

A HISTORY OF THE HEMP INDUSTRY
IN MISSOURI

by

Miles W. Eaton, B. S. in Educ.

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the

GRADUATE SCHOOL

of the

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

1938

*Approved
Lewis E. Atherton*

3 10 1971
New
101

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to express his appreciation to Dr. Lewis E. Atherton for the advice and guidance given him in writing this thesis. He is also grateful to the librarians of the State Historical Society of Missouri for their interest and aid in making available the use of newspapers, journals, and reports for this research.

3 10 1971
New
101

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION	i
I. THE BEGINNING OF THE HEMP INDUSTRY IN MISSOURI	1
Methods of Cultivation	1
Reasons for Hemp Becoming a Missouri Crop	18
II. HEMP AS AN INDUSTRY IN MISSOURI	36
Marketing Organization	36
The Location and the Volume of Hemp Production in Missouri	66
III. DECLINE OF HEMP AS A MISSOURI CROP	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY	93
APPENDIX	98

INTRODUCTION

Hemp, one of the oldest known fiber plants was cultivated in China and India as early as 500 A. D. With the rise of civilization and the development of those activities that create a demand for this fiber, the hemp culture spread to other parts of the world. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was grown extensively in Russia, France, and Italy. Russia was considered the leading hemp producing country of the world at that time.

The hemp plant yields a strong and durable fiber. Consequently, its fiber proved useful in the manufacture of rough fabric commodities. When transportation on the high seas became an important factor in the commerce of the world, this fiber found another important use in the manufacture of riggings for sailing vessels. The plant was even grown for narcotic purposes at an early date in China and India.

The hemp plant was first introduced into North America soon after the colonial settlements were established. It was grown in New England on a small scale, but considerable attention was given to its cultivation in Maryland and Virginia. Both the British government and the colonial legislatures attempted to promote the industry of hemp by

offering bounties for its production in the latter part of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries. However, the industry did not assume any great importance in North America until the urgent need for it arose in the cotton industry. Kentucky grew hemp on a small scale by 1800. With the demand for raw hemp for manufacture into cordage, bagging, and canvas, the industry expanded greatly in Kentucky, and began to extend to other western states, particularly to Missouri.

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF THE HEMP INDUSTRY IN MISSOURI

Methods of Cultivation

Hemp was an important crop for Missouri farmers in the forties and fifties of the nineteenth century. Today, the significance of the crop in Missouri farm economy is only a memory. Consequently, it is necessary to give some explanation to the typical technique in the methods of its production in reviewing a history of its growth in Missouri.

For hemp culture, a rich fertile soil, having a good system of drainage, was required, a soil which would endure well the extremes of wet and dry seasons. If the ground was rich, did not hold water on the surface after heavy rains, and in drouth did not bake or crack, but was moist within two or three inches of the surface, such land possessed the right kind of subsoil and was considered excellent for the growing of hemp. This was known to be a good test to ascertain the proper soil conditions.¹

In entirely favorable seasons, fair crops of hemp could be grown on rich, clean, and well tilled land, in

1. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868, (Jefferson City, Missouri, 1868), p. 181.

almost any of the western states. In years when the growing period was very wet or dry, hemp failed, except where the subsoil provided both a drainage and a source of moisture.

To secure uniformity in the length and quality of hemp, it was considered unwise to grow it on foul or worn out land.² J. T. Cleveland of Hazel Ridge, Missouri, an important hemp farmer, in 1848 expressed the belief that hemp would not grow well on land after a small grain of any kind, but that it would after corn or tobacco, if these crops had been well and cleanly cultivated.³ It was also Cleveland's opinion that soil once rich, though badly worn, would grow a first rate crop of hemp, if the soil had been properly prepared. Two years later this opinion was justified by this hemp farmer in a letter to the editor of the Western Journal of St. Louis.

I now give it as a fact, that an old field of twenty acres, which was first cleared and planted in corn in 1811, having had this course of regeneration pursued with, it produced, in 1849, 13,710 pounds of prime hemp, of a beautiful color and fine weight.

The plain fact is, that our Missouri farmers too often (or rather too many of them) scratch their ground over and over, year after year. All of the fertility of the soil, thus lying dormant and useless below the three or four inches of the surface, undisturbed.⁴

-
2. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, March, 1856, p. 80.
 3. St. Louis, Western Journal, August, 1848, p. 439.
 4. Ibid., April, 1850, p. 51.

There was considerable diversity of opinion as to the effect of hemp on the soil. In various sources it was the general belief that hemp improved rather than exhausted it. One local Missouri newspaper indicated the belief that hemp was not an exhausting crop as commonly supposed. It declared that if the soil was kept up, by cutting the plant before the seed ripened, rotting it upon the ground where it grew and by alternating every fifth year with rye to be fed down to hogs, hemp would improve the soil.⁵ The Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868 for Missouri, pointed out that hemp repaid heavy manuring better than almost any other crop.

This report indicated that on certain rich lands in the hemp districts of Kentucky and Missouri it had been the usual practice to grow hemp upon the same ground year after year, some fields producing it for twenty to thirty years in succession without exhaustion. However, the report questioned the advisability of such a practice by indicating the belief that on average land the soil fertility could not bear such a load.

Another source indicated that hemp, cultivated for the production of fiber, cut before the seeds were formed, and settled on the ground where it was grown, would improve, rather than injure the soil. It was further

5. Columbia Patriot, May 8, 1841.

thought this treatment would improve the physical condition of the soil by destroying the weeds.⁶

Whether the average hemp farmer was careful to prevent soil wastage is uncertain. Since the belief that hemp would improve rather than injure the soil was common, it is not unlikely that often the farmer was careless and some soil deterioration might have taken place. If the soil was properly worked, the hemp allowed to rot on the ground where it was grown, and some system of rotation followed, it seems reasonable to conclude that the cultivation of hemp did not to any severe degree exhaust the fertility of the soil.

In preparing the soil for the crop, the usual practice was to plow deeply in the fall, followed by a shallow plowing in the spring. This would permit the absorption of moisture during the winter and put the soil in good physical condition in the spring to prevent the moisture from evaporating. Following the spring plowing, the soil was well harrowed with a heavy harrow and then rolled. Some farmers considered the use of the roller as indispensable in preparing the soil for hemp, since this helped to compact the soil and form a mulch for the seed bed. After being rolled, the soil was cross plowed, rolled again, and then harrowed. After this process of prepara-

6. Dewey, Lyster H., "Hemp", Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture for 1913, (Washington, D. C., 1914), p. 308.

tion, the soil was then ready for the seed.⁷

Some farmers followed the practice at sowing season of preparing the soil of only a few acres at a time, followed by planting.⁸ This operation was continued for a month or more until the crop was planted. This plan was favored, partly because of the convenience in carrying on other spring work, and partly because different portions of hemp ripening in succession would allow the harvest to be handled more easily.

The time of planting depended somewhat upon the strength of the land. Strong land would bear the earliest sowing. If the hemp seed was sown too early, it was at the expense of the lint quality, if too late, the growth was apt to be short. Generally, the time for planting in Missouri was from the middle of April to the twentieth of May, according to the advancement of the season and convenience of the farmer.⁹

In regard to the quantity of seed to be planted per acre, there was a diversity of opinion among the farmers. The majority followed the rule of sowing four to five pecks of seed to the acre, according to the quality of the soil. If more seed was sown to the acre, it was on

7. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, March, 1856, p. 80.

8. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868, p. 184.

9. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, March, 1856, p. 81.

land of extra fertility and good tillage; otherwise too thick sowing would cause the hemp plants to grow unequally, some coarse and others fine. Uniformity in size and length of the hemp stalks was essential for a good lint crop, and this was the constant object of the careful farmer.¹⁰

Hemp sown for seed was handled in a different manner than that sown for fiber. When hemp was sown for seed, it was planted, in a field to itself. This field was prepared and the hemp cultivated in a manner very similar to the way corn was handled.¹¹ The custom was to plant the seed as early as possible, placing about eight to ten seeds in a hill. When the hemp plants were several inches high, they were thinned out, leaving only three or four of the strongest standing. This type of cultivation would allow the stalk to branch, permitting the growth of seed.¹² The hemp would not branch unless it was cultivated.

In planting hemp for its fiber, the chief practice was to sow it by hand in a broadcasting fashion.¹³ The seed was then covered by a light harrowing, followed by

-
10. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, March, 1856, p. 81.
 11. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868, p. 185.
 12. Knobbs, Pauline Dingle, Hemp Raising in Marion County, Missouri, Before 1860, (Typewritten Memories of her Father, Reverend James S. Dingle), p. 4.
 13. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868, p. 186.

the field roller to even the surface and compact the soil about the seeds. Though this was the usual practice, there were other methods followed. A writer to the Valley Farmer of St. Louis told of an unusual method in sowing seed, that he saw while passing through Saline County on the stage.

Aaron F. Bruce was sowing his hemp seed. The field had not been plowed since fall, the sower was followed by a number of hands with shovel plows and light harrows. There was volunteer hemp in many places, from eight to twelve inches high.¹⁴

This method of planting was regarded as an experiment, in that the ground had not been plowed since fall and no great care had been taken to prepare a seed bed. Later in the season, while this writer was in the company of J. M. Lewis and H. H. McDowell, neighbors of Bruce, he learned that Bruce's crop was considered one of the best in the neighborhood of Marshall. A Mr. O'Bannon, while attending the State fair, stated he had put in the principal part of his crop in the same manner. It was explained that when the soil was fertile, easily handled, and the fall breaking thoroughly done, a failure to produce a good crop had never been known.

Great care was necessary in selecting reliable seed for planting, because the quality of the hemp produced depended much upon the character of the seed. Seed,

14. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, November, 1854, p. 430.

inferior for planting, was often utilized in other ways. In the fifties some farmers developed the practice of feeding such seed to their poultry. Sometimes, seed of this character would fall into the hands of unprincipled dealers and when sold to farmers for sowing purposes re-
15
sulted in a total failure of the crop.

The hemp plant had a rigid stalk, that by harvest time, sometimes attained a height of twelve feet. However, from five to eight feet was considered average. When the seed was sown broadcast for fiber, the stalks grew closely together, had no branches or foliage except at the top, and developed from one-fourth to three-fourths of an inch in diameter. When the hemp was grown for seed, the stalk attained a thickness of one to two inches. The leaves of the plant shaded from a dark to a light green. While the stalk was of a more coarse texture, it too was green while growing. Hemp matured in the latter part of
16
August.

The cutting of hemp began while the ". . . seed was
17
in the milk". This time was indicated by the dropping of the leaves from the stalk. If hemp was cut much earlier than this, the fiber would be deficient in weight. In

15. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, November, 1854, p. 430.

16. Dewey, p. 286.

17. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868, p. 188.

Missouri the time for cutting was generally around the
tenth to the twentieth of August.¹⁸

This phase of hemp culture was considered very severe and difficult. Since the height of the hemp was as tall or taller than a man's head, the stalk about an inch thick, and the implement for cutting crude, the labor of harvesting hemp was a great hardship. Also, the cutting took place in the very hottest of weather. Consequently, strong laborers were required. This was one of the phases of hemp culture where the slave was utilized. Except in the culture of hemp, where the task system prevailed, the Missouri slave was a general farm hand.¹⁹ Since the labor of cutting hemp was so severe, slaves were in demand. As a hemp cutter and laborer, the slave was probably considered a profitable investment, if he was such anywhere.²⁰ In Platte County, where large quantities of hemp were produced by the late forties, slaves found a ready sale at \$1200 to \$1400 each. In 1840 there were hardly two hundred slaves in Platte County, but by the middle fifties, the number had more than trebled.²¹ This tends to indicate the wide demand for slaves in the hemp culture,

18. Knobbs, p. 4.

19. Trexler, Harrison Anthony, Slavery in Missouri, 1804 to 1865, (Baltimore, Maryland, 1914), p. 22.

20. Ibid., p. 24.

21. Paxton, W. M., Annals of Platte County, Missouri, (Kansas City, Missouri, 1897), p. 37.

since Platte County was a leading county in producing this staple. In Lafayette County slaves were used widely. As many as twenty or thirty slaves would stand in a line cutting this staple with sickles.²²

The methods of cutting hemp were crude and awkward. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it had been the practice to pull hemp by hand.²³ Later the planter adopted the practice of using a specially shaped hemp hook. By the time the culture became prominent in Missouri, the use of a cradle had made some improvement over the hook, although the hook was still widely used.

Hemp was cut very low to the ground so as to preserve the stalk. This operation was done with the right hand and the hemp was gathered in the left arm.²⁴ Where the hemp was over eight feet high, it was considered best to use the hook, even after the use of the cradle became extensive. The use of the cradle was considered best for hemp under eight feet in height. The length of the hemp stalk, when falling, did not interfere with the swinging of the cradle, as it would if of greater length.

The common work hand could cut about an acre a day with the cradle and about half an acre with the hook. It

22. Trexler, p. 24.

23. Gray, Lewis Cecil, History of Agriculture in Southern United States to 1860, (Washington, D. C., 1933), Vol. II, p. 822.

24. Knobbs, p. 5.

was expected that each hand would raise and care for nine
or ten acres of hemp.²⁵

When hemp was out, it was placed flat on the ground in long rows to be cured. After this process was completed, the crop was arranged in shocks, where it remained until the heat of the summer had passed, probably until October. An unsigned letter from Platte County indicated that Missouri farmers seldom stacked their hemp.²⁶ There seemed to be some question as to which procedure, shocking or stacking, would be the better; however, in Missouri, the hemp was shocked rather than stacked, after curing.

James Williams gives an interesting statement as to the methods of harvesting and cutting the crop:

They cut it in August, with a kind of a drag-hook with a long handle, by hand-spreading it out behind them. They cut a swath about as wide as the hemp was long, to have room to spread it. They took it up in about ten days, knocked the dry leaves off and put it in shocks, tying them at the top like corn. They let the shocks stand until thoroughly dry then spread them out on the same ground to rot the stems, so they would break in a hemp brake, when the properly rotted.²⁷

There were two methods of rotting hemp, dew-rotting and water-rotting. The former method was used extensively in Missouri. It was not until the late forties and early

25. St. Louis, Western Journal, August, 1848, p. 439.

26. Paxton, p. 81.

27. Williams, James, Seventy-five Years on the Border, (Kansas City, 1912), p. 23.

fifties that any water-rotting of importance was done, and then in only small quantities.

In the dew-rotting process the hemp, after curing, either in the shock or on the ground, was spread out in the late fall to receive the benefit of the dews and rains. It was generally taken up before Christmas, although if the weather was dry and the hemp rotted very slowly, it was often left on the ground until spring before it was sufficiently rotted. The rotted hemp, when taken up, was either reshocked in the field, or at once taken to the breaking machine. If the woody substance or pith of the stalk, looked as if it would be easily broken by the brake, it was considered sufficiently rotted.²⁸

Interest in water-rotting hemp in Missouri did not develop until the United States Navy offered a market. Under the stimulus of this new demand much attention was given to the water-rotting process by the newspapers, magazines, and statesmen,--all in an attempt to encourage Missouri farmers to water-rot their hemp.

Hemp to be water-rotted had to be handled with greater care than that which was dew-rotted. The cutters had to be careful to keep the stalks straight and to allow none to be broken or crossed in the bundles. This was considered important, both to avoid waste and for the

28. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868, p. 189.

appearance of the staple.

Hemp, from six to eight feet in length, was considered most suitable for water-rotting. It would handle more easily in the tanks or vats, and have less opportunity to be broken than stalks of greater length. The proper time for economical and complete water-rotting of hemp was after it had been well cured.²⁹ If done at this season, the labor and expense of having the hemp reshocked could be saved. It would also rot better during the warm weather of the fall than during the cool weather of the winter. One local magazine pointed out that if hemp was water-rotted in September, it would require five to eight days to complete the process; in October, from seven to ten days; in November, from ten to fourteen days; in December, from fourteen to twenty-one days; all according to the weather.³⁰

Vats or tanks of oblong shape were constructed to hold the water in which the hemp stalks were placed for rotting. The temperature of the water depended upon the season and the amount of hemp in the vats. The chances of uniformity in rotting were greater if the water was heated than if allowed to remain at the temperature of the atmosphere.

There was some difference of opinion as to the proper

29. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, October, 1856, p. 305.

30. Ibid., p. 306.

temperature of the water for rotting. A local magazine pointed out the chief object in rotting hemp was to remove the vegetable albumen, which caused lint to adhere firmly to the stem in the unrotted state. This was accomplished by putrifactive fermentation and this magazine believed the most suitable temperature for this was from sixty to sixty-five degrees Fahrenheit.³¹ Some hemp farmers believed the water for rotting hemp should have been warmer. Thomas H. Barlow of Kentucky, who owned a highly developed water-rotting apparatus, said the water in his vats was heated from eighty to one hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit.³² It seems likely that farmers in various hemp districts followed the practices which were convenient for them, and no doubt they considered their practice the best. Even in Missouri there was some variation among the farmers. A Mr. Harrison of Saline County, owned a hemp water-rotting apparatus at Lexington, Missouri, in 1845. Under his plan of water-rotting, the hemp, after being sufficiently cured, was immersed in vats filled with moderately warm water, where it remained for four days.³³

When the hemp was sufficiently rotted it would emit an unpleasant odor and the lint would be slimy and easily separated from the wood. The hemp bundles, after reaching

31. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, October, 1856, p. 305.

32. Lexington Express, September 15, 1845.

33. Ibid., June 20, 1845.

this state, were carried to some convenient grass land,
and spread out to dry.³⁴ This was considered a most unpleasant task because of the condition of the hemp.

It can be readily seen that great care and experience was required in securing a uniform rotting. Added expense and unfamiliarity with this process considerably retarded its use. However, the prices for water-rotted hemp were more attractive than those for dew-rotted, and gradually a number of Missouri farmers turned to water-rotting. Yet, in 1850, of the 16,028 tons of hemp produced in Missouri only sixty tons had been water-rotted.³⁵

The breaking of hemp was the process by which the woody shell of the stalk was broken and removed, leaving the long straight fiber which was used for manufacturing hemp commodities. This was another phase in hemp culture that was considered a difficult and severe task and for that reason slave labor was used. For a long time the breaking of hemp was done by hand. The stalk was broken and the pith removed by means of a heavy crusher which the slave swung up and down.³⁶ An instrument, known as a hemp brake, was also used for this task. This was a simple device, hand operated, by which the hemp stalk was broken

34. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, October, 1856, p. 306.

35. "Statistics of Missouri", Seventh United States Census, 1850, (Washington, D. C. 1853), Table XI, pp. 679-682.

36. Trexler, p. 4.

so as to allow the removal of the fiber. This, however, did not lessen the labor much, but only made it possible to increase the rate of breaking. A day's work in breaking hemp was considered to be between a hundred and two hundred pounds. The amount broken varied according to the strength and skill of the slave. One slave was reported to have broken as much as two hundred pounds in a day.³⁷ It was reported in Marion County that in some cases a slave might be paid for any amount of hemp broken above the ordinary expected task. This was an attempt to encourage a greater amount of hemp to be broken.³⁸

Some farmers followed the practice of having their hemp hackled or dressed. This was generally done at some warehouse especially prepared to do this type of work and very seldom was it done on the farm. Hackling or dressing hemp consisted of cleaning and sorting the rough fibers so that the hemp might be used for the manufacture of finer commodities than rope and bagging.³⁹ However, this practice did not seem to have been common in Missouri.

In getting the hemp ready for market, the fibers of full length were doubled at the middle and twisted before the two ends were brought together, forming what was

37. Columbia Patriot, May 8, 1841.

38. Knobbs, p. 7.

39. Dewey, p. 334.

called a hand of hemp.⁴⁰ These hands of hemp were purposely kept small so that they could be packed neatly and economically in bales, similar to cotton bales, for shipment. A lever or screw press was used in pressing the hemp into bales. Some bales would contain one hundred to two hundred pounds of hemp, while others were reported to be as large as four to five hundred pounds.⁴¹ In general a ton of hemp was made up of four to eight bales, according to their size.

James Williams tells of his experience in baling hemp, while he was a boy living in Missouri.

It devolved on me, as a boy of thirteen years, to prepare this patch of hemp for market. After getting it properly rotted, I borrowed an old flax brake in the neighborhood (a flax brake is too small to break hemp well) and kept pegging away at it, threshing the hands of lint across the brake to get the sheaves out, as we called the broken stems from which the lint peeled off in the process of breaking. After finishing a hand we'd twist it up something like a twist of tobacco, only leaving about half of the frazzled ends loose, but tying it securely where we left off twisting.

Where a large commercial crop was raised in the river counties, the "hands" were placed in a nice bale, then put under a great screw press and were made solid and compact enough to ship to Liverpool, . . . the great hemp market of the world.

We didn't have a screw press, but used a long pole, the short end in a crack V shaped

40. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868, p. 190.

41. Columbia Patriot, May 8, 1841.

block for fulcrum on top of the slab. One boy at the long end of the lever pressed down, while another boy tied the ropes. In such a way we got two bales weighing about a hundred pounds each.⁴²

Such were the general practices followed in the cultivation and production of hemp in Missouri during the period of its growth.

Reasons for Hemp Becoming a Missouri Crop

A practical interest in hemp culture did not develop in Missouri until the eighteen thirties. However, there was considerable interest in its possibilities much earlier. These possibilities in the actual growth of hemp were called to the attention of Missouri farmers as early as 1809. Through newspaper comments, letters, and market quotations, farmers secured information as to the benefits and profits to be derived from its culture.

A newspaper of St. Louis in 1809, indicated that a rope walk would soon be in operation in that city. This paper pointed out that the manufacture of hemp would attract thousands of dollars to the Missouri territory.⁴³
To substantiate its belief that hemp would be a profitable

42. Williams, p. 23.

43. St. Louis, Missouri Gazette, March 8, 1809, (A rope walk was an establishment that manufactured rope from raw hemp).

crop, this paper two years later stressed the idea that the climate and soil of Missouri were more suitable for growing hemp than that of Russia.⁴⁴ The Gazette was particularly insistent on the value of this crop, for a few weeks later it published a message from the Secretary of the Navy to Congress. The secretary stated that ". . . as to the certainty and profit of a crop of hemp, it is believed that no crop is more certain when grown in ground adapted to it, and to the grower it yields a profit superior to most articles and exceeded by few."⁴⁵ The secretary further declared that an acre of ground would yield 1000 pounds and, if properly dressed, this would be worth from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars. At this time the same paper drew on outside testimony by publishing an article by John S. Smith of Baltimore, to give the farmers practical information on hemp cultivation. This article pointed out the type of soil needed, methods of planting, harvesting, rotting, and breaking of hemp.

In the twenties a local paper commented on the proper manner to ship hemp to market. Reference was also given to the growing need for hemp commodities. It seemed to be the opinion of this newspaper that it would be well for

44. St. Louis, Missouri Gazette, May 16, 1811, (Russia was the leading hemp producing country in the world).

45. Ibid., May 30, 1811.

Missouri farmers to consider seriously the benefits to be derived from growing hemp.⁴⁶ Another local paper indicated the belief that hemp grown in Missouri would be of a superior quality, as shown by the following quotation:

. . . 38 hogsheads of Missouri tobacco, bearing the stamp of Bingham and Lamme, Boon's Lick, Missouri, were sold in the city of New York and pronounced superior to any other description of tobacco in the market. What will they say when they see our hemp? We should not be surprised to hear exclaim that Russia has been practicing an imposition on the world when they come to examine the hemp from Missouri.⁴⁷

Perhaps the quotation of hemp prices by local papers from time to time induced some farmers to undertake the culture of hemp, as most of the local papers followed the practice of quoting the prices for farm commodities.

The apparent purpose of the various comments on hemp production and trade in this commodity was to draw the attention of Missouri farmers to hemp culture and to stimulate an interest in its cultivation. Although there was no great quantity of hemp grown in Missouri until the late thirties and early forties, throughout the period of the late twenties and thirties, newspapers continued to agitate for its cultivation.

This agitation was not without foundation, however. It was readily acknowledged that the climate and soil over

46. Franklin, Missouri Intelligencer and Boon's Lick Advertiser, December 11, 1821.

47. "Old Time News", Missouri Historical Review, October, 1912, Vol. VII, p. 34.

large areas of the Mississippi Valley and its tributaries were suited for the growing of hemp.⁴⁸ Other crops, such as wheat, corn, oats, and hay, were grown extensively in Missouri and it was thought that the bottom lands along the Missouri River, being very fertile, were adaptable to hemp culture.

Regardless of the suitability of Missouri for growing hemp, no great advancement took place until certain other forces began to act upon the development of the state. A primary force, as an incentive to hemp growing, was the migration of large numbers of people to Missouri. The physical assets of Missouri, accompanied with the economic distresses of the East and the South, led many people to migrate to the state.

There had been a gradual stream of migration to Missouri following the purchase of the Louisiana Territory. But the great emphasis on migration came in the twenties and thirties. By 1860 the census figures for Missouri showed a population of 1,063,489 whites. Of this number,⁴⁹ 273,803 were born south of the Mason and Dixon line. Of those persons born south of the Mason and Dixon line, 99,814, came from Kentucky, 73,594 from Tennessee,⁵⁰ 53,957 from Virginia, and 20,259 from North Carolina.

48. Dewey, p. 345.

49. Trexler, p. 9.

50. Ibid.

Both Kentucky and Virginia were producers of hemp, although in Virginia hemp was produced on a smaller scale than in Kentucky. During the middle thirties interest in growing hemp developed in Tennessee, and some efforts were made to begin the cultivation of this staple.⁵¹ It is natural that the settlers from the South would want to adopt the same farm economy in Missouri with which they were familiar prior to their migration. It also may be assumed that these slave state immigrants were responsible for most of the slaves brought into Missouri.⁵²

Since a considerable number of the settlers owned slaves, there was a desire for an extensive farm staple. Apparently, hemp seemed to fill that desire. It was a crop requiring the year round use of laborers. Because of the hardships in its cultivation, it was thought slave labor could be used effectively. These migrants made their settlements near the Missouri River, consequently market facilities were convenient with the development of trade. It was from the countries where slaveholders had settled that the emphasis on hemp culture was apparent.

A second cause, which was probably the most important of all in stimulating the growth of hemp in Missouri, was the wide expansion of the cotton industry in the late

51. St. Louis, Western Journal and Civilian, September, 1855, p. 282.

52. Trexler, p. 9.

twenties and thirties. This expansion created a great demand for the use of baling rope and bagging in the shipment of cotton. These commodities were manufactured from raw hemp. To supply the demand for such commodities, there was a consequent expansion in the production and manufacture of hemp. Since the demand for manufactured hemp commodities was great, the price for the raw article was attractive. It is therefore natural that a practical interest in growing raw hemp in Missouri would develop. The attractiveness of prices not only stimulated the growth of this crop, but had an enormous influence on its expansion. One local farm journal believed that high prices would stimulate hemp farmers to increase the production of this article more than anything else.⁵³

The general restriction of hemp culture in the United States tended to emphasize this culture in Missouri. The situations suitable for growing hemp seemed limited to some extent. One important farm magazine expressed the belief that it was a settled point that non-slaveholding states would not grow hemp. This same magazine indicated it was not probable that any slaveholding states south of Missouri or Kentucky would ever cultivate hemp as a staple.⁵⁴ Non-slaveholders did not find it profitable to grow hemp without the facilities of slave labor because

53. St. Louis, Western Journal and Civilian, September, 1855, p. 282.

54. Ibid., p. 283.

of the hardships in the production of this crop. Slaveholders in the South did not care to cultivate hemp as a staple, since the cultivation of cotton would bring a greater profit. Although some hemp was grown in Tennessee in the late thirties and early forties, this crop was finally abandoned in favor of cotton.⁵⁵ Thus, Kentucky and Missouri seemed the most suited for the growth of hemp.

Still a further cause for the growing of hemp in Missouri came from the influence of a protective tariff. There was no state that produced any great quantity of hemp, other than Kentucky, prior to 1840. To supply the need of this commodity for American consumption, large quantities had been imported from Russia. Some bagging had been imported from Scotland. As early as 1824, growers of hemp in Kentucky began to demand protection in the form of a tariff on the foreign hemp articles.⁵⁶ Some protection was granted, but apparently not enough to satisfy hemp growers and manufactures. In 1841 the tariff on imported hemp and bagging was increased. Apparently a wide increase in production resulted from this protection and it did not seem particularly pleasing to producers and

-
55. "Statistics of Tennessee", Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Table XI, p. 588. Tennessee produced only 595 tons of hemp in 1850, but 77,812,800 pounds of cotton and 20,148,932 pounds of tobacco.
56. Moore, Brent, A Study of the Past, the Present, and the Possibilities of the Hemp Industry in Kentucky, (Lexington, Kentucky, 1905), p. 40.

manufacturers. An upper Missouri newspaper in 1845, declared that the high protective tariff of 1841 had caused such a wide expansion in the number of hemp factories, that the results were overproduction in bagging and unprofitable competition. This newspaper indicated the sentiment of disapproval by western producers and manufactures over the high duty, as it was felt they had more to fear from internal competition.⁵⁷ The facilities for growing hemp and the manufacture of bagging were believed by this same paper to enable producers and manufacturers to supply the articles so cheaply that they could defy all foreign competition. This paper further pointed out that a high duty upon foreign bagging could have no other effect than to deceive and stimulate overproduction, causing a reduction of prices in some seasons below cost.⁵⁸ Whether this expressed the opinion of a majority of hemp producers and manufacturers is uncertain. However, this seemed to be a subject of some controversy.

On the subject of the tariff on hemp, Thomas S. Forman wrote in the Patent Office Reports for 1844:

The price of hemp, bagging, and bale rope has declined almost in ratio of their increased production. Thus, in 1835 with a crop of 7,000 or 8,000 tons in all western states, it was \$10 to \$12 per hundred weight Since then under the stimulating influence of the tariff . . .

57. Lexington Express, July 23, 1845.

58. Ibid.

the products are four or five times the amount they were in 1835 and the price is \$3.00 per hundredweight These prices do not remunerate the grower or manufacturer.⁵⁹

Regardless of the effect of protection on the price of hemp, it was evidently desired by certain vested interests. In 1846, Congress passed an act raising the duty on raw hemp thirty per cent. This was considered liberal protection, but because the manufactured imported hemp was subjected to only a duty of twenty per cent there was continued disapproval.⁶⁰ This situation acted in the nature of a bounty to the foreign manufacturer, and it was feared that if the law continued other countries would cease to ship raw hemp, but send only the fabric to the United States. This would allow for increased domestic production of hemp, but tend to encourage the foreign manufacturer at the expense of the domestic manufacturer. A farm journal of St. Louis in 1848 expressed the hope that all persons interested in hemp growing would ask for an amendment of the act of 1846.⁶¹

Thus, it seemed that the injurious effect of the tariff was greater on the domestic manufacturers than on the producers. Charles S. Morehead, a representative in Congress, indicated the belief that the manufacture of

59. Moore, p. 53.

60. St. Louis, Western Journal, September, 1848, p. 504.

61. Ibid.

hemp would be more extensive but for the discrimination of
the tariff act of 1846.⁶² None the less, even though the
effect of the tariff was not all that was hoped for and
the price of hemp declined, it did cause an expansion of
production in Missouri and Kentucky.

A fifth stimulus to the expansion of hemp production
in Missouri grew out of the intent of Congress to make the
Navy Department a market source for domestic producers.
As early as 1825 the United States navy authorities became
interested in the possibilities of securing use of Ameri-
can hemp for the navy. The chief supply of hemp for naval
purposes in the United States had been secured from Russia.
Various experiments were conducted in comparing the Ameri-
can hemp with that of Russia. It was found that the hemp
in the United States if properly rotted would compare fa-
vorably with that from Russia.⁶³

Missouri producers, as well as a majority of other
American growers, dew-rotted their hemp. It was an ac-
knowledged fact that dew-rotted hemp could not be used ef-
ficiently as ship riggings and that it resisted sea water
poorly.⁶⁴ If the domestic producers were to take advan-
tage of the United States navy as a market for their com-
modities, it would be necessary for them to water-rot

62. St. Louis, Western Journal, September, 1848, p. 396.

63. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, March, 1856, p. 80.

64. Moore, p. 42.

their hemp.

In 1841, the Secretary of the Navy reported to Congress on the use of American hemp for the navy. He stated that the quality of American water-rotted hemp was as good as any imported and that the industry should be encour-

⁶⁵aged. On September 11, 1841, with the view of offering encouragement to hemp growers, Congress passed this resolution:

That the Secretary of the Navy be and hereby is directed to purchase domestic water-rotted hemp for use of the United States Navy . . . and for that purpose cause purchases of such hemp to be made in the different hemp growing regions of the Union.⁶⁶

A resolution was adopted in the United States Senate in 1842, that the Secretary of the Navy be authorized to collect from authentic sources all information attainable on the process of hemp cultivation and manufacture within the states and territories. He was further requested to secure any other information relating to the culture, preparation, and manufacture of hemp as he deemed to be useful in encouraging its production.

An upper Missouri newspaper commented on the possibilities of the United States navy as a market for domestic hemp.

It is now well ascertained that water-rotted hemp, suitable for the use of the United States

65. Moore, p. 47.

66. Jefferson City Inquirer, April 20, 1843.

Navy can be made in several states of the Union, and especially in Kentucky, Missouri, Indiana, and Tennessee. The navy uses annually about 700 tons of clean hemp. Each of the states, Kentucky, Missouri, or Virginia, produce a larger amount of clean hemp. Nothing remains to be done to enable us to supply the navy and all shipping interests with a requisite supply of water-rotted hemp, but to encourage the hemp growers to prepare the article for the use of the navy by water-rotting it.⁶⁷

On February 16, 1843, the Missouri State Legislature sent a memorial to Congress. It was in the form of a request to Congress to establish, at suitable points in Missouri, agencies for the purchase of water-rotted hemp on government account. The great importance of hemp to Missouri was emphasized and explained. The opinion was expressed that the establishment of such agencies was the only requisite to insure a supply and demand constant with the amount produced. The memorial further stated that it was highly desirable for the producer to find a home purchaser in the government for his hemp, without subjecting himself to the onerous taxation of transportation and commission charges.⁶⁸

A somewhat similar resolution was sent to Congress from Indiana on February 4, 1843, requesting the encouragement of hemp production and the water-rotting process.⁶⁹

67. Jefferson City Inquirer, April 20, 1843.

68. Laws of the State of Missouri, 12th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1842-'43 (Jefferson City, 1843), p. 391.

69. Senate Document, 27C., 3S., No. 57, Vol. III.

These comments and requests aroused considerable interest and hopes in Missouri. Although there was great agitation on this subject in Missouri, no great quantity of hemp was ever water-rotted. However, the numerous newspaper comments on this subject and other phases of hemp culture tended to broaden the interest in its production.

The interest in raising hemp and consequently in good farm lands developed to such an extent that farmers followed the practice of stressing this feature in announcing their farms for sale. E. B. Craven advertised his farm, southeast of Lexington, for sale in April, 1844. Of the two hundred and fifty-eight acres, sixty acres were prairie land, fenced and under the cultivation of hemp.⁷⁰

Another farmer, R. J. Smith of Jackson County, announced his three hundred acre farm for sale and stated that fifty acres were under the cultivation of hemp.⁷¹ A two hundred acre farm was advertised for sale in Clay County in 1846. Forty-five acres were said to be under cultivation and it was described as ". . . all good hemp land."⁷²

The organization of agricultural societies, the occurrence of fairs, and the exhibition of agricultural products in the late forties and early fifties were other

70. Lexington Express, April 30, 1844.

71. Ibid., September 15, 1845.

72. Liberty, Weekly Tribune, April 20, 1846.

incentives for the production and expansion of the hemp crop. The interest was not only in increased production, but there was also an attempt to raise the cultivation of hemp to a higher plane.

The organization of the "Northwest Agricultural Society of Missouri" at Weston, Missouri, in 1854, is an example of the local cooperative interest in farm commodities. The purpose of this society was to stimulate an interest in the culture of hemp as well as other agricultural products. It was indicated that the people of the surrounding counties were beginning to profit from the cooperation with their friends of Platte in the growing of

⁷³ hemp. During the same year in which this society was organized it held a hemp exhibition and the following hemp premiums were offered and won.

1. Best crop of hemp of thirty acres and upwards, \$20.00. Won by Oliver C. Steele.
2. Second best crop of thirty acres and upwards, \$10.00. Won by Dr. Thomas Beaumont.
3. Best crop of hemp of twenty acres, \$12.00. Won by Samuel Pepper.
4. Second best crop of twenty acres, \$6.00. Won by John D. Pepper.
5. Best crop of five to twelve acres, \$8.00. Won by A. Rich.⁷⁴

Another local agricultural society in Missouri held an examination of hemp crops and offered premiums to the growers at St. Joseph in May, 1855. The St. Joseph Cycle,

73. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, February, 1854, p. 55.

74. Ibid., May, 1854, p. 175.

May 18, 1855, carried the results:

W. L. Irving won the premium for the best twenty acres of hemp. Judge S. L. Leonard and R. C. Mosley won premiums for the best ten acres.

Judge Leonard produced for his ten acres, 14,264 pounds of hemp, averaging 1,427 pounds to the acre. This was the largest yield exhibited.⁷⁵

The cultivation and production of hemp was so important that exhibitions were held and premiums were offered at the "Annual Fair of the Missouri State Agricultural Society" at Boonville, Missouri, October 1-5 of 1855:

1. Best twenty-five pounds of dew-rotted hemp from the brake; five entries. J. H. Estell of Howard County, premium, \$20.00. J. L. Obryan of Cooper County, certificate.
2. Best twenty-five pounds of hackled hemp; three entries. Johnson, Bartly and Lythe of St. Louis, premium, \$20.00. J. H. Estell of Howard County, certificate.
3. Best twenty-five pounds of water-rotted hackled hemp. John Miller of Howard County, premium, \$20.00.⁷⁶

Throughout the period of the fifties in Missouri, fairs and exhibitions were held at various times in attempts to promote, not only hemp production but the production of other agricultural products.

One phase of hemp culture that caused considerable controversy and held back the expansion of hemp production and consequently trade, was the lack of any efficient

75. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, June, 1855, p. 246.

76. Ibid., November, 1855, p. 476.

machinery to replace hand labor in the cutting and breaking of this product. A general belief existed that if the severity in the labor of cutting and breaking hemp could be relieved, the production and trade of this article would be greatly expanded. Attempts to secure the construction of machines to increase and raise the standard of hemp production began during the middle forties. Throughout the late forties and fifties the demand for efficient machinery was agitated by local newspapers and farm journals.

The announcement that Thomas L. Fortune had invented a hemp braking machine in 1845 was illustrative of the numerous inventions brought forward. The St. Joseph Gazette, June 27, 1845, indicated that this machine required four hands and two horses for operation and that it would break 2,000 pounds of hemp in twelve hours. The inventor stated that this machine would break and clean more hemp, and waste less than any other machine.⁷⁷ Although this announcement created great interest among the hemp growers, it is unlikely that this machine attained any practical usage. In 1848, Chauncy P. Holcomb invented a hemp brake. This machine was reported to clean and break about 1,000 pounds of hemp a day and that only

77. "Missouriana", Missouri Historical Review, July, 1932, Vol. XXVI, p. 397.

two hands and two horses were needed to attend it.⁷⁸ As to the effectiveness of the machines that were invented, many hemp farmers were skeptical. J. T. Cleveland of Hazel Ridge, Missouri, declared that of the many machines invented and brought forward for the breaking of hemp, he had never seen one that, taking into consideration time, expense, and manner of cleaning the fiber, equalled the old fashioned hand-brake.⁷⁹

In the fifties other inventions of machinery designed to lessen the labor of hemp cultivation were announced. John Lock Hardeman, a hemp farmer of Saline County, was reported to have invented a breaking machine which lessened hand labor.⁸⁰ An attachment to the McCormick reaper⁸¹ was reported to be effective in cutting hemp in 1854. S. A. Clemens announced the operation of a new power hemp brake at Whitleys' Foundry on North Main Street in St. Louis. This machine was said to break one to one and a half tons of hemp in ten hours.⁸²

78. St. Louis, Western Journal, July, 1848, p. 227.

79. Ibid.

80. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, September, 1855, p. 373.

81. Napton, Wm. Barclay, The Past and the Present History of Saline County, Missouri (Chicago, Illinois, 1910), p. 132.

82. St. Louis, Western Journal and Civilian, September, 1855, p. 285.

There was little indication that any of the machines were ever very effective. This sentiment was reflected by a farm paper of St. Louis in 1855.

The entire hemp crop of this country is still broken by hand labor. The average during the entire season does not exceed fifty pounds per hand each day. The present limit of the hemp crop of Missouri is the amount to which manual labor can be applied to breaking by hand. Previous attempts to produce a good hemp brake have been almost without number, but have failed in their objective.⁸³

There seems to be no definite explanation for the failure to produce efficient machinery for cutting and breaking hemp. When machinery was used, it handled the hemp in such a hapzardly manner that the cleaning and breaking often had to be repeated by hand labor. However, the importance of the hemp industry to Missouri at this time was so great that the demand for efficient machinery for cutting and breaking hemp continued.

Thus, hemp culture became a part of the Missouri farm economy. Beginning in the early part of the nineteenth century some interest existed as to its possibilities. The agitation for the growing of hemp was so successful that by the middle forties the culture of this staple was definitely a part of the farm economy in Missouri. The interest and actual production of this crop continued to increase and expand until the Civil War.

83. St. Louis, Western Journal and Civilian, September, 1855, p. 284.

CHAPTER II

HEMP AS AN INDUSTRY IN MISSOURI

Marketing Organization

The difficulty of getting a product to market had always been a problem for the pioneer farmer. In Missouri, this difficulty was experienced in marketing hemp as well as with other farm commodities.

With the gradual increase in the demand for manufactured hemp products in the form of bale rope, bagging, and twine, the lack of adequate marketing facilities was realized. If only a farmer could get his raw hemp to a place where it could be manufactured, there would be no difficulty in selling it. Some form of organization was needed. Consequently, much attention, from the time hemp was first grown in Missouri, was devoted to securing some efficient means of marketing. Throughout the entire period of hemp growth in Missouri, a method of marketing was a serious problem. Whether any satisfactory organization was realized is doubtful. Those practices followed varied and differed with the development of the state and the increasing importance of hemp.

Before any great development had taken place in the state and where the neighborhoods were small, the farmers

at first followed a practice of making their shipments together. This system of cooperation was used with the marketing of hemp as well as with other products. The hemp was usually entrusted to two or three experienced men, who would transport it to the most accessible market.¹ From the first, St. Louis was such a market. This commercial metropolis was the main source for marketing hemp throughout the period of its growth in Missouri.

As the state increased in population and advanced in development, small towns grew at various strategic points along the Missouri River. These towns naturally became the centers of trade for the surrounding population. In the hemp growing regions, the principal towns for shipping were Lexington in Lafayette County, Miami and Arrow Rock in Saline County, Glasgow in Howard County, Rocheport in Boone County, Brunswick in Chariton County, Liberty in Clay County, and St. Joseph in Buchanan County. There were also small landing points from which farm produce was shipped.

At these principal river towns and landings there were warehouses for storing hemp. The proprietors of these establishments made a business of storing, baling, and shipping hemp for the farmers at stated sums per ton. Where there were no warehouses, the bales of hemp were

1. Franklin, Missouri Intelligencer and Boon's Lick Advertiser, December 11, 1821.

2
piled on the ground or a wharf to await shipment.

Eldridge Burden, a mayor of Lexington, in a message to the people of that city indicated the need of better shipping facilities. He emphasized the need of erecting a large and stable wharf at the end of Waters street in Lexington to care for hemp awaiting shipment. He further stated that steamers touching at the wharf would be moderately taxed to pay for the erection of it.³

Most hemp farmers did not follow the practice of selling their hemp crop to a buyer at the first shipping point, as was generally the case with wheat, corn, wool, and other products. The hemp farmers, especially the wealthier ones, commonly had their raw hemp shipped on account to a favorite commission merchant in St. Louis. In following this practice, frequent and often expensive trips were made to the commercial metropolis of the state. This permitted a better understanding of market conditions and brought about a close relationship between the merchant and the producer. It was probably the main reason for hemp farmers being better acquainted with the city life than any other portion of the rural population.⁴

2. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868, p. 190.

3. Lexington Express, June 13, 1845.

4. Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture of 1868, p. 191.

Among the important commission firms in St. Louis, was the partnership of Hill and M'Gunnegle. This firm bought and sold quantities of hemp. In June, 1829, the partners announced that they had disposal of a rope walk, erected and owned by Benjamin Arnold, in the suburbs of St. Louis.⁵ The firm of McGill and Cochran of St. Louis in 1829 shipped 850 bales of hemp, nearly 100 tons, on the steamer Maria to the market in New Orleans. The hemp sold at seventy to eighty dollars per ton, which was said to have netted the firm \$600 to \$800 over the amount invested.⁶ Anderson and Gratz was another commission firm in St. Louis. These partners purchased sixty tons of hemp from Nathan Corder of Lafayette County in 1853.⁷ The shipment was received in excellent condition and was regarded, both as to the staple and the manner in which it had been handled, as one of the best in the St. Louis market for 1853. John Campbell, a hemp farmer in Lafayette County, shipped sixty-four bales of dew-rotted hemp to a commission merchant in St. Louis. This hemp was neatly baled, well cleaned, and sold for seventy-five dollars per ton. This was considered one of the better shipments for 1845.⁸

5. St. Louis Beacon, June 27, 1829.

6. Lexington Express, July 11, 1845.

7. Ibid., May 21, 1853.

8. Ibid., June 20, 1845.

Although large quantities of raw hemp were shipped on account to commission merchants in St. Louis, certain information indicates that some hemp, probably in small lots, was sold to local dealers and merchants in upper Missouri. By the middle forties, it seemed that local dealers had a monopoly over hemp from farmers of middle sized and small holdings. The local merchants and dealers in some cases made the shipments on commission, but often bought outright from the hemp growers. These persons were engaged in general trade, selling goods and manufactured articles, and buying farm produce from the surrounding communities. Buying hemp, in most cases, was a side line rather than a speciality. Often market conditions and prices offered for hemp in St. Louis or New Orleans would be described by the local dealers.

Some of the more important local merchants and dealers in hemp were Switzler and Smith and J. D. Perry and Company of Fayette; Bullard, Russell and Company, Henderson and Roberts, and W. B. Waddell of Lexington; J. T. Slaughter of Liberty; and Bull, Warren, and Woods of Glasgow. Waddell's business establishment in Lexington was known as the "Hemp House". These merchants and dealers were known to have made regular shipments of farm commodities to St. Louis and New Orleans by steamboat.⁹

9. Lexington Express, April 4, 1845.

James Aull of Lexington is an example of a merchant shipping farm commodities. On April 17, 1830, he shipped twelve bales of hemp and one barrel of tallow by the steamboat Trenton to New Orleans. Aull ordered the hemp to be shipped to New York by the way of New Orleans and said that two hogsheads of tobacco would be sent later from Liberty. The returns from the hemp, tobacco, and tallow were to be invested in brown sugar.¹⁰ Fifteen years later the shipping of hemp had so expanded that other dealers at Lexington became engaged in this business. Henderson and Roberts shipped thirty bales; W. B. Waddell, 197 bales; and Bullard and Russell, 153 bales.¹¹ During the same year 350 tons of hackled or dressed hemp, 1,230 tons of common dew-rotted, and two tons of water-rotted hemp were shipped from Lexington.¹² For the year of 1849, 1,470 tons of hemp were shipped from this town. By this time other river towns began to rival Lexington in shipping this commodity. Glasgow shipped 380 tons of hemp; Brunswick, 294 tons; and 1,200 tons were shipped from warehouses in Lafayette County, above and below Lexington.¹³

10. Aull, James, Letter Book I, Aull Manuscript Collection (Lexington, Missouri Historical Society).
11. Lexington Express, April 4, 1845.
12. Ibid., December 31, 1845.
13. St. Louis, Western Journal, February, 1850, pp. 328-329.

The local newspapers generally carried advertisements of merchants desiring to purchase farm produce and having goods for sale. As an example of this practice, Switzler and Smith of Fayette advertised in the Boon's Lick Times for 100 tons of good clean hemp.¹⁴ At Lexington, Bullard, Russell and Company advertised in 1844, for 100 tons of merchandisable hemp, for which high prices would be given.¹⁵ The advertisement of J. D. Perry and Company of Fayette is an example of a local firm engaged in buying and selling general farm produce. This company wanted to buy green and dry hides, hemp, tobacco, flaxseed, wheat, and beeswax for which the highest prices were offered.¹⁶ This advertisement also stated that dew-rotted hemp was selling at sixty-five to seventy-five dollars per ton and water-rotted at \$100 to \$110 per ton. Some hemp dealers would allow a better price for hemp if the farmer would take credit until the returns from the shipment had been received. Joel P. Williams of Fayette stated he would purchase hemp at two dollars and fifty cents per hundredweight cash, or three dollars per hundredweight on credit for four months. Other companies actually offered cash advances on shipments to distance markets. Such an example was Henderson and Roberts offering cash

14. Fayette, Boon's Lick Times, January 20, 1844.

15. Lexington Express, April 20, 1844.

16. Fayette, Boon's Lick Times, July 1, 1844.

advances upon shipments of hemp to St. Louis, or any
17
eastern or southern market.

Another practice that merchants and dealers followed
was the handling of implements and seed for sale to the
farmers. At Fayette, Switzler and Smith had hemp cradles
18
for sale and called these to the attention of farmers.

At Liberty, J. T. Slaughter in April, 1846, stated he had
just received a hundred bushels of hemp seed which was for
19
sale, cash only. At Lexington, Chadwick and Company and
D. Gillespie offered large quantities of hemp seed for
20
sale at a dollar and a quarter per bushel.

Some dealers opened warehouses on the Missouri River
for the handling and shipping of hemp. Elies Cox opened
a warehouse on this river, two miles north of Dover, to be
known as Cox's Landing. Cox desired to receive, store,
and ship goods and produce, and stated that he was pre-
pared to bale hemp at two dollars per ton. Joel Prewitt
of Fayette announced he would buy baled hemp, if the farm-
ers would deliver it at Glasgow, Bluffport, Franklin, and
21
Rocheport. These towns all had river landings.

-
17. Lexington Express, April 20, 1844.
 18. Fayette, Boon's Lick Times, September 18, 1844.
 19. Liberty, Weekly Tribune, April 11, 1846.
 20. Lexington Express, April 20, 1844.
 21. Fayette, Boon's Lick Times, July 1, 1844.

Bull, Warren, and Woods of Glasgow is representative of an upper Missouri firm shipping hemp on commission. This firm shipped ninety bales of dew-rotted hemp for David Huston of Lafayette County in 1850. This shipment was reported to have been above average Missouri hemp, and it sold for \$130 per ton, being fifteen dollars above the market rate.²²

To some extent, hemp was actually used as a medium of exchange with the local dealers. J. T. Slaughter of Liberty stated that he would purchase hemp for which not only cash but goods would be given upon delivery.²³ Belt, Coleman and Company of Weston, Missouri, advertised through the Weston Platte Argus, that all persons indebted to them were to come forward and settle, with cash,²⁴ hemp, or give approved security.

The agitation that began in the twenties against shipping hemp in the raw state and for its manufacture locally was an important reason for the marketing of this staple in upper Missouri. As early as 1821 a local newspaper of Missouri stated that hemp should not be shipped in the raw state, but manufactured into such articles as bale rope, cotton bagging, and twine.²⁵ Several years

22. Jefferson City Inquirer, December 14, 1850.

23. Liberty, Weekly Tribune, April 11, 1846.

24. Trexler, p. 25.

25. Franklin, Missouri Intelligencer and Boon's Lick Advertiser, December 11, 1821.

later this same paper continued its agitation against shipping hemp in the raw state. It explained that the expense of transportation was less in proportion to the capital invested and that raw hemp was more liable to damage from moisture and rough handling than when it was a manufactured article. Because of the bulkiness of raw hemp,²⁶ it was also difficult to handle.

In accordance with this agitation for the manufacture of hemp in upper Missouri, some early steps were taken at Lexington, as indicated by the establishment of a rope walk in that river town. This rope walk, established on a small scale in 1828 or 1829, was operated by William P. Moore and John Buchanan. It was later sold to the McGrew brothers.²⁷ Gannett and McClure, hemp dealers, owned a factory near Columbia, Missouri. On April 4, 1835, they announced they would purchase all hemp brought to them, for which fair prices would be given.²⁸ In the middle thirties hemp was brought to Rocheport in Boone County in considerable quantities and this continued at an increasing rate up to the Civil War. It was either exported in

-
26. Fayette, Missouri Intelligencer and Boon's Lick Advertiser, February 20, 1829.
 27. Chiles, William H., History of Lafayette County, Missouri (An address published by the Public Library and Historical Association of Lexington, Missouri, 1928), p. 6.
 28. Columbia, Missouri Intelligencer and Boon's Lick Advertiser, April 4, 1835.

the raw state or sold in the local market for manufacture. One or more rope walks were always among the industrial establishments of Rocheport.²⁹ Rope was also manufactured at Glasgow, Liberty, Miami, and Lexington. By 1854 three hemp factories were in operation at Lexington, two operated by steam and one by horse power.³⁰

By the middle forties it had become a common practice for hemp dealers and growers to sell to the local manufacturers. The belief that manufactured hemp would have a greater market value and at the same time keep within the state much of the capital realized from its manufacture was widespread. For some time hemp was only manufactured into rope and twine, and it was not until the late forties and early fifties that any bagging factories were in operation. In 1845 hemp had been manufactured into bale rope to such an extent in Lexington that the shipment from that port amounted to 2,500 coils.³¹ The firm of Bullard and Russell at Lexington made a single shipment of 193 coils of rope during that year.³² The manufacture of hemp into bale rope continued at an increasing rate.

29. Franklin, Lillie, "Rocheport, Missouri, An Illustration of Economic Adjustment to Environment", Missouri Historical Review, October, 1924, Vol. XIX, p. 8.

30. St. Louis, Western Journal and Civilian, September, 1855, p. 285.

31. Lexington Express, December 31, 1845.

32. Ibid., April 4, 1845.

By 1849 the yearly shipment of bale rope from Lexington, amounted to 12,375 coils. Glasgow shipped 744 coils for that year.³³ In 1853, C. L. McGrew, owner of a rope walk in Lexington, stated that in the manufacture of bale rope, 600 tons of hemp had been purchased in the past year from Missouri farmers. This quantity of hemp produced 10,000 coils of bale rope.³⁴ Apparently, the encouragement and agitation for local manufacture had considerable effect.

The Western Journal and Civilian, September, 1855, stated:

It is the policy of Missouri to convert into fabrics or dress all hemp that is produced in the state, and we rejoice that such a vigorous movement has been made in that direction. For besides giving employment to our people, and retaining the profits of manufacture at home, it will be the best means which we can at present command of extending the commercial relations between St. Louis and the Southern States.

In the early forties it was thought that another market source for Missouri hemp growers would be available, because of the action taken by Congress to purchase domestic hemp for the navy. Whether any extensive use of the navy as a market for Missouri hemp was ever made, is to be questioned; however, at least some sales were made.

The resolution of Congress of 1841, which authorized the Secretary of the Navy to make contracts for purchase of domestic hemp, was interpreted by the Navy Department

33. St. Louis, Western Journal, February, 1850, p. 328.

34. Lexington Express, February 9, 1853.

to mean that hemp purchased by the navy had to be shipped to Boston for inspection, before it could be bought from the producer. The Navy Department was to announce its desire to purchase hemp through the local newspapers in the hemp growing regions and then any producers wishing to sell to the navy were required to ship their hemp to Boston for inspection.³⁵

To Missouri hemp farmers, as well as those in other states, this was very unsatisfactory. Such sentiment was reflected in various articles that appeared in the local newspapers. Illustrative of this sentiment was a report of a committee to whom this subject had been referred, published in a local Missouri newspaper. This report stated:

So far as the Western hemp-growing states are concerned, the decision of the Navy Department renders the resolution of Congress useless to the Hemp-growers. They are unaccustomed to the business of water-rotting hemp. They are now making their first attempts. If they ship to Boston, without some form of inspection, great quantities of this article may be rejected and thrown back upon the hands of the growers, after incurring the expense of growing, water-rotting, and shipping. The large masses of hemp refused at Boston, being unsuitable for the use of the navy might still be valuable for many other purposes, but rejected in large quantities at a single point where there might be little or no competition among the purchasers, it would be greatly reduced in value and necessarily sold at a sacrifice. By this the government would gain nothing; the hemp growers would lose much. To avoid such an evil the hemp should be inspected

35. Jefferson City Inquirer, April 20, 1843.

and purchased in the hemp-growing regions.³⁶

At this same time the paper expressed the opinion that at first the government should not go to the expense of building hemp depots. It was believed that the warehouses found along the Missouri River would serve the purpose at a trifling expense, until a little time and experience would enable the government to decide whether a depot was necessary. However, because of the great amount of agitation for the establishment of a hemp agency in Missouri, one was established at St. Louis, July 5, 1844, with Henry King as the agent and inspector. King was succeeded by John Smith the following year, July 11, 1845. A hemp agency had been established at Louisville, Kentucky, July 6, 1843, with James Hamilton as agent and inspector. He was later succeeded by Lewis Sanders,³⁷ April 7, 1845.

After the establishment of the hemp agency at St. Louis the hemp producers had to undergo a double inspection. The hemp was first inspected at St. Louis and if satisfactory, was then shipped to Boston, there again to be inspected and finally to be purchased by the Navy if the authorities were content with the final inspection. The hemp producers had to offer at least thirty tons for

36. Jefferson City Inquirer, April 20, 1843.

37. Executive Document, 29C., 11S., Doc. 46, No. 482, Vol. 3, p. 1.

sale, and this had to be water-rotted, thoroughly dressed, and cleaned. To pass inspection, the strength of the hemp had to be such that a rope made up of twenty-one yarns, one and three-fourths of an inch in circumference, would bear at least 4220 pounds. The length, color, and other properties had to be entirely satisfactory to the inspector. If the hemp was finally accepted by the Navy Department, a contract was formed by which the government would pay the producer in certified bills, of not less than \$1000 in amount, with ninety per cent payable in thirty days.³⁸ The price offered was determined by the general trend of hemp prices. Since the hemp accepted by the navy had to be of the best quality, top prices were expected.

Even this set-up was not satisfactory to the hemp farmers, as indicated by the continued dissatisfaction reflected by newspapers and by the fact that no hemp was purchased from Missouri planters before 1845. The belief existed that the speculators and dealers would profit at the expense of the producers. This sentiment was indicated by a local newspaper in 1845.

If a western grower, after his hemp has passed the government inspection in the west, sends it east to be purchased by the Navy Department and it is there rejected because of some slight defect, the eastern contractor can buy it at his own price, for the rejected article will be of dull sale.

38. Lexington Express, October 17, 1845.

The present system is most admirably devised to keep the trade in the hands of the eastern contractors, and it will not be changed so long as they and their friends in the Navy Department can prevent a change. Few, if any, growers in this quarter will attempt to sell to the United States government, now that they must undergo a double inspection and run the risk of having their hemp thrown upon their hands in a distant market.³⁹

It was the opinion of this newspaper as well as others, that the hemp agent at St. Louis should be authorized to purchase at the agency without subjecting the farmer to the necessity of shipping his hemp east to be again inspected before purchased. Missouri newspapers believed that this was the sincere intention of the resolution of Congress of 1841. Finally, on July 18, 1845, Secretary Bancroft of the Navy, in a letter to the chief of the Bureau of Construction of the Navy commanded that the testing, inspecting, and purchasing of domestic water-rotted hemp, made by the agencies in the hemp growing regions, was to be in the future, final and conclusive,⁴⁰ instead of requiring another inspection at Boston.

John Smith, hemp agent at St. Louis, in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, attempted to explain the failure of Missouri growers to offer hemp for sale to the navy. Smith suggested that the conditions of the government's marketing set-up were obnoxious to Missouri farmers

39. Lexington Express, June 9, 1845.

40. Executive Document, 29C., 1S., Doc. 160, No. 484, Vol. 5, p. 11.

in two ways:

First, instead of advertising for hemp by contract, they expected the Navy Department would offer a fixed, liberal price, commensurate to the extra labor and risk of health incurred in the process of water-rotting, by the way of a bounty or encouragement. Second, the fixing of a minimum quality of hemp to be accepted at thirty tons, coupled with the inconvenience of the method of payment as followed by the government.

It is said these conditions deprive the farmer of the proposed bounty or enhanced price over the foreign article, by the interposition of the speculator betwixt him and the Navy Department, and particularly so if the supply should exceed the demand, which is supposed to be limited.⁴¹

By December 27, 1845, there apparently had been no hemp inspected or purchased by either of the hemp agents in Missouri. The Secretary of the Navy had indicated that offers for the delivery of 150 tons of hemp had been made in October, but none had been received from either the agency in Missouri or in Kentucky.⁴² In an effort to continue the policy of securing domestic hemp for the navy, Congress again passed a resolution May 9, 1848, authorizing the Secretary of the Navy to make contracts for the purchase of hemp, not to exceed five years. The price offered was not to exceed the average price for the last

41. Executive Document, 29C., 1S., Doc. 160, No. 484, Vol. 5, p. 12.

42. Ibid., 29C., 1S., Doc. 46, No. 482, Vol. 3, p. 2.

five years, the inspection and delivery to be made at the
43
place of the purchase.

Since the minimum amount of hemp a producer might offer was left at thirty tons, considerably complaint arose. A letter to the Secretary of the Navy, signed by David R. Atchinson, Willard P. Hall, James S. Green and John S. Phelps stated:

We are satisfied that such a minimum limit as you propose will exclude the people of Missouri from all contracts to supply the navy with hemp. Although Missouri is one of the largest hemp growing states in the Union, yet our people are small farmers, and but very few if any, will be able to take a contract as large as the smallest amount you mention in your report. We would, therefore, most strongly urge that instead of proposing contracts for thirty tons and upwards of hemp, you propose contracts of five tons and upwards. The effect of the proposal, we suggest, would be to throw open the contracts to the farmers of our state, thus to increase competition and in that way secure to the Navy the very best hemp, at the lowest prices.⁴²

Since the above complaint was rather universal, the Secretary of the Navy indicated such suggestions would be adopted.

Apparently the resolution of 1848 and the changed policy of the navy began to have the desired effect. By 1850, a little over sixty-nine tons of hemp had been purchased at St. Louis.⁴⁵ George M. Billings of St. Louis

43. St. Louis, Western Journal, July, 1848, p. 398.

44. Jefferson City Inquirer, February 10, 1849.

45. Senate Document, 30C., 23., Doc. 20, No. 529, Vol. I, p. 2.

was awarded a contract for 300 tons of water-rotted hemp⁴⁶ to be shipped in 1850 to the navy.

Thus, it seems by the later forties and early fifties Missouri did offer some hemp for sale to the United States Navy. However, it is doubtful whether the amounts secured from this state were ever very large. In 1853 the government hemp agents at St. Louis and Louisville were withdrawn.⁴⁷ Consequently, it is likely that the government finally became discouraged in attempting to secure domestic hemp for the navy from Kentucky and Missouri. Kentucky had furnished most of the domestic hemp bought by the navy after 1846, but even then failed to fill the demand. The hemp secured from Missouri was of a superior quality and brought high prices. Not only was the marketing organization for the purchase of hemp for the navy disliked, but it was difficult to get Missouri farmers to water-rot any great amount. These two difficulties seem to have been greatly responsible for the fact that no great advantage was taken of the naval market by hemp growers.

There were certain other phases in the marketing of hemp that caused considerable controversy and displeasure with both the producers and dealers. One such controversy resulted from the manner in which hemp was sometimes baled

46. Glasgow Times, April 4, 1850.

47. Moore, p. 60.

and brought to the dealer. Often dirt and tow would be concealed within the interior of the bale, with the exterior of the bale appearing favorable. The purchaser could in no way detect this without destroying the bale. To remedy the uncertainty of the situation, dealers and merchants had developed the practice of purchasing 112 pounds of hemp for the price of 100 pounds. The extra twelve pounds were allowed for any tow or dirt concealed in the bale. This, of course, was not very pleasing to the producer.

The weight of hemp had been regulated by an act of the State Legislature in 1841. This act stated, "hereafter, when the sale of hemp shall be made, the delivery of one hundred pounds avoirdupois weight, shall be considered as delivery of a hundred pound weight, any custom or usage to contrary not withstanding."⁴⁸ From the controversy that existed over this subject and from the fact that much hemp continued to be sold on the same scale as prior to 1841, it seems likely that the law had little effect in changing the established practice. A farm journal as late as 1850 gave the opinion that the law governing weights and measures was arbitrary, but the matter once settled, it then becomes a custom, and custom in such cases becomes the law of the land.⁴⁹

48. Laws of the State of Missouri, 11th General Assembly, 1st session, 1840-1841 (Jefferson City, Missouri, 1841), p. 86.

49. St. Louis, Western Journal, January, 1850, p. 195.

To remedy certain other evils that existed in the marketing of hemp, a considerable demand for a state law developed in the early forties, which would permit the inspection of this product and its classification according to quality and condition. Raw hemp was commonly brought to dealers in a condition that indicated it had been slovenly and haphazardly cleaned and dressed.

This situation resulted in certain merchants of St. Louis petitioning the State Legislature for an inspection law in 1844. The majority report of the committee, to whom this subject had been referred, did not consider a law necessary and consequently none was enacted. However, the minority report strongly favored an inspection law. The report pointed out the vast importance of hemp to Missouri. It stated that Missouri hemp in strength, length of lint, and other natural features were superior or fully equal to that of any other source of production. The opinion was expressed that if only the appearance and condition of it, when placed on the market, could be improved, Missouri hemp would rank foremost on the world's market. The report further stated:

If the hemp is found to be inferior, the whole lot is set down as equally inferior and the seller must submit to a reduction of price. On the other hand, if the bale selected for a test, proves good, the whole lot is rated

accordingly, and the purchaser may find himself greatly deceived when he tests the whole lot.⁵⁰

Another drawback to the reputation of Missouri hemp was the fact that much of it was baled on the farm where grown. Here, the hemp was often poorly baled. Consequently, after it was handled a number of times, the bales worked loose, broke apart, and had a shoddy appearance by the time they reached the market. Since nothing was done to remedy the situation, there was no indication that the manner in which hemp was marketed improved. On the contrary, certain information indicates that the problem continued to be serious.

In the early fifties, a state inspection law was again demanded. An editor of a farm journal in St. Louis was seriously concerned with the need for inspection. In 1851, he voiced the following sentiment.

Hemp in several respects is like cotton. It has several different qualities and should be classified. It must go to market in tightly packed bales, hence the interior cannot be seen or gotten at well, without thorough examination. Consequently, it is necessary to have a law to require the farmers and balers to assort the different qualities of hemp previous to baling, and put but one quality as nearly as possible into a bale so that all hemp in the bale would be uniform.⁵¹

50. Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Missouri, 13th General Assembly, 1st session, 1844-'45, (Jefferson City, Missouri, 1845), p. 255.

51. St. Louis, Western Journal, February, 1851, p. 223.

A local Missouri newspaper in 1853 stressed the evils in marketing hemp. This paper believed that there was no article so injured in appearance by bad handling as hemp. Hemp, of the very best quality, was often brought to the market at Lexington in such a manner that it could hardly
52
be called a salable article.

This situation in marketing hemp was still unimproved by 1854, and apparently no improvement was ever secured. An important farm magazine for that year commented on this subject in the following manner.

. . . great importance is attached to the manner in which hemp is handled. A second or even a third rate crop, if neatly handled will meet with readier sales and better prices than the best crop every produced, if handled badly, by awkward, inexperienced or careless hands. It is to be regretted that much of the hemp sold in our market is not handled in a better manner. These badly handled crops, when shipped, give our market a bad name, and injure the best article, if it is known to come from the same place.⁵³

In 1859 complaints of the manner in which hemp was handled were still voiced. This was indicated by the following sentiment.

A large portion of the hemp crop was broken by machinery, barely cracking the stalks, and perhaps in the history of our market a more inferior article, taken as a whole, was never received.⁵⁴

-
52. Lexington Express, August 31, 1853.
 53. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, March, 1854, p. 110.
 54. Fifth Annual Report of the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce (St. Louis, Missouri, 1860), pp. 21-23.

The responsibility for the plight of Missouri hemp was placed upon both the producer and the dealer. The farmer was considered responsible because he was careless in cleaning and breaking his hemp and allowed it to be baled in a sloppy manner. However, the farmer was defended on the following ground, "few farmers can be in their field at all times, and unless hands--especially hired hands--are watched they will slight their work".⁵⁵ Yet the farmer was blamed for not requiring his hands to clean the hemp a second time in a proper manner.

Some critics believed the hemp dealers and merchants had done more to encourage this carelessness in cleaning and marketing preparation than the producers. One important newspaper in the hemp growing districts believed that if the dealers would buy for shipment only those crops that were well handled, and refuse the hemp from the slovenly and careless producers, Missouri hemp would soon be sought in preference to any other.⁵⁶ The practice of dealers and merchants receiving shoddy hemp and docking the seller was likewise condemned. One journal believed the price of hemp should range upward instead of downward; that hemp should be graded as fair, superior, and excellent and the price governed by the grade of the article. One merchant, probably to defend the position of dealers

55. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, March, 1854, p. 110.

56. Lexington Express, August 31, 1853.

and merchants, voiced his feelings on this subject.

Certain farmers follow the practice of concealing "tow" in the center of their bales of hemp. I shipped forty-one bales of tow, all of which had been bought for good hemp. This is fraud. When detected in this fraud, some farmers excuse themselves by shuffling the blame to his negro, or "some cussed Mormon" that he had given a dollar per hundred for breaking.

What would the farmer think of me as an honest merchant, if I would sell him a barrel of sugar of my own packing and then upon opening, discover in the center about fifty pounds of rocks?⁵⁷

This merchant explained that in each bale he had purchased during the season, a small amount of tow had been found. By the end of the season, 12,300 pounds of tow had been taken in for good hemp. Because of this he had suffered a loss of \$220 on his hemp transactions.

These problems continued up to the Civil War. Other than establishing the selling weight of hemp in 1841, there was no action taken to remedy the evils in marketing hemp. It seems that this constituted one of the very serious problems of the hemp industry in Missouri. Apparently the majority of the producers and manufacturers were not discontented with the situation for otherwise some law for hemp inspection and classification would have been enacted. Probably the small and middle sized hemp producers were not vitally interested enough to emphasize greatly the appeal for better marketing conditions. It is not

57. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, March, 1854, p. 110.

unlikely that the newspaper and magazines pictured conditions worse than they actually existed. Nevertheless the problem was serious enough to show the need of a better marketing system. It seems reasonable to assume that the great amount of discussion did tend to induce both the producer and dealer to be more careful and interested in raising the standard of Missouri hemp, whether any state action was taken or not.

Another controversy that arose in the marketing of hemp was that over insurance for shipment. The practice of insuring hemp shipments seems to have been a wise policy. While awaiting shipment to St. Louis or to New Orleans, the hemp was often piled on the river bank, since there was hardly enough storage room. Consequently, large quantities were exposed to the weather. The bales of hemp when taken aboard the steamboat were either stacked on the boat deck or in the hold. After reaching its destination, the hemp was piled on the river wharves in cases where room in the warehouses was unavailable. In the process of shipment from the producer to the merchant the hemp was often exposed to rain or damp weather. The damaging effect of moisture on the hemp greatly lessened its market value. Sometimes the explosion of the boat's boilers would result in a fire and a loss of all property aboard. A belief existed among the shippers that hemp was a cause for some of the fires, as it was

thought such fires would result from the spontaneous combustion of the hemp.

Since the value of the hemp cargo was considerable, the practice of insuring this article against any mishap or damage developed in the late forties. Yeatman, Pittman and Company of St. Louis was an example of a firm extending insurance to the hemp producer to cover the shipment of his crop.⁵⁸ Hanemhamp and Company of St. Louis, also extended insurance to Missouri farmers.

In 1850, farmers were told that insurance on hemp would be graduated according to the condition of this article when shipped. The Board of Underwriters of St. Louis passed a resolution to the effect that hemp shipped to or from any port after April 1, if baled, pressed, and covered with bagging as cotton, was to be charged the same rate of premium that was charged on general merchandise. If the hemp was baled and pressed, but not covered, it was to be charged twice the rate of general merchandise; if baled loose and not pressed nor covered, it was to be charged four times the rate on general merchandise.⁵⁹

This regulation did not seem to be acceptable to the hemp producers of the state. Such sentiment was indicated by the comment in the local papers. One newspaper believed the reasons of the growers for disapproving this

58. Jefferson City Inquirer, March 9, 1850.

59. Glasgow Times, January 31, 1850.

regulation should be given publicity and receive proper consideration. In keeping with this attitude this paper published a letter written by a Saline County farmer to Yeatman, Pittman and Company. This farmer believed that hemp growers had a double reason for complaint because of the regulation of the insurance companies.

In the first instance, (in reference to charging double insurance upon hemp that is not covered with cloth, and quadruple where it is not baled), when the decision was announced, it being at a season of the year when, if they knew anything of the business of the Missouri River, they knew that the bagging could not be obtained until after a large portion of the hemp was baled. It would, therefore, seem that the intention of insurance companies was to place the hemp grower in a position to pay double insurance if he insured.

Secondly, the hemp growers are not satisfied that hemp has been the direct cause of much loss to the insurance companies by fire. We know, however, that it is made the scapegoat in all cases of fires where there is a bale of hemp. This has become a fashionable idea. We want facts to prove that losses by fire occasioned by hemp have been as extensive as it is alleged.⁶⁰

The dissatisfaction of the hemp growers was great enough to cause some thought of cooperative insurance for hemp. The Saline County farmer in his letter to Yeatman, Pittman and Company stated,

There is some stir here on this subject. A meeting is called for next Monday, to take into consideration the organization of an Insurance Company in the county for the mutual protection of hemp growers.

60. Jefferson City Inquirer, March 9, 1850.

I think the Insurance Companies of St. Louis should suspend the operation of the change so as not to affect the present crop, and let the hemp grower have practical notice of the change, and at the same time publish information to show the propriety of the change.⁶¹

Whether anything definite was accomplished is uncertain. However, the disapproval of the hemp farmers seemed to have had some restraining effect on certain companies. Hanemhamp and Company stated in April, 1850, that they would continue to charge the old rate of insurance on baled and uncovered hemp.⁶²

The marketing organization was strengthened to some extent by the establishment of certain manufacturing companies within the state. Until about 1847 the manufacture of hemp in Missouri had been limited to rope production, as indicated by the numerous rope walks in operation in upper Missouri and St. Louis. Although some attention had been given to the manufacture of bagging and finer fabrics in the middle forties, it was not until later that any great activity took place. The first important factory of this nature was owned by Blaine, Tompkins, Jenks, and Lawrence in St. Louis. The operation of this factory was reported to have begun about 1845.⁶³ However, no important action in the manufacture of bagging in

61. Jefferson City Inquirer, March 9, 1850.

62. Glasgow Times, April 4, 1850.

63. Jefferson City Inquirer, November 19, 1845.

Missouri took place until 1847.⁶⁴

About 1848, the American Hemp Company was established at Jacksonville, Illinois.⁶⁵ Whether this company ever purchased much Missouri hemp for manufacture is uncertain. It seems doubtful, since no great attention was given to its activities.

In 1855, the Missouri Hemp Improvement Company was incorporated for the purpose of purchasing and manufacturing hemp. The proprietors were James H. Hughes, H. Chidester, James E. Yeatman, Edward Wyman, John L. Blaine, Stillman H. Clemens, John McDowall, George F. Clemens, Unit Rasin and R. D. Van Nostrand.⁶⁶ The following year the Arthurton Hemp Manufacturing Company was incorporated. This company was authorized to transact the business of buying, selling, and manufacturing hemp. It was given the privilege to tax moderately steamboats that touched at its wharves, a privilege later repealed. The owners were Michael Arthur, Madison Miller, William Wymore, and Griup Bird.⁶⁷

64. St. Louis, Western Journal, March, 1848, p. 166.

65. Ibid., January, 1848, pp. 27-28.

66. Local Laws and Private Acts of the State of Missouri, 18th General Assembly, 1st session, 1855-1856 (Jefferson City, Missouri, 1856), p. 204.

67. Laws of the State of Missouri, 19th General Assembly, 1st session, 1856-1857 (Jefferson City, Missouri, 1857), p. 293.

The establishment of these companies and factories was an indication of the wide importance and the volume of hemp produced in Missouri. It is uncertain to what extent they profited from their investment, but it is likely, judging from the great trade in hemp and the amount produced that the companies profited, at least temporarily. It also seems reasonable that they aided in keeping the manufacture of hemp and the benefits derived from such pursuits within the state.

The Location and the Volume of Hemp

Production in Missouri

The principal hemp producing counties and regions in Missouri varied but slightly during the entire period of its culture. However, the culture spread on a small scale to back river counties in the fifties. From the beginning to the disappearance of the culture in Missouri, the principal producing counties were Buchanan, Clay, Howard, Lafayette, Platte, and Saline. These counties were consistently large producers of hemp. They were located in the central western part of the state, bordering the Missouri River. The hemp producing regions in Missouri throughout the period of hemp culture were confined in a general way to the Missouri River Valley and to certain counties along the Mississippi River, north of St. Louis.

The Platte Territory, purchased in 1837, opened a region whose soil was particularly adapted to the culture of hemp.⁶⁸ One citizen enthusiastically stated that no soil on earth, whether timber or prairie was more adapted to hemp than that of Platte County. It was reported that from the first settlement of this county, hemp was the staple product.⁶⁹ Although Platte did develop into a highly productive county, it is unlikely that hemp attained such importance at first. However, with the increasing population and the development of the western part of the state, great emphasis was placed on this industry. This county was one of the leading hemp producing regions in Missouri during the culture of this article.

Saline County, too, was an early producer of hemp. The growing of this crop gradually became an important source of income. Aaron F. Bruce, west of Marshall, was one of the largest growers of this crop in the county.⁷⁰

By the middle forties the general location of hemp producing regions in Missouri had extended to other counties, adjoining or near the original producers. The counties that began to assume an important position in the

68. "Missouriana", Missouri Historical Review, July, 1935, Vol. XXIX, p. 307.

69. Paxton, p. 37.

70. Napton, p. 132.

hemp culture of Missouri at this time were Andrew, Carroll, Chariton, Jackson, and Ray.

A local paper at Liberty, Missouri, stated that Clay County was peculiarly adapted to agricultural purposes, since it lay near the river and had a rich and productive soil. In 1846, it was believed that Clay County would rank high among the western counties in sending farm produce, including hemp, to the markets.⁷¹

As late as 1855 the people of western Missouri were extremely loud in their praise of that section for raising hemp. The St. Joseph Cycle, May 18, believed that the fertility of Platte County and adjoining counties was measured by the enormous crops of hemp produced.⁷²

By 1850 the culture of hemp had extended to include several counties a considerable distance from the river valley. The hemp that was produced in these regions, however, was only in small quantities. Along the Mississippi River in northern Missouri, a few counties grew hemp, mainly Marion and Pike counties.

The hemp regions in Missouri may be more practically located by pointing out the volume produced in the counties at the various times. The volume of hemp produced varied from time to time, but there seemed to have been a gradual increase in production from the beginning of its

71. Liberty, Weekly Tribune, April 20, 1846.

72. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, June, 1855, p. 246.

growth to 1860. After 1860, production declined. In 1840, Missouri produced 18,100 tons of hemp and flax.⁷³ The statistics for hemp and flax were not separated; consequently, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine how much hemp was produced for that year.

J. D. B. De Bow, editor of De Bow's Review, stated "it is impossible to reconcile the hemp and flax returns of 1840 In a few states, such as Illinois and Indiana, the returns were rejected altogether for insufficiency."⁷⁴ There is some indication that the amount might have been between 1400 to 1600 tons. A Mr. Chambers of St. Louis thought that Missouri raised 1600 tons of hemp in 1840. Yet the Report of the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce in 1842 indicated that the crop of 1840 brought into the market of 1841, about 1460 tons of hemp.⁷⁵ It seems likely that the actual amount produced was some what near the above figures. By noting the following table, it can be observed that by far the greatest part of the 1840 returns was for flax.

73. Statistics of the United States of America, 1840, (Washington, 1841), pp. 356-358.

74. Quoted in Moore, p. 46.

75. Quoted in the Journal of the House of Representatives of Missouri, 13th General Assembly, 1st session, 1844-'45 (Jefferson City, Missouri, 1845), p. 255.

Counties	Hemp and Flax ⁷⁶ tons	Counties	Hemp and Flax tons
Audrain*	2	Monroe	3.5
Benton	1.5	Montgomery	3
Boone	72	Morgan*	3.5
Callaway**	293	Perry*	4
Carroll	4	Pettis	13
Chariton	3	Pike	74.5
Clay	218	Platte	53
Clinton	4	Pulaski*	55
Cole	9	Ralls	25.5
Cooper**	70	Randolph	8
Crawford*	21.25	Ray	86
Gasconade*	32	Ripley*	1
Howard	109	Rives*	17
Jackson	1.5	Ste. Genevieve*	35
Johnson	9	St. Louis ⁺	9,905
Lafayette	381	Saline	119
Lewis	11	Shelby	5
Lincoln**	160	Taney*	0.5
Linn	2	Van Buren*	26
Marion	113	Washington*	5,932
Miller	4	Wayne	108
	Total		<u>18,010.75</u>

* The census reports of 1850 and 1860 give no record of any hemp grown in these counties.

** The census reports of 1850 and 1860 record these counties as producing less than fifty tons of hemp.

+ St. Louis county produced only 116 tons in 1850 and only forty-six tons in 1860.

Thus, the amount of hemp produced in 1840 was considerably less than the amount of flax produced.

In 1841, the amount of hemp produced was a considerable increase over that of 1840. A memorial of the citizens of St. Louis to Congress indicated that the hemp crop

76. Statistics of the United States of America, 1840 (Washington, 1841), pp. 356-358.

of Missouri in 1841 was nearly 10,000 tons. The crop for 1842 was reported to have been nearly 17,000 tons.⁷⁷ It is uncertain as to the reliability of these reports, but it is very reasonable to believe that hemp production did expand greatly. This may be explained by the fact that weather conditions were good, the government was encouraging hemp production in Missouri, and for years great emphasis had been made on the expansion of this crop. The yield for 1842 was unusual, being greater than that recorded for 1850 and almost as large as that for 1860.

It was reported that the crop of 1843 did not exceed that of 1842, because of weather conditions. Although there was no indication as to the amount produced, it is probable that the volume of hemp for 1843 was considerably lower. Even the amount reported for 1844 was considerably less than for 1842. The yield in Missouri for that year was about 12,000 tons.⁷⁸

The weather conditions in Missouri seem to have been greatly responsible for the increase and decrease in the yearly productions of hemp. Some years appeared to have been particularly poor for growing hemp, while conditions of certain other years seemed to have been ideal. The effect of weather conditions on the crop of 1843 is

77. Journal of the House of Representatives of Missouri, 13th General Assembly, 1st session, 1844-'45, p. 255.

78. Moore, p. 53.

illustrative of this influence. Conditions in 1843 were described by a Platte County farmer.

The season was backward, no ground was plowed until the 20th of April. . . . in May the windows of the heavens opened and the late corn and hemp were failures. Hemp and wheat were covered by snow from November to April Hemp did not rot until the spring rains came and then the weather was so wet that the hemp could not be broken out. Much of it was left in the shock and lost.⁷⁹

There was no reported amount of hemp produced for 1845, but it is likely the yield was good. This was indicated by the comment of the local newspapers on weather conditions and the progress of the hemp industry. In Lafayette County, corn was reported promising, wheat over average, and hemp doing well.⁸⁰ In Platte County the hemp crop was expected to be large.⁸¹ One local paper indicated that trade in hemp was increasing with greater rapidity than any other article of domestic growth.⁸² Still another paper stated that the production of hemp had so expanded in Howard County that it was fast attaining the importance of the leading staple.⁸³

From 1845 to 1850 there was no indication as to the volume of hemp produced in Missouri. However, it may be

79. Paxton, p. 53.

80. Lexington Express, June 20, 1845.

81. Paxton, p. 74.

82. Jefferson City Inquirer, November 19, 1845.

83. Fayette, Boon's Lick Times, May 31, 1845.

assumed that the yield of hemp in the late forties was fair and on the gradual increase, as indicated by the reports on the weather and crop conditions. In 1846, the farmers of Platte County planted less hemp than in 1845, but the fiber was reported better and heavier than that of the preceeding year.⁸⁴ In Clay County the farmers were expecting a good year as indicated by the fact that they were planting large crops of hemp, tobacco, and other kinds of produce.⁸⁵ In 1847, the crops in general were reported fairly good. The hemp crop varied in different counties. In Platte County the total volume for the year was 1,500 tons while in other counties it was no better than normal. The quality of hemp for 1848 did not compare with that of the previous year, but the yield was as large.⁸⁶ In 1849, the reports on hemp conditions were not very encouraging. There were no fall rains and the hemp was covered with ten to fifteen inches of snow during the winter. Spring rains caused the farmers to be late in breaking out their hemp crop, but it was believed that most of it was saved.⁸⁷

The condition of the weather seemed to have a direct bearing on the volume of hemp produced. In general the

84. Paxton, p. 74.

85. Liberty, Weekly Tribune, April 20, 1846.

86. St. Louis, Western Journal, March, 1848, p. 166.

87. Ibid., February, 1848, p. 111.

demand for the raw article was steady; consequently with good weather conditions the rate of production was on the upgrade. It was only during years of poor weather conditions that the volume of hemp produced failed to show some increase over a preceding year.

The census figures for Missouri in 1850 show that a total of 16,028 tons of hemp were produced for the year ending June 1, 1850.⁸⁸ Sixty tons of this amount had been water-rotted, the remainder dew-rotted. Although this does not accurately measure the amount of water-rotted hemp for the previous years, it does tend to indicate in what proportion hemp was water-rotted.

The leading hemp producing counties for 1850 are indicated by the following table.⁸⁹

<u>County</u>	<u>Dew-rotted</u> tons	<u>Water-rotted</u> tons
Platte	4,345	10
Lafayette	2,462	0
Buchanan	1,894	0
Saline	1,559	0
Clay	1,274	14
Howard	904	0
Marion	498	0
Andrew	475	0
Ray	431	1
Jackson	361	0
Carroll	300	0

88. "Statistics of Missouri", The Seventh Census of the United States, 1850 (Washington, 1853), Table XI, pp. 679-682.

89. Ibid.

There were a few other counties that produced over 100 tons of hemp, and a considerable number producing under this amount.

The counties producing water-rotted hemp are indicated below.

<u>County</u>	<u>Tons</u>
Holt	16
Clay	14
Cooper	13
Platte	10
Crawford	2
Macon	2
Chariton	1
Ray	1
St. Clair	1

With the exception of Platte, Clay, and Ray, the small producing counties were more advanced in water-rotting. There was no indication as to the forces influencing this difference. However, there existed certain practices which may be considered as an explanation. Most of the farmers in the counties where hemp was water-rotted, did not begin to grow the crop until the possibilities for selling it to the United States Navy became an attractive feature. It is reasonable to assume that these farmers undertook the growing of hemp with the idea of preparing it for sale to the navy. Consequently, it would be necessary for them to water-rot this article before such a sale could be expected. On the other hand, the farmers in the large producing counties had followed the process of dew-rotting since the beginning of hemp culture. These

producers had so developed this practice that a majority of them failed to make any noticeable change. The process of dew-rotting was considerably easier and more convenient than water-rotting. Thus, it seems probable that once this practice had been established, any variation from it would be slow and difficult.

The volume of hemp produced in certain leading counties was so great that the production of this crop was the main attention of the farmers. In Lafayette County it was indicated that the farmers were so wedded to hemp cultivation and produced it to such an extent that they were compelled to import grain and meat from Johnson,⁹⁰ Cass, and Ray Counties. In Saline County, one producer made the statement that hemp was not now a great staple,⁹¹ but that it was the great staple.

For the year of 1850 it was estimated that the Missouri River counties of Boone, Callaway, Chariton, Clay, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, and Saline produced seven-hundredths tons of hemp per capita.⁹² Of these counties, Boone, Callaway, and Cooper produced under 100 tons of hemp. Chariton County produced 169 tons, while the counties of Clay, Lafayette, and Saline produced over a 1,000

90. Gray, p. 876.

91. Jefferson City Inquirer, March 9, 1850.

92. Gray, p. 876.

93
tons and Howard over 900 tons. It is thus easy to see that the latter group of counties were responsible for this high average.

There were no figures of authority on the volume of hemp produced in Missouri from 1850 to 1860. The demand for raw hemp continued and it is not unlikely that the volume produced per year continued to increase or decrease with the kind of seasons. With the exception of 1854 and 1859 the seasons were mainly good, and the harvests universally bountiful. Hemp, wheat, and tobacco were reported to have been raised with abundant returns in Saline County.⁹⁴

The hemp crop of 1854 was likely small because of the unsatisfactory weather conditions. This may be assumed from the numerous comments on the dissatisfaction of the farmers with the weather conditions. A hemp grower in Saline County believed the crop would be a short one. It was reported that three-fourths of the growing hemp was late and was cut short by the drouth. Another distressing feature, as voiced by the farmers, was the scarcity of good hemp seed.⁹⁵ The statement was made

93. "Statistics of Missouri", The Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, pp. 679-682.

94. Napton, p. 134.

95. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, September, 1854, p. 339.

that there was not enough seed in Saline County to sow half the amount sown the preceding year. In Platte County it was indicated that the volume produced was smaller than usual, but that the lint was heavy and the article superior.⁹⁶

A farmer at Dover, Missouri, stated that the farmers had been late in breaking out their crop and that the hemp had rotted slowly because of the dry weather. At that time he was fearful that much of the crop would not be ready for market.⁹⁷

Thus, it seems that the volume of hemp produced for 1854 was below a normal yield. Again in 1859, weather conditions were not altogether satisfactory. There was no indication as to the volume for that year, but from the comments it is likely that the amount was not above average. The quality of the crop was deficient to that of 1858 because of the unfavorable weather for rotting. Neither rain nor snow fell in sufficient quantities for this purpose and consequently the farmers were late in breaking out their hemp in the spring. This probably had the effect of lowering the total yield for the year.⁹⁸

Probably of all the hemp crops produced from 1850 to 1860, the crop of 1853 was the largest. In Lafayette

96. Paxton, p. 176.

97. St. Louis, Valley Farmer, February, 1854, p. 55.

98. Fifth Annual Report of the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, p. 21.

County it was declared that this crop was one of the finest ever grown, both in quality and in quantity. The yield per acre was not quite as great as that in 1842, but the total quantity produced was larger. The crop for 1842 had yielded a total of 17,000 tons of hemp. It is uncertain whether the crop of 1853 was actually as large or larger than that for 1842, but from the numerous comments it must be concluded that the amount produced for 1853 was unusual. An opinion of a local newspaper for this year indicated that the emphasis upon the growing of hemp was so strong and the volume produced so great, that many farmers had no agricultural pride beyond its culture.

This paper believed that some attention should have been given to the improvement of livestock as well as to hemp.

For the remaining years during the fifties there was no great comment on the volume of hemp produced or dissatisfaction with the weather conditions. Neither was there any indication that the hemp crops were much more than normal for the time. As during the forties, the weather conditions influenced greatly the variation in the amount of hemp produced during the fifties. The demand for raw hemp continued strong and on the increase up to 1860; therefore, it is likely that under normal conditions the volume of hemp produced kept pace with the demand.

99. Lexington Express, April 27, 1853.

In 1860, the census shows that Missouri produced the largest amount of hemp ever recorded for the state, a total of 19,267 tons. Of this amount, 15,788 tons were dew-rotted, 1,507 tons were water-rotted, and 1,972 tons were treated in other ways. The counties producing the greatest volume of hemp for this year are indicated by the following table.

<u>County</u>	<u>Dew-rotted</u> tons	<u>Water-rotted</u> tons	<u>Treated in</u> <u>other ways</u>
Saline	3,920	0	0
Lafayette	3,547	3	8
Platte	1,793	0	0
Buchanan	1,108	500	90
Howard	655	0	0
Carroll	612	4	0
Gentry	15	600	200
Macon	600	0	0
Clay	499	0	0
Marion	211	2	50
Atchinson	216	0	1
Boone	0	215	0

There were several other counties that produced over a 100 tons of hemp and a considerable number listed producing under that amount.

By noting the tables for 1850 and 1860, showing the principal hemp producing counties for those years, it can be observed that over this ten-year period the large producing counties shifted but slightly. The large producing counties in 1850, Platte, Lafayette, Buchanan, and Saline, were again the greatest producers in 1860. However,

100. Agriculture of the United States, 1860; compiled from original returns of the Eighth Census (Washington, 1864), pp. 91-95.

within this formation there was a slight change. Saline became the highest ranking county in 1860, with Lafayette second, Platte third, and Buchanan fourth. The amount of hemp produced in Platte County for 1850 decreased over fifty per cent in 1860; however, Platte still was able to rank third for this year. The counties of Andrew, Ray, and Jackson were among the principal producing counties in 1850, while in 1860 these counties were dropped to second-rate producers.

It is difficult to give any clear explanation for the decrease of hemp production in the above counties. To believe that this decrease had been gradual from 1850 to 1860 is contradictory to the newspaper comments for this period. With the exception of 1854, newspapers had described the hemp crops as mainly good and bountiful. However, it is to be remembered that conditions in 1859 were not exactly satisfactory. The rotting of hemp had been tardy and slow. This did have some decreasing effect upon the total volume produced. However, this cannot be taken as a sufficient explanation, since certain counties increased widely in production. Probably the most legitimate explanation was the fact that the attention given to general farming had greatly expanded. Perhaps, there was a realization that greater profits could be secured in general farming, without the uncertainty of growing a good product and the hardships of labor, as in growing

hemp. In the counties of Andrew, Clay, Jackson, and Marion that had decreased in the production of hemp in 1860, there was a wide increase in the production of livestock, corn, and rye. There was some increase in the production of oats. Howard County had considerably increased in the production of rye and corn, but had decreased in livestock, oats, and wheat as well as hemp. Platte County had decreased considerably in the production of hemp, also made a slight decrease in the production of livestock, wheat, corn, and oats. There seems to have been a general decrease in wheat production in most of the counties.¹⁰¹ Thus, it seems that hemp production was sacrificed to some extent in the counties of Andrew, Clay, Jackson, Marion, and Howard for an expansion in general farming, especially in the production of corn, rye, and livestock. The decrease of hemp in Platte County seemed to have been in line with the general decrease in all agricultural activities in that county. There had been considerable dissatisfaction in Platte County, as in other counties, over the failure to procure any efficient hemp machinery for replacing hand labor. One farm journal made the statement in 1855 that the present limit of the hemp crop of Missouri was the amount to which manual labor could be

101. Agriculture of the United States, 1860, compiled from original returns of the Eighth Census, pp. 91-95.

102
applied. This would tend to discourage increased production, but does not explain the definite drop in hemp produced for Platte County.

Perhaps soil deterioration, may have been experienced, and contributed to decreased production in those counties that had long been growers of hemp. However, during the period of hemp culture in Missouri the belief existed that the growing of hemp enriched, rather than impoverished the soil.

Although certain counties did drop in production, it should be remembered that the state as a whole produced more hemp in 1860 than in 1850. Some counties made great increases. These counties were: Saline, 2,361 tons; Lafayette, 1,099 tons; Carroll, 312 tons; Gentry, 800 tons; Macon, 596 tons; and Atchinson, 211 tons. ¹⁰³ A few counties that grew small quantities of hemp in 1850 had no record of production in 1860.

The volume of hemp produced in Missouri the following years was less than at any time since 1840. The tables below indicate the amount of hemp grown for 1870, 1880, and 1890. By comparing the amounts produced at these times with that of previous years, the great decline of hemp as a Missouri crop, can be readily observed.

102. St. Louis, Western Journal and Civilian, September, 1855, p. 284.

103. Agriculture for the United States, 1860, compiled from the original returns of the Eighth Census, pp. 91-95.

1870¹⁰⁴

<u>County</u>	<u>Tons</u>
Lafayette	1,371
Saline	493
Worth	200
Clay	131
Benton	95
Carroll	80
Pulaski	75
Platte	54
Mercer	50
Sullivan	50

There were twelve other counties producing considerably less than fifty tons of hemp.

1880¹⁰⁵

Lafayette	68
Saline	54
Ray	31
Platte	24
Clay	23
Carroll	3
Buchanan	2
Clark	2
Clinton	2

1890¹⁰⁶

Buchanan	14
Ray	14
Saline	3

There has been no record since 1890 of any hemp grown in Missouri.

-
104. The Statistics of Wealth and Industry of the United States, 1870 (Washington, 1872), pp. 190-195.
105. Report of the Production of Agriculture as returned at the Tenth Census, 1880 (Washington, 1883), Table XIII, p. 232.
106. Report of the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census, 1890 (Washington, 1895) Table XVI, p. 402.

CHAPTER III

DECLINE OF HEMP AS A MISSOURI CROP

For twenty years the hemp industry occupied an important position in the farm economy of Missouri. Although some hemp was produced prior to 1840, it was in the following twenty years that its culture became so very prominent. In varying degrees the production of this crop increased and decreased from the beginning of its culture to the end. However, both in acreage and quantity, this crop followed a gradual expansion until 1860. Because of the volume of hemp produced and the extent of its culture, hemp was considered an important staple crop in many of the counties of the Missouri River Valley. The opinion existed that this crop was produced to such an extent that other agricultural pursuits suffered.¹

That the hemp industry reached such great proportions and that Missouri farmers in certain districts were so devoted to its culture, was probably responsible in no small way for the shaping of opinions on such outstanding sectional question as slavery and the tariff. It was acknowledged that a great part of the hemp production was in the

1. Lexington Express, April 27, 1853.

hands of the wealthier farmers.² It was also thought that most of these farmers in the leading hemp producing counties, had migrated from the Southern States. Because he adopted the cultivation of a crop that was largely dependent upon the cotton industry and because there were other ties, it is reasonable to conclude that the hemp farmer had a tendency to show some sympathy for the problems of the cotton planter.

The source of labor for the hemp farmer was similar to that of the cotton planter, since slaves were used in the cutting and breaking of hemp. Consequently, it is natural to believe that the hemp farmer desired to protect this labor source, and resented the efforts and agitation of the free holders to release the negro from servitude. In this way, the cotton planter had a supporter in retaining slavery.

The hemp culture in Missouri may be considered a carry-over of the industry from Kentucky. Some settlers from the South found an opportunity to engage in its culture only by moving to the newer regions on the Missouri River. In this venture the settlers were successful to a large degree.

The hemp industry may be considered to have reached its peak in 1860, since with the outbreak of the Civil War

2. St. Louis, Western Journal and Civilian, September, 1855, p. 282.

its decline began. In Missouri, the war had a disastrous effect on the cultivation and manufacture of this crop. This statement may be justified in various ways.

First, practically all trade relations between the southern states and Missouri were disrupted. Since the hemp industry depended largely upon the shipping of cotton, the severing of trade relations removed the market for Missouri bagging and bale rope. Consequently, without a market for these commodities, the demand for raw hemp declined rapidly in the early sixties. Also, the Confederate Government restricted the growing of cotton in the South, except for home consumption.³ This had an added emphasis in removing the need for bagging and bale rope for shipping purposes.

Second, while the war continued, with the unsettled conditions that existed in Missouri, it is probable that interest and attention given to agricultural pursuits suffered. Especially would this be true of a crop that no longer had a reliable market. However, when the cotton industry was checked, a demand developed for any kind of fiber, to supplement the use of cotton. This had a tendency to stimulate hemp growth in certain regions, especially in Kentucky.⁴ There was no indication that this stimulant had any great effect in arousing the industry in

3. Moore, p. 62.

4. Ibid.

Missouri. It is to be remembered that hemp in Missouri had mainly been used for rough fabrics. No great success had ever been attained in producing the crop for finer fabrics.

Even after the war ended the industry in Missouri did not revive to any great extent. An important factor responsible for this was the removal of the main labor source, the negro slave. The growing of hemp ceased to be a favored or profitable crop after the abolition of the slaves.⁵ However, this cannot be considered the only reason for the disappearance of hemp culture in Missouri.

Prior to the abolition of slavery there had been numerous efforts to construct machinery that would efficiently handle the cutting and breaking of hemp. Even though certain machines were reported to have had some valuable assets, it was a general complaint among hemp producers that no machinery had successfully replaced hand labor. The statement was made as early as 1855 that the amount of hemp produced had reached its limit without the use of better facilities to handle the crop.⁶ Had any attempts to construct machinery, that would have handled hemp effectively, been successful, the effect of slave abolition would not have been so disastrous. Hemp

5. Napton, p. 132.

6. St. Louis, Western Journal and Civilian, September, 1855, p. 284.

production, to some extent was resumed in the late sixties, but again the main difficulty in the way of a more extended cultivation was the scarcity of labor or some machinery that would overcome this difficulty.⁷ So the lack of any available machinery to replace the labor shortage must be considered as a cause for motivating the passing of hemp growth in Missouri.

With the restoration of the cotton industry in the late sixties hemp production responded to a small extent, This was indicated by the fact that since production was nearly suspended during the war, Missouri, in 1870, produced 2,816 tons of hemp.⁸ However, these small gains seem to have been lost in the seventies. Another step in the revolution of industry was responsible. The use of iron ties and wire replaced bagging and bale rope in the packing of cotton for shipment.⁹ Consequently, one market for hemp bagging and bale rope was lost. It was on this market that Missouri hemp largely depended.

In an attempt to bolster hemp production in the United States a duty of twenty-five dollars per ton was placed

7. Second Annual Report of the Missouri State Board of Agriculture, 1866. (Jefferson City, Missouri, 1867), p. 35.

8. The Statistics of the Wealth and Industry of the United States, 1870, compiled from the original returns of the Ninth Census, pp. 356-358.

9. Moore, p. 63.

upon the importation of the raw article in 1870.¹⁰ This duty was continued until 1894, when hemp was finally placed on the free list. Apparently the attempt to revive domestic production by protection failed.

During this period the market for hemp rope and rigging for sailing vessels was largely destroyed. The substitution of steam for sails in the operation of ocean-going vessels closed what market there had been for dressed hemp in the manufacture of canvas and riggings.¹¹ It is doubtful whether this had any great effect on the production of hemp in Missouri, although the removal of such a market did away with any potential hope in this state to manufacture hemp for ship riggings. Some hemp commodities continued to be used on ships, but only on a small scale.

Another reason for the loss of interest in hemp production in Missouri was the fact that other crops became more profitable. This was realized in the extensive production of grain crops and the raising of livestock. There was also some hint that soil deterioration might have contributed to the unfavorable aspects of hemp growing.¹² However, it had generally been considered that hemp was not as destructive of the soil as some grain

10. Dewey, p. 339.

11. Moore, p. 63.

12. Gray, p. 821.

crops or tobacco.

Thus, the culture of hemp in Missouri disappeared. In 1880, there were 209 tons produced,¹³ and in 1890,¹⁴ only thirty-one tons. Since 1890, no hemp has been grown in Missouri in great enough quantities to be recorded in the census reports. There is no hemp grown at present, at least none for commercial purposes.

The only indications today that hemp was a Missouri staple are in the memories of the older generation, literature on various phases of the culture, and certain relics that exist as a monument to the once great industry. One such relic still existing is a hemp-breaking stone in Monroe County. The Monroe City News, June 5, 1930, stated that this stone, weighing about a ton, is located on the Grundy Burnett farm northwest of the Bonsoil schoolhouse in Monroe County.¹⁵ Another interesting landmark of the bygone days of hemp culture is in Saline County. It is an old hemp press or baler that stands on the William Douglas farm, one and one-half miles southwest of Malta Bend.¹⁶ This press was reported to have been erected

-
13. Report of the Production of Agriculture as returned at the Tenth Census, 1880, p. 232.
 14. Report of the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at Eleventh Census, 1890, p. 402.
 15. "Missouri Notes", Missouri Historical Review, Vol. XXV, p. 158.
 16. Marshall, Daily Democrat-News, February 12, 1938.

between 1831 and 1833, although this was somewhat earlier than the period of great hemp growth in Missouri.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

County Newspapers:

Boon's Lick Times, Fayette, Missouri, 1844 to 1845.

Columbia Patriot, Columbia, Missouri, 1841 to 1842.

Daily Democrat-News, Marshall, Missouri, February 12, 1938.

Glasgow Times, Glasgow, Missouri, 1850.

Jefferson City Inquirer, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1842 to 1850.

Lexington Express, Lexington, Missouri, 1844 to 1853.

Missouri Gazette, St. Louis, Missouri, 1809 to 1811.

Missouri Intelligencer and Boon's Lick Advertiser, Franklin, Missouri, 1821 to 1826; Fayette, Missouri, 1826 to 1830; Columbia, Missouri, 1830 to 1843.

St. Louis Beacon, St. Louis, Missouri, 1829.

Weekly Tribune, Liberty, Missouri, 1846.

(These newspapers may be found in the files of the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.)

Manuscript Collection:

Aull, James, Letter Book I, Aull Manuscript Collection, Lexington, Missouri Historical Society.

Farm Journals:

The Western Journal of Agriculture, Manufacturing, Mechanical Arts, Internal Improvements, Commerce, and General Literature, Charles and Hammond, St. Louis, Missouri, 1848 to 1854.

The Western Journal and Civilian, devoted to Agriculture, Manufacturing, Mechanical Arts, Internal Improvements, Public Policy and Politics, M. Needner and Company, St. Louis, Missouri, 1854 to 1856.

The Valley Farmer, A Monthly Journal of Agriculture Horticulture, Education and Domestic Economy, applied to the Wants of the Farmers in the Valley of the Mississippi, Woodward and Abbot, St. Louis, Missouri, 1854 to 1856.

(These journals may be found in the files of the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.)

Missouri State Legislature Proceedings:

Laws of the State of Missouri, 11th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1840-1841, Calvin Gunn, Printer, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1841.

Laws of the State of Missouri, 12th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1843-1844, James Lusk, Printer, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1844.

Laws of the State of Missouri, 19th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1856-1857, James Lusk, Printer, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1857.

Local Laws and Private Acts of the State of Missouri, 18th General Assembly, Adjourned Session, 1855-1856, James Lusk, Printer, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1856.

The Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Missouri, 13th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1844-1845, James Lusk, Printer, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1845.

Government Documents:

Executive Document, 29C., 1S., Doc. 46, No. 482, Vol. 3.

Executive Document, 29C., 1S., Doc. 160, No. 484, Vol. 5.

Senate Document, 27C., 2S., No. 157, Vol. 3.

Senate Document, 30C., 2S., Doc. 20, No. 529, Vol. 1.

Statistics of the United States of America, as collected and returned by the marshals of the several judicial districts; under the . . . act for taking the Sixth Census; corrected at the Department of State, June 1, 1840. Published by the authority of an act of Congress under the direction of the Secretary of State, Blair and Rives, Washington, 1841.

The Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, Washington, 1853.

Agriculture of the United States, 1860, compiled from the original returns of the Eighth Census, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, Government Printing Press, Washington, 1864.

The Statistics of the Wealth and Industry of the United States, embracing the tables of Wealth, Taxation, and Public Indebtedness of Agriculture, Manufacturing, Mining, and Fisheries. With which are produced from the volume of population, the major tables of occupations compiled from the original returns of the Ninth Census, June 1, 1870, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1872.

Report of the Production of Agriculture as returned at the Tenth Census, June 1, 1880, embracing General Statistics, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1883.

Report of the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States at the Eleventh Census, 1890, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1895.

Reports:

Fifth Annual Report of the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce for 1860, Merchants Exchange Reporter Print, St. Louis, Missouri, 1860.

Second Annual Report of the Missouri State Board of Agriculture, with an abstract of the Proceedings by the County Agricultural Societies to the General Assembly for the year of 1866. Emory S. Foster, Public Printer, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1867.

Third Annual Report of the State Board of Agriculture with an Abstract of the Proceedings of the County Agricultural Societies of Missouri to the General Assembly for 1868, Ellwood Kirby, Public Printer, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1868.

Derived Sources

Articles:

Dewey, Lyster H., "Hemp", Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture for 1913, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1914.

Franklin, Lillie, "Rocheport, Missouri, an Illustration of Economic Adjustment to Environment", Missouri Historical Review, October, 1924, Columbia, Missouri, 1925, Vol. XIX.

"Missouriana", Missouri Historical Review, July, 1932, Columbia, Missouri, 1932, Vol. XXVI.

"Missouriana", Missouri Historical Review, July, 1935, Columbia, Missouri, 1935, Vol. XXIX.

"Old Time News", Missouri Historical Review, October, 1912, Columbia, Missouri, 1913, Vol. VII.

Books:

Chiles, William H., History of Lafayette County, Missouri, An Address Published by the Public Library and Historical Association of Lexington, Missouri, 1928.

Gray, Lewis Cecil, History of Agriculture in Southern United States to 1860, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, 1933, Two Volumes.

Knobbs, Pauline Dingle, Hemp Raising in Marion County, Missouri, Typewritten Memories of her Father, Reverend James S. Dingle.

Moore, Brent, A Study of the Past, the Present and the Possibilities of the Hemp Industry in Kentucky, James S. Hughes, Lexington, Kentucky, 1905.

Napton, William Barclay, The Past and the Present History of Saline County, Missouri, B. F. Bowen and Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1910.

Paxton, W. M., Annals of Platte County, Missouri,
Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Company, Kansas City,
Missouri, 1897.

Trexler, Harrison Anthony, Slavery in Missouri, 1804
to 1865, Johns' Hopkins Press, Baltimore,
Mary Maryland, 1914.

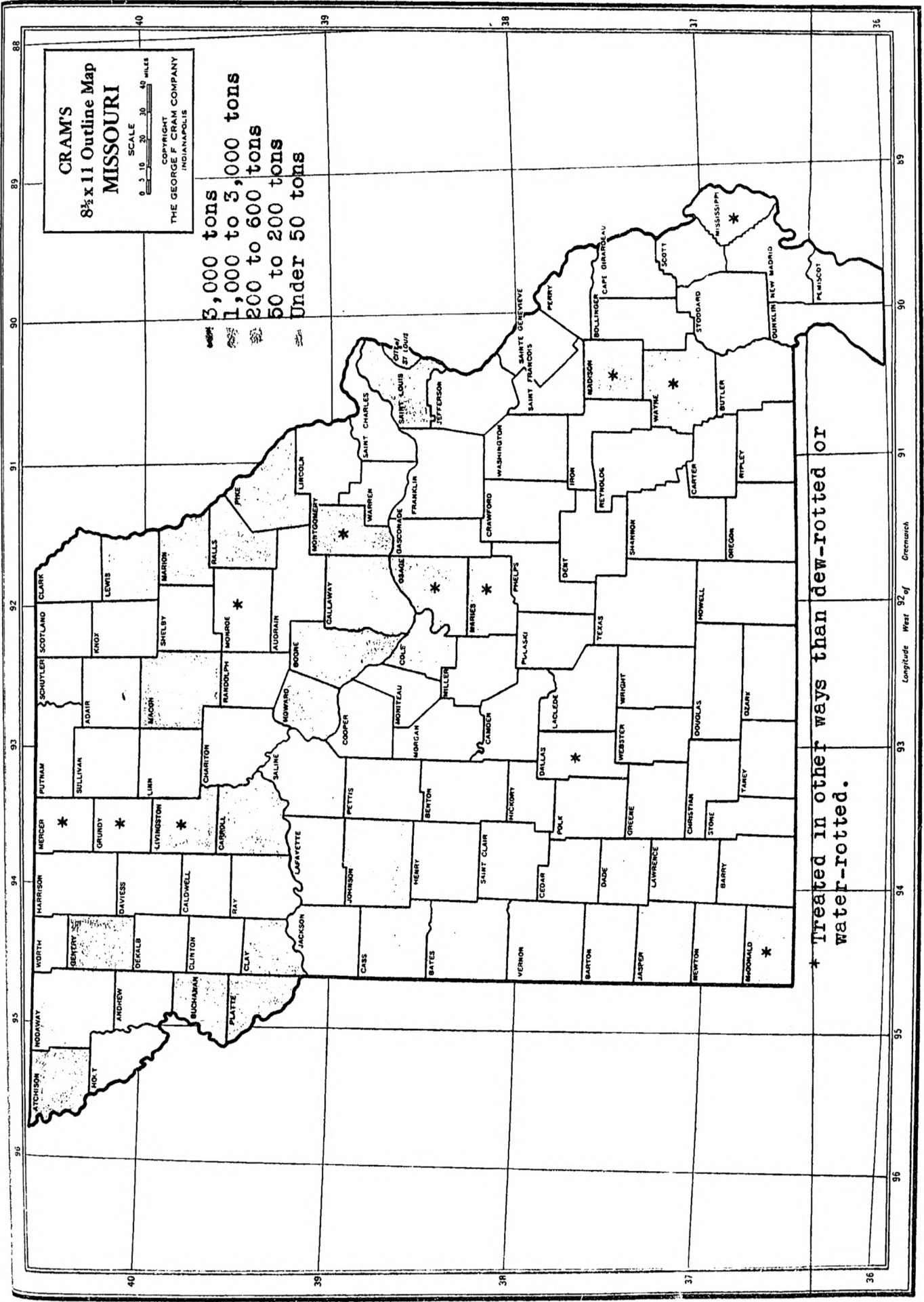
Williams, James, Seventy-Five Years on the Border
Standard Printing Company, Kansas City,
Missouri, 1912.

APPENDIX



Hemp Producing Counties in Missouri, 1860

Counties	Dew-rotted Tons	Water-rotted Tons	Treated Other Ways, Tons
Andrew	127		
Atchison	216		1
Boone		215	
Bollinger		135	35
Buchanan	1,479		
Callaway	35		
Carroll	612	4	
Cass	8		
Chariton	50		1
Clay	499		
Clinton	43	2	
Cole	31		
Dade	5		
Dallas			50
De Kalb	150		
Gentry	15	600	200
Grundy		14	50
Holt	112		
Howard	655		
Jackson	146	16	
Jasper	5		
Johnson	32	9	
Lafayette	3,547	3	8
Lewis	5		
Livingston			3
McDonald			200
Macon	600		
Madison			10
Marion	211	2	50
Mercer			180
Merier			25
Mississippi			50
Monroe			60
Montgomery			252
Nodaway	1		
Osage			35
Pettis	62	2	
Pike	1,108	500	90
Platte	1,793		
Putnam	50		28
Ralls	3		
Ray	162	5	
St. Louis	46		
Saline	3,920		
Sootland	60		
Wayne			644
Total	15,788	1,507	1,972
Grand Total	19,267 Tons		



Counties Producing Hemp in Missouri, 1860

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
COLUMBIA

GRADUATE SCHOOL
OFFICE OF THE DEAN

July 13, 1938

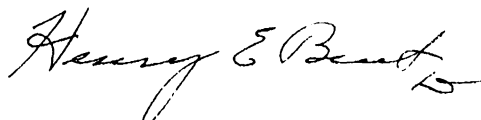
Professor Conrad H. Hammer
220 Mumford Hall

My dear Professor Hammer:

It is customary for the Graduate Committee to refer dissertations, submitted by candidates for the degree of Master of Arts, to some member of the Group who is not connected with the Department in which the candidate's work has been done. I am sending you herewith a dissertation which has been submitted by Miles W. Eaton

I shall be greatly obliged if you will kindly examine it at your earliest convenience and report in writing to the Graduate Committee whether in your opinion the dissertation meets the general standard which has been established in this University for the Master's dissertation.

Very truly yours,



Dean of the Graduate Faculty

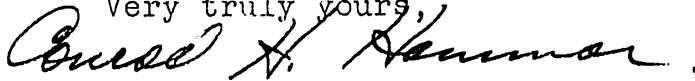
July 18, 1938

Dean Henry E. Bent
Graduate School
University of Missouri

Dear Dean Bent:

I have read the thesis of Mr. Miles W. Eaton on "A History of the Hemp Industry in Missouri", and wish to approve it as meeting, in my estimation, the standards maintained by the Graduate School of the University of Missouri for theses presented for the degree of Master of Arts.

Very truly yours,



Conrad H. Hammar.
Assoc. Professor of
Agricultural Economics.

CHH:MEJ

University of Missouri - Columbia



010-508834460



University Libraries
University of Missouri

Digitization Information Page

Local identifier Eaton1938

Source information

Format Book
Content type Text
Source ID 106183709007, 010-508834460

Notes Scan of a previous scan.
The text on pg. 55 have a shadowed appearance.

Capture information

Date captured June 2024
Scanner manufacturer Plustek OpticBook
Scanner model A300 Plus
Scanning system software Book Pavilion
Optical resolution 600 dpi
Color settings 8 bit grayscale
File types tiff
Notes

Derivatives - Access copy

Compression Tiff: LZW compression
Editing software Adobe Photoshop 2023
Resolution 600 dpi
Color grayscale
File types tiff combined to pdf
Notes Images cropped, straightened, brightened.