

PART II – Chapter 6: HISTORY

In comprehensive planning, a review of the history of an area and the socio-economic, political and geographic factors that have led to its present condition can be beneficial to the task of assessing both existing and anticipated land uses and environmental issues. In addition, a historical perspective is helpful for understanding how that development has been supported through the delivery of public facilities and services with respect to governmental structures, funding practices, responsibilities, and co-operation.

The following is a brief historic overview of how Johnson County has physically evolved. This information is helpful to understanding how certain geographic conditions (e.g., topography, waterways) have influenced the location of development and how certain manmade decisions (e.g., location of section line grid roads) continue to influence the pattern and shape of development throughout the County as well as within the unincorporated area.

Johnson County is approximately 477 square miles. Today, approximately 225 square miles (47%) are in the unincorporated area and 252 square miles (53%) are within the 20 incorporated cities: Bonner Springs, De Soto, Edgerton, Fairway, Gardner, Lake Quivira, Leawood, Lenexa, Merriam, Mission, Mission Hills, Mission Woods, Olathe, Overland Park, Prairie Village, Roeland Park, Shawnee, Spring Hill, Westwood, and Westwood Hills. The nine townships with remaining territory in the unincorporated area are: Aubry, Gardner, Lexington, McCamish, Monticello, Olathe, Oxford, Shawnee, and Spring Hill.

Historically, development is guided by cultural influences and geographical conditions, particularly the availability of natural resources. Over time, changes in social, economic, and political behavior, in addition to technological advances, stimulate changes in the relationship between rural and urban areas and the physical configuration of development.

For example, the industrial revolution started a vast movement of people from rural areas to cities, resulting in the build-up of urban cores and adjoining residential areas. A subsequent increase in congestion, noise, pollution, and technological advances, particularly the automobile, stimulated the decentralization of populations. People moved out of core areas to fringe areas and to suburbs. Some suburbs became bedroom communities relying on the urban core for employment and services.

Subsequent technological advances, including communications, enabled suburbs to establish their own employment centers and regional commercial areas. An example of these population shifts is evident in the development throughout Johnson County.

1.0 FOLLOWING THE TRAILS

The Kansas or Kaw Indians were the first major recorded inhabitants in the area now known as Johnson County. They traveled and lived throughout much of the central part of the continent. Early pioneer settlement was closely associated with the emigrant trails leading to and through the area. Most important of these were the Santa Fe Trail, Oregon Trail, and the California Road, all of which passed through Johnson County. These trails branched westward from landings located several miles to the northeast of

PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

Johnson County along the Missouri River. The landings housed fur trading posts, which were established along both the Missouri and Kansas Rivers in the early 1800's following the forays of trappers and the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1803. Historic Trails map is on page 6-3.

Trade on the Santa Fe Trail, beginning in 1821, resulted in a steady flow of traffic through the County. Both the Santa Fe and the Oregon Trails, originating in Independence, Missouri, followed the same route west across the Missouri-Kansas state line into Johnson County and proceeded west through the southern part of the County. Near the present site of the Gardner Municipal Airport, just north of U.S. Highway 56, the trails divided. The Santa Fe continued in a southwesterly direction to New Mexico and the Oregon Trail proceeded northwesterly through the southwest corner of the present-day Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant into Douglas County and on to the Northwest Territory.

The California Road and Westport branch of the Santa Fe Trail passed through the northeastern corner of the County and continued westward. Four missions were established along this route after the area had been designated as a Shawnee Indian reservation in 1825. They were the Shawnee Methodist Mission, the Baptist Mission, the Quaker Mission and a mission established for the Delaware Indians.

The Shawnee Methodist Mission was located in present-day Fairway and was established by Rev. Thomas Johnson for whom the County was named. This was the most active of the County's missions flourishing until 1854. The Baptist Mission, established in what is now the City of Mission, operated from 1831 to 1855. The Quaker Mission was established in 1834 in present-day Merriam. The Mission period ended by the start of the Civil War. During that time, the *Shawnee Sun* was published

as the County's first newspaper in the language of the Shawnee Indians.

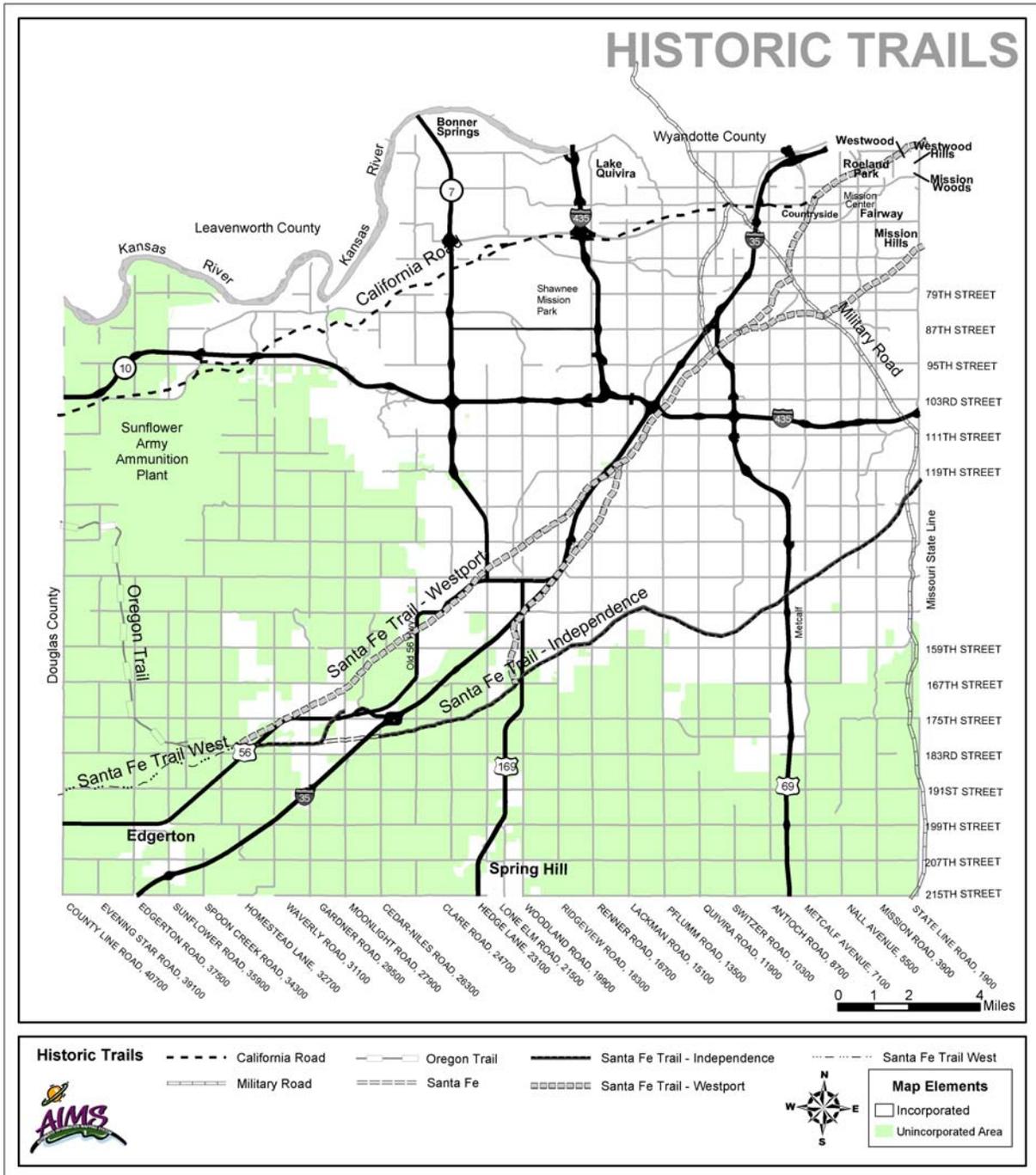
After the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, the Kansas Territorial Council established Johnson County in 1855 and Gum Springs (now known as Shawnee) was made the County Seat. Three years later, in 1858, Olathe was designated the seat of County government in part because of its central location within the County. It was not until 1861 that Kansas became a state. Raids during the Civil War and an accompanying drought resulted in especially difficult times for the entire region. Johnson County's population in 1860 was 4,364 people.

The future of Johnson County was assured after the Civil War when nearby Kansas City, Missouri, became a prominent commercial center due to its strategic rail connections across the Missouri river and across the country. Rail lines emanating from Kansas City to the southwestern range areas passed through Johnson County and sparked new growth for established towns as well as spurring the formation of new villages. Some of the towns existing by the 1870's were Spring Hill, Edgerton, Shawnee, Gardner, Lenexa, De Soto, Campbelltown (Merriam), Mission and Olathe.

Perhaps one of the single-most important factors in shaping the County's overall layout occurred in 1855 when the original survey of the territory divided Johnson County into a grid of one-mile square land sections. A space of at least 20-ft. wide on each side of the section line was reserved as "right-of-way" for future public roads. Since then, this grid system has not only been the basis for the County's major road network (e.g., Metcalf, Antioch, Switzer, 95th, College Boulevard, and 199th), its imprint is evident today throughout the entire County's overall development pattern.

PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

MAP 7: HISTORIC TRAILS



PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

2.0 SETTLING DOWN

After 1900, Johnson County became more closely associated with the rest of the metropolitan area largely due to the establishment of the interurban trolley lines connecting the County to Kansas City. During the 1920-30's, the metropolitan shift southward, triggered by the Country Club Plaza, developed by J. C. Nichols (an Olathe native), and stimulated residential development in the extreme northeastern sector of the County, including the Mission Hills area.

The urban expansion after World War II had a greater impact on the County than anything up to that time. Nine new cities were incorporated in the extreme northeast portion of the County between 1948 and 1951. These cities were primarily residential areas and included Leawood, Fairway, Westwood, Westwood Hills, Mission Woods, Mission Hills, Roeland Park, Mission and Countryside. Most of these cities had experienced some development prior to this time, but expanded tremendously after the war. The northeastern portion of the County was taking on a definitely urban, as opposed to rural, character. The major road system was partially predetermined by the location of the old trails. While the traffic patterns were good between developments within the various cities, traffic coordination between cities was poor.

The County's population increased from 33,327 in 1940 to 105,345 in 1955. Due to the fragmentation among jurisdictions and the increasing population, efforts to provide urban services and direct development, were strained. Problems were most evident within the Urban Mission Township. Because it was a township, the governing body's ability to collect funds was limited; it had no power to spend money on public works projects other than maintenance; and it was unable to plan

or zone sufficiently. As a result, in 1960, after annexations by existing cities, Mission Township became the incorporated first-class city of Overland Park. While there was still little countywide coordination, the creation of Overland Park allowed for improved management of growth.

3.0 BLAZING NEW TRAILS

Growth continued at a high rate in the County through the 1960's. Development moved to the urban periphery as population growth became less pronounced in the "landlocked" cities in the extreme northeast portion of the County. Construction of Interstate Highway 35 (I-35) made Johnson County more accessible, and industry and businesses more mobile. During this time, Johnson County became more diversified. Suburbs became core cities in their own right with major employers moving in and regional shopping centers developing. Development followed closely along the interstate corridors, as well as along major arterial streets such as Metcalf Avenue. Adjacency to I-35 resulted in a development boom in Lenexa and Olathe. The construction of Interstate Highway 435 (I-435) had a similar affect on southern Overland Park and Leawood.

The County population was 143,792 in 1960. In 1967, the population surpassed the 200,000 mark and then began to increase at a slower rate. For 1980, Johnson County recorded a population of 270,269 people. Several cities in the northeast portion of the County began to experience a slight loss of population in the 1970's due to demographic changes and out-migration to the fringe cities. In contrast to high immigration throughout the 1960's, the migration rate leveled off and began to fluctuate in the 1970's. Olathe, Shawnee, and Lenexa absorbed the bulk of the population growth in the 1970's. Nonresidential growth continued

PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

at a heavy pace in Olathe and Lenexa. Office expansions along College Boulevard in Overland Park attracted a large number of companies from other parts of the Kansas City metropolitan area, as well as nationwide.

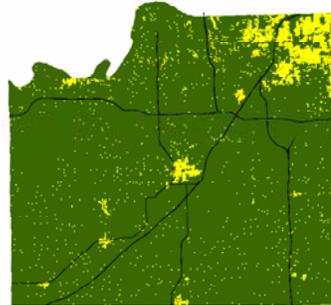
In the 1980's Johnson County grew faster than all major U.S. regions and surrounding states. Only the western region of the nation grew at a comparable rate. During the 1980's much of the northeast part of the County lost population while the area immediately south of I-435 more than doubled. Southern Overland Park and Leawood, eastern Olathe, western Lenexa and Shawnee together still comprised the rapidly growing urban fringe of the County.

Reaching a sustained growth rate of almost 10,000 people per year, the 1990's again brought growth to Johnson County. Currently, the 20 incorporated cities comprise over 50% of the County's land area. In 1990 the split was 55% unincorporated area and 45% in cities, and, in 2000, the numbers became 49% unincorporated and 51% cities. Retail development continues to be attracted to Johnson County's high incomes. However, it is now attracted further south to 135th Street in a band from Leawood to Olathe. The County's population in 2000 was 451,086, which is up 27% from 1990. Together, Overland Park and Olathe attracted 70% of the County's growth from 1990 to 2000 while the only rural area to gain any significant population was Aubry Township in the southeast corner of the County.

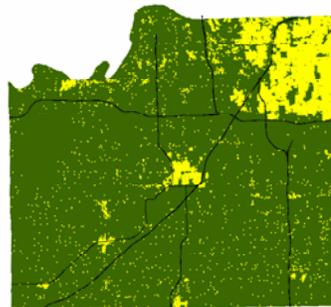
4.0 COUNTY PROFILES

For purposes of discussion, Johnson County jurisdictions may be classified into four main groups based upon their historical development and ability to expand: the northeast cities, developing fringe cities, rural cities, and the unin-

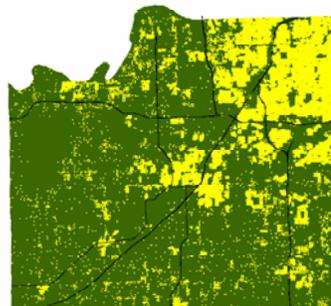
corporated area. The following is a brief summary of each.



1950 Housing Pattern



1970 Housing Pattern



1990 Housing Pattern

PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

4.1 Northeast Cities Profile

The northeast cities were the first ring of suburbs that sprang up outside of Kansas City from the 1920's to the 1950's. In general, they feature a coordinated residential pattern within their borders and have contained little commercial development until fairly recently. The Country Club cities located in the far northeast portion of the County near or adjacent to the State Line, trace their development to J. C. Nichols' influence and emerged in the 1930's and 1940's. For the most part, housing there is attracting upper-middle to high-income households. These cities include Fairway, Prairie Village, Mission Hills, Mission Woods, Westwood Hills, and Westwood.

Cities in the northeast with different histories from the Country Club cities are Mission, Roeland Park, Lake Quivira, and Merriam. Roeland Park and Mission evolved primarily in the postwar suburban boom. Merriam was one of the older cities dating back to the mid-1800s with a historic downtown and grid streets. In the late 1990's, Merriam was able to redevelop some residential land for commercial uses. Lake Quivira started as a private lake community. The northeastern cities may have different histories but they all share the characteristic of being landlocked and unable to expand their boundaries.

TABLE 4: YEAR INCORPORATED - NORTHEASTERN CITIES

Northeastern Cities	Year Incorporated	Background
Fairway	1949	J.C. Nichols development prior to incorporation.
Prairie Village	1951	Originally, J.C. Nichols housing development.
Lake Quivira	1972	Private lake community prior to incorporation.
Mission Hills	1949	Expansion of residential areas that crossed State Line and 47 th Street in a southwesterly direction.
Mission Woods	1949	
Westwood Hills	1949	
Mission	1951, 1959	
Roeland Park	1961	
Merriam	1950, 1957	First platted in 1860, Merriam was previously known as Cambelltown and then Glenwood.
Source: <u>Historic Johnson County</u> by Elizabeth Barnes.		

4.2 Developing Fringe Cities Profile

The "developing fringe cities" include cities able to expand their borders, or able to expand into undeveloped areas currently within their city limits. They are Leawood, Lenexa, Olathe, Overland Park, and Shawnee. The cities of Olathe, Shawnee, and Lenexa date back to the mid-1800's. They have older cores, which feature a gridiron street pattern. His-

torically residential, Olathe, Shawnee, and Lenexa are diversifying their land uses. Overland Park is similar to Lenexa, Olathe, and Shawnee in that it was first platted in 1854, however, there was a long period where the area was not incorporated so Overland Park did not have the advantage of being a city until it was finally incorporated in 1960 and is now the

PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

second largest city in Kansas, serving as a major employment center independent from the central core of the Kansas City Metropolitan Area.

Leawood is a product of the post-war boom becoming an incorporated city in

1951. It is often associated with the other Country Club cities in the northeast corner of the County. However, Leawood still has some room for new development to the south within its city limits.

TABLE 5: YEAR INCORPORATED - FRINGE CITIES

Developing Fringe City	Year Incorporated	Background
Leawood	1951	Kroh Brothers development prior to incorporation.
Lenexa	1907	Early railroad town platted in 1869. It was a site along the Santa Fe Trail route from Westport.
Olathe	1868	Platted in 1857, Olathe has been the County Seat since 1858.
Overland Park	1960	From 1885 to 1895, this area was known as Glenn. It was an early inter-urban connection to Kansas City.
Shawnee	1856, 1922	Originally known as Gum Springs, Shawnee was the first stop on the Santa Fe Trail in 1802. The Indian Affairs Headquarters were established here in 1828. Served as County Seat until 1858.

Source: [Historic Johnson County](#) by Elizabeth Barnes.

4.3 Rural Cities Profile

The “rural cities” include De Soto, Edgerton, Gardner, and the part of Spring Hill within Johnson County. The rural cities of Edgerton, Gardner, and Spring Hill do not share borders with any other cities at this time. As a result, they are distinct cities surrounded by rural areas and open space. Gardner has experienced a tremendous increase in population from 3,191 people in 1990 to 9,396 in 2000. De Soto shares borders with Lenexa and Olathe and is bounded by the Kansas River to the north. It is still surrounded by unincorporated area to the south and west and is the closest city to the former Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant.

4.4 Unincorporated Area Profile

The fourth category consists of the “unincorporated area” which is land left in the original townships outside of any city limits. When Kansas was first opened up for settlement it was a public-domain state, meaning the federal government sold or gave away Kansas land. To know who owned what, the land was divided into townships. The original townships were Aubry, Gardner, Lexington, McCamish, Mission, Monticello, Olathe, Oxford, Shawnee, and Spring Hill. In addition to cities, many small villages populated these townships in the 1800’s. Some still exist like Stilwell, Ocheltree, and Stanley, while others are now remembered as street names (Clare and Kenneth).

PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

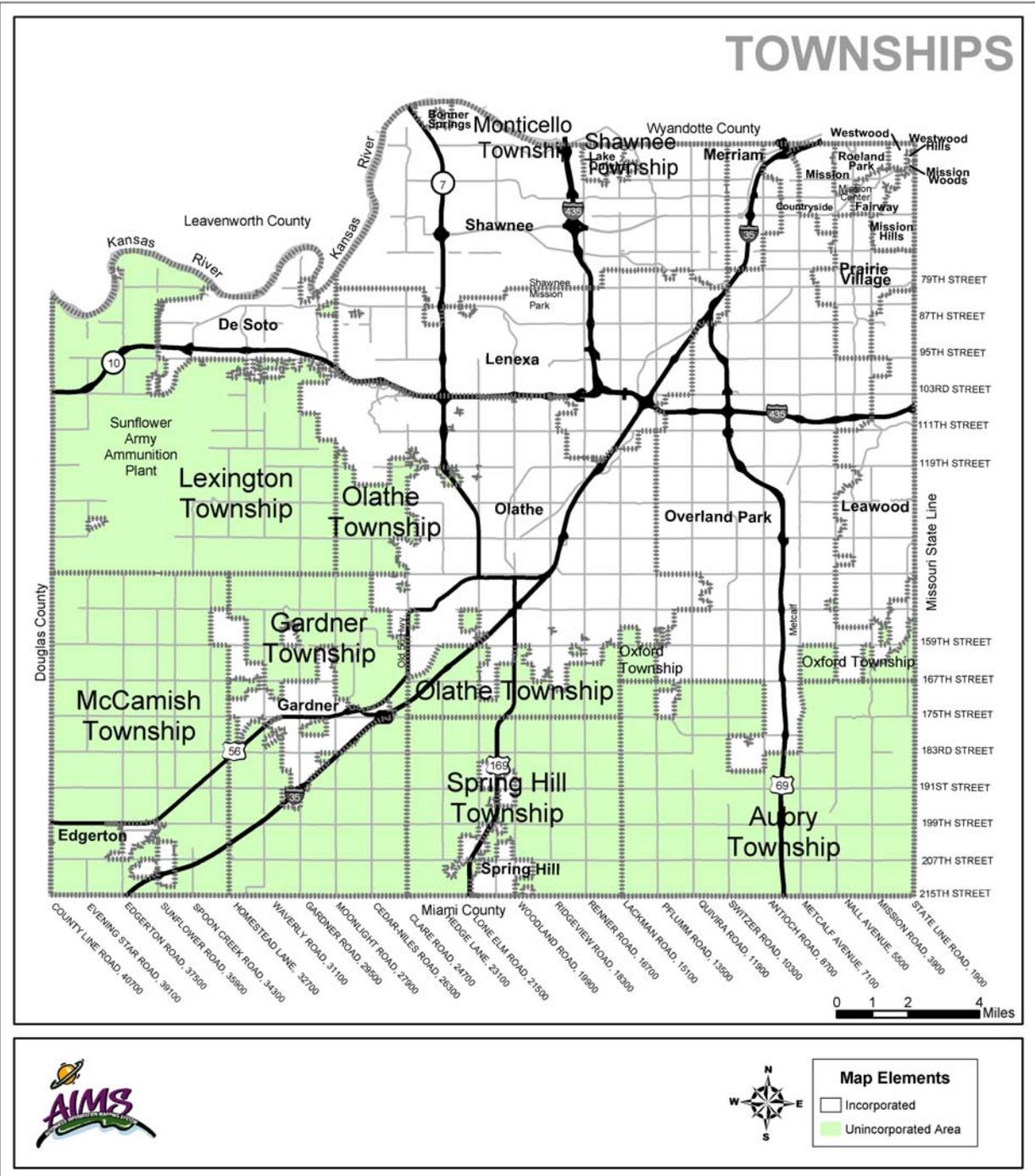
TABLE 6: YEAR INCORPORATED - RURAL CITIES

Rural Cities	Year Incorporated	Background
De Soto	1863	Established as Lexington in 1857, the name changed to De Soto in 1863. Post Office first established in 1857.
Edgerton	1883	Lanesfield joined with an adjacent village, Hibbard, to become Edgerton.
Gardner	1907	Gardner was platted in 1857. The Santa Fe and Oregon trails split west of town.
Spring Hill	1858	It was on the stagecoach route prior to becoming a railroad stop after 1869.

Source: Historic Johnson County by Elizabeth Barnes.

PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

MAP 8: TOWNSHIPS



PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

TABLE 7: YEAR ESTABLISHED – VILLAGES BY TOWNSHIP

Villages by Township	Year Established
Frisbie Monticello Township Shipping service site along the railroad that was eventually abandoned as other cities developed.	Mid 1800's
Holiday Monticello Township Name changed from Waseca in 1885. Annexed by City of Shawnee in the 1960's	1885
Virginia Village Monticello Township Loading/service site along the railroad that was abandoned as other sites expanded.	--
Monticello Monticello Township Loading/service site along the railroad that was abandoned as other sites expanded.	Early 1800's
Wilder Monticello Township Loading/service site along the railroad that was abandoned as other sites expanded.	--
Kenneth Oxford Township Loading/service site along the railroad that was abandoned as other sites expanded.	Mid 1800's
Oxford Oxford Township Loading/service site along the railroad that was abandoned as other sites expanded.	Mid 1800's
Stanley Oxford Township Post office established in 1872. Village from 1872 – present.	1872
Ocheltree Spring Hill Township Village formed in 1867 along the railroad, which competed with Spring Hill for a railroad depot.	Mid 1800's
Clare Olathe Township Shipping service site along the railroad, which was eventually abandoned as other cities developed.	Mid 1800's
Aubry Aubry Township 1858-60 Settled and received a post office. 1862 discontinued as a settlement. 1866 – Reestablished as a settlement.	1858
Stilwell Aubry Township Village from 1888 to present. Originally named Mt. Auburn and changed to Stilwell to honor a Missouri Pacific railroad promoter.	1888
<i>Source: <u>Historic Johnson County</u> by Elizabeth Barnes.</i>	

PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

5.0 HISTORIC SITES

The Johnson County historic sites on the Kansas and National Registers remind us of the roles played by the Civil War, westward trails, missions, farms, and trains in shaping the County. The following Johnson County properties are on the National Register of Historic Places and the Register of Historic Kansas Places and are shown on the map on page 6-13.

National Register of Historic Places – Unincorporated Area

1. Blackfeather Farm (1923), 8140 W. 183rd St., Stilwell
2. Gardner Lake Beach House (1937-38), west side of Gardner Lake



3. Lanesfield School (1869, altered 1904), 18475 Dillie Road



4. Redel District (1905, 5 buildings), 163rd and Mission Road
5. Turner Barn (1898), 19805 S. Moonlight Road
6. John McCarthy House (ca. 1860), 19700 Sunflower Road, Edgerton



National Register of Historic Places – Within Cities

1. Horn-Vincent-Russell Estate (1931), 6624 Wenonga Road, Mission Hills
2. J.B. Mahaffie House (1865), 1100 Kansas City Road, Olathe
3. Albert Ott House (1894), 401 S. Harrison, Olathe
4. Martin Van Buren Parker House (1880), 631 W. Park, Olathe
5. I.O. Pickering House (1869), 507 W. Park, Olathe
6. Shawnee Methodist Mission (west building 1839, east building 1841, north building 1845), 3403 W. 53rd St., Fairway



7. Herman and Ella Voigts House (1923), 2405 W. 103rd St., Leawood
8. John J. Wolcott House (1928), 5701 Oakwood, Mission Hills

Register of Historic Kansas Places – Within Cities

1. Edgerton Grange Hall (1904, altered 1930s), 404 E. Nelson, Edgerton



PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

2. William C. Harkey House (1902), 224 E. Main, Gardner
3. George Hodges House (1892, altered 1921), 425 S. Harrison, Olathe
4. Hycrest (1881, altered 1919), 505 E. Cedar, Olathe
5. Lackman-Thompson Farm (1887), 11180 Lackman Road, Lenexa



6. Frank Lanter House (1901), 562 W. Park, Olathe



7. Graham Rogers House (ca. 1845), 6741 Mackey, Overland Park



8. Spring Hill Historic District (1887-1888, 1896, 1903-1905, 9 contributing buildings), Main Street, Spring Hill

Note: Those properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places are automatically included on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

About 7,000 pre-1950 structures in Johnson County were identified in a recent survey by the Johnson County Museum. This survey is part of a larger project to

document historic architectural resources in Kansas, and is funded by a historic preservation survey grant from the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, and administered by the Kansas Historic Preservation Department. A survey of these resources will contribute to an understanding of the County's history and will aid in planning to preserve historic structures.

This survey includes residences, commercial buildings, barns, outbuildings, and bridges. Volunteer surveyors record information about location of structures, their architectural style and form, construction materials and techniques. Each structure is photographed. From these ongoing surveys, structures are nominated for the Kansas and National Registers of Historic Places.

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Photographs are from the Johnson County Appraiser's Office for all photographs except the Lanesfield School photograph, which is from the Johnson County website home page.

PART II -- Chapter 6: HISTORY

MAP 9: HISTORIC SITES

