

## **REPORT ON THE GROWTH OF PEORIA**

### *Overview*

Throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Peoria was the second city of Illinois. From the 1840 census until the 1960 census, Peoria trailed only Chicago in total population. The population of Peoria increased steadily until sometime between 1950 and 1960. By 1960, Rockford had passed Peoria to become the second largest city in Illinois, a ranking that it still holds. Between 1960 and 1990 Peoria remained the third most populous city in the state. However, by 1990 several other cities began to close the population gap with Peoria. Springfield's population passed 100,000 for the first time, while Aurora and the combined populations of Champaign/Urbana and Bloomington/Normal all passed 90,000. Population increases or decreases since 1990 can only be estimated until the results of Census 2000 are made public in early 2001. It is clear however that the populations of many suburban Chicago communities are growing at rates much greater than any of the downstate communities, including Peoria.

A secondary issue to be discussed is the growth of the Peoria metropolitan area in relation to the city of Peoria. The Census Bureau first designated the Peoria area as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in 1940. The Peoria-Pekin MSA represents all of the tri-county area. The results of the 1930 census indicated that the city of Peoria accounted for approximately 52% of the total tri-county population. By the 1990 census, that representation had fallen to 33%. However, from 1940 through 1990, the Peoria MSA has maintained its position as the second largest metropolitan area entirely within Illinois.

### *Peoria Population Growth*

Chart one and table one show the growth of Peoria's population from 1840 through 1990. After strong growth from 1840 until 1930, the population leveled out until 1950 when it began to decline. This leveling off and eventual decline in the population around 1950 is not unique to Peoria, and can probably be tied to a series of events; interstate highway system, more and better cars, better economy and more personal income, desire to get out of the city for a perceived better life in the suburbs, etc. The population jumped in 1970, although the majority of this increase can be attributed to the Richwoods annexations. After an all time population high in 1970, the number began to drop again. Without the Richwoods annexations, the city population probably would have steadily declined from 1950 until 1990.

### *Peoria Metropolitan Population Growth*

Chart two and table two show Peoria's population as a percent of the tri-county area population. In many ways, this data mimics the data in table one. From 1850 until 1930, Peoria continued to increase as a percentage of the tri-county area. Certainly by the late 1800's, Peoria had been clearly established as the major city of the area. In 1930, Peoria represented slightly over 50% of the population of the entire tri-county area. This number began to decline after 1930 as people moved out of the central city. The Richwoods annexations boosted the percentage slightly, and Peoria's population seems to have stabilized somewhat at around 32% of the total area. This data can be compared with other data such as housing construction, school age population, jobs, etc. to ascertain

whether Peoria controls approximately 32% of these items. If Peoria only accounts for 20% of the new housing development, school age children and jobs, then it can be assumed that Peoria's total population as a percentage of the MSA will continue to decline.

#### *Peoria Population Density*

Chart three and table three show the density of Peoria's population over the same time period as the two previous data sets. In the 1800's as Peoria's population increased so did the population density, reaching 8911 people per square mile by 1890. The density stayed somewhat constant from 1890 until 1950, varying between 7160 and 8911 persons per square mile. With the Richwoods annexations and the general decline in city population, the density declines dramatically after 1960. The past thirty years has seen a stabilization of the population density to between 2618 and 3200 people per square mile. This density level is average when compared to other similar cities in Illinois.

#### *Peoria and other Illinois Cities*

As mentioned in the overview, Peoria has historically been the second city of Illinois. In 1840, the population of Chicago was only slightly more than two and a half times that of Peoria. Although the population of Peoria did not keep up with Chicago over the next one hundred and fifty years, it did increase enough to keep Peoria in second position until 1960, and third position through the 1990 census. Table five shows the population growth of ten major cities in Illinois from 1900 through 1990. Further breaking down this information into two categories helps in identifying the trends. The first category consists of older industrial based cities; Peoria, Rockford, Decatur, and Joliet. The second category consists of newer non-industrial based cities; Naperville, Aurora, Champaign-Urbana, and Bloomington-Normal. Springfield in many ways falls into both categories and will be shown thus. Chart four shows the population change of the first category cities since 1900. The growth of these cities is surprisingly similar, with few dramatic increases in population, and with the exception of Springfield, a downturn in total population over the past ten to twenty years. The second category cities show a very different trend. When compared with the population of Peoria at the turn of the century, all of these cities had significantly smaller populations. However, since the 1970 census, the non-manufacturing cities have increased their populations at a rate far greater than that of Peoria. There are many reasons for this trend; change in the economy from primarily manufacturing to service related, and in the case of Naperville and Aurora, the general increase of suburban Chicago populations.

#### *Peoria and other Illinois Metropolitan Areas*

The Peoria metro area, officially the Peoria-Pekin MSA, is still the second largest metro area in Illinois. Population data from the 1990 census indicates that the Peoria MSA has approximately 50,000 more people than the Rockford MSA, the next largest metro area in Illinois. Table 6 indicates the history of MSA populations in Illinois through the 1990 census. The MSA data clearly shows that in 1990, the Peoria metro area remained the primary urbanized area in downstate Illinois.

### *Future Population Trends*

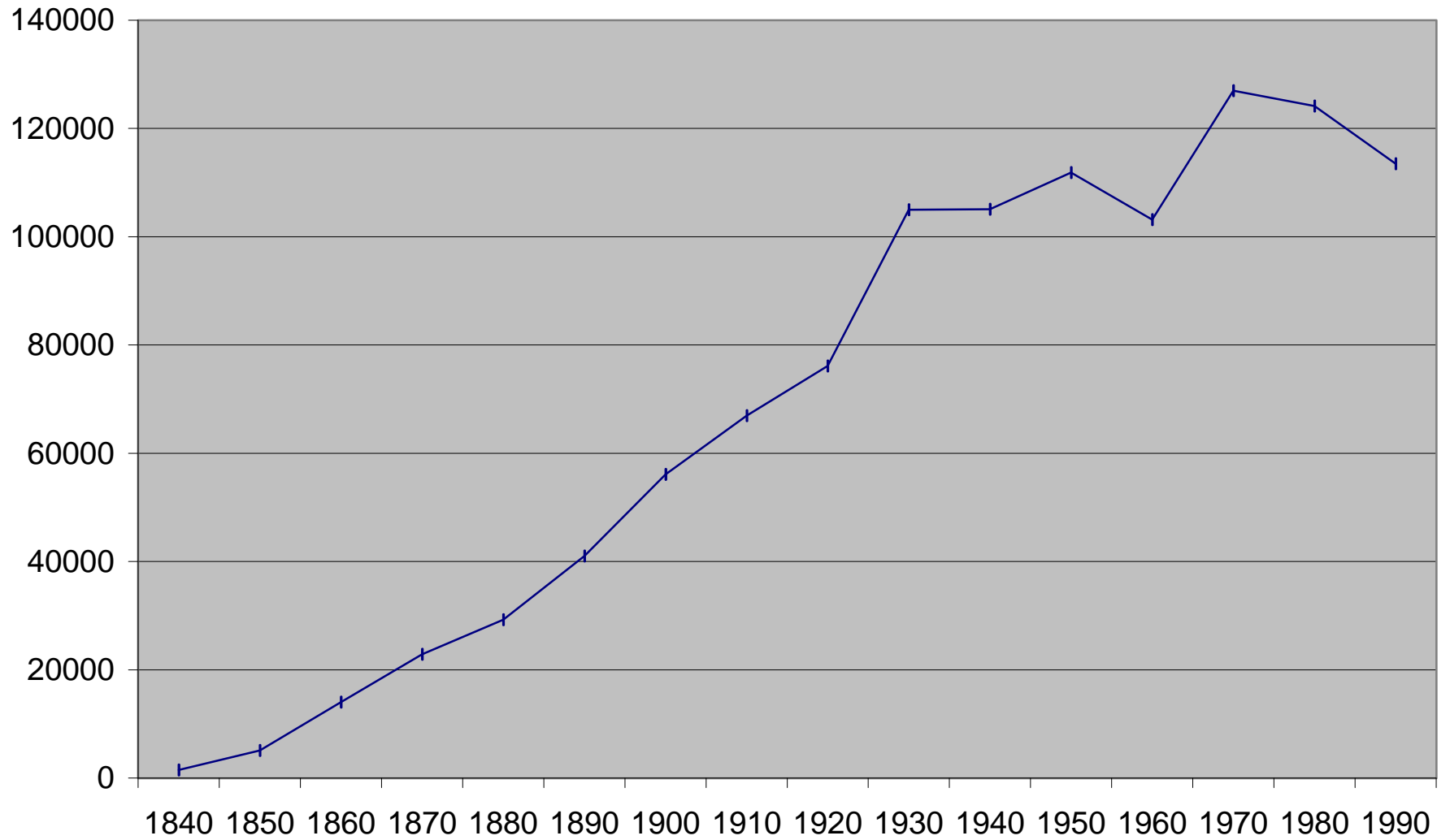
Predicting the future growth or lack thereof in any community is at best calculated guesswork. Several Illinois communities have taken advantage of the ability to conduct a special census of their population during the 1990's. While a special census can give a community some idea of where growth is occurring, it can also be misleading. A special census does not have to count the entire population of a community, but can be targeted in the areas where the community knows growth has occurred. Peoria conducted a special census in 1998, counting the population in the far northwest section of the city. This special census placed the total population of Peoria at a little over 119,000. Several other communities in Illinois have also used the special census mechanism to re-count their population between the regular decennial census. The various special census results indicate that many of the communities in suburban Chicago, especially Naperville, Aurora, and Joliet have seen a dramatic increase in their population over the past ten years. In addition to the special census mechanism, the Census Bureau makes population projections based upon trend data. This data is perhaps even less reliable than the special census data, because it does not take into consideration any changes in communities over the past few years. Table and chart seven show the Census Bureau projections for municipal population in 2000. These figures should only be taken as a rough guide, for example, all indications are that Peoria has had an increase in overall population since 1990, perhaps not to the 119,000 special census number, but there is no indication that the population has fallen to around 111,000. However, the Census Bureau information can be used as a basic indicator of where growth is occurring in Illinois. The area showing the greatest amount of growth, in both percent and number, is the Chicago suburbs. This area, which stretches north over the Wisconsin state line, east into Indiana, west almost to DeKalb, and south past Joliet is home to almost nine million people. The fastest growing communities in this area, Naperville, Aurora, and Joliet, all benefit by having self-generated growth in addition to serving as attractive bedroom communities for a population that works elsewhere in the Chicago metro area.

### *Conclusions:*

Although much can be made of population growth trends, it is the quality of life in any community that sets it apart from other cities and towns. The data in this report, when compared with similar data on a nationwide level, indicates that Peoria is far from unique. Throughout the past one hundred and fifty years, many cities have experienced dramatic growth, but have not sustained that growth. There are numerous reasons for this trend; changes in industrial development, the development of new products and markets, the de-densification of older urban areas, faster and more reliable transportation, etc. Although population numbers can be used as indicators of trends, the issue of quality of life remains paramount. Peoria must continue to be attractive to new growth, and to aggressively attract that new growth, without losing sight of the quality issues important to the existing population.

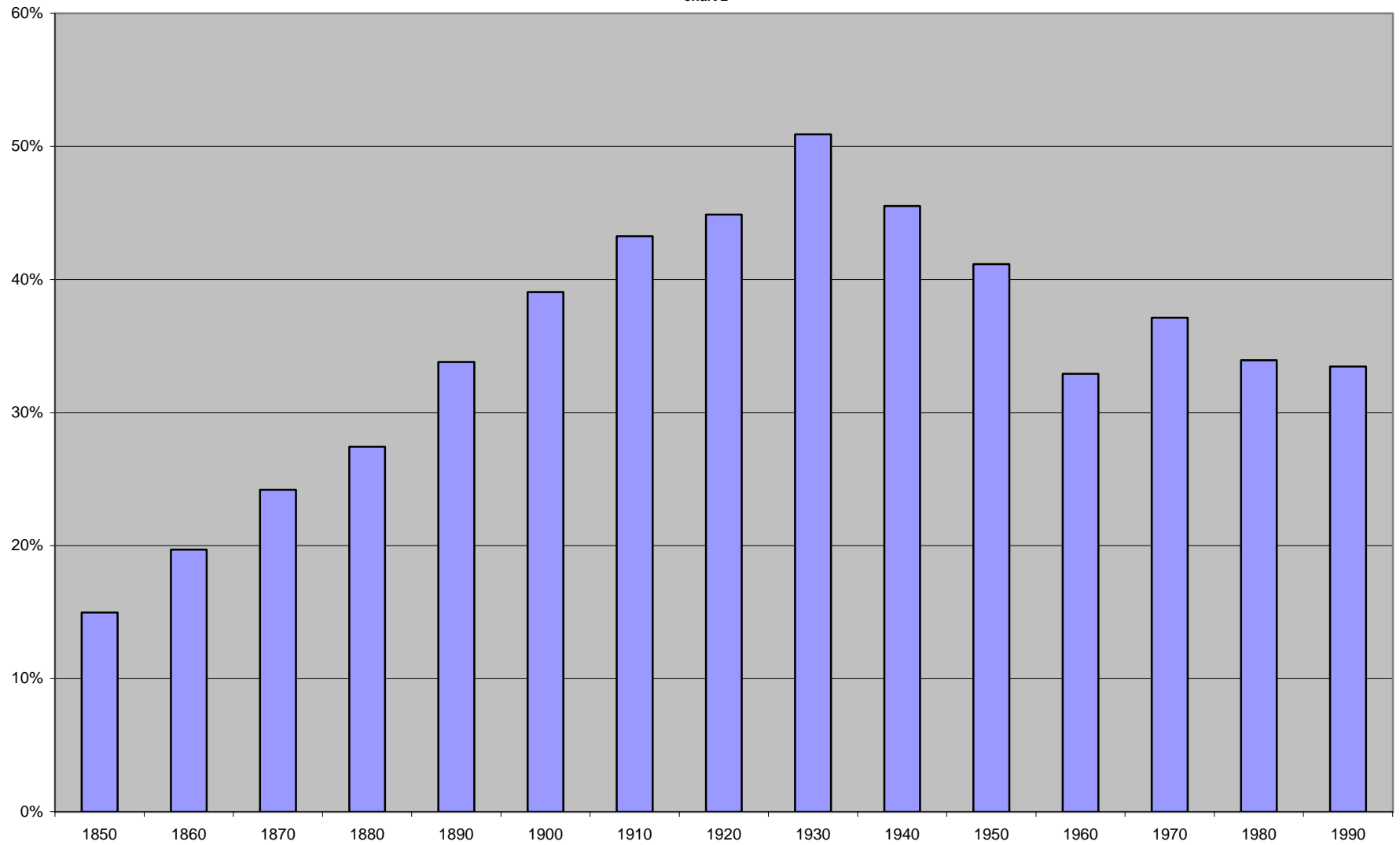
# Peoria Population Growth

chart 1



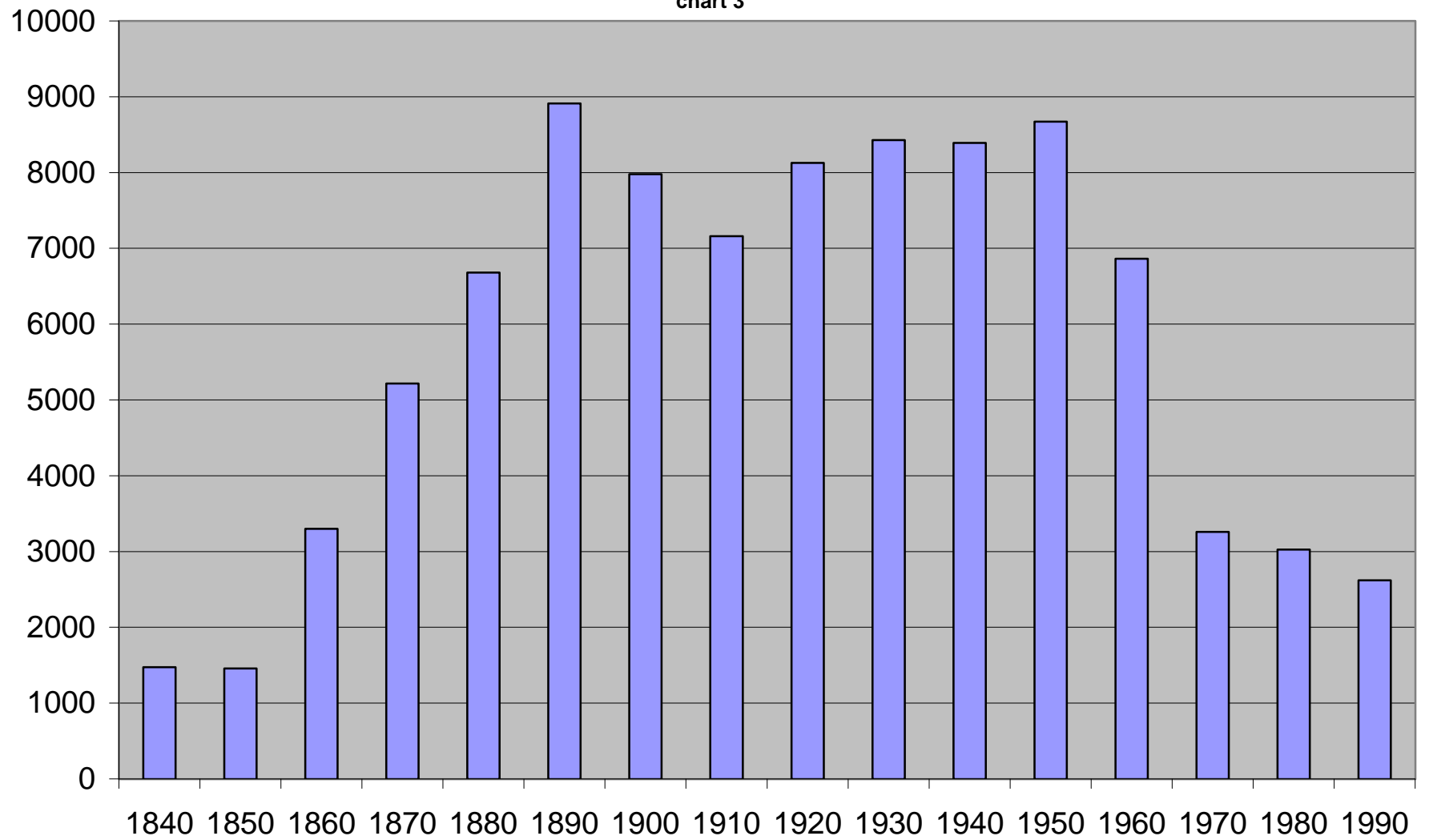
City population as a % of tri-county area

chart 2



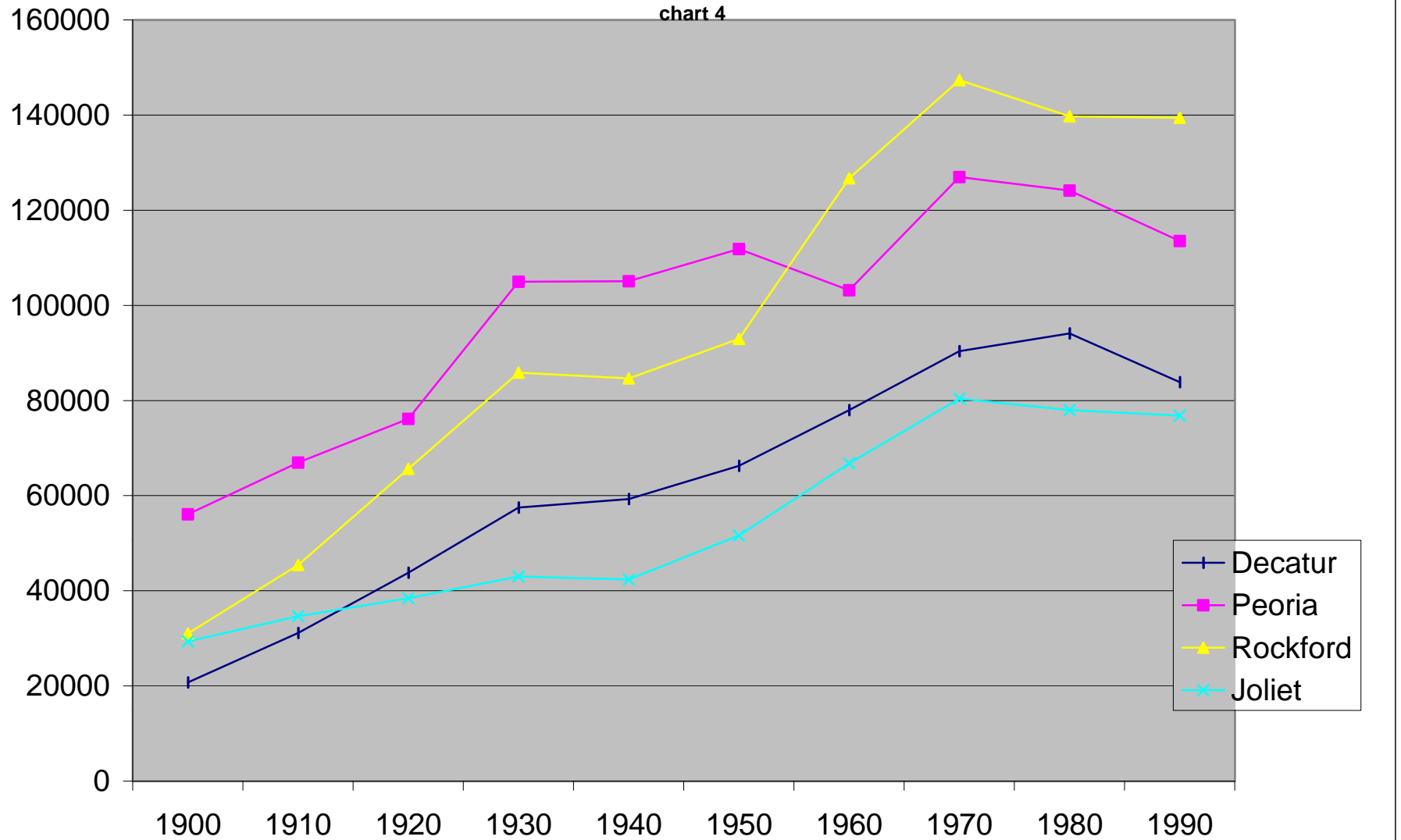
## Population per sq mile

chart 3



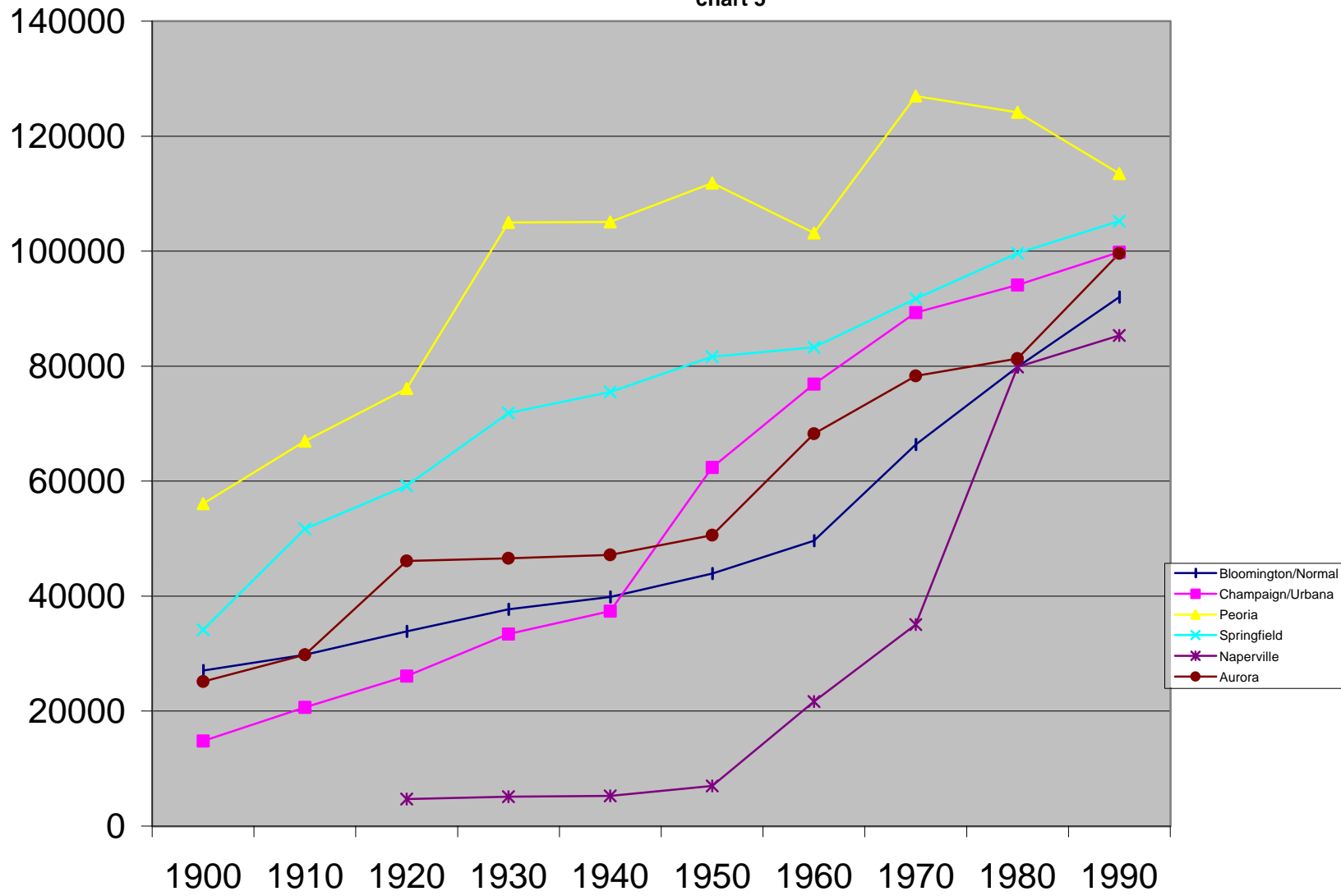
## Population Growth

chart 4



# Population Growth

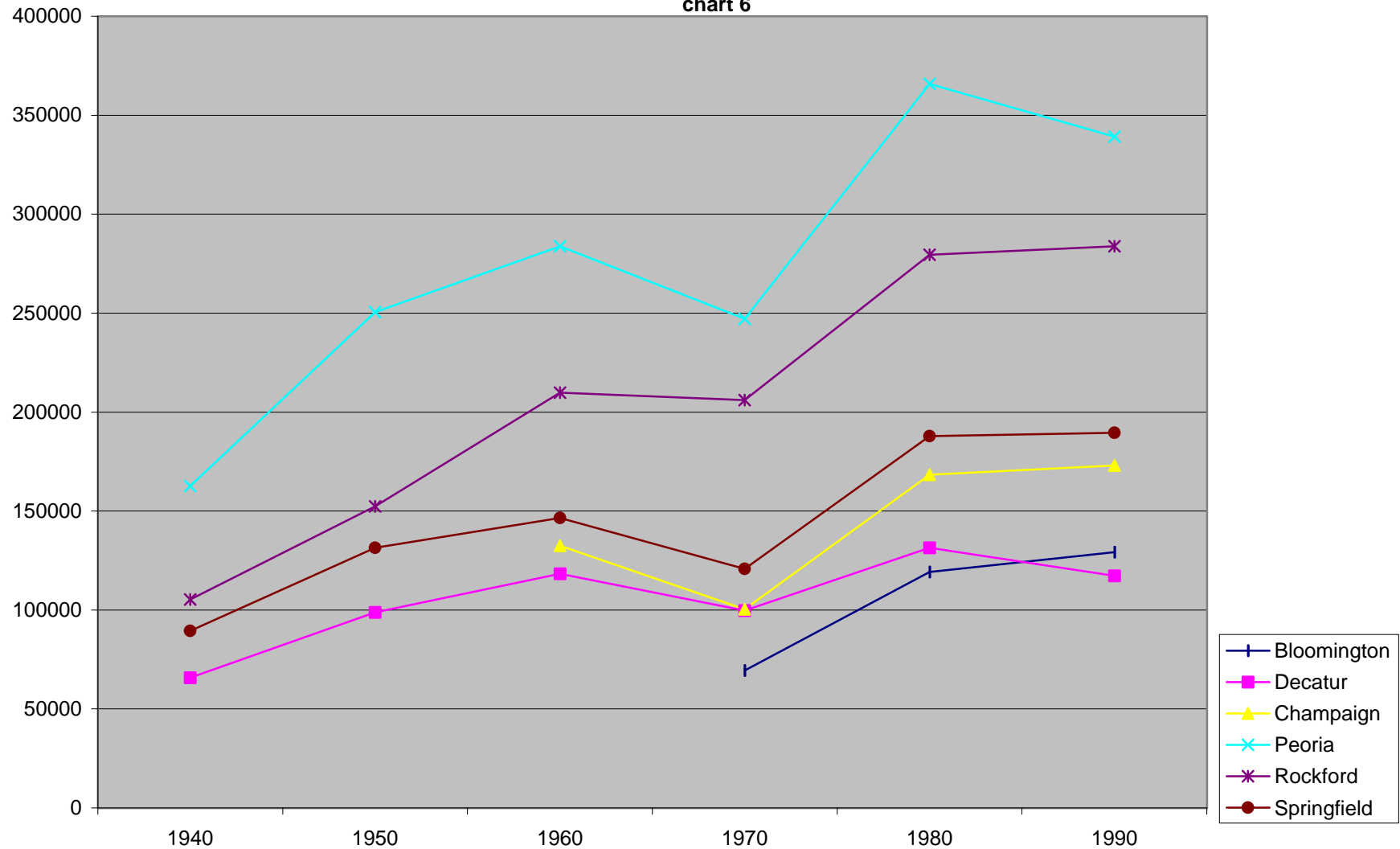
chart 5





# MSA Population Growth

chart 6



**Table 1****Peoria Population Growth**

Year	Population
1840	1467
1850	5095
1860	14045
1870	22849
1880	29259
1890	41024
1900	56100
1910	66950
1920	76121
1930	104969
1940	105087
1950	111856
1960	103162
1970	126963
1980	124160
1990	113504

**Table 2****Peoria & Peoria MSA Population**

Year	Peoria City	Peoria MSA
1900	56100	
1910	66950	
1920	76121	
1930	104969	
1940	105087	162566
1950	111856	250512
1960	103162	283833
1970	126963	247121
1980	124160	365864
1990	113504	339172

**Table 3****City of Peoria - Historic Population Density**

Year	Population	Approx Acre	Approx Sq Miles	Pop per acre
1840	1467	636.73	0.994890625	2.30
1850	5095	2238.91	3.498296875	2.28
1860	14045	2723.27	4.255109375	5.16
1870	22849	2803.63	4.380671875	8.15
1880	29259	2803.63	4.380671875	10.44
1890	41024	2946.47	4.603859375	13.92
1900	56100	4501.01	7.032828125	12.46
1910	66950	5984.65	9.351015625	11.19
1920	76121	5993.38	9.36465625	12.70
1930	104969	7969.81	12.45282813	13.17
1940	105087	8015.41	12.52408266	13.11
1950	111856	8257.03	12.90160828	13.55
1960	103162	9619.47	15.03042875	10.72
1970	126963	24924.34	38.94427984	5.09
1980	124160	26252.40	41.01936766	4.73
1990	113504	27742.79	43.34811141	4.09

**Table 4****Population Density**

City	Pop / Sq Mile
Normal	3292
Bloomington	3110
Rockford	3100
Naperville	3055
Aurora	2974
Peoria	2776
Springfield	2474

**Table 5**  
**Growth of other cities in Illinois**

Year	Bimton/Nor	Decatur	Cham/Urbana	Peoria	Rockford	Springfield	Naperville	Aurora	Joliet	Chicago
1900	27081	20754	14826	56100	31051	34159		25146	29353	1698575
1910	29792	31140	20666	66950	45401	51678		29807	34670	2185283
1920	33868	43818	26117	76121	65651	59183	4703	46126	38442	2701705
1930	37698	57510	33408	104969	85864	71864	5118	46589	42993	3376438
1940	39851	59305	37366	105087	84637	75503	5272	47170	42365	3396808
1950	43935	66289	62397	111856	92927	81628	7013	50576	51601	3620962
1960	49628	78004	76877	103162	126706	83271	21675	68241	66780	3550404
1970	66388	90397	89332	126963	147370	91753	35062	78279	80378	3366957
1980	79861	94081	94111	124160	139712	99637	79833	81293	77956	3005072
1990	91995	83885	99846	113504	139426	105227	85351	99581	76836	2783726

**Table 6**  
**Illinois MSA population growth**

Year	Bloomington	Decatur	Champaign	Peoria	Rockford	Springfield
1940		65764		162566	105259	89484
1950		98853		250512	152385	131484
1960		118257	132436	283833	209765	146539
1970	69392	99693	100417	247121	206084	120794
1980	119149	131375	168392	365864	279514	187789
1990	129180	117206	173025	339172	283719	189550

**Table 7**  
**ILLINOIS CITIES WITH POPULATION**  
**OVER 70000 (estimated 1998 population)**

Chicago	2802079
Rockford	143656
Aurora	124736
Springfield	117098
Naperville	117091
Peoria	111148
Bloomington/Nor	103062
Champaign/Urbana	99152
Joliet	92285
Elgin	87507
Decatur	79972
Arlington Heights	76522
Waukegan	75999
Schaumburg	74481
Evanston	71928
Cicero	71289