shaped their city to proficient these conditions. Chicago became the great western anchor of a vast heavy-manufacturing belt stretching from Massachusetts to Illinois. To the west, north, and south lay the immense resource regions to supply it with raw materials—corn, wheat, cattle, lumber, iron ore, coal, and petroleum—with Chicago as consumer and funnel to eastern markets, as well as dispenser of manufactures to those staple-producing regions. From 1900 to 1970, Chicago functioned as a complete national-scale metropolis, with particular sway over a continental interior extending to the Rocky Mountains and beyond. By 1930, Chicagoans could travel to four continents in a single day’s journey, thanks to planes and trains. New York had more international ties and better links with the national hinterland when only one extra-local connection was needed, but Chicago was its only serious competitor and trying hard to cut the margin.

Chicago’s world was enlarged socially, too, by the diversifying regions around the world from which it drew its population elements. A ceaseless procession of new migrants piled into Chicago’s growing factories. Eastern and Southern European immigrants streamed through East Coast ports of entry and headed straight for the capital of the midcontinent. Subsequently, African American immigration north in unprecedented numbers from the more than four continents, many streams of emigrants with new loyalties and new allegiances.

The world Chicagoans created in the region during this long period of industrial hegemony was characterized by rising densities in developed districts, infilling between the spokes, and aggressive expansion into the urban fringe, pushing it back until the metropolitan wheel became more like a giant crescent extending inland from the lakeshore. As the suburbs proliferated, an anturban bias pitted them increasingly against the central city, socially and politically. The spread of the automobile offered individual freedom, until the next encounter with gridlock. Superhighways were inserted into the metropolitan frame, disrupting community life in the tightly packed neighborhoods where expression was pushed through, while creating wholly new axes for urban development beyond the built-up zone. Chicago flowered in this period as a center of literature, art, design, and performance. From the novels of the early-twentieth-century CHICAGO LITERARY RENAISSANCE to the rise of Chicago blues music, from the advent of the ART INSTITUTE to the rise of opera, ballet, and the popularity of theater, Chicago introduced, presented, and reconfigured a full-scale cultural life to the world. Through boom and depression, peace and war, expansion and segregation, this cultural awakening created a canon of works that reflect the energetic, cosmopolitan, connected social worlds of the time and something of the identity of the place. Above all, Chicago projected a hunger for and celebration of modernity, an artistic chase for something even larger and more so than beauty, a world that saw in Chicago a world of art and culture.

Chicagoans could reach most of the remainder of the United States and some parts of Mexico and Canada within a day. By 1950, air service had joined railroads to extend all-day travel from Chicago (often in combination) to much of North and Central America, as well as some localities in Western Europe. By 2000, this combined reach, together with road service, had effectively expanded Chicago’s reach to much of the rest of the well-populated world.