

American Regions

Cultural Geography



Urbanization

- Millions of Americans, most of them in cities, prefer to consider their country as a basically rural place, and they think that ruralness provides the country with a basic national vigor.

- There is no longer much justification for this view of rural dominance. About 70 percent of Americans live in urban areas, and more than 40 percent are in areas of 1 million people or more. In 1990, the U.S. farm population numbered about 5 million (2 percent of the population), a figure that has declined steadily since the first national census in 1790, when over 90 percent of all Americans were farmers.

- Several elements of urbanization are emphasized in our discussion. Cities have a particular form, a particular layout. Most American cities have a rectangular-grid pattern, partly a result of cultural attitudes, partly a result of a desire for efficient transport before the automobile, and partly because that pattern is an easy way to survey the land. Within cities, there is a collection of industrial and commercial centers, residential areas, warehouses, and so on.

Industrialization

- A substantial part of U.S. employment is related to manufacturing, either directly or indirectly. Most cities were founded and experienced their major periods of growth when manufacturing was the primary factor in urban growth.

- Today, there is substantial regional specialization in manufacturing, partly as the result of variations in the availability of industrial raw materials and partly as the result of industrial linkages; manufacturing concerns that produce component parts of some final product are located near each other as well as near the final assembly site to minimize total movement costs.

- Other important sources of variation include differences in labor availability or labor skills, in the quality of transportation facilities, and in local political attitudes. Regions tend to specialize in the production of whatever it is that they can best produce. And with this regional specialization has come regional interdependence; few sections of America are truly self-sufficient in manufacturing, in spite of what local pride might lead us to believe.

High Mobility

- America's extensive transportation network is an important element in its high level of economic interaction. Goods and people move freely within and between regions of the country. Regional interdependence is great; it is made possible by these interregional flows. Relative isolation is uncommon, but it does exist.

- Nearly 20 percent of all Americans change their residence in any one year. Although much of this residential migration is local in nature, it does result in substantial interregional population movement.

- Until the last decade of the 19th century, there was a strong westward population shift toward frontier agricultural lands. The focus of opportunity then changed and migration shifted to urban areas. More recently, the U.S. economy has entered what some call a post-industrial phase; employment growth is primarily in professions and services rather than primary (extractive) or secondary (manufacturing) sectors. Such employment is much more flexible in its location, and there has been a more rapid growth in such employment in areas that appear to contain greater amenities.

Resources

- About 25 percent of the land in row crops in the United States produces exports. Also, the country is able to satisfy much of its gigantic demand for industrial raw materials domestically. The United States has the potential to be a major supplier for a few nonagricultural raw materials internationally and is the world's leading exporter of coal.

- Although the U.S. population is predominantly urban, the taking of natural resources from its abundant base requires a large non-urban labor force. Furthermore, particularly for agriculture, the development of these resources often involves a substantial land area. As a result, the relationship between the physical environment and human adaptations to that environment are clearly visible. Government plays an important role in this relationship by establishing controls on land use and agricultural production and by regulating the development of many resources. It is partly because processes inherent in urbanization and industrialization lead to high demand for raw materials that the United States has become dependent on imported raw materials in spite of great natural resource abundance.

High Income & High Consumption

- The high U.S. national income is achieved through high worker productivity, which requires a significant use of machines. And modern machines are fueled by inanimate energy sources. Mobility also implies heavy use of energy resources. High income spread somewhat evenly among a large share of the population will generate high product demand. All this increases energy consumption

- Americans consume about 25 percent of the world's total energy production. The United States imports half the petroleum it consumes, an increasing share of the iron ore and natural gas used, nearly all of its tin and aluminum, and large quantities of many other mineral ores.

- High income also affects diet. Americans eat far more meat products and have a substantially more varied diet than most of the world's population. Beef and dairy production are, therefore, especially important in the agricultural economy.

Environmental Impact

- One consequence of high consumption combined with resource abundance and dependence is a strong disruption of the physical environment. Resources seldom can be removed from the natural landscape without some impact, and the manufacture and use of these resources often harm the air and water. The increased severity of such environmental impacts has enlivened the argument between development and conservation--an argument that has stimulated greater governmental intervention in both processes in an attempt to establish a middle ground. As domestic resources become increasingly scarce and their costs of extraction and production increase, the importance of this conflict will grow.

Political Complexity

- The United States has a complex political structure, with jurisdiction over an activity or state divided among many different decision-making bodies, some elected and some appointed.
- Federal, State and local governments

- Below the state level, the complexity of the political structure can present a major problem in the effective and efficient distribution of governmental services. Counties, townships, cities, and towns are all governed by their own elected officials. Many special administrative units oversee the provision of specific services, such as education, public transportation, and water supply. The resulting administrative pattern is often nearly impossible to comprehend, because many overlapping jurisdictions may provide one service or another in a given area.

Cultural Origins

- The United States has grown from a diverse cultural background. African Americans have made important contributions to the national culture. A distinctive cultural region has developed in the Southwest, with an admixture of Hispanic Americans, American Indians, and European Americans. The Chinese contributed to the life of such cities as San Francisco and New York. This cultural diversity is an important element in the distinctive character of the country.

Cultural Regions of USA

- Megalopolis,
- the American Manufacturing Core,
- the Bypassed East,
- Appalachia and the Ozarks,
- the Deep South,
- the Southern Coastlands,
- the Agricultural Core,
- the Great Plains and Prairies,
- the Empty Interior,
- the Southwest Border Area,
- California,
- the North Pacific Coast, the Northlands,
- and Hawaii.

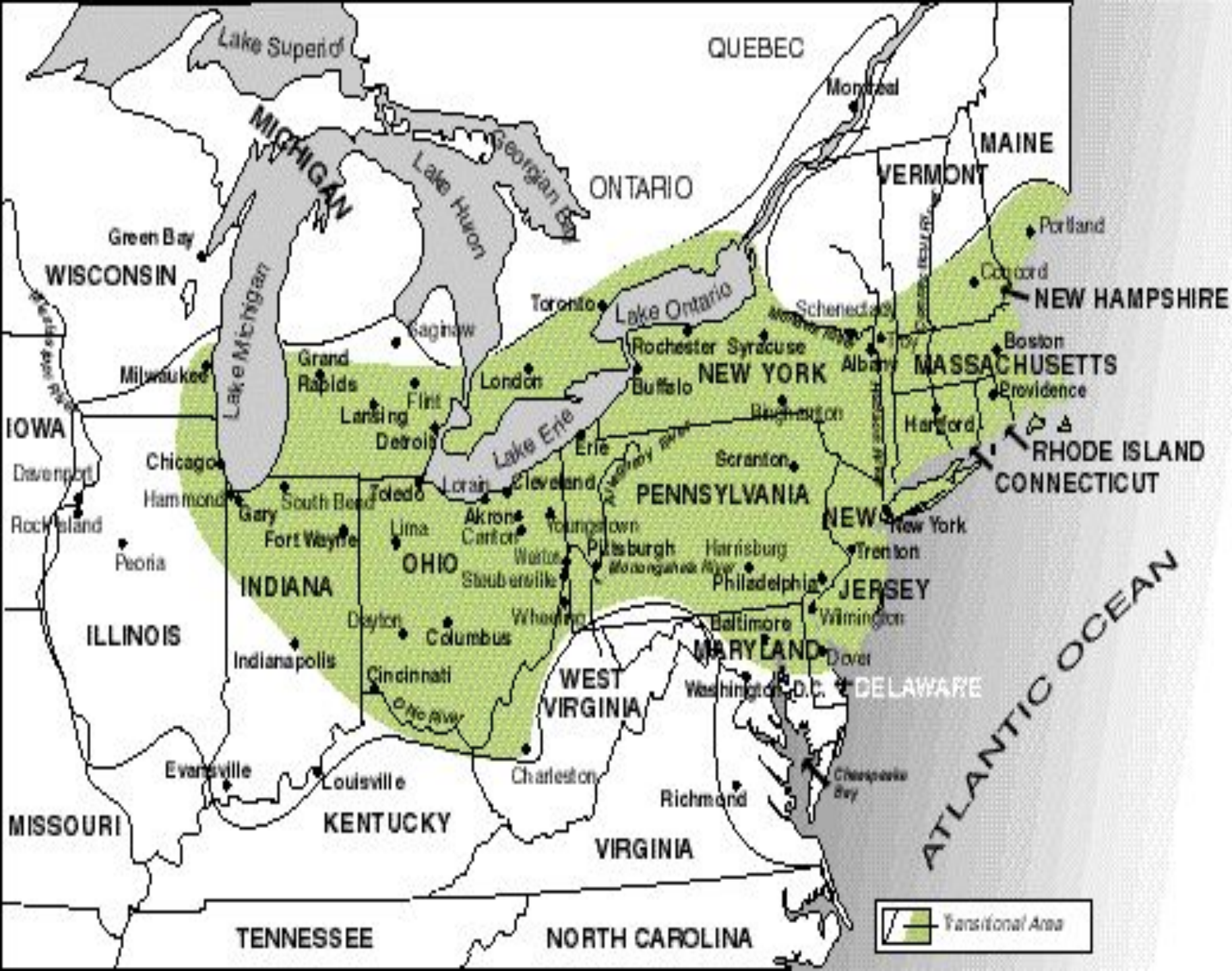
The Megalopolis

- Highest population in USA – over 50 million people
- Huge cities from Washington to Boston
- Old Cities – not well planned
- Considerable cultural diversity
- Different ethnic and racial groups



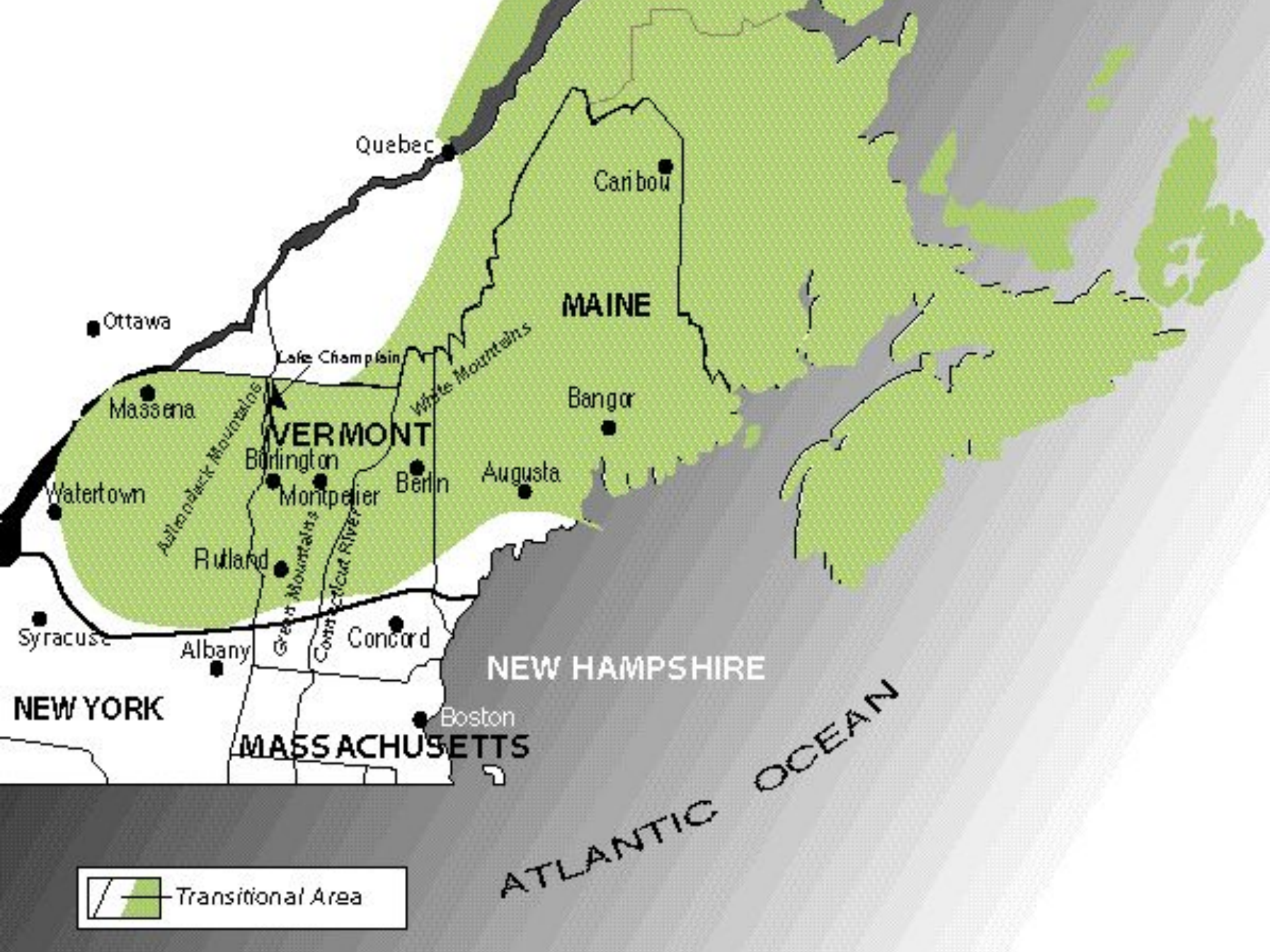
The Manufacturing Core

- The northeastern United States, excluding northern New England, is the country's single most significant region of manufacturing. This region is loosely defined on three sides by the Ohio River Valley, Megalopolis, and the southern Great Lakes.
- Its factories produce most of the country's steel, as well as a significant percentage of its motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts.



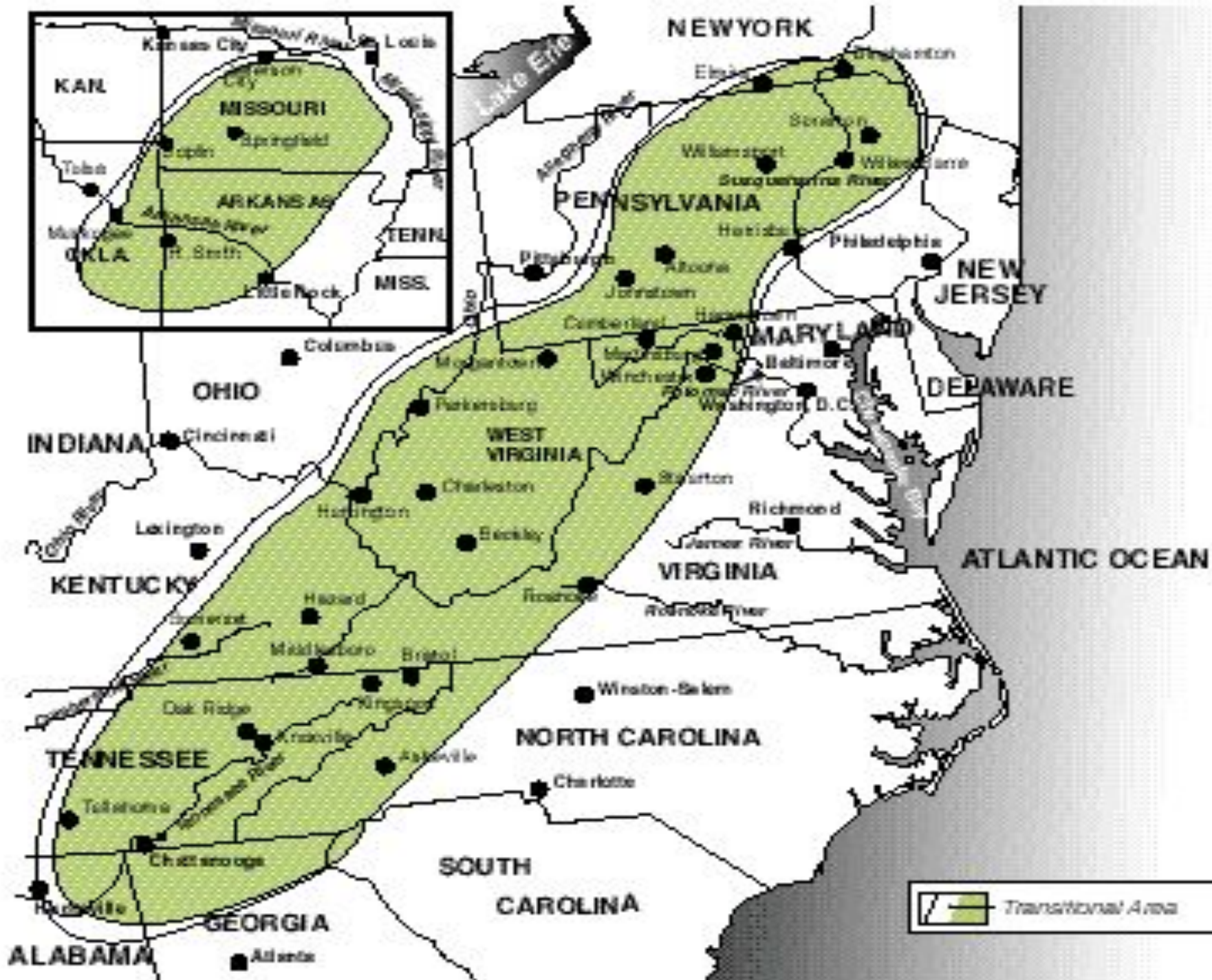
The Bypassed East

- The Bypassed East is not an easy place in which to live and work. Its harsh climate, hilly terrain, and thin, rocky soils limit agriculture.
- The small size of the major regional centers is a good indication of what may be the greatest single reason for the relatively low per capita income levels found in the region.



Appalachia and Ozarks

- Appalachia is America's primary region for owner-operated farms. The average farm in Appalachia contains only about 40 hectares.
- Over much of Appalachia, farming's chief partner is coal.
- Economically, perhaps the worst region in the USA.



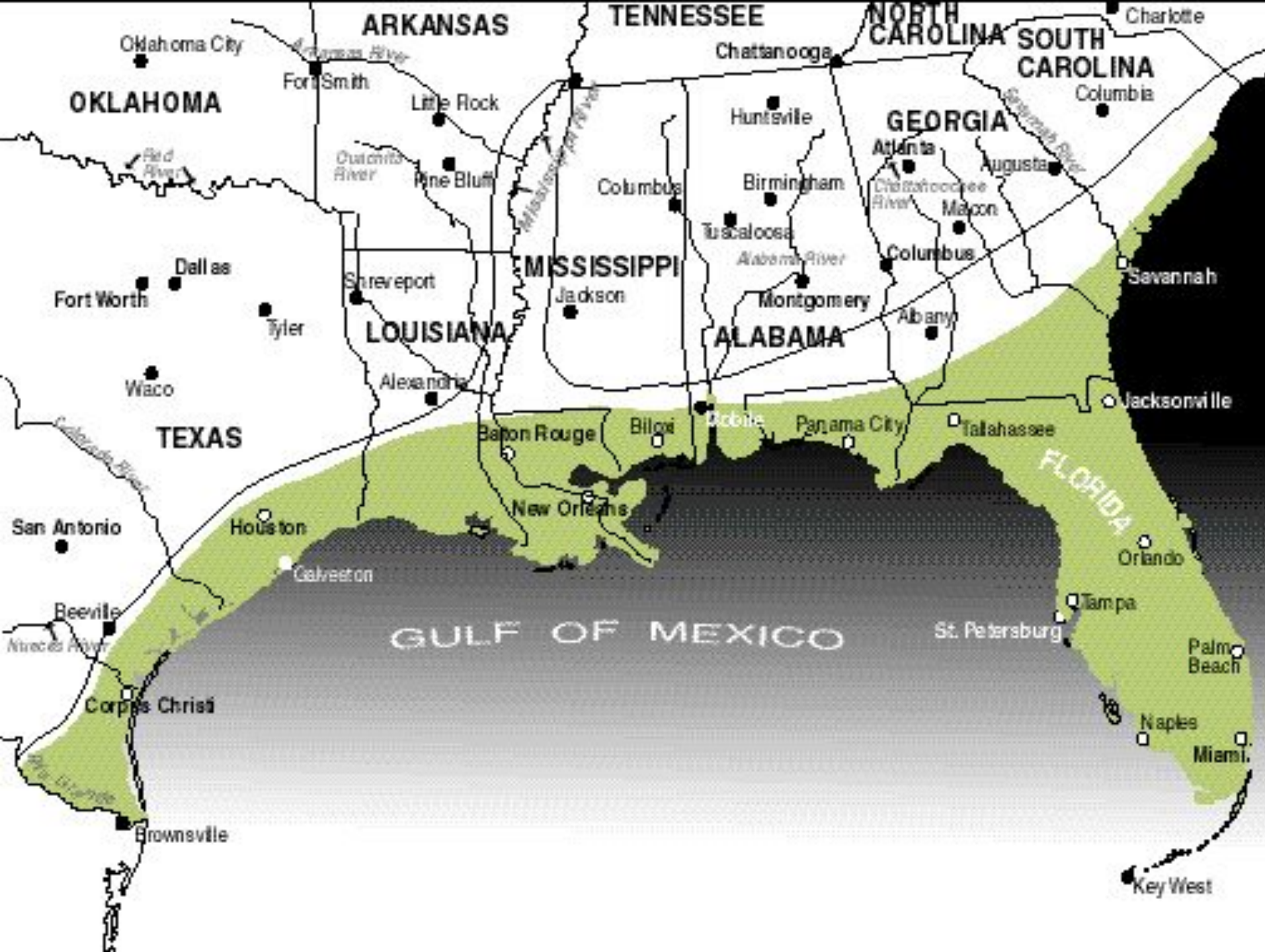
The Deep South

- Production of plantation cotton had become so successful that the region's economy was dominated by this one crop.
- With the loss of the Civil War, the South's economic underpinnings were badly damaged.
- Economic diversity is replacing simple dependency on agriculture.



The Southern Coastlands

- A humid subtropical climate, a long growing season, mild winter temperatures, and warm, humid summers
- Citrus production has been a particularly important
- Sugar Cane & Rice production
- Petroleum deposits along the Gulf Coast



The Agricultural Core

- The mixed farming operation of crop-livestock production
- Corn, wheat, soy beans
- US Automobile Industry



The Great Plains and Prairies

- Much agriculture – mostly Wheat
- Coal, petroleum, precious metals
- Chief cities are: Kansas City (Missouri) and Minneapolis-St. Paul (Minnesota). Denver (Colorado), Dallas-Fort Worth (Texas), and San Antonio (Texas).





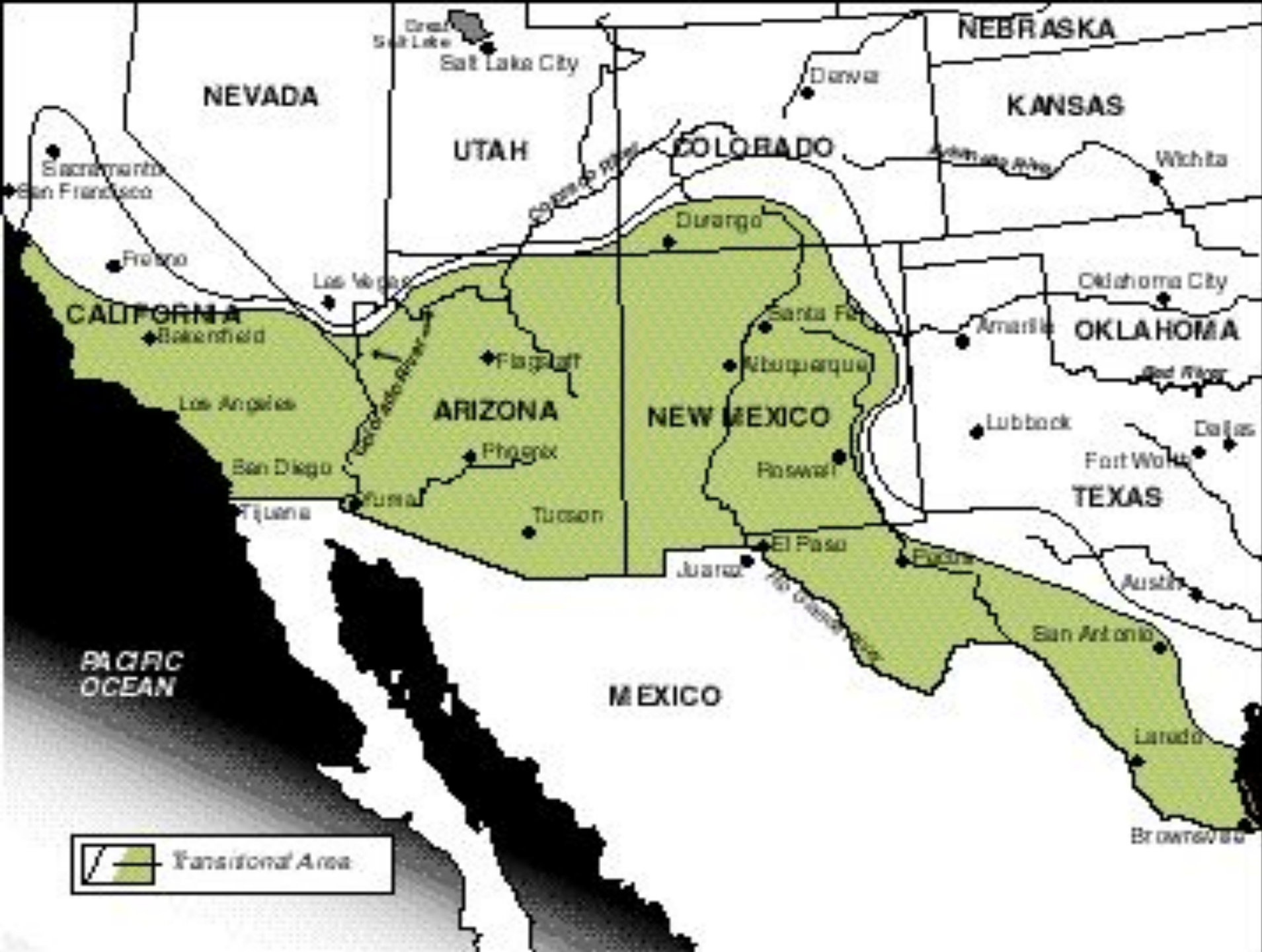
The Empty Interior

- Most of the Empty Interior is occupied by plateaus rather than mountains.
- Difficult climate, little agriculture
- Tourism
- Ranching
- Gold and silver mining



The Southwest Border Area

- Coexistence of Spanish-American, American Indian, and Anglo cultures
- Southwest is the sunniest and driest of all the U.S. regions
- Many military bases
- Tourism (Grand Canyon)
- Retirement area for older people



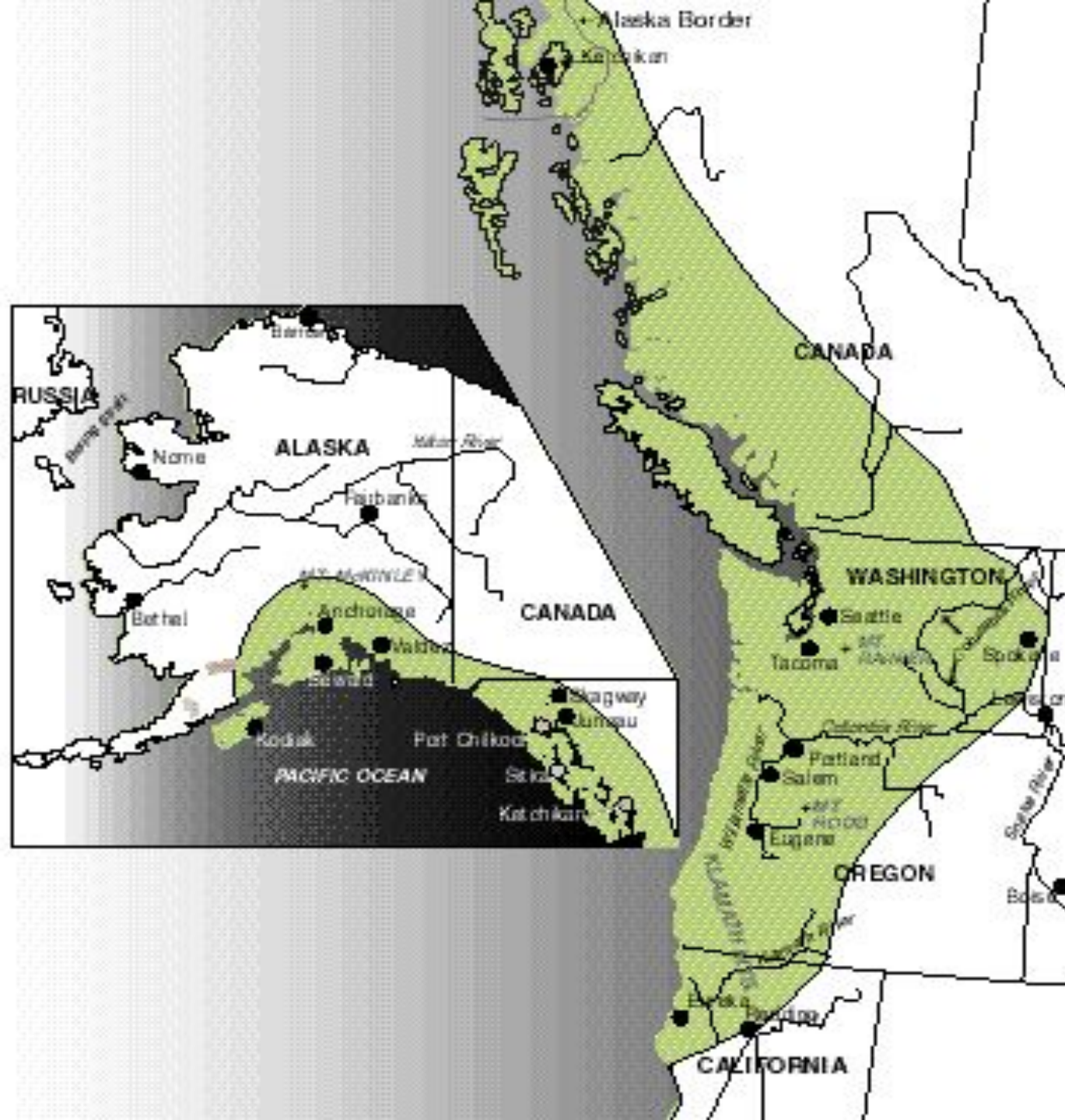
California

- Agricultural interior (valleys) – grapes (wine), vegetables
- Urban coast areas (Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego)
- Largest population of any US state
- Technological center (silicon valley)
- Warm and Hot weather



The Pacific Northwest

- Inland Mountains and green coastlines
- Cities: Seattle, Juneau, Portland
- Lumber and fruits
- Fishing: Salmon
- Hydro-electric power
- Microsoft in Seattle



The Northlands

- Harsh, cold climate
- Hunting and fishing
- Very small population



Hawaii

- 3,850 kilometers west of San Francisco, California, 6,500 kilometers east of Tokyo, Japan
- Islands with Mountains and coast
- Pineapple and sugar cane farming
- Restful environment
- Tourism
- Native Hawaiians



Major Cities

- 1 ~ New York, New York: 7,333,253
- 2 ~ Los Angeles, California: 3,448,613
- 3 ~ Chicago, Illinois: 2,731,743
- 4 ~ Houston, Texas: 1,702,086
- 5 ~ Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 1,524,249
- 6 ~ San Diego, California: 1,151,977
- 7 ~ Phoenix, Arizona: 1,048,949
- 8 ~ Dallas, Texas: 1,022,830
- 9 ~ San Antonio, Texas: 998,905
- 10 ~ Detroit, Michigan: 992,038

