

A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF EMPORIA, KANSAS,  
DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION,  
1929-1939

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A large volume of historical writing has been produced about the Great Depression period, especially when one considers that only three decades have passed since that time. Most of this writing has been of a general nature. Few studies of particular communities during the era have been produced. Contributions of the latter type may add to our understanding of the effects of the Depression upon the entire nation.

A study of Emporia, Kansas, during the 1930's may be regarded as an examination of a typical Middle Western community. It was not part of a large, metropolitan area, but with a population of 14,067 persons in 1930, a figure which remained fairly constant throughout the decade, it was large enough to be considered a representative town.<sup>1</sup> The presence of the distinguished editor, William Allen White, provided it with a fame which most communities of a comparable size could never hope to achieve. Because he took such an active part in the affairs of the town, White

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<sup>1</sup>Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, Kansas Year Book, 1937-1938 (Topeka: The Capper Printing Company, 1938), p. 81.

wrote many editorials in which he analyzed the events that he observed, and thus provided a valuable insight into the events of the time.

The Great Depression period in Emporia, covering approximately the decade from 1929 to 1939, was one of the most exciting, turbulent, and distressing periods in the town's history. The economic crisis alone would have been responsible for this, but other factors contributed to making it a particularly interesting era for study.

The Sunday movie controversy was one of two dominant social issues in the 1930's. Appearing periodically from 1931 to 1934, it involved an attempt by various persons to legalize the showing of motion pictures on Sunday. It can be divided into three episodes. The first, occurring in 1931 and 1932, featured a campaign led by the local manager of the Fox Theaters in Emporia, Jack C. Moore, to legalize the shows through a referendum. That attempt failed. The second episode, occurring in 1933, largely was the work of one man, E. O. Briles, manager of the Lyric Theater. He tried to gain a court decision which would allow Sunday movies. He failed also. The third attempt, once again a referendum, was successful. Held in 1934, that episode did not spark the bitter debate that was characteristic of the first referendum. During the entire controversy

the opposition to the shows was centered among the churches, although it was not confined to them.<sup>2</sup>

The other dominant social issue was liquor and vice control. During the period there were a number of road-houses, dance halls, tourist camps, and gambling dens at which prostitution and illegal liquor were present. A series of raids were conducted in 1934 by local law enforcement personnel which curtailed such businesses, but many of the places remained open.<sup>3</sup>

The Finney bond scandal was one of the most important Kansas news items of the decade. Because it had no direct relationship to the economic aspects of the city itself during the Depression, a discussion of it will not be undertaken in this study, but mention of it should be made. The scandal revolved around the forgery of \$1,000,000 in Kansas municipal bonds by Ronald Finney of Emporia. His father, Warren Finney, also an Emporian, removed genuine assets from his numerous banks and replaced them with forged securities. The Finneys and William Allen White's family were intimate friends, but not associated on a business basis. The Finney family frequently attended dinners given

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<sup>2</sup>Ernest Kent Farmer, "Sunday Movies: A Social Problem in Emporia, Kansas, 1931-1934" (unpublished M.S. project, Kansas State Teachers College, 1958), pp. 14-65, passim.

<sup>3</sup>Russell Roberts, "Emporia Was Wide-Open Town in '30's," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 21, 1969, p. 2.



by the Whites for distinguished guests. White had obtained the position of state chairman of President Hoover's anti-hoarding campaign for the elder Finney, and had attested to his character many times. In short, Warren Finney was a highly respected member of the local business community, and the events that unfolded in 1933 shocked the city, the state, and the White family.

Both Finney men were sentenced to prison terms. Ronald served about 15 years of a 600-year term.<sup>4</sup> Warren committed suicide on June 6, 1935, before he began serving the sentence.<sup>5</sup>

It was rumored that Ronald obtained a promise for a 15-year sentence, the usual maximum for forgery cases, in a deal negotiated by his attorney with the judge and the attorney for the state, in return for a confession of guilt. It was reported that because Governor Alf Landon did not like the plan the judge changed the sentence to 600 years.

The White family believed that the long sentence was unfair, and had been imposed only with the thought of capturing votes.<sup>6</sup> Later, William Lindsay White, son of

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<sup>4</sup>Walter Johnson, William Allen White's America (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), pp. 440-42.

<sup>5</sup>Orville W. Mosher, The Lyon County Historical Museum (n.p., privately printed, [1965]), p. 32.

<sup>6</sup>Johnson, p. 442.

William Allen White, asked Governor Andrew Schoeppel to parole Ronald Finney, and the request was granted shortly before the elder White's death in January of 1944.<sup>7</sup>

Before studying a community's economic history one must learn the most important elements of the town's economy. William Allen White wrote that there were three principal economic elements in Emporia. They were education, transportation, and agriculture. Education was represented by two colleges, Kansas State Teachers College and The College of Emporia. Transportation was represented by the Santa Fe Railway, and to a much lesser extent the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad. The Santa Fe roundhouse in Emporia was the largest structure of that type in Kansas, and the city was an important division point on the road's transcontinental main line. Agriculture was exemplified by the fact that the city was the trading center for the farmers of the productive Neosho and Cottonwood valleys. Within a thirty-five mile radius of the city there were 75,000 persons who were closer to Emporia than to any other town of more than 10,000 population.<sup>8</sup>

Neither of the two colleges prospered during the Depression. The Teachers College fared the better of the two because it had the support of state taxes while the

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 572.

<sup>8</sup>K. E. P. News, of the Kansas Electric Power Company, Dec., 1937, p. 1.

Presbyterian College of Emporia did not. A new athletic stadium was constructed by the Works Progress Administration on the Teachers College campus, but other construction was scarce. Few new faculty members were hired. President Thomas W. Butcher was a competent, but conservative, administrator who did not approve of embarking on new projects. The National Youth Administration employed students on the campus to help them finance their education.<sup>9</sup> This agency provided employment nationally for more than 600,000 college students during its seven-year existence. Most work was of a routine, clerical nature, but an attempt was made to find work which was related to a student's field of study. Besides helping students, the NYA also assisted about 2,500,000 unemployed youth who were not in school.<sup>10</sup>

The Depression decade was particularly damaging to The College of Emporia. It is likely that it would have closed had it not been for the generous contributions of friends and alumni. These contributions sometimes took forms other than direct gifts. For example, the Eckdall-McCarty Bookstore allowed the school library to defer

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<sup>9</sup>C. F. Gladfelter, former professor of Biology and Agricultural Science, tape-recorded interview, Emporia, Kansas, May 7, 1969.

<sup>10</sup>William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940, Vol. XLI of The New American Nation Series, ed. by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (47 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 129.

payment for many months on the few books that it could purchase. In another instance a woman taught Greek and Latin in return for her meals and a free room in the college dormitory. In addition, she donated \$1,000 of her savings to the college.

The payment of faculty salaries often was delayed. Barter was used frequently in place of money transactions due to the lack of available cash. Professors' salaries were reduced drastically, as much as 50 per cent in 1934. Parts of these salaries never were paid outright. At the end of the Depression period the college requested that faculty members who had money owed to them by the school allow part of that sum to be written off as contributions.<sup>11</sup>

The student body of the college came largely from rural, Presbyterian families of Kansas. Many students could attend college only if farm crops were productive enough to provide tuition payments. Consequently, enrollments fluctuated in proportion to agricultural output.<sup>12</sup>

The financial difficulties were compounded by the loss incurred from land holdings of the college which had

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<sup>11</sup>Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, former College of Emporia Librarian, personal interview, Emporia, Kansas, May 29, 1969.

<sup>12</sup>The College of Emporia, "Faculty News Letter," May 10, 1937. (Mimeographed.)

been donated by friends and alumni. Much of this was in western Kansas. It was productive land originally, but due to drought it soon produced no revenue. Unable to pay the property tax on this land, the college was forced to sell it at a fraction of the normal price.

Many students found employment to help finance their education. The college provided jobs for some, while others were employed through the NYA. This work was very important in that it allowed students to continue their study who otherwise would have been unable to do so.

The parents of many students presented the college with notes that promised tuition payment at a later date. A large number of these notes were not paid by the end of the Depression.<sup>13</sup>

In response to that problem a faculty committee was organized in 1941 to collect the unpaid notes in return for receipt of part of the back salaries. Notes totaling \$33,000 were assigned for collection, but only \$15,000 was to be credited to the faculty salaries. Participation in the program was voluntary. Those who joined the committee were assigned notes equaling two-months' salary based on wage rates at the time of assignment. The remaining funds collected were used to pay as much of the

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<sup>13</sup>Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, personal interview.

previously owed salaries as possible.<sup>14</sup> Most faculty members joined this committee, and were glad to have the opportunity to collect their salaries. All of the notes were not collected, however, and it was necessary for the college to retain a collection agency to obtain the remainder of the funds.<sup>15</sup>

The Santa Fe Railway responded more directly to changes in national business conditions than did the other two basic elements of Emporia's economy, education and agriculture. Because Emporia was a division point where most train crews were changed, locomotives serviced, and trains assembled, fluctuations in national economic conditions were felt strongly in the local railroad business. Unfortunately all local railroad records for the 1930's have been destroyed. This hampers a study of railroad conditions in Emporia during the period, but does not preclude it. More indirect methods, such as an examination of the general business conditions of the entire Santa Fe system, are helpful since the state of the company was reflected in the railroad business of Emporia.

The Santa Fe's program of improvement for its rolling stock, repair shops, roadbed, and offices was decreased

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<sup>14</sup>The College of Emporia, "Faculty Agreement," Feb. 25, 1941. (Mimeographed.)

<sup>15</sup>Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, personal interview.

considerably during the 1930's. Freight revenues declined 52 per cent during the period 1929 to 1933. Passenger business dropped even more as revenue for that classification in 1934 was only one-third of that of 1929. Returns for each mile of operation dropped sharply during the Depression decade. Average revenue per passenger mile in 1929 was 3.057 cents while it was only 1.77 cents in 1939. Freight revenue per ton mile declined from 1.234 cents in 1929 to 1.09 cents in 1939.

The transport of all major types of freight decreased during the 1930's. During many of the years the hauling of agricultural products especially was hard hit due to the drought in the central states.

While the Santa Fe Railway suffered a business slump it also faced unprecedented competition from other forms of transportation. The transport of crude oil by the road was threatened by the increased use of pipelines, and truck competition was intense for agricultural products and small shipments of all types. The decrease in heavy industrial production and building lessened the hauling of products that traditionally had been moved by rail, such as coal, stone, gravel, and various ores. Bus lines produced new competition for passengers.

To counter this heavy competition the Santa Fe inaugurated several new services. It purchased the largest fleet of streamlined trains owned by any road at that time.

A system of bus lines was acquired both to provide competition for other bus companies and to be used in coordination with railroad transportation. A group of trucking companies also were purchased. One of their most beneficial functions was to gather shipments at small towns and carry them to major terminals where they were assembled for rail movement. That system eliminated the need for long freight trains to stop at intermediate towns to collect or discharge small shipments. The effect was that rail freight speed was increased. The introduction of faster locomotives also helped the Santa Fe to meet the increased competition.<sup>16</sup>

A table of freight and passenger revenues and net corporate income proves helpful in charting the business conditions of the Santa Fe during the Depression years.<sup>17</sup>

TABLE 1

## SANTA FE RAILWAY OPERATING STATISTICS

	Freight Revenue	Passenger Revenue	Net Corporate Income
1928	\$189,003,111.71	\$38,371,577.24	\$49,930,430.55
1929	204,551,491.70	37,926,205.06	61,036,803.29
1930	175,960,470.98	31,180,170.25	37,348,800.25
1931	143,624,008.07	22,557,053.51	23,101,691.02
1932	107,400,213.35	14,520,805.52	7,545,007.45
1933	97,426,943.40	12,202,075.73	3,698,671.18
1934	104,720,630.36	11,970,641.70	7,001,314.01

<sup>16</sup>L. L. Waters, Steel Trails to Santa Fe (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1950), pp. 425-30.

<sup>17</sup>The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company, Forty-Fifth Annual Report, for the Year Ended December 31, 1939 (Chicago: Lincoln Printing Co., 1940), pp. 11-12.



TABLE 1- continued

	Freight Revenue	Passenger Revenue	Net Corporate Income
1935	\$109,685,779.50	\$13,447,074.36	\$9,554,315.11
1936	128,400,301.73	15,629,081.78	9,998,125.53
1937	138,984,860.51	17,526,621.40	7,659,404.26
1938	124,139,642.15	16,896,756.60	8,228,044.30
1939	127,530,775.97	18,277,823.39	8,502,732.43

The third important element of Emporia's economy, agriculture, was weakened both by drought and the general slump of business activity. The effect of drought was the more serious of the two, but poor business conditions reduced the purchasing power of urban consumers and thus lessened their ability to buy normal amounts of agricultural products.

Agricultural producers in the Emporia area may be divided into two classifications, farmers and cattlemen. The type of work performed by the two groups overlapped at times, but their basic objectives were different. Farmers produced crops and a variety of livestock while cattlemen relied solely upon the raising of cattle.

Farmers in the Emporia area faced the same problem as did those in other regions, namely that prices paid for agricultural products fell more rapidly than operating costs. For example, during a fifteen-month period after the Depression began in 1929, most operating costs remained stable while the prices paid for hogs were more than halved.

[The dust storms that plagued the central states during the 1930's descended upon the Emporia vicinity many times. They were evidence of extreme drought, and carried away much valuable topsoil. The storms were so severe in Emporia that street lights were turned on during the middle of the day. Windows of homes were sealed with tape in a futile attempt to keep the dwelling free from dust.]

The various agricultural programs of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, such as the Agricultural Adjustment Act, helped local farmers considerably. These worked so well that it was sometimes unprofitable to attempt to market any farm products. The experience of a farmer who lived near Emporia demonstrated that fact. One section of the AAA provided payments to farmers who killed young pigs or pregnant sows, the object being to reduce pork production which hopefully would return hog prices to normal levels. The local farmer in question separated the poorest of his young pigs, which represented a small portion of the entire pig crop, and killed them. For that he received a payment as provided by the AAA. Because weather conditions had been unfavorable and he was unable to grow feed, he was forced to purchase it from an outside source at a total cost of \$400. When the pigs had been fattened he sold them, but received only \$300. Thus, it would have been more profitable for him to have killed all of the pigs originally. Examples of this type were

repeated by the local farmers and of course proved to be discouraging.<sup>18</sup>

Despite these unfavorable conditions, most farmers in the Emporia area were not compelled to leave farming. In addition to the assistance of the federal programs, many farmers were helped by local bankers who allowed liberal repayment provisions on loans. The use of barter was common as doctors and merchants accepted payment in hams, beef, or similar commodities.<sup>19</sup>

- Cattlemen suffered economically just as much as farmers. The droughts caused grass to be short and other feed to be almost nonexistent. Cattle were wintered frequently on wheat pasture. This practice proved to be productive during less severe winters.

The worst year for Emporia cattlemen was 1934. One of the most serious droughts in history occurred that year. The drought was so widespread that no feed was grown within practical shipping distance of Emporia. Few cattlemen had received any income for three years due to the Depression, and most of them owed substantial debts to mortgage companies. The situation was eased somewhat when the federal government purchased sizeable numbers of cattle to be butchered and distributed among poor families across

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<sup>18</sup>C. F. Gladfelter, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

the nation. If the cattle had not been used in that way, it is likely that they would have starved.

Another troubled year for local cattlemen was 1936. That was a drought year also, but one factor was different from 1934. Corn crops to the North were near normal in 1936 since the water shortage had not affected that area, and feed could be shipped to Emporia.

The New Deal programs and the tolerance of bankers and mortgage company officials helped local cattlemen considerably just as they did farmers. Many cattlemen worked on laboring jobs when they were available to supplement their income, but most were able to return to the cattle business on a full-time basis at the end of the Depression. The local situation may be summarized by stating that those who were connected directly with agriculture during the 1930's suffered serious economic hardships.<sup>20</sup>

In many ways the Great Depression was the most interesting period in Emporia's history. The following chapters study in detail the social and economic aspects of the Depression era in Emporia.

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<sup>20</sup>Frank Dobbs, cattle buyer, tape-recorded interview, Emporia, Kansas, May 8, 1969.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SUNDAY MOVIE CONTROVERSY, 1931-1934

While Emporia's citizens were struggling with the effects of the Great Depression during the early 1930's, they paused long enough to become involved in one of the most noteworthy social issues in their town's history, the Sunday movie controversy. Most states had "blue law" statutes which prohibited all commercial activities on Sunday, except those considered essential by the various state legislatures.<sup>1</sup> Kansas had such laws dating from 1868. As movies became more popular during the twentieth century several unsuccessful attempts were made to repeal the Kansas laws. Those favoring the Sunday movies sponsored a constitutional amendment in 1931 which would have eliminated the blue laws. Just as before, the measure was defeated. Included in the opposition to it were Lyon County legislators William L. White and E. H. Rees. A bill repealing only the prohibition of Sunday movies might have received a more favorable reception in the state legislature, but an elimination of all

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest Kent Farmer, "Sunday Movies: A Social Problem in Emporia, Kansas, 1931-1934" (unpublished M.S. project, Kansas State Teachers College, 1958), p. 3.

blue laws was apparently too radical at that time. In retrospect White believes he voted against the measure primarily to prevent large retail stores from operating on Sunday. His reasoning was not based upon religious consideration, but he hoped that Sunday could be used as a day of rest by as many persons as possible. He was not against Sunday movies, nor was he opposed to essential businesses, such as restaurants and gasoline stations, being open that day.<sup>2</sup>

During the same year an attempt was made by a Wichita theater operator to test the local ordinance against Sunday movies. He operated his theater on Sunday, but was ordered to discontinue the practice by Sedgwick County Attorney George L. Adams.<sup>3</sup> District Judge Grover Pierpont ruled that the local ordinance was invalid, however. Kansas Attorney General Roland Boynton and County Attorney Adams appealed the case to the State Supreme Court which ruled that Sunday movies were illegal because they violated the state blue laws.<sup>4</sup> Federal Judge John C. Pollock, however, issued a temporary injunction on September 22, 1931, which prohibited several county

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6; William L. White, editor, The Emporia Gazette, tape-recorded interview, Emporia, Kansas, July 25, 1969.

<sup>3</sup>Topeka State Journal, July 13, 1931, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Farmer, p. 11.

attorneys, including those of Lyon and Sedgwick, and the state attorney general from suspending Sunday motion picture shows. Since Emporia was in Lyon County, it appeared that local theaters there could begin lawfully to show Sunday movies. Jack Moore, manager of Emporia's major theaters which were a part of the Fox Theater Corporation, declined to take immediate advantage of this legal possibility. In a statement issued September 23, 1931, Moore wrote:

It has long been a policy of Fox Theaters to regard Sunday shows as a matter for each community to settle for itself. We have no idea of starting Sunday shows in any town without the definite approval and consent of the people of that town.<sup>5</sup>

The Sunday movie question in Emporia may be divided roughly into three episodes. The first, during 1931 and 1932, involved a settlement of the issue through a referendum. The second, during 1933, concerned an attempt by E. O. Briles, owner of the Lyric Theater, to legalize Sunday movies through a court decision. The third episode, during 1934, involved another attempt to legalize the movies through a referendum. The third attempt was successful.

The establishment of motion pictures in Emporia may be traced to the year 1910 when an organization of

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<sup>5</sup>Emporia Gazette, Sept. 23, 1931, p. 1.

young women from the First Presbyterian Church, known as the King's Daughters, sponsored a movie at the Electric Theater. All profits were given to the organization as the theater manager received valuable advertising from the event. Motion pictures shown on any day of the week had been considered unsuitable entertainment by many Emporians, particularly the more conservative ones. Thereafter, the movies became more acceptable because they had been sponsored by a church group.<sup>6</sup>

The Electric Theater and another early movie house had been replaced by three newer theaters by the 1930's. They were the privately owned Lyric Theater and the Strand and Granada Theaters of the Fox Corporation.<sup>7</sup>

The Sunday movie issue in Emporia began on December 16, 1931, when the Fox Corporation announced the inauguration of Sunday motion pictures at the Strand and Granada Theaters. Until that time Sunday movies were not an issue because motion pictures were never shown on that day. In the light of the manager's comment of about three months before, the Fox Corporation evidently assumed that the community's silence was "approval and consent" or, more likely as indicated later, wished to press for

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<sup>6</sup>Laura M. French, History of Emporia and Lyon County (Emporia: Emporia Gazette, 1929), p. 97.

<sup>7</sup>Farmer, p. 14.



a community referendum. After the announcement by the Fox Corporation, a vocal opposition to the shows was heard. It came mainly from the churches, although some church members did not object to the movies. The first movie was scheduled for December 27, 1931.<sup>8</sup>

William Allen White wrote an editorial encouraging the citizens of Emporia to take some positive action regarding the controversy. He urged opponents of the movies to present an ordinance to the city commission which would be aimed specifically at Sunday motion pictures. At the same time he pointed out that if the majority of the people were in favor of the shows, the movies would continue to be presented. He contended that if the theaters were closed on Sunday by authority of existing ordinances the other businesses operating on that day, such as filling stations, restaurants, and drug stores would have to be closed also.<sup>9</sup> An existing city ordinance prohibited labor on Sunday.<sup>10</sup> Several businesses had been opening on Sunday for a number

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<sup>8</sup>Emporia Gazette, Dec. 16, 1931, p. 1; S. A. Wagner, long-time Emporia resident, personal interview, Emporia, Kansas, January 9, 1970.

<sup>9</sup>William Allen White, "Sunday Movies," Emporia Gazette, Dec. 17, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup>City of Emporia, Kansas, Revised Ordinances of the City of Emporia, Kansas, 1929, Ordinance 1266, Article 9-406, p. 114.

of years, but their operators apparently never were prosecuted.<sup>11</sup>

The first move against the Sunday movies was made by the Ministerial Association. Representatives of that organization met with Jack Moore about a week before the Sunday movies were scheduled to begin in an effort to cancel the projected showings, but no settlement was reached.<sup>12</sup>

Soon thereafter petitions requesting an ordinance against Sunday movies were distributed among the congregations of most Emporia churches. Several days later the petitions, bearing 900 signatures, were presented to city clerk E. T. Mendel.<sup>13</sup>

The Strand and Granada theaters began showing Sunday movies on December 27, 1931.<sup>14</sup> The picture at the Strand was "The False Madonna" starring Kay Francis, William Boyd, and Conway Tearle. The Granada featured "Sooky" starring Jackie Cooper and Robert Coogan.<sup>15</sup> Many Emporians opposed the shows, but the local officials made no effort to close the theaters, probably due to Judge

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<sup>11</sup> Farmer, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Emporia Gazette, Dec. 18, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Dec. 26, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., Dec. 28, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Dec. 26, 1931, p. 5.

Pollock's injunction. While there were 1,836 paid admissions at the first Sunday pictures, the most interesting fact was that ministers reported an increased attendance at their evening services.<sup>16</sup>

A delegation of thirty-four Emporians who opposed Sunday movies attended a meeting of the city commission on December 29, 1931, and proposed the passage of an ordinance prohibiting the shows. The group presented additional petitions containing 350 signatures. A spokesman for the delegation, Chamber of Commerce President Charles G. West, explained their stand against the movies. He questioned several members of the group, such as Mrs. Thomas W. Butcher of the Women's City Club, President Thomas Kelly of The College of Emporia, and Roscoe W. Graves representing the Boy Scouts, about their views. One prominent member of the delegation, William Allen White, explained that his main interest was in seeing that the issue be voted upon by the people of Emporia. As in an earlier editorial, he warned against voting on the existing ordinance banning Sunday labor in general for that probably would have resulted in the alignment of the restaurant owners, filling station operators, theater managers, and all others who wished to do business on Sunday, into one bloc. Instead, he favored the passage

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., Dec. 28, 1931, p. 1.

of an ordinance against Sunday movies only. This would allow the theater managers to petition the city commission to hold a referendum on Sunday motion pictures if they so chose.<sup>17</sup>

The following day, December 30, 1931, Jack Moore issued a statement explaining his position. He stated that he favored the new ordinance since it would allow a vote of the people on the Sunday movie issue, and he promised that the Fox Corporation would abide by the will of the majority.<sup>18</sup>

The next day at a city commission meeting Mayor C. A. Bishop requested that the issue be voted upon by the citizens. At that meeting the commission voted to write a test ordinance banning Sunday motion pictures.<sup>19</sup>

A few days later Moore revealed the strategy of the Fox Corporation. It would temporarily discontinue Sunday movies. If the city commission passed the proposed ordinance it planned to file petitions requesting a referendum on the law. According to statutes, the ordinance would not be effective between the date of filing

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., Dec. 29, 1931, pp. 1-2.

<sup>18</sup>Jack Moore, "From Mr. Moore," Emporia Gazette, Dec. 30, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>Emporia Gazette, Dec. 31, 1931, p. 1.

of the petitions and the election day. In the meantime, the Fox Corporation would show Sunday movies. The people of Emporia would be able to see the type of films shown on Sunday, and they could decide whether or not they were in favor of them.<sup>20</sup>

The proposed Sunday movie ordinance was submitted by City Attorney O. L. Isaacs to the city commission at the regular meeting January 5, 1932. After the attorney read the ordinance Mayor Bishop protested strongly that it was not what had been requested. The draft as written by the city attorney read:

An ordinance relating to desecrations of the Sabbath day.

Be it ordained by the governing body of the city of Emporia, Kansas.

Section 1. The showing of motion pictures for profit on the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday or the Sabbath day, shall be deemed a violation of ordinances forbidding labor on such day and accepting or receiving a consideration for the right to see motion pictures on such day shall be deemed a violation of ordinances forbidding the sale of goods, wares and merchandise on such day; and all parties aiding, abetting or participating in doing such acts shall be deemed to desecrate such day and shall be deemed guilty of violating ordinances forbidding labor and sales on such day and shall be prosecuted under applicable ordinances. This ordinance shall not be construed as amending or repealing any existing ordinance.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., Jan. 2, 1932, p. 1.

Section 2. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force ten days after its passage and after its publication, as provided by law.

Passed and approved this fifth day of January, 1932.

Attest: E. T. Mendel, city clerk.

(Signed) C. A. Bishop, Mayor.

Isaacs explained that it was an interpretative ordinance. He stated that an ordinance which specifically outlawed Sunday movies would be void, in his opinion. He further maintained that if the new ordinance were voted down, the older one prohibiting Sunday labor would still be in effect. In reply to a question regarding the effectiveness of the new ordinance, the city attorney said that it was not worth a "tinkers darn." Despite the misgivings of the mayor and others the ordinance was passed by the city commission.<sup>21</sup>

Theater manager Jack Moore sponsored petitions to oppose the new ordinance and allow the people to vote on it. On January 8, 1932, a sufficient number of signatures had been obtained to authorize a referendum on the Sunday movie ordinance.<sup>22</sup>

About 200 opponents of Sunday movies assembled at the First Presbyterian Church on Sunday afternoon, January 17, 1932, to organize a campaign in support of their

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Jan. 5, 1932, pp. 1-2.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., Jan. 8, 1932, p. 1.

cause. The Reverend O. M. Showalter, pastor of the First Baptist Church, served as chairman. He opened the discussion by stating that the problem was to get sufficient numbers of Sunday movie opponents to the polls. A number of persons expressed their views. W. E. Haynes spoke in favor of working through individual church organizations, but J. W. Coverdill pointed out that all church members were not opposed to Sunday movies. Police Judge Reverend J. H. J. Rice argued that the issue should not be viewed as strictly a church problem, but should be considered a civic problem as well. The group decided that a campaign organized within the church and neighborhood groups, rather than on a door-to-door basis, was the best approach.<sup>23</sup>

The plans for the movie referendum were finalized on January 26, 1932, at the regular city commission meeting. March 8, 1932, was selected as the voting date.<sup>24</sup>

Judging from an almost two-month absence of letters in the local newspaper about the Sunday movie issue, the question had created only a narrow interest.<sup>25</sup>

William Allen White encouraged Emporians to become more involved in local political affairs in an editorial

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., Jan. 18, 1932, pp. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Jan. 26, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup>Farmer, p. 27.

published on February 6, 1932. Noting the lack of emotion over the upcoming election he asked: "Is Emporia in her seventies losing her capacity for emotional reaction?"<sup>26</sup>

Letters to the editor of the newspaper about Sunday movies increased in frequency following this editorial. A representative example of a letter favoring the Sunday movies was written by Humbert Riddle on February 26. He stated:

May I say just a word concerning the proposition to be voted on March 8 relative to Sunday movies.

It seems to me that anything, not in itself immoral or having an immoral tendency, which, in these days of depression of finance and morale, tends to make the human race happier, should be encouraged. Thousands of good citizens can see no objection to the movies and pass many pleasant hours in the movie theaters. They do not regard a show on Sunday in any different light than at any other time. In fact, if movies are to be considered as having a demoralizing influence upon the theater attendants, they should be banned, not on Sunday alone, but on every other day as well. Of course, no modern thinking person wishes them barred entirely: hence the argument that they be prohibited on Sunday because of immorality falls to the ground of its own weight.

Let's bring a little joy and happiness to the many good people who are not financially situated to pass their Sundays (their only days of recreation) in golf or motoring or similar

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<sup>26</sup>William Allen White, "A Quiet Election," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 6, 1932, p. 4.



pursuits, but who can, and will gladly, pay a small fee to be entertained for two hours of the twenty-four on Sunday by a clean, moral, movie show!<sup>27</sup>

A typical letter in opposition to the Sunday movies was written by the Reverend O. M. Showalter on February 10. He stated:

Emporia is noted for meeting every emergency that comes along. When additional school facilities are needed in any section, a magnificent building springs up. When poverty comes, Emporia cares for her own and many wayfaring transients besides. Now we are asked to say "yes" or "no" on the matter of lowering the dignity of, and respect for the Lord's day. What will Emporia's answer be?

Habits and self-control constitute important steps to civilization. Anything that militates against their formation and development counteracts the ethical and patriotic welfare of community and nation. My own judgment is that the average picture film of today is not conducive to good habits and self-control. But Sunday movies are worse by reason of the fact that they carry with them an utter disregard for the Lord's day.

The "Sabbath day" of the Jewish dispensation and the "First Day of the Week" of the Christian era have been constant reminders of God, and have taught valuable lessons which we cannot afford to discontinue. It will be a sad day for our nation and our community when we take away the last shred of respect for God's day.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Humbert Riddle, "Favors Sunday Movies," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 26, 1932, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup>Rev. O. M. Showalter, "The Lord's Day," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 10, 1932, p. 10.

Up to this point the issue had been debated primarily on religious grounds. Those who opposed the movies argued that such entertainment would diminish church attendance and desecrate the Sabbath. Others who favored Sunday pictures contended that they would provide suitable recreation for those who could not afford more expensive pastimes. A few days prior to the election, J. Stanley Hagan submitted a letter to The Emporia Gazette challenging this frame of reference. He argued that the churches should not become involved in the controversy because movies were no more unsuitable Sunday entertainment than picnics, fishing, or automobile pleasure riding. He closed by stating that times were difficult and the Sunday shows would enhance Emporia's popularity and make it a better town.<sup>29</sup>

In keeping with this non-religious perspective, O. E. Hazlett related the issue to the Depression in a letter that was published the same day as the Reverend O. M. Showalter's. It read:

A strong objection to Sunday movies, one that affects all of us very vitally whether we are interested in the religious or moral issue or not, has as yet hardly been mentioned, the economic reason. We are all interested in keeping money spent working in the community as far as possible. The movie houses are probably one of the greatest offenders in that line in town in the per cent of total

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<sup>29</sup>J. Stanley Hagan, "Not A Religious Question," Emporia Gazette, Mar. 5, 1932, p. 3.

receipts transferred to New York or Hollywood. They have nothing to sell except entertainment. After a person has bought a ticket and seen the show he has nothing tangible for himself and his family to take home with him. We are now in the greatest financial depression in the present century or longer. Hundreds of men have been out of work in this community all winter and very few of them have secured permanent employment yet. The necessary funds to give employment enough to these men to keep their families together has been raised with great effort and much sacrifice by many persons. Does it not seem very illogical to give the movies an extra day that probably will show as heavy or possibly even heavier business than on Saturday, to take more money out of this community where it is so badly needed for the necessities of life.<sup>30</sup>

While individual citizens were debating the points of the issue among themselves, the theaters attached slogans to their regular advertisements calling for an approval of the Sunday movies. In a final appeal for support, the Fox Corporation placed an advertisement in the local newspaper the headline of which read: "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." A lengthy plea followed:

These were the immortal words flung in the face of the tyrant George of England by the fathers of this country.

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<sup>30</sup>O. E. Hazlett, "From O. E. Hazlett," Emporia Gazette, Mar. 5, 1932, p. 3.

These were the three "inalienable rights" that our ancestors fought and died for.

It was these rights that brought the oppressed of all lands to the shores of this nation. It is the enjoyment of these rights that has spared America the strife, hatred and misery that clouds the pages of European history.

It is the right of "Life" to "liberty" and the "pursuit of happiness" that has made America the happiest, the most peaceful and the most prosperous nation on the face of the earth.

Tuesday, the citizens of Emporia will be given the opportunity to express themselves on the ideal nurtured by Washington, Franklin, Adams and Jefferson and defended by Lincoln, Roosevelt and Wilson.

Shall Emporia strike from the Declaration of Independence those words that have flamed down the corridors of America's glorious history? Is "the pursuit of happiness" to be stricken from the most notable document in the history of nations?

Next Tuesday the citizens of this city vote on the question of Sunday motion pictures. Involved in this question is an issue that is vastly deeper and more important than the mere showing of pictures.

A vote for the Ordinance prohibiting Sunday movies means the right to pursue happiness in their own fashion and after their own inclination is to be denied the people of Emporia.

A vote against the Ordinance means that so far as the citizens of Emporia are concerned they wish to perpetuate, to guard, the ideal born on July 4th, 1776.

No matter whether you are inclined to attend Theaters on Sunday or not...vote AGAINST THE ORDINANCE...deprive no Man of his American Heritage...the right to pursue Happiness in his own fashion.

VOTE FOR SUNDAY MOVIES!  
Tuesday, March 8<sup>31</sup>

This long appeal apparently did not sway enough voters to the side of Sunday movies. On March 8, 1932, 1,609 votes were cast in favor of them while 2,094 votes were in opposition.<sup>32</sup> The opponents of the shows won a clear majority, and the issue was temporarily closed. William Allen White commented upon the vote, "Emporia is a different town from Atchison, Wichita or El Dorado. The sentiment here is definitely against Sunday movies."<sup>33</sup> It is probable that most Emporians believed that the matter had been settled, but it soon reappeared.

The next episode of the Sunday movie controversy began on September 9, 1933, when E. O. Briles, owner and operator of the Lyric Theater, announced that he would test the city's Sunday movie ordinance by showing motion pictures on Sunday, September 10, 1933. He admitted that he probably would be arrested, but noted that other towns in the Emporia area allowed such entertainment, and many Emporians traveled to these towns to see the Sunday shows.<sup>34</sup>

As promised, Briles held a Sunday show, but soon after the picture began the police arrested him and an

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Mar. 9, 1932, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup>William Allen White, "The Election," Emporia Gazette, Mar. 9, 1932, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup>Emporia Gazette, Sept. 9, 1933, p. 1.

employee, Miss Glennis Wasson. Briles was charged with disobeying the Sunday labor law, and was released upon payment of a \$100 bond.

The police accompanied Miss Wasson and Briles back to the theater where they found another employee, Cleo Smalling, showing the movie. He was arrested also, but Briles finished the showing. The police warned Briles not to hold a second feature which was scheduled for later in the afternoon. He complied with that order, but instead he held a show that evening. He was arrested again, but that time his bond was set at \$200, which he paid. Miss Wasson and Smalling were not charged.<sup>35</sup>

The following Sunday, September 17, 1933, Briles again was arrested for showing movies. He posted a \$200 bond and was released.<sup>36</sup>

Some persons demanded that the continual arrests be stopped, and that the theater simply be padlocked to prevent the showing of movies. That was not possible, however, under the existing law. An arrest was all that could be done.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Sept. 11, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., Sept. 18, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Frank Lostutter, former Emporia Mayor, tape-recorded interview, Emporia, Kansas, April 16, 1969.

On September 19, 1933, Briles was found guilty on three charges of violating the Sunday labor and sales ordinance, and was fined \$450. The fines were \$25 for each labor violation, \$25 for each charge of causing employees to work on Sunday, and \$100 on each count of the sale of tickets on Sunday. The sentence was appealed to the District Court.<sup>38</sup>

The following Sunday, September 24, the Lyric Theater again opened for business. Briles was not arrested that time as Mayor Frank Lostutter had stated that a sound case already had been prepared against him.<sup>39</sup> The city apparently felt the need for further charges, however, as Briles was arrested twice on the following Sunday, October 1, again for showing movies.<sup>40</sup>

The first appeal was scheduled to come before the District Court on October 10, 1933.<sup>41</sup> But it was delayed because of the illness of Judge Lon C. McCarty and the court's preoccupation with the Finney trial.<sup>42</sup> In the meantime Briles was arrested on the same charges on

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<sup>38</sup>Emporia Gazette, Sept. 20, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Sept. 25, 1933, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., Oct. 2, 1933, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., Oct. 3, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Oct. 13, 1933, p. 1; see introduction.

October 8.<sup>43</sup> At this time his wife also was arrested and charged with showing movies.<sup>44</sup> Briles was arrested again October 29 on the same charge.<sup>45</sup>

The appeal finally was heard in District Court on November 13, 1933. Attorney Owen Samuel argued for Briles that the city of Emporia could not prove that the shows were not a necessity. He contended that anti-Sunday movie laws were antiquated, and remarked that at least 175 Kansas towns had such entertainment. City Attorney O. L. Isaacs countered this argument by contending that several Kansas Supreme Court decisions had demonstrated that the city was not obligated to prove that the movies were not a necessity. Briles was found guilty by the jury.<sup>46</sup>

Before the sentence was announced on December 9, 1933, Samuel stated the reasons for his client's showing of the Sunday movies. With the backing of many Kansas theater owners at the outset of the campaign, Briles had planned to make a test case of the Emporia episode. The theater owners apparently had hoped to get a Kansas

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Oct. 9, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., Oct. 30, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., Nov. 13, 1933, pp. 1-2.



Supreme Court ruling to permit the showing of Sunday movies, but when this appeared impossible their backing vanished. Briles was faced with the possibility of having to pay substantial fines, and his attorney advised him to discontinue his campaign.<sup>47</sup>

On December 9 Briles was fined \$60 on six counts of violating the Sunday labor law. The maximum fine would have been \$300. Judge McCarty cautioned him against further violations of the Sunday laws.<sup>48</sup> Briles had thus lost his case, but was not fined heavily. Lacking the support of other theater owners he apparently decided that no useful purpose would be served by continuing his fight.

The third portion of the Sunday movie issue in Emporia began on March 1, 1934, when fourteen copies of a petition requesting an end to the Sunday movie ordinance were filed with the city commission by the new manager of the Strand and Granada theaters, Ray McLain. The petitions contained about 2,200 names although the signatures of only slightly more than 1,300 eligible voters were needed to make them valid.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., Nov. 14, 1933, pp. 1-2.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., Dec. 9, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., Mar. 1, 1934, p. 3.

Following the checking of the petitions City Clerk E. T. Mendel announced that only 877 qualified signatures were contained in the documents. Additional petitions containing 367 names had been submitted on March 2, but even if all of these had been valid there would not have been sufficient qualified signatures. McLain issued a statement saying that he and his backers would abide by the decision of the city, but that there was not enough time to circulate new petitions before the next election. He contended that sentiment in Emporia had changed since the last election, and pointed out that it was one of only three towns of more than 10,000 population in Kansas that prohibited Sunday motion pictures.<sup>50</sup>

The theater manager apparently underestimated the capacity of the Sunday movie proponents to distribute petitions for in a few days the campaign began again. This time the movie people made a greater attempt to assure that only qualified persons signed the petitions.<sup>51</sup> In addition, a new Sunday movie referendum was backed in an editorial by William L. White, son of the famous editor. The editorial did not argue for or against the movies, but did advocate a new vote.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., Mar. 6, 1934, pp. 1-2.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., Mar. 9, 1934, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup>William L. White, "Courtesy Vote," Emporia Gazette, Mar. 8, 1934, p. 4.

The petitions, containing more than 2,000 signatures, were presented to the city commission on March 15, 1934.<sup>53</sup> They were checked and found to contain sufficient names. The petitions were worded to give the commission a choice of repealing the ordinance or submitting it to a vote of the populace. The latter course was chosen.<sup>54</sup>

This last chapter of the Sunday movie controversy generated little enthusiasm if the lack of correspondence in the local newspaper about the issue can be considered an indicator. But William Allen White did express his views in an editorial by stating:

The Sunday movie question will be on the ballot at the general election; not the primaries. The question should be seriously considered. It should not be an emotional question. There is nothing to get mad about or excited over whether it wins or loses.

Generally speaking, and allowing for some notable exceptions the mental pabulum offered by the movie is low grade. So, speaking broadly, the movie fans wish to be amused, entertained, thrilled rather than instructed or improved.

So with some exceptions we may assume that on the whole Sunday movies will attract the movie crowd and nobody else. If the movie crowd has no place else to go, nothing else to do except to sit and look at Clark Gable or Laurel and Hardy or the professional vamps who wiggle across the screen, they would probably be at nothing much better

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<sup>53</sup>Emporia Gazette, Mar. 16, 1934, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., Mar. 20, 1934, p. 1.

without the Sunday movies. And while better things may be offered, the crowd that goes to the movies the great body of movie fans would not be attracted by the better things, very likely.

On the other hand, and to balance this thing, a lot of people sincerely believe that the Sabbath will be desecrated by a moving picture clicking along in a gaudy movie palace. If these people are offended, and the rest of us, unless we are too much cramped in our personal liberties to be happy, should not give offense to these sincere people, however wrong they may seem. Each side has its arguments. Neither side has a perfect case. Everyone should vote, should vote honestly according to his own convictions.

And let it go at that!<sup>55</sup>

One of the reasons for the relative lack of interest in the movie question may have been the fact that a proposed city light plant was also being voted upon at the same election. The fact that the light plant issue took precedence over the movies was verified by a White editorial.<sup>56</sup>

The voting occurred on April 3, 1934.<sup>57</sup> Just as citizen interest was different during 1934 as compared with 1932, so were the voting results. The Sunday movies were approved by a margin of 2,791 votes to 2,053.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>William Allen White, "Sunday Movies," Emporia Gazette, Mar. 22, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup>William Allen White, "The Step-Child," Emporia Gazette, Mar. 30, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 3, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., Apr. 14, 1934, p. 1.

Emporia theaters could thereafter show movies seven days a week. In an editorial William Allen White disagreed with the opinion of the majority, but urged movie opponents to remain silent unless the Sunday shows proved to be harmful to the community.<sup>59</sup>

One interesting aspect of the entire controversy was the fact that many people were concerned about Sunday movies when they seemingly would be preoccupied with Depression problems. The Depression may have affected the issue, however. Much interest was shown during the first episode in 1931 and 1932 when Emporia was first beginning to feel an economic sickness. The second phase largely was the work of one man. The third part of the controversy in 1934 sparked only a fraction of the interest of the earlier period. Yet the Depression was worsening in 1934, and Emporia was facing a serious drought as well. Some citizens viewed the inauguration of Sunday shows as a way to attract much-needed dollars into Emporia from movie fans in the adjacent rural and small town communities. Therefore, interest in the matter probably was dependent partly upon the severity of economic conditions in Emporia. Most of the arguments for and against the

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<sup>59</sup>William Allen White, "Sunday Movies," Emporia Gazette, Apr. 4, 1934, p. 4.

movies already had been presented by 1934, and the issue was losing its appeal as a novelty. Nevertheless, the controversy was one of the most unusual social issues in Emporia's history, and should be regarded as an interesting quirk of an earlier era.

## CHAPTER III

### VICE CONTROL IN THE EMPORIA AREA, 1929-1939

The period of national prohibition, stretching from January 16, 1920, to December 5, 1933, is famous for its supposedly widespread crime.<sup>1</sup> The Depression decade, 1929-1939, has been noted by some of the local residents as an era of rampant lawlessness in Emporia. But was the city really characterized by a period of gambling, prostitution, gross liquor violations, and wild roadhouses? A closer look at the issue is needed.

It is first necessary to survey the laws governing liquor use in Emporia and Kansas. The original Emporia charter of 1857 forbade the sale of liquor in the city, and Kansas adopted a prohibition amendment in 1880. The amendment did not stop liquor sales completely as many of the larger cities contained saloons. Kansas City, Kansas, for example, had 250 saloons in 1905.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew Sinclair, Era of Excess: A Social History of the Prohibition Movement (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup>Laura M. French, History of Emporia and Lyon County (Emporia: Emporia Gazette, 1929), pp. 4-5; Charles C. Howes, This Place Called Kansas (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), pp. 174, 176.

On July 13, 1933, the Kansas Supreme Court declared that state prohibition laws did not provide air-tight rules for defining beer as an intoxicating beverage. The result was that local courts were forced to make that decision. Beer was served legally thereafter in many cities, including Emporia. Governor Alf Landon asked the state legislature to redefine the laws governing the alcoholic content of malt beverages, but instead it authorized a state prohibition referendum.<sup>3</sup> The repeal question was submitted to the Kansas voters in 1934, but was voted down by a margin of 436,688 to 347,644.<sup>4</sup> Next, the Kansas legislature failed in an attempt to outlaw beer containing 3.2 per cent alcohol in 1935.<sup>5</sup> Finally, in 1937, the state legislature legalized 3.2 beer. One reason for the change in sentiment was the need for additional state revenue, and a beer gallonage tax was a partial solution to the problem. Emporia's ordinances were changed to correspond with state laws.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Donald R. McCoy, Landon of Kansas (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 162, 165, 167; Everett Rich, William Allen White, The Man from Emporia (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941), p. 272.

<sup>4</sup>Howes, p. 175.

<sup>5</sup>McCoy, p. 190.

<sup>6</sup>William Frank Zornow, Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), p. 256; Judge Jay Sullivan, Lyon County Attorney, 1937-41, tape-recorded interview, Emporia, Kansas, April 6, 1970.



William Allen White supported the prohibition position through his Emporia Gazette editorials. In anticipation of the 1934 prohibition referendum he wrote:

Prohibition was established, not to keep people from taking a drink, not to make men more moral, not to deny personal liberty of those who would drink. Prohibition was established as a part of the broad American movement to abolish poverty. For it was the poor, the least able to rise in the economic scale, that were held down most tragically by the saloon. This, men in their thirties and forties do not know.<sup>7</sup> This, even older men seem to have forgotten.

Liquor raids were sporadic in Emporia during the 1930's. On the basis of complaints or observation of illegal sales, investigations were held, but at other times liquor probes were infrequent.<sup>8</sup> The two largest inquiries were conducted in 1934 and 1938, although the second was characterized more by the arousing of public sentiment rather than official action.

Prior to 1934 notable liquor violation arrests were made at various times. On August 30, 1930, three homes were raided on East Fourteenth Avenue by a squad of state and county officers led by Lyon County Sheriff Tom Owens. The investigation was made just before an American

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<sup>7</sup>William Allen White, "Kansas Prohibition Issue," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 8, 1934, p. 4; cf., Rich, p. 265.

<sup>8</sup>Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview.

Legion convention began, which was expected to generate liquor sales. Upon finding beer and wine at one home and a large quantity of homemade wine at another, two persons were charged with the possession and sale of intoxicating liquor, and three were cited only for the possession of intoxicating liquor.<sup>9</sup>

Several arrests were made during the Christmas season of 1930. Two men were charged in separate incidents when liquor was found in their car, and two others were arrested when sheriff's deputies discovered them removing sixteen gallons of liquor from a straw stack. While police officers were arresting one man on a liquor violation at the Baltimore Hotel, they discovered thirteen others gambling, and charged them with that offense.<sup>10</sup>

Just after Christmas, a state police officer spent several days in Emporia dressed in rough clothing, carrying a concealed bottle of liquor, and posing as a pipeline worker. He made friends with a number of liquor purchasers, and they led him to several bootleggers. His undercover work resulted in the arrest of five men and one woman in Emporia and Hartford for liquor violations. The men were sentenced to ninety days in jail and fined \$200,

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<sup>9</sup>Emporia Gazette, Aug. 30, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., Dec. 16, 1930, p. 1.

and the woman was sentenced to an indefinite term at the Women's Industrial Farm at Lansing. The latter penalty was imposed since state law prohibited district judges and justices of the peace from sentencing women to jail terms.<sup>11</sup> The sentences imposed were similar to those given other liquor violators.

On the evening of July 13, 1931, county officers arrested two men for operating a still northwest of Emporia. The officers had observed the still for several days, and when the operators arrived at the scene they were apprehended. The new Lyon County Sheriff, Joe Dailey, took possession of the thirty-gallon still, its accessories, and a Ford roadster containing four gallons of whiskey. Also found at the scene were six fifty-gallon barrels and one forty-gallon barrel, all filled with mash. The still was located in the side of a rocky hill, and its distilling apparatus was fed by a nearby spring. The two men were charged with the possession, manufacture, and transportation of intoxicating liquor, and with the possession of a still.<sup>12</sup>

Federal officers worked several weeks in the Emporia area to gather evidence which led to the arrest

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., Jan. 8, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., July 14, 1931, p. 1.

of seven men and two women in Emporia and nearby Olpe on liquor violation charges September 17, 1932. While the Olpe raids were in progress Chief of Police Roy Clay and Constable Ben Taylor apprehended one man at the Coca Cola bottling plant on South Commercial Street, one at a private home, and one at the corner of Tenth Avenue and Commercial Street. Meanwhile officers Ben Taggart and J. C. Smith pursued a woman, her brother, and a teenage girl. The trio's car was stopped near Thirteenth Avenue and State Street, and jugs of liquor were hurled from the vehicle, breaking on the pavement. The woman and her brother were arrested, and some of the liquor was salvaged as evidence. Later the woman's husband and another man were arrested on liquor charges near the Santa Fe depot.<sup>13</sup>

The preceding incidents are examples of typical liquor violations in the Emporia area before the concerted campaign against roadhouses in 1934. Other arrests were made, but they often involved only local officers apprehending one or two persons at a time.

As mentioned previously, a 1933 Kansas Supreme Court decision ruled that the state prohibition laws did not provide airtight rules for defining beer as an intoxicating beverage. Local courts were then forced to decide

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., Sept. 19, 1932, pp. 1, 8.

if beer was intoxicating, and Emporia's test case began July 27, 1933, when a local mechanic opened an improvised tavern in his garage at 213 Commercial Street. The interior of the building was fashioned with an ice tub and three tables. Beer containing 3.2 per cent alcohol went on sale at nine-thirty in the morning for 25 cents a bottle. Before sales began, the proprietor notified law enforcement officers of his move. A large crowd was buying beer when Undersheriff R. M. Anderson and Deputy George Hosler arrested the seller at ten-forty-five in the morning, and charged him with the possession of intoxicating liquor.<sup>14</sup>

Several bottles were confiscated, and their contents tested 2.4 per cent alcohol by weight and 4 per cent by volume. Federal charges were not filed since the national prohibitory statute outlawed beer of more than 3.2 per cent alcohol by weight or 4 per cent by volume. A federal beer permit had been purchased. Meanwhile additional charges of sale of intoxicating liquor and maintaining a liquor nuisance were levied against the seller, and his wife was charged on the same two offenses plus the possession of intoxicating liquor.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., July 27, 1933, pp. 1-2.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., July 28, 1933, pp. 1, 12; July 29, 1933, p. 1.

On August 2, 1933, a jury of twelve men, mostly farmers, found the defendant not guilty of the liquor charges and thus opened the way for the legal sale of 3.2 per cent beer in Emporia. The charges against the defendant's wife were dropped.<sup>16</sup>

Wholesalers in nearby towns had anticipated the legalization of beer in Emporia and had stationed truckloads of the beverage outside the city limits on August 2. By evening, beer was on sale in at least fifteen locations.<sup>17</sup>

The legalization of beer in Emporia prompted a campaign by local prohibitory groups. The Emporia Women's Christian Temperance Union adopted a resolution on August 10, 1933, calling for a boycott of all merchants selling beer.<sup>18</sup> In the fall a parade of dry workers and church workers was held on Commercial Street in conjunction with a local Sunday School convention.<sup>19</sup> A prohibition rally also was held in the fall which featured Dr. John R. Golden, chairman of the Kansas Emergency Prohibition Committee as the principal speaker.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., Aug. 2, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., Aug. 3, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., Aug. 11, 1933, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., Oct. 13, 1933, p. 7; Oct. 23, 1933, pp. 1, 3.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., Oct. 19, 1933, p. 5.

With the end of national prohibition on December 5, 1933, a fundamental change in local liquor consumption occurred, although violations of state prohibitory laws changed little. During national prohibition, liquor used in Emporia was of the homemade or moonshine type. When other states permitted the manufacture of liquor after prohibition repeal, the use of homemade liquor dropped, the number of bootleggers declined, and the consumption of distilled liquor, still illegal under Kansas law, increased. Many persons travelled to Kansas City, Missouri, where liquor was sold legally, and brought a supply back to Emporia after repeal.<sup>21</sup>

One of the largest series of liquor raids held in the Emporia area during the 1930's was conducted early in 1934. Liquor raids usually were prompted by complaints.<sup>22</sup> Such was the case of the 1934 raids.<sup>23</sup>

The first raids were held early on the Sunday morning of February 4, 1934. Led by Lyon County Attorney Clarence Beck and Sheriff Joe Dailey, a group of sheriff's deputies first raided the Grandview Camp, two miles east

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<sup>21</sup> Clarence Beck, Lyon County Attorney, 1931-35, and former Kansas Attorney General, personal interview, Emporia, Kansas, April 10, 1970.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.; Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>23</sup> Emporia Gazette, Jan. 31, 1934, p. 1.

of Emporia on Highway 50. When the officers arrived they found a number of couples dancing to a singer with piano accompaniment. The officers departed after they recorded the names of the patrons and employees. The following day a temporary injunction was issued against the Grandview Camp. While such an injunction was in force, any evidence of further violations could have resulted in the arrest of the defendants on contempt of court charges and the padlocking of the building. Soon thereafter the camp was vacated.

The second raid was conducted at the Stineway, located eight miles east of Emporia on Highway 50. No liquor was found, but a slot machine was in use and the tavern proprietor was arrested on a gambling violation. A temporary gambling injunction was issued against the business on February 6, and the owner was sentenced to a thirty-day jail term.<sup>24</sup>

Another series of raids were conducted early in the morning of February 24, 1934. The places searched were the Millmaster Cafe on East Sixth Avenue, the Barbecue Inn and a private home used as a roadhouse, both located near Soden's bridge at the south edge of Emporia, and a filling station at Moon Creek, a few miles west of

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Feb. 5, 1934, pp. 1-2; Feb. 6, 1934, p. 1; Feb. 9, 1934, pp. 1-2; Mar. 1, 1934, p. 1.



the city. Liquor was found at each location and a total of six men were arrested for prohibition violations. On March 1 liquor injunctions were issued against the Barbecue Inn and the Millmaster Cafe.<sup>25</sup>

The Emporia raids created a momentary excitement in some parts of Kansas as seen by an editorial in The Hutchinson News. It appears that the editor may have been inflating the sensationalism of the issue, but he reflected his interest in the raids when he wrote:

The Emporia Gazette is running a series of articles on Lyon county night club life, revealing the truth in all its sordid details of whiskey drinking, crap shooting, official corruption, gun-toting and obscene dances by high school girls in brassiers and scanties.

Frequenters are not college students but the scum that has floated about Emporia for some time and which surprisingly enough, never before has been exhibited to a godly community priding itself on its virtue and its glee clubs.

Road houses seem to be springing up throughout prohibition Kansas, modeled after the speak-easies, blind pigs and cribs that once contaminated other cities. But no one expected the hell-joints to invade the sacred precincts of the Athens of Kansas, where Sunday<sup>26</sup> movies are banned and the higher arts flourish.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., Feb. 24, 1934, pp. 1--2; Mar. 1, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>John P. Harris, "Athens Laid Low," Hutchinson News, Feb. 24, 1934, p. 4.

Liquor violations usually declined following prohibition raids as they did in 1934. Another type of violation in the city, the use of marble machines as gambling devices, was revealed in 1934. The machines, common throughout Kansas, were intended only for amusement, but the winners often were paid by the business proprietors in money or merchandise, most commonly cigarettes. Gambling convictions for such arrangements were difficult to obtain because the "pay-off" was done in secret. Many local businesses contained the machines. On the complaint of the Reverend A. E. Henry of the First Methodist Church, and the orders of Chief of Police Roy Clay and Mayor Frank Lostutter, the use of the machines was banned in the spring of 1934. The basis for their orders was an existing city ordinance prohibiting the devices.<sup>27</sup>

The remainder of 1934 was marked by only an occasional raid. A private home on Cottonwood Street was searched in June and a quantity of alleged liquor confiscated. The owner was fined \$100 and sentenced to thirty days in jail.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Clarence Beck, personal interview; Emporia Gazette, Feb. 23, 1934, pp. 1, 3; Apr. 23, 1934, p. 1; Office of the Attorney General of the State of Kansas, Brief on Gaming Tables and Gambling Devices (Topeka: Office of the Attorney General, 1939), p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Emporia Gazette, June 15, 1934, p. 2; June 16, 1934, p. 2.

Chief of Police Roy Clay led a gambling raid on a private home on Congress Street in September. Previous raids at the home had been unsuccessful, but the latest one revealed four men engaged in a dice game and three others looking on. The owner of the house who was also one of the participants was fined \$40 and sentenced to ninety days in jail, but received a parole from the jail term. The participants and spectators forfeited \$25 and \$10 bonds respectively.<sup>29</sup>

Finally in 1934 two local farmers were arrested on liquor charges following raids by county officers. One man was charged with the possession of a still and the other with the possession and transportation of liquor. The still owner was sentenced to six months in jail and fined \$100, and the other man received a sixty-day jail sentence and a \$200 fine.<sup>30</sup>

A concerted drive against liquor violations did not arise again until 1938, but a survey of the major enforcement activities from 1935 to 1938 will characterize vice control during that period.

William Allen White devoted one editorial to the condemnation of a nude show in one of the local

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., Sept. 19, 1934, p. 2; Sept. 22, 1934, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., Oct. 29, 1934, p. 2.

roadhouses early in 1935. He wrote:

In a roadhouse out on Sixth avenue, which heretofore has had a good reputation, last week a scandalous show was put on in which naked women danced and sat in the laps of hoodlums. Some of these hoodlums came from big fine homes in the northwest part of town, and are married to decent girls. All the hoodlums are old enough to know better.

This show should not be repeated, nor anything like it. Once is enough.

You can padlock a joint as a nuisance as easily for giving a naked-woman show, as you can for peddling booze.

This is a fair sized warning.<sup>31</sup>

Apparently the warning was sufficient to stop the shows or future performances were better concealed since no official action was taken.

The use of injunctions was employed in 1935 by the new County Attorney, Frank Eckdall, to stop liquor and gambling activities that might have failed to receive a jury conviction due to a scarcity of tangible evidence. Seven injunctions were issued, one of which prohibited gambling at the Postoffice News Stand where a slot machine had been operating. Liquor injunctions were issued against three private homes as well as the B and B Cafe, the Barbecue Inn, and the Casa Bonita.<sup>32</sup> The last one was a roadhouse located five miles east of the city in which liquor violations frequently occurred.

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<sup>31</sup>William Allen White, "Once is Enough," Emporia Gazette, Jan. 3, 1935, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup>Emporia Gazette, June 4, 1935, p. 12.

Due to evidence of further liquor violations District Judge Lon C. McCarty ordered the Casa Bonita padlocked on June 20, 1935. On June 26 a permanent liquor injunction was issued against the roadhouse, and on the following day one of its owners was charged with the possession and sale of intoxicating liquor. During the summer the Casa Bonita was sold, and the padlock was ordered removed on September 4 so that the new owner could operate the business. The injunction against liquor sales remained in force.<sup>33</sup>

A temporary gambling injunction was issued against the Sixth Avenue Lunch August 29, 1935. Its operator was arrested for setting up and keeping a gambling device, permitting persons to play a slot machine, keeping a room or place to which persons were accustomed to resort for gambling, setting up and keeping a gambling device in a place where merchandise is kept for sale, and keeping and maintaining a common nuisance. On the same day a raid was conducted at a local residence by city police, and three pints of whiskey and gin, and three partial pints of whiskey, sloe gin, and dry gin were

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., June 20, 1935, p. 1; June 26, 1935, p. 1; June 27, 1935, p. 1; Sept. 5, 1935, p. 1.

uncovered. The occupants were arrested for the possession of intoxicating liquor.<sup>34</sup>

Two major raids in 1936 resulted in the arrest of a total of twenty-two men on gambling charges. On March 7 a residence on Merchant Street was searched and found to contain various types of gambling equipment in use. Eleven men were charged. The same house was raided on September 16, and again eleven men were charged with gambling violations. The owner of the house was the same as was charged in the earlier raid.<sup>35</sup>

On June 10, 1936, Lyon County Sheriff Roy Davis led a raid on a private home on South Exchange Street which uncovered 250 pints of whiskey, alcohol, and sloe gin. The cache was found in a secret compartment behind some wall paneling. The owner and a woman companion were charged with the possession of intoxicating liquor.<sup>36</sup>

A campaign against punchboards was begun in January of 1937 by county law enforcement officers. The campaign was continued through the end of the year as the result of complaints from Emporia citizens that punchboards and other gambling devices were used in the city.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., Aug. 30, 1935, pp. 1-2.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Mar. 9, 1936, p. 5; Sept. 17, 1936, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., June 11, 1936, p. 2; June 12, 1936, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Jan. 6, 1937, p. 1; Dec. 3, 1937, p. 2.

Liquor raids were infrequent during 1937. A private home on Rural Street was searched in September and found to contain three pints of whiskey. The owner was sentenced to an indefinite term at the Women's Industrial Farm at Lansing for the possession of intoxicating liquor. At the same time the former operator of the Stineway was arrested by county officers for the possession of intoxicating liquor at his Neosho Rapids home. The Stineway had been closed and moved to a new location for use as a schoolhouse. Sheriff's officers also raided several road-houses during September in search of operating slot machines, but found none.<sup>38</sup>

The vice control issue heated up considerably in 1938. As mentioned earlier, much of the intoxicating liquor used in Emporia after the repeal of national prohibition was commercially distilled rather than homemade. One of the largest raids ever made in the county confiscated 1,396 pints of distilled liquor from a car enroute to an unknown point from Kansas City, Missouri, February 5, 1938. The car was stopped by city police several miles east of Emporia following a report that it was expected to pass through the city. The wholesale value of the liquor was estimated at \$837.60 and the retail value at \$2,094.00. The two men in the car were charged

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Sept. 20, 1937, p. 1.

with the possession and transportation of intoxicating liquor, and both were sentenced to sixty-day jail terms and fined \$200.00.<sup>39</sup>

County Attorney Jay Sullivan, Sheriff Roy Davis, and juvenile court workers launched an investigation of marijuana smoking in the spring of 1938.<sup>40</sup> The use of marijuana was just beginning in Emporia during the 1930's. It grew wild in the area, especially near the railroad tracks. The seeds had been carried by accident from the Mexican border in railroad livestock cars and deposited along the tracks, especially near the Santa Fe Stockyards.<sup>41</sup> The use of marijuana was revealed during an April auto-theft trial in which fifteen cars were stolen. Interestingly, when the charged youth admitted smoking marijuana prior to the crimes, District Judge Joe Rolston, Jr. cancelled a five to fifteen-year prison sentence, and County Attorney Sullivan filed a misdemeanor charge of joy riding. The youth was then sentenced to a sixty-day jail term. He was not charged with the felony offense of possession of marijuana, but Judge Rolston vowed to deal harshly with future marijuana users.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Feb. 7, 1938, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., Apr. 2, 1938, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup>Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview; Clarence Beck, personal interview.

<sup>42</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 2, 1938, pp. 1-2.



Two Emporia men were sentenced to prison terms on marijuana charges in July 1938. The first, then on parole from serving a federal liquor violation term was sentenced to fifteen months in the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth for the possession of marijuana. The second received a one to five-year sentence in the state penitentiary for the sale of marijuana cigarettes.<sup>43</sup>

A series of liquor raids began in August of 1938 which started a three-month vice probe in the area. Raids were conducted on August 21 at the Last Chance Cafe, Third Avenue and Albert Street, and the Shamrock, located one mile east of the city. Both establishments held retail beer licenses. As the result of evidence gained in the raids, County Attorney Sullivan charged the operators with violations of the Kansas malt beverage law by sale after midnight, by sales on Sunday, and by permitting intoxicated persons to frequent the establishments. Injunctions prohibiting the sale of beer were granted against both places.<sup>44</sup>

On September 3, following the report of a state undercover agent that he purchased liquor at the Casa Bonita east of Emporia, state and county law enforcement officers raided the roadhouse as well as two others, the

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., July 7, 1938, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Aug. 22, 1938, p. 1; Aug. 23, 1938, p. 1.

North Star at Eighteenth Avenue and Merchant Street, and the Hi-Way Diner near Soden's bridge. No liquor was found at the last two, but gin and port wine were uncovered at the Casa Bonita. County Attorney Sullivan filed a motion in district court to enforce a permanent injunction against the premises. The injunction had been granted in 1935 and the building padlocked, but it will be recalled that the padlock was removed the same year to permit operation by a new owner. In response to Sullivan's motion, Judge Rolston ordered the Casa Bonita padlocked September 19, 1938, saying "...the place is a nuisance, where gin has been sold and drinking of intoxicating liquor is permitted...." In October of the same year a new owner purchased the roadhouse and Judge Rolston ordered the padlock removed.<sup>45</sup>

Most vice violations were committed by adults, not college or high school students during the 1930's.<sup>46</sup> But two raids were conducted October 16, 1938, following a Kansas State Teachers College homecoming celebration which involved some college-age youths. Early morning dances were stopped by police at the Sunset Inn near Soden's bridge and the College Grill near Twelfth Avenue

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., Sept. 5, 1938, p. 1; Sept. 8, 1938, p. 1; Sept. 19, 1938, p. 1; Oct. 14, 1938, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup>Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview.

and Commercial Street since a city ordinance prohibited dancing after midnight. The police observed that many of the patrons appeared to have been drinking, but no arrests were made.<sup>47</sup>

In the fall of 1938, William Allen White observed editorially that any Emporia social event seemed to generate an increased flow of illegal liquor, and he called for a more rigid enforcement of the prohibition laws.<sup>48</sup> Other members of the community soon echoed his call. One citizen wrote a letter to the local newspaper requesting a grand jury investigation of local vice. Several hours after the letter appeared eggs were thrown at the writer's house, and a bucket of swill, tin cans, and trash were dumped on his front porch. The next day, William Allen White declared in an editorial that illegal liquor sales and gambling stopped soon after the letter was printed. He again charged that vice was widespread in the city saying that "it isn't just liquor-selling that is wrong with this town. It's booze and gambling and women, all mixed up in one...."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Emporia Gazette, Oct. 17, 1938, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup>William Allen White, "It Stinks," Emporia Gazette, Oct. 18, 1938, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup>Harry McGuire, "Why Not a Grand Jury?" Emporia Gazette, Oct. 21, 1938, p. 8; Emporia Gazette, Oct. 22, 1938, p. 1; William Allen White, "Two Words," Emporia Gazette, Oct. 22, 1938, p. 4.

The Chanute Tribune commented about the attack on the letter-writer's house stating:

We have heard of such things happening in the large cities and have said complacently, 'That's what goes on in densely populated centers but such a thing would be impossible out here in Kansas'...but the truth belies the thought...it is possible.

We speak of purges in Germany, Russia and other foreign countries with horror...yet this Emporia incident is typical...they probably threw eggs and swill in Europe before they got their courage up to chop off heads.<sup>50</sup>

An increasing number of citizens then called for a local vice cleanup. The Men's Bible Class of the First Methodist Church Sunday School passed a resolution demanding that local law enforcement personnel "ferret out and prosecute those who directly or indirectly are promoting unlawful business." Copies were sent to Mayor Frank Lostutter, Chief of Police Roy Clay, Sheriff Roy Davis, and County Attorney Jay Sullivan.<sup>51</sup>

A similar resolution was adopted by members of the Free Methodist Church Sunday School. Their resolution stated that "deplorable moral conditions appear to exist in Emporia and its environs and that acts of hoodlumism

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<sup>50</sup> Clarence W. Moody, "Is this America?" Chanute Tribune, Oct. 26, 1938, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Emporia Gazette, Oct. 24, 1938, p. 1.

reveal a well entrenched effort to resist public interest in a clean-up campaign."<sup>52</sup>

With all of the uproar over vice in the city little direct action seems to have come from it. Several more editorials and letters to the editor appeared in the local newspaper, but they presented no new issues. Several speculations may be made about the lack of action. The open discussion of the problem may have quieted the law violators temporarily, the charges may have been groundless, or the letters and editorials may have reflected vice levels that remained fairly constant during the 1930's, but earlier were little noted by most citizens. The last explanation seems to be the most valid. Vice control was never a critical problem during the decade, but with prohibition laws existing in Kansas after national repeal, liquor law violations were likely to occur. Gambling took place, but not at a greater rate than was common throughout much of the country. Marijuana use was just beginning during the 1930's, and while violations of the marijuana laws did take place, again there was no serious enforcement problem.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Oct. 25, 1938, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup>Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview; Clarence Beck, personal interview.

Perhaps a letter to the editor published in The Emporia Gazette best characterized the end of the 1938 controversy. The writer referred to a William Allen White editorial which asked for a "long faced, hawkeyed" W. C. T. U. member, "meaner than a buzz saw with a voice like the same" to supervise local dances. The letter stated:

The agitation begun recently against the stench places in Emporia, if any, will now die a natural death, The Gazette having made its customary crack at the members of the W. C. T. U. This always satisfies both sides of the controversy and the reform movement is dropped.<sup>54</sup>

The only apparent result of the uproar was a meeting between Mayor Frank Lostutter and local beer dealers. The mayor told of complaints received by city officials that such violations as serving beer to persons under eighteen years of age, remaining open after midnight, and permitting brawls were occurring at local taverns. He warned the dealers to be more strict in observing the laws. The dealers agreed to that, but charged that most violations of the liquor laws were made by bootleggers, or took place in establishments not

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<sup>54</sup>William Allen White, "A Time to Dance," Emporia Gazette, Oct. 29, 1938, p. 4; Mrs. F. M. Spellman, "From Mrs. Spellman," Emporia Gazette, Oct. 31, 1938, p. 7.

holding beer licenses.<sup>55</sup> The latter contention was correct in many instances since most of the businesses permitting the use of illegal liquor were not licensed to sell beer.<sup>56</sup>

Few vice raids were made during 1939. Two Emporia men began serving terms in the Coffey County jail following the search of a car and a raid on a farm near Lebo by Lyon and Coffey County officers. A total of 1,200 pints of liquor were confiscated. Officers found a liquor "depot" on the farm which they believed was a warehouse for several local bootleggers. The liquor was thought to have come from Illinois, a common source of supply for distilled liquor coming into Emporia.<sup>57</sup>

The new Lyon County Sheriff, Dan Rowlands, led raids on six houses late in January. Three were found to contain illegal liquor, and the owners were arrested for the possession of intoxicants and "maintaining and keeping common nuisances or operation of premises where intoxicating liquors are kept, sold, bartered or given away,

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., Nov. 30, 1938, pp. 1-2.

<sup>56</sup>Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>57</sup>Emporia Gazette, Jan. 2, 1939, p. 1; Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview.

contrary to law." All three men received fines and jail sentences.<sup>58</sup>

Chief of Police Roy Clay arrested two men for the possession of heroin in April. One was employed by a circus in winter quarters at Emporia, and the other was from outside of the Emporia area. The men were arrested soon after they called for a package containing heroin at the local post office. City police and federal law enforcement officers had watched the post office for two and one-half days after the heroin had been traced to Emporia by federal narcotics officials. The men were held for federal authorities in the city jail.<sup>59</sup>

Gambling convictions often were difficult to obtain because games changed locations frequently, and "pay-offs" from marble machines usually were made in secret. The only determined enforcement of gambling laws was made against the use of slot machines. One such instance occurred in June of 1939 when Sheriff Dan Rowlands, following a tip, found a slot machine in use at the Transport Inn west of Emporia. The owner was

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<sup>58</sup>Emporia Gazette, Jan. 30, 1939, pp. 1, 6; Feb. 1, 1939, p. 1; Feb. 3, 1939, p. 1; Feb. 6, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., Apr. 20, 1939, p. 1.



arrested and received the minimum fine of \$100, while the machine was destroyed under orders from the local court.<sup>60</sup>

There was no serious vice control problem in Emporia from 1929 to 1939, but prohibition laws made certain actions unlawful in the city which were legal in other states. A stiffer penalty was imposed for the possession of liquor than for drunkenness which prompted drinkers to consume their liquor more quickly to avoid prosecution on the more serious charge. This caused the consumption of liquor to appear more prominently.<sup>61</sup>

The number of full-time bootleggers in Emporia during the Depression decade was small. For example, there were only eight or ten in the city in 1936, and of that number about three or four conducted most of the business. Of course, as mentioned earlier, the number of bootleggers declined after the repeal of national prohibition in 1933. After that time, some bootleggers acted as wholesalers, bringing commercially distilled liquor into the city from other states, usually Illinois. The supply was then sold among the retail bootleggers. Enforcement was aimed more toward stopping violations in

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., June 10, 1939, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup>Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview; Frank C. Clough, William Allen White of Emporia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1941), p. 166.

roadhouses rather than thwarting individual bootleggers, unless the latter became careless and sold in the open. Just as most illegal liquor sales were made by a few persons, the majority of offenses were committed by a small number of roadhouses and taverns, perhaps five or six.

Since it was necessary to obtain liquor samples to assure prohibition convictions, law enforcement officers frequently employed undercover agents. These agents would enter a roadhouse before a scheduled raid. If they were successful in purchasing liquor, they would hold the beverage in their possession until after other officers entered the building. The arrest of roadhouse operators serving illegal liquor decreased such offenses little, as most proprietors looked upon a conviction merely as a business loss. A few made sizeable profits from their activities.

Gambling existed during the decade, but was not well organized. Games often "floated" from residence to residence so that the participants could escape prosecution. The only activity that aroused the wrath of any sizeable number of local citizens was the operation of slot machines which were in some Emporia establishments during the decade.

Narcotics use from 1929 to 1939 was small although the smoking of marijuana was just beginning.

The marijuana seeds were transported by accident in railroad cattle cars from Mexican border regions where the plant grew in abundance. Thus it was only necessary to search along railroad tracks in Emporia to find the plants. Despite the large supply, the smoking of the plant was infrequent.

Prostitution existed in Emporia during the 1930's, but certainly was not widespread. One of the common bases of operation was the Broadview Hotel, but most prostitutes stayed only a few days and then left the city.<sup>62</sup>

It would be easy to inflate the vice control issue in Emporia. Law violations did occur, but they were never uncontrollable. Of all the unlawful activities, liquor violations were the most frequent and persistent. During the Depression decade, Emporia had varying amounts of vice, but could never be considered an "open" city.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Clarence Beck, personal interview; Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GREAT DEPRESSION STRIKES EMPORIA, 1929-1933

The great stock market crash, beginning in the fall of 1929, produced no immediate economic repercussions in Emporia. Few Emporians "played" the market, so most residents probably read news accounts of the crash only with passing interest. ✓ Those events on Wall Street would affect Emporia later, but the immediate crisis came at a time of general prosperity in the city.<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of the crash to Emporia was reviewed by William Allen White on November 13, 1929, when he wrote:

The big fellows were the principal sufferers in the present crash. The market had many small investors, it is true, but these speculations were made from excess profits. The main injury to business will be felt in the market for \$2,000 fur coats, orchids and 8-cylinder cars. Around Emporia we will not notice it. Those who have been playing the stock market are, for the most part, ones who could well afford the losses, and sales of gasoline, groceries, furniture and winter clothes will not be affected.

....  
So if a squeeze should come it will not affect the small towns. Emporia is in a particularly secure position. She is not a boom town;

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<sup>1</sup>Frank Lostutter, tape-recorded interview.

she rests on the firmly grounded foundation of a rich trade territory for her prosperity. Emporia merchants have expanded gradually to fulfill the growing needs of the Neosho and Cottonwood valleys. Never have her financial institutions been in better shape for a storm, and behind all stands the federal reserve board, ready to extend unlimited credit on sound<sup>2</sup> collateral. The day of panics is gone forever.

The city's prosperity was evident in the affluence of the three most important parts of the local economy, education, transportation, and agriculture. Early in November The College of Emporia inaugurated Dr. John Kelly as its new president, and dedicated Kenyon Hall, a new \$375,000 administration, chapel, and classroom building. The events were marked by a two-day celebration on November 1 and 2. The banquet held on the evening of the first day of the celebration was addressed by such notables as Rolla Clymer, prominent editor from El Dorado; President Thomas W. Butcher of Kansas State Teachers College; the Reverend F. E. Stockwell, representative of the general board of education for the Presbyterian church; William Allen White; and Dr. Conrad Vandervelde, Dean of the College.<sup>3</sup> A football game

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<sup>2</sup>William Allen White, "Business," Emporia Gazette, Nov. 13, 1929, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 2, 1929, pp. 1-2.

between the college and nearby Pittsburg State was one of the highlights of the celebration.<sup>4</sup>

The prosperity of the Santa Fe Railway was indicated by White in an editorial published on October 24, 1929, in which he praised the company's growth record over the preceding quarter-century. During that time the railroad increased its track mileage by 100 per cent; its number of locomotives by 53 per cent; its locomotive capacity by 234 per cent; its receipts by almost 300 per cent; and its investment in road and equipment by 139 per cent. White attributed that success in part to prosperity and invention, but primarily to managerial excellence. He stated that if a great catastrophe completely destroyed all of the road's equipment, its managers and employees could have the company in operation again within five years.<sup>5</sup>

The Santa Fe had under construction or had approved plans for a number of improvements for its Emporia facilities in 1929. A new roundhouse was occupied in May.<sup>6</sup> A new oil fueling station for steam locomotives

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Nov. 4, 1929, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>William Allen White, "A Marvelous Record," Emporia Gazette, Oct. 24, 1929, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>Charles S. Wilson, "Among Ourselves," The Santa Fe Magazine, June, 1929, p. 95.

was under construction which included a pumping system, unloading trough, and 80,000 barrel capacity storage tank. New rails were laid in the freight yards, and an automatic interlocking system was planned which would allow switches to be controlled from a new tower. Other improvements in progress included a yard office, several storehouse buildings, and a grain elevator at the newly completed stockyards.<sup>7</sup>

The agricultural prosperity of the Emporia area also was evident during the period of the stock market crash. Local farmers reported that their stock watering ponds were full, and that feed was in abundant supply for the winter.<sup>8</sup> Favorable agricultural reports continued during the winter. The wheat crop was in excellent condition in January of 1930, and some of it was being grazed. Preparations for oat seeding had begun, and cattle feeding operations were being conducted by many farmers. A local banker, Ed Rees of the Citizens National Bank, reported that all of the farmers that he had talked with were optimistic about immediate farming prospects.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>M. L. Pearson, "Among Ourselves," The Santa Fe Magazine, May, 1929, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 1, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., Jan. 7, 1930, pp. 1, 3.

A number of new businesses opened, and many construction projects were begun during the latter part of 1929. Individually they were not necessarily significant evidences of prosperity, but considered as a total pattern they did indicate a healthy local economy. The Dex Ink Factory and the Granada Confectionary began operations at that time, and the Crown Drug Company announced plans for a new store.<sup>10</sup> The New Process Laundry opened a new cleaning plant, a building was completed for the S. H. Kress & Co., and construction was in progress for a structure of the Mutual Building & Loan Association.<sup>11</sup> In addition, a remodeling project was underway for the Mit-Way Hotel, and an extensive remodeling of the Red X Pharmacy was completed.<sup>12</sup>

Various road construction work was in progress or planned during the same period. Involved was the improvement of almost five miles of township roads, the paving of about one mile of city streets, and the improvement of Highway 11 from Emporia to the southern edge of Lyon

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., Oct. 24, 1929, p. 5; Nov. 9, 1929, pp. 5, 10; Nov. 16, 1929, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., Nov. 2, 1929, p. 1; Nov. 9, 1929, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., Nov. 5, 1929, p. 1; Nov. 14, 1929, p. 2.



County, a distance of approximately eighteen miles.<sup>13</sup>

A rebuilding job of the roadbed of the Missouri Pacific Railroad in the vicinity of nearby Allen provided additional employment for Emporia workers.<sup>14</sup>

While Emporia generally was prosperous during the latter part of 1929 there were a few signs of future trouble. William Allen White warned that Emporia might suffer from the stock market crash at a later time when he wrote:

Emporia lost practically nothing in the stock crash. The loss which Emporia will feel will be the indirect loss; the loss which comes to a rural community when the wheels of industry slow down. That may come later and it may be serious. So far, Emporia's loss and the loss of central Kansas generally is in a changed psychology toward saving. Collections are slow. People are holding on to their cash, dreading the worst which probably won't come.

....  
Emporia and Kansas and the rural Missouri valley are the innocent bystanders in this game and it will do little good to squirm and squinch and wiggle. All we can do is to keep on innocently by-standing, and wait.<sup>15</sup>

Another unfavorable statistic was the decline in Emporia's population between 1928 and 1929. The

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., Oct. 30, 1929, p. 1; Nov. 4, 1929, p. 1; Nov. 6, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Nov. 14, 1929, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>William Allen White, "Post Mortem," Emporia Gazette, Nov. 20, 1929, p. 4.

population dropped from 14,432 to 13,898 while that of Kansas was increasing.<sup>16</sup>

One would assume that no work scarcity existed in the winter of 1929 and 1930 since Emporia's economy appeared to be sound. But Mrs. Nina V. Riggs, juvenile court officer who spent much of her time helping needy families, predicted on November 7 that much unemployment was facing the city. She attributed her opinion to the displacement of domestic help by labor-saving devices and the end of the Santa Fe Railway's \$5,000,000 improvement project. In the second instance, many workers had come to Emporia specifically to work on the railroad job, and had remained in the city after it was completed. Many had been unable to secure employment thereafter, although some jobs were available. The main problem was that nearly all of the workers were Mexicans who could speak no English and were unskilled. Therefore, most employers shunned them.<sup>17</sup>

As a final danger signal shortly after the crash, the Ford Motor Company and the United States Mercantile

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<sup>16</sup>Emporia Gazette, Oct. 26, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., Nov. 7, 1929, p. 11; Wayne Traylor, personal interview, Emporia, Kansas, June 30, 1969.

Company announced price reductions in the local newspaper due to depressed business conditions.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Emporia's economy still was sound during the last weeks of 1929, but a few signs of depression had begun to appear.

Near normal business activity continued through the winter of 1929 and 1930. In compliance with President Hoover's request that public improvement projects be scheduled to maintain high employment levels, the city planned a number of such jobs for the winter. As much work as possible was withheld until cold weather in order to give workmen employment at a time when they were most likely to be idle. City projects that winter included water main repairs, storm sewer construction, and an enlargement of the city garage.<sup>19</sup>

A significant increase in local cattle feeding came that winter as a result of the expansion of the Santa Fe Stockyards. The company began feeding cattle on a small scale the previous winter at the facility which also had the capacity to feed 60,000 sheep. The increase in feeding operations was coupled with the construction of a new shed to accommodate an additional

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<sup>18</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 1, 1929, p. 3; Nov. 13, 1929, pp. 6-7.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., Dec. 3, 1929, p. 1.

750 cattle. Livestock were fed for individual owners by the railroad. The principal advantage for the cattlemen was that the Santa Fe could buy large quantities of feed at low prices, and could keep the animals in barns where they would make better weight gains than if they were left in the open. Many local cattlemen had their cattle fed there.<sup>20</sup>

A drought materialized during the early spring of 1930 which seriously hindered local economic conditions. By April large cracks had appeared in the ground, cisterns and ponds contained little water, and many farmers were forced to haul water to their farms. Wheat and oats were damaged from a lack of moisture, and few cattle had been placed on the pastures.<sup>21</sup> Some later rains improved the agricultural situation slightly, but drought conditions prevailed during most of the growing season of 1930.

The opening of the Kraft-Phenix Cheese Factory in Emporia on May 5, 1930, gave a substantial boost to the local farmers by providing an additional milk market. Approximately 8,000 pounds of milk were received at the factory by noon of the first day of operation, which was

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., Jan. 8, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Apr. 10, 1930, p. 1.

considerably more than usual for the opening day of facilities of comparable size.<sup>22</sup>

Plans for the cheese factory were formulated about eighteen months earlier when a Chamber of Commerce committee contacted officials of the Kraft Cheese Company, and were presented with the offer which had been made to many other communities. The company proposed that a group of local businessmen build a cheese factory and provide it with a railroad siding. When local producers had supplied the factory with 20,000 pounds of milk for thirty consecutive days the Kraft Company would purchase the business.

Many persons doubted that the venture would be successful, but seventy men provided the necessary funds.<sup>23</sup> The conditions of the agreement with the company were reached on June 13, 1930, when 20,000 pounds or more of milk had been received for thirty consecutive days.<sup>24</sup>

On December 1, 1930, the Kraft Company purchased the factory for \$17,488.36. That represented a 90 per cent return of the investment made by the local

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., May 5, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., Dec. 6, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., June 13, 1930, p. 1.

businessmen. The men would have received a larger share of their original investment if they had not needed to pay administrative expenses incurred during the plant's operation.<sup>25</sup>

The new factory strengthened the local economy in several ways. Workers were hired to operate the plant which helped lessen the unemployment level. Truck drivers benefitted from hauling raw milk to the factory, and the Santa Fe Railway transported the finished product. Lastly, local dairy producers received a significant new market for their product.

Despite some damage by drought to the wheat crop of 1930, yields generally were high, but protein content of the grain was low.<sup>26</sup> Wheat prices also were low which prompted many farmers to store their crop in anticipation of later price gains.<sup>27</sup> Large wheat crops were common throughout much of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. A considerable portion of the crop was transported by the Santa Fe Railway to Kansas City markets by way of Emporia, which provided many jobs for local railroad workers.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., Dec. 1, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., June 27, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., July 2, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., June 30, 1930, p. 1.

Although wheat yields generally were high near Emporia during the summer of 1930, drought conditions seriously damaged the corn crop, a much more important product of the area's agriculture. County agent Carl Howard estimated that only 30 or 40 per cent of the crop could be harvested.<sup>29</sup> Such gloomy predictions prompted many farmers to chop the immature corn into silage for livestock feed rather than gamble that it would develop into a usable grain crop.<sup>30</sup>

As drought and extreme heat continued in Emporia it seemed likely that temperature records might be broken. On August 3, 1930, the city recorded the highest temperature in the nation, 113 degrees, and the following day all local heat records were surpassed when the temperature reached 114.<sup>31</sup>

Possible drought aid was anticipated by local farmers when Arthur M. Hyde, Secretary of Agriculture, asked county agent Howard to report on local agricultural conditions, August 8. Emporia bankers estimated that 300 to 1,000 local farm families soon would be unable to purchase livestock feed. It was believed that only about a

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., July 29, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., Aug. 8, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., Aug. 4, 1930, p. 1.

twenty-day feed, grass, and water supply existed at that time for area farms. In response to a call for suggestions by Secretary Hyde, Howard contended that retail meat prices should be lowered in comparison to cattle prices in order to stimulate meat consumption.<sup>32</sup>

Governor Clyde M. Reed announced during late August that the Federal Farm Board, an agency organized in June of 1929 primarily to provide loans for cooperative associations, planned to make loans to local cattlemen.<sup>33</sup> It was believed originally that federal loans of \$8 would be issued for every \$1 of loan value made by local sources, and that the federal funds would carry low interest rates and require no collateral. When it was learned that collateral would be needed the plan was sharply criticized by M. A. Limbocker, general chairman of the Kansas Drought Emergency Committee. He argued that the program provided little help since cattlemen with available collateral could get local loans. He emphasized that nearly every Lyon County cattleman would need to borrow money to feed

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Aug. 9, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>Topeka Daily Capital, Aug. 21, 1930, p. 1; John D. Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, 1921-1933, Vol. XL of The New American Nation Series, ed. by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (47 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 218.



his cattle, but that few could provide the necessary security.<sup>34</sup>

A different type of drought aid was announced on September 10, 1930. Secretary of Agriculture Hyde selected forty-one Kansas counties, including Lyon, to receive a one-third reduction in freight rates for livestock feed.<sup>35</sup> That was helpful, but it did not offset the damage of the drought during the summer of 1930. The water shortage hindered the agricultural economy of the Emporia area considerably, and the failure of the Hoover Administration to introduce positive recovery measures, such as would come under Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, curtailed it further. The inadequate and sometimes contradictory agricultural philosophy of the Administration was demonstrated by Secretary Hyde when he said "I believe in controlled production, but such control, in my judgment, must come about by voluntary action of the farmers themselves, and not by mandate of law."<sup>36</sup>

Employment was at a high level during the early summer of 1930, primarily because the effects of the

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<sup>34</sup>Emporia Gazette, Aug. 20, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Sept. 10, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Roosevelt, Vol. I: The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. 239.

drought had not been felt yet. The Welfare Association was placing the majority of unemployed men on jobs, most of which were agricultural. For example, ninety-four men were given employment during a five-day period in late June.<sup>37</sup>

Although employment was available for most men that summer, some were forced to work fewer hours. The 193 local Santa Fe shop workers had their traditional six-day work week reduced to five days as a result of depressed business conditions over the country.<sup>38</sup> A similar measure was imposed upon city laborers on September 12 when their customary eight-hour day was reduced to six hours, and the daily wage was cut from \$4 to \$3.<sup>39</sup>

Considering the severity of the summer drought, its harm to local agriculture, and the continued nationwide depression, late summer business in Emporia was brisk. Retail merchants particularly were hopeful, partially because of the increased business from students in town for the fall term. Mrs. Leonard Fort of the Fort Jewelry Company stated that "this year at September 1, our business was better than it was last year at the

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<sup>37</sup>Emporia Gazette, June 26, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., July 4, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Sept. 12, 1930, p. 1.

same time...." W. E. Haynes of the Haynes Hardware Company remarked that "business is more active. It has improved over the last two weeks. It is not quite up to normal but it has improved...." Harry Ropfogel of the Ropfogel Clothing Store said that "our business is as good as it has ever been, in fact better...."<sup>40</sup>

Municipal workmen were engaged in a large improvement project during the autumn. Laborers removed street car tracks on the city's main business street, Commercial, in preparation for the laying of a new water main.<sup>41</sup>

Prospects for a large local construction job were learned when the building program for the state's five colleges and universities included plans for a new \$200,000 library at Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia.<sup>42</sup> But on December 30, 1930, E. L. Barrier, state budget director, announced that only \$28,000 would be allocated for improvements to the school, and the money was not to be used for library construction. Governor Clyde Reed stated that the times were not favorable

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., Sept. 5, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., Sept. 19, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Oct. 13, 1930, p. 1.

for the start of any extensive building programs.<sup>43</sup> Apparently Emporia's business climate was stronger than that of the state in general.

A temporary surge in railroad business began late in October from a sharp increase in livestock and fruit shipments. A number of local railroad employees were recalled to work to help with the heavy freight volume. The Santa Fe scheduled twelve special fruit trains through Emporia on one day of the approximately ten-day period of increased activity. About 2,500 to 3,000 freight cars moved through the city each day during that time. The company stockyards were busy feeding an average of 55,000 sheep and 2,000 cattle. Finally, a rail replacement job covering thirty miles of trackage east of Emporia was scheduled for early November which would employ many local workers.<sup>44</sup>

The importance of the Santa Fe Railway to Emporia was emphasized by William Allen White in an editorial published October 10, 1930. He urged Emporians to ship

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Dec. 31, 1930, p. 1; Topeka Daily Capital, Dec. 31, 1930, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup>Emporia Gazette, Oct. 28, 1930, p. 1.

merchandise by rail and regard the company as being as much a part of the town as the locally owned businesses.<sup>45</sup>

A campaign to allow only rail-shipped commodities into Emporia had been started several months earlier by the Chamber of Commerce. At that time seventy local Santa Fe employees were laid off from their jobs, and a boycott of merchants who received truck-hauled goods was threatened by many railroad workers. The Chamber of Commerce appointed a committee to study ways of discouraging truck transportation. Two Emporia representatives had been sent to the state legislature to back the imposition of a heavy license fee against commercial truck lines.<sup>46</sup>

The construction of a pipeline across southern Lyon County by the Missouri and Kansas Company provided work for 175 local men during the autumn of 1930. The new line joined a pipeline system which stretched from the Texas Panhandle to Indianapolis, Indiana. An office, machine shop, and blacksmith shop were maintained by the company in Emporia during the construction.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>William Allen White, "Our Good Friend," Emporia Gazette, Oct. 10, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup>Emporia Gazette, June 3, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., Nov. 6, 1930, p. 1.

Unemployment became a definite problem in Emporia by mid-November of 1930. The situation probably would have been much worse except for the city's policy of dividing municipal work among as many men as possible, the temporary increase in railroad business and retail sales, and the pipeline construction. These should be regarded as factors that softened the effects of the Depression, but did not eliminate them.

There were several causes for unemployment. The beginning of the cold weather period reduced opportunities for outdoor work. A drop in freight carloadings on the Santa Fe resulted in the removal of many railroad workers from service and the reduction of work hours for others.<sup>48</sup> The drought also hurt the local economy. Farmers had little money to spend, which in turn meant that the merchants who depended heavily upon their trade were compelled to reduce their work forces. That meant that both the employees and the merchants had to curtail their spending. The announcement that no funds were available for the proposed Teachers College library destroyed the prospect of employment for many men. If the construction plans had been approved the workers might have come from

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<sup>48</sup>See Table 2, p. 101.

other towns, but at least some money would have been circulated in Emporia.

To call attention to the problem of unemployment, "work wanted" advertisements began to be placed on the front page of The Emporia Gazette on November 17.<sup>49</sup> A "buy now" campaign began in Emporia about the same time. William Allen White urged employed citizens to repair their homes, buy new furniture or appliances, purchase new clothes, or buy anything that would improve their living standard.<sup>50</sup>

White published an analysis of the local conditions on November 18. He observed that many indoor employees still had jobs, but hundreds of workers were unemployed. Writing that "this town has plenty of money but it isn't too well distributed," he urged Emporians to buy items such as clothing, fuel, shelter, and other comforts to stimulate the local economy.<sup>51</sup>

In anticipation of unemployment during the winter of 1930 and 1931, William Allen White urged the local labor unions to prepare to help workers in a greater way

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<sup>49</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 17, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 14, 1930, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 18, 1930, p. 1.

than in the past.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps in response to that plea an employment agency was established by the Emporia Trades & Labor Council on December 3, 1930. It received listings of employers who had work available, and workers who sought employment. The agency served both union and non-union men, but only Emporia residents were given work. The establishment of that office brought praise from many Emporians.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately there was little initial success as only 2 of 49 registered men had been given work by the second day of operation.<sup>54</sup> Two weeks later the list of registered jobless had increased to 139. One problem that arose was that some employers would not pay standard wages, but demanded that the unemployed work for reduced pay because of their jobless condition.<sup>55</sup>

Another plan to aid the unemployed was organized by the Heritage fund, the oldest of the town's benevolent groups. Officials of the fund met with representatives of labor unions, the American Legion, the Retailers' Association, the Welfare Association, various lodges and

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<sup>52</sup>William Allen White, "The Guilds," Emporia Gazette, Nov. 19, 1930, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup>Emporia Gazette, Dec. 3, 1930, pp. 1-2.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., Dec. 4, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., Dec. 18, 1930, p. 1.



orders, the city government, the Santa Fe Railway, the schools and colleges, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the two hospitals, and several banks.<sup>56</sup> From that meeting a plan was adopted to survey all Emporia families to determine who needed work and who could offer employment. The actual survey was conducted by the Women's City Club.<sup>57</sup> That program went one step further than the work of the Trades & Labor Council since the Women's City Club made a complete survey of the town to determine the unemployment situation.

The drought of the summer of 1930 produced considerable hardship for local farmers, as was previously mentioned. It was announced on January 20, 1931, that twenty-three Kansas counties, including Lyon, would have committees established to administer federal farm loans for the purchase of feed, seed, and fertilizer.<sup>58</sup> That was a different program than the earlier one offered to cattlemen. The first loan checks were delivered to Emporia on March 5, 1931.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>William Allen White, "An Emergency Plan," Emporia Gazette, Nov. 26, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup>Emporia Gazette, Dec. 9, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., Jan. 20, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., Mar. 5, 1931, p. 1.

Considerable unemployment existed among Santa Fe workers during the winter of 1930 and 1931.<sup>60</sup> Santa Fe President W. B. Storey published a Christmas greeting to employees that winter which noted the depressed conditions. He stated:

TO THE SANTA FE FAMILY:

Once more the Christmas season approaches. The year has been a hard one for many of us due to the general depressed condition of business throughout the country. On the other hand, many of us have had continuous work. All who have been given the opportunity have worked efficiently and have continued to give that class of service for which the Santa Fe is noted. We know from past experience that the clouds that now affect all business in the country will pass away. May I, therefore, send you all the Season's Greetings and express the wish that the New Year may bring us a renewal of prosperity and with it employment and hence, happiness for us all.<sup>61</sup>

Locomotive firemen voluntarily reduced their maximum number of work-miles in January 1931 so that unemployed fellow-members might benefit. Passenger train firemen worked 4,000 to 4,800 miles each thirty-day period under the existing agreement. The voluntary plan reduced that to 3,600 to 4,000 miles. Comparable reductions were made for those in freight and yard service.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., Jan. 31, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup>W. B. Storey, "To the Santa Fe Family," The Santa Fe Magazine, December, 1930, p. 58.

<sup>62</sup>Emporia Gazette, Jan. 31, 1931, p. 1.

William Allen White praised the mileage reductions and the policy of the Trades & Labor Council to give equal treatment to union and non-union workers as examples of the responsibility and sense of duty of American labor.<sup>63</sup>

— One indication of an attempt by some Emporians to save money during the winter of 1930 and 1931 was a decreased sale of coal. A total sales reduction of \$40,000 was reported by seven of ten coal dealers questioned. A mild winter accounted for part of that decline, but the increased use of wood for fuel, especially by farmers, was an important factor. Some urban workers cut wood on a share basis, giving part of the commodity to the landowner as payment.<sup>64</sup>

The work of the churches in helping Emporia's unemployment problem should not be overlooked. A committee of representatives from the major churches sponsored a program to provide jobs for the unemployed and at the same time improve the city parks. Each church member was asked to donate \$3.20, the total wages of eight hours of work at a rate of 40 cents per hour. That money was used for park improvement projects which were

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<sup>63</sup>William Allen White, "The Engineers," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 16, 1931, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup>Emporia Gazette, Feb. 10, 1931, p. 1.

important since the city government had not appropriated any money for that purpose. No information about the total scope of the program is available, but one of the leading churches, the First Presbyterian, collected \$105.40 from members and donated \$20.00 from the church loan fund during 1930 for the project.<sup>65</sup>

The various agencies for unemployment relief eased the jobless situation considerably although they did not eliminate it. State Commissioner of Labor C. J. Beckman applauded the local efforts, particularly the job survey. He commended other cities for their work, but stated that Emporia had done more than any other Kansas town in relieving unemployment.<sup>66</sup>

The winter season was the most critical time for unemployment since many jobs could not be performed during the inclement weather. With the coming of the spring of 1931 new work became available. For example, the Santa Fe began a large roadbed improvement project on the eastern division, of which Emporia was the western

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<sup>65</sup>William Allen White, "Churches Are Helping," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 23, 1931, p. 4; First Presbyterian Church of Emporia, Kansas, Financial Statement (Emporia: First Presbyterian Church, 1931).

<sup>66</sup>William Allen White, "Emporia's Job," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 12, 1931, p. 4.

terminus. Several hundred men were hired or recalled to work for it. One significant part of the new project was that Mexican workers were not used.<sup>67</sup> Many Mexican laborers and their families had moved from their native country to Emporia shortly before the Depression began to work on railroad jobs. When business slowed most were released from their employment. Some Emporians began to resent their presence, believing that they were a drain on the city's welfare resources. While serious trouble never erupted there was periodic friction between the Mexicans and some permanent residents.<sup>68</sup>

The problem was lessened somewhat in June of 1931 when the Santa Fe Railway offered free transportation for the Mexican workers and their families to El Paso, Texas, where they could cross easily into Mexico. Most could not afford to buy food for the trip so the Chamber of Commerce and Ministerial Association sponsored a campaign to raise money for the meals.<sup>69</sup> The first group left

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<sup>67</sup>Emporia Gazette, Mar. 30, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup>C. S. Wilson, "Among Ourselves," The Santa Fe Magazine, April, 1929, p. 89; Wayne Traylor, personal interview.

<sup>69</sup>Emporia Gazette, June 9, 1931, p. 1.

Emporia on June 10.<sup>70</sup> Many remained in the city, however, and their presence continued to cause resentment. A movement was begun in October of 1931 by a group that included many prominent citizens, such as Mayor C. A. Bishop, to deport the Mexicans.<sup>71</sup> No evidence is available to indicate that the plan was successful.

It is understandable that the people who backed the movement desired to have as much work made available for the established members of the community as possible. Yet the action represented a deterioration of good relations between certain local citizens at a time when cooperation was most needed. Fortunately the Chamber of Commerce unemployment committee that was organized a few weeks later provided work for many Mexicans.<sup>72</sup>

Economic conditions in Emporia during the summer of 1931 generally were poor. The only favorable condition was the large wheat yield throughout the central states that produced a temporary increase in railroad shipments through Emporia during the early summer.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Emporia Gazette, June 10, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., Oct. 2, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup>Frank Lostutter, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>73</sup>Emporia Gazette, July 13, 1931, p. 1.

But declines in other railroad business, particularly the hauling of passengers, had occurred earlier in the year.<sup>74</sup>

The greatest crises for local farmers that summer were the low price of wheat in relation to expenses and unfavorable weather conditions. Production costs were so high that the average profit was only 28 cents for each acre of wheat grown.<sup>75</sup>

The corn crop was damaged by high heat, and the Neosho River, one of the area's two major waterways, was reduced to a series of pools.<sup>76</sup> William Allen White noted the local conditions, and predicted that the state might again be called "bleeding Kansas."<sup>77</sup>

The construction business provides one of the best examples of the course of economic conditions during the early 1930's. Building permits for the five-month period from March to July in 1931 totaled only \$68,000, compared to permits of \$95,022 during the same period in 1930 and a huge \$617,789 for the same time in 1929. The March to July period was a good indicator of construction activity

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., May 6, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., June 26, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., July 22, 1931, p. 1; July 27, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup>William Allen White, "Bleeding Kansas," Emporia Gazette, July 28, 1931, p. 4.

since it was the time when most building projects were begun. By 1931 building was confined mainly to remodeling and repair work.<sup>78</sup> The reluctance of most people to spend money on construction of course was due to business conditions, but it served only to prolong the Depression.

A similar reluctance was evident on the part of Mayor C. A. Bishop. A difference of opinion between the Mayor and Finance Commissioner H. E. Peach was revealed in September of 1931. A debate between the men began at a city commission meeting in response to the receipt of three petitions that requested the paving of several streets. Mayor Bishop argued that no new paving projects should be started because they would increase taxes. Commissioner Peach contended that only through the creation of new jobs for the unemployed, which the paving projects would have done, could business be stimulated. The Mayor's arguments prevailed at the meeting as the paving petitions were tabled for the remainder of the year.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Emporia Gazette, Aug. 7, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., Sept. 29, 1931, p. 1.



Peach's reasoning was sounder. His plan might have produced some temporary distress from increased taxes, but it was a better way of producing a business recovery since it would have created jobs and placed money into circulation. Mayor Bishop's proposal ignored any plan for solving the Depression.

By the summer of 1931 it was apparent that many Emporians faced a winter of destitution if a drastic plan of employment was not adopted. The Depression was worsening. Building activity had dwindled to a few remodeling jobs. Farmers had suffered unfavorable growing conditions that seriously damaged crop yields in most cases. When a large crop was harvested, such as the wheat crop of 1931, prices were so low that little profit could be made. The two colleges had remained open, but did not grow.<sup>80</sup> The decline of railroad business had placed many local employees out of work.<sup>81</sup> A table of freight carloadings on the Santa Fe depicts the business decline during the early Depression years.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, personal interview; C. F. Gladfelter, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>81</sup> W. R. Lapsley, "Among Ourselves," The Santa Fe Magazine, April, 1931, p. 75; June, 1931, p. 78; August, 1931, p. 64.

<sup>82</sup> The Santa Fe Magazine, March, 1929, p. 70; April, 1930, p. 74; May, 1929, p. 84; June, 1929, p. 84;

TABLE 2

## SANTA FE RAILWAY FREIGHT CARLOADINGS, 1929-1931

Month	1929	1930	1931
January	162,887	144,025	129,567
February	146,891	137,498	110,263
March	165,769	150,298	124,280
April	168,991	157,099	125,877
May	166,779	148,775	130,772
June	167,939	153,497	129,850
July	209,159	175,901	160,887
August	188,519	159,414	140,307
September	185,513	162,611	131,218
October	214,098	181,178	148,301
November	175,090	147,169	124,626
December	153,261	131,552	104,335

William L. White surveyed local economic conditions in an editorial July 22, 1931. He wrote:

This fall and winter, Emporia will come to grips with one of the most difficult tasks in her history—the job of finding work, food and clothing for the laboring men and women who have made their homes in Emporia and helped build the town.

Floating, transient labor has been and will be with us always. Their distress this winter will be dire, but their care should be a charge upon the state or nation, rather than upon the local communities. First and foremost, we must make adequate provision for our own townsmen.

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July, 1929, p. 68; August, 1929, p. 73; September, 1929, p. 70; October, 1929, p. 66; November, 1929, p. 78; December, 1929, p. 69; January, 1930, p. 74; February, 1930, p. 66; March, 1930, p. 70; April, 1930, p. 74; May, 1930, p. 76; June, 1930, p. 72; July, 1930, p. 82; August, 1930, p. 62; September, 1930, p. 66; October, 1930, p. 58; November, 1930, p. 60; December, 1930, p. 56; January, 1931, p. 57; February, 1931, p. 60; March, 1931, p. 62; April, 1931, p. 64; May, 1931, p. 68; June, 1932, p. 58; July, 1931, p. 63; August, 1931, p. 56; September, 1931, p. 56; October, 1931, p. 59; November, 1931, p. 60; December, 1931, p. 51; January, 1932, p. 52; February, 1932, p. 58.

White went on to explain how the economic situation had become increasingly worse in Emporia since the beginning of the Depression. Using the construction business as an example, he pointed out that serious unemployment hit the industry in the spring of 1930. Most of the carpenters, masons, and plasterers worked only 15 or 20 per cent of their usual working days that year. Conditions were worse in 1931 than in 1930. Speaking of the construction workers he said:

They face the winter of 1931 with their credit exhausted, borrowed up to the limit, and with the outlook for work blacker than it has been at any time since the depression started.

. . . .

But this year there is practically no work in sight. All summer the Welfare association has had long waiting lists for harvest jobs which pay the worker only \$1.50 per day and his dinner at noon. Certainly labor cannot be accused of holding out for exorbitant [sic] wage scales when men have been eager to work in the harvest fields at less than 20 cents an hour.

White concluded that some type of work project had to be found for the unemployed of the town. He advocated no special job, but called for suggestions from the local citizens.<sup>83</sup>

The reference to transient labor poses an interesting question. Should non-permanent residents such as

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<sup>83</sup>William L. White, "Wanted: 1,000 Jobs," Emporia Gazette, July 22, 1931, p. 4.

transients, workers of foreign citizenship like the Mexican laborers, and college students, have been given employment?

An influx of transients at such a time should not have been encouraged. Local residents deserved job preference over them. The editorial argues correctly that the state and national governments were responsible for their care, but at that time, prior to the New Deal, local aid was the only available relief of any consequence and should have been provided when possible.

The case of the Mexican workers and college students was different as both groups had contributed at one time or another to the town's economy by placing additional money into circulation. Many students needed work to continue their educations.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, both the Mexican workers and college students deserved equal treatment with Emporia residents in work allocation.

William Allen White argued to the contrary on the hiring of college students. Writing that "this year, at least, it may be better to let some of the college boys go," he admitted that it was a difficult question, but contended that it would be better to hire permanent residents

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<sup>84</sup>Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, personal interview.

first.<sup>85</sup> White's view overlooked the fact that the retention of a large student population was one important factor in the achievement of prosperity since education was a vital part of Emporia's economy.

A newspaper article published on July 23, 1931, reported the efforts of the city and county governments to employ as many men as possible. The city government spent a total of \$7,948.09 for extra workmen from September of 1930 to April of 1931. The county government created two special projects during 1931 to provide additional work. They were the operation of a rock crusher from January 19 to June 30 and the construction of a bridge from February 21 to May 9. The projects provided a total of 1,734 work days.<sup>86</sup>

The greatest local work relief program of the Depression began in the autumn of 1931. Sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, it differed somewhat from earlier plans. Whereas agencies such as the Trades & Labor Council served as a clearinghouse to bring employers and unemployed workers together, the new committee was more comprehensive. After an initial period when it tried to

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<sup>85</sup>William Allen White, "Jobs and College," Emporia Gazette, Aug. 24, 1931, p. 4.

<sup>86</sup>Emporia Gazette, July 23, 1931, p. 1.

place workers with employers, it relied upon employment of men and women directly. A large variety of projects were undertaken, although no private work, such as field cultivation, was performed. Only jobs that benefitted the community in general were considered.<sup>87</sup>

The general chairman of the committee was M. A. Limbocker. Frank Lostutter headed the registration and labor placement sub-committee, H. W. Glass was in charge of the finance sub-committee, Calvin Lambert supervised the work of the employment planning sub-committee, and William L. White was chairman of the publicity sub-committee.<sup>88</sup>

The initial job of the registration and labor placement sub-committee was to maintain a list of available jobs and unemployed workers and attempt to get the two groups together. As a start it used the results of the unemployment survey made during the prior year.<sup>89</sup>

Registration for the project began on November 10, 1931.<sup>90</sup> By the middle of that day seventy-six

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<sup>87</sup> Frank Lostutter, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>88</sup> Emporia Gazette, Nov. 4, 1931, p. 1; Nov. 5, 1931, p. 1; Nov. 7, 1931, pp. 1-2.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., Nov. 4, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., Nov. 10, 1931, p. 1.

workers had submitted their names, but initial attempts at placing them on jobs met with little success.<sup>91</sup> Soon thereafter the committee devoted its time to the direct employment of workers on community improvement projects.<sup>92</sup>

There were two main methods of financing the committee's work. The first was the day's salary campaign, supervised by H. W. Glass. Under the plan every employed worker was asked to contribute once each month during the winter a sum equal to one day's salary.<sup>93</sup> The other method was the penny-a-meal campaign directed by Mrs. A. H. Lakin. Emporians were requested to give one penny for the unemployment committee after they ate each meal.<sup>94</sup>

One interesting aspect of the program was that the workers were paid in scrip, at a rate of 40 cents per hour. It was honored by Emporia merchants for necessities such as food, but not for luxury items. That protected the workers since their wages could not be

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., Nov. 11, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup>Frank Lostutter, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>93</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 4, 1931, p. 1; May 4, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., Nov. 6, 1931, p. 1.

garnisheed by creditors, and it guaranteed that they would not spend their earnings foolishly.<sup>95</sup>

One of the first jobs performed by the unemployed workers was a tree trimming and removal project begun on November 16.<sup>96</sup> A rock crusher was placed into operation a short time later.<sup>97</sup> A sewing project was organized that made and mended clothing which then was distributed to impoverished families. Only widows that supported families or women whose husbands were incapacitated were eligible for the sewing.<sup>98</sup>

The unemployment of the Mexican men continued to be a problem, but the Chamber of Commerce committee provided an effective solution. One difficulty in dealing with the Mexicans was that most of them spoke only Spanish and most other Emporians spoke only English. A Spanish-speaking priest who served in the Mexican section of the town contacted the unemployment committee and explained the pressing need to them. Working with Frank Lostutter, the two men organized a project composed

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<sup>95</sup> Frank Lostutter, tape-recorded interview; Emporia Gazette, Nov. 14, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Emporia Gazette, Nov. 16, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., Nov. 19, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., Nov. 21, 1931, p. 1.



entirely of Mexican workers. The job selected was the improvement of approximately nine blocks of Eighteenth Avenue. The Mexican men performed their job well and were among the best workers of the committee's force.<sup>99</sup>

The committee accomplished its purpose of providing work for the city's unemployed during the winter of 1931 and 1932. On May 3, 1932, a major project, the park boulevard construction, was completed. The job connected all parks with surfaced roads, and provided employment for many men. Other major projects undertaken by the unemployment committee included the rebuilding of the College of Emporia driveway, the construction of new entrances to Kansas State Teachers College, the building of a parking lot at Emporia High School, and the surfacing of about seven blocks of city streets.<sup>100</sup> Contributions often exceeded disbursements as most Emporians were generous in their giving.<sup>101</sup>

During the spring of 1932, a new mayor, Frank Lostutter, assumed office. Lostutter defeated incumbent C. A. Bishop on April 5, 1932, by a vote of 1,923 to

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<sup>99</sup>Frank Lostutter, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>100</sup>Emporia Gazette, May 4, 1932, pp. 1-2.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., Jan. 7, 1932, p. 1.

1,595, and served as mayor until 1941. Bishop had held the office since 1929.<sup>102</sup>

Business conditions during the summer of 1932 in Emporia were no worse than in previous Depression years. Adequate rainfall improved the situation somewhat.<sup>103</sup> But the summer offered only a temporary respite from serious unemployment, and local officials prepared for another winter of work scarcity. At that time, two fundamental changes occurred in unemployment relief for the Emporia area. The financing was changed from local contributions to federal funds, and the original Chamber of Commerce committee was made into a body that supervised unemployment relief for the entire county as well as the city of Emporia. It was called the Lyon County Federal Relief Committee. In response to an inquiry made by Kansas Governor Harry H. Woodring about Emporia's need for federal unemployment relief funds, Mayor Lostutter sent the following telegram:

Took care of unemployment last year at cost of \$25,000, but under present conditions cannot hope to raise over \$10,000 or \$12,000 this winter, and we will have more unemployment. Federal funds would best serve by local unemployment program for

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., Apr. 6, 1932, pp. 1-2; Frank Lostutter, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>103</sup>Emporia Gazette, Aug. 9, 1932, p. 1.

able-bodied men. Five hundred unemployed men here and should figure \$35,000 cost.<sup>104</sup>

A new unemployment survey was begun on September 8, 1932, to determine the probable needs of the area during the approaching winter.<sup>105</sup> One week later the Lyon County Federal Relief Committee requested \$53,000 in federal funds for relief work. The formal request contained a report that revealed some interesting facts about unemployment in the Emporia area. A total of \$43,152.67 was spent in 1931 for relief, and \$43,646.74 was used for the same purpose from January 1, 1932, to the time of the filing of the application. It was predicted that 706 families would need some financial assistance in the winter of 1932 and 1933, while approximately 400 families received relief benefits during the early months of 1932.<sup>106</sup>

On October 12, a federal grant of \$10,606 was received by the Lyon County committee. By October 24, seven work projects had been approved by the Kansas Federal Relief Committee, and more than 500 jobless persons

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., Sept. 16, 1932, p. 1; July 13, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., Sept. 8, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., Sept. 16, 1932, pp. 1-2.

were listed by the local body.<sup>107</sup> Federal grants were received on two other occasions by the committee. A grant of \$15,750 was accepted on November 21, and \$11,985 was allocated on January 7, 1933.<sup>108</sup> The total of \$38,341 in federal funds was well above that which Mayor Lostutter predicted would be needed for local unemployment relief.

The winter of 1932 and 1933 was the last in which Emporians had to suffer the effects of the Depression without the benefits of the New Deal of the Roosevelt Administration. Conditions were serious after that winter, but it does provide a convenient transition point for a study of the Depression in Emporia. Following the inauguration of Franklin Roosevelt as President on March 4, 1933, Emporians relied heavily upon New Deal projects for work relief. Prior to that time they had to look to each other for help, and the agencies that they created for unemployment relief were quite effective.

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., Oct. 24, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., Nov. 21, 1932, p. 1; Jan. 7, 1933, p. 1.

## CHAPTER V

### EMPORIA AND THE NEW DEAL, 1933-1937

The inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as President on March 4, 1933, opened a new chapter of the Depression in Emporia. After that time, the city relied more heavily upon relief of various kinds from the federal government. While local assistance did not end, the burden of extracting Emporia from its economic illness made a significant shift away from the local government. Emporia's foremost representative, William Allen White, set aside his Republican sentiments and greeted the Roosevelt Administration with an editorial that encouraged support for the new President.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first moves of President Roosevelt was to declare a national bank "holiday" on March 5, 1933. The action was designed to allow time for the writing of an emergency banking bill. Persons throughout the country discovered ways to conduct business without the banks. Canadian money was used in Michigan and Mexican

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<sup>1</sup>William Allen White, "President Roosevelt," Emporia Gazette, Mar. 4, 1933, p. 4.

pesos were utilized in the Southwest.<sup>2</sup> Business continued in Emporia with the use of credit and checks. Farmers' markets paid suppliers with checks, and downtown merchants generally allowed customers to charge merchandise.<sup>3</sup>

President Roosevelt's new banking bill, which most Congressmen found to be a conservative one, was presented to a special session of Congress on March 9. The bill arranged for Presidential control of gold movements, authorized penalties for hoarding, provided new Federal Reserve bank notes, and permitted the reopening of banks with liquid assets and arranged for the reorganization of the remainder. The bill passed unanimously in the House, and by a vote of seventy-three to seven in the Senate.<sup>4</sup>

Emporia's banks reopened on March 14, 1933. On that day they were busy handling the checks written during the "holiday," and deposits at all Emporia banks exceeded withdrawals by \$152,360.<sup>5</sup> In an editorial

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<sup>2</sup>William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940, Vol. XLI of The New American Nation Series, ed. by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (47 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 42.

<sup>3</sup>Emporia Gazette, Mar. 6, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Leuchtenburg, pp. 43-4.

<sup>5</sup>Emporia Gazette, Mar. 14, 1933, p. 1; Mar. 15, 1933, p. 1.

March 16, William Allen White noted that deposits exceeded withdrawals by ten times throughout Lyon County. He contended that "the fear complex is thawing," and a general upsurge in prosperity had started.<sup>6</sup>

White's comments seem to have been partly wishful thinking or premature judgments. Bank deposits were heavy, but the discouraging signs outweighed the encouraging ones. Poor weather conditions limited agricultural output. The wheat crop was damaged by low soil moisture during the winter of 1932-33, as only 2.36 inches of precipitation fell in the Emporia area from November through February.<sup>7</sup> Growing wheat was in generally poor condition both throughout Kansas and the country as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Corn planted before late April made little progress due to dry weather.<sup>9</sup> Late in April abundant rainfall was received, but accompanying cool weather retarded crop growth. Greenbugs and cut worms seriously damaged alfalfa crops, and chinch bugs plagued corn fields during May and June

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<sup>6</sup>William Allen White, "In the Front Rank," Emporia Gazette, Mar. 16, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>Emporia Gazette, Mar. 24, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., Apr. 11, 1933, p. 1; June 10, 1933, p. 1; Topeka Daily Capital, Apr. 11, 1933, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 19, 1933, p. 1.

of 1933.<sup>10</sup> Drought conditions returned by late June, and were accompanied by an even greater invasion of chinch bugs, the worst attack of the insects since 1925 according to Lyon County farm agent Carl Howard.<sup>11</sup>

Poor yields and low crop prices reduced the farmers' income to a point where few farm laborers could be hired. Farm children increasingly took the place of hired men in the harvest fields, and local men who ordinarily worked as farm hands were idle, or worked only an occasional day on relief projects.<sup>12</sup>

Wage reductions and budget cuts were made during the spring and early summer of 1933. County appointive deputies and clerks received annual salary reductions of approximately \$1,500 effective for one year. Elective county officials were given salary cuts of approximately \$3,789 annually.<sup>13</sup>

On June 15, 1933, the College of Emporia Board of Trustees announced a 40 per cent budget reduction for the

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., May 3, 1933, p. 1; June 13, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., June 19, 1933, p. 1; June 24, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>William Allen White, "Farm Girls," Emporia Gazette, June 29, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 5, 1933, p. 1.



1933-34 academic year. The reduction was made after the Trustees insisted upon a balanced budget. The faculty voluntarily assumed a 35 per cent decrease in salaries which followed a 15 per cent decline the preceding year. Reductions in other expenditures also were made ranging from 30 to 50 per cent.<sup>14</sup> Further economy measures were needed to balance the budget, however, and seven faculty members were released from employment in July.<sup>15</sup>

Freight carloadings on the Santa Fe Railway declined in the first seven months of 1933 as compared to 1932, with the exception of May and June which showed slight increases.<sup>16</sup> Freight, mail, and express revenues reached the lowest level of the Depression during 1933.<sup>17</sup>

The final discouraging factor of the economy was that the number of Lyon County families receiving relief increased dramatically during much of 1933 compared with 1932.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., June 16, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., July 12, 1933, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup>The Santa Fe Magazine, March, 1933, p. 56; April, 1933, p. 58; May, 1933, p. 60; June, 1933, p. 57; July, 1933, p. 60; August, 1933, p. 59; September, 1933, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup>L. L. Waters, Steel Trails to Santa Fe (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1950), p. 426.

<sup>18</sup>Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, Public Welfare Service in Kansas, A Ten Year Report, 1924-1933 (Topeka: The Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, 1934), p. 330.

Perhaps White was anticipating an upsurge from Roosevelt Administration programs in his optimistic editorial of March 16. [During the famous Hundred Days in 1933 many economic rehabilitation agencies were created or reorganized which eventually brought a definite uplift to Emporia. One of the first of these organizations was the Civilian Conservation Corps. President Roosevelt called for the establishment of such an agency in his March 21, 1933, address to the Congress. The bill empowering the President to establish the agency was passed on March 31, 1933, and through Executive Order No. 6106 the CCC was created on April 5.<sup>19</sup>]

[The CCC assisted the Emporia area in two ways. First, it employed local men on conservation projects which eliminated some families from the relief rolls. \* Second, a CCC camp was established near Emporia which provided a new state lake for Lyon County. The workers spent some of their wages in Emporia.] On April 24, 1933, M. A. Limbocker, chairman of the Lyon County Federal Relief Committee, announced his office had received notice that sixty-three Lyon County men could be signed

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<sup>19</sup>Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. II: The Year of Crisis, 1933 (New York: Random House, 1938), pp. 80-2.

immediately into CCC service.<sup>20</sup> Applications were accepted from single men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who were members of families on relief.<sup>21</sup> The first quota was filled on May 2.<sup>22</sup> All of the men had been called into service by June 1.<sup>23</sup>

[Plans for the Lyon County CCC lake project were approved May 26, 1933. The project was located on a 581.65 acre tract about thirteen miles northeast of Emporia. The property was acquired by the state in 1930.<sup>24</sup> Work on the project started June 9, 1933, when 6 unemployed Emporia men began digging the camp well.<sup>25</sup> The main CCC work force of 200 men, mostly from Kansas City, arrived at the camp June 27, and an additional group of 40 men arrived early in July. The camp was administered by army personnel, but civilian engineers and state employees supervised the actual construction. The CCC men worked forty hours per week for a monthly salary of \$30, and \$25 of this was sent to their families. They were allowed to travel into

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<sup>20</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 24, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>William Allen White, "Men Wanted," Emporia Gazette, Apr. 26, 1933, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup>Emporia Gazette, May 2, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., June 1, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., May 27, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., June 9, 1933, p. 1.

Emporia during the evenings, thus providing Emporia merchants with extra revenue. Some supplies, such as perishable foods, were purchased in Emporia.<sup>26</sup> ] \*

While a shift toward national administration of relief was beginning in the spring and summer of 1933, local relief projects were continuing. At that time they were administered by the Lyon County Federal Relief Committee, and financed partially by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. The RFC was created during the Hoover Administration on January 22, 1932.<sup>27</sup> Its operations were broadened considerably during the Roosevelt Administration until it became the country's biggest single investor.<sup>28</sup> Kansas used the RFC considerably. For example, \$1,145,000 was loaned to the state between October 1932 and January 1933.<sup>29</sup> The RFC granted the county committee \$4,250 on June 7, 1933, for relief work. A

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., June 27, 1933, pp. 1, 8; July 6, 1933, p. 1; July 13, 1933, p. 6; Rosenman, p. 109.

<sup>27</sup>John D. Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, 1921-1933, Vol. XL of The New American Nation Series, ed. by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (47 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 271.

<sup>28</sup>Leuchtenburg, p. 71.

<sup>29</sup>Grace A. Browning, The Development of Poor Relief Legislation in Kansas (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 85.

total of \$41,401 was provided for relief from October 1932 to June 1933. About sixty persons were employed during June on such relief projects as city street repair, rock quarrying, county road improvement, and a women's sewing project.<sup>30</sup>

Lyon County relief work ended temporarily in early July when all available funds were depleted, but a new federal grant of \$5,200 was received soon thereafter. By July 13 three new projects were in progress in the city. They were a street extension, the construction of an outdoor theater and shallow reflecting pool at Peter Pan Park, and the widening and straightening of a storm sewer ditch. About forty men were employed on the new projects.<sup>31</sup>

Another federal agency that had a decided effect upon Emporia was the National Recovery Administration. The NRA, authorized June 16, 1933, established and enforced codes of fair practices for various types of businesses.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Emporia Gazette, June 7, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., July 3, 1933, p. 1; July 13, 1933, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup>Rexford G. Tugwell, FDR: Architect of an Era (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 107.

The first group agreement for operating codes in Emporia was established July 29, 1933. Under the agreement, department stores reduced their weekly working periods to fifty-two hours. Previously most stores had been open fifty-eight hours in the summer and sixty-three hours during the winter.<sup>33</sup> Men's clothing, women's ready-to-wear, and furniture stores also decided in favor of a fifty-two hour week. The hours were shortened with the idea that this would encourage the employment of more workers to handle the same amount of business squeezed into a shorter period. By August 8, 267 employers had signed with the NRA.<sup>34</sup>

An NRA campaign was started in Emporia August 29, 1933. About 400 workers canvassed the city to obtain pledges from consumers to patronize only the businesses that had agreed to follow NRA codes. At the same time businessmen were interviewed to determine if they had subscribed to the NRA. One of the main questions was whether any additional employees had been hired, which was a chief NRA goal.<sup>35</sup> When the campaign was finished on September 2,

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<sup>33</sup>Emporia Gazette, July 29, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., July 31, 1933, p. 1; Aug. 8, 1933, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Aug. 29, 1933, pp. 1-2.

2,183 consumers had signed a pledge. The canvas revealed that 124 new workers were employed since July 1.<sup>36</sup>

An NRA compliance board was established in Emporia on September 15, 1933. It was designed to hear complaints against businesses that had violated NRA agreements. If the irregularities were not corrected the matter could be forwarded to the NRA offices in Washington, but the local board could take no action of its own. The original board members were: Fred Brown, representing the industrial workers; Bill Bechtel, representing the retail workers; T. A. Merritt, representing the industrial employers; C. T. Boone, representing the retail employers; Mrs. E. K. Lord, representing the consumers; and Roscoe Graves, representing the attorneys. A number of complaints were received by the board during its first week of operation.<sup>37</sup>

Business conditions improved in Emporia during the late summer and early fall of 1933. The Santa Fe Railway launched a two-month rail replacement project in the summer between Holliday and Emporia which employed about 300 laborers, many from Emporia.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., Sept. 2, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Sept. 15, 1933, p. 1; Sept. 22, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Aug. 7, 1933, p. 5.

Santa Fe job, early in the fall a county-financed resurfacing project on Highway 11 between Emporia and the southern Lyon County line utilized approximately 400 Lyon County workmen, all previously unemployed.<sup>39</sup>

Farmers also enjoyed a similar economic improvement. The federal government through the New Deal's farm regulatory agency, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, purchased hogs during the summer of 1933 to raise market prices and provide destitute families with meat. The purchases gave local hog farmers a greatly expanded market, and provided 5,000 pounds of free pork for Lyon County in October of 1933. Approximately 400 Emporia families received the meat, and the remainder went to other parts of the county.<sup>40</sup>

Crop conditions improved after the earlier dry weather and chinch bug invasion. The corn, sorghum, alfalfa, and prairie hay crops made a good recovery during the summer as a result of adequate rainfall.<sup>41</sup> But the chinch bug damage had been heavy, and the corn yield was slightly below average.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Sept. 23, 1933, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup>Leuchtenburg, p. 73; Emporia Gazette, Aug. 24, 1933, p. 10; Oct. 14, 1933, p. 1; Oct. 16, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup>Emporia Gazette, July 25, 1933, p. 10.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Nov. 17, 1933, p. 1.



The fall enrollment at the two Emporia colleges was at a near normal rate in 1933. The College of Emporia enrollment was 327, a slight drop from the preceding year's total of 354. The college employed 67 students on the campus to help them finance their education. Despite budget cuts the college employed a higher percentage of students than most schools in Kansas. Enrollment at Kansas State Teachers College was 1,273, an increase of 62 students from the previous year.<sup>43</sup>

[Local CCC activity was continuing at a rapid pace in the fall of 1933. Most preliminary work at the state lake project prior to the actual construction of the dam was completed by September. Several improvements, such as road construction near the lake site, had been made.<sup>44</sup>]

Meanwhile the effects of two additional New Deal agencies, the Public Works Administration and the Civil Works Administration, were felt in Emporia. The PWA was created in 1933 primarily to finance large-scale construction projects. From 1933 to 1939 it aided in the construction of 70 per cent of the country's new school

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Nov. 10, 1933, p. 11; Sept. 22, 1933, p. 3; Oct. 20, 1933, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Sept. 23, 1933, pp. 1-2.

buildings and 65 per cent of the new city halls, court-houses, and sewage plants.<sup>45</sup> A grant of \$7,796 was made by the PWA to Lyon County October 4, 1933, for road improvements. The grant was much greater than the \$2,000 requested, and covered nearly the entire cost of the projects.<sup>46</sup>

The CWA enjoyed a much shorter life than the PWA as it existed only from November of 1933 to June of 1934. It was designed to sustain millions of unemployed through the winter. President Roosevelt believed it was costing too much, and he abolished it in 1934 when warm weather arrived and jobs became more abundant. The CWA employed workers directly. Half of the employees came from relief lists, and half from those in need of work but not necessarily poverty-stricken. The agency was one of the major factors in bringing Emporia and the country through the winter.<sup>47</sup>

The first CWA work in the Emporia area began November 20, 1933. A total of 431 workers, all previously on relief, were employed immediately. All of the workers were Lyon County residents, and 263 were from Emporia.

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<sup>45</sup>Leuchtenburg, p. 133.

<sup>46</sup>Emporia Gazette, Oct. 4, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Leuchtenburg, pp. 121-22.

The initial CWA jobs included a women's sewing project, rock quarrying and crushing, and a road improvement project. Nearly all of the wages were paid by the CWA whereas the county had been paying 62 per cent of the previous work relief wages and the federal government the remainder.<sup>48</sup>

The number of CWA workers grew to 656 on November 23 when the work force on several existing projects was increased, and new jobs were begun. All of the local unemployed who were then registered with the CWA received jobs, with the exception of 35 Mexican workers. A separate rock quarrying project was established for the Mexicans November 27.

The anti-Mexican sentiment flared up again as revealed in a letter to the local newspaper. The writer argued that Mexican workers should have been denied employment with the CWA. Asking "why doesn't the Santa Fe take care of them or send them back to Mexico where they belong...", his main contention was that the Mexican government would not, in his judgment, hire unemployed Americans, so why should the CWA employ Mexicans.<sup>49</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 20, 1933, pp. 1-2.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., Nov. 23, 1933, p. 1; Nov. 27, 1933, p. 1.

decision was to hire the Mexican workers, as noted, whenever possible, since they made a contribution to the local economy and were entitled to a satisfactory wage.

By early December the number of CWA workers swelled to 876. Besides receiving wages, the employees got an allotment of free pork from the federal government, just as was distributed earlier. The large boost in employment from the CWA was reflected in increased retail purchases. Emporia clothing stores received the greatest benefit as most of the unemployed had purchased no clothing during their jobless period. Grocery stores noted the second greatest business upturn, although it was not as large as the clothing stores since the workers had continuously purchased food.<sup>50</sup>

A large CWA project, consisting of numerous repairs to Emporia school buildings, was approved December 15, 1933. A total of \$13,500 was allocated for the job, and by December 21 sixteen men were employed on the project. Other new projects at that time included storm sewer repairs in Emporia and road widening at the city dump.<sup>51</sup> Outside of Emporia, a new \$4,000 sanitary toilet construction project for areas with no sewer system was begun.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., Dec. 8, 1933, p. 1; Dec. 11, 1933, pp. 1-2.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., Dec. 16, 1933, p. 1; Dec. 21, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Dec. 27, 1933, p. 3.

The year 1933 was certainly an eventful one in Emporia. The New Deal made a decided, positive impact. While the Depression was far from over, the various programs provided time for more lasting changes to be made. The Civil Works Administration, even though it did not begin until November of 1933, made the most dramatic appearance in Emporia that year. It provided a large number of people with an adequate wage for the period, 40 cents per hour, and their retail purchases boosted the local merchants. During 1933, an average of 750.3 workers were employed weekly by the CWA in Lyon County, and a total of \$50,456.58 was paid for work on the projects.<sup>53</sup>

In an Emporia Gazette article published January 1, 1934, local merchants noted that 1933 was a better business year than 1932. Whereas 1932 prices were constantly falling and the value of inventories continually declining, a price stability was reached in 1933. James A. Poole, local dry goods retailer, singled out the bank holiday in March as being the turning point since retail prices

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., Nov. 18, 1933, p. 1; Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, Public Welfare Service in Kansas, 1934 (Topeka: The Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, 1935), p. 434.

increased after that month. Edwin Dumm, furniture dealer, attributed much of the 1933 upsurge to the constructive programs of the Roosevelt Administration, and he noted the effect of the CWA wages as a definite economic stimulus. The help of the CWA also was lauded by Leon Van Scyoc, manager of the J. C. Penny store; Jack Gregory, manager of the Newman department store; Mason McCarty of the Eckdall & McCarty bookstore; and W. E. Haynes of the Haynes Hardware Company.<sup>54</sup>

The Depression in Emporia was marked by a series of economic ups and downs. In keeping with this trend, the business improvement of 1933 was followed by the disastrous drought of 1934 which hurt the agricultural community more than any other group.<sup>55</sup>

The drought began in the fall of 1933. By November conditions were so serious that many wells and farm ponds were dry, and some farmers had to haul water to their livestock. Only 1.24 inches of rain fell during November.<sup>56</sup> Rainfall continued to be scarce in December with only 1.42 inches of precipitation, and as the winter

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<sup>54</sup>Emporia Gazette, Jan. 1, 1934, pp. 1, 6.

<sup>55</sup>Frank Dobbs, tape-recorded interview.

<sup>56</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 17, 1933, p. 1; Dec. 2, 1933, p. 3.

progressed, increasing numbers of farmers were forced to haul livestock water.<sup>57</sup> By mid-February almost all local farmers were obtaining stock water from creeks and rivers, as well levels were dropping continually. Growing wheat remained in good condition through the winter, however.<sup>58</sup>

While farmers were looking with alarm at the increasingly dry conditions, the blessing of the winter of 1933-34, the CWA, was providing continued support for many Emporians. Two different types of CWA jobs began in January 1934. First, seven unemployed librarians were hired to do re-cataloging, inventory, and book repair work at the Kansas State Teachers College library. Second, a survey started January 9 in which four Emporians tabulated a number of statistics about Emporia business conditions in 1933.<sup>59</sup>

There were several other CWA projects in progress during the winter and early spring of 1934. The toilet construction project, begun earlier, was a success. The

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., Jan. 3, 1934, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., Feb. 15, 1934, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., Jan. 9, 1934, p. 5; Jan. 10, 1934, p. 5.

toilets were built partially in Emporia and then transported to their permanent location.<sup>60</sup> A \$1,200 remodeling project for the city library, consisting mostly of painting, began January 17.<sup>61</sup> A tree removal and trimming job employed several CWA workers in February, and the remodeling of the city hall also began at that time.<sup>62</sup>

A total of 144 students were employed at the colleges under CWA sponsorship. The College of Emporia employed 30 of the students, and Kansas State Teachers College 114. They were hired in addition to the regular campus employees, and most of the jobs consisted of clerical, janitorial, or maintenance work.<sup>63</sup>

Two new grants were received for CWA projects in March. One was a \$4,467 grant for the construction of a monkey island at Peter Pan Lake, and the other was a \$5,779 grant for the repair of the Ruggles bridge northwest of Emporia.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., Jan. 12, 1934, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., Jan. 17, 1934, p. 10.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., Feb. 5, 1934, p. 8; Feb. 10, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., Feb. 16, 1934, pp. 1-2.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., Mar. 17, 1934, p. 1.



An adult-education night school was held under the sponsorship of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the CWA. The FERA was a relief agency somewhat like the CWA except that it aided only those who were on relief, and it did not employ workers directly as did the CWA. The local school employed ten teachers, and approximately 300 students were enrolled in classes ranging from sociology to manual arts to foreign languages. The school ended April 4, 1934, when it was discontinued by the supervising body, the Kansas Federal Relief Administration.<sup>65</sup>

Several road improvement projects continued through the winter, but the CWA was eliminated gradually during the late winter and early spring of 1934. The first step was a reduction of working hours in January when urban workers were cut to twenty-four hours and rural workers to fifteen hours per week. Both groups had previously worked thirty hours per week. At the time of the hours reduction there were 876 CWA workers employed in Lyon County. The free food allocations were discontinued for many CWA workers in February, since only those

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., Mar. 31, 1934, p. 10; Apr. 6, 1934, p. 2; Leuchtenburg, pp. 121, 123.

who qualified for relief were eligible for the food thereafter.<sup>66</sup>

In mid-February the local CWA work quota was reduced to 736, and almost all CWA activity was terminated briefly until selection of those workers who could continue in the program was made. Selections were based on the needs of the workers. The quotas continued a steady decline, and were down to 448 by mid-March.<sup>67</sup>

The phasing out of the CWA continued until it formally ended June 30, 1934. From its beginning on November 17, 1933, a total of \$139,704.05 were expended for wages in Lyon County. Of that, \$19,884.28 was paid for Emporia jobs. The main projects in Emporia and the CWA wages paid were: Street improvements, \$3,382.67; city library and city hall improvements, \$386.55; city dump maintenance, \$1,168.30; park improvements, \$265.50. The largest wage total in the county, \$86,703.00, was paid for road improvements. Wages of \$7,920.65 were spent for building improvements at Kansas State Teachers College. The wages used for the toilet construction

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<sup>66</sup>Emporia Gazette, Feb. 6, 1934, p. 1; Jan. 22, 1934, p. 1; Feb. 14, 1934, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., Feb. 23, 1934, pp. 1, 5; Mar. 13, 1934, p. 5.

project were \$785.08, and \$2,304.91 were paid to workers of a farm housing survey. The remainder of the wages was paid for miscellaneous projects. The decline in the CWA employment is evident from the fact that an average of 718.8 employees worked each week during the first three months of 1934, while an average of only 23.2 were employed during the second three months of the year.<sup>68</sup>

The largest CWA project, the county road improvement program, was transferred to the FERA in the spring of 1934, and about 271 workers were employed on the job in mid-April. Poor Commissioner Mrs. Shirley Prior noted that many workers formerly employed by the CWA were having difficulty finding jobs. One of the main reasons was the low level of farm employment.<sup>69</sup>

The Public Works Administration helped to absorb some of the workers from the CWA. A PWA-sponsored street widening project on West Sixth Avenue began March 26, 1934. The thirty-two workers used on the job were selected from unemployment lists, but they were employed by a private construction company rather than directly by a federal agency, in keeping with PWA procedures. Another PWA

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<sup>68</sup>Public Welfare Service in Kansas, 1934, p. 434.

<sup>69</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 25, 1934, p. 6.

project began May 9 when forty men started laying a water line along Ninth Avenue.<sup>70</sup>

[ Work progressed smoothly at the local CCC camp during the winter and spring of 1934. The camp was termed the best in Kansas by the area CCC inspector, Brigadier General Abraham Lott. A group of CCC workers from Minnesota joined the original work force in early May. The total number of workers was increased to approximately 400, and double working shifts were started on the lake project.<sup>71</sup> ]

Local farmers took advantage of the federal corn-hog program in 1934. Under the plan, farmers who signed contracts reduced their corn acreage 20 per cent and their hog production 25 per cent. In return they received 30 cents per bushel for corn, and \$5 for each hog marketed. The hog payments were provided beyond the regular market price. By April 30, 1934, 1,463 corn-hog contracts had been signed in Lyon County, covering 73,007 acres of corn and 49,679 hogs. The contracting farmers produced about 78 per cent of the county's corn acreage, and 90 per cent of the hogs.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., Mar. 26, 1934, p. 2; May 9, 1934, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., Mar. 7, 1934, p. 1; Mar. 27, 1934, p. 1; May 8, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., Jan. 31, 1934, p. 6; Apr. 30, 1934, p. 8.

The dry conditions continued to plague farmers during the late winter and spring of 1934. The dry weather was accompanied by an unusually warm winter which failed to kill chinch bugs, thus adding to the farmers' despair. Blowing dust became a problem throughout Kansas by early April. The dust was considered worse than that encountered in earlier years because a larger acreage in western Kansas had been plowed for wheat fields, and there had been a succession of dry years in the early 1930's.

By May cracks appeared in wheat and alfalfa fields. Much corn had been planted, but little had sprouted due to the dry conditions. One fifty-four year-old farmer was quoted in the local newspaper as saying "...I have never seen the ground so hard in the spring." The dust and drought problem was compounded by high temperatures as evidenced by a May 8 record of 96 degrees.<sup>73</sup> Emporia recorded the highest temperature in the nation several times during the summer of 1934, including June 3 with 99 degrees; June 5, 108 degrees; June 6, 104 degrees;

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<sup>73</sup>William Allen White, "Trouble Ahead," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 10, 1934, p. 4; Emporia Gazette, Apr. 11, 1934, pp. 1-2; Apr. 17, 1934, p. 3; May 1, 1934, pp. 1, 10; May 9, 1934, p. 1.

June 27, 107 degrees; and July 15, 116½ degrees, an all-time high.<sup>74</sup>

The drought, which did not end until September, and the heat, which did not subside until August, had a decidedly detrimental effect on Emporia.<sup>75</sup> Providing an adequate drinking water supply for the city and producing crops on area farms were two major problems. A variety of solutions were tried.

The first attempt was a series of prayer meetings at local churches. The effect of these meetings is impossible to measure, but a judgment may be made about the second attempt, a water restriction law. By order of the city commission August 8, the use of water for lawns, trees, shrubs, car-washing, and all other non-essential purposes was prohibited. The rules were easy to avoid, but as William Allen White pointed out in an editorial, those who did so were only ultimately hurting themselves and the community. The restriction order was so successful that the daily water consumption dropped from a peak of 3,000,000 gallons to 1,230,000 gallons on August 29.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Emporia Gazette, June 3, 1934, p. 1; June 6, 1934, p. 1; June 7, 1934, p. 1; June 28, 1934, p. 1; July 16, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., Sept. 14, 1934, p. 1; Aug. 20, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., July 17, 1934, p. 2; Aug. 8, 1934, p. 1; Aug. 30, 1934, p. 1; William Allen White, "Play the Game," Emporia Gazette, Aug. 9, 1934, p. 4.

The federal government built pumping stations on a number of streams to supply local farmers with water. A total of 455 Lyon County farmers were served, and a daily average of 221,923 gallons of water was pumped.<sup>77</sup>

The Santa Fe Railway reopened its water pumping and treating plant at nearby Neosho Rapids to help relieve the Emporia water shortage. The new plant provided 300,000 gallons of water daily, and all freight trains received water at Neosho Rapids instead of Emporia. Certain other water-consuming services such as boiler washing were transferred from Emporia to other cities. The Santa Fe Stockyards at Emporia were closed temporarily during the summer, but after the Neosho Rapids plant was in operation the railroad yielded to cattlemen's pleas and reopened the stockyards.<sup>78</sup> The diversion of services to other points was not helpful in all respects for the city because employment was reduced even though water consumption was lowered.

William Allen White termed the 1934 drought the worst in more than 50 years, and probably the most serious since the drought of 1860. The heat was scorching as

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<sup>77</sup>Emporia Gazette, Sept. 11, 1934, p. 8.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., Aug. 23, 1934, p. 1.

there were 65 days of over-100 degree temperatures, 40 days when the temperature exceeded 106, and 10 days of plus-110 degrees.<sup>79</sup>

Farmers were hampered by an invasion of chinch bugs and grasshoppers in the summer of 1934. The problem, combined with the poor weather conditions, destroyed most of the corn crop.<sup>80</sup> The only places where corn continued to grow were along a few river banks. Most farmers chopped the remnants of their corn crop for silage, and stored the feed in temporary silos just as they had done in previous drought years.<sup>81</sup>

Corn acreage restrictions for farmers participating in the corn-hog program were cancelled in June due to the drought. The only restriction for use of the previously idle land was that sorghum and corn crops grown on it had to be chopped for silage. At the same time, hog production was curtailed 21 per cent further than under the original agreement.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>William Allen White, "Sundown," Emporia Gazette, Sept. 14, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>80</sup>Emporia Gazette, June 12, 1934, pp. 3, 8.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., July 31, 1934, p. 7; Aug. 7, 1934, p. 6.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., June 16, 1934, p. 2; July 16, 1934, p. 2.



Cattlemen were aided tremendously by federal government livestock purchases. It is likely that the cattle would have died from lack of water and feed if the purchases had not been made. The federal government bought the animals regardless of their condition. A rate of \$6 per head was paid for cattle over two years old, \$5 per head for one to two year-olds, and \$3 for each animal under one year of age. Cattle acceptable for meat purposes brought an additional \$1 to \$14 depending on their age and physical condition.

Most of the cattle purchased were shipped out of the county, but each week seven of the best animals were butchered locally, and the meat was distributed to the approximately 505 families then on relief. By September 19, a total of 936 cattle had been purchased in Lyon County. Many of the government cattle were fed and watered at the Santa Fe Stockyards while enroute to market.<sup>83</sup>

While farmers were struggling with the drought in the summer of 1934, many unemployed found work on various relief projects. Employment and payrolls declined during

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<sup>83</sup>Frank Dobbs, tape-recorded interview; William Allen White, "The Staggering Herd," Emporia Gazette, Aug. 3, 1934, p. 4; Emporia Gazette, Sept. 19, 1934, p. 6; Sept. 20, 1934, p. 6.

the spring due to the demise of the CWA, but other projects helped absorb the slack. A monkey island and house were built at Peter Pan Park. The job began as a CWA measure, but was transferred to local administration as a work relief project. The PWA street-widening project on Sixth Avenue, begun March 26, 1934, was completed June 5, 1934. A four-block strip from Constitution to Rural Streets was increased from forty to fifty-five feet in width. Another PWA project, the water line laying job on Ninth Avenue, begun May 9, 1934, continued into the summer with an average of eighty employees. The PWA furnished about \$8,000 and the city approximately \$25,000 for the work.

The low bid for a new PWA project, a restroom and shower house at Dryer Park on the site of the city waterworks, was accepted June 14. The PWA furnished 30 per cent of the funds and the city the remainder for the structure that was completed July 20, 1934.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the relief projects, unemployment increased so much during the summer of 1934 that many who ordinarily would have been eligible for work relief had

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<sup>84</sup>William Allen White, "Reality," Emporia Gazette, June 2, 1934, p. 4; Emporia Gazette, May 30, 1934, p. 2; June 5, 1934, p. 1; June 22, 1934, p. 12; July 20, 1934, p. 1.

to be cared for by direct relief since sufficient work funds were not available to support the increased load. The main reason for the increase was the loss of farm jobs from unfavorable weather conditions.<sup>85</sup>

One of the favorable aspects of 1934 was the number of students enrolled at the two colleges. It might be assumed that the opposite would be true in view of the Depression and harsh weather. William Allen White contended that with the scarcity of work both on and off the farm, many children emerging from high school could find no jobs. Their parents often could not finance an education for them, but federal jobs were available on campus for a portion of the student body, and local businessmen provided some jobs for them also. Those students whose parents had regular jobs could still attend college. White urged Emporians to help the students when possible as long as it was not at the expense of permanent citizens since the students were a valuable asset to the town.<sup>86</sup> That was a change in emphasis from a view expressed several years earlier when he contended that it would be wise to withhold employment from students.

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<sup>85</sup>Public Welfare Service in Kansas, 1934, p. 429; Emporia Gazette, Aug. 29, 1934, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup>William Allen White, "Emporia's Students," Emporia Gazette, Aug. 30, 1934, p. 4; Emporia Gazette, Dec. 4, 1934, p. 7.

One resident disagreed with White's later view in a letter published in The Emporia Gazette. The writer seemed to overlook the fact that the editorial argued in favor of hiring permanent residents first, but she did raise a new point that some local employers were withholding jobs from all but students. She wrote:

Having read your article "Emporia's Students," which was interesting and logical from a point of view, we venture to look at the situation from another side.

What of Emporia's fathers? Many of them have been for four long years walking the streets in search of work, and who have been turned away from almost every available remunerative source of employment by the terse information "none but student help employed."

....  
Let the student of the depression finance himself before leaving home for college, even though it may be necessary to postpone school for another year or two.

White's advice in the latest editorial was valid. Every effort to help the students was commendable since the colleges provided an economic boost to the city.<sup>87</sup>

Several letters from Emporians appeared in the local newspaper during September of 1934 telling of the distress of the city's unemployed. Comments included: "Some of the unemployed are not getting enough to eat;

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<sup>87</sup>Elizabeth M. Maber, "Students and Jobs," Emporia Gazette, Sept. 7, 1934, p. 5.

on a weekly budget of \$2.40 (one day each week on work relief projects) I am taking care of myself and 16-year-old son...." One writer told of graft in the handling of relief funds in an Illinois county, and argued that an investigation of Lyon County relief procedures should be made.<sup>88</sup>

The plea for more help for the unemployed was taken up by a local association of unemployed persons, the Allied Workers, who previously had been concerned mainly with social events. A group of 400 members held a meeting November 19, 1934, to plan a protest march; draft a resolution to be sent to city, county, and state relief officials; and to send a telegram to President Roosevelt. They asked for increased relief funds to raise the county wage from 30 cents to 40 cents per hour for unskilled labor to equal the wage paid on most federal projects. They also asked for disability compensation, additional work relief projects, a homestead rehabilitation program, and faster construction of farm ponds as unemployment jobs. The telegram sent to the President stated:

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<sup>88</sup> Frank Payton, "From Frank Payton," Emporia Gazette, Sept. 26, 1934, p. 3; Myron Vanhuss, "Cites His Own Case," Emporia Gazette, Sept. 27, 1934, p. 11; John Schureman, "Wants Relief Probe," Emporia Gazette, Sept. 28, 1934, p. 5.

Four hundred unemployed in mass meeting petition for:

1. Extensive program of public works for temporary relief.
2. Adequate unemployment insurance.
3. Thirty hour work week bill without reduction in pay.
4. Federal factories to enable the unemployed to produce for themselves what they cannot now buy.

Walter Moore, President Allied Workers, Emporia, Kansas.<sup>89</sup>

William Allen White praised the efforts of the Allied Workers. He did not agree with all of their proposals, but he approved of their method of operation.<sup>90</sup>

The protest march numbering 225 persons was held November 24, 1934, and a mass meeting was conducted afterwards at the Lowther Junior High School. The parade was led by a marching band, and included in the procession were Mayor Frank Lostutter, Finance Commissioner Carl Brogan, and County Commissioners Fred Fowler and William Schultz. The unemployed displayed banners reading "Why Has Lyon County Done Nothing" and "Emporia Needs a City Auditorium, a City Hall, Storm Sewer Extension." Children passed out handbills which stated:

Lyon county is one of the four counties in this district (16 to 22 counties to a district) which has the lowest direct and work relief budgets.

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<sup>89</sup>Frank Lostutter, tape-recorded interview; Emporia Gazette, Nov. 20, 1934, pp. 1-2.

<sup>90</sup>William Allen White, "Allied Workers' Program," Emporia Gazette, Nov. 20, 1934, p. 4.

The budgets of the state are divided into four brackets. Lyon county is in the lowest bracket. What are we going to do about it?  
Sponsored by Allied Workers.<sup>91</sup>

The Allied Workers were pointing to a definite worsening of the Depression in Emporia during 1934. Much of the distress was attributable to the effects of the drought and excessive heat of the summer. The number of county relief cases rose almost continuously in 1934 from 299 in January to 938 in December.<sup>92</sup>

On the other hand, the amount of money spent for various types of relief projects increased dramatically from \$98,535.16 in 1933 to \$207,483.90 in 1934.<sup>93</sup> Thus the workers' charges that little was being done for the unemployed were false.

The Civilian Conservation Corps employed ninety-eight men from Lyon County in 1934, an increase over the sixty-four employed in 1933.<sup>94</sup> ] The CWA spent \$99,800.06

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<sup>91</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 26, 1934, pp. 1, 8.

<sup>92</sup>Public Welfare Service in Kansas, 1934, p. 430.

<sup>93</sup>Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, Social Welfare Service in Kansas (Topeka: The Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, 1937), p. 60.

<sup>94</sup>Public Welfare Service in Kansas, A Ten Year Report, 1924-1933, pp. 32, 758.

in the county in 1934, up from \$50,456.58 in 1933.<sup>95</sup> Lyon County farmers received \$157,157.40 under the corn-hog program in 1934, and a total of \$25,927.00 was paid by the federal government for cattle purchases through April 30, 1935.<sup>96</sup>

The prosperity of the Santa Fe Railway increased somewhat in 1934. Freight, mail, and express revenues increased on the system in 1934, while passenger revenues remained about the same. Despite the drought, both freight and passenger business improved at Emporia in 1934 compared to 1933. Incoming freight carloads increased by 313, and outgoing carloads by 262. Passenger ticket sales amounted to \$67,327.38, an increase of \$11,635.73 over 1933.<sup>97</sup>

Relief projects and business improvements continued during the final months of 1934. A total of 212 Emporia men were hired for a special track improvement project on the Santa Fe between Neosho Rapids and Olathe in October of 1934, and an additional 75 workers were added to the job in November.<sup>98</sup> Several PWA road surfacing jobs were

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<sup>95</sup>Public Welfare Service in Kansas, 1934, p. 434.

<sup>96</sup>Social Welfare Service in Kansas, p. 792.

<sup>97</sup>Waters, p. 426; Emporia Gazette, Dec. 19, 1934, p. 1; Apr. 5, 1935, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup>Emporia Gazette, Oct. 2, 1934, p. 1; Nov. 14, 1934, p. 1.



completed in October. A cooperative coal mine was leased in October to allow unemployed workers to mine their own coal. One-third of the coal was given to the mine association to defray expenses, and the remainder went to the miners. Finally, a beef boning plant was established at Emporia in October by the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, the state agency that administered federal relief. The operation employed forty men to bone and pack beef for shipment to canneries.<sup>99</sup>

The increase in relief cases during 1934 and the protests of the Allied Workers primarily were the result of the decreased farm and farm-related employment. The slight increase in railroad business, the prosperity of the colleges, and the continuation of relief projects were reflected in a maintenance of a degree of prosperity for the workers. But local agriculture in 1934 was a disaster, and related employment declined correspondingly. The corn-hog and cattle payments helped somewhat, but they could not erase the effects of a serious drought. The problem was compounded by the fact that other areas of the central plains were hit just as hard by the drought, and feed was not available for shipment to Emporia.

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., Oct. 26, 1934, p. 2; Oct. 5, 1934, p. 12; Oct. 19, 1934, p. 1.

Some cattlemen were forced from their profession by the drought of 1934. Many of those remaining purchased cattle and grazed them on wheat pasture in the winter of 1934-35. The wheat pastures enjoyed a good moisture supply due to the ample precipitation of the autumn, but no straw stacks were available to feed the cattle during snowy periods due to the increased use of combines. Fortunately the winter was not severe, and the animals fared well on the wheat.<sup>100</sup>

The adequate precipitation of the autumn of 1934 was great enough that all water restrictions were ended November 19, 1934. The Santa Fe Railway switched its engine watering from Neosho Rapids back to Emporia.<sup>101</sup>

The summer of 1934 was notable for weather extremes. The city suffered the distinction of having the most days with above 100 degree readings in the nation, sixty-two. The all-time city heat record was set July 15 with a temperature of 116½, and August was the driest month of the year with only .14 inch of rain.<sup>102</sup>

The weather of 1935 was unfavorable again, and the main problems at various times were dust storms,

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<sup>100</sup> Frank Dobbs, tape-recorded interview; Emporia Gazette, Nov. 26, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> Emporia Gazette, Nov. 19, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., July 16, 1934, p. 1; Jan. 1, 1935, pp. 1-2.

floods, and a drought.<sup>103</sup> The dust storms arrived first. Blowing dust had appeared in the spring of 1934 on several occasions, but the storms of a year later were more severe.<sup>104</sup> Stories about dust storms during the "dirty thirties" are famous, and many applied to the Emporia area. Huge dust clouds descended upon the city, cutting visibility and choking residents. Window edges were covered in an effort to block the intruding particles, a halo of dust often was observed around room lights, and some joked grimly that the only clean place in the house was the inside of the refrigerator.<sup>105</sup>

The first major dust storm of 1935 struck Emporia March 20. At dawn the sky was almost clear, but by late morning the dust began to blow. At first the dust cloud appeared high in the sky, blocking out the sun or making it appear blue. Soon after eleven o'clock the storm descended to the ground, changing the atmosphere from a light beige color to copper, next to a reddish chocolate, and finally to light grey. All westbound Santa Fe trains

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<sup>103</sup>Waters, p. 426; Emporia Gazette, Aug. 1, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 11, 1934, p. 1; Mar. 20, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup>C. F. Gladfelter, tape-recorded interview.

were halted in Emporia, and the Harvey House restaurant was filled with travelers waiting to resume their journey.

Waitresses experienced a particular distress since plates and tables were continually in need of cleaning, and some customers complained that their soup was muddy.

Visibility in the city was reduced to one block, necessitating the use of street lights and automobile headlights. A local laboratory conducted an interesting experiment by collecting dust particles on greased glass plates and examining the specimens every thirty minutes with a microscope. At first the particles were large and dark, indicating that they came from western Kansas. Later they were small and reddish, showing that they originated in the Oklahoma redlands.<sup>106</sup>

Dust storms reappeared in April, but by early June the main weather problems were floods. Both the Neosho and Cottonwood Rivers spilled over farmlands in the Emporia area although little of the city was affected. The floods came after several weeks of unusually rainy weather which ironically followed the dust storms. Many bottom land farms were stripped of grain crops by the overflowing water.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Emporia Gazette, Mar. 20, 1935, pp. 1-2.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., Apr. 10, 1935, p. 1; June 3, 1935, p. 1; June 27, 1935, p. 4; William Allen White, "Our Rainy Spell," Emporia Gazette, June 1, 1935, p. 4.

During the first half of 1935 there were a few encouraging business signs in Emporia. Santa Fe Railway employees received a 5 per cent wage hike April 1, which resulted in a \$7,000 increase per month in the local payroll. The increase returned wages to the 1932 level before cuts were made.<sup>108</sup>

Perhaps the most promising sign was the continued prosperity of the two colleges. The College of Emporia enrollment for the spring semester was 309, an increase of 32 students over the fall term. Indebtedness of the college dropped from \$125,020.12 in August 1934 to \$61,328.14 in February 1935. Kansas State Teachers College recorded a 30 per cent increase over the preceding year in its summer school. The 1935 spring enrollment was 1,489.<sup>109</sup>

The College Students' Emergency Program, a federal project, employed about 160 students to work at the Teachers College in the 1934-35 school year. The workers were paid 30 cents per hour, and could earn up to \$20 each month. Some of the main improvements made by the

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<sup>108</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 1, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., Feb. 11, 1935, p. 7; Feb. 15, 1935, p. 1; June 11, 1935, p. 1.

students were the repaving of a drive along the west side of the campus, the excavation of the west end of the administration building basement, the laying of a steam line between the women's residence hall and the power plant, and the planting of trees and shrubs. A number of women students were hired to repair books, compile bibliographies, and conduct research.<sup>110</sup>

The cattle business also was becoming healthier in 1935. Pasture leasing began earlier in the year, and leasing rates were running to \$7 per head compared to the \$5 price of 1934. Cattle prices rose to about \$11 per hundred-weight compared to \$4 in 1934.<sup>111</sup>

Work relief projects continued during 1935 and so did the militancy of the relief workers. On June 7 nearly all relief workers struck, primarily to protest a reduction in hours of employment and the maintenance of a 30 cent per hour wage scale. The working hours had been reduced by state relief officials due to a temporary shortage of federal funds, and the wage rate had not been raised because the local relief committee had been unable to convince the state wage rate committee that 40 cents

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., May 13, 1935, p. 10.

<sup>111</sup>William Allen White, "Hoo-Ray," Emporia Gazette, Feb. 5, 1935, p. 4.

per hour was the standard wage in Lyon County. The Allied Workers did not instigate the strike although many of the members participated.

On June 8 as the strike continued the workers issued additional demands. They included: free groceries and medical care for the relief workers and their families during the strike; a written statement from the poor commissioner certifying the amount of money received and the manner in which it was spent during May and June of 1935; and a resolution by county officials in favor of the Workers Unemployment and Social Insurance and Old Age Pensions bill, then pending before the Congress. County officials rejected all demands except the request for a report on May and June expenditures.

State relief officials ordered on June 8 that all work relief projects still operating be halted. A telegram from John G. Stutz, Kansas relief administrator, read in part:

Citizens of Lyon county have indicated that there are serious differences of opinion on the conduct of the county relief program. There also is interference with the conduct of county relief projects. We are required by federal regulations to withhold federal relief funds from Lyon county for all work relief, non-manual and educational projects while these conditions exist.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Emporia Gazette, June 7, 1935, pp. 1-2; June 8, 1935, pp. 1-2; June 10, 1935, pp. 2, 8.

Relief projects were not resumed until June 13 when the county commissioners notified the state relief administrators that the differences of opinion had been settled. It appears that the commissioners based their statement upon the belief that many relief recipients did not support the strike and would be glad to return to work under prior conditions. No formal agreement between the commissioners and strikers was made.

Upon resumption of the relief projects many workers returned to the jobs, although about eighty-five did not. The following day, June 14, the remaining strikers voted to return to work in view of the fact that without a unified strike movement by the work relief employees, the goals could not be realized.

The strikers' demands were not met, except the agreement by local officials to disclose the relief expenditure distribution during May and June. The main concession was that the June wage budget was provided in full to the workers even though about one week's work was not performed.<sup>113</sup>

The strike indicated a growing reluctance among those on work relief to accept any wage standard offered. \*

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., June 13, 1935, pp. 1, 12; June 14, 1935, pp. 1, 12; June 15, 1935, p. 1.



A similar feeling was evident among some young unemployed men as only about half of the 50 potential CCC workers offered employment in June responded. Of that number, 14 were qualified and left the city for CCC service on June 17. The Lyon County quota was 50 white men, and it excluded several Negroes who applied for work. The shortage of CCC workers was prevalent all over Kansas as only 3,000 men applied to fill the 4,000-man quota.<sup>114</sup> ]

A new federal work relief agency, the Works Progress Administration, was created May 6, 1935. The WPA was designed to place as many unemployed to work as quickly as possible, and was authorized after Congress approved a \$4 billion relief appropriation. With the advent of the WPA, federal relief grants provided for individual counties through the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee were cut drastically in August in preparation for the transfer of the federal relief program from state grants to a complete dependence on the PWA, WPA, and related federal agencies.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., June 17, 1935, p. 10; June 20, 1935, p. 7.

<sup>115</sup> Leuchtenburg, pp. 124-25; Basil Rauch, The History of the New Deal, 1933-1938 (New York: Creative Age Press, 1944), p. 163; Emporia Gazette, Aug. 6, 1935, p. 1.

The first Lyon County WPA projects were a rock crushing job for road building, the construction of four miles of roadway, the building of a tunnel between Lowther Junior High School and Emporia Senior High School, and the resurfacing of the junior high school playground. The first WPA work was performed November 1, 1935, and the first paychecks, totaling \$469.06, arrived December 10 of the same year.<sup>116</sup>

One of the largest federal projects of the Depression, the Lake Kahola construction northwest of Emporia, was organized during 1935. It ultimately involved both WPA and PWA funds. The preliminary plans for the lake, originally designed as a reserve water supply for the city, were approved June 29 by R. V. Smrha, assistant engineer of the State Board of Agriculture. William Allen White strongly supported the project in an editorial August 15. He wrote:

This is a good project. Without it, or some such reservoir, Emporia will always be threatened with a summer water shortage. When the water improvements were made, 20 years ago, Emporia used less water than now. The town has not grown in population, but it has grown in the summer use of water. We have installed more plumbing. We

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<sup>116</sup>Emporia Gazette, Sept. 24, 1935, p. 1; Nov. 1, 1935, p. 1; Dec. 11, 1935, p. 7.

have planted more flower gardens. We have kept more lawns in trim than were ever dreamed of a quarter of a century ago. Either this town must fade and shrivel in the summer or we must get more water. It can be dammed in Kahola creek. This is a wise project.<sup>117</sup>

On September 5, a PWA grant of \$106,875 was approved for the Kahola project by the National Emergency Council, an administrative agency of President Roosevelt. Next, a \$150,000 bond issue was passed by Emporia voters by a vote of 1,758 to 144 on September 13. Interestingly, more than 4,500 of the approximately 6,500 registered voters failed to cast ballots.<sup>118</sup>

Various steps remained before the project received final approval. The first land purchase for the lake was made October 22. The reservoir was approved the next day by the State Board of Health, and the reservoir bonds were purchased in mid-November by the Harris Trust and Savings Bank of Chicago. A contract of \$141,165.33 for the first segment of the construction was let December 2 to M. E. Gillioz of Monett, Missouri. The final approval of the

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., June 29, 1935, p. 1; William Allen White, "Kahola," Emporia Gazette, Aug. 15, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>118</sup> Emporia Gazette, Sept. 5, 1935, p. 1; Sept. 13, 1935, p. 1; William Allen White, "Where Were They?" Emporia Gazette, Sept. 13, 1935, p. 1.

project from PWA officials was received by Mayor Lostutter December 30, 1935, and work at the construction site started January 17, 1936.<sup>119</sup>

The need for a reserve water supply was underscored by the mid-summer drought of 1935. The weather that year certainly was unusual as the spring dust storms were followed by floods and then drought. July 1935 was the driest July on record with only .82 of an inch of rain. The maximum temperatures for the month were cooler than the previous year, however, with a high reading of 105 in 1935, compared to 116½ in 1934.<sup>120</sup>

The drought was broken in the autumn, but the unusual weather hindered agricultural production during the year. Excessive rains ruined much of the wheat crop, and the drought stunted corn production. The dry weather was not accompanied by extreme heat, and it did not last long enough to limit corn production to 1934 levels of 4.1 bushels per acre. Decreased wheat shipments from Emporia on the Santa Fe Railway in 1935 indicated the

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<sup>119</sup>Emporia Gazette, Oct. 22, 1935, p. 1; Oct. 24, 1935, p. 1; Nov. 25, 1935, p. 1; Dec. 3, 1935, p. 1; Dec. 30, 1935, p. 1; Jan. 17, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., Aug. 1, 1935, p. 1.

decline of wheat production as compared to the previous year. In the first ten months of 1934, fifty-nine carloads of wheat were shipped from Emporia whereas only forty-one carloads originated in the city in 1935. On the other hand, 1935 forage production was heavy, and the oats and sorghum crops were better than those of 1934.<sup>121</sup>

Various relief programs continued in the Emporia area during 1935. A new agency, the National Youth Administration, under the direction of the WPA, employed many Emporia college students. Most of the students were used as secretaries and clerical assistants. William Allen White had written to President Roosevelt February 22, 1934, about the financial distress of the small midwestern colleges, and his letter may have influenced the President to provide the college aid. A total of \$8,658 was spent for college employment by the NYA in Lyon County during 1935.<sup>122</sup>

The PWA spent \$119,559.00 in the city in 1935, and the WPA provided \$21,733.00 for the county during the same

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<sup>121</sup>William Allen White, "The Weather-And Us," Emporia Gazette, Nov. 1, 1935, p. 4; Emporia Gazette, Oct. 9, 1935, pp. 1, 7.

<sup>122</sup>Leuchtenburg, p. 129; C. F. Gladfelter, tape-recorded interview; Walter Johnson, ed., Selected Letters of William Allen White, 1899-1943 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), pp. 341-43; Social Welfare Service in Kansas, p. 319.

period. In December of the year there were 455 WPA employees working on various jobs in Lyon County. Total relief expenditures, in addition to exclusively federal programs such as the PWA and WPA, increased further in 1935 to \$271,418.56. Expenditures in 1934 were \$207,483.90 and in 1933 they amounted to \$98,535.16.<sup>123</sup>

[The CCC lake project northeast of Emporia was completed November 13, 1935. While it is now usually known as Reading Lake, it originally was called Lake Wilhite in honor of the late O. M. Wilhite, long-time civic booster. It had a surface area capacity of 135 acres. During 1935 there were seventy-three Lyon County men employed by the CCC compared to ninety-eight in 1934 and sixty-four in 1933.<sup>124</sup>]

Of the three main elements of the city's economy, agriculture, transportation, and education, the last was the healthiest in 1935. Agricultural production was strong for some crops, poor for others, as the weather

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<sup>123</sup>Social Welfare Service in Kansas, pp. 60, 317, 319.

<sup>124</sup>Emporia Gazette, Nov. 14, 1935, p. 1; Public Welfare Service in Kansas, A Ten Year Report, 1924-1933, p. 32; Public Welfare Service in Kansas, 1934, p. 758; Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, Public Welfare Service in Kansas, 1935 (Topeka: The Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, 1936), p. 291.

conditions curtailed production somewhat. The Santa Fe Railway enjoyed slight increases in freight, passenger, mail, and express revenues during the year. Freight car-loadings showed an increase over 1934 levels in some months and a decrease in others so that no definite trend was established.<sup>125</sup> Some local railroad employees received wage increases in 1935 as mentioned previously.

One of the most encouraging economic factors of 1935 was the increase in building activity over 1934. Construction amounted to \$96,810 in 1935 as compared to \$50,315 in 1934. The building pace was substantially below 1929 levels, however, when a total of \$1,033,179 was spent for construction.<sup>126</sup>

The last full year of the first Roosevelt Administration, 1936, began with a fundamental change in relief procedures. Federal funds for direct relief, previously given to the states which in turn distributed it among individual counties, were discontinued. Direct

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<sup>125</sup>Waters, p. 426; The Santa Fe Magazine, March, 1935, p. 57; April, 1935, p. 52; May, 1935, p. 53; June, 1935, p. 60; July, 1935, p. 49; August, 1935, p. 52; September, 1935, p. 46; October, 1935, p. 50; November, 1935, p. 50; December, 1935, p. 53; January, 1936, p. 51; February, 1936, p. 52.

<sup>126</sup>Emporia Gazette, Jan. 1, 1936, p. 1.

relief was financed thereafter by the states and counties, but federal funds continued for the various work relief programs such as the WPA and PWA. Federal surplus commodity distribution continued also.<sup>127</sup>

The Lake Kahola project northwest of Emporia began January 17, 1936. Local men were used on the job except in cases when certain skilled workers were not available. By March 25 tree clearance had been completed, and excavation was in progress for the dam. In addition a concrete conduit to divert Kahola Creek during the construction and to serve as a permanent outlet from the lake to the creek and the Neosho River had been finished. Sixty-two men were employed on the project at that time. A check for \$59,375 from the Federal Treasury, representing about one-fourth of the total cost of the project but more than half of the federal contribution, was received by Mayor Lostutter on May 7.<sup>128</sup>

M. E. Gillioz, contractor for the first part of the project which involved the basic dam construction and earth-moving work, issued the low bid for the second

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., Jan. 13, 1936, p. 1; Jan. 17, 1936, p. 1; Feb. 26, 1936, p. 1; Mar. 25, 1936, p. 3; May 7, 1936, p. 1.



phase of the work as well. The second part of the work involved the construction of a spillway, two bridges, and guard rails and approaches to the road along the top of the dam. The contract for \$35,919.14 was awarded August 7. <sup>129</sup>

With about 225 men employed on the project in the summer, the dam construction was completed October 26, and the entire project was finished December 16, 1936. The value of the lake as a reserve water supply was lauded by an editorial in The Hutchinson News, as it encouraged other Kansas towns to construct similar facilities to lessen the effects of the periodic droughts.<sup>130</sup>

Next to the Kahola project, the largest relief job of 1936 was the construction of a new dam for Lake Wooster and an athletic stadium at Kansas State Teachers College. The WPA project was approved January 31. Approximately \$75,000 was allocated for the work, and the college provided \$15,000 of that total. Employment levels were authorized to range between 75 to 100 men. A new dam was needed because the existing one was made

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<sup>129</sup>Ibid., June 26, 1936, p. 1; Aug. 7, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., Aug. 21, 1936, p. 10; Oct. 26, 1936, p. 1; Dec. 16, 1936, p. 1; Jan. 8, 1937, p. 4.

from debris from the old administration building demolished in 1918, and it was not water-tight.<sup>131</sup>

Another large WPA project was the construction of a sewer system in the southeast part of the city. An average of fifty-two men was employed daily on the job that lasted from December 23, 1935, to July 1, 1936. The total cost of the project was \$19,389.04 of which the city paid \$2,253.86 and the federal government the remainder.<sup>132</sup>

The sanitary toilet project mentioned earlier was transferred from county supervised work relief to a WPA program. Twenty-three men were employed on the project jointly conducted by the WPA, United States Public Health Service, Kansas State Board of Health, and Kansas State College Extension Service.<sup>133</sup>

Approval of a WPA pond building project was announced July 21, 1936. It will be recalled that an acceleration of this type of work was one of the requests of the Allied Workers. About 100 men were assigned to build the ponds for individual farmers. They were

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<sup>131</sup>C. F. Gladfelter, tape-recorded interview; Emporia Gazette, Jan. 31, 1936, p. 1; Feb. 3, 1936, p. 1; Mar. 7, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>132</sup>Emporia Gazette, July 21, 1936, p. 10.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., Feb. 4, 1936, p. 6.

constructed on the condition that they would be made available for public use whenever the county commissioners declared a drought. The farmers supplied 15 per cent of the materials, equipment, and services, and the WPA provided the remainder.<sup>134</sup>

Two large private construction projects, a booster station of the Panhandle Eastern Pipeline Company between Emporia and Olpe and an overpass across the Santa Fe tracks on East Sixth Avenue in Emporia, employed many local men during the summer and fall of 1936.<sup>135</sup>

Abnormal weather plagued Emporians once again in 1936 as the city experienced its worst drought in history. Only 18.1 inches of precipitation were received. Farmers were the hardest hit, but livestock feed, unavailable in 1934, was shipped to the Emporia area in 1936 to ease the situation somewhat.<sup>136</sup>

The drought first appeared in the spring, but was broken temporarily by a sizeable rain in early May. It lasted long enough to curtail crop growth, especially

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid., July 21, 1936, p. 10.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., June 2, 1936, p. 1; Aug. 10, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., Jan. 1, 1937, p. 1; Frank Dobbs, tape-recorded interview.

wheat, oats, and alfalfa.<sup>137</sup> The drought returned in June, however, with only .35 of an inch of rain recorded. The first water restrictions were implemented July 20 as the water shortage continued. Initial restrictions were mild with only automobile, porch, sidewalk, and driveway washing prohibited. As the drought continued the Neosho River water level fell, placing the city's water supply in jeopardy. Since Lake Kahola was still under construction, city workmen began laying a pipe on top of the ground from the Cottonwood River to the city water filtration plant. Excessive heat, such as the summer maximum of 116 degrees on August 14, contributed to rapid evaporation of local rivers, and further restrictions limiting lawn and garden watering to the hours between 5 A.M. and 8 A.M. were imposed August 18. Water department employees and police patrolled the city to enforce the rules, and water usage temporarily decreased. On September 1 water pumping from the Cottonwood River began, although its benefits were nullified partly by an increased water consumption. The river was at a lower level than during the 1934 drought.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>Emporia Gazette, May 2, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., July 1, 1936, p. 1; July 20, 1936, p. 1; Aug. 11, 1936, p. 1; Aug. 15, 1936, p. 1; Aug. 18, 1936, p. 1; Aug. 24, 1936, p. 1; Sept. 1, 1936, p. 1.

With the water supply continually declining on both the Neosho and Cottonwood Rivers, additional restrictions were imposed by Mayor Lostutter on September 9 prohibiting all water consumption except for personal and sanitary uses. The Santa Fe Railway had restricted its water consumption in Emporia by nearly 50 per cent in August. Westbound trains received water at Neosho Rapids and Osage City, and eastbound trains at Cassoday and Strong City.<sup>139</sup>

Heavy rains upstream on the Neosho River and at Emporia in mid-September ended the water crisis. Pumping on the Cottonwood River had ceased by September 15, and all emergency water restrictions were ended September 16. The Neosho River was flowing at full capacity by September 24.<sup>140</sup>

Most of the 1936 corn crop was destroyed by the drought and a grasshopper invasion, but the wheat crop recovered sufficiently to produce one of the best yields in several years. Wheat prices rose in 1936 to boost farm

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid., Sept. 9, 1936, p. 1; Aug. 29, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., Sept. 14, 1936, p. 1; Sept. 15, 1936, p. 1; Sept. 24, 1936, p. 1.

income, and Lyon County farmers received \$176,023.05 in soil conservation and production payments during the year.<sup>141</sup>

The 1936 grasshopper invasion was checked partially by the efforts of local businessmen, NYA workers, and the federal government. Businessmen purchased large quantities of bran with contributions collected in the city, and NYA workers mixed it with free grasshopper poison from the federal government. The poisonous mixture then was distributed at no charge to farmers and gardeners. The poison was successful in eradicating large numbers of the insects, but not before they had damaged crops. Grasshoppers were so thick at times that the sky was temporarily blackened, and entire fields were stripped within a twenty-four hour period.<sup>142</sup>

The College of Emporia debt at the beginning of 1936 was \$115,000.00, an increase over the February 1935 total of \$61,328.14, but less than the peak of \$335,500.00

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid., Sept. 1, 1936, p. 6; Dec. 31, 1936, p. 5; William Allen White, "Ring Out the Old!" Emporia Gazette, Dec. 31, 1936, p. 4.

<sup>142</sup>Albert Hotzel, long-time Emporia resident, personal interview, Emporia, Kansas, July 10, 1969; Emporia Gazette, July 16, 1936, p. 1; July 21, 1936, p. 1; July 3, 1936, p. 1.

in 1932. The increase was incurred despite budget reductions from \$170,000.00 to \$87,000.00 per year.<sup>143</sup>

Kansas State Teachers College enjoyed an enrollment increase during the spring semester of 1936 compared to the previous year. The 1936 total was 1,485 students.<sup>144</sup>

The Santa Fe Railway made definite business gains during 1936. Freight carloadings were higher in every month compared to 1935 with the exception of April. Freight revenue increased decidedly, and passenger, mail, and express revenues rose slightly.<sup>145</sup>

The Santa Fe inaugurated two Chicago to California passenger trains, the Scout and the deluxe Super Chief, and accelerated the schedules of many of its other passenger trains. The new trains passed through Emporia as did all transcontinental Santa Fe trains. The Super Chief possessed the fastest passenger schedule of the

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<sup>143</sup>Emporia Gazette, Jan. 16, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., Feb. 4, 1936, p. 7.

<sup>145</sup>The Santa Fe Magazine, March, 1936, p. 54; April, 1936, p. 46; May, 1936, p. 54; June, 1936, p. 54; July, 1936, p. 51; August, 1936, p. 60; September, 1936, p. 54; October, 1936, p. 52; November, 1936, p. 46; December, 1936, p. 45; January, 1937, p. 50; February, 1937, p. 52; Waters, p. 426.

time for the weekly Chicago to Los Angeles round trip, thirty-nine hours and forty-five minutes each way.<sup>146</sup>

Locally administered relief declined drastically in 1936 when expenditures dropped to \$54,466.98 compared to \$271,418.56 in 1935.<sup>147</sup> The switch in federal emphasis from state grants to national programs like the WPA was responsible for the change. [The number of Lyon County CCC workers dropped to twenty-eight in 1936, which was down from the seventy-three employed in 1935.<sup>148</sup>]

The change from the first to the second Roosevelt Administration on January 20, 1937, provides another convenient transition point for a study of the Great Depression in Emporia. Federal assistance had increased greatly since the end of the Hoover Administration, but economic recovery was far from complete. Economic trends were uneven in Emporia from March 1933 to January 1937, and were influenced by many factors not the least of which were the burning droughts and caustic dust storms. But the city had survived. Its economic struggle continued through the remainder of the decade.

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<sup>146</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 15, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>147</sup>Social Welfare Service in Kansas, p. 60.

<sup>148</sup>Public Welfare Service in Kansas, A Ten Year Report, 1924-1933, p. 29.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE END OF THE DEPRESSION DECADE, 1937-1939

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt began his second administration in 1937 with a reduction in federal expenditures. He believed that a definite recovery had begun, and he wished to silence critics who charged that he was spending public funds too freely. The result was that a recession set in during 1937 that nullified some of the earlier gains.<sup>1</sup>

The downward economic trend had little effect on Emporia in 1937. The Santa Fe Railway was strengthened during the year both nationally and locally. By January 1937 all local employees removed from service during the Depression had been called back to work.<sup>2</sup> The annual railroad picnic in Emporia had a reduced attendance of 2,000 persons since more employees were working than in

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<sup>1</sup>Rexford G. Tugwell, FDR: Architect of an Era (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967), pp. 170-71.

<sup>2</sup>L. D. Mallary, "Among Ourselves," The Santa Fe Magazine, January, 1937, p. 61.

the past. One of the reasons for the work increase was the heavy movement of grain cars.<sup>3</sup>

Nationally the Santa Fe placed a huge equipment order consisting of \$6,135,000 worth of new rails, 3,025 freight cars totaling \$10,183,925, and 27 locomotives with a combined cost of \$3,985,000. The rail order was the largest placed by any railroad since 1929.<sup>4</sup>

Freight and passenger revenue increased on the Santa Fe in 1937 compared to 1936.<sup>5</sup> Despite the passenger increase, the Harvey House restaurant next to the depot closed January 31, 1937. Its end was due to faster trains and better dining car service rather than a decrease in business.<sup>6</sup> Freight carloadings increased from January through October with only a slight decrease from 1936 levels during November and December.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Frank C. Clough, "Big Four Brotherhoods and Friends Again Entertain at Emporia," The Santa Fe Magazine, July, 1937, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>The Santa Fe Magazine, January, 1937, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company, Forty-Fifth Annual Report, for the Year Ended December 31, 1939 (Chicago: Lincoln Printing Co., 1940), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup>L. D. Mallary, "Among Ourselves," The Santa Fe Magazine, March, 1937, p. 59.

<sup>7</sup>The Santa Fe Magazine, March, 1937, p. 52; April, 1937, p. 52; May, 1937, p. 52; June, 1937, p. 52; July, 1937, p. 52; September, 1937, p. 48; October, 1937, p. 50; November, 1937, p. 46; December, 1937, p. 44; January, 1938, p. 46; February, 1938, p. 52.

A few weather irregularities occurred in 1937, but they were not serious enough to damage crop production as much as in previous years. The Neosho River spilled over adjacent farmlands in February, but the flood came too early to impede crop growth. It was indicative of a generally heavy winter and spring rainfall which boosted farm crops. Dry conditions set in during July and retarded row crops, but did not affect the sizeable wheat harvest then in progress.<sup>8</sup> The large yields resulted in a record breaking wheat movement for the Santa Fe Railway.<sup>9</sup>

The drought was broken in August, and row crops as well as pastures made a substantial recovery.<sup>10</sup> The federal government offered corn loans of 50 cents per bushel to Lyon County farmers who had joined the Agricultural Conservation Program. But 1937 agricultural production was abundant in the area, and the slight demand for the loans was reflected in a decline in total federal farm benefit payments from \$131,227.99 in 1936 to \$60,734.79 in 1937. Farm income in the county was nearly

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<sup>8</sup>Emporia Gazette, Feb. 9, 1937, p. 1; Apr. 1, 1937, p. 1; July 8, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>L. D. Mallery, "Among Ourselves," The Santa Fe Magazine, September, 1937, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup>Emporia Gazette, Aug. 20, 1937, p. 1; Sept. 14, 1937, p. 6.

double that of 1932, with the sorghum crop one of the best in history and cattle sales bringing large profits.<sup>11</sup>

Local colleges made some gains in 1937. The College of Emporia recorded a 24-student increase in its spring enrollment compared to the preceding year. Kansas State Teachers College hired six additional instructors for its summer term which accomodated 1,524 students. The fall enrollment at the Teachers College declined by 19 students, due in part to a 52 per cent decrease in NYA funds. The Teachers College received a \$15,795 NYA allotment for the 1937-38 school year, and The College of Emporia was granted \$3,510 for the same period. The latter institution liquidated a \$200,000 bond issue in the fall of 1937 that had been incurred in 1929.<sup>12</sup>

Demands for direct relief increased in the city during the winter of 1937 due to a combination of severe weather and a slowdown of WPA employment. The local relief office issued large quantities of wood and coal

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Dec. 10, 1937, p. 1; Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Thirtieth Biennial Report (Topeka: Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1937), p. 587; Thirty-first Biennial Report (Topeka: Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1938), p. 510; William Allen White, "We Ring Out the Old," Emporia Gazette, Jan. 1, 1938, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Emporia Gazette, Feb. 2, 1937, p. 5; May 8, 1937, p. 8; July 22, 1937, p. 13; Sept. 28, 1937, p. 1; Aug. 27, 1937, p. 1; Oct. 7, 1937, p. 2.

for fuel as well as blankets and heavy winter clothing. Most of the clothing had been donated to the office. Despite the abundant output by some agricultural producers, the Emporia Resettlement office provided feed loans for approximately 500 local farmers. The Resettlement Administration had been created in 1935 to lessen rural poverty, and it had assumed the work of the rural rehabilitation and land programs previously under FERA direction. Relief needs of farm families improved vastly when the entire year is considered as only 25 farmers were receiving support by the end of 1937. Excellent fruit and vegetable harvests during the year provided large amounts of canned goods for farm families and lessened their dependence upon local relief.<sup>13</sup>

The decline of WPA employment continued throughout Kansas during 1937. On December 26, 1936, the total number of WPA workers in the state stood at 40,301; on June 26, 1937, it had dropped to 30,704; and by October 30, 1937, it was down to 25,438.<sup>14</sup> Part of the lost employment

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., Jan. 18, 1937, pp. 1, 3; Dec. 23, 1937, pp. 1, 4; William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940, Vol. XLI of The New American Nation Series, ed. by Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (47 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 42.

<sup>14</sup>Works Progress Administration, Report on Progress of The Works Program, December 1937 (Washington: Works Progress Administration, 1937), pp. 92-3.

in Emporia was rectified by improved agricultural conditions, but a major pipe-laying project of the Panhandle Eastern Pipeline Company provided jobs for a number of local men during the summer. Of the 525 men on the project, about 60 were Lyon County residents and the remainder were from other areas, although most lived in Emporia while the work was in progress.<sup>15</sup>

On August 30, 1937, the Congress authorized a special national unemployment census to be made on or before April 1, 1938. The census was taken in November of 1937. It revealed that there were 516 persons in Emporia who were totally unemployed and seeking work, 283 working on WPA, NYA, CCC, or other emergency jobs, and 312 who were partially employed but looking for more work.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of 1937, William Allen White drew up a "balance sheet" of the year's activities. On the minus side he included a decline in county and city population, as the county population had dropped more than 1,600, and the city population by 1,200 since 1930; and the

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<sup>15</sup> Emporia Gazette, July 24, 1937, pp. 1, 3; Aug. 13, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Superintendent of Documents, Monthly Catalog, United States Public Documents, September 1937 (Washington: Superintendent of Documents, 1937-1938), p. 1127; Census of Partial Employment, Unemployment, and Occupations, Preliminary Report of Total and Partial Unemployment (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938), p. 31.

continued unemployment coupled with a decline in relief projects. On the plus side he included the Panhandle Eastern project and the strength of the Santa Fe Railway; the fact that farm income was twice that of 1932; one of the greatest sorghum crops of all time; a large profit from local cattle; substantial fruit and vegetable production which was largely responsible for a decrease in the demand for food relief in the latter part of 1937; normal weather; and slight wage advances.<sup>17</sup> Thus many substantial economic gains had been made in 1937, but some Depression problems continued.

The agricultural gains of 1937 were reversed in some cases during 1938. Once again, abnormal weather conditions were partly responsible. Rains in December of 1937 moistened top soil sufficiently to prevent it from blowing, but streams were running so low by January of 1938 that many farmers had to haul water to their farms. The lack of moisture stunted winter wheat growth and prevented extensive grazing of the wheat pastures.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>William Allen White, "We Ring Out the Old," Emporia Gazette, Jan. 1, 1938, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>Emporia Gazette, Jan. 20, 1938, p. 1.

The dry weather was followed by the worst flooding in several years on the Cottonwood and Neosho Rivers and many creeks in the spring of 1938. Emporia was not flooded, but croplands in the area were damaged extensively. The worst floods occurred in May and June.<sup>19</sup>

The generally heavy rains favored upland agricultural production, but lowland crops were destroyed in many instances. Some yields in the county were less during 1938 than in 1937, although corn production increased. Wheat yields declined from 1,229,100 bushels in 1937 to 792,500 bushels in 1938, while the total value of the crop decreased from \$1,253,700 to \$412,100. Oats production dropped from 459,760 bushels in 1937 to 309,640 bushels in 1938, and its value declined from \$165,500 to \$61,900. On the other hand, the corn crop rose to 1,186,570 bushels in 1938 compared to 829,600 in 1937. The total value of the 1938 corn crop was \$557,600, up from \$506,100 in 1937. The value of livestock production increased from \$1,233,342 in 1937 to \$1,277,900 in 1938. Forage yields increased slightly in 1938, but the total value of all crop and livestock production decreased in 1938 from 1937 levels. This situation was offset

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., May 20, 1938, p. 1; June 11, 1938, p. 1.



somewhat by an almost doubling of federal soil conservation payments to Lyon County farmers in 1938.<sup>20</sup>

Nationally the Santa Fe Railway's business declined during 1938, but local railroad employment increased slightly. Freight carloadings on the system were down throughout the year, and freight and passenger revenue declined correspondingly.<sup>21</sup> Passenger transportation technology continued to improve with the introduction of more streamlined equipment.

A total of forty local switching crewmen received \$31,000 in back pay early in February due to a wage adjustment made by the National Railway Adjustment Board. The payment was made to compensate for company violations of several points of the work contract dealing with work starting times. With a spring lull in railroad business, local Santa Fe shopcraft workers had their employment periods reduced from six to three or four days per week, depending upon the amount of available work. With an

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., June 30, 1938, p. 1; Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Thirty-first Biennial Report, p. 309.

<sup>21</sup> The Santa Fe Magazine, March, 1938, p. 50; April, 1938, p. 50; May, 1938, p. 42; June, 1938, p. 40; July, 1938, p. 40; August, 1938, p. 42; September, 1938, p. 40; October, 1938, p. 40; November, 1938, p. 36; January, 1939, p. 38; February, 1939, p. 38; The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company, Forty-Fifth Annual Report, p. 11.

increase in summer business, even though it was less than the year before, the 120 local workers were reinstated to a five-day week.<sup>22</sup>

Large crowds at the Emporia depot greeted the Chicagoan and the Kansas Citian, newest streamlined trains of the Santa Fe. An existing train, the Chief, received streamlined equipment in 1938, and a new streamlined trans-continental train, the El Capitan, also entered service that year. At the same time, in response to increased competition from automobiles traveling on improved highways, the railroad discontinued service on some of its secondary lines, as seen by the demise of all passenger service, with the exception of a mixed freight and passenger train, between Emporia, Eureka, and Moline.<sup>23</sup>

College enrollment in Emporia during 1938 increased again. The rise was attributable entirely to Kansas State Teachers College which recorded 1,435 students in the spring and 1,577 in the fall, while The College of Emporia enrollment was 345 and 343 students respectively, approximately

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<sup>22</sup>Emporia Gazette, Feb. 4, 1938, pp. 1-2; June 22, 1938, p. 1; The Santa Fe Magazine, August, 1938, p. 42; September, 1938, p. 40; October, 1938, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 18, 1938, p. 2; Feb. 10, 1938, p. 9; Apr. 15, 1938, p. 7.

the same as in the preceding year, but down from the early 1930's.<sup>24</sup>

The pace of work relief quickened in the Emporia area during 1938. A \$9,000 WPA project made improvements to the Ruggles Dam northwest of the city early in the year. A total of twenty NYA workers constructed extensive improvements at Hammond Park, including the removal of debris and the installation of walks, picnic tables, and a drainage system.<sup>25</sup>

Forty CCC workers planted trees in the Lake Kahola area during the summer of 1938. Four low-water crossings and a shelter house were built by WPA workers at the same time. Other workmen built new roads around the lake, while some private homes also were built there.<sup>26</sup>

One of the largest projects of the Depression, the construction of the Civic Auditorium, was started in 1938. The idea for building such a structure had appeared before in the form of bond elections, but it

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<sup>24</sup>Office of Admissions and Records, 'Kansas State Teachers College, Historical Data on Enrollment, Credit Hours, Degrees and Certificates for Kansas State Teachers College (Emporia: Kansas State Teachers College, 1960), pp. 3-4; Office of the Registrar, The College of Emporia, Enrollment Statistics, 1884-1967 (Emporia: The College of Emporia, 1967), p. 4.

<sup>25</sup>Emporia Gazette, Jan. 11, 1938, p. 1; Jan. 17, 1938, p. 1; Mar. 3, 1938, p. 7; Oct. 22, 1938, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., June 2, 1938, p. 1; June 20, 1938, p. 3.

always had been defeated. This time William Allen White plus a group of businessmen and civic leaders organized a drive to approve the construction, both from the standpoint of providing jobs for local men and creating a much needed building for exhibits, conventions, and trade shows.<sup>27</sup>

Emporia voters cast a record 4,564 ballots in approving the auditorium March 28, 1938. A large school construction program was defeated at the same election. The local architectural firm of Brinkman & Hagan was selected to design the auditorium and supervise the construction. In the largest bond sale in the city's history, a \$300,000 issue was sold May 10, 1938. A \$245,000 PWA grant provided additional funds.<sup>28</sup>

While the decision to build the auditorium was made rather easily at the 1938 election, the selection of a site sparked much controversy and indecision. Finally, the city commission decided upon the block between Mechanic and Market Streets and Fifth and Sixth Avenues. The first work began October 24, 1938, when a

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<sup>27</sup> Frank C. Clough, William Allen White of Emporia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1941), pp. 111-13.

<sup>28</sup> Emporia Gazette, Mar. 29, 1938, p. 1; Apr. 14, 1938, p. 1; May 10, 1938, p. 1; July 13, 1938, p. 1; Clough, p. 113.

workman started clearing the site of trees. Pouring of the concrete foundation began November 17, and the first federal check amounting to \$136,363 was received by Mayor Lostutter December 19.<sup>29</sup>

The building permit for the excavation and foundation construction at the auditorium swelled the total value of building permits issued in the city in 1938 to \$153,320. The low point for value of permits issued during the Depression was 1936 when only \$52,303 worth were taken out.<sup>30</sup>

Work on the auditorium continued throughout 1939. Workmen began pouring concrete for the basement walls in January of that year and finished the task by March. The PWA approved the superstructure contracts March 18, and the paint contracts were awarded April 7.<sup>31</sup> The PWA granted an extra \$20,588 for the auditorium in May 1939. An additional \$25,125 in city funds also were allowed for the work.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Emporia Gazette, July 26, 1938, p. 1; Oct. 24, 1938, p. 1; Nov. 17, 1938, p. 1; Dec. 19, 1938, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., Nov. 2, 1938, p. 12; D. Spencer Yohe, ed., Kansas Statistical Base Book (Lawrence: University of Kansas, Bureau of Business Research, 1954), p. 92.

<sup>31</sup>Emporia Gazette, Jan. 27, 1939, p. 2; Mar. 16, 1939, p. 2; Mar. 18, 1939, p. 1; Apr. 7, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., May 12, 1939, p. 1.

Pouring of concrete for the main floor of the structure began during June, and bricklaying started in August. One interesting facet of the bricklaying involved the insertion of a copper-covered letter into the mortar between a row of the bricks. The letter contained a tribute to the late O. M. Wilhite who had urged the construction of an auditorium on that site, and was responsible for many civic improvements. The letter was inserted on top of the bottom row of bricks between the police and fire departments' entrances by Mrs. Frank Lostutter, the daughter of O. M. Wilhite and the wife of Mayor Lostutter.<sup>33</sup>

Work on the auditorium progressed well through the fall of 1939, with about 250 workers employed on the job. It was completed, and passed to the control of the city on May 1, 1940.<sup>34</sup>

The auditorium project employed a number of local workmen in 1939, but WPA jobs declined decidedly during the first part of the year. The slump was due to the failure of state and regional WPA officials to approve work projects. WPA jobs opened again in the summer, but

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., June 5, 1939, p. 2; Aug. 16, 1939, p. 1; Aug. 21, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., July 20, 1939, p. 1; May 1, 1940, p. 1.

under new rules employees were forced to work longer hours for the same amount of pay. In effect this reduced their hourly wage from 40 cents to 29 cents.<sup>35</sup>

An NYA project made improvements to the watering system of the Peter Pan Park rose garden in 1939. At the same time, city workmen planted rose bushes and repaired tennis courts at the park.<sup>36</sup>

A proposal to further improve and enlarge Hammond Park was defeated in a bond election, March 27, 1939. The \$17,500 bond issue, which would have employed a number of men, was defeated by more than a two to one margin.<sup>37</sup> The slowdown of some relief work was offset partially by an increase in private employment.<sup>38</sup>

The Santa Fe Railway's freight and passenger revenue as well as its net income increased slightly in 1939.<sup>39</sup> The shipment of cattle from Texas to Flint Hills pastures near Emporia in April resulted in the reinstatement of eighteen local trainmen to employment. In June,

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Feb. 15, 1939, pp. 1, 6; July 5, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., Mar. 22, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Feb. 9, 1939, p. 1; Mar. 28, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Mar. 16, 1939, p. 2; Yohe, p. 80.

<sup>39</sup>The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company, Forty-Fifth Annual Report, pp. 11-12.

some Emporia railroad shop workers received increases in their employment periods to six days per week from the previous five days. The lengthened work week brought a total monthly payroll increase of \$1,000 to the workers.<sup>40</sup>

The Santa Fe Railway conducted a campaign against grasshoppers near Emporia in 1939 to assist local farmers and to keep the railroad right-of-way free from insects. The main thrust of the campaign consisted of section workers sprinkling poison along the tracks.<sup>41</sup> Area farmers probably welcomed all available assistance since the 1939 corn yield was considerably smaller than that of 1938.<sup>42</sup>

Just as in the past, both excessive rains and a drought hindered local farmers during 1939. For example, February rainfall was fairly abundant with a total of 2.05 inches of rain recorded, the most received in that month since 1920. Unusually dry weather appeared in May, but it was followed by numerous showers during June. The rain interfered with wheat harvesting, but gave a good

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<sup>40</sup>Emporia Gazette, Apr. 17, 1939, p. 1; June 10, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., June 9, 1939, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup>Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Thirty-first Biennial Report, p. 309; Thirty-second Biennial Report (Topeka: Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1939), p. 387.



early boost to corn crops. It was not sufficient to produce flooding, however.<sup>43</sup>

While showers were numerous in June, they did not bring enough moisture to replenish sub-soil water. That factor combined with high temperatures and a total rainfall of only .49 inch in July critically damaged growing corn. [The drought became increasingly worse in the late summer and throughout the fall until it was broken by a heavy rain on November 9, 1939. It destroyed much of the local corn crop, but Lake Kahola kept Emporia from facing a serious water shortage. That lake plus Lake Wilhite and numerous ponds, many of which had been constructed by the WPA, provided an ample water supply for livestock.<sup>44</sup> ] \*

Wheat and livestock production increased in Lyon County during 1939, compared to 1938. The 1939 wheat crop was far below the 1937 production, however. The oats crop was slightly less in 1939, but higher prices resulted in a much more valuable yield. Due to the drought, corn yields in 1939 were less than half of those in 1938. A total of 797,000 bushels of wheat were harvested in 1939 with a value of \$510,100.00. The oats crop yielded 303,240

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<sup>43</sup>Emporia Gazette, Mar. 1, 1939, p. 1; June 10, 1939, p. 1; June 22, 1939, p. 1; June 27, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., July 11, 1939, p. 1; Aug. 1, 1939, p. 1; Nov. 10, 1939, p. 1; Nov. 22, 1939, p. 12.

bushels at a total value of \$91,000.00 while the value of livestock production reached \$1,996,400.00. Only 486,720 bushels of corn with a total value of \$272,600.00 were harvested in 1939. That contrasts to the 1,186,570 bushels at a valuation of \$557,600.00 produced in 1938. Alfalfa seed production was one of the most successful crops of the year. Lyon County farmers received \$187,877.21 in soil benefit payments during 1939.<sup>45</sup>

Enrollment at The College of Emporia changed little during 1939, with an average enrollment of 346 students. Spring 1939 enrollment at Kansas State Teachers College climbed to 1,507 students, up from 1,435 of a year earlier. The fall 1939 enrollment rose to 1,697 students, the largest total of the decade.<sup>46</sup>

A \$10,000 remodeling project was made at the Teachers College campus late in the summer. Improvements included the installation of an accoustical tile ceiling and repainting in Albert Taylor Hall; the installation of

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<sup>45</sup>Kansas State Board of Agriculture, *Thirty-first Biennial Report*, p. 309; *Thirty-second Biennial Report*, p. 387; *Emporia Gazette*, Aug. 29, 1939, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup>The College of Emporia, *Enrollment Statistics*, p. 4; Kansas State Teachers College, *Historical Data on Enrollment, Credit Hours, Degrees and Certificates*, pp. 3-4.

a new ceiling and repainting at Roosevelt High School; the repainting and replastering of the Y. W. C. A. room and the repainting and installation of a new floor in a recreation room, both located in the Student Union; the addition of a new refrigeration system for perishables at the Student Union coffee shop; and the replastering and repainting of much of Morse Hall, the women's dormitory.<sup>47</sup>

There were some signs of additional business prosperity during 1939. The Civic Auditorium construction of course provided an economic boost for the Emporia area, but there were other positive factors also.

A new commercial radio station, KTSW, began broadcasting January 25, 1939, from studios in the Broadview Hotel. The call letters were derived from the initials of Kermit Trimble, the general manager and secretary, and Selleck Warren, station president.<sup>48</sup>

The construction of ten new homes between Grove and Twelfth Avenues on Lawrence Street started March 13. The loans for the homes were insured by the Federal Housing Administration, created in 1934 to insure such

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<sup>47</sup>Emporia Gazette, Aug. 19, 1939, p. 3; Sept. 2, 1939, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., Jan. 25, 1939, p. 1; L. D. Mallary, "Among Ourselves," The Santa Fe Magazine, February, 1939, pp. 49-50.

loans for middle-income families. The new homes ranged in price from \$4,000 to \$5,000. Initiators of the project were Fred Fleming, Jr. and H. Russell Seacat.<sup>49</sup>

The number of manufacturing production workers in Lyon County increased during 1939 to 139. In 1937 there were 134 workers; in 1935, 106; and in 1929 there were 158. The number of manufacturing establishments in the county grew to 22 in 1939, slightly above the 20 in existence during 1937, but less than the 28 operating in 1929. On the other hand, the number of retail establishments in Lyon County declined to 407 in 1939, down from 442 in 1935, 435 in 1933, and 423 in 1929. Retail sales also dropped during 1939 to \$7,816,000 as compared to \$8,154,000 in 1935, \$6,249,000 in 1933, and \$13,693,000 during 1929.<sup>50</sup>

The final positive factor in 1939 was the population increase in the city to 13,198. The 1939 population was the highest since 1935 when there were 13,300 persons living in Emporia.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Leuchtenburg, p. 135; Emporia Gazette, Mar. 11, 1939, pp. 1-2; Mar. 14, 1939, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup>Yohe, pp. 48-9, 79-80.

<sup>51</sup>Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Thirtieth Biennial Report, p. 370; Thirty-first Biennial Report, p. 308; Thirty-second Biennial Report, p. 386.

The Great Depression reached its tenth year in 1939. It did not end completely that year, although much progress had been made toward that goal. Nor did its demise come abruptly. The change from depression to prosperity, even though it was to become mainly a war prosperity, was a complex transition. It is not the task of this study to analyze that transition, but the assistance of the New Deal programs and the large war expenditures of the 1940's certainly were major factors. The outbreak of war in Europe in the fall of 1939 competed with the still existing economic problems for first attention.

Many changes occurred in Emporia from 1929 to 1939. From all of the economic woes, a number of physical improvements did take place, mostly the result of the New Deal. Among the benefits were many miles of street and road improvements made by various agencies; new ponds built by the WPA; Lake Wilhite, now known as Reading Lake, constructed by the CCC; Lake Kahola, made by the WPA and PWA; a WPA-built stadium at Kansas State Teachers College; and the Civic Auditorium, a PWA project. Except for the new roads which have either been rebuilt or are unrecognizable as Depression projects, the many improvements still stand in the Emporia area as tributes to the ingenuity of the Roosevelt Administration and the hard work

of those persons who played a part in their construction. Like all cities, many interesting events have occurred in Emporia since its inception in 1857. But perhaps no period has been as turbulent and eventful in the city's history as the Depression decade, 1929 to 1939.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

A few conclusions may be made about the social and economic events of the Great Depression in Emporia. The first social issue to be considered is the Sunday Movie Controversy. It will be recalled that the issue ran from 1931 to 1934, and involved three attempts to legalize the shows, two referendums and one court test case. The first referendum and the court test failed, but the second referendum, held in 1934, was successful in permitting Sunday movies to be shown legally in Emporia.

It appears that a growing resentment against legal curtailment of Sunday activities erupted in Emporia and was met by a vocal faction that upheld the belief that Sundays were intended only for religious purposes. The two forces vied for the support of the rest of the community. When the referendum first appeared it was a novel issue which brought forth the ire of many who thought it represented a threat to the Sabbath. The efforts of theater operator E. O. Briles to legalize Sunday movies through a court test and the

second referendum did not spark the turmoil and controversy of the first referendum. The sentiment in Emporia regarding the shows was changing.<sup>1</sup> By the time of the second referendum in 1934 many initial apprehensions had disappeared and a majority of those voting seemed to have come to believe that there was a place both for movies and religious activities on Sunday.

The other major social issue of the Great Depression in Emporia was vice control. The problem in studying this topic lies in the fact that it is easy to sensationalize the issue, but there is also the danger of dismissing evidence to compensate for possible exaggeration.

Liquor violations were the most frequent and widespread vice infractions during the decade. It seems that this was partially due to the fact that prohibition, whether it was national or state, enhanced the glamour of drinking. Even though "hard" liquor was illegal in Kansas throughout the Depression decade, a ready source was available to those who wished to purchase it. Before national prohibition repeal in 1933, homemade liquor, also known as deep-shaft, was the main type in use. But after repeal, distilled liquor, usually from Missouri or Illinois, was more common.

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<sup>1</sup>William I. White, tape-recorded interview.



Gambling was the second most common form of vice in Emporia. One of the main problems with this violation was the relative difficulty of enforcement. While liquor samples provided tangible evidence of prohibition violations, gambling activities often moved from place to place and therefore were difficult to detect. Gambling convictions for the use of marble machines were hard to obtain because the winners usually were paid in secret. Slot machines brought convictions more readily because their "pay-off" was easier to detect. There also seemed to be a greater local condemnation against slot machines than against other forms of gambling.

Prostitution and marijuana use were the least frequent forms of vice. There was no concerted drive against prostitution by law enforcement officials. The Broadview Hotel was a common operating point for prostitutes, but they usually remained there only a few days. Marijuana smoking was just beginning in Emporia during the 1930's, and there were some convictions for its use. A readily available supply was found along the local railroad tracks.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview; Clarence Beck, personal interview.

Vice was certainly never out of control in Emporia during the Depression. Liquor use created the most problems, and a few speculations may be made about the reason for this. Prohibition seems to have made liquor consumption more popular than it ordinarily would have been, and the abundant supply of illegal intoxicants filled this demand. Moreover, liquor supplying was fairly well organized. The number of bootleggers in the city was small, often less than ten, but they never seemed to lack customers nor a sufficient supply to sell. By contrast, gambling activities definitely were not organized.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the selling of illegal liquor had little social stigma attached to it during the Depression, and some dealers made sizeable profits from their work. Most did not fear legal penalties for they merely looked upon them as business losses, and yet it is doubtful that more severe sentences would have deterred liquor sales.<sup>4</sup> Emporia was never a lawless city from 1929 to 1939, but vice activities were widespread enough to prompt periodic crackdowns by local officials.

When examining the economic impact of the Depression upon Emporia it is evident that business conditions did not

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<sup>3</sup>Clarence Beck, personal interview.

<sup>4</sup>Judge Jay Sullivan, tape-recorded interview.

change abruptly after the stock market crash in 1929. Rather, the transition to a depressed economy was gradual and involved several factors. First, the effects of the national economic slowdown filtered down to Emporia. It was most evident in the fluctuations of railroad business. Just after the general economy began to weaken, the Emporia area was ravaged by a series of droughts, floods, and dust storms. This curtailed agricultural production and thus dealt a dual blow to the town's economy. Farm output and railroad business, two of the three main elements of the city's economy, were depressed through much of the decade 1929 to 1939. But it is important to note that there were no definite, steady trends in the changes of local agriculture and the Santa Fe Railway. Instead, there were a series of economic ups and downs which were caused by numerous factors.

While agricultural production and railroad business fluctuated to a great extent, enrollment at the two colleges remained fairly constant even though the schools did not grow appreciably.<sup>5</sup> The colleges provided an

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<sup>5</sup>Office of Admissions and Records, Kansas State Teachers College, Historical Data on Enrollment, Credit Hours, Degrees and Certificates for Kansas State Teachers College (Emporia: Kansas State Teachers College, 1960), pp. 3-4; Office of the Registrar, The College of Emporia, Enrollment Statistics, 1884-1967 (Emporia: The College of Emporia, 1967), p. 4; C. F. Gladfelter, tape-recorded interview.

economic stimulus to the town, but they changed little through the Depression years while the economic conditions around them varied considerably.

During the Hoover Administration which endured until 1933, there were few federal programs to relieve the economic hardships. Emporians adopted a number of their own relief plans which in some cases, such as the Chamber of Commerce work relief program, resembled the New Deal agencies of the Roosevelt Administration. But there were many other important schemes as well. The city and county governments hired as many men as possible to ease unemployment. The Emporia Gazette featured "work wanted" advertisements on its front pages, and a "buy now" campaign was initiated to revive retail sales. The Emporia Trades & Labor Council established an employment agency for persons seeking work. One of the town's oldest benevolent groups, the Heritage fund, sponsored an unemployment survey conducted by the Women's City Club. Emporia churches organized a park improvement project from members' donations to provide work for the unemployed and to beautify the city. Local locomotive firemen voluntarily reduced their maximum number of working miles in order to provide jobs for many of their unemployed fellow employees. Friction between permanent

residents and Mexican citizens was common during the early Depression years. Many residents believed that the Mexicans should not be entitled to any relief, and there was an unsuccessful campaign to deport the foreign citizens. When the Santa Fe Railway offered to transport the Mexicans to El Paso, Texas, where they could cross the border into Mexico, many were unable to go because they lacked money for meals during the trip. The Chamber of Commerce and the Ministerial Association collected money to provide meals for those who wished to go. Some of those that remained were hired by the Chamber of Commerce work relief program.

There were many ways in which Emporians helped themselves during the early Depression years. With the advent of the Roosevelt Administration in 1933, the city relied heavily upon the new federal programs. The Civilian Conservation Corps employed young men to work on public conservation projects. Even though the agency hired relatively few local workers, it was responsible for the construction of Lake Wilhite, now known as Reading Lake.

The National Recovery Administration provided operating codes for businesses by establishing guide-lines for such rules as working hours. Its main contribution was the indirect creation of more jobs within existing businesses.

A major help to the local colleges was the National Youth Administration. It employed many young persons to work at various college jobs, and sometimes to improve parks. It should be regarded as a prime factor in keeping the colleges in operation during the Depression.

During the winter of 1933-34, the Civil Works Administration directly hired a number of local persons to work on a variety of projects. It served the important purpose of sustaining many unemployed through that winter, but because President Roosevelt believed it was costing too much, the agency was discontinued June 30, 1934. The policy of hiring workers directly was carried over to the Works Progress Administration created in 1935. It provided workmen for many projects such as Lake Kahola.

No comprehensive figures about the extent of federal relief in Emporia exist so a statistical study of the impact of the various agencies on the city is impossible. But if any program played a most important role in local relief during the Depression decade, it probably would be the Public Works Administration. The PWA provided a steady supply of funds to private companies for numerous road improvement projects, Lake Kahola, and the Civic Auditorium. No other agency seems to have had a more widespread effect.

Agriculture was one of the most important elements of the local economy. Government payments helped farmers

to a large degree, but weather conditions had the greatest impact on farm prosperity or depression. Because agriculture was so important to the city's economy, the weather was as important as the national economic situation in determining the status of the local business conditions. This was evident during 1937 when there was a national recession, but Emporia was relatively prosperous. That year the large crop yields were a major factor in the city's economic health.

The worst year for agriculture was 1934. A serious drought and a heat wave curtailed agricultural output. Livestock feed was scarce since other parts of the country suffered from damaging weather conditions as well. In 1936 a drought again limited farm yields, but feed was available for shipment to the Emporia area, and that eased the situation considerably.<sup>6</sup> Droughts during the late 1930's were not as severe as those of 1934 and 1936, and their effect was lessened by water supplies in Lake Kahola and numerous WPA-built farm ponds.

Emporians adjusted well during the early years of the Depression by creating their own relief agencies. With the coming of the New Deal in 1933, federal relief became increasingly significant. It is difficult to

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<sup>6</sup>Frank Dobbs, tape-recorded interview.

determine with certainty whether local programs alone could have preserved the city's economic system through the Depression years. It is important to note, however, that even with federal programs, local resources continued to be utilized. One example was the city's contribution of more than half of the money for the construction of the Civic Auditorium. Thus, New Deal programs were coupled with local resources to successfully carry Emporia through the bleak Depression decade.



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