

Olivet Nazarene University

Digital Commons @ Olivet

Honors Program Projects

Honors Program

5-2022

Kankakee County in Deindustrialization: An Oral History Approach

Rachel Shepard

rsh Shepard12@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/honr_proj



Part of the [Labor History Commons](#), [Oral History Commons](#), [Public History Commons](#), and the [Regional Economics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Shepard, Rachel, "Kankakee County in Deindustrialization: An Oral History Approach" (2022). *Honors Program Projects*. 132.

https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/honr_proj/132

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors Program at Digital Commons @ Olivet. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Program Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Olivet. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@olivet.edu.

KANKAKEE IN DEINDUSTRIALIZATION: AN ORAL HISTORY APPROACH

By

Rachel H. Shepard

Honors Scholarship Project

Submitted to the Faculty of

Olivet Nazarene University

for partial fulfillment of the requirements for

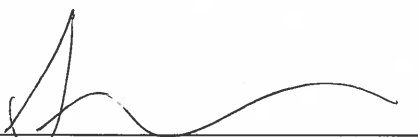


GRADUATION WITH UNIVERSITY HONORS

February 16, 2022

BACHELOR OF ARTS

in

History and Business Administration

<u>Stephen Case</u> Scholarship Project Advisor (printed)	 Signature	<u>2.17.22</u> Date
<u>Stephen Case</u> Honors Council Chair (printed)	 Signature	<u>4.27.22</u> Date
<u>Elizabeth Schuman</u> Honors Council Member (printed)	 Signature	<u>4-27-22</u> Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the opportunity, ability, and perseverance to see this project to completion. It was through His strength and guidance that I have made it to where I am. I would also like to thank my mentor professor, Dr. Case, for the help, patience, and expertise he brought to me and my project. I thank Olivet Nazarene University's Honors Program and supporting professors and staff who aided in the completion of this project. Lastly, I would like to thank my fiancé, Connor Cavanaugh, for listening to me as I discussed my project for hours with him. It was his listening ear and encouragement that kept me going even when I didn't see finished results of my work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	vi
List of Figures	ii
Kankakee: The Home of the Twin Gazebos	1
Oral History Approach	4
Changing Trends in Economic Policy	6
Examination of the “Rust Belt”	8
Methods	12
Oral History Interviews	15
1960’s	15
1970’s	16
1980’s	19
1990s and Beyond	26
Conclusion	29
Appendix A	31
Appendix B.....	33
Bibliography	37

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 4

Figure 2 4

ABSTRACT

The City of Kankakee was an industrialized city which prospered economically for decades. Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, economic trends shifted for Kankakee and the surrounding communities. The major factories, such as Roper Corporation and A.O. Smith, migrated their source of production from Kankakee to other regions of the United States and abroad during the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, the declining industrial economic activity led to changing community perceptions. Kankakee is an example of the “Rust Belt” region, a region in the Midwestern and Northeastern States of the United States where declining industrial activity occurred throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The paper uses an Oral History Approach to investigate the changing economic landscape and community and individual perceptions of Kankakee during the Deindustrialization period.

INTRODUCTION

Kankakee: The Home of the Twin Gazebos

The story of a city is formed by the people who came before, by the people who live there now, and from people outside the community, contextualizing the place within a greater geographic and historical context. Kankakee is one such city with a varied past with varied stories. While the name “Kankakee” remains the same, the reputation, culture, economy, structure, and people change over time. The city continually transforms, never staying stagnant. However, there are some moments in the history of a city that are catalysts for more significant change. Such was the case in Kankakee back almost forty years ago. But before arriving to tell those stories, there is another story to be told.

The year was 1999, and *Places Rated Almanac* had just released their “Guide to Finding the Best Places to Live in the United States and Canada,” and out of 354 designated metropolitan areas, Kankakee, Illinois, ranked last.¹ This was a blow to the community, and the embarrassment was increased when late night comedy host David Letterman mocked Kankakee on live television. In a segment called “Top 10 slogans for Kankakee, Illinois,” Letterman offered these potentials, “You'll come for a pay phone. You'll stay because your car's been stolen... Ask about our staggering unemployment rate... We put the ill in Illinois... We also put the annoy in Illinois.”²

¹ Ira Glass, “554: Not It!” This American Life, April 10, 2015.
<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/554/transcript>.

² Glass, “554: Not It!”

David Letterman called the mayor of Kankakee, Donald Green, and broadcasted the conversation on the Letterman Show. Letterman asked if the rating had had a negative impact on the community. As Mayor Green explained, Letterman interrupted and asked, “Do you think it has anything to do with the name itself, Kan-ka-kee?” “No, Kankakee is a fine name!” exclaimed Mayor Green. When Letterman asked Green if he knew what the name meant, there was short pause before Mayor Green declared, “It means middle class factory town,”³ which received a host of claps and laughter from the crowd.

David Letterman proceeded to donate two gazebos to Kankakee so Kankakee could henceforth be known as the “Home of the Twin Gazebos,” a mocking attempt at helping to change the reputation of the “middle class factory town.”⁴ Kankakee had been publicly humiliated by the whole situation. But this raises the question of how Kankakee arrived at the place where it was considered the worst place to live in the United States and Canada. What was the context that led to Kankakee being ranked the worst place to live and being nationally mocked on television? What were the events that led up to this? And, just as Letterman asked Green, how did these events affect the Kankakee community?

³ TotalBullSquat, “Kankakee Rated in Places Rated Almanac, 1999.” YouTube video, 5:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sieWuTIR56g>

⁴ Glass, “554: Not It!”



Figures 1 & 2: (From left to right) Gazebo once located at Depot Park in Kankakee. The other gazebo is located at Cobb Park in Kankakee.

As Mayor Green stated, Kankakee was known as a “middle class factory town,” one of many in the Midwestern region. Kankakee was once a booming metropolis of industry, productivity, and wealth. What happened to change this trend? And how did this affect the people of Kankakee? The poor livability rating Kankakee received in 1999 was influenced by changes in the community twenty years prior, back in the 1970s and 1980s.

During the 1980s, national economic trends were transforming the economy of Kankakee, resulting in visible changes in its physical landscape and that of its two closest suburbs, Bourbonnais and Bradley, as well as change in the community’s self-assessment. The city’s prosperity was built on industrial power, supported by a strong blue collar employment base and the railroad lines that stretched to Chicago and beyond. During the 1980s, Kankakee’s industrial economic base transformed as industries left the area, a process known as deindustrialization. Deindustrialization took place not only in

⁵ Tiffany Blanchette. *David Letterman gazebo at Depot Park*. Photograph. 2015. https://www.daily-journal.com/news/local/dear-letterman-you-can-have-your-gazebos-back/article_0ef5077d-4309-59d7-92d0-fe46ae6c4027.html.

⁶ Dees Stribling. *David Letterman gazebo at Cobb Park*. 2016. <https://www.dees-stribling.com/2016/10/05/the-surviving-kankakee-gazebo/>.

Kankakee, but in the greater Midwestern and Northeastern regions of the United States. As these different parts of Kankakee's history fit into the puzzling question of how Kankakee reached this point of being the lowest ranked metropolitan region in the nation, the guiding questions for the research became,

1. How did the deindustrialization process of Kankakee in the 1980s affect the lives of Kankakee residents?
2. How did residents respond to the economic conditions?
3. How have personal histories and memories of these events shaped the history of the deindustrialization time period in Kankakee into the present day?

Places Rated Almanac uses statistics to give metropolitan areas a livability score. But a place is far more than its statistics. To truly understand a place and its people, one must hear the stories its people have to share. Statistics, while useful, do not paint the full picture. It is through the lived experiences of those people who have spent their lives in a community that a community's past, present, and future can be understood. The stories recalled and recounted in this project are stories of people who have lived in Kankakee throughout the economic changes of the 1970s and 80s. These are the voices of interest here, because they are the voices gathered from those who saw the changes in the community firsthand.

Oral History Approach

The stories portrayed by people from Kankakee yield conclusions on the state of the community throughout a time of change. These stories are memories of the past: the words, artifacts, feelings, and thoughts that resonated with people so greatly they become

part of the history of Kankakee. There are different classes of historical evidence, but “of the three general classes of historical evidence (documents, artifacts, and memories), evidence in the human memory is the most fragile and ephemeral. The oral history interview transforms fragile memory into a permanent record of the past that is both valuable and—given the passage of time—quite irreplaceable.”⁷ Once the people who lived during deindustrialization are gone, unless documented by oral history, their stories and memories are gone as well. As such, listening to and recording the stories of the past for communal posterity is of great importance.

Oral history is the active participation of people telling the stories of the past that they witnessed or experienced. According to the Oral History Association, the best practices for oral history research include four key elements: preparation, interviewing, preservation, and access and use.⁸ With the four elements in mind, oral history becomes a rich source of information in telling the story of Kankakee during the deindustrialization period.

The value of oral history lies in how it helps “place people’s experiences within a larger social and historical context. The interview becomes a record useful for documenting past events, individual or collective experiences, and understandings of the ways that history is constructed.”⁹ The deindustrialization period in Kankakee was comprised of both specific events and a prolonged trend in the community. Gathering the perceptions of Kankakee residents who stayed in the region even as the large

⁷ Thad Sitton, George L. Mehaffy, and O. L. Davis. *Oral History: a Guide for Teachers (and Others)* 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

⁸ Oral History Association, “Best Practices,” 2021, <https://www.oralhistory.org/best-practices/>.

⁹ Oral History Association, “OHA Core Principles,” 2021, <https://www.oralhistory.org/oha-core-principles/>.

manufacturing companies left provides insight into how a community recovers from national trends that Kankakee residents could not control. The events which transpired in Kankakee in the late 1970s and early 1980s were an example of larger regional and national trends in economic policy and corporate decisions to move sources of production from the Midwestern region.

Changing Trends in Economic Policy

United States' national economy policy shifted throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. Throughout the 1970s, it went from being dominated by Keynesian economics, focusing on aggregate demand determining market activity to remedy downturns in the market through monetary and fiscal policy, to Neoliberal economics, focused on allowing the market to correct itself without aid from government intervention.¹⁰ This shift in economic thought occurred due to several characteristics present throughout the 1970s. During the 1970s, “the U.S. economy experienced high and fluctuating inflation, lagging productivity growth, increased regulation, and stifling of economic incentives.”¹¹ Rising national inflation rates throughout the 1970s were attributed to increased monetary expansion, a result of government intervention in the economy.¹² In addition to rising inflation, national economic goals changed from increasing to redistributing income and wealth to American citizens, rather than focusing on expanding American industry. By the end of the 1970s, “the federal government was spending more on transfer payments to

¹⁰ Palley, T. I. From Keynesianism to Neoliberalism. In Saad-Filho, A., & Johnston, D. (Eds.). *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader* (pp. 20-30). Pluto Press, London, 2015.

¹¹ Michael Boskin, *Reagan and the Economy: The Successes, Failures, and Unfinished Agenda*. (San Francisco: I.C.S. Press, 1987).

¹² Boskin, *Reagan and the Economy*, 50.

individuals than on purchase of goods and services... by dollar volume, the government's major role was to redistribute income, not provide goods and services."¹³ The redistribution, rather than generating new wealth, is significant because it is an example of the national economic slowdown.¹⁴ In response to national changes, Americans increasingly looked to another economic school of thought to pull the nation out of this slowdown and reinvigorate economic growth.

Neoliberal economics became the school of thought most prevalent in national economic decisions when Ronald Reagan, a proponent of the neoliberal economic policies, was elected president in 1980. Neoliberal economic policies follow from the idea that the federal government should be less involved in the work of the state and local governments; thus, the federal government should offer less financial help to state and local municipalities. One goal of Reagan's efforts in the economic sector was to push fiscal responsibility of local programs onto local governments rather than keeping responsibility at the federal level.¹⁵ Federal government funding cuts affected services for local municipalities with a low potential for generating revenue within the municipality. Municipalities that were able to generate sufficient revenue were not as affected since they were more financially independent.¹⁶ Though one goal of these economic policies was to correct prior economic initiatives, several outcomes generally led to less desirable economic environments for working classes. For example, Neoliberal economic policies

¹³ Boskin, *Reagan and the Economy*, 18.

¹⁴ Boskin, *Reagan and the Economy*, 11.

¹⁵ John P. Forrester. and Charles J. Spindler, "Managing Municipal Services in an Era of Declining Federal Assistance," *Policy Studies Review*, 1990, 63.

¹⁶ Forrester and Spindler, "Managing Municipal Services," 64.

allowed the real value of the minimum wage to fall, undermined unions, and created a labor market of employment insecurity.¹⁷

The changes in economic policy under Reagan contributed to the conditions for deindustrialization, as well as worsening the economic effect on people due to the departure of industry. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, the Midwestern and Northeastern regions of the United States, commonly referred to as the “Rust Belt” region, slowly lost their industrial employers. The loss of industries that were pillars of economic progress in the “Rust Belt” region resulted due to several factors in addition to the changes in national economic policy.

Examination of the “Rust Belt”

The “Rust Belt” refers to a region within the Northeast and Midwest states where factories and other manufacturing facilities once operated but have since been abandoned for areas such as the Southern states, leaving rusting factories, declining populations, and high unemployment rates.¹⁸ The events that put the creation of the Rust Belt into motion began in the 1970s as economic trends began to change, continuing into the 1980s when many manufacturing facilities moved their industries to other regions. There are several overarching causes for these regional trends besides the influence of neoliberal economic policies.

¹⁷ Palley, “From Keynesianism to Neoliberalism,” 22.

¹⁸ Thomas Quain, “Leaving College without a Degree: Oral Histories from the Rust-Belt.” PhD diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 2020.

One plausible reason for the decline of industry in what would become the Rust Belt was due to the reduction in the location-specific advantages in the goods-producing sector.¹⁹ As the world became more globalized, there was less need to keep production facilities close to places of commerce. The Midwest was geographically positioned to be a hub for manufacturing and exporting products to other regions of the country due to its extensive waterways and railroads. However, the Midwest's geographic advantage decreased due to globalization. Globalization allowed goods to be transported at a reduced cost.

Additionally, some historians argue the Rust Belt region declined due to the rapid technological change and economic globalization in the manufacturing industry.²⁰ Other reasons include a significant decline in the aggregate and manufacturing employment share, higher wage premiums than other regions, and low productivity growth within Rust Belt industries leading up to the 1980s.²¹ This is significant because the Rust Belt region was the hub of domestic manufacturing in the United States throughout the 1960s, and when the hub of the manufacturing enterprises moved, so did a significant proportion of the wealth of the Rust Belt region. Additionally, wage premiums were generally higher in the Rust Belt region due to larger and more prominent union influences than in the Southern states to which many manufacturers migrated. This was due in part to the long establishment of manufacturing in the Rust Belt region, as opposed to the South which was not yet a hub of domestic manufacturing. The redistribution of wealth in terms of

¹⁹ Chamna Yoon, "The Decline of the Rust Belt: A Dynamic Spatial Equilibrium." PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2013, 475.

²⁰ Chamna Yoon, "The Decline of the Rust Belt," 475.

²¹ Simeon Alder, David Lagakos, and Lee Ohanian, "Competitive Pressure and the Decline of the Rust Belt: A Macroeconomic Analysis," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, (2014): 10.

industrial production benefitting the geographic area in which it resides to other regions left lasting implications on the Rust Belt metropolitan areas.

Manufacturing employers within the Northeast and Midwest industrialized cities moved the centers of their operations to other regions across the United States and throughout the world. In the United States, the aggregate employment share of the Rust Belt dropped from 39% in 1960 to 29% in 1990.²² The Rust Belt's manufacturing share as a percentage of total US manufacturing dropped from 47% in 1960 to 38% in 1990.²³ For example, deindustrialization of Pittsburgh, a hub of steel manufacturing, began in the 1970s but increased significantly in the 1980s. The Allegheny Conference, an organization founded to improve the economic prospects of Pittsburgh's future, found it difficult to maintain the economic vitality of Pittsburgh, competing against the allures of the suburbs and a continued dependence on mills and mines, two of the industries still in production after the closing of steel factories.²⁴

Similar trends unfolded in Flint, Michigan, where the city's deindustrialization and economic downturn was affected by suburbanization and the building of new highways along with the outsourcing of jobs to the surrounding suburbs and a subsequent erosion of the city's tax base.²⁵ From 1978 to 1989, 30,000 people lost their jobs in Flint, when General Motors moved their source of production. In total, GM moved eleven U.S. based plants to Mexico. One GM lobbyist commented that GM moved because, "GM

²² Alder, Lagakos, and Ohanian, "Competitive Pressure and the Decline of the Rust Belt," 6.

²³ Alder, Lagakos, and Ohanian, "Competitive Pressure and the Decline of the Rust Belt," 6.

²⁴ Allen Dietrich-Ward, *Beyond Rust: Metropolitan Pittsburgh and the Fate of Industrial America*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

²⁵ Andrew Highsmith, *Demolition Means Progress: Flint, Michigan and the Fate of the American Metropolis*. The University of Chicago Press, 2015.

wouldn't be doing anyone any favors if it goes bankrupt. [GM needed to move] in order to stay competitive in today's economic climate." Ronald Reagan visited Flint, Michigan to speak with the GM workers who were let go, urging workers to remain positive through the tough times workers were experiencing. Additionally, Reagan informed the workers of manufacturing possibilities in the South. However, few, if any, of the workers Reagan spoke with ever returned to manufacturing work. Though the efforts were received in mixed terms, some which sided favorably with Reagan's efforts to meet the issues of the let go workers, there is evidence these meetings resulted in prolonged economic recovery and change for the workers.²⁶

Dozens of other industrialized cities in the Midwest faced the consequences of declining industrial activity during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite overall trends of Rust Belt cities, each is still unique in terms of the industries which left, its geographic location, socioeconomic makeup, and responses to the process of deindustrialization. Kankakee, Illinois was another that had to alter once industry left.

Kankakee's manufacturing base consisted of several key employers that altered the trajectory of the city once they departed. These included A.O. Smith, a water heater plant, Roper Corporation's two facilities, one in Bradley and one in Kankakee, producing kitchen stoves and outdoor power equipment, and Kroehler, an upholstered furniture manufacturer.²⁷ Amongst these major manufacturing facilities as well as more minor manufacturing facilities, the total number of workers employed in manufacturing

²⁶ Michael Moore, director. *Roger and Me*. Dog Eat Dog Films, 1989. 1 hr., 31 min.

²⁷ Steve Bencoter, "Learning Lessons the Hard Way: An Analysis of the Economic Plight of City of Kankakee," *Undergraduate Review* 3, no. 1 (1989), 33.

numbered close to 10,400 in 1978. All three of the manufacturing facilities closed within a ten-year period, leaving high unemployment rates in Kankakee, up to 21.4% in February of 1983.²⁸ Kankakee was a textbook example of an industrial city seeing the effects of deindustrialization.

METHODS

Investigating the stories of Kankakee in the 1970s and 1980s and into the twenty-first century involved conducting interviews with Kankakee County residents. In keeping with Oral History Association guidelines, interviews were conducted with the four key components in mind: preparation, interviewing, preservation, access and use.²⁹ Preparation for the interviews included primary and secondary research into the history of deindustrialization in Kankakee. Preparatory research allowed for deeper discussions into aspects of deindustrialization in Kankakee with a working knowledge of the key employers in the area and the story behind how and why factories left Kankakee. Interviewing included seeking out potential interviewees, informing them of the purpose and intent of the research, then conducting the interviews with the participants. Interviews ranged from half an hour to two hours in length. In total, eight formal interviews were conducted. Interviews were recorded for the sake of gathering accurate quotes and statements from the interviewees. The interviewee's statements are preserved within the remaining portions of the paper. The knowledge gained from the oral history interviews is to be accessed and used through ONU's Honors program journal, ELAIA.

²⁸ Vic Johnson, *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader: Kankakee County, Illinois, 1853-2003*, Kankakee County Historical Society, 2004.

²⁹ Oral History Association, "Best Practices."

While oral history interview recordings are normally made accessible for public use, for the sake of confidentiality of the interviewee's identities, the recordings will not be made accessible. Instead, the recollections of the people interviewed are captured through the quotes and stories told in the thesis. All four of these aspects of the oral history process honor the people who told their stories.

Eight people from Kankakee and the surrounding villages, Bourbonnais and Bradley, were interviewed. All interviewees received an informed consent form describing the purpose and procedures of the research. All interviewers signed the informed consent form before the interview began. All interviewees lived in Kankakee throughout the deindustrialization period, ranging from the late 1970s to late 1980s. The professions of the interviewees varied, though a considerable portion of jobs were service oriented. One of the participants worked in one of the manufacturing facilities and lost her job due to deindustrialization. The other interviewees, though influenced by the loss of industry, did not directly work in manufacturing. As a result, most of the participants did not lose their jobs. All the participants saw visible changes in the community as the process of deindustrialization took place in Kankakee County. The interviews were conducted either in person in several locations throughout Kankakee County or over Zoom. Interviewees were given a research consent form detailing the purpose and use for the oral history interviews in the research process.

Interview questions focused on perceptions and recollections of when industry left Kankakee and how the community changed once the industries left. The open-ended questions asked for thoughts on the tone of the community, their own personal reflections

on the loss of industry, and the visible changes they saw in Kankakee during and after the process of deindustrialization.

The methods for the project were inspired by John Hershey's journal articles turned into a novel on the bombing of Hiroshima, titled *Hiroshima*. John Hershey, who lived from 1914-1993, was a journalist who travelled to Japan to collect first-hand accounts of the bombing of Hiroshima through interviews. In his articles, he interwove the stories of six people who each had a unique background and location in the city when the bomb fell. Hershey's documentation of the bombing earned him acclaim in the United States. From this acclaim, a school board in a suburb of Chicago chose to name a newly built school in his honor. As a freshman in that high school, I read *Hiroshima* and was struck by how Hershey interwove personal stories into a cohesive narrative. His recounting of the stories resonated with me and inspired me to pursue the oral history project on Kankakee's deindustrialization.

Additional inspiration came from Lauret Savoy's *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape*, a retrospective look on how the stories and memories of the people and the land in America have been told and preserved. In her book, Savoy phrases "re-member": to know there are traces and patterns of the past that can be uncovered. She laments the loss of past voices, the untold stories of people who have gone before. This idea also resonated with me and fed my interest in oral history. I find it extremely important to retain the stories of the past from people who lived through the events. The combination of these two interests led me to exploring the oral histories of Kankakee residents during a time of economic change.

Oral History Interviews

1. 1960s

Throughout the 1960s, Kankakee's economic growth manifested in the busy downtown streets and continued construction of industrial and commercial buildings. The physical landscape, as well as the economic outlook of Kankakee, looked productive and thriving, steadied upon industries with a strong employment base of industrial laborers. Sarah Peterson, born in the 1940s, grew up in Bradley, Illinois, a village adjacent to the City of Kankakee. Bradley used to be named North Kankakee, but this changed in 1895 when the David Bradley Plow Works factory relocated to the village, an early indication of the importance industry would play in the village's development. Sarah Peterson grew up in a union household, her father a supervisor at the Bear Brand hosiery company that produced women's hosiery. The factory, located in downtown Kankakee on West Avenue and had been in operation since the early 1900s, closed its doors in 1968 due to increasing production costs and overseas competition.³⁰ Sarah Peterson recalls as a teenager in the late 1960s walking from Bradley to Schuyler Street in downtown Kankakee to shop with her friends. She recalls the bustling of the stores in downtown Kankakee as well as the 8-block radius called 'the square' where young people would go to drive their cars and hang out.³¹ She remembers going to the Paramount theatre with her friends, as well as the candy store downtown called Johnson's Candy Kitchen. Of these places Sarah explored as a young woman, only the Paramount theater remains.

³⁰ Jack Klasey, "Remembering 'The Bear Brand,'" Daily Journal, October 29, 2016, https://www.daily-journal.com/news/local/remembering-the-bear-brand/article_3b506af8-bd99-5e86-916a-66eed9e59fdc.html

³¹ Sarah Peterson, interview, December 10, 2021.

The geographic periphery of downtown Kankakee was where the major industries of Kankakee were located, industries which made the bustling of the downtown area possible. The industries, though on the periphery of the geographical landscape of Kankakee, were anything but peripheral to the economic achievements of Kankakee's growth, evidenced by several economic achievements of the manufacturers in Kankakee County. In 1964, the Kankakee Industrial Development Association organized for the purpose of encouraging continued industrial expansion.³² Then, in 1965, Kroehler Manufacturing Company, an upholstered furniture manufacturer in Bradley, became the first furniture factory in history to reach a sales volume of over \$100,000,000 in one year.³³ It was during this period of Kroehler's economic prosperity when Sarah Peterson, a high school graduate in 1967, started her work as a payroll supervisor at Kroehler Manufacturing, a job she held for 18 years.³⁴ In the same year, Roper Corporation announced plans for a \$500,000 addition to their product engineering building, an implication that Roper was investing in not only the company, but its presence in the Kankakee community.³⁵ The physical landscape of Kankakee and its surrounding suburbs grew just as the manufacturers that benefitted from the infrastructure of Kankakee continued to grow and prosper.

Corporations manufacturing goods were not the only ones benefiting economically. The manufacturing corporations of Kankakee were unionized, leading to higher wage premiums for union workers. In 1969, the hourly wage for a Roper factory

³² Johnson, *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader*, 280.

³³ Mary Jean Houde and John Klasey, *Of the People: A Popular History of Kankakee County* (Kankakee County Board of Supervisors, 1968), 419.

³⁴ Sarah Peterson, interview, December 10, 2021.

³⁵ Houde and Klasey, *Of the People*, 419.

worker was \$5.94 per hour, while Southern plants paid \$2.97 per hour.³⁶ The union presence in Kankakee manufacturing was strong and the relationship between management and union workers led to numerous strikes throughout the decades. In 1966, six unions within Roper's facilities struck, leading the Roper plants to close for thirteen weeks.³⁷ Several years later, in 1969, another strike at Roper closes the plant for several weeks. The strikes were common knowledge in town, as Mark Jones recalled several bitter strikes taking place throughout the years, though he did not know any more of the details.³⁸

2. 1970s

As Kankakee moved into the next decade economic growth continued. Michael Johnson, a pastor and then president of Olivet Nazarene University who moved out of Kankakee in 1972, echoed similar remarks to that of Sarah Peterson, recalling that, "Kankakee was still vibrant, the downtown Kankakee was really a kind of a destination. The mall had not been built for one thing. There were department stores and restaurants, [downtown Kankakee] was very positive."³⁹ One unique business that continued to prosper in the 70s was the Yesteryear, a fine dining restaurant located at Frank Lloyd Wright's house located on the Kankakee River, just South of Kankakee's downtown area. Yesteryear had been in operation since 1952. Sarah Peterson recalled going to the

³⁶ Steve Bencoter, "Learning Lessons the Hard Way," 33.

³⁷ Johnson, *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader*, 281.

³⁸ Mark Jones, interview, October 6, 2021.

³⁹ Michael Johnson, interview, November 10, 2021.

Yesteryear Restaurant for Kroehler's company holiday party. A few decades later, however, this would be the site of a horrific crime that cast its shadow on the town.

One of the major factories and employers in Kankakee, Roper Corporation, continued its expansion in 1970. But Roper expanded its sources of operation elsewhere. Roper announced its plans in 1970 to open a new facility in LaFayette, Georgia.⁴⁰ Questions immediately arose in Kankakee whether the opening of a new facility in LaFayette meant Roper's Kankakee facilities would close. There were important differences between the Kankakee and LaFayette facilities. Though the Kankakee factories had operated for several decades, the Lafayette factories would be newly built. The acquisition of the new southern Roper factory came about because of a decision made by the newly appointed Chief Executive of Roper in 1967, Max Hoover. In a press release in 1969, Hoover stated that the Kankakee plant, "has the highest labor rate in the stove manufacturing business and the worst productivity. We possibly could have lived with the rate, but not both of them... We decided we couldn't win here. We decided to restructure the company."⁴¹ One of the decisions of "restructuring" included the initial acquisition of new factories and then relocation of Roper facilities. The acquisition of the plant in LaFayette proved to be profitable when Roper Corporation's total productivity in 1974 increased from 15 to 18 percent. According to Crain Chicago Business, "Max Hoover had revitalized his company, Roper production costs were cut by building southern plants."⁴² But back in 1969, Roper's corporate office had not yet made the

⁴⁰ Johnson, *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader*, 320.

⁴¹ Johnson, *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader*, 318.

⁴² Johnson, *Sesquicentennial Reader*

decision to relocate down to the South. At the time, it simply looked as if Roper was expanding their places of production.

It did not take long for Roper union workers to catch on a possible decision by Roper to leave the area. In 1971, the Stovemounters Local union at Roper argued that, “we could produce so much more than they [the South] could, so it was cheaper on a stove by stove basis than down South.”⁴³ Kankakee unions felt the need to justify their importance to Roper Corporation. Their pitch was that even though wages were higher in the North than in the South, the Kankakee union workers produced stoves faster than other workers in other regions like the South would.

In addition to tensions between the corporations and the local union chapters, rising inflation, a characteristic of the late 1970s national economic climate, affected the corporations located in Kankakee. In one *Daily Journal* article, Hoover discussed the outlook for 1974, saying, “we talk to a lot of economists in order to forecast our future performance. In previous years many of them were willing to predict trends in the economy with few, if any, qualifications. There is more reluctance in 1974. Most economists frankly admit ‘we don’t know’ about the oil supply and price and wage controls which are the major causes of current material and parts shortages and inflation.”⁴⁴ National changes were beginning to see their effects in Kankakee’s employment as the nation moved into the next decade.

3. 1980s

⁴³ Johnson, *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader*, 280.

⁴⁴ *Daily Journal*, “Roper”, February 5, 1974.

At the turn of the decade, the job employment situation became one of the most discussed issues in Kankakee County.⁴⁵ An article in the *Daily Journal* stated, “the region that was built on the backs of blue-collar men and women would never be quite the same.”⁴⁶ From 1978 to 1983, the number of industrial jobs in Kankakee dropped from 10,400 to 6,400.⁴⁷ In just six years, 4,000 jobs were lost due to the slow removal of the larger manufacturing employers in Kankakee. As the number of manufacturing jobs decreased, so too did the number of people residing in Kankakee. In 1980, there were 102,926 residents in Kankakee County. By 1986, the number of residents fell to 95,926.⁴⁸

There were several reasons Roper Corporation and A.O. Smith left the area. One was tensions between management and the unions within the factories, leading to strikes over the years. In addition to lower wage costs, another plausible explanation for the choice of manufacturers to leave Kankakee was aging facilities. In one article from the *Daily Journal*, Robert Wood, the chief attorney for Roper Corporation, acknowledged that the functions of the Kankakee facilities moving to Tennessee and Georgia, had “more favorable worker compensation, unemployment insurance and tax rates...in addition to the Kankakee and Bradley facilities are older and less efficiently laid out than Roper’s newer plants in the South.”⁴⁹ David Reed, an architect by trade, reflected on his time working at an office close to A.O. Smith’s factory. He would walk around the industrial park during his lunch breaks and noticed several aspects of the architectural design of the older facilities. He explained how the factories had been built during the

⁴⁵ Johnson, *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader*, 386.

⁴⁶ Johnson, *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader*, 387.

⁴⁷ Johnson, *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader*, 387.

⁴⁸ Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, “Resident Population in Kankakee County, Illinois,” <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/ILKANK0POP>

⁴⁹ Jerry Morgan, “Local Roper shutdowns permanent,” *The Daily Journal*, June 18, 1982.

World War II period which were a combination of masonry and steel. “Being the 1940ish buildings, they were not as open spaced planning as modern buildings which are steel columns, wide spans, and I can have a dynamic building. So the design of the building and the materials used would inhibit some dynamics, some open planning, some growth and change. But, at the same time, to say ‘my building is old and falling apart and decrepit, therefore I’m moving’—whose fault is that for not replacing the roof, for not painting, for not upgrading the electrical?”⁵⁰

Kankakee community leaders saw that given the state of their buildings, it was most likely the manufacturers would leave within the next several years. In the Kankakee Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Report for 1982, Donald McCann from First Bank of Meadowview, and past Chairman of the Board wrote, “It is my forecast that the Kankakee area will lose 1,500 manufacturing jobs in the next three years. Depending on what statistical evidence you wish to use, the capital investment that it takes to create 1,500 manufacturing jobs is between \$60,000 and \$75,000. It is quite unlikely that during this same three-year period \$60,000 to \$75,000 will be spent by manufacturers relocating to our area.”⁵¹ McCann understood that the fabric of the community was about the alter and the community needed to prepare for these changes. Even with investment from the city in manufacturing, there was an awareness that bringing new jobs to Kankakee would not cover the loss of well-established industries like Roper and A.O. Smith.

Crain’s Chicago Business wrote a rather critical account of Kankakee’s attempts to keep Roper and A.O. Smith in Kankakee. One portion of the editorial was titled

⁵⁰ Reed, interview, November 8, 2021.

⁵¹ Kankakee Area Chamber of Commerce, “Annual Report for 1982 and Program of Work for 1983,” 1982.

“Kankakee: A City and State of Mind,” highlighting several of the misconceptions Kankakee residents had about the industries’ choice to leave Kankakee. The four myths *Crain’s Chicago Business* pointed out were “there’s nothing we could have done to keep the plants here that move South,” “Just wait. What happened to us [the Midwest] will happen to them [the South],” “Our manufacturing plants really were productive,” and “(Fill in name of CEO) is a jerk.”⁵² These sorts of sentiments were echoed by David Reed, who stated that within Kankakee’s community, “There were rumors that the wages in the South were half of those in Kankakee because they only worked half the time. Who benefits from that story? The people who used to be workers. Then you hear of plants closing ‘okay, Smith or Roper, maybe the deal wasn’t as good as you thought.’”⁵³ There was talk that the workers at the new Roper Plant would frequently take time off, resulting in the closing of the plant. Whether this be fact or fiction, Kankakee residents still believed themselves to be a more profitable “factory town” than the locations to which Roper and A.O. Smith moved. There was, at least in a portion of the Kankakee population, a desire to preserve the reputation of the Kankakee workers who had supported the actions of the unions throughout the decades leading up to the closing of factories in the 1980s. Additionally, many of the workers never thought that the talk of the factories leaving would ever come to fruition. Michael Johnson commented that since many people did not actually believe the factories would leave, when the factories did leave, it sent shockwaves through the community.⁵⁴

⁵² Crain’s Chicago Business, “Kankakee: What happened to the Midwest... and why,” April, 29, 1984.

⁵³ Reed, interview, November 8, 2021.

⁵⁴ Johnson, interview, November 10, 2021.

Throughout the 1980s, the population of Kankakee County slowly declined. During the decline in population, there was a lack of need for new housing. Charles Smith was a young commercial realtor in Bourbonnais during the 1980s who witnessed the stagnation of the housing market when the factories left. When he was in college, he had a job helping with the construction of the Grand apartments near ONU as well as the Olde Oak and Oak Run apartments. Smith recalled that the Briar Cliff and Plum Creek subdivisions of Bourbonnais that had been planned to be built were put on hold for ten to fifteen years, since there was no need to build new houses if people were not moving in. Many of the roads had already been paved, but the lots largely sat empty with the exception of intermingled houses which had already been sold and built.

Thomas Brown was in grade school when Roper Corporation and A.O. Smith left Kankakee. As a child, he did not fully comprehend the economic changes taking place in his community. What he did know was that as his school year progressed, there were classmates who were missing. He remembers as the school year went on, there were kids in his classes who never came back. He always wondered what happened to them and how their families were doing.⁵⁵

Reed also saw the effects of the loss of employment within Kankakee's schools meant to support the Kankakee community. The local church Reed attends also has a school which suffered when the major industries left. The members of the church were comprised of blue-collar laborers who, when they lost their jobs, left the area. As a result, the school that had more than 200 children dropped to around 125 within several years.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Thomas Brown, interview, December 8, 2021.

⁵⁶ Reed, interview, November 8, 2021.

It was evident that the decrease in enrollment was due to the loss of jobs of many of the church's members. Reed recalled that at many of the factories in the area, there were second and third generation factory workers, "So when those factories closed, Grandpa was out of work, Dad was out of work, and the young Son was out of work. Major hit to the families."⁵⁷

In addition to educational facilities, what was once the hub of Kankakee's local commerce altered with the changes brought about by deindustrialization. William Duncan was a young attorney during the 1980s who saw the downtown area alter significantly through the decade. He lamented how downtown Kankakee was one of the cultural casualties for Kankakee County. The downtown area represented the collapse of Kankakee. The residents of Kankakee began to view Kankakee in a less desirable light. He also recalled a ridiculous picture of Court Street, devoid of people, with a tumbleweed blowing across the street. The sensationalized picture reflected views people had of the Kankakee area. Kankakee's downtown, once a center for commerce and gatherings, appeared to be deserted. Deindustrialization alone was not the cause of the desertion of the downtown area, Even as the manufacturing jobs in Kankakee disappeared, Roper's presence lingered in the community up until 1988, when Roper Corporation was bought out by General Electric and Whirlpool. With the change in ownership, the seventy corporate Roper workers in Kankakee were to be "phased out" over a few months in 1988.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Reed, interview, November 8, 2021.

⁵⁸ Marx Gibson, "Roper tells 70 workers here: 'Thanks, bye,'" April 14, 1988.

Even amongst the hard times in Kankakee, local community leaders attempted to boost the community's spirits. One such man was Stephen Small, b.1947-d.1987, a local businessman and owner of the *Daily Journal*, who bought the deteriorating Frank Lloyd Wright house, once the Yesteryear restaurant. Small's goal was to renovate the home. But before the project was completed, disaster struck. In September of 1987, Stephen Small was kidnapped at the Frank Lloyd Wright property and held for a ransom of one million dollars in cash by another man from Kankakee. Unfortunately, he died within several hours of being buried alive underground. Several of the interviewees mentioned the impact Stephen Small's murder had upon the already fluctuating community.

Michael Johnson remarked that the kidnapping and murder of Stephen Small, "created a snowball with Kankakee's bad reputation."⁵⁹ The kidnapping and murder of Stephen Small made national news and "shook the community" further.⁶⁰ William Duncan described how the perceptions of a dangerous downtown Kankakee contributed to "white flight" in Kankakee to Bourbonnais and Manteno. Thomas Brown's family lived close to the downtown area of Kankakee, moving briefly to another Illinois city before moving back, except this time their home was outside of the downtown area. Brown recalls seeing his childhood home boarded up, the surrounding homes also in disrepair. It is a memory that has stuck with him into his adulthood, a memory that bothered him as a child and continues to make him reflect on the state of Kankakee.

Speaking to the interviewees, there was one common thread which bound their stories together. Amongst all the changes in Kankakee in the 1980s, there was a phrase

⁵⁹ Johnson, interview, November 10, 2021.

⁶⁰ William Duncan, interview, November 9, 2021.

which stood out to the members of the community, a phrase which seems to be engrained in the minds of the people who live in Kankakee today: “Last one out of Kankakee, turn out the lights.” A silly sounding phrase, and yet it was echoed again and again by the interviewees who recalled their memories from Kankakee’s deindustrialized past.

The phrase “Last one out of Kankakee, turn out the lights” had been printed onto bumper stickers, visibly displayed on passing vehicles on the streets of Kankakee, Bradley, and Bourbonnais. The interviewees did not know who made or distributed the bumper stickers, though some speculated union workers’ involvement. The bumper stickers encapsulate the general tone of the community during this period, reflecting a lamenting of what Kankakee used to be before deindustrialization. As other memories faded in the minds of the interviewees, this phrase remained in the memories of residents even as Kankakee has bounced back economically from the challenges it faced in the height of deindustrialization. The progress of recovery was slow, and there were difficulties along the way, but Kankakee slowly recovered from the events of the 1980s.

4. 1990s and Beyond

The events which transpired in Kankakee in 1980s continued their effects into the 1990s. William Duncan, attorney and city council member during the 1990s, remarked how in the summers of 1994 and 1995, he distinctly remembered there were around 26 to 27 murders each of those summers.⁶¹ Many of the murders were unsolved and were a result of individuals from Chicago coming to sell drugs in the streets of Kankakee. There was a specific house in Kankakee used as a point of distribution by a Chicago gang. Once

⁶¹ Duncan, interview, November 9, 2021.

the house was no longer used for drug activity, “the house was demolished, since it was such a bad symbol for the area.”⁶²

However, there were glimpses of hope during a hard time for Kankakee. Michael Johnson recognized the need for Olivet Nazarene University to play a larger part in the community. He helped ONU become a part of the Kankakee community by joining several board of directors of Kankakee organizations such as the Kankakee Chamber of Commerce and hospital boards.

In more recent years, plans are in the works to utilize the Kankakee Riverfront area. The people who have made Kankakee their home, who weathered the changes during the time of deindustrialization, crimes, burnt buildings, and bad perceptions adamantly supported using the Kankakee Riverfront to help the Kankakee community and draw in business.

Outside revenue coming into the Kankakee community within the past twenty years has contributed to Kankakee’s continued economic recovery and revitalization after the post-industrial period. Olivet Nazarene University wove more fully into the fabric of the Kankakee community with the help of Olivet Nazarene University’s leadership. When ONU became the summer home for the Chicago Bears, there was a realization in the community that this decision would impact the broader perception of the Kankakee area. Michael Johnson was a focal participant in the agreement with the Chicago Bears in coming to ONU. He knew that though ONU would benefit, the community would be the real winners with the deal.

⁶² Duncan, interview, November 9, 2021.

Additionally, the perception of Kankakee has altered in recent years as Kankakee and its surrounding suburbs have come to be perceived as a part of the larger Chicago metropolitan area. As Mark Jones explained to me, “The northeastern part of Bourbonnais, it became a suburb of a sorts, where people commute to Kankakee from Bourbonnais. I’ve noticed this through the years, that over the years we have been termed a suburb of Chicago. We suddenly moved a lot closer than we were. And I think that is part of mindset that has driven an increase in the number of people here who use this a basis for commuting to other suburbs or [Chicago].”⁶³

Like Kankakee’s perception shifting due to the inclusion of the Chicago Bears summer home at Olivet Nazarene University, the Riverfront plan to utilize the Kankakee River more effectively, and Kankakee’s inclusion in the wider Chicagoland suburban area, the removal of aspects of Kankakee also contributed to a new perception for Kankakee. For example, Roper’s Kankakee Division facility was demolished in 2016. The Roper facility, which had stood empty and deteriorating since its closing in 1982, was a reminder to the community of the trouble caused by the removal of Roper in the community. When the buildings were all leveled to the ground, the mayor of Kankakee applauded the action, never believing she would see the day when the facility would be torn down.⁶⁴

The Roper facility has not been the only structure in recent years to be demolished to pave a way forward for Kankakee’s development. Thomas Brown worked in the

⁶³ Jones, interview, October 6, 2021.

⁶⁴ Lee Provost, “Bittersweet moment for Kankakee as landmark manufacturing site comes down,” Daily Journal, March 3, 2016.

Kankakee school system as well as in an economic development role for the City of Kankakee. Brown, one of many residents looking towards the future growth of Kankakee, learned the history of the David Letterman gazebos. He was shocked to find that the gazebos were mocking the Kankakee community. He wasn't alone in his sentiment. Students at the Kankakee High School learned the history of the gazebos and decided enough was enough: they would tear down the twin gazebos of Kankakee, physical symbols of the laughingstock Kankakee was back in 1999. A compromise was reached between the students and the Park District of Kankakee where the students were allowed to tear down the gazebo located at Depot Park. It so happened that David Letterman was retiring around the time of the demolition of the Depot Park gazebo. A brilliant idea was born: the wood boards of the demolished gazebo would serve as the material to create a rocking chair to commemorate Letterman's retirement.⁶⁵ The Paramount Theatre which Sarah Peterson had enjoyed as a young woman in the 1960s served as the space for the unveiling of the completed rocking chair bequeathed to Letterman with a host of fanfare from Kankakee residents attending the event in addition to Letterman's camera crew filming the ceremony for the Letterman's show.

The demolition of the Roper facility and the Depot Park gazebo are symbols of Kankakee residents choosing to move Kankakee into the future rather than dwelling upon the events of the past. Though the events of deindustrialization in Kankakee will not be forgotten, the residents of Kankakee have chosen to focus on the future development of their community.

⁶⁵ Mary Schmich, "Regifting Kankakee gazebo back to Letterman an act of pride," Daily Journal, March 17, 2015.

CONCLUSION

The process of deindustrialization in Kankakee is intricate, weaving together different aspects of the culture of Kankakee. The stories told are but a few out of hundreds, even thousands of stories from individuals who witnessed the changes in the community they called home. The people on the periphery of the manufacturing decisions made become the focus when it is realized that these were a few of the many people who willingly remained in the Kankakee community, using their skills, time, and energy to create a new perception for Kankakee. There was a resounding agreement from the interviewees that Kankakee has developed significantly since the time of Roper, A.O. Smith, and Kroehler leaving.

APPENDIX A

“Kankakee County in Deindustrialization: An Oral History Approach” Initial Interview Questions

- What was your occupation(s) throughout the late 1970s and 1980s within the Kankakee area? Were you involved in any governmental units?
 - From your recollection, what the role of the government in the deindustrialization of Kankakee?
- Were you involved in any local unions?
 - From your recollection, what was the role of unions in the deindustrialization of Kankakee?
- Do you recall the closing of Roper, A.O. Smith, and other industries in Kankakee?
 - From your recollection, what contributed to the removal of Roper and A.O. Smith?
- What were your initial thoughts on the closing of the manufacturing plants?
- What was the overall tone of the community before, during, and after the closing of the manufacturing plants? Do you have any examples?
- How did the closing of major manufacturing employment affect you, your family, or other people you knew? Do you have any examples?
- In 1974, there was a national recession which affected industry in Kankakee. From your perspective, how did the economic recession of 1974 and the 1980s affect your communities? (work, neighborhood, school, church, etc.)

- Were there any ways in which you actively helped those around you during the deindustrialization period? (Any initiatives taken?)
- Do you have any further thoughts on the deindustrialization of Kankakee? Any other stories you would like to share?
- Since the 1970s and 1980s, how have you seen Kankakee change? (industries, communities, the overall tone of the community, etc.)

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Kankakee in Deindustrialization: An Oral History Approach

Principal Investigator: Rachel Shepard, Dr. Steve Case

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted through Olivet Nazarene University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask him/her any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. Nature and Purpose of the Project:

The purpose of the project “Kankakee in Deindustrialization: An Oral History Approach” is to investigate the impact of the deindustrialization of Kankakee during the 1980s through the lens of individuals who were affected by the changing economic landscape of the city. The nature of the project is oral history, investigating the economic conditions of Kankakee through the lens of personal narratives.

2. Explanation of Procedures:

To complete the research project, I will conduct research by meeting with approximately a dozen people of different social classes, and occupations to understand the impact of deindustrialization in Kankakee in the lives of people who lived in the area throughout the 1980s. The meetings will happen over the course of several months, meeting with every individual to allow interviewees to reflect on the past and recall memories. The first part of the interview will be a pre-interview, detailing the economic history of the United States and the local Kankakee region during the late 1970s and through the 1980s. After the initial part of the interview, participants are to meet with the researcher to answer questions on their personal stories. The questions will relate specifically to the economic conditions of Kankakee County during the removal of manufacturing companies like Roper, A.O. Smith, and any other places of employment involved within the deindustrialization process of Kankakee. The interviews will be recorded in order to gather more specific information from the participants.

3. Discomfort and Risks:

There is the possibility for discomfort of the participants in discussing past economic hardships such as loss of jobs or other stressful economic situations locally or familial which significantly impacted their lives.

Additionally, the culmination of the research will result in a written thesis paper which will be published in ELAIA, Olivet Nazarene University's Honor's Program Journal. Even though pseudonyms will be used to keep the identities of participants confidential, the personal accounts of participants will be published for others to read.

4. Benefits:

Participants may benefit from research findings that help give context and understanding to their personal narratives involving changing economic circumstances. Additionally, participants are given the chance to voice their stories, and additionally offer wisdom gleaned from their experiences. The participant's responses to the oral history questions will be preserved for posterity.

5. Confidentiality:

All participant information will be held in the strictest confidence. Confidentiality will be maintained by securing names and contact information of participants on a password protected file on Dr. Case's Olivet Nazarene University computer. Additionally, pseudonyms will be used within the thesis paper to be written after research is conducted and completed.

6. Refusal/Withdrawal:

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

Disclosure: For the sake of confidentiality, the names of interviewees have been changed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Benscoter, Steve. "Learning Lessons the Hard Way: An Analysis of the Economic Plight of the City of Kankakee." *Undergraduate Review* 3, no. 1 (1989): 29-52.
- Boskin, Michael J. *Reagan and the Economy: The Successes, Failures, and Unfinished Agenda*. San Francisco: ICS Press, 1987.
- Brown, Thomas. Interview with Rachel Shepard. Zoom, December 8, 2021.
- Crain's Chicago Business, "Kankakee: What happened to the Midwest... and why," April, 29, 1984.
- Derber, Milton. *Labor in Illinois: The Affluent Years, 1945-1980*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- Desch, Tom, director. *An American Home*. House Painter Media, 2017. 55 min.
- Dietrich-Ward, Allen. *Beyond Rust: Metropolitan Pittsburgh and the Fate of Industrial America*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.
- Duncan, William. Interview with Rachel Shepard. Kankakee, Illinois, November 9, 2021.
- Feyrer, James, Bruce Sacerdote, Ariel Dora Stern, Albert Saiz, and William C. Strange. "Did the Rust Belt Become Shiny? A Study of Cities and Counties that Lost Steel and Auto Jobs in the 1980s/Comments." *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs* (2007): 41-102.
- Forrester, John P. and Charles J. Spindler. "Managing Municipal Services in an Era of Declining Federal Assistance." *Policy Studies Review*, 1990.

- Ghosh, Palash. "A Tale of Three Cities: Detroit, Toronto, and Pittsburgh In a Post-Industrialized World." *International Business Times*, October 9, 2013.
<https://www.ibtimes.com/tale-three-cities-detroit-toronto-pittsburgh-post-industrialized-world-1417742>
- Gibson, Marx. "Roper tells 70 workers here: 'Thanks, bye,'" April 14, 1988.
- Glass, Ira. "554: Not It!" *This American Life*. Podcast audio, April 10, 2015.
<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/554/transcript>
- Hersey, John. *Hiroshima*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946.
- High, Steven. *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Highsmith, Andrew R. *Demolition Means Progress: Flint, Michigan and the Fate of the American Metropolis*. The University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- Houde, Mary Jean, and John Klasey. *Of the People: A Popular History of Kankakee County*. Chicago: The General Printing Company, 1968.
- Johnson, Michael. Interview with Rachel Shepard. Zoom, November 10, 2021.
- Johnson, Vic. *An Illustrated Sesquicentennial Reader: Kankakee County, Illinois, 1853-2003*. Kankakee: Kankakee County Historical Society, 2004.
- Jones, Mark. Interview with Rachel Shepard. Kankakee, Illinois, October 6, 2021.
- Kankakee Area Chamber of Commerce, "Annual Report for 1982 and Program of Work for 1983," 1982.

Kankakee County Museum, Kankakee, Illinois.

Kankakee Public Library Archives, Kankakee, Illinois.

Klasey, Jack. "Remembering 'The Bear Brand,'" *Daily Journal*, October 29, 2016,
https://www.daily-journal.com/news/local/remembering-the-bear-brand/article_3b506af8-bd99-5e86-916a-66eed9e59fdc.html

McMillan Lequieu, Amanda. "'We Made the Choice to Stick It Out': Negotiating a Stable Home in the Rural, American Rust Belt." *Journal of Rural Studies* 53 (2017): 202–213.

Moore, Michael, director. *Roger and Me*. Dog Eat Dog Films, 1989. 1 hr., 31 min.

Morgan, Jerry. "Local Roper shutdowns permanent," *The Daily Journal*, June 18, 1982.

Mouat, Lucia. "America's Urban 'Rust Belt' Cinches Up for the Future." *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 25, 1984.
<https://www.csmonitor.com/1984/0525/052510.html>

Newman, George. Interview with Rachel Shepard. Kankakee, Illinois, December 9, 2021.

Oral History Association. "Principles and Best Practices: Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History." Last modified October 2009.
<https://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices-revised-2009/>

Palley, T.I. "From Keynesianism to Neoliberalism." In *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*, edited by Saad-Filho, A., and Johnson, D, 20-30. Pluto Press, 2015.

- Peterson, Sarah. Interview with Rachel Shepard. Bourbonnais, Illinois, December 10, 2021.
- Provost, Lee. "Bittersweet moment for Kankakee as landmark manufacturing site comes down," *Daily Journal*, March 3, 2016.
- Quain, Thomas R. "Leaving College without a Degree: Oral Histories from the Rust-Belt." PhD diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 2020.
- Reed, David. Interview with Rachel Shepard. Kankakee, Illinois, November 8, 2021.
- Ritchie, Donald A. *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*. Oxford University Press 2011.
- Savoy, Lauret. *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2015
- Schmich, Mary. "Regifting Kankakee gazebo back to Letterman an act of pride," *Daily Journal*, March 17, 2015.
- Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2013.
- Simeon Alder, David Lagakos, and Lee Ohanian. (2014). "Competitive Pressure and the Decline of the Rust Belt: A Macroeconomic Analysis," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w20538>
- Sitton, Thad, George L. Mehaffy, and O.L. Davis, Jr. *Oral History: A Guide for Teachers (and Others)*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

Smith, Charles. Interview with Rachel Shepard. Bourbonnais, Illinois. December 1, 2021.

Stein, Judith. *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Teaford, Jon C. *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993.

TotalBullSquat, "Kankakee Rated in Places Rated Almanac, 1999." YouTube video, 5:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sieWuTIR56g>

Troy, Gil. *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980's*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013. ProQuest Ebook Central.

U.S. Census Bureau, Resident Population in Kankakee County, IL [ILKANK0POP], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/ILKANK0POP>

"'Worst' Place to Live Students to Send Letterman off with a Rocking Chair," *The Guardian*, February 7, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/feb/07/worst-place-illinois-david-letterman-top-10-rocking-chair>

Yoon, Chamna. "The Decline of the Rust Belt: A Dynamic Spatial Equilibrium." PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2013.

