

2000 census figures show cities holding fairly steady

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plummited 13.7 percent. Sharon Springs lost 4.2 percent of its population, overshadowed by a 7.9 percent drop in Atwood and a 13.6 percent fall in McDonald. Pickman said changes in farming continue to depress the population in rural counties, as family farmers leave the land and larger operations take over. He said there are fewer families farming and less work available in rural areas.

The younger generation, Pickman said, tends to take jobs in large cities after college instead of moving back to their hometowns. Others who want to live in a rural area, he said, find themselves moving away to find work.

But, Pickman said, Goodland's location right off I-70, its good school system and its rural setting attract retired people and established families. He said some young natives decide to move back after they marry and have children.

"It's a very nice place to raise children," he said, noting that there is most likely a higher percentage of older people in the city. A breakdown of cen-

sus figures according to age, sex and occupation will be released later this year, but estimates showed a big drop in the 25-44 age group.

An older population can mean trouble for the school district, Pickman said, noting that having to shut down or cut schools would cause a big population decline in any city.

Harding said the Chamber of Commerce uses census figures when applying for state or federal grants, but relies on its own figures when recruiting new businesses.

"I have little confidence in the census numbers," Harding said, noting that the Chamber multiplies the number of housing units in Goodland by the average number of people living in each unit for a population figure of 5,408.

Harding, who has been Chamber manager for 20 years, said Goodland's population took big hits when the Rock Island Railroad went bankrupt, when the Great Western Sugar Co. went under and when an irrigation company left town.

Harding said the population dropped by hundreds with each closing and the Chamber has worked to recover from the setbacks. Chamber representatives

are always recruiting new businesses, he said, noting that they have focused on the processing industry, approaching seed companies, refineries and bottlers.

In the past year, Harding said, the Chamber has helped bring the Feed Bunk, an expansion of a Burlington business, and American Freightway to town.

Harding said census estimates are typically based on trends, but economic development efforts have stopped Goodland's population from dropping as much as nearby counties.

Pickman said the city has worked to attract businesses and younger families by improving utility service and providing more recreational opportunities.

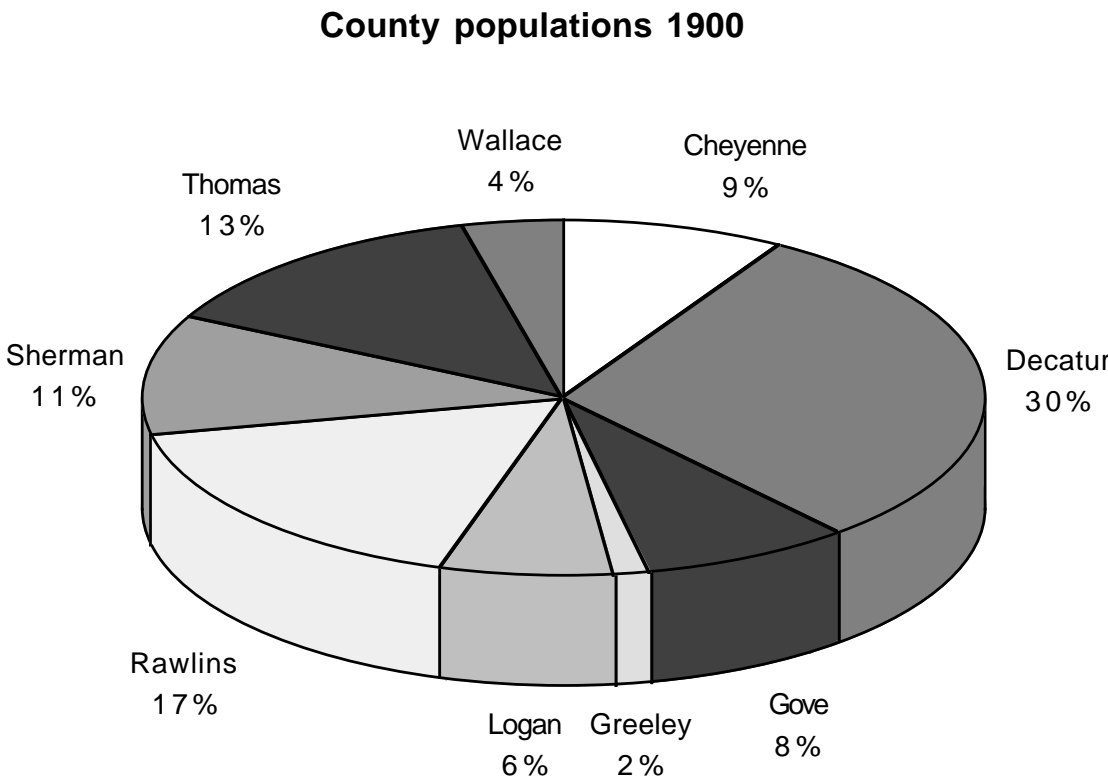
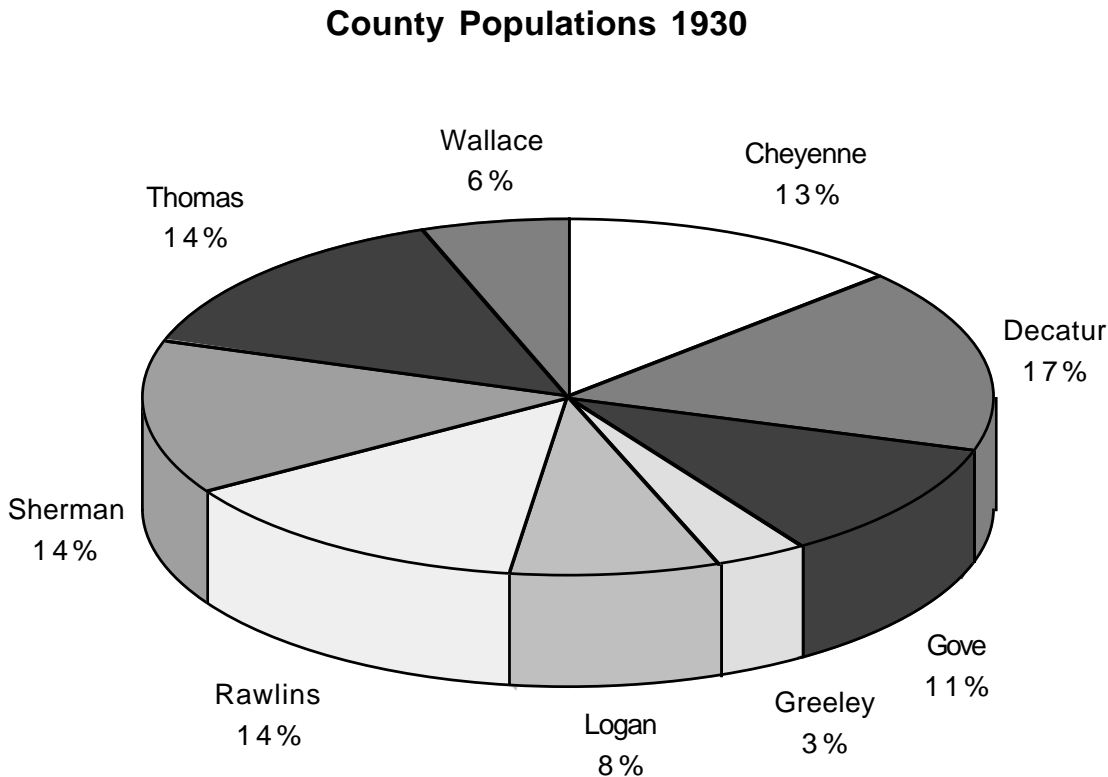
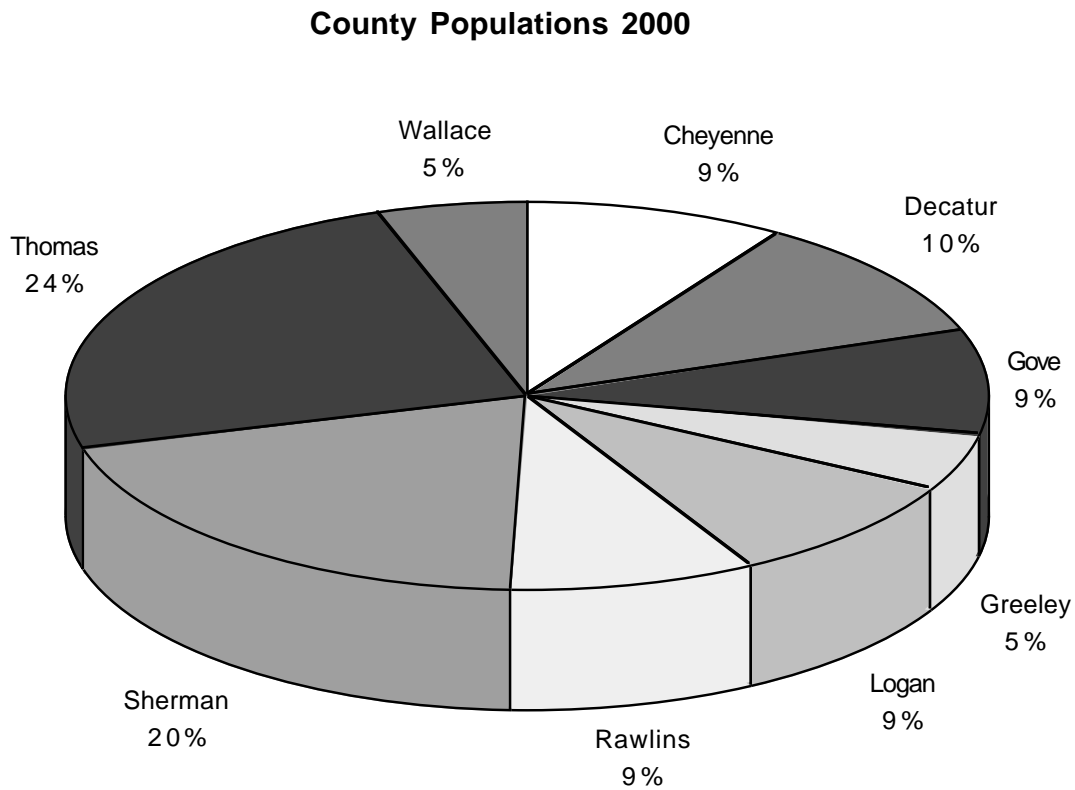
The city has upgraded water and electric lines, he said, and plans to install a sewer line at the airport to accommodate three businesses. Pickman said the city built a new baseball complex last summer, is now having a new swimming pool built and plans to collaborate with the school district to put in new tennis courts.

"We want Goodland to be a place people want to come to," he said.

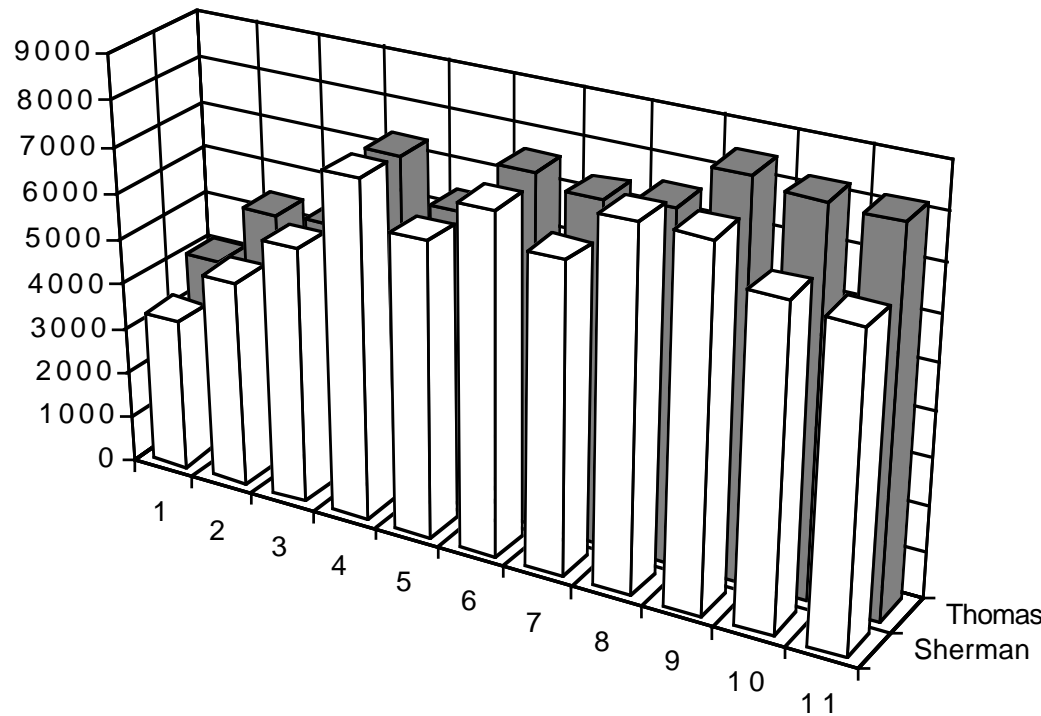
Populations of selected counties 1900-2000

Based on figures from the U.S. Census Bureau

Counties	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Cheyenne	2640	4248	5587	6948	6221	5668	4708	4256	3678	3243	3165
Decatur	9234	8976	8121	8866	7434	6185	5778	4988	4509	4021	3472
Gove	2441	6044	4748	5643	4793	4447	4107	3940	3726	3231	3068
Greeley	493	1335	1028	1712	1638	2010	2087	1819	1845	1774	1534
Logan	1962	4240	3223	4145	3588	4206	4036	3814	3478	3081	3046
Rawlins	5241	6380	6799	7362	6618	5728	5279	4393	4105	3404	2966
Sherman	3341	4549	5592	7400	6421	7373	6682	7792	7759	6926	6760
Thomas	4112	5455	5517	7334	6425	7572	7358	7501	8451	8258	8180
Wallace	1178	2759	2424	2882	2216	2508	2069	2215	2045	1821	1749
Totals	30642	43986	43039	52292	45354	45697	42104	40718	39596	35759	33940



Comparison Sherman and Thomas Populations 1900-2000



100 years of census figures show boom and bust of High Plains

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a Technical College.

Decatur County

The boom years for the high plains, except for Decatur County, were from 1900 to 1930, with eight of the counties showing increases in population in the 1910, 1920 and 1930 census figures.

Decatur had the largest population of the area at the turn of the century, with 9,234 in 1900. That was the high-water mark, with drops over the next 30 years to 8,866 in 1930. After the 1930 peak, the decline becomes more dramatic so that by 1980, the county had less than half the population present in 1900. With the 2000 census, Decatur is now listed as one of the fastest shrinking counties in Kansas, losing 62 percent of the 1900 population down to 3,472.

Decatur had 30 percent of the total area's population in 1900, had dropped to 17 percent by the 1930 report and down to 10 percent with the 2000 census.

At the turn of the century, farming was very big business in Decatur County. There were nearly as many farms as there were quarter-sections of land to farm. There were over 100 active school districts, and the county also had a railroad to move produce to market.

The proximity of the railroad brought both merchandise and people into the area to swell the numbers and put Decatur in a position of importance in northwest Kansas.

As population continued to move westward after the turn of the century, the numbers could not be sustained and as the mechanization of farming began to develop, the number of farmers began to decline, which continues even today.

Greeley County

While Decatur was beginning the slow decline, the other counties were getting their boost as an influx of other rail lines brought a boom to much of the area. Greeley County which, had the lowest population in the 1900 census at 493 people, had grown to 1,712 by 1930. Greeley had a small dip in 1940, but then showed growth through the '50s and '60s, reaching 2,087 in the 1960 census. Since then it has declined to where it is below the 1930 level, with 1,534 in the 2000 report.

Greeley remains the smallest of the counties, but it's portion of the total population has grown from 2 percent in 1900 to 5 percent in 2000.

Rawlins County

At the turn of the century, Rawlins County was second only to Decatur with a population of 5,241 and 17 percent of the total area residents. By 1930, Rawlins had grown to 7,362 and was the third largest county behind Decatur and Sherman. Thomas County was fourth by 28 people at 7,334.

Decatur's share of the total population had dropped to 17 percent and Rawlins, Sherman and Thomas each had 14 percent of the total in 1930.

That was the highest level for Rawlins, as the winds of the 30s started pushing people out and by 1960 the county was virtually at the same population it had shown in 1900.

From the 5,279 of the 1960 census,

Rawlins County has dropped another 44 percent to 2,966 in the most recent count.

Efforts for economic development within the county had been looking up in recent years, but development of a plant to make pressboard out of wheat straw has not gotten any further than a ceremonial ground breaking during Gov. Bill Graves re-election campaign in 1998.

Thomas County

As the 20th century began, Thomas County was the third largest in the area with a population of 4,112 in the 1900 census. Today, it has the largest population of the area at 8,180 and represents 24 percent of the area total.

Thomas County's growth was a moderate 34 percent, reporting 5,517 in 1920, but that had jumped another 33 percent to 7,334 in 1930.

Being on the eastern edge of the windy high plains, Thomas County had a modest drop of 12 percent in the 1940 report, but had surpassed even the 1930 level by 1950 at 7,572. Thomas County stayed in the 7,500 range through 1970, and hit a new high of 8,451 in 1980. This was a 12 percent increase from the previous high in 1950, and a 100 percent increase from the 1900 census.

There has been a slight decline in the past two census reports, with Thomas County dropping 3 percent to 8,180 in the 2000 census.

Cheyenne County

The northern-most county in the area, Cheyenne has been one of the most steady over the 100 years. The 1900 census put the county at 2,640 and the 2000 census put it at 3,165, a modest 20 percent increase in 100 years. That was down 60 percent from its peak, however. The highest point for Cheyenne was in 1930, when the census reported 6,948 and the county had 14 percent of the area's total residents.

In the census of 1900, Cheyenne county had 9 percent of the area popu-

lation and with the 2000 census report the county represents 9 percent of today's area residents.

Wallace County

Another county of the area which has been pretty flat in population over the century is Wallace, which reported 1,178 in 1900 and 1,749 in the 2000 figures.

From 1910 until 1990, Wallace's population was over 2,000 with a high of 2,882 in 1930, but it dropped to 1,821 in the 1990 report.

The county represented 4 percent of the total area population in 1900, rose to 6 percent in 1930, and is 5 percent today.

Logan County

This small county on the southern edge of the area has increased 55 percent over the 100 years, staring at 1,962 in 1900 and reporting 3,046 in the 2000 census.

The high population point for this county was in 1950 with 4,206 people.

Logan represented 6 percent of the total area residents in 1900, and that has grown to 9 percent today and the county has moved ahead of Rawlins County as the sixth largest county by population.

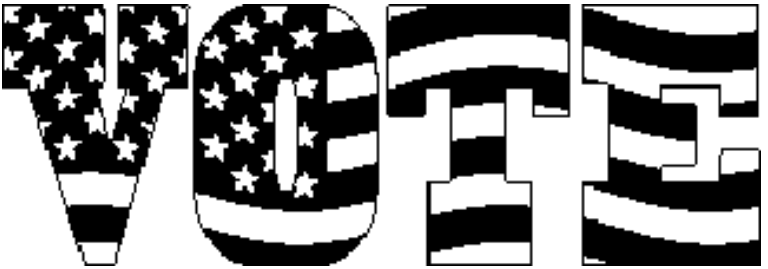
Gove County


Gove started the 20th century with 2,441 people and nearly tripled that in 10 years to 6,044, which was the high mark for the county.

By the 1930 census Gove had dropped to 5,643, but that represented 11 percent of the residents of the nine-county area.

The county numbers remained in the 4,000 range until 1970, when the census reported 3,940. That has continued to drop in every census with 3,068 reported in the latest release.

Gove is holding onto fifth place in the area, just ahead of Logan, but is virtually tied with both Logan and Rawlins with 9 percent of the total area population. In 1900, Gove represented 8 percent of the area total.





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BRENDA McCANTS

GOODLAND CITY COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 3rd, 2001