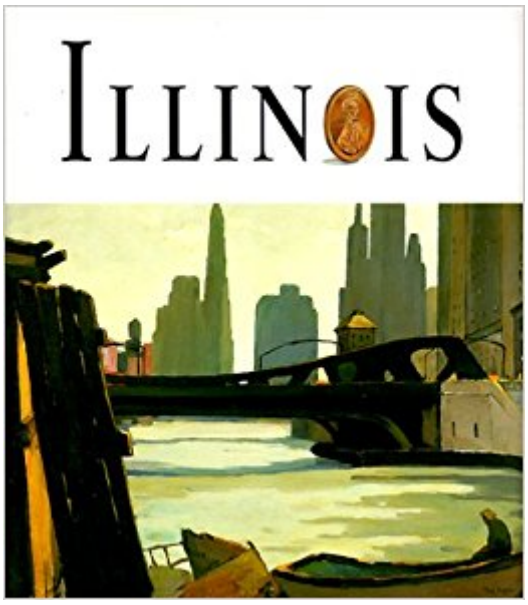
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Art Of The State: Illinois



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Synopsis

Book by Joanne Trestrail

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

From the Windy City of Chicago to the sleepy farms downstate, Illinois exemplifies all that is American. This richly illustrated book takes us to the Land of Lincoln-and of the beloved Bulls, Bears, and Cubs-and shows why Illinois is such a vital place. From Michael "Air" Jordan to Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan, from Al Capone to Studs Terkel and Oprah Winfrey, Illinois has nurtured people who have shaped America. Tour the stockyards, ride the el or John Deere’s tractor, and listen to the blues as you explore the Prairie State. 134 illustrations, 115 in full color

My family was traveling to Chicago and my mother-in-law saw this book in the library and wanted a copy for herself. It arrived before taking off for their trip.

Years ago, when preparing for my 50-state road trip I’d purchased loads of travel guides to help me plan what to see in each state. The guides seemed satisfactory until I stumbled upon the first ART OF STATE book in Iowa. This curious book made all other travel books pale by comparison. Deceptively slim, lightweight and light airy pages, it packs a punch of meaningful, inspirational information. I’ve since purchased all the books in the series (20 of the 50 states as of 2008.)Beautifully designed and written, they are thoroughly engaging and a joy to read--like finding an

ancestor’s scrapbook in the attic and reading a fascinating family heritage while peering over images of a buried past. Each author must be a native or a deliberate transplant, for each one tells their state’s story lovingly, with a deep appreciation of the state--and not just its good features, but the blemishes, too, described evenhandedly. Photographs of architecture, landscapes paintings, crafts and memorabilia complement the words. Each book presents the state’s history, climate, landscape, traditions, symbols, recipes, must-see destinations and a statewide calendar of events. If your budget won’t allow you to buy all 20 in the series, at least buy two: one of your home state and one of your adopted state. You’ll be amazed at what you discover.Forgive me for raving so much about THE ART OF STATE series, but the it’s such a find, like discovering a diamond in a pile of glass. I can’t help but gush.Now, about the Illinois edition. The inside cover of each book in the series displays a wallpaper design treatment: a background color, unique to the state, dotted with a state motif, for example, ,miniature moose for Maine. I try to guess what the wallpaper will be before opening the book. The Illinois book motif, a shiny penny, surprised me. I’d assumed a Lincoln image, and chuckled when I saw the penny image of his face instead of a more formal sculpture. The author captures the state’s dichotomy between the dominance of Chicago, (the hub of art, finance, transportation) and "Downstate" (, anywhere in illinois other than Chicago, which is mostly flat, mostly farms). According to this book, Chicago was intended to be part of Wisconsin, not Illinois, until one man pushed the border farther north before applying for statehood. What a different state it would have been without Chicago, and what a different book it would have been, which is my only complaint about the book: too heavily slanted toward that lofty city (the reason for 4 stars). That said, I did learn a lot about Illinois from its French fur trading start to its thriving commercial waterways, and later railways. I was surprised at Mormon inroads in Nauvoo, and exodus (when founder Joseph Smith ran for U.S. President and got killed by mob, inspiring new leader, Brigham Young, to run out of Illinois and into Utah). Another interesting tidbit: Illinois blue grass rivals Kentucky’s, while its soybean production is unrivaled by any state. The state’s big influencers: from meatpacking moguls Swift and Armour, to rail-splitter turned country-unifier Abraham Lincoln, to railroader George Pullman and merchandising maniacs Montogomery Ward, William Wrigley, Sears & Roebuck, and Marshall Field ("Give the lady what she wants), to creative giants Frank Lloyd Wright, Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser, Studs Turkel--all shaped not only Illinois, but the whole country. This lightweight book easily hefts the heavyweights of Illinois history, from fur-trading beginnings to fur-flying sports and politics.

Having been born and raised in the Prarie State and the Land of Lincoln, I have a keen interest in

books related to Illinois. ART OF THE STATE: ILLINOIS is part of a series of books examining the Art--including art, architecture, crafts, photography, and natural landscapes--that is unique to each state. However, this little volume contains much more than just a bunch of photographs and paragraph descriptions. In reality, the book is a concise, but vivid history and trivia book about the state of Illinois. I learned several things about the state of my youth that I never knew before. For instance, I had no idea that the lava lamp was invented in Illinois or that Lincoln Logs were first manufactured and sold in the state (that one makes sense, but I never knew it until after reading the book). However, having grown up in downstate Illinois, my favorite piece of information that I took away is that even though there are 39 different spellings for the plant, Chicago is named after a wild plant that grew in the area and literally means "stinking weed".As much as I enjoyed the book, it does have one flaw. I realize that Chicago is the biggest city in the state and the third biggest city in the country. However, in a book that is supposed to be reflective of the entire state, the book has a great deal more information about Chicago than anything else. Somewhere between 60%-70% of the book is about Chicago and the inhabitants of the city, whereas Springfield is barely mentioned and the historical city of Vandalia isn't even mentioned. Nevertheless, despite the huge amount of space given to the Windy City, ART OF THE STATE: ILLINOIS is a well put together book that is entertaining and informative read as well as being relatively short and compact. A great little book for anyone who has an interest in the State of Illinois.

Who knew The Land of Lincoln also gave us the Lava Lamp. This book is filled with facts, photos and artwork related to The Prairie State. There is also a great deal of historial info on The Windy City to the far south area known as Egypt. A great collectors edition. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in Illinois or just wants to add to a collection of United States history.

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