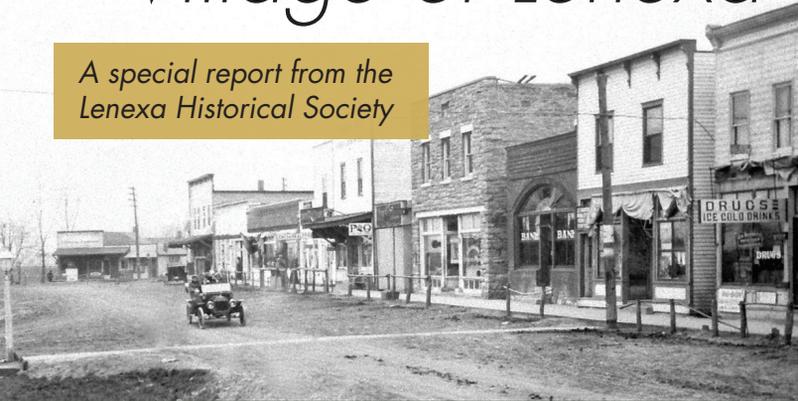


# The 1907 incorporation of the "Village of Lenexa"

A special report from the Lenexa Historical Society



By any measure, Lenexa in 2022 is an outstanding place to live. City services, civic activities, quality of life — Lenexa scores significantly higher in resident surveys than the region and nation in these and nearly every other category.

But imagine what it was like over a hundred years ago, prior to the city's existence, when residents of "The Village of Lenexa" were asked if they wanted to remain unincorporated, or fall under the auspices of a yet-to-be-determined form of city governance. Equitable leaders would need to be found, trust would need to be established, and structure for operating a newly established city would need to be created.

Understandably, there was debate — always interesting, oftentimes quite direct.

At right are sections, verbatim, from the Lenexa newspaper in early April, 1907.

## Incorporation

*"That is the question before the people and a question that every man, woman and child should think what it means to be the future of our town.*

*"It means that it will be a city of the third class with a mayor and council to make city laws and have them enforced and to look after the interests of the citizens.*

*"It means sidewalks and crossings which we all agree that we do need. That alone would be saving on shoe leather. The streets would be lighted in better shape, and with some kind of fire protection which we need as bad as anything everyone will admit. It means that loose stock running*

*around will be looked after.*

*"It means if you mention incorporation to some people the first thing they mention that the taxes will be so high and that they have lived here for 25 years or more and that they have got along all right and have got along through the muck and slush all right, and probably will for some time as long as their health permits them. It may be true but these things do not help Lenexa to grow.*

*"The majority of the people of Lenexa want these improvements, they see that it will never be a town until it is done and now is the time to see it is done."*

First published in the Lenexa News April 12, 1907.

### NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given, that a petition signed by a majority of the electors and taxable inhabitants of the village of Lenexa, in Johnson county, Kansas, described by metes and bounds in said petition, which is herein-after set forth in full and made a part of this notice, will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners of Johnson county, Kansas, at the office of the county clerk, of said county in the court house, in the city of Olathe, in said county and state, on Wednesday May 8, 1907, at 10 o'clock a. m., said date being more than three weeks from the date and posting of this note, praying that said village or town of Lenexa be incorporated as a city of the third class according to law. 1

Now that Lenexa is incorporated as a city, the next thing to do will be to hold a non partisan meeting to select candidates for the various city offices. The best and most conservative men available should be selected at this time especially for there will be a vast amount of hard work devolving upon this first city administration, and it will be this city administration, which, in a great measure will determine whether or not the city shall go forward or backward in its growth and progress. 2

About 8:30 o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, June 4, 1907, Judge G. W. Brown stepped to a south window of Pastime hall and shouted: "Hear ye! Hear ye!! Hear ye!!! The polls are now open." And Lenexa's first city election was on. 3

Geo. W. Brown, F. C. Henry and L. F. Newcomer were the Judges and E. A. Legler and H. M. Parker, the clerks of election.

J. Walter Bennett, the west side barber, claims the distinction and the honor of having cast the first vote in the first election of our beautiful and progressive city. Miss Maude Williams was the first lady to vote, and this was the first vote ever cast by a lady in a general election in Lenexa.

In 1907, even momentous decisions could be made quickly.

- 1 Lenexa's April 12 request for incorporation.
- 2 Three weeks later, on May 8, the city was incorporated.
- 3 Lenexa's first election was held June 4, 1907.

In that election, E.M. Switzer became mayor, defeating F.C. Henry by a vote of 93 to 3. The first council meeting occurred on June 10. J.W. Bennett was selected city clerk and I.O. Krumm, "a good man to handle the money," city treasurer.

115 years ago, a unique, timeless goal for Lenexa's leadership and residents was stated, and its sentiment resonates strongly today: "This organization needs the cooperation of the entire community in bringing about the most possible good to the greatest number of individuals."