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A HISTORY OF THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT  
OF GREENLEAF, KANSAS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

I first became acquainted with Greenleaf in the Fall of 1977, when Professor Ray Weisenburger suggested researching the history of the Greenleaf Center shopping mall as a project for his Planning Principles class. Tom Burdett and I agreed to work jointly on this project.

As our familiarity with Greenleaf increased, our initial curiosity deepened to a genuine interest in delving deeper into the community's evolvement. We decided to continue our research as independent study with Professor Weisenburger, in the Spring of 1978.

These findings were compiled into a paper by Weisenburger, Burdett, and myself, entitled, "Rebuilding the Small Town After a Disaster: Recommendations for Integrating Disaster Relief Planning and the Continuing Planning Program." It was presented in an "Idea Market" session at the 1978 American Institute of Planners conference, held in New Orleans.

The information on the Greenleaf Center referred to in Chapter VI herein, was gathered by Tom Burdett and myself during the Spring of 1978, as a project for Professor C. A. Keithley's Research Methods class. This research study was entitled, "The Impact of the Greenleaf, Kansas, Shopping Center."

Special recognition is given to Mr. Burdett, whose authorization to incorporate our joint research and many suggestions made the development of this Report possible.

A sincere thank-you is given to all the residents of Greenleaf, who unselfishly shared their time, thoughts, and memories with me.

Finally, thank-you to my Report committee, Ray B. Weisenburger, C. A. Keithley and Henry Camp, for their continuous encouragement.

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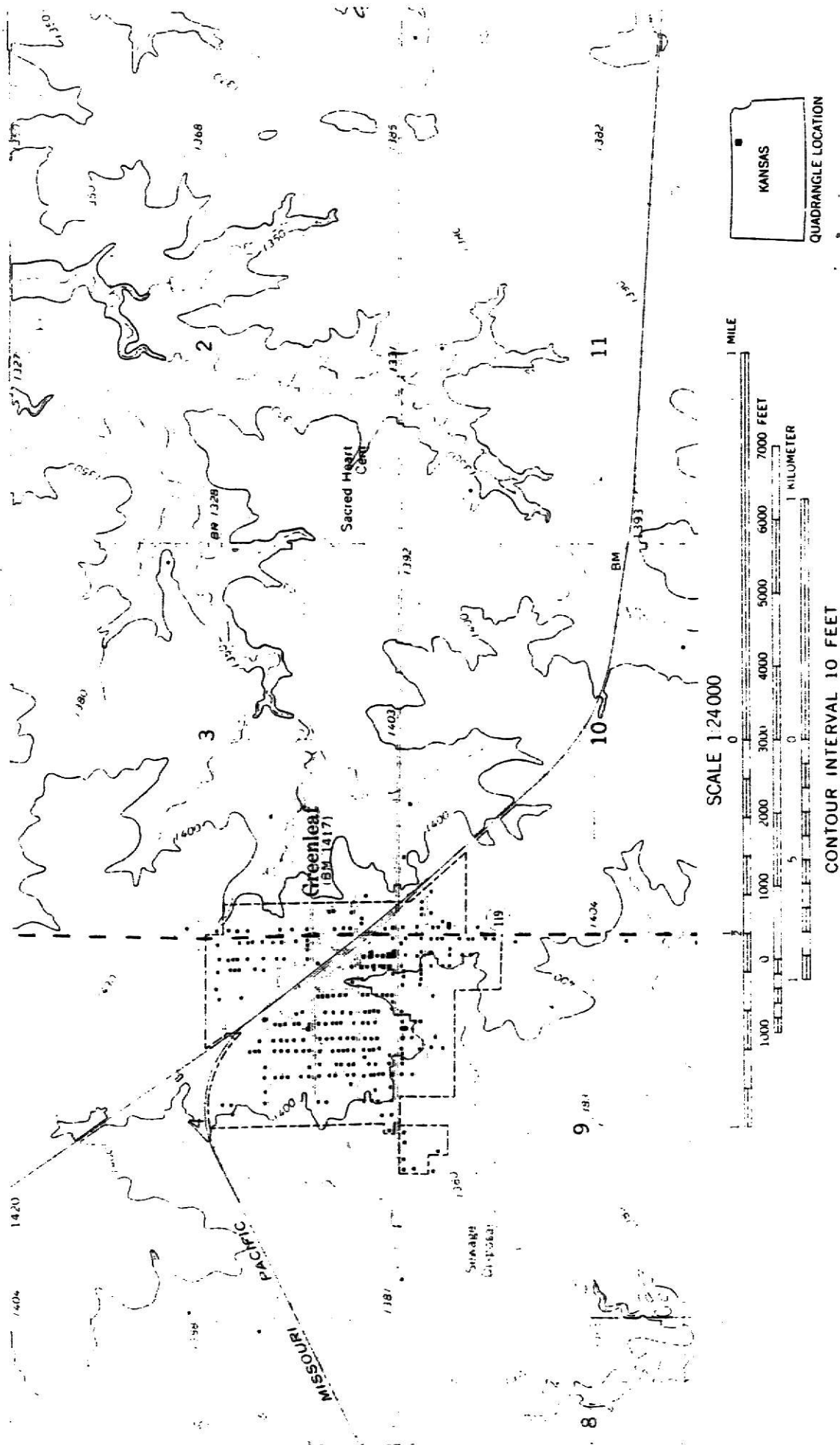


Fig. 1. Geographic Location of Greenleaf, Kansas: 39°44" North-58°45" West

SOURCE: U.S. Department of the Interior Geological Survey, Greenleaf Quadrangle Map

## I. EARLY SETTLEMENT

The area that was to become Washington County was settled in the 1840's and 1850's by homesteaders escaping the crowded Eastern United States and by newly-arrived European immigrants seeking a better life.

Farming was the predominate occupation of these settlers. One of the major overland routes to California traversed Washington County and this provided a ready market during the Gold Rush years as many travelers stopped to stock-up on food supplies for the remainder of their Westward trek.

Travel on this road at times was very heavy and it afforded a number one market as the following prices will indicate: corn, from 75¢ to \$2 per bushel; hay from \$10 to \$20 per ton; eggs, 40¢ to 50¢; butter, 40¢ to 50¢ per pound; cheese, 50¢ per pound; milk, 20¢ per quart; flour, from \$4 to \$7 per sack; bacon and ham, 25¢ per pound. By this it can be seen that the farmers of Washington county were doing well.<sup>1</sup>

In these early years, Marysville, located in neighboring Marshall County, was the major marketing center in the area. By virtue of its grain mills, it had developed into a thriving business community, servicing the surrounding hinterlands and Western-bound travelers.

Over time, the people of Washington County realized the economic advantages of retaining the money flow from their agricultural endeavors in the immediate area. Efforts began in the late

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<sup>1</sup>G. M. Hollenberg, "History of Washington County," Hanover Democrat, ca. 1938, contained in Washington County Clippings <sup>2</sup> (1932-1938): 208.

1850's to build-up trade centers within the County boundaries. Washington, which was designated as the County seat, was laid-out in 1859.

Within the next decade, several other communities were developed, including Round Grove, founded by W. P. Kelch in the early 1870's. Round Grove became a fairly active trading center and stage coach stop, complete with a general store, inn, and livery stable.

The life span of Round Grove was short-lived. During this same period, the railroads were pushing their way across Kansas, and the routes selected by the various companies promoted growth for the communities along the lines while resulting in the abandonment of others. Round Grove met the latter fate.

## II. THE EFFECT OF THE RAILROADS AND THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF GREENLEAF

In April, 1876, The Waterville and Washington Railroad Company was incorporated, and began construction of the line connecting its two namesake cities. During the Fall of 1876, the roadway and property belonging to this company were leased to the Central Branch Union Pacific Railroad Company to complete the route.

In November, 1876, the Central Branch Union Pacific Railroad Company located and laid-out the plat for a new town at the railroad's main terminus. Greenleaf, named after the railroad company's treasurer, A. W. Greenleaf, was situated approximately two miles north of Round Grove. Thus, Round Grove was abandoned and the entire community was moved to Greenleaf, which had been platted for a potential population of 2500.

Also in November, 1876, The Republican Valley Railway Company was incorporated, and began constructing a line from Greenleaf to Concordia. The following November, the company leased its railroad and property in the Central Branch Union Pacific Railroad Company to complete the route.

The Central Branch completed the Waterville to Washington route, via Greenleaf, in January, 1877, and the Greenleaf to Concordia route in January, 1878. In 1879, The Waterville and Washington Railroad Company and The Republican Valley Railway Company were consolidated with others to form the Atchison,

Colorado, and Pacific Railway Company, which in turn, was further consolidated with the Central Branch Railway Company in 1879.

Final consolidation of this roadway occurred in 1909, forming the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company, which still operates the road. Figure 2 depicts the present route of the Missouri Pacific along with the other railroads servicing north-eastern Kansas.

With its location on the railroad line, Greenleaf rapidly developed as a thriving community, servicing the railroad and surrounding farmlands. The town witnessed an influx of migrants in its first years as the railroad brought workers and their families to town while others moved to Greenleaf to seek jobs in the burgeoning number of businesses that opened to service the railroad and its employees.

. . . in 1876 the railroad came to Greenleaf and things began to pick up. Every fellow along the road got a job and the farmers all along the road got rid of their surplus. Feed was at a good price.<sup>1</sup>

Railroad management seemed to favor Greenleaf. Capital was provided for the construction of several buildings, water wells, and landscaping. At the time of the town's inception, the railroad treasurer and town namesake, A. W. Greenleaf, proclaimed that he would award a prize to the first child born in the new community. The following Spring, Ralph Greenleaf Snyder was born and was presented with a silver cup.

By 1880, Greenleaf had a population of 600 and had developed an economic base that supported the following businesses

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<sup>1</sup>Anton Peterson, "In the Early Day," Greenleaf Sentinel, 9 March 1933, contained in Washington County Clippings 2 (1932-1938): 10.

Fig. 2. Railroads Servicing Northeastern Kansas

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Railroad</u>
AT&SF	Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Company
BN	Burlington Northern, Inc.
CRI&P	Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company
MP	Missouri Pacific Railroad Company
UP	Union Pacific Railroad



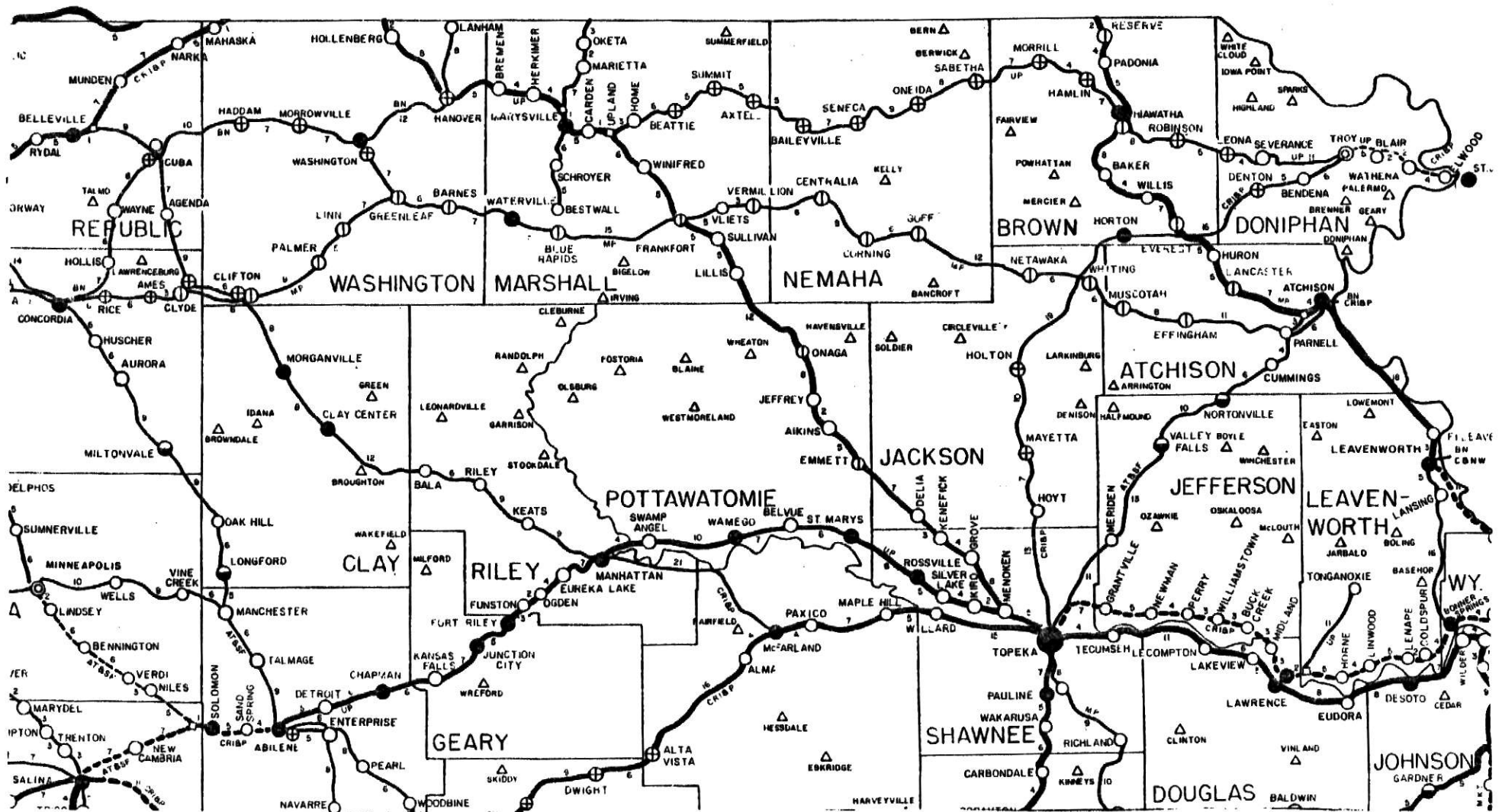
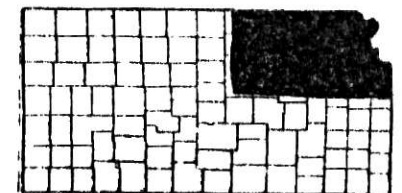


Fig. 2. Railroads Servicing Northeastern Kansas

SOURCE: Official Kansas State Railroad Map, Kansas Corporation Commission



and services; four general stores, three drug stores, a furniture store, a bank, two hotels, a harness shop, a millinery store, a lumber yard, a lawyer, a shoe shop, three grain stores, a photo gallery, a barber, a butcher, two saloons, two livery stables, and two blacksmiths.<sup>1</sup>

This early economic success of the community was highly touted by the railroad itself, which, in its publication of 1878-1879, The Emigrant Guide or Hand-Book of the Central Branch Union Pacific Railroad & Co., listed the following description:

Greenleaf, Washington County, is situated at the head of Coon Creek, 113 miles from Atchison and 3 miles from the center of the county. The branch of the Central Branch Union Pacific Railroad now running to Washington makes Greenleaf an important junction and business point. It is considered one of the best markets for grain on the line of the road. There is at present 2 grain houses, 5 stores, 1 drug house and 2 hotels. For enterprise and energy the businessmen of Greenleaf compare favorably with the best towns in Kansas. A. Synder, proprietor of the Greenleaf House, is a popular and successful landlord, always making his house truly a home for all. . . .<sup>2</sup>

In 1880, Greenleaf was designated as the end division of the railroad and the roundhouse, used to store and repair locomotives, was located there. The community was a busy railroad center for both freight and commercial travel, averaging twenty-eight trains daily.

Greenleaf was incorporated as a city of the third class on 6 September 1880. The following day the first elections were held, with Dr. C. W. Winbigler elected mayor.

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<sup>1</sup>Pearl Cox, "Ecology of Greenleaf, Kansas," Greenleaf, 1958. (Typewritten.)

<sup>2</sup>The Emigrant Guide or Hand-Book of the Central Branch Union Pacific Railroad, & Company, 1878-1879, contained in The 70th Anniversary Edition Washington County Register 70 (16 September 1938): 31.

Throughout the remainder of the century, Greenleaf continued to grow at a steady rate, adding new businesses and services to the roster of town enterprises. A peak population of 1100 was reached in the late 1800's.

As Greenleaf matured, it began to display characteristics common to many railroad communities of this period. The expenditures of the railroad workers and their families were the economic base of the community.

As strikes broke-out along the lines between railroad management and union employees, several citizens and merchants made attempts to aid the strikers. While this assistance was geared towards the protection to business investments, it also reflected a developing sense of community among the residents. The degree of sympathy being displayed towards the striking railroad workers prompted Mayor Burke to issue the Proclamation, depicted in Figure 3, to the citizens of Greenleaf, in 1886.

Towards the turn of the century, Greenleaf also developed a self-styled class system, dividing community members on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, and income. The railroad tracks bisected the community physically as well as psychologically. The part of town located west of the tracks became known as the "upper class" area, housing the merchants, professionals, and railroad supervisory staff. This group tended to be northern European Caucasians with strong affiliation to the Lutheran Church. The area lying east of the railroad tracks became classified as the "lower class" neighborhood, and was home to the railroad workers, town laborers, and their families. This group tended to

# PROCLAMATION.

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MAYOR'S OFFICE,  
Monday, March 15, 1886.

## TO THE CITIZENS OF GREENLEAF:

It having come to my knowledge that rumors are being circulated throughout the different municipalities now being embarrassed by the strike now at rife between the Gould system of R. R. and the Knights of Labor, wherein the R. R. Co. and K. of L. only are at strife, that you are aiding and abetting the strikers in their grievances, encouraging mob violence, intimidating and boycotting R. R. officials, &c. &c.; however erroneous this may be, as known to me, or whichever way your sympathies may tend, I admonish you to take no part in the strife other than to encourage a speedy and an amicable concession between employer and employes. Continue as you are doing, to bear the commercial embarrassment, over which you have no control, retaining due respect for the contending parties, and a settlement will speedily follow, with credit to all concerned.

Respectfully,

F. E. BURKE, Mayor.

Fig. 3. 1886 Mayoral Proclamation

SOURCE: Kansas State Historical Society Archives

be Italian or Black, prompting this part of town to be referred to as "Little Italy." This group tended towards affiliation with the Catholic Church.

This class distinction was not characterized by civil strife in Greenleaf. The community was close and took care of its less fortunate members, with many philanthropic activities undertaken by the churches and private citizens.

During the early years of the twentieth century, Greenleaf seemed to be settling-in to the life of a successful, self-sufficient community. However, Greenleaf also had ties to the larger national community. Actions occurring in this sphere were to have some detrimental effects on Greenleaf during the first quarter of the new century.

### III. ECONOMIC DECLINE

When discussing the economic decline of a community, it is tempting to the writer to fall into a strict cause and effect framework. Both growth and decline are complicated, multi-faceted occurrences, potentially warranting a complete, in-depth analysis in their own right.

With this as a qualifier, it appears that there were two major factors working together in the early 1900's to initiate decline in Greenleaf.

During this period, the Industrial Revolution was under full-swing in the United States. Family fortunes that had been made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through agriculture and railroad enterprises were now poured into developing industry.

Armed with the necessary capital, the industrial entrepreneurs sought locations to build. Prime sites were those cities possessing access to energy sources, freight transportation, and massive pockets of labor.

Thus, industry tended to agglomerate in the Northeastern states and in some heavily populated Midwestern cities with both water and rail access, such as Cincinnati, Omaha, and Kansas City. Communities such as Greenleaf were unable to compete in securing home industries.

As these industrial centers were identified, they began to lure many workers away from the smaller towns with the promise of



jobs, enhanced by the aura of sophisticated "Big City" life. This attraction for the industrial cities gathered momentum after World War I, as many returning veterans found these cities more appealing, given their recent international exposure. As a popular song of that era stated, "How can you keep them down on the farm, after they've seen Paree?".

The second factor initiating decline in Greenleaf was of a direct nature. In 1925, Missouri Pacific Railroad made the decision to designate Concordia as its end division, relocating the roundhouse there. Justified by Missouri Pacific as a cost-cutting move, the decision appears to have been influenced by a rash of railroad strikes in the Greenleaf area at the time.

With only freight and passenger stops remaining in Greenleaf, Missouri Pacific only required a skeleton crew to work the station. All but a handful of employees were transferred to Concordia, Atchison, or St. Joseph, Missouri. Almost over night, Greenleaf lost approximately half its population.

This loss of population had a further effect on decline. With over half of the spending power removed from the community, several businesses and service providers had no choice but to leave Greenleaf for larger towns with an economic base capable of supporting their enterprises. As businesses left Greenleaf, fewer workers could be employed locally, and additional people left to seek new jobs in more promising locations.

This additional loss of businesses and workers further diminished Greenleaf's ability to attract home industry. Local farms and the Coop grain elevators continued to thrive, but their needs for additional labor were minimal.

By 1950, the population of Greenleaf had shrunk from its 1890's peak of 1100, to 651. A further decline to 600 persons was recorded by the Census Bureau in 1960.

Almost adding insult to injury, passenger service to Greenleaf was discontinued by Missouri Pacific in November, 1960. A previous attempt to cut this service had been thwarted a few years earlier when the citizens submitted a petition to the Interstate Commerce Commission, and service was retained to Atchison.<sup>1</sup>

The population had further declined to 468 persons by 1970; the future of Greenleaf seemed doomed to that of a railroad-abandoned ghost town.

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<sup>1</sup>Pearl Cox, "Ecology of Greenleaf, Kansas."



#### IV. EFFORTS TO SAVE THE COMMUNITY

The citizens of Greenleaf realized that some immediate measures were necessary to avoid this pending fate. Largely through the efforts of Gary Padgett, third generation town banker, the community turned to planning and economic development tactics to ward-off further decline. The years 1971-1973 were to become the turning-point for the future of Greenleaf.

Realizing that any businesses or industries considering a small town location would closely examine the bank, both in terms of assets as well as an indicator of the structural condition of the community, Padgett initiated redevelopment with the construction of a new bank building. (See Figure 4.)

This physical sign of optimism regarding the town's future was accompanied by the formation of The Greenleaf Development Company, Inc., in 1972, as "a profit corporation organized to foster orderly growth of the trade area."<sup>1</sup> The goal of the corporation was to develop capital to attract new businesses to the community and was initiated with \$25,000 in investments by approximately 140 local stockholders. The Company was qualified as a local development corporation through the Small Business Administration (SBA).

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<sup>1</sup>"Greenleaf Development Company, Inc.," Greenleaf, 1973. (Typewritten): 1.

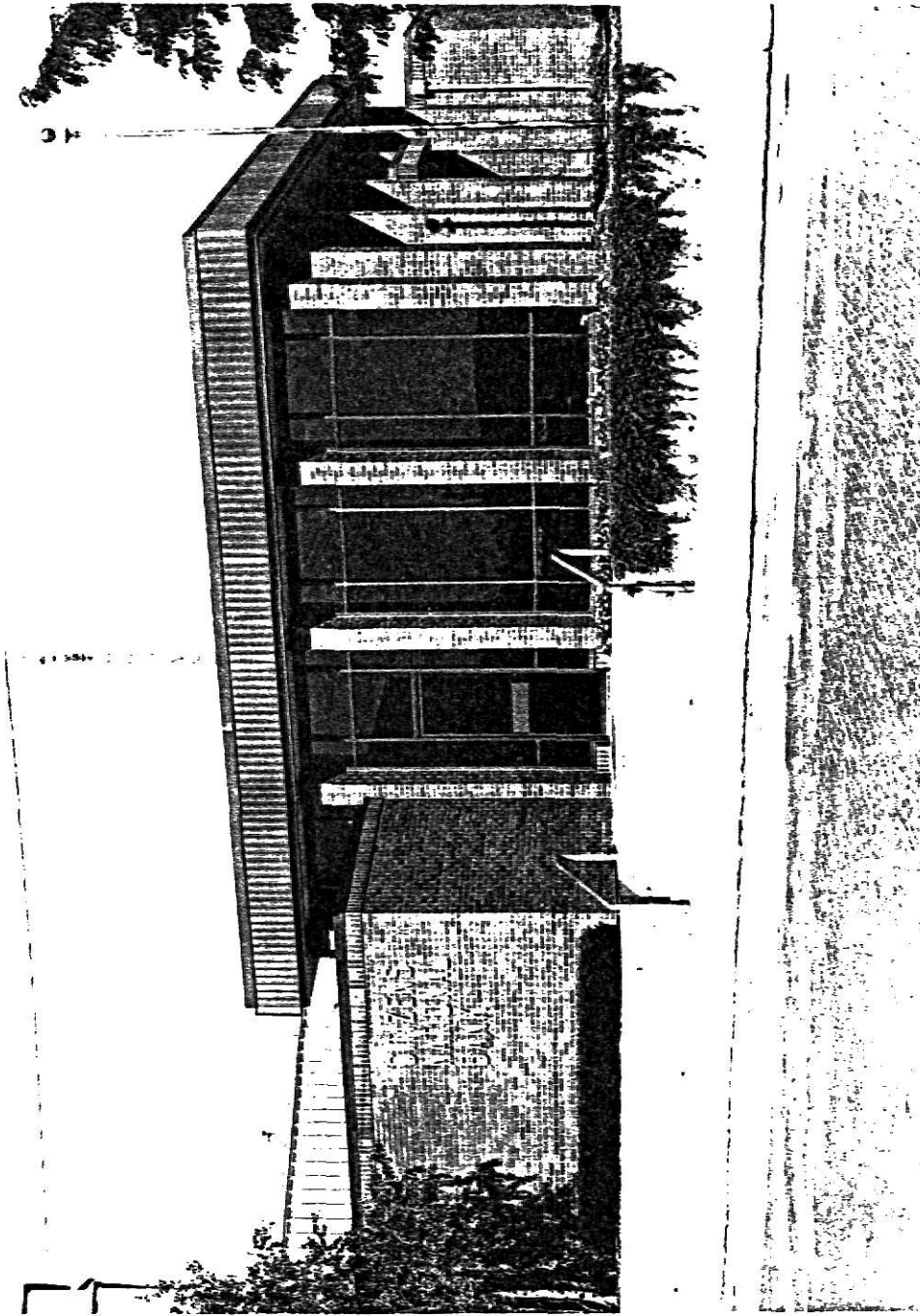


Fig. 4. The Citizens National Bank

Various committees were established during this period to coordinate redevelopment activities.

A Planning Commission was established to direct future growth. John O'Connell, a Kansas State University graduate student in Regional and Community Planning, assisted in the preparation of a sketch plan and a zoning ordinance. These efforts to regulate community development resulted in Greenleaf receiving the 1973 Blue Ribbon Award for Community Planning from the Kansas Department of Economic Development (KDED).

The Greenleaf Housing Authority was established for the purpose of attempting to secure federally subsidized elderly housing units through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Turnkey Program. This goal was not realized at this time due to the moratorium on low-income housing subsidies, adopted as policy by the Nixon administration, in 1972.

Enhancing the beauty of the community was the functional goal of the Greenleaf Tree Committee. Assistance in developing suitable tree stock was obtained through Kansas State University's Community Forestry Program. With the cooperation of the Garden Club, an active drive was undertaken to maintain existing shrubbery and flower beds.

In the Fall of 1971, Greenleaf joined the PRIDE program. Sponsored by the Kansas Department of Economic Development, PRIDE, the acronym for Programming Resources with Initiative for Development Effectiveness, is a program to encourage communities in the state to identify their problems and enhance their opportunities. The PRIDE Steering Committee instigated participation

to develop community spirit and citizen involvement to retain Greenleaf as a strong, vibrant community.

PRIDE participants compete in categories with communities of similar sizes for cash prizes and recognition awards. For its efforts, Greenleaf won first place for the years 1972 and 1973.

The catalytic event for actualizing these PRIDE-initiated goals was the decision to construct a municipal swimming pool. An \$80,000 bond issue was passed and fund raising activities were held to supplement this. The olympic-sized pool was opened in 1972.

Additional fund-raising activities were held for the construction of a ball park, complete with refreshment facilities and viewing stands. (See Figure 8.)

These accomplishments in the 1971-1973 period reflect a degree of success that any community would view with pride. This success becomes phenomenal with the knowledge that these various undertakings were instigated by a community with a population of less than 500.

Characteristic of all community development programs, the catalytic group tended to be a small percentage of residents. What enters as a rather unique factor is the comparatively large percentage of Greenleaf residents who supported these initial goals and carried them through to the implementation stage. The residents of Greenleaf had a strong sense of community and the drive to participate totally in their own success story.

This 1971-1973 period also witnessed a modest growth trend for Greenleaf with the acquisition of four new businesses and a small population increase. As this transitory period came to a

Fig. 5. Architectural Sketch of Greenleaf Recreational Area and Swimming Pool

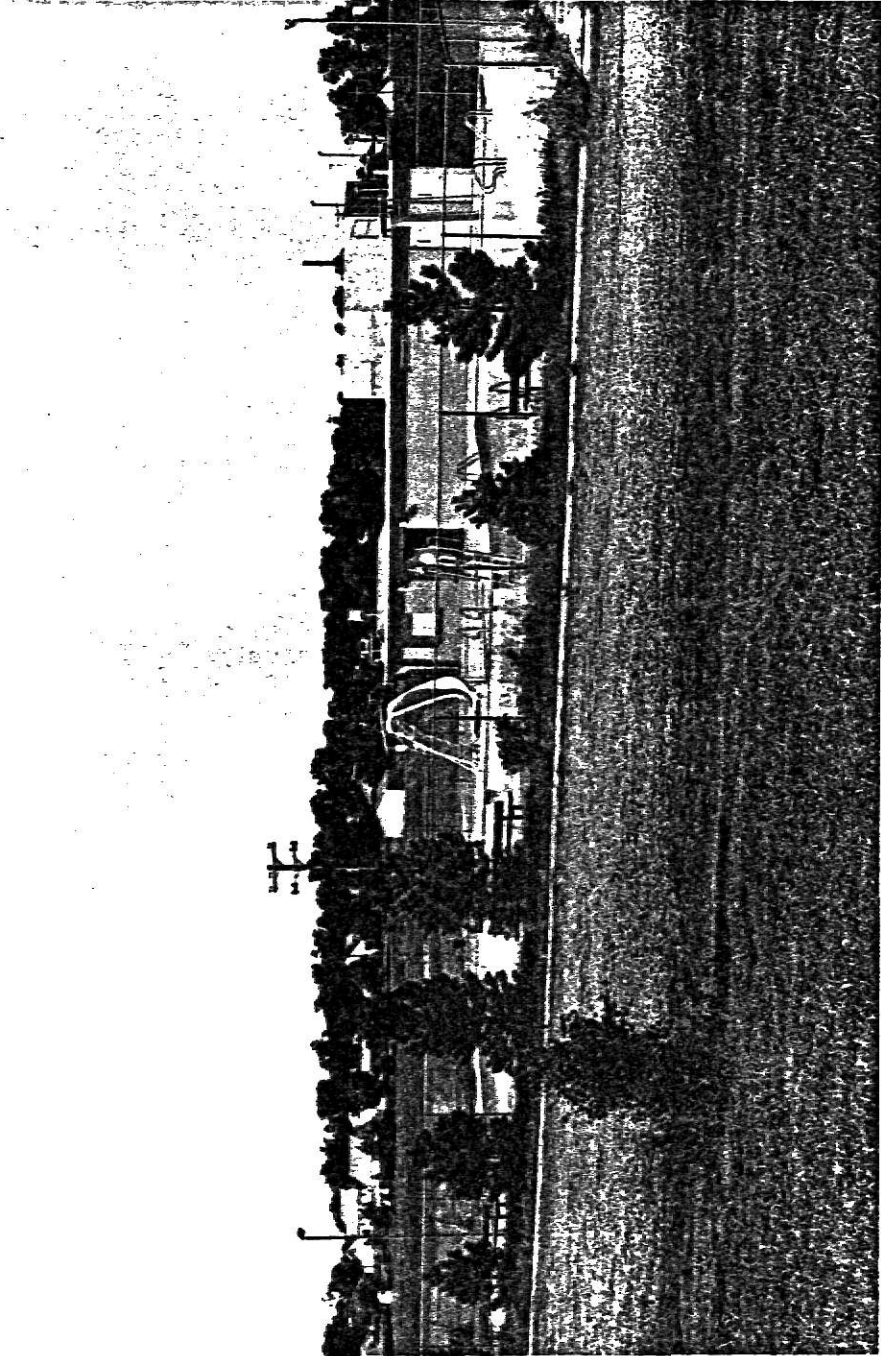


Fig. 6. Greenleaf Swimming Pool



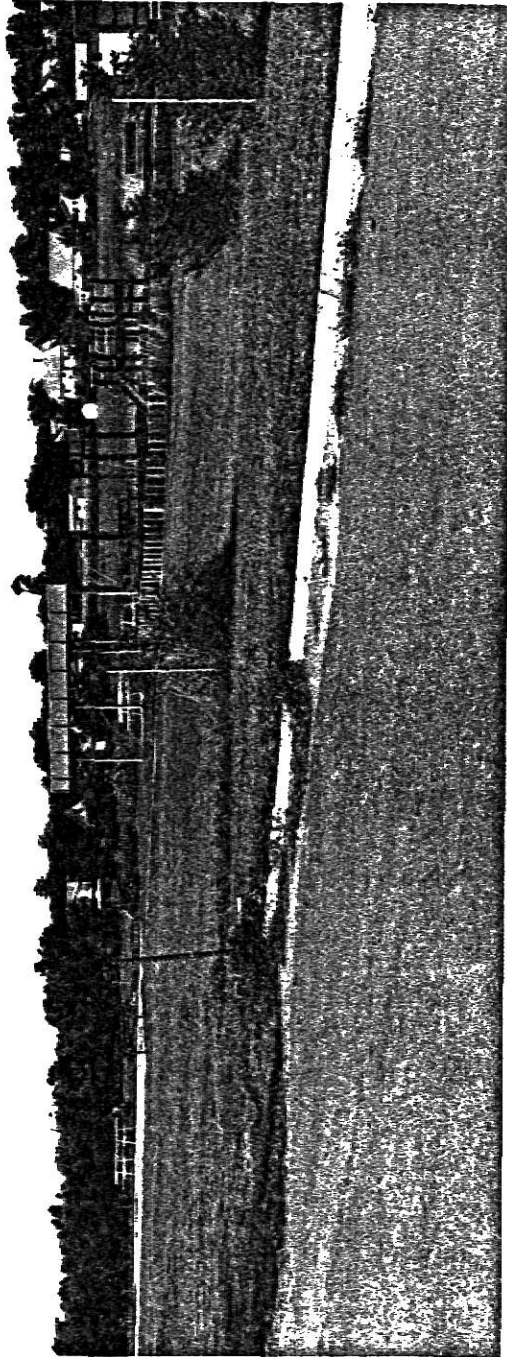


Fig. 7. Greenleaf Recreational Area

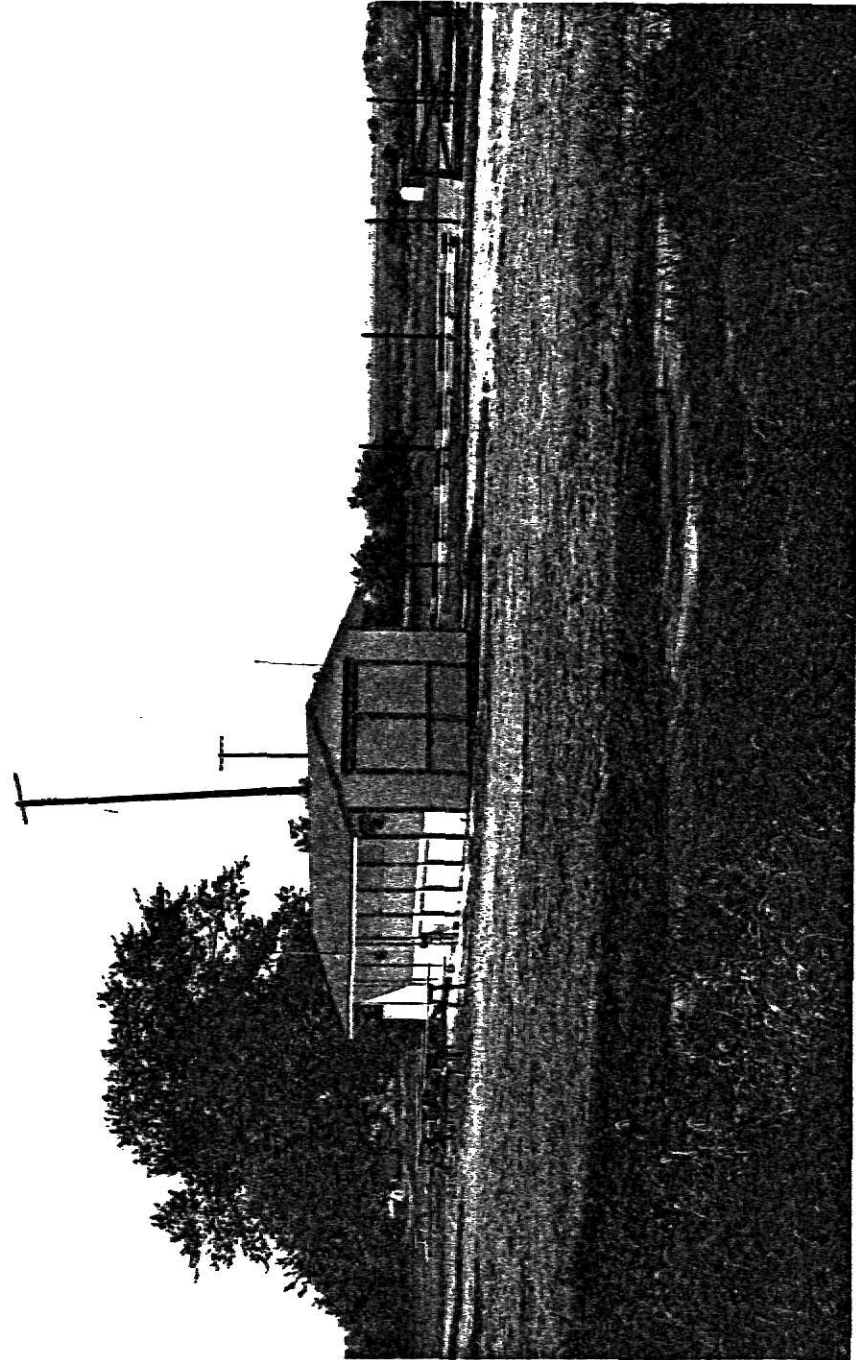


Fig. 3. Ballpark and Refreshment Stand



close, Greenleaf seemed well on its way to defying the statistical probabilities of small town demise. However, development was interrupted by a disaster that virtually destroyed the community, and required all the sense of community that the residents could muster to sustain their hope.

## V. DESTRUCTION OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE DECISION TO RE-BUILD

25 September 1973, was to have been the day that the recently developed zoning ordinance was to have been implemented. But with an irony that only Mother Nature can display, a disaster was to occur that left the need for such a growth management technique unnecessary.

Throughout the afternoon, a series of severe thunderstorms had passed through the area. Several neighboring communities had suffered some subsequent damage, but Greenleaf had been spared in this initial onslaught.

Towards dusk, a light rain had resumed, deceptive in intensity of what was to follow. At approximately 8:40 P.M., the residents of Greenleaf were startled out of their evening routines by the sounds of car horns blaring up and down several streets. Two men who farmed south of town had spotted a funnel cloud approaching Greenleaf. Jumping into their trucks, they raced the storm into town and attempted to warn their neighbors of what was approaching. Their heroic effort, reminiscent of Paul Revere's ride, is credited with saving the community from a large loss of lives.

The tornado ripped through Greenleaf, leaving two children dead and several people injured. Structural damage was immense, including the total destruction of forty businesses and seventy-six homes. An additional eighty homes, the elementary school,

fire station, and city hall had sustained major damage. Forty homes reported minor damages, 200 cars were either destroyed or had received major damage, while an additional forty cars had received minor damages.

The tornado had also ruptured one of the Coop's anhydrous ammonia tanks, resulting in the residents being evacuated to an outlying church for the remainder of the evening.

As the shocked residents gathered to assess the damages, it was realized that some immediate action would be necessary for Greenleaf to survive. For the tornado had destroyed the CBD area, including such necessary businesses as the two grocery stores.

Within hours following the storm the business leaders of the community were meeting to assess damage to the community. With this information in hand it was apparent our goals must be as follows, to wit:

- (1) Obtain housing for those people whose homes were destroyed.
- (2) Construct Temporary Business facilities for businesses no longer in existence.
- (3) Conserve all insurance proceeds of businesses and homeowners as they were a prerequisite for rebuilding.
- (4) Plan for orderly rebuilding of the commercial district.
- (5) Plan for orderly regrowth of residential district.<sup>1</sup>

The Greenleaf Development Company, Inc., became the catalytic group for initiating these recovery goals. Several efforts were begun simultaneously to re-build the town.

In the first few days following the tornado, representatives from various federal agencies visited Greenleaf to inform the residents of available funding to assist them in reaching these reconstruction goals.

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<sup>1</sup>"Greenleaf Development Company, Inc.," Greenleaf, 1973. (Typewritten): 1.

It was learned that under the Federal Disaster Law, mobile homes could be provided for one year to those homeowners whose residences had been destroyed. However, the pads for the mobile homes and utility hook-ups were the responsibility of the various homeowners. Fearing that this expense would be a detriment to home reconstruction, while destroying all efforts to zone the community, the Development Company made the decision to become the owners and administrators of the mobile home park. Seventeen mobile home sites were constructed with no rent charged during the first year. This encouraged the homeowners to conserve their insurance monies for the purpose of rebuilding their own homes. In an effort to enhance the aesthetics of the park, the Development Company also constructed two large television antennas, precluding the need for individual antenna of varying sizes and types, on the individual mobile homes. (See Figures 9 and 10.)

Characteristic of rural communities, Greenleaf has a large percentage of elderly. Left homeless by the tornado, many of these older citizens did not have the financial ability to supplement insurance monies nor did they have the desire to rebuild. To solve the long term housing needs of these citizens, the Housing Authority again applied for federal assistance to subsidize construction. At this time, the moratorium on subsidized housing was still in effect. Senator Bob Dole was instrumental in securing this funding. Dole appealed to Congress for special consideration to be given to Greenleaf's request, as part of the community's overall disaster relief effort. On 31 October 1973, HUD awarded \$500,000 to the Greenleaf Housing Authority through the Turnkey Program. Twenty elderly housing units were subsequently constructed. (See Figures 11 and 12.)

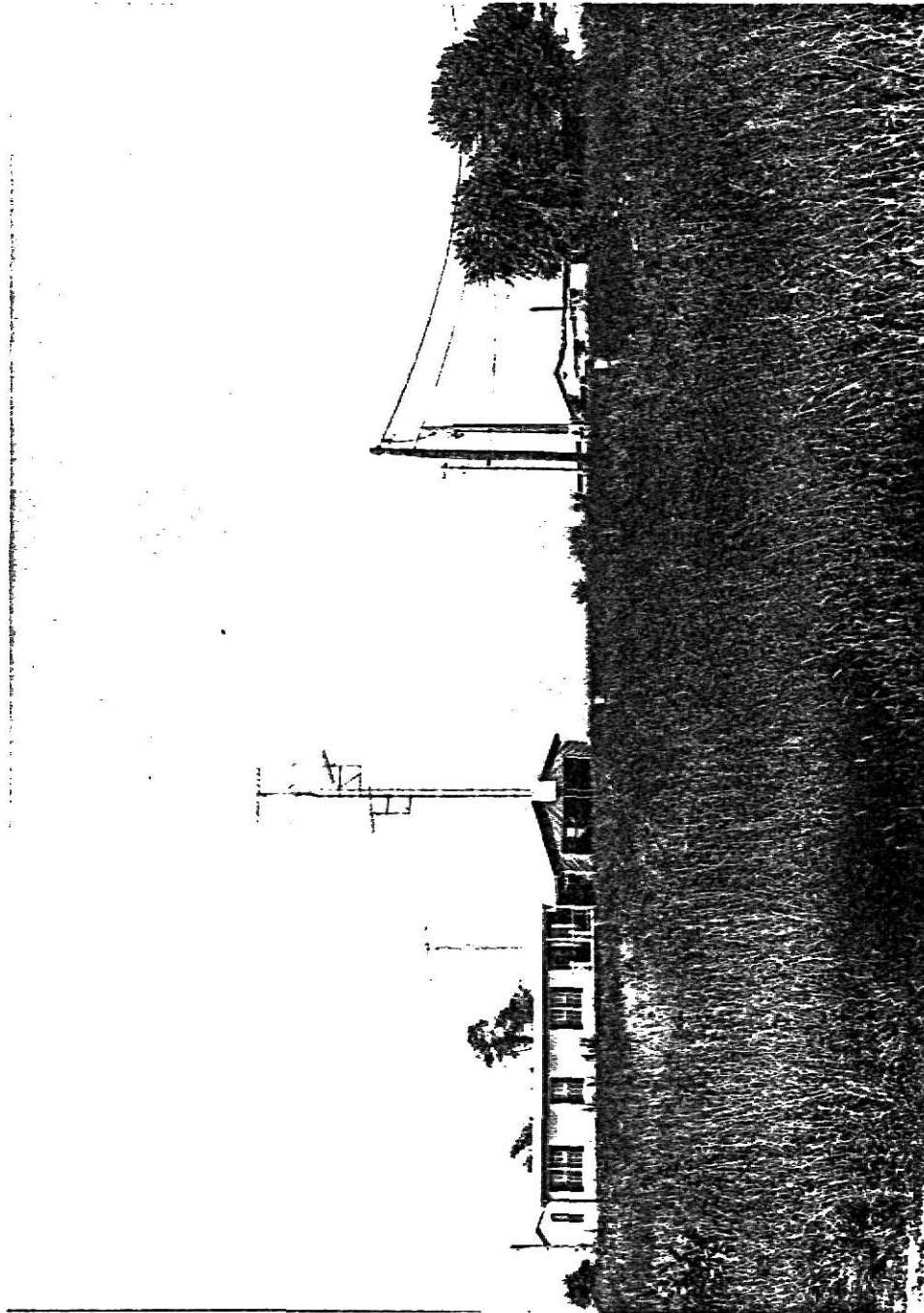


Fig. 9. Post-Tornado Mobile Home Site



Fig. 10. Post-Tornado Mobile Home Site

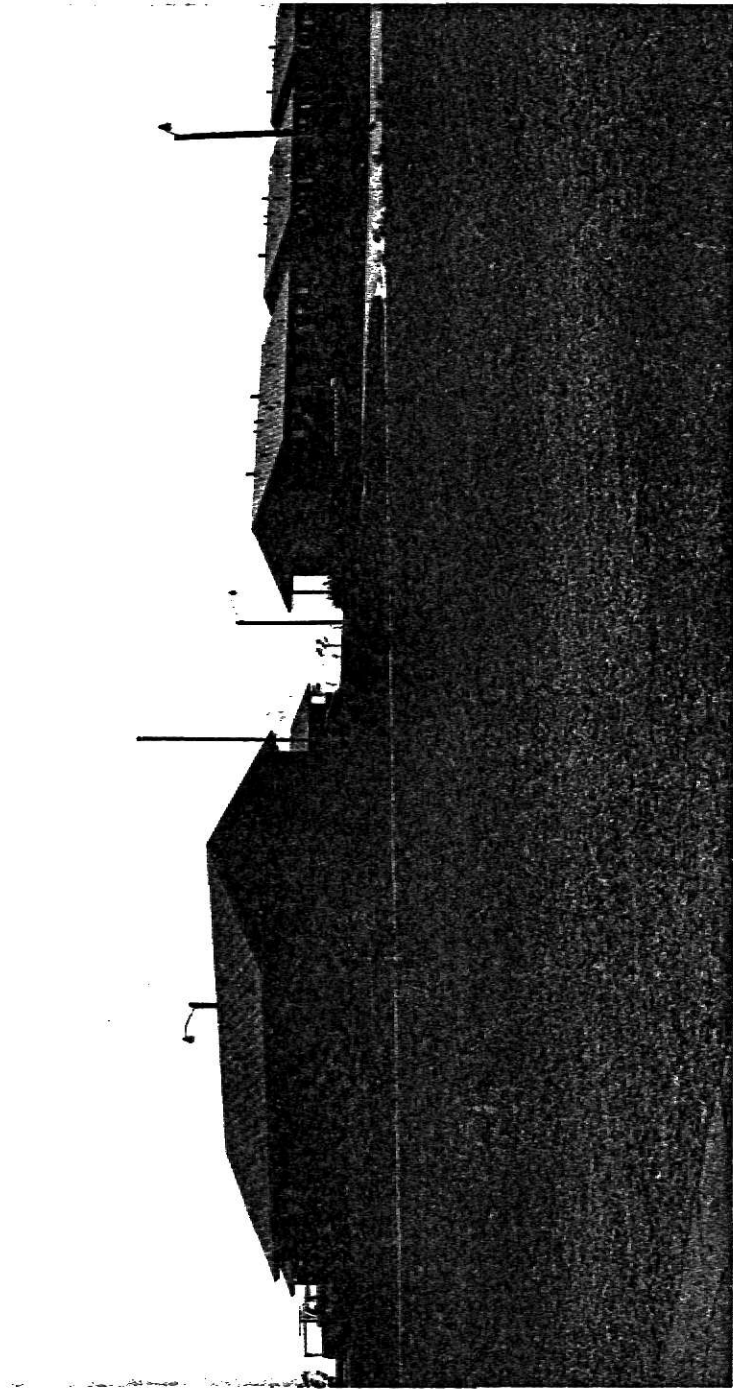


Fig. 11. Greenleaf Elderly Housing Site





Some immediate actions had also been taken to aid the commercial sector. Within hours after the tornado, Phil Coolidge, a Topeka architect and acquaintance of Padgett's, arrived at Greenleaf to assist in the reconstruction decisions. It was at this time that the idea of re-designing the downtown was born.

Coolidge and several of the business people reviewed the structural damage and the alternatives for reconstruction of the downtown. It became apparent that limited insurance monies, given the need for full reconstruction, would prohibit the construction of free-standing separate business locations comparable to those existing prior to the tornado. An enclosed shopping mall was deemed as the optimal solution. While deferring construction costs for some merchants remaining in the community, this structural concept would offer cost saving locational advantages to new businesses and services choosing to locate in Greenleaf.

Architectural fees for the mall, designed by Phil Coolidge, were funded from an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant. A site was selected and the Development Company began buying property from the individual owners, with the assistance of a Small Business Administration (SBA) grant.

It was realized that to keep the businesses in Greenleaf until construction of the Center was completed, some temporary structures were necessary. The Development Company directors made the decision to secure metal buildings to temporarily house the Farmer's Grocery Store, a restaurant, the attorney's office, and the Mansfield Insurance Agency. A mobile home was also provided for the dentist's office.

The community facilities were gradually repaired and the Tree Committee began the process of replacing trees. Approximately sixty-five percent of the town's trees had been destroyed by the tornado. Several neighboring communities and organizations donated money for the purchase of trees to Greenleaf, supplementing the generous donations of several community residents.

Greenleaf had survived a disaster that could have resulted in the end of the town's existence. The outstanding factor in the community's favor was the large scale organizational framework that existed prior to the storm. Planning and economic development were deeply engrained in Greenleaf and these tools were transferred to the goal of survival with little difficulty.

The sense of community displayed by the residents of Greenleaf cannot be emphasized enough. These people had a deep faith in themselves and a commitment to their community. Although generous assistance was received from various federal and state agencies, it was the local community structure that coordinated and implemented recovery efforts to their successful conclusion.

To bolster morale throughout this period, several community social activities were held, thanking neighbors and friends for all the unselfish support and encouragement.

During the Summer of 1974, a tornado ravaged the neighboring community of Blue Rapids. Several Greenleaf residents took time out from their own recovery efforts and went to Blue Rapids to assist in the clean-up process.

Greenleaf is a community in the true sense of the word!

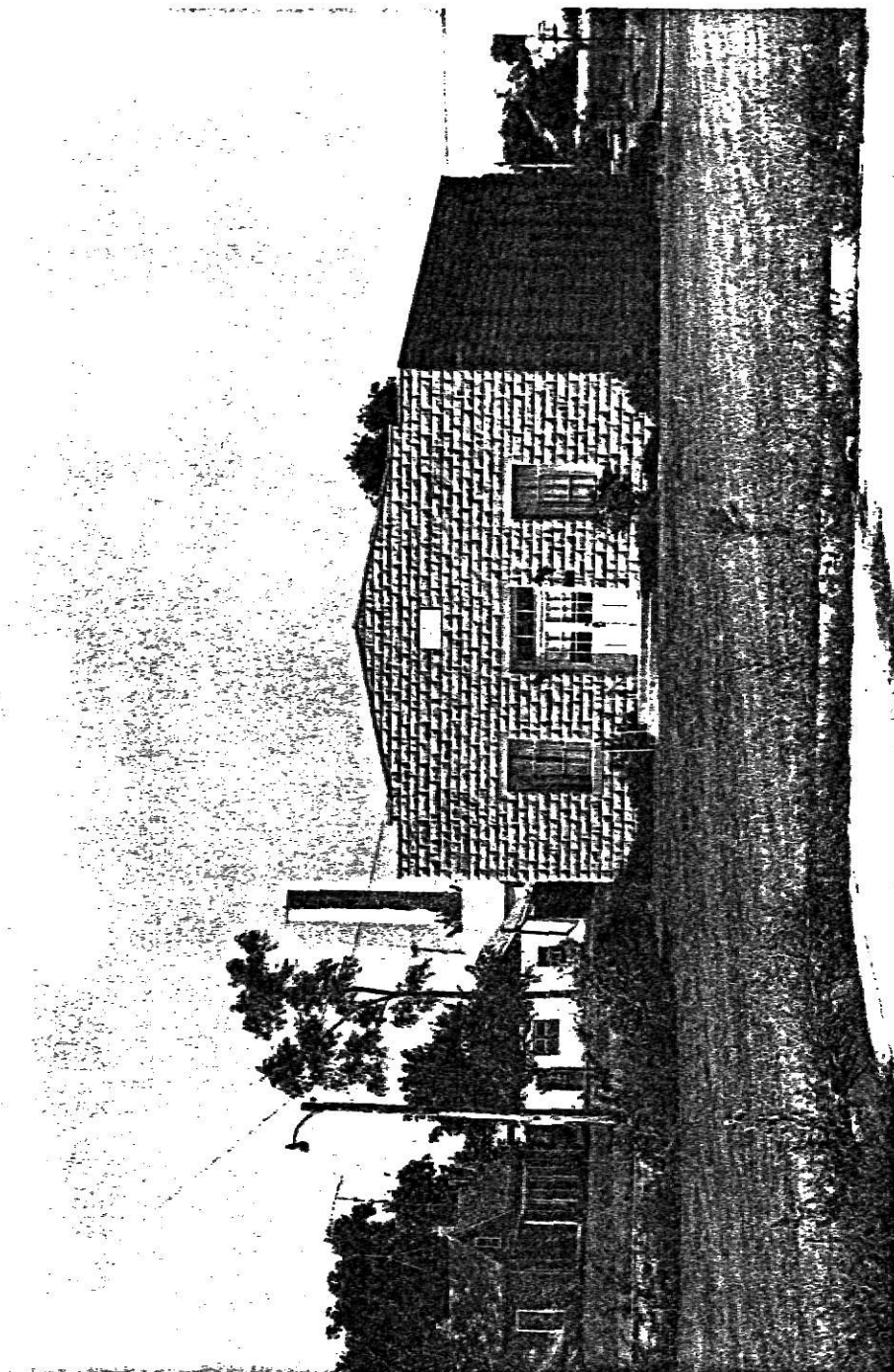


Fig. 13. Community Center

## VI. THE GREENLEAF CENTER AND THE RECONSTRUCTED CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

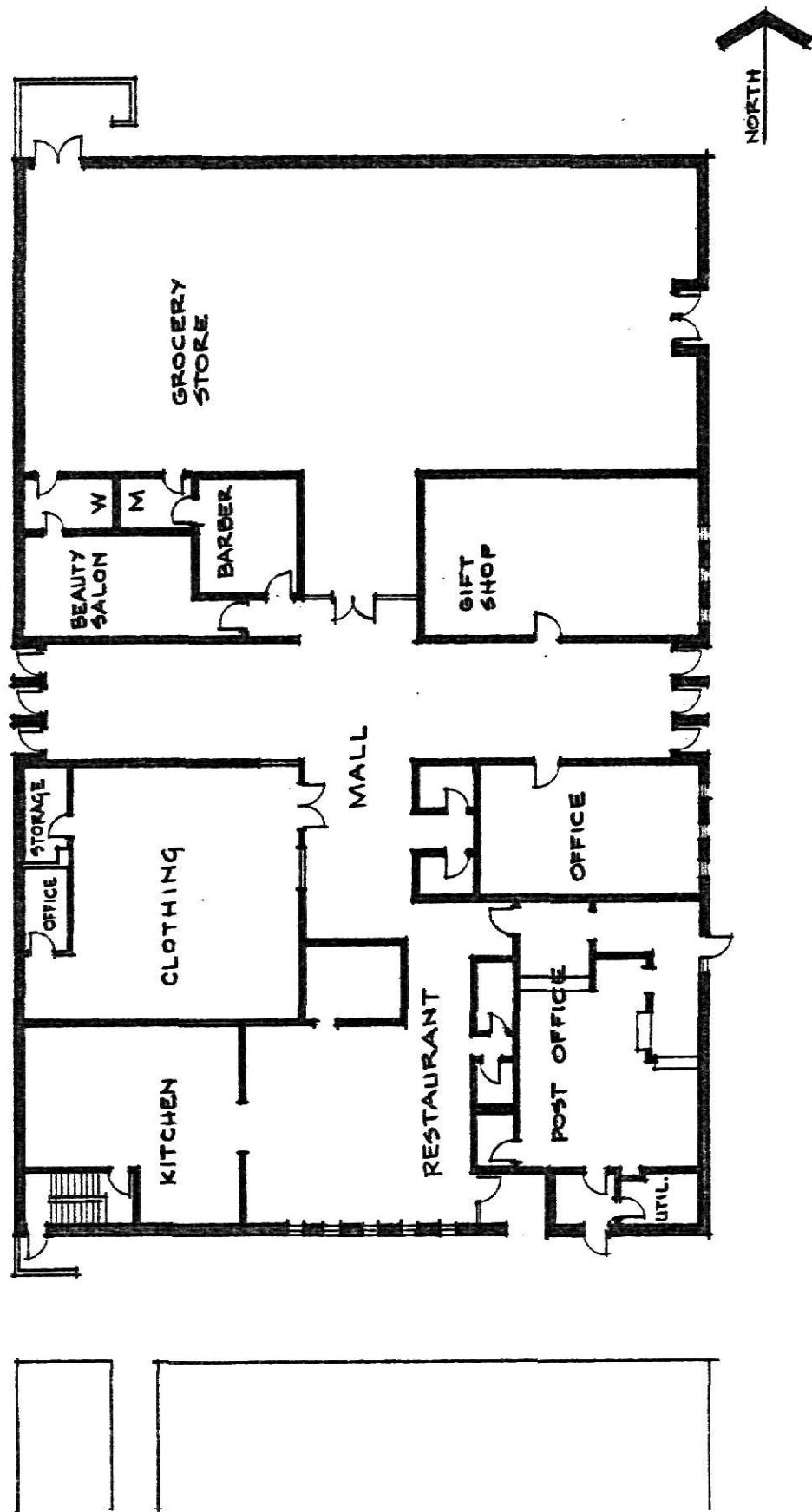
Constructed by Johnson Brothers, of Salina, the Greenleaf Center held its Grand Opening on 25 September 1975, the second anniversary of the tornado.

Figure 14 depicts the Center in its present operative status. Figure 15 shows the present Greenleaf CBD, and Figure 16 refers to the pre-tornado CBD. These depictions of the Greenleaf business structures are included as a pictorial description to aid the reader in the ensuing discussion.

The Center was originally conceived as a cost-cutting design, through shared overhead expenses, to house ten of the pre-tornado businesses and services. However, at the time of its opening, the Center contained two businesses and three services that had been located in the CBD prior to the storm, two businesses new to the community, one service provider new to the CBD, and one empty space. The restaurant, although not new to the CBD as a type of business, was opened under new management.

As indicated in Figure 15 and Figure 16, the tornado and subsequent construction of the Greenleaf Center not only changed the physical complexion of the block and one-half comprising the CBD, but also promoted some major changes in the composition of CBD businesses.

Prior to the tornado, there were thirty-two free-standing commercial structures in the Greenleaf CBD. Of these buildings,



**GREENLEAF CENTER  
MAIN FLOOR PLAN**

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

DENTIST AND LAWYER'S  
OFFICES ARE ON THE  
LOWER LEVEL.

Figure 14: Greenleaf Center

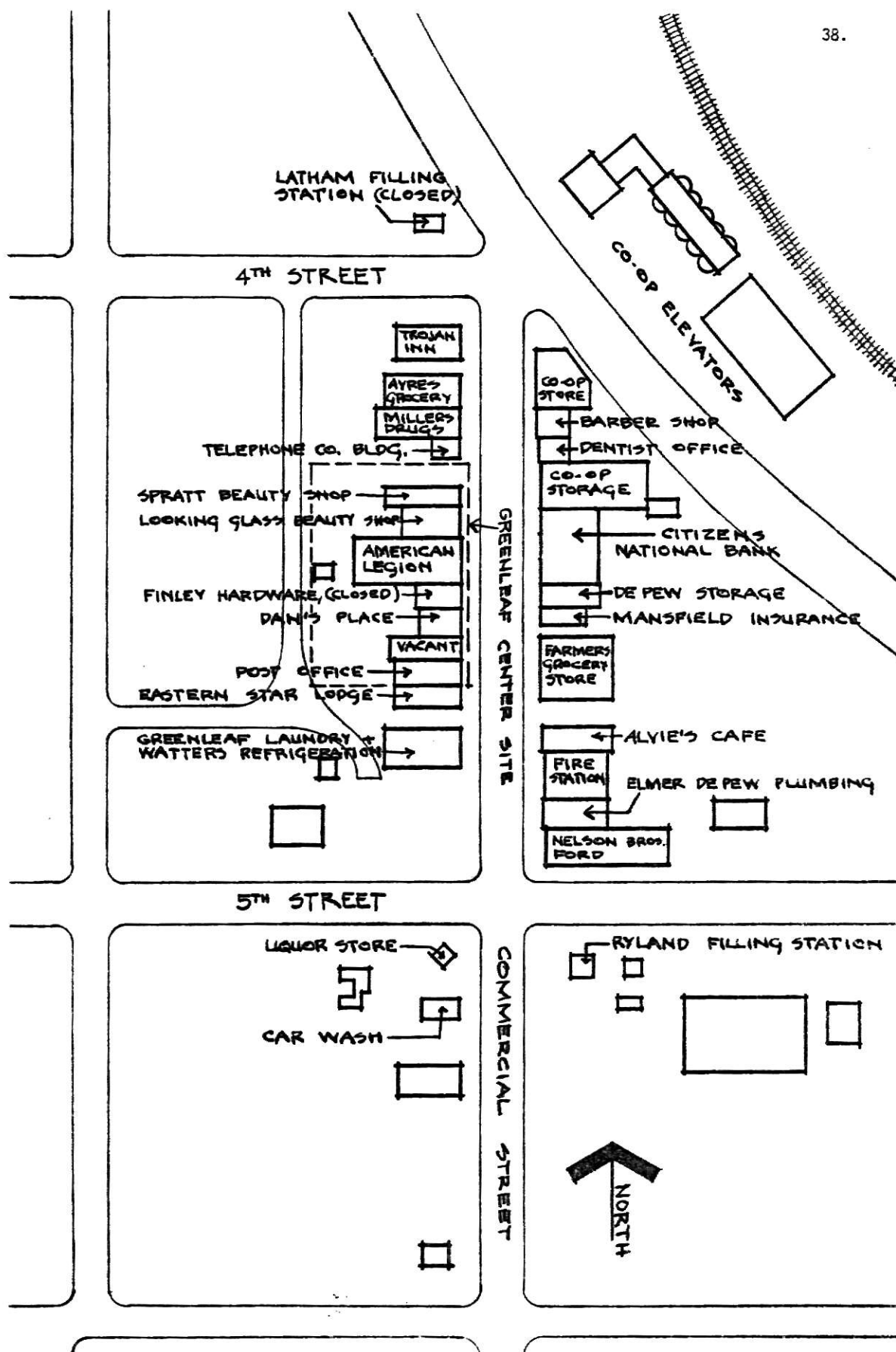


Figure 15: Pre-tornado Central Business District





Fig. 16. Aerial View of Greenleaf CBD

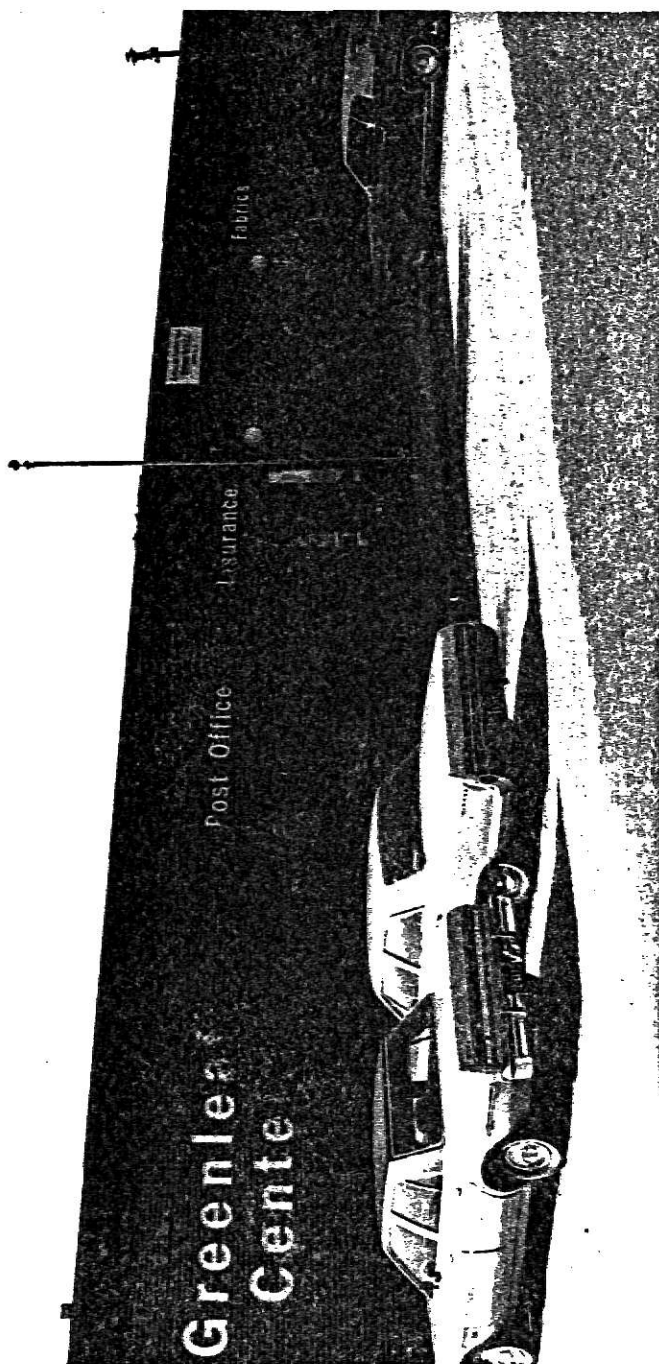


Fig. 17. Greenleaf Center--Front





Fig. 13. Greenleaf Center--Interior

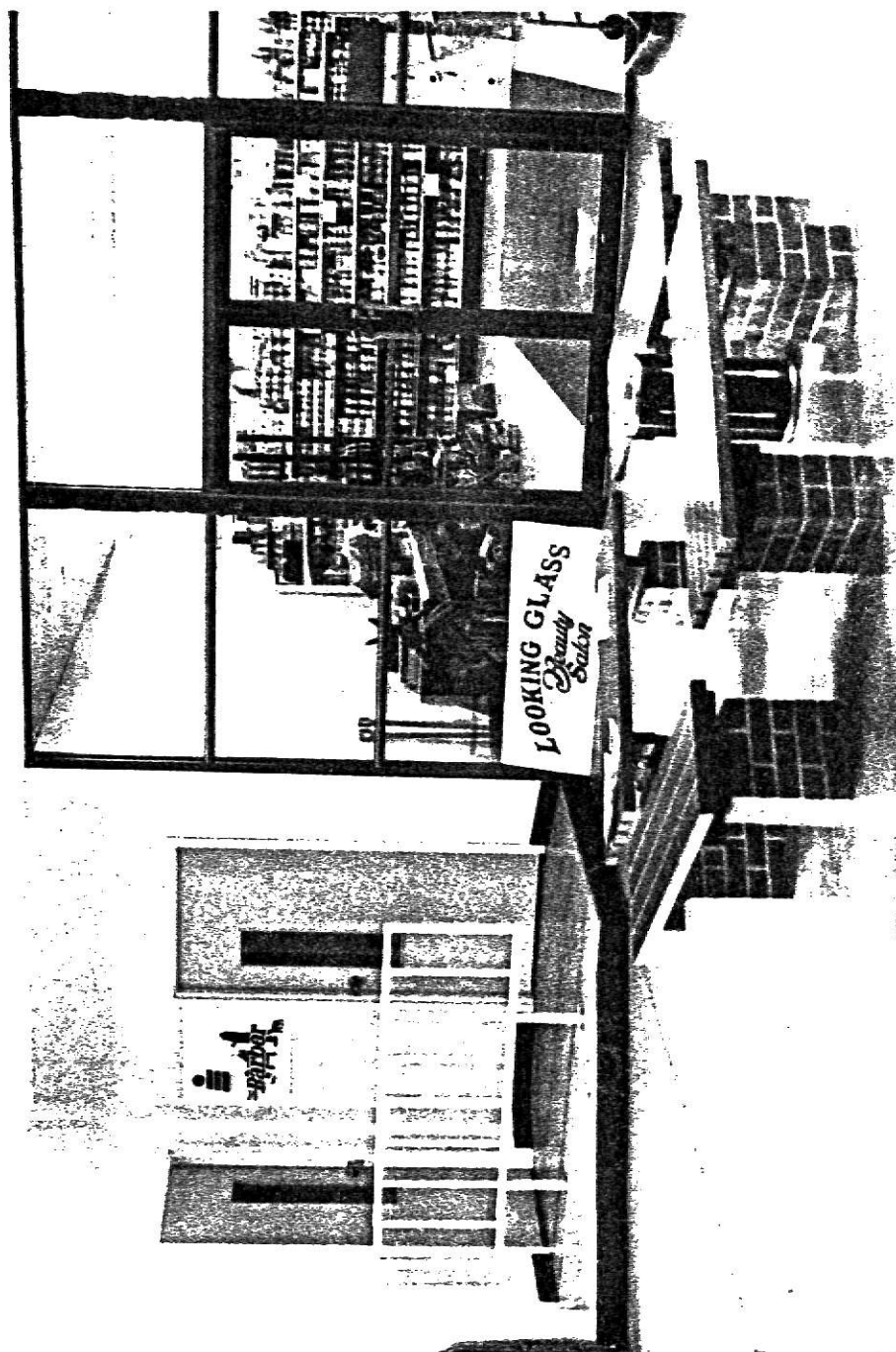


Fig. 19. Greenleaf Center--Interior

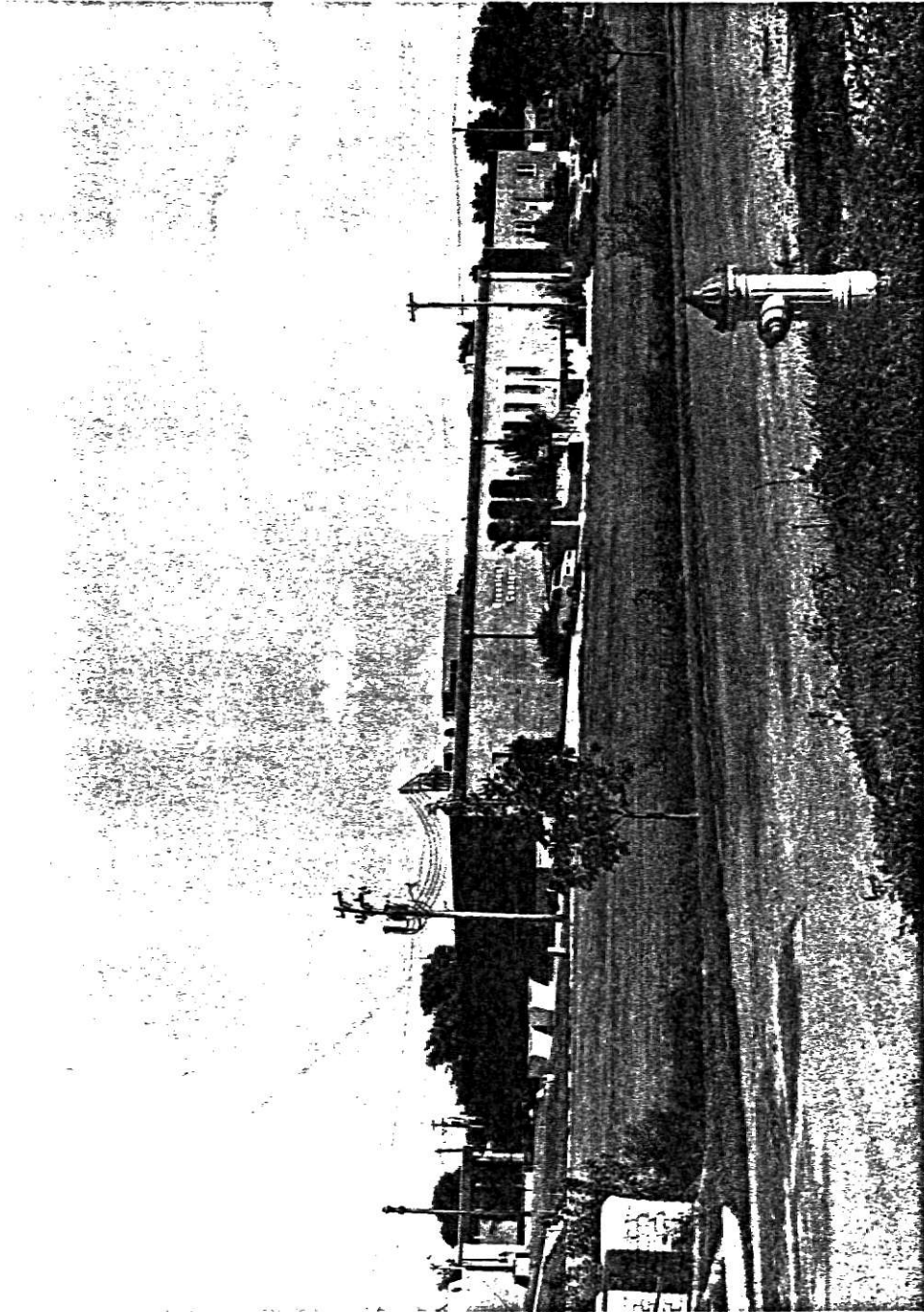


Fig. 20. Greenleaf Center--Rear

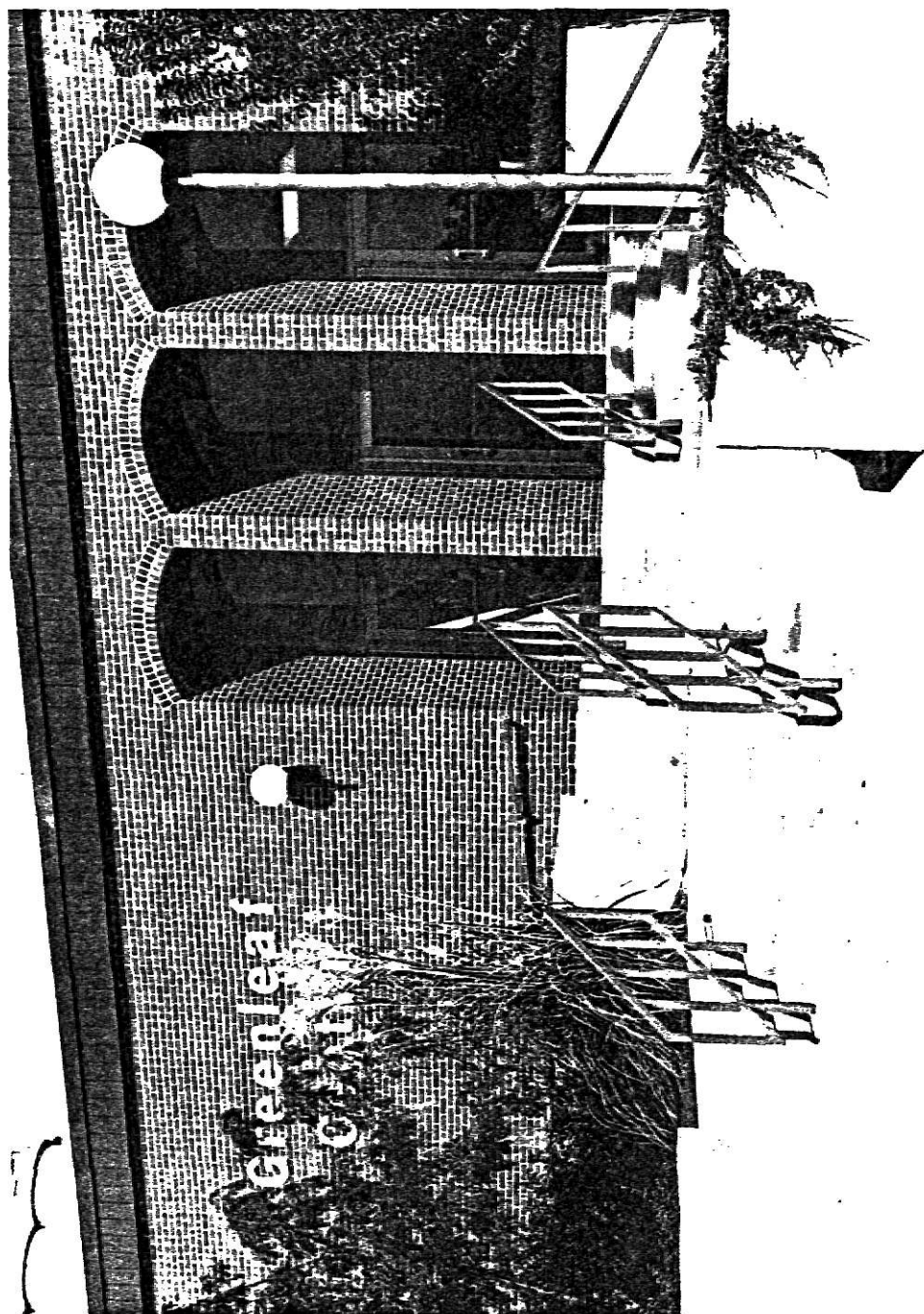


Fig. 21. Greenleaf Center--Rear

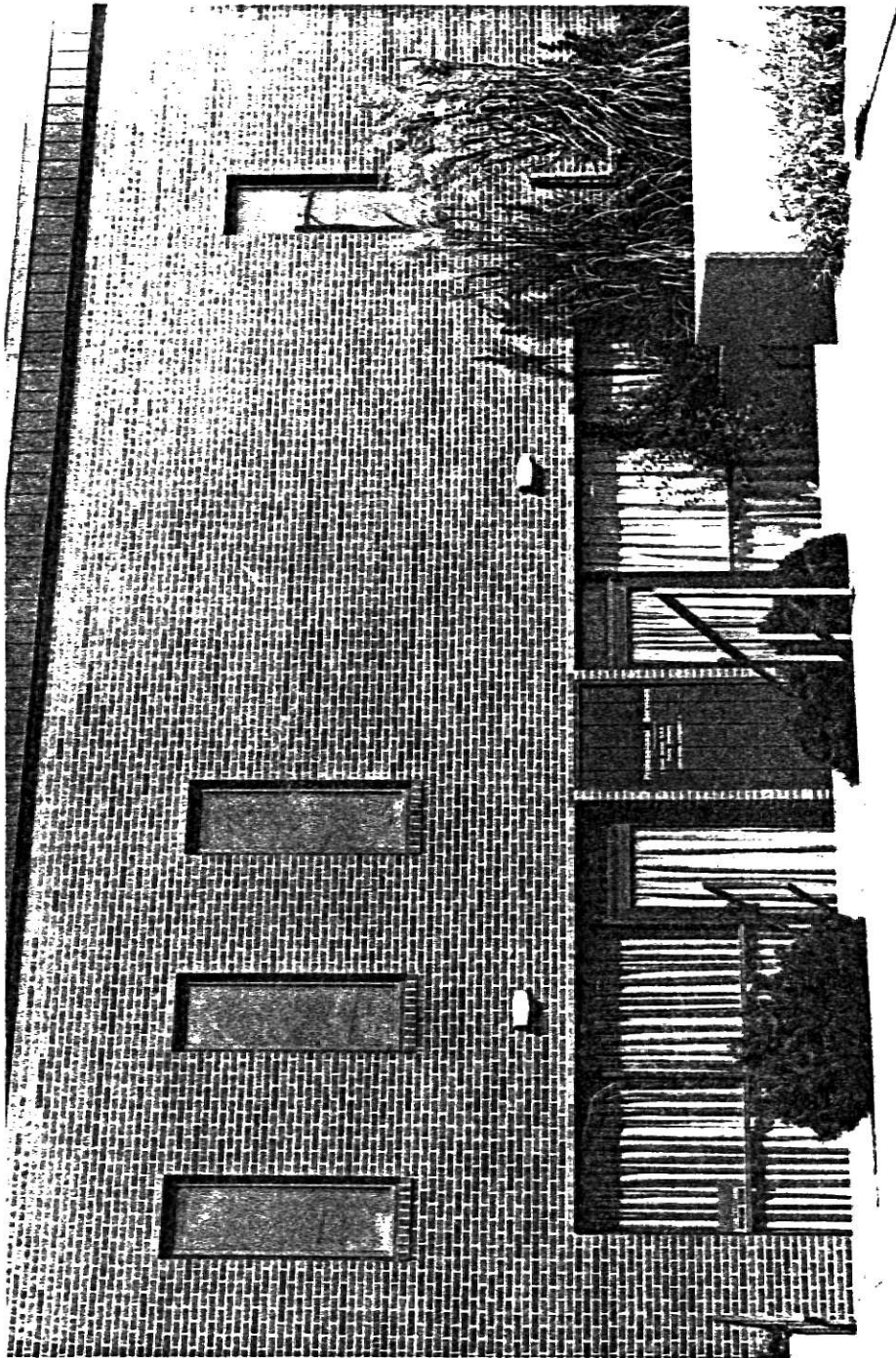


Fig. 22. Greenleaf Center---Rear



three were vacant due to closed businesses, four were used solely for storage, and three were organizational lodges. Of the twenty-two businesses and services operating at the time of the tornado, four of these entered the Center, eleven retained their original structures or relocated independently of the Center, and seven did not re-open after the storm.

The Looking Glass Beauty Shop was operated outside of the CBD area immediately after the tornado and moved to the Center in September, 1978.

As part of the previous study, The Impact of the Greenleaf, Kansas, Shopping Center, conducted by the author and Tom Burdett, in the Spring of 1978, interviews were conducted with the nine Center merchants and service providers. The main purpose of this research was to ascertain whether:

1. The Center had influenced the decision of the pre-tornado businesses and services to remain operative in Greenleaf.
2. The Center location had had an effect on the amount of business they received.
3. The decision to construct the Center had influenced the new businesses and services to locate in Greenleaf.

Due to its nature, the Post Office's continued tenure in Greenleaf was not applicable in these findings.

Those businesses and services located in Greenleaf prior to the tornado were The Farmers Grocery Store, the barber shop, the dentist, and the attorney. Both the grocery store and the barber had not been influenced by the Center in making the decision to remain in Greenleaf, nor had they noted any change in the number of customers. Greenleaf had had a dentist prior to the tornado,

but Dr. N. G. McGrath, a community leader in his own right, had died before the Center opened. The new dentist stated that his decision to locate his practice in Greenleaf had been influenced by the Center. The attorney also had considered the construction of the Center in locating his practice in Greenleaf and had been originally housed in a metal building upon his arrival.

The new businesses, Pam's Nook & Hanger, the restaurant, and the gift shop, all opened as a direct result of the Center. These local business people had not considered initiating their enterprises prior to the tornado.

The insurance company, managed by former Mayor, Matt Uhlik, had been operating prior to the tornado in his residence. Mr. Uhlik, who had been mayor for eleven years, including the 1973-1975 period of reconstruction, made the decision to relocate his company in the CBD as a direct result of the Center's inception.

To compliment these previous findings, research was conducted to determine the various reasons that the six merchants who did not re-open after the tornado had made their decisions. Interviews were conducted with four of these merchants in the Summer of 1979. Due to the wide array of reasons, these businesses will be discussed individually.

#### Trojan Inn

Two days before the tornado, Susan DeMars had closed the doors of her restaurant. She and her husband each had other jobs and had lost interest in this business venture. Their intent was to rent the Inn for dances and private parties.

They were approached about relocating in the Center, but due to their previous decision, they opted to remain closed, and have moved away from Greenleaf.

#### Ayres Grocery

This store had been operated as a family business for sixty-seven years at the time of the tornado. Originally, the Ayres' had also run a meat packing plant, but this closed in 1963.

Mr. and Mrs. Ayres were approached about relocating in the Center. Although there had been enough business for both grocery stores to maintain a profit margin prior to the tornado, the Ayres were skeptical whether, given reconstruction costs, this profit could be sustained for two grocers.

When the Farmer's Grocery made the decision to continue business, first in a metal building and then in the Center, the Ayres decided to remain closed. This decision was also influenced by their ages and reconstruction costs.

#### Ryland Filling Station and Car Wash

Murle Ryland had operated his filling station as an independent Vickers dealer for thirty-five years. The Car Wash was a more recent venture.

Due to his declining health, Mr. Ryland had been slowly decreasing the automotive services of his station since the Spring of 1973 and had considered putting the businesses up for sale. When the tornado destroyed his businesses that Fall, Ryland opted for retirement.



### Millers Drug

This business had been in operation since 1912. In its early years, it had been franchised as a Rexall Store. The original Mr. Miller had been the druggist, but upon his death in 1947, his son discontinued the pharmacy.

Mrs. Miller stated that for a number of years prior to the tornado, Rexall had wanted to break their contract with the Millers since they were not operating a pharmacy, but were unable legally to do so.

With the building destroyed by the tornado, Rexall found the escape clause necessary to break the contract.

The Millers were approached about entering the Center, but felt that without Rexall's support, their anticipated sales would not cover the overhead, and they decided to remain out of business. Mrs. Miller added that in retrospect, they would have rebuilt the drug store, but independent of the Center.

### Spratt Beauty Shop

It appears, through information provided by current residents, that at the time of the tornado, the operator of the Spratt Beauty Shop was slowly withdrawing from business and was only taking appointments for friends. When the building was destroyed, the business remained closed and the operator left town.

### Nelson Brothers Ford

According to present residents, Nelson Brothers Ford had been a marginal business for several years. Only a few cars and trucks were sold annually, and Ford would have removed the dealership except for a binding contract. The tornado severely damaged

the building, giving Ford the ability to discontinue their involvement.

#### Dan's Place

This restaurant was destroyed in the tornado. At that time, Dan Mullen was approached about relocating his restaurant in a metal building, which he did. Mrs. Mullen operated the restaurant for a short time and then sold the restaurant to the Development Company, fearing that the overhead would be too high to continue business in the center.

Mr. Mullen worked outside of Greenleaf for a few years, but returned in 1976, opening The Pub, continuing the type of business that had been there under different management, as Alvie's Cafe.

In summary, it appears that for the majority of businesses which did not re-open after the storm, the tornado hastened their inevitable closings. For reasons of health, age, or poor business, these enterprises apparently had no other options following the tornado.

Since the tornado, the Twin Valley Workshop has located in Greenleaf. Housed in a tornado-era metal building, the Workshop is a major rehabilitation center in the Washington County area for physically handicapped persons. This addition is viewed with pride by the community. (See Figure 23.)

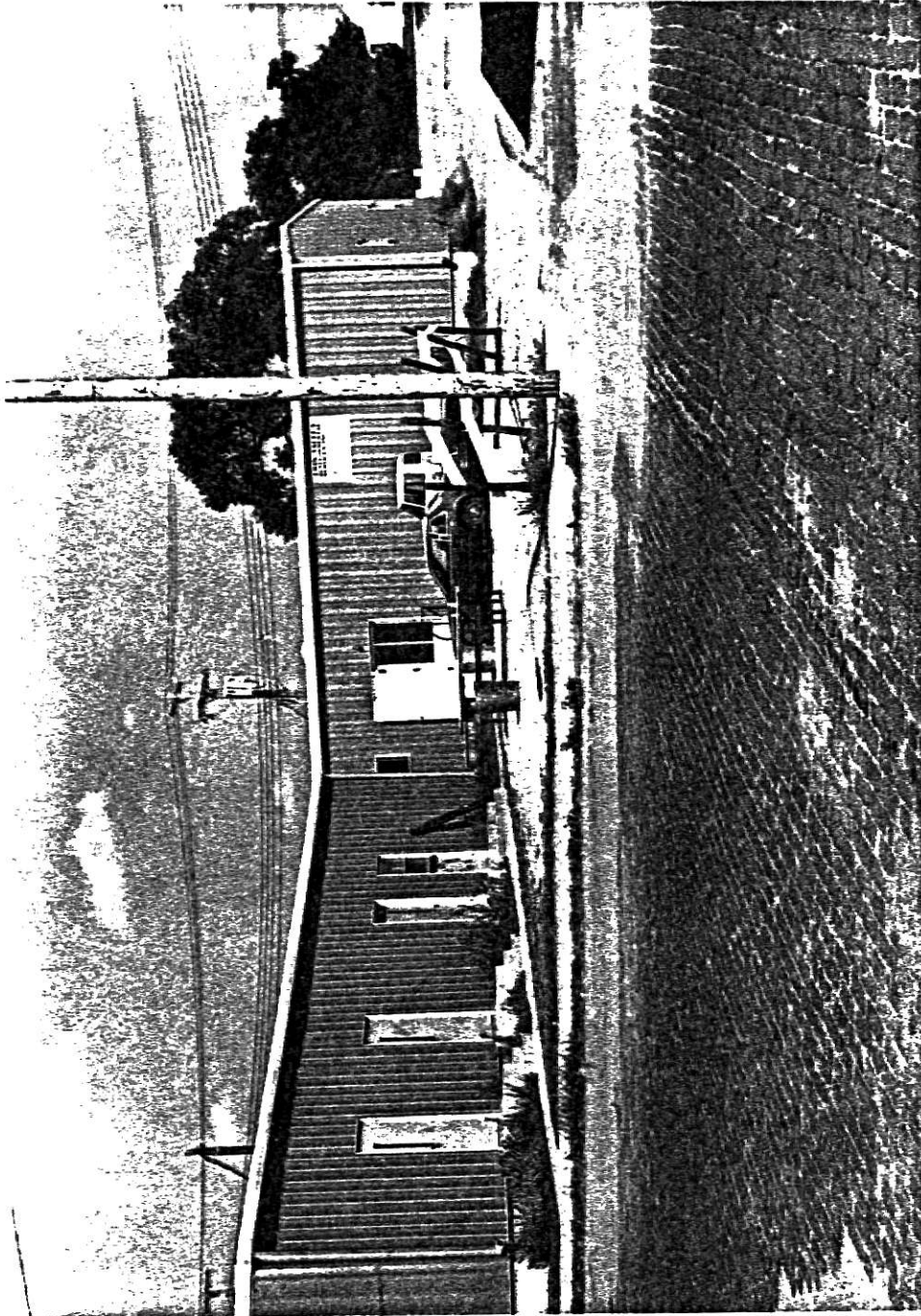


Fig. 23. Twin Valley Workshop

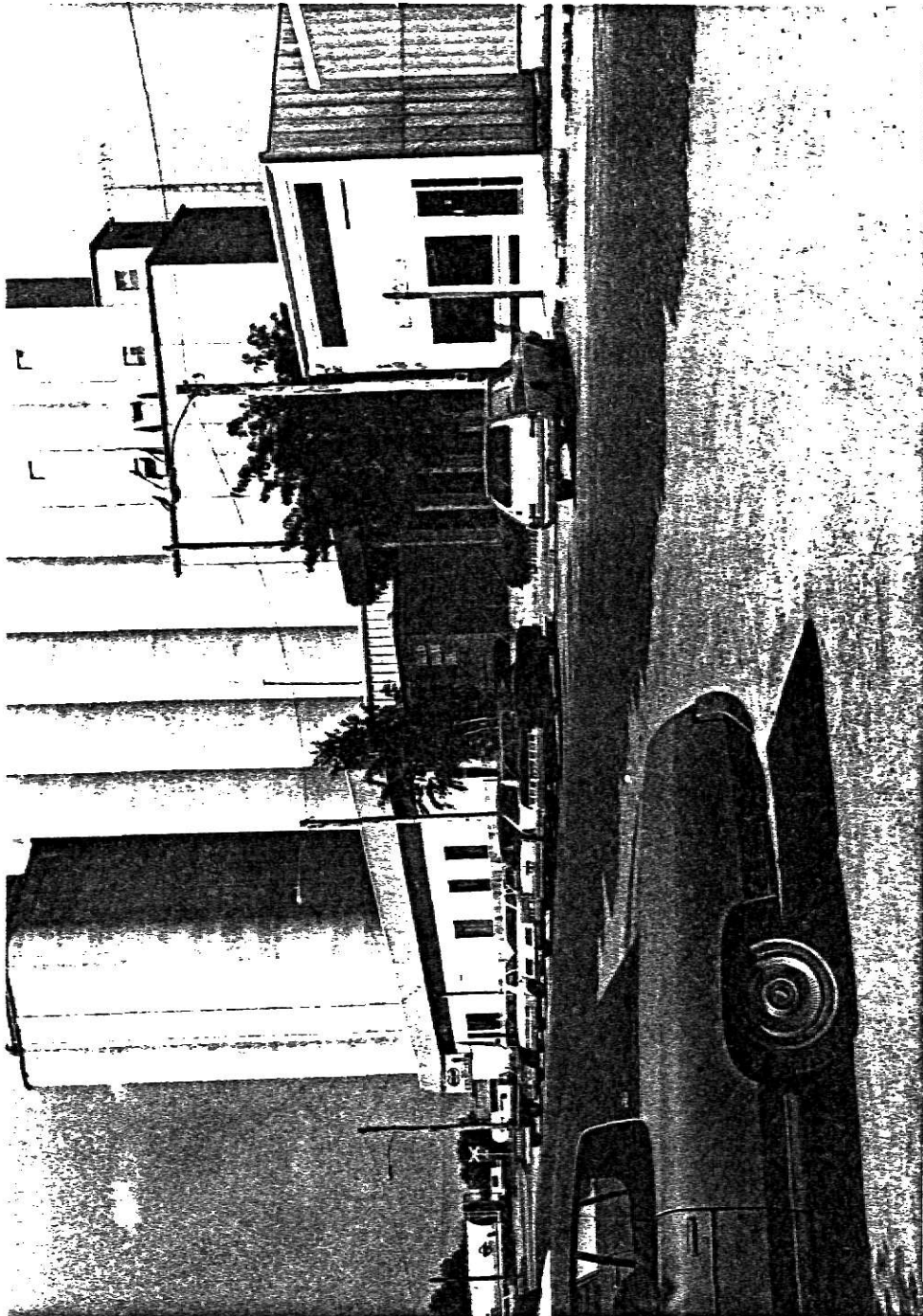


Fig. 24. Greenleaf Coop

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

The Greenleaf Center was an unusual redevelopment tool for a community of less than 500 people. This design concept became a reality as a result of the symbiotic relationship between the community as a whole and the business sector.

The private business sector had large amounts of money invested in the downtown area at the time of the tornado. Reconstruction of free-standing buildings was an unreasonable alternative due to the prohibitive costs that would be incurred by the individual business people. These additional expenditures would have been difficult to absorb through the usual marketing technique of price increases given the small trade area and close proximity of several towns with competitive markets. The Center concept evolved as the optimal alternative, given its superior cost efficiency.

The community as a whole has been very supportive of the Center, although some residents commented that aesthetically they would have preferred reconstruction of the free-standing structures, adding that Greenleaf has lost some of its flavor as a result of the redesign. Regardless of their individual opinions, the residents realized the necessity of retaining businesses in the community and, as a result, supported the decision of the business people.

It was this ability of the community to cooperate in favor of its best interests that resulted in redevelopment being a

successful process. This cooperative spirit is a crucial aspect of the pride that the residents of Greenleaf have for their community.

The quick disaster recovery Greenleaf achieved can be attributed to several interrelated factors; the pre-tornado existence of the various committees and the Development Company provided an organizational mechanism to coordinate the town's rehabilitation. The high level of willingness of the business people and individual property owners to reinvest in the community could undoubtedly be cited as the key to Greenleaf's success.

At present, Greenleaf is a healthy thriving community and has experienced a modest growth trend in recent years. Plans are continually being developed for improving community resources.

The residents of Greenleaf have a strong sense of commitment to their community, reinforced through long years of fighting the odds against saving a small town; a battle which may never end.

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- Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Ayres
- Ms. Mary Ann Brabec
- Ms. Margaret Carlson
- Ms. Lillie Cox
- Ms. Pearl Cox
- Ms. Susan DeMars
- Mr. and Mrs. John McGrath
- Ms. Jane Miller
- Mr. and Mrs. Dan Mullen
- Mr. and Mrs. Gary Padgett
- Mr. Murle Ryland



A HISTORY OF THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT  
OF GREENLEAF, KANSAS

by

JANET ANN PELLETIER

B. A., Creighton University, 1974

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Department of Regional and Community Planning

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

This report traces the development of the community of Greenleaf from its inception as a railroad town to the present.

Greenleaf was developed by The Central Branch Union Pacific Railroad Company in 1876, and was platted for a potential population of 2500. The town served as the end division of the railroad and was the location of the roundhouse. A peak population of 1100 was reached in the late 1800's.

In 1925, railroad management moved the roundhouse and end division to Concordia, subsequently transferring the majority of employees out of Greenleaf. This resulted in a loss of over one-half of the town's population.

With this reduction in the community's buying power, several businesses were forced to close and move elsewhere. This further reduced the town's population, leading to more shrinkages in the economic base.

The population had further declined to 468 persons by 1970, and the future of Greenleaf seemed doomed to that of a railroad-abandoned ghost town.

The years 1971-1973 were to become the turning-point of the future of Greenleaf as the citizens assessed the economic realities and came to the realization that the community would need to fight to keep their town alive.

Through the unified efforts of the community, several programs were undertaken to initiate redevelopment.

Realizing the dominate role of banking services in the revitalization process, Gary Padgett, president of Citizens National Bank, initiated redevelopment with construction of a new bank facility.

The Greenleaf Development Company was formed in 1972. Its goal was to develop capital to attract new businesses to the vicinity and was initiated with \$25,000 in investments.

Various committees were established during this period to coordinate redevelopment activities, including the Greenleaf Housing Authority, Greenleaf Tree Committee, and a Planning Commission.

For these efforts, Greenleaf received the 1973 Blue Ribbon Award for Community Planning from the Kansas Department of Economic Development and won first place in the PRIDE Program for the years 1972 and 1973.

As this transitory period came to a close, Greenleaf seemed well on its way to defying the statistical probabilities of small town demise. However, development was interrupted by a disaster that virtually destroyed the community.

On 25 September 1973, a tornado ripped through Greenleaf, leaving two dead and several injured. Structural damage was immense including the total destruction of thirty-two buildings and seventy homes.

The pre-tornado momentum, characterized by a unified community effort of revitalization was now directed to sustaining the town.

Some immediate funding was obtained for the provision of metal buildings to continue the operation of some of the businesses. A mobile home park was constructed to provide shelter for some of those whose homes had been destroyed.

After meeting these immediate needs, the focus of the community was directed towards the long-term recovery measures.

Throughout this preliminary recovery period, the idea of re-designing the downtown was conceived. It became apparent that limited insurance monies, given the need for full reconstruction, would prohibit the construction of free-standing separate business locations comparable to those existing prior to the tornado.

An enclosed shopping mall was deemed as the optimal solution. The Greenleaf Center, which held its Grand Opening on 25 September 1975, is presently at full capacity, housing ten businesses.

The remainder of this Report discusses the effect the tornado and subsequent construction of the Center had on the town's merchants and their decisions to remain closed or re-institute their various enterprises.

The majority of information for this Report was gathered through interviews with several Greenleaf residents, supplemented by research at the State Historical Society Archives.