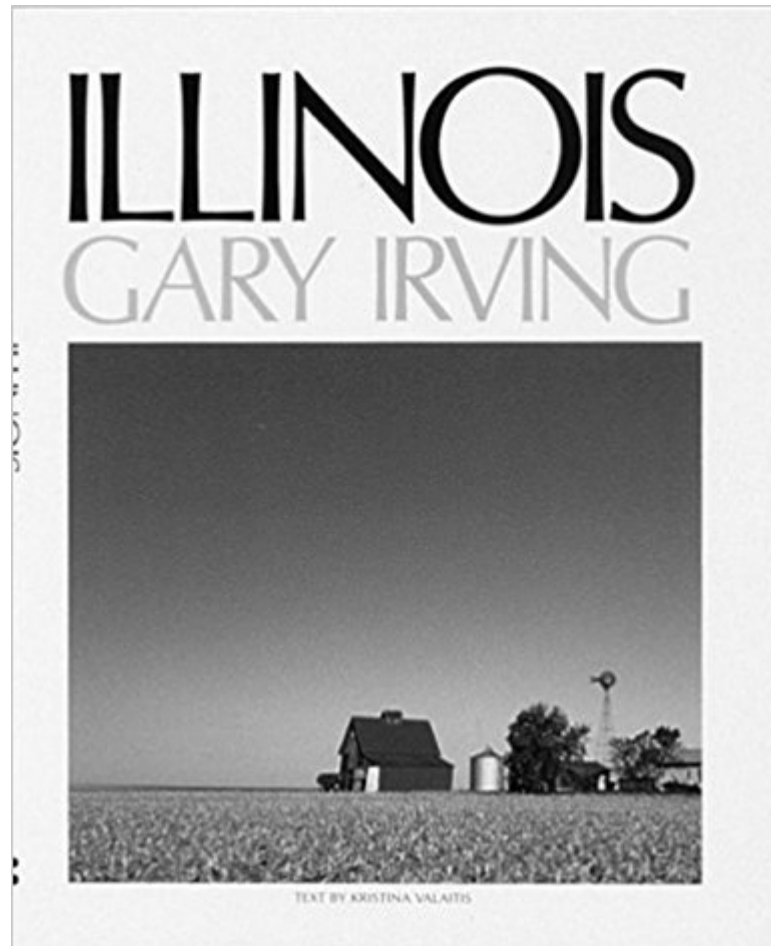




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Illinois



Synopsis

From lush rolling hills to fields of corn, from the richness of Victorian mansions to the simplicity of the Amish, from Chicago's skyscrapers to grain elevators, Irving captures the essence of this great state.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

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Customer Reviews

My husband is from Oakland Illinois, the 'gateway to corn country' We moved to Texas nearly 10 years, and at one point bought Mr. Irving's book for my father-in-law, who brokers corn from his office at the elevator in Greenvew, IL. Every Christmas we return to Illinois, visiting relatives in towns like Petersburg, Arcola, and Hindsboro - the kind of towns that form the heart of Illinois, and the heart of this book. This past Christmas, flipping once again through the familiar images of Mr. Irving's book, I was struck by the elemental and easily underestimated beauty of the midwest. Sure, Illinois is flat and seemingly plain - but it does have it's own mysteries. You can see time passing by standing outside a deserted, sagging barn, where only the whirring of bird wings and the sound of a far-off combine interrupt the silence. In the corn fields, growth is something you smell rather than see or hear, and the smell is green and yellow and rustling; walk a few feet into the rows and you will learn the true meaning of solitude. You can lay on a hillock and the sky will wrap itself around your peripheral vision. The two-lane highways ('the hard road' to locals) snake between bean and corn fields, past the barn handpainted with the sign "Chewing (tobacco) serves to steady nerves!", and through towns that all have a single flashing stoplight and a town square w/ parking on the slant all around. If you've been away for awhile, you drive slowly on these roads - in part because of the

deer, in part because of the Amish, in part to safely pass the combines rolling along on the shoulder, in part to wave at passing cars (you almost always know the driver, or know someone who knows the driver - in the cornfields of Illinois, everyone is either friend or family once-removed), but mostly you drive slowly because of the plain beauty of the farmhouses and elevators and the hypnotic horizon of the sky. My love of the ocean was born on the Illinois plains - the undulating cornfields, the far horizons, the renewing sunrise - the ocean is my way of staying in touch with the land I learned I actually loved only after I left it. Mr.Irving's book illustrates the poetry of life in the corn belt under the Illinois sky.

I embrace these spaces as I travel through Southern Illinois, thanks to Gary. How about a book on Indiana!

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