

Springfield had its roots in the old town of "Sarpy Center." Established by Capt.J.D.Spearman, the town had a hotel, store, blacksmith shop, two churches, a public park, and a newspaper, the "Sarpy County Sentinel," that touted the town as "the perfect location for the county seat." Sarpy Center lost the election, but the town remained for a time.

In the early 1880s, when the Missouri Pacific decided to build a railroad through the area, Spearman was sure the line would come through his town and assure its prosperity. Such was not the case, but being a very determined man, Spearman bought land on which the rail line was built, and moved lock, stock, and barrel (with the exception of the school house) to the new town site. He named the new location "Springfield" for the springs found in the fields on the west edge of town. A post office was established in December 1881 and in February 1882 the plat was filed.

Springfield grew rapidly. Within a few months the population was over 300 and the town had 28 businesses and two churches. Incorporation papers were completed in January 1884 with trustees John G.Behm, D.O.Brawner, A.V.Rogers, E.E.Baldwin and E.J.Smith. Among the first contributions to the village bank account were the \$500 annual saloon license fees paid by each saloon in town. (Previously all fees went to the county, but once incorporated, the town got the money.) It was put into the school fund.

Celebrations abounded, beginning with a free ox roast on Independence Day 1884. It was said that 2,000 people showed up -- a good percentage of Sarpy County's population. Sam Startzer served as the head chef, and there was a "Calathumpians and Rag Muffin Parade," guest speakers, big dance platform -- all day and all night dancing, ten-cents per couple -- and free ice water on the grounds. In June 1885 the Ringling Brothers came to town. They rented a hall and packed it to capacity. Springfield was host to the Sarpy County Fair from 1899-1903, when it was discontinued, and again starting in 1937.

The town's most traumatic year was 1903. Shortly after midnight on March 19 a fire broke out, and a dozen buildings on the south side of the main street went up in flames. Wet blankets and canvas hung on the

wooden storefronts on the north side of the street saved them. An Omaha construction company came in and rebuilt the whole block -- this time of brick and stone. (This was one of the first major construction projects for the Peter Kiewit Company.) Later that summer, the creek flooded and destroyed a great deal of property.

The school built in Sarpy Center in 1876 served the community until the huge influx of Springfielders filled it to overflowing. The schoolhouse built in 1884 was replaced by a larger one in 1918. After the consolidation of several districts in 1958, a high school was built three miles east of town and opened in 1960 as Springfield-Platteview District 46.

Early in its history Springfield had a Methodist, a Baptist, a Congregational, and an Adventist church. The latter three were disbanded, leaving only one church for several decades. In recent years Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches have been established.

The old Spearman Bank is a "well-travelled" building. Built in the old town of Sarpy Center, it was moved to Springfield in 1881 where it continued to serve as a bank. In 1908, when the Spearman and Sarpy County State Bank merged, it was moved about half a block south to make way for a new one on that site. The old building was then used for a variety of purposes, including a G.A.R. Hall, the village hall, and a beauty shop. In the early 1950s it was moved again, this time to Richfield, where it was remodeled into a home.

Isaac Cornish was the mayor of Springfield when the first electric lights were turned on February 17, 1914. The town's first paved streets (six blocks) were opened for travel on November 15, 1923. Other streets remained dirt or gravel until nearly four decades later.

Springfield, south of the Omaha-metro area, recorded a 1980 census of just under 800 residents. The 1990 preliminary figures indicate that over 1,600 inhabitants now make Springfield their home.