

A HISTORY OF GERALDINE

BY

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S.S.S.

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CHAPTER I

PROBLEMS AND PROCEDURES

Geraldine, Montana, is a farming community located in Chouteau County just twenty-eight miles southeast of Fort Benton, the county seat of Chouteau County, and eighty-five miles northwest of Lewistown. Geraldine has a population of approximately three hundred fifty. The main source of income in the Geraldine area comes from the growing of grain, although small herds of cattle are not uncommon. Also there are a few large cattle ranches in the Geraldine area.

The topography of the townsite is almost level bench land, surrounded by higher benches, with farm land extending from all sides of the town's borders.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the history of Geraldine, Montana. A history of the town had not been compiled, and it was the author's intention to prepare the text of this history for publication. The knowledge of the town and its growth gave the author a better background and understanding of the community. This study presented factors and conditions which gave a deeper understanding into the growth, or lack of growth, of the small, central Montana town.

The main factors involved in this town's growth, as will be shown in this study, were economic. The wheat and

cattle market, the transportation improvements, and the facilities of the town were all economic factors that the investigator found to influence the development of Geraldine.

The history presented throughout this study of documents, records, and personal interviews aided the author in forming conclusions about the future of Geraldine. The procedures used in gathering data for the compilation of this historical study and in forming generalizations about the past, present, and future of Geraldine are presented in the following section of chapter one.

Procedures

The evidence presented in this history was collected from newspapers, legal records and documents, and personal interviews. The material was gathered entirely within Chouteau County. When checking with the State Historical Society about possible items which might be of interest in the compilation of a history of Geraldine, the author found that this society had the same documentary data that was available within the county and town itself. The same was true of people who had left Geraldine throughout the years. Their return letters, upon comparison with what was at hand, reiterated what was already known to the author.

The local newspaper, The Geraldine Review, provided much of the material for the study because it was the

official publication media for the city of Geraldine. All legal transactions for the town of Geraldine were published, according to law, on page two of the newspaper. All publications of this paper, which were made available to the writer through the courtesy of the First National Bank of Geraldine, were carefully searched and all data of historical significance were recorded.

City officials also made available the city records. These included the justice docket, which contained the court records of the justice of peace, and the city ordinances and resolutions. The ordinances and resolutions ledgers, a political history of the development of the town of Geraldine from the time of incorporation to the present, furnished proof of the city's improvements and internal growth.

Information presented in the body of this report was reiterated several times by those interviewed personally by the author. In view of this repetition the author felt the material was probably authentic and might, therefore, be utilized in this historical study.

When Geraldine was in its infancy, the town newspaper failed to include a house of prostitution as one of the business places. This "house" was referred to at various times in the newspaper as an "illicit place of business," especially when another addition to the already existing "house" was advocated. The notations in the justice docket

about this type of commercial business were short and simple. The recording of incidents, such as a fine imposed on ladies for "maintaining and conducting a disorderly house," were, however, of little value to the author in presenting the history of the town.

The school records and the documents available in the County Clerk and Recorder's office in Fort Benton, the county seat, furnished some resource material of interest to the study. These records however, were incomplete and scanty.

Personal interviews and discussions with "the old-timers" of Geraldine substantiated much of what was collected from the previously mentioned sources. Valuable information that was not recorded in writing was also obtained from these people. Most of the old-timers became interested in the history that the author presented and offered evidence to support the thesis that Geraldine and its growth were the result of economic factors involving the people and their way of making a living.

Much of the material collected from one source was found to be repeated in various other resource media. The author used, in every case, the source that was original or was substantiated by repetition. Since this study was directed to the town itself and factors influencing the town, biographical sketches of individuals were not included. When names were used, the author briefly noted the relationship between the individual and the situation presented.

Although many people were instrumental in the building of the town of Geraldine, the author presented the facts that seemed pertinent to the physical and economic development of the town.

The plan used in presenting this history involved a discussion of the land used for the development of the townsite of Geraldine. Further discussions were developed concerning the building of the first structures in the town and concerning the growth of Geraldine up to the present time. As the development of the town progressed, historical profiles of organizations and institutions were discussed from the time of their inception to the present.

The author formed conclusions with respect to the influence of past events on the present status of Geraldine throughout the paper. The thesis that Geraldine was a result of economic conditions was concluded from these facts and details brought to light in this study. These conclusions are discussed in chapter three.

CHAPTER II

DOCUMENTED HISTORY OF GERALDINE, MONTANA

In presenting this recorded history of Geraldine, the author will show the relation between events that occurred during the previous history to the present development of the town. This chapter was organized into three parts so the historical evidence could be presented in logical form. Throughout the paper, the author attempted to relate the historical material to economic conditions that had a relationship to the growth of Geraldine.

Pre-Geraldine

The section of Montana where Geraldine is located attracted ranchers and then homesteaders for many years before a townsite was selected. The Geraldine countryside was a stockman's paradise. Benchlands, interspersed with valleys and draws, provided land for big herds of cattle and sheep long before 1900. (56)* The rich, slightly rolling prairie, with the Highwood Mountains to the west and the Bear Paws and Little Rockies to the north and east, caught homesteaders' eyes about the turn of the century.

The land that became Geraldine's townsite adjoined Winchell Springs, which had been a stopping-off point for

*Numbers in parentheses refer to references in the bibliography arranged in alphabetic order.

travelers for many years. (56) The springs were named for Winchell, a man who had homesteaded beside them. Winchell Springs is a natural spring that provided water for cattle and travelers for many years. The springs became, and remained, the water supply for Geraldine until artesian wells were drilled in 1959. (12) Winchell sold his holdings to the Homer-Flager Sheep Company, which in turn sold to the Brady-Collins Sheep Company. (56) The Brady-Collins ranch house was the only residence in the area for many years, and it and its springs provided a resting place for many a weary traveler. A stagecoach stop, the Dew Drop Inn, was established there.* The ranch property was again sold in 1911 by the Winchell Springs Land Company, of which David Hilger of Lewistown and Roy F. Clary of Great Falls were principal stockholders. (56)

The Milwaukee Land Company bought the land adjoining the springs in 1912 for townsite purposes. G. W. Morrow was general townsite agent for the land company which was formed to develop the country through which the Milwaukee Railroad was extending its line. (17)

Development of Geraldine

The events describing the settling of the townsite

*Stated by Ed Owen, Ben LaVanway, and Zoyd Money in an interview with Stan Smith at Geraldine, Montana, on December 28, 1964.

presented a picture of people excited by the prospect of a new town and a new life. This excitement and interest was produced, in part, by the knowledge that the Milwaukee Railroad was soon to build a spur through the land included in the townsite.

The townsite of Geraldine was sold and settled upon on May 10, 1913. (58) From this date until August 15, 1913, when the first issue of the town newspaper, The Geraldine Review, appeared, business houses were dotting the landscape. G. E. Shawler, editor of The Geraldine Review, wrote: (17) "The two months' old town is rapidly gathering business houses representing different commercial lines. Backed by big interests and a wideawake people, Geraldine is bound to be the town of the section."

The optimism transcribed by Mr. Shawler was substantiated by the activities of those settlers who were about to build a new town.

The Geraldine townsite plats (a plan or map of a townsite) had been filed and were sold at a Lewistown auction which resulted in one hundred forty lots sold, four to a lumber yard at \$5,100, others bringing \$250 to \$400 each. The Chouteau County Commissioners had five applications on May 21, 1913, for saloon licenses at Geraldine and there wasn't a building in sight at the time. Fred Yockey and the Geraldine Hotel Company got the licenses, the other three being denied. (48)

It wasn't long before the first building had been completed. W. D. Welch finished construction of a general

store on June 11, 1913. (48) The general store was quickly followed by a succession of structures and by August 15, 1913, the firsts of the town were noted in The Geraldine Review: (22)

First Merchant - W. D. Welch
 First Bank - Farmers' State Bank
 First Livery Stable - Thornquist and Hansmyer
 First Liquor Dealer - Fred Yockey
 First Builders and Contractors - E. C. Fuller Co.
 First Attorney - Thomas F. Arnett
 First Barber - L. L. Green
 First Pool Hall - Dollar Bros.
 First House and Sign Painter - Erenes Grace
 First Restaurant and Lodging House - S. A. Storey
 First Newspaper, The Geraldine Review - G. E. Shawler

Many of these "structures" left much to be desired. Makeshift buildings and tents served the public until more commodious accommodations could be presented. It wasn't long, however, before customers were walking into solid frame buildings to buy their wares. (22) The town was growing fast. Businesses and residences were being built at a rapid pace and more people were continually moving in, giving credence to the optimism felt by the town leaders that Geraldine was there to stay.

The interest in the internal growth of Geraldine was noted in the town newspapers. By November of 1913 Roy Blyth, a contractor, was grading the streets and sidewalks. (54) There was a public meeting in The Geraldine Review office to organize a Commercial Club. (54) And by January 1914, work had begun on street lamps for Main Street, and water was

pipied from Winchell Springs for fire protection. School had started during the year 1914; a regular law officer was stationed in Geraldine; and more land was added to the original townsite. (18)

Nor was the community lacking in entertainment. Many of the early residents told the author that besides the "barn dances" and "get togethers," a rod and gun club was organized and baseball and moving pictures served as entertainment for townfolk as well as a community band which delighted the populace. The Lewistown Daily News (59) said of Geraldine in 1914:

Geraldine already has a water system, and enlargements are proposed. The town is a live one, having city parks and a splendid up-to-date appearance, growing rapidly. Geraldine is setting a pace that is hard for any other new town in Montana to measure up to. For an unincorporated town to have a waterworks system, a sewage system, graded streets, cement walks, a park, and other civic improvements is a rather unusual thing, but Geraldine is making good along these lines.

That the town had grown fast was evidenced by the number of businesses that had converged on the town. The businesses in Geraldine when 1915 was in its infancy were:

three general stores, one bank and a second organized, six restaurants, two hotels, one exclusive hardware and furniture store, one jeweler, two blacksmith shops, three livery and sales stables, one auctioneer, one tailor shop, one shoe shop, one harness shop, two barber shops, two candy and cigar stores, two laundries, one drug store, one garage, one bakery, two elevators, four coal dealers, three lumberyards, four drayage and express, one oil

distributing house, two liquor houses, three lodging houses, two agricultural implements, four contractors, five insurance agents, two physicians and surgeons, one dentist, one water company, one flour and feed mill, one lawer, one dressmaker, two plumbers, two real estate dealers, three agents for loan companies, one electrician, one meat and produce dealer, and one weekly newspaper for a total of eighty-five. (16)

With the farmers being able to market their crops locally and the ranchers able to ship their stock via the Milwaukee Railroad, the economic condition of the community was greatly improved. This was evidenced by the financial statements printed in the local newspaper: "The two general stores in Geraldine are running \$20,000 per month in sales." (36) "Railroad receipts, \$17,000 for month of September, \$800 in tickets sold to passengers." (37) "Business last year totals \$1,005,000." (19)

To assume that Geraldine's over three hundred occupants and the farmers and ranchers were becoming rich would be an overstatement. Wheat and livestock varied in price on the market; however, most farmers were able to sell a minimum amount of produce and store the rest to wait for a rise in the marketing price. The farmers and ranchers, the backbone of the economy of the Geraldine area, were buying; the crops were excellent. According to the August 14, 1914, Geraldine Review wheat was being bought at the elevators for \$.71 to \$1.30 a bushel, depending on the time of year. It was a prosperous time for Geraldine with better times anticipated.

Although better times were coming, an important event was about to happen that would affect the citizens of Geraldine. A petition for incorporation of the town of Geraldine was filed at the county court house in Fort Benton on November 28, 1914. (8) Having first required a census of Geraldine, which was three hundred sixty-five citizens (9), the county commissioners set April 17 as the date that the citizens of Geraldine would vote on the question of incorporating under a town government. (33) The decision to incorporate was accepted by a decisive vote, and the town prepared to set the machinery in motion for a city government.

Nominations for city officials were presented to the voters, and elections were held. The first mayor of Geraldine was W. D. Welch (61), and the city government was inaugurated on July 29, 1915, with selection of committees and appointments for various city posts by the mayor. (26)

Town boundaries were defined August 24, 1915 (2), and the city was divided politically into three wards. This political division was changed in 1932 to two wards (6) and two precincts (7), precincts and wards being the same. Ordinances providing for the city seal (3) and for the protection of the citizens put the town on the same legal basis as other towns.

People in the Geraldine area of Chouteau County were very close to living in Banner County, with Geraldine as the

county seat. In 1920 and 1921 groundwork was laid, and an election was held to determine whether a new county would be formed or not. (14) The voters were overwhelmingly in favor of such a division.

Many people devoted much time and money to the creation of Banner County. However, due to a faulty publication in the official county paper, the Montana Supreme Court handed down a decision that all proceedings leading up to the election and the election creating the County of Banner were null and void. (34) It was never determined who was to blame for the faulty publication. Attempts were made to start proceedings again; but because of the time and work involved, the promulgation of Banner County was never a threat of reality again.*

Reality existed in the newly incorporated town, though. The community continued to prosper, and the people had a sense of pride that was reflected throughout the city. Religious services were conducted regularly, civic improvements presented proof of growth regularly, and the schools became increasingly important to all concerned.

Reverend Father Phelan came from Fort Benton and said mass in Geraldine in October of 1913 (35), and the Methodists had secured a site for a house of worship. (17) The Catholics soon decided to build a church, and a site

*Stated by Fred Brandel in an interview with Stan Smith in Geraldine, Montana, on March 20, 1965.

was purchased. The St. Margaret's Catholic Church had its dedication November 11, 1917. (27) It was remodeled in 1939, and in 1964 a beautiful new church was built across the street from the old church.

The Methodists regularly held services in the Milwaukee depot in 1914 until more permanent accommodations could be secured. (47) The Immanuel Presbyterian Church, which was a part of early community life, didn't remain in Geraldine. The Lutheran, the Methodist, and the Catholic churches serve the modern Geraldine community. The present Community Church (Methodist) was dedicated in 1927. (38) The Lutherans organized in 1946 and inaugurated their weekly church services in 1948. (43)

Better times were in store for Geraldine, and many factors contributed to these better times. As has been mentioned, the agriculture income was the backbone of the town; and the coming of the Milwaukee Railroad in 1913 provided transportation and convenience for farmers and ranchers so they could market their produce easier. Ed Owen*, who lived those times, stated:

Before the advent of the railroad in Geraldine, farmers would haul their grain many miles with horse and wagon. Sometimes it would take days to sell a load of wheat. When the elevators were ready to receive grain, the farmer not only had a better and shorter way to transport his grain but he could sell it on the spot for ready cash.

*Stated by Ed Owen in an interview with Stan Smith at Geraldine, Montana, on May 20, 1965.

The significance of the Milwaukee Railroad in Geraldine manifested itself in the appearance of the town as well as with the name of the town. The railroad people built two parks adjacent to the depot with provisions for maintenance. (30) The name "Geraldine" was selected as the town's name after getting the permission of William G. Rockefeller's wife, Geraldine, to name the town for her. (30) Mr. Rockefeller had considerable interests in the Milwaukee Railroad.

The first shipment of freight to be received by rail in Geraldine came in on Wednesday, December 3, 1915, when the McCaull Webster Lumber Company received two carloads of Roundup Coal. The coal sold for \$6.75 a ton as compared with \$17.00 a ton via the wagon-haul route. (24) Shortly after this first shipment, a new Milwaukee depot was christened with a New Year's Eve dance.

The Farmer's State Bank, which changed to the First National Bank December 4, 1916, opened for business in the fall of 1913. (13) The bank was a main contributor to community prosperity. It moved into the brick building that it presently maintains in 1914. (20)

With the addition of a flour mill and a granite quarry (59) and other businesses, Geraldine grew at a fast pace. The year 1915 blessed the country with ample rains and abundant sunshine to produce a tremendous wheat crop. It was common to hear of farmers harvesting fifty bushels

to the acre in areas that were previously producing from fifteen to thirty bushels to the acre. (62)

Electors went forward in providing for their comfort and their desires. On March 21, 1916, the city council granted William Waidman the authority to build, construct, and maintain an electric power and heating plant. (4) And during 1917 the city purchased the water plant from Winchell Springs Land Company. (5)

Farmers were confident in the future of Geraldine, also. They built the Farmers Elevator and Milling Company, designed to furnish electricity and power for the town and for its own milling operations. Main Street had electric lights in 1918 (10), but the flour mill never operated. Flour mills presented a problem for their owners. They kept burning down. (25) So, the flour industry gained little stature in the Geraldine area, although the wheat was excellent for milling purposes.*

Geraldine people were improving the economy of the town by backing the businesses. They were improving the town physically as was recorded by their lighting, street and sidewalk (10), and beautification plans. The churches were supported, and the schools were improved. The pioneers of Geraldine were certainly proving to outsiders that the town was there to stay.

*Stated by Ed Owen in an interview with Stan Smith at Geraldine, Montana, on May 20, 1965.

Schools and churches reflected the attitude of a town. This attitude was one of a forward-looking people who realized the future must be planned. The planning of the future included a public school which started March 16, 1914. (23) Facilities were scant and supplies limited. Because of the nature of the economy, which required many young people to work during the busy seasons, many students didn't attend school regularly nor did they all start or finish at the same time. In September of 1916, the school offered, for the first time, courses in high school; and by December of the same year the high school was accredited by the state. (51)

A new school was proposed; and on January 22, 1918, the new building was dedicated, a modern and roomy structure as compared to the four little rooms previously occupied by the students. (1) First commencement graduated three students on May 31, 1918. (1) The newly accredited high school offered English, History, French, Home Economics, Mathematics, Music, Agricultural Science, and Commercial (53), which were not much different than the curricular offerings today.

Enrollment during the 1917-1918 school year reached a peak of 198 as compared with 247 in the 1964-1965 school year. The 1917-1918 school year was shortened because of a Spanish influenza epidemic in which a number of people died. (52) The number of students that attended school in 1918 indicated a growing population in the Geraldine area.

Transportation problems due to bad roads and long distances presented a problem for the school board. This problem was alleviated when a dormitory was provided in 1918. The first dormitory was in the building previously used as the school; but in September of 1921, the school district bought the Yockey building, (a hotel) for use as a dormitory. (1) The cost of living in the dormitory was limited to actual expenses. Parents either paid cash or brought the equivalent of cash in produce. When a new addition to the present school was built in 1954, the dormitory was sold and bus service was used to transport the rural students to and from school. (1)

Geraldine School District Forty-Four became a second class district in 1919. To become a second class district, a population of one thousand is required. A census showed over eleven hundred with slightly under seven hundred within the town limits. (52) The school enrollment by this time was 225, just twenty-two under Fort Benton, a neighboring and older town. (52)

With increased population, the price of wheat thirty cents a bushel higher than a year ago and rising, Geraldine was ready for further development. However, nature didn't provide the needed moisture, and crops were poor in 1919. Ranchers had to ship their cattle because of drought conditions. It just happened that a slump in the cattle market settled at about this time with beef selling at the

local meat market for eight cents a pound for front quarters and twelve cents a pound for hind quarters. (14) The wheat market was fluctuating around eighty cents a bushel. (28)

Wheat prices kept going down during the next two years; and on November 25, 1923, the Montana Bank closed its doors. The bank wasn't bankrupt; it was a voluntary liquidation resulting from lack of business. (32) The post office at Graceville, an outlying community, closed; and fire destroyed many of the town businesses. (15)

The setbacks mentioned above did not destroy the spirit of the townspeople. A community fair was organized and was very successful for two years. Wheat prices rose. A committee of businessmen took over the auditorium and the proceeds were used for the school and community. Few businesses were added during the 1920's. The people sat back and enjoyed what they had built in previous years.

In 1930 the official paper for Geraldine reported 299 people residing in Geraldine. (38) The Geraldine Review again recorded the town business establishments. (57)

Geraldine has a bank, a drugstore, a hotel, a railroad, two restaurants, a lunch room, a meat market, two pool halls, four garages, a blacksmith, two insurance agencies, two general stores, three elevators, a lumberyard, two coal dealers, three oil supply stations, a transfer line, two dealers in feed, two barber shops, a hardware store, four auto agencies, a post office, a weekly newspaper, a shoe shop, a theatre, two houses where patients could get care, and five implement dealers for a total of forty-nine businesses. The community also claimed a public school, a dormitory, two churches,

a woman's club, lodges, long distance telephone service, a public library, three mail routes, a gymnasium, and a music teacher.

Mr. Verle Quigley, president of the Geraldine bank, informed the author of some problems confronting the community through the years. After several bad years and a drop in commodity prices, many of the professional men left Geraldine for greener pastures. The regular doctor left about 1921; and through the succeeding years, until about 1947, when the services of any doctor within the town terminated, the services of a doctor were sporadic. The last doctor to frequent Geraldine came from Great Falls for one day, once a week. The same circumstances appeared to be true of dentists, lawyers, and other professional men.*

This phenomenon forced the people in the Geraldine area to travel to other towns to get the services no longer available in Geraldine. Automobiles became more of a necessity than a luxury to Geraldine people.*

The number of residents of Geraldine decreased during the 1920's, businesses combined and farmers moved. The price of wheat declined until, in 1931, farmers were getting twenty cents a bushel, hardly enough to pay for the cutting. In fact, while harvest was in progress in 1932, farmers were working from early morning until late at night harvesting a very good crop. Men asking for work were

*Stated by Verle Quigley in an interview with Stan Smith at Geraldine, Montana, on June 10, 1965.

loitering in the streets, and the farmer couldn't hire help because the prices of commodities were so low. A strange sight indeed, thousands of bushels of grain and the hungry standing by.*

Cash was scarce in the 1930's. The Geraldine Review was taking wheat in place of money for subscriptions. (29) The population of the town didn't increase but the people were not stagnant. A golf club opened in 1931 (29); the auditorium was repaired (55); the water system was improved in 1931. (60) Also, water was piped to the cemetery (39), and the streets were graveled periodically. The scarcity of cash didn't force the people to let the city become run-down.

On December 22, 1934, The Geraldine Review (40) recorded that the auditorium, which was built in 1914 and housed the moving picture apparatus, burned with everything destroyed. Immediately, plans were formulated to build a new auditorium. The building was erected in the same location with the main door facing east instead of north.

Organizations devoted much time to the improvement of the community. One of these was the Young Men's Civic Club, an organization formed to help the town in any possible way. This club bought a fire truck for the city. This act was a typical example of the attitude the citizens of Geraldine had for their town.

*Stated by Ed Owen in an interview with Stan Smith at Geraldine, Montana, on May 20, 1965.

Although the scenes transcribed present a picture of serenity, excitement had its day also.

On Main Street, about 5 o'clock, Tuesday, March 28, 1939, a nineteen year old outlaw with a stolen car resisted arrest and was shot and killed. The outlaw drove down Main Street and parked across the street from the bank, near the meat market. He had been under suspicion because of his actions. An investigation resulting in confirmation that the lad was wanted prompted Mr. Ed Fuller, city marshall, to accost the outlaw and inform him that he was under arrest. The boy blinded Fuller with a tear gas gun and shot at the marshall. Fuller wasn't hit. The butcher, Mr. Preshinger, ran out of his store with a rifle and handed it to the marshall. Still blinded, the marshall fired three or four times in the general direction of the outlaw. During this time the youth was still firing at Fuller. Suddenly, the car lurched back and a door of the car came open. The driver fell to the sidewalk with a wound through his neck. (49)

This violence occurred about the time that the world began to see violence of its own. Shortly thereafter, World War II began and the young men of the community were enlisting or were drafted into the armed services. The remaining population carried on and supported the war effort as was shown by the war bond sales of the First National Bank of Geraldine. The bank had the highest percentage of sales in the county up to November 30, 1942. (41) The collection of rags and paper by the citizens aided the war effort as did most of the activity in Geraldine during the war.

Following World War II, civic pride and responsibility came to the fore; and in the ensuing years organizations

developed to care for the town's needs. The American Legion post organized on February 2, 1946; and on February 15 of the same year, installation of the American Legion and its Auxillary was held. (42) The 4-H clubs organized in January of 1947, two girls' clubs on January 24 and the others on January 27. (21) The Parent Teachers Association and the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts became active. The Parent Teachers Association organized in 1950 (44) and the "Scouts" organized in 1953. (45)

The discontinuance in 1955 of passenger service (50) on the branch line of the Milwaukee Railroad that came through Geraldine and the final issue of The Geraldine Review, which was Vol. 49, No. 47, Thurs., August 2, 1962, finalized any notions of Geraldine ever becoming a town any larger than it was in the past.

Again, Verle Quigley* volunteered information that aided the writer in presenting the history of Geraldine. Improved methods of farming throughout the years that Geraldine was building had a desirable effect on the economy of the area. These improved methods of farming and the improvement in the machinery that tilled the land meant that a farmer could farm more land with less help. However, the rising costs of the machinery and the rise in the general cost of living forced the farmer to either

*Stated by Verle Quigley in an interview with Stan Smith at Geraldine, Montana, on June 10, 1965.

get more land or do something else for a living. Consequently, these improvements led to the questionable situation of fewer farms and fewer people living and working on them. Thus, fewer businesses were needed in Geraldine.

To haul wheat or cattle to market during the early days of Geraldine required many days. With the acceleration of the quality and speed of transportation, farmers and ranchers could get their cash crops to market much easier, hauling bigger loads faster and with less help. Again, this meant fewer jobs available for the farm worker, and fewer people who called Geraldine home.

Improved modes of transportation also provided the residents of Geraldine the means to travel from one area to another, sometimes covering great distances in a relatively short time. This lessened the need for so many businesses in Geraldine. To care for fewer people from a reduced number of farms and to cater to people who had the means and reasons to travel many miles placed a burden on the businessman in Geraldine.

Modern Geraldine

Geraldine isn't the "hustle and bustle" town it was in the second decade of this century. Instead, it reflects the quiet dignity of respectability, respectable because of the pride the citizens take in their town, respectable

because of the support and interest shown by the farmers and ranchers who call Geraldine their town, respectable because the majority of the people who live there like it.

Now a freight line, with general passenger service discontinued on this spur, the Milwaukee Railroad continues to ship wheat and cattle to central markets.

Farms and ranches are declining in number, but their acreage is increasing. Business establishments have declined in number, also. The author counted twenty-four different places of business in Geraldine in 1965. Some of these operated from their homes, and most of them had more than one type of business. For example, the grocery stores stocked clothing as well as staples, and an elevator had a hardware business along with its grain business.

Many rural homes and many homes in Geraldine are modern, with trees, shrubbery, and well-kept lawns. The town also has a new sewage lagoon which was built in 1958 (11), a new water system with a water tank for storage, and a new Catholic church. Plans are formulated for a new Methodist church, and the Lutheran church has recently undergone improvements. A new lighting complex has been built that illuminates the streets of Geraldine, and the airport runway has been paved. Runway lights have been installed to aid the pilots at night. Contributions from town and rural residents provided the finances to pave ten city blocks. This street-paving project is one of the most

recent improvements. A new fire engine that will aid rural Geraldine has been added to the existing equipment of the Geraldine Fire Department.

The town of Geraldine has a small population and is confined to a small area, but these statements refer only to numbers and rods. The people with whom the investigator talked seemed to exude enthusiasm for the welfare of the community and the area around it.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study presented historical evidence indicating that the growth of the town of Geraldine was a result of economic conditions. The data collected from local and county sources resulted in a history that informs the reader not only of the activities of the people within the town, but of the conditions that existed outside the community and that had a direct relation to the town's growth.

When Geraldine was first being settled in 1913, many people from many places were interested in colonizing the town and the land surrounding the town. This interest resulted in the town growing rapidly from the time of its inception to about 1919. By 1915, the town of about three hundred fifty residents had eighty-five established businesses. The rapid growth continued after Geraldine was incorporated in July of 1915 until the cattle and wheat prices dropped in the early 1920's.

The drought in 1919 and the later reduction of commodity prices curtailed the rapid growth of the town. People began to emigrate from Geraldine throughout the 1920's and the "little city" was dormant during this period as far as continued rapid growth was concerned. The people who called Geraldine home, however, did not

neglect the town. Civic organizations and civic improvements progressed as if nothing had changed. Nevertheless, the town was not growing in population or numbers of business establishments.

That Geraldine was not destined to become a large town was evidenced by the number of business establishments that were in the town from 1915 to 1965. In 1915 there were eighty-five established business houses, in 1930 there were forty-nine, and in 1965 there were twenty-four.

As has been mentioned, Geraldine remained on a fairly level plateau, economically, from 1919 to 1930. Retailers came and went, and professional people started to move to places that would better serve their interests. The period starting in the early 1930's produced a sharp decline in the endeavors of rural and townfolk alike. Prices were down, and there was not much ready cash available. Many farmers gave up their land and moved to other areas.

During, and especially following World War II, the Geraldine area experienced a revitalization; and once again economic conditions were on the upswing. This prosperity continued through the fifth decade of this twentieth century up to the time of the writing of this paper, 1965. Farms were becoming larger, prompted, in part, by rising costs of operating equipment and by the use of bigger and better machinery to farm the land; and, partly, by the economic

fact that more land was required to make a living.

Transportation improved steadily during Geraldine's growth. These improvements in the modes of travel enabled the people to seek personal services in other towns, services which were not available to them in Geraldine. Business people, in order to realize a profit, needed the support of the majority of the people in the Geraldine area, support which waned due to the improved transportation.

Throughout the years the town and rural people of Geraldine refused to let the "little spot on the prairie" become a ghost town. They continually improved what was there, and they continually provided for their own desires.

Conclusions

A major increase in the population of Geraldine seems improbable at the present time or in the immediate future. A sharp increase in population probably would result from a mineral strike of some kind adjacent to Geraldine, a strike which appears very doubtful to the author at this time. Farms in the region around Geraldine have become larger as some farmers sell or lease their land to their neighbors. Even though the farms are larger, a minimal number of hired hands are needed to operate the machinery because the machinery used to farm the land is bigger and more efficient. Therefore, with fewer families

living on farms and fewer laborers needed as help, a limited number of business establishments are needed to supply the immediate needs of the people who trade in Geraldine.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Petition for the Incorporation of the Town of
Geraldine, Filed Nov. 28, 1914

To the Honorable Board of County Commissioners of the County
of Chouteau and State of Montana

Gentlemen: We the undersigned residents of the town of Geraldine, County of Chouteau and State of Montana, qualified electors of said County and State, do hereby respectfully petition your honorable body to incorporate the certain territory lying in the county of Chouteau and State of Montana as a municipal corporation to be known as the town of Geraldine, the boundaries and limits of which are more particularly described as follows to-wit:

Beginning at the south-east corner of Section One (1) of Township 21 N. Range 11 E.M.M. and thence running north on the Range line a distance of three-quarters of a mile, more or less, to the south-east corner of the $NE\frac{1}{4}NE\frac{1}{4}$ of Section One (1) Twp. 21 N.R. 11 E.M.M.; thence running west three-quarters of a mile, more or less, to the south-east corner of the $NW\frac{1}{4}NW\frac{1}{4}$ of Section One (1) in Twp. 21, N.R. 11 E.M.M. thence running south a distance of three-quarters of a mile more or less, to the south-east corner of the $SW\frac{1}{4}SW\frac{1}{4}$ of Section One (1) Twp. 21 N. R. 11 E.M.M. thence running east on the line dividing sections one (1) and (12) Twelve in Twp. 21 N.R. 11 E.M.M. a distance of three-quarters of a mile more or less to the south-east corner of section One (1) Twp. 21 N.R. 11 E.M.M. the point of beginning.

That the wards of the proposed municipal corporation consisting of three in number shall be described as follows, namely:

The First Ward, Shall constitute all of the territory within the proposed corporate limits East of a line running through the center of Main Street beginning at the Corporation line on the North and extending by the Corporation line on the South. The Second Ward, Shall constitute all of the territory within the proposed corporate limits North of a line running East from the Corporation line on the West, through the center of Winchell Avenue to the center of the point of intersection of Winchell Avenue and Main Street and West of a line running North through the center of Main Street from the center of the point of intersection of Winchell Avenue and Main Street, to the Corporation line on the North.

The Third Ward, Shall constitute all of the territory within the proposed corporate limits South of a line running East from the Corporation line on the West, through the center of Winchell Avenue to the center of the point of intersection of Winchell Avenue and Main Street and West of a line running South through the center of Main Street from the center of the point of intersection of Winchell Avenue and Main Street to the Corporation line on the South.

That annexed hereto marked "Exhibit A" is a map of the proposed territory to be incorporated and that the same is made a part hereof.

That we further respectfully allege, that three hundred inhabitants reside within the boundaries of the territory to be incorporated and that we are residents therein. And that should you appoint some person to take the census of the number of inhabitants residing within the territory proposed to be incorporated as the town of Geraldine, we agree to abide by the report of said census-taker.

APPENDIX B

ORDINANCE NO. 1

AN ORDINANCE Defining the Boundaries of the Town of Geraldine, Montana.

Be it Ordained by the Town Council of the Town of Geraldine:

Section 1. That the boundaries of the said town of Geraldine be, and the same are hereby described, as follows, to-wit:

Beginning at the southeast corner of the southeast quarter of section one (1), in Township twenty-one (21) north, of range eleven (11) east of the Montana Meridian, Chouteau County, Montana; thence north, a distance of two hundred and forty (240) rods, to the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of the northeast quarter of said section; thence west, a distance of two hundred and forty (240) rods, to the southwest corner of the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of said section; thence south, a distance of two hundred and forty (240) rods, to the southwest corner of the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of said section; thence east, two hundred and forty (240) rods, to the place of beginning.

Passed by the town council and approved by the mayor this 24th day of August, A.D. 1915.

Fred Yockey Mayor

Attest:

H. M. Magnuson
City Clerk.

APPENDIX C

ORDINANCE NO. 49

An ordinance providing for a seal for the Town of Geraldine, Montana:

Be it ordained by the Town Council of Geraldine:

Section 1. Seal, Form of,

A seal in a circular form with the words "Town of Geraldine, Montana," on the outer circle, and in the interior and center of said circle, the words "chouteau County" shall be the seal of the town of Geraldine, to be used in all cases in which, by the laws and customs of nations, it is necessary to use a seal by a corporation.

Passed by the Town Council this 3rd day of September, 1915.

Approved by the Mayor this 3rd day of September, 1915.

Fred Yockey Mayor

Attest:

H. M. Magnuson Town Clerk

APPENDIX D

ORDINANCE NO. 123.

AN ORDINANCE DEFINING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE WARDS IN THE TOWN OF GERALDINE, MONTANA,.

BE IT ORDAINED by the Town Council of the Town of Geraldine, Montana:

Section I - That the Town of Geraldine, Montana, be divided into two Wards, to be known as the First Ward and the Second Ward, respectively.

Section II- That the First Ward shall include all of the territory within the corporate limits of the Town of Geraldine lying south of Winchell Avenue and South of the Center Line of South Half of Sec. 1-21-11.

Section III-That the Second Ward shall include all of the territory within the corporate limits of the Town of Geraldine lying North of Winchell Avenue and North of the Center Line of the South Half of Section 1, Twp. 21, Range 11.

Section IV - That all Ordinances or parts of Ordinances, Resolutions or Orders of the Town Council conflicting herewith are hereby repealed.

Section V - That this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect on and after its passage and approval.

PASSED by the Town Council and APPROVED by the Mayor, this the 20th day of February A.D. 1932.

(SEAL)

W. W. Carley MAYOR.

ATTEST:

H. M. Magnuson
Town Clerk.

APPENDIX E

ORDINANCE NO. 124.

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE NO. 42 OF THE TOWN OF GERALDINE, BEING "AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE VOTING PRECINCTS IN THE TOWN OF GERALDINE, MONTANA."

BE IT ORDAINED by the Town Council of the Town of Geraldine, Montana:

Section I - That Section I of Ordinance No. 42 be amended to read as follows: The Town of Geraldine shall be divided into precincts for the purposes of elections, annual or special, as follows:

Precinct No. 1 - The First Ward;

Precinct No. 2 - The Second Ward.

Section II- That all Ordinances or Resolutions of the Town Council, or parts thereof, in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

Section III- That this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after the date of its passage and approval.

PASSED by the Town Council and APPROVED by the Mayor,
this the 20th day of February A.D. 1932.

(SEAL)

W. W. Carley MAYOR.

ATTEST:

H. M. Magnuson
Town Clerk.