Rails of Destiny:
Railroad Development in Kansas City, 1840-1870
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Abstract

During the 1850s, towns in the Missouri Valley boomed as settlement and trade expanded west. With the introduction of the railroad to Missouri and its rapid development throughout the state, elites in Leavenworth, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, competed to bring the railroad to their towns. In 1869, Kansas City won the contest after the construction of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Bridge transformed the city into a multi-line hub. By exploring the establishment of both Leavenworth and Kansas City and the years leading up to the construction of the bridge, the persistent efforts of the city’s elites, the failures of Leavenworth, and the financial interest of James F. Joy, this thesis reveals the impetus behind Kansas City’s victory and growth.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man.... The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 1854

In the mid-nineteenth century, the United States underwent an explosion of growth and expansion in the West. As Chicago and St. Louis competed for the valuable trade of the West, the budding cities of the Missouri Valley competed for regional dominance and access to Eastern markets. Two contenders, Leavenworth and Kansas City, vigorously campaigned for the construction of a bridge across the Missouri River to connect to the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad line and on to Chicago. To the elites in each city, the railroad and the bridge represented destiny, the difference between becoming an urban metropolis or stagnating into mediocrity.

The expansion of transportation and infrastructure influenced the rapid growth of the United States in the early nineteenth century. Upon the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, the merchants of the East looked to the West for financial gain. Chicago, connected to the Erie Canal by Lake Michigan, emerged as a metropolis because of geography and the cooperation of Eastern elites. Following the incorporation of Chicago in 1833, the city expanded rapidly until its population outnumbered all cities in the United States but New York.

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In the West, Chicago had one major competitor, St. Louis. Contrary to Chicago’s reliance on the East, St. Louis’s prominence came from its geographic location on the Mississippi River. St. Louis provided the supplies and routes that Americans used to expand across the continent. As the last major settlement before the frontier, St. Louis offered a trading hub for merchants in the West seeking to sell resources to those in the East.³

As railroads expanded West in the mid-nineteenth century, Chicago’s prosperity threatened the economic dominance of St. Louis. The competition between these two metropolitan titans encouraged the search for a new trading hinterland. The Missouri Valley, geographically situated between two rivers, represented a new market for the investors in the East. The draw of Kansas agriculture, southern Missouri mine output, and goods from Texas offered Chicago and St. Louis resources that could propel the industries of the cities.⁴

The people of the Missouri Valley knew the importance of the railroad. The establishment of a feeder line to a main route or a stop along a main line meant the exchange of resources, merchandise, mail, and a symbolic connection to Eastern markets. Merchants and politicians in many cities in along the Kansas-Missouri border understood the significance of this connection.⁵ With this realization, elite citizens in towns

³ Miller, 228; Charles Carroll Spalding, *Annals of the City of Kansas: Embracing Full Details of the Trade and Commerce of the Great Western Plains, Together with Statistics of the Agricultural, Mineral, and Commercial Resources of the Country West, South, and South-West, Embracing Western Missouri, Kansas, the Indian Country, and New Mexico* (Kansas City, MO: Van Horn & Abeel’s Printing House, 1858), 72, 103.

⁴ Miller, 119, 136, 263.

⁵ Earle B. Young, *Galveston and the Great West* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 38-42.
throughout the Missouri Valley started booster campaigns. Typically newspaper driven, reporters in these cities exaggerated the prosperity of their towns to entice the investment of Eastern capitalists. Kansas City ultimately won the contest for a railroad and bridge due to the financial interest of railroad magnate James F. Joy, Congressional connections, and fractures within Leavenworth’s support base.

Frederick Jackson Turner, One of the earliest historians to explore city growth, argued that the process of conquering the frontier led to the development of cities. In contrast to Turner’s argument, Walter Christaller in *Die zentralen Orte in Suddeutschland* theorized that the establishment of cities revolved around a systematic approach that emphasized the distances between larger cities and smaller hamlets. Ignoring geographic-centered approaches, Charles Nelson Glaab in *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis* wrote that the interaction between community elites and Eastern wealth attracted the railroads.

Expanding on Glaab’s analysis of the interaction between urban elites and Eastern capitalists, this thesis will explore the relationship between the boosters in Kansas City and the interests of one investor-James F. Joy. Following the construction of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Bridge in 1869, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce constructed a myth to explain the actions that resulted in Kansas City’s victory over Leavenworth. The myth contains dramatic last minute actions by the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce to convince James F. Joy and the directors of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad to

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6 Cronon, 41, 45-56; “Editorial Correspondence,” *The Evening Telegraph Philadelphia*, December 27, 1867.

choose Kansas City over Leavenworth. Additionally, the myth contains dramatic cajoling by Chamber of Commerce member and United States Senator Robert T. Van Horn to pass a bill authorizing construction of the bridge. While the myth contains some elements of truth, in reality, the process took many years and required many periods of uncertainty for Kansas City.

The emphasis on the construction of the bridge as the moment that propelled Kansas City over Leavenworth by historians ignores crucial factors in the rise of the city. The first chapter of this thesis briefly explores the founding of both Kansas City and Leavenworth. Both towns emerged from the need for westward expansion, but shared two different markets and created their own hinterland. Kansas City relied on siphoning Santa Fe Trail trade from Independence, Missouri, while establishing a growing trade with the Native Americans in the area. Leavenworth’s foundations emerged from the push of settlement following the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. Leavenworth developed a hinterland based upon the lucrative trade from the surrounding military fort, Fort Leavenworth. Additionally, the town became an important destination because of trails that led west.

The next chapter follows Kansas City and Leavenworth through the 1850s as each town formed a system of paper railroads. The elites of each city established paper railroads to gather funding to build railroad beds that might attract future railroads. Throughout the period, both towns prospered with the expansion of trade along the Santa Fe and Smoky Hill Trails, but the struggle over slavery in Kansas threatened the commerce of both towns. The chapter illustrates the differences in the unification of boosters in Leavenworth compared to those in Kansas City. Kansas City’s formation of the Chamber
of Commerce, which controlled the city council, solidified the citizenry into expanding business and railroads. Leavenworth failed to establish such an organization and often experienced divisions based upon slavery and each faction’s proper course of expansion. The chapter also describes the emergence of two railroads, the Missouri Pacific, and the Hannibal and St Joseph. These two Missouri railroads were pivotal in connecting Eastern interests with Western trade. With construction of both the Hannibal and St. Joseph and the Missouri Pacific nearing the western portion of Missouri, both Leavenworth and Kansas City acted to secure a connection to the lines.

The final chapter explores the Civil War and the impact upon the Missouri Valley. The widespread guerrilla warfare of Missouri threatened both the unity and economic dominance of Kansas City, causing Leavenworth to emerge as the leader of trade and population in the area. The chapter analyzes the importance of the Chamber of Commerce’s actions to secure the terminus of the Missouri Pacific, combined with the beginning of a transcontinental railroad that placed Kansas City at the junction of two major roads. Additionally, the Civil War’s impact upon Kansas City promoted further unity in the city and the determination to revive the economy of the once great city. The Civil War pushed out key opponents of railroad expansion long enough to enact legislation that established Kansas City as the Missouri Pacific’s western terminus.

The final chapter also explores the involvement and motivations of James F. Joy who relied on railroad expansion to generate profits and invested in not only Kansas City property, but also vast acreage of Cherokee lands in southern Kansas. Contrary to the myth, Joy possessed more knowledge and experience with Leavenworth and Kansas City than he is given credit for. Despite Leavenworth’s larger population and superior
economy, the failures and fragmentation of the boosters in the city, and Leavenworth’s inferior geographic location, caused Joy and other railroad investors to pass the city over. Kansas City’s superior geographic position and ability to incorporate smaller towns played an important role in the city’s fortunes rising above Leavenworth.

Most histories of Kansas City explain the growth of the city as a byproduct of the successful campaign for the construction of the Hannibal Bridge across the Missouri River. The emphasis of the bridge neglects the importance of fifteen years of efforts by the Chamber of Commerce and city elites in securing pre-existing railroad connections that attracted the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. By overlooking the Chamber of Commerce’s efforts, the importance of unity among businessmen and elites in Kansas City and Leavenworth becomes secondary to swift actions by Robert T. Van Horn. Additionally, Kansas City’s geographic position allowed the city to attract bridge construction by establishing lucrative railroads that did not require river crossings. Historians assign the catalyst for the success as fate, luck, or the dealings of the Chamber of Commerce. In fact Kansas City’s victory over Leavenworth can be attributed to the efforts of the city’s elites, the failures of Leavenworth, and the financial interest of James F. Joy.
Chapter 2: A Great City Every Three-Hundred Miles: City Growth in The Missouri Valley, 1820-1859

Where the Missouri, after running its southward course for nearly two thousand miles, turns eastward to the Mississippi, a large commercial manufacturing community will congregate, and less than a generation will see a great city on these hills.

-Thomas Hart Benton, 1853.¹

While settlement of the eastern regions of Missouri started in the early eighteenth century, major settlements along the Missouri River in the West did not begin until the mid-nineteenth century. Cities like Kansas City, St. Joseph, and Weston began as resupply points for settlers heading westward.² As the population of these river cities grew due to increased traffic and economic activity, civic pride led townspeople to promote their cities’ potential and place investments in the future of their city. During the mid-nineteenth century, the people of the Missouri Valley believed that great cities grew every three hundred miles. As St. Louis dominated the eastern side of Missouri, the small villages and towns along the Missouri River, nearly three hundred miles from St. Louis, fought for dominance and the opportunity to emerge as the next great metropolis.

Geography largely influenced the founding of these towns throughout the Missouri Valley. The initial settlers, the Kanzas Indians, found good trapping and hunting opportunities in the region.³ Blessed with natural geography, the area connected to both

¹ A wide variety of sources exists for this popular Senator Benton speech. The one chosen for this work is William Keuenhof, “Catholic Church Annals of Kansas City (1800-1857),” Catholic Historical Review 3, no. 3 (October 1917): 335.


the Missouri River and the Kaw River and provided access to the large fur market in St. Louis. The Kanzas tribe profited from trading pelts with the French traders who built settlements throughout the region in order to facilitate trade with the tribes. At some point in the late-eighteenth century, most likely due to encroaching Sac or Iowan tribes, many Kanzas tribe members removed themselves from the area and migrated further south along the Kansas River, near present day Manhattan, Kansas. Lewis and Clark reported discovering French ruins along the rumored spot of the Kanzas village on the banks of the Missouri in 1804.

Despite initially abandoning the area, French traders resumed activity shortly after the beginning of the nineteenth century. Trade flourished and pockets of settlements around the Missouri and Platte Rivers sparkled with activity, but American settlement remained sparse in the Missouri Valley. With Mexican independence in 1821 and the lifting of trade sanctions, the establishment of trade with Santa Fe by William Becknell in 1821 greatly influenced development and trade in the Missouri Valley. The Missouri Valley, with its connection to both the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, served as the eastern terminus for Santa Fe Trail trade because of the ability of traders to ship their

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4 Kaw River and Kansas City River are interchangeable. Early spelling of the tribe is debated throughout history, some spellings area Canceas, Canzas, Kanzon. The popularly accepted spelling of Kanzas, which transformed into the modern Kansas, first appeared in 1854 when Edward Hale wrote, “An Account of Emigrant Aid, Companies, and Directions to Emigrants.” See Edward E. Hale, *Kansas and Nebraska: The History, Geographical and Physical Characteristics, and Political Position of Those Territories: An Account of the Emigrant Aid Companies, and Directions to Emigrants* (Boston, MA: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1854), 5, 54-55.

goods along the rivers. With valuable goods coming from St. Louis, trade along the route to the Santa Fe Trail flourished and settlements began to spring up.⁶

While the importance of trade along the Santa Fe Trail increased in the mid-1820s, issues with Native Americans along the frontier area of Western Missouri persisted. Starting in 1825, the Osage and Kanzas tribes agreed to treaties with the federal government that traded their lands in Western Missouri in exchange for an unsettled reservation in Kansas. Increasing tribal warfare and threats to new white frontier settlement forced the United States government to reevaluate the frontier defense system. In late 1825, three forts protected new settlements along the Missouri River in the West: Fort Snelling, Fort Atkinson, and Jefferson Barracks. As the boundary of the frontier spread westward, the ability of these forts to respond to threats against settlers diminished. In 1827, Colonel Henry Leavenworth received orders to march westward and established a new fort to along the Missouri River. The site he chose became Cantonment Leavenworth or Fort Leavenworth.⁷

Following Fort Leavenworth’s establishment in 1827, trade along the Santa Fe Trail increased and settlement along the Missouri River grew, but in 1848, the discovery of gold in Sutter’s Mill, California, caused an explosion of traffic through the area. Individuals looking for new opportunity traveled the California Trail and the Oregon Trail through cities in Western Missouri. With the influx of travelers looking to outfit for the long journey, and the expansion of trade with Mexico through the Santa Fe Trail,


⁷ Hall, 2-3, 7-9.
townships expanded their merchandise operations in order to serve as emporiums for both of these needs. Initially, the defining cities of the trails were Franklin and Independence, but the expansion of settlement in these areas pushed the boundary and the last outpost of trade further west.8

As Fort Leavenworth protected the traders along the Santa Fe Trail, the settlers in west Missouri, and those traveling west toward California, settlers flocked to the fort for both protection and business. Settlement in Kansas territory did not officially take place until the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill on May 30, 1854.9 Upon enactment of the bill, Senator David Atchison, a Missouri resident, immediately telegraphed his companions and business associates in Missouri and instructed them to “go over and take possession of the good land,” which the men wasted little time in procuring.10 While crowds of settlers came to Kansas for their chance to stake arable land, the businessmen in Missouri plotted future town sites.11

Before the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, squatters had already claimed nearly every inch of Kansas land that was not part of the Indian Reservations.12

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8 Gregg, 34-35.

9 The Kansas-Nebraska Act called for popular sovereignty in regards to the issue of slavery in the new territory of Kansas. The act divided settlers in the territory, encouraging squatters from both pro-slavery and anti-slavery groups to settle and establish town sites to influence the future of slavery in the area.

10 Henry Miles Moore, Early History of Leavenworth City and County: Also an Appendix Containing a List of the Lawyers, with a Sketch of Each, of the First Judicial District, and Who Signed the Roll of Attorneys from 1855 to the Admission of the State (Leavenworth, KS: Sam’l Dodsworth Book Company, 1906), 18.


12 Those writing the town history of Leavenworth during this period are unsure of the total expanse of squatter’s territory. There exists a good chance that the squatters did claim Delaware Indian land and worked with Indian Commission agents to transfer the land. See Moore, 41, 92-93.
On May 9, 1854, a large group of anti-slavery squatters assembled in Kansas, two miles from Fort Leavenworth, to discuss future settlements and business. Out of the meeting, the Leavenworth Town Company emerged as an informal organization with an agreement signed in June 1854. After an allocation of shares and properties divided between the members, the company laid out lots and sold them to interested parties. The leaders of the town company decided to name the settlement Leavenworth after the nearby Fort Leavenworth, partly because of the name’s potential appeal to future settlers by associating the town with the imposing fort.\textsuperscript{13}

By August of 1854, free-state settlers chose to make Leavenworth home. The Leavenworth Town Company formulated rules to facilitate city growth, but also to allow the company leaders to control final judgment of who settled the area and what businesses could operate in the county. After signing treaties with the local Kickapoo and Delaware tribes, the Leavenworth Town Company continued to expand and began to offer its lands at public auction.\textsuperscript{14} The first public auction in early October brought an overwhelming response to available land in both the county and town.\textsuperscript{15} Shortly after the land auction, the territorial government of Kansas officially incorporated Leavenworth in

\textsuperscript{13} Moore, 30-31.

\textsuperscript{14} Leavenworth history is divisive on the issue of its ideology during the Bleeding Kansas period. While the initial merchants claimed to meet under the guises of anti-slavery, most of them came from Weston, Missouri, a predominately pro-slavery town. Additionally, Leavenworth was site of the formation of the Law and Order Society, which advocate against abolition. See George W. Martin, “The First Two Years of Kansas,” in Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society (Topeka, KS: State Printing Office, 1908), 133; The Kansas herald of Freedom, October 21, 1854.

\textsuperscript{15} Some of the highest price lots on Main Street sold for over $7,000 while the lower priced periphery lots sold for $50. See Hall and Hand, 117; Moore, 47.
1855. With a population nearing one-thousand and several key businesses, Leavenworth became both the first county and city in Kansas Territory.¹⁶

![Map of Missouri from 1856, showing the locations of Leavenworth, Kansas City, Westport, and Independence.¹⁷](image)

Kansas City’s development, like Leavenworth’s, was tied heavily to the lucrative commerce that the Santa Fe Trail produced. Initial development in the area occurred in 1799 when fur traders involved in the St. Louis trade established a post just south of St. Joseph Missouri.¹⁸ St. Louis’ principle trade revolved around beaver fur for over fifty

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¹⁶ Moore, 55-58, 52-43, 38.


¹⁸ For simplicity, all references to the Town of Kansas or the City of Kansas in this thesis will be marked as Kansas City. The settlement originally was referred to as Kansas, but became the Town of Kansas in 1838 after being officially organized by the Kansas Town Company. The City was officially platted in 1853 with the Missouri government and became the City of Kansas after incorporation by the state. Finally, in 1889 the city adopted a new charter and changed its name to Kansas City.
years. In the beginning of the 1810s, the founding of the Montreal Fur Company and the entrance of the Hudson Bay Company into Missouri Valley territory threatened the established resource market of the Missouri Fur Company. As more companies emerged, they sought to expand northwest through the Rocky Mountains to find prime beaver trapping ground. After a series of misfortunes and business blunders in 1813, the Missouri Fur Company merged with the American Fur Company.

After merging with the Missouri Fur Company, the American Fur Company sent agents throughout the West to consolidate trading posts and root out independent traders. The agent responsible for the Missouri Valley, Jean Pierre Chouteau Jr., convinced independent traders throughout the Missouri Valley to work for the American Fur Company. Additionally, Pierre Chouteau established new trading posts on both sides of the Missouri River in the modern Kansas City area. Pierre Chouteau had vast experience with the Native Americans throughout the area, most of which he gained through his father’s extensive dealings and negotiations with the various tribes. The Chouteau family had established a lucrative trade network under French authorization when France still controlled the territory. With vast experience at hand, Pierre Chouteau successfully reeled in many independent traders and strengthened the fur network of St. Louis.

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19 Miller, 7-9.

20 Additionally, the War of 1812 had a disastrous impact upon the fur trade. Native American tribes allied with the British attacked many fur traders throughout the conflict. For more info, see Spencer C. Tucker, The Encyclopedia of the War of 1812 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 15; Eric Jay Dolin, Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 268; Miller, 9.

By 1819, the merger between the American Fur Company and the Missouri Fur
Company experienced problems, as many of the influential traders behind the creation of
the Missouri Fur Company reorganized under the leadership of Manuel Lisa.\textsuperscript{22} Despite
reorganization of the Missouri Fur Company, some Chouteaus remained with the
American Fur Company. In 1821, the American Fur Company, seeking to expand its
territory throughout the Missouri Valley, tasked Pierre Chouteau’s half-brother Francois
Chouteau with establishing a central agency in the area to oversee trade. Francois
Chouteau, picked a natural landing along the mouth of the Kaw and Missouri Rivers,
with quick river access, and an easy connection to the nearby Osage, Neosho, and
Arkansas Valleys. While the settlement slowly grew, Francois Chouteau established the
roots of Kansas City by recognizing the natural benefits of the geographic location
between two rivers.\textsuperscript{23}

Kansas City in its earliest origins served as an outpost for the fur industry, but as
pioneers expanded westward toward Chouteau’s outpost and the Missouri River other
settlements along the Missouri River began to grow. In 1827, settlers looking to establish
a trading settlement along the Missouri River founded Independence. Independence
dominated trade in the area and served as the western border of what people considered
civilization.\textsuperscript{24} John McCoy and James McGee, two important individuals who shaped the
early history of Kansas City, found their way to west Missouri through Independence.

\textsuperscript{22} Michael P. Malone, \textit{Montana: A History of Two Centuries} (Seattle, WA: University of

\textsuperscript{23} Lawrence O. Christensen, \textit{Dictionary of Missouri Biography} (Columbia, MO: University of

\textsuperscript{24} Carrie Westlake Whitney, \textit{Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People 1808-1908}
(Chicago: S. J. Clarke publishing Company, 1908), 33-37.
While Independence proved highly successful, conflict between Protestant settlers and Church of the Latter-Day Saints members produced a series of town disturbances from 1830 to 1831. As business in Independence suffered from divisions within the community, Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy ventured into new territory. McCoy claimed a parcel of land along the Missouri River, opposite the Missouri border in Indian territory, just south of Chouteau’s outpost. Isaac, a Native American sympathizer, established a mission with the goal of converting the tribes in the area, while also providing for their well-being. Isaac stayed busy with his mission, but his son John McCoy purchased the adjacent lot across the river on the Missouri side, divided the land, and established a store in 1833. John McCoy called his location Westport because it was the most western port in the state.

James McGee, who in 1827, arrived in Missouri from Kentucky with his family and purchased over two hundred acres near Chouteau’s outpost. The previous owners of the land had already built a mill and distillery, which McGee immediately used to his advantage. McGee obtained a lucrative contract from the United States Government to

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26 While sources on the interaction between Isaac McCoy and the Mormons of Independence are scarce, one particular account suggests that Isaac led a band of marauders against the Mormons. See Parley Parker Pratt, The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Embracing His Life, Ministry and Travels, with Extracts, in Prose and Verse, from His Miscellaneous Writings (New York: Russell Brothers, 1874), 108. Additionally, McCoy published an account in the Fayette, Missouri’s Western Monitor, December 6, 1833.

27 Initially, the Osage Tribe and the Sac and the Fox dominated the area, but following the Treaty of Fort Clark in 1808, the tribes ceded all lands in the area. Formerly, two of the most powerful tribes in Missouri, both tribes relocated across the border into Indian Territory (modern Kansas). After the Indian Removal Act of 1830, many tribes traditionally situated in the East, moved to the West, just across the border of Missouri. The fate of early Kansas City and Westport, strongly rested on the economic stimulus that the Native Americans provided. For more information, see Michael John O’Brien, The Prehistory of Missouri (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 353-356; Miller, 17-20, 31, 112.

28 Whitney, 60.
grind flour for the relocated tribes in the area. Additionally, McGee also began to produce some of the best whiskey in the area. While native tribes had already dealt with fur traders in the area, the introduction of milled flour brought more Native American business to Chouteau’s Landing.29

Independence towered over Westport in trade during the 1830s, but slowly the Mexican traders who traveled along the Santa Fe began to lodge at Westport to await their shipment of goods from Blue Mills and Wayne City, the shipping hubs of Independence.30 With closer proximity to the Missouri River and a better location to oversee and graze livestock, the popularity of Westport grew rapidly and threatened the dominance of Independence.31 In addition to the trade of the Santa Fe, the already developed fur trade in the area fueled the development of Westport.32

In the mid-1830s, the trade along the Santa Fe Trail quadrupled from previous levels.33 As the tradition of traders along the Santa Fe Trail lodging at Westport continued, so did the desire to find a closer landing than Blue Mill, located several miles


30 Independence’s landing experienced a severe flood in 1828 that destroyed much of the city’s natural port. The tradition of taking shipments at Blue Mill or Wayne City, within three miles of Independence begins and continues during this period. See Jack DeVeré Rittenhouse, The Santa Fe Trail: A Historical Bibliography (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 14.


32 Miller, 12-14.

33 More wagons and men began to travel in 1833 than ever before. See Gregg, 160.
east through dense wooded forests. Additionally, the trek to the shipping hubs in Independence required a crossing of the Blue River, which seasonally flooded and blocked traffic. In 1838, traders began to use the landing outside of Francois Chouteau’s warehouse, just four miles north of Westport. Located at the junction of the Kaw and Missouri River, the landing with its natural rock shelf that rose above the river provided a superior port than Blue Mills or Wayne City.

The natural landing further stimulated trade between the booming Westport and Independence and led to the establishment of the settlement of Kansas City. The landing area belonged to the estate of frontiersman Gabriel Prudhomme who died in 1831. Following Prudhomme’s death, his widow and his son administered his property. Due to the growing popularity of the newly discovered rock landing, locally referred to as the levee, a group of individuals organized themselves as the Kansas Town Company to purchase the estate and establish a new settlement in 1838.

Just as John McCoy established the city of Westport, he organized and led the company that founded Kansas City. The settlement, located a mere three miles from Westport, expanded rapidly from its designation as the shipping terminal of Westport. Within a year of the purchase, the Kansas Town Company surveyed the land and sold lots to interested buyers. Additionally, at Francois Chouteau’s old warehouse, the company

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34 *Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas: Historical and Biographical*, 469.


36 Miller, 28-30.


38 Haskell and Fowler, 26-27.
expanded McCoy’s initial road by connecting Westport and Independence. The establishment of a road to connect the settlement with both Westport and Independence established the seeds of future growth for Kansas City.39

An estimated population of four hundred claimed Kansas City as their home in the early 1830s. Trade depended on goods exchanged through the Santa Fe Trail and the fur trade centered in St. Louis. While development stagnated in the mid-1830s, the town began to establish new businesses and enterprises with a resurvey and new lots established in the late 1830s.40 New sources of business served as the impetus for a boom in Kansas City. Settlers traveling to the newly incorporated Missouri lands that accompanied the Platte Purchase used Westport and Kansas City as a starting point and a supply station. Additionally, interest from traders and settlers along the Oregon Trail increased economic activity in Kansas City.

In addition to the new sources of economic activity, the traditional industry of Westport, Native American trade expanded during the late 1830s and early 1840s.41 With over ninety thousand Native Americans living across the river, and each tribe receiving annuity payments from the government for their relocation, trade in Westport and Kansas City prospered.42 For many people passing through Westport and Kansas City, the site of hundreds of Indian traders walking through the streets was shocking.43

39 Miller, 41-42.
40 Spalding, 17.
41 Haskell and Fowler, 28.
42 The predominant tribes that traded in Kansas City were: Delawares, Kaws, Kickapoos, Osages, Pottowatomies, Weas, Stockbridges, and Peorias. See Miller, 31.
43 Alexander Majors, Seventy Years on the Frontier: Alexander Major’s Memoirs of a Lifetime on the Border (Chicago: Rand, McNally, 1893), 28-31; Spalding, 20; Miller, 387.
Growth in Kansas City stagnated from 1838-1846, following the Panic of 1837. Additionally, the fur trade that fueled early commerce began to buckle under the pressure of extreme competition and the reemergence of independents trappers.\textsuperscript{44} Besides troubles with the depression and fur trade, Kansas City trade also suffered because of the suspension of Mexican trade along the Santa Fe Trail by General Santa Anna in 1843. Additionally, a series of floods struck the town and washed away a portion of the levee in 1843 and again in 1844, causing financial loss and a delay of commerce.\textsuperscript{45}

While Kansas City benefitted from the shipments of goods that came through the town, most of the area’s business still took place in nearby Westport. The resumption of Santa Fe Trade in 1845 and the outbreak of the Mexican-American War in 1846 prompted new channels of business and people to both Westport and Kansas City. Westport served as a supply point for army movements as American forces traveled south and to Fort Leavenworth. Despite Westport’s prominence, Kansas City nearly doubled in population from the growth that came from the war, reaching over eight hundred citizens, dozens of businesses, three warehouses, and a brickyard.\textsuperscript{46}

Despite the steady growth of Kansas City, the citizens of Westport and Independence considered Kansas City a minor outpost. Traders in both cities referred to the settlement as Westport’s Landing, to designate its secondary nature as a simple dock for the real boom town of Westport.\textsuperscript{47} While both cities profited from the emigrants

\textsuperscript{44} Andrew Theodore Brown, \textit{Frontier Community, Kansas City to 1870} (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1963), 47-48.

\textsuperscript{45} Miller, 27-29, 31-34, 213.

\textsuperscript{46} Spalding, 18-19; Miller, 33.

\textsuperscript{47} Miller, 30.
passing through the area on the way to California in 1849, Westport benefitted more. The increase in trade and population by settlers who stayed behind, and the establishment of new enterprises to outfit emigrants brought expansion to Westport and inadvertently to Kansas City.48

The relationship between Westport and Kansas City beginning in the late 1830s was one of interdependence. John McCoy himself referred to Kansas City as a “colony of Westport.” While settlers had assigned the pejorative “Westport Landing” to Kansas City, the cities needed each other. Rarely, at any point throughout their history did either Kansas City or Westport consider each other competition; instead, the two recognized Independence as the main competitor in the area, with Weston representing a minor threat as the once great city, began to decline in the 1850s.49

In 1849, calamity struck Westport and Kansas City: an outbreak of Asiatic cholera, which claimed many residents’ lives and pushed settlers away from the cities. Both Westport and Kansas City suffered from these outbreaks, and by 1850 Westport declined to nearly four thousand residents while Kansas City’s population dropped to five hundred.50 After the epidemic subsided, a period of prosperity for both Westport and Kansas City resumed as trade from the Santa Fe Trail increasingly shifted to Westport. Merchant brothers W. G. and G.W. Ewing, who owned a warehouse in Kansas City, acquired a government contract to carry government freight to Santa Fe. Additionally, traders along the Santa Fe Trail continued to abandon shipping through Blue Mill and

48 Spalding, 19.
49 Brown, 61.
50 Total population numbers for Kansas City and Westport from this period are difficult to obtain, but sources indicate that both cities lost a great deal of population. See Miller, 43-45.
utilized the landing in Kansas City instead.\textsuperscript{51} By the end of 1850, businesses began to flock to the levee in Kansas City and scheduled wagon trains began to both arrive and exit directly from the city, omitting Westport altogether.\textsuperscript{52}

While the number of businesses expanded in Kansas City, the population still suffered from the lingering cholera epidemic of 1849. As development accelerated in the city, enterprising businessmen attempted to booster their city in order to attract business and settlers. As businesses multiplied in Kansas City and more settlers flocked to engage in trade, William Gilliss and Benoist Troost established the first hotel in Kansas City. On the surface, the enterprising businessmen used the hotel to lodge guests coming into the city, but the primary goal of such a fancy establishment was to showcase the beauty and splendor of Kansas City.\textsuperscript{53}

With an expansive hotel built to impress future investors, the city then attracted a newspaper. In 1851, Robert Kennedy moved from Independence and established the \textit{Kansas Public Ledger}. The early issues focused on the California and Oregon emigrants, advertising the less strenuous and safer routes. The paper also offered Kansas City as the most logical and convenient stop for those making the arduous trek to the West. While the \textit{Kansas Public Ledger} was a short-lived operation, the legacy of the public relations and necessity to booster the town made itself apparent.\textsuperscript{54}

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\textsuperscript{51} Bernard, 556-559. \\
\textsuperscript{52} Majors, 128. \\
\textsuperscript{54} Brown, 64-67; Miller, 50. 
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Despite the desires of boosters to facilitate city growth, Kansas City faced inherent problems hindering expansion. Most of the large city magnates purchased the prime lots in the initial land auctions of the 1840s, leaving a majority of land situated on bluffs or large ravines. While much work had been done to improve roads connecting to Westport and Independence, geographical pitfalls loomed over future city expansion. In order to facilitate expansion, the early city leaders had to cut streets through extreme obstacles, often up to twelve feet grades.55

With the goal of expansion and city building on the minds of prominent businessmen throughout Kansas City, the next goal was official municipal organization. Until this point, Kansas City existed as a mere settlement under the charter of the Kansas Town Company filed in 1838. In 1849, the merchants and businessmen of Kansas City had the city’s boundaries established through the government of Jackson County, but a possible disagreement with Jackson County officials regarding the jurisdiction of town police may have pushed Kansas City to seek incorporation by the state.56

Kansas City historians of the period debate exactly what stimulated the need for incorporation. Milton J. Payne, former mayor of Kansas City from 1855 to 1862, believed that the organization of Native Americans who pushed for the establishment of the Nebraska Territory caused the forward thinking men of Kansas City to rally for official incorporation. These progressive minds sensed that the development of new


56 Charles L. Shannon, Rees Turpin, and George Kingsley, Charter and Devised Ordinances of Kansas City 1909 (Kansas City, MO: Frank T. Riley Publishing Company, 1909), 13; Carrie Westlake Whitney suggests this disagreement was the impetus for the incorporation of Kansas City under Missouri government. Animosity did exist between Independence, Jackson County’s seat and Kansas City. The first group of trustees that Kansas City sent to be approved by the Jackson County courts did not qualify, (most likely under a residential clause) which may have furthered the animosity between the two towns. See Whitney, 672.
territories and the expansion of settlement in the Kansas Territory left an opening for a new city in the Missouri Valley to emerge as the supplier and great metropolis of trade.\textsuperscript{57}

Through a special act in early 1853, the Missouri State Legislature offered the citizens of Kansas City a town charter, which the citizens approved on March 28, 1853. After electing city officials, the need for political organization and effective taxation became a priority for the city. The only governmental revenue generated during the years of county authorized government had been under duties collected by the Levee Master. Private business owners and magnates initiated most of the improvements to town infrastructure. In order to create inhabitable lots for settlement, proper tax organization and the hiring of a city engineer to design a metropolis became of utmost importance. Despite the progressive growth of the city and trade, the town’s government remained highly unprofessional and unmotivated until 1855.\textsuperscript{58}

For Kansas City, periods of unpronounced growth occurred starting in late-1854 and early 1855. The Kansas-Nebraska Bill stimulated massive growth and trade for Kansas City. In just the immediate year, the Kansas City businessmen calculated a sixty percent rise in trade due to the influx of the emigrants settling in the territory. Kansas City contained just over seven hundred residents at the time of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill’s enactment; with such an impetus, the number doubled by the end of 1855.\textsuperscript{59}

While Kansas City had an established history by 1854, Leavenworth’s sudden establishment and success took the Missouri Valley by storm. Leavenworth lacked the

\textsuperscript{57} Brown, 80-81.

\textsuperscript{58} Brown, 84-86.

\textsuperscript{59} The overall estimated trade potential for the area was $5,100,000, of which Kansas City obtained an estimated $1,200,000. With the opening of the Kansas Territory for settlement in 1854, the estimated annual revenue was $700,000 in the first year. See Spalding, 22-25.
natural levee of Kansas City to serve as the nucleus of trade, but Leavenworth did not have the impeding bluffs of Kansas City that hindered expansion. Additionally, the city expanded rapidly due to the large tracts of land that the Delaware tribe ceded to the federal government.60 The fierce competition between pro-slavery and anti-slavery parties fueled the population growth of Kansas and brought prominence to Leavenworth as the first established town.61

The nearby location of Fort Leavenworth afforded Leavenworth many advantages that enabled such rapid growth. During the early 1830s, commanders at Fort Leavenworth ordered the establishment of trails and routes to nearby trading posts for protective and resupply purposes. After Leavenworth’s informal establishment in 1854, the city utilized these already connected roads to major settlements in Kansas. As one of the first towns in Kansas, and located directly on the river, the initial infrastructure established by the military gave Leavenworth an economic advantage over any settlement along the Missouri River.62

Within six months of Leavenworth’s establishment, residents built over one hundred structures. In short order, four hundred settlers called themselves citizens of Leavenworth. The town’s strategic location by Fort Leavenworth provided an economic push for business owners and the impetus for new ventures. After the Mexican-American

60 President Pierce proclaimed this acreage should be divided and established in lots and sold at auction in 1856, but after some controversy, the lands did not get officially sold until 1857. Initially, the squatters and some residents were promised land at appraised value. At this point, Leavenworth city proper limits consisted of over 320 acres, owned by the town company. See William Cutler, History of the State of Kansas: Containing a Full Account of Its Growth from an Uninhabited Territory to a Wealthy and Important State... Also, a Supplementary History and Description of Its Counties, Cities, Towns, and Villages (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), 421-424; Hall and Hand, 102-103.

61 See William Cutler, History of the State of Kansas, 418-425, 144.

62 Hall and Hand, 167.
War, the United States government established a series of forts in New Mexico Territory. Fort Leavenworth served as the shipping hub for supplies sent along the route. In 1855, the firm of Majors, Russell & Waddell opened the Government Overland Transportation Company. The United States awarded the company an extended two-year military shipping contract to manage the supplies for outposts along the Santa Fe Trail. After a series of successes handling the government’s shipping needs, the firm diversified into commercial operations handling merchant freight along the Santa Fe Trail.63

In the summer of 1855, the territorial Kansas government offered Leavenworth a town charter, which the citizens officially approved. Within two years of Leavenworth’s incorporation, the town gained notoriety as the starting point for trails heading to California and Utah. Within the year, additional firms established freight lines, including the Kansas Stagecoach Company, which linked Leavenworth to Lawrence and Kansas City. Leavenworth quickly accomplished what took Kansas City over twenty years to achieve: prosperity.64

Like Kansas City, Leavenworth businessmen worked to establish a newspaper to booster their growing town and to convince others about the potential and merits of the city. By July 1855, Archibald M. Sevier published the city’s first paper The Kansas Territorial Register, advocating the merits of free-staters and the prosperous nature of Leavenworth. Like Kansas City’s first newspaper The Kansas Public Ledger,

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63 Majors, 140,141; Cutler, 53, 376; George W. Martin, “A Chapter From the Archives,” in Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, ed. George W. Martin (Topeka, KS: State Printing Office, 1912), 364.

64 Moore, 120.
Leavenworth’s paper lasted but a short time, closing down by late December 1855. The Kansas Territorial Register’s demise is indicative of the inherent problems that Leavenworth faced during its infancy. Settlement by both pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions caused bitter conflict and violent outbursts that threatened successful business and city growth.

Despite the conflict between factions, business continued to thrive. The population in Leavenworth by 1858 was double that of Kansas City. Unfortunately, two potentially fatal challenges to Leavenworth’s phenomenal prosperity also occurred in 1858. In July 1858, a fire in the downtown business district destroyed many of the businesses. While the disaster interrupted business for a short period, the town rebuilt, but with brick instead of cottonwood. Additionally, the new construction also spawned a wide array of town projects, such as the establishment of a new courthouse and the grading of much of the downtown streets.

In addition to the fire that ravaged Leavenworth, the effects of the Panic of 1857 reached the Missouri Valley in 1858. The booming construction in Leavenworth subsided and the growth of new industries stalled. Many of the long distance freighting companies,

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65 The Kansas Territorial Register’s office was raided by Kickapoo Rangers, a band of pro-slavery supporters out of Kickapoo City, also in Leavenworth County. For more information see Hall and Hand, 275.


67 The population of Leavenworth in 1857 is recorded at five thousand and the 1858 population is recorded at ten thousand. The number is up to debate, but the population of Kansas City still lagged behind.

68 Moore, 222-224; Miller, 65.
like Russell, Majors & Waddell, faced massive losses and bankruptcy. In late 1859, as
the rumors of gold found at Pikes Peak began to circulate the country, both Kansas City
and Leavenworth experienced a boom due to the increased business coming through the
towns. Over 100,000 people left their homes and headed to the mountains to find their
fortunes. While Kansas City served as the starting point for those willing to take the
Santa Fe route, Leavenworth sat upon the Smokey Trail, a shorter, less treacherous route
to the gold.

Kansas City began as a small trading outpost for the fur trade of St. Louis, but by
the end of the 1850s had transformed into a bustling competitive city. Throughout the
1850s, Kansas City remained the preferred starting point of the profitable Santa Fe Trail,
but the withdrawal of the Native Americans from the border of Missouri and the
emergence of multiple townships in Kansas, threatened the trade market of Kansas City.
In addition to these new townships in Kansas, cities like Weston, St. Joseph, and
Westport remained lucrative and vibrant. For the average businessman in Kansas City,
the popular prophecy championed by Missouri senator Thomas Hart Benton that a great
city would grow every three-hundred miles and that Kansas City would emerge as a great
metropolis seemed unbelievable.

While Kansas City’s origins began in the early nineteenth century, with the
lucrative trade at the confluence of the rivers, Leavenworth emerged from the
commercial needs of Fort Leavenworth. Before 1854, the site of Leavenworth, situated

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69 The Panic of 1857 did not treat the firm of Russell & Waddell well, but a near tipping point
came with the loss of a majority of goods on a shipment to Utah during the Mormon War in 1857. See

70 Howard Roberts Lamar, *The Far Southwest, 1846-1912: A Territorial History* (Albuquerque,
only two miles south of the fort, consisted of just a few merchants and traders. Following the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, Leavenworth’s economy and population expanded because of its geographic location as an entryway for those entering Kansas to settle or migrate further west.

By the end of the 1850s, Leavenworth surpassed Kansas City in population, but Kansas City remained the leader in freighting throughout the region. While Kansas City appeared to be dormant during the last years of the decade, the city expanded with a new district called McGee’s addition, which E.M. McGee surveyed and sold lots at reasonable prices to those who wished to settle in Kansas. However, Kansas City began to lose control of the commerce of the Kansas Territory due to better transportation routes through Leavenworth. As the 1850s ended, the businessmen of both Kansas City and Leavenworth, recognized the developing competition between each city. In response to the need for organization of trade, merchants in Kansas City established the Chamber of Commerce, an informal organization to regulate prices and push for the expansion of Kansas City and its trade.71

The prospect of the 1860s held great tidings for cities in the Missouri Valley. Each city expected to expand both geographically and economically. The increasing settlement of western territories brought a new source of income for each city, but Leavenworth and Kansas City had to face two important trials before courting the iron horse, the Civil War and the powerful Missouri River. How each city overcame these

obstacles was an important factor in the development of the great metropolis of the plains.
Chapter 3: The Railroad Comes to Town: Expansion of Railroads to the Missouri Valley in the Antebellum Era

*I cannot think that railroads and canals are mere daydreams.*
- Senator Lewis F. Linn

In the early 1830s, fascination grew within the United States with the new technology of the railroad. As railroad construction progressed throughout the East, the growing cities of the Plains looked to the railroads as the future of commerce. In Missouri, a group of delegates met in St. Louis on April 20, 1836, to discuss the future of railroads in Missouri and the benefits of such a network of railroads. Despite the enormous costs of constructing long railroads, the delegation agreed that three major roads should extend from St. Louis and cover the directions west and north. To assist with the construction of these railroads the delegation recommended distribution of a state grant in the sum of ten million dollars and land grants to assist with the costs. Following the recommendations of the delegation and the growing popularity of the railroad, the Missouri State Legislature authorized the incorporation of multiple railroads throughout sessions in 1836-1837. While these projects failed to raise the needed capital,
and the Panic of 1837 caused momentary delays on any new construction, railroad fever cemented itself in Missouri.\(^5\)

The St. Louis railroad delegation of 1836 represented the desire of citizens of Missouri to establish a series of rail lines, but construction did not begin for a time. In 1849, a delegation met once again in St. Louis to discuss railroads in Missouri, and also to champion a line to cross the United States to San Francisco.\(^6\) While the significant act of the 1849 delegation was the consensus of state officials to authorize a charter for the Missouri Pacific Railroad, the display of railroad fever demonstrates the growing railroad mania that consumed Missouri. The 1849 convention also represents a transition from the desire of short railroads designed to connect cities short distances from one another to massive lines that stretched statewide.\(^7\)

In addition to the excitement generated by the St. Louis Delegation of 1849, on March 3, 1853, Congress appropriated a set of funds to Secretary of War Jefferson Davis to commission a series of surveys to establish the most economically feasible route to

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\(^6\) Railroad delegations like this met all throughout the United States during this period. The first one located in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1845 while the second major one located in Chicago met in 1847. The delegations mostly served the same purpose, to generate enough railroad interest in the state to motivate businessmen to establish funding to improve the infrastructure of the state. See Robert Edgar Riegel, *The Story of the Western Railroads: From 1852 Through the Reign of the Giants*. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 19.

establish a railroad across the United States.\textsuperscript{8} Of the five completed railroad surveys, the United States government considered the Central Pacific route, starting at St. Louis, through Kansas City, to San Francisco, California. While the construction of such a transcontinental railroad faced years of difficulties and expenses, the act of searching for legitimate routes generated a buzz throughout the United States. Merchants throughout cities in the Missouri Valley looked to the proposed route as a necessity of survival, each advocating the benefits of their chosen location.\textsuperscript{9}

At the close of the 1850s, businessmen in Kansas City believed that the rapid development of Leavenworth and the government’s construction of a detailed system of roads around Leavenworth, threatened Kansas City’s position as the rising city of the Missouri Valley.\textsuperscript{10} The population of Leavenworth more than doubled Kansas City’s and the rapid commerce of the trails outside of Leavenworth threatened the superior freighting industry of Kansas City.\textsuperscript{11} As the prospect of a railroad across the nation and railroads from the East reached western Missouri, enterprising men from both cities campaigned to entice the citizens in each city to believe in the destiny of a rail line. In addition to selling the railroad to the population in each city, these visionaries had to convince the financial might of the East to build the railroad.

\textsuperscript{8} Sabrina Crewe and Michael V. Uschan, \textit{The Transcontinental Railroad} (Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens, 2004), 9; William Eno DeBuys, \textit{Salt Dreams: Land and Water in Low-down California} (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 51.


\textsuperscript{10} Miller, 60.

\textsuperscript{11} Isaac Smith Homans, William B. Dana, \textit{The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review} (New York: Freeman Hunt, 1861), 43-44.
As railroad fever progressed through Missouri, merchants and businessmen of the Missouri Valley believed that the era of steamboats and wagons as shipping methods was ending. With the growing population living in the Missouri Valley and the increasing migration to the West, new shipping methods were needed to handle the increasing quantity of trade. Additionally, the Missouri River in many cases proved to be more problematic than the Mississippi River. As the best months for navigation were from April to August, the Missouri River suffered from low levels and experienced severe ice in the winter, directly impacting the city’s yearly business.\(^{12}\) The railroad, with its ability to operate year round, offered the merchants in Kansas City an additional season of income. In terms of city growth, prominent Kansas City businessmen believed that developing the exchange of goods between the city and the hinterland could fuel the next level of growth within Kansas City. These businessmen looked toward the example of Chicago, one of the most rapidly growing cities in the United States, a city that exploded with railroads.\(^{13}\) Railroads were the future of cities; to these Kansas Citians only the railroad could push the city past all its rivals.\(^{14}\)

As the progress of rail technology allowed increasing amounts of freight, advancements in bridge construction also propelled a growing impulse of rail expansion in the United States. Changes in laws regarding bridges, railroads, and steamboats represented the increasing importance of railroads over riverboats in both Missouri and

\(^{12}\) Miller, 151-153.


the nation. After the Wheeling and Belmont Bridge Company built a bridge over the Ohio River, and Pennsylvania sued the company claiming that the bridge impeded riverboat traffic, laws that governed the interaction between railroads and river commerce came to the forefront. In 1852, the Supreme Court ruled that the bridge impeded navigation of the Ohio River because of its height. Despite the judgment of the court, the decision over the authorization of bridge construction remained a controversial issue. Ultimately, in 1852, Congress overruled the judgment of the Supreme Court as an act of interstate commerce, declaring that the Wheeling Bridge did not interfere with navigation of the Ohio River and that boats were not to obstruct the construction or the use of the bridge.15

Congress isolated their opinion to the Wheeling Bridge and did not apply it universally to bridge construction in the United States. However, Congress had claimed the power to control the construction, and the ultimate determination of a bridge as a public nuisance, through the reality of interstate commerce. The Wheeling Bridge case was not the first transportation case to enter the Supreme Court, but it set the tone and opened the floor to the debate between river and rail interests.16

In April 1856, the Rock Island Railroad Bridge became the first bridge to cross the Mississippi River, operating traffic between Iowa and Illinois. The bridge remained a controversial matter throughout its construction as some merchants in St. Louis felt as

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though the bridge threatened to divert river shipping from St. Louis to Chicago.\textsuperscript{17} Additionally, the bridge magnified the ongoing dispute between Northern and Southern interests over the path of a transcontinental railroad.\textsuperscript{18} Within two weeks of the bridge’s opening, a steamboat, the \textit{Effie Afton}, as it navigated upriver from St. Louis, drifted into the Rock Island Railroad Bridge causing severe damage through both the collision and the ensuing fire.\textsuperscript{19}

The \textit{Effie Afton} disaster revived the conflicted interests between the riverboat industry and the growing railroad systems in the Mississippi Valley. Additionally, the bridge disaster represented the looming threat of Chicago over St. Louis in trade superiority. As railroads from Chicago began to stretch eastward, St. Louis felt the pressure of the increased trade that the railroad offered Chicago. Navigation along the Mississippi River remained difficult north of St. Louis due to a series of rapids, and river traffic became increasingly difficult as winter progressed and ice proved hazardous to travel.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Frequently, throughout construction, St. Louis’s Board of Trade sued the Rock Island Bridge Company over the construction of the railroad as an impediment to construction. Despite the efforts of the Board of Trade, construction persisted.

\textsuperscript{18} Secretary of War Jefferson Davis attacked early construction of the bridge as he believed it gave the North an early advantage in settling the Kansas and Nebraska territories, thus turning them into Free states. Additionally, the ongoing dispute between Northerners and Southerners over the path of a transcontinental railroad remained a key issue. See David A. Pfeiffer, “Bridging the Mississippi: The Railroads and Steamboats Clash at the Rock Island Bridge,” \textit{Prologue Magazine} 36, No. 2 (Summer 2004): 14-27.


To the merchants in St. Louis, the Rock Island Railroad, once across the Mississippi, faced little competition on the way to the Missouri River. In 1857 the owner of the *Effie Afton*, John Hurd, sued the Bridge Company, the company responsible for construction of the Rock Island Railroad Bridge, for fifty thousand dollars in damages in Chicago courts. The case not only prompted riverboat factions to face railroad supporters, but illuminated the division between St. Louis and Chicago, with each crying foul play. Supporters of the railroad claimed that the *Effie Afton* contained explosives and deliberately rammed into the bridge, while the boating interests claimed that the bridge impeded navigation and provoked the *Effie Afton’s* crash.

The events that followed the crash of the *Effie Afton* into the Rock Island Railroad Bridge became national news. The nation awaited the results of the trial and speculated how the event could impact future railroad development. Since the case took place in Chicago, the jury consisted of individuals with loyalties to the railroad, but the jury could not reach a verdict in the case. The dismissal of the case represented an immense victory to those who supported the railroad.

By the beginning of 1858, the fully repaired and successfully running Rock Island Railroad once again appeared in newspaper headlines after a House of Representatives

21 During the railroad boom in the 1850s, Iowa remained a solid competitor to Missouri’s development due to multiple reasons. A side effect of the Iowa’s constitutional limit on state debt was the construction of secure built efficient and financially sound railroads. Additionally, the lack of prominent river trade allowed the railroad to build at an expansive rate. See Riegel, *The Story of Western Railroads*, 26-28.


committee determined that the bridge impeded traffic along the Mississippi and that courts, not Congress, should determine the future of the bridge. Following the results of the committee, in May 1858, James Ward, a steamboat owner from St. Louis, filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa. In 1860, after deliberating and reviewing the evidence, Judge John Love determined that the bridge obstructed Mississippi River traffic and ordered the removal of the portions of the bridge on Iowa’s border.²⁵

In December 1862, the company appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court, which reversed the decision of the lower court and determined that as long as a bridge allowed river traffic to proceed, it could not be a public nuisance. The decision settled the riverboat-railroad war over the existence of the Rock Island Bridge until 1866 when an act from Congress forced the bridge to move upriver to a spot that allowed less obstruction of riverboat navigation. By approving the bridge in 1862, and then directing the relocation of the bridge in 1866, Congress determined that railroads were the future of development in United States and claimed the ultimate power in determining the construction of railroad bridges.²⁶

The Mississippi River became the eastern terminus of major railroads in Missouri due to the necessity of the importation of materials from the East Coast or shipped up the Mississippi, from the Gulf of Mexico. Physical construction began with the Pacific Railroad (later known as the Missouri Pacific) in 1852, establishing a five-mile stretch of


rail from St. Louis to Cheltenham. The Hannibal and St. Joseph line, not far behind the Missouri Pacific, began construction in 1853, and stretched across northern Missouri between Hannibal and St. Joseph. An additional railroad, the North Missouri Railroad, also began construction in 1854, with plans to stretch from St. Louis to the Missouri-Iowa state border. Capitalizing on the growing demand for a great transcontinental railroad, the Hannibal and St. Joseph and the Missouri Pacific sought to provide the first connection between the East and the West for the future transcontinental railroad. By connecting Illinois to Missouri, the lines hoped to receive the reward of Congressional aid for such a grand project. These railroads faced a slow, tedious building process, typically laden with delays from multiple sources. The enormous cost of the typical railroad in the United States normally revolved around an investment made by the city and typically, a federal or state grant awarded to the railroad.

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28 In 1876, after a debt crisis, the Pacific Railroad reorganized as the Missouri Pacific, but confusion persisted since 1872 when the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad leased the Pacific Railroad for a period of 999 years. The Atlantic and Pacific then let their Missouri holdings go into receivership, which canceled the lease. Eventually the St. Louis and San Francisco line leased portions of the Pacific until reorganization as the Missouri Pacific. Despite the differences in naming conventions, newspapers called the Pacific Railroad, the Missouri Pacific, long before the official name change. For clarity, incarnations of the Pacific Railroad of St. Louis in this chapter will be called, the Missouri Pacific. Charles Barrett, *Analysis of the Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroad, Missouri Pacific Railroad, and St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad, Central Railroad of New Jersey, Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, Michigan Central Railroad, Texas and Pacific, Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, and International and Great Northern Railroad, Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, Showing the Present Condition of These Several Companies* (New York: Baker & Godwin Printers, 1881), 10; *Missouri Republican*, “St. Louis and Santa Fe Railroad,” (St. Louis, MO), June 19, 1869; George Sanger, *The American Almanac and Repository of Useful Knowledge for the Year 1854* (Boston, MA: Philips, Samson, and Company, 1854), 309.

29 Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads*, 38-40; Financial aid came in many forms: from land grants to raise funds for the railroad to a form of a mortgage where the state owned an interest in the railroad until repayment of the loans. See Stover, 30-31.
The small towns of the Missouri Valley generally lacked the necessary funds to build a railroad. The enterprising citizens hoped to rally the citizenry to fund bonds to attract investors from the East seeking to capitalize on the towns as crossroads of commerce. However, for initial growth and investment, the mere idea of the railroad coming to town could stimulate a town’s economy enough to propel further growth.\(^\text{30}\)

After construction began on the Hannibal and St. Joseph line, the Missouri Pacific, and the Northern Missouri Railroad, the Missouri Valley buzzed with potential. Boosters throughout the Missouri Valley reacted to the construction with swift actions to mobilize citizens into raising funds and enticing the railroad to come through their town. For Kansas City and Leavenworth, the two most important railroads were the Hannibal and St. Joseph Line and the Missouri Pacific. Both started with great potential, but the Hannibal and St. Joseph had direct advantages over the Missouri Pacific in initial construction.\(^\text{31}\)

The Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad began as a charter, a meaningless paper charter that simply represented a dream. In 1846, individuals in Hannibal, Missouri met to discuss the validity of extending a railroad from Hannibal to the west. These men agreed that by establishing a railroad west from Hannibal, they could profit by providing the entryway for Eastern railroads into Missouri.\(^\text{32}\) These enterprising men needed two things to happen before construction of such a railroad: a charter and investments. Without the necessary funds, the railroad remained stagnant until Robert M. Stewart, a

\(^{30}\) Brown, 116-117. WPA, 412.

\(^{31}\) Miller, 76, 113; Hine, 409.

Missouri state senator, advocated for improvement of the state’s infrastructure and rallied the state senate to approve the charter for the Hannibal and St. Joseph in 1847.  

With a charter obtained, Stewart set out to raise funds for the construction of the railroad. Through initial investments from Marion County, the city of Hannibal, state aid, and Stewart’s own personal funds, the initial survey of the railroad westward began in 1849. As the route proceeded west, the prospect of having a railroad through the scattered towns along the proposed path generated additional interest and investment. After gaining support from the towns throughout the proposed route, Stewart and his cohorts petitioned both the state legislature and Congress for aid in constructing the railroad. In 1851, the Missouri State Legislature authorized $1.5 million in state bonds to match investments from the board of the Hannibal and St. Joseph. Additionally, in 1850 Congress officially granted Missouri authorization to distribute alternating sections of land, to assist with financing the line.

As the Hannibal and St. Joseph broke ground and expanded westward towards the Missouri Valley, the businessmen in Kansas City eagerly watched as the railroad drew closer. With limited operating funds and grants based upon reimbursement, the Hannibal

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33 Albert J. Roof, Past and Present of Livingston County, Missouri: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress and Achievement (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1913), 112.

34 Thomas H. Bacon and Sidney J. Roy, A Mirror of Hannibal: Containing a Most Complete and Authentic History of the City (Hannibal, MO: C.P. Greene, 1905), 31-32.

35 A political battle between Stewart and Missouri politicians, Carty Wells from Marion County and John Taylor from the city of Palmyra preceded the approval of the Hannibal and St. Joseph charter in 1847. In exchange for large investments from businessmen of Marion County and support of the Senate and House of Missouri, Stewart agreed to plot the line through Palmyra, Missouri, twelve miles northwest of Hannibal and then head west toward St. Joseph, Missouri.

36 The grant authorized Missouri to oversee distribution once the Hannibal and St. Joseph’s construction was complete. See John Bell Sanborn, Congressional Grants of Land in Aid of Railways. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1899), 115; Oster, 406; Thornton, “Early History of Railroads in Missouri,” 38; Congressional Globe, 32nd Congress, 1st Session 1852, 3-4.
and St. Joseph Railroad negotiated with contractor John Duff of New York to construct the line. To build the 203-mile track quickly and under budget, Duff accepted an offer from the board of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad for twenty-three thousand dollars per track mile and over one million dollars in railroad stock. The contract also stated that Duff could operate finished sections of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad for his own commercial gain until the construction of the line finished. The ownership clause of the contract caused repeated conflict between the directors of the Hannibal and St. Joseph and Duff. Instead of quickly constructing the line, the directors accused Duff of extending construction to profit from finished portions of the railroad. Additionally, the directors believed that Duff’s rush to profit from his temporary controlled portions of the line resulted in quickly built, shoddy construction.37

As the Hannibal and St. Joseph line faced a series of financial setbacks and problems with Duff’s construction crew, John Murray Forbes bought controlling interest in the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. Forbes and his associates, who already controlled an expanding network of successful railroads running through Michigan and Illinois, sought to use their investment experience to secure the Hannibal and St. Joseph so that their Chicago system could expand its range and marketable resources.38 After Robert Forbes, John Murray’s brother, surveyed the proposed route, the vast potential

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37 *Journal of the House of the State of Missouri*, 1855, 105-109; Sanborn, 115-116.

and value of the land offered to the Hannibal and St. Joseph became clear. The addition of Forbes meant the end of the Hannibal and St. Joseph’s financial and construction problems. While the railroad struggled at first to secure the proper funding, by 1856, the initial bonds offered to the railroad matured and construction resumed as the line progressed seventy-five miles west of Hannibal, but the impending depression that accompanied the Panic of 1857 threatened to delay railroad development in Northern Missouri. Due to the conditions of the federal land grants and aid authorized under the Missouri government, Forbes needed to finish construction of the railroad as quickly as possible to sell the land offered by the state.

After a four-month long disagreement with the Hannibal and St. Joseph’s contractor Duff & Company, Forbes convinced the contractor to resume construction. In comparison to Forbes’s other railroads, the Hannibal and St. Joseph was in a position to capitalize on an emerging market, new settlers to Kansas and Nebraska, with no immediate competition. After successfully negotiating terms with the city of Hannibal to ferry goods across the river to Quincy, Illinois, where the rails of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad rested, Forbes stood in a position to create yet another successful railroad and connect Missouri to his Illinois system. After negotiating new


40 Sanborn, 115; Overton, 53; Marks, 64-66; Bacon and Roy, 36-37.

41 Eastern railroads did not reach the Mississippi River until 1854 when the Chicago and Rock Island line first reached the Mississippi River. Additionally, in 1856 the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad reached Quincy and thus had access to the Mississippi River. Prior to reaching the Mississippi River, lines faced the prospect of splitting the shipments into multiple loads and staging to the river for ferry access. See Riegel, “The Missouri Pacific Railroad to 1879,” 6; Jean F Blashfield, *The Transcontinental Railroad* (Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books Capstone, 2001), 6-9; Overton, 52-53.
terms with the contractor, the Hannibal and St. Joseph line officially opened on February 29, 1859.42

Compared to the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, the Missouri Pacific Railroad faced a harder path to extend itself past St. Louis. Even though the Missouri State Legislature offered the Missouri Pacific more financial aid than the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad and equal amounts of land grants, the rough terrain west of St. Louis delayed construction, and an epidemic of cholera that plagued the line from 1853-1855 created labor shortages that complicated progress. Additionally, a significant disaster occurred on November 1, 1855, when an inaugural train from St. Louis to Gasconade overturned on a wooden bridge, resulting in hundreds of deaths. Work continued following the Gasconade disaster, but the line had barely reached the state capital of Jefferson City when construction halted in the fall of 1856. Despite the estimates of the Missouri Pacific’s engineer James Kirkwood, the railroad had depleted all of its grants and subscription funds.43

Enticing new investments on the Missouri Pacific proved difficult after the Gasconade Bridge disaster and the stunted progress the line had already made. The directors of the Missouri Pacific petitioned the Missouri Legislature for an additional loan of one million dollars in 1856. Unwilling to abandon a project that already had over five million dollars invested in it, the legislature granted the loan in 1857, despite much criticism. Construction resumed, but the Missouri Pacific failed to avert the financial


downturn that accompanied the Panic of 1857. The line managed to survive the initial throws of the panic by receiving aid from the Missouri Legislature, but funding of the Missouri Pacific ceased as bond values plummeted and the state stopped issuing bonds until 1859.44

Even with temporary funding measures in place from the Missouri State Legislature, the Missouri Pacific still faced construction issues and financial setbacks. By the end of 1859, the railroad had expanded just a mere eighty miles in the previous five years of construction. By 1860, the line had fallen into extreme debt and once again petitioned the legislature for additional funds. Critics and supporters battled in the legislature over the lackluster results of the Missouri Pacific and eventually passed a funding measure, overriding Governor’s Robert M. Stewart’s veto.45 Even so, the railroad lapsed on multiple payments and shut down until interest resurged near in 1864.46

Geography played a role in the Missouri Pacific’s troubles. Hills and bluffs littered the surveyed route from St. Louis to Jackson County as well as the need to dodge the Missouri River. Additionally, consistent funding remained the difference between the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad and the Missouri Pacific Railroad. While both railroads


45 Robert M. Stewart was one of the initial organizers of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. While critics complained of the excessive funding of the Missouri Pacific, Stewart had an interest in the promotion of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. Other cases appear where Stewart may have attempted to use his position as governor to guide the success of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, such as revoking Platte County Railroad’s charter in 1860. “Statement from Robert M. Stewart, December 31, 1860,” Missouri State Archives.

struggled financially at times through multiple economic downturns, the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, backed by Forbes, reached St. Joseph from Hannibal, Missouri by 1859 and completed its initial goal of crossing the state. The Missouri Pacific Railroad, funded by local investors, city investments, and grants, hardly moved the line to Jefferson City, Missouri, by 1861, only 181 miles from St. Louis.47

Obviously, finding consistent investors for the Missouri Pacific Railroad remained difficult. While some men promised to fund the railroad in certain towns, when the time to collect upon the bonds came, the money was simply not there.48 Additionally, the land grant offered by Congress to each railroad differed in quality. The Hannibal and St. Joseph received 600,000 acres of prime farmland, while the Missouri Pacific Railroad’s grant contained undesirable land in an already settled area.49 The experience of Forbes, who successfully established rail systems with the Michigan Central Line and the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy outmatched those behind the Missouri Pacific. Additionally, Forbes with his connections overseas, secured loans during the Panic of 1857, even after the questionable condition of the United States on the world money market.50

47 Brown, 116-117.
48 Pacific Railroad bonds required little initial investment. The initial purchase required pennies on the dollar, then the company could call the rest of the money in when the funds were needed. See Riegel, “The Missouri Pacific Railroad to 1879,” 11.
49 Glaab, Kansas City and the Railroads, 40.
Without attracting Eastern investment, railroads out of the Missouri Valley faced a difficult process selling subscriptions and waiting for aid to come through the Missouri legislature. Prominent citizens in Kansas City strategized possible ways to fashion Kansas City as a hub or a nodal point of rail exchange. Johnston Lykins, who first came to the Missouri Valley with future Westport Landing founder Isaac McCoy, to work as a missionary to the Native Americans in the area, became a pivotal leader in Kansas City history. After retiring from mission work in 1851, Lykins moved to Kansas City to practice medicine.\(^5\) Lykins established himself as a major force in the city by purchasing large tracts of real estate in 1851.

After Kansas City emerged as a formal town with a charter in 1853, the city formed its first professional government. After a complicated election, Lykins became the city’s first mayor in 1853.\(^5\) As mayor and leader of the merchants in town, Lykins guided an associate M. J. Payne to establish a new newspaper in Kansas City. *The Enterprise*, edited by William A. Strong, began as a weekly newspaper dedicated to describing the new and exciting events happening in Kansas City. Strong and M.J. Payne were both inexperienced newspapermen, and upon Payne’s accession as mayor in 1855, the elites of Kansas City searched for a new editor to run the newspaper.\(^5\)

In the summer of 1855, Robert T. Van Horn, a former newspaper editor who worked for his brother-in-law in steamboat ventures, delivered a steamboat to St. Louis. During his stay in St. Louis, representatives of Kansas City elites, Johnston Lykins and


\(^{52}\) Lykins served as the second mayor of Kansas City after Samuel Gregory had to forfeit the office due to living outside of city limits. See Miller, 45-46.

Mayor Milton Payne, met with Van Horn. After learning of Van Horn’s experience, the representatives asked Van Horn to travel to Kansas City and offered to sell *The Enterprise* to Van Horn for the sum of one thousand dollars. Van Horn accepted the offer and sailed to Kansas City to meet with Lykins, Payne, and the rest of the prominent citizens of Kansas City. After a cordial welcome to the city, Van Horn toured the office and tools of *The Enterprise* and agreed to pay half of the initial price upfront and the second installment later. By the end of 1855, Van Horn began to publish editorials advocating the agenda of Lykins and associates, including the incorporation of a vast network of railroads to Kansas City.54

In 1856, Van Horn, along with Lykins, Payne, and other prominent leaders in the early town, established the Kansas City Association for Public Improvement. This organization united merchants in the town with a vision to improve the city and to improve the range of markets by establishing railroads. The Association for Public Improvement eventually merged with the Kansas City Board of Trade, which served as a voluntary organization, comprised of merchants throughout the town. These organizations, after merging in 1856, chartered themselves as the Chamber of Commerce in 1857.55 The Chamber of Commerce members took it upon themselves to champion key improvements within the city to propel Kansas City over its rivals in trade. The largest and most prominent of these improvements to trade was the establishment of a system of railroads.56

54 Greenwood, *Col. Robert T. Van Horn, His Life and Public Service*, 4-6; Miller, 51; Spalding, 98.


56 Whitney, 140-145.
Each city in the Missouri Valley sought to connect to either the main line of the Missouri Pacific Railroad or the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. The prominent leaders of Kansas City desired to transform the city into a hub with direct connections to both the Missouri Pacific and the Hannibal and St. Joseph railroads. By connecting to both of these railroads, Kansas City could engage with both the St. Louis and Chicago markets.57

Following the massive delays that plagued the Missouri Pacific, the leaders in Kansas City looked to the Hannibal and St. Joseph as the best logical route to expand trade. Kansas City obtained multiple charters to connect to the approaching Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. As the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad could not fund a spur to Kansas City along the line, proponents in Kansas City chartered the Kansas City and St. Joseph Railroad in 1853, to connect with the line at its eastern terminus in St. Joseph. The Kansas City and St. Joseph Railroad, one of Kansas City’s first railroad ventures, experienced troubles in the construction phase and consolidated with several other railroads such as the Platte Country Railroad, the Atchison and St. Joseph Railroad Company, Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Railroad, and the Weston and Atchison Railroad. While the Kansas City and St. Joseph Railroad eventually extended south from St. Joseph into Weston, Missouri, in 1861, the Panic of 1857 disrupted construction and consolidation of the line, thus delaying the project.58

Two important events surrounding the Missouri Pacific Railroad during Kansas City’s early railroad development boom in the 1850s changed the future of rail

57 Miller, 75-77, 95; Brown, 117.

development in the city. First, the continual problems that the Missouri Pacific suffered expanding across the state to reach Kansas City forced the city to look for other ways to connect to the East. Secondly, throughout the 1850s, the board of directors of the Missouri Pacific Railroad failed to name Kansas City as the western terminus of the road. Early in 1850, the Missouri Pacific leadership wanted to select a town in Cass County as the terminus, but both Independence and elites in Kansas City pushed for their locality as the terminus. When a delegation from Kansas City met with the directors of the Missouri Pacific in St. Louis, the delegation learned that the railroad feared establishing a terminus in a town near the river because steamboats could compete with the railroad with cheaper operating expenses. The turning point in convincing the Missouri Pacific to select Kansas City as the western terminus came when the Chamber of Commerce of Kansas City sent an official delegation in 1857 to negotiate terms. With the combined interests of Independence and Kansas City, the delegation successfully convinced the directors of the Missouri Pacific to establish routes through both cities.\textsuperscript{59}

Even though construction of the Missouri Pacific faced numerous delays, the success of the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce to convince the railroad to declare Kansas City as the terminus propelled even more railroad projects within the city. Without the investment from the East or Missouri state government funding to build railroads in Kansas City, the town boosters passed resolutions and bond acts in order to raise money for paper rail companies. Typically, construction never started, but

\textsuperscript{59} Initially, the board of directors for the Missouri Pacific asked for the purchase of $300,000 in stock to pay for the costs of running the railroad out there, but Jackson County not only subscribed to $300,000 in stock, but Kansas City also authorized over $200,000 in city bonds to pay for paving the road bed. M.J. Payne, “City of Kansas, Early Municipal Government Of,” in Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri, ed. H.L. Conrad (New York, Southern History Company, 1901), 623-625.
sometimes raising initial funds, surveying the route, and clearing the roadbed incited eastern investors to build.\textsuperscript{60} A chartered paper railroad also had the advantage of state authorization to build in the directions established in the charter. In some cases, preauthorized charters served as valuable foundations to future railroads, quickening the building process. These boosters often formed multiple paper railroads just to save for later development. Often, the paper railroad simply represented an attempt by the boosters of Kansas City to incite enough interest to make Kansas City the connecting point on an extended regional rail line, or to combat another city’s attempt at developing a railroad.\textsuperscript{61}

The initial pioneer of railroads in Kansas City, Johnston Lykins, along with the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, envisioned a vast network of railroads extending from Kansas City.\textsuperscript{62} The two most significant of these railroads, the Kansas Valley Railroad and the Kansas City, Galveston, and Lake Superior Railroad, both chartered shortly before the Panic of 1857, represented an ambitious attempt by Lykins to establish Kansas City as the emporium of the West. Johnston Lykins, along with Robert T. Van Horn and fellow chamber member, Kersey Coates, capitalized on the enthusiasm of the growing railroad expansion in 1855 and formed the Kansas Valley Railroad company in 1855. The charter granted to the Kansas Valley Railroad called for the line to head west

\textsuperscript{60} Paper railroads generally required little investment from outside sources. While the companies often sold subscriptions and boasted about the value of their investments, the railroads only called in the stocks if outside investors selected the charter for development. See, Brown, 126.

\textsuperscript{61} Brown, 124-125; Glaab, \textit{Kansas City and the Railroads}, 42, 56.

\textsuperscript{62} Johnston Lykins produced a plan with grand visions for railroads through the Missouri Valley. Lykins’s plan called for thirteen railroads expanding from Kansas City and incorporating raw materials from Kansas, Missouri, and Texas to Kansas City where distribution to the East would take place. For more information see, Young, 31, 39.
from Kansas City to Fort Riley. While the company sold subscriptions and gained a charter from the territorial Kansas Legislature in 1855, development on the railroad never actually took place. Nevertheless, the chartering itself allowed Kansas City to block development of several smaller roads that worked in coalition to bypass Kansas City and connect Kansas to the Missouri Pacific. It also united Kansas City interests with those in the Kansas, especially at the expense of Kansas City’s competitor, Leavenworth.

Kansas City’s most ambitious paper railroad project, the Kansas City, Galveston, and Lake Superior Railroad, sought to connect with the growing railroad town of Galveston, Texas, a shipping hub, where sixty miles of railroad had already been established. The Kansas City Chamber of Commerce hoped that by connecting Galveston to Lake Superior, along with connecting to the Missouri Pacific, Kansas City could position itself as the crossroads of the nation. The project seemed highly unlikely to materialize, but the Chamber of Commerce’s extensive campaign to garner support and raise funds in Kansas City and Jackson County represented a unique feature of Kansas City in comparison to its rivals. Whereas other cities divided their desires between different routes, Kansas City’s Chamber of Commerce unanimously directed their efforts towards railroad projects.

The Kansas City, Galveston, and Lake Superior remained a paper project throughout the 1850s and never materialized. As the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce

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63 This Kansas Territorial Legislature, known as the Bogus Legislature, because the pro-slavery element in Kansas and Missouri voted to elect the pro-slavery legislature, while suppressing the anti-slavery element in Kansas. Brown, 126-127; Journal of the Council of the Territory of Kansas, at Their Second Session (Lecompton, KS: R.H., 1857), 61, 190, 201.

64 Brown, 126-127; Miller, 97.

65 Brown, 128-129, 135.
underwent a series of meetings to vote for aid to the development of the railroad, members introduced a new project, the Kansas City, St. Joseph, and Hannibal line. While this project also failed to extend beyond fund raising, the approval of funding and chartering of the railroad represented a push toward the Chicago controlled line instead of the traditionally supported Missouri Pacific line. Additionally, when the proposal reached the directors of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad and members of the board of the Burlington system, who noted the benefits of extending to the region, the prospect of a Chicago connection with Kansas City and the Southwest appealed to the investors.\(^6\)

The first territorial Kansas Territorial Legislature issued charters for five railroads, two of these charters designated Leavenworth as the eastern terminus.\(^7\) Similar to the case of Kansas City’s paper railroads, the elites of Leavenworth hoped to connect to the eventual transcontinental railroad, thus establishing Leavenworth as the major metropolis of the West. While few of these railroads ever developed, their incorporation produced more prosperity for Leavenworth and the surrounding towns of Kansas. By 1857, one of the most significant railroads, the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western Line, received an additional measure to the charter, the extension of branch roads and ferries. More importantly, the legislature called for the line to branch off and form the Southern Branch and Gulf Railroad, a line designated to run south through Kansas, cutting through Indian Territory, until it reached the Gulf of Mexico.\(^8\)

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\(^6\) Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads*, 86-87

\(^7\) All of these railroads faced multiple problems materializing, but since the Bogus Legislature chartered them, this produced even more problems for the life of the railroads. See Charles C. Howes, *This Place Called Kansas* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 101.

With the expansion of the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western Line, the railroad formally organized and sought subscriptions, but failed to begin construction in the 1850s. The Kansas Territorial Legislature in 1858, approved additional roads emphasizing Leavenworth as the eastern terminus, but these too did not materialize in the 1850s, for multiple reasons. To begin with, Kansas Territory did not have a stable governing body capable of granting aid to complete railroads in Kansas. Additionally, Kansas lands still contained a fair amount of reservations and native land, requiring extra effort and negotiation to purchase or obtain the right of way through these lands.69

Besides problems with temporary governments and negotiating Native American territory, the debate over slavery repeatedly threatened the stability of Kansas. Leavenworth, founded as a pro-slavery town, faced many difficulties advocating any financial programs in the town because of the vast differences between pro-slavery supporters and anti-slavery. In comparison to Leavenworth’s severe divisions, Kansas City’s leadership, informally pulled from the Chamber of Commerce, remained united in the drive for economic improvement regardless of ideology. Measures advocating improvements to the town and the expansions of railroads, met little competition due to the advocates in the Chamber of Commerce. Even those facing a loss of business profits from the expansion of railroads, such as the firm of Chick & Northrup whose trade

69 The Delaware tribe controlled land central to the development of railroads out of Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western Line, but also to other lands projected through Kansas. A new treaty with the tribe called for a resurvey of reservation land. Upon completion of a resurvey, members of the Delaware tribe received equal lots of land with the remaining land left open for sale. In 1860, the directors of the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western Line pushed through an additional treaty allowing them to purchase the land from the tribe at the lowest legally set amount. See A Compilation of All the Treaties Between the United States and the Indian Tribes: Now in Force as Laws (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 1873. See also, Charles Joseph Kappler, Indian Affairs: Treaties (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 345-350, 814.
depended on stage and river lines, remained supportive of railroads due to vast property holdings.\textsuperscript{70}

While Kansas City remained united towards business, bands of pro-slavery border activists from Kansas City and Jackson County threatened anti-slavery merchants from Leavenworth and Kansas. Following the harassment of a town merchant by Kansas City ruffians, Leavenworth officials passed multiple resolutions to stop trade with Kansas City. The absence of Leavenworth slightly affected Kansas City, which maintained its traditional Western trade with the army, Native Americans, and the Santa Fe Trail.\textsuperscript{71}

For the competing cities of Leavenworth and Kansas City, the visionaries of each town preached the railroad as not only the next level of town growth, but a matter of survival.\textsuperscript{72} A collection of individuals in each town promoted the railroad as the next level of technology to the public, encouraging the necessary funding of bonds. In Kansas City, a small group of individuals enticed railroad investors and changed the future of the city. On November 22, 1858, Kansas City visionaries seeking the expansion of the railroad in the city invited delegates from both western Missouri and Kansas who stood to gain from the expansion of a railroad line from Kansas City. The delegation promoted an interest in the railroad and cooperation between Kansas City and towns in Kansas, but the


\textsuperscript{71} Brown, 102-103, 148.

\textsuperscript{72} Spalding, 57.
depression that followed the Panic of 1857 put a hold on the majority of railroad
construction plans in Kansas City and the Missouri Valley.73

Besides Leavenworth’s absence from the railroad convention in Kansas City in
1858, another blow to Leavenworth’s railroad fortunes came in 1860, when city boosters
and advocates throughout Kansas agreed to meet in Topeka for a convention designed to
plan railroads for the territory. Whereas the territory once recommended several railroads
with an eastern terminus at Leavenworth, this convention promoted five railroads,
awarding Leavenworth only a mere branch line.74

Following the Panic of 1857, the Missouri Valley cities did not remain idle for
long. The boosters within the city focused on the incoming path of the major railroads
heading towards the Missouri River and dedicated themselves to constructing new
railroads in Kansas and Missouri to link with them. Leaders in both Leavenworth and
Kansas City realized the potential behind of each of the major roads that came from the
East. The Missouri Pacific began in St. Louis, where it connected to the lucrative river
trade, while the Hannibal and St. Joseph with its ties to Chicago, granted the Missouri
Valley access to the Great Lakes and East Coast. Railroad men in Kansas City and
Leavenworth also hoped that establishing a stop or a line in their cities along these major
roads meant a possible connection to the future transcontinental railroad.75

73 Kansas City invited rivals such as Independence, Westport, and Lawrence, but either failed to
invite Leavenworth or Leavenworth chose not to attend. See Miller, 92-93.

74 Richard A. Ruddy, Edmund G. Ross: Soldier, Senator, Abolitionist (Albuquerque, NM:
University of New Mexico Press, 2013), 49; Johnston, 78.

75 Willard Ridings, “Missouri History Not Found in Textbooks,” Missouri Historical Review 16,
no. 3 (April, 1922): 470.
The advancements in transportation technology in the late 1840s transformed railroads from primarily passenger driven transportation into machinery with vast potential for shipping cargo, which changed the nature of commerce and shipping in the United States. Whereas the railroad once isolated itself to interior traffic in the East, the growth of Chicago as a railroad hub represented a changing country. The railroad served as a means of transportation but also as a means of colonization. With an abundance of federal territory and Indian land available to offer railroad companies, the construction of railroad lines helped settled areas without convenient access to the Missouri River.

River and canal trade dominated commerce in the United States until the beginning of the 1850s when railroads began to expand from the East to Chicago and then further west. River traffic remained economically viable, but the capacity of the railroad to ship larger quantities of goods and people positioned rail traffic as an emerging superior option. Railroads and river traffic worked together in cooperation initially, with many river and ferry lines establishing locations along railroad terminuses at the edge of rivers, but as bridge engineering evolved, so did the competition between both transport methods. As the construction of bridges spread westward, so did the conflict between riverboat and railroad interests. The culmination of this conflict between the transport industries came with the series of cases over the Rock Island Railroad Bridge. The resulting decision in favor of the railroad symbolically labeled riverboats the shipping option of the past.

The growing conflict between railroads and riverboats also manifested itself in the infrastructure of St. Louis and Chicago. The beginning of St. Louis as a city revolved around river trade, and the city faced growing problems adapting to the new technology
of the railroad. Chicago, as a younger city, positioned itself as a railroad hub that connected to the East. Chicago’s rail network crossing the Mississippi River into Missouri and Iowa threatened the economic prosperity of St. Louis as the railroad could reach further than the river port. Compared to Chicago, St. Louis’s railroad network grew slowly and suffered from continual problems. Originally, two railroad lines, the Hannibal and St. Joseph and the Missouri Pacific designated St. Louis as the eastern terminus, but delays in expanding a feeder line to the Hannibal and St. Joseph pushed the line to connect with an extension of Chicago’s network.

By the end of the 1850s, with the exception of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, railroad progress throughout the Missouri Valley was hardly past the paper phase. Many prominent residents in the cities of the Missouri Valley fought to build a railroad to establish their city as the nodal point between cities in the East and the gold booming cities of the West. Additionally, the major railroad lines in Missouri sought to establish themselves as the Missouri link in the future transcontinental railroad. Extensive railroad development required government aid in the forms of bonds, credit, and land grants. The Panic of 1857 forced the local economies of Kansas City and Leavenworth to focus on already established Western trade instead of expanding into regional trade by having access to a railroad network. Kansas City and Leavenworth did not construct any railroads, but the growing sentiment behind connecting to the Missouri Pacific or Hannibal and St. Joseph lines, propelled each city’s economy. It also incited individuals to band together to promote future railroads.

The growing tensions in Kansas had a profound effect on both Leavenworth and Kansas City. Tensions within Kansas threatened to derail the expansion of business and railroads due to the instability of the government and the armed conflicts over slavery. In Missouri, border ruffians threatened Kansas City’s trade by threatening anti-slavery interests in the city. While both cities organized paper railroads, the way each city organized and united to promote railroad interests played a key role in the development of the Missouri Valley as a trading hub.

While each city hedged their futures on the expansion of the railroad, the 1850s brought little development of the railroad or expansion of the economy. Kansas City still relied on the expansive trade of those heading west, the Santa Fe Trail business, and trade with Native Americans. While the expansion of Leavenworth siphoned migrant trade from Kansas City, the divisions within Kansas also pushed exchange towards Kansas City instead of Leavenworth. However, in February 1859, both cities waited patiently as workers drove the last spike of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad in Chillicothe, Missouri. The railroad finally came to west Missouri and the prospect of the 1860s held much potential for the Missouri Valley.
Chapter 4: Bridging the Waters: Kansas City’s Rise to Metropolis of the Missouri Valley, Civil War-1870

The first bridge over the Missouri River and secured that concentration of railroads unequalled in the Missouri Valley . . . which at no distant day will rival St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Chicago, in controlling the trade of the Far West.

– John Wilder

By 1860, with a population of forty-seven hundred, officials in Kansas City seemed optimistic about the future of the town. While Leavenworth’s population had outpaced Kansas City’s, trade from the growing southern portion of Kansas and the traditional Western trade associated with the Santa Fe Trail remained lucrative. Kansas City still served as a key point for settlers looking to travel west, but Leavenworth, positioned along the Smoky Hill Trail, became a popular terminal for those traveling to Pikes Peak in search of gold. Initially, railroad progress in Kansas City and Leavenworth remained mostly isolated to the formation of paper railroad companies designed to attract larger railroad organizations like the Missouri Pacific or the Hannibal and St. Joseph. In May of 1860, after the completion of the Platte Valley Railroad, connecting Weston to St. Joseph and thus to the Hannibal and St. Joseph, members of the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce emphasized the importance of connecting to either the Hannibal and St. Joseph or the Missouri Pacific. Many of the prominent citizens of Kansas City still

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3 8th Census of the United States, 1860, I, 293; Westlake, 247.
believed that a connection the Missouri Pacific remained the most important act to propel Kansas City to regional dominance.  

After construction of the Missouri Pacific faced multiple delays in the 1850s, barely expanding to Sedalia by the close of the decade, officials in Kansas City remained optimistic as the Missouri Pacific’s directors came to the city in early 1859. In previous years, the directors of the railroad refused to name Kansas City as the western terminus, because the leaders of the Missouri Pacific feared competition with the riverboat industry. By the late summer of 1859, the directors of the Missouri Pacific officially designated Kansas City as the western terminus in Missouri. Before the construction of the Missouri Pacific in Kansas City could begin, the directors required a bond from Jackson County, instead of Kansas City.

Sending a measure for funding to the ballot within Jackson County accelerated the growing rift between those living in the cities and those in the rural areas who believed that spending tax dollars to construct a railroad in the area only benefited the rich land

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4 Miller, 98; Sacramento Daily Union, Volume 17, Number 2502, 4 April 1859. Because of the importance of a transcontinental railroad, California frequently reported on activities happening in Missouri during this railroad boom.

5 Journal of the Senate of the State of Missouri: At the First Session of the Twentieth General Assembly (Jefferson City, MO: C. J. Corwin Printing, 1859), 355; The railroad prospectors in Kansas City believed that the board of directors of the Missouri Pacific sought to negotiate the most subscriptions before naming a western terminus. See

6 Daily Alta California, June 3, 1858.

7 Due to the long-standing series of financial setbacks that the Missouri Pacific experienced during construction, by the end of the 1850s, the directors of the Missouri Pacific Railroad changed company policy to accept county subscriptions instead of city subscriptions. In comparison to city subscriptions, county subscriptions were stable and authorized by a state authorized entity. In the early years of railroad promotion companies did not care if state or city authorized subscriptions, but as the problem became more rampant, the courts saw an increase load of cases regarding the legality of city subscriptions. See Charles Nelson Glaab, “Local Railroad Promotion in Kansas City, 1855-1880” (PhD diss., University of Missouri: Columbia, 1958), 165. For a brief comprehensive review see W.B.J, “County Subscriptions to Railroad Corporations,” American Law Register, vol. 20 (Philadelphia, PA: D.B. Canfield and Company, 1872), 737-745; Journal of the Senate of the State of Missouri, 16-17; Miller, 92.
speculators of the cities. Additionally, while both towns contained a majority of Southern sympathizers, Kansas City’s neutrality regarding slavery and Kansas provoked some Jackson County residents who felt insulted at Kansas City’s lack of conviction over the institution of slavery.  

The county court ordered voting on the proposition to take place on September 3, 1859. Throughout the week leading up to the ballot, Van Horn expressed both the benefits that the railroad offered the rural population of Jackson County and the necessity of passing the ballot to fund the railroad. Besides the growing element of the rural population who believed the railroad only served to benefit the rich landowners of Kansas City, owners of Independence’s two largest industries, wagon building and outfitting, feared railroad access could limit influx of emigrants searching to buy supplies for the trail. The Kansas City Chamber of Commerce held meetings and released pamphlets that explained how the addition of a railroad network could benefit everyone in the county by providing farmers and merchants with an outlet to the west, but also the potential population growth that the railroad offered. With such a network, Kansas City could emerge as a metropolis of exchange.

Even though both Kansas City and Independence previously authorized two bonds totaling more than $225,000 to the Missouri Pacific, the county court merged the two cities bills at a fixed rate of $225,000. In Kansas City, the measure passed, with 1667 votes.

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8 Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 166; Western Journal of Commerce, September 7, 1859; Western Journal of Commerce, September 8, 1859.

9 Miller, 92, 95.

10 As some of the largest businesses in Independence, it is very likely that this faction produced a counter pamphlet against the Missouri Pacific that attacked the railroad’s financial mismanagement and broken promises to the county. See Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 168-170.
votes for and only eight votes against. The measure also passed in Independence, but with less of a majority (For Jackson County voting detail see chart below).\textsuperscript{11} This countywide election demonstrated an important aspect of Kansas City that propelled the growth of the town in the future, unity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Votes For</th>
<th>Votes Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City</td>
<td>1667</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westport</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Osage</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Jack</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulphur Springs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sni-a-bar</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2132</strong></td>
<td><strong>870</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Votes in Jackson County Missouri Pacific Funding\textsuperscript{12}

The remarkable consensus of Kansas City’s populace during the railroad boom of the 1850s and 1860s and the conviction of the populous in voting with the direction of the Chamber of Commerce enabled Kansas City to gain access to the Missouri Pacific. Through the Chamber of Commerce’s frequent meetings and pamphlets, individuals in the city knew the benefits of the railroad and the prosperity that construction could provide the town. Robert T. Van Horn and his newspaper *The Daily Journal of*

\textsuperscript{11} Regrettfully, the Independence papers through this period are unavailable and the *Western Journal of Commerce* only detailed Kansas City and the surrounding area.

\textsuperscript{12} The complete results of the election were printed in the *Western Journal of Commerce*, September 8, 1859.
*Commerce* remained an important facilitator of railroad gospel from 1855 to 1870. Through *The Daily Journal of Commerce*, Van Horn stressed the importance of building a railroad network radiating from Kansas City.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite some initial claims of fraud, the success of the ballot measure brought immense celebration to Kansas City. With approval by Jackson County, a committee of men from Jackson County traveled to Jefferson City to petition the legislature to continue funding the Missouri Pacific and to demonstrate the necessity of completing the railroad and show that Independence and Kansas City were ready to assist with funding on their end. In late December 1859 and January 1860, the bill met with opposition in the state legislature over growing concerns about investing more money in a railroad plagued by financial problems. Due to the stalemate in the legislature, the Missouri Pacific and other railroads in Missouri waiting for aid stopped construction. In February 1860, Missouri Governor Robert Stewart called a special session of the legislature to address the aid to railroads and other issues left unheard. Just as the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce celebrated a railroad victory, Governor Stewart, vetoed the bill.\textsuperscript{14}

Even though the railroad boosters in Kansas City organized the Kansas City, Galveston, and Lake Superior as a north-south directional route, the railroad only served as a charter, and the Chamber of Commerce intended this as a future route after securing the Missouri Pacific. The Chamber of Commerce remained committed to the Missouri

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 166-168; *Western Journal of Commerce*, September 8, 1859; Brown, 129.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Van Horn reprinted an article from the Independence newspaper that suggesting that Kansas City committed voter fraud due to the unusually high turnout. *Western Journal of Commerce*, March 15, 1860; *Western Journal of Commerce*, April 5, 1860; Brown, 128; Sixteenth Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Pacific Railroad, to the Stockholders (St. Louis, MO: George Knapp and Company, 1866), 9; *Journal of the Senate of the State of Missouri at the Called Session of the Twentieth General Assembly* (Jefferson City, MO: W.G. Cheeney Public Printing, 1860), 37, 42; Jackman, 463-464.
\end{itemize}
Pacific and preferred the route because it could generate profit for St. Louis and because to the elites of Kansas City, the Missouri Pacific had the greatest chance of reaching town.\textsuperscript{15} The veto of the aid bill in 1860 damaged the loyalty of the Kansas City businessmen to the Missouri Pacific, but further united the businessmen of Kansas City in securing railroads. Van Horn and the Chamber of Commerce turned towards securing a route to the Hannibal and St. Joseph, which was partially authorized under the charter of the Kansas City, Galveston, and Lake Superior.\textsuperscript{16}

Starting in April 1860, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce worked on securing a line to St. Joseph by negotiating with the Platte County Railroad. In a similar fashion to the early movement of the 1850s, Kansas City chartered multiple railroads to lure in either the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad directors or other counties and towns to assist with funding. The leaders of Kansas City held multiple municipal meetings and lectures educating city of the necessity of a new railroad connection. The veto of Governor Stewart dictated that Kansas City resort to self-preservation as a means of securing a railroad. While the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce had held previous meetings and chartered similar railroads in April and May of 1860, the desire to bypass the Missouri Pacific and connect with the Hannibal and St. Joseph attracted surrounding towns in similar positions as Kansas City. Residents of Cole County, miles north of Jackson County, joined Kansas City in raising money for a connection to the Hannibal and St. Joseph Line. On April 27, Kansas City voted $200,000 worth of city bonds and

\textsuperscript{15} While not directly stated by primary sources, geography remained a key element of Kansas City’s preference for the Missouri Pacific. A northern route to St. Joseph required a river crossing at one point, or a ferry system.

Clay County matched the subscription with another $200,000 on June 12, 1860. With the authorization of city and county funds, the leaders of Kansas City and Clay County chartered the new road as the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad.\(^\text{17}\)

The Kansas City and Cameron Railroad attracted the attention of the executives behind the Chicago, Quincy, and Burlington Railroad who controlled the Hannibal and St. Joseph Line. The possible connection of the Burlington System to Kansas City enticed the directors of the railroad to open negotiations for the establishment of a spur line to Kansas City.\(^\text{18}\) With enough initial funds to begin construction on the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad, the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce completed a survey of the roadbed and started negotiations with the directors of the Hannibal and St. Joseph in Boston.

On June 21, the executives of the Missouri Pacific approached the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. The directors, convinced that construction could begin between Independence and Kansas City without state aid, offered the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce an agreement to grade the roadbed if the county could distribute the initial bonds previously passed in 1859. Robert Van Horn immediately approached the county court to gain approval to reapply the preexisting bonds. The Jackson County court ruled

\(^{17}\) Clay County most likely joined to determine itself as the southern point of the branch road on the way to Cameron, Missouri. The residents of Clay County and its biggest city, Liberty, most likely felt threatened by the growing railroad connections planned for Weston and Parkville. Wyandotte and Olathe, cities across the river in Kansas, also held versions of their own meetings that supported a regional connection to the Hannibal and St. Joseph. William Earl Parrish, Perry McCandless, and William E. Foley, \textit{A History of Missouri: 1820 to 1860} (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1972), 148; \textit{History of Jackson County}, 464.

\(^{18}\) Glaab, \textit{Kansas City and the Railroads}, 43-49; The negotiation of this spur line, called the Cameron Project by local officials, did not progress anywhere as the Hannibal and St. Joseph line wanted Kansas City to grade the roadbed to Cameron. Kansas City, initially wanted to connect with the Missouri Pacific as a priority, but the persisting problems of the Missouri Pacific later in the 1860s intensified negotiations with the Hannibal and St. Joseph line. See Glaab, “Railroad Promotion in Kansas City,” 184-187; \textit{Daily Journal of Commerce}, December 19, 1863.
that a new vote had to take place in early August to reauthorize bonds to begin construction on the Missouri Pacific between Independence and Kansas City.\(^{19}\)

The Chamber of Commerce continued negotiations with the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad while still working with the directors of the Missouri Pacific. On July 12, Mayor Maughs along with officials from Clay County traveled to Boston to continue negotiations for the spur line. During negotiations with the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, the directors of the Missouri Pacific extended their presence in Kansas City to prepare for construction of the roadbed for the line between Kansas City and Independence.\(^{20}\) Robert T. Van Horn and members of the Chamber of Commerce campaigned to ensure the success of the upcoming August vote to authorize city bonds towards the construction of the roadbed.\(^{21}\) As roadbed construction began on July 25, 1860, Jackson County authorized a reconsolidation of previous measures and allowed a measure for $200,000 instead of ordering a new bond by ballot. While Kansas City erupted with celebrations of the beginning of the railroad in the city, Mayor Maughs and company also reported the successful completion of negotiations with the directors of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad. Construction of the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad started on October 8, 1860, just across the river in the small town of Harlem. In

\(^{19}\) The language of the bonds required that the state approve aid to the Missouri Pacific in order to begin construction of the line. *Sacramento Daily Union*, August 9, 1860.

\(^{20}\) Miller, 96; Glaab, “Railroad Promotion,” 180.

\(^{21}\) The directors of the Missouri Pacific started construction on the roadbed assuming a success ballot for authorization of pre-existing funds. See Glaab, “Railroad Promotion,” 178-180, for a brief narrative of the continual process of negotiation over the consolidation of bonds.
the span of a few months, Kansas City cemented its future as a railroad hub and center of trade, but the celebrations were short-lived.\textsuperscript{22}

The explosion of railroad fever suffered from the outbreak of the Civil War. Divided loyalties caused an immediate halt in the progress of railroads and industry. Through the 1850s, as St. Louis enlarged in population and industry, the city began to shift towards the East as a center of commerce and influence. As industry grew in St. Louis, the city diminished its economic ties to the South as an agricultural base. In 1861, as the Southern states seceded, Missouri held a special election to determine the loyalties of the state. St. Louis, by far the most populous city of Missouri, mainly supported the North, while smaller farming towns throughout the state supported the South.\textsuperscript{23}

The election displayed overwhelming support to remain in the Union. While many factors influenced the rejection of secession, the changing nature of Missouri in the 1850s largely resulted in the decisive vote. The population disparity between St. Louis and the rest of Missouri towns promoted the vast difference in votes. Additionally, those with a stake in the railroad in Missouri believed that secession threatened the chances of a transcontinental railroad in Missouri.\textsuperscript{24}

For those in Kansas City, the prospect of war threatened business. The populous of Kansas City remained ideologically divided about slavery and loyalty to the Union, but

\textsuperscript{22} William Earl Parrish, William E. Foley, and Perry McCandless, \textit{A History of Missouri: 1860 to 1875} (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 207


\textsuperscript{24} Fellman, 8-10; Ellis Merton Coulter, \textit{The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865} (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1950), 53-55; \textit{Western Journal of Commerce}, November 8, 1860; \textit{Western Journal of Commerce}, November 15, 1860.
the wealthy city leaders pushed to remain united behind business and the growth of the city. The Civil War halted the construction of railroads throughout Missouri. Even though Kansas City already experienced years of conflict over slavery in Kansas, the outbreak of war interrupted most commercial activity in the city. The city remained united over the affairs in Kansas and the divisions surrounding the Civil War, but the conflict between Missouri Bushwhackers and Kansas Jayhawks tested the ties between friends and city folk. Radical guerrillas surrounded Kansas City in every direction, pushing the boundaries of a city that wished to remain neutral, and hindered a majority of commercial exchange. Many of the guerrillas used Kansas City as a supply point and place to purchase gunpowder and other necessities.25

The Civil War in Missouri may have not reached the heights that states in the South experienced, but Missouri still experienced several major battles and remained a desirable strategic point for the South. After the outbreak of the conflict and the lack of conviction by Missouri voters to pursue secession, Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson rejected Lincoln’s call for volunteers for the army and set in motion a plan to ally Missouri with the Confederacy. Before fleeing Missouri, Jackson appointed General Sterling Price as the leader of state forces and made movements to solidify Missouri’s position against the Union. Following Jackson’s movements, the Union sent federal troops to seize an important St. Louis arsenal and force Jackson to leave Jefferson City.26


The divisions within Missouri state government contributed to immense chaos in the Missouri Valley. As Jackson called for assistance against the federal invaders, groups of pro-slavery men from Independence volunteered for service raided Kansas City for firearms. The small raid upon Kansas City was only the first in a series of planned assaults against the city. Over one thousand Confederates gathered at a farm outside of Independence with plans to invade Kansas City and secure it for the Confederacy, until troops arrived from Fort Leavenworth. These troops signaled the beginning of the federal occupation of Kansas City that persisted throughout the war.  

Robert T. Van Horn, the enterprising newspaperman, elected mayor early in 1861, faced difficulties dealing with the pro-secession party that had taken over city government. In the winter of 1861, the pro-secession legislature approved special powers for city commissioners enabling them to act without the mayor’s consent. To combat the growing unrest between Kansas City and the legislature, Van Horn left for St. Louis to discuss the guerrilla activity with the Union command stationed there. The general granted Van Horn the title of Major and gave him authorization to gather local militia to clear Kansas City of its lawlessness and secessionist faction. After returning with enough troops to regain control of Kansas City, Van Horn attempted to resume regular government operations, but with the lack of funds due to the disruption of trade due to the war, the city barely operated for the rest of the war.  

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27 Brown, 164-165; Leavenworth Daily Times, May 2, 1861, pg. 2; Brown and Dorsett, 26.

28 While most of the leaders of Kansas City supported the South, they chose to remain united to business and the future of Kansas City. This remained true during the Kansas troubles and throughout the Civil War, except for the rise of a faction of pro-secessionists. See, Western Journal of Commerce, April 5, 1860.

The beginning of the Civil War in Missouri represented the lowest period of Kansas City’s history. Van Horn’s popular *Journal of Western Commerce* ceased publication due to lack of support and the onset of extreme Southern sentiment in the city. Several merchant houses left Kansas City for nearby Kansas towns or St. Louis. The city could barely afford to pay its postmaster who stopped all mail during the summer of 1861. Those who supported the Union fortified the city to defend against the looming threats by the bands of Confederates heading towards Kansas City. Mayor Van Horn, charged with leading the city forces, attempted to protect the city and surrounding counties from Confederate attacks throughout the early period of the war.  

Those merchants who remained in Kansas City still conducted some basic level of business, especially with the traditional Southwest trade. The federal government ordered troops from several frontier forts to escort those along the Santa Fe Trail. Additionally, trade from Kansas City to Pike’s Peak temporarily brought in revenue for the city. From 1861-1862, trade through the Missouri Valley remained at nearly all time low levels, except for Leavenworth, whose economy had experienced a Civil War boom. While Kansas City struggled to retain some of its traditional trade, Leavenworth gained designation as the military freighting headquarters. In large part due to the presence of Fort Leavenworth, the government reassigned over seven million pounds of shipping freight to Leavenworth for the distribution throughout the frontier fort system.

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30 Greenwood, *Col. Robert T. Van Horn, His Life and Public Service*, 12-14. Westlake, 192-194; Kansas City feared an invasion in 1861 from Confederate General Price, Price’s raid stopped at Lexington, Missouri, fifty miles downstream from Kansas City. Van Horn and his militia marched to help the city before it fell. See Brown 166-167; Once the Union army, out of Leavenworth, occupied Kansas City, Van Horn and his men marched on with the Army of the Tennessee to Shiloh. Van Horn also briefly served in the Missouri State Legislature, before returning to Kansas City in 1863. See Brown 170-173.

31 See charts in Miller, 104-105; Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads*, 96; Moore, 224; Harry Seckley, “Old History Shows City as Civil War ‘Boom Town,’ Hit by a Slump,” *Leavenworth Times,*
The continued guerrilla warfare in western Missouri during the Civil War strained the cohesion that united the businessmen of Kansas City. For the elites who stayed, many faced financial hardships due to the decline in trade. Additionally, those who invested heavily in real estate found themselves unable to sell their lands, thus facing seizure for lack of tax payments. Additionally, as the city remained occupied by a Union force, those who supported the South faced apprehension from pro-Northern factions. By the end of 1862, in response to the consistent barrage of guerrilla attacks throughout western Missouri, the Union leadership issued General Order No. 37, which ordered the assets of pro-Southern sympathizers seized to reduce the ability of the guerrillas to fight. While this did not apply to Kansas Citians at first, the Union later targeted those merchants and businessmen who remained loyal to the Confederacy by fining them each fifteen thousand dollars to pay for the damages caused by the guerrillas.32

The pro-Northern group of the Chamber of Commerce responded to the fines by petitioning the acting Union Governor of Missouri, Hamilton Rowan Gamble, and the new federal general, Samuel R. Curtis, in St. Louis. When both of these options failed, the case reached Washington, where officials lifted a majority of the fines. The reprieve from persecution in Kansas City only temporarily lasted until August 1863 when William Quantrill, leader of a group of Missouri pro-Confederate guerrillas, destroyed much of Lawrence, Kansas. General Thomas Ewing, commanding officer of the U.S. Army District of the Border, fearing misguided retaliation from angry Kansans, issued General

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32 The command believed that since these merchants were most certainty selling supplies to guerrillas that they could pay for the damages. See, Brown and Dorsett, 27-28; Brown, 175-177, 188-189.
Order Number No. 11 forcing everyone in the surrounding west Missouri counties to evacuate to designated cities and military outposts. The order also determined that those loyal to the Confederacy should evacuate to the South. To hinder any guerrilla’s ability to find shelter and food, troops destroyed many homes and crops throughout Jackson, Cass, and the surrounding counties.

General Order No. 11 disrupted most of the remaining trade and commerce of Kansas City and forced prominent members to evacuate the area due to their known allegiance to the Confederacy. Except for the initial raids in 1861, Kansas City remained free from large-scale attacks throughout the Civil War. By the end of 1863, General Ewing lifted the provisions of General Order No. 11, which allowed those loyal to the Union to return to their homes. By early 1864, Ewing dismissed the District of the Border in Kansas and left a minor guard in place. However, in late September 1864, citizens panicked as General Sterling Price, the leader of the Confederacy’s forces in Missouri, marched with multiple brigades toward Kansas City. Price and his forces intended to sack Fort Leavenworth to secure the West, but the cities of Westport, Kansas City, and Independence were targets on the way.

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33 Ewing feared further reprisal by James Lane, the future senator of Kansas, who had already led multiple raids throughout western Missouri, executing those he found guilty in his own court. See Paul Kirkman, *The Battle of Westport: Missouri’s Great Confederate Raid* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011), 45-46.


35 Miller, 107; Price officially announced Kansas City as his first target, most likely as strategic bluff. See Paul Jenikns, *The Battle of Westport* (Kansas City, MO: Franklin Hudson Publishing Company, 1906), 48; Whitney, 198-199; *West Port 1812-1912* (Kansas City, MO: Franklin Hudson Publishing Group, 1912) 50-51.
In preparation for Price’s advance, soldiers from Fort Leavenworth and the Kansas militia stationed troops in Kansas City, Westport, and Independence. Robert T. Van Horn took the lead in Kansas City, setting up a series of blockades and defenses in the city. On the morning of October 21, 1864, Price’s forces assaulted Westport, which lasted for over three days and represented the largest conflict of the Civil War west of the Mississippi.\footnote{Westlake estimates that over twenty-nine thousand troops fought in Jackson County during this battle, according to records accessed by Paul Jenkins, the number is closer to thirty-two thousand. See Westlake, 198-200; Jenkins, 174; \textit{West Port 1812-1912}, 42-43, 60-63.} The Union soldiers repulsed the Confederate forces, but the destruction done to Westport signaled the end of Westport’s significance in the Missouri Valley as the city never recovered. The Battle of Westport represented the last major threat to the Missouri Valley, guerrilla activities persisted, but on a minor level.\footnote{A combined element of Union generals caught up with Price’s forces at the Battle of Mine Creek in Kansas, two days after retreating from the Battle of Westport. The battle destroyed much of the fleeing confederate forces, pushed Price south, and ended his terror upon Missouri and Kansas. See Jeffrey D. Stalnaker, \textit{The Battle of Mine Creek: The Crushing End of the Missouri Campaign}. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011), 10-12.}

Whereas Kansas City entered the war as the dominant trade hub of the Missouri Valley, the depression in Kansas City associated with the Civil War allowed Leavenworth to boom. Leavenworth dominated the regional trade, government contracts, and further extended trade to Pike’s Peak. For the emigrants who still headed west, Leavenworth became the premier city to begin the trek. The town of Leavenworth teemed with new development consisting of residential houses, theaters, brothels, bars, and merchant houses.\footnote{Glaab, \textit{Kansas City and the Railroads}, 97; “Leavenworth Businesses Houses,” \textit{The Emporia News}, May 31, 1862.} The town also served as the last terminus of the telegraph in the West
and remained a communication headquarters throughout the Civil War. To the leaders of Leavenworth, the city was emerging as the metropolis of the West.  

The outbreak of the Civil War contributed to an important event that shaped the future of the cities in the Missouri Valley. Without Southern state representation, Congress passed the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862, which called for the establishment of a railroad line from the Missouri River to California with government aid. Congress selected a route that extended from the Missouri River to the edge of the Nevada Territory. With that route selected, Abraham Lincoln had to declare the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific. While Lincoln did not favor the popular terminus of Kansas City, Kansas, or St. Joseph, Missouri, the wide-scale funding and construction of the railroad propelled development in Missouri and Kansas, especially in efforts to connect to the newly developing transcontinental railroad.  

Besides the impetus for development that the construction of the Union Pacific line gave to existing lines in Kansas and Missouri, the Pacific Railroad Act also authorized an additional route through Kansas to run parallel to the Union Pacific. Congress adapted the old Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western charter into a funded line

39 During the war, the guerrillas had repeatedly severed the telegraph lines between St. Louis and Kansas City. In some cases, the Union purposely cut them to deny the Confederates intelligence. See Sacramento Daily Union, June 24, 1861; Bird, 21.

40 See the Pacific Railway Acts, officially called, “An Act to aid in the Construction of a Railroad and Telegraph Line from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean, and to secure the Government the Use of the same for Postal, Military, and other Purposes,” Thirty-Seventh Congress, 2nd Session, United States Statutes at Large, 489-490; Congress passed additional acts to amend the conditions of the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1863, 1864, 1865, and 1866.

41 The construction of the Union Pacific was a slow process during the war, mainly due to the costs of the materials, but massive railroad developments occurred throughout Kansas, extending from the Missouri River, due to the impulse and grants allowed by the federal government. See section 8, 9, 10 of the Pacific Railway Act of 1862. See also Hine and Faragher, The American West, 282-285; Joseph Nicholas, Condensed History of the Construction of the Union Pacific Railway: Also Some Important Facts Later On (Omaha, NE: Klopp, Bartlett & Company, 1892), 147-148.
that stretched from Kansas City to Fort Riley, to connect with the main branch of the
Union Pacific line. By September 1863, construction of the Union Pacific Eastern
Division began across the river from Kansas City. By fall of 1864, construction reached
Lawrence, Kansas, nearly forty miles away.

With the threat from Southern troops and pro-slavery guerrillas at bay, and the
construction of the Union Pacific and the Union Pacific Eastern Division railroads
underway, a sense of normalcy returned to Kansas City. The depression caused by the
Civil War in Kansas City reduced the population and left the city in near financial ruin.

Those who remained in Kansas City started a program to rebuild the city and expand
trade once again. Before the end of the war, members of the Chamber of Commerce
worked to alleviate some of the debts that plagued Kansas City residents. Prominent
chamber members M. J. Payne, E.M. McGee, and Robert Van Horn, all elected to the
Missouri State Legislature, worked to pass bills to stop the foreclosure of property in

42 This spot across the river from Kansas City, Missouri, remained settled with interests from the
Kansas City, but also the incorporation of a once prominent trade post Quindaro, which due to guerrilla
warfare and its pro-slavery supporters, lost its prominence as a trade post. While Kansas City, Kansas, did
not officially come into being until much later in the 19th century, the construction of the Union Pacific
Railroad across the river from Kansas City, Missouri, started a pulling process that started engulfing former
small settlements and even the prominent city of Wyandotte, just four miles north. See Perl Wilbur
Morgan, History of Wyandotte County, Kansas: and its People (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company,
1911), 104-108; Pacific Railway Act, Sec 8,9,10.


44 No sources exist that present an accurate population census in Kansas City following the Civil
War, but multiple sources indicate a severe population drop. According to local historians like Westlake,
the population merely dropped by 500, but Kansas City local histories often blur the details on negative
moments associated with the Civil War. Going into the war, nearly 8,000 people lived in Kansas City, it is
safe to assume that the number dipped around 3,500. For different assessments of population, see Westlake,
263,437; William Earl Parrish, Perry McCandless, and William E. Foley, A History of Missouri, 1820-1860
(Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000, 134-135; Benjamin B Seelye, A Brief History of the First
Congregational Church, Kansas City, Mo., 1866-1909: Comprising the Story of the Old First
Congregational Church of the City of Kansas, 1866-1905 and of the Clyde Congregational Church of
Kansas City and allow those who lost property under General Order 11, exemption from state taxes. While these measures provided temporary relief for Kansas City residents, the condition of the city’s trade and finances after the end of the war placed the citizens of Kansas City near financial ruin. In order to survive, Kansas City’s businessmen had to align their future with the railroad.45

The Civil War not only brought violence and destruction to Missouri, it significantly delayed railroad progress. In 1860, before the outbreak of war, the Missouri Pacific faced multiple financial problems and fell into receivership in 1860. In the early parts of the war from 1861 to 1863, Confederate troops and pro-Southern guerrillas frequently targeted railroads throughout Missouri as a way to disrupt supply points. While the Missouri Pacific continued some minor expansion during the Civil War, funded by some operating profits and subscriptions, the destruction and conflicts in Missouri during the war, multiplied the construction difficulties of the Missouri Pacific. By 1863, the Missouri Pacific constructed only several miles of railroad until the throes of the Civil War passed in 1863, when the legislature could finally turn its attention to railroad issues.46

Among the elites in Missouri, funding the final phase of construction of the Missouri Pacific Railroad was a complicated matter. While the line suffered numerous financial setbacks, by the beginning of 1863, the Missouri Pacific had less than fifty miles to reach its western terminus, Kansas City where it could connect with the newly

45 Brown, 190-191.

46 Wiley Britton, The Civil War on the Border: A Narrative of Military Operations in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory, During the Years 1863-1865, Based Upon Official Reports and Observations (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1890), 145, 192-193; Stalnaker, 35, 39; Gerteis, 189, 194; Miller, 102-103; Sacramento Daily Union April 4, 1859; Daily Alta California, September 26, 1859; Riegel, “Missouri Pacific to 1879,” 12-13; Parrish, 207-208.
authorized Union Pacific Eastern Division. Despite being within months of finishing the line across the state, the Missouri Pacific fell even further into debt. Construction of the Missouri Pacific completely shut down without the necessary aid granted by the state. The failure of the line to repay loans granted by the state placed the Missouri Pacific into receivership, once again threatening the future of the line.⁴⁷

The Missouri Pacific’s operational insolvency placed the businessmen of Kansas City in a frantic position. Typically, members of the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce invested in vast tracks of real estate within Kansas City and the surrounding hinterland. Whereas before the Civil War, the merchants profited from increased land prices due to the rising numbers of emigrants settling or trading in the areas, the Civil War destroyed land values and disrupted normal business. Before the Civil War, the Chamber of Commerce promoted the railroad to boost the trade of the city as a nodal point and to increase the demand of property by expanding the city. The conflicts of the Civil War and the isolation from trade pushed Kansas City residents into financial ruin. Instead of profiting from traditional investment avenues, the elites of Kansas City could only speculate on the potential value of their land after the establishment of a railroad system.⁴⁸

To fund the Missouri Pacific, the Chamber of Commerce in Kansas City organized a movement to raise bonds until the Missouri state government could pass long term funding acts. To Robert Van Horn and the elite in Kansas City and Jackson County, funding the rest of the construction between Independence and Kansas City could propel

⁴⁷ Parrish, 207-208; Miller, 102.

either St. Louis or the state to grant additional aid. Even though the community supported the measure, Robert Van Horn and the Chamber of Commerce’s attempts to raise money failed due to the poor economic conditions of Jackson County and Kansas City. Despite Kansas City’s lack of funds, former mayor M.J. Payne successfully negotiated resumption in construction with George R. Taylor, the director of the Missouri Pacific.49

The desperate financial condition of the Missouri Pacific line not only resonated throughout Kansas City and generated controversy in the Missouri government as a faction of the Missouri government believed that the best course of action was to sell the railroad to a private entity to recoup government funds. The Missouri Pacific’s failure to generate a profit, and the reduced property value of the land granted to the Missouri Pacific, convinced the legislature that the line could not generate a profit, nor finish without additional state funding. Sensing a threat to Kansas City’s goal of establishing a railroad and connecting to the East, Robert T. Van Horn, M.J. Payne, and E.M. McGee, now elected to state government, campaigned within the state chambers to convert the Missouri Pacific’s lien into a second mortgage.50

The Missouri Legislature failed to address the lien issue during the 1863 session, but the trio of representatives from Kansas City did convince the assembly to enact a measure that delayed any attempt to sell the Missouri Pacific for three years.

49 General Order No. 11 pushed a portion of Jackson County’s rural citizens who opposed railroad development out of the county until late 1864. Railroad bills within Kansas City and Jackson County were more likely to pass without this faction who opposed railroad development. See Western Journal of Commerce September 14, 1864, for an announcement of the return of farmers. It should also be noted that rural populations who opposed the expansion of railroads was not isolated to Kansas City, Leavenworth experienced this as well. Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 184-187; Wyandotte County and Kansas City, 212; Miller, 474.

Construction of the Missouri Pacific line in Kansas City stopped once again until the next legislative session in late 1863 and early 1864. After a debate over the future of the railroad and an attempt by John Fremont to purchase the line and merge it with the Kansas Pacific, the legislature transferred the state lien into a second mortgage and allowed the company to resume construction with eligibility for aid from the state government.\footnote{Western Journal of Commerce, February 13, 1864; Western Journal of Commerce, April 2, 1864; History of Jackson County, 474-476; Charles P Deatherage, Early History of Greater Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas: The Prophetic City at the Mouth of the Kaw (Kansas City, MO: Interstate Publishing Company, 1927), 589.}

Once again, Kansas City celebrated a railroad victory and hoped that the Missouri Pacific could finally complete construction and alleviate the wartime depression. The pressures of isolation, poor financial conditions, and the long process of railroad negotiation finally cracked the unity of the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. With the Missouri Pacific beginning construction through the city, two factions developed over the placement of the line. One faction advocated running the line through the south side of town where those individuals owned tracts of land. The other faction, consisting of the directors of the Missouri and key members of the Chamber of Commerce, wanted the line to run along the levee where it could easily access trade. Merchants in the town feared that running the railroad along the levee would threaten the traditional river trade. With such a divide, the Chamber of Commerce approached the directors of the Missouri Pacific, who offered the city twenty-five thousand dollars to run the line along the levee. With the city suffering from the lack of trade due to the war, on September 17, 1864, the
citizens voted 270 to 107 in favor of allowing the Missouri Pacific to run along the levee and to accept the twenty-five thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{52}

The line between Independence and Kansas City finished in late September 1864. After construction of the Missouri Pacific continued east to connect with the lines coming from Pleasant Hill, Confederate general Sterling Price entered Missouri with his group of Confederate troops. General Price’s raid upon Missouri targeted the railroads in Missouri, especially the Missouri Pacific line, and destroyed over one million dollars of track. Additionally, Price’s troops destroyed railroad bridges throughout the interior of Missouri and destroyed machine shops.\textsuperscript{53} Price’s raid represented the last push of the Confederacy during the Civil War, but for the railroads in Missouri, business suffered. The damages forced the Missouri Pacific, already struggling financially to complete the connection between St. Louis and Kansas City, to petition the legislature for additional aid in late 1864.\textsuperscript{54}

In the Missouri Legislature, funding the Missouri Pacific remained a controversial issue, but new elements complicated opponents of funding the Missouri Pacific. The Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 authorized the Missouri Pacific to connect with the Union Pacific Eastern Division and vaguely authorized the expansion of the Hannibal and St. Joseph to connect with the Eastern Division. The authorization of multiple connections to

\textsuperscript{52} Western Journal of Commerce, July 2, 1864; Western Journal of Commerce, September 17, 1864.

\textsuperscript{53} Ridings, 469; Riegel, “The Missouri Pacific to 1879,” 13-14; Paul Kirman, 55, 74; I. MacDonald Demuth, The History of Pettis County, Missouri: Including an Authentic History of Sedalia, Other Towns and Townships, Together with ... Biographical Sketches ..., 1882, 387-388; Jerry Ponder, General Sterling Price’s 1864 Invasion of Missouri (Mason, TX: Ponder Books, 1999), 173.

\textsuperscript{54} Mark A. Lause, Price’s Lost Campaign: The 1864 Invasion of Missouri (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 158; Charles Nelson Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 183; Western Journal of Commerce, May 2, 1863.
the Union Pacific generated a sense of immediate action within the elites of Missouri, especially St. Louis, where growing tensions over the rise of Chicago trade threatened the economic dominance of St. Louis. The possibility of the Transcontinental Railroad bypassing St. Louis and the potential to lose access to the rich resources of the west threatened the city. Since the Union Pacific Eastern Division had already laid forty miles of operational track to Lawrence, the possibility that the Missouri Pacific could generate a profit and continue to connect to the Union Pacific forced the Missouri Legislature to continue to fund the line. After the suppression of Price and the end of the Civil War in Missouri, the Missouri Pacific repaired the damaged lines in late 1864. On September 21, 1865, the first cars of the Missouri Pacific rolled into Kansas City. Finally, Kansas City had its first railroad, which connected to St. Louis.\footnote{The History of Pettis County, 388; G.K. Renner, “The Kansas City Meat Packing Industry Before 1900,” Missouri Historical Review 55, no. 1 (October 1960): 19; Million, 90; Miller, 108-110; Daily Alta California September 2, 1859.}

As previously noted, Leavenworth experienced a tremendous boom during the Civil War. The United States government transferred the freighting contracts for goods

west from Kansas City to Leavenworth, and a majority of Missouri Valley commercial activity took place in Leavenworth. The city may have found good fortune, but in comparison to Kansas City, it failed to remain united over the future of the city. During the boom, some of the merchants in the town championed a bridge construction program along the Smoky Hill Route to speed the progress of trade from the Colorado Territory. Other divisions, led by, Samuel Hallett, advocated for expansions of the railroads to connect with the Union Pacific main line and other lines through Missouri. 57

Once Kansas City started recovering from the depression caused by the Civil War, increased rivalry between Kansas City and Leavenworth also developed. With the war over and the increasing development of railroads, the inevitable growth of one of the cities in the Missouri Valley seemed imminent. While both cities had access to railroads, the key to harnessing the valuable trade of the area and becoming a regional hub lay in a network of railroads. The completion of the Missouri Pacific and the development of the Union Pacific Eastern Division offered Kansas City an opportunity to develop into a centralized point of railroads, but the elites of Leavenworth worked to overtake Kansas City’s future railroad connections and bypass the town. 58

Until the end of the war, Kansas City focused its efforts on securing a Missouri system of railroads, but the elites of the Chamber of Commerce looked toward the future and planned a vast network of systems. While both Leavenworth and Kansas City possessed able boosters, the two rivers of the region posed a key problem. By the end of the Civil War, bridge technology had advanced enough to begin consider crossing the

57 Leavenworth Daily Times, August 16, 1865.

58 Miller, 108.
two rivers. Until the cities could master the rivers, they could only hope for marginal improvements in trade.59

Kansas City first attempted to bridge the rivers to expand its trading network. The Union Pacific Eastern Division initially connected with the Missouri Pacific by a system of ferries, but in 1864, the city established a pontoon bridge across the Kansas River that enabled quick and steady transport of passengers and cargo.60 Compared to the Missouri River, the Kansas River was less dangerous and lacked commercial steamboat traffic.61 Additionally, geography afforded Kansas City an advantage over Leavenworth with regards to the extension of the Kansas Pacific. The line originally designated Leavenworth as a main point in the line, but the route from Kansas City to Lawrence required no expensive bridges and little initial investment besides connecting the line in Kansas City. From Lawrence, the Union Pacific Eastern Division could operate spur lines to both Leavenworth and Atchison. Until the Confederate raid that destroyed most of Lawrence in 1864, Lawrence appeared to be overtaking Leavenworth and Kansas City as a regional hub.62

The boosters of Leavenworth wasted no time capitalizing on Kansas City’s economic crisis during the Civil War. Similar to the Kansas City, Galveston, and Lake


61 In 1864, the Kansas State Legislature officially declared the Kansas River as unnavigable. See The Journal of the Kansas Bar Association. Bar Association of the State of Kansas, 1992, 41.

62 Kansas Annual Register, 153; Richard, D. Cordley, A History of Lawrence, Kansas: From the First Settlement to the Close of the Rebellion (Lawrence, KS: Lawrence Journal Press, 1895), 96, 256.
Superior, in 1864 Kansas authorized a charter for the Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Galveston.\textsuperscript{63} The two individuals responsible for the promotion and financing of the line, Samuel Hallett and Jim Lane, played pivotal roles in the development of railroads in Kansas, particularly those involving Leavenworth, during the 1860s.\textsuperscript{64} Contrary to Kansas City’s north-south railroad development, the Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Galveston line represented more than a paper railroad; it was an attempt to harness not only the valuable trade of the growing southern region of Kansas, but also the rich available land that the United States Congress offered as aid for railroads that constructed towards the state line.\textsuperscript{65}

The growth and expansion of the Missouri Pacific and the chartering the Union Pacific Eastern Division provided the impetus for the railroad boom in Leavenworth and Kansas during this period. Upon the completion of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad to St. Joseph in 1859, the merchants of Kansas pictured a network of railroads to connect the vast agricultural resources to the East, but less than twenty miles of physical construction took place before 1864. With federal and state government land grants provided to aid in construction of railroads in Kansas, the remaining years of the 1860s consisted of numerous attempts to establish a railroad to harness the growing trade in

\textsuperscript{63} Originally, the Kansas Legislature authorized the charter to the Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Fort Gibson, but the line never started construction. For a brief overview of legality regarding the changing charter from the 1850s until 1866, see Lawrence Lewis, Adelbert Hamilton, John Houston Merrill, William Mark McKinney, James Manford Kerr, and John Crawford Thomson eds., \textit{The American and English Railroad Cases: A Collection of All the Railroad Cases in the Courts of Last Resort in America and England} (Northport, NY: Edward Thompson Company, 1883), 596.

\textsuperscript{64} Samuel Hallett came to Leavenworth from the East as an investor on the Union Pacific Eastern Division. For a brief overview of Samuel Hallett and his involvement in Kansas, see \textit{The Road: A Fortnightly Review of Railway Practice; Extraordinary Cases in the Last Ten Years Described} (Philadelphia, PA: Thomas S. Fernon Printing, 1877), 137.

California and Denver, as well as the emerging growth of Texas and its shipping industry.\textsuperscript{66}

While Hallett and Lane provided their own booster campaign to position Leavenworth as the center of railroads in the West, the divisions within the Leavenworth and Kansas prevented Leavenworth’s expansion. Hallett and Lane possessed the vision of establishing Leavenworth as a railroad hub by not only focusing on connections with the East, but also establishing connections to the West. The growing factions in Leavenworth divided their loyalties to lines that provided temporary benefits. In many cases, Leavenworth chose to abandon cooperation with other Kansas towns in order to construct lines that placed Leavenworth as the sole eastern terminus.\textsuperscript{67}

In late 1864, when Kansas City began recovering from the depression that accompanied the Civil War, the growing rivalry between Leavenworth and Kansas City multiplied. Leavenworth occupied a good portion of the Santa Fe Trail trade that Kansas City typically operated, but as Kansas City reasserted itself as a safe destination for wagons and traders to transport wares, rumors of Kansas City’s violence and lack of safe passage to the area spread throughout the Missouri Valley. Additionally, as calls for the construction for the Missouri River Railroad that connected Kansas City and Leavenworth increased, apprehension developed in Leavenworth as a faction of

\textsuperscript{66} Thomas L. Kames, \textit{William Gilpin, Western Nationalist} (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1970), 239; Ralph Tennal, \textit{History of Nemaha County, Kansas} (Lawrence, KS: Standard Publishing Company, 1916), 77; I.E. Quastler and Edward Dennis Sokol, \textit{The Railroads of Lawrence, Kansas, 1854-1900: A Case Study in the Causes and Consequences of an Unsuccessful American Urban Railroad Program} (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1979), 64, 82.

prominent railroad investors believed that Leavenworth needed to bypass Kansas City. Some also feared that connecting to Kansas City’s main line would send all traffic through Kansas City, and Leavenworth would be but a stop along the line. Instead of being just a spur off Kansas City and Atchison’s line, Leavenworth boosters sought to establish Leavenworth as a sole terminal of the Hannibal and St. Joseph.⁶⁸

Before the Civil War, both Leavenworth and Kansas City started negotiations for a connection with the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. In both cases, the negotiations consisted of bond measures passed by the cities in order to pay for paving the roadbed in hopes to attract the railroad to furnish the line. With the establishment of the Missouri Pacific and the connection to the Union Pacific Eastern Division, James F. Joy, John Murray Forbes’s lieutenant for Western affairs began to shift his attention towards the Missouri Valley. Joy, who successfully managed and forged the Michigan railroad network for Forbes, possessed a different philosophy. Whereas Forbes’s railroad philosophy dictated that railroads must generate a profit from use for long-term financial responsibility, Joy emphasized the enormous short-term gains from land grants associated with the construction of new lines. James F. Joy strove to form railroad empires, insisting that expansion allowed a railroad to survive.⁶⁹

In June 1863, James F. Joy traveled to the Missouri Valley, when the enormous land grants associated with the Union Pacific Eastern Division Railroad enticed the directors of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy railroad to begin surveying prospective

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⁶⁸ Sacramento Daily Union, November 7, 1860; McEwen and Dillenback, 32; Western Journal of Commerce March 4, 1864; Western Journal of Commerce, March 5, 1864;

⁶⁹ Miller, 115, 77; Smith, 114; John Lauritz Larson, Bonds of Enterprise: John Murray Forbes and Western Development in America’s Railway Age (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2001), 128, 132, 130.
expansion outlets. The Union Pacific Eastern Division, originally owned by a group of investors from Leavenworth, Pawnee, and other towns in Kansas, could not afford to complete construction of the line beyond the initial phase of clearing the roadbed. Following the financial hardship of the company, the Union Pacific Eastern Division’s future remained unclear. Multiple parities attempted to gain control of the line and the profits from the land grants in Kansas.\(^70\)

The question of the Union Pacific Eastern Division’s ownership of the company caused construction to stop briefly due a lapse in payments to the contracting firm of Ross, Steele, and Company. Two emerging Kansas railroaders, John C. Fremont and Samuel Hallett, invested $200,000 and started the process of acquisition. Before the completion of the paperwork to grant Hallett and Fremont ownership of the line, James F. Joy, sent C.A. Trowbridge to negotiate the terms with Ross, Steele, and Company. James F. Joy’s first encounter with Hallett and the city of Leavenworth ended with Hallet rallying a militia force to chase the men of Ross, Steele, and Company from their jobsite.\(^71\)

Hallett, originally from New York, centered his railroad enterprise in Leavenworth and sought to expand a rail network to the East at the expense of Leavenworth’s rival, Kansas City. According to the Pacific Railroad Act, Kansas City was the Union Pacific Eastern Division’s mandated eastern terminus. Without the ability


\(^71\) James F. Joy most likely sent Trowbridge to survey the situation and try to gain control of the railroad. See Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 211, 212; Cruise, 535.
to change the eastern terminus, Hallett instead chose to focus on the route across west Kansas. The debate of the routes divided both Leavenworth and Kansas. One faction argued the benefits of a northern Kansas route due to the geography and room to build, while another faction argued that a southern route along the Kansas River, one of the areas exploding with population due to the recent boom, could prove easier to construct and operate.

By the fall of 1863, Hallett, unable to come to terms with the differing factions in Leavenworth, moved the headquarters of his operation to Wyandotte. While Hallett still believed that Leavenworth could become the center of trade and a great hub of railroads, the mayor and landowners in the city derailed his vision by offering Hallett land at extremely high prices. Additionally, the city refused to turn over a bond issue directed towards the Union Pacific Eastern Division, thus causing a stoppage in construction. Other factors likely played a role in Hallet’s decision. The Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, after learning about a possible connection between the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad and Leavenworth, attempted to stop negotiations by offering Hallet controlling interest in the Kansas City and Cameron Road. Even without the Chamber of Commerce’s intervention, the Eastern investors of the Chicago, Burlington, and

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72 The Pacific Railway Act placed no direct restrictions on the choice of the route across Kansas.


74 Cruise, 534-537; Collins, 266.

Quincy did not want to invest in the Union Pacific Eastern Division because of problems with ownership, funding, and construction.76

When Hallett began construction on the Union Pacific Eastern Division from Wyandotte in April 1863, he not only had controlling interest in the Eastern Division, but also interest in the Parkville and Grand River Railroad, which ran north of the Missouri River. Hallett intended to form a railroad network, and quick actions by the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce enabled Hallett to focus his attentions on Wyandotte and thus directing a network to Kansas City. Leavenworth, again with its divisions and greed, lost another chance to become a railroad center.77

As president of the Union Pacific Eastern Division, Samuel Hallett quickly pushed railroad construction and laid over forty miles of track to Lawrence when the chief engineer O. A. Talcot, fearing the haphazard construction of the railroad and its ramifications on safety, telegraphed Abraham Lincoln that the road did not meet construction requirements to receive the grant from Congress.78 Upon hearing the news, Hallett, who was in Washington D.C. seeking additional aid for the Union Pacific, telegraphed his brother in Wyandotte, who slapped O.A. Talcott. On July 27, 1864, after arriving back at his offices in Wyandotte, Talcott shot Hallett, mortally wounding him.


The death of Hallett delayed both the establishment of a vast railroad network for Kansas City and construction of Union Pacific Eastern Division.⁷⁹

After a brief period of uncertainty, the Union Pacific Eastern Division continued construction and quickly laid rails across the state. By 1866, the company under new leadership petitioned Congress to change the predesigned route that dictated a northern connection with the Union Pacific in Nebraska along the 100th meridian. Instead, Congress authorized a new connection to Denver, and a junction with the Union Pacific in Wyoming. With the establishment of the Missouri Pacific in Kansas City in 1865, this made Kansas City the logical terminal for the Union Pacific Eastern Division. With a connection to Denver, a rapidly building town, and a line across the entirety of Kansas, the junction of rail lines in Kansas City enabled the city to deal in the rapid agriculture of the West.⁸⁰

Leavenworth, with a sizable depot on the Union Pacific Eastern Division line and a new connection from the Missouri Pacific, remained a contender in trade in the Missouri Valley. By 1866, as Leavenworth negotiated a direct connection to the East, Kansas City’s Chamber of Commerce hurried to stop Leavenworth from obtaining a Kansas City bypass. If Leavenworth could bypass its Kansas City connection and establish a direct link to the Hannibal and St. Joseph or the North Missouri Railroad, the city could deal directly with Chicago or St. Louis instead of negotiating through Kansas City. Of all the years of the railroad boom in the Missouri Valley, 1866 proved to be the

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most decisive in determining what city could rise above the others, as Leavenworth and Kansas City both raced to connect to the Hannibal and St. Joseph.\textsuperscript{81}

The Kansas City Chamber of Commerce reorganized the Kansas City, Galveston, and Lake Superior Railroad into the Kansas City and Cameron during the Civil War and enacted a measure to fund the roadbed paving. While the Chamber of Commerce successfully negotiated with the directors of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad, the actual funds meant for completion of the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad went towards finishing the Kansas City segment of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. With a minor amount of work done on the roadbed, and the ensuing commercial breakdown of Kansas City in late 1863, construction and negotiation talks ceased.\textsuperscript{82}

Following the end of General Price’s raid and the suppression of guerrilla warfare in Missouri, Kansas City resumed negotiations with the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy directors. James Lane, the prominent senator from Kansas, fashioned a grand design to run an additional connecting line of the Missouri Pacific from Lawrence to Pleasant Hill. This route, positioned twenty-five miles below Kansas City, could avoid heading through the town and offer the railroad a straight shot to St. Louis. In addition to this route, Lane proposed a southern line to extend from Lawrence to Galveston, directly competing with Kansas City’s proposed line to the South. With Leavenworth’s attempt to establish a spur line the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad as a way to bypass Kansas City, and Lane’s

\textsuperscript{81} Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce, April 21, 1866.

\textsuperscript{82} Miller, 118; Journal of the Senate of the State of Missouri at the Adjourned Session of the Twenty-Second General Assembly of the State of Missouri (Jefferson City, MO: J. P. Ament Printing, 1863), 28.
plan to establish Leavenworth and Lawrence as a network of railroads designed to circumvent Kansas City, the boosters of Kansas City realized that Leavenworth’s new champion, James Lane, threatened the future of the city.83

The connection with the Hannibal and St. Joseph centered on crossing the Missouri River. By 1866, bridge technology had improved greatly and the possibility of crossing the river seemed optimistic.84 Groups of boosters in each city set out to raise money and entice the directors of the Hannibal and St. Joseph by advocating the geographical and economic benefits of each city. Before the Civil War, bridge construction had not seemed necessary to the Chamber of Commerce in Kansas City. The city had an excellent relationship with both the ferry system that managed the city and only a few steamboats actually traveled to Kansas City down the river. However, the Civil War emphasized the inefficiency of using ferries, as the system could not quickly negotiate large amounts of cargo quickly.85

Both Kansas City and Leavenworth began intense negotiations in late 1865 with the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad’s, James F. Joy, who managed the affairs of the railroad for the Eastern investors. During these negotiations, Kansas City’s Chamber of Commerce campaigned to raise money to build portions of the Kansas City

83 During the Kansas troubles and the Civil War, Lane led multiple excursions to attack Missourians not directly involved in combat and raids in Kansas. See Brown, 160, 168; Paul R. Peter, Quantrill of Missouri: The Making of a Guerrilla Warrior: The Man, the Myth, the Soldier (Nashville, TN: Cumberland House Publishing, 2003), 319.

84 The introduction of the Howe Truss Bridge enabled engineers to build stronger bridges. See Brian Solomon, North American Railroad Bridges (St. Paul, MN: Voyageur Press, 2008), 33-34.

85 Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 242-243; Morgan, 126; Westlake 252.
and Cameron Railroad. Even though Kansas City’s financial situation had improved following the end of the Civil War, Kansas City bonds did not inspire trust or investment potential in the East.

In the initial phase of negotiations, Kansas City offered to pave the roadbed of the Kansas City and Cameron and transfer ownership to the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad if James F. Joy, in exchange, furnished the materials and constructed the road. By the end of 1865, Leavenworth appeared to be winning the race for the railroad and bridge after a session with James F. Joy and investors from Leavenworth formed a crude, vague agreement to construct a road between Leavenworth and Cameron, upon Leavenworth’s completion of a roadbed.

Even though Leavenworth brokered an informal agreement with James F. Joy, Kansas City authorized new city bonds and transferred older, existing bonds from the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad. Construction resumed during the early part of 1866 but lasted only several months, until persistent funding issues plaguing the railroad shut down operations. Leavenworth, too, faced its own problems in negotiating the initial construction of the railroad. Once again, multiple factions who each possessed a different charter authorizing construction of the railroad could not agree over the legality of each side’s charter.

J. T. K. Hayward, a former director of the Hannibal and St. Joseph, visited both Kansas City and Leavenworth as an agent to of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy to

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87 *Leavenworth Daily Times*, October 31, 1865.
provide James F. Joy with an update over each town’s progress towards roadbed clearing and fundraising. Hayward declared that Leavenworth possessed a better opportunity of completing their road and doubted the ability of Kansas City to fund their project.88

Even though Leavenworth had obvious advantages in the race to gain the approval of James F. Joy, key elements aided Kansas City in developing a relationship with Joy, who after an injury to an associate, John W. Brooks, possessed authority over the decision to build the spur line.89 Joy, who at this point began to differ in philosophy from his Boston investors, sought to expand the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy line westward and form a new system. Additionally, Joy, a seasoned land speculator, guided an associate, Theodore Case, to purchase large tracts of land throughout Kansas City. Once again, Leavenworth did not possess the large tracts of cheap land, as the divisive elites each wanted to gain more individually than the city could collectively.90

While Joy may have not intended the action at first, the vast resources and available lands in southern Kansas and the possibility of negotiating a train through Indian Territory, attracted Joy to Kansas City. Joy anticipated a large portion of land grants associated with building a railroad through Indian Territory, curiously absent of railroads. Additionally, Joy purchased numerous lots throughout southern Kansas in anticipation of a successful line radiating from Kansas City. In the short-term, the


89 Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 255.

90 Brown, 209-211; Thomas K. Skinner, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of the State of Missouri* (Kansas City, MO: Ramsey, Millett, and Hudson, 1884), 185.
geography of Kansas City allowed for quicker rail access to the south. In comparison, Leavenworth required the Hannibal and St. Joseph to establish two river crossings in order to provide a direct route to the same land.91

James F. Joy’s level of commitment to Leavenworth, as the winner of the contract, is debatable. In 1860, Joy’s first experience in Leavenworth, led to denial of city bonds because the people of Leavenworth questioned the railroad’s legitimacy. Additionally, Thomas Ewing, the lawyer-general of Kansas, led a faction that believed that giving Joy an initial subscription of $100,000 could force Leavenworth to finance the spur line. Joy and his associates made it clear in 1860, that the spur line needed funding from the city in order for authorization of construction, but Leavenworth, as in the case with Samuel Hallett, believed that the city’s business and large population merited complete outside funding of the railroad.92

While both Kansas City and Leavenworth continued taking pledges from citizens and raising county bonds to invest in the railroad, the directors of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy kept their policy that construction of a spur line, at the very least, required enough initial bonds to complete the roadbed. On June 4, 1866, executives of the Hannibal and St. Joseph drew up two contracts to send to Leavenworth dictating the terms of the construction of the spur line. Before the treasurer of the Hannibal and St. Joseph, R. S. Watson, could send the contracts to Leavenworth, a trio of representatives from Kansas City met with the executives of the Hannibal and St. Joseph. The trio asked

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the company to reconsider opening the contract with Kansas City, originally established in 1860. The Hannibal and St. Joseph referred to Joy, who asked for a delay and an opportunity to visit Kansas City and survey the progress of the railroad and fundraising.93

During the visit to the two cities, Joy determined that constructing the roadbed in Leavenworth meant the use of most of the county’s bonds. Joy certainly recalled past efforts and the difficulties associated with passing funding measures in Leavenworth as a divided town with multiple factions. On his trip to Kansas City, Joy witnessed the present state of partial construction of the roadbed and the initiative to pass city bonds for railroads, and assured the Chamber of Commerce of his support. The final catalyst to sway the executives of the Hannibal and St. Joseph, Congressional authorization of the bridge, remained in the way.94

Before selecting Kansas City as the location of the Hannibal and St. Joseph spur line, Joy requested that the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce use Congressional connections to pass a bill authorizing a bridge at Kansas City and Quincy. Kansas City’s representative, Robert T. Van Horn, elected in 1864, negotiated bridge additions to a large omnibus bill during the Thirty-Ninth Congress that authorized the establishment of a bridge across the Missouri River on July 25, 1866. Joy also requested that Van Horn seek additional land grants in Congress for a proposed Kansas City southern extension, the Missouri River, Fort Scott, and Gulf Railroad. Van Horn’s successful lobbying for both the bridge bill and expansion of land grants enabled James Frederick Joy; the directors of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad; and the executives of the

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93 The contract expired due to a clause that a railroad must be constructed within two years. Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 262-265.

94 Leavenworth Daily Times, August 16, 1865.
Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad to draft a contract with the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad.\footnote{While this analysis of the Congressional debate is brief, the bill passed several bridges, most without any opposition. The only debate regarding the bridges at Kansas City and Quincy rested with steamboat interests. Since Kansas City’s Chamber of Commerce had a developed relationship with area steamboat lines, this proved to be a minor issue, but (as indicated in chapter 3) Mississippi River steamboat interests remained powerful. Brown, 209-211; Leavenworth’s senatorial champion, James Lane, committed suicide shortly before end the senatorial session of the thirty-ninth congress that authorized construction of the railroad bridge. Lane remained the only major opponent to construction of the railroad bridge in Kansas City and the additional of a large tract of land grants associated with Joy’s prospected railroad in Kansas. See Speer, 315-316; Miller, 115; Daniel Webster Wilder, The Annals of Kansas (Topeka, KS: G. W. Martin Publishing House, 1875), 568.}

After a series of negotiations regarding control of the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad, and an additional attempt by J.T.K Hayward to sway the decision to Leavenworth, on December 10, 1866, the directors of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad and Cameron Railroad agreed to provide the funds and iron rails in exchange for ownership of the Kansas City and Cameron. The Chamber of Commerce and the directors of the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad officially approved the contract on February 4, 1867. Within days, construction began on the line between Cameron and Kansas City. With Joy at the head of construction, the railroad progressed rapidly and reached Harlem, just opposite of Kansas City on the Missouri River, on November 30, 1867.\footnote{Before approving the contract, the directors of the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad petitioned Chicago to invest in the railroad so that the directors could maintain control of the railroad instead of offering ownership to the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. See Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce, February 3, 1867; Brown, 210-211; Westlake, 252, 255.}

Before the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad could reach Kansas City, the construction of a bridge to gap the Missouri River had to be completed. While not as treacherous as the Mississippi River, the Missouri River was still a formidable barrier.
Kansas City, however had a geographic advantage. Compared to Leavenworth and St. Joseph, the bridge had to cross a shorter distance, thus saving money and time.\(^97\)

Under the supervision of engineer Octave Chanute, the Hannibal and St. Joseph Bridge in Kansas City opened to the public on July 3, 1869. The city rejoiced at the opening of the bridge and the through track that now centered three major railroad lines at Kansas City. Within a year, Kansas City’s network had expanded to over nine railroads.\(^98\) The trials of the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and the hard times brought on by the Civil War seemed like a distant memory.\(^99\)

Even though Kansas City won the contract for the spur road and the Hannibal and St. Joseph Bridge across the Missouri River, the immediate rivalry between Kansas City and Leavenworth continued. Before the official opening of the bridge, Joseph McCoy who steadily advanced his position as the largest cattleman of Kansas contracted with Leavenworth to be a shipping center for his vast stock of Texas cattle. Leavenworth did not fully support McCoy’s endeavor and refused to offer the enterprise any advantages. By the end of 1868, convinced of the vast shipping potential of Kansas City, McCoy established a shipping facility in Kansas City. Soon with the connection of the railroads

\(^{97}\) Glaab, “Local Promotion,” 274.

\(^{98}\) On February 22, 1867, the Missouri State Legislature authorized any railroad terminating on or near the Hannibal and St. Joseph bridge authorization to use the bridge. This bill greatly contributed to the expansion of the railroads in Kansas City and profited the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. See Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce, February 23, 1867.

to Chicago and St. Louis, the Kansas City stockyards provided meat to most of the East.\textsuperscript{100}

While Kansas City entered 1860 as one of the leading shipping towns in the Missouri Valley, the Civil War threatened to destroy much of the town commercial enterprise. By 1863, Leavenworth had overtaken Kansas City in both population and commercial enterprises but still lacked key elements responsible for Kansas City’s success. The divisive nature of the elites of Leavenworth proved too strong for the town to come together on railroad issues. The Kansas City Chamber of Commerce could essentially fund any railroad bill needed to pave a roadbed to entice railroads.

The amazing unity of the Chamber of Commerce proved to be an essential factor in the rise of Kansas City. Even though the town faced opposition from the rural segment of the county, Kansas City still outnumbered voters on major railroad bills. City bills for railroad bonds passed easily. Even though the establishment of a railroad network threatened certain industries, such as the wagon traders, the availability of large tracts of cheap, speculative land offered the Kansas City elites long-term potential.

Geography also played an important role in the ascension of Kansas City. Kansas City, at the mouth of the Missouri River and the Kaw River, possessed a natural supremacy over Leavenworth. Kansas City offered potential railroads a cheaper route to southern Kansas, where railroads could develop the territory through the vast amount of land grants. Additionally, the distribution of smaller towns throughout Jackson County and across the river in Kansas, allowed Kansas City to expand its hinterland and establish a system of exchange that revolved on a center point.

Finally, the local railroad boosters remained the most important factor in the rise of Kansas City over Leavenworth. The promoters shared a singular vision that required cooperation and persistence. While the prospect of a transcontinental railroad propelled railroad development in Missouri, by working through the multiple financial problems of the Missouri Pacific, the boosters managed to attract the Union Pacific Eastern Division, which in turn attracted the Hannibal and St. Joseph. By chartering multiple paper railroads and working to establish a north-south directional railroad, in combination with an eastern and western connection, the Chamber of Commerce positioned Kansas City to appeal to the eastern investors.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The day has come at last. All the bright anticipation of the people are now realized, our railroad system is completed, and we now feel bold to say that Kansas City is the city of the Missouri Valley.¹

Cities in the Missouri Valley grew because of westward expansion during the mid-nineteenth century. Kansas City emerged from the expansion of business at Westport and the use of the levee as a center point of trade in the area. While local historians from Kansas City highlight the significance of Kansas City’s victory over Leavenworth from inception, Kansas City also successfully outmaneuvered rivals Westport, Weston, and Independence. Indeed, Kansas City’s story did not begin with the construction of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Bridge, but with the founding of Westport. Native Americans first realized the potential for the area long before any white settlement. In 1821, Francois Chouteau, a fur trader, recognizing the geographical benefits of the area, established a trading post in the area. Over time, the growing Native American presence attracted missionary, Isaac McCoy, while the potential of Chouteau’s small trading post appealed to Isaac’s son, John Calvin McCoy, a businessman who realized the geographical advantages the area offered and established a store and plots for a settlement. McCoy, called his settlement Westport, but the landing through which river goods entered the city grew into Kansas City after McCoy and associates purchased a two-hundred acre estate, which the group organized into a township.²

¹ Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce, December 1, 1866.

² The most comprehensive accounts of early Kansas City come from its local historians, William Griffith, William H. Miller, Carrie Westlake, and C.C. Spaulding. For more information on the connection between the St. Louis fur trade and the Chouteau family’s involvement in the settlement of the Missouri River, see William E. Foley and Charles David Rice, The First Chouteaus: River Barons of Early St. Louis (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000).
Initially, Kansas City thrived as a post in the fur trade, dictated by St. Louis, but over time, the area developed its own economy. The city first established a viable local trade with Native American tribes. With a strong local trade, the city used its superior geographic location, at the confluence of the Kaw and Missouri Rivers, to offer Santa Fe Trail traders a superior location over the previously utilized Independence, Missouri. The expansion of western Missouri, through settlement along the Missouri River and the Platte Purchase, also contributed to the success of Kansas City.

The expansion of western Missouri greatly influenced the settlement of Kansas and, especially, Leavenworth. Leavenworth emerged from the settlement of Fort Leavenworth and the need to have some form of commercial exchange surrounding the fort. The area remained sparsely settled until the development of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which caused a surge of settlers into Kansas from Missouri and other areas in the East. Through the rapid development and settlement of the area, Leavenworth expanded its commerce and hinterland to include trade with Fort Leavenworth, the surrounding areas of Kansas, and the settlers heading further west along the Smoky Hill Trail.

During the 1850s, Leavenworth and Kansas City each developed a hinterland and long distance trade that the cities felt content with, but the coming of the railroad set events in motion for an economic battle between the cities. As the Missouri Pacific, first chartered in 1851, faced a long arduous construction process west, Kansas City and Leavenworth hedged the future of each town upon connecting to the railroad. By the onset of the Panic of 1857, boosters in each city started the process of attracting the railroads in hopes of being along the rumored transcontinental line.
The beginning of 1860 found Leavenworth with a larger population, but Kansas City leading the Missouri Valley in commerce. Fortunes in Kansas City changed with the violence brought by the Civil War, allowing Leavenworth to become the most populous and profitable city in the region. While the Civil War threatened the survival of Kansas City, the effects of the conflict actually provided Kansas City an advantage in acquiring access to multiple railroad trunk lines, which ultimately pushed the city over its Missouri Valley rivals.³

The elites of Kansas City possessed a sense of vision and remained united through many periods of uncertainty. With the formation of the Chamber of Commerce in 1857, the elites dictated much of the legislation of the city, especially in terms of business and railroads. In comparison, Leavenworth remained highly divided over issues of railroads, infrastructure, and expansion. Additionally, as the economic downturn caused by the Civil War tightened Kansas City’s economy, the elites of the town found themselves united and facing less opposition by industries threatened by the expansion of the railroad. The Civil War also pushed the rural elements of Kansas City away from the area, allowing increased railroad funding measures without traditional rural opposition.

In late 1863, with the majority of Civil War conflict in Missouri finished, the expansion of the Missouri Pacific and the passage of the Pacific Railroad Acts greatly benefited Kansas City. The Pacific Railroad Acts allowed for the extension of a railroad from Kansas City, designed to connect with the Missouri Pacific, to western Kansas and Denver. The Chamber of Commerce’s dedication to finishing the Missouri Pacific’s

³ Most Kansas City historians leave out reference to the disastrous condition of the city during the Civil War era. William H. Miller, the city’s most comprehensive historian, only briefly mentions the Civil War, and ignores its impact upon the city. See Miller, 55, 110, 149.
connection to Kansas City incited a railroad boom in the area that resulted in appealing to the Hannibal and St. Joseph directors who looked to connect the valuable commerce of the West to Chicago and the East.

The myth of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Bridge, as presented by the early historians of the city, presents Kansas City as an underdog in the race of supremacy for the Missouri Valley. The myth establishes the importance of the Chamber of Commerce and the railroad boosters, who through the ambitious maneuvers of a few, attracted the last minute attention of James F. Joy, and through the swift actions of Robert T. Van Horn, secured Congressional legislation to build the bridge right under the nose of Leavenworth officials. While the myth has an entertaining sense of drama, the story leaves out many important elements. By placing such an emphasis on the bridge, the myth leaves out the importance and hard work of the railroad boosters in securing the Missouri Pacific. Additionally, local histories seldom mention the correlation between Kansas City’s selection as the Missouri Pacific’s western terminus and the Congressional designation of Wyandotte as the terminal of the Kansas Pacific.

Key to Kansas City’s expansion and often understudied is the incorporation of multiple smaller cities into a larger metropolis. Kansas City possessed an abundance of surrounding land purchased by that the early leaders of the town as investments. With the available real estate, Kansas City could both attract the railroad, and facilitate additional settlement. The expansion of the Kansas Pacific Railroad and the Missouri Pacific Railroad influenced the creation of Kansas City, Kansas. The construction of the Kansas Pacific Railroad was a key factor in the development of Kansas City.

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4 Griffith, 108.

5 For an effective summary of the legend of the bridge, see Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads*, 1-9.
City stockyards and the connection of the Kansas Pacific contributed to the rise of Kansas City as a meatpacking hub. Armourdale, just south of the Kaw River, emerged as a meatpacking district that identified itself with Kansas City, Kansas. Additionally, the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad’s expansion to the Missouri River, shortly before the completion of the bridge, influenced the growth of Harlem, which emerged as part of the city following the opening of the bridge.

Regarding negotiations of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Bridge, the myth fails to mention the multiple visits of James F. Joy and the value of the land that he purchased in Kansas City. Instead, the focus is on the brevity of negotiations between the directors of the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad with the Boston investors of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad. While the construction of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Bridge did in fact lead to the rise of Kansas City as a metropolis, Leavenworth still worked to secure another bridge. Even with seven railroads operating at the base of the city, Kansas City continued to expand and negotiate rail connections.

The simplification of the rise of Kansas City into a metropolis trivializes the work of city officials to attract the railroads beginning in the mid-1850s. The myth also reduces the importance of several key events in the history of Kansas City. The construction of

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6 The growing presence of Kansas City stockyards and fresh cattle shipments enabled Kansas City to attract meatpacking businessmen from other cities as well. St. Joseph had a longstanding meatpacking industry, but with the emergence of the intersection of McCoy and the railroad hubs, Kansas City offered the businessmen a better deal to relocate. For the businessmen, relocation was a necessity in order to survive in the industry. For more information see The Daily News History of Buchanan County and St. Joseph, Mo: Supplemented by Biographical Sketches (St. Joseph, MO: St. Joseph Publishing Company, 1899), 71-72.

7 Roy Ellis, A Civic History of Kansas City, Missouri (Springfield, MO: Elkins-Swyers, 1930), 9.


9 Miller, 123.
the Hannibal and St. Joseph was neither the beginning of the rise of Kansas City, nor the end, but a continuation of the expansion of Kansas City’s hinterland. As the railroads connected to Kansas City, the city’s hinterland grew from southern Kansas and western Missouri into a regional trade that consisted of goods from Texas, Santa Fe, and Denver, which found their way into St. Louis, Chicago, and the East.

While some elements of luck assisted the Chamber of Commerce in establishing the railroads in Kansas City, through the hard work and effort, or what some call, “The Kansas City Spirit,” the elites of Kansas City possessed a long-term vision that their competition in Leavenworth lacked. Despite tough decisions and hard economic times, the elites of Kansas City placed their future in the railroad and remained dedicated to the cause throughout repeated struggles. The close-knit relationship between the Chamber of Commerce and city officials enabled the elites to pass legislation for railroad needs that matched the vision of the boosters. Kansas City’s rise to Missouri Valley dominance was the culmination of a multitude of factors that the boosters in the city successfully harnessed. Analyzing the history of Kansas City and the importance of railroad development in establishing the city as the metropolis of the plains may help historians understand the interaction between urban development and hinterland, railroads and cities, and successful booster campaigns.
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