

Chapter 2

The Town of Independence

The Americans who founded Jackson County and the county seat of Independence built their new town and county within a varied social environment of race, ethnicity, class, sex, gender, and language. Although conflicts existed, the desire to participate in international markets tied people together. Economic opportunism often caused people temporarily to set aside prejudices in favor of business alliances. Richard Jules Oestreicher studied Detroit of the 1880s and observed the suspension of prejudice and the forming of solidarity among a working class composed of diverse social and ethnic groups, based on their ability to resolve differences and work toward a common goal. In a very similar way (although in admittedly different circumstances), the success of Independence's Mexican trade prior to 1860 depended very much on the willingness of diverse peoples to cooperate with each other in a common venture.¹ In Independence, a type of equality existed for anyone who could contribute to the trade. When the need for these people ended, so did the illusion of equality.

Oestreicher showed how workers in Detroit banded together against what they perceived as a common exploitative enemy. This ability to work toward a common goal found itself enhanced through the need for protection. In Independence's Mexican trade, however, group need became complicated with individual entrepreneurial desires to acquire great wealth quickly. The value of group action often became muddled by individual avarice, as illustrated by Mexican trader David Waldo's observation in 1829 that "the fewer the traders the greater the profit."² For Waldo, the chance for profit outweighed any

1. Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*. For other studies of the American working class in the nineteenth century, see Hirsch, *Roots of the American Working Class*; Decker, *Fortunes and Failures*; and Dawley, *Class and Community*.

2. Goodrich, "Waldo Brothers," 31.

other consideration. In Independence's Mexican trade, it seems that in order to maximize wealth, traders often found that they could realize higher profits by mutual assistance than by actively undermining each other's business interests.

The founders of Independence used the local government as a means of mitigating conflict and fostering a favorable business climate through its court and legal systems. As they established an international trade with Mexico, businessmen and politicians controlled official positions and processes, including probate and estate actions, in order to monitor the local economic environment. Success depended on the business community's ability to limit contention among diverse competitors and to promote enforcement of laws instead of relying on general agreement.³

Two other related trade networks developed concurrently with Independence's international trade with Mexico. Rocky Mountain fur traders outfitted at the town from its beginning in 1827 until the 1840s, purchasing needed equipment and livestock on their way to the mountains and shipping bales of pelts back to the settlement for transport to St. Louis. Fur traders purchased fur from Indian tribes, who trapped and processed the pelts.⁴

The second trade network related to the fur trade involved Indian annuities. In the 1830s, the Jackson administration moved various eastern tribes to reservations between the 100th meridian and the western Missouri state line. Over thirty reservations extended from present-day Nebraska to Oklahoma, including Wyandotte, Shawnee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, Peoria, Osage, Kansa, Sac, Fox, and various other Native groups. Tribes living there received yearly payments, known as annuities, from the United States government. The Shawnee and Wyandotte reservations were located only fifteen miles from Independence, and both groups regularly came to the town to trade; other tribes also traded at the settlement. The fur trade and Indian trade coexisted with Independence's Mexican trade. Many merchants participated in all three, trading with Indians, selling supplies to fur trappers, and investing in goods for Mexican trade. Together these three interrelated networks formed a large part of Independence's economic base, with agriculture and service industries serving as the remainder. They also established the

3. Doyle, *Social Order of a Frontier Community*, 39.

4. Chittenden, *American Fur Trade of the Far West*, 1:463–64, 516; Lavender, *Great West*, 227, 233, 239.

basis for the town's success as an outfitting center during the Oregon and California migrations of the 1840s.⁵

On February 16, 1825, five months before George Sibley embarked on his Santa Fe Trail survey between the United States and Mexico, Missouri state officials had established Jackson County. Joseph Walker of Six Mile, a member of Sibley's survey party and later one of the American West's most famous explorers, claimed to have been instrumental in giving the new county its name before departing for Santa Fe. The state of Missouri temporarily put Jackson County under the administration of Lafayette County, located immediately to the east, but state representatives established an independent government for Jackson County on December 15, 1826, with its own court system and government.⁶

In March 1827, three state-appointed commissioners created a new town as county seat of Jackson County, selecting a site in the northwest section of the county. This was an unusual choice because state law required that they pick a central location. Instead they selected a knoll surrounded by a number of springs in the watershed between the Big and Little Blue Rivers. They platted the town in July of that year on the Osage Trace (later part of the Santa Fe Trail) about ten miles southwest of Fort Osage.⁷ Although the record is unclear, officials probably selected the town site because of an existing illegal settlement in the area, its fresh springs, its location on the Santa Fe Trail, and its proximity to the Missouri River.

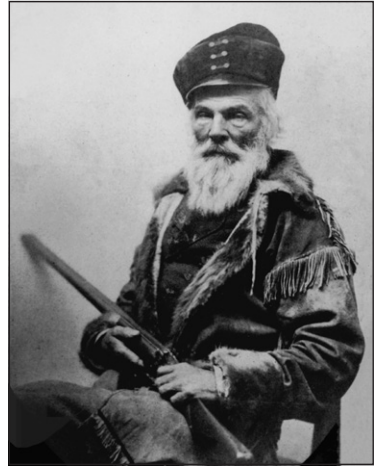


Figure 2.1. Joseph R. Walker (1798–1876), photograph by Mathew Brady, ca. 1860. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

5. Gibson, *American Indian*, 299–313, 334–41; Webb, *Centennial History of Independence, Missouri*, 25; Schirmer and McKinzie, *At the River's Bend*, 23.

6. *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 68, 117, 633, 634; Gregg, "History of Fort Osage," 478–79. Joseph Walker and his brother Joel had fought with Andrew Jackson at Horseshoe Bend, Alabama (March 27, 1814), during the Creek Indian Wars; see Gilbert, *Westering Man*, 54–56, 89.

7. Record Book 1, pp. 1, 3–4, Jackson County Recorder's Office; *History of Jackson County*, 101–3; Walton, *Sentinel of the Plains*, 14–15; Barry, *Beginning of the West*, 142.

Even before the area was organized as Jackson County and the town of Independence was founded, squatters had been occupying on the lands of the Osage and Kansa for years, including the Chouteaus of St. Louis and other French Creole and métis fur trappers. When Fort Osage was established in 1808, Americans from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, the Carolinas, and the central and eastern portions of Missouri also moved into the rich region. By 1822 surveyor and explorer Jacob Fowler had passed through the future site of Independence at least once; it is not unreasonable to think that there were others as well. In March 1825, Colonel Henry Atkinson of the U.S. Army 6th Infantry demanded that Fort Osage factor George Sibley, as justice of the peace, warn illegal residents to leave Indian lands at the threat of forced removal by United States troops. Sibley's success in getting people to leave the region is unrecorded. However, it is not likely that he convinced many to leave or that he tried very hard to do so. When Independence was founded, these existing settlers would no doubt have been anxious to have their land claims recognized and incorporated into the new town.⁸

The initial layout of the town itself suggests earlier illegal settlement. The county surveyor recorded a most irregular town plan for Independence: the public square was located in the northeast section of the town boundary. The geography of the area did not require an irregular town site, so this irregularity probably reflected the existence of some sort of a settlement on the site before the county government platted the town. We know that at least one house existed in the vicinity of the town site even before lots were sold because Samuel Newton, who was in charge of lot sales at Independence, presented a bill to the county court for house rent of one dollar per day for three days while he was handling the lot sales. Officials who had either social or political connections to the squatters platted and sold property to accommodate those already on the site. As one might predict, assuming previous illegal settlement, many lot sales in July 1827 clustered to the southwest, along the Santa Fe Road.⁹

8. See Fowler, *Journal*, ed. Coues, 134nn247–52; Wetmore, *Gazetteer of the State of Missouri* (1837), 92–93; Gregg, “History of Fort Osage,” 479; General H. Atkinson to G. C. Sibley, Fort Osage, March 8, 1825, and George Champlin Sibley to Honorable David Barton, January 10, 1824, George Sibley Papers, MHMA; Sibley, *Road to Santa Fe*, ed. Gregg, 17.

9. Record Book 1, pp. 8, 15, Jackson County Recorder's Office; Price, “Central Courthouse Square in the American County Seat,” 52; *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 104; Sibley, *Road to Santa Fe*, ed. Gregg, 17, 193; Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 122.



Figure 2.2. Hermann Meyer, *Independence Courthouse, Missouri* [1838], engraving, ca. 1850, Jackson County (MO) Historical Society Archives, JCHS4862L.

The new town of Independence functioned as the seat of county government and as a trade center, serving the fur, Mexican, and Indian trades as well as regional agricultural markets. Traders and immigrants required large numbers of livestock and large amounts of forage and food. Also, the military units attached to Fort Leavenworth, some forty-five miles to the northwest, required livestock, feed, and foodstuffs. To meet the various needs of the town, officials planned and built a traditional square ringed by commercial structures and set aside lots 2, 59, and 143, respectively, for a jail, a temporary courthouse, and a public spring. Lot 115 was also reserved; however, the intended use was never made clear. Officials reserved the central lot for a future permanent courthouse. By 1833, a brick courthouse occupied the center of the square, with streets running on a north–south/east–west grid.¹⁰

10. Both the plan and the administrative court system that governed Jackson County originated in the hill country of Tennessee, with ties to still earlier English systems of law and administration. State officials appointed a county court with three judges. It acted only as an administrative body, carrying out the business

The Jackson County court held the first sale of town lots on July 9, 10, and 11 of 1827. Sale commissioner Newton laid out the town in 147 parcels on 240 acres. The court left little to chance in the selling of lots. Just in case properties did not look as choice as they might, the court appropriated seven gallons of whiskey at fifty cents a gallon to be served to prospective buyers, entering the amount along with other expenses. The total expense of the sale amounted to \$72.86 (\$3.50 of which was for the whiskey). Sales of lots totaled \$374.57 collected with \$1,122.77 due in payments, for a total amount in sales of \$1,497.34.¹¹ With these funds, officials established a financial base for the county to fund roads and other necessary improvements important for the support of international trade.

From the records, it is clear that a relatively small group of people controlled the sale of lots by purchasing certain parcels and acting as surety or security for friends. If the purchaser defaulted on his payment, the surety guaranteed the money pledged for the property to the County Court. Only one person from outside the Six Mile social network of interrelated families, French-American Joseph Roy, initially purchased a lot in the new county seat—and it is likely that he, like others, had already established himself at the site before the official sale. The rest of the buyers bore Anglo-American names. Some time after the first sale of lots and before November 1831, an additional French or métis-American, Calise Montardeau, purchased lot 30.¹²

Merchants involved in the Mexican trade purchased at least twenty-five of the seventy lots sold. For example, Mexican trader Samuel C. Owens, and a partner, Ed Wilburn, bought lot 21 for ten dollars with trader R. (Rowland?) Flournoy acting as security. Owens acted as security for five other transactions and also served as treasurer for the sale. Owens limited his security commitments to sale commissioner Newton, Solomon Flournoy, and John Thornton. The Flournoy family, also involved in the Mexican trade, purchased a

of the county government. See Schwenck, "Social, Political and Economic Overview of Western Missouri," 2:48–56; Price, "Central Courthouse Square in the American County Seat," 30, 44–51, 52–53, 57–60; Record Book 1, pp. 1–4, 8, 10–12, 14, 21–22, 24, 32–35, 41, 43, Jackson County Recorder's Office; Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 136; *History of Jackson County*, 120–22, 388, 640; Gilbert, *Westering Man*, 88–96.

11. *History of Jackson County*, 634–36; Record Book 1, pp. 8, 15, and Book of Original Sales: Old Town Independence, Missouri, 8, Jackson County Recorder's Office.

12. Record Book 1, pp. 15, 127, and Book of Original Sales: Old Town Independence, Missouri, 1–10, Jackson County Recorder's Office. A listing of the sale of lots by purchaser's name, trade, and number of lots purchased, as well as information on people providing surety for the purchases, is provided in appendix 1.

large number of lots. James, Lawrence, and Solomon Flournoy bought two lots apiece, and Rowland Flournoy bought one. Members of the Flournoy clan served as security on seven other transactions for purchasers, five of whom were members of their family (the other two were Samuel C. Owens and Ed Wilburn).¹³

James Aull of Lexington, Missouri, a merchant in the Mexican trade and employer of Samuel Owens, purchased lot 11, with County Court Judge Richard Fristoe as security. Gan Johnston and merchant S. V. Noland both purchased lots and acted as security for each other. Six lots were purchased by the merchant firm of M. Franker and E. Todd, with Elisha Todd as security. In this manner, the individuals interested in international trade supervised the behavior of their associates by participating in the sale with them. They acted as legal parties that helped guarantee the purchaser's ethical behavior. They encouraged like investment while also using security as a means of controlling the sale of property. By supporting only certain people as surety and by having those same people offer them some sort of support, the sale quickly became a closed affair. Those from outside the social network of families and business associates of the earlier Six Mile settlement, who could not be as readily observed or controlled, stood little chance of purchasing property. And at least one sale was apparently handled privately. William Lawrence's tavern already occupied lot 10 at the time of the sale and that transaction did not appear on the sale records. His tavern later became the site of a series of hotels operated by Smallwood "Uncle Wood" Noland (not the same person as S. V. Noland, mentioned above).¹⁴



Figure 2.3. Samuel Combs Owens, 1847, from a memorial. Jackson County Historical Society.

13. See appendix 1. See also *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 635–36; Book of Original Sales: Old Town Independence, Missouri, 1–10, Jackson County Recorder's Office.

14. See appendix 1. See also *History of Jackson County*, 104, 187–88, 635–36; Abstract for Lot Number 10, City of Independence, Missouri, Abstract Collection, JCHS. Guests at Smallwood Noland's hotel

The network of families and friends in the Six Mile area involved in the town lot sale centered on the Flournoy and Noland clans, who maintained large families. Interestingly, the Hudspeths, Shepards, Walkers, and Chiles, other large Jackson County families with important political and social ties, did not participate in the sale. Added to this was the political and economic network that included Samuel C. Owens, Lilburn Boggs, and sale commissioner Samuel Newton. These people purchased fourteen lots, or more than half the lots purchased by Mexican international traders, acting as each other's security. Other traders and merchants divided the remaining eleven lots, with the firm of Franker and Todd buying six, the single largest number of lots purchased by one business entity.¹⁵

Although membership in the Anglo-American social and economic network remained important in Independence, in select instances, however, familial relationships did develop with other groups. As in the fur trade and trade in Indian annuities (monies paid to Indian tribes for properties sold in the east), women and marriage played a part in the Mexican trade as well. Marriage acted as both a familial bond and a business bond, making traders part of family networks. Such relationships acted as a contractual arrangement and a way to remain close to important business by becoming part of familial and fiscal networks.

In 1845, Independence trader Dr. Eugene Leitensdorfer married Soledad Abreu, daughter of Santiago Abreu, the governor of New Mexico. James Wiley Magoffin of Independence married Maria Gertrudis Valdez of Chihuahua, who died at Independence in January 1845. Mexican trader Isaac Lightner married Carmelita Valdez (presumably a sister or cousin of Maria Gertrudis) at the home of James Magoffin in Independence on July 2, 1845. Mamie Bernard of Westport, Missouri, some twelve miles west of Independence, married Epifiano Aguirre, described as "a freighter and native of Chihuahua," in 1862. Marriage alliances such as these made economic alliances stronger and provided the possibility of a closer examination of contractual obligations and fiscal practices through the use of family relationships. In the uncertain and varied legal systems surrounding the Mexican trade, these alliances often played important roles. The tradition of strengthening trading

included the Magoffins and François Xavier Aubry, among others. See Magoffin, *Down the Santa Fe Trail*, 1; Sherman, *Memoirs*, 1:117–18.

15. Book of Original Sales: Old Town Independence, Missouri, 1–10, Jackson County Recorder's Office; *History of Jackson County*, 635–36.

alliances through marriage alliances was a long-standing one in the West, as evidenced by the earlier fur trade networks. Indian trade marriages in Jackson County included Noel Margraine's marriage to the daughter of Osage chief White Hair, Hiram Northrup's marriage to Wyandotte Margaret Clark, and Cyprian and Frederick Chouteau's marriages to Shawnee and Delaware wives. However, unlike many fur trade marriages, the matrimonial alliances associated with the Mexican trade usually remained monogamous, with traders often adopting the culture of their brides, as in the case of freighter James Wiley (Santiago) Magoffin and Mary Gertrude Valdez of Chihuahua. Although these marriages in the Mexican trade between Anglos and Mexicans seem to have remained the exception rather than the rule, they were not uncommon and established important family economic and political networks in the trade.¹⁶

While familial ties and relations helped stabilize the Mexican trade, Anglo-American officials also used the Jackson County government in Independence to establish laws and ordinances conducive to the promotion and control of international commerce. The county court granted business licenses. This enabled the business and political interests of the town and county to control the types of businesses and their number through fees and fines, to limit competition, and to examine the actions of their competition. To support such espial systems, the county court collected both state and county taxes, paying officials to enforce their laws. They also used the collected monies to establish roads and make transportation improvements such as bridges and ferries. Additionally, they oversaw the probate function of the county, partitioning and making settlements of estates, and assessing, measuring, and sometimes manipulating economic power.¹⁷

Initially, the county court regulated business and law in Independence and the other settlements within its jurisdiction. In one of its first sessions, the county court instructed its clerk and collector to issue as many blank

16. Morgan, *History of Wyandotte County*, 1:74; Walker, *Journals of William Walker*, 303–4n1; “Wyandotte County: The Wyandotte Nation” in Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas*; Craver, *Impact of Intimacy*, 1–3, 29, 49–60; Hodges et al., *Missouri Pioneers*, 4:90; Connelley, *War with Mexico*, 196–97; Aguirre, “Spanish Trader’s Bride” (special thanks to Mark L. Gardner for calling my attention to this article); Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 4–6; Throne, “People of the River,” 307–8; Magoffin, *Down the Santa Fe Trail*, xix, xx. Mary Gertrude Valdez de Beremende was a cousin of New Mexico governor Manuel Armijo.

17. Record Book 1, p. 12, Jackson County Recorder’s Office; Price, “Central Court House Square in the American County Seat,” 38, 53–56.

licenses “as deemed necessary” for businesses.¹⁸ In 1830, between February and August, the county clerk issued nine business licenses in Jackson County: to four merchants, four liquor dealers, and one ferry operator. Independence residents petitioned the state for town incorporation and reapplied in 1833. Local commissioners handled small affairs for the city under the direction of the county court. Business licenses, road openings, the administration of paupers, taxes, and other similar transaction continued to be handled by the county court until 1849 when Independence was finally incorporated under the laws of the State of Missouri as a city of the third class, with a municipal jurisdiction independent of the county court.¹⁹

The establishment of roads and river landings, and the licensing of private ferries by the county government benefited international trade and the transport of goods. The county court appointed road commissioners and approved petitions for road improvements even before it accepted a plat for the county seat or built a temporary courthouse. Merchants and settlers needed established, well-maintained roadways to promote commerce. Predictably, one of the first road requests on the books involved a road from the previously occupied Six Mile area at Fort Osage to the new county seat. Another road connected the new

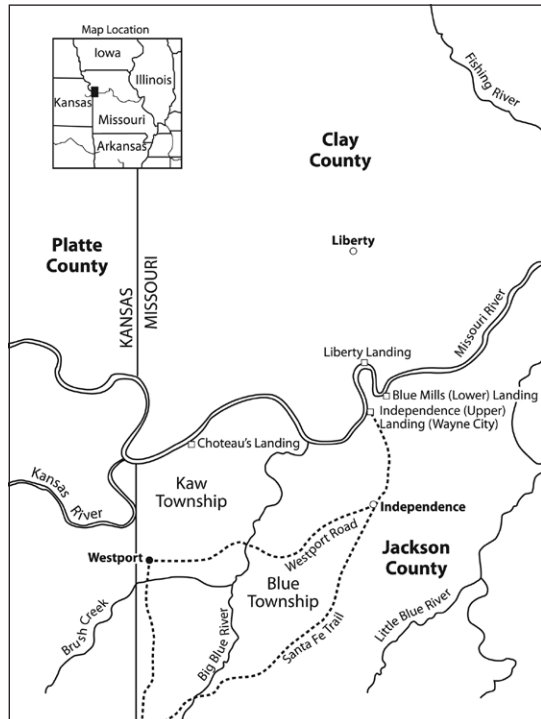


Figure 2.4. Missouri River landings in Jackson and Clay Counties in the 1830s.

18. Record Book 1, p. 12, Jackson County Recorder's Office.

19. Record Book 1, pp. 12, 16, 26, 40, 41, 63, 65, 80, 90–92, 98, 175, 149, Jackson County Recorder's Office.

county seat with Prine's Ferry, two miles north on the Missouri River, later to become an important riverboat landing for the town of Independence known as Upper Independence Landing or Wayne City. The maintenance of transportation routes to rivers and connecting trails and roads remained a major concern of both the Jackson County government and the Independence business community.²⁰ Lower Independence Landing, located at Blue Mills some six miles from Independence, was also known as Owens' Landing, after its proprietor, trader Samuel C. Owens of Independence.

In addition to transportation, the county government at Independence also administered estates. Two examples of the power of the probate function of county government—the ability to supervise and manipulate the transfer of property and the probate court's relationship to the Mexican trade—can be found in the estate cases of Gabriel Prudhomme and Cornelius Davy.

In June 1831, the Jackson County court issued a ten-dollar tavern license to Gabriel Prudhomme, a resident of Chez Les Canses in Jackson County who died that November in a fight at the French settlement. His 257-acre farm fronted on the Missouri River and contained a natural rock landing place the Chouteaus had used for some time in their transport of furs to St. Louis. It is unknown if Prudhomme charged for the use of his landing site. The farm and landing site were about fifteen miles northwest of Independence.²¹

The Jackson County probate court and Prudhomme's widow administered the estate for nine years. In 1837, heirs requested partition of the estate, and the county court ordered the parcel sold and the proceeds divided among the heirs. The court declared the first sale of the parcel on July 7, 1838, for \$1,800 to be fraudulent due to manipulation of the sale by officials. A second sale was held on November 14, 1838. This time the court sold the property for \$4,220 to the Kansas Town Company headed by St. Louis fur trader and Chouteau competitor William Sublette of Sublette and Campbell. Other speculators bidding on the property included Mexican trader and Jackson County recorder of deeds Samuel C. Owens and Independence attorneys Russell Hicks and Richard Rees.²²

20. Record Book 1, pp. 7, 32, 53–54, Jackson County Recorder's Office; *History of Jackson County*, 170.

21. Record Book 1, p. 112, Jackson County Recorder's Office; Brown, *Frontier Community*, 31–32; Hoffhaus, *Chez Les Canses*, 160.

22. Brown and Dorsett, *K.C.*, 6; Garwood, *Crossroads of America*, 24–28; Barry, *Beginning of the West*, 360; *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 396–98; Brown, *Frontier Community*, 32–38.

The heirs of the Prudhomme estate continued to find themselves caught between the Kansas Town Company and the Jackson County government. The two entities shared some members, such as Samuel C. Owens. Heirs of the Prudhomme estate petitioned the court's commissioners to sue the Town Company for non-payment in 1840. In turn, the Town Company members and their various heirs sued the Prudhomme heirs for non-payment of debts as a retaliatory and punitive action. Circuit courts settled the case in favor of the Prudhomme heirs in 1843. The Jackson County Recorder's Office issued a deed for the Prudhomme farm to the Kansas Town Company on August 17, 1843. After the estate settlement, speculators began buying up the interests of the earlier Town Company. In April 1846, the company held an additional sale of lots. According to one source, between 1838 and 1846 the settlement's population grew to around three hundred.²³

The Prudhomme case illustrates the use of Independence's county government by merchants and attorneys in supervising and guiding business interests in the international trade with Mexico. Both Russell Hicks and Richard Rees, prominent Independence attorneys, participated in the early Kansas Town Company speculation. Samuel C. Owens, county recorder of deeds and Mexican trader, had interests at Chez Les Canses in addition to his investments at Independence. He also acted as administrator for the estate of Chouteau employee Baronet Vasquez, who died of cholera in 1828. According to some, Owens intended building a large warehouse at Chez Les Canses for Mexican traders. The death of François Chouteau in April 1838 provided these regional speculators and Chouteau competitors in Jackson County a perfect excuse to make their move, even though Madame Chouteau remained at the settlement. In 1847, the Kansas Town Company made François Chouteau's son, Pierre Menard Chouteau, treasurer, thus co-opting him into the process.²⁴

With his interest in international trade and possible plans for warehouse expansion, Owens would have been able to use his position with the Jackson County probate court to scrutinize the administration of various estates in order to protect his own business interests. The estates of traders and merchants who owed him money would be important to him. An insider's knowledge of available property was also useful. His position as recorder of deeds gave him

23. Brown and Dorsett, *K.C.*, 6; Garwood, *Crossroads of America*, 24–28; Barry, *Beginning of the West*, 360; *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 409; Brown, *Frontier Community*, 38–46.

24. Hafen, *Mountain Men and Fur Traders of the Far West*, 7:333; Brown, *Frontier Community*, 42, 44, 45, 85; *History of Jackson County*, 297.

important access to information. This access to county records allowed him to have immediate information that others often did not have as readily, and to be able to act more quickly and to parlay information more efficiently.

With the help of the probate court, the Kansas Town Company transferred the French-American farm property to Anglo-American control, with the assistance of the county court. The town company could now avail themselves of a better river landing to serve the Mexican and fur trades. Anglo-Americans dominated the final sale of town lots, although creoles, including Pierre Chouteau, purchased some property. Thus, the probate function of the Anglo-American county court played a significant role in bringing Prudhomme's river landing under Anglo-American control by administering its partition and overseeing its sale.²⁵

The Jackson County government oversaw the administration of the estates of business people involved in the Mexican trade. Through county probate functions, business partners who were owed money by the deceased watched the fiscal condition of estates to ensure payment of outstanding debts. A position as a guardian of minor heirs or an executor greatly enhanced a business partner's ability to observe and assess an estate. The potential for abuse in such situations remained high, but administrators or guardians, attempting to cover debts or access estates themselves, found such arrangements convenient.

An example of the importance of estate supervision and the potential for abuse in such instances can be found in the case of American trader David Waldo, who administered the estates of various Mexican trade partners. Waldo used his position to watch out for his interests and collect money owed him by deceased business partners, as in the cases of his brother Lawrence's children or his ward Donaciana Howland. On the death of Chihuahua merchant Cornelius Davy of Independence, Waldo acted as executor of Davy's estate and as guardian of his children. After all debts and fees were settled, the estate amounted to \$29,675. Waldo, as executor, interpreted Davy's will to mean that the estate could not be divided until the last of Davy's children married. One of his daughters did marry and asked for a partition of the estate. Waldo refused, fighting the partition through the courts from 1852 to 1855. The Mis-

25. Brown, *Frontier Community*, 42, 44, 85; *History of Jackson County*, 297.

The Missouri Supreme Court finally ordered him to make a partial partition of the estate to the married daughter.²⁶

In addition to probate, the County Court administered ordinances and local laws. Merchants needed a stable social environment that would encourage international commerce. Initially, Independence served as the county seat without incorporation as an independent municipal entity and did not possess specific town ordinances. The county laws, based on state legislation, governed the town, and a group of county-appointed town commissioners assisted in the governing of the town. Administration of the county and the city centered on its court and nine permanent justices of the peace. These men acted as local administrators, performing marriages and confirming other contracts, officiating at elections, and selecting “apportioned hands to work on the road division.”²⁷

The control of governmental power and the ability to supervise actions in order to support a favorable climate for trade rested in these official positions. The county court also controlled local elections. After a brief initial shuffling, between 1827 and 1860 officials seldom left official positions and for the most part the county government continued to be held by the inter-related southern families of the Six Mile area and their close friends.²⁸

Elected officials controlling the county court and its proceedings consisted mostly of people involved in businesses, including general merchants, blacksmiths, saddle makers, and Mexican traders, or those with connections to those businesses. Samuel C. Owens, originally from Kentucky and a Mexican trade merchant and business associate of James Aull of Lexington, Missouri, provides one example of the political entrepreneur involved in both the establishment of Independence and international trade.

Owens maintained an active interest in the interrelationship of private business and government. He acted as recorder for the first sale of town lots in July 1827. At various times between 1827 and his February 1847 death while leading the Traders’ Battalion during the Battle of Sacramento in the Mexican War, he also served as county recorder of deeds, commissioner for the town of Independence, special agent for land sales in Jackson County, county treasurer,

26. Goodrich, “Waldo Brothers,” 151–54.

27. Record Book I, p. 24, Jackson County Recorder’s Office.

28. Record Book I, pp. 23–24, Jackson County Recorder’s Office; *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 178–82.

and clerk of the County Court. These connections would have enabled Owens to closely observe political conditions that might have benefited his trade with Mexico by giving him access to privy information regarding real estate, probate, and court proceedings.²⁹

From 1827 to 1860, the Independence business community grew steadily. It included merchants and commission agents, insurance agents, stage line offices, blacksmiths, wagon makers, livestock dealers, gunsmiths, saddle makers, hotel owners, banks, attorneys, doctors, druggists, and saloon keepers. Tailors, jewelers, and hatters also worked in their shops on the square.³⁰

The businesses of Independence between 1827 and 1850 consisted mostly of general merchandise and outfitting stores situated around a Shelbyville Square, a style named for its place of origin, Shelbyville, Tennessee. In this plan, the courthouse stands in the center of a full city block with streets intersecting at each corner. Mormon immigrant Ezra Booth noted in 1831 that the town had a brick courthouse, “two or three merchant’s stores, 15 or 20 dwelling houses, built mostly of logs hewed on both sides.” By 1834, Independence, Missouri, had developed as a merchant’s town and regional seat of county government with approximately 250 citizens, located on a surveyed road to Mexico.³¹

The western border of the state lay twelve miles to the west; approximately three hundred miles beyond that lay the 100th meridian, the boundary between the United States and Spanish territory as agreed to under the terms of the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty. With that border in mind, Independence’s inhabitants invested not only in business involving real estate, the Mexican and fur trades, and Indian annuities, but also in the seemingly unlimited possibilities of the United States’ western expansion. In 1844, a newspaper article stated that the town had twelve merchandise stores (an increase by two over the ten reported by Chouteau in 1836), a druggist, two jewelers, a hatter, four saddlery and harness making shops, and two large

29. Record Book 1, pp. 32–33, 43, 58, 68, 75–77, Jackson County Recorder’s Office; *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 178–82; Glasgow and Glasgow, *Brothers on the Santa Fe and Chihuahua Trails*, 30–31.

30. McLaughlin, “Independence, Jackson County, Missouri,” 142–50; Wells, “Growth of Independence, Missouri,” 33–46; Wetmore, *Gazetteer of the State of Missouri* (1837), 93, 97.

31. Ezra Booth, Letter VI, in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 196; Evans-Hatch and Evans-Hatch, “Nineteenth Century Independence and Moore’s Addition,” chap. 7 of *Farm Roots and Family Ties*; Ohman, *History of Missouri’s Counties, County Seats and Courthouse Squares*, 33–34; *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 105. According to Ohman, Independence was one of the earliest of the fifty-seven of Missouri’s 114 counties to adopt the Shelbyville Square plan, which became popular in Tennessee between 1810 and 1820.

taverns. Similar reports were made the next year.³² Samuel C. Owens and Company remained the largest mercantile house on the square. Smallwood Noland's Washington Hotel rented rooms for one dollar per day. Other business houses included the merchant firms of Lucas and Kavanaugh, David Waldo, and McCoy and Lee.³³

By 1849 Independence's trade with Mexico had grown and so had competition from other towns up and down the Missouri River. In July, local government officials incorporated as a town of the third class, a municipal entity separate from the county government. Predictably, the town's officials continued to consist of merchants, businessmen, and attorneys with interests in the Mexican trade. For the most part, however, personnel in municipal offices changed more frequently than those in the county government, indicating more social flexibility and a wider range of participation in municipal than in county government.³⁴

Just as the steamboat on the common seal of the city of St. Louis reflected the importance of river traffic to that town, or the seal of Jackson County—a wheat sheaf and plowshare—reflected the importance of agriculture to the region, the newly incorporated city adopted a common seal consisting of a covered wagon drawn by four mules. Independence's seal reflected the importance of overland freighting and traffic to the town.³⁵

Independence continued to grow as an outfitting center. The local press in the spring of 1849 stated that the town now had 1,600 inhabitants and thirty dry goods stores. Two large hotels served the town, as well as numerous boardinghouses. Twenty wagon and blacksmith shops also worked out of the settlement.³⁶ Growth notwithstanding, Independence businesses began to feel the pinch of competition from other outfitting towns. The next spring,

32. Wells, "Growth of Independence, Missouri, 1827–1850," 40; McLaughlin, "Independence, Jackson County, Missouri," 174, 176–77.

33. McLaughlin, "Independence, Jackson County, Missouri," 142–50.

34. Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, Book A, pp. 1–2, and Record Book Y, p. 15, Jackson County Recorder's Office. List of mayors and terms of office are included in *Revised Ordinances of Independence, Missouri 1931*, 265–67. See also Sutherland and McCoy, *Missouri State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (1860), 125–30; *History of Jackson County, Missouri*, 647. Citizens had attempted in May 1832 to incorporate Independence as a town with an independent municipal government; however, it is unclear whether the trustees named in the petition ever took office. See Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 276.

35. Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, Book A, 1849, Ordinances: Number 15, Sections 1 through 6, Common Seal, 32–33, Jackson County Recorder's Office; Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, frontispiece; Schirmer and McKinzie, *At the River's Bend*, 15.

36. Wells, "Growth of Independence, Missouri," 43.

in March 1850, Independence business people published a circular in the St. Louis *Missouri Republican* that boasted of three hotels and numerous private boardinghouses, several large wagon and carriage shops having together between forty and fifty forges, with baggage and spring wagons selling from eighty to one hundred dollars apiece. Thirty-five stores carried dry goods, clothing, hardware, groceries, provisions, and implements. The town also had three saddle and harness shops. A hat maker, two gunsmiths, two tin shops, and three druggists rounded out the description. Reporters listed American and Spanish mules and Indian ponies as costing from sixty to one hundred dollars. Oxen sold for between forty-five and fifty dollars per yoke. The circular stated that between fifteen hundred and two thousand mules were available for sale and that between four thousand and five thousand would be available in the near future. The article also mentioned an abundance of corn and grazing in the vicinity.³⁷

Independence merchants signed the advertisement, including firms such as McCoy, Russell, and Company; Wilson and Parker; Jabez Smith; and Abraham M. Abraham. The article also stated that Mr. Abraham Comingo, an Independence attorney, could be found at the Virginia Hotel in St. Louis as an authorized agent for Independence merchants “prepared to impart all further information that may be desired.” Independence merchants banded together to promote their town as an outfitting point, encouraging its economic growth, even sending agents east to move immigrants and merchants towards Independence.³⁸

Increasing interest in international trade with Mexico caused agriculture, including livestock raising, to remain a high priority industry in Jackson County. Freighters needed thousands of livestock to pull wagons. Large numbers of personnel attached to the trade created a demand for meat and produce. In western Missouri between 1850 and 1860, livestock production increased by 1,365,037, and the value of slaughtered livestock increased by \$6,477,343. At the same time, wheat production increased by 37,277,889 bushels.³⁹

37. *Missouri Republican*, March 27, 1850, p. 1, handwritten copy (transcribed by Janet Stines, Webster Groves, MO, Oct. 1941), Nat D. Jackson Collection, JCHS; Unruh, *Plains Across*, 39–43; Holliday, *World Rushed In*, 101–2; Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 38–39, 44–45; Walker, *Wagonmasters*, 95–100; Eggenhoffer, *Wagons, Mules and Men*.

38. *Missouri Republican*, March 27, 1850.

39. Schwenk, “Social, Political and Economic Overview of Western Missouri,” 40–43, 49; Walker, *Wagonmasters*, 44–66.

In the 1850 census, 1,886 people in Jackson County called themselves farmers, by far the largest occupation listing. The next largest group, 311 people, listed themselves as working in Mexican trade-related occupations, including six “speculators” and two who called themselves Mexican merchants exclusively.⁴⁰ In addition to the usual service industries needed to support international trade and their continuing growth, Independence supported another directly related institution. African slavery played a large part in the agricultural economic base in Jackson County, and in Independence, the Mexican trade and slavery remained intertwined as part of the same economic fabric. The demand for livestock and agricultural products in the trade created a need for labor-intensive work including farming and tending of animals. Farmers used slaves to produce labor-intensive crops like tobacco and hemp, as well as other farm products. In addition, the profits from the Mexican trade often found their way back into the slave trade and vice versa through business people like Jabez Smith, who invested in both the Mexican trade and slave speculation.⁴¹

Initially, slaves made up only a small part of the population. In 1830, 2,822 people lived in Jackson County. Of these, sixty-two slaveholders (2.02 percent of the population) owned 193 slaves. The largest slaveholder, William Hudspeth, owned twenty-five slaves. Most Jackson County residents who owned slaves held only two or three slaves.⁴²

By 1840, the population of Jackson County nearly tripled; slaves increased to 1,361. Slaveholders now numbered 330 (3.88 percent) and thirty of them held between ten and twenty slaves apiece. F. K. Cowherd, now the largest slaveholder, owned thirty-six slaves. By 1850, the slave population rose to 2,969 in Jackson County with speculator and Santa Fe trader Jabez Smith of McCoy, Waldo, and Smith owning 202 slaves. By 1860, Jackson County’s slave population rose to nearly four thousand. Smith participated in the Mexican trade as the principal financial backer in McCoy, Waldo, and Smith, and invested in other similar ventures. The larger portion of his wealth seems to have been held in human chattel. Therefore, it is assumed that Smith reinvested some portion of his profits from the Mexican trade in slave speculation.⁴³

40. Schwenk, “Social, Political and Economic Overview of Western Missouri,” 49.

41. *Ibid.*, 6–11, 49; Missouri, vol. 16, pp. 482, 484–85, 599, R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

42. Dorsett, “Slaveholding in Jackson County, Missouri,” 2–3.

43. Schwenk, “Social, Political and Economic Overview of Western Missouri,” 49; Dorsett, “Slaveholding in Jackson County, Missouri,” 2–3, 19, 21–22; Missouri, vol. 16, pp. 424 (McCoy, Waldo, and Smith),

Independence attempted to respond to trade needs, but with mixed success. Local shops could not always meet the high demand for supplies and equipment. Wagons provide a good example. As late as 1849, Chicago, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh firms continued to send wagons to Independence markets and to compete successfully with local wagon makers. In 1849, a wagon (without cover) could be purchased in Chicago for \$48, shipped to Independence for \$6.50, raising the price to \$54.50, and sold for about \$115. Craftsmen built many of these smaller wagons, however, for use other than in the Mexican trade. Freight wagons were much larger than the typical immigrant wagon. By 1860, a freight wagon at Independence cost between \$800 and \$1,500, with a large number of them being built locally. It remains unknown why more business people did not invest in local wagon manufacturing.⁴⁴

The international trade with Mexico drove Independence business people to additional lengths as they attempted to compete for their share of the overland traffic. No idea, invention, or venture proved too fantastic. On October 24, 1846, the *Liberty [MO] Weekly Tribune* reported that an Independence man named Thomas had constructed a freight wagon with masts and sails “to run across the prairies to Bent’s Fort, to be propelled by the wind.” Thomas expected the contraption to travel at about fifteen miles an hour. On April 12, 1847, the *Saint Louis Daily Union* stated he was still at work on his invention. A few years later, workmen finished the wagon at the Robison and Crook Foundry on the east side of the square in Independence. The contraption consisted of a body twenty-five feet long, seven feet wide, and twelve feet high with wheel hubs “as big as barrels,” a mast twenty feet high, and a navigation deck. The invention worked, but proved unwieldy and ran into ditches; one account states that it disappeared altogether after crews failed to moor it properly.⁴⁵

484 (Jabez Smith), 482 (McCoy, Russell, and Co.), R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

44. Unruh, *Plains Across*, 39–43; Holliday, *World Rushed In*, 101–2; Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 38–39, 44–45; Walker, *Wagonmasters*, 95–100; Eggenhoffer, *Wagons, Mules and Men*.

45. Barry, *Beginning of the West*, 650–51; Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 179–80; Webb, *Centennial History of Independence, Missouri*, 235–37; Schirmer and McKinzie, *At the River’s Bend*, 25. See also Box 2, Folder 104: Old Westport—Wind Wagon, William A. Goff Papers, SHSRC, KC. In *Centennial History of Independence, Missouri* (235–37), Webb states that the foundry was originally started by Jacob Hallar and a Mr. Fallon in 1852 and sold to Crook and Norris in 1854; in 1858 John M. Robinson bought the business and continued to run it until the Civil War.

Other ventures also captured the imaginations of the Independence business community in the 1850s, including the Independence and Missouri River Railroad project. In February 1849, a group of Independence investors received approval from Missouri's Fifteenth General Assembly to incorporate as the Missouri River Railroad Company. Capitalized at fifty-thousand dollars with stock to be divided in one-hundred-dollar shares, the board of directors included local hotel owner Lewis Jones, attorney Samuel H. Woodson, merchant and politician Samuel D. Lucas, and other local investors. The incorporation papers stated that the board might choose the type of carriages and the method of propulsion "whether . . . by steam or otherwise," established tolls on freight (100 cents per ton and twenty-five cents per package for all light articles), and provided for the construction of a warehouse in Independence.⁴⁶

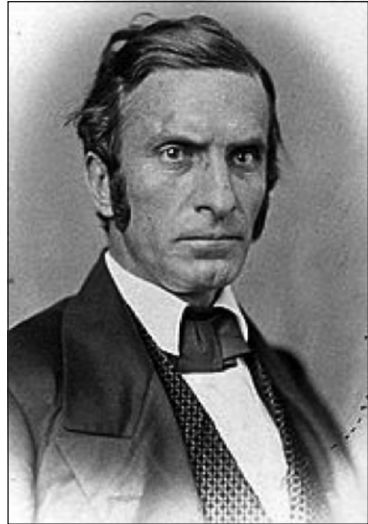


Figure 2.5. Samuel H. Woodson, ca. 1859. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, #LC-DIG-ppmsca-26808.

According to local tradition, the rail line used rails of oak capped in iron and mules to pull the cars over the six-mile route up the lands adjacent to the east fork of Sugar Creek from the Upper Independence Landing at Wayne City on the Missouri River to the depot in Independence on Rock (now Maple) Street. It is possible that the successes of the Allegheny Portage Railroad, which began operating between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh in 1834, served as an inspiration for the system. By 1855, the railroad had passed into the hands of James and Mahala Porter of Independence. Soon afterward the railroad failed, and its one passenger car, two freight cars, two warehouses, and turntables were auctioned off for salvage. National railroad networks did not reach Independence and Jackson County until after the Civil War.⁴⁷

46. *Laws of Missouri*, 8:316–21. According to historian Donald Chaput, François Xavier Aubry, a French-Canadian merchant known as "Skimmer of the Plains," invested in the Independence and Missouri River Railroad; Chaput, *François X. Aubry*, 57.

47. *Laws of Missouri*, 8:316–21, 10:341–42; *Jackson Examiner*, March 18, 1904, as cited in Wilcox,

By 1860, a change had taken place in the Independence community business profile, as seen in advertisements placed in Sutherland and McEvoy's *Missouri State Gazetteer and Business Directory* of 1860. The inventory of advertising businesses shows the change of emphasis and the diversification of trades that took place in Independence. By this time, the list of businesses reflected a smaller community interested in selected professional pursuits rather than a bustling center of international commerce. Independence's interest now centered on the administration of business and government rather than on direct freighting or industry; these Independence left to the quickly developing community of Kansas City. Although competition between the two communities continued, the county court system and agricultural center remained at Independence and in the eastern section of the county. If a process could be controlled through administration, the less attractive physical elements of international trade, which included livestock, labor, and vice, could be left to developing settlements still within Independence's regional and economic control. Independence continued to benefit from international trade without its attendant complications.⁴⁸

The ordinances passed by the city of Independence in the 1850s showed a group of Anglo-Americans intent on regulating a community dedicated to international trade and to enforcing traditional order and stability. They involved the regulation of running horses, firing guns, gaming houses, selling liquor to slaves, betting, disorderly houses, assault and battery, riots and routs, privies not located over pits, noisy drunks, indecency, prostitution, disturbance of religious services, and noisy minors. Such social problems had been trouble from the beginning. In the early 1830s a representative of the American Home Missionary Society reported that "There appears to be an over abundance of females here practicing the world's oldest profession."⁴⁹

The town incorporators considered the regulation and observation of business very important. The collection of revenues, including the sale of lands and the granting of licenses to businesses, occupied thirteen pages, by far the

Jackson County Pioneers, 279–81.

48. Sutherland and McEvoy, *Missouri State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (1860), 125–30. The list is incomplete in its listing of businesses as it omits both Robert Weston and Hiram Young, two of the largest blacksmithing and wagon building firms in the city in 1860. For a complete breakdown of the listings, see appendix 2.

49. Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, Book A, 1849, Ordinances: No. 1, Misdemeanors, secs. 1–14, pp. 1–5; Lyon, "Independence, Missouri, and the Mormons," 16.

largest entry in the new city ordinance book. The improvement of transportation in order to augment trade also occupied their official interests. Town citizens began concentrating on better roads and riverfront improvements. They also established a city market house where produce and other foodstuffs could be offered for public sale.⁵⁰

It is possible to tell the priorities of this first council, not only by the subjects they addressed, but also by the amount of the fines imposed. To begin with, officials helped guarantee the efficiency and honesty of the city collector by exacting a bond from him in the amount of \$2,500. Fines generally ran from fifty dollars to two hundred dollars apiece for business license violations. The definition of violation and determination of penalty remained the purview of the local courts. Generally, violations consisted of the non-payment of licenses. The bonds and fines imposed on businesses for violations could exceed those imposed for “moral” violations. In cases involving gaming houses, the council imposed fines anywhere between five and ninety dollars. Running a house of prostitution netted the violator a fine ranging from twenty dollars to two hundred and fifty dollars, with ninety-six hours to one year in prison, or both. Fines for assault and battery could range from one dollar to one hundred dollars. Riot, rout, or unlawful assembly could net a fine of between five and one hundred dollars. Noisy drunks might be fined as much as fifty dollars; however, gross indecency only rated a fine between one dollar and ten dollars. Thus, the regulation of business remained an important consideration and from these examples, it seems clear that Independence officials were more concerned with regulating business than with regulating the behavior of individuals.⁵¹

Protecting the business environment to keep it favorable to international commerce required the supervision and control of any group of people felt to be pernicious or threatening to the stability of the community. Accordingly,

50. Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, Book A, 1849, Ordinances: No. 2, secs. 1–3, In Relation to Hogs, p. 6; No. 7, secs. 1–17, City Collector, pp. 10–16; No. 10, secs. 1–2, Wards, pp. 21–22; No. 11, secs. 1–4, City Constable, pp. 22–23; No. 15, secs. 1–6, Common Seal, p. 32; No. 18, secs. 1–10, Market House, p. 35; No. 20, secs. 1–20, Night Watch, p. 39; No. 43, secs. 1–3, Magazine, p. 59; No. 48, secs. 1–4, In Relation to the City Magazine, p. 62; No. 49, sec. 1, In Relations to the Market House, p. 63; 1857, Ordinances: “An Ordinance in Relation to the City Wharf and Certain Streets,” p. 63; Holliday, *World Rushed In*, 96, 473.

51. See Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, Book A, 1849, Ordinances: No. 1, Misdemeanors: secs. 1–14, pp. 1–5; No. 7, City Collector: sec. 11, p. 16; No. 12, art. 3, Merchants, secs. 1–3, 26, art. 4, Groceries, secs. 1–3, pp. 26–27; 1850, Ordinances: No. 36, Bawdy Houses, secs. 1–3, pp. 53–54; 1852, Ordinances Past [*sic*] Since the Revision of the Laws in 1852: Ordinance Number 2, Street Obstructions, n.p.

the Independence City Council adopted specific ordinances regulating the actions and movements of slaves and free blacks. Officials prohibited slaves from buying liquor without written permission, playing card games, carrying firearms or other weapons, and assembling in unauthorized groups of more than six. The council punished these violations by fines assessed to the owner, and by imprisonment and lashes administered to the offending slave—not less than ten and not more than thirty-nine.⁵²

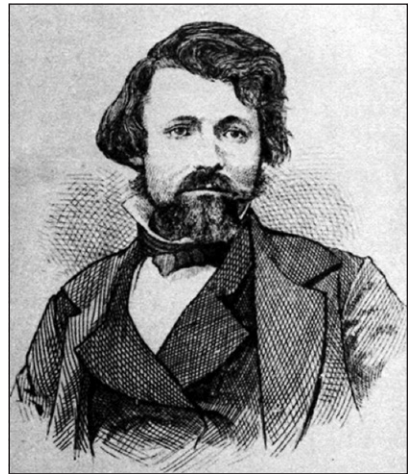
While Independence and its officials organized and managed their nascent city government, a completely uncontrollable social phenomenon rapidly made its way westward along with the settlers. Perhaps no single phenomenon underscored the Independence community's international connections more than disease. Cholera swept through the settlement in the 1830s, '40s, and '50s. This disease struck terror in travelers and hosts alike; it could kill victims within twenty-four hours. The disease initially broke out in India in 1819 and quickly spread to Europe over trade and transportation routes, including the fabled Silk Road. After entering various countries, including Germany and Ireland, it quickly moved west across the United States. Because the disease could only be transmitted through contact with human fecal matter, large crowds and poor sanitation made a perfect breeding ground for a disease that made no distinction on the basis of race, gender, or station in life. Moses "Black" Harris, famed mountain man and guide, died of the disease in Independence in 1849 and "Skimmer of the Plains" François Xavier Aubry survived a bout in the settlement in 1851. In August 1852, Mother Mathilda Mills, a sister of Loretto who was traveling with Bishop Jean Baptiste Lamy, died of cholera aboard the steamboat *Kansas*. Because of community hysteria, her body had to be smuggled into Independence at night for burial in a private cemetery adjacent to the city burying ground. Years later, American author Willa Cather based her 1927 *Death Comes for the Archbishop* on the story of Archbishop Lamy after discovering

52. Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, Book A, Ordinances 1852: Slaves Out at Night & Co. secs. 1–3, p. 44. In 1857, the council passed an additional ordinance prohibiting the assemblage of "Negroes or Mulattoes" for any purposes without the presence of the marshal, his deputies, or members of the City Watch. Violation of the ordinance could result in punishment "by stripes"—this time, the council did not specify the number, indicating an increasing severity of punishment for such violations as the nation moved closer to civil war. Such ordinances enabled Anglo-Americans to closely monitor Afro-Americans and complicated free black participation in business in Independence by restricting freedom of association. See Ordinances of Independence, Missouri, Book A, Ordinances 1857: No. 1, Ordinance in Relation to Negroes and Mulattoes, secs. 1–2, p. 63.



Figure 2.6. Alfred Jacob Miller, *Trappers* [one probably Moses “Black” Harris (d. 1849)], watercolor and gouache on paper, ca. 1858–60, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

Figure 2.7. François Xavier Aubry, engraving from Joseph Tassé, *F. X. Aubry* (Montreal: E. Sénécal, 1871).



his life story in an obscure biography on a 1925 trip to Pueblo, Colorado.⁵³

Much changed in Jackson County and Independence in a relatively short period of time. In a little more than thirty years, the region became a threshold of empire, with all of its attendant problems and complications of government, commerce, conflict, and disease.

By the late 1850s, Independence and its environs to the west had changed dramatically. Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, writing in 1858, noted that

In 1851 the antelope, wild deer, and the wild goat bounded at liberty over the extensive plains . . . these fields were the pasture of enormous herds of buffalos. . . . Today they are in the possession of numerous droves of horned cattle, sheep and hogs, horses and mules. . . . Wheat, corn barley, oats, flax,

53. Barry, *Beginning of the West*, 237–38, 286–88; for the 1849 outbreak, see 829–31, 845–47, 849–50, 861–65; for the 1850 outbreak, see 929–30, 935, 951–55; for the 1851 outbreak, see 1003–5, 1015, 1027, 1040, 1060; for the 1852 outbreak, see 115–16, 1070, 1082, 1086, 1090–93, 1097–98, 1100; for the 1854 outbreak, see 1098, 1219, 1221, 1226, 1230–232. On Cather’s use of the story of Archbishop Lamy, see Horgan, *Lamy of Santa Fe*, xviii.

hemp, all sorts of garden stuff . . . are produced there in abundance.

De Smet also observed that freighting in the region had increased, particularly government freighting. On his way west of Missouri in 1858, he described one of the caravans that had made up in the regions adjacent to and in Jackson County.

The most remarkable thing I met . . . were the long wagon trains . . . transporting to Utah provisions and stores of war. Each train consisted of twenty-six wagons, each wagon drawn by six yoke of oxen and containing near 5,000 pounds. The quartermaster general . . . told me that the whole train would make a line of about fifty miles. Each wagon is marked with a name . . . daubed in great letters. . . . The Master Wagoner is admiral of this little landfleet: he has control of twenty-six captains and 213 oxen.⁵⁴

In just a few short years, the borderland Eden had become the continental garden of industry and commerce.

When Independence was founded in 1827, most of the area was still wild and unsettled. But the town was founded specifically to serve as a center for international trade between Europe and Mexico, and quickly grew as settlers established governments and courts, and used those systems to control social and economic conflicts, scrutinize economics, and better manage their legal and business affairs. At the same time, the regional economy expanded to include agricultural interests and industries that also serviced that trade. In only three decades, Independence had grown from a few scattered dwellings to a bustling entrepôt of international trade, seat of county government, and center of a growing agricultural and industrial economy.

54. De Smet to "Reverend and Dear Father," St. Louis, November 1, 1859, in De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels*, 2:717–29, quotes at 720, 725–26.