"SILVER CITY," A HISTORY OF THE ARGENTINE COMMUNITY OF KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Division of Social Sciences

Emporia Kansas State College

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Edwin Dale Shutt II

August 1974

William A. Seiler
Approved for the Major Department

Harold E. Hurst
Approved for the Graduate Council

OUTLINE

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the flat bottomlands of the Kaw River, about three miles from its mouth, lies the Argentine community of Kansas City, Kansas. The Argentine community has a colorful past. Founded in 1880, this town was the headquarters of the Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company. A large smelter plant was maintained at Argentine. This smelter had the reputation of being the largest in the world, both in terms of capacity and in the value of the ore refined. A settlement grew up around the smelter and the railroad, which had come in the late 1870's. This settlement became known as Argentine, which is derived from the Latin word for "silver."

As a result of several factors, the Argentine smelter shut down permanently in October of 1901. The town of Argentine immediately went into a depression. Hundreds of people left the community to seek work elsewhere. This was the main reason why the little city sought for and gained annexation into the city of Kansas City, Kansas. Thus, on January 1, 1910, Argentine officially became the seventh ward of Kansas City, Kansas.

Argentine fortunes have grown with the city, and in 1974 it is a prosperous suburb. In 1907 a group of men organized the Kansas City Structural Steel Company in Argentine. From small beginnings this plant grew to such an extent that for many years, in terms of steel fabricated, it was considered the largest steel plant west of

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In later years, the company was still credited as the largest plant west of the Mississippi River.

The Argentine community has many other claims to fame. For many years, the Argentine High School was considered one of the most prestigious schools in the state. In the 1930's a vocational technical program was started at the high school and it quickly became a pioneer in the field of vocational training.

During the pioneer days of Kansas, the community could boast of another distinction. White Feather Creek in Argentine is the grave site of the famous Shawnee Indian known as the "Prophet." This Indian, reputed to be the twin brother of the great Chief Tecumseh, spent his final years living around what is now the Argentine community. A section of the first chapter is devoted to him.

In the summer of 1951, the Argentine and the lowlands of the greater Kansas City area were subject to one of the greatest natural disasters of our nation's history. The great Kaw River flood of 1951 caused losses of over $870,000,000 along the Kaw, Missouri, Marais des Cygnes and Osage River basins. A large chapter has been devoted to this and other great floods that have struck the Argentine community.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the growth of the Argentine community from its beginnings to the present. The major emphasis of the paper has been placed on the silver smelter, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, the great floods, and the old town itself.

Outside of old newspaper accounts, little has been written about much of the community's history. What works do exist, the

author utilized to the utmost. Also, the author had the aid of numerous libraries and collections to achieve materials for the fuller accounts in this study. The author is thus deeply indebted to the staff of the Kansas State Historical Society. Much of the old newspaper clippings that they had on the smelter and the early days of the town could not have been found elsewhere. A special thanks goes out to the staff of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library. The staff gave me access to their Kansas Room Collection, and spent many hours setting up dozens of rolls of microfilm for the author. The Argentine Branch Library and the Wyandotte County Historical Society also deserve mention. The author also received valuable information from the Argentine files of the Kansas City Star, the Kansas City Kansan, and the Silver City Record.

A special thanks goes out to Hewitt and George McCamish, Tom Yearsley, Joseph L. Larson, Clarence Baker, Loyd Crawford and the author's father, Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr. Without their aid, much of the information on the Kansas City Structural Steel Company could not have been gathered.

The author also received valuable assistance from the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the archives of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools System. The author gives special thanks to the many wonderful people whom he interviewed.

Last, but not least, the author gives special recognition to his mother, father, sister, and brother. Without their assistance over the many weeks, the typing and editing of this paper would have been impossible to complete.

CHAPTER I

EARLY BEGINNINGS

Kansas has a rich Indian heritage. Long before the coming of the white man, Indians dwelled in the fertile river valleys. Other tribes roamed the plains in search of the buffalo. Unfortunately, most of the traces of these Indian cultures have vanished, but the names of many towns and rivers reflect their Indian origins.

The word Kansas has such an origin. Early Spanish explorers may have derived the word from the Kansa Indian tribe. These Indians were of Siouan linguistic stock and lived in the eastern part of the state.[1]

There are several theories as to the meaning of the name Kansas. Some experts believe the name meant "People of the South Wind." Andreas in his History of the State of Kansas, which was written in 1883, gave another meaning for the word. He said that it meant "smoky." Consequently, the southern fork of the Kansas River is called the Smoky Hill River. Other historians, however, claim that the word Kansas has no particular meaning. They tend to disregard an old Osage Indian legend that said the "Kansas" Indians were a tribe of cowards because they refused to aid the Osage Indians

---

[1] Kansas City Kansan, August 2, 1962, p. 1.

during a war. Thus, by this interpretation, the word Kansas means tribe of cowards.[2]

Regardless of the exact meaning of the word, the fact remains that the name of the largest river and the name of the state derive their origins from the Kansa Indians. Unfortunately, the name Kansa has also been spelled many different ways. The name of the river for instance has been spelled as many as 125 different ways. Some of these were: Cans, Causa, Kances, Kanza and Quans.[3] Even as late as 1882, Professor Hay's article on Kansas written in the ninth volume of the Kansas Historical Collections gave twenty-four spellings of the name.[4]

One of the earliest spellings of the river had it being called the Cansez River. This was on a map of the Louisiana Territory by a Frenchman by the name of Du Pratz. A Monsieur De Bourgmont, the Commandant of the French fort at New Orleans spelled the name of the tribe and the river by the name of "Cana." A 1715 map by still another Frenchman by the name of Charlevoix even called the river the Padouea River after the Padieuca Indians. This was a mysterious tribe of Indians which he claimed roamed the region between Kansas and the Gulf of Mexico.[5]

Needless to say, this name did not come into popular usage. By the 19th century, the most common names for the river were the

---

[2]Ibid., p. 1.

[3]Ibid., p. 3A.

[4]John Hay, "Kaw and Kansas, A Monograph on the Name of the State," Kansas Historical Collections, IX (1905-06), 523-24.

[5]Kansas City Kansan, August 2, 1962, p. 3A.

Kansas or Kaw. The word Kaw seems to have been derived from a corruption of the word Kansa. The first "a" in Kansa became sounded "aw" or "awer." From this came the word Kawer and finally Kaw.[6]

To this day, the river has continued to be referred to as the Kansas or Kaw River. This has caused some confusion to mapmakers. In 1895, the United States Board of Geographic Names asked a Kansas City, Kansas newspaper to decide the issue. This newspaper took a poll among residents of the area. The results were inconclusive.[7]

Generally speaking, Kansas is the official name. This is even the name that the Kaw Valley Drainage Association uses on its official stationery. Kansas is also the name used on maps and official government documents such as those of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. However, the Kaw River seems to be the most commonly spoken name by residents of the eastern part of the state and both names can be correctly used.[8]

The first record of any mention of the Indians in Kansas was found in the accounts of the explorer Juan de Ornato who met them in 1601. Coronado in his explorations in 1541 probably contacted Indians living in the eastern part of Kansas. Coronado in his accounts referred to a beautiful fertile valley which he named "Quivera." No one knows for sure what location he was referring to. It may have been in the Kaw or the Missouri River Valley. Wherever it was, it must have been the hunting grounds and habitat of the

---

[6] Ibid., p. 1.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

Kansas Indian Nation.[9] These Indians were to live in this general area until January 14, 1846, when they ceded to the United States Government two million acres of land. The tribe was then moved to a reservation in the Neosho River Valley near what is now the town of Council Grove, Kansas.[10]

Another tribe which lived in the eastern part of the state was the Pawnee Indians. This was a powerful nation of Indians, until 1832 when a smallpox epidemic ravaged the tribe and reduced it one-half in number. In 1833, these Indians negotiated a treaty with the United States in which the tribe agreed to abandon all its land lying south of the Platte River in Nebraska.[11]

This was about the time that our government was trying to remove the Indians living east of the Mississippi River and relocate them on reservations in the west. The Shawnee Indians were one of the first tribes to be moved. These Indians have been referred to as the "gypsies" or the "Bedouins of the American Wilderness." The tribe seemed to be constantly on the move. The word Shawnee means "Southern." Thus, this tribe may originally have been a part of the Algonquin Family of Indians that inhabited South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and other Eastern states.[12]

---

[9]Clint J. F. Hammer, "A History of Wyandotte County, Kansas" (unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, Colorado State College of Education, Greeley, Colorado, 1948), found in the preface.

[10]Perl W. Morgan, History of Wyandotte County Kansas, Volume I, (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), p. 27.

[11]Robert Dean Allison, "The Early Development and Progress of Kansas City, Kansas," (unpublished Master of Science Thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1960), pp. 8-9.

[12]Ibid., p. 11.

The two most famous Shawnee were their great Chief Tecumseh and his brother who was called the Prophet. Tecumseh organized a confederation of Indian tribes to prevent the white man from taking their lands. A long and bloody war was waged with the whites. Tecumseh's power however was broken when the Shawnee were defeated by General William Henry Harrison at the Battle of Tippecanoe. During the war of 1812, Tecumseh fought for the British and was killed in battle.

His death brought an end to the confederation. The Shawnee gave up their warlike ways. They gave up their lands and settled in Missouri near Cape Girardeau. In 1825, an Indian agent by the name of William Clark negotiated a treaty with the Shawnee by which they surrendered their Missouri claims for a reservation in what is now southern Wyandotte and Johnson counties.[13]

The Delaware Indians were also moved into Kansas at about the same time. Both tribes now settled the lands formally occupied by the Kansas Indians. The Delaware Indians settled in Wyandotte County west of the Missouri River and on the north side of the Kansas River.

Most of the Shawnee congregated around what is now the town of Turner, Kansas. Turner is about a mile and a half from the Argentine community. Soon an Indian village grew in the Turner vicinity.[14]

Shortly thereafter, efforts were made to establish Christian missions among the emigrant tribes. At a Methodist Episcopal Church

---

[13] Ibid., p. 9.

[14] Ibid., p. 12.

conference held at St. Louis on September 16, 1830, it was decided that a mission should be built among the Shawnee. A Missionary Society was formed and the Reverend Thomas Johnson and his bride came to the Shawnee village. Soon construction was begun on a two-story log building.[15]

On January 13, 1831, Richard W. Cummins, a Shawnee Indian agent, wrote, "Mr. Johnson is at this time making arrangements, and I think shortly after the winter breaks will have the school in operation."[16] The school was quickly in operation. The lower floor of the two-story building consisted of two rooms. The west room was used as a school room and chapel, while the east room was a reception area and living room. The second story was utilized as sleeping and living quarters.[17]

A smallpox epidemic in the latter half of 1831 forced the suspension of operations of the school. The Shawnee living in the Turner and Argentine vicinity temporarily were forced to disperse. Except for this temporary suspension, the school was in use until 1838.[18]

Then, in that year, the Methodist Conference meeting at Booneville, Missouri decided to build a new mission a few miles

---

[15]Grant Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones in the Progress of Wyandotte County, Kansas (Merriam, Kansas: The Mission Press, 1935), p. 47.

[16]Louise Barry, compiler, The Beginnings of the West, Annals of the Kansas Gateway to the American West, 1540-1854 (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society Press, 1973), p. 179.

[17]Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, p. 47.

[18]Barry, The Beginnings of the West, p. 179.

to the south. The Turner mission was abandoned and the building disappeared. The place was soon forgotten. Fortunately, E. F. Heister of the Kansas City Sun Newspaper rescued the site from oblivion. A granite marker five feet high and three feet wide was erected and dedicated at that spot on June 26, 1917. A bronze tablet, ten inches by eighteen inches, was placed on the monument and bore this inscription:

> This monument marks the site of the first mission house erected for the benefit of the Shawnee Indians by Reverend Thomas Johnson of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1830. The mission was moved to the site southwest of Westport, Missouri in 1839. Methodism in Kansas began on this spot. Erected by the Kansas Methodist Historical Society in 1916.[19]

This monument stood about three-quarters of a mile southeast of Turner. A more exact location would be about one block west and one-half of a block north of the 5100 block of Edgehill Drive in Kansas City, Kansas. The land surrounding the monument became part of a peach orchard in later years. The granite marker was toppled over and lay in weeds for many years. The plaque was removed from the stone by a Methodist group. Presently, the Wyandotte County Historical Society is seeking to restore a monument to commemorate the old Indian mission and school.[20]

After the closing of the mission at Turner, most of the Shawnee Indians drifted out of Wyandotte County and settled around the new mission in Johnson County. But in Argentine, the Shawnee were to leave a historical artifact of some note. The great Shawnee

---

[19]Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, p. 48.

[20]Denny M. Smith, interview in his home at 6130 Riverview, Kansas City, Kansas on March 31, 1974. Mr. Smith is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Wyandotte County Historical Society.

Ten-Squa-Ta-Wa or "the Prophet" spent his remaining years around Argentine. He and a few remaining followers lived in a small village approximately two miles south of Argentine. This village called Prophet's Town was located in a hilly, wooded area just south and east of what is now the Maple Hill cemetary and the Sacred Heart Grade School on 34th Street.[21]

The Prophet was the reputed twin brother of the Shawnee Indian chief Tecumseh. Both he and his brother are among the most fascinating of American Indians. As Tecumseh's career grew in importance, so did the Prophet's role come into prominence. The Prophet became a famed and feared reformer and mystic among the Shawnee Indians.

The Prophet was born in Ohio sometime around 1768. His earliest given name seems to have been Laulewasikaw, which in Shawnee means "Loud Voice."[22] His early years seemed to have been spent in obscurity. He apparently was somewhat lazy and a drunkard.

Then something, seemingly mysterious and miraculous, occurred. ONe day around 1805, he fell in a trance while smoking his pipe. The Shawnee believed he was dead, and began to prepare him for burial. Suddenly, he revived and informed his comrades that the Great Spirit had lifted him to heaven and shown him all about the past and the future. He claimed that within four years there would be two days of darkness during which the Great Spirit would call forth from

---

[21] Ibid.

[22] Edward Eggleston and Lillie Eggleston Seeskye, Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1878), p. 106.

the earth all of the dead animals and friends of the Shawnee. Included among friends were the English, Spanish and the French. However, the Americans were the dreaded enemy, for the Great Spirit had said:

> The Americans are not my children, but the children of the evil spirit. They grew from the scum of the great water when it was troubled by an evil spirit and the froth was driven into the woods by a strong east wind. They are numerous, but I hate them. They are unjust, they have taken away your lands which were not made for them.[23]

Thereafter, Laulewasikaw called himself Ten-Squa-Ta-Wa, which meant the "Open Door." He became a prophet and developed a following. Another incident occurred which greatly enhanced his reputation among the Shawnee. Through some source, this crafty Indian learned that a solar eclipse of the sun was to occur in 1808. He boldly announced that at a given time, he would darken the sun as proof of his great supernatural powers. The eclipse occurred just as he had predicted and he was heard to exclaim: "Did I not prophesy truly?"[24]

Ten-Squa-Ta-Wa or the Prophet gradually became the second most influential of the Shawnees. Only his brother, Tecumseh, was to exercise more influence. Tecumseh may have been the most powerful and feared Indian of the early 1800's. Tecumseh's ambition was

---

[23]Albert Britt, Great Indian Chiefs, A Study of Indian Leaders in the Two Hundred Year Struggle to Stop the White Advance (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Incorporated, 1938), p. 132.

[24]Editorial, The Weekly Journal, Wyandotte County's Community Spirited Weekly, January 25, 1974, p. 3. This editorial was a reprint of research done by Perl Morgan. He was a prominent Kansas historian. One of his best known works of local interest is a History of Wyandotte County, Kansas and Its People, published in 1911.

to unite the Indian tribes west of the Allegheny Mountains into a great confederation of tribes. This confederation would halt the advance of the hated white man. This in itself was not a new idea. More than 100 years earlier, an Indian chief by the name of King Phillip had tried to implement the same idea. More recently, the great chief Pontiac and his conspiracy had sent ripples of fear among the whites.

Thousands of Indians began to follow the leadership of Tecumseh and the mysticism of his brother. The British, in Canada, at odds with the United States, also lent support to their cause. A great Indian capital was built by Tecumseh and named Prophet's Town. The village was in the Indian territory near the confluence of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers.

As Tecumseh's followers grew in numbers, the American settlers and soldiers began to grow apprehensive. Finally, with a pro-war, anti-British feeling sweeping the country, General William Henry Harrison, the territorial governor of Indiana, decided to destroy Tecumseh's power.

In late September of 1811, Harrison led a force of 1,000 men against the Indian capital. Fort Harrison was build, and by November 6, Harrison's forces were encamped near the Indian village.[25] Tecumseh was not at the Indian capital at that time. He was visiting Indian tribes to the southwest. He had warned his followers not to engage in hostilities during his absence. Harrison's march changed Tecumseh's strategy. The Prophet, who was in command of the village,

---

[25]Richard B. Morris, Editor, Encyclopedia of American History Vol. I (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), p. 140.

was seething with anger against the whites and whipped the Indians into a frenzy. Also, Harrison was seemingly eager for a fight. He wanted to fall upon those rebellious savages and administer a sound thrashing to them.

During the night before the battle, the Prophet mixed a mysterious broth at a meeting of the Indians and told them that one-half of the American army was composed of dead men and the other half was made up of crazy soldiers. He also promised the Shawnees immunity from the bullets of the whites. He claimed that the bullets of the soldiers would bounce off the bodies of the red men.[26]

On the morning of November 7, the Shawnees attacked Harrison's camp. Not known for his courage, the Prophet took no part in the battle. While his followers were being slaughtered, he directed the Indians from a safe spot. In a loud and shrilling voice he cried out all through the battle: "Fight on, O my people for it shall be as the Prophet has said. You will crush these white enemies."[27]

The battle raged for many hours. Both sides suffered heavy losses. Without Tecumseh's leadership, however, the Indians were defeated and fled. Harrison entered the deserted Indian village and burnt it to the ground. Tecumseh was furious when he heard about the defeat. His dreams of a confederation of tribes was ended. Also, the Prophet's great influence was lost forever. Ten-Squa-Ta-Wa

---

[26]Charles H. L. Johnson, Famous Indian Chiefs (New York: L. C. Page Company, Incorporated, 1909), pp. 327-28.

[27]Ibid., p. 328.

lived on in the shame of his cowardness and false prophesies. Henceforth, whenever he would walk through an Indian village, he became an object of contempt. Boys would taunt him and braves would shun him when they saw him coming.

Tecumseh was still a power to be reckoned with. Now a hunted enemy of the Americans, he fought on the British side and through his leadership distinguished himself during several battles. He was killed in the Battle of the Thames River on October 5, 1813.

Tecumseh's death marked the final demise of the Shawnee's power. The tribe sold its lands and moved to Missouri. Within a few years, they had been relocated in Kansas. The Prophet, by now aging and somewhat of a recluse, followed the tribe in its wandering to Cape Girardeau, Missouri. By 1830, he had settled in the hills outside of present day Argentine.[28] The village where he and his followers dwelled was also named Prophet's Town. However, this was a small village consisting of a handful of poor mud huts. During his last days, the Prophet, ill and emfeebled, decided to spend the remainder of his life in complete seclusion. He moved from the village and settled in a log cabin near the 3800 block of Argentine.

In November of 1836 he died. Before his death, the Prophet was visited by Dr. C. A. Chute of Westport, Missouri. He said of his visit:

---

[28]According to Harrington's book, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, page 89, teh actual location was in Shawnee Township, Wyandotte County, on the N.E., 1/4 of the S.W. 1/4 of Section 32, Township 11, Range 25.

In November last there died in the County of the Shawnees, a few miles from this point, the Shawnee Prophet Ten-Squa-Ta-Wah, generally reputed to be a twin brother of Tecumseh. He had been sick several weeks when he sent for a gentleman connected with the Baptist mission to visit and prescribe for him. At the same time with this gentleman, I also called to see him. I went accompanied by an interpreter, who conducted me by a winding path through the woods till we descended a hill at the bottom of which, secluded apparently from all the world, was the Prophet town or huts, built in the ordinary Indian style, constituted the entire settlement. The house of the Prophet was not distinguished at all from the others. A low portico covered with bark, which we were obligated to stoop to pass under, was erected before it, and a half starved dog greeted us with a growl as we entered. The interior of the house, which was lighted only by the half open door, showed at the first view the taste of one who hated civilization. Two or three platforms built against the wall served the purpose of bedsteads, covered with blankets and skins. A few ears of corn and a quantity of dried pumpkins (a favorite dish of the Indians) were hanging on poles overhead; a few implements of savaged domestic, as wooden floor, everything indicated poverty. One corner of the room, close to an apology for a fireplace, contained a platform of split elevated about a foot from the floor and covered with a blanket. This was the bed of the Prophet. Here was a fallen savage greatness. I involuntarily stopped for a moment to view in silence the spectacle of a man whose word was once law to numerous tribes, now lying on a miserable pallet, dying of poverty, neglected by all but his own family. He that exalted himself shall be abandoned. I approached him. He drew aside his blanket and disclosed a form emaciated in the extreme, but the broad proportions of which indicated that it had once been the seat of great strength. His countenance was sunken and haggard, but appeared--it might have been fancy--to exhibit the soul within. I thought I could discover in spite of the guards of hyprocrisy, something of the marks which pride, designing mind had stamped there. I inquired of his symptoms, which he related particularly and then proposed to do something for his relief. He replied that he was willing to submit to medical treatment, but was just then engaged in contemplation, or study, as the interpreter called it, and he feared that the operation of medicine might interrupt his train of reflection. He said his study would occupy three days longer, after which he should be glad to see me again. Accordingly, in three days I reappeared again to his cabin, but it was too late. He was speechless and evidently beyond the reach of human assistance. The same day he died.[29]

---

[29]Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas, Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. IX, pp. 164-65.

The Prophet was buried only a few feet from his cabin near White Feather Spring in Argentine. This area was uninhabited and would remain so for more than fifty years. The grave was unmarked and forgotten.

Then in 1897, E. F. Heister, an editor of the Kansas City Sun newspaper, decided to attempt to locate the grave. Charles Blue Jacket, a Shawnee chief and Indian minister, who had attended the Prophet's funeral was brought back from the Oklahoma Indian reservation. Blue Jacket had lived around Argentine and Shawnee Mission until about 1870. His life story is almost as interesting as the Prophet's. His father was a white man by the name of Marmaduke Van Swerangen. This man was captured at the age of seventeen by Shawnee Indians in West Virginia. Swerangen remained with them and became a chief by the age of twenty-five.[30]

His grandson, Charles Blue Jacket, was to be the last of the Shawnee chiefs. Blue Jacket was married three times and the father of twenty-three children. He fathered his last son at the age of seventy-two.[31]

When Blue Jacket arrived in Argentine, he was at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. On the morning of September 24, 1897, he met distinguished guests and conducted them on a tour of the site of the old Prophet's Town.[32] The next day, he, Mr. Hiester and possibly a few others went to White Feather Spring, the grave site of the

---

[30]Morgan, History of Wyandotte County, Kansas and Its People, p. 35.

[31]Kansas City Star, September 28, 1897, p. 8.

[32]Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, p. 91.

Prophet. Some years later, Mr. Heister recollected what happened. He said:

> When we had located the White Feather Spring, Blue Jacket said this was the place. He went up onto the south bank a few rods from the ravine and said--"The house stood right here. We carried him out in this direction," said he, pointing to the northwest. Then he walked out towards the northwest, possibly a distance of seventy-five or a hundred yards and stopping said--"We buried him right in here." Thus was the grave of the Prophet located within a radius of a few rods. Near enough for an Indian buried in his blanket more than sixty years before.[33]

A marker was placed over the grave. Chief Blue Jacket returned to the Shawnee reservation and died within a week of pneumonia contacted as a result of the damp Kansas weather.[34] He was eighty-one.

Time destroyed the marker over the grave. Then, around 1916 or 1917, the grave site was relocated and a pipe was cemented into the ground. In subsequent years, a metal rod was driven along side it. Both markers disappeared. The White Feather Spring was itself in danger of being covered up. For several years, property near the grave site was used as a dumping ground. Top soil washed into the property of Mr. Jack Beemont at 3818 Ruby Avenue in Argentine. His back yard is the supposed location of the grave. Mr. Beemont claims that the fill has raised the level of the spring about two or three feet within the last two or three years. If this rate continues, Mr. Beemont fears that the spring will be covered.[35]

---

[33] Ibid., p. 92.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Editorial, The Weekly Journal, Wyandotte County's Community Spirited Weekly, January 25, 1974, p. 1. Mark Nolan wrote this editorial entitled "Historical Site Involved in Cover Up" for the paper.

Tensquataway Marker

On Saturday, March 30, 1974, the Kansas State Historical Society attempted to relocate the grave site. Mr. Beemont and Mr. Denny Smith of the Historical Society led the search. Using a small bulldozer, about eight feet of dirt was removed from the supposed grave site. By using a metal detector they were able to find the metal rod which had originally marked the grave. The Wyandotte County Historical Society is planning to erect a permanent marker over this site in the near future. Thus, a historical landmark will be preserved for future generations.[36] Mr. Smith gave the author a map of the location of the grave site. This map has been reproduced and is on the preceding page. The reader should bear in mind, however, that there will always be at least some controversy as to whether this is the actual grave of the Prophet. Historians generally concede that this is the probable location. Their principal source, however, is the testimony of the aged Shawnee Indian Chief who was trying to recollect a burial made almost sixty years earlier.

Around the time of the Prophet's death, other religious groups founded missions in the area. A Baptist mission school was founded in the northeastern part of Johnson County on March 1, 1835. The first newspaper ever printed in Indian language was published there. It was also the first newspaper printed in the state of Kansas. The Baptist mission was discontinued in 1855.[37]

---

[36]Denny Smith, interview in his home at 6130 Riverview, Kansas City, Kansas on April 1, 1974.

[37]Allison, "The Early Development and Progress of Kansas City, Kansas," p. 16.

The Quakers also located a mission on 320 acres near what is now the junction of U.S. 50 and 69 near Merriam, Kansas. This mission closed permanently in 1870.[38]

The Shawnees ceded their reservation to the United States in 1854. The United States returned 200,000 acres of land to be divided among themselves. Each member of the tribe was permitted to receive 200 acres.[39] By 1870, however, almost all of the Indians had sold their parcels of land. Most of the Shawnee then migrated to the Oklahoma reservation where they merged with the Cherokee Indians. The other Indian tribes such as the Munsee Indians, who settled about five miles west of Argentine near the present town of Muncie, Kansas, the Delaware and the Wyandotte Indians also sold their lands. The area was now ready for settlement.

The white man had already made many inroads into the region. Trading posts carried on a lucrative trade with the Indians as early as the middle of the eighteenth century. In the first part of the nineteenth century, the famous Chouteau family and the American Fur Company that they worked for aided greatly in the settlement of the Kansas City area. As early as 1820, Francis G. and Cyprian Chouteau were sent to Kansas and they built a post on the north bank of the Kaw River a few miles above its mouth. Here, near the present site of Bonner Springs, they built the earliest and what was probably the principle trading post in Wyandotte County. Known as the "Four Houses" trading post, it consisted of logs arranged on four sides of a square in order to perhaps provide some kind of

---

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., p. 17.

protection in case of an Indian attack. This post was in use as late as 1826. By then, other trading posts were established near the Indian settlements and the "Four Houses" was abandoned.[40]

About a mile or so north of the present town of Turner, Kansas and only a couple of miles from Argentine, another post had been built. A lucrative trade was conducted with the Delaware Indians. The post continued in operation until the middle of the 1850's. It was near this settlement that the Reverend Johnson built his Methodist mission. This post also has another claim to fame. It was here that John C. Fremont completed preparations for his expedition into the Rocky Mountains in 1842.[41]

Another establishment of interest was the Grinter House, just west of Muncie, Kansas in Wyandotte County. Moses P. Grinter is considered the first permanent white settler in Wyandotte County, Kansas. In 1831, he began operation of the first ferry on the Kansas River. In 1833, he started a grist and saw mill. The year 1850 saw the establishment of the first post office in the territory not located on a military post. In 1857, he built a lodging house, which is the oldest house still standing in Wyandotte County. The Wyandotte County Historical Society has since turned it into a museum.[42]

---

[40]Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, p. 11.

[41]Harry E. Hanson, compiler, A Historical Outline of the Grinter Place From 1825-1878, p. 4. This work was published by the Hanson family, date unknown.

[42]Ibid.

From 1854 to 1857 other ferries were built along the Kaw River. Including the Grinter Ferry, there were at least eleven ferries between the mouth of the river and the western boundaries of Wyandotte County. These included the Wyandot National Ferry; the Silas Armstrong Ferry; and the Willis Wills Ferry, near the river's mouth; the Santa Fe Road Ferry; the Eureka Ferry; the Muncie Ferry, near the present town of Muncie; the Tooley Ferry and Keeler Ferries, approximately two miles west of the Grinter Ferry; the Chouteau Ferry near Edwardsville, and the Tiblow Ferry near Bonner Springs.[43] All of these ferries were vital in the growth of Kansas City, Kansas and the surrounding areas.

---

[43]Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, pp. 162-74.

CHAPTER II

THE OLD CITY OF ARGENTINE

Perhaps one might say that if the railroad had not come to the flat bottom lands along the Kaw, there would not have been a town of Argentine. The statement is nothing unique in itself. Many communities owed their growth and prosperity to the coming of the railroads and Argentine is truly indebted to the Santa Fe Railroad.

In 1875, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad came to the bottom lands of the Kaw between the present day communities of Turner and Argentine. On 128 acres of ground, they established terminal facilities, transfer sheds, round houses, machine shops, repair shops, and a coaling depot.[1]

The Santa Fe also completed an enormous ice house in those early days. This ice house, one of the largest and the most modern in the entire Santa Fe system, was filled with ice from lakes in the northern part of the country. It was thirty-six feet by 208 feet and had a capacity of 3,000 tons.[2]

By 1890, the Santa Fe had 27.46 miles of tracks in the Argentine yards. The value of its property was approximately $900,000

---

[1] Kansas City Gazette, December 31, 1899, p. 5.

[2] Ibid.

and it had a payroll of nearly 500 workers. Plans were then being made for the building of immense repair shops.[3]

A small village quickly grew by the railroad yards. It was this location that W. N. Ewing came upon in his search for a smelter site. The immense transfer yards of the railroad convinced him that this was the proper location. Thus, the smelter was built near the railroad tracks. A smelter colony was quickly established and prominent businessmen saw the need for a town to be plotted.

Thus, on November 8, 1880, a man by the name of James W. Coburn purchased sixty acres of ground from some Shawnee Indians and began plotting a town. He called his town "Silver City" which later became Argentine. Argentine is derived from the Latin word for "silver."[4] Ninety years later, this community still goes by the name of Argentine.[5]

On April 9, 1881, the Kansas Town Company of Wyandotte County was organized with an initial capital of $100,000. The incorporators of this company were William B. Strong, George O. Manchester, Jacob Mulvane, J. R. Mulvane and E. Wilder. Coburn soon purchased 415 acres of land in Sections 20, 21, 28, 29, Township 11, Range 25 east, Wyandotte County from this company. He

---

[3]Ibid.

[4]Gloria A. Servos, "Argentine, The Silver City," p. 1. This was un unpublished paper written in 1962, and found in the Argentine file of the Silver City Record at 3416 Strong, Kansas City, Kansas.

[5]According to a newspaper article in the Kansas City Star, April 17, 1962, there is doubt as to why the area became known as Argentine. Most scholars accept the theory that the town was named after the smelter. However, the name of Argentine apparently shows on an abstract dated 1849. This was long before the area became known for its silver refining.

turned over seventy-five acres of this land to the railroad. The rest he plotted and put on the market. This new land became known as the Mulvane's addition to the town of Argentine.[6]

In 1882, a certain Judge Dexter felt that the young city had a sufficient population to entitle it to a city government. Therefore, he ordered that elections be held on the first Tuesday in August of 1882. The following men were named officials of the new city:

Mayor	-- G. W. Gulley
Assistant Mayor (?)	-- George Simmons
Police Judge	-- A. J. Dolley
Marshall	-- Charles Duvall
City Clerk	-- J. H. Holderman[7]

During the winter of 1881 and 1882 a successful school was taught. Negro children attended a separate school run by a negro lady. On August 28, 1882, an election was held to vote on bonds for the building of a school house. Seven thousand dollars was voted for this undertaking.[8]

During the early part of the summer of 1881, the first church services were held. It was not until May 1882, however, that the first church was organized. This church was destroyed by a tornado in June 1882. Three months later, it was rebuilt on what was then the corner of Ruby Avenue and 2nd Street. The first pastor was the Reverend J. W. Johnson.[9]

---

[6]This information came from an old article in the Argentine file of the Kansas Room Collection of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library at 6th and Minnesota Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas.

[7]Ibid

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

By the end of 1882, Argentine was a growing and prosperous little city. The smelter at Argentine did a business of $10,000,000 annually, receiving its ores from all parts of the continent. Plans were being made for the erection of a $75,000 building for the Western Land Manufacturing Company. This company was going to use the lead refined by the smelter and turn it into lead products. Steps were also being taken for the organization of a white lead company with a capital stock of between $300,000 and $500,000. A flour mill with a capacity of 100 barrels of flour a day was also projected. Land prices were high in the town. Lots ranged from $125 to $300.[10]

Argentine, like most smelting towns, was a wild, wide-open town. There were blocks and blocks of saloons and few churches. Horse and poultry rustling was an early problem. G. W. Simmons,[11] who was later a deputy city marshall, councilman and prominent businessman, formed a horse league to chase poultry and horse rustlers. If a horse was stolen in the night, it would be reported to Mr. Simmons, who would summon the league into action. They would chase the thieves, and, upon capture, take them to the justice of the peace. The justice of the peace would then pronounce a sentence of either twenty years in the penitentiary or hanging. After a few

---

[10] Wyandotte County Clippings, "Argentine, A New Manufacturing City of Great Promise," pp. 241-242. This is a news clipping from an old Kansas City newspaper, possibly either the Kansas City Gazette or the Kansas City Herald. This clipping can be found in the Argentine file of the Kansas State Historical Society, 10th and Jackson, Topeka, Kansas.

[11] G. W. Simmons was the owner of a livery stable, grain store, express agency and mortuary in the early town. His descendants are the owners of the Simmons Funeral Home in Argentine.

such punishments were dealt out, horse and poultry thievery was no longer a problem.[12]

In an interview in February 1942, G. G. Simmons, the son of G. W. Simmons, recalled the early days of the town:

> There were forty-five houses here when we came to Argentine from Ashkum, Illinois in 1882. Almost all of the town was confined to the district between what is now 21st Street and 23rd Street.[13]

The little town grew steadily, however. In 1884, the first post office was opened. In 1887, the first bank opened. Its motto was "conservative and careful business."[14] In 1888, the east end of the city was built by J. T. Thayer. This residential area became the homes of the smelter and railroad officials and the social elite of the town. Beautiful homes and trees lined the streets, and this residential area, at that time, was as beautiful as any in the Kansas City area. The population jumped from 3,264 in 1888 to 6,500 in 1890. In 1890, the city was no longer classified as a second class city but became a first class city. A Tax Payers League of Argentine was organized.[15]

The town was rapidly spreading out. Several large additions were added to the city. By 1890, some streets were already graded.

---

[12]This information came from the Simmons' scrapbooks of mementos of Argentine at the Simmons Funeral Home at 37th and Strong, Kansas City, Kansas.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Wesley Channel, Beckie Fabian and Nancy Jo Williamson, "And Then Came Argentine," p. 8. This was an unpublished report written by three high school students of Argentine High School in 1961. This report is in the possession of Mr. Robert Allison, Counselor at Harmon High School, 2104 Steele Road, Kansas City, Kansas.

[15]Ibid., p. 9.

The city council passed an ordinance dividing the city into sewer districts and by the end of the year was planning on having a complete sewer system. Contracts had already been let for the construction of three sewers which were to empty into the Kaw River.[16]

The city already had a splendid water system. Water was obtained from the Kaw and pumped to a large reservoir on one of the hills southwest of town. The fire department under the charge of Chief Harry Higginbothan was considered adequate and modern for the times. It consisted of a hose cart and a thoroughly trained team of horses.[17]

The police force of the city consisted of the Chief of Police, Stephen March, and his four assistants. Police Judge Wortman reported the collection of $5,878 in fines in 1890. This figure far exceeded that of any other year. Other prisoners, not fined, were confined to the rock piles.[18]

Argentine as a town, however, still lacked many cultural traits characteristic of a modern city. The following editorial appeared in the Argentine Republic Newspaper, dated October 19, 1889:

> One evening last week we saw an old man walking down one of our main streets when suddenly he slipped and fell, where some garbage had been dumped all over the sidewalk, and came very near to being seriously injured.[19]

---

[16]Kansas City Gazette, December 31, 1890, p. 5.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Argentine Republic Newspaper, October 19, 1889, p. 2. This newspaper is still in existence in the community and is now called the Silver City Record.

Argentine was a wide open smelter town and was very wild compared to the more civilized towns of Quindaro, Wyandotte, and Armourdale. Residents of these towns had repeatedly warned the residents of Argentine to clean up their town. Finally, on one evening in 1892, a group of citizens from the nearby town of Armourdale made a raid on the saloons, bawdy houses, and gambling dens in Argentine. Property was destroyed and several Argentians were killed. In revenge, citizens from Argentine marched into Armourdale the next day, roughed up a few citizens and murdered the sheriff.[20] Hard feelings existed between the two cities for several years.

Matters had hardly quieted down between the two towns when on a day in 1895 a group of Indians came into the town of Argentine. They went to the Mayor, F. O. Willard, and informed him that they held the deeds to the land that the town was plotted on. They promptly demanded that the townspeople vacate the premises. The citizens of Argentine were naturally greatly angered. They accused the citizens of Armourdale of putting the Indians up to this task. Angry words flowed between the two cities. Armourdale began a boycott and refused to sell meat and other products. Argentine, in return, refused to export any iron goods into Armourdale. This feud apparently went on for several years before things were forgotten.[21]

As far as the Indians' claim was concerned, this case eventually reached court. R. R. Dunbar, an Argentine lawyer, represented

---

[20]Channel, Fabian and Williamson, "And Then Came Argentine," p. 10.

[21]Ibid., p. 11.

them. It seems that the land had originally belonged to two Indians: Nancy Whitefeather and Elizabeth Longtail, of the Shawnee Indians. The deed to the land had been passed among their heirs. An Indian by the name of George Washington sold the land to the Kansas Town Company. The Indians claimed that there were two George Washingtons and the wrong one had signed the deed and received money for its sale.[22]

The Indians claimed 160 acres of land, including the home-sites of 200 of the most prosperous families of the town, as well as the land on which the Emerson Grade School, the Argentine High School, and much of the railroad yards and the depot stood.[23]

Judge Hook, of the United States District Court sitting at Leavenworth, Kansas, ruled against the Indians. This decision was expected; nevertheless, all of Argentine was jubilant:

> The effect of the decision in Argentine became apparent as soon as the news was received yesterday. Little knots of businessmen and citizens owning property in the diatrict affected by the suit gathered on the streets and exchanged congratulations. They had been confident that the outcome of the contest would be favorable to them, but it had served as a cloud on their titles during the past four years and interferred greatly with real estate transactions. While it was admitted that Dunbar still had an opportunity to carry the case to the supreme court, it was not thought probable that he would do so, owing to the expense and difficulties involved in such proceedings. Judge Hook's decision is regarded by the interested property owners as serving to completely clear their titles.[24]

---

[22] Wyandotte County Clippings, volume I, "Victory for Argentine," p. 53. This is an undated newspaper clipping that can be found in the Argentine file of the Kansas State Historical Society at 10th and Jackson, Topeka, Kansas.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

Almost since the founding of the town, a newspaper has been in existence in the community. Several newspapers lasted only a few months before going out of business. The Argentine Advocate only operated from February 19 through November 24, 1888. The Eagle lasted for two years from 1892 until 1894, and the Labor Review was printed from June 20, 1891, until some time the next year.[25] Another newspaper, the Argus, operated its press from August 25 until December 1, 1887, and a final paper, the Siftings existed from January 9 until May 29, 1886.[26]

One newspaper, founded in 1887, is still in existence. This is the Argentine Republic which is now called the Silver City Record. It has also been called the Kansas City Advertiser and the Wyandotte County Record. Joseph Landrey was the founder of the newspaper. Mr. Landrey was a man of several trades. He left an Indiana newspaper and came to Argentine looking for work with the railroad. In December of 1887, he felt the need for the community to have a newspaper, and thus he started a weekly paper. The first office of his newspaper was on Silver Avenue just west of the Simmons Livery Stable. Within a short time, the newspaper had a circulation of 300 subscribers.[27]

---

[25]Kansas State Historical Society, Department of Archives, History of Kansas Newspapers, 1916, p. 319.

[26]Ibid., p. 320.

[27]This information came from a newspaper clipping found in the Argentine file of the Kansas City Kansan newspaper at 901 North 8th, Kansas City, Kansas. The title of the article was "A View of Old Argentine, News from Paper of 50 Years Ago Reveals Bustling Town."

Mr. Landrey's paper was simple, humorous and philosophical. The following quote is his explanation for the founding of the newspaper:

> The Republic was not intended to supply a long felt want or fill a niche to the literary world, but an actual necessity in the race for bread and oleomargarine. We shall endeavor to make the Republic useful as well as ornamental. We have no room for beautiful snow, spring poetry or unfriendly words. We desire liberal patronage and will use our utmost endeavors to please. The Republic is in hearty sympathy with honest toilers and expects to win.[28]

Joseph T. Landrey took over the newspaper after the death of his father in 1905. He turned the paper over to his brother, Grant, in 1908. Grant S. Landrey operated the paper until September 1917. Then, he sold the paper to E. W. Wells. The name of the paper was changed from the Argentine Republic to the Kansas City Advertiser. In 1937, the paper was renamed the Wyandotte County Record.[29] Kenneth Wells is the present editor of the paper. The paper is still a weekly and for several years has been called the Silver City Record.

One of the old businesses of the community is the Ice House. This was started in 1898 by David Wentling and his son, Bryon. Ice was cut from the Kaw River and stored in a barn at 17th and Elmwood in sawdust and delivered during the summer.

---

[28]Kansas City Advertiser, 50th anniversary edition, November 26, 1937, p. 1. (This newspaper is now called the Silver City Record.)

[29]Servos, "Argentine The Silver City," p. 15.

This business started with only one ice wagon and ended up with fifteen. It was the only ice house in the community. In winter the firm sold and delivered coal.[30]

In the early 1800's, the Nokes Opera House was a gathering place of the community. This building was built on Silver Avenue between 21st and 22nd Streets. It was owned by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.[31]

The Argentine City Hall was located on the southwest corner of 24th and Silver Avenue. The building was completed on November 16, 1891 at an estimated cost of $8,000. The two-story building was constructed of brick. It had an attic and a basement.[32] The building served many purposes. The basement contained cells and housed the city's prisoners. A rock quarry was used on Monkey Mountain and each morning chain gangs were marched up there from the jail to break rocks for use by the city street department.[33]

The fire department was located in the first floor. The chief of police, the city clerk, the police court and the mayor's office were also on the first floor. The city council held its meetings on the second floor. One room was used as a library. Part of it was also used as the firemen's sleeping quarters. Until Argentine High School was built in 1908, classes were also held on the second floor. Most of the court house was torn down in

---

[30] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[31] Ibid., p. 25.

[32] Don Simmons, "City Hall, Argentine, Kansas." (This one-page article written by Mr. Simmons is among the Argentine mementos of the Simmons Funeral Home, 37th and Strong, Kansas City, Kansas.)

[33] Ibid.

1930. The remainder was razed in 1958 to make room for the Ruby Avenue extension. The drawing, at the end of this chapter, is a picture of the old city hall. This drawing is a reproduction of a picture given to the author by Don Simmons of the Simmons Funeral Home.[34]

For many years, the Metropolitan Street Railway Company of Kansas City, Missouri had a line into the Argentine district. The terminal was located near 24th Street. A person could catch an electric street car in Kansas City, Missouri and journey through Kansas City, Kansas to the Argentine community. One-way fare was five cents. Children under twelve years of age were not charged a fare.[35]

By the turn of the century, the town of Argentine had a population of about 8,000. However, the closing of the Argentine silver smelter brought almost financial ruin to the town. Hundreds of citizens moved away. This loss was coupled with the great flood disasters of 1903, 1904, and 1908. Much of the community was under water during these floods. The community was laboring under such a financial stress that by 1907, it began to seek annexation into Kansas City, Kansas.

The city faced a tough fight in getting annexed. The Mayor of Argentine, Charles W. Green, escorted Mayor Cornell and ten

---

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Don Simmons, "Argentine's Electric Street Cars." This one-page article, written by Mr. Simmons, is among the Argentine mementos of the Simmons Funeral Home, 37th and Strong, Kansas City, Kansas.

West Side Councilmen on a ride through Argentine during May of 1907. Mr. Green told the Kansas Citians:

> This is a plain business proposition. Our city wants to be annexed to yours. Here, we have a city of 7,000 in population. It has good businesses, good streets, good sidewalks and good water. We'll endeavor to show you the good this afternoon so that you may be able to see the proposition from our standpoint.[36]

Kansas City, Kansas was to reject Argentine's proposals several times. The first time was on Wednesday evening May 22, 1907. In anger, Green and the Argentine delegation left the meeting. Members of the Argentine community said that the real opposition to annexation came from the Metropolitan Street Car Company. This company, they charged, was trying to compel Argentine to accept a franchise which they refused to do.[37]

On the night of October 8, 1907, the Council of Kansas City, Kansas again defeated by vote the annexation of Argentine. The vote stood six in favor and four against. Mayor Cornell of Kansas City, Kansas announced that the passage of the annexation ordinance was defeated since a two-thirds majority was needed.

> Mayor Green of Argentine occupied a seat next to Mayor Cornell. The two Mayors turned in their chairs, looked each other in the eye, and then shook hands. Mayor Cornell then stood erect and said: "Don't go away mad gentlemen. The Mercantile Club is now holding a meeting just a block from us and is talking over the matter of government by commissions, and I have been requested to extend an invitation to you all to attend this meeting."
>
> The Argentine delegation left the city hall, but instead of visiting the Mercantile Club meeting boarded cars for Argentine, stating that it was "23" as far as it was concerned on annexation.[38]

---

[36] Kansas City Times, May 24, 1907, p. 3.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Kansas City Journal, October 9, 1907, p. 1.

Finally, after the commission form of government was adopted in Kansas City, Kansas, Argentine was annexed into the city on October 15, 1901. Effective the following January 1, Argentine became the seventh ward of Kansas City, Kansas. According to census figures of 1909, Kansas City, Kansas had a population of 102,947 and Argentine 8,442. The new combined total was 111,389.[39]

The fortunes of Kansas City, Kansas now became the fortunes of the Argentine community. Argentine has received the cultural and economic advantages of its extension of the city. However, the memories of the times when Argentine was a separate city have not been forgotten. These were times of prosperity and adversity, happiness and sorrow. This chapter is dedicated to that era. The following is a list of the mayors of the old city of Argentine:

G. W. Gulley	1882-83	J. O. Gaskill	1891-93
E. G. Bliss	1883-84	F. O. Willard	1893-97
J. A. Healy	1884	C. W. Marston	1897-99
W. F. Noyes	1884-85	C. W. Green	1898-1903
G. W. Gulley	1885-86	Dr. D. E. Clopper	1903-95
Z. J. Enright	1886-88	A. F. Jasper	1905-06
G. W. Gulley	1888-89	H. R. Rossiter	1906-07
Steve March	1889	C. W. Green	1907-09[40]
William McGeorge	1889-91		

---

[39]Kansas City Journal, October 15, 1907, p. 1.

[40]Perl W. Morgan, History of Wyandotte County Kansas and its People (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), p. 300.

Argentine City Hall

CHAPTER III

THE ARGENTINE SMELTER

> Could the old warrior Fernando Cortez arise from the tomb and visit the Argentine smelter by the light of the pale-faced moon, look around and see the piles of precious ores scattered negligently here and there, all fresh taken from the land he won by roasting the heroic chieftain on burning coals, it would paralyze him sure.[1]

These fitting words, spoken by Joseph Landrey, the founder of the old Argentine Republic Newspaper, reflect the great wealth of the Argentine smelter. "Argentine" is derived also from the Spanish (as well as Latin) word for silver, and the town was truly a silver city. From 1880 until 1901, the Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company had its main smelter located in Argentine. For many years this smelter was the largest silver and lead smelter in the world in terms of plant size and the value of products refined. The smelter received ores from all parts of the continent and sent finished products all over the world.[2]

The peak year of the smelter was 1898. In that year, the smelter produced one-twelfth of all gold produced in the United

---

[1]Editorial, Kansas City Kansan, December 1937. This unsigned editorial was found in the Argentine file of the Kansas City Kansan at 901 North 8th, Kansas City, Kansas. The exact date of the newspaper article is unknown to the author. The editorial is entitled, "A View of Old Argentine, News from Paper of 50 Years Ago Reveals Bustling Town."

[2]Kansas City Star, May 1, 1899, p. 24.

States; one-eighth of all the silver; and one-fifth of all the lead. In addition, 9,846,312 pounds of blue vitrol worth $89,390 and 201,011 pounds of zinc worth $4,352 were produced. Refined silver and gold were sent to such faraway places as India and Japan.[3]

W. N. Ewing was the founder of the smelter. Previously, he had been the superintendent of the Carbon Coal and Mining Company at Osage City, Kansas, and the superintendent of a smelting establishment in Colorado. He desired to establish a smelting works either at Topeka or some other point in Kansas City.[4]

Ewing had encountered financial and technical difficulties at his smelter in Colorado. He was dependent upon a single mining camp for his raw material. This was an inadequate supply. Also, labor was scarce and unreliable. The shipping facilities were monopolized by one railroad. He also did not have any way of mending broken machinery. In one instance, the breaking of a single wheel, costing only $8.00 to repair, caused the suspension of work at the smelter. The company lost between $8,000 and $10,000.[5]

Ewing decided it would be best to relocate his smelter. It would be better to ship the ores for smelting and refining to a manufacturing center possessing all the advantages of shipment,

---

[3] Ibid.

[4] Wyandotte County Clippings, "Argentine, a New Manufacturing City of Great Promise," pp. 237-238. This is a news clipping from an old Kansas City newspaper, possibly either the Kansas City Gazette or Kansas City Herald. This clipping can be found in the Argentine file of the Kansas State Historical Society, 10th and Jackson, Topeka, Kansas.

[5] Ibid.

fuel supply, and quantity of labor. He went to capitalists at Topeka and Emporia in an effort to secure financial assistance, but he received no real encouragement.[6]

Finally, he came to Kansas City and met some prominent businessmen. Among them were C. F. Morse, T. F. Oakes and Kersey Coates. Ewing and these men formed the Kansas City Smelting and Refining Company, and Ewing became the Secretary and Superintendent of the new company.[7]

It was Ewing who chose the site for the new smelter. The location was in the lowlands of the Kaw River about three miles from its mouth. At that time, the area was almost completely uninhabited. The site for the smelter was an orchard. Where the town of Argentine was to be plotted, a large cornfield stood.[8]

Work on the new smelter was started in the summer of 1880 and was completed by the fall. Ewing and his associates saw the need for a town to be built. Therefore, the town of Argentine was started. From small beginnings, this town evolved into a prosperous community.

The real genius responsible for the fabulous growth of the Argentine smelter was August R. Meyer. Meyer, along with N. Witherell and Theodore Berdell, purchased the controlling interest in the smelter in 1881. Meyer became the President of the reorganized

---

[6]Ibid., pp. 239-40. [7]Ibid.

[8]Kansas City Star, August 24, 1901, p. 2.

smelting company which was now called the Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company.[9]

August R. Meyer was a wealthy and nationally known figure before he came to Argentine. He was born of German descent in St. Louis, Missouri and attended school there until he reached fourteen years of age. Then he went abroad to study at the School of Mines in Freibourg, Saxony (now part of East Germany), where he was graduated in 1872. Also, he spent several terms as a student at the University of Berlin. He traveled throughout Europe and became known to metalworkers throughout the continent.[10]

Meyer returned to America and worked for a short period of time in Illinois. In the spring of 1874, at the age of twenty-six, he went to Colorado. He became the territorial assayer at Fair Play, Colorado. Meyer is credited with giving this rugged mining camp its first official name: Leadville. He helped to build Leadville's first sampling and smelting works. He also established an ore-crushing mill in Alma, Colorado. Meyer's old home in Leadville is now preserved as the Healy House. This house is a state museum commemorating the silver mining of the state.[11]

In 1881, Meyer looked for a site to build a smelter. He came to Kansas City and inspected the Argentine smelter which was then less than a year old. He was impressed with the adequate

---

[9]Kansas City Star, May 22, 1899, p. 24.

[10]Kansas City Times, April 10, 1971, p. 11A.

[11]Ibid.

labor supply and the railway facilities. Therefore, he and his associates purchased the company.

Meyer built a beautiful home in Argentine near the smelter. This home was located on what is now 22nd and Ruby. Later it was sold and became the first hotel in Argentine. It was called the Bleaker House. The owner of the hotel used to send his children to the smelter with hot lunches for his boarders.[12]

Meyer later built another home at 2806 Independence Avenue. He built a final home at the corner of 44th and Warwick in Kansas City, Missouri. This dwelling, erected in the style of a German manor, is now the home of the Kansas City Art Institute.[13]

Besides his smelting interests, he was very active in civic affairs. He conceived the idea of a boulevard (Cliff Drive) along the high scenic bluffs of the Missouri River. He also proposed other parks and boulevards for the city. In 1892, he became the first President of the Kansas City, Missouri Park Board. He and William Rockhill Nelson, the owner of the Kansas City Star, were instrumental in the development of the park and boulevard system.[14] Meyer Boulevard was named in his honor.

Meyer also gained lasting fame from the Argentine smelter. In the smelter's first year of operation, it refined 40 ounces of

---

[12]Nellie M. McGuinn, The Story of Kansas City, Kansas (Kansas City, Kansas: The Kansas City Public Schools, 1961), p. 79.

[13]Kansas City Times, April 10, 1971, p. 11A.

[14]Ibid.

gold, 463,000 ounces of silver and 3,100 tons of lead.[15] However, under Meyer's leadership, this figure was to be passed many times over. The following chart shows the value of the products produced by the smelter from 1881-1898.[16]

Type	Amount	Price Per Ounce	Value
Gold	1,103,410 ounces	$20.67 per ounce	$ 22,807,434.70
Silver	117,743,515 ounces	.63 per ounce	74,178,415.08
Lead	446,876 tons	80.00 per ton	35,750,080.00
			$132,735,929.78

The raw, unrefined ore was shipped by rail to the smelter from all over the continent. The interests of the Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company were scattered. The company also owned two smelters in Leadville, Colorado and one at Carmen and one at Chihuahua, Mexico. Sampling works were located at Salt Lake City, Utah, and in Mexico at Hermosillo, Parral, Jiminiz, Chihuahua, Pachuea, and Sabinal. The company also owned mines at Cook's Peak, New Mexico and in Mexico at Sierra del Carmen, Sierra Mojada, and Parral.[17]

In later years, the company was merged with the great "smelter trust" owned by the German family, the Guggenheims. This

---

[15] Kansas City Star, May 7, 1899, p. 24. August R. Meyer is not to be confused with Alfred M. Meyers who for many years was the Chief Engineer of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company in Argentine.

[16] Ibid. Due to the extreme age and poor condition of the microfilm, these figures are only approximate.

[17] Ibid.

trust had a combined capital stock of $65,000,000 and consisted of twenty-two smelters. This great combine controlled over 80 per cent of the lead produced in the United States. August R. Meyer was on the Board of Directors of this trust.[18]

The smelting industry did a lucrative business and paid good wages. The following chart is a listing of wages for workers at the Argentine smelter in 1901.[19]

Classification	Salary
Vitriol plant employees	$1.80 per day
Common laborers in other departments	$1.50 per day
Furnace men	$2.00 to 2.70 per day
Gold room employees	$2.00 per day
Blast furnace men	$3.00 per day
Superintendents and foremen	$75-150 per month

This was an extremely hazardous occupation however. Workers became ill from the sickening fumes of the melting ore. Many workers became paralyzed and died from lead poisoning. The author knows of two people who were affected by the toxic fumes. Cornelius T. Campbell, who worked at the Kansas City Structural Steel Company for many years, had a father who worked in the company's smelters in Mexico and in Argentine. His father was twice partially paralyzed as a result of lead poisoning.[20] The author's great-grandfather,

---

[18] Ibid.

[19] Kansas City Star, August 24, 1901, p. 1.

[20] Cornelius T. Campbell, personal interview held in his home at 1501 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 12, 1974.

Louis L. Johnson, was a lead burner in the Argentine smelter. Mr. Johnson died of lead poisoning on July 3, 1901 at the age of forty-nine.

The usually prevailing southwesterly winds blew the toxic fumes directly into the city. Because of fog and high humidity, the smelter fumes covered the little city for much of the year. Vegetation could not grow in many areas. The author has heard stories about the fumes being so bad that dogs and cats suffocated on the streets.

Working conditions were also poor inside the smelter. An intense heat was given off by the smelter furnaces. Coal, coke and oil worth $753,000 was used annually. The coal came from Missouri, Colorado and New Mexico. The coke came from West Virginia and Alabama. The oil was purchased from the Standard Oil Company and its subsidaries.[21]

The heat of the smelter was so intense that the men had to work in teams of four. Three men stirred the moulten metal and the other man stood by with a water hose and cooled his partners. Due to the vats being wet when the hot metal was poured in, there sometimes were explosions that killed two or three men.[22]

Due to the value of the precious ores, great security was employed at the plant. Armed guards patroled the gates. Men were

---

[21]Kansas City Star, May 7, 1889, p. 24.

[22]Terry Miller, "The Kansas City Smelting and Refining Works," p. 3. (This unpublished paper of four pages was written in April of 1948. It was found in the Argentine file of the Silver City Record, 3416 Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas.)

searched from head to foot whenever they entered and left the plant. Bricks of gold and silver, however, were usually left unguarded on the docks. These metals were shipped by Wells Fargo wagons to the railroad depot. All gold went to the Federal mints where they were exchanged for their value in money. Silver was stamped with the company's trademark and sold on the open market. Eventually, most of it also ended up in mints. Lead was sold on the open market although most of it went to New York. Zinc was also sold on the open market.[23]

The smelting grounds at Argentine consisted of eighteen acres. About one-third of this tract was covered with buildings. There were five general departments in the plant. They were: the assaying, sampling, roasting, smelting and refining departments.[24] Most of the smelting work involved complicated processes. Therefore, most of the workers were skilled laborers. When Meyer took over the smelter, the word quickly spread to the mining districts of Germany, Austria and Bohemia. Many smelter workers came over from Europe to work in the Argentine smelter. At one time, the smelter colony reached 3,000.[25] This was almost half of the population of the entire town. Many of these people were of European descent.

Their skills were put to good use in the Argentine smelter. For as the author has mentioned before, a detailed process was

---

[23]Kansas City Star, May 7, 1889, p. 24.

[24]Kansas City Gazette, December 31, 1890, p. 17.

[25]Kansas City Times, April 10, 1971, p. 11A.

involved in the refining of the ore. This process began in the assaying department. The ores were tested and the value was determined there. Then, the ores went to the sampling department where the ores were mixed in the proper amounts for correct smelting.

From the sampling department, the ore went to the blast furnaces. Here is was mixed with charcoal, crushed stone, and other smelting ingredients and shoveled into the furnaces. It then came out of the furnaces and the finished product, the bullion, was poured into vats. The slag or refuse material from the furnaces was poured in bog bowls and taken to the slag yard. Valuable ores remained in the slag and it was necessary to allow the slag to cool in order for the valuable materials to settle to the bottom. The valuable portions were removed and refined while the slag was sold to railway companies for ballast.

Lead, zinc, silver and gold comprised the bullion taken from the furnaces. This bullion was placed in molds to cool. Each full mold was called a pig and weighed about seventy-five pounds. From there, the bullion was taken through the last process, that of the refining department. The gold and silver were separated from the lead and made ready for shipment.[26]

Perhaps the proudest day in the history of Argentine occurred on October 30, 1889. On that day, several Latin American dignitaries, who were in this country to form the International Union of American Republics, visited Argentine. These men were taken by several trains from Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri to the town of Argentine.

---

[26]Kansas City Gazette, December 31, 1890, p. 17.

There, they visited the smelter for several hours. They reboarded the train and spent the night at the Coates House Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri. The next morning they left for Springfield, Illinois. Soon, the delegates went to Washington, D.C. and on April 14, 1890, formed the International Union of American Republics. The purpose of this union was friendship and the betterment of trade between the American Republics. This union was perhaps the forerunner of the present Organization of American States.[27]

Silver medals were minted and presented to the dignitaries during their visit to Argentine to commemorate the event. These medals bore the profile of the heads of President Harrison of the United States and President Diaz of Mexico. One of these medals can be found in the Missouri Room Collection of the Kansas City, Missouri Public Library.[28]

The Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company took great pride in this visit by Latin American dignitaries. The company also took great pride in the facilities that it erected for its employees. Reading rooms and recreational facilities were established. The company also had low rent housing available for the families of smelter workers. For several years around 1890, could also take pride in the statistics of the labor bureau. These statistics showed that the average wages paid at the smelter were

---

[27]Kansas City Star, April 17, 1962, p. 6.

[28]Ibid.

higher than the wages paid in "any large manufacturing concern east of the Rocky Mountains."[29]

For the most part, the company maintained an excellent management-employee relationship. This relationship started at the top with August R. Meyer, the president, and extended on down through the superintendents, foremen and common laborers. As the author has mentioned previously, working conditions were far from good. The hours were long and the work was hazardous. Nevertheless, working conditions at the Argentine smelter were no worse than they were in most other industries in our country in the late 1800's.

The company did experience a strike in May 1886. The year 1886 was a period of great labor unrest in Kansas as well as across the country. Perhaps the most serious strike in Kansas was at the Argentine smelter.

On May 15, 1886, the 200 employees of the smelter struck the plant. They demanded a reduction of hours worked from twelve to eight with no decrease in pay. To meet these demands, the company would have had to utilize three shifts or increase the working force by approximately one-third.[30]

Sheriff James Ferguson of Wyandotte County went to Argentine on the morning of May 15. He placed a force of deputies around the plant's property. The smelting company hired an additional

---

[29]Kansas City Gazette, December 31, 1890, p. 17.

[30]Dorothy Leibengood, "Labor Problems in the Second Year of Governor Martin's Administration," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, V, number 1 (1936), p. 191.

twenty men to stand guard during nights. This they did for several days.[31]

A. R. Meyer was in Mexico at the time of the strike. A. F. Snyder, the plant superintendent, handled the labor negotiations for the company. The employees apparently had some legitimate grievances. The men claimed that twelve hours was too long a work day since the work was so unhealthy and exhausting. They also complained about the hospital tax of one dollar a month that they paid. The employees complained that the company did not have a hospital in case of sickness and that the company's doctor lived in Kansas City, too far away for emergencies. In many instances the workers were forced to hire a physician at their own expense. When a man was "leaded," the term applied to the disease common to the smelting industry, he did not have the time to send to Kansas City for the company doctor but had to secure one from the Argentine community. This expense he had to pay out of his own pocket. The workers also complained that in some instances, they had to pay a double tax of two dollars a month to cover hospital fees.[32]

The company refused to give in to the strike demands. The company claimed that the business was run on a close margin and the pay raises could not be justified. The company might have been willing to substitute three shifts for two, if the men agreed to scale their wages to eight hours. The workers, however, had struck and abandoned their work, thereby subjecting the plant to a great

---

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 192.

financial loss. Thus, the company held that they did not have any obligations to meet the workers' demands.[33]

Since the strikers had been given an opportunity to return to work but had refused to do so, all of them were fired. They had to reapply for work. Company officials admitted that the work was hard, but they claimed that if the employees abstained from the use of alcohol, they would be in no danger of lead poisoning.[34]

After a lengthy conference, the strike was called off. Armed guards protected company property for several days. Although the ring leaders of the strike were not hired back, most of the other employees did return to the plant.[35] The author has no other information about the strike. Doubtlessly, however, the company's relationship with its employees was strained for some time.

In 1890, the company's financial image took a beating. The McKinley tariff on imported ores hurt the smelting industry. The high duties imposed on the Mexican ores resulted in a reduction in the volume of business at the Argentine smelter. Silver became a speculative commodity. The violent fluctuations in the price of the metal made it hard for the smelting works to plan its expenses. The company, out of necessity, had to carry a large inventory of raw materials. These ores were often purchased at what was apparently a low price. Yet, by the time that these ores were ready for market,

---

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

their value might have decreased even more. Consequently, the smelter was often forced to sell for a loss.[36]

The price of silver apparently stabilized. The 1890's were the best years of production for the smelter. The peak year for the smelter was 1898. Business at the turn of the century looked promising. By the spring of 1901, the Argentine smelter could boast of a monthly payroll of $55,000. The payroll averaged between 800 and 900 employees. One-half of the town's population was comprised of the smelter colony.[37]

The Argentine smelter was only one of twenty-four owned by the Guggenheim's "smelting trust," and as the trust grew larger, labor-management relations became more impersonal. To the big officials in New York, the Argentine smelter represented only a profit or a loss on the balance sheets.

For many years, ores had been sent to the plant in El Paso for reduction work. Then, they had been sent by rail to the Argentine smelter for the final refining process. Freight rates had continued to rise. It was now more profitable to send the El Paso ores by water to the trust's newer plant at Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Also, refining works were being built closer to the Colorado ore fields. Suddenly, neither the El Paso nor the Colorado ores were coming to Argentine in any great quantities.[38]

---

[36]Kansas City Gazette, December 31, 1890, p. 17.

[37]Kansas City Star, August 24, 1901, p. 1

[38]Ibid.

The days of the Argentine smelter were numbered. There had been rumors for several weeks that something was about to happen at the Argentine smelter. Many felt that lay off would be only temporary. During the annual yearly housecleaning, the plant was always closed down for a few days. During this time, the mile long tunnel leading to the smelter's smoke stack was cleaned. This tunnel was large enough for two men to walk erect standing side by side.[39] The soot was swept from the tunnel and the smoke stack. This soot often contained as much as 20,000 dollars worth of precious ores and these were worth recovering.[40]

It soon became apparent, however, that this was not just another yearly housecleaning. The smelter was to be closed permanently. Within a few weeks, the payroll of 800 men had been reduced to 400.[41]

More men were terminated daily. The trust finally announced that the smelter was to be closed. They did not specify whether this was to be of temporary or permanent duration. Workers were advised to secure other employment if they could.

By August 20, 1901, the situation was gloomy. Within the last few days, 150 men had been terminated. The company announced that more would go by September 15. Company Superintendent McConald denounced as untrue rumors that the company books were short $100,000.[42]

---

[39]Ibid., p. 2.

[40]Kansas City Star, August 20, 1901, p. 1

[41]Kansas City Star, August 24, 1901, p. 1

[42]Kansas City Star, August 20, 1901, p. 2.

A few days later, William McGeorge, a former mayor of Argentine had this to say about the situation:

> There have been periods of slackness when many of the men have been temporarily laid off and there have been occasions when the plant worked only part time, but it will be a new experience to have the works shut down altogether. The thought has a paralyzing effect. We do not understand it and the future is filled with uncertainty and dread.[43]

Friday, October 4, 1901, was the last day that the smelter was in operation. Only 100 men were still on the payroll. The vitriol department would remain open for almost a year. However, only fifty men were employed in that department.

Silver Avenue, the main street of the town was deserted that day. The street was seven blocks long but there were only about a half-a-dozen people on the street.[44] A heavy gloom hung over the town: its biggest employer had shut its doors. Probably the livelihood of about 700 families depended on the smelter. A few smelter employees would find work at the railroad. Many families moved away as their bread winners sought new occupations.

The entire social structure of the town had been upset. The smelter community dominated the economic, social, and political life of Argentine. They comprised about one-half of the town's population and directly or indirectly supported the other half.

Smelter officials, along with a few engineers and conductors of the railroad, were the social elite of the community. They lived on the higher ground at the east end of town. Whatever the smelter company wanted in concessions, it always got without an argument.

---

[43] Kansas City Star, August 24, 1901, p. 1.

[44] Kansas City Star, October 4, 1901, p. 1.

They were even able to elect one of their officials, Charles W. Green, the mayor of the town.

But now, this was all changed. The Santa Fe Railroad had always played second fiddle to the smelter. The railroad had demanded and received only a few concessions from the town. All of these concessions had been hard fought for. Ironically, it was now the previously shunned railroad that had to carry the economic fortunes of the town.

The town of Argentine went into a depression after the closing of the smelter. Some people still believed that the closing of the smelter was only temporary. Even August R. Meyer, the president of the old Kansas Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company, was optimistic. Meyer was a member of the Board of Directors of the Guggenheim smelting trust and he tried for months to get the smelter reopened. As late as October 11, 1902, he announced that he was positive that the new smelter would open within a few months.[45] Even Mr. Meyer's efforts failed however.

The closing of the smelter was one of the major factors in convincing the town's officials to seek annexation into Kansas City, Kansas. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company was to come to Argentine in 1907. The steel plant was to become great in its own right, yet it has never had the economic impact on the community that the smelter did.

Few memories exist of the old smelter. The relatively new Silver City Shopping Center and such old streets as Silver Avenue

---

[45]Kansas City Star, October 11, 1902, p. 9.

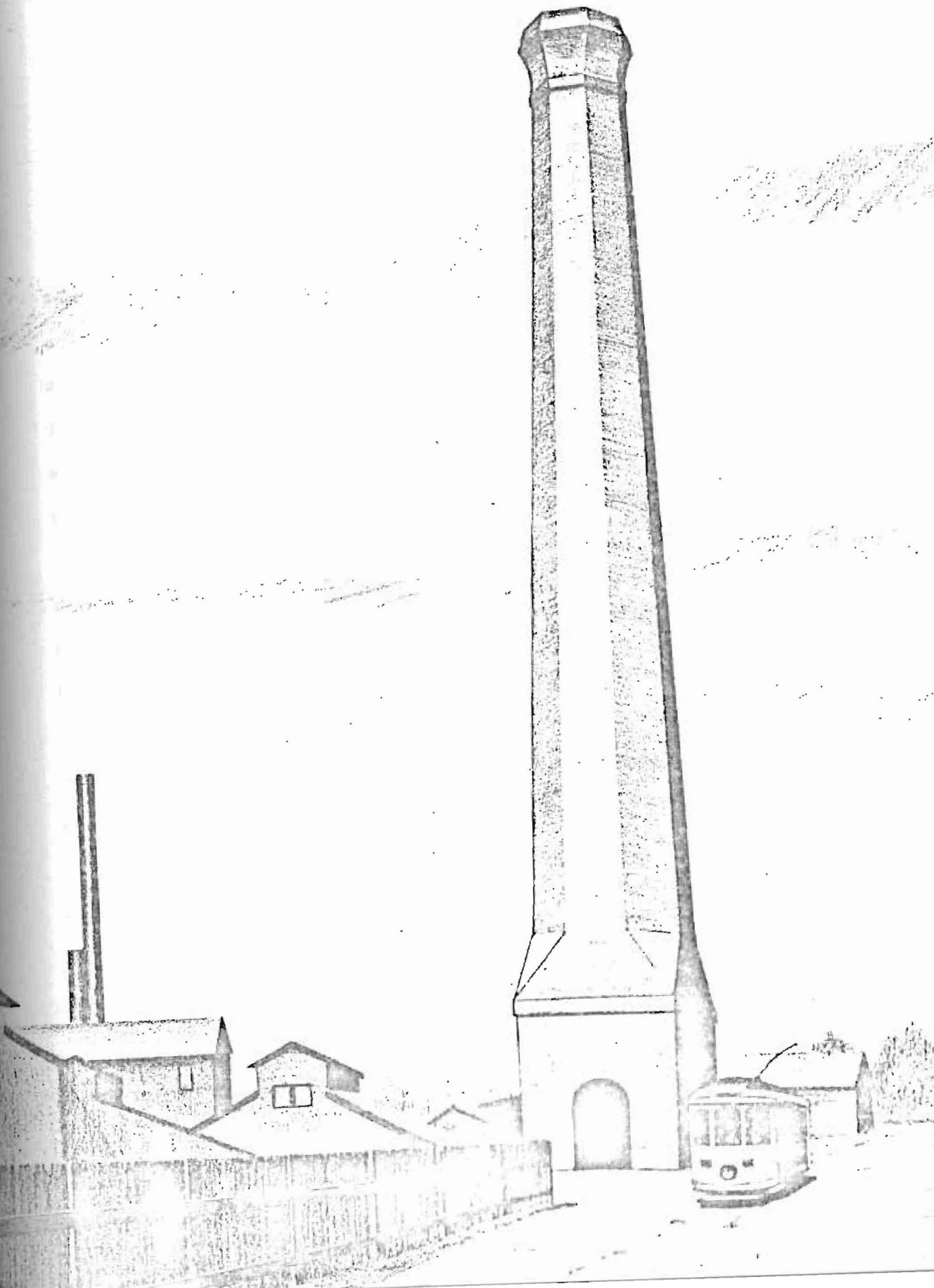
and Ruby Avenue are namesakes of a forgotten era. For fifty-eight years, however, a huge smelter smoke stack stood on the north side of Metropolitan Avenue near 21st Street in Kansas City, Kansas. This smoke stack was built about a year before the smelter closed. It replaced an older smoke stack that was situated south on the top of a hill at what is now 23rd and Lawrence. Great care was taken in the construction of the new smoke stack. The bricks and cement mortar came from Italy.[46] When completed, it contained 700,000 bricks and cost $20,000 to build. It was credited as the largest brick smoke stack in the United States. Measuring 187 1/2 feet in height, the base was twenty-six feet square and fifteen feet across at the top. In 1958, the smoke stack was razed to make room for a $2,000,000 storm sewer.[47] Thus, the last vestige of a by-gone era disappeared, the era in which Argentine may have been the silver refining capital of the world.

---

[46]Gloria A. Servos, "Argentine, the Silver City," 1962, p. 4. (This waa an unpublished paper written in 1962 and found in the Argentine file of the Silver City Record, 3416 Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas.)

[47]Don Simmons, "The Smelter." (One-page paper written by Mr. Simmons, given by him to the author.)

- drawing presented by Don Simmons



CHAPTER IV

CASTLE ON A HILL

Representative of the great wealth associated with one segment of the early Argentine experience is a home that has been a familiar landmark for many generations of Argentians. High on a hill overlooking Argentine and the valley this majestic home is known as Sauer Castle. Anthony Phillip Sauer built the two-story brick building and its four towers of Viennese design sometime around 1868. The surrounding land was unsettled.

Sauer was a pioneer of the Argentine community and was one of the many men who were prominent in the settlement of Kansas. He was of foreign descent, born on March 10, 1826, at Hessen-on-the-Rhine in Germany. There, he grew up and received an education. In his late teens he sailed to Australia to become a merchant. In 1853, he immigrated to the United States and established a tannery and imported leather business in New York City.[1]

Then, about five years later, his health failed and he came west in search of a healthier climate. He came to St. Louis and entered the steamboat business. Later, he and his two sons, Gus William and Anthony P., Jr., operated a freighting business.

---

[1]Kansas City Times, October 21, 1950, p. 34.

He eventually located in Kansas City, Kansas, where he established a tannery and later a real estate business.[2]

Anthony Sauer married Mary Messersmidt who was born in Bavaria, Germany, on November 22, 1840. Her parents immigrated to the United States in 1848 and eventually came to Kansas City, Kansas. The marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Sauer produced seven children.[3]

Sauer decided to establish a permanent home in Kansas City, Kansas. He tried to pick a scenic location reminiscent of his birthplace on the Rhine River in Germany. He chose a location on a bluff overlooking the Kansas River. Presently, this house is located at 945 Shawnee Road between the Argentine and Rosedale districts.

Sauer planned to create a large fruit farm. He wanted to raise grapes for the manufacture of wine. He invested about $60,000 on improvements for his sixty-three acres of property. About $20,000 of this sum went for the building of a three-story brick mansion. This dwelling, when constructed, was one of the largest buildings in the state. With the exception of the stones used for the foundation, all of the material for the building was shipped by boat from St. Louis, Missouri.[4]

The furnishings of the new house illustrated the fabulous wealth of its builder. A solid walnut stairway with a rosewood rail ran from the basement of the house to the upper floors. The floors were walnut. Marble for the mantels came from Italy, crystal

---

[2]Perl W. Morgan, History of Wyandotte County Kansas (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), p. 574.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Kansas City Times, October 21, 1950, p. 34.

chandeliers came from Austria, and lace curtains came from Brussels. An Italian sculptor came from St. Louis to carve the stone lions that still guard the entrance to the grounds. Miniature statues were also placed for the high-arch windows.[5] The building resembled a castle of the Rhineland in every sense of the word. Hence, it became known as Sauer Castle.

While workmen were building the home, they also built a wine cellar. The ground was tunneled out from a cliff. Vine covered arches led to the entrance to the cellar. This cellar was about fifty feet long and thirty-five feet wide.[6]

Eighteen acres of vineyards were planted. Almost every kind of grape that could grow in this type of country was planted.

Sauer had a very extensive knowledge of engineering and horticulture. His home was one of the first in the area to have running water piped into the house. A hydraulic engine was used for this purpose.[7]

The fabulous interior of Anthony Sauer's home resembled many of the old homes of Europe. There was an extensive library with hundreds of books written in Italian, French, and German. Many religious paintings by Spanish artists hung in the house.[8]

---

[5] Ibid.

[6] Don Simmons, "Sauer Castle." This is an unpublished fold out furnished by Mr. Simmons. The Simmons family is one of the oldest families of Argentine and are the proprietors of the Simmons Funeral Home in Argentine. Don Simmons is one of the most knowledgeable persons on the history of the community.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

On the second floor were two large bedrooms and a master bedroom. Solid walnut furniture, some of it hand carved, lace curtains, and expensive rugs adorned the rooms. The third floor of the home was utilized as the servants' quarters. Also, on this floor, a small school was conducted. The Sauers saw to it that all their children were well educated. Special tutors were hired. All of the children learned to speak several languages.

A stable, carriage house, and milkhouse were built near the home. Large brick ovens were used three times a week. In the front yard was a large fountain. Water was piped from these springs throughout the year.[9]

Huge flower gardens were planted on the grounds. These grounds were probably among the most elaborate seen anywhere. People came from miles around just to see the gardens. Rare shrubs and trees came from all over the world. Nothing remains of the old gardens. The greenhouse was later utilized as a chicken house.[10]

Anthony Sauer's home was completed in 1871. By that time, he was dying of tuberculosis. In those times, this was a dreaded and almost always fatal disease. He did all he could to prevent the terrible coughing spells. In the summer he wore a mask over his nose to prevent the pollen from his garden flowers from getting into his lungs. This mask was made of very finely woven pure gold mesh. He also wore chest protectors of heavy felt. These protectors were almost one-half of an inch thick. They were specially made

---

[9]Ibid.

[10]Kansas City Times, October 21, 1950, p. 34.

in Europe to meet his requirements. Sauer believed that these devices would protect his lungs from the damp and ever-changing Kansas climate. None of these devices seemed to help. Only eleven years after his marriage, and at the age of fifty-three, he died. He passed away in his home on a hot summer night, August 16, 1879. He was buried at the side of his infant daughter in the old Union Cemetery.[11]

Sauer died in the prime of his life. He was one of the most respected and influential men in this part of the state. He died only a couple of years before the town of Argentine was plotted. Doubtlessly, had he lived, he would have been influential in the growth of the town. All of his sons and sons-in-law, however, did aid in the early growth of Kansas City, Kansas.

At the time of her husband's death, Mrs. Sauer was still a young woman. She continued to raise her family in the house, but she was not able to maintain the large grounds. The orchard and vineyards were sold. Different sections of the land became housing additions.

Mrs. Sauer lived in the home until her death in 1919. Other members of the family, including even a fifth generation, lived in the home for many years. The current estate, in a large residential area, now comprises only four acres. Mr. Paul Berry has owned the home and property since 1954.[12] Don Simmons of the Simmons

---

[11] Simmons, "Sauer Castle."

[12] Ibid. For a more detailed description of the Sauer Castle, the reader could contact Don Simmons at the Simmons Funeral Home, 37th and Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas. Mr. Simmons might still have additional foldouts on Sauer Castle.

Funeral Home in Argentine gave the author a charcoal drawing of Sauer Castle. This drawing has been reproduced and is on the following page.

945 Shawnee Road - Sauer Castle

CHAPTER V

KANSAS CITY STRUCTURAL STEEL COMPANY

With the exception of the smelter, and perhaps the railroad, no single industry has contributed more to the economic stability of the Argentine community than the Kansas City Structural Steel Company. Founded in 1907, this Argentine steel plant was for many years considered the largest west of the Mississippi River. This company has constructed buildings and bridges throughout the world as well as providing most of the skyline of downtown Kansas City, Missouri.

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company began as the dream of two young men, Howard A. Fitch and Olaf C. Smith. Howard Fitch was born on March 28, 1868. When he was eighteen, his family moved to Kansas City. There, he took his first job as a rod man for a surveying crew with the Kansas City Cable Railway Company.[1] In 1890, he went to Minnesota and found an opening as a cub draftsman in the structural steel industry. This industry was just beginning to come into prominence. As Mr. Fitch explained it:

> Steel beams and shapes had just supplanted iron shapes. The first steel beams were rolled in 1886 although steel rails had been rolled since 1879. Architects and engineers were at first a little wary about substituting steel for iron. However,

---

[1] Kansas City Times, November 3, 1953, p. 3.

> by 1891 mills have been discontinuing the rolling of iron beams and shapes.
>
> Structural steel is thirty-three per cent stronger than iron and is very much cheaper to produce. It would be virtually impossible to supply sufficient iron shapes to meet the construction requirements of today.[2]

Fitch moved up rapidly in the steel industry. He represented his company on many business trips. On such a trip, in Salt Lake City, he met the woman who was soon to become his wife.[3] This is how he related some of his earlier experiences in the steel industry:

> In the spring of 1897, I went to Butte, Montana to introduce the use of steel structures for the mining industry. The time was ripe, so that within a year it was almost universally adopted in that industry.
>
> I recall that about 1900 I had my first inklings of reinforced concrete construction. The engineering facts and information was very meager at that time and such construction that we used was very poorly designed and very crude. We had a theory but little engineering knowledge as to how to apply it.[4]

Fitch's theory about the strength and durability of steel was soon proved. The construction industry was revolutionized. Kansas City in 1900 was also to witness his engineering genius. The Democratic National Convention was scheduled that year for Kansas City in the newly built Convention Hall. Just three months before the Convention, however, this structure burned to the ground. A ninety-day engineering feat then took place. A new hall was erected in time for the convention. Fitch's company, the Minneapolis Steel

---

[2]Howard A. Fitch, "54 Years of Construction Changes in Kansas City," p. 1. This article written in April 1940 by Mr. Fitch was found among the official records of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

[3]Kansas City Times, November 3, 1953, p. 3.

[4]Fitch, "54 Years of Construction Changes in Kansas City," p. 1.

and Machinery Company, furnished all of the steel for this project. Fitch came to Kansas City and was chief engineer of the project.[5]

O. C. Smith's career closely paralleled that of Fitch. Mr. Smith was born of pioneer parents in Green Bay, Wisconsin, on October 31, 1872. His family moved to St. Ansgar, Iowa, where he received his elementary and secondary education. He attended the University of Minnesota and received a degree in engineering. While at the university, he participated in all sports and was considered an outstanding baseball player.

After leaving college, Smith was employed as superintendent of the Gillette-Herzog Steel Company of Minnesota. In 1900, the American Bridge Company purchased the firm and he was to remain with them until 1904. Then, he accepted a position as the superintendent of the Minnesota Steel and Machinery Company.[6]

While working for this firm, Smith became acquainted with Fitch. They became close friends. Fitch at that time was the chief engineer of the same company. The two men decided to form their own steel company. Their first choice for a location apparently was St. Louis, Missouri. However, the Consolidated Kansas City Refining Company in Argentine had just gone out of business. The land and buildings were for sale at a cheap price.[7]

Furthermore, the smelter grounds were located on the Santa Fe Railroad. This site was a natural crossroads on the south side

---

[5]Kansas City Times, November 3, 1953, p. 3.

[6]Kansas City Star, July 4, 1936, p. 1.

[7]Ibid., p. 2.

of the Kaw River about three miles from its mouth. Kansas City Structural Steel was to have frontage of 1,381 feet on the main line of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. The Kansas City Division of this railroad is a focal point onto which twelve major trunk lines converge.[8]

Because of such advantages, Fitch and Smith decided to buy the old smelter site. The price was between $45,000 and $50,000.[9] The first shop payroll began on June 20, 1907, with the names of L. Glassford, F. Becker, C. D. Coreham, C. Prebstel, H. Becker, Jon Fitch, A. J. Anderson, Arthur Reiner, B. F. Marshall, Dick Keele, William Keele, T. M. Williams, Homer Wise, Charles Rober and Cliff Yeager. These men were employed in putting the property and shop in order.[10]

These employees also spent the early months attempting to salvage gold, silver, lead, and other metals from the abandoned smelter deposits. In April 1908, gold, silver, and lead to a value of $5,000 were found in an abandoned pile near the brick smokestack. Workmen digging around the foundations of an abandoned blast furnace struck a hard substance. A force of fifty men set to work and a

---

[8]Kansas City Structural Steel Company, "Kansas City Structural Steel Procedure Manual," p. 1. This pamphlet was found among the official records of the steel company.

[9]Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, Kansas Yearbook, 1937-1938 (Topeka, Kansas: Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, 1935), p. 319.

[10]Kansas City Structural Steel Credit Union, "Kansas City Structural Steel Company," volume 1, number 9 (Kansas City Structural Steel Employees Credit Union, November, 1945), p. 2. This was a little newsletter that was distributed to the employees.

twenty-ton deposit of lead ore was uncovered. This lump contained three ounces of gold to the ton, priced at twenty dollars an ounce. Silver totalling 175 ounces valued at fifty dollars an ounce was recovered, as was tons of lead valued at about ten cents a pound. Apparently this metal had leaked through the floor of the old blast furnace, and when a new floor was laid over the old one this metal deposit became buried and forgotten.[11]

Eventually, the steel company was able to recover enough metal to more than pay for the cost of the original buildings and grounds. In 1912, alone, an estimated $62,000 was refined from the old ore dumps on the property.[12]

Attempts to salvage these metals were made on several occasions since then. Doubtlessly, many old timers can recollect the efforts of a miner by the name of John E. Hanson. Mr. Hanson was a former Alaskan and Mexican miner who had invented a mechanical prospector. In 1929, he pitched a tent on the steel plant's property. He set up a miniature smelter inside the abandoned smokestack. The tunnels and the older stack were razed. The interior of the bigger smokestack was also scraped clean and the soot was refined for particles of precious metal.[13]

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company officially began operations in the spring of 1907. Howard A. Fitch was named the President, and O. C. Smith the Vice-President of the new company.

---

[11] Kansas City Times, April 21, 1908, p. 4.

[12] Kansas City Times, February 23, 1951, p. 31.

[13] Ibid.

The first contract was for an addition to the Jones Store Building on Walnut, between 12th and 13th Street, in downtown Kansas City, Missouri. This was a 10,000-ton contract. During the next few months, the Y.M.C.A. building, the Sharp building and the Boley building were constructed in Kansas City, Missouri.[14] Sales for the company's first year of operation totalled $7,000,000.[15]

The company quickly branched out into the mine and smelter fields. Steel was fabricated for the Ray Consolidated Copper Plant of Hayden, Arizona, in 1910. This has been followed by contracts with the American Copper Company, the American Smeltering and Refining Company, the Arizona Company Smelter at Clifton, Arizona, the United Verde Copper Company at Clarksdale, Arizona, and the Alaska Gastieneau and Alaskan Juneau gold mining plants.[16]

One man in particular was responsible for Kansas City Structural Steel's growing reputation in the construction and smeltering industries. This was Alfred M. Meyers, who was the chief engineer of the company for almost forty years. Mr. Meyers received an engineering degree at the University of Kansas. He began his career working for the King Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio. Meyers and other engineers of this company were pioneers in highway bridge construction. Meyers worked a short time for the Wisconsin Bridge Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1908,

---

[14]"Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume I, number 9, April, 1945, p. 1.

[15]Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, Kansas Yearbook 1937-38, p. 319.

[16]"Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume I, number 9, April, 1945, p. 1.

he started working for the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, and he was greatly instrumental in building up the company's reputation in the designing and the fabricating of mine and smelter buildings for the copper mining industry. He also was an expert in the designing of highway and railway bridges and a variety of other industrial structures.[17]

Another man of outstanding merit was Thomas W. McCurnin, manager of the Erection Department. The company has almost always had crews which erect the steel that the company had fabricated. These crews traveled all over the country and in different parts of the world. McCurnin was an early organizer of these erection gangs. He started his career in the steel construction industry with the Standard Oil Company in the late 1890's. In 1902, he became the Superintendent of Construction of the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company. Then, in 1910, he came to the steel plant and was to remain there for almost forty years. Known as "Rusty," because of his flaming red hair, he became a familiar face to iron and steel workers throughout the country.[18]

Neil G. Lilley also began his career in the iron and steel industry at about the same time. In 1899 he started as a cost accountant for the Twin City Iron Works of Minneapolis, Minnesota. This company in 1902 merged with the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company, the employer of Howard Fitch and O. C. Smith. Lilley soon

---

[17]"Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume III, number 3, October, 1945, p. 1.

[18]"Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume II, number 2, September, 1945, p. 1.

met them. He came to Argentine, and in June 1907 started working for them. Lilley soon was named a Vice-President and General Sales Manager and was to remain in that capacity for about fifty years.[19]

On March 29, 1909, John P. Cooper joined the company as the Shop Timekeeper. He later held various jobs in the office and then in 1935 was named the Secretary of the company.[20]

As the company grew in prominence, the stature of these men also grew in importance. From 1914 through 1917, the company received different kinds of notoriety. A group of steel plant employees decided to organize a semi-pro football team. They realized that colleges would not schedule games against a team of amateurs. Therefore, they decided to call themselves the Argentine School of Engineering. They called themselves a college and sent out a letter-head. Games were scheduled with such schools as Baker, Ottawa and perhaps even the University of Kansas.

The team was mostly made up of brawny steel workers of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, although other players were residents of the Argentine community. Many had played football in college. Two players, the Allen brothers, were the cousins of famed Forrest C. "Phog" Allen, the basketball coach of the University of Kansas.

The Argentine School of Engineering football team was apparently pretty good. They had a big line averaging about 210 pounds each.

---

[19]"Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume I, number 9, April, 1945, p. 1.

[20]"Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume II, number 1, August, 1945, p. 1.

Since everyone worked days, the team had to practice at night. Emerson Park was used as a practice field. Since there was no lighting at the park, the players, in order to see, had to use a painted white ball.[21] The football team broke up for good about the time of our entry into the First World War.

During the war, the steel company filled many government orders. Steel railroad tank cars were made, as were the rudders of ships. For most of the war, O. C. Smith was in charge of the production of structural steel for ships at the Hog Island Naval Yard in the east.

In the decade following the war, the steel company did a booming business. By the spring of 1919, 500 men were on the payroll.[22] Kansas City Structural Steel was already credited as the largest fabricating steel plant west of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In 1929, a $300,000 addition was constructed. A new building, 700 feet long and 200 feet wide, was erected, with two big crane runways in it. Each runway was 80 feet wide and 700 feet long. At the end of the building, a small plate shop was built. Officials of the company estimated that this new addition would increase production by almost 50 per cent. They also anticipated having to add an additional 100 men to the payroll.[23]

By 1926, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company was doing a business of between $4,000,000 and $6,000,000 annually. Two million

---

[21]Kansas City Kansan, April 24, 1949, p. 7.

[22]Kansas City Star, March 19, 1919, p. 1.

[23]Kansas City Star, September 11, 1919, p. 1.

dollars had been invested by the company. The land alone was appraised at more than $125,000.[24] During the 1920-1929 decade, shipments of steel averaged 36,634 tons a year.[25] The record year of tonnage was also recorded in this decade. This occurred in 1923 when the company produced 58,124 tons of steel.[26]

One of the most memorable jobs of the decade was the rebuilding of the concentrator mill and storage bins for the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company at McGill, Nevada. The original structures were completely destroyed by a fire on July 7, 1922. The output of concentrates therefore was stopped and work in a plant having a capacity of 12,000 tons of ore daily was suspended. Naturally, the replacement of the destroyed structures was of vital importance. Thus, on July 9, two days after the fire, the management decided to immediately rebuild the mill. Steel was to be used throughout, and the company planned to have the steel frame for the first unit completed no later than October 1.

On July 18, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company was awarded this contract requiring 3,000 tons of steel. The steel company agreed to have the first unit completed by August 15, 1922. On August 4, the first shipment of steel and erection equipment

---

[24]Kansas City Journal Post, February, 1926, p. 40. This is a reprint of an article written in this no longer published magazine. The article can be found in the Argentine file of the Kansas Room Collection of the Kansas City Kansas Public Library at 625 Minnesota.

[25]This figure came from a newspaper clipping in the Kansas City Structural Steel file of the Kansas City Kansan Newspaper at 901 North 8th, Kansas City, Kansas.

[26]Kansas City Star, February 18, 1938, p. 18.

was made. By August 12, the complete shipment of the first unit had been finished. The erection of the steel was started on the first unit of the new concentrator mill on August 20. By September 2, the frame for the first unit had been completed. This was done twenty-eight days ahead of schedule.[27] This was a remarkable feat of fabricating and engineering, especially when the reader considers the time element involved. The feat greatly enhanced the already nation-wide reputation of the company.

Another extremely productive year for the company was 1929. Four hundred tons of steel were sent to the construction site of a copper smelter at Salaverry, Peru. This steel had to be of a lighter and smaller quality since it had to be transported over the Andes Mountains before the August snows began.[28]

Also in this year, an order was received from the Soviet government. Three steel towers, each nine feet in diameter and sixty feet high were built for the Russian oil fields.[29] Because of these and other contracts, the steel company was doing its busiest work of the decade. The drafting room had both a day and a night shift. Four hundred and fifty men were employed by the company.[30]

In November 1929, the nation's decade of prosperity was to come to an abrupt end. The depression resulted in thousands

---

[27]This information was condensed from an advertisement brochure entitled "Rapidity in the Erection of Steel" which was found in the official archives of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

[28]Kansas City Star, May 12, 1929, p. 10.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Kansas City Star, September 25, 1932, p. 2d.

of banks and businesses failing throughout the country. The steel industry was particularly distressed. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company went into a financial tailspin that lasted almost a decade.

From 1930 through 1938 the company shipped only an average of 16,319 tons a year compared with 36,634 tons during the period between 1920 and 1929. The average monthly billings for a 120-month period from 1920 through 1929 was $363,000. During 1932 and 1933 the monthly averages were only $73,000 and $97,000. In 1929, the total manhours for the shop was 908,000. But in 1932 it was only 165,000 and 212,000 in 1933.[31]

By September 1932, the company's payroll had decreased to 130 men.[32] In the financial year ending December 31, 1935, the company suffered a net loss of $49,087. Only 10,708 tons of steel were fabricated. This total is the lowest in the company's history. In the first two months of 1936 alone, the company surpassed this figure.[33]

Like so many other companies, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company went into a receivership. The company was reorganized by the Securities Service Corporation of Chicago. This reorganization was completed by May of 1935.[34] The company was to experience

---

[31]These figures came from a newspaper clipping in the Kansas City Structural Steel file of the Kansas City Kansan at 901 North 8th, Kansas City, Kansas.

[32]Kansas City Star, September 25, 1932, p. 2d.

[33]Kansas City Times, February 20, 1936, p. 13.

[34]Kansas City Times, May 14, 1935, p. 4.

many ups and downs financially during the next few years. However, this was a general trend found in most businesses during the depression. The company was never again to experience another year as financially poor as 1935.

In 1936, the company suffered a leadership loss that could not be expressed in terms of dollars. On July 3, 1936, O. C. Smith, the Vice-President and co-founder of the company, died at the age of sixty-three. He had always been in good health. In the last week of June, however, he underwent an emergency appendectomy. After steady signs of improvement, complications set in, and on Friday afternoon, July 3, he passed away at Providence Hospital in Kansas City, Kansas.[35]

Smith's death was also a great loss to the Argentine community. A resident of Argentine, he had been involved in many civic activities. In 1922 he was named the President of the Kansas City, Kansas, Chamber of Commerce. He was a vigorous advocate of navigation and flood control projects. Active in youth groups, he was a President of the Wyandotte County Council of Boy Scouts of America. Largely through his efforts, Camp Naish, near Bonner Springs, was built as a camp grounds for the scouts. Smith was also a member of the Kansas City, Kansas, Board of Education from April 1927 until August 5, 1929, and from July 7, 1930, until August 1931.[36] When asked to serve in this position again, with a humbleness that was characteristic

---

[35]Kansas City Kansan, July 4, 1936, p. 1.

[36]Ibid., p. 2.

of his entire life, Smith said, "You can find better men than I for the office."[37]

Smith's funeral rites were held on Monday, July 6, 1936. The steel plant was shut down that day. Memorial services were held in the auditorium of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The church was filled to capacity. Hundreds of people stood in the corridors during the services. It was estimated that 1,500 people were in attendance.

The memorials were long and many. The Reverend Carl W. Nau said,

> Mr. Smith's work in every conceivable activity and his contact with men in every walk of life will be perpetuated in the memory of every individual of this community. No man in this community was more beloved in the hearts of men. His record is his great monument.
>
> He loved the humble and the poor. He fraternized with them aiding them in their problems and wants. He was known by his fellow workers for his honesty, sincerity and fairness. Mr. Smith was strong in faith and service to the church.[38]

O. C. Smith's partner and close friend for so many years, Howard A. Fitch, also gave a warm tribute:

> Mr. O. C. Smith and I worked for the same companies at the same time, with a few slight exceptions, during the entire period of his business life.
>
> This association began the day before Christmas in 1891. He was an assistant to the shop superintendent, I was a cub draftsman. We were working for the Gillette-Herzog Manufacturing Company in Minneapolis.
>
> And so we continued for five years until the end of 1896, at which time I was sent to Montana as contracting engineer and Mr. Smith continued as assistant superintendent and later as superintendent of the Gillette-Herzog shop.
>
> This continued for another five years. Then in the spring of 1902 the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company organized. I was engaged as chief engineer of the structural department

---

[37] Kansas City Times, July 4, 1936, p. 4.

[38] Kansas City Kansan, July 6, 1936, p. 2.

and in May, 1905, Mr. Smith was engaged as superintendent of the shop.

Then at the end of 1906 we both resigned and came to Kansas City and organized our present company.

Many of you know the rest of the story. We ran square into money panic of 1907. Those who had promised financial support could not come across. However, the die was cast and within a few months we had raised sufficient funds to purchase this property.

Mr. Smith had the rare faculty of understanding and managing men. Perhaps it was because of his sympathetic nature, reaching far beyond the eight or ten hours of shop labor.

He knew the problems, economic and social, of all the employees. He knew the weaknesses of many of them and attempted to guide them to a more rational understanding.

Mr. Smith's sudden and untimely death on July 3, 1936, was a shock and great loss to his family and to all his many friends and acquaintances. His memory and influence are not erased. During the future years of the operation of this company there will always be a memory and a reverence for his high personal character.[39]

There are many stories that the author has heard about Mr. Smith's character. One of the most popular stories is about the time he won a radio in a contest, and even though it was better than the one he had at home, he gave it away to a man who did not have one.

O. C. Smith was always held in the highest esteem by his employees. A plaque was dedicated to his memory, and for many years it was hung below his picture in the shop office. The inscription on it read:

IN MEMORIAM
O. C. SMITH
October 31, 1872-July 3, 1936

He shall live long because he lived well;
His life was a true example of unselfishness,

---

[39]"Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume I, number 11, June, 1945, p. 1.

Manifested by his deep concern always
for the
Welfare and happiness of his fellowmen.

Shop Employees

After the reorganization, the company's fortunes slowly improved. The year 1937 was successful. The profit was $204,643 against $133,360 in 1936 and the net loss of $19,087 in 1935. The tonage in 1937 was 17,142 as against 18,580 in 1936 but this discrepency did not reflect in the company's profits.[40]

Another good year was 1938, although there were some erratic performances. Tonnage was down to 15,628 tons. The net profit had fallen off to $45,271. However, the billings for work completed total $2,369,641. This was compared to the 1937 figure of $2,161,317 and the 1936 figure of $2,127,486. The employment figure was 150 as against 210 in 1937.[41]

Howard A. Fitch, the company's president, was optimistic about the future:

> The work in our shop fell off decidedly during the last four months of 1938 and the price situation was quite demoralizing. The indications for future business are indefinite, but we believe that the present upward trend in structural steel will be maintained during the next few months and that the price situation will gradually improve.[42]

Fitch's prediction was accurate. Production in the decade of the 1940's was to average 22,800 tons yearly. This was substantial improvement over the 1930's.[43] It is true, however, that much

---

[40]Kansas City Star, February 18, 1938, p. 14.

[41]Kansas City Star, February 21, 1939, p. 12.

[42]Ibid.

[43]"Kansas City Structural Steel Procedure Manual."

of this output was the result of government war contracts. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company built LST's (landing ship tanks) and LSM's (landing ships mechanized) for the United States Navy. Four hundred and seven landing crafts were built from 1942 until the end of the war by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.[44] The Darby Steel Corporation of Kansas City, Kansas, built about 450 ships and the Missouri Valley Steel Company of Leavenworth, Kansas, about 150. These amphibious landing craft were used in invasions in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of operations. Supposedly, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company launched the very first LCT's (landing craft tanks) built in the country.[45] The steel company had some 260 men in the armed forces and many of these men would proudly write back that they had seen ships bearing the markings of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.[46]

Large numbers of boats built by the steel plant were used in the Allied invasion of Sicily. The United States Navy was so pleased with the performance of the company's boats that a personal letter was written to the company's President, H. A. Fitch. The letter read as follows:

> It will be a matter of personal pride to each of you to know that LCT's of your construction were part of the spearhead in the successful invasion of Sicily. The fact that the landing operations on a scale unparalleled in history, were effected with the utmost precision and a minimum of casualties was in

---

[44]Kansas City Star, August 4, 1946, p. 8D.

[45]This information came from a newspaper clipping in the Kansas City Structural Steel file of the Kansas City Kansan at 901 North 8th, Kansas City, Kansas.

[46]Kansas City Star, August 4, 1946, p. 8D.

no small measure due to the efficient performance of the landing craft such as you are providing for our amphibious forces. Many more of your LCT's will be needed for the bigger job ahead when our fighting boys establish the beachheads which will ultimately lead to Berlin and to Tokyo. They are counting on your best effort to supply these vital crafts on time.[47]

Cordially yours,
Rear Admiral E. L. Cochran
Chief of the Bureau of Ships

The author was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to interview two retired employees of the company who had some part in the construction of these boats. C. T. Campbell had these recollections:

> Frank Schafer, a pattern and templates maker, was probably the genius behind their construction. "Whitey" Hufferd[48] and Leonard Cramer were the foremen over the construction. For most of the war, the plant was run on two shifts of ten hours. Security was very tight. There were guards posted at the gates. Naval personnel supervised the construction. All employees had to wear badges with their pictures on them which they had to show whenever they entered and left the plant.[49]

Glen L. Culp, a retired area foreman remembered the following about the war years:

> The shop was divided up into a north and a south end. Small boats were built in the north end and the larger boats were built in the south end. The boats were fabricated in the plant. Then they were hauled over to the boatyards on the Missouri River west of the Fairfax Airport. The smaller landing crafts were hauled from the steel plant to the boat dock on large trailer trucks. The larger boats, I believe, were floated down the river to the boat dock. There, the boats were outfitted with plumbing, electrical and mechanical equipment and then launched. Some of the boats were launched at Fairfax and were floated down the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans. Other boats were loaded onto railroad cars. Almost one boat was turned

---

[47] Kansas City Kansan, August 20, 1944, p. 3.

[48] Manuel W. Hufferd gave over fifty years of service to the company. He was the author's great uncle.

[49] Cornelius T. Campbell, personal interview held in his home at 1501 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 12, 1974.

out every three days. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company received many Army and Navy awards for its accomplishments.[50]

During the war, a bridge in China fabricated by the company gave the Kansas City Structural Steel Company another kind of publicity. This three-span bridge over the Pei Ho River near Tientsin, China, was considered an engineering feat when it was constructed. The Japanese claimed to have destroyed it several times. However, a former employee of the company, in the service as a Navy Lieutenant sent Mr. Fitch a photograph of the bridge, showing troops crossing it well after the Japanese reports of its destruction.[51] This picture hung in his office for many years. The bridge apparently survived the war.

Business was good for the company in the post-war years. In 1946, the company had 500 employees on the payroll. Two sales offices were maintained in Denver and Tulsa. All departments were capable of greater capacity than in 1941. Over $100,000 was spent in 1946 alone for new equipment. Since steel was in shortage for a while, there was almost a five year period of time before the demand caught up with the supply.[52]

On June 23, 1947, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company was fifty years old. The company could boast of a $7,000,000 annual

---

[50]Glen L. Culp, personal interview held in his home at 2514 South 49th Terrace, Kansas City, Kansas on February 25, 1974.

[51]Kansas City Star, August 4, 1946, p. 8D.

[52]Ibid., p. 8D.

industry and a payroll of 500 employees.[53] Three great losses were to affect the company during the decade of the 1950's.

The first of these was the great flood of 1951. Water was thirty feet deep in some parts of the plant. However, the company did not face as devastating a financial loss as other flooded industries. After the water receded, the company quickly got back into limited operation. Within about a month the company was back to full production.[54]

The second loss was the death of Howard A. Fitch, the founder of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company. He died at his home at 4601 Holmes Street, Kansas City, Missouri, on November 2, 1953, at the age of eighty-five. He was born on March 28, 1868, in Warrensburg, Missouri. He studied surveying and engineering at the old Normal School there.

Fitch is considered one of the pioneers of the structural steel industry. Starting with only $75,000, he and O. C. Smith built the Kansas City Structural Steel Company into a firm that was known world-wide. Fitch had retired from active participation in the company about six years earlier, but had remained the chairman

---

[53]These figures came from a newspaper clipping in the Argentine file of the Kansas City Kansan newspaper at 901 North 8th, Kansas City, Kansas.

[54]Joseph L. "Pete" Larson, personal interview held in his home at 1208 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 1, 1974.

of the Board of Directors. He suffered a heart attack a few days prior to his death.[55]

Fitch was a founder of the Central Fabrications Association. He helped to consolidate the handbooks of the steel mills and the structural steel manufacturers into one handbook. This enabled a contractor to readily locate the type of steel he needed.

In 1917, he began to advocate the formation of a national association of structural steel fabricators. Largely through his efforts, the American Institute of Steel Construction was founded in 1923. Fitch remained a vice-president of this organization until his death.

Fitch, like O. C. Smith, was very active in civic affairs. In 1913, he was elected the President of the Kansas City Commercial Club, which was the forerunner of the Kansas City, Kansas, Chamber of Commerce. He was also elected the President of the Kansas City Industrial Corporation in 1917.[56]

An extremely religious man, he often preached the lay sermon at the Westminster Congregational Church. His interests were mostly his family and the steel business. He was always an avid reader. He was a Shakespearean scholar and had hundreds of books in his library on literature, history, and probably every book written on the steel business.

---

[55]Kansas Construction Magazine, December, 1953, p. 45. An obituary was found in this issue of the magazine at the Kansas State Historical Society, 10th and Jackson, Topeka, Kansas.

[56]Kansas City Times, November 3, 1953, p. 3.

Fitch was loved and respected by all the employees of the company. A close associate of his said,

> He lived and thought steel but somehow he found time to take an active part in any community betterment program and he was deeply religious. He was an avid reader and found relaxation in crossword puzzles.[57]

The author's father, Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr., an employee of the company, came to know Mr. Fitch quite well:

> I personally knew Mr. Fitch for about six years before his death. Part of my duties as a young employee in the office was to chauffeur him to work each morning. Even though he was getting along in years, he came to work almost every day on a part time basis. He was a very distinguished and outstanding gentleman. It is a great pleasure for me to be able to say that I knew him.
>
> To me, the most outstanding characteristic of our company is its open door policy. This policy was initiated in the early days of the company by O. C. Smith and H. A. Fitch. If an employee ever had a problem, he could always talk it over with the company officials. This open door policy was later carried on by Howard Fitch, Jr. and Glen Smith and is now carried on by the present officials of the company. The company has thus always had a warm relationship with its employees.
>
> Mr. Fitch told me many stories about the founding of the company. One story I remember particularly is the one about the presenting of turkeys. Since the founding of the company, turkeys have always been presented to all active and retired employees at Christmas.
>
> Mr. Fitch related to me the origin of this practice. He recalled that times were hard for his family when he was just starting his career. Just before Christmas one year, he found employment with a new company. Prior to that, he had not worked very much and it appeared that his family was going to face a bleak Christmas. However, this company gave out free turkeys to all its employees at Christmas. He told me that he believed that this was a wonderful gesture. Consequently, this practice was initiated. Even though the company has experienced many lean years, turkeys have always been presented to all present and retired employees of the company on Christmas Eve.[58]

---

[57] Ibid.

[58] Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr., interview in his home at 2428 South 47th Street, Kansas City, Kansas on November 18, 1973.

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company was to experience a final great loss in the 1950's. This happened in 1956. The preceeding year had been a prosperous one for the company. Bills on completed contracts in 1955 totaled $7,334,542 compared with $6,803,221 of the preceeding year. Tonnage was also up. The company had fabricated 26,569 tons in 1954.[59]

The year 1956 started in a prosperous way, with many steel orders received for bridges and smelters. Profits looked like they were going to be high. In the early morning hours of the last day of the year, however, a devastating fire swept through the office building of the company. This blaze was considered one of the most troublesome and spectacular fires ever fought by the local fire department. Seven companies answered this two-alarm fire.

Glenn A. Smith, Work's Manager, estimated that the loss would total $100,000. This figure included the cost of repairing the west wing of the building, damage to office equipment, and the cost of reproducing engineering plans destroyed by the fire. The west wing of the building, sixty feet by eighty feet, was constructed in 1930. This part of the building included the engineering department, the purchasing department, and the offices of Howard A. Fitch, Jr., President; John P. Cooper and Neil G. Lilley, Vice-Presidents, and J. A. Vance, Secretary of the company. By containing the fire to the west wing and preventing damage to the drafting

---

[59]Kansas City Times, March 14, 1956, p. 26.

rooms in the east wing, a far greater loss was prevented. The cause of the fire was never actually determined.[60]

The main plant, about a half block northwest of the office building, was not touched by the fire. Production was not halted at the plant. However, as J. A. Vance, Secretary of the company, observed: "The most disturbing part of this is the loss of records that are going to be difficult to replace."[61]

Also, John C. Fast, Chief Draftsman for the company, said that many drawings had to be done over. The cost of redoing these plans was about $100 a sheet. Many drawings that had to be redone included those of the Table Rock bridge near Branson, Missouri, a $2,000,000 project; a building for the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, and drawings for several turnpike bridges.[62]

Until plans for renovation were completed, temporary quarters were found in the adjoining three story brick structure that housed the accounting department. Though the losses were great, the company's finances suffered no permanent damage and the company was able to continue its previous level of excellence.

The author would like to devote the next part of this chapter to a description of some of the steel fabrication jobs for which the company is noted. A complete listing would be impossible for it would involve many pages. Nevertheless, this partial list will give further understanding of the company's important work.

---

[60] Kansas City Star, December 31, 1956, p. 1.

[61] Kansas City Kansan, December 31, 1956, p. 1.

[62] Kansas City Star, December 31, 1956, p. 1.

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company has fabricated the steel for most of the major buildings constructed in the greater Kansas City area. The earliest was the Jones Store building, five stories high requiring 1,100 tons of steel. The following is a chart listing more of these buildings.[63] A more complete list can be found in Appendix II.

Year	Name of Building	No. of Stories	Tons
1909	Livestock Exc. Building	10	1500
1910	K. C. Star Bldg.	4	1040
1910	Grand Avenue Temple	13	1100
1910	Rialto Bldg.	14	1100
1911	Waldheim Bldg.	17	1185
1913	Sears Roebuck Bldg.	10	741
1914	John Taylor Bldg.	7	1504
1914	Graves Bldg.	12	907
1914	Muehlebach Hotel	10	1713
1917	Oppenstein Bldg.	9	722
1919	K. C. Club Bldg.	14	1844
1920	K. C. A. C. Bldg.	22	2809
1924	Board of Trade Bldg.	14	1034
1926	Wyandotte Co. Ct. House, K.C.K.	1	85
1929	Professional Bldg.	17	1219
1929	University Bldg.	11	432
1930	Phillips Hotel Bldg.	21	1210
1930	K.C. Power and Light Bldg.	32	7000
1930	Nelson Art Gallery	1	1100
1933	Courthouse, K.C. Mo.	32	4881
1934	Auditorium, K.C. Mo.	1	4560
1936	City Hall, K.C. Mo.	32	5952
1938	Federal Cts. Bldg. K.C. Mo.	10	3010

The company has also fabricated the steel for many outstanding bridges. Some of these bridges were also built by the company's erection crews. The author has already mentioned the bridge in Tienstin, China. Another outstanding job was the fabrication of

---

[63]This information came from a listing of buildings constructed from 1907 to 1938, in the greater Kansas City area, courtesy of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

welve large tresses for the two 300-foot spans and the four 400-foot spans for a bridge at Del Rio, Texas. This took 6,000 tons of steel. Some of the girders weighed as much as thirty tons.[64]

The Grand Canyon bridge at Lee's Ferry, Arizona, was built in 1929 and is still considered an engineering marvel. This bridge stands 475 feet above the Colorado River, is 616 feet long, and took 1,200 tons to complete.[65] Under the guidance of A. M. Meyers, Chief Engineer, this bridge was erected by the company's erection crews. The Colorado River has also been spanned by a 600 feet long arch bridge at Needles, California.[66]

The Topeka Avenue Bridge, carrying traffic in a four-land roadway forty-four feet wide on U.S. Highway No. 75 over the Kansas River, was built in the late 1930's. Steel over the bridge was fabricated by the steel company. This bridge is of the continuous girder type 893 feet long, comprised of one 217 foot center span, two 152 foot end spans and two 186 foot intermediate spans. The total width of the bridge is fifty-seven feet. For many years, the center span was said to be the longest plate girder span in the United States.[67]

A bridge of a more recent construction is one over the Kaw River at Bonner Springs. In the 1950's, steel was provided for

---

[64]Kansas City Star, September 22, 1963, p. 97. This edition of the paper had a section devoted to the numerous steel companies of the metropolitan Kansas City area.

[65]Kansas City Star, August 4, 1946, p. 8D.

[66]Kansas City Times, November 3, 1953, p. 3.

[67]This information was found on an advertisement brochure in the archives of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

many of the bridges of the Kansas Turnpike System. The company provided some of the steel for the building of the 18th Street Expressway and numerous other bridges in the greater Kansas City area.

The American Institute of Steel Construction has presented the company with many awards for bridge construction. At least five bridges with steel fabricated by the company have won the annual "Most Beautiful Bridge Award."[68] The company's 1955 winning entry was for the Missouri River Bridge at Leavenworth, Kansas. The double arch of the bridge was fabricated by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company and the approach spans were fabricated by Missouri Valley Steel Incorporated. The jury selected this bridge for the top award in its I class,[69] because ". . . the clean, simple repetitive design gives feelings of gracefulness to the double arch."[70]

Another citation for beauty in the designing and erection of steel was in the class III award in 1954. This was for the Garrison School Pedestrian Bridge built over the Paseo-6th Street Trafficway Connection in Kansas City, Missouri.[71]

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company has also erected most or all of the facilities for many of the country's mining

---

[68] Kansas City Star, September 22, 1963, p. 97.

[69] This classification refers to bridges with spans over 400 feet long.

[70] Kansas City Structural Steel Company "News Digest," Volume I, number 3, November 27, 1956, p. 1. This was a digest formally published by the Kansas City Structural Steel Management Club.

[71] Ibid., p. 3.

companies. Here is a partial list of the companies served by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.[72]

Alaska Juneau Gold Mining Co.
American Smelting and Ref. Co.
Bagdad Copper Corp.
Bunker-Hill & Sullivan Mining & Consolidating Co.
Castle Dome Copper Co.
Climax Molybdenum Co.
Consolidated Copper Mines Corp.
International Smelting & Refining Co.
Magna Copper Co.
Minnesota Mining & Mfg. Co.
Ozark Smelting & Refining Co.
Phelps Dodge Corp.
San Francisco Mines of Mexico Ltd.
Stearns-Roger Mfg. Co.
United States Vanadium Co.
Vanadium Corporation of America
Sullivan Mining Co.
Anaconda Copper Mining Co.
Braden Copper Co.
Cananea Consolidated Copper Co.
Chile Exploration Co.
Eagle Picher Co.
Inspection Smelting & Refining Co.
Kennecott Copper Corp.
Miami Copper Co.
National Zinc Co.
Pacific Foundary Co.
San Manuel Copper Corp.
Shattuck Denn Mining Corp.
U.S. Smelting-Refining & Mining Co.
Utah Construction Co.[73]

The author wished he had the time to interview many of the people connected with the company. However, he was able to interview four people who have been associated with the company for many years.

Glen A. "Butter" Culp was a working foreman for the company for many years. He retired as an area foreman in 1972 at the age of seventy. These were his recollections of the steel plant:

> I was born in Argentine in 1902. I have spent my whole life living in the Argentine vicinity. In 1920, I graduated from Argentine High School. Starting in 1918, I worked during the summer for the steel plant in the drafting room. I went to the University of Kansas for a year and then left school and came back to the steel plant and went to work full time.
>
> I worked as a marker, puncher, and on the riveting gangs. During one summer, when I was about fifteen years old, I worked in what was called the rod shop.
>
> I believe that I started out at about thirty-five cents an hour. By 1926, I was making fifty-eight cents an hour. During

---

[72]This was compiled from a brochure in the company's archives, p. 3.

[73]Ibid.

the depression, my salary was cut from seventy-five cents an hour to about fifty cents an hour. I was laid off for some periods of the depression. Sometimes I worked over at the Darby Steel Corporation for awhile.

One steel contract that I can vividly recall was the one for the Navajo Railroad Bridge over the Grand Canyon at Lee's Ferry, Arizona. Half of the bridge was built out over the canyon. Then cables were strung out to the other side and building materials were hauled over. The erection work was extremely dangerous. One man fell off the bridge and died. Finally, when the two sections of the bridge came together, a pin was inserted to temporarily hold the bridge in place. Due to atmospheric conditions, this pin could only be inserted certain times of the day. When the pin was finally lined up in the hold, plates were bolted down over it. When the final rivet was driven, one worker, overcome with joy, took and unhooked his riveting gun and threw it over into the canyon. Then he had a picture taken of himself doing a handstand on the bridge.

I personally knew John P. Cooper, Neil Lilley, H. A. Fitch, O. C. Smith and their sons H. A. Fitch, Jr. and Glenn Smith. For many years my parents lived on Woodland. O. C. Smith lived only two doors from us. His son, Glenn, and I were about the same age and we played together as kids.

It was tragic that O. C. Smith had to die in his prime. He was very dignified yet had a common touch. He knew just about everyone in Argentine. His son Glenn, who later moved up to the Vice-Presidency of the company, inherited many of the good traits of his father.[74]

Many families have had two or three generations of its members work at the steel plant, of whom Cornelius T. "Con" Campbell is one example. Con Campbell worked at the plant from April, 1916, until his retirement in 1965. Mr. Campbell's father also worked for the company from 1912 until 1942. Previous to this, his father had worked for the Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company's smelters in Mexico and Argentine. Twice his father contacted lead poisoning, as a result of his hazardous occupation which was a lead burner.

---

[74]Glen A. "Butter" Culp, interview in his home at 2514 South 49th Terrace, Kansas City, Kansas on February 24, 1974.

"Con" Campbell was born in 1898 and was eighteen years old when he started working for the company.

> I started out as a rivet heater and then worked in the blacksmith shop. I worked in the office the last year before my retirement. While employed at the plant I was a working foreman and at my retirement was the supervisor of stocks materials.
>
> I cannot recall what I started out making but I do recall that pay raises were usually only about two cents an hour. I probably was only making about fifty or sixty cents an hour in the early 1920's.
>
> Times were especially hard for many employees of the company during the depression. The company had no seniority listings as such for the laying off of employees. The company tried to keep as many on the payroll as they could. If they needed your skills, you stayed; if they didn't, you went. I was pretty fortunate and lost only about a week or two of work during the whole period of the depression.[75]

Joseph L. "Pete" Larson was a valuable interview for the author. He has worked more than twenty-eight years at the Kansas City Structural Steel Company and is a life-long resident of Argentine and a graduate of the Argentine High School.

> I was born in Argentine and have lived in the east end all of my life. I was born at 1213 Ruby, just across the street from where I live now. My father, Henry "Rube" Larson, was of Danish descent and may have worked for the Argentine smelter. He lived in the smelter colony which was located near the present site of the 18th Street Expressway.
>
> He began working for the Kansas City Structural Steel Company in 1921 and worked for over forty years as a machine tool operator. He was working the night of the 1951 flood and he always had a saying about predicting floods. He said that he always watched the rats and possums in the plant. When they headed for higher ground, so did he.
>
> I came to the steel plant on June 19, 1946 as a permanent employee. During the summers of 1944 and 1945, I worked as the plant mailman. Briefly, in 1945 I made bumpers for some of the landing craft. I worked in the Credit Union Office for awhile. Then in 1954, I became the company storekeeper and remained in this job for nine years. Since 1963, I have moved to the office and have been in charge of materials.
>
> The steel company stocks all types and shapes of angles, channels, bars, plates, and several different types of standard

---

[75]Cornelius T. Campbell, personal interview held in his home at 1501 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 21, 1974.

A-36 steel. A-36 is the steel that most buildings and bridges are made out of. Another kind of steel stocked is A-588 steel. This is a corrosive steel that does not have to be painted. We just let it rust and then it turns into a bronze color. Much of our A-572 steel is used to build snowplow and bulldozer blades.

I would estimate that the company's inventory in steel runs about 7,500 tons, and each day this figure keeps growing as the company gets more steel in. The total area of the plant consists of about twenty-six acres. The steel storage yard is about 300 feet long and 75 feet wide. Tons and tons of material are brought and stored here until it is ready for fabrication. From there, the steel goes into the shop and is cut, bent, welded and reformed into usable shapes. There is also a separate inventory in the storeroom.

I have noticed many changes since I started to work at the steel plant. The type of work is different. Smelting work is still done if the company can get the bid. However riveting has been replaced by welding. Fifty years ago there was probably at times as many as 750 people on the payroll. Four or five men were in a riveting gang. There were about five or six of these crews. However, welding has eliminated the use of rivets. Therefore, riveted bridges have been replaced by welded or bolted bridges. The 18th Street Expressway Bridge is an example of this. The river span was riveted with box girders but the connections were all made with high strength bolts.

The plant has also become more modernized since I came. One machine operator might now be able to do the work of five men. At one time, we were considered the largest plant west of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In later years we were still considered the largest plant west of the Mississippi River. I believe that we received this ranking on a basis of our yearly tonnage. Presently, we probably do not hold this high a ranking. Kaiser Steel or some other company on the west coast is probably larger than us in output or in the physical size of its plant.

Currently, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company operates a warehouse in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona, and a warehouse and fabrication plant in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Although these plants might not be directly affiliated with our company, they are under the same ownership.[76]

The author's father, Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr., has been employed by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company for twenty-eight years. These are his recollections:

I was first employed as a laborer in the fabrication shop. I started in October of 1945. I worked for several months and was laid off in the first part of 1946 due to slack work in our

---

[76]Joseph L. "Pete" Larson, interview in his home at 1208 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 1, 1974.

shop. In those days, we did have temporary layoffs. I returned in 1946, however, and started in the shop office. I have been employed in the office ever since.

I have worked in most phases of the shop office and for about the last fifteen years I have been the Chief Clerk of the Shop Office. During the last fifteen years, I also have handled most of the personnel work for the fabrication shop.

When I started with the company in 1946, with the exception of O. C. Smith, almost all of the original founders of the organization were still living and active in the company. Howard A. Fitch, Sr., was the company President and General Manager. Shortly thereafter, he retired and relinquished the Presidency to his son Howard A. Fitch, Jr. Glenn A. Smith was General Manager of the shop and later became a Vice-President.

When I started working for the company, the payroll in the fabrication shop averaged around 375 to 400 employees. However, due to the present nature of our business and the modernization of the plant, this figure has decreased. Presently, we have 250 men on the shop payroll. About forty of these work on the night shift. This figure includes such classifications as painters, crane operators, electricians, machinists, welders, checkers, machine operators, maintenance employees, burners, inspectors, and leadmen. Approximately eighty-four employees comprise the office payroll. This figure includes company officials, managers, engineers, technicians, draftsmen, and sales office and clerical employees.

Women have always worked in the shop office. However, due to the physical nature of the work in our fabrication shop, few women ever applied for work out there. In July of 1973, our first woman applied and was accepted for employment in our fabrication shop. Presently, there are seven women on the payroll.

For many years, the fabrication shop employees have been represented by Shopmen's Local Union No. 582 of the International Association of Bridges, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers (affiliated with the A.F.L.-C.I.O.). While company employee relations have always been good, we have had two labor disputes since 1946. The first occurred from September 1, until September 20 in 1965. The latter one was from July 1, 1973 until October 10, 1973.[77]

For several years, a company practice has been to hire summer employees. These employees work from the month of June until the first of September. Many of these are students who have been able to continue their college educations because of the financial

---

[77]Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr. interview in his home at 2428 South 47th Street, Kansas City, Kansas on November 18, 1973.

assistance they received by working for the company. Some of these students, upon graduation, have returned to work for the company. Others have gone on to become lawyers, doctors, school teachers, and businessmen in our community.

Until recent years, most of the company's labor force was comprised of men from the Argentine, Turner, and Armourdale areas. Many of these employees are closely related. They often represent second or third generations from the same family. Many times an applicant would come to the company and say that his father, grandfather, uncle, or some other relatives had worked for the company many years before.

In fact, second and third generations have even come from outside of the United States. Many of these have been displaced persons who came from countries in Central Europe. One man, Tony Gasparovic, came from Yugoslavia and started working for the company as a custodian in the late 1940's. He worked for about twenty years until his retirement. He in turn sent for his son and grandson in the old country and found employment for them at the plant.

The author has a second cousin who has worked for the company about twenty-eight years. He also had an uncle who worked there as a welder for over twenty-five years, until his death. The author's great uncle, Manuel "Whitey" W. Hufferd, worked at the steel plant for fifty-four years.

Whitey Hufferd was born on August 9, 1889. He lived for over fifty years at 3907 Strong Avenue in Argentine. Mr. Hufferd started working for the steel plant on November 6, 1907. He thus started only about one-half of a year after the plant began operations.

he was Chief Inspector for the plant. His job was to see that all material leaving the plant was properly fabricated. Several times he went out to the construction sites whenever there were assembly problems. During the war he and L. L. Cramer were in charge of the construction of the boats. He retired on October 31, 1961 at the age of seventy-two and died on November 30, 1962.[78] His death occurred when the author was only about twelve years old. The author wishes he could recall some of the amusing anecdotes that he told him about the company.

The main purpose of this chapter had been to describe the formative years of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company. However, before concluding, the author would like to briefly bring the history of the company up to date.

H. A. Fitch, Jr., son of the founder, succeeded his father as the President of the company. He reamined in this position until his death on July 29, 1962. Glenn A. Smith, the son of O. C. Smith, was the Vice-President of the company for many years until his retirement in 1970. Mr. Smith passed away on February 4, 1971.

John S. "Jack" Harrow is the current President of the company. He was a brother-in-law of Howard Fitch, Jr. Thomas M. Fitch, the son of Howard A. Fitch, Jr. and the grandson of Howard A. Fitch, Sr., is the Executive Vice-President of the company; V. R. Bartley is Vice-President of Erection; R. H. Dill is the Vice-President of Sales; C. A. Baker is the Vice-President of Operations; L. C. Crawford is the Plant Manager, and James Harrow is the Assistant Plant Manager.

---

[78]This information was gathered from the company records of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

The company has experienced both some good and some lean years financially in the decade of the 1960's. In the decade of the 70's, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company is carrying on in its sixty-year old tradition. The following is a financial report of the 1973 fiscal year:

> Kansas City Structural Steel Company reported the steel service centers in Albuquerque, Phoenix and Tucson operated at a profit and continued to show an improvement but that the Kansas City plant turned in a "disappointing" performance.
>
> Because of competitive conditions at the time jobs were taken here there was a cost over run in shop operations, according to John S. Harrow, president. Also contributing to the loss here was a strike at the Kansas City, Kansas plant.
>
> For the year, however, the earnings were ahead of 1972 amounting to $223,817, or $1.57 a common share, compared with $184,197, or $1.30 a share in the previous year. Sales and billings on completed contracts amounted to $20,057,609 compared with $20,122,217.
>
> Competitive conditions in the market have tended to ease somewhat in recent months and shop operations are more profitable. The company is under tonnage allotments from the mills which limit jobs that can be bid and which also tend to stabilize market conditions, Harrow said.
>
> A major problem, he said, is the determination of prices to use in estimating job costs in light of the rapid changes taking place in price lists by the mills.
>
> Bank debt and long-term borrowing were increased because of the larger investments ($4.5 million against $2.9 million) and receivables ($4.4 million against $2.6 million). Additions to fixed assets totaled $742,575 against $516,050.[79]

Two of the company's recent contracts of distinction were those for the B.M.A. Building in Kansas City, Missouri, and the R. Crosby Kemper, Sr. American Royal Arena.

The fabrication of the steel for the new arena is the most important contract that the company is presently filling. The company is fabricating the steel for the "Space Frame" roof and wall structures. The space frame concept is an unique building

---

[79]Kansas City Star, April 2, 1974, p. 16.

esign. Instead of having wall columns to support the roof framing there are three "space frames" and the roof structure is hung from them. More than 2,000 tons of steel will go into this building.

The arena will be located just north of the present American Royal Building. It will seat 16,000 people when completed in the fall of 1974. This building is to be the home of the American Royal Livestock and Horse Show, the Kansas City Scouts Hockey Team, and the Kansas City Kings Basketball Team.[80]

Since 1903, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company has served the Kansas City area. From small beginnings, the company has acquired a world-wide reputation.. Quality in the fabrication and erection of steel has become a motto. Tank cars, boats, bridges, and buildings are the company's monuments. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company will continue to hold a position of importance in the steel industry.[81]

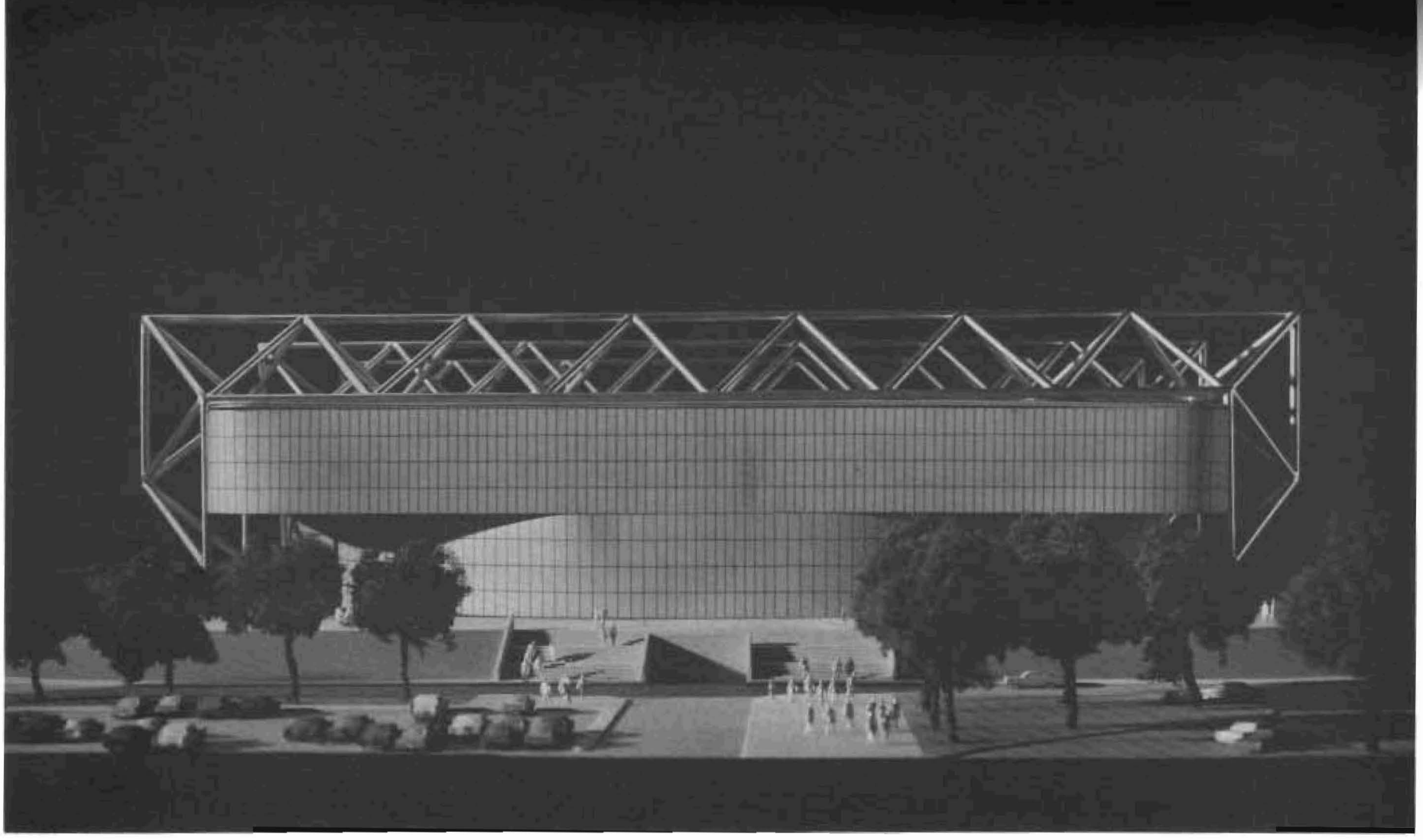
---

[80]This information came from company correspondence written by Loyd Crawford, Plant Manager, of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, December 11, 1973.

[81]The author is deeply indebted to the following employees for the information that they gave him: Hewitt and George McCamish, Tom Yearsley, Joseph Larson, Loyd Crawford, Clarence Baker and the author's father, Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr.

Spiral Stairway - BMA Building - Kansas City, Missouri

Fabrication and Erection by **Kansas City Structural Steel Company.**



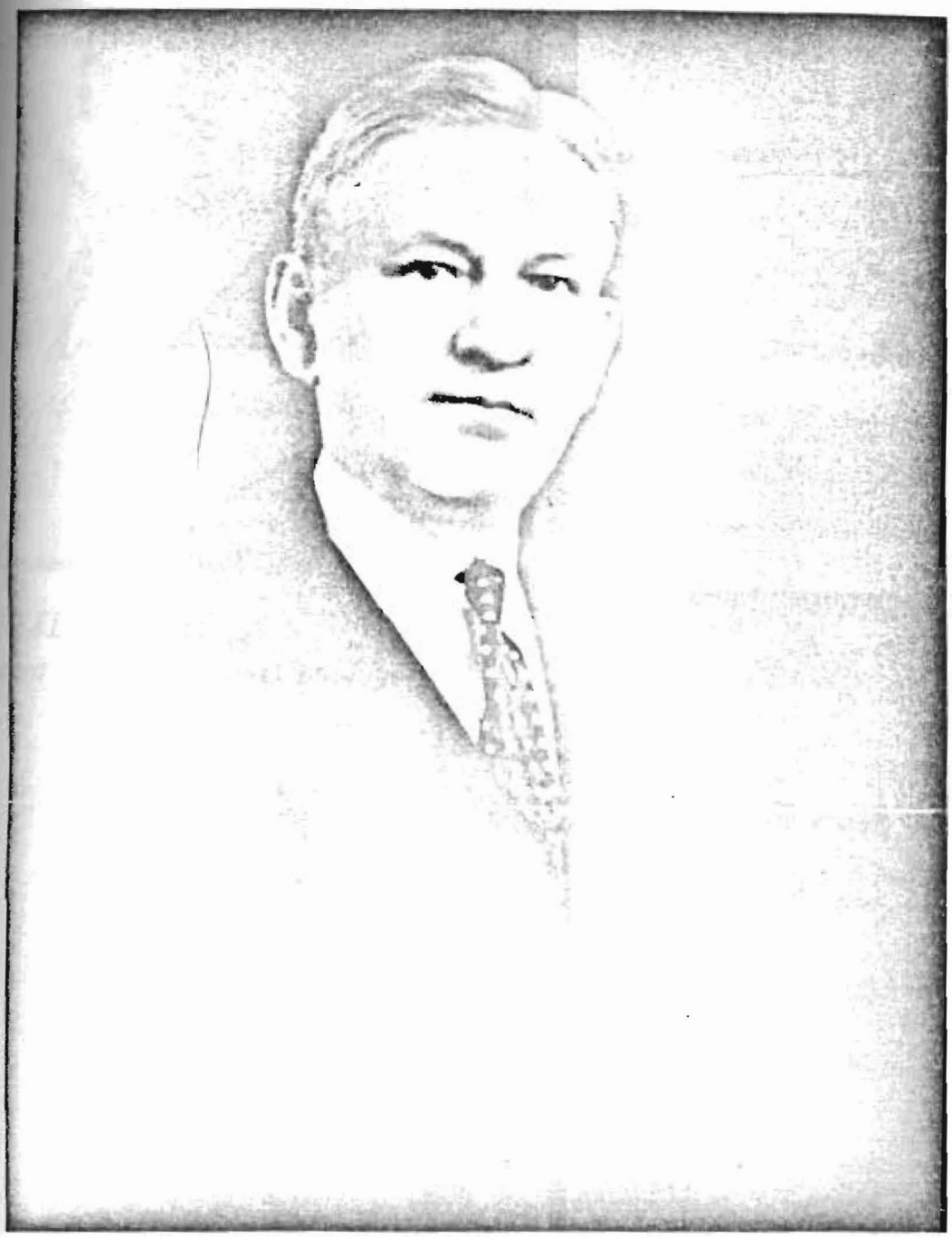
Fabrication and Erection by **Kansas City Structural Steel Company.**

H. A. FITCH

President of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company
Since Its Inception In 1907

John P. Cooper

Secretary



O. C. Smith

1872 - 1936

NEIL G. LILLEY

Vice-President & General Sales Manager

Alfred M. Meyers

Chief Engineer

CHAPTER VI

TALES OF FLOODS AND DISASTERS

The Kansas River basin is one of the most fertile and productive regions of our country. The heart of the grain belt is located in this area. And it is also a region known for extensive vegetable growing and livestock raising. The great basin and its tributaries drain over 60,000 square miles. Sixteen per cent of this land is in Colorado, 28 per cent in Nebraska and 56 per cent in Kansas.[1]

The major river of the basin is the Kaw or Kansas River. The Kaw is formed in Geary County near Junction City by the union of the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers. From this origin, the Kaw flows 169 winding miles or approximately 135 miles in a straight line to its mouth on the Missouri River at Kansas City. The Kaw River drains 5,554 square miles of territory. The Blue River, the largest tributary, drains 9,600 square miles in east central Nebraska and Kansas. Another large branch, the Republican River, drains 25,000 square miles in western Kansas, western Nebraska and eastern Colorado. Finally, the Smoky Hill River, with its tributaries the

---

[1]Kenneth S. Davis, River on the Rampage (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Incorporated, 1953), pp. 35-36.

Solomon and Saline rivers, drains another 20,000 square miles of central and western Kansas.[2]

Much of the lowlands of these river valleys is susceptible to periodic floods. Generally, the rivers reach what is considered flood stage about every two years. Before the numerous flood control projects were completed, floods of severe proportions occurred about every five years.[3] The metropolitan Kansas City area is particularly vulnerable to floods. Large areas of both cities are situated in the lowlands of the Kaw and Missouri rivers. A heavy concentration of manufacturing and wholesale interests, stockyards, meat packing plants, mills, factories, and railroad yards begin in the Argentine vicinity and continue up both banks of the Kaw to its mouth. Then it follows the west bank of the Missouri River and spreads out upon the level lands northeast of downtown Kansas City, Missouri. This area received the full fury of the great flood of July, 1951.

Outstanding floods took place in Kansas prior to 1951. There were reports of heavy flooding along the Kaw in 1826, 1844, 1858, 1867, 1877, 1903 and 1935. Lesser floods of some importance occurred in 1904, 1908, 1909, 1915, 1927, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945 and 1947.[4]

Many meteorologists believe that the flood of 1844 may have been the greatest flood of all, even surpassing that of 1951. Unfortunately, few accounts of the flood survive. Kansas and much

---

[2] Ibid., p. 36.

[3] Kansas Board of Engineers Report of the Board, Report on Flood Protection in the Kansas River Basin for the Kansas Industrial Development Commission (Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1957), p. 15.

[4] Davis, River on the Rampage, p. 134.

of Missouri was inhabited by only traders and Indians at that time. A known fact is that the flood of 1844 was caused by extensive and prolonged rains over a wide area. Early accounts told of up to twenty-seven inches of rain falling in parts of Kansas during May and June of that year. The Reverend Jonathan Meeker, a missionary, mentions in his diary almost continuous rainfall from May 7 through June 10.[5]

A meteorologist, Mr. S. D. Flora, made a thorough study of this flood. Mr. Flora was the head of the United States Weather Bureau in Topeka from 1917-1949. His findings indicated that from Manhattan to below Lawrence, the flood of 1844 was as much as five to six and a half feet higher than the flood levels reached by the flood of 1951. However, Mr. Flora points out that "a small difference in the distribution of the heavy rains from July 10 through July 12, 1951 and their continuation for one day longer would in all probability have produced a flood equal to that of 1844."[6]

No known high water marks of the 1844 flood are left in the Argentine or Kansas City, Kansas area. But prior to 1920, there was a definite high water mark out in the stone of one of the piers of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railway bridge across the Missouri River in Kansas City, Missouri. This water mark was estimated at thirty-eight feet by Army Engineers. By comparison the crest of

---

[5]United States Department of the Interior, Water Resources Division, Geological Water Supply Survey Paper, Kansas-Missouri Floods of July, 1951 (United States Department of the Interior, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952), p. 224.

[6]S. D. Flora, "The Great Flood of 1844 Along the Kansas and Marais des Cygnes Rivers," Kansas Historical Quarterly, XX (May, 1952), 73.

1951 flood on the Missouri River at Kansas City was thirty-six feet from five to seven A.M. July 14.[7]

Until 1951, the flood of 1903 was the greatest flood officially recorded along the Kansas River Valley. This flood was the result of a great storm front that dumped over seventeen inches of rain in psrts of Kansas. Over two-thirds of the state received between eight to seventeen inches of rain. This rainfall exceeded the normal precipitation for the month by about eight inches in some areas.[8]

Ironically, just two years earlier, at about the same time of year, the Kansas plains and much of the Southwest had suffered through a severe corn and grass failure. Sufficient rains failed to come all summer. Ninety days of drought afflicted the Great Plains. Panicky farmers hurried their cattle to market. The rains came just in time and were adequate enough to insure only a sub-par yield for the year. Many agricultural experts believed it would take years for the area to recover. In 1902, however, the farm belt responded with a banner harvest. The spring rains came at the proper time and in sufficient quantities.[9]

Kansans were not so fortunate in the spring of 1903. Heavy rainfall began in western Kansas during the first part of May. In the central and eastern parts of Kansas, the rainfall was far heavier.

---

[7]Ibid., p. 80.

[8]Phil E. Chappell, "Floods in the Missouri River," Kansas Historical Quarterly, X (1907-08), 560.

[9]"The Kansas City Flood Edition," The New Empire Magazine for the Homeseeker and Investor, June, 1903, p. 19.

More rainfall fell in ten days than some locales received in almost a year.[10]

By May 26, the Kaw River had overflowed her banks above Lawrence. Downstream at Kansas City the waters continued to rise. On June 1, a stage of thirty-five feet above the low level mark and fourteen feet above what was considered the danger level was reached. The last twenty-four hours showed an enormous rise of 7.6 feet on the gauge. This was within a few feet above the estimated mark of the 1844 flood.[11]

Little damage occurred in the Missouri River Valley above Kansas City. But the valley of the Kaw was devastated. Damage in the valley was estimated at over $10,000,000.[12] The greater Kansas City area suffered an additional $22,000,000 worth of damage.[13]

The flood came to Kansas City, Kansas, Friday, May 30. Dwellers in the Armourdale section and in the town of Argentine began to leave their homes. By Saturday night, one story buildings were submerged. During Sunday, the Kaw ignored a usually winding channel and rushed directly across the west bottoms into Kansas City, Missouri. Many people were forced to remain where the floods had overtaken them. Some people lodged in trees and on telephone poles from Sunday afternoon until late on Monday.

---

[10]Chappell, "Floods in the Missouri River," p. 560.

[11]Ibid. [12]Ibid., p. 561.

[13]Rufus Terral, The Missouri Valley, Land of Drouth, Flood and Promise (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1947), p. 88.

Stockyards, industries, warehouses, packing plants, and everything else in the lowlands between the two rivers were flooded by up to ten feet of water. City water works were cut off as were gas and electricity over much of the two cities.

The railroad yards were particularly hard hit. At 12 A.M. water began to pour into the Santa Fe Roundhouse in the Argentine Yards. Officials frantically had employees erect sandbags, but to no avail.[14] Disaster also struck at the main depot. Several feet of water slammed into Union Depot in Kansas City, Missouri. No trains were running from both cities for many days. Eight thousand freight cars were submerged.[15]

Water ran ten feet deep in some areas of Argentine. Many streets were blocked by wreckage piled twenty to thirty feet high. Many homes in the Argentine and Armourdale area were washed off their foundations and turned upon their sides or roofs. Sofas and chairs were sticking out of windows. The corners were torn out of many brick and wood frame buildings by smaller houses washing against them. In some areas, whole blocks were washed away. Near 5th Street and Kansas Avenue, a wagon was hurled against a house with such force that the end of the house was splintered and left the wagon clinging in the wreckage. Another home was suspended between two houses by telephone wires. One man returned home to find a dead horse in his parlor.[16]

---

[14]Kansas City Star, May 29, 1903, p. 1.

[15]Davis, River on the Rampage, p. 134.

[16]"The Kansas City Flood Edition," The New Empire Magazine, p. 17.

Many people lost all or most of their belongings in the flood's wake. Merchants saw most of their merchandise ruined. What was left, they tried to unload at any price, which was tellingly reported in one West Bottoms sign: "A $600 piano for $.10."[17]

Many years later, one woman wrote an account in part of which she viewed a result of the flood on the basis of her moral assessment. At the time of the flood she lived on Cheyenne Street near 2nd Street in Armourdale. She recalled that,

> . . . several days before the flood struck, all saloons threw their doors open wide to the public with everything they had in stock free as they had nowhere to move it to and didn't want it wasted. The town drunks almost drowned themselves literally, taking advantages of the chance of a lifetime. After getting soused to the gunwales, they would wander off to lie down somewhere in weeds or the gutter to sleep it off. Some had to be rescued to keep from drowning, and no doubt some actually did drown, but were no great loss to the community or their long suffering families either.[18]

For all the suffering, the death toll was relatively light. The loss of life totaled only fifteen in both cities.[19] However, of a total population in Kansas City, Kansas of 60,000, over 20,000 people were forced to leave their homes.[20]

When the waters receded, the cleanup work was staggering. Four feet of solid mud covered much of Argentine and Armourdale.

---

[17]Ibid., p. 9.

[18]Freida Merle Graybill Imes, "The Flood of 1903" (unpublished paper found in the Kansas Collection of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library, 1972), p. 11.

[19]"The Kansas City Flood Edition," The New Empire Magazine, p. 5.

[20]Ibid., p. 18.

Some two story buildings had as much as four inches of mud upstairs.[21]

In 1903, Argentine had a population of more than 6,500 people. One-third of them lived in the hills while the rest lived in the Kaw River bottoms.[22] Twenty-five hundred of the town's dwellers were forced to flee their homes.[23] From Spear Avenue to the bluffs in the east, the Kaw River was one mile wide. Except for a road winding through the hills to the Rosedale community, Argentine was almost completely isolated.[24]

The high Missouri River had acted as a dam and backed the Kaw up to Muncie, Kansas. Nineteen bridges over the Kaw River were washed out. The only bridge that was left standing was the 23rd Street Viaduct Bridge. The local superintendent of the railroad, in an effort to weigh down the structure, loaded the bridge with every locomotive it would hold and anchored others to the bridge's support beams. Forty-four locomotives were used. The superintendent, on his own initiative, had saved the bridge. Yet, he nearly lost his job since the value of the locomotives was greater than that of the bridge.[25] His courage, however, provided the only link across the flooded river for many days. Soldiers and

---

[21]Freida Merle Graybill Imes, "The Flood of 1903," p. 26.

[22]Kansas City Star, May 30, 1903, p. 1.

[23]Ibid., June 1, 1903, p. 1.

[24]Ibid., May 30, 1903, p. 2.

[25]Joseph H. McDowell, Building a City, A Detailed History of Kansas City, Kansas (Kansas City, Kansas: The Kansas City Kansan Press, 1962), p. 19.

engineers from Fort Leavenworth eventually built pontoon bridges at all points where the original bridges stood. Planks were nailed over boats. Some of these planks were only twenty feet wide, with no railings and only one foot above the water level.[26]

The Fort Leavenworth soldiers also performed other duties. They worked in rescue and cleanup operations. Soldiers also protected property against looters. Stationed at intervals, they were under orders to shoot anyone failing to obey orders to halt or to show passes.[27]

As soon as the water levels receded, cleanup operations began in the two Kansas Cities. Large amounts of money, food and clothing were donated to flood relief funds. Despite heavy financial losses, the communities made a fairly rapid recovery. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for the town of Argentine. Even before the flood, the community was laboring under great difficulties and possessed little genuine optimism for the future. The community was in a near financial depression and the city treasury was depleted. The silver smelter, by far the town's largest employer, had closed in 1901. Many men were at least temporarily out of work. The Structural Steel Company of Howard Fitch and O. C. Smith was not yet in existence and would not be established in Argentine until 1907. The flood could not have come at a less opportune time. To make matters worse, flood relief for this area was almost non-existent for some time. Donations were divided totally among the stricken

---

[26]Freida Merle Graybill Imes, "The Flood of 1903," p. 28.

[27]Ibid., p. 26.

communities of Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri. The independent town of Argentine was unintentionally ignored. Dr. D. E. Clopper, Argentine's mayor, pleaded for urgent relief. He said:

> . . . Argentine is not in a position to refuse any contribution, however small. We were not in the best shape before the flood and now our situation is serious. More than 3,000 of our people, out of a population of 7,000, are homeless. The 4,000 who were not driven from their homes are caring for their fellow citizens and for nearly 1,000 Armourdale refugees as well. Proportionally our burden is heavier than that of any other city in the flooded district.
>
> The flood came as the last incident in a long chapter of calamities. Our troubles started with a railroad strike in 1894. In the bank failure of 1896, the city lost $22,000. The Treasurer of the city ran away with $18,000 in 1897. The smelter closed down in 1901 and a payroll of $20,000 a month ceased. The smallpox epidemic of 1902-03 cost the city $5,000.
>
> There are as many people in Argentine now as in former years. Those who were thrown out of employment found work in Kansas City, Missouri and in the packing houses of Armourdale. Many of these may be idle for some time and they must be cared for.
>
> Further than that, the flood has left the sewers clogged, the streets in the flooded district impassable, the sidewalks washed away and the water works plant badly damaged. We will need money to make absolutely necessary public improvements and the city hasn't any money.[28]

A group of prominent Argentine citizens also issued a plea which was printed in the Kansas City Star. They said:

> Four thousand of our people are made homeless by this awful flood and with an additional 1,200 from Armourdale which we have cared for without any assistance except for a few provisions and clothes from Rosedale and Kansas City, Missouri, and a small donation of $69 in cash paid by citizens from $1 on up. The point we wish to make clear is this: We have 4,000 sufferers and the city is composed entirely of poor men, and with a depleted city treasury, and the streets and alleys covered with a slime from one to three feet deep, and sewers all clogged, we must have assistance in a financial way to put our city in a sanitary condition or abandon it all together.[29]

---

[28] Kansas City Star, June 7, 1903, p. 7.

[29] Kansas City Star, June 8, 1903, p. 2.

The appeals were successful. Employees of the Kansas City Star made an immediate $200 contribution.[30] Money, food and clothing soon arrived in Argentine. The Argentine community made a slow recovery.

Nature dealt the small city another severe blow one year later. In July heavy rains again fell in the Kansas River watershed. The Kaw Valley experienced another flood. This flood was not nearly as severe. The Kaw River at Kansas City crested at 27.5 feet compared to the thirty-five feet of the flood of the preceding year.[31] Nevertheless, parts of Lawrence and North Topeka were flooded. In Argentine, and the Armourdale and the West Bottoms area of Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri, the same area overflowed in 1903 was again covered by water ranging in depth from one to ten feet.[32] Two-thirds of Armourdale and one-third of Argentine were flooded. Five thousand people abandoned their homes.[33]

In Argentine, the Kaw began rising rapidly around midnight, July 6. By noon of the next day, the lowlands of Argentine were flooded.[34] The Santa Fe Railroad Depot was surrounded by water. The railroad yards and the roundhouses were under water. All of North Argentine was also flooded.

---

[30] Ibid.

[31] The reader should bear in mind that the water level is designated in the number of feet that the river is above what is considered the normal low level mark. For instance, the reading of the 1903 flood was thirty-five feet above this mark.

[32] Chappell, "Floods in the Missouri River," p. 562.

[33] Kansas City Star, July 8, 1904, p. 1.

[34] Ibid., July 6, 1904, p. 1.

For two days, the waters continued to rise. By July 8, 1904, Argentinians were homeless. On that Friday morning, the business district along Spear and Strong Avenues was under as much as eight feet of water. Water extended as far west as Adams Avenue approximately a quarter of a mile away. The community was again almost isolated. The only means of communication with the city was by one telephone wire of the Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company. Just two miles to the west, the town of Turner, with its 800 inhabitants, was a virtual island in a sea.[35]

The waters quickly subsided. Damages were light in comparison with the 1903 castrophe. Within a short time, the city was back to normal.

But for two consecutive years, the metropolitan Kansas City area had been devastated. Concerned citizens felt the need for the building of a protective dike system. In 1905, the Kaw Valley Commercial Club urged the Kansas legislature to establish a drainage system.[36] Public support seemed to back this movement. Flood control plans were proposed. Soon, however, the cost of the plans began to worry many citizens. Endless legislative debates eliminated a chance for any immediate action. Plans were rejected and the public apparently grew disinterested. The issue of flood control was forgotten.

An old Czech proverb says, "Misfortunes always come in by a door that has been left open for them." Yet another flood struck

---

[35]Ibid., July 8, 1904, p. 6.

[36]Chappell, "Floods in the Missouri River," p. 561.

the Kaw Valley in the late spring and early summer of 1908. This deluge was unusual in that veteran observers of the river did not expect a major flood. Heavy rains had fallen in May and early June, but apparently not enough to constitute a serious threat. Even T. B. Jennings, United States Weather Observor in Topeka, emphasized that the valley was in no danger of high water.[37]

The flood of 1908 was an oddity in another aspect. This flood reached a crest and receded. Just when the peril seemed over and the harm done, heavy rains fell upstream. The Kansas River once again steadily rose and was to reach an even higher crest.

The initial flood crest reached Kansas City by June 8.[38] Armourdale and North Argentine were deserted. Anticipating a disaster equal to those of past years, the inhabitants of the lowlands of Armourdale and Argentine evacuated their dwellings. Fortunately, unlike the rapidity of past floods, the Kaw River rose slowly. Residents had ample time to carry out much of their valuables. Wagon load after wagon load was piled high with goods. Merchants of endangered sections were able to remove or give away much of their merchandise. One hundred Santa Fe employees erected sandbags in the railroad yards. Two hundred box cars were sent to safety in Ottawa.[39]

---

[37] Kansas City Times, June 6, 1908, p. 1.

[38] Kansas City Star, June 8, 1908, p. 1.

[39] Ibid.

Some parts of Kansas were to receive more rainfall than prior to the great flood of 1903. By June 10, the Kaw had crested at Kansas City. Most of the railroad boarding houses in Argentine were flooded. The parts of Argentine between 5th Street and Manville Avenue and between Metropolitan and Strong Avenue were under water.[40]

The Kaw River slowly began to fall. The crest of the flood was 28.5 feet, which was reached Thursday night, June 11. By ten o'clock on Friday, the river had fallen over three feet to a 25.2 reading.[41] Some people began to move back to their homes. Plans were drawn for the cleanup operations.

Suddenly, as swiftly as the river fell, it rose again. Heavy rains began falling throughout Kansas. Swollen tributaries dumped their waters into the Kaw. The river again flooded parts of Topeka and Lawrence. Worried citizens downstream again left their homes. Cleanup operations were terminated.

Heavy rains fell from June 13 through July 15. A new flood rocked Argentine and Armourdale, as the river again spilled her banks. The new crest was even higher. At 2:00 A.M. on the 15th of June, the Kaw River reached a new crest of 29.7 feet. This mark was more than a foot higher than the high water mark of June 11. Thus, the flood of 1908 was actually two floods, with the second ond occurring only about a month after the first. The author was unable to find any property damage estimates for 1908. The total damage was far less than May of 1903 and the flood of July of 1904.

---

[40] Ibid., June 10, 1908, p. 6.

[41] Ibid., June 13, 1908, p. 1.

This flood, in terms of flood crest, achieved third place, ranking behind the floods of 1844 and 1903. By comparison, the crest of the destructive 1904 flood was a foot and a half lower.

This time Kansas Citians had learned a hard lesson. In 1910, the Kaw Valley Drainage District was formed and began operations. Bonds amounting to $1,750,000 were passed for flood control. By 1911, protective dikes were built from the mouth of the Kaw River to Turner, Kansas.

One man was perhaps as influential as any other person in getting major flood control measures adopted. His name was Willard J. Breidenthal, a resident of Kansas City, Kansas. He was a banker and was prominent in civic affairs for many years.[42]

This man acquired an interest in flood control at an early age. He was a witness to the 1903 flood and subsequent floods. In fact, the high waters of the 1903 flood prevented him from keeping a date with the young woman who later became his wife.[43]

In the 1930's, Breidenthal became the chairman of the Greater Kansas City Flood Protection and Planning Committee. This was about the same time that the National Resources Board was organized by President Roosevelt. Breidenthal and his committee went to this organization for financial support. The President's Board promised to ensure Federal backing if the local interests came up with a flood control plan.[44]

---

[42]McDowell, Building a City, A Detailed History of Kansas City, Kansas, p. 19.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid.

Breidenthal and his associates enlisted the support of Frederick H. Fowler and associates of California. This was an engineering firm noted for its water control projects. The firm was paid $50,000 to draw up a flood control plan. In 1934, the engineers presented a report that was endorsed by Army Engineers and the National Resources Board. The flood control plan for the Missouri River Valley was submitted to the United States Congress.[45] In 1935 and 1936 the first flood control legislation was passed. By the end of 1939, work was begun on the Fort Peck Dam on the upper reaches of the Missouri River.[46] Other projects were soon under construction. Until World War II came, these projects were developed in an orderly manner.

The outbreak of war forced the suspension of construction. Thus, the years 1942-45 were a period of inactivity in so far as flood control works were concerned. Heavy flooding happened in the Missouri River basin during the war. Limited maintenance and major flood damage resulted in the loss of a large amount of the flood control works then completed. Severe floods occurred from 1942 through 1945 and in 1947. The 1943 flood caused an estimated $65,000,000 worth of damage. An even more damaging flood in 1947 caused over $111,000,000 damage.[47]

The cry again rose for protection against destructive floods. Fifty-five million dollars were spent during 1945 for levees on

---

[45] Ibid.

[46] Davis, River on the Rampage, p. 134.

[47] Ibid.

the Missouri River and her tributaries.[48] This was hardly an adequate beginning. In 1943, however, Lieutenant General Lewis Pick of the Army Corps of Engineers formulated an extensive flood control plan for the Missouri River basin and submitted it to Congress. About the same time, W. G. Sloan, head of the Federal Bureau of Reclamation, also submitted a plan to Congress. Congress debated the Sloan and Pick plans. Both proposals deserved merit. Finally Congress decided to combine both plans into one. The subsequent Pick-Sloan Plan was to entail a massive system of levees and flood control dams.

Funds were appropriated and by 1948 numerous dams and reservoirs were under construction. One such reservoir was Kanopolis Lake. This lake is located on the Smoky Hill River approximately thirty miles southwest of Salina, Kansas. Kanopolis was the first of the Kansas River Basin lakes. It was completed in 1948 at a cost of about $12,000,000.[49]

Such an endeavor was a step in the right direction. Unfortunately several factors were to retard the development of the flood control systems. Our nation's political situation intensified and federal monies designated for the Pick-Sloan Plan began to be diverted to other government agencies. Defense appropriations again took a huge bite out of the federal budget.

Other factors had an effect on the Pick-Sloan Program. Local interest groups began to fight against flood control measures.

---

[48] Ibid., p. 135.

[49] United States Army Corps of Engineers, Report of the Corps, Kansas Water Resources Development (Dallas, Texas: United States Army Corps of Engineers, Southwestern Division, 1971), p. 28.

Farmers, whose lands were to be flooded, organized powerful lobbies to represent their interests in Congress. Particularly stiff opposition was encountered in the Manhattan, Kansas area. This was the site of the proposed Tuttle Creek Dam, which was to be built on the Big Blue River, a tributary of the Kaw. The little Swedish community of Mariadahl, twenty miles north of Manhattan, lay in the path of the proposed lake.[50] Resistance was encountered from these residents as well as from other farmers up and down the valley.

Their cause had some merit at that time as there was a controversy over the building of big dams as opposed to soil conservation practices and smaller dams. Big dam advocates claimed that only the building of large reservoirs coulw prevent the flooding of the major tributaries.

On the other hand, small dam advocates claimed that a cheaper and better system could be built by using little dams and modern techniques of soil and water conservation. Perhaps Elmer T. Peterson, then the Associate Editor of the Daily Oklahoman-Oklahoma City Times, summed up this point of view best:

> . . . Take the Army Engineers stubborn determination to build a great dam at Tuttle Creek on the Blue River of Kansas to help protect Manhattan, Topeka and Kansas City. This flood protection would itself flood 55,000 acres of fertile farmland along with several beautiful villages. Permanently lost would be an area which produces more than $6,000,000 worth of crops a year.[51]

The heated controversy was to reach the United States Congress. After a series of debates, Congress decided to temporarily shelve

---

[50]Davis, River on the Rampage, p. 168.

[51]Elmer T. Peterson, "Big Dam Foolishness," The Readers Digest, July, 1952, pp. 63-66.

several reservoir projects, one of which was the Tuttle Creek Dam. Small dam advocates had won the first round. But they would lose the fight, for the Kansas River Valley was about to be dealt a devastating blow by a great flood.

The Kansas and Missouri River flood of July, 1951, is considered the greatest flood and perhaps the greatest natural disaster in our nation's history. Damages compiled by the Army Corps of Engineers totaled over $870,000,000 along the river basins of the Kaw, Missouri, Marais des Cygnes, and Osage. Red Cross statistics showed that nineteen people lost their lives.[52] Heavy flooding occurred throughout the Mississippi River basin during that month of July. Total flood damages came to 41 killed, 350,000 left homeless and an estimated $2,500,000,000 property damage.[53]

The reader can comprehend the magnitude of this calamity by a comparison with other disasters in our country's past. For instance, the San Francisco Earthquake and subsequent fire took hundreds of lives yet resulted in only $500,000,000 damage. The New York City fire of 1835 caused $20,000,000. The more famous Chicago fire of 1871 destroyed 18,000 buildings and caused $196,000,000 damage.[54] Finally, on April 16, 1947, an explosion

---

[52]United States Department of the Interior, Water Resources Division, Geological Water Supply Survey Paper, Kansas-Missouri Floods of July, 1951 (United States Department of the Interior, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1952), p. 1.

[53]"Accidents and Disasters," The New World Family Encyclopedia, 1954, I, 39.

[54]Ibid., p. 38.

and fire in Texas City, Texas killed 575, injured 3,000 and did $125,000,000 property damage.[55]

The July, 1951, flood also dwarfs other great floods of our country. The Johnstown, Pennsylvania, flood is one of the most famous. In 1889, spring rains caused the Conemaugh Lake Reservoir to collapse. Over 2,500 people drowned, yet the flood damage was not that extensive.[56] In 1913, the Ohio and Indiana floods killed 732. Missouri River flood damages totaled $270,000,000 in 1927. Floods and high winds in New England, in 1938, resulted in a toll of 553 dead and missing. Property damage was approximately $500,000,000.[57]

But enough said for other disasters. The remainder of this chapter will deal with the flood of 1951, which was the greatest disaster to strike the Argentine community, and the resulting flood control projects that were built.

The spring of 1950 was dry in Kansas and throughout the Southwest. On May 5, reminiscent of the Dust Bowl of the 1930's, a dust storm struck Manhattan.[58] Inhabitants of the Great Plains region were fearful of a drought. Fortunately, a drought did not occur that year. Rains came almost at the right time and Kansas again had a bumper crop.

---

[55] Ibid., p. 39.

[56] R. Hewitt, From Earthquake, Fire and Flood (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), p. 172.

[57] "Accidents and Disasters," The New World Family Encyclopedia, p. 39.

[58] Davis, River on the Rampage, p. 19.

Rather than dry, as the year before, the spring of 1951 was a period of above normal precipitation for Kansas. During May and June, heavy rainfall occurred throughout the state. Normally, the city of Manhattan averages thirty inches of rainfall annually, but this time twenty-one to thirty-eight inches of rain fell during May and June over most of east and central Kansas. The Kaw River, by June 29, was ten and a half feet above flood stage at Manhattan.[59]

The Arkansas River, between Syracuse and Garden City, spilled over her banks following an intense storm of May 15. A cloud burst on May 22 caused the Big Creek to flood forty-four blocks of Hays. Three people drowned.[60]

Almost every river and stream in Kansas reached flood stage. The June 21 flood on the Delaware River exceeded the height of any previously known flood. Near record flows occurred in Nebraska on the Big Blue River during June. Manhattan and Lawrence were partially flooded during June. The small towns of Solomon, Culver, Tescott, Shady Bend, and Beverly were damaged. Thousands of dollars worth of crops were destroyed.[61]

Flood waters receded during the first week of July as only slight to moderate rains fell. The Kaw River and her tributaries returned to their banks.

On July 9, the rains again fell in torrents over most of the state. On that day, some areas received as much as seven inches

---

[59] Ibid., p. 22.

[60] United States Department of the Interior, Geological Water Supply Survey Paper, Kansas-Missouri Floods of July, 1951, p. 7.

[61] Ibid.

of rain.[62] Calculations by the United States Weather Bureau showed that at least 16,000 square miles of the Kaw River basin received more than six inches of rain from July 5 through July 13, with amounts as high as 15.5 inches in places.[63] Making the situation worse was the fact that the month of June was the wettest month on record in Kansas. Missouri received only slightly less rain than Kansas. With the exception of one twenty-four hour period on July 2, rains fell in Missouri every day from June 1 through July 13.[64] Much of Kansas also received rainfall of varying amounts on almost forty consecutive days.

The Kansas River again left her banks on July 11, and spread out from bluff to bluff. Fort Riley and Manhattan were the first major urban centers to be flooded. At Manhattan, the main business district and 1,600 homes were under water.[65] At Topeka, 24,000 people evacuated their homes. The industrial districts and railroad yards were especially hard hit. The levees at Lawrence gave away and 1,700 inhabitants were evacuated.[66]

Every city in the Solomon and Saline River Valleys was flooded. Along the Neosho River Basin, severe floods struck Marion, Florence, and Strong City along the Cottonwood River, and at Council

---

[62]Davis, River on the Rampage, p. 23.

[63]Kansas City Star, August 3, 1951, p. 9.

[64]Kansas City Times, July 13, 1951, p. 3.

[65]United States Department of the Interior, Geological Water Supply Survey Paper, Kansas-Missouri Floods of July, 1951, p. 10.

[66]Ibid., p. 11.

Grove, Dunlap, Burlington, Neosho Falls, and Iola along the Neosho River.[67]

Three-fourths of Council Grove was quickly under water as 2,800 people fled the Neosho River. By the morning of July 11, the Neosho River at 29.25 feet and the Cottonwood River at 27 feet were nearing all time heights. Rain measuring 4.8 inches fell the night before at nearby Emporia. In one twenty-four hour period, Cottonwood Falls received 6.05 inches of precipitation, Lebo 4.93, Neosho Rapids 4.5, Osage City 4.35, Lindsborg 4.95, Ottawa 5.26, Beloit 5.43, Barnard 7.75, and Hillsboro 6.64 inches of rainfall.[68]

Many towns were flooded and isolated. In Hartford, where the Neosho and Cottonwood Rivers merged, all of the business district and most of the residential sections were flooded. Iola was flooded by the Neosho River to depths of four to five feet. Burlington was under eight feet of water. Strong City had a large part of its business district flooded. At Emporia, passenger trains with 1,000 passengers were stranded in the city because of flooded track on the city's borders. Meals and housing for their people were found at the College of Emporia and Kansas State Teachers College. The Neosho River was twelve to fifteen miles wide at places and the whole town of Neosho Rapids just fifteen miles southeast of Emporia was under water.[69]

---

[67] Ibid., p. 19.

[68] Kansas City Star, July 11, 1951, p. 1.

[69] Kansas City Times, July 13, 1951, p. 1.

To the reader the list of towns flooded might seem endless. Junction City had between seventy and eighty city blocks flooded. Most of Salina was flooded. Two hundred families fled their homes. In Abilene, waters reached a depth of four feet deep. Flood waters came into the yard and up the front steps of the Dwight Eisenhower home.[70]

Destruction in the Marais des Cygnes River Valley was also extensive. The damage to Ottawa was estimated by the Army Corps of Engineers to equal $5,537,000. Twelve blocks of businesses were flooded and nearly half of the town's population were forced to move. At Osawatomie, 1,500 out of a total population of 4,500 were evacuated.[71]

Kansas Citians naturally sympathized with the plight of these towns. But most of the flood stricken areas were over 100 miles away. The danger to Kansas City did not appear imminent. After all, the flood control levees at Kansas City had been erected to a height of thirty-five feet.[72]

Anyway, some of the same people whose homes and farmlands were flooded around the Manhattan area had been some of the greatest opponents of the proposed flood control legislation. Farmers of the Big Blue River Valley had not wanted their lush valley turned into a reservoir. They had blocked for years the Army Engineers' proposal to build the Tuttle Creek Reservoir which the engineers

---

[70]Kansas City Times, July 14, 1951, p. 1.

[71]Kansas City Star, July 12, 1951, p. 1.

[72]Ibid.

promised would hold enough water to make the Kaw less dangerous. These farmers and their lobbies in Washington, D.C., had managed to kill also every flood control appropriation bill. One of their arguments had been that Tuttle Creek would be built just to protect Topeka, Kansas City, and other big interests. Some Kansas Citians felt that this might be a cruel lesson for such narrow-minded interests to learn.

Any sarcasm quickly turned to apprehension as the flood crest on the Kaw passed Lawrence, just twenty-seven miles upstream. The Kaw at Kansas City began rising at the rate of seven inches an hour. By the afternoon of July 12, the flood stage reached thirty feet. The dikes at thirty-five feet were threatened. Scores of families were evacuated from their homes in Argentine, Armourdale, and the Central Industrial District of Kansas City, Kansas.

The following system of alarms was agreed upon by Civil Defense authorities for the residents of Argentine and Armourdale: "A warning of any break in the dikes or an overflow will be given in radio bulletins, the shrieking of police sirens and loud blasts from the whistles of industries in the area."[73]

Argentine prepared for the rising waters. The equipment of the new fire station in Emerson Park was moved to the old fire station on Silver Avenue. All police were alerted to emergency calls and constant police patrols were maintained in the Argentine area. The Stanley School at 3604 Metropolitan was set up as a refuge center.[74]

---

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

Streets in the Armourdale and Argentine district were closed by nightfall of July 13, when surface water backing up from sewers began flooding the intersections of some streets to depths of one to two feet. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company at 2100 Metropolitan was closed down and employees sent home. Water was already entering the plant from backed up sewers.[75]

Hundreds of volunteers and paid workers began placing sandbags on the levees. A crumbling earthen dike gave way west of Turner, Kansas. The Santa Fe Railroad's sheep feeding yards at the little town of Morris, Kansas, west of Argentine, were flooded. Kansas State Highway No. 32 north of Argentine and Holliday Road three miles west of Argentine were flooded.[76]

Then the dikes in the Argentine area gave away. At 11:45 P.M. the Kaw River splashed over the dike protecting Argentine at the old South Bridge. Water quickly overwhelmed a stone and earth barrier erected a few feet away. Five thousand people fled their homes. Within two hours, much of Argentine was flooded. Fifteen minutes after the break of the dikes, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company was under a foot of water. Strong Avenue, the main business street, was under four feet of water. The rise continued along parts of Strong and Metropolitan Avenues until a height of six to twelve feet of water was reached.[77]

---

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Kansas City Star, July 13, 1951, p. 1.

Ray J. Stannard, the superintendent of dikes for the Kaw Valley Drainage District, was an eye-witness to the event. He reported that he was at the pump house below the west end of the Old Southern Bridge when the water began to flow over the dikes. Then water flowed, he said, over the Santa Fe shop yards and into the business district.[78]

When the dikes gave way, the warning sounds of police sirens were heard. National Guardsmen picked up evacuees. Some trucks and motor cars on rescue duty were stranded by rising waters. Two National Guard trucks were stranded at 30th and Strong Avenue. Eight cars were trapped on the Goddard Avenue Viaduct which spanned the Santa Fe Railroad repair yards. Rescue boats had to be sent to pick up the motorists.[79]

Rescue boats also evacuated people trapped on roofs or in the upper floors of their homes. George Brown, eighty-two years of age, and seven members of his family were pulled off the roof of his home at 1419 South 31st Street.[80]

Only the tops of shade trees in Emerson Park were visible. Water was twelve feet deep in the park. Water covered an area from Ruby Avenue to the Union Pacific tracks. Metropolitan Avenue was covered with flood water up to 32nd Street. Water was up to the second floor of all houses in the vicinity of 26th and Strong Avenue. A drugstore there was completely covered.[81]

---

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Kansas City Kansan, July 13, 1951, p. 2.

Before the flood, workers frantically piled up merchandise and personal belongings into trucks and cars. Much of what was not removed was later seen floating in the streets. National Guardsmen even reported a house with three people clinging to the roof going downstream in the Argentine district.[82]

Lights in the Argentine district went out about five minutes after the water broke through. Power was restored two hours later. Street lamps, porch lights, and front store lights were soon burning less than a foot above the water.[83]

The Saint John Evangelist Catholic Church at 2930 Strong Avenue in Argentine was inundated by both the 1903 and 1951 floods. A marked block on the southeast corner of the church indicated the height reached by the 1903 flood. This mark was easily surpassed by the flood of 1951. The Reverend William L. Landwehr, pastor, and Reverend John Burdall, assistant pastor, watched the waters of this flood rise. They moved the church records to the second floor of the parsonage. The waters continued to rise around the church. Finally, the two ministers, taking the church records with them, were rescued by boat from a porch roof of the church.[84] Damage to the church was extensive. The churning water nearly reached the top of the altar. Many of the pews were upended or piled on top of one another. The statues on each side of the altar were knocked from their pedestals.[85]

---

[82] Ibid.

[83] Kansas City Star, July 13, 1951, p. 1.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Kansas City Star, July 22, 1951, p. 3.

A fire even raged in the midst of the flood in Argentine. A fire started in the McCall Service Station and quickly spread to the Antone Transfer Company at 2415 Metropolitan Avenue. Fire fighters battled waist deep water in efforts to quell the flames. Despite flood waters surrounding the two places, the fire burned out of control for some time.[86]

The flood swept into other parts of Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri. Over 9,000 inhabitants of the Armourdale area of Kansas City, Kansas evacuated their homes during the night of July 12. The levees on the left bank of the Kaw River protecting Armourdale were topped during the early morning of July 13.[87] Water covered Armourdale to the same depth that it had covered Argentine. Flood waters rose above many rooftops. Industries and businesses, the value of which ran into the hundreds of millions of dollars, were hidden under tons of dirty water and stacks of debris.

A gas oil storage tank in the area floated downstream into some high intensity wires. A huge explosion and fire resulted that engulfed the Phillips and Socony Oil Storage yards resulting in a loss of $10,000,000.[88] This was the worst fire in Kansas City's history. For five days the fire was out of control. Seven solid blocks of buildings and industries were consumed.[89]

---

[86]Kansas City Star, July 13, 1951, p. 1.

[87]United States Department of the Interior, Geological Water Supply Survey Paper, Kansas-Missouri Floods of July, 1951, p. 11.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Davis, River on the Rampage, p. 24.

The Central Industrial District was flooded next, shortly after T. P. Cookingham, the city manager of Kansas City, Missouri, had ordered the district evacuated. The stockyards, packing plants, warehouse and manufacturing plants in the area were flooded. Hundreds of cattle and hogs in the stockyards drowned and dead carcasses were floating in the debris. The city water works, after frantic sanding, were barely saved. Total damage in the Central Industrial District came to $140,000,000.[90]

The Fairfax and Jersey Creek industrial districts of Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, located along the right bank of the Missouri River just above the Kaw's mouth, were flooded. The Fairfax Airport was heavily damaged. Municipal Airport in Kansas City, Missouri was narrowly saved by protective dikes. All air traffic, however, for precautionary measures, was rerouted.

The Kaw River crested near its mouth around noon of July 14.[91] Flood levels of the Kaw varied with depth and width of the river. A record height of forty-five feet was reached at the 23rd Street Viaduct. This was ten feet greater than the height reached by the 1903 flood.[92] Perhaps it was even equal to the great flood of 1844.

Statistically, there was little comparison between the 1903 and 1951 floods other than the wide spread damage. Army Engineers estimated that about 30 per cent of the flood waters came down the

---

[90]United States Department of the Interior, Geological Water Supply Survey Paper, Kansas-Missouri Floods of July, 1951, p. 11.

[91]Ibid., p. 12.

[92]Kansas City Kansan, July 13, 1951, p. 1.

Kaw River while the remainder came down the Missouri River. In this flood, however, 85 per cent was estimated to have come down the Kaw.[93] The United States Weather Bureau claimed that the damage would have been several times as great if the pattern of rainfall from July 12 through July 14 had been slightly different. During those few days heavy rains fell in Central and South Central Kansas. Much of this water was drained off by the Kaw but important amounts went into the Marais des Cygnes and Neosho Rivers. These flood waters missed the Kansas City area. If the rains had been fifty to seventy-five miles farther north in Kansas, virtually all of this rain water would have drained into the Kaw.[94] The reader can further realize the intensity of this great storm by the fact that meteorologists claimed that a story of such intensity occurred in this part of the country only about once every 100 years.[95]

After the waters receded, much of Argentine and the other flooded areas was covered by a layer of mud several feet thick. As many as 3,000 National Guardsmen aided in the cleanup in the Kansas City area. They also did patrol and guard duty for approximately sixty days. Then, on September 4, the guardsmen were again alerted.[96] The rains had come again. On September 1, the north

---

[93]Kansas City Star, August 3, 1951, p. 9.

[94]Ibid.

[95]Kansas Board of Engineers, Report on Flood Protection for the Kansas Industrial Development Commission, p. 17.

[96]U. S. Congress House Committee on Appropriations. Special Sub-committee on Rehabilitation of Flood Stricken Areas, Hearings before a sub-committee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, 82nd Congress, First Session, 1951, pp. 13-14.

part of Topeka was again flooded. Eight thousand persons who were flooded out in July were again forced to seek higher ground. Residents of Argentine and Armourdale were again evacuated. Low lying areas were again flooded. This time, however, the river was only a few feet above flood stage and damage was minimal.[97]

Mere words by the author cannot express the suffering Argentians went through. Joseph Shalinsky, who operated a drug store at 3475 Strong Avenue, the main street of Argentine, had this to say after his drug store was wiped out:

> The thing that worries me most is that people down there don't want to go back to their homes. Many of them are middle aged. They were appalled at the destruction.
>
> It's all right during the emergency. They're happy if they can get into some kind of home. But they don't want to go back. They're afraid. They have no assurance that there won't be any more floods.
>
> If they don't get that assurance, they won't go back. They'll go away.[98]

George Males of 1336 South 28th Street also summed it up simply:

> The whole situation is messed up. I think the whole community is that way. We saved part of the furniture but the house is gone. . . .[99]

Jack Linton, the operator of a furniture and appliance store at 32nd Street and Strong Avenue, said that his place was under twenty-two feet of water at the height of the flood.

> I went down yesterday and threw about $8,000 worth of furniture out the back window and probably $12,000 worth out the front door. I started with $200, so I can get started

---

[97] Ibid., p. 12.

[98] Kansas City Times, July 23, 1951, p. 8.

[99] Ibid.

again, but I bought the building, and it would cost about $30,000 to repair.[100]

The author interviewed several persons to gain their recollections of the flood. Mr. J. C. Harmon, the principal of Argentine High School, stated that the high school facilities were used for many days as a refugee center.[101] Mrs. Elizabeth Couch, a resident of Argentine for over thirty years, recalled that the cleanup effort was almost insurmountable. Mud and debris were everywhere. Water, in fact, was within a few feet of her house on 38th Street.[102]

Mr. Glen Culp, who lived on Barber Street, was an employee of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company. He commented that the steel plant was able to get back into operation within a few days after the flood. However, he said that water was so high in the plant that cranes toppled over and floated out.[103]

The author was six months old at the time of the flood and lived in the Quindaro section of Kansas City, Kansas. Temporarily, while his father was away at Army Reserve Camp, he and his mother were living with his grandparents at 1922 South 15th Street in the Argentine area. Flood waters prevented them from returning to their home across the Kaw.

---

[100] *Ibid.*

[101] J. C. Harmon, personal interview held at his home, 1424 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas, January 7, 1974.

[102] Elizabeth Couch, personal interview held at her home, 2434 South 47th Street, Kansas City, Kansas, February 18, 1974.

[103] Glen Culp, personal interview held at his home, 2514 South 49th Terrace, Kansas City, Kansas, February 25, 1974.

The author's mother, Mrs. Mabel Shutt, had these recollections:

> I remember that the water main across the Kaw River was broken. Water was in short supply and residents were ordered to boil all drinking water. Also, all residents of Argentine had to report to the Argentine High School and Stanley Grade School for inoculation against tetanus and typhoid fever.
>
> During the flood, I walked across Monkey Mountain, a hill in Argentine overlooking the valley, and saw nothing but water everywhere. The Mack Lumber Company at 26th and Metropolitan was almost completely covered with water. Argentine was to be under water for about two weeks. Most of the stores and businesses did not open for three weeks. Some people did not get their water restored for about three weeks. The railroad lines were not in operation until about the first of September.[104]

A particular problem encountered by Argentians was that most of the doctors' offices and medical facilities were flooded. Dr. Haas, with his office at 21st and Ruby, was the only physician who was not forced to move. The other doctors, Ernest G. Neighbor, Gaylord P. Neighbor, J. A. Burger, Maurice A. Walker, and Lee C. Rook, were forced to set up temporary headquarters elsewhere.[105]

There has been some debate over the years as to whether there would have been a major flood along the Kaw if all the flood control dams had been completed by 1951. Kansas engineers, in later years, estimated that if all the proposed dams had been built, the price tag might have gone as high as $4,000,000,000. Yet they estimate that major flooding would still have occurred.[106]

On the other hand, Major General Lewis A. Pick, the Chief of the Army Corps of Engineers, told members of the Senate Flood

---

[104]Mabel Shutt, personal interview held at her home, 2428 South 47th Street, Kansas City, Kansas, December 10, 1973.

[105]Kansas City Kansan, July 15, 1951, p. 2A.

[106]Kansas City Times, July 20, 1951, p. 6.

Control Appropriations Committee that the flood could have been easily averted. The construction of the Tuttle Creek, Perry and Milford dams alone would have held most of the flood waters. Pick also blasted those critics who blamed his agency for the floods on the Kaw and Missouri.[107]

United States Senator John McClellan, a Democrat from Arkansas, supported Pick. He stated, "If Congress, a few years ago, had appropriated $300,000,000 for flood control reservoirs in Kansas, we would have been spared in this flood of at least twice that amount." McClellan went on to say that too often when Congress voted money for flood control, the opposition would raise a cry of "pork Barrel."[108]

Willard J. Breidenthal,[109] the chairman of the Flood Protection Planning Committee of Kansas, may have expressed this viewpoint best. Breidenthal said, "This is the granddaddy flood we've been talking about. I think this will convince any doubters on the value of flood control."[110]

Yet, there were still doubters. Farmers in the Kansas River valley continued to offer opposition. This time, as a result of the flood, their influence in Washington had greatly diminished. Citizens of flood-stricken areas of Kansas and Missouri raised

---

[107]Kansas Board of Engineers, Report on Flood Protection for the Kansas River Basin, p. 4.

[108]The term "pork barrel" is legislative slang referring to a fund of tax money which is appropriated for patronage rather than for any really needed improvements.

[109]See text at footnotes 42 ff. earlier in this chapter.

[110]Kansas City Star, July 13, 1951, p. 6.

such an outcry that it could not be ignored. A special sub-committee of the House Committee on Appropriations held sessions to get information on the issues. The committee recommended an extensive program of flood control legislation.

Even after funds were appropriated, there were delays. The vital Tuttle Creek Dam at Manhattan, Kansas, was one of several examples. Construction was started on that dam in 1952. Difficulties forced a brief work stoppage. Then came four years of drought. Memories seemed to be short about the urgent need of flood control. Work was started, but remained at a somewhat slow pace. By 1960, however, the dam was completed at a cost of $80,000,000. At the dedication, in recognition for his efforts, Willard J. Breidenthal was given the fitting title of "Mr. Flood Control." By 1966, engineers estimated that the Tuttle Creek Dam had prevented floods that would have totaled at least $23,000,000. In 1969, more rain occurred in central parts of Kansas than was received in 1951. This time, however, there was no major flooding along the Kansas River.[111]

The federal government, the state of Kansas, and local government units have worked together over the past twenty years to develop a system of flood control. In the Kansas portion of the Missouri River basin, six lakes and numerous local protection projects have been completed.

---

[111]McDowell, Building a City, A Detailed History of Kansas City, Kansas, p. 21.

Other major lakes, besides Tuttle Creek, have been completed. These include Milford Lake on the Republican River, Perry Lake on the Delaware River and the Pomona and Kanopolis Lakes.

Other dams and lakes were completed or are currently under construction. This list includes Clinton Lake on the Wakarusa River, Fort Scott Lake on the Marmaton River, Garnett Lake on Pottawatomie Creek, Grove Lake on Soldier Creek, Hillsdale Lake on a tributary of the Marais des Cygnes River, Melvern Lake on the Marais des Cygnes River, Onaga Dam on Vermillion Creek and Wilson Lake on the Saline River.

In addition, local protection projects have been completed. These projects were authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1936. Construction was started in 1940. Amendments to this act were passed in 1944 and 1954. The projects were partially completed in 1951. Works along the Kaw River at Kansas City afforded protection for several days but were finally overtopped. Losses prevented by these works during the floods of 1943, 1944, 1945, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1958, 1960, 1964, 1965, 1967, and 1969 are estimated to be $1,075,965,000 or about twenty-three times the cost of the protection works.[112]

The Flood Control Act of 1962 provided additional protection to the Argentine and the Kansas City area. Existing levees and flood walls were raised. The 1972 estimate of the cost of modifying the protective works was approximately $44,000,000. Federal aid included $37,800,000 of this total.[113]

---

[112] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

[113] Ibid., p. 28.

Thus, today Argentians can feel somewhat secure. The chances for a flood rivaling that of 1951 are not impossible but highly unlikely. Spring floods, however, continue to plague the lowlands of Kansas City. A heavy cloudburst or several days of steady rains will continue to cause flash floods with localized damages.

As late as October, 1973, flooding occurred in the Argentine vicinity. Heavy rains fell in the first half of that month. October 11 had the heaviest rainfall for an October day since the first records were taken in 1898.[114] Streams and creeks began to rise. The Army Corps of Engineers said that the Kaw River crested at 28.5 feet. This was the highest level that the river had reached at Kansas City since the 36.2 mark of 1952.[115] The A-1 Mobile Home Village in Turner, just two miles west of Argentine was flooded. Damages were light, although 1,000 residents were evacuated.[116] Although storm sewers backed up, no flooding occurred in Argentine.

Big floods hopefully are a thing of the past. Few local residents can recall the floods of 1903, 1904 or 1908. Even scars of the 1951 flood have been erased. Most flooded businesses, though suffering heavy losses, returned to the community. Many inhabitants of flooded areas, however, did not return. For this reason, the flood of 1951 had a profound effect on Argentine. Only the urban renewal projects of the 1960's can be said to have changed the community more.

---

[114] Kansas City Kansan, October 11, 1973, p. 1.

[115] Ibid., October 16, 1973, p. 2.

[116] Ibid., October 16, p. 1.

The Winn-Rau Housing Project was to be the new home of many flood sufferers. This development was begun in 1952 and consisted of several hundred low cost dwellings for flood victims. The location was a largely uninhabited, hilly area a few miles southwest of Argentine. Many residents of Argentine and other areas of Kansas City were to move to this new community. Soon this area was one of the most populated parts of Wyandotte County.

Over twenty years has passed since the great flood. Most present day residents of Argentine were not yet born. But those who did experience that flood will never forget. For on a rainy day in July, the Argentine Community was hit by what was the greatest flood in our nation's history. That "Black Friday," July 13, 1951, will always go down as the darkest day in the history of the Argentine community.

CHAPTER VII

HISTORY OF THE SCHOOLS

In the fall of 1973, an important educational institution in the community closed its doors after almost ninety years of service. This was Argentine High School. The new J. C. Harmon High School was completed and began operations. The new high school is a combination of Argentine and Rosedale High Schools. The old high school buildings became middle schools for grades six through nine. Many wonderful memories were connected with the old high school. Generations of Argentians received educational instruction. The new J. C. Harmon High School will continue to carry on this rich tradition.

This heritage had its beginnings in 1884. A two year high school course was begun in what was then the Lowell Grade School located on Elmwood near the southeast corner of 2nd Street. The first graduates from the program were Ella Erwin and Alta Turpie, who graduated in 1886. Later, Miss Turpie, whose married name was Greer, taught at Emerson Grade School in Argentine.[1]

---

[1]Hattie E. Poppino, "History of the Argentine Community and Argentine High School," (unpublished essay of eleven pages found in the Kansas Room Collection of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library, 1965), p. 5.

In those days, two years of high school education was sufficient preparation for becoming a teacher.

By the fall of 1889, the high school had been moved to two rooms upstairs in the Bruce Grade School. This school was located on Strong Avenue near the corner of 4th Street and was the elementary school for the town's colored children.

The high school term was eight months. There were only two teachers. One of these was Helen Keinknecht, who was also the principal. The other was Frank Agrelius who later taught for many years at Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia.[2]

Within a few years, the two-year program was extended to four years. On June 5, 1891, at the Noakes Opera House in Argentine, the first ceremonies were held for a four-year graduate. The first graduate was Bertha May Bell.[3]

The school's enrollment grew with the town. By 1901, eighty-eight students attended the high school. The enrollment had doubled in the last three years. The graduating class that year consisted of two boys and four girls.[4]

Beginning in 1902, the school system suffered a brief setback. The silver smelter's fortunes had declined and shortly it went out of business. The town's population declined. Some students left school for financial reasons, others moved away. In 1902, the enrollment had decreased to seventy-three pupils. There was

---

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

a serious drop-out problem. In the academic year of 1902-03, twelve students quit school.[5]

The 1903 and 1904 floods also resulted in a steep decline in enrollment. Many families were flooded out and eventually left the community. For these reasons, the enrollment in the early 1900's fluctuated between about 70 and 118.[6]

The two floods heavily damaged the Emerson Grade School in which the high school classes were held. Consequently, the high school was forced to seek new quarters. Temporary housing was found in an old brick building at the corner of 24th Street and Silver Avenue. Classes were held at other times on the second floor of the City Hall Building above the jail and workhouse.

The people of Argentine decided to build a permanent school house. A location was found at 22nd Street and Elmwood. Elmwood as such no longer exists as an actual street. Thus, a more precise location for the school is 22nd Street and Ruby Avenue. When the school was constructed, seven homes and the Ruby Avenue Congregational Church were located in the area between Elmwood and Ruby. Later, over the years as the school expanded, these buildings were removed.

The original high school building consisted of six classrooms and a small auditorium. There were 100 students and six teachers. Eleven students graduated in 1908 and in that year an

---

[5]Ibid., p. 6.

[6]Argentine High School, Argentine Mustang Yearbook, volume 20 (1973), p. 17.

athletic program was introduced.[7] A teacher doubled as the athletic coach.

Minnie J. Oliverson was the first principal of the newly constructed school. She started as principal in 1905 and was to remain as principal until 1910. Before coming to Argentine, she taught at the Kansas City High School which was later renamed Wyandotte High School.

At that time, the school system of the town was run by the Argentine Board of Education. School rules and curriculum were quite different than they are today. The common course of study was eight years in duration. Regular promotions were made at the middle and at the end of the year under the direction of the superintendent. The daily work of the pupil largely furnished the basis for his promotion to a higher level. If a pupil was able and willing to do the work of the class ahead of him, he was promoted. Special promotions could also be made at any time if the pupil had proven himself ready for advancement.

Three divisions or levels existed in the school system. The primary level was made up of grades one through four. The grammar school consisted of the fifth through eighth grades. The highest level was the four years of high school.[8]

Discipline was rigidly enforced in those days. Straps and whips were the most common forms of punishment. Often a naughty

---

[7]Poppino, "History of the Argentine Community and Argentine High School," p. 7.

[8]Marye Ruth Webster, "History of Emerson School," (unpublished report found in the Emerson Grade School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools), p. 9.

student would be ordered to go outside and cut a branch from a tree for use as a whip.[9]

In 1910, Argentine as a town ceased to exist as it became a part of Kansas City, Kansas. The Board of Education was dissolved, and by 1913 the community's schools were a part of the Kansas City, Kansas, Public School District 500. M. E. Pearson was the Superintendent of the Kansas City schools.

Also in 1910, Frank D. Tracy became the Principal of Argentine High School. Tracy was born on February 10, 1869 in Montgomery County, Kansas. He graduated from the Kansas State Normal School of Emporia. Before coming to Argentine, he was the supervisor of several grade schools in Kansas City, Kansas. He left Argentine in 1915 and became an instructor of mathematics at Central High School in Kansas City, Missouri.[10]

Clarence Thornton Rice became the new principal and was to stay until 1919. Earlier he had been the superintendent or principal of several schools in Bonner Springs, Kansas, and later a math teacher at Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Kansas. After leaving Argentine, Rice again returned to Wyandotte where he became the principal. He is also well known as the founder of the Anchor Savings and Loan Association of Kansas City, Kansas.[11]

---

[9]Ibid., p. 9.

[10]Argentine High School Junior Class of 1973, "Argentine Hi-Lites," (a short history of the high school compiled by students and published by the high school's journalism class, 1973), p. 5.

[11]Ibid.

These two men played a prominent part in the rapid growth of the high school during the years before the First World War. In 1913, the school library already had a reported 680 books. That year also saw Argentine High School become accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. In 1918 the school embarked on the project of cataloging the books in the library.[12] Few schools in the state could boast of such an accomplishment. Also by 1918, typewriting and other business courses, domestic science, and manual training studies were added.

In 1919 an athletic coach was added. A winning tradition was established that first season. Seven out of ten football games and twenty-five out of twenty-eight basketball games were won. The basketball team went into the finals of the state tournament and won second place.[13]

In another respect, 1919 was a memorable year for the high school and the community. Frank L. Schlagle became the principal and would remain principal until 1924. Under Schlagle's leadership in 1920 a Parent-Teacher Association was organized. Mrs. Mary Helmreich was elected the first president on October 4, 1920. This was the first P.T.A. organized in Kansas City, Kansas, and may have been the first one organized in the state.[14] National and state

---

[12]Wesley Channell, Beckie Fabian, and Mary Jo Williamson, "And Then Came Argentine," (unpublished paper done by Argentine High School students in 1961, provided through the courtesy of Robert Allison, Counselor of Harmon High School), p. 35.

[13]"A Quarter Century of Progress," (unpublished report found in the Argentine file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Schools, 1933), p. 2.

[14]"Argentine Hi-Lites," p. 6.

honors were won in journalism and music. The school placed third in a scholarship contest at Emporia in 1923.[15]

A rich typing tradition was also begun at the school. Under the leadership of G. C. Brink, a typing teacher at Argentine for forty-five years,[16] the school was credited with having the best department of business of any school in the state. The business department had such a local reputation that business establishments in the Kansas City area were calling the school in search of prospective employees. The author's mother secured a position with the Pierson and Williams Insurance Company in Kansas City, Missouri, in this manner.

Fourteen straight state typewriting championships were won. The Kansas trophy was won for sixteen years and district championships were won for an equally long period of time.[17] In 1921, Catherine Murray, a student at Argentine, set s new world record in typing for high school students with the almost unheard of time of seventy-two words per minute.[18]

The Journalism Department of Argentine High School under the direction of Miss Frances Taylor also won many honors. Miss Taylor devoted her entire teaching career to the high school. She

---

[15]Poppino, "History of the Argentine Community and Argentine High School," p. 7.

[16]"A History of Argentine High School," (unpublished paper found in the Argentine file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Schools, 1940), p. 3.

[17]"Argentine Hi-Lites," p. 42.

[18]Poppino, "History of the Argentine Community and Argentine High School," p. 7.

started there in September of 1903 and remained there until 1952. She was considered an outstanding Journalism teacher. The school's yearbook won national honors for many years. The school newspaper also won many awards.

Many school activities were added during the 1920's and 1930's. The A Club" was organized in 1918. This was an organization of students who had won one or more varsity letters in a sport. In 1927, the Mustang was adopted as the school symbol, and in 1932 the Mustang Club was formed as a type of pep club.[19] The "Buzzer" was the school paper until 1922. Thereafter, the Argentine Journalism Staff put out a school newspaper from 1923-1972.[20] A school yearbook was also added in the late teens.

The school's enrollment climbed rapidly. By the fall of 1921, there were 10 teachers and 285 students, of which 53 were seniors, 54 juniors, 64 sophomores, 97 freshmen and 1 post-graduate student.[21]

The high school was becoming crowded. The following paragraph appeared in the school newspaper, October 5, 1922,

> Because of crowded conditions the seating in the auditorium has been changed. What was formerly the senior section was not large enough to accommodate the fifty-three seniors enrolled so the other classes were crowded back to make room for them.[22]

---

[19]"Argentine Hi-Lites," p. 43.

[20]Ibid., p. 21.

[21]"A History of Argentine High School," (Board of Education Archives), p. 2.

[22]Ibid.

By 1923 an addition had been made to the high school building. Eleven classrooms and the much-needed auditorium were added. A couple of years earlier, a gymnasium and a small cafeteria were built. The school was also changed from a senior high into a junior and senior high school. Enrollment that year was 557. This total was comprised of 47 seniors, 78 juniors, 84 sophomores, 103 freshmen, 117 in the eighth grade and 123 in the seventh.[23]

In 1924, Schlagle left the high school to become the Assistant Superintendent of the Kansas City, Kansas, Public Schools. Then, in 1932, the superintendent, M. E. Pearson, retired. Schlagle was named to succeed him, and was to remain as the superintendent for thirty years until his retirement on August 31, 1962.

J. C. Harmon succeeded Schlagle as Argentine High's principal and was to remain as the principal until his retirement. Harmon was born on December 9, 1886, on a farm in Montgomery County, Missouri. He received a B.A. degree from Central Wesleyan College and his M.A. degree in School Administration from the University of Missouri at Columbia.[24]

Harmon was in the field of education for forty-four years, yet was never a classroom teacher. His career began as a principal in Martinsberg, Missouri, in 1912. During the school year of 1915-1916 he attended the University of Missouri. There he met another student, Miss Mary Yancy, who shortly thereafter was to become his wife. From 1916 until 1918 he was the principal of the High School

---

[23]Ibid.

[24]J. C. Harmon, personal interview held in his home at 1424 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas, January 7, 1974.

in Moberly, Missouri. In 1918, he moved to Nevada, Missouri, where he became the superintendent of schools until 1920. Then, he became the President of Cottey Junior College, a girls' school, until 1924 when he came to Argentine.[25]

Harmon's tenure was to be a memorable era for the school and the community as well. Argentine High School continued its growth. Junior high school graduation exercises were begun in 1927 and would continue until 1957. By 1930, the school's library had increased to 2,211 books.[26]

By 1930, the enrollment had increased to 809 students.[27] A new building was added south of the old stone structure and connected to it by corridors. The new building contained a new gymnasium and eight classrooms.[28] It was also about this time that students in the western end of Armourdale, just across the Kaw River, were given the option of attending either Wyandotte or Argentine High School. Many new students began attending Argentine High School and by 1935 the enrollment had risen to 1,130 students. Twenty-nine teachers comprised the faculty.[29]

The 1930's brought a new emphasis on vocational training and a great enlargement of the curriculum. When the high school first began operations, the courses were naturally limited. Algebra,

---

[25]Ibid.

[26]Channell, Fabian and Williamson, "And Then Came Argentine," p. 36.

[27]"Argentine Hi-Lites," p. 43.

[28]Argentine Mustang Yearbook, volume 20 (1973), p. 17.

[29]"Argentine Hi-Lites," p. 43.

Plane and Solid Geometry, four years of Latin, two years of German, English, Botany, Physics and Chemistry were offered. On alternate years a student might be able to take American History, Ancient History and General Science.[30] A total of fifty-seven courses were offered by 1935. Vocation courses had been introduced. These included Mechanical Drawing, Freehand Drawing, Woodworking, Foods, Metal Shop, and Shop Mathematics.[31]

Vocational training was a relatively new concept in high school education in the 1930's. The only high school specializing in this curriculum in the Kansas City area was Manual High School in Kansas City, Missouri. Argentine High School was to become a pioneer among Kansas schools in this endeavor.

J. C. Harmon was to become the driving force behind this new concept. The author had the privilege of interviewing Mr. Harmon and these are his recollections about the foundings of the vocational program:

> The initiation of the Vocational Program was probably the most important change in all my years at the High School. The High School, for many years, was primarily for the bright book-minded boys and girls. We had to realize that not everyone has the ability, the ambition, or the opportunity to go on to college. All we offered at the time, however, was a strictly academic program.
>
> However, only a few of our students continued their education beyond the high school level. Furthermore, only a very small percentage of their parents had even completed high school. Almost all went out and acquired a trade of some sort. It has always been my philosophy that the schools should serve the needs of everyone. Therefore, it was paramount that we added

---

[30]Clyde E. Swender, "Building a Vocational Education Program for Argentine High School," (unpublished Master of Science Thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1936), p. 2.

[31]Ibid., pp. 21-23.

new courses to serve our students' interests and needs. The Vocational Program was to aide in this respect.

I remember that there had been a fire in the gymnasium of the Kansas City, Kansas, High School, at 9th and Minnesota Avenue. What shop equipment they had was moved to the new gymnasium that was built. They said that they could not find enough students interested in a shop program. I asked the Superintendent of Schools if I could have their equipment and he gave me the okay.

Then I went down to O. C. Smith, the President of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, and asked him if he would help support a vocational program at the high school. Next I got on the phone and talked to the members of the Board of Education. I said, "It's budget time and don't forget Argentine High School."

Shortly, we received the funds necessary to initiate our program. The school got a shop unit complete with a machine shop and much auto mechanical, welding, and electrical equipment. For girls there was typing, sewing, shorthand, business machines, and foods processing classes.

A work-study program was started in which a student worked a few hours a day at a local business establishment and received on the job training. We were the first school in the state to have such a program. Ruth Schlatter was the first student to take advantage of this program. She began working part time for the Industrial State Bank and has been there ever since. Other students began working for Thompson's Cafeteria on Minnesota Avenue on the Kansas side and at the Myron Green Cafeteria in downtown Kansas City, Missouri.[32]

The vocational program was a tremendous success. Many Argentine students received the vocational skills necessary to enable them to secure employment with businesses in the community. The whole community thus benefited from the vocational program initiated at the high school. This program, which later became known as the Smith-Hughes program, became a model for other school systems to adopt.

Funds continued to be appropriated for this program. In 1940 a shop addition was built onto the school. The Federal Works Agency of the Public Works Administration aided by giving a grant

---

[32]Harmon, personal interview.

of $128,317.[33] The total cost of construction was $500,000. Four classrooms, one science laboratory, one instrumental music room, one chorus room and seven shop rooms were built. The new building capacity was now enough for 1,500 students in forty-two classrooms.[34]

In 1938 construction was begun on an athletic field at 22nd and Lawrence. This location, about one mile south of the high school, is on a high, winding hill overlooking the valley.

The concrete stadium was completed in 1939 at a cost of $10,000. The field was sodded at an additional cost of $1,000. The seating capacity of the stadium is 2,700 people.[35] Dressing rooms are at each end of the stadium. The stadium quickly played an important part in the school's activities. The field has since been used for football games and track meets. For many years the senior high graduation exercises also took place in the stadium.

Another construction project was in the immediate future of the high school. Part of this was credited to the flood of 1951. Several schools in the Argentine and Armourdale sections of Kansas City, Kansas, were heavily damaged. A $6,500,000 bond issue was passed in Kansas City, Kansas to renovate the school system. Approximately $1,500,000 of this was given to the Argentine school

---

[33]"Argentine High School Dedication Program for the Shop Addition, January 23, 1940," (unpublished report found in the Argentine High School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools), p. 1.

[34]Channell, Fabian, and Williamson, "And Then Came Argentine," p. 36.

[35]Argentine High School Yearbook, 1944 (Argentine Yearbook Staff, 1944), p. 53.

district.[36] Most of this money was to be used to enlarge the high school. The school was becoming overcrowded. Much of the school, dating back to 1908, was old and in need of remodeling.

In the summer of 1954, the original building of 1908 and other portions were razed. Also, the Ruby Avenue Congregational Church and several residences facing Ruby Avenue and 21st Street were torn down leaving the school that entire square block. While construction was being completed, students attended half-day sessions during the 1954-1955 school year.

In another respect, the summer of 1954 marked the passing of an era and a beginning of a new one. J. C. Harmon, after forty years as principal, retired. Wesley R. Channell became the new principal. Previously, he had been in Wyandotte High School's guidance program.

By mid-1956, the new building was completed with an auditorium, office, library, cafeteria, health clinic, and sixteen new classrooms. The new main office had two guidance rooms, a waiting room, an office for the activity director, and a private office for the principal. The new auditorium seated 1,200 students compared with a seating capacity of only 950 in the old one. The new cafeteria could serve 420 people instead of the former 100. The kitchen was praised as one of the most modern in the state.[37]

The enrollment of Argentine High School did not increase to any great extent for the next twenty years. By September of

---

[36]Channell, Fabian, and Williamson, "And Then Came Argentine," p. 37.

[37]Ibid., p. 38.

1972, the average enrollment was 1,332 students. The faculty was comprised of sixty-one classroom teachers, two vice-principals, three guidance counselors, a nurse, a librarian, and four office employees.[38]

W. R. Channell put in a distinguished nineteen years as principal. Gradually, however, the new addition to the school aged. Once again the building was becoming inadequate for the community's growing needs. The school's parking lot was too small. Classrooms were becoming overcrowded. The athletic field was too far away for convenience. These are some of the reasons that the Board of Education began contemplating the building of a new high school.

For several years plans had been formulated for the building and equiping of this and other schools in Kansas City, Kansas. In January 1970, the voters of Kansas City, Kansas, approved a $24,500,000 bond issue. Over $5,762,000 of this money was to go for the construction of the new high school in Argentine.[39]

A location for this school was found in the vicinity of 2400 Steele Road. The new high school was to be called the J. C. Harmon High School in honor of the man who had served as principal of Argentine High School for thirty years.

The J. C. Harmon High School was part of the largest school construction program ever undertaken throughout Kansas and the Kansas City metropolitan area. It opened in the fall of 1973. The

---

[38]"Argentine Hi-Lites," p. 43.

[39]Kansas City Kansas Board of Education, "Facts About New Schools in Kansas City, Kansas" (pamphlet circulated by the Public Information Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education, 1972), p. 1.

area of the building is 196,834 square feet covering 33.36 acres. The architects were Marshall and Brown of Kansas City, Kansas. They won an award for their design. Lehr Construction Company of St. Joseph, Missouri, were the general contractors.[40]

The new high school has many outstanding building features. A large two-story-high space exists in the center of the building around which the other parts of the school are grouped. This area serves as a social gathering place, dining hall, auditorium, gymnasium, and lobby. Flexibility is another characteristic. Almost all areas of the building are built as large open spaces which are subdivided by semi-permanent partitions. These partitions can be rearranged to meet new requirements. The building is also departmentalized with classes and laboratories grouped according to subject matter. A small "mini" auditorium is ideally suited for instructing large groups or can be used as seating capacity for the staging of school performances. A large modern school library, with conveniently located "mini" libraries, also serves the new school. The modern kitchen is designed to serve the entire student body and provides service daily for 2,500 elementary school children in the Kansas City, Kansas, area. Food is prepared in the high school kitchen and is catered to all the elementary schools.[41]

The old Argentine football stadium at 22nd and Lawrence, which is about forty years old, has been remodeled. The track was

---

[40]Kansas City Kansas Board of Education, "J. C. Harmon High School" (pamphlet circulated by the Public Information Office of the Kansas City Kansas Board of Education, 1973), p. 7.

[41]Ibid., p. 5.

widened, and improvements were made on the dressing rooms and the lighting of the field.[42] The stadium was also renamed the Art Lawrence Stadium in honor of Mr. Arthur Lawrence, a distinguished coach and teacher at Rosedale High School for thirty-six years.

The new J. C. Harmon High School, serving the Argentine, Rosedale, and Armourdale communities, is designed for 1,500 students from grades ten through twelve. The old Argentine and Rosedale High Schools have been turned into middle schools for grades six through nine. William Todd, the former principal of Rosedale High School, has taken a similar position at the new J. C. Harmon High School. W. L. Channell, after nineteen years of service, left the Argentine school district to become the principal of the F. L. Schlagle High School at 2214 North 59th Street in Kansas City, Kansas. The Schlagle High School also opened in the fall of 1973.

Lawson Roberts, formerly the principal of West Junior High School in Kansas City, Kansas, is the principal of the Argentine Middle School. Lawrence Chaney is the vice-principal. The average enrollment of the four grades is around 900 students. There are thirty-eight classrooms in operation with faculty of thirty-six teachers.[43]

Many fine elementary schools have served the Argentine community. Presently there are three of them: Emerson, Stanley, and the new Silver City Elementary School. Three former grade

---

[42]Kansas City Kansas Board of Education, "Facts About New Schools in Kansas City, Kansas," p. 7.

[43]Lawrence Chaney, personal interview held at the Argentine Middle School, 22nd and Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas, on March 12, 1974.

schools are Lincoln, Franklin and Lowell. The Lowell Grade School was the first school built in Argentine. It was only in operation for a few years at 22nd and Ruby. When the high school was started at that location, the grade school was used as part of that facility.

Another early school was the Bruce Grade School located in the Mulvane Addition to Argentine, which is now the corner of 24th and Strong. Constructed in 1888, it was later named the Lincoln Grade School. The Argentine School District was segregated until about the mid-1950's. Negro youths of high school age attended Sumner High School in Kansas City, Kansas. For almost eighty years, those of elementary age attended the Lincoln Grade School. The original building consisted of four rooms and eight grades. John Smith was the first principal. Other early principals were W. F. Bufkins, Tom Collins, P. K. Brown, L. V. Grant, Woodie Jacobs, Rhoda Johnson, and Dale Boggess. The members of the first faculty were Lena Brown, Ethel Stafford and W. D. Holmes. The first P.T.A. was organized in 1916 with Mrs. Martha McReynolds as president. In 1965 the school was retired from active service. At that time, it was the oldest building in the Kansas City, Kansas School system. The building was razed in 1969.[44]

The Franklin Grade School is also no longer in use. It was phased out in 1972. Former students now attend the Noble Prentis and the Emerson Grade Schools. Franklin has an interesting history. In the 1800's and 1890's, children of the east end of Argentine

---

[44]"Lincoln School History," (unpublished report of 1940 found in the Lincoln Grade School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools), pp. 1-2.

attended Lowell and it quickly became overcrowded. Land was purchased in 1898 from the Kansas Town Company for the building of a new school.

The school's name has an unusual origin. The Argentine Board of Education proposed four names for the new school. All were the names of distinguished Americans: Franklin, Greely, Irving, and Whittier. It was decided that the townspeople would vote on the new name. A five cents poll tax was paid. This money was used to purchase a flag for the school.[45]

Franklin was the chosen name of the school. It opened in 1898 and consisted of four rooms and four teachers. Miss Alice Beckwith was the first principal. The first P.T.A. was organized in 1912 with Mrs. George Drake as President. In 1914 ground was donated and a six-room addition was constructed.[46]

The Stanley Grade School is one of the schools currently in use. This school was built in 1889 on land purchased from the legal guardian of George Washington, who was the son of a Shawnee Indian woman named Mary Whitefeather. The original school was called the Gibbs and Payne School and consisted of four rooms and three teachers.[47] This structure burned on September 5, 1912. Two portable buildings were temporarily used, as was a small one-room

---

[45]"Franklin Grade School History," (unpublished report of 1940 found in the Franklin Grade School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools), p. 3.

[46]Ibid., p. 1.

[47]"Stanley Grade School History," (unpublished report of 1940 found in the Stanley Grade School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools), p. 3.

school at the corner of 37th and Powell. Some students were sent to Franklin and Emerson.[48]

The new building was completed in 1915 at a cost of $40,000. An addition was made to the school in 1923.[49] Presently, the Stanley School, located at 36th and Metropolitan, has twenty-two teachers with an enrollment of around 400 students in eighteen classrooms. It is presently classified as a Title I school and has an Extensive Learning Program with two instructors in some classrooms.[50]

Emerson Grade School was built in 1887. Originally it had six rooms with sixty-four seats in each room.[51] The author believes the school was named in honor of Ralph Waldo Emerson. In 1903, the school was used to house flood refugees. Water, in fact, reached the first floor of the building. In 1908, an addition of six rooms was built. In 1910, the Emerson Park and playground was built around the school. This area had been a swamp before and people were permitted to fish in it. A board sidewalk was built over the swamp to Strong Avenue. For many years, a saloon was located near the school at 29th and Strong, but it was torn down when Emerson Park was started.[52] A large addition to the Emerson School was

---

[48]Ibid., p. 1.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Frank Scott, personal interview held with the principal of Stanley Grade School, 36th and Metropolitan, Kansas City, Kansas, on March 12, 1974.

[51]Marye Ruth Webster, "History of Emerson School," p. 1.

[52]Ibid.

made in 1961 at a cost of $430,000. Eleven classrooms, a stage, an office, and a library were built.[53]

The Noble Prentis Elementary School has also served the Argentine community. Though it is actually in the Rosedale School District, students from Argentine, at various times, have attended this school.

Ground was donated for this school by a Mr. Roe in 1910. Construction was begun in 1911, on a two-room school. Two rooms in 1914 were added above the original school. The first principal was Abigail Newton and the school was originally called the "Yellow Hammer School." The first teachers were Serlena Wilhite and Abigail Newton. The first P.T.A. was organized December 11, 1914.[54] Several additions to the school have been made. The latest addition was within the last few years.

The newest elementary school in the Argentine community is the Silver City Elementary School, located at 2515 Lawrence Avenue. It opened in 1971 and is the first "open spaced" school to be built in Kansas City, Kansas. This means it has large open spaces with semi-permanent partitions. Thus, the school can be adapted to changing enrollment and educational requirements. Also, there is a large library, sound-proof rooms, and work rooms for teachers.[55]

---

[53]Emerson Grade School File, newspaper clipping from the April 30, 1961 issue of the Kansas City Kansan.

[54]"Noble Prentis Grade School History," (unpublished report of 1940 found in the Noble Prentis Grade School file of the Board of Education Building Office of the Kansas City, Kansas, Public Schools), p. 1.

[55]Kansas City Kansas Board of Education, "Silver City Elementary School," (pamphlet circulated by the Public Information Office of the Kansas City, Kansas, Board of Education, 1973), pp. 1-5.

The school has a capacity for 250 students. It has 25,172 square feet and cost $553,445 to build. Students from former portions of the Emerson, Noble Prentis and Franklin areas attend this school.[56]

---

[56]Kansas City Kansas Board of Education, "Facts About New Schools in Kansas City, Kansas," p. 4.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. ARGENTINE

If anyone is befitting the title of "Mr. Argentine," J. C. Harmon is that man. Mr. Harmon has lived in the Argentine community for fifty years. He has devoted his entire life to the field of education. At eighty-seven years old, he is remarkably alert. His mind is almost unbelievably sharp in its capacity to remember facts and dates.

J. C. Harmon was born in Montgomery County, Missouri, on December 9, 1886. He was one of seven brothers and sisters. His christened name is James Chester. However, few Argentians know his full name. His late wife preferred to call him J. C., and he has gone by this shortened version ever since.[1]

Harmon's parents were farmers. It was expected that he, like his other brothers, would carry on the family tradition. However, at the age of thirteen, he suffered a severe appendicitis attack and almost died. His parents felt that he would never be

---

[1]J. C. Harmon, personal interview held in his home at 1424 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas, January 7, 1974. This author had the opportunity of two interviews with Mr. Harmon at his home. The first interview, held on January 7, 1974, lasted one hour-and-one-half. The second interview of only a few minutes took place on January 11, 1974. From these conversations, the author was able to gain a deep insight into this great man. All of the following material up to that credited in footnote two comes from the interviews with Mr. Harmon.

strong enough during the rest of his life to be a farmer. Therefore, they decided he should get an education in order that he might pursue a more suitable occupation. So, they moved to Montgomery City, the county seat, because it had a four-year high school. Harmon's brothers and sisters did not continue their schooling beyond the elementary level.

Mr. Harmon graduated from Central Wesleyan College of Missouri with a B.A. degree in 1910. His majors were mathematics and English. His career began with a principalship at Martinsburg, Missouri where he served for one year. Then he became the superintendent of a high school and two elementary schools in Girard, Illinois, for three years.

During the school term of 1915-1916, he reentered college at the University of Missouri and successfully completed his Bachelor of Science Degree in Education in 1916. Also, while there, he met Miss Mary Yancy who became his wife. Harmon continued attending the university during summer sessions and obtained a Master of Arts Degree in School Administration in 1925.

He resumed his career in Moberly, Missouri, in the fall of 1916 where he was the principal of the high school until 1918. Then he moved to Nevada, Missouri, where he was Superintendent of Schools until 1920. Then he was the President of the Cottey Junior College of Nevada, Missouri. This was a girls' school and he was to remain there until 1924.

While visiting in Kansas City, Missouri, he learned of two principal openings on the Kansas side.

I got on the street car and came over and talked with Mr. Pearson who was the Superintendent of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools. Mr. Pearson informed me of two openings: one at Wyandotte High School and the other at Argentine High School. Mr. Pearson, however, did not seem too encouraging about my prospects. I went back to Nevada, Missouri and forgot about the matter. A week later I got a telephone call from Mr. Pearson and he told me that the Argentine job was mine.

So in 1924 I replaced Mr. Schlagle as the Principal of Argentine High School. I began to look around for living quarters for my family. Dr. Haas, a physician of the community, was at the time building some new homes in the 3200 block of Barber in Argentine. I had been told that no principal of the high school had ever lived in the community. However, I felt that this was essential in order to develop a proper rapport between myself and the community. So I lived in one of Dr. Haas' homes for two years. Then on August 1, 1926, we moved to this house on Ruby.

This house was just across the street from Mr. Charles W. Green. Mr. Green was one of the most influencial spokesmen of our community. Mr. Green had been on the board of directors of several banks. He was also an official of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company. He was also the mayor of the town of Argentine and a past mayor of Kansas City, Kansas. I did not know him all that well, but I had the highest regard for him.

Harmon's home was only a few blocks from the high school. Until 1948, he walked to school every day. At six-feet-four inches and 210 pounds he was visible at a considerable distance. Mr. Harmon feels that his stature, though a handicap in his youth, was a great asset to his profession. He recalled an incident where an irate father of a spanked child came up to the high school to even the score. He cooled down considerably, however, when he saw the towering principal.

Harmon's fabulous memory has been his trademark. He can recall the names of students that he has not seen for many years. Names have always been a hobby with him. He explained his penchant for names this way:

I resolved, that if I remained in the teaching profession, to learn my student's first names. I also tried to make a habit

of visiting as many of the students' homes as possible. My philosophy is this: A teacher should show a personal interest in her students. She should stand in the doorway and greet each incoming class by calling them by their first names as they entered. If she did this, she was not going to have any severe discipline problems. It is just a matter of the teacher showing her students that she cared.

Mr. Harmon cites a few accomplishments of the high school during his tenure there:

We were the first school in the metropolitan area to have a student council. Raymond Thomas was our first president. We were also the first school to sponsor mixers. The school board was at first somewhat opposed to this idea. Therefore, we had to hold the dances down at the old Parish House. When they proved to be a success, we were allowed to use the high school gym.

Argentine was the first school in Kansas City, Kansas, to have a vocational program. This I feel was my greatest accomplishment as principal. We were also the first school to have a part-time work-study program. This proved to be a great program for the school.

Mr. Harmon had these recollections about the years at Argentine High School:

Those years were the happiest of my life. But I realize that times have changed. Education requirements are different. Disciplinary problems seem greater now than in the past.

Unhappily it seems that teachers nowadays tend to view their work as being just another eight-to-four job. Much of the old dedication seems to have been lost. In the old days, teachers, though always underpaid, were among the most respected people of the community. Many teachers were women who never married. Teachers like Frances Taylor, Bertha Plumb, Bess Wilhite, Stella Cole, Edith Delaney and Gladys Congdon devoted their entire life to their profession. This is only to mention a few; there were many others.

Today, however, there is too much turnover and the teachers are much younger. Many young women teach only a few years, then get married and leave the profession. It would have disturbed me greatly if I would have faced such a great turnover when I was principal.

Many complain about the oversupply of teachers and the diminishing job market. But I would say this, a good teacher will never have any great difficulty finding a job. I would never discourage any young person from entering the profession. These young teachers just coming out of college start out at more money a year than I made as principal. Presently, teaching is a good paying occupation for a young woman.

> Besides that and more importantly, there is the feeling of accomplishment. One of the happiest days of my life was when I was a guest of honor at the dedication of the new high school. Former students of mine, some of them going back almost fifty years, turned out for the dedication.
>
> Thus, a teacher can really love his work. He can feel that it is a part of him and look forward to going to work with the feeling that he is contributing.

Harmon's service to the community has not ended with his retirement as principal. He has always been a healthy active man. In his thirty years as principal, he was absent only sixteen days and only one day was on account of sickness. Though eighty-seven, he has the vigor of a man thirty years his junior.

After his retirement from the high school, he sold encyclopedias for a while. In November of 1954 he started working for the Missouri State Employment Office. Then in the spring of 1955 he came over on the Kansas side and worked for the Kansas State Employment Office for the next six and a half years. In the fall of 1961, he began working for the Mission Chamber of Commerce. He remained with them for about two-and-one-half years. Thus, he worked steadily until about the age of seventy-five.

Harmon has also been a prominent figure in civic affairs. He is a past President of the Argentine Activities Association. He was also its secretary-treaaurer for two years. He was a past marshall of the annual Argentine Fall Festival Parade. He picked the date of the parade for twenty years and it never rained on those days. Then, the first year that he did not pick the date, it rsined! Mr. Harmon is also a member of the Metropolitan Avenue Methodist Church, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and Delta Kappa, an education fraternity.

The author interviewed several people to learn their impressions of Mr. Harmon. The author's father, Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr., was a student at Argentine and had this to say:

> You had to be a very bad boy before Mr. Harmon would ever kick you out of school. He had the students with discipline problems pick up trash and mow the school lawns. He was a father figure to many boys during the depression. I will always cherish the fondest memories of Mr. Harmon and what he has stood for.[2]

The author's mother, Mrs. Mabel Marie (Smith) Shutt, said:

> Mr. Harmon always knew every student of the high school by his or her name. He was a stern disciplinarian yet was not all that strict. He always seemed to be joking and kidding. I can never recall ever seeing him get angry at a student. Yet, if you stepped out of line, you knew that he meant business. I always had the deepest respect for both Mr. Harmon and the late J. C. Shankland who for several years was the vice-principal.[3]

Harmon told the author that the three most inspirational men he has ever known were Gene Spaulding, Harry Crew, and Pete Larson. These men all arose above physical handicaps. The author had an interview with one of these, Mr. Joseph L. (Pete) Larson, a graduate of Argentine High School. He also had nothing but praise for Mr. Harmon:

> One of the proudest moments I ever spent was when I escorted Mr. Harmon to the last Turner-Argentine basketball game. To me he is probably the greatest man that ever lived in Argentine or anywhere for that matter. I have as much respect for that man as for any other person I have ever known. It has been a real privilege to call him a friend and serve with him in various community activities. Mr. Harmon is a man who cares

---

[2]Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr., personal interview held in his home at 2428 S. 47th Street, Kansas City, Kansas, November 28, 1973.

[3]Mabel Marie Shutt, personal interview held in her home at 2428 S. 47th Street, Kansas City, Kansas, December 10, 1973.

> for you as an individual. You realized that by the fact that he could call you by your first name.[4]

Former teachers who served under Mr. Harmon also have the highest regard for him. Mr. Clyde E. "Pop" Swender, had nothing but fond memories of Argentine High School. He was the head coach of track and an assistant coach of football and basketball. He left Argentine and moved to Blue Mound, Kansas, where he operated a dry goods and variety store for about ten years. Then he spent four years at Strong City in Chase County as an elementary principal, after which he was a school counselor at Humbolt, Kansas, and later for the Blue Mound, Mound City, and Prescott, Kansas communities. Then he retired. However, since last fall he has been working as a part-time counselor in Pleasanton, Kansas.

This is what "Pop" Swender had to say:

> I served the Argentine High School and community from 1930 through 1947. Those were perhaps the busiest and happiest of my life. When I came to Argentine I had a full set of teeth. I was a bachelor with a lot of drive and ambition. When I left Argentine, I had a full set of "stone choppers" and a receding hair line and an increase in circumference. I served the seventeen years with Mr. Harmon as the patron saint and father confessor. He was an excellent valued friend and Mrs. Swender and I cherish the kindest thoughts of Mr. Harmon and his family.[5]

Another teacher who served under Mr. Harmon also had the highest regard for him. Mr. Earl Moody was one of these the author interviewed.

Mr. Moody was a teacher at Argentine High School for twenty-five years. He was born in Sheridan, Kansas, in 1888 of farm folks.

---

[4]Joseph L. Larson, personal interview held in his home at 1208 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas, March 1, 1974.

[5]Clyde E. Swender, personal letter written by him from Blue Mound, Kansas.

His family moved to Eudora in Douglas County, Kansas. When he was sixteen, his family moved to Wisconsin where he attended high school and college. His college major was Industrial Arts.

After a six-month stint in the service in World War I, he started teaching. He returned to Kansas and taught in Salina for four years. He came to Argentine High School in 1928 and was to remain there until the mandatory retirement age. Then he taught for a few years at Oak Grove Grade School in the Turner Unified School District. Mr. Moody had this to say of the ex-principal:

> Mr. Harmon was one of the finest men I ever worked for. We got along just fine. I never had a thing against the man I could complain about whatsoever. I think he had the love and respect of all. He is just a prince of a man and a gentleman in every sense of the word at all times. I enjoyed my twenty-five years with him as much as I had at any place that I had ever taught.[6]

---

[6]Earl Moody, personal interview held in his home at 2900 Steele Road, Kansas City, Kansas, March 7, 1974.

CHAPTER IX

THE ARGENTINE COMMUNITY TODAY

Today, Argentine is a growing prosperous community. No traces remain of the devastating 1951 flood. The suburb is well represented by industries, retail and discount stores, schools, churches, and other community groups. Urban renewal has made a major impact, but has not drastically altered the landscape. Several old timers with whom the author talked said that Argentine had not changed much over the last forty years. Streets have been widened, there is a new shopping center, new retail stores have been established, and government housing projects have been completed. But basically Argentine, especially the east end, has not changed.

One enterprise of the community that is always progressing, always modernizing its facilities, is the Santa Fe Railroad. The railroad came to the bottomlands of Argentine and Turner in 1875. Today the Santa Fe Railroad's giant freight handling facility at Argentine is the hub of the 13,000 mile transcontinental freight service. Even as early as 1920, at least 6,000 freight cars and more than 500 passenger cars on 144 trains passed through Argentine each day. Approximately 3,100 employees received average monthly payroll of $240,000. The 6,500,000 bushel capacity grain elevator

in the Argentine yards was at that time the largest west of Chicago and the second largest in the country.[1]

The Pennsylvania Car Company of Sharon, Pennsylvania, maintained a plant here. Freight cars were built, rebuilt, and repaired. There was a construction capacity of ten to twelve new cars daily.[2]

Today, on the average, 6,200 cars are handled through the Argentine yards. The total working trackage at Argentine can now accommodate nearly 15,000 cars. At Argentine, the Santa Fe makes direct connections with twelve other railroads. These railroads branch out and connect almost every place in the country.[3]

In an average year, it has been estimated that enough oranges pass through Argentine by rail to provide each resident of the country with about six each. Enough potatoes pass through to provide 100 pounds for every citizen of the metropolitan Chicago area. Enough piggyback trailers and containers pass through the yards that, if placed bumper to bumper, they would extend over more than 1,200 miles of highway.[4]

The Santa Fe arrived in Argentine in 1875. In 1888 through service was initiated to Chicago over its own tracks. All switching

---

[1]"Argentine Has Second Largest U.S. Elevator," Kansas City Journal Post, February, 1926, pp. 34-40. (This is a reprint of the unsigned magazine article from this journal. The reprint can be found in the Argentine file of the Kansas Room Collection of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library at 6th and Minnesota, Kansas City, Kansas.)

[2]Ibid., p. 41.

[3]Santa Fe Railway, Argentine Yard (Kansas City, Kansas: Santa Fe Press, 1973), p. 2.

[4]Ibid.

was done in the flat yards until the Santa Fe opened its first gravity classification yard in 1949. This yard incorporated the latest technology. Fifty-six classification tracks and retarders were operated manually from three towers at the humpyards.

The need for greater speed and reliability coupled with the strategic importance of Argentine led to the decision in July, 1967 to construct a $2,000,000 eastbound freight classification yard.[5]

Major construction was completed by the fall of 1969. By the spring of 1970, the new yard was in full operation. The key to the new east bound yard is the terminal data control center. Data is fed into the computer control center yards which in turn feeds this data into the railway's computer center in Topeka, Kansas. From the time a train bound for the Argentine yard leaves its place of origin, constantly updated information on destination, customer, weight loads, and other facts are transmitted. The computer, at Argentine, on the basis of the data received, decides where the car is to go in the Argentine yard and on what train.[6]

Larry Cena, Vice-President of Operations at the Santa Fe Yards, had this to say about the confusion that existed under the old system:

> There is just a heck of a lot of confusion around here with so many cars going in and out and being exchanged with twelve other railways. This place is a big mixing vat and we don't want anything to stay here longer than absolutely necessary. With something like this (referring to the new system) you have a fast, constant flow with no manpower troubles.

---

[5]Ibid., p. 3.

[6]Kansas City Star, May 14, 1970, p. 27.

> Too often, a car has gotten lost somewhere in the yard. You'd spend hours walking around the thousands of miles of track looking for it.[7]

The entire Argentine yard, including the new east-bound yard, extends for over nine miles along the Kansas River. The yards vary in length from 180 feet to 6,440 feet.[8] Physically, the new facilities include a forty-eight-track classification yard holding 7,736 cars; a ten-track receiving yard holding 1,208 cars; a nine-track departure yard holding 804 cars; and an eleven-track transfer yard capable of holding 762 cars.[9]

The Argentine Yard is one of only three terminal points on the Santa Fe Railroad that is equipped for the major servicing of diesel locomotives. These repair yards were constructed in 1954. In 1960, improvements were made on these facilities. A further enlargement was made in 1967 and 1968. Additional expansion of the diesel maintenance facilities is planned to meet the growing needs of the railroad.[10]

In 1961, a modern terminal office building and freight office was constructed on the north side of the yards. This structure consolidated into one unit offices for the local agent, the division superintendent, communications and the freight house facilities. This three-story terminal office building also houses the offices of the Santa Fe Trail Transportation Company. This is a trucking

---

[7] Ibid.

[8] Santa Fe Railroad, Argentine Yard, p. 3.

[9] Ibid., p. 4.

[10] Ibid., p. 13.

facility whose freight handling operations are coordinated with the Santa Fe's rail freight facilities.

Like the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, the Santa Fe Railroad has employed generations of Argentians. The railroad has played a vital role in the growth of the Argentine and the Kansas City, Kansas, area. It is one of the largest employers in the city. As of February, 1974, the payroll of the Argentine yard was comprised of approximately 2,000 people.[11]

In 1907, the Santa Fe built a depot in Argentine. This depot was located north of Strong Avenue on 26th Street. This two-story building was used for both passenger and freight trains. At one time, eleven employees worked at this depot. However, this station became obsolete after the construction of the new freight house at 42nd and Kansas Avenue in 1961. After the retirement of Luther C. Prather, the station master who had spent his entire career in Argentine, the depot was closed.

Many happy memories are associated with this depot. President Franklin Roosevelt briefly stopped at the Argentine depot during one of his election campaigns. Mr. Prather described his visit:

> The people were bunched in the thousands in front of the station for Roosevelt's visit and also packed the neighboring streets. Troops were stationed to prevent people from getting too close. When they put a ramp from the railroad car to the ground and the President shuffled down the incline, the people let out a roar that could be heard for miles.[12]

---

[11]Bob Zane, Chief Clerk to the Superintendent, Santa Fe Railroad, interview in his office at 4515 Kansas Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas on March 5, 1974. The author is indebted to Mr. Zane for the booklet with valuable information that he gave to him on the Argentine yard.

[12]"Argentine File" of the Wyandotte County Historical Society.

In July of 1952, a future President passed through the Argentine depot. Dwight D. Eisenhower stayed overnight in Kansas City, Kansas. He then boarded the train at Argentine on the way home to Abilene to announce his candidacy for the Republican nomination. Thousands of people also came to watch him.[13]

For many years, a plant of the Sinclair Refining Company was located in Argentine. At its peak, this plant employed 400 people. Only the steel plant and the railroad employed more of the community's workers. This local branch of the Sinclair Refining Company encountered grave financial difficulties during the depression. Also, for many years Kansas City, Kansas, had been trying to annex the property on which the refinery stood to relieve tax problems of the city. Rather than accept annexation, Sinclair closed its facilities in Argentine in 1931. Sinclair rebuilt the refinery in 1949. It was converted into a pipe-line terminal. Sinclair still maintains a distributing plant in Argentine but the actual refining of raw materials has halted.[14]

The National Zinc Company at one time had a large plant in the Argentine vicinity. This factory worked twenty-four hours a day every day of the year. Brimstones were shipped from Louisiana and Texas sulphur mines to the plant and were made into sulphuric acid. The Kansas salt fields were tapped and salt materials were used in

---

[13] Ibid.

[14] Gloria A. Servos, Argentine "The Silver City," p. 21.

the making of muriatic acid. Nitrate of salt was imported from Chile for use in the manufacture of nitric acid.[15]

Salts were sold by the company for use in the manufacturing of cattle and hog remedies. Salt was also sold for use in the dye, glass and paper industry. The company had many storage tanks on its forty-acre site. Muriatic acid was stored in wooden tanks, sulfuric acid in steel tanks, and the nitric acid in glass or earthenware.[16]

The author does not know when the National Zinc Company ended operations. While in Argentine, however, the company was a thriving enterprise. A business of about $1,500,000 was done annually. In the 1920's the company had a force of 150 men. The company also had zinc smelters in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and Sprink, Illinois.[17]

Many years ago, there was also a battery plant in Argentine. This was a manufacturing plant that supplied much of the southwest part of our country with the acids needed for cars, radios, and telephones.[18]

For over ninety years, a lumber yard has been located in Argentine. Originally called the Badger Lumber Company, it was founded around 1880. In 1882, the Mack Brothers gained ownership of the yard. It has since been known as the Mack Lumber Company. The lumber yard is located at 26th and Metropolitan. In the past, the Company has owned its own lumber mills and several hardware stores.

---

[15]"Argentine Has Second Largest U.S. Elevator," Kansas City Journal Post, February, 1926, p. 40.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. 39.

Besides Kansas City Structural Steel, the community can boast of another steel fabricator. John Russell, Sr., founded the Russell Steel Company in Rosedale and operated there for a year or two. In 1922, the business was moved to Argentine. The location was near the corner of 22nd and Metropolitan on the old site of the McDonald's Hardware Store. In 1966, the company moved into a new building about one-half block down the street.[19]

Russell Steel has always been a small organization. Presently, the company employs twelve people. The peak employment was about thirty men and was reached in the late 1920's. The company produces a fabrication of steel, aluminum and magnesium. Window sashes are a specialty of the company. John "Jack" Russell, Jr., is the president of the company. He has held this position since the death of his father in 1953.[20]

Only one bank is located in the Argentine community. This is the Industrial State Bank. The bank was chartered on February 2, 1917. For some time during the 1920's, the community had as many as four banks operating at the same time. Besides the Industrial State Bank at 3115 Strong Avenue, there was the Argentine State Bank at 27th and Strong Avenue, the Mutual State Bank at 35th and Strong Avenue, and the First National Bank of Argentine. The First National

---

[19]John Russell, Jr., interview in his office, at the Russell Steel Company, 2221 Metropolitan, Kansas City, Kansas on April 14, 1974.

[20]Ibid.

Bank moved to Armourdale around 1930. The other three banks merged in 1928 and became known as the Industrial State Bank.[21]

The bank's new location was 3119 Strong Avenue. In 1940, the bank moved across the street into the 3200 block of Strong Avenue. During the 1951 flood, the bank was covered with over twenty feet of water. Temporary headquarters were established in a small building at 21st and Silver. Shortly, the bank was able to move to its former location. In 1952, the bank was heavily damaged by a fire. In 1967, the bank celebrated its fiftieth anniversary and moved to a new $400,000 building on the southwest corner of 32nd Street and Strong Avenue, just opposite the old site.[22]

The community also has a savings and loan association. The Argentine Savings and Loan Association is located at 3004 Strong Avenue. Formerly called the Argentine Building and Loan Association, it was founded in 1906. W. W. Mack, a son of the founder of the Mack Lumber Company, has been the president since 1956. Former presidents include: J. O. Gaskill, 1906-1911; Charles W. Green, 1911-1941; Hugh J. Smith, 1941-1947; and Frank S. Powell, 1947-1956.[23]

Many stores and businesses have existed in the community for many years. The following is a list of some of these:

---

[21]Ruth Schlatter, Vice-President of Industrial State Bank, interview in her office at 32nd and Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas, on April 14, 1974.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Charles H. Steffens, Vice-President of the Argentine Savings and Loan Association, interview in his office at 3004 Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas, on April 14, 1974.

Mack Lumber Company
Laswell Drugs
Fleming Drug Store
Arnold's Drug Store
Sears
Mickey's Surplus Store
Argentine Building and Loan Association
Argentine Auto Supply
Jay's Barber Shop
Horner's Grocery Store
Park Theatre
Safeway Grocery Store
Simmons Funeral Home
Russell Steel
Shalinsky's Drug Store
Western Auto
Sterling Auto Supply
Vegas Filling Station
Hook Realty and Insurance
The Silver City Record
T.G. & Y.
Finkemeier Bakery
Schlatter Insurance
Industrial State Bank

These establishments have faithfully served the community. The urban renewal projects have added another dimension. The Argentine Heights and Silver City projects are considered text projects of how urban renewal can change an old neighborhood yet preserve its original character.

The Argentine Heights program was the first residential rehabilitation program in the state of Kansas. The program was completed in 1972. The cost of the project was $2,200,000. The Urban Renewal Agency estimated that it returned about $6,500,000 in redevelopment. The 320-unit Berkshire Village townhouse complex is a large portion of this project.[24]

The Silver City Project was the largest of the Kansas City, Kansas, Urban Renewal Projects in terms of acreage and cost. This project comprises 346 acres and cost $9,700,000.[25]

Plans were made for a third project, Villa Argentine. It was to have been started in 1973. This project has been temporarily shelved, however, due to a shortage of funds.

---

[24]Urban Renewal Agency of Kansas City, Kansas, "1972 Annual Report," (Kansas City, Kansas City Government Press, 1972), p. 13.

[25]Ibid.

From small beginnings, Argentine has grown into a prosperous community. In the early days, the railroad and the silver smelter played a vital role in the growth of the town. The Argentine smelter was reputed to be the largest in the world, and over one-half of the town's population consisted of the smelter colony. The smelter closed its doors in 1901. Several factors resulted from the closing. With the loss of its largest employer, the town of Argentine went into an economic depression. Many workers left the town to seek other employment. To complicate the situation, the community was devastated by floods in 1903, 1904, and 1908.

Fortunately, the small town was in a close proximity to prosperous Kansas City, Kansas. Argentine fought for, and, after a struggle, gained annexation into this city. Argentine's continued growth and development is a reflection of the prosperity of the entire city.

In 1907, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company began operating in Argentine. The company grew into a nationally-known organization. Other businesses such as the Mack Lumber Company, the Santa Fe Railroad, Russell Steel and the Industrial State Bank, and many others have also made valuable contributions to the community's development.

Argentine suffered through another great flood in 1951. The great Kaw River basin floods of that year are considered the greatest natural disaster in our nation's history. Parts of Argentine were under twenty to thirty feet of water. No scars remain today of that flood.

Argentine can look back with great pride upon over ninety years of their history. The Prophet's grave site and Sauer Castle are two reminders of an eventful past. The Urban Renewal Projects and the new J. C. Harmon High School are examples of how a community can change without losing its original identity. Argentine will continue to grow and prosper while maintaining the heritage of the past.

APPENDIX I

List of Businesses in Argentine: 1908

List of Businesses in the City of Argentine in 1908[1]

Asylums, Convents

Benedictine Sisters Home
713 Strong Avenue

Bakers

David Holt
217 Silver Avenue

B. Kolby Laswell
132 E. Ruby Avenue

Bands

Scales Concert Band
117 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Banks

Argentine State Bank
NW Cor 6th

First State Bank of Argentine
307 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Barbers

Edward Altringer
5 N. Spear Avenue

David W. Carter
117 1/2 Silver Avenue

James King
129 Silver Avenue

Frank McCullough
827 Strong Avenue

A. C. McKinney
217 W. Metropolitan Avenue

David M. Mitchell
205 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Bert Parks
117 N. 1st

Charles B. Riggert
16 N. Spear Avenue

Robert Slater
10 S. Spear Avenue

Peter Spohrer
815 Strong Avenue

Robert J. Venerable
230 Silver Avenue

Billiard Halls

Edward Altringer
5 N. Spear Avenue

Frank X. Egan
24 N. Spear Avenue

Thomas M. Lynch
101 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Frank McCullough
827 Strong Avenue

Edward Walton
117 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Cydnor I. Wortman
203 W. Metropolitan Avenue

---

[1]This list was compiled from the Argentine section (pp. 436-39) of Gould's 1908 City Directory for the Greater Kansas City Area, published by the Gould Publishing Company, Kansas City, Missouri, in 1908.

Blacksmiths

Jeremiah Callaghan
124 Silver Avenue

Orville C. Lang
816 Strong Avenue

Peter Starks
26 S. Spear Avenue

Boarding Houses

Jennie Burkett
212 N. 11th

Susie Busby
19 N. 6th

Moat C. Comley
301 Argentine Boul.

Lutie D. Hanna
315 S. Ash

Sarah E. Harrow
134 Maple

Kaw Valley House
9 N. 5th

Samuel Reeves
49 S. 5th

Hattie Williams
609 Strong Avenue

Myrtle Yearger
191 S. 1st

Boots and Shoes

H. R. Babcock
131 Silver Avenue

Samuel J. Beach
622 Strong Avenue

James Beale
N. Spear

Andrew Brown
26 Strong Avenue

Charles Damps
21 W. Metropolitan Avenue

John E. Ferreira
822 Strong Avenue

William H. Fields
120 W. Ruby Avenue

George S. Govier
539 Strong Avenue

Frank Hunze
219 Strong Avenue

Marx Levi
223 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Elias H. York
516 E. Ruby Avenue

Builders Supplies

William E. Drollinger
417 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Building and Loan Associations

Argentine Building and Loan Association
303 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Buildings and Halls

Ancient Order United Workmen Hall
105-107 Silver Avenue

Borgstede Hall
105-107 Silver Avenue

City Hall
Silver Avenue SW Cor 4th

City Jail
Basement City Hall

Connors Building
1 N. Spear Avenue

Eagles Hall
221 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Harmer's Hall
127 W. Metropolitan Avenue

King Building
543 Strong Avenue

Lapham's Hall
842 Strong Avenue

Maccabees Hall
125-127 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Masonic Hall
2nd SE Cor Metropolitan Avenue

Masonic Hall (Colored)
131 Silver Avenue

Metropolitan Building
125-127 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Metropolitan Hall
125-127 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Railway YMCA Building
25 N. 6th

St. John's Hall
19 N. 8th

Young Building
537 Strong Avenue

Cemeteries

Argentine Cemetery
Shawnee Boul. SE Cor Gibbs Road

Maple Hill Cemetery
Shawnee Boul. SE Cor New Shawnee Road

Cement Works

Drollinger Cement Works
917 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Chemicals

United Zinc & Chemical Co.
Kansas Av 1/2 mile W. of Kaw River

Christian Associations

Railway Young Men's Christian Assn.
25 N. 6th

Churches

First Baptist Church
45 S. 6th

Primitive Baptist Church
Spear Av NE Cor Kelley Avenue

Second Baptist Church
Ruby Av NE Cor 4th

First Christian Church
Metropolitan Av NE Cor Manvel
Rev. Frank L. Graham, pastor

First Congregational Church
W. Ruby Av SE Cor 2nd
Rev. Jasper C. Warren, pastor

Episcopal Church
131 N. Hickory

Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
12th SE Cor Powell

Immanuel Evangelical Church (German)
Metropolitan Av SW Cor 6th
Rev. August H. Jacobs, pastor

African Methodist Episcopal
325 W. Ruby Av
Rev. George A. Grithith, pastor

Methodist Episcopal Church
511 W. Metropolitan Av
Rev. De Kalb Burnham, pastor

First Presbyterian Church
W. Metropolitan NW Cor 8th

St. John's Roman Catholic Church
Rev. Louis Beck, pastor

First Church of Christ in
Christian Union
1213 Powell Avenue

Free Gospel Mission
823 Strong Avenue
Chaney A. Hartzler, pastor

Cigars & Tobacco

J. O. Gaskill & Co.
231 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Harry W. Herr
207 W. Metropolitan Avenue

Charles M. Riddell
543 Strong Avenue

Charles B. Riggert
16 N. Spear Avenue

Robert Slater
10 S. Spear Avenue

Clothing

Cydnor T. Wortman
203 W. Metropolitan Av.

Marx Levi
223 W. Metropolitan Av.

Clubs

Commercial Club
City Hall Building

R. R. Club
Sec 202 N. 4th

Coal

M. L. Butcher
529 W. Metropolitan Av

William E. Drollinger
417 W. Metropolitan Av

Frisbie Bros.
817 Strong Av

W.J. Ritter
425 W. Metropolitan Av

W. F. Sable
115 E. Metropolitan Av

Confectionery

Alfred S. Curtis
Strong Av SE Cor 11th

Harry M. Herr
207 W. Metropolitan Av

Kolby Laswell
132 E. Ruby Av

Belle Wright
209 W. Metropolitan Av

Contractors-Carpenter

Benjamin J. Armstrong
115 N. Taylor

Sparrel Blankenship
14th W. Ruby Av

Louis N. Dawson
249 S. Hickory

James I. Depul
1020 Strong Av

Thomas H. Johnston
121 N. 10th

John W. Leideburg
204 S. 7th

Peter B. Messinger
S 14th NE W Ruby Av

James Morrison
365 S. 1st

Gordon Spraker
817 Connor Av

Frank Webster
104 Silver Av

Contractors-General

Louis C. Bass
1132 Strong Av

Joseph H. Beazell
303 Shawnee Boul

George T. Brown
4th SW Cor Lawrence Av

Luther J. Cochran
50 S. 7th

Foster and Moore
Rear 18 N 6th

J. Clarence Kingscott
14th NR Barber Av

Judson Q. Marsh
423 W. Metropolitan Av

Lawton L. Maxson, Jr.
822 Powell Av

William Middlekauff
Rosedale Rd NR S 1st

Frederick J. Payne
220 S. Mulberry

Contractors-Paving

Charles E. Dodson
334 E. Ruby Av

Contractors-Stone

Enright Bros.
Ruby Av Bet 4th and 6th

George R. Levi
217 W. Elmwood Av

Alfred E. Payne
S 14 SE Cor Metropolitan Av

Contractors & Builders

William A. Drollinger
417 W. Metropolitan Av

Franklin G. Hawkins
20 N. 10th

William H. Tanner
132 W. Ruby Av

Dairies

Charles Johnson
New Shawnee Rd ft S. 2nd

Oscar Johnson
New Shawnee Rd ft S. 2nd

John H. McMahon
ft S. 1st

Christ Hazel Mikkelsen
SE Cor New Shawnee

Oscar F. Hazel Nordwall
Cor Rosedale Rd

Oscar H. Olson
Metropolitan Av nr 15th

Marion O. Walker
ft S. 1st

Dentists

Ellis D. House
10 S. Spear Av

Ralph E. Spencer
1 N. Spear Av

Dressmakers

Blanche Anderes
1118 W. Ruby Av

Rose Gordom
332 Harrison

Anita Simons
E 18 S. 8th

Druggists

J. D. Gaskill & Co.
231 W. Metropolitan Av

William McGeorge
W. Metropolitan Av SE Cor S. 2nd

J. C. Rawless & Co.
4 S. Spear Av and 846 Strong Av

Santa Fe Pharmacy
1 N. Spear Av

Dry Goods

George H. Adams
1020 Strong Av

H. R. Babcock
131 Silver Av

May A. Foster
222 N. Spear Av

George S. Govier
539 Strong Av

Byron LaGrange
810 Strong Av

E. B. Walden
125 Silver Av

Dryers & Cleaners

Ed Wilson
200 Wilver Av

Elevators

Santa Fe Elevator
1/2 Mile W of Santa Fe depot

Santa Fe Elevator
1 1/2 Miles NW of Argentine

Express Companies

Wells Fargo & Co. Express
N. Spear Av and Santa Fe tracks

Feed

M. L. Butcher
529 W. Metropolitan Av

W. F. Sable
115 E. Metropolitan Av

Florists

Cyrus Earnest
251 S. 2nd

Harvey G. Hughes Hazel
New Cor Argentine Rd

William F. Rosengarten
2000 N. Spear Av

Freight Depots

Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe RR
Spear Av and Santa Fe tracks

Fruit Growers

G. Frederick Espenlaub
Argentine Rd nr Ash

Joseph McMahon
ft S. 1st

Thomas McMahon
ft S. 1st

Thomas F. McMahon
ft S. 1st

Furnished Rooms

Margaret M. Brown
14 N. Manvel Av

Furniture

Glanville Bros.
311 W. Metropolitan Av

Thomas Harmer
107 Silver Av

Gardeners

William Bacon Hazel
nr Rosedale Rd

Josiah S. Burleson
Mulberry nr Rosedale Rd

Sylvester A. Fitzgerald
Argentine Boul NW Cor 14th

John B. Frohoff
Carlisle Rd nr Kansas Av

Edward M. Fuller
Hazel nr Rosedale Rd

George T. Isom
906 Willard Av

Theophilius G. Jarvis
Kansas Av SE Cor Carlisle Rd

William T. Jarvis
Kansas Av SE Cor Carlisle Rd

Frederick Jordon
1309 Strong Av

Ralph S. McKee
1309 Strong Av

Jones Mitchell
319 N. Spear Av

Samuel Mobley
nr Power Pl

Frederick Wendt
Argentine Rural Route No. 2

General Merchandise

Henry W. Richardson
South side Kan. Av opp United
Zinc & Copper Co's plant

Gent's Furnishing Goods

H. R. Babcock
131 Silver Av

John E. Ferreira
822 Strong Av

Charles M. Riddell
543 Strong Av

E. B. Walden
125 Silver Av

Grocers

George H. Adams
1020 Strong Av

J. H. Borgstede
211 Silver Av

Camp Zana
306 W. Ruby Av

Z. D. Chamberlin
541 Strong Av

Bert Cheatwood
820 Strong Av

J. B. Christenson
141 S. 1st

James C. Crawford
531 E. Metropolitan Av

L. G. Eike
225 Silver Av and 845 Strong Av

Willard H. Ekdahl
401 E. Metropolitan Av

Edward Evans
12 N. Spear Av

John F. Evans
2 S. Spear Av

May A. Foster
222 N. Spear Av

Charles W. Green
101 Silver Av

Harry D. Jones
410 W. Metropolitan Av

Lapham Bros.
842 Strong Av

Edward Matthews
Sherman Cor Kansas Av

M. B. Meyer
1315 W. Ruby Av

Patrick O'Farrell
928 Strong Av

James W. Pinkard
132 Silver Av

W. J. Ritter
425 W. Metropolitan Av

Sables Grocery
102 Silver Av

Charles H. Scott
1029 Silver Av

Aneill M. Scovill
102 Boeke

Arthur H. Shumate
537 Strong Av

Milton M. Stiffler
240 N. Spear Av

Louis C. Turner
121 E. Ruby Av

Vincent & Nielsen
6 N. Spear Av

Bradford M. Wilson
122 E. Ruby Av

Hardware

Thomas Harmer
105 Silver Av

Hurley and McDonald
215 W. Metropolitan Av

M. W. Lovelace
545 Strong Av

Harness Makers

Andrew Brown
826 Strong Av

Horse Shoers

Jeramiah Callaghan
124 Silver Av

Orville C. Lang
816 Strong Av

Peter Starks
26 S. Spear Av

Hotels

Argentine Hotel
14 N. Spear Av

Chicago House
126 W. Ruby Av

Cottage House
11 S. Spear Av

House Movers

Joseph K. Beazell
303 Shawnee Boul.

Ice

Argentine Ice Co.
229 E. Ruby Av

Santa Fe Car Icing Co.
Santa Fe tracks and Carlisle Rd

Ice Cream

B. G. Neiswander
135 E. Metropolitan Av

James W. Pinkard
132 Silver Av

Belle Wright
209 W. Metropolitan Av

Insurance Agents

Edgar L. Clark
223 1/2 W. Metropolitan Av

F. F. Erhart
8 S. Spear Av

G. W. Gulley
213 W. Metropolitan Av

Jewelers

J. O. Gaskill and Co.
231 W. Metropolitan Av

William L. Speer
2 N. Spear Av

Junk Dealers

Luther Morrison
1028 Barber Av

Henry Morris
Walnut nr 12th

George Thomas
270 Maple

Justices of the Peace

Harry M. Herr
207 W. Metropolitan Av

Joseph L. Landrey
612 Strong Av.

Laundries

Gregory's Steam Laundry
501 W. Metropolitan Av

Todd's Hand Laundry
Strong Av SE Cor S. 7th

Lawyers

Samuel Crawford
10 S. Spear Av

Joseph L. Landrey
612 Strong Av

H. J. Smith
303 W. Metropolitan Av

Francais M. Woods
513 W. Metropolitan Av

Light and Power Company

Standard Electric Light Co.
303 W. Metropolitan Av

Livery

Frisbie Bros.
817 Strong Av

G. W. Simmons
113 Strong Av

Lumber

Badger Lumber Co.
5th NW Cor Metropolitan Av

Lunch-See

George Harding
24 N. Spear Av

Meat Markets

J. H. Borgstede
211 Silver Av

T. D. Chamberlain
541 Strong Av

Bert E. Cheatwood
820 Strong Av

J. B. Christensen
141 S. 1st

L. G. Eike
225 Silver Av

Willard H. Ekdahl
401 E. Metropolitan Av

John F. Evans
2 S Spear Av

C. W. Green
101 Silver Av

Sable's Grocery
102 Silver Av

Aneil Scovill
102 Boeke

Arthur H. Shumate
537 Strong Av

L. C. Turner
121 E. Ruby Av

Vincent & Nielsen
6 N. Spear Av

Bradford M. Wilson
122 E. Ruby Av

Millinery

Fannie M. McCauley
15 S. Spear Av

Anna M. Williams
121 S. 1st

Music Teachers

Hazel F. Beeler
453 E. Ruby Av

Helen Bliss
115 W. Ruby Av

Ollie Bliss
221 E. Ruby Av

Lily Comby
47 S. 4th

Elva Fuller
913 Strong Av

Adah F. Funnell
619 W. Metropolitan Av

Jessie E. Neff
619 W. Metropolitan Av

Leita Hoagland
33 N. King

John P. Seales
120 Silver Av

Newspapers & Publications

Argentine Republic
612 Strong Av

Notaries Public

Sameul Crawford
10 S. Spear Av

F. F. Erhart
8 S. Spear Av

Joseph L. Landrey
612 Strong Av

Hugh J. Smith
303 W. Metropolitan Av

James F. Trowbridge
132 Silver

Francais M. Woods
519 W. Metropolitan Av

Notions

John E. Ferreira
822 Strong Av

George S. Gavier
539 Strong Av

Byron LaGrange
810 Strong Av

Nurseries

Elmhurst Nursery
2 Miles Southwest of Argentine

Frederick H. Espenlaub
Argentine Rd nr Ash

Harry H. Hughes
Hazel NW Cor Argentine Rd

Kansas City Nurseries
Kansas Av SE Cor Carlisle Rd

Nurses

Mabel Dorsey
217 W. Elmwood Av

Eloda M. Messimer
205 Lawrence Av

Paints & Oils

Thomas Harmes
105 Silver Av

Paperhangers

William Banner
397 S. Ash

Eli Bennett
413 W. Metropolitan Av

Edward J. Bowers
114 Boeke

Kelley Bros.
309 W. Metropolitan Av

Hosea C. Parcell
19 N. 9th

John L. Parcell
114 W. Ruby Av

Photographers

C. A. Goodrich
401 W. Metropolitan Av

Physicians

Oscar P. Blatchly
220 Ash

F. W. Brunig
203 W. Metropolitan Av

David E. Clopper
4 S. Spear Av

Edward W. Greenlee
117 W. Ruby Av

McClure & Smith
1 N. Spear Av

Henry A. Nave
2nd SE Cor W. Metropolitan Av

Daniel M. Smith
7 N. Spear Av

Clarence L. Zugg
135 S. 1st

Plasterers

Frank Freeburg
1122 Strong Av

William A. Hulit
318 S. Ash

Plumbers

Joseph L. Berenzen
201 Silver Av

Hurley & McDonald
215 W. Metropolitan Av

Post Office

Argentine Post Office
14 S. Spear Av

Publishers

Grant Landrey
612 Strong Av

Quarries

Enright Bros.
Ruby Av bet 4th and 6th

Queensware

Thomas Harmer
105 Silver Av

Railroads

Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe
9th and Santa Fe tracks

Real Estate

Edgar L. Clark
223 1/2 W. Metropolitan Av

F. F. Erhart
8 S. Spear Av

John Fitzgerald
11 S. 6th

George W. Gulley
213 W. Metropolitan Av

James L. Larkin
612 Strong Av

Thomas J. Payne
1201 W. Franklin Av

George W. Toothaker
12 S. Spear Av

James F. Trowbridge
132 Silver Av

Repair Shops

Edward D. Heath
203 Silver Av

Schools

Argentine High School
2nd bet Ruby Av and Wyandotte

Bruce School (Colored)
Strong Av SW Cor 4th

Emerson School
Metropolitan AV NW Cor Marvell

Franklin School
Oak SW Cor Metropolitan Av

Lowell School
Elmwood SE Cor 2nd

Stanley School
13th SW Cor Metropolitan Av

Second Hand

Henry W. Duff
207 Silver Av

Sheet Metal Works

Joseph L. Berenzen
201 Silver Av

Hurley & McDonald
215 W. Metropolitan Av

Springs

Argentine Springs
South side Metropolitan Av
bet Walnut and Lynn

Structural Steel

Kansas City Structural Steel Co.
Metropolitan Av NE Cor 1st

Tailors

John Birnback
115 S. 2nd

Percy Postlethwaite
5 S. Spear Av

Otto Ruch
S Spear Av

Henry Scherer
313 S. Metropolitan Av

Jacob Scherer
813 Strong Av

Tea and Coffee

Oscar Moss
253 Valley

Telephone Company

Missouri and Kansas Telephone Co.
237 W. Metropolitan Av

Tinners

Joseph L. Berenzen
201 Silver Av

Hurley & McDonald
215 W. Metropolitan Av

Transfer

Argentine Transfer Co.
105 Silver Av

William E. Drollinger
417 W. Metropolitan Av

Frisbie Bros
817 Strong Av

C. L. Frisbie
828 Strong Av

W. J. Ritter
425 W. Metropolitan Av

Milton Sayers
120 Maple

Charles C. Simmons
190 Shawnee Boul.

Undertakers

G. W. Simmons
113 Silver Av

Upholsterers

Frank R. Rasey
222 Silver Av

Veterinary Surgeons

Hermon M. Smith
128 Silver Av

Wagon Makers

J. J. Callaghan
124 Silver Av

Water Companies

Argentine Water Co.
303 W. Metropolitan Av

APPENDIX II

List showing some of the buildings in the greater Kansas City area erected by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company

Statement Showing List of Buildings Constructed in Greater Kansas City Steel for Which was Furnished by Kansas City Structural Steel Company Years 1907 to April 28, 1928 Inclusive

Order No.	Year	Contractor or Owner	Name of Building	No. of Stories	Tons
106	1907	Jones Store Co.	Jones Store Bldg.	5	1100
493	1908	Roby Realty Co.	Boley Building	8	620
734	1908	Geo.A.Fuller Const.Co.	Sharp Bldg.	12	496
1311	1909	Orear-Leslie Inv.Co.	Orear Leslie Bldg.	11	410
1900	1909	J. C. Gates	Gates Bldg.	7	953
177	1909	F. G. Altman	Altman Bldg.	5	170
3121	1909	K.C.Stockyards Co.	Livestock Exc. Bldg.	10	1500
3257	1910	Kansas City Star	K.C.Star Bldg.	4	1040
3293	1910	Grand Ave.Meth.Church	Grand Ave. Temple	13	1100
3300	1910	Boller & Decamp	Empress Theatre	3	350
3309	1910	J. C. Gates	Gates Bldg.	2	183
3412	1910	Albert Marty	Rialto Bldg.	14	1100
3427	1910	Webster Withers, Jr.	Webster Withers Bldg.	7	150
3481	1910	Belfast Inv. Co.	Belfast Bldg.	3	180
3797	1911	May Stern Realty Co.	Waldheim Bldg.	17	1185
4391	1911	J.W.Jenkins Music Co.	Jenkins Bldg.	8	450
4590	1911	Geo.A.Fuller Const.Co.	Union Sta.Power House		325
4729	1912	Trustee Realty Co.	Kling Bldg.	8	430
4941	1912	Geo.H.Siedhoff Contr.	Republic Bldg.	12	450
3140	1912	S.S.Kresge	Kresge Bldg.	6	325
3448	1913	Swenson Const. Co.	Sears Roebuck Bldg.		741
3627	1913	Kline Cloak Co.	Kline Bldg.	6	92
5660	1913	Louis Oppenstein	Globe Theatre		160
6273	1914	Frank L. Newman	Royal Theatre		128
6396	1914	Swenson Const. Co.	Jones Bldg.		281
6428	1914	Selden Breck Const.Co.	John Taylor Bldg.	7	1504
6438	1914	F. G. Bonfils	Bonfils Bldg.	5	292
6463	1914	judge Longston BaconEst.	Graves Bldg(G.B.Peck)	12	907
6648	1914	Westlake Const. Co.	Muehlebach Hotel		1713
7862	1915	Geo.A.Fuller Const.Co.	St. Joseph's Hospital		344
7988	1915	Frank L. Newman	Twelfth St. Theatre		79
9542	1917	Swenson Const. Co.	Oppenstein Bldg.	9	722
9543	1917	Swenson Const. Co.	Liberty Theatre		325
1480	1918	Frank L. Newman	Newman Theatre Bldg.		413
1784	1919	K. C. Club	K. C. Club Bldg.	14	1844
2061	1920	Athletic Bldg.Assn.	K.C.A.C. Bldg.	22	2809
2744	1920	Std.Real Est. Imp.Co.	Rothschild Bldg.	5	183
2890	1920	Alexander Pantages	Pantages Theatre		181
3328	1920	Bagby & Co.	Bagby Bldg.	11	360
3856	1921	Thompson Starrett Co.	Junior Orpheum Bldg.		360
6588	1923	Swenson Const. Co.	Rothschild Bldg.	5	194
6699	1923	Elks Benevolent Assn.	Elks Bldg. K.C. Ks.	13	347
6874	1923	K. C. Star	K. C. Star Bldg.		959
7900	1924	Pratt-Thompson Const.	Ed. of Trade Bldg.	14	1034

Order No.	Year	Contractor or Owner	Name of Building	No. of Stories	Tons
9757	1925	Swenson Const. Co.	1st Natl. Bank Bldg.		177
1371	1925	Swendon Const. Co.	Bonfils Bldg.	3	413
2064	1925	A. F. Morris	Spalding Bldg.	5	67
2170	1926	Swenson Const. Co.	Wyandotte Co.Ct.Hse,KCK		85
5302	1928	J. C. Nichols Inv. Co.	Plaza Theatre Bldg.		173
6207	1928	Swenson Const. Co.	Kline Bldg.	5	413
6350	1928	Swenson Const. Co.	Kline Bldg.	3	112
7028	1929	Fridstein & Co.	Professional Bldg.	17	1219
7164	1929	A. J. Rector	Jones Bldg.	5	334
7170	1929	University Bldg. Co.	University Bldg.	11	432
7268	1929	C. F. Woodling	New Market Inv.Co.Bldg.	2	89
7462	1929	Thompson-Starrett Co.	Pickwick Bus Terminal		333
7594	1930	Phillips Bldg. Co.	Phillips Hotel Bldg.	21	1210
7918	1930	Swenson Const. Co.	Gates Bldg.	10	580
8220	1930	Utilities Bldg. Corp.	K.C.Power & Light Bldg.	32	7000
8564	1930	Long Const. Co.	Nelson Art Gallery		1100
8520	1930	Thompson Starrett Co.	Fidelity Bank Bldg.	32	5434
8589	1930	S. Patti Const. Co.	Bldg. 21 W. 10th St.	12	646
8900	1931	Jenkins Music Co.	Jenkins Music Co. Bldg.	8	429
210	1933	Swenson Const. Co.	Courthouse, K.C. Mo.	32	4881
580-5	1934	Patti-Fleisher-Ring	Auditorium, K.C. Mo.		4568
1530	1936	Swenson Const. Co.	City Hall, K.C. Mo.	32	5952
2885	1938	Swenson Const. Co.	Montgomery Ward Bldg.,KC,K	4	364
2812	193-	Swenson Const. Co.	Federal Cts. Bldg., K.C. Mo	10	3010
			Total		67502

APPENDIX III

Community Organizations

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Argentine is largely dependent on the metropolitan Kansas City area for many of its cultural resources. This is not to say that Argentine has no culture. The community has many civic and service groups as well as fraternal organizations. There are many churches, two city parks and a branch library.

The Argentine Parish House is a community center that was built in 1922. In that year, citizens of the community decided to build a recreation center. Labor and building materials were donated. The site was an old cornfield near what is now 27th and Metropolitan. The Parish House has been a center of community activities for over fifty years. Basketball games, boxing matches, dances, club meetings and social affairs have been conducted there.

The community also can boast of two parks: Clopper Field and Emerson Park. Clopper Field is named in honor of Dr. D. E. Clopper, a doctor of the community who devoted his entire life to the betterment of the community. A plaque dedicated in his honor is located in Emerson Park.

The Argentine Activities Association is one of the most prominent organizations of the community. Made up of businessmen and concerned citizens, this group has worked many years for the betterment of the community. One of its biggest undertakings was the Argentine Parade which was an annual affair for thirty years.

Another distinguished organization is the Hawthorne Club. This organization started on January 5, 1905. On that day, a group of young ladies of the Argentine community met in the home of Mrs. Hugh Smith. At this meeting, a literary club was formed. The club originally had no name. However, they first decided to study the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Shortly thereafter, they became known as the Hawthorne Club. This club has done much for the betterment of the community. One of its most important accomplishments was the founding of the Argentine Library in 1907.[1]

There are many fraternal organizations in Argentine. Most of them use the Ben Hur Masonic Temple at 1500 South 30th Street, Kansas City, Kansas. These organizations include: The Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, the International Supreme Order of Demolay, the Order of the Eastern Star, the True Kindred, the International Order of Jobs Daughters and the Odd Fellows.

Many churches are located in the community. They are: the Emerson Park Christian Church, the Ruby Avenue Baptist Church, the First Christian Church, the Ruby Avenue Congregational United Church of Christ, Second Metropolitan Baptist Church, the Immanuel Lutheran Church and the St. John Evangelist Church.

Argentine has a branch library of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library. The Argentine branch was founded in 1907. Mrs. Bertha McMann, a member of the Hawthorne Club, was a librarian there for many years. She started the vacation reading program for children

---

[1]The information on the Hawthorne Club was compiled from articles in the Argentine file of the Kansas City Kansan newspaper at 901 North 8th, Kansas City, Kansas

of elementary school age. She also started the concept of a book-mobile.[2] In the 1951 flood, the library was flooded. The entire stock of books was lost. A layer of mud was deposited on most of the books. However, after the flood, the interior of the library was rebuilt and modernized.

An annual affair of the community for many years was the Argentine Parade. This occurred in the fall. Floats, bands and horsemen came from all over the surrounding area to participate in this event. Next to the American Royal Parade, this was the largest parade in Kansas City. In the earlier parades in the 1930's, only about 5,000 people showed up to view it. However, by 1960 there were as many as 50,000 people in attendance. An estimated 55,000 people attended the Argentine Parade of 1962. This parade featured 125 units. There were eight high school bands, two drum and bugle corps, horse units, and antique cars. Miss Carolyn Joyner, the holder of two national beauty titles and a student at Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, was in attendance, as was Miss Beverly Wood, a sophomore at Kansas State College at Manhattan. The last year of the parade was 1963.[3]

---

[2]Argentine file, Kansas City Kansan newspaper.

[3]Argentine file, Kansas City Kansan newspaper.

APPENDIX IV

A list of some of the prominent citizens
of Argentine's past and present

Barney Adams - one of the earlier settlers of Argentine.

Charles Arnold - pharmacist and a lifelong resident of Argentine, past President of the Argentine Activity Association.

Joseph F. Baehr - druggist of the early community.

Clarence A. Baker - graduate of Argentine High School and Vice-Preisdent in charge of Operations at the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

Charles E. Bowman - held several city offices, was one of the most enterprising and prosperous men of the young community.

G. C. Brink - typing teacher at Argentine High School for forty-five years.

Jacob M. Broadhurst - one of the most respected of the early citizens.

George Brown - Kansas pioneer and farmer.

Wesley L. Channell - Principal at Argentine High School for nineteen years.

David E. Clopper - Mayor of Argentine from 1903-05. Mr. Clopper was a physician and practiced thirty-nine years in the Argentine community. He was a great booster of the high school and was instrumental in the building additions that were made to the school. He also was a member of the Argentine Board of Education and an organizer of the Argentine Relief Association. Mr. Clopper was a President of the Argentine State Bank, an official of the Industrial State Bank and the President of the Argentine Activity Association for four consecutive terms. This man was one of the most loved and respected men in the history of the Argentine community. An estimated 3,000 people attended his funeral. All schools in the Argentine district were closed that day and flags were flown at half mast throughout Kansas City, Kansas.[1]

James Coburn - founder of the town of Argentine.

---

[1]This information came from a newspaper clipping in the David E. Clopper file of the Kansas City Kansan newspaper at 901 North 8th, Kansas City, Kansas.

John "Red Jack" Conners - one of the best known of the early settlers of Argentine.

Charles Dauzenroth - owned dry goods stores and held several public offices.

L. J. Enright - a builder contractor for the old town.

J. R. Ewing - prominent attorney at law during the early days of the town.

Finklemeyer family - proprietors of a bakery in the community.

Howard A. Fitch - pioneer in the steel industry, President and founder of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

John Gibbs - farmer and early settler, came to Argentine in 1855.

Charles W. Green - held a place of prominence and influence in the Argentine community. He was a local Argentine merchant and an official of the smelter company and the Kansas City Structural Steel Company. He was elected Mayor of Argentine in 1899 and elected to second, third and fourth terms in 1901, 1907 and 1909. Green was serving as Mayor when Argentine was annexed into Kansas City, Kansas. Thus, he was the last mayor of Argentine. In 1913 he was elected mayor of Kansas City, Kansas and reelected in 1915. Later he held such positions as President of the Kansas City Kansas Board of Education, membership on the Kansas State Board of Education and the State Public Utility Commission, and Vice-President, General Manager and director of the Kansas City Gas Company.[2]

Green family - proprietors of a florist in the community.

G. W. Gulley - civic leader for over forty years, first Mayor of Argentine.

Doctor Warren Haas - prominent physician of the community.

J. C. Harmon - Principal of Argentine High School for thirty years. See chapter entitled "Mr. Argentine."

---

[2]This information on Green came from the Argentine Collection of the Simmons Funeral Home, 37th and Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas.

John S. Harrow - President of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

Lloyd E. Hoke - an organizer of the Industrial State Bank, founder of the Mutual State Bank and a former President of the Argentine Activities Association.

Wilber Hook - current President of the Industrial State Bank.

James Howe - held several offices for the town of Argentine such as Justice of the Peace, Police Judge, and Director of the School Board.

August F. Jasper - coal and feed merchant in the early days of the town.

Reverend J. W. Johnson - first pastor of the Argentine community.

G. W. Killmer - early merchant.

Captain Kingscott - Civil War hero and early settler of the town.

Joseph Landrey - founder and editor of the Argentine Republic newspaper.

Laswell family - proprietors of a drug store in the community.

Jack Linton - operator of a furniture and appliance store in Argentine.

W. W. Mack - He is a son of the founder of the Mack Lumber Company. W. W. Mack has been the President of the Argentine Building and Loan Association since 1956.

Mack family - owners of the Mack Lumber Company.

Rusty R. McCurnin - the superintendent of steel erection for the Kansas City Structural Steel Company for over thirty years. Mr. McCurnin was a nationally-known figure in the steel industry.

Thomas McMahon - farmer and fruit grower.

August R. Meyer - developer of the Argentine smelter, socialite and philanthropist.

John E. Meyers - proprietor of the Argentine Hotel and an engineer for the Santa Fe.

J. H. Olliges - one of the original settlers and a prominent businessman.

Vernon L. Pierce - former Production Manager for the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, past President of the Kansas Engineers Society and the Argentine Activities Association.

Fred J. Reichert - hardware merchant and contractor during the early days of the town.

Lawson Roberts - current Principal of the Argentine Middle School.

John Russell, Sr. - founder of the Russell Steel Company.

John Russell, Jr. - President of the Russell Steel Company.

Joseph Shalinsky - proprietor of Shalinsky Drug Stores.

Geddes Simmons - grocery and meat proprietor, also a postmaster for the town of Argentine.

George Simmons - old merchant and town official.

Howard and Don Simmons - proprietors of the Simmons Funeral Home.

Judge Hugh J. Smith - was a prominent citizen of the community for many years.

O. C. Smith - Co-founder and for many years Vice-President of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company (see chapter on the steel plant).

Theodore A. Smith - one of the first permanent settlers of Argentine.

John Steffens - sheriff and official of the town of Argentine.

Joseph Steel - early farmer.

Frances Taylor - journalism and English teacher at Argentine High School from 1903-1952.

Ten-Squ-Ta-Wah - Shawnee Indian Chief known as the "Prophet." The Prophet is buried near 38th and Ruby in Argentine.

J. T. Thayer - contractor who built many beautiful homes in the east end of the city for the social elite of the community.

Norton Thayer - early manager of the Argentine Real Estate Investment Company aided in the development of the early town.

William Todd - current principal of the new J. C. Harmon High School.

G. W. Toothaker - early earl estate owner.

Maurice A. Walker - doctor of the community, has been prominent in civic affairs for many years.

Kenneth Wells - present editor of the Silver City Record.

C. T. Wortman - police judge for the town of Argentine.

David S. Young - prosperous real estate agent in the 1870's and 1880's.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Berry, Louise, compiler. The Beginnings of the West, Annals of the Kansas Gateway to the American West, 1540-1854. Topeka, Kansas: the State Historical Society Press, 1972.

Bixby, William. Havoc, The Story of Natural Disasters. New York: Longmans, Green and Company.

Britt, Albert. Great Indian Chiefs, A Study of Indian Leaders in the Two Hundred Year Struggle to Stop the White Advance. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Incorporated, 1938.

Davis, Kenneth S. River on the Rampage. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Incorporated, 1953.

Eggleston, Edward, and Lillie Eggleston Suskye. Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet. New York: Dodd, Meade and Company, 1878.

Hanson, Harry E., compiler. A Historical Outline of the Grinter Place From 1825-1878. This work was published by the Hanson family, date unknown.

Harrington, Grant. Historical Spots or Mile-Stones in the Progress of Wyandotte County, Kansas. Merriam, Kansas: The Mission Press, 1935.

Hewitt, R. From Earthquake, Fire and Flood. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957.

Johnson, Charles H. S. Famous Indian Chiefs. New York: L. C. Page Company, Incorporated, 1909.

Long, Luman H., editor. The World Almanac and Books of Facts, 1970 edition. New York: Sterling Publishing Company, Incorporated, 1971.

McDowell, Joseph H. Building A City, A Detailed History of Kansas City, Kansas. Kansas City, Kansas: The Kansas City Kansan Press, 1962.

McGuinn, Nellie M. The Story of Kansas City, Kansas. Kansas City Kansas: The Kansas City Public Schools, 1961.

McWirter, Morris and Ross, compilers. Guiness Book of World Records, 10th edition. New York: Sterling Publishing Company, Incorporated, 1971.

Morgan, Perl W. History of Wyandotte County Kansas. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911.

Terral, Rufus. The Missouri Valley, Land of Drought, Flood and Promise. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1947.

Encyclopedias and Yearbooks

"Accidents and Disasters." The New World Family Encyclopedia. 1954. Vol. I.

Argentine High School Yearbook, 1944. Kansas City, Kansas: Argentine Yearbook Staff, 1944.

Argentine High School Yearbook, 1973. Kansas City, Kansas: Argentine Yearbook Staff, 1973.

Gould Publishing Company. Gould's 1908 City Directory for the Greater Kansas City Area. Kansas City, Missouri: Gould Publishing Company, 1908.

Kansas State Chamber of Commerce. Kansas Yearbook 1937-38. Topeka, Kansas: Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, 1935.

Morris, Richard B., editor. Encyclopedia of American History, volume I. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953.

Magazines and Journals

Chappel, Phil E. "Floods in the Missouri River," Kansas Historical Quarterly, X (1907-08).

Flora, S. D. "The Great Flood of 1844 Along the Kansas and the Marais des Cygnes Rivers," Kansas Historical Quarterly, XX (May, 1952).

Kansas Construction Magazine, December, 1953.

"The Kansas City Flood Edition," The New Empire Magazine for the Homeseeker and Investor. June, 1903.

Kansas City Post, February 1926 (an article about Argentine from this magazine was found in the Kansas Room Collection of the Kansas City Kansas Public Library).

Leibengood, "Labor Problems in the Second Year of Governor Martin's Administration," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, (1936).

Peterson, Elmer T. "Big Dam Foolishness," The Readers Digest, July, 1952.

Newspapers and Newsletters

Argentine Republic (now called the Silver City Record).

Kansas City Advertiser (now called the Silver City Record).

Kansas City Gazette.

Kansas City Journal.

Kansas City Kansan.

Kansas City Star.

Kansas City Structural Steel Company (this was a similar newsletter to that formerly issued by the Management Club of the company).

Kansas City Structural Steel News (this was a newsletter printed by the company's Credit Union).

Kansas City Times.

The Weekly Journal, Wyandotte County's Community Spirited Weekly.

Government Reports

Kansas Board of Engineers, Report of the Board. Report on Flood Protection in the Kansas River Basin for the Kansas Industrial Development Commission. Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office.

United States Army Corps of Engineers, Report of the Corps. Kansas Water Resources Development. Dallas, Texas: Government Press, 1971.

U. S. Congress. House Committee on Appropriation: Rehabilitation of Flood Stricken Areas. Hearings before a subcommittee of the committee on appropriations, 82nd Congress. 1st Session, 1951.

United States Department of the Interior, Water Resources Division, Geological Water Supply Survey Paper. Kansas, Missouri Floods of July, 1951. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1952.

Urban Renewal Agency of Kansas City, Kansas. "1972 Annual Report." Kansas City, Kansas: Government Press, 1972.

Published Booklets

Argentine High School Dedication Program for the Shop Addition, January 23, 1940 (this can be found in the Argentine file of the records of the Board of Education Building, Kansas City, Kansas).

Argentine High School Junior Class of 1973, "Argentine Hi-Lites," (a short history of the high school compiled by students and published by the high school's journalism class, 1973).

Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education. "Facts about New Schools in Kansas City, Kansas, 1972."

Kansas City Kansas Board of Education. "J. C. Harmon High School," 1972.

Kansas City Kansas Board of Education. "Silver City Elementary School," 1972.

Poppino, Hattie E. "History of the Argentine Community and Argentine High School," Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education, 1965.

Santa Fe Railroad, Argentine Yard. Kansas City, Kansas: Santa Fe Press, 1973.

Unpublished Works

Allison, Robert Dean. "The Early Development and Progress of Kansas City, Kansas." Unpublished Master of Science Thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1960.

Channel, Wesley, Beckie Fabian and Mary Jo Williamson. "And Then Came Argentine." Unpublished report written by three Argentine High School students in 1961. This report is in the possession of Mr. Robert Allison, Counselor at Harmon High School, 2104 Steele Road, Kansas City, Kansas

Fitch, Howard A. "Fifty-four Years of Construction Changes in Kansas City," This article, written in April 1940 by Mr. Fitch, was found among the official records of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

"Franklin Grade School History." This was an unpublished report of 1940 found in the Franklin Grade School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools.

Hammer, Clint J. F. "A History of Wyandotte County Kansas." Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, Colorado State College of Education, Greeley, Colorado, 1948.

Imes, Freida Merle Graybill. "The Flood of 1903." This was an unpublished paper written in 1972 and found in the Kansas Room Collection of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library.

"Lincoln School History." This was an unpublished report of 1940 found in the Lincoln Grade School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools.

Miller, Terry. "The Kansas City Smelting and Refining Company." This was an unpublished paper written in April 1948 and found in the Argentine file of the Silver City Record, 3416 Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas.

"Noble Prentis Grade School History." This was an unpublished report of 1940 found in the Noble Prentis Grade School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools.

Poppino, Hattie E. "History of the Argentine Community and Argentine High School." This was an unpublished paper written in 1965 and found in the Kansas Room Collection of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library.

Servos, Gloria A. "Argentine, the Silver City." This was an unpublished paper written in 1962 and found in the Argentine file of the Silver City Record at 3416 Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas.

"Stanley Grade School History." This was an unpublished report of 1940 found in the Stanley Grade School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools.

Swender, Clyde E. "Building a Vocational Technical Program for Argentine High School." Master of Science Thesis, Emporia State Teachers College, 1936.

Webster, Marye Ruth. "History of Emerson Grade School." This unpublished report can be found in the Stanley Grade School file of the Board of Education Office of the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools.

Wyandotte County Clippings, Volume I. "Victory for Argentine." This is an undated newspaper clipping that can be found in the Argentine file of the Kansas State Historical Society at 10th and Jackson, Topeka, Kansas.

Interviews

Campbell, Cornelius T., personal interview held in his home at 1501 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 21, 1974.

Chaney, Lawrence, personal interview held at Argentine Middle School at 22nd and Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 12, 1974.

Couch, Elizabeth, personal interview held in her home at 2434 South 47th Street, Kansas City, Kansas on February 18, 1974.

Culp, Glen, personal interview held in his home at 2514 South 49th Terrace, Kansas City, Kansas on February 25, 1974.

Larson, Joseph L., personal interview held in his home at 1208 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 1, 1974.

Harmon, J. C., personal interviews held in his home at 1424 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on January 7, and January 11, 1974.

Moody, Earl, personal interview held in his home at 2900 Steele Road, Kansas City, Kansas on March 7, 1974.

Russell, Jr., John, interview held in his office at the Russell Steel Company, 2221 Metropolitan, Kansas City, Kansas on April 14, 1974.

Schlatter, Ruth, interview in her office at the Industrial State Bank, 32nd and Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas on April 14, 1974.

Scott, Frank, personal interview held with the Principal of Stanley Grade School at 36th and Metropolitan, Kansas City, Kansas on March 12, 1974.

Shutt, Edwin Dale, Sr., personal interview held in his home at 2428 South 47th Street, Kansas City, Kansas on November 18 and November 28, 1973.

Shutt, Mabel M., personal interview held at her home at 2428 South 47th Street, Kansas City, Kansas on December 10, 1973.

Smith, Denny M., personal interview in his home at 6130 Riverview, Kansas City, Kansas on March 31, 1974.

Swender, Clyde E., personal letter written by him from Blue Mound, Kansas.

Steffens, Charles H., interview held in his office at the Argentine Savings and Loan Association, 3004 Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas on April 14, 1974.

Zane, Bob, Chief Clerk to the Superintendent, Santa Fe Railroad, interview held in his office at 4515 Kansas Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas on March 5, 1974.

Collections and Records Consulted

The Argentine Branch Library.

The Argentine files of the Kansas City Star and Kansas City Kansan newspapers.

Kansas City Kansas Board of Education Records.

Kansas City Kansas Public Library.

The Kansas State Historical Society at Topeka.

Kansas City Structural Steel Company Records.

The Johnson County Public Library.

The Simmons Collection of the Simmons Funeral Home in Argentine.

The Wyandotte County Historical Society.