi River on one side and the Ohio River on the other. The promotional blurb proclaims, "Illinois as you've never seen it." The sheer beauty of these pictures coupled with this bold claim prompted a negative initial response on my part: Is the University of Chicago Press publishing coffee table books? Perhaps it is—but in this case the book's cover is consistent with the quality of its contents.

Open *Historic Illinois from the Air* to any page and you encounter striking visual images. These include outstanding aerial photographs and an array of other illustrations—maps, sketches, bird's-eye views, drawings, and LANDSAT images taken from satellites. Sources include the Newberry Library, where the author serves as director of the Herman Dunlap Smith Center for the History of Cartography, the University of Illinois, the Chicago Historical Society, and the Illinois Department of Transportation. Combining his love of flying with his skill as a photographer, David Buisseret took a number of low-level, oblique color photographs to complete the visual portion of his text.

From an initial chapter on the land which notes the strategic location of Illinois on the nation's major inland waterways to a concluding section on the Atomic Age, the text presents the panorama of Illinois history. The treatment of the nineteenth century is especially strong, with all regions of the state represented. Among the topics considered are the long-lots of the French along the Wabash, the discovery of Fort de Chartres by aerial photography in 1928, the development of lead mining near Galena, the federal arsenal on Rock Island, and the state penitentiary at Joliet. Through several segments which include the Illinois and Michigan Canal, patterns of migration and settlement, and railroads in Illinois, the emergence of Chicago as America's "second city" is presented.

Three features make this an outstanding contribution. A major challenge of any author who brings together words and pictures is that of balance. Buisseret provides the setting for his selected images by using a standard two-page presentation for almost every topic. In describing living conditions of the poor in Chicago at the turn of the century, for example, he includes a nationalities map of the Hull House neighborhood in color from 1895, another map depicting Chicago's neighborhoods in the 1890s, a sketch of a tenement block, and an aerial photograph taken about 1930 together with four hundred words of text that describe the setting and clearly explain the selected images. A second attribute is the exceptional quality of the reproductions. The book is an outstanding collaboration of the author, the illustrator and cartographer, Tom Willcockson, and the design and layout staff of the press. The view from above is a third feature; new insights on the relationship between humans and nature are revealed from the air.

It is not the aerial perspective alone that makes this book so compelling, though. Despite its limiting title, *Historic Illinois from the Air* refutes the notion that "books for adults are not supposed to need pictures" (Anne Hollander, *Moving Pictures* [1989], 9). The images so carefully chosen by Buisseret serve as a model for studies of neighboring states, including Iowa. Adults do need pictures selected not simply to illustrate but to *illuminate* our understandings of the past. You *can* judge this book by its cover; this is "Illinois as you've never seen it."

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