

# HISTORIC CONTEXTS

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To fully understand the findings of this survey, it is important to interpret the survey information in context with the development of the neighborhoods within the survey area and in relationship with the forces that influenced the development of the City of Manhattan in general, as well as the development trends that occurred regionally, within the state, and nationally. The National Park Service defines historic context as “a broad pattern of historical development in a community or its region that may be represented by historic resources.” Inherent in the development of a historic context is the identification of important connections between local, regional, state, and national history and the historic resources in a defined sub-area such as Wards 1 and 2 in Manhattan. When survey findings are viewed in relationship to this information, it is possible to apply the criteria for evaluating eligibility for designation to the national, state, and local historic registers. Moreover, an understanding of how historical change affected the community is extremely useful in evaluating community resources that might be threatened and in integrating protective strategies in planning efforts.

Historic contexts developed as part of a reconnaissance-level or intensive-level survey should not be confused with a comprehensive history of the community. The survey report is a technical report and development of historical contexts is one component that assists in providing technical analysis of the resources identified. Generally, establishing historic contexts involves reviewing the known history of the community, the region, and the state and seeking to define important patterns in the development of the area through time that may be represented by historic properties within the community and, specifically, within the survey area. The level of documentation depends on whether the survey is conducted at a reconnaissance level or an intensive level and the size of the survey area in relation to the community as a whole.

The establishment of historic contexts at a reconnaissance-level survey, as in this survey effort, is a base step in targeting the survey effort and in determining recommendations for future identification and evaluation effectively. It also directs the efficient use of personnel. For example, the presence of academically trained architects in Kansas in the late nineteenth century and the existence of an architecture and engineering program at Kansas State College in the early twentieth century required developing a historic context relating to the impact of these patterns on Manhattan’s built environment. Accordingly, Historic Preservation Services directed resources and

personnel toward identification of architect designed buildings in the survey area and identification of architects associated with the college. The resulting information relating to this context is far from definitive, but it establishes the importance of architect-designed buildings in Manhattan and resulted in specific management recommendations for future identification, evaluation, and designation of cultural resources.

The following narrative overview establishes historic contexts for defined chronological eras. Within these time periods, it identifies important development patterns, including geographic limits, historical themes, and the evolution of architectural styles and property types. Specific data from the survey is related to the contextual information in the “Results of Survey” and “Management Recommendations” chapters of this survey report. Because of the survey area’s geographical boundaries and its period of development, the survey does not fully address many of the established historical contexts for Manhattan in general, particularly the historical development patterns associated with evolution of Kansas State University.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANHATTAN, KANSAS: AN OVERVIEW**

### **TERRITORIAL PERIOD (1850-1861)**

The establishment of a commercial trade route to Santa Fe in 1821 promoted the first major encroachment by Euro-Americans<sup>1</sup> into the territory of the Kansa, Osage, and Pawnee nations. Further complicating the intrusion into the traditional lands of these Plains tribes, the federal government, in the mid-1820s, initiated the relocation of approximately thirty eastern Native American nations to “Indian Territory” in the eastern portion of what is now Kansas. The establishment of Fort Leavenworth in 1827, to protect the trade routes and keep peace among the various Indian nations, stimulated settlement in the immediate area.

By the time the forced migration of the eastern tribes ended in the mid-1840s, pressures created by the increasing use of the Santa Fe trade route and the California-Oregon overland emigrant trails impacted the sanctity of the territory set aside for Native American groups. In an attempt to accommodate these activities and as a first step to opening Kansas to settlement, the United States government began to remove all the

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<sup>1</sup> Other than the early explorers and trappers.

tribes from what is now the State of Kansas, relocating them to reservations in present-day Oklahoma.<sup>2</sup>

When the Kansas Territory opened for settlement after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, there was an immediate influx of Euro-American settlers into the territory. The resulting land claims were premature, as the stipulations in the various treaties with Native American nations had not been enacted and the titles extinguished. Under the Public Land Act of Kansas approved in July 1854, squatters could settle on unsurveyed land, but within three months of a “pre-empted” area being surveyed, they had to file a statement declaring that they had been on the land prior to the survey. The settler paid for the claim before the government offered the land for public sale.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the first public sale of land in 1856, the only land that could be purchased consisted of the thirty-five Wyandotte “floats” granted to the mixed-blood Wyandotte Indians under a removal treaty of 1842. The floats were sections of land set aside for Native American use that were free of claim or occupancy by any person or tribe.<sup>4</sup> In 1855, the completion of a wagon road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley and of a road leading northwest to connect with the Oregon and St. Joseph (Missouri) emigrant trails stimulated further claims on pre-emptive lands.

Pre-emption became a significant factor in the political dynamics of Territorial Kansas. The Kansas- Nebraska Act of 1854 ended the tradition of representative equality between slave and free states in the United States. The establishment of the doctrine of popular sovereignty in relation to the legality of slavery that was inherent in the Act made the settlement of Kansas a political as well as a moral battleground over the slavery issue. Although the majority of immigrants who settled in the Kansas Territory from 1854 to 1860 came as individuals, most represented two factions.

Missourians took advantage of the practice of absentee pre-emption claims in an effort not only to gain land cheaply, but also to create a neighboring pro-slavery territory.<sup>5</sup> Emigrant societies originating in the northeastern part of the United States formed to

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<sup>2</sup> David Sachs and George Ehrlich, *Guide to Kansas Architecture* (Lawrence: the University Press of Kansas, 1996), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Sheryll White and Terry Ward, “K-18 Impact Study Report” (report prepared for the Kansas Department of Transportation, 5 May 1990), quoting Paul Wallace Gates, *Fifty Million Acres: Conflicts Over Kansas Land Policy 1854-1890* (New York: Athenian Press, 1966), 3, 74.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, quoting William E. Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 43.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of absentee pre-emption previously played a role in the settlement of the Michigan Territory where it created bitter and sometimes bloody clashes between absentee and on-site claimants.

encourage the mass migration of abolitionists to the newly opened Kansas Territory. The New England Emigrant Aid Society <sup>6</sup> established the towns of Lawrence, Manhattan, and Topeka on Wyandotte float lands.

The community of Manhattan is located in Riley County Kansas, the westernmost county organized by the Territorial Legislature of 1855. At the time of its designation as a county, the Kansas River formed its southern boundary, Marshall County formed its northern boundary, and Calhoun County was its eastern boundary. Its comparatively irregular shape today is due to boundary changes that occurred between 1857 and 1873.

Riley County received its name directly from the military post named after General Benjamin Riley.<sup>7</sup> Fort Riley is about half a mile from the confluence of the Republican and Smoky Hill Rivers. At the time of its organization, approximately 95 percent of the land in the county was prairie and 5 percent woodland forest. Of this, 20 percent was dark, easily worked soil of the bottomlands and 80 percent was soil characteristic of the upland divides. In the area between the Big Blue and the Republican Rivers in Riley County, the major portion of the Kansas (Kaw) River flowed eastward through the county, following an irregular path through Manhattan. The Big Blue River, forming the larger portion of the eastern boundary of the county, flowed into the Kansas River east of Manhattan.

Located on a level plain near the juncture of the two rivers, Manhattan became a strategic river landing during the territorial days when steamboats came up the river and traveled as far west as Junction City. The area around Manhattan included river bluffs and the river and creek upland divides that provided excellent crop and pastureland. The temperate climate, particularly the absence of early and late frosts, encouraged agricultural pursuits, particularly in the high prairie areas. The presence of good quality clay for bricks in the bottomlands and limestone deposits led to the development of large quarries and brickyards near Manhattan and determined the predominant building materials of the town. The wide variety of timber utilized by the first settlers for their homes and business houses included oak, elm, and black walnut.

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<sup>6</sup> Under a new charter, the group assumed the name New England Emigrant Company.

<sup>7</sup> In July 1852, Colonel T. T. Fauntleroy of the First Dragoons recommended the establishment of a military post near a point on the Kansas River where it merged with the Republican Fork River. In May of the following year, a commission elected the present site of Fort Riley and construction began soon thereafter. On July 26, 1858, the U.S. Army formally designated the military installation as Fort Riley.

The natural landscape also included cottonwood, soft maple, hackberry, hickory, locust, ash, linden, sycamore, mulberry, box elder, and coffee-bean trees.

### **Town Founding**

The settlement of what would become Manhattan followed typical town building patterns in territorial Kansas. An organization of investors formed a town company and obtained a charter from the Territorial Legislature to plat a town. The federal Townsite Preemption Act permitted a town company to purchase up to 320 acres. Adjacent surrounding land could be added to the original plats. The first choice of a group of investors was land along or near main overland trails, river junctures, and in fertile river valleys.<sup>8</sup> Manhattan's location met all of these criteria.

Samuel D. Dyer is thought to be the first white inhabitant of Riley County. In 1853, he ran a government ferry about one mile below Rocky Ford on the Big Blue River. The next year, abolitionist and New Hampshire native the Reverend Charles E. Blood established a residence near the ferry landing.

The first settlers in the Manhattan area formed the community of Juniata located approximately five miles north of the present downtown area. The village served as a ferry landing on the Fort Leavenworth-Fort Riley military road. Samuel P. Houston constructed the first residence in 1853 when he built a log house and cleared thirty-five acres for crops.<sup>9</sup>

In the fall of 1854, Colonel George S. Park of Parkville, Missouri located the town site of Poleska on the Kansas River, at the southwest part of the present site of Manhattan. Shortly thereafter, another group claimed the land at the mouth of the Big Blue River as the town site of Canton. The group included Samuel D. Houston of Illinois, Judge Sanders W. Johnson of Ohio, Judge J. M. Russell of Iowa, E. M. Thurston of Maine, and Dr. A. H. Wilcox of Rhode Island.<sup>10</sup>

On March 24, 1855, Isaac T. Goodnow, Luke P. Lincoln, C. H. Lovejoy, C. N. Wilson, Joseph Wintersaid, and N. R. Wright, all of which were members of a committee of the New England Company formed in Boston, reached the site of present-day Manhattan

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<sup>8</sup> "Kansas Preservation Plan Study Unit on the Period of Exploration and Settlement (1820s-1880s)" (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1987), 52.

<sup>9</sup> Carolyn Jones, *The First One Hundred Years* (Manhattan: Manhattan Centennial, Inc., 1955), n. p.

<sup>10</sup> A. T. Andreas, comp., *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), 1305.

and decided to plat the town of “Boston.”<sup>11</sup> This group, in consultation with the Poleska and Canton residents, agreed to consolidate the three sites into one town called “Boston.” The various town sites included a log cabin built by Colonel Park for a blacksmith shop, a dug-out at the foot of Blue Mont, and a tent with protective sod walls pitched by Goodnow.

Within a month, these interests consolidated and twenty-four persons organized as the Boston Association on April 4, 1855 and named the town “Boston.”<sup>12</sup> The consolidated forces erected several crude houses and, with funds from the New England Emigrant Company, purchased “float” land in an area that is now north of Poyntz Avenue with the Boston group holding the title.<sup>13</sup> A second “float” purchased by Johnston Lykins included land that is today south of Poyntz Avenue.<sup>14</sup>

The Boston Association adopted a town constitution that divided and distributed stock to the original founders of the Association with shares set aside for religious, educational, and commercial development as well as discretionary shares to be assigned in the interest of the Association. The Association settled the legal ownership of the claimed float lands, approved the survey of a small portion of the town site, the erection of a warehouse and a temporary river landing, and the construction and operation of ferries across the Big Blue and Kansas Rivers as well as authorizing incentives for industrial and commercial businesses. The newly surveyed and platted town included a 45-acre park and a number of market squares.<sup>15</sup>

On June 1, 1855, the steamboat *Hartford* ran aground near the mouth of the Big Blue River forcing the landing of around seventy-five passengers and freight. The passengers composed a town company originating in Cincinnati, Ohio and were bound for Central Kansas where they planned to establish a town named Manhattan. The Boston Association offered the emigrants 320 acres of land in the southeast section of their

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Fifteen of the New England Company voted in the March 30, 1855 election for S. D. Houston for Representative to the First Territorial Legislature.

<sup>12</sup> The names of the members of the Boston Town Association were George S. Park, S. D. Houston, S. W. Johnson, J. M. Russell, E. M. Thurston, and H. A. Wilcox (all of whom were members of the old organization), as well as Charles Barnes, Stephen Barnes, C. W. Beebe, Cyrus Bishop, C. E. Blood, G. H. Brown, A. Browning, S. I. Childs, Martin F. Conway, Joseph Denison, John Flagg, Isaac T. Goodnow, William E. Goodnow, John Hoar, Amory Hunting, C. H. Lovejoy, Luke P. Lincoln, J. H. McClure, H. B. Neeley, E. C. Persons, T. J. Roosa, Freeman Shattock, Frank B. Smith, Newell Trafton, B. Welden, T. C. Wells, S. Whitehorn, and C. N. Wilson.

<sup>13</sup> The street is named for Colonel John Poyntz, who was the father-in-law of J. J. Davis, a partner in the Cincinnati and Kansas Land Company. Poyntz never visited Manhattan.

<sup>14</sup> Lykins was the second mayor of Kansas City.

newly platted town. However, because the charter of the Ohio emigrants dictated the name and destination of the group, they initially rejected the offer and continued westward. Two days later, the steamboat ran aground again and the group accepted the offer of the Boston Association with the condition that the town be renamed Manhattan.<sup>16</sup> On June 28, 1855, both groups formed the Manhattan Town Association. Within a year, the new settlers erected around fifteen houses, ten of which were prefabricated frame buildings that arrived aboard the *Hartford*.<sup>17</sup> William E. Goodnow erected the first stone building in the northern section of the town. David A. Butterfield of Utica, New York erected the second building.<sup>18</sup>

The sentiments and political convictions of the area's earliest settlers are reflected in the territorial elections. In the election of a territorial delegate to Congress held on November 29, 1854, the number of voters in Riley County was ninety-nine. Of them, sixty-six cast free-state votes and eleven cast pro-slavery votes. In the election held March 30, 1855 to select a territorial legislature, the free-state candidates received 233 votes and the pro-slavery candidates received 94 votes.

### **County Seat**

In September 1857, the county established four election precincts – Randolph, Manhattan, Ogden, and Montague – in preparation for an election to decide the permanent location of the county government. In an election held on October 5, Manhattan and Ogden received the highest number of votes, with Ogden beating Manhattan by 31 votes. The belief that fraud occurred at the Ogden polling places led the citizens of Manhattan to seek the intercession of the Territorial Governor. When he refused to act, they requested a review of the tally sheet. The refusal of the Ogden officials to release the tally sheets led to a court hearing. Testimony identifying the names of minors and soldiers at Fort Riley on the list revealed over 50 illegal votes. Manhattan became the county seat.

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<sup>15</sup> White and Ward, quoting Winifred N. Slagg, *Riley County Kansas* (Manhattan: Winifred N. Slagg, 1968), 46

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 49. A number of secondary sources provide various reasons for the use of the name Manhattan. Slagg notes that appellation is in honor of the New York investors who financed part of the trip and the construction of the boat.

<sup>17</sup> In 1882, one of the Cincinnati buildings shipped on the *Hartford* stood at the north end of Poyntz Avenue near the railroad track. Several African-American families occupied its nine rooms. Another of the prefabricated structures served as a store at the corner of First Street and Poyntz Avenue and, in 1882, it stood at the rear of A. L. Houghton's livery stable.

<sup>18</sup> William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883) [book online]; available from [www.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/books/cutler/leavenworth/leavenworth-co-p6.html#LEAVENWORTH\\_CITY](http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/books/cutler/leavenworth/leavenworth-co-p6.html#LEAVENWORTH_CITY); Internet; accessed 3 February 2001.

The community quickly expanded to include the typical institutional, commercial, and residential buildings that comprise a prosperous riverfront town and county seat. Like most Kansas River towns, the economy initially depended on land speculation and trade. The Emigrant Aid Company established a combination steam-operated sawmill and gristmill. The military road between Fort Leavenworth and Fort Riley strengthened the local economy and a commercial area evolved in the southeast portion of Manhattan where the trail crossed the river at the east end of Poyntz Avenue. After the discovery of gold at Pike's Peak in 1858, the road also served as part of the mail route through northern Kansas Territory to the Colorado gold fields.<sup>19</sup> Entrepreneurs built small manufacturing shops, established retail stores, and erected hotels and restaurants. Businessmen and professionals opened offices. At the river landing, steamboats delivered manufactured goods from the East and loaded cargoes of crops.

In 1858, the community erected their first school building on Poyntz Avenue. The Methodist Episcopal Church held the town's first religious services in June 1858. That same year, Bluemont Central College incorporated; the following year the college officials laid a cornerstone on a rise about a mile west of the present Kansas State University campus. The college opened in 1860 and contributed to the creation of a more diversified financial base, quickly elevating the community beyond subsistence and cash crop economy.

In 1858, the county purchased a building in Ward 1 and rented four rooms in the east end of the Barnes' Building on Poyntz Avenue. The next year the county officials began construction of a jail on "court house lots." County records from April 1862 refer to the jail's location near the southeast corner of the 3-acre public square. The building also housed courtroom facilities. Various county offices occupied rented quarters in the area adjacent to the jail/courtroom buildings, particularly along Poyntz Avenue. By this time, the City had acquired a fancy hotel and a 35-acre cemetery. Other businesses included wagon train suppliers, blacksmiths, and livery stables.<sup>20</sup> The Morrill Act of 1862 authorized the establishment of land grant colleges and, in 1863, thirteen days after Kansas accepted the provisions of the Morrill Act, Bluemont College became the nucleus of the future Kansas State Agriculture College.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Manhattan Nationalist*, Semi-Centennial Edition, 1 January 1903, 67

<sup>20</sup> Lowell Jack, *A History of Manhattan, Kansas, Riley County and Fort Riley* (Manhattan, KS: Hawley Printing, 2003), 26.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

The political strife between pro-slavery and abolitionist factions, which generated into the Border War after the territorial elections in 1854, played a role in Manhattan's early settlement and development. In 1856, the Kansas Territory officially opened for settlement. In 1861, Kansas became the thirty-fourth state to enter the Union. That same year, the Civil War began — an event that was an escalation of the border strife that began in 1855 along the Kansas-Missouri border over the status of slavery in the Kansas Territory.

By this time, Kansans were generally united in their support for the Union. Free-state advocates numerically dominated the state and ardent pro-slavery supporters left the new state. The supporters of the Democratic Party who remained were Unionists.<sup>22</sup> Manhattan, established by abolitionists and situated by the heavily protected military road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley, escaped the deprivations that occurred in the Kansas counties that bordered western Missouri. Nor was there significant internal strife in the community. Unionists composed the vast majority of Manhattan's population. In the presidential election of 1864, 220 Republicans and 51 Democrats cast their votes.<sup>23</sup>

#### **POST-WAR PERIOD (1865-1880)**

After the war ended, Kansas again was a destination point for settlers from the East. Between 1865 and 1870, the state's population grew from 150,000 to 365,000. The 1862 Homestead Law and the rapid growth of railroads immediately after the Civil War encouraged speculators to construct towns. Included in this onslaught of emigrants were war veterans who received generous land grants and former slaves who saw homestead grants as an opportunity to become self-sufficient. Most of these settlers established farmsteads in rural areas and, consequently, the state's population began to spread into the central and western portions of the state.<sup>24</sup> Soon factory buildings and warehouses, two- and three-story brick wholesale and retail business houses, and new residences became more prominent in the cityscape.

During the post-war period, Manhattan developed an economic base that supported a market and service center, meeting the needs of the agricultural and livestock trade in the surrounding county as well as of the businesses associated with the trade generated

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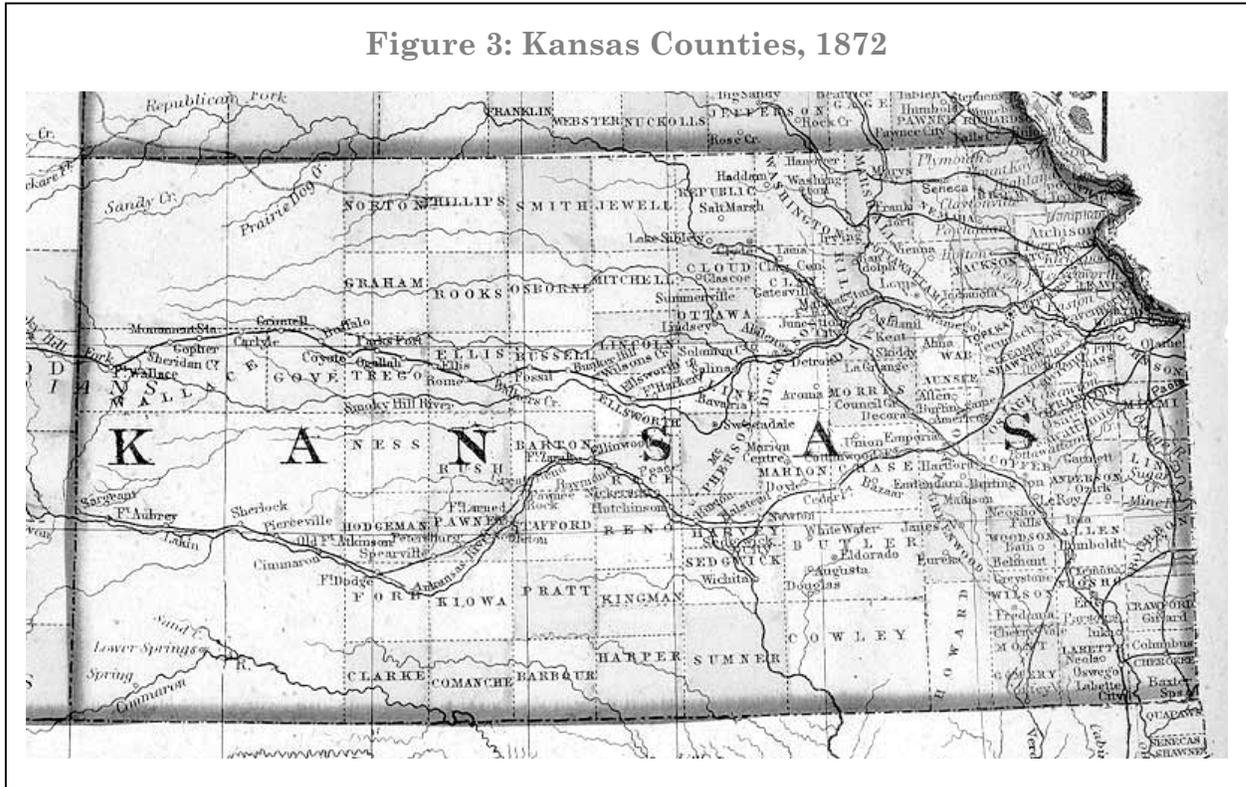
<sup>22</sup> "Kansas Preservation Plan Study Unit on the Period of Exploration and Settlement (1820s-1880s)," 71.

<sup>23</sup> Cutler, available from [www.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/books/cutler/leavenworth/leavenworth-co-p6.html#LEAVENWORTH\\_CITY](http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/books/cutler/leavenworth/leavenworth-co-p6.html#LEAVENWORTH_CITY); Internet; accessed 3 February 2001.

<sup>24</sup> "Kansas Preservation Plan, Study Unit on the Period of Exploration and Settlement (1820s-1880s)," 55.

by its role as county seat. In 1868, the Riley County population was 5,104 with 1,173 residing in Manhattan. By 1875, the county population reached 7,066. In the 1876 presidential election, the male population voted with 1,133 Republican, 223 Democrats, and 65 Greenback votes cast.<sup>25</sup>

Prior to the advent of the railroad, commercial and residential development in Manhattan occurred in a north to south pattern.<sup>26</sup> The commercial and industrial center in the southern corner of the City became more defined and grew in density once railroad lines reached Manhattan.



Immediately after the end of the war, Kansas' leaders focused on rail construction. Manhattan's boosters were no exception. In December 1865, the City of Manhattan granted the Union Pacific Railroad approximately twenty acres of land in the area known as Battery Park near the Big Blue River. The City required the railroad to erect a depot and/or other rail related structures. In 1866, the completion of the Union

<sup>25</sup> Jack, 68.

<sup>26</sup> By this time, the original Wyandotte Street was eliminated and First Street assumed the name of Wyandotte. The original Third Street became Second Street. According to the 1880 and 1900 census records, no addresses were listed for Second Street.

Pacific tracks to Manhattan inaugurated service between Manhattan, Kansas City, and points further east, north, and south. The Union Pacific Company constructed a complex of buildings in the northern part of Battery Park that included a turntable; engine, pumping and tool houses; and a water tank. A freight depot stood two blocks south of Poyntz Avenue along Wyandotte Avenue.<sup>27</sup> Located just east of the depot was the sawmill and, immediately south of the mill, were the E. B. Purcell grain elevators and stockyards.<sup>28</sup> Nearby, at the north side of Poyntz Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Purcell started a mercantile business. Two years later, he and his partners purchased the business on the southwest corner of Poyntz Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street where they operated five stores under one roof.<sup>29</sup>

In 1871, construction crews completed bridges over the Blue and Kansas Rivers. The following year, work began on the Manhattan and Northwestern Railroad. In 1872, the Manhattan and Northwestern railroad and the Manhattan and Blue Valley railroads further expanded rail services. In 1879, the Manhattan, Alma, and Burlingame branch of the Union Pacific linked Manhattan to Alma in Wabaunsee County and to Burlingame in Osage County.<sup>30</sup> That same year, construction began on a branch line of the Manhattan and Northwestern Railroad Company to connect Manhattan with the mainline of the Kansas Pacific Railway Company and the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad became linked to Manhattan.<sup>31</sup>

By the mid-1870s, the City began to realize the effects of the dwindling river trade, but the new rail connections began to compensate for the loss. National economic conditions, including periods of depressed market conditions, combined with grasshopper plagues in the surrounding farming communities, also restrained economic development during this period. After the economy absorbed the effects of two large bank failures in 1878, commercial activity improved.

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<sup>27</sup> The Union Pacific Railroad Depot was relocated in the winter of 1902.

<sup>28</sup> The stockyards were relocated in 1901.

<sup>29</sup> *Manhattan Nationalist*, 1 January 1903, 67

<sup>30</sup> Andreas, 246. The branch was jointly owned by the Union Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroads.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Within a short time, the Manhattan and Blue Valley Railroad held title to the line. On July 1886, the line merged with the Marysville and Blue Valley Railroad Company and changed its name to the Blue Valley Railway Company. Before the turn of the century, the Union Pacific Railroad absorbed the Blue Valley Railway.

On the western edge of Manhattan, changes in land use associated with the college profoundly affected the City's development patterns. When the Blue Mont College association established their institution in 1857, the town conveyed a large number of



*Early photograph of Kansas State College*

lots to the college to aid their efforts and private donations funded a farm and a three-story building erected in 1859 on a hill a mile west of the present Kansas State University campus. In 1863, the trustees

offered this property to the State of Kansas to be converted into colleges for the benefit of agriculture and mechanical arts. In 1875, the college campus shifted from the Blue Mont College location to the buildings located on the 171-acre farm, establishing the permanent location of the college.

By the end of the decade, Manhattan was a city of 2,104 inhabitants and was a “City of the Second Class.” Substantial residences and picturesque cottages, dignified churches, brick and limestone business blocks, mills, and livestock pens and lumberyards stood testament to the town’s prosperity.<sup>32</sup> In the surrounding county, over 8,000 inhabitants lived in villages and on farmsteads. Signifying stability throughout the area were improved fields, orchards, and pastures, as well as farmsteads with spacious stone dwellings and well-built barns. The region became noted for its shorthorn herds and fine horses as well as pure-blood Berkshire and Poland China swine. In 1878, 1,526 freight cars of crops and livestock originated in Manhattan. Of these, 132 cars contained cattle and 122 contained hogs.<sup>33</sup> During the next decade, Riley County’s population grew to 15,000 and the number of residents in Manhattan reached 4,500.<sup>34</sup>

### **BOOM YEARS (1880-1900)**

This sudden growth in population reflected the change in the region’s economic climate. By 1880, the population of Kansas fell into two well-defined camps. Emigrants from the antebellum period lived in the eastern half of the state while so-called “late comers”

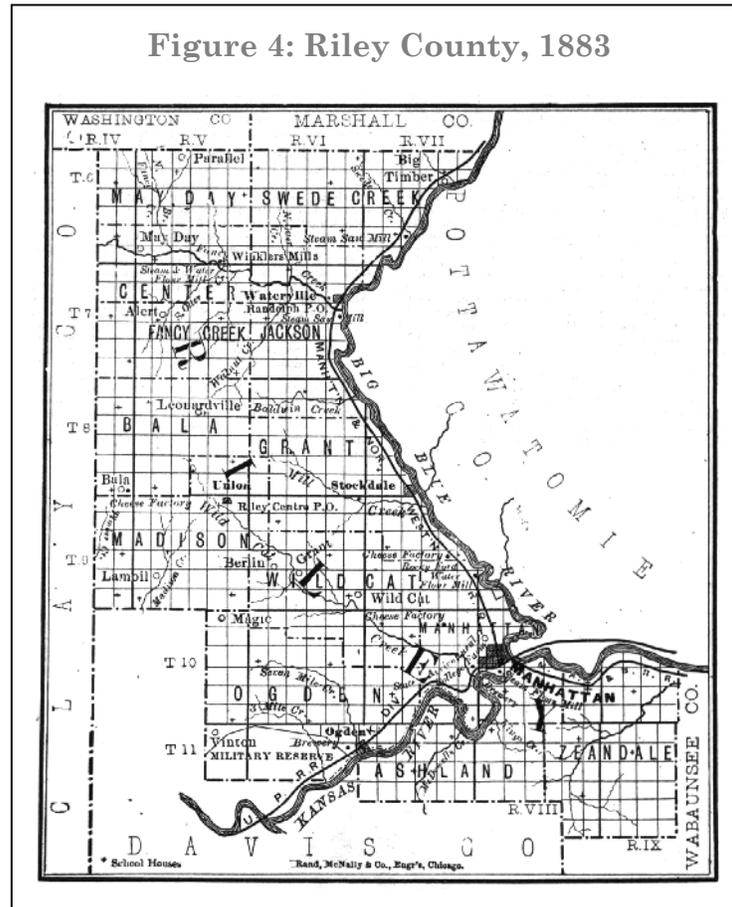
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<sup>32</sup> Cutler.

<sup>33</sup> Jack, 24.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 69.

from the east – ex-soldiers, Europeans, and former slaves – occupied the western half of the state.<sup>35</sup>

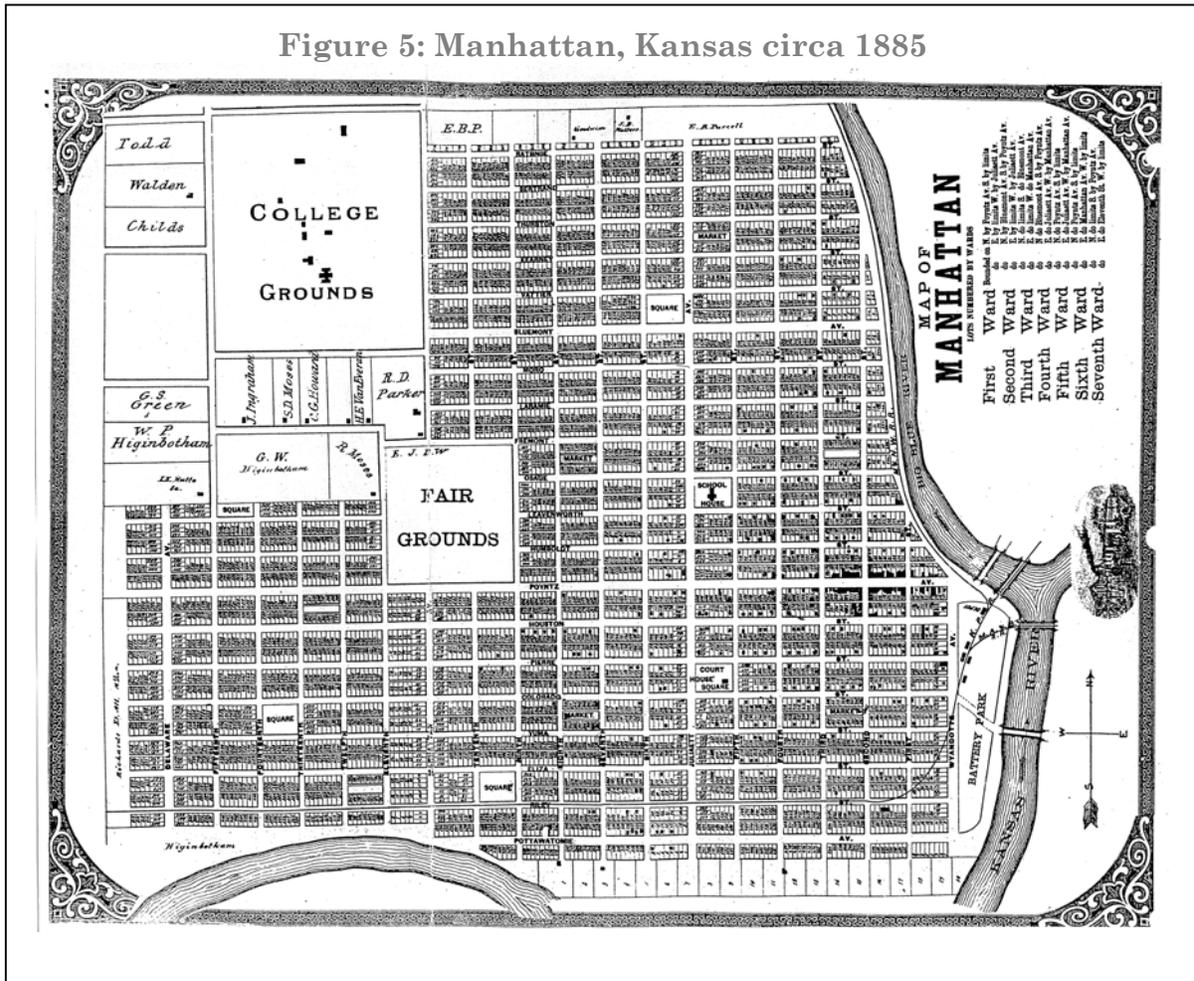


The drought of 1887 ended a decade of optimism. Farmers and cattlemen could not meet their loans, banks and businesses failed, and thousands of the state's citizens, particularly in the western counties, left the state. Two years later, the opening of land for settlement in Oklahoma created an additional exodus of fifty thousand Kansas settlers. Ironically, that same year Kansas had its largest corn crop. Once again, emigrants filled the state (particularly in the western counties) and another year of good crops restored confidence.

<sup>35</sup> Federal Writers Project, *The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984), 57.

By 1890, the state's population stood at 1.4 million.<sup>36</sup> Although still sparse in the western part of the state, the railroad network running through Kansas provided a reasonable degree of access to move people, produce, and goods. A decade of general prosperity followed, interrupted only by the hard times of a national depression from 1893-1895 and a mild crop failure in 1893. By 1894, the overall value of livestock and farm products in Kansas reached more than \$4 billion.<sup>37</sup>

Figure 5: Manhattan, Kansas circa 1885



During the next two decades, the growing number of commercial businesses reflected prosperous times in Manhattan. After the arrival of the railroads, commercial and industrial development shifted to the southeast near the rail lines and moved outward in a northwesterly direction. At the beginning of the decade, Manhattan stretched over

<sup>36</sup> Sachs and Ehrlich, 10.

one square mile. The town plat featured a grid system of streets. Seven streets were each 100 feet wide, including Poyntz Avenue (running east-west) and Juliette Avenue (running north-south).<sup>38</sup> The remainders were each 60 feet wide. Each block measured 315-by-400 feet, with a 15-foot-wide alley running east-west. The lots measured 50-by-150 feet. Beginning with Wyandotte Avenue,<sup>39</sup> which bordered the western edge of Battery Park and ran north-south, the streets were numbered from east to west, with the exception of Juliette Avenue, which ran between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets.

Two railroad and two wagon road bridges, one of each across the two rivers, provided access to and from the town on the east. The eastern end of Poyntz Avenue, which began at the old river landing site, continued to function as the commercial center of the town. However, many commercial and industrial businesses relocated near rail lines along Wyandotte Avenue and El Paso Street. Most of Battery Park remained an open natural area. In 1885, the Union Pacific Railroad located their depot north of the four-story Purcell mill. Other commercial and industrial businesses located near the depot and included the E. B. Purcell grain elevator, which was one of the largest in the state.<sup>40</sup> At this time, only three businesses operated in the area bounded by Wyandotte Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Pierre Street, and El Paso Street.<sup>41</sup> There were also seventeen residences scattered throughout this area.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Federal Writers Project, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Listed as Juliaett Avenue on the 1890 and 1897 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps. Beginning in 1905, it is listed as Juliette Avenue on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps.

<sup>39</sup> Map research revealed numerous street name changes after the circa 1885 plat map. Subsequent maps indicated different street names than those currently used. After 1908, 1<sup>st</sup> Street becomes 2<sup>nd</sup> Street; 2<sup>nd</sup> Street becomes 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street becomes 4<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Street becomes 5<sup>th</sup> Street, and 5<sup>th</sup> Street becomes 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Fort Riley Boulevard was Eliza Street on the circa 1885 plat map. After 1890 through at least 1947, it was called El Paso Street and carried the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad tracks. Fair Lane was an unnamed alley south of El Paso (Fort Riley Boulevard) until at least 1947. Riley Lane was an unnamed alley north of Pottawatomie Avenue until at least 1947. The existing railroad alignment located between Fair and Riley Lanes was the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and was concurrently known as Riley Lane until at least 1947.

<sup>40</sup> Jack, 69.

<sup>41</sup> Manhattan does not follow the practice of designating streets running one direction as “Avenues” and those running another as “Streets.” Major thoroughfares that are 100 feet wide are designated Avenues, while those that are 60 feet wide are designated Streets.

<sup>42</sup> By this time, the original Wyandotte Street was eliminated and 1st Street assumed the name of Wyandotte Street. The original 3<sup>rd</sup> Street became 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. According to the 1880 and 1900 census records, no addresses were listed for 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

In the areas to the north, west, south, and southeast of the downtown commercial center were neighborhoods dominated by small folk houses, picturesque cottages, and large residences.

**Figure 6: Churches in Manhattan,  
1883**

<b>DENOMINATIONS</b>	<b>SEATING MEMBERS</b>	
Methodist Episcopal	500	800
Presbyterian	600	125
Protestant Episcopal	400	60
Congregational	450	160
Roman Catholic	250	40
Church of the Disciples	250	100
Baptist	200	80
Colored Methodist Episcopal	175	35
African Methodist Episcopal	150	25
Colored Baptist	125	40

Within these residential enclaves were ten church buildings.

Along Juliette Avenue were the Courthouse Square and the Schoolhouse Square. The two-story main public school building was centrally located north of Poyntz Avenue in the Schoolhouse Square. To the southwest of the Schoolhouse Square, near the outskirts of the City,

was a stone two-story building erected in 1882 to accommodate the educational needs of an expanding population. Further west along Poyntz Avenue was the 45-acre Forest Park fairgrounds.<sup>43</sup> Manhattan was one of a few Kansas towns (like Lawrence and Topeka) that reserved several centrally located blocks for parks.<sup>44</sup> Part of the original plat of the City, this open space’s role as a public park began in 1870 when the county agricultural society erected the Riley County Fairgrounds in the northeast portion of the City. An octagonal stone building called Floral Hall was part of the agricultural display area. It also contained a racetrack.

The “Downtown” commercial and government center occupied the 100-200 block of Poyntz Avenue and expanded westward. In 1885, a newspaper reported that “with the exception of two short breaks, there is now a continuous awning on the north side of Poyntz east of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.”<sup>45</sup> Here, one- and two-story brick or stone retail buildings featured defined storefronts and had offices and meeting rooms on the second floor. By now, most of the commercial buildings were permanent masonry replacements for the first hastily assembled structures of the settlement and post-war eras. Like other main streets in small Kansas towns, the buildings housed retail sales businesses such as mercantile stores as well as other services such as livery stables. On the second floor, above the retail storefronts, there were professional offices and meeting rooms for fraternal groups. Banks and hotels usually occupied the prime locations on the corners.

<sup>43</sup> Jack, 25. In 1890, City officials resisted efforts to subdivide for residential lots. Five years later, they installed a cast iron fountain. The monument to Chief Tatarax of the Harahey tribe dates to 1904.

<sup>44</sup> “Kansas Preservation Plan, Study Unit on the Period of Exploration and Settlement (1820s-1880s),” 55.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 26.

The Blue Valley Bank, the oldest banking establishment in central Kansas, was among the major businesses located on and near Poyntz Avenue. In 1882, masons laid the cornerstone for a two-story limestone grange building on the southwest corner of Poyntz Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Also dominating Manhattan's main street was the three-story Adams House Hotel built in 1870 at the southwest corner of Poyntz Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. In 1884, architect George Ropes added a significant new element to the commercial streetscape. The large building known as the Green and Hessin Building at the northeast corner of Poyntz Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street housed a hardware and dry goods store, a dentist's office and, in the basement, a barber shop.<sup>46</sup> By the end of the decade, the City boasted its first waterworks at Ratone and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets and incandescent electric streetlights in its downtown area.<sup>47</sup> In 1883, Doctor E. L. Pattee opened a private hospital, the City's first medical facility, at Poyntz Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.<sup>48</sup>

By the 1880s, the number of professional associations; societies; temperance chapters; religious, literary, and musical study groups; and agricultural and social clubs within the Riley County was extensive, reflecting not only prosperity of the era but also a wide-ranging social and cultural life. Newspapers were a prominent feature of the social and economic life of the community. By 1880, the eight-page *Nationalist*, which was of the Republican Party persuasion, enjoyed a large circulation.<sup>49</sup> In 1882, the *Manhattan Enterprise* became the *Republic*, which also shared Republican sympathies. The *Manhattan Mercury* founded in 1884 and published by Jefferson J. Davis and later by his widow Mary enjoyed a long period of popularity.<sup>50</sup> The publishers of *The Independent* espoused the principles of the National Greenback Labor party.<sup>51</sup>

Harry Wareham and his family had a profound impact on the development and appearance of Manhattan. In the 1890s, he established an icehouse, eventually producing ice by mechanical refrigeration. Beginning in the 1890s and continuing well into the next century, he and his family erected, owned, and operated the Wareham Opera House; the Wareham Airdome, an outdoor theater; the Wareham Hotel; the Wareham Apartments; the Wareham Millinery Company; and the College Inn

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. It later housed the First National Bank, the Citizens State Bank (1912), the Manhattan Mutual Life Insurance company (1921) and, in the 1930s, the Brinkley Broadcasting Studios.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 33

<sup>49</sup> Through a succession of owners, the newspaper evolved from the *Western Kansas Express* (1859) to the *Manhattan Express* (1860) to the *Manhattan Independent* (1863) to the *Manhattan Standard* (1868) to *The Nationalist* (1870).

<sup>50</sup> Jack, 20.

<sup>51</sup> Founded in 1879 at Riley Center, it originally had the title of the *News*

restaurant. He built and operated the City's first sewer system and obtained franchises to operate a power and light company and the telephone company.

In 1897, the City of Manhattan leased the public square in Ward 3 to the Manhattan Athletic Association. This public square then became the location of the playing fields for the Kansas State Agriculture College.<sup>52</sup> In the surrounding residential enclaves stretching north, south, and west from the commercial center, well-shaded by spreading elms, residential streets featuring one-and-a-half-story cottages and larger two-story residences spread to the north and south from Poyntz Avenue. When approached from the surrounding countryside, the town had the appearance of a great park.

### **EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY MANHATTAN (1900-1930)**

Historians refer to the first fifteen years of the twentieth century as the "Golden Age of Agriculture" in the United States. Kansas played an important role in this era. Raising cattle and corn were the major agricultural industries in the eastern part of the state. The Flint Hills' rich pasturelands in central Kansas formed an important component in the state's growing livestock industry. In addition, the wheat farming and cattle areas in the western counties added to the state's important role as part of the nation's breadbasket.<sup>53</sup>

During the first decades of the twentieth century, increased mechanization enabled fewer workers to manage larger farms and the size of individual farming operations grew. Wheat became a billion-dollar-a-year crop, making Kansas the nation's number one producer by 1920. Proximity to cattle towns guaranteed the state's ranking as second in the nation in meatpacking. At the same time, the discovery and extraction of substantial oil and natural gas fields in Kansas contributed to the state's industrial growth, and Kansas ranked second in the United States in overall oil production from 1919 to 1931. Its growing brick, stucco, plaster, and cement industries further contributed to the diversity of the state's economic base. By the mid-1920s, the state's wealth was the highest in its history.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ten years later, the public square became the site of a city school. The Kansas State Agriculture College erected a new athletic field in the southwest corner of the campus. After World War I, Memorial Stadium was built at that location.

<sup>53</sup> Daniel Holt, "A Time of Contrasts: Progress, Prosperity, and the Great Depression, 1900– 1940," *Kansas Preservation Plan* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1990), 5.

<sup>54</sup> Sachs and Ehrlich, 13-16.

At the turn of the century, barely 10 to 15 percent of the country's inhabitants lived in cities; but by the end of the 1920s, nearly 57 percent lived in urban areas. In Kansas, the move from farm to town was slower. Although Kansas boasted a population of one million by the mid-1880s, it was not until 1940 that it reached its second million. In 1890, only 19 percent of the state's population lived in urban areas. This increased to 30 percent in 1910 and to almost 40 percent by 1930.<sup>55</sup>

Population increases brought more housing and related infrastructure; an increased demand for police protection; and court, fire, water, sewer, park, and public health services. These demands, in turn, created the need for new or enlarged commercial and governmental quarters and, with the rise in the use of the automobile, convenient parking.

Another result of this economic growth within the state was the growing role of professional architects. The advent of trained design and engineering professionals changed the character and appearance of the built environment, beginning in the boom years of the 1880s. Another important late nineteenth and early twentieth century force shaping the appearance of the built environment was that of the City Beautiful Movement, which stimulated the



growth of landscape architecture and integrated planning with architecture, particularly for large projects and public buildings. The planning aesthetic associated with the City Beautiful Movement attracted the attention of many civic leaders who sponsored or supported the construction of new public buildings and the creation of parks and boulevards. This trend occurred in Kansas' cities and larger towns. A surge in development in the 1920s resulted in new civic buildings and spaces in smaller communities. During this period, the Kansas Legislature passed laws requiring cities

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

with populations over 40,000 to create wide boulevards, something Manhattan's town planners accomplished in the nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup>

Even with a growing and increasingly diversified industrial base, the economy of the state remained firmly established in agriculture and associated businesses. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Kansas still had more than two million acres available for settlement, particularly in the northwest. By the onset of World War I, most of the available land was under cultivation. The boom years for agriculture, which began before World War I, did not peak until the 1920s. The war created an additional demand for agricultural products and the resulting land boom increased real estate values and farm mortgages.

Although the state's agricultural economy in the mid-1920s was stable, Kansas' farm families were far from prosperous. Despite the growth created by the agricultural boom and new industries, only a small percentage of farm homes and only a somewhat larger number of city homes had electricity, running water, sewers, and central heating.<sup>57</sup> By 1924, the debt of Kansas farmers reached \$535 million, contributing to a small statewide depression prior to 1929. Compounding the problem were "progress" taxes for courthouses, schools, roads, and bridges that were approved by the state legislature in the late 1920s.<sup>58</sup>

Manhattan shared the bounty of the state's agricultural economy, but also reaped the financial benefits of its role as the county seat and benefited from the jobs and services related to the college and nearby Fort Riley. Since its founding, successive waves of Germans, Swedes, and Irish settlers reduced the descendants of the New England and Ohio founders to a minority. In 1900, the population of the city was 3,438 and the college had an enrollment of 1,321.<sup>59</sup> Within two years, the population grew to 4,000.<sup>60</sup> At the end of the decade, it reached 6,300<sup>61</sup>

The appearance of the City continued to change. New paved sidewalks and curbs provided a modern appearance. The City numbered buildings and posted street names in anticipation of door-to-door mail delivery that began in 1901. While some commercial property owners modernized their nineteenth century buildings, others demolished

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<sup>56</sup> Holt, 7.

<sup>57</sup> Most commercial buildings in small farming communities did have electricity and running water.

<sup>58</sup> Holt, 5, 7.

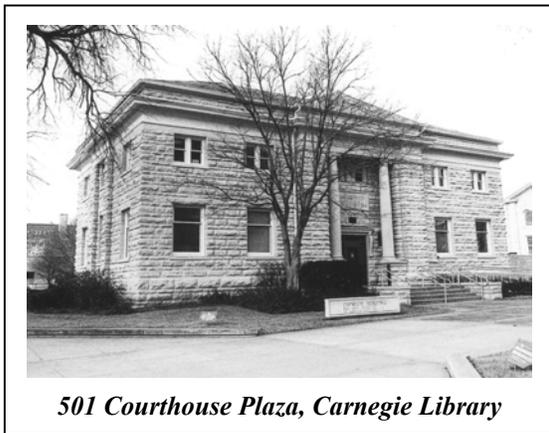
<sup>59</sup> Jack, 69.

<sup>60</sup> White and Ward, quoting Slagg, 67.

existing buildings and erected “modern” counterparts. In 1902, the City opened its first golf course in City Park. That year, a motorized delivery wagon appeared on the streets of Manhattan.<sup>62</sup> The Manhattan Ice, Light and Power Company and the Manhattan Gas Company became the City’s first utility companies.<sup>63</sup>

The 1905 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map shows that the area bounded by Wyandotte Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup>, Pierre, and El Paso Streets underwent a significant change. In 1902, the Union Pacific Depot erected at the corner of Wyandotte Avenue and Yuma Street stimulated the relocation of the Purcell stockyards and the erection of the electric power company at 209 Yuma Street. Construction of single-family housing occurred in the immediate area during the same time period.

On May 29, 1903, major flooding began along the rivers bordering Manhattan. The 1903 flood changed the course of the Kansas River, submerging the Manhattan Mills, the Blue Valley Railroad tracks north of Manhattan, and the main line of the Union Pacific, including its freight yards and roundhouse. It destroyed both the Rock Island Railroad Bridge and the wagon bridge. In the commercial core of the City, water covered Poyntz Avenue in a six-block area west of the Big Blue River Wagon Bridge, extending as far west as 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The most affected area was east of 5<sup>th</sup> Street in the southeast part of the City.<sup>64</sup> Damage estimates reached \$25,000.



*501 Courthouse Plaza, Carnegie Library*

Despite the flooding, progress continued. The new city hall and fire station opened on North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street near Humboldt Street. Another private hospital, Sanitarium Park Place, opened in 1903 in a small, frame two-story house at 412 North 11<sup>th</sup> Street (11<sup>th</sup> and Fremont Streets) and featured electric light and steam heat.<sup>65</sup> In 1904, the construction of the Carnegie Library building, a two-story brick and limestone structure, introduced the twentieth century

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<sup>61</sup> White and Ward, 26.

<sup>62</sup> Jack, 69.

<sup>63</sup> White and Ward, quoting Slagg, 67.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, quoting *The First One Hundred Years: A History of the City of Manhattan, Kansas 1855-1955* (Manhattan: The Manhattan Centennial, Inc., n.d.).

<sup>65</sup> The hospital became Park View Hospital in 1905. The following year, the owners erected a new twenty-three-room building at Juliette Avenue and Laramie Street that looked like a large two-story frame house.

version of Neoclassical-classical design into the City's building stock. Two years later, contractor Clarence Johnson completed the Riley County Courthouse from locally quarried stone at a cost of \$50,000.<sup>66</sup>

On June 7, 1908, the Kansas, Republican, Blue, Missouri, and Solomon Rivers flooded their banks. The floodwaters cut a new channel across two oxbow bends on the Kansas River.<sup>67</sup> Ironically, that same year, workmen completed construction on the Rocky Ford Dam and Power Plant. Again, flooding did not present a serious obstacle to continued development.

A 1905 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map shows railroad lines running through Battery Park. The Union Pacific freight depot is at the north end of Pierre Street at Wyandotte Avenue. The Union Pacific passenger depot is at Yuma Street and Wyandotte Avenue, and the Chicago Rock Island Railroad depot is at 4<sup>th</sup> <sup>68</sup> and El Paso Streets. The Manhattan Mills face east onto Wyandotte Avenue and Battery Park. Stockyards straddle Yuma Street east of Wyandotte Avenue.

In October 1908, the Manhattan City and Interurban Railway Company incorporated and began laying track for an electric streetcar system. The first trolley car run occurred the following year. Manhattan was one of the smallest towns in Kansas to establish a street railway system and it lasted from 1909 to 1927, ultimately connecting to Fort Riley and Junction City. The first track was two miles and began at the Union Pacific Depot and went north on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to Poyntz Avenue, west on Poyntz Avenue to 9<sup>th</sup> Street, then north to Fremont Street, west on Fremont Street to 11<sup>th</sup> Street, then north on 11<sup>th</sup> Street to Moro Street, then west along Moro Street to the college. Initially two cars provided twenty-minute round-trip service. A second line began at the Union Pacific Depot, went west on Yuma Street to the Rock Island Railroad Depot on 4<sup>th</sup> Street, north on 4<sup>th</sup> Street to Fremont Street, then west on Fremont Street to 6<sup>th</sup> Street, and then west on Vattier Street to the college. The next year there were four miles of track with six motor cars to accommodate the traffic; a streetcar passed a stop every ten minutes from early morning until late at night. In 1913, the Manhattan City Interurban Railway Company laid a tract to Fort Riley. A track already linked Junction

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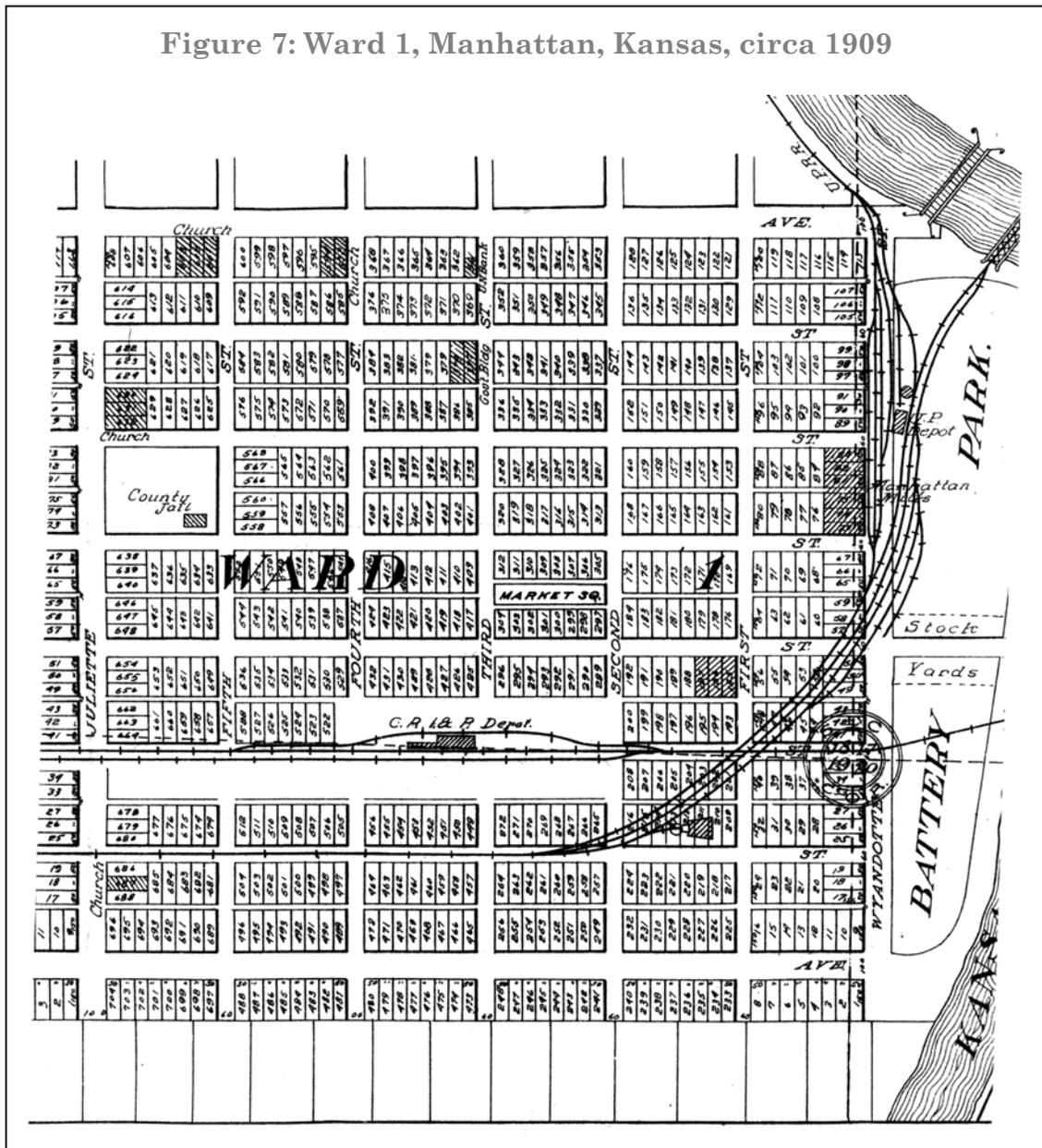
<sup>66</sup> Jack, 26.

<sup>67</sup> In 1915, once again, flooding changed the course of the Big Blue River. This time, it moved from the east end of Poyntz Avenue to its present juncture with the Kansas River.

<sup>68</sup> Today it is 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

City to the Fort, thus creating an interurban line between the two communities.<sup>69</sup> During World War I, gasoline motor buses ran on the streetcar lines due to the electricity shortage during the war. Painted green, they were known as “Green Bugs.”<sup>70</sup>

Figure 7: Ward 1, Manhattan, Kansas, circa 1909



<sup>69</sup> Chris Hill, “Historical Walking Tour of the Bluemont School Neighborhood” (unpublished report prepared as an Eagle Scout project, n.d.); Jack, 21.

<sup>70</sup> Jack 35.



**Southwest corner of 5th Street and Poyntz Avenue**  
*photograph courtesy of the  
Riley County Historical Society*



**1<sup>st</sup> and Colorado Streets  
Long Oil Company Facility**  
*photograph courtesy of the  
Kansas State Historical Society*



**Houston and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets**  
*photograph courtesy of the  
Kansas State Historical Society*

Manhattan’s appearance and modes of transportation changed in response to the advent of automobiles and trucks. Initial changes included the surfacing of the streets. Major thoroughfares such as Poyntz and Juliette Avenues featured brick paving and permanent all-weather sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. In 1910, the City had sixty miles of paved streets. As the popularity of automobile use continued

and became accessible to the middle classes, the use of the streetcar declined. In 1922, the county sold 3,500 motor licenses.<sup>71</sup> That year the owners of the electric trolley system converted to gasoline powered streetcars. In 1928, the company ceased operations.<sup>72</sup>

The 1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map depicts greater commercial and industrial development. In 1910, a brick factory opened and began producing twenty thousand bricks daily for sidewalks and homes. The City paved Poyntz Avenue from the Big Blue River to the courthouse.<sup>73</sup> In 1912, the City’s downtown featured four hotels and a new movie house. To the southeast, in the industrial section of town, two new businesses – a sausage manufacturing company and a lumber company – appear on the Sanborn map. Residential housing patterns in this area show the

construction of new dwellings and the demolition of others. Workmen connected ten to twelve houses per day to a new sanitary sewer system.

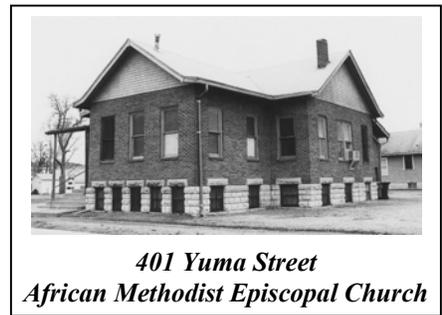
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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 70.

As new development occurred, land use became more formalized. Despite its abolitionist beginnings, Manhattan was a community of de facto segregation. This became more formalized when sometime after 1910 the city council passed an ordinance restricting housing for African-Americans to the south and southeastern parts of the City.<sup>74</sup>



**401 Yuma Street  
African Methodist Episcopal Church**

In response to the influx of men sent to training camps at Fort Riley, a survey conducted during World War I in Manhattan to evaluate recreational resources identified fifteen churches, five lodge rooms, several theaters, the high school and college auditoriums, tennis courts, athletic fields and gymnasiums, parks and picnic grounds, and hotels and restaurants. The need for additional facilities led to the construction of the federally owned Community Building in 1918. That year, an advertisement paid for by the Manhattan Commercial Club entitled “Why You Should Own a Home in Manhattan” appeared in the *Daily Mercury* and boasted of sixteen churches, a YMCA and YWCA, a streetcar system, cheap electric power, beautiful homes, and noted that “there are no pool halls or other places in the city having a tendency to decrease the morality of a community.”<sup>75</sup> That year the City’s first swimming pool opened at 4<sup>th</sup> and Pierre Streets. The following year population

increases resulted in the construction of a new junior high school building at 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Poyntz Avenue, next to the high school.



**Manhattan Avenue and Moro Street, 1923  
Looking North on Manhattan Avenue**  
*photograph courtesy of the  
Riley County Historical Society*

In 1920, Manhattan’s population reached 7,485 and the enrollment at the college was 3,017. In 1925, work started on the Telephone Exchange Building on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. A new creamery on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street produced the first pasteurized milk in the City. The following year marked the opening of the 150-room Wareham Hotel and the Eugene University (Manhattan Christian College).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Ward and White, 26. The flood of 1951 swept away approximately twenty houses in this general area of the City.

<sup>75</sup> Jack, 25.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71. In 1927, it became the Christian Workers University. In 1930, the name changed to Manhattan Bible College. In 1971, the name changed to Manhattan Christian College.

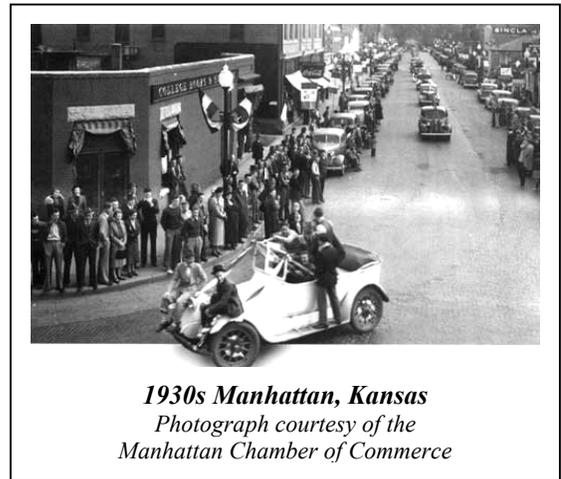
By 1930, Manhattan's population surpassed 12,000. The enrollment at the Kansas State Agricultural College was 4,800. The City extended a little more than a mile west from the old river channel, spreading to the north and south from Poyntz Avenue, which ended abruptly as it encountered the first slopes of



***New Business Buildings at the Southwest Corner of  
5<sup>th</sup> Street and Poyntz Avenue, 1928***

*photograph courtesy of  
"The Long Oil Company Manhattan Station" by Ben Eckart  
[www.enarco.com/long/manhat.htm](http://www.enarco.com/long/manhat.htm)*

"Limestone Hill," just west of Delaware Street. The college campus adjoined the City on the northwest and most of the new residential development was in this area. The college continued to be a primary economic force in the community. The Kansas State College<sup>77</sup> at 14<sup>th</sup> and Anderson Streets was then a landscaped 155-acre campus featuring twenty buildings constructed of native limestone and executed in a Gothic Revival design.



***1930s Manhattan, Kansas***

*Photograph courtesy of the  
Manhattan Chamber of Commerce*

The City had two business districts. The "Downtown" commercial, governmental, and financial district continued to focus on Poyntz Avenue. "Aggieville" formed the "Uptown" retail center that adjoined the college campus. Between the two was the original City Park, which was now landscaped with approximately one thousand trees and rose gardens and featured playgrounds, a swimming pool, tennis courts, an open-air pavilion with seating for one thousand, and new baseball diamonds.<sup>78</sup>

South of Poyntz Avenue an older section of modest homes extended to the Rock Island Railroad tracks. Along this railroad line, predominately south of Yuma Street, were

<sup>77</sup> In 1931, the Kansas Legislature changed the name from the Kansas State Agricultural College to the Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science. The use of the term "Aggies" to define the students of the institution is derived from this nomenclature.

<sup>78</sup> *The WPA Guide to 1930s Kansas*, 252.

small enclaves inhabited by African-Americans and Mexicans.<sup>79</sup> The 1930 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map shows an increase in commercial development of an industrial nature in the 200 blocks of Pierre and Colorado Streets. New additions to the area included automobile shops, a junkyard, and a power plant with fuel oil tanks and dynamos. The construction of Pillsbury Road (K-18) resulted in the demolition of residential houses.

In addition to the college and county government, agriculture and livestock production in the surrounding area continued to constitute an important economic base for the City. The City also had a number of small, related processing industries, including two hatcheries, a creamery, a flourmill, two packing companies that processed eggs and poultry, and a serum plant. A planning mill turned out cabinetry, egg cases, and shipping crates.<sup>80</sup> Two railroads and three bus companies serviced the community. Other economic indicators were the two daily and two weekly newspapers, two hospitals, four theaters, and three hotels that provided approximately 222 rooms.<sup>81</sup>

### **THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II (1931-1945)**

With the exception of public building projects, little private commercial development occurred during the Great Depression. When the Great Depression hit Kansas in full force, the only businesses that contributed any stability to the state's economy were in the meatpacking industry. The state's agriculture businesses dropped in value from \$545 million in 1929 to \$204 million in 1932. Compounding the problems created by the Great Depression, the drought from 1935 to 1937 added to the austere conditions for farm families and dimmed any hopes of immediate recovery. During the 1930s, approximately 103,000 people left the state. The number of farms went from a high of 174,000 in the 1930s to 156,000 by 1940, the lowest number since the 1880s.<sup>82</sup>

Due to the combination of drought and the Great Depression, federal relief programs focused particularly on the Plains states. In particular, the programs of the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee (KERC); the Work Projects Administration (WPA); the Public Works Administration (PWA); and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) had a significant impact not only on the economic conditions of the state, but also on Kansas' visual landscape. Under these programs, local and state governments received funding

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 249-250.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>81</sup> Jack, 71.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 9.

for the construction of public buildings, roads, bridges, and other public improvements to provide jobs and to stimulate the local economy. Cities and counties received funding for courthouses, city halls, libraries, ball fields, auditoriums, memorials, and other public facilities.

Projects receiving PWA funds were usually major, long-range construction programs that employed skilled workers and benefited the general public. The WPA funded less extensive public works projects that generally cost less than \$55,000 and could be completed within one to two years by employing both skilled and unskilled workers. However, it was not unusual for WPA projects to cost more than the recommended cut-off amount. In addition to these programs, the Federal Emergency Relief Commission provided Kansas with more than \$10 million for highway construction.

The KERC, created under Governor Alf Landon, provided considerable assistance in the early years of the Great Depression before federal funding became fully available. In addition to purchasing and processing agricultural products, funding approved by the state legislature assisted in the construction of 15,500 miles of roads and streets, 1,515 bridges, and 7 school buildings. Funding for renovation included 74 courthouses, 971 school buildings, 326 public buildings, and water and sewer systems. Beginning in 1931, KERC funded projects in cooperation with WPA programs. The KERC obtained funding from the legislature that was matched with federal funds. The WPA normally funded 85 percent of the total costs. This procedure became the norm after 1931 and by 1935, the state relief group acted as the procurement officer for these state funds to be given to counties and for federal monies.<sup>83</sup>

During the Great Depression, an unusually large variety of government-sponsored projects benefited the community. Much of this is attributed to Manhattan residents Evan Griffith and Fay Seaton. During the 1930s, Griffith served as state re-employment director, Kansas director of the public works administration, and as a director in the Kansas highway department. Seaton served as the chairman of the State Social Welfare Board. As a result, public work projects ranging from street and sewer repair to larger projects occurred in Manhattan and employed local workers. Among the projects were Griffith Field, a 1936 WPA project that employed 46 men for four months; the Youth Cabin (Boy Scout House) in Goodnow Park erected by 115 youths in 1937; and swimming pools at the City Park and the Douglass Center in 1939. The Bluemont Hill Scenic Drive financed by the National Youth Administration took 50

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

workers over twenty thousand hours to complete. Federally funded workers added two classrooms, a new roof, and a heating system to Douglass School. One of the last projects was the completion of the Manhattan Airport hanger.<sup>84</sup>

A June 4, 1935 flood, caused by all major streams overflowing at one time, inundated residential sections on the eastern and southern sections of the City. Flooding extended thirteen blocks west on Poyntz Avenue and surrounded a third of Manhattan's homes. Floodwaters washed away the K-29 Highway and the Rock Island railroad bridges and severely damaged the automobile bridge across the Kansas River. The Union Pacific Bridge remained intact although there was considerable track damage. In 1937, the Pillsbury Drive Bridge replaced bridges taken out by the flood.<sup>85</sup>

By the onset of World War II in 1941, Manhattan's population was 11,659 with 4,910 enrolled at the college. Fort Riley's role as a training center during World War II created considerable activity in the nearby community and the commercial businesses in Manhattan reaped the benefits of the increased military activity in the area. Although building slowed, the local economy remained healthy. By 1944, however, the college enrollment dropped to 3,786.<sup>86</sup>

Between World War I and World War II, the Community House came under City ownership, but was again purchased by the federal government for use as a United Service Organizations (USO) building and as headquarters for forty civic organizations and clubs. The City repurchased the building in 1946. Manhattan continued racial segregation throughout World War II and up until the advances made in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1941, the City received funds to erect a recreational hall to be used as a USO location for African-Americans. It was to be one of twenty-five in the nation that was close to large military bases. In January 1942, the Douglass USO Center on the north side of the 900 block of Yuma Street was in use. Local African-American churches continued their role in supporting activities here for black soldiers, as they had for generations. Following the war, the City purchased the building. Today it is an integrated facility utilized by up to eighty thousand visitors a year.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 23-24, 71. In 1940, the City purchased 110 acres to build an airport.

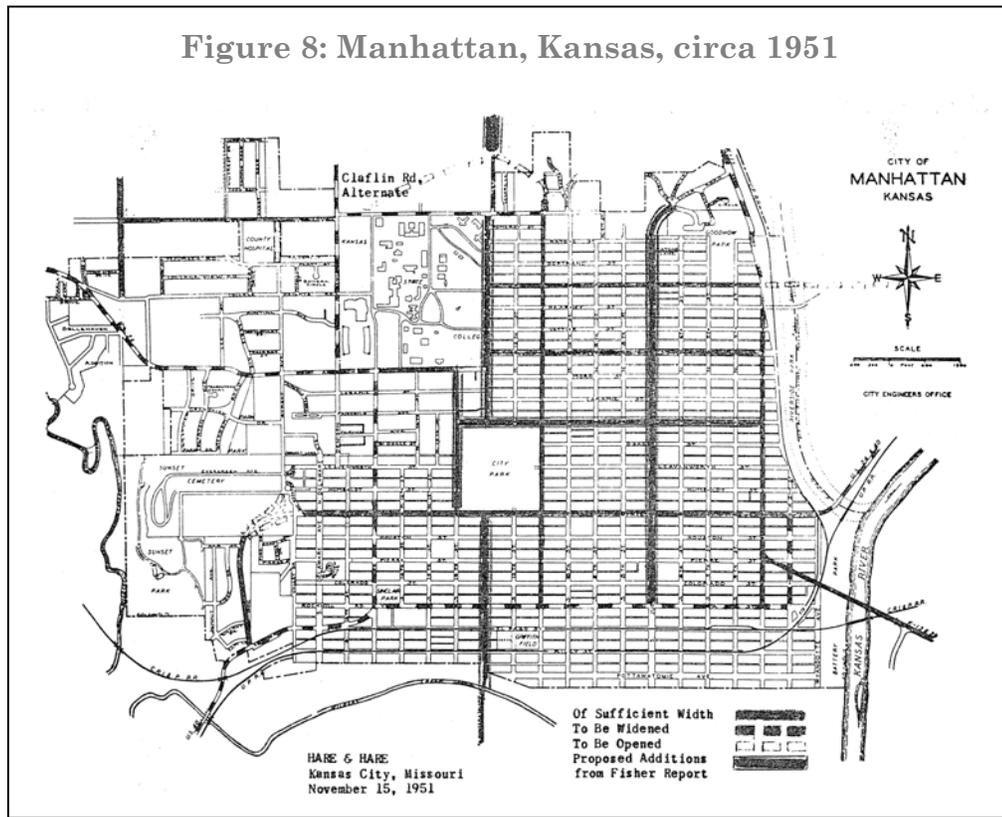
<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 51.

## POST-WORLD WAR II (1946-1955)

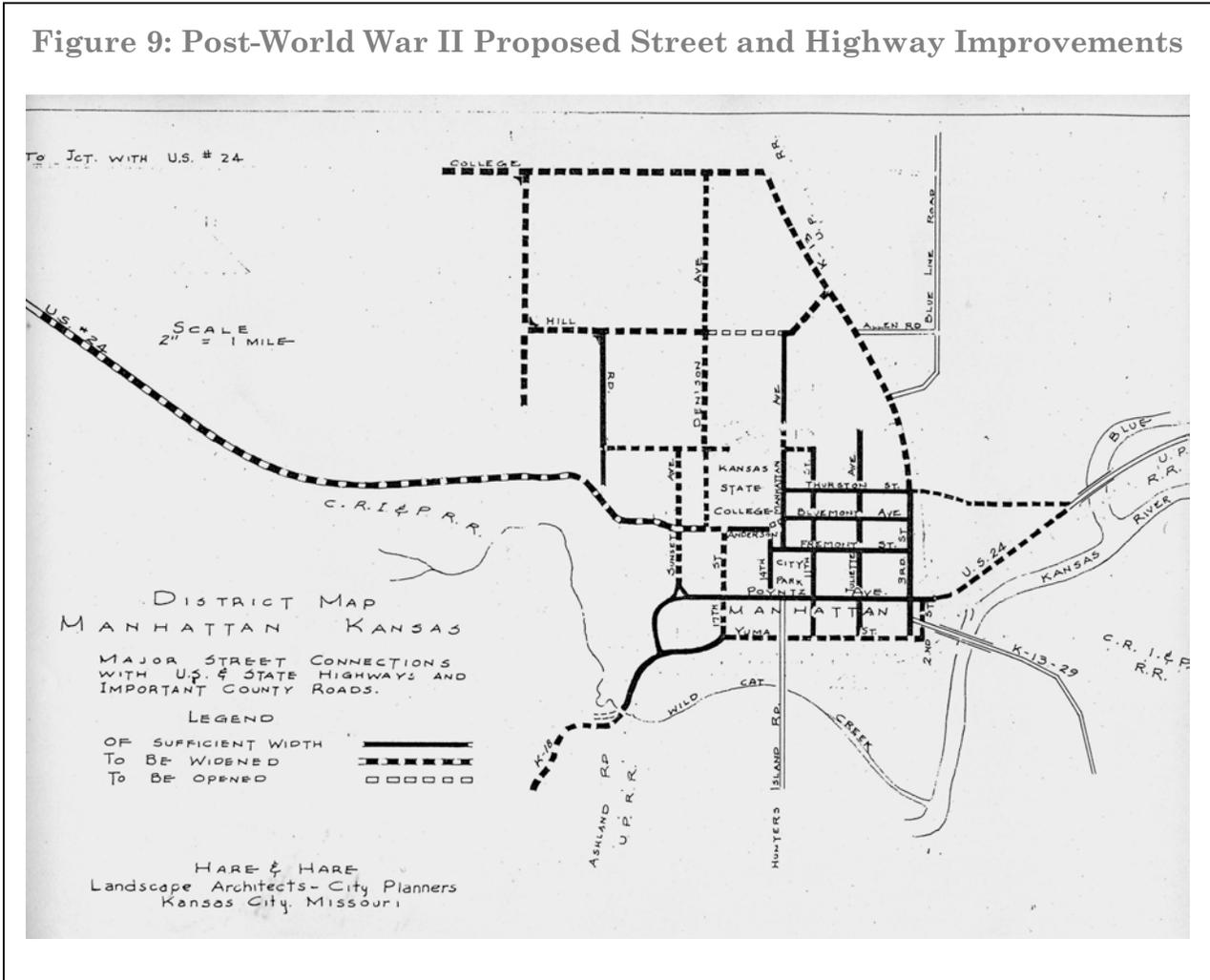
The disruption of private construction that resulted from the Great Depression continued after the United States entered World War II. As the nation refitted for wartime production, public works efforts also ceased. Except for very limited private construction, the principal changes in the American landscape and cityscape during those decades came from the highly selective program of funding public buildings and various defense plants.



Following the end of the war, there was a real and a psychological need for all kinds of new, clear symbols of progress. The pent-up need for new construction created a building boom. An influx of over ten million returning veterans and a desire to return to normalcy fueled an almost universal desire to own a home and raise children in a new homogeneous environment.<sup>88</sup> During the first years of the post-war period, home ownership, particularly for white middle-class families, became a matter of public policy. The 1949 Housing Act guaranteed developers and bankers a higher profit on

large housing developments targeted to the middle class. As a result, the selling of single-family detached houses quickly became big business.<sup>89</sup> Annual single-family housing starts exploded from 114,000 in 1944 to 1,692,000 by the end of the decade. Between 1950 and 1956, mortgage banking firms increased loans nationally from \$6 billion to \$20 billion.<sup>90</sup>

Figure 9: Post-World War II Proposed Street and Highway Improvements



<sup>88</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 242.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-47.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 242; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 233.

In Kansas, the post-war population grew steadily and, by 1950, the population reached 1.9 million. Despite suburban growth and the loss of rural residents during the Great Depression and war years, in 1950 the state remained essentially rural in character.

Significant and rapid changes in transportation occurred within the state during the post-war years. In the 1850s, Kansas' territorial government authorized the establishment of a public road on every section line in the state. By the end of World War II, the number of miles of road was considerably less than what had been authorized almost a hundred years before. Prior to World War I, road construction came under local governmental (county) control. The passage in 1916 of the federal Rural Roads Act provided 50 percent of the funds necessary for road construction to states. Kansas completed the transition from county to state control of major roads in 1929 and, in the 1930s, began upgrading these highways. Delayed by the Great Depression and World War II, the state did not complete the long-range highway building program initiated in 1946 until the late 1960s. Nevertheless, the initiation of these projects after World War II profoundly affected the small towns of Kansas. The routing of highways through, around, or past communities often created growth patterns that changed the town's physical orientation and the use of traditional transportation corridors.<sup>91</sup>

In 1946, there were two major signs of a return to civilian life in Manhattan. Due to a housing shortage caused by the war, Goodnow Park became the location for housing units for veterans. Signaling the beginning of post-war building boom was the construction of the Viking manufacturing plant at 1635 Yuma Street that same year. By 1950, Manhattan's population reached 19,056. Returning soldiers on the GI Bill pushed the enrollment at Kansas State College to 6,907. The City expanded rapidly to the north and west. Poyntz Avenue continued to be the major retail and office center of the community.<sup>92</sup>

In the summer of 1951, record-breaking rains from May through July that extended from Colorado through Nebraska into Missouri and Iowa caused widespread flooding in the Midwest. In Manhattan, water covered a 220-block area, extending west along Poyntz Avenue to 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Flood waters swept away approximately thirty houses,

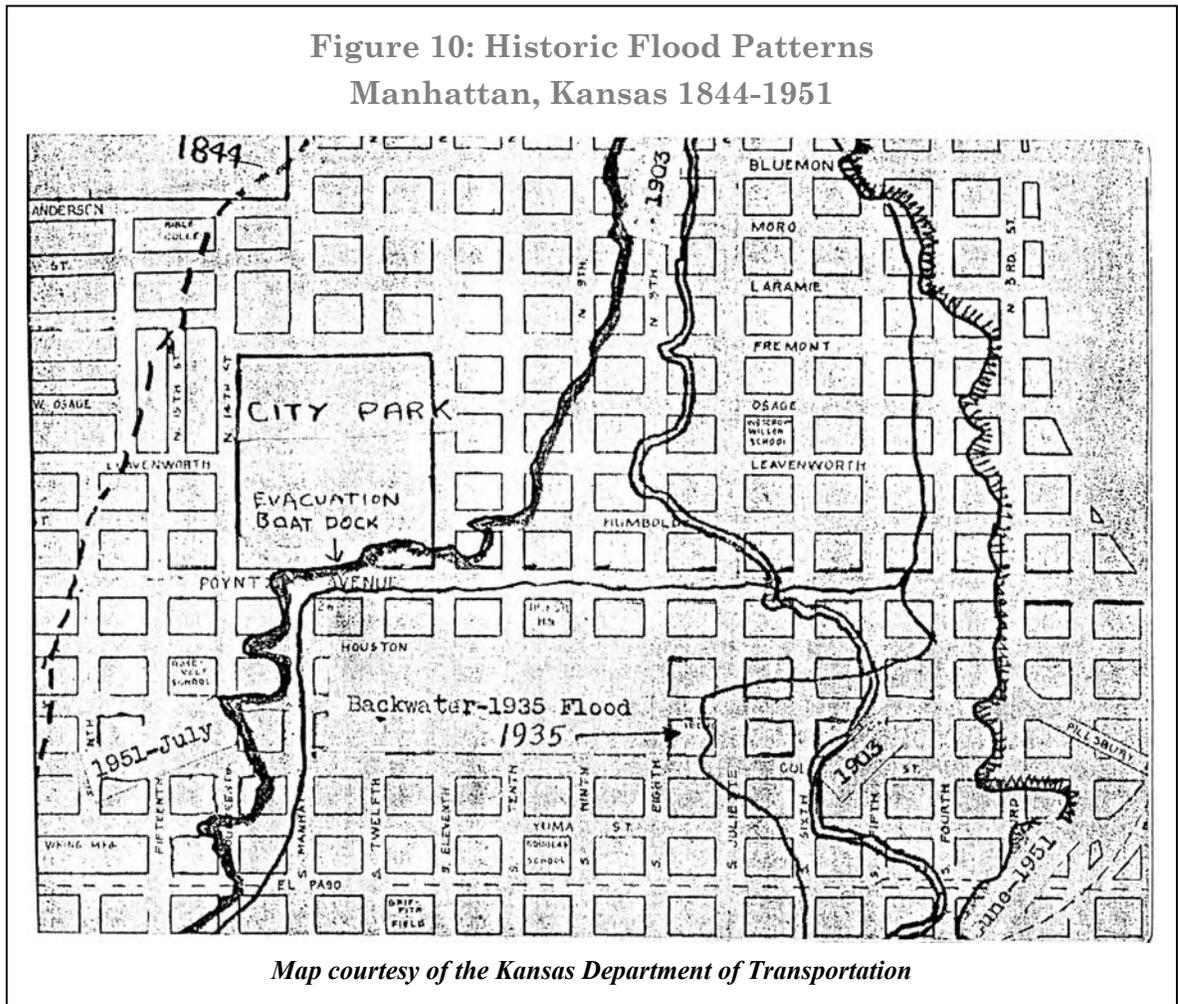
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<sup>91</sup> Paul K. Struwe, *Kansas Revisited: Historical Images and Perspectives* (Lawrence, KS: Division of Continuing Education, n.d.), 75. The later major improvements in roads came with the enactment of the Federal Interstate Highway Act of 1956, which provided 90 percent matching funds to states for road construction.

<sup>92</sup> Jack, 72.

twenty of which were originally located in the south and southeastern portion of the City. Damage estimates reached \$20 million.<sup>93</sup>

Within a year of the flood, recovery efforts included beginning construction on the Tuttle Creek Dam and lengthening and strengthening runways at the airport. Regular air service to Manhattan began in 1953. At this time, the new Sears store opened in its new building at the southeast corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Houston Streets. In June 1954, the one hundred-bed Riley County Memorial Hospital opened on ten acres of land on Sunset Avenue between Platt Street and Claflin Road.<sup>94</sup> During this time, construction crews completed the new city hall and fire station.



<sup>93</sup> White and Ward quoting Albert Horlings, ed., *A Picture Record of the Great Flood of 1951, Manhattan, Kansas* (Manhattan: *Manhattan Tribune-News*, 1951).

<sup>94</sup> Jack, 38-39, 72. In 1962, the name changed to Memorial Hospital and in 1995 to Mercy Health Center.