Historical Settlements in Sarpy County, Nebraska, 1803-1900

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Historical Settlement in Sarpy County, Nebraska
1803 - 1900

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Monique Ernestine Sawyer
1986
Approval Sheet

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Dr. Rita Wright
Dedication

To my parents, Ivan and Liselotte
Sawyer, and to my sisters and brother;
Ingrid, Anneliese and Erich.
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The purpose of this thesis is to study the historical settlement of Sarpy County, Nebraska from its inclusion in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 up until the area became stabilized and integrated on a national level, around the year 1900.

A frontier model of settlement was used to study the process and development of settlement in the study area. The data regarding settlement was organized in three parts. Part one, defining the frontier, is concerned with the temporal and spatial limits of the frontier. Part two, settlement types, is concerned with the individual settlements which occurred and is a settlement classification system based on five types of settlements. Part three, conditions which characterize the frontier, is concerned with general aspects of the settlement process.

Use of the frontier model puts the data regarding the settlement of Sarpy County into a context which allows it to be studied on a particularistic level and on a general level depending on the questions being asked of the data, and takes into consideration temporal and spatial changes which may occur.

The result is that the frontier model is found to be applicable to Sarpy County, and that its application contributes to the general knowledge and understanding of settlement in the county. Also, the frontier model generates hypothesis that may be tested in the study area and which may facilitate comparative analysis with other areas.
CHAPTER I

Sarpy County, Nebraska

The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 opened a vast new area of the United States for settlement. Exploratory expeditions, such as those carried out by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark between 1804 and 1806 and Stephen Long in 1819 and 1820, provided information concerning the content and extent of the resources to be found in this newly acquired frontier. The information provided through these expeditions interested the fur traders and soon fur trading posts were established in the new area. Thus began the settlement of a new frontier, the Great Plains (Bartlett 1974:48). Included in the settlement of the Great Plains was the area which was to later become Sarpy County, Nebraska.

The Study Area

Nebraska is located a little north of the geographic center of the United States. Most of its area lies within the Great Plains, between the Rocky Mountains and the Central Lowland. Sarpy County is located in eastern Nebraska. The county is bordered on the east by the Missouri River and on the south and east by the Platte River. It is bordered on the north by Douglas County, Nebraska. Sarpy County ranges in width from 9 to 12 miles and is approximately 25 miles in
length. The principal rivers and creeks in the county, excluding the Platte and Missouri Rivers, include the Elkhorn River and Buffalo creek in the western portion of the county, both of which are tributaries of the Platte River. The Big Papillion Creek with its three branches, the South Branch, the West Branch and the Little Papillion, is a tributary of the Missouri River and is located in the eastern portion of the county (See Figure 1).

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the historical settlement of Sarpy County, Nebraska, to examine spatially and temporally the processes of settlement which occurred and to examine the relationship of the settlements to each other. Sarpy County is chosen as the study area for several reasons discussed below.

As Figure 1 illustrates, Sarpy County has three natural borders formed by the Missouri and Platte Rivers. These borders delimit the spread of settlement within the county, thus there is only one imposed border in the study area.

The Missouri River's primary use during the developing years of the study area was as the major transportation route into the area. During the fur trade years the Missouri river served as the means to transport furs down to St. Louis and to transport trade goods up to the fur trading posts. These posts were primarily located along the Missouri with very few in the interior. Prior to the use of the railroads in the 1860's steamboats transported goods and people up and down the Missouri. The Missouri River was a direct connection to urban centers such as St. Joseph and St. Louis, Missouri. St. Joseph was the jumping off place for settlers using the Oregon Trail, the
Location of Sarpy County
Platte River Road and other overland trails to the west. Many of these travellers entered the new territory through the Sarpy County area.

The initial settlement, fur trade posts, which took place along the Missouri River after 1800, occurred in and around the Sarpy County area. Sarpy County is characterized by continuous and expanding settlements beginning in the first decade of the nineteenth century up to the present. These settlements are varied in their form and function, ranging from fur trade posts to railroad towns.

The settlements in the county had two economic bases: the fur trade and agriculture. The fur trade was the primary economic base of the study area for the first forty years. The fur trade was replaced by agriculture in the mid-nineteenth century and continues to be the primary economic base of the county. Settlements with the same economic base facilitates comparison between individual settlements and the studying of settlement processes.

Studies concerning the settlement of Sarpy County, Nebraska, have previously been limited and particularistic in nature. The studies are usually oriented around the town of Bellevue, the earliest established town in Sarpy County and one of the earliest towns in the Nebraska Territory, or they deal with noted personalities and particular events which took place in the county (Federal 1937, Goss 1859, Ridenour 1982, Sayre 1911, Simmons 1976). Studies concerning other towns in Sarpy County are limited to very general works (Andreas 1882, Greunke 1982, Perkey 1978) or are books put together for the purpose of centennial celebrations (Papillion Centennial 1970, Sarpy 1957). Studies which concern the entire Sarpy County
area and the process of settlement, the type of settlements and the relationships between the settlements are lacking. The purpose of this thesis is to fill this void, to go beyond the previous type of study. Its purpose is to study the area as a whole and to study processes, types and relationships of settlements rather than concentrate on a particular town or person. It is intended that this thesis provide a framework for further study in the Sarpy County area.

The aforementioned reasons for selecting Sarpy County, Nebraska, as the study area—natural boundaries, location along the Missouri River, the initial settlement of the territory occurring within the county, the continuous settlement of and variety in the type of settlement in the county, a consistent economic base for the majority of the settlements and a lack of previous studies—provide an opportunity to test models of settlement, primarily a frontier model. The spatial and temporal considerations of this study lend themselves to testing these models. The temporal period under consideration is from 1803 to 1900. By the year 1900 virtually no new settlements were occurring and those settlements which were established had spread themselves throughout the county and competition between the settlements had become stabilized. During this time period three events occur: the opening of a frontier, the settlement and development of a frontier, and the closing of a frontier. Sarpy County, therefore, is a good example of a frontier situation. The following chapter will outline and discuss the characteristics of several frontier models and produce one model which will be tested in Sarpy County, Nebraska.
CHAPTER II
Models of Settlement

The study of the frontier as a unique geographical and cultural entity has been the subject of research for many years in a variety of fields (Casagrande et al. 1964, Kristoff 1959, Lewis 1977, Leyburn 1935, Prescott 1965). What constitutes a frontier? What are the spatial and temporal elements of the frontier? What types of settlements occur in the frontier?

All of these questions have been dealt with in one form or another in the various studies of the frontier. The answers to these questions suggest a frontier model, a model which provides a definition of the frontier and an outline for the settlement which occurs in the frontier.

Defining A Frontier

The Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in July, 1893, was the setting for Frederick Jackson Turner's essays on the significance of the frontier in the development of American history: politically, socially and culturally (Turner 1962:9). Turner's essays were among the first to take into consideration the concept of the frontier and its role in the processes of settlement and the development of American society. Through his essays Turner developed
generalizations about the frontier and its subsequent settlement and
development. Turner's generalizations about the frontier led to
rethinking and considerable debate over the forces which led to the
development of American society. Many of his critics argued that
Turner was monocausational in his emphasis of the frontier as the
single force with which to explain American history, claiming that he
neglected the impact of other forces such as urbanization,
immigration, industrialization and the continuous impact of Europe on
America (Turner 1962:17). Turner stressed the importance of the
frontier as a significant developmental force in American history not
because he believed it was the single most important force but
because he believed it had been previously neglected in studies of
American history. Turner believed there was no single key to
American history but that it is a result of the interrelationships of
economics, politics, sociology, culture in general, and geographic
factors (Turner 1962:12). The purpose of Turner's essays was not to
describe American culture or to use the frontier as the explanation
of American society, but rather to consider the frontier as one of
numerous forces contributing to its social evolution (Turner

Turner defined the frontier as "the outer edge of the wave..., the meeting point between savagery and civilization... and that it lies at the hither edge of free land" (Turner 1963:3). The history of America is charted temporally by Turner through successive frontiers. These successive frontiers have natural boundary lines which "have served to mark and to affect the characteristics of frontiers" (Turner 1962:9). These successive frontiers are defined
by Turner as being the Fall Line, the Allegheny Mountains, the Mississippi River, the Missouri River where its direction approximates north and south, the line of the arid lands (approximately the ninety-ninth meridian) and the Rocky Mountains. The Fall Line marked the frontier of the seventeenth century, the Alleghenies that of the eighteenth, the Mississippi that of the first quarter of the nineteenth, the Missouri that of the mid-nineteenth (omitting the California movement) and the belt of the Rocky Mountains and the arid tract that of the late nineteenth century (Turner 1962:9).

Several generalizations were postulated by Turner concerning the characteristics and development of the frontier. As mentioned, Turner's frontier is a line, geographic in nature, which continuously moves westward, and it is along this line that new settlement and development takes place. This development, according to Turner, begins anew at each frontier line.

American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier (Turner 1962:2).

Through his essays Turner stresses the process of change that Western frontiers underwent. Turner's use of the term West did not mean a particular region in the United States but rather an area previously unsettled, an area of free land to which older institutions and ideas are applied.

...By this application, a new environment is suddenly entered, freedom of opportunity is opened, the cake of custom is broken, and new activities, new lines of growth, new institutions and new ideals are brought into existence. The wilderness disappears, the "West" proper passes on to a new
frontier, and in the former area, a new society has emerged
from its contact with the backwoods. Gradually this society
loses its primitive conditions, and assimilates itself to the
type of the older social conditions of the East

With regard to the settlement of the Great Plains, a frontier
reached in the mid-nineteenth century, Turner states that it was a
frontier by-passed momentarily and that the frontier of the
mid-nineteenth century was California with the Great Plains filling
as a result of the California frontier. Turner explains;

...the distinctive frontier of the period is found in
California, where the gold discoveries had sent a sudden tide
of adventurous miners, and in Oregon, and the settlements of
Utah. As the frontier had leaped over the Alleghenies, so
now it skipped the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains; and
in the same way that the advance of the frontiersman beyond
the Alleghenies had caused the rise of important questions of
transportation and internal improvement, so now the settlers
beyond the Rocky Mountains needed means of communication with
the East, and in the furnishing of these arose the settlement

This postulation of the skipping of a frontier, namely the Great
Plains, is incorrect. There was not a skipping of a frontier but a
simultaneous development of two frontiers instead.

Turner's frontier studies resulted in several generalizations
concerning frontier settlement. While Turner did not develop a
frontier model, many of the generalizations he put forth are evident
in subsequent studies of the frontier.

A frontier, according to Prescott (1965), exists where boundaries
have been established to define the state area, the frontier "marks
the limit to which the states authority has extended in occupying its
legally defined territory (p.35)." In other words, the frontier is a
region legally under the jurisdiction of a government but as of yet
unpopulated by settlements. Within this definition of a frontier
there are two kinds of settlement frontiers: the primary settlement frontier and the secondary settlement frontier (Prescott 1965:34-35). The primary settlement frontier is an historical frontier. The frontier area is limited by the extent of a government's authority over an area at a particular time. A range of economic activities can exist in a primary settlement frontier.

A secondary settlement frontier, on the other hand, is an area where the physical environment or inadequate techniques hold back the advance of the land use and settlement for quite some time. In other words, land available for settlement is not occupied until such time as a settling population develops the technology necessary to exploit the resources in the frontier area. The range of economic activities that exist in a secondary settlement frontier are limited because of the limitations of the physical environment. It is the primary settlement frontier which is applicable to this thesis.

The frontier has also been defined as an area of colonization. This colonization is associated with the dispersal of settlement "into new territory, or a new environment, or into an unoccupied portion of the old environment (Hudson 1969:367)." The area of colonization is a new area, an area distinct from the metropolitan area. The metropolitan area is defined as the longer settled, more stable area from which comes the colonizing population for the frontier (Casagrande et al. 1964:311).

All of the definitions of a frontier provided here are definitions of the spatial limits of a frontier. Just as there are spatial limits to a frontier, there are temporal limits as well. There is a point in time in which an area known as a frontier ceases
to exist as a frontier and becomes a part of the earlier established, more stable, metropolitan area. Identifying the ending of a frontier is more difficult than identifying its beginning. Temporally, a frontier begins with the acquisition and opening of a previously unoccupied area for settlement. The ending of the frontier is a gradual process involving several factors: a movement of the frontier to a new area, stabilization of the settlements, and integration of the settlements into the prior established area. The opening of a new frontier exhibits those elements of the previous frontier which are transitory and entrepreneurial in nature. These elements, the first to appear in a frontier, are also the first to disappear from the area when opportunity arises elsewhere, leaving behind those intent on pursuing permanent settlement of the area.

It is through the establishment of permanent settlements that the frontier begins to become a stable area. A regularity in settlement pattern develops as the frontier area stabilizes (Hudson 1969:30). It is this stabilization of the frontier area that leads to its integration into the metropolitan area. Integration occurs when the area of settlement or a large segment of the area becomes indistinguishable from the rest of the established areas (Casagrande et al. 1964:314). Once stabilization and integration have occurred a frontier area is no longer a frontier.

A frontier, therefore, can be defined as a region previously unoccupied or occupied by a different culture, such as native Americans, into which new settlement moves. The frontier is impermanent; it changes both spatially and temporally. The changes which occur are processes of stabilization and integration
Settlement Types

When a new frontier is opened for occupation, a number of settlement types occur. The type of settlements which occur depend on the environment of the area, whether the population is primarily single or family units, and the economic activities undertaken by the frontier population.

A classification of frontier settlements by Leyburn (1935) consists of four settlement types, briefly described here. One type is the small farm frontier, occurring in temperate regions and settled by both men and women whose intent it is to remain in the new territory. A second type is the settlement plantation frontier which generally occurs in sub-tropical regions and is settled primarily by families. The main economic activity is agricultural or pastoral and relies on a large labor force. A third type of frontier settlement is the exploitative plantation, which occurs in the tropics and is developed by men alone who remain on the frontier for a limited amount of time. Their exploitation of the frontier involves the use of forced labor. The fourth type of frontier settlement is the camp frontier. This settlement type is a short term, transitory type of settlement which is exploitative of a particular element of the new area and is generally settled by single men (Leyburn 1935:5-6). Of these four types of frontier settlements the camp frontier and the small farm frontier are the two which are applicable to the Sarpy County frontier.

The aforementioned frontier classification deals with frontier settlements only on a specific and spatial level and does not include processual or temporal considerations. The camp frontier and the
small farm frontier can both be incorporated into a classification of settlements that takes into consideration spatial, temporal and processual factors. This classification system contains five settlement types and together they demonstrate the process by which an area becomes settled and integrated into the metropolitan area (Casagrande et al. 1964:314).

The first type of settlement in this classification is the dispersed settlement. Dispersed settlement is characterized by the presence of scattered houses. The widely scattered households within this settlement type are occasionally located along roads or main trails.

The second type of settlement is the semi-nucleated settlement. This settlement is characterized by a collection of households and buildings providing minor services and functions. There is no localized government for this settlement type.

A nucleated settlement, the third type of settlement, is located along or at the terminus of a transportation route such as a road, railroad, main trail or river and consists of a cluster of households. The nucleated settlements have a municipal government and provide a variety of services for its inhabitants.

The fourth type of settlement is the frontier town. This settlement type serves as the supply center for the surrounding area and as a jumping off point for new settlers entering the area. It is also the terminus of the transportation system which links the frontier with the outside area. The frontier town is the location of social, economic, political and religious activity in the area. The frontier town functions as the collection point for products produced
in the surrounding settlement area and destined for an outside market. The frontier town contains a number of people whose function is to provide goods and services for the local population.

The fifth type of settlement is the entrepot. The entrepot is the primary link between the area of settlement and the metropolitan area. It is located on or in close proximity to the boundary of the frontier and is the terminus of the transportation system that serves the frontier. Through the entrepot pass the goods and people essential to the settlement of the frontier.

The two frontier classifications of settlement type discussed here can be combined into one frontier classification of settlement type that is applicable to the Sarpy County area. The small farm frontier occurs temporally and spatially with the frontier town type of settlement. The camp type frontier occurs temporally and spatially in the settlement process with the semi-nucleated settlement. The frontier classification of settlement type which can be applied to Sarpy County is as follows: 1) dispersed settlement, 2) semi-nucleated/camp settlement, 3) nucleated settlement, 4) frontier town/small farm settlement, and 5) entrepot.

The Frontier Model

The frontier model, like any model of settlement, provides an outline of the process of change that a region may undergo. Definitions and conditions which characterize frontier settlement are provided by the model. The frontier model is tested, its accuracy is assessed and modifications, if any, are made through the study of a selected region. In this case the region is Sarpy County, Nebraska.
The following frontier model is based on Casagrande's (1964) and Leyburn's (1935) frontier settlement classifications and Lewis's (1977) model of the colonial frontier in South Carolina. Figure 2 is a graphic representation of the Frontier Model.

The frontier is defined as a region, a new territory, in which settlement takes place. It is an area under the jurisdiction of a government, and there is a separation of the unsettled area and the metropolitan area. The frontier is an area of colonization (Casagrande et al. 1964:311; Kristoff 1959:274; Prescott 1935:35; Turner 1962:3). Temporally the frontier begins with the first influx of settlement and ceases to exist when the settlements or a large portion of the settlements within the frontier become stabilized and integrated with the metropolitan area (Casagrande et al. 1964:314; Hudson 1969:367). The frontier is both spatially and temporally impermanent and is a zone of transition from an unsettled area to a stable, metropolitan area (Lewis 1977:133).

The settlements within a frontier go through a process of change. This process affects the form, function, and spatial distribution of the settlements over time. In this model of frontier settlement the process of settlement, settlement change and settlement type can be described using a five part classification system, the components of which were described earlier in the chapter. In order of their occurrence they are: 1) the dispersed settlement, 2) the semi-nucleated/camp settlement, 3) the nucleated settlement, 4) the frontier town/small farm settlement, and 5) the entrepot. Not all settlements need go through each of the stages of settlement outlined here, some settlement types may exist simultaneously, and some
Figure 2

Nucleated Settlement

Semi-Nucleated/Camp Settlement

Frontier Town/Small Farm Settlement

Dispersed Settlement

Frontier Model
settlements may, after having reached a particular stage of
development, fall into decline and cease to exist. As the
settlements in the frontier are developing and as they move from one
stage of settlement to another they are becoming stabilized and
integrated with the metropolitan area.

There are five conditions which characterize settlement in the
frontier model (Lewis 1977:134). These conditions are
generalizations about various aspects of frontier settlement and
development. The first condition is that the area of settlement must
have continual contact with the metropolitan area from which the
settlement originated. It is the continual contact with the
metropolitan area with maintains the network of transportation, trade
and communication between it and the area of settlement. The
maintenance of such a network provides a route for incoming settlers
and supplies as well as a route for outgoing settlers and their
products.

The second condition is that because of the distance and the
limited lines of trade and communication between the frontier and the
metropolitan area, the initial settlements are not complex. As the
trade and communication between the metropolitan area and the
frontier improve, the settlements increase in number and in
complexity.

The third condition is that the settlement pattern in the area of
settlement is more geographically dispersed than the settlements of
the metropolitan area, unless settlement is temporarily stopped by
environmental or political restrictions.
The fourth condition is that agriculturally based settlements within the frontier area are focused around central settlements called frontier towns. The frontier town is the center of social, political, economic and religious activities and a part of the transportation network connecting the area of settlement with the metropolitan area.

The fifth condition is that as the frontier changes temporally it also changes in its spatial arrangement. With the influx of settlers, areas of settlement undergo changes in population density and settlement pattern as they become integrated with the metropolitan area. As the settlements grow and change the ones which no longer occupy strategic positions within the transportation, trade and communication network decline and/or cease to exist.

Conclusions

The frontier model consists of three parts. The first part, defining the frontier, is concerned with the temporal and spatial aspects of the frontier, when a frontier begins and when it ends, and the geographical area that it entails. The second part, settlement types, is concerned with the physical form, distribution and characteristics of the five settlement types in the frontier area. The third part, conditions which characterize the frontier, is concerned with the development of the frontier as a whole and consists of five generalizations about the process of settlement and development of a frontier.

The intent of this thesis is to study the development of the frontier in Sarpy County, Nebraska, using the frontier model of
settlement presented here. The next chapter presents the historical background of Sarpy County and the body of data to which the frontier model of settlement will be applied.
CHAPTER III

History of Sarpy County, Nebraska

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: one, to establish the location, temporally and spatially, of the frontier under consideration and two, to provide an outline of settlement and development in order to identify the structure and organization of the frontier. This chapter provides information regarding the economic, social and political conditions which characterize the settlement of the Sarpy County frontier.

Opening a Frontier

The area including present day Nebraska was originally a part of the Louisiana Purchase. This purchase was concluded on the 30th of April, 1803, between the United States and France. This area included the entire valley of the Missouri River and west to the Rocky Mountains. France was the Original claimant of this area but ceded it to Spain in 1762. For 37 years it was Spanish territory frequented by fur traders and the Indian tribes with whom they traded.

On the 1st of October, 1800, the province of Louisiana was returned to France from Spain by treaty. The treaty was confirmed in 1801 and once again France was in possession of the Louisiana
province. Their ownership was short-lived, however, because in 1803 it was purchased by the United States. The area was divided in 1804 into the Territory of Orleans and the District of Louisiana, Nebraska being a part of the latter (Andreas 1882:45).

The District of Louisiana underwent another change in March of 1805 when part of it became the Territory of Louisiana and the other the Territory of Indiana, Nebraska belonging to the Territory of Louisiana.

The Territory of Louisiana remained as such until it underwent still another change in 1812, this time becoming the Territory of Missouri, of which Nebraska was part. It was in 1819 that a portion of the Territory of Missouri became the Territory of Arkansas. Missouri became a state in 1821 and the area west of the Missouri River which included Nebraska became known as Platte Country (Andreas 1882:53).

Several attempts from 1851 to 1854 to organize a Nebraska Territory were unsuccessful due to the hotly debated issue of slavery in Congress at the time. In 1854 a bill was offered making the proposed territory into two territories rather than the originally proposed single territory. These two territories would be known as the Nebraska Territory and the Kansas Territory. After considerable debate in 1854 the Organic Act creating the Nebraska Territory was endorsed by President Pierce, and the Nebraska Territory was legally formed. The Nebraska Territory consisted of 351,558 square miles and extended from the 40th parallel of North Latitude to the British Possessions on the north and from the Missouri River on the east to the Rocky Mountains on the west. This area became smaller in 1861
with the organization of the Territory of Colorado and smaller still with the Organization of the Territory of Dakota in 1867 and the Territory of Idaho in 1863. It was at this time that the present boundaries of Nebraska became established.

Upon its organization in 1854 the Nebraska Territory received its first official government. Prior to this it had been included in the United States Judicial District of the State of Missouri since the Government felt no significant American settlements existed in the area. Due to the untimely death of the appointed Governor for the Nebraska Territory two days after his inauguration, and political maneuvering on the part of residents of the newly established town of Omaha and the lack of such maneuvering by the residents of Bellevue, the location of the capitol went to Omaha instead of the previously favored city of Bellevue (Olson 1966:81-82).

Nebraska Territory originally consisted of eight counties: Burt, Washington, Dodge, Douglas, Cass, Pierce, Forney and Richardson. The boundaries of Douglas County were:

...commencing at the mouth of the Platte River, thence north along the west bank of the Missouri River to a point one mile north of Omaha City, then west along the south boundary of Washington County twenty miles; thence south ten miles, more or less, to the Platte River, and thence east to the place of beginning (Andreas 1882:110).

The two major cities located in this county at the time were Omaha City and Bellevue.

With the convening of the first Legislature in 1855 county boundaries were amended and added to, and again in 1856. In February 1857 by an act of the Legislature a portion of Douglas County became known as Sarpy County. The boundaries of Sarpy County were defined as commencing:
...from a point in the middle of the Missouri River, from the center of the mouth of the Platte, up the main channel of the Missouri to a point two miles due south of the north line of Township 14N, west on a section line to the middle of the main channel of the Platte, down the Platte to the place of beginning (Andreas 1882:110).

It was not long after its establishment as a Territory that Nebraska began considering statehood. The first proposition of this type in 1860-61 was voted down by the people of the Nebraska Territory. A second attempt was made in 1832-63 but the bill failed during that session of Congress. Prospects for statehood were revived in 1864 when Congress and President Lincoln approved the Enabling Act. This law enabled Nebraska to form a state constitution and government. Several factors, however, prevented Nebraska's immediate action, these factors included the continuation of the Civil War, which drained many men and considerable amounts of money from the area, and increasing Indian troubles in the West.

Once peace had returned to the nation and the Indian troubles were under control, a constitution for Nebraska was written in 1886 and accepted by a narrow margin by the people of the Nebraska Territory. Admission of Nebraska as a state was approved by Congress but was vetoed by President Johnson on the grounds that the state Constitution was different from what had been prescribed and that the population was too low to qualify for statehood. Johnson's veto was overridden by the Congress and Nebraska was proclaimed a state on March 1, 1867, by President Andrew Johnson (Andreas 1882:1929).

While all of the aforementioned political events were occurring, exploration, settlement and exploitation of the Sarpy County frontier was underway.
The Explorers

Not much was known about the interior of the Louisiana Province in 1803. President Jefferson, interested in extending the commerce of the United States, instructed Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to

...ascend the Missouri, cross the mountains, and descend by the most practicable river to the Pacific; to make geographic and scientific observations; to ascertain the routes of Canadian traders in their traffic with the Indians; to determine the feasibility of collecting furs at the source of the Missouri and transporting them downstream; and to cultivate friendship and trade with the native tribes (Olson 1966:36-37).

Their travels led them through the Nebraska area. They camped at the mouth of the Platte River and ten miles north of the Platte on July 21 and July 22 respectively (Olson 1966:38). Their reports following the expedition prompted interest in fur trading enterprises and an interest in further and more scientific exploration.

Shortly after the Lewis and Clark expedition, Stephen Long made two major expeditions through the area, one in 1819 and the other in 1820. The purpose of these expeditions was to provide a more complete and accurate map of the central and southern plains and to evaluate this area with regard to the type of environment and resources to be found in the area (Nichols 1971:61).

Long's expeditions were government sponsored efforts, intended to explore the plains, but this time in an organized and scientific manner. Long's 1819 expedition met with many difficulties and its success was limited. Long's 1820 expedition consisted of 22 men: 10 soldiers and 12 civilians. The civilians were professionals, who were lacking in the Lewis and Clark expedition, and included a botanist, geologist, doctor, artist and naturalist.
Their expedition started at the Engineers Cantonment, north of present-day Omaha, headed west to the Loup River, then southwest to the Platte River and then followed the Platte west to the Rocky Mountains (Nichols 1971:55).

The expedition was plagued with several difficulties, including shortages of supplies and time, and the difficulty of gathering information. Each man was responsible for two or three different subjects and tasks in addition to their field of expertise. The 1820 expedition proved more successful than the 1819 expedition.

At the conclusion of his expedition Long evaluated the Plains as a region best suited for buffalo pasture and as a home for nomadic Indians. It was Long who labeled the central plains area as the "Great American Desert" (Nichols 1971:61).

Long was not alone in his ideas about the uninhabitability of the Great Plains. During the first half of the nineteenth century, when trappers and traders dominated the Great Plains, very little information was forthcoming about the area. Preconceived and publicized images that were removed from geographic reality abounded. From a study (Wishart 1975) of trappers journals, trading post journals, newspaper accounts and trapper's narratives, four images of the Plains were formed. The Plains were represented as a "wilderness unsuitable for permanent settlement, a 'land to cross' in order to reach more promising pastures, a potential grazing region and in a limited sense, an agricultural region" (Wishart 1975:46). These preconceived ideas and observations were not dispelled until more permanent settlement started occurring in the early 1850's.
Adventurers and artists, such as Prince Maximilian and Karl Bodmer, provided some insights, though somewhat romanticized, about the area. Maximillian and Bodmer traveled up the Missouri River in 1833 spending some time in the Sarpy County area and describing and painting what they saw (Thomas et al. 1976:25). They made their trip during the height of the fur trade years.

**Fur Trade Posts and Indian Agencies**

The portion of the plains which was fur trade territory was the area bounded on the east and north by the Missouri River and its tributaries, on the west by the Rocky Mountains and adjacent area and on the south by the Platte River (Wishart 1975:46).

The fur trade business operated from the first decade of the nineteenth century into the 1880's. There were two trading systems operating during this time. Both of these systems had their headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri. One system operated in the Rocky Mountains and the other system operated on the Missouri River (Wishart 1975:46).

The mountain system developed in the 1820's with the "rendezvous" as the major aspect of the system. The rendezvous was a system of trading whereby the trappers and Indians would meet once a year at a particular location to trade. The beaver was the most important fur bearing animal in the mountain system.

The Missouri River system began in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The river system was operated through a series of trading posts located along the Missouri River. Trappers and Indians would bring furs to the post; the post in turn would ship the
furs by river to St. Louis. The buffalo robe was the primary trade article in the Missouri River system. Figures 3 to 5 from Wishart (1975) illustrate the movement and the sources of the trading furs from 1808 to 1835.

Not only beaver and buffalo, but ermine, muskrat, deer, otter, fox and mink were trapped. From the early 1800's to about 1830 beaver was the primary fur bearing animal trapped. The trade in beaver furs dropped off with the rise in popularity of silk hats over fur hats. The trade of buffalo robes along with small fur bearing animals occurred from 1840 to 1860. From 1860 to 1885 there was a decrease in the trapping of small fur bearing animals and buffalo robes and a shift to hides due to an increased demand for leather products. By 1884 there were virtually no buffalo left on the Plains. Indian trade by the late 1860's and 1870's was conducted primarily by sutlers (men who follow an army and sell to the troops) at the army posts or by authorized traders located at Indian Agencies rather than company trading posts (Mattison 1961:10-11,27).

A variety of articles were used as trade goods and most of them came from Europe and the eastern United States. The trade goods included a variety of glass beads, clay, catlinite and shale pipes, brass bracelets, arrowheads, pins, metal awls, nails and gunflints. They also included knives, kettles, firearms, necked hoes, gunpowder, tobacco, vermilion, bar lead, blankets, cloth and ribbons (Wishart 1979:81). Figure 6 from Wishart (1979) illustrates the seasonal operations of the fur trade posts along the upper Missouri River.

There were two fur companies which vied for the trade along the Missouri River, the Missouri Fur Company and the American Fur
Figure 3

Upper Missouri Fur Trade Before 1808
(Source: Wishart 1975:48)
Upper Missouri Fur Trade, 1808-1819
(Source: Wishart 1975:49)
Figure 5

Upper Missouri Fur Trade, circa 1830-1835
(Source: Wishart 1975:51)
Organization of Upper Missouri Fur Trade
(Source: Wishart 1979:80)
Company. The Missouri Fur Company was organized around 1810 by Manual Lisa. His was the first fur trade post established along the Missouri. It was established a few miles north of the area that was to become Omaha. Joshua Pilcher took over the operations of the Missouri Fur Company upon the death of Lisa in 1820. The Company continued to operate strongly until 1823. Confrontations with the Arikara and Blackfoot Indians forced the abandonment of several of their posts further north and resulted in financial losses for the Company. Pilcher dissolved the Missouri Fur Company in 1824. Pilcher then moved to buildings further south, to what was later to become the town of Bellevue, to begin organizing a new fur trade company (Sunder 1968:57-59).

At about the same time that the Missouri Fur Company was ending its operations, the American fur company was beginning to prosper. The American Fur Company was started by John Jacob Astor in 1808. The western department of the American Fur Company was organized in St. Louis in 1822. John P. Cabanne established their first post along the Missouri River about three miles south of the Lisa post.

Further south, at what was to become Bellevue, Pilcher and former members of the Missouri Fur Company, Lucian Fontenelle, Andrew Drips, Charles Bent and William Vanderburgh, formed a partnership and opened a post in 1825 (Sunder 1968:61). This venture proved unprofitable for the group and Fontenelle purchased the post around 1828. Pilcher remained in the Rocky Mountains for three years then joined the American Fur Company and took over Cabanne's post in 1833 (Jensen 1975:357).
It was also in 1833 that John Dougherty took over the Fontenelle post for use as an Indian Agency. Pilcher took a position with an Indian Agency on the upper Missouri in 1835 and his fur post was then taken over by Peter A. Sarpy. A year later Sarpy moved the American Fur Company further south in the vicinity of the Dougherty Indian Agency. Sarpy's post remained an operating post until 1855 (Sterba 1976:103-104).

The travels of Prince Maximilian up the Missouri River accompanied by artist Karl Bodmer from 1833 to 1834 recorded much about the countryside and its inhabitants during that time period. He stopped by Bellevue heading north on May 3, 1833 and stopped at Cabanne's post later that same day. Dougherty had just taken over the Bellevue post and Cabanne's post was to change over to Pilcher later that same year. The following is the description Prince Maximilian gave of Dougherty's post and Cabanne's post (Thomas 1976:25).

Bellevue, Mr. Dougherty's post, is agreeably situated. The direction of the river is northwest. Below, on the bank, there are some huts, and on the top the buildings of the agents, where a sub-agent, Major Beauchamp, a blacksmith, and some servants of the company, all with their families, who attend to the plantations and the affairs of the company....

We soon saw the white buildings of Mr. Cabanne's trading post.... this trading post consists of a row of buildings of various sizes, stores, and the houses of the engages, married to Indian women, among which was that of Mr. Cabanne, which is two stories high. He is proprietor of the American Fur Company and director of this station. He received us very kindly, and conducted us over his premises. From the balcony of his house was a fine view over the river, but the prospect is still more interesting from the hills which rise at the back of the settlement. Between the buildings runs a small stream, with high banks, which rise from a pleasant valley, in which there are plantations of maize for the support of the inhabitants. Mr. Cabanne had planted fifteen acres of land with invaluable grain, which yield, annually 2,000 bushels of that corn, the land being extremely fertile.
These descriptions provide some insight into what the posts were like in 1833. The description also show that the area around the posts were suited for agriculture. Agriculture would be the major economic base of future settlements in the area.

Father Pierre Jean DeSmet made a map of the Missouri River where it borders Nebraska (See Figure 7) (Jensen 1975:354). On this map he locates the various posts, Indian villages and natural features that occurred along the route. The map was made around the year 1838.

Dougherty's Agency post and Sarpy's trading post are both within the study area, their locations can be seen in Figure 8 along with the other two posts in the vicinity, the Cabanne post of the American Fur Company and the Lisa post of the Missouri Fur Company.

The location of the Dougherty post was excavated by the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1973. The site contained five buildings, one of which was a blacksmith shop. This coincides with Maximillian's description of the post. Among the artifacts recovered were a hammer and tongs, china, scissors, table fork and knife, bone buttons, military buttons circa 1808-1821, hat plate circa 1813-1821, nails, screw, bolts, key, pintle, gunflints, powder horn plug, musket balls and musket side plate circa 1812 (Jensen 1975:348).

As mentioned previously, Dougherty took over the Bellevue post from Fontenelle, a fur trader, for use as an Indian Agency. It was known as the Council Bluffs Indian Agency at Bellevue. Dougherty operated the Indian Agency from 1833 to 1839 when he resigned his position. At this time Joseph Hamilton took over the post and new agency buildings were erected in 1841. These new buildings were erected below the other buildings along the Missouri bottom lands.
Father Pierre Jean DeSmet's Map
(Source: Jensen 1975:354)
Indian Agency and Trading Posts
(Source: Jensen 1975:344)
Hamilton was replaced by Daniel Miller in 1841. The buildings were used for about 15 years after Miller took over. In the year 1854 negotiations of treaties were under way with the Otoe, Missouri and Omaha Indians for land cessions. The Otoe and Missouri ceded their land on March 15, 1854, and the Omaha land cession followed the next day on March 16 (See Figure 9). Reservations were established for the Omaha in what was later to become northeast Nebraska and a reservation for the Otoe and Missouri was established in southeast Nebraska. Once the Indian land cessions had been completed there was no longer a need for the Indian Agency (Jensen 1975:366-368; Morton 1907:84). The Nebraska Territory was established that same year under the Kansas-Nebraska Act. This opened the area to permanent settlement. Previously the only persons within the area were the Native Americans, fur traders, Indian Agents and missionaries.

The Missions

The Sarpy County area was chosen as the location for Indian missions for two reasons: the Otoe, Omaha and Pawnee had their villages in the vicinity and the Indian Agency and the trading post of Peter Sarpy brought the Indians to the area to trade. The missionaries began arriving in the area in the 1830's. Their intention was to educate the Indians in Christian ways and values, paving the route for settlers arriving in the future.

The first missionaries to arrive were the Baptist missionaries Moses and Eliza Merrill in 1833. They opened a school for Otoe children in Bellevue but moved in 1835 to a new mission site on the north side of the Platte River (See Figure 10). The mission was closed in 1840 upon the death of Moses Merrill (DeGolier 1976:162).
Figure 9

Indian Land Cessions and Reserves
(Source:Morton 1907:84)
Location of Moses Merrill Mission
The mission site contained a house which combined a school, church and living quarters. All that is left of the site is a stone fireplace and chimney (Kivett 1971:39).

Samuel Allis and John Dunbar were the first Presbyterian missionaries to enter the area, arriving in 1834 (Mankowski 1976:165). Rather than establish a permanent mission site, Allis and Dunbar lived with the Pawnees year round. Their reports provided a great deal of ethnographic data about the Pawnee Indians.

The Presbyterian Church established a mission in Bellevue in 1847 under the direction of Edmund McKinney. The mission house was erected on the plateau above the bottom lands. The building faced east as to have a view of the Missouri River. It was two stories high, the central part being 64 by 28 feet with two wings, 30 by 18 feet and 30 by 22 feet. The building was to accommodate the mission family, assistants and forty Indian students. The mission was to provide services for both the Omaha and Otoe Indians.

William Hamilton took over the operations of the mission house in 1853. After the Indians ceded their lands to the United States government in 1854 the mission house was no longer needed. By this time its services to the Indians had already been dwindling. It was sold in 1856 and converted into the Bellevue House Hotel. It was destroyed by fire in the 1860's (Krider 1976:192,195).

The occupation of the study area by the missionaries was a short-lived one. They arrived in the area for a particular purpose, the education of the Indians, and once the Indians were removed from the area their presence was no longer necessary. Since the missionaries were no longer needed in their original capacity they
turned their attention to establishing churches in the newly organized town of Bellevue. The missionaries and their families provided a base population for the developing towns.

The closing of the Indian Agency, missions and fur posts coincided with the establishment of the Nebraska Territory in 1854. At this time the way was opened for permanent settlement and town development.

The Towns

After 1854 several towns were platted as the settlers tried to claim their portion of the land to be had in the new Nebraska Territory. Of the many towns platted some made it no further than the paper they were drawn on, others lasted a few years but failed to last due to various factors, while others succeeded and continue to this day.

Several of the early townsites progressed no further than the establishment of a post office and a building or two, while others managed to survive and grow until the railroads began laying their routes in the late 1860's. The railroads' decision on routes often meant life or death for some towns. The physical environment played a part in the success or failure of some of the early towns as well. Seemingly ideal locations turned out to be not so ideal after several years of attempting to establish a town, while for others, their choice of location proved to be a successful one.

Establishing a town involved a few simple steps. Those interested in promoting a townsite would first organize a Town Company, such as the Platteford Town Company and the George Bridge
Company, who platted the early towns of Platteford and Papillion City respectively. The company would then stake out 320 acres, the equivalent of a half section, the most allowed under the Federal Townsites Act of May 23, 1844. If they wanted to enlarge their townsite the members of the Company could pre-empt a quarter section of land per individual. Once a site was surveyed, the plat of the townsite would be filed with the county offices. The proprietors of the Town Company usually were the first to erect dwellings and businesses within their townsite to entice others to settle in their location.

Nebraska was surveyed in 1855-1856. The land survey system used was a grid system based on north-south lines known as Township lines and east-west lines known as Range lines. These lines form Townships six miles on a side. Each Township consists of 36 sections, each section being one mile square. A square mile section consists of 640 acres, and each section is divided into quarter sections and quarter-quarter sections consisting of 160 acres and 40 acres respectively. Any town settlements which occurred had to fit into this system of land survey which placed restrictions on the spatial arrangement of the settlements.

Figure 11 is a composite of the township plats and field notes of the original government survey of 1855-1856. This composite was done by the Sarpy County Surveyor in 1964. Besides showing the locations of towns, structures and roads this map shows in detail the location of natural features such as bluffs, rivers, marshes and ridges, as well as several types of trees that can be found in the study.
Sarpy County, Nebraska Territory
(Source: Nebraska State Historical Society)
area. This map offers an insight into the physical environment of the county during the years 1855-1856, the beginning of major historical settlement and town development within the study area.

Towns with names like Salinite and Triqual were among those towns whose proprietors got no further than to propose their existence and chose a location. Other towns such as Xenia, Hazelton, Fairview and Platona fared better but only by having a post office and one or more of the following: hotel, store and church. They were short-lived towns, unable to be supported by the surrounding population. Because of population and resource constraints only a few towns could exist within a given area, so not all those planned could have survived.

The towns under consideration in this study number 14 and were platted between 1854 and 1890. Included among these 14 towns are those which succeeded, those which failed quickly and those whose success was limited. The towns considered include river towns, railroad towns and inland towns and represent a variety in town type, form and function. The 14 towns in Sarpy County includes: Bellevue, Papillion City, LaPlatte(a), Larimer City, Platteford, Sauntee, Forest City, Papillion, LaPlatte(b), Sarpy Center, Springfield, Gretna, Portal and Chalco. There existed two Papillions and two LaPlattes, each was established at a different location and time from the other. Figure 12 shows the location of the 14 towns under consideration in Sarpy County. Appendix A provides information about the location of the towns using the township-range system, and the occupation dates for each town. A description of each town follows.

Bellevue was the first town to be established in the Nebraska Territory. It developed out of the fur trade posts, Indian agencies
Figure 12

Towns in Sarpy County
and mission houses that had previously been established in the area. After the ceding of the land by the Omaha, Otoe and Missouri Indians the residents of the area, those attached to the fur posts and missions, believed themselves entitled to 320 acres of land apiece since they had already been established in the area for several years. A Bellevue Settlers club was established and a Claim Association was organized. In their by-laws they developed rules which established legal claims and settled land disputes. No claims made prior to the 1854 treaties were recognized by the Association (Sayre 1911:72).

Bellevue was incorporated by an act of the Territorial Legislature March 15, 1855. Bellevue is located on the Missouri River. It was selected as the county seat in 1857 when Sarpy County became a separate county from Douglas County. It remained the county seat until 1875 when, following a fierce political battle between Bellevue, Papillion and Sarpy Center, Papillion was awarded the county seat, a position it still holds.

An early description of Bellevue (Goss 1859:15) offers an insight into the physical environment where the town was located and what Bellevue had to offer in the way of services at that time.

...Let us take a view of the spot itself upon which the city is situated. Casting our eyes around us, we discover an elevated plateau, of triangular form, about five square miles in extent, as level and beautiful as the hand of nature could make it. Upon the eastern portion of this plateau, overlooking the Missouri River, the city of Bellevue is situated, embracing within its present topographical limits some two square miles. From this spot, with our eyes toward the rising sun, we look down upon the turbid waters of said river, which forms our eastern boundary. From this point we have a view of the river southward and the valley of the same, for a distance of nearly fifty miles.... About two miles south, the Pappeo creek opens its mouth into the Missouri River. Between this plateau and the creek we have a
high alluvial prairie bottom, gradually sloping, and rich and fertile in extreme. Along this creek there is an abundance of timber, which is of great value in these regions.

Extending our gaze westward, we trace the plateau about two miles, covered with a smooth coat of green, where it is terminated by the Pappeo creek. This creek, which is a clear running stream, large enough for milling purposes, bounds this plateau upon the west as well as the southwest. Beyond this creek the valley rises gradually into a beautiful outspread prairie, of gentle waves and cones, studded with groves of various sizes, as delightful as they are useful.

Northward, the plateau rises gradually, and receding, swells into gentle eminences, the summit of which is our northern boundary. From the center of the plateau to the summit, the rise is so gradual that it is unequalled for residences in the world.... From them we overlook the whole country east, west and south, while the summit of the same protects the city from the bleak winds of the north. From the top of the same, especially from that point known as Elk Hill, the view in every direction is almost unlimited.

The description also shows what Bellevue had to offer as a town during the late 1850's.

The frequent steamboat arrivals poured in emigration upon us. Every nook and corner of the two hotels were well filled, as well also as private residences.... Several large and substantial brick buildings were also erected. The new bank building...and two brick yards were also put into operation in the city. These, together with four sawmills, could not supply building materials as fast as demanded. A large and tasteful school house has been completed...a neat and substantial Church edifice has been erected by the Presbyterians and another commenced by the Methodists.... This summer a valuable steam ferry was put upon the river.

Bellevue succeeded as a town and exists today due to a variety of reasons. A number of residents and dwellings were located at Bellevue prior to its establishment as a town. It started out with an established population base, and its location was known throughout the central plains because of the fur trade posts located there. Bellevue's location along the Missouri River made it an ideal location for trading enterprises and as a jumping-off position for travelers heading westward, resulting in a steadily increasing
population and town development. A Burlington railroad depot was erected in Bellevue in 1869.

Papillion City was surveyed and platted in 1857 by the George Bridge Company and consisted of 320 acres. It was approved and incorporated by the Territorial Legislature in 1857 (Papillion 1970:14).

Papillion City was located two and one half miles to the northeast of the present town of Papillion (Figure 12). Papillion City did not even last long enough for a post office to be established. It did not succeed as a town for two reasons; first, the lack of a nearby stream did not make it an attractive location for settlement, and second, there was a lack of transportation connections between Papillion City and the developing towns of Bellevue to its east and Omaha to the northeast.

LaPlatte(a) and Larimer City were two early towns located in the southeast corner of the county. Their settlement is closely associated since each had the same town proprietors.

LaPlatte(a) was the result of a town project entered into in 1855 by four men, Mr.s' Rankin, Larimer, Hogoboom and Cuming. This town was situated on the Missouri River, about four miles south of Bellevue. At this location was erected a tavern, a hotel, a reverend's house and a sawmill (Goss 1859:17).

The location of the town directly on the Missouri River subjected it to flooding. The townsite was abandoned for higher ground in an area west of LaPlatte(a). A new town enterprise was organized, the Larimer City Land Company, by Larimer and Hogoboom. The new townsite they surveyed and platted in 1858 was known as Larimer City, often
referred to as Larimer. Goss (1859:18) describes the location of the
new town of Larimer City.

...located upon an extensive and beautiful plateau,
directly at the junction of the Platte and Missouri Rivers. This plateau is considerably elevated above the Missouri River, sloping gradually towards it, and admirably situated for a large business metropolis. The plateau is bounded on the east and south by these two rivers, on the north by the Pappeo Creek and on the west, by a gradually sloping prairie, which rises to a level with the upland lying west of the plateau. This plateau is about two square miles in extent and embraces as beautiful a tract of land, lying toward the rising sun, as can be found in the world.

In addition to this description Goss mentions other natural features in the town's vicinity such as limestone and sandstone quarries along the Platte River and several coal deposits.

Despite the seemingly better location of Larimer City than the town of LaPlatte and despite its location on the territorial highway, Larimer City did not develop into a prospering, long lived town. The post office which had been established in 1858 was discontinued in 1860 and the town's population dwindled (Perkey 1978:465). In 1870 a portion of the former townsite of Larimer City was included in the Omaha and Southwestern Railroad's platting and development of the current town of LaPlatte(b), which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The town of Platteford was platted by the Platteford Town Company in 1857. A post office was established May 8, 1858, but was discontinued in October of 1879. A limestone quarry was located in the southwest corner of the town and Big Spring Creek ran through the center of the town. Platteford was located along the Platte River in the southwest corner of Sarpy County.
Another town located in the western portion of the county along the Platte River was the town of Sauntee. The town was platted in October of 1857 by the Sauntee Land and Ferry Company (Omaha World Herald 1962). Sauntee was located on the Platte River with a small creek to the southeast of the townsit.

Like Platteford, Sauntee did not last as a town. Both Sauntee's and Platteford's reasons for not developing are similar. The terrain in that region of the county was not ideal for town development. The Platte Valley is subject to flooding and the bluffs along the river often rise to 90 feet above the bottomland making transportation to and from the towns difficult. There was no access to the railroads and no bridge crossing the Platte River. Ferry service was inadequate and not maintainable (Omaha World Herald 1962). As a result of these difficulties both Platteford and Sauntee failed as towns.

In 1854 Wesely Knight took out a pre-emption and surveyed the town of Forest City, it was filed in 1857 at the county court and was incorporated as a town in 1858. Forest City was located in the western portion of Sarpy County, near the confluence of the Elkhorn and Platte Rivers.

Forest City was an active town in its early years. It was on the main travelled road between Omaha and Ashland and between Ashland and Elkhorn. A ferry operated on the Platte River between Forest City and Ashland. The ferry was used by many settlers heading west after the Civil War (Sarpy 1957:42).

At one time Forest City had a post office, which was established in 1858, two stores, saloons, a blacksmith shop, shoemaker shop, two
boarding houses, a log church and private dwellings (Sarpy 1957:43). The area where Forest City was located had been described as being "covered with native timber and abounded with wild game and streams full of fish" (Sarpy 1957:43). In the southeast corner of the townsite were located several springs.

Forest City no longer exists as a town. By the end of the 1870's Forest City was declining in population. The post office was moved to Gretna and the town was by-passed as a depot on the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad.

The town of Papillion is located at the juncture of Papillion Creek and the Union Pacific Railroad. The town was surveyed and platted in November of 1870. It is two and one half miles west of the earlier town of Papillion City, which was defunct by this time.

The county seat was awarded to Papillion in 1875. By 1887 Papillion was a prospering and rapidly growing town. A description of the town in 1887 states that Papillion had a court house, public schools, hotels, several stores, a flour mill, warehouse, shops, public hall, post office, numerous private dwellings and five churches (Bangs 1887:305). Union Pacific built a depot in Papillion. Papillion had two newspapers, the Sarpy County Sentinel and the Papillion Times. The Sentinel was started in 1872 but was moved to Sarpy Center in 1875 when it appeared that Sarpy Center had a chance of becoming the county seat. The Papillion Times was started in 1874 and continues to the present (Andreas 1882:1370).

There were three hotels established in Papillion: the Sarpy House, the Papillion House and the Wilcox House, in 1870, 1871 and 1876 respectively. The Union Pacific flouring mill was erected on
Papillion Creek. This mill had three grinding stones, two for grinding wheat and one for corn and feed. A second mill in Papillion ground wheat, which was shipped east, and corn, most of which, ground for feed, was shipped west (Andreas 1882:1371).

In 1875 elevators, or warehouses, were erected on the Union Pacific Railroad near the depot. A stockyard was operated by the elevator owner and large corn cribs were located west of the main street and fronting the railway (Andreas 1882:1371).

Papillion succeeded as a town through a combination of factors. The location of the town on Papillion Creek and the surrounding fields made the area suitable for agricultural development. The Union Pacific depot with the nearby elevators, stockyards, corn cribs and mills made Papillion an ideal transshipment point.

The original town of LaPlatte(a) was located on the Missouri River between the Platte and the Big Papillion Creek in 1855. Flooding prompted removal of the town further west at which time it became known as Larimer City. The present town of LaPlatte(b) was platted by the Omaha and Southwestern Railroad in 1870 and incorporated a portion of the town of Larimer City which it was located next to.

A post office was established in 1870. By 1887 there existed in LaPlatte(b) a hotel, grist mill, store, blacksmith shop and several other buildings. Limestone quarries located to the north and southwest of the town offered employment to many. The limestone was shipped to Omaha, Lincoln and other places by the Omaha and Southwestern Railroad. A railroad bridge belonging to the Omaha and Southwestern crossed the Platte River near the town (Bangs 1887:304).
LaPlatte(b)'s location between the Platte River and Missouri River and its location on a railroad was advantageous to its development. LaPlatte(b) still exists in Sarpy County but is not a major town.

The town of Sarpy Center was located nearly in the geographical center of the county. The town was surveyed and platted in 1875 by a land company organized by a Captain Spearman, who also established the town of Springfield (Bangs 1887:305).

A post office was established at Sarpy Center in 1875 but was discontinued in 1883 (Perkey 1978:467). At one time Sarpy Center had a hotel, two general merchandise stores, a drug store, a blacksmith shop, a harness shop and several other buildings (Bangs 1887:305; Greunke 1982). The Sarpy County Sentinel newspaper was published there as well. Sarpy Center lost in its attempt to gain the county seat when it was awarded to Papillion in 1875.

After the town of Springfield, located a few miles southwest of Sarpy Center, was built on the Missouri Pacific Railroad in 1881, Sarpy Center dwindled as a town and became defunct soon after.

Springfield was surveyed and platted in November of 1881 by the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The land was owned by Captain Spearman who had purchased 160 acres of land upon hearing that the Missouri Pacific Railroad was intending to build a rail line in the vicinity.

The Missouri Pacific was deeded a portion of the land alongside the rail line, they laid down two long side tracks east and west of the main line as well. A depot, 24 feet by 50 feet, was erected. Shortly thereafter occupation of the townsite was underway. A store was erected, a post office established and houses were built. Nine buildings from Sarpy Center were moved to Springfield in 1881.
On the east side of the track were corn cribs, three grain elevators and a stockyard. On the west side of the track were more corn cribs and a lumberyard. In 1882 there were two general stores, a hardware store, three drug stores, a hotel, a restaurant, a lumberyard, two harness shops, a livery stable, two agricultural implement warehouses, a blacksmith shop and a saloon, as well as three doctors (Andreas 1882:1375).

The town of Springfield is located on Buffalo Creek and was named Springfield because of the numerous springs in the area and the open fields surrounding it. Springfield's location in the center of the county, on a rail line, on a creek and surrounded by fields suitable for farming resulted in the success of the town.

Gretna was platted by the Lincoln Land Company in 1886. It is located a few miles northeast of where Forest City had been established. The town of Gretna was platted on the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. A post office was established at Gretna in September of 1886 (Perkey 1978:468). It was Gretna being chosen over Forest City for the location of a depot that spelled the demise for Forest City and the success of Gretna. It's location in the western portion of the county, a railroad depot and surrounding farm fields contributed to Gretna's success.

The townsite of Portal was platted in 1887 by John L. McCaque under the auspices of the Portal Land and Town Company. Portal was ideally situated on the south fork of Papillion Creek and was surrounded by three railroads: the Union Pacific, Missouri Pacific and the Burlington Railroad.
The Union Pacific route that went past Portal was known as the ox-bow route. This route came into portal from the northwest, went south around the bottom of the town, down to Papillion, across to the Gilmore depot, north to the Avery depot and on up to Omaha. The ox-bow route was a nine mile loop laid out south of the originally planned, more direct northerly route between the towns of Fremont and Omaha, located in Douglas County. The ox-bow route was chosen to avoid grading problems that existed on the direct route. Both the Missouri Pacific and the Union Pacific had a depot at the junction of their two railroads in Portal, with a boardwalk located between them (Ridenour 1982:n.p.).

Though the town of Portal was not long lasting, existing only about 18 years, it was quite extensive in its facilities. Portal contained a hotel, a harrow factory, a steam cooker factory, a painter and paint shop and a post office, established in 1887 but discontinued in 1898. The town also contained a general merchandise store, two saloons, a bank building, a nursery and a school. A town block was appropriated for a court house to be built if the town prospered. Portal had a newspaper, a grain elevator, two depots, a German Methodist church and parsonage and a Section House (a house owned by the railroad for housing railroad workers) (Papillion Times 1931; Ridenour 1982:n.p.).

Portal ceased to exist as a town due to several factors: flooding, a washed out bridge and the loss of daily passenger train service. A severe flood inundated much of the town in 1903. A bridge, north of the town, was washed out and not replaced, which made access to and from the town difficult. At this time the Union
Pacific was contemplating discontinuing the ox-bow route and going with a shortened and more direct route, which they did in 1905. After the 1903 flood and the difficulties with transportation Portal began losing its population. A Vacation of Land of Plot of Portal was filed June 9, 1905 (Ridenour 1982:n.p.).

The town of Chalco was surveyed and platted in October of 1887. It is located on the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. A post office was established in the town January 19, 1888, but was discontinued in 1953 (Perkey 1978:465). At one time Chalco had a depot, lumber yard and grain elevator located along the railroad. Chalco still exists but consists of only a handful of houses. Chalco is located in the northwest corner of the county, not far from where the town of Portal was located. They were both established at the same time and while both were located on a railroad neither town was a success.

The 14 towns discussed here were a part of the development of Sarpy County from 1854 to 1890, the year the last of the 14 towns was platted. Of the 14 towns only six currently survive. They are the towns of Bellevue, Papillion, Gretna, Springfield, Chalco and LaPlatte(b).

Conclusions

This chapter provides the historical background of Sarpy County, the data, for use in the frontier model. The historical data begins with the acquisition and exploration of the frontier with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and continues through the fur trade years from 1810 to the mid-1850's, which includes the Indian Agencies and Indian Missions, and finally the town building years from 1854 to
1890. Within this chronological sequence of events the political, economic, social and spatial structure and organization of the Sarpy County frontier was presented. Figure 13 is a summary of the positive and negative influences of a number of variables in the development of these 14 towns.

The frontier model puts this data into a framework so that it may be studied in a clear and organized manner. The data is easily organized into the three-part frontier model and a pattern of settlement concerned with temporal and spatial changes, individual settlements and general characteristics for Sarpy County is the result.
Variables Influencing Settlement

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Railroad</th>
<th>River</th>
<th>Road</th>
<th>Access to Transportation</th>
<th>Suitable Terrain</th>
<th>Farmland</th>
<th>Variety of Services</th>
<th>Stable and/or Growing Population</th>
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Condition which was advantageous to town development.
Condition which was disadvantageous to town development.
++ Condition changed from advantageous to disadvantageous due to one or more factors.
CHAPTER IV
Sarpy County as a Frontier

As the previous chapter illustrates, the period of time from 1803 to 1900 was a time of discovery, settlement and development for Sarpy County. These three factors are major characteristics of a frontier. This chapter is concerned with studying Sarpy County using the frontier model previously outlined, and with collecting data regarding the settlement and development of the county. The frontier model is an outline of the settlement process and the process of change that a region may undergo. The frontier model consists of three parts, defining the frontier, settlement types and conditions which characterize the frontier.

Defining the Frontier

Spatially the frontier is defined as a region of previously unsettled land (with the exception of the Native Americans) which upon acquisition by a governing body is opened to settlement and development. Temporally, the frontier begins with the first influx of settlers into the region and ceases to exist when the settlements in the region become stabilized and integrated on a national level. A region is stabilized and integrated when its settlements are no longer transitory and unique but resemble the rest of the nation. As
the frontier changes through time it also changes in its spatial arrangement. The settlements in the frontier move around, rise and decline and compete with each other until a stability is reached.

The study area, except for its Indian inhabitants, was unsettled territory until its acquisition in 1803 as a part of the Louisiana Purchase. Though fur trappers had traveled through the area prior to 1803, they did not establish any type of settlements. After 1803 and up until the area was organized as the Nebraska Territory in 1854 the only settlers legally allowed in the area were the fur traders, Indian agents and missionaries. After 1854 most of the Indian population was moved to northeastern Nebraska and there was an influx of settlement and more permanent town settlements were established.

The end of the frontier in Sarpy County is not as easily fixed as are its beginnings. The end of the frontier occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century. By this time those settlements which occupied strategic positions within the county were doing well and those which had not been able to compete had fallen into decline or ceased to exist altogether. Those settlements in existence by the end of the nineteenth century had become stable settlements and were being integrated on a national level. The process of stabilization and integration meant changes through time in the spatial arrangement of settlements and the type of settlements in the frontier. The type of settlements in the frontier and the spatial arrangement of the settlements are aspects of the frontier dealt with in part two of the frontier model, settlement types.
Settlement Types

A major factor in the spatial and temporal development of a frontier is the type or types of settlements which occurred in the region. The process of settlement is a process of change which over time affects the form, function and distribution of settlements in the frontier. Through the frontier model this process of change is represented by a classification system of settlement types. Five settlement types characterize the classification system in the frontier model. The five settlement types represent not only change temporally but spatially as well, and are: the dispersed settlement, the semi-nucleated/camp settlement, the nucleated settlement, the frontier town/small farm settlement and the entrepot.

**Dispersed settlement.** The dispersed settlement in the frontier is characterized by widely scattered households which are located along main roads or trails. The dispersed type of settlement is the earliest settlement to take place and is not associated with any organized community of settlement but is an independent settling by individuals. In Sarpy County settlement prior to 1854 was not allowed except with governmental permission. This permission was given only to fur traders, Indian agents and missionaries, whose settlement was not dispersed. The dispersed type of settlement is applicable to squatters, those who preceded the legalized settlement. While the existence of squatters in the frontier is probable, their impact on future settlement is the frontier is limited, except for providing a possible population base for future settlements.

**Semi-nucleated/camp settlement.** The second type of settlement in the frontier, the semi-nucleated/camp settlement, is characterized by
a collection of households and buildings, which provide a minimum of goods and services for the settlers. It is a short term, transitory type of settlement which is exploitative of the frontier and is not organized under any localized government. In the Sarpy County frontier there are three forms of settlement which, while they differ in their functions, are semi-nucleated/camp settlements. These three settlements are the trading posts, Indian agency and Indian mission. These three settlements are the initial settlements which take place in the Sarpy County frontier.

The fur trade posts established in the Nebraska Territory were the first white settlements to take place in the area. The function of the trading posts was solely an economic one, the business of fur trading. The two trading posts known to have been in the Sarpy County area were located along the Missouri River, the eastern edge of the frontier. Around each trading post were erected a cluster of buildings which provided support services and functions, such as a blacksmith and warehouses, for the trading post. The trading posts were exploitative of the fur bearing animals in the new territory for over 50 years, but left when the trading shifted westward to the Rocky Mountains. The locations for the trading posts were chosen for three reasons: the abundance of fur bearing animals in the area, the closeness of the Indians with whom they traded and the Missouri River, the major transportation route in and out of the frontier and the major trading route to Saint Louis. Both of the fur companies active in the area, the American Fur Company and the Missouri Fur Company, were headquartered in Saint Louis. The trading posts were
one of three semi-nucleated/camp settlements in the Sarpy County frontier.

An Indian agency was established in the study area in 1833. The agency originally occupied buildings which had been a trading post, but was moved to newer buildings in the same vicinity a few years later. The Indian agency was established by the United States government for the express purpose of negotiating treaties with the Omaha, Otoe and Pawnee Indians to acquire their land. The agency, both the original and the second one, consisted of a cluster of buildings all concerned with carrying out agency functions.

The Indian missions, the third type of semi-nucleated/camp settlement in the Sarpy County frontier, first entered the area in 1833. The missions consisted of a cluster of buildings and were located near the trading posts and Indian agency since the surrounding Indian population often congregated there. The Indian missions were established by church groups for the purpose of educating and preparing them for the upcoming increases in white settlement.

All three of the semi-nucleated/camp settlements were established with individual goals in mind. Once their reasons for being in the frontier no longer existed they either left the area, as did the fur traders and Indian agents, or, as the missionaries did, turned their attention toward establishing churches for the new settlers. After the year 1833 all three of these settlements existed simultaneously until shortly after 1854 when it was no longer economically advantageous or necessary for them to remain in the area.
**Nucleated settlement.** A nucleated settlement, the third type of settlement which may occur in a frontier, consists of a cluster of households located along a transportation route, such as a road, river, or railroad. It is a small settlement with a limited number of services available to its inhabitants. When the nucleated settlement type occurred in Sarpy County it was under one of three circumstances.

First, the nucleated settlement may have functioned as a transitional phase between the semi-nucleated/camp settlement and the frontier town/small farm settlement as in the Bellevue area, when it changed from being an area of trading posts and Indian missions to a frontier town. Second, it may have functioned not as a transitional phase but as a foundation for a frontier town, providing a base population and minimal services upon which a town could build. Forest City, for example, prior to its development as a frontier town consisted of a handful of farming households and businesses. It is from this base that the town developed. Lastly, the nucleated settlement may have been a settlement which after its establishment existed for a short time and when it did not develop any further it fell into decline and was abandoned. This was the case with many of the early settlements in Sarpy County such as Sauntee, Platteford and Larimer City.

In all three of these circumstances the nucleated settlement is shown to occur prior to the frontier town/small farm settlement type. The nucleated settlement may also occur after the establishment of frontier towns. A frontier town which falls into decline may,
instead of ceasing to exist, become stabilized as a nucleated
settlement, as was the case with the towns of Chalco and LaPlatte(b).

**Frontier town/small farm settlement.** The frontier town/small farm settlement was the fourth type of settlement to take place in the frontier. It is with this stage of settlement that the frontier begins taking on a new appearance. Changes in the spatial arrangement of the frontier occurred during this phase of settlement. The frontier town was the location of social, economic, political and religious activity in the area. The frontier town also served as the collection point for the products of the surrounding area which were produced for an outside market and it served as the supply center for the surrounding area. Along with the variety of services the town provided it was also a part of the transportation system linking the frontier with the metropolitan area.

The towns in the Sarpy County frontier were located along either transportation routes, such as roads, rivers and railroads, or they were located inland, away from the major transportation routes. The location of the towns in the frontier changed over time. These changes in location were due to several factors, environmental, economic and political. As these factors determined the location of the towns within the frontier they also determined the development of the towns over time.

The 14 towns under consideration in this paper were established in Sarpy County when the territory was organized in 1854 or when the railroads came through the county around the year 1870. The seven towns from the territorial beginnings of the county were located, with one exception, along the two principle rivers bordering the
county, the Platte River and the Missouri River, or along the main roads in the region (See Figure 12). The exception was the town of Papillion City. Its inland location was not an advantageous one. The town was located too far away from a water supply and from transportation and communication routes. Having only recently been opened to white settlement an adequate road system had not yet been established in the territory, which further isolated the town making its success virtually impossible.

The four towns of Sauntee, Platteford, LaPlatte(a) and Larimer City were located along the Platte and Missouri Rivers because of the rivers importance as transportation and communication routes in and out of the frontier. The terrain in the southwest corner of the county, the location of Sauntee and Platteford, is characterized by hills and bluffs along the river, making road travel to and from towns difficult. The Platte River provided its share of difficulties for the two towns. The Platte River frequently flooded and at other times would virtually dry up. Being a shallow river, navigation was difficult and maintenance of a ferry was expensive and inefficient. Without adequate transportation routes across the river and overland, and because they were located so far from other towns with more direct access to the metropolitan area, such as Bellevue, neither of these towns succeeded.

The town of LaPlatte(a) located along the Missouri River was frequently flooded and consequently abandoned for a new location and a new name, Larimer City. While the new location was better in that flooding was avoided it did not develop and was abandoned. At the time that Larimer was trying to succeed the majority of settlers were
establishing themselves in towns which had more to offer, such as Forest City and Bellevue.

Forest City did very well because of its location near the confluence of the Elkhorn and Platte Rivers in the western portion of the county. It was located on a well-traveled road with a ferry nearby. Its decline and abandonment was due to being bypassed as the location for a railroad depot.

Bellevue, the only one of the seven earliest towns in existence at the present time, was located along the Missouri River. Because of its location along a major transportation, trade and communication route the town did well. When the emphasis shifted from river travel to railroad travel Bellevue was able to compete with the new towns being established because it received one of the first depots in the area.

The other seven towns under consideration were established in Sarpy County with the development of the railroads. Several changes occurred in the Sarpy County frontier as a result of the railroads. There was an increase in town building activity and a shift away from the river and toward overland routes. The towns of Springfield, Papillion and Gretna occupied strategic positions along the railroad network and were successful towns. The towns of Chalco, LaPlatte(b), Sarpy Center and Portal were unable to compete and fell into decline, the latter two were eventually abandoned altogether. The towns established later were able to provide faster and more efficient access to the metropolitan area than had previously been possible.

All 14 of the towns in the region had an agricultural economic base and they functioned as the social, economic, political and
religious center for the surrounding farm community. The towns provided a variety of goods and services for the farmers, as well as functioning as collection points for their products and providing them with access to outside markets. The ability of the 14 towns to provide all the functions required by the surrounding population varied from town to town, influencing their ability to compete with each other. Some were successful in their efforts while others were not. It is at this point, when there is active competition between towns and the decline of towns no longer occupying strategic positions within a region, that the frontier begins to stabilize and become integrated with the metropolitan area.

**Entrepot.** The fifth type of settlement in the frontier is the entrepot. It is a stage of development which does not occur in every settlement in the frontier but only to one or two within a region. The entrepot is the primary link between the area of settlement and the metropolitan area and is generally located along the border of the frontier. It is through the entrepot that the goods and people essential to the settlement of the frontier pass.

In the Sarpy County frontier the town of Bellevue functioned as the entrepot. Located directly on the Missouri River, Bellevue had established itself as the entry and exit point to the frontier many years earlier when trading posts were located there. During its developing years as a town in the 1850's and the 1860's Bellevue served as the jumping off point for settlers heading west and as a port for steamboats traveling up and down the Missouri River. Bellevue functioned as the trade connection between the frontier and the metropolitan area.
Many of the services provided by Bellevue were taken over by the city of Omaha, located to the north of Bellevue. While Bellevue no longer functioned as an entrepot it remained an active town. The establishment of a railroad depot in Bellevue made it possible for the town to maintain a strategic position in the transportation and trade network developing in the region.

The five settlement types in the frontier model provide a framework of the settlement process in the frontier, detailing the features which characterize the settlements and the changes that they undergo. The changes which occur are changes in the temporal development and in the spatial arrangement of the settlements in the frontier. The settlements which were the most numerous and which impacted the development of the frontier the most were the towns. The form of the towns, which refers to the physical arrangement of the individual towns and the features which characterize this arrangement, represent the changes, both temporally and spatially, which the frontier region undergoes.

**Town Form**

The way in which a town develops is dependent upon several factors. These factors determine the features which characterize the town form. The three factors affecting town form in the Sarpy County frontier are the land laws in effect during settlement, the date the town was established and the location of the town in the region. The land laws in effect at the time of settlement determined who could claim the land and how the land was to be settled. The date of establishment and the location of the town combine to determine the
physical arrangement of the town and the services available in the
town. Using original plat maps, current maps, historical
descriptions and on site observation in looking at town forms for
Sarpy County, three different forms have been identified: the inland
town, the river town and the railroad town. The terms used to
describe the three forms obviously denote the importance of town
location on town form.

Land laws such as the Pre-Emption Act of 1841 and the Homestead
Act of 1862 influenced the settlement of the frontier and the
development of the frontier towns (Dick 1954:118; Olson 1966:158).
Under these two acts homesteaders could obtain land for very little
money or none at all. The Pre-Emption Act required a payment of
$1.25 per acre of land and the Homestead Act provided that

...any person who is the head of a family, or has
arrived at the age of twenty-one years, and is a citizen of
the United States...and who has never borne arms against he
United states Government or given aid and comfort to its
enemies...

could upon payment of a ten dollar fee file a claim for up to a
quarter-section of public land and that after having

...resided upon or cultivated the same for the term of
five years immediately succeeding the time of filing...

the claimant could secure a final patent for the land from the
government (Olson 1966:158). Other conditions of the act required
that improvements be made on the land and the residence built and
lived in for the five years (Dick 1954:118). The prospect of
obtaining land free of charge brought an influx of settlement into
the frontier and affected its development.
The two aspects of the Homestead Act which had the most impact on settlement were: first, that the land had to be cultivated and second, that the claimant was required to live on his or her property. This resulted in a large number of small farms forming an agriculturally based economy in the Sarpy County frontier. Towns began springing up in the frontier to meet the needs of these farming communities by providing them with goods and services and access to a trade network. Because the homesteaders were required to live on their land they had to come to town to conduct business. The towns, therefore, consisted of townspeople and the businesses they operated, with a surrounding farm population, each providing the necessary support for the other.

A great deal of information is obtained about town forms by comparing the original plat maps and current maps and using historical descriptions, as well as on site observation of the towns. Plat maps provide a good indication of the form which the towns in Sarpy County took. The plat maps, however, represent the intentions of the town proprietors and not what may have actually occurred. The validity of their use in this study needs to be examined to avoid making assumptions about town form which cannot be substantiated.

Original plat maps are available for 11 of the 14 towns included in this study. Of these 11 plat maps, six are for towns which exist at the present time. A comparison made of the six existing towns, using current maps and on site observation, with their original plat maps shows that all six of the towns did indeed follow the form indicated on the original maps. The towns of Bellevue, Papillion, Gretna and Springfield have all grown beyond their original
boundaries but the resemblance of the earliest portions of the towns to the plat map is evident and includes the location of streets, parks and business districts. These six plat maps are considered to be accurate representations of the form of these six towns and may be used in the study of frontier town forms. While this may be true for these six towns, it is not necessarily true for those towns for which there exist plat maps but the towns themselves no longer exist. Testing the accuracy of the plat maps for those towns must be done through other means, such as archaeological investigations and historical documentation.

Plat maps are available for five towns which no longer exist. Three of these five towns never really developed into towns (see Figures 14, 15, 16). Papillion City never had anyone live there, Platteford had only a few buildings located along the Platte River and Larimer city had a handful of buildings. In none of these towns was the potential outlined in their plat maps reached. For these three towns the plat maps represent what might have been, had the towns done better, and not what actually existed. The other two towns, Portal and Forest City, are different in that while they no longer exist, they had at one time been viable, prosperous, growing towns. It is assumed that their plat maps are accurate representations of what the towns had been at one time. This assumption is made for several reasons. First, it is known that the towns of Portal and Forest City were busy, populated, prosperous towns containing numerous businesses and residences. Second, that both of the towns existed for a number of years, Portal for 18 and Forest City for 31. Third, that they had advantageous locations;
Figure 15

Platteford Plat Map
(Source: Nebraska State Historical Society)
Larimer City Plat Map
(Source: Nebraska State Historical Society)
Portal was located between three railroads and had two depots, while Forest City was located along heavily travelled roads. Fourth, that both towns ceased to exist because of decisions made by the railroads. Portal ended due to the closing of the depots because the railroads were changing their routes, and Forest City ended because it was bypassed as a location for a train depot (Ridenour 1982:n.p.). The other towns in the county ceased to exist because of a lack of population, a lack in the availability of goods and services and disadvantages in their physical environment. Portal and Forest City were developing like their contemporaries, many of which presently exist and whose plat maps proved to be accurate representations of town form, therefore, their plat maps are assumed to be accurate representations of town form as well.

Eight plat maps are chosen which accurately represent the town forms in Sarpy County. Three town forms are evident; the inland town, the river town and the railroad town.

The inland town. The inland town is a town which is located in the interior of a region along the road system. The inland town has no special feature such as a railroad depot or river port around which to orient itself.

Forest City is an example of an inland town in Sarpy County. Since there is no railroad depot or river port to which the town may orient its activities it directed its activities toward the center of town. As is the case with Forest City this results in a town with a central park area around which the business district is oriented (See Figure 17). The goods and services provided by the town are in this central location. The central business district is encircled by the
Forest City Plat Map
(Source: Nebraska State Historical Society)
residential area containing the homes of the townspeople.

The occurrence of inland towns in the Sarpy County frontier is limited. With increasing populations, an expanding agricultural economy and the rapid development of other towns, competition between the towns increased; and Forest City, although it existed for over 30 years and was one of the earliest established towns in the county, was unable to compete successfully. The town was supported by an agricultural population requiring access to major trade routes which Forest City was unable to provide, but which nearby Gretna with its train depot could.

The river town. Unlike the inland towns whose spatial orientation is toward the center of the town, the river town is oriented toward its major feature, the river. This is especially true if the river, like the Missouri River, functioned as a major transportation, trade and communication route into and out of the frontier.

Bellevue is an example of a river town in Sarpy County. The form of the town reflects the importance of the river to the town. The river town is laid out so that it parallels the river resulting in as much of the town as possible fronting the river. This provides a large portion of the town with access to the river. Another characteristic of the river town is the business district laid out in a 90 degree angle to the river bringing business dealing with the river up into the town (See Figure 18).

River towns such as Bellevue fulfilled a number of functions related to their location on a major transportation route. Most
Figure 18

Bellevue Plat Map
(Source: Nebraska State Historical Society)
importantly they served as the point from which goods and people were transported to and from the region.

The railroad town. The third type of town form in Sarpy County is the railroad town. The railroad town is located along the railroad with access to it through one or more depots located in the town. These towns were platted by the railroad companies or by town entrepreneurs interested in the economic advantages of locating on the railroads. The form of the railroad town is influenced by the location of the railroad tracks themselves.

With the expansion of the railroads into Sarpy County there was a rapid increase in the establishment of towns. By 1869, when the first railroads started coming through the region, there were only two active towns, Bellevue and Forest City, in the county. During the first 20 years of railroad activity in the county there was a considerable amount of town building. Seven towns were established during this time, six of which were railroad towns. Plat maps are available for all six of the railroad towns and illustrate very well the form of the railroad town (See Figures 19-24).

The railroad town is often referred to as a T-town because of the shape that results from platting a town alongside of railroad tracks (Hudson 1979:105). The railroad track and especially the depot area are the primary focus of the T-town. In order to avoid the need for frequent and dangerous crossings over the tracks the town is located on only one side of the tracks. Located in the vicinity of the depot were warehouses, grain elevators, a lumberyard and stockyards. This kept all the heavy traffic in one area of the town and out of the
Figure 19

Chalco Plat Map
(Source:Sarpy County Register of Deeds)
Gretna Plat Map
(Source: Sarpy County Register of Deeds)
Figure 21

LaPlatte(b) Plat Map
(Source: Sarpy County Register of Deeds)
Papillion Plat Map
(Source: Sarpy County Register of Deeds)
Portal Plat Map
(Source: Sarpy County Register of Deeds)
Springfield Plat Map
(Source: Sarpy County Register of Deeds)
town proper. The plat of the town of Springfield provides an example of the distribution of these businesses around the depot (See Figure 24). The main business district, where a variety of mercantile and service-oriented businesses are located, is perpendicular to the railroad tracks and leads to the depot. The railroad tracks form the horizontal bar of the T and the business district forms the vertical bar.

The railroads took over as the major transportation route because they provided faster and easier access to outside markets. The railroad towns functioned as a center for these activities for the surrounding farm population.

**Conditions Which Characterize the Frontier.**

The second component of the frontier model is concerned with the type of settlements which occur within the frontier, the processes which occur temporally and spatially in this settlement and the physical form which these settlements take as a result of these processes. The three town forms: the inland town, the river town and the railroad town, characterize a portion of the settlement process, the frontier town/small farm settlement type, in the Sarpy County frontier. The town forms in the frontier represent the changes both temporally and spatially that a region undergoes as it develops from a frontier to becoming integrated on a national level. The first and second components of the frontier model: defining the frontier and settlement types, are both concerned with looking at specific details of the frontier. The third component, on the other hand, is concerned with the conditions which characterize the frontier. These
conditions, of which there are five, are generalizations about the nature of the frontier and about what can be expected to take place in a frontier (Lewis 1977:134).

The first condition is that the area of settlement must have continual contact with the metropolitan area from which the settlement is originated. The continual contact with the metropolitan area maintains the network which serves as a route for incoming settlers and supplies and as an outlet for the settlers products.

Contact with the metropolitan area was essential to the development of settlements in Sarpy County. The fur traders, Indian agents and missionaries relied heavily on the maintenance of a network of trade and communication. The fur trade posts were located along the Missouri River to facilitate the easy transport of furs down the river to St. Louis and to transport trade goods up to the trading posts. Both fur companies in the Sarpy County area, the American Fur Company and the Missouri Fur Company, were headquartered in St. Louis. The fur trade posts in the frontier were dependent on them for financial support and for operating instructions.

The missionaries and the Indian Agents relied on continual contact with their superiors, the Presbyterian and Baptist churches and the United States government respectively, for instructions and financial support. Because the Missouri River was the primary trade and communication route at the time, these settlements were naturally located along the Missouri River in order to maintain contact with the metropolitan area.
With the development of overland travel routes, trade and communication routes were expanded into the frontier enabling settlement to also expand into the frontier with the establishment of towns. It is at this time that the necessity of maintaining continual contact with the metropolitan area becomes evident. The inability of early towns, such as Sauntee and Platteford, to maintain adequate transportation and communication routes contributed to their demise. Difficulty in transporting goods and people to and from the towns hindered their development. Towns such as Forest City, on the other hand, with access to territorial highways, and Bellevue, with access to the Missouri River and to territorial highways, fared better. Bellevue served as a jumping-off point for many years for settlers heading west on the overland routes, such as the Platte River Road and the Oregon Trail.

The development of the railroads made continual contact with the metropolitan area easier and more secure than previously possible. The communication and trade network was able to expand and be maintained much more efficiently than before. This allowed a greater influx of settlers and goods into the area as well as increasing the output from the area, contributing to an overall stabilization and integration of the frontier with the metropolitan area.

The second condition of the frontier is that, due to the distance and the limited lines of trade and communication between the frontier and the metropolitan area, the initial settlements are not complex. This is very much the case with the Sarpy County frontier. The initial settlements in the study area consisted of the trading posts, the Indian agency and the Indian missions. Each of these settlements
was established for a particular purpose. The trading posts were interested in the economics of fur trading, the government Indian agency was interested in the negotiation of land purchases and the missionaries were interested in establishing schools for teaching christian doctrine to the Indians. The single-mindedness of each of these settlements kept them simple and direct in their mode of operation. Each of the settlements were reliant on a headquarters located elsewhere which provided them with instructions and to whom they were responsible. While each settlement consisted of a cluster of buildings, they included only those buildings needed to carry out the functions of the individual settlements.

The third condition is that the settlement pattern in the area is more geographically dispersed than the settlements of the metropolitan area, unless settlement is hindered by environmental or political restrictions. The system of fur trading in use along the Missouri River meant the establishment of posts along the river. Due to the vastness of the Nebraska Territory effective exploitation required a wide dispersal of the fur posts along the river (See Figure 25). This was also the case with the Indian agency and Indian missions. One agency and two missions were established in the study area, while another agency was located further north and other missions were located either further north or south of the study area.

The earliest towns were also dispersed within the study area. The two successful early towns, Bellevue and Forest City, were located on the eastern edge and western edge of the county respectively.
Figure 25

Fur Trading Posts on the Northern Plains
(Source: Mattison 1961:14)
The fourth condition of the frontier is that agriculturally based settlements are focused around frontier towns. The frontier town is the center of social, political and economic activities, as well as a part of the transportation and communication network connecting the area of settlement with the metropolitan area. The agriculturally based settlements in Sarpy County, the small farm, required an outside market for their products. In order to reach the outside market a trading network is needed, a trading network relying on a system of transportation and communication which connects the farmer with the metropolitan area. The frontier town functioned as the link between the farmer and the outside market providing access to transportation and communication routes through which they could sell their products and also providing goods and services necessary to operate the farms.

The fifth condition characterizing the frontier is that as the frontier changes temporally it also changes in its spatial arrangement. Changes in population density and settlement pattern occur as the frontier becomes more stabilized and integrated at a national level. This characteristic of the frontier is evident in the Sarpy County frontier.

The process of the area developing from a frontier to becoming integrated on a national level is a temporal one requiring the settlements to develop over time from the initial trading posts to towns. This process involved an increase in the number of settlements and changes in the arrangement of these settlements within the region. The initial settlements in the early 1800's, the trading posts, Indian agency and Indian mission, were clusters of
buildings located along the Missouri River. When the first town development began in the 1850's the number of settlements increased due to an increase in the population. The early towns moved further into the frontier but were still located along major rivers, the Platte River and the Missouri River, or along well travelled roads. Those towns which did not occupy strategic positions along trade and communication routes declined and ceased to exist. Not until the railroads came in the 1870's did the county experience any new development in its settlements. It is at this time that a number of changes took place in the spatial arrangement of the settlements within the county. There was an increase in the number of settlements and a shift from the river to the railroad as the primary trade and communication route. This shift brought settlements into the interior of the county orienting them around the railroad depot rather than along highways and rivers. As these new settlements grew and changed those which were no longer needed or did not occupy ideal positions within the trade and communication network went into decline, some ceasing to exist while others, though inactive as towns, maintained a small population.

Each of the five conditions is concerned with a different aspect of the frontier, a different part of the settlement process. The five conditions are generalizations and unlike the first and second parts of the frontier model, which are concerned with specific aspects of the frontier, the third part is concerned with the development of the frontier as a whole.

The result of the application of the frontier model of settlement to Sarpy County, Nebraska is an understanding of the settlement and
development of the area. The following chapter presents the results of using the model in the Sarpy county frontier.
CHAPTER V

Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis is to study the historical settlement of Sarpy County, Nebraska, which includes studying the processes of settlement that occurred temporally and spatially in the County frontier, and studying the individual settlements and their development.

The settlements in the county initially had an economic base of fur trading. After 1854 the economic base changed to agriculture when Nebraska was organized as a territory. Because only one economic activity existed at a time in the county, studies and comparisons of contemporaneous settlements were easily made.

The time period under consideration, 1803 to 1900, was selected because the year 1803 marked the beginning of settlement in the area and after the 1900, no new settlements appear in the area. The existing settlements were in the process of stabilizing and integrating on a national level during this time.

Within this time period there existed a range in the type of settlements, from trading posts to towns, and changes in the form, function and distribution of these settlements. The time span dealt with, approximately one hundred years, facilitates looking at the
whole process of settlement in Sarpy County and not just parts of it as the case would be if the time period were narrower.

Application of the frontier model to a study area, such as Sarpy County, produces several results. One result of its application is an organized database. Instead of just lists of dates, names and places, the data is organized into different parts of the frontier model. From this organization, variables can be selected which allow for comparative analysis between settlements. Figure 13 provides examples of variables which may be selected. Figure 26 is an example of organizing the settlements with regard to occupation dates, and provides a visual representation of temporal relationships between the settlements.

A second result is that the model defines the temporal and spatial boundaries of the frontier. Identifying the beginning and ending of the frontier within Sarpy County indicates when the frontier model is no longer applicable. The model also facilitates identification of the temporal parameters of the various settlements. Thus, it is possible to assign beginning and ending dates for the settlement types in the study area. This results in knowing when the various settlement types appear in the frontier, leave the frontier and how they relate to each other during the frontier period.

Another result of the application of the frontier model is that it provides a framework for studying the interaction of the temporal and spatial distribution of the settlements. Working within the framework a researcher can look for patterns on which to build hypothesis.
Figures 27 through 30 illustrate three variables: settlement type, settlement location and time. One pattern evident is that there is a striking difference in the settlement pattern before and after the introduction of the railroads. This pattern can be framed in terms of a general hypothesis concerning factors which led to this observed change in the settlement pattern. The following example illustrates how the frontier model can be used to form a hypothesis concerning a specific aspect of settlement.

**Hypothesis concerning the impact of railroads**

Prior to the introduction of railroads nucleated settlements are characterized by the interaction of many variables. These variables may include access to transportation, services available to the population or availability of farmland. Nucleated settlements develop into frontier towns through competition with each other. This competition takes into account the variables that initiated settlement.

Thus, the early nucleated settlements have a wide variety of factors characterizing the individual settlements and this variety creates an atmosphere of competition. During this period of competition either one of two events will occur. A nucleated settlement will either develop into a frontier town or it will cease to exist altogether. A nucleated settlement thus does not appear to be a stable condition during the early part of a frontier period. Figures 27 through 30 illustrate that between 1857 and 1860 there were six nucleated settlements in the frontier and that by 1870 only
Figure 27

Settlement Type and Settlement Location through Time
Settlement Type and Settlement Location through Time
Settlement Type and Settlement Location through Time
Figure 30

Settlement Type and Settlement Location through Time
two of these six settlements remained, both of which became frontier towns.

There is a change in this process after the railroads begin their entrance into the frontier. Settlements established by the railroads had far fewer factors influencing their formation than the earlier settlements in the frontier. The factors influencing each individual settlement were the same. Competition for viability became competition between settlements with a railroad and those without a railroad. Competition between settlements with railroads was not as evident and the results of competition not as final as in the earlier settlements. All the settlements begun by the railroads became frontier towns, and all were still functioning towns after 1890. After 1900 two of the towns, Portal and Chalco, reverted to being nucleated settlements and only one, Portal, eventually disappeared altogether.

The frontier towns in existence prior to the railroad towns were unable to compete with the increased economic advantage provided by the railroads. Other modes of transportation, such as wagon or boat, could not provide the speed and cost-effectiveness of the railroads. Bellevue was the only one of the early towns to have a railroad depot and subsequently the only one to remain in existence.

Based on the above hypothesis, the following specific test implications can be postulated: prior to the introduction of railroads, settlements were subjected to competition and faced a greater chance of dying before reaching frontier town status; whereas, settlements after the introduction of railroads are
subjected to less competition and are faced with dying only after they have reached frontier town status.

Once such test implications based on hypothesis are formed, they can be tested, either within the original study area or in another location, to determine if they are correct, incorrect or if there are exceptions to the hypothesis. If a hypothesis is found to be incorrect a new hypothesis may be generated from the additional research data produced.

There are several advantages to using the frontier model for future research in Sarpy County or in other research areas. One advantage of the model is that results of initial research and pattern development can lead to additional research increasing the knowledge and general understanding of the selected study area. Additional research may also contribute to expanding and/or refining the model and list of variables which effect settlement type development.

Another advantage to the frontier model is in comparative studies with other areas. Hypothesis testing of certain aspects of settlement patterning are possible with a minimum of data collection. By using an established set of variables, only certain data need be recorded.

There are limitations in using the frontier model. One possible limitation may be that the frontier town settlement type is based on an agricultural economy depicted by small family farms. Application of the model in an area which is not agriculturally based but perhaps industrially based may not be possible. Application in such an area
would have to be tested to see if the model would function there, or if alterations to certain aspects of the model have to be made.

The are three major results of this thesis. First, it demonstrated that the frontier model, expanded to include a settlement type classification system, was found to be applicable to Sarpy County, Nebraska. Second, the application of the frontier model contributed to the general knowledge and understanding of the settlement of Sarpy County. Third, as the preceding example shows, the frontier model can be used to generate hypothesis and test implications to be used in more general processual and comparative studies.
## APPENDIX A

### TOWNS IN SARPY COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWNS</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bellevue</td>
<td>NE$S1T13NR13E; E$S36T14N R13E; SE$S25T14NR13E</td>
<td>1855-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papillion City</td>
<td>W$SW$S19; W$NW$S30T14NR13E E$SE$S24T14NR13E</td>
<td>1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest City</td>
<td>N$S3T13NR10E</td>
<td>1857-1886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaPlatte(a)</td>
<td>NE$S19T13NR14E</td>
<td>1855-1858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larimer City</td>
<td>E$S27N$S26T13NR13E</td>
<td>1858-1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platteford</td>
<td>Lot 4 S18T12NR10E</td>
<td>1857-1879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauntee</td>
<td>S4T12NR10E</td>
<td>1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papillion</td>
<td>NW$S26NW$S27T14NR12E</td>
<td>1870-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaPlatte(b)</td>
<td>NW$S26SW$S23T13NR13E</td>
<td>1870-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpy Center</td>
<td>N$NW$NW$S17T13NR12E</td>
<td>1875-1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield</td>
<td>S$NW$; SW$SW$S24T13NN11E</td>
<td>1881-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gretna</td>
<td>S$NW$S36T14NR10E</td>
<td>1886-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portal</td>
<td>SW$S16E$SE$S17NW$NW$S21</td>
<td>1887-1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalco</td>
<td>SE$NW$NE$SW$S14T14NR11E</td>
<td>1887-present</td>
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Thomas, Davis and Karin Ronnefeld  
Turner, Fredrick Jackson

Wishart, David

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