

THE JACKSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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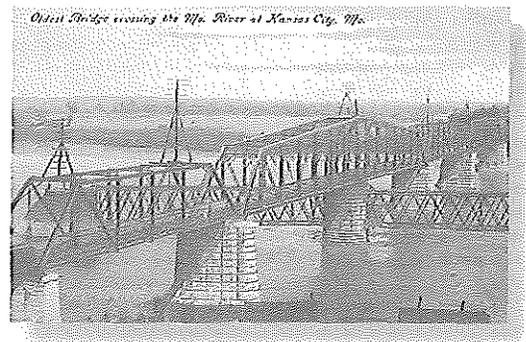
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STOP. LOOK. LISTEN. READ. OCTAVE CHANUTE'S *KANSAS CITY BRIDGE* BOOK TO BE REPRINTED

July 4, 1869, was the exciting day when the first railroad bridge to cross the Missouri River was completed...at Kansas City, Missouri!

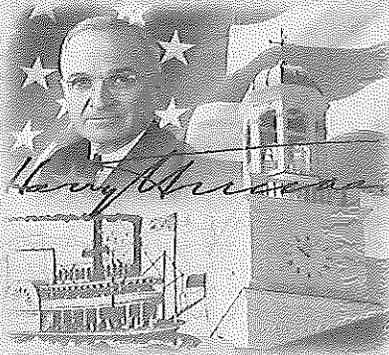
Recognizing the 140th Anniversary of this monumental event, the Jackson County Historical Society is "pouring some coal" on a project to re-print the book published by the bridge's chief and assistant engineers, Octave Chanute and George Morison. *The Kansas City Bridge: With an Account of the Regimen of the Missouri River and a Description of the Methods Used for Founding in that River* was published in 1870.



The new, commemorative edition celebrating the construction of the first "Hannibal Bridge" (named after the railroad that "fast-tracked" its construction) will make this book available once more...including the stunning engravings and elevations that were part of the original, limited edition printing.

PLUS, we have been working hard to assemble new appendices that include: a biography of Octave Chanute by a local authority on this famous engineer who would later influence and assist the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk; reproductions of many of the early images (engravings and photographs) of the bridge, starting with Dedication Day; the history leading up to the bridge's construction, and it's legacy to our metropolitan area; an article about the significance of the bridge to the engineering profession; the original publicity from July 1869; and, reproductions of original, Hannibal Bridge-related documents from the Jackson County Historical Society's archival collections.

If you are "stoked," contact David at 816.252.7454 for more information on this exciting project.



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EDITOR'S EPISTLE

By David W. Jackson

In June 2009, the Jackson County Historical Society celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the 1859 Jackson County Jail (owned and operated for more than 50 years as the 1859 Jail, Marshal's Home and Museum) in fine style—with a rare outdoor event on historic Independence Square and special living history educational program. Thanks to our sponsors and everyone who helped contribute to this successful event!

If you missed out on the hoopla, the Spring 2009 edition of the *Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL* was solely dedicated to recapping the history of the oldest building on Independence Square. It also introduced and promoted the Society's newest publication, *LOCK DOWN: Outlaws, Lawmen & Frontier Justice in Jackson County, Missouri*. This commemorative booklet is selling well, and will likely be a desirable souvenir for years to come.

As our President, George Lopez, noted in his year-end address, throughout 2009, our Board of Directors has been working especially hard on behalf of the Society. Attendance and tours at the Jail Museum have increased significantly. More than 7,000 history buffs, including every 1st grade student in the Independence School District, toured our museum, thanks to the participation of the volunteers serving on the Society's Education Committee.

An Historical Outreach Committee is undertaking a major new project—to enhance the Marshal's Home portion of our historic site by adding new signage, themes, and artifacts. Their goal is to provide the history connoisseur with a healthy serving of Jackson County history while preserving the historic integrity of the property. Plans are now underway, and the Board will be actively seeking sponsors and in-kind donors to assist with this ambitious project.

Membership has also increased, thanks to the efforts of the Membership Committee and a successful membership drive this past spring. We've also added more members to our highest donor group, the 1859 Guild. Won't you introduce your friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances to the Jackson County Historical Society's programs, products and services? Membership (and 1859 Guild sponsorship) form the basis of our funding structure. We couldn't do all that we do without you! As Mr. Lopez put it, "*Your continued support is the reason that the Jackson County Historical Society enjoyed a remarkable 2009. As a result, we look forward to an even better 2010—dedicated to the future of the past.*"

With the on-going restoration of the Truman Jackson County Courthouse on Independence Square, we continue to make available by appointment the Society's Archives, Research Library and Bookshop (located inside this historic moniker building). We continue to serve more than 3,500 contacts each year, and are grateful for our dedicated volunteers who allow everything to flow smoothly while we serve patrons who contact us, and make specific appointments to visit.

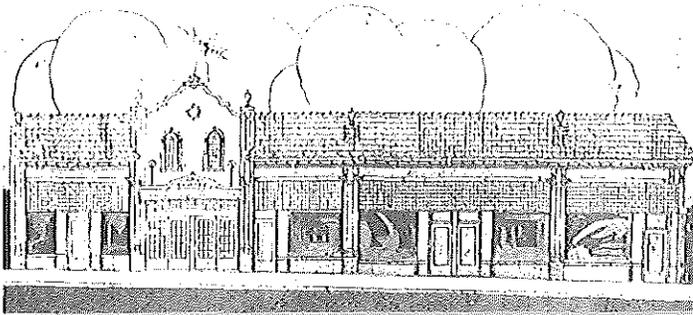
MISSION STATEMENT: *The Jackson County Historical Society is dedicated to the preservation and understanding of its county's heritage and will promote the study, appreciation and interpretation of local and regional history.*

KANSAS CITY NEIGHBORHOOD THEATERS: A PRELIMINARY HISTORY

By Craig M. Bryan UE

I became interested in Kansas City neighborhood theaters after my Mother told me about the Lindbergh Theater that opened in 1928. It was opened Christmas Day, 1928, by Abe Baier. My Mother (who lived in an apartment building next door to the theater at the time) went to Westport High School with the Baier's daughter.

This history covers roughly the period from 1918 to 1960. It is not intended to be a complete history, but rather a preliminary beginning, and does not pretend to cover all neighborhood theaters. It does not cover areas north of the



Drawing of the new Lindbergh Theater, 1928 (*Kansas City Journal*)

Missouri River nor Kansas City, Kansas. It also does not cover the ethnic theaters such as the Gem Theater at 18th and Vine (which was recently restored and re-opened as an arts center) nor the theaters which served the Spanish speaking audiences.

Many of the theaters had fancy Spanish type exteriors. However, I soon learned that very few of the theater buildings still exist. The few that are still around are mainly used for churches.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NEIGHBORHOOD THEATERS

The neighborhood theaters developed in the early 1920s, although some were in existence as early as 1909. They generally featured second run features and cheap admission (usually 10 or 15 cents in the 1920s and 50 cents by the 1950s). According to the *Kansas City Star*, they were originally called "walk-up theaters" because patrons walked from their home rather than taking the streetcar or driving their automobile (if they owned one). (By 1929, some theaters such as the Isis, the Rockhill and the Ashland were advertising free auto parking.) Many were built in the ornate style of the day with Spanish architecture being used in many.

Most theaters changed their bill several times a week and some more often. Many patrons would attend several nights a week, especially in the warm, humid Kansas City summers since many theaters had some type of air cooling.

The first wave of closings of the neighborhood theaters occurred about 1930, probably a combination of the effects of the Depression and the cost required to convert to sound operation. The Lindbergh Theater at 4011 Troost (which survived into the 1950s) mentioned in their advertisement on opening day, Christmas 1928, that they had installed a \$25,000 pipe organ. An advertisement for another theater that same day mentions the return engagement of "The Jazz Singer," usually considered the first "talkie." Probably when sound arrived a year or so later Lindbergh Theater owner Abe Baier wished that he had not spent such a sum on a pipe organ.

Another cause for the closing of some theaters around 1930 was the effect of the new medium of radio. The first commercial radio station in Kansas City was WOQ, which was owned by Western Radio and went on the air in March of 1922. It was followed by WPE (now KMBZ, owned by Central Radio) in April, WHB (owned by Sweeney Automotive School) in May, WDAF (owned by the *Kansas City Star*) in June and WMAJ (owned by the *Drover's Telegram*) in September.

The first national radio network, the National Broadcasting Company, opened in November 1926 and soon had two networks, the Red and Blue, and then was joined in 1927 by the Columbia Broadcasting System. By the end of the decade, many would-be movie patrons were staying home to listen to the radio.

In September 1931, thirty-two of Kansas City's theaters



Plaza Theater, courtesy, Dr. Kenneth J. LaBudde
Department of Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library,
University of Missouri – Kansas City

closed temporarily, due to labor problems. The *Kansas City Star* of September 20th 1931, reported the theaters to be closed included the Ashland, Aladdin, Bagdad, Belmont, Chief, Colonial, Gem (Negro), Granada, Lindbergh, Madrid, Murray, Oak Park, Ritz, Roanoke, South Troost, Strand, Summit, Sun, Tivoli, and Westport along with the following Fox theaters: Apollo, Boone (Negro), Gladstone, Lincoln (Negro), Linwood, MoKan, Rockhill, Vista, Waldo, and Warwick.

The second round of closings came in the early 1950s as the new medium of television kept people at home. In Kansas City, the first commercial television station was WDAF-TV, channel 4, owned by the Kansas City Star. It went on the air October 16, 1949. In 1953, it was joined by KCTY-TV, channel 25, KCMO-TV, channel 5 and KMBC-TV/WHB-TV, a joint operation on channel 9.



The old Warwick Theater, Soreal Design as of 2001.

In an article in the *Kansas City Star* of Sunday, December 30th 1962, it was noted that in December 1942, there were forty-eight neighborhood theaters. The list included the Ashland, Belmont, Benton, Circle, Fiesta, Gladstone, Home, Mary Lou, Murray, Roanoke, Southtown, State, Sun, Tivoli, Vox, Warwick, and more.

Twenty-six of the neighborhood theaters in 1942 were on the south side, ten were on the East Side, Kansas City, Kansas had eight, and one was in Johnson County, Kansas. There were also three "neighborhood" theaters downtown.

By 1962, the number of neighborhood theaters in the greater Kansas City had dwindled to fourteen. The *Kansas City Star* article also noted the number would dwindle to thirteen when the Aztec Theater in Shawnee, Kansas closed in January 1963.

Another factor in the 1950s that caused neighborhood theaters to close was the drive-in. The Heart drive-in on 40 Highway, opened in April of 1953, while the 63rd Street drive-in opened in May of 1955.

The chairman of the board of Dickinson (Theaters), Inc., Glen Dickinson, was quoted in *The Star* article as saying, "When drive-ins came in about 15 years ago, they were a

novelty." However, by the 1960s, patrons were driving to the drive-ins and taking the whole family. Dickinson also noted that in 1962, youngsters made up ninety percent of his audience and most of the business was done Friday night and Saturday afternoon.

Fred C. Souttar, area supervisor for Fox Midwest Theaters, Inc., stated in the *Star* article that "the public taste has changed." In 1942, Fox had eleven neighborhood theaters, but in 1962, that number had dwindled to three (the Isis, Vista and Fairway; None survive today.) He noted his company was planning fifty new theaters, many of them drive-ins, but others would be located in shopping centers.

The shopping center theaters were the forerunners of today's multi-screen cinemas, as some started with two screens and the number of screens kept growing. Even the drive-ins were affected and some offered up to four screens.

By 1965 only the Brookside, Isis, KIMO, Linwood, Plaza, Rockhill, Uptown, Vista and Waldo Theaters remained in operation. In 1970, only five neighborhood theaters survived: the Brookside, KIMO, Plaza, Uptown and Waldo.

Today, the drive-in is almost as much a dinosaur as the neighborhood theater. The following drive-ins, however, are still in operation: The Boulevard Drive-In in Kansas City, Kansas, The 1-70 Drive-In in Kansas City, The 63rd Street Drive-In in Raytown, and the Twin Drive-In in Independence. Others, such as the Heart drive-in are long gone. Some suburban movie complexes function somewhat like the old neighborhood theaters. The Gladstone at 64th and Prospect, the Independence Square in Independence, the Truman Corners at 12128 S. 71 Highway and others operate as discount movie houses.

By 1997, only the Plaza Theater survived as a regular movie theater (but with three screens.) However, in April 1999, the Plaza Theater closed as Cinemark of Dallas opened a 15-screen megaplex theater operation (the Palace on the Plaza) at Seville Square in another part of the Country Club Plaza. The Strand Theater is also in operation, but shows X-rated movies. The Englewood Theater in Independence survives showing older films. The Fine Arts Theater in Fairway, Kansas survived showing art films until a few years ago. It is now called the Top Two Theater.

The following neighborhood theater buildings are known to survive (but are used for other purposes): Aladdin, Bancroft, Benton, Gladstone, Madrid, Oak Park, Plaza, Rockhill, St. John, Sun, Uptown, and Warwick.

The multi-screen cinema continues to prosper. Station Casino in Kansas City opened an eighteen-screen cinema in 1997, and others operate with as many as thirty screens. AMC Theaters opened three new megaplexes in recent years, including the Studio 30 in Johnson County. Though the multi-screen cinemas of the 1990s offer a wide choice, they lack the elegance of the Neighborhood Theater, which featured elaborate and ornate settings.

While most of the old Kansas City theaters are gone, parts of them live on. In the November 1997 issue of "Antiques and

Collectibles Monthly Newsmagazine," included an article about the Clovis Antique Mall featuring a new balcony that was part of a former Kansas City theater.

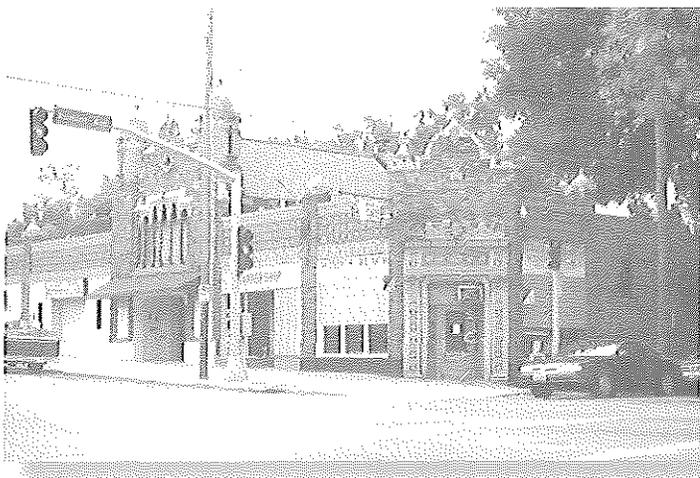
NEIGHBORHOOD THEATERS: EAST SIDE

ADMIRAL THEATER, 8th & Tracy

The Admiral was in operation by 1926 and was still in operation in 1937.

ALADDIN THEATER, 6044 E. 15th (15th & Belmont)

The Aladdin Theater, "the Pride of the East Side," opened about 1928 and was another theater designed in the Spanish motif. The theater survived until 1959. It was vacant in 1960, but later became a church, and today is the site of the Calvary Temple.



Site of the Aladdin Theater, a church as of 1999.

ASHLAND THEATER, 2400 Elmwood

An obituary in the March 9th 1955 *Kansas City Star* for Ashland Theater owner Richard Steadman says the theater opened in 1909 in a tent at 24th and Elmwood. By 1926, the theater was enlarged to a permanent theater seating 2,000 people. An advertisement for the theater in the May 4th 1929, *Kansas City Star* mentions free parking for 500 cars. The theater was out of business by about 1958.

BELMONT THEATER, 5607 St. John (Belmont & St. John?)

The Belmont Theater apparently opened in 1929 and was still in operation in 1941.

BENTON THEATER, 3200 Independence (Independence and Benton)

The Benton Theater was in operation by February 1918. By 1937, it was the Fox Benton. The Benton Theater was gone by 1960. It is now the site of the Miracle Temple.

BONAVENTURE THEATER, Independence & Olive

The Bonaventure Theater was in operation in February 1918 and by May 4th 1929 was showing "talkies." The Bonaventure Theater was gone by 1937?

DIAMOND THEATER, 15th & Prospect

The "New Diamond Theater" was in operation by November 1918 and was still in operation on May 4th 1929. In 1937, it was called the State Theater.

EMPIRE THEATER, 6417 E. 15th

Little has been found on the Empire Theater, and it apparently only operated a few years. It opened about 1927 or 1928 and operated until about 1931. The building was vacant from 1932 until 1937 when a Milgram's Grocery Store opened at the site. Milgram's Grocery Store operated until the 1960s (?) Today, the site is part of the parking lot for Aldi's Grocery Store.

GLADSTONE THEATER, 4608 St. John (St. John & Elmwood)

The Gladstone Theater was in operation by February 1918. In the 1920s, advertisements for the Gladstone Theater billed it as "The Northeast's Finest Theater." The March 26th 1926 *Kansas City Journal-Post* reported the Universal chain was buying the Gladstone from the Capitol chain. It was owned by the Fox chain by 1931. The Gladstone apparently closed about 1959. Today, a beauty school occupies the site.

MAPLE THEATER, 9th & Van Brunt

The Maple was in operation by 1926, and was still operating on May 4, 1929.

MOZART THEATER, 12th & Indiana

The Mozart was open by February 1918. It was gone by April 1919?

NATIONAL THEATER, 5312 Independence (Independence & Hardesty)

The National was open by 1929 and continued until about 1961.

QUEEN THEATER, 15th & Brooklyn

The Queen was in operation by February 1918 and was operating in 1924.

RITZ THEATER, 3301 E. 12th (12th & College)

The Ritz was open by 1926, and survived until about 1962?

ST. JOHN THEATER, 3608 St. John (St. John & Askew)

The St. John was in operation by November 1918, and continued until the late 1950s? A thrift store operated by the Delia Lamm Community Service organization now occupies the site.

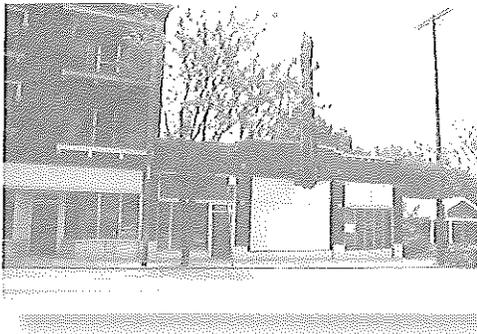
VISTA THEATER, 2617 Independence (Independence & Prospect)

The Vista was in operation by 1926. By 1937, it was the Fox Vista Theater. The theater apparently closed about 1960.

NEIGHBORHOOD THEATERS: MAIN STREET AREA

ALAMO THEATER, 3319 Main

The Alamo opened about 1911 according to an article in the July 2nd 1931 *Kansas City News-Press*. The theater was in operation intermittently from 1921, being listed in the City Directory until 1930. Apparently the Depression and the cost of conversion to sound forced the Alamo Theater to close. On July 2nd 1931, the *News-Press* article said it was converted into a garage.



The old Bancroft Theater with Sign intact, 1999.

A January 23rd 1944 article in the *Kansas City Star* said the old Alamo Theater was being converted by the Dickinson chain back into a theater and would open as the KIMO Theater within sixty days. The

theater operated until the about 1962, when it became an art house. The KIMO was still in operation in 1971, but later, it was converted into the Dove Adult Theater. In the mid 1990s, the whole block was torn down in anticipation of a mall being developed. Currently, the land is vacant.

ARMOUR THEATER, Broadway & Armour

The Armour was in operation in 1937.

BROADMOOR THEATER, 3444 Broadway

The Broadmoor was in operation by 1918, but apparently closed in early 1929. It apparently reopened as the Vogue sometime in the 1930s. On November 13th 1938, the *Kansas City Star* reported the Vogue Theater would show foreign films. It was open as late as 1961.

BROOKSIDE THEATER, 6325 Brookside

The Brookside Theater, located in the Brookside shopping area, was one of the last neighborhood theaters to open. It showed its first film in March of 1937. The Brookside Theater survived the mass closings of the late 1950s as it changed to a first-run theater, but did not survive a fire that destroyed the building in the early 1970s.

GILLHAM THEATER, 510 E. Gillham

The Gillham Theater was built in 1913, making it one of

the earlier neighborhood theaters. On September 28th 1929, the *Kansas City Journal-Post* reported the Gillham Theater and several other theaters had been sold to the Fox chain, but by 1937, it was no longer part of the Fox chain.

The Gillham Theater closed in April 1955, and the April 24, 1955 issue of the *Kansas City Star* reported the building would be converted to a public hall. The April 21st 1960 *Kansas City Star* said the Gillham Theater was being remodeled as the "Party House" meeting hall. By April 17th 1964, the hall was closed.

GLEN THEATER, 1309 Westport Road

The Westport Theater opened about 1931 in the old Westport area of Kansas City. By 1955, the name had changed to the Glen Theater. It closed about 1960.

MADRID THEATER, 3808 MAIN

The Madrid Theater opened May 26th 1926 and featured a Mammoth organ. It usually charged higher admission prices than other neighborhood theaters. For Christmas Day, 1928, the admission price was forty cents for adults and ten cents for children. Advertisements for the Madrid Theater in the late 1920s called it "The Distinctive Theater."

The Madrid Theater also converted for sound early. The same December 25, 1928 ad mentions that "The Jazz Singer" would be shown in a return engagement starting December 29, 1928. By 1941, it was part of the Fox chain. The Madrid Theater closed by 1955. Recently, the Madrid Theater has been restored and is used for wedding receptions and other occasions.

NEPTUNE THEATER, 39th & Bell

The Neptune Theater operated briefly in the late 1920s. An advertisement was listed in the May 4th 1929 *Kansas City Star*.

PLAZA THEATER, 4704 Wyandotte

The Plaza Theater was not really a neighborhood theater. It opened in October 1928 in the Country Club Plaza shopping area, the first suburban shopping area in the country. The first motion picture shown at the Plaza Theater was "Street Angel."

On September 28th 1929, the *Kansas City Journal-Post* reported it was sold to the Fox chain, which owned the theater until the 1960s. By the 1980s, it was converted to a three-screen operation. The Plaza closed in April 1999 as a 15-screen megaplex prepared to open elsewhere on the Plaza. It was the oldest surviving theater in Kansas City still showing regular fare. The building presently houses a Restoration Hardware Store, with the façade preserved.

UPTOWN THEATER, 3700 Broadway (Valentine & Broadway)

The Uptown opened January 6th 1928 and showed first run features; in advertisements in the 1920s, it was billed as

“The Magnificent Uptown.” On September 28th 1929, the *Kansas City Journal-Post* reported the Uptown, along with several other theaters, was being sold to the Fox chain.

The Uptown was open as a theater at least until 1971. Later it was used for concerts, and the September 12th 1997 *Kansas City Star* reported the Uptown was included in Tax Increment Financing plans for the area. Plans call for a three-story, 35,000 square-foot addition to the West End of the theater. The space would be used for dressing rooms, rehearsal space, a kitchen, a buffet and rest rooms. The new space would also feature a bar and concession area for pre-event gatherings.

1938, the theater was destroyed by fire.

HIGHLAND THEATER, 1616 E. 31st Street

The Highland Theater was in operation by 1918. It is listed in a small advertisement in the *Kansas City Star* of January 1st 1926, but by July 21st 1926 is no longer listed in the movie advertisements.

MARLBOROUGH THEATER, 81st & Paseo

The Marlborough Theater was in operation on January 1st 1926, but was not listed in the May 4th 1929 *Kansas City Star*

WALDO THEATER, 504 West 75th

The Waldo Theater opened about 1924 as the Westmoreland Theater and on December 25th 1930 was enlarged and re-opened. In the early days, it was part of the Fox Chain. In 1939, the name was changed to the Waldo Theater. The Waldo Theater survived until it closed on December 17th 1972.

On August 25th 1973, the Waldo Astoria Dinner Theater was opened at the site. The dinner theater closed in April of 1991, and moved to an Overland Park location. Then a multipurpose cultural center opened in 1991 as the Theater at Waldo. However in 1995, surrounding businesses needed more parking, so the theater was torn down. The east façade and lobby of the old Waldo Theater were kept for retail use. However, it has since been destroyed by fire.



Uptown Theater, courtesy Dr. Kenneth J. LaBudde Department of Special Collections, Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri – Kansas City

movie advertisements. In 1937, it was back in operation and called the Paseo Theater.

**NEIGHBORHOOD THEATERS:
PROSPECT-INDIANA AREA**

BALTIS THEATER, 3506 Indiana

The Baltis Theater apparently opened about 1927 or 1928. It operated at least through 1937, but apparently did not survive the Depression.

BEAUFORT THEATER, 5915 Prospect

The Beaufort Theater apparently was originally at 57th and Prospect because an advertisement in the *Kansas City Star* of January 1st 1926 lists it at that address. By the May 4th 1929 *Kansas City Star* advertisement, the theater is at 59th and Prospect. By 1931, the theater was called the Mary Luc. It

WARWICK THEATER, 3927 Main

The Warwick was open by 1918 and in May of 1928 re-opened after a balcony was built, which brought the seating capacity to 2,200. It was one of several theaters sold to the Fox chain in 1929.

The Warwick closed in June of 1953, according to the June 7th 1953 issue of the *Kansas City Star*, and the building was converted to commercial space. The building is one of the few to survive with the façade fairly intact. It is now occupied by a design company, Soreal Design.

**NEIGHBORHOOD THEATERS:
PASEO-WOODLAND AREA**

COLONIAL THEATER, 3838 Woodland

The Colonial Theater was one of the early neighborhood theaters, opening in 1909 with 660 seats. In 1927 the theater was enlarged; according to the September 11th 1927 *Kansas City Star*, the new enlarged theater was built around the old facility, which remained in operation. During the twenty-two week construction period, the Colonial never closed. When the new facility was finished, the old was removed bit by bit.

The new theater seating capacity was 1,020 and a balcony was added. It was also twelve feet wider on each side. Dr. R. H. Simmons owned the property at the time and H. H. Barrett was the lessee and operator.

In 1937, it was part of the Mutual chain. On February 20,

was in operation in 1941, but was gone by 1955.

BIJOU THEATER, 4941 Prospect

The Bijou Theater was originally at 7 E. 5th, and was at that location in 1924. The Bijou on Prospect opened about 1927, and sometime after 1937, was named the Linda Theater. The *Kansas City Star* of December 6th 1953 reported the theater had been sold to the Painters Union for use as a Union Hall.

CENTRAL THEATER, 31st & Indiana

The Central Theater was in operation by December 1928, and featured ten and fifteen cent admission. It was still in operation in 1941.

CIRCLE THEATER, 3551 Prospect

The Emerald Theater was in operation by late 1918, but became the Circle Theater by 1921. The January 23rd 1944 *Kansas City Star* reported the theater had been remodeled as the Pic Theater and would re-open about January 31st 1944. The June 10th 1956 *Kansas City Star* reported the theater had been sold and would become a boat dealership.

INDIANA THEATER, 4101 Indiana

The Indiana Theater apparently opened in 1925. It was in operation on May 4th 1929, but apparently did not survive the Depression.

LINWOOD THEATER, 3034 Prospect

The Linwood Theater was in operation by February 1918. The March 26th 1926 *Kansas City Journal-Post* reported that the Theater Universal chain had bought the theater. In early 1929, the Linwood Theater was part of the Capitol chain. Then, the September 28th 1929 *Kansas City Journal-Post* then reported the Linwood was sold to Fox Theater chain. The Linwood Theater was in still operation in 1967, but was gone by 1970.

MURRAY THEATER, 3200 E. 27th (27th & Benton)

The Murray was in operation by February 1918. It was still in business in 1937, but appears to have been gone by 1939.

OAK PARK THEATER, 3935 Prospect

The Oak Park opened on Christmas Day, December 25th 1925, but there was an Ellsworth Theater at 39th & Prospect by February 1918. The Oak Park survived until 1958, but the building was vacant in 1959. In 1960, Reverend O. S. Jones was operating a church in the facility. The September 22nd 1966 *Kansas City Star* reported the old Oak Park sign was being taken down due to fears it might fall. The building was being used at that time by the Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church. The Mount Olive Baptist Church now uses the building.

PROSPECT THEATER, 2607 Prospect

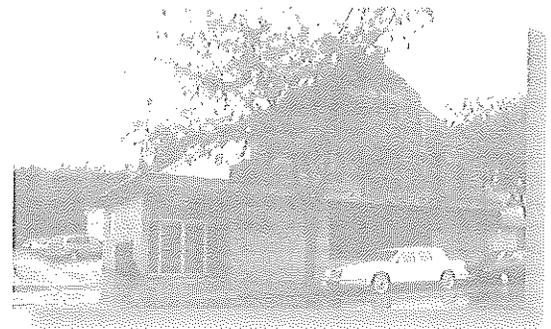
The Prospect Theater was in operation by February 1918. It was still in operation in 1937, but appears to be gone by 1939.

SUN THEATER, 7106 Prospect

The theater was originally the Mayfield Theater and was in operation by 1926 in the shopping district at 71st and Prospect. By May 4th 1929 the theater was called the Sun. The Sun continued in operation until about 1961. The Fellowship Baptist Church now occupies the building.

TIVOLI THEATER, 2420 Indiana

The Tivoli Theater apparently opened about 1927 or 1928. It was still in operation in 1931. In 1937, it was part of the Mutual chain, but appears to be gone by 1939.



The much modified Sun Theater Building, 1999

NEIGHBORHOOD THEATERS: TROOST AVENUE

AMERICAN THEATER, 910 Troost

The American Theater was an early casualty. It was in operation by April 1919, and was listed in the 1921 to 1925 City Directories, but by November 2nd 1925, it was vacant. In the *Kansas City Post* of July 4th 1923, it is called the New American Theater. In November 1926, it re-opened as the Diana Theater, but by the 1928 City Directory, it was gone.

APOLLO THEATER, 3227 Troost

The Apollo was one of the early neighborhood theaters, opening in 1911. On September 28th 1929, the *Kansas City Journal-Post* reported the Apollo was sold to the Fox Movie Chain.

By October of 1958 the Apollo Theater was closed and the *Kansas City Star* reported on October 25th 1959 that the Apollo Building was being converted to commercial space. By 1967, the building housed the Yum Yum Lounge. By 1975, the building was vacant again and was torn down by 1992.

BAGDAD THEATER, 2711 Troost

The Bagdad Theater opened July 21st 1926 and featured a "mammoth Wurlitzer" pipe organ. The opening day program featured Joe Black's Radio Orchestra, and Bebe Daniels in "The Palm Beach Girl." Admission was 10 and 20 cents.

The Bagdad Theater was owned by Abe Baier and offered

some unusual seating arrangements. According to the *Kansas City Journal-Post* of July 18th 1926, the 1,200-seat theater had two enclosed sections on each side of the projection booth. Each featured plate glass for its front partition. One side was for smokers and the other was a "Crying" room for "recalcitrant kiddies." Each room was equipped with a "Arctic Nu Air" ventilating system and the entire theater had an "air renewing system" that supplied the theater with fresh air every few minutes.

The Bagdad Theater was designed in the popular Spanish motif. The theater exterior was described by the *Kansas City Star* of February 28th 1926 as being pink stucco trimmed in buff terra cota. There were storefronts on each side of the entrance.

In 1940, the name was changed briefly to the Carrol Theater, but by 1941, it was back to being called the Bagdad Theater. By May 1954 the theater had closed. It stood vacant for three years. On May 28th 1957, as it was being converted into a union hall, it burned. The Laundry Workers Local Number 238 built a new building at the site and occupied it until about 1980. A religious center is now located on the site.

BANCROFT THEATER, 4307 Troost

Little has been learned about the Bancroft Theater, which was apparently named after nearby Bancroft Elementary School. The Bancroft Theater was in operation by February 14th 1918, and the theater was listed in the *Kansas City Directory* from 1921 until 1929. The Bancroft Theater closed by May of 1929, apparently a victim of the Depression and the costs of converting to sound operation. The building was vacant from 1930 to 1932 and was later used as a furniture store. The structure still stands, along with the outdoor sign.

GLORY THEATER, 3838 Troost

The Glory was in operation by February 14, 1918, being listed in a *Kansas City Star* advertisement. In the *Kansas City Star* advertisements of April 1919, the theater is called the Anita-Glory. Apparently, the Glory Theater did not survive into the 1920s.

ISIS THEATER, 3112 Troost

The Isis Theater, although in "the suburbs," was not really a neighborhood theater. It usually featured first run films, and charged higher admission prices; in the 1920s, newspaper advertisements for the Isis Theater billed it as "Isis, The Irresistible." It was also located in the 31st and Troost shopping district.

The Isis Theater, which was built in the Egyptian style popular in the early 1920s, was located in the Wirthman Building, which was built in 1917. The theater opened in August of 1918. On September 28th 1929 the *Kansas City Journal-Post* reported the Isis was being sold to the Fox Theater Chain.

Over the years, the Isis had three major fires. The first in January 1928 caused \$40,000 in damage. A March 1939

blaze caused \$30,000 damage and an April 1954 fire caused \$2,500 in damages. The Isis Theater continued showing first-run motion pictures until 1968, when they switched to adult movies.

The theater closed on May 2nd 1970 and never re-opened. The Wirthman Building was sold in 1988 to Enrique Rivera. Barbara Shelly, in a March 12th 1997 article in the *Kansas City Star*, said Rivera was "a landlord well-known for mismanaging properties." By 1992, the building was in terrible disrepair. In March of 1997, demolition started on the Wirthman Building, including the Isis Theater.

LINDBERGH THEATER, 4011 Troost

The Lindbergh Theater opened on Christmas Day 1928, and was named after aviator Charles Lindbergh, who had recently flown solo across the Atlantic from New York to Paris. Abe Baier, who also owned the Bagdad Theater at 2711 Troost, developed the theater. Baier purchased a row of one-story shops running from 4009 to 4015 Troost. He used the storefront at 4011 Troost for the entrance to the theater, which was built behind the stores.

According to the *Kansas City Journal-Post* of July 15th 1928, Baier planned to remodel the front of the entire row of shops into Spanish type architecture. Spanish tile and cut stone was used as trim for the facade. The theater had 1,350 seats and like the Bagdad Theater, featured a balcony smoking room and a room for children. A \$25,000 Robert Morton pipe organ was installed and the theater had a cooling system.

The opening day program featured Ronald Coleman and Velma Banky in "Two Lovers." Thomas Bruce, formerly of the Newman and Mainstreet Theaters, was at the organ. Admission was 10 and 15 cents.

On December 28th 1941, the name of the Lindbergh was changed to the Fiesta Theater. A December 11th 1941 *Kansas City Times* article noted the change was voted on by theater patrons. However, a December 28, 1974 article in the *Kansas City Star* noted that Charles Lindbergh had campaigned against the entry of the United States into World War II and that theater owner Abe Baier (who was Jewish) was accused of being a Nazi.

The renamed Fiesta Theater survived until about May of 1953. In August 1953, Abe Baier leased the building to George Tidona, who remodeled the structure for his Town Hall dining and dancing operation that had been at 1208 Wyandotte. The *Kansas City Star* of August 9th 1953 noted that the theater seats were being removed and the four-foot slope of the floor was being leveled for dancing. The projection booth and screen was kept in place for persons wanting to use the space for sales presentations.

In December 1973, the Town Hall Ballroom re-opened after being closed for part of the year. It featured weekend rock and blues live entertainment. By 1980, the Ballroom was gone and today the site is vacant ground.

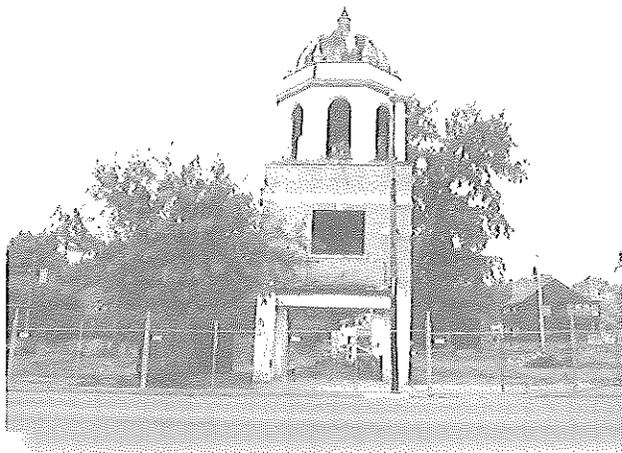
NEW CENTRE THEATER, 1103 E. 15th (15th and Troost)

Little has been learned about the New Centre. It was in operation by February 1918, and was listed in the City Directory from 1921 until 1935, but seems to have closed by 1936.

ROCKHILL THEATER, 4608 Troost

The Rockhill Theater, another theater designed in a Spanish motif and featuring a tower, opened on May 25th 1927.

A fire devastated the theater on October 31st 1967, and the theater did not re-open. By 1992, the building was the home of the Kansas City Community Center. By 1997, an adult strip club was using the building. In late 1997, plans were announced for the redevelopment of the whole block, with the developer saying he planned to keep the facade (including the tower) as part of redevelopment. Ironically, the article in the *Kansas City Star* made no mention that the tower was part of the old Rockhill Theater.



All that remains of the Rockhill Theater, 1999

SOUTHTOWN THEATER, 5707 Troost

The South Troost Theater opened sometime about 1924. By 1937, it was called the Southtown Theater and was part of the Mutual Chain. It closed about 1957 and was vacant for several years. Then in 1961, the Southtown Theater was converted into the Southtown Lanes, a bowling alley. About 1963, the building burned down and today with a parking lot on the site, nothing suggests it was once the site of a movie theater.

STRAND THEATER, 3542 Troost

The Strand Theater was in operation by 1921 and was listed in the City Directory that year. By 1937, it was part of the Mutual Chain. By December 1962, the theater became the Strand Art and showed X-rated movies. It continues in operation today as the Strand Adult Theater.

NEIGHBORHOOD THEATERS: WEST SIDE

PENN VALLEY THEATER, 2124 Jefferson

The Penn Valley Theater was in operation in 1924.

ROANOKE THEATER, 39th & Summit

Little has been found about the Roanoke Theater. It was in operation as the Spillane by November 1918. By 1924, it was the Roanoke; it appears to have closed by May 1929, but was in operation again by September 1930 and was operating in 1937 as part of the Fox chain.

SUMMIT THEATER, 1705 Summit

The Summit opened in 1914 according to the *Kansas City Star*. The *Kansas City Star* of September 11th 1949 reported it was being remodeled.

ADDITIONAL RELATED INFORMATION IS POSTED ON OUR ONLINE JOURNAL AT JCHS.ORG

Craig M. Bryan UE, is author of several unpublished local history manuscripts. He has kindly donated copies of these histories to the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's Archives and Research Library, and has allowed us to publish this manuscript for your enjoyment. Bryan's manuscript are available for research in the Society's archives. Watch future issues of the JOURNAL for representations of his other compilations. We welcome donations of photographs of area theaters to better document this "scene" in Kansas City history.

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FROM FORT OSAGE TO THE TOWN OF SIBLEY: A BRIEF STUDY OF A "FRONTIER" COMMUNITY

by John Peterson

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was first presented as a paper at the Second Lower Missouri Conference on Archaeology and History at the Fort Osage Education Center on September 6, 2008. A fully sourced edition of this article is available in the Society's archives.



George Sibley
(jchs000110I)

Historian William Cronon, in a critique of Frederick Jackson Turner's famous 1894 essay on the American frontier, wrote that a modern reassessment of Turner has created a legacy of historical study of the West that is:

...faith that history must in large measure be the story of ordinary people [and]... emphasis on the importance of regional environments to our understanding of the course of American history.

Frederick Jackson Turner believed that American history was a history of colonization and the westward advancement of American settlement. He defined the frontier as that area that "lies at the hither edge of free land," and his famous thesis was a response to the superintendent of the census who stated in 1890 that the American frontier was gone. Turner saw this as a significant event in U.S. history. He believed that up to 1890, American history was a product of the frontier, and from this point on its history would be the result of different processes.

The American Frontier and the American West are often thought of interchangeably. The frontier was simply a boundary that steadily moved west. Turner saw the American West as a "form of society, rather than an area." It was a product of new cultural institutions that were created to cope with the settlement of new environments. For our purposes here, I think we can define the American West as that vast area west of the Mississippi River that became dominated by the United States largely in the 19th Century.

Beginning in the 1980s, a "New History" of the West was being developed. Historians began to move away from the evolutionary, euro-centric "Turnerian" view that saw the American West as something that is not a place but a process. The "New History" paradigm began to view the West as something that is certainly a "place," shaped both by environmental and historical/cultural processes. The "New Historians" wanted to deconstruct the notion of a frontier based on ethnocentric views of U.S. expansion, in addition to questioning whether the American frontier was truly gone.

Historical studies of the West and the American Frontier began to focus on the role of ethnicity, gender, politics, and economy in shaping American settlement – all with an attempt to move beyond evolutionary determinism. It might also be seen as a study of the "legacy of conquest" as defined by Patricia Limerick. They began to question Turner's assumptions about what exactly is a "frontier".

According to Barnhart, the "New Historians" have focused attention along three avenues of research. These are the role of American Indians in actively determining their existence and history, the important function of the land itself in shaping history, and the idea of replacing the concept of "frontier" with "borderlands." Historical study of Fort Osage can address all



Fort Osage by Virginia (Jennings) Nadeau (jchs003799x)

three of these issues. Certainly the role of the Osage in the formation of the fort community and its subsequent history is critical and has been largely ignored by researchers. Also largely overlooked by historians has been the role of Fort Osage in shaping the history and culture of the Osage. For as Barnhart states, American Indians and Euro-Americans are "duel participants in the making of the history of the frontier."

The landscape is also critical. The fort and community would not have existed were it not for the high bluff immediately overlooking a large bend in the river. The fact that the fort was located in a territory that was at the time a tribal "frontier" and shared hunting grounds for competing tribes such as the Osage, Kansa, Ioway, and Sac and Fox also greatly impacted its history. Fort Osage was certainly a product of the idea of "borderlands," particularly with the 1808 Osage Treaty line that formed an official border between the United States, American Indian groups, and competing empires such as Great Britain and Spain.

In this article, I want to explore the role of Fort Osage and

the Town of Sibley in the framework of the American frontier. The few written histories of Fort Osage present a disjointed view of a frontier fort that was abandoned and replaced a decade later with a fledgling frontier town. The Town of Sibley is seen as a community whose only connection to Fort Osage is geography and having been named after the Fort Osage factor, George Sibley. In retrospect, one cannot readily separate the history of Fort Osage from the history of the Town of Sibley. It is more productive to view them as a single community that adapted to changing historical processes.

BRIEF HISTORY OF FORT OSAGE

The history of Fort Osage is tied to the U.S. Factory System that operated from 1795-1822. George Washington envisioned that these government-run trading houses, or factories, would control American Indian trade, prevent abuses by private traders, and, "*fix them* [American Indians] *strongly in our Interest.*" In April 1806, Jefferson established the Office of Indian Trade within the War Department to administer the factories. Most factories were supplied with an adjacent fort and military garrison. Fort Osage was one of the factory system's more successful operations. The trade house was built primarily for the Osage as partial compensation for signing the 1808 Treaty. Other groups such as the Kansa, Ioway, Missouriia, and Oto also participated in the Fort Osage trade.

In early September 1808, William Clark established the building site for the new factory and fort. Captain Eli Clemson and 73, 1st Regiment Infantrymen were left as the garrison. George Sibley was the factor and operated the Indian trade house. Just a few days after work on the new fort began, contingents of the Big and Little Osage were invited to reside near the fort and sign a treaty penned by Clark in which they relinquished all lands east of a line drawn from Fort Osage south to the Arkansas River, essentially most of their hunting territory in modern-day Missouri and northern Arkansas. At the time, Fort Osage was the western-most military post in the United States. The fort was closed briefly from 1813-1815 as a result of the War of 1812, but the government trading house was otherwise in operation from 1808-1822.

Many private traders felt the U.S. factory system was unfair and impeded free enterprise. For this reason the factory system was abolished by Congress in May 1822, due to the political persuasion of powerful men such as Ramsay Crooks, John Jacob Astor, and Senator Thomas H. Benton from the new State of Missouri. George Sibley and two associates purchased the remaining trade goods from the government and attempted to carry on trade at Fort Osage until 1827, but it was a failed enterprise that nearly ruined Sibley.

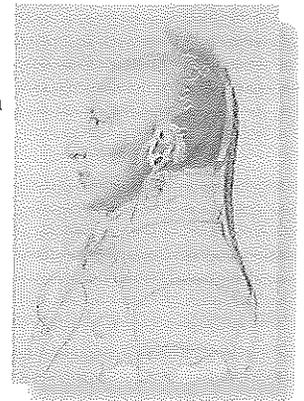
The last official role that Fort Osage played was as a staging area during the early development of the Santa Fe Trail. William Becknell's trading expedition to Santa Fe in 1821 caught the attention of Congress, and with influence from Missouri Senator Benton, one of President Monroe's

last acts was to authorize a bill and modest spending to mark a road that Benton referred to as, "a highway between nations." In March 1825, a survey of the Santa Fe Trail was authorized, and the new President John Q. Adams appointed three Commissioners for the survey, Benjamin Reeves, Thomas Mather, and George Sibley. Sibley was chosen primarily for the fact that he knew the Osage and Kansa from trading with them at Fort Osage and from whom treaties of right-of-way for the road would be necessary. Archibald Gamble, Sibley's brother-in-law, served as Secretary, and Joseph C. Brown as surveyor. Of the three commissioners, Sibley was the only one to actually reach Santa Fe.

FORT OSAGE AND FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY

The factory system not only served as an institution for mitigating conflict, promoting commerce, and forming alliances and peaceful relations with American Indians, but also as a mechanism for opening new lands for Euro-American settlement. It is not a coincidence that the first activity undertaken at Fort Osage was the signing of the 1808 Treaty in which the United States acquired most of the land that later became the State of Missouri and the northern part of Arkansas. This singular act in essence moved the boundary of the American frontier a couple hundred miles up the Missouri River. The Osage also ceded an area six miles square around the fort as a military reservation. This is the famous Six Mile District where the earliest Euro-American settlers established farms in the area.

While William Clark and the U.S. government may have felt that they essentially and legally pulled one over on the Osage, by acquiring most of the future state of Missouri with only the expense of the trade operations at Fort Osage, a small annuity, and the services of a blacksmith; the Osage too may have felt they made a good deal and pulled one over on the Americans. To those Osage present at Fort Osage in 1808, whose core village areas were to the west of the treaty line, they essentially ceded hunting territory of which they were led to believe they could still hunt on. Fort Osage would provide important access to trade goods, particularly firearms, at prices cheaper than they were currently paying, to maintain their hegemony on the prairie-plains border. In exchange, they only had to formalize their hunting territory, at least this is what they were led to believe. They were also asked to relinquish a great deal of land that they really did not control, particularly north of the Missouri River. It was of no



Portrait of Voithe Chinga (Le Soldat du Chêne), One of the Principal Chiefs of the Little Osage that Witnessed the Signing of the 1808 Treaty (jchs0037381)

consequence to the Osage to give land to the United States that was actually controlled by their enemies.

However, there were two main factors that ended up making this a very poor deal for the Osage. In fact, William Clark, many years later, expressed deep regret for penning this treaty. Firstly and most important, the Osage may not have foreseen the extent of the forced westward movement of tribes such as the Cherokee, Delaware, Kickapoo, and Shawnee across the Mississippi River and the large numbers of Euro-American settlers that would rapidly encroach on their hunting territory. This intrusion significantly impacted their ability to utilize this important hunting territory, particularly the Ozark Highlands. The conflict that resulted was seen by the United States as a violation of the 1808 Treaty and seen by the Osage as a violation of their hunting rights. The end result was that the Osage were forced to cede further territory in the 1818 Treaty. Secondly, the Osage were also led to believe, wrongly as it turned out, that the garrison at Fort Osage would assist them in battles against their enemies such as the Sac and Fox and Ioway; thus making it safe to reside near the fort.

Not all Osage were agreeable to the 1808 Treaty. A large segment of the Big or Great Osage led by Big Track and Clermont II resided far to the south and southwest on the Arkansas drainage and saw little benefit from the treaty and, therefore, strongly opposed its adoption. They were also upset that they were not consulted regarding the treaty's terms. Only those Osage that ventured to William Clark's new fort on the Missouri River were consulted. This caused delay of ratification of Clark's treaty, but within a few months Meriwether Lewis drafted a new treaty, essentially a copy of Clark's treaty, and forced all the Osage to sign it by using the powerful and coercive influence of Pierre Chouteau.

It should be noted that although the Osage were the dominant group to trade at Fort Osage, they were not the only tribe to use the fort. As stated, several other tribes also traded at the fort during its history. By 1810, the majority of the Osage at Fort Osage had left and returned to re-establish villages in southwest Missouri. However, the writings of Brackenridge and Bradbury indicate that at least a portion of the Little Osage maintained a village near the fort as late as 1811. They apparently abandoned this village after their 1811 summer hunt.

After the War of 1812, the Osage only visited the fort intermittently to trade and pick up their annuity. The principal reason was that Fort Osage was built in a "frontier" area that served as a buffer zone between the Osage to the south, and the Ioway and Sac and Fox to the north. Thus, it was inconvenient and dangerous for the Osage to travel to the fort, especially when they discovered that the fort's garrison was not going to join them in their battles against their enemies. While Fort Osage was a good location to intercept river traffic, its location was a poor choice for an Osage factory (trade house). William Clark and the War Department did not understand the intricacies of tribal relations in the new territory. Sibley's various documents and recorded statements

by Osage leaders note a considerable amount of raiding and ambushing that took place between the Osage on one side and the Ioway and Sac and Fox on the other during the pre-War of 1812 era at the fort.

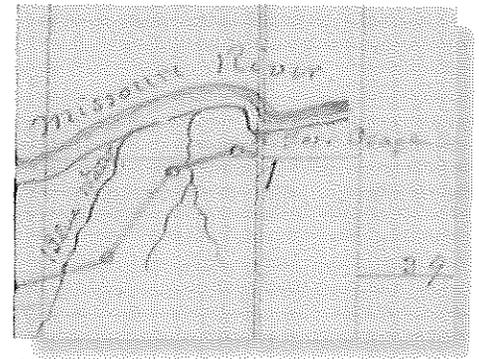
There were other factors as well. Unlicensed traders had intensified trade with them in their villages, and after the War of 1812 there was a new enemy, the Cherokee, which kept them in southwest Missouri to protect their villages and hunting territory. Finally, in 1821, the United States government built a factory (trade house) near the Osage villages on the Marais des Cygnes. It operated as a sub-factory of Fort Osage. It was too little too late as the factory system was abolished by Congress less than a year later.

Isenberg notes that the end of the factory system began an era of the market economy in the West, "where commerce came to be oriented toward the marginalization of Indians and competing Euro-American empires." The factory system for a short period, between the Louisiana Purchase and the War of 1812, maintained a "restrained" trade that was more aligned with "securing the allegiance of Indians" than free-market commerce. Nowhere was this more evident than at Fort Osage where an important alliance was formed with the Osage that enabled the United States to branch out into the Lower Missouri Basin. This alliance was critical. With a garrison of less than 80 soldiers, the Osage could have taken the fort at any time of their choosing and greatly impeded a U.S. foothold in the Louisiana Territory.

This shift from the factory system to a market economy, as Isenberg notes, created profound changes on the community of Fort Osage, and set in motion its transformation from an Indian trade operation to an outfitter for those traveling up the river and to the West. The era of "for-profit" commerce and land speculation in the West had begun in earnest. Although it is important to note that even during the factory system era, Fort Osage also played an important, but secondary, role as a staging and outfitting area for river travel.

FORT OSAGE AS A FRONTIER COMMUNITY

The normative view of Fort Osage has been one of an



Joseph Brown Map of the "Mexican Road," or Santa Fe Trail, that started just south of Fort Osage in 1825 (Copy available in the Oversized Collection at the Jackson County Historical Society's Archives)

isolated outpost far from the civilization of St. Louis. It has become part of that mythology and eurocentric perspective of the frontier fort in which a small group of men huddle within the confines of a stockade that provides scant protection against the wilderness and hostile savages outside. Over time, the frontier fort will give way to civilization and progress in the evolutionary determinism of Turner's Frontier Thesis.

If anything, the history of Fort Osage is in stark contrast to this "normative" view. The Osage in Missouri, for example, welcomed the presence of the fort and its trade operations. They could not have predicted that it was the beginning of a vicious cycle of treaty-making that would push them completely out of Missouri by 1825. Although the fort was at risk of attack by British-allied tribes during the early years of the War of 1812; it was seldom in danger of attack by hostiles. Rather than a small group of men huddled within a stockade, the fort grew into a multi-cultural community that attracted settlement outside of its walls. It is also important to note that the fur trade carried on at Fort Osage continued and intensified a global commerce that involved the American Indian tribes at one end with goods and factories in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia at the other end.

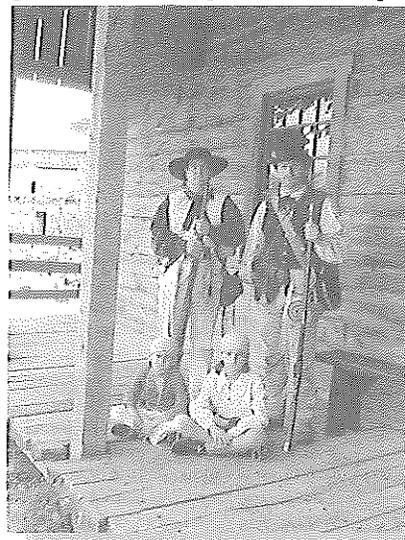
While the tribes were not allowed to live within the fort proper, they were certainly a part of its community. The fort itself was a community of soldiers and their families, civilian laborers, interpreters, such as Pierre Lorr, and their families of French and Indian heritage, sutlers, and African-American slaves. Several of the fort's garrison were European born, and Lt. Louis Lorimier was Shawnee and French. As stated, the Little Osage and part of the Big or Great Osage resided near the fort on a semi-permanent basis during the fort's first few years. The Kansa also resided near the fort during the Fall of 1808.

In fact, the early era of the fort (prior to War of 1812) saw the largest population that the community would ever see, even today – a population that consisted of a few thousand American Indians, the fort garrison, the trade operations staff, sutlers, families of soldiers and interpreters, a few African-American slaves, and a few Euro-American settlers and their families that arrived to set up nearby farms to supply the fort. This population was augmented by a continual coming and going of traders, agents, explorers, and others going up and down the river. When including the nearby Osage villages, the Fort Osage community had a greater population than St. Louis from 1808-1810.

War Department records and artifacts recovered during archaeological excavation of the fort in 1941-42 suggest that far from being an isolated, poorly supplied post; Fort Osage was equipped with fine furnishings and modern domestic and personal goods. Mary Sibley, George Sibley's wife, was famous for the vast extent of furnishings and personal goods, including the Easton family organ, which she brought to the fort in 1815.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF SIBLEY

When Fort Osage reopened in 1815 after the war was over, the newly married George Sibley built a house outside of the stockade. He was soon operating a small farm complete with pigs, cattle, and an orchard that he referred to as Fountain Cottage Farm. This was in addition to his duties as government factor. By 1819, Sibley began to see the writing on the wall. He knew the garrison at Fort Osage would soon disappear, as the military was planning on removing the garrison further up the river to a post that was to become



Re-enactors at Fort Osage
(jchs011496bs)

Fort Atkinson. He also had to suspect that the days of the factory system were winding down. There was simply too much wealth to be extracted from the West for the government to continue the subsidized trade with the Indians. Sibley understood that he needed to diversify if he was going to become prosperous at Fort Osage.

He started expansion of his farming activities adjacent to the fort, and construction began on a saw and grist mill. In July 1819, Sibley wrote in a letter to his brother, Samuel, that he envisioned his farm at Fort Osage as:

An outlet and good market, for vast quantities of Flour Pork and Whiskey, will exist for many years to come among the numerous Traders, Garrisons & on the Missouri above.

The fort, as it had been since its founding, continued as the center of a slowly growing community independent of the military garrison, and Fort Osage was granted a post office in 1820 with George Sibley as its first postmaster.

When Fort Osage was abandoned as a government trade operation in 1822, Sibley still planned on operating a private Indian trade business with two associates. The fort also maintained a small caretaker garrison until the establishment of Fort Leavenworth. Euro-American settlers slowly continued to trickle into the area intent on becoming prosperous by supplying travelers on the river and overland on the Santa Fe Trail. Although Sibley's private trade operation failed (the Indian trade had largely bypassed Fort Osage for several reasons), he and his wife, Mary, continued to reside on and off at Fort Osage until 1827. In a sense he had become, as Jones stated, "a man caught up in the life of a developing country while still wedded to a frontier institution which was passing away." In this case, Jones interestingly, and

perhaps erroneously, equates the term "frontier" with the term "obsolete."

However, Sibley still maintained Fort Osage as his permanent residence during those years from 1822-1827, despite the abolishment of the Factory System and the failure of his private trade operation. He envisioned prosperity outfitting travelers from his farm and mill operations. He claimed large landholdings adjacent to the fort, citing his improvements to the land under the Pre-Emption Act of 1816. Sibley believed that this land would be granted to him as a reward for his public service. Nonetheless, his claims were denied by the government in 1836, after years of legal wrangling, for the simple reason that his improvements were made on land that was a military reservation at the time. Thus his pre-emption claims were invalid.

Apparently, Sibley abandoned his dreams of becoming prosperous at Fort Osage, and sometime between 1827 and 1829, he and Mary permanently relocated to Lindenwood at St. Charles, never to return. Despite Sibley's woes, a community continued to exist. Zenas Leonard, in his famous account of a fur trade expedition to the west, stated in 1831, "we arrived at Fort Osage the extreme point of the white settlement." His party did exactly what the Fort Osage community hoped for, "Here we remained several days and purchased and packed up a sufficiency of provision." Maximilian also noted a settlement here in 1833. Fort Osage continued to serve in its unofficial role that had existed since its earliest days and intensified after the War of 1812. This was as a provisioning community for those traveling up the river or overland to New Mexico.

Since the government denied Sibley's claims to the land, it was actually his brother-in-law and attorney, Archibald Gamble, who acquired legal title and platted the town. It is likely that Gamble acquired the land on behalf of George Sibley, and the government simply looked the other way. Mr. Gamble also claimed rights to the river landing and ferry. Gamble and Sibley envisioned a town made prosperous from outfitting travelers on the Santa Fe Trail, river trade, and

steamboat outfitting. They also envisioned making themselves prosperous through speculation on lots in the new town.

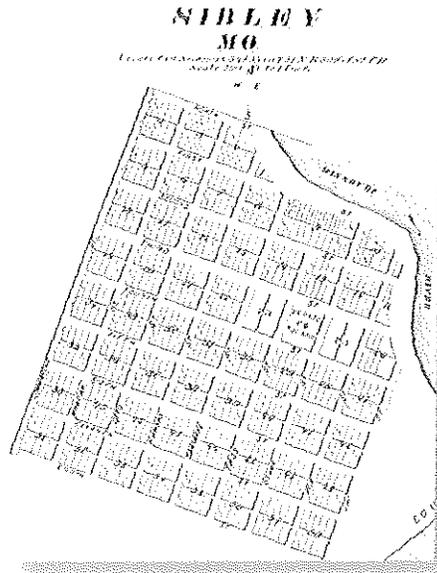
From the beginning, the Town of Sibley was an exercise in land speculation, common to all fledgling towns at the time. Like many other "frontier" towns, speculation also greatly inhibited its growth. Gamble created the town on June 4, 1836, with 538 lots for sale. Staab's recent research has discovered that of the 18 original purchasers of lots, at least nine were St. Louis residents, and eight of the nine lived in Archibald Gamble's neighborhood. Only three are known to have become actual Sibley residents. Staab believes that probably fewer than 100 lots were ever purchased, and the town never became as large as its plat map. However, several new businesses were established in the newly platted town. These businesses obviously thrived more on accommodating and outfitting travelers and supplying the needs of local farmers than thriving on business from an influx of new residents. The Town of Sibley had truly become a "modern" frontier town that arises out of land speculation and small businessmen seeking prosperity in the West.

The Town of Sibley never grew into more than a small village as the economic center of Jackson County soon became Independence. However, the town did experience a modest amount of prosperity in the late 1830s and early 1840s. A post office, school, church, hotel, flour mill, mercantile, blacksmith shop, and several homes were established during the early history of the town. Sibley also suffered from a series of tragic events. In 1844, a severe flood destroyed many of the businesses located at the base of the bluff. The town was also virtually destroyed by Union forces in June 1863, as Sibley was a refuge for Confederate guerillas during the Civil War. A serious fire in 1878 and a tornado in 1880 again damaged much of the town.

After the arrival of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad in 1887, the business center and many of the residents moved about a half mile to the south, adjacent to the train depot, which is often called "New Sibley". This was an important location in the railroad's ability to haul goods and material to the Southwest, since the crossing of the Missouri River was at Sibley. It is interesting and not coincidental that the railroad played a similar role at Sibley as the Santa Fe Trail did over 60 years earlier. The first bridge built in 1887 was replaced by the current bridge in 1915. The Sibley Railroad Bridge was quickly recognized as an engineering marvel and soon became a tourist attraction.

THE LEGACY OF TURNER'S FRONTIER AND FORT OSAGE RESEARCH

In summary, it is apparent that an understanding of Fort Osage and the Town of Sibley is in its infancy in regards to interpretation of the historical data. Little has been published from the primary documents of the fort-era beyond the work of Kate Gregg in the 1930s and '40s, work that was philosophically grounded in Turner's Frontier Thesis. Even



The 1836 Town of Sibley Plat Map as Published in the 1877 *Illustrated Historical Atlas, Jackson County, Missouri* (Reprinted by the Jackson County Historical Society, 2007).

less has been published concerning the archaeological work undertaken in 1941-42 of the fort itself. Outside of a few local researchers, almost nothing has been written on the Town of Sibley.



Sibley, Missouri, 1933, by Dick Millard, as published in *Results of County Planning* (jchs009353x)

I hope this article has demonstrated that a better approach to studying the fort and town is by shedding outdated notions of the "frontier" grounded in Turner's thesis. He provided us an important avenue to begin study of the American Frontier that has left a lasting legacy, but his euro-centric approach, a product of its time, has created misleading historical interpretations. New questions can now be asked grounded in modern historiography about the role of economics and ethnic and cultural identities that shaped the community. A modern reassessment of Turner's Frontier leads us to view Fort Osage and the Town of Sibley as a single community that adapted to changing historical processes. Ongoing analysis of the results of archaeological work in the Fort Osage Park will also facilitate new research avenues.

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ADDITIONAL RELATED INFORMATION IS POSTED ON OUR ONLINE JOURNAL AT JCHS.ORG

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Peterson grew up in New Mexico and has lived in the Kansas City area since October 2000. He currently resides in Independence.

SEGREGATION'S SYSTEMATIC STRIDE INTO KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

By Adia Robinson

When you think of the word segregation, you think of isolation or a separation of two things from each other. In the case of the Southern part of United States, during the period after the Civil War between the 1870's to the 1900's, the practice of segregation was to separate one race from another with the idea that it was un-natural for blacks and whites to be forced to interact with one another. The federal government reinforced this belief when it passed the separate but equal law in the Supreme Court ruling of *Plessy v Ferguson* in 1896.

Where did this idea originate from, and why? Was the belief so important that the idea could spread to a place like Kansas City, Missouri? A place that was considered in the words of Charles Coulter, "A city that was northern enough and western enough to allow gaps in their racially based city structure."

This article discusses how Kansas City, Missouri's growing African American population, the threat of crime and vice, and the influences of the real estate market combined to make white citizens view segregation as the only solution to keeping their families and their way of life safe.

Segregation was an early idea about the situation of slavery, that came from a poor white southern man named Hinton Rowan Helper. In the 1840's and the 1850's just before the Civil War, Helper started a movement for lower class white males. The movement was based on the premise that blacks should not be allowed to do anything with whites due to their inferiority. Therefore, they should be sent away to colonize Africa, Canada, or at least to western United States away from the progressive white nation.

Helper's book, "*The Impending Crisis*," and most of his other writings were on the side of the abolishment of slavery in the South. In doing this it would give the poor whites of America more jobs and the South a chance to stop depending solely on agriculture and be more industrial like the North. This would help the South become just as successful if not more than the North when they abolished slavery. Helper believed that by the South abolishing slavery and adopting to industrialize parts of the South that some how it would lessen the chance of the South becoming a drag on the American economy some time in the future. He argued that slavery was the downfall of the South and the only way to prevent this inevitable downfall was to abolish it. Helper explained

that slavery placed a minority of the rich white population in tyrannical power over the South and left the rest of the white population to suffer in poverty or be driven to other parts of the United States to find another home. Helper states, "slavery and nothing but slavery, has retarded the progress and prosperity of our portion of the union; depopulated and impoverished our cities by forcing the more industrious and enterprising natives of the soil to emigrate to the free states." Helper talks about how the system was slowly set up by the passing of laws in the favor of the upper class leaving the rest of the population with no rights at all. He claims that the masses of the South were unaware of any of the injustice

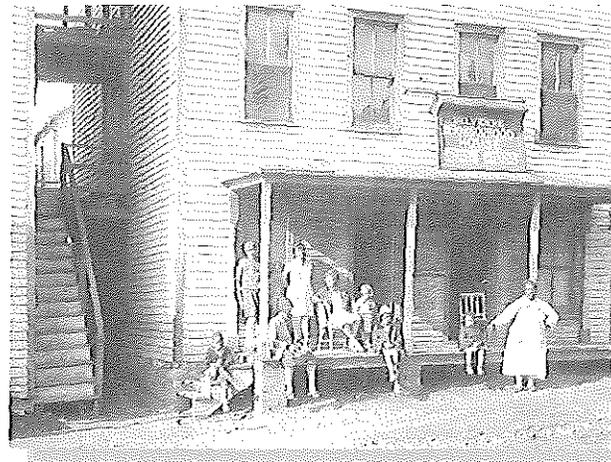
that they faced at the hands of the upper classes and that they are only a means to an end for the rich slaveholders. The solution he came up with is the immediate abolishment of slavery and that the masses take back the South from the rich.

Helper's plan of total disassociation with slaveholders and slavery all together is how he saw slavery could end. He recommends practices that advocate free labor and policies that benefit the masses and not only slaveholders. For blacks, he suggests that slaveholders should pay a tax of around six dollars for every slave they owned. This money should be given to blacks in order for them to colonize in South America, Central

America, Liberia or some where within the boundaries of the United States, away from the South. In this way, whites and blacks can have their separate areas in which to live in peace away from each other. Then the South could finally grow, have more cities and become an industrial giant just like the North.

Unfortunately, for Helper and many abolitionists like him, the South did not take his suggestions to heart. The southern white masses did not see Helper's view of their situation and remained very loyal to the southern system. Slaves in some instances were loyal as well to the system and their owners and did not want to give up the security of their situation.

As history has taught us, it took the Civil War of 1861 and the passing of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to end the system of slavery for good. As a result of the South being forced to end slavery by the North, segregation was the tool used to try to regain their former régime of power over the newly freed blacks still living among



Much of the black population of Kansas City lived under less than adequate conditions. This image of a house in the Belvidere neighborhood, courtesy, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library

them.

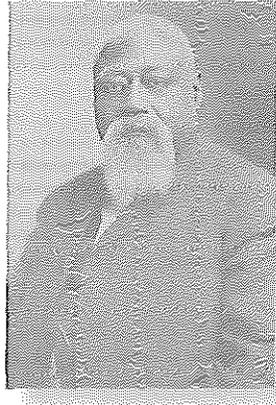
When and how the system of segregation was put in practice is a matter of debate among most historians today. Looking at the historiography debates, most of the arguments of historians have centered on reinforcing or refuting the theories of a man named, C. Vann Woodward. Woodward wrote that despite the common belief that separate but equal was the natural state of the races, this was impossible. He believed that whites and blacks had to form bonds for the system of slavery to work. Therefore, blacks and whites had a history of interacting with one another that was natural for both races.

Another one of his theories was that after reconstruction, segregation was not just hastily adopted, it was a process that developed over time. The movement started within the churches, schools and the railroad cars of United States. It wasn't until 1900 that it was truly rigidly defined and legally upheld.

Segregation was divided into two types, *de facto* and *de jure*. *De facto* segregation is based on the customs, habits, or practices of the people of a state. *De jure* segregation is based on the passing of laws that keep the two races apart.

Historian Joel Williamson had a theory that was an example of *de facto* segregation that happened in South Carolina. The theory was that right after the emancipation of slavery and throughout reconstruction, a rigid separation of the races existed. He states, "Each race clearly tended to disassociate itself from each other. The trend was evident in every phase of human endeavor: agriculture, business, occupations, schools and churches in every aspect of social intercourse and politics..." Williamson's theory was that many whites thought that segregation was the answer to avoid any problems they felt would occur by allowing the inferior negroes to enter their culture as equals. He felt that at the same time blacks started to distance themselves from whites to avoid more harsh treatment. His conclusion was that both races perpetuated segregation through their mutual mental separation, which made the physical separation possible. Examples of *de jure* segregation would be the Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, and the Supreme Court case *Plessy vs. Ferguson* of 1896 that ruled separate but equal was constitutional.

Missouri government did not feel the need or the pressure to separate the races as some of the other Confederate states. They had more of a relaxed approach in the beginning to dealing with the black population. Slavery was abolished in 1865 in Missouri. In that same year, the radical Republicans that took control during reconstruction drafted a new state



From 1869-1870 J. Milton Turner traveled all around Missouri investigating educational opportunities available for blacks. Image courtesy blackpast.org

constitution. The laws gave blacks most civil rights except the right to vote or hold public office in Missouri. It also allowed black children to be educated within local schools.

The revised Missouri constitution was adopted in 1875. After that, there were many revisions in order to address new situations that occurred at different times.

For example, in 1875, a law was passed that stated that districts in Missouri that contained at least fifteen black children within a school must provide separate schools for those black pupils. Then in 1889, another law was passed to make it illegal to educate children of different races in the same schools all together, after a Grundy County case finally reached the Missouri Supreme Court ruled against the black students. Justice Francis M. Black wrote the final decision declared, "Color carries with it natural race peculiarities which justified the separation of blacks and whites. Furthermore this court is in the opinion that these racial differences can never be eliminated."

In order to keep the races pure and to eliminate racial mixing there were laws passed on marriage. In 1869, a law was passed to prevent marriage of blacks or mulattos that had one-fourth black ancestry from marrying whites. Then in 1879, the percentage of the black ancestry of mulattoes was changed from one-fourth black ancestry to one-eighth black ancestry.

An example of the Marriage Law being enforced was reported in the *Kansas City Times* newspaper in 1872, when a 21-year-old Dutchman named Joe Vance wanted to marry a 32-year-old black woman named Mary Kinner. The couple went to several practicing Justices of the Peace, and a few Squires, who lived in Kansas City, Missouri, at the time. All of these men in various ways refused to marry the biracial couple.

Having been turned away by every Justice and Squire in Missouri the couple vowed to go to Kansas to see if they could find someone to marry them there. Vance was quoted as saying, "He is bound to marry the woman of his choice, and cannot understand why people cannot do as they please in a free country."

There was little opposition to the marriage laws, but when it did occur the offenders would be sent away from the establishment or treated so poorly that they would never want to come back. For this expressed reason, there was no thought of putting any other laws regarding segregation in Missouri. Another reason for not having any written laws on race relations in Missouri was that the black population in Kansas City as well as all of Missouri was too small to be seen as a threat by anyone.

The fact that Missouri didn't have Black Codes and only two laws that had anything to do with segregating the races didn't mean that there wasn't segregation of some form with in the city.

In fact, they practiced *de facto* segregation from the start of reconstruction until the end of segregation in 1960's. The local *Kansas City Times* reported an instance of *de facto* segregation in 1871 when the death of a black man at the hands of the local Marshal was published:

At the camp meeting grounds, on last Sabbath, a very serious affray occurred. It seems that two boys, unable to settle a dispute amicably, went outside the grounds, with the determination of engaging in a rough-and-tumble fight. Furthermore, they were accompanied by a negro man. The marshal of the ground, who is also deputy-constable of the township, heard of the affair and appeared in time to stop the disturbance. The negro man interfered and pushed him aside, whereupon the marshal knocked him down several times with a club, inflicting severe injuries, from which we learn the negro has since died.

There is no other mention of the incident. There were no later reports of grief from anyone because of the incident, the community did not form a mob and demanding justice behind the death, and there was no word of any real wrong doing on the part of the marshal. *The Kansas City Star* reported the incident as a casual thing like a report of a bake sale or business ads for someone's store. The title of the report was "Fight at the Camp-Meeting Ground" then in small caption below it was "Reported Death of a Negro Man."

Another article in the *Kansas City Times* that expressed the true views of the white population specifically to that of the blacks in their community. The article was based on the new Civil Rights Bill of 1875. The question that was being sought by the paper was if the bill became law, would it have any effect on the Kansas City community.

The *Times* reporters interviewed various white-owned establishments such as hotels, theaters and saloons to find out their reactions to having to serve blacks in their establishments due to the passing of the bill. The article, which is clearly biased to the beliefs of the people of that time, starts out with a title that at first glance is vague, but ends with the true point of the article...a warning to blacks as to how to conduct themselves under the new law:

Man and Brother: How He Conducts Himself Under the Civil Rights Regime, And What He May Expect When He Puts up at a Hotel. The "Times" Interviews the Land lords and Shows How the New Thing Works. So Far, all Quiet and Everybody Satisfied—The new Law and its Effects—Who it Applies to."

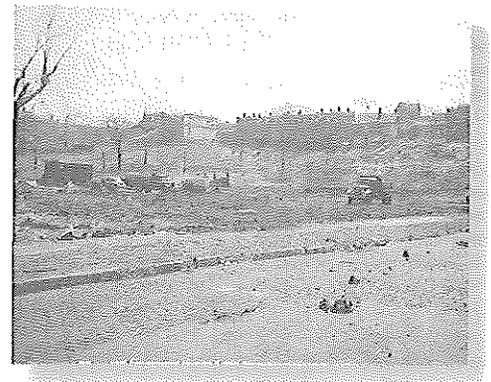
The newspaper report begins with interviews of various hotels, restaurants, theaters, salons, and barbershops of the Jackson County area. Some of the establishments interviewed were The St. James Hotel, The Coates House, The Pacific Hotel, The Lindell, The Leland, and The Sheridan. Most of the proprietors agreed that blacks can come into their establishments but they do not think that they will do so. Mr. Bruce Finch, the front desk clerk of The St. James Hotel; Mr. Robert Hall of The Pacific Hotel; the clerk of the Lindell, Mr. Brown; and, Mr. Robertson of The Sheridan Hotel, all have procedures that would be taken if a black person did try to come to one of their hotels for a room.

Mr. Finch stated, "I would tell him the rooms were all

taken—he would not get accommodation. Mr. Hall said, "I would give them one of course, but it would not be the best in the house. I don't think he would care to come again; the rates would be uncomfortably high." Mr. Robertson showed use of the same method when he states, "If any darkies stop with us they will have to pay \$10 per day." Mr. Brown confessed to just sending the person away when he stated, "I told him we were chock full and likely to remain so for some while. He went away at once and has not returned since." This is an example of what blacks had to go through when they tried to use the Civil Rights Bill.

The proprietor of the St. James Hotel, Mr. Alexander, and Mr. Fish of The Coates House, each talk about the general feeling of most of the whites within the city. They give their opinion about how the laws would really affect the white and black community and how they felt blacks would react in the face of this change.

Mr. Alexander stated, "I should dislike very much to force a colored man on our guests, and I don't imagine that I will be obliged to decide on the question in any other way than this. I don't believe that the Negroes will attempt to make any fuss about it; they are too sensible, too much disinclined to trouble, and I am of the opinion that everything will go on as before."



Many lived in the northeast part of the city that was called, "Belvidere," and "Hicks Hollows." This is an image of Belvidere Hollow from the Willis Castle Memorial Photograph Collection, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library

The two men seem to be in agreement when Mr. Fish states, "The two races cannot be placed on an equal footing and the Negroes know and appreciate the fact as well as we do. Hence, I am certain that if one of their color stops at a hotel, he will accept what accommodations are given him, without attempting to make a disturbance."

Mr. Fish, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Bartholow, the proprietor of The Lindell, all talk about how their businesses were driven by public demand. They have to provide what the majority of the people who frequent his establishment want. It was implied that the people wanted to be separated from certain people that they find to be undesirable. So, they have no choice but to provide that for them.

In the restaurants nearby cities of Jackson County there are certain ones that entertain blacks at anytime and they are known to the black community. The ones that do not serve blacks aren't likely to be bothered by the black community at all. As far as the saloon and theaters go the blacks of the

community are not welcome in the Opera House but can sit in the gallery at the Olympic. In the salons they can order a drink but can not participate in anything else there.

The article ends as thus, "*Now the colored people can know how the white people look upon the new order of things and they should be guided by this advice as to the best course to pursue.*"

At the time, many of the black population of Kansas City were living under less than adequate conditions. Many lived in the northeast part of the city that was called, "Belvidere," and "Hicks Hollows." Others lived in the West Bottoms, later relocated in the north end of the city. They were living in shanties along the dirt streets or alleys cluttered with debris and crowded with bars. The water mains and sanitary sewers of that part of the city either did not exist or were not maintained. All of these problems were ignored by the officials of the city when brought to their attention by blacks. Then the crime rate of their part of the city was very high because the police ignored the area all together.

The passing of the Civil Rights Bill could be looked at as the radical Republicans trying to give blacks some protection and right that they were clearly being denied at that time. As the above article shows, the white population of Kansas City wasn't really ready to give blacks those rights. Some of the owners as well as their patrons felt that the races were not and could never be equal.

The omnipresent threat of violence likely prevented blacks from demanding equal rights as whites. Every black had to have known about the reports of lynching all over Missouri and in the southern part of United States for just getting in the way of whites.

Before the Civil War lynching was a way to make blacks confess to crimes that really weren't their fault. After the Civil War, lynching was used as a way to get rid of any competition from blacks for jobs or envy of blacks having any kind of gain what-so-ever.

An example of this is when James Milton Turner (an advocate for schools for African Americans) assisted in setting up black schools thought out the state. From 1869-1870 Turner traveled all around Missouri investigating educational opportunities available for blacks. He encountered a lot of resistance and violence along his travels from the white communities of Missouri.

He even had threats of lynching from whites in Liberty and Independence.

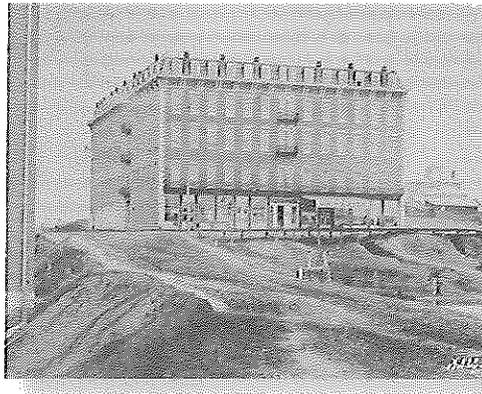
There is no wonder why the black community felt they had no other choice than to create their own businesses and communities if they wanted to have anything at all.

The opinion of the whites that the blacks of their community were too sensible to make a fuss with the social norms was changed when the beginning of the great black

emigration came though Missouri led by the Exodusters. (See the article, "Field to Factory: The Great Migration of Post-Civil War American Blacks," in the Spring 2002 issue of the *Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL*). The people were described as, "Homeless, penniless and in rages, these poor propel were throwing the wharves of St. Louis, crowding the steamers on the Mississippi River, hailing the passing steamers and imploring them for a passage to the land of freedom..."

The first documented complaint from the white community about the southern blacks coming into their city was in the *Kansas City Times* newspaper in 1879. The newspaper linked the outbreak of yellow fever in Kansas City to the black emigrants from the South. *The Times* reported:

We are not alarmists, but cannot forbear mention of the growing apprehension that the prevailing negro exodus from the South, now spreading itself over Kansas, and herding permanently in the Missouri river towns, is probably bringing with it the germs



Mr. Fish of The Coates House talked about the general feeling of most of the whites about blacks within Kansas City in an 1875 *Kansas City Times* article. This is an image from 1870 courtesy of the Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library

of the yellow fever, and timely precaution should be taken everywhere against the outbreak of this terrible epidemic. To a very great extent the immigrants shipped from St. Louis and unloaded at Wyandotte are "feeble, filthy and destitute," and the sudden change of climate and the exposure incident to a long river voyage from the South have prostrated them by scores. Of the hundreds in the camp at Wyandotte a large percentage are suffering to some extent, and dependent as they are upon public charity for their daily subsistence, and comparatively shelter less, it is not surprising that many have already died.

Even though the Exodusters were heading to Kansas for a new life many had to rely on the black community of Kansas City when their money ran out and they couldn't get all the way to Kansas. B. B. Watson, the pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Church) with the support of the Major George M. Shelley (probably lending his support due to the article in the *Times* about the concern of an epidemic in the city). Black churches organized a relief effort for the Southern blacks such as finding jobs for the men, getting them food, finding them shelter with families in the black community and raising money for them to get their destination in Kansas.

In 1912 and 1913, another wave of black emigration came to Kansas City from two sources, the South and the rural surrounding areas. The Southern blacks as well as the blacks from the rural area came to the city looking for better conditions, opportunities, and jobs for themselves and their families. The presence of these new blacks in the city along with the European immigrants made an already cramped community with little to no resources ripe and ready for conflict and violence.

Due to the industrialization of Missouri, the economy no longer depended on agriculture. The shift caused labor unrest, financial panic, and competition from the native born whites and European immigrants (and sometimes blacks) for jobs. The factory owners knew about the conflict and used it to their advantage putting the two groups against each other trying to get the cheapest labor they could. If the workers tried to demand a union and went on strike, then more than likely black labor was used until the strike was over.

The second wave of blacks coming in to Missouri along with the constant incoming of European immigrants all resulted in some whites responding with lynching. Statistics show that in the 19th century, nationally 3,224 people were lynched in the United States from the period of 1889-1918. From that initial 3,224 people 2,522 were blacks.

In Missouri alone, mobs lynched at least 81 people in the 19th century. Out of the 81 people lynched, 51 were found to be of black origin.

Out of all the regions in the United States, Missouri had the highest lynching rates in its region. Southern states such as Virginia had a recorded 78 lynchings; North Carolina 53.

Within the Border States, Missouri was found to have the highest ratings over their neighbors. For example, in Illinois the rate was only 24 lynchings, and in Kansas the rate was only 21.

Another cause of whites segregating themselves--of moving further away from the downtown area to keep their family socially and morally safe--was the threat of crime and vice in the Bottoms area of Kansas City. This area had problems in the early 1900's with the spread of vice (liquor, gambling, and prostitution) with in the forms of saloons and bawdy houses.

In Kansas City, keeping up appearances was very important to the upper class and especially in the middle class. It was expected that every person have decorum, respectability, and only socialize with people of the same class. At the time, there were all kinds of morally wrong elements all around them and not having the ability like the rich to remove themselves from it created a big problem for Kansas City's middle class whites.

The governor Joseph Folk sought to protect them by ordering the city's police to keep the saloons out of the so-called "residential districts." This left the saloons no other place to move but to the black neighborhoods. With no police protection in their areas there was nothing the black community could do to stop the saloons from moving within their communities. So, from the early 1900's on, the black neighborhoods were linked with the crime and vice of Kansas City, Missouri. Through the neglect from the city government and the police department, the black community didn't have a chance to remove themselves from their situation. The quarantine period was in place until 1913, through Folks' term and that of his successor, Herbert S. Hadley.

After Thomas Marks was appointed as new police commissioner in 1913, everything changed. Marks fired all the

officers who were hard on vice and hired men that were more inclined to be lenient. The commissioner's office issued licenses to 26 saloons within the residential area.

Marks then created a red-light district as a way of confining and regulating it. His policy was to segregate the vice away from the rest of society and hope it was good enough for the people. Police officers were to quietly collect money every month from the bawdy houses and saloons in the district. The houses paid a \$30 monthly fee, \$20 more if liquor was served. What the price paid for was that the police looked the other way while they did their illegal acts. In exchange for the pay out the establishment promised to run an orderly house and remain in the confines of the North End (right



Every black had to have known about the reports of lynching all over Missouri and in the southern part of United States for just getting in the way of whites. *Illustrated London News*, August 8, 1863

Maud Minner, a New York social worker for the Board of Public Welfare, did a survey on prostitution in the city. She uncovered and exposed the Marks System as well as his activity of allowing saloon once again to invade the residential district to the public. The people starting protesting and it was pulled from practice. Due to the fact that some respectable church going men and women formed an organization to sue the city of Kansas city, Missouri. The organization was called the Church Federation of Kansas City.

They demanded a new appointment of the police board for their negligent behavior, what they got was a shut down of the red light district. Four hundred women were evicted from the North End's brothels within two nights of raiding. This only served to scatter the women all over the city in the form of streetwalkers. When it became clear that the society couldn't stop the women, drugs and alcohol all together they settled for keeping it out of the better neighborhoods.

Nothing was really done to solve the problem until 1917, when an encampment of Kansas soldiers developed an outbreak of venereal disease from the local prostitutes from the Kansas City area.

To stop the problem the U.S. Attorney General demanded that the city perform a medical inspection and isolate the diseased prostitutes or the government would have to post sentries at Union Station to prevent soldiers from going out

where the black community was). In the words of Marks, "Vice can not be suppressed and cannot be scattered like measles along our boulevards, we must reduce the evil to the minimum."

This system went on without any knowledge from the white populous until

into Kansas City. Eager to keep the public in the dark about the incident the government officials passed ordinances, but did little else about the problem.

When the Federal government learned that the situation had not changed, they went through with the original plan and no soldiers were allowed into Kansas City on their own. In the end, nothing could be done to stop the spread of vice brothel that opened back up in the North End and the street walkers still walked along eighteenth and nineteenth streets of downtown. All the middle class society could do was segregate themselves from it as best they could, the poor classes just had to live with it.

Then, in the 1920's Tom Pendergast came along, filling in the void when his brother died in 1911. Tom Pendergast claimed to be the solution to the problem of vice in the City, which made him a favorite with the upper and middle classes in Kansas City. He also helped the poor and blacks get food shelter, fuel and jobs from politicians paid for with handouts to secure their vote.

While all these promises came true for the City, there was a heavy price to pay for it. The Pendergast machine was powered by the same vice the upper and middle classes were trying get away from.

Jim Pendergast owned a saloon, and his brother Tom Pendergast owned a liquor wholesale company, and the Jefferson Hotel. The Pendergast machine was steeped in illicit and illegal deals with just about anyone they had connections with. Pendergast along with his running mate Shannon took kickbacks, graft, or even sale revenues for doing favors. Jim formed alliances with the business elite giving his support to proposals of parks and boulevard and a plan to move Union Station. He even had a great close and personal relationship with Harry Truman who continued to associate and support Tom Pendergast when Jim Pendergast died.

The end was when the Union Station massacre occurred where three police officers got killed in a shoot out with all the men connected to Pendergast. Then, in 1930's Tom was finally stopped when the IRS went after him for tax evasion. The

truth about Tom came out for the public to see all the bribery, lies, and connections with the mob came to light and ended the Pendergast machine's reign.

Even though the machine was corrupt, it did help Kansas City's main community get the support and help with the things they needed.

The black community in the same turn finally got a little attention to the disorientation, crime, and corruption that surrounded them. Tom Pendergast organized and controlled the vice that was in the black neighborhoods, and allowed the community to focus on other matters of up ward movement rather than worrying about rising crime. The community was able to build their own businesses, churches, hospitals, and schools that resulted in a little community of their own on the 18th and Vine district. Middle and upper class whites got the purification that they wanted from the undesirable elements of the city and the poor whites benefited as well.

The last and final influence to segregation of the races was the real estate market. In 1913, The Board of Public Welfare reported on the social conditions of the urban environment, with a report called, *Social Prospectus of Kansas City*. The report was a slanted view of the black community that only looked at the conditions of the neighborhood and never the causes. All they say were deteriorating neighborhoods, poor schools, and high crime rates, saying nothing about the fact that jobs for blacks were scared and if they were lucky enough to find work they were paid little to nothing. Then there was the temptation of saloons, vice dens, gaming parlors, and candy shops, all to corrupt them. None of which was found within the middle class and upper class communities to the extent that it was in the black community in the North End.

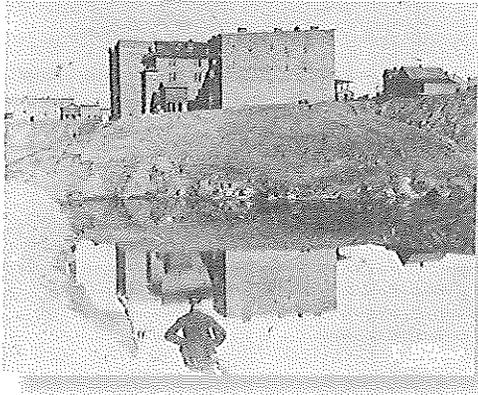
Many who read the reports from the Board of Public Welfare started to think that blacks were immoral and uncivilized. When the study of the black neighborhood by Asa Martin called, *Our Negro Population: A Social Study of the Negroes of Kansas City, Missouri*, came out that same year, it seemed to confirm the other reports from the Board of Public Welfare. The reports just seem to reinforce the thought that blacks were immoral and an uncivilized race, and such elements weren't desired in their community.

Within both reports, there is a link between where a person lived to race and behavior...and made home, neighborhood, and community a racial thing.

Whites wanted a population that was more cultivated, moral, and socially responsible so they wanted to keep away from anything that would damage their chances to achieve that. The real estate field saw that fear, and used it to their advantage to make lots of money.

In order to achieve the perfect neighborhoods, whites started to hire professional city planners to fashion zoning plans that would officially separate land. Before this, rich whites had constructed parks and private enclaves in order to separate themselves from undesirable elements within downtown community.

Then, in 1903, J. C. Nichols came to Kansas City,



Mr. Robertson of the Sheridan Hotel [and proprietors at other local hotels] all had procedures if a black person did try to come to one of their hotels for a room, as reported in an 1875 *Kansas City Times* article. This image of 4th Street, looking east from 4th and Broadway, shows Sheridan Pond, Sheridan Hotel, and Tindell Hotel, 1875, courtesy the Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library

Missouri, from Kansas City, Kansas, in order to help Missouri's white population reach their goal of racial purity. He formed the National Association of Real Estate Board of which he was the President. He helped shape the white community all over the United States in places such as Illinois, New York, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, even South America.

In 1906, Nichols helped to put in housing restrictions on properties with the use of deed restrictions and homeowners' associations. Urban historian Sam Bass Warner Jr., described Nichols' work as "a social disaster for Kansas City," because of the class and race separation he practiced when selling his properties. The roll of the deed restrictions and covenants was to keep certain people from moving into certain neighborhoods and bringing down the property values of that neighborhood. They also went as far as to dictate to the property owner how their property should look. For example, the Nichols Company had control over the design of homes to be built on the lots. That, and many other restrictions such as not being able to sell to any persons deemed undesirable to the neighborhood (i.e., Blacks, Jews, or Catholics), was included in the contract that was signed when you bought the property. The homeowners' associations made sure no one violated any of the restrictions.

To conclude, segregation was not something that just happened all at once. It was a process that happened over time, due to the social norms of communities. As this article shows, the conditions changed with every new generation that had to deal with segregation. They all had one essential goal in mind...to make sure that their community was the best place that it could be...a place that they could be proud to raise their families and live happily.

Even though blacks got a bad deal every time, African American communities lifted themselves up and made a way where it looked like no way could be made. They created their own communities, churches, hospitals, schools, women's and men's societies, etc. They founded organizations to fight for their right and to make things better. Above all, black communities came together for each other, which is a long-standing African tradition engrained in their history.

ADDITIONAL RELATED INFORMATION IS POSTED ON OUR ONLINE JOURNAL AT JCHS.ORG

Adia Robinson completed an archival administration internship with the Jackson County Historical Society in its Archives and Research Library, while as student at the University of Missouri at Kansas City. This article was extrapolated from one of Robinson's research term papers. Robinson lives in Kansas City. The complete, fully sourced version of this article is on file in the society's archives.

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BOOK NOTES

This October, Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society welcomed author Giles Fowler to present his new book, *Deaths on Pleasant Street: The Ghastly Enigma of Colonel Swope and Dr. Hyde*, for a special lecture and book signing commemorating the series of tragic events that began transpiring in the prominent Swope Mansion in October 1909. Yes. One hundred years ago, three deaths and several other Swope family members struck with typhoid (when there were no other cases in town) lead some to suspect foul play, and a plot to plunder the momentous Swope fortune.

The foreboding Swope Mansion on Pleasant Street (where the Campus RV Park is situated today; the mansion was razed in the mid-1960s) was the setting. *Unpleasant* as the details presented in *Deaths on Pleasant Street*, the fascinating story is prime fodder for a leading Hollywood mystery movie. What followed was a nationally publicized trial akin to the O.J. Simpson trial of 1994-95...except there ended up being three trials. Law students to this day often study the "Swope Murder Trials." The odd twist is that after seven years of grueling litigation, nobody was sentenced as the leading perpetrator. Still, the high-society Swope family was demoralized...and had outlaid more than \$100,000 in legal fees.

The Swope Mansion at this time was headed by the resolute family matriarch, Maggie Swope, who was a daughter of the well-known William Chrisman. Her husband, Logan Swope, had since passed. Their children and Logan's brother, Colonel Thomas Swope--who had in 1896 donated more than 1,000 acres for Swope Park to the people of Kansas City--lived with the family in the Swope Mansion. Another resident of the home was the beloved elderly family cousin, Colonel

"Moss" Hunton, who was quite popular in Independence social circles.

Hunton died dramatically with terrible convulsions on Friday, October 1, 1909, in the Swope Mansion at Independence. The next day, funeral arrangements were made. *But why were two coffins ordered from undertaker, R. B. Mitchell of Ott & Mitchell Furniture and Funeral Home?*

Coincidentally, on next evening, Sunday, October 3, the wealthy businessman and benefactor, Colonel Thomas Swope, died in a similar manner as his cousin...in the same house.

The twist of events that transpired over the next couple of months would add up to what looked suspiciously like murder, and one of the family's own, Dr. Bennett Clark Hyde, became the controversial suspect. Hyde was the husband of one of Logan and Maggie Swope's children, Frances, who was an heir to a massive fortune...that was, by the way, made even more robust with each passing heir.

The 1910 murder case surrounding the wealthy Swope family of Independence, Missouri, gripped newspaper readers throughout the nation. Gruesome autopsy reports. Outstanding testimony of questionable medical practices. Details of suspected murder and mayhem.

Fowler delivers an engaging and accurate retelling of these 100-year-old events in the literary journalism tradition by analyzing court transcripts, newspaper coverage, and personal memoirs. To take in the scenarios based on modern science, revisit the dark hallways of the Pleasant Street Swope Mansion in 1909, and judge for yourself. Was it murder? The Society will host a re-enactment of the first trial in Mid-May 2010; stay tuned for details.

Deaths on Pleasant Street is available for \$23 through the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society bookshop (jchs.org).

