

Review Essay Series

KANSAS TRANSPORTATION

by H. Roger Grant

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Because distances are crucial in the lives of Plains inhabitants, the methods used to traverse them have always been a vital element in people's lives and lifestyles. Changes in mode, especially during the previous two centuries—from foot to horse, horse to locomotive, train to automobile—have had far reaching economic, political, and social consequences. As a result the potential avenues for serious historical inquiry in the field of transportation seem limitless. Thus, transportation was an obvious topical choice for our review essay series.

In his series contribution, noted railroad and transportation historian H. Roger Grant, professor of history at Clemson University, examines America's continual effort to "conquer space" with better and especially faster modes of transportation. His focus on Kansas and the West is appropriate, in part, because Kansans traditionally have been quick to embrace new and improved modes of transportation. "Although the theme of *change* in transportation, along with its concomitant impacts on society, has been recognized fully by historians and mentioned by students of Kansas-related transportation top-

Distance is the constant enemy of Central Plains inhabitants. To conquer separation, individuals and communities have worked for faster and easier modes of traveling. While personal movement initially was slow—limited by human, animal, and water power—change came with accelerating Euro-American settlement. External combustion, namely steam, created monumental opportunities, principally in land travel, and it would be the steam-powered railway that transformed the daily lives of Kansans. The coming of the railroad did not stop people from striving for other useful forms of transportation. Indeed, Kansans embraced most transport replacement technologies, at times early on in their development. Just as the state became a recognized laboratory for political reform in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, a similar pattern developed with transportation. Electric interurban railways illustrate the rapidity of change. Kansans wanted up-to-date modes of travel, and not long after the first interurbans appeared nationally, scores of miles of these electric intercity lines served residents of the Sunflower State. When internal combustion-powered "horseless carriages" came into their own, however, trolleys through the Kansas countryside mostly disappeared. Taking to the skies is another example of a hopeful and in this case ultimately viable new transport form. Even before the Wright brothers flew their first airplane at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, Carl Browne, an ex-carnival barker and labor editor, attempted to build an aircraft based on a "patent-applied-for principle of rotary winged wheels" at a cooperative utopian colony in Bourbon County. Browne's efforts were not particularly successful, but in later years aircraft manufacturing became enormously successful in nearby Wichita, and the state developed into an undisputed center for this high-technology industry.

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A conductor signals "all aboard" on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, ca. 1950.

ics,” writes Grant, “the specifics in the local setting often have been overlooked. Historiographically, some forms, most notably railroads (usually in the context of a single company), have been studied reasonably well, but other types, and related or resulting issues for that matter, continue to be largely ignored.” We need to know much more about the role of government—national, state, and local—in transportation’s growth and development during the past century and a half, for example, and the far-ranging social implications resulting from the construction of the nation’s interstate highway system during the post-WWII era. In addition, Professor Grant observes, “Buses, a former backbone of the state’s transport network, and trucks, which today are the primary haulers of freight, lack any appreciable written coverage. The process of grasping and documenting the scope and nature of the Kansas transportation legacy in all its complexity has merely begun.”

This theme is vital to Americans living in the West. And as mentioned, although historians have covered thoroughly some issues dealing with travel throughout Kansas and the Plains, we have neglected others. Most notably, perhaps, is the social history of travel. We know a great deal about the technological and industrial development of the railroad and automobile, for example, but far less about “the human element.” Professor Grant challenges us to consider more seriously the “common people” and examine more closely the social and economic consequences of the transportation “revolutions” that impacted all nineteenth- and twentieth-century Americans.

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Although the theme of *change* in transportation, along with its concomitant impacts on society, has been recognized fully by historians and mentioned by students of Kansas-related transportation topics, the specifics in the local setting often have been overlooked. Historiographically, some forms, most notably railroads (usually in the context of a single company), have been studied reasonably well, but other types, and related or resulting issues for that matter, continue to be largely ignored. Buses, a former backbone of the state’s transport network, and trucks, which today are the primary haulers of freight, lack any appreciable written coverage. The process of grasping and documenting the scope and nature of the Kansas transportation legacy in all its complexity has merely begun.¹

That legacy began, of course, long before the first wagon or automobile or bus or truck rumbled along a Kansas road. The region’s earliest Euro-Americans visitors and settlers often walked to their destinations. It was common for an individual of antebellum America, or even later, to travel considerable distances on foot. Examples abound. On several occasions Joseph Smith Jr., founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), walked between Kirtland, Ohio, and Jackson County, Missouri, and later thousands of his co-religionists trekked from Nauvoo, Illinois, sometimes shoeless, pushing their handcarts across prairies and mountains to reach their promised land in Utah. For centuries before the coming of the horse, Native Americans traversed the Plains by wearing animal-skin moccasins for better traction in tall, wet grass. Except for the abundant literature on Plains Indians, scholars have largely ignored the history of walking in the context of early transport. It is most often diaries, letters, and other primary sources that attest to the importance of foot travel.²

Water transport, however, has received better historical coverage. At times Indians and later fur traders and trappers took to the streams, using canoes along the Arkansas, Cottonwood, Kaw (Kansas), Missouri, and Neosho Rivers, on their various tributaries, or in any place where this option was practical. Yet, unlike the benefits for Native Americans who lived on the semi-humid prairies, especially in the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys, opportunities to paddle canoes and watercraft on the Central Plains were limited. At best the semi-arid Plains experienced modest annual rainfalls, which usually meant that stream levels reached usable depths only in the spring after the snow melted or during periods of heavy rainfall. In *The Great Plains*, the classic interpretative study by Walter Prescott Webb, this famed historian emphasized that what became the state of Kansas could not rely heavily upon what was elsewhere long considered to be basic avenues for transportation, namely waterways. “The distinguishing climatic characteristic of the Great Plains environment from the ninety-eighth meridian to the Pacific slope is a deficiency in the most essential climatic element—water.” Unlike Ohio or Pennsylvania or even Iowa or Missouri,

1. Kansas lacks a statewide synthesis, but two overviews of American transportation history, although dated, are valuable works: Robert T. Riegel, *The Story of Western Railroads: From 1852 Through the Reign of the Giants* (New York: Macmillan, 1926); George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815–1860* (New York: Rinehart, 1951).

2. To understand how to use primary and secondary sources for studying transportation in a local area or community, see H. Roger Grant, *Getting Around: Exploring Transportation History* (Malabar, Fla.: Krieger Publishing Co., 2003).

much of the Sunflower State lacked an adequate network of these “natural channels of trade.”³

Kansans, nevertheless, were not to be wholly without access to long-distance aquatic transport. The Missouri River and portions of the Arkansas and Kaw were useful bodies of water, but really only to the areas along their immediate navigable channels. Sometimes vessels, whether flatboats, keelboats, or steamboats, could travel these typically wide and shallow streams only a few months a year because of either low or high water. Yet it is true that the introduction of steamboats helped hasten the process of Euro-American settlement and to lessen the isolation of some localities. Surely passengers, too, appreciated the usually smooth, albeit leisurely rate of movement over water. When the *Excel*, “a stanch little stern-wheeler with its remarkably strong engines,” made its way up the Kaw in April 1854 with goods for Fort Riley, it marked a red-letter day in internal Kansas transport. Common on most rivers, steamboat operations lasted briefly; for example, beginning on the upper Arkansas in 1878 and actively continuing only until the mid-1880s, falling victim to railroad competition. Even after the coming of the iron horse, the presence of river commerce on the Missouri remained significant for several Kansas communities, including Atchison and Leavenworth.⁴ And in the twenty-first century slow-moving, albeit husky towboats with their strings of barges regularly ply the “Big Muddy” between St. Louis, Missouri, and Sioux City, Iowa, hauling grain, rock, and other bulk commodities.

Those “western” stern-wheelers of the nineteenth century were wholly practical crafts. They could frequently accommodate dozens of passengers and handle several tons of freight. Their lightweight, high-pressure engines, whose compact boilers tolerated dirty river water, provided their power. Unlike their giant cousins in the East, these vessels featured light-draft hulls and drew only limited water, making possible shallow-water operations. Usually, they required a minimum water stream depth of about ten inches and somewhat more when fully loaded. Suggested one wag, “They had the ability to navigate on a heavy dew.”⁵



Long before horses, wagons, trains, or buses provided transportation on the Plains, the region's earliest inhabitants walked to their destinations.

3. Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1931), 17. Secondary coverage of water transport in Kansas largely is limited to pieces that have appeared in journal literature. Good illustrations are Cecil Howes, “This Month in Kansas History: Kaw River Steamers,” *Kansas Teacher* 50 (May 1942): 30–32; James H. Thomas and Carl N. Tyson, “Navigation on the Arkansas River, 1719–1886,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 2 (Summer 1979): 135–41.

4. See, for example, Floyd Benjamin Streeter, *The Kaw: The Heart of a Nation* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941); H. Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Early Years, 1865–1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); see also Albert R. Greene, “The Kansas River—Its Navigation,” *Kansas Historical Collections, 1905-1906* 9 (1906): 317–58; Edgar Langsdorf, “A Review of Early Navigation on the Kansas River,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 18 (May 1950): 140–45; Langsdorf, “The First Survey of the Kansas River,” *ibid.*, 146–58; Langsdorf, “More About Kansas River Steamboats: The First Kansas-Built River Steamer,” *ibid.* (November 1950): 405–7; Sonie Liebler, *That Splendid Little Steamer Hartford* (Manhattan, Kans.: Art Craft, 1989).

5. *Burlington (Iowa) Post*, May 12, 1923; see also Louis C. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949).

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Shallow-bottom steamboating had other attractive features. Capitalization costs were minimal, so an individual or a partnership could afford a steamboat. If the vessel “went down,” which was hardly uncommon, the most expensive parts, boiler and engine, usually could be retrieved, repaired, and refitted into a replacement boat. The support structures required to serve a particular community were modest; it might be a public wharf or a private dock or tie-up. These inexpensive facilities required no great feats of civil engineering or construction skills.

Needless to say, steamboats hardly were perfect conveyances. They were susceptible to extremes in steam levels, and delays were common even when conditions were ideal. Furthermore, it was necessary to keep vessels off the river during the winter when the ice broke or jammed and caused flooding, and so boats usually were quartered in sheltered areas, lagoons, or sloughs in the small tributaries. Boiler explosions, fires, and direct confrontations with sawyers and snags were reoccurring events that caused headaches to shippers and travelers alike.⁶

The saga of steamboating in the trans-Mississippi West has long been chronicled. The “standard” work by Louis C. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History*, appeared more than a half century ago. The obvious shortcoming in the literature of steamboating is social history. Requiring greater attentions is the non-economic impact of vessels on the people that they served from the 1840s until the railroad made them largely obsolete in the 1870s and 1880s. Numerous questions need addressing: Who took these boats and where? Who shipped and received goods? Did these vessels challenge the “village virtues” of the local citizenry? After all, river towns developed reputations for being “wide open” and an anathema for church-going agriculturalists.⁷

Often overlooked were the once popular ferry boats. These usually primitive affairs allowed travelers who were on foot, horseback, or with some conveyance to cross safely and conveniently streams that could not be forded. These vessels were commonly inexpensive to build and to operate and used oars, animals, or steam power. But as soon as bridges were built, usually by railroads or governmental bodies, these ferries, some dating from the pre-statehood period, closed. As with some other transit forms, the book literature is absent, although early in the publication of the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* a local historian, George A. Root, wrote a remarkable series of articles on “Ferries in Kansas.” He covered in considerable detail those ferries that operated on the Arkansas, Blue, Grasshopper, Neosha, Kaw, Missouri, Republican, Smoky Hill, and Solomon Rivers and in the process provided snippets of superb economic, political, social, and technological history.⁸

The paucity and unpredictability of water on the Central Plains obviously limited the practical use of water corridors. It would not be economically feasible

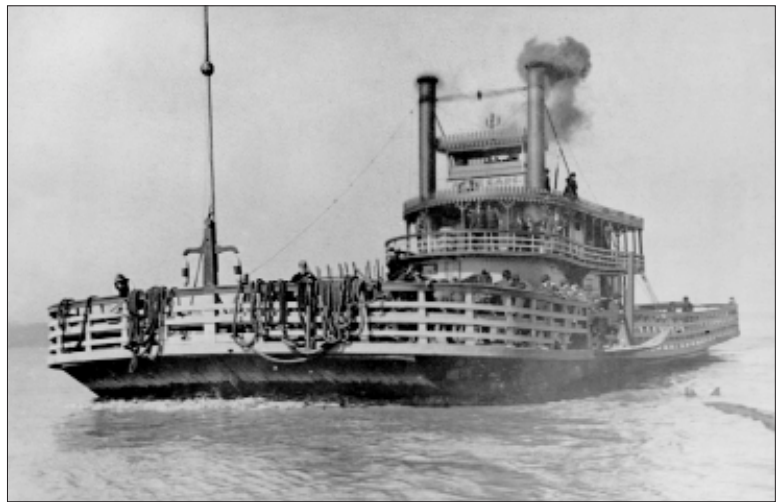
6. H. M. Chittenden, “Reports on Steamboat Wrecks on the Missouri,” *Nebraska History* 51 (Spring 1970): 17–23; Paul M. Putz, “Missouri Riverboat Wreckage Downstream from Yankton, South Dakota,” *Nebraska History* 64 (Winter 1983): 521–41.

7. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers*; see also Alan L. Bates, *The Western River Steamboat Cyclopedium* (Leonia, N.J.: Hustle Press, 1968); William E. Lass, *A History of Steamboating on the Upper Missouri River* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962).

8. George A. Root, “Ferries in Kansas,” a twenty-two part series in *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, running from vol. 2 (February 1933) through vol. 6 (May 1937). The articles examined ferries on the Missouri, Kansas, Blue, Republican, Solomon, Smoky Hill, Saline, Neosho, Arkansas, Grasshopper, Great Nemaha, and Marmaton Rivers; Wakarusa and Turkey Creeks; Marais des Cygnes, Verdigris, Cottonwood, Spring, Ninnescah, and Walnut Rivers, and Independence and Pottawatomie Creeks.

for promoters to become involved in the “ditch-digging” craze that prior to the Civil War swept parts of New England, the Old Northwest, and the South and led to such impressive artificial waterways as the Erie Canal, Ohio and Erie Canal, and James River Canal. Such projects were not replicated in the trans-Missouri West. The thousands of “ditches” in the region were for irrigation and not for passenger and freight commerce.⁹ Kansans were fortunate that their need for rapid, dependable long-distance transportation came at a time when railroads were the preferable alternative to canals.

Long before the first whistle or bell of a hissing steam locomotive could be heard in Kansas, residents found a historic form of ground transport of inestimable value. Wagons, carts, and carriages pulled by animals, whether oxen, mules, or horses, plodded over primitive trails whose condition depended upon the weather. Dusty or muddy were the usual conditions. Still, these arteries allowed for considerable mobility and the opportunity for settlers to engage in commercial agriculture and a variety of for-profit activities. For decades the prairie schooner or covered wagon became the physical symbol for long-distance travel in a pre-industrialized age. These sturdy boxes on wheels with their canvas coverings gave settlers a practical yet slow-moving means to reach their initial places of settlement and for businesses throughout the region to transport goods, especially heavy commodities such as building materials, farm implements, and kitchen stoves. Indeed, agreements for hauling freight to scattered federal forts and mail contracts accounted for much of the traffic on these pioneer trails. And there were surges in wagon usage, notably during the Mexican War and the California and Colorado gold rushes.¹⁰



Water transport developed in several forms—from canoes on streams to steamboats plying the major rivers. While steamboating was only marginally successful on Kansas rivers, communities such as Atchison and Leavenworth along the Missouri River benefited from river commerce.

9. Anne M. Marvin, “‘A Grave-Yard of Hopes’: Irrigation and Boosterism in Southwest Kansas, 1880–1890,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 19 (Spring 1996): 36–51.

10. For examples of works of interest here, see W. Turrentine Jackson, *Wagon Roads West: A Study of Federal Road Surveys and Construction in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1846–1869* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); Lewis E. Atherton, “Disorganizing Effects of the Mexican War on the Santa Fe Trade,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 6 (May 1937): 115–23; Louise Barry, “The Ranch at Walnut Creek Crossing,” *ibid.* 37 (Summer 1971): 121–47; Calvin W. Gower, “The Pike’s Peak Gold Rush and the Smoky Hill Route, 1859–1860,” *ibid.* 25 (Summer 1959): 158–71; David Lindsey, ed., “The Journal of an 1859 Pike’s Peak Gold Seeker,” *ibid.* 22 (Winter 1956): 321–41; Minnie Dubbs Millbrook, “An Old Trail Plowed Under—Hays to Dodge,” *ibid.* 43 (Autumn 1977): 264–81; H. B. Mollhausen, “Over the Santa Fe Trail Through Kansas in 1858,” *ibid.* 16 (November 1948): 337–80; George A. Root and Russell K. Hickman, “Pike’s Peak Express Companies: Part I—Solomon and Republican Route,” *ibid.* 13 (August 1944): 163–95; *ibid.*, Part II (November 1944): 211–43; *ibid.*, Part III—The Platte Route (November 1945): 485–526; *ibid.*, Part IV, 14 (February 1946): 36–92; Raymond W. and Mary Lund Settle, “The Early Careers of William Bradford Waddell and William Hepburn Russell: Frontier Capitalists,” *ibid.* 26 (Winter 1960): 355–82; Joseph W. Snell, ed., “By Wagon From Kansas to Arizona in 1875—The Travel Diary of Lydia E. English,” *ibid.* 36 (Winter 1970): 369–89; Leo E. Oliva, ed., “‘A Faithful Account of Everything’: Letters from Katie Bowen on the Santa Fe Trail, 1851,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 19 (Winter 1996–1997): 262–81.

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While some prairie schooners literally wandered across the prairies, by the 1840s major road corridors crisscrossed Kansas. The Santa Fe and the Oregon–California Trails emerged as the pre-eminent wagon roads. The former stretched in a largely southwesterly direction from the Missouri River community of Old Franklin, Missouri, later shifting to Independence and then Westport, Missouri, and terminated at the historic Spanish settlement of Santa Fe, of the future state of New Mexico, crossing much of the length of Kansas. In fact, approximately two-thirds of its length was in the Sunflower State.¹¹ The Cimarron Cutoff left the original Santa Fe Trail in west-central Kansas and reconnected with it in northeastern New Mexico. The latter, which took several names—Oregon Trail, California Trail, Platte Trail—began at various points in western Missouri; it extended from the Missouri River mostly westward to the Big Blue River and then angled northwestwardly to enter the soon-to-be Nebraska (near Fairbury). Stems ultimately reached California and the Oregon Country, more than two thousand miles from their mid-America starting points. The primary and secondary literature on both of these famous trails is extensive and offers insights into the economic, social, and even political dimensions of these active wagon corridors.¹²

Yet scholars have not overlooked other road arteries before development of modern highways. While not well known, the Dodge City–Tascosa Trail and Jones and Plummer Trail once stretched south from Dodge City through Meade before entering the present state of Oklahoma. A split occurred at Beaver, with a portion continuing to Fort Elliott in the Texas Panhandle and another to the Texas cattle town of Old Tascosa. Later both the military road (Dodge City–Fort Supply Trail) and the Fort Elliott and Tascosa extension served the same region. Historian C. Robert Haywood has shown how wagon trails lured, encouraged, and sus-

11. A useful historiographical work is Michael L. Olsen, "Old Ruts and New: The History of Santa Fe Trail History," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 19 (Winter 1996–1997): 228–41. In *Kansas History's* special Santa Fe Trail issue, Olsen examined the writings of both "those who would celebrate the trail and those who seek to interpret its significance." See also David K. Clapsaddle, "Conflict and Commerce on the Santa Fe Trail: Fort Riley–Fort Larned Road, 1860–1867," *ibid.* 16 (Summer 1993): 124–37; Clapsaddle, "The Wet and Dry Routes of the Santa Fe Trail," *ibid.* 15 (Summer 1992): 98–115.

12. Useful works on the Santa Fe Trail include Jack D. Rittenhouse, *The Santa Fe Trail: A Historical Bibliography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971); William Y. Chalfant, *Dangerous Passage: The Santa Fe Trail and the Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Stella M. Drumm, ed., *Down the Santa Fe Trail into Mexico: The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, 1846–1847* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984). Robert Luther Duffus, *The Santa Fe Trail* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1931); Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. Milo Milton Quaife (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967); Kate L. Gregg, ed., *The Road to Santa Fe* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1952); Leo E. Oliva, *Fort Larned: Guardian of the Santa Fe Trail* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1997); Charles R. Strom, *Charles G. Parker: Wagonmaster on the Trail to Santa Fe* (White City, Kans.: Village Press, 1999); Morris F. Taylor, *Fast Mail West: Stagecoach Lines on the Santa Fe Trail* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971); Stanley Vestal, *The Old Santa Fe Trail* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939); Henry Pickering Walker, *The Wagonmaster: High Plains Freighting from the Earliest Days of the Santa Fe Trail to 1880* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966); Walker D. Wyman, "Freighting: A Big Business on the Santa Fe Trail," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (November 1931): 17–27. Key works that cover all or part of the network of the Oregon and California Trails include William Elsey Connelley and Frank Root, *The Overland Stage to California* (Glorieta, N.M.: Rio Grande Press, 1970); William Ghent, *The Road to Oregon: A Chronicle of the Great Emigrant Trail* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929); Francis Parkman, *The California and Oregon Trail*, 8th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1886); John D. Unruh Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979); John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); James Tompkins, ed., "Reminiscence of Abraham Henry Garrison—Over the Oregon Trail in 1846," *Overland Journal* 11 (Summer 1993): 10–31; Morris Werner, "Blazing a Trail to Oregon: Jumping-Off at St. Joe," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 14 (Autumn 1991): 132–44. The numerous works of Marc Simmons on the Santa Fe Trail and Gregory M. Franzwa on both the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails also must be noted.

tained the come-to-stay pioneer and how they “gave orientation and direction to settlements.” During the 1870s and 1880s the trail served as a major freighting highway, and its service territory “changed from a culture based on buffalo hunting to one solidly founded on ranching and farming.” Similarly, students of transportation have looked at the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Route and the Smoky Hill Road, both extending westward from Fort Leavenworth to Denver. The former, which covered nearly seven hundred miles, became an important stage route and helped argonauts exploit the Colorado gold discoveries. The latter road, which was somewhat shorter, served more as a general wagon artery and touched a number of small but vibrant towns, including Abilene, Salina, and Ellsworth.¹³

During the relatively brief period of the long-distance cattle drive, cowboys used a variety of established wagon roads and their own trails to bring longhorns from Texas to strategic railroad shipping points in Kansas, most notably Abilene, Caldwell, Dodge City, Ellsworth, and Wichita. The impact of these overland arteries gave rise to the most celebrated cowtowns in American history. The somewhat chaotic past of these communities, which depended on cattle-on-foot delivery, is superbly captured in Robert Dykstra’s prize-winning study *The Cattle Towns*.¹⁴

Whether on the Santa Fe Trail, Oregon Trail, or some lesser known road, Kansans once relied heavily on the horse. The Plains Indians discovered the utilitarian value of these animals after their introduction by the Spaniards. Some scholars believe that this travel option prompted these indigenous peoples to increase their hunting activities and to lessen their interests in the horticultural life. Euro-Americans likewise embraced this ancient transport form with gusto. During much of the nineteenth and early parts of the twentieth centuries, men (and some women and children, too) frequently were mounted.



Wagons, carts, and carriages pulled by animals, whether horses, oxen, or mules, were a common form of ground transportation of inestimable value. This team, wagon, and passengers were photographed in 1886 near Cheney.

13. See, for example, C. Robert Haywood, *Trails South: The Wagon-Road Economy in the Dodge City-Panhandle Region* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986); Jackson, *Wagon Roads West*. Helpful companion studies are William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803–1863* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959); William F. Lass, *From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake: An Account of Overland Freighting* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1972); Wayne C. Lee and Hoard C. Raynesford, *Trails of the Smoky Hill: From Coronado to the Cow Towns* (1980; reprint, Caldwell, Idaho: Claxton Printers, 1990).

14. Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns: A Social History of the Kansas Cattle Trading Centers of Abilene, Ellsworth, Wichita, Dodge City and Caldwell, 1867 to 1885* (New York: Knopf, 1968). See also Jimmy M. Skaggs, *The Cattle-Trailing Industry: Between Supply and Demand, 1866–1890* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973); Don Worcester, *The Chisholm Trail: High Road of the Cattle Kingdom* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press for Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1980); O. James Hazlett, “Cattle Marketing in the American Southwest: The Rise of the Kansas City Commission Merchant in the Nineteenth Century,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18 (Summer 1995): 100–15; Hazlett, “Chaos and Conspiracy: The Kansas City Live Stock Trade, 1886–1892,” *ibid.* 15 (Summer 1992): 126–45; Floyd Benjamin Streeter, *Prairie Trails and Cow Towns: The Opening of the Old West* (1936; reprint, New York: Devin Adair, 1963).

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Whether for a soldier, physician, or preacher, the horse provided mostly dependable transportation; it could usually manage to negotiate the typical country roads, which amounted to little more than meandering dirt paths, and did so at a reasonable speed and cost. Horses even offered philosophical attractions. “The horse has always exerted a peculiar emotional effect on both the rider and the observer,” concluded Walter Prescott Webb in *The Great Plains*. “[H]e has raised the rider above himself, has increased his power and sense of power, and has aroused a sense of inferiority and envy in the humble pedestrian.” Understandably, before the dominance of the automobile, horses were everywhere in Kansas. Not even the brief bicycle craze of the 1880s and 1890s significantly lessened the presence of this treasured animal.¹⁵

The advent of the automobile age, however, did prompt dramatic changes. It caused the horse largely to disappear from streets and public roads and precipitated the collapse of an extensive horse-based economy with its blacksmiths, horse breeders and traders, harness and saddle makers, and wagon and buggy manufacturers. It was the impact of a new transportation type on established forms that repeatedly needs to be described and analyzed. The literature on what happened in Kansas when the “Tin Lizzy” replaced “Old Dobbin” is sparse, indeed.¹⁶

In the context of nineteenth-century Kansas transportation, many today best remember the horse as a star performer of the famed Pony Express. Beginning in April 1860 and for the next eighteen months this innovative mail service, spearheaded by William H. Russell, a partner in the freight and stagecoach company of Russell, Majors and Waddell, became a national sensation. Gallant riders on their fast steeds galloped over a two-thousand-mile route between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, establishing a ten-day delivery schedule for letters. In the process they sped across portions of northeastern Kansas. But high costs, Indian troubles, and introduction of the transcontinental telegraph made the Pony Express only a romantic and impressive footnote in the history of transportation.¹⁷

Notwithstanding the utility of the domestic horse, the iron horse offered much to Kansans. Establishment of the railroad brought about the virtual eclipse of the freight wagon and stagecoach (and the steamboat, too), and in the process created a major technological change during the late-nineteenth century that resembled the Internet revolution that swept the world during the closing years of the twentieth century. Although the first spindly track was not laid until shortly before statehood, virtually every Kansan could appreciate the observation made in an unsigned editorial, “The Farmers and the Railroads,” that appeared in an 1845 issue of the rail industry’s first major trade publication, *The*

15. Webb, *The Great Plains*, 492–93. An excellent account of the impact of the horse on society is Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954). See also James E. Sherow, “Workings on the Geodialectic: High Plains Indians and Their Horses in the Region of the Arkansas River Valley, 1800–1870,” *Environmental History Review* 16 (Summer 1992): 61–84.

16. Paul S. Sutter offers thoughtful commentary about the horse and the automobile in his essay, “Paved With Good Intentions: Good Roads, the Automobile, and the Rhetoric of Rural Improvement in the Kansas Farmer, 1890–1914,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18 (Winter 1995–1996): 284–99.

17. Arthur Chapman, *The Pony Express: The Record of a Romantic Adventure* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1932); Joseph J. DiCerto, *The Saga of the Pony Express: Hoofbeats in the Wilderness* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1989); LeRoy R. Hafen, *The Overland Mail, 1849–1869: Promoter of Settlement, Precursor of Railroads* (1926; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1969); Raymond W. Settle and Mary Lund Settle, *Saddles and Spurs: The Pony Express Saga* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Co., 1955).

American Railroad Journal: "The steamboat skirts the shore to landings whence roads lead into the interior. The railroad punches at once into the bowels of the land and drains the produce from either side like a mighty river and its tributaries." Iron rails, flanged wheels, and snorting locomotives were perfect symbols to a rampant manifest destiny.¹⁸

Once the iron horse entered the Kansas landscape in the early 1860s, after more than a dozen ill-fated schemes during the late territorial period, mileage quickly grew into a vast iron and then steel framework. At times supported by liberal federal land grants and generous local subsidies, by 1890 railroads in the state had installed an impressive 8,859 route mile network. In 1917 mileage peaked at 9,367; only Texas, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Iowa claimed more miles.¹⁹

For decades historians have chronicled Kansas's rich railroad heritage. Their focus has been the same as that of other scholars of the flanged wheel, namely company studies. Every principal road in the state has received attention. Once the process of "system building" (new line construction and corporate consolidation) largely had run its initial course by the early twentieth century, the big names in Kansas railroading became the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (Santa Fe); Missouri Pacific; Union Pacific; Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific (Rock Island); St. Louis–San Francisco (Frisco); Missouri–Kansas–Texas (Katy); Chicago, Burlington and Quincy (Burlington); and the Kansas City Southern.

As might be expected, the largest and most important roads have generated the greatest interest among professional scholars. Without doubt the premier railroad in Kansas was the Santa Fe, which operated a whopping 2,681 route miles locally, nearly 500 more than the Missouri Pacific, the second largest carrier. Fittingly, this has led to the writing of several in-depth studies of the Santa Fe because of its size and significance nationally and the availability of an abundance of primary source materials. Unlike most major (Class I) railroads, the Santa Fe retained a plethora of records, ranging from internally generated historical sketches known as "Santa Fe Splinters" to personnel files. Surely the best book to emerge is the *His-*



Once the iron horse entered the Kansas landscape in the early 1860s, our system of transportation grew into a vast iron, then steel, network. This 1905 passenger car (above) belonged to one of the biggest names in Kansas railroading: the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe.

18. "The Farmer and the Railroads," *American Railroad Journal* (January 30, 1945). Studies of the iron horse are numerous; indeed, they would by themselves fill a small library. For observations on Kansas's earliest ventures into this mode of transport, see Charles S. Gleed, "The First Kansas Railway," *Kansas Historical Collections, 1897-1900* 6 (1900): 357–59; George A. Ham, "The Atchison Associates of the Santa Fe Railroad," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 42 (Winter 1976): 353–65; I. E. Quastler, "Charting a Course: Lawrence, Kansas, and Its Railroad Strategy, 1854–1872," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 18 (Spring 1995): 18–33; Joseph W. Snell and Robert Richmond, "When the Union and Kansas Pacific Built Through Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 32 (Summer 1966): 161–86; *ibid.* (Autumn 1966): 334–52; Joseph W. Snell and Don W. Wilson, *The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1968); William Treadway, *Cyrus K. Holliday: A Documentary Biography* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1979).

19. H. Roger Grant, *Kansas Depots* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1990), 5; Homer E. Socolofsky and Huber Self, *Historical Atlas of Kansas*, 2d ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

During the post-World War II years American railroads produced company histories, usually works that marked some landmark event.

tory of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe by Keith L. Bryant Jr., part of the *Railroads of America* series published by Macmillan in the 1970s. This volume did more than review the corporate gestation, youth, and maturity of the Santa Fe; it delineated the company's impact on its vast service territory that stretched between Chicago and Los Angeles, including large sections of Kansas. (Unfortunately, the study commissioned in this series on the Missouri Pacific never appeared.)²⁰

Several other prominent business and railroad historians have treated in varying degrees of coverage the five other carriers that developed a strong presence in Kansas. Craig Miner examined both the recent history of the Missouri Pacific in his *The Rebirth of the Missouri Pacific, 1956–1983*, and also the formative years of the Frisco in *The St. Louis-San Francisco Transcontinental Railroad*. George L. Anderson explored the pioneer long-distance Kansas Pacific, which quickly entered the fold of the Union Pacific. Maury Klein produced a comprehensive two-volume study of the Union Pacific covering more than a century beginning in the 1860s. Klein also gave us the detailed and highly interpretative biographies of financier Jay Gould, who was associated not only with the Kansas Pacific and Union Pacific but also with the Missouri Pacific, and E. H. Harriman, the brilliant leader of the modern Union Pacific. Richard C. Overton wrote what arguably is the definitive history of the Burlington. Finally, Keith Bryant Jr. penned a masterful biography of the colorful and resourceful Arthur E. Stilwell, who almost single-handedly assembled the Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf Railroad, the principal predecessor of the Kansas City Southern, and later promoted the less important and always financially troubled Kansas City, Mexico & Orient Railway.²¹

Less skilled authors have covered two other carriers that collectively laid thousands of miles of track in Kansas: the Rock Island and the Katy. During the financial salad days of the post-World War II years various American railroads underwrote the costs of producing company histories, usually works that marked a centennial or some other landmark event. The Rock Island and Katy each embraced this form of commemorative book. The former railroad turned to William Edward Hayes, an experienced journalist who became executive assistant to the Rock Island president in charge of public relations and advertising, and the latter to Vincent Victor Masterson, also a company insider. Although these men had access to corporate records, they emphasized the colorful and episodic. Their approaches make for pleasant reading but frequently are devoid of needed interpretations.²²

20. Keith L. Bryant Jr., *History of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974). Other corporate studies of the Santa Fe include Glenn Danford Bradley, *The Story of the Santa Fe* (Boston: Richard C. Badger, 1920); James Marshall, *Santa Fe: The Railroad That Built an Empire* (New York: Random House, 1945); L. L. Waters, *Steel Trails to Santa Fe* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1950). In 1982 the University of Nebraska Press (Bison) released a paperback edition of the Bryant book, and in 1995 Omni Publications in Palmdale, California, reissued the Bradley study.

21. H. Craig Miner, *The Rebirth of the Missouri Pacific, 1956–1983* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983); Miner, *The St. Louis–San Francisco Transcontinental Railroad: The Thirty-fifth Parallel Project, 1853–1890* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1972); George L. Anderson, *Kansas West: An Epic of Western Railroad Building* (San Marino, Calif.: Golden West Books, 1963); Maury Klein, *Union Pacific*, vol. 1, *Birth of a Railroad, 1862–1893* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987); *ibid.*, vol. 2, *The Rebirth, 1894–1969*; Klein, *The Life and Legend of Jay Gould* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Klein, *The Life and Legend of E. H. Harriman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Richard C. Overton, *Burlington Route: A History of the Burlington Lines* (New York: Knopf, 1965); Keith L. Bryant Jr., *Arthur E. Stilwell: Promoter with a Hunch* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971).

22. William Edward Hayes, *Iron Road to Empire: The History of 100 years of Progress and Achievements of the Rock Island Lines* (New York: Simmons–Boardman, 1953); Vincent V. Masterson, *The Katy Railroad and the Last Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952).

What becomes clear about works on the major railroads in Kansas is that coverage is uneven. Although the Santa Fe, Union Pacific, and Burlington are superbly covered, the Rock Island study is highly journalistic and was written in the early 1950s missing the turbulent years from the mid-1950s until the road's dismemberment in the 1980s. Because of its date of publication, the chatty Katy tome says nothing about the last quarter of the company's corporate life. Moreover, the Frisco has not been viewed for the twentieth century, and the Missouri Pacific lacks coverage for the nineteenth century. Except for Bryant's biography of Stilwell, the Kansas City Southern, a road that continues to thrive, has been ignored by professional historians. Furthermore, the products of the mega-mergers of the 1960s and later, Burlington Northern, Burlington Northern–Santa Fe, and the greatly expanded Union Pacific (which now includes the former Chicago and North Western and the Southern Pacific), have not received adequate scholarly attention.

Fortunately, the railroad industry in the twentieth century, including the era of deregulation, has been examined in general terms. Scholars have explored such critical activities as dieselization, corporate mergers, communications, and the like. These various book publications help explain critical happenings throughout the nation.²³

Although historians, whether professional or amateur, may find it difficult as business scholar Albro Martin once observed, "to get their hands on the big fellows," they have offered generally good coverage of some of the less stellar railroads in Kansas. These shortlines either remained independent or they eventually entered the orbit of a larger carrier. Company histories of these often colorful pikes are available for the Kansas Central; Kansas City, Mexico and Orient; Kansas City Northwestern; and Wichita Northwestern. Also available is a study of Kansas "ghost" railroads, namely lines that no longer exist. This particular work includes both long-abandoned companies such as the Marion Belt and Chingawasa Springs and the St. Joseph and Topeka and the more recent trackage retirements made by Class I roads.²⁴



Historians have offered generally good coverage of some of the less stellar railroads in Kansas. Among the many independent shortlines was the Manhattan, Alma and Burlingame, pictured here at a Leavenworth depot.

23. See, for example, Ira G. Clark, *Then Came the Railroads: The Century from Steam to Diesel in the Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958); John F. Stover, *American Railroads*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Albro Martin, *Railroads Triumphant: The Growth, Rejection & Rebirth of a Vital American Force* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Richard Saunders Jr., *Merging Lines: American Railroads, 1900–1970* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001); Keith L. Bryant, ed., *Railroads in the Age of Regulation, 1900–1980* (New York: Facts on File, 1988), a part of the *Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography*.

24. See I. E. Quastler, *Kansas Central Narrow Gauge: Slim Rails Across the Midlands* (David City, Neb.: South Platte Press, 1999); Quastler, *Missouri Pacific Northwest: A History of the Kansas City Northwestern Railroad* (David City, Nebr.: South Platte Press, 1994); Frank P. Donovan Jr. and John Leeds Keer, *Destination Topolobampo: The Kansas City, Mexico & Orient Railway* (San Marino, Calif.: Golden West Books, 1968); Lee Berglund, *Wheat Belt Route: Wichita Northwestern: The Story of a Dust Bowl Railroad* (David City, Neb.: South Platte Press, 1998); Robert Collins, *Ghost Railroads of Kansas* (David City, Neb.: South Platte Press, 1997).

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Several Kansas shortlines were part of the narrow-gauge building phenomenon that swept America shortly after the Civil War. A cadre of railroad promoters considered standard-gauge lines (four feet eight and a half inches) to be impractical for certain transportation needs. They erroneously argued that slimmer pikes (usually three feet in width) held several crucial advantages, namely that they were easier and cheaper to build, maintain, and operate. A surprising number of these dreams became reality: between 1871 and 1883 a building boom produced approximately twelve thousand miles of narrow-gauge lines nationally, including more than two hundred miles in Kansas. In a massive tome, *American Narrow Gauge Railroads*, economist George W. Hilton skillfully examines the national story and provides thumbnail histories of scores of individual roads, including the three in Kansas. Two specialized studies of the 165-mile Kansas Central Railroad, a veritable narrow-gauge colossus, amplify this fascinating episode in the state's railroad past.²⁵

Not only is the literature thin on the contemporary rail giants, but book-length coverage of the small, independent roads, which commonly appeared in the aftermath of industry deregulation that the Staggers Act of 1980 made possible, is nil. These shortlines usually came about because their former owners did not believe that these pieces of trackage contributed much to their income, or the shortlines emerged from a bankrupt carrier. Yet, these lines, whether once owned by the Santa Fe or Rock Island, might be profitable if operated with a limited work force and personalized customer service. Grain shippers often were the principal beneficiaries of these rail operations, permitting smaller elevator firms to remain viable. The number of these recently launched carriers in Kansas is considerable and includes such firms as the Central Kansas Railway, Kyle Railroad, and Southeast Kansas Railroad. And this shortline movement has taken place in the context of major rail line shrinkages. For example, between 1973 and 1993 Kansas experienced a decline of its total route mileage from 7,776 to 4,094. Historians may yet explore these "new railway age" firms, either individually or collectively, although several have already disappeared, either abandoning operations or entering the fold of shortline conglomerates.²⁶

While contemporary railroads, whether Class I or shortline, have no need for the once ubiquitous depot, for more than a century Kansas carriers built and maintained these formerly essential structures. By World War I approximately 1,850 depots dotted the state's railscape. Many smaller communities had more than a single railroad and as a result possessed two or three "combination" freight and passenger stations. Some places had even more. Anthony, for one, claimed five passenger depots, buildings that belonged to the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient; Kansas Southwestern; Missouri Pacific; Rock Island; and Santa Fe. A few of the larger cities had "union depots" where two or more companies shared passenger operations. For example, the Burlington, Missouri Pacific, Rock Island, and Santa Fe used the same station facility in Atchison.

25. George W. Hilton, *American Narrow Gauge Railroads* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); see also Quastler, *Kansas Central Narrow Gauge*; Harold Crimmins, *A History of the Kansas Central Railroad, 1871–1935* (Emporia: Kansas State Teachers College, 1954).

26. To identify the new wave of freight shortlines in Kansas, see Edward A. Lewis, *American Shortline Railway Guide*, 5th ed. (Waukesha, Wis.: Kalmbach Publishing Co., 1996).

Unlike some of the state's transportation-related architectural heritage, depots have received considerable scrutiny. Their demise, which passenger train abandonments, line retirements, corporate mergers, and assorted technological changes prompted, has sparked interest. Since these structures possess adaptive reuse possibilities, their stories become important to new owners, community activists, and history enthusiasts. The leading study of depots, especially those in small towns, is this author's *Kansas Depots*, published by the Kansas State Historical Society in 1990. This heavily illustrated book provides an architectural, economic, and social history of these often well-remembered and cherished transportation facilities. The larger view of the depot and the railroad environment nationally is imaginatively told by landscape historian John Stilgoe in his provocative study *Metropolitan Corridor*.²⁷

What might best be considered a blend of economic, geographic, and occasionally social history is a unique study of the iron horse and the city of Lawrence during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Historical geographer I. E. Quastler has examined in detail the ongoing efforts of citizens of this Kansas metropolis to make their hometown a railroad mecca, perhaps rivaling Kansas City or Omaha. Yet, their luck was bad, and Lawrence never became the railroad center that its boosters had expected or hoped.²⁸

In another grassroots study, historian R. Alton Lee explored the history of the Morris County community of White City. The book's title, *T-Town on the Plains*, suggests the importance of railroads (Katy and Rock Island) in the physical appearance and development of this "elevator town." The iron horse shaped the basic street pattern and arrangements of commercial and residential buildings. Lee successfully captured the spirit of these carriers in White City's past. *T-Town on the Plains* is a fine companion to geographer John C. Hudson's *Plains Country Towns*, which focuses on how railroads shaped hundreds of prairie communities.²⁹



Railroad depots have received much attention in the literature, and since their demise these cherished transportation facilities have become important to history enthusiasts. This Missouri Pacific depot was photographed in Oskaloosa after 1910.

27. Grant, *Kansas Depots*. Also contributing to an understanding of depots in Kansas are Grant, *Living in the Depot: The Two-Story Railroad Station* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993); Grant and Charles W. Bohi, *Country Railroad Station in America*, rev. ed. (Sioux Falls, S. D.: Center for Western Studies, 1988); Bohi and Grant, "Standardized Railroad Stations in Kansas: The Case of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 4 (Spring 1981): 39–52; Janet Greenstein Potter, *Great American Railroad Stations* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996); Philip H. Lewis, "The Railroad Station: A Personal Perspective," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 3 (Spring 1980): 47–58. The railroad landscape, including the depot, is examined in John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the America Scene* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

28. I. E. Quastler, *The Railroads of Lawrence, Kansas, 1854–1900: A Case Study in the Causes and Consequences of an Unsuccessful American Urban Railroad Problem* (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1979).

29. R. Alton Lee, *T-Town on the Plains* (Manhattan, Kans.: Sunflower University Press, 1999); John C. Hudson, *Plains Country Towns* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985). A "T-town" is a street grid, found widely on the Great Plains, where the railroad tracks form the top of the letter "T" and the principal street creates the stem. See also James R. Shortridge, "The Missing Railroad Cities along the Union Pacific and Santa Fe Lines in Kansas," in *Tallgrass Essays: Papers from the Symposium in Honor of Dr. Ramon Powers, November 10, 2001*, ed. Michael H. Hoefflich, Gayle R. Davis, and Jim Hoy (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 2003); "Along the Line of the Kansas Pacific Railway in Western Kansas in 1870," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 19 (May 1951): 207–11; George L. Anderson, "Atchison and the Central Branch Country, 1865–1874," *ibid.* 28 (Spring 1962): 1–24.

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Since railroads have been the most studied of the various kinds of transport in Kansas, it is hardly surprising that the “people” element is covered better than others. In what has become a model work of its type, *Men of the Steel Rails: Workers on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, 1869–1900*, labor historian James H. Ducker probed the everyday life of workers on and off the job. By using a rich variety of published and archival sources, including payroll records and city tax rolls, he developed valuable insights concerning railroad work in the settings of local community and national society. Although Ducker looked at the Santa Fe system, he covered happenings in such Kansas communities as Arkansas City, Emporia, Newton, Nickerson, and Peabody.³⁰

Lesley Poling-Kempes’s scholarly work moves us beyond the male world of railroad trainmen and shop personnel. Her subjects are the Harvey Girls, women who were employed in the scattered restaurants and hotels of the Fred Harvey Company. Beginning in the 1870s, first in Topeka and then elsewhere along the Santa Fe, Frederick Henry Harvey, an entrepreneurial English immigrant, became internationally famous for providing the traveling public with fine food. Fred Harvey used standardized recipes and house brands to prepare good meals efficiently and to serve them in clean surroundings. His company catered to other wants of patrons, offering quality sleeping facilities and newspaper, souvenir, and snack stands. Much of the success of the firm was tied to the cadre of waitresses who were known fondly as Harvey Girls. Working long hours at modest pay, these women gave new and positive meaning to the domestic task of serving train passengers. Poling-Kempes’s *Harvey Girls* is a nonromantic treatment that looks at the day-to-day and year-to-year regimen of the waitresses, with insights about recruitment, work, living conditions, and social activities.³¹

Yet outstanding studies of railroad labor and waitresses on the Santa Fe fail to constitute a full account of the social history of Kansas railroads. Even the larger picture has major shortcomings, although popular culturist George Douglas has attempted to solve this with his work *All Aboard!: The Railroad in American Life*. A cultural history of railroads is another matter; no book attempts a comprehensive view of this intriguing subject, although a few works provide thoughtful insights.³²

While not social history, the literature of government promotion and regulation of the “First Big Business” in both the United States and Kansas tells much about the public’s perception of railroads. Since early carriers in the state frequently pre-

30. James H. Ducker, *Men of the Steel Rails: Workers on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, 1869–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). Other works of interest include Robert G. Athearn, *Union Pacific Country* (1971; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976); Charles N. Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1962); Russell S. Kirby, “Nineteenth-Century Patterns of Railroad Development on the Great Plains,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 3 (Summer 1983): 157–70; Richard C. Overton, *Burlington West: A Colonization History of the Burlington Railroad* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967).

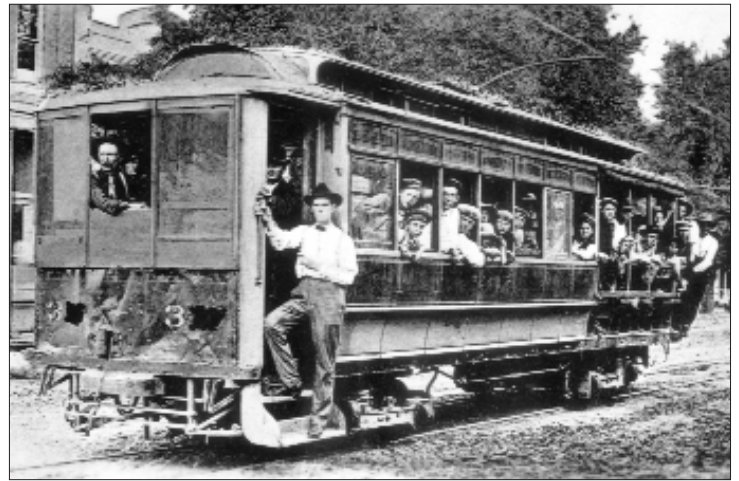
31. Lesley Poling-Kempes, *Harvey Girls: Women Who Opened the West* (New York: Paragon House, 1989); James David Henderson, *Meals by Fred Harvey: A Phenomenon of the American West* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1969); Mary Lee Spence, “Waitresses in the Trans-Mississippi West: Pretty Waiter Girls, Harvey Girls and Union Maids,” in *The Women’s West*, ed. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Judith Ann Stoll “Harvey Girls Then, Now, and Forever” (master’s thesis, Emporia State University, 1995).

32. George H. Douglas, *All Aboard! The Railroad in American Life* (New York: Paragon House, 1992). For matters of cultural history, see B. A. Botkin and Alvin F. Harlow, *A Treasury of Railroad Folklore* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1953); Norm Cohen, *Long Steel Rail: The Railroad in American Folksong* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Freeman H. Hubbard, *Railroad Avenue: Great Stories and Legends of American Railroading* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1945).

ceded settlement, they relied heavily on public support, particularly federal land grants. "Donations" of real estate helped make possible the construction of several future trunk roads, including the Katy, Santa Fe, and Union Pacific. Later these grants became a hotly contested political issue, with members of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party charging fraud and abuse. Their unhappiness occurred at a time when Kansans associated carriers with "public-be-damned" attitudes, particularly involving alleged high and arbitrary freight and passenger rates. Residents in the latter part of the nineteenth century struggled with a real "love-hate" relationship toward their preferred form of intercity transportation.³³

A more positive feeling of Kansans toward railroads came from agricultural promotion and development. Especially on the Great Plains, carriers made heroic efforts to encourage diversification and the best farming practices. In the 1870s and 1880s the Santa Fe promoted hard Turkey Red wheat, and somewhat later the Burlington and the Union Pacific became driving forces for dry farming, believing that modern science and technology provided sound methods for raising abundant cereal grains. In the process, companies commonly worked closely with agencies of the federal and state governments, particularly the faculty and staff of Kansas State Agricultural College in Manhattan. By the World War I era the railroad demonstration train became a regular sight at scores of railroad stations. Works in agricultural history reflect this closeness between farmer and railroad.³⁴

Kansans did more than join in the railroad construction mania that followed the Civil War; in the early years of the twentieth century residents enthusiastically embraced the national interurban-building frenzy. Unlike the antebellum canals, interurbans dotted the American landscape, even in remote corners of the American West. The introduction of practical electric-powered railways signaled an advance in transportation that many believed would yield enormous benefits. Distinct from the street trolley, which provided solely local service within a community and possibly stretched out into the nearby countryside to reach an amusement park, picnic grove, or cemetery, the interurban was designed to connect two or more communities with transport similar to those provided by



The electric-powered interurban was designed to connect two or more communities while street trolleys, such as the Salina Street Railway, depicted above in ca. 1909, provided solely local service. The Salina company operated eleven miles of track traveling to the town's commercial district, cemetery, college, and park.

33. An extensive literature of both federal land grants to railroads and political reform movements in Kansas is available. For the former, see Lloyd J. Mercer, *Railroads and Land Grant Policy: A Study in Government Intervention* (Washington, D.C.: Beard Books, 2002); for the latter, see Worth Robert Miller, "A Centennial Historiography of American Populism," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 16 (Spring 1993): 54–69. See also Thomas Frank, "The Leviathan with Tentacles of Steel: Railroads in the Minds of Kansas Populists," *Western Historical Quarterly* 20 (February 1989): 37–54; William R. Petrowski, "Kansas City to Denver to Cheyenne: Pacific Railroad Construction Costs and Profits," *Business History Review* 48 (Summer 1974): 206–24; Leslie Edward Decker, *Railroads, Land and Politics: The Taxation of the Railroad Land Grants, 1864–1897* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1964).

34. In addition to individual histories of the major railroads in Kansas, see Roy V. Scott, *Railroad Development Programs in the Twentieth Century* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1985); Constance Libbey Menninger, "The Gospel of Better Farming According to Santa Fe," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 10 (Spring 1987): 43–66.

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a steam railroad—hauling passengers, package express, and at times carload freight. The electric intercity railroad, according to one enthusiastic observer, “will perform a service for mankind as notable and perhaps ultimately as great as that rendered by its steam-operated precursor.”

The popularity of electric traction is explained easily. Interurban service permitted Kansas farmers, miners, and other citizens access to the economic and cultural opportunities offered by the larger towns and cities, and these communities tapped a larger trading area. When in operation, electric lines typically operated with great frequency, often on hourly schedules rather than the once or twice a day service provided by steam roads. Unlike steamcars, interurbans would stop at farmsteads, village crossings, or virtually anywhere, explaining why they became known as “people’s railways.” Electric railways also were clean; there were “no cinders, no dirt, no dust, no smoke.” Kansans, too, relished the less expensive rates usually charged, especially appreciated after years of discontent with railroad charges. Of course, this new mode of transportation, with all of its advantages, was particularly popular since the horse-drawn buggy offered a limited range and even with the coming of the automobile, highway travel in the state remained primitive. It took years before the slogan of the Kansas Good Roads Association, “Let’s Get Kansas Out of the Mud,” was realized. Finally, if a locality had been bypassed by steam railroads or lacked adequate steam service, an electric road solved the problem.

Even though Kansans proposed construction of more than a thousand miles of interurban lines, the actual mileage built totaled only a few hundred. Kansas City, Missouri, became a popular destination and before “interurban fever” had run its course by World War I, four companies linked Kansas communities to this Missouri metropolis just as the Kansas City, Clay County and St. Joseph tied it to St. Joseph and Excelsior Springs, Missouri. Another area of interurban concentration was in the Kansas–Missouri–Oklahoma corner, location of the tri-state mineral belt. The Joplin and Pittsburg Railway, the dominant road, operated eighty-two miles of line and daily transported hundreds of miners and other passengers. The two other notable interurbans in Kansas were Union Traction Company, which wandered through the countryside between Parsons, Cherryvale, Independence, Coffeyville, and Nowata, Oklahoma, and the Arkansas Valley Interurban Railway (AVI) that connected Hutchinson, Newton, and Wichita.

The fate of interurbans in Kansas mirrored largely the national story. A majority lived precarious lives and some died prematurely. The Iola Electric, for example, folded in 1919, and the Manhattan City and Interurban Railway quit in 1926. Several of the larger roads, however, lasted into the post-World War II era because of their profitable carload freight operations. It is surprising that a reorganized unit of the AVI—the Hutchinson and Northern Railway—continues today as a diesel-powered switching and terminal line.

The saga of electric interurban railway traction in the Sunflower State has not been lost to students of transportation. The industry itself is masterfully described and analyzed by economists George W. Hilton and John F. Due in their encyclopedic work *The Electric Interurban Railways in America*. In addition to examining the interurban phenomenon, these scholars presented an extensive section on “The Individual Interurbans.” Here are found thumbnail sketches of every Kansas interurban, including such lilliputian carriers as the thirteen-mile Southwestern Interurban Railway (Arkansas City to Winfield) and the twelve-

mile Kansas City, Lawrence & Topeka Electric Railroad (Kansas City to Zarah). Traction enthusiasts also have contributed to the literature of the state's interurbans. The most comprehensive studies focus on the Arkansas Valley Interurban and Union Traction. While other carriers might be examined profitably and the social and cultural dimensions need to be explored, the interurban phase of Kansas transportation is relatively well documented.³⁵

While considerable enthusiasm existed for interurban building, urban Kansans saw merits in the electric street railway, direct successor to another form of street railway propulsion, namely the horse and mule. Electric railways not only were practical conveyances, but "every town that was something had to have a trolley." Not long after this new urban transit emerged in the late 1880s, several communities witnessed installation of trolleys. In fact, Wichita had one of the first in the Midwest, opening in 1887. Yet, not every Kansas community that had a horsecar line experienced this replacement technology. The Larned Street Railroad, for example, which connected the Santa Fe depot on the south side of town with the Missouri Pacific station on the north side, never converted from animal power to electricity before ending service early in the twentieth century.

If a "typical" street railway existed among the dozen or so that appeared in Kansas, it might be the Salina Street Railway Company. Dating from the the 1890s, this company operated eleven miles of track and owned nine cars. It served not only the commercial district but also the town's cemetery, college, and park. Investors largely came from the ranks of local businessmen who believed that they had an opportunity to make a profitable investment and at the same time bolster their hometown.

The best places to find material about these firms, which the "jitney" (for-hire automobile), motor bus, and especially the automobile destroyed, is in community and county histories. Local newspaper coverage, too, might be considerable, especially at the time of construction or abandonment. Even more so than the interurban, the larger story of the trolley and its economic and social impact on urban Kansas remains to be written.³⁶

No one challenges the statement that the principal cause for the rapid demise of electric interurbans and street trolleys and also branch and local passenger trains was the automobile. While the earliest cars were owned by mechanics and tinkerers who also might be their builders, not long after



While susceptible to mechanical breakdowns and tire blowouts, the automobile began a new era in independent transportation. Increased numbers of automobiles intensified the pleas for better roads, which by the 1950s resulted in a dense network of "all-weather" highways. The proud owner of this Buick was photographed in Dorrance in 1910.

35. George W. Hilton and John F. Due, *The Electric Interurban Railways in America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960). See also Malcom D. Eisely, *Arkansas Valley Interurban, Special 19* (Glendale, Calif.: Interurbans Press, 1956); Robert Collins, *Arkansas Valley Interurban: The Electric Way* (David City, Neb.: South Platte Press, 1999); Allison Chandler, *Trolleys Through the Countryside* (Denver: Sage Books, 1963). Of value, too, for additional materials on the interurban era in Kansas, including articles from trade publications, is Thomas R. Bullard, *Street, Interurban and Rapid Transit Railways of the United States: A Selective Historical Bibliography* (Forty Fort, Pa.: Harold E. Cox, 1984); I. E. Quastler, "The People's Railroad: The Leavenworth & Topeka, 1918-1931," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 24 (Spring 2001): 18-35; Allison Chandler, "The Westmoreland Interurban Railway," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 28 (Autumn 1962): 301-9.

36. Over the years the federal government has produced publications that help explain the scope and context of urban transit. Of particular value are *Street Railroads, 1902: A Special Report* (Washington,

Automobile ownership increased, especially after the introduction of motorized buggies and the appearance of the Ford Model T, which came on the market in 1908.

the last century dawned the wealthiest citizens of the state, including bankers, businessmen, and physicians, began buying these expensive vehicles from an increasing number of mostly out-of-state manufacturers. These motorists endured repeated mechanical breakdowns, tire blowouts, and taunts of curious bystanders gleefully shouting, "Get a horse!" At the same time the general public appreciated the highly publicized long-distance automobile endurance tests, including the "Trail to Sunset" tourist caravan in 1911. In Kansas these auto pioneers, who rode in open-air Garford touring cars, roughly followed the historic Santa Fe Trail and encountered a "mass of gumbo mud" in their adventuresome transcontinental journey.³⁷

But it did not take long before more Kansans acquired more dependable automobiles and drove on improved roads. As automobile ownership increased, especially after the introduction of motorized buggies—called buggy cars or high-wheelers—and the appearance of the affordable and rugged Ford Model T, which came on the market in 1908, agitation intensified for better roads, first directed toward local units of government and then at the state. Although politicians created the Kansas State Highway Commission in 1917, one of the last in the nation, the state constitution prohibited the legislature from building internal improvements. Not until 1928 was the constitution amended to allow Kansas to take a modern approach to road building and to ensure compliance with federal statutes so as to tap funding from Washington, which had been growing since the mid-1890s.³⁸

By the 1930s Kansas and America were in the throes of the great automobile age. More and better cars appeared as did an expanded system of gravel and paved roads, many of which federal dollars made possible. These trends continued. By the post-World War II era Kansas had tens of thousands of automobiles and trucks along with a dense network of "all-weather" primary and secondary roads. The state even became a national leader in high-speed, limited access highways with the creation of the Kansas Turnpike Authority in 1953 and the construction that followed. Stretching 236 miles between Kansas City and the Okla-

D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902); *Electric Railways and Affiliated Motorbus Lines* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932); *Street Railways and Trolley-bus and Motorbus Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937). More about specific electric railway operations in Kansas, including company ownership and equipment, can be found in the *McGraw Electric Railway List*, published annually by McGraw-Hill from shortly after the turn of the twentieth century until the mid-1920s. Several issues have been reprinted and are readily available. An excellent case study of urban transit in the state is John W. Ripley, ed., "From Omnibus to Motor Bus: A History of Shawnee County's Street Transit System from 1869 to 1969," Shawnee County Historical Society, *Bulletin* 46 (December 1969).

37. Curt McConnel, *The Record-Setting Trips: By Auto from Coast to Coast, 1909–1916* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

38. A few master's theses and dissertations have dealt with Kansas, the automobile, and the Good Roads Movement, but published material is scarce. Very useful for the transition period is Sutter, "Paved With Good Intentions." For the government's role, see Sherry Lamb Schirmer and Theodore A. Wilson, *Milestones: A History of the Kansas Highway Commission and the Department of Transportation* (n.p.: December 1986); Mary Scott Rowland, "Kansas and the Highways, 1917–1930," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 5 (Spring 1982): 33–51; Wayne E. Fuller, "Good Roads and Rural Free Delivery of Mail," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 42 (June 1955): 67–83. A general study of interest is Michael L. Berger, *The Devil Wagon in God's Country: The Automobile and Social Change in Rural America, 1893–1929* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1979). For automobiles and the automobile industry in Shawnee County, Kansas, see John W. Ripley, ed., "Those Dreadful Devil-Wagons: Shawnee County's Automobile Owners, Dealers and Manufacturers, 1900–1925," Shawnee County Historical Society, *Bulletin* 49 (December 1972).

homa state line via Topeka and Wichita, the turnpike opened in October 1956.³⁹

Not long after the automobiles, buses, and trucks began to zoom over the Kansas Turnpike, the state raced to the head of the line to take advantage of what arguably was the most important piece of federal domestic legislation in the twentieth century: the National Defense Highway Act of 1956. A host of interest groups, including concrete suppliers, labor unions, oil companies, and trucking firms, the so-called “road gang,” pushed hard to end congestion on the nation’s primary highways by seeking massive federal expenditures on new interstate roads. After nearly a decade of pressure, the Eighty-fifth Congress and President Dwight D. Eisenhower endorsed this enormously ambitious public works program. A road-building blitz ensued, eventually creating more than forty-one thousand miles of these modern engineering marvels. Although Missouri began the initial interstate project in August 1956, Kansas completed the first section of interstate highway three months later.⁴⁰

Scholarly coverage of the impact of the automobile and particularly the truck on Kansans is limited, but in recent years the general topic of “highway culture” has intrigued students of popular culture. These scholars are more likely to emphasize the people component of transportation than are more traditional researchers. Although the extensive literature on U.S. Highway 66 does not pertain directly to the Sunflower State (only about thirteen of the nearly twenty-five-hundred-mile highway crossed the southeast corner of Kansas), a variety of works on “roadside attractions” is pertinent. Two noteworthy books are by John Jakle and Keith Sculle: *The Gas Station in America*, which appeared in 1994, and *The Motel in America*, published two years later. Both of these studies on highway vernacular architecture explain much about the general appearance of highway corridors in America, including in Kansas. A related title, *The American Gas Station: History and Folklore of the Gas Station in the American Car Culture*, by Michael Witzel adds to the coverage provided by Jakle and Sculle.⁴¹



In 1953 Kansas became a leader in high-speed, limited access highways with the creation of the Kansas Turnpike Authority and the construction that followed. The 236-mile Kansas Turnpike officially opened in October 1956.

39. See Craig Miner, *Kansas: A History of the Sunflower State, 1854–2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 334–37, for some brief observations on this phase of road building in Kansas.

40. The secondary literature on road building and automobile usage is rather extensive, and includes Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1997); Phil Patton, *Open Road: A Celebration of the American Highway* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986); John B. Rae, *The Road and the Car in American Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971); Mark H. Rose, *Interstate: Express Highway Politics, 1941–1956* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1979); Bruce E. Seely, *Building the American Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

41. John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Jakle and Sculle, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Michael Karl Witzel, *The American Gas Station: History and Folklore of the Gas Station in American Car Culture* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1999). See also Sculle, “Roadside Business: Frank W. McDonald and the Origins of the ‘Indian Village,’” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 14 (Spring 1991): 15–25. For a brief, popular look at the short Kansas portion of Route 66, see Susan S. Novak, “The Road Less Traveled,” *Kansas Heritage* 9 (Autumn 2001): 6–11.

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Trailways covered
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Its principal local
competitor flew the
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Perhaps because motor buses possess considerably less glamour than either electric interurbans or private automobiles, accounts of the commercial bus industry in the state are virtually nonexistent. In the late 1920s Kansans saw relatively widespread bus service, in part spurred by new and expanded communities that an oil boom had created in the state and in neighboring Oklahoma. Advances in bus construction, better roads, flexibility of routes, low charges per mile, and other factors contributed to the popularity. By the 1930s these somewhat primitive conveyances yielded to more powerful, comfortable, and dependable equipment. Even “sleeper” buses took to the roads. Technological progress became a hallmark of the evolving bus business.⁴²

From a corporate position, the original “mom and pop” bus companies gave way to much larger firms. By 1930 the Wichita-based Southern Kansas Stage Lines (its name was a reference to the once-popular horse-drawn conveyance) provided extensive service throughout the state. The company’s buses traveled over highways from Wichita to Denver, Kansas City, Omaha, Oklahoma City, and Tulsa. This largest of Kansas bus companies also operated a freight department, and its twenty-eight trucks and eleven trailers served wide sections of southern Kansas and northern Oklahoma. But typical of the bus industry in the trans-Mississippi West, large steam railroads became interested in this alternative to railroad passenger trains. Carriers either launched their own affiliates (Missouri Pacific and Union Pacific are illustrations) or they acquired existing bus operations. Southern Kansas Stage Lines experienced the latter fate; it became a subsidiary of the Santa Fe.

After Congress regulated the industry with the Motor Carrier Act in 1935, some railroad bus operations, including the former Southern Kansas Stage Lines, formed an alliance that became known as the National Trailways Bus System. By World War II Trailways covered the Sunflower State like a spider’s web. Its principal local competitor for long-distance travelers in the state was another association of bus firms that flew the banner of the Greyhound Bus Company. By the late 1930s its core routes regionally were between Kansas City, Denver, and Tulsa.

The era of World War II witnessed the high-water mark of regularly scheduled bus service in Kansas. Then, as automobile usage increased, especially in the prosperous 1950s, and improved roads, including the Kansas Turnpike and Interstate 70, became commonplace, “bus-mindedness” among the public faded and never returned. The only exception would be charter bus companies, a segment of the industry that in recent decades actually has flourished.

Although the secondary literature of the commercial bus business in the nation is sparse, a few titles convey its general history. The best overview is *Making Connections: The Long-Distance Bus Industry in the USA* by British-based historian Margaret Walsh, which helps place Kansas bus experiences in the proper context. By the last half of the twentieth century Greyhound had become the dominant company in a shrinking industry, and its history is told in varying degrees. In ad-

42. Margaret Walsh, *Making Connections: The Long-Distance Bus Industry in the USA* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2000). For coverage of Greyhound, see Carlton Jackson, *Hounds of the Road: A History of the Greyhound Bus Company* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1984); Oscar Schisgall, *The Greyhound Story: From Hibbing to Everywhere* (Chicago: J. G. Ferguson, 1985.)

dition to material presented by Walsh, the two leading works on this one-time corporate giant are by Carlton Jackson and Oscar Schisgall.⁴³

Even though there exists a paucity of published material that suggests dimensions of the social history of several transportation forms in Kansas, the bus business is somewhat unusual in that there is a revealing personal account of a local carrier. The company is the Kansas Central Lines that once operated the 123 miles between Emporia and Wichita and the author is James Lehrer, the veteran PBS news broadcaster. In *We Were Dreamers* Lehrer tells how his family valiantly struggled to operate this small local-service and feeder bus company. But, alas, this modest Kansas carrier lasted exactly one year and ten days after it inaugurated service on July 1, 1946, under President H. F. Lehrer. This touching memoir of a boyhood with buses during the industry's heyday nevertheless captures much about what operations once were like to the people who ran and used this service.⁴⁴

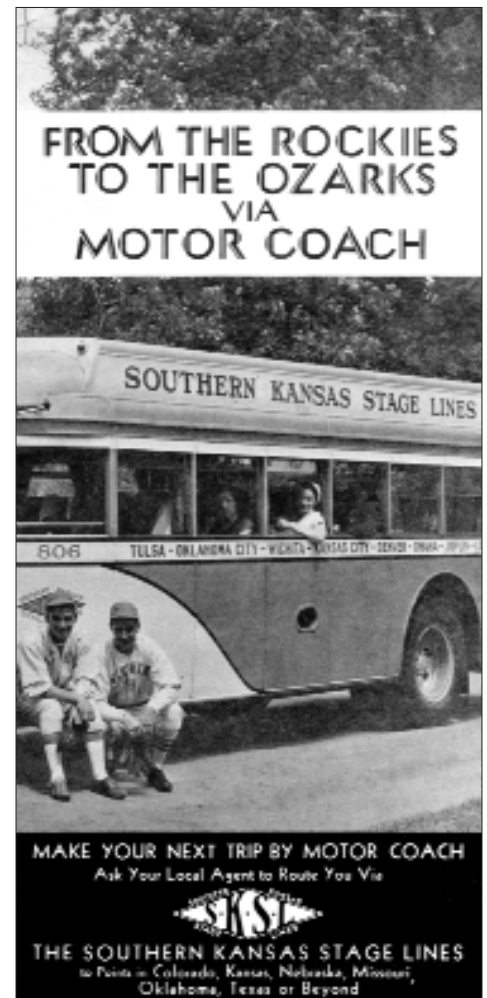
About the time Kansans began to turn to buses, a much fewer number boarded airplanes. Still, in the 1920s aviation burgeoned. Although the Wright brothers' most famous triumph had occurred in 1903, it was during World War I and immediately thereafter that aviation in America literally took off. Lucrative contracts from the federal government spurred such technological improvements as streamlined designs, stronger structural components, and more powerful engines. Then in 1925 Congress passed and President Calvin Coolidge signed the Contract Air Mail Act, popularly called the Kelly Act, which permitted the Postmaster General to select air routes and pay operators to fly mail over them. No other nontechnological event so directly encouraged commercial aviation. Soon passengers traveled in the same aircrafts as sacks of U.S. mail. Although Kansas had not been on the first major transcontinental air route (air mail and then passenger flights crossed neighboring Nebraska, closely following the Union Pacific's overland route), commercial aviation took hold. A pioneer carrier, United States Airways, which went airborne in the summer of 1929, with all-metal six-passenger Flamingo planes, provided daily service between Kansas City and Denver, with regularly scheduled stops in Topeka, Salina, and Goodland. "Fly with Mail" served as the firm's motto until financial reversals caused its demise in 1934.⁴⁵

As commercial aviation matured and after 1938 became highly regulated by Washington, Kansans mostly booked passage on several major airlines, including Braniff, Continental, and Trans World Airlines, and a few regional operators, most notably Central Airlines. Then after nearly four decades of federal control, the Jimmy Carter administration in 1978 succeeded in bringing about industry deregulation. The result was less corporate stability as competition intensified.

43. Walsh, *Making Connections*; Jackson, *Hounds of the Road*; Schisgall, *The Greyhound Story*. A book that helps the reader visualize the intercity bus business is Albert E. Meier and John P. Hoschek, *Over the Road: A History of Intercity Bus Transportation in the United States* (Upper Montclair, N.J.: Motor Bus Society, 1975).

44. James Lehrer, *We Were Dreamers* (New York: Atheneum, 1975).

45. Carl Solberg, *Conquest of the Skies: A History of Commercial Aviation in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979); Joseph K. Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Chuck Lebrecht, "A. K. Longren: Pioneer Airman of the West," *American Aviation Historical Society Journal* 26 (Winter 1981): 258-70; Thomas E. Lowe and Kenneth D. Wilson, "Saga of a Square Tail Stearman," *ibid.* 27 (Summer 1982): 82-91.



By 1930 the Wichita-based Southern Kansas Stage Lines (its name was a reference to the once-popular horse-drawn conveyance) provided extensive bus service throughout the state and traveled the highways from Wichita to Denver, Kansas City, Omaha, Oklahoma City, and Tulsa.

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Scores of upstart local airlines appeared, and the failure and restructuring of many older carriers followed. These changes have been only slightly studied. The firms that historically served cities in Kansas have largely been ignored, although a good overview of these companies is offered in *Airlines of the United States since 1914*. This encyclopedic volume by Smithsonian scholar R. E. G. Davis contains short commentaries about the histories of carriers and provides corporate genealogies. In a series of appendices such useful detail as a “Summary of Pioneer Airlines, 1914–1924”; “Domestic Airlines, 1925–April 1927”; “Local Service Operators”; and “Freight Airlines, 1946–1947” can be found. Later Davis teamed up with I. E. Quastler to write a comparable book on commuter carriers, which commonly made their debuts after federal deregulation. A section on companies in the “Central Region” offers succinct historical coverage of this dimension of Sunflower State commercial aviation. Quastler himself wrote a book-length account of Wichita-based carrier Air Midwest, which typifies the commuter airline industry in the latter half of the twentieth century.⁴⁶

Much more numerous than studies of individual airlines have been examinations of aircraft manufacturers, especially those that constructed military planes. Beech, Boeing, and Cessna, which did much to make Wichita the self-proclaimed “Air Capital of the World,” have been scrutinized in various fashion. These works universally stress the importance of technological betterments, arguing that customers, whether the federal government, commercial carriers, or civilian aviators, have benefited by these advances. Surely this emphasis relates directly to the reading audience; people are more enthusiastic about airplanes than they are about specific airlines, even the largest and most prosperous.⁴⁷

Clearly the story of transportation in the context of Kansas is a work in progress. Even the most written about form, the steam railroad, is far from being fully scrutinized. While some crucial building blocks are available for particular transport forms, rudimentary studies for others are missing. As indicated, the literature on trucking is practically nonexistent. Ironically,

46. R. E. G. Davis, *Airlines of the United States since 1914* (London: Putnam, 1972.); Davis and I. E. Quastler, *Commercial Airlines of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Quastler, *Air Midwest: The First Twenty Years* (San Diego: Airline Press of California, 1985).

47. These titles are of considerable value: Alain J. Pelletier, *Beech Aircraft and Their Predecessors* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute Press, 1995); Jeffrey L. Rodengen, *The Legend of Cessna* (Fort Lauderdale: White Stuff Syndicate, 1988); Walt Shiel, *Cessna Warbirds: A Detailed and Personal History of Cessna's Involvement in the Armed Forces* (Iola, Wis.: Jones Publishing, 1995). A good overview work is John B. Rae, *Climb to Greatness: The American Aircraft Industry, 1920–1960* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968). Also worthy of note, especially for students of Kansas history, are Richard Rashke, *Stormy Genius: The Life of Aviation's Maverick, Bill Lear* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1985); Henry Still, *To Ride the Wind: A Biography of Glenn L. Martin* (New York: Julian Messer, 1964); E. H. Rowley, *Time Before Space* (Manhattan, Kans.: Sunflower University Press, 1994); Peter M. Bowers, *Boeing Aircraft Since 1916* (London: Putnam, 1966); Peter Fearon, “Ploughshares into Airplanes: Manufacturing Industry and Workers in Kansas During World War II,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 22 (Winter 1999–2000): 298–314, which gives particular attention to the aircraft industry; Frank Joseph Rowe and Craig Miner, *Borne of the South Wind: A Century of Kansas Aviation* (Wichita, Kans.: Wichita Eagle and Beacon Publishing Co., 1994).

the electric interurban is much more romantic than any truck or trucking company, although the impact, especially economic, was not comparable. Even biographies of transportation greats in the Kansas context have been mostly absent, especially for those in the twentieth century, whether a John W. Barriger III of the Katy or the Braniff brothers.

Certainly parts of the larger picture have been revealed in two works that collectively offer insights into changes, often dramatic, that occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For the earlier period western historian Oscar Winther has explained major developments in *The Transportation Frontier*, and for more recent times another western scholar, Carlos Schwantes, has provided in *Going Places* a careful analysis of all forms of transport in the region, including the enormous and continuing impact of the automobile.⁴⁸

What every examined form of transportation in Kansas has in common is that the human element either has been neglected or ignored. But this may change. Since the 1960s the ongoing movement in American historiography to learn more about the past from “the bottom up”—to consider common people—eventually should have an impact on the subject of how people once moved about. How better to deal with common-person history than to focus on how these individuals sought to overcome time and distance, how they distributed the products of their labors, and how they received the necessities of life? And we need to know more about the social and economic consequences of the switch from one dominant mode of transportation to another—from horse power to steam power, from steam power to internal combustion motivation, etc. How did these revolutionary changes affect people in their particular Kansas or western locales? Hopefully, too, some enterprising scholar will create a comprehensive study of transportation on the Central Plains; the need exists and resource materials, both primary and secondary, are available. It is a complicated story that is worth the telling.⁴⁹



Perhaps less known than the large Kansas manufacturers—Beech, Boeing, and Cessna—was the Wichita-based carrier Air Midwest, a commuter airline operating in the latter half of the twentieth century. The above ad is from a May 1986 issue of *Business Roundup*, published by Air Midwest.

48. Oscar Osburn Winther, *The Transportation Frontier: Trans-Mississippi West, 1865–1890* (New York: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, 1964); Carlos Arnaldo Schwantes, *Going Places: Transportation Redefines the Twentieth-Century West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

49. The concept of a comprehensive study of a state transportation history has not caught on, although Ohio is the subject of such a work, part of a specially commissioned series to commemorate its bicentennial in 2003. The book is H. Roger Grant, *Ohio on the Move: Transportation in the Buckeye State* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).