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[William S. Worley](#)

Sterling College, Sterling, Kansas

Development of Industrial Districts in the Kansas City Region: From the Close of the Civil War to World War II

I want to thank Dr. Kimball and MRI for this opportunity to offer some observations about the historical process of economic development that has done much to shape the Kansas City metropolitan region.

My interest in this aspect of Kansas City dates from the time I spent around 1980 learning about the Prime Time economic development and public relations of Kansas City leaders in the 1970s. Dr. Kimball was a key individual in that effort, partly because he knew well how to communicate and interpret Kansas City's story to the Eastern media and decision makers. In that respect, he follows in the tradition of Kersey Coates of the Civil War era, who won the support of Eastern investors for railroad, land, and industrial investments in the expanding City of Kansas, as it was then officially named.

Some of you may have wondered about Sterling College where I teach. Sterling College and the town of Sterling are located along the original Santa Fe Railroad main line tracks in the Arkansas River valley 20 miles northwest of Hutchinson, Kansas, which makes it about 75 miles northwest of Wichita. Sterling is now in its 106th year of educating students in the liberal arts tradition as interpreted through its historic connection with the Presbyterian Church. We have even been playing football at Sterling College for over 100 years. But most importantly, we have been challenging students to learn and serve in the Midwestern and Kansas regions from which most of them have come.

I want to concentrate my remarks today on the Midwestern region. I am in the process of researching and writing a book that will show rather directly how the fortunes of small, mostly agricultural, communities like Sterling are actually interconnected directly with what has gone on and still occurs in this metropolitan region in which we are gathered.

Many song titles speak of Kansas City, such as "Goin' to Kansas City" or "Went to Kansas City on a Friday..." or something to that effect. But, when it came to industrial and economic development, the most appropriate song might well have been the old gospel hymn "Bringing in the Sheaves."

As Daniel Serda explained so well to this audience approximately one year ago, one of the first things that had to be done to make Kansas City grow was to attract outside investment. As he documented in his paper, much of this capital came from Boston.¹

¹ Daniel Serda, "Boston Investors and Early Development of Kansas City, Missouri," Lecture in *Midcontinent Perspectives Series*, Midwest Research Institute, Kansas City, Missouri, January 23, 1992.

I will begin with the development process in the Kansas City region's first industrial district the West Bottoms. Then, we'll look at the districts that were essentially extensions of that area: Armourdale, Argentine, and Rosedale. Next I'll explore industrial development in the Blue River Valley and in the old East Bottoms at largely unplanned districts such as Sugar Creek and at carefully planned areas such as North Kansas City in Clay County and Fairfax in Wyandotte County. I'll throw in the Garment District for good measure.

As early as 1869, even before Charles Francis Adams, Jr., became financially involved in Kansas City investments, the groundwork for attracting industry to the river bottom land formed by the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers was laid in the Civil War era by Kersey Coates, that Eastern emigrant to Kansas City from Philadelphia with whom I compared Dr. Kimball.

Coates platted subdivisions both in the bottom land and on the bluffs. The former was soon dubbed "the West Bottoms," while the latter became known as "Quality Hill." Coates made sure that the ownership of some West Bottoms land was strategically placed in the hands of James F. Joy, a Bostonian of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad Company board of directors. Coates's West Kansas subdivision land indeed served as the original site for early rail depots and for the Keystone Iron Works, an early day foundry.

You may recall that "Big Jim" Pendergast, Tom's older brother, was a puddler at Keystone when he won big on the horse "Climax." Jim was so pleased that he used the money to buy a saloon in the West Bottoms and named it for the lucky horse.² Kansas City's history was thus irrevocably changed by the outcome of a horse race!

The establishment of the train terminals and then the first Union Station in the West Bottoms was essential. The Stockyards Company was integral to the development of the district. Without going into details that Daniel Serda and others have recounted from this podium, let me state as a given that livestock servicing and the gradual development of a livestock slaughtering center were truly beginning points for the industrial development process in the metropolitan region.

While we think of the stockyards' area as the former home of all the packing house companies, the big companies, beginning with Armour in the 1870s to Wilson & Co. arriving in the World War I era, were all located on the Kansas side of the state line, even in the West Bottoms. This was partly because Adams and Morse made the companies good deals on Kansas land, but also, I suspect, because Kansas regulatory laws were usually more lenient than those in Missouri.

Given today's reversal of real estate values, at least in Johnson County, this idea of buying "cheap" Kansas land may seem a bit hard to believe, but I have documented in my research on J.C. Nichols that the cheapest land he bought in the formative years of the Country Club District was that which he developed into Mission Hills. He bought it from the Armour

² Coates' platting of West Kansas is indicated in Platbook B-1, Jackson County land records, Jackson County Courthouse. Serda indicates Joy's involvement, "Boston Investors...." p. 6. The most readable and reliable source on the Pendergast era is William Reddig's Tom's Town, recently republished in paperback by the University of Missouri Press.

family in 1908 for less than \$300 per acre. Indeed, Nichols saw as his greatest challenge in the early years to be convincing Missourians that living in Kansas was an “OK” thing to do.³

The result of this Kansas development was the original Kansas City, Kansas, and the Armourdale and Argentine districts. While Kansas City, Kansas, and Armourdale both received at least cursory planning attention from developer Morse, Argentine was more typical of the era – it just grew in response to specific stimuli.

Morse headed the group that established the original metal smelter in 1880. A little over a year later, August Meyer moved to Kansas City from Colorado and bought the smelter along with partners from New York City. The Consolidated Kansas City Smelter and Refining Company became, along with the railroads themselves (particularly the Santa Fe after its 1875 entrance into Kansas City), the principle employer in the Argentine district. One is somewhat suspicious that Morse set up the smelter company in the hopes of attracting other outside investors who would expand its activities much further than he had capital to accomplish.

As you are probably aware, the Latin, and by derivation the Spanish, name for “silver” is “Argentine.” We are reminded of this by the symbol “AG” meaning “silver” on the periodic table of the elements. Thus, the Argentine community is appropriately named for the smelter that gave it economic life in the 1880s.

Like the West Bottoms and Armourdale, Argentine was industrial, residential, and retail in function. Unlike the others, however, the development of Argentine was not planned. The river and the railroad tracks are the dominating features in the physical development of the town. Given that fact, or possibly because of it, it seems ironic that we remember August Meyer most for his contributions to the development of Kansas City, Missouri’s parks and boulevards system.

Meyer Circle was named for Meyer, but not because he lived on Ward Parkway. He was a neighbor of William R. Nelson in what is now Vanderslice Hall at the Kansas City Art Institute. Meyer Circle was named for Meyer because of his leadership on the Parks and Boulevards Board. Similarly, Armour Boulevard was named for S.B. Armour, the only Armour who didn’t live on 35th Street in the Hyde Park residential area. He was a brother of Philip, the Chicago Armour who founded the company. Once again, S.B. Armour had provided leadership to the Parks and Boulevards Board during the 1890s.

A heavy industry that dominates the 18th Street section of Armourdale today had its 19th-century origins in the West Bottoms. Two brothers moved to Kansas City from Cleveland, Ohio, to open a soap factory. Originally from England, the Peet brothers planned to render and process the tallow from the small packing plants that were just starting production in response to the cattle drives to Abilene, Kansas.

The Peet brothers, who arrived in 1868, actually preceded the Armours to Kansas City by two years. Their business grew and expanded, and ultimately larger buildings were required so they moved across the Kansas River to the west end of Armourdale. In the 1920s, Peet Brothers consolidated with a larger soap company, Colgate Palmolive, which had Cincinnati, Ohio, origins. Cincinnati was the pre-Civil War meat-packing center; hence, soap companies that used tallow were located there. The consolidated company was known as Colgate-Palmolive-Peet

³ W.S. Worley, *J.C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990).

during the World War II era, but after the last of the Peet family retired from the company, the name was dropped to form the familiar C-P logo.

The Colgate-Palmolive Armourdale plant, however, continues to function. Moreover, right across the 18th Street Viaduct is another large soap plant operated by rival Proctor and Gamble, a company that also retains its Cincinnati headquarters. Obviously, these plants no longer acquire tallow locally for their products, but they continue to be important industrial employers in the Kansas City region.

Regardless of other factors, the Kansas City region's industrial base from the Civil War to World War I lay in Wyandotte County, Kansas, rather than in Kansas City, Missouri, or north of the river. Though the United States was involved in "the Great War" for just over a year and a half, it had tremendous impact on the nation and this region. The increased demand for bread wheat cemented an already strong position for hard red winter wheat. This wheat was traded only on the Kansas City Board of Trade. Kansas City railroads carried car after car of wheat into the industrial districts and then transported car after car of processed flour further east and south.

Primarily because Morse could make Adams' investment money stretch further on the Wyandotte County side of the state line, the majority of 19th-century industrial development took place there. Not until 1919 would Kansas City, Missouri, have more manufacturing employees than Kansas City, Kansas, and then only by a slight margin. Proportional to its size, Kansas City, Kansas, remained one of the more manufacturing-oriented cities in the Midwest until the onset of World War II.⁴

One other Kansas community had its origin in the 1880 period, but without apparent help from either Morse or Adams. The little community of Rosedale developed because of the employment provided between 1877 and 1883 by a company known as the Kansas Rolling Mill. This name sounds like a reference to an early flour mill, but it actually was the name of a steel mill that produced rails for the expansion of the Santa Fe (and other railroads) into New Mexico and on toward California. The rolling mill closed down in 1883 because of national economic conditions that stalled rail expansion.

My emphasis on Wyandotte County industrial development does not mean that there were no similar efforts being made on the Missouri side of the state line. There was always a certain amount of manufacturing employment in the West Bottoms. But that area was more oriented to wholesale trade, which depended on good rail connections for efficient business service. This trade aspect of Kansas City's growth as a regional metropolis is beyond the scope of my talk today. Suffice it to say, that the activities were essential for the growth of the region.

The 1880s economic boom in Kansas City had the effect of shifting some of the focus of the Missouri industrial development to the Blue River Valley east of the city limits. It also attracted additional investment capital – this time from England. One result was the proposed development of the Blue River Valley into a series of industrial towns, appropriately named after English industrial cities. This is why we have the Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, and even Birmingham, districts. Birmingham was and is located north of the river in Clay County. It has never become a successful industrial venture.

This English capital was employed by local representatives who had been active in residential land development since around 1880 in Kansas City. The Lands Trust Company

⁴ From the 1919 U.S. Census of Manufactures.

worked primarily through a local conduit named the Jarvis & Conklin Trust Co. These agents enlisted the support of local leaders such as Lysander Moore and his son, George; Morrison Munford, publisher of the then separate and Democratic Party-oriented *Kansas City Times*; Munford's editor, Charles Grasty; and even Frank J. Baird, a real estate agent often used by Morse.⁵

The best known residential subdivision developed by Jarvis and Conklin and their allies was named Hyde Park, then a suburb of Westport, which was fast becoming another suburb of Kansas City. The interplay among these representatives of outside capital gets more interesting in that Jarvis and Conklin, or possibly Frank Baird, attracted Morse away from Quality Hill to Hyde Park to construct a small mansion on 36th Street near Grand Ave. Later many of the Armours and several other Quality Hill worthies chose to escape south to the Hyde Park area along Armour Boulevard.

These business partners first moved into the industrial district development game in 1887. The first Blue Valley subdivision was named Manchester. It was platted in the summer of 1887 by the Blue Valley Land Company with Lysander R. Moore as vice-president. Located between 17th and 19th streets, the subdivision included north-south streets named Bennington, Montgomery, Mobile, Birmingham, Winchester, Bristol, Corington, and Crystal. Several of these street names, as well as the subdivision name itself, were the names of English industrial cities.

In October 1887, Centropolis was platted by Morrison Munford of the *Kansas City Times*. Later additions to Centropolis listed the developer as the Centropolis Land and Lot Company with Munford as president and his newspaper editor, Charles Grasty, as secretary. George Moore, Lysander's son, is named on several of the succeeding plats with Munford and Grasty. The subdivision name, Centropolis, is obviously not that of an English industrial city. Rather, it is a coinage of that odd prophet of Kansas City's future greatness, William Gilpin. Its appeal appears to have been the emphasis placed on neighboring Kansas City's central location on the North American continent. The original Centropolis plat ran from 10th to 14th streets and from Bennington to Winchester, named "Centropolis Avenue" on this plat. Several of these streets have been renamed on today's maps.

The Sheffield subdivision was platted in October 1887, two weeks after Centropolis. Munford's signature appears on this land instrument as well. Here for the first time north-south streets appear carrying the names of Newton, Ewing, and Cambridge, all of English derivation and present-day street names. Sheffield was originally the farthest north of the Blue Valley industrial districts, extending south from present-day Wilson Avenue to Independence Avenue.

Sheffield was destined to become the best known of these industrial subdivisions because of the second name of one of the first tenants. Kansas City Bolt & Nut Co. began business in Sheffield in the late 1880s; however, it became known as Sheffield Steel in the 1920s, was purchased by Armco Steel in the 1930s, and today is known as Armco Grinding Co. Armco, by the way, originally stood for American Rolling Mill Company, which tells us something about the original focus of that national firm.

⁵ I explored the residential side of this English investment money at some length in Chapter Two of *J.C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City*, pp. 51-53. Rather detailed correspondence between the Lands Trust Company, its American agents including Jarvis and Conklin, and Edward H. Bouton, originally of Kansas City and developer of the Roland Park residential section of Baltimore, are available in the Roland Park Company Papers in the Olin Research Library, Archives and Manuscripts division, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

So, what happened to the Lands Trust investments in Kansas City? The real estate boom petered out the year after these districts came on the market. Soon thereafter, economic depression began to set in. By 1892, Jarvis and Conklin were bankrupt in Kansas City, although Roland Conklin moved to New York City and managed to keep that office going until roughly 1894. Manchester, Centropolis, and Sheffield generally languished through the balance of the closing decade of the 19th century.

Morrison Munford lost control of the *Times* early in the '90s, some time after his editorial assistant Charles Grasty moved to Baltimore to pursue newspaper and residential land development activities of the Lands Trust Company near that East coast city. By 1900, William R. Nelson was able to buy the morning *Times* and convert it from its traditional Democratic Party affiliation to Nelson's independent Republican orientation developed through the *Kansas City Star*.

Interestingly, Leeds was developed at almost the same time. The first plat was filed by local real estate developer and later member of the initial, unsuccessful Board of Parks and Boulevards Commissioners, John H. Lipscomb. I haven't found any tie between Lipscomb and the Moore-Munford-Jarvis and Conklin efforts in Manchester, Centropolis, and Sheffield. It appears that Lipscomb was simply following the English syndicate's lead in naming his proposed industrial subdivision after another English industrial city. Leeds languished even longer than did the more northerly Sheffield-Centropolis-Manchester areas. Leeds' major claim to fame came in the late 1920s when General Motors established their now-closed assembly plant just south of the originally platted Leeds subdivision.⁶

The broadening of the middle class, which resulted from war-time prosperity and which extended through the 1920s, created much more of a consumer-oriented society than ever before. Automobiles and building construction were important factors from 1914 through 1928. Kansas City's Ford assembly plant in Sheffield expanded, and new industries and companies using steel developed.

Interestingly, the Sheffield name was controversial in the pre-World War II era. As Ralph Gray, president of Sheffield Steel, explained in 1950, a U.S. government diplomatic representative came to Kansas City with a complaint from Sheffield, England, manufacturers. The English objected to the use of the name "Sheffield" on steel, which was competing with their own product on the world market. What writer Richard Fowler and Gray were unaware of was that it had been English money that had been used to purchase the land for the speculative industrial district in the Blue Valley in the first place. Indeed, it is possible that the grandparents of some of the English objectors were the very ones who had invested in Sheffield land in the Kansas City region to start with. Talk about history coming full circle!?⁷

⁶ Land subdivision records are in the plat books filed in the Jackson County Register of Deeds office in the County Courthouse. Platbooks B-1 through B-9 cover the time frame of the rapid land subdivision going on in the boom years of the mid-1880s. Specific plats may also be viewed on microfiche in the same office without reference to the original sequence of development. These documents have been little used by historians to study the growth and development of cities. The plats not only tell the shape and ownership of land, but they are helpful in making connections of initial land investment syndicates, such as those of Adams' Boston group and Munford's English Lands Trust group.

⁷ Dick Fowler, Leaders in Our Time (Kansas City: Burd and Fletcher, 1952), p. 162.

Immediately adjacent to the Sheffield-Armco plant is Butler Manufacturing. This major steel fabricating company has historically used product obtained from Sheffield and other sources to manufacture steel structures. Although it has not always had its plant located near Armco, there is a decided advantage to the location. According to former president and former MRI executive committee member Oscar Nelson, the turning point for Butler came in 1939, at the close of our period of study, when the U. S. Department of Agriculture issued a call for bids to construct on-farm storage tanks for a bumper crop of Midwestern corn centered in Illinois. Under Nelson's prodding, who was then General Manager of the company, Butler made the bid for almost all of the proposed tanks and then proceeded to sign a contract that called for shipping the product within 60 days.

The construction of the tanks was to be done in Galesburg, Illinois, to save on the shipping of completed material. Butler took over an old steam engine and boiler plant, modernized it, hired 1,200 men, and produced over 12,000 small on-farm storage bins within the 60-day limit. Butler kept the plant going and expanded its Kansas City manufacturing as well by expanding pre-war contracts. Butler transformed itself from a small steel-fabricating plant to a more specialized company that continues to dominate the grain bin fabrication business and the manufacture of steel buildings and a host of other steel-based products. And it has kept its focus in Kansas City – an important fact for later industrial development.⁸

To illustrate how industrial development attracted related businesses, the origins of the Puritan-Bennett Company goes back to its beginnings adjacent to Butler Manufacturing Co. Today it is a well-known Johnson County-based firm supplying oxygen to hospitals. At that time, the major need for oxygen was for use in welding, particularly steel welding such as Butler specialized in. Because the founder, named Bennett, had New England origins, the company was named Puritan-Bennett.

An extension of the Central Industrial District was developed in the river bottom land east of downtown Kansas City, Missouri, in the late 1880s. It came to full flower in the first part of the 20th century as the home of Kansas City's largest brewery – Heim Brothers – and of many grain elevators, flour and feed mills, and other food processing facilities. This area is often referred to as the East Bottoms – although a better term might have been the North Bottoms. Regardless of the name, this district ultimately gives way at the Blue River to the industrial concerns that dominated the little section.

Today the area north of Front Street is the most active with major facilities operated by firms such as Farmland Industries in North Kansas City, which was begun in 1929 by Howard Cowden as Consumers Cooperative Association. Initially supplying petroleum products to farmers' cooperatives, Farmland has expanded tremendously into the wide array of services and products it offers today. The East Bottoms, north of Front Street area, is an important post-World War II development of the Kansas City Southern Railway. It connects with this story because of its location, but it is beyond the scope of this analysis because of the timing of its activity.

Just after the turn of the century, a relatively new industry took hold immediately adjacent to the downtown retail and office area – the Garment District. One of the motivating factors, but by no means the only one, was the increase of skilled tailors and seamstresses from eastern Europe who came to the United States between 1900 and the outbreak of World War I.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 326

This was not a planned district at all. Rather the companies first rented, then owned, and sometimes improved workshops and (in some cases, sweatshop) sites in existing buildings on land that they were far removed from developing. The proximity of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, who lived in the flats in converted mansions on Quality Hill and to the east along Independence Avenue and on the numbered streets, was a major factor in locating garment factories in this section of Kansas City, Missouri.

The Garment District is a 20th-century phenomenon that has come and gone. The various owners often utilized large loft structures that pre-existed on the sites they chose. Two of the best known garment companies were home-owned during the first half of the 20th century – Donnelly Garment Company and H.D. Lee and Company.

The Donnelly Garment Company was the creation of its founder, Mrs. Nell Donnelly, who later married former Mayor and then U. S. Senator James A. Reed. She began her business by hiring neighborhood women as seamstresses to fill contracts she obtained. Gradually this work expanded and moved away from the piece-work system to a factory system of manufacturing. After World War II, Donnelly Garment Co. moved to a plant at 31st and Gillham away from the Garment District. Today it is not active in Kansas City as a manufacturer at all.

H.D. Lee & Company began in the late 19th century as a wholesale grocery company in Salina, Kansas. Mr. Lee recognized the need for work clothes and pioneered the one-piece worksuit made of cotton that we know as a “jumpsuit” or “coveralls.” After World War II, this company moved into the blue jeans market. The Lee Apparel Company was later acquired by Vanity Fair or VF, Inc. The Lee Apparel division is still headquartered in Johnson County.

Many other smaller garment companies flourished for decades, making the Garment District one of the thriving centers of industrial activity throughout the 20th-century portion of the period under study.

Actually preceding the Garment District, but located in almost the same area, was the old printing district that overlooked the Missouri River from atop the bluffs south of Sixth Street. The main survivor of that era is the Burd & Fletcher Co., long known for its printing of boxes and cartons.

One of the most colorful characters to come out of the Burd & Fletcher experience was Barney Allis, the person for whom the plaza between 12th and 13th streets in front of Municipal Auditorium was named. Most of you think that it was named for him because of his ownership and management experience at the old Muehlbach Hotel (pronounced “Mule-back” by Harry Truman, who made it his headquarters after leaving the presidency). The hotel became the premier hostelry of the city. But early in Barney’s career, he was a printer at Burd & Fletcher.

The story goes that there was a fire in the pre-World War I years at Burd & Fletcher. The active owner, Mr. B.A. Burd, bewailed the fact that the company had no inventory listing on which to make an insurance claim. Young Barney Allis overheard this and stepped up and offered to recreate the inventory listing from memory. He had literally memorized the location and quantities of printing materials as they had existed before fire swept the structure. Amazingly, the insurance company took the inventory and reimbursed Mr. Burd for the items lost. Shortly thereafter, Barney Allis began work in a small shop publishing publicity material for the hotel and restaurant trade in Kansas City. This ultimately led him into the hotel business by the end of World War I.

Burd & Fletcher remained at the same location throughout the pre-war period, and gradually became the largest industrial printer in the Midwest outside of Chicago. They operate several plants today, but their main office is still on West 7th Street, three blocks off Main. Their president in the 1940s, Lew Navran, served on MRI's Board of Directors in its early days as well.⁹

Sugar Creek, like Argentine, Rosedale, and the Garment District, was not a planned development at all, rather it was a small community essentially taken over by a large corporation – Standard Oil. With no apparent design, except to transport the mostly Slavic workers from Indiana refining points it was fading out, Standard Oil simply took over a little community of shacks hugging the banks of the Missouri River north of Independence in 1904.

The story of North Kansas City begins during the 1880s. Willard Winner, one of the most active land developers, attempted to develop a competing industrial district in southern Clay County that he proposed to call North Kansas City. Developed too late in the real estate boom, the effort died when Winner lost control of his speculative empire around 1890. Today we mostly remember Winner by the road bearing his name in northeast Kansas City, Missouri, which, ironically, leads directly into the original Sheffield District developed by competing interests.

In 1908, the Armour-Swift-Burlington people decided to exercise options on the land that became North Kansas City – probably the first planned unit development in the Kansas City region and one of the first in the nation. By “planned unit development,” I am referring to the goals of the developers to establish an industrial center for a variety of industries with residential and retail shop areas located adjacent to the industrial structures.

The A-S-B Bridge, which really made North Kansas City possible, opened in 1911. It was an early design project of a young engineer named Ernest Howard, later a partner in Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendoff. Howard had been commissioned by the three cooperating companies to develop a design for the proposed triple duty bridge. The bridge was designed to include electric streetcar tracks and electrical connections for an interurban line, besides railroad and truck traffic.

On the day scheduled to show the design, Howard received word that the busy executives had only a few minutes to see his plans and model. But this was no ordinary model of just a few inches. Since Howard planned to demonstrate the unique lifting mechanism that would allow a portion of the bridge to be raised vertically to allow river traffic underneath its span, he had constructed a one-fifteenth scale model, which meant that it was 29 feet long. Miniature railroad cars ran on the tracks across the working model of the bridge, and he even hired a small Japanese man to “engineer” the cars back and forth across the bridge.

As it turned out, the busy executives were fascinated by the huge model. Howard made his presentation staying within the allotted time frame. When he paused for questions, the A-S-B people wanted to play with the model instead. They spent the next hour and a half having the Japanese engineer run the miniature train back and forth and raise and lower the movable portion. Without objection, they approved the design for the bridge. The construction of the A-S-B bridge would transform the north bank of the Missouri across from the original townsite into a planned industrial community.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 321-324.

North Kansas City was not an immediate success, however. The development company formed by the three corporations had difficulty attracting enough businesses and workers to achieve its goals. One earlier triumph was to attract the newly organized C.R. Cook Paint Co. to a site adjacent to today's I-435 route. Remember, the A-S-B bridge opened in 1911; Cook Paint moved to North Kansas City in 1916. Things did not happen overnight.

Another early manufacturer in North Kansas City was Corn Products Refining Company (CPRC), which produced syrups and other corn-derived products. This turned out to be the more important employer because of the larger amount of manpower required in CPRC's manufacturing processes. Known today as National Starch, CPRC in 1919 was the largest manufacturer in North Kansas City. Indeed, it dominated manufacturing to such an extent that the U.S. Census Bureau refused to break down manufacturing by various lines for fear of disclosing too much information about what it said was the primary employer in North Kansas City – a corn syrup company.

In that same year, 1919, just after World War I, the same pattern was repeated by the Census Bureau for Kansas City, Missouri. They did not break down manufacturing employment because one automobile manufacturer so dominated the whole manufacturing employment scene. There was only one automobile manufacturer in Kansas City in 1919 – the Ford Motor Company. The plant had been organized on the edge of Sheffield adjacent to the Kansas City Bolt & Nut steel plant at 12th and Winchester in 1909.

Ultimately, North Kansas City has become one of the region's industrial success stories. Manufacturing and storage firms are doing very well. The attractive downtown retail district, beginning at Armour and Burlington roads, is nearly full of occupants. The small individual workers' homes are mostly occupied, as are the numerous apartments.

The final major element in the pre-World War II industrial development of the Kansas City region fell into place when in the early 1920s the Union Pacific Railroad organized the Fairfax Industrial District directly north of downtown Kansas City, Kansas. Like almost all the other districts of the era, Fairfax is located on river bottom land – in this case that of the Missouri River. Like North Kansas City, it has been quite successful, although in both cases the success was not immediate. Further, Fairfax differs from North Kansas City in that nobody lives there. It is, and always has been, strictly a manufacturing and warehousing district.

From the beginning, Fairfax was intended to be different both in the absence of residential and retail space and in the emphasis on airplane usage. Included in the original plans was the Fairfax Industrial Airport, which attracted its own set of small businesses connected with private aviation. North Kansas City, of course, did not need to copy this aspect of development since the Downtown Airport for the entire region was adjacent to its borders.

One of the most important pre-war companies located in Fairfax was the Darby Company, an outgrowth of Harry Darby, Sr.'s old Missouri Boiler Co. As boilermakers and steel fabricators, the Darby Company developed to significant size prior to 1940, although its greatest growth would be intimately connected with the 1940s war effort.

During the 1920s, Sunshine Biscuits Inc. constructed their huge factory in the Fairfax District, which dominates the west side of 7th Street as one drives through even today. The General Motors automobile assembly plant, so essential to Fairfax prosperity today, was a by-product of World War II bomber construction.

In summary, the key to understanding Kansas City's industrial development between the Civil War and the onset of World War II lies in recognizing the interrelated elements of rail connections, land prices, and innovative developers with significant financial backing. Boston money, Chicago money, and English money, to name a few of the major sources, all combined to create an industrial land base for the metropolitan region that served, along with rail and trade employment generally, to provide the Kansas City area with important economic stimuli. Businesses usually acquired area bank financing for day-to-day operations.

This quick overview has left out much more than it has included. There are many more stories to tell of individuals and of companies, of workers and of the products they made. I have just barely touched on the intricate interplay between the outlying sources of raw materials in Kansas City's economic hinterland and the growth of industry in the metropolitan region. These are themes I will be developing in future writings.

I hope one thing has become clear, which is a fact we tend to forget at times, that from an industrial standpoint, there is only minor importance to the state line that divides our Kansas City metropolitan region and even less importance to be attached to county lines. For Kansas City to grow, it took industries in both states, just as today it takes the combined efforts of businesses operating in the various counties in Missouri and Kansas for our region to flourish.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION: Isn't it unfortunate that the inter-city railroad and streetcar lines that ran between Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri, didn't tie the two cities together better?

ANSWER: We've had several other efforts in that direction. The Seventh Street Trafficway and the Inter-City Viaduct were an attempt to connect with Southwest Boulevard and come into Kansas City, Missouri, that way. There were many factors. Some of it was a bias against industrial sites, and people, in some cases, on the Missouri side were probably glad that industry tended to be more on the Kansas side, particularly in Wyandotte County. I think even today there is a tendency to think of Johnson County/Wyandotte County differences because of the presence or lack of industrial opportunities and jobs. But it is unfortunate. We haven't been able to get it all tied together.

QUESTION: What were the circumstances of the transition from Sheffield Steel to Armco Steel?

ANSWER: At the time it merged with Armco, it was a local syndicate. And I'm sorry I don't have the names of all the people involved. As I recall, Gustin, with Gustin Bacon Manufacturing, was one of the people in that syndicate.

QUESTION: Do you want to tell the story about Harry Darby and Kansas City's participation in building landing craft for D-Day?

ANSWER: That is actually a World War II story, but we can go beyond that time a little bit. Darby Industries, which was located at that time in Fairfax, was a steel-fabricating company as well. They received a contract during World War II to build landing craft for naval landings, such as took place on D-Day. Steel landing craft would be used to ferry soldiers from ships on shore.

So during World War II, we had this aircraft manufacturing plant, which became the GM plant located in Fairfax, and located right by it was this steel plant putting out naval landing craft. Since the naval landing craft turned out to be too large to be transported by rail, they were launched into the Missouri River, and then down the Mississippi, or to a point where they could be fished out, and put on ocean-going vessels that would take them across for the D-Day landing, and for other instances where they were used.

The whole issue of industrial development during the World War II period is extremely important for Kansas City. Fred Spletstoser, who is a historian at William Jewell College, has done quite a bit of work on this subject. It is an important subject because the war changed a number of things. For example, the Allied Signal plant, which used to be the Bendix plant, on Bannister Road was an the outgrowth of the need for manufacturing for World War II. It was a Pratt & Whitney engine plant for naval air craft engines during World War II. Other examples are Lake City Arsenal and Sunflower Ordinance in Johnson County out by DeSoto. Even in the Garment District, there was a tremendous stimulus from contracts for uniforms and other items that the soldiers needed. World War II was a real time of change. That's why I didn't get into it today – it's a whole different story – or at least a longer one.

QUESTION: What are the factors in Kansas City today that would help us take advantage of the renewed interest in small business development that the current administration has emphasized?

ANSWER: One of the things you've touched on here is the weakness of historians. Historians know a lot about what happened in the past, and we hope, or at least I hope, that what we discover is helpful in the future. But I would have to say as a caveat at the beginning, I'm not an expert in terms of current or future economic development. I have been involved in small business in another life, however. My family was in the feed and grain business, and I worked in that business for a few years in the early 1980s. And on another occasion, my wife and I owned a small retail business.

The availability of reasonably priced space and the right location are important. Small business is not in a position to exert its influence and change things to meet its needs. And so, if it's going to succeed, then probably those that have some ability to change things, and maybe create a more hospitable climate, are going to need to do some of those things on their behalf. I think that's the biggest difference between a large industrial situation, where they can come in and exercise their own changes – and certainly the packing house interests were able to do so historically.

When Ford Motor Company decided that they wanted to expand and move to Claycomo, they did. They were quite able to do that. When GM wanted to shut down Leeds, they did. These were situations where large companies came in and exercised their own changes themselves, as certainly the packing house interests were able to do historically. Small business can do that to a certain extent, but it's much more limited, and I think creating a better climate, as far as both regulation and that sort of thing, would be helpful.

QUESTION: Is the North-American Free Trade Agreement going to result in loss of jobs to the Rio Grande Valley or further south to Mexico itself?

ANSWER: There is some evidence, certainly, to support that. The industrial jobs generally have been leaving the United States. This is an overall trend and problem. We can see

it here in the Kansas City area in a variety of ways. The garment industry is probably the most blatant example. If you look carefully at the labels on the clothing you wear, you'll find that you buy things made in countries other than the United States. There are few garments made from start to finish in the United States. If they are, they probably are relatively more expensive. Normally that is chalked up to high labor costs, and certainly that will make some difference. But the fact of the matter is work has left the United States.

Now, the question is, do we replace those jobs with new industrial jobs or do we find ways for people to work that will enable us to compete and utilize our skills and the abilities that we have. And I think the reality is we're never going to be able to compete that well with cheap labor. We're going to have to emphasize other skills, which means retraining and other things. Now at this point, folks, understand that you are getting an opinion from a relatively untrained individual as opposed to the kind of historical area that I'm more comfortable working in.

QUESTION: What happened to the model bridge?

ANSWER: I wish I knew. It would be a wonderful thing to have. The people at Howard Needles may know. That story, by the way, comes out of a wonderful book called Leaders in Our Town. It was a series of articles in the *Kansas City Star* back in the early 1950s by Dick Fowler, one of the great journalists and interviewers of Kansas City history. Actually, Dick Fowler did this job about four-times over. In the early 1920s, he ran a series called, "Who's Who in Kansas City." Then in the late 1920s, he ran a series titled, "Turning Points," in which he asked business leaders to describe the turning point in their life. And then after World War II, he went back and did these biographical vignettes. They are about three or four pages long, and they give the people's background and something about them as individuals. It's a marvelous resource. Very few cities have this kind of resource, and Dick Fowler is much to be thanked for the work that he did by historians like me.

QUESTION: Are you aware that Fowler got it wrong about the model bridge? Howard's mentor, named Waddell, actually developed the model and demonstrated it for the railroad executives.

ANSWER: Yes, I understand that Howard was working for Waddell at that time. And what may have happened in the interview is that because Waddell faded out of the picture, Fowler played up the story to focus on current leadership of the company because Howard Needles Tammen & Bergendoff was originally Waddell's company (then known as Waddell & Haring).

QUESTION: Was the Kansas City Rolling Mill the forerunner of Kansas City Structural Steel?

ANSWER: I made the same mistake because it seemed as if site-wise, it ought to fit. But actually, it's not. I am thankful to Daniel Serda for this information because I made that observation to him, and he said, "No, there is some difference in the location." And actually there does not seem to be any connection. Kansas City Structural Steel began at a somewhat later date, and I'm sorry I can't give you an exact time. But, yes, they were somewhat similar industries, certainly. And it has been very important in Rosedale history in the 20th century.

QUESTION: What do you know of the people who were attracted to work in these industries? Particularly, what about black working men?

ANSWER: Three events are most significant in terms of increases in numbers of the black community. The first occurred in the late 1870s called the Exodus Movement. It was at the end of Reconstruction when some African-Americans were quite disillusioned with what was happening, as it turned out rightfully so, because terrible conditions resulted for sometime afterwards. They thought that if they could come to Kansas then things would be better. But it didn't quite work out that way. However, many people tried to come.

Kansas City was a landing point for the riverboat traffic. If people had enough money, they would move on west from here on the railroad. Many didn't have enough money, and so they stayed in Kansas City. This was the first major increase in the population.

The second event came around World War I. It was not as significant here as in some other American cities. For example, Detroit and Chicago had large increases at that point. Then during World War II and after, the coming of the mechanical cotton harvesting machine in the South put an end to sharecropping. That was the stimulus for what has become to be known as the "Great Migration" of African-Americans out of the lower South into the cities.

The majority of African-Americans coming into Kansas City came on one particular route, the old Katy Railroad (MKT) out of East Texas. A number of families came from Palestine, Texas, for example, and the African-American families trace their routes back there. Others came up on the Kansas City Southern that went along the state line between Texas and Louisiana to Port Arthur. But the main stimuli were the Exodus Movement, World War I, World War II, and industrial jobs. At first, the African-American workers were primarily hired as unskilled workers. Gradually, there was a movement into semi-skilled and skilled jobs, particularly in industries after World War II.

Since 1992, **William S. Worley** has played a dual role as Associate Dean of Academic Administration and Assistant Professor of History at Sterling College, Sterling, Kansas. He joined the staff of the college in 1990 as Assistant Professor in History and Government.



Prior to his teaching positions at Sterling College, Mr. Worley taught history at the University of Kansas, Rockhurst College, Johnson County Community College, and Eastern New Mexico University. In addition, Mr. Worley was Director of Orientation at the University of Maryland at College Park and Dean of Students at Kansas Wesleyan University.

He has presented papers and written extensively on history, in particular Kansas City's history and economic development, including the book J.C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City: Innovation in Planned Residential Communities. Currently, he is writing a chapter on Kansas City's Ward Parkway for a book tentatively titled Grand Residential Avenues in America, scheduled to be published in early 1994.

Mr. Worley received a B.A. in English from Kansas State University, an M.A. in Religious Studies from Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, and an MPhil and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Kansas.

[Top](#)

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