The American Value System

now known as

Small Town Values

by

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AMC Thesis
May 1, 1998

Presented to the American Culture Program Faculty
at the University of Michigan-Flint, fulfilling requirements
for the Master of Liberal Studies in American Culture

First Reader

Second Reader

The American Value System is Alive and Well in Small Towns

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Introduction

After raising three children and teaching for a few years, I realized that many people seemed to be wondering what happened to the American value system. Questions like, "What has happened to today's youth?" and "Why do children seem to have no values or morals anymore?" are often asked when several teachers sit down together. Every generation wonders about the youth and worries about who will take over running this country when the present generation is too old. There is much discussion about whether or not our President has a proper value system so it is quite normal to wonder if values are declining. If our leader is lacking values, how can we expect the next generation to follow a system in question.

Often when speaking of a decaying society someone will mention getting away from it all by moving to a small town in a rural setting. What were previously called American values seem to be alive if we look at small towns across America, and people are seeking those values. If they do not exist in the city or suburbs, possibly getting back to some grass roots will help. Those who want to establish basic values in their lives, in an atmosphere conducive to such a life, are leaving congested areas for a more rural setting. Instead of using "American values" in a sentence, we often hear "small town values" replacing the positive values Americans want in their lives. It is not the values that have changed, it is simply a matter of location.

American values were created in small towns and never left. Large urban areas evolved from some small towns and urban values evolved with the gradual change. As Americans tried to escape the new dirty cities created by industrialization, an area of land between city and country grew. The suburbs grew slowly for awhile and then began to pick up speed as industry and capitalism followed suburbanites into their new land. The closest small towns have been engulfed by suburbanization while smaller towns in the next outward wave have remained stable.

Small towns are classified as having a population of 5,000 to 20,000 residents. Outside of Flint, Michigan, an industrialized city, small towns of approximately 10,000 are becoming this city's suburbs. Further out there are smaller communities, even less populated than 5,000, and they seem to be holding on to the value system we think of when we discuss pure and basic American values.

To best understand these values I found it necessary to historically research our original American values, small towns in general, and specific small towns. The social history of small towns is necessary to grasp the heart and soul of people who create and then keep alive a primitive community. Values do not come from roads, fields, or buildings, but from those who create these necessities. If you want to know about values of a town, all you have to do is learn about the people who live there. Small communities form bonds not found in heavily populated areas because small towns are more like family units whose members are always willing to lend a hand. They share, watch out for each other, and help without being asked. Mrs. Clinton is known for saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." If you ask a child in a small town if that is true, they will probably tell

you that it feels like every adult is their parent. Taking pride and ownership of a town includes feeling connected to all who live there. In this day raising healthy, happy, well-adjusted children is extremely difficult. Having a little help along the way is welcomed by most.

Each small town has a unique personality and reason for being, but all share many concrete beliefs. Families will often stay in their home town with succeeding generations giving back to the community all that has made them feel safe and secure. Some families own businesses that cater to the town's needs while others are consistently volunteering for any service needing to be done. Each town has celebrations that are planned by a volunteer group giving hours of their free time. These celebrations are put together with love and commitment for the community. Durand has Railroad Days, Swartz Creek has Hometown Days, and Montrose has its Blueberry Festival. Year after year these people choose to celebrate their hometowns.

It is interesting to hear rural residents discuss recreation and summer activities because over the years, little changed. Outdoor activities are still as popular as they always have been. Simple entertainment, friends, and family seem to be the theme of pleasure in small towns. Unity is a guiding factor, joined by hard work and discipline. Play time is so much more rewarding if you have earned it, and small town people truly do.

Even though small towns near large industrial cities are financially connected to the city, towns are generally trying to keep the atmosphere at home as innocent as possible in this technological age. Often they refuse to give permits to chain restaurants or

what they deem to be immoral industries. A prime example is in Montrose. The township has accepted landfills as business in this community, but will not permit a juvenile training camp or fast food restaurants in town. Landfills may not be glamorous work, but they do not require strangers to come in to town for a length of time. Restaurants need people and a juvenile facility would not only bring those youths into the community, but also the families coming to visit. The idea was overwhelmingly denied. The philosophy of keeping things small and personal is primary in small town values.

I

The American Value System

When the term "small town values" arises in conversation, people nod their heads and agree that there are positive aspects to living by these ideals. If debating the best way to raise children, someone will mention that children are best raised in the realm of the safety of small town values. When asked to define that term, however, a pause in conversation and a surprised look comes over the faces of those present. How could someone question the definition of this broadly and loosely used phrase? If we look closely at the definition, we must consider the history of this country to truly understand the evolution of this theory. To thoroughly understand today's idea of small town values, we must understand how they actually arrived from our belief in the original "American Value System."

Before being "discovered" by Christopher Columbus, this country was a vast open land sparsely populated by American Indians. The land was clean, unpolluted, and a natural habitat to many wild animals. Most Europeans who came here were from relatively small, dirty, polluted, and over-populated countries. They came to escape political powers pushing religious beliefs on all who lived there. Those choosing to make

the horrendous trip knew that their dreams of freedom could only become a reality by risking everything they owned and even possibly life itself. It was a grueling, life-threatening, filthy trip in the hull of a ship lasting many long, agonizing days. People willing to subject themselves to this kind of torture were strong-willed and determined to survive, no matter what the consequences. This determination and hard work were all they had as they walked onto the shores of Eastern America. In order to survive, they had to be independent, hard-working, and willing to help others. They either lived by that code or they died. There was no other choice. This was the American way to survive. Besides the physical need for land, in order to build a home and grow and raise food, these new inhabitants were socially in need of belonging to a group. Humans require interaction with others, so most who came here connected with others who had similar beliefs. Many formed religious communities based on their freedom to worship and live according to a particular religion. Some, looking for the opportunity to farm large parcels of land, found their friendship with those who settled in the southern portion of this country. Even if they spent six days in the fields seeing no one else, they gathered for church services on Sunday. This independent, hard-working, life style was the foundation for what we call the" American Value System".

America was and still is looked upon as the land of opportunity. America is thought to be a place where anyone can become what they want to become, *if* they are willing to work very hard and suffer to get it. Immigrants coming to this country for the past three hundred years have believed that they must leave the only life they have ever known if they wanted to achieve their goals. They did not come to America expecting to

be taken care of like helpless children because there was no government to give out shelter, food, and clothing to the needy. There was no room for needy people.

In " Challenges to American Values", T. C. Cochran states:

> Many of the challenged values of today were imported from Europe and are older than the nation. In the first two centuries of settlement, Americans altered the European heritage to fit the new environment and developed a widely held set of social or cultural values. Although there were numerous differences in local customs, varying from those of a South Carolina planter to those of a Maine fisherman or from those of the Reverend Cotton Mather of Boston to those of the merchant Simon Gratz of Philadelphia, there were also common elements in American ideas and attitudes quickly recognized by visitors from other countries. These distinguished and learned travelers described the similarities somewhat differently, but from the early commentators to Francis Grund and Alexis de Tocqueville in the 1830's, they agreed on many distinctive American characteristics. (Cochran, p 3-4)

The values about which Cochran is talking were based on the similarities of the settlers because most migrated from northern European countries. They also shared the experience of migration and settlement in a new land, living on the edge of simple wilderness. Values that varied from those in Europe were a sense of individuality and responsibility, self-determination, private rights, material success, belief in a God, impatience with apparently nonutilitarian activities or learning, and white male supremacy. Although there were others, this is the core of the new American value system.

To best understand why values are so important to humans, it is good to remember that we are social beings. Social scientists divide society into culture, social institutions, and the physical environment. All of these things are important to consider when creating a value system. "In their actions as members of a society, people who do not outwardly follow the values and support the institutions of their culture are regarded as innovators or deviants." (Cochran p5)

Values, being based on past experience, came into question as a result of the migration to a new land. Settlers chose to keep part of their European value system while modifying, changing and creating new values for the New World. When moving to the new world most people brought nothing, or very little, with them. The American style, in the beginning, was purely functional, cheap, and a matter of simple survival. They based life on necessities and availability. Many who migrated also made more than one move once they reached America. It was imperative that they knew how to survive on almost nothing. It was a constant struggle to build. They built their homes, tools, relationships, and lives in these new lands. "Migration has continued to be a powerful influence throughout American history. In the decade 1920 to 1930, for example, an old stable East Coast city such as Norristown, Pennsylvania, received 501 new male migrants and lost 382. For the whole period 1910 to 1950, in-migration accounted for 80 percent of the growth in male population." (Cochran p8) This demonstrates the tremendous movement that has always been a part of shaping the people of the United States.

Geography and abundant natural resources helped to shape the new value system. Abundance of fertile land enticed internal migration and gave rise to innovations in the practice of farming, shop keeping, and millwork, drastically changing the culture. Migration and cheap land, completely unheard of in Western Europe, changed men, urban or rural, into real estate operators. Many easily flowing rivers made transportation from rural areas to towns more accessible and influenced agrarian values. Iron, lying on the surface of the ground in some areas, made this staple readily available for shipping to other countries. Another natural resource that was plentiful in America was wood.

Unlike the small depleted land in England, America's wood was so plentiful that most trees were regarded as hindrances rather than assets.

> These opportunities of the American geographical environment support the thesis that such forces working on the continuous flow of immigrants with the lower-to middle-class Western European cultural heritage were dominant in shaping the traditional American values and social practices. The total approach, therefore, could be called "geocultural". The physical environment was exploited by people with the cultural values and knowledge needed for material success, and, in doing so, they generated a common culture and values that for many decades became stronger as well as more distinct from those of Europe. (Cochran p9)

There were three basic forms of settlement in England; the rural rustic village, the bustling dirty city, like London, and the commercial town. When considering which of these three would be the best to have in the new land, many favored the commercial town. The rural village was specifically related to farming and vast areas of land while the city was known to be a disgusting, polluted mass confusion of social ills, such as fire, plague, poverty, and pollution. The commercial town was somewhere in between and could possibly resemble what we now call suburbia. After London's great fire of 1666, new ideas emerged in city planning. William Penn, when making plans for Philadelphia was adamant in spacing houses and businesses, with streets and squares serving as firebreaks and parks with gardens and trees. Penn had decided that he would create a "green country town, which will never be burnt, and will always be wholesome". (Lingerman p17).

> The small community has been the very predominant form of human living throughout the history of mankind. The city is a few thousand years old, and while isolated homesteads appeared in early times, it was probably not until the settlement of the New World that they made their 'first appearance on a large scale.' To Tocqueville, the village or township was the "only association so perfectly natural that wherever a number of men are collected it seems to constitute itself.' One estimate is that today (1942) three-quarters of the human race still live in villages; and

> to these villages are to be added the relatively very few who still live in nomadic bands or other unstable small settlements. (Robert Redfield, The Little Community, Lingerman , p.17)

In the past, whether it was a small village or a commercial town, it was predominantly believed that smaller was better. After living in or near cities like London, immigrants to this new land believed that it was best to build small communities with people who held similar beliefs. After initial failures, such as building too close to the sea and not growing their own food to sustain them through the northern winters, there were several successful towns in the north while fewer were being created in the south. The difference between the commercial towns of the north and agrarian villages of the south were beginning to show the diverse cultures that can arise within one nation, primarily because of the geographical layout of the land.

Some towns were created by religious doctrines of people who lived there. In the 1600's, the Articles of Agreement of Springfield, Massachusetts stated that the town would consist of forty families, definitely no more than fifty, because this was the ideal size for a town. This was derived from a principle laid down by the Pilgrims on church size: "No particular church ought to consist of more members than can conveniently watch over one another and usually meet and worship in one congregation." (Lingerman p.30) This helped to create tight homogenous communities, rich and poor, but with little or no differences in belief. Because of the internal migration and the need for individualism and freedom, although viewed suspiciously, people moved out to create new small towns, so these tightly created towns have not completely survived, but there are still pockets or communities most populated by particular religions. Two such areas in this part of

Michigan would be the Catholic community in New Lothrop and the German Lutheran community of Frankenmuth.

Another reason for inner migration was the population explosion among those coming to America by the 1700's. Increasing prosperity brought people, a higher fertility rate caused larger families, and the average person was living ten years longer. The land of a small town would be depleted so families would pack and move to a less civilized area. At that time, fathers were obliged to provide a livelihood for their sons so they might marry, meaning there must be land or a trade. Sometimes the fathers would go to auction and buy land in a new developing town and save it for their sons. If the sons wanted their land, they had to abide by the fathers' wishes while they were growing up. The monetary value of the land helped build the value system within the relationship between the father and son.

By the third and fourth generation, the anatomy of towns was more speculative. People were learning more trades and moving where there was need and opportunity, even if it was just down the road. Instead of settling within a religious community, with survival the main purpose, these future generations began to look at their individualism and possible prosperity. Because most townspeople were still fairly new themselves, new arrivals were warmly welcomed and helped by everyone in town. There was a feeling of comradeship and kinship. While pursuing their own dreams, they knew they could help others along the way. This was a strength in the American way of life and value system being created in this developing land.

II

Industrialization's Effects on American Values

The strong resolution of the first generations began to dim with each succeeding generation. The determination to leave behind the old dirty barren land drove first generation immigrants to these shores, but their American born children only knew the old country from stories. They had not experienced it themselves, so the stories of past life grew less dramatic with each new generation. By the end of the Civil War, America was going through a dramatic time and people were extremely unsettled in their financial security. London's problems were an ocean away and were no longer connected to Americans. The thought of open lands and freedom were only discussed in relation to Southern plantations and the freedom of slaves. The American value system was not only being questioned, but also was being used as a pawn in a financial game of chess between the North and South.

Factories built using assembly lines were predominantly in the northern industrial cities; therefore the needs of the people who were coming to find work had to be addressed. Cities were beginning to look like old country cities, with homeless people

begging on dirty street corners in industrial sections of most large northern industrial cities. Both southerners who had lost their land in the Civil War and freed slaves were coming north, looking for a new life, and rich northerners were able to exploit these poor migrant southerners.

Many similarities between the new and old worlds were beginning to emerge. The idea of moving to a large industrial city was synonymous with financial security, or at least survival. Previous generations were primarily focused on land for opportunity, but this generation looked at the city for a mere existence. If not poor and helpless at this time, many looked to the city as a pursuit of personal financial success.

> The pursuit of personal success, commitment to material progress, placing a high value on activity as such, individual-not social-responsibility, and other norms of the democratic, individualistic, and historic capitalist values were all reinforced rather than undermined in the first generations of an industrializing society. (Cochran p.9)

Many Americans were becoming more obsessed with monetary wealth and used this as a tool for measuring success. As factories grew, so did the city, population , and the pollution. By the late 1800s some urbanites were beginning to ask themselves about why they were living in a filthy, smelly, infested, and crime ridden city. If only their ancestors could hear them! It was like living in London all over again. Americans were reexamining their value system found that the true American value system was originally based on small communities where people were individuals who knew and helped each other, living in clean, fresh open air surrounded by land and trees. As early as 1850, Charles Dickens wrote of a New York slum: "See how the rotten beams are tumbling down, and how the patched and broken windows seem to scowl dimly, like eyes that have been hurt in drunken frays....Where dogs would howl to lie, women and men and boys

slink off to sleep, forcing the dislodged rats to move away in quest of better lodging." (Cochran p.45) Urban life was under inevitable physical destruction just as the buildings around them.

As more and more immigrants came into the cities, the original value system, based on white male, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant dominance was challenged by newcomers. Blacks coming north had been brought up in the South and conditioned to a special type of agrarian society. Northerners gave little support to those who knew nothing of self regulation. Urban problems became a special American challenge to traditional values. As cities grew and the United States became more metropolitan, the farm population was shrinking quickly. By 1900 the slums of New York City were worse than anywhere else in the world. Chicago was not far behind, and states began looking for a cure for public health menaces like excess sewage and dilapidated buildings. In the nineteenth century, immigrants from other countries and blacks from the south came primarily from rural areas. Consequently, although there are basic American values, there was still an acculturation from rural to urban values that was continuously going on, but needed adjustments such as reliance on government, more education, and more collective social agencies was slow and weak. In the country, an individual relied on the earth to sustain life, while in the city reliance was on money or other people. Survival means changed drastically with urbanization, and many had no idea how to adjust their way of life without turning to crime. Habitual criminals also found an ample supply of victims in the cities, just as any predator seeking a prey.

Feeling their values threatened by the impersonal big city, people sought substitutes. Important among these was the desire to belong to a meaningful group or family. In the small rural homes from whence they came such belonging was taken for granted, but in the city new groups were formed, not always with a positive outcome. Gathering in bars or on streets could prove to be injurious or even deadly. More sensible immigrants looked for clubs or organizations that held similar beliefs. Churches were often as much social establishments as religious ones. The first settlers of this country has congregated in small groups so they could be with people of similar beliefs, while these new city dwellers had to look beyond the crowded streets filled with strangers to find small social and religious groups so they too could satisfy the need to belong.

> In a very broad view, it may be said that, up to modern times , Western World culture was predominantly a rural culture and the values, customs, and habits appropriate to cities have everywhere challenged older traditions and values. Yet because of the lack of much experience with the values of centralized control and planning, inevitably accepted by most Europeans because of wars and absolute monarchies, the needs of urbanism have been harder to meet in the United States. These needs have challenged the deeply held American values of freedom and extreme individualism. (Cochran p. 48)

The differences between the original American value system and the revamped version for urban living was becoming even more clear to those living in cities. Farming communities were still removed from crime, crowding, and filth of urban areas. Their problems were centered around agriculture and its survival. Unlike city dwellers, little had changed in their social value system. They could read about urban problems in the paper and hear about the city from travelers and businessmen but rarely had to see it themselves. Children were sheltered from any knowledge of city life. The wealthy, who had homes in the country as well as the city, painted an ugly picture of city dwelling. It was becoming a

place for business only. Unfortunately, not many people had the luxury of owning a home in the country, and many could not afford anything but rent in the city. To leave the city required transportation, and owning and caring for a horse in the city was expensive. This mobility of those who were not extremely wealthy began to occur only after industrialization's birth in the United States.

III

Transportation and Suburbanization's Effects on American Values

Modern suburbanization developed early in the second half of the nineteenth century as urban residents were increasingly able to live on the fringe of the American city. Suburbia is defined as the politically separate but economically dependent communities located within commuting range of the central city. (Masotti 3) The key phrase is "commuting range". Because industrialization was key in creating the new transportation technology, which has been a significant force in shaping the geographical structure of suburbia, it is necessary to trace the growth of modern suburbs, leading to small towns, within the framework of four urban transport eras:

1. Walking-Horse Era (pre-1850 to late 1880's)
2. Electric Streetcar Era (late 1880's to 1920)
3. Recreational Automobile Era (1920 to 1945)
4. Freeway Era (1945 to the present) (Muller 26)

During the "Walking Horse Era" cities were small, tightly packed urban settlements. Cities had a random arrangement of homes, shops, and other work places all within walking distance from one another. The wealthy lived within the city limits, but they had larger sections of land, walled off from the rest of the community. They also were able to afford horse drawn carriages which gave them more mobility than most citizens. By 1850 horse-drawn streetcars were a success and opened a sizable new area for home construction at the edge of the city. Approximately a three mile expansion around the city became accessible to the people who could afford the use of this new invention. This newly accessible outer ring that surrounded the pedestrian city became the horse-car suburbs, and its land was used nearly exclusively to build larger and better quality housing. (Muller 29) Middle class families were at first dispersed throughout the city according to where a man was employed (as most women of this class did not work in public).

By the mid 1800s there were several magazines being written for domestic women taking care of their home, children, and husband. Godey's Lady's Book was one of the most important purveyors of the ideology of domesticity. A fore runner of modern magazines for women such as: Goodhousekeeping and the Lady's Home Journal, Godey's published much of its domestic advice in the form of fiction. (Marsh 22) Stories were written to show how a woman could ruin her family's life if she did not adhere to domestic principles. The most important reason for existence was to maintain the perfect mother-child bond, and it was to take precedence over everything and everyone, including her husband and her own desires. She must be very careful to choose the right husband

and influence him correctly in the early stages of their marriage or she would suffer for the rest of her life. This was, of course, being written by men.

During this time few women were employed outside of the home, especially in the middle classes, so marriage was the ladies' occupation. If they failed at marriage, they were actually failing at business. There was no sympathy for women who failed, they simply were looked upon as failures, because there must have been something they could have done . By the 1850s and 1860s there was a small group of women stirring up women's right's movements, but most were not yet involved. Domestic writers began to suggest that the model of female influence allowed women to coyly and slyly manipulate their husbands. This causes some problems in marriages but it did not provide women a central role in ordering family life.

Newly emerging women writers began to assert the significance of women's roles in the family. Women were told that their influence was far reaching, sacred and dignified, and that they had a calling to guard, instruct, and mold the moral nature of the family. Women were also told that there was no man's job that called for the wisdom, firmness, tact, discrimination, prudence, and versatility of talent as that of a woman in her home. (Marsh 25)

The ideology of domesticity made use of separate spheres in life and eventually in the home. Homes were arranged to give women their necessary space to run the household, and men received their studies where they could hang their guns and fishing poles or smoke their pipes. American Victorian pattern books for middle class homes in the 1860s and 1870s suggests that a typical, freestanding residential design was a tall and

rather narrow house with a basement and two stories capped by a full attic. Its interior arrangement both protected the family privacy and encouraged separation within the family. Only nineteen percent of the designs offered just one living area on the first floor. Bedrooms were being designated for male or female children and decorations were chosen to accentuate that choice. Home may have been considered to be man's castle, but it was designed and run entirely by women. Books and magazines were beginning to tell middle class women that it was their job to bring back the original American value system before this country went out of control and beyond survival.

The "Electric Streetcar Era" began in the late 1800s and immediately enabled the range of commuting to increase significantly, so the urban development radius could now be feasibly extended outward for a distance up to ten miles from the city core. By the twentieth century, cities were showing the wear and tear of industrialization. They were unable to keep up with the people flooding the streets to work in new factories being developed on the outskirts of all major metropolises. Quiet neighborhood streets were changing, and strangers now wandered where only familiar faces used to be. Cities were now being looked upon as dirty and dangerous. Trips to the country were more accessible because of the upgraded mass transportation. Open spaces, green grass, and blue sky began to look more desirable, safer, and more secure to the white middle class domestic engineers. A new domesticity seemed a viable solution to the large number of seemingly different kinds of problems. When looked at through the eyes of these women, urban society at the turn of the twentieth century was full of filthy factories, crowded immigrant ghettos, rising violence, and other non-conducive elements for raising healthy, happy

children. Members of the middle class were afraid that by this time an aggressive working class culture had taken a strong hold of the city. (Marsh 68) They realized that past optimism about returning to small town ideals would not be possible in the newly industrialized cities so new ideals would have to be created.

Sociologists who studied the American family during the first decade of the twentieth century contended that urban life and family stability had become incompatible. In 1908 the American Sociological Society devoted its annual meeting to questions about the family. Although scholars in attendance were not entirely in agreement about what was happening, they warned explicitly that city life and family togetherness had become contradictory. (Marsh 83)

Electric streetcars made suburban life more affordable for white middle class families. Although development soon stretched several miles out, trolley lines permitted many to access quickly the central business district. For these new suburbanites living in their much desired detached single family houses with backyard and garden, this made travel a little less complex. Although suburban streetcar corridors were overwhelmingly the domain of the new mobile middle class, city dwellers did have access to the recreational facilities at the end of the line. Picnic grounds, swimming beaches, and new amusement parks, such as Coney Island, Philadelphia's Willow Grove, and Boston's Castle Gardens, were popular to everyone. Fairgrounds were also being built at the end of the trolley lines, some even large enough to host the World's Fair, as did St. Louis Forest Park, the scene of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904. The railroad made suburban life a reality. Industry may have driven the middle class right out of the city, but

it gave them something to ride on their way out. Men were able to buy homes a few miles away from work and still get to the job on time every morning. Separation of distance between jobs and the home, and space within the homes, became a reality. By the time the man left for work in the morning until he came home at night could be timed between ten and fifteen hours.

> The suburban vision that took shape at the turn of the twentieth century had altered both the conventional conception of the ideology of domesticity and the notion of suburbia as a political substitute for the pastoral ideal. (Marsh 129)

When Americans entered World War I, many female supporters of women's rights, schooled in the idea of service, viewed American involvement as a chance for women to participate actively. In most cases, this new wave of ideas did not work in middle class suburbia. Margaret Slattery's The American Girl and her Community, published in 1918, was representative of this genre. Slattery's book defended young women from those who denounced their independence and desire for excitement. The new American girl would live in a world where "they" is of as great an importance as "I". (Marsh 134) Slattery believed that young women should be trained for careers, in case the war caused a shortage of men, but most would marry and would not use their training except to make a better home for her family. Slattery states:

> The new American girl...will accept the duties of the home as they come to her without fear or dread. I believe she will desire, to a far greater degree than have the girls of the previous generation, to share with the man she loves the joys and responsibilities of parenthood.....aware of the fact that the earth's greatest treasure ...is a child. (Marsh p. 135)

Beatrice Hale wrote What's Wrong With Our Girls? , in which she blamed all problems on the urban life of the time. Hale's attitudes reflected a growing fear on part of

middle class Americans that the new suburban domestic ideal of the Progressive Era had not succeeded in reaching enough Americans and therefore was not stabilized. Everyone was counting on the suburban woman to cure the nation's woes.

Stage three, the "Recreational Automobile Era", began about the time World War I ended. Private ownership of automobiles began to increase, giving more freedom to those who could afford the luxury of owning a car. By the following decade, suburbs began their domination of metropolitan and national population growth trends. With this new rush to the suburbs was the idea of home ownership and good citizenship. War does many things, including giving a nation a feeling of pride in ownership, if it ends on a positive note. While demographers can not pinpoint the exact year that more people left the inner cities than entered, it is agreed that the process intensified during the 1920s. Housing reformer William Smythe pressed the government to make suburbanization a national priority. Responding specifically to the challenge of the Bolshevik Revolution, he revived the argument that property ownership preserved self government. By 1930, forty-eight percent of American families owned their homes, and the average house was priced at approximately $5,700. (Marsh 133) Earlier in this century it was more important to move to the suburbs, but by the 1930s it was most important to own a suburban home. A complete cycle was occurring in the United States. Except for the poor who had no choices the city's people were deserting urban life. Small town citizens were quietly living their lives-- lives they were earlier told were not acceptable as so many rushed to the cities--and now they watched as so many began to leave in waves. The old

American values, now called "small town values", were beckoning Americans back to nature, individualism, independence, and less crime.

> A homeowner is something very special. We enjoy working on our homes, and we take pride in them. When a homeowner starts renting out part of his home, it changes things. He starts looking on his home as a rental unit. We see them taking less pride in their homes....This is down zoning, which lessens property values...Once they allow this, they can move on to high rises and who knows, I could wake up with a factory next door. Apartments are a sign of deterioration. It takes the sparkle out of the American Dream just knowing there are apartments on the block. (Perin p.98)

After World War II, the "Freeway Era" began to take hold. The scale of suburbanization was so greatly enlarged after 1945, it became common knowledge suburbia did not occupy a major position in national urban life until the opening of the postwar era. This idea is now being reconsidered. The growth may be more like capping off a pyramid of many smaller movements during the early 1900s. Between 1947 and 1960, the United States experienced the greatest baby boom ever, ending the slowdown in marriages and childbirth created first by the Depression and then by World War II. Another wave of suburban building would have developed even if there had been no postwar baby boom, for American cities have always grown at the edges, like trees, adding new rings of residential development every generation. At first new rings were added inside of the city limits, but since the last half of the nineteenth century they have more often sprung up in the suburbs.

Obviously, popular anti-suburban literature , which falsely accuses the suburbs of causing conformity, matriarchy, adultery, divorce, alcoholism, and other standard American pathologies, has not kept anyone from moving to the suburbs. Even current predictions of land shortages, longer commuting, and urban congestion in suburbs will not

discourage the next generation of home buyers. With industry and offices now moving to suburbs, areas previously outside commuting range become ripe for residential development to house their employees. (Masotti 48) Most suburbanites do not mind some suburban congestion. They do not leave the city for a rural existence, as the folklore has it; they only want a half-acre lot and their favorite urban facilities within a short driving range from the house, along with truer American values, which were becoming hard to live by in the city. Unfortunately, all that glisters is not gold, although it may prove to be fool's gold. Escape to the fringe of the city may be no escape at all. Suburban blight is spreading quickly and randomly, leaving a once beautiful countryside cluttered and destroyed by the ever present bulldozer. Some wonder if there was a reason to move to suburbs, while others ponder if they should go out even further? The numbers of those rushing to suburbs are depriving each other of the life style they expected to find outside of the city. Haphazard and unorganized housing developments were raised as quickly as possible, usually on previously farmed land, without a tree in sight. Seedlings were planted, but it would take at least twenty years to reap the benefit of shade. Endless sprawl in the suburbs has replaced crowded city streets. At some point in time those who flee one disorderly metropolis will run head on into the spreading blight of another.

> Today city and suburb are forging ahead, without adequate plans for their future, toward and inevitable day of reckoning. Many are building for more congestion and blight where the magnitude of the problem has already reached critical proportions. The indiscriminate grab for land has left little time or thought for how to achieve any sort of total community development. Our metropolitan areas reveal few signs of the bold concepts of urban planning and design that are called for by present rates of growth and changing technology. What they do reveal is an almost complete disregard for either natural or man-made beauty. The metropolis has become a jumble of poles and wires, signs and billboards, asphalt and concrete, dust and smog. As one

observer puts it, we seem to hell-bent for Slobovia, Upper as well as Lower. (Owen 6)

Small towns were relatively untouched by the first two transport eras. It was not until automobiles became recreational that there was travel between city and country for other purposes than farming. The naive farm boy who borrowed the family truck to go to the city was always in awe of the radical differences in lifestyles. The anonymity of being in such a large crowd of strangers was either scary or thrilling, depending on the boy. He could go somewhere in the city and find people breaking sacred rules by which he had been raised Everyone in town obeyed these values, except maybe the town deviants, and they did not count according to most townspeople. Every small town had a drunk who could not control himself, but children knew there was something wrong with him so they did not choose to imitate him. If a child did something wrong, the whole town knew it before sundown. Gossip lines were open from the school, to the home, to the grocery store, to the barber shop, and to the police station. It was the moral and ethical obligation of the parents to raise their children to be self-supportive, trustworthy, contributing members of the community. A phrase often used by parents when disciplining their children in a small town was, "What would people think?" Try that line in the city and a child would have no idea how to respond because people did not pay attention to what their neighbor was or was not doing.

To have any individualism and privacy in the city, people did not become friendly with their neighbors. To help each other, part of the original American value system, was thought to be dead in the city, unless settled in a very tightly homogeneous neighborhood where they tried to teach values. Unfortunately, these children were subjected to more

than the neighborhood and could be influenced in their early years. Children in small towns have always been influenced by familiar faces, stability, tranquillity, and a feeling of belonging. Towns are frequently referred to as familiar places, like "our town", while the urban area is usually called, "the city".

Believing they can have urban life and clean country living at the same time, more city people flocked to the suburbs. Suburbs were being marketed as the perfect wholesome environment for raising a family. Pictures showed green lawns, flower gardens, trees, parks, and happy families picnicking with friends. Americans have always believed in living a healthy life with fresh air and green grass, but they have also allowed the need for financial gains to cloud their visions and taint their values. This land was so large, it was inconceivable that it could ever be ruined or used up, so when the city became too dirty for living, those who could began the steady flow to the suburbs. Except for the rare examples of such men as William Penn or Thomas Jefferson, who drafted primitive controls for some of the land grants made in pioneer days, the traditional American approach to land has not been concerned with community values or future generations. (Owen 19) Besides personal living space being mass produced in suburbs, commercial buildings are constantly being developed along every main highway going in and out of every city. Businesses compete for the most convenient locations, with downtown no longer being an option. The majority of shoppers were going suburban so commerce was forced to do the same. Franchises began to take the place of the small "mom and pop" family store, forcing many family businesses out. Loyalty to the neighborhood store was being replaced by who had the best buy because people left their

neighborhoods and had not built relationships with businesses in the suburbs. Also, many families were feeling the financial burden of their move. Children had to driven everywhere they went; you could not walk to the stores, which were now in strip malls along busy highways; and dad spent most of his day away from the family, no longer able to come home for lunch, and sometimes late for dinner.

Mother began to take on more responsibility as head of the household while father was gone for long hours and could not easily be reached for help in decision making. If two cars were not financially possible, often times the father had to share rides into the city or use public transportation because the mother could not take care of the family without a car. This gave more women a reason to learn to drive, where before there was not a need while living within walking distance to everything in the city.

Having a strong value system was extremely important to suburban housewives. Their careers in mothering and housekeeping were driven by the need to raise healthy happy children. Removing children from the filthy corrupt city was the principle goal for leaving the conveniences of city living. Although suburbs were not exactly the country, these mothers saw them as the perfect places for raising children. Instead of concentrating on cooking and cleaning all day, the suburban mother now had so many modern conveniences she was able to spend more time thinking of ways to help her children. Mothers became more involved with school organizations like the Parent Teacher Association and helped to organize more extra-curricular activities and organizations. Instead of just playing with children in the local neighborhood, mothers organized play groups, many different lessons in activities; swimming, tennis, piano, etc., and began

having theme birthday parties with several children invited. Without even knowing it, children were being taught to value their capability to perform and their possessions with an emphasis on competition. While spending their days wrapped up in organizing their children's activities, these mothers, striving to be perfect parents, forgot the original purpose for moving from the city to the suburbs. Left in the city are poor children, reverting back to the survival mode of our original ancestors, just trying to get by day after day, in a less than desirable environment. Suburban life for primarily middle class white families, however, instills a strong belief in education as the means to build a life of happiness and financial security.

IV

What is Small Town, America?

While all of this movement was going on throughout history there was one area of stability. The small American town, feeling some population changes over the years, stayed true to its belief system. As the commercial towns became cities, and the cities became industrial amazons, the small town remained the same. As urban dwellers loved, and then left, their city, small town people stayed the same. While safe communities became filled with strangers and corruption, small towns remained familiar and safe. While the American value system changed to meet the needs of the growing city, and was rearranged in the new suburban life, small country towns never lost sight of their value system. It was plain and simple. If you live by the Golden Rule and the original American values, you will live a long happy life and will go to heaven when you die.

"In every village smil'd
The heav'n-inviting church, and every town
A world within itself, with order, peace,

And harmony, adjusted to all its weal."

This poem, written by Reverend Timothy Dwight, showed how sentimental a place towns had become in the hearts of New Englanders. (Lingerman 61)

This country began as small groups of people cleared land and helped each other build homes and lives. New Englanders were determined to survive harsh winters while pioneers of the South fought weather and disease to farm vast areas of land. Each town began as some man's dream to tame an area of wild land, build a home, then a town, and name it after himself. For some men there was a great need to immortalize themselves in order to feel the freedom for which they had so longed. After building the East Coast it was inevitable that men would choose to roam farther and farther west, into the wilderness, to find themselves. Most westward travel was done by following large meandering rivers.

> 'Old America seems to be breaking up and moving westward,' wrote Morris Birbeck, the Englishman who had come to America in 1817 to plant a colony of his countrymen in the Illinois Territory. 'We are very seldom out of sight, as we travel on this grand track towards the Ohio, of family groups behind and before us....Add to these the numerous stages loaded to the utmost, and the innumerable travelers on horseback, on foot, and in light wagons, and you have before you a scene of bustle and business, extending over three hundred miles, which is truly wonderful.' (Lingerman p.89)

New small towns were under construction everywhere. The high-tides of migration were 1816-18, 1830-37, and the early 1850s. Between 1810 and 1820 the population of Ohio increased 152 percent, that of Indiana 500 percent, and that of Illinois 350 percent. Between 1815 and 1818 the population of Illinois increased from 15,000 to 40,000, while 42,000 immigrants entered Indiana in 1816. From 1825 onward, Michigan

and Wisconsin filled at a similar rate, mostly with New Englanders, and their population grew from 30,000 to 300,000 between 1840 and 1850. By 1900 the Middle West had twenty-six million people, against twenty-one million in New England and the Middle Atlantic states combined, and the region provided six of the seven presidents elected in their own right since 1860. (Lingerman 91)

After leaving East Coast port cities behind, those traveling west dotted the countryside with small towns. It was inevitable that some of these towns would become cities, like Chicago and St. Louis, as they became the gathering places for those looking for life west of the Mississippi. It was not until the last half of the 1800s, however, when several historical events took place, that many people were enticed to leave small town America and run toward urbanization. Railroads were being built connecting major cities, creating faster and easier transportation for those without other means; as well, like horses, trains could carry cargo, which earned them the nickname "Iron Horse." The Civil War devastated the South , releasing its black population to fend for themselves and bankrupting many large farmers. Industrialized northern cities were growing steadily throughout this time but were soon consumed in growth with the invention of the assembly line. Small safe hometowns were losing their youth to the excitement and promise of financial security and glamour in the fast paced northern industrialized city.

By the 1890s, small town people reassured themselves that their way of life was not as backward and old-fashioned as they were being told by the urban newspapers and magazines. It was the backbone of America where technology came slowly to aid in the farming industry, but residents did not allow it to control them the way it had in the city.

They saw the benefits of living a comfortable distance from the ever changing city. Instead of updating their value system to meet the needs of the twentieth century industrialized life, they dug in their heels and celebrated life in Small Town, USA.

Small towns in the South generally were created around a town square with the court house in the middle. Businesses lined the other side of the four streets looking out over retired gentlemen sitting on tree shaded park benches all around the courthouse. Some northern towns have squares also and most have one main street running through the heart of the town and is usually called-- what else?--Main Street.

Even though there was a rush for city life, approximately seventy-five percent of Americans were still living in small towns in the 1890s. Their life--birth, marriage, childbirth, and death-- all took place on center stage of a small town. People moving in or out was big news. There was a distinct feeling of belonging to a small town where everybody knew your name. There were no house numbers or addresses, rarely did anyone remember street names, but everyone knew where the Smith house was. It was a familiarity that became a part of who you were.

In the 1890s most small towns were based on a horse-drawn economy and culture. Horses still pulled wagons loaded with farm produce, coming to town to unload at the local elevator, usually near a railroad, if one happened to go through town. There was a blacksmith, stable, and feed store ready to do business when farmers came to town. Saloons were available and ready to help farmers quench their thirst while they waited for repairs being done at the livery, carriage maker, or harness maker's shop. These specialty shop owners were skilled artisans who made a variety of tools and implements. The livery

stable was also called a social center for men, where they could catch up on news while waiting for repairs. Young boys were often educated in the functional side of reproduction when their fathers allowed them to be present while a stallion serviced a mare. Since this was the Victorian Era, the town women usually let it be known that this type of display was unacceptable and should only be done in privacy. Usually on a Saturday afternoon men gathered in the town's barbershops where they could get pampered, smoke their cigars, and catch up on town gossip. The general store was another location where news could be shared while picking up necessary items for the week. Everyone in town came through those doors at sometime during the week, and even women were allowed there.

Even though addresses were not important for directions or mail, there was a distinct division of localities, even in a small town. Wealthier sections of towns named their streets after people, nature, or popular places; the working class lived closer to the dirty businesses, like the blacksmith and livery, so their streets were named accordingly. Really poor, destitute people lived in a section divided off from town, decisively known as "the other side of the tracks", "Shantytown", or "down by the docks". The poor were not numerous and usually worked for the middle class in some fashion. Often a women's church group gathered food and clothing and donated it during holidays. The less fortunate were not feared but rather simply ignored by society and were not generally allowed to climb the social ladder. For the most part, small towns had few wealthy, usually the town doctor and maybe a lawyer or businessman, and few poor. Most were

somewhere in the middle. Farmers were wealthy in land but poor in cash flow. They raised, grew, and made almost everything they needed.

Electricity was beginning to filter into small towns about this time and was first introduced in town businesses. Small towns took their time, gently resisting change, watching as each new business changed over, and then the wealthier homes, one by one. Street lights were converted, giving businesses the opportunity to increase business hours and allowing people to gather in warm evenings under the glow of electricity.

Telephone service, quite common in the city, was creeping into small towns. Businesses started using the services, slowly learning to ask for a number when the operator answered instead of simply asking for an individual by name. The operator, supposedly there to transfer calls, could often be found, through eavesdropping, to be the most knowledgeable person in town. As with most technological advances, the telephone was slow to make it into homes, as small town residents still preferred to visit with the neighbor in person and sit quietly on the front porch after chores were done.

With this new technology came a new look. Towns were being wrapped in wires. Electrical and telephone wires were strung through town attached to businesses using the services. It was not a pleasing addition but most accepted it as tangible evidence of growth and prosperity. There was even a visible change happening to streets as most dirt roads were being replaced with some kind of pavement. By 1900 many towns had "Main Street" covered with a vitrified brick, giving rise to the question of horse travel. Horses, slowly being replaced by automobiles, were eventually banned from paved streets, and another sign of progress was showing itself in Small Town, USA.

Especially in northern towns, summer months were very special for social gatherings. On Friday and Saturdays there were supplies to buy and business to take care of, but evenings were left free for socializing. Farmers and townspeople would gather "downtown" for visiting and entertainment. It was common to have the town band or a visiting band hold concerts in the park, under the pavilion. They would play marches and waltzes, always displaying a feeling of pride, unity, and morale. Memorial Day was the first warm weather holiday, marking the beginning of summer. It was a more somber time, remembering those lost in battle while fighting for our freedom. There was always a parade ending at the cemetery where a prayer and gun salute was held. Following this there would be a picnic in the park where everyone could talk about the town's boys who were lost in war. The Fourth of July was celebrated by every family in and out of town, closing businesses, having a parade, a picnic, and a unified display of fireworks as the finale. No one would think of missing this town gathering. A traveling circus or carnival would stop in town at least once a summer, bringing everyone out to see unusual people doing unusual things. The animals were strange to most folk, the rides a little scary, and Midway games held a challenge for boys trying to win the affection of a girl eagerly waiting for a prize.

Fall brought hard work to farmers, but it was also a time for rewards if crops were good that year. Harvest time was usually celebrated by the whole town with a wonderful farmer's market, apple bobbing, pumpkin carving, and square dancing. Towns would also construct places called Opera Houses, even though they rarely featured an opera. Small towns could not afford to attract large traveling groups so they often would take anyone

they could get, as long as the material was acceptable. All entertainment was carefully scrutinized for "appropriate" content and usually consisted of local school productions, recitals, lectures, and political forums. Because most large shows were in cities, small town people knew they could see popular productions and famous speakers if they chose to travel. They were happy to keep their small towns small.

Speakers, of any kind, were popular during this time. Still lacking the technological conveniences of the future, the best way to get information was by listening to orators. Anyone who felt they had something important to say could stand up in the park and have control of the bandstand. Oration was an art in and of itself, without microphones, loud speakers, or editing. When election time was near there would be day long gatherings with one speaker after another promoting themselves or their party. People would watch, listen, and then have conversation or heated debates concerning their opinions.

Town gatherings were also a time to catch up on the town's gossip. Private lives were rarely private in a small town. Living according to the town's expected behavioral activities was possibly the only way to not be the topic of a hot conversation. There was forethought before actions, and what people would think was always considered. Small town people might forgive someone for wrongful doings, but they would rarely forget. Each generation knew the stories heard during gossip and carried them on into their own conversations. Gossip in a small town was not only talk, it is the informal judge and jury handing down verdicts according to unwritten town law.

When discussing growing up in a small town in the late 1800's, Henry Canby said:

> To us the town was a unity, indissoluble and unchangeable, like the Union.

> It was a culture with mores, it was a life in which one quickly knew one's place, and began that difficult weaving of one's emotions with experience that is called growing up, in a set of circumstances which one could not and did not really wish to alter...The town waited for you. It was going to be there when you were ready for it. Its life seemed rich enough for any imagination...You belonged-and it was up to your own self to find out how and where. There has been no such certainty in American life since. (Lingerman p.314)

During Victorian times, the average life expectancy was fifty years and because there was a high infant mortality, death in a small town affected everyone quite often. With many people being related or simply close after living in the same town all their lives, death was a community concern. Everyone knew who was sick and would prepare for each funeral. Food was taken to the family, and obituaries were written in great length and detail. Sometimes the deceased was described beyond reality, but that was accepted from small town folk. They knew later someone close to them would die and it would be proper also to exaggerate about his/her life's accomplishments.

Birth was also celebrated. Although there was no large social gathering like a funeral, birth was looked upon as a part of the town's survival. Children were the town's future so they should be cared for. Holidays often centered around children's activities with Christmas the premier holiday. The town's merchants would decorate their stores and families would plan a day to hunt for the perfect tree that would make their home smell like the outdoors and look beautiful with homemade decorations, popcorn strands, and brightly wrapped packages. New Year's was always a time for a party or visiting with friends. February was sometimes good for a Leap Year dance, now called Sadies, where ladies could ask men for a date, and Valentines Day was a time to exchange fancy cards with love poems inside. Easter was a sign that spring had arrived and, weather permitting,

children had Easter egg hunts outside after spending hours coloring special eggs. April Fool's Day cautiously gave permission for children to play pranks without getting into trouble, and May Day was a reason for boys and girls to place baskets of flowers and cookies on each other's doorsteps. Summertime, especially in the North, meant not only school would close, but also that everyone could enjoy warm weather activities. Farm children worked hard but they, too, enjoyed the warm nights, swimming, fishing, and time to be children.

In 1890 there was a feeling of peace in the United States. There were Mexican War, Civil War, and Indian Wars veterans still living with those memories, but life now was peaceful. The country was growing and industrialization was changing life in the city, but small towns were stable, secure, and comfortable.

By the 1920s small towns had modernized and accepted many technological changes. Most streets were paved, automobiles were more common, electricity was in many homes, as were plumbing and telephones. Wires connected people to each other and radios now connected them to the rest of the world. The twenties were primarily prosperous, and people began to live as if their lives would always be prosperous. Small towns were not feeling the financial freedom quite like the cities so they watched as city banks began giving loans on credit. Purchases were being made without paying for the merchandise. This new phenomenon was a market booster, and people created a feeling of indestructibility within themselves as institutions believed in them enough to give them credit. Large appliances, like refrigerators and washing machines, were being bought so fast production could hardly keep up demand. Automobiles were becoming more

accessible and factories hired more workers to make additional cars and trucks. Small town young men now had transportation into the city to get jobs that would pay cash for hard work instead of depending on the weather for superior crops. Small towns fairly close to industrialized cities began to lose their young men, if only for weekdays, because many were disillusioned with farming's uncertainties.

Unfortunately, the high life of the city came crashing down in 1929. Exuberant feelings of pride that came with the acceptance of extended credit now came tumbling down. Those who had shunned their small hometown were out of work, with no place to live, and owed the bank money they did not have. City life was not as wonderful as it had seemed to be and now was looking scary and unfriendly. Those with ties to home began their journey back to the small town for comfort, warmth, family, and friends, and in the 1930s, a study of popular magazine fiction by Patrick Johns-Heine and Hans H. Gerth showed writers began locating "the soul of American Life" in the small town:

> As for locale, there is no mistaking that the farm and with it the small town is exalted as representative of a whole way of life. It is significant that the typical conflict within the story is between the essential human goodness of small-town types as opposed to a metropolitan moneyed elite; unpretentiousness against pretentiousness, and littleness versus power. In short, those values lacking in the metropolis are the ones capitalized upon in the depiction of small-town or farm life, and the latter become personifications of good while the city remains the vessel of evil. We may assume that this is gratifying not only to those who live in towns and villages, but also to those persons who have recently migrated from farm or town to city and who have sentimental associations which find fulfillment here. (Lingerman 261)

Life was not easy in rural communities during the depression. No one was able to buy produce and grain being grown in the country. Farmers could not afford to buy seed to plant their crops, which, even if planted, might not be bought when brought to town.

The difference between those suffering in the city, however, and those suffering in the country towns was that towns consisted of people who knew and cared for each other. In small towns during this time, there was a feeling of pride for their hometown among people. Farmers had land and could grow more food than they needed for themselves so they traded food for things they needed. Town merchants could not afford to give much credit, but they always found a way to help those in need through bartering.

Schools were a place not only for learning but also for trading. When a child had no shoes or coat, the teacher would ask if anyone had outgrown their clothes and wanted to share with others. When children came to school with no food, other children would see what they had to share. It was common for a teacher to put a big kettle of water on the stove and ask the children to bring anything they might have for making soup, so everyone would have a hot meal at least once during the day.

Children of small towns found joy during this time, as most children will under any circumstances. Using imagination, children produced their own plays and recitals to entertain people in town. They also found pleasure in the simple things in life. Small towns are connected to nature and children love to explore the wilderness. They would go on hikes, swing in an old tire swings, go fishing and swimming, climb trees, chase cows, build forts and secret gardens, catch fireflies, snakes, and frogs, and play games for hours. People in small towns were not desperate enough to resort to crime because there was always someone who would help, so these children may have known the world was having a hard time, and they may have experienced some hardships, but they did not have to experience the Depression the same way as city kids.

In the city there was little support. There were soup lines and the government tried to help, but people became desperate for the primary needs of man. In the city, many people did not own their homes, lived in apartments, or had mortgages, and they were losing their shelter. With no land there was no way to grow their own food, so people were starving. In the north they had to worry about cold winters and usually there was little kindness or help from neighbors because they were in the exact same situation. Children in cities saw desperate people doing desperate things for survival. They experienced homelessness, starvation, frigid cold, fright, abuse, neglect, and abandonment. The American value system was becoming a disillusionment in the city, while, at the same time, it was growing stronger in the country small towns.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt became known as the "Alphabet Agency President" during his time in office. The Depression was so devastating he felt the need to create government funded jobs for as many people as possible. All of his organizations became known by their initials and conversations sounded strange if you did not know the meanings of these initials. Some programs were related to farming and were meant to keep farmers from going bankrupt or lose their farms. The Agricultural Adjustment Act was designed to reduce agricultural surpluses by reducing the amount of acreage planted. Farmers were paid a rental fee on land they did not plant so the demand price of the crop would not sink lower. Many farmers in Arkansas and Oklahoma were losing their crops because of severe dust storms in the 1930s. Movies, such as "The Grapes of Wrath", showed the devastation of those years. Many farmers packed up everything they could get on a truck, if they had one, and headed for California because they had heard about

glorious farming conditions in the southern parts of that state. They did not give up or expect someone else to take care of them, they simply moved on, as American pioneers always had.

In Northeastern industrial cities, where there were large numbers of people out of work, Roosevelt tried organizations that would take some of those people out of the city for awhile. The Civilian Conservation Corps set up boot camps, such as that in Roscommon, Michigan at Higgins Lake, where men could live, work, and make money. There they created the Higgins Lake State Nursery and began to reforest Michigan. The work was hard and dirty, and only the best could stay because there was always someone waiting to take your job. Other organizations built roads, dams, bridges, and buildings, while artists were hired by the government to paint, sculpt, and perform.

Some believe the Depression offered the strength that the labor movement needed because unions began a hard campaign for workers' rights. In Flint, Michigan, on December 30, 1936, the United Automobile Workers began a strike that lasted forty-four days. Police tried to prevent those outside the factories from taking food to workers who were participating in the sit-down strike, but people found ways to help. For example, Gerald "Scotty" Flynn, a country farmer who had been working with the pipe fitters in that factory just before the strike, wanted to help. He knew the layout of the factory so he was able to sneak food and supplies in without anyone knowing it. He was quite proud of his part in this monumental event in Flint. Farmers wanted the factory workers to do well so the economy could improve and their crops would begin selling again, and at this time

it became obvious that the small towns were beginning to become directly related to industrial cities.

FDR's program, the "New Deal", was cheered by many, but others claimed it was socialism. Welfare programs were created during this time and many felt the government owed them something when their lives were crushed by the Depression. Another realization becoming clear at this time was that the rich , who did not lose everything in the Wall Street crash, were taking advantage of those who did and became richer, while the poor who had little lost even that. Bitterness was more evident in the city, and instead of making a life for themselves, too many began taking advantage of government programs.

The 1930s were so dismal that even stage writers chose a change in scenery for their scripts. Thornton Wilder wrote a three act play called "Our Town". He depicted small town, America during the early 1900s. This play opened at Henry Miller's Theatre in New York on February 4, 1938. It created something of a sensation, not only for its warmth, tenderness, and the illuminating characterizations, but also because the production was a distinct departure from the naturalistic style of theatre previously in vogue in this country. True enough, there had been earlier dramas set on a bare stage, but never one in which the setting represented an entire town, and the characters a large cross section of its citizenry. The New York production had a successful run of 336 performances, which was contributed to no little by the announcement in the middle of the run that the play had been voted the Pulitzer Prize in playwriting for 1938. Only after the play had closed in New York did it begin to achieve the unique eminence it has enjoyed

ever since--an eminence that continues and gains added stature with each passing year. In road shows, in hundreds of stock and amateur productions in this country, in translations into every language of the world, "Our Town" has won itself a secure place as one of the very few authentic dramatic "classics" this country has ever produced.

The purpose behind the play is for Depression Era citizens of the United States to escape back to a time of tranquillity. It is set in a small town, showing that the three most important aspects of life are love, marriage, and death. This is a typical white middle class town comprised of ninety percent white Protestants and ten percent other. A narrator, called the stage manager, sets the mood and explains each situation as it begins. The two primary families are neighbors, the Gibbs family and the Webb family; both men hold high positions (doctor and newspaper owner), have wives who stay home, one son, and one daughter. The fathers are kind and loving as they come and go to their jobs, while mothers are always busy in the kitchen, taking care of the children, and tending gardens in their yards. They get together for choir practice and gossip on their way home. The children are educated, expected to do chores, and have respect and manners. In the first act, the teenagers are about fourteen and sixteen and begin to become interested in each other as more than neighborhood friends. It was a common occurrence in a small town for a boy and a girl to grow up together, get married, and live together until they died. People did not travel around the world like they do now. In the play, going away to agricultural school was discussed between the two young people because the boy knew he was going to inherit his uncle's farm. As a high school senior, only seventeen, he made the decision not to go because he felt he could learn as much as he needed by being on the

farm and, as he had a special girl in his life already, there was no reason to go out and meet new people in new places when everything he wanted was right here at home. That was the feeling many people had in the 1930s after they had run off to the big city and everything fell down around them. They knew home was the best place to be and agreed whole-heartedly with this boy on stage. The couple graduated from high school and got married that same summer. They were nervous, unsure of themselves, and extremely naive, but the mother consoled her son as the bride's father comforted his daughter, and then they did what everyone did-- they got married. Few people in a small town ever lived their whole life single. It was believed that all humans are meant to be in couples. When you were raised in the Protestant church, and lived by the bible, you found a mate, got married, and had children-- no questions asked. The third act, Death, shows the young couple only nine years later when she dies in childbirth. In a small town there is one cemetery where everyone is eventually reunited. In this play some of the dead greet the young lady in the cemetery while the living are grieving over their loss. There are no surprises; she knows everyone there, and greets each one as she would do so on the town's streets. Although she resists at first and wants to return to the living, she soon realizes that she cannot go back so she becomes comfortable with her place in death. Wilder chose to recreate the stability and comfort of small town living, give a calmness to everyday life, and help those who were returning to their small towns be proud of their decision so they would not feel shame as they reentered their old world. It was a play that today shows the importance of relationships, family, values, and everyday life that we take for granted will be here when we get finished with all that we do in this fast paced world

of technology. When the young dead woman goes back to see her family one last time, she is disturbed that they are walking and talking all around each other without really looking at each other. Values can only be passed from one generation to the next if the time is taken to communicate with children. This play may take place in the early 1900s, but its message is timeless.

Involvement in World War II was not deemed justified in the 1930s, and most polls showed that Americans wanted to help the Allies but not get physically involved. World War I was not a distant memory and no one was ready to jump into another war across the ocean. Our involvement increased after 1940, and by the time Pearl Harbor was bombed young men were anxious to go fight. Factories were converted to make war supplies, production was up, and men were leaving for the war. Women stepped in and worked in factories while the men were gone. The economy became strong and financial relief was in sight.

The automobile began playing a large part in changing the small farm towns around industrial cities. This was the era where :

1. cars became more affordable
2. financial security was climbing
3. farmers and small town people could drive to the city daily
4. a big influx of southern workers came north to work in automobile factories and those from rural areas chose to relocate outside of the city if transportation was not a problem.

Although the city's factories were saving the economy, the population explosion of the 1940s was stifling life in the city. There was no room for growth in housing or business, so the only place to go was out. The perfect solution for boys coming home

from war and the mass of southern immigrants was created in places like Levittown, the first subdivision mass producing small affordable houses cookie-cutter style. Every house had the same basic space and layout with only a few cosmetic changes, such as color, on the outside. The idea was immediately adopted by most industrial cities and production of large subdivisions began. At first, this new phenomenon did not affect small towns, but as waves of suburbia grew out, the closest small towns felt the need to increase their single family home supply.

In the 1950s, there was a need to rebuild the sense of security in the United States. We had just been through three wars--World War I and II and the Korean War--. and the Cold War and McCarthyism was in full bloom. If you looked at someone strangely or asked an unusual question, you might be declared a Communist. True American values were being threatened and America began to re-evaluate itself.

When psychologists were questioned about America's rural life as opposed to urban life this is what several had to say:

> G.B. Melton: "Perhaps conscious of its frontier heritage, this nation has always had a rather romantic, nostalgic view of life in the country. Getting back to nature is perceived as a means of cleansing and testing oneself... Rural life is believed to result in honesty, religiosity, and a strong sense of individualism."
>
> P. Saunders: "Rural life is understood to be the repository of all that is stable, immemorial, harmonious, pleasant, and reassuring in the modern world."

M. Bunce: "In classical times, philosophers like Aristotle saw rural life as moral, virtuous, and simple. This is a philosophy which continues to be remarkably strong in North America."

Goldman and Dickens: "There is a cultural traditional in western industrial societies that pictures rural village life in romanticized fashion as bucolic and idyllic...Rural is thus defined as bearing the promise of "affective community" an idealized form of community that stands in contradistinction to a city life." (Miller, Wolensky 60)

Richard Sennett quotes B.F. Skinner in his book, Beyond Freedom and Dignity:

> "Skinner's new book reveals a man desperately in search of some way to preserve the old-fashioned virtues associated with 19th-century individualism in a world where self-reliance no longer makes sense. ....Skinner also believes that the small group, the town, village, the little neighborhood circle, is the scale at which behavior conditioning can operate morally. 'A large fluid population cannot be brought under informal social or ethical control because social reinforcers like praise and blame are not exchangeable for personal reinforcers on which they are based. Why should anyone be affected by the praise or blame of someone he will never see again? ' (Wills 494)

The 1950s were designated the "Stay at Home" years. With so many babies being born, emphasis was geared toward family life. Getting back to original values was essential. The economy enabled fathers to work while mother stayed home with the children, formed neighborhood groups, and again became involved in the community. In small towns near large industrial cities, father drove approximately twenty to thirty miles each morning to get to work and then traveled the same path home in the evening. There was also a large group who worked second or third shift in the factories and left about the

time children were returning home from school or sometimes as they were going to bed at night. It was not uncommon to see women taking care of family business and going to social events alone when so many men were working in industry. Many families who were originally from other parts of the country used summer vacation, usually two weeks paid holiday for factory workers, to travel "home" to see family.

As a product of just such a family, I grew up believing that everyone had grandparents "down south" and always went to visit them in the summer. Without family close by, I found it comfortable to adopt neighbors as grandparents so I could pretend to have family nearby. Expressways were still being built in the 1950s so travel was long and hot. Many of my friends experienced the same summer vacation because our small town had several new families from the South. It was not until I was much older and learned about politics that I was amazed to find out that this town is Republican because all I ever heard about were Southern Democrats! Everyone was well accepted in town and politics was not a major role in everyday life of raising a family in the fifties, at least not to my knowledge. We were also quite unique in the fact that we moved into a new house in one of the first mass produced subdivisions in the Flint area. Winchester Village, in Swartz Creek, Michigan, began around 1957. When we moved in there were a few streets done and no house had a yard--it was all pavement and dirt. Every house was a small three bedroom ranch with a basement. The only difference was the color of the outside. Young families were moving in every day as new houses were built to meet the demand. An elementary school was built right in the middle of the subdivision. There were so many children playing in the yards, the street, and on the new sidewalks, it looked like recess

time at school. This vast concentration of young families were primarily dependent on General Motors and in debt beyond their limit. Financing was made so easy that every factory worker with visions of the American Dream jumped at the chance to give his family a piece of the "All American Pie".

After having experienced World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War, Americans wanted no more war. They were reestablishing family unity and working hard for financial security. The "Baby Boom" was in full explosion and there really was "No place like home!" Unfortunate as it was for this generation, there was another situation unraveling across the ocean. As Viet Nam became a familiar place mentioned on the evening news, Americans were adamant about staying out of another conflict. Whether they lived in the city or country the feeling was the same, no one wanted another war involvement. Men and women who had experienced past wars had no intention of allowing their own young children to see what they had seen, or have the memories and nightmares they still had. The conflict in that country looked much like our own Civil War to many, so there was a vast majority of Americans who believed Viet Nam should settle its own problems. The United States government, however, saw a possibility of the spread of Communism which had to be stopped.

While this was occurring in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the need to be happy and free of war and hate was emerging in young people's music. Frank Sinatra was a fairly mellow young man but was able to attract an increasing large younger crowd of dedicated followers. Never before had so many girls screamed and cried at a music concert. This was a new phenomenon taking hold in the United States. Elvis Presley

made his debut on the Ed Sullivan Show and was shown only from the waist up at times because he moved his body in ways you should not do on television. Media still had a conscience, much more so than in the 1990s where we see nudity and hear vulgar language in the name of freedom of speech. It simply was not proper at the time, and the older more conservative generation could not understand what was happening.

Actually what was happening was the coming of age of the teenager. This had a great impact on how the American value system was viewed both in the city and in small towns across the United States. After new child labor laws came into effect in the 1930s, fewer children in their teen years were working on a daily basis. More teens were finishing their education than ever before, and there was more free time for lounging, something that previously had been rare for all but the very wealthy. This new freedom was not fully realized in the 1930s or the 1940s because we were so involved in depression and war. Teenagers were either going off to war or they were helping to keep the family together back home.

Changes were gradual until after the 1950s were well under way. Modern technology was making chores easier at home and the economy was good so there was both spending money and free time for the youth of America. Gathering together as much as possible for talk, music, and dance became the favorite pastime for many teens. The biggest difference in who was able to do this was economic.

Poor urban teens saw little relief or spending money. They still had to find work to help the family struggle for survival. Their free time was not spent gathering in a soda shop, but on the street corner. Trying to find ways to get money was the main topic of

conversation, bitterness led to crime and gang activities, usually directed toward gangs from other parts of town or toward people who were fairly wealthy. Cities, being comprised of small ethnic units, saw the youth lashing out at a group of people simply because they were different. The melting pot theory for unity in the United States was disintegrating. Ethnic immigrants were no longer looked upon as new blood for this country; they were viewed as job threats or Communistic and often saw each other as competition. Although this country was founded by strangers to this land in the name of freedom, our ancestors were too many generations gone and a feeling of ownership was occurring, especially in the cities. Crime rates in the cities were soaring and involving younger criminals than ever before.

Small country towns were more prosperous but there was generally not a large difference in most of the townspeople's economical standings. Towns were still primarily middle class Caucasian Protestant families, with a very small percentage of color or religious differences. Unity was still strong and there was no feeling of threat for their jobs or their safety. To country folk, that was something only happening in the city.

By this time there were few farmers relying solely on farming in the industrial areas of the country. Many sold much of their farms to large corporations and then chose to drive to the city to work in the factories for a more stable income. Teenagers were known by name in town and could find somewhere to spend their free time, other than the street corner. Sometimes there were soda shops, drug stores with food counters and juke boxes, a bowling alley, school activities, church activities, or even a gas station on the corner of a busy street. Because they were familiar to everyone in town, a gathering of

teens did not look as threatening as it did in the city. They were greeted warmly, accepted, and understood. In the city, teens looked like a crime waiting to happen. Being perceived in a positive manner as a teenager molds strengthens a person's belief in himself. Being valued as a human being was not always possible for urban teens, reaffirming their bitterness and distrust for everyone outside of their immediate neighborhood or gang. Small town teens lived in a private naive world knowing only acceptance from those around them. If they received a negative reaction to something they did or said, they either corrected their mistakes or used them to give themselves a rebel reputation. Since most misbehavior came from the male youths, town people would shake their heads and proclaim, "boys will be boys". In the city, these boys would be strangers and possibly looked upon as juvenile delinquents. Because the unknown is always scarier than the known, city boys had a much better chance of being scary and unwanted.

By the 1960s and 1970s music was more than entertainment. America's youth was making a stand for freedom in every way possible. The subdued lifestyles in Leave It To Beaver and Happy Days was being replaced by rebellion against the Viet Nam War. Lyrics in songs became a way to express political and social beliefs, and teenagers were an easy target. They had time and money to buy records and go to concerts. They listened to the message and were ready to fight for freedom in this country, but not in Viet Nam. The secure conservative life their parents had worked so hard to give them was being torn apart by a whole generation who needed to find their own identity through individualism . This generation of Baby Boomers wanted their individualism, freedom, happiness, equality, sense of belonging, a back to nature rebirth, and peace on earth and good will.

This sounds extremely close to the original American value system, but it shocked the older generation because baby boomers had opted to go against the material wealth approach to success. They also rebelled against traditional religion and began getting in touch with their inner self through Transcendental Meditation and mind altering drugs. The American Dream that was so important to the parents of this generation was being thrown back into their face and called hypocritical. The nice house with the picket fence, garden, garage, and a car in the driveway became a symbol of materialism to this new generation. Parents were shaken as their values were being questioned, but they refused to give up what they had worked so hard to accomplish.

Middle class America was being tested but was still much safer than the turmoil boiling in the city. Cities were now basically poor and black. Racial equality, economic equality, and women's rights were issues that all came under the heading of Civil Rights. Cities were teaming with anger and riots broke out all over the country. The American value system was being challenged from every direction. It was believed by many, especially minorities, that the values this country lived by were created for and by white middle-to-upper middle class Americans and it was time for a change. Music was being created to tell the truth about the war, poverty, prejudice, and every other social problem.

If it were not for the evening news and this music, small town residents could have lived through this time totally oblivious to what was going on in the United States. Small town residents were not threatened by violence in their neighborhood because these towns were so homogeneous there was little injustice occurring locally. Teenagers listened to the music and tried to feel a part of the whole movement but were really quite

removed. They dressed like hippies as much as possible and wore peace symbols, mostly because it was popular and not to make a statement. Clothing still had to meet school requirements as well as their parents' approval so there were few true rebels in small towns.

Viet Nam was something in the news and music for small town people until the draft lottery was printed nightly in the local newspaper. When parents realized that the war could reach right out to the country where their children were safe and secure, a subtle unrest settled over small town America. This was only supposed to happen in the city where bad things occur, not in our safe haven in the middle of nowhere. The war became a reality, bringing townspeople closer together while it was causing total unrest in the cities. Parents became more adamant about keeping their families away from the city and real estate developers saw this as a prime time to extend building in suburbs. If the country will not go to the city, the city will go to the country.

The west side of Flint grew along Miller Road. The large wealthy settlement called Woodcroft Estates, which had been built in the country, was slowing being surrounded by modest homes owned primarily by General Motors employees. Ballenger Highway , running north and south, was representative of the end of a phase of suburbanization, until hospitals moved out and large corporations like K-Mart built on the west side of Flint. I-75 was built, creating easy access to Miller Road so another wave of growth occurred shortly after. By the early 1960s, there were more businesses, and even a strip mall called Yorkshire Plaza, heading west on Miller Road. A large strip mall was built on the corner of Clio and Pierson Roads, known as the Northwest Shopping Center.

To most small town residents on the west side, when they said they were going to Flint, they meant they were going to this corner. The youth may have been rebelling but people were still looking for stability outside of the city. A large state of the arts high school, Carman High, was built on a small country dirt road that dead ended at the Flint River just north of the school. This was three miles north of where the first mall was being built on the corner of Miller and Linden Roads, half way between Flint and Swartz Creek. It was amazing to most people that such large scale construction was going on in what had been cow pastures and corn fields. Shopping was becoming much more safe and convenient for those living on the west side of Flint but increasingly hard for those less fortunate in the city. The solidity of family life in the country and in the suburbs was not going unnoticed by commerce. After a lifetime of being considered dumb hicks in the sticks, commercials and advertisements were gearing their messages to family life outside of the city. While the Baby Boomers were chanting "love, not war" and "give peace a chance", families and businesses continued to move farther away from the city.

At first, while not too close, the convenience of having everything you need come closer was a nice change from always having to travel downtown. Unfortunately, with all those advantages came disadvantages. If the money went west, so did the criminal's opportunity for advancement. Crime statistics began to rise outside of the city where it had been strange to worry about such things. There was never a reason for minority populations to leave the city before but now they were forced to enter the lily white suburbs to shop. They were looked upon as criminals simply because of the color of their skin. No one thought about that possibility when all the construction was going on.

Minorities found it difficult to get jobs in suburbs because businesses were trying to attract white patrons, not poor ghetto people, and did not want to scare away possible shoppers by hiring black employees. Racial riots were making too many people nervous so it was best not to remind them of troubled times when merchants were hoping they would spend money in their stores. Although Blacks were gaining legal rights, it was a long hard road out of the city.

Most problems associated with the city and suburbs were being watched but not really lived by the people in small towns. Life went on with very little change. Women did not burn their bras and no buildings were burned or looted in a riot. They spent their days working or in school and their nights at home or at school and church functions. Some bright students went off to college but most stayed in town, got jobs in factories, and married their high school sweethearts, just like they did in Grover's Corners in 1910. The only difference was that farming was replaced by industry's factories.

Towns closest to the city began to attract middle to upper middle class people who wanted more than a small lot in the suburbs. They were used to having all of the conveniences of the city and were expecting the same in the small town. They started demanding changes like snow removal, black top roads, and garbage pick up on country roads but did not want their new low taxes increased to pay for these services. Some friction was felt between newcomers and the townspeople who were happy with things the way they had always been. They complained that these "city amenities" could ruin the rural character of the area. New residents were looked upon as being snooty city people who wanted to citify the country.

Real estate taxes did soar in the 1970's and the price of farm land tripled. Young people wanting to establish small farms found it impossible to buy land and had to leave the rural area to seek employment. When farmers could no longer afford their own land and young people could not buy it from them, it was sold to developers. In 1976 it is estimated that half a million acres of farm land in the United States was lost to development and more was being sold to large farming conglomerates. (Lingerman 450)

Farmers were beginning to feel the effects of big business, but small towns were still holding on for normal daily life. They were slow to incorporate much industry so there were no incentives for people to live there except for the quiet country living. No jobs were available for women or minorities, there was little care for the elderly except by the family, and child care centers were just neighborhood baby-sitters for women who did happen to work locally. Single people, blacks, and the poor looking for a job stayed away from small white towns surrounding the city.

In We, The People by Gordon Direnzo American character and social change are discussed in depth. By the 1970s there was a significant change in how Americans, in general, felt about American values. The difference was measured between 1952 and 1974.

all men are created equal	1952	75% yes
	1974	50% yes
honesty is the best policy	1952	80% yes
	1974	68% yes

value effort, have clear goals, and want to achieve

1952 59% yes

1974 2% yes

do something, don't just talk about it

1952 75% yes

1974 68% yes

time is valuable

1952 84% yes

1974 45% yes

live for the present, not the past

1952 80% yes

1974 87% yes

These are constant values expressed by this predominantly middle-class, largely Anglo-Euro-American sample over a period of two decades. These are some of the values that bind the generations together. They are the values represented in two generations. To the extent that the middle class is the majority segment and has the representative life-style of the United States, it seems reasonable to infer that these values are part of what has held the nation together. Most of the changes occurred in the turbulent 1960s and leveled off during the 1970s. (DiRenzo p.24-26) During this time there was a positive change in how Americans viewed artists, poets, and intellectuals. In the 1950s, many believed such people to be screwy, crazy, or should shut up, while in the 1970s they were thought of as creative and free thinking.

Baby Boomers were educated, getting married, and becoming parents in the 1970s and 1980s. They knew what they had experienced, or at least saw what had happened while they were young, and did not want their own children to go through such turmoil. The 1980s were a conservative time with many ex-hippies now in control of big business. The ideals of their own parents were coming forth as they settled in small towns to raise a family. Divorce rates were more than fifty percent, so having a stable family life became a strong goal for the adult baby boomers. Some made it, others did not, but children became a priority in middle and upper middle class family. Moms usually worked outside of the home and overcompensated for less time at home by becoming more involved with their children. A new phrase, "Soccer Mom", was born as more and more suburban and small town children discovered the new game. The mini-van was created for hauling children to activities, but soon these families need more space and the full sized van was completely converted into a home on wheels, with a television and VCR. to keep children happy on family trips. Families grew strong in the suburbs, but more emphasis was being paid to the material success than you might notice in small towns just outside of the suburbs. Small towns were afraid of the city reaching out too far and rebelled against small industry, fast food chains, and apartment buildings.

V

Specific Examples of Small Towns

Many people made choices to leave large hectic urban centers during the 1990s. Approximately two million residents of urban and suburban living moved from metropolitan centers to rural areas in this decade. In December, 1997, Time magazine did a feature article called, "Why More Americans are Fleeing to Small Towns". The cover was designed as a needlework sampler showing traffic traveling toward a small town. This article centers on the town of Wilmington, Ohio, in the heartland of this country. Wilmington has a population of 13,000 and was established as a farming community. Today there are other industries in Wilmington, but its heart and soul are still in farming. Jim and Kathy Wiley moved to Wilmington from Los Angeles, California, where Jim was a manager at Warner Brothers Film. Jim had been raised a small town boy in Pennsylvania but found himself in a fast paced job where he spent most of his time on a phone, in traffic, or both. He decided to leave the rat race and took a position with Technicolor's fast-growing film-distribution unit in Wilmington. Kathy was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley so this was quite a culture shock for her. While in Wilmington to buy a house, they stood in town watching the 1997 Clinton County Corn

Festival Parade. Kathy was amazed at Jim's excitement as he watched tractor after tractor parading by. This new life would be a drastic change, but the Wileys were not alone.

> A new kind of white flight is going on in America today, but unlike the middle-class exodus from multiethnic cities to the suburbs a generation ago, this middle-class migration is from crowded, predominantly white suburbs to small towns and rural counties. Rural America has enjoyed a net inflow of two million Americans this decade, in contrast to the 1980s, when rural areas suffered a net loss of 1.4 million people. Thanks to the newcomers, 75% of the nation's rural counties are growing again after years of decline.(Pooley p.54)

This trend is being helped by technological advances enabling small industries to move out of urban centers. The Internet and overnight shipping companies make communication possible from anywhere. Instead of commuting to city industry, people are able to spend more time at home with family. Young professionals are not alone in their move. Retirees are finding life in the country less expensive and more pure than the ever-growing suburbs. The 1990s signature preoccupation-improving quality of life-seems to mean moving to the country for millions of Americans. Researchers for Time looked at dozens of towns with expanding economics and populations ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 (anything smaller is a village and anything larger, a city) They spent several weeks in Wilmington and found cherished notions of small-town life colliding with the reality of an America that is changing with dizzying speed. Wilmington was founded by Quakers in 1810 because they opposed slavery. It is still a farming community but shares space with Airborne Express, which converted an old Air Force base into its national hub. Unemployment rates fell from 9.8% to 3% and now not all high school graduates have to leave home to find a job (Pooley p.55).

With this success came headaches. As population grew by just 2,000, the town found problems: traffic, pollution, crime and drugs. Farmers saw two sides to Airborne's existence. The company was polluting the area, killing fields of grain and poisoning water used by cattle, but the farmers and family members were working for Airborne.

Wilmington residents were facing new challenges . Old timers remember a smaller Wilmington of days gone by. Friday nights were for going into town, leaning on cars, talking, gossiping and getting a few groceries. Things have changed Main Street in Wilmington, Ohio, but have all small towns changed so drastically? Has big business reached out its tentacles to all of America's rural communities, invading the innocence and quiet seclusion of small towns across America? Perhaps an answer may be formed by examining a sample of small towns with a population of less than 10,000 on the west side of Flint, Michigan.

American values were created in small towns, could not totally survive city life, and have people returning to small towns in search of the "good life". Values exist everywhere, but the American value system is being rediscovered in sleepy little towns just outside of the hustle and bustle of industrialization. To see how these values exist today in local small towns, the Flushing and Montrose social histories will be compared to that of neighboring towns. These towns were established independently but are now similar in their connection to Flint, a northern industrial city. All have common characteristics but are also unique. People who live in each of these towns truly believe their town is a special place to live and raise a family. Their opinions are important because it is the people who make each town special.

FLUSHING

Flushing, the town on the river
Rushing? No. Slow.
River and town.
Flint River on its way
Down to Saginaw Bay.
Flushing, its environs spread
From Flint in Genesee
To the neighboring county of Shiawassee.
Flushing, a friendly place to be.
And so we write
Of you and me-
Of forebears for descendants.
We leave our thought and dream
To those we love
Who follow on the scene.

by: Irma R. Johnson, 02/04/1984

The Flint River Valley was once occupied by Sauk Indians. Then Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatonic defeated the Sauks, with one major battle fought on what is now known as the Flushing Golf Course. Excavations have unearthed many skeletal bones telling tales of these battles. The Saginaw branch of the Chippewa occupied this land and in 1786 joined the British in destroying American settlements. First settlers here in the 1830s found Indians to be quite dispirited and harmless, as they were already accustomed to receiving government payments. Indians gave the Flint River the same

name as their tribe, Pewonigowink, which meant "River of the Flint" or "River of the fire stone", and the city of Flint was named from the river.

Flushing was founded as a village in 1835 by brothers Charles and James Seymour. They were well known bankers and businessmen in Connecticut and purchased land to develop in the new territory. They chose twenty-four acres on the east side of the river and fifty-five acres on the west side. With the help of Horace Jerome, Charles built a dam of stone and timbers in 1836, and a saw mill was in place by 1837. Benjamin Bowers helped Charles build a grist mill by 1840. The location was strategically chosen because of the curve in the river and the high south bank. The area was rich in pine and the Seymours saw the opportunity to play a part in the lumber boom. By 1845 James came west as did Charles Jr. All of the Seymour men built businesses and homes creating the village of Flushing. In 1840, the average assessed valuation of an eighty acre farm was $216. Mills on the river grew and by 1912, were not only used for flour, but also franchised to furnish the town with electricity. The Hart Mill burned in 1918 so its owner built a cement block power plant but was not able to give adequate power to the town, causing many battles with the village council. This problem was finally settled by bringing in a line from Consumers Power Co.

Farming and raising farm animals was important business in Flushing. At this time very few farmers erected fences to keep their livestock in, so a system was devised to identify animals. Each farmer first used numbers or initials painted on the animal, but that was not satisfactory. Marks were then cut or punched in the ear of the animal, and these marks were recorded with the town clerk. The first mark registered was by James Clark

in 1838--he cut a square crop off the left ear of each animal. Other similar marks were recorded until about 1845.

Winter recreation was often provided by finding different means of sledding. Terrace Street hill was a favorite sledding spot for youngsters. Because Main Street was at the bottom of the hill, a guard was placed there to stop traffic when a sled was coming down the hill. Supplies were borrowed from the lumber yard, blacksmith, and even the barrel factory to constantly improve on speed. Ice skating was often enjoyed on the mill pond by the river. Racing horses on ice in the river was a popular pastime for young fellows. Winter racing was done with cutters and sleighs, with one driver and sometimes a passenger or two. The mill pond was an ideal spot for racing, hopefully not at the same time as skating. One fancy two-seater was made of wood with a curved dashboard reaching almost to the horse's tail. Most young fellows could not afford such fancy cutters. Some boys would use wooden runners held together with a board and nails--no seat and no comfort--but it could go. Another form of winter recreation was a sleigh ride. Often a farm parent would gather a few local children, settle them warmly wrapped in hay and blankets, and go riding through the snow. They would stop at a neighbor's home, warm up by the fire, play games, and fill up on homemade candy and popcorn. On the way home someone would play a mouth organ and everyone would sing along. There were always church or school parties where all children could take part in the festivities.

In summer everyone looked forward to the coming of the Indian Medicine Show. The company would pitch a tent in a vacant lot or open field and entertain townspeople for about a week. They would give a show with musical instruments, singing, acrobatics,

and Indian yells. In the middle of the program they would go through the crowd trying to sell bottles of Umatilla Indian Hogah, a concoction supposed to cure just about anything. Summer also meant political campaign meetings. Men would carry lighted torches so boys and girls would go down to the mill pond, get some cattails, dip them in kerosene, and set them ablaze. They did the same for all parties, not showing any political partisanship, but having lots of fun.

Education was always important in Flushing. Children were taught in a lean-to kitchen until a wooden frame building could be built in 1845 on the corner of Chamberlain and Hazelton, followed by three more schools on the same site. The first graded high school was organized in 1877. Two brothers, Ira and Franklin Sayre, comprised the first graduating class in 1878. Both became attorneys, prominent in banking, and Ira was also known as a builder in the area. Franklin's home on Main Street can still be seen today, as can many of the original family homes. That is one of the unique attributes belonging to Flushing. Main Street is lined with big beautiful homes being kept in their original condition by residents respecting Flushing's heritage. Schools were usually crudely constructed of wooden planks with several long wooden benches facing the teacher's desk. A few wooden pegs lined walls for hanging coats and lunch pails. The teachers, local people with little education themselves, were responsible for keeping a fire going during cold weather, coming in two hours before children and leaving only after they banked the fire with ashes to keep it going until morning. School terms were short and only during colder months because country children were needed to help plant and harvest farm crops as well as other daily chores. If a teacher was brought in from somewhere else, she was

usually boarded with a local family who had space and was willing to take in a stranger. That was the only way an educated teacher was financially capable of coming to town.

Diversity of religion came swiftly to Flushing. The Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Catholic Churches were all established in the 1800s. Most began as small wooden structures and were later rebuilt as larger more regal buildings made of brick with beautiful windows and steeples.

Beginning in the 1870s local picnics and July fourth celebrations were held at Hosie's Grove, the Hosie family land. For twenty-five years it was the location of July fourth programs with speeches, long addresses, reading of the Declaration of Independence, recitations, children's programs, band music, choir songs, food and games. After the Civil War and before the railroad came to town, the Fourth of July celebration was kicked off by local boys who had returned from the war with a two-wheel, carriage style cannon. They would set up the cannon on the corner of Main and Cherry Streets, face it west, and let her roar. This cannon somehow found its way to Flint and now is displayed on the courthouse lawn. There was no need for its service after many people began choosing to ride trains to Saginaw and Bay City for bigger July Fourth celebrations.

By the 1870s there were many small factories in business along the Flint River in Flushing. There were blacksmiths, bootmakers, mills, a chair factory, a broom factory, a wagon maker, a foundry, and even a stone quarry. Clay pits were dug just north of town and clay was shipped to Saginaw for making bricks. The pit was a favorite swimming hole for years because the water was clear and cold. It is now called Granville Lake and is lined by fine residences. It was in 1877 that Flushing officially became a village, being

approved by the state in March and holding elections in May, with eighty-two voters turning out to elect new village officials.

If there was any single factor that caused the town of Flushing to boom, it was the arrival of the railroad in 1888. New businesses came to town and buildings began being built of brick instead of wood. The depot was built by December 1988 on the corner of West Main and Seymour. It served mills along the river, downtown businesses, and there was also a passenger train. The railroad was taken over by Grand Trunk Railroad with several trains running daily. It was a popular recreation to take excursion trains to Saginaw and Bay City. By the early 1900s trucking businesses were taking train business causing train usage to steadily declined from that time. With decline in usage came deterioration of the train depot but it was saved from destruction in 1966 by agent Clare Fox. The Depot was fixed up, painted, and sold to private parties, and was turned into a restaurant but burned in 1980. It remained empty for years but was finally restored again and is now a museum.

Horse drawn stagecoaches were also being replaced by 1925. Robert Parsell's stage was soon made obsolete by Fred Russell's 1925 Dodge which could seat up to a dozen people. This operation expanded, and Valley Coach Lines was established nationwide. By the 1940s this service was transporting workers to the war plants in Flint. Russell was also responsible for establishing the fleet of buses serving the Flushing School System.

While mentioning names of people who helped to establish Flushing as the town it is today, people of urban upbringing may wonder why it is important to discuss specific

people, as if the total population did not really matter. The significant point being made is that a town is not a town without its people. Small town people have more of a probability that they will stay close to home than do urban dwellers. There is a sense of loyalty, and pride is much more fulfilling with this sense of ownership. Many people in a small town today can tell you of ancestors who have lived locally for generations.

A map of the Flushing area dated around 1859 was very interesting because it named the local roads, towns, and farms of the area. Flushing and Clayton Townships were then one unit measuring six miles east and west and twelve miles north and south. Corunna Road was open only to Clayton Township Hall while Seymour Road was already traveling through Clayton and Flushing Townships reaching towards the Montrose area. Isaac Lyons was the trailblazer of that area and then helped other settlers build their homes. Families settling in that area were: Morrish, Todd, Parsell, Mundy, Cuddeback, Ottaway, Pardee, Newcombe, Nichols, Green, and Benjamin. North and East of the Lyon's farm were several more familiar names: Packard, Luce, Fenner, St. John, Hosie, Rchardson, Robinson, Payne, Ransom, Baldwin, Marshall, and French. Heading west along Pierson Road and then north you would find: Hart, Smith, Chapin, Freeman, Kimmell, Kent, Diamond, McCartney, Lewis, Hawkins, Chamberlain, Turner, Lockyer, Graham, and Johnson. In the English Settlement (between Flushing and Montrose) were found many well known settlers: Smith Goddard, Bartlett, Hough, Wood, Reed, Bailey, White, and Hallock. East of this settlement and across the river came: Davis, Smith, Crandell, Bowman, Thompson, Darlby, Penoyer, Paton, Turner, Talbot, Sutton, Seland,

and Caldwell. Southeast of the village were: French, Woodruff, Packard, Rowe, Benjamin, Parsell, Penoyer, and Cronk.

The map showed a proposed railroad running from Flint to Owosso, just south of Corruna Road, but it was never built. There was no Swartz Creek village mentioned, no railroad from Flint to Lansing, and Durand had only one railroad running from Detroit to Owosso. Also missing were the villages of Lennon, New Lothrop, and Montrose, but an area two miles west of the present Montrose is marked Maple Grove. (Flushing Area Historical Society, Vol. 2, p20) That is an area not discussed in length, but it is personally known that this little community today is populated by the same few families, with few exceptions, as it has been through history. Birchmeir, Wendling, Gross, Henige, and Krupp are families with great history and commitment to the small community of Maple Grove, now a part of New Lothrop, northwest of Flint. When reading about New Lothrop in the Flint Journal today, these names will appear, as they did thirty years ago when I lived in Montrose, and probably even before that.

The Situation in Flushing , written by Edmund G. Love, is a wonderful book explaining the simple beauty of living in Flushing between 1918-1925. Mr. Love exuded love and pride for this little town as he told of being five years old when Flushing began to lose its innocence. In just a few short years he witnessed his hometown change in so many ways. The railroad was the hub of this town and it was also the center of Love's life as a little boy. His whole daily schedule was arranged around the train schedules. Because he lived one block off Main Street he walked to school and all over town. His mother did not worry about him in Flushing because everyone knew everyone else and looked out for

each other. He said he knew better than to go to unsafe areas so there was no need to worry. There was only one thing on his mind-- trains. He knew the trains by their numbers and could identify their whistles in the distance. Men on the trains knew Love and admired his love for their life. The mail truck would load and unload everyday and if there was a special delivery Love was hired for eight cents to hand deliver packages. His sixth birthday was a day he would never forget as the first train wreck in Flushing happened in early morning. In February there was a terrible blizzard that closed the railroad. In trying to open the tracks, a three engine pile-up happened. After begging his mother to let him miss school to see this once in a lifetime spectacle she relented, dressed him warmly, and told him to stand on the corner where his uncle would pick him up-- but not to move from that spot. While waiting for his ride, which was just down the street filling up with supplies, the fire alarm sounded. Fires were usually the most exiting thing going on in town but not that day, so Love waited. He saw his uncle leave, going past him, and on to the fire. By now, he had heard that the fire was at his own school. What could be better than watching your own school burn? A train wreck--so he waited. The trains were cleared and the school burned down, and he waited. By five o'clock his mother came looking for him and found him, still on the corner. It was his birthday and he had missed a train wreck and his school burning down. He was depressed for a while after that.

In April, 1918, the same year Love missed the wreck and fire, he witnessed two more catastrophes. There was a terrible storm one evening while his cousin Durwood was tending fishing nets in the river to make a little money. Lightning became unbearable and

Love remembered looking out his window and being very scared when several bolts of lightning shook the whole town all at the same time. Power went out and the town was dark, but Love did not know the worst part. Several men near the river were either struck by lightning or tossed into the swollen river and lost their lives that night. Cousin Durwood, the town's daredevil, could not win this battle and they found his body a few hours later. On Monday morning Bob Hart, owner of the power plant and mill, repaired the damages to the electricity and decided to call Grand Trunk Railroad to check out the railroad bridge, which was in pretty bad shape. About 3:30 p.m. that day someone was looking at the damaged bridge and his eyes were drawn to the power plant. Flames were flickering out of the top floor, around the little cupola on top. He pulled a fire alarm and the whole town came running to see what was on fire now. Evidently the earlier fire had left some unknown fires, just now taking life. Love was getting out of school and was in front of Fred Grave's barbershop when the alarm sounded. Ironically, this is the same corner where he had missed everything a couple of months earlier but now, standing on this corner, he could see everything. The fire would not be contained as it jumped from the power plant, to the elevator, on to the livery stables, fruit loading sheds, livestock pens, and Grant Reid's garage. This was a terrible place for the fire to find gas and oil, finally exploding, and throwing little fires everywhere. By 7:30 p.m. it looked like the whole town was doomed, but luckily the people trying to get the old fire hydrants working succeeded and water was pumped into town from the river. All of this Love watched from his corner in front of Fred Grave's barbershop. Most of the buildings destroyed in that fire were never rebuilt. The old railroad bridge was never repaired because its main

customer, the Hart Milling and Power Company was gone. Planks were laid over the bridge and it became a foot bridge. Bob Hart did rebuild his power plant but not the elevator.

It took a while to rebuild the power plant so Flushing residents had to revert back to kerosene lighting. For about two years Flushing was frozen in time and no one really seemed to mind. Many things seemed to moving too fast toward an unknown future of technology so slowing time down a little was welcomed by those who were happy in the comfort of small town life.

Flushing also built a water pumping system, but that had to be changed before it was even in operation. The original idea was to pump water from the river, but Flint was upstream and was growing leaps and bounds in population. They were dumping all waste into the river, making no exceptions, and the Flint River became terribly polluted in a very short time. Flushing sued the city of Flint to stop pollution and the federal government finally stepped in, but much damage had been done. Most people were slow to trust the new pumping system and continued to go outside and pump water out of the ground themselves.

In 1923, Love was a young lad of eleven when the end of an era occurred. A train whistle, like no whistle he had ever heard before, sounded in the distance. As he watched it pull into the station he was in awe of the sight in front of him. This was no ordinary train. It was a jack engine. It had its headlight in the center of the boiler, three driving wheels on each side, and only one pilot truck. It was modern and powerful, easily pulling fifty cars at one time and hills around Flushing were no obstacle for engine number 1452.

Reinforced rails replaced old worn out rails, bridges were made stronger, and even The Hole received new rails and ties. Trains were bigger and stronger but became less frequent as farm crops were being hauled by truck more frequently. Flushing was entering a more mobile era, depending less on its railroad. Children previously in awe of railroads were beginning to be amazed and amused by automobiles. The old iron bridge was replaced by a new cement one and downtown Main Street was paved. Children could no longer sled down hills in town because traffic was too dangerous on Main Street. There was no bob-hopping that winter either since there were no more bobs or cutters. Small town children were resilient, found new hills for sledding, and paved roads became a challenge for warm weather fun. (Love, p. 241)

Russell Ragen told a story about being a young boy in Flushing in the 1930s. He was known around town because he had one leg. Other children were getting scooters so his parents bought him one too. It was difficult to use his scooter unless he could hold his dog's collar and let the dog pull him. A neighbor, John Farthing, helped him create a leather harness for Laddie and off they went. Everything was fine as long as there were no loud noises. Laddie was badly frightened of loud noises and was gun shy. One day something spooked him and he did not stop running until he ended up in a basement furnace room of the old high school. He was a big dog, about 75-80 pounds, and thoroughly loved kids. He would not let kids fight with each other and one time a neighbor lady called the family and asked them to take their dog home so she could spank her child. Everybody knew Russell and his dog. (Wightman p.69)

Dr. Regan also remembered winter sports in 1930s Flushing. When there was enough snow to cover the gravel, the City Fathers would block off Saginaw Street from Henry to Elm, and the kids would flock to the area. Every day after school and all day on Saturdays the road would be filled with kids and sleds in all sizes, shapes, and varieties. The best sleds were called Flexible Flyer. They came in several sizes and could be steered. It was a great ride down hill, but a long walk back. In the evenings, the small children went home and teenagers took over. They were bigger and faster so they could go even further. It was also a pleasant and cheap date! A couple of years later they had to move one street over and everyone started down hill from the front walk in Tom Turner's yard. He must have had the most tolerant parents in the world. Later on, Russell remembered teenagers moving their sledding activities to the bluff in front of the golf course. Tobogganing was gaining popularity and steep hills were worth long climbs back up to the top. Sunday afternoons it was common to see whole families playing on the hills together. Parents were having just as much fun as their kids. There was no great place for ice skating so that was not popular in the early 1930s. In the late 1930s and early 1940s firemen obtained permission to flood a natural depression behind Bueche's store and this remained a popular area for ice skating for a while. Downhill skiing had not been discovered by Flushing residents in the 1930s. It would have been too expensive for most people. Tow skiing was the only skiing Russell remembered and only a few daredevils tried that. He recalled Ernie Arn telling a hair-raising story about being pulled behind a car while he skied the ditch, jumping each driveway along the way. He was an athlete and a daredevil. During the depression years Flushing children found ways to have fun with

Mother Nature's assistance. The big difference between these Flushing children and Flint's city children was in having space for outdoor recreation and a community whose members took care of each other during these hard times. Too many city families felt alone in their fight for survival.

When remembering people of the 1940s and 1950s, Eleanor "Peg" and Frank Mosey were remembered by many Flushing residents. They owned and operated Mosey Plumbing until they opened a restaurant in their Main Street store in the 1950s. Peg's was a favorite eating place for miles around. Ray Rossell said, "Peg's wasn't merely a restaurant. It was an institution, a general meeting place, and a facility to gather all the news of what was happening around town. My first experience at Peg's was early one Sunday morning. I delivered newspapers and stopped in to get a cup of coffee. The boys were already there--Pat Miller, Frank Dinsmore, and George Darby. Pat ordered "some of that stuff that resembles coffee" and that was all Peg needed to get things started. You could expect a dish cloth to fly across the room to wrap around someone's neck, or a sharp barbed comment from the kitchen. Try as they would, the boys never seemed to get the best of Peg. There seemed to always be something going on at Peg's. Business deals were closed and plans were made by the local merchants and construction crews. The big urn was always filled with hot coffee, and the pie wasn't too bad, either. Of course, they accused Peg of washing her socks in the urn, but that didn't phase Peg at all." (Wightman p .73)

Growing up in Flushing in the 1950s was not that different from the past. More residents drove ten miles into Flint while General Motors prospered, but Flushing still had

its small town feeling. This is exactly how Casey Waite felt while living in Flushing. She remembered having a child's pride in knowing almost everyone in town and was pleased when someone on the street called her by name. The dime store was a fascinating place to shop for small children who proudly spent their hard earned allowance on toys and candy. Casey and her friends would also sit together at the drug store drinking cherry cokes and phosphates. Shopping for groceries was usually done at the A&P and at King's Butcher Shop. Most people did not have a need to drive into Flint when these stores were available in town. One of Casey's favorite memories happened on Saturday mornings when she and her dad would walk downtown to the bakery and bring back doughnuts. Dad probably caught up on all of the local gossip at the same time. (Wightman p.283)

Teenagers were finding reasons to connect with Flint by the 1950s. There was a choice of movies for weekend entertainment and businesses were more plentiful for fulfilling after school jobs for those who could drive a distance. There was one reason to stay in town for warm weather entertainment-- Flushing had its own county park. Flushing Park, on North McKinley Road, was a favorite place to play. Within walking distance children had a place run, climb trees, play baseball, and have picnics. Teenagers, with or without cars, could see or be seen by other teens while gathering to gossip or flirt. The road through the park was one big circle so anyone coming through in a car would see everything happening in the park. Many people do not realize how important it is for children and teenagers to have a place to gather. In some small towns they gather on street corners, just like in the city, but it is not socially accepted. If older teens drive around in their cars, they are looked upon as possible trouble. As long as everyone was

behaving within the limits of the park rules, everyone was welcome to visit in Flushing Park.

Children were usually still home with mom and it was more rare for them to leave town for anything. Fast food was a sandwich and potato chips that were put together quickly on the kitchen table. Television was gaining popularity and most families knew someone with three black and white shows from which to choose. Flushing remained small and comfortable during the Cold War era as residents refused drastic change. Population growth occurred slowly with most of the spread heading east toward Flint. There was still an area between Elms road and I-75 that felt like a country buffer zone between Flint and Flushing, allowing Flushing to remain close, but separate from the large growing industrialized city.

Flushing remained a quiet respectable little town throughout the turbulent 1960s and 1970s. Property taxes and home prices were too steep for lower income families but did not discourage professionals wanting a safe haven from the city. This town was close to the urban destruction going on in Flint but remained a conservative, white, middle class small town. White middle class flight from the city helped to enlarge Flushing while its value system was allowed to remain the same.

Mrs. Linda Gillam explained why she and her husband chose to begin their married life in Flushing. Both were looking for jobs as high school Biology teachers when Mr. Gillam was hired by Flushing schools. As they looked for a home in Flushing, impressed by the small town atmosphere, Mrs. Gillam was hired by the Carman-Ainsworth school system. A discussion about where to live ended with the decision to stay in Flushing.

When comparing Flint Township to Flushing, the obvious reason for staying was the sense of community in Flushing where there is a downtown area bringing unity to people who live there. Flint Township did not have that to offer. They have remained in Flushing, raising four children, and now have three generations in Flushing.

Another resident of Flushing is Kathy Hortze. Kathy was raised in Flushing during those crazy 1960s and felt comfortable and safe as a teenager enjoying high school. Kathy participated in extra-curricular activities and was proud to represent Flushing. She married Greg , who was raised in the city, and they chose to build a home in Flushing Township. They are raising two sons who are, like their mother, active in extra-curricular activities, especially sports. Kathy has become an involved parent, frequently visiting her alma mater. Some of her teachers are still there, making the school feel familiar, while there is change happening. The population is growing , primarily at the elementary level because there are many subdivisions constantly being built in the township. Kathy sees the immediate demand for new school buildings to meet the needs of a growing population. In 1996 several soon-to-be high school graduates camped out and stayed awake all night. Tired teens started to school the next morning in a heavy fog. A fatal car crash took the lives of teens who were so close to starting a new life. Because of this tragedy, Kathy and several other parents of eleventh graders came together to plan a supervised over-night party for the following year. The community is growing but is still concerned with the problems of the youth and are willing to put time and energy in to care for the next generation. With one son in college and the other a freshman at Flushing High School, Kathy is looking forward to at least three more years of school participation.

The same growth is happening in Grand Blanc on Flint's south side, in Davison on the east, in Clio on the north, and Swartz Creek , just south of Flushing. Blacks choosing to leave Flint originally felt most comfortable moving north into the Beecher area, but now are choosing all of the mentioned suburban towns. The west and south side of Flint lost many white residents to Flint Township as subdivisions grew rapidly in open farmland. Carman High School was built in 1967 to accommodate the growing population. This school, built on a dirt road just two miles from Flint's city limits, was 100% white throughout most of the 1960s and 1970s. Flint Township is a large buffer zone between Flint and Flushing giving Flushing a feeling of being removed from the city.

The 1980s and 1990s have proven to be quite profitable for Flushing as the population grows almost beyond being called a small town. The township's farm fields are rapidly being changed into sprawling subdivisions, immediately occupied with families willing to pay the price, ranging from $150,000 to $400,000, to live in up-scale exclusive neighborhoods in the Flushing School District. Most of these subdivisions are between Flushing and Flint Township, creating a Flushing suburban sprawl that is now side-by-side with Flint Township along Elms Road. The town of Flushing looks like a little country town as does most of the land north and west of town, but as soon as you drive east there is a feeling of being in Flint's suburbs. It is almost like Flushing is trying to have both worlds in one. That could quickly change small town life in Flushing. It is already approximately 10,000 strong in the city limits and growing beyond that in the township so Flushing is technically outgrowing its small town status.

Montrose

Following the Flint River north of Flushing, in that undeveloped area, there is a feeling of being alone in the country for about ten miles before you see signs of another town. This is where the small town of Montrose is located. It still has a population below 2,000 as we reach for the year 2000. The township is large but sparsely populated. This is my hometown. I admit to being raised with small town values in a town too small to be called a town. It should still be called a village but local politicians have classified it as a city. The residents believe they know what is best for this little community and they all express themselves, at least the retired folk do, every morning over coffee at the coffee shop. Before looking at this town as it is today, there must be an explanation of how Montrose was created and the people who set the standards for this town's value system. Most of my information about Montrose comes from the Historical Association's newsletters called the Memory Lane Gazette. The first issue was in May, 1982 and continues to be published today. My mother, Mrs. Nancy Pope, was one of the founding "mothers" of the Montrose Historical Association and has been a researcher/writer/distributor for the Gazette. As an avid genealogist, she found great interest in researching people of the past. The people responsible for keeping small town memories alive are caring volunteers who work long hard hours, year after year, for the

pleasure of knowing that future generations will know their heritage and understand why this particular community believes the way it does today.

The Montrose area was first inhabited by members of the Sauk and Onottoway tribes. They were conquered by combined forces of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians and the local area became Chippewa tribal land until 1819. They signed a treaty with the United States Government, ceding some land in exchange for a reservation. This reservation, approximately two miles north of present day Montrose and along the Flint River, was called Pewonigowink, the Chippewa name for the Flint River.

Many settlers in this area were from Scotland or northeastern United States. They made the long grueling trip by wagon through unsettled land or by steamer across Lake Erie and Huron into the Saginaw Bay. In 1842, Seymour Ensign and his family from New York became the first white settlers in this area. He built a water craft by putting a platform on two canoes that had been tied together and they traveled fifty-five miles up the Flint River. They settled on forty acres of land at the present location of Wilson and McKinley Road, east of the river. Others came and settled near Ensign and the river. Pewonigowink Township was organized in March, 1846, and in April of the following year township officials were elected. There were a total of fourteen resident taxpayers at this time. In 1848, the state legislature recognized the name change from Pewonigowink to Montrose. John Farquharson was the person responsible for a new name, feeling sentimental about his native home town in Scotland, hoping it would attract more Scottish friends to settle there. Two settlements began to grow in the Montrose area. Soutter's Corners was on the Flint River and Elk Corners was a couple of miles west at Vienna and

Sheridan, also known as M-13. At one time Elk had a post office, hardware store, two large general stores, blacksmith shop, hotel, and two doctors located there. Soutter's Corners had a general store and feed mill, Montrose Post Office, a boat and shoe shop, blacksmith, and other stores. These first settlers were as tough and determined to succeed in their new land as the first settlers on the east coast of this country. They lived by the same values originally brought to this country from Europe. Hard work, determination, pride, freedom, and survival were the basics to give their families a healthy clean living in a new land.

The two communities were forced to come together by 1888 when the new railroad from Durand to Saginaw was built in open land located between the two corners. With the new town of Montrose growing around the railroad, Elk and Soutter's Corner's eventually lost businesses to the new development. The railroad never went as far as originally planned but it did connect Montrose to Saginaw, probably the most important Michigan city from 1850 through the 1890s.

By 1899 there were thirteen two-story brick stores, one brick hotel, one brick livery barn, nine two-story brick homes, a brick schoolhouse, and many frame buildings in town. There were two churches, one Baptist and one Methodist. The Methodist Church is still standing today but is no longer used. In October, 1899, the village of Montrose was incorporated and its 336 citizens held their first village elections. The following gentleman were elected: William Hillier, James Massey, Bert Carey, Otto Eggert, William Clements, William Main, Levi Bronson, Samuel S. Quehl, Preston M. Park, and John S. Smith.

To best understand how the early settlers felt, it is good to share their own words. This is a letter written by George Mackenzie to his family in Scotland, on January 1, 1855. It was reprinted in the Montrose Gazette in the November-December issue, 1982.

Dear friends,

We all join in wishing you all a happy new year.
We have been waiting for a letter from you
this long time past but no letter has yet appeared.
We talk of you everyday and there is a few
nights--but I am at Garlogie(Scotland) in my dreams.
If you were able to come down the bank
of the Flint and up the garden walk some night
and rapped at the window you would hear the
fiddle and accordion. Every night we have a concert...
Although I left society and live in the back woods
there is more heart here than thousands believe...
tell them (relatives in Scotland) they would be better
come to America and not have their children go
hirelings...There is a tribe of
red Indians live in a village about 5 miles from
Montrose and John is much respected by the
whole band. The chief or king is tenant at the
floodwoods.
He crops it and John gets a share of the crops....
You would wonder to hear John
and them speaking in the Indian tongue. The Indians
are honest and kind
and the light of Christianity is beginning to shine
among that peculiar primitive race.
Keep altogether, keep hearty, and if you move, move
here...although out of
sight we remain faithfully yours,
George Mackenzie

Many new settlers felt lonesome for their native homes and families while knowing this land was by far a better place to be. Montrose attracted several Scottish families allowing for some comfort among the families.

Myrtle Rachel Hiscock Russell was born in the Montrose area on September 4, 1883 in a small farm house surrounded by woods. When Montrose began to build around the railroad, her father moved his hotel business from Elk to Montrose. The new hotel was home for two years until they could also afford to build a home. Hotel business chores for Myrtle included cleaning the rooms daily and beating the mattresses each spring. She had to walk that proverbial mile to the Slade school each day and remembered a lunch treat would be sour milk soaked popcorn! She and three others were the graduation class of 1899, with Mr. L.H. Russell the principal. After going to Fenton Normal School and Commercial College to become a bookkeeper, Myrtle came home to work for her father. She remembered entertainment being centered around music; the piano, violin, harmonica, singing and dancing. Myrtle and her sister sang at church and local social events and could always be found at one of the dances being held every weekend. Myrtle had two early quick marriages that were not discussed and then she married again in 1940 and was Mrs. L.H. Russell until her husband died in 1952. Myrtle lived a long happy life in Montrose. (Gazette January-February, 1983)

A May 7, 1915 article from the Montrose Record explained how the people of Montrose took great pride in their small town and expected everyone to do his/her part in making this the best place to live:

Help: grow by resolving

Help-grow by resolving
That you will keep so busy boosting that
you won't have time to knock.
That you will vote, talk and work for a
bigger, better, quieter town.
That you will help to make this a good town
so the town can make good.

That you will increase the value of your
property by improving its appearance.
That you will say something good about
this town every time you write a letter.
That you will invest your money here
where you made it and where you can watch it.
That you will not point out the town's
defects to a stranger nor fail to point them out to a neighbor.
That you will keep your premises cleaned up and your buildings
repaired as a matter of both pride and profit.
That you will brag about this town so much that you will have to work
for this town in order to keep from being a liar.
That you will take half a day right now to pick up the odds and ends around
the place and turn them into either use, money or ashes.
That you will contribute as much money as you can afford and as much
enthusiasm as anybody, to any movement to develop the town's resources.
That you will make friends with the farmers, if a town man, or with the town
folks if a farmer, and help work together for the good of the community
of which this town is the center. (Gazette July-August, 1983)

This article gave much insight into values associated with living in Montrose in 1915. All citizens were expected to live up to these expectations without exception. Not only town folk, but farmers in the township were included as a part of this community and all were to help each other in maintaining this peaceful little village.

A May 24, 1918, article from the Montrose newspaper hints at how men were handling prohibition:

Soft Drinks Become Popular in Village

Since the State went dry near-beer and soft
drinks have reached formerly unknown popularity
in the village.
Men who formerly shunned the beverages and
laughed at them, terming them an insult to a man's
stomach could be seen Saturday night
drinking the concoctions and looking as if they
enjoyed it. The result was that soft drink
parlors did a thriving business and still those who
indulge went home sober. (Gazette January-February, 1983)

On October 21, 1924, the Montrose High School burned. Just as Mr. Love remembers his Flushing school fire, many Montrose residents are still around to talk about this great fire. Although recently deceased, Scotty Flynn remembered that day well. He was a member of the football team and their only ball had gone flat. The principal, and coach, sent Scotty and a couple of fellows up to Saginaw to buy a new ball. When they returned, they came into view of the school, and it was gone, burned right to the ground. All of his school books had been left on his desk so he ran around asking other students if anyone had saved his books. Luckily, someone had thrown them out the window and he was able to retrieve all of his school books. Glen Moore remembered a piano located in the upstairs room on the north end. When the fire started, Glen and several other boys carried the piano down the center staircase to the ground floor. Just as they reached the bottom of the stairs the school bell came crashing through the roof and fell all the way through the stairwell to the first floor. The boys hurriedly pushed the piano out the front door on the west side of the building. Glen also remembered the fire saving him from getting into trouble that day. He had come to class a little late and threw a handful of peanuts in his mouth as he entered the room. He had just managed to get into his seat when the teacher said "Glen Moore, stand up." As he stood, someone rushed into the room screaming about the fire so Glen never knew what was going to happen to him. Fern Fent remembered allowing her sister to wear a new hat to school. She never saw that hat again because it went down with the school. Hilda Middleton was only in the second grade but she remembered the fire well. Her class was beginning to use their readers when the teacher very calmly told everyone to stand up and walk out of the

building carefully and quietly. She led them toward the playground while she wondered why the older kids were running around making noise. After she reached a safe distance from school she turned around and saw smoke rising into the air above the school. Just then a familiar voice spoke her name and she knew everything would be all right because her pa was there to protect her.

Wyman Jennings gave back to Montrose his entire life. This small town lost a dear friend in August, 1997. Without Wyman, his wife Edith also died just five short months after losing her best friend--her husband. This couple exemplified Montrose's values for almost ninety years. Wyman's grandfather, Francis L. Jennings, was a pioneer of Michigan, settling in Arbelle Township, Tuscola County, in 1852. His son, Leroy, eventually bought twenty acres of land in Montrose Township in 1894, later buying more. In 1903 he moved into the village and opened an implement store. He married in 1897, had three children, with Wyman being the baby born August 14, 1908. Jennings was an active member of Montrose's society and was the village president for a while, a Republican, Royal Arch Mason, Blue Lodge member, and a member of the Gleaners. His wife was equally active. Wyman grew up believing in his hometown and seeing his parents as civic leaders. His early memories were of his mother's roles as a housewife, churning butter, growing a garden, raising chickens, and exchanging eggs for other staples. Many people used the barter system in those days, helping each other. Everyone came to town on Saturday to exchange their supplies at the local stores, to meet friends, and to catch up on all of the latest news and gossip. Saturday was an exciting day in Montose during those years. Many family members lived close and visited frequently,

enjoying each other's company. He remembered when the train trip to Saginaw was a big shopping outing for his mother, grandmother, and aunts. They would always come home with a surprise for him.

Doctoring was not a common occurrence. Wyman remembered knowing most people only called the doctor when they were seriously ill. Once he had a bad toothache and his father took him to Dr. Galbraith who sat him up straight in the chair, ran a lance around the tooth without freezing, and then pulled the tooth. The ice cream cone he later received somewhat eased the pain.

C.P. Miller built the first gasoline powered electric plant in back of the Eggert building. The plant ran all day until midnight and then shut off. The Jennings house was the second in town to have electricity. Jennings bought out a harness shop but the former owner, Herb Tillman, continued to work for Jennings for twenty-six years. He was an important person in Wyman's life, teaching him many things about the business. The Jennings family moved into a large Victorian style home just down the street from the store and business continued to flourish. Wyman loved spending time with his father, learning everything he could about business.

The depression years were lean for everyone, the Jennings family was no exception, and bartering was the only way to survive these hard times. The town folk came together and helped each other any way they could. Wyman remembered always having necessities but no one had much cash in those days.

As a volunteer fireman, it was Wyman's job to ring the bell to notify the town of a fire when he was working in the store, next door to the fire hall. The original fire fighting

unit was a hand pump supposed to be pulled by horses, but since they had no horses, they pushed and pulled it by hand. The last time he remembered using the old unit was at the elevator near the old ball park.

Wyman also remembered being active in school sports. His senior year, 1927, the baseball team won the county championship. This was quite a triumph being such a small town school. During his high school years Wyman was one of the few who had an automobile. His friends remembered many trips to Saginaw, maybe because it was the busiest town around, or maybe because Edith lived there.

Wyman and Edith were married in 1930, just as the depression years began. Like any newly married couple, the Jennings had to live modestly during this time. They both worked and managed to build a small home on Main Street in Montrose. In 1939 Wyman bought a small telephone company in town from Glen Massey. This was the beginning of Wyman's self-made legacy. Through this business, and many other ventures, Wyman prospered in Montrose and began to give back as soon as possible. He served on many boards and committees, gave donations when needed, built a library, helped the Historical Society claim a home and a museum, and many more gifts too numerous to list. The Jennings children have followed their parents' lead: Doug left a trust fund for town improvements, including an addition on the Historical Association's museum, and Rita, a lifetime resident and teacher for Montrose Schools. This family exemplifies living by the true values found in a small town.

Growing up in Montrose in the 1990s is little different from growing up there in the 1960s. Thirty years has hardly touched this little town. Because it is on the other side

of Flushing, it is twice removed from the urban sprawl into suburbia. In the 1960s, Montrose had several General Motors workers willing to drive half an hour into Flint while living a country life. Many had lived in rural southern areas and chose to return to the country as soon as possible after moving to Flint. Most of the women stayed in Montrose, working locally or not working at all. A few women drove to Flint or Saginaw to work, but that was the exception. The community was small and stable with few outside influences. Children rarely left town except for an occasional shopping trip with mom on Saturday. All entertainment was within the boundaries of the familiar surroundings. The school was a central focus for after school activities, even in the summer. Young teens were welcome at the old high school gymnasium, with no cost, shooting baskets and jumping on the trampoline. They could walk one block uptown for something to eat or drink and wander back to the school to see who else had come by. Boys and girls could sit and talk for hours in the safety of the school grounds. There was no swimming pool available so the school would take a bus over to Chesaning's public pool a couple of times a week to give the children something to do. The ride took about twenty minutes so everyone would talk or sing songs--typically started by the boys would be One Hundred Bottles of Beer on the Wall.

Summer was always officially started after the Memorial Day Parade. Even though school was not officially out everyone knew summer was here. The high school band, all of the veteran groups, boy and girl scouts, and anyone else who chose to be in the parade gathered at the bank on the west side of town. People would line the streets to wave and enjoy the entertainment. The parade would go east through town, across the

Flint River, and stop at the Montrose cemetery. There would be a short service and everyone would be dismissed from there. If it was a nice day, it was common for people to linger in town to visit with those people they had not seen for a while but if weather was chilly, everyone went home a little quicker. In the early 1960s there was a horse show every summer and that would be good weekend entertainment. After it closed, the town started bringing in a carnival at least once during the summer. It would set up on the baseball fields on school grounds. This was a good place to go on a date, or meet there if teens were not driving cars yet. Boys could try to show off their ability to win prizes for a girl, and she would be thrilled to carry something around, bragging about how the boy won it. The carnival would stay for three or four nights, giving locals somewhere to go and enjoy a few hours of fun, and then it would be gone.

Saturday night dating was different than the rest of the week for older teens. That was the night they would make plans to go to Flint for a movie, dinner, putt-putt golf, or even another town's carnival. Plans would be made during the week, boys would formally ask girls out on a date, and they would possibly choose to include other couples. Girls would then coordinate their wardrobe, according to where they were going, and have everything ready to wear, at least by Friday. The drive-in theaters were a popular place to go on dates so the girls would often pop popcorn ahead of time to save on expenses. It was also common to find a group listening to music or watching television anywhere they were welcome. That was less expensive than a trip into Flint.

There was a small old movie theater, the May Theater, open on weekends. Parents would drop their younger children off for early shows, while teenagers knew they

had the night shows. Very often you could depend on seeing one of the many beach movies playing in the 1960s. Many Junior High age romances started by meeting at the May Theater, but everyone knew to watch out for the old one-armed man with his flashlight who wandered the aisles looking for trouble makers or too much romance. He was not a kind soul to the youngsters so everyone was afraid of being kicked out of the theater.

In Montrose most children knew to behave themselves in public. There was an unwritten rule that if you get in trouble in town, you would also be in trouble at home. Not much horseplay was worth being in trouble twice. My mother worked in the only grocery store in town. That gave her access to all news and gossip in town. There was nothing I could do that she did not know about by the end of the day. She knew everyone in town. If I came home from school with a story she knew who I was talking about and she knew the parents and what they usually ate. If I said I was going to be at someone's house, that is where I had to be because she would eventually see those parents in the store and talk to them. Not all parents had that kind of connections but they were visible enough to stay involved with their children's activities.

The school was an ideal location for community gatherings. At the elementary parents would walk or drive their children to and from school if they lived too close to ride the bus. It was common to see mothers standing outside of their cars enjoying conversation while waiting for the end of the school day. Parent-teacher conferences and assemblies were well attended, at least by the mothers. Sporting events have always been a small town gathering time, especially at football and basketball games. Students were

encouraged to attend to show school pride. For away games, the school would take students on buses. There were usually at least two for high school students and one for the junior high. Since small towns usually played sports against other small towns, sometimes they would have to travel thirty-fifty minutes so there would have been no spectators without buses.

There was a lot of national turmoil going on in this country in the 1960s but very little of it affected daily life in Montrose. A few boys went to Viet Nam. I even wrote letters to my friends who were there, but I now know that I did not have a clue as to what those boys were experiencing over there. There were freedom rights movements everywhere, but not in Montrose. Not one bra was burned. One incident I remember was when a boy transferred from a Flint school to Montrose High School. His hair was about chin length and we knew he must be a radical hippie from the city. He became our symbol for freedom and rights. When the school told him to cut his hair we were all appalled and agreed to have a sit down in the school lobby. As we sat there, the principal's voice came over the loud speaker and I will never forget that sentence-- he said it so coolly. "If you do not go to class right now I will start calling your parents." Several of us looked at each other, thought about that threat, looked at Jeff, then slowly stood and walked back to class. That was my experience as an activist for civil rights.

Another civil rights situation arose when our small black population (six-eight) decided to rebel. They ran through the high school, over to the junior high, then collected the black elementary students. By the time they gathered, there was a school bus waiting to take them all home. The principal talked to their parents, let the students stay home for

a couple of days, then they were all back in school like nothing happened. White students never really understood their need to rebel but there was an acknowledgment to the connection between their feelings and the craziness going on in other parts of the country. Detroit was only an hour away by car and that city experienced much turmoil, but Montrose might as well have been on the other side of the world. Parents simply tightened restrictions on travel and dug deeper into the safety of this small town.

By the early 1970s, Montrose citizens felt the need to create a new identity for Montrose and give people a reason to visit and admire this quaint comforting atmosphere. Long distance travel was being hampered by gas prices, and automobiles were designed to be energy efficient. This was a perfect time to gear any marketing strategy toward Michigan residents who were finding summer adventure in new mobile homes or campers. The Montrose Orchard was well known for its superb blueberries as well as its apples. People were already traveling there to buy blueberries so it made sense to use that idea to create a celebration theme. Since blueberries are usually ripe in August, the third weekend in August was chosen as the date for the new Blueberry Festival. They geared most of their advertising toward campers even though there was no camping facility in Montrose. The first idea was to use the school grounds and hook up to the city electricity. When the first few years were such a success and people came in their campers from everywhere, Montrose citizens living on streets near the schools agreed to let campers park in front of their homes and plug into their electricity. The townspeople opened their lives to strangers and made everyone feel welcome in Montrose. They had a Blueberry Parade with a Grand Marshall and a Blueberry Queen and anyone else who wanted to be in the

parade. There was always a flea market, craft show, carnival, blueberry pancake breakfast, teen dance, beer tent with entertainment, baseball tournament, and road race. In the 1970s, the sleepy little town would wake up, and be full of activity for a few days. The sight of all those campers lining the side streets was quite amazing to most people.

Although the festival continues today, there are changes. The economy improved and fewer people choose camping as their summer recreation. There are still a few campers on the school grounds, but none line side streets anymore. Activities have changed with the times as soccer and basketball tournaments were added to entice newcomers. The beer tent became a large liability and could no longer be put up on school grounds so it was excluded in 1997. These changes keep most of the activity happening during the day with little reason to be in town in the evenings.

The Blueberry Festival weekend became the perfect time to gather classmates for reunions. They could meet at the beer tent on Friday night, have a float in the parade on Saturday, and get together for a big party on Saturday night. There was a reason to be together more than once and it cost no one any more than a couple of drinks. The atmosphere was good for families to return to town so children would have something to do while their parents enjoyed visiting with old school friends. Since I graduated from Montrose High School the same year as the Blueberry Festival was conceived, our twentieth year class reunion was the same year as the festival's twentieth anniversary. As a member of the planning committee, we used that connection as the theme of our gathering. We chose to buy T-shirts for the class and had 20/20 printed on the front. Many of us were in the parade and we all wore our shirts. It was fun to see classmates

that grew up together, most of us since elementary school, but have gone separate ways. In a class of 120, some chose to stay in town but many left. The familiar feelings came back as I walked through the crowded beer tent and at the parade. My name was called out and people waved to me from across the street. Parents of my classmates stopped to talk and meet my family. The sense of belonging crept inside even after living somewhere else for twenty years.

My sister, Amy (Kathy) Laurie, did not choose to live somewhere else. She tried a couple of times, but Montrose is where she settled. She felt it was important to raise her children, Sarah, Rachel, and Allison, in the safety of small town living. Montrose has had little growth since I left, with change coming slowly. Kathy likes to be near town so the girls can walk or ride their bicycles to visit friends or go to school functions. Although both Kathy and her husband, Terry, have to drive to the Flint area for work, they are comfortable knowing that the girls have their grandparents close by if they need something. It is not unusual to have several generations in a small town. Retired grandparents can be extremely helpful if they are close. When the girls forget something after they go to school, they know their parents are not available so they call Grammy and Papa. When one is bored at home or just needs to get away, she can hang out at her grandparents' home and get a little extra attention too. If the flu or a cold has someone staying home from school, it is nice to know Grammy (Nancy Pope) will be there so mom does not miss work. This family closeness is usually missing in urban life and in the suburbs.

Retired life means something different to just about everyone but there is a common denominator-- choices. There are more choices about how to spend time. After working thirty years as a General Motors second shifter, my father, Gerald Pope, now chooses his daily activities. My parents have chosen to stay in Montrose in their home of thirty seven years. Every morning my father helps to wake up the town and roll out the sidewalks by gathering with other retirees in the coffee shop. They find out the news of the last twenty-four hours and continue to discuss their strategies for solving the world's problems.

Diane's Pastry Shop is the hub of information in Montrose, unless you count the gossip exchanged over grocery carts in Alf Thorsby's Riverside Market, the only grocery store in town. As a market employee for many years, my mother was able to know everything happening in town without ever stepping foot in Diane's. Today, a few Montrose people will do bulk shopping in Flint or even stop in Flushing for Kessel's sales, but at some time during the week, everyone stops by Alf's for something. Like full service gas stations, bag and carry out boys are a thing of the past in most grocery stores, but not at Riverside. There is always a polite young man available to help put your groceries in the car.

Knowing a little about Alf Thorsby would help someone understand the people who give back to their community. Alf's father was in the grocery business in Montrose. In those days a customer would bring a list to the store and the store clerk would run through the store collecting everything on the list. After sharing a business for twenty-five years he bought his own store on the bank of the Flint River. He named in Riverside, as it

is still named today. Alf bought his father's business in 1958, then built a new store where it is located today. There have been numerous remodelings over the years as the business grew. Young people needing work in Montrose often start here. Riverside has grown from 4000 square feet to 45,000 square feet and has an average of eighty-eight employees. Few businesses in the Montrose area claim an employment of that size. Alf's three sons have grown up in the business and now they all have an interest in the store. While many Montrose residents have had to travel to Flint and Saginaw for employment, Thorsbys have kept their business and their family in Montrose. (Gazette, 1995)

Another family who contributed to the Montrose area is the Hill family. James and Iva Hill married and bought an abandoned eighty acre fruit farm on the corner of North Seymour and Farrand Road in 1925. James had some agricultural schooling but also took more horticultural training to learn how to restore this farm. They worked very hard and even had to build a new house after their restored home burned in 1937. They quickly built a brick home where they raised their family, and it is still a part of the farm today. James was concerned with education and found time to be on Montrose's school board. When a new high school was built in the 1960s, it was named Hill-McCloy because both men had been actively involved with the school system. They lost their married daughter, Irene, to an unfortunate illness. When Connie, their granddaughter, was not happy with her dad's new married life, the Hills took Connie in to live with them. Raising a teenager in the late 1960s was quite different than thirty years before but in some ways, it was the same. They gave Connie her mother's bedroom, enrolled her in Montrose High School, and gave her responsibilities at home. I lived across the road from the orchard, and

Connie was just one year older than me, so Mrs. Hill invited me to meet her granddaughter. I was curious and cautious at the same time, but Connie and I became fast friends. She was funny, nice and the boys thought she was pretty cute, too. Since my grandparents were in Missouri, I soon adopted Grandma and Grandpa Hill, and spent a lot of time at the Montrose Orchard. They spoiled Connie and her friends by having a ping-pong table in the basement and keeping the freezer full of ice cream. Few homes in Montrose had basements, probably because the ground is mostly composed of sand, but Hills made sure we were always comfortable in their finished basement. Grandpa Hill is gone and Grandma Hill is in a nursing home, but the orchard remains in good hands. Their son, Don, built a home around the corner from his parents and now he and his son manage the orchard. They have expanded several times, are happy to take school groups on a tour, and employ several people. Giving back to the community is the only life the Hill family has ever known.

There are many people who represent the heart of this small town. People who have been raised there and decided to stay are willing to give back the warmth and friendliness they felt as a child. Newcomers feel that friendliness and choose to raise their children in this caring environment. Montrose has maintained a stable population for many years. The graduating class of 1971 was 120 strong, as was my niece's class of 1992. The schools include a large township that is also remaining stable, as the class size demonstrates. There are no apartment complexes to influence a transient population but there are mobile home parks that may have more movement than the single family property owners. Most of the people who choose to begin their family life in Montrose

will stay. It is common to have most of a kindergarten class graduate together in this town.

VI

A Comparison of Small Towns

Looking at a map of Flint, there are definite circles of population growth and suburbanization around the city. Flint has several city high schools of approximately the same enrollment and they compete in athletic events as equals. In the first wave of suburbanization outside of Flint's city limits there are several schools classified as the "Big Nine". These schools are: Carman-Ainsworth, Clio, Kearsley, Davison, Grand Blanc, Swartz Creek, and Flushing. Powers Catholic School is included but does not represent a community designated by a specific area of land. These communities are similar in many ways. Clio, Davison, Grand Blanc, Swartz Creek, and Flushing began as small villages in rural settings. They were originally self-sufficient farming or lumbering communities. The railroad came through, uniting these towns with one another, but most travel was down between small towns and the city, not between two small towns.

Until General Motors made Flint an industrial city, there was no reason to connect these small towns, except as neighbors. Stories told by citizens in any of these towns would sound similar as memories flowed about life before General Motors and the automobile. Today these towns and their townships are still growing and subdivisions are

filled as soon as they are built. The number of homes being built in all of these communities is staggering. There is no new industry bringing in employees but the numbers are still rising. With this change is coming a change in their value system. Larger numbers make it more difficult to keep towns familiar. Movement in and out of the area creates strangers, and strangers do not trust each other. Crime rates are rising as communication diminishes within each community. New homes in fancy neighborhoods demand a higher income so more two working parent households are created. This leaves less time for child guidance and school involvement, resulting in a further break down in communication. Having coffee with neighbors or helping each other with chores can not exist if time is short and friendships have not been made. The American value system was created to help each other help themselves, a missing link in today's suburbs.

When looking at the same map of Flint, the next wave outside of suburban towns is the area containing very small towns. Populations drop drastically from eight to ten thousand down towards two to three thousand, and holding steady. These towns, like Montrose, are New Lothrop, Lennon, Durand, Gaines, Linden, Fenton, Holly, Goodrich, Elba, and Otisville. Linden, Fenton, Holly, and Goodrich are located south of Flint and are in a prime location to grow in this decade. The suburban sprawl north of Detroit has reached this area, and these small towns are experiencing a growth spurt that may help them to lose the one thing that is bringing people to the area: small town values.

Durand is a little larger than the other towns because it was the railroad hub of Michigan for many years. Railroad Days is the theme of their summer festival and the old railroad station is a historical landmark in Michigan. Because Durand has been stable for

many years and does not have a transient population, it still maintains its familiar atmosphere. There is little growth currently happening north of Flint. Clio is experiencing some growth, showcasing luxury homes and condominiums around a country golf course atmosphere.

People in these small towns are more mobile and many do travel to Flint or Saginaw for employment, but when in their home town, there is a sense of comfort in knowing familiar faces when visiting local businesses and school functions. Stability and security are common feelings in a town where most faces are familiar. More two-income families exist in rural towns today but there is usually family or good friends close by to help when needed. Generations existing in a small town give children more opportunity to find a family member if one is needed. Elder citizens will tell of changes in their community, and they see how Flint's influence has reached out to this area, but it is no where near the suburbanization of larger towns closer to Flint.

Mobilization is more convenient in the urban and suburban areas than in small towns. An organization called "Your Ride" is controlled by Flint's mass transit company and will go where buses may not be running. This service is not available outside of suburban towns. Calling for a cab or taxi is possible, but because they are based in Flint, the expense is too great for a trip to the country. Phone service is free to the city from suburban towns but not from the country communities. All phone calls to inquire about theaters, store sales, locations, or merchandise availability, doctor appointments, or to call in sick to work will cost small town residents. That is a minus with which they are willing to live. Small town residents are likely to better planners. Before making a shopping trip

into the city, they will make lists and check sales, because another trip might be a week or two away. My own parents visit me in the suburbs while on a shopping trip or at a doctor's appointment more than I return the favor by going out to the country, which is less than thirty minutes away. I am located more conveniently for a drop-in visit than they are.

Suburban small towns are more likely to be connected through school activities, as will the rural towns by simple population. Families travel from town to town watching their children in school related activities but the size of towns is usually similar to their own. When hearing about a football camp located in Montrose, I was familiar with the area so thought nothing of it, but other parents, who travel with their children constantly, were puzzled by the location because it did not fit with normal football visits. They did seem to remember the general location of the town but thought it was "so far away!", when it is actually closer than some suburban towns on the east side of Flint that are more familiar.

Cities are connected to their surrounding communities through business, recreation, and health care. Suburban towns are connected to cities for business, recreation, and health care but they are also connected to each other through school related activities. Small rural towns are connected to the city for business, recreation, and health care, to the suburban town for much of the same things, and to each other for school related activities. There is little personal connection when traveling between these three categories because the people have varying value systems. There are some

similarities but not enough to bring these people together socially. Socialization is still quite centrally located, even with the technology of today.

Conclusion

The American value system was created by people who chose to live in a new world. These people were determined and had a very strong work ethic. They refused to give up or have someone else take care of them. Hard work, strong faith, and close relationships created the first American small rural towns. City people stayed in Europe until there were urban centers here, allowing for financial gains. Pioneers worked diligently and found their lives in connection with land. As populations grew in some areas, pioneers moved into the unsettled country, pursuing a new connection with open land.

As urban centers grew in this country, values changed to meet the needs of a crowded, changing population. Values are there, but they evolved into a self-centered system to protect urban citizens from strange outside influences. While trying to sustain old values by closing their doors, they were losing community relationships .

The financial problems and hysteria of the 1930s were strangling urban belief systems. People were being thrown out of homes and losing jobs without warning. Neighbors could not help because they were having the same traumatic experiences. No one could trust anyone and the self-centered values closed in as a simple survival mode took hold of these terrified people. As the "New Deal" was set into motion, lives were

saved, but it also created an urban centered helpless society that would become comfortable being taken care of by government.

Small rural towns, even twenty miles outside of a large industrial city, have been able to maintain their pride and integrity. They may not have a large tax base, a large percentage of highly educated citizens, a mall filled with exclusive stores, or an elaborate expensive subdivision, but there are many attributes that are just as precious. The open land allows children to be raised with fresh air and room to run and play. Low crime rates exist because there is nothing in town to entice criminals from the city. Distance from fast-paced work, shopping, and traffic is relaxing. Running into friends at the grocery store is pleasant as is the clerk calling you by name instead of asking for three pieces of identification. Knowing the parents of one's school age children is comforting as the children go through their rebellious stage. When allowing children to go into a store or a movie theater without supervision, it is comforting to know the proprietors and most of the patrons. Schools are a familiar place to parents as well as children. Many social affairs occur at school because size of the facility is most functional for public gatherings. This helps to create a more relaxed atmosphere for parents who might otherwise feel uncomfortable in a school setting. Children also learn that school is not just a torture chamber set aside for school hours. It can be a pleasant place to be any time of day. Small towns like Montrose, New Lothrop, and Durand are becoming more modern with the available technology but they are doing so more slowly than urban areas and suburban towns. There is still more moral and ethical influence shaping their values than financial gains running the suburbs, or pollution, crime, and destruction controlling urban centers.

If you are willing to give up conveniences of less travel time to work and shopping, possibly less educational facilities with fewer activities and sports, you may want to investigate small town living. Becoming friends with neighbors and being recognized on the street or in a store may sound too familiar for someone from the city, but small town people enjoy knowing everyone. Relaxing and learning how to garden can release more stress than any high tech gymnasium in the city. Some who drive to the city say their time alone in the car is a time to self-evaluate or make plans for the day. If it is the original American values you crave, they are not dead, but have changed their name. They are now called "Small Town Values".

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