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Thomas L. Boeche
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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"Where Life is Simple and Passions Moderate":
A History of Nebraska City, Nebraska, 1900-1910

by
Thomas L. Boeche

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate College at the University of Nebraska at Omaha
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

Major: History

Under the Supervision of Professor Harl A. Dalstrom

Omaha, Nebraska

December, 1995

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate
College, University of Nebraska, in partial
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Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

Harold A. Delstrom History
Name Department/School

Michael L. Tate History

Orville D Menard Political Science

Chairperson Harold A. Delstrom

Date November 20, 1995

"Where Life is Simple and Passions Moderate":

A History of Nebraska City, Nebraska, 1900-1910

Thomas L. Boeche, M.A.
University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1995

Adviser: Professor Harl A. Dalstrom

Nebraska City vied with Omaha for leadership in early Nebraska, but by the first decade of the twentieth century was struggling to hold its own. Unlike earlier periods in its history, scant attention has been devoted to turn-of-the-century Nebraska City. To effectively document the decade 1900-1910, one must deal with a variety of historical, economic, and social issues. Perhaps the most important point to consider is the shift in population from 7,380 in 1900, to only 5,488 in 1910.

After weathering the Depression of the 1890s, this small town underwent drastic economic changes during the first decade of the twentieth century. There was a significant amount of labor unrest, and some major industries closed their doors, resulting in several hundred lost jobs. These events apparently made for a decade of declining population and economic uncertainty. The decade also brought changes in local agricultural production which may have had some bearing upon Nebraska City's livelihood.

Nevertheless, Nebraska City avoided a total economic collapse. The town retained its vital rail connections, and continued its role as a regional trade center. A great diversity in occupations, the introduction of new businesses, the expansion

of some existing industries, and a variety of community improvement and public works projects established a foundation for renewed population growth from 1910 to 1920.

Throughout the decade, Nebraska City's social fabric remained largely intact. Like many communities during this era, Nebraska City was caught up in a variety of social concerns such as prohibition and the suffrage question. Institutions such as churches, schools, clubs, lodges, athletic associations, and local government continued to thrive despite economic uncertainty. The city would never achieve its long-cherished dreams of great economic and political power; but the people persevered, and enabled Nebraska City to remain a prominent community.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

After researching and writing a paper on Sidney, Iowa for Professor Harl Dalstrom's graduate seminar, "Prairie Novel as History," I became very interested in pursuing a town history as a master's thesis project. I chose to deal with Nebraska City, which is my hometown, and in which I have always had a great interest.

There is a fair amount of work covering Nebraska City during the 1800s, including three master's theses, numerous articles on topics such as overland freighting and steamboating, and Glenn Noble's very enjoyable book, Frontier Steamboat Town. However, very little work has been done on Nebraska City at the turn-of-the-century. The period 1900-1910 is particularly noteworthy in view of the significant decline in the city's population, from 7,380 to only 5,488.

Chapter One of this work deals with Nebraska City's founding, and its development until 1899. The town began as a military outpost on the banks of the Missouri River in 1846, and was incorporated in 1854. The community grew fairly rapidly, and vied with Omaha for leadership in early Nebraska. During the 1860s, Nebraska City became a major terminal for the overland freighting business, and played host to the famous Russell, Majors and Waddell freighting firm. However, the freighting business died out in the late 1860s, and Nebraska City lost a good deal of prominence in the state. When Omaha gained the

transcontinental railroad, and later, when Lincoln was named the state capital, Nebraska City's economic and political influence waned even further.

In the late 1800s, the town strove to become an industrial center. A meat-packing plant, breweries, distillery and corn starch plant provided hundreds of jobs, and helped make Nebraska City the third-largest industrial center in the state. Railroads also made their way to town, with five lines radiating from the city by the late 1880s. The area's agricultural producers also played a large role in the city's economy, with many industries in town dependent upon raw materials provided by Nebraska City's agricultural hinterland. When the Depression of the 1890s struck, the town appeared to weather the storm well, holding nearly steady in population. However, over fifty years of "progress and prosperity" were shaken during the decade 1900-1910, when economic change and uncertainty struck Nebraska City.

Chapter Two deals with the town's society during the first decade of the twentieth century. The population was over eighty-eight percent native-born in both 1900 and 1910, and overwhelmingly midwestern in origin. It is important to note, however, that over thirty percent of the residents were either foreign-born or first-generation Americans, thus foreign cultures made a large impact upon the town. Nebraska City was particularly influenced by its large German population. Race played a smaller role in local society than did ethnicity;

Nebraska City's population of blacks was 142 in 1900, and 81 in 1910.

Like other midwestern communities, Nebraska City was class-conscious to a certain degree. Small town class structure was often based upon values such as wealth, occupation, activity in associations, national origin, and place of residence. Nebraska City had groups of "involved" citizens prominent in church, lodge, and government. On the other hand, there were also a large number of "common" day laborers who, according to the local papers, continually failed to act in a socially acceptable manner, or refused to keep their yards tended to the satisfaction of the papers' editors.

The church was the most prevalent form of social interaction in the city, and church membership apparently remained strong despite the town's economic decline. There were eighteen churches and several other smaller religious and quasi-religious groups active during the decade. Along with the churches, the public schools played a large role in local society. The town supported seven public school buildings, and the student enrollment held steady at about 1,000 students per year throughout the decade.

Politics also played a part in Nebraska City's social life. Despite producing such political notables as J. Sterling Morton and Judge William Hayward, Nebraska City seemed fairly complacent regarding local politics. The town's city council dealt with issues ranging from the levying of a poll tax, problems with

community cleanliness, and alcohol and drug abuse. The city police also often had to deal with problems caused by wandering bands of beggars and transients.

Nebraska City women were active in two organizations which played a vital role in early twentieth century Nebraska politics--the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Women's Suffrage Association. Local women worked hard to gain the vote for females, and played host to the state women's suffrage convention in 1903.

There was also a great political controversy dealing with Sunday business-closing laws, and how townspeople should choose to observe the Sabbath day. In 1901, Nebraska City's mayor ordered the closings of most businesses on Sundays, a controversial move which seemed very unpopular with many residents. The next year, in 1902, a group of Nebraska Citizens, calling themselves the Law and Order League, complained about men and boys playing baseball on Sundays. Despite an overwhelming vote in a referendum held in July, 1902, to allow Sunday baseball, the mayor ordered a stop to games on Sundays. These controversies over Sunday observances continued throughout the decade.

In addition to churches, schools, and politics, Nebraska City's social clubs and lodges played an active role in local society. Groups such as the Mason's, Eagles, Elks, Grand Army of the Republic, Harmony Rebekah Lodge, and the Nebraska City Women's Club were active in the town, and provided many citizens

with a valuable social outlet. Athletics were a very popular pastime for Nebraska Citians between 1900 and 1910. Baseball was the most popular sport, and the town fielded a large collection of teams. The local press also covered hometown football teams, as well as the track team and the high school girls' basketball team. Sports-minded residents could also enjoy games of tennis and rounds of golf at the Overland Country Club, or participate in games of "ten pins" at May's bowling alley. Other popular leisure activities included the annual chautauqua, movies, theater performances at the Overland Theater, and band concerts by the Merchants' Band and Orchestra.

Despite the precipitous drop in population from 1900 to 1910, the social fabric of Nebraska City remained intact. Unfortunately, economic realities sometimes threatened social idealism, such as during the early twentieth century in Nebraska City.

Chapter Three attempts to detail the harsh economic realities with which the city was forced to deal. The decade 1900-1910 brought the closings of several industries, which helps to explain the city's significant drop in population following several years of growth and expansion. The decade began with promise, with the town having twenty factories producing fifty commodities that filled two railroad trains daily. In 1900, Nebraska City was the third largest manufacturing center in the state, ranking behind only Omaha and South Omaha in value of production.

The city's foremost industry was the Argo Starch works, which employed between 200 and 500 workers, and provided a market for local farmers' corn crops. Other important employers included the Otoe Preserving Company, the Morton-Gregson packing plant, the King Drill Company, Inter-Ocean Shirt Factory, and the O.L. Gregory Vinegar Company.

In 1900, 2,669 residents listed 256 different occupations in the Federal Census. Ten years later, the number of workers dropped to 2,102, while the number of occupations remained almost steady at 249. The most common occupation in both 1900 and 1910 was laborer, or day laborer, with other common jobs including carpenter, teamster, teacher, dressmaker, and clerk.

Perhaps because of an exceptional wage disparity between the city's laborers and salaried officials, there was a great deal of labor activity and strife. There was a surprising number of labor unions present in town, including the Retail Clerks' Protective Association, Milkmen's Union, Teamsters' Union, Butchers' and Meat Cutters' Union, and the Starch Factory Employees' Union, among many others.

Several strikes occurred during the decade, including an unsuccessful action by the Starch Factory employees in 1903. The most prominent labor strife to hit Nebraska City was the strikes by the Amalgamated Meat Cutters' Union against the Morton Gregson plant in 1902 and 1904. These unsuccessful work stoppages led to bitter feelings, violence and division within the community.

Nebraska City's economy began to slow by 1903-1904. Most likely due to high labor costs and high corn prices, the Argo Starch plant shut down in the summer of 1904, resulting in between 200 and 500 lost jobs. The Faultless Castor Company and the King Drill Factory both cut their workforces drastically as well, resulting in another 150 lost jobs. These closings and cutbacks were the major reasons for the steep population drop suffered by the city during the decade. However, Nebraska City industry managed to hold on due to expansion in meat-packing, the alfalfa mill, and other firms. Main Street merchants were also affected by the tough economic times. Promotions such as "sales days," and projects undertaken by the Nebraska City Commercial Club, attempted to stem the town's economic decline.

Government institutions and public works programs also added to the city's economy. Nebraska City had a gas company as well as a water and light company during the decade. In 1910, the city began construction of a sanitary sewer system. A city hospital was established in 1902, with much of the cost shouldered by local businesses and churches. Public buildings constructed during the decade included a firehouse, a remodeled city hall, and a renovated public library. Street and sidewalk paving were contentious issues throughout the decade, with residents generally suffering from very poor transportation routes.

Nebraska City's economic decline stemmed directly from

a failure to keep several well-established key industries. Due to improved means of transportation it had also become easier for city residents and area farmers to trade in other markets. However, Nebraska City managed to retain some of its industries, and attract some new manufacturers as well. The city rebounded sufficiently from its dramatic population loss to begin a new period of growth from 1910 to 1920.

The fourth and final chapter of this project deals with transportation and agriculture. Railroads were the most important means of transportation for the city's businesses, residents, and area farmers. Nebraska City had two railroad depots which handled numerous arrivals and departures each day. By the turn of the century, river transportation had diminished greatly from the steamboating heyday of the 1860s. The Nebraska City streetcar system provided an important means of local transportation, with horse and mule-drawn streetcars serving the city until 1910. The automobile also made its first appearance in town in 1901; however, poor roads and washed-out bridges often made travel around the area almost impossible.

Along with local businesses and industries, agriculture was a major component of Nebraska City's economy. The interdependence between Nebraska City's local economy and the city's agricultural hinterland played a key role in the town's development. By the early 1900s, technology had made farmers' jobs easier, with great improvements in a variety of implements. However, horses and mules still provided the chief source of

power on the farm.

Otoe County farmers were blessed with the advantage of farming in an area of rich, fertile soil, which is excellent for corn production. Weather conditions were also kind to Nebraska farmers during the decade, with abundant rainfall, no prolonged periods of drought, and no widespread insect invasions. Although the area farmers benefited from good weather, high crop prices, and increased land values, production during the decade was inconsistent. There were major declines in corn and oat production, but there was also a marked increase in the production of wheat. Fluctuations also occurred in Otoe County livestock and dairy production, with decreases in milk, swine and cattle production, and increases in cream production, horses, mules, sheep and goats. Agricultural employment in Nebraska City decreased during the decade. The number of residents employed as farmers, farm laborers, and in various agriculture-related positions dropped from 140 in 1900 to only seventy in 1910.

From social life, to business and industry, to transportation and agriculture, hopefully this thesis provides a detailed look at many of the facets of Nebraska City life in the early twentieth century. My objective has been to produce a solid, informative, enjoyable account of a heretofore overlooked subject--the history of Nebraska City, 1900-1910.

Chapter One

"Progress and Improvement":
Nebraska City's Early Years, 1846-1899

The settlement of Nebraska City began with the establishment of a military post in 1846. The location on the banks of the Missouri River between North and South Table Creeks had first been mentioned as a potential military site by the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804. During the 1840s the army determined that the Table Creek plateau would provide a strategic location from which troops could protect settlers moving westward. An added benefit of the location was that it could be supplied easily by riverboats traveling up the Missouri. Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny was in charge of the detachment which laid out and constructed the log blockhouse and cabins that became Fort Kearny, the first military post established in what would become Nebraska since Fort Atkinson, near the modern town of Ft. Calhoun, had been abandoned in 1827.¹

By 1848 the army realized that the Table Creek site was not the best location for a post meant to protect settlers traveling west along the Platte River Road. The majority of emigrants traveling along the Platte came from Independence and St. Joseph, Missouri, and intersected with the Platte over 150 miles to the west of this original Fort Kearny. In order to better serve the steadily increasing flow of emigrants, the army abandoned the Table Creek site in 1848, and established a new, permanent Fort Kearny 169 miles to the west on the banks

of the Platte.²

Upon abandonment of Old Fort Kearny, the government left its property in charge of a Mr. Hardin in 1848, who was succeeded by John Boulware in 1849. Hiram P. Downs took over the site a year later and was in charge until the government gave up all claim to Old Fort Kearny.³ Although the army deserted the post, the log blockhouse remained, and would become a part of Nebraska City, serving as a printing office, court room, drug store, butcher shop and jail.⁴

The earliest settlers, or squatters, of the Nebraska City area following the removal of the army, were John Boulware, his son, John B. Boulware, and Hiram P. Downs, but the region was not officially opened to settlement until the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854.⁵ Although the future site of Nebraska City was then legally opened for settlement, the Pawnee Indians did not relinquish their claims to the area until the signing of the Table Creek Treaty on September 24, 1857.⁶ John Boulware's land claim occupied the eventual Kearney Addition south of the present town. John B. Boulware's claim consisted of the future South Nebraska City Addition, and Hiram P. Downs' 160 acre claim comprised the site of the original Nebraska City.⁷

In April, 1854, Stephen F. Nuckolls, a native of Virginia and the "chief founder of Nebraska City," along with Allen A. Bradford and Hiram P. Downs, became joint owners of Downs' claim, and they had a townsite surveyed and staked-off. The first survey stake was driven on July 10, 1854, and on March 7 of

the following year the Territorial Legislature established Otoe County and declared Nebraska City to be the county seat.⁸

Kearney City was incorporated on March 16, 1855, South Nebraska City on January 26, 1856, and Prairie City in August, 1858.⁹ All four communities were consolidated and incorporated as Nebraska City in late 1858.¹⁰

The new city grew rapidly because of its favorable location on the Missouri River. The census of 1854 showed that of the original 450 settlers in Nebraska City, 31 percent were from the Midwest, 30 percent from the South, 18 percent from border states, 14 percent from the North and 7 percent from foreign countries.¹¹ These early settlers worked quickly to establish the framework of a town. The first post office in Nebraska was established as early as 1853.¹² A frame church building was established by the Baptist congregation two years later, and the Methodist Episcopal congregation had constructed a brick church by 1856.¹³ Nebraska City could also boast of the first high school building in Nebraska, built in 1864 for a cost of \$31,000.¹⁴ Early leaders such as Hiram P. Downs of Maine, a man of "liberal views, great energy and thorough honesty," and Stephen F. Nuckolls, "a man of intrepid courage, of indomitable energy, to whom Nebraska will ever remain indebted," led the town forward with a great sense of optimism.¹⁵

Nebraska City was full of a sense of importance and an optimism that bigger and better things were yet to come. The original members of the town company pushed hard for

expansion and economic growth. Nebraska City businessmen, in an early example of community boosterism, "bulled" the land market "with at least enough confidence in their town to infuse some others . . . as to cause them to invest in lots in the 'future emporium of Nebraska.'"¹⁶

The decade of the 1850s brought considerable growth in both population and economic influence to Nebraska City. William and Kennett McLennan brought the first steam ferry boat to Nebraska City in 1854, and thereafter steamboat traffic on the Missouri River provided one of the keys to the town's development.¹⁷ Westward emigration caused thousands of settlers to follow the path of the Missouri River, a highway to the west "through which coursed Mormons, miners, soldiers, fur traders, and goods for all of them. . . ." ¹⁸ The levee at Nebraska City was continuously busy with steamboat traffic. Located downriver from South Table Creek, the levee was three or four blocks long, and 160 feet wide.¹⁹ At the height of the steamboat era in the early 1860s, Nebraska City saw the arrival of 300 boats in a season, with as many as six packets docked at any one time.²⁰

Steamboat traffic indeed played a large role in early Nebraska City, but the major factor which put the town on the map was the overland freighting business. The largest freighting firm in the west at the time was Russell, Majors and Waddell, headquartered at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.²¹ The firm contracted with the federal government to transport military supplies to

army posts and Indian agencies in the west. Russell, Majors and Waddell needed a starting point on the Missouri River which was close to the Platte River road in order to transport supplies westward. A heated contest arose between many Missouri River towns to become the terminus for Russell, Majors and Waddell's freighting venture. Eventually, in February, 1858, Nebraska City was chosen to be the new terminal point, due to its favorable location on the banks of the Missouri, its excellent dock and warehouse facilities, and the fact that it was closer to the western areas to be served than was Ft. Leavenworth.²² Alexander Majors, one of the freighting firm's three partners, asked Nebraska City to provide certain improvements. At a public meeting held in Nebraska City, Majors requested "improvement of the levee, the suppression of liquor shops . . . and the survey of a direct route to Fort Kearny, with bridges to be built on the route, and obstructions removed."²³ The business leaders of Nebraska City, ever eager to expand and improve their town, were quick to agree to Majors' conditions. The selection of Nebraska City by the company "established it as the second most important town in the territory, giving it a more important relative position than it has enjoyed since."²⁴

The freighting trail between Nebraska City and Fort Kearny became a principal highway to the west. As the freighting business grew, Russell, Majors and Waddell helped Nebraska City develop in order to handle its economic expansion. The Prairie City Addition to Nebraska City was established, in which

the company purchased a number of lots for \$19,000. The firm built a store, warehouse, corral, and a house for Majors.²⁵ In all, the freighting firm spent over \$300,000 in developing Nebraska City into a major freighting terminus.²⁶

Steamboats and freight wagons thus established Nebraska City as a growing, influential city. Optimism was high, speculation in land and business was flourishing, and a great deal of money was flowing into and through Nebraska City. Banks were established to deal with the freighting firms and the auxiliary businesses which sprang up to supply them. Stores and shops were opened to help outfit the stream of gold miners and emigrants who flowed through town. Nebraska City served as the jumping-off point for many of the speculators involved in the Pike's Peak gold rush of 1859. The principal business of some Nebraska City banks was the purchase of gold dust brought back from the Colorado mines.²⁷

In September of 1859, Nebraska City was host to Nebraska's first Territorial Fair. Prominent resident J. Sterling Morton made a moving speech predicting the great future in store for Nebraska.²⁸ Nebraska City, at the height of the freighting era, had high hopes of fulfilling her dreams of greatness, and long strove to supplant Omaha as the most influential city in the territory. The Federal Census of 1860 showed that Nebraska City, with a population of 1,922, was slightly larger than Omaha, which had a population of 1,883.²⁹

In order to expand the freighting business and the economy

even further, civic leaders set out in the spring of 1860 to develop a shorter and better route between the city and Fort Kearny. The original freighting trail led from Nebraska City to Ashland, and then turned west along the Platte River, joining the main Platte road in Hall County.³⁰ A surveying party financed by Nebraska City developed a new path, which ran straight west from Nebraska City, across Salt Creek and the Big Blue River, to just east of Fort Kearny some 169 miles to the west. This new trail, named the "Nebraska City Cut-Off," was seventy-five miles shorter than the previous trail. It offered westward travelers a smooth grade with few obstructions, and an abundance of water, grass and timber. Otoe County voted \$20,000 in bonds to build bridges on the new trail.³¹ Nebraska City residents had once again placed their own resources on the line in order to stimulate more economic expansion.

In the midst of all the confidence over the growing economy, a tragedy struck the community on May 12, 1860, when a good deal of the business district was destroyed by fire. The blaze began in the Coleman Butcher Shop on South Sixth Street, and, driven by a high wind, the fire spread quickly. In about three hours, approximately forty buildings had been destroyed. The material loss was great, and of the \$60,000 in insurance recovered, only \$3,000 was reinvested in Nebraska City. The majority of the money reinvested in Nebraska City was spent by Thomas Morton to build new facilities for Nebraska's oldest newspaper, the News. According to historian A.T. Andreas, the

fire ended the era of speculation and rapid expansion in Nebraska City: "The days of slow but steady growth had come."³² However, the first issue of the News published after the fire indicated Nebraska City's determination to succeed, even in the face of tragic circumstances:

Nebraska City still lives; a loss of \$100,000 or more can by no means impede the growth and development of our city. The great fire has apparently served to arouse our citizens to renewed energy and activity. Progress and improvement is still the watchword in all parts of the city.³³

After the fire, the optimism and the booster mentality of Nebraska City's business leaders continued. A Board of Trade was established in 1861 with Stephen F. Nuckolls as president to help promote the community's economic expansion.³⁴ Even after Russell, Majors and Waddell went bankrupt in 1861, the freighting business in Nebraska City continued to grow. Numerous smaller firms sprang up to fill the void left by the collapsing giant. All told, over sixty freighting firms operated out of Nebraska City, including Coe and Carter; the Gilman Brothers; Hosford and Gaynon; John Coad; Ben Holladay; Wells, Fargo and Company; Hawke, Nuckolls and Company; A. and P. Byrum; Moses Stocking; R.M. and D.P. Rolfe; H.T. Clarke and Company; and Moses Sydenham.³⁵

Nebraska City was also witness to the great Steam Wagon adventure in 1862. Major J.R. Brown developed a steam-powered tractor which was intended to pull a string of wagons. The so-called steam wagon was ferried across the Missouri River,

and made a triumphant parade through the streets of Nebraska City. The tractor was "as high as an ordinary cottage," with drive wheels twelve feet in diameter and two feet across.³⁶ The steam wagon departed Nebraska City in the spring of 1862, pulling ten wagons westward on the Nebraska City Cut-Off. After traveling only eight miles out of town, a casting broke, and the steam wagon stuttered to a halt. This unusual machine sat idle on the side of the road for ten years when it was finally sold for scrap. The legacy of the experiment was the rechristening of the Nebraska City Cut-Off as the Steamwagon Road.³⁷

Amidst the economic boom of the freighting years, the issues of slavery and the American Civil War also had an impact upon Nebraska City. A group of abolitionists was very active in the vicinity of Tabor, Iowa, across the Missouri River from Nebraska City. The well-known radical abolitionist John Brown, in conjunction with the abolitionists in Tabor, perhaps passed through Nebraska City while helping runaway slaves escape from Missouri. From 1855 to 1860, Nebraska was home to approximately ten to fifteen slaves, with most held in Nebraska City, including those owned by Stephen F. Nuckolls and Alexander Majors. On December 5, 1860, two slaves, Hercules and Martha, were auctioned in the streets of Nebraska City by the Otoe County sheriff. This auction was the last gasp of the slave trade in the Nebraska Territory, since slavery was abolished by the legislature in January, 1861.³⁸ The Civil War was also brought close to home

during 1862 when marauding Jayhawkers from Kansas committed several robberies and horse thefts in southeastern Nebraska. A vigilance group was formed in Nebraska City to guard against these raids, with over 200 residents taking an oath of allegiance to the Union.³⁹

Throughout the war years, however, the freighting business and the city continued to grow. The high water mark of the freighting era was 1865, when a total of 44,000,000 pounds were transported, employing 4,000 workers, 31,000 oxen, and 3,000 mules.⁴⁰ Nebraska City also acquired a rough and tumble, wide-open frontier town character. Saloons, dance halls, and gambling dens were populated with an assortment of "rollicking bullwhackers, mule skimmers and plain teamsters."⁴¹ A man visiting Nebraska City in 1866 described one of the city's "first class" hotels:

With a few exceptions the crowds of men who thronged the dining hall at mealtimes were armed with pistols. There was one peculiarity--not one man in ten would look me squarely in the face. Those who would not meet the eye, I set down as, 'Rebs,' 'deserters,' 'bushwhackers,' or 'guerillas,' and there are any amount of them there. This winter it has not been safe for a man to go on the streets after dark alone.⁴²

These "wild west" days were numbered for Nebraska City, however, because by 1866 the wagon freighting era was starting to decline. The transcontinental railroad was being established through Omaha, and this would spell the end of Nebraska City as a major river port and freighting terminus. By 1867, most of the freighting business in Nebraska City had ended, although a few firms operated through the 1868 season.⁴³ As the

freighting jobs faded away, so too did the population, for the number of residents dropped from 6,050 in 1870 to only 4,183 in 1880. By contrast, Omaha, Nebraska City's long-time rival, with the enormous economic impact of the transcontinental railroad, grew from 16,083 in 1870, to 30,518 in 1880.⁴⁴

Omaha had finally withstood the challenge of Nebraska City to become the dominant power. Nebraska City lost the rivalry with Omaha due to a number of factors. Like Nebraska City, Omaha was a major transportation center. Although only twenty-four freighting firms had operated out of Omaha as compared to over sixty in Nebraska City, Omaha also established itself as a center for mail service and as a trading and transportation point for emigrants moving west.⁴⁵ When rail and river transportation through the southern states was disrupted by the Civil War, many emigrants chose a route through Iowa, thus avoiding war-torn Missouri. This northerly emigration route, and Omaha's relative proximity to the large northern population centers led thousands of emigrants to Nebraska's largest city.⁴⁶ Most importantly, Omaha was assured of a direct rail line to the east because the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Charter established Council Bluffs, Iowa as the western terminus for the railroad. Speculators and investors from Council Bluffs thus eagerly promoted the expansion of Omaha.⁴⁷ Omaha also had strong ties with powerful northern politicians who before and after the Civil War helped Omaha gain the territorial capital as well as the transcontinental railroad.

Nebraska City, on the other hand, had been settled largely by southerners and people from the border states, and so lacked the political clout of Omaha.⁴⁸

Given Omaha's power, in 1858-1859, some Nebraska City leaders had even backed a movement to add the Nebraska Territory south of the Platte River to the proposed state of Kansas.⁴⁹ Later on, political leaders such as J. Sterling Morton, the future Secretary of Agriculture under Grover Cleveland, and founder of Arbor Day, led Nebraska City at the head of the South Platte faction which lobbied successfully to place the permanent capital of Nebraska south of the Platte River. The Nebraska City News of June 14, 1867, reported that Otoe County political leaders voted to place the state capital south of the Platte and west of the Missouri, "not because they loved Omaha less, but Nebraska City more."⁵⁰ Ironically, this love for Nebraska City meant that Lincoln, along with Omaha, would overtake Nebraska City in political and economic power and influence.⁵¹

Following the end of the steamboat and freighting era, Nebraska City did not quietly accept its diminished status. Instead, city leaders and businessmen began aggressively pushing for a railroad to serve the city. This was an enormously expensive venture, but construction was seen as "a general public enterprise to which all were expected to contribute in one way or another."⁵² Business leaders and residents of Nebraska City managed to raise enough capital to begin construction on the Midland Pacific line between Nebraska City and Lincoln. The

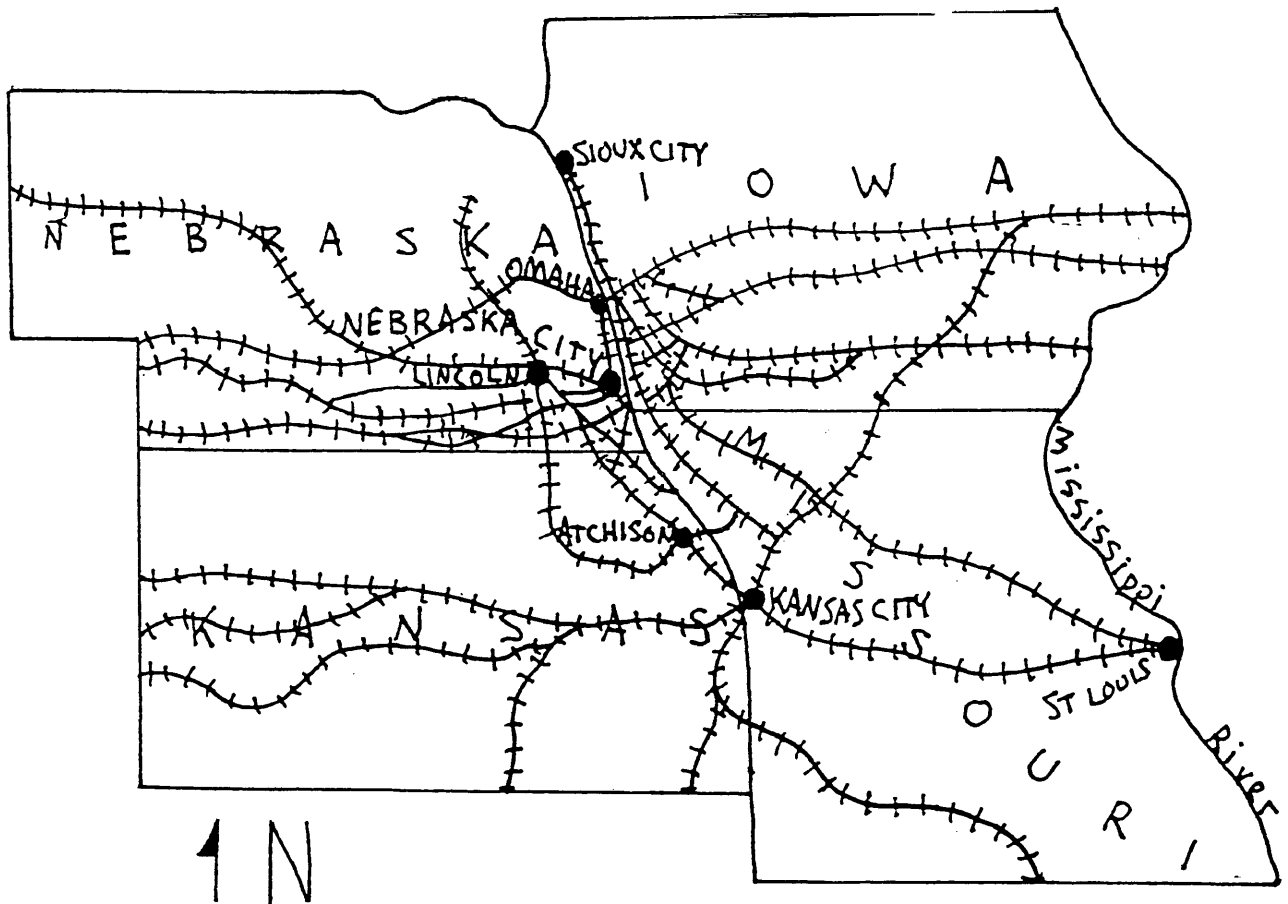
line was built westward from Nebraska City, and on April 23, 1871, some 1,500 people, seated upon seventeen flat cars, made the first excursion from Nebraska City to Lincoln.⁵³

Other railroads eventually made their way to Nebraska City. Rail service between Nebraska City and Brownville was established in the spring of 1875. The always-active community boosters also managed through various economic incentives to bring the Missouri Pacific line to town in 1887.⁵⁴ By the end of the 1880s, there were five rail lines which radiated from Nebraska City.⁵⁵

During the late 1860s and 1870s, Nebraska City also began to concentrate on industrial development. The era of big money freighting and speculation had ended, but the city now tried its hand at becoming an industrial leader. The Nebraska Distilling Company, which covered a two-square block area and employed several hundred men, was one of the city's first major industries. The distilling company also represented a lucrative market for area farmers as it purchased some 5,000 bushels of corn and 1,000 bushels of barley daily. Other industries established during the 1870s included the Nebraska City Gaslight Company, the Nebraska City Iron Works, Welsh's Planing Mill, and the Reed Plow Company which could turn out 250 plows per day.⁵⁶ The city was boosted even further when the state legislature appropriated \$10,000 for the construction of a school for the blind. Nebraska Citizens also raised \$3,000 of their own money to aid in the construction of the school which was

Map 1

Nebraska City as a Railroad Center, 1888



Source: Redrawn from S.H. Calhoun, Jr. Nebraska City: A Reflex of Its Importance as a Commercial and Manufacturing Center. Nebraska City: Staats-Zeitung Printing House, 1888, n.p.

formally opened on March 10, 1875.⁵⁷

The 1880s saw a further emphasis upon the economic well-being of Nebraska City. The city's businessmen formed a new Board of Trade in February, 1882, with the goal of promoting the "superior advantages" of Nebraska City, in the hopes of attracting more and varied industries.⁵⁸ New companies established during that decade included the Nebraska City Canning Company, the Chicago Packing Company and the Nebraska City Manufacturing Company which produced barbed wire, plows, harrows, and cultivators.⁵⁹ A Public Water Works was organized in 1887 to pump water from the river into a standpipe which was 100 feet high, twelve feet in diameter, and held 90,000 gallons of water. Nebraska City advanced further into the information age in 1881 with the establishment of the Mutual Telephone and Telegraph Company which operated until the early 1890s when it was taken over by Nebraska Bell Telephone. Other industries which Nebraska City managed to attract during the 1880s included two beef packing companies and two breweries.⁶⁰

A big boon to Nebraska City was the establishment of a permanent bridge across the Missouri River. Initially, a huge pontoon bridge, twenty-four feet wide and 894 feet long, was constructed during the summer of 1888. Once again, Nebraska Citians had risen to the occasion and provided \$13,000 towards the total construction cost of \$20,000. The pontoon bridge provided a much needed link across the Missouri, but the novel experiment was destined to last only one season. In August

Table I

Mercantile Enterprises in Nebraska City, 1888

Type of Business	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees
Academies	2	16
Agricultural Implements	7	38
Artists	3	3
Artists Material	3	8
Auctioneers	3	3
Attorneys at Law	-	19
Books & Stationery	4	11
Boots & Shoes	16	75
Bus & Baggage	2	25
Carpets	4	17
Cigars & Tobacco	35	106
Confectionery	22	74
Clothing	10	46
Coal	4	21
China	1	5
Contractors	12	46
Dentists	4	9
Drugs	7	15
Dry Goods	16	64
Fruits & Nuts	6	23
Furniture & Household Goods	3	12
Furnishing Goods	12	48
Groceries & Provisions	29	100
Guns & Sporting Goods	2	8
Hardware	5	24
Harness & Saddlery	3	12
Hay, Grain & Feed	2	6
Hides, Wool & Tallow	1	5
Hotels	7	60
Ice Companies	2	12
Jewelry & Watches	4	12
Laundries	5	17
Leather & Findings	1	5
Livery	2	25
Lumber	4	20
Loans (exclusive of Banks)	6	7
Meats, Dressed	7	32
Millinery	5	21
Musical Instruments	3	7
Restaurants	4	11
Sewing Machines	4	13
Theatres	2	7

Source: S.H. Calhoun, Jr. Nebraska City A Reflex of Its Importance as a Commercial and Manufacturing Center. Nebraska City: Staats-Zeitung Printing House, 1888, p. 10.

Table II

Manufacturing Enterprises in Nebraska City, 1888

Type of Manufacture	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees
Boots & Shoes	9	15
Box Makers	1	2
Breweries	2	20
Brick Yards	4	75
Broom Factory	1	4
Blacksmith	8	10
Bottlers	2	5
Carriages & Wagons	2	5
Canned Goods	1	27
Cigars	4	9
Contractors	12	15
Confectionery	2	5
Cereal Mills	1	18
Dress & Cloak Making	17	23
Flouring Mills	1	9
Foundry & Machine Shops	3	40
Furniture	4	12
Harness & Saddles	3	9
Marble Works	1	3
Merchant Tailors	9	10
Painting & Paper Hanging	6	15
Photographers	4	10
Printing & Bookbinding	6	35
Slaughtering & Packing	2	400
Tin	3	11

Source: S.H. Calhoun, Jr. Nebraska City: A Reflex of Its Importance as a Commercial and Manufacturing Center. Nebraska City: Staats-Zeitung Printing House, 1888, p. 11.

of 1888 the bridge was torn from its moorings by rising water, and was washed downstream.⁶¹

Luckily for Nebraska City, a permanent steel bridge had been under construction by the Burlington Railroad since 1887. The Burlington Bridge was completed only one week after the pontoon bridge was destroyed. The dedication for the new bridge across the Missouri was held on August 30, 1888.⁶² A two-mile long parade and an "optimistically estimated" crowd of 20,000 people celebrated the bridge opening, and Nebraska City's permanent link to the east.⁶³

As the 1890s began, Nebraska City was an expanding center of industry. Its reported population in the 1890 census was 11,941, but the real figure was probably somewhere around 7,500.⁶⁴ Many Nebraska communities inflated their population counts in the 1890 census, and the fact that Nebraska City apparently went along with this population "padding" is another example of the boosterism and the desire to grow in size and influence that was so prevalent in the community's history. Although the city was not growing as fast as some believed, the population had increased during the 1880s, and there was great hope for the 1890s.

Additional industries established during the 1890s included the huge Argo Starch Company which was located at the foot of Central Avenue just south of South Table Creek. Three brickyards were opened in the 1890s, as well as the Faultless Castor Company, the King Drill Manufacturing Company, a grain elevator,

the Kregle Windmill Company, and a factory to manufacture steel-reinforced concrete sewer pipe.⁶⁵ As a further aid to the economy, the Burlington Railroad Bridge over the Missouri River was floored, which allowed for vehicular traffic. The first vehicle crossed over the renovated bridge in June, 1891.⁶⁶

The Depression which struck the United States in the mid-1890s had a terrible impact upon much of Nebraska. Crop failures and financial panic devastated many Nebraskans, and the populations of many Nebraska towns remained stagnant or declined during the 1890s.⁶⁷ Nebraska City was not immune from the economic hardships which swept the state, as the city's population declined from approximately 7,500 in 1890, to 7,380 in 1900.⁶⁸ However, based on the increasing number of industries throughout the decade, apparently the local impact of the Depression was not overly severe.

According to author Willa Cather, the Depression of the 1890s actually had a "salutary" effect upon much of Nebraska. Cather believed that the trying years of economic hardship had, "winnowed out the settlers with a purpose from the drifting malcontents who are ever seeking a land where man does not live by the sweat of his brow. The slack farmer moved on. Superfluous banks failed. . . ."⁶⁹

Despite economic turmoil, Nebraska City's industries, if not its population, continued to grow in the 1890s, and joined with the regional agricultural producers to form a relatively healthy economy. Manufacturers in Nebraska City produced a

variety of consumer and industrial goods, and provided the city with numerous jobs. Area farmers were also a major part of the economy, and the city was increasingly becoming a retail and service hub for the surrounding agricultural community. From corn to barley to the area's famous apple crop, local farmers played a key role in the area economy. Nebraska City provided both a market for goods produced in the city's agricultural hinterland, and a transportation hub from which to ship foodstuffs by rail to other markets.

Agricultural statistics for 1890 show an impressive performance by Otoe County farmers. These farmers ranked second in barley production among all Nebraska counties, fourth in the number of cattle, fifth in hogs, sixth in corn production, seventh in the number of fruit trees, and eighth in both the number of horses and in the production of oats. The county also was ranked third with 359,954 improved acres, and number five in assessed valuation of property, with farmland valued at \$5,153,615.⁷⁰

The history of Nebraska City to 1900 was one of unfettered optimism and community boosterism, even in the face of economic and political setbacks. Nebraska City, the outgrowth of a small, short-lived military post, had been transformed into an important transportation center. As the freighting boom came to a close, the city's residents had worked diligently to establish rail connections and industries. Yet the years 1900 to 1910 would bring serious economic setbacks to Nebraska City, with a

resulting significant drop in population and economic influence. However, as always before, Nebraska Citians adapted to the changes, and looked to the future with optimism.

Chapter One End Notes

- ¹ Julius Sterling Morton, Illustrated History of Nebraska (Lincoln: Jacob North and Company, 1907), pp. 160-161.
- ² Wayne C. Lee, Wild Towns of Nebraska (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printer, Ltd., 1988), p. 12.
- ³ A.T. Andreas, History of the State of Nebraska (Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1882), p. 1200.
- ⁴ Clara Olive Bigford, "Early History of Nebraska City" (M.A. Thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1931), p. 16.
- ⁵ Merrill J. Mattes, The Great Platte River Road (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1979), p. 120; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954 (Nebraska City: Chamber of Commerce, 1954, unpaginated).
- ⁶ Glenn Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town (Lincoln: Midgard Press, 1989), p. 33.
- ⁷ Ibid., 74.
- ⁸ Ibid., 72-74.
- ⁹ Andreas, History of the State of Nebraska, 1202; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, np.
- ¹⁰ Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town, 78.
- ¹¹ Wilma Ann Daddario, "'Side by Side the Stout Farmer and the Keen-Eyed Speculator': Founding and Shaping Nebraska City, 1854-1870." (M.A. Thesis: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1992), p. 15. Midwestern states are Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. Southern states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Border states are Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland and Missouri. Northern states are the New England states, New York and Pennsylvania.
- ¹² Albert Watkins, Outline of Nebraska History (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1910), p. 32.
- ¹³ Andreas, History of the State of Nebraska, 1207-1208.
- ¹⁴ Federal Writer's Project, Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker

- State (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), p. 274.
- ¹⁵Andreas, History of the State of Nebraska, 1201.
- ¹⁶Ibid., 1201.
- ¹⁷Ibid., 1200.
- ¹⁸Walker D. Wyman, "Missouri River Steamboatin'," Nebraska History 27 (April-June, 1946), p. 92.
- ¹⁹Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town, 52.
- ²⁰Marion A. Jensen, Operation West (Detroit: Harlo Press, 1965), p. 33.
- ²¹Stanley Vestal, The Missouri (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 131.
- ²²Raymond W. Settle and Mary Lund Settle, War Drums and Wagon Wheels: The Story of Russell, Majors and Waddell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 86.
- ²³Ibid., 86.
- ²⁴James C. Olson, History of Nebraska (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), p. 107.
- ²⁵Settle, War Drums and Wagon Wheels, 86.
- ²⁶Olson, History of Nebraska, 106.
- ²⁷Morton, Illustrated History of Nebraska, 323.
- ²⁸A.E. Sheldon, Nebraska Old and New (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1937), p. 209.
- ²⁹Glenn Noble, Historically Eventful Nebraska City (N.P., E. Glenn Noble, 1981), p. 46.
- ³⁰Sheldon, Nebraska Old and New, 160-161.
- ³¹A.E. Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People 3 vols. (New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1931), pp. 217-219.
- ³²Andreas, History of the State of Nebraska, 1212; Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town, 157.
- ³³Andreas, History of the State of Nebraska, 1212.
- ³⁴Ibid., 1214.

- ³⁵Olson, History of Nebraska, 105.
- ³⁶Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ³⁷Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People, 218.
- ³⁸Sheldon, Nebraska Old and New, 204-205; James A. Beattie, School History of Nebraska (Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1920) p. 107.
- ³⁹Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ⁴⁰Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town, 122.
- ⁴¹Federal Writer's Project, Nebraska: A Guide, 274.
- ⁴²Lee, Wild Towns of Nebraska, 14-15.
- ⁴³William E. Lass, From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake: An Account of Overland Freighting (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1972), p. 187-188.
- ⁴⁴Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town, 188.
- ⁴⁵Lawrence H. Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell, The Gate City: A History of Omaha, (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1982), pp. 18-19, 62, 104.
- ⁴⁶Lass, From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake, 125.
- ⁴⁷Norman A. Graebner, "Nebraska's Missouri River Frontier, 1854-1860," Nebraska History 42 (December, 1961), p. 233.
- ⁴⁸Daddario, "'Side by Side the Stout Farmer and the Keen-Eyed Speculator,'" 2.
- ⁴⁹Morton, Illustrated History of Nebraska, 399.
- ⁵⁰Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People, 392-393.
- ⁵¹Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town, 170.
- ⁵²Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1931), p. 275.
- ⁵³Jensen, Operation West, 60; Richard C. Overton, Burlington West (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1944), p. 279.
- ⁵⁴Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town, 176.

- ⁵⁵ S.H. Calhoun, Nebraska City, A Reflex of Its Importance as a Commercial and Manufacturing Center (Nebraska City: Staats-Zeitung Printing House, 1888), p. 13. Calhoun lists five rail lines serving Nebraska City in 1888: the Burlington and Missouri; the Missouri Pacific; the Nebraska Railway; the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy; and the Kansas City, St. Joe and Council Bluffs.
- ⁵⁶ Andreas, History of the State of Nebraska, 1215; Jensen, Operation West, 122.
- ⁵⁷ Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People, 535-536; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p. A permanent school building was opened on January 13, 1876.
- ⁵⁸ Andreas, History of the State of Nebraska, 1214.
- ⁵⁹ Jensen, Operation West, 123.
- ⁶⁰ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ⁶¹ Jensen, Operation West, 84-85; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, np.
- ⁶² Jensen, Operation West, 83-84.
- ⁶³ Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town, 176.
- ⁶⁴ Edgar Z. Palmer, "The Correctness of the 1890 Census of Population for Nebraska Cities," Nebraska History 32 (December, 1951), p. 266.
- ⁶⁵ Jensen, Operation West, 123-124.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 86.
- ⁶⁷ Olson, History of Nebraska, 254.
- ⁶⁸ Noble, Historically Eventful Nebraska City, 71.
- ⁶⁹ Willa Cather, "Nebraska: The End of the First Cycle," in Virginia Faulkner, (ed.), Roundup: A Nebraska Reader (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1957), p. 6. (Originally published in The Nation, 1923).
- ⁷⁰ Nebraska State Board of Agriculture, Annual Report for the Year 1890 (Lincoln: State Journal Company, Printers, 1891), pp. 50-55. Otoe County statistics for 1890 are as follows: barley, 309,510 bushels; cattle, 37,900; hogs, 47,428; corn, 3,364,860 bushels; fruit trees, 182,718; horses, 12,261; and oats, 891,880 bushels.

Chapter Two

"Where Life is Simple and Passions Moderate":
Nebraska City Society, 1900-1910

The pattern of development in any community, however large or small, rests upon many variables. The geographic location of the city site, the surrounding terrain, available natural resources, the physical design, and access to transportation networks are among the realities which shape development. However, the most important factor is the make-up of the city's population. More so than bricks and mortar, street grids and factories and stores, a city is comprised of, and defined by, the people who call it their home. This chapter details the origins of the people of Nebraska City, what they did for recreation and leisure, where they worshipped, and also considers the impact of other social influences upon the residents.

The citizens of Nebraska City between 1900 and 1910 could generally be described as a group of tough, hardy people who had weathered many economic, social, and weather-related hard times. As Professor James Shortridge has said, many writers of midwestern history ascribe to the people of the region the traits of "self-reliance, pragmatism, strength of character, thrift, humbleness, industriousness, progressivism, idealism, and morality."¹ Such words could well be used to describe Nebraska City residents at the turn of the century. This description provides an idealized, but nevertheless fairly accurate picture of the inhabitants of a small city who faced a tumultuous decade of economic uncertainty and social change.

Newspapers are a vital tool in gaining an understanding of a town's social structure, and Nebraska City had five papers in publication for all or part of the decade 1900 to 1910. The News Publishing Company printed two Democratic-leaning newspapers throughout the decade; the Nebraska City News which was published twice weekly, and claimed to have the largest circulation of any paper in southern Nebraska, and the Nebraska City Daily News, which was issued every evening except Sundays. The Morton Printing Company also printed two local newspapers; the Daily Tribune, edited by Frank Helvey, was a Republican paper that was published from 1901 to 1907, and the Nebraska City Weekly, in print from 1902 to 1904, was published every Tuesday and Friday and edited by A.T. Richardson. The Weekly described itself as "a politically independent newspaper, designed to promote friendly interest between the manufacturing, laboring and farming classes of southeastern Nebraska." Nebraska City was also home to the Nebraska Daily Press, a Republican paper which was published every morning except Mondays throughout the decade, and was edited by E.A. Brown.²

The population of Nebraska City in 1900 was 7,380. Native born residents numbered 6,498, or 88.05 percent of the total population, with the foreign-born population numbering 882, or 11.95 percent of the total. By 1910, Nebraska City's population had fallen to only 5,488, the lowest census count since 1880, and smaller even than the population count of 6,050 in 1870. Native-born residents numbered 4,844 in 1910, or 88.27

percent of the total, while foreign-born residents numbered 644, or 11.73 percent of Nebraska City's population.³

The native-born population in both 1900 and 1910 was overwhelmingly midwestern in origin. The twelve states of Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, Kansas, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota provided 75.98 percent of the town's population in 1900, and 78.45 percent of the total in 1910.⁴ The percentage of Nebraska-born residents in the city increased from 41.91 percent in 1900, to 48.94 percent in 1910; this significant increase obviously reflects the passing of time since the era of settlement. However, it is important to note that the native-born residents were often only first-generation Americans; thus their parents' ethnic backgrounds still had a potentially large impact on their cultural outlooks. Of the 6,498 native-born residents in 1900, 1,557 (23.96 percent), had one and sometimes two foreign-born parents. Of the 4,844 native-born citizens in 1910, 1,115 (23.01 percent), had at least one foreign-born parent. Thus 33.05 percent of Nebraska City's population in 1900 was comprised of foreign-born and first-generation Americans. The town's 1910 population of 5,488 had a foreign born and first-generation American population of 1,759 people, or 32.05 percent of the total.⁵

The number of foreign-born residents in Nebraska City generally was indicative of trends throughout the state. Germany furnished the largest number of immigrants to Nebraska,

with most German-born people immigrating to Nebraska directly from Germany or from German enclaves in other European nations.⁶ Persons born in Germany made up 6.26 and 6.67 percent of Nebraska City's population in 1900 and 1910 respectively. These percentages would be even higher if German Swiss, Austrians, and Germans from Russia were included in the German cultural group. The second-largest group of foreign-born residents in both 1900 and 1910 were the English-born, who accounted for 1.36 percent of the town's population in 1900, and 1.49 percent in 1910. Swedes and Danes were the third-largest group to settle in Nebraska, and they were also the third largest group of foreign-born residents in Nebraska City, with sixty nine residents in 1900, and fifty-one in 1910. Bohemians or Czechs were the second-largest ethnic group to come to Nebraska; however, they made up less than one percent of Nebraska City's population in both 1900 and 1910.⁷

Immigrants and first-generation Americans had a large impact on the development of Nebraska City. The town was especially influenced by its large German population. According to Frederick Luebke, a German "colony" was established early in the city's history, and was prominent in business and politics.⁸ Nebraska City had a German-language newspaper, the Nebraska Volksblatt, that was published between 1868 and 1879. An area of town near South Table Creek between Ninth and Fifteenth Streets was christened "Germantown" by the News in 1867, and that paper's editor noted with pleasure the Germans' neat gardens

Table III

Nativity of Nebraska City Residents, 1900

<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Number of Residents</u>	<u>Percentage of Population</u>
Nebraska	3,093	41.91%
Iowa	745	10.10
Germany	462	6.26
Illinois	462	6.26
Missouri	457	6.19
Ohio	354	4.80
Indiana	207	2.80
Pennsylvania	183	2.48
Kansas	161	2.18
New York	161	2.18
England	100	1.36
Kentucky	99	1.34
Virginia	84	1.14
Sweden	69	*
Wisconsin	68	*
Canada	52	*
Ireland	50	*
Denmark	48	*
Tennessee	37	*
Minnesota	31	*
Colorado	26	*
Maryland	20	*
Michigan	19	*
Mississippi	19	*
Texas	19	*
West Virginia	19	*
Massachusetts	18	*
Scotland	18	*
Arkansas	17	*
Louisiana	17	*
Maine	16	*
Austria	14	*
Bohemia	10	*
New Jersey	10	*
California	9	*
South Carolina	9	*
Connecticut	8	*
France	8	*
Hungary	8	*
Russia	8	*
Vermont	8	*
South Dakota	7	*
Switzerland	7	*
Wyoming	7	*
Montana	6	*

Table III (continued)
 Nativity of Nebraska City Residents, 1900

<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Number of Residents</u>	<u>Percentage of Population</u>
New Hampshire	6	*
North Carolina	6	*
Utah	6	*
Europe	5	*
Italy	5	*
Norway	5	*
Georgia	4	*
Isle of Man	4	*
Alabama	3	*
Dakota	3	*
Holland	3	*
Nevada	3	*
Rhode Island	2	*
South Wales	2	*
Washington, D.C.	2	*
Delaware	1	*
Mexico	1	*
Nova Scotia	1	*
At Sea	1	*
Unknown	67	*
	<u>7,380</u>	<u>100%</u>

*: Less than one percent of total population

Source: 1900 United States Manuscript Census

Table IV

Nativity of Nebraska City Residents, 1910

<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Number of Residents</u>	<u>Percentage of Population</u>
Nebraska	2,686	48.94%
Iowa	490	8.93
Germany	366	6.67
Missouri	348	6.34
Illinois	254	4.63
Ohio	186	3.39
Pennsylvania	131	2.39
Indiana	125	2.28
Kansas	101	1.84
New York	84	1.53
England	82	1.49
Kentucky	65	1.18
Wisconsin	61	1.11
Sweden	51	*
Virginia	51	*
Canada	27	*
Ireland	25	*
Michigan	24	*
Tennessee	20	*
Austria	17	*
Denmark	17	*
Italy	17	*
Minnesota	14	*
Colorado	13	*
New Jersey	12	*
West Virginia	12	*
United States (unspecified)	10	*
Arkansas	9	*
Maryland	9	*
Oklahoma	9	*
South Dakota	8	*
California	7	*
New Hampshire	7	*
Scotland	7	*
Switzerland	7	*
Vermont	7	*
France	6	*
Louisiana	6	*
Massachusetts	6	*
Utah	6	*
Belgium	5	*
Connecticut	5	*
Texas	5	*
Montana	4	*
Norway	4	*

Table IV (continued)

Nativity of Nebraska City Residents, 1910

<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Number of Residents</u>	<u>Percentage of Population</u>
Wales	4	*
Wyoming	4	*
Mississippi	3	*
Oregon	3	*
Nevada	2	*
North Carolina	2	*
North Dakota	2	*
Russia	2	*
South Carolina	2	*
Alabama	1	*
Bohemia	1	*
Georgia	1	*
German Africa	1	*
Greece	1	*
Holland	1	*
Idaho	1	*
Indian Territory	1	*
Isle of Man	1	*
Maine	1	*
Mexico	1	*
Poland	1	*
Unknown	46	*
	<u>5,488</u>	<u>100%</u>

*: Less than one percent of total population

Source: 1910 United States Manuscript Census

and well-kept residences.⁹

Germans also played a large role in local politics, with Nebraska Germans generally belonging to the Democratic party. Otoe County, however, was an exception to this rule, with a ratio of two German Republicans for each German Democrat.¹⁰

The News also discounted the generally accepted connections between ethnicity and political affiliation:

When a man goes campaigning for German votes on a beer and sauerkraut platform, he'll find that many a German who drinks beer and eats sauerkraut will vote for someone else, who asks for support on more tangible grounds.

Along with ethnicity, race is an important strand in a community's social fabric. However, probably because of the small number of blacks in the community, race relations in Nebraska City from 1900 to 1910 do not seem to have been very prominent in daily life. Nebraska City's population of blacks in 1900 numbered 142, and grew even smaller in 1910, when it fell to eighty-one, a drop of some forty-three percent.¹² Many white Americans had long believed that blacks were naturally inferior to whites, and would ever remain so. However, by the early 1900s many whites had come to believe that racism existed largely due to economic and cultural problems, rather than strictly biological traits.¹³

The Daily Tribune noted Nebraska Citians' growing accomodation for their black neighbors when a story noted that while white masons at the Argo Starch works once went on strike due to a black being employed there, eventually "several" blacks

worked in the factory, and got along "nicely" with the other workers.¹⁴ The attitude of whites toward blacks in Nebraska City had obviously softened by the early 1900s. While blacks had been sold at auction only forty years previously, they were now employed in the city's factories. The Daily Tribune noted in the fall of 1901 that blacks were no longer begging throughout the city for winter clothing as they had done in years past. The editor of the paper was a supporter of the "accomodationist" point-of-view championed by black leader Booker T. Washington:

The Tribune is of the opinion that some intelligent and long-needed work has been done among this class of our people . . . in Booker T. Washington's line, teaching and urging them to do₁₅ something for themselves; work and save

In some ways, the topics of ethnicity and race are easily defined and can be dealt with through the use of statistics and percentages. However, class structure or social stratification, another very important aspect of social life, is difficult to define. It is an interesting and important task to search for the presence, or lack thereof, of a class structure or cultural pattern present in early twentieth century Nebraska City.

Historian Frederick Jackson Turner noted that with the closing of the American frontier in 1890, and the resultant loss of this social "safety valve," social conflict was likely to increase, with classes becoming "alarmingly distinct."¹⁶ One of the most useful interpretations of Turner's work is provided by Louis M. Hacker, who writes that the frontier

hypothesis:

helps to explain the failure of American labor to present a continuous revolutionary tradition: class lines could not become fixed as long as the free lands existed to drain off the most spirited elements in the working and lower middle-class populations--not only as farmers, of course, but as small merchants and enterprisers too--and to prevent the creation of a labor reserve for the purpose of thwarting the demands of organized workers.

Although Turner's frontier hypothesis has been discounted by some as "too optimistic, too romantic, too provincial, and too nationalistic to be reliable," it still holds some value.¹⁸ Turner himself eventually came to the realization that the historical processes that he studied had reached a point where the frontier had become "subordinated in influence to general social forces."¹⁹

According to historian Lewis Atherton, most small midwestern cities and towns had some level of social stratification or some existence of a cultural pattern. Although all citizens mingled at some level or another, Atherton defined five rather distinct, if not totally separate classes: a dominant Protestant middle-class; an "upper-class;" Catholics; foreign-born residents; and finally, a "lower-class," which tended to ignore the generally accepted habits of social behavior.²⁰ Atherton also described a small, midwestern town's class structure as follows:

At any one time, a small inner group of people based on varying combinations of wealth, length of residence, occupation, and breeding stood at the top. God-fearing, middle-class people devoted to church and lodge formed still another social layer. And, always, a lower class of common day

laborers, generally indifferent to dominant ideals could be distinguished.²¹

Sociologist Wayne Wheeler conducted research into social stratification in the Great Plains, and discovered that some Nebraskans used certain values in order to determine the class structure of their community. These values included wealth, religious activities, occupation, community leadership, activity in associations, behavior and personal appearance, national origin, kinship and family reputation, and place of residence.²²

Based on these various classifications and definitions, Nebraska City certainly had a social class structure between 1900 and 1910. Through a close examination of local newspapers, there appears to have been a group of "involved" citizens prominent in many aspects of city life, from government and business to civic activities. Many middle or upper-class residents were deeply involved with church and lodge activities that were duly reported by the local press. Also, it appears there was a rather large group of "common" day laborers who, to the consternation of newspaper editors, refused to keep their yards tended or to keep their dogs penned up. The Nebraska City police had to deal with frequent family or domestic disturbances, including one episode in which the Daily Tribune reported that certain residents of upper Central Avenue used "language not found in the dictionary."²³ There was also a certain class-conscious residential pattern in town, with many professional people residing on a stretch of Second Avenue known as "doctors and lawyers row," and many lower-class families

living along South Table Creek and on Kearney Hill in the southeastern part of Nebraska City.

While the existence of social classes may be impossible to prove or disprove with statistical accuracy, it is a topic which should be examined. When dealing with more quantifiable and easily-researched social issues, the existence of social stratification and any frictions it may have caused among Nebraska Citizens must be kept in mind.

Like a great many other midwestern communities, the church was probably the most binding, prevalent form of social interaction present in Nebraska City. Churches provided a source not only of spiritual replenishment, but they also acted as meeting places for residents of the community, social outlets, and they helped many worshippers develop a "formation of personal identity."²⁴ The local newspapers carried regular schedules of church activities. In addition to traditional Sunday services, the churches held sessions of Sunday school, evening prayer meetings, Christian Endeavor meetings, teacher conferences, reading circles, chorus practices, and also hosted meetings of the Ladies' Aid Society and the Junior League.²⁵

Data for Otoe County compiled in 1916 showed a total of 7,249 church members in the county, out of a total population of 19,323; a church membership rate of 37.51 percent. There were at least eighteen churches in Nebraska City that were active for all or part of the decade 1900-1910, including the First Methodist Church which was founded in 1853; First Baptist (1855);

Table V

Membership in Selected Denominations, Otoe County, 1916

<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Percent of Membership</u>
Roman Catholic Church	1,416	19.53%
Lutheran Synods of various states	1,210	16.69
Methodist Episcopal Church	1,085	14.97
German Evangelical Synod	949	13.09
Presbyterian in the U.S.A.	551	7.60
Disciples of Christ	497	6.86
Baptists, Northern Convention	413	5.69
Lutheran, General Synod	251	3.46
Latter Day Saints Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ	243	3.35
Protestant Episcopal Church	179	2.47
Congregational Churches	170	2.35
United Presbyterian Church	85	1.17
Seventh Day Adventist	51	*
United Brethren in Christ	32	*
All other bodies	<u>117</u>	<u>1.61</u>
	7,249	100%

*: Less than one percent of total membership

Source: United States, Religious Bodies, 1916. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919, pp. 285, 287.

First Presbyterian (1855); St. Benedict's Catholic (1856); St. Mary's Episcopal (1858); First Christian (1866); Reorganized Latter Day Saints (1866); First Evangelical Lutheran (1866); St. Mary's Catholic (1870); Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal (1888); Free Methodist (1890); Cumberland Presbyterian (1865); First Congregational (1863); Bethel Evangelical (1887); First Church of Christ Scientist (1898); and the Third Street Church.²⁶

In addition to these established churches, there were also several smaller religious and quasi-religious groups that operated during the decade. Anna Kautz and her husband organized a Jehovah's Witness Society in Nebraska City in 1908. This society was not affiliated with any religion, did not utilize ministers, and neither requested nor accepted offerings of any kind. Otoe County's only Jewish congregation was formed sometime around 1900. The few Jewish families in and around Nebraska City met on special occasions at the Odd Fellows Hall until their organization ceased functioning in 1901.²⁷

Nebraska City residents also organized a Salvation Army group in 1890, which was disbanded in 1897, and reconstituted in 1900 by a Miss Duney and a Miss Foster. However, due to a lack of public support, the Salvation Army closed its doors again in 1906. The Young Men's Christian Association was also present in Nebraska City, having been organized in 1885. The Y.M.C.A. had a difficult time getting and retaining any support, allegedly because there were "so many saloons in town," and

the young men's group ended its operations in 1909, "due to lack of moral and financial support."²⁸

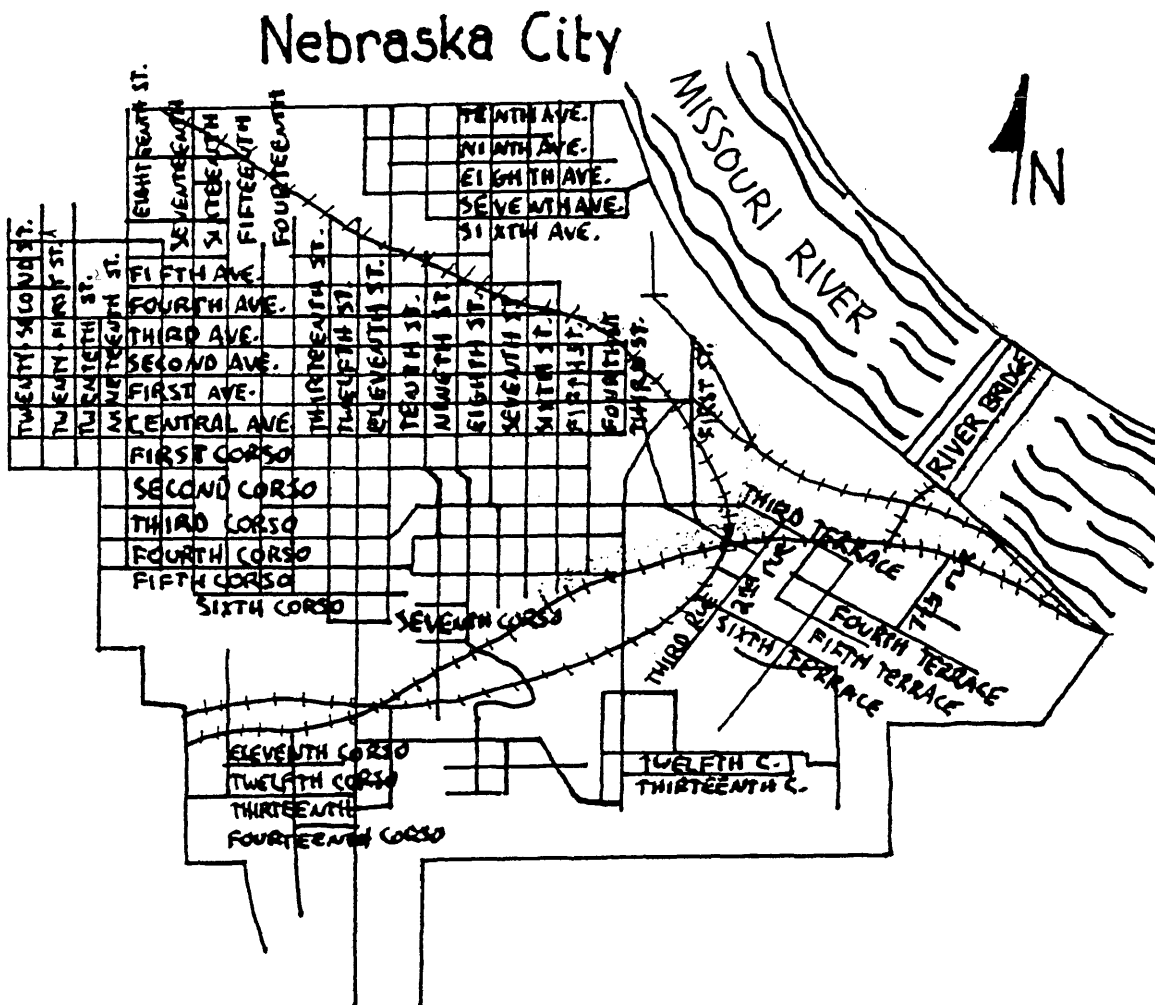
Along with the city's churches, Nebraska City's public schools played a large role in local social life. By 1907, the town had seven public school buildings, including Second Avenue School; Sixth Street School; Greggspport; Fourteenth Street; Kearney School; Edgewood; and the Nebraska City High School.²⁹ In 1901 a new brick high school building had been constructed, consisting of four rooms separated by folding doors, and containing new desks with stationary ink stands and foot rests.³⁰

In 1902, the Nebraska City school superintendent's report stated that the average number of students in school during the academic year 1900-1901 was 1,073 out of a total enrollment of 1,180 students. This amounted to an attendance rate of ninety percent, with two cases of truancy and 296 incidents of tardiness. The 1906-1907 school year saw an average attendance of 1,043, out of an enrollment of 1,125. In 1910, out of 1,538 residents between the ages of six and twenty, 1,074 were enrolled in Nebraska City's public schools. Thus, rather surprisingly, despite the town's decline in population throughout the decade, school enrollment remained steady.³¹ Along with the public school system, also of note was the Nebraska School for the Blind, which had an average of seventy students per year between 1900 and 1910.³²

The local press often dealt with questions regarding the

Map 2

Map of Nebraska City, Nebraska



Source: Redrawn from The Official State Atlas of Nebraska. Philadelphia: Everts & Kirk, 1885, pp. 134-135. (River bridge and street names added).

quality and type of education delivered to Nebraska City's students. Many educators at the turn of the century emphasized vocational skills in the schools in order to help students gain jobs.³³ The editor of the Daily Tribune championed this approach when he stated that manufacturing was the heart and soul of Nebraska City, and that the boys and girls attending school should be trained to work in the factories and mills. High school graduates "who are rapid and accurate in the simple processes of arithmetic, or who know how to do things with their hands," were necessary for the growth of Nebraska City's industries.³⁴

Some Nebraska Citians felt that a practical, vocational training in school that led to employment in Nebraska City's factories was more important than a more esoteric, non-applied form of education. However, Nebraska City's teachers still taught the basics of education. A teacher's association meeting held there in 1906 hosted discussions on such topics as the art of writing examination questions, grading written work, the teacher's ideal in the presentation of geography, a rational method of reading, the uses and abuses of recitation, and the opportunities for character-building in the public schools.³⁵ Based upon county-wide statistics, the public schools did their job well, as the illiteracy rate for Otoe County dropped from 3.5 percent in 1900 to only 1.6 percent in 1910.³⁶

Politics was another important, though not overwhelming, aspect of life in Nebraska City. Nevertheless, the town had

provided its share of influential political figures. J. Sterling Morton, who founded Arbor Day, and later went on to serve as Secretary of Agriculture in the Grover Cleveland Administration, was often a champion of Nebraska City's interests. Morton died in 1902, and was buried in Nebraska City's Wyuka Cemetery.³⁷ Another prominent local politician was Judge William Hayward, who was appointed Secretary of the Republican National Committee in 1908.³⁸

Nebraska City was governed by a mayor and a four-member city council. According to information in the Federal Census, Nebraska City had at least twenty full and part-time employees on the municipal payroll, excluding public school staff, in both 1900 and 1910. In addition to paid elected officials such as the mayor and city councilmen, other city employees included four policemen, a police chief, and a city engineer. The town was served by an all-volunteer fire department, whose property was valued at \$3,000 in 1901.³⁹ Some city offices and their corresponding salaries for 1902 were:

Mayor.....	\$200	per year
Treasurer.....	\$360	per year
Clerk.....	\$560	per year
Attorney.....	\$360	per year
Councilman.....	\$100	per year
Police Judge.....	\$360	per year
Fire Chief.....	\$100	per year
Street Commissioner.....	\$50	per month
Chief of Police.....	\$60	per month
Policeman.....	\$50	per month
City Engineer.....	\$5	per day worked ⁴⁰

Biennial city elections were conducted on a partisan basis, with Republican and Democratic city council candidates in each

of the city's four wards.⁴¹ The total average voter turnout during fall elections from 1900 to 1907 was 1,085. After a light voter turnout in November of 1907, the Daily News stated:

There were a large number who stayed at home and did not go near the polls. If these voters had come out it might not have changed things, but then the total vote would have looked so much better it would have seemed as if we were interested in matters of this kind.⁴²

Voter apathy and a distrust of politicians was encouraged by comments such as that printed by the Daily Tribune in 1903:

In comparison with other metropolitan cities in Nebraska our town is lucky. Omaha has a city election on tap that has passed into the stage of offensive politics; Lincoln has an excise board that is charged with giving the town to the retail liquor dealers, while we are blessed with a council that holds dark-lantern "executive sessions."⁴³

Nebraska City also had the occasional political scandal that got the tongues wagging on Main Street. In April, 1905, the city council instructed the city attorney to file impeachment proceedings against Police Judge Clinton P. Logan. Charges made against Logan contended that he had failed to write-up the court docket in many of the cases tried before him, and that he had failed to complete several records. Logan was charged with "the retention and non-payment of certain sums in fines and costs collected during the months of February and March, 1905, amounting to something in excess of \$1,000." The city council impeached Logan, and he was found guilty and removed from office.⁴⁴

Local government also dealt with the common, day-to-day

governance of the city. The council treated issues ranging from levying special taxes on businesses, to sidewalk construction, to matters such as who should oversee the disposal of the Nebraska City Volunteer Fire Department's "old grey team" of Frank and Ned.⁴⁵ In 1908, the city council approved a poll tax of \$2.50 to be levied on every male inhabitant of Nebraska City between the ages of twenty-one and fifty, except for "paupers, idiots, lunatics and others specially exempt by law."⁴⁶

Community cleanliness was another problem confronting city government. In May of 1900, the Board of Health reported to the city council that the streets, alleys and buildings of Nebraska City were in "deplorable and filthy condition."⁴⁷ The city's newspapers made frequent appeals to residents and business owners to clean up their yards, alleys, streets and sidewalks. The city council passed an ordinance prohibiting spitting on public sidewalks, and in 1907 an appeal was made to Nebraska City schoolchildren to help clean up their town.⁴⁸ However, problems resulting from unsanitary conditions persisted throughout the decade.

Unfortunately, like much of Nebraska, Nebraska City was beset with a host of societal problems. A 1907 Nebraska statute required that alcohol be clearly labelled, and it also forbade breweries from holding financial interests in saloons. A state law passed two years later required saloons to close from 8:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., all day on Sundays, and on election days. Liquor sales to drunkards, drug addicts, Indians and the

insane were also prohibited, as was alcohol consumption on trains. Some 450 Nebraska towns had gone completely "dry" by 1908.⁴⁹

Nebraska City followed this trend of legislating personal morality. In 1904, the city council passed Ordinance 329, which prohibited the use of cocaine, morphine, opium or chloral, "except when used in good faith under the direction of a regularly licensed physician."⁵⁰ One year later, in 1905, the city council approved an ordinance which prohibited the procuring or purchasing of intoxicating liquor for "habitual drunkards and minors."⁵¹ Alcohol was a major problem for the city, which by 1907 had at least fifteen, and possibly as many as twenty-three saloons.⁵² Perhaps in an attempt to curb crime, public drunkenness, or juvenile delinquency, a curfew bell was instituted that was rang at nine o'clock on summer evenings, and at eight o'clock each night during the winter months.⁵³

The town also had trouble dealing with problems caused by beggars and transients. In August, 1908, the city was "overrun with beggars." The Nebraska City News urged residents to give the beggars nothing and to buy nothing from them, in hopes of ridding them from the city, and thus saving the public "considerable trouble."⁵⁴ The News also reported on a "strolling band of gypsies" who invaded the city. In what was perhaps a thinly-veiled reference to the inability or unwillingness of Nebraska City's police to deal with these transients, the News noted: "In other places the police cause these people

to hike and remain outside the city limits."⁵⁵

Women's suffrage and prohibition were pivotal political issues in Nebraska at the turn of the century, and the Women's Suffrage Association played a role in Nebraska City politics. Because the prohibition question was so closely linked to the issue of women's suffrage, the Women's Christian Temperance Union also played an important role. The W.C.T.U. transcended church lines and led the fight against the evils of alcohol and saloons. Men and women had long sponsored organizations throughout the United States to combat alcohol, but few groups ever achieved the status of the W.C.T.U.: "Those psalm-singing Christian women who dared to enter saloons during the W.C.T.U. crusade."⁵⁶ The Nebraska City chapter, which was first organized in 1883 and led chiefly by Lucy Bowen, always faced an uphill struggle, largely because saloons often outnumbered churches.⁵⁷ The temperance movement led many women into the suffrage movement, and according to Aileen Kraditor: "It is evident that the 'true inwardness' of a great many led them to advocate woman suffrage partly on the proposition that women's votes would help abolish the curse of alcohol."⁵⁸

The question of women's suffrage played a central role in turn of the century Nebraska politics, with the Nebraska State Legislature considering and defeating municipal suffrage bills in 1889, 1891, 1893, 1897 and 1909.⁵⁹ However, attitudes among many Nebraskans regarding women's suffrage slowly changed. According to J. Sterling Morton's History of Nebraska, the

entrance of large numbers of women into the workforce increased their desire for suffrage, and thus led to a change in the attitudes of many men. As Morton said: "While the objections to extending the franchise to women are as strong and important as ever . . . they are relatively weakened by the economic changes in question."⁶⁰

Along with economic issues, ethnicity and political affiliation were keys to the issue of women's suffrage. Catholics, many immigrant groups, and anti-prohibitionists were opposed, while prohibitionists and "old-line" Americans were in favor of women's suffrage. Also, according to historian A.E. Sheldon, there was:

A large group in the Legislature and in the state . . . fundamentally opposed to woman suffrage, without regard to how women would vote. To many of them the very idea of women in politics was a dreadful thought! Women ought to be at home nursing the babies, and getting the next meal for the family.⁶¹

The women's suffrage movement played an active role in Nebraska City during the decade. In 1901, the Nebraska City Women's Suffrage Association held a meeting which was attended by Carrie Chapman Catt, the national president of the Women's Suffrage movement.⁶² The local group organized regular meetings and sponsored events such as an ice cream and cake social held in the summer of 1905.⁶³

Nebraska City also played host to the state suffrage association's twenty-third annual convention in 1903, a three-day affair held in the First Methodist Episcopal Church.

The attendees dealt with issues ranging from women's property rights to how to influence the state legislature on a variety of issues. Nebraska City delegates in attendance included Mrs. Gertrude C. Clark, Mrs. Lula S. Halvorsen, Mrs. Ollie King Carricker, Mrs. E.A. Bordwell, Mrs. H.M. Pendleton, and Mrs. M.J. Warner. The Daily Tribune spoke highly of the warmth and hospitality with which Nebraska Citizens greeted the members of the suffrage movement.⁶⁴

There was also a local political controversy over how townspeople should choose to observe the Sunday sabbath. Nebraska Statute 2338 allowed for a fine of between one and five dollars to be levied against anyone fourteen years of age or older who was found engaged in "common labor (work of necessity and charity only excepted)," on Sundays.⁶⁵ In 1901, Nebraska City Mayor John Mattes, Jr., exercising his statutory authority, ordered the Sunday closings of all local businesses except packing and manufacturing industries and druggist shops. Mattes also prohibited the running of milk and ice wagons on Sundays.⁶⁶ The movement to bring about Sunday business closings was led by a group known both as the Law and Order League, and the Sunday Observance League. According to the Daily Tribune, this group represented only about ten percent of the town's population.⁶⁷

In opposition to the mayor's decree, the Daily Tribune disputed the necessity or desirability of the Sunday closings. The editor of the newspaper complained that an "uncontrollable

minority" was forcing businesses to close on Sundays to the detriment of the majority of Nebraska Citizens, and the city as a whole.⁶⁸ The controversial issue was placed in a rather different perspective by the Omaha Evening News. According to that paper, Mattes was selfishly retaliating against the entire community because the Law and Order League had forced Nebraska City's saloons to close on Sundays. The Evening News saw the fact that Nebraska City's mayor was also the owner of the Mattes Brewing Company as more than a coincidence. The Daily Tribune, however, heartily disagreed with the Omaha paper's interpretation: "With all due respect to the News, it must be admitted that as a newspaper, it is as cheap as its subscription prices to out of town subscribers indicates."⁶⁹

The dispute over Sunday business closings continued throughout the decade. In May, 1909, the Nebraska City News reported that the Chief of Police had the names of several business establishments in violation of the Sunday closing laws, and that if they did not proceed to obey the law they would be punished, and if they continued to remain open, the city council would be asked to revoke their licenses.⁷⁰

The Sunday observance controversy also affected leisure activities in Nebraska City. Nebraska statutes allowed for the fining or imprisonment of anyone fourteen or older found "sporting, rioting, quarreling, hunting, fishing or shooting," on Sundays.⁷¹ In the summer of 1902, some Nebraska Citizens complained about men and boys interrupting the quiet Sabbath

day by playing baseball. In an attempt to resolve the local dispute, the town held a referendum sponsored by the Business Men's Association, in which residents voted 826 to sixteen to allow baseball to be played on Sundays. However, on July 20, 1902, the Nebraska City sheriff attempted to stop a Sunday baseball game, which resulted in a fight, and the arrest of four players. Apparently, the group known as the Law and Order League had persuaded the sheriff to intervene, despite the city's overwhelming vote to allow games to be played on Sundays. Nine days later, Mayor H.H. Bartling issued the following statement: "Owing to the strife, convention, and feeling among our citizens I have deemed it expedient to stop the further playing of baseball . . . on Sunday."⁷²

In order to circumvent the ban on Sunday baseball, by the summer of 1905 a baseball grounds had been established at Gibson's Lake, in Iowa, so Nebraska Citizens could easily cross the Missouri River and play baseball on Sundays.⁷³ Ironically, Iowa also had a Sunday observance law which called for fines against anyone "carrying firearms, dancing, hunting, shooting, horse-racing, or in any manner disturbing a worshipping assembly or private family" on Sundays.⁷⁴ However, enforcement of the Sunday laws was "lax," and apparently local Iowa authorities did nothing to discourage the Nebraska City ball players.⁷³

This baseball dispute was an interesting controversy between a minority of residents who wished to maintain a quiet, peaceful Sabbath day, and those who wanted to enjoy baseball seven days

a week. Although it cannot be readily determined when Mayor Bartling's prohibition ceased being enforced, it eventually became legal to play baseball in Nebraska City on Sundays, much to the delight and relief of baseball fans.

In addition to churches, schools and the political arena, social clubs and lodges played an active part in the cultural and social life of the city from 1900 to 1910. These institutions presented a very important outlet for middle and upper-class citizens to meet, mingle, socialize and "better" themselves. The Nebraska City Masons formed the oldest continuous Masonic Lodge in Nebraska with the formation of the Western Star Lodge No. 2 in May of 1855. The Nebraska City Aerie No. 968 of the Fraternal Order of Eagles was chartered in 1905, with 108 members led by President Dan W. Livingston. An Elks chapter, organized on July 18, 1907, with forty-five charter members, was active in youth activities, welfare work and a variety of civic activities.⁷⁵

The Nebraska City chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) held meetings at the GAR hall at 912 First Corso on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. The GAR hall had been erected between 1894 and 1898 to honor Civil War veterans. The GAR, in concert with the Women's Relief Corps, regularly held services in observance of Memorial Day, a significant holiday in turn of the century Nebraska City. Although Memorial Day, 1905 was "cold" and "threatening rain," the GAR led services which included music provided by the Methodist choir, an address

by the Reverend J.T. Smith, and a procession westward along Central Avenue to Wyuka Cemetery, led by the Merchant's Band.⁷⁶

Women's groups were also active in the city, dealing with a variety of cultural, moral and aesthetic issues. These cultural groups were popular and active around the turn of the century. Historian Thomas J. Morain described the role of many of these women's groups as follows:

The women were not stepping out of their traditional spheres as much as they were using the organizations to expand their spheres into a public dimension. The clubs were pressure groups that lobbied on educational and cultural issues; they represented the politics of aesthetics.⁷⁷

Nebraska City had a variety of women's groups, including the Harmony Rebekah Lodge, which was chartered on December 2, 1904, with twenty-eight members holding two meetings per month.⁷⁸ Many club meetings were meant to be enlightening and educational. For example, the Nebraska City Women's club met in October, 1907, led by Jean Morton. The subject of that particular meeting was Venice, Italy. Club member Mrs. Hayward gave a presentation on "A Day in Venice;" Mrs. Steinhart spoke on "A Lesson in Geography;" the hostess, Jean Morton, gave a report on "The Canal and the Rialto;" and Mrs. Sloan enlightened the group with a talk entitled "American Art Notes."⁷⁹ These meetings of women's clubs and organizations were publicized and encouraged by the local press. However, the Nebraska City News also reminded women of their practical role in society, declaring that "a woman may be able to reach high C, paint on china,

preside at a club, and still be able to darn stockings."⁸⁰

Some of the other social groups in the city included the Nebraska City Lodge, Knights Templar, Order of the Eastern Star, Knights of Pythias, Royal Highlanders, Royal Arcanum, Modern Woodmen of America, Woodmen of the World, Sons of Herman, Fraternal Aid, National Aid Association, Bankers Union of the World, Danish Brotherhood, and the Royal Tribe of Joseph.⁸¹

Nebraska City also had its share of athletic events, sports clubs and lodges. The local press carried frequent reports on local baseball, football, basketball and track teams locked in fierce competition with area rivals. Newspapers often reported on local baseball games, and they often ran big league standings on the front page. Nebraska City fielded quite a collection of teams, including the Pen Pushers; Merchants; Court Officers; Green Bugs; Bankers; Post Office; Commercial Travel; Court House; and the Lawyers.⁸² In 1907, the city constructed a baseball grandstand at the Fourteenth Street baseball field which was fifty feet long, had seven tiers of seats, and could accomodate up to 300 spectators.⁸³

The Nebraska City News gave an account of a baseball game between Nebraska City and a team from Peru, Nebraska that was played in May 1906, before a large crowd at the Fourteenth Street field. The Nebraska City boys played valiantly, but in the sixth inning the Peru boys "awakened and played ball," and Nebraska City went on to lose by a score of nineteen to six.⁸⁴ In early 1910, Nebraska City joined seven other towns to form

the M.I.N.K. baseball league, made up of teams from Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. In July of the same year, a petition was circulated asking merchants to close at 4:20 p.m. on Thursday afternoons so everyone could watch the M.I.N.K. league games.⁸⁵

In addition to baseball, the local press also covered Nebraska City football, including the high school team, and a squad formed by members of Company C, Second Regiment of the Nebraska National Guard. There were daily practice games in the fall which were often attended by crowds of "admiring girls." In 1907, the high school's schedule included games against South Omaha and Peru, while Company C's opponents included teams from Plattsmouth, Bellevue, and Hamburg, Iowa. In recounting Company C's victory over Hamburg, the Daily News reported: "Very little attention was paid to the rules and the judges penalized no one, although several very rank plays were made." When the high school team lost to South Omaha, the defeat was attributed to the inexperience of the Nebraska City boys. However, despite the loss, the Daily News confidently stated that the players "are now certain that they will not again be defeated."⁸⁶

In covering other sports, the Nebraska City News gave a complete account of a high school track meet held at the Nebraska City driving park in the spring of 1907. Events included the 100 yard dash, 220 yard dash, 440 yard dash, broad jump, shot put, pole vault, hammer throw, and the half-mile relay.⁸⁷

Although the local papers did not give extensive coverage to high school girl's athletics, the Daily News did give a brief

report of a basketball game played in 1907, in which the high school girls defeated a team from the Nebraska City Athletic Association by a score of twenty-five to six.⁸⁸

Sports-minded Nebraska Citians established the Overland Country Club in 1903. The country club had over 100 members led by president John W. Steinhart, and charged annual dues of ten dollars.⁸⁹ The club proved to be popular with the sporting set in town, and played host to daily games of tennis and rounds of golf.⁹⁰ Local bowlers also enjoyed games of "ten pins" at May's bowling alley.⁹¹ The Nebraska City city council passed a resolution authorizing the issuance of \$5,000 in bonds for the construction of an athletic area and driving park west of the city. The driving park, used for racing horses, encompassed some thirty-seven acres, and occupied the site of present-day Steinhart Park.⁹²

Another very popular social activity in town was the annual chautauqua. The name chautauqua came from Lake Chautauqua, New York, a gathering spot for popular camp meetings. The chautauqua offered a chance for all citizens to encounter, explore and enjoy lecture topics as diverse as music, drama, hobbies, oratory, camping and other pursuits. The midwestern audiences of the chautauqua "knew exactly what they wanted-- to feel superior and cultural without being bored in the process."⁹³

The Nebraska City Chautauqua Association was formed in 1907, and the chautauqua made its first annual appearance in

town that summer.⁹⁴ Local newspapers did their utmost to galvanize the city to support the chautauqua: "If this town can show the surrounding country that it is alive, awake and pushing to the front it will be worth much to every business man and resident in the city." The featured speaker for the town's first chautauqua was Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin.⁹⁵ Expenses for that first event amounted to over \$3,900, with Nebraska City making a profit of \$290.55.⁹⁶

Theater performances, music and movies were also important social pastimes for Nebraska Citians. The Overland Theater was built on the corner of Sixth Street and First Corso, and opened for business in December, 1897, with a performance of William Gillette's "Secret Service." The interior of the Overland was described as both "ornate," and "attractive." The most famous part of its decor was the stage curtain, painted by Haskill Coffin, which depicted an Indian attack on an overland stage.⁹⁷

The Overland was a popular stopping point for theatrical companies traveling between Kansas City and Omaha, and it often hosted standing room only crowds. The Daily Tribune reviewed a performance in 1901, and commented very favorably on the enthusiastic crowd:

The Overland was full, but full in the right way. The lower part of the house was crowded, while there was a little more room under the eaves. That shows the class of people who stand ready to assist in anything that is "of Nebraska City, by Nebraska City and for Nebraska City."⁹⁸

Nebraska City boasted of two movie theaters during the

decade 1900 to 1910. The first theater in the city, owned by Schnitzer and Wallern, was opened in 1907 in a building on Central Avenue; tickets for movies were five and ten cents.⁹⁹

In November, 1908, Nebraska City's second movie theater, the Fairyland, was opened. This theater, according to the Nebraska City News, was "furnished in a tasty and attractive manner."¹⁰⁰

The town was also the proud host of the fifteen-member Merchant's Band and Orchestra, formed in 1902, under the direction of W.H. Glanville.¹⁰¹

Another major social attraction was the local observance and commemoration of Arbor Day in April of each year. Beginning in 1872, through the efforts of J. Sterling Morton, one day each April had been set aside for the planting of trees throughout Nebraska. Eventually, April 22, Morton's birthday, was named as Arbor Day. Morton had been at all times a "prominent and controlling force" in Nebraska City until his death in 1902, and according to pioneer Omaha editor George L. Miller, Nebraska City was "almost entirely indebted to him and to his four sons for the great prosperity which it has enjoyed."¹⁰² On a special occasion in October, 1905, the residents of Nebraska City came out in force to witness the unveiling of a statue of Morton, and to hear an address by former President Grover Cleveland, the event's principal speaker.¹⁰³

In addition to covering the city's more formal social scene, the local press seemed to delight in reporting the everyday schedules and activities of Nebraska City's residents.

Regular tidbits were offered in the papers on the ordinary happenings that made up the city's social fabric. Picnics, outings across the Missouri River, young peoples' parties, and housewives' luncheons and teas were all duly noted. Many circumstances of daily life were also regularly reported; events such as "Mr. and Mrs. Goldman left this morning for Kansas City," "Mrs. Moulton of Fremont is in the city today," and "Frank Derman of Lorton was in the city last evening on a visit with friends."¹⁰⁴ These brief notes helped residents keep in touch with what their neighbors were doing, where they were going, and where they had been.

Despite some societal problems, the good points of Nebraska City's social life and structure outweighed the negatives. Although there was a precipitous drop in population from 1900 to 1910, the healthy social fabric of the city remained largely intact. The small city meant a lot of good things to a great many people, and thus the cultural pattern remained intact even during trying economic times. Many Nebraska Citians surely agreed with the statement of the Daily Tribune:

It is better to live in a small town than in a large one; to breathe the air of a farm than that of a city; to spend your days where life is simple and passions moderate, than to dwell among the poisonous exhaltations and the furious ambitions of the vortexes of civilization.¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately, economic realities sometimes threatened the bucolic idealism of this small town setting, such as during the early twentieth century in Nebraska City.

Chapter Two End Notes

- ¹ James R. Shortridge, "The Emergence of 'Middle West' as an American Regional Label," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 74 (June, 1984), p. 213.
- ² All five newspapers, the Nebraska Daily Press, Nebraska City Weekly, Daily Tribune, Nebraska City Daily News and the Nebraska City News, are available on microfilm at the Nebraska State Historical Society.
- ³ Totals compiled from 1900 and 1910 United States Manuscript Census, Nebraska State Historical Society, microfilm NARS, T263 Roll 1900-21 and T264 Roll 1910-15.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Donald R. Hickey, Nebraska Moments: Glimpses of Nebraska's Past (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 109.
- ⁷ Ibid., 113; 1900 and 1910 United States Manuscript Census; George E. Condra, The Nebraska Story (Lincoln: University Publishing Company, 1951), p. 180.
- ⁸ Frederick C. Luebke, Immigrants and Politics: The Germans of Nebraska, 1880-1900 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), p. 76.
- ⁹ Glenn Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town (Lincoln: Midgard Press, 1989), p. 100.
- ¹⁰ Luebke, Immigrants and Politics, 58.
- ¹¹ Nebraska City News, July 31, 1900.
- ¹² United States, Abstract of the Census with Supplement for Nebraska (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 620, 627.
- ¹³ Glenn C. Altschuler, Race, Ethnicity, and Class in American Social Thought: 1865-1919 (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1992), pp. 2, 22.
- ¹⁴ Daily Tribune, October 19, 1901.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., October 5, 1901.
- ¹⁶ Altschuler, Race, Ethnicity, and Class, 86-87.

- ¹⁷ Louis M. Hacker, "Sections--or Classes," in George Rogers Taylor (ed.), The Turner Thesis: Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1972), p. 55.
- ¹⁸ George Wilson Pierson, "The Frontier and American Institutions: A Criticism of the Turner Theory," in Taylor (ed.), The Turner Thesis, p. 93.
- ¹⁹ William Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner," Western Historical Quarterly xviii (April, 1987), p. 167.
- ²⁰ Lewis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), p. 75.
- ²¹ Ibid., 105.
- ²² Ibid., 279-280.
- ²³ Daily Tribune, March 22, 1905.
- ²⁴ Frederick C. Luebke, "Nebraska: Time, Race and Culture," in James H. Madison (ed.), Heartland: Comparative Histories of the Midwestern States (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 237.
- ²⁵ Daily Tribune, May 2, 1903.
- ²⁶ United States, Census of Religious Bodies, 1916 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), pp. 285, 287; Nebraska Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Eighth Biennial Report, 1901-1902 (Lincoln: 1902), p. 259; W.E. Hadden, "History of Otoe County Churches" (Lincoln: Nebraska Historical Records Project sponsored by the Nebraska State Historical Society, no date), unpaginated; S.H. Calhoun, Nebraska City, A Reflex of Its Importance as a Commercial and Manufacturing Center (Nebraska City: Staats-Zeitung Printing House, 1888), p. 12; Daily News, September 28, 1907.
- ²⁷ Hadden, "History of Otoe County Churches," n.p.
- ²⁸ Ibid., n.p.
- ²⁹ Daily News, October 15, 1907. Enrollment figures for each elementary school were as follows: Second Avenue--332; Sixth Street--286; Fourteenth Street--253; Kearney--105; Greggspport--83; Edgewood--34.
- ³⁰ Daily Tribune., November 16, 1901.

- ³¹ Nebraska City Weekly, June 6, 1902; Nebraska City News, April 15, 1907.
- ³² Addison E. Sheldon (ed.), The Nebraska Blue Book and Historical Register: 1915 (Lincoln: State Journal Company, 1915), p. 291.
- ³³ Altschuler, Race, Ethnicity, and Class, 48.
- ³⁴ Daily Tribune, September 25, 1901.
- ³⁵ Nebraska City News, February 2, 1906.
- ³⁶ United States, Abstract of the Census, 612-613.
- ³⁷ Donald W. Whisenhunt, Ten Famous Nebraskans (Wayne, NE: Wayne Enterprises, 1987), p. 12.
- ³⁸ Nebraska City News, August 14, 1908.
- ³⁹ 1910 United States Manuscript Census; Nebraska Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Eighth Biennial Report, 1901-1902, 258.
- ⁴⁰ Nebraska City Clerk, Minute Records of City Council Proceedings (Nebraska State Historical Society, microfilm RG 320, rolls 3,4), July 8, 1902.
- ⁴¹ Daily Tribune, April 5, 1905.
- ⁴² Nebraska City News, November 6, 1908; Daily News, November 6, 1907.
- ⁴³ Daily Tribune, May 1, 1903.
- ⁴⁴ Nebraska City Clerk, Minute Records of City Council Proceedings, April 7, 1905, April 17, 1905; Daily Tribune, May 23, 1905.
- ⁴⁵ Nebraska City Clerk, Minute Records of City Council Proceedings, April 14, 1902.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., February 3, 1908.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., May 21, 1900.
- ⁴⁸ Sheldon, Nebraska Blue Book: 1915, 131; Nebraska City News, July 6, 1905.
- ⁴⁹ Robert W. Cherny, Populism, Progressivism, and the Transformation of Nebraska Politics: 1885-1915 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981),

p. 110; J. Sterling Morton, History of Nebraska 3 vol. (Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1913), vol. III, pp. 278-279; Robert E. Wenger, "The Anti-Trust Saloon League in Nebraska Politics, 1889-1910," Nebraska History 52 (Fall, 1971), pp. 280, 283.

- ⁵⁰ Nebraska City Clerk, Minute Records of City Council Proceedings, August 8, 1904. Webster's New World Dictionary of American English (3rd ed.), defines chloral as short for chloral hydrate, a colorless, crystalline compound used chiefly as a sedative.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., May 11, 1905.
- ⁵² Nebraska State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1907 vol XI (Omaha: Polk-McAvoy Directory Company), pp. 591-599.
- ⁵³ Daily Tribune, May 4, 1903.
- ⁵⁴ Nebraska City News, August 7, 1908.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., November 6, 1908.
- ⁵⁶ Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border, 89.
- ⁵⁷ Hadden, "History of Otoe County Churches," n.p. A predecessor to the W.C.T.U. in Nebraska City--the Independent Order of Good Templars--was organized on July 9, 1867, with delegates from Nemaha, Otoe, Cass, and Douglas counties. See Andreas, History of Nebraska, p. 210.
- ⁵⁸ Aileen S. Krador, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), pp. 57-58.
- ⁵⁹ Ann L. Wiegman Wilhite, "Sixty-Five Years Till Victory: A History of Woman Suffrage in Nebraska," Nebraska History 49 (Summer 1968), p. 157.
- ⁶⁰ Morton, History of Nebraska, vol III, p. 285.
- ⁶¹ A.E. Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People 3 vols. (New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1931), vol. I, p. 594.
- ⁶² Daily Tribune, November 9, 1901.
- ⁶³ Ibid., July 21, 1905.
- ⁶⁴ Daily News, October 7, 1903; Daily Tribune, October 5, 1903, October 6, 1903, October 7, 1903, October 8, 1903.

- ⁶⁵ William Addison Blakely, American State Papers Bearing on Sunday Legislation (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), pp. 600-601.
- ⁶⁶ Daily Tribune, August 5, 1901.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., August 5, 1901, August 6, 1901, August 7, 1901.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., August 16, 1901.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., August 5, 1901. It is interesting to note that John Mattes, Jr. went on to play a major role in Nebraska politics by championing the German-American perspective. He had been a candidate for Secretary of State in 1896, and became a Democratic leader in the state legislature in 1915 and 1917. Mattes was also prominent in the formation of the German-American Alliance. In 1917, Mattes, along with fellow state senator Philip Kohl, killed in committee a municipal woman suffrage bill which had passed the House easily by a vote of 73 to 24. See Cherny, Populism, Progressivism, and the Transformation of Nebraska Politics, p. 85; Wilhite, "Sixty-Five Years Till Victory," pp. 161-162; and Frederick C. Luebke, "The German-American Alliance," Nebraska History 49 (Summer 1968), p. 167.
- ⁷⁰ Nebraska City News, May 7, 1909.
- ⁷¹ Blakely, American State Papers, 600-601.
- ⁷² Sheldon, Nebraska Blue Book: 1915, 112; Daily Tribune, July 16, 1902; Nebraska City Weekly, July 25, 1902, July 29, 1902.
- ⁷³ Nebraska City News, June 30, 1905.
- ⁷⁴ Blakely, American State Papers, 581; Thomas J. Morain, Prairie Grass Roots: An Iowa Small Town in the Early Twentieth Century (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), p. 149.
- ⁷⁵ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954 (Nebraska City: Chamber of Commerce, 1954), unpaginated.
- ⁷⁶ Daily Tribune, November 13, 1901; Nebraska City News, May 25, 1905; Nebraska City News Press, February 28, 1994.
- ⁷⁷ Morain, Prairie Grass Roots, 92.
- ⁷⁸ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ⁷⁹ Daily Tribune, October 14, 1907.

- ⁸⁰Nebraska City News, February 10, 1904.
- ⁸¹Daily Tribune, June 27, 1901.
- ⁸²Ibid., August 15, 1907.
- ⁸³Ibid., May 4, 1907.
- ⁸⁴Nebraska City News, May 22, 1906.
- ⁸⁵Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.; Nebraska City News, July 12, 1910.
- ⁸⁶Daily News, September 18, 1907, October 7, 1907, September 27, 1907, October 16, 1907, September 24, 1907, October 24, 1907, October 26, 1907, October 21, 1907.
- ⁸⁷Nebraska City News, April 26, 1907.
- ⁸⁸Daily News, October 22, 1907.
- ⁸⁹Daily Tribune, October 13, 1903.
- ⁹⁰Ibid., July 25, 1904.
- ⁹¹Ibid., August 1, 1901.
- ⁹²Nebraska City News, July 24, 1908.
- ⁹³Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border, 322-324.
- ⁹⁴Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ⁹⁵Daily Tribune, August 1, 1907.
- ⁹⁶Ibid., August 17, 1907.
- ⁹⁷Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ⁹⁸Daily Tribune, October 8, 1901.
- ⁹⁹Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ¹⁰⁰Nebraska City News, November 10, 1908.
- ¹⁰¹Daily Tribune, March 22, 1902.
- ¹⁰²Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.; J. Sterling Morton, Illustrated History of Nebraska (Lincoln: Jacob North & Company, 1907), p. 713.

¹⁰³Sheldon, Nebraska Blue Book: 1915, 123.

¹⁰⁴Nebraska City News, February 12, 1904.

¹⁰⁵Daily Tribune, September 7, 1902.

Chapter Three

"The Wheels That Make Business are Running a Little Slow":
Business and Industry, 1900-1910

Since the 1870s, Nebraska City had pinned its hopes for economic growth on manufacturing and industry. For the next thirty years the city attracted various manufacturers of everything from windmills to castors. Many jobs were provided for residents in meat-packing plants, a cereal mill, canning factory and starch works. However, the decade 1900-1910 brought a severe economic blow to Nebraska City with the closing of several industries. This decline in the economy led to the large drop in population, from 7,380 in 1900, to only 5,488 in 1910, a drop of over twenty-five percent. Thus, the story of Nebraska City's industries from 1900 to 1910 helps to explain why the city suffered such a significant drop in population following several years of growth and expansion.

Hopes were high in the early 1900s among Nebraska Citians for business growth and more industries. In 1901, the Daily Tribune asserted that Nebraska City's factories and merchants made the town what it was, and that the city's future depended entirely upon "manufacturers and the converting of raw materials raised on the farms into commercial products."¹

Newspapers also promoted the main street merchants as much as possible. When a merchants' meeting was held in October, 1901, the Tribune viewed the gathering as a new beginning for the city's economy:

The second chapter in the story of the new Nebraska City opened last night. The first

chapter began when the packing houses, cereal mills and starch factory commenced their successful careers. That was doing things for the town,² now the town has begun to do things for itself.

The city council of Nebraska City also tried to stimulate economic growth when, in 1902, they exempted manufacturers and "laboring enterprises" from a special tax levied upon other businesses. That early example of "supply-side" economics was championed by the Nebraska City Weekly, which described the tax exemptions for industry as "the things that a community needs to encourage, because they are the things that create wealth."³

In the early years of the 1900s, Nebraska City did in fact reach its industrial peak, with twenty factories producing approximately fifty commodities that filled two railroad trains daily. Many Nebraska City boosters still dreamed that their city would become an industrial giant of the Midwest. Local promoters often repeated the saying: "When you can't find a job in the big factory towns of the East, come to 'Neb City' away out in the corn fields of the West."⁴

At the beginning of the decade, Nebraska City was the third largest manufacturing center in the state, with products valued at over \$4.5 million, ranking behind only Omaha and South Omaha in value of production. According to the 1900 Census of Manufactures, Otoe and Douglas counties, which included the cities of Omaha, South Omaha and Nebraska City, manufactured products worth \$118,389,890, which accounted for over eighty-nine percent of the total value of all goods manufactured in

Table VI
Nebraska City Manufacturing Statistics, 1900

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number/ \$ Value</u>	<u>Percentage of State Total</u>
Establishments	108	1.99%
Total Capital	\$1,576,857	2.19
Proprietors--Firm Members	114	1.92
Salaried Officials	48	1.81
salaries	\$54,840	2.36
Average Wage Earners	739	3.02
wages	\$269,796	2.33
Men 16 and Over	585	2.78
wages	\$243,912	2.27
Women 16 and Over	143	5.45
wages	\$25,084	3.71
Children under 16	11	1.42
wages	\$800	*
Value of Products	\$4,582,554	3.18

*: Less than one percent of state total

Source: United States, Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Manufactures (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), pp. 511, 520-521.

the state. Nebraska City's industries accounted for over two percent of the state's total capital in 1900, and 3.18 percent of the value of all goods produced in Nebraska.⁵

As the 1900s began, Nebraska City boasted several successful industries, with many of them tied closely to the area's agricultural producers. Foremost was the Argo Starch works, located at the eastern end of Central Avenue. More than \$60,000 was spent in remodeling and enlarging the plant in 1901, including the installation of over sixteen miles of iron piping.⁶ The plant, which employed between 200 and 500 workers, covered almost four square blocks, was painted a bright yellow color, and sported a huge sign that read "National Starch Company, Argo Factory."⁷ In addition to the jobs provided for local workers, the starch factory was also a lucrative market for area farmers. The factory bought large amounts of corn from Nebraska City's agricultural hinterland, with the pace of production at the starch works often determined by the prevailing price for corn.⁸

Another major employer and a valuable market for area farmers was the Otoe Preserving Company, known until 1901 as the Nebraska City Canning Company, located at Eleventh Street and Seventh Corso. This enterprise had an average payroll supporting seventy-five to eighty workers, and had the capacity to pack 2,400 cans of apples and 3,000 cans of apple butter on a daily basis. During its busy season from early August until late fall, the preserving company would employ up to 500

temporary workers to can sweet corn and beans. In 1903, workers were able to can an average of 90 to 100 tons of corn per day. The quota of cans required for each season's packing were hand-soldered by employees during the winter months.⁹ Due to such a valuable market as the preserving company, farmers in the city's hinterland produced a variety of marketable foodstuffs. In 1899, Otoe County farmers produced 119,066 bushels of apples, 6,103,470 bushels of corn, and cultivated 1,085 acres of beans and other miscellaneous vegetables.¹⁰

Nebraska City was also host to the Morton-Gregson meat packing plant, located about one mile southwest of the town. In addition to the main buildings of the packing house, the plant consisted of an ice house that held over 2,000 tons of ice cut from the Missouri River, stockyards, and a large reservoir that was filled with water taken from South Table Creek.¹¹ In 1903, the Morton-Gregson plant shipped an average of eight railroad cars of pork per day, with the majority headed for markets in the eastern United States.¹² The monthly payroll for the plant was approximately \$15,000 in June, 1904.¹³ Morton Gregson was another example of the interdependence of Nebraska City manufacturing interests and the city's agricultural hinterland. Otoe County farmers produced over 83,000 swine in 1900, with the Morton-Gregson plant as a ready-made market.¹⁴

An adjunct to the Morton-Gregson packing plant, the Western Cold Storage Company, also provided a market for regional agricultural producers. This company, led by Rockwell King,

and by brothers Joy and Mark Morton, claimed to be the "best equipped cold-storage plant in the west." The plant had a capacity to store 250 train cars of foodstuffs, and handled everything from eggs, apples and butter to poultry. In 1901, the plant was receiving an average of 2,500 to 4,000 pounds of chickens daily.¹⁵

The King Drill Company, founded by Charles Van Pelt and later sold to Nebraska Citian William Bischof, had sixty-five men on the payroll in 1901. By 1906 the drill company had an annual output of 300 seed drills and 2,500 to 3,000 two-row lister cultivators. The firm advertised itself as the manufacturer of "King's Famous Single and Double Cutter Grain Drills and Broadcast Seeders, also Cream Separators."¹⁶ The Lincoln-based Inter-Ocean Shirt Factory was established in 1907 at Eleventh Street and Central Avenue. Thirty-five mostly female employees of the shirt factory produced overalls, shirts, aprons and girls' dresses. The factory was purchased by the M.E. Smith Company of Omaha in 1909, and operated in Nebraska City until its closing in 1922.¹⁷

Other local industries included the O.L. Gregory Vinegar Company, which opened in 1906, and had the capacity to handle 250,000 bushels of apples per year; the Nebraska City Cooperage Company, which made barrels for apples was located at 202 South Third Street and managed by Miles M. Vaugh and Daniel O'Brien; the Nebraska City Boiler and Tank Works; the Morton Printing company; the Cereal Mills, located on Thirteenth Street between

Eighth and Ninth Corso; the Kingfalfa Alfalfa Mill; The Nebraska City Bottling Works at 221 Central Avenue; the Nebraska City Broom Factory at 1712 Central Avenue; and the Nebraska City Foundry, which was powered by windmills until the installation of a gasoline-powered engine in 1909. There were also five cigar makers in town in 1907-1908: Claus Koch, Horace Kuwitzky, Kuhlman and Sons, J.H. Peters, and Phifer & Schrimpf.¹⁸

The workers in Nebraska City held a wide variety of occupations. In 1900, 2,669 residents listed 256 different occupations in the federal census reports. Ten years later, the number of workers dropped to 2,102, a decline of over twenty-two percent, while the number of different occupations remained almost steady at 249. It should be noted that the number of different occupations is affected by an overlap in how people identified their jobs. For example, in 1910, "clergyman" was indicated seven times in the census records, and "minister" on five occasions. The most common occupation in both 1900 and 1910 was laborer, or day laborer. Other common occupations included carpenter, teamster, teacher, dressmaker, and clerk.¹⁹

The major employers in 1900 were the factories, mills and packing plant, all of which combined employed over 750 workers. Tradesmen such as carpenters, teamsters, plumbers and painters numbered over 500. Merchants and employees of retail businesses numbered approximately 330, and positions held by women, such as servant, seamstress and dressmaker, accounted for over 370 jobs. The railroads employed over 170 people in 1900, and the

Table VII
Top Ten Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1900

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Day Laborer/Laborer	609	21.77%
Servant	186	6.65
Carpenter	93	3.32
Teamster	78	2.79
Teacher	71	2.54
Clerk	58	2.07
Butcher	56	2.00
Farm Laborer	55	1.97
Housekeeper	54	1.93
Dressmaker	49	1.75

Source: 1900 United States Manuscript Census. Nebraska State Historical Society, microfilm, NARS, T263, Roll 1900-21.

Table VIII
Top Ten Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1910

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Laborer	424	19.89%
Carpenter	69	3.23
Teacher	69	3.23
Salesman	56	2.63
Merchant	53	2.49
Clerk	49	2.30
Teamster	46	2.16
Painter	43	2.02
Bookkeeper	42	1.97
Dressmaker	40	1.88

Source: 1910 United States Manuscript Census. Nebraska State Historical Society, microfilm, NARS, T264, Roll 1910-15.

public schools and county and city government employed 114 people. Farming and various agricultural positions accounted for over 140 jobs, and professionals such as doctors and lawyers numbered around 100.

By the end of the decade, the number of industrial workers had dropped from more than 750 in 1900 to approximately 550. Trade positions fell from over 500 in 1900 to about 325 in 1910, while retail employment held steady at around 325. Positions dominated by women such as servant and seamstress dropped from over 370 to fewer than 200. Railroad jobs remained almost steady at 160, as did teaching and government jobs, with approximately 105 positions. Farming jobs dropped to only about seventy, while professionals still held around 100 jobs. New occupations that appeared in 1910 included automobile dealer and auto garage worker, a result of the introduction of the city's first automobiles between 1900 and 1910.²⁰

Common laborers outnumbered those in professional positions, such as physicians, lawyers, and executives, by over seven-to-one in 1900, and more than five-to-one in 1910. Unfortunately for this majority of workers, there seems to have been an exceptional wage disparity between managerial personnel and the average wage-earners who made up Nebraska City's workforce. The forty-eight "salaried officials" in Nebraska City in 1900 comprised 1.81 percent of the state total, yet they earned 2.36 percent of the salaries paid to "salaried officials." On the other hand, wage-earners in Nebraska City made up 3.02 percent of the state total, yet they earned only

2.33 percent of the total wages earned in the state in 1900. The female workforce was particularly underpaid in 1900. Nebraska City women workers, often in jobs such as seamstress, cook or servant were 5.45 percent of the state's female workforce, yet they earned only 3.71 percent of the wages paid to women statewide.²¹

Perhaps largely because the average Nebraska City wage-earner was underpaid, there was a great deal of labor strife in the city between 1900 and 1910. As in other parts of the United States in the early twentieth century, many Nebraska Citians turned to the labor union movement in hopes of earning higher wages, shorter work hours, and better and safer working conditions. The struggle between owners and laborers caused many hardships across the United States, and led Americans even further down the road to a class-structured society. President Theodore Roosevelt spoke out eloquently about the capital-labor rift:

'I am for labor,' or 'I am for capital,' substitutes something else for the immutable laws of righteousness. The one and the other would let the class man in, and letting him in is the one thing that will most quickly eat out the heart of the Republic.²²

The differences between classes in regard to occupation and wealth were, however, rapidly becoming entrenched in American society, yet early twentieth-century reformers hoped that class conflict would be reduced through a fairly-regulated system of capitalism that would provide "abundance, mobility, and opportunity to all."²³

Nebraska City's workers often turned to the organized labor movement in hopes of gaining higher salaries and improved working conditions. There was a wide variety and a surprisingly large number of unions active in the community between 1900 and 1910. For example, in 1902, the local union of Retail Clerks Protective Association was formed by about twenty-five retail clerks. The goal of the clerks' union, which grew to about fifty members by 1903, was to shorten the hours of labor they were required to work, and to encourage the public to make their purchases by daylight.²⁴ A Milkmen's Union was also formed, and its members banded together and raised the price of milk from five cents a quart to six and one-quarter cents. The Argo Starch Factory workers also organized a union in August of 1903, known as the Starch Factory Employees Union, No. 66. There were twenty-five charter members of this union, with Frank Cook serving as President, and Steve Salko as Vice President.²⁵ Some of the other unions present in the city included the Federal Labor Union, No. 1020; Teamsters Union, No. 193; a Carpenters Union, headed by secretary John Pfann, Jr.; the Butchers and Meat Cutters Union, No. 122; Ladies Union, No. 10231 A.F.L.; a Bricklayers and Masons Union led by William Rivett; International Flour and Cereal Mills Union, Local No. 46; Musicians Union, Local No. 273; and the Barbers Union, No. 426.²⁶

The labor unions in Nebraska City led several strikes during the decade. In March of 1903, 240 employees of the Argo Starch Works went out on an unsuccessful strike to gain an increase

in pay. There was also a call by organized labor to boycott the Freese and Son livery business because it employed men who refused to join the local Teamsters Union. The teamsters demanded that the non-union employees be discharged from their employment, but Freese and Son refused to give in to the union's demands.²⁷

The most prominent labor difficulties to hit Nebraska City during the decade were the strikes by the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butchers Workmen against the Morton-Gregson Packing Plant in 1902 and 1904. In January, 1902, the butchers union went on strike against the Morton-Gregson plant, demanding an increase in wages from \$1.50 to \$1.75 per day.²⁸ The strike turned violent; two assault complaints were filed in county court against strikers, and three arrests for assault were made against men who had beaten up men who continued to work during the strike.²⁹ A meeting between the butchers union and local businessmen was held on January 20, 1902. John W. Steinhart, a prominent businessman, urged the strikers to return to work immediately at the old wage, with the hopes of receiving a raise in the future. A union delegate from Kansas City also spoke, saying that although the labor union had lost many strikes, he had never seen any strikers willing to "lay down" after only two weeks on strike.³⁰

On February 14, over a month into the strike, the Morton-Gregson company asked the District Court for an injunction to restrain the strikers from interfering with the men who wanted

to return to work at the packing plant. Apparently, several workers did return to work. The plant management decided to resume operations four days later, and began issuing orders for hogs. The strike eventually died away, with no discernible victory for the workers. In March of 1902, a conference of management and a committee selected by the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butchers Workmen settled their differences and the strike was ended.³¹

Another strike against Morton-Gregson took place in the summer of 1904. Management called upon strikers to return to work, but they had to sign a contract that listed the following conditions of employment:

I agree to take a position and accept a rate of wages as may be mutually agreed upon as full compensation for services rendered; and to faithfully and diligently serve to the best of my ability for such time as I may be employed, unless prevented by sickness or desiring to take a position elsewhere. And I further agree to work with any man whether he be a member of any labor organization or not; I further agree not to participate in any strike with a view of interrupting the progress of the work, or the violation of this agreement.

1. Since we, as employers, are responsible for the work turned out by our workmen, we must therefore have full discretion to designate the men we consider competent to perform the work, and to determine the conditions under which that work shall be done. The question of the competency of the men being determined solely by us, we will not admit of any interference with the management of our business.

2. The number of apprentices, helpers and handy men to be employed will be determined solely by the employers.

3. We shall be free to employ our workmen at wages mutually satisfactory. We will not permit employees to place any restriction on the management, method

or production of work and will require a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

4. Should the employee prove incompetent, then the employer has the privilege of discharging the employee.

5. The above conditions being absolutely essential to the successful conduct of our business, they are not subject to arbitration.³²

Few members of the butchers' union accepted these heavy-handed terms of the Morton-Gregson management. While the strike lingered on, in early August a rumor swept through town that two carloads of blacks from Kansas City and St. Joseph were to arrive and begin work at the packing house. However, the Daily Tribune noted "the rumor was utterly baseless." Most workers remained on strike, and on August 4, they issued a written response to the plant management:

We, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of N.A. local union No. 122 hereby agree to accept a rate of wages as may be mutually agreed upon as compensation for services rendered, the wages to govern, to be the same as paid at the time the men were discharged; and to faithfully and diligently serve to the best of our ability for such time as we may be employed, unless prevented by sickness or desiring to take a position elsewhere. And we further agree to work with any man whether he be a member of any labor organization or not, with the exception of the men who have done Local No. 122 any harm in the past.

2. In the hiring or rehiring of the men we will not permit any discrimination.

3. We agree to place no restrictions on the management or production of the work, and will assure a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

4. We furthermore agree to submit to arbitration any question in dispute and abide by the decision of the arbitration board. The arbitration board to consist of one member selected by the firm, the second a member of Local No. 122, and the third to be selected by the other two. This agreement to expire May 1,

1905.³⁴

The local press seemed to be on the side of management during the 1904 packing house strike. The Daily Tribune noted that when the payroll of the packing plant was cut off due to the strike, the entire town felt an economic "stagnation." The Tribune went on to encourage the strikers to return to work for not only their own benefit, but for the benefit of the entire city:

The owners insist on a reasonably clear field for management unhampered by restrictions The foundations of this view are laid in experience and are not theories and the men who can assist in bringing them to the full understanding of his fellow citizen who may not see them clearly, does himself and his community a distinct service, for he is aiding in filling and circulating the 'pay envelope' that brings benefits to all.³⁴

The two warring factions met in early August, and the "points of difference" between management and the workers were settled. The wages remained at the same level as before the strike, and the plant retained the right to hire and fire workers without any interference from the union members. Management and workers agreed: "There is to be no agreement to sign and the agreement is simply an oral one." On August 13, work was set to resume at the Morton-Gregson plant.³⁵

In addition to grievances regarding wages and hours, industrial safety was also a major problem in Nebraska City's factories. Several workers suffered industrial accidents such as that inflicted upon a man named H. Hermann, an employee of the Argo Starch Works, who suffered a scalp wound when a heavy

starch pan fell from a rack and struck him on the head. Bert Bridges, an engineer at the starch factory, "badly mauled" his thumb when it was caught between two cog wheels. An even more serious injury was suffered by fourteen-year-old factory girl Maggie Bird, who was nearly killed when her hair was caught in factory machinery. It took some seventy stitches to close the wound on her head.³⁶

Along with, and perhaps largely because of recurrent labor strife, Nebraska City's economy began to slow by 1903-1904.

In recounting the year 1903, the Daily Tribune stated:

The year 1903 is approaching the end and it cannot be said that Nebraska City has made any marked or material advancement in the year just closed. Everything has been prosperous, business good, all our manufacturing plants running on time but nothing of importance that is strictly new has been added.³⁷

By the summer of the following year, the Daily Tribune reported that business in Nebraska City was starting to slow, and that the city was not buzzing with its usual economic vitality.³⁸

The closing of the Argo Starch Works in 1904 was a great disruption to Nebraska City's economy. The plant had originally been part of a local stock company managed by J. Sterling Morton's son Carl. The Morton family later acquired the majority of the company stock, and sold the plant to the National Starch Company. A suit was brought by the state of Nebraska with the goal of declaring void the sale of the plant to the National Starch Company, on the grounds that the factory was operated as a starch trust. William Jennings Bryan had criticized the

National Starch Company during his crusade against trusts, calling the Argo plant "part of a wicked monopoly." J. Sterling Morton resisted Bryan's efforts, and accused him of driving industry from Nebraska. Morton stressed "that the starch company was a corporation, not a trust."³⁹ Nebraska's suit against the starch company was eventually dropped by Nebraska Attorney General Frank Prout, who preferred to dismiss the suit rather than, as he said, "make an ass of himself trying to prosecute it farther."⁴⁰

The starch works managed to weather this storm, but it soon closed its doors for good. In August of 1902, the plant was shut down, but the management assured workers and townspeople that the factory would be reopened as soon as corn prices fell.⁴¹ Despite this harsh economic setback, the editor of the Nebraska City Weekly chose to remain optimistic:

None of the disasters that were expected to overtake Nebraska City, when the order to suspend grinding at the starch works was received, have arrived. There was a decided feeling of discouragement among our merchants at first But the evil day still holds off. For one thing, nobody expects the Argo factory to stay closed very long. And except for temporary interruption of the purchase of corn, no evil effects have been perceptible. There are no empty houses anywhere in town. Very few men went elsewhere for work, and the great part of them have since come back. Nebraska City is very far from being a dead one. This has been a very good test of her vitality, and it seems evident that the new order of things⁴², steady growth and progress, has come to stay.

The plant was briefly reopened in late 1902 or early 1903, but was shut down for good in June of 1904. In response to an inquiry from Joy Morton, who sat on the board of the

National Starch Company, J.B. Reichman, the company secretary gave the following explanation for the plant closing:

it was due primarily to relatively a much higher cost of labor there than at any other points of operation. The pay rolls of Nebraska City for the same number of men at a plant grinding a similar amount are about twenty-five percent higher . . . it is needless for me to add that the high prices of corn at that point also tended to⁴³ make it unattractive to operate at present.

The company also gave another explanation for the closing, saying that there had been a sudden appearance of a mold spore in the corn starch during processing, and that the situation could not be rectified. The only solution, according to the plant management, was to construct a newly-designed plant, which was eventually built in Argo, Illinois. The loss of the starch plant cost Nebraska City between 200 and 500 jobs, resulting in a great shock to city's economy.⁴⁴ In the summer of 1908, the starch factory was dismantled by the S. Krug Wrecking Company, and sold for scrap. The components of the plant consisted of boilers, elevators, engines, pumps, blowers, shafting, pulleys, belting, pipes, valves, 400 steel trucks, 40,000 box trays, 2,000,000 feet of lumber, and 3,000,000 bricks.⁴⁵

In addition to the loss of the starch works, Nebraska City was also struck by the virtual closing of the Faultless Castor Company which was forced to sharply curtail production due to unfavorable freight rates for shipments to the eastern United States where most furniture manufacturers were located.

The plant was eventually reestablished in Evansville, Indiana.⁴⁶ The castor factory was still present in Nebraska City as late as 1907, but the cutback in production cost the town another 100 jobs.⁴⁷ An additional fifty jobs were lost when the King Drill Factory all but closed due to what it said was intense competition from the "Harvester Trust."⁴⁸

The closings of the starch works, and cutbacks at the castor company and the King Drill Factory cost Nebraska City between 350 and 650 jobs. This devastating blow was the major reason for the steep population drop suffered by the city between 1900 and 1910. However, despite an over twenty-five percent drop in population that might easily have spelled doom for many cities, industry in Nebraska City managed to hold on. The town's reduced economy remained viable due to expansion in meat-packing, the alfalfa mill and other firms. A cereal mill that manufactured Quail Brand rolled oats was opened by Nebraska Citian Fred Beyschlag in July of 1906. That same year, a vinegar works established by local resident O.L. Gregory, with a capital stock of \$30,000, was opened in an old plow factory.⁴⁹

Along with Nebraska City's industries, main street merchants also suffered from hard economic hard times. Aside from the factory workers of the city, the downtown merchants depended quite heavily upon area farmers for their business. Nebraska City's retail trade area extended approximately seventeen miles north to near Plattsmouth, eighteen miles south to Auburn, twenty miles west to near Syracuse, and over twenty miles east into

Iowa and northwestern Missouri. Local merchants strongly resented the growing trend of shoppers going to other cities, in particular Omaha, for their retail needs. The Daily Tribune supported Nebraska City's merchants but hypocritically chastised Omaha for its community boosting, and railed against "Omaha's hog tactics, which have caused her to be prodigiously disliked all over the state."⁵⁰

The business owners often held special sales or bargain days to attract customers to the city. In November of 1901, the downtown merchants held a "Sales Day," and offered a fifteen percent discount on all merchandise. There were also street shows, a football game, a fire drill, and bicycle races. In order to attract consumers from Iowa and Missouri, the toll to cross the Missouri River bridge was waived on the day of the sale. In an effort to attract as many farmers to town as possible, the merchants offered a five dollar prize to the person who brought in the biggest ear of corn; and the Morton-Gregson plant offered five dollars to the farmer who brought in the best load of hogs. An estimated 1,700 to 2,000 out-of-town visitors came into Nebraska City for the "Sales Day" event.⁵¹

Some of the main street merchants who advertised regularly in the local papers included the Palace Clothing Store, Meredith and Company Hardware, L. Wessel's Sons and Company Department Store, S.T. Davies Grocery Store, the Overland Theater, and the Morton Printing Company. In addition to these retail businesses, Nebraska City was also home to four banks, ten

hotels, and at least fifteen saloons. These and other merchants banded together in 1903, and formed a Commercial Club united for the expansion of Nebraska City's retail businesses.⁵²

The Commercial Club, led by President John W. Steinhart, secretary F.A. Helvey, and treasurer F.J. Homeyer, was the forerunner of the modern-day Chamber of Commerce. This organization took some concrete steps to try to stem Nebraska City's economic decline. In addition to sponsoring special merchants' bargains and sales days, the Commercial Club helped persuade the city council to allow merchants to place hitching posts in front of their businesses to help keep the farm trade. The club also helped with the expansion of Nebraska City's industrial base. The merchants provided the building that became the home of the O.L. Gregory Vinegar Works, played a role in bringing the Inter-Ocean Shirt factory to town, and provided \$11,000 to purchase some old mill buildings that eventually became the G.E. Conkey mills, which produced a line of poultry, hog and cattle feeds. The Commercial Club also provided financial assistance which allowed the Stotts Automatic Signal Company to purchase two buildings on Tenth Street for the manufacture of railroad signals. In 1907 the club held a meeting to discuss ways to improve navigation on the Missouri River so as to improve the town's economy.⁵³

The city council also attempted to help the business community in different ways. In an act of retail protectionism which conveniently linked expediency and morality, the council

adopted a resolution presented by John Mattes, Jr., that limited the number of retail liquor licenses for 1905 to the number then in place.⁵⁴ However, the city council continued to restrain business activity on Sundays. In 1909, the Chief of Police notified the Nebraska City News that he had identified several businesses in violation of the city's Sunday ordinances. The chief stated that all violators would be punished, and if they persisted in violating the law, the city council would be asked to revoke their licenses.⁵⁵

Aside from economic woes, Nebraska City's business district had to cope with the frequent hazards of building fires. Between 1900 and 1910, Nebraska City's volunteer fire department answered a total of 183 alarms. The volunteer firefighters used a horse-drawn hook and ladder wagon, and a hose cart equipped with fire-fighting chemicals. The fire department did not acquire any motorized firefighting vehicles until 1916.⁵⁶ On December 14, 1901, the City Hall was completely destroyed by a fire that may have been caused by faulty electric lights in the city clerk's office.⁵⁷ In 1902, a livery stable on North Seventh Street was destroyed by fire, with the loss of eighteen horses, twenty-five buggies, eighteen sleighs, five carriages, two hacks, one baggage wagon, one spring wagon, fifteen tons of hay, ten tons of straw, 150 bushels of corn and 200 bushels of oats.⁵⁸ The Nebraska City Laundry Company burned to the ground in 1907, with a loss of \$5,000. During the same year, fire destroyed a house erected by Governor Samuel Black in 1858, which had

been one of the oldest landmarks in the city.⁵⁹

Another important segment of Nebraska City's economy was provided by government institutions and public works programs. The first utility company in town was the Nebraska City Gaslight Company, which was formed in 1879 with J.V. Barringer as contractor. This plant provided gas for several city street lamps until it was shut down in 1881 after being damaged by a flood. By 1902, the gas works had been reopened, and renamed the Nebraska City Gas Company. This privately-owned firm, valued at \$50,000 in 1903-1904, was headed by president W.S. Block, and managed by C.J. Hayes. By 1907, the gas company had moved to 1004 Central Avenue, and had been rechristened the Citizen's Gas Light Company. The gas works was purchased by another private firm, the Water and Light Company, in 1927.⁶⁰

A water works had been organized in May of 1887, with D.P. Rolfe as President and E.A. Rudiger as superintendent. This company eventually evolved into the Water and Light Company, a private firm which was owned by the New York banking firm Watson, Down and Anderson, and later held by E.A. Potter, Samuel Insull, Midwest Utilities, and the Central Power Consumers. In 1903-1904, the electric plant was valued at \$25,000, and the waterworks at \$150,000. The company, at the request of the city council, installed sixteen arc lamps in 1902. By 1905, the number of lights had been increased to twenty-four, and were lighted from twilight until 1:30 a.m. every night except when the moon was shining. The first private home to be wired

for electricity was owned by S.B. Eastmann; and the first business to be wired was Wessel's Department Store on Central Avenue.⁶¹

The Water and Light Company was also responsible for the city's water standpipe, which held some 90,000 gallons of water used to supply the city's homes and businesses. In the summer of 1902, the standpipe overflowed several times, and many nearby residents threatened a lawsuit against the company. Mayor H.H. Bartling ordered the city clerk to serve notice that the water company was in violation of its charter with the city by not cleaning and purifying water before it was delivered to residents. Bartling contended that the water company was simply supplying the city with water taken directly from the Missouri River. The Water and Light Company management denied these charges, and stated that heavy rains had kept the water-settling basins agitated, thus resulting in muddy water for consumers. In 1910, the city contracted for the construction of trenches and flush tanks for a sanitary sewer system, the first phase of which was completed in May of the same year.⁶²

Several other improvement projects were undertaken between 1900 and 1910. On January 4, 1902, a new city hospital was opened. The main floor of the hospital had a reception room, nurses' room, and three rooms for patients. The upstairs floor contained a men's ward with six beds, an operating room, and two private rooms. The facility was equipped with hot and cold running water and electric lighting.⁶³ The hospital was run

by a local physician, Dr. Neal, and the head nurse was Della Andrews. The various rooms of the hospital were furnished and equipped with funds provided by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, Mrs. M.L. Hayward, the King Drill Company, and John W. Steinhart.⁶⁴

Public buildings constructed during the decade included a new firehouse built for \$1,095 in 1905, and a remodeled city hall completed in 1902. The city hall was a three-story building with a city council chamber and offices on the upper floor, firemen's rooms and feed for horses on the second floor, and the fire department and jail on the ground floor. The building was heated by steam and lighted by electricity. The cost for the remodeling project was \$3,500. Nebraska City's public library also underwent renovation when fifteen volunteers from the Bricklayers' Union installed a new steam heating plant along with other repairs.⁶⁵

The city also struggled with the problems of street paving and sidewalk construction. The Daily News noted that towns could often be "sized-up" by the quality of their sidewalks, and the city council regularly passed resolutions calling for new sidewalks to be laid throughout the city. In 1903 the News reported that the lumber for several street crossings had been hauled to locations in the western part of town, but that construction had yet to begin. The paper asserted that the unattended lumber would not remain in place for long, and would soon be stolen for use as kindling, "by the shiftless people

who pass that way and conclude that the public owes them a living."⁶⁶ In the summer of 1904, "a number of sidewalks and crossings" were laid throughout the city, including a cement walk leading to Wyuka Cemetery, which was constructed by A.M. Munn for \$390.32, with a five-year guarantee.⁶⁷ In 1908, many residents of the Kearney addition in southeastern Nebraska City complained that there were no sidewalks in their area of town, and that the existing wooden crossings were worn out. Residents planned to present a petition to the city council, "asking them to recognize they are within the city limits and pay their share of the tax."⁶⁸

Nebraska City's mayor and other townspeople also often urged the city council to "do something" about the poor quality of street pavements around the city. The city's street fund for 1904 was an inadequate \$2,100. Upper Central Avenue was repaved in the fall of 1903, after which the Daily News urged the city council to "assess up the cost of the paving and have the property owners pay into the city treasurer the money the city has laid out in that part of the city." In another street improvement project, construction began in the fall of 1908 on a concrete bridge spanning South Table Creek on First Street.⁶⁹ However, despite all the good intentions of citizens and local government, the condition of most streets remained poor throughout the decade.

Another important part of the community's infrastructure was provided by the Nebraska City Telephone Company, which was

owned by a group of local businessmen. The company owned ninety miles of toll lines, operated fourteen stations, and was connected with nearly 100 towns throughout southeast Nebraska. The Nebraska City Telephone Company was eventually purchased by Nebraska Bell Telephone in 1910, which then sold the Nebraska City facilities to the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1912. Nebraska City was also well-served by telegraph companies, with Otoe County having over 112 miles of telegraph lines by 1901.⁷⁰

Nebraska City was far from being the only small, rural city to suffer economic setbacks in the first decade of the twentieth century. Although the decade has been called the "age of optimism," and the "age of confidence," many small towns were slowly dying away.⁷¹ The problems of cities in rural America grew to such proportions that in 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt established a Commission on Rural Life to study possible ways of improving the plight of small towns.⁷² According to historian Lewis Atherton, many small towns declined largely because they failed to modify their goals and ambitions to meet the changing times. Rather than accept an altered role in twentieth-century society, many small towns such as Nebraska City continued to pursue unrealistic goals of progress and growth through "industrialization, improved transportation, exploitation of local mineral resources, and trade-at-home, home town loyalty."⁷³

Industrial growth and business expansion continued to be

the goals for which many Nebraska Citians strove, even after it had become apparent that Omaha had become the major industrial city in Nebraska. However, Nebraska City's problem seems not to have been a failure to keep up with Omaha, a battle long since lost. Instead, it was a failure to keep some well-established key industries which left both Nebraska City and the state. It had also become clear that improved means of transportation and better transportation routes had made it much easier for city residents and area farmers to shop in other markets. When lofty goals went unfulfilled, the result for many cities was often "disillusionment and lethargy."⁷⁴

The years 1900-1910 were a tumultuous time for Nebraska City's business and industrial sectors. When several factories closed down, with a resultant loss of hundreds of jobs, the town's population dropped over twenty-five percent in ten years. However, instead of giving up, entering a state of lethargy and continuing a downward spiral, Nebraska City managed to retain some of its industry, and attract some new manufacturers. Nebraska City endured a decade of factory closings, labor strife and a declining population base, and rebounded sufficiently to begin a new period of growth from 1910 to 1920.

Chapter Three End Notes

- ¹ Daily Tribune, September 23, 1901, June 13, 1901.
- ² Ibid., October 30, 1901.
- ³ Nebraska City Weekly, August 1, 1902.
- ⁴ Marion A. Jensen, Operation West (Detroit: Harlo Press, 1965), p. 126.
- ⁵ United States, Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Manufactures (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1902), pp. 507, 511.
- ⁶ Daily Tribune, December 16, 1901.
- ⁷ Jensen, Operation West, 125.
- ⁸ Nebraska City Weekly, August 12, 1902.
- ⁹ Daily Tribune, September 26, 1901, July 15, 1903, September 21, 1903; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954 (Nebraska City: Chamber of Commerce, 1954), unpaginated.
- ¹⁰ United States, Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Agriculture (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1902), v. 2, pp. 661-663, 173-174, 380-381, 562-563.
- ¹¹ Daily Tribune, November 3, 1904.
- ¹² Ibid., June 26, 1903.
- ¹³ Ibid., July 28, 1904.
- ¹⁴ United States, Twelfth Census: Agriculture, v. 1, 458-459.
- ¹⁵ Daily Tribune, November 15, 1901.
- ¹⁶ Daily Tribune, September 24, 1901; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, np; Nebraska State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1902-1903 vol. X (Omaha: Omaha Directory Company, 1903), p. 339.
- ¹⁷ Daily Tribune, November 27, 1906; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, np.
- ¹⁸ Daily Tribune, August 29, 1906; Jensen, Operation West, 125-126; Nebraska City News, July 23, 1909; Nebraska

State Gazetteer, 1902-1903, 340; Nebraska State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1907 vol. XI (Omaha: Polk-McAvoy Directory Company, 1907), p. 594; Nebraska Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Eleventh Biennial Report, 1907-1908 (Lincoln: 1909), pp. 162-163.

- ¹⁹Compiled from 1900 and 1910 United States Manuscript Census, Nebraska State Historical Society, microfilm, NARS, T263 Roll 1900-21 and T264 Roll 1910-15.
- ²⁰Ibid.
- ²¹United States, Twelfth Census: Manufactures, 507, 511.
- ²²Glenn C. Altschuler, Race, Ethnicity, and Class in American Social Thought: 1865-1919 (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1992), p. 105.
- ²³Ibid., 79.
- ²⁴Daily Tribune, May 2, 1903, March 21, 1902.
- ²⁵Ibid., October 2, 1903, August 6, 1903.
- ²⁶Daily Tribune, May 1, 1903, May 18, 1903, July 7, 1903, August 24, 1903, November 24, 1904, January 4, 1904; Nebraska City News, December 11, 1908; Nebraska Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Twelfth Biennial Report, 1909-1910 (Lincoln: 1910), p. 124.
- ²⁷Addison E. Sheldon, (ed.), The Nebraska Blue Book and Historical Register: 1915 (Lincoln: State Journal Company, 1915), p. 114; Daily Tribune, July 25, 1905.
- ²⁸Daily Tribune, January 8, 1902.
- ²⁹Ibid., January 16, 1902.
- ³⁰Ibid., January 20, 1902.
- ³¹Ibid., February 14, 1902, February 18, 1902, March 13, 1902.
- ³²Ibid., July 27, 1904.
- ³³Ibid., August 4, 1904.
- ³⁴Ibid., August 6, 1904.
- ³⁵Nebraska City News, August 16, 1904; Daily Tribune, August 13, 1904. There was a nationwide strike which coincided with the strike in Nebraska City, but they were unrelated. The national strike, which was "ill-timed," eventually

"ended in total defeat, and the union was eliminated in the packing industry everywhere for more than a decade." See, William C. Pratt, "Divided Workers, Divided Communities: The 1921-22 Packinghouse Strike in Omaha and Nebraska City," Labor's Heritage 5 (Winter 1994), p. 53.

- ³⁶ Ibid., July 2, 1904, August 20, 1903, September 20, 1901.
- ³⁷ Ibid., December 18, 1903.
- ³⁸ Ibid., July 23, 1904.
- ³⁹ John W. Bailey, "The Presidential Election of 1900 in Nebraska: McKinley Over Bryan," Nebraska History vol. 54 no. 4 (Winter, 1973), p. 569; Sheldon, Nebraska Blue Book: 1915, 107.
- ⁴⁰ Daily Tribune, December 18, 1901, February 3, 1902.
- ⁴¹ Nebraska City Weekly, September 9, 1902.
- ⁴² Ibid., August 5, 1902.
- ⁴³ Daily Tribune, June 11, 1904.
- ⁴⁴ Jensen, Operation West, 126-127.
- ⁴⁵ Nebraska City News, August 7, 1908.
- ⁴⁶ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ⁴⁷ Jensen, Operation West, 127; Daily News, September 16, 1907.
- ⁴⁸ Jensen, Operation West, 127.
- ⁴⁹ Daily Tribune, August 29, 1906; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ⁵⁰ Daily Tribune, November 13, 1901.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., November 15, 1901, November 21, 1901.
- ⁵² Daily Tribune, April 22, 1903, December 23, 1903; Nebraska State Gazetteer, 1907, pp. 57, 591-199. The city's banks were the Farmer's Bank, Nebraska City National Bank, Otoe County National Bank, and the Merchant's National Bank. Hotels included the Atlantic House, B & M Hotel, Cincinnati, Watson, Overland, Missouri Pacific, Morton, National, Watson, and the Grand Hotel. Saloons included the Bader Brothers'

Saloon, Thomas Brown, Bismark Brugemann, Atlantic House, Ingram Brothers, Kloos and Bauer, Overland, John Mickelson, James O'Brien, Charles Paradies, William and Herman Schader, Schnitzer Brothers, John Stroble, Saul Thomas, and Werner & Funke.

- ⁵³ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.; Daily Tribune, August 7, 1906, August 26, 1906; Daily News, November 2, 1907, November 5, 1907; Nebraska State Gazetteer, 1907, 596.
- ⁵⁴ Daily Tribune, April 4, 1905.
- ⁵⁵ Nebraska City News, May 7, 1909.
- ⁵⁶ Larry Wiles, "Heritage of Flame: A History of Nebraska's Oldest Fire Department" (Nebraska City: by the author, 1984), pp. 34-39; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ⁵⁷ Sheldon, Nebraska Blue Book: 1915, 109; Daily Tribune, November 14, 1901.
- ⁵⁸ Daily Tribune, January 29, 1902.
- ⁵⁹ Sheldon, Nebraska Blue Book: 1915, 133; Daily Tribune, August 3, 1907.
- ⁶⁰ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.; Nebraska State Gazetteer, 1902-1903, 341; Nebraska State Gazetteer, 1907, 592; Nebraska Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Ninth Biennial Report, 1903-1904 (Lincoln: 1905), p. 195.
- ⁶¹ Nebraska City Weekly, August 29, 1902; Nebraska City Clerk, Minute Records of City Council Proceedings (Nebraska State Historical Society, microfilm RG 320, rolls 3,4), November 6, 1905; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.; Nebraska Bureau of Labor, Ninth Biennial Report, 195.
- ⁶² Nebraska City Weekly, June 6, 1902, July 1, 1902; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.; Nebraska City News, March 18, 1910, May 13, 1910.
- ⁶³ Daily Tribune, January 4, 1902.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., January 4, 1902.
- ⁶⁵ Daily Tribune, December 31, 1901, January 15, 1902; Nebraska City Clerk, Minute Records of City Council Proceedings, February 16, 1904.

⁶⁶Daily News, October 10, 1903, November 18, 1907.

⁶⁷Daily Tribune, June 10, 1904; Daily Press, June 14, 1904.

⁶⁸Nebraska City News, September 22, 1908.

⁶⁹Daily Tribune, October 6, 1903; Daily Press, June 21, 1904;
Daily News, November 11, 1903; Nebraska City News, September
22, 1908.

⁷⁰Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City:
1854-1954, n.p.; Daily Tribune, January 8, 1902; Nebraska
Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Eighth Biennial
Report, 1901-1902 (Lincoln: 1902), p. 257.

⁷¹Ezra Bowen, editor, This Fabulous Century: 1900-1910
(New York: Time-Life Books, 1969), p. 29.

⁷²Lewis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington:
Indiana University Press, 1954), p. 362.

⁷³Ibid., 338.

⁷⁴Ibid., xvi.

Chapter Four

"Nebraska City's Hinterland":
Transportation and Agriculture, 1900-1910

Transportation played a pivotal role in Nebraska City's economy, and railroads were the most important means of transportation for the city's businesses, residents, and area farmers. The railroads were used to move factory products, farm goods and passengers across the country. By 1901, Otoe County had 112.15 miles of railroads, and more than 2,000 miles of new track were laid in Nebraska between 1900 and 1910.¹

In Nebraska City, the Missouri Pacific depot was located at Central Avenue and Second Street, with four northbound passenger trains and two freight trains arriving each day, two southbound passenger and one freight train arriving daily, and two trains running to and from Lincoln each day. The Burlington depot was located at Seventh Street and Sixth Corso, and offered nine daily passenger arrivals from cities such as Chicago, Kansas City, Omaha, St. Louis, St. Joseph, Lincoln and Beatrice. Daily departures from the Burlington depot averaged seven trains, with destinations including Chicago, St. Joe and Kansas City, Council Bluffs and Omaha, St. Paul, Lincoln, Denver, Billings, Beatrice and Auburn.² In 1903, a passenger leaving Nebraska City could travel by rail to Portland, Tacoma, San Francisco or Los Angeles for \$25; to Spokane for \$22.50, or to Salt Lake City, Butte or Helena for \$20.³

Nebraska City's industries also made great use of the rail system. The Morton-Gregson plant could ship up to eight carloads

of pork per day, mostly to markets in the eastern United States. The Western Cold Storage Company, with its 250-car storage capacity, also made extensive use of the railroads. In 1901, most of the 2,500 to 4,000 pounds of live chickens which the cold storage plant received daily arrived by express trains from outside the immediate area, prompting the Daily Tribune to state: "the farmers back of town are not doing as much in poultry as they might."⁴

River transportation on the Missouri had diminished greatly after the heyday of the steamboats in the 1860s, and by the early 1900s river traffic retained little of the importance it had held in the earlier days of Nebraska City. Between 1902 and 1908, only three small pleasure boats docked at Nebraska City. These included an eighteen-foot skiff owned by Judge Hayward; the Elenora, a twenty-foot cabin cruiser owned by the Erwin brothers; and an eighteen-foot cabin cruiser named Swastika. Other than these three boats, the only river traffic to visit Nebraska City were several tow boats that belonged to sand-dredging companies.⁵

An important means of local transportation for many residents during the decade was the Nebraska City streetcar system. The company was organized in 1888, and headed by Nebraska City resident Herman H. Bartling until 1905, when he was succeeded by his son Edward D. Bartling, who became the youngest president of a streetcar line in the United States.⁶ The tracks upon which the streetcars operated ran from the

Burlington and Missouri Pacific depots west to Morton Park, and extended south on Fifteenth Street. The four streetcars were drawn by horses and mules, and rides cost five cents.⁷

The daily time table was as follows:

<u>Going East</u>	<u>Going West</u>
8:00 a.m.	8:25 a.m.
9:20 a.m.	9:40 a.m.
10:00 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
10:45 a.m.	11:20 a.m.
10:50 a.m...Tenth Street	12:20 p.m.
12:00 p.m.	1:00 p.m.
12:40 p.m.	1:40 p.m.
1:20 p.m.	2:20 p.m.
2:00 p.m.	3:10 p.m.
2:20 p.m...Fifteenth Street	3:40 p.m.
2:40 p.m.	4:00 p.m.
2:50 p.m...Tenth Street	4:20 p.m.
3:20 p.m.	4:40 p.m.
3:40 p.m.	5:20 p.m.
4:00 p.m.	5:45 p.m.
4:20 p.m.	6:30 p.m.
4:55 p.m.	
5:30 p.m. ⁸	
5:40 p.m.	

In June of 1903, the streetcar company suffered a devastating setback when its barn was destroyed by fire, resulting in the loss of twenty-five horses and mules. One mule was severely burned, but survived the fire, and on recuperation returned to duty. The scarred mule was always thereafter a conversation point for curious visitors to the city.⁹ The streetcars were also often a victim of inclement weather. In the winter of 1909, the streetcars were unable to run for several weeks due to heavy snow and ice. During those several weeks, however, the company's mules became "fat and lazy."¹⁰ Before his death in 1905, H.H. Bartling tried

to "induce" the city to aid him in putting in an electric streetcar system, but he was never able to succeed. In 1909, the streetcar company ceased operation, and the business was leased to Jacob Dixon, one of the company's drivers. However, largely due to increasing competition from the automobile, Dixon gave up his lease. When the streetcars made their final run in August, 1910, "Nebraska City heard for the last time the tinkle of the bells on the necks of the mules."¹¹

The automobile, that means of transportation that spelled the end of the streetcar system, first appeared in Nebraska City in 1901, when William Hayward brought a Locomobile Steamer to town. Hayward's car, which caused "near panic" among pedestrians, reportedly resembled a buckboard more than a car. The driver and one passenger were seated above the car's boiler, which carried 250 pounds of steam pressure.¹² By 1906, there were over 1,000 cars in the state of Nebraska, and by 1910, there were over 15,000 automobiles in the state.¹³ When three new automobiles, belonging to Dr. Watson, Ralph Duff and Bert Swalley, were delivered in August of 1908, the Nebraska City News reported, "it will not be long before every one will be having one of these whiz machines."¹⁴

The arrival of the automobile in Nebraska City also brought new employment opportunities for the town. Ralph Duff operated the city's first auto garage, and sold Regal, Moon and Matheson cars. The garage, located at Fifteenth Street and Central Avenue, had a large, cement-floored work area with drive-in

doors on the south and east sides of the building. It also contained a repair shop, offices, workroom, and room for stock and parts. Herbert B. Swalley had an automobile dealership located at 824 Central Avenue; and Robert Harris and Guy Barnhart operated a dealership and garage at 115 South Tenth Street. An advertisement by Harris and Barnhart in the 1909 Nebraska State Gazetteer read in part: "Agents for Famous Oakland Automobile. We repair gasoline engines, steam engines, bicycles, sewing machines" ¹⁵ The new automobiles in town also prompted several complaints about poor driving:

Considerable complaint has been heard regarding people driving on the wrong side of the street. Of late several accidents have been narrowly averted by reason of the cool headedness of some of the people who drive on the right side of the street. The greatest trouble is experienced with women and farmers

In 1910, auto dealer Ralph Duff drove a Matheson car the nine miles from Dunbar to Nebraska City in ten minutes. Every intersection along the route was guarded and the turns were all clearly marked. John W. Steinhart, Mayor Logan Jackson, and J.H. "Hyde" Sweet, rode along with Duff, all wearing goggles and dusters because the car had no windshield. ¹⁷

Poor roads were a major problem which affected transportation throughout the decade. Farmers had terrible difficulties in getting their wagons to town on the muddy, poorly-maintained roads, and it was next to impossible to drive automobiles through the thick mud. By 1904, Nebraska had public roads totalling over 79,000 miles, but only seventeen miles

were paved with stone, and only six miles with sand or clay. Most roads in the state "were little more than unimproved trails running along the section lines or wandering off from railroad points to fertile valleys."¹⁸

Heavy rains and flooding often made roads around Nebraska City impassable. In July, 1902, flooding washed away or damaged 100 bridges in Otoe County, amounting to \$40,000 in damages. Every road out of Nebraska City was rendered entirely or nearly impassable to travelers.¹⁹ The Daily Tribune went so far as to advocate the abandonment of the section-line roads that disregarded terrain, went up hills and down into gullies, and necessitated the building of numerous bridges. The newspaper's editor championed a return to Nebraska City's "ridge roads," which ran northwest and southwest from the city.²⁰ However, Nebraska City residents were destined to continue to deal with the cruel fact of poor roads for some years.

Along with business, industry and transportation, agriculture was a major component of Nebraska City's economy. The interdependence between Nebraska City's local economy and the city's agricultural hinterland played a key role in the town's development. However, agricultural life in Nebraska was often quite harsh. Farmers who managed to succeed were faced with a host of problems such as the wildly varying environmental conditions, high freight rates, fluctuating land prices, lack of credit, and low prices for agricultural products.

Despite a multitude of hardships, there were also some

advantages to farming in Nebraska. The weekly agricultural newspaper Nebraska Farmer stated:

The man who comes to Nebraska with a few hundred dollars, a good head and a stout heart can, in the course of a few years, be independent of landlords, rent-day, and all the other miseries which make life a struggle for the tenant of an eastern farm.

By the turn of the century, farming in Nebraska had improved greatly over the hardships experienced in the late 1800s.

Favorable weather conditions and rising prices benefited most Nebraska farmers throughout the decade 1900-1910. The "agrarian discontent" which had swept much of the Midwest had subsided due to improved prices and better living conditions on the farms.²² Agricultural historian Willard Cochrane stated:

"farm people came to believe that the good life could be achieved on the farm. It is true that the achievement of the good life required hard work, thrift, saving, investment in the farm, and 'right thinking.'"²³ According to historian James Olson, turn of the century Nebraskans began to realize that "farmers as well as any other group needed to apply their best brains to the problems before them."²⁴

Farmers' work in the early 1900s was made easier by advances in farm technology. Improvements were made in harrows, seeding equipment, cultivators, plows, harvesters, manure spreaders and grain separators.²⁵ Also by 1900, many farmers were generally using riding implements, thus saving a great deal of physical labor.²⁶ What farmers still lacked during the decade was an efficient source of power for their machinery. Steam

powered machines were generally too heavy and cumbersome, and gasoline-powered farm implements were still in their infancy, with the result that horses and mules still provided the chief source of power on the farms.²⁷ One Nebraska City farmer stated his views on farm work in the Nebraska City News:

During the hard-working season, I usually aim to work nine hours afield. I like to get in the field not later than seven and quit at eleven-thirty, get back into the field again at one-thirty, and work until six. A team should do enough in this time to satisfy any man.²⁸

Although farm work had grown easier for farmers, substantial problems remained. President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission noted in 1908 that a major problem for farmers and farm families was "a lack of any adequate system of agricultural credit whereby the farmer may readily receive loans on fair terms."²⁹ In addition, many farm wives still lacked the conveniences enjoyed by women in the city:

Things like household conveniences, running water, indoor plumbing, educational opportunities, social outlets, and cultural resources were of greater importance for the farm wife they were for her husband, who could measure himself in terms of the economic prosperity of the farm operation.³⁰

Nebraska City area farmers seemed to be trying to improve living conditions at home, when in 1910, the Nebraska City News reported that a "large number" of area farmers were installing electric lighting plants at their homes and adding other modern conveniences.³¹ The Nebraska Farmer also tried to help improve farm life, with a list of evening rules for the farm family:

Don't allow little ones to stay up late unless there is company.

Don't put them to bed unhappy.

Don't work all the evening.

Don't play games which lead to gambling.

Don't read sensational literature.

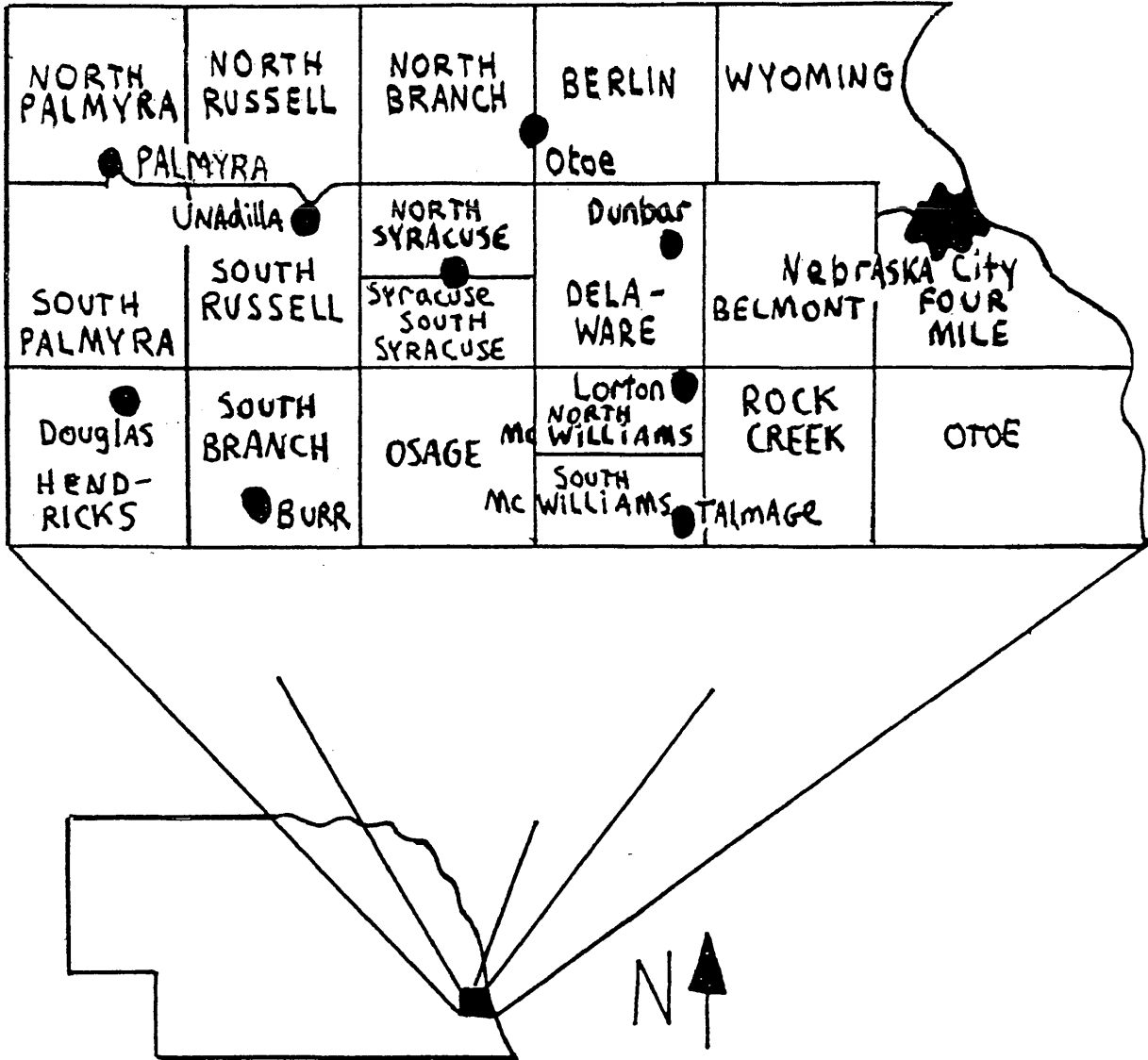
The winter evenings at home with books, music, games and stories are the most lasting scenes which memory holds.³²

It is clear that the farmers of the state had made great strides in productivity and efficiency between 1900 and 1910. During the decade, the total number of farms grew over 6 percent, and the number of acres of improved land increased by over 32 percent. The total value of all farm products produced in the state increased 178 percent, while the dollar value of all property per farm increased some 162 percent.³³

Nebraska City area farmers were blessed with the advantage of farming in a very fertile region. The eastern quarter of Nebraska is part of the corn belt which stretches across much of the Midwest, and is "agriculturally, an extension of western Iowa."³⁴ Otoe County, with an average elevation of about 960 feet, consists of a narrow band of lowlands along the western bank of the Missouri River, some steep bluffs which rise above the river, and an area of loess hills.³⁵ The Little Nemaha River and several small creeks run through the county. A band of rich, alluvial soil borders the Missouri, while most of the county is made up of silt loam soil, which has abundant amounts of minerals, humus and water. Much of the soil in Otoe County is "unexcelled for corn production." The only real disadvantage

Map 3

Map of Otoe County, Nebraska
with Precincts and Towns



Source: Redrawn from The Official State Atlas of Nebraska.
Philadelphia: Everts & Kirk, 1885, pp. 130-131.

for farmers is the fact that the rolling loess hills are subject to erosion when under cultivation.³⁶

Weather conditions were also kind to Nebraska farmers from 1900 to 1910. The state saw abundant rainfall, with only one dry year in 1907, no prolonged periods of drought, and no widespread insect invasions.³⁷ The average annual rainfall in the state during the decade was 32.56 inches, with an average rainfall of 21.68 inches during crop season. The average statewide annual snowfall from 1900 to 1910 was 23.93 inches. Locally, Nebraska City averaged 35.68 inches of rain per year, and 28.55 inches of snow annually.³⁸

Nebraska farmers also benefited from an increase in the value of farmland. By 1904, land was thirty-five percent more valuable than it had been in 1899. The best farmland sold for \$60 to \$75 per acre; fair tillable land sold for \$45 to \$55 per acre; hay land for \$40 to \$45, and pasture land sold for anywhere from \$35 to \$40 an acre.³⁹ In 1900, Otoe County had 2,424 farms, with an average size of 155.8 acres. The value of all farmland and improvements was nearly \$14 million, with buildings worth over \$2.4 million, and machinery and implements valued at over \$500,000.⁴⁰ By 1910, the number of farms had decreased by 126, to 2,298, with an average size of 164.3 acres. However, the total value of Otoe County farm property had increased to over \$40 million.⁴¹ These statistics indicate that while the number of farms in Otoe County dropped between 1900 and 1910, the remaining farms increased in size, and the

farmers benefited from the increase in land values prevalent throughout the state. However, the county suffered from fluctuations in agricultural production during the decade. There were major declines in corn and oat production; and declines in strawberries, raspberries and loganberries, barley, rye and vegetable production. However, there was also a noticeable increase in wheat production, and increases in the production of apples, potatoes, blackberries and dewberries, peaches and nectarines, cherries, pears and plums.

Corn was the number one crop produced in Otoe County in both 1899 and 1909. Between 1899 and 1910, the price of corn in Nebraska increased 140 percent.⁴² Otoe County farmers produced over 6.1 million bushels of corn in 1899, which equalled 2.89 percent of the state's corn production. In 1909, corn production in the county dropped to 3.3 million bushels and 1.83 percent of the state's total production. Perhaps some of this drop in corn production can be attributed to the loss of the market represented by the Argo Starch plant. There was also apparently a softening in the corn market in 1910, when the Nebraska City News reported that, "a number of farmers hereabouts still have considerable of their last years corn crop in their cribs. They refused to sell it for sixty cents per bushel and now they will have to either hold it or take less than 50 cents."⁴³

The second most plentiful crop produced in Otoe County was oats, the price of which increased 78 percent between 1899

and 1910.⁴⁴ The cereal mill in Nebraska City was a market for locally grown oats, and the crop also provided an excellent feed for horses. The county produced 1.7 million bushels of oats in 1899 (2.97 percent of the state total), and 967,000 bushels in 1909 (1.81 percent of the state total). This large drop in oat production during the decade mirrored a statewide decline from 58 million bushels in 1899 to 53 million bushels in 1909.

Wheat production increased markedly during the decade, from 232,510 bushels in 1899, to nearly 800,000 bushels in 1909. This shift to a strong emphasis on wheat production was a big change in early twentieth century Nebraska agriculture, and wheat prices increased sixty-seven percent during the decade. The development of new milling processes and the introduction of winter wheat meant that wheat became a "strong second crop." Otoe County also produced a significant amount of grass and hay, largely used for cattle grazing, and alfalfa which was valuable for both grazing and seed production. In 1903, the Nebraska Farmer called alfalfa "the largest crop producer on the farm. It is the cheapest feed produced on the farm, and its results as a pasture and hay feed are such that warrants a largely increased acreage on the farms."⁴⁵ Other common crops grown in Otoe County included potatoes, miscellaneous vegetables, barley and buckwheat.

Apples were a valuable crop for Otoe County farmers, and in 1908 were selling for about thirty cents per bushel.⁴⁶ Unlike

Table IX
Crop Production in Otoe County, 1899

Type	Quantity	Percentage of State Total
Corn	6,103,470 bush.	2.89%
Oats	1,722,980 bush.	2.97
Wheat	232,510 bush.	*
Potatoes	130,810 bush.	1.67
Apples	119,066 bush.	8.86
Wild, Salt, Prairie Grass	23,826 tons	*
Blackberries, Dewberries	16,480 qts.	10.43
Rye	16,080 bush.	*
Strawberries	13,410 qts.	3.28
Raspberries, Loganberries	10,000 qts.	4.29
Barley	7,590 bush.	*
Millet & Hungarian Grass	7,282 tons	2.03
Miscellaneous Grasses	6,192 tons	4.82
Clover	4,512 tons	6.20
Currants	4,120 qts.	2.52
Gooseberries	3,940 qts.	2.07
Cherries	3,221 bush.	5.95
Sweet Potatoes	1,707 bush.	3.53
Miscellaneous Vegetables	1,082 acres	3.17
Onions	931 bush.	1.10
Alfalfa	774 tons	*
Cider	482 barrels	9.24
Plums	478 bush.	1.12
Sorghum Cane	268 tons	2.09
Peaches & Nectarines	213 bush.	2.43
Tobacco	200 lbs.	3.46
Vinegar	161 barrels	7.44
Buckwheat	150 bush.	1.73
Pears	71 bush.	7.25
Beans	29 bush.	*
Apricots	13 bush.	3.90
Broom Corn	11 acres	*
Peanuts	1 bush.	*
Peas	1 bush.	*

*: Less than one percent of state total

Source: United States, Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Agriculture (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1902), 2 vols. vol. 1 pp. 102-679; vol. 2 pp. 173-733.

Table X

Livestock and Dairy Production in Otoe County, 1899

Type	Quantity	Percentage of State Total
Milk	3,514,196 gal.	1.84%
Eggs	1,020,570 doz.	2.48
Butter	755,126 lbs.	2.18
Chickens	174,012	2.34
Swine	83,002	2.01
Cattle	37,144	1.16
Honey	31,120 lbs.	3.59
Horses	12,793	1.60
Cheese	5,875 lbs.	2.22
Wool, Mohair, Goat Hair	4,440 lbs.	*
Geese	3,411	4.60
Ducks	2,847	1.41
Cream	2,727 gal.	*
Mules	2,111	3.82
Bee Colonies	1,894	3.63
Turkeys	1,873	1.57
Sheep	865	*
Bee's Wax	660 lbs.	4.10
Asses & Burros	23	3.14
Goats	18	*

*: Less than one percent of state total

Source: United States, Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Agriculture (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1902), 2 vols. vol. 1 pp. 102-679; vol. 2 pp. 173-733.

Table XI
Crop Production in Otoe County, 1909

Type	Quantity	Percentage of State Total
Corn	3,308,389 bush.	1.83%
Oats	967,840 bush.	1.81
Wheat	796,212 bush.	1.66
Grapes	227,294 lbs.	4.78
Apples	212,418 bush.	6.39
Potatoes	137,484 bush.	1.69
Hay, Forage	61,784 tons	1.06
Blackberries, Dewberries	39,150 qts.	7.80
Strawberries	11,122 qts.	1.70
Raspberries, Loganberries	6,951 qts.	2.62
Peaches, Nectarines	5,348 bush.	4.85
Cherries	3,243 bush.	3.60
Barley	2,648 bush.	*
Pears	1,123 bush.	16.76
Rye	766 bush.	*
Plums	696 bush.	1.66
Vegetables	578 acres	1.58

*: Less than one percent of state total.

Source: United States, Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Agriculture (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 30-54.

Table XII

Livestock and Dairy Production in Otoe County, 1909

Type	Quantity	Percentage of State Total
Milk	3,308,790 gal.	2.06%
Eggs	811,285 doz.	1.89
Butter	503,287 lbs.	1.93
Poultry	189,805	2.02
Swine	61,266	1.78
Cattle	34,699	1.18
Cream	30,959 gal.	1.58
Horses	14,013	1.38
Honey	7,658 lbs.	1.45
Mules	2,807	3.36
Sheep	2,619	*
Wool Fleeces	1,914	1.00
Bee Colonies	767	1.68
Goats	557	16.93
Asses & Burros	30	1.41

*: Less than one percent of state total

Source: United States, Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Agriculture (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 30-54.

corn and oat production, the apple crop increased from 119,066 bushels in 1899 (8.86 percent of the state total), to 212,418 bushels in 1909. However, the apple production as a percentage of the statewide total declined to 6.39 percent. The county's percentage of the state's apple crop dropped perhaps because of increased competition from other areas in southeastern Nebraska such as Brownville in Nemaha County, which was also a center of apple production where "there was fruit on many hills," and where "the fruit industry prospered."⁴⁷

Another important type of fruit production in Otoe County during the decade was blackberries and dewberries, of which the county produced 10.43 and 7.80 percent of Nebraska's total output in 1899 and 1909 respectively. The county produced 7.25 percent of the state's pear crop in 1899, and 16.76 percent in 1909. Other fruit crops raised by area farmers were raspberries and loganberries, currants, gooseberries, cherries, plums, peaches and nectarines, apricots and grapes.

There were also fluctuations in Otoe County livestock and dairy production. Milk, eggs, butter, swine, cattle, honey and bee colonies all decreased in production; while gains were made in poultry, cream, horses, mules, sheep, goats, and asses and burros. Milk production amounted to 3.5 million gallons in 1899 and 3.3 million gallons in 1909. Over one million dozen eggs were produced in 1899, with 811,285 dozen in 1909. The county also produced 755,126 and 503,287 pounds of butter in 1899 and 1909 respectively. Area farmers kept over 1,800

colonies of bees in 1899, and 767 in 1909. Bee production served two purposes for the farmers--honey production, and the pollination of fruits and vegetables.⁴⁸

Otoe County farmers raised 83,002 swine in 1899, over two percent of the state total; and 61,266 swine in 1909, 1.78 percent of the state total. This drop-off in swine production was surprising, as hog prices rose 133 percent between 1899 and 1910. However, even with rising prices, there was a general decline statewide in hog production, from 4,128,000 in 1900, to 3,435,724 in 1910.⁴⁹ As a local explanation, the population decline in Nebraska City and the labor strife at the Morton Gregson Packing Plant may have contributed to a decline in countywide swine production.

Cattle production fell from 37,144 in 1899, to 34,699 in 1909, while the number of horses increased from 12,793 to 14,013. The largest percentage increase in livestock came in the goat population, which grew from only eighteen in 1899 to 557 in 1909 (16.93 percent of the state total). This increase in the goat population was largely the work of Nebraska City area farmer Gilbert Hanks who, as reported by the Nebraska City News, kept several hundred goats on farmland south of town to clear brush and undergrowth.⁵⁰ Other livestock raised in Otoe County included geese, ducks, mules, turkeys, sheep, asses and burros.

Area livestock producers also formed different organizations to help increase production and trade. In 1906, the breeders of "fine stock" in Otoe County formed the Otoe Thoroughbred

Stock Association.⁵¹ In 1910, the raisers of chickens in the Nebraska City area organized an association known as the Otoe County Poultry and Pet Stock Association, with Corwin Jones as President, and C.C. Brant as Secretary.⁵²

Along with the general statewide agricultural prosperity, Nebraska's farmers also helped many cities' economies. Nebraska City's industries relied heavily upon the farmers of the area to supply them with material for processing. The Daily Tribune stated in 1901: "The future of Nebraska City lies altogether in the line of manufactures, and the converting of the raw materials raised on the farms into commercial products."⁵³

The ties between Nebraska City industries and the town's agricultural hinterland were strong, and mutually beneficial. However, the number of Nebraska City residents employed as farmers, farm laborers and in various agriculture-related positions dropped from 140 in 1900 to only seventy in 1910. This drop was no doubt caused in part by the decreased industrial activity in the town, and by the fact that at the end of the decade, "very few" farmers continued to live in Nebraska's cities. Some Nebraska City residents, however, spent the summer months working on farms. In 1905, the Nebraska City News reported that sixty men, women and children travelled by rail to the beet fields in western Nebraska to "make money and enjoy country life."⁵⁴ Mechanization may have lessened the need for farm laborers or hired hands, although these workers still formed an "essential labor pool" for midwestern farmers.⁵⁵

In addition to acting as a consumer of farm goods, as noted by historian Thomas J. Morain the "small town increasingly became a retail and service center for the surrounding farm community."⁵⁶ Nebraska City merchants vigorously pursued the farm trade, and the local papers carried weekly weather and crop reports issued by the Department of Agriculture, and daily stock reports from Nebraska City, Omaha, Chicago and Kansas City. The Daily Tribune was of the opinion that the farmers' retail business was more valuable than the trade provided by customers from nearby small communities. However, there may have been some antagonism between farmers and townspeople; as Iowa historian Joseph Wall notes: "there is a smugness of attitude within the small town that is a constant source of exasperation to the farmer."⁵⁷

Nebraska City merchants also sponsored a corn show which was held in the Eagles Hall in late 1908. This event featured a display of goods manufactured in Nebraska City, a corn judging contest, an address on corn raising, and a speech on corn culture and the advantages of corn shows and farmer institutions.⁵⁸ The city also held a stock show in 1908, and a stock parade the following year. Nebraska City's mayor led the procession along with a group of mounted policemen and the Merchant's Band. A "monster crowd" visited the city and viewed a decorated automobile parade, a cattle judging contest, and a special performance at the Overland Theater of a play entitled "The Cow Puncher."⁵⁹

Area farmers benefited from good weather, high crop prices and increased land values during the decade 1900-1910, but Otoe County agricultural production was inconsistent. Despite an eight percent increase in agricultural employment statewide from 1900 to 1910, agricultural employment among Nebraska Citizens decreased some fifty percent during the decade.⁶⁰ Although Otoe County's fluctuating agricultural production levels were consistent with statewide trends, it is also likely that Nebraska City's declining population and decreased industrial base contributed to the decline in some areas of production, as well as in agriculture-related employment.

Chapter Four End Notes

- ¹ Nebraska Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, Eighth Biennial Report, 1901-1902 (Lincoln: 1902), p. 257; Bruce Nicoll, Nebraska: A Pictorial History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), p. 134.
- ² Nebraska City Daily Press, October 28, 1903.
- ³ Daily Tribune, October 9, 1901, April 30, 1903.
- ⁴ Ibid., June 26, 1903, November 15, 1901.
- ⁵ Marion A. Jensen, Operation West (Detroit: Harlo Press, 1965), p. 114.
- ⁶ Nebraska Press Association, John Faris (ed.) Who's Who in Nebraska (Lincoln: State Journal Printing Company, 1940), p. 856; Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954 (Nebraska City: Chamber of Commerce, 1954), unpaginated.
- ⁷ Glenn Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town (Lincoln: Midgard Press, 1989), p. 194.
- ⁸ Daily Tribune, January 28, 1905.
- ⁹ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.
- ¹⁰ Nebraska City News, December 31, 1909.
- ¹¹ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.; Nebraska City News, August 3, 1910.
- ¹² Noble, Frontier Steamboat Town, 192; Nebraska Press Association, Who's Who in Nebraska, 855.
- ¹³ Nicoll, Nebraska: A Pictorial History, 134.
- ¹⁴ Nebraska City News, August 11, 1908.
- ¹⁵ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.; Nebraska State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1909 vol. XII (Omaha: Polk-McAvoy Directory Company, 1909), pp. 493, 496.
- ¹⁶ Nebraska City News, November 5, 1909.
- ¹⁷ Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954, n.p.

- ¹⁸James Olson, History of Nebraska (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), p. 278.
- ¹⁹Nebraska City Weekly, July 15, 1902.
- ²⁰Daily Tribune, November 7, 1901.
- ²¹Nebraska Farmer, March 15, 1900, p. 209.
- ²²Donald R. Hickey, Nebraska Moments: Glimpses of Nebraska's Past (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 163.
- ²³Willard W. Cochrane, The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 99.
- ²⁴Olson, History of Nebraska, 253.
- ²⁵Olson, History of Nebraska, 250-251; Cochrane, The Development of American Agriculture, 107-108; Bruce H. Nicoll and Ken R. Keller, Know Nebraska (Lincoln: Johsen Publishing Company, 1961), p. 146.
- ²⁶Nicoll and Keller, Know Nebraska, 146.
- ²⁷Bradley H. Baltensperger, Nebraska: A Geography (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 177; Cochrane, The Development of American Agriculture, 107-108.
- ²⁸Nebraska City News, July 4, 1905.
- ²⁹Cochrane, The Development of American Agriculture, 112.
- ³⁰Thomas J. Morain, Prairie Grass Roots: An Iowa Small Town in the Early Twentieth Century (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), pp. 100, 102.
- ³¹Nebraska City News, September 13, 1910.
- ³²Nebraska Farmer, March 5, 1903, p. 274.
- ³³Olson, History of Nebraska, 250.
- ³⁴Baltensperger, Nebraska: A Geography, 137.
- ³⁵George E. Condra, Geography, Agriculture, Industries of Nebraska (Lincoln: University Publishing Company, 1942), pp. 125, 296; George E. Condra, The Nebraska Story (Lincoln: University Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 26-27.
- ³⁶Olson, History of Nebraska, 9-10; Condra, The Nebraska Story, 40.

³⁷Olson, History of Nebraska, 13, 250.

³⁸Addison E. Sheldon, (ed.), The Nebraska Blue Book and Historical Register: 1915 (Lincoln: State Journal Company, 1915), pp. 801-802; United States Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Section of the Climate and Crop Service of the Weather Bureau, Annual Summary, 1900 vol. V no. 13, p. 5, Annual Summary, 1901 vol. VI no. 13, p.5, Annual Summary, 1902 vol. VII no. 13, p. 5, Annual Summary, 1903 vol. VIII no. 13, p. 5, Annual Summary, 1904 vol. IX no. 13, p. 5, Annual Summary, 1905 vol. X no. 13, p. 5, Annual Summary, 1906 vol. XI no. 13, p. 101, Annual Summary, 1907 vol. XII no. 13, p. 101, Annual Summary, 1908 vol. XIII no. 13, p. 101, Annual Summary, 1909 vol. XIV no. 7, p. 55, Annual Summary, 1910 vol. XV no. 1, p.5. (Lincoln: Weather Bureau Office, annually, 1900-1910):

Nebraska City Climatic Data, 1900-1910

Year	Annual Mean Temperature	Annual Rainfall in inches	Annual Snowfall in inches
1900	54.1	34.73	*
1901	*	*	*
1902	*	47.94	27.2
1903	*	32.34	15.5
1904	50.2	29.97	14.5
1905	50.5	45.61	33.3
1906	*	34.99	35.5
1907	50.9	33.29	38.5
1908	*	36.89	19.0
1909	51.3	*	40.0
1910	52.3	25.42	33.5

*: Data not given

³⁹Addison E. Sheldon, Semi-Centennial History of Nebraska (Lincoln: Lemon Publishing Company, 1904), p. 294.

⁴⁰United States, Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Agriculture (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1902), pp. 102-103, 287-288.

⁴¹Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Agriculture (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1912), pp. 30-45.

⁴²Olson, History of Nebraska, 250.

⁴³Nebraska City News, September 2, 1910.

- ⁴⁴Olson, History of Nebraska, 250.
- ⁴⁵Nebraska Farmer, April 16, 1903, p. 436; Olson, History of Nebraska, 198, 250, 252.
- ⁴⁶Nebraska City News, September 4, 1908.
- ⁴⁷Marion Marsh Brown, "The Brownville Story," Nebraska History 55 (Spring 1974), p. 115.
- ⁴⁸Condra, The Nebraska Story, 68.
- ⁴⁹Olson, History of Nebraska, 250.
- ⁵⁰Nebraska City News, July 1, 1910.
- ⁵¹Sheldon, Nebraska Blue Book: 1915, 128.
- ⁵²Nebraska Farmer, February 23, 1905, p. 225.
- ⁵³Daily Tribune, September 23, 1901.
- ⁵⁴Nebraska Farmer, November 26, 1903, p. 1301; Nebraska City News, May 18, 1905; According to Roger Welsch, it was common for many Nebraskans, especially German-Russians, to work in the beet fields of western Nebraska: "The 'beet trains' would load up what could have passed for a cargo of European peasants to journey to the seasonal work in the Nebraska panhandle." See Roger L. Welsch, "Germans from Russia: A Place to Call Home" Broken Hoops and Plains People (Lincoln: Nebraska Curriculum Development Center, 1976), p. 204.
- ⁵⁵Morain, Prairie Grass Roots, 60.
- ⁵⁶Ibid., 27.
- ⁵⁷Daily Tribune, November 13, 1901; Joseph Wall, Iowa: A Bicentennial History, (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 152, as quoted in Morain, Prairie Grass Roots, 33.
- ⁵⁸Nebraska City News, December 1, 1908.
- ⁵⁹Ibid., September 4, 1908, September 24, 1909.
- ⁶⁰United States, Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Occupations (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 104; Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Population and Occupation Statistics (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1912), p. 124. Agricultural employment among Nebraskans increased from 186,587 in 1900, to 202,618 in 1910.

Conclusion

Although the first decade of the twentieth century was generally one of prosperity for most of Nebraska, the economic fortunes of Nebraska City declined dramatically. The decade 1900 to 1910 in this small Nebraska town was marked by industrial decline, agricultural uncertainty, and fundamental economic change. The large decline in population during the decade could have heralded an end to the community as an important center in southeastern Nebraska, but the townspeople managed to persevere and begin a new period of population growth from 1910 to 1920.

The perseverance, fortitude, and resiliency that were displayed by residents throughout this difficult ten years had become trademarks of Nebraska Citizens. From the incorporation of the town in 1854, and throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, townspeople had overcome a long series of challenges and adversities. Economic and political setbacks including fires, the loss of the overland freighting business, the failure to gain the transcontinental railroad, the loss of political influence to both Omaha and Lincoln, and the Depression of the 1890s could not kill Nebraska Citizens' spirit to achieve. When the town was beset by economic uncertainty and industrial decline during the decade 1900-1910, the population dropped over twenty-five percent. However, Nebraska Citizens once again refused to give up or give in to the tough

economic times. The toughness, perseverance, and resolute spirit of the townspeople were vital qualities which must be recognized in any study of turn of the century Nebraska City.

The large population decline suffered by the town from 1900 to 1910 was part of an inconsistent population pattern present among several southeastern Nebraska cities. While Nebraska City's population fell from 7,380 in 1900 to 5,488 in 1910 (a 25.63 percent decline), other county seats located in southeastern Nebraska grew in population during the decade. Auburn, in Nemaha County, grew from 2,664 in 1900 to 2,729 in 1910, a 6.19 percent increase. Falls City, the county seat of Richardson County, saw its population increase by 7.71 percent, from 3,022 in 1900 to 3,255 in 1910. Like Nebraska City, Plattsmouth also suffered a decline in population, but to a much lesser degree; the Cass County seat fell from a population of 4,964 to 4,287, a loss of 13.63 percent.

Countywide statistics from these same southeastern Nebraska counties more closely mirror Nebraska City's pattern of population decline. Otoe County's population dropped 13.3 percent during the decade; Cass County fell 7.23 percent; Nemaha County 12.41 percent; and Richardson County's population declined by 11.04 percent. Thus Nebraska City's loss of population during the decade fits into a general pattern of inconsistent growth or decline in the river counties and towns of southeastern Nebraska. However, the drop in Nebraska City's population was by far the greatest decline by percentage.

It is clear that Nebraska City's population declined due to the loss of key industries that had provided between 350 and 650 jobs; but what were the causes of the town's industrial decline? The closing of the Argo Starch works in 1904 was the major economic setback suffered during the decade. A variety of reasons were responsible for the closing of the starch works, including comparatively high labor costs, high corn prices, labor strife, and the anti-trust suit brought, but later dropped, by the state of Nebraska against the National Starch Company. The King Drill Company was nearly shut down due to alleged intense competition from the "Harvester Trust," and the Faultless Castor Company drastically reduced its workforce due to high freight rates charged to ship its products to the furniture factories in the eastern United States. Most of the causes of the industrial slowdown were created by outside influences which the town could not control, thus making it difficult for Nebraska City to retain these key industries. Lost industrial jobs also led to a decline in the city's retail economic well-being. However, Nebraska City was fortunate in that some of its remaining industries expanded their workforces, and other new industries were attracted to town. There was also a significant degree of economic diversification, which helped the city avoid a total economic collapse.

Nebraska City was also affected by the inconsistent production of Otoe County farmers. Loss of industry in town contributed to the decline in the production of certain

agricultural commodities. On the other hand, fluctuations in agriculture led to declines in some areas of the city's economy, including retail sales, and agricultural-related employment for townspeople, which dropped by fifty percent from 1900 to 1910.

Despite the overall economic decline in the town, public works programs brought needed improvements to Nebraska City. A new city hall, firehouse, a remodeled public library, and a city hospital were all realized during the decade. Utility service, including gas, water, electricity, and a sanitary sewer system were established or expanded. The city also expended much time and energy on sidewalk and street paving. These efforts to improve the city's infrastructure, despite the economic hard times, helped to attract new businesses, and ensured the town's continued viability.

As government and business worked to improve Nebraska City's physical infrastructure, the townspeople managed to maintain the city's social and cultural infrastructure. Despite economic hardships and lost jobs, the city's social fabric remained strong. Institutions such as churches, schools, clubs, lodges, athletic associations, and local government helped keep the residents bound together in a healthy community. Despite a variety of social problems, including class tensions, labor strife, too many saloons, the occasional political scandal, and the controversy over Sunday observances, the local society remained stable and relatively vibrant. The people had been

tested by a variety of hardships, and as always before, Nebraska Citians managed to hold on and persevere until better times returned.

The history of Nebraska City, from its founding as Fort Kearny in 1846, until 1910, is a story of big dreams, ambitions, economic and political setbacks, and the failure to achieve the long sought after goals of great power and influence. The economic hard times, the industrial decline, and the loss of jobs and population during the first decade of the twentieth century were further obstacles which Nebraska Citians were forced to confront. Credit must be given to these strong townspeople, who overcame this economic adversity as they had overcome the multitude of challenges faced in previous years. Nebraska City maintained its viability due to the character and resoluteness of its citizens, and the strong social fabric they had constructed over the years. Because of the townspeople's perseverance and strength, Nebraska City remained a healthy community "where life is simple and passions moderate."

Appendices

Appendix A: Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1900

Appendix B: Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1910

Appendix C: Scenes from Nebraska City's History

Appendix A

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1900

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Day Laborer	367	13.12%
Laborer	242	8.65
Servant	186	6.65
Carpenter	93	3.32
Teamster	78	2.79
Teacher	71	2.54
Clerk	58	2.07
Butcher	56	2.00
Farm Laborer	55	1.97
Housekeeper	54	1.93
Dressmaker	49	1.75
Salesman	48	1.72
Painter	44	1.57
Engineer	42	1.50
Farmer	42	1.50
Washing	33	1.18
Grocer	24	*
Printer	24	*
Fireman	23	*
Miller	23	*
Plasterer	23	*
Railroad	23	*
Blacksmith	22	*
Seamstress	22	*
Bookkeeper	20	*
Cook	20	*
Lawyer	20	*
Cooper	19	*
Bricklayer	18	*
Machinist	18	*
Merchant	18	*
Banker	17	*
Milliner	17	*
Tailor	17	*
Doctor	16	*
Factory Worker	16	*
Saloon Keeper	16	*
Bartender	14	*
Brakeman	14	*
Insurance	14	*
Cereal Mills	13	*
Druggist	13	*
Dry Goods	12	*
Nurse	12	*
Express Man	11	*
Gardener	11	*

Appendix A (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1900

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Minister	11	*
Plumber	11	*
Real Estate	11	*
Starch Works	11	*
Barber	10	*
Brick Mason	10	*
Maid	10	*
Musician	10	*
Packing House	10	*
Section Man	10	*
Shoe Maker	10	*
Baker	9	*
Brewer	8	*
Catholic Sister	8	*
Dentist	8	*
Horse Trader	8	*
Mail Clerk	8	*
Stenographer	8	*
Stone Mason	8	*
Telephone Operator	8	*
Boatman	7	*
Capitalist	7	*
Harness Maker	7	*
Hotel Proprietor	7	*
Iron Moulder	7	*
Liveryman	7	*
Photographer	7	*
Sales Lady	7	*
Brick Maker	6	*
Broom Maker	6	*
Cigar Maker	6	*
Contractor	6	*
Hotel	6	*
Janitor	6	*
Agent	5	*
Factory Foreman	5	*
Grain Dealer	5	*
Hardware	5	*
Ice Man	5	*
Liquor Dealer	5	*
Millwright	5	*
Music Teacher	5	*
Peddler	5	*
Railroad Conductor	5	*
Telegrapher	5	*

Appendix A (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska City, 1900

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Watchman	5	*
Bank Clerk	4	*
Commissioner	4	*
Delivery Man	4	*
Landlady	4	*
Lumber Man	4	*
Newspaper	4	*
Mail Carrier	4	*
Meat Packer	4	*
Policeman	4	*
Porter	4	*
Railroad Clerk	4	*
Restaurant	4	*
Storekeeper	4	*
Baggage Man	3	*
Candy Maker	3	*
Cashier	3	*
City Clerk	3	*
Clothing Merchant	3	*
Coachman	3	*
Coal Dealer	3	*
Corn Merchant	3	*
Dishwasher	3	*
Dressing Room Girl	3	*
Jeweler	3	*
Junk Dealer	3	*
Manufacturing	3	*
Meat Trimmer	3	*
Preacher	3	*
Railroad Foreman	3	*
School Principal	3	*
Shipping Clerk	3	*
Waiter	3	*
Waitress	3	*
Water Divining	3	*
Well Digger	3	*
Auctioneer	2	*
Bank Cashier	2	*
Bill Poster	2	*
Boarding House	2	*
Cabinet Maker	2	*
Canning Factory	2	*
Carriage Maker	2	*
Chemist	2	*
Editor	2	*

Appendix A (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1900

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Fisherman	2	*
Fur Merchant	2	*
Government Inspector	2	*
Hog Dealer	2	*
Horse Shoer	2	*
Hotel Clerk	2	*
Inventor	2	*
Landlord	2	*
Lumber Dealer	2	*
Manager	2	*
Meat Market	2	*
Milk Dealer	2	*
Paper Hanger	2	*
Plow Factory	2	*
Postal Inspector	2	*
Railroad Cashier	2	*
Rooming House	2	*
Second-Hand Store	2	*
Secretary	2	*
Sewing Machine Agent	2	*
Switchman	2	*
Telephone Lineman	2	*
Trainer	2	*
Veterinarian	2	*
Watch Maker	2	*
Accountant	1	*
Actress	1	*
Agriculture Inspector	1	*
Appraiser	1	*
Artist	1	*
Box Maker	1	*
Bridge Foreman	1	*
Bus Tender	1	*
Butter Maker	1	*
Carpet Weaver	1	*
Cattle Merchant	1	*
Chamber Maid	1	*
City Engineer	1	*
Clothier	1	*
Collector	1	*
Companion	1	*
Constable	1	*
Corn Grinder	1	*
Corn Inspector	1	*
County Clerk	1	*

Appendix A (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1900

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
County Judge	1	*
County Treasurer	1	*
Deputy County Clerk	1	*
Deputy County Treasurer	1	*
Deputy Postmaster	1	*
District Clerk	1	*
District Judge	1	*
Drayman	1	*
Driver	1	*
Dye Works	1	*
Electrical Engineer	1	*
Electrician	1	*
Elevator Manager	1	*
Eloquutionist	1	*
Farm Dealer	1	*
Fence Builder	1	*
Freight Clerk	1	*
Freight Inspector	1	*
Fruit Packer	1	*
Gas Works	1	*
Grain Inspector	1	*
Grocery Clerk	1	*
Hack Driver	1	*
Homesteader	1	*
Implement Dealer	1	*
Inspector	1	*
Instructor	1	*
Jailor	1	*
Judge	1	*
Justice of the Peace	1	*
Librarian	1	*
Livestock Inspector	1	*
Lumber Merchant	1	*
Night Watchman	1	*
Notions Merchant	1	*
Office Boy	1	*
Oil Merchant	1	*
Marble Cutter	1	*
Meat Inspector	1	*
Mechanic	1	*
Messenger	1	*
Music Store	1	*
Piano Tuner	1	*
Postmaster	1	*
Press Man	1	*

Appendix A (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1900

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Provisions Dealer	1	*
Publisher	1	*
Rag Picker	1	*
Railroad Agent	1	*
Railroad Watchman	1	*
School Superintendent	1	*
Sand Dealer	1	*
Section Foreman	1	*
Sexton	1	*
Sheriff	1	*
Shirt Maker	1	*
Shoe Salesman	1	*
Speculator	1	*
Street Car Driver	1	*
Street Sprinkler	1	*
Stock Buyer	1	*
Tax Collector	1	*
Taxidermist	1	*
Telephone Manager	1	*
Telephone Service	1	*
Tinsmith	1	*
Toll Collector	1	*
Treasurer	1	*
Underwriter	1	*
Union Secretary	1	*
Upholsterer	1	*
Wagon Master	1	*
Wheelwright	1	*
Wholesale Grocer	1	*
Wine Maker	1	*
Yard Master	1	*
	<u>2,669</u>	<u>100%</u>

*: Less than one percent of total workforce.

Source: 1900 United States Manuscript Census. Nebraska State Historical Society, microfilm, NARS, T263, Roll 1900-21.

Appendix B

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1910

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Laborer	424	19.89%
Carpenter	69	6.65
Teacher	69	3.23
Salesman	56	2.63
Merchant	53	2.49
Clerk	49	2.30
Teamster	46	2.16
Painter	43	2.02
Bookkeeper	42	1.97
Dressmaker	40	1.88
Foreman	38	1.78
Servant	38	1.78
Engineer	37	1.74
Laundry	36	1.69
Farm Laborer	27	1.27
Proprietor	26	1.22
Stenographer	24	1.13
Housekeeper	22	1.03
Nurse	21	*
Agent	20	*
Cook	19	*
Farmer	18	*
Washwoman	18	*
Barber	17	*
Blacksmith	17	*
Fireman	17	*
Sales Lady	17	*
Sewing Factory	17	*
Insurance Agent	16	*
Lawyer	16	*
Seamstress	16	*
Telephone Operator	16	*
Wagon Driver	16	*
Butcher	15	*
Janitor	15	*
Doctor	14	*
Cooper	13	*
Factory Operator	13	*
Manager	13	*
Printer	13	*
Waiter	13	*
Baker	12	*
Bartender	12	*
Brakeman	12	*
Cashier	12	*

Appendix B (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1910

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Conductor	11	*
Mail Carrier	11	*
Porter	11	*
Superintendent	11	*
Driver	10	*
Inspector	10	*
Grocery Store	9	*
Miller	9	*
Plumber	9	*
Railroad	9	*
Moulder	8	*
Music Teacher	8	*
Real Estate Agent	8	*
Clergyman	7	*
Dentist	7	*
Dishwasher	7	*
Drayman	7	*
Druggist	7	*
Lineman	7	*
Newsboy	7	*
Saloon Keeper	7	*
Shipping Clerk	7	*
Boarding House	6	*
Cigar Maker	6	*
Electrician	6	*
Machinist	6	*
Plasterer	6	*
Editor	5	*
Express Man	5	*
Grain Dealer	5	*
Instructor	5	*
Machine Girl	5	*
Manufacturer	5	*
Minister	5	*
Restaurant	5	*
Shoe Maker	5	*
Switchman	5	*
Tailor	5	*
Telegrapher	5	*
Bricklayer	4	*
Grain Elevator	4	*
Hack Driver	4	*
Hotel	4	*
Mechanic	4	*
Section Hand	4	*

Appendix B (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1910

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Well-Digger	4	*
Apprentice	3	*
Bank President	3	*
Boot Black	3	*
Brick Mason	3	*
Carpet Weaver	3	*
Chore Woman	3	*
Cigar Factory	3	*
Civil Engineer	3	*
Collector	3	*
Contractor	3	*
Delivery Man	3	*
Domestic	3	*
Fisherman	3	*
Gardener	3	*
Harness Maker	3	*
Hostler	3	*
Mason	3	*
Photographer	3	*
Policeman	3	*
Roofer	3	*
Second-Hand Store	3	*
Secretary	3	*
Stockyards	3	*
Stone Mason	3	*
Tinsmith	3	*
Veterinarian	3	*
Watch Maker	3	*
Watchman	3	*
Weigher	3	*
Accountant	2	*
Automobile Dealer	2	*
Bill Clerk	2	*
Cleaning	2	*
Confectioner	2	*
Decorator	2	*
Delivery Boy	2	*
Forelady	2	*
Horse Shoer	2	*
Hotel Manager	2	*
Junk Dealer	2	*
Liquor Dealer	2	*
Liveryman	2	*
Livestock Dealer	2	*
Lumber Dealer	2	*

Appendix B (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1910

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Mail Clerk	2	*
Meat Cutter	2	*
Meat Market	2	*
Messenger	2	*
Milliner	2	*
Office Boy	2	*
Preacher	2	*
Professional Ball Player	2	*
Street Commissioner	2	*
Telephone Company	2	*
Toll Collector	2	*
Vice President	2	*
Windmill Company	2	*
Yard Man	2	*
Architect	1	*
Artist	1	*
Assessor	1	*
Assistant Manager	1	*
Auditor	1	*
Automobile Garage	1	*
Baggage Man	1	*
Bill Poster	1	*
Bottler	1	*
Box Maker	1	*
Brewer	1	*
Broom Maker	1	*
Buggy Master	1	*
Business Instructor	1	*
Cabinet Maker	1	*
Captain Salvation Army	1	*
Castor Factory	1	*
Cereal Mills	1	*
Chemist	1	*
City Clerk	1	*
Clerk of District Court	1	*
Coal Dealer	1	*
Commissioner	1	*
County Commissioner	1	*
County Sheriff	1	*
Deputy	1	*
Deputy County Clerk	1	*
Deputy County Treasurer	1	*
Deputy Sheriff	1	*
Draftsman	1	*
Dressing Room Girl	1	*

Appendix B (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1910

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Dry Goods	1	*
Foundry Worker	1	*
Freight Clerk	1	*
Fruit Stand	1	*
Handyman	1	*
Hairdresser	1	*
Hardware Dealer	1	*
Health Commissioner	1	*
Hod Carrier	1	*
Hog Dealer	1	*
Horse Jockey	1	*
Horseman	1	*
House Decorator	1	*
House Mover	1	*
Ice Man	1	*
Implement Dealer	1	*
Jeweler	1	*
Judge	1	*
Justice of the Peace	1	*
Lawn Tender	1	*
Locksmith	1	*
Lunch Stand	1	*
Lunch Wagon	1	*
Mail Agent	1	*
Marble Cutter	1	*
Matron	1	*
Meat Inspector	1	*
Money Order Clerk	1	*
Needlework	1	*
Newspaper Correspondent	1	*
Newspaper Publisher	1	*
Oat Roller	1	*
Office Girl	1	*
Office Man	1	*
Office Manager	1	*
Overseer	1	*
Packer	1	*
Paper Hanger	1	*
Peanut Roaster	1	*
Peddler	1	*
Pianist	1	*
Pipe Fitter	1	*
Police Chief	1	*
Polisher	1	*
Pool Hall Keeper	1	*

Appendix B (continued)

Occupations of Nebraska Citizens, 1910

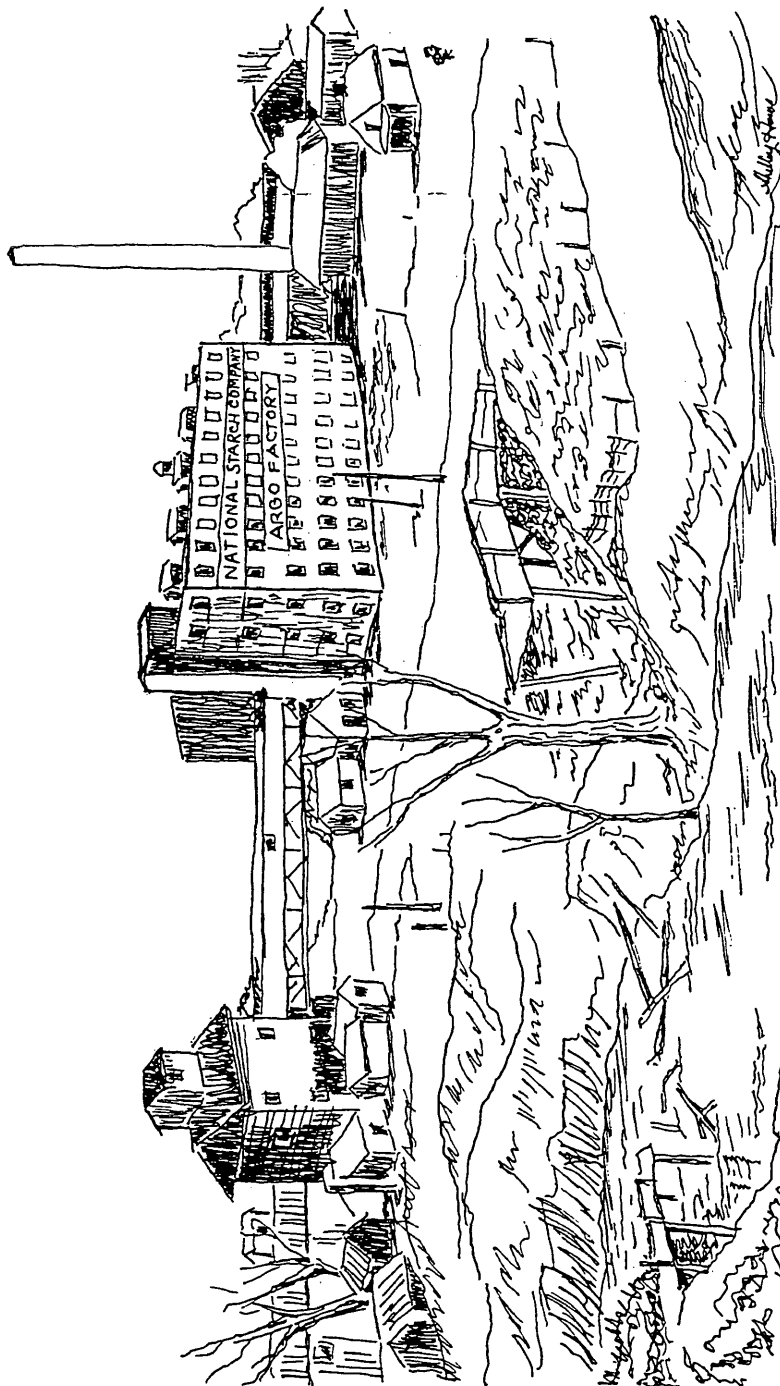
<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of Workers</u>	<u>Percentage of Workforce</u>
Postmaster	1	*
President Alfalfa Mill	1	*
Rate Clerk	1	*
Register of Deeds	1	*
Sand Dealer	1	*
Scaler	1	*
Station Hand	1	*
Stock Buyer	1	*
Stock Keeper	1	*
Stoker	1	*
Street Cleaner	1	*
Supervisor	1	*
Surveyor	1	*
Theater Manager	1	*
Ticket Agent	1	*
Time Keeper	1	*
Track Walker	1	*
Treasurer	1	*
Upholsterer	1	*
Usher	1	*
Vinegar Works	1	*
Wagon Maker	1	*
Wheelwright	1	*
Window Dresser	1	*
Wood Sawyer	1	*
	<u>2,102</u>	<u>100%</u>

*: Less than one percent of total workforce.

Source: 1910 United States Manuscript Census. Nebraska State Historical Society, microfilm, NARS, T264 Roll 1910-15.

Appendix C

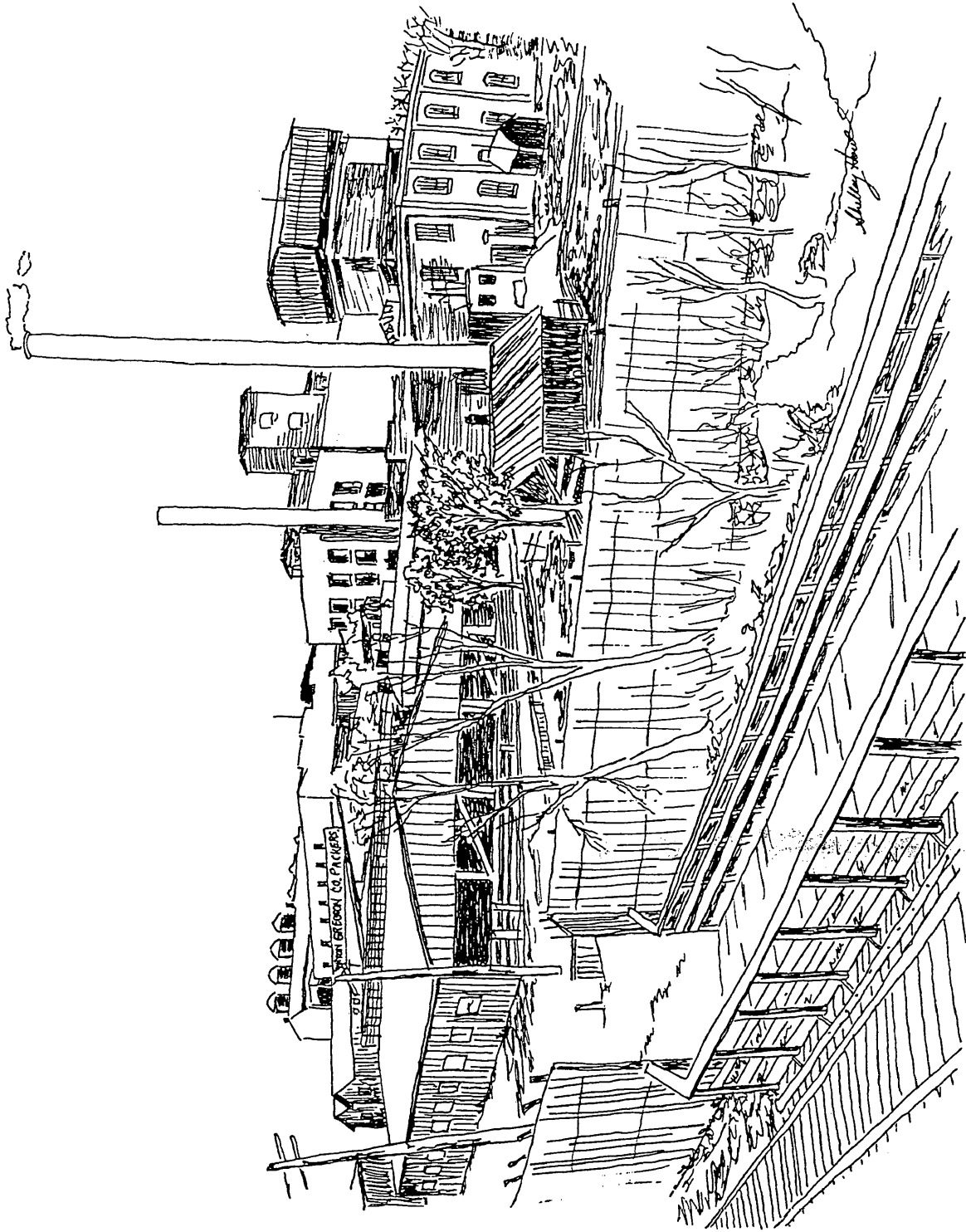
National Starch Company, Argo Factory



Source: Redrawn from Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City: 1854-1954 (Nebraska City: Chamber of Commerce, 1954), unpaginated.

Appendix C (continued)

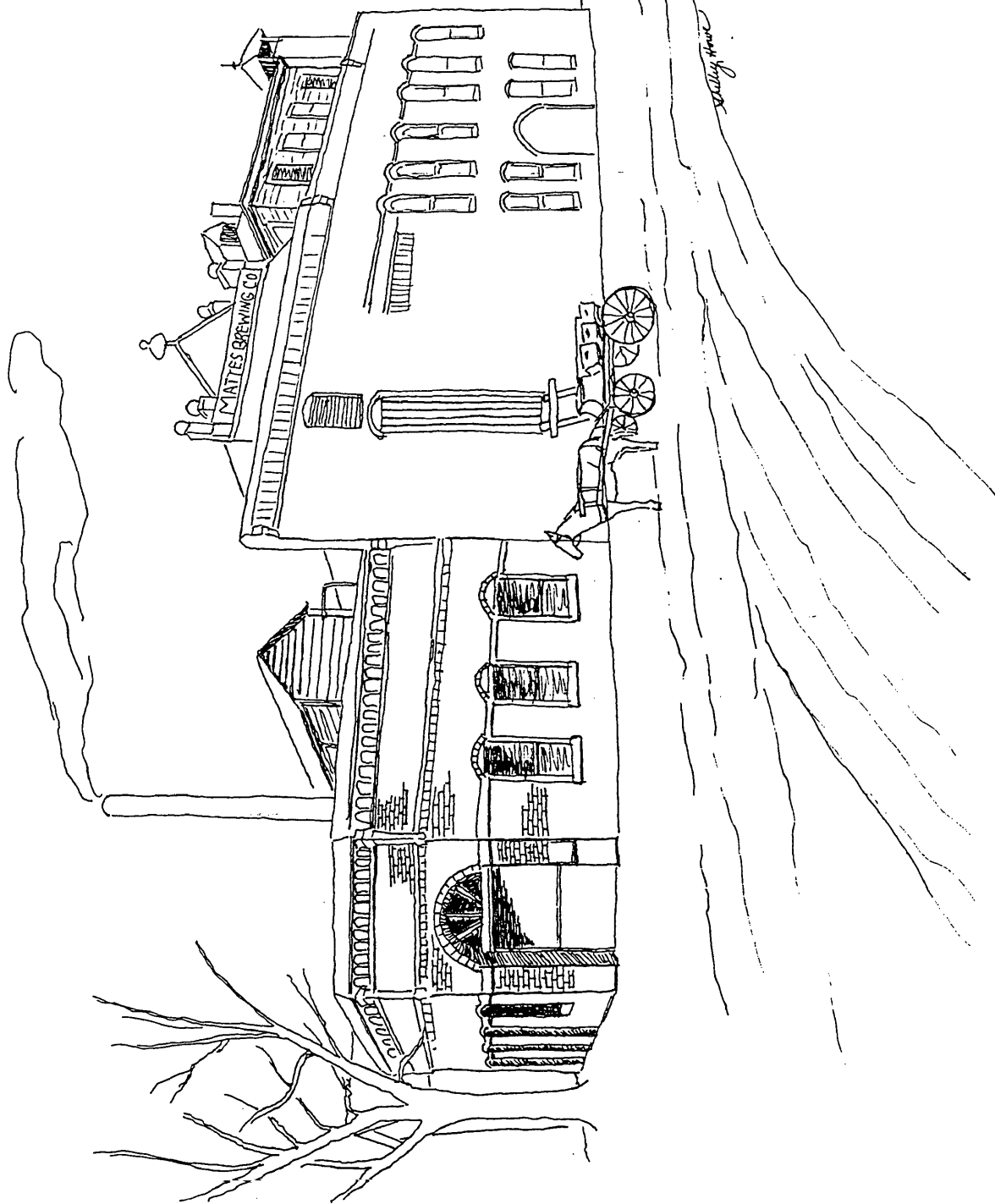
Morton-Gregson Packing Plant



Source: Redrawn from photograph courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society.

Appendix C (continued)

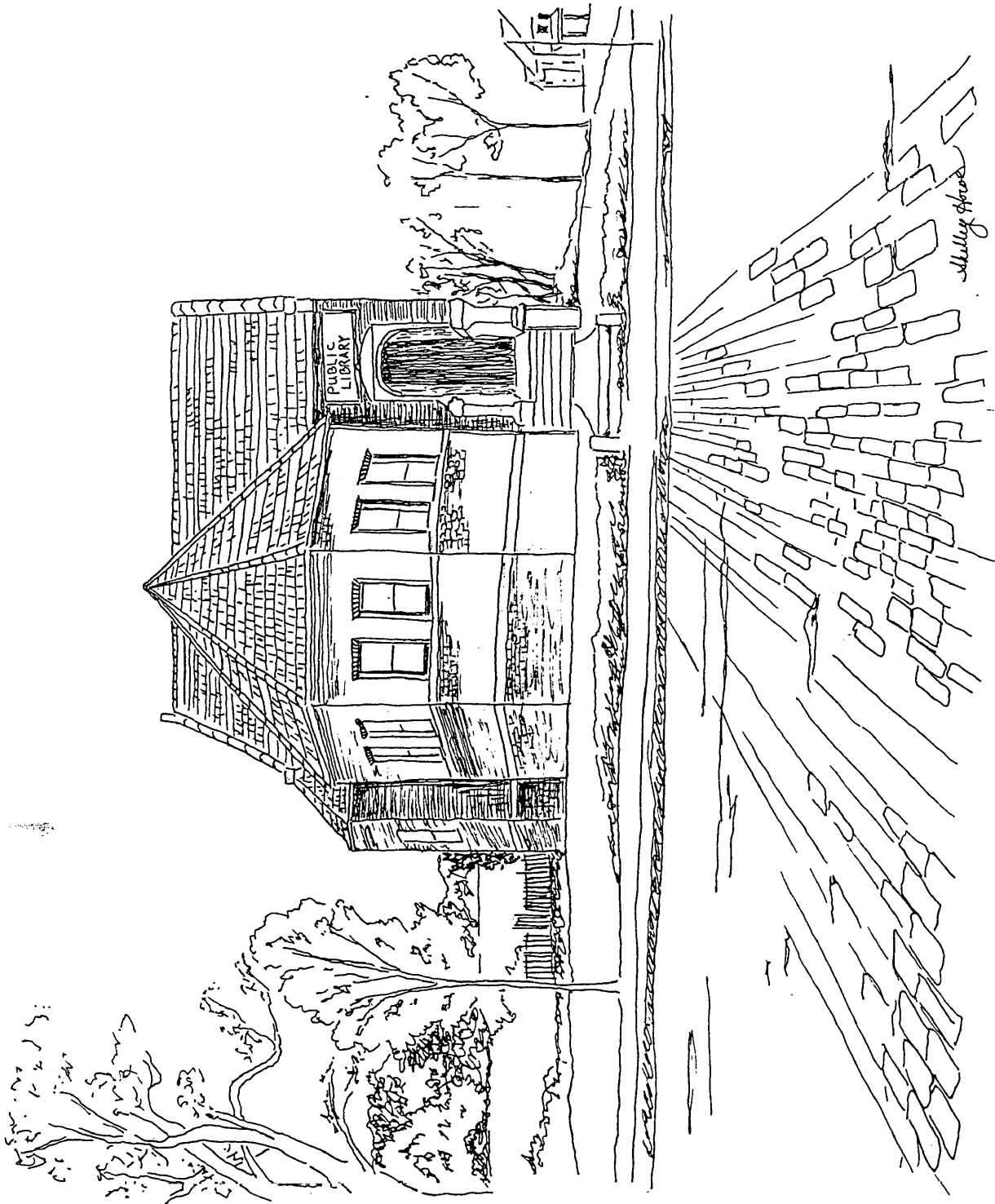
Mattes Brewing Company



Source: Redrawn from photograph courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society.

Appendix C (continued)

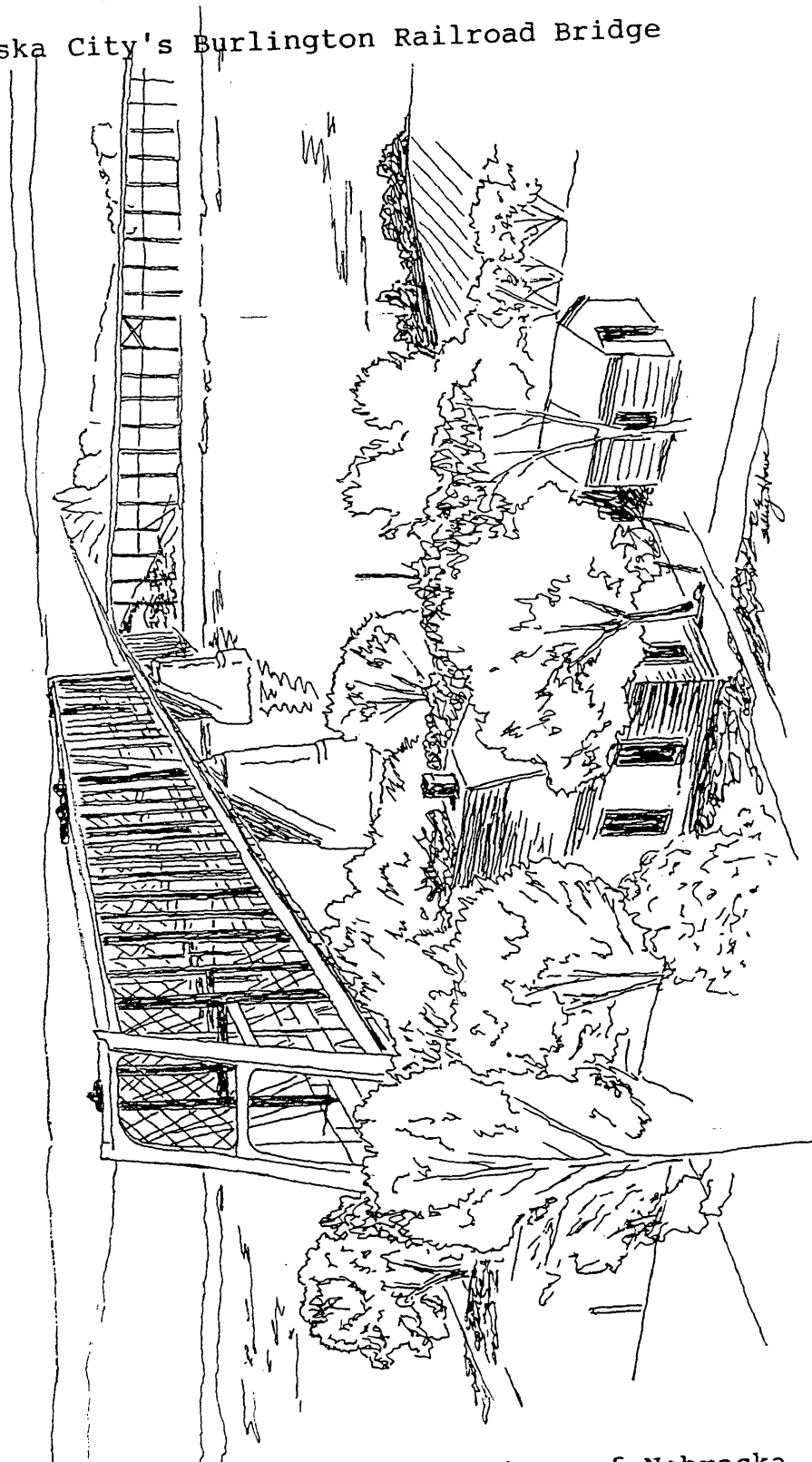
Nebraska City Public Library



Source: Redrawn from photograph courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society.

Appendix C (continued)

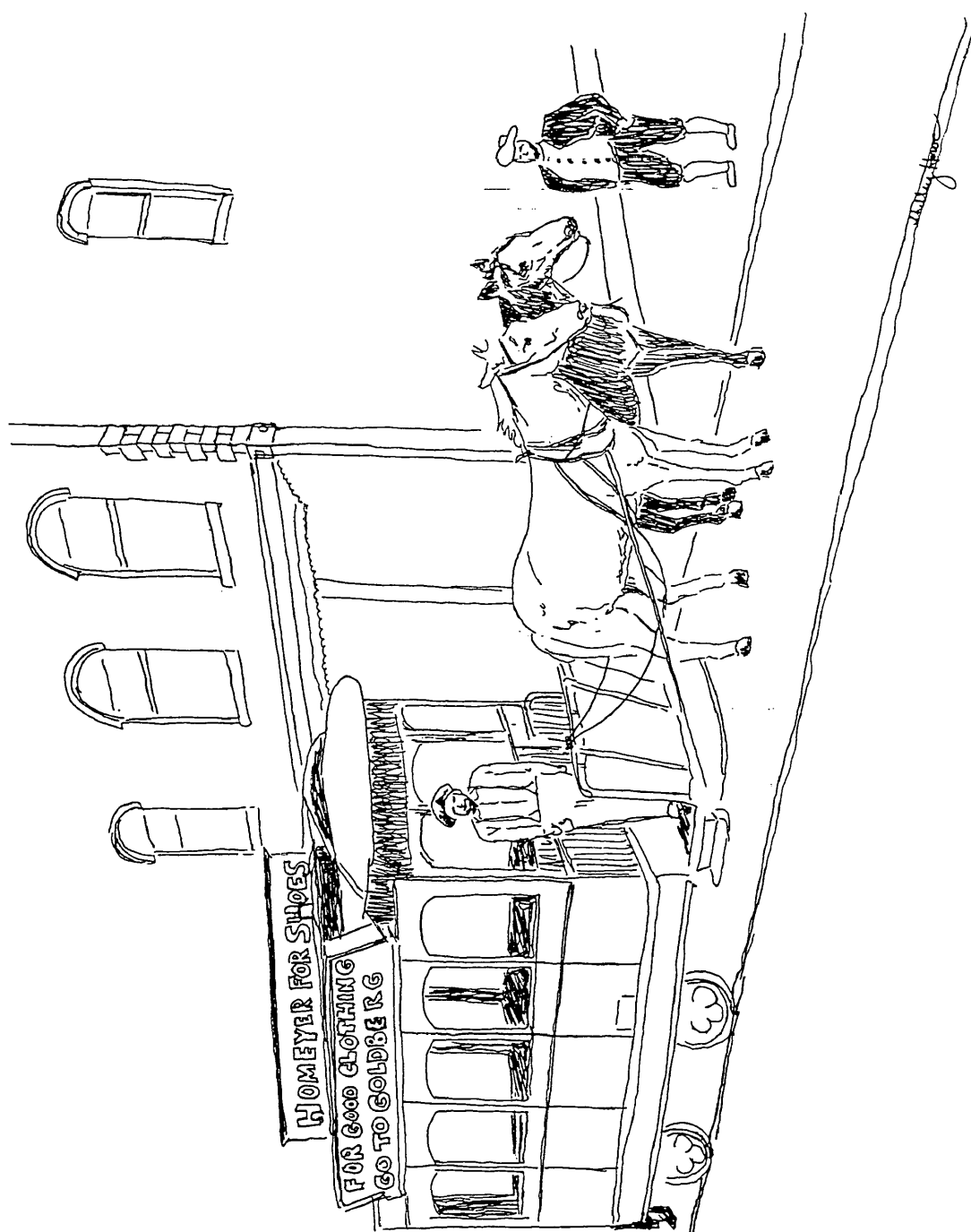
Nebraska City's Burlington Railroad Bridge



Source: Redrawn from photograph courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society.

Appendix C (continued)

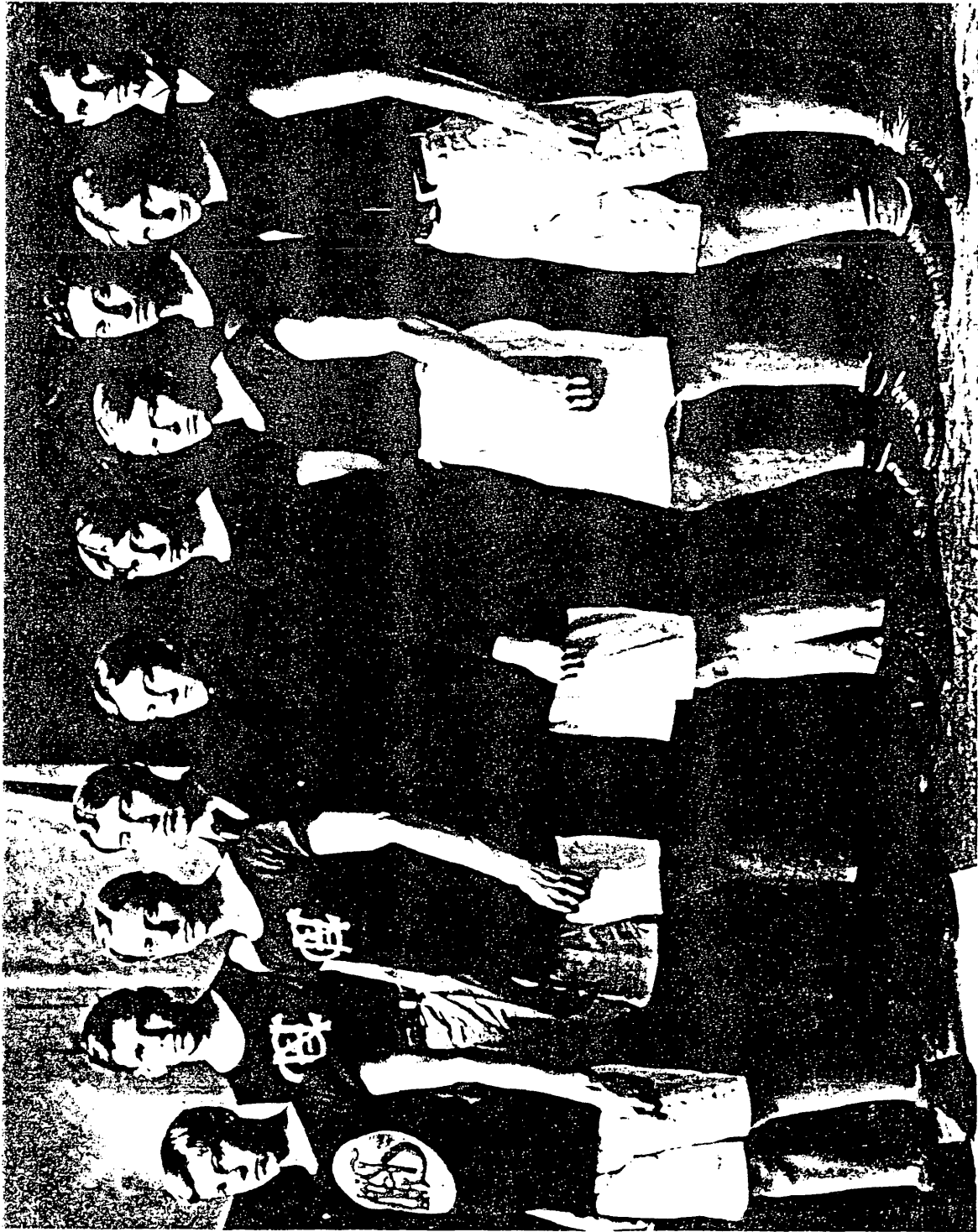
Nebraska City Streetcar System's Mule-Drawn Streetcar



Source: Redrawn from Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska City 1854-1954 (Nebraska City: Chamber of Commerce, 1954), unpaginated.

Appendix C (continued)

Nebraska City High School Boys' Athletic Team, 1907



Source: Photograph courtesy of Nebraska City Alumni Foundation.

Appendix C (continued)

Nebraska City High School Girls' Basketball Team, 1910



1 9 1 0
BASKETBALL TEAM
MYRTLE GLENN-ADYES HUBERLE-OLGA FASTENAU-EVA MCNAMARA, Captain-LULU ZIMMERS-
RUBY KOONTZ

Source: Photograph courtesy of Nebraska City Alumni Foundation.

Appendix C (continued)

Nebraska City High School Boys' Basketball Team, 1910



Source: Photograph courtesy of Nebraska City Alumni Foundation.

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