

## *Chapter 2*

### **ROELAND PARK BECOMES CITY, OR HOW WE GREW**

In the late 1940s various real estate subdivisions began investigating the feasibility of incorporating their areas into municipalities. This matter was considered by the Roeland Park Homes Association as early as April 1949. The Homes Association had been organized as provided for in the deeds of trust for the homes in the areas that had been developed by the Charles E. Vawter Building Company. Its purpose was to oversee the integrity of the community. One of the functions of the Homes Association was to provide some municipal services not provided by the governing bodies of Mission Township and Johnson County.

The matter became critical when, in 1950, the area known as Mission announced its intention to incorporate. At about this same time Charles Vawter was beginning to develop a shopping district in the vicinity of 51st Street and Roe Avenue. Mr. Vawter was concerned that the area he had developed, the subdivisions of Roeland Park, Roe Manor Heights and Roe Highlands, would be annexed by the proposed City of Mission. He was also concerned about the impact such an annexation might have on the business district he was developing. As a result, Mr. Vawter requested that the Board of Directors of the Roeland Park Homes Association initiate action to incorporate the City of Roeland Park.

The idea of an independent City received a mixed reaction. Not everyone wanted a separate city. Some of the residents felt that the area should be part of the new City of Mission. Mr. Vawter requested a meeting to discuss the matter. The meeting was held in his office, located on the northwest corner of 55th and Roe Avenue.

Mr. Vawter presented his views on the advantages of a City of Roeland Park, and a method for incorporating the City. There was considerable discussion, most of which favored such action. However, Charles Kent, a director of the Roeland Park Homes Association who lived at 5425 Juniper, took exception to some of the claims and proposals. Soon it appeared that the consensus of the meeting was to table the proposal to incorporate. Mr. Vawter then took the floor and persuaded the assembled group that incorporation was not only desirable, it was necessary.

The final plan was to incorporate a strip of land along Nall Avenue, blocking any action by the City of Mission to annex the area. This was to be followed by the annexation, by the new City of Roeland Park, of the remainder of the subdivisions that had been developed by Mr. Vawter. At the same time the incorporation was completed, the Roeland Park Homes Association was to become inactive and its function taken over by the new City.

Incorporation took place on July 2, 1951. The estimated population of the area initially incorporated was 1,875. The first annexation took place three weeks, later on July 25, 1951, and was soon followed by a second annexation on September 25, 1951.

As previously stated in the prologue to this history, the area included in the original incorporation was bounded on the west by the back property lines of homes on the west side of Nall Avenue from 58th Street to 51st Street. Originally it was planned that the center line of Nall would be the boundary line. But a meeting was held with the Mission planners and it was agreed that the new City of Roeland Park should be responsible for residents on both sides of Nall, as well as for the construction, maintenance and policing of the street.

With the first annexation completed, the City of Roeland Park generally encompassed all the area developed, or being developed by Vawter as well as the homes on the west side of Nall and the east side of Roe Avenue. The second annexation added the Walnut View and Nall Wood area on the west and all the area from Roe to Neosho, 47th to near 53rd Terrace.

A year later, on July 1, 1952 the City annexed the small tract of land between its south border and 55th Street, Roe to Buena Vista. The next annexation took place on June 22, 1953 when the tract of land now known as the Venture Plaza area was added to the City.

The next annexation of a major tract of land took place on September 17, 1954. At that time the area generally referred to as the Old Mission Golf Course, and now known as the Fairway Manor subdivision, was added to the City. Essentially this is an area between 48th Street and 53d Street, Neosho to Reinhardt and included a tract just north of the present site of Bishop Miege High School. At the same time, the area occupied by the Skyline School was annexed.

An interesting sidelight of this annexation is that the developers who were to build in the Fairway Manor area first went to the City of Fairway and suggested that it annex the area. The Fairway council took no action. The following night, the developers approached the Roeland Park council who agreed to the annexation.

In 1957 the Roeland Park swimming pool was constructed. Just prior to its opening, the area known as the Alban Roe Park, or the Roeland Park City Park, was annexed on June 28, 1957. Two weeks later on July 9, 1957, the remainder of the present City between Reinhardt, Neosho and Mission Road was annexed. This area includes the Shawnee Place subdivision that was the first area platted in what is now the City of Roeland Park. It also included the remainder of Mission Ridge, Fairway Manor North and the Mission Grove subdivisions. Included in the area are the St. Agnes Church and School, Bishop Miege High School and Old Mission Junior High School. However the area of the Shawnee Mission State Park, the Shawnee Indian Mission site, was excluded.

The final annexations occurred on February 18 and March 18, 1959. The first was all the area that is now the Skyline Village, the Nall Neighborhood Park and Pemland Heights. Pemland Heights was the area in which construction had occurred twenty years previously. The last area annexed was the Kansas City Power and Light Company Substation between the 18th Street Expressway and Roe Lane.

By 1960, the population of the City of Roeland Park, reported by the national census, had grown to 8,992. The population continued to increase until 1964 when the number of residents was estimated by Johnson County to be 10,519. Since then the number of persons living in the City has declined until the 1990 census showed just 7,724. Population by year is shown in Table 2.1.

**TABLE 2.1**  
**Number of Residents - City of Roeland Park, Kansas**

1951 Estimate	1,875
1960	8,992
1964 Estimate	10,519
1970	9,874
1980	7,962
1990	7,724
1996 Estimate	7,800



### Area of incorporation and annexation - City of Roeland Park

Area	Date Annexed	Area	Date Annexed
1	July 2, 1951, date of incorporation	6	Sept 17, 1954
2	July 25, 1951	7	June 28, 1957
3	Sept 25, 1951	8	July 9, 1957
4	July 1, 1952	9	Feb. 18, 1959
5	June 22, 1953	10	Mar 18, 1959