

DERBY, KANSAS: COLD WAR BOOMTOWN

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the development of Derby, Kansas, from the arrival of its first settlers in 1869 through the early 1970s. During its first seventy-five years, Derby never grew beyond its origins as a tiny trade center for local farmers, its economic growth constantly stymied and overshadowed by the often explosive growth of Wichita, twelve miles to the north. Derby might have met the fate of so many other Kansas farming communities that did not survive developments in industrialized agricultural and transportation in post-World War II America. With the beginning of the Cold War, however, the federal government began pouring money into the Midwest and West, building up existing, and constructing new, military installations. In addition, federal spending spurred massive new defense industries, creating growth around the cities of what some historians have called “Gunbelt America.” Wichita was one such city. Derby’s proximity to Wichita finally worked to its advantage, and the small town experienced its own boom as it became a residential community inhabited by affluent commuters to the job opportunities nearby.

In addition, Derby’s racial homogeneity, its relative affluence, and the deliberate attempts of its boosters to portray it as a “family friendly,” that is, as a white, middle-class, community, further spurred its growth as Wichita went through the turmoil of school desegregation in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Derby, Kansas, illustrates a distinct category in the development of the new Gunbelt West, a community that flourished both because of its proximity to a larger city as well as its distance from the perceived turmoil of that urban center.

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Introduction

“The commitment to a Cold War, based on threat (not action) and on continually improved weapons of extraordinary power and mobility, commandeered the lion’s share of the nation’s research and development capability and fueled a new set of industries – aircraft, communications, electronics, and computing – that were to irrevocably alter the American economic, occupational, and regional landscape.”¹

For some historians, such as Walter Prescott Webb, the West is a region defined by aridity, reaching from the southern tip of Texas through North Dakota. Webb claims that the region can be classified into two groups: desert states and desert rim states. Nevertheless, the entire region is defined by its dependence on water.² Other historians claim that the West is a specific area that constitutes all of the land west of the 100th meridian. However, what happened to the West following World War II necessitated the creation of a different definition of the West. Similarly to Webb, Gerald Nash set forth a definition in which the West is a region stretching from the Dakotas down to Texas and all states westward, excluding Alaska and Hawaii. Instead of a region defined by aridity, this West encompasses lands that were affected by federal military buildup in the post-World War II years. Nash, one of the first historians to address the importance of federal and military spending in the West during the post war years, put forth what would be a theme throughout his many works. Nash suggested that the “crucible” experience of the American West was World War II and that no other war, nor even the Great Depression of the 1930s, “brought such cataclysmic changes to the West.” Nash claims that the war transformed the West from a colonial economy, exploited by and dependent upon the eastern region of the United States, into a diversified region that included both industrial and

¹ Anne Markusen, "Cold War Workers, Cold War Communities," in *Rethinking Cold War Culture* ed. James Gilbert and Peter Kuznick (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001) 35-60.

² Walter Prescott Webb, "The American West: Perpetual Mirage," *Harpers Magazine*, May 1957, 25-31.

technological components.³ These components created the military industrial complex, a web of production fueled by the growing needs of the Pentagon, the branches of the armed forces, the policy decisions of politicians, and private aims of industries that serviced defense interests.⁴

Prior to the Second World War the United States had never supported a large standing army in peacetime. The major force that played out in the West during the middle of the twentieth century and brought such “cataclysmic changes” to many small towns was the federal government’s buildup of military installations in the West after World War II. As a result of unstable relations with the Soviet Union and other communist countries in Eastern Europe, as well as nations along the Pacific Rim such as Korea and Vietnam, the nation maintained a large military force. Foreign policy makers chose to concentrate the buildup of armed forces in the American West, and military installations blossomed in the region. Western land and space offered new incentives with its geographic isolation and secrecy. In addition, the rapidly growing and spread out cities of the region provided the necessary services and facilities for the operation of large-scale, technologically oriented industries.⁵

The impact that these installations had on the West was unprecedented. Money flowed toward the West through government contracts for many different products and projects, but primarily for shipbuilding and aircraft manufacturing.⁶ Between 1945 and 1973, Congress poured more than \$100 billion into Western military installations, in addition to large amounts it was already spending for dams, highways and other components of the economic infrastructure

³ Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), vii.

⁴ Anne Markusen, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell, Sabina Deitrick, *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 25.

⁵ Gerald D. Nash, "Mirror for the Future: The Historical Past of the Twentieth-Century West," in *The Twentieth Century American West: Contributions to an Understanding* ed. Thomas G. Alexander and John Bluth (Midvale: Charles Redd for Western Studies, 1983), 17.

⁶ Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 3.

of the West.⁷ The military buildup in the West was spread out over the entire region. Bases run by the army, navy and air force became important economic factors in the largest of states, California, as well as sparsely populated states such as Wyoming and Montana. In some years the military bases, supply depots and shipyards represented the largest contributors to the states' income.⁸ The new installations and the industries that sprang up to support them combined to create what came to be known as the "Gunbelt." The Gunbelt spreads across the entire United States – the southwestern states, Texas, and the Great Plains; Florida and up through New England – forming a "belt" around the country and leaving the interior relatively untouched.⁹ Although there were places in the center of the country that benefited from the location of military installations, the support industries that usually followed were relatively sparse.

The cities and regions touched by the creation of the Gunbelt would never be the same. The rise of the Gunbelt had socioeconomic and political consequences. As pockets of defense-dependent activity grew in the Gunbelt, the population grew rapidly, and more congressional seats were apportioned to the growing states. Typically, that representation was more conservative, that is, Republican.¹⁰ In addition, Gunbelt cities and regions became highly specialized by product or client. Tank production was concentrated around the Great Lakes; ammunition in the west north central and the east south central; aircraft in New England, the Pacific region, Kansas and Missouri. Specific clients also picked specific regions of the Gunbelt to set down roots. The Air Force concentrated its bases toward the southwest, Washington,

⁷ Gerald D. Nash, *The Federal Landscape: An Economic History of the Twentieth Century West* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1999), 78.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Markusen, et al., *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4.

¹⁰ Ibid., 7.

Florida and New England; the Navy, obviously, concentrated along the coasts; and the Army centered itself mainly in the Midwest, moving towards the perimeter in more recent years.¹¹

Probably the most significant change was the growth of the population in western cities and states. Phoenix, Arizona grew from a city of 60,000 in 1940 to an incredible 500,000 by 1960, while the state of Arizona as a whole quadrupled in population. In the same time that Arizona was booming, California was growing from 9 to 19 million people.¹² The western states during the forty years of the Cold War era saw their population increase by about 120 percent. In the rest of the United States, by contrast, the South grew by 75 percent, the Midwest by 36 percent and the population of the Northeast increased by only 29 percent. In other words, at the start of the Cold War, the population of the West consisted of one of every four residents of the United States. By the end of the Cold War, one of every three residents called the West home.¹³ These statistics alone set the West apart as a unique entity in the Cold War United States.

Economic growth and production were also major forces in changing the landscape of the region. In addition to federal money that was spilling westward for military installations, federal expenditures in the West funded a range of different products and services. One of the main reasons the Gunbelt was able to flourish was the Air Forces' strategy of outsourcing to private firms, compared to the Army's strategy of in-house research and development.¹⁴ Purchases from business and agriculture, wage and salary payments to civilians as well as military personnel, and investments in new manufacturing facilities as well as payments for public works projects all kept federal money flowing into the region. Federal government involvement included benefit

¹¹ Ibid., 233.

¹² Michael Welsh, "'The Legacy of Containment' The Military Industrial Complex and the New American West" in *The Cold War American West* ed. Kevin J. Fernlund (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 90.

¹³ Kevin Leonard, "Migrants, Immigrants, and Refugees: The Cold War and Population Growth in the American West" in *The Cold War American West* ed. Kevin J. Fernlund (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 31.

¹⁴ Markusen, et al., *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 31.

payments to social welfare recipients as well as large-scale conservation and reclamation projects and aid to farmers.¹⁵ The special economies that the federal government was creating in order to build the Gunbelt became deeply rooted in the affected communities and stimulated the growth of new business and community cultures, creating a permanent war economy in many areas.¹⁶

In his study of the changing West, Carl Abbott suggests that as a result of widespread and often stressful economic transitions, an increasingly smaller number of Westerners were engaged in primary production of products as the Cold War wore on.¹⁷ This means that far fewer workers in the West made their living directly from the land, in farming, forestry, fisheries or mining.

So where were these people working? The answer can be found by looking at the industries that thrived in the West in the 1940s and beyond. The most prominent industries were those that provided goods and services for the military-industrial complex. For those who migrated west to booming cities (many of them displaced agricultural workers), work could be found in shipyards and aircraft manufacturing plants, while others went to work in service industries such as tourism, education, and health care as well as in financial institutions. Still others became involved with the fabrication of raw materials, chemicals, petroleum and aluminum. The Gunbelt also attracted new technological industries that dealt with computers, electronics and information-processing systems, all of which became a vital and dynamic element of the economy of the West.¹⁸

In their study, *The Rise of the Gunbelt*, Ann Markusen, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell and Sabina Deitrick discuss six models of military-industrial cities that cropped up on the western

¹⁵ Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 4.

¹⁶ Markusen, et al., *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 8, 9.

¹⁷ Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1993), xv.

¹⁸ Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 4.

landscape. As will be recounted in Chapter Two, Wichita fits the Markusen models in several ways. Looking at all six models gives insight into where the cities that boomed after World War II and during the Cold War years came from. Lettered A through F, the models are: The Seedbed Transformed; The Upstart Military Industrial City; The Booster Incubated Military Industrial Complex; The Military Educational Complex; The Installation Based Military Industrial Complex; and Defense-Services Complex.

The rise of the Gunbelt and the creation of the military industrial complex in the West did not bring growth to everything it touched, however. In fact, in some areas, what was left behind by those who sought jobs in the new factories and industries was dying communities.

Prior to World War II, the United States was made up of many small towns and fewer big cities. However, following the war, and as the demand for small-scale agricultural operations lessened, people left the small communities to find a better way of life. In fact, small towns have always been affected by the larger world around them, their distance to the big city as well as developments in personal mobility. In many areas, mainly in rural agricultural areas with populations less than five hundred, decline was inevitable.¹⁹ The evidence was seen in rundown houses, empty storefronts and a general lack of new growth.

At the same time, there were many small towns around the country that, while remaining small, did not decline into ghost towns but experienced population stability or even moderate growth. Most such towns were those close enough to urban centers to take advantage of the developing automobile culture of the postwar years.²⁰ The automobile gave the inhabitants of the small towns a way to reach the outside world more conveniently, and frequently, the outside world was where the jobs were. Without attracting new residents because of employment

¹⁹ Norman T. Moline, *Mobility and the Small Town, 1900-1930: Transportation Change in Oregon, Illinois* (Chicago: The Department of Geography, The University of Chicago, 1971), 4.

²⁰ Ibid.

opportunities, such small towns grew by redefining their aims and goals; they were forced to create a new town identity that emphasized their suitability as a “good place to live.” In many towns a “booster spirit” took hold, a spirit that “reflects a concern for the place of a particular settlement in the larger society, a concern for its spatial identity.”²¹ Although the idea of having town boosters was not new in post-World War II America, the new boosters strived to make their town the center of residential activity. In Cold War America, small towns sought to boost their community by creating better roads and housing, by developing successful and advanced school systems, and by luring those who worked in the large cities to their quiet, “family oriented” towns. Derby was one such town.

Founded in the mid 1800s, Derby, Kansas had remained a small farming community for all of its history, never reaching the three hundred citizen mark until the late 1940s. During those seven decades, local boosters dreamed that their little town would become a great city. Like many other towns in the West and Kansas, Derby should have faded into local history with the industrialization of the West after World War II, but it stayed alive and flourished. Derby boomed from a small town of 432 in 1950 to a small city of 5000 people in 1956.

Why? Unlike Wichita, its large neighbor to the north, Derby did not have a major industry – a railroad, a cattle shipping port, or a state institution such as a hospital or university. But the sleepy farm community was an anomaly compared to towns of similar size and economic situation around the West. Instead of dying because of its circumstances, it rose and flourished because of the circumstances happening all around it. As such, Derby illustrates a distinct category in the development of the new Gunbelt West, a community that flourished both because of its proximity to a larger city as well as its distance from the perceived turmoil of that urban center. It grew because of where it was founded, not in the West, which it was, but because it

²¹ Ibid., 7.

was founded just south of Wichita. Although the early citizens of Derby thought they could really grow into something great, they could not and did not. The grand notions of becoming the next big cattle town, or a major stop along the railroad, were unobtainable due to the accident of geography: twelve miles north, Wichita boosters always held the advantage, and always outpaced Derby's attempts.

In the postwar years, however, that proximity to Wichita – and the “lucky” placement of the Boeing Aircraft plant and McConnell Air Force base -- finally fostered the boom that Derby had so long sought. Derby became a distinctively Cold War town. This work charts that development.

Chapter One – Settling Derby

“Where there is no vision, the people will perish.”²²

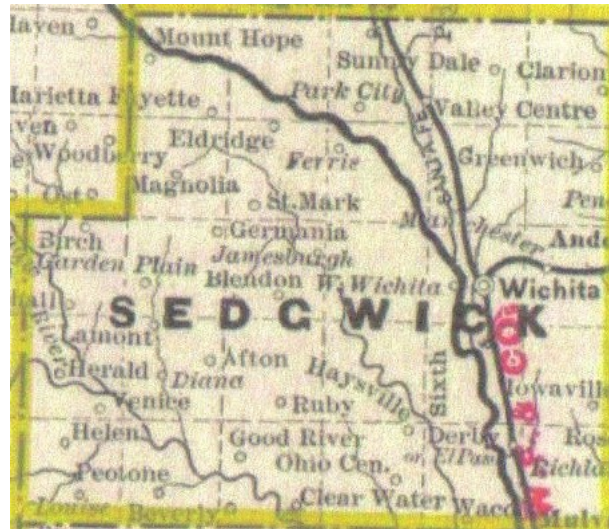


FIGURE 1.1 Derby is located 12 miles south of Wichita. In this 1956 map, Derby’s original name, El Paso is also shown.

Early in the spring of 1869, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Garrett brought their covered wagon filled with a few household and farming necessities to a stop along the banks of Spring Creek. The spot where the Garretts settled had been described to them as the “garden spot of Kansas.” An area with a good water supply, Derby was bordered on the east by Spring Creek and on the west by the Arkansas River. Alexander Garrett saw the beauty in the land as well. He is said to have remarked that the blue stem was so high he could tie it above the covered wagon. The Garretts were childless when they arrived in south central Kansas but soon had a daughter named Anna, the first white child born in Rockford Township. Six years later a son, Herman, was born

²² Proverbs 29.18 NCV (New Century Version).

to the family. By taking a chance and making a home in their little dugout on the banks of Spring Creek, the Garretts laid the cornerstone of the Derby community.²³

Although the Garretts settled in March of 1869, the small townsite itself, in an area north of Spring Creek and close to a bend in the Arkansas River, was not platted until the spring of 1871. John Hufbauer is listed as the official founder of the town, originally called El Paso after a town near where he lived in Illinois. Hufbauer was quickly joined by J. Hart Minnich, who also claimed land close to the townsite.²⁴

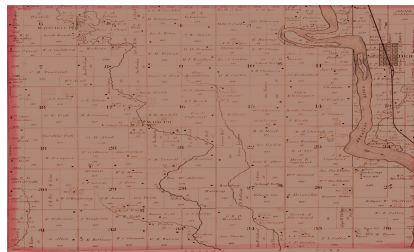


FIGURE 1.2: This map shows the Arkansas River as it ran through south central Kansas. The Derby townsite is shown in the upper right-hand corner. Township 29, South Range 1 East.

An admiring local history written in 1937 claims that this location offered extraordinary natural advantages that compensated for the menace of its proximity to Indian Territory.²⁵ In reality, by the time of the area's settlement Indian Territory constituted the area that is almost identical with the present state of Oklahoma and hence fifty-five miles further south. No doubt this was still very close for the new Kansans but not nearly as close as Marshall Hiskey's account portrays.²⁶ Hiskey's exaggerations extend to the area's alleged advantages. No doubt

²³ Marshall Hiskey, "Excerpts Regarding the History of Derby, Kansas Prior to 1937," photocopy; "Early Day History," *Derby Reporter*, 29 September 1967.

²⁴ John Watson, "Pioneers Believed that El Paso-Derby Would Outgrow Wichita," *Wichita Beacon*, 24 June 1956. For the purposes of this paper the name Derby will be used throughout in reference to the name of the town, even when the town was still officially called El Paso. The name of the town was officially changed from El Paso to Derby in 1956.

²⁵ Hiskey, "Excerpts Regarding the History of Derby, Kansas Prior to 1937."

²⁶ Hiskey's account puts the Indian Territory at the time as close as 10 miles to the south of where the Garretts settled.

there was, as Hiskey claims, a bountiful supply of deer and other game animals in the area, but his insistence that there was seldom a crop failure and that every farm had a surplus of “fine fruits” puts a gloss on what is known of the natural disasters that struck Kansas in the 1870s, starting with the locust infestation of 1874. A plat map from 1882 does, however, indicate a great many orchards in the township.²⁷

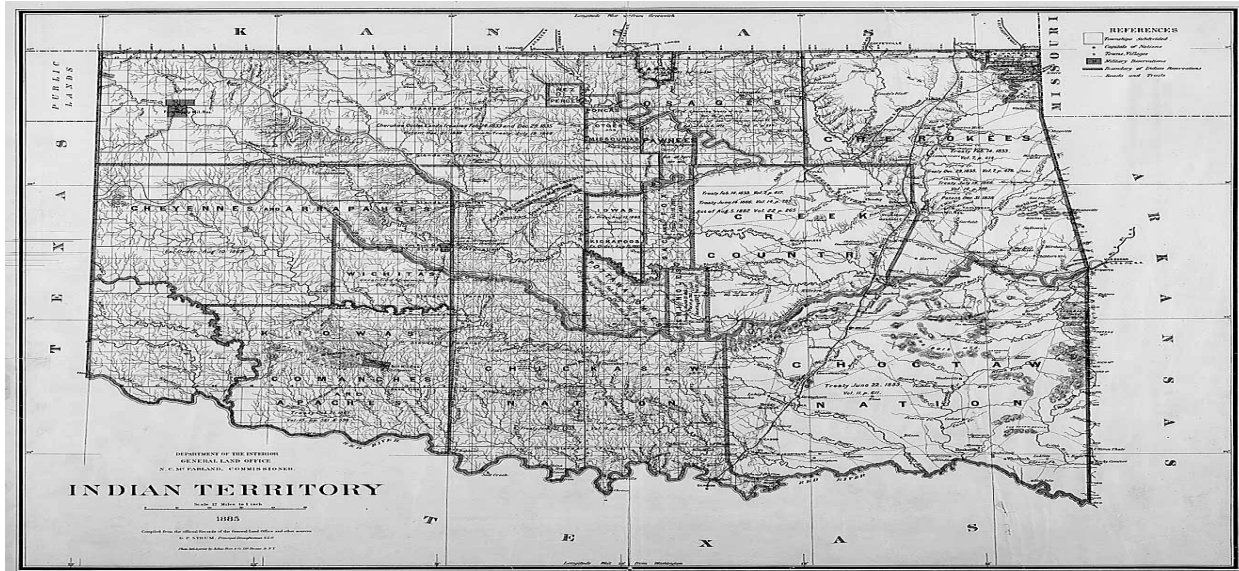


FIGURE 1.3. Map of Indian Territory as of 1885.²⁸

The early settlement of Kansas came in two phases. The first was a rush of over one hundred thousand people from 1854 to 1860 when the Kansas territory was opened, predicated on the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the fight against slavery. Due in large part to Indian treaties that forbade white settlement on Indian lands, prior to 1854 the majority of people seen in the region were those passing through on their way further west, soldiers stationed at forts, traders, missionaries, Indian agents and Indian tribe members.²⁹ The Kansas-Nebraska Act changed everything. Aside from repealing the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the Act gave settlers the

²⁷ Plat map – Figure 2.

²⁸ National Archives and Records Administration, Records of the General Land Office, Record Group 49

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/fed-indian-policy/>

²⁹ Craig Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854-2000* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2002) 34.

right to vote on the issue of slavery in the territory through popular sovereignty.³⁰ In addition, new treaties with the Indians were negotiated that pushed their lands farther West and South, making it easier for whites to settle in the area and prompting Indian Commissioner, George Manypenny to write, “Are treaties made merely for fun and hence to be looked on as maneuvers played off the benefit of a hungry crowd of land speculators?”³¹ The opening of the land to settlers made economic opportunity for farmers, and railroads and entrepreneurs of all types beckoned people from the eastern United States as well as abroad to the newly opened territory.

The second rush of settlers came after the Civil War, between 1870 and 1880, and, this time, settlers came in much greater numbers.³² This wave brought the Garretts and other early settlers to south central Kansas. The land that made up Sedgwick County was an early camping ground of the Osage and Wichita tribes who arrived after being driven from Indian Territory during the winter of 1861-1862. It is recorded that the relations between the white settlers and the Wichita were peaceful and that Native Americans sustained themselves by cultivating and harvesting large fields of corn and vegetables. The tribes did not stay in the area long, however, as the Wichita moved farther south in the fall of 1867.³³

Early settlers came during the 1860s and established small trading posts and farms. Sedgwick County was officially established in 1867, although county officials were not elected until April of 1870, when Wichita was selected as the county seat. In 1870, settlers began to pour into the area, establishing homesteads, trading posts, churches, grocery stores and post

³⁰ The Missouri Compromise of 1820 provided that slavery would be banned in new states lying north of thirty six degrees, thirty minutes north latitude, except for Missouri. The southernmost boundary of Kansas lies at thirty seven degrees north latitude.

³¹ Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854-2000*, 36.

³² James Shortridge, *Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier Kansas* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas 1995) 1.

³³ William Cutler, *History of Kansas* (Chicago, A.T. Andreas, 1883) Wichita Part 1. The center of Sedgwick County is 150 miles from the eastern border of Kansas, 250 miles from the western border, 180 miles from the northern border and 48 miles from the southern border.

offices. A post office opened in El Paso in 1870, and Rockford Township, where Derby is located, was officially formed in May 1871. By 1880, the population of Rockford Township had reached 700, the population of Wichita had grown to 4,911, and the population of Sedgwick County had swelled to 18,753.³⁴

Although the population of south central Kansas was certainly growing, it was still a very sparsely settled part of the state compared to the rest. In the twenty years from 1860 to 1880, the population of Kansas grew from 107,206 to 996,096, with the majority of people by 1870 settling in central Kansas. The Union Pacific Railroad reached Salina in 1867 and was completed on to Denver by 1868. By 1872, the main line of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, which traveled through Newton and extended beyond the Colorado border, had been completed.³⁵ These two railroads played a major part in bringing settlers to the region and economic prosperity to the towns and cities that were formed along their lines. Growth also helped bring more railroads to the area.³⁶

So who were the people, and where did they come from? The majority, 57%, came from the states that made up the middle of the United States, mainly Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. Sixteen percent were originally from the southern United States, 15% were foreign born and 11% were Yankees from the northeastern United States.³⁷ Protestants were predominating among the immigrants, and most blended and adjusted well into the culture and land where they settled.³⁸

³⁴ Ibid.,

³⁵ Shortridge, *Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier Kansas*, 73.

³⁶ Cutler, *History of Kansas*, Wichita, Part 1.

³⁷ Shortridge, *Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier Kansas*, 82.

³⁸ Ibid., 138.

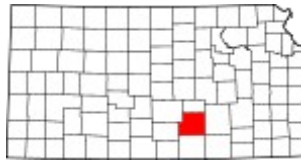


FIGURE 1.4. Sedgwick County is highlighted.

Derby was typical of a lot of small farming communities in the late 19th century, with a merchandise store, blacksmith, wagon shop, a small boarding house and a saloon. The stage coach arriving from Wichita, just twelve miles to the north of Derby, was met by two stages from the south and connected the small town in Rockford Township to Belle Plaine and Wellington to the west and Winfield and Arkansas City to the east.³⁹

Although Wichita was officially named an incorporated city in 1870, the true economic beginning of the town was in 1865 when cattle traders began using what would become known as the Chisholm Trail to drive their cattle north. Due to quarantine laws placed on cattle driven from Texas, Arkansas or other places in Indian Territory, the cattle trade in Kansas, which originally passed through Kansas City and Topeka, had been pushed farther and farther west as counties in eastern Kansas banned cattle from passing through. As a result, the Chisholm Trail, a trail that had been used as a trade route for many years prior to use by the cattle trade, running from the Canadian River in present day Oklahoma north to the headwaters of the Little Arkansas River near Wichita, became a substitute route. Later extended to Abilene, Kansas in 1867, the Trail attracted many of the great cattle drives from Texas.⁴⁰

From 1867 to 1872, nearly 1.5 million head of cattle were driven up the Chisholm Trail to Abilene, the site of a twenty-car sidetrack of the Union Pacific railroad designed for transporting cattle. In fact, in the first year that the cattle trade reached Abilene, nearly thirty-

³⁹ Hiskey, "Excerpts Regarding the History of Derby, Kansas Prior to 1937."

⁴⁰ Jeff Sheets, *The Legacy of the Chisholm Trail, Kansas Revisited: Historical Images and Perspectives*, ed. Paul K. Stuewe (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1997) 155-158.

five thousand head of cattle were driven in and shipped out. The successful use of the trail was aided by its location outside of the counties that had banned the Texas cattle due to fever.

However, the fever that pushed the quarantine line west eventually began to affect farmers and ranchers around Abilene. In 1871, Dickinson County, where Abilene is located, banned the cattle trade and a new post was set up in Ellsworth, sixty miles southwest. In addition, in 1871 the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad made its way to Newton, Kansas creating a major shipping center that would last until 1874.⁴¹

As for Sedgwick County to the south of Newton, the primary growth was not in Derby but twelve miles to the north in Wichita. Settlement in Wichita had grown up around the confluence of the Arkansas and Little Arkansas rivers, a geographical advantage that had attracted farmers and traders.⁴² The river was navigable by ferries, houseboats, large rafts and engineering supply boats to Wichita for two to three months during the “spring rises.” Steam boats, however, could only make it up the river as far as Arkansas City, about forty-five miles southeast of Derby.⁴³ Farmers were attracted to the area because the soil was rich and easily cultivated. Wheat, corn and oats were the principal crops grown. Although the beds of the two rivers sometimes ran dry, water soaked into the sandy soil and ran under the ground, probably the width of the valley, and the sub-irrigation was a great benefit, especially in extremely dry seasons.⁴⁴ Traders, attracted to the area by the abundance that the two rivers created were

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Sondra Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools*, (Shawnee Mission: Inter Collegiate Press, 1977) 2; Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Early Years 1865-1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982) 32. The Arkansas River, a wide and shallow but swift stream, entered the county at the northwest corner and left it near the southeast corner; the Little Arkansas entered the county at the center of the north line, ran south and emptied into the larger river at Wichita.

⁴³ Mary Einsel, *Kansas: The Priceless Prairie* (Coldwater: Mary Einsel, 1976) 61. The river began to shrink by 1885 because of irrigation in Colorado and western Kansas.

⁴⁴ Cutler, *History of Kansas*, Sedgwick County, Part 16.

plentiful. Cattle drivers, Indians and soldiers all came through the area around Wichita, providing a solid market for goods.⁴⁵

Many towns on the frontier had been able to exist and even thrive by providing a center for soldiers in the area, and Wichita had done well for herself, even serving for a short time as a post of its own, known during its brief life as Fort Beecher.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the founders took a gamble on the possibility that Wichita, a little trading post on the Chisholm Trail and a crossing on the government trail between Indian Territory and Fort Harker, would become the cattle capital of Kansas. For this to happen, however, the railroad must come to Wichita. A Topeka paper wrote in 1870, “A road here [Wichita] now would command nearly all of the immense cattle trade of eastern Kansas, as they could be taken from here to St. Louis or Chicago as cheaply as from Abilene.”⁴⁷

However, as previously stated, the A.T.S. & F. routed through Newton and moved westward along the Santa Fe Trail so, in the beginning, attempts at luring the railroad to Wichita failed. Determined to monopolize the cattle trade, in 1872 city and county officials offered up fifteen northern Sedgwick County townships to form a new county with Newton as the county seat. In turn, the new county would support a bond issue for the development of a spur from Newton to Wichita. An agreement was made, and by the end of the year Wichita had both a railroad and a major portion of the cattle trade.⁴⁸ With the arrival of the cattle trade in Wichita the growing town became the new destination for herds of Texas cattle.

The boom that had hit Wichita in the early 1870s made it fairly clear that Wichita was going to be the “big city” of the county. Derby, the second city in the county, but a very distant second, would always be playing a futile game of catch-up with Wichita; any grand dreams of

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Miner, *Wichita: The Early Years 1865-1880*, 31.

⁴⁷ Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools*, 3.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

someday being the gem of the county were just that, dreams. Derby did grow, but at the modest pace of a small trading center for farmers. In 1871, a ferry boat route was started across the Arkansas River, a blacksmith and wagon shop were erected, followed by a second general store and a pharmacy. A schoolhouse was built in 1872, the same year a grocery store and hotel opened. By 1873, a bridge had taken the place of the ferry. The town continued growing, slowly, until a spur of the railroad was completed to the town in July, 1879. The depot was completed in November 1879, and over the following winter, another bridge was constructed to replace the old one, which had been washed away by a flood in 1877.⁴⁹

Indeed, the biggest change for the small town arrived when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad first entered Derby on July 18, 1879. It was hoped that the entrance of the railroad would be a big boost to the town, as it was along a main line of the A.T.S.&F, and from the beginning the railroad had an abundance of business as both a freight and passenger carrier. The railroad did make it easier for farmers to get their crops to market and for travelers to get around, but the only big change the town experienced came in the form of a name change. The Santa Fe railroad gave the name of “Derby” to the town due to the frequent confusion of mail delivery between El Paso, Kansas and El Paso, Texas. Accounts vary as to where the name came from; some say it was named for the derby hat, others say it was named for a local farmer named Derby, and still others say that it was named by a Santa Fe engineer who was reminded of the English Derby when he saw a group of boys racing their horses to meet the train. For some time the name of Derby was used only by the railroad and post office; the town name was not officially changed to Derby until 1956.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Cutler, *History of Kansas*, Sedgwick County, Part 16.

⁵⁰ John Rydjord, *Kansas: Place-Names* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972) 146; “How the Town Was Named” *Derby Reporter*, 29 September 1967.

The citizens of Derby, however, were not quick to give up the hope of becoming a big city. After a fire destroyed much of the town in March 1879, the citizens quickly rebuilt, giving testimony to the resiliency of the townspeople, who were described as men of the “get up and push” variety. The Town Company was reorganized by September, and civic leaders talked about Derby growing bigger than Wichita both in population and business activity. In particular, residents talked about getting the cattle trade from Wichita. According to Derby’s historian, the cattle trade was something that the settlers in Derby desperately wanted to be a part of but could never quite grasp.⁵¹

The cattle trade that bypassed Derby sustained Wichita for most of the 1870s. Throughout the spring and continuing into late fall, hotels and boarding houses were home to nearly a thousand travelers who contributed to what one reporter called a “decidedly heterogeneous” population. An early settler stated that in Wichita one could find “the sleek and well dressed spectacular...; the independent, money making and money spending...cattle drover; the rollicking, reckless, free and easy herder; the substantial citizen; the professional gambler; and the long haired desperado of the plains.”⁵² In 1872, Wichita’s 2,000 permanent residents were enough to allow the city to incorporate as a city of the second class. Towards the latter part of the decade, with the cattle trade moving farther west, Wichitans realized that they needed to create a more diversified economy in order to sustain its growth.⁵³

Wichita did in fact thrive. From the 2,000 residents in 1872, Wichita jumped to almost 5,000 in 1880 and boomed to 23,853 by the end of the decade, although city officials claimed 40,000, due in large part to boom and bust cycles.⁵⁴ This growth was attributed to the railroads

⁵¹ Hiskey, “Excerpts Regarding the History of Derby, Kansas Prior to 1937.”; John Watson, “Pioneers believed that El Paso-Derby Would Outgrow Wichita,” *Wichita Beacon* 24 June 1956.

⁵² Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools*, 4.

⁵³ Miner, *Wichita: The Early Years 1865-1880*, 77, 169.

⁵⁴ R.M. Long, *Wichita Century: A Pictorial History of Wichita, Kansas 1870-1970* (Wichita: The Wichita Historical Museum Association, Inc., 1969) 53. In his book “Kansas: A History” Kenneth S. Davis states that Wichita’s

that ran through the city and the attraction of out of state investment capital, which provided jobs and ample income for newcomers. Businesses such as the Burton Car Works Co., financed by Boston capitalists, a watch factory, and packing houses provided numerous employment opportunities for everyone. Businessmen who had been profiting from the growth of the town gave it nicknames: The Kansas Wonder; Pride of the West; City of Destiny, Athletic Ajax of the Aboundful Arkansas; The New Chicago; Mecca of Men; and the Peerless Princess of the Plains. The physical appearance of the city changed dramatically during the 1880s as well. Telephones arrived in 1881, with the first directory listing 60 subscribers, and electric streetlights were introduced in 1885. Real estate boomed. It was not at all unlikely for a lot to be worth as much as ten times its original value in just a few months. In addition, from January to May 1887 real estate transfers totaled thirty five million dollars.⁵⁵ Housing additions provided living space for over 150,000 people, and the city was planning annexation of more land. Approximately 2,600 buildings were built between June 1886 and June 1887, including nine academies, colleges and universities either under construction or in planning stages. The increase in population gave Wichita enough citizens to become a city of the first class in July 1886.⁵⁶

In the end it was too little, too late for Derby. At a fraction of the size of Wichita, the booster spirit that townspeople tried so hard to cultivate never really materialized.⁵⁷ When it came to “stealing” the cattle trade from Wichita, Derby was too late: the trade was already set to move west again, out of Wichita. As in many other situations, Derby’s grand ideas and plans

population had been 4911 in 1880 and approximated 40,000 in 1888 according to the federal census. Kenneth Davis, *Kansas: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc. 1984), 120.

⁵⁵ Davis, *Kansas: A History*, 124-125.

⁵⁶ Towns all across the state had “boosters” who were successful promoters, real estate agents and developers. “Go getters who built their expansionist plans wherever they happened to settle.” Gerald Nash, *The American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 13; Long, *Wichita Century: A Pictorial History of Wichita, Kansas 1870-1970*, 58; Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools*, 32.

⁵⁷ In 1880, Rockford Township, which included more people than those living in Derby, had a population of 798 – Wichita had a population of 4,911 – therefore Rockford was 16% the size of Wichita making Derby much smaller.

were just that: grand ideas. Instead, Derby celebrated the little things, such as obtaining a stage coach stop, though in reality, the stagecoach stop was just a layover for people who were traveling on to bigger destinations.

Throughout the 1880s, Derby not only did not keep pace with Wichita, but in fact scarcely grew at all. According to the United States Census taken in 1885 the town's population was a mere 273 people.⁵⁸ Although churches were organized and a school system was started, the town was really just a small trading center for the surrounding farm population. Despite hopes for Derby's growth, the small town's population would remain stagnant over the next forty years. The population in 1895 was 275; in 1905 it was 261; it was 258 in 1915 and 284 in 1925.⁵⁹

Derby, nevertheless, served a purpose and had triumphs of its own. Although the cattle trade passed it by, it did survive, unlike many other agricultural communities in the state and in the nation during the period from the Civil War to WWII. Close to six thousand communities in Kansas never made it past the planning stage or, if they did, ceased to exist. Had all those communities survived, combined with the incorporated towns in the state, Kansans would not be able to go seven miles in any direction without encountering another community. Between 1854 and 1890, town promoters and investors perceived building towns as a way to get rich overnight, and in many cases the promoters and investors were very wrong. Many towns died because the promoters guessed wrong about where the railroad companies would lay new tracks or because the town never attained the county seat.⁶⁰ Derby probably should have been one of these six thousand dead communities. It was not along a major railroad line, it did not have major industry, and it never attained the county seat.

⁵⁸ Decennial Census, Kansas: Kansas State Census, 1885 p 249-250.

⁵⁹ Decennial Census, Kansas: Kansas State Census, 1895. Sedgwick County, Townships R-W; Decennial Census, Kansas: Kansas State Census, 1905, Reel 144; Decennial Census, Kansas: Kansas State Census, 1915 Scott County, Sedgwick County Towns A-V; Decennial Census, Kansas: Kansas State Census, 1925 Sedgwick County.

⁶⁰ Daniel Fitzgerald, *Ghost Towns of Kansas: A Traveler's Guide* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988) xi.

From the small hub of surrounding farms, Derby emerged as a trade center community. As one rural sociologist suggested, “a rural community consists of the social interaction of the people and their institutions in the local area in which they live on dispersed farmlands and in a hamlet or village which forms the center of their common activities.”⁶¹ Studies of trade centers indicate that farm families and other rural residents did not travel more than seven or eight miles for their main services, such as household goods, tools and equipment for the farm, school and church.⁶² Derby was perfectly situated in this respect: close enough for farmers to travel in and far enough away from surrounding towns to make it a necessity. As more and more educational, religious and social opportunities sprang up in Derby, it became more and more important; it had a doctor and lawyer; it had a post office. In this very modest sense, it mattered.⁶³

Ironically, Derby turned out to be located “just far enough away” from Wichita to survive. It was far enough away to be able to offer convenient services of its own but still close enough to allow residents to travel to Wichita if the need was there. Ultimately, Derby would grow because it was “just close enough” to Wichita to benefit from a new kind of boom that took hold in Wichita during World War II and beyond. When that happened, Derby would finally feel the advantages and disadvantages of the prosperity that had for so long lingered just out of reach. It too would experience the rapid growth and growing pains that came with a booming town.

⁶¹ Charles Loomis and Allan J. Beegle, *Rural Social Systems: A Textbook in Rural Sociology and Anthropology* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1950) 188.

⁶² *Ibid.* 189.

⁶³ Cutler, *History of Kansas*, Sedgwick County, Part 16. A few of the people who made up Derby were: S.W. McCoy was an attorney who came to Derby in 1874 where he served as Justice of the Peace, member of the school board, treasurer of the school district and notary public; H.C. Tucker was a physician and surgeon who also farmed. He arrived in Derby in 1871 and owned a drug store in town; and Benjamin Ward, a lumber dealer and merchant who came to Derby in 1882 was also a partner in the general merchandising store which carried a full line of goods.

Chapter Two – World War II and the Cold War

“The commitment to a Cold War, based on threat (not action) and on continually improved weapons of extraordinary power and mobility, commandeered the lion’s share of the nation’s research and development capability and fueled a new set of industries – aircraft, communications, electronics, and computing – that were to irrevocably alter the American economic, occupational, and regional landscape.”⁶⁴

For three quarters of a century, Derby had remained a small farming community, never realizing the three-hundred-citizens mark until the late 1940s. Like many other towns, in Kansas in particular and the West in general, Derby should have faded into local history with the modernization and industrialization of farming in the West after World War I. However, the decline of farming as a way of life did not kill Derby: indeed, the community did more than merely survive. Derby boomed from a small town of 432 in 1950 to a small city of 5000 people by 1956. Derby’s ten-fold increase in only six years stemmed from two related factors: its proximity to Wichita and Wichita’s growing place in the new economy of “Gunbelt America.”

Wichita’s transformation began during World War II, primarily because of its importance as an aviation center. The city’s population grew from 114,966 in 1940 to 189,910 by 1943, and continued to grow steadily until the conclusion of the war. The attraction was jobs: Boeing, and to a lesser extent, Cessna and Beech Aircraft companies were the major employers in Wichita. In 1939 only three percent of Wichitans depended on aviation for their livelihood, by 1943 it was an astonishing fifty percent.⁶⁵

The economic surge that sparked the aviation boom was not accidental, but rather the product of intensive lobbying. The Kansas Industrial Development Commission (KIDC) had set

⁶⁴ Ann Markusen, “Cold War Workers, Cold War Communities” in *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, ed. Peter Kuznick and James Gilbert (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 35-60.

⁶⁵ Craig Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854-2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 314.

up office in Washington, D.C. in order to lobby for defense contracts for Kansas. The first major achievement by the KIDC came in 1941 with the establishment of the North American Aviation Plant in Kansas City, Kansas. The plant built B-25s and was eventually producing thirteen bombers per day, which would total over six thousand by the war's end, or sixty-seven percent of all the B-25s produced during World War II.⁶⁶ In Wichita, the impact of the KIDC was even greater. Boeing Wichita landed the contract for the B-29 bomber, producing over sixteen hundred during World War II, or forty-four percent of total production. Beech Aircraft built the AT-10 and AT-11 bomber trainers and Cessna Aircraft manufactured a version of the T-50 Bobcat. Together, Wichita and Kansas City accounted for 92% of the state's total industrial development.

By 1944, Wichita aircraft plants had produced 26,300 planes for use by the armed forces. The remainder of the state contributed 8,200 planes, for a total of 34,500, a sharp contrast to the total of 300 planes produced in Kansas in 1938. Boeing Wichita employed 766 workers in July 1940 and close to thirty thousand by the end of the war. As a whole, the major and minor aircraft plants, with their direct subcontractors, employed close to sixty thousand people in the Wichita area. A significant portion of those workers were drawn from farming communities and were more than welcome at Boeing Wichita, where George Trumbold, then personnel director for the plant, commented that workers with modern farm backgrounds did especially well at manufacturing jobs. Trombold continued:

Most persons from rural areas have been industrious all their lives and are used to hard work. Nearly all Kansas farms are highly mechanized and Kansas farmers have learned the use of power machinery as well as hand tools.

⁶⁶ Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854-2000*, 311.

In 1942, of all the workers at the Boeing Wichita plant, fifty percent had farm backgrounds and were encouraged to keep farming while employed as long as it did not interfere with their work.

Wichita defined what it meant to be a “Boom Town” having the highest volume of war contracts, per capita, of any American city, and, along with San Diego, experienced the most dramatic transformation in the nation.⁶⁷ The Wichita war boom, however, left Derby untouched. With private automobile production halted in 1942 and gas and rubber rationed, the war workforce necessarily lived close to factories, frequently in hastily constructed “boomtowns.”⁶⁸ One such “town,” Planeview, built on Wichita’s south side had become by 1943 the seventh largest town in Kansas.⁶⁹ But for Derby, the twelve miles separating the small village from Wichita might as well have been a thousand. At war’s end, Derby remained what it had always been – a farming hamlet with a population hovering around 250 people. It was classified by the state as a fourth class city and its dirt roads and lack of sewer system indicated that it had earned the designation.

At the end of the war in 1945, Wichita faced an uncertain future. Although the population of the city did not drop off as rapidly as expected, many residents assumed that it was just a matter of time before they were forced to look for work elsewhere. In November of 1945, many of the structures that had made up the quasi-town of Planeview were dismantled, with the plan of completely removing Planeview within two years.⁷⁰ That dismantling was never completed. Before it could be accomplished, the advent of a new war, the Cold War, ushered in a new boom in the city. This time, the boom would not only touch Derby; it would transform it.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 314.

⁶⁸ James Flink, “Three Stages of American Automobile Consciousness” *American Quarterly*, Vol 24 No 4 (Oct 1972): 467.

⁶⁹ Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854-2000*, 221.

⁷⁰ Julie Courtwright, “Want To Build a Miracle City?: War Housing in Wichita.” *Kansas History* 23 (Winter 2000-2001): 231.

The boom that ultimately sparked the growth of Derby began in Wichita and rested, at least initially, on the shoulders of Boeing. Immediately following the war, the government-owned Plant Two in Wichita was shut down, and the greatly reduced staff withdrew to the original Plant One. However, with the advent of the Cold War and, specifically, the desire for a long-range bomber that could reach the Soviet Union, the decline in Wichita's largest aircraft manufacturing plant was reversed. In 1947, Boeing Wichita was chosen over the company's main headquarters in Seattle to produce the revolutionary B-47 Stratojet.⁷¹ This project sparked the postwar rejuvenation of Wichita.

As technological advances and the ongoing escalation of the Cold War triggered the demand for more sophisticated aircraft, Boeing and the other airplane manufacturers in Wichita were able to answer the call. By 1957, at the peak of the B-52 program, Boeing employed 35,000 and replaced General Motors as the nation's largest defense contractor. In the years between 1940 and 1955, manufacturing employment in Wichita increased 487%, and retail sales expanded 787%. According to Craig Miner, a prolific Wichita historian, "never again would [Wichita] operate even close to the entirely 'private city' it had once imagined itself as being."⁷²

The new, more sophisticated, military aircraft required extensive pilot training. Since the bulk of the new planes were to be constructed in Wichita, military officials decided to establish an "air academy" in the city.⁷³ On June 5, 1951, the city authorized Wichita Municipal Airport, which already shared its facilities with the Air Force, to serve as a training center for B-47 bomber crews. By September, a federal investigative panel recommended that the Air Force take sole possession of the facilities. Because of the airport's close proximity to Boeing on the

⁷¹ Ann Markusen, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell, and Sabina Deitrick, *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 169.

⁷² Ibid., 170. Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Magic City; An Illustrated History* (Wichita: Wichita - Sedgwick County Historical Museum, 1988), 193.

⁷³ Miner, *Wichita: The Magic City; An Illustrated History*, 194

southeast side of Wichita as well as the federal government's accrued investment in Boeing of approximately \$89,000,000, the panel also recommended that Wichita's municipal airport be moved to a location west of town, where new facilities would be built and paid for with federal funds. The military paid to build the new airport facilities in lieu of actually purchasing the older facilities from the city.⁷⁴

To accommodate the 15,000-plus servicemen and workers who were brought to Wichita to create the 3520th Combat Crew Training Wing, the Air Force initiated an on-base building project, which, when completed, totaled close to \$22 million. The improvements made to the base included 490 Capehart style-housing units, ten miles of paved streets, two hangars, as well as clubs, a theater, commissary, bank, hospital and base exchange. As the base began to grow, it became apparent that it would be a permanent fixture in south central Kansas. "The Wichita Air Force Base is part of the nation's long-range plan for building and maintaining a first class air arm," base commandant Colonel H. R. Spicer said "We're in jet bombing to stay." Quickly, the base turned into a highly specialized training center, and in June 1952, the 3520th was re-designated as the 3520th Flying Training Wing. Later that year, the Air Force officially took over what was formerly the Wichita Municipal Airport as its own. The base was designated as the Wichita Air Force Base on May 15, 1953, only to have its name permanently changed to McConnell Air Force Base eleven months later, on April 12, 1954.⁷⁵

Even with all the new construction, McConnell Air Force Base quickly outgrew its fences, and this time Derby was the direct beneficiary. Less than five miles away from McConnell and in close proximity to Boeing, the small town would capitalize on not only

⁷⁴ William P. Helm, "Air Force Base Due to Get Present Field Alone After September 1: Government School Is Expected to Move In Soon; U.S. Will Pay For Building of Replacement Port" *Wichita Morning Eagle*, 21 February 1951.

⁷⁵ "Local Airbase Activated Just One Year Ago Thursday" *Wichita Evening Eagle*, 5 June 1952; "Wings Over Kansas: McConnell Air Force Base," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 25 (Summer 1959): 339; "Team McConnell's History" <http://www.mcconnell.af.mil/history.html>, accessed 11 September 2002.

Wichita's boom but also on the growth of the automobile culture of the 1950s. Perfectly located for the commuter, Derby began to grow and grow very quickly.

In 1954, local and state newspapers reported Derby as the "fastest growing little city in the country." The population of the town had nearly tripled in just a year, from 950 to 2,500. Estimates indicated that ten to twenty families a week were moving into Derby, and city council members struggled with a lack of funds to meet the needs of the fast-paced growth. For the first time in its history, Derby had to deal with building an infrastructure and creating public services. A volunteer fire department was formed complete with its own engine, and a new water system was in the works, as well as new schools and improved community facilities.⁷⁶

Most urgently, in 1953, Derby put in a sewer line in response to the rapid building of home construction and in anticipation of future development. The sewer system was vital to the growth of the small community, as real estate developers could not build on land that was not connected to a main sewer line. The construction spurred further growth, particularly in housing, and as early as February of 1954, the town was once again struggling to keep the sewer plant in step with the town's expansion.⁷⁷

It is undeniable that the growth of Derby, and the atmosphere that dominated the town, was owed to the presence of the aircraft industry and McConnell Air Force Base in nearby Wichita. "At almost any hour of the day or night, the roar of big jet airplane engines is likely to be heard at Derby...Most citizens realize that strong public protests about jet plane noise would be ironical because the overwhelming majority of wage-earners at Derby are employed in some phase of the manufacture of jet bombers," claimed a Wichita newspaper in 1956.⁷⁸ The contribution of Boeing to the economic stability of the growing community was particularly

⁷⁶ "A Town Leaps in Size," *Kansas City Star*, 20 June 1954.

⁷⁷ Ibid.; Derby City Council Meeting, 23 February 1954.

⁷⁸ Gene Smith, "Once-Tiny Derby Now Sedgwick County's Second Biggest Town: Community Close to Boeing Acquires Many New Citizens - And Some Problems," *Wichita Evening Eagle*, 28 September 1956.

notable. Early in September 1956, Derby reported that 880 Boeing employees lived in the town. With Boeing's average salary of \$4,300, the worker's combined payroll brought a minimum of \$3.8 million dollars into the community annually.⁷⁹ That number is, however, almost certainly higher. Derby tended to draw more of Boeing's managerial class, and its members earned more than the Boeing average. One measure of their relative affluence is reflected in property valuations, particularly compared with another small town close to Wichita that benefited from the boom in the aircraft industry. Haysville, just to the west of Derby but closer to south Wichita, was home to only one hundred residents in 1950. By 1956, its population had exploded to 4,000, and it was officially the third largest town in Sedgwick County. Like Derby, Haysville's growth was primarily the product of aircraft employees searching for homes. Unlike Derby, however, Haysville attracted more blue collar workers and eventually was home to several industrial concerns, most notably the Vulcan Chemical Company. Moreover, the total property valuation in Haysville by 1956, while representing a huge increase over 1950, was much smaller per capita than that of Derby.

By 1959, it was reported that ninety percent of the working population of Derby was employed at the air plants.⁸⁰ Even when layoffs occurred, things never seemed to be as bad in Derby as they might have been elsewhere, a further indication that Derby's population growth was built upon the less vulnerable managerial class. Elwood Jones, a local banker, commented on one set of layoffs and their effect on Derby, saying, "Of course there is a feeling of insecurity caused, in part, by the layoffs in the aircraft industry. But Derby wasn't affected as badly as some places!"⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.; Thelda Delamarter, interview by author, tape recording, Derby, KS, 11 April 2003.

⁸¹ Jill Wood, "Years End Survey of Derby - Haysville Disproves Prophets of Gloom - Doom," *Derby-Haysville Star-Herald*, 29 December 1960.

Indeed, by 1960, Derby's population stood at 6,200, and the boom showed no sign of ending; the expansion of sewer lines and housing construction were the town's most prominent themes. A picture that ran in the *Derby Reporter* in July of 1963 depicted water lines being installed for a new housing division in Derby; the caption read:

How Derby Grows...Observers of Derby's municipal status often point out that the city's growth is not in fits and starts, but is gradual and sometimes so unspectacular that it goes unnoticed up to a point. Here in English's Second Addition, the El Paso Waster Company puts down an extension of its lines. Not much of an extension, about 170 feet. But in a while it will go another 170 feet or so to reach new customers. And so it goes, little by little, but solid.⁸²

Building permit results from 1962 were healthy, showing figures reaching nearly one million dollars; a number looked upon with satisfaction by many Derby businesses and professional people. The pricing trend for houses in Derby was also on the rise. Of the thirty-two houses built in the latter half of 1962, twenty-one were built for under \$10,000. By July of 1963, nineteen houses had been constructed in Derby, all for more than \$10,000 each, with two being built for more than \$15,000. In fact, it was reported that some of the houses currently on the market were not selling quickly because buyers were looking for higher-priced homes than those available.⁸³

Perhaps the biggest effect that the military buildup and related industry had on Derby, outside of the population change, was the effect that the increased population had on the Derby school district. The fact that McConnell and Boeing, as well as the Oaklawn section of south Wichita, were officially in the Derby school district turned out to be a boon: the school system was eligible for large government grants. The federal dollars eased many of the problems that Derby may have otherwise faced when building adequate facilities for its students. In 1957, the district received a grant of \$45,050 that covered half of its operating budget. The grant was

⁸² "How Derby Grows," *Derby Reporter*, 11 July, 1963.

⁸³ "Derby Building Permits \$686,900," *Derby Reporter*, 23 July 1963.

given because of the “federal impaction” that was present in Derby. Due to the large concentration of students whose parents were employed by the government at Boeing, McConnell Air Force Base and related industries that held government contracts, Derby received aid to alleviate the burden on the local taxpayers.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Public Law 388, which authorized federal payments in lieu of taxes for government property removed from local tax rolls, that is, the government property occupied by the Air Force and Boeing, provided \$360,000 to Derby schools in 1958 and \$461,784 in 1959. In addition, employees of the aircraft plant were valuable to the city of Derby for another reason. A “head count” was taken each year under Public Law 874 that provided for the school district to receive money for each child whose parents were working or residing, or both, on federal property within the district.⁸⁵ Largely fueled by those federal dollars, the Derby school district witnessed spectacular growth throughout the period. Nine new schools were built in the decade of the 1950s alone. A new high school and numerous new grade school buildings furnished space for 2,372 grade school students and 611 high school students.⁸⁶ By 1955, the average daily attendance in Derby public schools was nearly 2,500 students.⁸⁷

For the Wichita area, the fear of economic decline in the immediate postwar years was an unfounded one. Instead, the area found itself transformed by the impact of Cold War federal spending. In the city of Wichita itself, population grew 122% over the two decades after 1940, from 114,966 inhabitants in 1940 to over a quarter of a million in 1960; in the state of Kansas in general, the growth rate during the same period was only 21%.⁸⁸ That kind of growth has been

⁸⁴ James E. Ruffin, “Public School Crises in Wichita: A Time for Change,” *Everybody*, September/October 1971, 27.

⁸⁵ “Derby School Aid Alarm Played Down by Superintendent,” *Derby-Haysville Star-Herald*, 24 May 1960.

⁸⁶ Smith, “Once-Tiny Derby Now Sedgwick County's Second Biggest Town: Community Close to Boeing Acquires Many New Citizens - And Some Problems,” *Wichita Evening Eagle*, 28 September 1956

⁸⁷ Alice Shrink, “History of Derby, Kansas, 1938-1963,” Archives of Unified School District #260.

⁸⁸ Gretchen Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-1972* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) 20.

analyzed in *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America*. In this work, Ann Markusen and her coauthors categorize the transformations experienced by the cities of the emerging gunbelt and note five different types of “model” transformations.

Model A is what Markusen et al. label “The Seedbed Transformed,” by which they mean a city that possessed an already established center or industry that then reoriented itself toward the emerging military mission and market in the postwar era. Such cities, the authors argue, overcame major obstacles, such as the hold that more established industries had on resources and local attitudes.⁸⁹

Model B describes the “Upstart Military Industrial City,” a city far from existing industrial centers in which a single individual or small group starts up a military-oriented firm, often times with military support. Such cities grew in part, the authors believe, because there were no encumbrances, such as competing industries or a fixed business culture, to impede the impact of federal spending.⁹⁰

Model C is the “Booster Incubated Military Industrial Complex,” a city that vigorously promoted itself through the formation of a strong local coalition, often including members of Congress. A favorable outcome for the city, the authors suggest, usually depended on it being able to offer something special, such as a local resource, a piece of land, surplus capital, or a unique environmental setting. The growth of a Model C town, once it has the military installation, depends on the town’s ability to develop economies like those of established places and to draw other special defense service contractors to the area.⁹¹

The final two models, D and E, depend upon, in the case of Model D (the “Military Educational Complex”), an expanded link between local universities and military funded

⁸⁹ Ann Markusen, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell and Sabina Deitrick, *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 47.

⁹⁰ Markusen, et al. *Rise of the Gunbelt*, 48.

⁹¹ Ibid.

research;⁹² or, in the case of Model E (the “Installation Based Military Industrial Complex”), a place at the center of burgeoning defense related entities. Washington D.C. is the ultimate example of Model E.⁹³

Wichita can be thought of as a combination of both a Model A (“Seedbed Transformed”) and a Model C (“Booster Incubated Military Industrial Complex”) city. As a “seedbed transformed,” Wichita, which had already established itself as a cattle hub and agricultural center when World War II started, transformed itself into one of the main aircraft producers of the war. As a “Booster Incubated Military Industrial Complex,” Wichita is perhaps the most distinctive. It was the work of local supporters and national leaders that brought the air force base to Wichita. The foundation of the aircraft plants was the city’s “something special,” and that foundation allowed the two factions to come together. After the mid-1950s, Boeing became somewhat dependent on McConnell for stability and business. In fact, the authors state that “despite its commercial origin, the Wichita plant [Boeing] owed its survival to the rise of atmospheric warfare.”⁹⁴ Wichita would eventually grow beyond the early town boosters’ most optimistic dreams to metropolitan stature, with a population close to 300,000 a little more than a century after it was first settled.

But what of Derby? Though it fits into none of the models offered by Markusen and her colleagues, it represents a whole distinct category of gunbelt growth: the rise of small, suburban towns, created almost overnight by their accidental proximity to gunbelt cities and fueled by the impact of federal spending and the rise of automobile culture.

Derby is a prime example of what could be labeled a “suburban boomtown.” Its population in the 1940s was under 350 people, and by 1960 it had exploded to 6,201. This was a

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Markusen, et al, *Rise of the Gunbelt*, 168.

result of the installation of McConnell Air Force Base in 1951 and increased government contracts with the aircraft manufacturers around Wichita. Leaving its agricultural roots far behind, Derby would in the 1960s and beyond seek to create itself as a kind of white, middle-class paradise. The question it would face was whether twelve miles could insulate it from the social changes that rocked Wichita during a tumultuous period.

Chapter Three –A “Family Oriented” Town

In March of 1960, Don O’Neill, the editor of the *Derby-Haysville Star-Herald*, wrote an editorial discussing the growth of Derby. O’Neill’s particular concern was “heritage,” the town’s sense of its own history. He gently chided the many newcomers to the area who had, he claimed, move in and taken up the traditions of their former towns without regard to the history and ways of their new town. Insisting that a town without a history had no past glory to live up to and no ideals to look back on, O’Neill called on the new residents to take up the cause of Derby, rather than remaining “hometowners”:

Perhaps the average resident...is too much more interested in their former hometowns, to the extent that they haven’t realized that they are now residents of a new city. One which they have helped build and one which is their responsibility to promote.

O’Neill further noted that Derby was not run by an elite group of people who had lived there for many years. Instead, “strangers among strangers” had come together to form a city government that was run on a conglomeration of ideas on how to live and how to run things. O’Neill concluded his editorial by calling on those who did know the history of Derby to tell it in order that the town would have something to grow on, a heritage to build upon.⁹⁵

One has to suppose that O’Neill’s editorial fell upon mostly deaf ears. By 1960, Derby’s population had reached 6,200, more than 90% of whom had lived in the town for less than ten years: the history that Derby would embrace would be its most recent history, its “heritage” extending back no further than a decade. In one respect, O’Neill had it exactly right: Derby’s public life was led by newcomers. And throughout the 1950s, those “hometowners” demonstrated a remarkable consensus regarding what sort of town they were trying to create.

⁹⁵ Don O’Neill, “On This Side,” *Derby-Haysville Star-Herald*, 15 March 1960.

Ray Warren and Thelda Delamarter were two of those newcomers, arriving with their families in the early 1950s. In retrospect, both agree that when they first came to Derby their neighbors quickly accepted them. Delamarter, a teacher from Oklahoma, and her family quickly found their niche in the community, primarily through their involvement in church activities.⁹⁶ Warren, a real estate developer, also recalls an easy acceptance to the community, primarily, he believes, because everyone around him was in a similar situation. To him, Derby was different because it did not have long established roots like other towns that had been successful centers of trade and commerce for many years. Moreover, Warren considers Derby “lucky” in that it had many middle income people who were “better than average educated,” and who stepped forward to take positions on the school board and on the city council.

The importance of the homogeneity of Derby’s new residents can be seen in the actions of the city government that they dominated. In 1953, Derby earned its designation as a “second class” city. A city with a population of more than 2,000 and less than 15,000 becomes a city of the second class by proclamation by the governor. Upon becoming a city of the second class, the town is divided into wards and is no longer part of the surrounding township.⁹⁷ Dividing the town into wards ensures that representation of the people will be equal on the city council and enables the city council to provide more adequately for the needs of the town. Until a city becomes a city of the second class, it remains part of the corporate limits of the township where it is located.⁹⁸

In June of 1953, city leaders created a planning commission whose members, appointed by the mayor and city council, were responsible for many key aspects of Derby’s future growth

⁹⁶ Ray Warren, interview by author, tape recording, Derby, KS, 12 April 2003; Thelda Delamarter, interview by author, tape recording, Derby, KS, 11 April 2003.

⁹⁷ K.S.A. 14-101. Change in classification of city from city of third class to city of second class; governor's proclamation; when change effective; division of city into wards; registration of voters.

⁹⁸ K.S.A. 15-104. City to remain a part of corporate limits of township.

and development. The commission, for example, considered and approved new plats submitted for annexation by the city proper. The planning commission also helped in preparing zoning ordinances, which included zoning for commercial and residential areas.⁹⁹ One of the first things that the planning commission did as a board was to decide that Derby would no longer allow trailer courts, trailer camps or trailer houses, other than those already established, to be within the city limits.¹⁰⁰

Such decisions were obviously not neutral in their consequences. Rather, they represented a type of “boosterism” that looked upon the growing town’s future as one that catered to the middle class, perhaps even the upper middle class.

Tellingly, many of the older, original inhabitants would have liked to see the population level off at 5,000 or 6,000 people, but city planners were thinking in terms of creating a city that could hold 20,000 people.¹⁰¹ “Old timers,” as they were called, wanted leaders to be more conservative in their spending money for improvements such as paved streets. Many wanted a “pay as you go” approach, while others thought if the money was spent, then people would move to the town.¹⁰² City planners recognized that someday Derby would be in a position to establish parks and other public facilities that it could not then afford.¹⁰³

All of this is not to say that there were no skirmishes between newer residents and those who had called Derby home when it was not more than a trade center for local farmers. One of the earliest complaints was in regard to traffic. Residents who had been in Derby longer, in particular, complained about people speeding through town, driving on the wrong side of the

⁹⁹ Derby City Council Meeting, June 2 1953.

¹⁰⁰ Derby City Council Meeting, November 10, 1953.

¹⁰¹ Gene Smith, “Once-Tiny Derby Now Sedgwick County’s Second Biggest Town: Community Close to Boeing Acquires Many New Citizens – And Some Problems.” *Wichita Evening Eagle* 28 September 1956.

¹⁰² Don Pinkston, “Election Issues Divide Derby Old-Timers, Newcomers,” *Wichita Evening Eagle*, 1 April 1955.

¹⁰³ Today the Derby Park Board manages seven parks as well as the Derby Recreation Commission that provides recreational programs for people of all ages. Derby also has a large indoor swimming pool, family aquatic park and golf course.

road, and “hot-rodding” up and down the street and in residential districts. In response, city council members worked to establish a police force, which was put in place in the middle of the decade.¹⁰⁴

Other issues more clearly demonstrated the fault line between the older residents and Derby’s new boosters. Warren recalls an opportunity that arose for the town when he was just starting out in his business as a real estate developer. In 1960, Hidden Lakes Golf Course, which at the time was a private country club located on the southeast side of Wichita, was offered to the town at a real cost of \$185,000, a price that Warren calls “outstanding” for a developed golf course. For Warren and other boosters, the golf course represented a huge attraction for business and further residential growth. The opposition was, however, fierce. Led by a group of citizens comprised mainly of the original 350 residents, opponents argued that a golf course was something for “the rich, the elite, the aristocratic and nobody needed a golf course.” The group spearheaded a drive against the purchase, and when the golf course came to a referendum vote, it was defeated.¹⁰⁵

The defeat of the golf course referendum, however, was about the last time that older residents determined, even temporarily, the course of further development. In most instances, the new and growing majority prevailed in their attempts to create and grow a community that increasingly styled itself as a “great place to raise a family.” Such a commitment could take a number of forms, but all of them tended to create a town centered on life for middle class families. Derby, for example, increasingly expanded its recreational facilities. Land was given for a municipal pool in July of 1963. Just a few days after the pool opened in 1964, lights were

¹⁰⁴ Derby City Council Meeting, June 8, 1954.

¹⁰⁵ Warren; Hidden Lakes is now in Derby’s city limits. In addition, Derby Golf and Country Club has recently been completed well within the city limits.

added to the baseball field to allow for night games. Friday night “drive in” movies were offered free and open to the public, street dances were held regularly, and carnivals were planned.

More importantly, the school system became a central community concern. With its budget significantly enhanced by federal dollars, growth was rapid. By 1965, Derby had seven elementary schools that, combined, benefited from \$1,597,020 in federal funds; two junior highs that accepted \$511,223 in federal money; and one senior high that received \$45,842.¹⁰⁶ Size wise, Derby had made its way into the top ten school districts in Kansas. This enabled the school system to facilitate many courses, special services and activities that otherwise could not have been efficiently offered.¹⁰⁷

Speaking about the school system in 1967 Derby Superintendent L.L. Van Petten said that in his first year on the job he had immediately noticed that the people of Derby expected a lot of their schools and that reflected, to him, the type of people who lived in the town. Van Petten continued, “There is one noticeable factor here which can be best described as a highly mobile community... I have noticed in my observations, elsewhere and here, that air force and industrial areas where the turnover is rather rapid, parents demand the best in educational facilities for their children. It is one of the areas in which mobile life has made great demands on education. They search out the best schools for their children.”¹⁰⁸

In fact, the Derby school district took excellent care of its students. Average costs per pupil for first through eighth grades in Derby were nearly eleven dollars higher than the national average at \$350.78 compared to \$340.00 and nearly twenty-one dollars higher than the state average, which was \$330.00. In addition, nationally, school districts received 57% of financial resources from local sources, 40% from state sources and 4% from federal sources. Derby,

¹⁰⁶ “The ‘Strengths’ of Unified District #260,” Derby USD 260 Board of Education, 1966.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Superintendent Pleased by Cultural Expression.” *Derby Reporter*, 20 September 1967; Van Petten estimated that the children of air force personnel spent about three years, on average, in one particular school.

because it was located so close to McConnell Air Force Base, depended on local sources for 51.8% of its funding, the state for 21.6%, the federal government for 24.9% and miscellaneous sources for 1.7%.¹⁰⁹ Although money is not the only indicator of how good a school system is, it can be inferred that schools with more money can provide better programs than schools with less.

The higher standard that the town set for itself was constantly heralded to the outside world. Such statements as “The Derby school system has a state wide reputation for excellence and there is no doubt that an active community interest and constructive action will help maintain this standard,” or others such as “Let’s wake up! Derby has been able to boast of one of the finest school systems in the state of Kansas. There is no reason to let this standard be tossed aside. We still want people to move to Derby to educate their offspring,” were used to describe the town¹¹⁰

Using the school system as a draw for incoming residents was a common ploy of Derby leaders and the Chamber of Commerce. And it worked. With the beginning of the school year each year, student numbers were consistently on the rise, with each year’s number reported as the “highest in school history.” For the 1957-1958 school year, the small town registered 3,846 students in its entire school system; by 1965, Derby boasted 5,058, total students and the size of the senior class had more than tripled in just eight years, jumping from 111 students to 366.

Further growth was the ongoing goal of the town’s planners. At a meeting of the Derby Planning Commission in 1963, members were told that studies suggested Derby would grow to 7500 citizens by 1975 and perhaps twenty thousand by 1980.¹¹¹ Such growth, of course, required a constant upgrading of the infrastructure. Those in favor of expending public funds for the

¹⁰⁹ Derby School Board Meeting Minutes, January 1961.

¹¹⁰ “Derby School Board Works Overtime,” *Derby-Haysville Star-Herald* 7 March 1961; Larry Ricketts, “As I See It,” *Derby Reporter*, 7 February 1962.

¹¹¹ “Derby Population May Reach 7500,” *Derby Reporter*, 12 August 1963.

expansion of sewer lines and streets spoke out, saying that Derby needed to stick its neck out and continue to do so in order for the town to continue to grow, and to grow “as necessary for a community to get the library, hospitals, and sufficient shopping area that it needs.”¹¹² The forces in favor of expansion usually carried the argument.

By 1963, Derby had begun to market its community on Wichita radio. In September of that year Derby had begun promoting itself on Wichita radio through a thirteen-week segment called “The City of Derby Big Minute of News” on the KAKE network. The Derby Chamber of Commerce teamed up with the El Paso Water Company to run the thirty-second statements that touted the many positive aspects of Derby as a community to live and work in. The marketing campaign bragged about Derby’s growth and touted its convenient proximity to Wichita:

What makes Derby grow? In just 10 years, the population of Derby, Kansas has increased from 500 to 6000! Families are attracted to Derby because of the outstanding school system...because of lower taxes...newer homes...and convenience: Derby is only minutes from downtown Wichita! Paved streets...favorable utility rates...ample supply of the finest water...all contribute to Derby’s desirability! The El Paso Water Company and the Derby Chamber of Commerce invite you to visit Derby. In fact, why not...drive to Derby today!

In other ways, the ads seemed to emphasize Derby’s cultural distance from urban Wichita, particularly with its emphasis upon “niceness”:

Derby, Kansas welcomes you! Yes, you’ll sense the friendly attitude the minute you drive into Derby! You’ll see it in the smiles of the people who serve you in Derby’s modern stores and facilities. You’ll feel it in the cordial small town atmosphere! Derby, Kansas...a growing community, building for the future! Investigate YOUR future in Derby, only 15 minutes from downtown Wichita. Derby, Kansas has houses to fit all pocketbooks, one of the finest volunteer fire departments...many ideal industrial locations! Friendly, vigorous, progressive...a NICE place to live! Drive to Derby today! In all of these radio spots, what Derby sold was not so much its reality, but a nostalgia for

an older vision of “main street” America:

If you cherish pleasant memories of a childhood spent in a small town...if you want your children to grow up in that same wholesome atmosphere, consider Derby,

¹¹² “Mayor Crane Presents Views on Annexation,” *Derby Reporter*, 6 December 1963.

Kansas as your future home. Derby combines the vigor of a progressive growing community with the friendly charm of a small town. Derby offers an exceptionally fine school system...17 churches, a daily newspaper... a modern well-manned police force... paved streets... newer spacious homes... fine shopping facilities, with another new shopping center to be completed before the end of the year! A fine place to raise a family...Derby, Kansas. Drive to Derby today!¹¹³

What is most important about this marketing campaign is that it demonstrates that Derby was setting itself up to attract a very particular segment of the population, a segment defined primarily by economic status and, by extension, race. In 1976 Jack Pulley, vice president of the Farmers and Merchants State Bank in Derby, bragged about the town saying that one unique factor of the town was that it was highly family oriented. In addition Derby was ranked first or second in the state each year in per capita income.¹¹⁴ Another way to put this is to say that, beginning in the 1950s, Derby's city had quite consciously built a suburb.

In fact, Derby was like many other "suburbs" all across the nation that were typical of urban development in the post-war era. In his book *Crabgrass Frontier*, Kenneth Jackson lays out five main characteristics that these new developments had in common. The first and most obvious is that, like Derby, the towns were located on the periphery of cities, which allowed for unlimited growth. Although there were towns to the south (Mulvane), east (Rose Hill) and west (Haysville) of Derby, they were much smaller and allowed for at least five miles of growth on each side. Second, people in suburbs were able to spread out and away from their neighbors. They moved from the city, where houses were packed together, to the suburbs, where new homes were being built that had yards and room to play. The third characteristic that post-war suburbs shared was the architectural similarity of the homes that were being built. Derby was no stranger to this characteristic; rows of ranch style houses sprung up all over the town in

¹¹³ "Promotion of Derby Underway," *Derby Reporter*, 30 September 1963.

¹¹⁴ Patty Burnett, "Derby's Pride Propels Choir," *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, 12 June 1976.

the 1950s, keeping building costs low for families looking to move away from the city. Along the same lines, the fourth characteristic of postwar housing was its easy availability and the lowering of the purchase price. Finally, and what would later prove to be a big draw for Derby, the fifth characteristic of growing suburban towns was their economic and racial homogeneity.¹¹⁵

No characteristic of postwar suburban development is more obvious in Derby than its racial homogeneity. In 1960, although the population of the town had grown by more than six thousand people since 1950, the percentage of non-white residents in the town was less than one percent. In 1958, there were no African American students in the senior class of Derby High School. Nor were there any in the senior class of 1965. Indeed, during this period, virtually all of the African American students who attended the district's schools were children of officers at the air base, and as such, they came from well-educated and relatively affluent households. Those households were also perceived to be "well-disciplined," which may explain why early white residents claim that these children "had no problems" and "fit in at school." They were not, in other words, poor urban African Americans. About the only "racial incidents" that these white residents can remember are minor. Mary Dameron, for example, recalled a time in her junior year of high school when the prom king and queen were to be presented at halftime of a basketball game. The year would have been 1961:

The student body voted on the top contestants from a list of candidates. The king traditionally kissed the queen. This particular year the king and queen were base kids from McConnell. The queen was a lovely blond girl that was a cheerleader with me. The king was an African American basketball player. My father was on the school board and got several concerned phone calls about what would happen if the African American king kissed the white queen at halftime of the homecoming game. It all worked out just fine. I think he gave her a quick peck on the cheek as he presented the queen with a bouquet of roses.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 238-241.

¹¹⁶ Mary Dameron, interview by author, tape recording, Derby, KS, 16 April 2003.

So long as the minority numbers remained small, and so long as African American families were perceived to be “just like us,” the racial turmoil of the 1960s seemed far removed.

In truth, that turmoil was only twelve miles away. Wichita had spent the previous decade not only becoming less white but also more divided over school policy. From 1940 to 1960, the population of Wichita grew 122%, overshadowing the growth for the rest of the state during the same time, which was a mere 21%. More specifically, during the 1950s the African American population in Wichita more than doubled, with more African American families moving to Wichita, often for jobs in the aircraft industry or for military service at McConnell Air Force Base. African American neighborhoods became highly diversified socioeconomically, with doctors, lawyers, teachers, janitors and cooks living next door to the impoverished and unemployed. During the middle decade of the twentieth century the African American population increased from 8,802 to 19,861, making up 7.8 percent of the population of Wichita. As a result of the population influx, the city had to build thirty-six new elementary schools between 1948 and 1958, all of which were segregated.¹¹⁷

African American housing developments were restricted to a few sections of the city, the largest and most congested being northeast Wichita. Whereas real estate salesmen had previously only sold homes to African American families in African American areas, they began to see more financial opportunity by selling homes in white neighborhoods to African Americans and then playing on white fears. Agents would sell a home in a white neighborhood to an African American family and then call other white residents in the area, informing them of their new neighbors and asking them if they wanted to sell before property values began to decrease.

The practice, called “block busting,” intensified white anxiety and ironically became a self-

¹¹⁷ Gretchen Cassel Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-1972* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) 20-21; Sondra Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools* (Shawnee Mission: Inter Collegiate Press, 1977) 272; “Post Office Goes First Class July 1” *Derby Reporter*, 28 June 1963.

fulfilling prophecy for whites. Because property values are directly tied to the number of homes on the market, whites selling their homes to get away from African Americans hurt themselves and their selling profit.¹¹⁸

The situation was not any better for African American families moving to town because of jobs at McConnell Air Force Base. On-post housing was in short supply, and many African American servicemen were forced to find their own housing in the outside community. To make matters worse, at least one Wichita real estate developer stated quite openly, “This [on-post housing] development is for the Caucasian race.”¹¹⁹

By the beginning of the 1960s, 90% of Wichita’s African American population was concentrated in seven contiguous census tracts, and residential segregation continued to rise. At the start of the decade Wichita was 95.3% segregated, four percent more than at the start of the previous decade. A report to the Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Commission in 1962 stated that “Wichita is one of the most tightly segregated cities in the nation in terms of residence,” ranking fourteenth out of 211 cities throughout the United States.¹²⁰ Not helping matters was the 1960 census for Wichita, which showed that 65 percent of nonwhites held unskilled jobs compared to only 9 percent of whites.¹²¹ Local attorney Chester Lewis led a successful campaign in the 1960s for a fair housing ordinance. In 1967 he stated that “there are 25,000 Negroes in Wichita with about 18,000 of them stakeless, powerless and hopeless.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-1972*, 22.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 75. Executive Order 11063 was signed by President Kennedy in 1962 and was the federal policy statement against segregated housing in federally sponsored housing.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 24.

¹²¹ Ibid., 105.

¹²² Craig Miner, *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854-2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002) 346. Lewis also advised the Wichita NAACP Youth Council when in 1958 a dozen members staged an organized sit in at the Dockum Drug Store downtown. The disruption of business, caused when the students sat expectantly at the front counter instead of at a takeout window in the back, forced the entire Rexall chain, of which Dockum was a part, to begin serving African Americans at the counter alongside everyone else.

Without fair housing and equal jobs, the respect and equality that the African American citizens of Wichita were seeking would be hard to come by.

Similar to the African American residents of Wichita, African American students were restricted to the northeast section of the city. Isley, Ingalls, and Skinner elementary schools, which all held a predominantly white student population at the beginning of the decade, gradually turned into predominately African American schools, with white teachers requesting to be transferred out. Mathewson Intermediate School, which was built in a predominantly white neighborhood in 1951, also transitioned to African American during the 1950s. By 1959, there was only one elementary school in the northeast area of town with a white majority student population, and even that was quickly slipping away.¹²³ Although *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education* paved the way for desegregation, it would not be until the 1960s that the pace towards integration would quicken in Wichita. Until then, the school board continued to move cautiously on the subject: so long as neighborhood schools were the norm, residential segregation created de facto school segregation.

In Wichita busing became the hottest issue. In 1967 the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, through the Office of Civil Rights, began active investigation of the public schools in Wichita. It had not previously investigated school segregation in the Midwest.¹²⁴ Desegregation became a must for the Wichita school system. Noncompliance would mean forfeiture of much needed, and depended on, federal funds. School closings and re-assignments of teachers and students were suggested, but in the end it was bussing that became the hot, much contested issue.

¹²³ Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools*, 273.

¹²⁴ Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-1972*, 143.

One way busing, that is, only busing African American students to schools outside of their neighborhoods, was fiercely opposed. African American parents expressed the view that busing should be mutual; as one parent said “We didn’t buy our homes for our kids to go all over town to school.”¹²⁵ White parents opposed having their children bussed several miles across town to African American schools and neighborhoods where violence had taken place. African American parents and Civil Rights leaders saw the busing as a mere token because the plans only involved African American secondary school students and not elementary. Outbreaks of violence and stories in the newspapers kept tempers and emotions flared on both sides.

African American frustrations were played out with two boycotts. On the premise that one way busing was unfair and that African Americans would no longer accept it, a city wide boycott of the public schools was planned for Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday on January 15, 1970. On that day, of 3,720 African American students, only 234 attended classes; of 172 African American teachers, less than one third showed up for work, and sixteen bus drivers did not drive their routes. The boycott was so successful that another was arranged for February 2. Although all the African American teachers reported to school that day, 97 percent of African American high school students, 94 percent of the African American students enrolled at the seven segregated elementary schools, and 95 percent of African American students at the fifteen remaining elementary schools in the district stayed home. In addition, thirty-six African American bus drivers boycotted their routes, and only twenty-one of the 785 African American students who rode buses took their seats for the ride to school.¹²⁶

In just one short month it had become very clear to many civic and educational leaders in Wichita that fair cross busing was the answer to the district’s desegregation issues. To make

¹²⁵ Ibid., 166.

¹²⁶ Lois Barrett, “One Way Busing Under Fire: Blacks Call for School Boycott.” *Wichita Eagle*, 12 January 1970; Jacque Stringer, “All Black Elementary Schools Virtually Emptied by Boycott.” *Wichita Beacon*, 15 January 1970.

matters worse and perhaps to speed compliance along, on February 20, 1970, the OCR completed its investigation of the district and found it in violation of the Constitution and the Civil Rights Act.¹²⁷ The school board was in confusion over what needed to be done. With pressure from both sides of the community, they went back to the drawing board. However, this time they had cross busing at the top of the list.

In April the Board was continuing with its efforts to comply with HEW regulations and the cross busing that it advocated. Although it would not commit to assigning African American and white children to schools within African American neighborhoods, it did ask for white volunteers to attend two African American schools, L'Ouverture and Dunbar. The residential integration that had driven white flight in the previous decade seemed to be a factor contributing to the Board's decision-making. However, the volunteer busing plan maintained two distinct sides. Opponents of cross busing, mainly white parents, were satisfied with the plan because it was on a volunteer basis, whereas African American parents still felt that it was their children who were burdened. They thought that the volunteer plan was an attempt to appease the angry white people and that it contributed to a continuation of the polarization of the community. Not much support was given to the plan by parents of elementary school students; less than one percent of parents volunteered their children out of their neighborhood schools.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-1972*, 22. The formal notification received by the district said: "Respondent fails and refuses to adopt and utilize a method which will speedily and effectively convert its school system to an integrated unitary system...Respondent school district has been and is presently pursuing a policy and practice in the operation of its elementary and secondary education program in violation of the requirements of the Constitution of the United States and of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964...Wherefore the General Counsel prays that an Order be entered...terminating the eligibility of Respondent School District to receive financial assistance, administered through each of the Federal agencies listed." Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that: "No person shall on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

¹²⁸ Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-1972*, 176; Jack L. Kennedy, "Voluntary Busing Plan Given to Schools," *Wichita Eagle*, 28 April 1970; Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools*, 273.

On March 1, 1971, USD #259 received the verdict from the HEW. The District, along with the Board of Education and the City of Wichita (which shared some federal funds with the school district), were in fact in violation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Unless the Board reached a compromise with the HEW, federal funding of many district programs would be stopped.¹²⁹ The Board was forced to end its wishy-washy stance on busing and desegregation. By May it had come up with a plan that was conditionally approved by the HEW. Although many parents remained unhappy about the district's decisions, they were forced to accept them or be faced with HEW-regulated desegregation that would certainly make them even less content.

Wichita's plan for integration of its schools was implemented in August of 1971. Four of the seven elementary schools that for so long had been on the hot seat would remain open as integrated schools; the other three would be closed and used as community centers. The predominantly African American northeast section of the city, which had been designated as the assigned attendance area, was redrawn so that three assignment areas followed a feeder plan that allowed children from the same neighborhood to attend the same elementary school, then the same junior high and finally the same high school. White students who were reassigned to formerly African American schools were required to stay there for at least one year and encouraged to remain there longer. The Department of Health Education and Welfare monitored the situation in Wichita closely over the following two years through site visits and regular correspondence. In June of 1973, it declared that Wichita's desegregation plan was acceptable and ordered dismissal of the Civil Rights proceedings against the District. Finally, nine years after Chester Lewis of the NAACP filed the first complaint against Wichita USD #259, the

¹²⁹ Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools*, 273. Federal funding from the HEW, the National Science Foundation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which funded the Model Cities Program, would be stopped with the exception to community programs such as Head Start and Follow Through, the Child Nutrition Act, the Manpower Development and Training Act, and vocational education for those currently enrolled in public and private schools.

ordeal was over.¹³⁰ Although there remained some tension in the district over desegregation and integration, the district was able to move forward with its policies and begin educating its students again.

Despite the turmoil in Wichita, Derby remained relatively unmoved by the situation, at least in terms of public acknowledgment of the issues. Rarely was there so much as a mention of the racial issues that were transforming Wichita in the Derby daily newspaper. Instead the focus remained on the town, particularly on the continuous effort to diversify the economic base. The largest problem confronting the Derby schools, at least judging from news accounts, was the dress code.

Nonetheless, the Wichita “problems” did affect Derby, quietly impacting the town’s growth. From 1968 to 1975, the Wichita school population dropped by approximately sixteen thousand students: 68,127 to 51,907 in 1975. Although it cannot be blamed completely on school desegregation, the largest out-migration of whites came in 1970, when the HEW formally notified Wichita of the federal funding that would be withdrawn if they failed to comply with regulations. As a whole the Derby school district increased by 200 students in 1970. Wichita schools lost close to seven thousand white students from 1970 to 1972. Although white flight decreased after 1972, in the five-year period following the start of desegregation (1970), nearly 12,600 white students left the Wichita public schools.

Once again, as with the initial growth of Derby after World War II, Derby benefited from its geographical location to Wichita. The foundations that were laid when the first Air Force personnel and aircraft industry workers moved to the sleepy little town were built upon when Wichita began its troubles with racial tension and school integration. Many people saw Derby as

¹³⁰ Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-1972*, 180.

a safe, smart alternative for their (white) families, a safe place to settle down and raise a family while maintaining quick and easy access to their jobs and recreational activities in Wichita.

Derby had remained unaffected by the negative aspects of integration until April of 1970. On April Fool's Day of that year, Derby School Superintendent L.L. Van Petten received notification of racial charges against UDS 260 from Hugh Jackson, executive director of the Wichita Urban League. The letter contained a petition filed by three mothers whose children attended Paul B. Cooper elementary school and listing eight accusations and a plea for African Americans to have a part in the school's operational program. The letter from Jackson read:

Parents of the Paul B. Cooper School have requested our assistance in helping them to deal with the problems at the school as listed in the enclosed petition.

From all indications, the ugly head of white racism manifests itself again to the disadvantage of black people of the Wichita area. You gentlemen, occupy the leadership positions, and have the authority to see that these conditions are dealt with. We urge you to be about the business of dealing with them decisively.

Meanwhile, our office is making an investigation to determine if there may be grounds for filing a complaint with the Federal Government regarding the charges.

The eight accusations of the three mothers were:

1. One teacher in particular, Mrs. Karen Dirksen, slaps black children and displays a general hostile attitude toward them.
2. Blacks hold no offices in the PTA.
3. Black children are excluded from participating in school programs and activities, such as patrol, school plays, etc.
4. Blacks serve only as homeroom mothers or on lesser committees.
5. Principal not considerate with problems of black parents and their children.
6. Not one black teacher on the faculty.
7. No blacks employed in the school in any capacity – not even as a janitor.
8. Blacks have no voice whatsoever in the operation of the school.

In response to the accusations, the principal of the school, Sam Austin, said he had not been informed of the alleged slapping of a African American child until the petition was put in front

of him that morning. In response to the complaint about the lack of employees at the school, Van Petten said that, to his knowledge, the district had not received any applications for work in any capacity at the school and never had an African American teacher applied for a position at Cooper.¹³¹ The issue faded away, and nothing more was mentioned in the paper or school board notes.

One of the main problems with this situation for the African American residents of Derby was that they had no voice in the town. They were forced to go to Wichita leaders for help because there were no African American leaders in Derby to help them. In addition, it was easy for the issue to fade away, as there were simply not enough people who cared about it. It was dismissed by the school board as a non-truth, and the issues were explained away and swept under the proverbial rug. Residents of the town had for so long avoided what was happening in the outside world that it would have been very difficult for them to face the fact that the same racial issues that had created such turmoil in Wichita were making it to Derby. A close examination of their racial make-up was not something residents of Derby were willing to do, and, therefore, it was easy to dismiss this one complaint.

The town continued to grow as the schools and suburban lifestyle attracted more and more people to the area. The *Daily Reporter* often showcased families who were new to the area and asked about their reasons for moving to the area, and the majority of the answers contained the words “education” and “community.” Derby gained 297 residents in 1972, creating a population of 8016. Nearby Haysville, by comparison, gained only fifteen people during 1972 to bring its population to 6309 residents.¹³² By the mid-1970s, Derby was continuing to develop under the label of “bedroom community” to neighboring Wichita, but it was still the second

¹³¹ “Three Mothers Complain at Paul B. Cooper: USD 260 Charged with ‘Discrimination Against Blacks,’” *Daily Reporter*, 14 April 1970.

¹³² “Derby Has Largest Gain for 1972,” *Daily Reporter*, 4 February 1973.

largest community in Sedgwick County and was continuing to grow. In 1976 Jack Pulley, vice president of the Farmers and Merchants State Bank in Derby, bragged about the town saying that one unique factor of the town was that it was highly “family oriented.” In addition Derby was ranked first or second in the state each year in per capita income.¹³³

The urbanization and growth that found Derby did not happen as many of the founders predicted or even hoped that it would. In the mid 1970s many farms still surrounded the growing town, but they were farmed by fewer people using more advanced and efficient harvesting methods. The new industry in town was not even within the city limits; rather, it was the aircraft industry located in Wichita. From the beginning, Derby’s boosters had wanted it to more like Wichita. In the end, Wichita had become the source of its prosperity. From a meager beginning, Derby developed into a trade center for local farmers and then into a community growing at a very fast pace and filled with commuters. From the beginning, town leaders were able to have a significant amount of control in the development of Derby; even if growth was not at the pace they would have hoped, they were able to sink the towns’ roots further into the landscape so that when real growth happened they could take it in stride. From a spot along the bend in a creek that was never able to be as grand as the big city to the north, Derby grew to become a place where the people who lived in that big city moved to in order to escape the burdens of a changing world.

¹³³ Patty Burnett, “Derby's Pride Propels Choir” *Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, 12 June 1976

Conclusion

In his work *Cities of the Plains*, the historical geographer James Shortridge charts “the evolution of urban Kansas.”¹³⁴ Pointing to the factors that spurred urban development at various points in Kansas history, Shortridge outlines a model of “urban success.” Using that model, it is worth noting that during its first seventy-five years, Derby, Kansas, never enjoyed the factors that cultivated urban growth, however briefly, in other parts of Kansas. Although it occupied a river site, its close northern neighbor of Wichita occupied a better one. Though it eventually was connected by rail, Derby sat on a spur line, not at the center of a hub. Derby was not selected for one of the public institutions that spurred the growth of a town like Manhattan, nor did it enjoy a boom from the discovery of a unique natural resource, such as the natural gas of Liberal or the mining deposits that fostered growth in the towns of Osage County.

To read Shortridge’s account is to be reminded that the grand city that was envisioned by the Garrets, the Hufbauers and the Minnichs when they first settled in the Derby area was never more, and probably could never have been more, than a pipe dream. Their dream was of a thriving economic center, home to merchants and industry. In Sedgwick County, for three quarters of a century, that dream belonged only to Wichita: Derby’s proximity to its thriving neighbor stifled its attempts to grow beyond its place as a small agricultural trading post. But Shortridge’s model does not account for the unprecedented impact of the Cold war on American urban development because, in the end, that same proximity to Wichita finally made Derby a new kind of boom town, a thriving suburban community made possible by defense spending and America’s automobile culture. Derby hence represents a particular, and under-examined, development of both Gunbelt America and an urbanized Kansas, a community dependent upon

¹³⁴ James R. Shortridge, *Cities on the Plains: the Evolution of Urban Kansas* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2004).

the military industrial complex, but far removed from the direct consequences of explosive urban growth. And though Derby could be, and frequently is, considered simply an extension of Wichita, it is important to note that postwar Derby cultivated, and continues to cultivate, an independent, distinct identity. In boasting of itself as a “good place to raise children,” Derby markets itself as a white, middle class, enclave – one that stands in stark contrast to the urban turmoil that has marked Wichita’s recent history. As a suburban bedroom community, the town, now with a population of over 21,000, continues to pride itself on its schools and its opportunities for leisure activities. The school system in Derby started in a one-room building and has since grown as the town has grown. Thirteen schools, including a high school, alternative school, sixth grade center and nine elementary schools, are home to over six thousand students in USD 260.¹³⁵ In addition to a new golf course and country club, the city of Derby maintains 27 parks covering 273 acres located all around town, as well as a hike and bike path that links several of the parks and some of the schools. The buildings and parks are progress points, documenting Derby’s spread throughout the southern part of Sedgwick County over the past one hundred years. And recently, Family Circle magazine certified Derby’s image of itself by listing it as one of “The Ten Best Towns for Families.”¹³⁶ Such a designation points to another, less remarked, fact: Derby is one of the most affluent communities in Kansas; it is also one of the least racially diverse. As Table 1 clearly indicates, the small farming communities that thrived along with Derby in the aftermath of World War II center on a racial and class homogeneity that is the antithesis of Wichita’s more typical urban development.

¹³⁵ City of Derby, “City of Derby: Community Attractions Guide,” Derby, Kansas (2005).

¹³⁶ Mentioned in Derby’s Wikipedia entry, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derby,_Kansas.

Table C.1. Demographic Data – 2000 U.S. Census ¹³⁷

	Derby	Wichita	Haysville	Mulvane	Rose Hill	Kansas
Total Population	17,807	545,220	8,502	5,155	3,432	2,688,418
White	16,742 94%	445,884 81.8%	7,980 93.9%	4,969 96.4%	3,326 96.9%	2,313,944 86.1%
Black	237 1.3%	42,708 7.8%	45 0.5%	9 0.2%	9 0.3%	154,198 5.7%
American Indian	139 0.8%	5,753 1.1%	97 1.1%	51 1.0%	23 0.7%	24,936 0.9%
Asian	179 1.0%	15,547 2.9%	45 0.5%	15 0.3%	14 0.4%	46,806 1.7%
Hawaiian Islander	25 0.1%	294 0.1%	1 --%	3 0.1%	4 0.1%	1,313 --%
Other	167 0.9%	20,626 3.8%	120 1.4%	31 0.6%	12 0.3%	90,725 3.4%
More than One Race	318 1.8%	14,408 2.6%	214 2.5%	77 1.5%	44 1.3%	56,496 2.1%
Hispanic/Latino	533 3.0%	40,353 7.4%	272 3.2%	133 2.6%	62 1.8%	188,252 7.0%
Median Household Income	\$58,508	\$42,651	\$46,667	\$46,923	\$63,750	\$40,624
Median Family Income	\$66,476	\$51,660	\$50,118	\$56,285	\$67,770	\$49,624

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Derby maintained its status as the second largest city in Sedgwick County and continues to grow and prosper. But with all the growth all over the state and in the areas surrounding Wichita, why did Derby's growth eventually level off compared to the steady growth that had been taking place since the 1950s? The answer: Derby is "town locked." Like a land-locked state that has no room for expansion due to the fact that it is bordered on all sides by other states, Derby is bordered on all four sides by other towns. To the north is McConnell Air Force Base and the City of Wichita. To the east, south and west are, respectively, the expanding towns of Rose Hill, Mulvane and Haysville. All three towns that Derby once made seem small are now experiencing their booms and growing without noticeable

¹³⁷ Kansas - [DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000](http://factfinder.census.gov). [www://http.factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov).

boundaries. Although there was once plenty of room for further growth, the edges of Derby have been pushed to their limits.

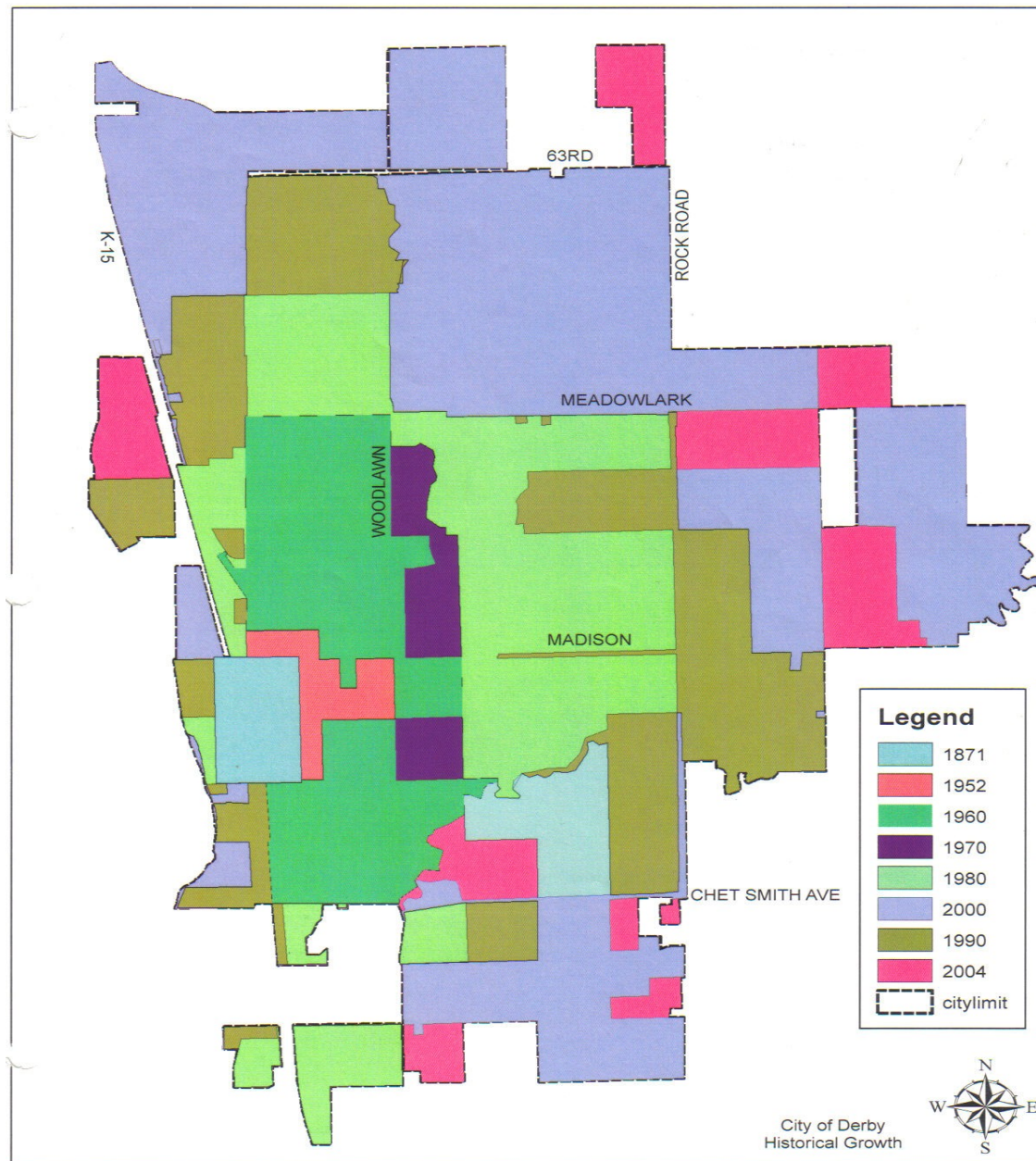


Figure C.1. This map shows the growth of Derby from its start in 1871 until 2004. McConnell Air Force Base lies just north of 63rd street.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ City of Derby Historical Growth (2005).

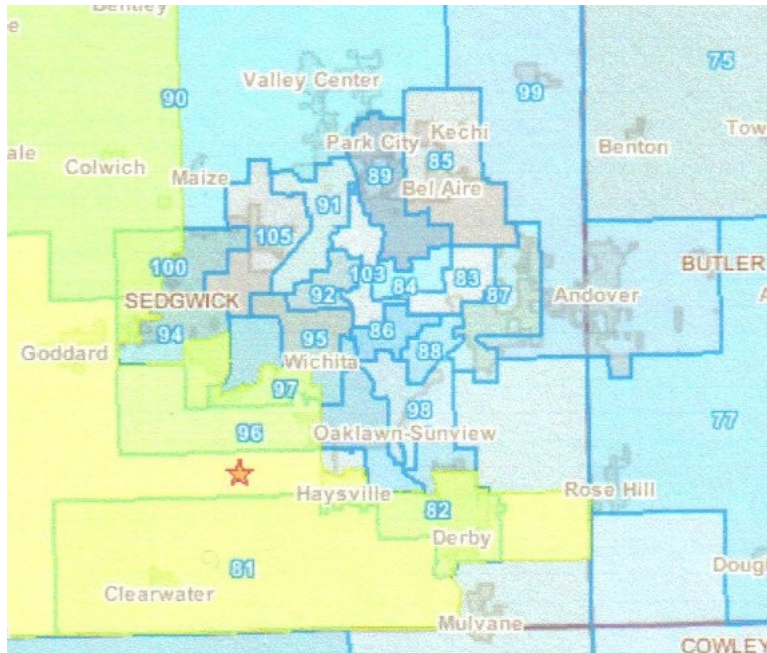


Figure 2. Map of Wichita showing neighboring cities and suburbs. Note Derby to the south and the locations of Mulvane, Rose Hill and Haysville.¹³⁹

The early town boosters of Derby believed that the fate of their community could be their own doing, that if they promoted their town enough, they would somehow thrive. Ironically, what they could not have known was Derby's fate would be the product of where they planted their town, its placement relative to Wichita. Twelve miles away, not five, not twenty, was the distance that at first stifled Derby's growth and then eventually made that growth possible. In addition, the luck of the placement of Wichita's defense build-up mattered as well. Had McConnell been placed to the north of Wichita, had Boeing built a plant to the west, then surely the farming hamlet of Derby would have met the fate of most such hamlets. Instead, Derby grew as Gunbelt America grew, as Wichita became a site of the military industrial buildup in the post WWII era. In addition, Derby was also able to benefit and grow as a result of the racially motivated social issues that affected Wichita during the 1960s and 1970s. Thriving because of

¹³⁹ Kansas Geospatial Service, "Wichita" available at http://mackinaw.kgs.ku.edu/output/ink_MyElect_MACKINAW46604876555.png, accessed 6 March 2006.

its proximity to Wichita as well as its social distance, Derby's town motto should perhaps be "Location is Everything."

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