

WORKERS, TOWNSMEN, AND THE GOVERNOR: THE SANTA FE ENGINEMEN'S STRIKE, 1878

JAMES H. DUCKER

SHORTLY before 11:00 a.m. on April 4, 1878, east-bound Santa Fe train number 22 pulled into Emporia junction. Within seven minutes passengers boarded or disembarked, mail and baggage were exchanged, and all was in readiness for a fresh engine to hitch onto the train. But the assigned engineer, John W. Thatcher, refused to couple on, and when the conductor, W. J. Janney, got the roundhouse foreman to act as engineer, Thatcher and other engineers threatened them and disabled the locomotive. Not until 4:00 p.m. did the train pull out toward Topeka. By then engineers and firemen throughout eastern Kansas were on strike against the Santa Fe railroad.¹

Title-page photo: Engineers and firemen who struck against the Santa Fe railroad in eastern Kansas in 1878 were motivated more by personalities than by principles. Most of the turmoil was at Topeka and Emporia, and the size of those cities had much to do with the public response to the strike. At Topeka, where there was too large a population to sustain a sense of community, there was not much sympathy for the strikers. But at Emporia, townsmen of all classes supported the enginemen, because the town was small enough for most of the people to be acquainted with some of the strikers. The photograph, above, shows the Santa Fe shops and yards at Topeka about 1879.

1. Besides Emporia and Topeka newspapers, Governor Anthony's papers help reconstruct the events of the strike. Included in the governor's papers are the reports of four company officials' experiences during the strike. These reports are in "Gov. George T. Anthony Papers," correspondence received, box 5, railroads 1877-1878, archives, Kansas State Historical Society.

Strike turmoil centered in Emporia and Topeka. Insults, beatings, rock throwing, and the display of pistols marked the next three days in both towns. On the second day Topeka railroaders ignored the reading of the riot act and law officers accepted a de facto compromise—passenger trains could run but freight would not. In Emporia there was no such compromise; any train that moved was stoned and on the third day all the locomotives in town were disabled.

In the meantime law forces mustered their strength. Topeka citizens, including many community leaders, formed two militia companies to assist outnumbered municipal officers. Emporia's lawmen, pressed by Gov. George T. Anthony, deputized two dozen men. By the fourth day of the strike, authorities probably had sufficient strength to resume freight traffic without fear of violence. But Anthony felt it necessary to have overwhelming power and delayed resumption of full service an additional day until two regular militia companies were in place in Emporia and Topeka. The militia was received quietly at the state capital but with great anger among Emporia citizens. In neither town, though, did the



William B. Strong (1837-1914), Santa Fe general manager, was in Colorado when the strike began. He met with local officials in Emporia and reported to Governor Anthony that 50 men would be needed there to insure the safe resumption of freight traffic.

enginemen make any significant resistance and the strike collapsed.

BESIDES the incidents of violence, the Santa Fe walkout displayed several noteworthy developments. For one there was the paradox of stated causes and the composition of the striking workers. Strike leaders repeatedly claimed that the men were quitting their posts primarily to protest the arbitrary rule of the road's western division superintendent who, they charged, reduced the men to a state of degradation "which has no parallel save in the case of Russian serfs or Mexican Peons. . . ." ² Yet only a handful of the engineers on the western half of the Santa Fe, which stretched from Newton into Colorado, struck while nearly all those east of Newton quit.

Another point of interest was the sympathy Emporia strikers received from their nonrailroading fellow citizens. Historians investigating labor conflicts have remarked on

2. Topeka Daily Blade, April 9, 1878.

the support strikers received from other townsmen. But in most of these studies the strikers composed a large percent of the town population so that merchants and politicians saw their own self-interest tied to that of the workers.³ This was not the case in Emporia where railroaders probably constituted no more than 10 percent of the working population and enginemen were an even smaller proportion.⁴

Finally, the action of Governor Anthony in sending state militia to Emporia was surrounded by controversy. Emporians saw this as insulting and totally unwarranted since they claimed that local forces were adequate to quell whatever trouble might arise. And when a militiaman accidentally shot and killed a town minister, Emporia's rage found sympathy statewide and helped make Anthony the first Kansas governor since the Civil War to fail to win two terms in the statehouse.⁵

STRIKE leaders in explaining the workers' stance charged that the company had reduced wages in violation of the previous year's contract and that a lengthening of the enginemen's runs and the foisting of new responsibilities on them had increased the hours of their workday. Most complaints, though, revolved around the treatment of the men by local officials, particularly William H. Pettibone, division superintendent of the western half of the Santa Fe based at Newton. The strikers held Pettibone guilty of flagrant favoritism and of hiring incompetents for engineers instead of promoting deserving firemen. Pettibone, they complained suspended and dismissed men arbitrarily and harbored a hatred for union men that led some to believe he was systematically trying to weed out all members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE). Some further charged him with opening the mail of a brotherhood man and using its contents against him. Whether Pettibone was

3. Herbert G. Cutman, "Worker's Search for Power: Labor in the Gilded Age," *The Gilded Age, A Reappraisal*, H. Wayne Morgan, ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), pp. 38-53; Shelton Stromquist, "Community Structure and Industrial Conflict in Nineteenth Century Railroad Towns" paper given at the convention of the organization of American historians, New York City, April 12, 1978; Martin H. Dodd, "Marlboro, Massachusetts and the Shoeworkers' Strike of 1898-99," *Labor History*, New York, v. 20 (Summer, 1979), pp. 376-397.

4. *Emporia City Directory*, 1877 (no imprint); "U.S. 10th Census," Kansas, 1880, Emporia.

5. William Frank Zornow, *Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), pp. 132-133.

guilty of all these offenses is uncertain, yet his firing of a telegraph operator who refused to reveal the contents of a confidential Western Union telegram sent by strikers during an earlier Santa Fe walkout, showed him to be a man quite capable of exercising power in a capricious and high-handed manner.⁶

Still, contemporary observers noted that confusion surrounded the enginemen's motivation. The Atchison *Daily Champion*, finding no two accounts of grievances to agree, labeled the matter "one of the worst pieces of muddled business we have ever heard of. . . ." ⁷ Personal factors best explain the initiation of the strike and the division between those eastern men who supported it and those on Pettibone's own division who stood by the company. The strikers were led by three Emporians—Thatcher, Charles Fletcher, and Thomas J. Tarsney. Apparently it was Pettibone's dismissal of Tarsney at the end of March which impelled all three to utilize their contacts among engineers along the line to plan the strike. These contacts were plentiful since Thatcher and Fletcher had played key roles in 1876 in founding the BLE lodge to which most Santa Fe engineers belonged, and Fletcher was still its second-ranking officer.⁸ Their identification with the strike gave it the prestige of a union action, although officially it was a wildcat walkout sanctioned neither by the local nor national organization.

The personalities of these men were crucial to the instigation and development of the walkout. Little is known of their earlier lives, but their subsequent careers proved the three Emporia leaders to be unusually talented and ambitious. After the strike failed Fletcher set up a law practice and Thatcher established a grocery store and later a clothing store. Both successfully entered Emporia politics in 1879; Fletcher as a justice of the peace, an office in which he served into the 1890's, and Thatcher as a city councilman, serving as acting mayor in 1885. Tarsney's career exhibited an even more obvious hunger for recognition and self betterment. Among his subsequent endeavors

were a brief tour as a lecturer on the topic of "Capital and Labor," an undistinguished political career in Colorado, a controversial stint as head of the Colorado militia, and a year or two prospecting in the Rockies. In 1898, failing to have found his fortune in the mountains, he was laying plans for a venture in Mexico when the Spanish-American War broke out. Telling a friend that he felt this was "my last chance," he became a sutler. Somehow he wangled the rights to the sole concession on Corregidor Island, his business prospered and by the end of the century Tarsney could take satisfaction that soldiers referred to him as the "King of Corregidor."⁹ Proud, ambitious, and capable of leadership, Fletcher, Thatcher, and Tarsney possessed personalities which may have made it impossible for them to long endure any superior, much less an arrogant one such as Pettibone. Moreover, their leadership qualities and the prestige of their position among union men swayed many other workers to join their cause.

That western engineers largely remained loyal to the company indicates that most who worked under Pettibone felt the strikers' intense anger at the superintendent to be unwarranted. It further suggests that whatever peer pressure reinforced the strike effort in the eastern towns, did not extend to Newton's workers who appeared to accept a separate set of leaders. To the extent that Pettibone practiced favoritism, some of the work force may have remained loyal to the man who had their interests at heart. But westerners also lacked sympathy for some of the stated causes of the strike. Particularly, the strikers charged that Pettibone had unjustly dismissed engineer J. W. Winters. This accusation found little backing among those who had known Winters and Pettibone from day-to-day contact on the job. In addition, the strike leaders' own personalities may have worked against them. The westerners could have found the Emporians pre- tentious and overly ambitious. Those in

6. Emporia *Ledger*, April 11, 1878; May 9, 1878; Emporia *News*, April 12, 1878; July 27, 1877; *The Commonwealth*, Topeka, April 11, 1878; Topeka *Daily Blade*, April 9, 1878.

7. Atchison *Daily Champion*, April 9, 1878.

8. "Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Collection," vouchers, series 3, no. 4350-4351, engineers (payroll), March, 1878, manuscript department, Kansas State Historical Society; *Locomotive Engineers' Journal*, directories of officers of lodge Number 130, 1876-1878.

9. A. T. Andreas and William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), p. 861; E. M. Forde, comp., *Revised Ordinances and Rules of the Council of the City of Emporia, 1885* (Emporia: Rowland and Co.'s Steam Print, 1885), pp. 74, 78-79; *Locomotive Engineers' Journal*, Cleveland, v. 25 (February, 1891), p. 172; Emporia *News*, June 28, 1878; *Harvey County News*, Newton, June 13, 1878; R. G. Dill, *The Political Campaigns of Colorado* (Denver: Arapahoe Publishing Co. and John Dove, 1895), pp. 205, 284; Durango *Herald*, October 26, 31, November 2, 1894; Marshall Sprague, *Money Mountain: The Story of Cripple Creek Gold* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1953), pp. 157-161; Denver *Times*, October 15, 1899, p. 22.



Gov. George T. Anthony (1824-1896), fearing riots similar to the ones at Pittsburgh, Pa., the previous year, called out the state militia to bolster local officials and make a show of force. The troops were received quietly at the state capital, but there was great anger among Emporia citizens. When a militiaman accidentally shot and killed a town minister, Emporia's rage found sympathy statewide and helped make Anthony the first Kansas governor since the Civil War to fail to win two terms in the statehouse. Photograph reproduced from *Portrait and Biographical Record of Southeastern Kansas* (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co., 1894).

Newton had their own men with leadership capabilities and high self-esteem. James M. Anderson, a Newton councilman, took the lead among fellow engineers in defending Pettibone. The majority of western engineers at a meeting held at Newton felt that the Emporia group acted as imperiously as they accused Pettibone of being when they called for a strike without seeking the advise and consent of the full BLE membership. Indeed the expulsion after the strike of many of the western engineers by the Emporia lodge tends to confirm the impression of a clique of influential but arrogant men controlling the Santa Fe BLE local.¹⁰ Lines of support for the strike, therefore, appear to have been drawn more by personality and place than by principle.

ALTHOUGH Topeka was important during the strike, Emporia proves more interesting. In contrast to Topeka in which the local economic and political leadership stood against the strikers, Emporians of all classes supported the stance of the enginemens of their

town. This support arose from the small size of the community which lent itself to a good degree of intimacy among most of the citizenry. In 1878 there were 9,000 Topekans while Emporians numbered about 3,000.¹¹ Topeka was too large to sustain a sense of community among all its citizens. But in Emporia the vast majority of inhabitants knew a number of the strikers. This close contact muted class divisions and disposed all groups to sympathize with their stance against outside corporate managers.¹² Fletcher's and Thatcher's elections to government positions in 1879 bears testimony to the town's respect for these men.

The strike leaders wasted no time in attempting to bring their grievances to the general public. On the second evening of the strike they called a public meeting at the courthouse. Tarsney and Fletcher presented the strikers' case, emphasizing their complaints and peaceful efforts before and during the strike to pro-

10. *Harvey County News*, April 11, 1878; *Newton Kansan*, April 18, 1878; May 2, 1878. The purging of many nonstrikers identified through the payrolls can be seen in the lists of expulsions in the *Locomotive Engineers' Journal* in the months following the strike.

11. Kansas State Board of Agriculture, *Fourth Annual Report, 1875* (Topeka: Public Printer, 1876), pp. 182, 267; *Second Biennial Report, 1879-1880* (1881), p. 523, 530; *First Biennial Report, 1877-1878* (1878), p. 287.

12. Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978), p. 74.

test these injustices. A "good many" citizens openly endorsed the workers' position.¹³

Emporia's sympathy for the strike was reflected further in the lack of local police action to prevent strikers from interfering with Santa Fe commerce in the first three days of the walkout. In contrast to Topeka where law officers strove to control unruly strikers and the citizenry formed two militia companies to aid the police, Emporia lawmen showed great reluctance to take strong steps against their striking neighbors. On the first day of the walkout the county deputy sheriff in Emporia was slow to intervene when Thatcher and other engineers acted to prevent Thatcher's train from leaving town. That night the water tank at nearby Neosho was disabled and at Emporia junction a group, reportedly under Fletcher's guidance, derailed three locomotives, though no one was ever arrested for these crimes. The following day saw the stoning of the few trains that arrived and the harrassment of the men who ran their engines. On the third day of the shutdown, company officers moved an engine out of the roundhouse. When they tried to move another, strikers, some said to have been armed, surrounded them. The engineers agreed to run the locomotives to a sidetrack but once there they removed the fires and drained the water. At the same time they emptied the yard water tank. All of this was done without prompting any police response.¹⁴

Meetings that Santa Fe officers held with city and county officials showed that the latter's reluctance to take strong action to insure unmolested traffic stemmed from an inordinate blindness to the flaws of striking fellow townsmen. J. D. Gunn, Pettibone's counterpart on the eastern half of the Santa Fe, spent a good part of the second day of the strike calling on leading local government officials. The U.S. marshal stated that he would do no more than insure that the mail got through. Mayor John S. Watson claimed that no violence had occurred within his jurisdiction. Watson was largely correct on this point since the derailments of the previous evening and most of the general turmoil and disruption of traffic took place at

the junction just beyond the corporate limits. The mayor said that the town would respond if a mob formed with designs to destroy the depot and actually committed violent acts, but that he did not view it as his duty to form a more intimidating force to protect Santa Fe property under the present circumstances. County Sheriff H. Connor displayed no more eagerness to allay company fears. He refused to create a larger police force to guarantee safe transit of trains through the county saying that he believed the strikers to be orderly and opposed to violence. Gunn was dismayed by Connor's words since they both had seen three derailed engines in the local yards that morning. Gunn was even more disturbed with the sheriff regularly assigning the yards to the protection of two deputies who were openly friendly to the strikers. The company had to post more than two dozen track workers around its property to assure any measure of security.¹⁵ In Emporia the Santa Fe found its efforts to resume its traffic thwarted by a community guided by small town identification with the interests of a minor but respected segment of the town citizenry.

THE SANTA FE called on the offices of Governor Anthony to overcome Emporia's reluctance to deal with local lawbreakers and the impotence of resolute law officials in Topeka who simply were out-numbered by the mob. At the request of Santa Fe General Manager William B. Strong, the governor on the second day of the strike wired the mayors of Emporia and other important railroad towns in the state urging alertness to strike problems. Strong, who was in Colorado when the strike began, met with Sheriff Connor on his return trip to Topeka. Strong reported to Anthony that his conversation with Connor led him to believe that the sheriff would need 50 men to insure the safe resumption of freight traffic. Upon hearing this Anthony telegraphed Connor on the third day asking whether he could raise 50 men and offering to finance the operation and muster the men in as militia under the sheriff's command. Connor, feeling the weight of the governor's office, replied that he could have 20 armed men by the following morning and thought he could get another 30. He re-

13. *Emporia Ledger*, April 11, 1878; *Emporia News*, April 12, 1878.

14. *Topeka Daily Blade*, April 6, 8, 9, 1878; *Commonwealth*, April 11, 1878; reports of C. F. Morse, L. Norton, Jr., J. D. Gunn, and J. Armstrong to Anthony, "Anthony Papers," railroads, 1877-1878.

15. Reports of J. D. Gunn and L. Norton, Jr., to Anthony, *ibid.*



T. N. Sedgwick
(1848-1905)

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

THE COMPANY TRANSMITS AND DELIVERS messages only on condition, limiting its liability, which have been assumed by the sender of the following proceeds: Messages are not to be sent by the Company unless the sender has paid in advance the full amount of the message, and the Company will not be liable for any delay in transmission or delivery of messages. Messages are not to be sent unless the sender has paid in advance the full amount of the message, and the Company will not be liable for any delay in transmission or delivery of messages.

ANSWER STAGES, Via Free, Chicago.

WILLIAM ORTON, Pres't, New York.
A. R. BREWER, Sec'y.

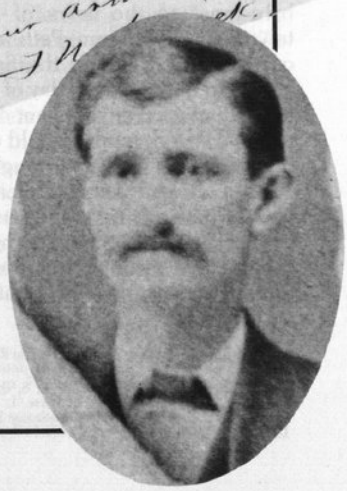
Dated Emporia Mo 8 1878
Received of Gov Anthony
for 410c

READ THE NOTICE AT THE TOP.

WE insist again to state that in sending these armed men to our City you have acted without Warrant of law & that our Citizens & officers feel Justly Indignant our Sheriff is amply able to quell any disturbance that is likely to arise we therefore beg of you in the name of Peace & good order to Recall your armed men

T. N. Sedgwick, Lyon county attorney, and John S. Watson, Emporia mayor, telegraphed Governor Anthony that local government was adequate to preserve order. They said they were "justly indignant" about the sending of state troops, and beseeched the governor to withdraw his armed men. Photograph of Sedgwick reproduced from *Historical Atlas of Lyon County, Kansas* (Philadelphia: Edwards Brothers, 1878).

John S. Watson
(? -1927)



quested arms for 25 and wished the authority to consider them militia. The next morning, Connor produced a force of 25, greater than he had promised the governor, and under their protection the company began to restore its locomotives to operating condition. Had orders come from Topeka to resume freight traffic, it was possible that the company would have succeeded, and any harassment by the strikers would have been quelled by Connor's men.¹⁶

But Anthony had decided from the outset that his duty was to forestall any test of strength until he was sure of the superiority of law forces. Although he cooperated with corporate officials, even to the extent of letting them determine when state assistance was no longer necessary, Anthony needed no guidance in formulating his course of action. Aware that the greatest loss of life and property in the great Pittsburgh, Pa., railroad riots of the previous year came when confrontation erupted before law forces were strong enough, Anthony had cautioned company officials not to precipitate trouble by too quickly resuming freight traffic. On the first and second days of the strike local lawmen in both Emporia and Topeka failed to establish firm control of the situation and disturbances were kept to a minimum only by the company surrendering all efforts at moving freight. Anthony feared a sharp clash would result from restarting the freight trains.¹⁷ The disabling of all the company's locomotive power at Emporia on the third morning of the strike confirmed in the governor's mind the inadequacy of local government forces.

Anthony that morning and afternoon took steps to bring the necessary power to bear. He considered a request for federal troops in order to bring "order without conflict" but never took that step. It was at this point that he urged Connor to augment his forces and offered to allow him to do this at state expense. However, Anthony lacked confidence either in Em-

porians' ability or willingness to act decisively and therefore immediately called upon state forces which would take control from Connor. The governor notified the commanders of two militia companies that the services of their men might be required. By the next evening 60 of Capt. J. B. Zeigler's troops from Independence and 40 more under Capt. J. C. Walkinshaw from Leavenworth were on their way to Topeka. By 8:00 a.m. on the fifth day of the strike Zeigler's troops were in place in Topeka's yards and the Leavenworth company plus 10 of Zeigler's force rode south toward Emporia. Following them came the first freight train to move on the eastern half of the Santa Fe since the fourth.¹⁸

Anthony's lack of faith in Emporia officials was manifested in his failure to inform them of the decision to use out-of-town militia until only a matter of a few hours before they were to reach the town. The previous day the governor wired Connor that a morning train "will bring what you need" which the sheriff could only infer meant the stands of arms he had earlier requested. Moreover, instead of making Connor's force a militia unit as promised, Anthony issued orders that Walkinshaw was to command both his own troops and Connor and his men.¹⁹

The imposition of outside authority incensed Emporians. Connor met Walkinshaw's train at a station 15 miles east of town and protested his coming. He further refused to take custody of the arms the militia train carried for him. The mayor, county attorney, sheriff, and the chairman of the county board of commissioners jointly telegraphed vehement appeals to Anthony and Santa Fe General Supt. C. F. Morse. They saw the move as an insult to the community's ability to take care of itself. Not only did they insist that the local government was at all times adequate to preserve order, but that since the outbreak of the conflict six men were all that had been necessary for police duty. They beseeched the gov-

16. W. B. Strong to Anthony, April 5, 1878, *ibid.*; Anthony to mayors of Atchison, Emporia, Topeka, Newton, and Dodge City, [April 5] 1878, "Governor's Letters," 1878, no. 11, archives, Kansas State Historical Society; *Message of George T. Anthony, Retiring Governor, to the Legislature of Kansas, January 13, 1879* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1879), exhibit A; reports of L. Norton, Jr., and J. Armstrong to Anthony, "Anthony Papers," railroads, 1877-1878.

17. Anthony to W. B. Strong, April 9, 1878, "Governor's Letters," 1878, no. 11; Anthony to C. F. Morse, April 5, 1878, *ibid.*; Joseph F. Tripp, "Reactions to the Birth of the Labor Problem in Kansas: 1877-1883" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Kansas, 1967), p. 49.

18. Anthony to Pres. Rutherford B. Hayes (not sent), P. I. Bonebrake, H. Connor, Capt. J. C. Walkinshaw, Capt. J. B. Zeigler, all dated April 6, 1878, "Governor's Letters," 1878, no. 11; Capt. J. C. Walkinshaw to Adj. Gen. Peter S. Noble, April 11, 1878, "Adjutant General's Correspondence," 1878-1879, archives, Kansas State Historical Society.

19. Anthony to H. Connor, April 7, 1878, "Anthony Papers," correspondence received, box 5, military affairs; Anthony to Connor, April 8, 1878, *ibid.*; Anthony to Walkinshaw, April 8, 1878, *ibid.*



H. W. McCune
(1869 - ?)



J. R. Graham



Jacob Stotler
(1833-1901)

Editors of the *Emporia News* and *Emporia Ledger* reflected the temper of the community in its outrage at the imposition of outside authority by the governor. H. W. McCune, editor of the *Ledger*, said there was no necessity for the employment of the militia. The *News*, published by Jacob Stotler and J. R. Graham, said the sending of state troops was a ridiculous farce. Photographs reproduced from *Historical Atlas of Lyon County, Kansas* (Philadelphia: Edwards Brothers, 1878).

error to withdraw the troops and warned that should the militia remain "we will not answer for the consequences." Walkinshaw also reported that Emporians wanted responsibility for the safety of their town. Reacting to these notices, Anthony instructed Walkinshaw to remain prepared but leave law enforcement to local officials. Walkinshaw wired Morse that trains were moving without interference from the mere dozen strikers on the scene. He further noted that the citizenry was highly excited and that he, the sheriff, and the top-ranking company officer in town all agreed that the Santa Fe would be best served by the removal of the troops. Morse passed this message along to Anthony adding that it appeared that the strike had collapsed and the militia could be removed. But when Emporia officials again called for the withdrawal of Walkinshaw's men, Anthony showed he was unsure that all was yet safe. Both in Topeka and Emporia he feared a night of reprisals by frustrated strikers, and told the Emporia leaders that the troops "will not be withdrawn until the possibility of their need at any point is passed."²⁰

20. Numerous correspondence dated April 8, 1878, between the principals mentioned in text to be found in *ibid*.

Evidently Connor shared some of the governor's misgivings, or possibly he simply wished to let his own men rest. He requested that the militia company guard the yards, depot, and water pump station on the grounds the night could hold dangers. Walkinshaw agreed but the fifth night of the strike passed uneventfully. Early the next morning the militia captain sent word of the peacefulness of Emporia, and Anthony responded that his company would be relieved as soon as possible. Anthony also sent a message to General Manager Strong suggesting that the need for troops was coming to an end and asking that he and Morse meet him when they thought the militia could be sent home.²¹

Tragically the removal of the troops would come too late and in a less orderly fashion than anyone wished. An Emporia Congregationalist minister, O. J. Shannon, visited the Leavenworth troops to lift the spirits of these men who had been torn from their normal daily pursuits

21. Walkinshaw to Noble, "Adjutant General's Correspondence," 1878-1879; Walkinshaw to Anthony, April 9, 1878, "Anthony Papers," military affairs; Anthony to Walkinshaw, April 9, 1878, "Governor's Letters," 1878, no. 11; Anthony to Strong, April 9, 1878, *ibid*.

at short notice and sent to a town which openly rumored that they were criminal low-life. He was speaking to some of these troops in one of their passenger cars on the sixth morning of the strike when a militiaman, a 17-year-old miner's son named O'Neil, carelessly handled his weapon at the rear of the car. The gun discharged and killed Shannon instantly. A flurry of telegrams were sent to the governor informing him of the situation and Anthony ordered Walkinshaw to avoid "any complication or collision" and run his train out of the county. The governor quickly determined to relieve all the militia forces and by the next night both the Leavenworth and Independence troops were home.²²

THE AFTERMATH of the strike was filled with recriminations. Strike leader

22. Norton to Morse, April 9, 1878, "Anthony Papers," military affairs; *Emporia News*, April 12, 1878; *Emporia Ledger*, April 11, 1878; numerous telegraph messages between Morse, Anthony, and those in Emporia, "Anthony Papers," military affairs; Walkinshaw to Noble, "Adjutant General's Correspondence," 1878-1879.

Fletcher made the dubious charge that the Newton engineers had promised to strike but at the hour of decision were overcome by cowardliness. Tarsney brought a complaint of mail tampering against Pettibone. There was substantial basis for the charge but a Newton court acquitted Pettibone and sent Tarsney off for a short stint in a Wichita prison for bringing false and malicious charges to court. The governor spent the rest of his term defending his use of the militia. After he failed to get another term as governor, the still-appreciative financiers behind the Santa Fe hired him in 1881 as a superintendent of their Mexican affiliate line. And Pettibone, possibly because higher company officers found him too controversial, left the Santa Fe within about a year of the strike.²³

23. *Emporia Ledger*, April 18, 1878; *Emporia News*, May 3, 1878; *Newton Kansan*, April 25, 1878; May 2, 1878; *Message of George T. Anthony*, January 13, 1879, pp. 28-30; P. I. Bonebrake, "George T. Anthony," *Kansas Historical Collections*, Topeka, v. 6 (1900), pp. 202-206; *The Biographical Directory of the Railway Officials of America for 1887* (Chicago: Railway Age Publishing Co., 1887).



George W. Reed
(1844-1914)



John A. Martin
(1839-1889)

In Topeka, where there was less sympathy for the strikers, George W. Reed, editor of the *Daily Blade*, commented that Governor Anthony's calling out of the state militia may have been premature, but it was probably justified. The *Atchison Daily Champion*, edited by John A. Martin, noted the confusion surrounding the enginemen's motivation and labeled the matter "one of the worst pieces of muddled business we have ever heard of."

THE ENGINEMEN'S walkout of 1878 reveals several points of importance to the history of strikes. Too often it is assumed that rank and file support for a strike stemmed from agreement with the position on grievances voiced by union leadership. Certainly an assessment of economic issues and the fairness of company management influenced men in many strikes and may have done so in this Santa Fe action. Yet such a hypothesis falls far short of explaining the activity of most of the 1878 enginemen. Those suffering under what strike leaders claimed to be the most onerous supervision stood by the company, while some who walked out did so with little inkling of why the leaders called the work stoppage. The division in the ranks of enginemen suggests that the personalities of worker leaders and the effects of close employee association with local peers were pivotally important in determining the stance of workers faced with the decision of whether to strike. This should not be surprising when it is remembered that strikes rarely took place in an atmosphere conducive to calm consideration of issues. In a tumultuous environment, men forced to choose sides were particularly susceptible to the claims of personal loyalty and emotional attachment.

BONDS of sentiment also explained Emporia's sympathy for the strikers and local government's reluctance to crack down on rebellious Santa Fe men. In the late 19th century communal attachments were deteriorating in many American small towns.²⁴ By the Pullman strike of 1894 Emporians would number over 8,000 and would be divided along class lines. Consequently Santa Fe employees who walked out failed to get strong support from the businessmen and professionals who controlled the local economy and government.²⁵ Yet in 1878 the town was only about a third its size of the

1890's. In such a community everyone knew just about everyone else. Class divisions had not yet begun to define one's circle of friends. As an 1898 history of Emporia remarked, it was not until a boom in town population in 1879 and 1880 that lines of wealth separated the citizenry.²⁶ At the time of the enginemen's strike, Emporia was still an "island community" whose residents supported the actions of their neighbors against outside forces without regard to differing economic or social status.

The actions of Governor Anthony further reflect the human element in the story of the 1878 strike. Anthony's actions were marked with a certain amount of irrationality engendered by fear of a Pittsburgh-like calamity in his state. While friendly to the Santa Fe, Anthony pursued a policy of his own design. The passage of time may have been adequate to diffuse the possibility of violence and by the fourth day of the strike local law enforcement was probably adequate to handle any trouble that could arise at Emporia. Yet the governor was not ready to take any chances. Given the history of the strike in Kansas, it was premature to send the militia to Emporia, and especially unforgivable to do so without properly notifying local officials. Yet it was quite understandable that Anthony would call on overwhelming force when it is realized that he reacted less to what was happening than to his worst nightmare of what could occur. Just as worker camaraderie proved more vital than issues for the Santa Fe enginemen and communal attachments more potent than respect for legal responsibilities for Emporia citizens and officials, so Governor Anthony was guided as much by his fear of unbridled upheaval as by a realistic evaluation of the crisis.

24. The theme of deterioration of community is examined in two excellent books by Robert H. Wiebe: *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967) and *The Segmented Society: An Introduction to the Meaning of America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

25. Kansas State Board of Agriculture, *Tenth Biennial Report, 1895-1896* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Co., 1896), p. 668; James Howard Ducker, "Men of the Steel Rails: Workers on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, 1869-1900" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1980), pp. 171-182, 342-347.

26. Jacob Stotler, *Annals of Emporia and Lyon County* (Emporia: [1898]), p. 99.