

THE MORPHOLOGY OF
KEWANEE, ILLINOIS, 1837 - 1969

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to point out the landuse patterns that have occurred from 1837 to 1969 in the city of Kewanee and, more importantly, to determine how these landuse changes relate to the historical development of Kewanee.

Kewanee was founded because of a railroad that was constructed through this area of Illinois. The railroad had a great impact upon the subsequent development and success of the new prairie town. Agriculture first felt the impact of the railroad and later industry took advantage of its many assets. However, Kewanee is not unique in its relationship with the railroad. Other cities in the state have also felt the influence of the railroad upon their development - among these Galva, Princeton, and Aurora. The railroad and its advantages modified each city as it grew. The railroad also had a more specific influence on industry and its location and development within the city of Kewanee, where major industries have maintained their railroad location down through the years.

Kewanee's relationship with the Wethersfield colony must also be considered. The colony definitely had an effect upon the development of the new settlement. Some of the residents of Wethersfield assisted in the founding of Kewanee. Many residents in the former moved to the latter to make their home and seek employment. Wethersfield businesses saw the advantages of being located near the railroad and were moved to the new settlement. All of these factors helped in the success of the new town of Kewanee. The two towns chose to

remain separate political entities until 1924 whereupon, by a special referendum, Wethersfield was annexed to Kewanee while both retained their own respective school districts.

Since the first settlement in the area was in the Wethersfield section of the city which soon became secondary to the Kewanee railroad nucleus, it is ironic that recent residential and commercial growth in the city pattern has developed south and west of that original colonial town site. Although the growth of Wethersfield had stabilized for a number of years, the last few decades have seen a change in the growth pattern. The residential area in the southwestern section of the city was the first to show indications of this change. Additional commercial establishments are a more recent indication of that growth.