

304

A HISTORY OF THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
OF GREENLEAF, KANSAS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	iii
INTRODUCTION.	1
I. EARLY SETTLEMENT.	4
II. THE EFFECT OF THE RAILROADS AND THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF GREENLEAF.	6
III. ECONOMIC DECLINE.	14
IV. EFFORTS TO SAVE THE COMMUNITY	17
V. DESTRUCTION OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE DECISION TO RE-BUILD.	26
VI. THE GREENLEAF CENTER AND THE RECONSTRUCTED CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT	36
VII. CONCLUSIONS	53
.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	55
ADDITIONAL REFERENCES	56

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. Geographic Location of Greenleaf, Kansas.	3
2. Railroads Servicing Northeastern Kansas	8
3. 1886 Mayoral Proclamation	12
4. The Citizens National Bank.	18
5. Architectural Sketch of Greenleaf Recreation Area and Pool.	21
6. Greenleaf Swimming Pool	22
7. Greenleaf Recreational Area	23
8. Ballpark and Refreshment Stand.	24
9. Post-Tornado Mobile Home Site	29
10. Post-Tornado Mobile Home Site	30
11. Greenleaf Elderly Housing Site.	31
12. Landscape Plan of Greenleaf Elderly Housing Project	32
13. Community Center.	35
14. Greenleaf Center.	37
15. Pre-Tornado Central Business District	38
16. Aerial View of Greenleaf CBD	39
17. Greenleaf Center--Front	40
18. Greenleaf Center--Interior.	41
19. Greenleaf Center--Interior.	42
20. Greenleaf Center--Rear.	43
21. Greenleaf Center--Rear.	44
22. Greenleaf Center--Rear.	45
23. Twin Valley Workshop.	51
24. Greenleaf Coop.	52

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

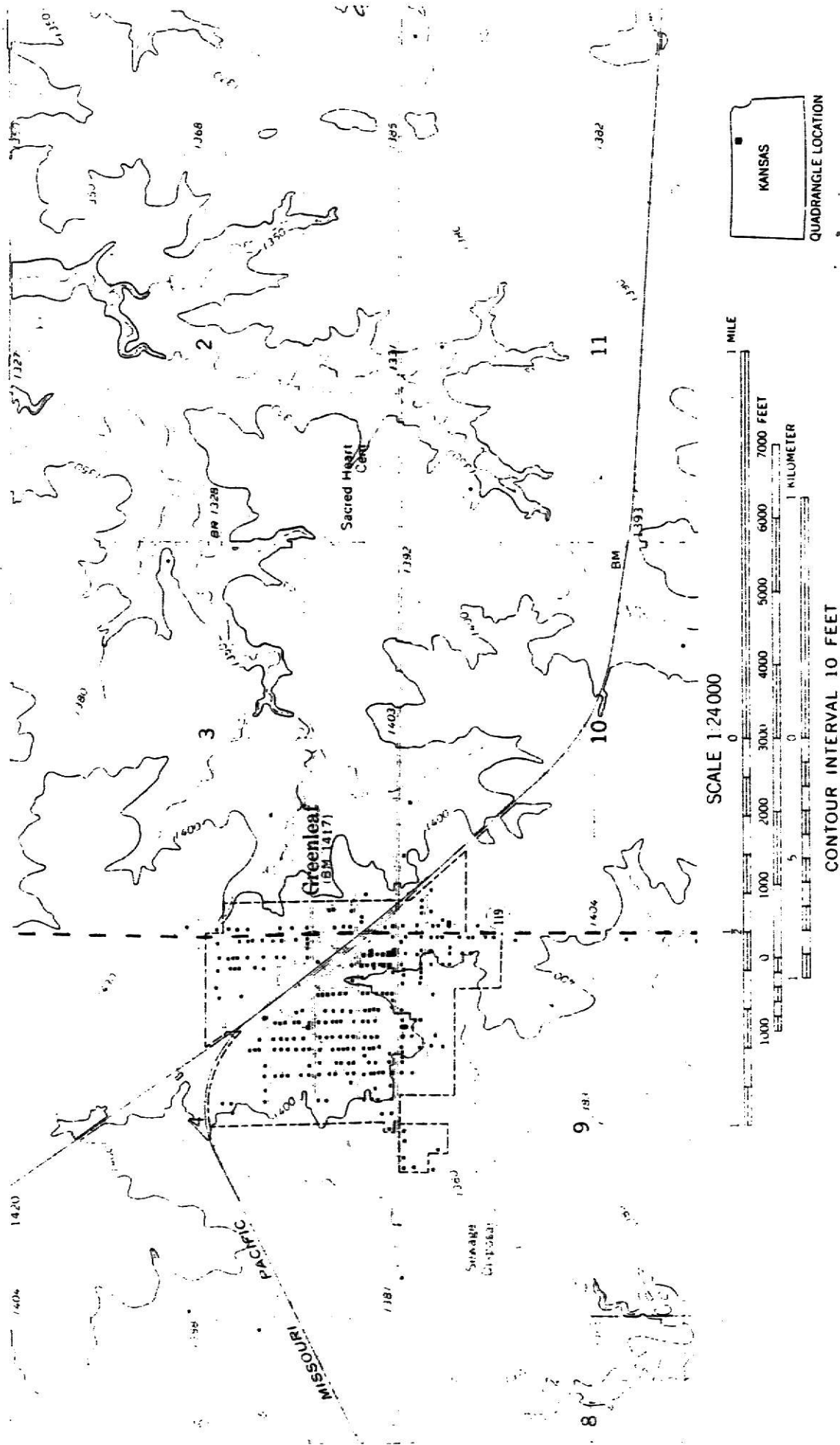
The information on the Greenleaf Center referred to in Chapter VI herein, was gathered by Tom Burdett and myself during the Spring of 1978, as a project for Professor C. A. Keithley's Research Methods class. This research study was entitled, "The Impact of the Greenleaf, Kansas, Shopping Center."

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

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

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

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I. EARLY SETTLEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fig. 2. Railroads Servicing Northeastern Kansas

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

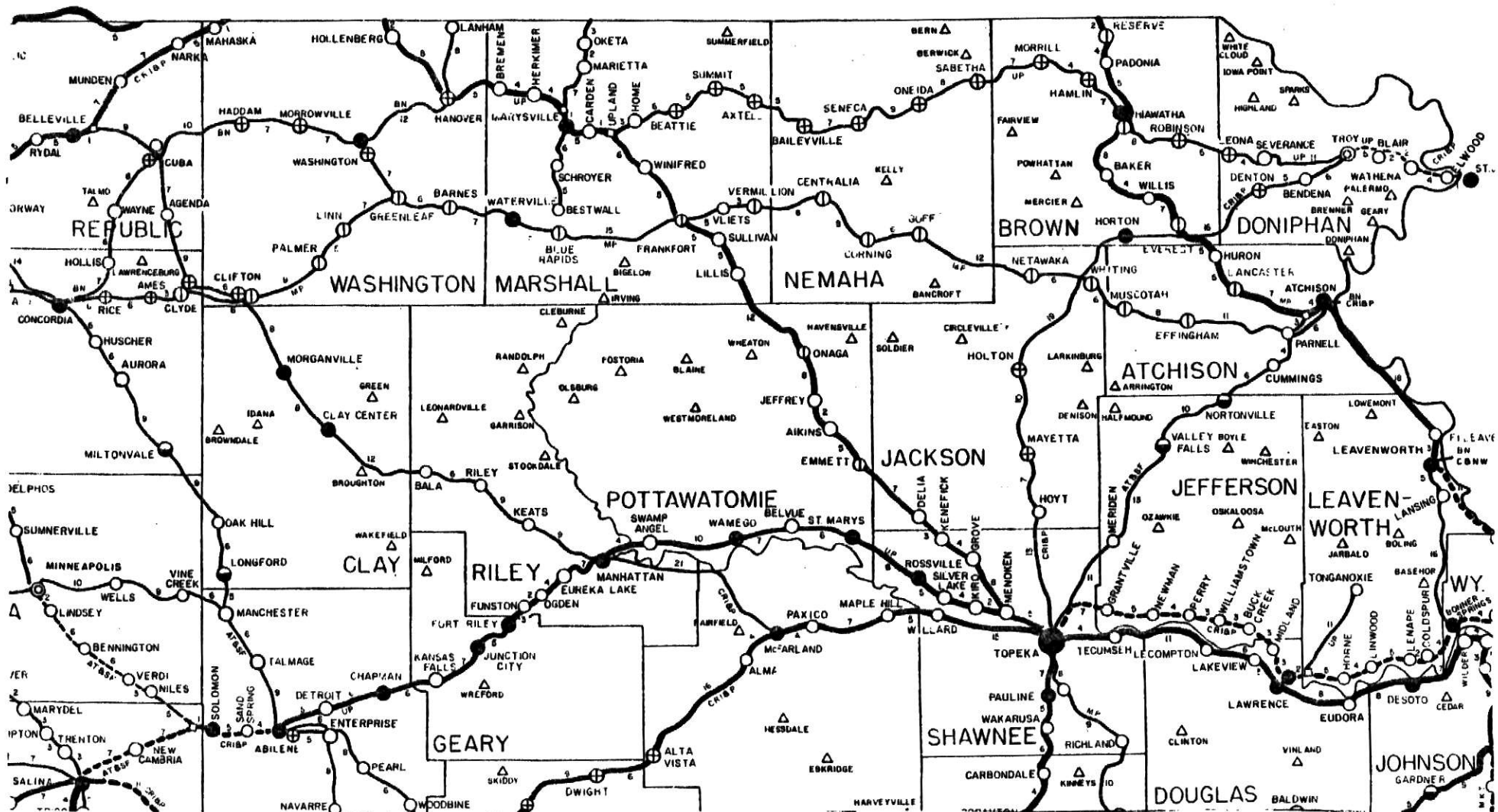
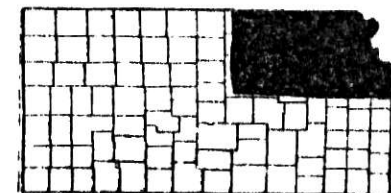


Fig. 2. Railroads Servicing Northeastern Kansas

SOURCE: Official Kansas State Railroad Map, Kansas Corporation Commission



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

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

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

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

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

¹Pearl Cox, "Ecology of Greenleaf, Kansas," Greenleaf, 1958. (Typewritten.)

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

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

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

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

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

PROCLAMATION.

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

TO THE CITIZENS OF GREENLEAF:

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

Respectfully,

F. E. BURKE, Mayor.

Fig. 3. 1886 Mayoral Proclamation

SOURCE: Kansas State Historical Society Archives

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

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

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

III. ECONOMIC DECLINE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹Pearl Cox, "Ecology of Greenleaf, Kansas."

IV. EFFORTS TO SAVE THE COMMUNITY

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

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

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

¹"Greenleaf Development Company, Inc.," Greenleaf, 1973. (Typewritten): 1.

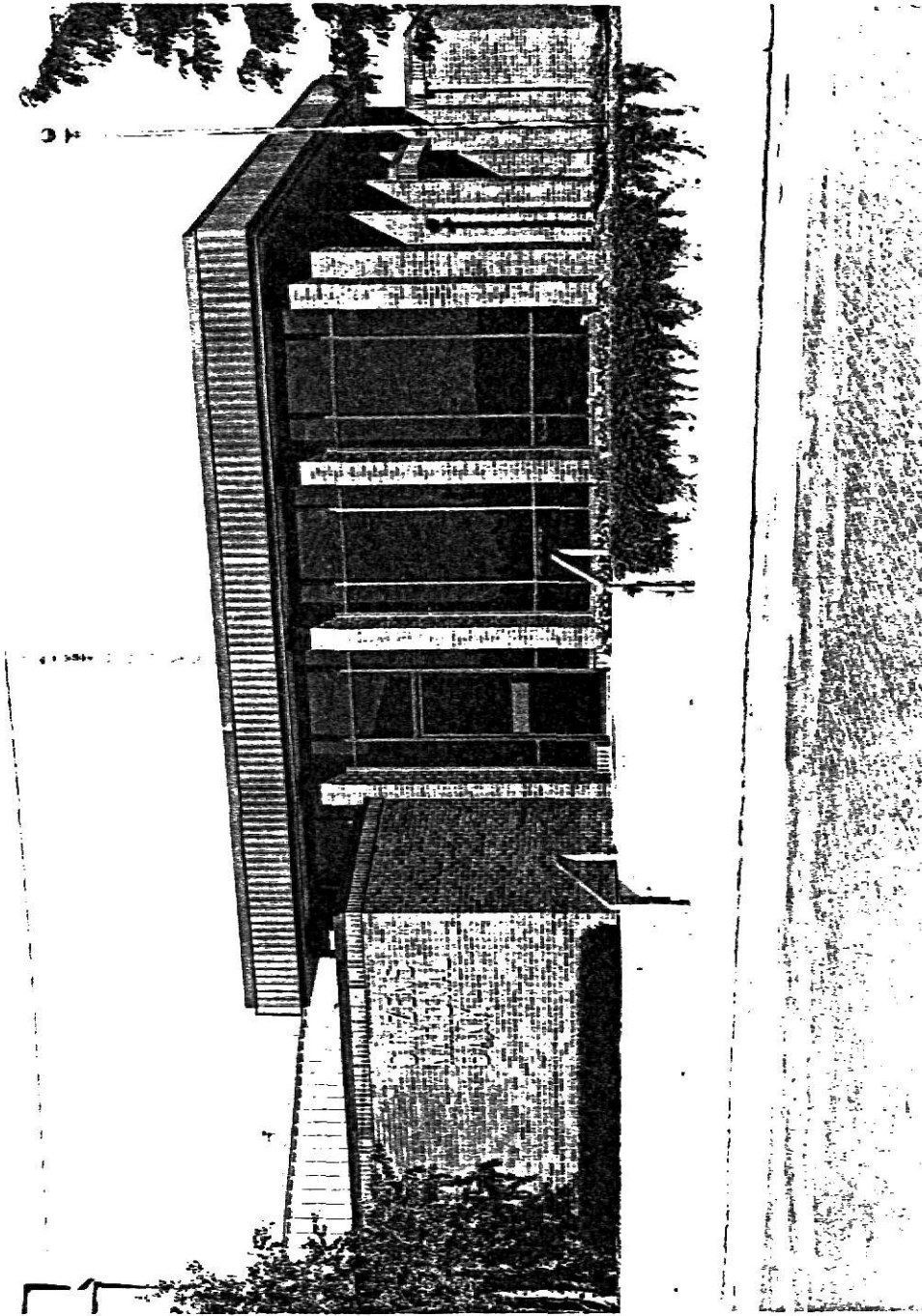


Fig. 4. The Citizens National Bank