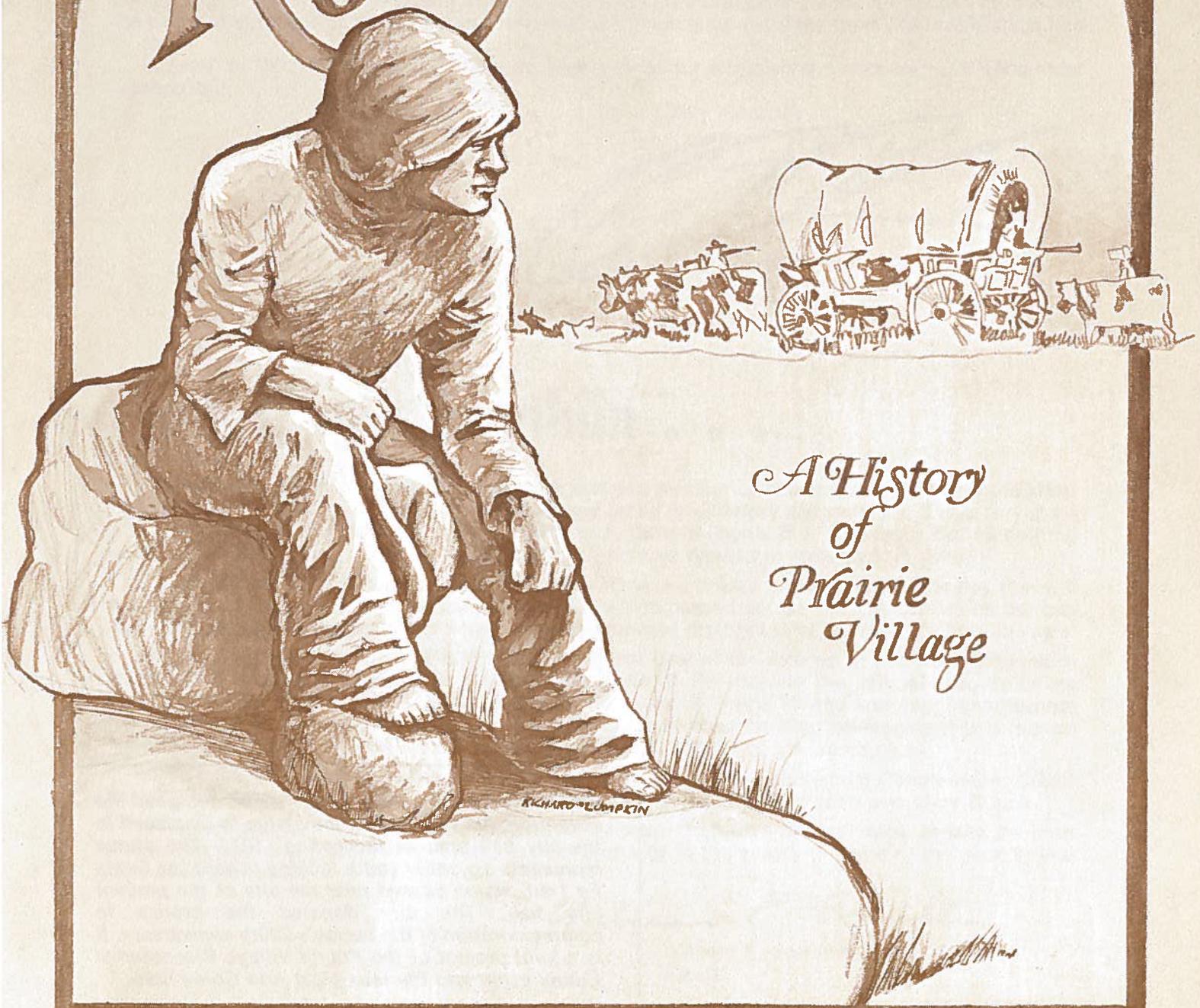


# Reflections



*A History  
of  
Prairie  
Village*

RICHARD LUMPKIN

# from Governor Bennett . . .

March 30, 1976

Prairie Village Bicentennial Commission  
Prairie Village City Hall  
7700 Mission Road  
Prairie Village, Kansas 66208

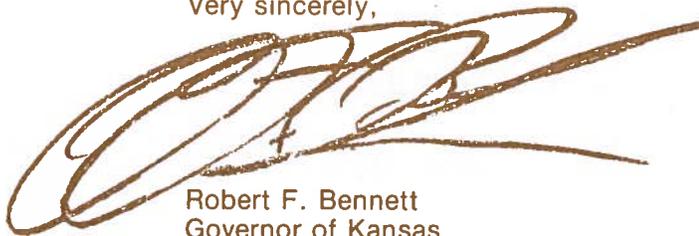
Dear Friends:

It is with extreme pleasure and pride that I commend the Prairie Village Bicentennial Commission for this fitting tribute to our nation's 200th birthday. Prairie Village is, of course, held in great affection and esteem as I began both my professional and political careers within its boundaries. I have spent many happy years there and I look forward to returning when I again enter "civilian" life.

Since its inception in 1946, Prairie Village has provided its citizenry with a comfortable and stable environment in which to live. The school system is exceeded by none giving each and every child an equal opportunity to obtain a quality education. The city government is effective in meeting the needs and desires of its people. In short, Prairie Village represents the great life that Kansas has to offer.

I send the citizens of Prairie Village my best wishes for a festive and meaningful Bicentennial celebration.

Very sincerely,



Robert F. Bennett  
Governor of Kansas

# from Mayor Franklin . . .

The nation's 200th year has seen an unprecedented number of celebrations all across the USA. Prairie Village had its share too, and they have now faded into history and memory. It was fun and it was appropriate to celebrate our Nation's 200th and Prairie Village's 25th birthdays. But something of permanence and value should remain to mark when we paused to look back in time.

Two such projects were undertaken by the city. One is a bronze statue of a pioneer boy that will soon permanently mark the historic Santa Fe Trail which passed across the ridge on which our city hall stands today. The other is this book - a newly prepared history of Prairie Village's first 25 years.

History is people in action. For that reason a great deal of the interest of a history is found in people's personal recollections, in the recorded news of the day, in the official records of its government. We are indebted to those persons who wrote of Prairie Village and people and events that shaped it. In 25 years, we have gone from a small suburban housing development to a mature suburban community, concerned now about keeping the quality of life we enjoy.

This book was prepared largely by a History Committee of the Bicentennial Commission. Credit goes to Jill Norden, chairman, Beth McMillen, Nancy Williams, and to John and Mary Bouck.

We think you will find that a city not really old enough to have a history, does, in fact, have an interesting past and a promising future, as told primarily in the words of some of the people who have been part of it.



William E. Franklin  
Mayor

November 1976

**to . . .**

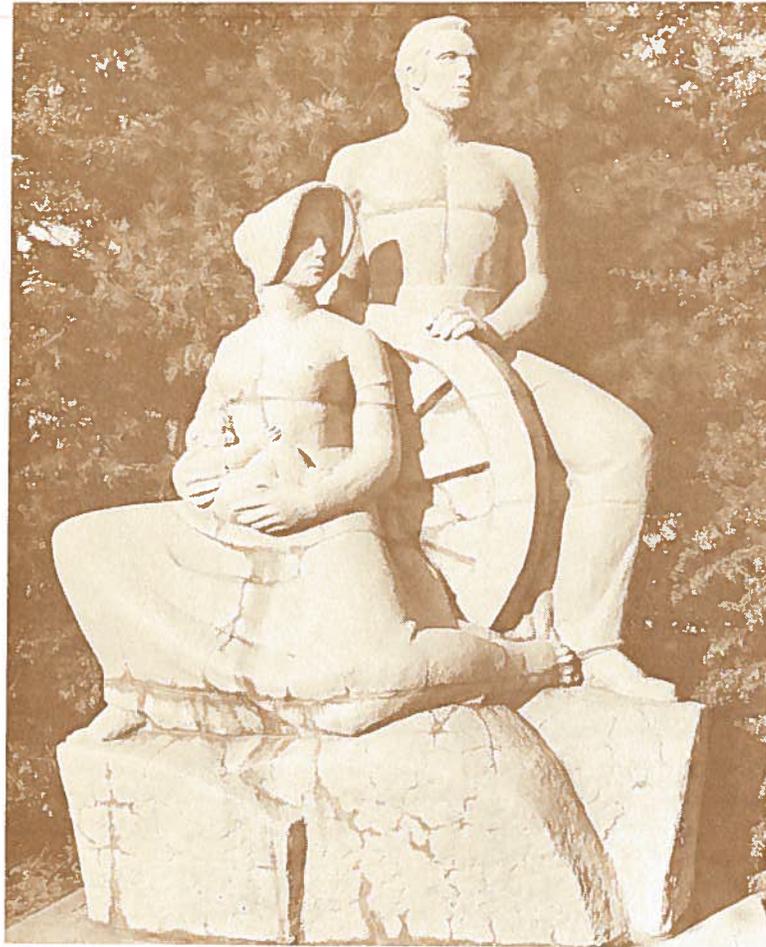
**the Indians  
the farmers  
the merchants  
the commuters  
the seniors  
the youngsters  
our ancestors  
our descendants**

**we dedicate this —**

**our brief history of Prairie Village,  
25 years young, hundreds of years old.**

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*This statue of "The Homesteaders" was designed by Anna Belle Campbell in 1951.*

## **"the homesteaders"**

*By John Bouck*

*[Taken largely from an original article written by Elizabeth Barnes.]*

If Prairie Village, the second largest city in the county, had had its beginnings back in the day when the earliest white settlers came to the area, it would in all likelihood have been given a different name.

When the late J. C. Nichols visioned the city that was one day to rise on the beautiful rolling hills and valleys along Mission Road, and platted the site in 1941, the present name seemed most appropriate. For it was truly to be a village on the prairie, and, furthermore, within the limits of the development stood the Prairie School, known by that name for almost a century.

However, since in earlier times it was customary for settlements and communities to be identified by the name of the settler most prominent in the locality, Prairie Village could well have been labeled "Porterville" and "Port Haven" or some such name indicative of perhaps the leading family of the area. For it was the Porters who led out in civic affairs, education and agricultural development, and it was on Porter land that the major portion of Prairie Village was originally founded.

As it was, at one time Mission Road was known only as Porter Road, because it bisected the original Porter farm. In 1858 Thomas C. Porter, Sr., came from Virginia to establish his farm home in Johnson County. Here he purchased 160 acres of land, half of which lay east of Mission Road, and half west of that main thoroughfare, and which now forms the heart of Prairie Village.

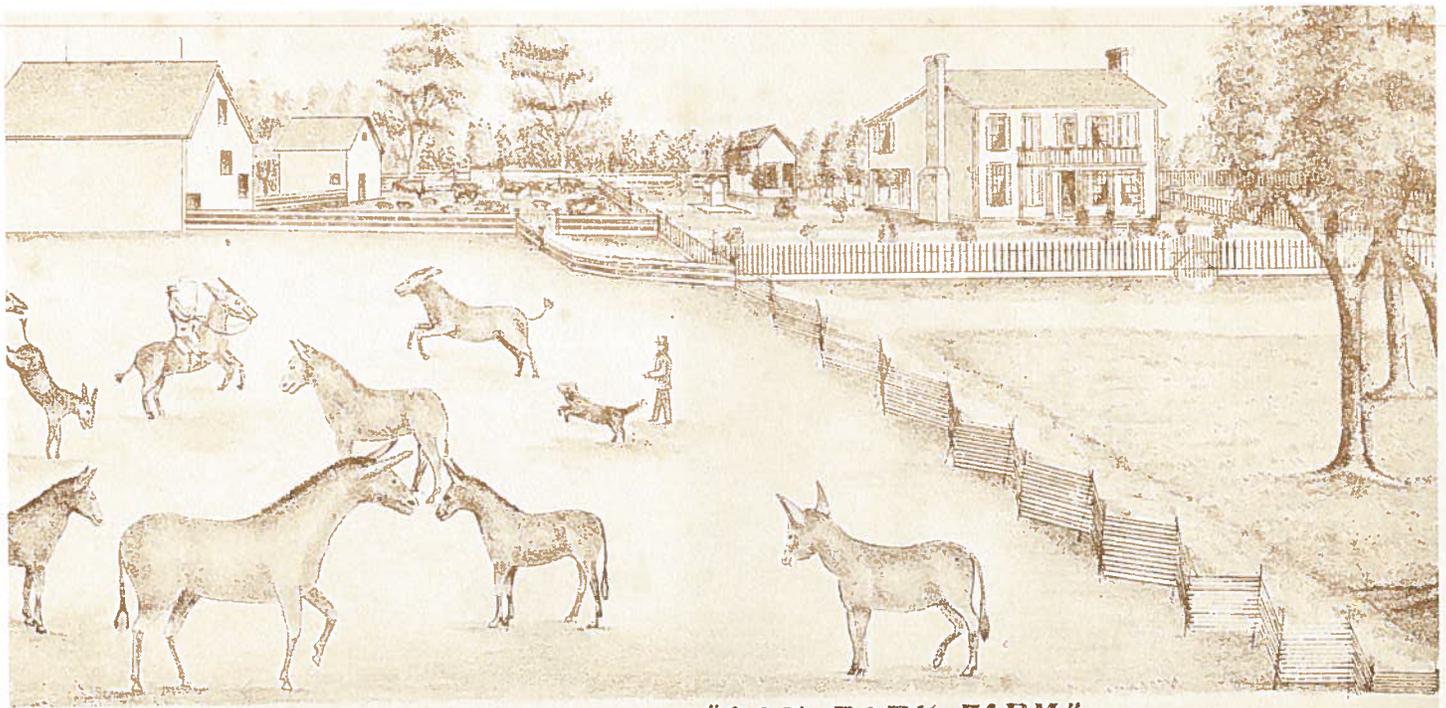
Audley W. Porter, 8100 Rosewood, grandson of the first Porter to settle in the county, recalls early days of the area. His father, Thomas C. Porter, Jr., built his home on a portion of the original Porter farm, a short distance west of the first Porter residence. The Thomas C. Porter, Sr., home was located on the site now occupied by the shopping center. The Thomas C. Porter, Jr., home stood where the Jones Store is now located.

He remembers the time when the one square mile of Prairie Village that lies west of Mission Road between 67th Street and 75th Street and west of Nall Avenue, contained only seven homes.

On a portion of what was the original Porter farm on the east side of Mission Road the Indian Hills Country Club is now located. Where the Homestead Country Club is now, stood the magnificent Henry Coppock home. The stately residence and the big cupaloe barn were once the show place and landmark for miles around.

All the Porter children attended the Prairie School, in the frame structure that stood on the site of the present school. It was then, 50 or so years ago, a frame one-room, one teacher school. At that time the average enrollment was perhaps 35 pupils. It was a typical rural school where extras in the way of equipment and supplies had to be furnished by the pupils.

But the teaching was of the best and, in spite of lack of facilities, some way or another the pupils



**"OAK PARK FARM"**

Sec 18, T

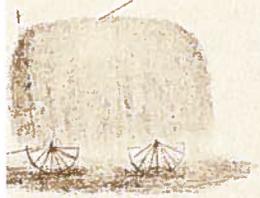
**RESIDENCE  
AND STOCK FARM  
OF  
HENRY COPPOCK,**

IN THE MULE  
WE HAVE  
ECONOMY IN

FEED, STRENGTH  
AND  
DURIBILITY

[B&O

NOT COTTON BUT GRASS  
IS KING



ALL FLESH IS GRASS.

INTELLIGENT AGRICULTURE  
IS THE  
NOBLEST OCCUPATION OF MAN

John J. Maslin

[CORN FIELD  
NEW GROUND.]

0 ACRES



Stanley's Est  
1/4 mile S.W.

25 ACRES NEW CLEARED GROUND  
FOR TOBACCO, BROOM CORN, &c.

GATE

GATE

GATE

TIMOTHY MEADOW

LIME STONE QUARRY

75 ACRES TIMBER

22 1/2 ACRES  
HOG PASTURE  
[CLOVER]

ANYTHING  
WELL BOUGHT  
IS HALF

Elliott Stevenson

TURKEY CREEK VALLEY ROAD TO KANSAS CITY, 8 MILES

J.J. MASLIN

FEED TROUGH

BARN 40 x 40

BARN YARD

STONY WALL

CORN CRIB

GARDEN

ORCHARD (200 TREES)

STACK YARD

GATE

managed to store up a remarkable amount of knowledge. Much of the instruction was given outdoors when weather permitted, and field trips where the children learned names of flowers, trees and birds, was a treat they always looked forward to enjoying.

Favorite pastimes for the young people of those days were hunting rabbits, fishing, and in winter time there was marvelous skating on Brush Creek. There were plenty of good swimming holes in the area. It was said that if a boy had not gone swimming by April 1st, he must pay the penalty for his timidity by being thrown into the creek by his companions. And this, in spite of how icy the water might be.

For the social and intellectual uplift of the community, the literary society was the leading factor. The group met in different homes and everybody was welcome. If a person attended for the first time, he might sit in quiet and enjoy the proceedings. If he came a second time, however, he did not escape, but was called on to contribute something to the entertainment. He had to stand in front of the audience and do something or other, even if it was nothing more than reading a paragraph or two from a book handed him.

Books and reading were emphasized to a high degree in the Prairie community. The "Literary Society" had its own book club and traveling library. Books were shipped into the home of Edgar Porter, who was official librarian. It was his duty to check them out to readers, and when every book in the lot had been read by every member of the community who wished to read it, all were returned and a new lot ordered.

All the Porters were greatly interested in education. Thomas C. Porter, Thomas C. Porter, Jr., and Edgar Porter all served at times on the Prairie School Board of Education. Edgar, especially, took a leading part in affairs of the community, and for many years headed the district board. Porter school would later derive its name from the Porter family.

Such was the early life of the rural community, which has grown into the city we know today.

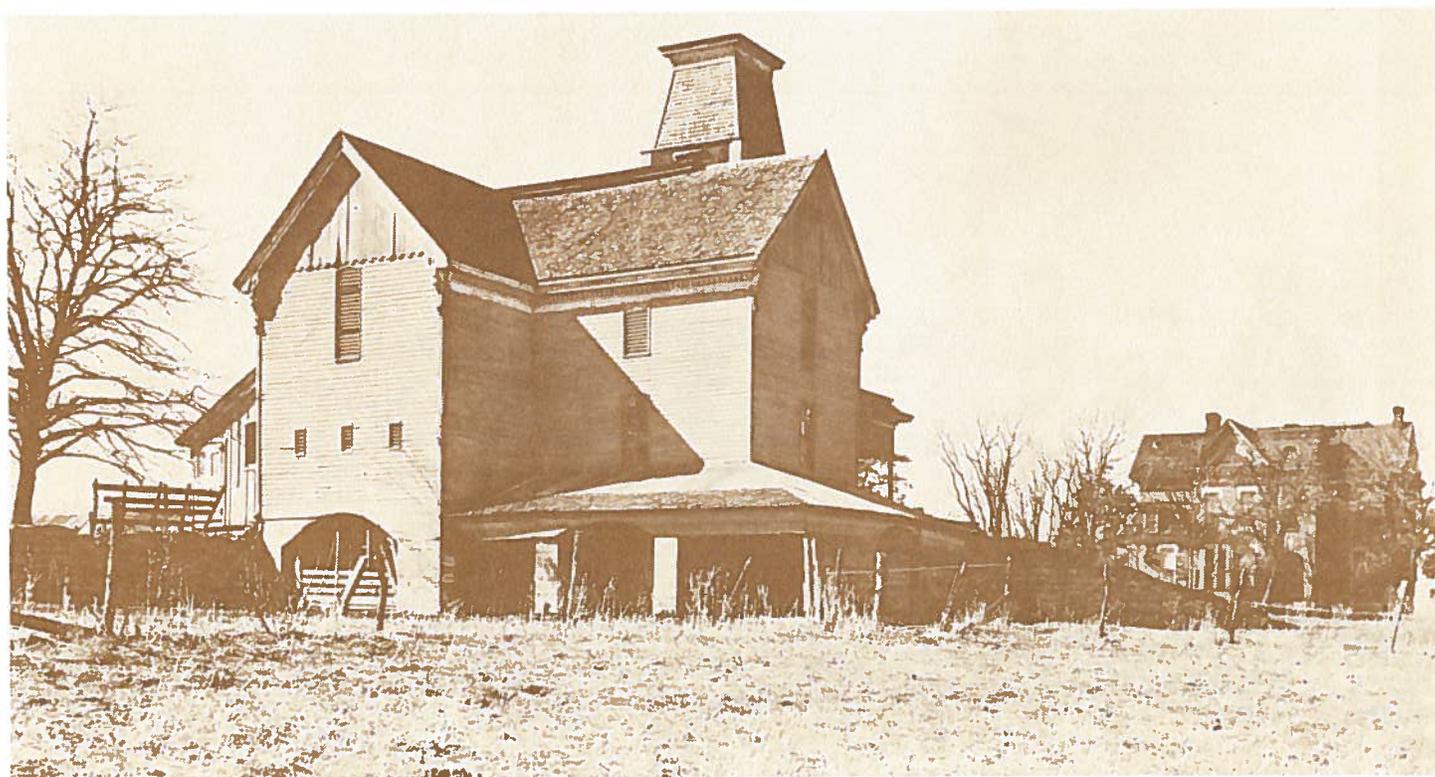
It was around 1908 when the late J.C. Nichols began his extensive land reclamation projects and residential district developments over across State Line, which resulted in the Country Club Plaza area, proclaimed at that time one of America's most beautiful residential districts.

That and other developments finished or well under way, he cast his eye over toward his native Johnson County, where he had visions of transforming dairy farms and truck gardens into communities of beautiful homes with adequate city facilities.

It required much vision, as well as courage, to undertake the task of converting farm lands into pleasant home surroundings. The big obstacle was the fact the area lay outside of city boundaries, which meant there were no sewage facilities, water, gas, electricity, streets or other accommodations. Everything had to be laid out from scratch, and it took a master mind to do it.

The first such enterprise resulted in the present city of Mission Hills. It was in 1917 this task was begun. Many years later Prairie Village was to be developed by the same man.

After the necessary farm land had been acquired by the J. C. Nichols Company, actual work on the



*The Henry Coppock barn and house, site of the present Homestead Country Club.*

development of Prairie Village was started in 1941. First a lot of work had to be done to clear and smooth the land, and plat the well-planned city which the developers had in mind, before any building could begin.

There was the matter of Brush Creek, which wound and twisted its way erratically through the area. Its course had to be changed and straightened, and this meant a great deal of grading and filling in. Mission Road, too, had to be rerouted for a portion of its way through the proposed city.

There were also delays in getting possession of some of the farm homes. The home of Thomas C. Porter, Sr., the first of the family to come to Johnson County, was located in the heart of what was to be the city's business section, where the Prairie Village Shopping Center now stands. It was occupied at the time by Miss Elizabeth Porter (daughter of Thomas C. Porter, Sr.) who had fallen heir to the home. She had been born on that land and had occupied that house for many years. It was home to her and she loved it, and, at her advanced age, did not want to pull up roots and put them down elsewhere. Finally, in 1947, a compromise was made, and she consented to move to a new home near the shopping center, given her by the J. C. Nichols Co. Here she lived with her brother, Edgar Porter, until her death in 1951.

There was a delay, too, in getting possession of some of the land adjoining the Prairie School. Part of it was owned by Henry Coppock (on whose land the Homestead Country Club is now located), who readily yielded possession. Other owners, however, balked a bit, and it took a little time to purchase their property.

Then, there was the unsightly and smelly trash dump west of the heart of the forthcoming city. It was filled with tin cans and refuse of all kinds which the farmers had been dumping there through the years. In addition, it served as a hog lot. All this had to be graded over and renovated to make way for the homes which were planned for that spot.

All in all, it was 1941 before actual building could be started. The very first home to be erected was on the land purchased from the Thompson A. Lewis family, which lay to the west of Mission Road between 67th and 69th Streets. The land, as all other farms in that section of Johnson County, had originally been Shawnee Indian land. The Lewis family had acquired it in February, 1881, from the State of Kansas and had paid \$560 for it.

The first 10 houses of Prairie Village were built in this same area. Others followed in other locations until, after one year of work, some 95 houses had been constructed, all on the first two or three streets south of the Prairie School.

Then, came World War II, and all building ceased until the end of the war. Originally 10 acres had been allotted for the proposed shopping center of the new city. Work on this was started in 1948. The first business structure to be erected was the Watkins Drug Store, which was completed and occupied in May, 1948. This structure is now occupied by another company.

By 1949, over 1,000 homes had been built in Prairie Village and the National Association of Home Builders named Prairie Village the best planned community in America. The city was getting international attention. In 1950, the prime minister



1889 Prairie School - Left to right, back row: Frank Hahn, Harry O'Dell, C. B. Weeks, teacher; Robert Nall, Betty Porter, Warren Tower, Arthur Standish, Olin Thorp, Ralph Coppock. Front Row: Ed Hahn, Tom Coppock, Will Thorp, Charley Coppock, Edgar Porter, Frank Miller, \_\_\_\_\_ Scotch, \_\_\_\_\_ Scotch, Cornelius Nall, Leda Coppock, Minnie Hall.



*The Porter farm, site of the Prairie Village Shopping Center today.*

of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, visited a typical Prairie Village home and expressed his approval.

Due to the shortage of experienced homebuilders after World War II, the J. C. Nichols Co. went into the building business themselves and for a five year period averaged one completed house per day.

The subdivision of Prairie Village, which was begun in 1941 was to eventually contain 1,781 houses. By 1948 the first new church in Prairie Village, the Village United Presbyterian Church, was built and Fire District #2 was established. Prairie Hills development was begun in 1950 and had 666 homes. A year later, in 1951, Prairie Village was incorporated as a city of third class. Ralph Brenizer was elected mayor in the first election, which was held in April of that year.

The year 1951 was a busy one, in that it also included the development of Indian Fields, with 234 homes, the first city council meeting in the first city hall offices in the lower level of Prairie Village Shopping Center, and the first annexation, which was Nall Avenue Gardens. The 400 people in that area brought Prairie Village's population up to 5,360. The present city hall, at 7700 Mission Road, was built in 1971.

Every two or three years a new development was begun. One of these was Corinth Hills, which was begun in 1955 and would eventually have over 400 homes. The land was formerly a farm named "Woolford" which was owned by Herbert M. Woolf and was located in the area now occupied by the Corinth Shopping Center. The thoroughbred



*The Porter farm as pictured in 1900 to 1915.*

"Lawrin", which was ridden to victory in the 1938 Kentucky Derby by Eddie Arcaro, was raised there. Prairie Village had become a city of the second class in 1953 and in 1957 became a city of the first class. The city has had as many as 31,000 residents but, due to smaller families, the population is now slightly less than 28,000. The city has grown from a few acres at its beginning to its present 6¾ sq. miles.

# “a planned community” . . . a village is born

## The Development of Prairie Village

*By Robert O'Keefe*  
Vice President, J.C. Nichols Company

My earliest memory was going with Mr. J. C. Nichols early one Sunday morning and walking south along Brush Creek from Mission Road to approximately 75th on an inspection of the ground which he was buying for the development of Prairie Village.

It was always interesting to go with him on these trips because he immediately began to envision how the street pattern would be laid out, where the churches would be located, etc.

Although the original segment of Prairie Village was started prior to World War II, the large majority occurred after the war inasmuch as any development of this type had to be shut down during the period of the war.

I recall Mr. Nichols' great interest and concern in the realization of the need for homes smaller than those in Indian Hills and Mission Hills for returning veterans. He was also aware of the responsibility that would occur with the transition of developing smaller homes adjacent to the larger homes.

I was assigned to work on the development of the Prairie Village Shopping Center. After securing the zoning for ten acres, although we did ask for more, we soon found that many people did not believe the Prairie Village area could support a shopping center.

However, after a good deal of contacting, etc., we did open the center with the construction of ten shops. Among these opening from May to July in

1948 were John S. Watkins' Drugstore, Calvert's Beauty Salon, Clyde Smith 5 & 10, Zeigler's Plainfield Cab, Skelly Oil Company, Ed Cox Bakery, Payless Grocery, M & H Book & Gift, Robinson Shoe Company, Hanna Cleaners, M. A. Stevenson (plumber in basement of Payless). Later that same



*The first Prairie Village Shopping Center stores pictured in 1948.*



1951 aerial view of Prairie Village.

year the following opened: Johnson County National Bank & Trust Company, Hensler & Bollard Village Washerette, Joe Maseda's Toon Shop, Robert N. Miller Hardware, Pete Potter and Martha Grother Dress Shop and Marcia Thompson's Infants and Children's Wear.

The first segment of Prairie Village began with Watkins' Drugstore and proceeded south along Tomahawk. However, a large gap then appeared between the southernmost store and the store being built for Payless Grocery, which is now the Ben Franklin store. The first store completed and occupied was by Watkins' Drugstore in May, 1948.

It was about this same time that Dr. Bob Menielly and his wife Shirley, came to Prairie Village to start their new church and build their first church structure. As I recall, the first service was held in November, 1948. The church was organized with an original list of charter members, numbering 282, and was formally organized on February 13, 1949.

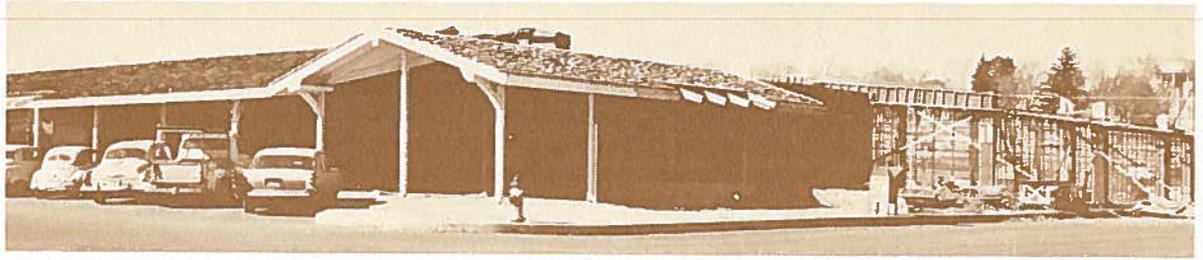
As records will show, the area became a third-class city on February 19, 1951, with Ralph A. Brenizer becoming Mayor.

In that same year, we made a lease with the Standard Oil Company which constructed a new service station at the corner of Tomahawk and Mission. Two years later, it was decided Mission Road would be moved eastward along the creek and so the new station was torn down and relocated, slightly westward to its present location.

In connection with the further development of Prairie Village in 1955, through the building of two mall buildings, I have several memories.

The entire hillside was rock and it was necessary to blast the rock out. This was done through the use of dynamite and extremely heavy steel nets. Rock was removed from the site and was crushed by a portable rock crusher. The rock was then stockpiled and later used in the development of the parking areas. This was the same year the creek was enclosed so the shopping center could be tied together.

I am sure many people will remember the two-story farmhouse formerly situated on the northwest corner of 71st & Mission. At the time, the Nichols Company elected to use the property for



*Corinth Shopping Center under construction in 1963.*

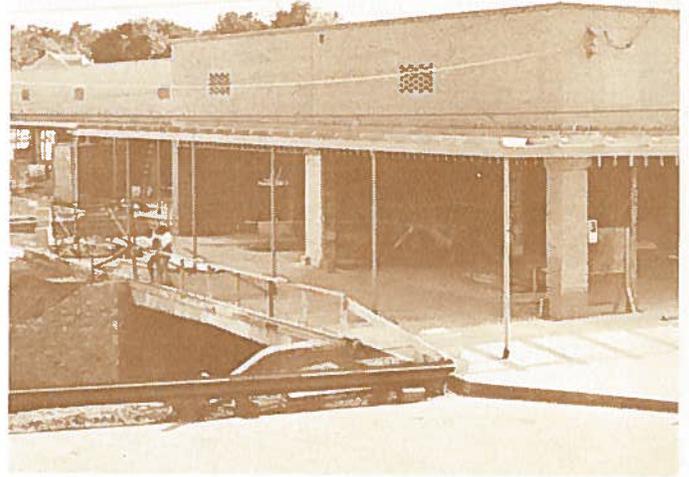
development, the structure was contributed to Fire District #2, and a large scale practice was held by the fire department. Over 140 firemen participated from Johnson and Wyandotte Counties and took turns in setting fire to the premises and then extinguishing it. They hid a dummy body within the structure so firemen could practice locating it. Needless to say, it was an all day event and attracted a great deal of attention.

As some of the older members of the shopping center undoubtedly could confirm, it was necessary in the earlier days of Prairie Village for the merchants to do all of their own work in regard to promotions. A number of the merchants used to gather on a Sunday afternoon and evening to put up the Christmas lights. Mabel Davidson of the Davidson Dance Studio always came down to provide coffee and the Cox Bakery provided rolls. It was also necessary for the merchants to set up their own booths when we had the need for such and to clean up after such a promotion. The early promotions included carnivals, church affairs in which all of the churches had booths for the sale of homemade items, numerous street dances for the benefit of the fire department, the rodeo kids pony show, etc.

One event that was never repeated was the distribution of some 6,000 baby chicks for Easter because we soon learned by giving them away, we had violated the restrictions of our own company inasmuch as poultry is not permitted to be raised within the city limits. Approximately three weeks after the distribution of the baby chicks, we also began to realize each was a rooster. This became more evident as the rooster grew and it seemed like eternity until the noise of crowing throughout the Village finally faded out.

Another notable memory was the fire which occurred in the Payless Grocery which was then located in the present Clyde Smith's room. This occurred on Thanksgiving night and created a great concern inasmuch as this was the main attraction of Prairie Village and with the upcoming Christmas season, the existing merchants were very worried.

With the cooperation of insurance agents, etc., the J. C. Nichols Company moved within 48 hours with small bulldozers to push everything within the store out into Tomahawk Road where it was loaded with high loaders into dump trucks and taken to the dump. Unfortunately, it was such an efficient job that we also "dumped" the safe. It was necessary for us to go back into the dump with bulldozers to locate and return the safe. Three weeks after the fire, Payless was reopened and going in full operation.



*Prairie Village Shopping Center construction addition in 1954.*



*Some of the earlier homes under construction on Oxford Lane at Tomahawk.*

*Photographs pages 5, 10, 11, 12, 27, 35, 38  
courtesy of J.C. Nichols Company.*

# village leadership . . .

## “A Charter was Granted”

By Mayor Ralph Brenizer



Ralph Brenizer  
Mayor 1951-55

The “Village” from the start was a community of young couples with growing families who were, in most instances, homeowners for the first time. Consequently there was a remarkable sameness of viewpoint in these early “Village” residents because of their similarity in age, income, family and home interests.

By 1950 the community had developed into a 980-home suburb and won the National Association of Home Builders’ Award for the “best complete community development” in the U.S. Naturally there was a lot of pride among the young residents of the area.

It was about this time that various members of the Prairie Village Homes Association felt it would be advantageous to incorporate the city of Prairie Village mainly for two reasons: (1) retention of taxes which were going to the township, and (2) retention of identity which the community felt would be lost if annexed by some other area.

In February, 1951, a charter was granted by the governor incorporating the city of Prairie Village as a third-class city. The first general election was held in April, 1951 and I was honored to be elected Mayor and re-elected in April, 1953.

From the very first days of the city’s existence we worked to help keep the city tax levy low because of the burden of school taxes. With all of the young families in the area the number of school children was increasing rapidly and the number of new schools being built and expanded was phenomenal.

In those early days of city government we spent many hours on basic organizational ordinances. The original incorporated area of the city included the area between Mission Road and Roe Avenue on the east and west and 67th Street and 69th Terrace on the north and south. This was done because state statutes required that an area to be incorporated as a third-class city must have a population of under 2000.

After incorporation, as the area developed, the council annexed more and more areas, always keeping in mind the type of development in connection with the original area.

In January, 1953, the city became a second-class city and the population had exceeded 9000. The south boundary had been extended to 79th Street.

Originally the mayor and council met in the basement-recreation room of Councilman Carl Schliffke. Meetings were held there until arrangements were made with the J. C. Nichols Company for a five year lease of space under the present Safeway Store (then Pay-Less Grocery) to house the first city hall. October 1, 1951, was a big night, indeed, when an “Open-House” was held in the city hall in conjunction with the council meeting to show off the new facilities to residents.

We always tried to conduct the council meetings informal—a town meeting type of attitude — so that residents would always feel welcome to attend either for purposes of observation or constructive criticism.

Certainly, we worked many long hours those first few years, but it was a labor of love. All the city officials believed as I did, that Prairie Village was the best place in the world to live and raise a young family. If we had not believed that we (Mayor and Council) would not have been willing to drive around the city in a pick-up truck and manually put up stop-signs because there was no money in the city treasury the first year.

It was hard work-but it was fun-to build the police department from scratch. All the officers were volunteers then.

I remember the wave of dog sentiment, pro and con, in February, 1952, after seven children had been bitten mostly by excited pets in schoolgrounds.

I remember the polio outbreak of April, 1953, when the Village had seven of the fourteen cases in the entire state and we instituted a program of inoculation with Gamma Globulin.

I remember the annual Village Merchants Association celebrations with fashion shows, parades, and street dancing . . . and the “Prairie Family” which was chosen in an art contest in 1951 as the Village decorative motif and subsequently sculpted into the beautiful statuary that now stands in the shopping center at Tomahawk and Mission Roads.

However, standing out most in my memory is the willing and cooperative attitude of everyone in the Village in those early days. Appointive officers and elected officials were faithful and loyal in carrying out their duties and the people of the Village, as a whole, when asked to serve, always responded in a fine way.

About two years after I left the mayor's office, I was transferred out of the city by my employer . . . but to me Prairie Village was always "home" and I vowed if possible I would return home sometime.

Therefore, after living in the New York area for a short time and later in Canada for several years, I was delighted to have the opportunity to return to Prairie Village. It is not only the most beautiful residential area I know, but there is no other place like it for "quality of life" which we hear so much about today.

three years on the Prairie School Board, prior to unification.

Stultz characterized early Prairie Village as a "law-abiding community, where there was a small town feeling." Mrs. Stultz added an example of community feeling was the "Mrs. Prairie Village" contest. It was sponsored by the Scout newspaper, and prizes were contributed by merchants. The women were judged on their civic contributions. Two winners, Mrs. Stultz recalled, were Troy McGrath and Dorothy Ballard.

## An Interview with Bruce Stultz

*By Mary Bouck*



*Bruce Stultz  
Mayor 1956-57*

## An Interview with Robert Bennett

*By Jill Norden*



*Governor Robert Bennett  
Mayor 1957-65*

Bruce W. Stultz began his public service to Prairie Village in 1951 when he was appointed the original City marshal, or police chief. He served in that position from 1951-1955, and organized the police department. The department began as an all-volunteer group with a budget of \$3600. The volunteers worked in cooperation with the Johnson County sheriff's office, and gradually, policemen were hired for full-time positions in Prairie Village. Traffic and pet control were duties of the officers. The police department was also called at times about flooded basements and other water drainage problems, though not really a police problem. Residents didn't know who else to contact.

During Stultz's term as mayor, from 1955-1957, Prairie View Park and Prairie Village swimming pool were developed. A bond proposal of \$165,000 for the municipal pool and \$65,000 for the park land was approved by the voters at the same time Mayor Stultz was elected.

As mayor, Bruce Stultz instituted psychological examinations for patrolmen, investigation of patrolmen's backgrounds, and enabled the Prairie Village policemen to attend police schools offered by the F.B.I. and the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department.

Following his term as mayor, Stultz headed the Civil Service Commission, which oversees police activities and appointments. He held this position through the administrations of Mayors Robert F. Bennett and Carl C. Schliffke. He also served for

In 1952, when Robert Bennett moved to Prairie Village, the land was mostly farmland. Only the section of stores in which Safeway is now located was in existence. A large farmhouse stood where the Jones Store now stands. Two small churches, the Colonial Church, and the Village Church, served the residents. There were no traffic signals, not even any street lights. Prairie Village was truly a "village on the prairie".

Bennett, a young law school graduate, came to Prairie Village to operate a law firm in the small office which is now Hank Bauer's Liquor Store. After serving as president of Prairie Ridge Homes Association, Robert Bennett became a councilman in 1953, his first elective office. Bruce Stultz was then mayor. In those days, the council was virtually a "municipal homes association", according to Bennett, with the homes associations having more to do than city government. Prairie Village developed into a city during Robert Bennett's tenure.

Council meetings were held in Carl Schliffke's basement, originally. It was a big occasion when the basement of Payless (now Safeway) was given for use as a city hall. In those days, each of the council meetings was started with a prayer. Different preachers were invited to participate.

Governor Bennett recalled one meeting when a nurse arrived with a sample of raw sewage taken from Brush Creek. Even then, Brush Creek flooding was a problem. Another area of concern was the storm water drainage system. Upland riparian

owners couldn't understand why they were paying for lower reparian owners.

In 1955, Governor Bennett ran for mayor, which office he held until elected to the senate in 1964. He served as both the mayor of Prairie Village, and a state senator for one year (until 1965). After being elected president of the Senate, Robert Bennett remained a Prairie Village resident until elected Governor of the State of Kansas in 1972.

Annexations were major issues during Robert Bennett's tenure. Battles formed between Prairie Village and Mission Township (later to become Overland Park) over who would get which areas. Prairie Village wanted the "Town and Country" area. It also wanted Leawood on the east, Lamar on the west. When it couldn't obtain that, it wanted Nall on the west to the end of Mission Township (about 103rd Street). Overland Park did not want Prairie Village to go south of 83rd.

Post cards were sent out exclaiming the virtues of each city. The Board of County Commissioners had hearings to decide which area went where. It was finally decided that Prairie Village was the logical city to take "Meadowlake" and "Granthurst" along with "Town and Country." The borders of Prairie Village were established.

The accomplishments during Robert Bennett's tenure were many. Street lights and traffic signals were installed. (A cause for controversy, with complaints from many that they came to the country to escape traffic). The street sealing program was started. A street sweeper was purchased. Emergency snow plowing was instituted, with the mayor riding on the snow plows to keep on top of things.

The park district was expanded while Bennett was mayor, with the inclusion of the now named Bennett Park. The police department, formerly all volunteer, was professionalized, and expanded into areas other than traffic control, including juvenile cases. The mill levy was held down. With zoning a crucial issue, a plan commission master plan was formulated. Corinth Shopping Center was zoned (Prairie Village and Meadowlake had been zoned under Mission Township). The public works office was built. (Public Works had formerly operated out of a metal building at the park). Civil service commission and police pension plans were formed.

During the time Robert Bennett was mayor, a number of independent parties were formed such as "Good Government", etc. which fell apart after elections, never staying around to help the candidates. For this reason, Prairie Village was made a partisan city, with candidates running as Democrats or Republicans.

Of course, not all projects were successful. An effort to build a public skating rink failed, although there were small rinks behind St. Ann's and in Prairie View Park. There was also an unsuccessful attempt to build a combined city hall and library. After its failure, the city hall remained in the basement for the duration of Mayor Bennett's tenure.

Among the people that Governor Bennett recalls were: Ralph Carroll, who had served on the city council with him and became the first superintendent of Public Works; Jack Hoover, the first city attorney; Jerry Little, the first police chief (Governor Bennett appointed Chief R. J. Hundley, the present police chief).

Fellow councilmen were: Bud Burke, Bill Gray, Bill Springer and Carl Schliffke, president of the council.

Prairie Village has indeed been fortunate to have such a public-minded individual as Robert Bennett involved in the growth of the city.

## "Pride of Ownership"

By Mayor Carl Schliffke



Carl Schliffke  
Mayor 1965-68

My first memory of Prairie Village is as a three-block area beyond Tomahawk Road, which ended at Mission Road. The area, surrounded by pasture land in which cows were grazing, consisted of three block-long streets extending from Mission Road to Delmar.

Sixty-ninth Street was the first block completed by the Nichols Company, which then began construction of houses along 68th Street. We purchased the fifth house completed on 68th Street for the magnificent sum of \$6,000 - a sum not large at today's prices, but requiring considerable financial manipulation to meet the monthly payments, when college graduate engineers were being hired at \$125 a month.



A City Council meeting in 1951.

The houses were built on a nearly assembly-line basis, with the basement excavators being followed by the foundation wall crew and then the carpenters, so that at any time the would-be purchaser could start at an empty lot and walk down through the various stages of construction and see exactly the quality of construction. If purchased early enough you had the option of choosing wallpaper and colors and, also, a choice of the three trees which were allocated to each lot. The saplings, planted along the curb lines, have since grown into the stately oaks which line 68th Street. The construction pace was slowed, and finally stopped, by the war, to be resumed again when the war was ended.

There was a great deal of pride of ownership by the home owners, as expressed by the appearance of the lawns and houses. Many hours were spent in hand pulling crab grass and cultivating. Many a home owner was startled by a knock on the door, to find Mr. J. C. Nichols, who took a personal interest in the Village, asking them to please close a garage door.

As the City grew other activities followed in which we were personally involved. Prairie School was expanded and became the stage for skits and plays by the P.T.A., which eventually developed into the Barn Players.

The Homestead Country Club pool was built on land given by the Nichols Company, which also contributed money to build a club house when certain membership goals were met.

A recently graduated minister, Robert H. Meneilly, together with his wife, Shirley, knocked on doors doing missionary work to establish a church. From the original meetings which were held in Prairie School, the Village Presbyterian Church membership has grown to be among the largest in the nation.

The original one-block business section also had its share of activity. The bank, formerly located in an area now occupied by a ladies apparel store, was held up and robbed. The large grocery store, which was located where the 5 & 10 now is, burned and was completely gutted.

Another recent graduate, Robert F. Bennett, hung up his shingle opening a law office next to the bank. The Porter farm which occupied the area to the south was cleared to make room for the expanding business section. The farm buildings were cleared by setting them afire, which also gave the volunteer firemen a chance to gain experience. They proved their expertise by extinguishing the blaze several times before the final lighting of the house to make room for progress.

The Village originally was governed by Mission Township, but many of the services were provided by Homes Associations and volunteers. In 1950 a group of citizens met to organize a City, and it was chartered in 1951 with a population of 400. The first political meeting was held at Prairie School, at which the fledgling politicians explained their platforms. Elected to the first council were Robert A. Elwell, James T. Cahill, Cary W. Jones, Jr., William G. Atwater and Carl Schliffke, with Ralph A. Brenizer as Mayor. The first council meeting was held at the law office of James M. Hoover, but subsequent

meetings were held in the recreation room of the Schliffke house on 68th Street until the first City Hall was established in the basement under the building now occupied by the Safeway store.

Since then many additions have taken place - swimming pools, parks, a new City Hall - which have made Prairie Village an outstanding area in which to live. It's been fun to have been a part of the growth and development of a City from the pasture land of 1941.

## The City Acquires Brick and Mortar

By Nancy Williams



Robert McCrum  
Mayor 1968-73

Robert D. McCrum is certainly a civic-minded individual. He believes every member of a community should give to the community his time or talent. This ideal is clearly exemplified by his many years of service to Prairie Village.

In the spring of 1957, McCrum rode the 7:30 a.m. bus to work downtown with a group of other P.V. residents. Among their topics of discussion, politics was a frequent subject. They decided among themselves that he should run for councilman from the Second Ward, which he did, winning by a narrow margin of four votes. This began his 16 years of service to local government. Bob McCrum served as councilman for 11 years. Then, in August of 1968, he as president of the council succeeded to the position of mayor after the resignation of Carl Schliffke. He was elected to another term of office, serving until April of 1973.

The present city hall was built during his administration. This was a goal of his. The city hall building is designed so that it can be expanded on all four sides. Also during his administration, Prairie Village received cable TV, continued drainage improvements and street repairs. Mayor McCrum was always concerned about tax increases and the change of tax structures. The city hall was financed by bonds but did not result in a large increase in local taxes.

Presently serving on the House Committee of Transportation and Local Government in Topeka, McCrum is continuing to serve his community as state representative.

Prairie Village has honored him by naming the park located at 69th Street and Roe Boulevard after him.



William Franklin  
Mayor 1973-

## “Pursuit of Quality of Life”

By Mayor William E. Franklin

Prairie Village reached early maturity in the 1970's. It is no longer a growing suburban community and the first signs that it is beginning to age were showing up. In addition, population has been declining for several years as the families mature and older children move away.

The years 1973 to 1976 have been ones where we have had to regear the city for its future as a “first ring” older suburban community. People live here because they seek “quality of life” in a community characterized by good to excellent housing, schools, shopping, and governmental services.

In the last four years we have accomplished a number of fundamental changes in the government in order to keep Prairie Village the excellent place it is to make a home.

Like it or not the complexity of government is increasing and we find ourselves involved in Federal Revenue Sharing, federal grants, federal regulations, regional considerations, county, special districts, inter-city, and state agencies. This is heady stuff for a quiet suburban city but it seems to me we are prospering rather than becoming over governed.

In addition, our citizens are demanding more of public officials and government services. But they are generally right, and they realize that being best takes money so they don't say “cut taxes” as much as they seem to say make things better and use the public's money wisely.

More specifically these items come to mind as significant developments in the Prairie Village government in the 1973-1976 period.

- Adoption and enforcement of a minimum housing standards code designed to help avert creeping deterioration of property
- Approval by the voters of a major recreation bond issue to reconstruct the swimming pool facility (“bath house”); to add a tennis center; to purchase land for new parks
- Major upgrading of the recreation facilities, especially in Prairie View Park, including 10 lighted tennis courts
- Upgrading of park and public property maintenance standards to achieve excellence of condition
- Initiation of street, curb, and sidewalk replacement/repair programs

- Strengthen police protection capability as patterns of crime have changed and crime increases in the suburbs
- Reorganization and streamlining of the “bureaucracy” to give better citizen services and improve policy making procedures of the City Council
- Regular open communication with the citizens via newsletters, committees, the press and other means
- Improvements in water courses to the point where most tributaries are paved or have drainage pipe
- A plan to improve Brush Creek along most of its length in Prairie Village. (See earlier references to it.)
- Financial management procedures to strengthen the efficiency of use of the tax dollar and to initiate new budget procedures. Our earnings on temporarily idle funds have increased 10 times over pre-1973 experiences.
- Searching for ways to finance government with less reliance on the property tax and intangibles tax, an issue that is not yet fully resolved. We still have the lowest debt by far of any first class city in Kansas.
- Development of a Comprehensive Plan to determine how the future of the city will be shaped by zoning, transportation, recreation, etc. This matter will come to the public input stage very shortly.

In short, a lot has happened but most of it has been aimed at improving the community and planning for its future. Our government, the Mayor-Council form, is unique in Kansas for first class cities and we see no need for a City Manager form as long as citizens work within their government as elected officials. They have done so for 25 years and will continue to do so.

What of Prairie Village's future? What will the city be like 25 years from now? It is difficult to visualize our future except by its people and its past.

Many older suburban communities will likely become less desirable places to live as they age. I don't think Prairie Village will. The basis for this optimism is that we have a unique blend of housing, commercial, and governmental facilities that attract people interested in “neighborhood conservation.”

The ingredients are: people; local government; educational facilities; and commercial properties designed to serve its citizens.

As long as our citizenry wants a high quality community we will have it. As long as government maintains and improves the community property we will have an excellent city. As long as we practice citizen-oriented and citizen-managed government we will have a prosperous future. As long as the people demand that public services and property and local government be improved and are not hesitant to invest in very moderate public debt to achieve it, we will prosper as a community.

The complexity of government will increase more but the administrative capability is available to deal with this. Prairie Village will likely be redeveloping and rebuilding in its older areas in a quarter century and everything will be both changing and yet constant and stable. I hope so; I think so.

## MAYORS

Ralph A. Brenizer [R] April, 1951-April, 1955  
Bruce W. Stultz [R] April, 1955-April, 1957  
Robert F. Bennett [R] April, 1957-April, 1965  
Carl C. Schliffke [R] April, 1965-August, 1968  
Robert D. McCrum [R] August, 1968-April, 1973  
William E. Franklin [R] April, 1973-

## COUNCILMEN

### Ward 1

Seat 1

Carl C. Schliffke [R] April, 1951-April, 1965  
William R. Riggs, [R] April, 1965-April, 1971  
Loren J. Newton [R] April, 1971-

Seat 2

Frances A. Weaver [R] April, 1953-April, 1955  
William R. Hogan [R] April, 1955-April, 1956  
Raymond I. Kopan [R] April, 1956-April, 1960  
William Springer [R] April, 1960-April, 1968  
Harlan Long [R] April, 1968-January, 1974  
Murray Beedy [R] January, 1974-

### Ward 2

Seat 1

William J. Phares [R] April, 1953-April, 1954  
Robert L. Robinson [R] April, 1954-April, 1956  
W. B. Chambers [R] April, 1956-April, 1957  
Robert D. McCrum [R] April, 1957-Sept., 1968  
Robert Kenney [R] Sept., 1968-Sept., 1970  
Harry Becker [R] Nov., 1970-

Seat 2

Ralph E. Carroll [R] April, 1953-April, 1956  
William G. Gray [R] April, 1956-April, 1958  
Fred J. Schaad [R] April, 1958-April, 1962  
R. C. Weed [R] April, 1962-April, 1966  
Robert Anderson [R] April, 1966-March, 1969  
Harry Becker [R] March, 1969-April, 1970  
William Blaufus [D] April, 1970-Dec., 1975  
Orville Matthies [R] Jan., 1976-April, 1976  
Gerald D. Watts [R] April, 1976-

### Ward 3

Seat 1

Eugene Mitchell [D] April, 1953-April, 1956  
Maurice Fitzgerald [D] April, 1956-June, 1970  
Alvar Werder [D] Sept., 1970-April, 1971  
William Franklin [R] April, 1971-April, 1973  
Larry McCully [R] April, 1973-April, 1976  
Thomas Masterson [D] April, 1976-

Seat 2

Leo Brady, Jr. [R] April, 1953-April, 1955  
George Morton [D] April, 1955-April, 1957  
Clark Churchhill [R] April, 1957-April, 1959  
George Reintjes [R] April, 1959-April, 1961  
Rodney Hill [R] April, 1961-April, 1963  
Robert L. McGahey [R] April, 1963-Nov., 1964  
Thomas E. Allen [R] Dec., 1964-April, 1965  
Daniel J. Watkins [D] April, 1965-April, 1971  
E. Stephen Brown [R] April, 1971-June, 1976  
Allen "Tex" Mount [R] June, 1976-

## COUNCILMEN

### Ward 4

Seat 1

Phillip Cartmell [R] April, 1953-April, 1956  
Edward Geary [R] April, 1956-April, 1958  
Phillip Cartmell [R] April, 1958, April, 1960  
George Lindsay [R] April, 1960-April, 1962  
Paul Enger [R] May, 1962-May, 1964  
Max Petty [R] June, 1964-July, 1965  
Barton Cohen [R] July, 1965-April, 1969  
Austin Harmon [R] April, 1969-

Seat 2

Preston B. Tanner [R] April, 1953-April, 1955  
Robert F. Bennett [R] April, 1955-April, 1957  
Albert C. Cooke [R] April, 1957-June, 1960  
Louis Grunwald [R] July, 1960-February, 1962  
William S. Norris [R] Feb., 1962-April, 1964  
Roy A. Ferguson [R] April, 1964, Aug., 1965  
W. W. Hawkins [R] Sept., 1965-Feb., 1968  
Robert L. Cumley [R] Feb., 1968-April, 1971  
Rush Barns [R] April, 1971-April, 1974  
Dean Lintecum [R] April, 1974-

### Ward 5

Seat 1

Alex McPherson [R] April, 1958-April, 1960  
Richard L. Epstein [D] April, 1960-April, 1962  
Frank C. Parrish [R] April, 1962-April, 1970  
Jerry Gaines [R] April, 1970-

Seat 2

George Lindsay [R] April, 1958-April, 1960  
Porter J. Smith [R] April, 1960-April, 1961  
Roger L. Reisher [R] April, 1961-Dec., 1962  
Robert D. Hovey [R] Jan., 1963-April, 1967  
Jack W. Frost [R] April, 1967-Feb., 1971  
James Lippert [R] Feb., 1971-July, 1971  
Richard Gustafson [R] Sept., 1971-Aug., 1973  
Robert Polete [R] Sept., 1973-

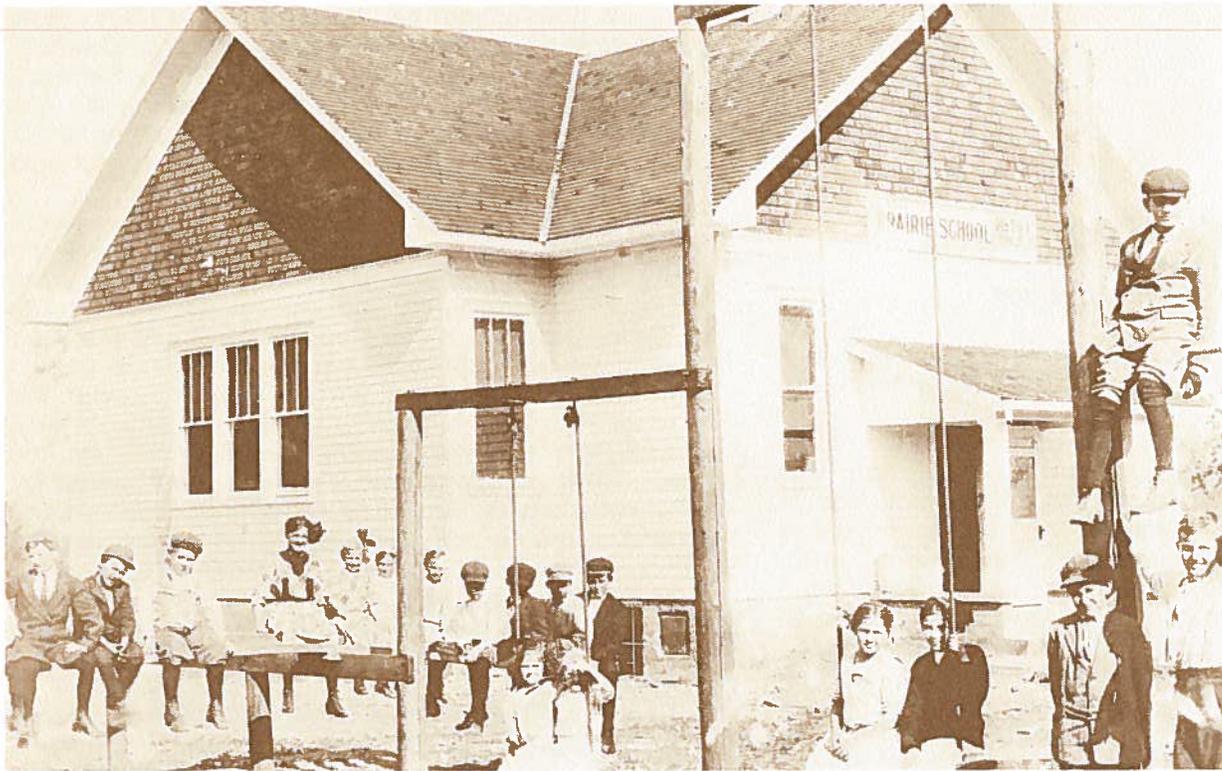
### Ward 6

Seat 1

Ray Davis [R] Feb., 1960-April, 1960  
Harry Krantz [D] April, 1960-June, 1962  
William G. Wald [R] July, 1962-April, 1963  
Gerald W. Moss [R] April, 1963-April, 1964  
William Mullarky [R] April, 1964-April, 1967  
Robert Nusser [R] April, 1967-April, 1971  
Albert Margolin [D] April, 1971-April, 1973  
Robert Nusser [D] April, 1973-April, 1975  
Michael Sagan [D] April, 1975-

Seat 2

Roy Kamberg [R] Feb., 1960-April, 1960  
Gene Hadel [D] April, 1960-April, 1961  
Paul Burke, Jr. [R] April, 1961-Aug., 1963  
James D. Putt [R] Sept, 1963-April, 1966  
John J. Lyons [D] April, 1966-July, 1967  
James Pusateri [R] August, 1967-Oct., 1969  
James Turner [R] Nov., 1969-April, 1970  
Mayme D'Agostino [D] April, 1970-April, 1976  
Robert B. Nusser [R] April, 1976-



*Prairie School in 1912.*

# “learning and literature”

*Corinth School in 1913.*



## Prairie Village Schools

*By Beth McMillen*

The Prairie Village schools have grown from two one-room school houses in the 1890's to twelve schools in 1976.

Corinth School and Prairie School are the oldest schools in Prairie Village. The Corinth School was first known as the Dycke Branch School, named after the John Dycke family who lived southwest of the school. John Dycke was active in school, civic, and church groups in the early days of the Johnson County settlement. According to an 1874 Johnson County atlas, the school was located at the junction of Cazad Road and Thomas James Road. Corinth School, re-named after Corinth Church, was built in 1871 slightly north of its present location. This, the 2nd school in Johnson County, is believed to have opened late in 1850's or early 1860's.

The First Territorial Legislature, in 1855, passed the School Act providing free public schools in each county for children aged five to twenty-one. Before the public schools were established, children were taught at home or in subscription schools. In our area of Johnson County, the only white settlers before 1854 were those connected with the Indian Missions, and their children would have attended the Indian Missions school as did the children of the slaves owned by the white Missionaries. Often children attended school for three months in the winter and then remained at home to help out from the spring planting through the fall harvest.

By 1865, Prairie School had been organized and 1866, the first Prairie School opened on Cazad Road (now the area of 63rd and Mission Road.) Built on the land given by Alexander Soule Johnson, son of Thomas Johnson, the "little crooked school house" leaned to the north because of structural deficiencies, but it served until 1883 when the school board purchased an acre of land at the present site from Henry Coppock for fifty dollars. Samuel Miles Standish, a local carpenter, designed and built the second Prairie School. He was given the old school site (about two acres) in exchange for his labor and eighty dollars! A large school was built in 1912 for a cost of \$2,000. The third Prairie School had one large main room and cloak rooms, a front porch, a coal bin and a basement area play space. The school now served as a civic center for such diverse activities as Friday night spell downs, the debating society, the Anti-Horsethief League, and an annual oyster supper. The new school had a gas light and a hot air furnace which replaced the old "fry or freeze" center stove method of heating. The Kansas City Star newspaper ran a feature article on the school with a picture titled "City School in the Country". Additions were made in 1926 and 1931.

A high school had been built by 1921 to meet the growing educational needs of the area children. Shawnee Mission High School (now Shawnee Mission North) served children from all the elementary schools in the area. There were no junior high schools, at the time, so the elementary schools had grades kindergarten through 8th grade.

Corinth School, in 1927, was still a one-room, one-teacher school with an enrollment of thirty-one students, ranging in age from five to fifteen. Work began in 1936 on the present Prairie School. The brick building was completed in 1939 and the west wing was added in 1948. A second teacher was hired in 1940 and a folding door was added to divide the room into two sections. Later that year, a new four-room colonial building was built to meet the needs of the forty-nine families now served by Corinth School. Mr. Webster Withers donated the land at the current site with the provision that the school face Mission Road. Additions were made in 1949, 1951, and 1953.

St. Ann's School opened in 1949 with seventy students and two Ursuline Sisters. The school was expanded in 1951, 1953, and 1956. The Sisters of Charity have staffed the school since 1955. St. Ann's includes grades one through eight and in 1976 has a staff of twenty-three and an enrollment of 453.

Porter School opened in 1951 followed in 1952 by Belinder School. Somerset School opened in 1953, Ridgeview School in 1955 and the first junior high school, Indian Hills, opened in 1955. Prairie Village got its second junior high school, Meadowbrook, in 1958 and its own high school, Shawnee Mission East. The high school is built on the old Blattner estate. The forty acres cost about \$96,000 in 1958. Meadowbrook is located where the John Dycke farm stood in the mid-1800's.

## The Village Library

*By Beth McMillen*

The Prairie School PTA in 1951 appointed a library committee under the leadership of Mrs. Mark D. Robeson which gathered over 5,000 signatures on petitions to place a resolution for a Johnson County library on the November, 1952, ballot. The resolution carried by a four to one vote following a vigorous campaign of speeches, handbills, car stickers and rallies, but there were no county tax moneys for books, space, or staff. Hundreds of volunteers from all over Johnson County opened volunteer libraries filled with donated books. Men donated lumber and built library shelves in barber shops and grocery stores and any other space that was available. Women and teenagers served as volunteer staff.

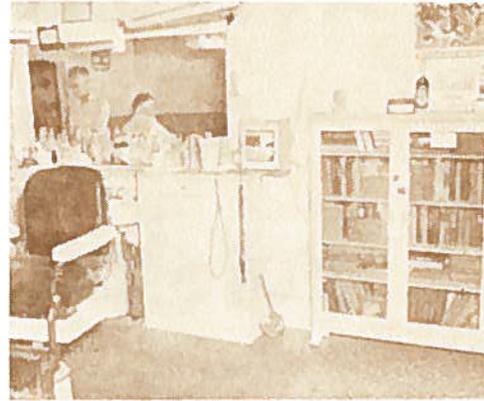
A Kansas law was passed in 1955 which enabled Johnson County to charge a mill levy to operate a public library. The first public library in Prairie Village was located at #20 on the Mall in the Prairie



In 1955, the library had two sites, under a clothing store . . .

System. Mrs. Troy McGrath was the first librarian at Corinth.

That first PTA Library Committee went on to become the "Johnson County Citizens Library Committee". In 1956, it reorganized as the "Friends of the Library of Johnson County" and is still active in the public library cause.



. . . and in a barber shop.

Village Shopping Center. It opened in March, 1956 and in its first month circulated 948 books. Miss Mary Moore was the librarian. In September 1961 a resolution to build Corinth Library passed by a two to one vote and land was purchased from the J. C. Nichols Company at a cost of \$17,000. The Corinth Library was completed in 1963 and is the second permanent building in the Johnson County Library



Children of Prairie Village, 1900-1910 [?]

# “freedom to worship”

## Religious Institutions

*By Mary Bouck*

### Asbury Methodist

5400 West 75th Street

Asbury Methodist began in October, 1952, when Rev. Mills M. Anderson held the first service in his home. In September, 1954, the Asbury congregation met in Santa Fe Trail School, and the ground was broken for the present church building (first unit) in December of 1954. Construction began on the sanctuary in December of 1957, and the present chapel and offices were added in 1963.

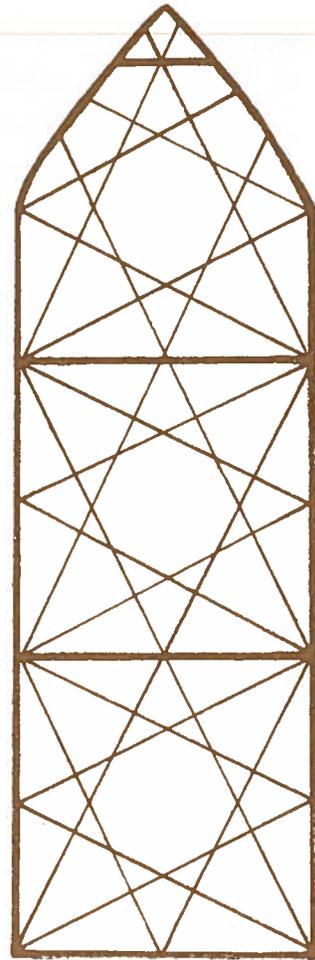
The current minister, Dr. Al Hagar, has served Asbury since 1955.

### Cherokee Heights Christian

7457 Cherokee Dr.

In October, 1950, an announcement was made by the Christian Churches of the purchase of a 3½ acre tract and the three-story residence at 75th and Cherokee. Interested persons were asked to meet at the house with Reverend Sherman Moore on Sunday, October 15th. About 15 people responded and began plans to start a Sunday School.

The dedication of the building site was held October 22, 1950, and Sunday School began the following Sunday with 25 present. On November 12th thirty persons responded to membership and the following week the church was officially named Cherokee Christian Church.



Various ministers and lay people filled in on Sundays until July, 1952, at which time Tom Underwood was called to become the first, and so far, the only full-time pastor the church has had. Mr. Underwood took one year's leave of absence to serve in the Congo under sponsorship of the United Christian Missionary Society in 1965-66.

The first unit of the present building was dedicated May 17, 1953. Three years later, on June 17, 1956, the educational unit was dedicated. In October, 1962, the building was completed with a new sanctuary, office facilities and additional church school rooms.

### Colonial Congregational

7039 Mission Road

The Colonial Church in Prairie Village (Congregational, United Church of Christ) was founded in 1948 on a tract of a little more than 2 acres of land on the northeast corner of 71st Street and Mission Road. The Reverend C. Fosberg Hughes became the organizing minister of the congregation. Construction for a church building began early in 1949, and the first services were held in the chapel on Labor Day Sunday, September 4, 1949. The Charter Membership role was held open until January 1, 1950, when it was closed with 102 names on the Clerk's record.

A second building unit was completed and dedicated in September of 1953. A third unit, consisting of the present sanctuary and social hall, was completed and dedicated on April 4, 1965.

The ministerial staff is comprised of a Senior Minister, David C. Dohrmann, and an Associate Minister, William J. Ryan.

#### **Congregation Ohev Sholom** 5311 West 75th Street

Ohev Sholom Synagogue, 75th and Nall Avenue, will celebrate its Centennial in 1977. The history of Ohev Sholom is a study of Jewish community growth and population shift.

In 1877, the first Jewish families in Kansas City, Kansas, lived in the lower part of the city in what was and still is commonly termed the "Bottoms". It was here that the first Synagogue, founded by a group under the leadership of Michael Levin, began services.

With the flood of 1903, a new trend began. Those affected by the catastrophe moved to an area on Nebraska Avenue and Washington Boulevard. Services were held in the homes of some of the members, and a charter was obtained in the name of Congregation Shearith Israel (Remnants of Israel). In 1925, a charter was granted for a new synagogue to be named Ohev Sholom (Lovers of Peace). The name was officially adopted as a compromise with Congregation Gomel Chessed and Shearith Israel.

In 1954, another Jewish community migration took place. The Jewish community of Kansas City, Kansas, was moving to the suburbs. More than 70% of its members were living in Mission, Prairie Village and Overland Park. In 1956, two acres of land at 75th and Nall were purchased, and, in 1957, an additional acre was purchased. October 2, 1960, the ground breaking ceremony took place, and on April 8, 1962, the first (educational) building was dedicated. It was agreed to use the lower half for school rooms, the upper half to be used as a temporary sanctuary. On May 15-17, 1970, the new sanctuary was dedicated in memory of Rabbi Marshall Miller, who served as spiritual leader from 1937 to 1965, when he died.

In addition to Rabbi Miller, there have been two other spiritual leaders. Rabbi David Paley served from 1965 to 1973, and the present Rabbi Maurice Weisenberg came in 1973 to Ohev Sholom.

The Hebrew Academy of Greater Kansas City, which just completed its 10th year, has increased to 12 grades and about 200 students. This year marked their first High School graduation.

#### **Ecumenikos [Ecumenical]** 5225 West 75th St.

Ecumenikos was founded in 1972 at its present location by members of five denominations. The denominations represented were United Methodist, United Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, Christian Church, and Mennonite (General Conference).

The present minister is Terry Woodbury.

#### **Faith Lutheran**

4805 West 67th Street

As America celebrates its Bicentennial, Faith Lutheran Church is moving into its 26th year of work and service in the community. From the beginning on September 10, 1950, with 52 people gathering for worship, Faith has grown to its present membership of 1102 in 1976. The Reverend Verner E. Strand and the Reverend M. Brent Gustafson follow four other ministers who have provided spiritual leadership for this congregation.

#### **Hillcrest Covenant**

8801 Nall

In 1960, three acres of land were purchased at the present church location. Construction of a church building was begun on the site in 1962, and the building was completed and occupied on March 10, 1963, and dedicated the following May 12. The congregation met at Osage School from 1961-1963.

Pastor Lindell was installed as pastor of the new congregation on September 10, 1961. Pastor Otteson served as interim pastor from June, 1969, until August, 1970. The present Reverend Klassen came to Hillcrest in August, 1970.

Two additional building phases have been completed, including the educational wing in 1967, and the new sanctuary in March, 1975.

#### **Nall Avenue Baptist**

5401 West 67th Street

On September 13, 1953, a group of Baptists, 38 in number, constituted the Nall Avenue Baptist Church of Prairie Village. Since her beginning in a residence at 67th and Nall, the church entered and concluded three building programs, purchased a residence and a lot adjoining the church property. Membership has grown steadily from the 38 original members to over 1400 at the present time.

Nall Avenue Baptist, throughout the years, with few exceptions, has been one of the leaders in mission giving in the state. The church is presently involved in a mission ministry in the Westport area.

During the 22 year history, the church has had three pastors, with the present pastor, Owen C. Dahlor, now serving in his nineteenth year.

#### **Nall Avenue Nazarene**

6301 Nall

Nall Avenue Nazarene began in October, 1972, at its present location. Its former location was 4418 Rainbow.

Reverend William C. Coulter is the present minister, and the average weekly attendance at services is 400. Membership numbers 299.

Nall Avenue Nazarene has an active music department, and also an enthusiastic education department.

**Prairie Baptist**

7416 Roe Avenue

Prairie Baptist was chartered on December 10, 1950, with 13 charter members. Leadership in the early months was provided by Dr. Robert H. Russell, Professor at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kansas.

Property was obtained at 75th and Roe, which continues to be the church location.

The present pastor is Reverend Robert E. Shaw.

**Resurrection Lutheran**

9100 Mission Road

The Lutheran Church of the Resurrection was organized on February 8, 1948, as Ward Parkway Lutheran Church at 8422 Ward Parkway. Services were first held at the Ruhl School, and a church building was dedicated on September 25, 1949.

In 1954, the decision was made to relocate to the site presently used. The chapel at the Ward Parkway location was moved to the present site and served as the parish education unit, with a new chapel being added. The Kansas City Star on June 13, 1955, published a picture of the actual moving of the building with the caption, "The Church Is On the Move." In 1963, a ground-breaking service was held for a new and larger church building which was dedicated on May 17, 1964. In 1969, additional adjacent property was purchased.

Among the pastors was Y. E. Nelson, who served the congregation for 12½ years. Reverend Earl H. Meissner joined the congregation as minister on March 1, 1969.

**Reorganized Latter Day Saints**

7842 Mission Rd.

On June 29, 1952, 35 people met for the first time as a congregation of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in a rented hall at 77th and Wornall. On October 12, 1952, Elder Lyman Jones was appointed the first pastor. The congregation met next in the Masonic Hall at 69th and Mission Road, then 5201 W. 75th, and finally, in March, 1954, a five-acre site was purchased at 79th and Mission Rd. On May 5, 1957, following a Communion Service, a ground-breaking ceremony was held. The following Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1957, saw the completion of the first unit of the building program.

On January 1, 1971, the decision was made to form two congregations out of the existing membership, due to the need for expansion. The newly formed Overland Park group uses the church building from 8 A.M. to 10 A.M. every Sunday morning and the Prairie Village group attends services from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. The building is shared on an equal expense basis. Meetings and special uses of the building are coordinated to satisfy the needs of both groups.

The second unit of the building program was begun on September 8, 1971, and was officially completed for the Easter Service in April of 1973.

Those serving presently in the pastorate (all lay members) are: High Priest John W. Blackman, Presiding Elder; Elder Frank J. Raw, Associate Pastor; and Elder George Davis, Jr., Associate Pastor.

**Southminster Presbyterian**

6306 Roe Avenue

Southminster Presbyterian Church was founded on September 9, 1951, and their founding minister was Dr. Ward Boyd. The first service was held at Hickory Grove School on September 23, 1951.

The cornerstone of the first building (Fellowship Hall) was laid on October 18, 1953, the building dedicated in March and the Educational wing completed in September of 1956. The present sanctuary was completed and the first service held there in December, 1962.

Dr. Frank L. Rearick retired from Southminster in October, 1975.

**Southwest Bible**

7820 Mission Road

On November 1, 1953, the Southwest Bible Church began as an expansion of Central Bible Church of Kansas City, Missouri. Approximately 40 families volunteered to establish the new church. The temporary meeting place was at the Kansas City Bible College, at 75th and State Line. In April, 1956, the land at 7820 Mission Road was purchased, and the present building was completed on November 23, 1958. The church then became officially known as Southwest Bible Church.

The Reverend George Darby has been the pastor since 1963. Former pastors were Dr. Robert Belton and Reverend Darrel Handel.

**St. Ann's Catholic**

7231 Mission Road

At its inception, St. Ann's congregation included 80 families. The Reverend Patrick J. Fitzgerald was installed as the first pastor in January, 1949. Reverend Wm. T. Dolan was appointed pastor in 1960, followed by Reverend A. M. Harvey in 1966. The present pastor, Msgr. Wm. Curtin, came to St. Ann's in 1971.

The cornerstone of the first church was set in June, 1949, and the dedication took place in November of the same year. The almost steady building program culminated with the building of the present church, which was dedicated in June, 1964. Fortunately, the church was built with the altar in the center, because soon after, as a result of the Vatican II Council, the altars were rearranged to face the congregation.

One of the organizations and services offered at St. Ann's is a private school with departmentalized programming and a large choice of electives. St. Ann's school began with 70 in 1951, 1953, and 1956. In 1959, the present convent was erected to care for the growing faculty of the school.

**Village United Presbyterian**

6641 Mission Rd.

The first worship service of the Village Church on Sunday, February 13, 1949, followed a year of house-to-house visitation by the founding minister, Bob Meneilly. The 282 charter members had been backed by a \$100,000 gift provided by the Board of American Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America for the building of a manse, sanctuary and undercroft. Usually, new congregations began in schools, theaters and neighborhood garages. The gift was an experiment to see if ready-built facilities would have a positive effect on the emerging young church. The result set a pattern for many denominations. Today, the community sees the results of five major building expansion projects.

Seven ministers comprise the staff: Dr. Robert H. Meneilly, Senior Pastor; Rev. Richard H. Athey, Minister of Pastoral Counseling; Dr. Lawrence P. Byers, Minister of Adult Education; Rev. William J. Foster, Minister to Precommunicants; Rev. Charles E. Fredrick, Minister of Evangelism and Stewardship; Rev. William F. Pinkerton, Minister of Pastoral Care; and Rev. Kenneth Winter, Minister with Youth.

**Zion Lutheran**

7501 Belinder Avenue

Zion Lutheran Church was officially organized on January 10, 1952, under the direction of the first pastor, Rev. Elmer Kroening. Worship services were first held at the Kansas City Bible College, which then stood at 75th and State Line, until the first church unit was dedicated on May 17, 1953. A new sanctuary and educational wing were dedicated on October 4, 1964. In 1966, the present pastor, Rev. John D. Frey, was installed on February 5, 1967. In 1968, Mr. Lester Schmidt became Director of Christian Education, and this position was later filled by Rev. Peter Tremain, who became Zion's Assistant Pastor on June 25, 1972.



*Highland Cemetery, 5100 W. 65th*



*Corinth Cemetery, 83rd at Mission Rd.*

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# from volunteers

# to professionals . . .

## **Prairie Village Police Department**

The City of Prairie Village, Kansas, was incorporated in February of 1951 by a proclamation of the Governor of the State of Kansas. At the first city council meeting, April 4, 1951, at the law office of James R. Hoover, 3946 W. 69th Terrace, a position of city marshal was created by Mayor Ralph A. Brenzier. On May 7, 1951, Mayor Brenzier appointed John Middleton as the first city marshal. Marshal Middleton was sworn into office on May 14, 1951. Two deputies, were sworn in to assist Marshal Middleton in the law enforcement of Prairie Village on July 2, 1951.

At the council meeting dated September 4, 1951, Marshal Middleton advised the mayor and city council that he and his deputies were observing cases of second and third offenders; no summons or complaint procedure was present at that time. During this period from April to September of 1951, only warnings for violations were given. At this meeting Mayor Brenzier asked City Judge Harry Roark to establish regular sessions of police court beginning on Friday, September 14, 1951.

By January of 1952, the all-volunteer police force for the City of Prairie Village, Kansas had risen to nine men, consisting of the City Marshal and eight deputies. The volunteers were given eleven (\$11) dollars per month for gasoline and personal

automobile expenses for time on duty. The first police budget submitted in 1952 was in the amount of \$6,600 which would include one automobile to be used full time.

On March 3, 1952 Mayor Brenzier accepted the resignation of City Marshal Middleton, and in turn appointed Bruce Stultz to fill the vacated position. By April 7, 1952, a police unit was in service every night of the week with part time operation during the daylight hours. All deputies were provided with a Frontier-style uniform.

On July 7, 1952, City Marshal Stultz advised the city council of the need to have professional full time employed policemen. It was decided that the first paid police officer was to be hired by November 15, 1952. The first officer, William E. Foley, was hired and sworn in as chief of police on December 5, 1952 with a salary compensation of \$275 to \$300 per month.

By February 2, 1953 the police department had grown to three men with the hiring of two additional full time paid police officers. This addition enabled the City to have 24-hour police protection. Eleven months later, the department added still another full time officer; at this time the proposed police budget had risen to \$27,380.

On May 2, 1955 Gerry Little was appointed to replace Chief Foley, who had resigned on October 10, 1954. The department now had six full time police officers with Chief Little serving on a part time basis with a compensatory salary of \$1 per

year. December 9, 1955 brought about a consolidated law enforcement cooperation between the cities of Prairie Village and Mission Hills. The Prairie Village Police Department assumed police service responsibilities for both cities, effective on January 1, 1956. To meet the newly increased law enforcement duties the police department had expanded to nine full time officers by February of 1956 and to 14 full time officers by April 15, 1957. On December 16, 1957 a proposed ordinance was adopted thereby establishing a Civil Service Commission for the department. Bruce Stultz and Darrell Havener were appointed to serve on this Commission. (Mr. Havener still serves the Commission)

By 1958, the department consisted of 16 full time police officers with a small volunteer reserve division. Captain Roy L. Gochenour was appointed as the city's first full time chief of police in May of 1959. In 1960, a part-time detective and juvenile division was formed. This was accomplished by four officers who after working their regular patrol duties would work overtime in the investigation of crimes in the City. The detective and juvenile officers became full time positions upon the appointment of two officers by Chief Gochenour in 1962.

In November of 1964, R. J. Hundley was appointed as chief of police to the City of Prairie Village by Mayor Robert Bennett, after the resignation of Chief Gochenour. Hundley still holds this position.

In 1965, a metropolitan major case unit known as the "Metro Squad" was formed. This department has participated in the Metro Squad since its inception by training and assigning police officers to the unit when called upon.

On February 23, 1976, the police department had its first officer die while under department employ. A military funeral was held for Joseph C. Albers on February 26, 1976. Patrol Sergeant Albert H. Heim became the first pensioned retiree from the department on April 1, 1976.

## Fire District No. 2

Fire District No. 2 was established in late 1947 before the station at 3921 W. 63rd St. was built. Two pumpers were kept at the J. C. Nichols maintenance barn located at 70th and State Line. Living quarters for the eight firemen, working two different shifts on a 24 hour on, 24 hours off, basis, were completed in early 1948. In July of that year, the firemen and equipment moved in.

Before the district was formed, the area now protected by the district was covered by a truck equipped with a pump mounted on it like a tree spraying truck. It was operated by employees of the J. C. Nichols Co. with help from Mission township Fire District No. 1 and the Overland Park Fire Department. The boundaries of Fire District No. 2 were much the same as today.

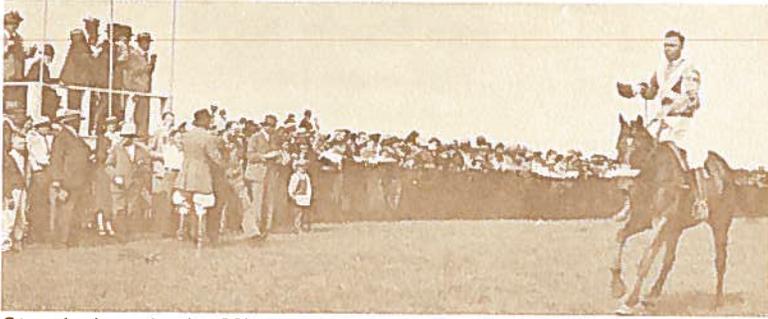
## Fire District No. 3

Fire District No. 3 was formed in early 1955. The residents voted on October 18 to approve bonds of \$140,000 to purchase land, equipment, and build a new station at 9011 Roe; \$80,000 for the purchase of land and new station, \$60,000 for equipment. The temporary building to house the fire trucks was at 8100 Mission Rd., which once was a barn for race horses on the Woolf farm. Quarters for stable hands were remodeled for the firemen. The Fire District was put into operation on January 1, 1956, and moved to the new station on August 4, 1956. There were eight firemen, four to a shift, who worked a 24-hour on and off shift.

Fire District #3 paid Fire District #2 for its chief to be the chief of No. 3 until the districts were consolidated in February, 1962. It is now known as Consolidated Fire District #2 and operated under the supervision of a three-man board, paid chief, asst. chief, fire inspector, 54 firefighters, and a seven-member ambulance crew.



*Fire Department Demonstration Fire, 1954*



Steeplechase in the 30's.



Polo enthusiasts - 1947.



Polo game - 1947.

# • • • and a time to play

## Recreation in Prairie Village

By Jill Norden

In the early days of Prairie Village, children created their own recreation. Brush Creek was the playground, a perfect place to search for flowers, fish, "skinny-dip" in the summer (as early as April 1), and skate in the winter. "Shinny" was a favorite game, played like hockey, with sticks and a tin can. Also popular were baseball, basketball and hide-and-seek.

In 1912, the new Prairie School was erected at 67th and Mission Road. Doubling as a Community Center, the school was used for meetings of the Anti-Horsethief League, the annual oyster supper, Friday night spelldown, and debating society gatherings. The latter affair welcomed guests one time, after which they were required to say or read something. The raised platform for the teacher's desk served as a stage.

In the early 1930's, polo playing and steeplechases were great sports in what is now the south part of Prairie Village. Roe Avenue runs through the old polo ground. R. L. Nafziger owned the property, which consisted of two lakes and the polo ground. Swimming and fishing were permitted on the lakes, provided one paid the 25¢ fee to the Mackey children, relates Mrs. Pat Hahn, daughter of Joe Mackey, who was "huntsman." The old Mission Valley Hunt Club was built in 1929 as a gathering

spot for members. Breakfasts and parties were frequent after riding to hounds. The clubhouse was forced to close in the mid-1930's by the depression. It remains as a private residence on W. 83rd Terrace, and was one of the homes on the Kappa Holiday Tour in 1972.

In 1952, Prairie Village finally had a swimming pool with the opening of Homestead Country Club. Membership was available only to residents of J. C. Nichols areas. In that same year, Prairie Village acquired its first parks: McCrum, at 77th and Roe, and Windsor at 71st and Windsor. In the early 50's, there were parades, fashion shows, street dances, and even a "swimming pool dance", held in the newly-built Homestead pool, following dinner at Prairie School.

Prairie View Park was acquired in August of 1955, with the first pool built later that year. A second pool was built in 1960. It was not until 1968 that the tennis courts appeared - a total of four. With the surge of tennis enthusiasts, six additional courts were built in 1974, and the Prairie Village Tennis Club was formed.

In 1969, a youth center was founded at "Stone House", next to City Hall. A Community Center was added to the picture in 1971 with classes and activities for all, including senior citizens and an active square dancing program.

Over the years, additional parks have sprung up, some with tennis courts, others with benches and fountains. Just this year, 1976, the residents voted to acquire land for a park in the south part of the city, enabling every resident in the city to walk to a park near his home.

## Scouting

Scouting has been a part of Prairie Village life long before there was a Prairie Village. According to records at the Heart of America Council of the Boy Scouts of America, the first troop organized in the Prairie Village area was the Prairie School PTA Troop 91, which started on November 18, 1938. The application for the charter was signed by Mrs. R. Z. Smiley, president of the Prairie School PTA and the troop was to meet at the school on Tuesday nights.

Shortly after the organization of the community of Prairie Village, Troop 91 moved from the Prairie School to the Men's Club at the Village Church.

On March 18, 1951, the second troop was organized in the Prairie Village area, at the Colonial Church. Reverend C. Fosberg Hughes, minister of the church signed the application for charter and it was approved with A. J. Shirk as Committee Chairman and D. P. Flack as Scoutmaster of Troop 92.

Prior to the organization at Prairie School of the troop, the Scouts in that area were served by a troop at the Roesland School, Troop 95. Records from the old Wyandotte Council of the Boy Scouts indicate that Troop 95 was organized in January of 1926.

Cub Scouting, a program for 8, 9 and 10 year olds also started at Prairie School with Pack 3091 which was organized on March 8, 1939, a few months after the organization of Troop 91.

Girl Scouts have been active in Prairie Village since the late 1940's. In 1953, Betty Johnson of Prairie Village became the executive director of the Kansas City Council of Girl Scouts furthering the active participation of Prairie Village scouts. Camp Timberlake was developed at the site of the old J. C. Nichols farm in 1956 enabling scouts to attend camp in Kansas. In 1967, the Pioneer Trails and Kansas City Council of which Prairie Village was a part, joined together to become the Mid-Continent Council of Girl Scouts. Today girls in Prairie Village are active from ages 6 to 17 through participation in Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes and Senior Scouts.

## Campfire

The Sunflower Council of Camp Fire Girls, presently serving over 5,000 people in Wyandotte and Johnson counties, separated from the Kansas City Missouri Council in 1921 because of the increased growth in membership. However, it wasn't until October 22, 1935 that Johnson County Camp Fire groups were invited to join the Council. A. L. Cross, principal of Shawnee Mission Rural High School, was elected to the Council's Board of Directors at that time.

From 1935 to 1969, Johnson County Camp Fire membership continued to expand until in 1969 two districts were formed in the county. Kiowa District was established in the area north of 75th Street with the area south of 75th Street known as Pawnee District. The Kiowa District membership was a little over 1,000 girls in 1969 and has stabilized at

approximately that figure today. Pawnee District has grown to include 1,500 girls within its membership.

A wide variety of activities are offered to girls by the over 500 adult group leaders in Johnson County. Many of this year's projects revolved around the Bicentennial and included crafts, field trips, service projects, and the earning of Camp Fire beads and emblems. The Council's Bicentennial Fire Hydrant Painting project decorated Johnson County streets with colorful early American characters.

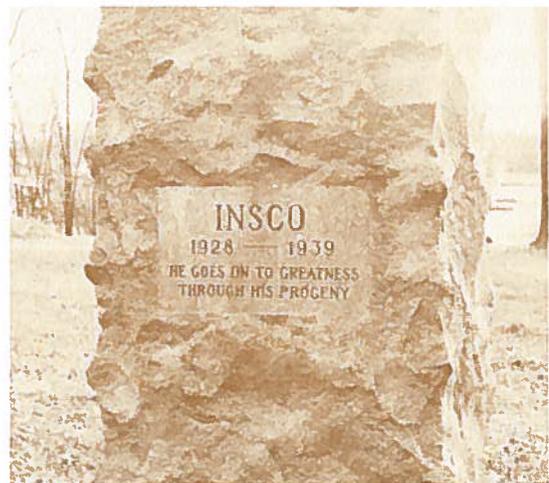
## Johnson County YMCA

The Johnson County YMCA is a branch of the Greater Kansas City YMCA a one of the largest suburban YMCA's in the United States, with an annual membership in excess of 24,000 individuals.

This "Y" began in 1951 as the Northeast Johnson County "Y" and we operated as a department of the Country Club Branch which is now the Southtown YMCA, located at 64th and Wornall, K.C., Mo. In 1959, the "Y" moved to 80th & Metcalf where O'Neill Oldsmobile stands today. From 1961-65 the "Y" was housed on 75th Street just west of Metcalf. Thanks to a capital campaign in 1964 the present building was built at 79th and Delmar. We moved in the Spring of 1965. The original building housed an indoor swimming pool, two meeting rooms, offices and lockerrooms.

The capital campaign of 1970 built four handball courts and the YMCA Sports Complex, which is located on Highway 150 west of Metcalf and houses 11 football fields and 7 baseball fields.

In 1974, Marvin Atha contributed the funds for four tennis courts which were built adjacent to the pool at 79th and Delmar.



*Lawrin, the most famous horse in Kansas history, won the 1938 Kentucky Derby while stabled at the old Woolf Farm, located in the vicinity of what is now the area to the west of the Corinth Library and Shopping center. Eddie Arcaro was the jockey.*



## reflections

### “I Sometimes Wonder . . .”

By Edgar A. Porter  
[written in 1952]

Prairie School District was born in 1865. The district comprised what is now Prairie, Roesland and Westwood. The district was bounded by Forty-seventh Street on the north, the State Line on the east, Seventy-first Street on the south, (only there wasn't any Seventy-first Street at that time) and Nall Avenue on the west. The school house was on a two acre tract on the northwest corner of 63rd and Mission Road. It was called the Crooked school because the building leaned slightly to the north. The building was forty feet wide and sixty feet long. Possibly it was built so much larger than was needed because the district fathers had a dim idea that at some future time they might need to divide it with a partition and have a two room school. (What vision!)

In 1874 the district was divided; the south part remaining Prairie and the north part becoming the Mission District. (Later, Mission became Roesland and Westwood.) The boundary of the new district began at 59th Street and Nall, east on 59th Street to State Line, south on State Line to 75th Street, (note the addition of the strip between 71st Street and 75th Street,) west on 75th Street to one-fourth mile west of Nall, north one-fourth mile, east to Nall, and north to 59th Street. This was an area of 2600 acres.

There were 15 families in the district: Major Deering, William James, William White, August Hahn, Horace Tower, D. C. Odell, Joseph Thorpe, M. V. (Wash) Henderson, Mr. Hughes, Garret Barnes, T. C. Porter, T. A. Lewis, Thomas Nall, John Nall, and Herman Spielbusch. The average farm holding was one-hundred seventy-three and one-third acres. I doubt if the average householder in the Prairie district owns more than half an acre. The new district purchased an acre of ground at 67th Street and Mission for \$50 and gave S. M. Standish, a local carpenter, the two acres at 63rd and Mission Road in return for erecting a building on the new site. It was in this building that my mental garden was cultivated. It was a one-room school. The heating plant was a big red stove that stood in the center of the room. Half of the pupils roasted while the others shivered. Our last chore before going home in the evening was to put our ink bottles under the stove so the ink wouldn't freeze overnight.

One redeeming thing about this stove was that it sometimes interfered with the teacher's line of vision, giving some pupils a measure of freedom from observation. In addition to the stove and the desks, the equipment consisted of a blackboard, a bundle of switches, a coal-scuttle, poker and shovel, a water pail and tin dipper from which we all drank in blissful ignorance of its deadly peril - germs hadn't been invented in those days. The play ground equipment consisted of an adjustable teeter-board, laid across a rail of the fence. We adjusted it by

putting the fat boy nearer the middle than the skinny one.

The teacher received from \$25 to \$35 a month for seven months. The annual budget was between \$300-\$400 a year - about \$18 per pupil. We didn't study cooking, sewing, carpentering, mechanics, basketball or football. We played baseball at recess but the ball and bat were furnished by the pupils, not by the school.

The first church in the Prairie district was an open air one at 68th Street and Mission Road. It came about in this way. During the Civil War the commander of the Union forces in Missouri issued the famous, or infamous, Order No. 11. One of the provisions of this order was that no minister might preach the gospel in Missouri without taking an oath of allegiance to the Union. Many ministers refused to do this because they considered it a violation of the Constitutional right to freedom of worship. Some who were near enough to the border took their congregations across the State Line to hold services. The Westport Cumberland Presbyterian Church had two elders living in Johnson County; T. A. Lewis at 67th and Mission and T. C. Porter at 69th and Mission Road. In those days there was a beautiful little grove midway between these homes. In nice weather the Westport Church held services in this grove. In stormy weather services were held alternately at the two homes. After the school house was built in 1866 this church held services in the school house until they built a church in Westport to replace the one that had been destroyed during the war.

Since the lives, loves, and adventures of the early settlers in the Prairie district followed about the same pattern, a brief sketch of the family with whose fortunes and misfortunes I am most familiar may be of some interest. My father, Thomas C. Porter, brought his bride to the Prairie District from Kentucky in 1858. They came by steamboat up the Mississippi to St. Louis and up the Missouri to Kansas City. At that time Westport was a thriving little town, but Kansas City was only a suburb of Westport, known as Westport Landing. Father bought 160 acres of land at \$6 an acre. His farm was one-fourth of a mile wide and a mile long between 69th Street and 71st Street, intersected in the middle by Mission Road. He had only a small house at first, a one room log cabin. As the years passed he kept adding a little more on and a little more on until he had a lot of little morons.

Life was rugged in those days. Conveniences were few and luxuries were nil. They didn't have push buttons. In those days the wife had to sew on the buttons and press the clothes. Now she presses the button and it does the rest. They didn't have electric lights, gas lights, or kerosene lamps. They had tallow candles made by hand in their own molds. Just as they were getting a good start in the new land, along came the great drouth of 1860, which according to the old timers was a drouthier drouth than any drouth we have had since. Next came the Civil War when life and property along the border were in constant danger. What the Bushwackers didn't steal the Jayhawkers did. I shall not attempt to describe the ravages of these

hoppers, because - well, it is said that pigs do not climb trees because no one would believe it if they did.

During my boyhood days life ran much more smoothly, but still one of our chief pastimes was doing without things. We didn't have television. We didn't have radios. We didn't have movies. We didn't have telephones. About our only commercialized entertainment was the "priest of Pallas" parade in Kansas City. We had to manufacture our own amusements, and yet, I sometimes wonder if we didn't have more fun and feel better afterwards than the youngsters of today who have everything.

## **"We Could Buy Chickens and Eggs"**

*By Howard D. McEachen*

When I signed a contract in June, 1944, to become principal of Shawnee Mission High School (so named because it served Shawnee and Mission Townships — Prairie Village being located in the latter) World War II was at its peak.

There were no homes to rent in Northeast Johnson County and very few for sale. I finally found one at what is now 4107 W. 69th Street, Prairie Village, where my wife and I still reside. Only Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Settles of 4117 and Mrs. Othel Sherwood of 4023 have lived on this street longer than we have. Mr. and Mrs. John Bosserman who lived on 69th St. when we came moved to another area but a few years ago moved back and now live a few doors from their former home. Sixth-ninth was the first street built in Prairie Village by the J. C. Nichols Co. in 1941. The January 1942 issue of BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS featured the first house in Prairie Village. We have a bound copy of this issue.

When our family consisting of three sons, my wife and I moved to Prairie Village in August, 1944, it extended from 67th Street through 69th Street, Mission road to Delmar. Sixty-seventh Street was the only through street from Mission Road to Metcalf. Our oldest son, Bill enrolled in the 7th grade at Prairie School, Dick in the 6th grade, and Gary in the 1st. J. True McAuley was principal of Prairie school at that time. The McAuleys now reside in Green Valley, Ariz.

At that time Porter's farm was south of 69th Street. We had no grocery or any store closer than Mission or Overland Park but we could buy chickens and eggs from Porters and milk was delivered to the door. For a short time a bus outfitted as a grocery store traveled through the Village periodically. Mail in the early days of Prairie Village was delivered out of Mission by rural carrier to boxes on the street. Later, mail to us came addressed "Kansas City, Mo. 15" which was confusing to people who knew we lived in Kansas. When the Shawnee Mission Post Office area was set up we could use Prairie Village or Shawnee Mission and later came the 66208 zip. Telephone numbers changed frequently too as more

After Purchasing & Moving the Department is Fitted by Elizabeth Hubbard

**This Little Home Went to Market**

*By Hester Kibbey Palmer*

A Midwest Gardened Home on central road gap, a buyer snapped it up, the very first day.

There's a price tag on "this little home" that says "under \$6,000" and it's not a sticker, it's a fact. The house is a single-story, garden-level home with a central road gap. It's a beautiful home with a lot of character. The kitchen is a gem, with a built-in stove and sink. The living room is a gem, with a built-in fireplace and a large window. The bedrooms are a gem, with built-in beds and wardrobes. The bathroom is a gem, with a built-in tub and a large window. The house is a gem, with a lot of character and a lot of charm.

Pages from *Better Homes and Garden*, January 1942 issue.

exchanges were added. During the war you were lucky to get a phone, even though it was a four-party line.

Most families were "one-car families" as can be seen by the one-car garages in "old" Prairie Village. Most men who worked downtown left their cars for their wives and rode the bus. The regular riders and the bus driver developed quite a spirit of comradery with Christmas parties, etc. For a time a "Toonerville trolley" type bus went from 69th and Mission Road to 63rd and Brookside twice a day.

In 1944, there were about six Prairie Village students attending Shawnee Mission High School.

In February, 1944, the Prairie Village Homes Association was incorporated and the following Board members were elected: Dr. Earl B. Jewell, W. S. Turner, J. W. Roberts, Othel Sherwood, and Howard D. McEachen, who was elected President of the Board. The annual meetings were usually held following a dinner at the Prairie School cafeteria. Since none of the early homes were equipped with disposals, garbage and trash collection, (as in later years) was usually the item that caused the most discussion. This service was taken over this year by the city.

Quite a change took place in Prairie Village after the war ended and building could be resumed. The Nichols Company built a home for the Porters on Prairie Lane and gave them five lots to use for gardening during Miss Porter's life-time so they could acquire the farm and start building the shopping center.

By 1950, the population of Prairie Village including those of school age had increased tremendously. Prairie School was full as was Shawnee Mission High School, although it had been completely rebuilt by 1950. In 1952 it was voted to form Junior High Schools by taking the 7th and 8th

grades from the elementary schools and the 9th grade from the High School. Consequently, in 1955 four Junior High Schools were opened, one of which was Indian Hills in Prairie Village. This was soon followed by a fifth, Meadowbrook, also in the present Prairie Village. The Junior High Schools only temporarily eased the Senior High School situation and in the fall of 1958 the second senior high school in the Shawnee Mission District—Shawnee Mission East was opened at 75th and Mission Road. Porter, Belinder, and Highlands were added in the Prairie Elementary District.

Our sons all became Eagle Scouts in Troop 91 which at first was sponsored by Prairie School. When Dr. "Bob" Meneilly came to organize the Village Church he became Scoutmaster of the troop and the church became the sponsor.

Incidentally two of our sons and their families live in Prairie Village and the third has his medical office in the Village. So, our roots were well established in Prairie Village in 1944.

## Recollections

By Audley Porter

I was born April 6, 1901, at what is now about 72nd and Mission Road, the present site of Jones Store. My father, Thomas Chapman Porter, married my mother, Anna Woesteymeyer Porter, on May 16, 1900. My grandfather, Thomas Carson Porter married my grandmother, Ann Chapman Porter in Kentucky in 1858. Thompson A. Lewis married my Grandfather's sister, Bettie Porter Lewis in Kentucky.

In 1858, Grandfather Porter and Uncle Thompson Lewis walked from Westport to 95th and State Line. They stayed that night with Mr. Jeske Steele. The next day (Sunday) Mr. Steele took them horseback, and advised them to buy the ground where Prairie Village is now.

I started to Prairie School in 1906. Then there were no rock roads, no telephones, no electricity.

Prairie School was truly a Community Center. The Literary Society, The Debating Club and the Reading Circle met there. The Central Protective Association, commonly called the "Horse League", met there monthly. It was formed to guard against horse and chicken thieves and burglars. Every winter it had an oyster supper, and every summer a barbecue on the west side of Mission Road about 59th Street.

In 1872, my Grandfather Porter and Uncle Thompson Lewis were ruling elders who helped form the Corinth Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The bricks were made from clay in the creek bank there and were burned at the site. The church stone still stands in the Corinth cemetery on the south side of 83rd Street, east of Corinth School.

During the Civil War, there were no doctors in the community. My great aunt, Betty Porter Lewis, had ridden with and helped her father, a doctor in Kentucky. She had sufficient knowledge of medicine to attend the ill in the neighborhood. This service was gratis - a community service.

## A Visit with Mrs. Fred Irwig

*By Jill Norden*

As we sat in the den of her home at 5109 W. 87th Street, Mrs. Irwig reminisced about the early days before her home was part of Prairie Village. At that time her mailing address was Route #1, Lenexa, Kansas.

The Irwigs arrived in Kansas 45 years ago - August 31, 1931 to be exact. They had decided they didn't want to live in town anymore. "We wanted to raise our children without our neighbors telling us how," said Mrs. Irwig. They placed a blind ad in the paper, and received 13 responses, including a caretaker's cottage located on what is now 87th Street (then, a dirt road). That house was too small, but they fell in love with the one across the street, view and all. Upon learning it was not for sale, they begged the realtor to inform them if it ever should be. Months later, they successfully purchased the home and 20 acres (a modest holding then). Additional land was purchased, and the Irwigs were "country farmers", with a healthy crop of Black Angus Cattle, hogs, sheep, chickens, and feed for them all.

In the early years of the Irwigs residence, there was no water or gas. Water was hauled for two years in milk trucks. (Eventually, along with their neighbors, the Irwigs brought in water lines. There were no stores, the closest being in Waldo, and a

grocery store, Goodells, in Overland Park (now a gift shop). The Power and Light Company was in Dale's present location. Overland Park consisted of one street of shops.

Mrs. Irwig recalled the homes in existence between hers and Prairie School in 1931. These consisted of: Woolf farm house (now High Lawn Montessori School), the present Stone House, a red brick house which later became the rectory for the Presbyterian Church, Porter house (where Jones Store now stands), and the Clark home on Nall. Horses still live in the back yard of the latter home - they were here first!

There were two schools in those days - Corinth, consisting of two rooms, and the four room Prairie School. When it came time for the oldest Irwig child to enter school, it was found that there weren't enough desks at Corinth School. Not knowing what to do, the Irwigs were relieved to learn that for a fee of 50¢ a semester, their daughter could attend Prairie School, and have a desk all to herself.

Mrs. Irwig recalled that the children were all let out of school at different times. The principal, Mr. Cook would not allow them to remain on the playground after school, so in 1941, with the advent of gas rationing, her boys switched to Corinth School. Apparently, there were enough desks. Often, the boys would ride their horses to school, leaving them tied up with a nose bag to ward off hunger.

All the farmers were very neighborly. They frequently loaned equipment and helped each other. One neighbor, however, (whose name Mrs. Irwig was loathe to mention), was the target of local gossip. It seems she tended to hallucinate. When residents would pick up rocks early in the morning, she would claim they were cutting down her hedgerow. She also stated that her good garden tools were stolen every night to be replaced with rusty ones. This lady seemed to have two occupations; gardening and keeping her eye on the comings and goings of people on her property. One day, Joe Mackey was on his way to play with the Irwig children. When Mrs. W--- (the hallucinating neighbor) spied him, she shot him in the seat of the pants. According to Mrs. Irwig, he wasn't even on the lady's property! The neighbor's house was burned down eventually by a couple of boys.

There were further memories . . . the agriculture course at Shawnee Mission High School, which trained boys who helped out at the Irwig farm... The Bel Air Golf Course, unsuccessfully bid on by Prairie Village when it came up for sale (it became Meadowbrook Country Club) . . . the Coppock farm where Mrs. Irwig's grandfather hunted in the 1880's (now the site of Homestead Country Club).

Eventually, the farmland around the Irwig home was sold, and houses were built. The pool was filled in, the tennis courts, where the Shawnee Mission High School tennis team had played, was torn down. The Irwigs gave the fence around the tennis court, the flag pole and the bath house to Shawnee Park. When asked how she felt about the development of the area around her country home, Mrs. Irwig stated: "It's nice to have neighbors instead of Black Angus cattle".

## "It Was Too Far Out"

By Ben Turpin

My home, Block 5 - Lot 4, was built in the summer of 1941, in Prairie Village, and I purchased it in August of that year. According to records, Mrs. Turpin and I have lived longer in Prairie Village than any other family (this means the Prairie Village area developed by the J. C. Nichols Co.)

That fall, the house on Lot 2, Block 5 was featured on the cover of the "Better Homes and Gardens Magazine," which was a big boost in getting the area off the ground. However, as a salesman for the Nichols Co., I still had much resistance from buyers because "it was too far out". The two car family was not in vogue at that time and since there was no shopping center, only promises that some people never feel will be fulfilled even by the J. C. Nichols Co., made this resistance understandable.

There was very little transportation (public). My daughter for example, had to ride her bicycle to Bishop Hogan High School at Troost and Meyer, since my work made it impossible to regulate my hours to drive her. Even by today's standards of jogging etc. that was quite a jaunt for a high school freshman.

As a real estate salesman I had a tough time, then, to qualify a buyer for a Prairie Village home, priced at \$6,000. The buyer had to make \$160 per month to obtain an F.H.A. loan. My payments, for example, came to \$39.60 per month — this included principal, interest, insurance and taxes. I was advised, by people who shall go unnamed, that my school taxes would not increase because "as the population grows there will be that many more people to pay the school taxes."

Our mail was delivered to us in mail boxes in front of our homes. These boxes were sold to the residents for \$5 or \$6. I don't recall if this included the post and installation.

The Porter farm was directly behind our home and I recall Edgar Porter selling produce to us once or twice a week.

In the late '40s, the shopping center was constructed and one of the first catastrophies was a fire in Schorgl's Grocery, located then at the northeast corner of Tomahawk and 69th. This was not only a catastrophe to the Schorgls', but to the Prairie Village residents.

One early morning, we were all alarmed by the wailing of sirens, and learned very shortly that the Johnson County Bank had been held up. It was located than at Adler's present location.

An event that thrilled the small fry and even a few parents occurred when a large farm house was burned down by the fire department in the 40's at the northwest corner of 71st and Mission Rd., the present location of the Jones Store.

We also recall the many square dances that were held in the area between what is now the Skelly Station and the shops new comprising of Adlers, Bauer's, the barber shop, and the sporting goods store on the corner.

In 1960 we moved to our present address on 71st, but we still have fond memories of 69th st. between Mission Rd. and Delmar. We still think it one of the prettiest streets in the entire Prairie Village area. (Again I'm only talking about the area developed by the J. C. Nichols Co.)

## The Uillage

By Tom Leathers  
(Publisher, The Squire)

My memories of Prairie Village Past center largely around covering the city government. Because I felt there was a need for people to be more informed about their community, I started The Squire in 1959. At the time, I was a resident of Prairie Fields - then the southern suburb of the Village.

For about six years I sat as a reporter at the meetings of the city council - mostly during the Bob Bennett era. It was a time of growth, sometimes a time of controversy. Bob Bennett was a strong leader. His scowl of displeasure could melt the pencil of a fledgling reporter when the Mayor felt a reporter had erred in covering a previous meeting. He somehow let it be known next time around. Even councilmen sometimes cringed under the frown of the knowledgeable Mayor, as he outmaneuvered, out-thought, out-directed some of them. All except perhaps the late Maurice Fitzgerald, a witty, determined Democrat who didn't mind a tussle with the then un-bearded mayor. It was a lively time, and the occasional confrontations between Bob Bennett and his Irish adversary kept many a long meeting from being dull. But overall, Mayor Bennett's leadership was a real plus and probably the greatest factor in the orderly growth of the city.

What else do I remember? Probably the saddest day was when the people turned down a bond issue that would have given the city a public ice skating rink and recreation complex - at little cost to the taxpayers. The rejection at the polls came after a heavy "anti" advertising campaign by a business firm who promised that their proposed installation on Metcalf Avenue would solve the ice skating and recreational needs. Let "private enterprise" do it, they said. And sadly, the voters turned down something that would have provided excellent, low-cost public recreation for years to come.

Another disappointment was when a special committee failed to convince the city council that the new city hall should also include facilities for youth, as well as an area in the building where people could come to get help and guidance on human needs. Instead of where people could come to get advice and council on various services, the city hall was built with only space for the operation of city government and the police department.

Undoubtedly, failures in the past were due partially to lack of participation by the mass of Village residents in the affairs of their city. Hopefully for the future, there will be a greater effort by both the public and the city government to insure greater involvement and participation.

## Planning Made It Happen

By Stan Rose

(Publisher, Sun Publications)

America's birthdate is 1776.

Suburbia's birthdate is more like 1946. At least, the Suburbia most of us in Prairie Village know.

It all started here — just as it did on the fringes of many U.S. cities — right after World War II, when throngs of returning servicemen and their wives eagerly responded to the promise of a better tomorrow.

The promise came from the federal government through the G.I. bill and through developers such as the J. C. Nichols Company whose vision and knowhow made the promise believable.

I was one of hundreds of veterans who literally stood in line to become a Prairie Village homeowner and a pioneer suburbanite. That was back in 1947, before Prairie Village became the first of many communities in Northeast Johnson County to incorporate.

Our home was on 69th Terrace between Tomahawk and Roe. To the south of us was pasture land as far as the eye could see.

It didn't take long to learn we had made a wise choice. Within no time at all, Prairie Village gained nationwide fame when it was honored as the nation's blue ribbon planned community by the National Association of Homebuilders.

We "early settlers" (will the Porters and the Breyfogles and the Barkleys please refrain from snickering?) felt we, too, should get a share of credit for foresight and planning. After all, we could have plunked down our \$250 plus closing costs for a home in some other part of the metropolitan area.

Needless to say, life wouldn't have been the same if we had. To say there's no place like Prairie Village isn't just provincial talk. Ask anyone who's had the misfortune to be transferred from Prairie Village. Ask about the promise he has made to himself and to his family to return here someday for good.

Ask Ralph Brenizer, first mayor of the newly incorporated third class city of Prairie Village, who made good on his promise to come back here to live. He came back after 17 years in the Toronto area, which Ralph concedes may be the next best thing to living here.

Ralph is a classic example of many who have gone away and come back. Unfortunately, there are thousands of former Johnson Countians who haven't been able to figure out a way to return. Through the years, many former residents have kept their ties with the community they grew to know and love, and the Sun has been an important link to them.

What makes our area so unique? Why has it consistently set the pace for most other counties in America in per household buying power, in outstanding educational facilities, in parks and recreation programs, in sensible planning and zoning?

It didn't happen by chance. With the kind of planning that went into the first homes develop-

ments and shopping centers, it was easy to understand why postwar Johnson County attracted people who would settle for nothing less than the best.



The 1950 Anniversary square dance in the Johnson County National Bank parking lot.

Somebody once dug up the statistic that Johnson County could boast the highest percentage of college graduates of any county in the nation.

No wonder Johnson Countians never turned down a bond issue to build a new school, expand an old one, build an enviable library system and a superb community college, construct Olympic size city swimming pools, parks, and other things that help make the good life. They were too bright to settle for less than the best.

It would have taken a supreme effort on the negative side to have blown the opportunities that were here for the taking.

The kind of leadership and concern shown by so many who have called this community their home has made the transition from a bedroom community to a thriving, virtually self-contained area of a quarter of a million residents seen almost effortless. But, of course, much effort and time has gone into this transition, and the reward to those who have volunteered their services can certainly not be measured in dollars or even in thanks.

We have had more than our share of involved citizens, whose real reward has been the satisfaction of serving. Dollar-a-year councilmen and mayors, and others who receive little or no remuneration for civic and community service.

Planning started it all. Planning kept alive the promises and dreams of the architects who knew the potential here, laid the groundwork, hoped for the best and got it. They knew that with a little luck and a lot of hard work, we couldn't miss. But without the doers, the planners could never have made it.

Much of the planning has been done.

It's the doers who now have the future of Prairie Village in their hands.

As an observer on the scene for the last 29 years, I'm betting the future will be just as bright as the past. That's the spirit of '76!

# The Ringing of the Bells

By Charles Wetzler

During the period of 1963 until 1975, I had the opportunity to serve the Prairie Village Municipal Court, first as city prosecutor and later as municipal judge. This experience gave me a first-hand view of all sides of our community life. Most municipal court cases involve alleged traffic offenders, shoplifters, and lease law violators. These cases are important to the parties involved but certainly don't attract attention outside the city limits of Prairie Village. However, there was one municipal court case that not only received attention in the local news media, but also was described in national publications, including **The New York Times**.

This particular action was commenced by a complaint being filed by a citizen of Prairie Village alleging that a priest serving a church within the city "disturbed his peace" by allowing the church bells to be rung at 7 a.m. The complaining citizen alleged that his job required him to be up late at night and that he was awakened prematurely each day by these bells. I had been city prosecutor about 10 days when this complaint was filed and I quickly determined it was my duty to prosecute the case with "vigor." Public reaction to the complaint was torrid. I received numerous calls expressing every possible view on the loudness as well as the soothing effect of these bells. The call I best remember was from the "accused priest" who requested permission not to be present for the hearing because it was his regular bowling night and he was the captain of the bowling team. I gladly told him that he need not appear since I was sure he would be well represented at the hearing by his attorney and his congregation.

The trial drew the largest crowd ever assembled in a municipal court hearing in Prairie Village. The setting was the old city hall, located in the basement of the Safeway store, where there was a standing room only crowd with people even standing on the outside stairwell and sidewalk in front of the building. The show was presided over by Judge Harry Roark, who served faithfully as municipal judge of Prairie Village for approximately 20 years. Judge Roark had the advantage of not being a law school graduate and he decided cases on the basis of good judgment and common sense and not legal technicalities. A photographer from the Squire publications received permission from Judge Roark to be present in the courtroom to capture the action of the event on film. The crowd was divided in seating location in accordance with their views on the harshness of the bells and their religious preference.

The case started by the complaining witness explaining in great detail how his sleeping routine was disturbed each morning by those "horrendous bells." The attorneys paraded many witnesses across the witness stand who either described the harshness of the bells or how pleasant the bells made their lives. The thought that kept crossing my mind was how I would like to be bowling with the priest. I can still hear the crux of my closing

argument, which was printed in **The New York Times**: "Most people would find the voice of Caruso pleasing to the sound, but I am sure you would not want him singing an aria in your bedroom window each morning at 7 a.m."

Apparently, Judge Roark was not impressed with my argument but was more impressed by his own personal poll that was taken prior to the trial. His poll indicated that there were more people in the community that liked the bells than were opposed to their ringing, and he quickly found the accused priest "not guilty." During his remarks, the Judge obtained a commitment from the church to change the bell ringing ritual to a later hour, which commitment has been kept to this day. The complaining witness changed his sleeping hours and work habits to correspond with the ringing of the bells. Although the new city prosecutor lost his first case, justice once again prevailed in the Prairie Village Municipal Court.

## Prairie Village's First Grocery

Francis J. Schorgl, owner of the Corinth Pay Less grocery store, tells the following story about his father, the late Frank A. Schorgl, Sr., founder of the Pay Less stores.)

In the late 1930's, Mission Woods and Fairway were under development by the J. C. Nichols Co. along Highway 50. Frank A. Schorgl owned and operated the Pay Less Grocery store at 48th and Rainbow. One afternoon, a man walked in his store and said: "Hello, I'm J. C. Nichols. I've been watching your grocery operation and I like the way you do business. We're planning a new business center out in Johnson County, and I would like you to put in the grocery store there."

Schorgl recalled later: "We drove out Mission Road, which was just a narrow dirt road. After getting near the Porter farm, Nichols stopped the car and asked me to get out. All I could see was farmland and a few farm homes. Nichols pointed to a spot in an almost open field and said, 'There is where your store will be. That spot someday is going to be the intersection of 69th street and Tomahawk Road.' "

Schorgl was stunned. His background was in the grocery business, not in land planning. He asked: "Who will buy my groceries?" Nichols chuckled and said, "Don't worry about that. We will fill these fields with homes and in a few years, you'll have all the business you can handle."

World War II delayed the development of Prairie Village but construction began soon after. In the fall of 1949, Schorgl opened his new Pay Less grocery in Prairie Village. The store expanded and moved a block east. In 1956, Schorgl retired and sold the operation to Safeway, which continues to operate in the same location. In 1959, again at the request of the Nichols Company, the family opened a Pay Less store in Red Bridge and in 1962, Corinth Square.

## Prairie Village's First Bank

The Johnson County National Bank and Trust Company was opened on July 5, 1939 in a small building at 5004 State Line Road, a building which had not yet been vacated as a barber shop. During this period the Bank enjoyed the distinction of being the only national bank in the United States of America which confined its activities solely to trust department operation, refusing to accept deposits.

On May 18, 1949 the bank moved to the Prairie Village Shopping Center and occupied new offices at 3911 Prairie Lane, a part of the center presently occupied by Adler's.

After several expansions at the Prairie Lane address, it became apparent that even more space was needed along with a location that would physically accommodate drive-in teller facilities. Accordingly, a new free standing building was constructed at 6940 Mission Road to which the Bank moved on September 2, 1963 and which it presently occupies. Less than ten years later, the need for more space resulted in a substantial expansion of those quarters. The new addition was completed in May, 1972.

## "A Nichols Expandable"

*By Dan Watkins, Sr.*

1976 is more than just a Bicentennial Year for the Watkins family at 3511 W. 73rd Street. It also marks a quarter of a century of enjoyable living in Prairie Village.

Our first exposure to the Prairie Village area came in 1947 when we occasionally joined our friends from Missouri who would drive to the farm at 75th and Roe for fresh eggs and garden vegetables.

By late 1948 we felt we had thoroughly studied the city and had concluded that a Nichols expandable house in Prairie Village was the proper answer to an expanding family. We repeatedly tried to buy one but without success. Finally, in 1950 we put \$500 into the J. C. Nichols' jackpot drawing for one of some 40 houses being started in Prairie Hills—and were lucky enough to have our name drawn out before the expandable houses were gone. We chose 7124 Cherokee as our address and we were the second family to move into Prairie Hills early in 1951. Wes Berkebile, with the J. C. Nichols Company, helped with the moving-in pains. The children thought the old shack in the pasture made a great playhouse.

In the next few years we saw the pasture turn into Windsor Park; Shawnee Mission East High School was built; and the old homestead was burned to make way for The Jones Store. St. Ann's grew from a small church and four class rooms to the plant we see today. Mission Road and 75th Street grew from country roads to thoroughfares. The shopping center doubled and tripled in size. So did the swimming pool.

It took us eight years to expand the house and then totally outgrow 7124 Cherokee . . . but by then we were hooked on Prairie Village. We bought the

only vacant lot available at 3511 W. 73rd Street and built a bigger house which is still home.

During these 25 years we have watched Prairie Village change from a fringe suburban development to a close-in urban community. Much of the discussion in our governing body has dealt with the effects of this gradual change in status. We also watched as the Village changed from a low-to-medium cost type of home to a medium-to-high priced mix of residences.

For six years (1965 - 1971) I was privileged to serve as the loyal opposition on the City Council of Prairie Village. We fought a lot about traffic, politics, how zoning could help maintain our self-image and how badly we needed a new city Hall. I recall clearly the dedication of the new city building to the memory of Maurice Fitzgerald, who had given long and dedicated service on the city council, and who had passed away shortly after he supported the final vote on the new city hall.

Serving on the City Council brings all kinds of opportunity. I will always remember the first time we were sued for a million dollars. In fact I remember it every time I pass the fine building at 75th and State Line. The Council had the temerity to rezone this tract **downward** when the developer changed his mind about his promised development. Zoning problems were always painful but I believe the Village has succeeded in retaining its wholly residential flavor.

Some of the best memories I have of Prairie Village relate to the dedicated people in City government. In addition to Maurice Fitzgerald, I felt that Frank Parrish was one of the most outstanding and dedicated city councilmen which the Village was fortunate enough to have working for the magnificent sum of \$1 per year. The girls in the clerk's office received higher salaries but they worked harder. Carl Schliffke was hard to match in his dedication as Mayor. There were many, many others.

My participation in city government was triggered by a neighborhood flap over the location of the Post Office and the Bryan Building in a residential area. Of course we believed we were right about the Post Office but the regrettable part is that so few people have such a reason for becoming involved in their city's life. Certainly it is a privilege to be able to participate in making the city you call home the kind of place you want for your family to grow up in.

Our twenty five years in Prairie Village have seen the residential areas go from newly graded lots to a forest-like appearance with maturing trees. The City is reaping the harvest of excellent planning by the developers and by the City planners. Cherokee Drive is still "Magnolia Mile" in the spring. Our family has been born and largely matured without the trauma of moving.

Perhaps the best testimony to the appeal of Prairie Village lies in our own block. Of the nine lots contiguous to ours, six are occupied by the same families who were there over 18 years ago. We hope they will still be there in 18 more years since we plan to stay.

## “Love at First Sight”

By Rev. Robert Meneilly

About the time I was to graduate from theological seminary, my bride and I had opportunities to go to Philadelphia, Hollywood or Prairie Village. We made a quick trip to Prairie Village, and it was love at first sight. After a one day visit, we were excited; this was the place for us. The basements on West 69th and 69th Terr. of Tomahawk were in, and everything was bursting out with life.

By the end of 1947, the original building of the Village Church was under construction. Being across from Prairie School, we chose Georgian Colonial architecture because we wanted to be identified with the community. The church family grew rapidly and the building was increased in size within nine months after getting into the first chapel. Additional acreage was purchased from the Henry family where we had watched coyotes snatch their chickens at times. In time Mission Road was widened and paved like a first class street.

The famed Boy Scout Troop 91 was taken over by Village Church from Prairie School for want of leadership, and I found myself serving as a Scoutmaster before I was even a Boy Scout. Troop 91 became the largest in the country. In time the Village Church became the largest United Presbyterian congregation in the U.S.A.

In 1954 the present sanctuary seating over 1,000 was built. The colonial spire of the original chapel was moved and placed on an enlarged base to its present position. Several years later an educational building housing offices and 30 class rooms was built. Additional facilities were added last year.

What has been gratifying is being here to baptize the infants of those we baptized in those early years of life here. We have married over 2,000 couples and had some part in the posterity of this community.

We have been around the world, but always declare as we come out Mission Road there's no place like this in all the world. We have been gratified to have lived here all our married life and raised our three children here.

## “Watching a Child Grow Up”

By Jane [Scott] Phinney

At the time I became city clerk, the population was some 7,000, and when I left was approximately 30,000. It was a good deal like watching a child grow up, since we did have growing pains. We did have problems, too, and I used to say that just when it seemed there was nothing new that could come up, something did.

Our council meetings frequently ran until midnight, one or two o'clock in the morning. The mayor, Robert F. Bennett, and the dedicated councilmen, believed that everyone who wanted to be heard should be heard, and this plus the council's desire to do what was best for the city and the people sometimes caused long discussions. One of the outstanding things about Prairie Village was the commitment and cooperation of the mayors, councilmen, and committee people who served the city and its residents without monetary compensation.

The city clerk's office was a clearing house for all manner of questions and problems — everything from “where can I have hemstitching done?” to “you may not believe this, but I have a monkey in my garage”. The annual dog census and the swimming pool registration always provided some amusing incidents.

Some of my fondest memories are of the residents of Prairie Village — they were friendly, kind and courteous and it was interesting and a pleasure to be a public servant in Prairie Village.



Second Anniversary Celebration

## Bicentennial Celebration

On July 15, 1974, the city council voted to establish the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission. Its purpose was to plan, coordinate, and carry out a suitable celebration of the nation's 200th anniversary, and the city's 25th anniversary.

Designated as the "City of Flags", over 100 flags were sold and installed free of charge to Prairie Village residents. Governor Robert Bennett participated at the raising of the official Bicentennial flag at city hall.

Events within the city to commemorate the Bicentennial were:

September, 1975: Display of Revolutionary artifacts at "Old Settlers Days", Olathe.

October, 1975: Display of artifacts at annual meeting, Johnson County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission annual meeting.

January, 1976: Movie, "The Howards of Virginia", dealing with the Colonial period, sponsored by the Commission at the Corinth Library.

February, 1976: Co-sponsored the musical, "1776" at Shawnee Mission East High School.

March, 1976: Revolutionary Period movie, "LaFayette" at Corinth Library

March, 1976: Benjamin Franklin kite-flying and design contest, Prairie View Park.

April, May, 1976: Displayed Revolutionary War Period documents and artifacts to 6,000 school children in Prairie Village.

June, 1976: Dinner-Dance, Homestead Country Club for "friends" of Prairie Village.

June, 1976: All-day Parade and Picnic with games and entertainment.

July, 1976: Prototype of statue, to be cast in bronze, presented to city council by Richard Lumpkin, artist, to be approved later as permanent memento of Bicentennial Celebration in Prairie Village.

December, 1976: History of Prairie Village available to residents.

The following served on the Commission:

Jerry Gaines, Chairman	John Bouck	Mary Ann Harper	Mary Price
Ed Winch, Co-chairman	Beckon Brown	Robert W. Lee	Greta Ross
	Gerald Canada	Annabeth McMillen	Bill Sanks
	Tom Davidson	Jill Norden	Nancy Williams