

A SKETCH PLAN FOR NICODEMUS, KANSAS

by

DIANA LOUISE MANNING

B. F. A., Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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Approved by:

O. J. SELFRIDGE

Major Professor

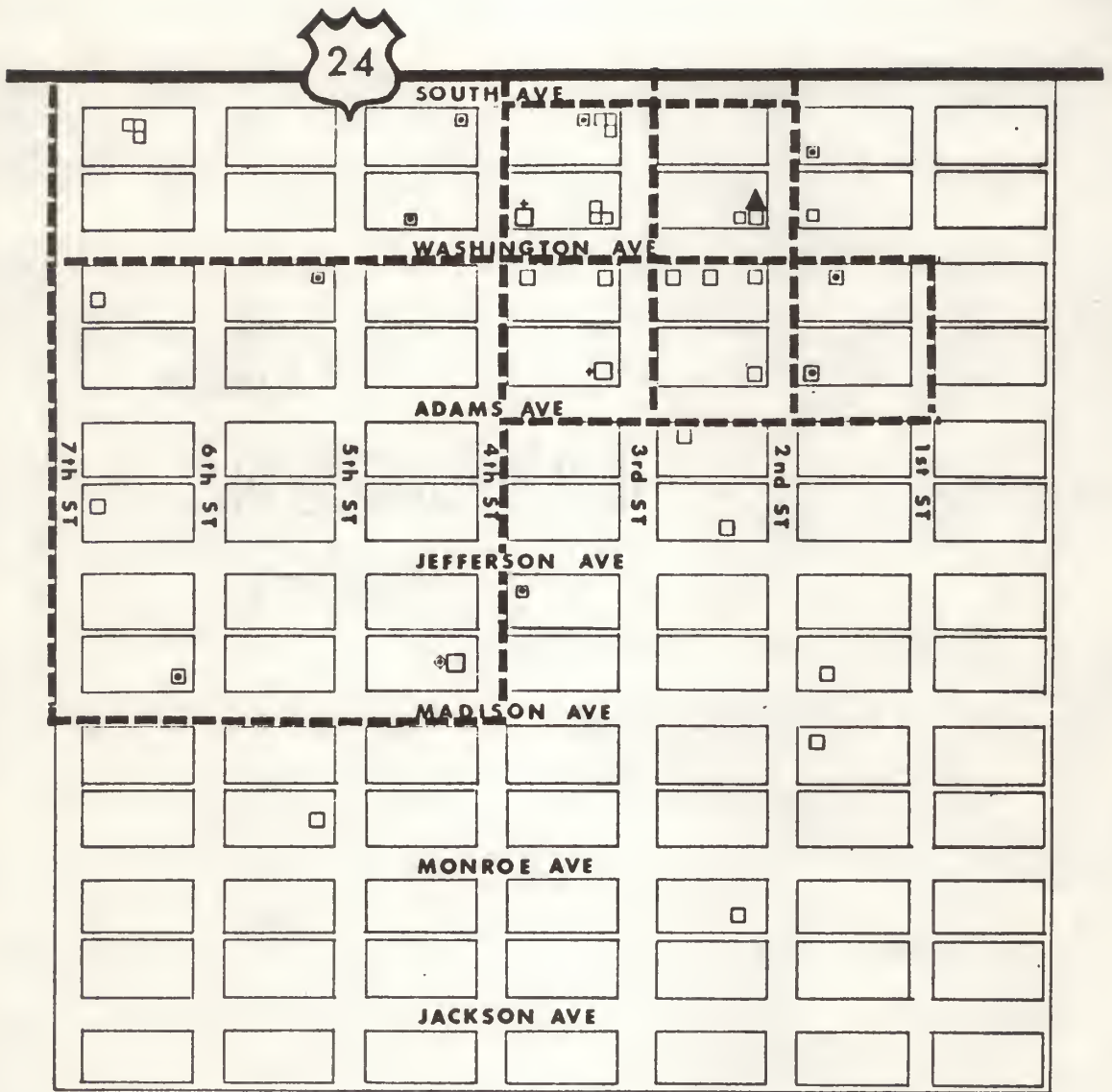
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








Official Plat

**BASE MAP**

**NICODEMUS, KANSAS**  
GRAHAM COUNTY

**LEGEND**

-  Township hall
-  Church
-  School
-  Commercial structures
-  Residential structures
-  Vacant structures
-  Existing roads
-  U.S. highway 24



Scale:  
Feet:  0 360

TABLE I

# **I N T R O D U C T I O N**

## INTRODUCTION

Nicodemus is the last remaining all-black community in Kansas. The unincorporated Townsite is located in Graham County, which is in northwestern Kansas. There are only 10 families living on the Townsite of Nicodemus, all of which are black. This community is like most of the western Kansas prairie towns. The population is declining due to lack of industry and service; most of the inhabitants are elderly and the housing is poor.

The origin of this community was a direct result of the war between the States. It exemplifies the propensity of a race of people wanting to come into their own freedom. The historic plight by which they sought to justify their needs, the agony and pain received to accomplish their mission, the ecstasy of a dream that once existed, and the will to hold on to what they have struggled for are the only existing characteristics of this community, that once was. Although the economic and physical characteristics of Nicodemus are synonymous to other rural unincorporated towns in Kansas, the historical and cultural significance of the community presents an unique entity of its own and this uniqueness just might bring it life.

The Kansas Department of Economic Development along with the Federal government has recognized the historical significance of Nicodemus and efforts to sustain the quality of life in this community are in progress. The Department of Housing and Urban Development has approved location of a ten (10) unit



housing development for the elderly. There is a great probability that this housing unit will aid the in-migration of elderly citizens to the community since there are elderly members from Nicodemus living in an around Graham County.

The Kansas Department of Economic Development along with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has piloted a program to develop preliminary community goals and objectives through a sketch plan. The sketch plan is basically a preliminary, incomplete plan designed to guide stages of the planning process for future growth and development. The stages of the planning process which will be undertaken through this sketch plan are:

POPULATION STUDY

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

LAND USE STUDY

HOUSING CONDITIONS

TRANSPORTATION STUDY

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The goals of this plan are to formulate ways to sustain the historic flavor and also, to indicate possible ways of projecting futures for the people of this community.

GOALS:

1. To capitalize on the historical significance that Nicodemus provides America and the State of Kansas, as it relates to Black America.
2. To develop preliminary community goals and objectives which will indicate future growth and development of Nicodemus.
3. To incorporate citizen participation into the plan by organizing leaders of the community to help identify community goals and objectives.
4. To identify physical improvements needed and propose feasible solutions resulting from studies and analysis of the community.



STUDIES

- BASE MAP: To show the location of streets, parks, institutions, cemeteries, and topography. This map will show the recorded plots and existing conditions.
- POPULATION: To show the total number of people in age groups, sex and migration.
- ECONOMIC ANALYSIS: To identify past, present and future wealth-producing factors of the area.
- LAND USE: To survey and study the existing land use (residential, commercial, public and industrial); to determine the future development of the existing land and adjacent land use.
- HOUSING CONDITIONS & ANALYSIS: To make a visual survey of the conditions of the residential buildings and the number of persons in the house hold.
- To identify the types of housing, recreation and open spaces in the Township.
- TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION: To analyze the community's transportation links in relation to the Municipal, County and State. Also, to identify needed street improvements and traffic patterns within the Township.
- COMMUNITY FACILITIES: To survey the existing community facilities, such as public buildings, to evaluate the adequacy of buildings and to list additional facilities needed.
- CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: To list needed improvements and possible sources of financing, based on the goals and objectives as stated by the residents of the community.

## LOCATION

Nicodemus Township is located in the northeast section of Graham County, which is in northwestern Kansas. Graham County is bounded on the north by Norton and Phillips Counties, Rooks County on the east, Trego and Gove Counties on the south and by Sheridan County on the west. U. S. Highway 24, traverses the unincorporated village of Nicodemus, which is 12 miles east of Hill City, the County seat and 1 mile west of the Rooks County line. It is 36 miles northeast of Wakeeney and 59 miles northwest of Hays, both being transportation points in which U. S. Interstate Highway 70 traverses. Also, Hays is the only Urban center in this region of the State. Nicodemus is 183 miles northwest of Manhattan, an Educational center and 243 miles northwest of Topeka, the State Capital. Geographically, the State of Kansas is in the center of the United States and is bounded on the south by Oklahoma, on the north by Nebraska, on the east by Missouri and on the west by Colorado. Nicodemus is the centroid to each metropolitan area in these States. It is 306 miles east of Denyer, Colorado, 399 miles north of Oklahoma City, 298 miles south of Omaha, Nebraska and 326 miles west of Kansas City, Missouri.



REGIONAL LOCATER MAP



TABLE II

## HISTORY

Nicodemus, Kansas was settled in the year of 1877 by a band of Southern freedmen called the "exodusters". This year and era correspond to the period of Kansas history commonly known as the "Exoduster" movement: the migration of ex-slaves from the former Confederate states of the South to the newly formed states of the West and the less racially hostile areas in the North. The Black migration into the Western and other states illuminates one of the most dramatic sagas in late-nineteenth-century American history. The very essence of the excursion by the freedmen from captivity into what was considered the "Promised Land" dramatized the sincere effort exhibited by them to pursue the great American dream.

A multitude of reasons created the initiation of the "Exoduster" movement. Orval L. McDaniel, in his study, attributes the massive emigration of ex-slaves from the South to several basic causes. The near total loss of political power suffered by Blacks of the South after Reconstruction combined with the unscrupulous tactics of Northern politicians who encouraged Blacks to settle in their political districts to decide close elections were indeed important considerations when discussing the migration of the "Exodusters".<sup>1</sup> Mississippi Governor, John Marshall Stone, in his report to the state legislature, charged that a partial cotton failure created discontent

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<sup>1</sup>  
Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Nicodemus, Graham County, Kansas", (unpublished Master's thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p.7.



among the Black plantation laborers and caused many to abandon the South to seek homes in the West and North.<sup>2</sup> McDaniel recorded that Blacks who had resettled in the West and North sent positive letters concerning conditions in Kansas to their friends in the South,<sup>3</sup> thus encouraging them to leave. Regardless of their reasons for migrating, the number reached such a proportion that in 1880 the United States Senate appointed a commission to investigate the causes of the migration.<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, was so active in helping former slaves settle in Kansas that he is considered the "Father of the Exodus".<sup>5</sup> Singleton, a Black man, was originally commissioned by the Tennessee Real Estate and Homestead Association, an organization supposedly dedicated to aiding former slaves colonize Kansas. Singleton was so impressed with the West that he eventually led over 8,000 ex-slaves from Tennessee into the West.

In 1877, the first group of Blacks settled Nicodemus from Topeka,<sup>6</sup> and immediately following were other groups, mainly from Kentucky, which joined the colony in 1878. The year 1878

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<sup>2</sup> Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Nicodemus, Graham County, Kansas", (Masters thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Singleton's Scrap Book. Kansas State Historical Archives, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

<sup>6</sup> Glen Schwendemann, Nicodemus: Negro Haven on the Solomon, State of Kansas Commission of Civil Rights, Topeka: 1971, p. 6.

witnessed over 300 Black immigrant settlers arriving to colo-<sup>7</sup>  
nize Nicodemus, and again, this party originated in Kentucky.

The initial idea of colonizing Western Kansas with form-  
er slaves apparently was the brainchild of a white man, W. R.  
Hill.<sup>8</sup> Although, various humanitarian motives are listed as  
reasons for Hill's desire to enlist pioneering Blacks to settle  
in Kansas, it seems relatively safe to conclude that an abiding  
concern for financial gain may have motivated Hill even more.  
McDaniel, notes that Hill, as a real estate dealer, had been  
involved in developing other communities before the idea of  
colonizing Nicodemus was ever considered.<sup>9</sup> Reports claim that  
Hill deceived several families of Blacks in Topeka, Kansas  
with glowing and exaggerated tales of the virtues of Kansas,  
only to have the angry colonists seek his life after discover-  
the appalling conditions once at the intended site.<sup>10</sup> At least  
one group led by Hill had to pawn much of their goods and  
equipment to pay freight charges for the trip.<sup>11</sup> McDaniel  
recorded that freight cost disputes always seemed to develop  
when Hill led parties to the colony site.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>  
Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Nicodemus, Graham, County,  
Kansas", (Masters thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>  
Glen Schwendemann, Nicodemus; Negro Haven on the Solomon,  
State of Kansas Commission of Civil Rights, Topeka: 1971, p.4.

<sup>9</sup>  
Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Nicodemus, Graham, County,  
Kansas", (Master's thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p.43.

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid., p.44.

<sup>11</sup>  
Ibid., p.59.

<sup>12</sup>  
Ibid.



The agonizing hardships that the first Black settlers endured must touch the heart of the most callous person. One writer confidently believes that Nicodemus in the history of Blacks is what Jamestown was in the history of white colonization, because Nicodemus was the first attempt by Blacks to make a serious effort at settling upon public lands of the United States.<sup>13</sup> The absence of traditional building materials, such as lumber, forced the colonist to extemporize earthen dug-outs.<sup>14</sup>

The first Blacks learned quickly that shelter would not be their only serious problem. There was indeed an Indian menace and the constant problem of fleas. Wild animals and the lack of beast of burden combined to create a less than jovial existence for the early settlers of Nicodemus. With the lack of draft animals to pull the plows, the ground had to be painstakingly broken with spades and grub-hoes.<sup>15</sup> Noble L. Prentice, in the History of Kansas, observed that during the first year of the tiny colony's existence, the torrid sun burned the crops and the sub-zero winter froze the animals to death.<sup>16</sup> Further evidence of the physical suffering experienced

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13

Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Nicodemus, Graham County, Kansas", (Masters thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p. 26.

14

Glen Schwendemann, Nicodemus; Negro Haven on the Solomon, State of Kansas Commission of Civil Rights, Topeka: 1971, p. 8.

15

Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Nicodemus, Graham County, Kansas", (Masters thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p. 53.

16

Noble L. Prentice, A History of Kansas, (Winfield, Ks: E. P. Greer, publisher, 1899), p. 153.

by the settlers at Nicodemus was reported in the County newspaper, The Graham Gem. The Graham Gem, credited the benevolence of the Otoe Indians with saving the colony from complete starvation when it wrote, "They, the Indians, came to the dugouts and seeing the distressed of the poor colored people, pointed to heaven and said, "God gave to us, and we give freely to you".<sup>17</sup>

The struggling colony managed to survive the first winter and it later acquired the name of "Nicodemus", probably after an African Prince who was brought to the shores of America aboard the second slave ship, and who later purchased his own freedom.<sup>18</sup> The Prince prophetically declared that the White man would regret the day he enslaved the Africans.<sup>19</sup>

By 1886, Nicodemus had reached a moderate level of prosperity and had begun to take pride in politics and civic affairs. The two local newspapers, The Western Cyclone and The Enterprise, made conscientious efforts to "sell" Nicodemus. Both news weeklies hailed new local business establishments and constantly predicted and economic boom.<sup>20</sup> In the late summer of 1887, The Western Cyclone proudly announced to its readers that Nicodemus contained four general stores, two grocery, drug and

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News Item, The Graham Gem, January 14, 1894, p. 1.

18

Glen Schwendemann, Nicodemus; Negro Haven on the Solomon, State of Kansas Commission of Civil Rights, Topeka: 1971, p. 8.

19

Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Nicodemus, Graham County. Kansas", (Masters thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p. 43.

20

The Nicodemus Western Cyclone, June 17, 1886, p. 2.

millery stores, two livery stables, one bank, two land and loan agents, one law firm, a physician, two blacksmith shops, a barber shop, two implement dealers, two churches and a school.<sup>21</sup>

The excellent caliber of Black political leaders in Nicodemus indeed accounts for much of the colony's ultimate success. It has been suggested that during the 1880's, the colony possessed leaders who had few equals among the Black population of Kansas. John W. Niles, A. T. Hall, and E. P. McCabe possessed superior leadership qualities.<sup>22</sup> Niles eventually became best known as an editor of the Rooks County Record, Hall also exerted his influence in the field of journalism, while McCabe became the first Black to hold a major political office in Kansas, that of state auditor, 1883-1887.<sup>23</sup>

While Nicodemus was making great strides in business, politics and education, it must also be concluded that great progress in racial achievements were accomplished. Available sources lend credibility to the theory that Whites and Blacks in western Kansas enjoyed a racial climate less hostile than the South, North or other sections on the western frontier. Although Kansas initially and temporarily expressed adversity

<sup>21</sup>

The Nicodemus Enterprise, August, 1887, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup>

Glen Schwendemann, Nicodemus; Negro Haven on the Solomon, State of Kansas Commission of Civil Rights, Topeka: 1971, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup>

Ibid., p. 13-14.

24

toward the emigrating Blacks, this opinion was due, no doubt, more to the drain on public expenses caused by the colonists than to skin pigmentation.

If there exists a direct or indirect correlation between prosperity and improved race relations, then Nicodemus appeared to typify that correlation. Along with the economic "boom" of the 1880's came improved racial attitudes. There does appear to have been clashes between Black farmers from Nicodemus and White cowboys from outlying areas, but the disputes remained ones of rights to water for cattle and not racial. Most Whites and Blacks in Nicodemus and its environs seemed to be more interested in making an economic success of the community by joint cooperation rather than fomenting racial unrest. News articles, during this period (1880), extolling the virtues and economic success of Nicodemus, suggest that financial prosperity was much more important than racial conflict.<sup>25</sup> As an example of the somewhat close relationships that must have existed between Whites and Blacks, The Bogue Signal carried an article inviting all citizens to an Emancipation celebration that was to be held at Nicodemus. The announcement added that "A general pleasant time is expected."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, with the atmosphere charged with economic prosperity, available evidence indicates that the prevailing

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Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Nicodemus, Graham County, Kansas", (Masters thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p.14-16.

25

Western Cyclone, June 24, 1886, p. 1.

26

News Item, Bogue Signal, July 25, 1889, p. 1.



racial climate at Nicodemus seemed to be devoid of the violent and fervent racial hostility that existed in the areas of other settlements.

The economic "boom", however, was short-lived. Even by 1886 large numbers of Blacks had ceased coming into the north-<sup>27</sup>west section of Kansas, and the large hoped-for metropolis did not develop. Reliable population figures for Nicodemus cannot be found; however, in 1880 the federal census report-<sup>28</sup>ed the town as having 484 Blacks and that figure increased to 595 by 1911. This would seem to suggest that although the economic prosperity prophesized by leading citizens of Nicodemus did not materialize, the Black population growth did increase somewhat. Nonetheless, after an all-time high in 1910, the population of Nicodemus began to drop noticeably.

The basic reason advanced for the decline of the community was the failure of the proposed Missouri Pacific railroad to build through the town. The railroad line never extended past Stockton, thus, dealing Nicodemus an economic death blow. Blacks moved to Bogue, Hill City and other towns. In addition, many of the businesses of Nicodemus moved to towns where transportation would be better and where there would be a greater demand of their goods.<sup>29</sup> By, 1950, the tiny community

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Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Nicodemus, Graham County, Kansas", (Masters thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p. 82.

28

Glen Schwendemann, Nicodemus: Negro Haven on the Solomon, State of Kansas Commission of Civil Rights, Topeka: 1971 p. 23.

29

Orval L. McDaniel, "History of Niocdemus, Graham County, Kansas", (Masters thesis, Ft. Hays State College, 1950), p. 82.

IMMIGRATION POSTER

**All Colored People**  
**THAT WANT TO**  
**GO TO KANSAS,**  
**On September 5th, 1877,**  
**Can do so for \$5.00**

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**IMMIGRATION.**

**WHEREAS,** We, the colored people of Lexington, Ky., knowing that there is an abundance of choice lands now belonging to the Government, have assembled ourselves together for the purpose of locating on said lands. Therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED,** That we do now organize ourselves into a Colony, as follows:— Any person wishing to become a member of this Colony can do so by paying the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), and this money is to be paid by the first of September, 1877, in instalments of twenty-five cents at a time, or otherwise as may be desired.

**RESOLVED,** That this Colony has agreed to consolidate itself with the Nicodemus Towns, Solomon Valley, Graham County, Kansas, and can only do so by entering the vacant lands now in their midst, which costs \$5.00.

**RESOLVED,** That this Colony shall consist of seven officers—President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Trustees. President—M. M. Bell; Vice-President—Isaac Talbott; Secretary—W. J. Niles; Treasurer—Daniel Clarke; Trustees—Jerry Lee, William Jones, and Abner Webater

**RESOLVED,** That this Colony shall have from one to two hundred militia, more or less, as the case may require, to keep peace and order, and any member failing to pay in his dues, as aforesaid, or failing to comply with the above rules in any particular, will not be recognized or protected by the Colony.

Source: Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Ks.



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## POPULATION

Population studies are one of the most important aspects of the planning process. They determine the need and demand for goods such as housing, community facilities and services that are necessary for community development.

There are several methods used to forecast needs and future projection of population for most communities, but due to the size and non available data for the Township of Nicodemus, the only method utilized in this report is population pyramids. Population pyramids are graphical expressions of characteristics of a population. They are done by converting the actual figures in each age-sex group to a percentage of the total population for the particular pyramid.

The age and sex distribution is shown on Tables V, VI, and VII. The total population for these groups are as such:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>
1950	116
1960	117
1970	100

TABLE IV

Source: Graham County Court, County Clerk, Hill City, Ks.

### POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

The total population for the unincorporated Township of Nicodemus is 100 inhabitants. This number includes the Town-site of about 10 families and surrounding area which makes up the Township of Nicodemus. According to records from the

County clerk, only 50% of the total population in the Township are black, most of which live on the Townsite of Nicodemus.

Due to the fluctuating characteristics of the population in various age groups, an analysis of the population pyramids was extremely difficult. However, a general interpretation of the population characteristics was derived from the past and present trends which have affected the growth of the community. The population trends of Nicodemus have followed a plunging decline since the late 1930's. This decline in population can be attributed to several influencing factors, such as:

The plague or the drought and depression during the 1930's which paralyzed Nicodemus, as well as the rest of the Country.

The failure of a combination of railways to materialize through Nicodemus.

The lack of economic opportunities in the Township and surrounding communities.

The inadequate housing conditions and the unavailability of housing accommodations on the Townsite.

The out-migration of the child-bearing and younger population.

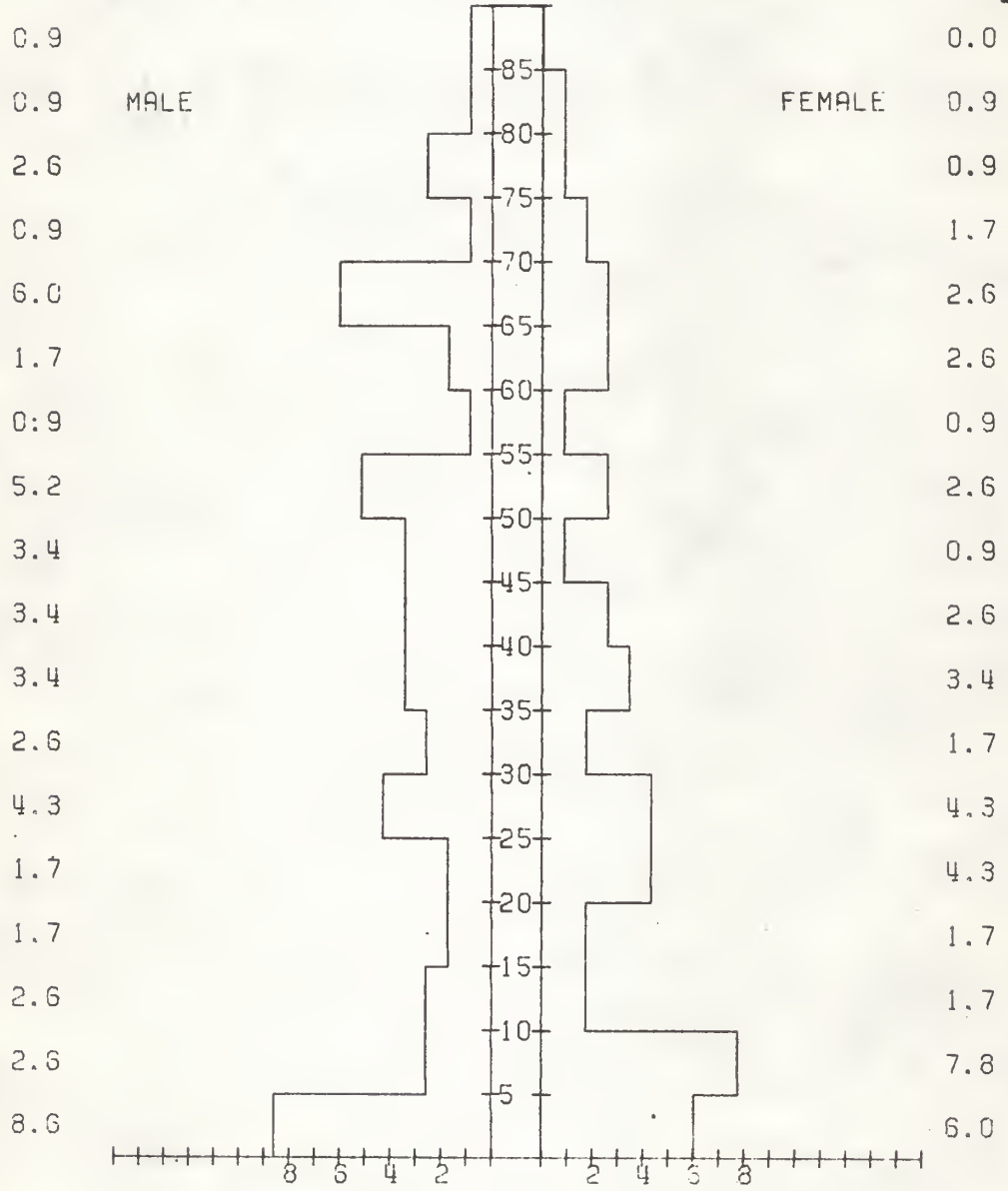
The death rate of the elderly population.

The lack of Community facilities and services

These trends listed above directly attribute to the oddity of the population pyramids, (illustrated).

Finally, it should be pointed out that population projections are sophisticated techniques for forecasting future populations, and do not clearly show a general understanding

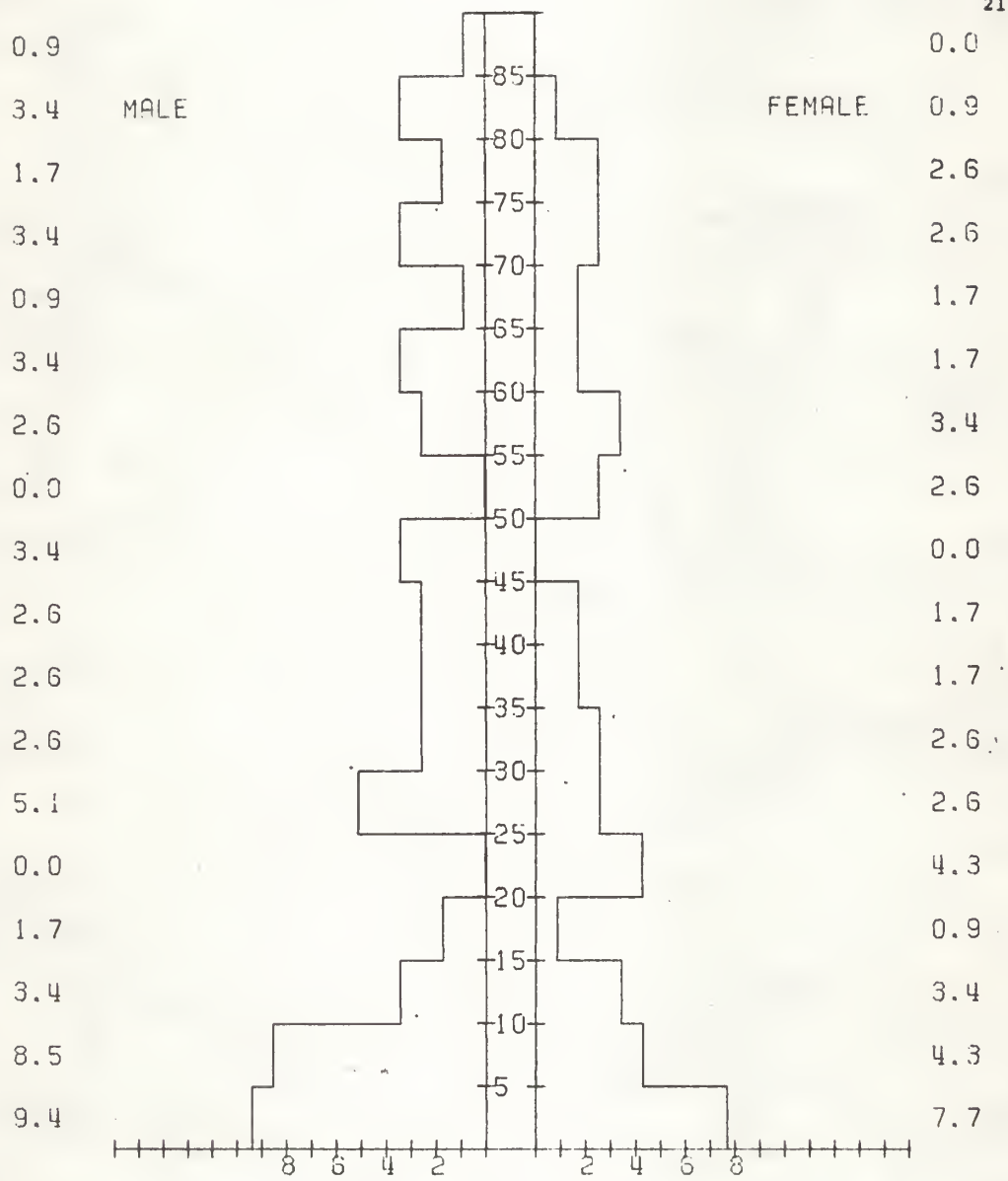
of past and present population characteristics of a community. Also, they are merely estimations which do not include unforeseen events of an environment. The population of Nicodemus has declined considerably in the past 20 years, and does not indicate any future population increase. However, there will be a sizable increase in population due to potential availability of an elderly housing unit.



POPULATION PYRAMID  
 NICODEMUS TOWNSHIP 1950

Source: Graham County Court,  
 Hill City, Kansas

TABLE V

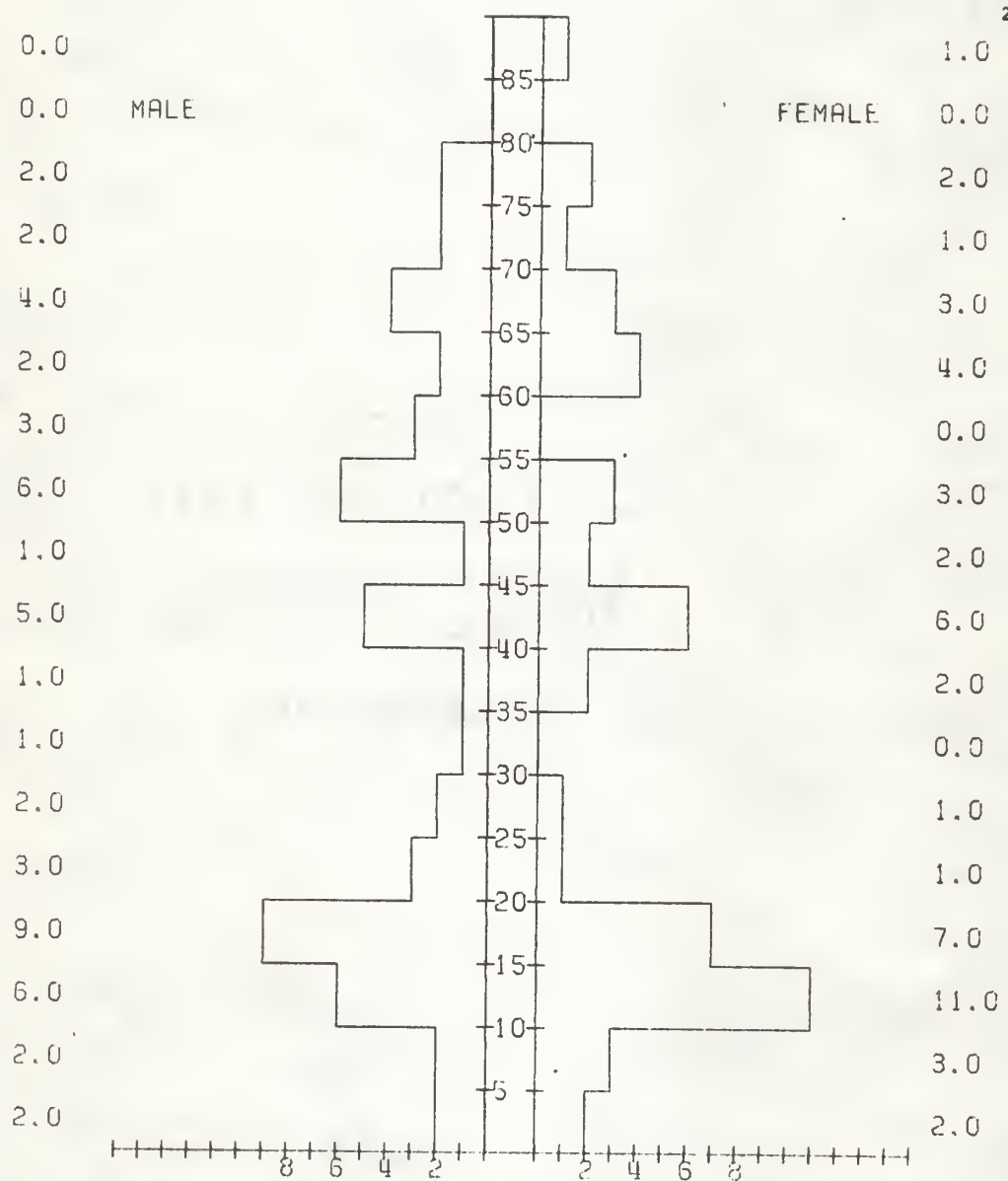


POPULATION PYRAMID  
 NICODEMUS TOWNSHIP 1960

Source: Graham County Clerk,  
 Hill City, Kansas

TABLE VI





POPULATION PYRAMID  
 NICODEMUS TOWNSHIP 1970

Source: Graham County Court, TABLE VII  
 Hill City, Kansas ..



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## ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The economic development of an area is dependent upon the wealth bearing factors of that area and the resources available. These resources include the land, availability of water and other minerals, in addition to the skills of the labor force, transportation links, political status and other related factors.

The purpose of this study is to identify past, present and future wealth producing factors of the Township of Nicodemus. The past history of Nicodemus indicates the Township as having very prosperous economic activities. However, there have been several influencing factors which have resulted into the fluctuating economic characteristics of the community. Presently, there is very little evidence of any type of economic activity in the Township.

The average resident of Nicodemus depends on small individual farming as their major source of income and employment. Of course, there are basic and non-basic industries in other communities and Counties which employ some of the labor force of Nicodemus, however, the number employed is very small. There is no professional, commercial or industrial services in the entire Township. This situation leave the residents the awesome burden of communicating to other communities in order to accomodate their needs.

Data related to the economic conditions of the community was not available, therefore, an analysis was derived from a general observation of the existing conditions of the community. Additionally, the viability of this community will be dependent on the development of some type of service or industry related to the resources and labor force of the Nicodemus Township.

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## EXISTING LAND USE

One of the prime considerations in the preparation of a Sketch Plan is the way in which land is used in an area. This study analyzes the past and existing patterns of land use, and the amounts of land occupied by each use.

The purpose of the existing land use study is to analyze the existing types of land use in the developed area of Nicodemus Township. The study will consist of statistical information taken from The Graham County Comprehensive Plan, along with additional information supplied from a block by block survey. The land uses are classified in six (6) distinct categories: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Public & Semi-public, Transportation and Vacant.

According to a field survey by Clark and Enersen Planning division, the total developed land area in Nicodemus is 40.4 acres. A list of land use categories are provided on the land use table, (illustrated).

The land use table shows that the largest portion of land in the developed area of the Township is vacant or used for agricultural purposes; the second largest amount of land is used for streets and alleys; while residential structures make up only sixteen percent (16%) of the total developed land in this area. Also public and semi-public land uses comprise a small portion of the developed area, most of which is used for the State park rest area



located along U. S. Highway 24. There is no commercial activity in the Township, however, there are two small areas designated as commercial uses. These commercial sites are also located along U. S. Highway 24. They are the Hilltop Inn, that once served as a restaurant and an abandon Gas Station. There is no evidence of any of the developed land in this area ever being used for industrial purposes.

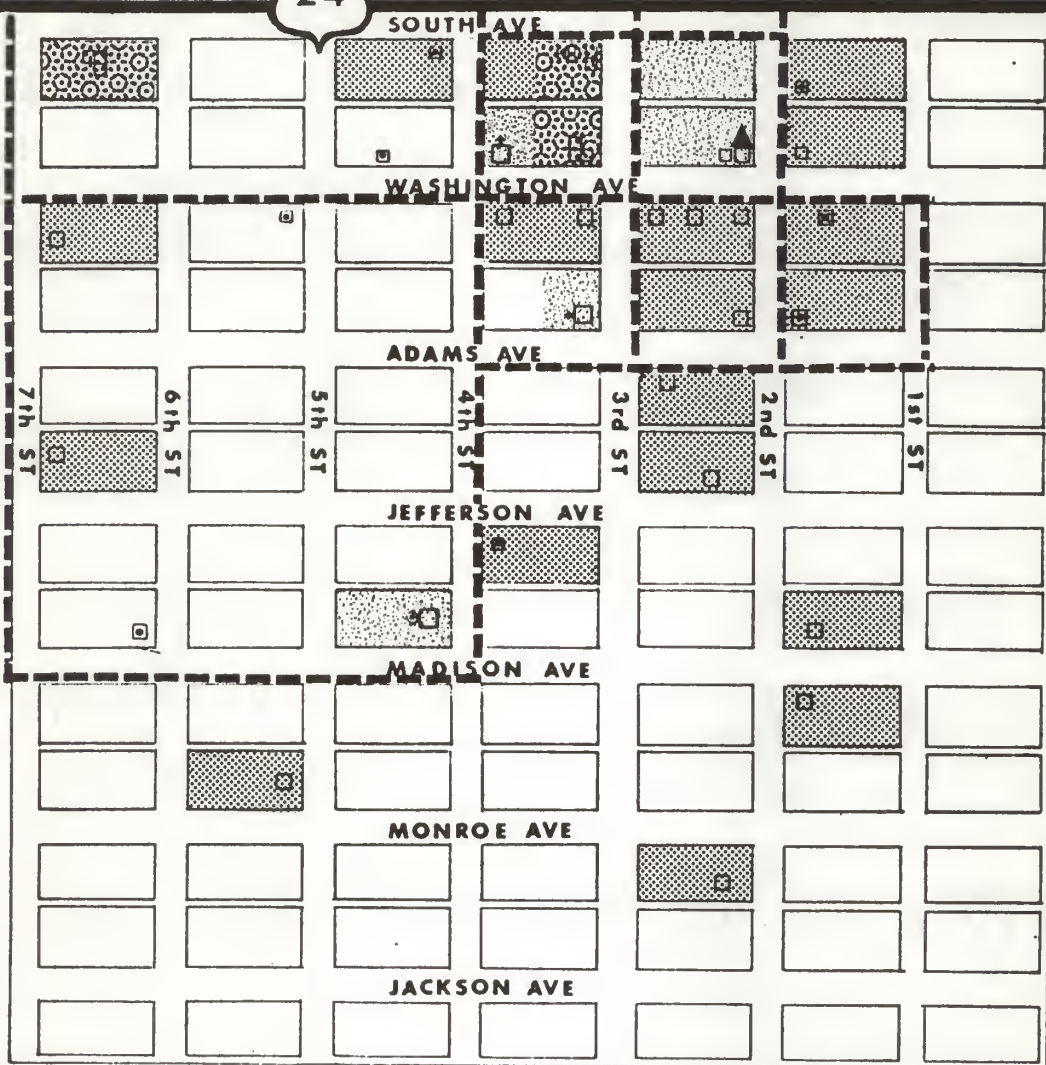
EXISTING LAND USE  
Nicodemus  
Graham County, Kansas

Type of Land Use	Nicodemus	
	Land Use in Developed Area	% Land Area In Developed Area
	Land Area (acres)	
Residential		
single-family	6.5	.16
multi-family	---	---
mobile home	---	---
Total	<u>6.5</u>	<u>.16</u>
Commercial	0.6	.01
Industrial	---	---
Public and Semi-Public		
schools	---	---
parks and recreation	1.4	.03
other public utilities and facilities	<u>1.9</u>	<u>.05</u>
Total	<u>3.3</u>	<u>.08</u>
Transportation		
streets and alleys	14.0	.35
railroads	---	---
Total	<u>14.0</u>	<u>.35</u>
Agriculture or Vacant	<u>16.0</u>	<u>.40</u>
Total	40.4	1.00

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Source: Planning Department, Clark and Enersen, et al,  
Lincoln, Nebraska, Field Survey, August, 1971.

TABLE VIII



**NICODEMUS, KANSAS**  
GRAHAM COUNTY

**LEGEND**

-  Residential
-  Public & Semi Public
-  Commercial

**EXISTING LAND USE**



TABLE IX

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## HOUSING STUDY

A major factor that must be considered when studying and planning for the development of a given area is the need for housing. Without this consideration, the economic stability of the community will be jeopardized.

The purpose of this study is to identify the types of housing structures and survey the condition of dwelling units in the Townsite. The study will be discussed in two general categories: Dwelling units by type, and condition of housing structures.

A visual survey was conducted in Nicodemus during the preparation of this sketch plan, also, statistical information was taken from the Graham County Comprehensive Plan. Both the visual survey and information from the County Plan influenced the classification of these housing conditions: Housing structures in good condition, housing structures in fair condition, and housing structures in poor condition. The dwelling units are also classified into type of structures, they are: single-family units, multi-family units and mobile homes, note Tables X and XI, illustrated.

According to both surveys, Clark & Enersen Planning Division and a block by block analysis of the community. There is a total of eighteen (18) housing units in the Townsite of Nicodemus. All of these housing units are single-family dwellings except one (1), which is a mobile home. There is no multi-family dwellings in the community,



however, a potential multi-family elderly housing unit is designated for this community.

The general characteristics of the housing conditions are poor with the exception of a few which are in fair and good conditions. Additionally, there are six (6) housing units that are vacant in the Township.

Although the approval of a 10 unit elderly housing facility has been designated for Nicodemus, there is still need for additional housing in the Township. There is a considerable number of Nicodemians living in other communities around the County, due to the lack of housing accommodations in the Township.

HOUSING STRUCTURES BY TYPE AND STRUCTURAL CONDITION  
 Nicodemus  
 Graham County, Kansas

Housing Structures	Number	Percent
Single-family	17	94.4
Good	3	16.7
Fair	6	33.3
Poor	8	44.4
Multi-family	0	0.0
Good	0	0.0
Fair	0	0.0
Poor	0	0.0
Mobile Homes	1	5.6
Good	0	0.0
Fair	1	5.6
Poor	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
Total all units	18	100.0
Vacant	6	33.3
Good	0	0.0
Fair	0	0.0
Poor	6	33.3

Source: Planning Department, Clark and Enersen, et al,  
 Lincoln, Nebraska, Field Survey, August, 1971.

TABLE X

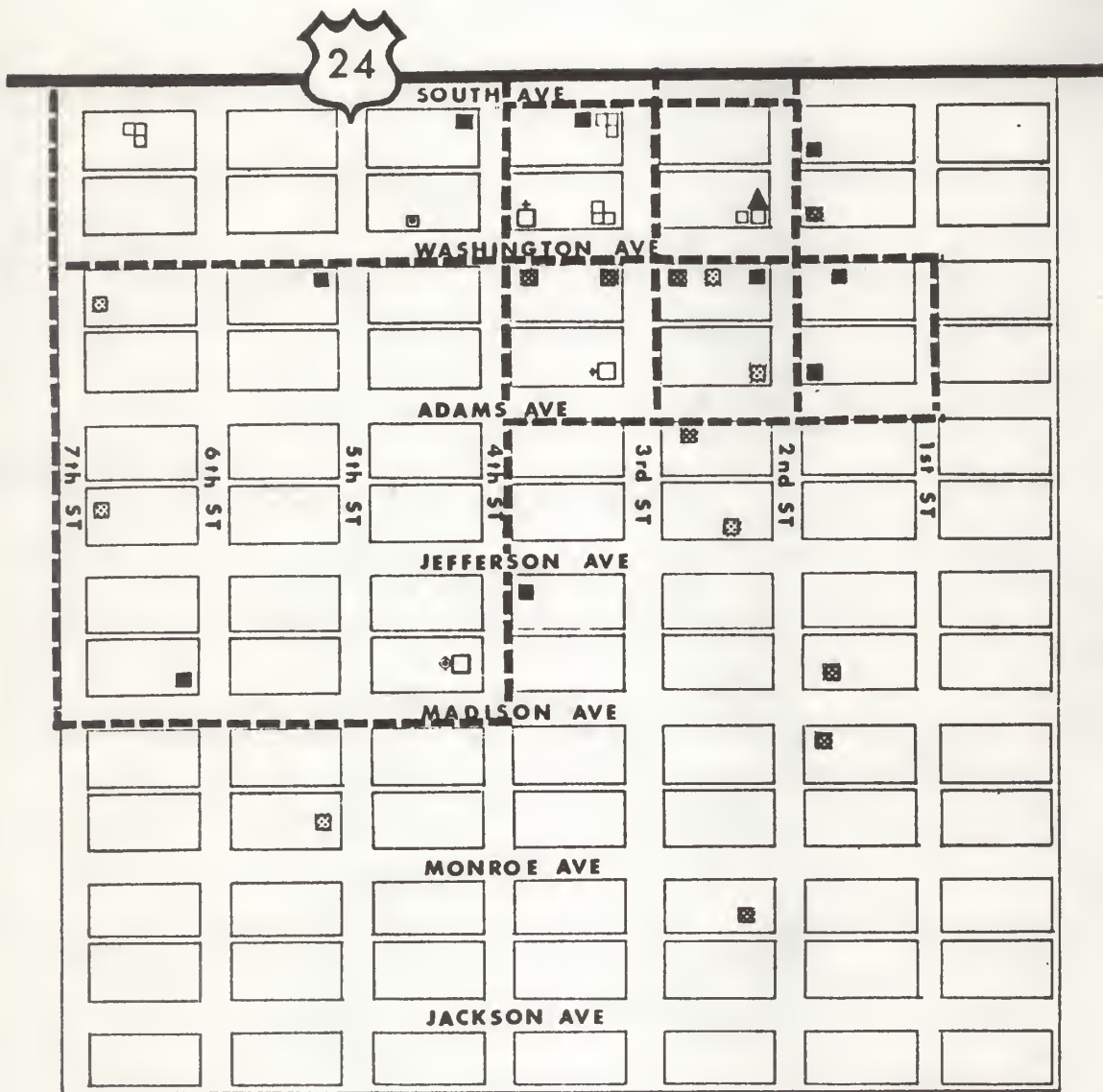
CONDITION OF HOUSING STRUCTURES  
 Nicodemus  
 Graham County, Kansas

<u>Number of Structures</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Good	9	
Percent of Total-----		.41
Fair	5	
Percent of Total-----		.23
Poor	8	
Percent of Total-----		.36
Total Housing Structures	22	

<u>Number Vacant</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Good	-	
Fair	-	
Poor	4	
Percent Vacant-----		.18

---

Source: Graham County Joint Planning Board, Field Survey, September, 1971.



LEGEND

-  Good
-  Fair
-  Poor

NICODEMUS, KANSAS  
HOUSING CONDITIONS  
GRAHAM COUNTY

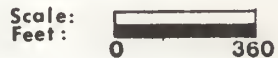


TABLE XII

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## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Generally, the health, safety and well-being of the populace of a community are dependent on the goods and services provided by the public officials. This aspect of the planning process comprises several related elements, such as : police and fire protection, school facilities, health services, street improvements, public recreation and cultural development. The community facility study is designed to evaluate the adequacy of the existing facilities of a community and determine the need, if any of additional facilities for the area.

Because of the unincorporated status of Nicodemus, the Township is dependent on the County and communities within the County to provide the necessary facilities for the community. Even so, Nicodemus does have limited facilities for use by the general public. There is a vacated school structure which is used for public meetings and social functions by the community. Also, there is a Township Hall which provides additional facilities for public meetings and gatherings.

Recreational facilities in the Township are provided by the area surrounding the vacant school building and the State highway rest facility. The rest area facility is also shared with motorist traveling U. S. Highway 24, as well as the populace of the community.

Due to both financial and political status of the Township, the educational facilities for the school ages of the community are provided by Bogue and Hill City school systems. The additional facilities and services needed by the community is supplied through a joint effort from the adjacent communities within the County.

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## TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Transportation is indeed, a most important aspect of the planning process that augments the possibility of growth and development for a community. It is the effective movement of people and goods, which is essential to the over-all economic well-being of a community.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the community's transportation links in relation to the Municipal, County, State and Region. Also, the study attempts to identify needed street improvements and traffic patterns within the Townsite.

### ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

For the purpose of this report, the classification of roads will be discussed in three (3) general categories: Arterial roads, Collectors, and Local roads.

#### ARTERIAL ROADS

An arterial is a road capable of moving large volumes of traffic at high speeds between widely spaced areas without interruption of the traffic flow. In reference to the above description, the arterial road that traverses the Township of Nicodemus in east and west directions is U. S. Highway 24. It also connects east and west with U. S. Highway 18, a mile north of Bogue. U. S. Highways 24 and 18 are primary access routes which connect the Township of Nicodemus and other communities of the County with the major urban centers

in Kansas. This highway system, also, connects this region with the adjacent states east, west and north. U. S. Highway 283 traverses Graham County north and south and serves as a transportation link that connects Nicodemus and other communities of the County with the State of Nebraska and U. S. Interstate Highway 70. U. S. Interstate Highway 70 runs parallel to U. S. Highway 24 about 40 miles south of Nicodemus and both highways connect Nicodemus with the states which border Kansas, north, south, east and west.

#### COLLECTOR ROADS

Collector roads serve as the link between the major arterials and local residential roads. Traffic is picked up by the collector roads and transported to and from the arterials.

According to the official plat of Nicodemus Townsite, the street system is of a regular grid pattern consisting of 49 blocks. The streets are 80 feet wide, except Third and First streets which vary in size. For the purpose of this report, the roads which serve as collectors are Washington Avenue, Fourth and Seventh streets. Washington Avenue runs east and west and collects traffic from adjacent local roads; Fourth and Seventh streets run north and south, pick up traffic at these points and transport the local traffic to and from U. S. Highway 24. Washington Avenue, also, serves as the main throughfare for the community and runs parallel, east and west to U. S. Highway 24.

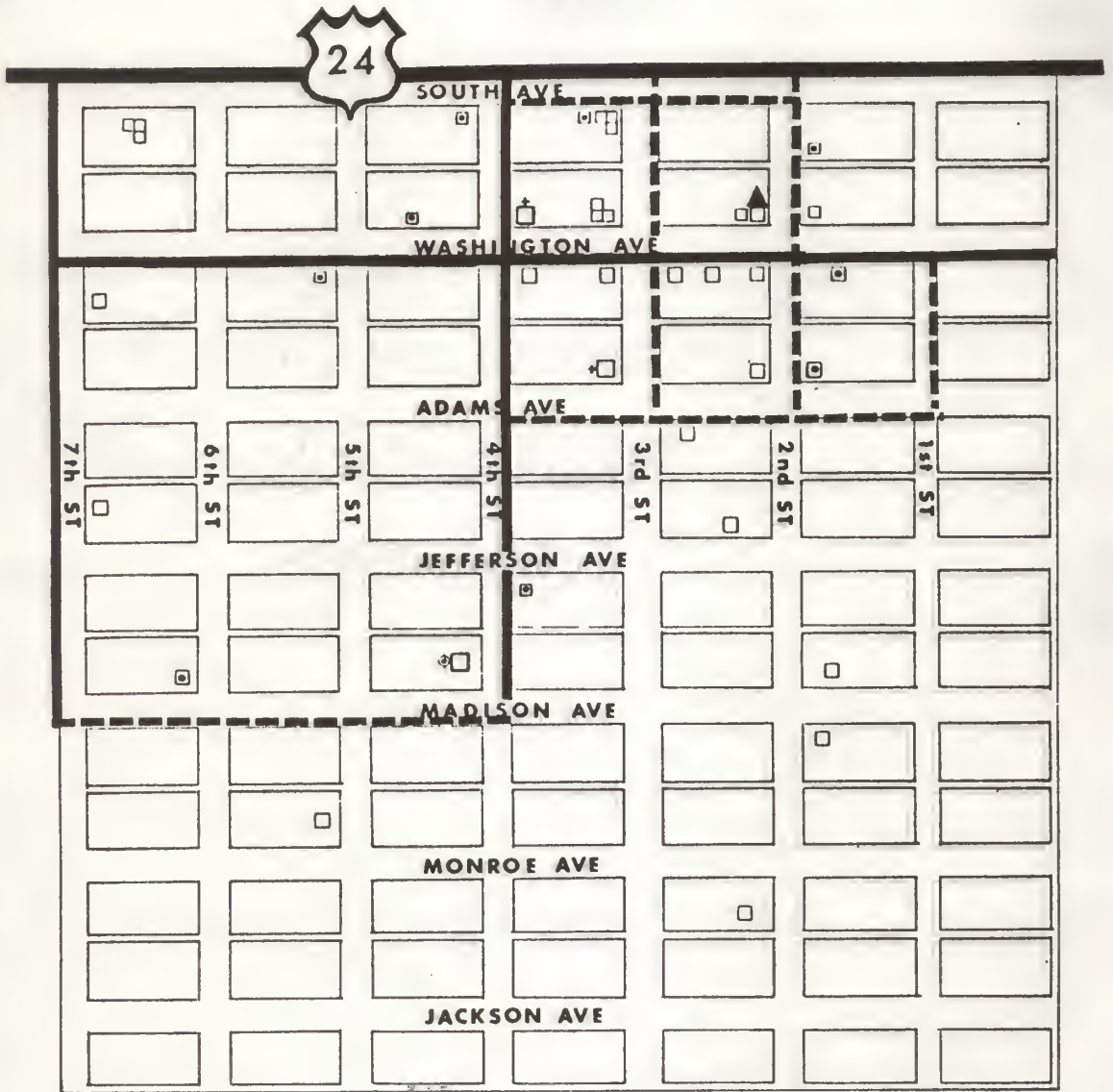


LOCAL ROADS

Local roads provide access for pedestrians and vehicles to their properties or homes and are not intended for through traffic. The existing streets which serve as local roads east and west are South, Adams, Jefferson and Madison avenues. The existing local roads running north and south are First, Second and Third streets. These roads provide access to and from local properties within the Townsite.

The street system of Nicodemus consists of six (6) roads running east and west and seven (7) roads, north and south. Most of the area designated for roads does not exist as platted. According to the official plat of Nicodemus, roads which are no longer existing east and west are Monroe and Jackson avenues; and Fifth and Sixth streets, north and south. Washington Avenue is the the only road existing as platted, while the others terminate at various intersections of the street system. The existing roads are stone surfaced, whereas the remaining unimproved road system is hard dirt.




There is an obvious need for road improvement within the Townsite. However, Nicodemus is not financially capable of making such improvements. The entire street system is in need of resurfacing, reconstruction, drainage and culverts. All of the existing roads are in need of resurfacing and drainage. The remaining street system should be reconstructed, surfaced and drained.

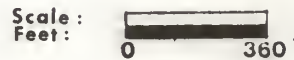


**NICODEMUS, KANSAS**

GRAHAM COUNTY

**LEGEND**

-  Arterial roads
-  Collector roads
-  Local & Existing roads



**STREET SYSTEM**

TABLE XIII

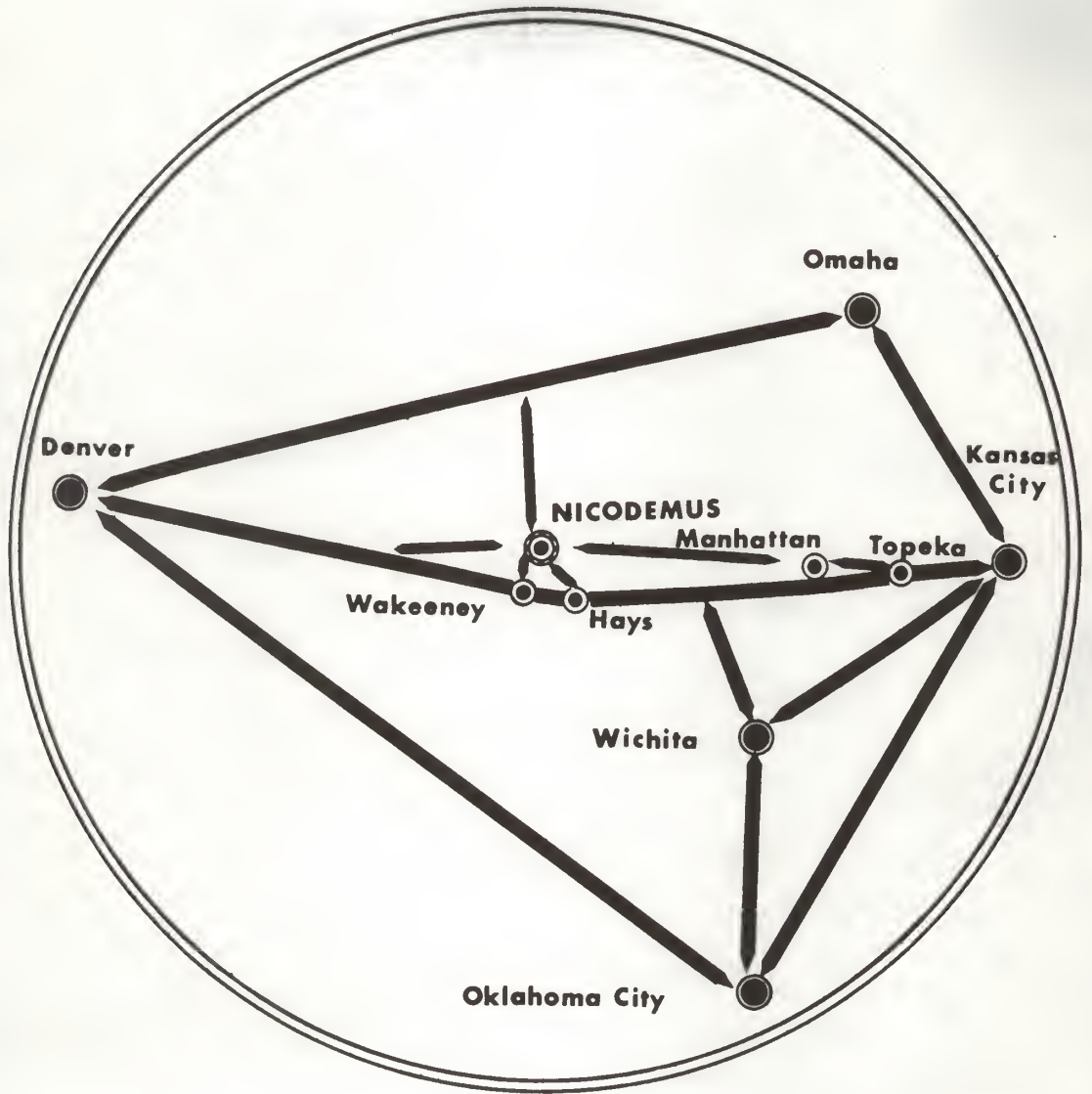
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Geographically, the State of Kansas is in the center of the United States and is bounded on the south by Oklahoma, on the north by Nebraska, on the east by Missouri and on the west by Colorado. Of this regional setting, the transportation links which connect the State of Kansas to the adjacent States are as such: U. S. Interstate Highway 70 traverses the entire State of Kansas east and west and connects Kansas with the states of Missouri, east and Colorado, west. U. S. Interstate Highway 80 connects the states of Colorado and Nebraska northwest and northeast of Kansas and also, provides a transportation link via U. S. Highway 283 to the State of Kansas. U. S. Interstate Highway 29 connects the states of Nebraska and Missouri northeast of the State of Kansas and eventually link with U. S. Interstate Highway 70 to points west and south. U. S. Interstate Highway 70 links with U. S. Interstate Highway 35 south of the State of Kansas and connects the State of Kansas with the State of Oklahoma. This transportation linkage also provides access to the metropolitan area of the State, Wichita, Kansas. Additionally, each Interstate Highway which connect the States to this region provides direct access to each metropolitan area within the States.

Nicodemus is centrally located to each metropolitan area of the states which border Kansas, north, south, east, and west. Notice the table XIV, illustrated. The outer vertices indicate the direct routes to each metropolitan center within the regional framework. The inside vertices represent the routes which serve as transportation links to and from Nicodemus within the State of Kansas. Noticeably, the Regional, as well as State transportation routes to and from the Township of Nicodemus are very good and possibly serves as the Township's most important asset.

The distance to and from Nicodemus via the regional metropolitan centers is quite similar, notice the mileage chart table XV, illustrated. These regional urban centers are also frequently traveled by vacationers, residents and tourists. Denver just so happens to be one of the most celebrated tourist attraction of the World. Oklahoma City, Kansas City and Omaha are equally as celebrated and exciting urban centers of this region. It should also, be noted, that these regional urban centers are heavily populated with Blacks. Blacks who are yearning to relate to their cultural and historic attributes to America. If the Township of Nicodemus is restored and once again flourish as a viable historic community, the regional transportation links will be its greatest asset. The location of Nicodemus in relation to the regional metropolitan areas invites an ideal setting for a cultural and historic community.





**Direct Regional & State Transportation Routes**

**LEGEND**

- ⊙ Historic Nicodemus
- Regional Metro areas
- State Urban centers
- Major Transportation links
- Minor Transportation links



TABLE XIV



DENVER, COL	KANSAS CITY, MO	* NICODEMUS, KS	
335	267	59	HAYS, KS
616	0	326	KANSAS CITY
530	123	183	MANHATTAN, KS
591	63	243	TOPEKA, KS
305	297	36	WAKEENEY, KS
526	195	236	WICHITA, KS
306	326	0	NICODEMUS, KS *
0	616	306	DENVER, COL
615	347	399	OKLAHOMA CITY
547	202	298	OMAHA, NEB

\*

**MILEAGE CHART**

TABLE XV

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## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Capital Improvement Plan as defined is a listing of priorities for construction and development of those items recommended in the Plan to include Community facilities, Transportation and CBD to be accomplished during the planning period.

Nicodemus is in desperate need of Capital programming and scheduling of priority programs. But due to their unincorporated status, the financing medium will have to be undertaken through the County or through a closed-end Federal Grant.

In as much as Nicodemus has historic significance to the State and Country, it is necessary that these improvements are made to enhance the historic flavor and background of the community. The needed improvements were derived from a visual survey of the area and coordinated efforts from members of the community.

DESCRIPTION OF PRIORITIES

Drainage & Culverts for the major streets. The streets are already constructed, but in need of excavating, up-grading and resurfacing.

Sewer System for Township. The town is using septic tanks and wells currently. This concentrated use in light of the high water table in the area could lead to high concentrations of nitrate in the water and nitrate poisoning. There is

need for a holding tank, sewer pipes and mains to adequately accomodate the population of the community.

Water Supply for the Township. Presently, there is an inadequate water supply through out the Township. There should be a complete extension of Water mains to accomodate the needs of the community.

General Street Improvements for the Township. The designated but unconstructed streets should be reconstructed and the existing streets should be improved.

Landscape the General Area. The entire Townsite needs to be landscaped with greenery, trees to enhance the historic atmosphere of the community. Additional efforts should be made to maintain the landscaping and general appearance of Nicodemus.

Renovate Building for Public Service. There is the need for a public safety building to house a volunteer fire department and sheriff for the Township. An existing structure could be renovated to accomodate a rural fire truck and a jeep for the sheriff to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community.

Politically and financially, the Township of Nicodemus is not able to afford such improvements, however, the improvements are basic necessities for the Township to become a viable asset to its surrounding area and community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As an ammendment to the current studies of Nicodemus Township, it is felt that the following recommendations should be considered by the populace of the community to ignite possibilities for future growth and development of the Townsite.

TO INCREASE THE POPULATION FOR INCORPORATION CONSIDERATION

According to Kansas Statues Annotated 15-115, NO TERRITORY SHALL BE INCORPORATED AS A CITY UNLESS IT HAS (300) OR MORE INHABITANTS. Nicodemus has been unincorporated since its establishment in 1877. Possibly, this situation could be attributed to the freed slaves being unaware of the importance of incorporating their Township, and the amenities which incorporation would provide. Presently, Nicodemus is faced with the problem of being under-populated, as well as lacking the ability to indicate potentials for growth and development. Adequate population and potential development serve as criteria for being considered for incorporation. Incorporation of Nicodemus would ensure the Township the general powers provided by the State Enabling Body. Moreover, the Township would be able to make general improvements, borrow money, issue bonds, levy taxes for improvements and levy taxes on all taxable property within the town.



There has been communication from former residents of Nicodemus, who are yearning to return to their birthplace and reclaim their birthright. Members of the community should start a communication drive to contact former residents and heirs of Nicodemus, and inform them of the present situation of the community. Efforts to encourage former residents to consider relocating into the Township should be a major priority. Such efforts will enhance the possibility of increasing the population for incorporation consideration. Also, promote the idea of both present and former populace investing into a cooperation and collectively pooling resources to augment meaningful development for the community.

TO FORM AN INVESTMENT CLUB

Former residents of Nicodemus, currently residing in various parts of California, have formed a Nicodemus West Incorporation. The function of this Incorporation is to pool resources of its members in order to promote the development of Nicodemus, Kansas. Residents of Nicodemus should extend this idea to former residents residing in various sections of the Country. There should be a joint effort from all residents of this community, to form an investment club designed to promote the general welfare of Nicodemus.

The membership dues should consist of an initial payment, plus annual dues. There should be a designated

time period within a year for both initial and annual dues. Share ownership should be determined on a set amount per share, in order to protect heirs of original owners. Voting rights should be determined on a membership only, basis, regardless of the amount of shares. This procedure should all be handled at the advice and assistance of an Attorney.

After forming the investment club, there are several projects to be under taken within the community. The first suggestion would be to establish priorities from all voting members of the club, as well as the residents of the community. This method usually suggests the projects which are needed most.

Such projects, as securing a small business loan to re-establish the gas station and restaurant located along U. S. Highway 24, should be initiated. The possible construction or remodeling of an existing structure could provide a multi-purpose building to accomodate the needs of the general public. Also, the community should organize a group to volunteer both labor and materials for the construction of a playground for all ages of the community to enjoy. Such projects as these and others would be very beneficial to the community, as well as the economy.

CAPITALIZE ON THE RESOURCES PROVIDED BY NICODEMUS

It has already been established that Nicodemus prime resources are its cultural and historic attributes. Nicodemus also provides an excellent opportunity for recreational entertainment. Webster Lake, a State owned and operated recreation facility, is located in Rooks County, 11 miles east of Nicodemus. It provides excellent camping, swimming, boating and picnic facilities. This would be an ideal spot for Inner City youths, organizations and clubs to experience a refreshing atmosphere in rural, historic Kansas. Publicity of the historic character of Nicodemus, along with the recreational facilities provided by the adjacent County, invites an excellent setting for a Recreation Resort during the summer. Also, there is an abundance of pheasant and wild game located along the Solomon Fork river. This situation offers superb hunting game for the winter months. Since hunting is one of Kansans' favorite winter sports, the presence of the game should be capitalized upon by the Nicodemus community. Efforts should be made to contact the Kansas Wildlife, Fish and Game Division, to have this area designated as a hunting reservation. With the additional resources of the area, Nicodemus has the potentials of becoming a historical resort community.

These are just a few human interest activities which could be entertained by the residents of the community.

Additionally, these activities might be an incentive to induce participation from some private financial sources, as well as both State and Federal governing bodies.

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## SUMMARY

The summary of the current studies will be discussed in two separate parts. First, a general statement which gives a conclusive analysis of each unit of study. Secondly, a future development plan, that is based on the cultural and historical resources of the community and also, serves as an alternative for the present conditions of the Township.

POPULATION. The present population of Nicodemus Township is 100 persons. Technically, there was no indication of any future population growth, however, the Township is expected to have a slight increase in population, due to the potential availability of an elderly housing site.

ECONOMIC. There is very little economic activity in the community. The prime source of employment is small individual farming and also, there was no indication of any future employment opportunities. The viability of this community will be dependent of the development of an economic industry or service related to the resources and labor force of the Township.

LAND USE. There is 40.4 acres of developed land in the Township, of this total amount of land only 60% is actually being used. Most of the land is vacant or used for agricultural purposes, while the remaining land is used for transportation, residential, public and commercial, respectively.

HOUSING Generally, the housing conditions in the Township are rather poor with the exception of two units which are in good condition. All of the housing units are single-family dwellings with the exception of one mobile home.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES Due to the unincorporated status of the Township, facilities and services for the community are very limited. There is a Township hall and a vacant school building which both serve as facilities for public gatherings in the community.

TRANSPORTATION The Township of Nicodemus is centrally located in the northwest section of Kansas and is traversed by a major U. S. Highway. The regional transportation links which connect Nicodemus to other areas are very good. The location of Nicodemus to the regional transportation links is probably the Township's greatest asset.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS Politically and financially, the Township of Nicodemus will not be able to make any type of general improvements for the community. However, the community is in desperate need of general improvements, therefore, priorities were established in hopes of obtaining financial aid from local, state or federal financing sources.

These statements were derived from a total understanding of the past and present forces which have influenced the existing conditions of Nicodemus Township.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The future development plan is designed to illuminate both past and present characteristics of Nicodemus Township. The idea of this plan was initiated as an alternative to the appalling conditions of this community. A community that possess such a cultural and historic background as Nicodemus, Kansas.

Residential The residential character of the community should remain mostly single-family with sparsely multi-family developments throughout the Townsite. Note the harmonious development of low and high density residential areas in the plan, table XVI, illustrated. This pattern was designed to control the density adjacent to the proposed historic path of the community and also, to protect the future development of conflicting land uses.

Public & Semi-Public The State rest area located along U. S. Highway 24 is designed to expand throughout the entire block designated as public use. Hopefully, this expansion will serve as an invitation for tourists to relax and enjoy the historic atmosphere of the community. The proposed construction of a recreational area located on Fourth and Jefferson Avenue should also, be implemented. This construction will serve as a rest and play area for the tourist and community at the termination of the historic path.

Commercial & Semi-Commercial Presently, there are two existing commercial facilities located on South Avenue adjacent to U. S. Highway 24. This type of development is designed to continue along this route because of the location. The location of commercial facilities along this route will serve dual purposes. First, the location will induce participation from the traveling public and secondly, the location will protect the residents of the community from the hazards of generated traffic and congested traffic problems within the townsite. The Semi-Commercial area is designed with the idea of a historical, late nineteenth-century setting of the "ex-slave movement west". Facilities and parking space to accomodate this idea should also be constructed in this area. The Semi-Commercial area would allow the community an opportunity to orient tourist to their cultural and historical background, as well as enhance the economic conditions of the area.

Roads According to the official plat of Nicodemus Township, all of the streets are not existing as designated. The non-existing roads should be reconstructed and the existing streets should be re-surfaced and improved. South Street which is located parallel to U. S. Highway 24 and provides access to the State park area should be constructed as a buffer road, to protect the residents and general public from the heavy volume of traffic generated by U. S. Highway 24. Also, South Street will provide access to the Commercial facilities

proposed for the adjacent area.

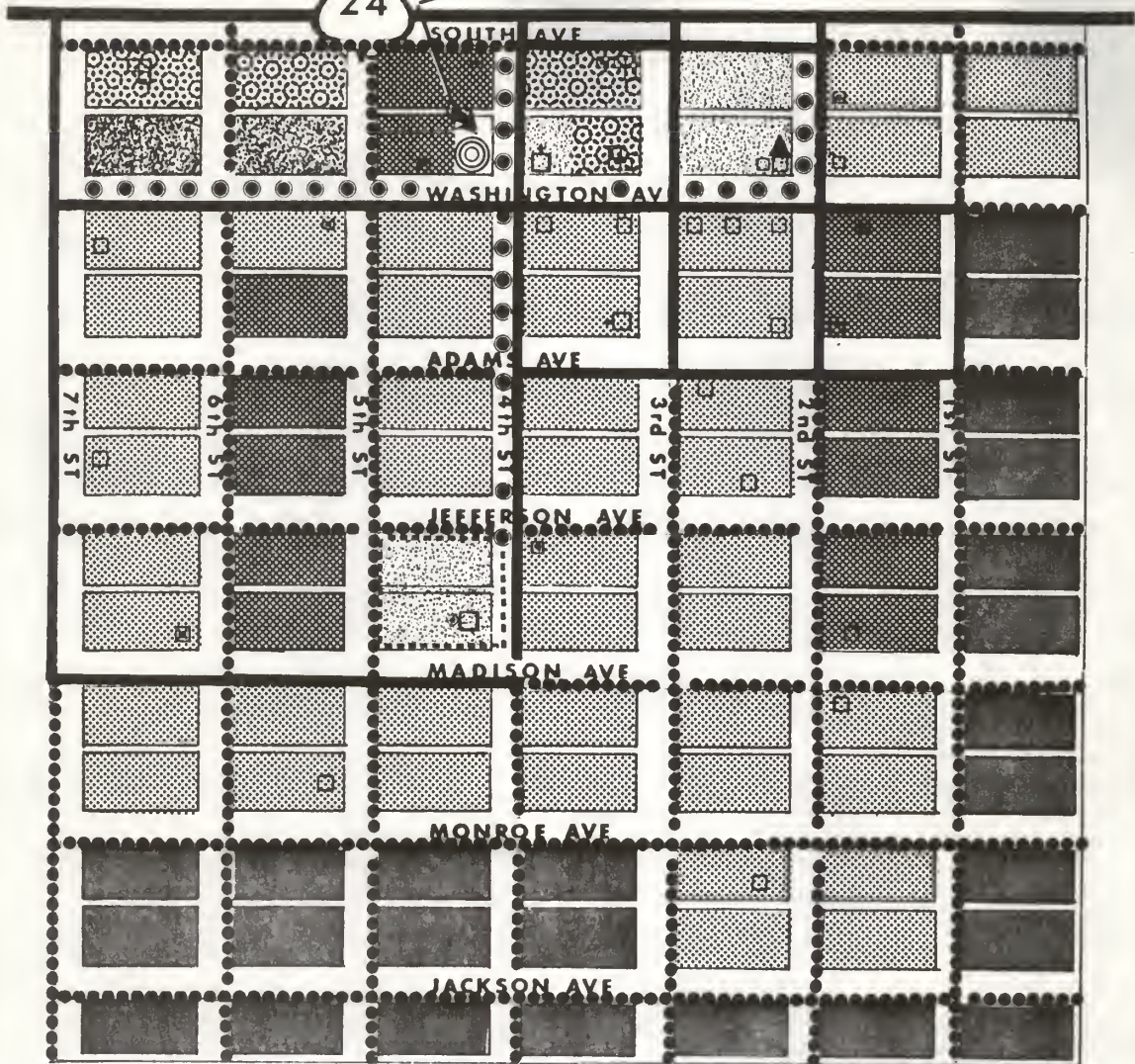
Historical Path The existing land use of the Township has already designated Washington Avenue and Fourth Street as focal paths of the community. These streets should be improved to serve as direct routes for tourist to follow while visiting the community. The adjacent land should be landscaped and developed with structures to radiate the historical character of the community. The area of the plan designated as Semi-Commercial would be a simulated historical setting of the late nineteenth-century era, depicting the plight of the "Exodusters". The historical path along Fourth Street should keep the low-density residential character of the community, which should orient the visitors to the present cultural attributes of the area. The historical path should extend along Fourth Street, culminating into a recreation area surrounding the school building. The recreation area should add another dimension to the historical path, also additional fun and relaxation for the visitors, as well as the community.

Finally, it should again be stressed that the Township of Nicodemus will not be able to afford such a plan, however, the plan was designed to awaken the community, local, state and federal governing bodies, and general public to the many possibilities of future development for this area.





Proposed Elderly Housing Site (HUD)



**NICODEMUS, KANSAS**

GRAHAM COUNTY

**FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**LEGEND**










-  Low Density Residential
-  High Density Residential
-  Public & Semi Public
-  Commercial
-  Semi-Commercial (historic)
-  Vacant or  
Future development area
-  Future road reconstruction
-  Existing roads
-  Historical path



TABLE XVI

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