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Making the Corn Belt: A Geographical History of Middle-Western Agriculture (Midwestern History)

John C Hudson

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#1537224 in Books 1994-08-01Ingredients: Example IngredientsOriginal language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.58 x .97 x 6.43l, #File Name: 0253328322276 pages | File size: 56.Mb

John C Hudson : Making the Corn Belt: A Geographical History of Middle-Western Agriculture (Midwestern History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Making the Corn Belt: A Geographical History of Middle-Western Agriculture (Midwestern History):

"John Hudson's accomplishment looms large...This is a book of great substance that will likely stand as a classic." - John Jakle. Stretching from the Rockies to the Appalachians, the Corn Belt is America's heartland. "Making the Corn Belt" traces the geographical and agricultural evolution of this region, whose agriculture is based on the tradition of corn-feeding meat animals. This use of corn emerged in the westward movement of Euro-American farming people from the Upland South to the Ohio Valley and the Mississippi Valley. Corn Belt agriculture, however, spread more slowly northward than it did westward, partly because of the patterns of migration established in the spread of the frontier. By the Civil War, however, this distinctive cultural region was divided socially and politically. "Making the Corn Belt" traces these evolving regional-agricultural themes and carries them into the age of rapid technological change in the 1930s. This volume presents the most complete and up-to-date account of the origin and growth of America's heartland.

From the Back Cover Stretching from the Rockies to the Appalachians, the Corn Belt is America's heartland. Making the Corn Belt traces the geographical and agricultural evolution of this region, whose agriculture is based on the tradition of feeding corn to meat animals, especially beef cattle and hogs. The use of corn as a feed grain emerged in the westward movement of Euro-American farming people from the Upland South to the Ohio Valley. In the five islands of fertile land west of the Appalachians - the Nashville Basin, Pennyroyal Plateau, Bluegrass, Miami Valley, and Virginia Military District - corn emerged as the best crop to feed livestock. Thus was the Corn Belt born. Migrants from the Five Islands took corn-livestock agriculture west to the Mississippi Valley, and by 1850 the core of today's Corn Belt was a cultural region developed by a segment of the population whose ancestry could be traced back to the Ohio Valley. Corn Belt agriculture, however, spread northward more slowly than it did westward, partly because of the patterns of migration established in the spread of the frontier. The Civil War demonstrated that, even though its agriculture was distinctive, the larger region was divided in social and political terms. John Hudson traces these regional-agricultural themes into the rapid technological changes of the 1930s. The introduction of soybeans at about this time helped shift parts of the Corn Belt from livestock feeding to cash-grain production. Some of these trends continue today in parts of the region, while other areas have specialized in cattle feeding as the meat-packing industry has shifted westward. Farm residents in the 1990s account for less than 2 percent of the national population. In the Middle West today, to be a "farm resident" no longer means what it once did: although nearly two-thirds of the men work primarily on the farm, nearly three-fourths of farm women are principally employed elsewhere. Many farmers have left the land and abandoned the "traditional" farm, but those who remain have been even more productive. The "typical" Corn Belt farm has disappeared, replaced by a small cluster of metal buildings surrounding a suburban tract home. John C. Hudson takes us to the heart of the Corn Belt and captures the essence of this most "American" region.