

2.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

2.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF JACKSON

The first settler arrived in what would later become the city of Jackson in 1829 (Deming 1984:11). The exploration party included three men, native guide Pewytum, a second guide, Alexander Laverty, and prospective settler Horace Blackman. Arriving at the place Blackman knew was the perfect location to settle on July 3, 1829, the party celebrated both the location and the 53rd anniversary of American independence the following morning (Deming 1984:11).

Although cautioned by friends and family that he had selected a location too far west, Blackman was determined to make his home at the site, which later became the corner of Ingham and Trail streets (Deming 1984:12). Blackman, along with his brother Russell and three hired men, cleared the claim and constructed a small log cabin. Once this was completed, the men returned east, Russell staying in Ann Arbor to earn money and Horace to New York to prepare his family and other potential settlers for the move.

Returning in the spring of 1830, the Blackmans found that a number of changes had occurred during their absence. In spite of the initial warnings that it would take another 20 years before settlement reached the site of the Blackman claim, a number of other settlers had filed claims for lands upstream from the Blackman location. By November of 1830, 30 families had settled in the new community, and the first formal plat was prepared by J. F. Stratton in 1831 (Figure 2.1-1) (Bohn 1993:11).

In addition to finding a large settlement established near his claim, the Blackmans and their party also discovered the newcomers had already decided on a name for the new town. The new community had been christened Jacksonburg in honor of President Andrew Jackson. It was not until 1838 that the name Jackson was finally accepted by the community in an effort to avoid the confusion other settlements named Jacksonburg or Jacksonopolis within the state (Deming 1984:13).

Independent of Horace Blackman's arrival in the area, authorization was made in the fall of 1829 to lay out the territorial highway westward through Michigan's new counties (Reed 1921:9). The United States Military road began in what was then known as Sheldon's Corners (now Canton) in Wayne County with a planned termination at St. Joseph on Lake Michigan (Romig 1986:509-10).

When the hamlet that was to become Jackson was established, great efforts were made to situate it as near as possible to the St. Joseph trail. The intent was to place the community to intercept homesteaders and artisans moving west (Santer 1970:33). This careful placement resulted in Jackson being readily accessible by at least three Indian trails and two secondary trails. It also situated the community near the geographic center of the county, an advantage that was noted in the later selection of the county seat (Santer 1970:36).

The placement of the early trails in Jackson played a great role in the present day appearance of the community. One of the trails traveled south of present day Michigan Avenue with the second located approximately a mile to the north (Inter-State 1881:484). One of the roads crossed property

owned by Blackman, with the second road traversing land held by the Bennett family. Initially a rivalry grew between the two men in their efforts to entice travelers to cross their property. Blackman succeeded in bringing the greater number of travelers across his lands, but eventually reached an agreement with the settlers to the north to place a new road between the two existing trails (Inter-State 1881:484). The road eventually became the main street through the business center of Jackson.

Not only did the location of the main highway through Jackson change, but also its name. Initially it was known as St. Joseph Street, suggesting its ultimate terminus on the west side of Michigan (*Jackson Citizen Patriot* [JCP] 1930a:22). Like many communities across the county, the main road traversing through the City of Jackson was known as Main Street. It was not until 1924 that the road was given its present name of Michigan Avenue (Polk 1924:127).

In addition to the highways bringing travelers to Jackson, by 1841 the first railroad had made its way into the city (Bohn 1993:39). The first line, the Michigan Central Railroad, connected Jackson with Detroit. The Michigan Central furthered its connections to the west with the lease of the Air Line Railroad completed between Jackson and Niles in 1871 (Inter-State 1881:428). The State of Michigan was forced to sell the railroad in 1846, but continued interest by prominent businessmen in New York, resulted in the private development of the rail line through to Chicago by 1849 (Bohn 1993:39).

Jackson quickly became a hub of intersecting railroads. Four additional railroad lines connected Jackson to the north, south, east and west by 1871 (Bohn 1993:39). Additional railroads that passed through the city included the Michigan Southern Branch Railroad, the Grand River Valley Railroad, and the Jackson, Fort Wayne & Cincinnati Rail Road Company (Inter-State 1881:428-429). Four additional rail lines made connections just outside Jackson, bringing the total rail service for the community to eight available railroads by 1871, making Jackson Michigan's "Central City" (Bohn 1993:40). An advertisement for a freight transfer company located in Jackson enumerated a total of nine rail connections centered in Jackson, with service of 22 express trains and 53 passenger trains daily (Figure 2.1-2) (Bohn 1993:39).

In addition to the presence of the railroads themselves, Michigan Central moved their locomotive and repair shops from Marshall to Jackson in 1871 (Bohn 1993:41). This move resulted in the addition of over 1,000 jobs to the community. Many of the new jobs required skilled labor, which in turn contributed both to the expansion of the existing businesses and drawing new industry to the city with its readily available pool of workers.

The influx of new residents forced Jackson to leave behind its small town appearance. By 1894, reports noted that a great effort had been made to improve the city's amenities.

Everywhere elegant concrete and stone walks are talking the place of plank walks, and the old tar and asphalt ones are gradually disappearing. Main Street (Michigan Avenue) is superbly paved through its business portion with fire brick; these are being extended, supplanting the old cobble stones. Shade trees are being constantly

SMITH BROS. & COLLINS TRANSFER CO.



"Jackson, the Hub of Michigan"

Our Central Location in Jackson enables us to make the Quickest Time with the Least Freight to More Stations than any other Transfer House in Michigan.

There are Nine Railroads Running out of Jackson.
 Michigan Central Going East.
 Michigan Central Going West.
 Michigan Central Air Line Division.

Jackson & Grand Rapids.
 Jackson, Lansing & Saginaw.
 Lake Shore & Michigan Southern.

Jackson & Fort Wayne
 Grand Trunk Railroad.
 Cincinnati, Jackson & Mackinaw.

22 Express Trains.

53 Passenger Trains Arrive and Depart each day.

83 per cent. of all the Grain raised in Michigan is raised in the four Southern Tier Counties.

JACKSON, MICH.

Figure 2.1-2. Smith Bros. & Collins Transfer Co. 1897 Advertisement

set and older ones extending their branches so that to-day, look whichever way you will, the vias and vistas are beautiful, the smooth roadways lined with long stretches of curbing which guard these green-leaved sentinels of pedestrian pleasure, increase the pleasure of driving or cycling (Parish 1894).

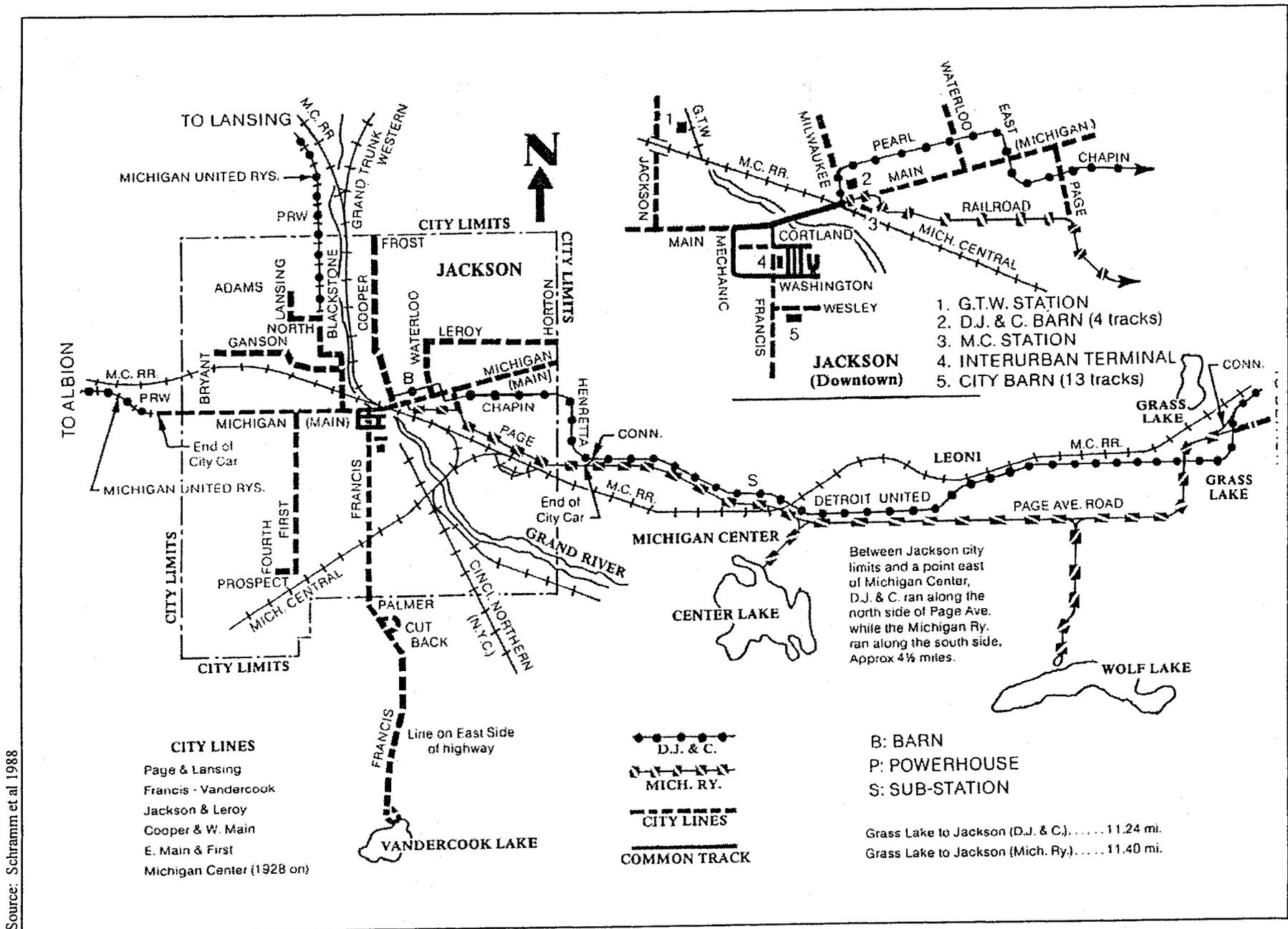
One of the greatest innovations brought to Jackson by the end of the nineteenth century was the electric railroad. The first electric streetcar service, the Jackson Street Railway, began in the city in September 1891 (Bohn 1993:127; Meints 1992:92). A series of mishaps marred the first day of service. The trouble began when the trolley slipped from its overhead wire and snapped up, which severed a telephone line. The severed line fell onto the trolley line causing a fire in a wooden telephone box. A horse-drawn fire truck rushed to the scene, where the live electrical wire fell across one of the horses, killing it instantly (Bohn 1993:127). In spite of the first day problems, the street rail service soon formed a network through the city.

Around the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, business people began to work toward making the street car system stretch beyond the city limits. The first interurban service to reach Jackson was constructed by the Hawkes and Angus Company of Detroit (*JCP* 1927a:2-8). The Detroit firm, which already had a line to Ann Arbor, connected that city with Jackson by the fall of 1901 (Bohn 1993:127).

Other interurban lines soon arrived to serve the Jackson community. Among the names associated with interurban travel through Jackson are the Jackson & Suburban Traction Company, the successor firm to the Jackson Street Railway; the Jackson & Adrian Electric Railway; the Jackson and Albion Electric Railway; the Jackson and Ann Arbor Railway; and the Jackson and the Battle Creek Traction Company. Most of these lines were taken over by the Detroit and Chicago Traction Company in 1901, resulting in one company providing service to many of the desired destinations in the region (Meints 1992:58). Although it is unclear exactly when the Detroit and Chicago Traction Company ceased service to the Jackson area, the firm's incorporation was reported as lapsed, indicating they failed to carry out activities required by their charter to continue operation (Meints 1992:33).

One of the major interurbans to operate in Jackson was the Detroit, Jackson & Chicago Railway (DJ&C). Incorporated on January 12, 1907, the company was controlled at the time of its incorporation by the huge firm of the Detroit United Railway (Meints 1992:64). DJ&C also acquired a number of smaller firms that provided service to Jackson. Joining the DJ&C in serving the region was the Michigan United Traction Company (Figure 2.1-3). Incorporated in 1911, the Michigan United Traction Company operated until 1915, when they assigned all of their lines in leases to the Michigan Railway (Meints 1992:112). The two firms, Michigan United Traction Company and Detroit, Jackson & Chicago Ry. shared a car barn near Francis Street constructed in 1911 (Figure 2.1-4) (Schramm et. al. 1988:66).

By the close of the 1920s, the interurban business was over in the city of Jackson. The rise of automobiles and move toward busses for public transportation resulted in the elimination of the earlier transportation mode. While the Michigan United Traction Company reassigned all their



Source: Schramm et al. 1988

Figure 2.1-3. Interurban and Railroad Routes in Jackson

extending two full pages. Among the businesses mentioned were boot and shoe stores, physicians, dealers in lumber, foundry and machine shops, booksellers, general stores, saddles and harnesses, masons, chandlers, gunsmiths, saloon keepers, tool manufacturers, grocers, carriage makers, and druggists (Lee and Sutherland 1856:134-136).

In 1880, the principal business offices stores and manufacturing establishments numbered 865, not including the minor houses (Inter-State 1881: 497). By the end of the century, one report indicated that Jackson was the “home of over 400 commercial travelers, and the headquarters of most of the state agencies for the sale of agricultural machinery” (General Welfare Association 1899:4).

The community continued to flourish in the early twentieth century. With a population of 31,433 in 1910, Jackson had become one of Michigan’s six cities with populations between 25,000 and 50,000 (Santer 1970:141). The location of the Jackson’s commercial district also continued to grow, extending along Main Street and spreading down the cross streets in the heart of the city (Figures 2.2.1-1 and 2.2.1-2). A comparison of commercial activities between 1870 and 1910 revealed major increases in the number of stores. For instance, the 32 grocery stores present in 1870 rose to 114 in 1910 (Santer 1970:170). Some of the changes can probably be attributed to the increase in population, such as the additional 19 wood and coal dealers found in the city in 1910 or the 39 additional real estate agents. Other increases are representative of the advances in technology. Included among these changes are the addition of a bathroom supplier, six sewer pipe merchants, and 16 plumbers (Santer 1970:170).

One of the most stable businesses reflected in the comparisons between nineteenth and twentieth century businesses was that of banking. In 1881, Jackson boasted one national, two state, and two private banking houses. The only National bank in the city was the Peoples’ National Bank. Established in 1865, the bank had capital of \$100,000 under the direction of president Henry A. Hayden and cashier John M. Root (Inter-State 1881:430). State banking charters were held by both the Jackson City Bank, organized under State charter in 1865, and the Jackson County Bank, chartered in 1872 (Inter-State 1881:432). Private banking houses in the late nineteenth century included P.B. Loomis & Co., established in 1856, and the Jackson Interest and Deposit Bank, established in 1869 (Inter-State 1881:432).

In 1912, Jackson still was served by five banks, although their number now included one national and four state institutions (*Jackson Citizen Press* 1912:6). Each bank included savings departments among their services. In addition to the traditional banking institutions, the early twentieth century brought six building and loan associations into the community. The banks played several roles in the City of Jackson, some more obvious than others. Of course there was the financial focus of each institution, but they also contributed to the current city skyline. Between 1912 and 1917 the People’s National Bank four-story Mansard roofed building was replaced by the one of the first “skyscrapers” constructed in the city (Figures 2.2.1-3 and 2.2.1-4). In 1928 the City Bank and Trust also constructed a soaring new bank tower, now the Jackson City Hall (Figure 2.2.1-5).

The final years of the 1920s saw several mergers take place in the Jackson banking community. First, the Jackson State Savings bank, organized in 1896, merged with the National Union bank on May 4, 1927 (*JCP* 1937c:5-4). Just short of three years later, the oldest bank in the city, Peoples

Source: Brian Sugener Private Post Card Collection, Lansing, Michigan

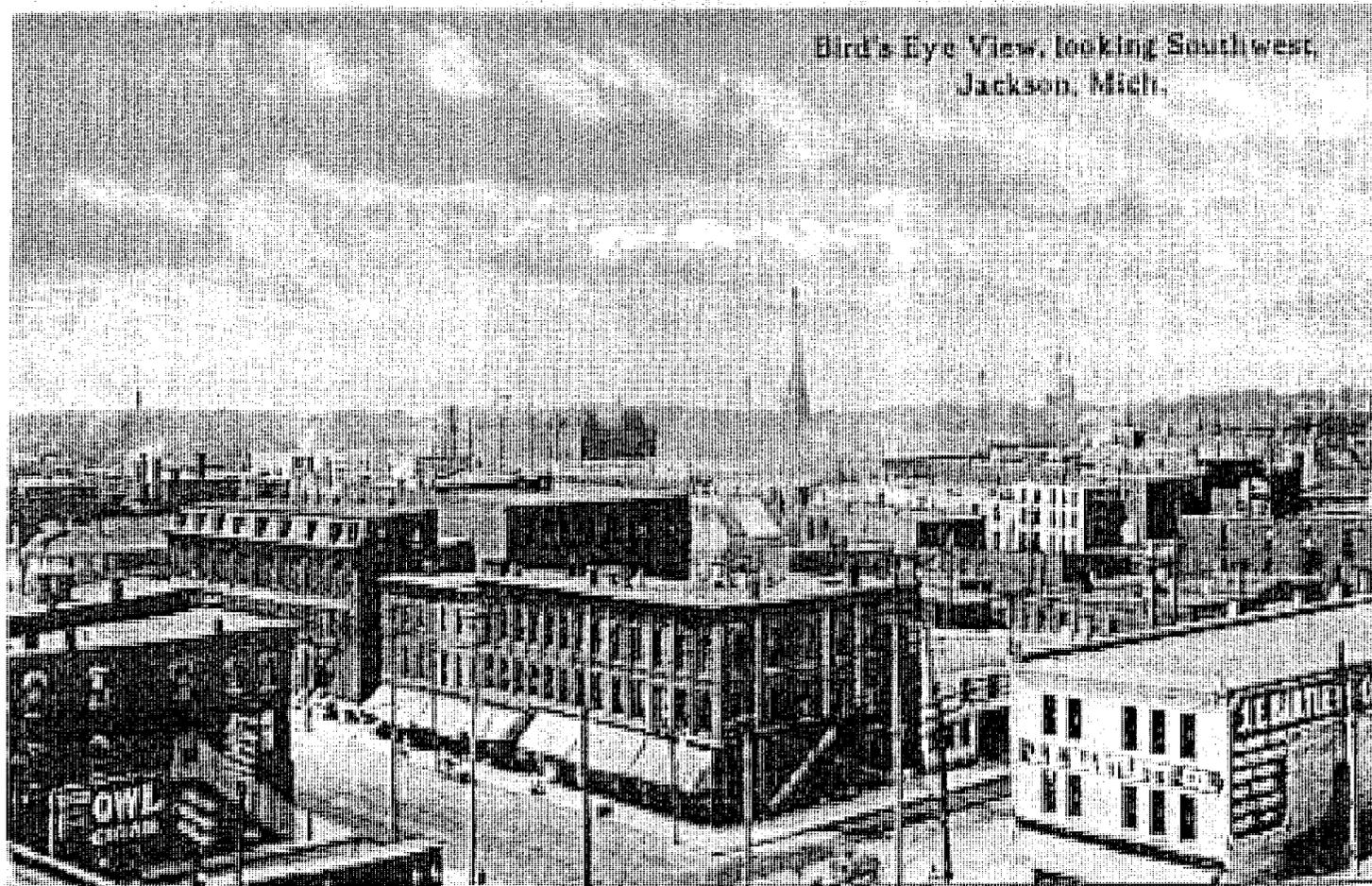


Figure 2.2.1-1. Bird's Eye View of Jackson, ca. 1900

Source: Brian Sugener Private Post Card Collection, Lansing, Michigan



Figure 2.2.1-2. Jackson Streetscape, ca. 1890



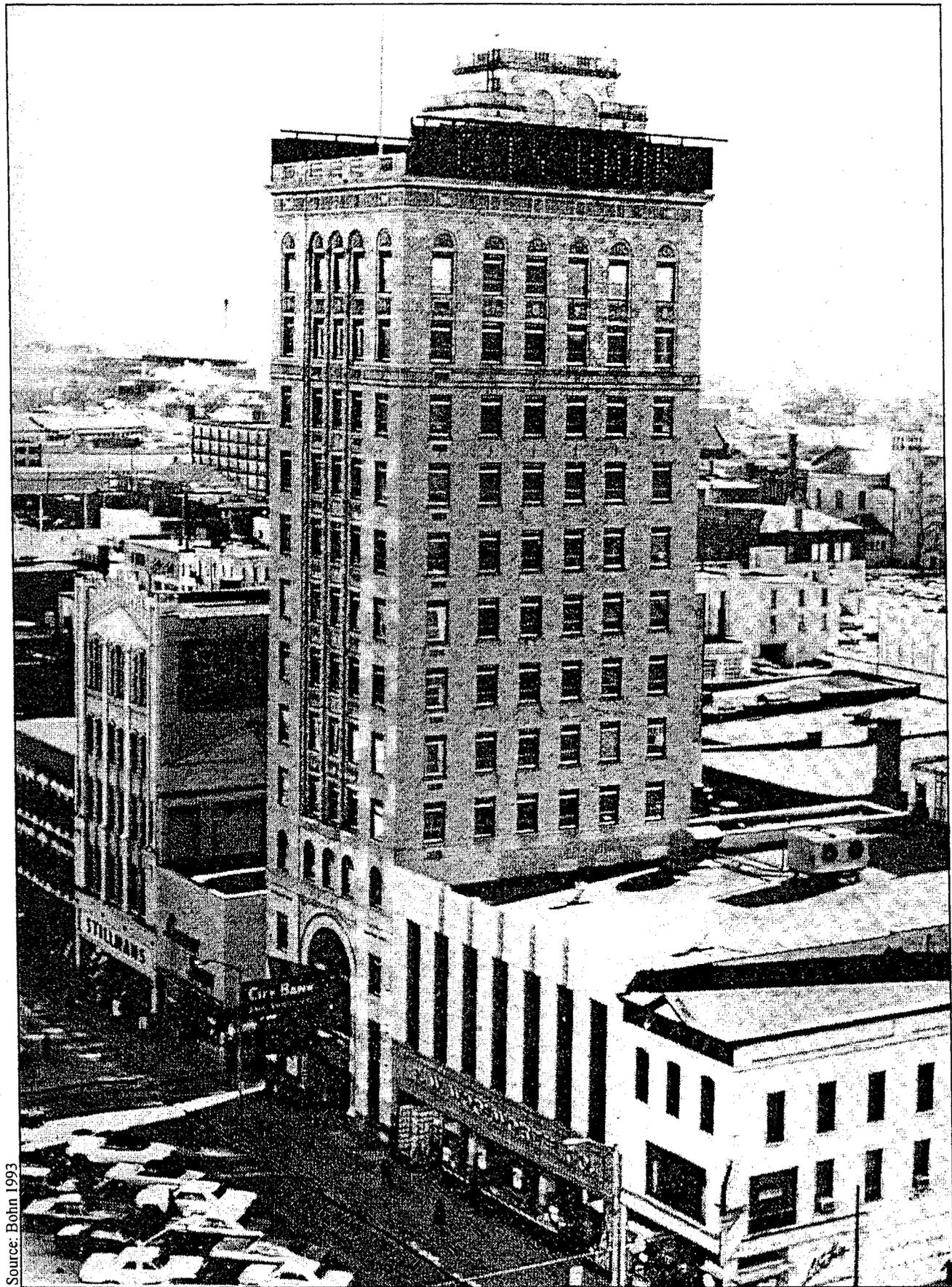
Source: Brian Suppener Private Post Card Collection, Lansing, Michigan

Figure 2.2.1-3. Peoples National Bank, ca. 1915

Source: Brian Sugener Private Post Card Collection, Lansing, Michigan



Figure 2.2.1-4. Peoples National Bank, after 1917



Source: Bohn 1993

Figure 2.2.1-5. City Bank Building Tower, Erected 1928

National Bank, also merged with the National Union to form the Union and Peoples National Bank. This new bank embarked on the construction of a new banking house, the 17-story building designed by architect Albert Kahn and constructed by Otto Misch of Detroit and North-Moeller Company of Jackson (Figure 2.2.1-6) (*JCP* 1930b:2-9). The grand new facility opened to the public for the first time on March 29, 1930.

Weakened by the mergers and the slump of 1929, the Union and Peoples National Bank closed for the Michigan bank holiday in 1933, although they had not transacted any business during the entire previous month (*JCP* 1937c:5-4). By then the bank had affiliated itself with a large group of Detroit banks, which failed to reopen after the bank holiday. Among those permanently closed was the Jackson bank, which was still in the process of liquidation over four years later.

The 1930 construction of the Union and Peoples National Bank, which now houses the offices of Jackson County government, was one of the last major construction projects in Jackson's central business district. The commercial center continued to thrive through the 1940s and 1950s, drawing patrons from both the city and the surrounding county. But, like many business districts around the country, by the 1960s, a number of storefronts were standing vacant. This can in part be attributed to the construction of the Paka Plaza (now Jackson Crossing) in 1965, and the 1972 completion of the Westwood Mall at the corner of Michigan and Brown (Deming 1984:76).

In 1964, in an effort to keep shoppers in the downtown, the city reconfigured Michigan Avenue between Blackstone and Mechanic into a mall (*JCP* 1964:1). Named "Progress Place," the mall closed Michigan Avenue to through traffic with the construction of huge planters and relocation of parking (Figure 2.2.1-7). Although the development of a mall in the area was not originally scheduled to begin until 1968, contributions by business owners in the impacted area prompted the early start of the multi-phase project (Beers 1964:3-1).

By 1972, the merchants were already expressing dissatisfaction with the new street configuration (Winzeler 1977a:A-7). In June 1975 two-way traffic was returned to Michigan Avenue between Jackson and Mechanic, with the eastbound lane opened between Jackson and Blackstone in July of the same year. It took two more years to develop the plan to remove the mall entirely between Jackson and Mechanic streets (Winzeler 1977b:A-7). This plan included rebuilding the street curbs and gutters and installing lighting and greenery. Final approval for the "clean street" plan by the Jackson City Commission came in March 1978 (Piper 1978:A-1).

Ironically, shortly after approving the return of Michigan Avenue to its pre-mall configuration, another mall plan was presented to the city. The new plan, proposed by Ericson Development Company of Los Angeles, called for the complete enclosure of several blocks of Michigan Avenue. The plan would have cost the city millions of dollars, not including the expenditure required to turn Jackson Street into a tunnel from Louis Glick as far south as Greenwood Avenue (Winzeler 1978:A-1, 2). Some of the building removals suggested at the same time as the mall plan in an effort to provide parking have since come to fruition, including the Dwight, Moskin, and Stillman Buildings all once located on Michigan Avenue between Jackson and Mechanic Streets (Piper 1978:A-2).



Source: Polk 1930

Figure 2.2.1-6. Union and Peoples National Bank, Erected 1929

Source: JCP 18 October 1964



Figure 2.2.1-7. Progress Place Mall Landscaping Under Construction, View from the Hayes Hotel

In 2004, the area defined as the downtown development area, which is slightly larger than the project area for this project, included 66 establishments such as restaurants and retailers; 157 office locations, including medical, government-related, financial/legal, and non-profit/community service-related offices; and 17 manufacturers (Alicia Hoiles, Downtown Projects Manager, Jackson DDA, personal communication, 2004).

2.2.2 Industrial History

The pioneers who settled Jackson were an industrious group of people. Within a year of settling the new community, industrial concerns already included a shoemaker, mill, and a tannery (Inter-State 1881:577). Dr. Oliver Russ was attributed with being the first shoemaker, the mill was under the ownership of Thompson & Bennett, and the tannery was owned by Mills and Prussia. Also of note were the first two mechanics in the community, Josephus Case and John Wickham.

The construction of the saw mill and its associated dam soon attracted additional business to the area. Both a blacksmith and millwright journeyed to Jackson, staying on in the growing community upon completion of the construction project (Santer 1970:55). In spite of the presence of a few skilled laborers, most early settlers were forced to rely on their own abilities to provide the comforts to which they were accustomed. For example, cloth making and repair was left largely to the women, who had hopefully learned the skills before ever venturing west.

Seven years after permanent settlement was established in Jackson, the first flour mills were completed. William and Jerry Ford employed about 50 men to construct their Aetna Mills. The men worked the entire summer of 1836, completing the first race that October. The winter weather stalled the final completion of the mill, which finally opened for operation in July 1837 (Bohn 1993:10).

The construction of the flour mills combined with the arrival of the Michigan Central Railroad in 1841 is attributed with starting Jackson's first great period of economic growth (Bohn 1993:10). Small businesses were opened to cater to the growing community, which produced farm tools, wagons, carts, and shoes. As more and more connections were made by the railroad to Jackson, the variety of goods produced also began to expand. The proximity to active railroads for both raw materials and shipment of goods proved a boon to the community.

The growth of industry in Jackson was described by the *Jackson Daily Citizen* in 1889 (*Jackson Daily Citizen* [JDC] 1889a:22): "New factories are locating in Jackson nearly every week in the year. Progress is the watchword." At the time, a list of over 200 different items manufactured in Jackson appeared in the special "Industrial Edition" of the JDC. The variety of items was staggering, and included everything from the mundane to the outrageous. Items on the list of products included ink, saws, files, paint, pipes, spices, cradles, purifiers, balloons, carriages, perfumes, windmills, spectacles, knit goods, hoop skirts, monuments, blank books, corset steels, cider barrels, steam heater, burial caskets, artificial stone, cast steel hoes, portable houses, buckwheat flour, electrical batteries, heating furnaces, iron hitching posts, cigars, furniture, cyclone dust collectors, and plated metallic handles for glassware (JDC 1889b:7).

Due to the extensive agricultural lands surrounding Jackson one of the first major industries in the community were flour mills. The first mill, Atena Mills, opened for business in 1837, with the second mill completed a full decade later. Under the ownership of John R. Kennedy, the Kennedy Mill was steam-powered, utilizing one of the first steam engines produced in the nearby Michigan State Prison (Bohn 1993:12). Because of the importance for farmers to have grain milled at a nearby location, the opening of the second mill was greeted with great fanfare. At the event of the Kennedy Mill opening, a local newspaper proclaimed that the new mills would make "Jackson turn out as many barrels of flour as any station on the great thoroughfare from Detroit to Chicago during the present fall" (Bohn 1993:12).

The milling industry and its supporting industries grew over the following decades. In 1872 William Bennett and Charles Knickerbocker opened the Jackson City Mills, considered to be the largest mill in the city (Bohn 1993:12). In 1888, the Eldred Flouring Mill was erected on Clinton Street (now Louis Glick Highway). The Eldred was the last large mill constructed in Jackson.

The presence of the milling industry in Jackson spawned a number of supporting industries, as well. Among the supporting industries were flour mill equipment manufacturers and machinists. One such firm, The George T. Smith Middings Purifier Co., was established in 1879, and produced the equipment needed to produce high quality flour (Inter-State 1881:557).

Numerous small bakeries were located in the city. One of the more famous bakeries was the U. S. Baking Company. Beginning as a small shop, the company eventually erected a factory on W. Pearl Street to produce everything from bread to the "Jaxon" cracker (Bohn 1993:12). The U. S. Baking Company was later purchased by the National Biscuit Company, ultimately becoming Nabisco. Similarities in the appearance between the Jaxon cracker and Nabisco's Ritz cracker spawned a controversy that the two crackers were really the same (Spangler 1998:A-3). Nabisco historians could trace the company history back to Jackson, but not the cracker recipe.

Another large industry headquartered in Jackson that centered around agriculture was S. M. Isbell & Company. Unlike the mills that handled the grain after harvest, Isbell and his firm provided farmers across the region with seeds. Organized in 1878, the firm originally handled a wide variety of products, but in the late 1880s narrowed their focus to a strict produce and seed business specializing in beans, wool, and apples (*JDC* 1889c:9). In the early twentieth century the firm's attention to detail was praised "every package of seed placed upon the market by this firm is the result of scientific experiments worked out in testing gardens by up-to-date specialists in agriculture" (*Jackson Citizen Press* 1912:48).

In addition to the agriculture-based industry in Jackson, the city was known for its corset companies. In 1868, the Bortree Corset Company moved to Jackson County, becoming the first corset company west of New York City. The Bortree Company invented the double corset, which led much of the undergarment industry to expand in the city of Jackson (Santer 1970:129, 158). The Jackson Corset Company was founded in 1884 and became the largest manufacturer of combination corset and waist garments in America. It employed almost 300 people by 1895, when it was said to be the largest manufacturer of combination corset and waist garments in the United States (Deming 1984:41).

A number of smaller corset manufacturers were also located in Jackson. Unique among the firms was the Coronet Corset Manufactory, founded by Mrs. C. A. McGee who patented the Cornet Corset (Inter-State 1881:555). The Cornet Corset factory was opened on March 1, 1880 and initially employed just 10 to 12 workers to produce 10 dozen corsets a day. Along with Coronet, other Jackson based corset manufacturers included The Reliance Corset Company, the Jackson Skirt and Novelty Company, the American Lady Corset Company, the S. H. Camp Company, Kellogg Corset, and the I. M. Dach Company.

The five corset companies located in the city in 1899 more than tripled to sixteen by the early twentieth century (Thoms 1971:46). By 1910, approximately 20 percent of Jackson's industrial workers were women employed in the corset industry (Figure 2.2.2-1) (Bohn 1993:79). Jackson had become one of the country's corset production giants. By 1899, approximately one-half of the steel stays produced in the country were made in the city, which had become the main producer of corsets west of Boston (Deming 1984:40). Industries developed to support the corset industry also flourished in Jackson. Paper-covered cardboard boxes, spring steel, and corset and skirt sewing machines were also produced in the city (Santer 1970:159).

The changes in women's fashions after World War I and advances in materials such as elastics, ultimately were responsible for the demise of most of Jackson's corset manufacturers. By 1934, by changing their primary production to therapeutic or prosthetic support garments and devices, only two Jackson corset manufacturers, Kellogg Corset Company and the S. H. Camp Company, survived (Deming 1984:40).

Of course, with the presence of the railroad shops and intense interest in the automotive industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Jackson's industrial efforts were not limited to agriculture or corsets. Among the earliest industries in the city was the Austin, Tomlinson & Webster Manufacturing Company. The firm, established in 1842, used prison labor as part of their work force in the production of farm wagons (Inter-State 1881:551). Other manufacturing firms such as Withington Cooley and Co., manufacturers of hoes and other farm implements, also required specialized machinery to assist in the production of their metal parts. While a number of Jackson firms, including the 21 automobile firms located in the city between 1901 and 1954 (Bohn 1993:59), concentrated on the products made from the metal parts, a number of shops specialized in making the machines that shaped and cut the metal itself. Among the largest of these firms was the George D. Walcott & Sons Company. Founded in 1881, the Walcott Company was known for supplying Jackson's manufacturers with the "machines for making machines." The company did not limit their sales to local manufacturers, but had a customer base stretching from Boston to Georgia (*JDC* 1889d:14).

Source: Bohn 1993



Figure 2.2.2-1. Kellogg Corset Production Area

