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The Omaha City Council and Commission: A Profile, 1858-1930

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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CHAPTER I

WHO CONTROLLED URBAN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT?

Historians have frequently examined reforms of government in the Progressive Era. The stated purpose of these modifications, particularly the commission and city manager plans, was "to make elected representatives more responsive to the wishes of the voters."[1] Under the commission, a board of five or seven commissioners elected at-large replaced a council with members chosen by ward. The small number of representatives allowed citizens to pinpoint responsibility since each man was in charge of one city department. The manager plan simply added a hired city manager who implemented the commissioners' policies.[2] Samuel P. Hays and James Weinstein have challenged this view of structural reform and instead found that rather than returning political control to the people, the elite businessmen and professionals who backed these changes succeeded in establishing their own class in power. According to Hays and Weinstein, the

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[1]Robert H. Wiebe, Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 6.

[2]James Weinstein, "Organized Business and the City Commission and Manager Movements," Journal of Southern History 28 (May 1962): 169-170.

commission and city manager plans enabled elites to wrest
control of municipal governments from lower or middle class
ward councilmen who previously controlled them.[3] This
thesis will test the Hays-Weinstein view by examining city
council and commission candidates in Omaha, Nebraska, between
1858 and 1930. Biographical characteristics of candidates
will be utilized to determine whether elites gained control
of the visible means of power when the commission replaced
the city council in 1912. Before dealing with Omaha,
however, it is necessary to discuss the Hays-Weinstein
view in more detail.

In "The Changing Political Structure of the City in
Industrial America," Hays studied the physical alterations
that occurred in cities and their effects on urban political
leadership. In pre-industrial cities, or pedestrian
communities in which one walked everywhere, social classes
were mixed. Factory owners often lived next to their place
of business and in sight of workers' houses. The city's
social and economic leaders frequently served as its
political leaders as well, chosen in a town meeting to
represent the community as a whole.[4]

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[3]Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal
Government in the Progressive Era," in Progressivism: The
Critical Issues, ed. David M. Kennedy (Boston: Little,
Brown and Co., 1971), pp. 87-108; Weinstein, "Organized
Business," pp. 166-182.

[4]Samuel P. Hays, "The Changing Political Structure of
the City in Industrial America," Journal of Urban History 1
(November 1974): 8-9.

By the late nineteenth century the city underwent a
process of decentralization. . The arriving immigrant groups
each formed small subcommunities while the upwardly mobile
began to relocate in suburbs. Trolley systems allowed for
separation of work and home and permitted the factory owner
to move his family from the heat and noise of the central
city to a cool, green suburb. The decentralizing tendencies
and growth of subcommunities enhanced the importance of the
ward as a political unit and aided the rise of the machine
politician who dispensed favors and kept control over the
various factions. Each subcommunity elected a representative
to guard its interests in the city council. With ward
representatives, the type of man selected to the council
changed. Rather than choosing the economic or social leader
of an earlier day, each ward's voters elected men like
themselves. With most of the upper classes in suburbs, city
councils became increasingly lower and middle class in
composition. Their economic leaders were primarily small
businessmen, who came to dominate the councils by 1900.[5]

At the turn of the century other influences affected
urban life. Science and technology provided increased
mobility and communication and facilitated relationships
over a wider geographical area. Functional interest groups
began to replace parties as a political mechanism. Interest

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[5]Ibid., pp. 10-14; Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for
Order (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), p. 30.

groups for farmers, businessmen, and laborers concentrated their energies on a single goal rather than dealing with an entire party platform. At the same time technological advances and increased education gave rise to what Robert Wiebe termed a "new middle class." It included persons in law, medicine, social work, administration, economics, and architecture who increasingly viewed themselves as professionals. Their status was further enforced by formal entry requirements which began to limit the number of persons who could enter these occupations, and by the development of professional organizations which allowed the "new middle class" to associate with their peers. A "structure of loyalties," as found in occupational affiliations, began to replace the old nineteenth century loyalty to a political party. As professional organizations became national in scope, their members looked beyond their local sphere and grew interested in sharing their skills with the entire country. The reform that spread over the United States in the 1900s emanated from these self-conscious new professionals.[6]

Reform movements marked the entrance of the upper class into political activity after several decades' absence. After providing leadership in the early pedestrian community, the upper classes moved out and left the city of subcommunities

[6]Samuel P. Hays, "Political Parties and the Community-Society Continuum," in The American Party Systems, ed. William N. Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 167; Wiebe, Search for Order, pp. 111-113, 129.

to the lower and middle classes. By the twentieth century, cities annexed their upper class suburbs, bringing the reformers into the center of municipal politics.[7]

Samuel Hays based many of his conclusions about urban political change from research on Pittsburgh and Des Moines, presented in his article, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era." He found that the source of reform in both cities was overwhelmingly upper class (which included Wiebe's "new middle class" professionals) and particularly businessmen who voiced their concerns through chambers of commerce. They viewed the commission plan as an extension of business principles applied to urban government. In Des Moines, the Commercial Club initiated the drive for the commission along with the help of a Committee of 300 business and professional men. Although supporters of the commission spoke in the name of "the people," they held definite ideas about who should be in control. The president of Des Moines' Committee of 300 announced that the "professional politician must be ousted and in his place capable businessmen chosen to conduct the affairs of the city." In Pittsburgh, the two groups behind governmental reform were the Civic Club and the Voters' League, both filled primarily with upper class members. Professional men comprised almost half the members of these

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[7]Hays, "Political Structure of the City," p. 24.

groups, supplemented by a good number of businessmen who directed some of the largest enterprises in the city.[8]

James Weinstein focused more specifically on the role of organized business and its support for structural reform of government in the Progressive Era. According to Weinstein, the "movement to rationalize municipal government illuminates the goals and political ideology of businessmen." They sought additional governmental services without increasing their tax rate. Cities needed paved streets, deepened harbors, lighting systems, and other amenities that current city governments could not provide. Although some businessmen opposed reform because they feared an end to the contract letting and utility franchises handed out by political bosses, others supported the changes which offered a "stable and less expensive alternative to the old system of graft and complicated legislative procedures."[9]

The reform target of the upper classes was the structure of an urban government which they believed was dominated by local interests. Each ward's councilman spoke for its economic and social interests, not the larger picture that the reformers had come to see as the essential view. The reform movement was an attempt by the professionals and large business elements "to take formal political power from

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[8]Hays, "Politics of Reform," pp. 90-93.

[9]Weinstein, "Organized Business," pp. 166-168.

the previously dominant lower and middle class elements so
that they might advance their own conceptions of desirable
public policy." With the emphasis on placing expert business-
men in governmental positions, the reformers plainly stated
that men of other occupational categories would not be
suitable.[10] In 1911 a Voters' League pamphlet in Pittsburgh
discussed occupations not appropriate for school board members:

> . . . Objections might also be made to small shop-
> keepers, clerks, workmen at many trades, who by lack
> of educational advantages and business training,
> could not, no matter how honest, be expected to
> administer properly the affairs of an educational
> system, requiring special knowledge, and where
> millions are spent each year.[11]

Clearly, the reformers wanted not only businessmen in the
new city governments but also sought to change the class and
occupational backgrounds of decision-makers.

Hays pointed out that the reform process and movement
toward citywide elections and structural governmental change
shifted the occupational characteristics of city councilmen
upward. The commissioners were doctors, lawyers, admini-
strators, and other professionals who possessed contacts
beyond those of the typical neighborhood grocer, saloon-
keeper, or druggist who represented his ward twenty years
earlier.[12]

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[10]Hays, "Politics of Reform," pp. 94-95.

[11]Ibid., p. 97.

[12]Hays, "Political Parties," p. 180.

The innovations sought by the reformers centered on
the commission and manager forms of government which concen-
trated political power in the hands of a few. According to
the Progressive ideology of the time, these changes
supposedly gave power back to the people. But the day to
day workings of government under the commission actually
restricted the control of the lower and middle classes.
The shift from ward to city-wide election of councils and
school boards eliminated the authority of small subcommunities
and often reduced the number of people on the board. In
Pittsburgh, for example, a city council of twenty-seven
elected by ward was replaced by a council of nine elected
by the city as a whole.[13]

In the long run, how successful was the commission
form of government in meeting its originators' objectives?
Although the businessmen who supported it succeeded in
destroying the old ward system, they did not always meet
the goal of placing themselves in control. In Des Moines,
the first commission election resulted in the repudiation
of the "silk sox" businessman's ticket and the election of
five neutral men. In Denver, voters succeeded in changing
the system back to a mayor-council plan after three years
under the commission.[14]

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[13]Hays, "Politics of Reform," pp. 97-98.

[14]Bradley Robert Rice, Progressive Cities: The
Commission Government Movement in America, 1901-1920

William Bennett Munro, professor of municipal govern-
ment at Harvard University, set out to assess the gains of
the commission in 1912. He examined ten commissions of five
men each to test whether the change had succeeded in
replacing the professional politicians with businessmen and
experts. Of the fifty commissioners, thirty-six held some
office in their city before the institution of the commission.
Professor Munro admitted that when "over seventy percent of
the new officials prove to be men who were connected with
city administration in the days preceding reform it can
scarcely be urged that the commission system has managed to
secure a new type of officeholder."[15] The New York Bureau
of Municipal Research conducted a similar study and found
thirty-eight of forty-eight commissioners held public offices
prior to election. The occupational backgrounds revealed
most commissioners came from small enterprise and the profes-
sions with some blue collar workers rounding out the boards.
These men may have been more acceptable to each city's
business interests, but they were still politicians accus-
tomed to public office.[16]

(Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), pp. 49-50;
J. Paul Mitchell, "Boss Speer and the City Functional,"
Pacific Northwest Quarterly 63 (October 1972): 156.

[15]William Bennett Munro, "Ten Years of Commission
Government," National Municipal Review 1 (October 1912):
564.

[16]Rice, Progressive Cities, p. 65.

These conclusions challenge the Hays-Weinstein interpretation that the commission ousted representatives of the lower and middle classes. In contrast, Hays found that Pittsburgh's <u>Blue Book</u> printed an increasing number of city commissioners' names, while few of the city councilmen elected by ward in previous decades had been included in the social listing. Weinstein pointed out that in Galveston, five businessmen, including a banker, two wholesale merchants, a real estate dealer, and an officer of a livestock concern sat on the first commission. The same type of slate was elected in Dayton and Springfield, Ohio, and in the new commission cities in Illinois.[17]

These results indicate that the political environment in each city probably determined whether new men replaced the politicians or incumbents filled seats on the commission. No consensus has developed over which cities were most likely to reject or accept the businessmen's slates; such detailed information will only be available when more studies are completed on individual cities which adopted the commission plan.

A variety of other monographs have addressed the question of which people held the seats of power in local government. These works, many of them by political scientists,

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[17]Hays, "Political Parties," p. 180; Weinstein, "Organized Business," p. 173. Of the first five Galveston commissioners, two were elected and three appointed by the governor. When all five positions were made elective two years later the voters promptly returned the incumbents to office.

examined leadership in cities such as New Haven, Chicago, Nashville, Birmingham, Atlanta, and Ypsilanti, Michigan. Although the authors did not always focus on the alterations wrought by commission government, they dealt with change in composition of leaders over long periods of time. Some of their insights are useful and will provide an informative background as well as points of comparison for this study of Omaha.

One of the first and most widely known of leadership composition studies was Robert Dahl's Who Governs?, an examination of two centuries of city government in New Haven, Connecticut. Dahl divided New Haven's mayors into three groups: the patricians, 1784-1842; the entrepreneurs, 1842-1900; and the ex-plebes, post-1900.[18]

In the period of government by patricians, the typical candidate came from an established New England family, attended Yale, was admitted to the bar, and was active in public affairs. These men shared a common heritage and religion and possessed wealth, position, and education. However, they eventually lost their political roles due to population growth of the city, spread of suffrage, and the secret ballot. With the rise of industry, manufacturing entrepreneurs began to command not only the wealth the patricians held before but also began to hold political

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[18]Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

office as the patricians retreated into economic affairs.
Most entrepreneurs came from long-time New England families,
but of more humble origins than the patricians. A number of
these men worked at an early age and spent few years in
schools but had advanced enough to become successful business-
men. After sixty years, they lost their position to the ex-
plebes, the men who had labored in the entrepreneurs'
factories. In 1870, foreign-born residents made up almost
thirty percent of New Haven's population. By 1910, one-third
were foreign-born and another one-third of foreign stock.
Clearly, the ex-plebes in New Haven, who held power through
the 1950s, were members of ethnic groups. Irish Catholics,
in particular, controlled both parties in the 1940s, although
the Democratic party was more specifically their stronghold.
Their position was challenged by Italians who found their
niche in the local Republican party and used it to gain some
power in political affairs.[19]

Robert O. Schulze, in his study of Cibola (Ypsilanti,
Michigan), found that a bifurcation of power existed between
the community's "economic dominants" and "public leaders."
Schulze defined economic dominants as those men with "top
formal statuses in the major economic units" of the com-
munity, while public leaders were persons who exercised
"major influence and leadership in community affairs."

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[19]Ibid., pp. 12-43. Foreign stock referred to
persons with at least one parent not born in America.

In the town's early period, economic dominants and public
leaders were the same men. Later Cibola's economic system
became increasingly controlled by persons outside the
community. Its location near Metro City (Detroit) brought
a number of branch factories with officers and managers
who did not identify with Cibola. Outsiders, concerned
only with their company, increasingly filled the economic
dominant positions in the city. By tracing men considered
economic dominants between 1860 and 1900, a period when
dominants and leaders were the same men, Schulze discovered
that eighty-one percent of these twenty-one men held public
offices. However, as Cibola's economic units became absentee
owned, fewer economic dominants expressed interest in local
affairs--only twenty-eight percent of forty-three men held
public office between 1900 and 1940. As absentee control
expanded, economic dominants withdrew from public office and
left the positions to the public leaders, local men who
identified with the community. Within one hundred years,
Cibola moved from leadership by one group of men, to a split
group of dominants and leaders, to outward rule by the
leaders only.[20]

Two studies completed after those of Dahl and Schulze
examined the mayors of Chicago and Nashville. In Chicago,

[20]Robert O. Schulze, "The Bifurcation of Power in
a Satellite City," in Community Political Systems, ed.
Morris Janowitz (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1961),
pp. 21-23, 33-34.

Donald S. Bradley and Mayer N. Zald found four stages of
mayors: commercial elite, 1837-1868; transition mayors,
1869-1875; personal machine versus party machine, 1876-1930;
and political administrators, 1931-1965. Incorporated in
1837, Chicago had no old, established families or "patricians"
to assume social responsibility. Chicago's early leaders
were the men who built the city, with occupations related
to commercial, transportation, and building interests.
Almost half of the first nineteen mayors earned income from
real estate speculation and investment; others made a living
through merchandising, trading activity, railroads, banking
and building, or law.[21]

The transition mayors of 1869-1875 were leading
businessmen affiliated with large companies doing business
outside of Chicago. They identified not with local politics,
but with their firms, and provided leadership during the
rebuilding years after the Chicago fire. The twelve mayors
between 1876 and 1930 reached the top administrative position
through the support of personal machines. The city attracted
so many ethnic groups that no one boss emerged to unite them
all; each leader controlled a faction or region. Their
occupations included law, real estate, management, and
wholesaling. Chicago's last group of mayors after 1931

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[21]Donald S. Bradley and Mayer N. Zald, "From
Commercial Elite to Political Administrator: The Recruit-
ment of the Mayors of Chicago," American Journal of
Sociology LXXI (September 1965): 153-155.

began their careers with little formal education and a start "near the bottom of the occupational hierarchy." They gained control of the mayor's office through party service and demonstrated administrative talent.[22]

Mayer Zald teamed with Thomas A. Anderson to examine Nashville in a deliberate attempt to study a city with demographic characteristics unlike Chicago's. They divided Nashville's mayors into four categories: frontier settlers, 1806-1832; sons of the settlers, 1833-1871; the period of industrial growth, 1872-1908; and professional politicians, 1909 onward.[23]

Nashville resembled Chicago in that businessmen held the office of mayor in the first three periods, followed by professional politicians. Although all were businessmen, the differences between mayors in the first three periods focused on specific occupations. Before 1832, the elite of the first settlers, including retail traders, land specu-lators, plantation owners, and newspaper editors, held the position. By the 1830s the first elites gave way to the next generation. These men were wholesalers, retailers, and attorneys, who played an increasingly important role as Nashville became a commercial center. When the city industrialized after 1872 attorneys and wholesalers became

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[22]Ibid., pp. 159-164.

[23]Mayer N. Zald and Thomas A. Anderson, "Secular Trends and Historical Contingencies in the Recruitment of Mayors," Urban Affairs Quarterly III (June 1968): 54, 57.

most prominent in the mayoral position. Most of them
varied from earlier mayors in that they possessed formal
education and were not members of Nashville's old elite
families. Men who rose to the chief governmental job after
1909 represented no particular class. They had devoted
their lives to politics and attained their positions
because of skill and ability.[24]

Two recent monographs by historians examined the social
characteristics of those who governed in Atlanta and Birming-
ham. In The Social Bases of City Politics: Atlanta, 1865-
1903, Eugene Watts analyzed all mayors, aldermen, and council-
men of the period by collecting data on eleven variables
including occupation, region of birth, length of residence,
and age. He studied the losers as well as winners, believing
that the "emergence, disappearance, and failure to participate
of various groups of citizens reveal much about the social
patterns underlying competition for city office."[25]

For occupational differentiation, Watts divided his
approximately 800 candidates into four groups: professional,
proprietor, clerical, and blue collar. Between 1865 and
1903, almost three-fifths of candidates were businessmen
(proprietors) with another one-fifth comprised of professional

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[24]Ibid., pp. 59-66

[25]Eugene Watts, The Social Bases of City Politics:
Atlanta, 1865-1903 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press,
1978), p. 5.

men. White collar and blue collar employees made up the
last one-fifth of candidates. The clerical employees "did
not appear to have a strong sense of group identification."
However, skilled workers were well organized in unions or
clubs and exhibited some class awareness. Of eighty-five
blue collar candidates, all but five had skilled trades.
Their role became important enough that by the 1880s,
organized tickets always kept a slot for working class
candidates.[26]

Watts examined other characteristics that are important
for comparative purposes: region of birth, length of
residence, and age. Seventy-five percent of Atlanta's
candidates were born either in Georgia or in one of the
other ten Confederate states. Approximately fifteen percent
of the candidates came from north of the Ohio River, and ten
percent were foreign-born. In regard to length of residence,
over three-fourths of all the candidates running for election
had resided in Atlanta over ten years. The age of exactly
half of Watts' candidates fell between the ages of thirty-
five and forty-eight. Although the range of ages extended
from twenty-one to seventy-five, only ten percent were under
thirty and ten percent over fifty-five. The median age of
candidates in all three offices grew older between the time
periods. The median age of mayors moved from approximately
forty-six years between 1865-1883 to approximately forty-

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[26]Ibid., pp. 71-73.

eight years in 1883-1903. The jump for aldermen and council-
men was even more decisive: aldermen aged from forty-two
years to forty-six, while councilmen advanced from thirty-
nine to forty-three years. Watts concluded that the change
to older candidates paralleled growth in the age of this new
city and also marked Atlanta's change from unstable to
settled conditions. City politics matured, and campaigns
became more orderly as the age of candidates increased.[27]

Watts found that in general, candidates, and winners
in particular, were not representative of the Atlanta
population. Very young and very old men, newcomers, and
blacks did not appear as candidates in numbers representative
of their totals in the city. Blue collar workers and people
with little property were also underrepresented. The voters
usually chose people of the "better class," and these men
remained in office and dominated municipal government.[28]

Carl Harris' monograph, Political Power in Birmingham,
1871-1921, presented a classification scheme for ranking
occupations of municipal candidates. By utilizing the
reference books of R. G. Dun and Company, a New York-based
credit rating firm, Harris classified the wealth of each
economic interest group, from the iron and steel corporations
to merchants and saloonkeepers. The high, medium, and low

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[27]Ibid., pp. 81, 91, 93-96, 137. Aldermen and
councilmen ruled in the fashion of a bicameral legislature.
Both were elected by all Atlanta voters, but aldermen had no
residence requirements while councilmen had to live in the
ward they represented (p. 13).

[28]Ibid., p. 168.

rankings were based on the amount of local resources, such as real and personal property tax assessments, held by the median firm in each group. The members of the upper ranking set, which totaled the top one percent of the Birmingham adult male population in 1910, included iron and steel corporations, utility corporations, railroads, banks, metal manufacturers, and commercial coal companies. The middle set, with the next nineteen percent of the population, was comprised of real estate companies, contractors, nonmetal manufacturers, merchants (except retail grocers), and professionals. The bottom eighty percent of the population, in the lowest ranking set, contained truck and dairy farmers, saloonkeepers and liquor dealers, retail grocers, artisans, and wage earners.[29]

Harris found both offices of mayor and alderman dominated by men from the middle ranking groups between 1871 and 1911. Ninety-five percent of the men elected mayor between 1897 and 1921 came from middle ranking occupations; one-half to two-thirds of the aldermen were from the same set. It is interesting to note that the men who lost races for mayor closely resembled those who won. Of thirty-eight losers between 1875 and 1921, eighty-seven percent were classed in middle economic interest groups. Harris pointed out that except for one election, "had the results of every aldermanic

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[29]Carl V. Harris, Political Power in Birmingham, 1871-1921 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977), pp. 46-53.

election been exactly reversed, it would have made little
difference in the economic interest group representation on
the board of aldermen." Thus, representatives from the top
twenty percent of the Birmingham population held the seats
of power while eighty percent, comprised of workingmen, were
underrepresented.[30]

Workingmen participated most heavily in Birmingham
politics in the 1880s and early 1890s when they supplied as
many as twenty-five to thirty percent of the aldermen.
However, their role and that of the representatives from the
upper economic group continued to decline as the middle
ranking group became more firmly entrenched in municipal
politics. Voters probably elected workingmen more often
before 1896 because at that time, candidates for mayor ran
with a slate of one man per ward. An at-large vote elected
aldermen although each represented a particular ward. The
mayor balanced his team with businessmen and workingmen and,
by the "kite-tail" method, often brought his entire slate
into office with him. In 1895, however, a new law provided
for election of aldermen by their own ward, and without
slate support, fewer workingmen ran for office.[31]

In 1910, Birmingham annexed its surrounding suburbs,
creating sixteen wards represented by thirty-two aldermen
in the city council. Many of these representatives were

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[30]Ibid., pp. 61-64.

[31]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

merchants and professional people tied to downtown and sub-
urban business communities. At the same time, agitation
began for the new commission form of government in Birming-
ham to "abolish the unwieldy board of aldermen and replace
it with an efficient, full-time, more prestigious three-man
city commission . . . ." After adoption of the commission
the first men elected were central city residents. However,
a suburban druggist won election in 1915 on the issue of
suburban representation. The commission was expanded to
five members in 1915, and by the 1917 and 1921 elections,
suburban residents held four of the five positions.[32]

After 1915, the newspapers in Birmingham complained
the commission no longer attracted the ideal men anticipated
in such positions. In 1915 and 1917, the Birmingham News
organized a businessmen's caucus to nominate and elect the
ideal businessman to office, but the group failed to even
find a man to run, let alone elect him. As a result, after
the first commissioners retired, the board was comprised of
men from approximately the same economic status as those who
participated in the old aldermanic council before 1911.[33]

The middle ranking economic group representatives
increased their dominance even more after 1915. Between
1911 and 1950, voters selected only one representative from
each of the upper and lower ranking economic groups to the

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[32]Ibid., pp. 81-85.

[33]Ibid., pp. 87-88.

Birmingham city commission. Most of the post-1915 commis-
sioners were suburban residents and more often professionals
rather than merchants who predominated before.[34]

Both the Watts and Harris studies challenge the Hays-
Weinstein thesis. Hays' study of Pittsburgh found the city's
economic leaders utilizing the commission to propel them-
selves back into a municipal government they believed they
had lost to ward leaders and professional politicians.
Harris' "middle ranking businessmen" in Birmingham and Watts'
"better classes" in Atlanta assumed political leadership in
the beginning and never let go of it.

It should be stated that Atlanta and Birmingham are
not directly comparable to New Haven, Ypsilanti, Chicago,
and Nashville. The time span covered in Atlanta and Birming-
ham was much shorter and at the same time, much more detailed.
Also, the Atlanta study began with 1865, omitting the earliest
period of that city's history which might have provided an
indication of early patrician leadership. Perhaps the fact
that these two cities were studied in the Gilded Age has
something to do with the continual business leadership.
That was also the period in which the entrepreneurs controlled
New Haven and the big businessmen ruled Chicago during its
transition years after the fire. The particular era under
study, whether it be a frontier period, Gilded Age, or

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[34]Ibid., p. 88.

early twentieth century, plays an important role in examining
who held the visible means of. power in American cities.

New Haven, Ypsilanti, Chicago, and Nashville each
passed through stages of political leadership by various
groups. It can be argued that businessmen led these cities
in every period, but the fact that differences are apparent
between the stages indicates their variance from Atlanta and
Birmingham. In New Haven, Ypsilanti, Chicago, and Nash-
ville, the elite of earliest settlers assumed control of
government. Thus New Haven had its patricians, Ypsilanti
had men who were both "economic dominants" and "public
leaders," Chicago elected men prominent in building the
city, and Nashville had its plantation owners, land specu-
lators, and newspaper editors. Unlike their counterparts
in Atlanta and Birmingham, these men soon relinquished
control to other types of businessmen.

The "pattern of internal migration and the concen-
tration of ethnic groups in communities"[35] influenced
political life in New Haven and Chicago. In New Haven, the
ex-plebes united to move into city government by 1900.
Chicago, however, attracted so many ethnic groups that no
one could gain control of the entire political scene until
the 1930s. It remained a city with a number of leaders,
each with his own faction, much longer than the other cities.
The South had plenty of cheap labor and drew in few immigrants.

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[35]Zald and Anderson, "Secular Trends," p. 68.

As a result, Nashville, Atlanta, and Birmingham had no large ethnic groups to form factions or support party machines to push native-born elites from office.

Elites such as Harris' "middle ranking businessmen" or Watts' "better classes" may have held office so long because they faced no competition from ethnic groups. On the other hand, the Watts and Harris studies were much more detailed than those of other cities in terms of actual people elected and win-loss percentages. Hays' study dealt only with councilmen; the discussions of Chicago and Nashville looked only at mayors. More detailed examinations showed minor changes, such as the fact that workingmen made their greatest inroads into Birmingham municipal government in the 1880s and 1890s. An investigation of councilmen in cities like Chicago and Nashville might reveal more clearly the trends only hinted at by studying the mayor's position alone.

Like Atlanta and Birmingham, the other four cities do not seem to fit the Hays-Weinstein thesis. In New Haven, the ethnic groups held power after 1900, the period when reformers started to take control of municipal government in other cities. In Chicago and Nashville, professional politicians with administrative skills ran the city, not the reformers who sought to oust these kinds of leaders. The public leaders in Ypsilanti probably were the reformers there, but they always had played a role in that city's municipal government.

The composition of urban officials in other cities
provides a comparative framework in which to place Omaha,
Nebraska, from 1858 to 1930. Samuel Hays has suggested that
historians "cannot deal long with election returns without
delving more deeply into the dynamics of community life and
its social structure out of which political thought and
action arose."[36] The growth and development of Omaha from
its beginning until 1930 affected the political climate and
in some cases, influenced the election of particular candidates.
In order to deal with the political and social changes that
occurred in Omaha, information in Chapter II has been divided
into three periods: the frontier city, 1854-1879; the
emerging metropolis, 1880-1899; and the twentieth century
city, 1900-1930.

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[36]Hays, "Political Parties," p. 161.

CHAPTER II

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MILIEU

The Frontier City, 1854-1879

In 1854, the Omaha Indians ceded all their lands west
of the Missouri River to the United States government. This
action helped pave the way for passage of the Kansas-Nebraska
Act which created two new territories west of the Missouri
in May, 1854, and opened these areas for settlement. As
early as 1852, land speculators had lined the east side of
the Missouri, anxiously anticipating the moment when they
could legally cross to the new lands and stake their claims.
Some of the more enterprising men had even greater visions
and organized town companies with plans to found new metro-
polises in Kansas and Nebraska.[1]

Accordingly, a group of Council Bluffs, Iowa, business-
men, "with pre-eminent foresight and daring," organized the
Council Bluffs and Nebraska Ferry Company in 1853 with the
purpose of establishing a city on the west side of the river.
Two other settlements, the old Mormon community of Winter
Quarters several miles north, and the trading and missionary
center of Bellevue farther south, had existed previously on

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[1]James C. Olson, History of Nebraska, 2nd ed. (Lincoln:
University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 78-80.

the Nebraska side of the river, but neither was flourishing.
Thus, in May, 1854, with all the legal technicalities taken
care of, the members of the Council Bluffs and Nebraska
Ferry Company hired Alfred D. Jones to survey their new
townsite of Omaha City (See Figure 1). Jones laid out the
city into 320 blocks, each 264 feet square. He allowed a
width of one hundred feet for streets, except Capitol Avenue
and 21st Street which were 120 feet side. The surveyor left
space for three squares: Capitol Square, where the terri-
torial capitol later stood; Jefferson Square, northeast of
16th and Chicago; and Washington Square, northeast of 16th
and Farnam. Jones included one park, lying between 8th and
9th, Jackson and Davenport, but it lasted only until 1858
when the Herndon House hotel was constructed on the site.[2]

Omaha City residents immediately tried to advance
their town's position by attempting to make it the site of
the Nebraska territorial capital. Other towns, including
Bellevue, Florence, Fontanelle, Plattsmouth, Nebraska City,

[2]A. T. Andreas, History of the State of Nebraska, 2
vols. (Chicago: The Western Historical Co., 1882), 1: 679-
682; Arthur C. Wakeley, Omaha: The Gate City and Douglas
County Nebraska, 2 vols. (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Pub-
lishing Co., 1917), 1:77. See also Lawrence H. Larsen's
The Urban West at the End of the Frontier (Lawrence: The
Regents Press of Kansas, 1978), pp. 9-10, in which he briefly
described Omaha's growth and development from frontier boom-
town to railroad center between 1854 and 1880. Larsen
included Omaha in his examination of twenty-four western
cities in 1880, describing ethnic and social components,
physical development, and services such as fire and police
protection and how they varied from place to place. Based
on census information, especially the 1880 Report on the

Figure 1. 28

Figure 1.

and Brownville also wanted the designation, but Acting
Governor Thomas B. Cuming, Jr. realized he could enhance his
own wealth and power if he made a deal. When members of the
Council Bluffs and Nebraska Ferry Company astutely invited
him to join their group and either gave him, or gave him the
opportunity to buy lots in the city, Cuming decided to name
Omaha as the capital.[3]

In 1856 Omaha City attracted a large immigration and
began to acquire permanent buildings. The Pioneer Block, a
three-story brick retail structure "considered the most
imposing and architecturally perfect edifice north of St.
Louis," went up on Farnam between 11th and 12th. Harney
Street, the "commercial highway and fashionable promenade,"
was built up with frame buildings as far west as 14th Street.
Harney, Douglas, and Farnam Streets held the most homes,
although some were scattered as far north as Cuming Street.
The first line of bluffs on the west held little residential

Social Statistics of Cities, the book provides a wealth of
statistical comparisons pertaining to western cities.

[3]Andreas, History of Nebraska, 1: 686-687; Nan
Viergutz Carson, "Thomas Barnes Cuming, Jr. and the
Location of Nebraska's Territorial Capitol," (M. A. thesis,
Municipal University of Omaha, 1961), pp. 152-155. For a
complete discussion of early Nebraska politics, see James
B. Potts, "Nebraska Territory, 1854-1867: A Study of Fron-
tier Politics" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska,
1973), Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms,
1975.

attraction for the earliest settlers; only Acting Governor
Cuming's "mansion" adorned the hill at 18th and Dodge.[4]

With a population estimated at 1,500 to 1,800 by
February, 1857, Omaha "began to assume in a more defiant
manner the airs of a city, and determined to possess herself
of rights incident to municipal corporations." County
government ruled the settlement until the third territorial
legislature passed a bill in February, 1857, incorporating
the "Town of Omaha City." The Legislature changed the
official designation to "City of Omaha," afterwards shortened
simply to "Omaha." Elections were set for March 2, the first
Monday of the month. All legal voters who had resided in
Omaha for sixty days previous to the election could cast
their ballot between eight o'clock and four o'clock for a
mayor, nine aldermen, recorder, assessor, treasurer, and
marshal. Candidates were forced to meet a stiff requirement--
residence of one year in the town.[5]

Omaha was divided into three wards, each represented
by three aldermen. The first ward included all of the city
south of Farnam Street, the second covered all land between

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[4]Andreas, History of Nebraska, 1: 690-691.

[5]Ibid., 1: 693; Wakeley, Omaha: The Gate City, 1:
109; Bertie Bennett Hoag, "The Early History of Omaha from
1853 to 1873," (M. A. thesis, Municipal University of
Omaha, 1939), p. 28; James W. Savage, John T. Bell, and
Consul W. Butterfield, History of the City of Omaha
Nebraska and South Omaha (Chicago: Munsell and Co., 1894),
p. 83.

Farnam and Capitol Avenue, and the third ward encompassed
that part of the city north of Capitol Avenue (See Figure
2). Soon after election the council convened and passed a
number of badly needed ordinances, including one "to prevent
hogs running at large," another for "suppression of gambling
and gambling rooms," and others to regulate billiards and
bowling alleys and the "sale of intoxicating liquors."[6]

Since no official city building existed, the council
met in the Masonic Hall, the Odd Fellows Hall, the Capitol
and the courthouse constructed at 16th and Farnam in 1857-
58. There is some indication that councilmen in the early
days failed to perceive the importance of their position.
In 1857, the council ruled that in the event a quorum of
members was not present, the marshal or sergeant-at-arms
would bring in recalcitrant members not previously excused.
As the year progressed there were so many unexcused absences
that the council was moved to fine each missing member $5.00.[7]

After the 1858 municipal election, the legislature
reduced the number of Omaha city councilmen to two per ward
for a total of six on the council. For a relatively small
settlement in a depression by 1858, the municipal elections
attracted all kinds of participants. The February 17, 1858,
Omaha Nebraskian stated that there were "about a dozen

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[6]Andreas, History of Nebraska, 1: 693; Savage, Bell,
and Butterfield, History of Omaha, p. 83.

[7]Hoag, "Early History of Omaha," pp. 30-31.

Figure 2. 32

MAP OF **OMAHA CITY** NEBRASKA.
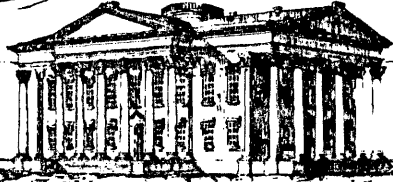
Omaha Ward
Boundaries, 1857
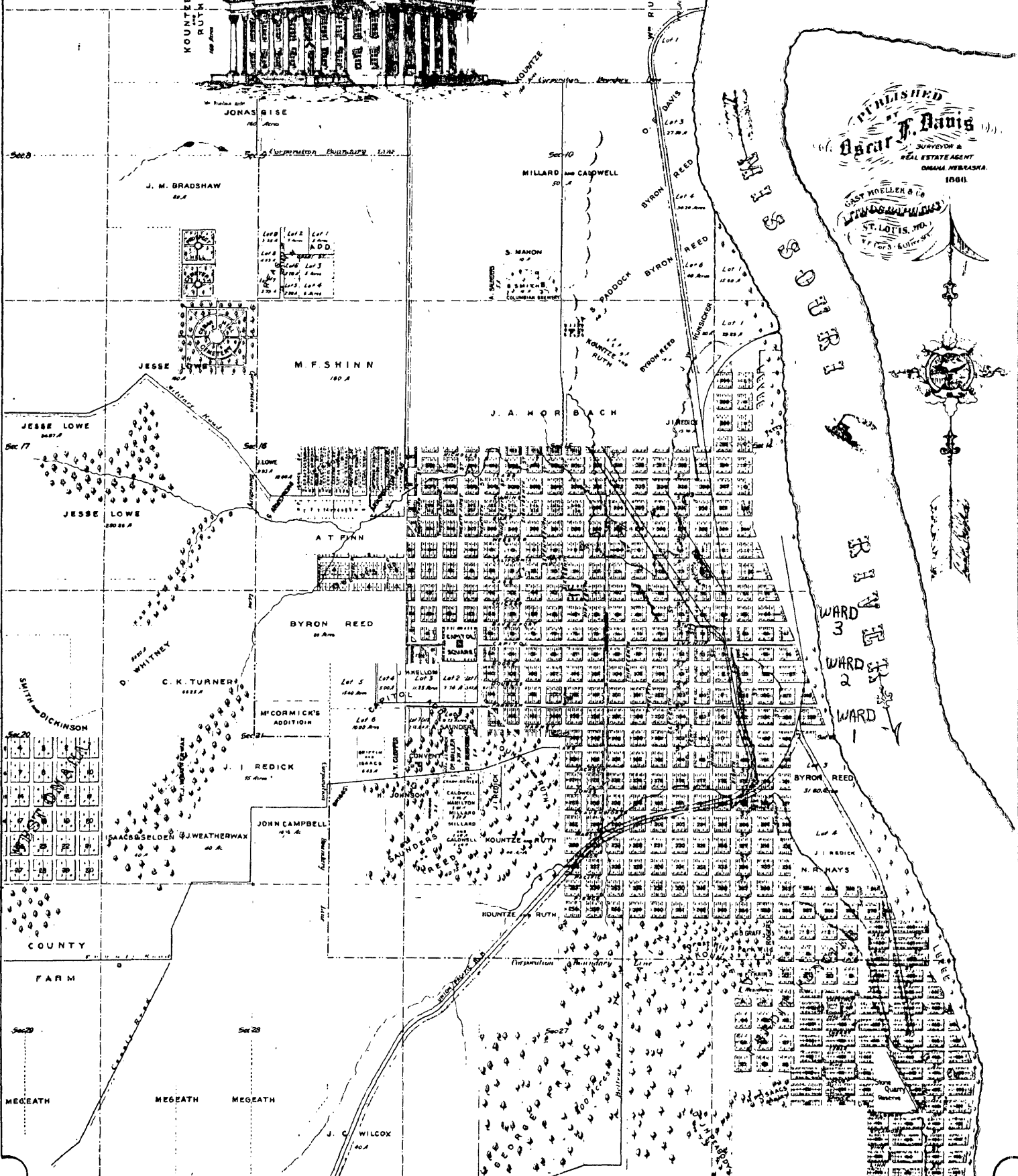
candidates for Mayor and as many for each of the other offices to be filled."[8] One citizen agreed that there were too many candidates and also pointed out their inferior quality:

> The evil effects of this fast, precocious disposition of our citizens is made strikingly apparent, in the multitude of office-seekers. The election of city offices is at hand, and every tenth man you meet is a reluctant, of course, candidate for Mayor. These self-denying gentlemen claim that they have consented to sacrifice private loss for the public good . . . . It matters not how verdant or how inexperienced these aspirants happen to be; "good moral character" is not even a requisite.

The writer continued his diatribe by noting that the candidates varied in age from "young men, fresh from the halls of college, [to] old men tottering to the cold and silent grave."[9]

Although parties had not yet been established, the "multitude of office seekers" evidently evoked some bitter campaigning. The Omaha Times commented that "a man has but to run for an office to procure a history of his past acts." The Nebraskian believed that the organization of parties would have stopped the "bitter personalities and violent animosities which have characterized this contest, and spared the destruction of friendships cemented by the intimacy of years."[10] The Nebraskian's comment on "friendships cemented by the intimacy of years" ignored the fact that most Omaha residents had arrived in 1856, only two years previous.

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[8] Ibid., p. 34; Omaha Nebraskian, February 17, 1858.

[9] Omaha Times, February 16, 1858.

[10] Times, March 3, 1858; Nebraskian, March 3, 1858.

By 1859, Republicans and Democrats had supposedly organized in Omaha municipal politics, each with a newspaper to support their particular point of view. The Nebraskian, the Democratic organ, never relented in its attempts to taunt the Omaha Republican and its followers. The Nebraskian announced that the failure of the Republicans to put forward a municipal slate "only prove[d] the cowardice of the leaders of that party, and the unblushing impudence of their organ, which has time and again asserted that there is a clear Republican majority in this city . . . ."[11] The six Democratic candidates in 1859 won for lack of any opposition.

Although the Panic of 1857 had interrupted Omaha's growth and caused some residents to move on, most stayed until the discovery of gold in Colorado helped bring the city prosperity by 1859. The gold rush rapidly transformed Omaha into an outfitting center for western-bound miners. Merchants kept stores open night and day, seven days a week, in order to meet the demand for picks, shovels, pans, stoves, food, and all other articles necessary for the gold-seekers. The newspapers began to see the value of publicizing their city's advantages. The Omaha Nebraskian pointed out that Omaha was sixty-two miles closer to the Colorado mines than any other town on the river, while the Omaha Times published not only

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[11]Nebraskian, March 9, 1859.

a table of distances, but advertised the wealth of supplies available from the city's retail firms.[12]

As a result of Omaha's position as a jumping-off point for western travelers, the city developed as a transportation center. The gold discoveries brought the freighting business to Omaha as local merchants sent out trains of wagons hauling goods west. Stage companies provided connections to nearby towns as early as 1854, with routes extending as far as Dakota within four years, and to Denver by 1860. Tri-weekly packets ran between Omaha and St. Joseph, meeting the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad there in 1860.[13] Clearly Omaha was becoming a funnel through which many newcomers passed before going west.

Yet one more form of transportation directed travelers through Omaha, and supported the city much longer than any of its predecessors. In 1862, a Congress in the throes of the Civil War passed the Pacific Railroad Act to provide funds for a transcontinental railroad. President Abraham Lincoln fixed the eastern terminus of the railroad in Council Bluffs,

[12]Walker D. Wyman, "Omaha: Frontier Depot and Prodigy of Council Bluffs," Nebraska History 27 (July-September 1936): 147-149; Norman A. Graebner, "Nebraska's Missouri River Frontier," Nebraska History 42 (December 1961): 223.

[13]Graebner, "Nebraska's Frontier," p. 220; Alfred Sorenson, The Story of Omaha From the Pioneer Days to the Present Time (Omaha: National Printing Co., 1923), p. 262; Carol Gendler, "Territorial Omaha as a Staging and Freighting Center," Nebraska History 49 (Summer 1968): 105-108, 111-113.

but construction of the lines began in Omaha by 1865. The
results were immediate. The press, in the form of the Repub-
lican, foretold a magnificent future for Omaha and wrote of
"the mineral wealth of the Rocky Mountains and the fabled
trade of the Orient, both of which would pass through
Nebraska's great entrepot of trade with the result that 'into
the coffers of our bankers and businessmen must unnumbered
millions annually fall.'" Building the railroad necessitated
other construction in the city, as the Union Pacific erected
shop buildings, a brick roundhouse with ten locomotive pits,
and dwellings for railroad workers and their families. The
impact of the railroad transformed Omaha from a town of 3,000
struggling to maintain its position in 1865 to a bustling city
of 16,000 three years later. By 1868, Omaha had "rocketed
into importance as the leading railroad center of the Missouri
and Mississippi Valleys."[14]

The Union Pacific Railroad no doubt brought to Omaha
a number of people who planned to move west but either ran
out of funds or courage and elected to stay. The 1870 census
revealed that of almost 20,000 people in Douglas County,
approximately 7,500 were foreign-born. The largest number of
foreign-born were the 1,957 Germans, followed closely by 1,865
Irish. Natives of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark totaled 1,564,

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[14]Robert G. Athearn, Union Pacific Country (New York:
Rand McNally and Co., 1971), pp. 28, 36, 38, 143.

followed by people of English, Scottish, and Welsh birth who numbered 1,072.[15]

As Omaha grew from a frontier village to a railroad center, city government and political life changed. By 1869 Omaha had grown enough to become a city of the first class (See Figure 3). Accordingly, a new city charter divided the city into six wards and doubled the council's size to twelve members. Two men represented each ward, serving staggered two-year terms. The election date was fixed in June but later moved to April in 1871.[16]

The 1869 election revealed the changes that had occurred in Omaha within ten years. This time the Republicans had no

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[15]U.S. Dept.of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, <u>Ninth Census of the United States</u>, 1870: Vol. I, p. 3663.

[16]Hoag, "Early History of Omaha," pp. 38-40. Since Omaha did not acquire home rule until the 1920s, all charters were imposed on the city by the legislature. The variety of charters mentioned in this chapter may not, in fact, have been new in each case, but simply amended and revised versions of the original city charter. Accurate information for ward boundaries is extremely difficult to locate. The county election commissioner's office has voting returns only since 1897, and a few maps which cover only that period. City charters provided information on the number of wards and methods for electing councilmen, but ward boundaries were handled by ordinance. Books of city ordinances were published in 1857, 1859, 1866, 1872, 1881, 1890, and 1905, and provided the boundaries in force during those years. City directories sometimes listed ward boundaries but they were occasionally in error. Ms. Alice Station, genealogy department, Omaha Public Library, was kind enough to share her research on ward boundaries and directed me to available sources. The genealogy department has a collection of maps which also provided some information. One other problem in determining boundaries was to find places such as "north line of E. V. Smith's addition," and "east line of tax lot 32 in section 15, township 15, range 13 east." These descriptions, along

Figure 3.

OMAHA WARD BOUNDARIES
1869

SROB - 2/80
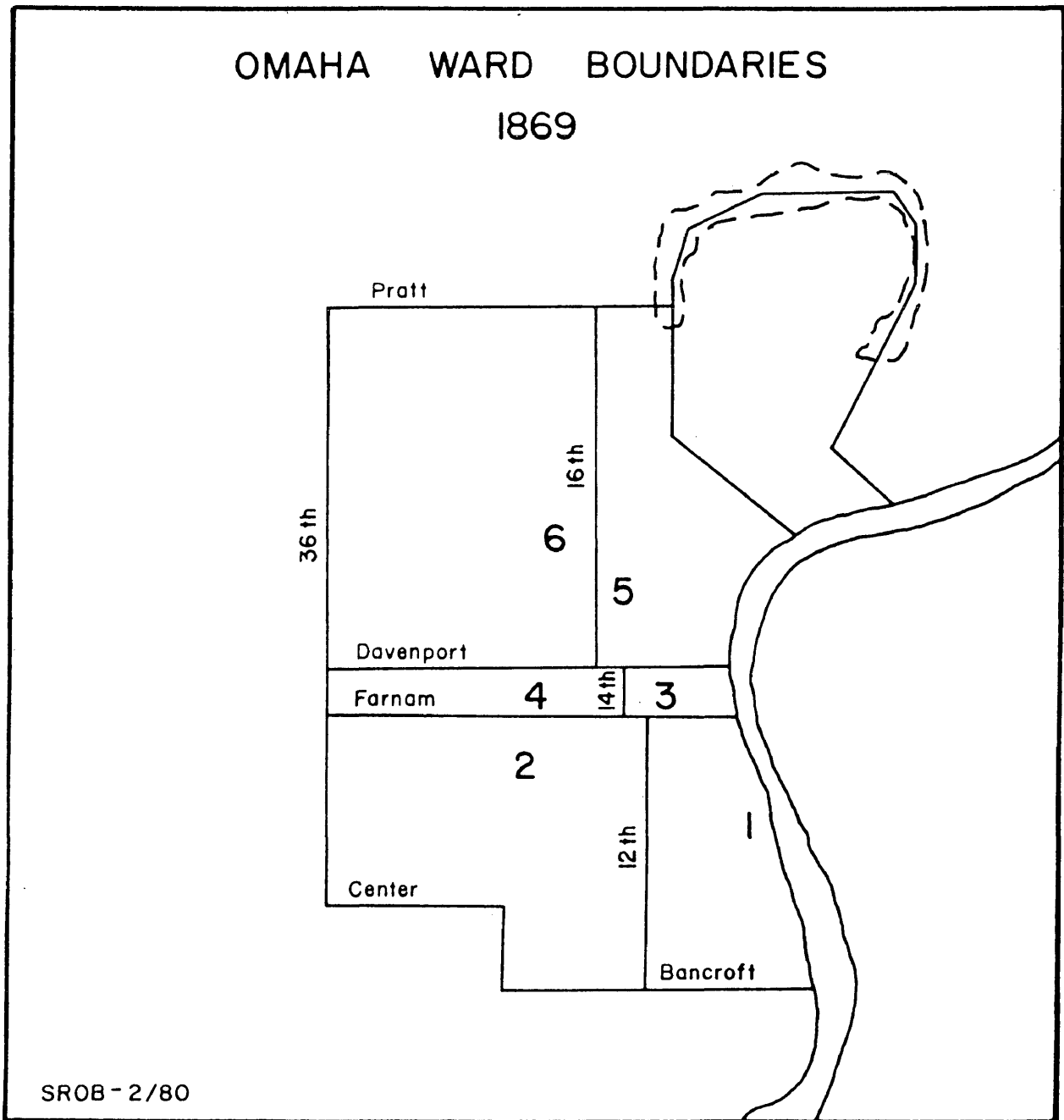
trouble organizing a slate, and instead found themselves with not only a regular Republican group, but also with a Rump Republican ticket. Election rhetoric mentioned work-ingmen and blacks as distinct groups whose votes were especially sought by the two major parties. An ethnic dimension was present as well. The Weekly Republican intimated that the Democrats circulated a "flaming hand-bill" to attract all Germans to Turner's Hall for discussion of a ticket all could support.[17] The life of frontier newspapers was often brief and by 1869 Omaha's first weeklies had been replaced. George L. Miller's Daily Herald backed the city's Democrats, while the Weekly Republican, and later, the Omaha Daily Bee, threw their weight behind the opposition.

Foreshadowing a persistent campaign theme in Omaha politics, the Democrats in 1869 seemed most concerned with ending corruption in municipal government. The Herald protested control by a "Republican ring" which allowed Omaha to be "overrun by the lawless . . . drunkenness, disorder and flagrant examples of the basest immorality in high places have disgraced us . . . .Prostitutes and roves [rogues?] have held high carnival in and around the chief offices of the City Government, and still boast their

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with changes in street names, made it almost impossible to work on anything but maps of the period when first plotting the information.

[17]Omaha Weekly Herald, May 19, 1869; June 2, 1869; Omaha Weekly Republican, June 9, 1869, May 19, 1869.

intimacies with, and control over, some of its chief

representatives." Neither party really achieved success in

1869. As many as four tickets--"the straight Republican,

the copperhead, the workmen's and the sore-head"[18] (Rump

Republicans)--split the votes and divided control between

Republicans and Democrats.

One of the most interesting aspects of Omaha politics

throughout the period was the type of reasoning exhibited

by the newspapers in supporting various candidates. Little

information was available on the earliest elections, but by

1869 newspapers began discussing each candidate and why

citizens should vote for him. A study of comments on

candidates revealed several different techniques of journal-

ism.

Newspapers frequently based a man's fitness for office

on the length of his residence in the city. Perhaps, in a

city with so many people traveling through, early-day

Omahans believed that candidates who had lived there a

number of years were more likely to be concerned with

efficient management of city funds. Another frequently

mentioned qualification for office was the amount of property

held by a candidate. Thus in 1869, the Daily Herald sup-

ported C. H. Downs because "he has been here for fifteen

years," and was, in addition, "largely identified with

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[18]Weekly Herald, May 19, 1869; Weekly Republican,
June 9, 1869.

property interests." The case of Charles Banckes, running
for council as a Republican in the third ward in 1877,
perhaps best illustrated the importance of property to voters.
The Republican pointed out that although it had been charged
that Banckes held no property, "it is well enough known that
Mr. Banckes meets his obligations, and is sound and solvent,
and has several thousand dollars invested in a profitable
business." The next day, the Republican jubilantly announced
that the "valuable property that he [Banckes] occupies, corner
of 12th Street and Capitol Avenue, will be transferred to
his name tomorrow."[19] The newspaper seemed to treat Banckes'
sudden acquisition of property as rendering him more fit for
office.

The newspapers also used a "jump-on-the-bandwagon"
technique. This method intimated to the reader that certain
candidates were so qualified that anyone who opposed them
was foolishly wasting his vote. The Daily Herald used this
treatment in backing Henry J. Lucas, fifth ward Democratic
candidate in 1874, as "one of the most prominent of the old
members of the council, [who] will of course be re-elected
by increased majorities." A variation on this theme pro-
posed the idea that "good" citizens would support a parti-
cular candidate. The Herald noted that "friends of common

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[19]Omaha Daily Herald, May 29, 1869; Omaha Daily
Republican, March 31, 1877, April 1, 1877. C. H. Downs
was indeed a founding father, having assisted Alfred D.
Jones in surveying the original Omaha townsite in 1854.

decency and the public interests" would surely support
W. J. Hamilton in his race for the third ward Democratic
seat in 1873.[20] Thus "good" citizens, or those who liked to
back a winner, should follow the newspapers' advice and vote
for the candidate in question.

Two other techniques outlasted the property, residence,
and bandwagon presentation of candidates. The first, a
relatively common method, based support on a man's past
record. Julius Rodowsky, perennial first ward candidate,
was not only "one of our oldest citizens and principal
property owners," but "with his past experience on the city
council, ought to be able to make an active and useful member
of that body." A second technique, heralding a candidate's
vigor and business ability, began appearing in the 1870s.
James Stephenson, a five-time Democratic candidate in the
1870s, was known as "an enterprising, plucky, live man who,
if elected, will serve the people faithfully and well."
Newspapers described Captain W. W. Marsh, running from the
sixth ward in 1873, as one of Omaha's "most energetic
businessmen, whose personal interests will not prevent him
from pushing public improvements to the extent of our
financial ability." The Weekly Republican best summed up
the ideal candidates as "able, thorough businessmen--tried
men--men who are known in the community, and men who are

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[20]Daily Herald, April 1, 1874, April 1, 1873.

willing to give and can give their time and best thoughts to enhance the prosperity of the city."[21]

One last important characteristic of politics in the 1860s and 1870s was the constant hint of fraud, occasional brawling, and drunken revelries that permeated election day activities. The 1861 election in Omaha was notable in that it "passed off quietly enough, there having been but one knock-down." The Daily Republican cited the 1873 municipal contest as "the whiskey, beer, and money election," since four-horse teams carried beer to all the polling places, and "money was scattered freely in every direction." As a result, the "worst passions of men ran riot, and the moral effect will not be wiped out for many a day." The charge of fraudulent voting in the downtown wards, a complaint that lasted well into the twentieth century, surfaced as early as 1874, when the Herald pointed out "that in the first and second wards more voters marched to the polls than there were men resident in that portion of the state." The newspaper even offered a partial explanation for the discrepancy: "We do know that the women in that part of the city are tired of cooking for their country relations who come in . . . for a week's bumming and an honest vote and we sympathize with them deeply."[22]

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[21]Omaha Daily Bee, March 24, 1873; Daily Herald, April 2, 1878; Weekly Republican, March 21, 1874.

[22]Daily Telegraph, March 5, 1861; Daily Republican,

Between 1854 and 1880, Omaha progressed from a frontier outpost to a bustling city of 30,000. Even though its greatest growth was in the future, the character of the city as a transportation center had been set in its early period and would affect Omaha's development for the next fifty years.

The Emerging Metropolis, 1880-1899

By the 1880s Omaha experienced a boom which solidified its position in the Midwest, brought fantastic population growth, unparalleled real estate expansion, and the development of the city as a wholesaling and retailing center. In addition, Omaha's heavy industries expanded in size, and the organization of the Union Stockyards attracted not only ranchers selling their livestock, but meat packers and their armies of workers to the area.

The real estate boom which "had few equals in American history" resulted in the laying out of dozens of new suburbs around the city. The decade witnessed the platting of Dundee Place and Benson, two towns on the west and northwest boundaries of Omaha, as well as some inner suburban developments like the Walnut Hill subdivision west of 40th and Cuming, and Bemis Park, between 33rd and 38th north of Cuming. The 1880 U.S. Census counted 5,110 dwellings in Omaha. Within two years, 1,000 more went up, while in 1887,

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April 2, 1873; Daily Herald, April 8, 1874.

over 2,000 homes were erected. Building values, at less than $1 million in 1880, reached nearly $8 million by the end of the decade. The assessed valuation of real and personal property totaled $5.8 million in 1880, but grew to $16.4 million by 1888.[23]

Omaha developed as a wholesaling center basically because the railroads made it convenient for companies to ship their merchandise to the surrounding territory. By the 1880s wholesale companies with goods such as clothing, groceries, boots and shoes, liquor, furniture, upholstery, and numerous other products began to construct their warehouses near the railroad tracks, generally south of Harney Street and east of 12th Street. The wholesaling firms increased their sales from $11.2 million in 1879 to $47.2 million in 1890, becoming a significant portion of the city's economy in the process.[24]

The smelter, lead works, and iron works led Omaha's list of heavy industry. The smelter, founded by local capitalists with an investment of $3 million in 1870,

[23]Ed. F. Morearty, Omaha Memories (Omaha: Swartz Publishing Co., 1917), p. 11; Howard P. Chudacoff, Mobile Americans: Residential and Social Mobility in Omaha 1880-1920 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 14; John Lethem, Historical and Descriptive Review of Omaha (Omaha: Rees Printing Co., 1891), p. 17.

[24]Nebraska State Historical Society, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Old Market Historic District, 1978, Item 8, pp. 1,2.

handled silver, lead, and copper ore from the western
mining regions. The Carter White Lead Works, operated by
Levi Carter, processed the pig lead from the smelting
company. The Paxton-Vierling Iron Works, reorganized in the
mid-1880s, employed 250 men and manufactured products worth
$300,000 annually by the 1890s.[25]

Another large employer of labor along with the whole-
saling business and heavy industry was the Union Stockyards
and its meat packing plants. The idea of rancher Alexander
Swan of Wyoming, the stockyards company was organized in
1883 with the help of local business leaders including cattle-
man William A. Paxton, capitalist John A. Creighton, and
politician John A. McShane. They purchased land south of
the city and built not only a stockyards, but the town of
South Omaha nearby. Within two years the company erected
the first of the packinghouses, attracting other big meat
packing concerns and workers to South Omaha. At the turn of
the century, the big firms were Swift, Armour, and Cudahy,
followed by many smaller companies that also operated pack-
inghouses near the stockyards.[26]

Each of these industries, plus the great number of
people traveling on the railroads, brought new residents to
the city. One-third of Douglas County's 37,000 residents in

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[25]Savage, Bell, and Butterfield, History of Omaha,
pp. 494-497.

[26]Ibid., pp. 596-597, 614, 624-627; Sorenson, Story
of Omaha, pp. 604-605.

1880 were foreign-born. The major ethnic groups remained the same as in 1870. Germans made up the largest number with 3,600, followed by 2,000 Irish, 1,700 Swedes and Norwegians, and 1,500 English, Welsh, and Scottish people. Many ethnic groups formed their own communities in Omaha, particularly on the Near South Side, and in South Omaha. The people filled the new jobs opening up around the city and added to a population that reached 102,000 by 1890.[27]

As Omaha became an urban center and more workers flooded in, the city was certain to encounter labor problems. The smelter was the target of the earliest strikes in 1876 and 1880, but the labor disturbance that most affected Omaha's political scene was the "Camp Dump" strike of 1882. Three hundred workers went on strike when contractor James Stephenson, employed by the Burlington and Missouri Railroad, reduced their wages. The laborers organized parades and meetings in Jefferson Square to promote their cause and eventually formed Omaha's first labor association, the Omaha Labor Protective Union. Clashes with scabs and troops brought in to keep order were inevitable, and one disturbance resulted in the death of an old man. The bloodshed

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[27]U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Compendium of the Tenth Census, 1880, p. 518. The recorded census population for 1890 was 140,472, but a later study estimated the actual population to be about 102,000. See Edgar Z. Palmer, "The Correctness of the 1890 Census of Population for Nebraska Cities," Nebraska History 32 (December 1951): 259-267.

caused hostilities to fade, and although authorities arrested a few union leaders for their activities, no one was severely punished.[28]

The events of the strike occurred in February and March, 1882, just preceding the April city elections. As a result of their strike organization, the laborers were able to field both a Labor Union and a Trade Union ticket of candidates for city council. Besides the regular Republican and Democratic slates and the two labor groups, a citizen's ticket was formed. Its sole purpose, according to the pro-labor Bee, was "nothing more or less than a desperate move on the part of the corporate monopolies to regain control of our city council . . . ." The newspaper asserted that the citizen's candidates were all puppets of the Union Pacific or the Burlington Railroads.[29]

Even though there were five tickets, the lists duplicated one another in many cases. The twelve members of the two labor slates included ten men also listed on the regular Republican and Democratic ballots. Similarly, three men on the citizen's list also appeared on either the Republican or Democratic tickets. Newspapers heralded the election results, however, as a great victory for the laboring men.

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[28]For a detailed discussion of the strike, see Ronald M. Gephart, "Politicians, Soldiers, and Strikes: The Reorganization of the Nebraska Militia and the Omaha Strike of 1882," Nebraska History 46 (June 1965): 89-120.

[29]Bee, March 31, 1882.

Four members of the Labor Union slate and two Citizen's men
won election to the council. Of these six, all but two
Labor Union candidates were also listed on the Republican
ballot. The men fittingly represented their class with
occupations including a shoemaker, house mover, two saloon-
keepers, Union Pacific clerk, and an ice dealer.[30]

The 1880s brought a decade of electoral changes to
the city council, beginning with new ward boundaries that
reflected the city's growth, and the adoption of at-large
councilmen in the 1881 city charter (See Figure 4). In
odd-numbered years such as 1881 and 1883, a plurality of
votes of the entire city elected six councilmen at-large,
who served for two years. Six ward councilmen, chosen by
voters from only their ward, were selected in the even-
numbered years and also held office for two years. Perhaps
the concern over property exhibited by newspaper editors
before 1880 affected the charter since it now demanded
that each member of the twelve-man council had to "be actual
and bona fide owners of real estate" within the city. In
addition, each councilman was required to give a bond of
$2,000 to the city, along with "two or more good and
sufficient sureties who shall each justify that he is worth
at least two thousand dollars over and above all debts and

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[30]This information was taken from the raw data
assembled for the quantitative analysis of candidates and
will be explained in detail in Chapter III.

Figure 4.

OMAHA   WARD   BOUNDARIES
1881

Pratt

6

36th

19th

Seward

5

Davenport

4

15th

3

Howard

Leavenworth

2

Center

13th

1

Bancroft
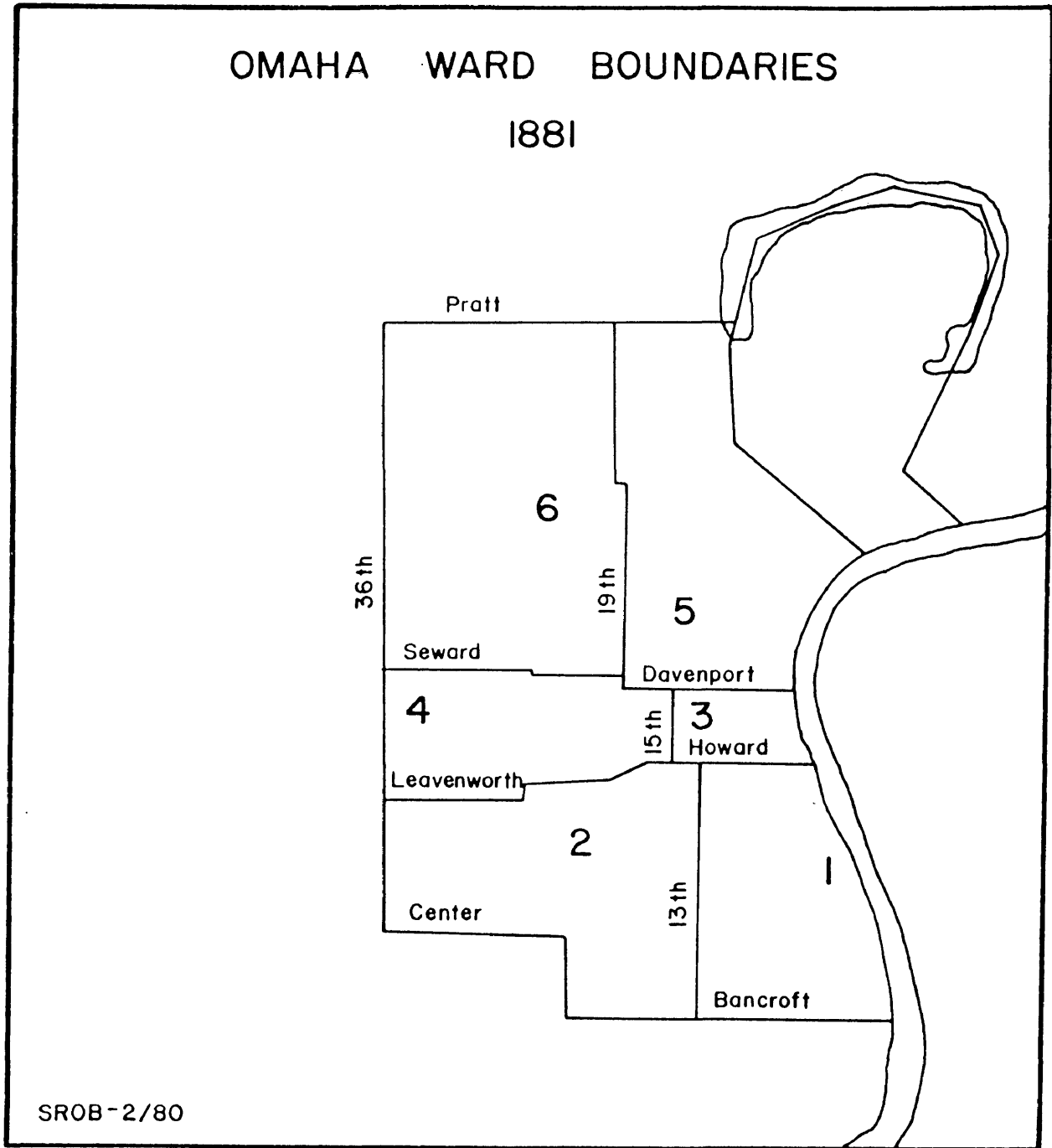
SROB-2/80

exemptions." The bond insured the "faithful discharge of the duties of the councilman," and also became liable if the councilman "vote[d] for any expenditure or appropriation of money, or the creation of any liability in excess of the amount allowed by law."[31]

The 1881 charter seemed aimed at achieving some of the goals American reformers sought in the commission movement twenty years later. Requiring property ownership and deposit of a bond effectively eliminated any candidate who did not at least own his home, a law that obviously hit lower classes the hardest. The at-large system of voting limited candidates to men with enough wealth and position to achieve city-wide support.

Evidently the at-large system did not function as planned. In 1883, the Bee pointed out that each ward had circumvented the law and named a candidate to make up its share of the at-large slate, rather than allowing the party convention to choose six men regardless of place of residence. Voters still elected candidates at-large, and the elected council still included the top six votegetters, whether there were two men from one ward and none from another or one from each ward. The Bee protested that the local political conventions violated the intent of the law, which

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[31]W. J. Connell, compiler, Act Incorporating Cities of the First Class As Amended (Omaha: Rees Printing Co., 1885), pp. 6-7; Compiled Ordinances of the City of Omaha (Omaha: Gibson, Miller, and Richardson, Printers, 1881): 93-95.

was "to take the nomination of candidates for council out of the hands of the ward caucus and to insure the election of a higher grade of men as would prove acceptable to the entire city." The at-large system never accomplished its original intent of bringing in a "higher grade of men." Ten years later in 1893, the Bee still found fault with at-large elections. It expected that councilmen at-large "would be citizens who by long residence and prominence may have become known to a majority of voters." The newspaper regretted that the law provided for the same number of at-large councilmen as those elected by wards, enabling "the ward politicians to trade, so that the man who could get a majority of the delegates of his own ward became the choice of the city convention, which practically nullifies the prime object of the law and makes our councilmen at-large simply ward councilmen."[32]

It is interesting that the Bee made some of the same comments that reformers used later to support the at-large election of candidates under the commission form of government. They, too, called for an end to ward control of politics, and tried to put better men in office through an at-large vote, which required that a candidate possess more city-wide recognition than that achieved by a ward leader.

The Bee's interest in the at-large system was not the only position that made it sound like an early-day

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[32]Bee, April 2, 1883, October 11, 1893.

commission advocate. Like later reformers, the newspaper also approached city government as a business:

> Omaha is a corporation with more than $100,000 worth of property. The council is a board of directors to manage its affairs. The men who are to assume this great trust should at least be citizens who have a fair reputation for integrity and are not discredited with their grocers and butchers.[33]

Since the argument stated that cities should be run as businesses, it was only natural that businessmen should be elected to take charge of municipal government. Indeed, when examining newspapers' comments about candidates from 1880 to 1899, the command to elect good businessmen overwhelmed any other endorsement candidates received. A sampling of newspaper opinions revealed their affinity for business types. Jeff Bedford made a great candidate because he was "a thorough businessman, approachable by all classes, and will not need to go to school to learn how to manage municipal affairs." The Daily Herald knew W. A. L. Gibbon as a man with "quite a comfortable fortune amassed by frugality and conservative business methods, in fact he is a businessman in every sense of the word . . . ." The Democratic fifth ward candidate in 1893, Walter Moise, gained support because he possessed an "abiding faith in the future prosperity of the Gate City," and a "keen business sagacity, so peculiar to men of his character."[34] Omahans' good

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[33]Ibid., October 11, 1893.

[34]Daily Herald, May 1, 1887, December 2, 1888; Omaha World-Herald, October 12, 1893, November 5, 1893. The Herald

feelings for businessmen paralleled the success of the city's growing real estate market, expanding wholesale trade, and industrial expansion.

The assessment of candidates as businessmen extended beyond 1900 and continued as a staple of newspaper commentary on political hopefuls. However, the heyday of this form of endorsement in Omaha was the period 1880-1899, particularly the election year of 1887. Virtually every candidate discussed in that election was referred to as a businessman of some sort, whether the description was "brightest and most popular young businessman," "excellent business quali- fications," or "great business ability and enterprise."[35]

Yet one more forerunner of commission thought appeared in Omaha in the 1890s. Later reformers who supported the commission sought to replace professional politicians with good businessmen who only needed to know business principles, not politics. By the 1890s some Omaha office- seekers announced their candidacies in spite of their lack of political acumen. Allen T. Rector, treasurer of the large Rector and Wilhelmy wholesale hardware company, had originally declined to stand for office because he was

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merged with the four-year-old Omaha Evening World in 1889, and as the World-Herald, generally backed the Democratic party.

[35]Bee, April 25, 1887; [Alfred Sorenson], Omaha Illustrated: A History of the Pioneer Period and the Omaha of Today (Omaha: D. C. Dunbar and Co., Publishers, 1888), unpaged.

unfamiliar with ward politics and machine methods, but later
ran on the 1894 Populist ticket. Frank Burkley, head of
Burkley Printing Company who served on the council for ten
years, stayed in office because of "his business ability and
not because he had a pull or was a politician."[36]

Some of the techniques utilized by newspapers before
the 1880s such as amount of property, length of residence,
and past record were still used to endorse candidates.
Comments on property-holding, however, declined, probably
because the 1881 charter required every candidate to hold
some property. Occasionally references appeared regarding a
candidate's ethnicity, but these were usually positive
comments dealing with the candidate's base of support among
his countrymen. In general the business approach to the
candidates and municipal government most typified the
period 1880-1899.

Omahans were proud of their city's fantastic growth
during the 1880s, and by the end of it published a series
of booster booklets to advertise the Gate City's advantages.
Among the accomplishments residents most proudly extolled
was the increase in population from 30,518 in 1880 to the
recorded 1890 total of 140,472. A later study revealed
errors in the 1890 figures and placed Omaha's population at

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[36]World-Herald, October 24, 1894, November 5, 1893.

102,430, but the inflated figures provide an example of Omahans' good feelings about their city.[37]

The population growth naturally led to boundary changes, and in 1887, a new charter proclaimed Omaha a city of the metropolitan class. The city boundaries reached out to Read Street, 48th Street, and F Street, wards were redrawn, and three more were added for a total of nine (See Figure 5). The alternating at-large and ward councilman system remained, along with the $2,000 bond required of each officeholder. Elections were moved to the first Tuesday in May for selection of at-large councilmen, and the first Tuesday in December for ward councilmen.[38]

While 1887 represented the height of the real estate boom to some, signs of distress were evident. In that same year, one Omahan recalled that the boom declined, "rents began to lower and foreclosures of real estate mortgages started; the earmarks of depression had begun to form . . . ."[39] Business began to slow down while all construction ceased and soup kitchens acquired permanent customers. At the same time, lack of moisture and falling crop prices ruined farmers in Nebraska and nearby states. In desperation, the farmers organized the Populist Party, which held its national

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[37]See Note 27.

[38]Charter for Metropolitan Cities, 1887 (Omaha: The Republican Co., Printers, 1887), pp. 4-6; W.J. Connell, compiler, The Revised Ordinances of the City of Omaha (Omaha: Gibson, Miller, and Richardson, Printers, 1890): 569-572.

[39]Morearty, Omaha Memories, p. 29.

Figure 5.

OMAHA WARD BOUNDARIES
1887
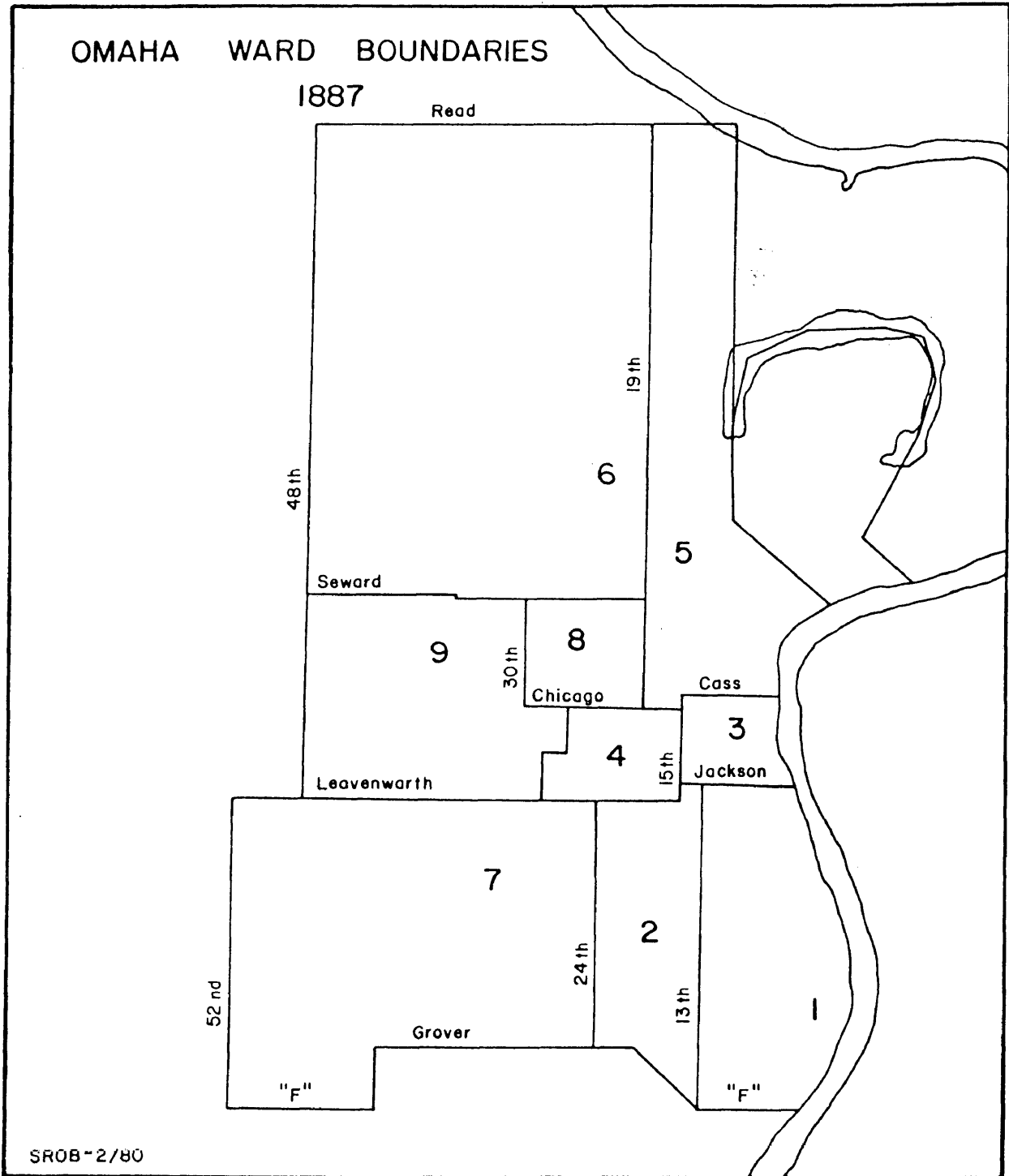
convention in Omaha in July, 1892. After listening to speakers like Mary Ellen Lease of Kansas who urged farmers to "raise less corn and more hell," and Populist orator and Utopian novelist Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, the party came up with a platform that included such proposals as a graduated income tax, direct election of United States senators, the Australian ballot, and initiative and referendum.[40]

Since Populism arose out of Midwestern politics, it was no surprise that the Omaha municipal contests in 1893 and 1894 also included Populist slates. In contrast to the earlier third party tickets, the Populists contained only three of the same candidates as the regular Republican and Democratic tickets in these two elections. Unfortunately, the newspapers did not provide extensive coverage of the Populist candidates and few were prominent enough to ever appear in city histories. As a result very little is known about them as a group. The 1893 Populist slate contained possibly the first black man to run for city council in Omaha, Edwin Overall, a mail carrier. Only one Populist was ever elected and he had also been named as a representative on the regular Democratic ticket.[41]

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[40]Addison Erwin Sheldon, Nebraska The Land and the People, 3 vols. (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1931), I: 714-717.

[41]See Andreas, History of Nebraska, 1: 788, for a short biography of Overall. This information was taken from the raw data assembled for quantitative analysis which will be discussed in Chapter III.

The 1890s brought continued confusion in electoral changes. An 1891 ordinance fixed the election on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Yet another charter in 1893 raised councilmen's bond to $5,000 and at the same time planned for a change of ward boundaries, by ordinance, in early 1894 (See Figure 6). Three years later another charter finally halted election of councilmen at-large and selection of ward councilmen by voters only of their ward. The new system provided for each councilman to represent a ward, but he was elected by all voters of the city, who made their selection for a councilman from each of the nine wards. Electors still voted for candidates from all over the city, but each candidate only ran against men from his ward rather than city-wide opponents. The charter required that councilmen live in the ward they represented. Election day was moved to March after 1897, with the period between the contests lengthened to three years.[42]

As the depression of the 1890s continued, two events brightened the lives of Omahans. In 1895 a group of businessmen formed the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben to provide entertainment for visitors to the state fair held in Omaha. The organization presented a Harvest Ball along with a week of activities including electrical parades for which Omaha became famous. In 1898, the city's businessmen planned a

[42]Charter for Metropolitan Cities, 1893 (Omaha: Omaha Printing Co., 1893), pp. 7-9; Charter for Metropolitan Cities, 1897 (Omaha: Klopp and Bartlett Co., City Official Printers, 1897), p. 7.

Figure 6.

60

OMAHA WARD BOUNDARIES
1894

Read

24th

6

48th

5

20th

Seward

Nicholas

8

Chicago

9

28th

4

16th

Leavenworth

3

7

24th

2

52nd

13th

1

Grover

"F"

"F"

SROB-2/80
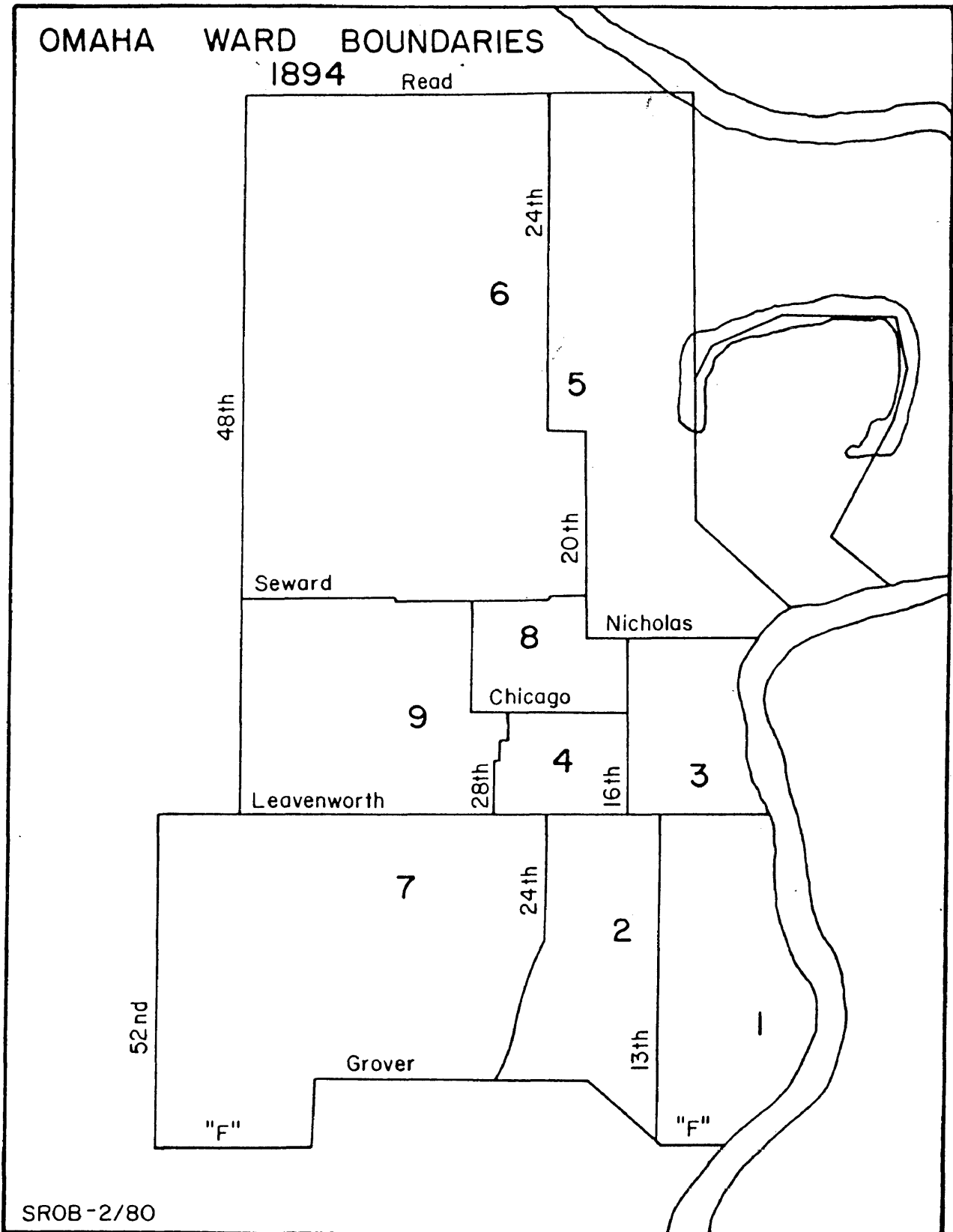
Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, to present
"all the products, industries and civilization of the states
west of the Mississippi River at some central gateway where
the world can behold the wonderful capabilities of these
great wealth-producing states . . . ." The five-month
exposition attracted over 2.6 million visitors to Omaha and
helped the city climb out of the depression. The Classical
and Renaissance-style plaster of paris buildings "had no
relation whatever to the life of the Plains," but the
fantastic display of structures, reflecting pool with Vene-
tian gondolas providing boat rides, and a Midway with the
hootchie-coochie dancing of Little Egypt,[43] helped Midwest-
erners escape the gloom of the previous decade and brought
them into the twentieth century with new optimism for growth
and expansion.

The Twentieth Century City, 1900-1930

The 1890s depression cut short the real estate boom
of the previous decade and ended growth in the new suburban
developments. However, the prosperity brought by the Trans-
Mississippi Exposition and the rejuvenation of business after

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[43]Wakeley, Omaha: The Gate City, 1: 269; Olson,
History of Nebraska, p. 255. See Arvid E. Nelson, Jr.,
The Ak-Sar-Ben Story (Lincoln: Johnsen Publishing Co., 1967)
for a complete history of that organization, and Kenneth
Gerald Alfers, "The Trans-Mississippi Exposition" (M.A.
thesis, Creighton University, 1968) for a comprehensive
study of the great fair.

1900 once again encouraged construction in Omaha. The Exposition particularly caused growth in Kountze Place, the development surrounding the site where the great fair was held in North Omaha. Most other new suburbs were generally west of the central business district. Dundee and Benson, the two outlying villages platted in the 1880s, achieved their biggest population increases in the 1900s; Dundee grew from 400 people in 1900 to 1,023 by 1910, while Benson expanded from 510 to 3,170 over this decade. Even Florence, the old Mormon center north of Omaha, doubled in size from 688 to 1,526.[44]

Inner suburbs started to fill up, too. In the 1880s, streetcar lines initiated growth on Farnam Street and along Park Avenue toward Hanscom Park. The park area became an upper middle class neighborhood and a desirable residence district by the turn of the century. The construction of homes along Farnam Street was more limited until the 1900s, when it became the home for the city's elite. The wealthiest of early pioneers made their homes along South 10th Street or around Capitol Hill. Twenty years later, their sons built their mansions in the West Farnam district or adjacent Cathedral neighborhood. The West Farnam-Cathedral area was the home of Omaha's "heavy respectables," the

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[44]U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, 3:28.

leaders in business, banking, and industry. Their palatial homes reflected their influence and served as the epitome of financial success in the city.[45] [By the 1920s, the next generation of leaders moved west again to Dundee, Fairacres, and the new Happy Hollow vicinity.]

While the upper middle classes left the central city, new residents continually arrived to fill it up. Omaha's railroads, smelter, and packinghouses all attracted great numbers of immigrants to the city, particularly "new" immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The number of German, Swedish, and Irish arrivals were cut in half between 1890 and 1910, while the totals of Russians, Italians, and Greeks more than doubled. South Omaha especially became an "ethnic city." Its 26,000 residents in 1910 contained over 8,000 foreign-born, half of them natives of Austria, Hungary, and Russia.[46]

Like other American cities at the turn of the century, Omaha was hard pressed to meet the physical needs of growth and expansion. City services never quite kept up with the hordes of immigrants who needed housing and jobs or the new suburban developments which required amenities such as paved

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[45]Chudacoff, Mobile Americans, pp. 32-33; B. F. Sylvester, West Farnam Story (privately published, 1964), unpaged.

[46]U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, I: 856-857, 862-863. Austria, Hungary, and Russia also included today's nations of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and portions of Yugoslavia.

streets, lighting, and sewers. No social service agencies existed to provide aid to immigrants, but the gap was filled by another type of agency, the political machine. Tom Dennison ran Omaha's machine from the Budweiser Saloon at 1409 Douglas where he dispensed favors, saw to it that deserving voters received a needed load of coal or a rent check, and thus was able to deliver votes in selected political races.[47]

Dennison, a professional gambler, settled in Omaha in 1892 after operating several gambling houses in Colorado. It has been said that he only entered politics to protect his gambling interests. The Budweiser was located in the third ward, the center of Omaha's vice activities and the oldest part of the city. Dilapidated buildings housed transients, criminals, prostitutes, and those too poor to live elsewhere. The Boss' control of the third ward voters was legendary, as they turned in overwhelming margins of victory for candidates he supported.[48]

Later Dennison's control spread to other areas of the city. He stayed in touch with the city's ethnic communities by recruiting trusted lieutenants from each group to handle their needs. Through an alliance with county commissioner

[47]Orville D. Menard, "Tom Dennison: The Rogue Who Ruled Omaha," Omaha 3(March 1978): 14.

[48]Ibid., pp. 13, 15; John Kyle Davis, "The Gray Wolf: Tom Dennison of Omaha," Nebraska History 58 (Spring 1977): 27-28.

Johnny Lynch, Dennison also gained power over tenth ward
voters in the years before World War I. Lastly, he main-
tained ties with the upper classes through Omaha Printing
Company head Frank Johnson. The "better elements" wanted
assistance in circumventing city codes and regulations, and
in receiving paving and printing contracts and building
permits. Johnson made these desires known to Dennison who
gladly utilized his expertise in return for favors.[49]

Although the Boss first supported Republican mayor
Frank Moores, his partisanship was flexible. When Moores
died in 1906 Dennison, a Republican, began to support James
Dahlman, the Democrat chosen mayor in 1906. Dahlman became
Omaha's "perpetual mayor," holding office until his death in
1930, except for three years between 1918 and 1921. Dahlman,
a Texas-born cowboy, came to Dawes County, Nebraska, in 1878
to work on a ranch. He eventually became active in the
Democratic party, serving as a member of the Nebraska dele-
gation to the National Democratic Convention in 1892 and 1896,
and playing an active role in the campaigns of his friend
William Jennings Bryan until they disagreed over prohibition
in 1910. In addition Dahlman held office as mayor of Chadron
and sheriff of Dawes County. He moved to Omaha to work as a
livestock commission man, but by 1906, friends encouraged him
to run for mayor. Dennison probably supported Dahlman through-
out his long political career because he was tolerant of the

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[49]Davis, "Gray Wolf," pp. 30, 38; Menard, "Dennison,"
p. 19.

Boss's businesses. Dahlman was not interested in ending
gambling and vice or closing saloons, all of which not only
won machine support but endeared him to the lower classes who
helped elect him time after time. The extent of Dahlman's
involvement in the machine is still unknown; most commentators
believed he did not profit greatly from its activities.[50]

By the time Dahlman won the mayoral contest in 1906,
electoral changes had altered the council again. Another new
city charter in 1903 provided for twelve wards, drawn in
1905 within the same city boundaries that had existed since
1887 (See Figure 7). The document retained the method of
voting for councilmen that was adopted in the 1897 charter,
although election day was moved to the first Tuesday in
May.[51]

While Tom Dennison's machine flourished, reformers
began to organize in an attempt to remove all corruption
from municipal government. The Progressive reformers who
started good government movements in other cities in the
1900s were represented in Omaha by the Omaha Real Estate
Exchange, the Omaha Commercial Club, and the Fontenelle
Club. The members of these groups clearly fit the national

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[50]Davis, "Gray Wolf," pp. 36, 40-41; John F. Showalter,
"James C. Dahlman, Mayor of Omaha," Sketches of American
Mayors, V, National Municipal Review XVI (February 1927):
111-112.

[51]Charter for Metropolitan Cities, 1903 (Omaha: Klopp
and Bartlett Co., Official City Printers, 1903), pp. 4-6;
B. F. Thomas, compiler, Thomas' Revised Ordinances of the

Figure 7.

OMAHA WARD BOUNDARIES
1905

Read

12

24th

5

Pratt

48th

6

Lake

20th

Seward

Nicholas

11

9

38th

26th

8

Chicago

3

4

16th

Dewey

Pacific

Leavenworth

7

24th

10

Center

10th

52nd

2

13th

1

Grover

"F"

"F"

SROB-2/80
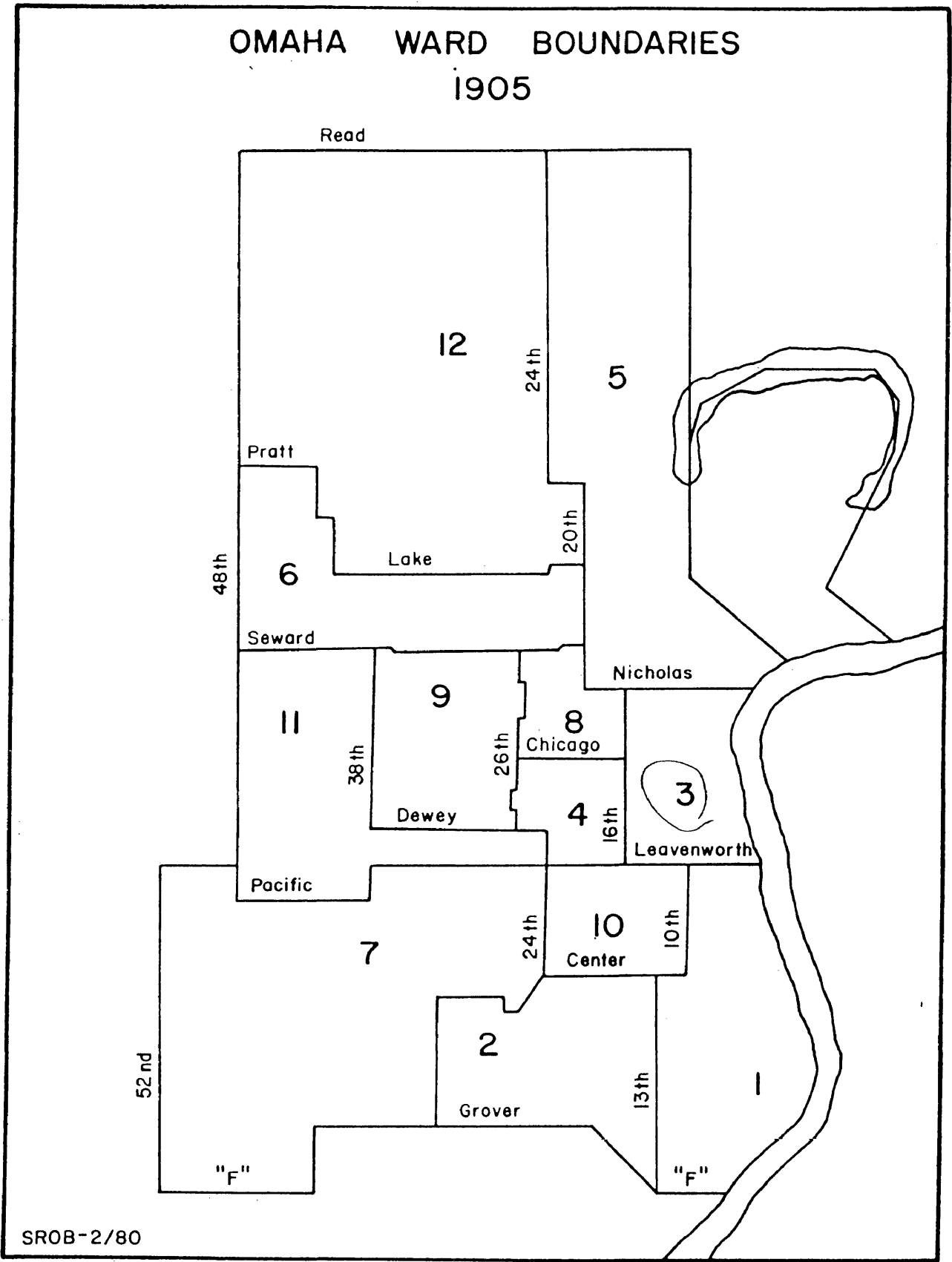
economic and social stereotypes for reformers. Most were
businessmen in skilled managerial positions, small-scale
manufacturers, merchants involved in regional commerce, or
professionals, particularly physicians, lawyers, and ministers.
In 1904, more than three-fourths of the candidates for
executive committee positions in the Commercial Club lived
in the city's western, more affluent wards. Over sixty
percent of the Real Estate Exchange's Board of Directors in
1912 resided in the same area. Both the Real Estate Exchange
and Commercial Club advocated mechanistic political reforms,
such as the commission and city manager forms, which would
alter the structure of municipal government.[52]

Members of the Fontenelle Club and other political
groups fell into the same socio-economic category as the
merchants but displayed more interest in holding office.
Local Republicans who opposed the Frank Moores-Dennison
connection in the 1903 municipal election formed the Fonte-
nelle Club. In 1903 and 1906 they supported E. A. Benson,
a reform candidate for mayor, who they felt best represented
their class. Although the club dissolved by 1911, the same
type of reform organization developed for every election,
such as the Citizen's Union in 1912, and the Committee of

City of Omaha, Nebraska (Omaha: Klopp and Bartlett, Printers,
1905), pp. 546-551.

[52]Richard K. Wilson, "Business Progressivism in
Omaha: 1900-1917" (M. A. thesis, Creighton University,
1977), pp. 15-16, 25, 33, 39.

5,000 in 1918. Besides their support of reform slates, these groups worked to ferret out election corruption. In 1906, the Fontenelle Club printed a list of all registered voters in the third ward and offered $1.00 reward to persons who would turn in the names of men illegally registered. By 1912, the Citizen's Union paid $100 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons involved in election fraud.[53]

The efforts of the mechanistic reformers to alter municipal government succeeded in 1911 when the people of Omaha voted to change to a commission plan. Impetus for the plan emanated from the Real Estate Exchange, Commercial Club, and the local Ad Club, which especially supported the commission as a means to promote the city. These groups formed a citizen's committee, composed mainly of the clubs' members. A closer examination of committee members revealed that over half of them resided in two western, affluent wards of the city, and only two members, a traveling salesman and a labor newspaper editor, were not obviously upper class in socio-economic status.[54]

Omaha's voters approved the plan by a "decisive majority," with no organized opposition. Mayor Dahlman supported the plan because it was popular with voters, and because he

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[53]Ibid., pp. 26, 44-46; Omaha Daily News, March 24, 1906, April 25, 1912.

[54]Wilson, "Business Progressivism," pp. 138-139.

felt the plan would give him even greater control. Although
Dennison opposed the commission, he did not organize a campaign
against it. The new system provided for seven commissioners
elected at-large on a non-partisan ballot. The salary of
$4,500 annually would supposedly attract men of ability who
could not afford to leave private business otherwise.
The original plan stated that the winners decided the division
of responsibilities after the election. However, a candidate
often announced the position he desired in advance, partic-
ularly if he sought the mayor's job. The new form of govern-
ment was first implemented in the May, 1912, election.[55]

The reformist Citizen's Union slate received the
support of the Daily News and Daily Bee. Like the Herald's
campaign against corruption in 1869, the News essentially
opposed Dahlman and the machine because they failed to deal
with vice and crime. The newspaper warned that "moving
picture shows and burlesque theatres are doing more to destroy
the boys and girls of Omaha than all the churches combined
can do toward helping them." In response to such a travesty
the News urged support of the Citizen's Union, a vote to
"protect your home, your son, your daughter," and against the
"dive" and "police favoritism." The Bee echoed the News,

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[55] Ibid., pp. 140-142; Victor Rosewater, "Omaha's
Experience with the Commission Plan," National Municipal
Review X (May 1921): 281; Louise E. Rickard, "The Politics
of Reform in Omaha, 1918-1921," Nebraska History 53 (Winter
1972): 444, note 8.

describing the Citizen's Union candidates as "honest, upright, progressive, unafraid men-of-affairs who stand for what is good in city government and squarely against what is bad. They are pledged to no man or organization--but they are pledged to the cause of decent government."[56]

Only the World-Herald exhibited more concern about the effect of the commission itself, cautioning voters to elect men who would represent all citizens rather than just one class. Evidently the newspaper believed the reformers would sweep the election and be unable to work with other elements of the population. The World-Herald urged Omahans to choose men "who can make the widest appeal and command the confidence of the poor and the moderately well-to-do as of the wealthy . . ." A variety of men would "insure that the commission itself will not go to extremes . . . and will begin to work with the entire city in a friendly frame of mind."[57]

William Redick, the head of the Citizen's Union slate, asked in his campaign whether voters would "change the entire form of city government here and then turn that city government over to the gang that has run it for the past six years?"[58] Unfortunately for Redick and the Citizen's

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[56]News, April 30, 1912, April 8, 1912; Bee, April 7, 1912.

[57]World-Herald, April 23, 1912, April 26, 1912.

[58]Ibid., May 4, 1912.

Union, the voters did just that. All the attempts by
reformers to change city government had altered only the
structure; incumbents won election to office and they promptly
appointed Dahlman to serve as mayor under the new commission.

Commission government in Omaha never accomplished
all its supporters intended. While no party labels accom-
panied candidates' names on ballots, tickets had formed
before the election which reflected party politics. In
essence Dahlman's "Square Seven" in the 1912 election was the
Democratic ticket, while the Citizen's Union was its Repub-
lican counterpart. The expected efficiency of placing all
control of a particular department under one commissioner
did not always streamline operations. In some cases admin-
istrative functions were transferred from one department to
another after each election, simply to fit the experience of
various commissioners. One critic of the system believed
seven commissioners were too many, "producing arbitrary and
illogical divisions of authority."[59] Rather than eliminating
professional politicians, the commission in Omaha provided a
means whereby they became more entrenched in municipal govern-
ment. Despite the criticism it received, the commission
continued as Omaha's city government for over forty years,
dominated by James Dahlman and his Dennison-supported slates
for its first two decades.

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[59]Rosewater, "Omaha's Experience," pp. 282-285.

The one break in Dahlman's career as mayor and Dennison's control came in the 1918 election. A combination of circumstances temporarily weakened Dennison's organization and allowed the reformist officeseekers to finally achieve their desired objective. Wartime references marked the entire campaign. Patriotism, or the lack of it, seemed to determine a candidate's fitness for office. The Bee urged voters to select "men of unquestioned patriotism and proven capability." During such a critical period, it was each person's "solemn duty to see that the City Commission is chosen from loyal Americans who are fitted for this important office."[60] Dahlman missed no, chance to tie his plea for votes to the war effort:

> Whenever I have said good-by to our boys, and I think
> I have grasped the hand of every one of these brave
> young men before they swung on the train that carried
> them away to join the ranks of the nation's heroes,
> I promised them that I would be at the depot as mayor
> to welcome their return. I mean to keep that pledge.[61]

One overzealous patriot, in a letter to the Bee, protested the "contradictory actions of our military men." While "General Pershing--God bless him--is in France fighting to subdue that monster, the Kaiser," soldiers stationed at Omaha had "registered to vote for the purpose of perpetuating local Kaisers in city hall. Awake! Arise! God Save America!"[62]

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[60]Davis, "Gray Wolf," pp. 41-43; Bee, April 9, 1918.

[61]World-Herald, April 22, 1918.

[62]Bee, April 30, 1918.

Since the war was foremost in the thoughts of most Omahans, candidates tried to tie their campaigns to it and urged citizens to vote as a civic duty.

The Bee heralded the election's results in headlines otherwise reserved only for war news. The defeat of Dahlman and all but two men from his slate was announced as "the greatest victory the city has had in twenty-five years," by new mayor Ed. P. Smith. The reformers, however, failed to manage the problems their administration faced. Labor problems, housing shortages, complaints about the high cost of living, and unemployed veterans all caused trouble for Mayor Smith. Racial tensions also compounded the issues. The black population in the city had grown from 4,426 in 1910 to 10,315 a decade later.[63] Many blacks came during the war looking for work, and began to form their own community on the city's Near North Side.

Throughout the summer of 1919 the Daily News and Bee published inflammatory stories about crimes supposedly committed by blacks, particularly attacks on white women. Many of the stories proved to be false or exaggerated, but they fueled the explosive social atmosphere that developed

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[63]Ibid., May 8, 1918; U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, 3: 71; U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, 3: 609. See Michael L. Lawson, "Omaha, A City in Ferment: Summer of 1919," Nebraska History 58 (Fall 1977): 395-417, for a discussion of the problems faced by Ed Smith's administration.

in Omaha. Violence finally erupted in September, 1919,

when a mob attacked the Douglas County Courthouse in search

of Will Brown, a black man accused of assaulting a white

woman three days earlier. Brown was seized, shot, hanged,

and his body burned by the rioters. In the process, the mob

set fire to the Courthouse and caused $1 million in damage.

Mayor Smith had attempted to reason with the crowd but was

also seized and hanged; his life was saved by the quick

action of two men who managed to rescue him before he

strangled.[64]

The extent of Dennison's alleged involvement in the

riot was never discovered, although many believed his organ-

ization had instigated it. However, the mob actions effec-

tively ended any trust the voters professed for the reform

administration, and when the next municipal election was

held in 1921, Omahans were only too glad to return Dahlman

and his slate to office.[65]

By 1921, Dahlman was dealing with a larger metropolitan

area. The city's population grew from 124,096 to 191,601

between 1910 and 1920, primarily because Omaha annexed the

surrounding towns. The annexation law provided for an aggre-

gate vote of Omaha and the area in question, effectively

ending any opposition by the smaller suburban towns. Dundee

and South Omaha were absorbed in 1915, followed by Benson

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[64]Menard, "Dennison," p. 18; Davis, "Gray Wolf," p. 44.

[65]Ibid.

and Florence in 1917. As Omaha grew throughout the 1920s,
it continued to annex small areas, particularly along the
western edge of the city (see Figure 8).[66]

In general, newspaper coverage of candidates in the
period 1900-1930 stressed each man's record. More biograph-
ical information was printed, allowing readers to judge the
political hopefuls for themselves rather than rely on a
newspaper's assessment. Since Omaha had moved out of the
frontier stage, length of residence in the city was no longer
so important. However, many candidates still stressed the
fact if they were native Omahans or had lived in the city a
number of years. Few accounts mentioned a candidate's
property holdings, but the biographical information provided
on each candidate generally gave a good idea of where he
stood on the socio-economic ladder.

Candidates also began to advertise themselves for the
first time in this period, often stressing their independence
of the city hall machine. John A. Scott, fourth ward Repub-
lican candidate in 1906, placed an ad announcing he "does
not ride on free passes; is under no obligations to the
corporations; and is free to carry out the will of the
people." A committee supporting Harry Zimman, five-time

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[66]U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census,
Abstract of the Census, 1930, p. 22; See Map of Omaha,
"Growth of the City," prepared by the Omaha City Planning
Department, for all annexations from 1854-1978.

Figure 8.

THE GROWTH OF THE CITY
OF OMAHA
1854-1917

FLORENCE
1917

BENSON
1917

DUNDEE
1915

1917

1887

1870

1857

1854

SOUTH OMAHA

1915

SROB-2/80
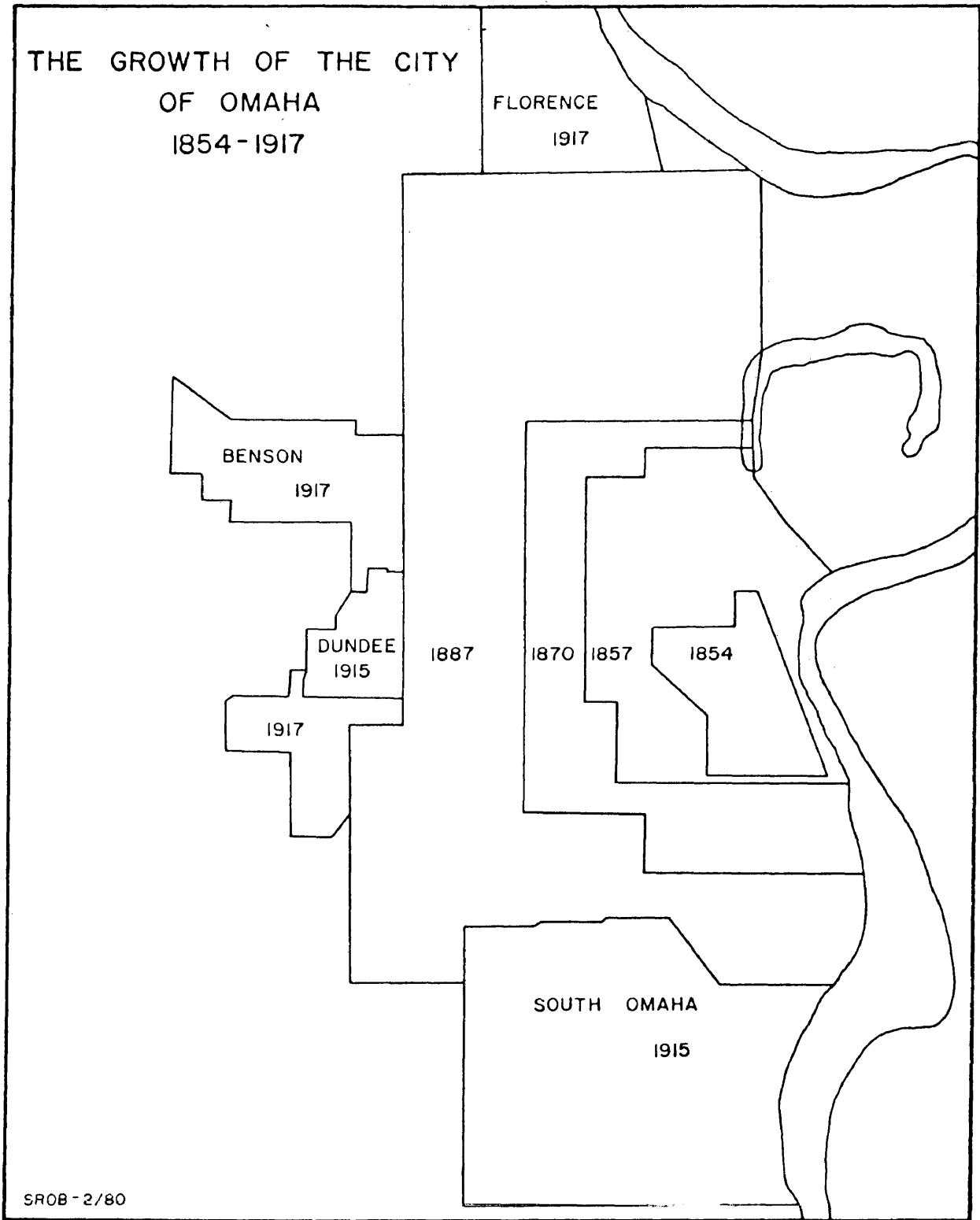
officeholder, printed an ad for him:

> Intelligence! Honesty! Courage! These traits must
> be in any man to make that man a Good City Official.
> Zimman, by his public record, has shown himself able
> to withstand the wiles and pressures of self-seeking
> corporations and to serve only the People's Best
> Interest.[67]

By 1912, the election of the first group of commissioners led the newspapers to encourage voters to select a balanced slate of efficient, experienced men. Joe Hummel, who eventually became parks commissioner, was a man who would "be approachable and sympathetic to all classes of people," and furthermore, brought "efficiency and economy and steady progress" to municipal government. Dan Butler, a perennial candidate, held a good record as city clerk, conducting his office "in a scientific, business-like manner, and not as a harbor of refuge for political incompetents." Perhaps the epitome of the type of man reformers sought for the commission was William A. Redick. The son of an Omaha pioneer, Redick represented "the best type of Omaha citizenship." Not only was he independently wealthy, but he was "broad-minded, high-minded, public-spirited, cultured, able, independent, and incorruptible.[68] Still, even such a glowing accolade could not win Redick a position on the commission.

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[67]Bee, April 1, 1906, April 7, 1918.

[68]Ibid., May 6, 1912; World-Herald, May 5, 1912, April 23, 1912.

Throughout the 1920s candidates were anxious to
stress the fact that they were not politicians but men
running on their record of efficiency. In his re-election
campaign, Joseph Koutsky, street commissioner, emphasized
his record as a "watchdog of the taxpayers" by cutting street
paving costs. In addition, supporters pointed out, he was
"not a good politician--he is too much a businessman."
Charles Courtney and Leo Rosenthal, running for the first
time in 1924, printed in their ad that they had "no enemies
to punish; no friends to favor, Sensible! Sound!! Substan-
tial!!!" Henry Dunn, a former police chief, received support
for his re-election as police commissioner by one speaker
because he "spent a lifetime as a specialist in that one
department of city government. No other man on the ticket
has the experience and knowledge of Henry Dunn."[69]

The death of James Dahlman in January, 1930, marked
the end of an era in Omaha. Dennison's machine produced
revenue throughout the 1920s, but his involvement in politics
waned, and newspapers began to lose interest in attacking
him. Prohibition and gangsters, rather than voting frauds,
captured the attention of Omahans. When the reformist
Independent Voters League won the 1933 municipal election,
they claimed defeat of the machine. In reality, the pub-
licity surrounding the 1932 trial of Dennison and associates

[69]World-Herald, April 24, 1924, April 30, 1930,
May 4, 1924.

for conspiracy to violate the Volstead Act had undermined the organization, and his death the following year ended the dynasty.[70]

Between 1854 and 1930 Omaha grew from a Missouri River village to a twentieth century metropolitan center. It attracted new residents of all types, from native American settlers to European immigrants who changed over the years in accordance with national trends. The city's growth led people to move south, north, and west of the central business district and caused each area to develop its own character. The land south of downtown, and later South Omaha itself, was especially known for its ethnic concentrations. Workers' housing filled land north of the business district to upper middle class Kountze Place, twenty-nine blocks north of Dodge Street. Omaha's elite residents followed a path west from South 10th Street and Capitol Hill, to Hanscom Park and the West Farnam-Cathedral area, to the Dundee-Happy Hollow district by the 1920s.

The political scene, particularly the ways of looking at candidates, changed along with Omaha. A candidate's length of residence and amount of property were extremely important qualifications for office in the early days. The newspapers' endorsements seemed to carry more weight as well, informing citizens of their foolishness for failing

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[70]Menard, "Dennison," p. 20; Davis, "Gray Wolf," pp. 45-48.

to support a particular man who was sure to be elected.
By the 1870s, endorsements because of a man's record or
business ability were accepted newspaper techniques.
The business qualification became especially important in
the 1880s when Omaha adopted councilman at-large represen-
tation. The idea of businessmen running government, a big
selling point of the commission after 1900, was present in
Omaha twenty years earlier. Without decreasing their stress
on businessmen, newspapers diversified their approach by
the twentieth century. Between 1900-1930 candidates relied
on their record, even presenting it to the public in their
ads, rather than waiting for a newspaper discussion of
qualifications for office.

Omaha challenges the Hays-Weinstein thesis along with
Atlanta, Birmingham, Chicago, and other cities. The commis-
sion did not put elite businessmen into municipal government;
in Omaha they had begun to move in twenty years earlier.
The professional politicians, supported by Dennison and led
by Dahlman, won before the adoption of the commission in 1911
and continued to win until 1930. Perhaps we need to ask how
Omaha's commissioners differed from the men who began
running for the council in the 1880s. They were not the
reformers of the Real Estate or Fontenelle Clubs, but were
they businessmen like their earlier counterparts? Or
did they reflect the old ward heeler variety of politician

connected to the Boss, the type of man the commission

would supposedly replace? An examination of the candidates'

biographical characteristics will provide more insight

into these questions.

CHAPTER III

OMAHA'S POLITICAL CHANGE, 1858-1930

The examination of Omaha history in Chapter II
pointed out that the commission form of government failed
to place elite reformers in office. Although the good
government supporters were elected in 1918, their inabil-
ity to handle city administration ended their rule after
three years and Omahans again returned to the control of
Dennison and his slate of commissioners led by Mayor James
Dahlman. But how did the commissioners elected after 1912
compare to their counterparts before 1900? Perhaps these
commissioners were not as different from the previous
businessman candidates as reform rhetoric suggested. Did
the commission alter in any way the type of man who was
elected in regard to his occupational status, ethnicity,
or age? Did the at-large election of candidates present
a ticket balanced with candidates from various parts of
the city or was there a takeover by suburban elites as
suggested by Samuel Hays?

These questions on the exact nature of the commis-
sioners and the councilmen who preceded them can best be
answered by an examination of their biographical character-
istics. As shown in Watts' study of Atlanta and Harris'

book on Birmingham, a more detailed research project on
candidates revealed trends only hinted at by looking at
mayors or, as in this investigation of Omaha, by studying
the generalizations made by newspapers and other commentators.

Before attempting to compare Omaha to the Hays-Wein-
stein hypothesis, the nature of their research deserves
discussion. Weinstein's article was published in 1962,
while the primary article in which Hays elucidated his
conclusions on the role of businessmen and elites in govern-
ment, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in
the Progressive Era," was printed in 1964. Neither man
sought to present a quantitative analysis of his results,
but instead offered a hypothesis based on trends noted in
his research. Two decades later, quantitative analysis is
still a relatively new methodology for historians; in the
early 1960s it was almost unknown. This study of Omaha is
much more detailed than the original hypothesis to which it
is being compared. In addition, neither Hays nor Weinstein
was very precise in pointing out the extent of changes in
governmental personnel. But their conclusions lead the
reader to assume that businessmen excluded the lower elements
from participation in municipal government. However, the
difference in degree of comparison in this study does not
nullify the value of the effort or its results. Although
Hays and Weinstein's articles were not quantitative in
nature, the trends they presented will be compared to the

conclusions on Omaha politics to determine whether the commission helped elites gain control of the visible means of power after 1912.

In order to assess the change or continuity among city councilmen and commissioners in Omaha, biographical data was collected on 317 candidates who ran in elections from 1858 to 1930. Twenty-one elections were chosen for study, and all candidates, both winners and losers in a particular election, were included. The large number of candidates, elections, and amount of available data called for methods beyond the traditional historical approaches. As a result the biographical characteristics of the 317 men were computerized using a packaged program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Packaged programs provide a means whereby less sophisticated users can utilize a computer for help with methodological problems. Rather than requiring a specific computer program written for each project, researchers in economics, sociology, psychology, history, and other disciplines have used SPSS to analyze their information.[1]

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[1]For complete information on SPSS, see Norman H. Nie, C. Hadlai Hull, Jean G. Jenkins, Karin Steinbrenner, and Dale H. Bent, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1975). For other historical studies which have utilized computer-assisted analysis, see Robert P. Swierenga, ed., Quantification in American History: Theory and Research (New York: Atheneum, 1970); Howard P. Chudacoff, Mobile Americans: Residential and Social Mobility in Omaha 1880-1920 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); William O. Aydelotte, Allan G.

The program provides methods for organizing data and offers a variety of options, from simple frequency counts to complex multiple regression analysis for handling the information.

The data gathering for this project began with the selection of election years. Originally, the plan was to examine two elections per decade. The choices were relatively limited in the first two decades, and 1858 and 1859 were chosen for the 1850s. The following decade presented a much more difficult picture. Newspapers were suddenly less available than in the 1850s and when they did exist, were frequently missing issues that dealt with election campaigns. Although the newspapers were not solely relied on for candidates' names,[2] they certainly gave the only indication of third party activity and covered the mood of the citizenry. Since each newspaper generally supported one party, at least two publications were needed to get

Bogue, and Robert William Fogel, eds., The Dimensions of Quantitative Research in History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); Edward Shorter, The Historian and the Computer (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1975).

[2]The names of candidates in each election were not as readily accessible as one would believe. The county election commissioner's office had city voting results from the 1897 election on, but no knowledge of any city elections before that date. Apparently the only official recorded totals for elections before that date are those listed in the minutes of the city clerk. These records, in the original manuscript notes, are located in the Omaha City Clerk's office, City-County Building.

information on all candidates. In only two elections, 1861 and 1869, did enough newspapers exist to list all the candidates and give some election coverage.

By the 1870s and 1880s, the council had moved to a two-year system in which half the group was elected each year. In effect, two elections were studied to cover one entire council. This method was used to examine 1873-74, 1877-78, 1882-83, 1887-88, and 1893-94. By the end of the 1890s elections occurred only every three years. After the 1897 contest (the second examined for the decade) alternate elections were studied beginning with 1900. The twentieth century elections, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1918, 1924, and 1930, were not chosen randomly but were selected because of their importance. The three most significant dates, 1906, 1912, and 1918, each represented specific points in Omaha's political life: 1906 marked the first election of Omaha's "perpetual mayor" Dahlman; 1912 brought the first commission election; and 1918 witnessed the only success of the reformers in election to office.

Once the election years were decided upon, newspapers were carefully studied for approximately a month preceding each election for any information on the candidates. After the completion of the entire newspaper search on all elections, information was supplemented by various local histories and booster books.[3] As discussed in

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[3]Aside from newspaper quotes, no attempt has been made to footnote any particular piece of data about a

Chapter II, the amount of information provided by the news-
papers varied greatly over the years. Little biographical
data was printed before the 1880s, but as these candidates
were the earliest settlers, the city histories provided a
wealth of detail on the better-known men. The newspapers
gradually began to include more biographical data, and in
a clear-cut form. The 1918 election was remarkable in
that every candidate who ran for a position before the run-
off election was listed along with basic biographical
information. Such election coverage was evidently a fluke--
newspapers six years later failed to discuss several of the
candidates in any detail. In general, candidates after
1912 were the best known, because of Who's Who in Omaha
1928, which gave complete profiles on many of them and
included everything from birthplace to religion and club
affiliations.

Both winners and losers on election day were tabu-
lated in the study. This group did not include everyone
listed in a run-off or slates presented at city conventions,
but only the final Republican and Democratic tickets. Thus,
when there were nine wards, the total number of candidates
for that election was eighteen if there were no third party
groups. Third party information was utilized whenever

candidate in this chapter. The list of sources used for
gathering candidates' biographical data is provided in the
bibliography. Manuscript census data was ruled out as a
source for this study because the large number of candidates
made it too time-consuming for a project of this scope.

possible. In all cases, however, these men were relatively obscure, and locating a complete first name and perhaps an occupation was the extent of the biographical data. Third party candidates made up a large portion of missing data and in some cases were excluded from tabulations. Candidate lists were much easier to construct after the advent of the commission in 1912, since there were no third party challengers, and the total number of candidates per election remained at fourteen until 1930.

In all, thirty-seven biographical facts (variables) were possible for each candidate; in most cases, not all the information was available. The variables were not selected beforehand, but decided upon after all information had been collected. The newspapers, in particular, helped determine the use of certain variables such as age at arrival in Omaha, year of arrival in Omaha, and birthplace. The publications seemed to stress the importance of these facts, while the omission of other information, such as address (in the early period), religion, and military experience illustrated their lack of interest in those aspects of a candidate's background. Excluding variables necessary for identification purposes, those examined were: party, total elections won, total elections lost, occupation, occupational status, address, ethnicity, religion, age at election, year of arrival in Omaha, age at arrival in Omaha, birthplace, political experience at first election, military

experience, listing in any one of four social directories,

membership in any one of twelve clubs, and total club

memberships. Missing data for religion, political exper-

ience, military experience, social directory listings, and

club memberships forced those variables to be eliminated

from most analysis. While other variables also lacked

information, enough existed to present a fair picture of

the results. Unfortunately no data on income level was

available for the candidates. The indexed tax lists such

as Watts utilized in his Atlanta study did not exist in

Omaha.[4]

The complete set of data on the candidates was next

organized for coding, a process which simply converted

qualitative information into numbers readable by computer.

Each variable, such as party or ethnicity, had values which

corresponded to numbers (See Appendix, Codebook). For

example, party had nine values: 01 represented Republican,

02 represented Democrat, 03 represented Socialist and on

down the line until each value of that particular variable

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[4]Interview with Joseph F. Circo, October 18, 1979.
Joseph F. Circo, Assistant Chief Deputy-tax control, Douglas
County Clerk's office, stated that tax lists before 1940
consisted mainly of receipts. Evidently few records were
kept on taxes and those that were had been destroyed in
the early 1950s. The County Treasurer's office has personal
property records dating back to 1955, but earlier records
were presumed destroyed. Mr. Circo, who celebrated forty
years in county government in 1979, personally recalled
that although all records were supposed to be microfilmed
before being destroyed, many were never filmed. Some other
material was crated and moved to storage in the city's salt
mine in Kansas.

had its own exclusive number. Such a list could be quite

extensive, as in the case of occupation, with eighty-five

values, or birthplace, which had sixty-five values. Dates,

such as year of arrival in Omaha or election year, were

represented by the last two digits; thus 1868 was listed

68. There was no confusion between the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries since numbers above 54 referred to the

1800s and those from 00 to 30 meant the 1900s.

The coded data and relevant portions of the SPSS

program were then entered into the computer. The number

of different candidates was 317; however, because of men

who ran more than once, the total number of cases for the

data set was 391. Each case was marked to signify whether

he had been listed before, and in order to remove these

men from tabulation if necessary. In few cases, however,

was there a need to remove the multiple candidates. If a

man ran again or was re-elected, he represented the same

ethnic group or occupational group or occupational status

as in his first election. Thus, Isaac Hascall, perennial

second ward candidate, remained a German real estate sales-

man and proprietor each of the eleven times he ran for local

office between 1873 and 1900, and deserved to be counted

as such in each election.[5]

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[5]The decision to use multiple candidacies benefitted
from a quote by social historian Edward Pessen, who pointed
out that "treating a man elected a number of times as
though he were one office holder is misleading; men of
high status occupations typically were re-elected more

Discussing twenty-one elections would be far too detailed and limiting in showing long-term change in Omaha politics. Accordingly, all data has been organized into the three time periods utilized in Chapter II: 1858-1879, 1880-1899, and 1900-1930.

TABLE I. PARTY OF SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES BY SUBPERIOD

Party	1858-1930	1858-1879	1880-1899	1900-1930
Republican	42.6%[a]	38.3%	68.3%	16.3%
Democrat	34.9	48.3	28.3	26.5
Worker	1.2	-	3.3	-
Commission	16.6	-	-	57.1
Unknown	4.7	13.3	-	-
100% =	169	60	60	49

[a]Because of rounding, some totals in this and other tables do not equal 100% .

One of the most basic facts about each candidate was his party affiliation. Data collected on successful candidates showed that Republicans won more elections than any other party, and that third party success was extremely limited. Although Democrats won almost half the positions between 1858 and 1879, Republicans held an advantage over

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often than those of less prestige." Edward Pessen, "Who Governed the Nation's Cities in the 'Era of the Common Man'?" Political Science Quarterly LXXXVII (December 1972): 591-614.

the entire period because they won almost seventy percent
of the council positions between 1880 and 1899. The figures
for Republicans and Democrats in the third period are low
because only the elections of 1900 and 1906 allowed party
labels. Beginning with the commission in 1912, all party
affiliations were dropped, thus making commissioners the
leading officeholders between 1900 and 1930. The total
number of winners decreased in that subperiod as well because
only seven commissioners were elected in four of the six
elections. Since this table shows each party's share of the
political pie in winning elections, it fails to reveal the
number of third parties that named candidates, but never
won election. These unsuccessful parties included the
Socialists, Populists, Prohibitionists, and Independents,
who together comprised twenty-six percent of all unsuccessful
candidates over the seventy-two years. The majority of
these men ran in the subperiod 1880-1899, except the Social-
ists, who fielded their only known ticket in the 1906
election.

A candidate's occupation overshadowed the importance
of his party. Perhaps no characteristic described a man
better than how he made his living. When newspapers or other
sources failed to mention occupation, city directories
provided information for most regular party candidates.
As a result, an occupation was listed for eighty-nine
percent of the candidates overall, with a good portion of

the missing data made up of third party candidates who were either omitted or impossible to trace in city directories.

Classification of occupations was one of the most difficult tasks of the entire quantitative aspect of this study. Two variables, occupation and occupational status, were used to deal with this problem (See Appendix, Codebook, variables 9 and 10). Occupation included all means of employment grouped into categories of professional, services-sales-clerical, small merchants, wholesale merchants-large retail, manufacturing-industry, and skilled and unskilled tradesmen. Under occupational status all men were classified into categories of professional, proprietor, clerical, and blue collar, in order to place a candidate's level of expertise in a particular occupation.

Since the occupational variable attempted to indicate the type of work done by a man, a decision was made on whether a person's job or who he worked for was more important. Was it more significant that Thomas Casey was a flagman or that he was employed by the Union Pacific? The importance of his job was perceived to be the fact that he worked for the Union Pacific. Thus, all railroad employees below management levels were listed as skilled or unskilled railroad employees. One patternmaker or flagman or timekeeper would have been another skilled or unskilled value, rather than giving an indication of how many railroad employees participated in city government. A similar method was utilized for employees

in other occupations. Although St. John Goodrich was a
clerk in C. S. Goodrich's store, he was listed not as a clerk
but under dry goods stores. Frequently, sources gave no
specific job title for a candidate, just a designation that
he was employed at a certain store, or at a particular cement
or brickmaking plant. The occupational variable provided
a picture of where people worked as well as what they did.

Another problem in organizing occupations into
categories was that of size of business firms. In a group
such as manufacturing-industry, it was extremely difficult
to gauge the number of employees of an upholstery and
mattress factory or a machinery manufacturing firm. As a
result, categorizing of occupations by size of firm was
almost impossible. The size of a company was ignored for
this particular category, since the main focus of the
occupational variable was to show the number of people
employed in types of businesses rather than to provide a
glimpse of the firms' employment capacity. The manufac-
turing-industry group showed some wide extremes in its
businesses. Carriage and wagon manufacturing firms
typically were small organizations, perhaps with as few
as one or two men working in them. The linseed oil works,
in comparison, was one of the city's larger employers as
were some of the food product manufacturing firms.

Some provision was made for size in classifying
merchants. Small merchants received a category by them-
selves, while large retail operations were grouped with
wholesale merchants. These two categories provided for
firms as diverse as August Aust's German Steam Refined
Sausage on South 13th Street, and the large, well-
known John McCormick and Company, wholesale grocers.
Obviously not all examples were as clear-cut as these
particular firms. In making such a subjective decision,
returning to the newspapers' comments about a particular
candidate often provided some knowledge of his socio-
economic level, especially if his firm was a major one or
a small neighborhood business. Location of the firm also
gave some clues, with small stores usually situated far
from the downtown area or in a basically residential area.
Generally, larger companies were located downtown or in the
developing wholesale district. As elections approached the
1900s and city directories became more specific, these
distinctions were more easily made.

One other problem in classifying occupations over
a long period of time was the concept of professionaliza-
tion. When does a carpenter become a contractor? When
does a bookkeeper become an accountant or an auditor?
These distinctions raise questions over whether a book-
keeper's job actually changed between 1854 and 1930, or
if he suddenly called himself a professional accountant,

reaching that level of consciousness exhibited by Robert
Wiebe's "new middle class" as discussed in Chapter I.
Again, decisions on these cases were extremely subjective,
and were based partially on the date of the election, and
partially on indications given by newspapers on each
candidate's status. Values were provided for carpenters
under skilled trades and bookkeepers under the clerical
category, but provision was also made for accountants-
auditors under professionals and contractors-developers
in manufacturing-industry. As elections approached the
1900s it again became easier to determine whether a carpen-
ter was a man like Parker S. Condit, a Socialist candidate
in 1906 and a cabinet-maker at the People's Store, or a
contractor like George Parks, 1918 commission candidate
who had erected several of the South Omaha packing plants.

Another aspect of the professionalization question
dealt with men who had ceased to play a physical role in
their companies' product. Charles Landrock gave his
occupation as harnessmaker and ran Landrock and Woolworth,
wholesale and retail manufacturer of harnesses, where he
was probably involved in making the product himself.
Similarly, Frank Burkley ran Burkley Printing Company, but
no doubt functioned as an administrator, not a printer.
Both men were proprietors, but in a far different capacity.
To deal with this movement toward administration, the
private administrator and public administrator values

were included with professionals. Private administrators
included men like Burkley who were officers of companies,
but not really involved with creation of a product. In
this group were men such as W. H. Alexander, manager,
Western Branch Henry Bill Publishing Company; W. A. L.
Gibbon, manager, Nebraska Savings Bank; and David H.
Christie, secretary, Nebraska Building and Loan Association.

In contrast to the men involved in private sector
companies were the public administrators, men who held
state or local government positions. In one sense these
men could be referred to as professional politicians, for
they included candidates who held a city or state office
when elected to the council or commission. The vast
majority of them were incumbent commissioners who ran for
re-election. Since a commissioner held a full-time job
with pay of $4,500 a year, his official occupation was as
a superintendent of a city department, which put him under
the public administrator value. Thus a public administrator
in Omaha did not refer to one of Hays and Weinstein's
elite businessmen applying his sound knowledge to govern-
ment, but instead included the Old Guard, those men who
held previous offices in government at the time of their
election.

In order to differentiate between men such as St.
John Goodrich, the clerk, and C. S. Goodrich, the proprie-
tor mentioned above, the occupational status variable was

devised. Divided into professional, proprietor, clerical, and blue collar; the occupational status variable categorized all the clerks or proprietors listed in various values such as dry goods store, drug store, or insurance office. These categories were the same as those used by Watts in his book on Atlanta and were adapted to this study because they provided clear-cut status divisions. While the occupational variable covered the kinds of places where candidates worked, the occupational status variable was more useful for comparative purposes and change over time. "Professional" referred to obviously educated men such as attorneys and physicians, along with professional administrators, including incumbent city commissioners running for re-election. "Proprietors" included men who operated their own business, no matter how small. "Clerical" encompassed most of the people in sales and services, basically those who worked for others. Lastly, blue collar workers were skilled and unskilled tradesmen and some of the men involved in manufacturing and industry.

The most difficult decisions under occupational status dealt with classification of candidates into the proprietor or clerical category. Often the newspapers provided the best indication of whether a man ran his own operation or worked for someone else. One basic rule followed was that the presence of a man's name in the company title made him a proprietor. "O'Connor and Mullen,

Wine and Liquors" on North 16th Street may have been a
small neighborhood store, but Ed O'Connor owned and operated
it and deserved to be classified as a proprietor. In
Poverty and Progress, a study of Newburyport, Massachusetts,
Stephan Thernstrom pointed out that even though such enter-
prises were small, they represented the owner's stake in
society. According to nineteenth century propagandists,
a man with property became a "capitalist," just a step
away from investing, expanding his holdings, and making his
fortune. For many immigrants, acquiring property, no matter
how small, was a step up the social ladder, indicating that
they were "decent, respectable, hard-working, churchgoing
members of the community."[6] The most important aspect of
social level in the late nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries was each man's perception of his position, not
our view of it one hundred years later. For an immigrant
to own a business with his name on it meant he had made it
in his new country and acquired a certain amount of status.

In terms of general occupations, men from the sales-
services-clerical field made up over one-quarter of all
candidates. Within that group of ninety-nine candidates,
fifty-two were men in real estate or insurance, or saloon-
keepers. Professionals followed the sales-services-clerical

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[6]Stephan Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress: Social
Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City (New York: Atheneum,
1975), pp. 160-163.

group with nearly eighteen percent of all occupations. Of
the seventy men classified professional, approximately one-
third were public administrators, which in this case referred
mainly to incumbent city commissioners seeking re-election.
Attorneys were also prominent among the professionals and
made up almost one-fifth of the total. Skilled tradesmen
and the small retail categories also held a good share of
the occupational pie. Among the sixty-two men listed under
the small retail category, thirty-five operated food or
liquor stores. The largest portion of the skilled trades-
men was comprised of skilled railroad workers, about twenty-
eight percent of the fifty-three men.

TABLE II. OCCUPATIONS, 1858-1930, BY MAJOR GROUPS[a]

Group	Percentage	Number
Professional	17.9%	70
Sales-Services-Clerical	25.3	99
Small Retail	15.9	62
Large Retail-Wholesale	5.1	20
Manufacturing-Industry	9.0	35
Skilled Trades	13.6	53
Unskilled Trades	2.5	10
Unknown	10.7	42
	100.0%	391

[a]Tables refer to all candidates unless stated
otherwise in title.

Although Table II showed the division of workers into occupational groups over the entire period under study, it provided no insight into occupational change by subperiod. The numbers shown are small, but Table III reveals that leading occupations varied with each block of time. The most popular candidate occupations before 1880 were food merchants, food manufacturers, and saloonkeepers. Certainly these men characterized important facets of the Omaha economy in the years when the city supplied food and drink to travelers moving west.

The leading occupations of candidates in the 1880-1899 subperiod reflected the city's preoccupation with businessmen and good government as pushed by the Omaha Daily Bee. Real estate agents, who probably best represented the city's boosterism and good feelings in the 1880s, were a new group of winners in that period of growth and expansion.[7] These men included Leavitt Burnham, former land commissioner for the Union Pacific, who ran a real estate and loan business after 1878; George N. Hicks, who had an office in the just-completed New York Life Insurance Building (Omaha Building) and was known for "having done more than any one other man

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[7]Multiple occupations were not an infrequent occurrence among candidates, and real estate was often pursued as a part-time career. However, rather than dealing with several occupations, an attempt was made to determine the candidate's primary means of making a living. Thus, the men listed as real estate agents are a much smaller number than the total who claimed some activity in the field.

TABLE III. LEADING OCCUPATIONS BY SUBPERIOD[a]

Occupation	1858-1879	1880-1899	1900-1930
Attorney	3.9% (5)[b]	2.0% (3)	8.1% (9)
Private Administrator	-	5.9 (9)	2.7 (3)
Public Administrator	-	.7 (1)	19.8 (22)
Hotel Proprietor	3.9 (5)	1.3 (2)	.9 (1)
Saloonkeeper	4.7 (6)	6.5 (10)	-
Real Estate	3.1 (4)	6.5 (10)	2.7 (3)
Insurance	.8 (1)	2.6 (4)	5.4 (6)
Food Merchant	8.7 (11)	5.9 (9)	2.7 (3)
Liquor-Tobacco	3.9 (5)	3.3 (5)	1.8 (2)
Food Manufacturing	5.5 (7)	1.3 (2)	-
Printer-Stereotyper	-	2.0 (3)	4.5 (5)
Skilled Railroad Worker	4.7 (6)	5.9 (9)	-
Unknown	18.1 (23)	9.2 (14)	4.5 (5)
% Total in Each Subperiod	57.3%	53.1%	53.1%

[a]Occupations chosen were those with five or more candidates in any one subperiod.

[b]Percentages indicate the portion of candidates who held that job in each subperiod and provide a comparative figure between subperiods. Numbers in parentheses indicate the sample size. Obviously, since both numbers and percentages deal with only a portion of all occupations, neither totals the actual number of occupations in each subperiod.

to build up the city around Hanscom Park"; and Michael Lee,

an Irish-born father of seven who tried both the hotel and

grocery business before finally succeeding in real estate

because "from his first coming to Omaha Mr. Lee has had the

good sense to save a part of his earnings, however small,

and the shrewdness to invest his savings in city property."[8]

Private administrators also represented the leading

businessmen, the "higher grade of men" desired for office

in the 1880s. One councilman with a reputation above

reproach was William F. Bechel, an officer of Pacific Express

Company, who served as council president almost continu-

ously between 1884 and 1900. Not only was he a "very

efficient councilman," but he was recognized as the "best

presiding officer the council has ever had," because of his

"thorough knowledge of parliamentary rules, the promptness

of his decisions, and the facility with which he disposes

of business . . . ."[9] Although Bechel was probably the

quintessential councilman for that period, the businessman

applying his knowledge to city government, other private

administrators possessed similar backgrounds. Among them

were John F. Boyd, superintendent of one of the city's

great achievements, the Union Stockyards; Frank Burkley,

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[8]Omaha World-Herald, October 23, 1894; [Alfred Soren-
son], Omaha Illustrated: A History of the Pioneer Period
and the Omaha of Today (Omaha: D. C. Dunbar and Co.,
publishers, 1888) (unpaged).

[9]Omaha Daily Bee, October 12, 1893; [Sorenson], Omaha
Illustrated (unpaged).

former _World-Herald_ business manager and head of Burkley

Printing Co.; and Cadet Taylor, vice president of Globe

Loan and Trust Company Savings Bank. These were the "higher

grade of men" who led the city in the 1880s and 1890s.

Perhaps the decade of the 1880s in Omaha best repre-

sented what Hays and Weinstein predicted with the advent

of the commission elsewhere. The idea of at-large elections,

an important aspect of the commission argument, began in

Omaha in that decade. But even more significant was the

increase in the number of private administrators and business

types such as insurance and real estate salesmen, into city

government. They clearly fit the occupational model put

forth by Hays and Weinstein. At the same time, however,

saloonkeepers, grocers, and skilled railroad workers held office

to balance the businessmen's participation. This division

of power may have caused the complaints voiced about muni-

cipal government by the _Bee_ between 1880 and 1899.

After 1900 occupations did shift upward, with public

administrators and attorneys leading the occupations of

candidates. These results ostensibly agree with Hays'

findings in Pittsburgh. However, it should be pointed out

that the public administrators in Omaha were more nearly

professional politicians than elite business efficiency

experts. The twenty-two public administrators were, in

reality, only thirteen men re-elected to office as many as

four times. After the public administrators, attorneys

led the candidate occupation list after 1900. Thus there
was a shift upward in candidates' occupations throughout
the three periods, but the big change occurred not with the
alteration of government machinery to the commission form,
but in the 1880s booster decade in Omaha. The increase in
professionals by 1900 was a continuation of a trend begun
earlier. Also, the number of public administrators was
misleading in that these men would have claimed regular
occupations if they had served part-time on the council
twenty years earlier. Part of the increase in professionals
must be attributed to the fact that such men might not have
held professional occupations before their involvement in
commission government.[10]

Since public administrators led the occupational
listing after 1900, an effort was made to pinpoint more
information on their backgrounds. Table IV, which reveals
occupations of commissioners at their first election,
reflects the findings of Table III in that attorneys and
public administrators again provided the most candidates.
The public administrators in this case were men like Dahl-
man, who stepped into the commission from the mayor's
office; Dan Butler, who had previously been city clerk;
L.B. Johnson, who held office as the Nebraska State Auditor;

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[10]While commissioners won election to office for full-
time employment and were paid a salary in accordance with
that, we cannot be certain that they were not also operating
their old businesses. For the purposes of this study the
author assumed the winners served as full-time commissioners.

TABLE IV. COMMISSIONERS' OCCUPATIONS AT FIRST ELECTION,

1912-1930

Occupation	Percentage	Number
Attorney	14.6%	6
Public Administrator	22.0	9
Engineer	4.9	2
Journalist	4.9	2
Auditor-Accountant	2.4	1
Express-Transfer Company	2.4	1
Real Estate	2.4	1
Real Estate Combination	4.9	2
Insurance	4.9	2
Low Government Position	2.4	1
Food Merchant	2.4	1
Liquor-Tobacco	2.4	1
Hardware	2.4	1
Clothing	2.4	1
Commission Merchant	2.4	1
Building Supplies	2.4	1
Contractor-Developer	4.9	2
Carpenter	2.4	1
Plumber	4.9	2
Printer-Stereotyper	2.4	1
Unknown	4.9	2
	100.0%	41

and Charles Withnell, who had been the city building
inspector until 1912. Others included Thomas Harrington,
elected to council in 1900 after serving as a ward assessor;
Frank Furay, chosen for the commission in 1912 after hold-
ing office as county treasurer; and Thomas Stroud, who ran
for commission in 1924 while serving as a county commis-
sioner. Thus, the commissioners were remnants of the old
councilmen and city government, along with an influx of
new candidates. Without the public administrators, other
professionals totalled almost twenty-seven percent of all
commission candidates, certainly not enough to declare that
they controlled city hall.

Elections still attracted small businessmen, such
as a food merchant, liquor-tobacco salesman, and hardware
store owner. The blue collar workers maintained
representation in elections with a carpenter, two plumbers,
and a printer-stereotyper. One of these men, however, had
reached the height of his profession. Tom P. Reynolds,
candidate in 1918 and 1924, was president of the Nebraska
Federation of Labor and the Omaha Central Labor Union. By
1924 he was also vice president of the International Union
of Stereotypers, certainly not an average workingman.
This variety of men does point out that the elite business
and professional classes did not suddenly assert control
over the old central city ward bosses. Perhaps more profes-
sionals were taking part, but they had not displaced the
Old Guard entirely.

TABLE V.   OCCUPATIONAL STATUS 1858-1930 AND BY SUBPERIOD

	1858-1930	1858-1879	1880-1899	1900-1930
Professional	18.2%	7.1%	13.7%	36.9%
Proprietor	46.5	49.6	50.3	37.8
Clerical	13.0	13.4	15.7	9.0
Blue Collar	12.8	11.8	12.4	14.4
Unknown	9.5	18.1	7.8	1.8
100% =	391	127	153	111

An examination of occupational status over time revealed that proprietors provided the largest share of the candidate total in all three subperiods (See Table V). However, after 1900 their proportion was significantly reduced and professionals markedly increased their activity in politics. Part of this increased professional percentage was due to the fact that the commission made representatives department heads as well as legislators, and thus all were classified as professionals. After the turn of the century, candidates holding clerical occupations declined, but blue collar workers slightly increased their percentages. The total division of candidates into occupational status categories differed somewhat from Watts' findings in Atlanta. Overall, sixty percent of Atlanta candidates were proprietors, as compared to approximately forty-seven per-cent of Omaha candidates. Although professionals made up

approximately one-fifth of all candidates in both cities,
one-fourth of Omaha candidates were clerical and blue collar
as opposed to one-fifth of Atlantans. Atlanta also had
fewer unskilled men in its blue collar group--only about
six percent were blue collar as opposed to twenty percent
among the Omaha men. In general, Omaha's division of candi-
dates into occupational status groups was only slightly
more equitable than Atlanta's.

It should be noted that the percentage of candidates
of unknown occupational status decreased greatly between
the first and third periods. A number of candidates were
unknown in the first period because it was impossible to
find out their occupation, let alone infer their occupa-
tional status. With no Omaha city directory until 1866,
information about the candidates in 1858, 1859, and 1861
was scarce. As mentioned in Chapter II, great numbers of
people came through Omaha on their way west in this period.
One member of the 1857 city council, William N. Byers,
stayed only until gold was discovered in Colorado and moved
to Denver where he established the Rocky Mountain News in
1859.[11] Surely many others followed Byers' path and left
the city before city directories made it easier to gather
information about them. Again, as elections moved closer

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[11]James W. Savage, John T. Bell, and Consul W.
Butterfield, History of the City of Omaha Nebraska and
South Omaha (New York: Munsell and Co., 1894), pp. 95,
119.

to the twentieth century, newspapers devoted more attention to candidates and made it easier to deal with occupations and status.

Occupational status was one variable which was useful to view on a year by year basis. Table VI indicated the domination of proprietors even more carefully, showing only one year between 1861 and 1888 in which proprietors failed to comprise at least half the candidates. These figures support the idea of business involvement in Omaha government before the commission. As mentioned earlier, the change in governmental machinery enhanced the statistical prominence of the professionals. It should be pointed out, however, that even in the 1912 election in which no one was classified a public administrator because of the commission, professionals made up half the candidates.

Another good indication of a man's status was the location of his home and the type of ward he represented. When candidates were elected by wards, obviously each man resided in his ward. The discussion of residence became important, however, with at-large elections of commissioners. In the early days, newspapers generally failed to mention the location of a candidate's residence. Since men represented wards and the city was relatively small, the editors probably assumed that everyone knew the men involved and needed no introduction to them or where they lived. Newspapers did not really begin a concentrated effort to

TABLE VI. OCCUPATIONAL STATUS BY ELECTION YEAR

	1858	1859	1861	1869	1873	1874	1877	1878	1882	1883	1887
Professional	--	--	33.3%	8.3%	10.0%	7.1%	--	--	--	--	12.5%
Proprietor	100.0	66.7	50.0	62.5	50.0	50.0	33.3	69.2	66.7	63.6	58.3
Clerical	--	33.3	--	8.3	--	28.6	16.7	15.4	8.3	18.2	16.7
Blue Collar	--	--	--	8.3	20.0	7.1	33.3	15.4	25.0	18.2	12.5
Unknown	--	--	16.7	12.5	20.0	7.1	16.7	--	--	--	--

	1888	1893	1894	1897	1900	1906	1912	1918	1924	1930
Professional	16.7%	16.7%	22.2%	22.2%	22.2%	16.7%	50.0%	57.1%	57.1%	71.4%
Proprietor	61.1	44.4	38.9	50.0	44.4	70.8	35.7	14.3	21.4	28.6
Clerical	16.7	22.2	22.2	11.1	33.3	4.2	--	--	7.1	--
Blue Collar	5.6	16.7	16.7	11.1	--	8.3	14.3	21.4	14.3	--
Unknown	--	--	--	5.6	--	--	--	7.1	--	--

include an address with a candidate until 1906, when the
Republican, Democratic, and Socialist tickets were carefully
listed with short biographies of each man in the Daily News.

Since the city's size and number of wards changed so
many times, a method of organizing the candidates' residences
for classification by SPSS was devised. The listing of each
man's address was too detailed since all locations would
have to be grouped into larger categories for any discussion.
Listing by wards was no more specific because the boundaries
changed so often. The decision was made to classify addres-
ses according to the 1980 census tract boundaries for Omaha.
The tracts remained fixed for all elections, thus avoiding
problems with the changing ward structure or expanding
city boundaries.

One problem that surfaced in attempting to place
early residents in census tracts was the change in Omaha's
street numbering system. Before 1879-80, an address might
be listed as 512 14th Street or 254 Dodge. Rather than
numbering named streets according to the nearest cross
streets, such as 1212 Dodge between 12th and 13th, the
early system simply allowed for twelve numbers per block
on each side, or twenty-four numbers for each block.
Beginning with 8th Street, numbers on named streets such
as Dodge and Douglas started with 100 and 101, even numbers
on the north and odd on the south side of the street. Since
the block between 8th and 9th Streets held twenty-four

numbers, buildings west of 9th Street were listed beginning
with numbers 124 and 125. Each numbered cross street
brought another twenty-four numbers, so that as far west as
between 20th and 21st Streets on Douglas, the building
numbers began with 388 and 389. The numbered streets were
slightly more complicated. Farnam Street provided the
dividing line, as buildings north of it were numbered
beginning with 500 on the west and 501 on the east side of
the street. Again, while traveling north of 12th or 13th
Street, twenty-four numbers were added to each block; thus
buildings north of Douglas were numbered beginning with 524
and 525, and those north of Dodge began with 548 and 549.
Moving south of Farnam, twenty-four numbers were subtracted
with each street. With buildings north of Farnam numbered
500 and 501, those north of Harney were 476 and 477, while
those north of Howard began with 452 and 453. The system
was destined to run out as the city expanded farther south,
and that, in fact, may have been the reason the city changed
to the current system in 1879-80.[12]

Figures 9 through 11 show the numbers of candidates
per census tract in each subperiod.[13] Candidates in the

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[12]I am indebted to Harold Becker, long-time "Omaha-
logist" and historical columnist for the Sun newspapers,
who kindly shared his knowledge of the early street number-
ing system with me.

[13]Addresses were located for all but twenty-one men
in Figure 9 and nine men in Figure 10.

early period were concentrated in three downtown census tracts, 13.02, 17, and 18, since they covered much of the entire city between 1858-1879. The second subperiod, Figure 10, is interesting in that it shows greater concentration of candidates in more census tracts than either of the other subperiods. Some of the concentration, especially in tracts 17 and 18, is due to the fact that they were part of the city during the entire period, and thus elected more people than tracts that were annexed later in the period. However, there were other areas away from the downtown that were part of the city in the entire period and produced a number of candidates, such as tracts 38 and 41. Tract 38, the home of eight candidates, was the area surrounding Hanscom Park, an up-and-coming residential neighborhood at the end of the streetcar lines in the 1880s. Tract 41 was a long narrow strip between Dodge and Harney, 24th to 33rd Streets, and lay along the Farnam streetcar line which led to the developing Gold Coast area. Both tracts were the kind of upper middle class areas that provided homes for the business types being urged into city government at that time.

Tract 15 produced twelve candidates and was located just north of Creighton University. It is difficult to determine the socio-economic status of the area since many residences have been destroyed; however, the candidates who lived there listed a variety of occupations. Three

Figure 9.   Number of
Candidates per Census
Tract, 1858-1879
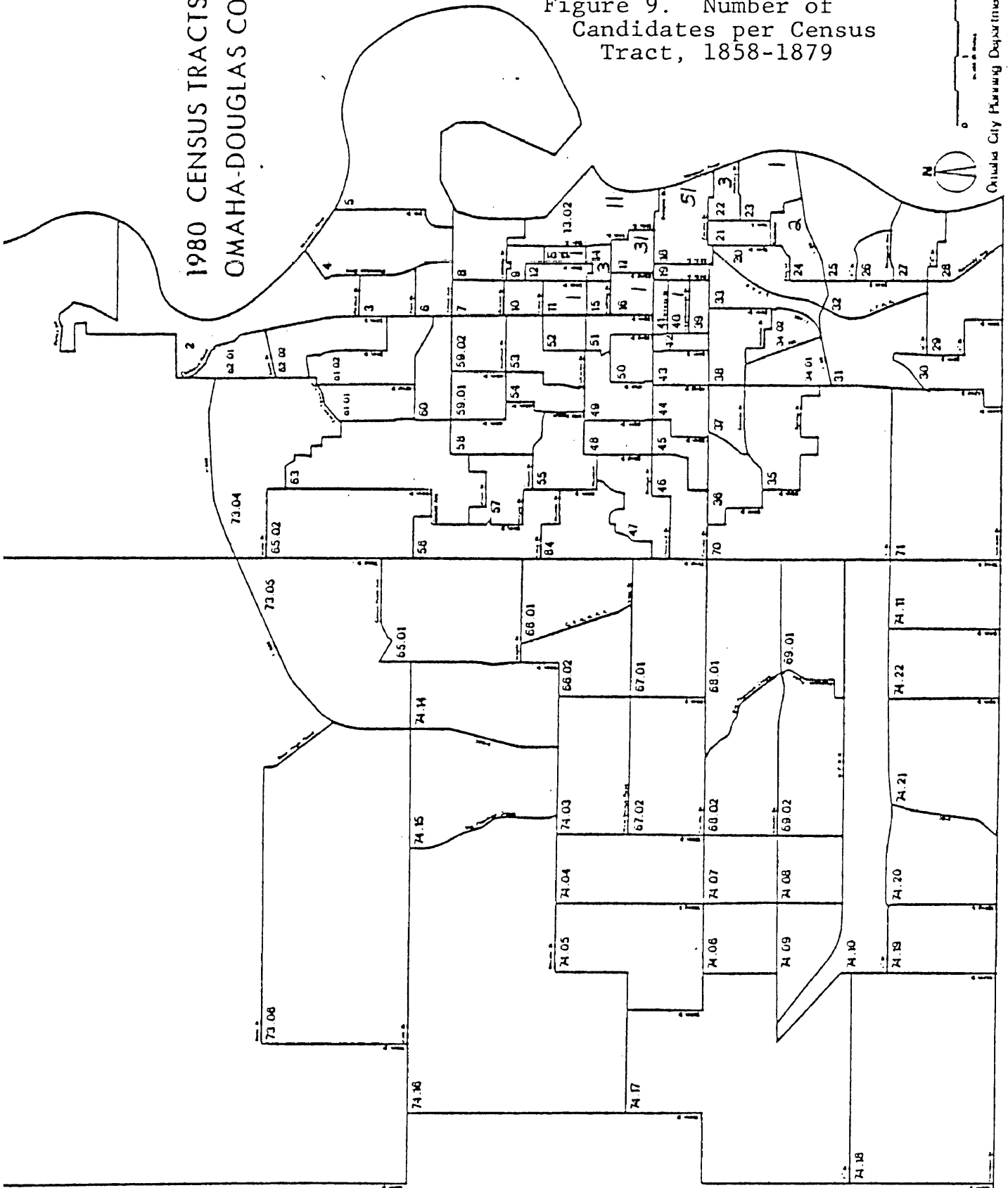
1980 CENSUS TRACTS
OMAHA-DOUGLAS COUNTY

Figure 10. Number of
Candidates per Census
Tract, 1880-1899
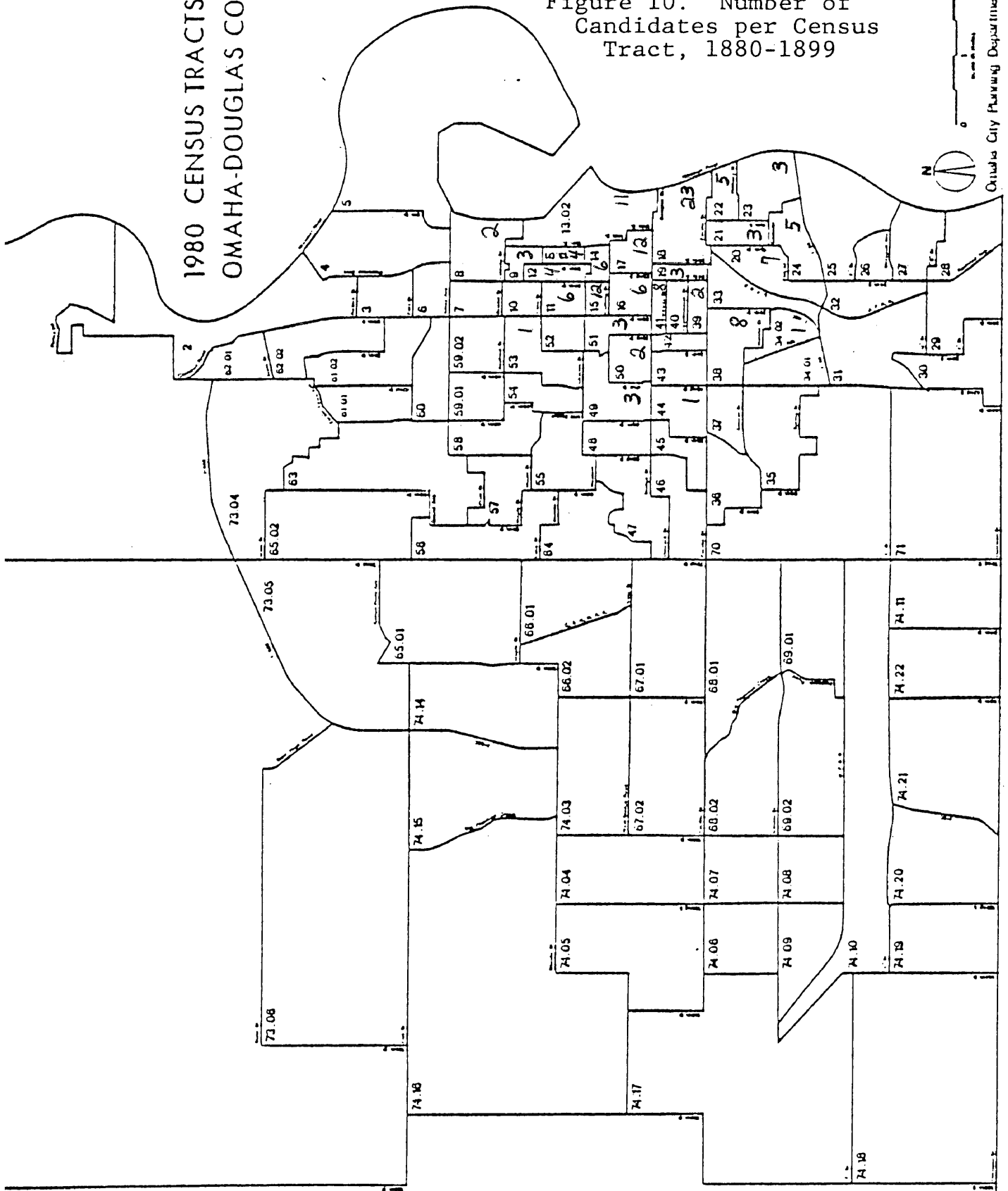
1980 CENSUS TRACTS
OMAHA-DOUGLAS COUNTY

Figure 11. Number of Candidates per Census Tract, 1900-1930
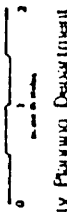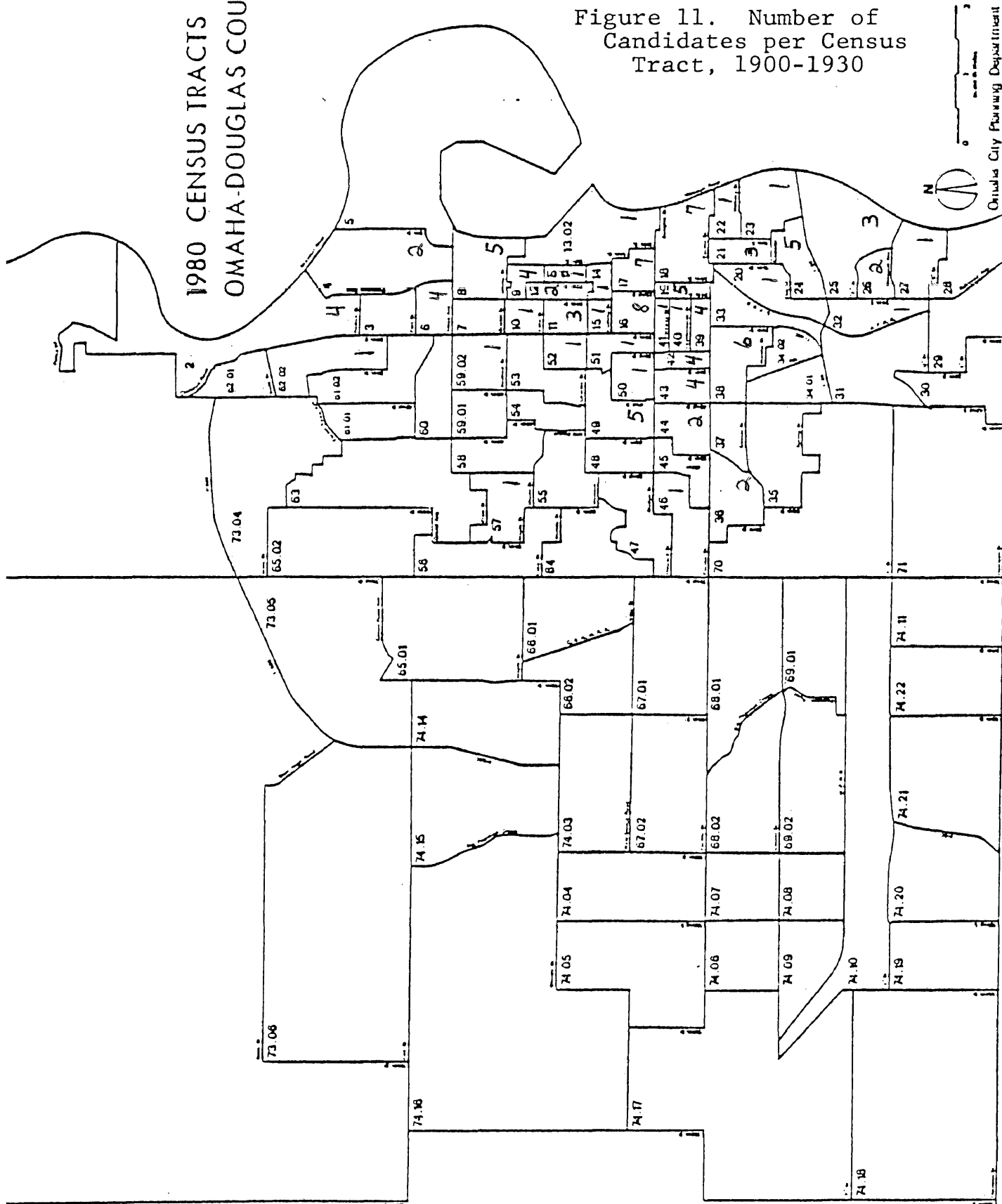
1980 CENSUS TRACTS
OMAHA-DOUGLAS COUNTY

Omaha City Planning Department

Figure 12. Number of Commission Candidates per Census Tract (Multiple Candidacies Suppressed)

1980 CENSUS TRACTS
OMAHA-DOUGLAS COUNTY
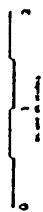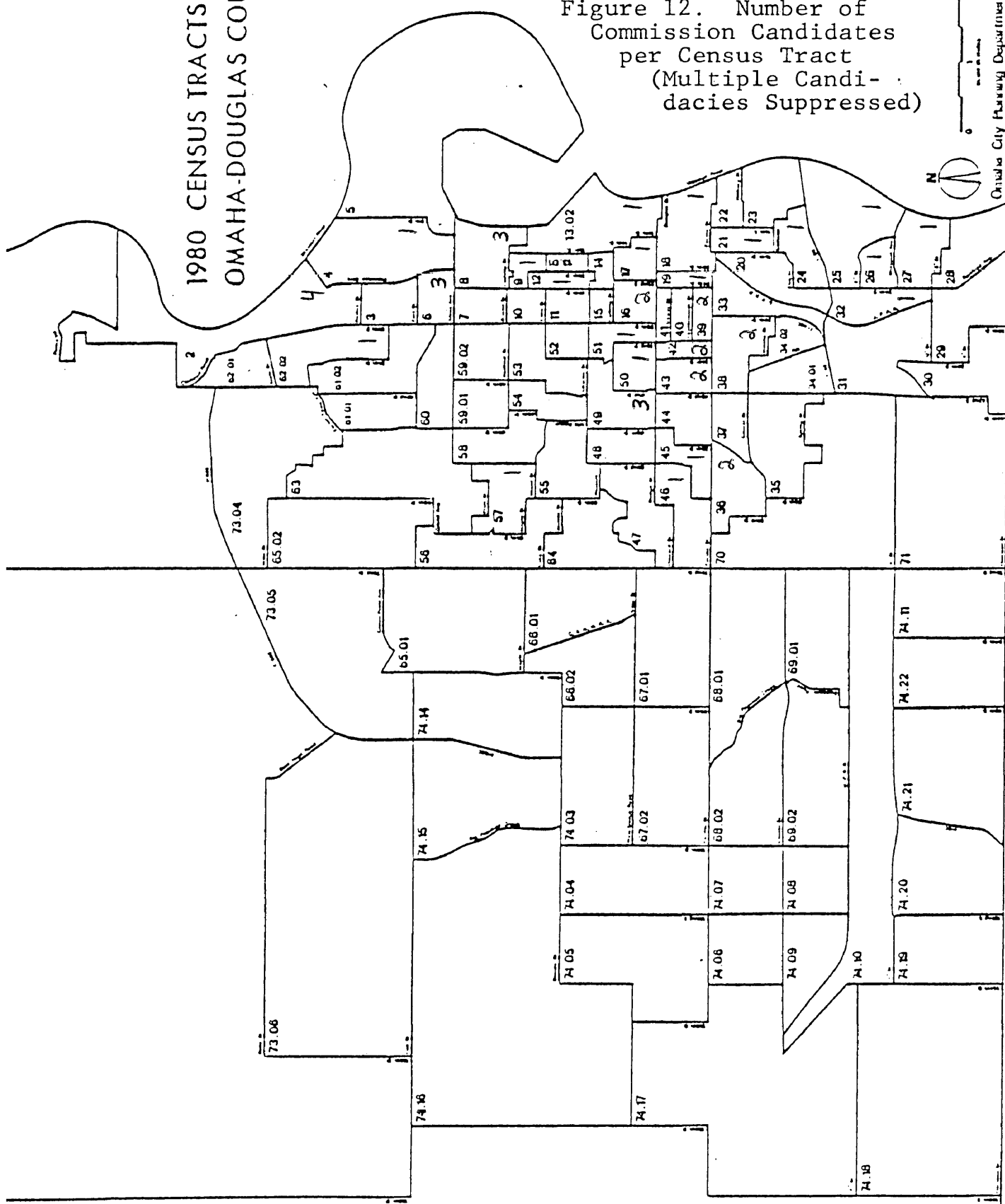
were Union Pacific employees, while others included a brick-
layer, a clerk, and a blacksmith. The neighborhood also claimed
as residents a grocer and a druggist whose places of business
stood on nearby Cuming Street, and an attorney, a pastor,
and a bank vice president. Apparently the area was a middle
class neighborhood with a diverse assortment of residents.

After 1900 more census tracts show candidates, but
fewer display much of a concentration of them. The number
of tracts with only one candidate increased after the turn
of the century, revealing the extent of the city's sprawl.
Some central city tracts such as 16, 17, 18, and 38 still
showed a good concentration of candidates, but the sub-
urban areas annexed by 1918 do not appear to be providing
a great portion of men running for office. Dundee and
Benson showed only one man between them. Census tract 49,
lying between 41st and 48th, Dodge Street to Hamilton,
produced five candidates, but that area had been part of
the city since 1887 and certainly was not a suburban out-
post. South Omaha, encompassing tracts 25, 26, 27, and
32, was more active in supporting men for city government.
In the elections after 1900 the area put forth seven men as
candidates. South Omaha, however, scarcely held the repu-
tation of being an elite residential suburb of the kind
presumed likely to produce good government men who sought
to re-order the personnel of city government.

The concentration of candidates from the North Side
and the newly-annexed suburb of Florence was Omaha's closest
approximation of suburban residents attempting to remove
control from downtown ward bosses. The only tracts that
produced candidates and were part of Florence were tracts
2 and 62.02. However, of these five candidates, none lived
in Florence proper, but resided in the southern portions of
the tracts, areas which had been annexed in 1887. Tracts
2, 4, 6, and 8 did provide fifteen candidates after 1900.
Many of these men lived along Florence Boulevard or in
Kountze Place, an upper middle class residential develop-
ment lying between 16th and 24th, Locust and Pratt Streets.
This general vicinity was a fairly exclusive residential
location, particularly along Florence Boulevard, and
provided Omaha's best example of suburban representation in
municipal government.

The same North Side concentration is revealed in
Figure 12, which enumerated the addresses of all commission
candidates, with multiple candidacies suppressed. It is
obvious that the greatest numbers of men resided in wards
2, 6, and 8 on the North Side, and 49 in the west central
portion of the city. This map should be viewed in conjunc-
tion with Table VII, which showed only the winning commis-
sion candidates, again with multiple candidacies suppressed.
Among the winners, no more than two different men lived in
the same tract between 1912 and 1930.

TABLE VII. CENSUS TRACT ADDRESS BY NUMBER

OF WINNING COMMISSION CANDIDATES,

1912-1930[a]

Tract		Tract	
2	1	25	1
6	2	26	1
8	1	27	1
9	1	36	1
12	1	38	2
16	2	42	1
17	1	43	1
21	1	46	1
		51	1

20 winners

[a]In all, there were twenty-eight winners for the four commission elections examined. Without the suppression of multiple candidacies, the following tracts differed from Table VII: tract 6 had three successful candidates; tract 16, four; tract 17, three; tract 26, two; tract 38, three; tract 42, two.

These maps certainly contradict the expected finding if Omaha conformed to the Hays-Weinstein thesis. Commissioners were not suburban elites taking away the power of the downtown ward bosses, but were often central city men themselves. In comparison, the councilmen from the business-oriented 1880s and 1890s were more concentrated in identifiable elite neighborhoods during that period.

Table VIII was an attempt to relate the occupational status of all candidates according to census tract. It showed that in the tracts with the largest numbers of candidates overall, such as 16, 17, 18, and 38, proprietors generally made up the lion's share of those men. Tracts 17 and 18, since they were part of the city in all three periods, had some of the greatest numbers of clerical and blue collar candidates as well. If any tracts appeared elite, they were tracts 38 and 16, which both claimed seven professionals. Tract 38 was the Hanscom Park-Field Club neighborhood which became an upper class residential suburb in the 1880s and after. Tract 16 was the city's old Gold Coast around Capitol Hill and toward Creighton University, but that area had declined in status by the turn of the century. Table VIII revealed that no one particular region of the city provided a great number of candidates in any occupational status category. The tracts that came the closest to this assessment were downtown areas that were part of the city for the entire period, not the suburban tracts where Hays' elite reformers lived.

The ethnicity of candidates, shown in Table IX, illustrated that despite the influx of Southern and Eastern European immigrants to Omaha by 1900, few changes occurred in the ethnicity of city council candidates.[14] Men of

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[14]The ethnicity of a candidate could not always be determined from biographies or newspaper accounts. To supplement this information, all names were checked in

TABLE VIII. NUMBER OF CANDIDATES BY CENSUS TRACT

AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS, 1858-1930

Tract	Prof.	Prop.	Clerical	Blue Collar	Tract Total
2	2	2	–	–	4
4	–	–	1	1	2
6	3	–	–	1	4
8	4	–	–	3	7
9	–	3	1	1	5
10	–	1	–	–	1
11	–	7	1	2	10
12	–	2	2	2	6
1301	1	4	1	–	6
1302	2	16	3	2	23
14	1	3	2	4	10
15	3	5	4	1	13
16	7	3	3	1	14
17	8	24	8	3	43
18	6	48	12	12	78
19	–	7	–	1	8
20	1	2	1	4	8
21	1	1	1	3	6
22	–	4	2	3	9
23	1	4	–	–	5
24	2	9	–	1	12
25	1	1	–	–	2
26	2	–	–	–	2
27	1	–	–	–	1
32	–	1	–	–	1
3402	–	1	–	–	1
36	–	2	–	–	2
38	7	7	–	–	14
39	1	5	–	–	6
40	1	1	–	–	2
41	3	3	3	–	9
42	3	–	–	1	4
43	3	–	1	–	4
44	–	2	1	–	3
45	1	–	–	–	1
46	1	–	–	–	1
49	1	6	1	–	8
50	1	2	–	–	3
51	1	–	2	1	4
52	–	–	–	1	1
53	–	1	–	–	1
57	–	1	–	–	1
5902	–	1	–	–	1
6202	–	–	–	1	1
	69	179	50	49	347

TABLE IX.   ETHNICITY BY SUBPERIOD

Ethnicity	1858-1879	1880-1899	1900-1930[a]	Commissioners
English	40.2%	25.5%	27.9%	21.4%
British Isles[b]	25.2	17.6	18.9	21.4
Irish	12.6	15.0	12.6	17.9
German	13.4	22.2	25.2	25.0
Other Europeans[c]	3.9	11.8	13.5	12.5
Unknown	4.7	7.8	1.8	1.8
100% =	127	153	111	56

[a] Includes Commissioners.

[b] British Isles includes candidates who were neither English nor Irish, but with ethnicity determined as Scottish, Welsh, Scottish-Irish, Scottish-English, English-Welsh, Anglo-Canadian, or WASP (Americans claiming descent from early settlers in the U.S.)

[c] Other Europeans includes candidates with ethnicity determined as Bohemian, Polish, Dutch, French, Danish, Swedish, Scandinavian, or Russian.

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TABLE X.   NUMBER OF CANDIDATES BY ETHNICITY

AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS, 1858-1930

Ethnicity	Prof.	Prop.	Cler.	Blue Collar	Number
English	18	57	17	18	110
British Isles	16	31	14	8	69
Irish	11	24	6	8	49
German	16	43	7	10	76
Other Europeans	8	20	3	5	36
Total	69	175	47	49	340

English heritage always provided the largest number of councilmen and commissioners, followed by Germans and Irish. When examining commissioners alone, Germans supplied one-quarter of all candidates, followed by men of English and British Isles descent. Some of these men were repeat candidates, but the fact that they kept running gives an indication of which ethnic groups placed men in election races.

Table X compared candidates' ethnicity with their occupational status. More proprietors ran for office than any other group, as pointed out above. However, Table X revealed that proprietors also made up the greatest number of candidates within each ethnic group, followed by professionals. The English provided the most candidates in all, and likewise had the largest number of candidates in each occupational status division. Beyond that, no one ethnic group provided a majority of the professionals or blue collar workers or representatives of any other category.

One exception to leadership by Anglo-Saxons was that of Harry Zimman, third ward representative in 1900, 1903, and 1906, and commissioner in 1918 and 1921. Zimman, the son of a rabbi at the Russian Jewish synagogue, was known as a "curbstone orator" when elected to the council at age twenty-one in 1900. He was a grocery clerk when he first

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Elsdon C. Smith, New Dictionary of American Family Names (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973).

won, but within six years had become an attorney.

His victory was "regarded as a political accident," but Zimman soon attracted attention through his fights against corporate domination in the form of the railroads, street railway company, and utility companies. By 1918, the World-Herald supported Zimman, stating that although he was "a radical, he is not a bigot or extremist. He stands for clean and honest government without standing for puritanism. He is not to be controlled either by high-brow cliques or low-brow groups."[15] Although he had legal training, Zimman was not the elite businessman the commission form of government was expected to attract into service.

Two variables dealt with a candidate's age: age at each particular election and age at arrival in Omaha (See Table XI). For the approximately fifty-seven percent of candidates for whom age could be determined, the mean age for all candidates 1858 to 1930 was almost forty-five years old. This figure varied by subperiod, as the men in the earliest period averaged forty-two years old, while by the twentieth century, councilmen and commissioners were forty-nine years old. Perhaps the men after 1900 were slightly older because of the at-large elections for commissioners. It has been pointed out that men elected at-large needed more city-wide recognition to win. Their increased age

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[15]Omaha Daily News, March 24, 1906; Omaha Daily Bee, April 29, 1906; Omaha World-Herald, April 29, 1918.

TABLE XI. AGE BY SUBPERIOD

	1858-1930	1858-1879	1880-1899	1900-1930[a]	Commissioners
Age at this Election	N=222				
Mean	44.6	41.5	42.6	49.2	51.9
Minimum	21	25	23	21	33
Maximum	70	70	66	69	69
Age at Arrival	N=220				
Mean	23.5	32.0	24.3	17.3	14.9
Minimum	0	15	0	0	0
Maximum	54	54	51	51	51

[a]Includes Commissioners.

may be due to the fact that older candidates have had more time to build a reputation than younger men. Figures for commissioners even further reinforce the age differential. Men who ran for the commission averaged almost fifty-two years old, a full ten years older than men who ran before 1900. The minimum age of these men was thirty-three, as opposed to men in their twenties in the other subperiods. The age of candidates at their arrival in the city decreased as more and more men were born in the city or came as children, rather than arriving as grown men. The mean age

was lowered from thirty-two in the frontier period to
seventeen by the twentieth century.

Throughout all three subperiods, the years of candi-
dates' arrivals in the city (not shown here) were not
particularly concentrated in any one year. The greatest
concentration of candidates in the first subperiod arrived
in the big immigration years of 1854 and 1856, which brought
twenty-eight percent of candidates in the pre-1880 period.
The range of arrival years for candidates in that subperiod
was only eighteen years, a relatively brief period because
few of these men could have been born in the city and run
for office before 1880. In contrast, candidates in the
following subperiods arrived in the city over a much longer
period of time. As the city grew older, it was possible
for candidates to have come as children or been born in
Omaha, thus increasing the range of arrival years. The
peak years for the last two subperiods are not really
concentrated enough to show any trends in settlement of the
city. The entire listing of candidates arriving by years
pointed out that although candidates in the second sub-
period came steadily throughout the 1850s, 1860s, and
1870s, the most men arrived between 1876-1883, when almost
thirty-two percent of the 153 candidates in that subperiod
arrived. In the last subperiod, a similar concentration
occurred between 1884 and 1891, with the arrival of
thirty-four percent of those candidates.

TABLE XII.   LEADING BIRTHPLACES OF CANDIDATES

1858-1930[a]

Birthplace	Percentage	Number
Illinois	4.6%[b]	18
Iowa	3.1	12
Massachusetts	2.6	10
New York	10.2	40
Ohio	2.6	10
Pennsylvania	5.4	21
Ireland	4.3	17
Germany	3.6	14
Omaha	5.4	21
Unknown	36.1	141
100% =		391

[a]Includes all states with ten or more candidates over the entire period.

[b]Percentages and numbers deal with only a portion of all birthplaces, and do not add up to 100% or 391.

The greatest number of Omaha's city council candidates came from six states and two foreign countries, or were born in Omaha. New York provided the most city council candidates of all states. Of these forty New York men, eighteen ran for office in each of the first two subperiods, while only four ran in the last subperiod. Pennsylvania supplied the second largest candidate total, twenty-one, eighteen of

whom also ran in the first two subperiods. The Irish and Germans also provided three-fourths of their respective totals before 1900. In contrast, after 1900, the largest numbers of candidates were born in Illinois, Iowa, and Omaha. Surprisingly, Omaha did not act as a magnet for Nebraskans, as only three candidates from outside the city claimed the state as their birthplace. Men no longer traveled west to make a new start on the frontier as in the early days, so Omaha's new leaders came from men born in the city or in surrounding Midwestern states.

Few of the other variables included in coding revealed enough information on which to base judgments of candidates. Religion was missing for seventy-four percent of the candidates, illustrating that such information was extremely difficult to locate. Newspapers rarely mentioned it, while religion was only occasionally listed in city histories if a man was particularly prominent. Many of the candidates for whom religion was known were those listed in Who's Who in Omaha 1928 and from the period after 1900. Perhaps the fact that Omaha recorded the lowest percentage of church members (thirteen percent) among sixteen western cities in 1890 indicated why religious affiliation evoked little interest with regard to political candidates.[16] The

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[16]Lawrence H. Larsen, The Urban West at the End of the Frontier (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1978), p. 29.

question of political experience of a candidate at his
first election was known for thirty percent of the candi-
dates, while information on military experience was avail-
able for only eleven percent of the men.

An attempt to deal with status, as evidenced by
four Omaha social directories published in 1886, 1890,
1892, and 1910, revealed that as many as thirty-three
percent of the men were listed in them in any year. How-
ever, the scope of this project did not allow for determi-
nation of how many candidates had a chance of being listed
in any one book. Obviously a man who came to the city in
1915 would not be listed in any book, while one who died
before 1886 would also be left out. The social directories
would play an important role in a study that focused on
the years 1890-1910.

An attempt was made to list a candidate's club
memberships when known. This, too, is a less than perfect
measure of a candidate's involvement in community affairs
unless a researcher is willing to scour membership lists
of every significant club in the city. Such involvement
was beyond the scope of this study. As a result, data on
any club memberships was missing for forty-three percent
of all candidates. One variable, total club memberships,
provided a numeric total of known memberships for each
candidate, as shown in Table XIII.

The types of clubs included were various fraternal organizations, such as Masons, Elks, and Woodmen of the World, as well as primarily social clubs like Ak-Sar-Ben, Happy Hollow and Omaha Country Clubs, and the exclusive Omaha Club (See Appendix , Codebook, variables 25-36). Obviously the largest number of men belonged to three organizations or less. Only "Cowboy Mayor" James Dahlman, a three-time candidate, held memberships in seventeen organizations, a factor which may indicate why he was able to hold office so long. His numerous contacts were certainly a large part of his political career. This type of information would again be important in a more limited study in which one could examine membership lists rather than relying on biographies and other sources.

One last question on candidates deserves attention: Did winners vary in any way from losers? Did men of one occupational status continually win elections while others lost? Were men from particular ethnic groups more generally winners than men from other groups? Did age have an effect on a candidate's chances for success?

As Table XIV shows, occupational status caused little effect on election results in the early frontier period of Omaha's history. Some changes began to occur, however, between 1880 and 1900. Professionals and proprietors won more elections than they lost, while the opposite was true for those lower on the socio-economic ladder, the clerical

TABLE XIII.   TOTAL CLUB MEMBERSHIPS

BY PERCENTAGE OF CANDIDATES

No. of Memberships	Percentage	Number
1	18.4%	72
2	9.7	38
3	11.3	44
4	3.8	15
5	4.6	18
6	3.6	14
7	2.8	11
8	1.0	4
9	.8	3
10	.5	2
12	.3	1
17	.8	3
Unknown	42.5	166
	100.0%	391

and blue collar workers. The blue collar workers in partic-
ular put up a good representation of candidates, but only
five percent of them ever won the elections. The blue
collar disparity continued after 1900, although more of
their candidates won election in that period. As shown
earlier in Table V, proprietors lost their popularity after
1900 while professionals achieved success. Again part of

TABLE XIV.   OCCUPATIONAL STATUS BY SUBPERIOD AND RESULT

	1858-1879		1880-1899		1900-1930	
	Losers	Winners	Losers	Winners	Losers	Winners
Professional	9.0%	5.0%	10.8%	18.3%	25.8%	51.0%
Proprietor	50.7	48.3	41.9	63.3	43.5	30.6
Clerical	10.4	16.7	18.3	11.7	9.7	8.2
Blue Collar	11.9	11.7	17.2	5.0	19.4	8.2
Unknown	17.9	18.3	11.8	1.7	1.6	2.0
100% =	67	60	93	60	62	49

TABLE XV.   ETHNICITY BY SUBPERIOD AND RESULT

	1858-1879		1880-1899		1900-1930	
	Losers	Winners	Losers	Winners	Losers	Winners
English	40.3%	40.0%	28.0%	21.7%	25.8%	30.6%
British Isles	19.5	23.3	15.0	23.4	24.2	12.2
Irish	7.5	26.7	17.2	11.7	9.7	16.3
German	19.4	6.7	16.1	31.7	24.2	26.5
Other Europeans	6.0	1.7	14.0	6.7	12.9	14.3
Unknown	7.5	1.7	9.7	5.0	3.2	--
100% =	67	60	93	60	62	49

the high percentage of professionals was due to the change
to commission government and its resulting professional
status of incumbent candidates, but the fact remains
that government had moved toward increasing professionali-
zation and began to shut out men who could not leave other
occupations for a full-time commission position.

In regard to ethnicity of winners and losers (Table
XV) the data revealed no clear-cut conclusions. Both the
English and Irish lost more often in the 1880 subperiod,
but won more after 1900. After 1880 Germans won more than
they lost, particularly in the second subperiod when they
made up over thirty percent of all winners. The data on
winners and losers by ethnic group paralleled the ethnicity
of all candidates as revealed in Table VIII. The same groups,
English, British Isles, Irish, and Germans dominated, all
receiving a varying share of the political pie over time.
If any groups dominated after 1880 in Omaha, it was the
Germans and English, who had made up a good portion of the
city's ethnics in the earliest days. Perhaps if this study
had followed candidates to the present day it would show
the participation of the ethnic groups who arrived in the
city later on, particularly Southern and Eastern Europeans.
However, for the period before 1930, the city's candidates
represented the members of mostly nineteenth century immigrant
groups.

The ages of candidates at each election showed the
interesting result that in all three subperiods, winners

TABLE XVI.   AGES BY SUBPERIOD AND RESULT

	1858-1879		1880-1899		1900-1930	
	Losers	Winners	Losers	Winners	Losers	Winners
Age at this Election						
Mean	43.9	39.8	43.8	41.1	50.9	47.7
Minimum	28	25	24	23	31	21
Maximum	70	62	66	56	68	69
Age at Arrival						
Mean	32.7	31.5	25.7	22.4	18.2	16.3
Minimum	15	20	0	0	0	0
Maximum	51	54	50	51	51	46

were at least two years younger than the losers of elections
(See Table XVI). The winners' range of ages was narrower,
indicating that perhaps voters chose younger men for elections,
ignoring older candidates and thus driving up the mean age
of losers. In terms of mean age at arrival, winners were
younger than losers in all three subperiods, ranging from
differences of one year before 1880, to three years between
1880 and 1900, to approximately two years after the turn of
the century.

Summary

Omaha's change in composition of councilmen came in the 1880s, the same period in which at-large elections and property qualifications were instituted for municipal candidates. The alteration of government machinery to the commission scarcely affected the election of candidates, for although more professionals were running for office, a number of them were Old Guard city hall workers who simply moved into places on the commission. The addresses of candidates also tended to disprove the contention that suburban elites sought to displace downtown ward heelers through the commission. In Omaha, the greatest concentration of addresses occurred in the period 1880-1899, while among commissioners, no more than two different men from any one census tract won election between 1912 and 1930.

The data also displayed other information that dealt less specifically with commissioners. No particular ethnic group dominated city government throughout the period, but power was shared by Germans, English, and others of British Isles descent. When compared to occupational status, the ethnic dimension revealed no startling results: no one group produced a majority of professionals, proprietors, or blue collar workers. Not surprisingly, as the city aged, the mean age of candidates at each election increased, from forty-two to forty-nine years between 1858 and 1930. Correspondingly,

the age at arrival decreased as more candidates were born in Omaha or came as children. ·The birthplace of candidates shifted from Eastern states in the first subperiod to Nebraska and Iowa by the twentieth century.

Lastly, data on winners and losers showed some variance in regard to occupational status and age. Occupational status did not appear to influence election results before 1880, but after that period proprietors and professionals exhibited marked success. The latter group continued their good fortune into the twentieth century. A closer look at age at each election revealed that winners were approximately two years younger than losers in each subperiod. Perhaps voters subconsciously chose younger men for office, or increasingly younger men kept running, since candidates' minimum age kept decreasing as well.

Unfortunately, all the collected data cannot provide an answer to the question of a "machine" involvement in city politics. It is difficult to gauge the role of Tom Dennison and the extent to which he controlled the election of commissioners. This study, however, deals with who holds the visible reins of power, rather than who really governed the city. In any event, whether Omaha's commission elections were run by the machine or left to chance, they failed to produce a change in municipal government personnel.

CHAPTER IV

MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP FROM GROUND-FLOOR PIONEERS
TO PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS

This study attempted to test the Hays-Weinstein thesis
in Omaha, Nebraska, between 1858 and 1930. The results as
revealed in Chapters II and III showed that Omaha did not
fit the hypothesis, just as many other cities have diverged
from the conclusions and implications of these two scholars.
Suburban elites with upper middle class status did not
displace the central city small businessman when the commis-
sion replaced the city council in Omaha. More professionals
participated in city government, but without excluding
persons from other socio-economic groups.

In reviewing the information presented on the question
of who held the visible means of power in municipal govern-
ment in America, few cities studied thus far fit the Hays-
Weinstein argument except those on which they originally
based their ideas, particularly Pittsburgh and Des Moines.
The research undertaken by Harvard professor William Munro,
discussed in Chapter I, pointed out that thirty-six of
fifty commissioners surveyed in 1912 held some public office
before they served on the commission. Likewise, studies of
Nashville and Chicago revealed that professional machines

and administrators operated in those cities. In contrast,
a type of ethnic machine ran New Haven and Ypsilanti's
public leaders, rather than its principal business executives,
held municipal offices. The idea of elites taking control
through a commission form of government never surfaced in
these studies. In Birmingham and Atlanta, the business
elite moved into city government by the 1860s and 1870s,
managing to retain their hold for several decades.

Since Omaha did not fit the mold either, how did it
compare to the other cities mentioned above? In general,
Omaha experienced stages of growth similar to all the cities.
A closer examination of candidates placed them in three
general groups: the Ground Floor Pioneers, 1858-1879; the
Enterprising Proprietors, 1880-1899; and the Professional
Politicians, 1900-1930.[1]

The Ground Floor Pioneers consisted of those men who
came to Omaha early and made a career selling goods to
western travelers, purchasing land and waiting for city
growth to increase its value, or developing amenities the
city needed to insure expansion. They "got in on the
ground floor" and watched their profits swell along with
the city. This group of candidates included men such as
John McCormick and Jesse Lacey, who arrived in 1857 and

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[1]The dates included in these categories conform to
the divisions utilized earlier in this study and should
not be taken as definite breaking points. For example, the
change between the first two periods occurred gradually
between 1875 and 1885, not with any one election.

1859 and operated the well-known John McCormick and Co.,
wholesale grocers.[2] Another early entrepreneur was James
G. Megeath, who came as a young man in 1857 and made money
hauling supplies to the Mormons traveling through Florence.
Megeath invested in real estate and donated, along with
another ground floor man, attorney A. J. Hanscom, the land
that became Hanscom Park. Captain W. W. Marsh did not live
in the city until 1863, but once here, became the man most
responsible for building up the Omaha Horse Railway Company.
Other city council nominees who followed this same type of
pattern were founding father Dr. Enos Lowe; attorney Exper-
ience Estabrook; real estate manager and businessman Joseph
Barker; and merchant and livestock man D. C. Sutphen. For
these early men, it was important for newspapers to mention
how long they had resided in the city or the amount of
property they held. Along with vigor and business acumen,
these facts indicated a candidate's success in Omaha, and
his particular fitness for involvement in municipal affairs.

The Enterprising Proprietors became dominant in the
businessman's decade of the 1880s. These men inherited a
more settled city and no longer based their living on the
immigrant trade, but on Omaha's developing role as a whole-
sale and retail trade center. As shown in Chapter III,
proprietors made up a majority of candidates in many of the

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[2]These names and those in the following paragraphs
were cases pulled from the raw data analyzed in Chapter III.

elections examined, but the plea for good businessmen in the 1880s brought even more of them to the forefront. The lowest percentage of proprietor participation in any election of that decade was 58.3 percent in 1887. The 1880s attracted council hopefuls like printer Samuel Rees; wholesale fruit merchant W. W. Bingham; wholesale lumber man C. L. Chaffee; and the secretary of Mercer Chemical Company, George L. Mercer. At the same time, this period marked the heyday of small merchants like saloonkeepers and grocers. It should be observed, however, that of ten saloonkeeper candidates in the period 1880-1899, nine represented the third ward, which included the city's tenderloin and red light district. All the same, the office-seeker in this period, whether he was Patrick Ford, proprietor of the Niagara House Saloon on South 10th Street, or D. A. N. Chase, president of Chase and Co., wholesale spices, teas, and coffee, was a proprietor, a man who operated a business and identified in some way with the business community. Their experience and knowledge of business gave them the edge in running for a position in local government.

The years after 1900 saw the election of more professionals into municipal offices. Government was becoming more complex and the effective conduct of city business required more attention even before the commission changed municipal representatives' work into a full-time job. The occupational scale did shift upward, especially with the advent of public

administrators, but how much of this change was a function
of increasing professionalization rather than an attempt,
as Samuel Hays implied, to displace the lower classes? As
mentioned earlier, the years around the turn of the century
marked the beginning of a great period of professionalization.
As carpenters became contractors and bookkeepers became
auditors, so did part-time city councilmen become full-time
professional commissioners. As full-time department heads,
the commission effectively eliminated those men who could
not resign their jobs for three years to run a municipal
department. The men who did choose to hold public office
became professional politicians through their continued
involvement in civic affairs.

Another element after 1900 was the as-yet unknown
role of Tom Dennison. Although established in Omaha by the
early 1890s, the Boss's movement toward political activity
and his participation in elections has never been specifi-
cally dated. It is difficult to know at this point which
candidates he controlled and which actively opposed him.
At any rate, Dennison's power over municipal politics grew
more secure after he chose to support James Dahlman in
1906, and his domination continued through 1930. A number
of unanswered questions will characterize this period until
more definitive studies of the machine and Dennison are
completed.

Omaha thus appeared to follow portions of each of the other cities' patterns. The first leaders in the city on the Missouri were the commercial elite, the men who essentially built the town, as in Chicago. These men resembled Ypsilanti's "economic dominants" and "public leaders" in that they represented the city's biggest businessmen in the early days, and also the well-known men among first settlers in the city. They gave way to a new generation of participants in the businessman's government by the 1880s, a period comparable to New Haven's entrepreneurs, Nashville's industrial development era, and the businessman's government in both Birmingham and Atlanta. Perhaps this resemblance occurred because of the period under study rather than any similarity among cities. As mentioned in Chapter I, the Gilded Age emphasis on business may have contributed to the predominance of businessmen in government. Also, the fact that the entire Atlanta study and half of that on Birmingham fell into this period may account for their findings of continual business domination. Omaha does seem to fit into a national trend by exhibiting a great desire for business leadership between 1880 and 1899.

Although Omaha has often been referred to as a "little Chicago," it did not experience the fifty years of ethnic rivalry as exhibited in that city by candidates with personal machines. Omaha, too, attracted a number of ethnic groups, but as displayed in Chapter III, few of them outside North-

west Europeans even managed to put up candidates, let alone operate as a voting bloc. Ethnic politics failed to make a visible impact in Omaha until after 1900, and then became organized basically because of Tom Dennison's machine. Dennison recruited a lieutenant from each ethnic group to serve as a go-between and keep lines of communication open. His rise to power, of course, coincided with the increase in numbers of Southern and Eastern Europeans and blacks arriving in Omaha. Dennison took advantage of their disorganization and utilized them to construct his machine in the early 1900s. The central control of one man over all elements of the city was delayed until the 1930s in Chicago because no boss could unify them; in Omaha Dennison took charge thirty years earlier.

Just as the qualitative examination of Omaha politics in Chapter II failed to reveal the presence of an elite takeover following the advent of the commission, the quantitative analysis of candidates' biographical characteristics in Chapter III provided the same conclusion. In general a change in the machinery of government did little to alter the type of candidate elected. The occupations of these representatives did shift upward over time, with attorneys and public administrators leading the groups. Although no saloonkeepers or railroad workers were nominated after 1900, some small businessmen such as grocers and tobacco store owners still ran, although unsuccessfully, in Omaha elections.

Thus, the businessmen and professionals did not completely remove the influence of men from lower rungs on the socio-economic ladder. In addition, further research revealed that the preponderance of public administrators in Omaha was misleading. The idea of a public administrator conjures up the picture of a strong, efficient businessman bringing order to government. In reality, many men classified as public administrators on their first election to the commission already held some other office in city government and had transferred to the commission. Rather than a change to elite control, the Old Guard simply moved in and solidified their position.

The addresses of candidates revealed that the greatest concentration of men by census tract occurred in the period 1880-1899. Beyond the downtown tracts which held population the entire time, tracts 15, 38, and 41, residential areas just outside the central business district, provided the most candidates. Certainly some of these men were repeat candidates, but they still represented their area. Both tracts 38 and 41 could be characterized as middle to upper middle class areas, neighborhoods quite likely to produce the up-and-coming businessmen called for by the newspapers in the 1880s. No real suburban concentrations emerged after 1900, although the greatest number of office-seekers in an outlying area came from the city's North Side, along Florence Boulevard and in the Kountze

Place neighborhood. Even so, this was not a highly signif-
icant concentration. The Dundee-Benson vicinity, tradition-
ally thought of as an elite area after 1910, produced only
one council hopeful. Thus the candidates were not suburban
men attacking the downtown, but were usually central city
men themselves. Although the North Side area offered more
candidates, it did not elect all of them. Most importantly,
no tract ever produced more than two different men who
served on the commission. Although one man may have been
elected to the commission several times, no area of the
city consistently provided a majority of the commissioners
between 1912 and 1930.

Did elite businessmen ever really assert control in
Omaha? In the beginning, some of the men who eventually
formed Omaha's elite played roles in city government. But,
as George Leighton suggested, an ever more powerful group
ran the city, whether or not they held a city position.
These men connived to keep the state capital, convinced the
railroad to cross the river at Omaha, and fought to get
the railroad river bridge at the city as well. They exerted
authority behind the scenes, rather than holding the visible
means of power.[3]

In the 1880s municipal government attracted many of
the city's businessmen, proprietors who lived in areas of

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[3]George R. Leighton, "Omaha, Nebraska: The Glory is
Departed," Harper's Magazine 177 (July 1938): 119.

the city that reflected their status as members of the new middle class. By 1900, however, as professional politicians began to assume control of city government, the role of proprietors decreased. They instead began to participate in city politics through groups such as the Omaha Real Estate Exchange and the Omaha Commercial Club, as discussed in Chapter II. Men who could not afford the time and effort necessary to run for office, particularly the full-time commissioners' position, exercised influence through member-ship in these organizations. Some of them still ran for office, most notably the ineffectual reformers elected in 1918, but in general they left office-holding to others.

Perhaps the upper echelons of these civic leaders, the men who operated the city's biggest industrial and business houses, held the real power in Omaha. It has been pointed out that Frank Johnson, Omaha Printing Company president, was the liaison between the city's upper classes and Tom Dennison. Furthermore, the question of whether Johnson or Dennison had the upper hand is still unknown.[4] The possibility exists that the upper classes after 1900, men who might have participated in government in the 1880s, had moved away from political candidacy but in actuality retained real control in the city.

[4]Orville D. Menard, "Tom Dennison: The Rogue Who Ruled Omaha," Omaha 3 (March 1978): 19-20.

Although these points go beyond the basic premise
of this thesis in dealing with the visible means of power,
it is impossible to ignore the role of the political machine.
Perhaps elites in Omaha after 1900 expressed no interest in
running for office because they already controlled municipal
affairs. They instead may have left the office-holding to
professional politicians, or to reformers of various types
who were so divided over their goals that they were unable
to accomplish many of them.[5] The machine apparently balanced
its tickets well and thus an examination of commissioners'
characteristics revealed no bias toward a particular
ethnicity (although most were Northwest Europeans), occupa-
tion, or home address. Answers to speculation on the
relationship of bossism to the elite of the city await a
more detailed analysis of the role of Tom Dennison, along
with further study of his connections to all levels of
Omaha society.

Altering the machinery of government failed to create
any difference in the Omaha political scene. Dahlman, at
first against the commission, quickly decided to support it
because he correctly assumed he could maintain even stronger
control through it.[6] Dennison simply took the change in

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[5]Louise E. Rickard, "The Politics of Reform in Omaha,
1918-1921," Nebraska History 53 (Winter 1972): 419-445.

[6]William F. Schmidt, "Municipal Reform in Omaha From
1906 to 1914 as Seen Through the Eyes of the Omaha Press"
(M. A. thesis, Municipal University of Omaha, 1963), pp. 47-
49.

stride and continued his shadowy, but important role in government just as under the council system. The Boss was not unusual in his adaptation to the new form of government; Tom Pendergast, who ran Kansas City, Missouri, effected a similar coup when that city moved to the commission.[7]

Neither did the passage of a 1913 permanent election registration law in Nebraska affect Dennison's organization. Proposed in order to eliminate fraudulent election practices blamed on the machine, the registration system failed to halt the Boss's electoral success. However, it did provide the reformers with another vehicle for participation in government. The appointed election commissioner chose precinct inspectors, the men most responsible for ending fraud on the precinct level. The inspectors came from "the better sections of the city," and were "independent, respectable citizens." In 1925 over half the inspectors made a living as attorneys, clerks, and salesmen, and practically all fell into the "white collar" class.[8] The election commission presented another area in which reformers could participate, but in such a way as to avoid confronting the machine.

[7]See Lyle W. Dorsett, The Pendergast Machine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 77-79, for a discussion of Tom Pendergast's takeover of Kansas City commission government.

[8]Joseph P. Harris, "Permanent Election Registration in Omaha," National Municipal Review XV (November 1926): 638-640.

Perhaps another reason why the commission failed to
alter the Omaha scene was its lack of radical change. In
Pittsburgh, where a ward-elected council of twenty-seven was
replaced by a commission of nine, or in Birmingham where
three, and later five, commissioners took the place of thirty-
two aldermen, drastic cuts in representation resulted from
the commission. In Omaha, seven commissioners replaced
twelve councilmen, a much more equitable change than in
the other cities. In addition, some type of at-large voting
had been part of the city's election policy since the 1880s
and was not brought in as a by-product of the commission.
City-wide voting and the commission received the blame for
limiting the participation of lower classes elsewhere; it
pre-dated the commission in Omaha and diffused its effects.

The Hays-Weinstein articles were traditional, rather
than quantitative in their methodology. Yet the hypotheses
suggested by these provocative essays invite comparison to
other cities such as Omaha. Historical circumstances vary
from place to place, as do sources available to historians
and the methodology to utilize these sources. Without
suggesting that the Hays-Weinstein thesis has no merit, it
must be said that Omaha did not fit their model because
the commission failed to change the type of men running
for office. The city experienced the push for businessmen
in government twenty years before the commission, at the
same time demands were made for at-large representation and

."a higher grade of men" to hold municipal office. Professionals especially ran for office in increasing numbers, but this was not surprising, since more men were classified as professionals after the turn of the century. The nature of Omaha's professional commissioners was also important: most were city hall employees who moved onto the commission, rather than an influx of new businessmen imbued with scientific administrative attitudes. Perhaps the real ruling elite in Omaha failed to run for office because they were already tied to city hall through the boss, Tom Dennison. As a result, a splintered reform movement lacked this upper echelon of men who were involved in reform in other cities, and was hampered in its efforts to achieve power.

This study illustrated that changing the machinery of government did not necessarily lead to a change in personnel. In some cities the commission did attract new men, who won elections based on city-wide contests. In Omaha, the governmental structure itself did not change municipal rule. More case studies on the nature of Progressive reform and structural change in municipal government will present perhaps an even greater number of divergent views on hypotheses such as those offered by Hays and Weinstein. The end result may be that historians cannot even classify Progressive reform as a movement at all, but conclude

that it consisted of individualized reactions to individual circumstances that varied with each locality.[9]

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[9]For an interesting argument stating that there was no such thing as a "Progressive Movement," see Peter Filene, "An Obituary for 'The Progressive Movement,'" _American Quarterly_ 22 (Spring, 1970): 20-34.

APPENDIX

CODEBOOK: POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN OMAHA, 1858-1930

Variable Number	Variable Name	Description	Columns
1	Election	Election Year	1-2
			Skip 1 (3)
2	Candid	Candidate I.D. Number	4-6
			Skip 1 (7)
3	Party	Candidate's Party	8-9

Code major party if listed in more than
  one in any one year.

01 = Republican
02 = Democrat
03 = Socialist
04 = Populist and Populist-Petition
05 = Prohibitionist
06 = Workingmen, Labor Union, Citizen's,
       Trade Union
07 = Independent
14 = Commission
-9 = Missing Value

Skip 1 (10)

| 4 | Ward | Ward Represented This Election | 11-12 |

01 = 1
02 = 2
03 = 3, etc.
14 = Commission
-9 = Not Applicable

Skip 1 (13)

Variable Number	Variable Name	Description	Columns
5	Appear	Number of Appearance in Coding	14

1, 2, 3, 4, etc.

Skip 1 (15)

| 6 | Result | Result <u>this</u> Election | 16 |

1 = Win
0 = Loss

Skip 2
(17-18)

| 7 | Wins | Total Elections Won | 19-20 |
| 8 | Losses | Total Elections Lost | 21-22 |

Skip 1 (23)

| 9 | Occup | Occupation this Election (See Extra List 1) | 24-26 |

-99 = No occupation known

| 10 | Occstat | Occupational Status | 27-28 |

01 = Professional
02 = Proprietors (owners of all
　　　sorts)
03 = Clerical (Middle Class,
　　　Sales and Services)
04 = Blue Collar (Skilled, unskil-
　　　led, some mfg. workers)
-9 = Missing Value

Skip 2
(29-30)

| 11 | Address | Address According to 1980 Census Tract | 31-34 |

-999 = Missing Value

Skip 1
(35)

Variable Number	Variable Name	Description	Columns
12	Ethnic	Ethnicity	36-37

```
01 = English
02 = Scottish
03 = Irish
04 = Welsh
05 = Scottish-Irish
06 = Scottish-English
07 = Scottish-Dutch
08 = English-Welsh
09 = Canadian
10 = WASP
11 = German
12 = Bohemian
13 = Polish
17 = Dutch
18 = French
21 = Danish
22 = Swedish
30 = Scandinavian
31 = Russian
-9 = Missing Value
```

Skip 1
(38)

13	Relig	Religion	39-40

```
11 = Baptist
12 = Congregational
13 = Episcopal
14 = Lutheran
15 = Methodist
16 = Presbyterian
21 = Catholic
31 = Jewish
-9 = Missing Value
```

Skip 1
(41)

14	Age	Age at this Election	42-43

-9 = Missing Value

15	Arrive	Year of Arrival in Omaha	44-45

(Last two Digits-58, 68, 06, etc.)
-9 = Missing Value

Variable Number	Variable Name	Description	Columns
16	Born	If Born in Omaha	46

0 = Not Born Here
1 = Born in Omaha
9 = Missing Value

| 17 | AgeArr | Age at Arrival in Omaha | 47-48 |

0 = Birth in Omaha
01, 02, . . . 10, 20, 35, etc.
-9 = Unknown

Skip 2
(49-50)

| 18 | Birth | Birthplace | 51-52 |

(See Extra List 2)
-9 = Missing Value

Skip 1
(53)

| 19 | Exper | Political Experience at <u>First</u> Election | 54 |

1 = Yes
2 = No
9 = Unknown

| 20 | Vet | Veteran | 55 |

1 = Yes
9 = Unknown

Skip 1
(56)

| 21 | Excel | Excelsior Listing-1886 | 57 |

1 = Yes
0 = No

| 22 | Orff | Orff's Blue Book-1890 | 58 |

1 = Yes
0 = No

Variable Number	Variable Name	Description	Columns
23	Blue92	Blue Book-1892	59
	1 = Yes 0 = No		
24	Blue10	Blue Book-1910	60
	1 = Yes 0 = No		
			Skip 1 (61)
25	Mason	Masonic Member	62
	1 = Yes 9 = Unknown (Use for all club coding)		
26	CommClub	Member Commercial Club, Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade	63
27	Elk	Member Elks	64
28	Oddfel	Member Odd Fellows	65
29	Eagle	Member Eagles	66
30	Kofp	Member Knights of Pythias	67
31	Omaha	Member Omaha Club	68
32	Ak	Member Ak-Sar-Ben	69
33	Wow	Member Woodmen of the World	70
34	HHField	Member Happy Hollow, Field, Omaha, Seymour Club	71
35	Union	Member Union or other Political Club	72

Variable Number	Variable Name	Description	Columns
36	Realest	Member Real Estate Owners Club	73
			Skip 1 (74)
37	TotMem	Total Memberships	75-76

01 = 1
02 = 2
03 = 3, etc.
-9 = Unknown

Extra List 1: Variable Number 9, Occupation

Professional

        001 = Attorney
        002 = Physician
        003 = Private Administrator/Officer
        004 = Public Administrator (Government
                employee)
        005 = Engineer
        006 = Teacher
        007 = Minister
        008 = Journalist, Publisher
        009 = Auditor, Accountant
        010 = Dentist

Services and Sales, Clerical

        021 = Policeman
        022 = Fireman
        023 = Barber
        024 = Hotel Proprietor
        025 = Saloonkeeper
        026 = Stables, Livery
        027 = Express and Transfer Co.,
                Stage Lines
        028 = Steamboat and Railway Agent
        029 = Loans, Investments, Land Companies
        030 = Real Estate
        031 = Real Estate Comb. (loans,
                insurance)
        032 = Insurance
        033 = Livestock Commission
        034 = Unspecified sales
        035 = Cashier
        036 = Clerk
        037 = Office Worker (unspecified)
        038 = Telegraph Operator
        039 = Coroner
        040 = Bookkeeper
        041 = Travel Agent
        042 = Mailman or other Low Level
                Government Job

Small Merchants

        051 = Food Merchants (grocery, meat,
                bakery, confectionary)
        052 = Liquor Store, Tobacco, Cigars
        053 = Hardware, Firearms, Auto Supplies

```
054 = Coal, Ice
055 = Dry Goods, Notions, Housewares
056 = Clothing, Jewelry
057 = Drug Stores
058 = Feed Store (animals  products)
059 = Lumber Dealer
060 = Merchant (unspecified)
```

Wholesale Merchants and Large Retail

```
071 = Commission Merchants, Forwarding
        (unspecified)
072 = Wholesale Food Products (spices,
        tea, fruit, produce, groceries)
073 = Wholesale Hardware (including
        paint and glass)
074 = Wholesale Wearing Apparel
075 = Wholesale or Large Company
        Construction Materials
        (brick, tile, lumber)
076 = Agricultural Implements
077 = Wholesale Coal
```

Manufacturing-Industry

```
081 = Building Supplies Mfgr.
        (brick, stone, cement, sawmill,
        drain tile)
082 = Contractor, Developer
083 = Machinery Mfgr.
084 = Boiler Works
085 = Carriage, Wagon Mfgr.
086 = Harness Mfgr.
087 = Tent, Awning, Rubber
088 = Upholstery, Mattress
089 = Chemicals, Paint and Oil
090 = Food Product Mfgr. (brewery,
        milling, grain company,
        cracker factory)
091 = Linseed Oil Works
```

Tradesmen-Skilled

```
101 = Carpenter
102 = Blacksmith, Horseshoer
103 = Plumber
104 = Machinist
105 = Boot, Shoemaker
106 = Tinner
107 = Stereotyper, Printer
108 = Skilled Railroad Worker
```

109 = Street Railway Company employee
      (undetermined)
110 = Butcher
111 = Stone Mason
112 = Cigar Maker
113 = Electrician
114 = Bricklayer

Tradesmen-Unskilled

121 = Laborer, Workingman
      (unspecified)
122 = Freighter, Teamster, Stage
      Driver
123 = House Mover
124 = Miner
125 = Mechanic (unspecified)
126 = Unskilled Railroad Worker
127 = Livestock Worker
182 = General Employee
129 = Grading Contractor

Other

777 = Retired
-99 = No Occupation Given

Extra List 2:   Variable Number 18, Birthplace

```
01 = Alabama
02 = Alaska
03 = Arizona
04 = Arkansas
05 = California
06 = Colorado
07 = Connecticut
08 = Delaware
09 = D.C.
10 = Florida
11 = Georgia
12 = Hawaii
13 = Idaho
14 = Illinois
15 = Indiana
16 = Iowa
17 = Kansas
18 = Kentucky
19 = Louisiana
20 = Maine
21 = Maryland
22 = Massachusetts
23 = Michigan
24 = Minnesota
25 = Mississippi
26 = Missouri
27 = Montana
28 = Nebraska
29 = Nevada
30 = New Hampshire
31 = New Jersey
32 = New Mexico
33 = New York
34 = North Carolina
35 = North Dakota
36 = Ohio
37 = Oklahoma
38 = Oregon
39 = Pennsylvania
40 = Rhode Island
41 = South Carolina
42 = South Dakota
43 = Tennessee
44 = Texas
45 = Utah
46 = Virginia
47 = Vermont
48 = Washington
49 = West Virginia
```

```
50 = Wisconsin
51 = Wyoming

61 = England
62 = Scotland
63 = Ireland
64 = Wales
65 = Canada
71 = Germany
72 = Alsace-Lorraine
73 = Bohemia
78 = Poland
80 = Russia
81 = Denmark
82 = Sweden

90 = Born in Omaha
```

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