Project Report

Belleville Downtown Historic Preservation Survey

(M Street, West side Belleville Courthouse Square, ca. 1915)

Prepared by Dale Nimz
For the Belleville Main Street Program, Belleville, Republic County, Kansas

December 1, 2008

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Introduction

This project report consists of the following sections:

1) Methodology
2) Historic context statement and architectural analysis
3) Recommendations
4) Bibliography
5) List of surveyed properties
6) Maps

Methodology

The Belleville Downtown Historic Preservation Survey project was initiated by the Belleville Main Street Program with assistance from the Kansas Historic Preservation Office (KHPO). Primary funding was provided by a Historic Preservation Fund Grant, administered by Katrina Ringler, KHPO Grants Manager. Melinda Pierson, Executive Director, Belleville Main Street Program, supervised the project. Deputy County Appraiser Retha Blecha provided a survey area map and property information. Members of the Main Street Design committee also provided advice and assistance.

Consultant historian Dale Nimz carried out the historic preservation survey, research, and interpretation with maps provided by Mike Houts. Nimz began field work in Belleville in July, 2008. Research was carried out in September, property inventories were prepared in October, and the project report was written in November, 2008.

Generally, the survey covered the buildings around the courthouse square from 18th to 19th and from M to N Streets. Additional properties were surveyed on M Street north toe 15th and south to 20th as well as west of the square on L Street. Buildings in the survey area were recorded with digital photographs. Individual buildings were inventoried and building locations were recorded on a survey map. Approximately 93 buildings (historic and modern) were inventoried in the survey area.

In the existing KHPO inventory for Belleville, Republic County, only three historic properties in the survey area were identified (Post Office, 1119 18th Street; Phoenix Block, 1816-1822 M Street; McCullough Block, 1836 M Street). The Republic County Courthouse and the Belleville Post Office are the only properties in the survey area listed on the National Register. The consultant carried out archival research at the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS), Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Belleville Public Library, (see Bibliography). Other information for the historic context statement came from secondary sources on Kansas history and architecture. Relevant Sanborn Insurance Company maps for Belleville (1886-1933) were copied from originals in the Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas. The consultants also searched for and identified historic photographs available in Special Collections, Wichita State University.

Because historic building permits and city directories are not available for Belleville, specific dates of construction for many buildings were difficult to determine. For a few buildings, construction dates were reported by Louise Carstensen in the Historic of Republic County, Kansas (1964). For the other properties inventoried, analysis of the Sanborn maps was used to determine approximate construction dates.

To develop additional specific information on construction dates, the significant businesses and prominent people associated with downtown Belleville, the consultant recommends future interviews with knowledgeable Belleville residents (long-time business operators and property owners.) Then, newspaper research could be focused by estimated dates of construction and occupancy. For a limited number of significant buildings, additional research in county property records could confirm property owners and their tenure.

Republic County is located in the northern tier of Kansas counties along the Nebraska border. Organized in 1860, the county is surrounded, from east to west, by Washington, Cloud, and Jewell counties. Belleville is the county seat of Republic County with a population of 2,239 in the year 2000. The historic commercial district is arranged around a central courthouse square located in the approximate center of town. U.S. Highway 36 runs along the southern edge of town. Before the realignment of Highway 36 in the 1930s and the movement of Highway 81 to the west in 1955, automobile traffic moved through the commercial district on M Street. Historically, two railroad lines, the Union Pacific branch from Junction City and the Rock Island main line from Chicago to Denver, served Belleville.

Historic Context Statement
Belleville Downtown Survey, Republic County, Kansas

Belleville Beginnings

In 1860, the territorial legislature of Kansas defined the boundaries of and named Republic County. The name was related to the Republican River which runs through the county. In September 7, 1868, Governor Samuel J. Crawford issued an executive order organizing the county and designating Pleasant Hill as the temporary county seat.

Belleville's early development was typical of many settlements that began through the efforts of a town company. The Belleville Townsite Company organized on September 25, 1869. There were sixteen original members of the company; the officers included James E. Van Natta, president, John McFarlane, secretary, and directors, B. F. Saylor, J. C. Reilly, and A. B. Tutton. They chose the northwest quarter of Section 2, Township 3, Range 3 West for the site because of its central location and higher elevation.[1] The original townsite included a tract three blocks wide on the north, south, and west, and two blocks wide on the east of the courthouse square. Although Belleville boosters won the 1869 election for the permanent location of the county seat over Scandia, a second election was necessary in 1870 to confirm the choice.

To supply water for the new town, the company hired Dave Woodruff to dig a well on the site. On May 29, 1870, the company awarded a contract to John G. Rich for building a "town house." The

[1] Louise Carstensen, "Belleville City," in History of Republic County (1964), 413, 421.

log building was to be chinked with rock, daubed with mortar, and covered with cottonwood shingles, one door and one window cut and finished, gables covered with lumber, window to be cut in the east and door in the west end.[2] The Belleville town house stood on the open prairie at what is today the northeast corner of 19th and M Streets. Important cultural traditions and community institutions were established early in the town's history. In 1870-1871, the town house sheltered the first post office, the first store, the first church services, and the first school. For example, the Belleville Post Office was established February 18, 1870.

Business began when Dr. J. C. Griffith built a small wood frame store building on the southwest corner of what is now the courthouse square moving his stock of drugs from the "town house." He added a stock of groceries and opened for business on July 4, 1870. E. A. Hallowell and Volney Van Trump built a wood frame building on the northwest corner of the square and opened July 5. J. D. Bowling also constructed a building on the west side of the square.

When William Piper built the "Belleville House," a hotel which opened in September, 1870, it was the first building on the north side of the square.[3] However, this early building was destroyed by fire in 1888. The north half of this block was used for livery stables throughout the nineteenth century. Also, the first county jail stood here from the early 1870s until 1885 when a new jail was built on the southeast corner of the courthouse square in 1889.

Local newspapers not only covered local issues, but they were voices for political parties and they also promoted the town to potential settlers. The Belleville Telescope, was first published by James C. Humphrey on September 30, 1870 at his homestead near the townsite. The early newspaper was published for sixteen months, discontinued for eighteen months, and then resumed. In 1874 Humphrey built a building for the newspaper and his residence near the northeast corner of the square. He sold in 1887, but re-purchased it again in 1889. Finally, Humphrey and his daughter sold the Telescope in July, 1901. A. Q. Miller purchased the newspaper in 1904 and served as the editor until 1922.[4] Miller's son took over management of the paper at that time while his father served the state in positions outside of Belleville. Nevertheless, A. Q. Miller continued as the owner of the Telescope and contributed editorial comments. Several other newspapers were published in Belleville during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but none could match the longevity of the Telescope.

On August 12, 1872, the Belleville Town Site Company proposed to donate $2,000 in town lots to Republic County for the erection of a court house on the public square provided that the county commissioners appropriated $1,000 for that purpose. The officers presented a deed for 126 lots to the county commissioners on August 13. The two-story wood-frame building (24 x 50 feet) was constructed on Lots 11 & 12, Block 16, on the north side of the square.[5]

The plan of downtown Belleville is an example of the Shelbyville Square which includes the central courthouse. Named after the prototype in Shelbyville, Tennessee, the square uses a block of the grid plan for a public square. As settlement spread throughout the Midwest, this plan quickly

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[2] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 415; Savage, History of Republic County, 176.
[3] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 416.
[4] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 478.
[5] I. O. Savage, A History of Republic County, Kansas, 134. See also Sanborn Insurance Company Map (October, 1886), 2.

became the most common county-seat plan in new counties in most Midwestern states. Some county seats were laid out in the Shelbyville pattern as late as 1900.[6]

In an analysis of town planning in early Kansas, historian James C. Malin identified three types of town plans: those oriented to river navigation; to the public square; and to main streets. Malin concluded that the town built around a square followed the southern tradition where the county was the minimal unit of local government. He believed that this type was carried north of the Ohio River along with other cultural traits by immigrants to Kansas who were accustomed to the public square orientation. In territorial Kansas, this town plan was characteristic of towns founded by free state emigrants from the Ohio River border areas. After the Civil War when the areas of central and western Kansas were settled, both the public square and the main street plans were used.[7]

By 1873 the new town of Belleville had become a gateway to the homestead country of the central Great Plains. At that time, F. G. Adams reported that, "the first business house erected in Belleville now stands in the public square, which at the present time is nearly surrounded on all sides by substantial business houses… The people of Belleville have erected good business structures, and neat and tasteful residences."[8] Despite this optimistic description, the Belleville public square needed attention in 1875 because it had grown up in weeds for the past four years. Community leaders plowed the square to eliminate the weeds and planned to plan trees to create a more attractive landscape.[9]

Prosperity depended not only on the procession of travelers that used the services of towns and hamlets in Republic County, but also early agricultural production. There were many difficult early years of farming. The financial panic of 1873 also depressed both agriculture and business. Drought in 1875 added to the hardship for farmers and many of them left Kansas with few resources remaining. By 1878, however, increasing farm production was documented in the first report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture.

Other indications demonstrated Belleville's development as a community. On December 1, 1874, the unsold lots were divided by lot among the stockholders and the Belleville Townsite Company was dissolved. Later, Belleville was incorporated as a city of the third class on January 10, 1878. Ten years later, Belleville became a city of the second class on February 14, 1888. By that time the town had a population of over 2,000 residents.[10]

After Belleville and Republic County grew in population and prospered, a larger and more prominent courthouse was completed in December, 1885. The courthouse did not become the focal point of the public square until a substantial two-story brick courthouse was completed in

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[6] Besides Shelbyville, there are several other examples in southern middle Tennessee, all laid out between 1810 and 1812. See Edward T. Price, "The Central Courthouse Square in the American County Seat," originally published in Geographical Review (January 1968). In Dell Upton and John Vlach, eds., Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 125, 134-135.

[7] James C. Malin, "Kansas: Some Reflections on Culture Inheritance and Originality," Journal of the Central Mississippi Valley American Studies Association 2 (Fall, 1961), 14-15.

[8] F. G. Adams, The Homestead Guide (Waterville, KS: F. G. Adams, 1873), 211.

[9] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 419.

[10] I. O. Savage, History of Republic County, 181-182; "Golden Jubilee Edition," Belleville Telescope 1 July 1937, 1.

December, 1885. This new courthouse was designed by architect George Ropes. Hulse and Moses and Ulrich Brothers were the building contractors. Later on February 12, 1889, the county commissioners accepted a bid for a new jail and jailor's residence to be constructed on the southeast corner of the public square. These structures were completed on October 15, 1889. The old courthouse was sold, remodeled into a hotel and eventually destroyed by fire on February 15, 1890.[11]

Fires in downtown Belleville were a recurring problem in the community's history. In response, entrepreneurs began to build brick and stone commercial buildings that were more durable and resistant to fire. The first brick building in the downtown was constructed in 1882 on the southwest corner of 18th and M. Built by Volney Van Trump, he leased the second floor to the IOOF and AF&AM lodges. Originally, the first floor was leased to the First State Bank, H. M. Hubbard, president. J. C. Hogin bought this significant building in 1912 and replaced it with a new brick building in 1916. The Belleville State Bank occupied the first floor.[12]

A major fire in February, 1884, destroyed approximately two hundred feet of early wood-frame commercial buildings on the west side of the square. Belleville citizens organized a volunteer hook and ladder company, an essential community service, about 1885.[13]

In the 1880s, Kansas boomed economically. The state had nine times as many people in 1885 as in 1865. The railroad system grew into a dense network. Besides the trunk lines of the 1870s, the Missouri Pacific and Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific entered Kansas. In 1886, 950 miles of line were constructed, and 1,680 miles were built. Eight hundred miles of railroad were constructed in 1888 bringing the total in Kansas to a total of nearly 9,000.[14] Economic conditions in the 1880s were good to farmers, businessmen and merchants in northeastern Kansas and a decade of growth produced a flourishing community in Belleville.

By 1890 Belleville had a well-established central business district, churches, schools, and railroad connections. Many businesses in the downtown district had moved from early wood frame buildings into more substantial brick ones by the 1890s. In 1890, John Lethem described Belleville as "beautifully situated on a high, rolling upland. The court house is a commodious and well furnished structure, built of pressed brick and cut stone, surrounded by a beautiful grove of cottonwood and maple trees." The leading hotel in town was the Hotel Republic, established in 1886. It was described as a "handsome brick structure, two stories high," with a dining hall seating forty people and thirty-two sleeping apartments. Lethem also mentioned that just one year earlier, Belleville had finished one of the best opera houses in Northern Kansas. He concluded the positive assessment by saying, "the streets are wide and straight and well shaded by thrifty, beautiful trees…The business blocks are substantially built, of brick and native stone, the frame structures of pioneer days having disappeared… With its abundant supply of water, with its superior railroad facilities, and situated as it is in the center of a rich agricultural and stock-growing region, Belleville offers the best advantage to persons seeking desirable business locations and places for residence of any city in Kansas."[15]

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[11] Savage, History of Republic County, 134-135; Carstensen, "Belleville City, "466.
[12] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 448.
[13] Snapp, Centennial Days, Belleville, Kansas, 1869-1969, n.p.
[14] Miner, History of the Sunflower State, 146-147.
[15] John Lethem, Historical and Descriptive Review of Kansas Vol. 1. Northern Section, 200-201, 204-205.

Although the 1893 depression hurt Kansas farmers and businessmen, residents of Belleville and Republic County recovered quickly. In a promotional article published in the April 21, 1899 edition of the Telescope, a reporter boasted that, "there is no town in the state more beautiful." Local residents were proud to have "a telephone exchange, water works, good walks, and a fine lot of business houses arranged around a large public square, in the center of which the fine court house rears its dome and may be seen for many miles in all directions." The extensive list of businesses in Belleville included Carstensen & Collins, hardware, harness, implements, buggies, wagons, pumps and windmills; Dr. W. T. Doherty, drug store; R. B. Ward, hardware, queensware, implements, wagons and buggies; Harley L. Pierce, jeweler and optician, stockholder and manager of the local telephone exchange; S. T. Stevenson, dry goods, notions, and shoes; J. B. Riddlebarger, wholesale and retail dealer in flour, hay, and feed; buyer of poultry, butter, and eggs; G. A. Chapin, groceries, shoes, notions and tinware; H. D. Munger's Racket Store, tinware, notions and household articles; J. W. Hall & Company, real estate, loans, and insurance; D. C. Deal, clothing store; D. H. Ferguson, implements; J. C. Dawson, Post Office Book Store; L. D. Speenburg, meat market; Alex James Livery Stable; F. M. Bush & Son, general merchandise; J. M. Doyle, furniture, carpets, and undertaking; and the Hotel Republic, conducted by S. C. Crummer.[16]

Agricultural history

By 1899, a reporter in the Telescope argued that because of the important production of corn and alfalfa in Republic County, the area was "the natural home of cattle, hogs, and horses" and all of these were "the products that make countries wealthy."[17] The importance of agriculture to early settlers in Republic County was demonstrated by a meeting on February 20, 1871 for the purpose of organizing a county agricultural society. This was the first step taken in any county in Kansas west of the Sixth Meridian to organize an agricultural society. Later, a county horticultural society operated from 1879 to 1890.

Based on traditions, immigrants to Belleville brought distinctive cultural values from their previous homes and expressed them in community institutions. The county fair was an example of a specialized landscape designed to recreate past traditions in their present lives. Fairs served not only as a tradition carried to Kansas from more eastern states, it was particularly useful for a new town. Most of these fairs were used as promotional devices intended to attract new settlers to a community. Agricultural societies usually were composed of farmers, but also business men who believed that they could use the fair to advertise the fertility of local farmland and created elaborate exhibits to promise bountiful production.

Social organizations were elemental in providing stability within a relatively young community. They created relationships based on shared values and ideas as well as a means for new residents to immerse themselves in a new community's life. Economic activity in a small town was necessary for survival, but social institutions provided the essential stability and predictability of community life.

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[16] "Belleville," Belleville Telescope 21 April 1899, 4, cols. 1-6, p. 8.
[17] "Belleville," Belleville Telescope 21 April 1899, 4, cols. 1-6.

The first Republic County fair was held on October 4, 1871, at temporary grounds two miles east of Belleville. A second annual fair was held October 3-4, 1872, on a thirty-acre site about one half mile northeast of Belleville. The fair association operated until county commissioners withheld financial support on October 29, 1878, and the annual fair was discontinued.[18]

Without a county fair, agricultural boosters sponsored a Corn Carnival from 1879 to 1904. The first Corn Carnival Parade was held in downtown Belleville in 1898. As farmers throughout Kansas experienced the so-called "Golden Age of Agriculture," a new agricultural society in Republic County was organized in 1905. At the same time, county leaders held a meeting on July 8, 1905, to discuss organizing a fair. Although there was no fair that year, the Republic County Agricultural Association purchased most of the present site northeast of downtown Belleville and set the date for the first Republic County Fair of the twentieth century for September 11-13, 1906. This fair operated with an entrance admission fee through 1919.[19]

By 1930 Republic County supported the third largest agricultural fair and livestock show in Kansas. The fair had benefited from legislation passed in January, 1919, which provided for counties of a certain population to own and operate their own fair by tax levy. This enabled the Fair Board to offer free attendance and promote the North Central Kansas Free Fair. The board purchased the fair grounds by February 2, 1920 and opened the first free fair September 7-10, 1920.[20] Soon the fair board asked members of the Belleville Chamber of Commerce to manage the fair's amusement department. The chamber moved the race track and fences, built the racing oval into the fastest in the Middle West, built new grandstands and installed lighting for night attractions. By 1937, the fair was the third largest in Kansas and considered to be in the best financial condition of any fair in the state.[21] That same year, Republic County farmers produced the greatest wheat crop in local history to that date. Big yields on the 110,000 acres harvested were estimated to bring $2,000,000 in Republic County.[22]

The progress in agriculture was summarized in the conclusion of the History of Republic County, 1868-1964. Local historians conclude, "in less than a hundred years a miracle has come about in the farm homes and on the homesteads of Republic County. Agriculture has grown up from the age of homespun to the age of power--from self sufficient produce for yourself-farming to a type of business occupation, which calls for a wider variety of skills than almost any other occupation. High production per man with labor-saving cost-cutting has brought a better way of life. It has made America a 'Land of Plenty.'"[23]

Railroads

Along with agriculture, the railroads made Belleville a prosperous community and supported the downtown businesses. No railroad track was laid in Kansas until 1860, and by 1865, only seventy-one miles had been constructed. After the Civil War ended, however, every town on the Great

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[18] Savage, History of Republic County, 87, 96.
[19] Snapp, Centennial Days, Belleville, Kansas, 1869-1969 n. p.
[20] Special Progress Edition, Belleville Telescope 27 November 1930, E3.
[21] "N.C.K. Free Fair Leads in Early Fair History of State," Golden Jubilee Edition, Belleville Telescope 1 July, 1937.
[22] "Golden Jubilee Edition, Belleville Telescope 1 July 1937, 1.
[23] Carstensen, History of Republic County, 1868-1964 (Belleville, KS: Belleville Telescope, 1964), 519.

Plains sought a railroad line because most new towns would not survive without the access to agricultural markets, trade opportunities, and passenger traffic. Just as important as the railroad was the telegraph that came with it and connected all communities across the nation.

In 1873, F. G. Adams suggested that some railroad would build up the valley of the Republican River. He insisted that "Belleville has admirable railroad capabilities and prospects" because it was "admirably situated in respect to lines of thoroughfares, with a good soil, numerous timbered streams, excellent building rock, and broad acres of free homestead lands, immigration has naturally fallen in here very rapidly." At that time however, Belleville was still "fifty miles from Waterville on the Central Branch railroad, and forty-five from Hanover on the St. Joseph and Denver road, from which points stages arrive daily."[24]

As relative prosperity returned, the settlers of Republic County held a meeting on April 26, 1878 to select a committee to visit Kansas City, meet with officers of the Kansas Pacific Railroad and the Kansas City Board of Trade, and discuss steps to secure a railroad.[25] In fact, the first railroad in Republic County, the Missouri Pacific, reached Scandia on December 24, 1878, but Belleville did not have a railroad connection until 1884.

That was the Junction City and Fort Kearney extension of the Union Pacific Railroad (1884-1935). The first regular passenger train on that line reached Belleville on November 29, 1884. Construction and freight trains had been running on the track for the previous two weeks. That service lasted until the last scheduled passenger train on the Union Pacific left the Belleville depot on January 17, 1935 and then the tracks were removed.[26]

In Belleville's history, the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad (1887-1980) was the most important railroad influence on the town. Republic County residents approved bonds for construction of the Rock Island line in spring, 1886. The first regular Rock Island passenger train left Belleville for Fairbury, Nebraska on September 18, 1887. Belleville became an important division point for two Rock Island branches--one ran south to Kansas City, Missouri and one ran north through Omaha to Chicago while the main line ran west from Belleville to Denver. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Rock Island line provided an essential outlet for stock and grain to markets in Kansas City, Omaha, and Chicago.[27]

When the Rock Island built its track through Belleville, the line divided Belleville and Freedom townships and the area north of the tracts was designated as the "North Ward." Today that area includes the North Central Kansas Fair grounds.

By 1905, Belleville was important to the Rock Island and the railroad was vital to the town's economic base. As engineer J. A. Carter noted in a Telescope article published on December 29, the Rock Island employed nearly 225 men with a monthly payroll of nearly $8,000. Carter described Belleville's advantages as a division point. "It is the northwest terminal of the Kansas Division at the west point of a link connecting to great overland routes, one leading west, east, and

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[24] F. G. Adams, The Homestead Guide, 213.
[25] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 471.
[26] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 471; O. Savage, A History of Republic County, Kansas (Beloit, KS: Jones & Chubbic, Printer, 1901), 63.
[27] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 472.

north, the other southeast and southwest. Here lading diverges and is taken to different destinations." This distribution required tracks for storing cars and crews to switch the cars in order, facilities for housing, handling, and repairing the large class of engines used on the branch. Carter believed that this function would be even more important in the future. As he wrote, "we look to the west, as the great volume of business is from west to east, hence crews must be held at the western terminal in position to move stock and all perishable freight east without delay." Carter reported that one prominent railroad president had predicted that "every track will have to be doubled from the Missouri river to the west coast of our nation, to meet the growing demand of business."[28]

In 1915, the Belleville Social Survey documented the importance of the Rock Island division point. At that time, the report concluded that "fully one-third of the men over twenty years of age in the community gain their living directly from the railroads. Another third of the population is made up of business men and their employees and professional men. The largest proportion of the last third of the male adults is composed of retired farmers."[29]

Twentieth Century Changes

Technological innovation and social change in the early twentieth century brought important developments to Republic County and Belleville. Much of the evolution of businesses and buildings on Belleville's Courthouse Square from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century was recorded in the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Belleville dating from 1886 to 1933. These maps show that most of the buildings constructed in the business district were constructed during this period and that, by the 1930s, most were constructed of brick.

A crucial problem faced by the leaders of Belleville from the town's early days was the development of a dependable quality water supply. By 1875 there were wells at each corner of the square. On April 1, 1875 a pump was installed in the well on the northwest corner. Subscriptions were solicited to buy pumps to put in each of the wells and, by May, 1875, there were three pumps in operation.[30] In 1879 a cistern on the northeast corner of the square was completed, a pump installed, and a watering trough placed to accommodate those who wished to water their stock.[31] After citizens approved $3,500 in bonds, a water storage tower in the southwest corner of the square was constructed in 1881.[32]

During the drought of 1890, the Rock Island storage pond and all the city wells went dry. Five years later, in an attempt to solve the water supply problem, the Union Pacific Railroad dug a large well twelve feet in diameter and one hundred sixty-five feet deep. The contractor found a source of clear pure mineral water and installed an up-to-date pumping plant. In 1900 the city of Belleville purchased the well and pumping plant for a municipal supply. As the town's population grew, other wells were dug, a standpipe erected, and a cement storage reservoir constructed. In the new

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[28] Belleville Telescope 29 December 1905, 13-14.
[29] E. W. Burgess and J. J. Sippy, Belleville Social Survey, 16.
[30] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 419.
[31] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 420.
[32] Glenn Snapp, ed., Centennial Days, Belleville, Kansas, 1869-1969 (Belleville, KS: Belleville Centennial Committee, 1969, n.p.).

wells, however, a vein of very salty water reached, when mixed with the mineral water from the earlier wells, "a queer tasting drink resulted."

Local discussions about where to look for water divided the town's leaders into two groups described by the Telescope as "Riverists vs anti-Riverists." A contractor drilled in the vicinity of the Republican River to the west, but found no satisfactory water supply. Finally, the city hired the Layne Western engineering firm of Kansas City to search for and provide an adequate long-term supply of water. In early August, 1928, voters approved a bond issue of $119,400 for that purpose. In February, 1929, the Layne Western Company completed a system of two wells (each with a capacity of 4,000 gallons/minute) eleven miles north of the city. That water is now piped into the city. A few years later, the Telescope commented, "the supply is considered inexhaustible and is unusually pure. There is no taste of salt or disinfectant. It is equal to the best supplies anywhere."[33]

Other city services also were provided in the early twentieth century. Belleville editor A. Q. Miller witnessed and described many of the steps in civic improvement. Miller bought the Telescope in 1904. As he remembered in 1937, at that time, the city lighting system consisted of a few kerosene lamps installed about the public square. The water system consisted of one deep well from which the city was trying to serve a growing community with an inadequate water supply. There were not a foot of brick or concrete sidewalk and the old-fashioned board walks that did exist were limited to the downtown district.

In 1904 street grade lines had not been established. There were no curbs and gutters and storm drainage system so drainage was inadequate. There was no central sewer system. As Miller wrote, "after every rain the streets and alleys were a veritable quagmire and merchandise could not be delivered from the stores to the city residences." [34]

The first lights on the streets of Belleville in 1906 were kerosene. After the city invested in a municipally owned light plant in 1907, the first electric arc lights were installed and, eventually, a set of three-globe lights formed a "great white way" illuminating the streets leading to the courthouse square and the square itself.[35]

In the early days of settlement, the fuel supply was a serious problem by 1877. According to the Telescope, "no sooner had the community become fairly well established than the fuel supply began to dwindle. Worry over deforestation had begun and hauling coal from Waterville, the nearest railroad point, was out of the question. Coal was discovered at Minersville [in adjacent Cloud County]. Farmers were busy with their wagons hauling the fuel to supply the heavy demand… the coming of the railroad solved the fuel problem for all time and coal became available for everyone."[36]

Until the Kansas Pipe Line and Gas Company [later Kansas Power and Light Company] brought gas to Belleville in March, 1930, coal was the universal fuel for businesses and residences in Belleville. In the 1930s, the gas company supplied six towns--Belleville, Scandia, Cuba, Narka,

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[33] "Golden Jubilee Edition," Belleville Telescope 1 July 1937, C1.
[34] "Golden Jubilee Edition," Belleville Telescope 1 July 1937, B1.
[35] Snapp, Centennial Days, Belleville, Kansas, 1869-1969, n.p.
[36] Special Progress Edition, Belleville Telescope, 11A.

Mahaska, and Munden--through Belleville. As the Telescope described, "nearly all the large fuel consumers in the business section are burning gas in their furnaces and the clouds of smoke which formerly hung over the city at fire-building times are gone forever."[37]

In the Telescope, A. Q. Miller summarized the improvements he had observed in the years between 1904 and 1937. He said in 1904, for example, "there was not a modern store front on the public square while today Belleville has the reputation of standing at the top of the list in towns of its class in modern store fronts."[38] By 1937 the city had installed an excellent electric lighting system, a new water system, and a $100,000 sewer system.[39]

In the early twentieth century, Kansans welcomed innovations such as the airplane, automobile and the tractor.[40] Between 1900 and 1910, there was an increasing demand for good roads. The Kansas Good Roads Association was organized in 1900 with the slogan, “Keep Kansans Out of the Mud.” By 1914 Kansans owned 50,000 cars, and 30,000 of the owners were farmers.[41] Cities and towns invested in their infrastructure, including paving.

However, paving technology for the improvement of roads was undeveloped. Brick paving was most effective at curing ever-present mud or dust and ruts along Main Street. Easy to lay and long lasting, vitrified brick streets afforded a solution for permanently paved roads that were used in many Kansas towns. By 1922 Belleville had brick paving laid by Harry Taylor. There were more than five miles of brick paving completed by 1937. In 1964 the town had seventeen miles of brick and asphalt paved streets.[42]

The rapid growth of automobile transportation was reflected in the construction of service buildings on 18th and M Streets in Belleville as garages replaced livery stables. In 1904 there were two wood frame livery stables, but they were replaced by nine modern garages in 1937.

A. Q. Miller, the prominent editor of the Belleville Telescope, became convinced that the success of the automobile would be limited only by the available roads. Miller recalled that the first three automobiles which came to Belleville were owned by Judge Dillon, Harley Pierce, the telephone manager, and Ellis Ludwick, the lumber dealer. Then in 1906, several Jackson cars were delivered on the railroad. These "real automobiles with chain drive," which would carry them at twenty miles an hour, were sold to local doctors Billingsley, Arbuthnot, and Haning.[43]

The first Chevrolet agency was established in Belleville by Zona White in 1914 soon after the company first began to manufacture automobiles. Later, the Bowman-Shore Motor Company purchased the Chevrolet agency in January, 1929, and moved to the Mosher garage (northwest corner 20th & M, constructed 1916) early in 1930.[44]

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[37] "Golden Jubilee Edition," Belleville Telescope, 5.
[38] Special Progress Edition, Belleville Telescope 27 November 1930, B1.
[39] "Golden Jubilee Edition," Belleville Telescope 1 July 1937, B1.
[40] Miner, History of the Sunflower State, 196.
[41] Miner, History of the Sunflower State, 226, 262.
[42] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 467.
[43] "Golden Jubilee Edition," Belleville Telescope 1 July 1937, B1.
[44] Special Progress Edition, Belleville Telescope 27 November 1930, 4A.

Editor Miller became a vocal proponent of interstate auto routes and improved highways. He participated in a regional meeting on June 1, 1911 in Salina to form an association for planning a north-south road across Kansas. The group decided to assess counties for road dragging and pole painting with work done by volunteers. The association authorized W. S. Gearhardt, the state engineer, Kansas State College, to draw a map of Kansas, showing the routes connecting all county seat towns. A. Q. Miller was elected treasurer of the Meridian Road Association. The group adopted the name "Meridian" Road (later U.S. Highway 81), because the proposed route followed the sixth principal meridian. In September, 1912, an expedition of volunteers logged the road and plotted the mileage between various towns, from Chester, Nebraska, to South Haven, Kansas. The Meridian Road Association was the beginning of the International 81-Pan American Highway Association which eventually designated Highway 81 as a route from Winnipeg, Canada to Laredo, Texas.[45]

At a important meeting on March 21, 1913 hosted by the Commercial Club at Belleville, A. Q. Miller was elected secretary-treasurer of another association. The group planned a new east-west route and set the goal of marking an east-west route between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Denver, Colorado. Since the tentative route paralleled the Rock Island Railroad, it was called the Rock Island Highway. At the time, the "highway" was just a series of disconnected township roads. The association carried out a logging and mapping expedition that began September 21, 1913. In a few months at a meeting in St. Joseph on March 17, 1914, the Rock Island Association merged into the Pike's Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway Association (later U.S. Highway 36). It took this name because it was routed to Colorado Springs.

Because of the intersection of two major highways, Miller and his associates in Belleville originated the slogan making Belleville, "Crossroads of America" in 1914. For the next several years, A. Q. Miller was very active in state and national promotion of the two highways. He served as president of both U. S. 81 and U. S. 81 highway associations. Several of the guidebooks and brochures were printed in the Telescope printing shop.[46]

As the federal and state governments invested more in the highway system, several highways in Kansas including 36 and 81 were designated on November 11, 1926 as part of the national network which was numbered, not named. In another sign of technological progress, the city of Belleville selected a new airport site one half mile west of town and authorized the Bowers Airport Company of Salina and Lindsborg to erect hangers, a depot, and other equipment. The company planned to spend between $16,000 and $20,000 on the facility. At the time, the city was negotiating with government airmail officials in the hope of securing a mail route between Wichita and Omaha.[47]

During the early twentieth century, Belleville leaders embraced the Progressive movement for civic improvement. This interest coincided with national ideals about city beautification that were popular in major metropolitan areas and towns everywhere across the United States. One of the important steps toward improvement was the Belleville Social Survey (1915). As the Kansas City Star reported, "this typical Kansas community is the first town of its size in Kansas, or for that

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[45] A. Q. Miller, 76-78.
[46] A. Q. Miller, 79-90.
[47] "Belleville Will Spend $20,000 On Its Airport," Topeka Capital 12 August 1929.

matter in the United States, to undertake and make a thorough social inventory, or stock-taking of its assets and liabilities."[48]

Among other conclusions, the survey commented on the effect of the railroads on Belleville's development. The Rock Island cut off North Belleville from the main body of the community, but the Union Pacific railroad did not have such "a sectionalizing tendency." However, the presence of the Union Pacific railroad west of the business square was an important factor in making the east side of the town the residence section. The survey noted that the business houses of Belleville were located around the two square blocks of the courthouse park and, consequently, the courthouse square served as an important civic center--"the courthouse square symbolizes the unifying factors in community life." To a stranger visiting Belleville, the survey commented, "the courthouse square is its most attractive characteristic."[49] Civic improvement provided benefits to Belleville's residents, but community leaders also believed that improvement attracted new residents and businesses to town.

Other improvements in Belleville included the change of street names. Historically, street names featured the names of prominent citizens, trees, and presidents. Some streets running north and south had different names north of the old Rock Island railroad line. For example, L was Randolph from the south city limits to the railroad tracks and Burns from the tracks north. In 1919 the city leaders changed to a system with letters of the alphabet designating streets running north and south and numbers identifying east and west streets. The ordinance passed on September 22, 1919 provided that Belleville streets would be designated by letters and numbers.[50] Also, the city adopted the city-manager form of government in 1921. Later, the city changed to the city manager, council-mayor form in 1951.

Buildings and Institutions

Some of the most prominent buildings in downtown Belleville were constructed for banks, the leading commercial enterprises of the community. For example, the First National Bank received its charter in Scandia on August 23, 1887. When the bank moved to Belleville in 1893, it took the name National Bank of Belleville with W. W. Caldwell, president, C. P. Carstensen, vice president, and D. D. Bramwell, cashier. Initially, the bank was located at 1820 M Street.[51] Later, D. D. Bramwell became the bank president. After his death in 1927, his son G. H. Bramwell took over and was followed by grandson, G. P. Bramwell. The bank changed its name to the First National Bank of Belleville on June 14, 1921. In 1894 the National Bank moved to the northwest corner of 18th and M where it remained until November 6, 1965. The bank then moved to a new building on K Street between 17th and 18th. In 1950 the bank officers removed a projecting corner bay with a distinctive domed roof from the building at 18th and M "in keeping with the rest of the town's modernization."[52]

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[48] "A Social Photograph of Belleville, Kansas," Kansas City Star 12 April 1914.
[49] E. W. Burgess and J. J. Sippy, Belleville Social Survey (Belleville, KS, 1915), 8-9.
[50] "Belleville Streets Had "Jazzy Names" Prior to Change to Numbers and Alphabet Designation," Bicentennial Edition, Belleville Telescope 3 June 1976, 1G.
[51] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 476.
[52] Snapp, Centennial Days, Belleville, Kansas, 1869-1969, n. p.

The Belleville State Bank was established on August 8, 1900 with H. F. Talbot, president, J. R. Caldwell, vice president, and J. A. Butler, cashier. Later Ed and Lloyd Johnson owned the bank and A. R. Moss was president in 1930.[53] The Belleville State Bank was located at the southwest corner of 18th and M.[54]

The People's National Bank was established August 1, 1910 with Henry H. Collins, president, Charles A. Ball, vice president, and George Young, cashier. The bank opened in a new building on the southwest corner of 19th and M Streets. E. A. Fulcomer became president in 1920. His son Paul J. Fulcomer succeeded his father in July 1934 and grandson, Paul G. Fulcomer, became president in January, 1961.[55] The Belleville State Bank merged with the People's National Bank in 1931.[56]

The Belleville Building and Loan Association was another financial institution. It was organized in the spring of 1923 and opened for business on July 2, 1923 in an office over the People's National Bank. W. G. Saip served as president and Gene Nelson was secretary and manager. The association bought the building at 1830 M, remodeled it, and moved there in 1927.[57]

During the early twentieth century, public libraries became even more important as Kansans esteemed education at all levels, especially college. Belleville citizens first discussed a public library at a public meeting in 1924. Later, representatives from city organizations held another meeting in April, 1926, elected officers, and began drives for book donations and fund-raising. The library opened February 1, 1927 in its first quarters upstairs in the Perry Builiding with $175 and one thousand donated books. A new library building was constructed and accepted by the city on January 1, 1930.

For other entertainment, Republic County residents visited the Blair Theater, "one of the finest in northern Kansas and southern Nebraska." Sam H. Blair opened the theater in 1928.[58] He and his wife Katie Blair came to Belleville from Mena, Arkansas in 1920 when they heard that the local theater was for sale. They opened a moving picture theater in the Chapin building on the south side of the square. When their lease expired in 1928, the Blairs decided to build. They purchased and gutted three existing commercial buildings on the south side of the square and hired the Pearcy brothers--Glenn, Fred, and George--to construct an up-to-date movie theater. The new theater was ornamented in a Spanish decorative style and the interior was wired for "talkies" which soon came to Belleville. Murals were painted on the interior walls by artist Tom Swift. The new theater cost $35,000. It reopened on December 24, 1928. Talking pictures came to Belleville on April 19, 1929. In 1941 the Blairs leased the theater to the Commonwealth Theater chain. By that time, the Blairs had interests in theaters in Greenleaf, Smith Center, Osborne, Phillipsburg, Mankato, Clyde, Scandia, Republic, and Cuba and in York and Hebron, Nebraska. In 1966 the Blair Theater was sold to the Commonwealth company.[59]

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[53] Special Progress Edition, Belleville Telescope 27 November 1930, F3.
[54] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 448.
[55] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 476.
[56] Snapp, Centennial Days, Belleville, Kansas, 1869-1969, n.p.
[57] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 476.
[58] Special Progress Edition, Belleville Telescope 27 November 1930, F6.
[59] "Blair Theatre A Pacesetter in North Central Kansas," Bicentennial Edition, 3 June 1976, 3E.

Fires in Downtown Belleville

While city leaders invested in improvement, local businessmen had to recover from the hazards of fire. Fire disasters were recurring events in Belleville's development. Three such fires interrupted local progress during the early twentieth century, but property owners rebuilt and maintained the vitality of the commercial district around the courthouse square.

In a disastrous fire on July 28, 1919, four brick store buildings on the south side of the square were destroyed (total loss $50,000). The fire originated in the Eagle Grocery and Meat Market (proprietors Hill & Latta) in the old Saip building. Fire spread to the Rabel Building occupied by the Concordia Creamery and then into the Chapin building occupied by R. L. Johnson's hardware and the Fulcomer Building occupied by the Belleville Motor Company operated by Roy Shields.

One of the worst fires in Belleville, which caused damage estimated at between $60,000 and $75,000, broke out in the Opera House block, a local landmark, in the evening February 13, 1924. The fire completely burned the Opera House, the Arbuthnot Drug Company's store, the Opera House Café, Dr. E. V. Kalin's dental office above the café, and R. Martin's Steam Suitatorium (clothes cleaners), located behind the State Bank (on the corner). The Opera House Block had been constructed by Ezra Powell in 1882. Next door, the Hogin bank building suffered damages estimated at about $10,000. The State Bank, located in the front on the lower floor of the Hogin building remained intact, as did attorneys' offices above the bank.

Despite the extensive destruction, Belleville was fortunate in having one of the latest and most modern fire engines and pumpers, which was first used in this fire and "fully demonstrated the wisdom of the city administration in its purchase last fall." The Telescope reported that the "owners of the buildings burned are already figuring on re-building, and while it took the old opera house, which for more than thirty years has been an old landmark, and will long remain in the memory of all Belleville citizens, there will undoubtedly soon arise on its site buildings of more modern and up-to-date character." However, the fire left local residents without an adequate place for large gatherings.[60]

A few weeks later, another fire on April 24, 1924 destroyed buildings on the northeast corner of 18th and M Streets. The fire originated in the basement of the Wineland hardware store and destroyed the two-story hardware building, the Nealeigh pool hall on the corner, and the city fire station behind those buildings to the north. The estimated loss was approximately $40,000, but all the city equipment was saved. At the time, the Telescope commented that John Nealeigh, owner of the pool hall planned to rebuild.[61] Apparently, the Nealeigh building, a stone structure constructed in 1884, was damaged, but only the roof, ceiling, and front were replaced on the original building.[62] The Wineland Hardware Company planned to relocate their business and the property later was sold.

Depression Years (1930s to 1945)

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[60] "Fire Does Much Damage," Belleville Telescope 14 February 1924, p. 1, col. 6.
[61] "Belleville Has Bad Fire," Belleville Telescope 24 April 1924, p. 1, col. 4; "Business Building Owned by Neileigh Family More Than 50 Years Is Sold," Belleville Telescope 19 July 1934.
[62] "Business Building Owned by Neileigh Family More Than 50 Years Is Sold," Belleville Telescope 19 July 1934.

After the stock market crash of 1929, millions of Americans lost their jobs and those still working saw their wages reduced. Drought and dust storms in the Great Plains left many farm families in despair. The Depression of the 1930s and a statewide drought brought hard times to Republic County. Banks failed, individuals lost their homes and savings, and farmers lost their land. To make matters worse, the drought from 1934 to early 1937 brought grasshoppers and poor crops.

With little agricultural production and widespread unemployment, Belleville's need for assistance increased. Most federal programs were established to work on a county-wide basis, but Belleville residents benefited from several new federal projects. Many of the farm to market roads were improved which helped create a network of all-weather roads in the county. Such roads provided accessibility for farmers coming to Belleville as the county's major trading community.

Belleville boosters expected benefits from the Highway Association organized at Topeka on October 9, 1933. Although they boasted that Number 36 "will be the best transcontinental route in America," half of the road was unsurfaced (oiled gravel) at that time.[63] By 1933, a state port of entry was established in Belleville. First, it was housed in the Mosher garage downtown, but soon moved to the south border of Belleville in 1934.

Congress quickly drafted new federal programs for relief and recovery from the Great Depression. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was created in 1935 to provide jobs for unemployed workers. In Republic County, recovery funds were allocated for roads, bridges, "sanitary privies in rural areas," pond construction, flood control, and the renovation of public buildings. In Belleville, the municipal swimming pool, band shell, tennis courts, park and native stone grandstand at the North Central Kansas Free Fair grounds all were constructed with federal financial assistance. The grandstand served crowds attracted by popular auto races on the high-banked oval race track.

The Public Works Administration (PWA), another New Deal economic recovery program, financed part of the cost of the swimming pool which was to the public and dedicated on July 4, 1937.[64] PWA grants helped support construction of the post office just west of the commercial district and the Republic County Courthouse on the square in Belleville. The Post Office, constructed in 1937-1938 on the northwest corner of 18th and L Streets, featured an interior mural in the lobby painted by the notable Kansas painter, Birger Sandzen. The Belleville Post Office was dedicated on October 8, 1938. The post office was expanded and modernized in 1966.[65]

The most important federal contribution to the community was the Republic County Courthouse. In a dramatic fire on April 1, 1938, the 1885 courthouse burned. Quickly, the PWA approved a grant for construction of a replacement building. The new courthouse was dedicated on December 18, 1939. The building was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. It is significant for its association with the public works projects funded under the Public Works Administration (PWA) in Kansas and is a rare example of the Art Deco style county courthouse in the state. Mann & Company, an architectural firm from Hutchinson, Kansas, designed the courthouse and Peterson Construction of Salina, Kansas served as the general contractor. The

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[63] "Anniversary Edition," Courier-Tribune, 103.
[64] "Golden Jubilee Edition," Belleville Telescope 1 July 1937, 1.
[65] Belleville Telescope 6 October 1988, clippings file, Belleville Public Library.

ground floor housed support functions and the first floor has offices such as county clerk, register of deeds, county treasurer, appraiser, and commissioners' offices. The second floor has a courtroom, judge's and sheriff's offices. The third floor has a jail screened by "Republic County Court House" lettering at the façade parapet.[66]

These federal programs gave locals work and at the same time, created public facilities that are still used today. Less well known than the public construction programs were the WPA projects initiated by the Division of Women's and Professional Projects. These programs were designed to employ "white collar" workers and women who were the heads of families. The Kansas Museum Project was intended "to awaken interest in historic and cultural backgrounds and to stimulate appreciation and contemporary creative expression."

Kansas was one of only three states to create a museum project through the Works Progress Administration. Workshops in seven Kansas communities produced handcraft and visual aid materials, which were distributed throughout the state to educational institutions. Belleville was one of those communities and in November, 1938 the Belleville Public Library ordered several Models of Industry, the All Nations figurines, and American Costume Dolls, Native Bird and Kansas Landmark prints by Margaret Whittemore, and Wild Flower paintings by Avis Chitwood. Today the library collection includes seventeen pairs of costume dolls, forty-three prints of Kansas landmarks, five paintings of Kansas wildflowers, eight intricate wooden models, and one horn carving.

Federal assistance helped the residents of Belleville and Republic County cope with the Depression. By 1937 crop production improved and a report in a special edition of the Telescope announced that Belleville was experiencing "its biggest building boom in both business and residence properties for nearly ten years. Construction work which ranges all the way from remodeling and new fronts for business houses to complete building and residence construction is either underway or will be started within a few weeks." Commenting with satisfaction on the progress of the past fifty years in Belleville, the editor wrote, "witness today the paved street, modern sewer system, excellent lighting system, and white way, modern school system housed in sanitary and well lighted buildings, modern store fronts and substantial business buildings. Last, but not least, the abundant supply of pure water, approved by the state board of health. Were it not for this excellent and unfailing water supply, coming from an inexhaustible underflow north of the city, the dedication of the municipal swimming pool this week would not be possible."[67]

In another summary of the city's history published in 1930, A. Q. Miller described the progress of technology, "present day residents of Republic County have witnessed the turning of the virgin soil into prolific wheat and corn fields; they have seen the sod and frame school houses displaced by modern brick buildings; they have witnessed the coal oil lamp superceded [sic] by the electric light and seen the old fashioned cook stove and hard coal burner displaced by modern gas burners fed by pipelines stretching across hundreds of miles across the country. They have seen the oxcart

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[66] Dana Cloud and Sally Schwenk, "Republic County Courthouse," National Register of Historic Places nomination, prepared April 30, 2000. The nomination is associated with the National Register Multiple Property Document, "Historic County Courthouses of Kansas."
[67] "Golden Jubilee Edition," Belleville Telescope 1 July 1937, B1.

and lumber wagon and horse-drawn implements superceded [sic] by the high powered truck and tractor and sixteen-cylinder automobile, to nothing of the advent of the commercial airplane."[68]

Modern America

Three trends that affected the Belleville Downtown district after World War II were the decline of railroad transportation, the development of the federal interstate highway system, and the movement of population from farms to cities. In Kansas the new construction of railroads slowed after 1917 and virtually ended by 1928. Abandonment of unprofitable branch lines began in the 1930s. During the Great Depression, the financial stability of railroads was threatened by the increasing competition from automobiles and trucks. The general decline in railroad passengers and freight hauling paused during World War II, but resumed after the war. Railroad lines in Kansas were abandoned at a slow but steady rate through the 1970s.[69] The Rock Island railroad ended service to Belleville in 1980 and the Rock Island passenger depot was sold.[70]

Extensive development of the Interstate highway system after 1956 weakened the economic position of railroads and accelerated a population movement of Kansans from farms to cities. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 brought interstates to Kansas by paying ninety percent of the cost.[71] In 1968, Belleville leaders authorized construction of a new 3,000-foot paved and lighted runway to attract general aviation to the local airport.[72]

Also, city residents viewed a new library on the courthouse square at a formal open house on October 25, 1956. The Belleville Library began operating in March, 1956 with a 99-year lease from the county commission. Constructed for a total cost of $49,160, the building was described as "modern and comfortable, modern without being too brittle or functional in appearance."[73]

Throughout the twentieth century, the general demographic trend of rural counties losing population affected Belleville and north central Kansas. In the 1990s, the wheat state lost more and more of its rural population as fewer people operated larger farms. In 1920 there were 167,000 farms in Kansas; in 1996 only 64,000. As people moved from farms to cities, the east-central and south central urban areas became more densely settled.[74] However, agriculture remains the major base of the economy in Republic County.

Architectural Analysis

This historic preservation survey focused on the commercial buildings of the Belleville Downtown district and other buildings on M Street, the major north-south route through town before U.S. Highway 81 west of town became a modern transportation and commercial corridor after World

[68] A. Q. Miller, "60 Years Republic County Progress," special edition, Belleville Telescope 27 November 1930, 1.
[69] Deon Wolfenbarger, "Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas," National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Document, (2000), E-11-12.
[70] "Depot Sale Auctions All But Memories," Topeka Capital-Journal 8 March 1981.
[71] Miner, History of the Sunflower State, 337.
[72] Snapp, Centennial Days, Belleville, Kansas, 1869-1969 n. p.
[73] Carstensen, "Belleville City," 469; "Modern and Cozy, Belleville's New Library," Kansas Library Bulletin , 25:4 (December 1956), 15-16.
[74] Miner, History of the Sunflower State, 405.

War II. There were 92 buildings inventoried in the Belleville Downtown Survey Area between Fifteenth and 20th Streets and L and N Streets. Approximately eighty-four were commercial buildings, seven were institutional buildings and one is a telephone equipment structure.

Based on current information, the major periods of development in Belleville's Downtown occurred from 1870 to about 1879, from 1880 to about 1900, from 1900 to 1945 and from 1940 to the present. Apparently, no buildings from the early period have survived. Approximately twenty-three buildings appear to have been constructed before 1900, but these commercial buildings have storefronts altered in the twentieth century. Approximately twelve buildings in the survey area were constructed between 1900 and 1919. Thirty-three buildings were constructed between 1920 and 1945. After the new Post Office and Courthouse were completed in 1938, the historic architectural character of downtown Belleville was well defined. Only nine buildings in the survey were constructed between 1946 and 1960. Two buildings were constructed in the early 1960s. Approximately twelve buildings in the survey area appear to have been constructed after ca. 1970.

The commercial architecture of the Belleville Downtown survey area is representative of Kansas architecture during the periods of construction. Buildings constructed in the late nineteenth century represent the Late Victorian Italianate and Romanesque styles. Most of the buildings constructed in the early twentieth century are examples of the Commercial style, but there are a few examples of the Colonial Revival and Classical Revival style. Also, the Blair Theater has an elaborate Spanish Revival façade and the Republic County Courthouse is a rare example of the Art Deco style applied to a Kansas courthouse. The Belleville Downtown Survey identified several landmark buildings, but further research and evaluation is needed for other buildings that appear to be significant.

In the post World War II period, a major change in the Belleville commercial district has been the re-location of services, automobile services, and implement dealers to commercial corridors approximately seven blocks west along Highway 81 and ten blocks south along Highway 36. Nevertheless, downtown Belleville retains a number of specialty stores, banks, and offices. Downtown Belleville still is an active business district anchored by public services including the City Hall, Post Office, Library, and Republic County Courthouse.

Commercial buildings on Belleville's Courthouse Square are typical of historic Kansas architecture. Most of the inventoried buildings have a degree of architectural integrity that demonstrates an evolution of architectural integrity and building types over several decades of commercial and institutional development.

Recommendations

The objectives of the Belleville Downtown Historic Preservation Survey project were to assess the community's historical resources through a reconnaissance survey of properties in Belleville's downtown area. The field survey recorded the architectural integrity and documented the historical significance of 92 properties in the downtown commercial district. The survey inventories, historic context statement, and report will support the economic development and historic preservation activities of the Belleville Main Street Program. Information from the survey will be used in marketing and promotion of the downtown commercial district.

The Belleville Downtown commercial district does appear to have potential for a nomination to the Kansas Register or the National Register of Historic Places. A potential historic district (See map--Proposed Historic District A) could extend from the Hotel Republic/Republic Block (ca. 1885) at the northwest corner of 17th and M Streets south on the west side of M Street crossing 19th Street to include the old People's National Bank building (1909) at 1902 M Street, then east on the south side of 19th Street to include the Blair Theater (1928). The proposed district includes the courthouse square (a notable feature), the Republic County Courthouse (1939, National Register), and the Belleville Public Library (1956). The west boundary is the alley between L and M Streets, the southeast boundary is the alley between 19th and 20th Streets. The boundary around the courthouse square forms part of the southeast boundary, the east boundary, and the north boundary. A modification of this basic district (See map—Proposed Historic District B) could extend west on 19th Street to the intersection with L Street including three well preserved early twentieth century commercial buildings at 1205 19th Street, 1209 19th Street, and 1206 19th Street as well as three similar buildings at the northeast corner of 18th and M Streets (1301 18th, 1303 18th, and 1305 18th Street). The additions would help protect the architectural character of two significant intersections in the Belleville Downtown District.

Although a nomination would depend on local support, particularly of the downtown property owners, designation of a commercial historic district would qualify properties for financial assistance from the Federal and state investment tax credit programs as well as the Kansas Heritage Trust Fund. Historic district designation could be the basis for a façade restoration revolving fund administered by the Main Street program. With such a program, several Main Street commercial buildings with historic facades and altered first floor storefronts could be restored and that would strengthen the historic architectural character of the district. Finally, a historic district nomination would recognize the community's pride in the Belleville Downtown business district and give business-owners a possible advantage in the regional competition for customers.

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Photographs
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Maps
Since GIS mapping was not available for Belleville, the survey area base map was prepared by Mike Houts from an aerial map. Additional information was based on the Sanborn Insurance maps. (See Survey Area map).

Historic Preservation Survey
Belleville, Kansas
15th Street
16th Street
17th Street
18th Street
19th Street
20th Street
L-Street
M-Street
N-Street
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Belleville Downtown Survey
Proposed Historic District
15th Street
16th Street
17th Street
18th Street
19th Street
20th Street
L-Street
M-Street
N-Street
Proposed District
Feet
0
100
200
400
N
W
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S

BELLEVILLE, KAS.
OCT. 1933
2
3
17TH ST.
18TH ST.
19TH ST.
20TH ST.
4
5
L ST.
M ST.
N ST.
A. M. SANBORN LUMBER CO.
HOTEL REPUBLIC
LODGE
BANK
AUTO REP.
FIRE DEPT.
CITY JAIL
CREAMERY
COUNTY COURT HO.
BAND STAND
COUNTY JAIL
PHOTO
STONE CUTTING
DRUGS
CITY HALL
POST OFFICE
GARAGE
PLUMBER
TIRE SERVICE
16
17
20
21
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28

Belleville Downtown Survey -- LIST OF SURVEYED PROPERTIES

BD1. 1503 M Street (ca. 1915)

BD2. 1511 M Street (ca. 1953)

BD3. 1601 M Street (part ca. 1940)

BD4. 1615 M Street (ca. 1908)

BD5. 1514 M Street (Melton Motor Company, 1947.)

BD6. 1610 M Street (ca. 1930, 1970)

BD7. 1614 M Street (ca. 1930).

BD8. 1209-1211 17th Street (ca. 1925).

BD9. 1205 17 Street (ca. 1960, 2000).

BD10. 1313 17th Street (Barnard Veterinarian, ca. 1920)

BD11. 1315 17th Street (Blacksmith, ca. 1920).

BD12. 1321-1327 17th Street (ca. 1951).

BD13. 1702 N Street (Belleville Creamery, ca. 1930, 1956)

BD14. 1318 17th Street (non-historic, unknown construction date)

BD15. 1320 17th Street (non-historic, unknown construction date)

BD16. 1705 M Street (Belleville Fire Department, ca. 1981).

BD17. 1205 18th Street (First National Bank of Belleville, 1965).

BD18. 1119 18th Street (Belleville Post Office, 1938, additions ca. 1960).

BD19. 1206 18th Street (Belleville Clinic, ca. 1950).

BD20. 1811 L Street (ca. 1920).

BD21. 1819 L Street (United Telephone Exchange, 1923, non-historic additions).

BD22. 1205 19th Street (Harley Lewis Ford Garage, ca. 1920).

BD23. 1209 19th Street (Shaw Medical Building, ca. 1920).

BD24. 1206 17th Street (ca. 1950).

BD25. 1702 M Street (Republic Block, Hotel Republic, 1885, ca. 1950).

BD26. 1704 M Street (Republic Block, Hotel Republic, 1885, ca. 1950).

BD27. 1706 M Street (Republic Block, 1885, ca. 1950).

BD28. 1708 M Street (Republic Block, 1885, ca. 1950).

BD29. 1710 M Street (Republic Block, 1885, ca. 1950).

BD30. 1712-1714 M Street (ca. 1910).

BD31. 1716 M Street (ca. 1910).

BD32. 1718-1720 M Street (National Bank of Belleville, Post Office, Odd Fellows Lodge, 1893).

BD33. 1301 18th Street (H. L. Pierce Confectionary, ca. 1925).

BD34. 1303 18th Street (Neileigh Recreation Hall ca. 1884, 1925).

BD35. 1305 18th Street (C. H. Mullen Soft Drink Parlor, ca. 1925)

BD36. 1307 & 1309 18th Street (ca. 1995).

BD37. 1313 18th Street (F. W. Simmons Garage, ca. 1920).

BD38. 1317 18th Street (G. W. Hedgecock Building, Rex Theater, ca. 1910).

BD39. 1319 18th Street (unknown construction date).

BD40. 1323 18th Street (ca. 1950).

BD41. 1325 18th Street (ca. 1900, 1968).

BD42. 1327 18th Street (ca. 1930).

BD43. 1329 18th Street (H. J. and Lloyd Saylor Garage, 1913).

BD44. 1802 M Street. (J. C. Hogin Building, 1916).

BD45. 1804 M Street (ca. 1939)

BD46. 1806 M Street (ca. 1939).

BD47. 1808 M Street (Riddlebarger Jewelry, ca. 1892, 1969).

BD48. 1812 M Street (Carstensen & Cullers Hardware, ca. 1892).

BD49. 1814 M Street (ca. 1886).

BD50. 1816 M Street (Phoenix Block, ca. 1885).

BD51. 1820 M Street (Phoenix Block, Chauncey Perry Building, ca. 1885).

BD52. 1822-1824 M Street (Phoenix Block, L. W. Leavenworth Hardware, ca. 1885).

BD53. 1826 M Street (Phoenix Block, W. P. Weeks Building, ca. 1885, 1950).

BD54. 1828 M Street (1885, ca. 1920, 1950).

BD55. 1830 M Street (Pierce & McCabe General Store, Belleville Building & Loan, ca. 1887).

BD56. 1832 M Street (ca. 1887).

BD57. 1834 M Street (Hostetler Brothers Annex, 1900).

BD58. 1836 M Street (McCullough Building, Hostetler Brothers Store, Masonic Lodge, 1892).

BD59. 1206 19th Street (ca. 1925).

BD60. 1902 M Street (Peoples National Bank, City Hall, 1909).

BD61. 1904-1906 M Street (Deal & Lowell's Clothing Store, ca. 1892).

BD62. 1908 M Street (ca. 1900).

BD63. 1910 M Street (ca. 1910).

BD64. 1914 M Street (J. A. Mosher Garage, 1916).

BD65. 1911 M Street (ca. 1930).

BD66. 1915 M Street (ca. 1930).

BD67. 1306 19th Street (C. P. Carstensen Block, Post Office, 1916).

BD68. 1308 19th Street (ca. 1920).

BD69. 1312 19th Street (Sam and Katherine Blair, Blair Theater, 1928).

BD70. 1314 19th Street (ca. 1920).

BD71. 1316 19th Street (ca. 1920).

BD72. 1318 19th Street (ca. 1920).

BD73. 1320 19th Street (ca. 1925).

BD74. 1322 19th Street (ca. 1895).

BD75. 1324-1326 19th Street (G. A. Chapin Building, Electrodome Theater, ca. 1900)..

BD76. 1328 19th Street (Frank Hinnen Grocery, ca. 1925).

BD77. 1330 19th Street (ca. 1940).

BD78. 1332 19th Street (ca. 1960).

BD79. 1334 19th Street (T. A. Meek Building, 1888, 1946).

BD80. 1801 N Street (C. C. Thomas Photo Studio, ca. 1900).

BD81. 1805 N Street (ca. 1930).

BD82. 1807 N Street (Frank Sis Feed Store, ca. 1945).

BD83. 1809 N. Street (Frank Splical Tractor Dealer, ca. 1945).

BD84. 1811 N Street (ca. 1930).

BD85. 1813 N Street (Telephone Equipment building, 2008).

BD86. 1815 N. Street (ca. 1940).

BD87. 1817 N Street (F. N. Bush General Store, ca. 1890)

BD88. 1819 N Street (ca. 1930)

BD89. 1825 N Street (ca. 1980).

BD90. 1903 N Street (ca. 1974).

BD91. 1815 M Street (Republic County Courthouse, 1938, National Register).

BD92. 1327 19th Street (Belleville Public Library, 1956).