

U.S. population moving west

United Press International
WASHINGTON — After the Census Bureau tabulates all incoming data, it will probably announce in 1981 that the nation's population center is for the first time west of

the Mississippi River. That's the estimate of American Demographics magazine, an Ithaca, N.Y., based publication that deals with census matters. It projects that the center of the

country will be someplace in Missouri, an undetermined number of miles west of the Mississippi, as of 1980. The population center fixed by the 1970 census is in St. Clair County, Ill., near St. Louis.

"It's going to go southward and toward the west just as it has every census," said Bryant Robey, a member of the magazine staff. "It's going to cross the Mississippi certainly and probably sink farther toward the south."

In 1790, the first time such a location was fixed, it was 23 miles west of Baltimore and it took 100 years — slowly following the wagon trains — to move through Maryland, West Virginia and Ohio.

By 1900, it was six miles southeast of Columbus, Ind., and since then has been inching its way into Illinois.

"There's no way to know where it will be in the year 2,000, although my guess is it will continue in the same direction, although perhaps not as quickly. It certainly won't be any place as far west as Denver," Robey said.

The population center is set by thinking of the United States as a

flat plane, calculating the location of every American and finding the center of gravity.

The 1980 census will also be the first one costing more than \$1 billion, according to the magazine's projections, with the price amounting to about \$4 per person. That's an increase of \$3 per person over the 1970 census.

David Kaplan, who was in charge of planning both the 1970 and 1980 censuses, said part of the increased cost is due to inflation. But he said another reason is that the size of the average household has decreased.

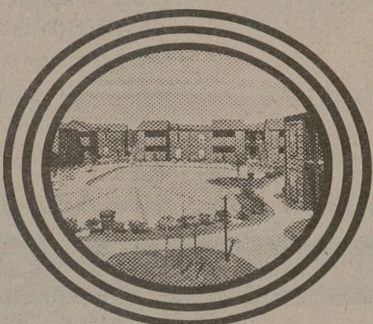
"It costs appreciably more to enumerate six people living in three households of two each than the same six people living in two households of three persons each."

About 25 percent of the increase will go towards increasing the census' accuracy, he said.

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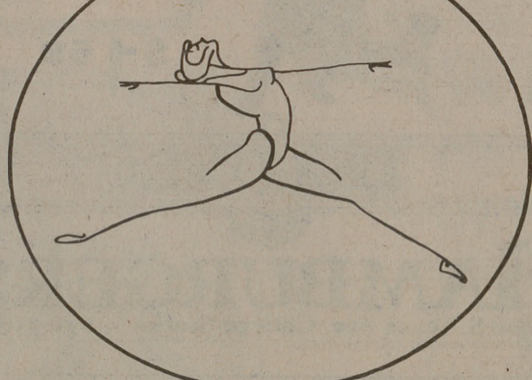
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