

THE LABORING IRISH: DEVELOPING COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY
IN EARLY KANSAS CITY

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by
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ABSTRACT

By 1880, the Kansas City community had experienced phenomenal growth. Since 1820, the new city had evolved from a fur trading post, an outfitting center for western trails, a trading center for Native Americans, a center for railroad construction and distribution, and became the second largest slaughter/packing house industry in the United States. Due to the enormous number of cattle and hogs coming from the west, that were slaughtered and shipped to markets in the east, Kansas City developed an enormous appetite for labor. The slaughter/packing house industry consumed the most labor, but labor was also required for removal of the city's bluffs, building of streets, grain milling, railroad construction, and the manufacturing to support the slaughterhouses. Irish immigrants filled this need. Irish immigration to the United States peaked in the mid nineteenth century. Most Irish immigrants were Roman Catholic from rural Ireland and possessed limited skills, other than their willingness to perform manual labor. Kansas City was a second or third stop in the United States for most Irish immigrants, having entered through New York, Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, or Canada. Most of the immigrants were single male and females, and used a social and family network to encourage and finance other family members to emigrate. This thesis explores the effects of labor on the economy of Kansas City, labor that was provided by Irish immigrants. In that process, Irish immigrants built

communities for themselves based on employment, Catholic parishes and schools, and social and fraternal organizations. Through the use of federal censuses, city directories, and newspapers, this study reveals the impact that Irish immigration had on the development of Kansas City. This study also examines the Kansas City community through the eyes of arriving immigrants and the community that the Irish built for themselves.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, have examined a thesis titled "The Laboring Irish: Developing Community and Industry in Early Kansas City," presented by Gregory S. Smith, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Tim Burke and Thomas Dolan were Irish immigrants who were employed on the Armour Family farm in New York in the 1850s. The Armour Family, descended from a Scotch-Irish native of Ireland, was a successful farm family with six brothers.¹ Some of the brothers entered the packing house business in Chicago, and opened a slaughter house in Kansas City, appointing Simeon, the oldest brother, to manage the new venture. When Simeon Armour built a home for his wife in Kansas City, he sent for Burke and Dolan to leave the farm and come to work for him in his new city. They both worked in the Armour Packing House but Dolan also managed the plant's stables and Burke managed the express business at the Union Depot, during the 1870s. Simeon Armour kept his fellow Irishmen close to him. Burke boasted that he had blacked and polished Simeon's shoes the day of his wedding. Burke and Dolan also reportedly had a weakness for the "cup." Numerous times they were both fired from their packing house jobs by various foremen and superintendents, only to be re-hired by Simeon Armour if they would go take the "pledge" from Father William Dalton, the local Catholic priest, and curb their drinking habits.² Armour maintained his preference for Irish laborers throughout his career.

Philip Armour and his original partner, John Plankinton, operated two packing houses in the 1860s, in Milwaukee and Chicago. They had a sense that the time was right to locate another plant in Kansas City in 1870. Philip Armour brought from Chicago his plant superintendent, Samuel Allcutt, his knowledge of the slaughter/packing house business and

¹ *The Kansas City Star*, March 29, 1899.

² *Ibid.*

market savvy, some experienced workers, and a preference for the Irish. Wanting his business to be closer to the source of supply, he also brought with him an industry that would require a large amount of labor. The location of the Armour plant in Kansas City would coincide with the development of the new city and growing industry, resulting in a thriving economy. The Armour Packing Company became the largest business and employer in Kansas City. According to Emma Abbott Gage it became a tourist attraction for visitors to Kansas City, that should not be missed: "Everybody has heard of the great Armour Company's packing-houses, and everybody eats something in the course of a year that has passed through either the Armour's plant at Chicago or the one at Kansas City. To go through one of these plants is a sight one never forgets."³ The Armour Packing Company made a major contribution toward the industrial success of Kansas City, and Irish immigration supplied a substantial amount of labor to the development of the city.

This thesis contends that through their labor, Irish immigrants made a major contribution to the developing economy of Kansas City, in the nineteenth century. The slaughter/packing house industry became the largest business in Kansas City, requiring the most labor. Armour Packing Company became the largest packing house, and employer in the city, and Irish immigrants fulfilled that need. The most common occupation of Irish immigrants in nineteenth century Kansas City was manual laborer. In addition to the packing houses, the Irish labored in leveling bluffs, grading streets, constructing railroads, milling grain, and also were employed in building trades, and as teamsters and blacksmiths. In the process of immigration and labor, Irish immigrants built community for themselves through their employment and support of religious, educational, and social institutions.

³ Emma Abbott Gage, *Western Wanderings and Summer Saunterings Through Picturesque Colorado* (Baltimore, Md.: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1900), 196.

The nineteenth century historiography of Kansas City was dominated by the prophecy that Kansas City was destined to become the "city of the future." Perhaps those historians felt vindicated due to the success of Armour Packing Company. But, many of those historical accounts take on the character and theme of the chamber of commerce board room in their promotion of a new city. The role of immigration and labor in the development of the city has been ignored in this period.

A theme of nineteenth century histories of Kansas City was that the new city would be successful because of its geography. The first history of Kansas City, *Annals of the City of Kansas: Embracing Full Details of the Trade and Commerce of the Great Western Plains*, was written by Charles C. Spalding in 1858.⁴ Spalding begins his volume with an endorsement of a guaranteed success formula for Kansas City espoused by William Gilpin. Gilpin popularized the theory that Independence would become a great urban center. Gilpin studied isothermal lines which indicated that great cities were founded and located on navigable rivers, some 300 miles apart. As Kansas City began to outgrow Independence, Gilpin revised his prediction and appointed Kansas City as a potential urban center. Gilpin, by 1861, had moved his residence from Independence to Denver, and proclaimed that Denver would also become a great urban center. Gilpin became the first governor of Colorado Territory. Another geographical reason for the potential success of Kansas City was the fact that it had been founded on the elbow or bend in the Missouri River.

The next generation of nineteenth century Kansas City history were basically economic forecasts that roughly followed the "great men and great events" formula. The

⁴ Charles Spalding, a Vermont native who held pro-slavery views, was an educated civil engineer, who worked briefly on a newspaper in 1855 in Westport. Spalding was hired by Robert Van Horn, the new editor of the *Journal* newspaper in Kansas City. Van Horn encouraged Spalding to write a book promoting Kansas City, which was endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce. The city council also approved the work and helped circulate the book, which helped build Spalding's reputation as a booster.

most notable work was written by William H. Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, published in 1881. Miller was a journalist who became secretary for the Kansas Board of Trade in 1877. Without using the tag, "great man," Miller identifies Robert Van Horn, a newspaper editor, and the tag of "great event," meaning the geography of Kansas City, as the ingredients for success. Miller neglects much of the history of Kansas City, but his work does contain useful data on successful businesses and manufacturing, real estate additions, trade and commerce data, and population growth. Miller highlights the economic development of railroad building and the business climate that Van Horn and his clique had created.

In 1888, Theodore S. Case, a physician and lawyer, published *History of Kansas City*, which was a better-written version of William Miller's work but also included commentary on Kansas City social and religious institutions. Both Case and Miller proclaim that Kansas City has been and will be successful. Carrie Westlake Whitney, the long-standing librarian at the Kansas City Public Library, published a two-volume history of Kansas City. This work is written in a grandiose, self-congratulatory style and Whitney apparently tapped various local authors to write chapters according to subject matter. Volume two of Whitney's work contains valuable biographical data. Out of these works came the moniker for the community, "the Kansas City spirit" which implies that the success of the community will guarantee success in future projects.

The histories of Kansas City written in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were all provincial in their emphasis. Whether they were written as economic and/or geographical forecasts, political biography or early success of industry, they were all

promotional in nature. These accounts do not address issues that more contemporary historians are concerned with such as urban history, women's and gender studies, environmental, immigration, and social issues. The early historical accounts of Kansas City oriented toward business and industry, and the highly visible leaders in the community, are all we have for this period. An excellent study and review of written and oral historical traditions that focus on Kansas City may be found in an essay written by R. Richard and A. Theodore Brown.⁵

In the mid 1950s, The Rockefeller Foundation awarded a grant to R. Richard Wohl of the University of Chicago to study urban history. The history of Kansas City was the subject of the project, a manageable size for an urban study, which resulted in the History of Kansas City Research Project. A. Theodore Brown, an Associate Professor of History at the University of Kansas City was chosen to direct the project. Dr. Wohl died in 1957, but Dr. Brown continued the work and in 1963 published *Frontier Community: Kansas City to 1870*, which was one of the first scholarly works on Kansas City history and provided a social, cultural, and political portrait. Since that project, other scholarly works have been written. *The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City* by William K. Wilson (1964); *The Pendergast Machine* by Lyle W. Dorsett (1968); *K. C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri* A. Theodore Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett (1978); *J. C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City: Innovation in Planned Residential Communities* by William S. Worley (1990); *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1900*, by George Ehrlich (1992); *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis* by Charles N. Glaab (1993); *Pendergast!* by Lawrence H. Larsen and Nancy J. Hulston (1997); and *A City*

⁵ R. Richard Wohl and A. Theodore Brown, "The Usable Past: A Study of Historical Traditions in Kansas City" *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (May, 1960), 237-259.

Divided: The Racial Landscape of Kansas City, 1900-1960 by Sherry Lamb Schirmer (2002), have all made significant contributions to the academic study of Kansas City history. All of these works were helpful in the research of this topic but they failed to address the role of immigration in shaping the city and developing industries, such as meat packing. This thesis fills that void.

It is challenging to uncover the stories of early Kansas Citians, especially those of working class people. Irish immigrants in particular, left few manuscript records that describe their lives in early Kansas City. The most helpful historical sources for this study were the federal census of population taken in 1860, 1870, and 1880, and the resulting statistical analyses for those years. This study ends in the early 1880s since the 1890 federal census burned and only a few states records still exist. Through a study of the census and statistical analyses, a story of immigration of a people comes forth. Names, ages, occupation, marital status, place of residence, place of birth, parents' place of birth, household members, place of children's birth, value of real estate, family relationships, relationship to head of household, and literacy, all work together to build a portrait of the lives of Irish immigrants in early Kansas City. Each census modified and asked somewhat different questions. As occupations and economic conditions changed, instructions to enumerators changed as well.

The first city directory for Kansas City, Missouri was published in 1859, and the first city directory for Wyandot (original spelling of town), Kansas, was published in 1880. Usually city directories were published annually and included commerce and business statistics, a listing of residents, all in varying formats. A city directory would generally include data regarding municipal and political data, general population, city statistics, index

of street names, public service organizations, schools, churches, and other civic data. Publishers varied from year to year. By comparing census data with city directory data, a story of resident life emerges. Newspapers, such as, *The Kansas City Daily Western Journal of Commerce*, *The Kansas City Times*, and *The Kansas City Star*, are helpful but carried little biographical data of Irish immigrants, especially laborers. Parish records at the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese are interesting, but Irish priests could not be accused of being wordy, at least in print. Unfortunately, there are no employment records or business records that survive from the slaughter/packing houses in this period studied. I have used all of this material to build a picture of early Kansas City and the role of the Irish in the development of the city.

Chapter One discusses the changing role of Kansas City in its growth. There were few if any other cities in nineteenth century America that changed its identity and demonstrated as much phenomenal growth as Kansas City. Beginning as a fur trading post in a slave state, Kansas City grew into a major transportation center within six years, and was home to the second largest meat packing industry in the country. Within a short period of time the new community experienced river traffic, Native American emigration, western trail movement, the Civil War, railroad expansion, and the completion of the Hannibal Bridge.

Chapter Two recognizes the development of Kansas City and the meat packing industry in the midst of the transcontinental railroad expansion. The business elements of the new meatpacking industry, market, supply, financing, transportation, and labor, are discussed. The movement of large quantities of cattle and the development of stock yards influenced the positioning of Kansas City's largest business, the Armour Packing Company. In addition, some of the environmental problems that a new city experienced as a growing

city are considered. In parallel with the developing business climate in Kansas City, was the immigration of the Irish into America, Missouri, and then Kansas City.

Chapter Three discusses the demographics of Irish immigrants in Kansas City between the years of 1860 to 1880. I discuss what Irish immigrants found in Kansas City during these years from the perspective of laborer. Select biographical sketches of Irish laborers illustrate their willingness to work and how quickly they adapted to new opportunities. The Irish people joined together, became members of the church, fraternal and social organizations, political movements, schools, and used employment opportunities to build community.

The necessary ingredients of a successful slaughter/packing house industry included a market, supply, financing, transportation, and labor. In the 1870s, Kansas Citians must have thought they had identified the ingredients or business elements necessary for success. The Civil War established a market for packed beef and pork. Cattle drives and the agricultural output of the heartland created a supply of livestock. Boston businessmen provided financing. The development of railroads and the completion of the Hannibal Bridge provided transportation for the newly emerging meat packing industry. All of these elements have been explored by past historians. The role of labor and Irish immigration, and the impact on developing community, has been given less attention, however.

CHAPTER 2

AN EMERGING COWTOWN

Understanding the changing identity of a new community is to initially understand the identity of Kansas City. The community that became Kansas City, had experienced a cultural and commercial metamorphosis by 1880. Although the dominant geographical feature of the city, the bend and flow of the Missouri River varied, the influence of the river on the city's location and development remained constant. The city was located in a slave state, yet its location allowed its residents to benefit on trade and transportation routes that connected it with the rest of the nation. Kansas City had started humbly as a French fur trading settlement, then adapted itself as a trading post for commerce with Native Americans, and then later into a trail outfitting center. This transportation and trade activity led to rapid real estate development in the decade before the Civil War. Although this expansion was stunted during the war years, the city emerged from the conflict poised to capitalize on its central location for railroad expansion and distribution. At this point, the community was guided by a pro-business elite that, promoted the city and its growing transportation networks as a livestock center. The city rapidly emerged as a "cowtown" that by 1880 was become the second busiest meatpacking and slaughterhouse center in the nation. The essential elements that Kansas City required to become a major slaughterhouse center were a pro business community, transportation networks, financial backing, a local and national market, a supply of livestock, and laborers to work in meatpacking and its associated industries. This chapter

will outline the changes that Kansas City experienced before assuming its identity as a cowtown.¹

The Missouri River, some 2,300 miles long, begins in western Montana, and generally flows eastward and then southward until turning east again before joining the Mississippi River in St. Louis. An unusual natural characteristic of the river was the change of course from south to east, creating the elbow at the point where Kansas City developed. This change of river flow was caused by huge ice sheets, which altered drainage patterns in the landscape that occurred in the last million years.² This natural elbow became a major advantage for transportation and aided westward development. Nineteenth century traders viewed the Missouri River elbow as a tremendous advantage for transportation since goods could be shipped on the river westward from St. Louis and then transferred in western Missouri for overland travel southwesterly to Santa Fe. The Kansas River, only 150 miles long, forms at the confluence of the Smoky Hill and Republican rivers at what became known as Junction City. At the point where the Missouri River forms its famous elbow and turned east, the Kansas River (or Kaw) joins the Missouri, and this confluence was named the Kawsmouth.

The origin of Kansas City had its roots in the early history of western Missouri and Jackson County. Missouri entered the union as a slave state in 1821 and Jackson County was organized in 1826. Blue Township was organized in 1827, where Independence, founded in 1827, quickly became the largest town and county seat. By 1836, Jackson County had about

¹ The term cowtown, in the nineteenth century, was used to describe an unsophisticated and rough town. A town could gain that reputation because its identity and economy was dependent on cows. These towns had a large number of cowboys and slaughter/packing houses, or were located near where cattle were raised or at the end of a cattle trail. Other towns referred to as cowtowns were Wichita, Kansas and Fort Worth, Texas. A cowtown generally was viewed in a negative light and it often took years to change that image.

² James R. Shortridge, *KANSAS CITY and How It Grew, 1822-2011*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 4.

4,500 residents and Independence had become the outfitting frontier town for western trails and the departure point for the Santa Fe Trail trade. Independence was situated on the "the edge of civilization" next to the "Great American Desert" occupied by Native Americans. Also in the area was the town of Liberty, founded in Clay County in 1821, and Fort Leavenworth, which was established on the western side of the Missouri River in 1827. In 1821, Francois Chouteau of the famous St. Louis Chouteau family, an agent of the American Fur Company, established a trading post on the Missouri River just east of where the river 'elbowed.' Chouteau built a warehouse and cabins, which became the earliest white settlement within the land that became Kansas City.

In the early years of the establishment of Kansas City as a trading settlement, another geological feature was discovered that would benefit development. In western Missouri, and edging into eastern Kansas, a rock shelf formed two limestone formations, named Bethany Falls and Argentine. The northwestern edge of the Bethany Falls limestone formation provided a natural wharf on the south side of the Missouri River, just east of the Kawsmouth juncture. This natural stone wharf, although not discovered until the 1830s, would provide a landing spot for trade goods coming from the east on the Missouri River. Francois Chouteau made the earliest acquisition of land in the area, in 1826, just to the east of the natural wharf.

In 1831, Gabriel Prudhomme, a resident of the French community, bought 271 acres from the U. S. Government, which included the natural wharf and a mile frontage on the south side of the Missouri River. Prudhomme's land extended south from the Missouri River to the bluffs that rose from eighty to one hundred thirty feet above the river. Also, included on Prudhomme's property was a ferry that had been built by Patrick Roy, another French settler. James McGee, a settler of Scotch-Irish descent, moved from Kentucky in 1828, and

bought well over a half section of land or approximately 400 acres, south of the Missouri River, along the bluffs.³ These three were the first white settlers to acquire the land that became the central part of the settlement of Kansas City. That land was covered with heavy timber, thick underbrush, and deep ravines. About thirty-five families lived in the French speaking community of Kawsmouth. Trading was the primary occupation of the community; no one had in mind establishing a city.

In November 1831, just ten months after his land was patented, Prudhomme was involved in a brawl at Kawsmouth, and was killed in the fight. The estate of Gabriel Prudhomme was left to his widow and six children, including his 257 acres and the ferry. By 1836, the oldest daughter Prosper, had married, and petitioned the court to divide the land so that she and her husband could receive their share. The court created a commission of three local men who reported the land was "broken" and only included a ferry and a warehouse, and by breaking up the acreage, little value would be realized by the family. The court therefore appointed James McGee to conduct the sale and he accepted a bid of \$1,800.00 for the entire estate. Several local residents charged McGee with fraud, stating that he arranged for a front man to buy the land on his behalf so that McGee could add to his previous holdings. The court removed McGee, who denied any wrongdoing from the transaction. At the second sale, a group of fourteen men hastily created a town company, and bid \$4,220.00 for the Prudhomme estate. William Sublette, an agent for the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, was the only member of the town company who was not local. He may have seen value in the land located on the Missouri River.⁴ It is unclear what value the town company

³ *The History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Kansas City, Mo: Birdsall, Williams & Co., 1881), 380-381.

⁴ A. Theodore Brown, *Frontier Community: Kansas City to 1870* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1963), 31-36.

saw in the land, but John McCoy, a surveyor and entrepreneur of Westport, a settlement a few miles to the south, was aware of the natural rock landing. The new town company was named the Town of Kansas. The town name of Possum Trot also had been considered but was rejected.

In his first term, President Andrew Jackson pushed Congress to approve the migration of eastern Indian tribes beyond the western borders of the United States. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830 stating that new lands "would be theirs as long as the grass grew." Among other Native Americans, tribes such as the Huron, Delaware, Sac and Fox, Shawnee, and Ottawa began a forced removal and resettlement just west of the Missouri border in Indian Territory. This emigration also enticed missionaries to the frontier to "Christianize" the Indians. The first to arrive were Thomas and William Johnson, Methodist circuit preachers, who in 1830 established a mission and school for Native American children, west of Kawsmouth. Also soon to arrive was Isaac McCoy, a Baptist preacher who had experience in establishing Native American missions in Indiana and Michigan, and who built a Baptist mission west of the Missouri border. McCoy had been awarded a contract for surveying the Indian Territory by the U. S. Government. Both Methodist and Baptist missions stressed the value of teaching Native Americans farming and home building, skills that fit the American model of self-sufficiency.

In the 1830s, the newly founded Church of Latter Day Saints or Mormons, sent not only missionaries but also families from New York and Ohio to live in Jackson County. The Mormons believed that Native Americans were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel, who deserved to hear their history as told in the *Book of Mormon*. The Mormons purchased 2,000 acres of land in Independence and in the area of the future Kansas City and laid out plans to

build a temple and a large urban city. Jackson County citizens felt threatened by the influx of thousands of Mormon settlers, who were mostly Yankees, and they violently evicted them from the county in 1836, forcing them to settle in counties north of the Missouri River. Ironically, the plans for a large frontier city would be realized by future residents of Jackson County.⁵

With the passing of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the U. S. Government signed treaties with various tribes. As Native Americans emigrated, they brought with them their government annuities, which resulted in an increased market in trade goods in western Missouri. There were an estimated 90,000 Native Americans who lived west of the Missouri state line, running from the Platte River south to Oklahoma territory, during the 1830s. Government annuities ranged from \$300,000 to \$500,000 annually, and were paid to tribes during the 1830s. This created a highly profitable market and new community for trade in western Missouri. An early chronicler of Kansas City history observed:

These Indians bought of our traders, calicoes, blankets, very many saddles, bridles and ribbons: and rings, costing ten cents in St. Louis, were frequently sold to these Indians for five and six dollars; and large profits were made on everything. Bacon was sold to them as high as from thirty to forty cents per pound; and salt for fifteen and twenty cents per tin cup full.⁶

Native Americans with annuity funds were cash buyers but at times reverted to trading ponies, trinkets, furs, and pelts for their purchases. Some traders took advantage of Native Americans by selling them alcohol, which was soon legally prohibited. Elijah Milton McGee, later mayor of Kansas City in 1870, was fined in the 1840s for selling whiskey to Native Americans. Currency was in short supply in this frontier society and most of the trade

⁵ Brown, *Frontier Community: Kansas City to 1870*, 23.

⁶ C. C. Spalding, *Annals of the City of Kansas* (Kansas City: Van Horn & Abeel's Printing House, 1858), 20.

was "truck and dicker," meaning that people traded goods and services for other goods and services.⁷

Isaac McCoy and his son John Calvin McCoy walked through the town of Independence in 1830, on their way to establishing a mission two miles west of the Missouri state line on Turkey Creek, close to the Shawnee Indian villages. By 1833, John McCoy had built a log store in Missouri, just a mile from Indian Territory, close to his father's mission, and four miles due south of the Missouri River. Since McCoy wanted to capitalize on the Native American trade, he built on an Osage Indian trail, which linked Independence with the Kansas River valley. McCoy intended to utilize Independence to supply stock for his store. This location would encourage the new market for emigrating tribes in possession of annuity cash. In 1834, McCoy had the idea to have his goods delivered from St. Louis on the steamer, the *John Hancock*, at a point just west of Francois Chouteau's warehouse on the Missouri River. McCoy said there was a natural rock ledge there that could be used as a wharf. This was the first known use of the Bethany Falls limestone shelf that would serve as a dock. With fewer supplies being shipped through Wayne City Landing and Independence, area residents derisively called the rock ledge, "Westport Landing," probably out of jealousy due to the decreased business. In 1835, McCoy, a surveyor like his father Isaac, filed a plat of town lots. Originally called Shawnee and then West Port on the plat filing, the new town soon became Westport. McCoy could not sell the lots, so he gave them away to anyone who would agree to build on them. By 1837, a tavern, school, and a harness and saddle shop were built, and about fifty people lived in the settlement. This was the first mention of the word "town" to describe the settlement that would become Kansas City.

⁷ C. C. Spalding, *Annals of the City of Kansas*, 19.

The Santa Fe trade developed in addition to the fur trade and the Native American trade in western Missouri. After Mexico became independent of Spain, trade developed between northern Mexico and the United States. The Santa Fe Trail initially began in Franklin, Missouri, but for trade purposes the eastern terminus for the trade route relocated to Independence beginning in 1822. The Santa Fe trade or "commerce of the prairies" a term coined by Josiah Gregg, developed outfitting towns along the Missouri River, such as Franklin, Boonville, and Lexington. But Independence was the western most point in Missouri, and although not on the river, it was the largest town in Jackson County in the 1830s. By the 1840s, Westport had the advantage as the outfitting post for the Santa Fe Trail. There was grassland closer to Westport where livestock could be fed, watered, and rested. Due to the meandering path of the Santa Fe Trail between Independence and Westport, and due to the necessity of fording the Little Blue and Big Blue rivers, one to two days of travel could be avoided by moving the trailhead west to Westport. Shipment of trade goods on steamships from St. Louis began bypassing the Blue Mills Landing, which was used by Independence, and were unloaded at Francis Chouteau's settlement at the natural rock ledge instead. The monetary value of the Santa Fe trade quickly surpassed the value of the Native American trade.

Although trade was growing, the Town of Kansas at the Kawsmouth grew slower than the town at Westport. In 1844, a major flood of the Missouri River wiped out everything in the Kawsmouth settlement except for the warehouse of William Chick. The Chouteau family decided not to rebuild. The limestone shelf was left undisturbed by the flood. The trade and business of outfitting settlers and westward emigrants continued to benefit Independence, Westport, and the Kawsmouth settlement, but by 1850 more

departures left from Westport than the riverfront. Other towns on the Missouri River, such as Parkville, Weston, and St. Joseph also experienced growth because of the stream of emigrants. But, the dominant feature of the riverfront continued to be the natural wharf that was developed and used by Westport merchants for trade goods. Westport business leaders began to sense that their future lay in the development of the riverfront. The Santa Fe trade was temporarily interrupted by the Mexican War but resumed after the conflict subsided. With the discovery of gold in California in 1849, and the consequent rush of gold seekers heading west, outfitting of travelers dramatically increased in Westport and in the Town of Kansas.

In early 1846, John Calvin McCoy made a plat for the Town of Kansas Company so that the lots in the Prudhomme estate could be sold at a profit. The final sale of the estate finally became legalized in 1846 after years of lawsuits. The court had required that all fourteen shareholders appear in person before the county clerk, but two had died.⁸ In the meantime, some company members sold lots and took out bonds to guarantee the title to the buyer. Since the original sale date of the estate in 1838, streets had changed names and directions, but the plat was still simply ink on paper; the actual settlement was on the riverfront. Other than the growing trade, this made the Town of Kansas appear as essentially a real estate development. It is interesting to note the occupations of the buyers of lots in 1846; there were seven farmers, four merchants, three butchers, three doctors, two carpenters, two grocer/saloon keepers, two traders, two laborers, two brick makers, and one each of a landlord, pilot, lawyer, broker, surveyor, tailor, gunsmith, wheelwright, school

⁸ William H. Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with A Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded* (Kansas City: Birdsall & Miller, 1881), 30.

master, an Indian, and a gentleman.⁹ The highest price paid for a lot was \$341.00, bought by William Chick, who was the owner of the largest warehouse on the riverfront. Considering a population of three hundred people, there was a very active trade in the community to support farmers, merchants, traders, grocers, and butchers. A sign of growth by 1849, was the opening of a hotel, originally named the Union Hotel, built on the riverfront by William Gilliss, a gentleman, and Benoist Troost, a doctor. The community by then listed ten stores, three taverns, four brickyards, several blacksmith shops, four warehouses, a steam mill, and a livery stable. There were some residences built on the side of the bluffs overlooking the riverfront.

In the late 1840s, some 4,500 people lived in Jackson County. By then, Independence had been the dominant town in the county with a population of 1,600, but had not received a town charter until 1849. According to the state law of Missouri, a town designated as the county seat had to generally be located in the center of the county to provide reasonable access for all county residents. During the early 1840s, \$450,000 of commerce had flowed through Independence from the Santa Fe trade, but competition from Westport changed the balance. Independence town leaders knew they were losing trade business and so they elected to build a three and a half mile railroad from the Wayne City landing on the Missouri River into their town, to expedite the movement of trade goods. By 1850, the population of Westport had grown to 2,000 people. Westport received a town charter in 1857, but was eventually annexed by Kansas City in 1889. A town charter was granted to the Town of Kansas in 1850 by the Jackson County court, but was not recognized by the state of Missouri until 1853, by then it changed its name to City of Kansas. (In 1889, the city changed its

⁹ William H. Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, 41.

name again to Kansas City.) The new plats of John Calvin McCoy in 1846 and 1847 did not generate much new settlement, and the town population hovered around 500 people. Even then, the plats were a town on paper, but McCoy and other investors began to see the riverfront community as a town of the future. Most of the streets in McCoy's plat lay on bluffs and ravines, which were heavily timbered and nearly impassable with undergrowth.¹⁰

The bluffs on the south side of the Missouri River, where the core of Kansas City developed, took years to level out. As high as one hundred thirty feet, the bluffs were taken down piecemeal, dug out by hand. Some early Kansas City boosters simply neglected a description of this geographical feature in their promotional historical accounts, fearing the ridicule of regional newspapers. "It was a standing news item that several persons had been killed in Kansas City by falling off some of the bluffs in the main part of the city onto the tops of four-story buildings."¹¹ Charles Spalding wrote in 1858, in the first history of the community, that leveling the bluffs would indeed be an expensive task. But, he went on to say that in considering the history of other American cities such as New Orleans, Chicago, St. Louis and Cincinnati, they had most likely expended more in building up or digging down in their respective excavations. According to Spalding, leveling the bluffs and ravines would prove an advantage to the residents of Kansas City.¹²

From the establishment of the Chouteau fur trading settlement in the early 1820s until 1853, the population hovered at less than 500 people. The Rev. C. B. Boynton, traveling

¹⁰ Carrie Westlake Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People, 1808-1908* (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1908), 92.

¹¹ Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People, 1808-1908*, 110.

¹² Spalding, *Annals of the City of Kansas*, 25-26.

westward in the early 1850s provided a perceptive comment on the developing identity of the new town:

City, is a somewhat ambitious title for the little village of Kansas, but it may be presumed to have a prospective import, referring rather to the possible than the actual. Having a fine landing, with thirty feet of water, when the river is at its low stage: a natural limestone wharf, and a high bluff in the rear, it seems to occupy the natural site of the principle commercial city for the Kansas valley.¹³

As the town of Kansas City developed, the riverfront area became known as Old Town and led into what was known as the East Bottoms or East Kansas. To the west of Old Town, the land around the old settlement of Kawsmouth and just to the east of the Kansas River became known as West Kansas or the West Bottoms. Both areas had to contend with the bluffs. Although a road had been cut, for several years, through the heavy forest of oak, hickory, elm, and walnut from the river to Westport, most people were forced to live close to their employment to avoid the laborious daily task of climbing the bluffs.

A less inviting spot for town building it would be difficult to conceive. But from this great angle in the Missouri River was the best natural road to the southwest and west, and it was the highest point to which goods for the great Santa Fe and plains trade could be taken by boat, without increasing the cost of land transportation and incurring worse roads.¹⁴

The position of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers also dictated the general direction of urban development which was south and east. The bluffs, however, did not discourage the building of houses and businesses. As the bluffs were leveled shovel by shovel, lot by lot, and street by street, buildings were re-built and, in some instances some people built new first floors to adjust to new lowered ground levels. In 1853, Dr. T. B. Lester reported that while away on a

¹³ C. B. Boynton, Rev. and T. B. Mason, *A Journey Through Kansas with Sketches of Nebraska* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wiltach, Keys & Co., 1855), 20.

¹⁴ Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, 51-52.

business trip, Main Street, where his home was located, had been lowered twenty feet. Within a few days, the street was lowered again by another twenty feet.¹⁵

The steamboat business on the Missouri River reached its peak in the City of Kansas during the 1850s and by the end of the decade the population of the new city grew to over 4,000 people. It was estimated that \$5.1 million flowed through the new city due to annuities for the Native American trade, supplying of goods to Army forts, the Santa Fe trade, the U.S. Mail, and outfitting of emigrants for the overland trails.¹⁶ The City of Kansas was fast becoming a city but other river communities were growing as well and would soon enter a rivalry for dominance in the region. In the 1860 census, the population of St. Joseph (8,932) and Leavenworth (7,429) both surpassed the 4,418 in the City of Kansas:¹⁷

St. Joseph	8,932
Leavenworth	7,429
Kansas City	4,418
Independence	3,164
Atchison	2,616
Wyandotte	1,920
Weston	1,816
Westport	1,195

Although not the largest city by population, the City of Kansas handled the most pounds of freight and trade goods by 1860. The nucleus of the business community had become invested in trade. Investment in land followed quickly. The housing market, however, lagged behind the population growth.

¹⁵ Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People, 1808-1908*, 113.

¹⁶ *The History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 438.

¹⁷ Brown, *Frontier Community: Kansas City to 1870*, 130.

The population of the City of Kansas took a leap forward in 1857. Although population figures could be inflated for promotional purposes, in January of 1857 the population was estimated at 2,000, by June it was reported at 3,244, and by December the population was believed to have grown to 5,185. The local newspaper, *The Journal*, reported that the economy of the city had not been hurt by the financial panic of 1857 because trade remained strong. The commerce of trade was referred to as 'border money.' "The whole amount of this border money is \$5,100,000. Of this, \$2,800,000 comes directly from the United States Mint, and consequently comes here annually by virtue of statute law to that effect.

Annuity Money	\$1,100,000
Army Money	2,000,000
Mail Money	200,000
Emigration Money	300,000
New Mexico Money	<u>1,500,000</u>
	\$5,100,000 ¹⁸

Annuity money referred to the continuing trade with Native Americans living on the western border. New Mexico money referred to money that flowed back from the Santa Fe trade to local merchants, mechanics, and farmers. The Santa Fe trade had stabilized and increased after the Mexican War ended. One effect of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 was to increase emigration into the Kansas Territory. The settlement of Kansas was of particular interest to western Missourians involved in land speculation, town development, wholesale merchants, steamboat owners, and railroad promoters.

The primary intent of the Kansas-Nebraska Act was to open up settlement in the newly created territories of Kansas and Nebraska. The act allowed the residents of each

¹⁸ Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, 70.

territory to decide for themselves whether or not they would enter the union as a slave or free state. This created a potential powder keg waiting to explode in western Missouri and eastern Kansas. Slavery had existed in the City of Kansas area since 1829 when James McGee emigrated from Kentucky with two slaves to work the land he had bought near Liberty. Many of the city business leaders, although not slave owners, were pro-slavery. Business owners in Westport considered it their duty to protect slavery in their town. The City of Kansas, on the western border of a slave state, was home to both northern and southern immigrants. The new city found itself in the midst of guerrilla warfare between the Missouri Bushwhackers and Kansas Jayhawkers. At one point, it became necessary for the abolitionist owners of the American Hotel to sell to pro-slavery owners. According to some politicians, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was written in a way that invited pro-slavery, Southerners to come to western Missouri and the City of Kansas to ensure that Kansas would enter the union as a slave state. The way in which the new city would respond to this political challenge helped to define the city.

In 1853, when the new city was chartered, the business community or the power elite of the City of Kansas was made up of three groups. The first group was comprised of mercantile businessmen associated with the Santa Fe or southwest trade and the Native American trade. This group included such men as John Calvin McCoy, Hiram Northrup, and William Chick, and his sons Washington and Joseph. By the late 1850s about half of the poundage of freight, 15,000,000 pounds annually flowed through the firms of Chick and Northrup. The second group of the power elite was made up of those who had bought land, such as those associated with the Kansas Town Company, but who were not serious land speculators. James McGee, who died in 1840, and his sons were the largest landowners, and

carried on the family business. Other members of this group were Joseph Ranson, an Irish immigrant who also owned a grocery business, physicians Francis Rice and Isaac Ridge, ministers Nathan Scarritt and Edward, and Johnston Lykins. Many of this land buying group subdivided lots, and offered them at favorable terms if the buyer would agree to build promptly, which encouraged faster growth.

By the mid 1850s, these early business leaders were awakened beyond their individual interests and ambitions, when they recognized the need for a broader perspective of town development, and assumed the role they might play in developing a mentality of community urban development. The third group of the business power elite were land speculators who contributed to the long range business prospects of the City of Kansas. This group was interested in land speculation for its own benefit. Kersey Coates, a Pennsylvania abolitionist came to the new city representing an investment group, but soon began buying land for himself. In 1856, Thomas Swope, a Yale educated newcomer from Kentucky, came to the city looking for investment opportunities. Swope had considered but rejected land investment in Leavenworth, and became wildly successful in the City of Kansas. Swope did not consider himself a real estate genius because he thought common sense dictated that the City of Kansas could only grow to the east and south. John Reid, a Virginian who was farming in Jackson County, and a pro-slavery proponent, became a major land speculating businessman in the new city. Numerous additions were platted in 1857 through 1860, and the city charter was amended to accommodate and expand the corporate city limits. Many in the business community who were involved in trade and real estate formed the basis for the founding of the chamber of commerce in 1857. A sense of community developed among the

leading residents of the new city, who in spite of political difference had a common interest in the protection and development of commercial projects and real estate additions.

As required by the state charter of 1853 for the city, a mayor and city council were elected, but there initially was a lean municipal government. The city engineer, responsible for surveying and street improvements was the highest paid position in city government. The business community attempted to organize a Board of Trade in 1856 which became a voluntary organization to discuss ideas on commerce. Out of this evolved a Chamber of Commerce that was organized in November 1857, the organ for the business community. A study of the Chambermen's business interests reflected where they hoped the city was headed. Out of the original sixteen members, fourteen were landowners who developed additions. Two members had already made a significant impact in trade, and two members were land speculators. Seven of the sixteen Chambermen also served on the city council and three members served as mayor in the 1850s. Five members of the Chamber held director positions at local banks, and four were in the stock company that hired a newspaper editor. Although no one was a railroad man, in 1857 nine members of the Chamber held board director positions in newly formed railroads.

The geographic origins of the Chamber members were varied. Before the 1850s, many immigrants to the City of Kansas were from the Upper South, primarily from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. After the 1850s, this shifted to more immigrants coming from the northern regions of the United States. Many chamber members held pro-slavery views regardless of their origin. But, the common denominator of the Chamber was land ownership and the desire to protect their investment. According to William H. Miller:

It was the center of thought and opinion, and had the effect of largely uniting the people in commercial efforts. It became the source of public enterprise and public

movements in a most marked degree. Under its potent influence the people all worked together for common ends, and whatever public movement or enterprise it decided upon, received the support of all, and the strength and energy and intelligence of all were united in giving it shape and carrying it forward.¹⁹

The City of Kansas was becoming a community dedicated to development and protection of their land investment. There is no real evidence that the residents of the area in the 1820s to 1840s recognized the potential for the city located at the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers. But, on the eve of the Civil War it was remarkable that a group of business leaders with opposing political beliefs worked together for mutually beneficial purposes. The business community was creating the environment to later attract railroads, which would provide transportation for developing new industries. The railroads would protect their investment in the City of Kansas.

The first newspaper in the community, *The Public Ledger*, begun by an Irish immigrant, Robert Kennedy, had a short life and had failed by 1852, and Kennedy left town soon after. Business leaders recognized the need for a newspaper to promote the community, chronicle events, and they gathered to create a new company, and staked \$1,000 in capital to support the venture. Rather than hire an editor, Milton Payne, who served as mayor 1855-1859, went to St. Louis and bought printing equipment. A printer named D. K. Abeel was hired to handle the mechanical and business operations of the newspaper. An attorney named William Strong was employed as editor and the paper was renamed *The Kansas City Enterprise*. The business group soon realized the need for an experienced newspaper editor and hired Robert T. Van Horn in 1855. Van Horn's employment was contingent upon him purchasing the newspaper for \$1,000, apparently so the group could recover their investment. By 1857, Van Horn made the newspaper a daily and in 1858

¹⁹ Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, 69.

finally settled on changing the name again to, *The Kansas City Daily Western Journal of Commerce*. Van Horn's influence would prove greater on the community than simply as a newspaper editor.

Van Horn came to Kansas City with his wife and two children from Ohio where he had edited newspapers in Pomeroy and Cincinnati. He was a Pennsylvanian who was pro-slavery, yet he advocated a moderate stance. A glimpse of the future for the City of Kansas appeared in a November 1855 edition of Van Horn's newly acquired newspaper. The article stated that the finest stock growing area in the world existed in the southern portion of the Kansas Territory. There was a growing interest for the future destiny of western Missouri and the Kansas Territory for the cattle trade. In an editorial in the *Kansas City Enterprise*, Van Horn observed:

With these facts before us, it does not require the foresight of a prophet to foretell that at Kansas City will be located the great meat market for a large portion of the United States. Then we will require the Missouri River, the Pacific Railroad, and the Kansas Branch of the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad, to transport to Eastern and Southern markets, the immense amount of beef and pork which will be slaughtered and packed at Kansas City.²⁰

By the summer of 1857, Van Horn strongly urged the cause of building railroads for the sake of the Kansas City community:

Therefore the first and immediate object of business men, and property holders should be to secure good roads and all the Railroads we can get. Every commercial house in the township can exert considerable influence for Railroads, if properly directed. Make it a business rule to never let a farmer go out of your store until you have said more or less to him about Railroads.²¹

Van Horn was relentless in his first priority, promotion of Kansas City and the building of railroads. At a year-end banquet held on Christmas Day 1857, for the business community,

²⁰ *Kansas City Enterprise*, November 24, 1855.

²¹ *Kansas City Enterprise*, August 15, 1855.

many cheers went up for the "Railroads and the Press-Twin Brothers in American Progress and Development." When the podium was offered to Van Horn for his turn to speak he said that,

railroads involve the philosophy in the progress of the world. Let us work westward-that is the work for Kansas City-and the first snort of the iron horse as he bounds away for the headwaters of the Kansas will be the herald of the swift completion of the iron highways or commerce with the East.²²

The wild cheering from the banquet indicated the acceptance of the promotion of Kansas City by Van Horn.

The influence of Robert Van Horn was significant and long lasting. While communities around Kansas City, such as St. Joseph, Atchison, Leavenworth, and Lawrence, became embroiled in the politics of the border wars and the resulting Civil War, Kansas City was able to achieve a middle ground that made the city more attractive to eastern investors, and a safer place for commerce and transportation. At a regional railroad convention held at Kansas City in 1858, Van Horn presented a resolution calling for Congress to provide support and funding for a continental railroad through Kansas City. Van Horn was then authorized by the Chamber of Commerce to present a memorial to the U. S. Congress promoting Kansas City as the eastern point of a transcontinental railroad. Van Horn also was instrumental in getting charters granted for railroads. He served twice as mayor, and was later elected to the U. S. Congress in the 1860s, 1880s, and 1890s. Van Horn well understood the connection between the building and placement of railroads, and urban development.

During the 1850s, the Kansas City community became engaged in a flurry of activity to attract railroads to their new city. The building of a railway from St. Louis across

²² Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, 80.

Missouri, the promise of a transcontinental railroad, and the prospect of opening western markets, deepened the hunger for a railroad that would advance the community. Railroad policy was initiated in the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, which it then expected the mayor and city council to enact. The campaign to attract a railroad to Kansas City included state approved charters, authorized bond issues, pamphlets, maps, newspaper editorials, public meetings, and community support. Numerous paper railroads were organized without ever laying a mile of track.

One essential ingredient that the new community could not provide for itself was financing. Robert Van Horn studied in detail how to build a railroad. Milton Payne, a Kentuckian with southern sympathies, who served as mayor for several years, Kersey Coates, the Pennsylvania Quaker real estate developer, John Reid, the Jackson County farmer and pro-slavery organizer, and Johnston Lykins, a Baptist missionary turned entrepreneur, became the core of the power elite who promoted railroads. All of these men with the exception of Van Horn, owned real estate, and would profit from railroad development. They were bound by common business interests, setting aside political differences, and presented a unified community policy to attract railroads. In the end, their most lasting impact was unity, which ultimately attracted Boston financiers to select Kansas City over Leavenworth, St. Joseph, and Atchison. Local promotion, community support, and geography were all important to the success of building railroads, but the unity of business leaders was the deciding factor for the eastern financiers.

In spite of the growth in population and commerce in the late 1850s in Kansas City, the border wars threatened the positive impact. In 1855, after the first Free State constitution was accepted by some settlers in Kansas Territory, and violence had erupted in Missouri,

Robert Van Horn reported that he was gratified that the "dark clouds had been happily dispelled." "It requires a calmer state of feeling than exists on either side to investigate the subject with that calmness requisite for so important a matter. Indeed, we are not sure but that the least said, the better for all."²³ When further violence erupted on the border making the roads unsafe, trade became severely diminished. As shipments to Kansas City became threatened, Van Horn strongly reacted, saying that those threatening violence had better bring their own coffins with them. Van Horn was accused by some of political opportunism. In the 1860 presidential election, he supported the Constitutional Union ticket and by the time of the firing on Fort Sumter he supported the Union and the Republican Party. In reality, Van Horn supported business, the promotion of Kansas City, and railroad development over partisan politics. After he was elected mayor in 1861, Van Horn traveled to St. Louis where he was commissioned a major in the Missouri Militia. He commanded a battalion in Kansas City, which secured the city for the Union.

By 1860, less than ten percent of the population in the state of Missouri was enslaved. A higher concentration of slaves existed in the counties along the Missouri River, where tobacco and hemp were grown. In western Missouri in 1860, 23.5 percent of the population were slaves in the counties of Platte, Clay, Ray, Lafayette, Saline, and Jackson. There were 3,316 slaves in Jackson County but very few in Kansas City. The towns of Independence and Westport were pro-slavery and very interested in Kansas Territory becoming a slave state. Although many in the Kansas City business community had southern origins and were pro-slavery, many businessmen realized that keeping trade open with the new state of Kansas was essential to their trade interests and land investments. With new settlement in Kansas, a new agricultural market was developing. The economy of Independence and Westport did

²³ *Kansas City Enterprise*, December 15, 1855.

not have the same advantages or future as Kansas City. During the Civil War, the population of Kansas City shrunk by one half. Some businesses closed, and some businessmen who were pro-slavery left town. Kansas Citians quickly came to realize however, that partisan politics affected trade, and that rival towns such as St. Joseph and Leavenworth could easily gain a favorable edge, if not held in check.

The first railroad connection in Kansas City, interestingly enough, came from the west. The Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 authorized land grants and issuance of government bonds to railroad companies. The primary purpose of the new law was to establish a transcontinental railroad from the Missouri River to the Pacific coast. As decided by President Lincoln, the eastern terminus of the transcontinental Pacific railroad would be in Omaha, although a bridge over the Missouri River was not built there until the 1870s. Through much political maneuvering, trunk lines would be built to connect with the main transcontinental rail line, which would then receive land grants and bond availability. The state of Kansas had chartered a paper railroad, one of 1,100 charters made in 1855, called the Leavenworth, Pawnee, and Western Railroad, which was reorganized under the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 and was federally chartered as the Union Pacific, Eastern Division. Construction began in September of 1863 in Wyandotte County, Kansas, right through the area that would become the Kansas City stockyards in the west bottoms. This line was completed to Lawrence by the summer of 1864 and reached Junction City by the fall of 1866. By 1869, the railroad was built nearly across the state of Kansas and to Denver, and then connected northward to the main Union Pacific rail line in Cheyenne.

In 1869, under another federal railroad act, the name of UP Eastern Division, was changed again to the Kansas Pacific Railroad. In the course of railway construction, a bridge

over the Kansas River was built in Wyandotte County, just south of Kawsmouth. The Kansas Pacific Railroad from the west was significant due to the access of an agricultural market in Kansas, and even more significant for future shipment of cattle and hogs into Kansas City. This was a major step for the new city in their development as a major transportation center. With the construction of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, the possible role that Leavenworth and St. Joseph would play in the future was greatly diminished.

From the east, the Missouri Pacific Railroad finally finished construction from St. Louis to Kansas City in the summer of 1865. Since the late 1850s, promotional activities of the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and City Council had attempted to encourage the Missouri Pacific to build into Kansas City, but the railroad coyly refused to commit. At one point, the Missouri Pacific even released a plan to build their line to Sedalia, and then due west to Lawrence, completely bypassing Kansas City to the south. When the railroad was completed into Kansas City, the Missouri Pacific received a federal charter to build the line into Leavenworth. The Missouri Pacific then lowered rail rates for freight shipped to Lawrence by way of Leavenworth, excluding the Kansas Pacific line. But, what Kansas City really wanted was a rail connection with Chicago. By 1870, railroad construction had exploded for Kansas City, which had seven railroads built into the city.

The rise of Kansas City, Missouri as a western railroad center and regional metropolis supplies one of the best examples of the relationship of real estate, local promotion, and railroad planning to the growth of individual cities in the era of booming development of new regions.²⁴

Even with the promotional nature of the Kansas City power elite and with the federal emphasis of building trunk lines for the transcontinental railroad, building a bridge over the

²⁴ Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, *A History of Urban America*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), 104-105.

Missouri River to connect with a rail line east to Chicago became a necessity. In some sense, Kansas City backed into building the bridge that would prove a very fortunate building block in the city's development as a regional transportation hub. In 1852, Boston financiers, John Brooks and John Forbes had taken control of several small Illinois rail lines and created the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad. Their legal counsel, James Joy, was a Detroit lawyer with railroad and real estate expertise. The Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad owned the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, which by 1859 had built a rail line from Hannibal to St. Joseph using federal land grants. This was the earliest railroad connection eastward from Chicago into the Missouri Valley. Joy, who became the president of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad, well understood the influence of new railroads on real estate and the development of new towns. It also became apparent that if Kansas City could bridge the Missouri River and build a rail line about 35 miles to the north, connecting with the Hannibal and St. Joseph railroad, its connection to Chicago would be complete.

In the late 1850s, the West Kansas Land Company was organized to develop and promote land that would become the core of the West Bottoms. James Joy became aware of the venture and became acquainted with Kansas Citians Charles Kearney and Theodore Case, and persuaded them to purchase shares for him in the land company. By 1866, the land was still vacant, but James Joy had become the major stockholder in the land company.

"Obtaining stock in the West Kansas City Land Company was clearly in accord with Joy's consistent policy as a railroad entrepreneur of his knowledge of where railroads would be built to buy cheap land and later resell the property at a substantial profit."²⁵ Their thinking at the time was also that this land held the potential for a major industrial site since railroads

²⁵ Charles N. Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 148.

from the west and east met there. They had no idea at the time that the land would shortly become home to the Kansas City Stockyards and the slaughterhouse industry.

The final link that Kansas City needed was a bridge over the Missouri River. The Kansas City power elite had authorized U.S. Representative Robert Van Horn to present a memorial to Congress seeking federal approval to build the first bridge over the river, which was granted in 1866. Leavenworth and St. Joseph had lost out on their bid as a rail and transportation center. Once again James Joy was impressed with the initiative and unity of the Kansas City business community and financing was approved by a Boston financial group that was controlled by John Forbes. This financial group provided financing to the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad to build the bridge, and the name Hannibal Bridge was affixed to the project.

The Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad awarded the contract to build the bridge to the Keystone Bridge Company, a Pennsylvania company begun by Andrew Carnegie in 1865. The cost of the bridge was one million dollars and construction began in 1867. Bridge building and ironworks would become a significant business in the new river city. The Hannibal Bridge, designed for rail and pedestrian traffic, was a steel truss swing bridge that could open within two minutes, allowing for river traffic to pass. The architect was Octave Chanute, a Paris born self taught engineer who considered himself an American. Chanute was a railway and aviation engineer who had a major impact on the Wright Brothers first flying machine. Chanute also designed the Chicago Stockyards, laid out in 1865, and the Kansas City Stockyards laid out in 1871.

The Hannibal Bridge opened amidst an enormous celebration on July 3, 1869. In St. Louis, the Missouri River was not bridged until 1874 when the Eads Bridge was completed.

For years, Kansas City promoters heralded the Hannibal Bridge as the turning point for the city becoming a major urban presence. The completion of the bridge was a significant architectural and urban achievement. The population of Kansas City exploded in the years after the completion of the bridge. From a population of 4,418 in 1860, and a low of 3,000 during the war, the population expanded to 15,067 by 1867. In only three years Kansas City's population had doubled. The United States census, taken in 1870, gave the population of Missouri Valley cities as follows:

Kansas City	32,286
Leavenworth	17,873
Atchison	7,054
Lawrence	8,315
St. Joseph	19,565
Council Bluffs	10,020
Omaha	16,083
Topeka	5,790 ²⁶

The ten year increase for Kansas City from 4,418 in 1860 to 32,286 in 1870,, was the largest per cent increase ever made by an American city. With the opening of the Hannibal Bridge, the future of railroads was secure in Kansas City. Commerce and industry expanded with the population, and subsequently real estate values increased.

By 1870, there were seven railroads completed into Kansas City. The city had only managed to macadamize seven miles of streets compared to miles of railroad track. Mud and the ever-changing bluffs characterized the Kansas City landscape. The Missouri Pacific railroad from St. Louis laid track along the south side of the Missouri River and the levee, which compromised business development and forced more businesses southward, up the bluffs. A passenger rail station, the Grand Avenue Depot was built at the base of Grand Avenue, in Old Town. Grand Avenue had earlier been widened to 100 feet and

²⁶ Denis Malone, *The Kansas City Directory and Reference Book with a Business Directory for 1870*, 20.

macadamized and served as a route for southern urban development and a commuter route to Westport. The Missouri Pacific rail line continued into the West Bottoms where it joined with the Union Pacific Railroad of Kansas Pacific, at the State Line Depot. The flats in the West Bottoms provided ample land for other railroads such as the Missouri River, Fort Scott, and Gulf Railroad to build. This railroad was built in 1868 and the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad built in 1869 then headed northward across the Hannibal Bridge to the Kansas City and Cameron Depot, and continued northward for access to Chicago.

There was not adequate land for the proliferation of railroad development next to the bluffs south of the Missouri River, in Old Town. Acreage was plentiful and cheap in the flats of the West Bottoms, and railroad financiers took advantage of positioning their rail lines there. The Missouri River, Fort Scott, and Gulf Railroad built a line south of the Kansas River, negating the need for a bridge, which provided connection to the south and across southern Kansas. The Grand Avenue Depot in Old Town was soon obsolete and a new depot, Union Depot was built in the West Bottoms, and became the main depot for Kansas City by 1878. The Union Depot anchored development of various businesses such as saloons, hotels, and machines shops supporting the railroads. New freight depots encouraged further industrial development in the West Bottoms or West Kansas. Rail lines running east, west, north, and south now converged in West Kansas.

Within a few decades, the new community of Kansas City had experienced distinct changes in identity beginning as a fur trading post and settlement, which developed into trading post for trade with Native Americans, then developed into an outfitting center for travelers on western trails, and then morphed into a center of rapid real estate development, as a pro-business community created the environment for railroad expansion. Kansas City, a

community where slavery existed, and where some civic leaders harbored pro-slavery attitudes survived the effects of the Civil War. With a developing market for beef and pork, an abundant supply of livestock, and its geographical location, Kansas City was primed to become a cowtown. Kansas City had secured financing from Boston financiers. The decade of the 1870s saw Kansas City become a cowtown as major slaughterhouses and packing houses located in the community. Labor would become a key determinant in the successful development of the cowtown.

CHAPTER 3

A LABORING COMMUNITY

In the late 1860s, Kansas City was certain to realize two basic requisites for success; its geographical position and a pro business community. The other elements for success were a market, supply, financing, transportation, and labor, which all came from outside the city. A market emerged from the needs of the Civil War. The market was fueled by an adequate supply of cattle and hogs. Financing came from the east coast railroad financiers. Transportation was provided by the western expansion of railroads. Irish immigration was a major component of meeting vast labor needs. All of these elements developed somewhat independently, but were all inter-related, resulting in Kansas City's being in the right place at the right time. A by-product of this success was a negative environmental impact on the new city, however. All of these elements worked together to create a new identity, an emerging laboring community known as a cowtown.

The market for canned foods was greatly impacted by the Civil War, which expanded the American palate. The canning of foods was a European invention from the early nineteenth century. The idea caught on as Napoleon's troops needed to take food supplies on long marches with some degree of convenience. In Pennsylvania in 1847, tomatoes, earlier thought of as a poisonous fruit, were first canned. By the time of the California gold rush, canned oysters and sardines were consumed by miners. Just before the Civil War, Gilbert Van Camp a grocer, who was previously a tinsmith, first canned pork and beans, in Indianapolis. Primarily, fruits and fish (oysters, herring, sardines), were the first foods canned. By the Civil War, Union troops could conveniently take supplies of canned

tomatoes, beans, and meat with them. Van Camp soon made a fortune from contracts with the U.S. Army. Canning methods were quite basic; the use of pressure cookers and sterilization of cans came into use in the 1870s. The widespread use of canned meat in the Civil War gradually spread the idea of eating meat that was not dried or salted across the American nation. The growing appetite for canned meat soon created a new demand.

Before the canning of meat, preservation included smoking, drying, salting or pickling. Slaughtering of cattle and hogs usually occurred in the cooler months of the year, in an effort to prolong preservation. Fresh meat in the American diet most often meant which animal was hunted, killed, and processed that day. Pork products were more adaptable for preservation by salting and pickling, and were most often packed in wooden barrels, and sent to sea for consumption by sailors. Salted or dried beef and salted or pickled pork was commonly eaten when fresh meat was not available. The methods of preservation changed little until the mid nineteenth century.

Commercial meat packing companies had existed in America since the mid seventeenth century, but were not high volume businesses. Transportation of cattle and hogs to meat packing facilities generally occurred whereby the animals were driven to the pens located near the slaughterhouse. Animals were clubbed to death and dragged by some mechanical apparatus into the packing house for processing. Before the Civil War, cities on major rivers, such as Buffalo, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Louisville began developing more commercial meat packing operations. The rivers provided transportation to markets for meat products. However, getting the animals safely and in salable condition to a meat packer continued to slow the supply.

In 1830, 23 miles of railroad track existed in the United States: in 1860, 30,626 miles, almost all of which was east of the Mississippi River. While tracks linked the

livestock-rich region that lay generally along the fortieth parallel to the slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants in Alton, Illinois, Buffalo, New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and St. Louis, they made relatively little use of this integrated system before the Civil War. The cost of transporting cattle per head on rail was often as high as the cost of the cattle itself.¹

By 1850, Chicago was a small city in comparison to New York, Philadelphia and St. Louis. However, the geography of Chicago greatly contributed to the growth of the city. Chicago was linked to the east coast through the Great Lakes and the Erie Canal, and with a canal dug to the Illinois River, Chicago was connected to the Mississippi River as well. New railroads also originated out of Chicago that would lead to a connection over the Missouri River. Close to areas of high agricultural production, Chicago soon became a center for livestock, grain, and produce. In the late 1840s, the Chicago Board of Trade was organized. "Entrepreneur Nelson Morris, who at age twenty-two had established a small Chicago pork plant, in 1866 seized the opportunity to ship live cattle by rail to the Army on the Potomac. He soon became the exclusive provisioner of Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the West, with a lucrative contract."² By the 1860s, meat packing companies that would become volume producers would shift from the east, to the states of Illinois and then Missouri. With the end of the Civil War came the end of contracts for beef. There were large herds on the Texas range with market limitations. Joseph McCoy of Illinois saw the budding link of supply to market.

Joseph McCoy, (no relation to John Calvin McCoy of Westport), was a twenty nine year old livestock dealer from Illinois, who was in Kansas City in 1867, and came up with a lucrative idea. McCoy saw the relationship between the supply of Texas Longhorn cattle, the

¹ Jimmy M. Skaggs, *Prime Cut: Livestock Raising and Meat Packing in the United States, 1607-1983* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1986), 43.

² *Ibid.*, 45.

geography of Kansas City, the completion of the Union Pacific-Eastern Division/Kansas Pacific Railroad, and the demand for beef in the eastern United States. He wondered if there was a better method of getting beef to Chicago more quickly at a lower cost? McCoy's idea was to encourage cattle drovers to bring their herds to cattle pens, pay off the drover, pen up the cattle waiting for shipment by rail, and then sell them to the railroad who then sold them to an eastern market. Cattle drives out of Texas were a constant frustration to farmers in settled states such as Missouri, because it was thought that Longhorn cattle spread a flu disease to their domestic livestock. Longhorn cattle drovers also showed little respect for private property and frequently cut barbed wire fences and allowed cattle to trample them. If cattle drives would head north from Texas to Kansas, cattle could then be shipped from rail heads in Kansas towns that had been recently connected with the Kansas Pacific Railroad. McCoy began scouting out Kansas towns that would be receptive to building cattle pens beside the new rail line.

In the summer of 1867, McCoy found a small town that was willing to embrace his new business idea. "Abilene was selected because the country was entirely unsettled, well watered, excellent grass, and nearly the entire area of country was adapted to holding cattle. And it was the farthest point east at which a good depot for cattle business could have been made."³ The cattle would winter in the new pen in Kansas, where they were fed and rested while gaining weight, and in the spring they would be in better physical condition, hopefully bringing a higher price at market.

McCoy's next step was to secure lumber and build cattle pens. "In sixty days from July 1st a shipping yard, that would accommodate three thousand cattle, a large pair of

³ Joseph G. McCoy, *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and the Southwest* (Kansas City, 1874), 50.

Fairbank's scales, a barn and an office were completed, and a good three story hotel were well on the way toward completion."⁴ McCoy hired a man very familiar with the country and sent him on horseback to intercept a cattle drive from Texas and inform the drovers of a buyer with a cattle pen in Abilene. McCoy would later advertise this arrangement with fliers distributed throughout the region. In 1867, Abilene had received 35,000 head of cattle most of which were shipped on to Chicago because Kansas City had limited accommodations at the time. McCoy's advertising had been successful. By 1869, 150,000 head of cattle had been driven to Abilene. Texas cattlemen were surprised to see how well the cattle had wintered in Kansas.

McCoy first traveled to St. Louis and presented his idea to the president of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, but was told it would never work. He therefore arranged a verbal contract with the Kansas Pacific Railroad to pay him a commission of \$5 per railcar of cattle shipped from Abilene. Shortly thereafter the railroad refused to pay McCoy saying there was no contract in writing. Upon hearing that the railway would not pay McCoy as promised, other creditors began pressing him, forcing him to relinquish his business. McCoy had foresight but lacked business acumen. McCoy would die penniless years later in a Kansas City boarding house. It took an outsider to Kansas City, Joseph McCoy, to bring the supply of cattle into Kansas City. Ironically, the financiers of the Hannibal Bridge, which began construction in 1867, had no idea that by its completion in 1869, it would be ideally positioned to ship packed beef and pork on eastward.

In the spring of 1868, as cattle were shipped into Kansas City, promoted by McCoy, the Missouri Pacific Railroad changed its mind about rail heads and cattle pens. The railroad was the first to build cattle pens, small as they were, in the area near the mouth of the Kansas

⁴ McCoy, *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and the Southwest*, 50.

River and adjacent to the town of Wyandotte, the predecessor of Kansas City, Kansas. In 1868, Edward W. Pattison, who the year before had established a packing house in Junction City, Kansas, opened a packing house in Kansas City in collaboration with J. W. L. Slavens. Their first year yielded 4,209 cattle packed, which represented Kansas City's first stake in the new market. Pattison and Slavens were the first beef packers, later selling out to Jacob Dold. Also in 1868, Thomas J. Bigger of Belfast, Ireland, began packing hogs for the Irish and English markets. The first pork packers in Kansas City were M. Dively and J. L. Michener. Slavens sold his interest to a Dr. F. B. Nofsinger, who then partnered with Pattison.⁵ In 1870, Kansas City had caught the attention of a large Chicago packer, who was interested in packing closer to the source of supply.

With the large influx of cattle shipping into Kansas City, cattle pens, feed and transfer yards, loading docks, and unloading chutes were required. This was the beginning of the Kansas City stockyards located in the West Bottoms. A small building served as an exchange building where commission men bought and sold. This provided an auction environment where cattle were sold to the highest bidder rather than blindly accepting an offer from a railroad. Bisected by the state line, most of the Kansas City stockyards were located in Kansas in the thumb of bottomland called the flats, where many of the railroads converged in Missouri. The land was also convenient for fresh water from the Kansas River while the Missouri River was used as a sewer for the disposal of stockyard waste and manure. Before the location of railroads and stockyards, some of this land was swampy, but much was still farmed. And very appealing to investors was that the land was cheap.

⁵ Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, 171-172.

Once again financiers from Boston saw potential in Kansas City. Initially the stockyards, financed by the railroads, then received a major investment from a Harvard educated investor, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., a grandson of President John Quincy Adams. In the mid 1870s, Adams and the Kansas Stockyard Company had purchased approximately one hundred forty acres in the West Bottoms, adjacent to the Kansas Pacific Railroad, with Adams serving intermittently as president.⁶ Adams appointed Charles F. Morse, a Bostonian, who had hands-on railroad experience as the general superintendent with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway, as general manager of the stockyards. Adams and Morse together strategically bought cheap farm land in the West Bottoms, west of the Kansas River which would become the industrial core of Kansas City, Kansas. Adams, who never lived in Kansas City, began investing in other real estate projects near the West Bottoms. Adams, primarily an investor in railroads such as the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, the Denver and Rio Grande, and the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railways, later admitted that the most money he ever made was from real estate investments in Kansas City.⁷

The livestock trade exploded almost overnight. Some 53,000 cattle were shipped from Abilene through Kansas City as a result of Joseph McCoy's experiment. The first stockyards were not complete until 1871, but small slaughterhouses had packed over 4,000 head of cattle in each of the years of 1868 and 1869. By 1870, some \$3,000,000 of livestock trade had passed through Kansas City banks. In 1870, the trade and commerce report of

⁶ *The Kansas City Evening Star*, November 10, 1880.

⁷ Edward Chase Kirkland, *Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 1835-1915, The Patrician at Bay* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), 69.

Kansas City reported that 21,000 head of cattle and 36,000 hogs were packed.⁸ Kansas City reported the following volume for 1871:

RAILROAD	CATTLE	HOGS
Kansas Pacific	84,597	6,204
Kansas City, Ft. Scott & Gulf	20,325	1,732
Lawrence & Southern	9,540	1,402
Missouri Pacific	<u>281</u>	<u>9,505</u>
Total	114,743	18,843 ⁹

In 1870, a large established packer, Plankinton and Armour, with plants in Milwaukee and Chicago came to Kansas City and rented out the Pattison and Nofsinger plant. Plankinton and Armour were responsible for approximately 13,000 cattle and 15,000 hogs of the 1870 total slaughter.

The city directory of 1870 reported that the gross volume of the businesses of Kansas City, Missouri in 1869, totaled \$79,913,000, excluding banking. The sales and distribution of wholesale and retail dry goods and groceries accounted for \$30,162,000 of the total, an indication of westward shipping and local growth. Lumber, brick making, hardware, agricultural implements, wagons, and saw milling combined for a total of \$13,720,000 of total business assets. The slaughterhouse and packing house business was worth \$1,426,000.¹⁰ Industrial development encouraged by expanding markets and availability of railroad transportation, heavily influenced the rapid growth of slaughterhouses, packing houses, livestock commissions, saw mills, machine shops, foundries, boiler works, grain elevators, and housing, which combined to ultimately change the commerce of Kansas City.

⁸ *Twelfth Annual Report of the Trade and Commerce of Kansas City*, 59.

⁹ Cuthbert Powell, *Twenty Years of Kansas City's Live Stock Trade and Traders* (Kansas City, Mo.: Pearl Printing, 1893), 80.

¹⁰ Malone, *The Kansas City Directory and Reference Book and a Reference Book with a Business Directory for 1870*, 17.

In addition to the influx of financing provided by Charles Adams to the creation of the Kansas City Stockyards, was the major impact of Plankinton and Armour of Chicago in the creation of a slaughterhouse and packing plant in Kansas City. Plankinton and Armour became the largest beef and pork packer in Kansas City. Philip D. Armour had some minor connection with the region before founding his packing plant in the city. Armour was born in Stockbridge, New York in 1832, of Scotch-Irish descent. He had five brothers, four of whom would join the family businesses. One brother, Charles, served in a Kansas Union Regiment during the Civil War and was killed in battle while serving in Missouri. In 1850, Armour left New York for California to join the Gold Rush. The trip took him six months, traveling by rail and foot, and he passed through Independence and Westport on his trek. In California, he convinced an owner of a grocery business to allow him to cut fresh meat for sale to customers. He also worked with a fellow Yankee from Vermont in ditching water from Sacramento and soon the two became water contractors where miners could pan for gold.

By 1856, Philip Armour had amassed \$6,000 and decided to return to his native county in New York and buy a farm. Upon returning home, he found that all his brothers but the oldest had left home. Armour left the farm to visit his older brother Herman in Milwaukee. Once there, he invested his money with Frederick Miles, who owned a wholesale grocery business. He had become interested in transportation of food products and decided to visit Cincinnati where he inspected a pork packing plant. In 1863, the wholesale grocery business was dissolved and Armour bought a grain elevator in Milwaukee. At this point, he met John Plankinton, who was impressed with the young Armour, and Plankinton asked him to join him in the beef packing business. In the meantime, Herman Armour, had

left Milwaukee to enter the grain business in Chicago with his youngest brother, Joseph Armour.

In 1862 Mr. Armour's brother [Philip], Herman O. Armour, had established himself in Chicago in the grain commission business, which now turned over to the care of another brother, Joseph F. Armour, that he might go to New York as a member of the new firm Armour, Plankinton & Co. The Chicago house retained the former name of H. O. Armour & Co. but did not undertake packing until 1868. It was of peculiar importance that the Milwaukee and Chicago houses should be able to ship to a house of their own, that is, to themselves, in New York.¹¹

At this point, three of the Armour brothers operated two separate companies, but apparently learned the importance of transacting business cooperatively with each other.

John Plankinton had come to Milwaukee from Pittsburgh in the mid 1840s with the intent of establishing a packing house for beef. Plankinton originally was only in beef packing as most pork was slaughtered and preserved by farmers. Plankinton and Armour began packing pork in Milwaukee when Armour arranged lucrative contracts with the U. S. Army during the Civil War. Chicago at this time began to grow at a much quicker pace than Milwaukee, and Armour became convinced that they should open a pork packing plant in Chicago, which they opened in 1867 at the Union Stock Yards. By 1868, they were slaughtering beef, pork, and a few sheep in Chicago. Even in such a new industry as commercial packing, Plankinton and Armour was the largest company with the most experience of any company in the United States by 1870 when they opened their operation in Kansas City.

It became evident to Armour [Philip] in 1871 that the livestock producing power of the country was rapidly migrating westward, and in order to keep abreast of it he established at Kansas City, the firm known as Plankinton and Armour, under the immediate supervision of a elder brother, Simeon B. Armour.¹²

¹¹ William O. Stoddard, *Men of Business* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 203-04.

¹² Rudolf Alexander Clemen, *The American Livestock and Meat Industry* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1923), 154.

Simeon was the last brother to leave farming in New York when he was persuaded to join his brothers in business. The health of Joseph Armour began to fail in the early 1870s and Philip Armour moved to Chicago in 1875, becoming the guiding and dominant force in all operations.

After their first successful season of operations in Kansas City in 1870, Plankinton and Armour began building their own slaughter and packing facilities, located very near the mouth of the Kansas River, just west of the Kansas state line. The land for the fifteen acre site was inexpensive, close to rail lines, and convenient to the Missouri River for waste disposal. The first building was 160' x 180' and was two stories in height with a cellar. In 1873, they constructed a second two story building with a cellar measuring 144' x 192', which doubled their capacity. In 1876, the company built an ice house that was three stories high, measured 102' x 185' with walls that were three feet thick. Another ice house of identical proportions was built in 1877. Each facility had a capacity of storing 10,000 pounds of ice.

In 1878 an addition, a rendering room, was made to one of the earlier buildings, 70 x 120 feet, and the business of the plant further facilitated. The buildings now covered two and a half acres, exclusive of the office, smoke houses, ice houses, and saw mill and box factory, which occupied nearly as much more.¹³

Business continued to grow each year after 1878 and additions and or improvements continued to follow. "In 1881 extensive chill rooms were fitted up and cooled through the medium of amoniatic gas and artificial ice manufactured, thus enabling them to run full handed the year around with perfect safety."¹⁴

¹³ Powell, *Twenty Years of Kansas City's Live Stock Trade and Traders*, 90.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

The first city directory for Kansas City, Kansas, published in 1882, provided a report on employment and the economic impact of the Plankinton and Armour slaughterhouse and packing plant. The report listed the occupations and the number of people employed by department:

EMPLOYEES OF PLANKINTON & ARMOUR, DEC. 8, 1881

Hog killing and cutting dept.....	235	Elevator men.....	5
Hide department.....	4	Carpenters.....	20
Cattle killing and cutting dept.....	45	Blacksmiths.....	4
Tanking department.....	63	Masons.....	4
Sausage department.....	19	Curing department.....	13
Gut " 	22	Smoking " []	
Lard " 	29	Pickling " 	16
Market " 	29	Canvas " 	16
Saw House " 	9	Tinners.....	27
Fertilizer " 	7	Canners.....	16
Engine Room.....	9	Coopers.....	19
Machinist's room.....	10	Packing department.....	36
Roustabouts.....	71	Miscellaneous.....	20
Teamsters.....	8	Weighmasters & clerks....	30
Press room.....	9	Office.....	10
Blood men.....	6		
Watchmen.....	8		
Supply men.....	5		

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The total number of employees for this report was 867, excluding the smoking department.

The number of employees in the hog killing department was more than five times the number of employees in the cattle killing department which paralleled the number of hogs killed and packed. In Kansas City, Armour packed considerably more pork than beef. This would begin to change with the advent of the refrigerated rail car. The city directory report continued:

Hold your breath now while we give you a few startling statistics. The capacious maw of this leviathan consumed during the year ending November 1, 1881, 425,000 hogs, 22,000 cattle, 1,000 cords of wood, 6,000 tons of salt, 3,250,000 feet, or 371 car

¹⁵ Caley & Sager, *Directory of Wyandott, Kansas* (Wyandott: Gazette Printing and Publishing House, 1882), 28.

loads of lumber, 4,500 boxes of tin, 225,000 pounds of saltpeter, 9,600 tons of coal, 70,000 tons of ice and---barrels, and the expense account during that year was as follows:

Hogs	\$6,500,000	Wood	45,000
Cattle	850,000	Tin	51,750
Labor	450,000	Saltpeter	22,500
Ice	100,000	Coal	30,000
Cooperage	69,000	Miscellaneous	25,000
Lumber	92,000		
Salt	60,000		<u>\$8,853,250</u>

Nearly NINE MILLION DOLLARS expended in one year. ¹⁶

Plankinton and Armour was apparently largely self sufficient in its operations. They produced their own steam power with coal, smoked meat with cord wood, packed beef in their own tin cans, produced their own barrels, and for the most part made their own ice. These aspects of the operation were keys to controlling their costs and quality. According to the above figures, the average annual wage for all workers listed was \$517.00. In 1871, Armour had packed 14,000 cattle or 30 per cent of the total, and 30,000 hogs or 36 per cent of the total for the Kansas City market. By 1878, Armour packed 18,000 cattle or 96 per cent of the total, and 170,000 hogs or 48 per cent of the total. Armour was the largest employer in Kansas City in the 1880s. Other packing companies had recognized the potential and growth of meat packing in Kansas City as well. By 1880, Fowler Brothers and Swift & Company from Chicago, Jacob Dold & Sons from Buffalo, and Kingan & Company from Indianapolis had located slaughterhouses in Kansas City.

Most of the beef that Plankinton and Armour processed was Texas Longhorn cattle. Longhorn beef was seldom slaughtered and sold for fresh meat; it was known for being stringy and somewhat tough. However, the Longhorn beef canned fairly well, losing its

¹⁶ Caley & Sager, *Directory of Wyandott, Kansas*, 28.

toughness in the canning process. Most of the Longhorn beef was canned, but some was still salted and packed in barrels. "The firm has become a recognized necessity to the utmost confines of civilization, supplying such products as lunch tongues, cooked canned meats, English brawn, etc., to most of the countries of the globe."¹⁷ English brawn was a type of headcheese, made of various leftover beef parts, boiled and jellied, and then canned. Armour also developed highly successful brand names for pork products; "Gold Band" hams and bacon; "White Label" lard; "White Label" soup; and "Helmet" canned meats.¹⁸ Armour Gold Band brand became so popular that it was printed on menus of upscale restaurants.

The slaughtering of livestock in smaller packing plants was a crude process at best, with one group of men performing all the processes such as killing, hanging the carcass, removing the head and hooves, scraping the hide, splitting the body, and finally butchering the meat into pieces for packing. Armour developed a process whereby the animal was handled by grappling hooks or chains that were attached to a track and rail. After the animal was killed, usually with a knife in the heart, the animal was hung over a vat to bleed out and then moved through a scalding tank. From there the animal was moved by a series of pulleys hung by its hind legs, and disemboweled. The carcass was allowed to cool overnight and then the meat was cut into pieces for packing. This process became a disassembly line that allowed the slaughtering and packing process to accommodate a large volume of work.

Armour eventually built packing plants that were six stories tall. The animal was mechanically drawn to the top floor and the rails moved the animal down to descending floors of the plant through a methodical disassembly process. "The process is so rapid, that

¹⁷ Caley & Sager, *Directory of Wyandott, Kansas*, 28.

¹⁸ *The Kings and Queens of the Range*, Dec. 15, 1898, 4.

efficient workmen will have the animal killed and hung up in a space of about two and a half minutes from the time he leaves the pen."¹⁹ This method also specialized labor and made the whole system more efficient. Power for the rails, pulleys, and saws was provided by steam. The killing process at Armour could easily handle 5,000 cattle, 13,500 hogs, and 4,000 sheep on a daily basis when running at full capacity. The packing plant produced lard and rendered fat and tallow. The hides were salted and bundled, and then shipped to a tannery. "The entrails are emptied of their contents, washed, heaved into a tank, and steamed out into grease for mechanical purposes. The hoofs and horns to the glue and comb makers. The stomachs, or manifold, is carefully saved, cleansed, and prepared for tripe."²⁰ The slaughtering/packing process in a large scale plant evolved into a major manufacturing process that required a large pool of labor.

Philip Armour realized that he was not merely in the slaughter/packing house business, but was engaged in a manufacturing industry. Armour's efforts to prevent waste, coupled with his entrepreneurial spirit, led him to seek to alter the use of the waste of slaughtered animals. Disposing of the waste from slaughtered animals had always been a problem. Packers at times paid for the removal of slaughter house waste. Several small businesses found a niche in the market to take waste products, and use them to manufacture other products such as glue, combs, fertilizer, etc. Armour was the leading packer to develop uses for waste products and began buying out smaller manufacturing businesses. In 1885, Armour bought Wahl Brothers glue factory in Albany, New York. He also hired a chemist to analyze the use of all waste products. By 1890, Armour and Company had entered the agricultural fertilizer market. "The residue from glue making and lard processing as well as

¹⁹ *Kansas City Journal*, July 22, 1871.

²⁰ McCoy, *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and the Southwest*, 315.

offal, blood, and bones soon became commercial fertilizer, the demand for which increased markedly during the 1880s, when western bison-bone phosphates and Peruvian guano phosphates were in short supply."²¹ They sold hog bristles for hair brushes and mattress stuffing, blood for tinting paint, beef stomachs for rennet, and they would eventually open a large soap works in Chicago. Other raw materials were used for violin strings, ammonia, and hair curling products. Armour and Company came to deserve the reputation that they used 'everything but the squeal' in meat packing.

The slaughter/packing house industry stimulated other businesses in Kansas City, and increased the need for labor. The railroads, which brought cattle and hogs to the city, also grew tremendously from the shipment out of Kansas City of manufactured meat products. Livestock companies, the livestock exchange, and horse and mule trading grew as well. With the packing houses came the need for large volumes of coal, lumber, tin, and salt. Soap manufacturing in Kansas City followed on the heels of the packing houses. With railroads came shipments of grain into Kansas City and coupled with livestock, the city created a board of trade.

In spite of the growth of the railroads and manufacturing, visitors to Kansas City were decidedly not impressed by what they saw. Rose Kingsley was among the throng of Britons who became enthralled with the American West, especially the Rocky Mountains. Rose, the daughter of Charles Kingsley, author and Anglican canon of Westminster in London, was traveling to Denver when she boarded the wrong train, forcing her to spend time in Kansas City. She reported her impressions of the city in 1873:

My heart sank; for of all places to wait at, a more unpleasant one on a hot day than Kansas City...It stands on a sandy bluff over the river; a strange situation to choose, as the foundations for all the houses on the slope of the hill have to be cut out of the

²¹ Skaggs, *Prime Cut: Livestock Raising and Meatpacking in the United States 1607-1983*, 42.

sand at great expense and inconvenience. I had seen enough of Kansas City to satisfy me.²²

With the growth of slaughter/packing houses came smoke from railroad locomotives, smoke from steam power, smoke from curing in the packing house, and the smell of thousands of slaughtered beeves and hogs. The air was so foul, that men and women complained even about the condition of their clothing:

Most buildings in Kansas City, even though comparatively new, are dirty and smoky looking, because of so many factories, perhaps. In this respect, Kansas City is the Pittsburgh of the West. One cannot wear linen and have it spotless very long here. A man in duck trousers would be a novel sight on the streets of Kansas City, and a lady cannot wear a white dress more than once. Little specks of greasy smut float in the air, and lodge everywhere. These same greasy particles of soot are no respecters of persons, and one riding in the street-cars soon gets a dirty face.²³

Paving of streets, building gutters, and a sewer system came slowly. The air quality, with smoke, carried a pervasive stench. Kansas City had developed quite a reputation for its odor. One traveler calling Kansas City the 'Terrace City' recorded his experience.

I was suddenly and sorely disappointed when the train pulled up in front of a small wooden building, which, with all its surroundings, was in a condition of filth I am quite sure I have never matched. The morning was oppressively sultry and the stench from certain unkept and exposed conveniences about this so-called station was to me instantly sickening.²⁴

The stench or odor of Kansas City would be an enemy of the town for years to come.

The dramatically growing slaughter/packing house industry resulted in major environmental hazards and social issues. In 1880, the six slaughter houses packed 539,097 hogs and 30,912 head of cattle, and waste and offal was dumped into the Missouri River.

22 Rose Kingsley, *South by West or Winter in the Rocky Mountains and Spring in Mexico* (London: W. Ibster & Co., 1874), 33-34.

23 Emma Abbott Gage, *Western Wanderings and Summer Saunterings Through Picturesque Colorado* (Baltimore, Md.: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1900), 186-187.

24 *The Kansas City Evening Star*, November 8, 1884.

Several ice dealers were cutting ice below the city from the Missouri River. One local newspaper observed:

Thousands of gallons of sewage, stock filth and slaughter house and packing house juice are poured into the river every day contributing to the ice that will rattle about invitingly in fifty thousand ice pitchers next summer. Water closet sewage, garbage juice and the drainage from thousands of cattle at the stock yards combine apparently to make a pretty ice.²⁵

Due to increased concerns about public health, the city council of Kansas City, in 1881, appointed Dr. John Fee to the new position of city physician. The council also appointed a sanitation committee and eventually a board of health to deal with public sanitation. Ice dealers found it more convenient to cut ice from the river next to the city, which enabled them to cut their costs of hauling the ice and undercut the prices of the ice dealers who sold ice from cleaner sources. Dr. Fee persisted in his new position to push the city toward adoption of sanitary regulations. For example, he stated that cutting ice in the river so close to the city was a serious health risk and recommended a law that required ice cutting at a distance from the city.

The final contingent factor to fall into place to shape a successful platform for a thriving slaughterhouse industry was labor. Once again, similar to the factors of market, supply, transportation, and finance, labor also had to come from outside the Kansas City community. The population of Kansas City, without the labor of newcomers such as the Irish, could not have supported the new industry. Immigrants from Ireland in mid nineteenth century America arrived with empty stomachs, empty pockets, and few marketable job skills. Their best resource, however, was their willingness to work at unskilled labor. Although most Irish immigrants came from a rural background, the Irish immigrant population was primarily concentrated in urban areas once in America. Irish immigrants and Irish-

²⁵*The Kansas City Evening Star*, January 21, 1885.

Americans supplied the need for labor in the slaughterhouse industry. Most jobs that Irish immigrants filled were the result of the kin and friendship network that they also used to assist with immigration.

In one sense, the history of the United States cannot be fully appreciated without the study of immigration. By the time of the American Civil War, most people living in America had immigrated willingly, with the exception of Africans, who came against their will as slaves. With the exception of Chinese immigrants, most Americans immigrated from Europe. Between the years of 1815 and 1860, some five million people immigrated to the United States, and ninety five percent of those were from European countries. Those ninety five percent of immigrants had come from northwestern Europe: approximately half from Ireland and other parts of Great Britain, and the balance from German states and provinces. From 1820 to 1870, 2,388,721 people immigrated from Ireland, 2,332,976 from German states, and 1,398,803 from Great Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland).²⁶ Overall, German states and provinces produced the most immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century.

Although complex, there were several factors which influenced the immigration of Europeans in the nineteenth century. The population of Europe increased dramatically. "An estimated 184 million people inhabited Europe in 1800; by 1850 there were 266 million and by 1900 more than 390 million people. These figures, however, do not include the millions who had left the continent for America and other places around the world."²⁷ The average lifespan of a European increased due to improved sanitation and public health, lower infant

²⁶ Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Statistical History of the United States*. Series (C89-119, Immigrants by Country), (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1970).

²⁷ James M. Berquist, *Daily Life in Immigrant America, 1820-1870* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 5.

mortality, advances in medicine, and later an understanding of germ theory. The food supply was favorably influenced by the agricultural revolution. The industrial revolution increased and modified occupations and demanded an increase in the supply of labor. And, availability of transportation provided the means for movement of goods and consequently new markets. It was not uncommon for Europeans to move within their own country or region before immigrating to another country. Some movement of people was influenced by the hope of new opportunity and available land in America.

By 1840, the population of Ireland, a small rural island country, was approaching eight million people. Dominated by England and English landlords, Ireland was eighty percent Catholic, ten percent Anglican, and a small percentage were Presbyterians. About three million Irish still spoke Gaelic but were being forced to speak English. Most Irish were tenant farmers, using only hand tools, and were forced into making extensive use of each acre of ground. With the population increasing and with English landlords decreasing the amount of land available for agricultural use, the average Irish farmer was forced to consider other alternatives for economic survival. "Due to political domination by England, Irish agriculture was not entirely free to modernize. Large amounts of land were in the hands of middlemen, who subdivided their plots and rented or sold for short term gains."²⁸ This resulted in less tillable land available for farming and therefore reduced the amount of labor required. The potato famine only exacerbated the situation, forcing the Irish to look for other sources of work. The choices for the average Irish man were to work on a larger farm, learn a trade, seek industrial work, or immigrate, usually first to England. For the average Irish woman her choices included marriage, entering a convent, staying at home while working in a textile-cottage job, or immigration.

²⁸ John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*, 28.

The English made immigration to America difficult for the Irish. The passage to British North America (Canada) cost about 15 shillings, but as much as five pounds to America in the 1830s. Also, one could sail for Canada from any Irish port, but sailing to America was only possible from England, which was preceded by a fourteen hour trip across the Irish Sea. Britain was also motivated to encourage immigration to Canada and other parts of the British Empire, rather than America.²⁹ Due to these conditions, the typical immigrating Irish family could only afford to send one son, who then saved to send money home to Ireland for future family members to immigrate. About a third of a million Irish immigrated first to Canada during the 1840s and then traveled to America which reduced the high cost of travel. In the 1850s, rates for passage lowered by using ships that had transported lumber from North America to the British Isles, and became available for emigrants on the return voyage. Eventually, some passages directly from Ireland to America developed, with lowered passage rates to St. John and New York.

The most intense period of Irish immigration came in a ten-year period from 1845 to 1855. In the fifty-year period between 1820 to 1870, 2,388,721 Irish immigrated to the United States, with 1,333,128 coming in the 1845 to 1855 period, or 55 percent of the whole. By comparison, German immigration during this fifty year period saw 2,333,976 people come to the United States, with 1,011,066 coming in the 1845 to 1855 period, or 43 percent of the whole. The heavy emigration of this period from Ireland was due to the failure of the potato crop, which Ireland was almost totally dependent on for its food source. The consequences for Ireland had long term effects on the economy as many Irish were forced to abandon their land. "Emigration begun in the famine years continued steadily for the rest of

²⁹ James M. Bergquist, *Daily Life in Immigrant America 1820-1870*, 94.

the century as the Irish population shrank from about 8 million in 1841 to 6.5 million in 1851 and to 4.4 million in 1911."³⁰ The vast number of immigrating Irish soon referred to this episode as the famine migration. Beyond the motivation of famine, other motives for emigration included repression of the Irish due to rising tenancy rates, eviction, and lack of other employment opportunities.

Most emigrating Irish left agricultural work in Ireland and moved into American cities where other Irish people and families earlier had immigrated. Having no money to invest in farming and with few skills, manual labor was the most frequent occupation for the Irish. In the U. S. Census for 1860, 1,611,304 Irish were living in the United States, mostly in states with large urban populations. The most heavily populated states for Irish immigrants were:

<u>State</u>	<u>Irish Nativity</u>
New York	498,072
Pennsylvania	201,939
Massachusetts	185,434
Illinois	87,573
Ohio	76,826
New Jersey	62,006
Connecticut	55,445
Wisconsin	49,961
Missouri	43,464
total	1,260,720 ³¹

The most frequently used ports of entry for Irish immigration were New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. The most heavily populated cities for Irish immigrants in 1860 were:

³⁰ James M. Bergquist, *Daily Life in Immigrant America 1820-1870*, 103.

³¹ *Population of The United States in 1860*. The Eighth Census, Volume 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864).

<u>City</u>	<u>Irish Nativity</u>	<u>Population (free)</u>
New York City	203,740	813,669
Philadelphia	95,548	565,529
Brooklyn	56,710	266,661
Boston	45,991	177,841
St. Louis	29,926	190,524
New Orleans	24,398	168,675
Chicago	19,889	109,260
Cincinnati	19,375	161,044
Baltimore	15,536	212,418
Kansas City	1,271	4,418
total	512,384	2,670,039 ³²

The 1870 U. S. Census reported an increase of some 240,000 native born Irish in the United States and seventy five percent of that growth was in the same nine states with the largest Irish population as listed below.

<u>State</u>	<u>Irish Nativity</u>	<u>Population</u>
New York	528,806	4,330,210
Pennsylvania	235,798	3,456,609
Massachusetts	216,120	1,433,156
Illinois	120,162	2,511,096
Ohio	82,674	2,601,946
Wisconsin	48,479	1,051,351
Connecticut	70,630	527,549
New Jersey	86,784	875,407
<u>Missouri</u>	<u>54,983</u>	<u>1,603,146</u>
total	1,444,436	18,390,470 ³³

The growth of Irish born in the same cities, however, was not proportional to the growth in the same states.

³² *The Statistics of the Population of the United States 1860.* The Eighth Census, Volume I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864).

³³ *The Statistics of the Population of the United States 1870.* The Ninth Census, Volume I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872).

<u>City</u>	<u>Irish Nativity</u>	<u>Population</u>
New York	201,999	942,292
Philadelphia	96,698	674,022
Brooklyn	73,985	396,099
St. Louis	32,239	310,864
Chicago	39,988	298,977
Baltimore	15,223	267,354
Boston	56,900	250,526
Cincinnati	18,624	216,239
New Orleans	14,693	191,418
<u>Kansas City</u>	<u>2,869</u>	<u>32,260</u>
total	553,218	3,580,051 ³⁴

By the 1880 U. S. Census, the total number of Irish born population had leveled out and was slightly less.

<u>State</u>	<u>Irish Nativity</u>	<u>Population</u>
New York	499,445	5,016,022
Pennsylvania	236,505	4,197,016
Massachusetts	226,700	1,763,782
Illinois	117,343	3,031,151
Ohio	78,927	3,117,920
Wisconsin	41,907	1,309,618
Connecticut	70,638	610,769
New Jersey	93,079	1,092,017
<u>Missouri</u>	<u>48,898</u>	<u>2,022,826</u>
total	1,413,442	22,161,121 ³⁵

<u>City</u>	<u>Irish Nativity</u>	<u>Population</u>
New York	198,595	1,206,299
Philadelphia	101,808	847,170
Brooklyn	78,814	566,663

³⁴ *The Statistics of the Population of The United States 1870*. The Ninth Census, Volume I. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872).

³⁵ *The Statistics of the Population of the United States 1880*. The Tenth Census, Volume I. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883).

St. Louis	28,536	350,518
Chicago	44,411	503,185
Baltimore	14,238	332,313
Boston	64,793	362,839
Cincinnati	15,077	255,139
New Orleans	11,708	216,090
<u>Kansas City</u>	<u>3,526</u>	<u>55,785</u>
total	561,506	4,696,001 ³⁶

The average Irish immigrant in the years before the Irish famine was not the poorest member of society, who were typically Irish and Catholic, but instead were typically Scotch-Irish and Protestant. By the time of the famine immigration the average immigrant was from the poorer elements of society, and were generally Irish Catholic with rural roots. All Irish immigrants, whether Catholic or Protestant, typically engaged in chain immigration, meaning that one member of a family, usually a younger male emigrated first before other members of the family emigrated. This occurred due to the expense of travel. The single male generally found work near the port of entry as a manual laborer, sending money back home for another family member to emigrate until the family could re-unite.

By 1880, the U. S. Census reported that the most common occupation in the United States was that of a laborer. Unfortunately, instructions to census enumerators, while changing every ten year census cycle, did not during this time differentiate between types of labor. If types of labor or manual occupations were specified, the study of industries, manufacturing, and businesses would become more definitive. The types of labor required in the United States varied by geography, transportation, and markets. Skilled labor occupations such as painters, carpenters, stone masons, tailors, seamstresses, servants were enumerated separately. In Kansas City in 1870 there was an abundant need for labor in

³⁶ *The Statistics of the Population of the United States 1880*. The Tenth Census, Volume I. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883).

slaughterhouses, railroad building, grain milling, digging out bluffs, building curbs and gutters for streets, and sewer construction. The most common occupation for an Irish male immigrant was a manual laborer. Out of 776,279 Irish workers in the United States, 36% were employed as laborers. In Kansas City, the percentage of Irish laborers tended to follow the national average. In 1870, 44% of Irish immigrants, or 979, were employed as laborers while in 1880 there were 983 employed or 31% of the Irish work force.

Kansas City had become known by 1880 for its slaughter/packing house industry. The industry would continue to grow attracting more immigration and more labor. The elements of growth, a market, supply, transportation, financing, and labor were evident in the successful economic growth and development of Kansas City. The Irish, the dominant labor force and dominant immigrant group made a major contribution as a laboring community. However, they made a larger contribution to Kansas City as they created community for themselves.

CHAPTER 4

A NEW COMMUNITY

As much as the growing business community of Kansas City needed labor to grow, labor reciprocally became the essential element for the creating a Irish community. The availability and need of manual laborers was quenched by willing Irish immigrants. With the continual movement of Irish immigrants to Kansas City, the Irish population began making a new community for themselves. The Irish were joiners. They joined the local parish of the Roman Catholic church, fraternal organizations and Irish societies, schools, and a favorable political climate contributed toward a new community and reinforced their Irish identity.

The effects of English racism toward the Irish and the emancipation of enslaved Americans also influenced labor patterns for Irish immigrants. The nineteenth century English view of the Irish saw them as barbaric, stupid, and alcoholics, a bias that had existed for many years before their emigration from Ireland. In the nineteenth century in New York City and Boston, advertisements for employment regularly carried a tag line, "No Irish Need Apply." However, in Kansas City it is difficult to find that bias in newspapers or other print media. Certainly, racist attitudes prevailed but did not prevent employment for Irish workers because they were in such demand as laborers.¹ The labor market in Kansas City was also influenced by freed African American slaves after the Civil War.

In the period before and during the Civil War, Irish immigrants were generally opposed to the abolition of slavery because the Irish anticipated competition from freed slaves in the labor market. After the Civil War ended, many former slaves left the American

¹ Although there is no written evidence of bias toward employment of Irish laborers, a positive climate and attitude was created through the Armour's favorable attention to the Irish, an earlier pork packer Thomas Bigger was Irish, several contractors for bluff removal and railroad work were Irish, and Irish government officials, undoubtedly influenced the employment of Irish laborers.

South and headed west for new opportunities. In Kansas City, an obvious resting point, the newly freed people found a market for labor which they did not expect, and many stopped and put down roots.² Immigrating Irish found receptive labor markets in Kansas City as well, but now found themselves competing with African Americans for manual labor jobs. Like African Americans, the Irish entered the labor market in the lowest paid manual labor jobs. Although the Irish filled similar positions as African Americans in the labor market, they were not excluded from citizenship, property ownership, and voting rights, which led to a path of assimilation that was closed to African Americans.³

Community began to develop around labor patterns. The Irish accepted jobs as laborers simply based on what jobs were available to them. Before the famine generation, canal construction in the eastern United States required vast amounts of labor. Then railroad construction required a large supply of laborers. Teamsters were always in demand. As the industrial revolution expanded, labor was required in textile production and metal production. Most Irish men in Kansas City were employed as laborers in slaughterhouses, railroad construction, digging out bluffs, road construction, milling, and ice cutting. Irish women in Kansas City worked in domestic service, cleaning, cooking, and household tasks. Most Irish immigrants lived in close proximity of their employment and in conjunction with similar employment, community began to develop. The Irish, as well as other immigrants lived close to their employment in other cities, but living close to employment was even more critical in Kansas City, since it was more difficult to get around due to the bluffs and

² Charles E. Coulter, "*Take Up the Black Man's Burden*" 20-22.

³ Kevin Kenny, "Race, Violence, and Anti-Irish Sentiment in the Nineteenth Century," 375. J. J. Lee and Marion Casey, eds. *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States*. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006).

lack of passable streets. The type of labor and living conditions, and how the Irish responded, led to the development of a new identity for Irish immigrants living in America.

A good example of how labor needs and the development of community were linked is demonstrated by the activities of an Irish priest named, Bernard Donnelly. Financed by city real estate taxes, the grading of Main Street and cutting through river bluff cliffs began in 1856. Father Donnelly, a native of County Cavan, Ireland, had attended seminary in eastern Missouri and upon graduation in 1845 became the first resident pastor to the parishes Catholic at Kawsmouth and Independence. By the early 1850s, the bishop of St. Louis had assigned the new priest to the parish in the town of Kansas. Father Donnelly had the entrepreneurial idea of pitching to the new city council that he could employ a few hundred young, single Irish men to provide labor to lower the bluffs, grade and level the streets, and build curbs. If awarded the contract, Father Donnelly would provide transportation, room and board, and supervision of the Irish immigrants that he would recruit from the East Coast. Upon receiving the contract, Father Donnelly wrote letters to the newspapers, *The Boston Pilot* and *The Freeman's Journal of New York* recruiting the labor.⁴ Donnelly required that all laborers had immigrated from County Connaught, believing this would cut down on squabbling and fighting. The men also had to agree to attend Mass regularly and abstain from alcohol. They were all housed in boarding houses on Broadway near 5th and 6th streets. The area soon became known as Connaught Town.⁵

In 1860, the population of the new town of Kansas City was 4,418, with 1,271 Irish immigrants living in Jackson County, and 702 of those in the city. The city that Irish

⁴ William J. Dalton, *The Life of Father Bernard Donnelly: with the Historical Sketches of Kansas City, St. Louis and Independence, Missouri*. (Kansas City, Missouri: Grimes-Joyce Printing Company, 1921), 74-75.

⁵ *The History of Jackson County, Missouri*, (Kansas City, Mo.: Birdsall, Williams & Co., 1881), 438.

immigrants encountered in 1860 was filled with freight sitting on the docks along the river, and the streets were filled with mud. The infrastructure was partly developed with some bluffs and streets cut through, with only one road graded and macadamized from the city to Westport. The 1860 city directory reported that there were 469 buildings, 5,007,686 pounds of freight transported, five stage lines, two railroads under construction, a seven piece band called the Kansas City Band, a Shamrock Benevolent Society, a German singing society named the Orpheus Singing Society, and the Kansas City Bible Society.⁶ The city limits were bounded by the Missouri River on the north and, the Kansas state line on the west and stretched south to twentieth street, and east to a few blocks beyond Troost. The new city was already divided up by the real estate additions filed by developers. According to a young Ohio physician, Kansas City was made up of bluffs, ravines, mud, hills, with numerous saloons, blacksmith shops, rickety structures, and on one end of town there was a slum already occupied by Irish settlers.⁷ The young physician could not understand the attraction of the town, yet decided to stay. In addition to these signs of improvement, the main thing that Irish immigrants found was a job.

The economy and business index of Kansas City in 1860 reflected a community deeply involved in trade, commerce, and an evolving building trend. There were 27 retail grocery stores and provision businesses, six wholesale grocers, six hardware and cutlery dealers, nine dry goods businesses, six clothing businesses, 14 boot and shoe manufacturers, ten blacksmiths, six wagon and carriage manufacturers, and four forwarding and commission

⁶ James Sutherland, *Kansas City Directory, and Business Mirror*. (Indianapolis, Ind.: James Sutherland, Publisher and Compiler, 1861), 29-33.

⁷ A. Theodore Brown and Lyle A. Dorsett, *K. C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978), 23.

agents. The number of businesses far exceeded what would be necessary for a community of some four thousand people and indicates extensive trade and commerce. An indication of the growing community is reflected in the number of building trades. The community had six brickmaking businesses, ten bricklayers and masons, 21 carpenters and builders, five civil engineers, eight contractors, ten blacksmiths, nine boarding houses (three of which were Irish), and two cistern makers.⁸

Two of wealthiest Irish men in Kansas City were John Campbell, a real estate dealer and Patrick Shannon, owner of a dry goods company. Campbell was one of six city councilmen while Shannon was president of the Shamrock Benevolent Society.

Other Irish owned businesses included George Sweeney and Wm. Carroll, grocery merchants, boarding house owners, Michael Madden, Thomas Mahon, John Remy, and Charles Dwyer, and Philip Shannon, dry goods merchants. Possibly the most significant Irish businesses were contractors that did street grading, railroad construction, and bluff removal. These were significant businesses that promised potential future growth due to the development of the bluff city. David O'Neil was a street contractor who listed his business worth at \$70,000. Peter and Patrick Soden earned work for railroad construction, and Thomas Burke contracted bluff work.⁹ By the late 1850s the Irish Benevolent Society and the Shamrock Benevolent Society were already functioning in the community. There were Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches with their own buildings, and other Presbyterian, Methodist and Episcopal congregations formed with no building of their own.

The primary occupations of male and female Irish immigrants in the United States in 1860 was laborer for men and housekeeper for women. In Kansas City there were 209 men

⁸ James Sutherland, *Kansas City Directory, and Business Mirror*, 117-125.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 117-125.

employed as laborers out of 557 employed people. Manual labor was used in digging out bluffs, street grading, railroad construction, flour milling, lumber milling, making bricks, as well as other occupations. There were 211 women with the term housekeeper listed as their occupation, although the 1860 federal census did not differentiate between maintaining one's own household or being paid for the service. The second most common occupation for an Irish female was servant. Out of 68 servants listed in the census, 53 were Irish. The next most common occupations for Irish males were teamster, 26, stone mason, 13, carpenter, 9, clerk, 9, tailor, 6, followed by shoemakers, merchants, and barkeepers. Irish women were also employed as dress makers and laundry workers.¹⁰

The 1860 census for Kansas City listed 16 boarding houses, four of which were Irish owned. This would not account for Irish immigrants paying to rent a room or share a room in another household. The census has numerous examples of single Irish males sharing a household and single Irish females living with other families. The 1860 census lists 192 Irish immigrant families, 226 single males, and 106 single females. Out of 192 families, 122 families listed both parents as Irish born and 30 families with one Irish parent. The balance of the families was those with no children. Twelve of the Irish families had at least one child born in Ireland and six families with all children born in Ireland. In studying the states where children of Irish born parents were born, 108 families had children born in Missouri, 16 in New York, 12 in Illinois, and 10 in Ohio. This would indicate that Kansas City was not the first stop for these Irish families. The census does not indicate if Kansas City was the first stop for single immigrating Irish males and females. Most Irish immigrants were influenced

¹⁰ *Population of the United States 1860*. Eighth Census, Volume I. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864).

to live close to their site of employment and also where other Irish immigrants lived.¹¹ In addition to Connaught Town, where several boarding houses were located at 6th and Broadway, several Irish lived in an area close to the levee around 4th and 5th streets and Delaware, called Stringtown.

By 1860, Father Bernard Donnelly had become the most influential figure in the Irish community. As a spiritual leader for the growing Irish Catholic community, he routinely intervened with young Irish laborers who had problems with alcohol and handling their income. Father Donnelly would intercept a man's income and then dole out an allowance to him. At other times he would take the man's wages and give it directly to the man's wife and children. "He did not wait for Sunday to teach his people industry and saving habits, but did his preaching whenever he met them."¹² His actions to obtain a contract with the city for road grading and lowering bluffs served as a role and business model for Irish immigrants to become a contractor themselves.

Father Donnelly was in frequent contact with other priests in Ireland and continually encouraged immigration to Kansas City. He also encouraged Irish farmers to come and farm in the Kansas City area. Father Donnelly admonished immigrants about the temptations they would face in the city. Bishop Miede of the Diocese of Kansas City encouraged a colonizing spirit in Father Donnelly and asked him to care for some Irish families who had crossed over into Kansas. "While performing this duty for his friend he induced a number of Irish families, recently come from his own county, Cavan, to buy farms on the road leading to

¹¹ *Population of the United States 1860*. Eighth Census, Volume I.

¹² William J. Dalton, *The Life of Bernard Donnelly*, 174.

Leavenworth. The men were practical farmers, the farms productive and they prospered."¹³

This colony of Irish farmers was informally called the 'Irish Settlement.' The first established church in Kawsmouth was a Catholic mission for trappers and fur traders. In 1834, Father Roux, a native of France who was a non-resident priest from St. Louis, had purchased for six dollars, a 40 acre tract of land located along Broadway from Ninth to Twelfth streets.¹⁴

Father Donnelly assumed control of a ten acre strip of the tract that the church anticipated would be used for a cemetery. A small log church had been built at this site, but the land was rocky and difficult to use as a cemetery. Father Donnelly, before becoming a priest was a civil engineer in Liverpool, and thought he could use some of the land as a stone quarry, a lime kiln, and a brick yard. "He dug up the earth and shaped it into bricks. He kept his brickyard in service until the early 70s. He sold thousands of bricks, and what he retained he used in the parish school."¹⁵ The stone quarry and brickyard provided employment for Irish immigrants. Father Donnelly also labored in the brick yard beside the other workers.

Father Donnelly had gained the ultimate trust of his parishioners, a fact that would later backfire on him. During the Civil War, the people of Kansas City became quite fearful just before the Battle of Westport about what the outcome of the battle would mean for their community. Several parishioners took their valuables, such as gold, silver, jewelry, deeds, and cash to Father Donnelly for safekeeping during the anticipated battle. Father Donnelly was reluctant to keep so many valuables, but made a written inventory by name of all that was given to him, placing everything in a wooden box. Donnelly decided to bury the treasures in the church cemetery and asked the sexton to help him dig. After the burial,

¹³ Dalton, *The Life of Bernard Donnelly*, 135.

¹⁴ *Kansas City Journal*, February 19, 1922.

¹⁵ Dalton, *The Life of Bernard Donnelly*, 135.

Donnelly became aware that the sexton, after too much to drink in a tavern, had divulged their activity. Father Donnelly became worried and dug up the box at night himself two more times and reburied it, but regretfully forgot the location. After the war, Father Donnelly was never able to find the box but true to his promise, he paid off each parishioner for their loss.

Father Donnelly also rented out some of the church owned tract of land. Together with that income, and with proceeds from the quarry and brickyard, he was able to help finance several other Catholic buildings and institutions. A new stone church, Immaculate Conception, was built on the site in 1856 and the cathedral, which still stands, was completed in the 1880s. Donnelly purchased a 44 acre site and located another cemetery, Mount St. Mary's. Also located there was St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum. When the Civil War ended Donnelly requested the Carondelet motherhouse in St. Louis help him found a parish school, and St. Teresa Academy was founded in 1866. He supported financially the founding of St. Joseph Hospital by the Sisters of St. Joseph as well. Donnelly also encouraged and financially supported the founding of Sts. Peter and Paul, a German Catholic parish in Kansas City.¹⁶ The area around the ten acre tract of land west of Broadway, maintained a prominent Catholic presence, and encouraged the development of the Quality Hill neighborhood and the Coates House Hotel and Opera House.

An Irish immigrant arriving in Kansas City in 1870 would have seen a larger town than in 1860. The bluffs, only a few had been leveled, would have still hamstrung the growth of the Old Town area beside the river. There was still freight sitting on the docks at the levee, mud and manure still dominated the streets, although some streets were cut through. But there was a lot of growth to the east of Old Town, south beyond the bluffs, and

¹⁶ Dalton, *The Life of Bernard Donnelly*, 139.

businesses were filtering west into what would become West Kansas. The population had grown dramatically. In 1860, there were some 4,400 residents. With the Civil War came a decline in population and commerce: some graded streets even had grass growing in the roadway. The 1860 city directory listed 1,400 names but by 1866 there were only 1,100 names listed and only 280 of those in 1866 were the same as in 1860. By 1870, Kansas City claimed some 32,000 residents but 25,000 was estimated as a more accurate figure. Approximately 25% of the population was foreign born, led by Irish immigrants.¹⁷ The origins of the American native born population were shifting from border states (Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee). to northern states (Pennsylvania and New England).

As described in Chapters Two and Three, three major events in the 1860s would mold the future of Kansas City. Kansas City had survived the Civil War and Order No. 11. Several buildings, homes, and farms in Jackson County and outlying areas had been destroyed by Order No. 11, but Kansas City was still in-tact, in spite of losing residents and businesses. Secondly, the Union Pacific-Eastern Division railroad was completed into Kansas City from St. Louis in September of 1865.¹⁸ This continued to encourage competition for building other railways into Kansas and the connection of Kansas City to Chicago. Thirdly, the completion of the Hannibal Bridge in 1869 was the first railway passage over the Missouri River which connected Kansas City to Chicago and eventually eastern markets. Very shortly, cattle and hog packing would help promote Kansas City from a frontier outfitting trade center to a center of commerce. What all this meant to the Irish immigrant, however, was a growing labor market.

¹⁷ *The Statistics of the Population of the United States*. Ninth Census, Volume I. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872).

¹⁸ Carrie Westlake Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri; Its History and Its People 1808-1908*, Volume 1, (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1908), 250.

By 1870, the social atmosphere in Kansas City was likely more rowdy than it had been in 1860. Cattle were now shipping into West Kansas, and with them came cowboys. The labor used on the Hannibal Bridge was housed in an area called Harlem on the north side of the Missouri River, which many considered a violent settlement. Saloons, gunplay, gambling, and prostitution grew with the constant turnover of passing-thru clientele. The city also lacked the infrastructure and accoutrements of more developed cities. Kansas City by 1870, had two employed firemen, 24 police without uniforms, no water works, and no sewer system. There was no public sanitation or hospital. In 1867, the public school system was created with no budget for any expense, classes were held in a church, abandoned shops or office buildings, and the best school Kansas City had to offer was Father Donnelly's parish school. In 1867, the first public high school, Central High School was founded and in 1869, the first school for African Americans, the Lincoln School was founded.¹⁹

In 1867, the city was divided into four wards. There were 768 buildings accounted for in the city.²⁰ The four wards were quadrants with Tenth Street as the north/south dividing line and Main Street as the east/west dividing line. Between January 1865 and October 1869, 45 new or re-drawn additions and sub divisions were approved by the city council. The largest addition was still McGee's Addition developed by Elijah Milton McGee, son of the pioneer James McGee. This addition was located south of 12th Street and east of Main Street in Ward 2. McGee, who became mayor in 1870, targeted the mobile middle class, although rich and poor lived there as well. Several German immigrants settled in McGee's Addition. Another notable addition was developed by Kersey Coates in the 10th

¹⁹ Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri; Its History and Its People 1808-1908*, Volume 1, 337.

²⁰ William H. Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, 118.

Street and Broadway area in Ward 3. Coates paved the streets in his addition and required that homes were built of brick. This area became known as Quality Hill. Racial segregation in housing did not exist within the city; people basically lived where they could afford and where they found employment. There were Irish immigrants living in all wards of the city, but primarily they lived in Old Town by the levee, East Kansas, and West Kansas. Although seven railroads were operating in Kansas City by 1870, the city on paper took on the appearance of a real estate development. A huge amount of dollars flowed through real estate transactions and encouraged building booms that provided employment for Irish immigrants in the building trades.

In 1870, the wholesale dry goods and grocery business accounted for the largest revenue passing through the city at \$16,000,000. Secondly, the retail dry goods and grocery businesses produced receipts of \$9,240,000. Thirdly, railroad receipts, passenger and freight, accounted for \$7,422,000. Receipts for dollar volume of other businesses were manufacturing \$5,000,000, building improvements \$4,000,000, lumber milling \$2,500,000, retail clothing \$2,300,000, wholesale liquor \$2,000,000, retail boots and shoes \$1,800,000, agricultural implements \$1,500,000, and slaughtering and packing \$1,426,000.²¹ The earliest beef and pork packing businesses were located in West Kansas. An earlier beef packer J. L. Michener, was located on the levee but closed his business during the Civil War and left town.²² Other new businesses that located in West Kansas by 1870 included a machine shop, sheet-iron shop, foundry, smith and forge shop, brass furnace and foundry, and boiler shop. In the Old Town area close to the levee were hat and cap manufacturing, candy production,

²¹ *The Kansas City Directory and Reference Book with a Business Directory for 1870*, 17-18.

²² Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri; Its History and Its People 1808-1908, Volume 1* , 490.

sewing machine manufacturing, stables, liveryes, saddleries, blacksmiths, stove and tin-ware manufacturing, piano and musical instrument dealers, shoe and boot manufacturing, hardware businesses, tobacco manufacturing, and commission and forwarding houses. In East Kansas, just east of Old Town were located flour and lumber mills.²³ Kansas City now had 21 churches, two Catholic parishes for the Irish and one German, and one Hebrew Association. Gas lights had come to a few streets in Kansas City. There were thirteen hotels, nine halls, and then three bands were organized in the city.

The decade of the 1850s saw a record number 914,119 Irish immigrants who came to the United States. This was the decade following the Great Famine in Ireland. In 1860, the population of Missouri was 1,063,489, which included 43,464 Irish people in the state.²⁴ Only 702 Irish immigrants lived in Kansas City in 1860. The decade of the 1860s saw a reduced number of 435,778 of Irish immigrants come to the United States, however the number of immigrants into the state of Missouri for 1870 was higher than 1860. The population of the state of Missouri was 1,603,146 with 54,983 Irish immigrants living in Missouri. In Kansas City, there were 2,869 Irish immigrants in 1870 out of an estimated total population of 25,000.²⁵ This also reinforces the concept that Kansas City was not the first stop for Irish immigrants, that they settled temporarily elsewhere before settling in Kansas City.

In the 1870 federal census for Kansas City, there were 979 men listed as laborers out of a total of 2,184 Irish immigrants employed, or 44%. Ward 1, in Old Town beside the

²³ *The Kansas City Directory and Reference Book with a Business Directory for 1870*, 29-40.

²⁴ *Population of the United States 1860*, The Eighth Census, Volume I. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864).

²⁵ *The Statistics of the Population of the United States*. Ninth Census, Volume I. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872).

levee had the highest population and number of laborers. Ward 4, in West Kansas, where the heaviest industry, manufacturing, and packing plants were located, had the second highest population and laborers. In Ward 1, lived an Irish Deputy Street Commissioner employed by the city. Also within Ward 1 were 12 street contractors, 2 railroad contractors, and 2 general contractors, all Irish owned businesses. Peter Soden was apparently the most successful contractor, listing his estate at \$75,000. Soden also had two brothers with their own contracting businesses. Within the city were 95 men employed in the building trades and included in that total were 39 stone masons or stone cutters. There were 720 women who listed their occupation as keeping house. There was a total of 544 servants in the census which included 115 Irish women. There were 158 boarding houses listed in the census, and 20 were owned or operated by Irish immigrants. Other occupations for Irish men were barkeeper, 23, retail grocer, 17, blacksmith, 13, waiter, 12, railroad engineer, 11, saloon proprietor, 10, and followed by tailors, shoemakers, and pork packers. One eleven year old child was listed in the census as a peanut stand operator.²⁶ The census recorded 319 Irish immigrants living in boarding houses. In 1870, there were 784 Irish families, which included 31 families with all children born in Ireland, and 113 of the total had at least one child in the family born in Ireland. There were 825 single male Irish, and 219 single females listed in the census. There were 327 families who listed Missouri as the birth place of at least one child, followed by New York, 75, Illinois 74, Ohio, 61, and Vermont, 23. Out of the 784 Irish immigrant families, 454 families listed both parents as Irish.

Patrick Shannon was an Irish immigrant who became the eighth mayor of Kansas City and its first Irish mayor. Patrick was born in County Cavan and immigrated after his

²⁶ *Population of the United States 1870*. Ninth Census, Volume I, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872).

parents had died in Ireland. Patrick already had two brothers in America, John and Philip, one in New York and one in St. Louis, and induced them both to re-locate in Kansas City. In 1856, they opened a hotel on the riverfront and then a dry goods business. The dry goods store became very successful; the brothers maintained wholesale connections made before coming to Kansas City. Patrick built the first brick home in Kansas City on Pearl Street, close to the levee, overlooking the Missouri River. Pearl Street preceded Quality Hill as the elite neighborhood. Shannon joined the Confederacy and fought in the Battle of Westport.

Toward the end of the Civil War, Robert Van Horn was serving as mayor of Kansas City and resigned in 1864 and asked Patrick Shannon to finish his term. Shannon was elected in his own right in 1865, making amends for his favoring the Confederacy. During Shannon's term as mayor, a saloonkeeper, Irish immigrant Denis O'Brien became the chief of police. The dry goods business became even more successful, occupying three floors of their building and then moved from the riverfront to the corner of Main and Third Street. The Shannons routinely took out large advertisements in the *Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce*, to promote their business, which included selling all types of dry goods, imported dress goods and fabrics, the latest styles of ladies furnishings, elegant house furnishings, and as well as a boot and shoe room.²⁷ Shannon had served on the city council, the new board of education, and joined the business elite to encourage railroads to Kansas City. Shannon actively supported his church and sponsored "social parties" with fellow Irishmen to raise funds. "The members of the Catholic Choir will give a Social Party at Long's Hall, Monday evening, February 12th, the proceeds to be appropriated for the purchase of a Cabinet Organ for the church. Music by the Kansas City Brass and String Band, who kindly volunteered

²⁷ *Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce*, June 6, 1865.

their services for the occasion."²⁸ Shannon also contributed to St. Teresa's Academy. It was rumored that Patrick and Father Donnelly had known each other before immigration to Kansas City. Together they had founded the Shamrock Benevolent Society. Shannon was gregarious and well known in the Irish community, and together with Father Donnelly, they would have attracted Irish immigrants to Kansas City.

An Irish immigrant arriving in the city of 1880 would have seen a city more than twice the size in population of 1870. Passenger railway service to Denver had begun in 1870, and Union Depot, a major railway station was opened in 1878. In 1876, the second Kansas City livestock building was erected on State Line at 16th Street, and the stockyards had expanded to 55 acres, soon to cover 140 acres. The Coates Opera House had opened in 1870 where the Irish poet Oscar Wilde would later appear. The air quality in Kansas City had deteriorated with six functioning packing houses and the stench in West Kansas permeated the whole town. There were 80 saloons in operation in the city and 71 women, a few Irish, had listed their occupation as prostitute, and were living and working in Ward 1, or in East Kansas. There were also 32 prostitutes residing in ward 5.²⁹ By 1875, the city had awarded a contract with a New York company to develop a waterworks for Kansas City, which would later become city owned. The primary driving force behind the waterworks was to develop a means for firefighting. The city had an organized fire department but was comprised mostly of volunteer fire companies. Missouri law had created a police department and board of commissioners for the city. The city maintained a tough reputation with a number of transients, including cowboys and east/west travelers.

²⁸ *Kansas City Daily Journal of Commerce*, February 4, 1866.

²⁹ *Population of the United States, 1880*. Tenth Census, Volume I, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883).

The explosive growth of Kansas City in the 1870s continued to increase the demand for labor. The first grain elevator was built in 1871, with two more completed in 1873, expanded the milling industry and solidified the grain exchange on the Board of Trade. At the end of the 1870s there were seven grain elevators in Kansas City. Grain receipts included wheat, corn, oats, rye, and barley.³⁰ The coal market in Kansas City grew rapidly in the 1870s after coal was discovered and mined in eastern Kansas. In 1880, over five million bushels were shipped through Kansas City and the 1880 City Directory listed ten coal dealers.³¹ Street grading, bluff removal, cistern building, sewer lines, and street curbs continued to require significant amounts of labor. The largest market for labor however was the slaughter/packing house industry. By 1880, there were four major slaughterhouse/packing houses operating in Kansas City, with Plankinton and Armour employing 1,500 men.³² Agricultural implement, wagon, and stove manufacturers also hired laborers. By the end of the 1870s, there were 19 Irish owned contractors performing railway construction, street grading, bluff removal, and cistern building. There were 17 Irish owned boarding houses, and three Irish real estate investors. The census also reported four Irish physicians, and some Irish business men who owned stores, a lightning rod business and a publisher of city directories.³³ Kansas City was not exempt from the national Panic of 1873, which affected every bank. The city had over extended itself financially and was unable to stay current on payments to contractors and laborers for grading work performed. In the

³⁰ Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, 173.

³¹ *Ballenger & Hoye's Business Directory for 1880*, 702.

³² *Kansas City Journal of Commerce*, January 1, 1887.

³³ *Population of the United States, 1880*. Tenth Census, Volume I. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883).

summer of 1874, a grasshopper invasion affected the western plains which slowed the grain and livestock business. In spite of these financial slowdowns, the population and immigration of Irish continued to grow.

In 1872, the state legislature of Missouri divided the city into six wards. The first ward still contained most of the Old Town and East Kansas, the second ward was bounded by Main Street on the west and south to Twelfth Street, the third ward contained McGee's addition and the Kansas City Exposition Grounds south to the city limits at Twentieth Street, the fourth ward was bounded by Thirteenth Street on the north and appeared positioned for the growth coming south, the fifth ward included some of Quality Hill and the boarding house district next to the Missouri River, and the sixth ward comprised West Kansas, the railyards, and packing houses, west to the state line. In the 1870s the city council had approved another 43 additions and sub divisions and most of the city limits were platted out. There were three distinct Irish neighborhoods; West Kansas which turned into a slum from the environmental impact of the railroads, stockyards, and packing houses, Irish Hill which was located immediately west of Quality Hill on the bluffs, and an Irish Patch around Eighth Street and Cherry where St. Patrick's Cathedral would be built. Connaught Town was dissipating in the boarding house district. There was a new Irish Patch developing just west of the Armour Packing plant in Wyandotte County, Kansas, and in the 1880s a new Catholic parish, St. Bridgets, was built in Wyandotte County. Irish immigrants continued to generally live close to their employment but in the 1870s were also influenced to live close to a Roman Catholic Church: Irish Hill near to Immaculate Conception, Irish Patch near St. Patrick's, and West Kansas near Annunciation Parish at Wyoming and Fifteenth Street. By 1880, there

were Irish immigrants living in all six wards of Kansas City, but the first, fifth, and sixth wards, the poorest residential areas, had the most Irish.³⁴

In the decade of the 1870s, 436,871 Irish immigrated, just slightly more than the previous decade. The total population of Irish immigrants in the United States in 1880 was 1,854,571. The population of the state of Missouri in 1880 was 2,022,826 having grown some 400,000. Missouri in 1880 had 48,898 Irish immigrants. The population of St. Louis in 1880 was 350,518 with 28,536 Irish immigrants. The population of Kansas City had more than doubled in 1880, from an estimated 25,000 in 1870 to an actual 55,785, with 3,526 Irish immigrants. Kansas City had 9,301 total foreign born immigrants in 1880, with 37% of those Irish, making the Irish the dominant foreign born group.³⁵

In the 1880 census the most populous ward for Irish immigrant families and single people was Ward 1, Old Town and East Kansas, followed by Ward 6, West Kansas. The highest number of those employed mirrored the ward populations. The most common occupation of Irish immigrants was laborer, with 983 laborers out of 3,027 total people employed or 32%. In wards three and four, primarily residential areas, the most common occupation for women was keeping house while laborer was the most common occupation in business and manufacturing wards. Even though the Irish population had grown by 50% in Kansas City by 1880, there were still almost the same number of laborers, 979 in 1870 and 983 in 1880, which suggests there was more variety of occupations among men. The number of Irish men employed in building trades was 207 in 1880, which had grown from 95 in 1870. Within the building trades occupations in 1880 there were stone mason, 84, carpenter,

³⁴ Miller, *The History of Kansas City: Together with a Sketch of the Commercial Resources of the Country with Which It Is Surrounded*, 142.

³⁵ *Population of the United States, 1880*. Tenth Census, Volume I, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883).

53, stone cutter, 27, plasterer, 18, painter, 14, brickmaker, 11, bricklayer, 9, and plumber, 4. The number employed in other occupations were teamster, 84, railroad, 84, grocer, 44, and clerks, 32. There were 18 Irish immigrants employed as policeman which is significant since in 1874 there were only 24 in the entire city.

In the 1880 census, 726 Irish women were listed as keeping house, 135 housekeepers, and 114 servants. The difference in occupation definition by enumerators was that women who were listed as keeping house did so for their own home, while those listed as housekeeper were paid by an employer for the service. There were 10 dressmakers in the census. There were 93 boarding houses listed in the 1880 census, 16 of which were Irish owned, and 932 Irish immigrants listed a boarding house as their residence. There were 10 Irish immigrants who listed the Coates House Hotel as their residence. In the 1880 census there were 1,179 families listed, with 604 families with both parents of Irish nativity. There were 17 families who listed all children being born in Ireland, and 80 families in which at least one child was born in Ireland. There were 633 families who had at least one child born in Missouri, followed by New York, 125, Illinois, 95, Ohio, 44, and Pennsylvania, 19. There were 1,103 single males listed in the 1880 census compared to 825 in the 1870 census. The number of single females grew from 219 in the 1870 census to 279 in the 1880 census.³⁶

The town of Kansas City, Kansas in Wyandotte County, was organized in 1872, and originally comprised the thumb of land west of the Missouri-Kansas state line and east of the Kansas River. The town of Wyandotte also was located in Wyandotte County, organized in 1857, and laid northwest of the original Kansas City, Kansas. The town of Armourdale, located in Wyandotte County, was organized in 1882, and is generally west-southwest of the

³⁶ *The Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880)*, (Washington: Government Office, 1883).

original Kansas City, Kansas. The Plankinton and Armour Packing Plant was located in the original townsite of Kansas City, Kansas in 1870. The town of Armourdale was financed by Charles Adams and named after the Armour family, essentially becoming a company town, although the Swift Packing company was within the town limits as well. By 1880, Armour Packing had doubled its capacity and was responsible for one half of the total meatpacking output from Kansas City. The original town of Kansas City, Kansas, home to a significant Irish Patch, was also home to the largest percentage of foreign born and African Americans in Wyandotte County in the nineteenth century. In 1886, Kansas City, Kansas was re-organized to include the original townsite, and annexed the towns of Wyandotte, Riverview, Armstrong, and Armourdale.³⁷

Within the city limits of Kansas City, Kansas in 1880 the census records 3,202 people of which 270 were Irish immigrants. There were 67 families, 80 single males, and 11 single females. The census enumerator, unlike the Jackson County Missouri census, distinguished between some types of labor. Among the Irish immigrants, there were 10 railroad laborers, 35 packing house laborers, and 62 general laborers. There were 162 male Irish immigrants out of which 107 were laborers or 66%, which was twice the number when compared to Kansas City Missouri. There were 62 female Irish immigrants who listed their occupation as keeping house as well as five servants. Twenty-one families of the 67 families of Irish immigrants had children born in Kansas, sixteen families had children born in Missouri, and ten families had children born in Illinois. The Illinois Irish immigrant families were likely packing house workers from the Chicago stockyards who came to Kansas City to work for Armour. These figures would indicate that families living in Kansas City, Kansas were on their second or third location since leaving Ireland. Only eight of the 67 families had

³⁷ *Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas*, (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1890), 389.

children born in Ireland. Four families had children born in New York, and five families had children born in Massachusetts. Sixty-five Irish immigrants lived in boarding houses, while most Irish immigrants in Kansas City, Kansas lived in shanties with no house number or street name, indicating an Irish Patch. There was a growing population of African American and mulatto people living in Kansas City, Kansas.³⁸ The census recorded 4,576 African Americans living in Wyandotte County in 1880.

Working as an Irish immigrant laborer in the years from the 1850s to 1880 meant that jobs were usually available but work was not consistent or year around, so that workers had to be flexible according to what work was available, and that labor could be dangerous. The packing house industry grew enormously, but work was seasonal, especially in the early 1870s. Most slaughtering was done in the cool and cold weather leaving most laborers without work the rest of the year. Refrigerated rail cars came into more common use by 1875 which meant that packing could be done in all types of weather according to the supply of beef and pork. Packing house labor was the most plentiful but also the most dangerous. It was not uncommon for some laborers to get crushed by an animal carcass, to receive burns by the scalding tanks, and to receive bruises, cuts and even amputations from butchering and grappling hooks. The pay for packing house workers did not escalate according to the packed output of beef and pork but instead remained low.

Since there were a number of Irish contractors who would give preference for Irish laborers, work was available, but the number of jobs contracted depended on the city budget to finance lowering of bluffs, grading streets, building curbs, cisterns and sewers. The grain elevator business and milling was also affected by the availability of grain. The building of

³⁸ *Population of the United States, 1880*, Tenth Census, Volume I, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883).

the water works was also affected by city funding although initially it was a private enterprise. Railroads were built with manual labor but this type of job only lasted when the track was initially built. Labor in the building trades was at times plentiful but was affected by housing shortages and then, over supply. During building booms, work was plentiful in the brickyards. In the early 1870s it was estimated that Irish immigrants supplied one fifth of the labor force. Work was available, but not on a year around basis which caused a lot of transient movement of single workers who could easily move on to another geographic location. Slum like living conditions in West Kansas also influenced laborers to find other employment and move out of the district.

Whether one was an Irish immigrant or not, living with the odor and stench was a trial in Kansas City, and public sanitation problems were numerous. The odor problem was so prevalent that the city physician appointed a stench committee. "A great many citizens are continually complaining of the great number of hungry cows and hogs that are prowling around our streets. One gentleman states that night before last he lost flowers and shrubbery to the value of seventy-five dollars by an unruly cow getting into his yard."³⁹ In May of 1881 laborers were attempting to build a new foundation at 5th and Main, when they "laid bare an old privy vault, the stench from which is a source of much ill humor on the part of the neighbors. Business men and others in the vicinity desire that the contractor be compelled to remove the filth instead of leaving it exposed to the hot sun."⁴⁰ The stables at the horse railroad owned by the Corrigan family contributed to the city stench. "Complaint was made yesterday to Health Officer Russell that a nuisance on a big scale was annoying people who

³⁹ *Kansas City Journal of Commerce*, October 4, 1871.

⁴⁰ *Kansas City Evening Star*, May 31, 1881.

reside near Corrigan's street car stables, at Seventeenth and Madison Ave. The officer visited the stables and found a large accumulation of manure that gave forth an odor strong enough to sicken the entire neighborhood."⁴¹ By July 1886, the police were monitoring new sanitation policies and making charges as appropriate.

The police have been keeping a pretty close watch, of alleys and back yards recently and yesterday afternoon eight persons who had failed to heed the notice served upon them were placed under arrest. Those who appeared in police court this morning were, for the most part, residents of the southwestern part of the city, and occupy houses on the edge of the bluff. They have been in the habit of throwing slops over the bank and in consequence the people living on the ledge below have been compelled to literally wade through foul pools and heaps of decaying vegetable matter.⁴²

The local newspapers routinely reported numerous sanitation problems that were compounded by smoke and smell from packing houses.

The boarding house business, with no guidelines for occupancy limits or sanitation, was a public health problem. Anyone could get in the business. The 1870 census reported that 319 Irish immigrants listed themselves as boarders. The census also recorded 158 boarding houses, 20 of which were Irish owned, while the 1870 city directory only listed 45 boarding houses.⁴³ The 1880 census reported that 889 Irish immigrants listed themselves as boarders. The census also recorded 91 boarding houses, 14 of which were Irish owned, while the 1880 city directory listed 76 boarding houses. By the mid 1880s, the city physician singled out the disease problems with tenement houses noting that most still did not have sewer connections and that sanitation laws were difficult to enforce.⁴⁴ Very few families

⁴¹ *Kansas City Evening Star*, July 30, 1884.

⁴² *Kansas City Evening Star*, July 15, 1886.

⁴³ *The Kansas City Directory and Reference Book with a Business Directory for 1870*. 14.

⁴⁴ *Kansas City Evening Star*, November 17, 1884.

lived in a boarding house. Most of the Irish immigrants living in a boarding house were single men while single women lived with their family or at times with a family that employed them. Many Irish immigrant families lived together in shanties and with other families lived in make shift houses. The properties in the West Bottoms in West Kansas were recognized as being in the worst condition. Some were in such deplorable condition that there was no landlord and some families simply occupied them. The poor committee of a local charitable organization described the shanties as being one room, with a slope roof so short that an adult could barely stand up, and damp flooring with loose planks that exposed a clay base.⁴⁵

Beside a reputation for packing houses, railroads, and jobs, Kansas City was also known as a "young man's town." There were numerous young males, immigrant and non-immigrant, passing through the city. In the 1880s, Kansas City was known for having four times as many saloons as churches. The local newspaper routinely listed the city recorder's docket each day. "There seem to have been many who improvised a celebration of their own yesterday, as the charges of drunkenness were numerous."⁴⁶ There were city ordinances against keeping a brothel, against visiting a brothel, against operating a brothel in a saloon, and against any woman engaging in acts of prostitution. The police department was viewed as incapable of maintaining the law, much to the dismay of law abiding residents. "What must I do to rid the neighborhood of Grand Ave. and Third St. of houses of ill-fame? I have a house there which I desire to rent to decent respectable people, but am unable to do so on

⁴⁵ *Kansas City Evening Star*, April 10, 1884.

⁴⁶ *Kansas City Evening Star*, July 15, 1884.

account of the cribs in the neighborhood."⁴⁷ A crib was a nineteenth century term for the dwelling place of "sporting women" or "soiled doves." In an attempt to expose the prostitution problem, the local newspaper reported the names of prostitutes charged and fined, the names of the proprietor of the saloon or owner of the house, and charged the prostitutes customers with vagrancy.⁴⁸ Gambling was a continual problem, partially because the state and city wanted some types of gambling classified as a felony, while other types of gambling were acceptable if boys and laborers did not participate.⁴⁹ But gambling, like prostitution and drunkenness, flourished and underscored the rowdy nature of Old Town and West Kansas. These were all serious temptations for the young Irish male immigrant.

Statistics of immigration are essential to tell the story of the Irish laborer. A summary of the lives of five Irish immigrant laborers come closer to the everyday fabric of their lives. Michael Ryan, Edward Doherty, Peter Soden, Con Murphy, and Daniel Ahern were all Irish immigrants who came to Kansas City after other stops in America. They all began employment as manual laborers and within their lifetime made several job changes that enabled them to improve their socio-economic status. Each of them were quite willing to labor and were entrepreneurial in finding new opportunities. Their lives certainly did not fit the English stereotype of the lazy Irish.

Michael Ryan, an Irish immigrant laborer, was born in County Cork, Ireland in 1826 and immigrated to America at age 21, arriving in Boston in 1847. Ryan left Boston shortly after, and moved to Virginia where he married an Irish immigrant named Mary Murphy, also

⁴⁷ *Kansas City Evening Star*, July 15, 1881.

⁴⁸ *Kansas City Evening Star*, October 28, 1880; July 15, 1881; September 30, 1884; September 16, 1884; October 16, 1884; March 7, 1885.

⁴⁹ *Kansas City Evening Star*, December 27, 1880.

born in County Cork. They moved to Kansas City in 1857, having met Father Donnelly, but found it difficult to find work at that time.⁵⁰ In the 1860 census Ryan was listed as a laborer and he and Mary had begun a family that would eventually grow to eleven children.⁵¹ Ryan began raising potatoes on six acres of land he rented with two other immigrants while living in a \$15 per month rental house. Saving what money he could, in three years, he bought a strip of land at 15th and Locust and continued to raise and sell vegetables to the city market. Ryan wished to build a cabin on the land but could not afford to buy lumber so he and two colleagues cut down cottonwood trees by the Missouri River, and they built log cabins from the logs. Ryan became a bricklayer for six years and during the Civil War sold his house in order to build another house on Charlotte Street between 17th and 18th streets. When the Civil War ended he bought one acre of land on twentieth street for three hundred dollars, but paid this off through his labor. Ryan then sold his Charlotte Street house and bought 160 acres by the Blue River paying thirty-five dollars per acre and then sold that within a few years for 125 dollars per acre. Ryan moved back into the city buying two brick homes on 18th Street. In the 1880 census Ryan was still listed as a laborer. His wife's occupation was keeping house, while one daughter was a laundry worker, another daughter was a servant, and his oldest son was a carpenter.⁵² Ryan later was employed by the post office for fourteen years. Primarily a laborer, he found security through buying and working small lots of land in the city and eventually, selling a quarter section of land outside the city limits.

⁵⁰ Carrie Westlake Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People 1808-1908, Volume 2*, (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1908), 484-486.

⁵¹ *Population of The United States in 1860*. The Eighth Census, Volume I, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864).

⁵² *Population of the United States 1880*. Tenth Census, Volume I, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883).

Edward Doherty was an Irish immigrant who arrived in Kansas City in the spring of 1870 where he lived with the Finnican family in Ward 1, and listed his occupation as laborer. The Finnican family was comprised of a 50 year old woman with six children living in the home, three of which were adult males who were laborers.⁵³ Doherty was born in 1847 in County Clare, Ireland. His parents were farmers who remained in Ireland. Edward left Ireland in 1867, sailing from Liverpool to New York in eleven days. He proceeded to Troy, New York where he worked as a laborer for a few months, then moved to Chicago where an older brother, who was a builder and contractor, lived. Edward worked as a laborer in Chicago and attended night school until moving to Kansas City where he was hired as a switchman on the Kansas City, Fort Scott, & Gulf Railroad. In 1873, Doherty worked with a partner in a retail grocery store in West Kansas at Fourteenth and Wyoming streets. After the Panic of 1873 doomed their business they were able to open a larger grocery store at Liberty and Fourteenth streets. After eleven years in that business he sold out and opened a saloon at Sixteenth and Wyoming streets, a business which he held for seven years. Doherty helped Father William Dalton build Annunciation parish church in 1871, at Fifteenth and Wyoming. Doherty was married in 1872 at St. Mary's parish in 1872. Eight of their children were baptized by Father Dalton.⁵⁴ In 1880 Edward Doherty was living on Genessee Street in West Kansas with his wife, five small children, and his father in law, and his occupation was now listed as grocer.⁵⁵

⁵³ *Population of the United States 1870*. The Ninth Census, Volume I, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872).

⁵⁴ Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People 1808-1908, Volume 2*, 391-392.

⁵⁵ *Population of the United States in 1880*. Tenth Census, Volume I.

Peter Soden was an Irish immigrant who became one of the most successful contractors in Kansas City by the end of the nineteenth century. He was born in 1830 in County Cavan, Ireland and at age 18 he settled in New York in 1848. Soden was influenced by reports of the frontier and in 1852 he moved to Independence in Jackson County. He found a job at the U. S. Army Arsenal in Liberty, Clay County, where he worked for three years before moving to Kansas City. In 1859, he was living with his 59-year old mother and a 26-year old brother and cousin, in a house at Third and Oak streets in Old Town.⁵⁶ The two brothers and cousin listed their occupations as laborer. In 1860 Soden had received a contract for the labor of building a railroad bed through part of Jackson County for the Missouri Pacific Railway. Soden also was able to win contracts with the city of Kansas City and was responsible for some of the initial cutting through of streets. He also continued to win railroad contracts. Due to his early success as a contractor, he saved money for his sister and brothers to immigrate. In 1870 Soden listed his wife and four small children in the household still living in Old Town in Ward 1. His occupation was listed as contractor and he listed his real estate valuation at \$75,000.⁵⁷ Soden had also become interested in real estate investments and renovated houses for re-sale. He also ran freight from Kansas City to Colorado and contracted to riprap the Missouri River from the mouth of the Kaw River to Third Street docks in Old Town.⁵⁸ Soden would have employed a number of laborers for the wide variety of railroad, street grading, and real estate contracts he won. In 1880 Soden had

⁵⁶ *Kansas City Directory and Business Mirror for 1859-60*. (St. Louis, Mo.: Sutherland & McEvoy, 1860), 59.

⁵⁷ *Population of the United States in 1870*. Ninth Census, Volume I.

⁵⁸ Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People 1808-1908, Volume 2*), 214-218.

moved to Central Street in Quality Hill with his wife and four children, and living with them was a nephew who worked in a telegraph office.⁵⁹

Cornelious Murphy, "Con," came to America with his family when he was one year old. Con was born in County Cork, Ireland and his family immigrated to Virginia living there until 1857 when they came to Kansas City, part of the way on a boat. Con's father settled into farming on land that would become 15th and Locust streets. The family was living in Westport by 1870 where Con's occupation was listed as harness maker.⁶⁰ His oldest brother Jeremiah, was a mattress maker and another older brother, Daniel, was a farmer. Con spent three years as a harness maker but then became employed as a clerk in a clothing store. Con's brother, Daniel Murphy had become Collector for Jackson County and hired Con as an assistant collector.⁶¹ Con was later elected to the office of county marshal, a position he held for four years. He was then hired by the Kansas City post office as superintendent of mail carriers. After serving in that position for four years he returned to the dry goods business with a partner, only to leave that business to become an inspector of detectives in the police department. His final occupation was that of owning a livery stable that he operated out of Fifth and Grand streets, and later bought out another livery business at Thirteenth and Walnut streets.⁶²

Daniel Ahern, an Irish immigrant, became the Chief of Police in Kansas City. He was born in County Limerick, Ireland, in 1855 where his parents were farming. Ahern sailed from Queenstown, Ireland to New York in the spring of 1879. Ahern's friends encouraged

⁵⁹ Ibid., 214-218.

⁶⁰ *Population of the United States in 1870*. Ninth Census, Volume I.

⁶¹ *Ballenger & Hoye's Kansas City Business Directory for 1880*, 36.

⁶² Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People 1808-1908, Volume 2*, 23-24.

him to come to Kansas City, where he lived with his brother in law and sister John and Johannah Scanlon in West Kansas. Both John Scanlon and Daniel Ahern listed their occupations as laborer.⁶³ Daniel was hired as a mechanic for the Fort Scott Railroad but by 1881 he was appointed to the police force by Mayor Daniel Frink. He held the position of patrolmen, was promoted to sergeant, lieutenant, and then to Chief of Police. Ahern was Catholic, a member of the Knights of Columbus and the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks.⁶⁴

Between the years of 1853 to 1880 two Irish immigrants were elected mayor of Kansas City, Patrick Shannon serving 1864-1866, and Robert H. Hunt serving in 1872. There were twenty people elected mayor during this period with the average term lasting a year and a half, and alternating between Republicans and Democrats, with a Citizen Party attempting government reform in 1873. More significantly, there was at least one Irish immigrant on the city council during these years with John Campbell, the real estate developer, serving seven years. In 1872, over 20 Irish immigrants ran for 12 council seats in six wards and three were elected, Michael Flynn, Patrick Kirby, and Patrick Fay.⁶⁵ Irish immigrants were very involved in administration of city government holding appointed positions of marshal, county sheriff, auditor, collector, treasurer, assistant postmaster, postmaster, and justice of the peace.⁶⁶ There were numerous Irish contractors for bluff removal and street grading that benefitted from Irish immigrants who occupied the positions

⁶³ *Population of the United States in 1880*. Tenth Census, Volume I.

⁶⁴ Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People 1808-1908*, Volume 2, 462-465.

⁶⁵ Theo. S. Case, ed., *History of Kansas City Missouri*, (Syracuse, N. Y.: D. Mason & Co., Publishers, 1888), 425.

⁶⁶ Case, *History of Kansas City Missouri*, 204-209.

of city engineer, assistant city engineer, and assistant street commissioner. As Irish contractors gained contracts from the city, they would have influenced the hiring of Irish labor. However, by 1873, the city experienced severe financial problems and defaulted on paying contractors and laborers. Reports about misappropriated funds in the city treasury became public, and contracts and labor positions dried up.

The possibility of a fire was a major threat to the well being of the Kansas City community since the city did not fund or authorize a fire department until 1871. For the safety of the community some residents became volunteer fire fighters, with neighbor helping neighbor. Volunteer fire companies called 'hook and ladder companies' formed with a foreman and a team of firefighters. The first hook and ladder company in Kansas City was formed in 1867 and named "John Campbell" in honor of the city councilman John Campbell. The foreman was an Irish immigrant, Frank Foster, the postmaster. A team of 25 firefighters, mostly Irish, composed the volunteer company. When Campbell purchased the first steam fire engine for the city, the company named the equipment for Campbell. The day of its arrival to Kansas City became a major celebration in the community. According to Carrie Westlake Whitney:

When the boat slowly swung into the landing at the levee, with the new engine aboard, Colonel Foster and his men in uniforms of red shirts with pearl buttons and blue trousers, were drawn up in imposing array to welcome the new arrival, while all the town turned out to applaud. With elaborate ceremony the christening took place and the "John Campbell" became the protector of Kansas City property.⁶⁷

Frank Foster later became the first paid Fire Department Chief for Kansas City. Joseph McArdle, an Irish immigrant, was one of two of the first firefighters that the city employed in 1872. The fire department became a major employer for Irish immigrants.

⁶⁷ Whitney, *Kansas City, Missouri; Its History and Its People 1808-1908*, Volume 1, 208.

Similar to the Fire Department, Irish immigrants were also hired into public service jobs at the Police Department. The department was not organized under the city until 1874. Previously, the chief of police was a marshal which was an elected position. Patrolmen or policemen were generally appointed by the marshal or city council, as a result of a political favor. Irish immigrant Jeremiah Dowd, a laborer, had been elected marshal in the 1860s and Charles Dougherty, an Irish immigrant living in Independence, was elected county sheriff in 1870. There was an abuse of the political appointment system and changes were made where policemen could not engage in any political work. "Appointments are made by a board of police commissioners, consisting of the mayor, as ex-officio president of the board, and two members appointed by the governor, sworn not to appoint any applicant for political or other reasons aside from his proven eligibility and efficiency."⁶⁸ When the department was organized under city administration there were 25 officers. In the 1880 census there were eighteen officers listed and one police captain, all of whom were Irish immigrants.⁶⁹

Irish immigrants who came to Kansas City looking for work were welcomed and supported by the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church was the first denomination to establish a mission and then a parish in Kansas City. Father Donnelly became the first resident priest and built Immaculate Conception in 1857. The second parish established in Kansas City was Saints Peter and Paul in 1867 in the area of McGee and 9th streets. "German Catholics were among the principal supporters of Father Donnelly from his coming to Kansas City to reside."⁷⁰ Sts. Peter and Paul was essentially a German Catholic parish,

⁶⁸ Case, *History of Kansas City Missouri*, 213.

⁶⁹ *Population of the United States in 1880*. Tenth Census, Volume I.

⁷⁰ William J. Dalton, *Historical Sketches of Kansas City, "Souvenir of Silver Jubilee of Annunciation Parish"* June 30, 1897, 11.

but the founding of which was largely encouraged by Father Donnelly but, pastored by Father Ernest Zechenter. The German parish built the first pipe organ in Kansas City. A new Irish parish was established in 1872, Church of the Annunciation at Wyoming and 15th streets in West Kansas. A third Irish Catholic parish, St. Patrick's, was established in 1873 at Cherry and 8th streets. Father Halpin of St. Louis, once again encouraged by Father Donnelly, was the first pastor of St. Patrick's. The parish started with Father Halpin saying mass at Sts. Peter and Paul for three months before a separate building was constructed. Much of the building material for St. Patrick's was taken from a church under construction at Oak and 7th streets and re-used. "As there were many contractors and mechanics living in the parish and a very little work was going on at the time, all the idle men and un-hired teams were gratuitously helping to draw material and place it in the walls. The result was that the stone masonry cost the parish but a very small sum in money."⁷¹ As Irish immigrants settled largely close to where jobs were available, the placement of Irish Catholic parishes also heavily influenced the choice of a neighborhood. An Irish patch or Kerry Patch or Irish Hill was close to each of these Irish Catholic parishes. The diocese of Kansas City was organized in 1880 with John J. Hogan, an Irish immigrant, serving as bishop.

By the late 1860s and very early 1870s, a large concentration of Irish immigrants had settled into West Kansas where the packing house industry, railroads, and machine shops were located. It made sense for Archbishop Kendrick of St. Louis to make plans for a Catholic parish to locate in West Kansas. Father William Dalton, a second generation Irish priest from St. Louis was chosen as pastor. The Catholic community and Kansas City community supported the cause. It was decided that the annual Catholic Christmas Fair and

⁷¹ Dalton, *Historical Sketches of Kansas City*, 12.

Festival of 1872 would be held at Frank's Hall to benefit the new parish in West Kansas.

"This year the festival has been generously conceded to the youngest and most needy parish, that of West Kansas City. Father Dalton intends to make this fair a success. He should be liberally supported in his undertaking."⁷² The new parish was named Church of the Annunciation and already claimed a membership of four hundred families. A local newspaper reported:

Father Dalton, to whom is due all credit for the founding of the church in that portion of the city, arrived here one Saturday in June of last year, Sunday June 23, commenced his missionary labors by saying Mass in O'Brien's Hall. During the following week he sought out and gathered together the members of the Catholic faith in West Kansas City, and in one week afterwards succeeded in erecting a frame church 60 feet long by 35 wide. Thus was the first organized effort made to establish a church in the bottom.⁷³

The new parish grew quickly with new families and a baby boom.⁷⁴ The parish grew to over 1200 families by the end of the 1870s. The parish established a school that was led by the Sisters of St. Joseph, a pastor's residence, and a residence for the sisters.

Annunciation was known as the parish for working people and became a community center as well as a church. Father Dalton insisted on welcoming people of all ethnic backgrounds to the parish. Father Dalton was a priest who was involved with widows, the hungry, family squabbles, sick children, advice for drunken fathers, and all troubles that plagued Irish immigrants.

The laying of the cornerstone for Annunciation parish in September 1872 was quite an event for the Kansas City Irish community. Bishop P. J. Ryan from St. Louis came to bless the cornerstone and preached to a crowd that he claimed was the largest Catholic

⁷² *The Kansas City Times*, November 30, 1872.

⁷³ *The Kansas City Times*, January 5, 1873.

⁷⁴ *Baptism Record*, Annunciation Parish, Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph.

gathering he ever attended. There were four Catholic societies in attendance, the Irish Benevolent Society, St. Joseph's Benevolent Society, St. Vitus Society, and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, with parish priests from Leavenworth, Independence, Butler, Holden and Sedalia, including Father Donnelly and Father Zechenter. There were fourteen carloads of parishioners from Leavenworth in attendance. A parade was headed by the fire department, the Irish mayor R. H. Hunt, and city officers. Jeremiah Dowd, the marshal of Kansas City served as the Grand Marshal of the Parade. "The audience was a solid mass of humanity, reaching from the platform at the southeast corner of the 127 foot lot to the street and across Wyoming east almost to Liberty Street. In width it covered fully 150 feet." ⁷⁵ Archbishop Alemy of San Francisco and Archbishop Lamy of Santa Fe said Mass and 30 children received their first communion before the ceremony.

By 1880, the Catholic Church had made a lasting impact on the Irish immigrant community and the Kansas City community. In 1871, *The Times* had invited the Catholic community as well as others in Kansas City to a preaching series by Father Jacobs of St. Joseph Diocese, which was attended by hundreds from other denominations. In fact, he claimed he would appeal to even those who may differ from him in his religion.

A series of engrossing interest in the Catholic community are in progress at the church of the Immaculate Conception of Father Donnelly's church, the attendance being so great that the church is filled almost to suffocation and crowds gather upon the steps, in the door-ways, and at the windows.⁷⁶

The church's main parishes, Immaculate Conception, Saints Peter and Paul, St. Patrick's, and Annunciation all had schools. St. Teresa's was an academy for young women begun in 1866. In the early 1870s, a new small parish, Our Lady of Good Counsel was

⁷⁵ Dalton, *Historic Sketches of Kansas City*, 14

⁷⁶ *The Kansas City Times*, October 28, 1871.

begun in Westport, which at the time was still outside of Kansas City. There was a Catholic hospital, St. Joseph's, begun in 1875, predated only by the city hospital in 1870. Other charitable organizations included a home for the aged and an asylum for orphans. Another religious order, The Redemptorist Fathers from New Orleans founded a new parish south of the Kansas City city limits and north of Westport. The clergy of the diocese was largely Irish.

Irish immigrants coming to Kansas City also benefitted from the Irish fraternal and voluntary associations. Fraternal and voluntary associations were a common and popular aspect of society in nineteenth century immigrant America. Generally begun by an ethnic community, the organizations served numerous purposes such as charity, burial society, preserving ethnic identity, observing ceremonial occasions, and social functions. Some Irish organizations were also begun to combat bigotry and prejudice. But no one organization served every purpose. All Irish voluntary organizations admitted only members who were male, Irish, and Catholic. The organizations that became solely political for the defense and independence of Ireland found themselves distanced by the Catholic church. The first Irish fraternal organization in Kansas City was the Shamrock Benevolent Society. It was formed in 1858 and was a charitable organization that also sponsored social activities such as dances and parties. It evolved into the Irish Benevolent Society which was formed in 1870. The local newspaper reported: "This veteran organization, which stands foremost among the institutions of our city, both in participating in her public displays and in extending the hand of fellowship to its members, held its annual election of officers on the 5th inst..."⁷⁷ The Ancient Order of Hibernians was organized in 1872, from the finest young men of Irish

⁷⁷ *The Kansas City Times*, November 30, 1872.

descent who were in good standing with the Catholic church. This organization acknowledged they were an extension of the AOH nationally and on the state level, and advertised their record of payouts of sick and death benefits.⁷⁸ The local officers for the voluntary organizations were typically already active in the community and local politics through service in city offices and/or on the city council.

The year 1872 in Kansas City saw the Irish community coming together. There was an Irish mayor and city councilmen, there were new Irish Catholic parishes, numerous Irish contractors, ever arriving Irish immigrant families, a coming Irish baby boom, and the establishment of the Plankinton-Armour Packing plant with jobs. It is not surprising then that the first St. Patrick's Day Parade was held on March 17, 1873. The *Times* heralded: "For the first time in the history of our young city, has the fete day of St. Patrick, Ireland's patron saint, been observed with proper magnificence and respect, and for once the Irishmen of Kansas City may speak with a glow of pride mantling their brows while they relate the incidents connected with the celebrations of St. Patrick's Day, 1873."⁷⁹

The day began at St. Patrick's with High Mass being said by the new Irish born pastor, Father James Dunn. The parade began at that point and included the Irish Benevolent Society, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, St. Vitus Society from Saints Peter and Paul parish, the Fire Department, Vollrath's Band, St. Aloysius Band, St. Vincent de Paul Society, and numerous dignitaries. All were invited to participate regardless of their ethnicity. The parade route included Father Donnelly's church Immaculate Conception, St. Teresa's Academy, the sisters convent for a wreath ceremony, and down the 12th Street Hill to the

⁷⁸ Case, *History of Kansas City Missouri*, 182.

⁷⁹ *The Kansas City Times*, March 18, 1873.

Annunciation parish where Father Dalton washed and blessed the church bell. "The line of march was one grand ovation--cheers, waving handkerchiefs from thousands of windows; green banners and emerald emblems fluttered in the bright sunshine from every side. It was indeed a grand sight, such as one as is seldom seen in the West, and never before seen in the West, and never before seen in a city of forty thousand people."⁸⁰

The parade was a celebration of being Irish, of being employed, of being able to feed your family. The parade was a celebration of a new community. It was a grand day indeed.

⁸⁰ *The Kansas City Times*, March 18, 1873.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The labor of immigrating Irish in Kansas City in the nineteenth century was significant and enduring, provided stability to developing industry, the economy, and the community. Most of the developing industry in Kansas City required a vast amount of labor, and the willingness and adaptability of Irish immigrant men and women fulfilled that need. There were four pockets, neighborhoods or Irish patches where Irish community developed. Although the geography of the Irish community shifted, the bonds of community developed within family, employment, churches, and social and fraternal life, creating an enduring community. The development of the slaughter/packing house industry occurred simultaneously with the immigration patterns of the Irish, in the emerging demography of Kansas City. The labor performed by men could be measured by the impact on the economy in the growth of meat packing, manufacturing, building, and changing topography. Women performed manual labor as well, but it is more difficult to measure the impact on the economy since their efforts were centered in the family. The labor performed by Irish immigrant men and women was typically gendered in traditional ways.

Irish immigrants were the dominant ethnic group that supplied labor to the developing Kansas City economy by 1880. In the 1880 census for Kansas City, 4,550 people were employed as laborers. Of that total, 3,100 were native born Americans, 963 were Irish immigrants, and the next closest ethnic group was German with 173 laborers. The 1880 census did not record the number of African-American laborers. The 1880 census began recording women as laborers, 29 in 1880, but did not include the occupations of keeping house or housekeepers as that of laborer. Statistics from the 1890 census recorded that out of

6,222 laborers in Kansas City, 1,528 were "colored." The statistics went on to report that out of 1,722 foreign born laborers, 714 were Irish, and the number of German laborers had nearly doubled to 339. The total number of Irish workers in Kansas City in 1890 had increased by 235 people, but the number of laborers had decreased by 249 people. Irish immigrant employment had grown with non-labor railroad positions, and also expanded in the number of positions of merchants, clerks, and building trades.

Irish immigrant women had several things in common. They were largely Roman Catholic, most were married, most were mothers, and worked, unpaid, at keeping their own home or were paid to keep house for another family. Some women worked in paid positions as a laundress, as a servant, or a seamstress. In some cases they were married with children in the home without a man present, probably due to her husband working in a different location. The enumeration instructions for the federal census did not consider the occupations of women as labor. There were more men classified as laborers because there were more single men than single women during this period. The most common labor performed by women was keeping house. Their work was essential but taken for granted.

Irish immigrant men had several things in common. Most were single, although married males were numerous, Roman Catholic, from an agricultural area of Ireland, kept ties with family members still in Ireland, shared living accommodations with other single Irish men, and willingly took on any manual labor job. Since slaughterhouse work and grain milling work was seasonal according to need or supply, it would not have been unusual for male Irish laborers to be employed at more than one job during the course of a year. Occasionally, male laborers left Kansas City for the promise of work elsewhere.

The study of the biographies of Irish male immigrants in Chapter 4, reveals that most of these men began work life in Kansas City as laborers. The occupations that these men evolved into included, contractor, policeman, fireman, store clerk, public servant, and politician, but all began as a laborer. Although most shared an agricultural background in Ireland, very few continued farming. Irish male immigrants were also joiners. They joined Catholic parishes, became members of a Irish fraternal or voluntary association, and joined in the social life of the Irish community. Single Irish male immigrants not only lived together, they also lived in Irish neighborhoods or patches, close to other Irish immigrants. All of these commonalities served to preserve and maintain their Irish identity as well as helped them assimilate into American society.

Irish immigrant labor ensured an essential ingredient in establishing enduring communities. Although the geography of the Irish patches, Irish Hill, and Irish neighbors shifted due to expanding industry, the community remained solid. The Irish community was built on labor and employment, family and social ties, and religious and social engagement. As the Irish were able to move up the socio-economic scale, they were able to solidify their community. The first generation immigrants laid a foundation for the next generation to move up socio-economically, finding better employment.

The Irish dominated employment in the fire department and police department. They also continued to hold positions within local government. The second generation saw the rise of strong political factions within the Democratic party. The 1890s saw significant increase in the influence of Irish politicians. In 1900, Kansas City had even snagged the National Democratic Convention. Jim Pendergast, tavern owner and city councilman, became highly influential in the 1890s. Pendergast was opposed by an Irish Catholic

Joe Shannon, politician, (no relation to Mayor Patrick Shannon), who appealed to the working Irish who lived in poorer sections of Kansas City, resulting in a long standing political rivalry. Ultimately, Jim Pendergast's brother, Tom, became a nationally known political boss who was able to change city government in Kansas City to a city manager model, which was controlled by Tom. In the 1920s and 1930s, Kansas City developed a notorious reputation for a city controlled by an Irish political boss, a reputation far removed from the influence of the laboring Irish immigrants. The immigrating Irish instead were committed to their religion and education, and their enduring influence in nineteenth century Kansas City was a solid underlayment to developing industry, community, and family.

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