

Illinois State Museum -- Map Compare and Contrast Geography Activity

Objective: Students will be able to compare maps of one area over time to understand changes in topography, environmental change, and man-made changes.

Grade Level: 6-9

Time Required: one class period

Maps: <http://www.museum.state.il.us/RiverWeb/landings/Ambot/prehistory/archives/images/environment/thumbnaill/ulthm.htm> (You can also search in the ISM's main search engine for each map; however you lose the frames information of the module).

Compare the Milner's GLO wetlands map and PLA map with modern maps of the area. What does this map tell you about Euro-American activities in the American bottom?

From RiverWeb website:

- river has been fairly stable in the American Bottom for the last several hundred years
- wetlands and swamps were major physiographic features prior to the late 19th to early 20th century
- rivers, lakes, swamps, wetlands, and sloughs covered about 35% of the valley
- excluding the Mississippi River and islands, 19% of the valley floor was covered
- in some places 50% of the floodplain area was underwater for a good part of most years
- in the area around Cahokia, over 15% of the valley was permanently underwater

Vocabulary:

GLO (General Land Office) - department that published many old Public Land Survey (**PLS**) maps from before there was heavy Euro-American settling of certain areas, in this case the American Bottom
Maps show location of

- Native American settlements, roads, taverns, homesteads
- prairies, forests, wet, and dry land

physiographic - pertaining to the study of natural features of the earth's surface can include land formation, climate, currents, and distribution of flora and fauna

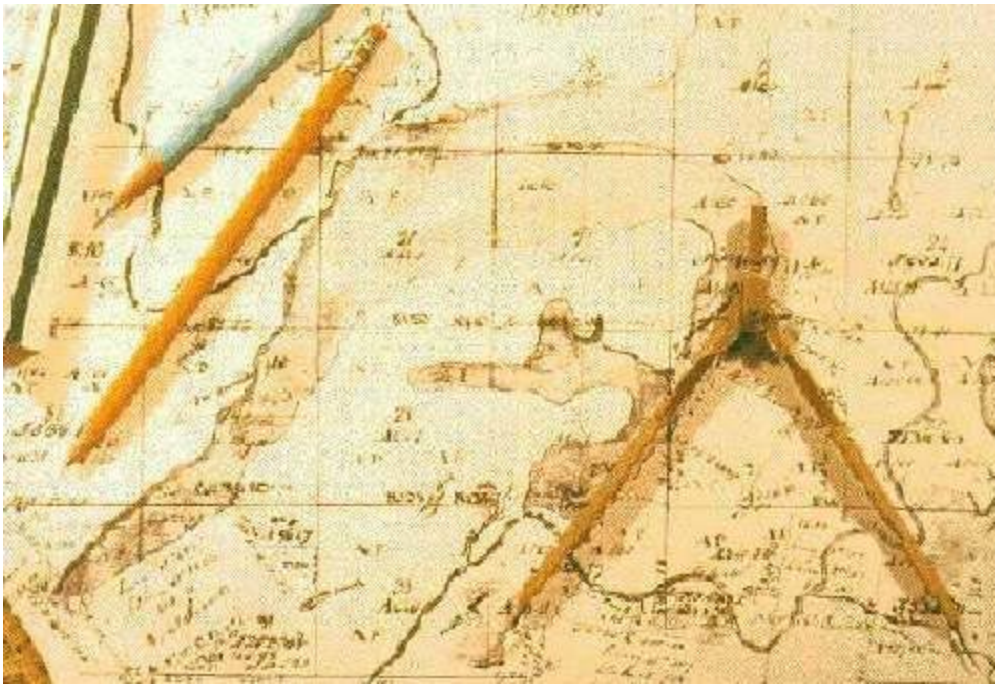
Compare the Milner's GLO wetlands map with modern maps of the area.

Major similarities:

- two branches in the river coming together
- Horseshoe Lake, or horseshoe-shaped body of water not connected directly to the Mississippi River

Major differences:

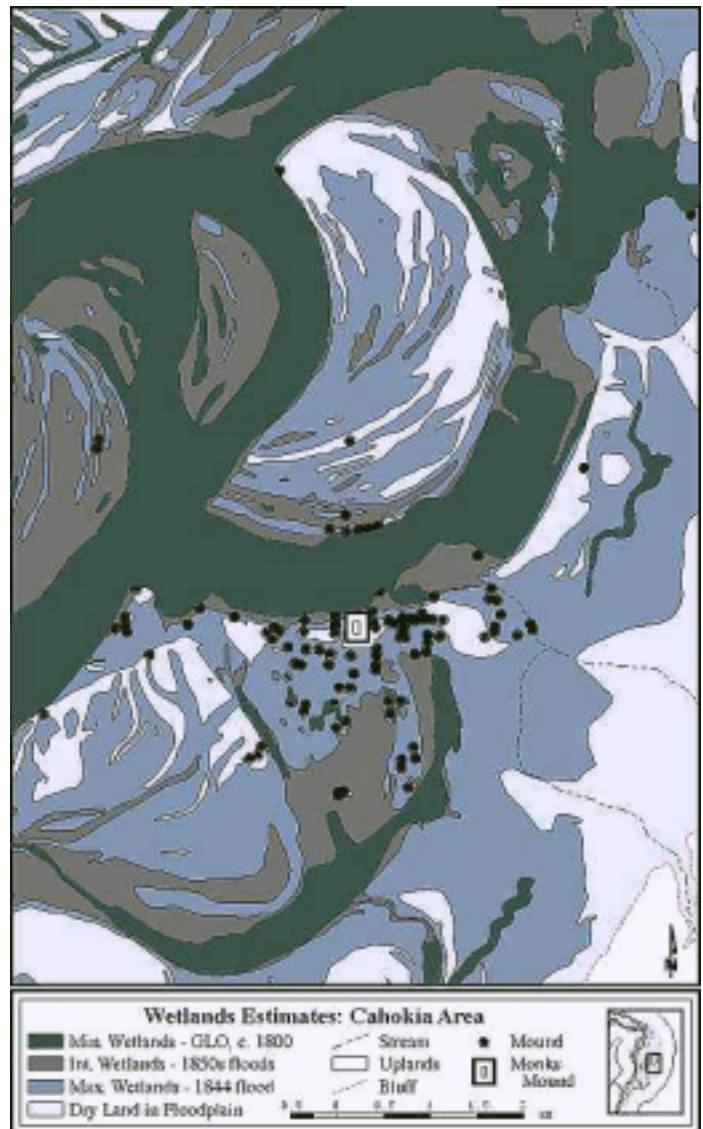
- Cahokia on the new map is not in the same place as Cahokia on the old map.
- many towns deep into "floodplain" areas and where swamps were
- river narrowed into one stream past branch
- third branch joins the Mississippi River where the two branches come together



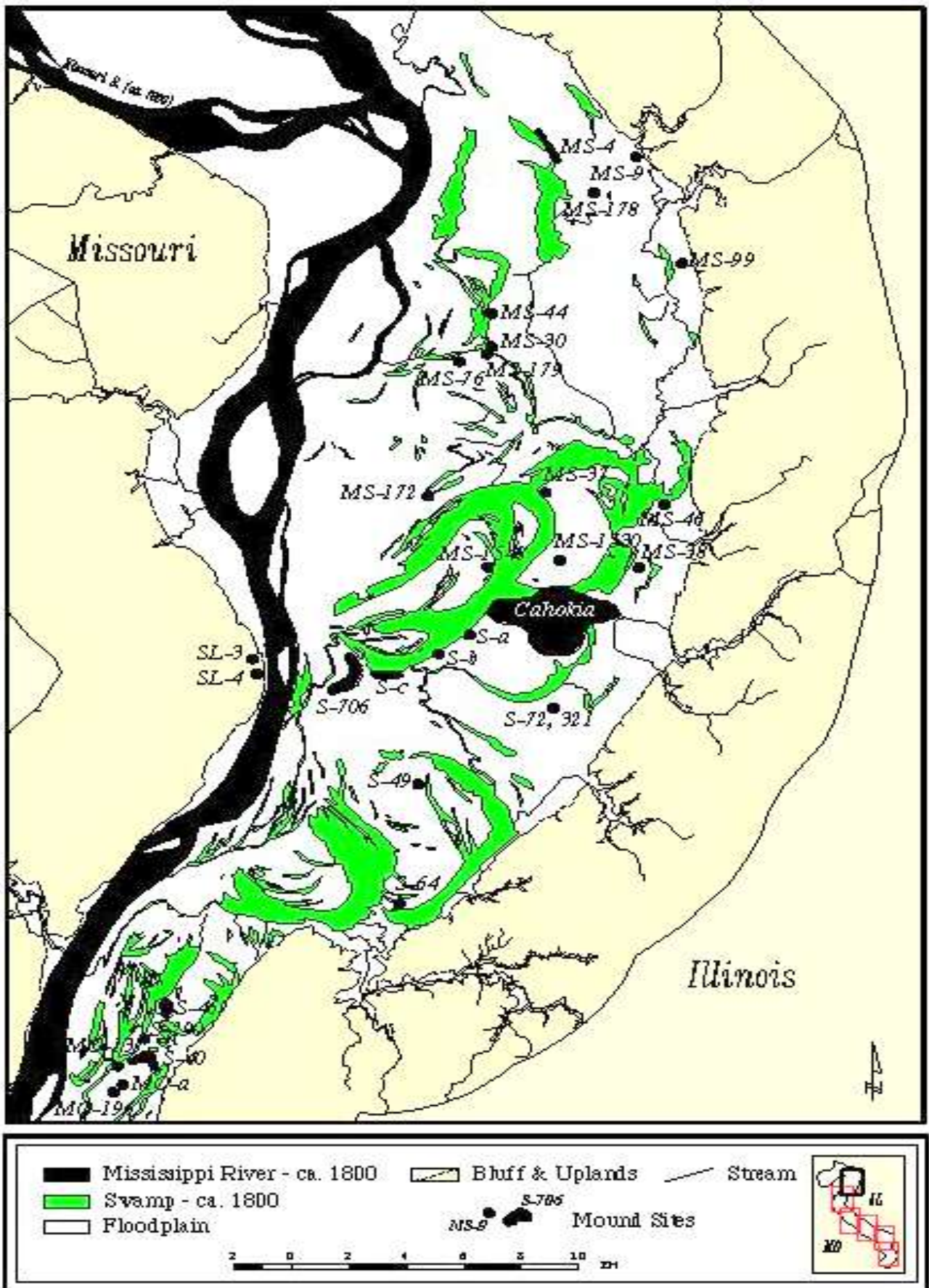
Public Land survey Map of 19th century.

Maps from the Web site:

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/RiverWeb/landings/Ambot/prehistory/archives/images/environment/thumbnail/ulthm.htm>



Wetlands estimate map over time



Map of Cahokia Area circa 1800.

Euro-Americans changed the Mississippi River, but more by way of containing it than by changing its course.

Procedure:

Students should look at projections or printouts of each map and all maps together. Begin with a common element or place on each map and then explore the map systematically to compare and contrast land and water features. Summarize the changes found through time.

For each major change (in the flow of the river, in landform transformation) think about what this change meant for people living along the river. Think also what it implies for people today who are studying people of the past. Landscape history is an important factor in understanding the past.

Illinois State Board of Education Goals:

Geography:

17.A.2a Compare the physical characteristics of places including soils, land forms, vegetation, wildlife, climate, natural hazards.

17.A.2b Use maps and other geographic representations and instruments to gather information about people, places and environments.

17.B.2a Describe how physical and human processes shape spatial patterns including erosion, agriculture and settlement.

17.B.2b Explain how physical and living components interact in a variety of ecosystems including desert, prairie, flood plain, forest, tundra.

17.C.2a Describe how natural events in the physical environment affect human activities.

17.C.2b Describe the relationships among location of resources, population distribution and economic activities (e.g., transportation, trade, communications).

17.C.2c Explain how human activity affects the environment.