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HISTORY OF PAPILLION, NEBRASKA

by

Edward F. Kearns

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty of the Department of History

University of Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. EARLY HISTORY.	9
III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY.	24
IV. CULTURAL ASPECTS	41
V. RELATIONSHIP TO THE NATIONAL SCENE	56
VI. PAPILLION TODAY.	73
VII. CONCLUSION	87
BIBLIOGRAPHY	90

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Map of Papillion City, Nebraska -- June 1, 1857	11
2. Map of Papillion, Nebraska -- October 31, 1870.	18
3. Map of South Papillion, Nebraska -- February 29, 1872 .	19
4. Outline of Papillion -- June 1961	75

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A territory is opened for settlement and the people pour in. Homesteads spring up in all directions and soon towns begin to dot the landscape. A nucleus of local government is formed and, as time passes, it broadens and strengthens. The territory gradually develops into a state and takes its place in the nation. The coming to statehood lures more settlers, as well as speculators, and the cycle repeats -- more homesteads; more towns; still more government. In this humble manner began the great state of Nebraska and with it the beautiful little town of Papillion.

Long before Nebraska was opened to settlement, its lands were well traveled. The Missouri River, along the eastern boundary, was the route of early explorers and fur traders. The Platte Valley, traversing the state from east to west, is a marvelous natural highway. Through it passed the Oregon and Mormon trails over which trekked thousands of covered wagon emigrants seeking both fortune and freedom. The overland freight caravans, the stage coaches, and the Pony Express used the same route which was later to carry the first transcontinental telegraph line and the first transcontinental railroad. Little wonder that settlement came quickly once the opportunity was provided.¹

Prior to the opening of the territory, the Indian roamed freely

¹George E. Condra, James Olson, and Royce Knapp, The Nebraska Story (Lincoln: The University Publishing Company, c. 1951), p. 149.

over the plains. The first inroads on his sovereignty were made by the fur traders. The final blow began with the rush to California in 1849. As more and more emigrants crossed the area, timber and grass became scarce and game more difficult to find. Then, too, the white man brought with him his own special kind of diseases which played havoc in the savage ranks. When the Indian showed signs of being disturbed over these events, the soldier came to protect the white man and, as in the past, the Indian was eventually forced to give way to the white man's progress.²

The chiefs of the Omaha, Otoe and Missouri tribes ceded nearly five million acres of Nebraska land to the United States government in a treaty signed in Washington on March 15 and 16, 1854. With the land now part of the public domain, President Franklin Pierce then signed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill on May 30 of that same year. This Act opened the territory to settlement and the ink was hardly dry on his signature before settlers were rushing in from Iowa and Missouri to stake their claims. In Kansas, the result was a bloody civil war. In Nebraska, the measure represented the first step in the transformation of an uncivilized country into peaceful communities.³

A French fur trader, Peter A. Sarpy, owned and operated a

² Edwin A. Curley, Nebraska, Its Advantages, Resources and Drawbacks (New York: The American and Foreign Publication Company, 1875), pp. 188-189.

³ Addison E. Sheldon, "Land Systems and Land Policies in Nebraska," Nebraska State Historical Society, Publications, Vol. XXII, 1936, p. 25.

trading post at a strategic crossing point on the Missouri River. When the Kansas-Nebraska Act appeared imminent, he and some friends organized the Bellevue Town Company on February 9, 1854. As soon as settlement became legal, the work of establishing Bellevue as a city began in earnest and, on July 15, the Nebraska Palladium began publication as the town's newspaper. In the meantime, speculators were laying out cities in other areas. The first Territorial Legislature granted charters to seventeen of these would-be communities, each proclaimed to become the gateway to the West.⁴

Initially, the bluff land along the western banks of the Missouri River was occupied. As this area flourished, settlement moved in about ten miles and a few of the more hardy pioneers pushed out as much as forty to sixty miles from the river. This latter group, however, encountered much hardship and were hard-pressed for survival. In fact, all of the early settlers had a difficult time, but the land brought under cultivation made fertile farms.⁵ By 1856, people were pouring into the territory and a census that year showed 10,716 persons in residence.⁶

Under the Pre-emption Act of September 4, 1841, settlers were entitled to stake out claims on 160 acres of the public domain. By living on the claim they earned the right to purchase the land at \$1.25 per acre when the federal government put it up for sale. The act covered surveyed land only but, when the tide of settlement ran far

⁴ James C. Olson, History of Nebraska (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), pp. 83-84.

⁵ Curley, op. cit., p. 192.

⁶ Sheldon, op. cit., pp. 36-40.

ahead of the surveyors, a modifying act was passed on March 27, 1854. This one permitted the staking of claims on unsurveyed land with the provision that, when the surveys were made, the settler was entitled to select the 160 acres most closely corresponding to his claim.⁷

Other ways of acquiring title to Nebraska land were available. For instance, unclaimed land could be purchased at auction when the federal government put it up for sale. Still another method was through soldiers military bounty land warrants. As a bonus, the federal government presented soldiers with these warrants which, though depreciated, were worth the established price of \$1.25 per acre for public land. For those who made use of them, the warrants were an ideal premium. Unfortunately, however, many were sold to speculators who used them unscrupulously.⁸

While the process of individual settlement was going on, towns were also beginning to appear throughout the territory. Land laws were even more favorable to towns than to homesteads. The Townsite Act of May 23, 1844, encouraged their establishment and provided them with about the same rights as those given the homesteader.⁹ All of them were not destined to survive, however. In many cases it took some fortunate circumstance, such as the building of a railroad or the availability

⁷ Ibid., pp. 25-27.

⁸ Bruce H. Nicoll and Ken R. Keller, Know Nebraska (Lincoln: Johnson Publishing Company, c. 1951), pp. 68-69.

⁹ Roy M. Robbins, Our Landed Heritage (Princeton: University Press, 1942), p. 152.

of water power, to provide the incentive for further existence.¹⁰

The first governor of the newly-established Nebraska Territory appointed by President Pierce was Francis Burt, a 47 year old Pendleton, South Carolina, editor. He set up an office in Bellevue but died on October ⁷/₈, 1854, only ¹²eleven days after his arrival.¹¹ His successor, Thomas B. Cuming, favored Omaha as the Territorial Capitol and soon moved the seat of government there, much to the chagrin of the Bellevue boosters.¹² This was only the first of a series of set-backs that were to beset that town.

After the transfer of the Territorial Capitol, Omaha became the prize city of Douglas County which covered a rather large and unwieldy area. On February 7, 1857, an act of the Territorial Legislature carved off the southern portion of that county and established the boundaries of Sarpy County. At the same time, Leavitt L. Bowen, Charles S. Holloway, and Silas A. Strickland were appointed as commissioners to locate a seat for the new county.¹³ Their selection was Bellevue which retained the seat of county government until it

¹⁰ Arthur C. Wakely, Omaha: The Gate City and Douglas County, Nebraska (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917), p. 411.

¹¹ Olson, op. cit., p. 85.

¹² History of the State of Nebraska (Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1882), p. 1361.

¹³ Nebraska Territorial Laws, Resolutions and Memorials, 1857 (Brownville N. T.: Robert W. Furnas, Territorial Printer, 1857), p. 279.

was moved to Papillion on January 1, 1876.¹⁴

Sarpy County was named in honor of Peter Sarpy, one of its earliest and most colorful residents. Despite the fact that it possessed the oldest ^{surviving} settlement in the territory, it was one of the last of the river tier to be organized. Its northern edge was placed adjacent to Douglas County and natural waterways were used to enclose the remaining three sides. The Missouri River furnished the eastern border, while the Platte River contained it on the west and south and, to this day, the boundaries remain unaltered.¹⁵

Sarpy County covers an area of about 236 square miles,¹⁶ has an average north to south width of ten miles, and is approximately twenty miles wide. Along the Missouri River the bluff portions are decidedly hilly but the interior is undulating country. The western section contains a series of divides or rolling prairies, intersected with small streams and ravines, providing a more interesting landscape than the monotonous terrain so common in other areas of the West.¹⁷ The valley land along the Platte and Elkhorn Rivers is almost perfectly level. Drainage is excellent throughout the entire county and the soil is rich and productive.¹⁸

¹⁴ Old Bellevue, American Guide Series, Federal Writers Project, WPA, Sarpy County, Nebraska, 1937, p. 14.

¹⁵ History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1361.

¹⁶ Nebraska Blue Book 1960, p. 562.

¹⁷ History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1363.

¹⁸ Curley, op. cit., p. 144.

It was ten years after the formation of Sarpy County before Nebraska reached statehood. The Territorial Legislature formulated a constitution which was, in turn, ratified by the people in early 1866. The legislature which was elected under the provisions of this constitution then met in Omaha on July 4. A bill calling for the admission of Nebraska to the United States was passed by Congress on July 28, but did not receive Presidential approval. A similar bill in early 1867 was again turned down, but Congressional interest was such that the necessary two-thirds majority was obtained to override the veto. The bill was ratified by the Nebraska Legislature on February 20, 1867 and proclaimed official by the President on March 1 of the same year.¹⁹

The 1870 census indicated that the population of Nebraska had reached 122,993, with most of it concentrated in a few communities. Sarpy County was growing fast and could boast of 2913 inhabitants at this point in time.²⁰ Bellevue was still the key city and county seat although its prestige was already on the wane. Papillion was in an embryo stage with little to indicate its future growth beyond the fact that it was settled by a group of energetic and ambitious persons.

Although still reasonable by present-day standards, good unimproved land had risen to an average cost of ten dollars an acre by 1875. Much of it could be purchased on 100% credit if the buyer made

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 197.

²⁰ Ninth Census of the United States, Volume I, Population (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), pp. 46-47.

sufficient improvements to provide security. If not, contracts usually called for at least one-fifth cash and the balance in yearly installments at 10% interest. Land could also be purchased from earlier settlers anxious to try their fortunes further west, on cheaper land. Usually these purchases were in the form of small improved farms of 80 to 160 acres and could be obtained at a substantial reduction for cash.²¹

The foregoing has been presented to provide the reader with a brief background on the course of events leading to the founding of Papillion. It can readily be seen that considerable vision was necessary on the part of many diverse persons in order to arrive at this point. Only foresight and dedication could have overcome the many obstacles that must have blocked progress from the time of the Louisiana Purchase, through the opening of the territory, and finally to the purchase of the land on which Papillion now lies. Then, too, the element of chance most certainly played a large part in the various developments. Gradually, however, the pieces fell in place and the time became right for a new town to emerge -- a town destined to become a leading community in the area.

²¹Curley, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

CHAPTER IX

EARLY HISTORY

The background to a town name, frequently interesting, is especially intriguing in the case of Papillion. As legend would have it, the name reverts all the way back to pre-Territory days when a party of French fur traders discovered the broad valley where the town is now located. The area was abundant in luxurious grasses and beautiful wild flowers, and swarms of exotic butterflies filled the air. Overcome by the scene, one of the men could not help but exclaim, "Papillon," the French word for butterfly, and from that time on both Indian and White Man used the term in describing the valley. In the due course of events, the stream and finally the town acquired the name with only a minor change in spelling occurring in the transition to English.¹

The first mention of Papillion as a town appears in the Douglas County Deed Records for April 28, 1856, where a certificate of the George Bridge Company states:

. . . this Will Certify that we the undersigned did on the 15th day of April AD 1856 Select the following legal Sub-divisions of the Gov't Land in the County of Douglas for the purpose of laying out a town Platt thereon to be known and called by the name of Papillion City & that we have since that date proceeded to lay out said parcel of Land into Streets Alleys Blocks & Lots. West Halfe of N. W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec No. 30 in Township No 14 north of Range No. 13E. West Halfe of S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section No. 19 in Township No. 14 North of Range No. 13E. East Halfe of N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section

¹The Papillion Times, June 18, 1931.

No. 25 in Township No 14 N. of Range No. 12E & E. Halfe of S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. No. 24 in Township No. 19 North of range No. 12E, containing in all (320) acres More or Less.²

The work of George Bridge and his associates was approved by the Nebraska Territorial Legislature when an act incorporating the City of Papillion was passed on February 13, 1857.³ In those early days of the Territory each community needed a special charter from the legislature in order to be incorporated. However, this requirement placed so much of a burden on that body that laws were later passed providing for the general incorporation of towns and villages. These acts even provided for government by stating that first and second class cities were to have the mayor and council plan, while villages were to be governed by a board of trustees.⁴

The original Papillion was only two and one-half miles ^{center} north-east of the present town, ^{miles east} but lacked those key elements which were essential to town survival in the early days of western settlement. Having neither a railroad nor a stream, it was destined to oblivion. In this respect, however, it was no different from such other Sarpy County towns as Plattford, Basleton, Larimer Mills, Forest City,

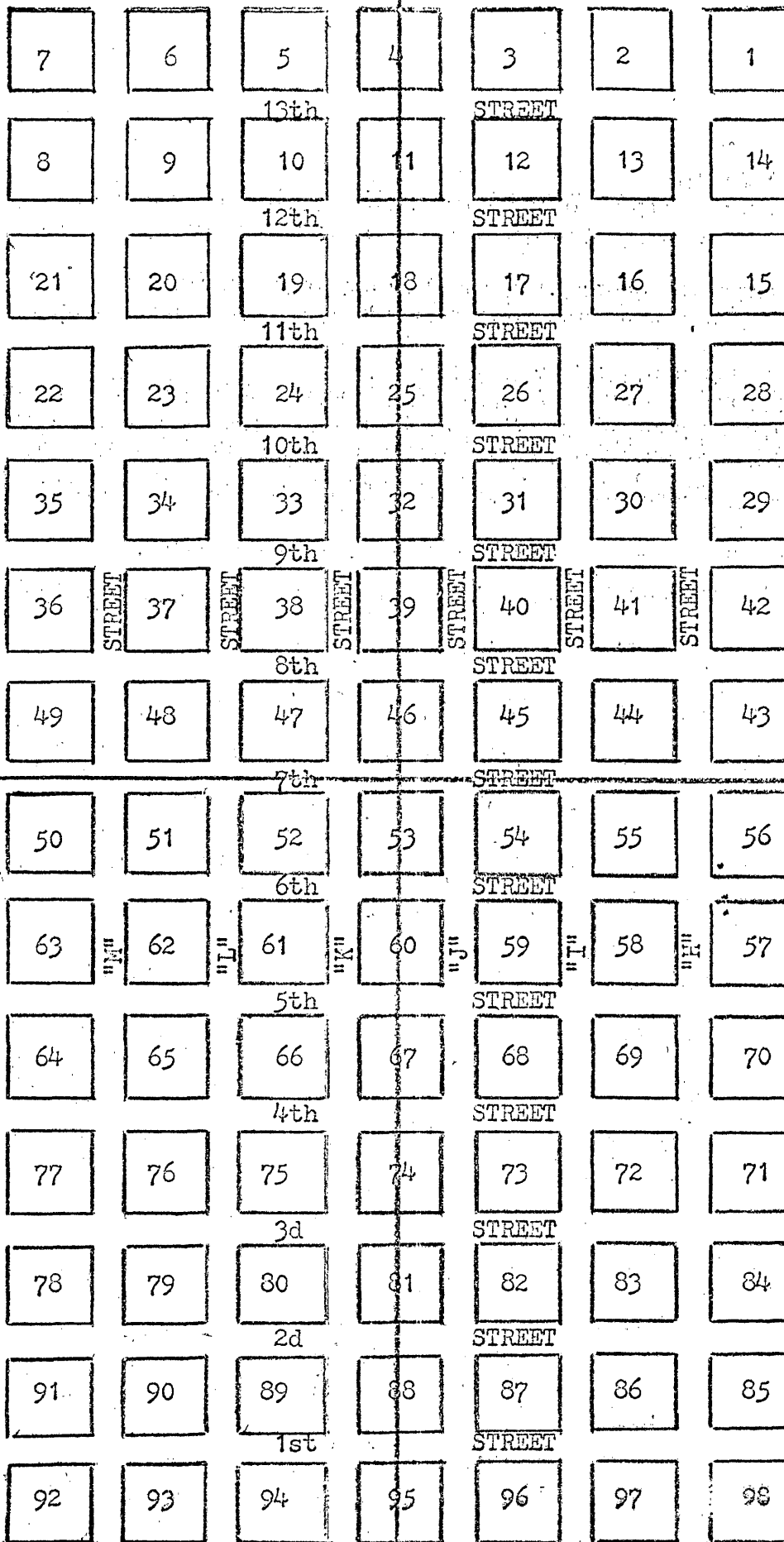
² Book B, p. 304. It is interesting to note that in another certificate on file in the Nebraska Historical Society Building, Lincoln, Nebraska, George Bridge spelled the name of the town as Pappillon. On the map filed with reference 2 the name appears in the French spelling as Papillon.

³ Nebraska Territorial Laws, Resolutions and Memorials, 1857 (Brownville: Robert W. Furnas, Territorial Printer, 1857), p. 186.

⁴ Federal Writer's Project of the WPA for the State of Nebraska, Nebraska, A Guide To The Cornhusker State (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), p. 70.

Section 24
Town 14N
Range 12E

Section 19
Town 14N
Range 13E



Section 25
Town 14N
Range 12E

Section 30
Town 14N
Range 13E

PAPILLON CITY

Fairview, Sarpy Center and Portal, all of which started full of promise but were soon to fall by the wayside.⁵ The action of the George Bridge Company followed the general pattern of the townsite speculators who were prevalent throughout the settlement of the West. Wherever government land was opened, they could be found, pre-empting what were thought to be the choice locations. Once a site was obtained, it was quickly surveyed and platted as a town and, as soon as possible, literature advertising the lots was circulated throughout the land. Since the object of these ventures was purely and simply to make money, much of the written material was so grossly exaggerated that the towns, on paper, often rivaled the largest cities in the country. In some areas the laying out of towns appeared to be a mania and one visitor to such an area wrote: "Nearly every man we met had a town, if a paper platt constituted a town; and every man who had a town had a map to the county marked out to suit his town as a county seat."⁶

George Bridge was no newcomer to this part of the country as he was a member of the Omaha Claim Club and had a choice lot on the Missouri River as early as 1854.⁷ Claim Clubs such as the one in Omaha played a vital role in the initial stages of Nebraska history. Although illegal within the concepts of Federal law, they did perform a necessary function. Since the land had not been surveyed when the

⁵The Papillion Times, June 16, 1931.

⁶Wakeley, op. cit., p. 411.

⁷Alfred Sorensen, The Story of Omaha (Omaha: National Printing Company, 1923), pp. 128-129.

first settlements were made, such an organization among the settlers themselves was the only protection they had. Their motto was: "An injury to one is the concern of all," and claim jumpers were accorded swift and appropriate action.⁸ The original aim of the Clubs was to secure the peaceful adjustment of all cases in which claims overlapped each other in the unsurveyed country.⁹ Later, though, they took on a dual purpose in that not only did they accord their members the protection of numbers, but they were also designed to secure for the pioneer "Squatter" 320 acres instead of the 160 granted by the United States Government. In fact, the members were bound by a secret ritual and oath to protect each other in this undertaking. The purpose was to gain for each pioneer an extra quarter section which he could later sell to a newcomer and thus obtain the necessary cash to pay for the quarter he was permitted by law to pre-empt.¹⁰

Accused claim jumpers were given what was considered to be a fair and impartial trial and in most instances would forego their claimed right on the decision of the Club. Occasionally, however, a more recalcitrant individual would not abide by the decision handed down and would need further convincing before coming to terms. One of the most effective methods was to toss him into the Missouri River at the end of a rope; if he would not forego his claim when pulled out,

⁸ Wakeley, op. cit., p. 81.

⁹ History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1564.

¹⁰ The Papillion Times, June 29, 1922.

the dose was repeated until he did come around. There is this to be said for the Clubs: They represented the only real government in land titles, they operated quickly and efficiently, and they eliminated the heavy expense of normal county court action.¹¹ Perhaps these cogent reasons had much to do with the enactment of a territorial claim club law by the first session of the Nebraska Legislature. Passed on March 6, 1855, the law was practically an attempt to abrogate the United States statute for the acquisition of land which permitted pre-emption up to 160 acres only. The new law recognized not only the authority of the Claim Clubs, but also valid claims up to 320 acres.¹² It was never tested in court, enforcement generally being by swift and vigorous Club meetings and the use of a convenient rope.¹³

In the same year that Papillion City was incorporated, John L. Beadle of Wayne County, New York, visited the area that was later to become Sarpy County, with a view toward obtaining some western property. He was pleased with the topography of the land on which Papillion now stands as it seemed to him that this point in the valley would be a natural outlet for the rich agricultural country extending south and west to the Platte River.¹⁴ He felt certain that the route to the

¹¹ Frank P. O'Brien, To Nebraska In '57, A Diary of Erastus F. Beadle (The New York Public Library, 1923), pp. 32-33.

¹² Nebraska Territorial Laws, Resolutions and Memorials, 1855 (Omaha City, N. T.: Sherman and Strickland, Territorial Printers, 1855), p. 159.

¹³ The Papillion Times, June 29, 1922.

¹⁴ S. D. Bangs, "History of Sarpy County," Nebraska State Historical Society, Transactions and Reports, Vol. II (Lincoln, Nebraska: State Journal Company, Printers, 1887), pp. 304-305.

Pacific would pass through this valley assuring its future and so, on July 2, 1857, he obtained a grant to the Northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 26, Township 14, North of Range 12, East of the 6th Prime Meridian, in Sarpy County, Nebraska. The grant which is a major portion of Papillion today, had originally been issued to Robert Maynard as a military bounty land warrant and his reason for releasing it, or what consideration he received, has gone unrecorded.¹⁵ One thing certain, however, is that the faith that John Beadle exhibited in the area has without a doubt proven itself in the beautiful little town which is now the Sarpy County seat.

John Beadle did not live to see his Western land take shape and prosper as a town. His death in 1863 saw the property revert to his brothers, Michael and David,¹⁶ who were soon to initiate actions which would instill first life, then growth, into Papillion. For instance, a map of Sarpy County published in 1869 advertised:

Papillion is located fifteen miles from Omaha and eight miles from Bellevue, at the intersection of the surveyed route of the Omaha & South-Western and Union Pacific Railroads. The site covers one section of land, one-quarter of which is in lots 50 X 142 feet, the balance in lots containing from five to twenty acres each. Reservations have been made for Public Grounds, Railroad Grounds, and for religious purposes.

Beadle Brothers of New York, Martin Brothers and D. Leach of Bellevue, J. Ritchie and S. M. Pike of Papillion were listed as the proprietors and Goss and Watson as agents.¹⁷ Although the advertisement did not

¹⁵ Sarpy County Records, Book J, p. 497.

¹⁶ Sarpy County Deed Records, Book 28, p. 536.

¹⁷ Published by Goss and Watson. Copy on file in home of Mrs. Julius Steinberg, Bellevue, Nebraska.

indicate a price, 4.45 acres was later recorded as being sold to William and Albert Sander for \$712 on September 3, 1870.¹⁸ This turned out to be a choice selection as the parcel was destined to be in the heart of the business district.

Another avenue exploited in the initial efforts to establish a town was a negotiation to obtain a railroad. The importance of such a prize needs no elaboration, especially when the town is not only new but located out on the prairie. For this reason, the railroad companies in those days expected the communities which they were helping to develop to assist them in their extensions and improvements.¹⁹ That is perhaps why early Papillion residents contributed \$1200 toward the movement of the Union Pacific depot to their town in a contract which was drawn on October 9, 1869 and read:

To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that the U. P. R. R. Co. does hereby agree to put down a side track & to erect a suitable Station House at the Summit $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles West of Present Papillion Depot in Sarpy Co. Nebraska on following terms: VIZ: that the citizens of said County will pay toward the cost of necessary grading the sum of Twelve Hundred dollars in Cash in two payments as follows = first payment of Six Hundred dollars to be made to the U. P. R. R. Co. Nov 15th 1869 & ballance [sic] Dec 15 1869.

The estimate of grading is Two Thousand dollars it is supposed will actually cost a larger Sum than that = Work on the part of the Co. to begin at once & to be continued until finished.

Value of lands required by to [sic] Co. estimated at Four Hundred (\$400) in addition to above sum.

/s/ S. H. H. Clarke
Div. Supt. for Co.

¹⁸ Sarpy County Records, Book J, p. 367.

¹⁹ The Papillion Times, June 25, 1931.

To assist in the payment of the above required sum & secure the Station above specified, We agree to pay the several sums set opposite our Names.

/s/ D. E. Beadle \$400 /s/ S. M. Pike \$100²⁰

With the sale of lots progressing and the railroad providing an invaluable adjunct to the community, the outline of a town soon began to appear and by 1870 the population had reached a total of 333 persons.²¹ On October 31, 1870, the town was surveyed and platted (refer to map on page 18) and William Robinson became the first[?] official mayor.²² Soon afterwards, in 1872, S. M. Pike had part of his land south of the creek surveyed and platted as "South Papillion" (refer to map on page 19),²³ but it was never intended that the two areas grow as separate communities. As we shall see, the two surveys established a town outline which was to remain unchanged until the most recent times.

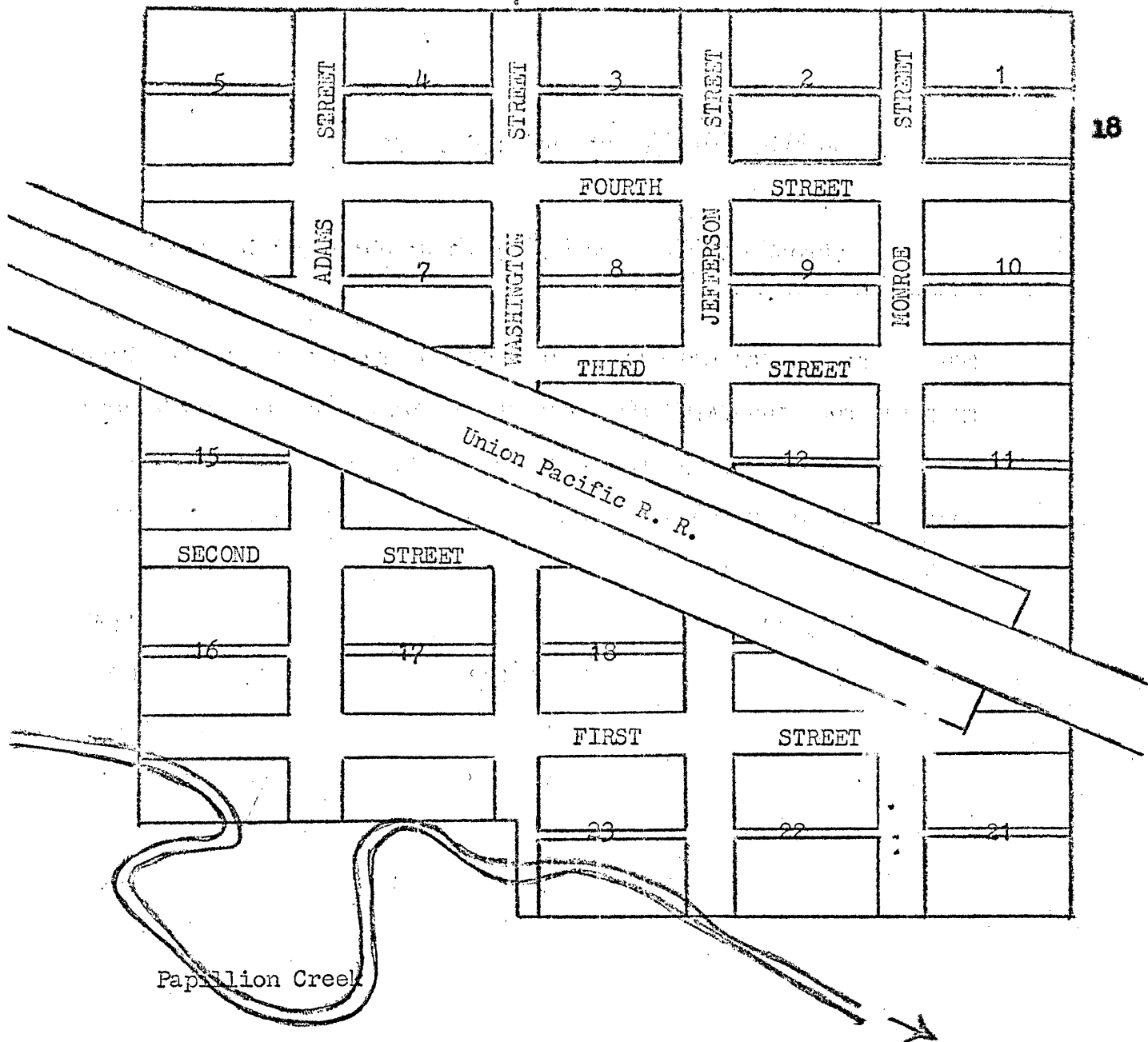
The most significant event in all Papillion history was the capture of the county seat. The addition of this prize provided the final assurance of survival as water power was already furnished by the Papio Creek and a link to the outside world by the Union Pacific Railroad. The center of county government could not help but attract both settlers and business. Up to this time, Bellevue had been the

²⁰ The original contract is framed and located in the Sarpy County Historical Society Building, Bellevue, Nebraska. The agreement also contains twenty-nine other names (some obliterated) with pledges ranging from one hundred dollars down to five dollars.

²¹ Ninth Census of the United States, Population, Volume I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), p. 196.

²² Sarpy County Records, Book J, p. 367. See p. 33.

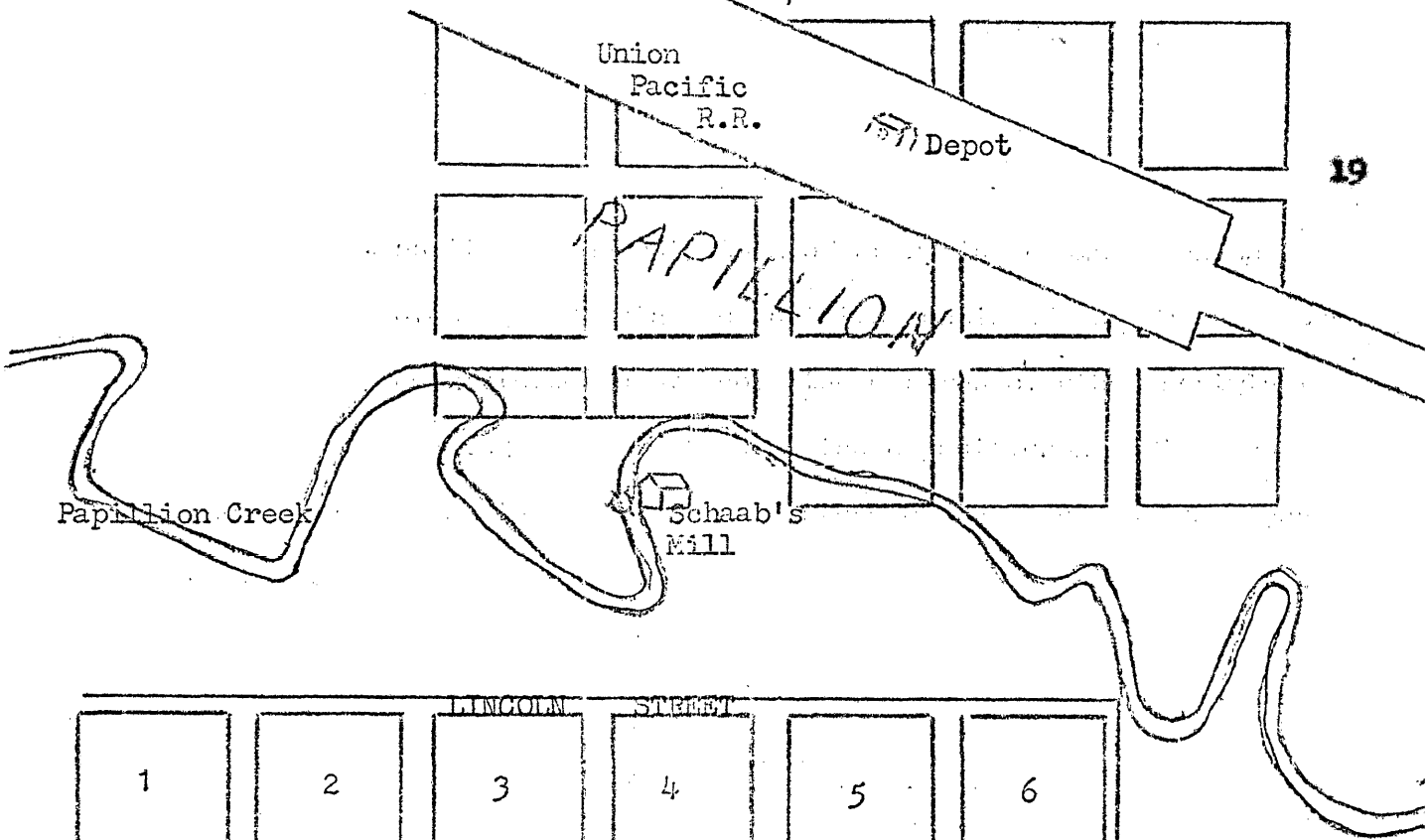
²³ Ibid., Book K, p. 37.



MAP OF PAPILLION

PLATTED OCTOBER 31, 1870

All the Streets are 80 feet wide. The Blocks when full are 280 feet square. The Lots are 66 feet by 140 feet. The Alleys run East and West and are 16 feet wide except in Block number 8, 17, 18, and 24 through which there are no Alleys.



		LINCOLN STREET									
1	2	3	4	5	6						
		GRANT STREET									
12	MADISON STREET	11	JACKSON STREET	10	ADAMS STREET	9	WASHINGTON STREET	8	JESSERSON STREET	7	HICHOGE STREET
		SHERMAN STREET									
13	MADISON STREET	14	JACKSON STREET	15	ADAMS STREET	16	WASHINGTON STREET	17	JESSERSON STREET	18	HICHOGE STREET
		SHERIDAN STREET									
24		23		22		21		20		19	
		HALLECK STREET									
25		26		27		28					

MAP OF SOUTH PAPILLION

Filed in Office of County Clerk February 29, 1872

county seat as it was the only town of appreciable size when the county was formed. This state of affairs continued as long as enough votes could be mustered to overcome the desires of other aspiring towns. The opening wedge to this enviable position had first come when Governor Cumming chose Omaha instead of Bellevue for the location of the territorial capitol. The final blow came when the decision was made to site the Union Pacific Missouri River bridge crossing at Omaha. Either action alone would have been a minor tragedy but the combination marked the downfall of Bellevue hopes of remaining a leading city in Nebraska since the bulk of her population now moved to Omaha.²⁴

In the plush days of Bellevue, Sarpy Center and Papillion had taken shape on the plateau to the west and grown from "crossroads" to villages. As the decline of the older town became more evident, the acute politicians of these new communities began to realize the possibility of securing for their town the prestige and profit of the county seat.²⁵ Their efforts were culminated when the general election on October 12, 1874 saw Bellevue, Sarpy Center and Papillion contending for the honor. Bellevue was eliminated at that time as it had been agreed between the county commissioners and the three towns that the town receiving the least number of votes would drop out of the fight.²⁶ With the choice now narrowed to two towns the efforts

²⁴ History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1364.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The Papillion Times, June 25, 1931.

of the leading citizens of these communities were doubled.

Perhaps one of the most notable facts about the fight for the county seat was the surprising lack of violence. Normally, such events caused extreme resentment resulting in a great deal of fighting and gun play. In this case, however, members of the rival towns limited themselves to verbal battles and the use of fists or guns were conspicuous by their absence.²⁷ This by no means indicated a lack of enthusiasm, however, and many diverse efforts were pointed toward winning the battle. For instance, Mayor Spearman of Sarpy Center pulled a shrewd maneuver when he introduced a bill in the Nebraska Legislature to make Sarpy Center the seat. Fortunately for Papillion, however, the bill was defeated leaving the decision still in the hands of the voters.²⁸

The town of Sarpy Center was established approximately in the geographical center of the county.²⁹ It was first conceived by Captain James Dawson Spearman for the sole purpose of capturing the county seat. In 1874 a company was formed, the town surveyed and platted, and it soon grew to pretentious proportions making the promoters extremely confident of success. Good roads converged at this point from all directions and business with the surrounding area was excellent. The town had a good hotel, store, and blacksmith shop

²⁷The Papillion Times, June 25, 1931.

²⁸History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1364.

²⁹S. D. Bangs, op. cit., p. 305.

and, in addition, the Sarpy County Sentinel was moved there from Papillion during the county seat battle. In fact, in view of its location in the center of the county, and also the fact that it was surrounded by rich country, the boosters of that town were quite justified in their contentions for the county seat.³⁰

Sarpy Center received the most votes in the initial election and was considered to be an easy victor in the special election which was called for April 6, 1875. To forestall such an occurrence, an organization called the Papillion Town Company was created to raise funds for building a court house, thereby swinging the election to Papillion.³¹ A \$10,000 bond was posted to guarantee the building of a court house within one year after the county seat was moved³² and, to secure the necessary funds, a subscription was started among the business men and inhabitants of the town. J. M. Pike presented the company with thirty lots, Dr. D. E. Beadle gave up twenty-five lots, while other citizens added smaller tracts and money.³³ In the meantime, Albert and William Sander donated a site for the court house just east of their store on the corner of First and Jefferson Streets. This latest action decided the question as to where to locate the court house and apparently had a deciding influence on the voters as Papillion

³⁰ The Papillion Times, June 25, 1931.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sarpy County Miscellaneous Record, Book 1, p. 84.

³³ History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1369.

won the election ending a most interesting contest.³⁴

Once the election returns were in, work began on the new court house which was to be a two story building, forty-eight feet square, with several offices and a large hall for entertainments and concerts.³⁵

On July 3, 1875 (July 4 being Sunday) , the cornerstone was laid by ex-Governor McComas of Virginia. Practically everyone in Sarpy County was present for the impressive ceremonies which were highlighted by the firing of a cannon. As is usual in such circumstances, those present believed the new building being erected would meet the needs of the community for at least a century. Little did they know that the development and progress of their county seat would soon strain the capability of the edifice which was yet to be completed.³⁶

³⁴The Papillion Times, June 25, 1931.

³⁵History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1369.

³⁶The Papillion Times, June 25, 1931.

CHAPTER XIX

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

Although it was John Beadle who first recognized the potential of the Papillion Valley, it was to be his brother David who would inject life into the dream. The name of David E. Beadle, a medical doctor, can be found on almost every page of early Papillion history that one unfolds. He was the head of the group which petitioned and convinced the Union Pacific Railroad to move its depot; he was also responsible for having the original town surveyed and platted; and to him we must credit many firsts. He was the first doctor to open practice, was appointed as the first postmaster, and built the first house, all of which occurred during 1869¹. In January of the following year he also opened the first store, a drug store, but he did not retain this enterprise for very long, selling out to the Sander brothers in August of the same year.² All in all, Doctor Beadle exhibited a most imposing display of confidence in the town and should, without a doubt, be considered as the father of Papillion.

A similarity in appearance marked the western prairie towns. On either side of the main streets there was at least one general store, bank, hotel, livery stable and hardware store. They slumbered through the week but came to life on Saturday when the settlers did their

¹History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1369.

²S. D. Bangs, op. cit., p. 305.

shopping. Early Papillion was no different from the rest. It had all the typical business elements starting with the general store which the Sander brothers had developed from Doctor Beadle's drug store.³ Hotel business must have been good, too, as three of them were operating by 1876. First came the Sarpy House erected in the fall of 1870 by John Biale. Originally this building was only 30 feet by 24 feet but in 1882 it more than doubled in size when it was enlarged to 50 feet by 60 feet. In 1871, the Papillion House was built by Ole Bergstrom and, in 1876, N. R. Wilcox followed with the Wilcox House.⁴ By this time Papillion was becoming a thriving little community.

In July, 1873, Doctor J. C. Klingeman added his services to the growing medical requirements of the area.⁵ His arrival must have been a welcome sight to Doctor Beadle who had continued his many and diversified efforts. Although he had sold his original drug store, he opened another on the corner of Third and Jefferson Streets⁶ and then, in 1875, his practice was further increased by the award of the county contract for furnishing medical services to the paupers.⁷ The rest of the town was not standing still either, as, by 1878, it could

³The Papillion Times, June 25, 1931.

⁴History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., pp. 1370-1371.

⁵The Papillion Times, March 10, 1898.

⁶Ibid., February 24, 1876.

⁷Sarpy County Commissioners Records, September 7, 1875, p. 233.

also boast of two dry goods stores, a hardware store, a blacksmith shop, grocery store, carriage maker and furniture store. Personal needs were taken care of by a clothing store, a boot-maker shop, and restaurant, and there was even a tonsorial parlor for the more fastidious. A Western Union Office operated on the corner of Second and Washington Streets⁸ and, for those so inclined, D. L. Carpenter was appointed as an agent of the Cunard Line in 1877 and tickets were available to all parts of Europe.⁹ In view of all this, the town could certainly be considered self-sufficient.

The ability to recognize and take advantage of opportunity plays an all-important role in the drama of history. Such was the case in the successful efforts of the early citizens in convincing the Union Pacific to move its depot into Papillion. However, the elements of chance leading up to these opportune moments must be given equal if not more credit. For instance, the very fact that a railroad was anywhere near Papillion might be considered nothing less than a stroke of good fortune.

When consideration was first being given to a transcontinental railroad, the people of Bellevue were certain that the Missouri River crossing would be located near their town as surveys had shown this area to be the most suitable for such an undertaking. If this had come about, the route westward could not have helped but pass either

⁸ The Papillion Times, December 10, 1874.

⁹ Ibid., December 6, 1877.

through or near Papillion. But this was not to be the case. When the crossing was finally made, it was at Omaha to the bitter disappointment of the Bellevue residents. There were, no doubt, many reasons for the decision of the Union Pacific officials to build the bridge at Omaha, but perhaps uppermost in their minds was the fact that Douglas County had voted to provide the company with \$250,000 to aid in the construction. The clinching factor quite possibly came when the citizens of Omaha, on the same date (July 13, 1868), guaranteed \$150,000 for right of way and depot grounds in connection with the bridge.¹⁰

When active work on construction of the Union Pacific was begun in the spring of 1864, the contract called for work to be completed on a line due west one hundred miles to a point in the Platte Valley, and from there to the 100th meridian. Such a route would have completely bypassed Papillion, but it was abandoned after the expenditure of almost \$100,000. Those in charge claimed that the route was too hilly to permit completion within the three years allotted by the contract and, so, two new routes were surveyed. The one selected made a loop to the south, almost to Bellevue, before proceeding westward and later came to be known as the "ox-bow." This decision was violently opposed by the people of Omaha who did not want to provide Bellevue with any advantage in the fight for the bridge crossing.¹¹

¹⁰ James W. Savage and John T. Bell, History of the City of Omaha, Nebraska (New York: Munsell and Company, 1896), p. 398.

¹¹ Alfred Sorenson, History of Omaha (Omaha: Gibson, Miller and Richardson, Printers, 1889), pp. 238-239.

In the years to come there was to be considerable controversy over the merit of the circuitous route to the south which added nine miles in thirteen. At the time it was justified on the grounds that it eliminated the eighty and sixty-six foot grades out of Omaha. However, General Grenville M. Dodge, who should know, later said: "If this had been done there would have been some argument for the change, but they only eliminated the grades from the Omaha summit West." As he put it: ". . . it took three miles of sixty and sixty-six foot grade from the Missouri River to reach this summit . . ." and ". . . coming east the Elkhorn summit was an eighty foot grade so by the change and addition of nine miles they made no reductions in the original maximum grades."¹² But justified or not the "ox-bow" was built and Papillion became a part of the coast to coast railway system.

On July 1, 1882, fortune again smiled on Papillion when the Missouri Pacific Railroad made a connection with the Union Pacific there.¹³ This track was constructed as a branch of the Missouri Pacific Railway Company of Nebraska, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Missouri Pacific Railroad which was incorporated in Nebraska in June, 1881. The company built a line of road from a junction with the parent railroad at the Kansas-Nebraska state line to a point just south of the Union Pacific tracks at Portal. From this point a branch

¹² Grenville M. Dodge, How We Built The Union Pacific Railway (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), p. 12.

¹³ J. Sterling Morton, Illustrated History of Nebraska (Lincoln: Jacob North and Company, 1905), Vol. III, p. 352.

line was extended 2.35 miles to Papillion where it made a junction with the Union Pacific just east of the depot.¹⁴ From there into Omaha the trains operated over Union Pacific tracks until a separate line was completed in 1886.¹⁵

With the coming of the Missouri Pacific the residents were afforded direct access to Kansas City, St. Louis and the South and could boast of as good train service as any village in the country. Fourteen trains operated through the town going to all points of the compass and offering potential passengers a wide selection of starting times.¹⁶ This bounty did not last long, however, as in 1887 the present Missouri Pacific main line via Nebraska City, Union and Plattsmouth was completed and Papillion lost its passenger service. The branch line was completely removed in 1917,¹⁷ but before that another blow had come in the form of the "Lane Cut-off."

The loop that the Union Pacific made to the south before proceeding westward from Omaha had been for some time a bothersome subject to the company officials. The problem ended in 1908 when a new line, the "Lane Cut-off," was ^{completed} built between Omaha and Lane, Nebraska.¹⁸ This line avoided the circuitous route and saved nine

¹⁴ Letter from Mr. R. J. Maxwell, Public Relations Department, Missouri Pacific Railroad Company, St. Louis, Missouri, September 29, 1961.

¹⁵ Savage and Bell, op. cit., p. 409.

¹⁶ The Papillion Times, December 4, 1930.

¹⁷ Letter from Mr. R. J. Maxwell, loc. cit.

¹⁸ Nelson Trottman, History of the Union Pacific (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1923), p. 303.

miles. It also eliminated Papillion from the direct east-west line. The town was not completely cut off, however, as the Union Pacific now placed motor cars on the Papillion loop, operating between Valley and Omaha and providing the town with three trains each way daily.¹⁹

Agriculture has always been important to Papillion. In addition to the wide variety of business enterprises available to supply the needs of the pioneer farmer, the town also contained a grain dealer, an elevator, and two flour mills. As early as 1869, John Schaab built the first mill on the Papio Creek in the south part of town and named it the "U. P. Mills."²⁰ Though small, being only 25 feet by 36 feet, it had a capacity of 3500 pounds of flour and meal per day and was to remain the only mill until the fall of 1890 when the Papillion Roller Mills was erected on the banks of the Papio by a man named Schilts. Both of these mills were initially operated by water power but later converted to the more certain power of gasoline engines.²¹

It took courage and persistence to be a farmer in those early days. Most of the work had to be done by hand, machine farming not becoming highly developed until the turn of the century. Corn was the principal crop with wheat playing an important second. The worst period came in the middle seventies, known as the "grasshopper years."

¹⁹The Papillion Times, July 2, 1908.

²⁰History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1371.

²¹The Papillion Times, March 10, 1898.

The invaders came suddenly in the summer of 1874, wiping out everything before them. Great injury was done to the crops and even clothing and harness was destroyed if left in the open. Millions of eggs were left behind by the pests and the next year the invasion was even worse.²²

In the early part of 1875, Congress found it necessary to appropriate \$30,000 for the purchase of seeds and another \$150,000 for food and clothing, all to be distributed among the stricken of the states which had suffered.²³ The Granges, too, worked vigorously at relief work. In Papillion, corn and flour were collected from all over the county and donated to those smitten by the grasshopper scourge. In the midst of one such campaign, Grand Master Potter emphasized that: "This is a step in the right direction" ". . . we shall be pleased," he went on, "to see those -- whether grangers or not -- who are blessed with plenty and to spare, take from the bounty of their store-houses and contribute to the relief of distressed humanity" He gave special emphasis to the fact that: "In this land of plenty, to allow any one to go hungry . . . is an inexcusable crime."²⁴

The University of Nebraska has long geared its facilities to the education of the farmer and the improvement of his methods. In 1895, the Department of Farming Instruction encouraged the establishment of a Farmer's Institute in Sarpy County but met with no success

²²Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., pp. 174-176.

²³Albert Watkins, Outline of Nebraska History (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1910), pp. 43-44.

²⁴The Papillion Times, December 10, 1874.

at that time.²⁵ The Institutes were an organization of farmers to obtain more knowledge about their crops and livestock. The University furnished free of charge speakers to keep them in touch with the most practical and up-to-date information on the subjects of interest to them.²⁶

Finally, in January 1905, the efforts of the school were rewarded and the Sarpy County Farmer's Institute was organized with John Grinnel as President. It was located in Papillion and two years later a Ladies Auxiliary was formed with Mrs. E. G. Pace as President.²⁷

Out of the needs of the farmer grew another Papillion institution. Despite its many other assets the early-day village still lacked a bank which was not to come until 1880 when Augustus W. Clarke set himself up as the town's first banker.²⁸ "A. W." had originally settled in Bellevue in 1864 but apparently was among those who could see the growing potential of the Papillion Valley.²⁹ His first venture into Papillion business was the Clarke Elevator. This enterprise had a humble beginning as a 22 foot by 50 foot warehouse but it was soon followed by the general store that in turn led to the banking business.³⁰

As both merchant and grain dealer, Clarke gained the confidence of the farmers. He purchased their grain for resale to the cavalry posts and they, in turn, bought merchandise from him. Since no banks

²⁵ Ibid., December 19, 1895.

²⁶ Ibid., November 10, 1904.

²⁷ Ibid., January 29, 1914

²⁸ Ibid., April 1, 1892.

²⁹ Ibid., March 10, 1898.

³⁰ History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1371

were available in the area, it became a matter of practice for them to leave their credit from grain sales with him for future purchases. As time went on this outstanding credit became larger until, in 1880, Clarke had more than \$50,000 of his customers' money entrusted to him for safekeeping. It had even reached the point where he was being requested to pay funds to a third party. Such transactions were written in long hand, sometimes on wrapping paper, and were in effect a check. At this point it was apparent that the banking end of his business must be separated, so space in the rear of the store was enclosed with chicken wire and over a small window was placed a sign announcing "A. W. Clarke, Banker." The bank was officially in business. It operated as a private institution until 1907 when it was incorporated under the laws of Nebraska.³¹

Growing slowly, by May 9, 1883, Papillion had a population of over 400 persons³² and was incorporated as a village under the laws of the State of Nebraska. The first trustees appointed were A. W. Clarke, William Robinson, James E. Campbell, Absalom W. Critchfield and William Sander. William Robinson was named the first⁷ mayor.³³ Few problems presented themselves to the village board in those early days, but as time passed more and more need for civic improvement

³¹ Leaflet published by the Clarke Bank, 1952.

³² United States Bureau of the Census, Eleventh Census of the United States, Population, Volume 6 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), p. 271.

³³ Sarpy County Commissioners Records, Book 3, pp. 162-163. See p. 17.

became apparent. In 1896, a well was sunk so that visitors and local people alike would have water for themselves and their horses when doing business in town. Gasoline street lights had been installed and the village marshall had a ten dollar a month contract to perform the daily chore of lighting them.³⁴ Of interest is that an economy wave, influenced by the village financial condition in 1901, resulted in a decision not to use the lights during the summer months.³⁵

As in so many embryo towns, mud was a constant problem plaguing the town fathers. The initial solution, insofar as the pedestrian was concerned, was plank walks along the main streets. These served the purpose if one never had to cross the street, but required constant repair due to the ravages of the weather. In 1908, the business men began replacing the planks with concrete walks³⁶ and by 1912 The Papillion Times could proudly boast that the town "has . . . over $5\frac{1}{3}$ miles of concrete sidewalk 4 or more feet in width and has only 210 feet of plank walk. . . ."³⁷

The streets were something else again. Gravel was first used in an effort to maintain them in a passable condition but even this did not prevent the mud holes and general mess that accompanied inclement weather. They were continually in need of repair, but at times it was possible to look on the brighter side:

³⁴ City Council Records, Book I, p. 274.

³⁵ The Papillion Times, June 13, 1901.

³⁶ Ibid., April 30, 1908.

³⁷ Ibid., October 10, 1912.

Once more Papillion's main thoroughfare is in very excellent condition and travelers may drive thereon without fear of wrecking vehicle or sustaining personal injury. The recent winds have dried out the mud holes and the good work was completed when "Hap" Eaton and "Blondy" Ruff cranked up their Fordson and securing a heavy steel drag upon which rode Alderman Bill Cordes and other huskies the chuck holes were filled up and the surface made reasonably smooth again. Unless we have some extended rainy weather . . . the streets will be in good condition all winter. ³⁸

On December 15, 1919, a mass meeting was held in the District Court room and a decision made to pave Washington Street from the north edge of town to the south edge, a distance of one mile, and to also pave a spur one block east to the court house. The paving was of vitrified brick laid on a concrete base five inches deep and coated over with asphalt. ³⁹ It was completed in June, 1921, and most of the town turned out to celebrate the event at a "jollification" and free dance. ⁴⁰ The cost had come to four dollars a square yard ⁴¹ which is exceptionally reasonable by today's standards, especially in view of the fact that most of the original roadway is still in use.

The passing years saw little change in the outward appearance of the town but the pressures for civic improvements gradually had their effect. In 1908, Ordinance No. 121 provided for the installation of electric lights ⁴² and, in the same year, a \$25,000 municipal water works system made a tremendous improvement in the life of the inhabitants. ⁴³ The Papillion Times, acting like a Chamber of Commerce,

³⁸ Ibid., December 16, 1920.

³⁹ Ibid., December 18, 1919.

⁴⁰ Ibid., June 9, 1921.

⁴¹ Ibid., December 18, 1919.

⁴² City Council Records, Book II, p. 46.

⁴³ The Papillion Times, May 21, 1908.

often stumped for what were considered to be necessary changes. When things became dormant, the paper often spoke out for progress and the need to make Papillion an attractive place for people to live. One such editorial on July 31, 1919, preceded the paving of Washington Street and the construction of a city sewer system which was completed during 1920.⁴⁴

Fire was an ever-present threat to the welfare of the community. On January 31, 1899, an assembly was held to discuss ways and means of securing some sort of fire protection for the property in town. A provisional fire company was organized, and a resolution adopted in favor of procuring a hook and ladder wagon. Charles Rosencrans, then Mayor, was designated Chief of the new company, J. P. Spearman became his assistant, and committees were appointed to solicit funds.⁴⁵ Contributions must have been slow in coming, however, as it was a year later before The Papillion Times could report that the Papillion Fire Company had received the first consignment of firefighting apparatus from a firm in Wisconsin. Even then the equipment was very simple, consisting merely of twelve buckets, one fifty foot extension ladder, and four other ladders of varied sizes.⁴⁶

Despite the acquisition of new equipment, fire fighting did not become an organized activity until the beginning of World War II. Anyone within hearing distance ran to the fire barn when the whistle blew.⁴⁷ On January 29, 1942, Tony Bucher, Chairman of the Commercial

⁴⁴ Ibid., December 25, 1919.

⁴⁶ Ibid., January 4, 1900.

⁴⁵ Ibid., February 2, 1899.

⁴⁷ Ibid., July 23, 1959.

Club Fire Department Committee, called a meeting of the local men at the American Legion hall. About fifty men made their appearance and, before they were through, a volunteer fire department was organized in accordance with Nebraska laws, James Klingeman had been named President, and Paul Hellbusch drew the post of Fire Chief.⁴⁸ Once officially organized as a twenty-five man department, the volunteers conducted a series of scrap metal drives and raised the necessary funds for a truck.⁴⁹

One distinct advantage that early-day Papillionites had over the present inhabitants was plentiful public transportation. Although train service was greatly reduced upon completion of the "Lane Cut-off," it was more than adequately replaced by an interurban street railway. The firm of Shimer and Chase had been awarded the franchise to build the interurban, but they, in turn, sold out to the Nebraska Traction and Power Company in 1908. The original contract called for six miles of road to be built. Two and one-half miles were to extend eastward from Ralston to "Q" Street in South Omaha; the remaining three and one-half miles to be laid southward to Papillion. Completion was anticipated by the summer of 1909.⁵⁰

After much bickering and many delays, the "Ralston Interurban" was finally completed and the first car arrived in Papillion at 5:30 P.M. on Sunday afternoon, October 1, 1911. This new system was a welcome addition to the transportation facilities of the town as it

⁴⁸ Ibid., January 29, 1942.

⁴⁹ Ibid., July 23, 1959.

⁵⁰ Ibid., October 1, 1908.

provided two-hour service to Omaha from seven in the morning until midnight.⁵¹ The fare was ten cents to Belton and twenty-five cents to Omaha. Terminals were located at the top of Washington Street on the north edge of Papillion, in Belton, and by the Postoffice in downtown Omaha.⁵²

The Interurban met the needs of the public in its day but the time came when it had to give way for more modern methods. In May, 1926, the company received permission from its main offices to tear up the tracks from Papillion two miles north to the county line. Bus service was substituted for the street cars, the route being from the southern limits of Papillion to the center of downtown Omaha. This was good news to the people of Papillion who used the service, because many of them had previously been required to walk as much as a half mile to get to the street car terminal on the north side of town.⁵³

Many improvements had been installed by 1920, yet the town debt was so small that it was still possible for the village board to reduce the levy from forty-one mills to thirty-six mills.⁵⁴ Soon after the turn of the century, a Commercial Club had been organized to promote the welfare and development of the community and by 1912 it had seventy-five members.⁵⁵ Composed mainly of the leading business

⁵¹ Ibid., October 1, 1908.

⁵² Ibid., September 28, 1911.

⁵³ Ibid., May 6, 1926.

⁵⁴ City Council Records, Book II, p. 395.

⁵⁵ The Papillion Times, October 10, 1912.

and professional men, the group campaigned continuously for civic improvement and had much to do with the changes instituted in Papillion. Every town needs such an organization and Papillion was fortunate in having a group whose members gave willingly of their time and money in order to see the town prosper.⁵⁶

Those who were present when the corner-stone of the court house was laid in 1875, and who thought that the new building would last a century, missed their calculation by over fifty years. By 1914, it was the unanimous opinion of the County Commissioners that Sarpy County was badly in need of a new court house.⁵⁷ A great many of the voters agreed, although not quite enough, as the proposition for the county to issue bonds in the sum of \$60,000 to build a new court house was defeated that year by a vote of 695 to 515.⁵⁸

Even though the bond issue was defeated, most people readily agreed to the necessity for a new court house and agitation continued in this direction. It was several years, though, before the voters would give their stamp of approval to the building of a new structure. The day finally came, however, and on July 4, 1922, the corner-stone of the new court house was laid in impressive ceremony. Built at a cost of \$150,000, it is an imposing building of light-colored brick. Located on the corner of Third and Washington Streets, it is ideally situated just outside of, and overlooking, the Papillion business district.⁵⁹ Although completed less than forty years ago, and

⁵⁶ Ibid., April 18, 1929.

⁵⁷ Ibid., January 1, 1914.

⁵⁸ Ibid., February 12, 1914.

⁵⁹ Ibid., June 29, 1922.

considered at the time to be more than adequate for the needs of the county, it is already heavily overcrowded. In this respect, it bears a remarkable resemblance to its predecessor which was unable to complete a half century of service.

At the time the new court house was built, Papillion had a population of 666 persons which was barely double the number of inhabitants present when it was first platted fifty-two years before.⁶⁰ However, the pioneer settlers had mastered the environment, schools and churches had kept pace with the needs of the community, and the Twentieth Century had brought an era of prosperity. Although the rate of increase was not impressive for the heart of county government, it did represent some growth and Papillion was to continue to grow steadily, though slowly, through the years to come.

⁶⁰ Fifteenth Census of the United States, Volume I, Population (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 681.

CHAPTER IV

CULTURAL ASPECTS

Life for the pioneer was rugged but simple. He fought the elements from dawn to dark and never knew the leisure time that we enjoy today. He worked hard and he played hard but this, by no means, is an indication that culture was completely neglected. Although perhaps unsophisticated by modern standards, schools, churches, newspapers, and other social and cultural displays were a part of the community from its very inception, adding the final ingredients to the molding of the town.

The first school in Papillion was held in the home of Mrs. Thompson in 1872. Prior to that time, there had been county schools in the surrounding area, but this was the first to be officially a part of the town.¹ The teacher, Miss Pauline Carpenter, was paid thirty-five dollars a month for her efforts, which was about average for that locale and period. Conditions were not exactly ideal as she had no blackboard and little else to work with, and there were barely enough seats for the sixteen pupils. In fact, the County Superintendent of Schools paid a visit to the school in November of that first year and noted: "Teacher doing as well as she possibly can under the circumstances."²

¹History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1370.

²Sarpy County School District Record, November 7, 1872, p. 29.

School conditions were considerably improved the following year with the erection of a frame school building at a cost of twelve hundred dollars. The structure was completed in time for the fall term of school where Mr. F. Wharton³ presided over forty pupils.⁴ His salary is not recorded but, at that time, the average male teacher wages were only fifty-one dollars a month. In fact, schooling in those days was considerably more reasonable in all respects as the cost of tuition was a mere eight dollars and ninety-two cents a student.⁵

By 1875, enrollment was up to sixty-six pupils and construction was begun on a brick school house.⁶ School District 27, in which Papillion lies, issued thirty-five hundred dollars worth of bonds to secure the necessary funds. Although the bricks used were made right in Papillion,⁷ construction was slow and it was not until the fall of 1876 that school was held in it with A. E. Lake as principal. In the meantime, the frame building had been purchased by the Episcopal Church and moved to another lot where it served as their house of worship for many years.⁸ The newly completed school was able to contain the

³History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1370.

⁴Sarpy County School Superintendent's Record, p. 210.

⁵Sarpy County School District Record, October 20, 1873, pp. 56-59.

⁶Ibid., July 23, 1875, p. 134.

⁷The Papillion Times, March 14, 1957.

⁸History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1370.

Papillion students until 1893 when it became necessary to add an east wing. With this addition, no further building was necessary for the next thirty years.⁹

a bldg To the north⁴³

Religion of all faiths embraced the residents of Papillion from the very beginning. Even before the town was formed, circuit riders and missionaries held services throughout the area. Churches were, of course, important stabilizing elements to a town and Papillion was fortunate in having several. In fact, the growth of religion by 1876 led The Papillion Times to remark: "Piety and religious services are fast becoming leading features of our town. Almost every denomination is represented here and have large congregations." The newspaper sagely observed that: "It is evident that this people have concluded that it is better to be doorkeepers in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of the ungodly."¹⁰

St. Paul's Methodist Church has always been part of Papillion. As early as 1860, the Reverend J. P. Miller began missionary work in the Papillion Valley under the auspices of the German Methodist Episcopal Church.¹¹ The first regular preacher was P. J. Mai who conducted services from 1867 to 1869. In the early years^{'70's}, the services were held in the Masonic Hall, but, in 1876, a church edifice was erected at a cost of eighteen hundred dollars.¹² Attendance in those

⁹The Papillion Times, March 14, 1957.

¹⁰Ibid., July 6, 1876.

¹¹Ibid., June 29, 1922.

¹²History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1369.

days was less than fifty but, as time passed, the congregation grew to the point where a new church became a necessity. In 1900, a new building was dedicated which proved to be adequate until 1917 when a further addition was made. ¹³ German & Eng. M.E.s had separate churches till merger.

The First Presbyterian Church of Papillion was organized on March 1, 1874, under the auspices of the Reverend J. R. Brown and with a membership of twelve. ¹⁴ Services were held in the Masonic Hall alternating every other Sunday with the Methodist Church. ¹⁵ The Reverend J. Riale became the first regular pastor in 1875 and services were moved into the new court house, but, by 1878, sufficient funds were available and a new two thousand dollar church building was erected. ¹⁶

The Holy Cross Episcopal Church was established by the Episcopalians in 1877. Membership not being very large, they were served by a minister from Omaha. ¹⁷ In order to have a place to meet and worship, the frame building which had been the first Papillion school house was purchased for the sum of seven hundred dollars and relocated just south of the creek on the east side of Washington Street. ¹⁸

The First Lutheran Church, like the others, had a humble

¹³ The Papillion Times, June 29, 1922.

¹⁴ History of the State of Nebraska, loc. cit.

¹⁵ The Papillion Times, December 10, 1874.

¹⁶ History of the State of Nebraska, loc., cit.

¹⁷ The Papillion Times, June 29, 1922.

¹⁸ History of the State of Nebraska, loc. cit.

beginning in Papillion. The very first service was conducted in Sander's Hall on June 2, 1876, with the Reverend J. Hilgendorf presiding. Services were later moved to the court house and, on October 14, 1878, the cornerstone of the first church building was laid.¹⁹ The Reverend William Euseman became the first resident pastor, serving for nearly twenty-five years, during which time the parish grew from a membership of seventeen to a congregation consisting of four hundred and eighty souls.²⁰ The growth of the parish brought a need for larger quarters and, so, on June 8, 1924, the cornerstone of the present building was laid. Growth also brought a desire for a parochial school. The first one was located in the basement of the old church and taught by the pastor. Mr. Paul G. Zieschang became the regular teacher in 1916 with a class of thirty-eight pupils under his care. A new two-room school house was dedicated in 1918 but enrollment gradually dwindled to a mere fourteen by 1939, so the school was discontinued.²¹

The Catholics of Papillion first held their services in the railroad section house. In 1878, however, membership being about twenty families, a permanent building was erected on the north side of town.²² The congregation served as a mission for many years under

¹⁹ The First Lutheran Church, Papillion, Nebraska, a pamphlet commemorating the 75th anniversary of the church, 1875-1951, [n. d.] , n. p. . On file at the Nebraska State Historical Society.

²⁰ The Papillion Times, June 29, 1922.

²¹ The First Lutheran Church, Papillion, Nebraska, loc. cit.

²² The Papillion Times, June 29, 1922.

the suspicions of priests from Omaha, but, in 1897, the Reverend Father Henry Hoheisel became the resident priest, a post he held until retirement in 1932.²³ The original building which was only twenty-six feet by forty feet was enlarged in 1902 to take care of a growing population that was to reach two hundred and fifty by 1922.²⁴

As in the case of the Lutheran Church, the growth of the Catholic congregation brought a growing desire for a parochial school. Many felt that religious training and education of the children should be correlated with mental training. This wish was realized on June 4, 1916, when the cornerstone of the Sacred Heart Academy was laid by the Bishop of Lincoln. The academy was a two-story brick building and opened in September of that same year with three Benedictine Sisters teaching the sixty-eight students.²⁵ Boarding students were also accommodated in the building and enrollment gradually increased to a hundred pupils by 1922.²⁶

Newspapers formed an integral part in the growth and development of the western prairie towns. Every community seemed to have a paper and many had at least two, each openly vying for subscribers by taking opposing views on almost every issue. Papillion had a newspaper as early as 1872 and, by 1906, could lay claim to having had a total of eight, although no more than two ever operated at the same time. Only one of these, The Papillion Times, survived that hectic

²³ Ibid., December 21, 1932.

²⁴ Ibid., June 29, 1922.

²⁵ Ibid., June 8, 1916.

²⁶ Ibid., June 29, 1922.

period and is still functioning as the sole voice of the press.²⁷

The very first newspaper to be identified with Papillion was the Sarpy County Sentinel. Established in June, 1872, by George W. Hatfield, it was purchased by Pomeroy and Kennedy in 1873, who in turn sold out to J. C. Newberry in 1874. The number of times that the enterprise changed hands is quite probably an indication that it was not an extremely profitable venture. Nor was the trend to change, as the paper moved to Sarpy Center in 1875 where it was sold to Spearman and Huff. The purpose of the move was to provide boosters of Sarpy Center with editorial backing in their fight to obtain the county seat. With this battle lost, the paper eventually passed into the hands of Fox and Glover of Louisville, Cass County.²⁸

The only other newspaper of any lasting fame is The Papillion Times. This enterprise was established in November, 1874, by the Papillion Publishing Company with A. R. Kennedy as editor.²⁹ Started as a seven-column paper, it ran as such until 1879 when it was converted to a six-column quarto. It was published as a weekly, reached a circulation of seven hundred by 1882, and has remained a weekly to this time.³⁰

²⁷ Newspaper Bibliography and Holdings, Volume II, Nebraska Newspapers (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1937), [n. p.] .

²⁸ History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1370.

²⁹ S. D. Bangs, "History of Sarpy County," op. cit., p. 305.

³⁰ History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1370.

Interest and dedication to the education of their children continued as an important area of concern to the people of Papillion. This is borne out in the correlation between the growth of the town and the steady increase in school enrollment. As time went by, some improvement also appeared in the wages of teachers as, by 1890, the average male was receiving seventy-five dollars a month, while his female counterpart earned forty-five dollars.³¹ In 1915, any transportation problems of the children who lived very far from town were resolved by the purchase of a school wagon. This vehicle was enclosed to protect the youngsters from inclement weather and was the forerunner to the three school busses in use today.³²

School enrollment reached two hundred and sixteen pupils by the end of 1922 with ten teachers serving the twelve grades.³³ As the school building was no longer equal to its task, a west wing was added at a cost of thirty thousand dollars.³⁴ High School students constituted approximately one-third of the total enrollment but it was to be over thirty more years before the seekers after higher learning were to have a home of their own.

The pioneer looked forward to the 4th of July as its celebration marked the high point of the summer. At first it was mostly an occasion for public speaking, but the speeches were soon relegated to the

³¹ Sarpy County School Superintendent's Record, p. 271.

³² The Papillion Times, October 7, 1915.

³³ Sarpy County School Superintendent's Record, [n. p.] .

³⁴ The Papillion Times, March 14, 1957.

background in favor of ball games, races, parades, and dancing.³⁵ In Papillion, an auspicious precedent was set at the celebration of the laying of the court house cornerstone in 1875. That year the affair was held on July 3, as the 4th fell on Sunday, and happy celebrants congregated from all over the county.³⁶

The cornerstone laying, with all the appropriate speech-making, was, of course, the main feature of that day in 1875. However, it was only one of the many events, both scheduled and unscheduled. Perhaps the parade was the highlight but certainly the cannon must be credited with a large part in the program. This cannon had been "borrowed" from Capitol Hill in Omaha for the occasion and was put to good use firing continuous and enthusiastic salutes from dawn until dark. This is the same cannon that was later taken by residents of Cass County for a celebration being staged in Plattsmouth.³⁷

Independence Day celebration in Papillion grew to grand proportions. In 1892, for instance, the program listed, in addition to the normal parade, such events as races and other sports, a free dinner and barbecue, fireworks, a platform dance, and even a balloon ascension to cap off the day.³⁸ This certainly must have been the high point of that summer.

Social entertainments in the frontier towns were few. The

³⁵Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., p. 188.

³⁶The Papillion Times, July 11, 1935.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸The Sarpy Republican, June 23, 1892.

pioneers had no movies, radios, or televisions, and had to make their own amusements. Dances and balls were perhaps the most popular events, being held at every opportunity -- holidays, house-warmings, weddings, or any other occasion that provided an excuse. Play parties were also favorites with all the participants joining in the singing and games.³⁹ In 1874, the editor of The Papillion Times was definitely enthused by one of these parties when he said: "If we could have such a festival as that once a week life would be robbed of half its miseries."⁴⁰

Formal societies made an early appearance. Papillion Lodge Number 39 of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons was organized under a dispensation on November 23, 1872, and was further organized under a charter on August 7, 1873. Meetings were held in the Masonic Hall over the store of J. J. Brown. Then, in 1876, the meeting place of Number 7 Royal Arch Masons was changed from Bellevue to Papillion. Dahlgren Post Number 55, Grand Army of the Republic, was initiated in August, 1880, with a membership of fourteen and, in March of 1882, a Commandery of the Legion of Honor was formed.⁴¹ Rather impressive for a small town but these were only part of the many and varied social groups that the people enjoyed.

The Papillion Literary Society provided an early and valuable contribution to the culture of the town. In 1874, it was meeting on

³⁹ Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., p. 188.

⁴⁰ The Papillion Times, December 10, 1874.

⁴¹ History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1370.

alternate Saturday evenings in the Masonic Hall. Both prose and poetry readings were on the program as well as solo and chorus singing. The members exhibited a great deal of pride in their organization and considered it a superior social element.⁴² Singing societies and concerts composed of local talent were also very popular and were given a great deal of space in the local newspapers. A dramatic club was organized in 1880 and was soon producing such tear-jerkers as "Among the Breakers," "Above the Clouds," and "Ten Nights in a Bar-Room."⁴³ In March, 1891, the Opera House played host to the "T. K." Quartette which was the first musical entertainment ever held in the town.⁴⁴ This group was well received and was followed by an increasing number of musical, vaudeville, and even medicine shows.⁴⁵ But the climax in available entertainment came in 1916 when the "Alyce" movie theater opened its doors to provide the residents of Papillion with the products of the embryo movie industry.⁴⁶

Sporting events placed high on the list of popular pioneer pastimes. Hunting was a favorite as it not only furnished enjoyment but also provided meat for the table. The Papillion Gun Club made things even more interesting by holding an annual hunting contest with the members competing for prizes.⁴⁷ Horse races were held at

⁴²The Papillion Times, December 10, 1874.

⁴³History of the State of Nebraska, op. cit., p. 1370.

⁴⁴The Sargy Sentinel, March 26, 1891.

⁴⁵The Papillion Times, January 10, 1901.

⁴⁶Ibid., January 20, 1916.

⁴⁷Ibid., November 21, 1895.

the drop of a hat and no celebration was complete without a series of foot racing events. Papillion could boast of a Lawn Tennis Club in 1896,⁴⁸ but it was baseball that was to become the most popular of sports. The town team was given enthusiastic backing in its games with teams from the surrounding area.⁴⁹

A beautiful and impressive section of Papillion is that in which lies the city park. Covering an area of more than ten acres today, its cool, shaded lawns invite rest and relaxation. A playground is available for the children, and benches and tables await the picnickers. Perhaps the most-used portion, however, is the baseball diamond and football field, for it is here that all the teams of the town, from Little League through High School, stage their games. Another corner contains the site for a still different form of entertainment, a band stand and dance floor, which are given a workout during the summer months.

The land for the original section of the city park, located on the west side of Washington Street, just south of the creek, was donated to the town by S. M. Pike in 1872.⁵⁰ In 1914, the size of the grounds was doubled by the acquisition of a vacant tract to the west and the village board lost no time in improving the new section. Sixty trees were planted that spring⁵¹ and a permanent band and speakers stand was constructed in the approximate center of the

⁴⁸ Ibid., April 23, 1896.

⁴⁹ Ibid., July 3, 1902.

⁵⁰ Ibid., July 29, 1920.

⁵¹ City Council Records, Book II, p. 220.

combined area.⁵² Park expenditure was given an important position in the town budget, permitting necessary maintenance as well as permanent and desirable improvements. In 1920, a lighting system was installed and concrete walks constructed throughout the park.⁵³

One segment of the community which has always made good use of the park is the Boy Scout troop. Formed in 1914 with a complement of about thirty-four boys it soon became a part of the national Boy Scouts of America. In addition to the scheduled meetings, expeditions were conducted to study the history, geography and industry of the country.⁵⁴ The unit was given a tremendous boost in 1921 when a log cabin was built in the park to be used as Boy Scout headquarters. It was constructed of rough oak logs, neatly chinked, and was covered by a green shingle roof. The interior log walls were finished off with a floor, ceiling and fireplace.⁵⁵ Truly a meeting place capable of instilling pride in the heart of any Scout, and one which has stood the test of time, it still adds an historic and picturesque touch to the present-day park.

The need to make literature more available to the public was under discussion as early as 1916. A branch library was considered under what was known as the Benson Plan. This plan called for a small annual fee which qualified the town for a deposit of forty or fifty books in each classroom and a further liberal deposit in one of the

⁵² Ibid., p. 234.

⁵³ The Papillion Times, July 29, 1920.

⁵⁴ Ibid., February 12, 1914.

⁵⁵ Ibid., November 10, 1921.

local stores to take care of the reading public. These books were changed whenever the teacher indicated that all pupils had had access to them.⁵⁶ A one mill levy was ordered by the village board to provide the funds for such a branch.⁵⁷ As the years passed, the inventory of community-owned books grew larger and, at the same time, the voices demanding a permanent home for them became louder and more prolonged. The stock of literature was moved from place to place and finally settled in somewhat cramped quarters on the second floor of the Fire Hall. Here it remained, despite the recurring protests of the literary-minded, until the recent purchase of a home near the city park made a permanent library possible.⁵⁸

As we have seen, the early settlers did not lack cultural pursuits or a wide variety of improvised entertainment. The children had this same ability of providing their own pleasure. Contrary to the mild approach taken today, pranks were considered a delightful form of entertainment and Halloween was a fruitful, and more or less accepted, time for indulging in this pastime. In 1900, the Sargy County Herald humorously reported that "the boys had their fun last night, as it was Halloween." They were also busy as "they put a buggy on the roof of C. S. West's furniture store and a lumber wagon in the corridor of the court house." They also "moved several shed buildings into the street between Harmsen's saloon and West's furniture store,"

⁵⁶ Ibid., May 11, 1916.

⁵⁷ City Council Records, Book II, p. 297.

⁵⁸ The Papillion Times, June 15, 1961.

and, to top things off, "on one of the buildings was C. L. Hoyer's law sign, another one bore Dr. Klingeman's office sign and on another was Bryan's picture."⁵⁹ It must have been a night long remembered in the minds of the residents.

In retrospect, a student of society would readily admit that the inhabitants of Papillion have never lacked for either personal pleasure or culture. These essential ingredients to community life played an extremely important role in Papillion and must certainly be credited with assisting in its development. A development which, as we shall see, was to lead into a growing awareness to national affairs.

⁵⁹ Sarpy County Herald, November 1, 1900.

CHAPTER V

RELATIONSHIP TO THE NATIONAL SCENE

It was easy for the pioneer to isolate his thinking and planning within the confines of his own farm or community. Contacts with other towns were few and news of a national scope filtered through rather slowly. Personal survival was the central theme in his life, leaving little room for concern over remote national problems. Gradually, however, the impact of national events became more and more apparent to him. For one thing, the coming of the railroad brought him closer to the rest of the country. Then, too, the newspapers began carrying an expanded coverage of world-wide happenings. By the turn of the century, he was not only well-informed on the problems of his country but had begun to feel their effect.

In the 1870's, the principal farm organization was the Grange. Its purpose was both educational and social, and activity was furnished for every member of the family. The meetings provided not only education in improved agricultural methods but also served the dual purpose of giving whole families an opportunity to get together for social good times.¹ The principal objective of the Grange was, of course, promotion of the farmer's welfare and, as an association, it worked for better farm prices and lower shipping rates. In the 1880's, the economic pressure on the farmers began to increase and many felt they

¹Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., p. 178.

were being cheated. High freight rates and milling prices, as well as profit-making schemes of eastern financial interests led to deep and bitter discontent out of which grew the Farmer's Alliance.²

The Farmer's Alliance, like the Grange, represented a cooperative effort to improve conditions for the farmer. Its objectives were fewer middlemen, lower railroad rates, higher prices for farm products, and organized buying and selling. In this respect, it was the forerunner of the cooperative associations that exist throughout Nebraska today.³ Out of it grew the so-called Populist Movement.⁴

Tired of years of drouth and depression, farmers everywhere began seeking new political leadership. They felt that the two old political parties had not solved their problems, and consequently they banded together to form a new party. This movement, which is considered perhaps the most unusual political development in all of American history, is generally called the "Populist Revolt." The new organization was known as the "People's Party" or the "Populist Party." It was by no means confined to Nebraska, although Nebraska furnished a great deal of the leadership for the new party.⁵

The aim of the Populist Movement was strong government control

² John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1931), p. 97.

³ Federal Writer's Project, op. cit., p. 63.

⁴ Nicoll and Keller, op. cit., p. 89.

⁵ Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., p. 89; also Hicks, op. cit., pp. 205-237.

over railroads and industry to help the cause of farmers and laborers. Formed with a nucleus of members disgusted with both Republican leadership and conservative elements of the Democratic Party, it attracted the liberal element of the Democratic Party and even some Republicans.⁶ The Nebraska Party was organized in 1890 and, for a new party, was highly successful in the election that year. Two of Nebraska's three Congressmen were Populists, the Populist candidate for governor ran a close second, and the party obtained the majority in both houses of the state legislature. Hard times continued and the party grew in strength.⁷

At the same time that the Populist Party was being formed, one of the nation's great leaders came forth from Nebraska. He was William Jennings Bryan. Although a registered Democrat, he attracted much Populist support as he advocated many parts of their program. In 1890, at the age of thirty, he was elected to Congress, and, in 1892, he was re-elected. In the Presidential election of 1896, he was a candidate for both the Democratic and Populist Parties although, at that time, he was only thirty-six years of age.⁸ The people of Nebraska especially loved him for his close touch with the everyday world and the simplicity and honesty of his views.⁹ Defeated in 1896, he was again

⁶ Nicoll and Keller, op. cit., p. 89; also Hicks, op. cit., pp. 205-237.

⁷ Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., p. 178.

⁸ Ibid., p. 179.

⁹ Federal Writer's Project, op. cit., p. 5.

nominated by both parties in 1900. On September 27 of that year he appeared in Papillion to give a campaign speech and The Papillion Times predicted that he would win by a landslide.¹⁰ Needless to say, the prediction was wrong as the Republican candidate, McKinley, was re-elected by a larger majority than in 1896 and even Nebraska went Republican. In Papillion, however, the people backed up their editor to some extent by casting 170 votes for Bryan and only 148 for McKinley.¹¹

The Populist Party, however, soon lost most of its strength. Good times came back and the farmers were returned to either the Democratic or Republican fold.¹² In the year following the election of McKinley, the shock of his assassination struck across the land. The Papillion Times carried a full page report on the incident and on September 19, 1901, every business house in town was closed to show respect for the martyred president. It was a day of mourning and throughout the community both the stars and stripes and pictures of the late president were displayed draped in black.¹³

The ensuing national elections of 1904 and 1908 saw the country turn to the Republican Party and Papillion was no exception. This was especially unusual in the case of the election of 1908 inasmuch as the ever-popular Bryan was again a candidate on the Democratic ticket.

¹⁰ The Papillion Times, September 27, 1900.

¹¹ Ibid., November 8, 1900.

¹² Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., p. 179.

¹³ The Papillion Times, September 19, 1901.

Although Nebraskans in total cast a majority of their votes for Bryan, Papillion gave 187 votes to Taft and only 144 to Bryan.¹⁴ The Democrats were to have their day, however, as in 1912 and again in 1916 their presidential candidate, Woodrow Wilson, swept the country, including Papillion, by a landslide majority. At the same time that the Democrats were sweeping Nebraska, the people were also voting for state-wide liquor prohibition. In Papillion this controversial election was relatively close, the Dry element winning by the small margin of fifteen votes.¹⁵

The subject of prohibition was not new to Papillion as a Red Ribbon Club was reported as early as 1877.¹⁶ This organization was no doubt a part of the prohibition wave which swept the northern states starting in the middle of the nineteenth century -- a wave which was to see eighteen states adopt prohibition and then recede so that by 1906 only three remained Dry. It was on the return swing of the pendulum that Nebraska voted to be Dry in 1916. Moreover, the state was only slightly ahead of the 18th (Prohibition) Amendment to the Constitution.

During the same period, another controversial issue occupied a prominent position in the national scene. The subject was woman suffrage which had also been an active movement since the middle of

¹⁴ Ibid., November 10, 1904 and November 5, 1908.

¹⁵ Ibid., November 7, 1912 and November 16, 1916.

¹⁶ Ibid., December 6, 1877.

the nineteenth century. By 1910, favorable public opinion was on the upswing and the growth of suffragist organizations rapidly increased. In 1913, the suffrage question was a prime item on the agenda of the Papillion Women's Club¹⁷ and the Equal Franchise League met every Friday afternoon to discuss ways and means of obtaining the right to vote.¹⁸ As a part of the total movement, the efforts of these two groups met with success in that the Nebraska Legislature voted for woman suffrage in 1917, followed by the Suffrage Amendment passed by Congress in 1917.

The stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing depression of the Thirties had a tremendous impact throughout all of Nebraska. For example, the price of wheat dropped from \$1.40 to 28 cents per bushel, and corn changed from \$1.00 to eight cents. Most farms went into extreme debt and, in many cases, were ultimately lost to the creditors. As if the Depression were not enough to bear, drought and the grasshopper also returned to plague the farmer. From 1934 to 1936 rainfall was only half the normal amount and crops barely returned their seed. The grasshoppers, however, were not the problem they had been during pioneer days as a great deal had been learned about controlling them with poisons.¹⁹

In Papillion, the stock market crash was very remote and given little immediate attention. The editor of The Papillion Times had

¹⁷Ibid., February 6, 1913.

¹⁸Ibid., December 4, 1913.

¹⁹Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., p. 195.

little to say about the subject beyond initially reporting the fact and, from then on, an occasional quote from an Eastern newspaper concerning the economic condition of the country as a whole. But, by the end of 1930, the economic pinch was becoming much stronger and the editorials were taking more notice of the problem. "In these days of unemployment and business depression the policy of the federal government in laying off help here and there, in order to reduce the national deficit, seems hardly consistent," they emphasized, especially "when its spokesmen from one end of the country to the other are vehemently urging all lines of business to furnish employment even at a sacrifice."²⁰

The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency marked the beginning of a full-scale attack on the problems of the Depression. Millions of dollars were spent by the federal government to provide food for the hungry and work for the unemployed. A multitude of legislation took affect during the first few months of his term but many of the measures were only temporary in nature and were discarded as soon as the emergency was considered over. In their place projects were selected for their permanent value as well as for the work they would provide. The Roosevelt program was known as the "New Deal."²¹

The effects of the "New Deal" were felt almost immediately in Papillion. One of the most important early measures was the National Industrial Recovery Act enacted in June, 1933, and designed to relieve

²⁰ The Papillion Times, November 27, 1930.

²¹ Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., p. 194.

unemployment by shortening hours of labor, increasing wages, and eliminating unfair trade practices. The National Recovery Administration (NRA) was established as a federal agency to administer the provisions of this new act and the program was inaugurated with considerable fanfare. Karl C. Brown, chairman of the Papillion NRA Committee, was certainly enthusiastic when he declared that "Papillion must do its part in this great plan. It has never failed when the nation called and it will not fail now."²² By September, the editor of The Papillion Times was also convinced of the worth of the act as he felt that such improvement in employment had already occurred and also that a spirit of solidarity had taken effect.²³

The village of Papillion did its part in the over-all program to relieve unemployment by hiring a number of the men who were out of work for the job of filling in and grading of the streets in preparation for graveling.²⁴ Resolution of the unemployment situation was a must for the "New Deal" as the failure of the Hoover administration in this area had a great deal to do with the Democratic landslide of 1932. Among the first of the measures designed to improve employment levels was the establishment of the Civil Works Administration (CWA) which, although it operated for only four months beginning in November, 1933, gave relief to some 4,000,000 unemployed in the country during the

²² The Papillion Times, August 31, 1933. ✓

²³ Ibid., September 28, 1933.

²⁴ Ibid., September 21, 1933.

worst winter of the Depression.²⁵

The effect of the CWA program was felt immediately in the Papillion and Sarpy County area. The County was assured of employment for 164 men all winter on such worth-while jobs as cleaning brick from public highways, rebuilding drainage structures, widening bad corners, and rebuilding and widening roads and, by November 22, thirty men had already been recruited from Papillion, Gretna and Springfield.²⁶

At about the same time that employment actions were being taken throughout the County, a street improvement program for Papillion, involving an outlay of over \$800 of federal aid money for labor, was being approved by the state department. The first step of the project was to dig a drainage outlet along the east side of Monroe Street south to the Union Pacific right-of-way to connect with the railroad outlet for drainage of flood waters. Ten men were employed for the project which was to be followed by other street improvements upon completion.²⁷ With actions taken by the CWA and such other programs as the Public Works Administration (PWA), Works Progress Administration (WPA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and many others, the nation slowly worked its way out of the unhappy Thirties only to find itself faced with even worse crisis in the outbreak of World War II.

War, like pestilences that man must endure, leaves its mark on

²⁵ James Truslow Adams (ed.), Dictionary of American History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), Vol. IV, p. 640.

²⁶ The Papillion Times, November 23, 1933.

²⁷ Ibid., November 30, 1933.

every community. As far as Papillion is concerned, this could even be held to be true in the case of the Civil War although the town was not in existence at the time. As you will recall, the land on which the town lies was originally a government grant to Robert Maynard in recognition of his services during that war and was acquired from him by John Beadle. Moreover, many of the town's first settlers were veterans of that war and kept their memories alive through membership in the Dahlgren Post of the Grand Army of the Republic.²⁸

The first war of a national scale to which Papillion was to be exposed was the Spanish American War occurring during the "Manifest Destiny" revival of the 1890's.²⁹ The events of that war must have appeared rather remote to these mid-west folk, inasmuch as there was no editorial comment from beginning to end, although each issue of the local newspaper did contain complete coverage of the affair from the national point of view. Other than the fact that the inhabitants were well-versed in the events of the war, the occurrences and eventual victory by the United States appeared to cause little more than a ripple of interest in the town.³⁰

When victory did not bring the end of conflict in the Philippines, however, the local editor took his pen in hand to denounce the policies of the American Government while praising the

²⁸ Sargy County Records, Book J, p. 497.

²⁹ James T. Adams, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 332.

³⁰ The Papillion Times, January 1, 1898 - December 31, 1898.

actions of Aguinaldo.³¹ Actually, the Philippine Insurrection to which he was bitterly opposed, had been inherited from Spain at the close of hostilities with that country. One of the problems stemmed from the fact that many of the troops sent there to quell the uprising were state troops who had enlisted for the war with Spain. Now that that conflict was over, it was considered unfair to expect them to continue to serve indefinitely.³²

In any event, the editor was probably summarizing the feelings of the local inhabitants when he bitterly objected: "We bought the Filipinos from Spain for two dollars per head. They are now our chattels and must deliver themselves up dead or alive." "If we are fortunate enough to catch any of them before they are too dead," he continued in a Populist vein, "American arms will stand guard over them while the Whiskey Trust gets in its work of christianization and the Sugar Trust teaches them the art of tilling the soil."³³

In the progress of American history, each succeeding war has had a more disastrous affect on the people than its predecessor. Up to the time of World War I, the inhabitants of Papillion had realized little or no impact from world conflict, but this was to change. At the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1914, Nebraska had a German population of over 200,000 of which 30,000 had immigrated from the old

³¹ Ibid., May 4, 1899.

³² James T. Adams, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 113.

³³ The Papillion Times, March 23, 1899.

country. This element sympathized with the actions of the Fatherland and solicited public approval of German actions during the first two years of the war. The sinking of the Lusitania, invasion of Belgium and eventual entry of the United States into the fray served to change these feelings.³⁴

The most important contribution of Nebraska to the first World War was to furnish food to the United States and her allies. Crop production was boosted by plowing land heretofore not used. The war years brought higher prices for the crops which, with the increased production, resulted in a period even more prosperous than the years before the war. Another important contribution was General John J. Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces, who always considered Lincoln his home although national responsibilities caused him to spend most of his life elsewhere.³⁵

From a personal standpoint, most Nebraskans would feel that the principal credit should be given their state for the number of young men who served their nation in this time of stress. A total of 47,801 Nebraskans entered the struggle and over 1000 of them gave their lives for their country.³⁶ These men had become part of the national defense units through various means. Some were enlistees in the Regular Army, Navy or Marines, some were members of the

³⁴ Addison Erwin Sheldon, Nebraska The Land and the People (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1931), Vol. I, pp. 901-904.

³⁵ Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., pp. 190-191.

³⁶ Ibid.

National Guard, and quite a few were drafted under the Selective Service Act of 1917.

The Draft for World War I was carried out with local civilian controls. Through state governors, civilian boards were appointed for each county and also for each 30,000 inhabitants in large cities. Organization was speedy and the cooperation of the people phenomenal. Registrants were assigned numbers and the order of call was determined by drawings in Washington. The age limits were at first 21 - 30 and were later raised to 17 - 45. All males within the age limits were registered with the result that over half the nation was on record. The Draft produced 60 per cent of the armed forces as compared to 2 per cent during the Civil War. The success of this endeavor stemmed from national solidarity, wise legislation and intelligent and enthusiastic local cooperation.³⁷

Even before the Selective Service Act was signed into law by President Wilson, the call went out for volunteers to assist in conducting the registration of men subject to military duty in the Papillion area.³⁸ Actual registration for Papillion Precinct occurred on June 5 and was considered practically 100 per cent perfect with 100 men being entered on the rolls.³⁹ Each state was given credit for its National Guard strength and for the number of enlistments in the Regular Army between April 2 and June 30, 1917. The result in Nebraska was a

³⁷ James T. Adams, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 2.

³⁸ The Papillion Times, May 10, 1917.

³⁹ Ibid., June 7, 1917.

gross quota of 18,900 with the net quota being 8,185.⁴⁰

Sarpy County was allotted a quota of seventy-one for the first Draft on July 20. Notices were sent out to twice that number, including twenty-eight Papillionites, to report for physical exams in order that a list of seventy-one eligibles might be established.⁴¹ All necessary actions continued in an orderly fashion and, on September 6, 1917, the first contingent of draftees from Sarpy County proceeded from Papillion to Omaha and then on to Fort Riley, Kansas. Consisting of four men, the group included R. L. Bossard and E. H. McCarthy of Papillion, Sam Metz of Springfield, and John Monahan of Gretna.⁴²

The second group to depart for the war contained twenty-eight Sarpy County men and left by rail from the Papillion depot. This contingent was given a rousing send-off with an all-day affair consisting of a picnic, a band concert, and speeches by prominent county officials.⁴³ This type of send-off was again repeated when the third Sarpy County contingent of twenty-eight departed on October 3.⁴⁴

In the meantime, other actions to aid in the war effort were being taken by the citizens of Papillion. The bells of all churches were rung for four days in a row in June to remind the inhabitants of their obligation to purchase Liberty Bonds.⁴⁵ The goal was for every family to invest at least fifty dollars but no stone was left unturned

⁴⁰ Ibid., July 19, 1917.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., October 4, 1917.

⁴¹ Ibid., July 26, 1917.

⁴³ Ibid., September 20, 1917.

⁴⁵ Ibid., June 14, 1917.

and even students and Boy Scouts were drafted to sell Liberty Stamps.⁴⁶ A county chapter of the American Red Cross was formed in July of the first war year and remained active throughout the conflict, rolling bandages, preparing packages for overseas shipment and raising funds through various enterprises.⁴⁷

As the months dragged on, the people became more and more weary of the war and news of the signing of the armistice was received with great joy. Word came about 3:30 on the Monday morning of November 11, 1918, and immediately bells and whistles gave notice to the people gathered in the streets. A parade of school children was held that same morning, impromptu celebrations sprung up both Monday and Tuesday evenings, and the overwhelming delight of the people culminated in a formal celebration and parade on Wednesday night.⁴⁸ After all, this was the war to end all wars and certainly no one present in the waning days of 1918 could have been expected to foresee the holocaust that was to begin on December 7, 1941.

Recovery from the Depression had barely started when the ominous clouds of war again appeared on the horizon and America was pushed into its second world war within a generation. Nebraska's contributions to this conflict were a repeat of those furnished during the First World War. The farmers, with modern methods, improved seed, and

⁴⁶ Ibid., January 24, 1918.

⁴⁷ Ibid., July 19, 1917 and March 14, 1918.

⁴⁸ Ibid., November 14, 1918.

bountiful rain were able to extend their production to new records. Prices rose to new heights and prosperity exceeded that of all previous years. The young men of the state were called once more and 120,000 of them served in the armed forces.⁴⁹

Papillion residents had felt the effect of the war long before the United States became a participant. Rising prices of such staples as sugar were a matter of concern as early as 1939 although many felt that such sacrifice was minor as long as the nation could remain neutral.⁵⁰ Passage of the Peace Time Conscription Law brought the possibility of war even closer to home when all male residents between the ages of 21 and 35 were required to register on October 16, 1940.⁵¹

In Sarpy County, a total of 1094 were registered, 137 of them being from Papillion Precinct.⁵² The first call from the State Board required only volunteers and none of the eligibles from the town accepted this initial opportunity.⁵³ By January of the next year, however, two of the men, Harry Smith and Peter Umatum, tired of waiting to be called and enlisted.⁵⁴ In February, quota allotments were stepped up and a contingent of sixteen Sarpy County volunteers and draftees departed from the Union Pacific station. Their pre-war service commitment was for one year only and the general feeling of

⁴⁹ Condra, Olson, and Knapp, op. cit., p. 196.

⁵⁰ The Papillion Times, September 7, 1939.

⁵¹ Ibid., September 19, 1940.

⁵² Ibid., October 17, 1940.

⁵³ Ibid., November 21, 1940.

⁵⁴ Ibid., January 16, 1941.

the townspeople was that the year would soon roll around and few would regret the time spent with Uncle Sam.⁵⁵ Disaster was yet to strike.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor created the same surprise and consternation in Papillion as everywhere else in the nation. And, as in all communities throughout the land, the people rallied to the cause. The sale of Defense Bonds increased considerably, the local ration board went into action, activities of the Red Cross were accelerated, and enlistments became common-place. The people had been surprised but they proved capable of supplying their nation with those actions necessary to overcome the trying circumstances of the early days of the war.⁵⁶

The ensuing years of World War II were full of distress and remorse for all the inhabitants and the news of the Armistice in 1945 was greeted with immense relief. Another unhappy period had ended and the residents optimistically looked forward to the peaceful existence they had experienced in the years before the war. The population was officially listed as 763 persons and quite probably very few of these foresaw the rapid growth that was to change their little town during the 1950's.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., February 27, 1941.

⁵⁶ Ibid., January 8, 1942.

⁵⁷ Sixteenth Census of the United States, Volume I, Population (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1942), p. 643.

CHAPTER VI

PAPILLION TODAY

A tour through the history of a town is, without a doubt, a most interesting venture. This is, of course, especially true in the case of long-time residents who are thus provided the opportunity to re-live old memories or, in some cases, to discover little-known facts out of the past. It would also hold true for others acquainted with the town or locale, either casually or through recent residence. Historians, too, have an interest in view of their never-ending quest to discover and record historical data in order to establish the pattern of growth of the nation. In each case, the enjoyment of seeing the town in retrospect is heightened through comparisons with the present. Up to this point we have generally chronicled the past history of Papillion and shall now endeavor to present a view of the town as it is today.

Progress and growth have been the key-notes in recent Papillion history. The sleepy little village, content to remain in the background, quiet and undisturbed, no longer exists. Population more than doubled between 1950 and 1960 with a gain from 1034 to 2250 and Papillion now ranks as the 49th largest city in Nebraska.¹ Quite impressive for a town that had less than 600 souls at the turn of the

¹Eighteenth Census of the United States, Pamphlet PC (1) - 29A
(Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960), p. 29-17.

century,² and had not grown beyond 800 as late as 1940.³

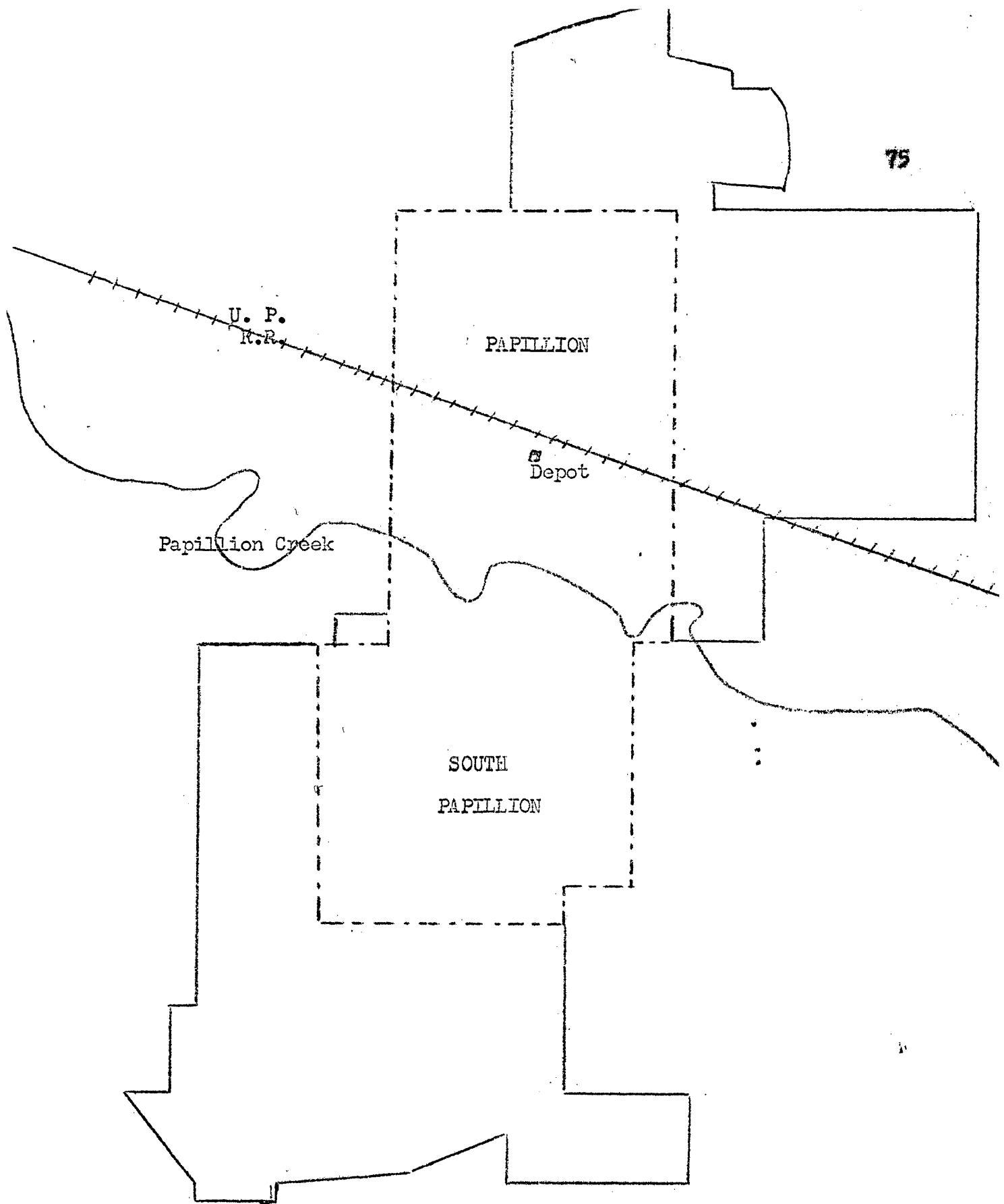
The population explosion has had the direct effect of revising the outline of Papillion. The map on page 75 provides a graphic comparison of the changes made to the old boundaries. As in the case of the population, the area within the town has more than doubled. The city limits have been continually pushed out in all directions in order to accommodate the influx of inhabitants. The outline is not the only change, however. Within the town, signs of improvement are visible in every direction.

The 1921 residents were justly proud of their paved street which ran through the heart of town and covered a one mile stretch from the north to the south limits. This innovation was a vast change to the gravel road it replaced, and represented a welcome advancement in civic life.⁴ And proud they should have been for forty years later the same stretch of roadway is still serving the community well, requiring little or no up-keep, and giving the impression that it will last forever. The 1962 resident also has a right to be proud of his streets for virtually every street within the city limits has now been paved. Gone are the dirt and gravel with their accompanying ruts and chuck-holes. Gone is the never-ending dust of summer and the mud of

² Twelfth Census of the United States, Volume I, Population (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), p. 261.

³ Sixteenth Census of the United States, Volume I, Population (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1942), p. 643.

⁴ The Papillion Times, June 9, 1921.



OUTLINE OF PAPILLION - JUNE 1961

Dotted Lines Indicate Original Outline Of City Limits
(Reproduced From Maps On File In Office Of County Surveyor)

spring and fall. In their place are wide concrete roadways, easily maintained and giving the town a clean and modern appearance. As in 1921, pavement has furnished a welcome advancement to civic life.

A rather recent innovation in the way of life of Papillion residents is the house-to-house mail delivery which began on September 19, 1959.⁵ Prior to that time, mail could be obtained only at the Post Office located in the center of town. Most of the people rented boxes there and, despite the convenience of the house delivery, there are many who miss their daily trip to town. The journey provided a welcome break in the routine, a chance to meet and chat with acquaintances, and even some desirable exercise. The new system represents progress, however, and, given a choice, there would probably be very few who would choose to return to the old.

The town has always taken pride in its city park. Centrally located, it has not only helped beautify the city but has also furnished a suitable area for recreation and relaxation. Two new parks have been added to the inventory of city assets. North Park is located in the north part of town just west of the water tower. Trumble Park occupies an area in the southwest section. Starting out as mere plots of ground, it will be some time before these new arrivals reach the status of the old park. However, the Junior Women's Club started them on their way by donating \$300 worth of trees and shrubs in May, 1961, and in the not too distant future it is anticipated that Papillion will

⁵Ibid., September 17, 1959.

be able to boast of three beautiful and delightful recreation areas.⁶

Completion of the water works in 1908 represented another tremendous stride in civic advancement, but with the passage of time the system became out-moded and inadequate for the needs of the increased population.⁷ In 1959, voters approved a \$105,000 bond issue for a new water tower and transmission system which was completed in September of 1960.⁸ Sitting at about the highest point in town, the new 50,000 gallon structure can be seen from a considerable distance. In fact, it can be easily distinguished from other towers in the area as the town fathers overcame tradition and had it painted a pastel green rather than the more normal white.⁹

Throughout the history of Papillion, flooding of Papio Creek has been a constant source of irritation and financial loss. Although not an annual affair, the floods have occurred frequently and newspaper accounts down through the years indicate that they have steadily become worse.¹⁰ The most recent, and the worst flood the city has ever known, came on Sunday morning, August 2, 1959. The creek swept over its banks, filling basements and first floors of a number of the houses and business establishments in the center of town. The final blow came on the following Tuesday when a fifty-foot section of the bridge, weakened

⁶ Ibid., May 11, 1961.

⁷ Ibid., May 21, 1908.

⁸ City Council Records, Book VI, p. 69.

⁹ The Papillion Times, September 8, 1960.

¹⁰ Ibid., June 15, 1899; June 18, 1914; June 7, 1917; August 6, 1959.

by the unaccustomed surge of flood waters, dropped into the creek.¹¹

Loss of the bridge placed a temporary kink in the normal routine of Papillion residents as North and South Papillion became separate entities isolated from each other by the width of the creek. Since the bridge had been the only means of access from one side to the other, travel across the creek required a detour of several miles either up or down stream to another bridge. This state of affairs continued until 12 August when a temporary structure was completed and north to south traffic once more resumed.¹²

At one point in time, residents of the town began to wonder if the term "temporary" was not a misnomer insofar as the bridge was concerned. State financial aid was necessary to help defray the cost of a new structure and the process of government action was slow. All necessary requirements were finally met, however, and, on August 12, 1961, a new bridge was officially opened with an appropriate ceremonial dedication.¹³ It had taken two years from the time the old bridge fell, but it was well worth it. The new span is a four-lane structure of concrete beauty bearing no resemblance to the out-dated and inadequate bridge which gave way to the flood in 1959. It provides easy access to both sides of the creek and gives the center of town a modern-looking appearance. At this time it is more than sufficient for the needs of the people and should remain so for many years to come.

¹¹Ibid., August 6, 1959.

¹²Ibid., August 13, 1959.

¹³Ibid., August 17, 1961.

Through the years, several bridges have spanned the creek and each, in turn, has been an improvement over its predecessor. A timber bridge constructed in 1899 served the community until 1922. Condemned by state engineers as being unsafe, it was replaced by the concrete structure which lasted until its unfortunate demise in 1959.¹⁴ Completion of the new bridge prompted a drive to improve the appearance of the creek banks, with flood control and beautification being the twin aims of the \$3500 project. One-half the amount was provided by the city, while the remainder was furnished by contributions of the local merchants and citizens.¹⁵

The long-felt desire for a permanent library building ended when a house at 202 West Lincoln Street was purchased for this purpose in late 1961. A public fund-raising drive then raised over \$1200 in order to modify and equip the former home for its new purpose. As soon as the work is completed, the library will be transferred from its present cramped quarters on the second floor of the Fire Hall. The City Council also plans to move the offices of both the police and the water departments to the library building to help defray the cost of operation.¹⁶

The volunteer fire department is now in its twentieth year of operation since it became an organized activity in 1942. Under the leadership of the present Fire Chief, Louis Hauschild, Jr., it is still

¹⁴ Ibid., August 10, 1961.

¹⁵ City Council Records, Book VI, p. 131.

¹⁶ Ibid., December 7, 1961.

an all-volunteer twenty-five man unit with no salaried personnel. However, there has been a decided change in equipment. Two pumps, a LaFrance and a Ford, are now on hand and an 1140 gallon Ford tanker stands ready to cover fires on farms and other areas where water might not be readily available. In addition, a fully-equipped rescue vehicle, purchased in 1959 after a concerted fund drive, provides the department with the capability to overcome all types of emergencies. This modern array of apparatus certainly bears no resemblance to the twelve buckets and five ladders that were all the Papillion Fire Company could claim in 1900.

Police protection is furnished by four persons. The Chief, John Earnest, and one patrolman are salaried employees and the remaining two auxiliary policemen are non-paid volunteers. The Chief has at his disposal a patrol car complete with two-way radio to aid him in the performance of his duties. The department is more than adequate for the needs of the town as crime is practically non-existent and traffic violations at a minimum.

While other areas have shown definite improvement over the past, the availability of public transportation has regressed. Passenger trains no longer service the town and even freight service is intermittent and practically extinct. The interurban street railway with its two-hour schedule to Ralston and Omaha passed into oblivion in 1926 and the bus service that replaced it has not always been satisfactory.¹⁷

¹⁷Ibid., May 6, 1926.

At the present time, the Gray Line Bus Company is operating a bus route from Omaha to Papillion via Ralston and LaVista. The schedule is planned for the convenience of school children, as well as shoppers, terminating at Papillion High School at 8:40 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. Although this cannot be compared with the plentiful transportation available during the Twenties, it is certainly an improvement over the once-a-week schedule that it replaced in August, 1961.¹⁸

The business elements of the town have continued down through the years in many respects unchanged from their original counterparts. However, some change was, of course, inevitable. For instance, three automobile dealers have taken the place of the former carriage maker and the advent of the automobile also brought three gasoline stations, two body repair shops, and two independent garages. Only one hotel remains where three formerly flourished, the dry goods and furniture stores have disappeared, and no boot-maker or restaurant remain to service the personal needs of the residents.

In many areas of the business district one of a kind appears to be adequate for the needs of the town. The Clarke Bank, in modern surroundings, remains the only banking facility in town, and one drug store, hardware store, and clothing store are all that are available. Other elements have increased with the growth in population. Two appliance stores, grocery stores, lumber yards, and barber shops provide for the needs of the populace where one of each formerly sufficed.

¹⁸Ibid., August 31, 1961.

Medical needs are taken care of by one doctor but his services have been augmented by a dental clinic with two practicing dentists.

Recreational desires are partially off-set by the Papio Theater, showing current motion pictures. More active needs are supplied by the new sixteen lane bowling alley which was completed in 1958. Lending a modern touch to the town, this establishment is significant of the signs of progress and growth that are visible in several directions. Developments which continue to change and improve the appearance of the business area.

Churches of all faiths remain important stabilizing elements of the town although, in most cases, the present structures in no way resemble the original meeting places. Members of St. Paul's Methodist Church, the First Lutheran Church, and St. Columbkille's Catholic Church worship in large brick structures rather than the former Masonic Hall, Sander Hall, or railroad section house, and a new and modern Trinity Lutheran Church was completed and formally dedicated on February 28, 1960.¹⁹ Two of the faiths meet in temporary quarters. The Southwest Baptist Church utilizes the old Papillion schoolhouse and the United Presbyterian Church conducts its services in the American Legion Hall.²⁰ The people of these faiths are no doubt familiar with the inauspicious beginnings of the other churches and feel that one day they, too, will be able to worship in a new and modern building.

The tremendous jump in population since World War II had a

¹⁹ Ibid., February 25, 1960.

²⁰ Ibid., September 14, 1961.

corollary increase in the number of school-age children. By 1956, enrollment far exceeded the capability of the school, and a determination was made to move the high school classes to a new building. A modern educational plant containing eleven rooms was completed in early 1957 and classes began occupying it on February 19.²¹ Then, in 1958, high school students received a further boom in the form of a \$210,000 bond issue for a gymnasium-auditorium which was added to the new school.²² Considerable more would soon be needed.

Explosive is the only word that can adequately describe the recent growth in the number of students. In 1957, enrollment in the Papillion School District was less than 300.²³ By 1960, it had jumped to 691.²⁴ At the start of the present school year, 1156 students presented themselves for formal education.²⁵ And, if these statistics are not startling enough, the Superintendent of Schools, Leslie George, has estimated that the schools will house over 3000 students by 1965.²⁶

The opening of two additional grade schools during 1961 provided some necessary relief to the old school. Tara Heights School is located on the northeast edge of town and Trusble Park School occupies a plot of land to the southwest. In addition, classes for the children of nearby LaVista are temporarily being conducted in some of the newly-constructed homes in that town. Yet more and more schools will

²¹ Ibid., February 21, 1957.

²³ Ibid., February 26, 1959.

²⁵ Ibid., September 7, 1961.

²² Ibid., January 1, 1959.

²⁴ Ibid., September 8, 1960.

²⁶ Ibid., May 11, 1961.

be needed as the school population continues to grow.

In a sense, all this came overnight. The increase in population within Papillion had some bearing on the problem. However, Suburbia was the greatest contributor to the flood of school children. Construction of 336 homes in LaVista located in the northern part of the school district was completed in 1959. Another 341 homes were added to this project in 1961 and a third addition is still to come. The result will be 1270 single family homes and 26 multiple dwelling units on the map. With 150 new homes completed in other parts of the school district, it is not difficult to account for the tremendous jump in students.²⁷

The rapidity of the increase in school population has brought the School Board members a succession of financial problems. The cost of new schools, as well as the additional teachers required, has far exceeded any expectations. To further complicate their enigmas, tax revenue from the new houses in outlying areas does not accrue until one year after the land changes from farm to urban classification.²⁸ Many solutions have been offered. A bill requesting a special grant of \$225,000 was introduced in the State Legislature, but the Governor indicated that he would not support such a measure.²⁹ In view of this, the legislature approved a study of educational problems in several counties as an interim measure.³⁰ In the meantime, the problem still exists.

²⁷ Ibid., May 11, 1961.

²⁹ Ibid., May 25, 1961.

²⁸ Ibid., April 14, 1960.

³⁰ Ibid., July 13, 1961.

Another solution offered is the separation of LaVista into a separate school district. Such an action would, of course, greatly reduce the financial problems of the Papillion School District, but would certainly complicate those of the village of LaVista. In any event, the proposal has been hotly debated on moral and legal grounds for several months and is now being tested for legality in the state courts. Meanwhile, all eligible children are receiving their education and, no doubt, will continue to do so regardless of the decision of the courts.

The two parochial schools in Papillion also reflect the population surge. As you will recall, the First Lutheran School closed in 1939 for lack of pupils. Today, enrollment has risen to 42 and two teachers are needed. The Sacred Heart Academy jumped to 125 students in 1960 and to 153 in 1961³¹ and is taught by four Benedictine Sisters.³² A new convent, dedicated on March 19, 1961, was built to house seven sisters in anticipation of future growth.³³

Growing pains are evident in other areas. The County Court House, for instance, has outgrown its available floor space and plans for an addition are being readied for presentation to the County Board. Several approaches to increasing the size of the building have been presented in recent months but, at the moment, the most-favored plan appears to be a two-story addition to the east side.³⁴ The City Council has also

³¹ Ibid., September 7, 1961.

³³ Ibid., March 16, 1961.

³² Ibid., August 31, 1961.

³⁴ Ibid., December 7, 1961.

taken recognition of the increasing demands on its time. A nine-member planning commission was created in 1958 to assist the council in the multitude of diverse projects that need attention.³⁵

The rapid growth of Papillion in recent years can be attributed to several factors. Although the town has no industry of its own, several large plants are located in the vicinity. The Western Electric Company, for instance, has an extensive factory in nearby Millard. Then, too, Offutt Air Force Base, the home of the Strategic Air Command Headquarters is only a few miles away and many of its personnel have made Papillion their temporary home. Perhaps the most cogent reason, however, is the population increase that has occurred in Omaha. Bursting at the seams, that city has steadily built to the south and west as the city dweller searched for more room.

With the limits of Omaha creeping toward Papillion, the status of the town has changed from a small country village to a suburb of a large metropolitan city. Residents are now only a few minutes commuting distance from any area in the city. The result is an opportunity to work in the city and live in a small, clean, country-type town, and many have taken advantage of this situation. However, unless the southwestward advance of Omaha is halted or diverted to another direction, Papillion may some day lose its identity within the confines of the approaching city limits. To some, the advantages of such an occurrence are perhaps attractive. To most, however, the loss of their small-town status would be a minor tragedy.

³⁵City Council Records, Book VI, p. 47.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The process of evolution, whether it be of the human race, a nation, or even a small community, is usually gradual, often painful, and always inevitable. The opening of the West was a part of this ceaseless change, as was the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the ensuing settlement of Papillion. Every event seemingly an entity unto itself but, nevertheless, each an integral part of the whole fabric of history.

When the Nebraska Territory was opened, settlers and speculators poured into the virgin country, each pursuing his personal dream. The land along the Missouri River was the first to be settled because of its proximity to civilization and essential supplies. Bellevue and Omaha became important communities in the area, growing larger as the years passed. When population along the river increased in density, the pioneer moved inland in his never-ending quest for cheaper land, and more communities developed to care for his needs.

John Beadle saw the possibility of the Papillion Valley and acquired the land which was to later become Papillion. His brothers, David and Michael, followed through on his conviction by settling on the property and encouraging others to join with them to form a town. In this respect, they were no different from a multitude of other communities throughout the area, each struggling for existence. However, survival took a great deal of fortitude and persistence,

as well as a bit of luck, and the early residents of Papillion had them all.

The fact that a transcontinental railroad -- even the "ox-bow" of the Union Pacific -- was near the town was a matter of good fortune, because the initial road westward could have gone over several different routes. The residents of Papillion, taking advantage of this situation, petitioned the railroad to move a station ^{2 1/2} two miles west into their town and, thus, became a part of the coast-to-coast network. The favorable decision ignited a spark of life in the new community.

The spark created by the coming of the railroad was further heightened by acquisition of the county seat in 1875. When the decline of Bellevue as a town of import became apparent, Papillion sought and obtained the county government. This action is again indicative of the persistence of the people, because it took more than desire to win such a prize. Considerable effort was necessary to overcome all opposition to the move, but the people were equal to the battle and, when the fight was over, Papillion had another reason to continue.

The history of Papillion could, perhaps, be divided into three separate and distinct periods. First, of course, would be the early stages when the town was struggling for existence. A period which lasted from the initial plat in 1870 to about the turn of the century. The middle period might be considered to extend from that point to the end of World War II. A quiet and peaceful era, during which the

town slowly developed from a pioneer village to a modern little community. The latest stage began at the conclusion of the war and can best be expressed as the "boom" period. The rapid growth in population in recent years has doubled the original size of the town and has changed its appearance in many ways. Since this period is not over, we, perhaps, can assume that many more changes are yet to come.

The history of Papillion most certainly portrays those elements necessary for growth and development of a community and is, for this reason, representative of the many other Western towns which have survived down through the years. In any event, the author sincerely hopes that the reader has enjoyed his research efforts and has found the contents to be of some value.

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The Papillion Times, December 10, 1874 - January 25, 1862.

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F. PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE

Maxwell, R. J., Public Relations Department, Missouri Pacific Railroad Company, St. Louis, Missouri, September 29, 1961, to the author.

G. MISCELLANEOUS

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