

By 1940, the population of Sarpy County had grown to 10,835 compared to 10,402 in 1930. This was a gain of 433 or just over 4%. In fact, the county's population over a 40-year period (1900-1940) had only grown from 9,080 to 10,835. City populations were Bellevue 1,184, Papillion 763, Springfield 370 and Gretna 482.

Early in the 1940s, one of the major events of the 20th century took place – WW II. Of course, the war itself affected everyone in the county. Men went off to war. Most managed to survive it; some did not. Rationing was an inconvenience. But in Sarpy County there was an added factor – the presence of Fort Crook.

Before the War started, the Martin Bomber Plant was built. The East Coast was vulnerable to German attack and the West Coast was equally vulnerable to Japanese attack. Bellevue was considered an ideal location being about as far away from either as one could get.

Fort Crook was also considered an ideal location because it was practically deserted when on January 4, 1941, most of the fort was leased to the Glenn L. Martin-Nebraska Company. A few statistics about the bomber plant (just the main building) gives one an idea of the facility: 250 miles of electrical wiring, 47,000 cubic yards of concrete poured, 10,000,000 square feet of paint applied, 5 acres of glass installed, and 10 miles of fluorescent lighting installed. Twenty-five full size football fields could fit into its floor space: 1,200,000 square feet. Peak employment at the plant was reached in November, 1943, when 14,527 persons were employed, 40 percent of them women. The work force at the bomber plant was nearly 1½ times the total population of the county.

The Baby Boom and economic development followed the war. For 100 years Sarpy County, the smallest in Nebraska, had been quiet and predominantly agricultural. Now that was changed forever.

Meanwhile, back at the Fort . . . In 1945, the first Prisoner of War camp for Italian prisoners was established at Fort Crook; prisoners were housed in the old barracks on the east side of the parade ground. In 1946, Fort Crook was renamed Offutt Field and in 1948 was designated as Offutt Air Force Base and transferred to the newly created United States Air Force. SAC Headquarters was established at Offutt AFB at 12:01 A.M. November 9, 1948.