ATCHISON, AN EARLY HISTORY

A Thesis

Presented to

the Division of Social sciences

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

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by

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June 1979

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Stanley J. Alexander (name of student) for the Master of Science (degree)

in History (major) presented on December 21, 1979 (date)

Title: Atchison, An Early History

Abstract Approved: Walter W. Buchanan

Atchison is a city rich in historic interest. The city was the first in Kansas to have either a bank or a railroad, as well as several other "firsts" in the history of our state.

While man has undoubtedly occupied the Atchison area for thousands of years, the known history of the region began just a few hundred years ago with the arrival of the Kansa Indians. These Indians figured prominently in the visits of many of the early explorers who journeyed to Kansas.

Atchison was founded in 1854, by a group of men from Missouri. The city became the headquarters of the pro-slavery forces that were determined to establish Kansas as a slave state.

Atchison became in a few short years an important commercial center. By the late 1850s steamboats were de-

livering large amounts of goods and passengers to the town for transportation to the West. Because of its location at the great bend of the Missouri River and its steamboat trade, Atchison became a prominent overland freighting terminus. The city became the "Gateway to the West," carrying on a tremendous trade with the mining camps, military forts, and settlements to the West.

The coming of the railroad era forced Atchison to shift its attention from water to land transportation. "Railroad fever" spread to the Midwest as the towns along the Missouri River raced to secure railroad connections. Atchison developed into an important railroad center. During the 1870s, 80 to 100 freight and passenger trains arrived and departed daily. But in spite of its early success, Atchison failed to become the "Great Railroad Center of Kansas."

This paper traces the development of Atchison to its rise as one of the most important cities in early Kansas history. The exploration, growth, and development of the city figures very prominently in, and parallels, the evolution of the state of Kansas.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is indebted to the staff of the Kansas State Historical Society for its much appreciated help in locating and providing needed materials. The Atchison Library and the libraries of Benedictine College and Emporia State University also aided me with valuable and courteous assistance.

I would like to give special recognition to my wife, Linda. Without her assistance over several months, the typing and editing of this paper would have been nearly impossible to complete.

Finally I wish to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Edwin Moreland, Dr. John Zimmerman, and particularly the chairman, Mr. Walter Butcher. Their guidance was much needed and highly appreciated.

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INTRODUCTION

Atchison, located in the northeastern corner of Kansas on the Missouri River, is a city rich in historic interest. The city was the first in Kansas to have either a bank or a railroad, as well as several other "firsts" in the history of our state.

In early times, Atchison was undoubtedly the home of prehistoric Indians who roamed throughout the rich hunting lands of the Atchison area. While man has occupied the region for thousands of years, the known history of the area began just a few hundred years ago with the arrival of the Kansa Indians. These Indians figured prominently in the visits of many of the early explorers who journeyed to Kansas.

Founded in 1854, by a group of men from Missouri, Atchison became the headquarters of the pro-slavery forces that were determined to establish Kansas as a slave state.

Atchison quickly became one of the most important cities in Kansas, becoming firmly established as the "Gateway to the West": a great railroad, steamboat, stagecoach, and wagon train center.

By the year 1880, Atchison was the industrial and agricultural center of Northeast Kansas, and was reaching the peak of a steady population growth.

This paper traces the development of Atchison from the earliest historical references about its location to its rise as one of the most important cities in early Kansas history. The exploration, growth, and development of the city figures very prominently in, and parallels, the evolution of the great state of Kansas.

Atchison, while not being ignored by historians, has not been the subject of exhaustive research. This work consolidates numerous sources to shape a comprehensive account of the city's early history.

CHAPTER I

LAND OF THE KANSA

When white men first came to Kansas, there were but a few Indian tribes here. Some of these Indians roamed the plains in search of buffalo, while others dwelled in the rich river valleys of Kansas.

The Kansa Indians had settled along the banks of the Missouri River at Doniphan, just north of Atchison. The tribe eventually spread southward to the banks of the Kansas River, and westward near present-day Manhattan.

The Kansa abandoned their Missouri River villages sometime just before the 1800s. Bourgmont visited the Grand Village, just north of Atchison in 1724. A later Kansa village was located farther south on the Missouri between Atchison and Leavenworth. However, by the time of Lewis and Clark's expedition in 1804, the Kansa had receded to the banks of the Kansas River.

The exact origin of the Kansa Indians is unknown, but study indicates that they probably resided on the Ohio River. Hundreds of years ago they migrated westward to the Kansas River, and eventually settled northward along the Missouri River.[1]

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[1]Waldo R. Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science, Vol. 49 (1946), p. 4.

Written records referring specifically to the name Kansa go back to 1673, the year of French explorer Father Marquette's great voyage down the Mississippi River.

> The crudely constructed and dimly outlined map based on Marquette's journey down the Mississippi River in 1673 still stands as the oldest extant historical document that indisputedly makes reference to the people (Kansa) under consideration.[2]

There is no evidence that Marquette ever personally came into contact with the Kansa. He apparently heard of them and of their general location from one of the tribes along the Mississippi.

Other French maps of the late 1600s and early 1700s also show the approximate location of the Kansa. It might be supposed that during this period of time some parties of French traders may have encountered the Kansa, but there are no records to offer as evidence.[3]

The first firmly established contact between the Kansa Indians and white men occurred in 1724. In this year Bourgmont, a French military commander, arrived at the Grand Village of the Kansa, which was located just north of Atchison at the later site of the town of Doniphan.

The exact meaning and origin of the word Kansa or Kansas has been a matter of considerable dispute and study.

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[2]William E. Unrau, The Kansa Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), p. 6.

[3]Ibid, p. 9.

William Connelley, a noted Kansas historian of the early 1900s, stated that, beyond doubt, the word Kansa can be traced directly to the Siouan language family.[4] Most ethnologists shared Connelley's conclusion.[5]

A noted authority on the Kansa Indians, George P. Morehouse, took exception to the conclusions of Connelley and others. He claimed that the name Kansa was derived from a word used by Spanish explorers during the early 1600s. Morehouse announced, in 1907, that he had discovered more than 125 different spellings of the tribe's name. Some of these were: Kanzan, Canzon, Kancez, Kansies, Canceas, Konza, Canceze, and Kaw.[6] An earlier Kansas historian, John Hay, had reported in 1882, twenty-four ways of spelling the word.[7]

Morehouse became firmly convinced that the word Kansa did indeed derive from a Spanish word, Escansaques. Most ethnologists and others involved in Indian studies, however, were not convinced of the accuracy of Morehouse's findings.[8]

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[4]William E. Connelley, Standard History of Kansas and Kansans, Vol. I (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918), p. 196.

[5]Unrau, The Kansa Indians, p. 7.

[6]George P. Morehouse, "History of the Kansa or Kaw Indians," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. 10 (1907-08), p. 333.

[7]John Hay, "Kaw and Kansas, A Monograph on the Name of the State," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. 9 (1905-06), p. 523.

[8]Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," p. 4.

During an expedition into Kansas in 1601, Spaniard Juan de Onate, Governor of New Mexico, described a tribe of Indians which he called the Escansaques. George Hammond, editor of the narratives of the Onate expedition, states that the Escansaques may have been Kansa or Osage Indians.[9]

However, William Unrau disputes the possibility that the Escansaques might have been the Kansa:

> The editors of the Onate manuscripts...describe the Indian's homes and economy in a manner quite contrary to subsequent and more careful appraisals of the important characteristics. They also note that the word Escansaques was uttered by these Indians as they placed their hands on their breasts to make the traditional sign of peace, a gesture which obviously conflicts with the emphasis Morehouse placed on the alleged belligerence of the Kansa.[10]

Waldo Wedel characterized Morehouse's claim as being "more ingenious than convincing."[11]

Addison Stubbs, an interpreter who lived for several years among the Kansa, wrote of an interesting finding in 1896. He reported that Konza, the word for plum, was the

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[9]George P. Hammond, ed., Don Juan de Onate, Colonizer of New Mexico, Vol. I (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1953), p. 25.

[10]Unrau, The Kansa Indians, p. 8. The Escansaques were described as tepee-dwellers, rather than lodge-builders, in Hammond, ed., Don Juan de Onate, Colonizer of New Mexico, Vol. I, pp. 751-52.

[11]Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," p. 4.

closest word to Kansa in the spoken language of the tribe, and that to them "it was simply a name with no meaning."[12]

Earlier reports, however, suggested that the Kansa did recognize the word as the tribal name customary in historical times. Isaac McCoy, a missionary and surveyor, told Secretary of War John Eaton, in 1831, that the "authentic" pronunciation was "Kan'Zau."[13]

Although, as Connelley states, "the full meaning of the word Kansas may never be known,"[14] historians generally agree that the word means "wind people", "People of the South wind", or a variety of other phrases involving the word wind.[15]

Countless other interpretations have been offered, but it seems safe to conclude that the name Kansa derived from an Indian word, perhaps Siouan. Somehow it evolved into the language of the European explorers.[16]

As the Kansa Indians came into contact with the white man's culture, their physical and social characteristics were written into the narratives of numerous explorers and travel-

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[12]Addison Stubbs to A. G. Adams, 23 May 1896. Addison Woodward Stubbs Papers, Manuscript Division of the Kansas State Historical Society.

[13]Isaac McCoy to John Eaton, 31 January 1831. Isaac McCoy Papers, Manuscript Division of the Kansas State Historical Society.

[14]Connelley, Standard History of Kansas and Kansans, p. 196.

[15]Unrau, The Kansa Indians, p. 11.

[16]Ibid, p. 10.

ers. Perrin Du Lac, a visitor to one of the Kansa villages in 1802, described the braves as "tall, handsome, vigorous, and brave."[17] Thomas Say, who accompanied Stephen Long's expedition through Kansas, commented favorably on their coppery color, straight black hair, high cheek bones, and well-formed bodies. He noted that the men carefully plucked their arms, chins, eyebrows, and much of the scalp, leaving only a narrow strip, just enough to enable their enemy to gain the honor of their scalp. This strip of hair was often decorated with an eagle feather, or perhaps a deer tail.[18]

The typical brave wore a breechcloth and girdle, plus leggings and moccasins made of deer skins. They wore beads or trinkets suspended from their slit-ears, and colorful tatoos and paint covered their bodies. Father De Smet, who visited a Kansa village in 1840, gave this description of two of the braves he met:

> ...armed like warriors, one carrying a lance and a buckler, and the other a bow and arrows, with a naked sword and a collar made of the claws of four bears which he had killed with his own hand.[19]

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[17] Ibid, p. 28.

[18] Edwin James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Vol. I (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966) pp. 126-27.

[19] Chittenden, Hiram M. and Alfred T. Richardson, (eds.), Life, Letters, and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, Vol. I (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), p. 280.

The Father also wrote that the men, when not hunting, spent most of their waking hours eating or smoking.

> ...discharging the fumes of the tobacco by their mouths and nostrils, reminded one of the funnels of a steamboat.[20]

Unlike the fine descriptions of the Kansa male, the typical Kansa female was generally described in less than a complimentary manner. Edwin Bryant, stopping in Kansas on his way to California in 1846, characterized them as being inferior in intelligence and "miserable-looking objects in their features, figures, and clothing."[21] John Irving, in 1833, had offered this description of one of the Kansa squaws:

> We had heard of Indian beauties, but she was not one of them, for she engrossed in her own person a concentration of ugliness, which would have satisfied a dozen ordinary females.[22]

The fact that the Kansa female generally was undernourished, shabbily dressed, and assigned by tradition to perform most of the tribe's manual labor, including all of the agricultural toil, probably resulted in her crude and sloppy personal appearance. The Kansa women wore moccasins, leggings, a short skirt, and a loose upper garment that was often removed to expose her from the waist up, and long, braided hair.

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[20]Ibid, p. 282.

[21]Edwin Bryant, What I Saw in California (New York: Appleton, 1848), p. 39.

[22]John Francis McDermott, (ed.) Indian Sketches Taken During an Expedition to the Pawnee Tribes by John Treat Irving, Jr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), p. 57.

> "Thus her clothing and general appearance were hardly designed to appeal to the largely Victorian tastes of eastern observers."[23]

The Kansa women did not want the braves to do any work, and didn't complain or object to their own hard work.

> The duty of the braves was to hunt and fight, and to consider those things which were for the general good of the tribe. According to their ideals of true Indian character, servile duties about the camp or village, or any labor of the white man's kind, were to them degrading in the extreme.[24]

As to the mental and moral characteristics of the Kansa, Thomas Say observed:

> They bear sickness and pain with great fortitude, seldom uttering a complaint. Insanity is unknown; the blind are taken care of by their friends. Drunkenness is rare, and is much ridiculed.[25]

The following was noted by Father De Smet:

> With regard to the qualities which distinguish man from the brute, they are far from being deficient. To bodily strength and courage they unite a shrewdness and address superior to other savages, and in their wars and on the chase they make dexterous use of firearms, which gives them a decided advantage over their enemies.[26]

And De Smet continues:

> However cruel they may be to their foes, the Kansas are no strangers to the tenderest sentiments of piety, friendship, and compassion.[27]

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[23]Unrau, The Kansa Indians, p. 29.

[24]Morehouse, "History of the Kansa or Kaw Indians," p. 362.

[25]James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, p. 125.

[26]Chittenden and Richardson (eds.), Life, Letters, and Travels of De Smet, p. 283.

[27]Ibid, p. 285.

As to their conduct toward their enemies, De Smet made these observations:

> To be enabled to take many a scalp from their enemies, or to rob them of many horses, becomes the object of their most fervid prayers, to which they sometimes add fasts, macerations, and sacrifices. What did they not do last spring, to render the heavens propitious? To obtain the power, in the absence of their warriors, to massacre all the women and children of the Pawnees! And in effect they carried off the scalps of ninety victims, and made prisoners of all whom they did not think proper to kill. It would be time lost to attempt to persuade them that there can be neither merit nor glory in the murder of a disarmed and helpless enemy.[28]

The Kansa Indians were builders of grass lodges. These dwellings were much larger than the more famous tepees made by the Indians farther to the west. These well-constructed lodges could last a lifetime.

Although the Kansa Indians lived in fixed villages and grew corn and garden vegetables, buffalo meat was their chief food. They were quite dependent upon the buffalo for many of the necessities of life. In addition to meat, the buffalo was useful in the making of clothing, utensils, rope, ceremonial implements, and a variety of other useful items.[29]

While there were no great battles between the Kansa and white men, their relations varied and were not always friendly. They carried on a lucrative trade in furs with the French during the 1700s, and continued this trade with the American explorers and traders during the early 1800s.

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Bliss Isely and W. M. Richards (eds.), Four Centuries in Kansas (Topeka: The State of Kansas, 1946) pp. 21-22.

As warriors the Kansa seem to have stood rather high among their peers, according to the narratives of the early explorers. Zebulon Pike recorded this experience:

> We were led considerably out of our course by our guides, and in my opinion not less than 100 miles; this was entirely owing to the pusillanimity of the Osage, who were more afraid of the Kans, than I could possibly have imagined.[30]

De Smet, over 30 years later, said this of the Pawnees:

> Though six times more numerous than the Kanzas, they have almost on every occasion been conquered by the latter, because they are far inferior to them in the use of firearms, and in strength and courage.[31]

Meriwether Lewis made the following reference to the Kansa:

> ...a dissolute, lawless banditti, who frequently plunder their traders, and commit depreditions on persons ascending and descending the Missouri River.[32]

Stephen Long made this observation in 1823:

> This tribe was formerly very troublesome to our traders, frequently robbing them of their goods, but since the establishment of the upper posts on the Missouri, they have become very friendly.[33]

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[30]Jackson, Donald (ed.), The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, Vol. II (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), p. 150.

[31]Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," p. 31.

[32]Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Vol. 6 (New York: Antiquarian Press, Ltd., 1959), p. 85.

[33]James, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Vol. II, p. 365.

Chief White Plume, principal Chief of the Kansa Indians during the early 1800s. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

Little White Bear, one of the seven principal Kansa chiefs during the 1820-30s. Courtesy Kansas Historical Society.

An unidentified Kansa woman, probably photographed in the 1870s or early 1880s. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

Later, in the days of the Santa Fe Trail, the Kansa had a certain notoriety as thieves, "though rarely as armed disputants of the passage." It may also be noted that, as a tribe, the Kansa never took up arms against the United States government.[34]

The Kansa Indians practiced what we might call Animalism as their religion. They worshipped the glory and powers of nature, which they called "Waucondahs". These mysterious spirits existed through the whole universe -- in the sun, rocks, rivers, seasons, thunder, or practically any other object.[35]

The Kansa made sacrifices to the Waucondahs. The Kansa, in earlier days, burned the hearts of their slain enemies as sacrifices to the winds. In other ceremonies, pieces of flesh cut from their own bodies were substituted.[36]

The Kansa Indians believed that great horned monsters lived beneath the Missouri River bluffs. Some of the islands in the river were feared as evil places. Bear Medicine Island, several miles south of Atchison, may have been the site of secret religious ceremonies.[37]

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[34]Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," p. 31.

[35]Unrau, The Kansa Indians, p. 46.

[36]Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," p. 33.

[37]David Dary, "When Indians Ruled the Riverbank," The Kansas City Star Magazine, Vol. 7, No. 27 (1976), "Bicentennial: 200 Years in Mid-America," on 4 July 1976. Bear Medicine Island was later called Kickapoo Island. Because of one of the Missouri's many shifts, this island has since vanished.

George P. Morehouse made important studies of the Kansa tribe during its confinement on the upper Neosho Reservation during the mid-1800s. The leaders of the Kansa must have liked him rather well, as they later elected him, in 1908, "Historian of the Kansa Tribe."[38]

Morehouse was told by the Kansa that "hundreds and hundreds of snows" after the forming of the earth, man simply leaped into existence. In the beginning the Kansa believed there were only red men--who were extremely proud of their long tails. As punishment for this obsessive vanity, great swarms of mosquitoes (and women) were sent down to earth and their wonderful tails were taken away.[39]

Another popular Kansa legend held that man and woman were placed on a tiny island surrounded by "leagues and leagues of water." Soon the island became so over-crowded that its excess population was drowned in the sea, but the women "prayed to the Great Spirit to save them from destruction by giving them more room." The kind Great Spirit then sent down great numbers of beavers, muskrats, and turtles, whose task it would be to build a much larger area of land. For many years these animals molded this small island into the world's great land masses from materials at the ocean's

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[38]"Appointment as Historian of the Kansa or Kaw Tribe," G. P. Morehouse Papers, Manuscript Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

[39]"The Creation," G. P. Morehouse Papers, Manuscript Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

bottom. Autumn leaves were used by the Great Spirit to create birds, deer, buffalo, and other animals. The world was "filled with life and beauty."[40]

There was much custom and ceremony surrounding marriage and it was sacred and binding. The Kansa tribal circle consisted of two half-tribes, each made up of eight different gentes whose members were descendants of a common ancestor. No Kansa was allowed to marry a woman from a gens of his side of the circle, nor could he marry even a remote relative.[41]

Chastity was an important requisite, if a woman hoped to be the wife of a chief or a successful warrior or hunter. Although the young women were dutifully guarded by their mothers against a possible violation, Thomas Say reported the presence of "several courtezans" in the Kansa village he visited.[42]

The French traded with the Kansa throughout most of the 1700s; however, this trade was very unequal. The French traded the Kansa guns, ammunition, whiskey, tools, tobacco, and other goods for the much more valuable pelts and furs of the beaver, deer, otter, bear, and other animals which were abundant in eastern Kansas.

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," p. 27.

[42] Ibid, p. 25.

Perrin du Lac described, in 1802, how the French traders dealt with the Kansa Indians:

> When a trader arrives at a village belonging to these nations, his first business is to make presents to the chiefs, before he lands the merchandise. He is then permitted to construct his cabin in any part of the village which he pleases, and to open his shop. When the prices of the articles which he brings for sale are once fixed, no variations whatsoever are afterwards permitted. When a savage enters the cabin he lays down the skins which he has to dispose of, and fixes on the articles which he prefers. Each skin has a conventional value. There is never any difficulty in the traffic.[43]

The French trade with the Kansa continued until the purchase of Louisiana in 1803. This great land bargain had far-reaching consequences for the Kansa, as well as for the other tribes of the region.

The development of the Louisiana Territory by the United States was to be linked with the removal of certain eastern tribes to the new territory. Before this could be undertaken, however, it was first necessary to extinguish the primary title of the indigenous tribes. The Kansa were among the first victims. An immediate result of the Indian Removal was the establishment of reservations.

The Kansa Indians signed, on October 28, 1815, a treaty of peace and friendship with the government of the United States. This treaty was signed at St. Louis, as was the Kansa Treaty of 1825, which gave all of the Kansa lands

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[43] A. P. Nasatir, ed., Before Lewis and Clark, Vol. II (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), p. 708.

of eastern Kansas, except a large tract of land along the Kansas River, to the government. This agreement was signed by White Plume, principal chief of the Kansa, and Governor William Clark. Villages were established to the west of present-day Topeka.

The first mission to the Kansa was established in 1835 by Rev. William Johnson, a Methodist. The missionary's efforts met with little success. Morehouse wrote strongly of the neglect of the Kansa in religious and educational help, and the manner in which our government robbed them of their richest lands.

In 1825, the Kansa were induced to sell their right to about one-half of the richest part of Kansas for a mere pittance, that a lot of immigrant tribes might be provided with homes.

The government, after taking away its mighty domain, made only spasmodic efforts toward civilizing the tribe. Educational opportunities were ill-directed and half-hearted.[44]

The government hired a number of different farmers to teach the Kansa about agriculture. This appointee was simply called "the farmer." Daniel Morgan Boone, son of the famous explorer, opened a farm in 1827. Some success was made, but very few of the braves would consent to work, farming being "the work of the squaws."[45]

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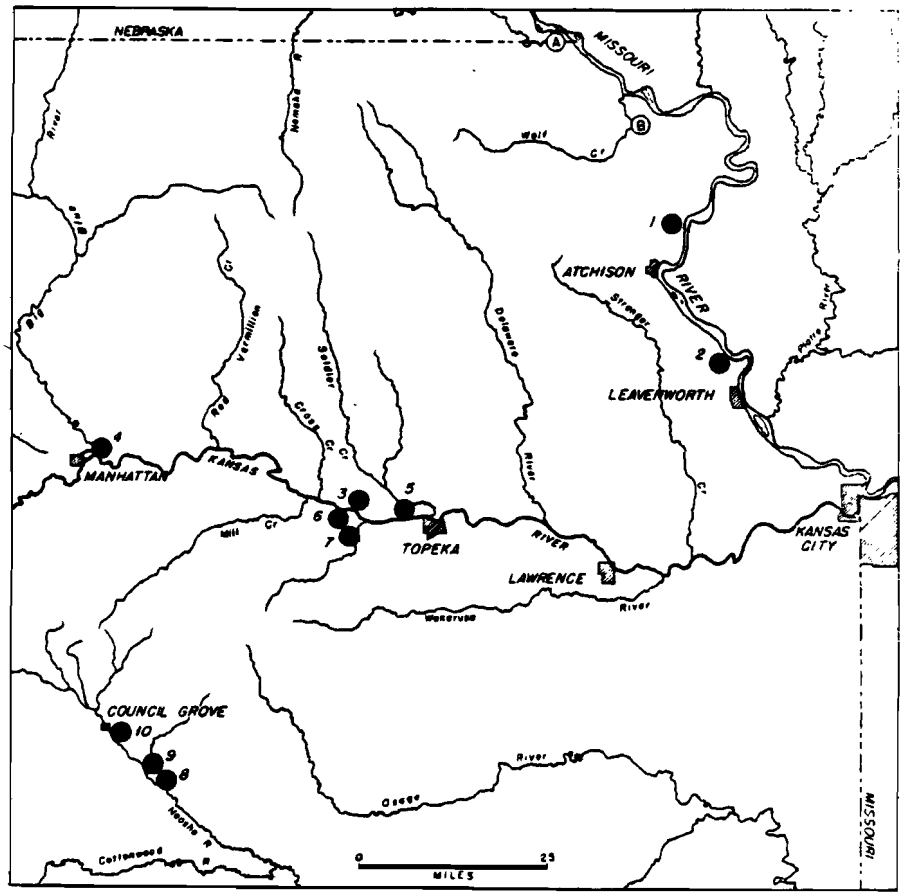
[44]Morehouse, "History of the Kansa or Kaw Indians," p. 363.

[45]Ibid, pp. 362-63.



KANSA INDIAN SITES IN KANSAS

1, Doniphan site, the "Grand Village des Cansez", is referred to, by George Morehouse, as the "first capital of Kansas". It was visited, in 1724, by Bourgmont; 2, site just south of the Atchison County line. A French fort and trading post were here in 1757; 3, an old Kansa village which Lewis and Clark heard of in 1804; 4, site located near Manhattan and occupied between 1800-1830; 5, 6, 7, these three sites were occupied from 1830-1846; 8, 9, 10, these sites were occupied from 1847-1873. In 1873, the Kansa were removed to Oklahoma. This map appeared on page 2, in Waldo Wedel, "The Kansa Indians."

On January 14, 1846, the Kansa signed an even more disastrous treaty with the "White Father". The Mission Creek Treaty ceded the eastern portion of their Kansas River tract. This resulted in the moving of the tribe to a new (but smaller) reservation on the Neosho River near Council Grove. Here the tribe decayed morally and numerically.

> After they learned to love liquor, all efforts for their advancement proved futile. The tribe among whom "drunkenness was rare" ceased to exist, and before they were removed to the Indian Territory, they were perhaps the most degraded tribe in Kansas.[46]

In 1855, the Kansa Indians were hit by a devastating epidemic of smallpox that killed over 400 of the tribe's members. Smallpox, cholera, and other communicable diseases of the white man accounted for a mortality rate of fantastic proportions during the mid-1800s.

Accounts of traders, explorers, and other observers indicate that the Kansa population was quite stable from at least 1723 until about 1850. As late as 1844 there were probably 1700 Kansa Indians, yet a census taken in 1869, just twenty-five years later, counted a population of just 525.[47]

Several other factors made the survival of the Kansa increasingly uncertain. Many Kansas were killed at an early age during recurrent warfare with the Osages, Pawnees,

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[46] A. T. Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), p. 60.

[47] Information from a chart showing estimates of population for the Kansa Indians since 1723 in Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," p. 16.

Cheyennes, and other tribes. A large number of braves were killed during raids to seize captives and horses. Unrau discusses an additional factor in the decline of the Kansa Indians:

> The seemingly calculated destruction of the natural buffalo supply, together with the federal government's failure to provide adequate economic assistance, led to increasing malnutrition and, in some cases, death by starvation.[48]

Combined with disease and the demoralizing effect of alcoholism, the tribe rapidly decayed. The Kansa were also the prey of land speculators, traders and merchants, and the victim of the Indian Agents.

The white man's increasing greed and his misunderstanding of the red man in Kansas can be illustrated by this quote from a Kansas newspaper of the 1850s:

> A set of miserable, dirty, lousy, blanketed, thieving, lying, sneaking, murdering, graceless, faithless, gut-eating skunks as the Lord ever permitted to infect the earth, and whose immediate extermination all men, except Indian Agents and traders, should pray for.[49]

In 1854, Kansas Territory was established. Settlers eventually came to the Neosho River Valley and began to overrun the Kansa reservation. In 1873, a new treaty was concluded. Again the white man displaced the Kansa. The Kansa were now forced to leave Kansas. The new reservation was in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), east of the Arkansas River.

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[48]Unrau, The Kansa Indians, p. 27.

[49]Christopher Davis, The North American Indian (New York: Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1969), p. 57.

Here there was some success in farming and stock-raising, although many of the braves had enlisted in the army.

By 1882, the Kansa population was only about 200. Andreas wrote the following pitiful description of the Kansa in 1883:

> ...a feeble, poverty-stricken remnant of the powerful nation from which the fair state of Kansas derived its name.[50]

In 1976 there were but sixteen known full-blooded Kansa Indians, of which fourteen still live near the old reservation lands in Oklahoma.[51]

In retrospect, the Kansa Indians were never a very large or powerful tribe of Indians, nor were they a very important factor in the settling of the frontier.

> Their story is symbolic of the unequal struggle being waged by many of their contemporaries--tribes a little too large to be ignored or brushed aside, yet at the same time too small to maintain themselves indefinitely against pestilence, want, neglect, and injustice. It is to their credit that they were able to retain their identity as long as they did--long enough be it remembered, to see one of their own blood occupy the second highest office in our nation.[52]

Within the heart of what was once the great hunting lands of the Kansa, the city of Atchison was to be founded.

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[50]Andreas, History of Kansas, p. 60.

[51]Dary, "When Indians Ruled the Riverbank," p. 15.

[52]Wedel, "The Kansa Indians," pp. 2-3. Charles Curtis was vice-president from 1929-1933. He was a great-great grandson of White Plume, who was a Kansa Chief during the early 1800s.

George Remsburg, Atchison County historian, reported that several Indian campsites were found in the Atchison area, including one within Atchison's original town site.[53]

On October 24, 1832, just seven years after the Kansa ceded their eastern Kansas lands to our government, the Kickapoo Indians were assigned to a reservation in Northeast Kansas, which included most of Atchison County. The Treaty of Castor Hill, Missouri, stipulated that their reservation lands would include at least twelve hundred square miles.[54]

The earliest accounts mentioning the Kickapoo were written during the 1600s. At this time they lived in the lands between the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers. They later lived in the area of the Wabash River. During the early days of the Indian Removal, they were moved to a tract of land along the Osage River in Missouri. From here they were sent to their Kansas lands.[55]

The removal of the eastern tribes to the lands west of the Mississippi River constitutes one of the most shameful episodes in American history.

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[53]Mark Zimmerman, "The Ground House Indians," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. XIV (1915-18), p. 474.

[54]William Zornow, Kansas, A History of the Jayhawk State (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1971), p. 45.

[55]Connelley, Kansas and Kansans, Vol. I, pp. 264-65.

> No phase of American history is more depressing than the sordid story of the removal of these unhappy wretches from familiar surroundings to a new abode. Sickness decimated their ranks, and they were constantly preyed upon by unscrupulous white traders and drummers who sought to relieve them of the modest wealth they possessed even before they reached their destination.[56]

Over ten thousand Indians were uprooted from their homes, extending from New York to Missouri, and delivered to Kansas reservation lands.

In 1854, the Kickapoo reservation was reduced to a one hundred and fifty thousand acre tract on the Grasshopper River. Much of this diminished reserve was lost through the labors of corrupt railroad promoters. Soon the rapidly shrinking Kickapoo lands were again reduced, and the tribe was given its present territory of about sixty-four hundred acres in Brown County.[57]

During their brief stay in Atchison County, the towns of Muscotah, Kennekuk, and Kapioma were the centers of Kickapoo occupancy. Both Kennekuk and Kapioma were the names of Kickapoo chiefs, and Muscotah is a Kickapoo word meaning "Beautiful Prairie."[58]

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[56]Zornow, Kansas, A History of the Jayhawk State, p. 45.

[57]Connelley, Kansas and Kansans, Vol. I, p. 265.

[58]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 30.

CHAPTER II

EXPLORATION AND EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE ATCHISON AREA

The first European explorer to reach Kansas was Francisco de Coronado. This Spanish expedition came to the land of Quivera in 1541. A few earlier historians brought the great explorer eastward to the Missouri River and into what is now Atchison County.[1] However, later researchers have proven beyond doubt that the Atchison area was not honored with a visit by the great conquistador. The path of Coronado's advance into Kansas is now generally well established by both archaeologists and historians. In 1881 some chain mail fragments were found at a site just south of Lindsborg. About fifteen miles to the east of this site, an old Spanish bridle was unearthed.[2]

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[1]William Connelley, Standard History of Kansas and Kansans, Vol. I (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918), pp. 10-11; Sheffield Ingalls, History of Atchison County (Lawrence: Standard Publishing Company, 1916), p. 31. Bandalier placed Quivera in Northeast Kansas. L. B. Prince also wrote that Coronado may have traveled to Northeast Kansas. H. H. Bancroft gave the location of Quivera as somewhere between the Arkansas and Missouri Rivers.

[2]W. E. Richey, "Early Spanish Explorers and Implements in Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. XIII (1903-04), p. 160.

Perhaps the most interesting artifact to be uncovered was the sword found in Finney County in 1886. Inscriptions on this antique weapon point out its ownership by Juan Gallego, one of Coronado's officers. Also marked on the sword is the inscription "Draw Me Not Without Reason; Sheath Me Not Without Honor"--a common engraving upon Spanish swords of Coronado's time.[3]

The exact route and the extent of Coronado's expedition has long been the subject of disagreement among Kansas historians. Most do, at least, agree that Coronado first came to the Arkansas River at a point just east of Dodge City. He then advanced northward to the Smoky Hill River. As to the extent of Coronado's travels, Richmond flatly states that "he did not go farther than the site of Lindsborg, although some writers have believed he did."[4] Zornow, in an earlier work, offered the same conclusion.[5]

Dunbar notes that a very significant discovery was certainly within Coronado's grasp, but he was destined to fail.

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Robert Richmond, Kansas, A Land of Contrasts (St. Charles: Forum Press, 1974), p. 12.

[5]William Zornow, Kansas, A History of the Jayhawk State (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1971), p. 22.

> ...when already within less than a hundred miles of the most wonderful watercourse east of the Rocky Mountains, Coronado and his command were fated to return to Mexico blissfully ignorant of the existence and near presence of the Missouri River. The discovery and early exploration of the stream was thus reserved for their more complaisant and enterprising rivals, the French.[6]

Thus, it is no longer even probable that Coronado's great expedition ever saw the Missouri River, or trod upon the soil of what is now Atchison County.

The first white men known to have visited the Atchison area were those in the French expedition led by Etienne Vengard de Bourgmont. Bourgmont, formerly the commander of Fort Detroit, had left that post in 1705 to marry an Indian girl and live the life of an explorer and trapper. His adventures came to the attention of the Company of the Indies, a trading company, and on July 26, 1720, he was appointed the Commandant of the Missouri River. The object of this mission was to promote peace among the various tribes, and to check any future Spanish intrusions into the plains country. He was given orders to implement French expansion plans.[7]

In November, 1724, Bourgmont led a party of about forty men up the Missouri River and built Fort Orleans, near Brunswick, Missouri. The next year his expedition continued

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[6]John Dunbar, "The White Man's Foot in Kansas," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. X (1907-08), p. 78.

[7]Kate L. Gregg (ed.), "The Missouri River, Explorers in the Valley," Part II, Missouri Historical Review, Vol. XXXIX (1944-45), pp. 513-14.

its journey up the river, past the site of Atchison, and arrived at the Kansa village at Doniphan about five miles north of Atchison on July 7, 1724.

During the next two weeks, the French and the Kansa Indians were engaged in a series of celebrations, powwows, and councils. The Indians received presents and traded horses for French goods. Bourgmont prepared for a trip westward to meet with the Commanche Indians. He brought Commanche prisoners from the Kansa to be used as interpreters.

On July 24, 1724, the French expedition was ready to start on their journey to Commanche territory. Only eighteen Frenchmen embarked upon this mission of friendship and peace, but it was still an impressive group, as the Kansa furnished a great procession:

> Three hundred warriors, commanded by two grand chiefs and fourteen war chiefs, three hundred Indian women, five hundred Indian children, and five hundred dogs loaded down with baggage and provisions.[8]

The Bourgmont expedition marched westward across Atchison County. During the next few days, they established several campsites in the county. They apparently followed Deer Creek, passed Stranger Creek, and crossed either the Delaware or Grasshopper River a few miles south of what is now Muscotah.

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[8]Morehouse, "History of the Kansa or Kaw Indian," p. 337. Isely and Richards, in Four Centuries in Kansas, pp. 29-30, notes that the dog was the only domestic animal of Kansas Indians. The Indians stole wolf puppies and made them pets and beasts of burden. The dogs were trained to pull a vehicle called a travois. Later, of course, the Indians obtained horses from the white man.

On July 28, the party passed out of Atchison County somewhere along the present southwest boundary.[9]

Bourgmont became ill soon after leaving Atchison County. In a hand-barrow he was carried back across Atchison County to the Kansa village,[10] and then taken down the river to Fort Orleans. On October 8, his health improved, Bourgmont again set out from the Kansa village. Ten days later a peace treaty was signed between the French and the Commanches (before, the Commanches had been friendly with the Spanish). The Commanches were also persuaded to sign a treaty of peace and friendship with other Indian tribes, including the Kansa, Missouri, and Osage Indians.[11]

After the conclusion of the peace talks, Bourgmont returned to Fort Orleans. He did not obtain the favorable results he had wished for. Zornow mentions several factors that account for this failure:

> Bourgmont's sickness had cost them precious time, for had he remained well, the party would have pushed on to Santa Fe. As it was, the commercial gains were slight, and by 1728 Fort Orleans was abandoned....The French had hoped to collect Indian pelts at Fort Orleans for reshipment south to New Orleans, but this scheme did not materialize.[12]

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[9]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 32.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Morehouse, "History of the Kansa or Kaw Indians," p. 337.

[12]Zornow, Kansas, A History of the Jayhawk State, p. 29.

Bourgmont's misadventures ended any further French efforts to extend exploration or trade westward. Andreas wrote that Kansas then became "virtually an unknown and unexplored region" until the close of the seventeenth century.[13]

It is quite likely that French traders and trappers visited Atchison County before the expedition of Bourgmont. However, there is no real evidence to verify this probability.

In 1802 another French explorer, Perin du Lac, journeyed up the Missouri River. In his journal, Du Lac mentioned that three miles below the old Kances village they "perceived some iron ore." This location is about two miles north of Atchison. The explorer must have collected some samples of this low-grade ore (and later lost it), for Du Lac mentions in his journal:

> I intended to have assayed it on my return, but an accident unfortunately happening prevented me.[14]

In 1803 an exciting event happened that greatly influenced our nation's history. The United States bought the vast territory called Louisiana from France. The United States paid little more than two cents an acre for this great bargain. President Jefferson, of course, needed to know more about this huge territory we had purchased. Jefferson chose

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[13]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 49.

[14]Nasatir, Before Lewis and Clark, Vol. II, p. 708.

his private secretary, Captain Meriwether Lewis, and Lieutenant William Clark to explore the northern part of the Louisiana Purchase. They were to map the region, determine its boundaries, collect specimens of animal and plant life, seek friendship with the Indians, and search for a river route to the Pacific Ocean. On May 4, 1804, the Lewis and Clark expedition, consisting of about forty men and three boats, left St. Louis on the great expedition up the Missouri River.

The Lewis and Clark expedition reached Atchison County on July 3, 1804, landing at the county's southeast corner. They passed Cow Island, just opposite Oak Mills. North of this island, Lewis noted:

> At the head of this island, on the northern shore, is a large pond containing beaver, and fowls of different kinds. After passing a bad sandbar, we stopped on the south side at an old trading house, which is now deserted, and half a mile beyond it encamped on the south. The land is fine along the rivers, and some distance back. We observed the black walnut and oak, among the timber; and the honeysuckle and the buck's-eye, with the nuts on them.[15]

The expedition camped for the night near Walnut Creek,[16] and the next morning, July 4, a gun was discharged in honor of Independence Day. About a mile north of here an interesting incident occurred:

> One of our men was bitten by a snake, but a poultice of bark and gunpowder was sufficient to cure the wound.[17]

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[15]Meriwether Lewis, The Expedition of Lewis and Clark, Vol. I (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), p. 21.

[16]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 33.

[17]Lewis, The Expedition of Lewis and Clark, Vol. I, p. 21.

A member of the expedition, Sergeant Floyd, reportedly named the prairie on which the city of Atchison stands. In memory of the incident (and in honor of the victim) it was named "Joe Field's Snake Prairie."[18]

Later in the day, Lewis and Clark reached the future site of Atchison:

> ...we reached a creek on the south about twelve yards wide and coming from an extensive prairie....To this creek which had no name, we gave that of Fourth of July Creek; above it is a high mound, where three Indian paths centre, and from which is a very extensive prospect.[19]

In the early evening of July 4, the expedition discovered and named Independence Creek, whose mouth is about two miles north of Atchison, in honor of the holiday. Camping here, the party celebrated Independence Day with "an evening gun and an additional gill of whiskey to the men." The Atchison vicinity, then, was the site of the first celebration of our nation's birthday on the soil of Kansas.[20]

On the next morning, July 5, the prairie between Atchison and Independence Creek was observed. This land was described by Lewis:

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[18]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 33.

[19]Lewis, The Expedition of Lewis and Clark, Vol. I, p. 21. The Fourth of July Creek is now known as White Clay Creek. Ingalls, in his History of Atchison County, p. 33, states that the high mound mentioned by Lewis was the site of the Soldier's Orphan's Home, now called the Youth Center of Atchison.

[20]Ibid.

> ...an extensive and beautiful prairie, interspersed with copses of timber, and watered by Independence Creek. On this bank formerly stood the village of the Kanzas; from the remains it must have been once a large town.[21]

Later that day, the expedition passed beyond the northeastern boundary of Atchison County, and continued on its great journey.

In 1810 John Bradbury, a notable naturalist from England, made a journey up the Missouri River. In 1809 Bradbury was commissioned by the Botanical Society at Liverpool to study and collect plant life specimens in the United States. He presented letters of introduction to President Jefferson, and was invited to visit the great American at his home at Monticello. Jefferson was impressed by the gentleman, as this excerpt from a letter written by the President to General Meriwether Lewis, now governor of Louisiana Territory at St. Louis, indicates:

> ...having kept him here about ten days, I have had an opportunity of knowing that besides being a botanist of the first order, he is a man of entire worth and correct conduct. As such I recommend him to your notice, advice and patronage, while within your government or its confines. Perhaps you can consult no abler hand on your Western botanical observations.[22]

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[21] Ibid, pp. 21-22.

[22] Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), Bradbury's Travels in the Interior of America, Early Western Travels, Vol. VI (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), pp. 9-10. In this work, p. 10, Thwaites said that the reference to Lewis' botanical observations was intended as a spur to get Lewis moving on the then unpublished journals of his expedition of 1804-06.

Bradbury became the first scientist to make a systematic study of the plants of the Louisiana Territory. On April 15, 1810, he landed on the shore of what is now Atchison County, just a few miles north of Atchison, and made this observation:

> I had an opportunity of going ashore, and found the soil to have the appearance of the greatest fertility.[23]

Bradbury shipped the great number of specimens he collected on his expedition to the botanical gardens in Liverpool, and "no doubt many Atchison County specimens were included in these shipments."[24]

In 1811 Henry Brackenridge, another traveler of the Missouri River, made some observations along the shore of Atchison County. Brackenridge, a young lawyer and adventurer, was persuaded by Manuel Lisa, a fur trader, to accompany him on a trip up the Missouri. Brackenridge and Lisa's party camped just below the south Atchison County boundary on April 29, 1811. Brackenridge saw "astonishing quantities of game on the shore" that day.[25]

On April 30, near the site of Atchison, Brackenridge wrote this entry in his journal:

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[23]Ibid, p. 67.

[24]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 35.

[25]Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), Brackenridge's Journal of a Voyage Up the Missouri River, in Early Western Travels, Vol. VI (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), p. 68.

> Mr. Lisa and myself went on shore, and each killed a deer. There were great numbers of them sporting on the sandbars. There are great quantities of snipes, of a beautiful plumage.[26]

Traveling north, toward the site of the old Kansa village near Doniphan, Brackenridge noted the "smooth waving hills, perfectly green, with a few clumps of trees in the hollows."[27] Brackenridge's party continued up the Missouri River, ultimately journeying northward into North Dakota.

The extraordinary success of the Lewis and Clark expedition excited widespread interest in the lands west of the Mississippi River. After the War of 1812, many American leaders considered this an area of great strategic importance. Many reports of clashes between American fur traders and the Indians produced even more interest in the area. It was deemed desirable to control the Indians and try to lessen the influence of British trading companies. Indian troubles led to the building of army posts to strengthen our government's control of the West. John Calhoun, President Monroe's Secretary of War, envisioned a network of forts along the Missouri River.[28] The ensuing joint scientific and military excursion into the Louisiana Territory, known as the Missouri Expedition, began in 1818.

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[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid, p. 69.

[28]Roger L. Nichols, (ed.), The Missouri Expedition, 1818-1820, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), pp. ix-x.

The Missouri Expedition spent nearly a year (October, 1818 to September, 1819) on Cow Island,[29] just north of the southern boundary of Atchison County. This temporary post was, at first, under the command of Captain Wyley Martin and was known as the Martin Cantonment. Captain Bennett Riley, for whom Fort Riley was later named, was a member of Martin's detachment. Eventually, about 1100 men would arrive at this encampment.

The scientific observations of the Missouri Expedition were to be undertaken by a group of scientists under the command of Major Stephen Long, who was already an illustrious explorer of the West. Colonel Henry Atkinson was the head of the military arm of the expedition.

On October 16, 1818, Captain Martin's force landed on Cow Island. The soldiers soon began to collect materials for the construction of winter quarters. The abundant oak and cottonwoods supplied fine boards, while the nearness of stone and clay made easier the task of building chimneys.[30]

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[29]Cow Island, sometimes referred to as Buffalo Island or Isle au Vache, was located on the present day Atchison and Leavenworth County line. Prince Maximilian, in Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), Maximilian's Travels in North America, p. 256, noted, in 1833, that Cow Island was six miles long. George Remsburg, in "Isle Au Vache," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. VIII, p. 442, writes that a flood, in 1881, ended the existence of the island. The former historic island is now just a tract of bottomland on the Missouri side of the river. Before the flood, the Missouri River's main channel was on the Missouri side, while on the Kansas side a smaller channel separated the island from the Kansas shore. The flood threw the main channel to the Kansas side.

[30]Ibid, p. 30.

During the expedition's stay here, hunting parties roamed throughout the Atchison County area finding abundant game, as noted in the journal of Surgeon John Gale:

> Our hunters bring in daily large quantities of game. The venison is very fat at this season (November), but the turkeys are lean.[31]

The great variety of game in the area can be further evidenced by this entry in Gale's journal:

> went...ten miles above...on a hunting excursion and returned the twenty-fifth (May, 1819) with a bear, some racoons, deer, geese, cat, and buffalo fish, and several soft-shelled turtles.[32]

On August 15, 1819, the steamboat Western Engineer, commanded by Major Long, arrived at Cow Island. This steamboat was certainly one of the most unique and amazing crafts ever built, as this eyewitness description indicates:

> The bow of this vessel exhibits the form of a huge serpent, black and scaly, rising out of the water from under the boat, his head as high as the deck, darted forward, his mouth open, vomiting smoke and apparently carrying the boat on his back. From under the boat, at its stern, issues a stream of foaming water, dashing violently along.
>
> All the machinery is hid....The boat is ascending the rapid stream at the rate of three miles an hour. Neither winds nor human hands are seen to help her, and, to the eye of ignorance, the illusion is complete that a monster of the deep carries her on his back, smoking with fatigue and lashing the waves with violent exertion.[33]

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[31]Ibid, p. 33.

[32]Ibid, p. 57.

[33]Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), James Account of S. H. Long's Expedition, Early Western Travels, Vol. XIV (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905), p. 178. The distinguished Missouri Senator, Thomas H. Benton was the author of this description. It appeared in the St. Louis Enquirer, 19 June 1819.

The Western Engineer was constructed by the Allegheny Arsenal near Pittsburgh for the purpose of exploration of the Louisiana Territory, and obviously it was designed to overawe and perhaps frighten the Indians. A resident of Franklin, Missouri, offered this description of the impression it made upon tribes of the area:

> ...the perfect horror of all Indians who see her. They say, "white man bad man, keep a great spirit chained and build fire under it to make it work a boat."[34]

On August 24, an important council was held with 175 Kansa and 13 Osage Indians on Cow Island. Major John O'Fallon, Indian Agent, arranged this meeting to seek an end to "their repeated insults and depredations upon the whites."[35] The Indians had made numerous attacks upon Missouri River traders and explorers and had fired upon the soldiers stationed at Cow Island. O'Fallon warned them of possible reprisals by the United States Army and advised them to exhibit "future good behavior."[36] After the meeting the Indians were entertained by the firing of rockets and shells and a demonstration of the operations of the Western Engineer.

During the next few days, several boats carrying supplies and more soldiers arrived. On August 25, Major Long left Cow Island aboard the Western Engineer. His destination was Council Bluffs, Iowa, where a post called the

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

Cantonment Missouri was to be built. On August 29, a party of naturalists, under the command of Major Thomas Biddle, arrived at Cow Island after crossing Atchison County enroute from a Kansa Indian village which was located near Manhattan. Two members of the group, Thomas Say and Augustus Jessup, were ill and had to stay at the island for a time.[37]

On September 5, 1819, the rest of the expedition force, now under the command of Colonel Atkinson, resumed its trip up the Missouri. Sixteen boats were required to transport the men and supplies northward to Council Bluffs.

The expedition sailed along the shore of Atchison County September 5-7. John Gale's journal relates the presence of numerous kinds of fish, aquatic fowl and beaver in the ponds and lakes along this stretch of the Missouri.[38]

In 1833, a German adventurer, Prince Alexander Philip Maximilian, journeyed up the Missouri. On April 23, he viewed the shoreline of Atchison County and recorded these comments in his journal:

> We proceeded past Cow Island...which is covered with poplars and shave grass. The sand was marked by the footsteps of the stags which come here to drink, by which they tread down deep paths to the waters edge,

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[37]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 33.

[38]Roger L. Nichols (ed.), The Missouri Expedition, p. 67.

> and lick holes in the saline clay of the bank. Here began green hills without wood, which are the transition to the entirely naked prairie, as they at first alternate with woods, which grow in the ravines, and on the banks of the river. At twelve o'clock the thermometer was at 77°. Our navigation was attended with many difficulties to Independence River.[39]

A Frenchman, Paschal Pensoneau, was the first white settler in Atchison County. In 1844, Pensoneau settled along Stranger Creek, near what is now Potter. Here he started the first farm in the county and built a trading post. The Frenchman had long been a trader and interpreter among the Kickapoo Indians and had married a woman of this tribe. In 1854, he moved to the smaller tract of land assigned to the tribe along the Grasshopper River. In 1875, he left Atchison County and settled in Indian Territory.[40]

During the Mormon migration, a settlement was established a few miles west of Atchison, just east of Shannon. This temporary settlement was established to serve as a station on the way to Utah. Mormon Grove, as the Atchison County settlement was called, was probably the only such station in Kansas. Corn, potatoes, and other crops were

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[39]Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), Maximilian's Travels in North America, in Early Western Travels, Vol. XXII (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), p. 256.

[40]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, pp. 35-36.

cultivated here, and trenches were dug to enclose the livestock. Food was held for the benefit of the parties of migrating Mormons traveling to the Utah settlement. The station was abandoned in 1849, after cholera broke out and killed many of the Mormons at the station.[41]

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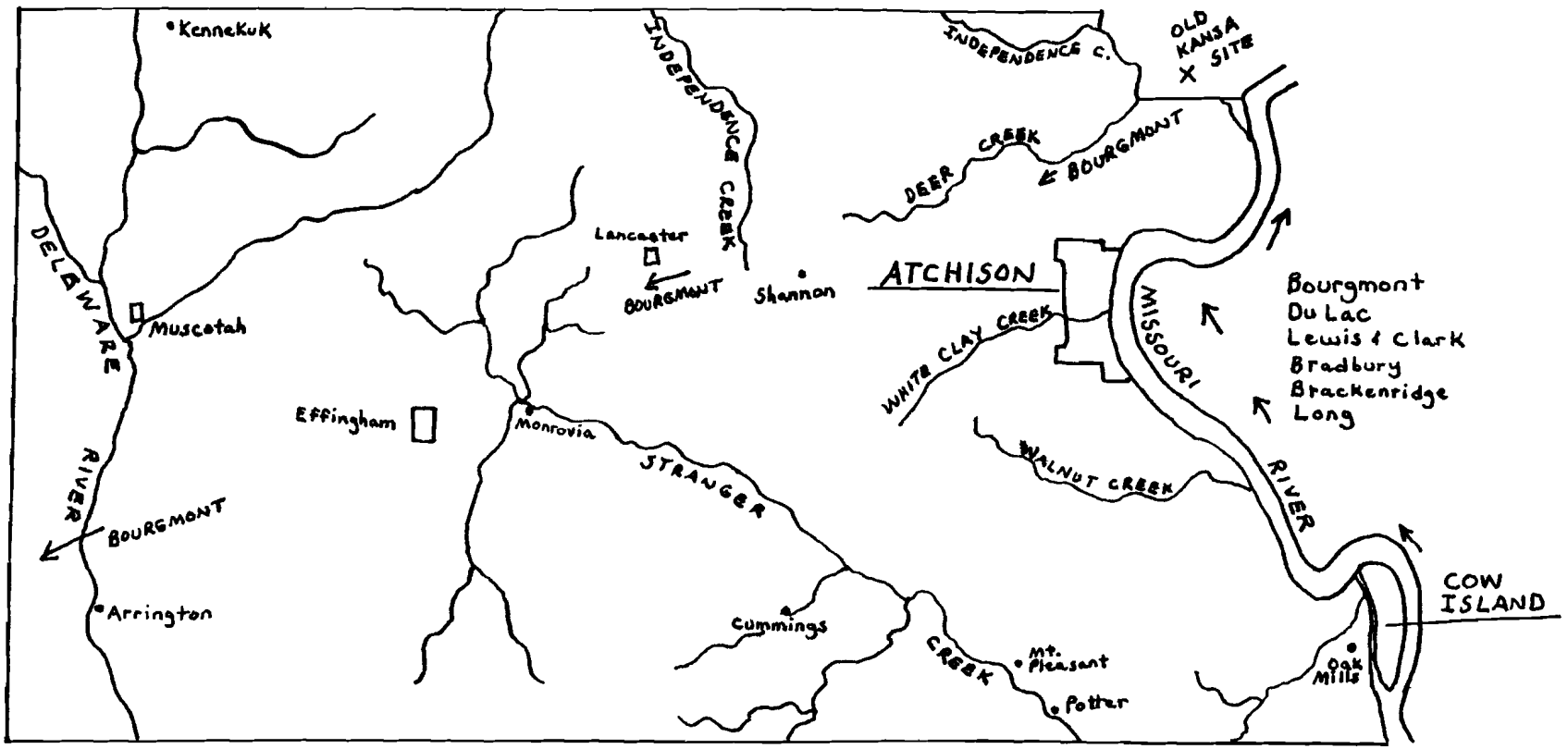
[41]Ibid, p. 36; Connelley, Kansas and Kansans, Vol. I, p. 161.



ATCHISON COUNTY

This map shows the county as it appeared prior to the flood of 1881. This flood greatly altered the southeast corner; Cow Island ceasing to exist.

CHAPTER III

THE ORGANIZATION AND BUILDING OF THE CITY OF ATCHISON

In early 1854, the Atchison area was very sparsely settled. In fact, all of what is now Kansas was barely settled, as evidenced by the writing of Edward Everett Hale in 1854:

> Up to the summer of 1854, Kansas and Nebraska have had no civilized residents, except the soldiers sent to keep the Indian tribes in order; the missionaries sent to convert them; the traders who bought furs of them, and those of the natives who may be considered to have attained some measure of civilization from their connection with the whites.[1]

On May 30, 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed. This Act officially opened Kansas to white settlement. Soon after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Missourians began to pour into the newly opened Kansas lands.

An earlier and less famous measure also had an important effect upon Kansas. When Missouri was admitted as a state in 1820, its original western boundary was simply a line drawn north and south from the mouth of the Kansas River.

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[1]Edward E. Hale, History of Kansas and Nebraska (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1854), p. 162.

Missouri citizens agitated for the inclusion of the land between the original state line and the Missouri River. On March 28, 1837, President Van Buren proclaimed this land, usually known as the Platte Purchase, part of Missouri. If the original boundary had been retained, the city of St. Joseph and much of Northwest Missouri would today be part of Kansas. But there were no settlers in Kansas to object to the Missouri annexation.

The first settler to establish himself in Atchison County, after the territory was opened to settlement, was George M. Million. He settled near the town of Rushville, Missouri, several miles Northeast of Atchison, sometime before 1841.[2]

In 1841, Million operated a farm near the present site of East Atchison (Winthrop), Missouri. During the winter months he cut and hauled wood to the nearby bank of the Missouri River. He supplemented his income by selling the wood to the numerous steamboats that were traveling the river.[3]

During 1841, Million was also operating a ferry boat. He reportedly did a thriving business transporting many of the gold seekers rushing to California during the Gold Rush

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[2]A. T. Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), p. 370.

[3]Ibid.

in 1848-49. The 49'er traffic apparently helped him accumulate a good sum of money. He built a store and began trading goods with the Indians in exchange for their furs.[4]

In June, 1854, Million, by virtue of squatter sovereignty, became the first settler in what is now the city of Atchison. He built a house near his ferry landing, at the bottom of Atchison Street. He claimed 160 acres of land, which was directly across the river from his land in East Atchison.[5]

Atchison's second settler, Samuel Dickson, built a cabin on the east side of what is now South Sixth Street between Spring and Park Streets. This cabin, described as being but twelve feet square with one door, one window, and a large stone chimney, was soon deserted by Dickson, who was a resident of Rushville.[6]

Soon after the opening of Kansas to settlement, Senator David Atchison of Missouri decided that a city should be built in Kansas Territory at the great bend of the Missouri River.[7]

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 42.

[6]Ibid, p. 43.

[7]Connelley, Standard History of Kansas and Kansans, Vol. I, p. 361.

On July 20, 1854, a group of five Platte City, Missouri, men headed by Dr. John H. Stringfellow, entered Kansas to establish their residency. They crossed the Missouri River near Leavenworth and traveled upstream along the Kansas shore. During the day, they reached the cabin of John Alcorn, who had settled along Walnut Creek. Alcorn tried to talk Stringfellow's party into choosing his claim as the site for the city they were planning to found. His pleas were to no avail, however, as the site seekers continued their journey up the river until they reached the future site of the city of Atchison.[8]

Coming upon the site from an elevated position, the divide between White Clay and Stranger Creeks, the Missourians looked northeastward upon a beautiful valley gradually sloping from the west.

> They were not only charmed with the beauty of this vast amphitheatre, but also by its natural advantages of the easy access and its peculiar facilities for obtaining artificial approaches. Here it was that the great river made a bend from the northeast, throwing this point twelve miles west of any locality above, twenty miles west of Leavenworth and thirty-five west of Kansas City. This site was also nearer to the rich agricultural region, just open for settlement, than any other point on the Missouri River.[9]

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[8]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 370.

[9]Ibid.

Traveling down into the valley, the party found the claims of Million and Dickson. George Million showed the men an old map of Missouri, which he had produced for their inspection. This map showed that the site upon which they stood was indeed further west than any other place on the river bend. They were convinced that this was to be the site of their future city.

> ...they could look over the present site of the city of Atchison, and see nothing but hills broken by water courses and lowlands stretching to the west, covered with a heavy growth of cottonwood. But the river lay to the east and the natural outlet to the west was so free and easy that they perceived at once, that the town could not but become another gateway through which must pass the great overland travel.[10]

John Stringfellow made a land claim just north of George Million's. The Missourians then suggested that a company be formed to layout the town. Million objected, but said he would surrender his land claim for $1,000. This was thought to be an outrageous demand, but the Platte City men were determined to found a city at this site. Thus, Million parted with his land claim for the $1,000, which would be payable to him within a year.[11]

Now John Stringfellow, James Darnell, Leonidas Oldham, Ira Norris, James Martin, Million and Dickson formed a town company. Six other shares, granted by privilege, were given

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

in the company: David Atchison, Elijah Green, E. H. Norton, Peter T. Abell and Benjamin F. Stringfellow (brother of John Stringfellow), the Burnes brothers, and Stephen Johnson. A week later the members of the town company met under a great cottonwood tree which grew next to the river about a half block south of Atchison Street. A short time prior to this meeting, David Atchison had given his interest in the town to his nephew, James Headley, a young lawyer. Jesse Morin was also admitted as a member. Senator Atchison, a founder and the man for whom the city of Atchison was named, cannot be listed as a member of the Atchison town company.[12]

The members of the town company numbered eighteen as they met to plan the town site. They formally organized the company and elected officers. The three officers and other fifteen members were:

Peter T. Abell, President
Dr. John H. Stringfellow, Secretary
James Burnes, Treasurer
Ira Norris
James T. Darnell
Leonidas Oldham
James B. Martin
George Million
Samuel Dickson
Elijah Green
E. H. Norton
Benjamin F. Stringfellow

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[12]Ibid. Atchison, then, was organized on July 27, 1854, thus being the second town to be founded in Kansas. Leavenworth had been organized on June 13, 1854.

Lewis Burnes
Daniel D. Burnes
Calvin F. Burnes
Stephen Johnson
Jesse Morin
James Headley[13]

Abell, the newly-elected president of the town company, was born in Kentucky in 1813. At the age of twenty he moved to Missouri, where he became a successful merchant. He later became a lawyer and was for many years one of Missouri's leading attorneys. Prior to the founding of Atchison, he was a resident of Weston, Missouri. Abell continued his law practice in Atchison.[14]

Dr. Stringfellow was to be a prominent figure in the early history of Kansas. He was born in 1819 in Virginia. He became a leader in the Pro-Slavery Party and was the founder and editor of the Squatter Sovereign, Atchison's radical pro-slavery newspaper.

The Stringfellow family was responsible for two of Atchison's "social firsts". Dr. Stringfellow's son, Henry, born on August 20, 1855, was the first child born in the town. Mrs. Stringfellow's sister, Miss E. A. Simmons, became Atchison's first bride, being married to J. T. Darnall on October 17, 1855.[15]

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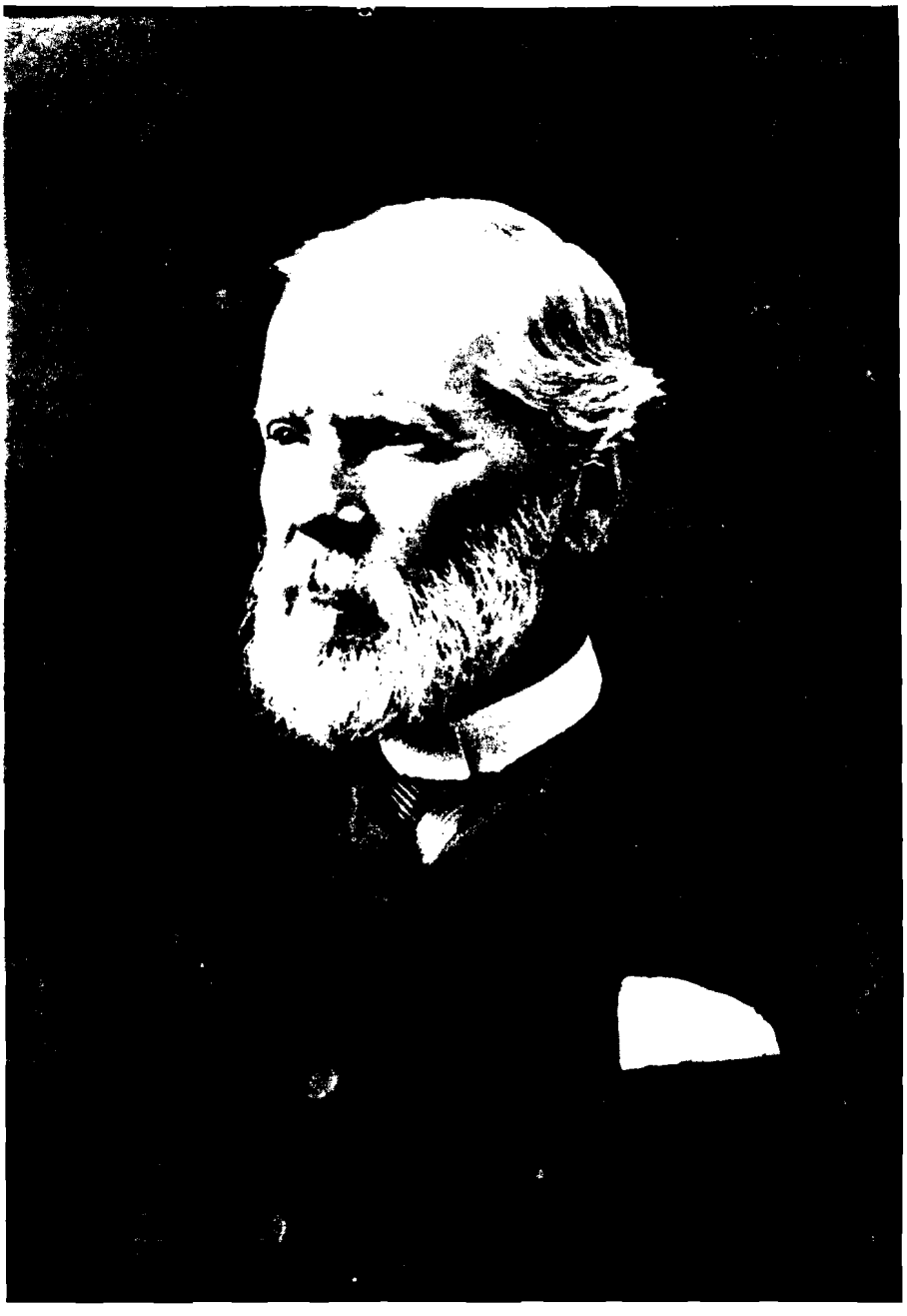
[13]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 65.

[14]Genealogical and Biographical Record of Northeastern Kansas (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1900), pp. 45-46.

[15]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 370.



Dr. John Stringfellow, radical newspaper editor.
Courtesy Kansas Historical Society.

In August, 1854, the first business in Atchison had been established by George T. Chaliss. It was located at the corner of the Levee and Commercial Streets. P. T. Abell, president of the town company, gave to Mr. Chaliss the lot upon which he built his store. The store apparently enjoyed a prosperous market for its stock of groceries and dry goods.[16]

The Atchison townsite was divided into 100 shares. Each member of the town company retained five shares.[17] The remaining thirty shares were held in reserve for general distribution. Henry Kuhn, a surveyor, was hired to survey the 480 acres which made up the original townsite of Atchison. This was accomplished on September 20, 1854.[18]

On September 21, town lots were offered for sale. During the afternoon, thirty-four lots were sold at an average of $63 apiece. The prices for these lots ranged from $35 to $200. The sale of lots was also continued into the next day, the 22nd.[19]

The highlight of the sale, however, was a speech given by Senator Atchison. His speech, on the issues of the day, made the event of national importance.[20]

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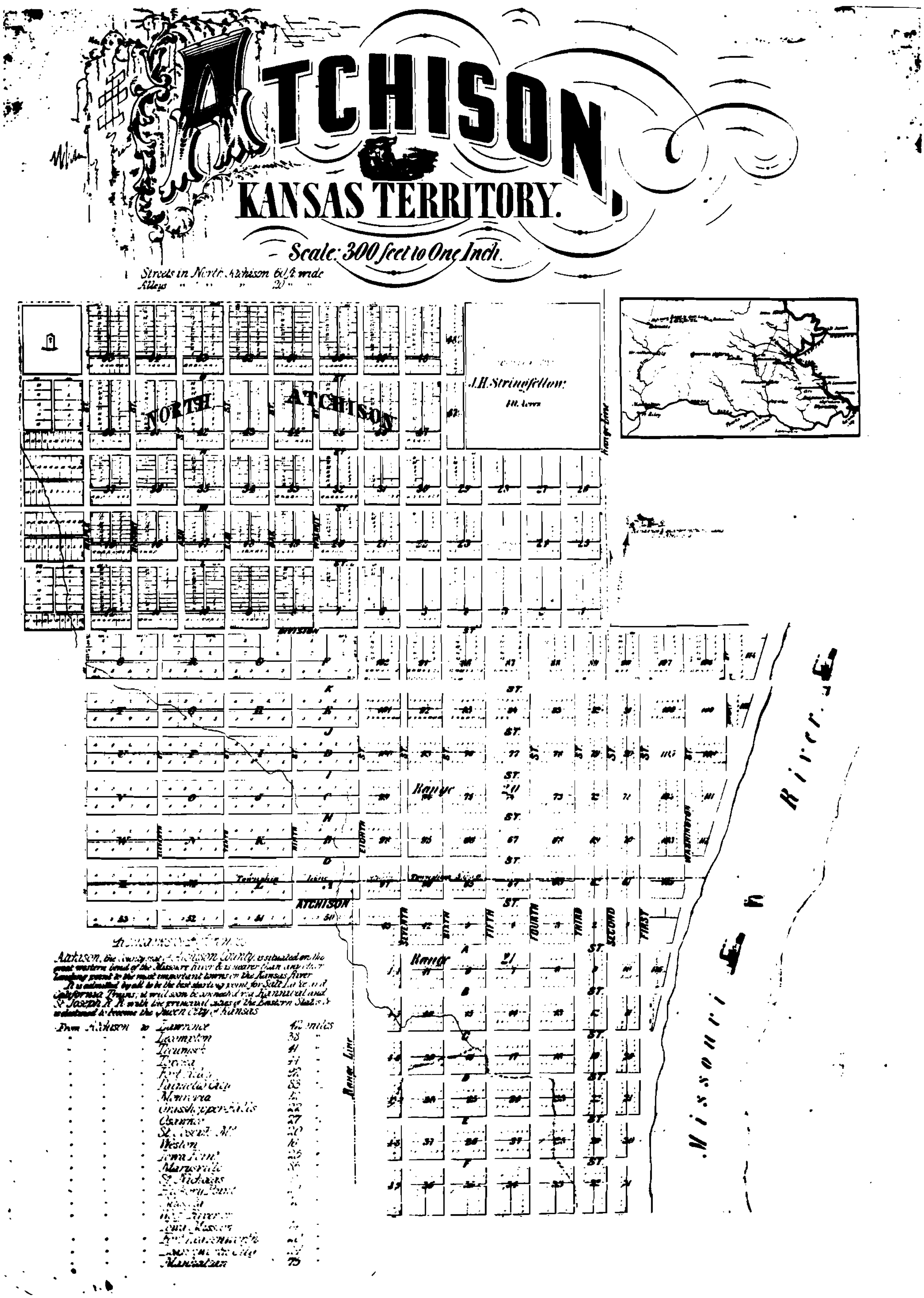
[16]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 370.

[17]Abell and B. F. Stringfellow, and the four Burnes brothers were considered as two members. Seventy shares were divided among the fourteen full memberships in the town company.

[18]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 65.

[19]Ibid, p. 67.

[20]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 370.


ATCHISON,
KANSAS TERRITORY.
Scale: 300 feet to One Inch.
Streets in North Atchison 60 ft. wide
Alleys 20
NORTH ATCHISON
J. H. Stringfellow
DIVISION ST.
Range
Township Line
ATCHISON
SEVENTH
SIXTH
FIFTH
FOURTH
THIRD
SECOND
FIRST
WASHINGTON
Range Line
Missouri River
Atchison, the County seat of Atchison County, is situated on the great western bend of the Missouri River & is nearer than any other landing point to the most important towns on the Kansas River
It is admitted by all to be the best starting point for Salt Lake and California Trains; it will soon be connected via Hannibal and St Joseph R. R. with the principal cities of the Eastern States & is destined to become the Queen City of Kansas
From Atchison to Lawrence 42 miles
Lecompton 38
Tecumseh 41
Weston
Osawkee 27
Marysville
St Nicholas
Manhattan 75

Also on September 21, the town leaders discussed building a hotel and establishing a newspaper. These two enterprises are of prime importance to any community that wishes to grow and prosper.

The Atchison townsite's one hundred shares were each assessed $25 for the construction of a hotel. The following spring saw the completion of the National Hotel, which was located at the corner of Atchison and Second Streets. It was a modest log structure.[21]

The town company donated $400 for the establishment of a newspaper. The money was used by Dr. J. H. Stringfellow and Robert S. Kelley to start a printing office. In February, 1855, the Squatter Sovereign came into being. Its arrival was noted by Leavenworth's Kansas Herald:

> The Squatter Sovereign published at Atchison, Kansas Territory, by J. H. Stringfellow and R. S. Kelley, made its appearance last Saturday, the first number of which is now before us. It is a large size sheet, very neatly printed and well filled with original and choice selections. It is edited with considerable ability, is pro-slavery in sentiment and will be a valuable acquisition to the true interests of Kansas. We welcome our neighbors into the journalistic field, and bid them good speed.[22]

A post office, another necessary enterprise, was established in Atchison on April 10, 1855. Robert S. Kelley was the first postmaster.[23]

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Leavenworth Kansas Herald, 9 February 1855.

[23] E. J. Dallas, "Kansas Postal History", Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. I-II (1879-80), p. 256.

Atchison was incorporated as a town by the Territorial Legislature on August 30, 1855. The town soon began to grow at an amazing rate. On November 22, 1856, the Squatter Sovereign published a circular which illustrated the advantages enjoyed by Atchison over the other towns along the Missouri River:

> Atchison is nearer to most persons living north of Kansas River, than any point on the Missouri River. The country, too, south of Kansas River, above Lecompton, is also as near Atchison, as any other Missouri River town. The roads to Atchison, in every direction are very fine, and always in good repair for wagons and other modes of travel. The country opposite of Atchison is not excelled by any section of Missouri, it being portions of Buchanon and Platte counties - in a high state of cultivation, and at a considerable distance from any important town in Missouri, making grain, fruit, provisions, and all kinds of marketing easily procured at fair prices - a matter of no small consideration to settlers in a new country.
>
> The great fresh water lake from which the fish markets of St. Joseph and Weston are supplied, is also within three miles of Atchison.
>
> To show the capability of Atchison to supply the demands of the country, we here enumerate some of the business houses: six large dry goods and grocery stores, wholesale and retail; one large clothing store, one extensive furniture store, with mattresses and bedding of all sorts; one stove, sheet iron, and tinware establishment, where articles in that line are sold at St. Louis prices; several large warehouses sufficient to store all the goods of emigrants and traders across the plains, and to Kansas Territory; one weekly newspaper - the Squatter Sovereign - having the largest circulation of any newspaper in Kansas, with press, type and materials to execute all kinds of job work; two commodious hotels and several boarding houses, one bakery and confectionary, three blacksmith shops, two wagon makers, and several carpenters shops, one cabinet maker, two boot and shoe maker's shops, one saddle and harness maker's shop, one extensive butchery and meat market, a first rate ferry,

> at which is kept a magnificent new steam ferry boat, and excellent horse boat propelled by four horses, a good flat boat, and several skiffs; the saw mills, two propelled by steam, and one by horse power; two brick yards, two lime kilns.
>
> A fine supply of professional gentlemen of all branches constantly on hand, equal to the demand. A good grist mill is much needed, and would make money for the owner.[24]

Some of the businesses operating in Atchison in 1856 were the "Uncle Sam" Clothing Store, George Million's "Pioneer Saloon", John Robertson's Saddlery and Harness business, and Grafton Thomassen's steam saw-mill. There were several grocery and dry goods stores. Luther Challiss' store advertised "such an assortment as was never before offered for sale in the upper country". Approximately fifty new buildings were erected by the middle of 1856. Atchison was growing at a rapid pace.[25]

Washburn's Great American Colossal Circus, the first circus to perform in Kansas, gave its first performances in the state at Atchison on July 3, 1856. The event, of little real importance, nevertheless can be presented as evidence that during the year 1856 "Atchison was pushing its way onward and upward."[26]

On January 29, 1857, the Kansas Territorial Legislature passed an act stating that any banking institution

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[24]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 373.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

founded within the territory, and lacking the authorization of the legislature, would be unlawful. The first bank to be granted authorization was the Kansas Valley Bank of Leavenworth. The bank would have five branches -- at Atchison, Lecompton, Doniphan, Fort Scott, and Shawnee. The parent bank at Leavenworth, however, was never formed.[27]

The Atchison branch, independent of the unformed Leavenworth bank, then became the first bank in Kansas to be organized. The Atchison bank was given legislative authorization to form on February 19, 1857. The bank's first president was Samuel C. Pomeroy. During this first year, the bank issued a statement of its condition. Its assets were $36,638; its liabilities, $20,118.[28]

In 1858, William H. Russell of Leavenworth succeeded Pomeroy as president of the bank. In 1861, the bank's name was changed to the Bank of the State of Kansas. The bank was closed in 1866.[29]

In 1859, the Exchange National Bank, Atchison's oldest still existing financial institution, was established by

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[27]George W. Martin, "A Chapter from the Archives," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. XII (1911-12), p. 364.

[28]Ibid. This statement of the bank's assets was issued because of rumors started by the rival towns of Sumner and Doniphan to the effect that the Atchison bank was about to suspend operations.

[29]Ibid, p. 366.

William Hetherington.[30]

Hetherington, a Pennsylvanian, operated a flour mill in his native state until it burned down in 1858. After trying his luck in St. Louis and Kansas City, he came to Leavenworth where he bought a bankrupt stock of goods which he freighted to Atchison by wagon. Apparently the sale of these goods enabled him to acquire the funds necessary for the establishment of his bank.[31]

On March 19, 1866, Hetherington bought much of the stock of the Bank of the State of Kansas. The result was that the Exchange Bank became the legitimate successor to the first bank to be incorporated in Kansas.[32]

Hetherington's Exchange Bank was first located in the basement of a building at Third and Commercial Streets. In 1869, the bank was moved to Fourth and Commercial, where it remained until the present-day building at Sixth and Commercial was built by Hetherington.[33]

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[30]Although Andreas, Sheffield Ingalls, and others wrote that the bank was founded in 1859, George Anderson, in The Widening Stream, p. 12, suggests that the Exchange Bank was actually founded in 1860. Until 1882, the bank was called Hetherington's Exchange Bank. It became the Exchange National Bank on August 1, 1882.

[31]George Anderson, The Widening Stream, The Exchange National Bank of Atchison, Kansas (Atchison: The Lockwood Company, Inc., 1968), p. 12.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Andreas, History of Kansas, p. 380.

Except for one year during the Civil War, the bank has been in continual operation. A number of attempts to plunder it during the war "induced Mr. Hetherington to close his business and wait for better days."[34]

On March 13, 1858, a special election resulted in the selection of Samuel Pomeroy, a free-state leader, as Atchison's first mayor. Pomeroy urged the importance of grading and improving Atchison's major streets. Pomeroy, born in Massachusetts in 1816, came to Kansas in 1854 as an agent for the New England Emigrant Aid Society.

The Massasoit House, which opened its doors on September 1, 1858, became Atchison's major hotel. This hotel, located at Second and Main, was a large three story structure with a basement.

> It did a large business and was the headquarters for the Overland staging crowds. All the lines, which ran in every direction, out of Atchison at that time departed from the Massasoit House. It was a favorite place for political gatherings, and from its balconies many speeches were made by political parties of that day. It at one time was the hiding place for a number of slaves who had been secreted in the hotel by their master. Horace Greeley, the famous editor of the New York Tribune, ate his first dinner in Kansas at this hotel, and Abraham Lincoln was a guest on the day John Brown was executed at Harper's Ferry.[35]

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[34]Martin, "A Chapter From the Archives," p. 367.

[35]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 72.

When the Massasoit House opened, there were three other hotels in Atchison. The Tremont House was a wooden structure located at the corner of Second and Main. The Planter's House was at Sixth and Commercial, now the site of the Exchange National Bank. The National Hotel was a plain log building near the corner of Second and Atchison.[36]

Several towns in Atchison County were competing with Atchison over the location of the county seat. Sumner was probably Atchison's most formidable rival,[37] but there was also spirited competition from Lancaster, Mount Pleasant, and Monrovia. On October 4, 1858, the dispute was settled by an election to determine the location.[38]

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[36]Ibid, pp. 71-72.

[37]Sumner was located about three miles south of Atchison. H. Clay Park, in "The Rise and Fall of Sumner," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. XII, pp. 436-7, writes that J. P. Wheeler, president of the Sumner Town Company, a member of the lower house of the territorial legislature, "logrolled" a bill that gave Sumner the honor of being county seat. However, the "Atchison Gang" finally got the bill killed in the Senate. When Atchison secured its first railroad, Sumner began to further fade in importance. Sumner's "death blow" came in June, 1860, when the town was nearly destroyed by a tornado.

[38]Andreas, History of Kansas, p. 370.

Six hundred and fifty-six votes were cast for Atchison; Sumner, 213; Monrovia, 116; Mount Pleasant, 66; and Lancaster, 9. Five hundred and forty-nine votes had been cast in Atchison County, whose population was approximately 2,745.[39]

Formal education in Atchison began in 1858, when several ladies opened small private schools. During November, 1858, the Atchison Free High School opened at Fourth and Commercial Streets, now the site of the YMCA building.[40]

Higher education began in Atchison in 1859. Benedictine monks, wishing to work among the Catholic settlers in Northeastern Kansas, came to Doniphan, Kansas, in 1855. The decline of Doniphan as an important center led to a move to Atchison for the order. On October 12, 1859, St. Benedict's College opened.[41]

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid, 378. In 1860, the first taxes were levied for educational purposes, resulting in the construction of a central school building. This structure, located at Fifth and Kansas, was destroyed by a fire in October, 1869. A new building, now the site of the Atchison Junior High School, was erected at this location in 1870.

[41] Catherine and Bill Roe (ed.), Atchison Centennial, A Historic Album (Atchison: Lockwood Company, Inc., 1954), p. 39. Benedictine sisters arrived in the city in 1863 and opened a school which eventually became Mount St. Scholastica College. In 1971, the two colleges merged and became Benedictine College.

By 1859, the city of Atchison had eight hardware stores, twenty-seven groceries, and twelve dry good stores. A grist mill had been built and six insurance companies were represented in the city. A large courthouse was erected during this year, with a county jail attached to it. The city of Atchison had a population of five hundred.[42] Several doctors and numerous lawyers lived in Atchison at this time. St. Benedict's and various Protestant denominations were well established in the city.

Horace Greeley, the famed editor of the New York Tribune, considered the proposal to build a transcontinental railroad as one of the great issues of the day. Greeley wished to arouse public interest in the project by setting off on a journey from New York City to the Pacific to observe the nature of the land through which the proposed railroad would pass. Greeley arrived in Atchison on May 15, 1859. While staying at the Massasoit House, Greeley wrote of his journey through Missouri and his travel down the Missouri River from St. Joseph to Atchison. The "Muddy Mo" just north of Atchison created, for him, a vivid impression:

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[42]Andreas, History of Kansas, p. 373.

> The river is at once deep, swift, and generally narrow ....Its muddiness is beyond all description....A fly floating in a teacup of this dubious fluid an 1/8 of an inch below the surface would be quite invisible.[43]

Greeley went on to describe the great bluffs along the river, the stands of elm and cottonwoods, the "deep, rapid boiling, eddying current" and its drifting logs and trees "often torn from its banks by its floods".[44]

As to his impression of Atchison, Greeley wrote the following passage:

> Atchison gives me my first foothold in Kansas. Many trains are made up here for Laramie, Green River, Fort Hall, Utah, and I hear even for Santa Fe. I have seen several twelve-ox teams, drawing heavily-loaded wagons, start for Salt Lake City, etc., today....there are others camped just outside the corporate limits....A little farther away, the tents and wagons of parties of gold-seekers, with faces set for Pike's Peak, dot the prairie.... I have been looking for the West, and here it is at last.[45]

During the day, Greeley had toured the city in a carriage with some of Atchison's leading citizens. The next morning, May 16, after a night of terrific rain, thunder, and lightning, Greeley departed by stage westward on his journey to the Pacific Coast.

On December 2, 1859, another famous man arrived in Atchison. Abraham Lincoln came to the city to speak of "the issues of the day". Lincoln gave a speech in the Methodist

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[43]Horace Greeley, An Overland Journey (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), p. 17.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid, p. 18.

Church which was located at the corner of Fifth and Parallel Streets. Franklin G. Adams described Lincoln's visit in these words:

> I had first seen Mr. Lincoln and heard him talk in Atchison in 1859. He was not then popularly known in Kansas. He was known to be a candidate for the nomination in 1860 as President. The people of Kansas were for Wm. H. Seward. Seward had fought our battles in the U. S. Senate. He was the idol of our people; yet Lincoln was greatly admired for his noble defense of our free-state clause in his great debate with Douglas in 1858.
>
> In Atchison, we appointed a committee to receive him and to provide a place for his address in the evening. He was taken to our best hotel, the Massasoit House, and a good many of the citizens came into the hotel office to shake hands with him and to hear him talk. He was soon started, with his chair tipped up, and among the first to engage in conversation with him was Col. P. T. Abell, the head and brain of the pro-slavery party in our town and largely in the territory. Both had been Kentuckians. Abell knew many citizens of Illinois who had moved there from Kentucky. The two immediately found mutual acquaintances about whom they could converse, and Lincoln began to tell stories, relating incidents in the lives of Illinois Kentuckians.
>
> I was on the committee to provide a place for the Lincoln meeting that evening....The best audience room in town was that of the Methodist Church. Our committee hunted up the trustees, and (Judge) Wilcox says he had considerable difficulty in gaining consent to having a political meeting in a church....it took the best I could do in the way of persuasion to get the church, which we did. I still remember the appearance of Mr. Lincoln as he walked up the aisle on entering the church and took his place on the pulpit stand. He was awkward and forbidding, but it required but a few words for him to dispel the unfavorable impression, and he was listened to with the deepest interest by every member of the audience.
>
> I have mentioned the attachment of the people of Kansas for W. H. Seward. Our own local paper, the Atchison Champion, of which John A. Martin was the editor, made no mention of Mr. Lincoln's presence in Atchison at

> that time. Martin was wrapped up in Seward and could not brook the thought of any encouragement or contenance given by the people of Atchison to a rival candidate.[46]

Lincoln's speech concerned itself with topics of importance to his Republican party: the threat of secession, the prevention of the spread of slavery, and popular sovereignty. He commented upon the hanging of John Brown, indicating that he had received the proper penalty.

Lincoln's Atchison speech has been memorialized by a plaque placed upon a red granite boulder near the Atchison County Courthouse, just across the street from the site of the great man's address.

During the late 1850s, the Atchison area had seen great progress in both its economy and population. However, the 1860s began with "hard times" for most Kansans. The drought of 1859-60 severely damaged Kansas crops. Little rainfall of any consequence fell during this time. The drought resulted in the Kansas Famine (1860-61), during which thousands of settlers left the state. E. C. Manning described this troubled time in Kansas history:

> During the winter of 1859-60, the sun shone forty-five consecutive days through a cloudless sky upon a snowless plain. Through the summer of 1860 the hot wind parched the soil and no harvest followed the seed time; hence the approaching winter brought an alarming outlook....Labor was unemployed, the professions unoccupied,

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[46]Franklin G. Adams, "Reminiscences of Franklin G. Adams," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. VII (1901-02), p. 539-40.

> the granaries were empty, the streams had perished, and the mills were still. As winter neared a panic arose. Everyone who could do so fled from the territory.... Claims were abandoned, farms sold for a pittance.[47]

News of the "great suffering" in Kansas reached the East, prompting charitable organizations to send welcome relief supplies to the people of Kansas. In November, 1860, a territorial relief committee was selected. S. C. Pomeroy of Atchison was chairman and receiving agent for any donations and contributions sent to Kansas. Atchison, being the only city in Kansas reached by a railroad, was to be the receiving point.[48]

In spite of the ill effects of the drought of 1859-60, the city of Atchison continued to thrive. Atchison was an established commercial center of unquestioned importance.

> It was nothing unusual to see two or three steamboats lying at the levee discharging freight, and as many more on the river in sight....It was not an unusual sight to see a whole boat load of wagons and ox yokes, mining machinery, boilers and other material necessary for the immense trade of the West....heavily loaded wagons, and strings of four or six horse or mule teams, formed almost an endless procession....out of Atchison to the West.[49]

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[47]E. C. Manning, "In At the Beginning, And-," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. VII (1901-02), p. 203.

[48]George W. Glick, "The Drought of 1860," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. IX (1905-06), p. 482-83. Supplies from the East were transported by the Hannibal and St. Joe Railroad to St. Joseph and from there on the recently completed Atchison and St. Joe Railroad to Winthrop (East Atchison), Missouri, just across the Missouri River. The goods were ferried across the river to Atchison.

[49]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 160.

CHAPTER IV

FROM BORDER WAR TO CIVIL WAR

Transportation and communication between the western and eastern sections of the United States became a problem when the western population grew after the discovery of gold in California. Passenger and freight traffic moved very slowly by wagon, by stagecoach, and by ship.

It was realized that the building of a railroad to California was the answer. However, Congress in 1854 had become deadlocked on the issue because northern and southern factions could not agree to the route of the proposed railroad.

Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois proposed a central route. The greatest obstacle to this plan was the lack of settlement in Nebraska. To solve this problem, Douglas introduced a plan to make Nebraska an organized territory. Due to its northern location, it was thought Nebraska would become a territory without slaves and would eventually become a free state. Douglas knew the southerners in Congress would complain about the possibility of another free state; unless they gained something in return. To satisfy them, Kansas was added to his original plan. It was thought that Kansas would be settled by pro-slavery people.

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had closed the territory north of the southern boundary of Missouri (36^{o} 30') to any future slavery. David Atchison, Democratic Senator from Missouri, who was "undoubtedly the originator of the idea of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise",[1] encouraged the introduction by Senator Douglas of what was to become the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

The Act was passed by Congress on May 26, 1854. It established the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. The residents of each area would be allowed to decide for themselves as to whether or not they would become free or slave. This became known as the doctrine of "popular sovereignty."

The founders of Atchison were largely western Missourians who were sympathetic toward the institution of slavery. Some of these men, such as David Atchison, John and Benjamin Stringfellow, and Peter Abell, were prominent pro-slavery leaders. Referring to David Atchison, Andreas wrote:

> Atchison was the gateway through which a powerful champion of the pro-slavery classes expected to advance his forces and finally take possession of the state of Kansas, in the name of his institution.[2]

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[1]Thomas H. Webb's Scrapbooks, Kansas State Historical Society, Vol. 4, p. 111.

[2]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 369.

From the start of territorial days, slaves were kept in the Atchison area. George Million, Atchison's first settler, owned six slaves. Peter Abell, the president of the town company that founded Atchison, owned a black house servant. Several other slave owners lived in Atchison County during territorial days. The slave population, though, was never significant.[3]

Most of the later settlers coming into the Atchison area had but little interest in the slavery question. Most of them were simply concerned with finding good land or starting small businesses.

David Atchison gave a speech of political importance in Atchison on September 21, 1854. This account of the event was printed in a Parkville, Missouri, newspaper:

> ...He commenced by mentioning the bountiful country that was beginning to be settled; to some of the circumstances under which a territorial government was organized, and in the course of his remarks mentioned how Douglas came to introduce the Kansas-Nebraska Bill...
>
> General Atchison then spoke of those who had supported and those who had opposed the bill in the Senate, and ended by saying that the American people loved honesty and could appreciate the acts of a man who openly and above-board voted according to the will of his constituents, without political regard or favor. He expressed his profound contempt for abolitionists; said if he had his way he would hang every one of them that dared to

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[3]C. E. Cory, "Slavery in Kansas," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. VII (1901-02), p. 240.

> show his face, but he knew that Northern men settling in the territory were sensible and honest, and that the right feeling men among them would be as far from stealing a Negro as a Southern man would.[4]

David Atchison was born in Kentucky on August 11, 1807. He became a lawyer and moved to Liberty, Missouri, in 1830. He shortly became a leader in the Missouri State Militia, a state legislator, and later a judge of the district court at Platte City. In 1838 Atchison was appointed to a vacancy in the United States Senate. He was re-elected for two terms. On March 4, 1849, Atchison was said to have been "president for a day."[5] Defeated in his quest for another term, he retired from politics in 1855. He soon became the radical leader and advisor of the pro-slavery party during the days of "Bleeding Kansas." The former Senator played a major role in the violence of this period.

Atchison, in a typically poisonous speech at Platte City, said that if Kansas could not become a slave state by peaceful means, then he "must take it at the point of the bayonet, if necessary."[6] He also stated that he would rather "see Kansas sunk to the bottom of hell"[7] than allow it to become a free state.

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[4]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, pp. 66-67.

[5]Newly-elected President Zachary Taylor did not wish to be inaugurated on a Sunday, so Senator Atchison, the presiding officer of the Senate, technically was acting president.

[6]Webb's Scrapbooks, Vol. 6, p. 87.

[7]Ibid, Vol. 4, p. 11.

David R. Atchison, leader of the Missouri pro-slavery forces.
Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

David Atchison was well-known throughout the South. Because of his connection with the town of Atchison, many zealous pro-slavers, coming into Kansas territory, settled in and around the town. Many free-staters were also settling in the area, but most apparently thought it wise to conceal their true feelings, fearing that their lives and property would be endangered.

Andrew Reeder, a Pennsylvania lawyer, was appointed the first territorial governor of Kansas in June, 1854. Reeder, who was a stranger to Kansas, traveled throughout the territory. He ordered that an election to determine our delegate to the United States Congress be held on November 29, 1854.

Reeder was only the first of ten governors (or acting governors) of the Territory of Kansas during the years 1854 to 1859. He served as territorial governor from July 7, 1854 to August 16, 1855. Like the other governors of the troubled territory, he was extremely unpopular with the pro-slavery people. Atchison's Squatter Sovereign printed the following declaration:

> Nine-tenths of the citizens of Kansas would rather see him hanging to a tree, than filling the gubernatorial chair.[8]

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[8]Richmond, Kansas, A Land of Contrasts, p. 67.

David Atchison began to stir up the western Missouri pro-slavery forces. His agitated speeches inspired a great wave of illegal voters in Kansas elections. One such speech was delivered on November 6, 1854, at Platte City.

> When you reside in one day's journey of the territory... you can, without an exertion, send 500 of your young men who will vote in favor of your institutions. Should each county in the state of Missouri only do its duty, the question will be decided quietly and peaceably at the ballot box.[9]

On November 28, 1854, the day before the congressional election in Kansas, Missouri pro-slavers poured into Kansas. In this election, as in others during this period, they came in such overwhelming numbers that they actually outnumbered the legal voters in some voting precincts.

> They took possession of the polls, elected many of the judges, intimidated others to resign and refusing to take the oath qualifying themselves as voters and prescribe to the regulations of the election, cast their ballots...and hastily beat their retreat to Missouri.[10]

These illegal Missouri voters were referred to as "Border Ruffians" by the Kansas free-staters who were disgusted by their violent behavior and sloppy appearance. One observer described them in the following manner:

> They are a queer looking set, slightly resembling human beings, but more closely allied, in general appearance, to wild beasts....They never shave or comb their hair, and their chief occupation is loafing around whiskey

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[9]D. W. Wilder, Annals of Kansas (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1886), p. 52.

[10]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 46.

> shops, squirting tobacco juice and whittling with a dull jack knife...and delight in robbing...from free-state men....They...revel in ignorance and filth.[11]

John Whitfield, a pro-slaver, was elected as a delegate to Congress by a large majority. Soon the voting frauds were much-publicized, but most settlers seemed much more interested in working their farms or running their businesses.

The first territorial legislature met at Pawnee from July 2 to 6, 1855. Despite the vetoes of Governor Reeder, the pro-slavery legislature passed in July and August what became known as the "Bogus Laws." The worst of these laws was the Missouri Slave Code which called for severe penalties to those who either spoke against slavery or helped free slaves. Free-state people called the laws "bogus", due to the illegal nature of the elections which elected these representatives. Later in the year, at Topeka, the Free-State Party wrote a free-state constitution with Charles Robinson as their governor. This made the political situation in Kansas even more confusing. The Federal authorities recognized the pro-slavery legislature. The Free-State government had no legal authority. The two "governments" ignored the laws passed by their rival body.

Another election for Kansas' delegate to Congress was held in October, 1855. Both the Free-State Party and

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[11]Richmond, Kansas, A Land of Contrasts, p. 67.

the Pro-Slavery Party voted in their own elections. The Free-Staters chose Andrew Reeder, the former governor. John Whitfield, who had been the territory's delegate in the previous congress, was selected for the post by the Pro-Slavers. This resulted in the United States Congress refusing to accept either man as a delegate. So Kansas had no representation in the 34th Congress.[12] Richmond notes that this sad affair was evidence of the "slightly ridiculous" nature of the Kansas political scene of the time.[13]

Governor Reeder had ordered that a census be taken before the election for the legislature. This was required before an election for a territorial legislature could be held. The population, exclusive of Indians, was found to be 8,501. This figure included 192 slaves. There were 2,905 men of voting age.[14] The election, held on March 30, 1855, had predictable results. Large numbers of Missourians again swept into the voting places to control the election. Missourians intimidated the resident voters to such an extent that the pro-slavery faction received a majority of the seats in the legislature. There were 6,218 votes cast

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[12]Ibid, p. 68; Zornow, Kansas, A History of the Jayhawk State, p. 71.

[13]Richmond, Kansas, A Land of Contrasts, p. 68.

[14]Isely and Richards, Four Centuries in Kansas, p. 129.

in the election despite the fact that there were only 2,905 eligible voters.[15]

Pro-slavers in Kansas and Missouri rejoiced over the election results. They freely admitted the outrageous way the election had been won. Referring to this event, Andreas wrote:

> ...The Pro-slavery residents, with their allies over the Missouri border...acknowledged the outrages with an abandoned frankness....There was no attempt to hide the truth. The Missourians had gone over to the various precincts in Kansas in overwhelming numbers, and elected a Pro-slavery legislature - they were proud of the achievement, gloried in it, and took great pains to boast of it.[16]

The free-state people, of course, were furious. The results of this election started a series of free-state meetings and other actions intended to bring Kansas into the Union as a free state.

A group of free-state men framed a state constitution in Topeka during October 23-November 11, 1855. They asked Congress to admit Kansas as a free state. Meanwhile, other free-staters, such as James Lane, continued to work for a state government.

The pro-slavers formed an organization called the Law and Order Party, which was pledged to work for the establishment of slavery in Kansas. Atchison was the head-

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[15]Ibid.

[16]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 97.

quarters of this group. The free-state supporters living in Atchison and Leavenworth, where the Law and Order Party dominated town affairs, suffered many insults and indignities.

> ...mobs were readily organized in...Atchison...to intimidate...or otherwise maltreat any person who should dare speak in opposition to the prevailing sentiment... on the slavery question. No Free-state man's life or property was safe in any of the border towns of Kansas at that time, unless he kept his mouth shut.[17]

In response to the Law and Order Party, the free-staters formed their own society -- the Kansas Legion. Its members armed themselves and organized military units.

Pat Laughlin, a member of the Legion, was active in organizing various companies in Kansas. He later betrayed the society by giving out information to some pro-slavery men. On October 25, 1855, a gun fight between Laughlin and Samuel Collins (a Kansas Legion member) took place near Doniphan. Friends of both men were present and armed. Laughlin shot and killed Collins and was himself slightly wounded. No attempt was made by territorial peace officers to arrest Laughlin. After his wound healed, he lived and worked in Atchison.[18]

In August, 1855, a black woman owned by Grafton Thomassen, Atchison's sawmill operator, drowned in the Missouri River. J. W. B. Kelley, formerly of Cincinnati but

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[17]Ibid, p. 115.

[18]Ibid, p. 116.

now an Atchison lawyer, offered his hasty opinion that the woman, who was assumed to have committed suicide, might not have done so if Mr. Thomassen had treated her better. Kelley also made some other remarks that angered the pro-slavery faction in Atchison. Thomassen, a powerful man, with the encouragement of many spectators, gained satisfaction by beating up Mr. Kelley in a fist-fight. In addition to the beating, the good men of Atchison, looking at the "principle of the thing", passed seven resolutions to encourage Mr. Kelley to swiftly leave the city.

> Resolved, That one J. W. B. Kelley, hailing from Cincinnati, having upon sundry occasions denounced our institutions, and declared all Pro-slavery men ruffians, we deem it an act of kindness to rid him of such company, and therefore command him to leave the town of Atchison one hour after having been informed of the passage of this resolution, never more to show himself in this vicinity.
>
> Resolved, 2d, That in case he fails to obey this reasonable command, we inflict upon him such punishment as the nature of the case and circumstances may require.
>
> Resolved, 3d, That other emissaries of the Abolitionist Society, now in our midst tampering with our slaves, are warned to leave, else they will meet the reward which their nefarious designs so justly merit -- hemp.
>
> Resolved, 4th, That we approve and applaud our fellow townsman, Grafton Thomassen for the castigation administered to said J. W. B. Kelley, whose presence among us is a libel upon our good standing and a disgrace to our community.
>
> Resolved, 5th, That we recommend the good work of purging our town of all resident Abolitionists; and after cleansing our town of such nuisances, shall do the same for the settlers on Walnut and Independence creeks, whose propensities for cattle stealing are well known to many.

Resolved, 6th, That the chairman appoint a committee of three to wait upon said Kelley and acquaint him with the action of this meeting.

Resolved, 7th, That the proceedings of this meeting be published, that the world may know our determination.[19]

Copies of the resolutions were printed and distributed throughout Atchison for the signatures of the citizens of the city. Any man who refused to sign it was to be considered an Abolitionist. This action led to what is perhaps the most famous incident in Atchison during the "Bleeding Kansas" days.

Pardee Butler, a preacher of the Christian Church, lived on a farm twelve miles west of Atchison. Butler came into Atchison on business on August 16, 1855, soon after the "Kelley outrage." Being one of the few free-staters in the Atchison area not afraid of expressing his opinions, he walked throughout the city berating Mr. Thomassen and the citizens who had drafted and signed the resolutions against Mr. Kelley.

The Reverend Butler was well-known in Atchison and is said to have been a man of strong convictions and courage; while he did not encourage controversies, he was inclined to express his "dangerous abolition heresies." Later in the day Butler had a heated argument at the post office with Robert S. Kelley, Atchison's postmaster and assistant editor

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[19]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 371.

of Atchison's radical pro-slavery paper, the Squatter Sovereign.

Butler informed Mr. Kelley that he was not a subscriber to the Squatter Sovereign because of the violent pro-slavery nature of the paper. Mr. Kelley responded, "I look upon all free-staters as rogues and they ought to be treated as such." Mr. Butler replied, "I am a Free Stater and expect to vote for Kansas as a Free State." Mr. Kelley then stated, "I do not expect you will be allowed to vote."[20]

The next morning a mob assembled in front of the National Hotel, where Pardee Butler was staying. Kelley presented the resolutions to Butler and demanded his signature. Butler was later to write of the misadventure that befell him:

> ...I felt my heart flutter, and knew if I should undertake to speak my voice would tremble, and determined to gain time. Sitting down I pretended to read the resolutions -- they were familiar to me, having been already printed in the Squatter Sovereign -- and finally I began to read them aloud....I said not a word, but going to the head of the stairs, where was my writing-stand and pen and ink, I laid the paper down and quickly walked down stairs and into the street. Here they caught me by the wrists, from behind, and demanded, "Will you sign?" I answered, "No", with emphasis. I had got my voice by that time. They dragged me down to the Missouri River, cursing me, and telling me they were going to drown me. But when we had got to the river they seemed to have got to the end of their programme, and there we stood....By this time a great crowd had gathered around, and each man took his turn in cross-questioning me, while I replied, as best I could, to this storm of questions, accusations and invectives. We went over the

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[20]Ibid.

> whole ground. We debated every issue that had been debated in Congress. They alleged .... that slaves are property, and that they had a natural and inalienable right to take their property into any part of the national Territory...while I urged the terms of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and that under it free State men have a right to come into the Territory, and by their votes to make it a free State, if their votes will make it so.[21]

A vote was taken to determine the punishment which would be administered to the preacher. The mob decided upon a verdict of death by hanging; but Mr. Kelley purposely reported false results, thus saving Mr. Butler's life.[22]

And Butler continues:

> The crowd had now to be pacified and won over to an arrangement that should give me a chance for my life. A Mr. Peebles, a dentist from Lexington, Mo., who was working at the business of dentistry in Atchison, and himself a slave-holder...said: "My friends, we must not hang this man; he is not an Abolitionist, he is what they call a Free-soiler. The Abolitionists steal our niggers, but the Free-soilers do not do this. They intend to make Kansas a free State by legal methods. But in the outcome of the business, there is not a...difference between a Free-soiler and an Abolitionist; for if the Free-soilers succeed in making Kansas a free State, and thus surround Missouri with a cordon of free States, our slaves in Missouri will not be worth a dime apiece. Still we must not hang this man; and I propose that we make a raft and send him down the river as an example."
>
> And so to him they all agreed. Then the question came up, What kind of a raft shall it be? Some said, "One log"; but the crowd decided it should be two logs fastened together. When the raft was completed I was ordered to take my place on it, after they had painted the letter R. on my forehead with black paint. This letter stood for Rogue. I had in my pocket a purse of gold, which I proffered to a merchant of the place, an

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[21]Pardee Butler, Personal Recollections of Pardee Butler (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1889), pp. 68-69.

[22]Ibid, p. 70.

> upright business man, with the request that he would send it to my wife; but he declined to take it. He afterwards explained to me that he himself was afraid of the mob. They took a skiff and towed the raft out into the middle of the Missouri River. As we swung away from the bank, I rose up and said: "Gentlemen, if I am drowned I forgive you; but I have this to say to you: If you are not ashamed of your part in this transaction, I am not ashamed of mine. Good-by."[23]

After landing a few miles below Atchison, Reverend Butler made his way home. On April 30, 1856, after an absence of several months, he again made an appearance in Atchison. This visit, meant to be both brief and discreet, was unwise. A letter written by Butler for publication in the Herald of Freedom describes his further mistreatment by Atchison's "pro-slavery ruffians":

> April 30th I returned to Kansas, crossing the Missouri River into Atchison. I spoke with no one in the town, save with two merchants of the place, with whom I have had business transactions since my first arrival in the Territory. Having remained only a few moments, I went to my buggy to resume my journey, when I was assaulted by Robert S. Kelley, co-editor of the Squatter Sovereign, and others, was dragged into a saloon, and there surrounded by a company of South Carolinians, who are reported to have been sent out by a Southern Emigrant Aid Society. In this last mob I recognized only two that were citizens of Atchison or engaged in the former mob....They yelled, "Kill him! Kill him! Hang the -- Abolitionist." One of their number bristled up to me and said, "Have you got a revolver?" I answered, "No." He handed me a pistol and said, "There, take that, and stand off ten steps; and --, I will blow you through in an instant." I replied, "I have no use for your weapon." I afterwards heard them congratulating themselves in reference to this, that they had acted in an honorable manner with me. The fellow was furious; but his companions dissuaded him from shooting me, saying they were going to hang me.

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[23]Pardee Butler, Personal Recollections of Pardee Butler (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1889), pp. 68-72.

Pardee Butler, Free State preacher.
Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

They pinioned my arms behind my back, obtained a rope, but were interrupted by the entrance of a stranger-- a gentleman from Missouri, since ascertained to be Judge Tutt, a lawyer from St. Joseph. He said: "my friends, hear me. I am an old man, and it is right you should hear me. I was born in Virginia, and have lived many years in Missouri. I am a slave-holder, and desire Kansas to be made a slave State, if it can be done by honorable means. But you will destroy the cause you are seeking to build up. You have taken this man, who was peaceably passing through your streets and along the public highway, and doing no person any harm. We profess to be 'Law and Order' men, and ought to be the last to commit violence. If this man has broken the law, let him be judged according to law; but for the sake of Missouri, for the sake of Kansas, for the sake of the pro-slavery cause, do not act in this way." They dragged me into another building, and appointed a moderator, and got up a kind of lynch law trial. Kelley told his story. I rose to my feet, and calmly and in respectful language began to tell mine; but I was jerked to my seat and so roughly handled that I was compelled to desist. My friend from Missouri again earnestly besought them to set me at liberty. Kelley turned short on him and said: "Do you belong to Kansas?" Judge Tutt replied: "No; but I expect to live here in Atchison next fall, and in this matter the interests of Kansas and Missouri are identical." Chester Lamb, a lawyer in Atchison, and Samuel Dickson, a merchant of the place, both pro-slavery men, also united with Judge Tutt in pleading that I might be set at liberty. While these gentlemen were speaking, I heard my keepers mutter, "--If you don't hush up, we will tar and feather you." But when Kelley saw how matters stood, he came forward and said he "did not take Butler to have him hung, but only tarred and feathered."

...I was given into the hands of my South Carolina overseers to be tarred and feathered. They muttered and growled at this issue of the matter...One little, sharp-visaged, dark-featured South Carolinian, who seemed to be the leader of the gang, was particularly displeased. With bitter curses he said, "I am not come all the way from South Carolina, spending so much money to do things up in such milk-and-water style as this."

They stripped me naked to my waist, covered my body with tar, and for the want of feathers applied cotton. Hav-

> ing appointed a committee of seven to certainly hang me the next time I should come into Atchison, they tossed my clothes into my buggy, put me therein, accompanied me to the outskirts of the town, and sent me naked out upon the prairie. It was a cold, bleak day. I adjusted my attire about me as best I could, and hastened to rejoin my wife and little ones on the banks of the Stranger Creek...[24]

Throughout 1856, Dr. Stringfellow employed his "poison pen" to encourage further violence by the pro-slavery faction. The motto of his paper, the Squatter Sovereign, seemed to be "death to all Yankees and traitors in Kansas."[25]

The Squatter Sovereign in January, 1856, writing about a murder in Leavenworth, praised the murderer and offered encouragement to any others who would kill abolitionists.

> It seems now to be certain that we will have to give the abolitionists at least one good thrashing before political matters are settled in this territory. To do so we must have arms; we have the men. I propose to raise funds to furnish Colt's revolvers for those who are without them.[26]

In April, 1856, the Squatter Sovereign proclaimed that Kansas "must be a slave state or the Union will be dissolved."[27] On May 22, the paper praised Senator Preston Brooks of South Carolina for the brutal beating he administered to Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts in the United States Senate. The Atchison paper said that the

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[24]Ibid, pp. 106-108.

[25]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 56.

[26]Ibid, p. 55.

[27]Webb's Scrapbooks, Vol. II, p. 149.

assault upon Sumner by Brooks was "approved and applauded by the citizens of Kansas" and that the shocking deed was "one of the best acts ever done in the Senate chamber."[28] In July, the paper suggested that the hanging of a boatload of abolitionists and free-staters would "do a great deal toward the establishment of peace in Kansas."[29] The Squatter Sovereign was "without dispute the most bitter pro-slavery organ in the territory."[30]

Kansas pro-slavers called upon the people of the South to supply them with arms and ammunition. Likewise, the free-staters appealed for aid from the North. Henry Beecher, an abolitionist preacher, and his congregation in the East sent "rifles and bibles" to the free-staters. Jim Lane's "Army of the North" brought men and rifles into Kansas for the free-state cause.

In March, 1856, a number of pro-slavery emigrants arrived by steamboat in Atchison. These southerners came heavily armed and formed a company under Captain F. G. Palmer. An Atchison company was already in existance. It was under the leadership of Captain John H. Stringfellow

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[28] Squatter Sovereign, 22 May 1856. Senator Sumner had harshly criticized Brooks for his pro-slavery stand and had spoken sharply about the "crimes against Kansas" being committed by the Pro-Slavery Party.

[29] Webb's Scrapbooks, Vol. 14, p. 72.

[30] Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 372.

and First Lieutenant Robert S. Kelley, editors of Atchison's Squatter Sovereign.

On May 21, 1856, the South Carolina emigrants, together with pro-slavery Atchison forces led by David Atchison and John Stringfellow, raided Lawrence. With a force of about 800 men and the aid of two cannons, they burned the Free State Hotel, the free-state Herald of Freedom, and the house belonging to Charles Robinson, the future first governor of Kansas. Two men, one on each side, were killed.

Dr. A. Morrall, one of the South Carolina emigrants to Atchison, wrote an account of this action, of which he was a participant:

> ...I came to Kansas with a company from Charleston. The object of this company in coming to Kansas was to make her a slave state...The free-state men were located at Lawrence...we were at Atchison and Leavenworth. Each party annoyed the other by raiding the camps and taking each other's horses...We took each other prisoner, if we were caught in their limits or they in our limits...
>
> Under the territorial laws the acting sheriff, Sam Jones, was ordered to arrest some of the free-state men at Lawrence, but they resisted and drove him off. He then summoned us, as a posse, to assist him in making the arrest. In the meantime, the free-state men, knowing what the sheriff was about to do, armed themselves and defied him; so we were marched in military style to Lawrence to help in making the arrest, or to destroy the town.
>
> We started from Atchison with wagons of provisions, and were armed to the teeth, with one piece of artillery, of which I had charge. My orders were to batter down the hotel....I sent word to them to vacate the building, giving them thirty minutes to do so...at the end of the time I did fire, and knocked the walls down. We did not disturb anyone in town, but the printing press was

> destroyed and the type thrown in the river...neither was the town "sacked", although such eatables as were found ...were taken, after which we marched back towards home--Atchison...[31]

After the raid against Lawrence, David Atchison stated, in his typically boastful manner, "men of the South and of Missouri, I am proud of this day."[32]

Throughout the "Bleeding Kansas" days, a number of Missouri newspapers and citizens denounced their own David Atchison and the "Border Ruffians." It should be noted that most of the people of Missouri were not pro-slavers and that a good many abolitionists lived in the state. The following quote, typical of many Missouri newspapers, appeared in the St. Louis News on May 12, 1855:

> We understand and believe that David R. Atchison is at the bottom of all the troubles that have afflicted Kansas, and is the chief instigator of the meetings, mobs...threats, and excitements which threaten to plunge the border into a wild...strife.[33]

A letter from Weston, Missouri, which appeared in the Boston Traveller in January, 1856, stated that "the people of Missouri do not respect the man who volunteers

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[31]Dr. A. Morrall, "Brief Autobiography of Dr. A. Morrall," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. XIV (1915-18), p. 131.

[32]Webb's Scrapbooks, Vol. 15, p. 83.

[33]Ibid, Vol. 4, p. 27.

as a champion of Slavery" and that the people of Missouri despised Atchison for his conduct in Kansas.[34] John Haskell wrote that most Missourians were not radical, violent slavers, but conservative, wishing to follow a policy of "letting well enough alone" as regarded the issue of the extension of slavery into new territory.[35]

Kansas was now embroiled in a civil war. The state was plagued by riots, bloodshed, and death. "Bleeding Kansas" was to cost about 200 people their lives.

A pro-slavery celebration and meeting in Atchison on June 28, 1856, illustrates the spirit of the times. Among the toasts at a banquet that night were these: "Kansas- our chosen home - stand by her. Yes! Sons of the South, make her a slave state, or die in the attempt!" "The city of Atchison - may she before the close of the year '57 be the capital of a Southern republic!"[36]

Thinking the one attack was not enough punishment for the free-state town, David Atchison and Benjamin Stringfellow assembled a force of 2700 men for a "final assault" upon Lawrence.

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[34]John Haskell, "The Passing of Slavery in Western Missouri," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. VII (1901-02), p. 39.

[35]Ibid, p. 29.

[36]George W. Martin, "The First Two Years of Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. X (1907-08), p. 146.

The defenders of Lawrence numbered only about three hundred men. A week before, the forces about the town had numbered at least one thousand men, well organized and equipped. But much of this force, believing the danger was over, had departed. John Brown, one of the defenders, assured the men that Missourians were cowards that could not stand up to brave or determined enemies.

Andreas wrote that had the attack come, "it would have marked the bloodiest day in the annals of the territory."[37] However, further destruction aimed at Lawrence was averted by the arrival of Federal troops led by Governor Geary on September 13, 1856. He ordered Atchison and Stringfellow's forces to disband, which they did.

Governor Geary's triumph over David Atchison seemed to take the steam out of his crusade to establish Kansas as a slave state. Geary "severely reprimanded" Mr. Atchison for his past actions, proclaiming that the former Senator had fallen so low as to now be the radical leader of a mob of men "with uncontrollable passions, determined upon wholesale slaughter and destruction."[38]

After the disbanding of his militia, David Atchison addressed a pro-slavery gathering. His message plainly indicated the general trend of pro-slavery sentiment in Kansas.

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[37]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 150.

[38]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 60.

> General Atchison...said that it was time for men to exercise their reason and not yield to their passions and also to keep on the side of the law which alone constitutes our strength and protection. These words... breathed a far different message than his strong language of a few years before...[39]

The interrupted action at Lawrence was the last organized, large-scale incursion into Kansas by Missouri pro-slavers. Most of Atchison's men returned to their homes.[40]

Although the year 1856 was exciting, it hurt business in Atchison. Many of the city's citizens were absent, engaging in actions arising from the slavery question. Business had declined. One obvious reason was Atchison's "reputation as the home of blood-thirsty pro-slavery men."[41]

As Atchison's prosperity began to diminish, most of the town's merchants were disconsolate. Rumors were afloat that Atchison was rapidly beginning to fade as a commercial center. Indeed, W. H. Coffin, a Quaker passing through Atchison in January, 1857, observed that the town was "so ultra pro-slavery that it killed the place."[42] Holloway

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[39]Ibid, p. 62.

[40]Atchison continued to take part in "Bleeding Kansas"; his role ended with the coming of statehood. Declining a commission as a brigadier general in the Confederate Army, he assisted with the organizing of Missouri troops during the Civil War. He retired after the war to his farm in Clinton County, Missouri, where he died in 1886.

[41]Peter Beckman, "The Overland Trade and Atchison's Beginnings," Territorial Kansas (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1940), p. 151.

[42]William H. Coffin, "Settlement of the Friends in Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. VII (1901-02), p. 348.

notes that until 1857 Atchison was certainly "the most violent pro-slavery town in the territory."[43]

However, an important change in the political climate of the town had begun late in 1856. Most of Atchison's businessmen had signed a unique document which was published in the Squatter Sovereign. They publicly declared that although many of the people of Atchison were pro-slavery, the rights of all men, particularly those who were "gentle and quiet", would be respected.[44]

In 1857, Franklin Adams and other Leavenworth businessmen began investing in Atchison real estate. The Squatter Sovereign was purchased from John Stringfellow and Robert Kelley. Adams changed the paper from a radical pro-slavery newspaper to one of free-state sympathies. The paper now would be more concerned about opening new schools and churches and otherwise building up the town. Adams also helped form a Free-State Party organization in Atchison County.[45] Before 1857, the pro-slavery forces had maintained such a reign of terrorism that there had been no organization of free-state men in the city of Atchison.

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[43]J. N. Holloway, History of Kansas (Lafayette: James, Emmons and Company, 1868), p. 109.

[44]Squatter Sovereign, 22 November 1856.

[45]"Biographical Sketch of Franklin G. Adams," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. VII (1901-02), p. 173. John Stringfellow returned to Virginia and served as a confederate surgeon during the Civil War. He returned to Atchison in 1871 and lived here until 1876. Until his death in 1905, he lived in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Although the pro-slavery grip on Atchison was loosening, some of the fanatical die-hards used violence and threats as a means to prevent free-state meetings in Atchison. In spite of this pressure, the free-state committee invited James Lane to speak in Atchison. The angry pro-slavery faction marched in the streets and attacked Franklin Adams. The peaceful attitude of the free-state men served to prevent the incident from becoming a serious disorder.[46]

Although John Brown never entered Atchison County, the fanatical abolitionist figures in Atchison history. In 1857, a group of Atchison pro-slavers rode to intercept Brown at Centralia. He was traveling with a group of Missouri blacks he intended to free in Nebraska. The wily Brown managed to capture the Atchison party. After a fearful night as Brown's prisoners, the embarrassed men were released unharmed.

Politics became calmer throughout Kansas during the later months of 1857 and early 1858. At a public meeting in Atchison on October 19, 1857, speeches were made by both pro-slavery and free-state citizens. They decided that it was now necessary to "pull together" and build up the town if Atchison was to compete with other new and prospering towns of the territory.

> As Lawrence was the free-soil champion of Kansas, so, for the first three years of her life, Atchison moved and had her being in the pro-slavery principle. From

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[46]Ibid.

> 1854 to 1857 is a clean-cut period in her history. During the latter year the local leaders of the Pro-Slavery Party saw how the scales of public sentiment tipped in the outer world, and concluded to forget politics, invite the immigration of all respectable classes, and to unite business energy...for the good of a community with an evident...future before it.[47]

It might be said that the downfall of slavery in Kansas was due to the folly of the pro-slavery leaders. Their illegal voting in elections held during 1854 and 1855 was not only dishonest but unnecessary, because they could have won the elections legally. A census taken in 1855 disclosed that of the 2,905 eligible Kansas voters only 1,031 were originally from free states, while 1,874 were from slave states.[48] If the Missouri Border Ruffians had stayed home, the pro-slavery party could have elected the first territorial legislature legally.

Under the principle of popular sovereignty, pro-slavers had the right to peacefully enter the territory of Kansas and work to make it a slave state. It was the fraudulent voting and accompanying violence that aroused the North to send arms and free-state imigrants to Kansas. By 1857 the free-state settlers outnumbered the pro-slavery voters more than two to one.[49]

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[47] Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 369.

[48] Isely and Richards, Four Centuries in Kansas, p. 177.

[49] Ibid.

In February, 1858, the Squatter Sovereign's publishing facilities were purchased by John A. Martin. The new owner changed the name of the paper to Freedom's Champion. Martin guided the paper to a position of prominence among the free-state newspapers.

John Martin, a Pennsylvanian born in 1839, had come to Atchison in 1857. In 1858, the young man was nominated for the territorial legislature, which he could not accept, being not even twenty years old. He would become in 1865 mayor of Atchison, and later, governor of Kansas.

By the middle of 1858, even the pro-slavery newspapers in Kansas were beginning to tire of the senseless bloodshed and violence in the state.

> The territory was growing up and more and more people were realizing that the political differences need not be settled with guns and fists.[50]

After the end of the slavery agitation in Kansas, more peaceful elections and constitutional conventions took place. The political winds were relatively calm by October 4, 1859, the date that the Wyandotte Constitution was accepted by an overwhelming vote of the people of Kansas Territory.[51]

Three representatives from Atchison were sent to the Wyandotte Convention: John J. Ingalls, a lawyer and

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[50]Richmond, Kansas, A Land of Contrasts, p. 75.

[51]Under this constitution, Kansas would finally be admitted to the Union on January 29, 1861.

future Senator of Kansas; Caleb May, a farmer; and Robert Graham, an Atchison merchant. Mr. Ingalls, who had settled at Sumner in 1858 and who was now just 26 years old, was said to be the "recognized scholar of the convention."[52] John Martin played an important role as secretary of the convention.

The question that seemed to provoke the most heated argument at this convention was the location of the state capital. It was decided that the city receiving a majority of votes cast by the delegates would be the capital. A second ballot was limited to the front-runners; Topeka, Lawrence and Atchison. The final vote was Topeka, 26; Lawrence, 14; and Atchison, 6.[53] All of the Democratic delegates, including the representatives from Doniphan and Leavenworth Counties, had voted for Topeka.[54]

Much controversy arose over charges of bribery and the pooling of votes by representatives of Topeka and Lawrence. The details of the corrupt happenings at this convention are obscure, but a typical observation by the Herald of Freedom follows:

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[52]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 63.

[53]G. Raymond Gaeddert, The Birth of Kansas (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1940), p. 61.

[54]Atchison, now a free-state town, had just "gone Republican."

> If there has ever been anything in our political history more disgraceful to us as a people than the proceedings of this convention, I should be sorry to know anything about it.[55]

One of the political highlights of Atchison history came on December 2, 1859. Here Abraham Lincoln spoke against the extension of slavery into the western territories. This, and four other speeches given in Kansas in December, 1859, helped to make Lincoln a national figure.

The Kansas delegates, however, were supporters of Senator William Seward, the well-known candidate from New York who was a pro-Kansas supporter in the Senate. Atchison's Republican newspaper, Freedom's Champion, did not even mention this speech, or the fact that Lincoln had ever been in Atchison.

In the new state's first election, Charles Robinson was elected governor. Samuel Pomeroy of Atchison and James Lane became the first United States Senators from Kansas.

Pomeroy's bid for the Senate had been hotly contested by much spirited opposition. His election was the subject of great controversy. Pomeroy had been accused of pocketing donations made to the Kansas Relief Committee, founded to combat the drought of 1859-60.

The famine of 1860-61, which followed the drought that damaged Kansas crops, is interesting in view of the political motives and corruption that soon became apparent.

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[55] Herald of Freedom, 31 July 1859.

The New England Kansas Relief Committee and the Kansas Territorial Relief Committee were to distribute needed goods to the people of Kansas. This later committee, headed by Thaddeus Hyatt of New York and Samuel Pomeroy of Atchison, set up distribution headquarters in Atchison.

Most Kansas politicians believed that Pomeroy was "trying to ride into the United States Senate on the famine horse." Hyatt's reports of the "great need" of the Kansas people were criticized by his many opponents as "gross exaggerations." He replied that such criticism was prompted by the jealousy of the city of Lawrence and fear that word of the extent of the famine would ruin land values and trade and discourage immigration to Kansas.[56]

The political motives of the relief work became obvious when the bulk of the relief provisions were distributed at Republican strongholds, yet relief aid was meager in the Democratic districts of Kansas.[57]

Pomeroy apparently made use of a portion of the relief funds to bribe some state senators into supporting his senate bid. There are no reliable figures to offer as proof

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[56]Gaeddert, The Birth of Kansas, p. 23.

[57]Gaeddert, in The Birth of Kansas, p. 24, notes that in Atchison and Leavenworth counties, the relief aid in pounds per capita was thirty-five and six. In Republican Allen County and Democratic Linn County it was one hundred and seven, respectively.

of the amount of money collected by the Kansas Relief Committee and sent to Pomeroy, but there was a difference of almost $100,000 between Hyatt's statement of what had been sent to Kansas[58] and Pomeroy's last statement of the amount of money he had received.[59]

Samuel Pomeroy, once "as hard-up as the rest of the Kansas settlers", was now able to build a two-story city hall in Atchison, and rent and furnish a fine house in Topeka.[60] It seems doubtful that Pomeroy would ever have been elected to the Senate but for the drought of 1859-1860.

Atchison had survived the violence and confusion of territorial days. The town, as well as the state of Kansas, was eager to enter the Union in January, 1861. Most realized, however, that an even greater time of crisis was nearly upon them.

At the start of the Civil War no organized military units had been formed in Kansas. Soon recruiting began, and military companies were formed in towns throughout the state. The citizens of Atchison formed four militia com-

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[58] T. Hyatt to B. F. Camp, Jan. 12, 1861. Thaddeus Hyatt Papers, Manuscript Division of the Kansas Historical Society.

[59] Atchison Union, 15 June 1861.

[60] Atchison Champion, 22 September 1860.

panies. Mayor G. H. Fairchild, who had won election in the spring of 1861, captained Company K of the First Kansas, which fought in the Battle of Wilson's Creek, August 10, 1861. This was the first action of the war for Kansas troops.

During the war there were continuous threats of invasion from southern organizations in Missouri. In September, 1861, the pro-slavery men at Rushville, Platte City, DeKalb, and Iatan were reportedly planning a march against Atchison.[61] To meet the threat, "homeguard" companies were organized and 650 men came to Atchison to help protect it from the "rebel menace." The thorough organization of the people of Atchison against possible invasion spared the town from "being completely annihilated."[62]

During 1862, Union victories in the Southwest caused many Southerners to come to Atchison for safety. Their agitation was the cause of much unrest in the town. A proclamation was soon issued by Mayor Fairchild. This announcement warned these rebel sympathizers that the city and people of Atchison would in no way protect them as long as they "held to the views which they expounded at every favorable opportunity." Most of the more vocal of the Southerners left Atchison. Fairchild's proclamation warned them not to return.

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[61]"War Times in Atchison," Atchison Daily Globe, 30 October 1907.

[62]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 131.

> It would be absurd to suppose that a patriotic community could treat its enemies otherwise, persons who are in sympathy with...men who have brought upon our country untold misery...and suffering.[63]

The proclamation was approved by a mass meeting in Atchison on March 15, 1862.

On August 20, 1862, $4,000 was donated by Atchison citizens to assist Atchison County troops. Another $4,000 was later sent to Lawrence to aid its citizens after Quantrill's destructive raid.

Throughout the Civil War, the Missouri-Kansas border was the scene of much lawlessness and turmoil. Bands of thieves organized themselves into companies as "Saviors of the Union." These men raided farms and towns in western Missouri.

During the early years of the Civil War, a notorious gang operated in Atchison. One of the local saloons served as its headquarters. The gang's leader was Captain Marshall Cleveland, former leader of a band of Jayhawkers operating along the Missouri-Kansas border.[64]

Cleveland and his men stole horses in Buchanan, Clinton, and Platte Counties in Missouri at night and sold them in Atchison. The gang also took upon themselves the

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Cleveland, whose real name was Charles Metz, was a native of New York. After "graduating" from the Missouri Penitentiary, he became a captain in the Seventh Kansas Cavalry regiment. He quit the service in 1861.

task of driving suspected southern sympathizers out of town. One of the men forced to leave town was Peter Abell, one of Atchison's founders, who returned after the war.

One of Cleveland's gang, a man named Hartman, was particularly despised in Atchison. Hartman was guilty of "so many and such flagrant outrages upon the prominent citizens"[65] that four of Atchison's citizens "drew straws" to decide which of them would have the pleasure of murdering him. All four of these notable residents, and their wives and children, had been threatened and intimidated by the bandit. James McEwen, a cattle-buyer, drew the short straw. Under cover of darkness, McEwen ambushed Hartman, fatally wounding the man with his double-barrel shotgun.

> ...He filled Hartman with buckshot from his head to his heels, but strange to say, the fellow did not die for months afterward.[66]

The damage Cleveland's men inflicted upon pro-slavery Missourians and their sympathizers "ranged all the way from blood to loot."[67] They were not beyond, on occasion, robbing or stealing horses from Unionists. Some of the people attacked and robbed by the Cleveland gang were Atchison residents. The gang eluded several attempts by law enforce-

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[65] Ibid, p. 142.

[66] Ibid, p. 143.

[67] William Lyman, "Origin of the Name Jayhawker," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. XIV (1915-18), p. 206.

ment officials to capture them. On at least two occasions Cleveland managed to capture the posses sent to arrest him. After relieving them of their horses, he allowed them to leave on foot.[68] Cleveland was finally shot to death by a posse which included men from Atchison and Weston in 1863. He was buried in St. Joseph, Missouri. Some of the members of his gang joined the armies; others were lynched by vigilantes.

In 1863, a vigilante committee had been formed in Atchison to aid in the punishment of law violaters and to keep lawless bands of "Jayhawkers"[69] out of the city. The members of the committee took an oath to uphold the laws of the United States and the state of Kansas.

Atchison men, serving with the Union Army or the Kansas State Militia, fought throughout the West, but mainly in Missouri and Arkansas.

In September, 1864, Gen. Sterling Price attempted an invasion of Kansas. His decision resulted in the battles of Lexington and Big Blue. Price's forces were defeated at Westport, ending his campaign along the Missouri-Kansas border.

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[68] S. M. Fox, "Story of the Seventh Kansas," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. VIII (1903-04), p. 23.

[69] Free-state or union guerrillas who freed slaves and stole horses and other property. They had organized for the purpose of mutual defense against the Missouri "border ruffians."

The final year of the war, 1865, did not involve many Kansas soldiers because they were not involved in the battles in the East that ended the Civil War.

Atchison men fought bravely during the Civil War. Three Atchisonians died at Wilson's Creek, the first battle involving Kansas troops. Men from Atchison died at Corinth, Chickamauga, Atlanta, Nashville and other important battles.[70]

Andreas wrote that no county in the United States had "so patriotic a record as Atchison County" during the Civil War. He indicates that Atchison County provided approximately the same number of Union volunteers as her voting population. "What county in the entire Union can show a fairer record?"[71]

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[70] Atchison Clippings, Vol. 4, p. 15 (compiled by the Kansas State Historical Society).

[71] Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 374. The census of 1860 placed the population of Atchison County at 7,747 and the voting population at 1,133. Richmond, in Kansas, A Land of Contrasts, p. 88, states that Kansas had the highest military death rate among Union states.

CHAPTER V

THE GATEWAY TO THE WEST

The early French explorers and trappers had called the Atchison region the "Grand Detour" of the Missouri River. The site of the future city of Atchison was known to be a perfect starting point for travel westward, it being about twelve miles farther west than any other point on the river. Travelers could save one to five days by departing from Atchison instead of one of the other Missouri River towns. The founders of the city figured that it was certain to become a great trading and transportation center.

In 1854, only one business was operating in Atchison: George Challis' store. It is said that he rented blankets to travelers for two dollars. Whiskey, purchased for forty cents a gallon, was sold for twenty-five cents per drink.[1] During the first three years of Atchison's existence, it appears that few emigrants, other than those traveling to the neighboring fertile farm lands, passed through the city.

Atchison's location was to make it a natural trade terminus. About a dozen roads left Atchison to the north, south, and west. The city became a starting point for the

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[1] "Fiftieth Anniversary Edition," Atchison Daily Globe, 8 December 1927.

Pony Express. Two large Overland Stage Lines, the Holladay Overland Stage Line and the Butterfield Overland Dispatch, were headquartered here and operated extensive stage lines. A tremendous freighting business was carried on here during the late 1850s and early 1860s. Steamboats and ferries brought great amounts of freight goods and passengers to Atchison for transportation to the "Far West."

In the 1850s, when Atchison was founded, steam locomotives were still primitive; but the transportation of goods and passengers by steamboat was already highly developed. Before the railroads made the steamboat trade along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers obsolete, Atchison had developed into a great center for the river traffic.

> Atchison in the fifties and sixties was almost barren of trees; its few streets were well fertilized and in wet weather had no bottom; non-descript buildings were scattered along its main street....It was full of rough characters, it was uncomfortable, it was dirty, it stank; but it was a magic city. It was a gateway to the wonders and wealth of the west.[2]

In October, 1855, George Million received a charter from the Kansas State Legislature for the operation of a ferry across the Missouri River. This body fixed the rates to be charged, so that the public could not be charged an unfair toll for this needed service. The rates were as follows:

> Two-horse wagon or wagon and one yoke of oxen (loaded), $1; ditto (empty), 75 cents; one additional pair of horses and oxen, 25 cents; loose cattle and oxen, per

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[2]Peter Beckman, "The Overland Trade and Atchison's Beginnings," Territorial Kansas (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1940), p. 148.

> head, 10 cents; sheep and hogs, 5 cents per head; man and horse, 25 cents; two horse buggy or carriage, 75 cents; foot passengers, 10 cents; one horse and buggy or other vehicle, 50 cents.[3]

Million, who had operated a ferry service since 1849, advertised the advantages of using his boat in the first issue of the Squatter Sovereign.

> This ferry has been in operation since 1849; during which time it has been the great crossing point for the Oregon, California and Utah emigrant....Our boat is a good one, and we have plenty of hands...to work it.
>
> At the beginning of spring, we shall have a fine new steamboat...the ferry landing is the best on the river, there being at all times deep water from shore to shore. Our banks have no wide sand beach where stock can mire down, being dry at all times. To the emigrant to Kansas we say, this is the place to cross, as when here the distance to other points in the territory, is nearer than from crossing places above or below.[4]

The operation of Atchison's ferry passed through several different owners but continued in operation until 1875, when a railroad bridge was completed across the Missouri.

Freight and passengers were landed at the Atchison levee by a regular line of steamboats which operated between St. Louis and St. Joseph. It took eight days to make the round trip between these two cities.

In 1856 the people of Atchison, perhaps unrealistically, already began to see their town as a future Cincinnati or St. Louis. The Squatter Sovereign declared that

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[3]George A. Root, "Ferries in Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 2 (May, 1933), pp. 117-18.

[4]Squatter Sovereign, 3 February 1855.

"there are one-horse towns in Kansas, but Atchison is not on that list."[5]

At least two steamboats landed at Atchison per day. On some days five or six would arrive. Many famous river-boats docked at Atchison, including the "Hesperian" which burned near Atchison in 1859. This boat was said to have made "a better looking fire than any other thing that was ever built."[6]

The great steamboats sometimes carried four hundred passengers and as much as six hundred tons of freight. The fare from St. Louis to St. Joseph was ten to fifteen dollars, which included cabin and meals.

The Missouri River, filled with sandbars, required great skill for the safe piloting of a steamboat. Thus, an experienced captain could make the then incredible salary of five hundred dollars a month. The crew aboard one of the boats usually numbered between eighty and one hundred.[7]

Mark Twain, who made the trip upriver, described his journey which took him past the city of Atchison.

> We were six days going from St. Louis to St. Joseph, a trip that was so dull and sleepy and eventless, that it has left no more an impression on my memory than if its duration had been six minutes instead of that many days.

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[5] Squatter Sovereign, 6 May 1856.

[6] "Old Steamboat Days," Atchison Daily Globe, 8 May 1905; Atchison Clippings, Vol. 4, p. 81. Of course, during the winter months there was little traffic.

[7] Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 153.

> No record is left in my mind now concerning it, but a confused jumble of savage looking snags...and of reefs which we butted...and of sandbars....In fact the boat might as well have gone to St. Joseph by land, for she was walking most of the time anyway--climbing over reefs ...and snags, patiently and laboriously all day long.[8]

Because of its location and the well-developed steamboat business, Atchison was selected as the out-fitting point for the Great Salt Lake Freight trade. A good wagon road led west. During the time of overland freighting on the plains, more wagon trains left Atchison than any other place along the Missouri River. Many freighting firms had headquarters in the city.

William Chandless, a traveler to Utah in 1855, wrote that, indeed, "the Salt Lake emigration starts from Atchison, Kansas."[9]

In 1855 the Atchison town company erected large warehouses and stockyard facilities "sufficient to accomodate all the Salt Lake, California, Oregon, Santa Fe and Kansas emigration, and traders."[10] The company also began plans for improving the steamboat landing, grading streets, and building a hotel.

Ox trains, which carried the bulk of the freight goods, took about ten weeks to reach Salt Lake. A trip to Denver, by the durable and sure oxen, took about five weeks.

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[8]Mark Twain, Roughing It (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1871), p. 3.

[9]Beckman, "The Overland Trade and Atchison's Beginnings," p. 150.

[10]Squatter Sovereign, 27 March 1855.

The cost of shipping merchandise westward was extremely high. The rates per pound on goods shipped by ox or mule trains from Atchison to Denver were as follows:

Flour	9 cents
Tobacco	12½ cents
Sugar	13½ cents
Bacon	15 cents
Dry Goods	15 cents
Crackers	17 cents
Whiskey	18 cents
Groceries	19½ cents
Trunks	25 cents
Furniture	31 cents[11]

A large part of the traffic west from Atchison was over the Military Road, which led to and then followed the south bank of the Platte River. This road passed through the counties of Leavenworth, Atchison, Nemaha, and Washington in Kansas, and then to the northwest into Nebraska. The heavily loaded wagons along this road are said to have "formed almost an endless procession."[12] The prosperity of Atchison was also aided by the government wagon trains starting from the city that supplied various military posts to the west, such as Forts Laramie and Kearney.

The greatest years of the overland freight trade were from 1859 to 1866. Most of the people of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain regions had to be supplied from the Missouri River.

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[11]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 154.

[12]Ibid, p. 160.

During the 1860s freight companies in Atchison ran wagon trains to Santa Fe and settlements in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Nebraska. However, the bulk of the traffic led to Denver and Salt Lake City.

Atchison's position as an important overland staging point was a result of an order issued by the United States Post Office Department. Atchison was made the headquarters for the westward mail routes. Atchison became the distributing point not only for mail sent to all parts of Kansas but also for mail delivered to Colorado, Utah, and California. According to Isely and Richards, Atchison became, "for a time, the most important city in Kansas."[13]

In 1860 there were forty-one firms in Atchison engaged in the freighting business.[14] There was no doubt that Atchison was "prominent among the Missouri River cities in this enterprise."[15]

The Colorado Gold Rush in 1858-59 helped Atchison to become an important overland starting point. The Parallel Route west of Atchison was extensively advertised as the "one desirable route" to the Cherry Creek Mines. It was said to be a "good road - with ferries and bridges available at every needed point."[16] Prospectors who arrived here found

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[13]Isely and Richards, Four Centuries in Kansas, p. 202.

[14]Atchison City Directory (Indianapolis: James Sutherland, 1860), p. 8.

[15]Atchison Clippings, Vol. 4, p. 78.

[16]Freedom's Champion, 19 February 1859.

that the promised great route was not supported by facts. No improvements were even attempted until the end of March, 1859.[17]

In the fall of 1859, Atchison was crowded with returning "Pike's Peakers", as well as masses of out-bound prospectors. Stages full of passengers and gold came into the city, and many successful miners seemed eager to spend their "gold money" and get to their homes for the winter.

A description of the great business in Atchison during the 1860s was written by Samuel Bowles:

> ...goods are sent through the town, being bought by the shippers or territorial merchants in Philadelphia, New York, St. Louis and Chicago; yet a single firm here, in a modest building, is selling one million dollars yearly to small traders....Long trains of heavily-loaded wagons, drawn by mules and oxen, are moving out daily now; but immense warehouses and large yards are still stored full with massive machinery for working the mines, and goods for feeding and clothing the miners, and agricultural implements to cultivate the prairies...[18]

In addition to the lucrative business with the gold miners, Atchison now had a virtual monopoly of the Salt Lake trade. The Mormon trade was regarded as the greatest of the markets in the west. In 1859 nearly a thousand wagon loads of goods were sent to Utah. This involved 1,168 men; 9,235 oxen; 627 mules; 141 horses; and over 4,000,000 pounds of goods.[19]

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[17]Ibid, 26 March 1859.

[18]Samuel Bowles, Across the Continent (New York: Samuel Bowles and Company, 1865), p. 3.

[19]Freedom's Champion, 10 March 1860.

In early 1860, Atchison merchants were advertising "we can furnish you with everything...and at less prices that can be bought at any other points on the river."[20] Atchison's Freedom's Champion wrote that the "Smoky Hill" route, advertised by Leavenworth, was traveled upon only by those who were "fool-hardy and insane."[21]

Covered wagons crowded into Atchison during 1860. The stores did a booming business. Now better equipped groups of emigrants were leaving the city. "Instead of hand carts and starving, squalid travelers, we see well provided ox, mule and horse trains."[22] People were pouring into Atchison by steamboat, train and stage.

A steam locomotive tractor, for use in the overland freighting business, was tested on Atchison's streets on July 4, 1860. Thomas Fortune unloaded his "twenty feet long monster" on Atchison's levee, just in front of the White Mice Saloon. His machine was decorated with flags and filled with wood. It steamed through the streets at an "unheard-of speed." At the foot of Commercial Street the wagon failed to make a turn and crashed into A. S. Parker's Mammoth Everything House. It was later tried on the prairie west of

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[20] Freedom's Champion, 21 April 1860.

[21] Ibid, 11 February 1860.

[22] Atchison Union, 28 April 1860.

town, where its great weight caused it to mire down into the mud. This ended Fortune's dreams of fortune.[23]

In 1861, a daily overland mail stage route was instituted at Atchison. Until its termination in 1866, it was the greatest stage line in the world--carrying huge amounts of express goods and mail, and thousands of passengers. The modern four- and six-horse or mule coaches were considered to be the fastest and safest means of crossing the plains and mountains.[24]

The distance by stage line from Atchison to Placerville, California (via Salt Lake City) was 1,913 miles. It became the longest and most heavily traveled stage route in the United States. The passenger fare was $225, or 12 cents per mile. The fare for Denver was $75; Salt Lake City, $150. To be on schedule, the stage needed to travel about 112 miles per day.

> In equipment, no similar line could excel it. In importance, none could equal it. It was the greatest stage line on the globe carrying the mail, passengers, and express. It was also deemed the safest, and was known to be by far the quickest and most expeditious way to get across the plains and over the mighty mountain ranges that intervened.[25]

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[23]Catherine and Bill Roe, ed., Atchison Centennial, p. 7; Dick, Vanguards of the Frontier, p. 364.

[24]Ingalls, History of Atchison County, p. 162.

[25]Frank A. Root and William E. Connelley, The Overland Stage to California (Topeka: W. Y. Morgan, 1901), pp. 41-42.

Although somewhat of a "building boom" had taken place in Atchison during the early 1860s, the city streets were so deplorable that travelers westward said the worst part of the road to California was Commercial Street in Atchison.[26]

> Atchison was a dirty hole in the early '60's, before any macadamizing was done. John J. Ingalls...frequently called the attention of the "City Fathers" to the disgraceful condition of the streets. He characterized the city as a "hog pen" and styled Commercial Street as "a wallow for the vile brutes." The fact cannot be disputed that at times it was a fearfully muddy place. As late as the summer of 1865, the mud was so deep...that a mule train going out of the city westward got stuck, and broke out the tongue of a wagon trying to get out of the mire.[27]

Founded in 1856, the Russell, Waddell and Majors Freighting Company was headquartered in Leavenworth and moved about 21,000,000 tons of freight through Atchison. This company had 6,000 teamsters, 50,000 oxen, and at least 5,000 wagons. The company, however, went bankrupt; in 1862 its equipment was purchased by Ben Holladay. He moved its headquarters to Atchison. As many as 1,600 wagons stopped in Atchison in a single day. Butterfield's Overland Dispatch, founded in 1864 at Atchison, was another large freighting firm. This company had 55 wagonmasters, 1,500 drivers, 1,200 mules, and 9,600 oxen. Holladay took over Butterfield's

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[26] Atchison Daily Champion, 23 March 1865.

[27] Frank A. Root and William E. Connelley, The Overland Stage to California, p. 410.

enterprise in 1866.[28]

Small independent freighters also made a good living from the Atchison overland trade. Henry Porter organized his own outfit and dispatched wagon trains for several years. During his first year in business he sold over $300,000 in goods and made $75,000 in profits.[29]

Atchison was a wild town during the freighting days. It became well-known for its numerous saloons and "houses of pleasure." One reform-minded citizen wrote:

> ...we are governed by whiskey...we have no Sunday law... in Atchison the Sabbath day is devoted in making drunkards...our authorities have not the power to close the saloons on Sundays, even if they were so disposed.[30]

In Atchison women and girls of the "respectable class" seldom walked the streets of the city. Whenever the ladies did, they wore sunbonnets or veils to hide their features from the ruffians and drunkards.[31]

> In Atchison...newcomers were confronted by outlaws and wild men well supplied with revolvers and fond of drink ....Sleep was out of the question until the early hours of morning. Hideous blasphemous language, howls of pain, and the noise of revolvers were heard all night.[32]

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[28]Federal Writers Project, Kansas (New York: Viking Press, 1939), p. 169. Holladay then sold his staging interests to Wells Fargo and Company, which now operated all western staging.

[29]Everett Dick, Vanguards of the Frontier (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 364.

[30]Wyman, "Atchison, A Frontier Depot," pp. 307-08.

[31]Dick, The Sod House Frontier, p. 69.

[32]Ibid, p. 345.

The stage line was "big business" for Atchison. In 1865 it was reported that during that year 2,007 passengers had left for the West and 2,281 had arrived in Atchison from the West. These passengers had paid $814,720 in fares. The stages carried, in just this one year, $2,400,000 in cash, gold and silver, and 23 tons of express goods.[33]

In 1865 about 5,000 wagons carried 21,541,830 pounds of goods from Atchison's levee. This record was "probably not equalled by another town on the river at any time, and never again by Atchison."[34]

Early in 1866, as the railroads moved westward, it was obvious that the stagecoaches would soon be obsolete. The advance of the Union Pacific Railroad and the completion of the Kansas Pacific Railroad resulted in the abandonment of Atchison as a point of departure for the mail. The overland trade steadily decreased and ended for the city on December 19, 1866, as the stages left Atchison for the last time.

> ...the long train of Concord stages, hacks and express coaches started from their stables and yards on Second Street, some drawn by six horses and some by four. The procession went out of town west along Commercial Street, the route daily traveled for five years.... There must have been forty or more teams in the procession, besides the loose horses led.

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[33] Atchison Daily Champion, 3 January 1866.

[34] Wyman, "Atchison, A Frontier Depot," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. XI, No. 3 (August, 1942), p. 307.

> ...It was a magnificent sight to look upon, and yet there appeared to be something solemn or sad about it, when it was remembered that a similar scene would never be witnessed again in the old town. There were the familiar stages and express coaches and teams that had so often rolled down the busy streets of Atchison loaded with human freight, carrying hundreds of thousands of treasure, vast numbers of express packages, the well-known drivers, and...the great overland letter mails between the Atlantic and Pacific. The stage line had had its day. The company was bidding a final adieu to the city and section of country its vast enterprise had so many years been such an important factor in helping to build up.[35]

Hard times hit Atchison after the sudden dissolution of the overland trade. Some businesses closed and people were unemployed. A visitor to Atchison during this period remarked:

> Times are dull....Hundreds of young men are tramping the streets, idle, starving and shelterless.[36]

Atchison experienced a difficult adjustment to a new economic base. Fortunately, the city had been busily promoting itself as a railroad center. Although Atchison was to become a nucleus of railroad traffic on the plains, there is no doubt that the great overland trade had insured the survival of the city and was responsible for its growth.

Of the fourteen Missouri River towns along the shores of Kansas in the 1850s, only three - Atchison, Leavenworth, and Kansas City - were still prominent by the end of the 1860s.[37]

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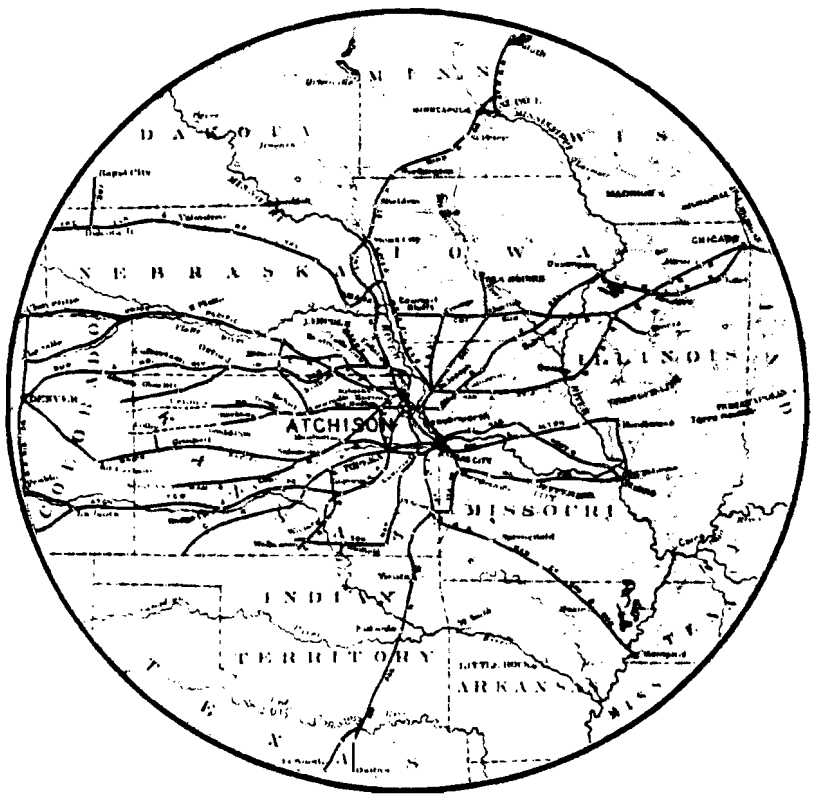
[35]Root and Connelley, The Overland Stage to California, pp. 437-38.

[36]Wyman, "Atchison, A Frontier Depot," p. 300.

[37]Everett Dick, Sod House Frontier (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937), p. 41.



Atchison as a railroad center was nowhere more vividly illustrated than in this circle map, prepared by L. H. Everts & Co., of Philadelphia, and published in 1888.

In 1858, eight years before the staging business came to an end, people in Atchison were agitating for a railroad. Atchison would become the first city in Kansas to be reached by a railroad.

Atchison had been "buzzing with railroad fever", and the townspeople desired to secure railroad connections with California and Santa Fe. However, these plans would be interrupted by the Civil War.

The first railroad to be built between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers was the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. In March, 1858, Atchison issued $200,000 worth of bonds for an extension of this railroad to be built to Winthrop, just across the river from Atchison. Mayor Pomeroy was elected as the city's agent. His efforts, as well as those by the Stringfellows, Peter Abell, and others, resulted in the completion of the Atchison and St. Joseph Railroad on February 22, 1860.

Although the railroad's freight and passengers had to be ferried across the river from Winthrop, the city of Atchison now had the distinction of being the western-most point reached by railroad in the United States. The city was the "Gateway to the West."[38]

On June 3, 1860, the official celebration was held for the completion of Atchison's first railroad. There were

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[38]Peter Beckman, "Atchison's First Railroad," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXI, No. 3 (Autumn, 1954), p. 153.

speeches, barbecues, dancing, a parade, and other festivities. The streets were decorated with flags and banners. Delegations of citizens from many towns in Missouri and Kansas were there. It is estimated that about 8,000 people participated in the celebration.[39]

The Atchison and St. Joseph Railroad gave Atchison direct lines to Chicago, St. Louis, and other points east. Its benefits to the city were listed by Benjamin Stringfellow:

1. It removed from Leavenworth to Atchison the shipment of the vast amount of government freight destined to the western posts, and thus gave to Atchison its first advertisement as an outfitting place for the mining regions of Colorado.

2. It removed the starting point of the overland mail to the Pacific, to Atchison from St. Joseph, where it had been located by political favor.

3. It removed to Atchison the terminus of a branch of the Union Pacific road, which by like political favor, had been located at St. Joseph, and thus secured the construction of the Central Branch Union Pacific, one of the most important roads in our state.

4. It thus made Atchison a point to be sought by railroads, brought all these other roads, and made this the great railroad center of Kansas.[40]

Before the completion of the Atchison and St. Joseph Railroad, construction began on the Missouri and Western Telegraph line. A branch of this line was extended to Kansas City, and then to Leavenworth. The line was connected

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[39]"Railroad Celebration in 1860," Atchison Globe, 1 September 1907.

[40]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 376.

to Atchison on August 15, 1859. The Freedom's Champion noted that Atchison's people were proud of the fact that their telegraph was fourteen miles farther west than any other telegraph station east of the Rocky Mountains.[41] Andreas states that at this time Atchison was the most westerly telegraph station on the continent.[42]

During the early 1860s, several railroad conventions took place in Kansas. The most important of these meetings took place in Topeka in 1860. Here came proposals for the building of five railroad lines. One railroad would be constructed west from Atchison to Colorado. Another would connect Atchison and Santa Fe via Topeka. Lucrative government loans and generous land grants succeeded in getting the railroads started. The Republicans had promised that communication and transportation would be opened to the West.

The success of the Topeka Railroad Convention was largely a result of the actions of Senator Pomeroy of Atchison. The senator secured the passage of the land grants made to Kansas railroads. George Glick wrote that "every

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[41] Freedom's Champion, 30 July 1859.

[42] Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 377. John E. Sunder, in "Telegraph Beginnings in Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (Spring, 1959), p. 96, writes that they were mistaken. A telegraph line had been completed between Houston and Galveston, Texas in 1858. Atchison is located at 95.08 and Houston at 95.21 degrees west longitude. So, Houston is just barely west of Atchison.

important line of railroad owes a lasting debt of gratitude to him."[43]

It is said that the political parties in Kansas--Republicans, Democrats, free-soilers and pro-slavers--"all worked together...for the welfare of Kansas" at this convention.[44]

Hindering Atchison's westward railroad construction was the reality that there was no great, wide and level valley leading westward. Omaha and Kansas City had the Platte and Kansas River Valleys to their west, but Atchison only had little White Clay Creek. A direct route west of Atchison would require extensive bridging and would have to follow an indirect winding route. Atchison actually had little opportunity to expand her influence either to the east or west.[45]

Luther Challiss of Atchison was granted a Charter in 1859 for the building of the Atchison and Pike's Peak Railroad. Construction began in 1860 but was soon halted by the Civil War.

Atchison leaders, such as John Martin, realized that a railroad to the West was necessary if Atchison was to

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[43]George Glick, "The Railroad Convention of 1860," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. IX (1905-06), p. 480.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Anderson, "Atchison, 1865-1886, Divided and Uncertain," p. 34.

reap full benefits from its railroad connections to the East.

On January 1, 1867, the name of the Atchison and Pike's Peak Railroad was changed to the Central Branch Union Pacific Railroad. Construction of the line resumed. The rails were built westward through Monrovia, Effingham, Muscotah, Netawaka, Centralia and Frankfort. The western end of the line, one hundred miles from Atchison, was Waterville. This town was, for a time, called "West Atchison" because the builders were primarily Atchison men.[46]

Atchison's dream of a railroad to Colorado ended at Waterville. A rival line was built from Kansas City to Denver. The "Central Branch" became a minor branch line. The railroad not only failed to reach Colorado but did not succeed in establishing connections with the main line of the Union Pacific in Nebraska. The line also lacked important branch lines.

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad originated in Atchison on February 11, 1859. The charter, issued by the state legislature, incorporated the company as the "Atchison and Topeka Railroad" with the stipulation that:

> The company is hereby authorized...to survey, locate, construct...and operate a railroad...from or near Atchison...to the town of Topeka...and to such a point

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[46]George Anderson, "Atchison and the Central Branch Company," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXVII (1962), p. 13.

> on the southern or western boundary...in the direction of Santa Fe...as may be convenient and suitable for the construction of such railroad...[47]

This railroad was largely an Atchison venture, $150,000 having been raised in Atchison to provide the financial ground work for the project. Cyrus Holliday was elected president, and Peter Abell, secretary of the company. Senator Pomeroy of Atchison helped persuade the United States Congress to pass a land grant bill that aided its construction in 1863. Pomeroy became president of the railroad in 1864. It was stipulated that the line, from Atchison to the Colorado border, be in operation by March 3, 1873.

It wasn't until May 16, 1872, that the line between Atchison and Topeka was opened.

> The A. T. & S. F. Road ran its first train through between Atchison and Topeka on Thursday, but in the attempt to return yesterday, the undertaking was abandoned at Grasshopper (Valley) Falls, there having been some three bridges washed away.[48]

In 1869 construction was started on the Atchison and Nebraska Railroad, and by 1871 it had reached the Kansas-Nebraska state line. A consolidated company called the Atchison, Lincoln and Columbus Railroad completed the line to Lincoln in 1872.

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[47] Joseph Snell and Don Wilson, "The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2 (Summer, 1968), p. 114.

[48] Topeka Commonwealth, 18 May 1872.

Birth place of the Santa Fe Railroad.
Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

In 1869 the Leavenworth, Atchison and Northeastern Railroad connected Atchison and Leavenworth. This line later became part of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The Missouri Pacific later built a line northward to the state line. This gave Atchison a fine connection with Omaha.

The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad was built to Atchison in 1872. Some smaller companies--such as the Burlington and Missouri River, and the Kansas City, St. Joe and Council Bluffs Railroad--also built lines to Atchison. With all of the railroad connections to Atchison completed, the next important business was the building of a bridge across the Missouri River at Atchison.

Although Atchison's location on the "Grand Detour" of the Missouri River held early advantages, the river also had a detrimental effect on the city's future. The river did bring Atchison close to the opening trade of the West, but it had effectively isolated the hopeful commercial center from half of its natural trade territory--that in Missouri.

In 1868 serious agitation for the building of a Missouri River bridge at Atchison began. The business leaders in Atchison assumed that the railroads would build a bridge without asking the city for financial assistance. The following appeared in the Atchison Champion:

> Atchison has voted liberal aid to nearly all the railroads centered here, and...we believe that the rail-

> roads...ought to build the bridge without aid from us, and that it would be largely profitable to them.[49]

Five years later, in 1873, the bridge question was still unsettled. Neither the railroads nor the city had been willing to take on the expense of a million dollar bridge project. In the meantime, the rival Missouri towns bridged the river.[50] Eating its words of a few years earlier, the Atchison Champion now favored building the needed bridge--even if Atchison had to pay for it herself.

> A bridge is a vital necessity to Atchison. We have secured the most magnificent railroad system in the Missouri Valley. All that is needed to make our growth and development rapid and permanent is a bridge across the river....Ten railroads are now practically centered in Atchison...the trade and travel of these roads, once permanently fixed...will alone be sufficient to build up and sustain a city of 200,000 people. A bridge will ...make Atchison the center or focal point of the most extended railroad system west of Chicago....Nine-tenths of the people desire a bridge, and are willing to pay the amount asked to secure the building of one.[51]

On August 8, 1873, the Atchison Champion announced that "gentlemen of ample means" were willing to invest in a bridge at Atchison. They would invest ten and a half dollars for each dollar put into the project by the city. Atchison would only have to vote bonds of $100,000 out of a total estimated cost of $1,150,000. On August 29, the resolutions for the construction of the bridge passed by vote of the

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[49] Atchison Champion, 7 August 1873.

[50] A bridge across the Missouri River was completed at Kansas City in 1869, Leavenworth in 1872, and St. Joseph in 1873.

[51] Ibid.

people of Atchison.[52]

Construction of the bridge began in August, 1874, and was completed in July, 1875. The great iron structure was 1,182 feet long and 19½ feet wide. It was used for both railroad and wagon traffic. The stone used for the underwork of the bridge came from the quarries at Cottonwood Falls.[53]

Even after the bridge had been built, the policies of the Chicago and Atchison Bridge Company prevented Atchison from reaping its full benefits.

> If we were asked to state what influence...at the present time is exerting the most unfavorable effect on the business and prosperity of Atchison, we should reply...the manner in which the Chicago and Atchison Bridge Company conducts its affairs....We have reference to the manner of collecting tolls from the railroad companies using the bridge.[54]

The Kansas City Bridge Company charged all the railroads using its bridge a fixed monthly or yearly fee. It did not matter how many cars and passengers traveled across the river on their bridge. The same rate was charged, whether a dozen or a hundred cars crossed.[55]

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[52]Ibid, 8 August 1873.

[53]Roe, Atchison Centennial, p. 9; Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 377.

[54]Atchison Champion, 4 May 1882.

[55]Ibid.

In contrast to the reasonable policy used at Kansas City, the Atchison Bridge Company collected a toll on every single car or passenger. A railroad would pay a certain fee for crossing over one car. If they sent a hundred cars over, they had to pay a hundred times that rate.[56]

There were four eastern railroads with lines that reached both Atchison and Kansas City.[57] It was much cheaper for these lines to use the bridge at Kansas City. The following appeared in the Atchison Champion:

> This condition of affairs is doing our city infinite harm....The Council Bluffs road, for instance, can... deliver freight...to Kansas City, fifty miles south of Atchison, rather than to deliver business to the... lines at Atchison.[58]

The consequence of the difference between the Atchison and Kansas City bridge rate was that the eastern railroads sent most of their westbound freight and passengers to Kansas City. They sent to Atchison only freight and passengers bound for destinations having no connections with Kansas City.[59]

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[56] Ibid.

[57] These lines were the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific; the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy; the Hannibal and St. Joseph; and the Kansas City, St. Joseph and Council Bluffs.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

Atchison's business leaders continually pleaded with the bridge company to make their rates similar to those of the Kansas City Bridge Company. By the time this controversy was settled in the mid-1880s, Atchison's hope of becoming a great railroad center had suffered a severe setback.

Samuel Pomeroy and other Atchisonians had played a prominent role in the launching of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe; but when construction began at Topeka, the rails were built away from Atchison toward Wichita. The line was later completed to Atchison in 1873. Since there was still no Missouri River bridge at Atchison, the Santa Fe built a route between Topeka and Kansas City. When this new line was completed, later in 1873, it diverted to Kansas City much of the business Atchison had counted on. Some of the trade of the southwest did come through Atchison, but it was just "a trickle in contrast to the flood that had been anticipated."[60]

In 1882 the Missouri Pacific completed a line from Kansas City through Atchison to Omaha. John Martin believed that the construction of this railroad "would guarantee the industrial and commercial future of Atchison."[61] It was thought traffic would be diverted to Atchison where-

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[60]Anderson, "Atchison, 1865-1886, Divided and Uncertain," p. 40.

[61]Ibid, p. 44.

ever that line intersected east-west railroads. If the eastbound traffic heading toward Chicago or St. Louis would cross the Missouri River at Atchison, Kansas City would be deprived of the west and northwest trade. Unfortunately, Atchison suffered another bitter disappointment: it became just another way station along the Missouri Pacific line as the trains moved through Kansas City on their way to St. Louis.[62]

John Martin, a strong advocate for the building of railroads, wrote the following:

> This is the Age of Railroads. The locomotive is the true pioneer. The railroad...precedes civilization.... Railroads have made Kansas what she is. Railroads will make Kansas what she is destined to be, one of the richest, greatest, most prosperous states in the whole union.[63]

Atchison had developed into an important railroad center. During the 1870s, 80 to 100 freight and passenger trains arrived and departed daily. But in spite of its early success, Atchison failed to become the "Great Railroad Center of Kansas." By the time Atchison had bridged the Missouri River, patterns of trade and commerce had already

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[62]Ibid, p. 45.

[63]Atchison Champion, 14 November 1867.

been established by the rival towns along the river--particularly Kansas City.[64] Attempts by Atchison to catch up were rewarded with disappointment and failure. Atchison was no longer the "Gateway to the West."

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[64]Daniel J. Boorstin, in The Americans: The National Experience (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 132-133, wrote that the construction of the railroad bridge across the Missouri River at Kansas City had assured the dominance of Kansas City over Atchison and its other river rivals.

CHAPTER VI

THE COMMERCIAL CENTER OF KANSAS

In 1860 there were few factories or industries in Kansas. At this time Kansas City was a small, unimportant town, and was "having a hard struggle in competition with Atchison...and other points in the region..."[1] During the early years of Kansas statehood, lumbering was the principal industry. Numerous sawmills were located along wooded streams in eastern Kansas. Flour and feed milling and the manufacture of wagons and carriages were the state's other leading industries.

Although manufacturing was developing in Kansas, it was on a limited scale. According to Douglas, there seemed to be little chance that Kansas would have an important manufacturing future:

> The fact must be apparent that Kansas will always have to be an agricultural state, although the importance of combining manufactures with the leading industry (flour milling) is apparent.[2]

The coming of the railroads to Kansas provided an opportunity for greater manufacturing growth. The rail-

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[1]Richard Douglas, "History of Manufactures in Kansas," Kansas State Historical Collections, Vol. XI (1909-10), p. 93.

[2]Ibid, p. 98.

road lines could carry in needed raw materials and fuel, and ship out manufactured products. Not surprisingly, with its great railway system, Atchison was to become an important industrial center.

The Atchison City Directory of 1860 hailed Atchison as a future great metropolis. Although this passage now seems to have been premature and unrealistic, Atchison did seem to have a promising future:

> The sight of Atchison is beautiful in the extreme. It is a vast amphitheatre, extending back from the river in a gradual ascent north, west and south, from two to five miles, to an elevation of some 150 to 200 feet... and which, when filled up, as the necessities of the next twenty years will fill it, will present a picture unequalled in magnitude and beauty. One hundred thousand people living in this amphitheatre, and all embraced in one grand view, from any point within its borders.[3]

In 1867 Atchison's first flour milling operation was started by E. K. Blair and W. W. Auld. Atchison rapidly developed as one of the West's great milling centers.

> Atchison's elevators are located in the midst of the finest agricultural region of America; with eight railroads centering here, it is not strange that Atchison has become one of the leading grain markets of the West.[4]

In 1877 the Champion was proclaiming that Atchison's flour mills were the "largest and best equipped mills in the West."[5] By the early 1880s, Atchison's grain trade averaged

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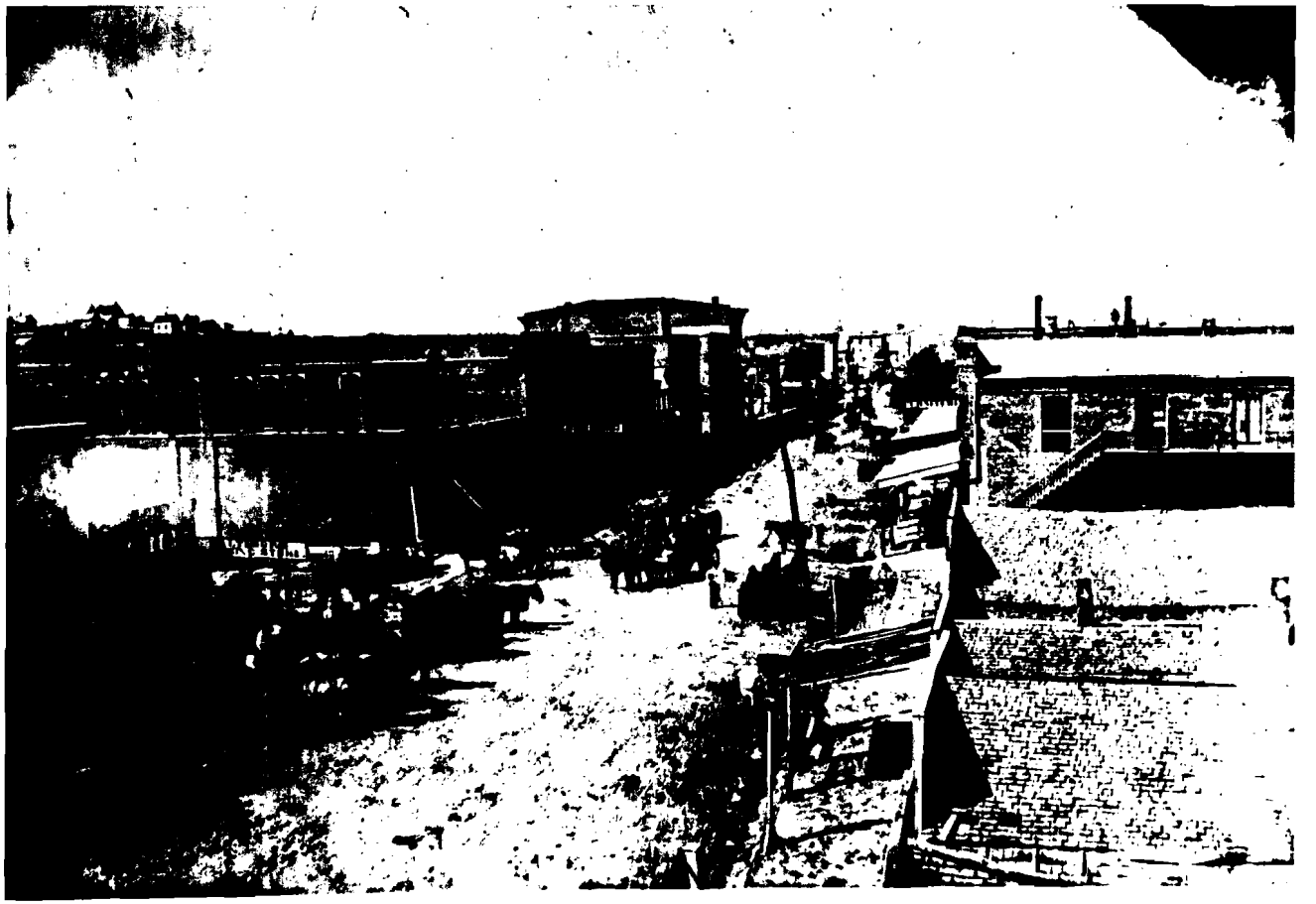
[3]Atchison City Directory of 1860, p. 8.

[4]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 381.

[5]Atchison County Clippings, p. 114 (compiled by the Kansas State Historical Society).



Commercial Street in Atchison, 1860.
Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

about four million bushels yearly.[6]

The Blish, Mize and Silliman Company, Atchison wholesale hardware distributor, had its origins in the great overland trade era. The company was founded in 1871. This firm supplied wagon trains with wagon bows, ox shoes and yokes, rope, horse shoes, axle grease and other goods needed for the great overland travel.[7]

Rockwell International, Atchison's leading industry, can trace its beginnings to 1872. In this year, the John Seaton Foundry and Manufacturing Company was founded. Seaton was lured to Atchison by the city's offer of a $10,000 reward to anyone who would establish an iron foundry here. The company manufactured iron and brass castings, architectural ironwork, steam engines, boilers, sheet iron, and other products.[8] In 1880 Seaton's foundry turned out 475

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[6]Andreas, History of Kansas, Vol. I, p. 381. Milling and grain storage are major forces in the present-day (1979) economy of Atchison. The Pillsbury Company is one of the most important flour milling operations in Kansas. Midwest Solvents, one of the largest producers of alcohol in the United States, uses millions of bushels of grain yearly in its operation. Several other feed, milling and storage operations also contribute to Atchison's position as a major grain market.

[7]Roe, Atchison Centennial, p. 2-8.

[8]Atchison, (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, 1974), p. 25; Andreas, History of Kansas, p. 381. In 1914, the company was re-organized as the Locomotive Finished Material Company. LFM was purchased by Rockwell Manufacturing Company in 1956. According to Atchison, p. 20, it is the largest North American steel foundry west of the Mississippi River and the world's greatest manufacturer of locomotive truck frames.

tons of iron castings, nineteen tons of brass castings, and 57 tons of boiler and sheet iron. The Atchison Champion stated that this busy industry was "not surpassed, if equalled, by any other in the West."[9]

The Fowler Packing Plant, established in 1878, was a major industry. Located in East Atchison, the plant employed about 500 men and was the "first large packing house in this region."[10]

> The most extensive packing house west of Chicago, and the most perfect in construction, arrangement and all modern advantages in the country, has been built in East Atchison, where the stock yards, the repair shops, yards and freight depots of the eastern roads are located...They propose to make Atchison one of their principal packing points...expecting to handle an average of 3,500 to 4,000 hogs per day through the present season, and increase their facilities as the extent of the supply demands.
>
> This enterprise will prove of great advantage to the business interests of the city as well as country tributary, it furnishing a near home market for the farmers and dealers on the many lines of road centering here.[11]

D. G. Stockwell, in 1878, leased some eighty acres of property belonging to the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad. Stockwell and E. W. Fowler established a stock yard here. The Stockwell, Fowler & Company had the sheds, buildings and yards necessary for the accommodation of 160 carloads of cattle and hogs.[12]

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[9] Atchison County Clippings, p. 120.

[10] Douglas, "History of Manufactures in Kansas," p. 120.

[11] "Live Kansas Town," The New West Monthly, Vol. 1 (Dec., 1878), p. 65.

[12] Ibid, p. 67.

Visions of Atchison becoming a great stock market, however, were premature. The opening of the great cattle country to the southwest by the railroads and the completion of their lines to Kansas City helped make that city a great cattle market.[13] The Fowler enterprises, realizing the potential of the opening of this great cattle-raising region, shifted their operations to Kansas City by opening a plant there in 1881.

By the late 1870s, there were more than 250 businesses in Atchison. There were nine dry goods establishments, seventeen grocery stores, and an assortment of businesses dealing in drugs, stoves, shoes, clothing, jewelry, books, millinery goods, and a variety of other goods and services.

In 1879 the city of Atchison had sixty factories which employed about 1,000 men.[14] According to the census of 1880, there were five carriage factories, seven flour mills, five brick yards, four furniture factories, and three manufacturers of wagons and agricultural implements. The city also boasted companies that produced candy, soap, crackers, cigars, boilers, barrels, brooms, vinegar, and soda water. In addition, there were two breweries and a factory that produced sashes, doors and blinds.[15]

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[13]Douglas, "History of Manufactures in Kansas," p. 124.

[14]Atchison Daily Champion, 20 February 1879.

[15]Douglas, "History of Manufactures in Kansas," p. 120; Atchison County Clippings, pp. 231-33.

> Probably no city in the Missouri Valley, in proportion to its size, has as extensive a manufacturing system, and no point on the river offers such advantages in that respect, as Atchison. Here are congregated some of the largest factories, mills, shops and other establishments in Kansas...[16]

During the 1870s, only two cities in Kansas--Leavenworth and Topeka--were more important than Atchison as a manufacturing center.[17] Atchison was indeed, according to The New West (a publication for the immigrant traffic), "getting ahead of the other river towns."[18] The Champion was calling Atchison "the busiest and most prosperous city in Kansas."[19]

On September 29, 1879, the city of Atchison was visited by Rutherford Hayes, the President of the United States. Mr. Hayes, touring the state by train, had arrived in the morning. In the course of his speech here he said:

> I have but to assure you that my journey through your beautiful and promising state has been a most delightful one. We shall leave it with most grateful recollections of your country; its beaufiful scenery, and its remarkably enterprising, talented and energetic people. In all my travels in the United States, it seems to me I have never been met by a population more determined, energetic and courageous than I have met in the great state of Kansas. I am perhaps sinning against you when I look directly in your face and

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[16] Atchison County Clippings, p. 119.

[17] Douglas, "History of Manufactures in Kansas," p. 99.

[18] "Live Kansas Town," The New West Monthly, p. 66.

[19] Atchison Daily Champion, 2 January 1877.

undertake to speak well of you, but this is my impression, and I do not desire to measure the words, but talk out freely, plainly and frankly as you have heard it.[20]

The President, in the company of General William Sherman, had entered Kansas at Fort Scott on September 24. In the course of his travels, he referred to the "wonderful growth and abounding prosperity of Kansas." After speaking in Atchison, the President left the state, riding the rails to St. Joseph.[21]

The census of the State Board of Agriculture reported that the city of Atchison had a population of 15,106 in 1880.[22] An article in The New West Monthly set Atchison's population as "something less than 20,000 inhabitants" and mentioned that nearly 5,000 people had been added to the population within the past year.[23] The Atchison City Directory of 1880 claimed a population of 16,000 and noted the building of about 700 houses in the city during the previous year.[24]

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[20] Atchison Weekly Champion, 11 October 1879.

[21] Ibid.

[22] State Board of Agriculture Annual Reports, (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1881), p. 513.

[23] "Atchison and Her Mayor," The New West Monthly, Vol. 2 (April, 1880), p. 118.

[24] Atchison City Directory (Atchison: Lowe and Co., 1880), p. 14. This "building boom" included the erection of 155 business and public buildings. One of the new buildings was the Atchison City Prison, located near Third and Commercial Streets.

After 1880 Atchison's growth as an industrial and commercial center began to diminish. The shrinkage of the city's development and expansion came despite the praise of publications such as The New West Monthly and the publicity campaigns of local newspapermen and merchants.

> Thousands of people pass through Atchison, Kas., every week looking for the land of promise, who either are too tired or stupid to stop a day and look round.... Those who do will be surprised at the bargains they can secure, and we doubt, if considering the markets of a prosperous and growing city, they can do better than buy land in the vicinity. Good farms can be bought...at low rates, while town property offers unprecedented advantages.[25]

The great start that Atchison had as a center of transportation and commercial activities might have made the city one of the largest and most important in the West. The founding fathers certainly envisioned a tremendous future for their city; but Kansas City, with its own geographic advantages, became the metropolis of the region.

> It is a river town that succeeded in a minor way, failing to achieve greatness, not because of lack of efforts ...but because geography decreed otherwise. Growth of ...frontier towns depended upon being in line with major cities like Chicago or St. Louis. Atchison was not so favored.[26]

The early success of Kansas City came from the steamboat trade. The city profited from its proximity to the Santa Fe Trail to the West. After the Civil War much

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[25]"Atchison," The New West Monthly, Vol. 2 (March, 1880), p. 103.

[26]Wyman, "Atchison, A Frontier Depot," p. 300.

View from Fourth and Kansas Streets in Atchison, about 1880.
Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

of the new settlement was to the southwest. Kansas City became the distribution center for this trade. Its development as a railroad center made Kansas City the focal point of industrial and commercial activities in the Midwest. Douglas wrote that the rise of Kansas City as a great commercial and manufacturing center was the result of the "natural fitness of the location with reference to traditional lines of communication" and its location at "the gateway of commerce to the Southwest."[27]

The late 1870s had also witnessed the growth of St. Joseph and Topeka as important business centers. In 1880 Kansas City, St. Joseph, Leavenworth and Topeka had populations of 55,785;[28] 32,431;[29] 16,550; and 15,451[30] respectively. Topeka had displaced Atchison as the second most populous city in Kansas.

Atchison, founded in 1854, had become in a few short years an important commercial center. By the late 1850s steamboats were delivering large amounts of goods and passengers to the town for transportation to the West.

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[27]Douglas, "History of Manufactures in Kansas," p. 122.

[28]Kansas City, Missouri, Census of 1880.

[29]Tenth Census of the United States, Vol. 19, Table 1-11.5.

[30]Second Biennial Report of the State Board of Agriculture.

Because of its location at the great bend of the Missouri River and its steamboat trade, Atchison became a prominent overland freighting terminus. The city became the "Gateway to the West", carrying on a tremendous trade with the mining camps, military forts, and settlements to the West.

The coming of the railroad era forced Atchison to shift its attention from water to land transportation. "Railroad fever" spread to the Midwest as the towns along the Missouri River raced to secure railroad connections. Atchison became the first city in Kansas to be reached by a railroad. Despite the impetus of this early advantage, the city failed to become the railroad center of the state.

Although geographic factors played an important role in the rise and decline of Atchison, its failure to become the dominant commercial center of Kansas was also the result of differing interests among the people of the city.

The cities of Chicago and St. Louis were engaged in competition for control of the trade that was opening with the West. This rivalry seemed to offer a good opportunity for Atchison to advance its interests. Although it was written that Atchison was "the strategic field where Chicago and St. Louis would do battle",[31] the business leaders of the city were divided in their response as to which of the two rivals to support.

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[31] Atchison Daily Champion, 15 March 1872.

Atchison never gave its whole-hearted support to either of the cities. Some people were said to be obsessed with the idea that a line running to the southwest from Chicago and one running to the northwest from St. Louis would intersect at a point near Atchison.[32] The city could then take advantage of the rich trade of both regions. Atchison's inability to make a commitment to either the Chicago or St. Louis factions resulted in a failure to gain the support of either.

Atchison leaders knew that a railroad to the West was necessary if the city was to experience significant growth and development. In looking to the West, however, her attention was not given to any one destination or direction.

During the early years of dreaming of a railroad network it was the Central Branch of the Union Pacific that captured the imagination of the people of Atchison. The city's leaders hoped that the Central Branch would be the main railroad line to the Pacific coast, placing Atchison at a strategic location with the markets of both Chicago and St. Louis. The unbridged Missouri River, however, made it extremely unlikely that Atchison could become the eastern terminus of one of the branches of the Pacific railroad. After many delays due to changes in plan and direction, the Central Branch ended--just one hundred miles west of Atchison.

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[32]Ibid, 7 May 1871; 19 March 1872.

Atchison leaders also pinned their hopes upon the Missouri Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads. The Missouri Pacific line between Atchison and Omaha conjured up images of the rich trade of the Northwest pouring into the city; likewise, the rich Santa Fe trade was expected to flow into Atchison from the Southwest. These companies disappointed and frustrated the people of Atchison by making Kansas City their eastern terminus.

Instead of dividing her energies between the southwest, the northwest, or directly west, the city might have focused her attention upon one specific goal. Atchison divided her energies and lost all three.

The Missouri River had provided the basis for the success of the city, but it eventually resulted in the failure of Atchison to gain commercial dominance. The great bend of the river placed the city near the west, but it also cut it off from its eastern connections with Chicago and St. Louis. It is this writer's judgment that Atchison's failure to bridge the river before 1875 dealt a severe blow to the city, from which it was unable to recover. While Kansas City, St. Joseph, and Leavenworth reaped the benefits of a Missouri River bridge, Atchison leaders had to be content to emphasize the efficiency and speed of their ferry boat system. Efforts by Atchison to catch up resulted in disappointment and failure.

Although Kansas City ultimately became the dominant city of the Midwest, Atchison had, for a time, offered spirited competition. Her dreams of becoming a great metropolis had faded, but the city could look back proudly into its past--when Atchison was the "Gateway to the West."

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