The State in the Station: The Nineteenth-Century American Train Station and State Power

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Accessibility
“The State in the Station: 
The Nineteenth–Century American Train Station and State Power”

A dissertation presented
by
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My dissertation, “The State in the Station: The Nineteenth-Century American Train Station and State Power,” investigates stations as emblematic of negotiations over the nature of public space in the second half of the nineteenth century. The dissertation is a spatial history of seemingly public places—urban train stations—that while built with state intervention were legally private property. Debates about eminent domain and municipal police patrolling the private stations revealed larger conflicts about the legitimate boundaries of state power. Using St. Louis as my primary example, I focus on how the state—the combined power of federal, state, and municipal governments—intervened in the urban landscape by defining the accessibility of certain space to everyday people, and in doing so extended its reach. The project proposes a new interdisciplinary framework of US state formation in the late nineteenth century, using corporate documents, official reports and legal decisions, but also newspaper accounts, photographs, paintings, and maps. My analysis attends to the built environment and draws on actor-network theory to trace the connections from humans to inanimate objects: telegraphed arrest warrants made the station into a gauntlet for criminals, but also for “runaway” women. Large urban train stations, where many networks intersected in a relatively small space, were easier to control than other transportation nodes like ports or private spaces like theaters or factories. I argue that they were a spatial bottleneck that gave state officials a multiplier effect on their power to stop, search, and potentially institutionalize people.
# Table of Contents

**Introduction**  
Stations and States  

Ch 1.  
The Prehistories of Stations:  
The State in St. Louis' Landscapes, 1767-1851  

Ch. 2  
Towards Train Stations As Public Places, 1852-1874  

Ch. 3  
Cops at the Depot:  
The Railway Panopticon  

Ch. 4  
Marching to the Depot:  
The Train Station as the Origin of the Military-Industrial Complex  

Ch. 5  
Draining the Station:  
The State Around the Turn-of-the-Century Station  

Appendix A  
Maps
Acknowledgments

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Last—and most importantly—thanks to my partner Jill Nowak and my mother Bonnie Karl. If dissertations are made of words, they are also composed of many hugs and not a few tissues given to the writer by his closest and dearest family. Thanks for standing by me during this long journey.
List of figures

0.1—A succession of maps of the southern side of St. Louis.
0.2—The headhouse vs. the whole station.

1.1—Map of St. Louis in 1822.
1.2—“View of St. Louis from South of Chouteau’s Lake, 1840.” John Caspar Wild.
1.3—Maps of the Mill Creek Valley in the nineteenth century.
1.4—“Chouteau’s Pond, South to Eighth and Gratiot [Streets], 18 July 1851.” Thomas Martin Easterly.

2.1—Detail from “Bird’s-Eye View of St. Louis, MO,” 1858, James Palmatary.
2.2—Three maps of the Mill Creek Valley in 1840, 1858, and 1876.
2.3—“Chouteau’s Pond after Pond Was Drained,” 1851, Thomas M. Easterly.
2.4—Detail from Indest & Anders’s 1841 map of St. Louis.
2.5—“Depot St. Louis, Missouri, 1867, Alexander Gardner.
2.6—St. Louis’s Union Depot as it appeared in an 1883 souvenir book.
2.7—A stand inside of the Union Station in Portland, Maine.

3.1—Plate 27 of “Pictorial St. Louis, the great metropolis of the Mississippi valley; a topographical survey drawn in perspective A.D. 1875,” Richard Compton and Camille Dry.
3.2—A detail of the Union Depot in Compton and Dry’s 1875 birds-eye view of St. Louis.
3.3—Jeremy Bentham’s ideal panopticon and the “railway panopticon.”
4.1—White’s Military Band in Kalamazoo, Michigan, circa 1890.
4.2—A map of the Division of the Missouri in 1883.
4.3—“American Progress,” 1872, John Gast.
4.4—Illustration of settlers departing for the West, in Harper’s Weekly, 1870.
4.5—An advertisement requesting floral donations for Decoration Day.
4.6—A French Zouave soldier.
4.7—A cornet in e flat.

5.1—A postcard of St. Louis’s Union Station, around the turn of the twentieth century.
5.2—A view of the Midway at Union Station, around the turn of the twentieth century.
5.3—Maps of the Mill Creek Valley in 1876, 1894, and 2018.
“This history of space would emphasize destruction—be it on a scale of architecture and the house (the building), on the scale of the urban, or on that of a country. Such a history would extricate the meaning of these destructions—not as the will of a particular agent, but as the substitution of one space by another, including the destruction of antecedent spaces by subsequent spaces (catastrophe). The same history of space would emphasize reappropriations (modifications of the purpose and meaning of buildings) through which the destruction of what exists is avoided.”

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Introduction—States and Stations

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the place where trains stopped was as important as where they went. The large urban train station was not simply another big building in the cityscape. It was a radical spatial innovation that dramatically reconfigured the urban built environment, transformed people’s conceptions of the public and private spheres, made them more accepting of federal intervention to help private corporations, and became a place for the municipal state to control people and commodities. This dissertation describes the change over time of stations from small shacks to huge industrial zones and argues that large urban train stations became an inadvertent site of state building in the United States in the late 1800s. Political and economic elites built these private spaces of commerce and transportation, but everyday Americans continued to make claims to a space they saw as public. Everywhere state actors helped build stations, and everywhere they discovered they could use these stations as a fulcrum to leverage their power.

The significance of the state over the last five centuries has inspired research in many disciplines. Some scholars have concentrated on bureaucracies as a nested set of rationalized institutions, or the state’s monopoly of violence as the source of its strength.
Others have highlighted the state’s politicized nature, helping certain classes and even certain groups within classes. I’m interested in the actual exercise of state power in space, but also a certain kind of state power. While state power (in the form of the military) dispossessed Native Americans of their land, the kind of state action I will trace out in this book is more subtle. The sociologist Michael Mann has distinguished between “despotic power” and “infrastructural power.” Despotic power, according to Mann, refers to actions that elites can undertake without any sort of routine negotiation with civil society groups. Infrastructural power, on the other hand, is “the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm.” More recent research has built on Mann’s formulation and highlighted the impossibility of separating the ideological state from the material state. Work in political geography and political anthropology suggests that the idea of the state is sustained by everyday practices. Actual state actors (rather than ideas about the state or an ideology) have an affect on people’s lives in the course of everyday, and people’s actions reshape ideas about what the state is. At the same time, discourse about the state is crucial to its formation, so it’s important to listen attentively to what representatives of the state have to say, and analyze where they are saying it. Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, writing about the formation of the English state, punned that the state states. What state actors like the mayor, the members of the Board of Health, and the jurists who created the justifications said is important. But I am equally attentive to what other people said about the state, because representations of the state either in print or in actual physical buildings are another key way that states are constituted, and state power is exercised. Ultimately, stories about railway stations allow me to trace “not so much the state’s use of physical force as its ability to impose itself by generating a cultural revolution and a moral regulation—that is, transformations that result in profound reorganization of how social life is lived across the national space.”

1 Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, The Great Arch: English State Formation As Cultural Revolution (New York: Blackwell, 1985), 3; Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, “Introduction:
I use the phrase “the state” frequently in this dissertation. It’s an easy shorthand but in facilitating generalizations (referring to people who share a monopoly of violence) it also obscures the heterogeneity of the people and things that make up “the state.” “The state,” as Philip Abrams suggested in 1977, does not exist but is rather a claim to coherence and intentionality “to what are in practice frequently disunited, fragmented attempts at hegemony.” The state lives through the actions, the performances, of officials who everyday people believe have been empowered by “the state.” In my story, I am primarily concerned with municipal government officials attempting to perform their authority on everyday Americans, who in turn tried to contest or evade that attempt at control. The most common state official actually in the railroad station were municipal police, but mayors, city councilmen (all men in the nineteenth century), public health officials, commodity inspectors, and judges also contributed to building railroad space. They did not always act with the same goal, and at times fought amongst themselves about the station. They also alternately collaborated with and subverted state and federal officials. The federal government, through subsidies to railroad companies, plays an enormous role in station building early in my story. Though no federal officials other than US Army personnel frequented the platforms of the Union Depot, the authority of the government to subsidize private companies, I argue, was bolstered the military use of the train station. State building does not necessarily require state actors on-site.


3 As I discuss at length in Chapter 2, these stations were called “union” not because of the Civil War (there were union stations in the south), but rather because one station “united” in one building what had before been separate stations for each railroad company.
Historians and political scientists have long debated the seeming relative weakness of the American central government in the nineteenth century compared to the contemporary strength of European central governments. While some have suggested that the Civil War was the take-off point for the federal government, others have argued that the power the national government exercised during the war soon faded and governance reverted to a “government of courts and parties.” Still other scholars have traced the building of the American central government through the welfare state, or through policing its borders. More recent work has focused on expanded policing of sexuality or alcohol as places where federal authority increased dramatically, building itself outward as it was increasingly able to identify and punish newly-criminal offenses. Despite the relative weakness of the American central government, state and local governments were quite powerful. Historians interested in American political development have lately been less interested in what the state was or what it said and more interested in what it did. What has often been overlooked, however, is where all of this happens. The exercise of power is not evenly spread but rather varies dramatically over space. The ability of state actors to compel action—or, more to the point for my

study, to arrest movement—generally decreases as the distance from the center (be it the national capitol, the state capitol, or the county seat). I argue here that there are folds in this space-power continuum, and where many networks cross there are special places. There is a topology of power, as John Allen has noted, and that means power extends across a landscape in ways that are not inversely proportional to the distance from some political center. In certain key locations, state actors can exercise overwhelming power. That means, in a very concrete way, they can encourage certain movement through space and arrest the flow of other people and goods. The geographer Yi Fi Tuan has also defined place, quite simply, as “a pause in movement.” Whether willing or not, train stations were a place where people stopped, surveyed what was around them, and made meaning out of it. Train stations, much more than simply places of increased mobility, were places that people were observed, stopped, and made to wait. Doreen Massey has pointed out that different social groups have what she calls “differentiated mobility.” Despite the railroad’s ability to effect space-time compression, some people were in charge of moving, whereas others were “on the receiving end of it [or] effectively imprisoned by it.” The train station was an actual place where state officials both exercised power and exercised it in front of a large audience. This audience—of immediate onlookers but also of the extended “audience” of newspaper readers—demonstrated state power at the station, and showed the state to be more powerful there than it was elsewhere in the city. Historians of local governments (both cities and towns) have done important work on the enormous aggregate financial power of municipalities in the nineteenth and early twentieth


6 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 138. Tuan also notes that, “Space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning.” 136.

The unspoken assumption, though, is that municipal power was confined to the city limits. I show that municipalities could act on the national level, and indeed used the train station and the telegraph to create an inter-city national network.

States around the world and throughout history have struggled to make both their subjects and their environments more legible to facilitate industry, taxation, conscription, and other activities. This was no different in the United States, where elite production of space extended control over ordinary Americans. This type of spatial control varied: it was sometimes dispossession of a commons for subsistence, but could also be permitting direct control over human bodies or enacting laws that limited certain people’s access to earning a living while promoting others. The extension of infrastructural power required in part a spatial re-ordering of the landscape; this was not always successful. Despite the desire to simplify and render territory more legible, state actors inadvertently created places that were anything but simple. Places that might have looked blissfully bucolic—as with a St. Louis millpond, Chouteau’s Pond, which I will present in the first chapter—were in fact complicated intersections and overlaps for networks of capitalist, pre-capitalist, and subsistence work.

This is not the first scholarly investigation of the state and railroads. A recognition of the complex entanglement of the state and railroad corporations has inspired decades of scholarly endeavor. Some of the major works of this field have examined the federal government’s role in promoting railroad construction through the loan of army engineers

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10 For more on this selective permeability of stations, see Massey, “Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place”; John Allen, echoing Massey’s formulations, notes that “Overcoming the barriers of distances is not open to all on an equal basis. More than that, some groups are in a position to take charge of the process, to initiate flows and movements, whilst others find themselves on the receiving end of such capabilities.” Allen, Topologies of Power, 38.
or transfer of land grants, while others have questioned the economic rationale for these subsidies. This literature features insightful examinations of railroad impact on cities’ hinterlands and corridors along rails, the social effects of journeys on trains, and the railroads’ contribution to the growth of cities, but such works have privileged railroads as networks and have not given adequate attention to the train station itself as a place of state formation.

Nor are railroads were not the only examples of hub-and-spoke networks in the nineteenth-century US. Roads, then canals, and even later highways created the networks along which goods and people flowed. All three were common carriers, where shippers or other users could move their own vehicles after payment of tolls. But for each of these networks, the hub was either unremarkable or even unmarked (two roads crossing in the countryside) or completely subsumed in a town (two canals intersecting in a town). It’s unlikely that there was any single space of arrival in cities—the end of a particular road reaching a city square, a canal terminus, or a wharf—where so many people arrived. For instance, the Erie Canal flowed into a large artificial pool called the Canal Basin in Albany, New York. But passengers on canal boats—unlike passengers on trains rocketing along rails—did not have to wait until the boat arrived at the Basin. An 1856 map of Albany shows that there were over twenty wharves on side canals off the main canal. A traveler could hop off a slow-moving packet boat on any of these. The Canal Basin was also unlike arriving at a large train station: a boat could tie up anywhere in the Basin, and there was no particular exit as the basin was unfenced surrounded by city streets.

11 Forest Hill has made the point that people often conceptualized railroads too as common carriers. The logistical and technological differences which prevented this made assured that railroads would be run either by a corporation or the government; this of course had wide-ranging consequences. Forest G. Hill, *Roads, Rails & Waterways: The Army Engineers and Early Transportation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 98. It’s worth noting that not all canals were common carriers; those created solely by corporations often restricted, or attempted to restrict, access.

Only in railroads was the hub significant both as a flywheel transmitting social energy through spokes into its immediate surroundings and as a space unto itself. Thus, the focus on the railroad as a network has led to the occlusion of the station’s significance as a place that the network created. The little historical research devoted to train stations has been marked by a focus on small rural stations, or a nostalgia for the grand urban stations of a bygone era; in other cases, the station is an object of architectural history, or a yet another example of nineteenth-century engineering prowess. The attention to the architectural innovations is not surprising considering that nineteenth-century sources are filled with the same enthusiasm for architectural beauty and engineering feats. Railroad trade journals rarely discussed stations, and when they did, it was often a series of statistics. In 1870 the Railroad Gazette, reporting on what it referred to as the Union Passenger Depot (now called Grand Central) in New York, stated that was impossible “to give a description, which will adequately convey the magnitude of this building. The weight of the iron to be used will be over 8,000,000 pounds…The entire length of the rood will be 652 feet…The east side, along the Fourth avenue, will be furnished with cast...

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iron pilasters…” The station described here is empty and anti-social, while in reality people moving through stations brought them to life.

A gravitational analogy is useful to understand why the train station, more than any other nineteenth-century building, is so important for understanding American urban history and the history of state building in the United States. In the seventeenth century Isaac Newton stated that objects exerted a special force, which he called gravity, in proportion to their size and how far away they were from other objects. While Newton’s hypothesis explained much observable activity—apples falling, tidal movements—it didn’t specify how gravity actually worked. It took three centuries until Albert Einstein described matter actually bending the space around it—the larger the object, the more bending. This distortion created ripples and folds that pulled other nearby objects closer, like a marble rolling down into a cone. Enormous objects like the sun created such huge distortions that not only were planets were pulled into orbits around them, but light passing near was actually bent slightly. Space was no longer an inert container, but was something that could affect change.

Spatial historians, like physicists, have argued that space is not simply an inert container in which events take place. The French Annales school of history began investigating the impact of space as early as the 1920s, and historical geographers have had a strong influence on historians, enough to have created a “spatial turn.” Space isn’t simply where things happen, it’s often the reason things happen as they do. Just as the sun bends the space around it, so too can the built environment and human geography warp urban space. Buildings, by obstructing paths, create flows around them. But they can also turn what seems to be empty space into social space. Camillo Sitte, a lover of Europe’s

15 For an overview see Simon Gunn, “The Spatial Turn,” in Identities in Space: Contested Terrain in the Western City since 1850, ed. Simon Gunn and Robert J. Morris (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 1–14; A more recent collection includes historians using the tools of critical cartography. See Barney Warf and Santa Arias, eds., The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives (Routledge, 2008).
dense urban cores, had pointed out (at the beginning of the twentieth century) that part of the charm of, say, Pisa’s main piazza was all of the lively places that the buildings created. Monumental buildings have an especially strong pull: the important functions they contain draw people to them daily, and their size and decorated façades pull the passer-by’s gaze upward. The ziggurat, pagoda, and courthouse all draw the observer’s eye towards them and upward towards the elites that had built them.

This dissertation argues that the railroad station was like a star that in swallowing its satellites, grew ever larger. As it grew, the station pulled the city towards it, and twisted urban social life around it. It exerted what I would call “social gravity.” This process was auto-catalytic: as more goods flowed through the station and as more people came and went through it, the station’s social gravity—its ability to attract even more networks and everyday paths to it—increased. But the process was not entirely automatic. State actors actively aided the station’s construction and its expansion. The station was a place the state helped build for one reason—primarily economic development—but then took an interest in for other reasons. Among these was the fact that the station was becoming an important place for the state to watch over and control, not just a block on a gridded map. Drawings that represent Einstein’s theories often show a space-time grid bent around a star. These gridlines, representing gravity, are normally invisible. Careful reading of documentary and iconographic records makes these gridlines of social gravity around the train station visible. Like our sun, train stations start off with an immense amount of combustible fuel, in this case, capital. Railroads attracted money, pulling it out of other investments (including alternate forms of transportation, like canals and steamboats).

Railroad historians have long either looked past the train station, or looked only at its façade, perhaps in part because railroad archives suggest these types of narratives. The archives of the Hagley Museum and Library have a collection of railroad photos taken

in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Photograph after photograph is of locomotives screaming down the tracks. File #69.92.78 shows locomotive #272 with smoke billowing out as it passed under a bridge next to telegraph or phone wires. No humans are in view, though a second line of tracks is visible to the right of the locomotive. This series of photographs resembles historians’ work on railroads: a focus on where the trains are moving, on the engineering required for them, but not much on where the trains stopped, or on the people in the station who weren’t conductors or coalmen or engineers. The Hagley’s railroad postcard collection is better but is still too narrow a view. The postcards are almost entirely views of the main building at a train station, the headhouse. The postcards shows the front facades of these station buildings or their immense waiting rooms, but rarely anything more. The exception to this rule is a pair of views of the Union Station in Manchester, New Hampshire. One has the typical view of the headhouse of the station, closely cropped so only the main building is in view. The other view shows the station’s sheds over the platforms, the marshaling yards, the powerhouse, and other ancillary buildings.¹⁷

Railroad company histories mirror this focus on the rails and movement, rather than with the station and its immobile parts. A history of the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy, an important company whose tracks spread across the Midwest doesn’t even have an entry for “station” in its index: the alphabetical list goes directly from “Stamford and Northwestern Railroad” to “Sterley (Tex).” A similar history of the New York Central Railroad has no entries in its index of “Station” “Depot” of “Grand Central Station,” despite the iconic status of Grand Central to Americans. The Baltimore & Ohio history recounts endless stories of amassing the capital for the rails and discusses the “graciously appointed” cars and powerful locomotives but leaves out the companies’ train stations entirely. The centennial history of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company devotes a few

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¹⁷ File #69.92.78, Box 4, Folder 4, Locomotives and views of Mauch Chunk contact photographs and negatives Collection (Accession 1969.092), and Box 2, Railroads Postcards Collection (Accession 1995.229), Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware.
Figure 1—A succession of views of an area on the southern side of St. Louis, extending from the Mississippi River (at the bottom left of each map) to around 22nd Street, a distance of about two miles. This map is a composite. City blocks are depicted, but this does not mean that all were built up, hence this map does not accurately depict housing density. The grid is based mainly on the two city maps published in 1846 and 1850 by Julius Hutawa (in the Missouri History Society Archives), with modifications to the waterfront based on the 1869 map of the city by the Colton Company in New York. The locations of the stations (indicated with dark red 3D buildings) and the ancillary railroad buildings (e.g. repair shops, powerhouses, coal sheds, and railroad warehouses, indicated with 2D pink rectangles) are from written sources as well as two bird’s-eye view maps, one by James T. Palmatary (published in 1858 in St. Louis) and the other by Camille Dry and Richard Compton (published by Compton & Company in St. Louis in 1875). The 1894 map is based largely on a series of maps in a promotional book published in 1895 by the architects and officers of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis, called The Saint Louis Union Station. This map does not show the full extent of the 1894-era railyards, which extend west off this map and cover at least another dozen acres. I worked with graphic artist Ryan McQuade to create these maps. The inset at the bottom right shows the location of these sections relative to the full maps of St. Louis in Appendix A.
pages to Penn Station in New York, but focuses on the engineering required to build it. The discussion of its two Philadelphia terminals, Centennial Station and Broad Street Station, occupy only two pages.\textsuperscript{18}

Elsewhere, the station is missed in the forest of rails and ties. Richard White opens his magisterial tome on the railroads’ effects on North America by noting in the work’s very first line that “railroads remade North America and in doing so created the modern corporate world.” Elliot West, talking about frontier cities being created by the historical twins of railroads and telegraphy, argued that the nineteenth-century explosion of cities was birthed by “building an infrastructure of rails and wires.”\textsuperscript{19} Both of these authors likely used the words “railroads” and “rails” as a shorthand for both railroad companies as well as the entire rail infrastructure of the actual rails, the ties to which they were spiked, the coal the locomotives demanded, and all of the associated people and legal apparatus that the words “railroads” or “rails” connoted. The Union Pacific Rail Road’s logo had the letters U and R, flanked by rails and spikes and surmounted by telegraph wires. The company’s promotional pamphlets recounted the action of laying rail, the heroic and dynamic motion that brought the rails ever westward:

One in the rear throws a rail upon the rollers, there in advance seize it, and run out with it to the proper distance. The chairs have, meantime, been set under the last rails places. The two men in the rear, with a single swing, force the end of the rail into the chai, and the chief of the squad calls out


‘Down,’ in a tone that equals the ‘Forward’ to an army. Every thirty seconds there came that brave ‘Down’, ‘Down,’ on either side of the track.

This is exciting stuff and it’s perhaps unsurprising that the railroad’s main station in Omaha hardly merits a mention. In a section called “Western Car Shops,” a party of visitors tours “extensive shops of the railroad company.” The forty-acre area is “specially devoted to these buildings [i.e. to the machine shops], and to passenger and freight traffic.” But the use of rails as a synecdoche has led to a radical understatement of the actual station’s importance. Wheat and coal traveled on rails, but it had to be loaded and unloaded at stations. Millions of people crossed the United States on trains in the United States, but most of them (except for tramps) boarded at a station. To work, a train needed a locomotive; but it also needed be stop and be stationary. In a network like railroads, the nodes are important places.

Train stations seem like straightforward places: a building provides a place to buy tickets and to shelter travelers, trains arrive and then depart. Both places were, I will argue, assemblages and merit attentive analysis that incorporates the natural, built, and human elements. The train station was an “assemblage,” a term is increasingly used to point to four interrelated sets of processes: assemblages are made up of a tangle of sociomaterial processes, they involve distributed agencies, they are marked by fragility and provisionality rather than structural durability, and they are characterized by emergence rather than resultant formation. The first train station in St. Louis, built in 1852, was constructed of wood and nails, but was the product of capital, political maneuvering, and a cholera epidemic that had just receded. People, with certain ideas, used stuff to build it.

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20 “The Great Union Pacific Rail Road Excursion from New York City to the One-Hundredth Meridian of Longitude,” (New York: L.H. Bigelow and Company, 1866), 1, in the Union Pacific Railroad Company pamphlets (1862-1866) Collection, volume 1; “Union Pacific Rail Road Across the Continent, West from Omaha, Nebraska,” (New York: C.A. Alvord Printers, 1867), 12, in the Union Pacific Railroad Company pamphlets (1862-1866) Collection, volume 2, Linda Hall Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
in a particular location and not another. The station was full of people acting intentionally, but each had a different amount of power to change the station, and ultimately there was no station without steam engines and the wood (later coal) to drive them. As durable as the stations’ façades seemed to be, the places where trains stopped were different with each arrival of another locomotive, each changing of the police patrolling the platforms. Finally, stations had properties that were emergent, rather than the result of a plan. My central argument is that the station was a place of state formation, but the fact that the station could be used by the state as a place to disproportionately exercise its power was not an elite plan. It was an inadvertent outcome that was the result of decades of very intentional acts, none of them directed at that outcome. In working to create the huge complexes in the midst of cities that train stations became, elites had very specific plans; sometimes they ran in parallel, but often they crossed. Political elites wanted to promote long-distance transportation and transfer wealth to their supporters. Economic elites needed space for effective freight and passenger loading. Municipal boosters wanted the economic development that railroads promised to deliver to cities, via the train station. I have found no evidence whatsoever that any of these station-building elites imagined a space where laws and patriarchy could be better enforced, or where everyday Americans would learn to accept subsidization of railroads while tapping their feet to the martial tunes of the brass band playing on platform 1. Regardless of their differing intentions, state actors—especially at the municipal level—eventually realized the opportunities that stations offered, and seized them.

This project is an environmental history, yet “natural spaces” are to be found only in the first chapter. Pollution and intra-city infrastructural networks, long the main themes of urban environmental history, are mostly absent from my account. I think of my dissertation as responding to Neil Maher’s challenge to environmental historians to tell the stories of topics that are not the subdiscipline’s traditional subjects.21 My story is

environmental history if that means a type of history that is especially attentive to flows of people and commodities, to the impact of the materiality of things, and to space and place. As part of the process, I created a series of maps (Figure 1, above) of my main area of study, the Mill Creek Valley just south of the heart of St. Louis. The valley’s topography provided a perfect place for one of the early European settlers to build a dam, create a millpond, and open a grist mill. Later owners raised the dam and flooded a much wider area, which became called Chouteau’s Pond. In the mid-nineteenth century, the city government ordered the pond drained, and the first train station was built on what had been its bed. All later train stations and their miles of sidings were located there. These maps were at first simply illustrative, a visual way for me to think through the physical changes over time. I realize now how powerful Philip Ethington’s claim is about all history being spatial, that knowledge of the past is literally cartographic because time is nothing in itself but rather “a culturally specific reading of the dynamic environment.” Reconstructing the past is rebuilding not a static, map-like description, but describing
as many “interval point-observations of bodies in motion” as possible.\textsuperscript{22} The stack of successive maps and the text that accompanies them could be thought of as an annotated flip book. The book at first glance looks like a history of what could be called St. Louis’s railroadcape, which is the area that the station, its tracks, and its associated buildings cover. The text that accompanies the map tells the story that is invisible in the maps, of the state’s involvement in building and maintaining and using that place.

In reconceptualizing my history as a series of maps in a flip book, I hope to avoid something that J.B. Harley has pointed out is inherent to maps. As an impersonal type of knowledge, maps “desocialize” the territory they represent, fostering “a notion of socially empty space. “Decisions about the exercise of power,” Harley writes, “are removed from the realm of immediate face-to-face contacts.”\textsuperscript{23} I am not only rebuilding the physical landscape, the railroadscapes of St. Louis’s past, but also tracing out the networks of people, things, and ideas that crossed and tangled in those places. To complicate Ethington’s theory, studying the history of train stations doesn’t just mean bodies in motion, whether those bodies are locomotives or people. It’s also the history of bodies being stopped from moving. The main agent of arresting motion is not the snow or a late train, but the state. This is what I mean with the phrase “the state exercising power”: it was, very concretely, the ability of state actors to hold up milk shipments, to waylay immigrants, to block the path of women escaping their abusers, and to arrest men on charges that were sometimes trumped up.

In historical research, the “spatial turn” in history has two directions, essentially arrows pointing towards the macro and the micro. The more “macro” part of the spatial turn has been to examine how macro transformations in capitalism have reconfigured space and how economic, environmental, and other stories are so dependent on spatial


understandings. It’s easy to see this in the work of David Harvey, Richard White, and William Cronon, among others. The other half of the spatial turn has been to look at how the spatial imaginaries of architecture, town and city planning, etc., have shaped daily life. Much of this work has been informed by the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault and has focused on surveillance, policing, reinforcement of norms, and the like.

The excellent research on railroads in the United States has largely fallen into the first category, which could be expressed succinctly as how the railroads changed America. This research, by and large, has integrated railroads into these broader histories of US politics, economics, and environment.\footnote{David Harvey, \textit{Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development} (London: Verso, 2006); White, \textit{Railroaded}; William Cronon, \textit{Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West} (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991). David Schey has also written extensively on these more micro (but no less important) interactions of railroads and everyday people. David H. Schley, “Making the Capitalist City: The B&O Railroad and Urban Space in Baltimore, 1827-1877” (Johns Hopkins University, 2013); For more on railroad stations and their effects on cities and people, see H. Roger Grant, \textit{Railroads and the American People} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); David Naylor, \textit{Railroad Stations: The Buildings That Linked the Nation} (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); Camelia Kusumo, \textit{Railway Stations, Centres and Markets} (The Netherlands: Paprozifou, 2009); Steven Parissien, \textit{Station to Station} (London: Phaidon, 1997); Carroll L. V. Meeks, \textit{The Railroad Station: An Architectural History} (New York: Dover Publications, 2012); Jeffrey Richards and John Mackenzie, \textit{The Railway Station: A Social History} (London: Faber & Faber, 2010); Albert J. Churella, \textit{The Pennsylvania Railroad}, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Laura Elaine Milsk, “Meet Me at the Station: The Culture and Aesthetics of Chicago’s Railroad Terminals, 1871–1930” (Loyola University Chicago, 2003); Christopher Brown, \textit{Still Standing: A Century of Urban Train Station Design} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).} One reason the train station is such a rich site of historical investigation, it seems, is that it brings together these two sides of how space organizes social, economic, and political life. Train stations were, in a very concrete way, the actual place that where Americans interacted with and thought about these larger national flows of political power, of money, and of the actual stuff of America—coal, steel, grain, cattle, and people from elsewhere. Someone stealing coal from a freight yard or being arrested at a station after a telegram had arrived but before their own train stopped, are examples that link the political economy of railroads with the organization of space and policing around the station and in the rest of the city.
My work, then, connects the railroads with the micro level of daily interactions in nineteenth-century America. While I’m interested in the question of how railroads changed America (and in particular, American cities), I devote more time to the question of how the railroad station changed Americans. Historian Grace Elizabeth Hale has written that “train stations, those often-disguised buildings, then, sat at another crucial borderlands as well. With their function as nodes of transport for both goods and peoples and as nodes of connection between northern cities and southern small towns, railroad stations also bridged the transition between the older agrarian-dominated economy and the growing influence of industrial production and mass consumption in the region.”

Geographic literature on political geography, critical military geographies, and cartography has also been crucial, allowing me to see state power at transportation nodes, in pseudo-military marching band performances on platform, and hidden in plain sight in map grids. The literature on the relationship between state power and space is vast, but until recently political geographers (along with many historians and political scientists) have taken for granted that the goal of state formation was to make the exercise of a state's power over its territory more extensive and homogeneous. Even sociologist Michael Mann’s influential theory about infrastructural power rests on territorial boundaries: whereas economic and ideological institutions can function over borders, the state has power “over a delimited territory over which it has authoritative power.” Recent work in political geography has extended Mann’s work, but has also highlighted the unevenness of the reach of state power. Geographer Joseph Painter has noted the considerable “qualitative and quantitative social and spatial variation” of this power. Painter is interested in where “failures, disruption, and breakdown” reveal where the state is weak, but this means that there are also certain spaces where the state’s power is stronger. John Allen has added to this map of power, noting that power isn't simply


26 For a review of the historiography of space and state power, see Joe Painter, “Geographies
exercised in a linear way across territory, but rather through networks whose nodes provide places that enable the exercise of authority.\textsuperscript{27}

My project is a description of a particular built environment, but this is not a strictly architectural history. Trains stations were not a “natural” response to a need; they were buildings that were unlike any other structure in the nineteenth-century American city. Fundamental to understanding the impact of the station is expanding our gaze to take in the whole station. Railroad historian H. Roger Grant, commenting on the technical distinction between the words “depot” and “station” (which I use interchangeably), says that the depot meant the building in which railway business (i.e. selling tickets) was done, whereas station “applies both to [that] structure and other facilities (water tower, coal chute, freight platforms, and the like) at the site as well.”\textsuperscript{28} In writing the social-spatial history of the train station, I am taking a broader look at the station than just the building where railway business was done. American stations were modeled on European predecessors, but the station has largely been ignored in Europe except by art historians and urban designers. Railroad historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s description of the train station is at the same time marvelously precise but surprisingly limited: “The basic elements of the station were clear and have never changed. These are the platforms for the trains, a reception and waiting area for goods and passengers, and the necessary offices for the issue of tickets.”\textsuperscript{29} Schivelbusch says he is describing a train station, but in fact this is a description only of two of the constituent parts of a station: the platforms and what station designers call the “headhouse” (the building where the public waits, checks

\textsuperscript{27} Allen, \textit{Topologies of Power}, especially 128-134.

\textsuperscript{28} H. Roger Grant, \textit{Kansas Depots}, Images Series (Topeka, Kan.: Kansas State Historical Society, 1990), 3.

\textsuperscript{29} Richards and Mackenzie, \textit{The Railway Station}, 19–20.
luggage, and buys tickets). Schivelbusch’s makes much out of the convenient dichotomy of the classic European train station: steel and glass towards the country, and the stone façade towards the city. The only liminal zone here is inside the headhouse, when in reality the whole station was much larger than simply the headhouse and had many different zones. Schivelbusch’s description omits the majority of the station: the machine shops where workers fixed locomotives, the livestock yards where animal passengers boarded, and the marshaling yards where tramps got water for their dinners and fuel for their fires, and the poor gathered fallen coal. The station’s headhouse may have been a binary—stone towards the street, steel towards the tracks—but railroad stations were huge spaces whose boundaries were never so neat.

That station was more than the ornate building that separated the street from the platforms: it was a zone, an area of the city that disrupted certain flows and enabled others. The station provided a sort of commons for subsistence and other work, but it also was where the authorities could translate their ideas about the rule of law into physical space. The interstitial commons and the materialization of authority depended on three things: larger stations, ambiguity about whether the station was public or private space, and the station as a spatial and chronological bottleneck for transportation. As stations grew larger, and especially as multiple railroad companies began to build union stations that they jointly owned, the station’s social gravity grew. These union stations were intersections of the following: of multiple train lines of more than one railroad company; of the public with the railroad cars that carried them; of railroads and other companies who shipped their wares; and (crucially) of the public and private spheres. As the stations

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30 Railroad historian Anthony Bianculi dedicated three chapters of his third volume on railroad technologies to station structures, other than the headhouse, needed to service equipment, to conduct operations, and for the processing of commodities. An incomplete list includes engine-houses or roundhouses, turntables, coaling stations, water tanks, sandhouses, watchmen’s shanties, tool houses, section houses (lodging for employees built on the station grounds) signal towers, (un)loading structures, and grain elevators. *Trains and Technology: The American Railroad in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 3 (Tracks and Structures) (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 176–214.
became the focal point for more of these intersections and pulled more activity to them, their status as spaces—legally private but somewhat public—blurred. The railroads used this blurring to their advantage, extracting public subsidies in the form of money but also public property and public policing, all with the excuse of their public (and later, defense-related) function. Finally, stations became railway panopticons. As an ever-greater percentage of Americans entered and left cities (often on a daily basis) through stations, these spaces became an important choke-point and an effective place for the enforcement of state-created laws, gender norms, and patriarchal authority.

Historicizing stations helps better understand Americans and the American state in the nineteenth century. Buildings can be investments, a form of art, and technical solutions, but they are also social objects. Large urban “union” train stations were important and extremely well-trafficked places in nineteenth-century American cities. In 1875, the first year of operation of the new Union Depot in St. Louis, thirteen different railroad lines disgorged passengers at the station. An average of 100 trains per day arrived, carrying up to 7,660 passengers. At no other point did so many people enter a city through such a narrow gate. St. Louis is often thought of as a river city, but it was the flow of people through its main train station that grew exponentially in the late nineteenth century. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported in 1886 that steamboats “literally crowded with people” had brought in 574 attendees to the fair the previous day, whereas the number of arrivals by train before noon were placed at 12,530. The article mentioned

that the total number of people arriving by train over the previous three and a half days of the fair was 112,710. The numbers for steamboats in the previous days were not given, it seems fair to conclude that the number of people arriving through the Union Depot dwarfed arrivals at St. Louis's famous mile-long Levee. Stations, especially union stations where multiple railroad companies' lines came together, were enormous. This quantitative difference—stations' sheer enormity—led to a qualitative difference. Stations were critical nodes in overlapping networks, flows of goods, crowds of people, as well as ideas about ownership and accessibility.

The importance of large urban stations is clear when they are connected to the rise of municipal power in late nineteenth-century America. Many American cities experienced enormous population growth in the middle decades of the century; St. Louis went from 36,000 residents in 1840 to 351,000 in 1870. During this same period, many other American municipalities struggled to extend their power and control over their new residents, who flooded in from other cities and from surrounding towns. The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has written that the modern city has “no planned front and back…no processional route or ceremonial gate.” In this study I argue the opposite: the nineteenth-century American city did indeed have a gate, and its creation was definitely planned. J.B. Jackson noted a long time ago that the ancient Egyptian suffix for city meant “the place that one arrives at.”

There had of course been city gates before: Medieval Paris had thirteen gates, the Inner City of Beijing had eight, and Jerusalem had nine. None of these cities had one single main gate where a huge percentage of new arrivals arrived. For most of the second half of the nineteenth century, the large urban train station was the primary gateway for arriving in a city. What happened as a result of making train stations the main entrance to cities was not intentional; but various levels of the American state used that place to buttress their own power.

My project starts by asking simple questions about space in and around the station. What was it like for a working-class white man, a young, single woman, or an African-American of either sex to pass through one of these stations? How did the architecture of the station allow for surveillance, but also give the idea to Americans that they had a right to be at the station, to wait at the station, to use the station as they would use a park, a street, or library? How did different parts of what we call awkwardly “the American state” combine to build the station, and why? Why was the station a crucial place for the weaker parts of that heterogeneous state to exercise power?

There were other places in the nineteenth-century American city that shared some of the characteristics of the train station. Ports were points of arrival, often built in part by the government. Department stores were promiscuous places where surveillance of patrons was adopted early on. Factories shared time discipline. There were other places where Americans in the 1800s could observe state intervention in the landscape. There were places other than the train station platform in which bands played martial tunes, soldiers marched in uniform, and red, white, and blue bunting hung from nails. Some urban spaces shared some characteristics with the train station: none of them shared all of these characteristics. No other late nineteenth-century space was as ambiguously public; police patrolled inside of no other industrial complex; no other space had so few exits used by so many people on a daily basis, and at very specific times; no other space had as many martial personnel, symbols, and performances as the train station. There were other places like it; I argue that there was no other place that provided state actors with the same sort of opportunity to exercise power.

While I have found examples of the train station as a place of state formation all over the nineteenth-century United States, my focus is on the succession of trains stations in St. Louis—first a shack, then a one-story building, then a grand Second Empire edifice, then the largest station in the world in 1894, Union Station—and the changes in these spaces over time. St. Louis is an American city that, as Eric Sandweiss has written, is “unique in many ways, but typical in far more.” Like all American cities,
St. Louis started half accidentally and half intentionally, a city on what was imagined as the frontier. The site the city now occupies sits on a broad plain close to the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. It was not merely at the confluence of waters but also of sections: St. Louis is, simultaneously, the northernmost southern city, the southernmost northern city, the westernmost eastern city, and the easternmost western city. During the Civil War it was a city where slavery was illegal inside of a slave-holding state. It was a booming nineteenth-century metropolis—the fourth-largest US city in 1870—that lost half of its population in the post-World War II years. Historians who have read William Cronon's epic story of Chicago's growth might think that my choice of St. Louis for a narrative on railroads is misguided. Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis* opens with the defeat of the St. Louis's anachronistic grain market, held on the banks of the Mississippi's steamboat-crowded bank, by the iron horses arriving at Chicago's modern grain elevators. Cronon leaves St. Louis seemingly prostate on page 108, its steamboat-centered market mired in mud of the Levee. Cronon's account is a rehash characterization of mid-twentieth century explanations of mid-continent hegemony, in which St. Louis was being left behind because it looked the wrong way—southward rather than westward.

The “Future Great,” as its late-nineteenth century boosters called St. Louis, was

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hardly on the decline at mid-century. Its Union Depot station, opened in 1876, was the destination for thirteen (and later twenty-two) different railroads, the highest number for any American station at that time. By 1900, St. Louis was the second-largest American railroad center by passenger volume. When opened in 1894, the Union Station (which replaced the ageing Union Depot) was almost twice as large as any other American train station and a third again bigger than Frankfurt’s main station, the next-largest in the world. It had 31 tracks (expanded within two years to 42) compared to Boston’s North Station’s 23 or Chicago’s Union Station’s 9. It served 22 railroad companies, the next largest number being 6 at Chicago’s Dearborn Street Station and 3 at Grand Central in New York. In contrast to Chicago, all of the twenty-two railroad lines that came to the city began there. Railroads reached north and east to challenge Chicago, went south to Texas and the Gulf, and even allowed St. Louis to carve out a hinterland in the Southwest for several decades. In a collection of essays on the idea of the frontier, historian Frederick Jackson Turner noted that the Mississippi Valley, in a larger sense than geographers and even historians even had ascribed to it, drained the whole interior. It received water from two thousand miles of the Missouri and another thousand miles of the Ohio River. This added up to “five thousand miles of main water highways open to the steamboat, and nearly two and a half million acres of the drainage basin…an empire of natural resources in which to build a noble social structure worthy to hold its place as the heart of American industrial, political, and spiritual life.” Turner saw the Mississippi as a funnel, a cone draining an enormous triangle of the country’s mid-section down to New Orleans. I turn that cone ninety degrees counterclockwise. St. Louis, not New

35 St. Louis’s first nickname was the “Mound City,” a reference to the Native American mounds that dotted the landscape. These were mostly removed, and the city elites then adopted the nickname “The Future Great.” This nickname now being somewhat ironic, the city government prefers “The Gateway City.”

36 Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis, The St. Louis Union Station: A Monograph (St. Louis, MO: National Chemigraph Company, 1895), 49.

Orleans, is now at the tip of the cone, and the funnel drained a railroadshed, an enormous amount of land that was accessible in any weather with a regularity that the steamboat could never match. St. Louis’s vast station was a funnel for an enormous railroadshed of passengers and goods.

Maps of St. Louis had West, not North, at the top and St. Louis was the command center for US imperialism for most of the second half of the nineteenth century. The US Army made it the central staging ground for the Mexican-American War, and it remained so for all conflicts in the West thereafter. Jefferson Barracks, just south of the city, was where the US Cavalry kept its horses in between genocidal forays onto the High Plains in the 1870s and ’80s. The first permanent U.S cavalry, the dragoons, were formed and stationed at the Jefferson Barracks. Soldiers from the Barracks sallied forth to kill Native Americans as early as the Black Hawk War, but the Barracks assumed its dominant role in imperial conquest after the Civil War. General William Tecumsah Sherman both supported railroad construction across the trans-Mississippi West and used these railroads to defeat indigenous people of the plains and mountains. The Union Depot, as the starting point for twenty-one railroad lines, was also a martial space, a crucial node in the military transportation system. Chicago prospered not instead of St. Louis, but because of it: St. Louis provided the imperial aegis under which Chicago became rich.

Because this book narrates changes—and continuities—over time, it is primarily a work of history. As such, the source base that I use to tell my story is archival. Recreating the social life of stations is an archivally challenging endeavor. It is not, however, a problem of the dearth of railroad-related records. As the first mega-corporations in the United States, railroads generated voluminous records. Because these companies were extraordinarily long-lived, these corporations’ records have mostly made it into various archives. The Pennsylvania Railroad records at the Hagley Library contain 2,000 linear feet of documents, as well as 181 microfilm reels. Chicago’s Newberry Library holds over 2,300 linear feet of records documenting the history of the Chicago, Burlington
& Quincy Railroad Company (CB&Q), which existed from 1855 to 1970. Many other archives hold similarly enormous quantities of railroad-related documents. I have consulted some of the many miles of railroad archives—real estate transactions, invoices to and from other companies, schedules, circulars, and property deeds add up to miles quickly. Corporate minutes run on for thousands of pages without mentioning the railroads’ stations, not to mention what transpired there on a daily basis. For this reason, these records have not been my only sources.

Sifting stories out of voluminous bureaucratic records is nothing exceptional for historical research. Indeed, selecting fragments of the past in archives is so central to the discipline of history that the location of those fragments—the archive itself—is rarely included in the analysis. The brief mentions of archives in historical monographs are found at the beginning, in the acknowledgments; and at the end, explanations of their acronyms immediately before the footnotes. In the last ten years there has been a growing literature on reconceptualizing the archives not only as a place where sources are found but also as an object of investigation. In other words, moving the archives into the middle of the book, and up from the footnotes into the body text. Each archive has a mission, a reason for its founding and a philosophy that guides its construction. Each archivist decides what collections of documents (called *fonds*) will be accessed and whether certain kinds of *fonds* will be sought out. Each archivist appraises raw *fonds* in different ways, keeping or rejecting documents that another archivist might have made a different decision about. The documents that make it through what is euphemistically called “appraisal” (where 98% of the records are thrown out) are then put in an order by archivists that may or may not reflect their original grouping. Finally, descriptions are written in the passive voice, and usually in the third person. Every single step, from the founding mission to the description of a particular fond, casts a shadow over what narratives can be written from those records.  

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38 For an overview of the history of archives and archiving, including a discussion of the archival turn, see John Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory*
The literature on archives as objects of analysis focuses heavily on colonial archives. Kathryn Burns explored the making of archives in eighteenth century Peru, showing how the office of the notary shaped the recording of wills and land transfers. Ann Stoler, on the other hand, suggested reading *along*, rather than *against* the archival grain; Stoler's work on the Dutch East Indies investigates what happened when the authorities' observations did not line up with their perceptual (and archival) categories. Jeanette Allis Bastian has suggested that only through careful attention to the whispers in the archives of the colonizers of the Caribbean can we tell the stories of the colonized. The archives that Burns, Stoler, and Bastian put at the center of their analysis are filled with themes of expansion, enclosure, surveillance, categorization based on class and race, maintenance of dominance, extension of state and elite power, social control, and punishment for transgression. These archives and their obsessions are not particular to colonies; national governments have the same preoccupations, as do local governments. Colonial archives have much in common with archival material generated in the nineteenth-century United States, both by local governments and by corporations, as well as by newspapers. It follows then that the theory of the so-called archival turn can also be applied to repositories like the Missouri Historical Museum Archives, or a pseudo-archive like the corpus of


the \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch} daily paper, which has been digitized and is now searchable electronically.\textsuperscript{40}

Kirsten Weld, in her monograph on counterinsurgency and resistance in Guatemala, has called for historians to engage in what she calls “archival thinking.” This phrase means examining not just the document in an archive, but also how it came to be produced, and what sorts of knowledge it engenders. In addition, Weld suggests that “why a particular document was created \textit{and} why it was grouped with other documents and kept in order to constitute an ‘archives’ are mutually dependent questions.”\textsuperscript{41} As I copied down lines or photographed pictures from records in the archives I have consulted, I have tried to be aware of why they were there, and also to try to imagine what is not there, what other records might have been “appraised” into the dustbin, or simply never have been created. This is not merely a counterfactual exercise: all the records I have been able to consult are available for use in the production of historical narratives because an archivist in the past thought them consonant with the mission of the archive they are ultimately housed in, and worthy of safekeeping. Antoinette Burton reminds us that though the origins of archives are often hidden, “all archives come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures—pressures which leave traces, and which render archives themselves artifacts of history.”\textsuperscript{42} The archives I’m using to reproduce the social life of the train station are full of voices. Most are of rich, white men; occasionally we also hear from their subordinates or supplicants. These archives are also brimming with silences.

\textsuperscript{40} Laura Putnam has written about the implications of digital searches for historical work. Laura Putnam, “The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast,” \textit{American Historical Review} 121, no. 2 (March 2016): 377–402.


I have also relied on newspaper accounts of what had happened at the station. Nineteenth-century newspapers have thousands of articles that mention cities’ union stations. Newspaper reporters were often stationed at the station, just as they were at the courts and around ports. Things happened at all three places on a regular basis: news could be created if there was a reporter present with a notepad. Newspaper reports, while imperfect and certainly not impartial, allow a reconstruction of control exerted on subalterns that did not leave traces in the judicial record. Often, these were reports of police activity: the price of writing a social history of the train station is the surveillance of subalterns. Social historians have often relied on court records to allow subalterns a chance to give voice to what normally is the hidden transcript. Newspaper reports catch some of the interactions at the station that never made it to court, as well as showing police enforcement of moral codes that were not actually legally forbidden. Newspaper articles record what are silences in judicial documents or simply aspirations for control written into laws. Many of the articles I cite are about people who were objects of police “attention,” but were released after being stopped and frisked. People who were arrested were often either fined or released on the condition that they leave the city. My narrative is built on the traces that I’ve been able to find and stitch together in what I think is a coherent picture of the past.

Luckily, it seems that as stations grew larger and increased in social importance, there were fewer silences. The way my archives—corporate records, municipal ordinances, and the thousands of articles written by *Post-Dispatch* writers who sat around St. Louis’s Union Depot—were created has limited the kind of stories I can tell. As much as these archives are now committed to bringing in records that document a wide variety of experience, their “construction histories” mean that those sorts of documents were not privileged in the past.43 Despite silences in the archives, though, “what happened leaves

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43 Richard John, in his chapter examining examines the influence of funding on academic research centers, mentions the Hagley Museum, one of the archives I would like to use for this project. He notes that the museum and library received generous funding from the Du Pont family, their goal being to encourage research on the agency of individuals and new technology in
traces…that limit the range and significance of any historical narrative.”  

The architecture of the larger station and the surrounding area, which I know through textual sources but also images, are also an archive that I access for this project. I rely on paintings, daguerreotypes, photographs, maps, and the bird’s-eye views that were so popular in the second half of the nineteenth century. Maps and incredibly detailed bird’s-eye views from the nineteenth century allow me to show how vast the station was, with all of its associated yards, sidings, and repair shops. Representations are not simply useful for building more accurate illustrations, though. How train stations were represented in souvenir books and postcards provides clues to how everyday Americans understood those stations to be public.

Every train station is built somewhere, and each somewhere had been someplace else before the building of the station. Chapter 1 begins in the late eighteenth century and examines the millpond known as Chouteau’s Pond. This artificial body of water was located in the Mill Creek Valley just south of St. Louis for the first half of the nineteenth century. This chapter explores the role of the state (first the French colonial government, then American authorities) in changing the landscape to promote industry but also control people. I argue in this chapter that Chouteau’s Pond was a development project that ultimately became a dangerously promiscuous place in elite eyes. People of all classes and races mixed along its banks, and extra-market opportunities proliferated. The pond was ordered drained in 1851; the ostensible reason was that its water had become so polluted as to be dangerous. In reality, elite actors’ revulsion for the pond was more closely linked to the fear of social mixing than to miasmatic vapors. In addition, the pond’s bed provided the perfect place for one of the first stations west of the Mississippi.


Chapter 2 covers St. Louis expansion in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. By looking at representations of three successive train stations built in the Mill Creek Valley, I show the work at all levels of government in clearing huge areas of cities for main stations owned by private companies. I investigate the ambiguity of the station, which began as a non-space—an end point that was often not even labeled on maps—then was clearly a private space, and which ultimately came to be seen as a public place. This tension between legally private and seemingly public generated conflict that often ran along class lines.

Chapter 3 reveals how the station became a “railway panopticon,” a place where municipal police could more easily catch criminals but also enforce gender and class norms. Rather than arresting and holding people in a government-run institution, municipal governments across the United States took advantage of the bottleneck in transportation that the main railway station provided. Unlike Bentham's panopticon, the station was not planned as a place of public surveillance. Its use as such was emergent: it was an inadvertent place of state building, a spatial accident that municipal authorities used as soon as they recognized it potential. This chapter analyzes the nineteenth-century antecedents of current “stop and frisk” policing.

Chapter 4 investigates the connections between the military and the railroad station. This analysis draws on insights from several strands of scholarship, among them assemblage theory, critical military geography, and performance theory. This chapter also draws on the recent work in critical military geography, and its assertion that military geographies can be found anywhere. Rather than investigate only the places where war is made—the field of battle, military bases, or the halls of the Pentagon—geographers have turned to the places far from the front that are “constituted and expressed by the material practices of military activities and the discursive strategies of militarism.”

everyday Americans saw the station as a martial space, and argue that the military-industrial complex has a much deeper history than the Second World War. Railways were the predecessors of Lockheed Martin and Boeing: private companies dependent on state subsidies both indirect and direct. With a visibility that canals and roads (and even the huge grants of land along both sides of every rail) simply had not had, the train station taught (or at least tried to teach) nineteenth-century Americans to see this economic arrangement as beneficial to growth, not as an unfair intervention at the expense of other industries. The station was a crucial linchpin for the conquest of the West, and late nineteenth-century white Americans joined with soldiers to use the station as a place of martial performance.

Chapter 5 shows the decline of state power in train stations even as these buildings grew ever larger at the turn of the twentieth century. I argue that the train station had a transformative and often devastating effect on their immediate surroundings, prefiguring the destruction wrought by interstate highways later. I conclude by suggesting that state power is heterogeneous in space and time. State actors may have more power in particular spaces like train stations in certain historical moments, but this power does not necessarily increase as the state overall becomes stronger.

Chapter 1—The Prehistories of Stations: 
The State in St. Louis’ Landscapes, 1767-1851

Large urban railroad stations were places that officials in various parts of the sprawling American state helped to build, and that municipal governments then used to extend the reach of their influence on the economy and the lives of ordinary Americans. By the time the railroad arrived in American cities, they already had dense urban cores. The train station had to be located someplace close to the city’s center, but there was always something else already in that someplace. In the case of St. Louis, the place where the first train station was built in 1852 was Chouteau’s Pond, a large millpond just west of the city center. Though the pond was private, it functioned as a sort of public park. St. Louisians of all classes and races came to the pond to work and to play, like the people in the painting to the left. A cholera epidemic in 1849 extinguished the pond’s romantic halo. With large numbers of people dying near its waters, the members of the newly constituted St. Louis Committee of Public Health ordered the Chouteau family to drain it. The filling in of the pond began with the ground-breaking ceremony for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. By 1852 one of the first train stations west of the Mississippi River stood where citizens of all kinds had once fished and swam. The draining of the pond and the building of the station did not, however, herald the arrival of the state in this space. The
Figure 1.1—Above is a representation of what was called the Mill Creek Valley in the nineteenth century. Before Europeans arrived, Native Americans camped along the bluffs above the Mississippi (represented by the grey parallel lines, later Broadway) and likely fished in the small river in the low valley south of the bluffs. Lacléde and his heir Auguste Chouteau laid out the earliest French city and gave permission to Joseph Taillon to dam what the French colonists called le Petite Riviére. The dam was later raised in 1767 by Pierre Lacléde, greatly enlarging the millpond. After Auguste Chouteau inherited the tract of land that included the mill, the small lake became known as Chouteau’s Pond. The full maps are in Appendix A.
replacement of the pond with the station was a process whereby the state became more
visible and active in creating the urban landscape, and in the process extended its reach
into the economic life of the city and the daily life of its citizens.

Chouteau’s Pond in John Caspar Wild’s 1840 painting below (Figure 1.2) seems
to be a rural oasis far from the city and its rules. Yet all the people whose paths crossed
there—young boys fishing, slaves washing clothes and talking about freedom in hushed
voices, middle-class dandies promenading and sailing, and of course the miller grinding
grain—lived in a world where the American state was slowly extending its reach across
the landscape and into the daily lives of Americans, native and newly-arrived. The
nineteenth century in the United States—as was the case across the world—saw the
emergence of an industrial state with a greater imperial reach, modern bureaucracies,
and the redefinition of the state as, among other things, a provider of public goods.¹ All

¹ Osterhammel calls these, along with “a systematic expansion of the powers to extract taxes
from society,” “the main developmental tendencies of the state in the nineteenth century.” Jürgen
three of these characteristics are visible in the creation of train stations, as state actors at all levels of government, not only extending their power into borderlands far from the coastal centers, but also over urban landscapes. This meant creating a built environment that made it easier to shape individual behavior, preserving a moral order but also a social one. Landscapes that were complicated and inflected with glades and glens were places where people of different backgrounds could mix and earn their livelihoods outside of the market that might undermine that effort. In addition to making cities more legible to state power, a project of the American state at all levels in the nineteenth century was the promotion of industrialization. American jurists and legislators transformed the basic property regime, in which, as one nineteenth-century commentator noted, the “quiet citizen must keep out of the way of the exuberantly active one.” These legal changes were not simply abstract policies but rather had an important impact on the shape of the country. These changes first allowed dynamic capitalists to create millponds like Chouteau’s Pond, and then later build railroads in their place. Railroad companies, aided by the active support of federal, state, and municipal legislators, took control not only of huge swaths of Western land, but also used eminent domain and state funding to reshape huge sections of cities.

At Chouteau’s Pond, the state’s intentions, ordinary people’s actions, and material realities like the power of water and burning coal, collided and combined in unpredictable ways. The pond, like other similar spaces, was a place of messy causation: Lines with arrows start at both humans and inanimate objects, then zig and zag, go underwater, and are as hidden as some of the paths around the pond’s edge. The pond, like the train station

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after it, was a place where state and private power overlapped, reinforced, and concealed each other. This does not mean that the state always collaborated and aided railroad companies. As often as the state’s twin desires of regulating the population and promoting private industry reinforced each other, they also sometimes ran at cross purposes. That various levels of the state also conflicted with each other, and even officials at the same level, in their attempts to help create a landscape of expropriation, sometimes created space for small acts of resistance by slaves and the rural poor. Unintentionally, government officials sometimes made places where subsistence and non-market transactions thrived, and where it was difficult to maintain racial and class separation.3

This chapter examines a certain landscape (Chouteau’s Pond)—which later chapters will then compare to the railroad landscape (or railroadscape) that replaced it—and argues that the pond was a state scheme that didn’t fail, though neither did it succeed in the way the people who had created it had wanted. The legal doctrines that allowed private citizens to expropriate their neighbors’ land and create millponds were then used to drain the millponds and create railroad stations. In creating these theoretically private spaces—train stations—the state inadvertently helped build a type of place where it could exercise its power more effectively than inside other private enterprises. While scholars have often pointed to the state’s intervention in the landscape of the countryside (especially in the American West) in favor of the railroad, I argue that this also happened in urban

areas, and in this chapter I trace the connections between millponds and railroads. In Chouteau’s Pond, the state created a place that subverted the extension of state power, and only draining the pond for the railroads could re-extend that power. I proceed through three kinds of analysis of Chouteau’s pond. I first examine the pond as a landscape of state intervention, albeit one that inadvertently supported an informal economy that promoted social mixing. I then look at the pond as an “organic machine,” highlighting the political economy of mills and the legal doctrines that allowed them to be created. Finally, I discuss the state-mandated repurposing of the pond’s bed as a railroad station.

The landscape historian John Stilgoe has written about the early meanings of the word “landscape.” While today the word indicates the “surface of the earth people shaped and shape deliberately for permanent purposes,” it originally meant simply “shoveled land” in Old Frisian. In the seventeenth century, English speakers began to use it to identify paintings of views across water to land. All of these meanings aid in the analysis of John Cooper Wild’s painting above: it’s a view across water, but of a place that despite being seemingly free of culture, is the product of shovels in human hands. In reality, the state, while absent in the image, had a huge if visually subtle influence on the landscape of St. Louis. This landscape is not simply a backdrop to my story about train stations. A critical history of the train station has to begin with the place the building of the station destroyed. It also has to acknowledge the complex networks of material conditions and human actions, including (but not limited to) those by state officials. Though these elements are not immediately apparent, the landscape in Wild’s painting above was one of Indian removal, state promotion of agriculture and industry, and the grid system. But the


5 In his examination of the Tuscan landscape, historian Dario Gaggio has argued that anthropologist Tim Ingold’s concept of landscape as a thing not only to be seen but also engaged, a place where people’s work leaves traces of them, is analytically more productive than the more popular meaning among cultural geographers of landscape. As an example, Gaggio cites Tim Cresswell, who states that “We do not live in landscapes—we look at them.” Dario Gaggio, *The Shaping of Tuscany: Landscape and Society between Tradition and Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 10–11, f.19.
dirt is just as important to this story: crumbly soil, cracked bedrock, and position on the west side of the Mississippi provided both the opportunity and the specific place for the state to exert its power and create the station. The city of St. Louis sits at an intermediate point, on low bluffs above the Mississippi River. To the west stretch rolling hills and prairie, and the total rainfall gradually declines as the traveler approaches the Rockies. Just across the river is a fifty-mile-long strip of lowland now called the American Bottom. It was here, as well as on the bluffs of the western bank, that the Mississippi mound-building Native Americans settled. Their agriculture was dependent on the rich, easily tilled soil that the river periodically deposited, and a water table that was close to the surface. The Native Americans who built the city of Cahokia almost certainly chose this location because of its nearness to the places where the Illinois and the Missouri Rivers met the Mississippi. But they also certainly appreciated the thick forests that started in the bottom land and grew as one followed trails back eastward.6

The ground on the western side of the river where St. Louis would be founded was fickle, almost to the point of being geologically skittish. Glacial winds that had calmed enough to deposit their loads had dropped an excellent layer of topsoil. This glacial dust is called loess. The name comes from the word, löss, that German peasants used to describe the dirt, from the same etymological root as “loose.” Soil scientists call loess an “Aeolian” soil, after Aeolus, the Greek god of wind. Wind creates loess; water destroys it. Uncovered by vegetation and exposed to flowing water, loess quickly erodes and what are at first ditches become yawning valleys very quickly. Below the loess in St. Louis

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7 This soil was also perfect for Dhegihan Sioux moundbuilders. Andrea Hunter and Andrew B. Weil, “Saving Sugarloaf Mound in St. Louis, Missouri,” Journal of Heritage Stewardship 7 (2010): 78–81.
is an equally precarious firmament, limestone. Unlike bedrock made of granite, schist, or shale, limestone can become unstable quickly, in human time rather than geological time. Carbon dioxide dissolved in rainwater filters through the soil and eats away at the limestone. This eventually opens up cracks, through which even more rainwater flows: the result is underground caves. German immigrant brewers looking for cool spots to lager their beer appreciated the caves, but they often collapsed, leaving the land around the young city dotted with sinkholes. Another unfortunate consequence is that pollution traveled easily through the ever-widening cracks in the holey limestone. While the flow of pollutants is not easy to detect, the erodible loess is easy to see in early maps of St. Louis.

The city is a tight rectangular grid running parallel to the Mississippi on one side, and the small bluff that is now Broadway. The grid stops to the southwest at a shallow depression now called the Mill Creek Valley. When the city was founded, a small creek fed by several springs flowed towards the Mississippi River in the bottom of the valley. The first French settlers called this unassuming watercourse, rather unimaginatively, *le Petite Riviére* (the Small River). The cross-hatching in these early maps of St. Louis makes it clear that the side valleys above the Petite Riviére were quite steep, a result of loose soil (loess) falling into the valley below.

Chouteau’s Pond exists now only in the archives, in texts and visual images. These records are traces of the past, and specifically of past networks that crossed and made the pond the place that it was. Given the recent work on the subjectivities that are built not only into historical sources, but also into the archives in which they are contained, textual evidence can’t stand on its own. Recreating the past from fragments is always difficult and images—especially photographs—seem to offer a more objective view of what the past looked like. Historians of cultural landscapes lean heavily on visual evidence. Archival theorist Joan Schwartz has pointed out that historians looking at photographs mainly use them as a surrogate for their own eyes, a way to “extend the powers of human
observation across space and across time.” Historians not trained as art historians often look to photographs to ask factual questions: in what year was this technology in use? How large was the boat? Or in this case, what did people do at Chouteau’s Pond? Schwartz suggests that historians should move beyond visual facts to the questions of what those visual facts were meant to convey, or what they meant for viewers in that moment. This sort of question is essentially archival thinking: instead of analyzing just the photograph, the historian can imagine what cannot be seen in the frame, what was there before or just after, what has been avoided, and what is conspicuously absent. In addition, critical landscape historians have argued that representations of past landscapes offer a seemingly coherent whole, in which “the continuity of the material world and its apparent unchangeability seem to promise constant or certain meaning.” This seeming stability of material form does not certify a stability of meaning. In analyzing images in this chapter and others, I have to both ask questions about what was left outside of the frame, but also about what is unseen. For each image I will ask questions about who produced these images, who their intended audience was, and what nineteenth-century Americans saw when they viewed the paintings, daguerreotypes, and maps of the Chouteau’s Pond. All of these images, despite their perspective, are flat. A closer look reveals that all of them are palimpsests. They have layers of information, like the colors overlaid in an oil painting. Each image foregrounds certain aspects of the pond, while leaving other aspects out. These views of the pond do not simply depict the pond, but depict the place that certain people wanted it to be. Written records allow the viewer to see what is below the layers of oil in depictions of Chouteau’s Pond: the original pencil outlining for the landscape was traced by state actors.


10 For more on silences in the documentary archive, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Schwartz, “Photographic
The earliest surviving non-map image of the pond is the 1840 painting by John Caspar Wild pictured above. Wild depicts the pond from the south with the spires of the city’s churches in the background. In the foreground, a boy wades into shallow water to fish, while a dandy in tails and a top hat sits on the bank, either sketching or painting. In the middle of the lake a sculling team has just cast off from a long, low dock to practice; their coach, in his own boat, watches, perhaps barking orders. To the right of the painting the loess that has eroded away to create the depression that the pond fills is clearly visible, still crumbling into the water. The atmosphere is calm and the area seems almost parklike, with the underbrush cleared away. The only hint of the pond being private property, rather than public, is a small section of fence in the middle background. The mill—which was the ultimate source of the pond, and the reason for which it was created—is nowhere visible, nor is any industry. The skyline is visible, but without smoke and with church spires disproportionately large.

The state first pushed Native Americans out of Wild’s frame. Over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the French, then Spanish, then finally American colonial officials cleared the site of St. Louis of any indigenous population that was thought to hinder the city’s growth. The young Auguste Chouteau, later owner of the pond, was an employee of a company that had a French charter to found a trading center on the Mississippi. He used the company’s resources to bribe the local Missouri Indians into moving, and later imperial officials continued the policy of paying off or threatening local natives to allow European settlers to “develop” the landscape. The absence of Native Americans in Wild’s depiction is not an accident, but the result of a concerted...
effort of decades of work to keep them away from a place where Native Americans had buried their ancestors under dirt mounds.\textsuperscript{11} The rise of a new commercial elite based on manufacturing rather than the business that had initially built St. Louis, fur trading, further marginalized the role of Native Americans in the city. The Chouteau family, which stood at the pinnacle of the St. Louis social hierarchy at the end of the eighteenth and first decades of the twentieth centuries, not only had extensive business contacts with indigenous people but also intermarried extensively with native families.\textsuperscript{12} This was not the case with the rising class of political leaders in the 1830s and 1840s, of which Luther Kennett is the avatar. Kennett was born in 1807 in Kentucky, where he became a court clerk at the age of fifteen. He moved to Missouri in 1825, where he was again a court clerk and then a partner in a business successful enough to make him rich. He married an Anglo-American woman from Ohio and moved to St. Louis. He was elected an alderman in St. Louis in 1842 and mayor in 1851 (I return to Kennett below).

There are no state officials visible in Wild’s depiction, but their influence on the land is visible at the edges of the pond as well. The state was part of each of the steps that led to the creation of the pond. In the early days of St. Louis, ownership of land was often tied to performing certain kinds of improvements, and permission to build anything had to be obtained from colonial officials. Before the arrival of Europeans, the Petite Riviére had flowed in the bottom of the valley. Sometime after the founding of the city in 1764, a man named Joseph Taillon built a milldam and a mill to grind grain. Taillon did not simply buy the land along the creek and build a mill; more likely, he obtained the deed for the land with a so-called performance clause. In these cases, the recipient of the deed would have to perform some service to the French colonial state, usually the erection of a useful structure like a grist mill. The Petite Riviére was the boundary for St. Louis’s


common fields, which was “a source of firewood, nuts, berries, and game, [and] chiefly a foraging area for the villagers’ cows, pigs, and horses.” After the founding of the city, the colonial government alienated part of the commons and gave it to Taillon in return for his building a dam and a mill. Captain Louis St. Ange, the representative of the French government in St. Louis, had likely decided that the benefits of having a grist mill in the city outweighed the costs of the lost part of the commons. Taillon also benefitted from the official French policy allowing Native American slaves. In one census, Taillon is listed as possessing four of the city’s sixty-nine total slaves, just two fewer than the provincial governor St. Ange or the city’s founder, Pierre Laclède. It’s easy to surmise that the millpond Taillon created was likely not actually built by him. Native slaves had likely cut the trees on the side of the river, dug the soft soil, and piled it to raise a dam. The promotion of agriculture by the provincial government further increased the size of the small lake Taillon’s slaves made as they built the dam.

In 1767 the founder of St. Louis and one of the richest men in the city, Pierre Laclède, bought the mill; the French colonial administration granted him more of the land around it. He obtained permission from the colonial government to raise the dam, which meant that the water crept up even further, moving into the side valleys. Soil erosion caused by eager farmers also enlarged the pond. Eager for self-sufficiency and later trade, provincial administrators like St. Ange laid out common fields around the city and encouraged settlers to cut down trees and till the soil. As the trees around the city were cut down and the other vegetation turned by the plow or eaten by the animals the settlers brought with them, the water cut these loess side valleys even deeper. The stumps in Wild’s painting are ambiguous: it’s not clear if they have been cut to create a pleasant space for recreation, or whether native slaves had removed the trees to reinforce the dam that had created the millpond. Maps from the early nineteenth century show the

13 Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 15, 16, 23; Anne Hyde, talking about St. Louis under the Spanish at the end of the eighteenth century, noted that while it was illegal, nearly half of St. Louis households owned enslaved Native Americans. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 39.
irregularly shaped pond with its long, watery arms reaching towards the seemingly orderly grid of St. Louis’s rapidly expanding street network. Laclède died in 1778 and Auguste Chouteau, scion of another of the leading families in the still-small city, bought the property. Chouteau’s ownership of the now-enlarged lake led to it being called Chouteau’s Pond. With the transfer of formal ownership to the United States, the Chouteaus received American confirmation of the ownership of the pond.

Thus, despite Wild’s best efforts to present the pond as natural, Chouteau’s Pond was an artificial body of water that state actors had actively helped to create. The pond was the physical manifestation of distant French bureaucrats, the decision of local administrators, the labor of Native American slaves, and the erosion of an eminently tillable loess soil. This dense web of associations of human intentions and physical processes did not just create a millpond on the day the water rose high enough to turn a waterwheel. Chouteau’s Pond continued to be a crossroads, a place where people, animals, trees, and dirt made history. One geographic space can, over time, be very different places. This is the case for Chouteau’s Pond: what started as a shallow valley with a small stream in it became a pond, then a larger pond, then flat ground with a small train station, then the center of a huge rail yard with a major train station and hundreds of associated warehouses and railroad buildings. Chouteau’s Pond in the mid-nineteenth century had grown to be a place that subverted the power of the state, but also a space that was more valuable for railroads, a key vehicle of state power.

Other images of the pond just before mid-century seem to suggest that the primary use of the pond was recreation. In a series of daguerreotypes made in the 1850s, Thomas Martin Easterly echoed Wild. Easterly’s images of the pond are from its eastern tip, near where Spruce Street dead-ended at the water’s edge near Eighth Street (See Figure

14 Primm, Lion of the Valley, 35.

1.1, above). The halo in Wild’s painting is gone, but the pond is still host to two small canoes, perhaps belonging to fishers. In the background the unfinished octagonal roof of the Missouri Medical College and the tower of Kemper College are plainly visible. Easterly made a second daguerreotype a year later, in 1851, with almost the exact same view. The Medical College’s roof is now complete, and a large new building has sprung up. In addition to canoes, though, there are finally people in the frame. A horse-drawn

16 Easterly apparently took frequent walks around the pond, perhaps scouting the best locations to photograph from. Samuel R. Curtis noted in his diary on a “rather cold and uncomfortable” day in 1850 that he had “walked around Couteaus [sic] Pond with Dr. Easterly.” Missouri History Society Archives (hereafter MHSA), Journals and Diaries, Samuel R. Curtis, 1850-1852. April 20, 1850. A guidebook description of the Medical College’s octagonal building allow us to orient Easterly’s two photographs of Chouteau’s Pond. “The College building is large and commodious, situated in one of the most delightful portions of the city, at the corner of Eighth and Gratiot
buggy is stopped in the muddy street—perhaps to watch Easterly fiddle with the delicate camera—and children at the edge of the pond seem to be preparing to fish, though it’s difficult to determine whether the person in the very center of the frame is carrying a fishing rod or something else. As a turn of the twentieth century encyclopedia of St. Louis noted, the pond “combined pleasure with utility. Apart from industrial service it contributed largely to the fund of social enjoyment.”¹⁷

Many descriptions of the pond from the first half of the nineteenth century talk about it as if it were a public park. Anne Lucas Hunt, an early settler in St. Louis, called it a “really handsome body of water,” with a picturesque waterfall next to the mill. She noted that she often took groups of girls on fishing expeditions out to the pond.¹⁸ A German immigrant, Gustave Koerner, wrote in his memoirs that when he arrived in 1833, he and his other immigrant friends were looking around for something to do on the weekend. Before moving on to a brewery on the south side of St. Louis, the three went bathing “in what was called Chouteau’s Pond, a lake, a mile or more distant from the city limits and surrounded by trees and bushes.”¹⁹ The Chouteau family apparently had no problem with people entering their millpond, and it was clearly known as a spot for a swim or even a bath. In 1841 Cornelia Field, who had been born in St. Louis, wrote her father from New Orleans. She told him about her upcoming visit, mentioning that her husband Matt was happy that his father-in-law had purchased a house so close to the pond. Cornelia reminded her father how fond Matt was of swimming, and said that

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when they came to visit, Matt “intends to get a bath every morning before breakfast.” In creating a productive landscape, the Chouteaus had clearly unintentionally also created one of leisure. To reinforce his heightened dam, the Chouteaus planted cottonwood trees along it. After they had grown tall, “they furnished a fine shade which was much resorted to in hot weather as a pleasant evening promenade.” One of the pond’s springs, near Market and Twentieth Street, was surrounded by “a fine growth of young sapling timber, and was much resorted to by picnic parties, 4th of Julys, and for many years the annual Methodist Camp meetings.” James Eads, later famous for building an eponymous bridge across the Mississippi to bring railroads to St. Louis, made early experiments at the pond. As a boy in the 1830s, he would take a six-foot-long steamboat of his own design down to Chouteau’s Pond where he “had the satisfaction of seeing it navigate the pond by real steam power.” These accounts make it clear that the pond, while technically private property, was accessible to anyone who wanted to swim, catch fish, or boat. Iconographic evidence shows people walking arm-in-arm, various kinds of boats plying the pond’s placid waters, and artists drawing the pond.

Both Wild’s lithograph and Easterly’s daguerreotype focus on middle-class leisure activities at the pond, but the intended customers and the artists themselves mediated their representations of Chouteau’s Pond. John Caspar Wild was born in Switzerland and had been trained in Paris in the 1820s. He arrived in the United States in 1832 and began working as a painter and lithographer first in Philadelphia and then Cincinnati. He moved to St. Louis in 1839 and immediately executed a four-part series of lithographs

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20 *MHSA*, Ludlow Field Maury Collection, letter of Cornelia Field to N.M. Ludlow, June 7, 1841, 1.


22 Ibid.

that showed a 360-degree view of the city. Some of the buildings in Wild’s series had yet to be built, and art historian John Reps has suggested that this shows Wild’s commitment to molding his images to the desires of his intended audience. Wild soon began work on his next project; he announced his plans to create a series of images of the city in the local newspapers. The price alone makes the artist’s intended audience clear. The image of Chouteau’s Pond (see Figure 1.2, above) was not for sale alone but rather as part of a series of eight colored lithographs that together cost eight dollars. This sum would be over $180 in 2016 dollars. His eight lithographs highlighted the bustle in the rapidly growing city, but also bucolic countryside. His lithograph of Chouteau’s Pond focuses on middle-class leisure, editing out the mill and any other forms of work being done. Wild is at pains to portray an important St. Louis place but also to eliminate traces of what made some nineteenth-century American elites nervous about millponds: industrialization and social mixing.

Easterly too was not simply an amateur daguerreotypist eager to record random St. Louis scenes for his friends. He had settled down in St. Louis after having married a local schoolteacher. A reoccurring series of advertisements in the St. Louis Daily Evening Post announced that Easterly had opened “his new Daeguerrean Gallery” in one of the city’s principal avenues. Easterly also seems to have been committed to using daguerreotyping to record what he found fleeting and prone to disappearance. He made the first recorded image of a lightning strike, but also made many portraits of Native Americans. His images of the pond were also part of this nostalgic preservation process. The considerable expense involved in producing each image, and the difficulty of exposure and developing, meant that making a series of snapshots was not an option. Each of Easterly’s images was a well-considered composition, “a metaphor for a timeless, pastoral world of the city’s pre-industrial past.” These images were not all made for specific customers, but they were all made to generate business. These were what art historian Martha Sandweiss has called “public photographs,” produced for exhibition and sale, or for exhibition to produce more sales. These images were made by daguerreotypists and photographers with an awareness
of a potential (paying) audience; they were informed by public opinion but could also inform it. It’s not coincidental that Easterly’s subjects—Native Americans, Chouteau’s Pond, and lightning—fit perfectly into the three largest categories of public art in the trans-Mississippi at mid-century: so-called “Indian Galleries” (images of a supposedly “dying breed”), landscapes, and natural wonders. In an advertisement from an 1851 St. Louis business directory, Easterly announced to the public that “among his specimens may be seen likenesses of beautiful landscapes, perfect clouds, and a bona fide streak of lightning taken on the night of June 18th, 1847.” The ad announced that Easterly had exhibited his collection at the St. Louis Mechanics’ Institute and had been awarded first prize. Interested people—all potential customers—were invited to come and view his specimens at his studio, as his work “will speak for itself.” Easterly made his images with the express purpose of getting customers to his studio. Much of his work survives in one large collection donated after his death to the Missouri History Museum, suggesting that while he was alive it was constantly on view, rather than dispersed to various owners.

Visitors to St. Louis must have been told that the pond was a leisure ground, because a number of travelogues have descriptions of it as well. Sixteen year-old Wilson Daniels left his home in Troy, Indiana, to work on steamboats and soon found himself in St. Louis. While he was there he “visited that pond daily and had great sport throwing stones at some water fowls that inhabited it.” James Buckingham, an English journalist and world traveler, stopped in St. Louis on his 1842 tour of the United States. Chouteau’s


Pond, which he described as “a beautifully picturesque lake near the town,” was fed by the plentiful rock-springs “that everywhere abound” and provided excellent water. Unlike Koerner and Wilson, Buckingham doesn’t seem to have taken a swim or thrown rocks at ducks, but an 1842 poem published in a St. Louis newspaper confirms that the pond was the closest thing to a public park that St. Louis had. Repeatedly praising the pond’s cool, pure, clear waters, an anonymous author, addressing the pond itself, asks “how many varying scenes thou has survey’d.” Though written in the flowery language of a romantic poem of the era, the text mentions Indian encampments, children fishing, and shady arbors that are “sacred to bathing” (perhaps providing the proper concealment for disrobing). The poem closes with a worried glimpse into “dim futurity,” where the pond’s gentle waters have been “partitioned out by avarice for gold.” Fearing the privatization of this space in the future, the author closes that he or she is content to view “with feelings fond./ In all thy present loveliness, sweet Pond!”

This nostalgic view of the pond as a place devoted only to leisure obscures its function as a place for subsistence. Chouteau’s Pond was also a place where people could earn their daily bread because it was at the intersection of a series of networks. Actions that seem to be simply humans doing things—like building a dam or fishing—are actually complex associations of humans with the physical world. An ecological reconstruction of Chouteau’s Pond would examine the factors combined to create the pond’s ecosystem: St. Louis’s soil structure, or pedology (the friable but rapidly eroding loess), the valley’s hydrology (a constant flow of cold water into a pond with both shallow and deep parts), and pollution load (the organic matter from the nearby city, draining into the pond through holes in its limestone bedrock). An account of the mill-dam breaking in 1826 mentions that a great number of fish were flushed out into the ravine below the dam, among them buffalo fish (*Ictiobus cyprinellus*), croppie (*Pomoxis spp.*), and bass (*Micropterus spp.*). An ecologist would

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know that fish like crappie lived in the deeper central parts of the pond, where the cold water flowing from the springs pooled. Bottom feeders like catfish and buffalo fish likely preferred the long arms of the pond, where the water was shallower, and more stagnant. Here all of the rich organic material—food, animal carcasses, and even sewage—could accumulate on the muddy bottom for them to feed on. But these connections can be drawn out further into the human world and the social connections that bind it together. A boy fishing in Chouteau’s Pond is not just a boy, a pole, and some water: he is part of a web of work that stretches out both in space and in time. The boy is able to fish because Taillon had had workers raise a dam, but also because he was able to use a knife made far from St. Louis to cut a pole from a grove of aspen trees on the side of the pond. Attention to these networks even calls into question the reason why the boy was fishing.29

Looking back at the traces of work done at the pond—both textual and iconographic—that have made it into the archives, it’s striking how many people are fishing. That fishing was a familiar pastime is suggested by a newspaper account from 1843. The reporter describes a walk around “one of the most romantic spots in the West,” the southern edge of the pond. He encounters an old man who is telling his fishing companion about pursuing deer and catfish there years before. The account is clearly fictitious, as the reporter comes back several days in a row only to find the two old men still sitting there, still recounting tall tales.30 Fishing in Chouteau’s Pond was an everyday activity, but it was an ambiguous one. What appears to be a painterly touch in Wild’s painting—the boy with the fishing pole, perhaps playing hookey from school—could actually be something other than leisure. Children did all sorts of jobs in the mid-nineteenth century. So many of the illustrations of the pond show children fishing, and so many accounts refer to this, that it seems possible that this was a leisure pursuit but


30 “Chouteau’s Pond,” Daily People’s Organ, May 27, 1843.
also petty capitalism meant to supplement a household’s income. The three types of fish mentioned in the 1826 milldam break were all popular eating fish, and numerous accounts agree with one that claimed “the boys caught the fish with which the pond abounded.”31 The fishing in pre-refrigeration days suggest the fish might not have been just for sport, or bragging rights on the schoolyard. Another possibility was that the fish were not for sale but were indeed for domestic consumption; just as children engaged in wage labor to help their families, they might also have been involved in subsistence. Ultimately, it’s not important to determine the reason fishing was a commonplace activity at the pond. What is important is tracing the paths that lead from the city to the dam to the glens along the edges, and reconnecting all of the actors that made the pond an important place, dense with connections.

In addition to the fishing, which clearly provided an opportunity for the city’s poor to supplement their food, the pond had other resources to offer. An anonymous history of the pond noted that “among the trees grew bushes which in season rewarded the search of the villagers with their full complement of berries of several sorts” and “many were the parties that sallied forth in quest of these delicious fruit.”32 The now-submerged Petite Rivière had once been the boundary of the commons, an area open to all residents of St. Louis for subsistence. Even after the privatization of the area, people continued to make claims on the place. Indeed, the damming ironically made private property even more of what Allan Greer has called the “colonial outer commons,” the “area of settler hunting, timbering, foraging, and grazing” created through the dispossession of native commons.33 A state development project created an anti-state economic zone. The fish and the game and the berries and the nut trees undermined the ultimate goal of the state in the mill.

31 Ibid.
32 MHSA, Anonymous, Chouteau Family Papers, Box 54, “Chouteau’s Pond,” typescript, undated but probably late nineteenth-century, 1.
French colonial official had granted Taillon a license to build his mill to strengthen the capitalist economy of St. Louis, but the resulting pond provided ways for people to earn their keep without selling their time for wages, letting them stay at least partially outside of the market.

Prostitution was another extra-capitalist endeavor that likely also took place at the pond. St. Louis municipal codes forbade any nude bathing in the Mississippi River inside of the city limits. Chouteau’s Pond, sitting just outside the limits, was more permissive. Its deeply indented coves and thickly forested banks made this nudity possible. In addition to the large cottonwoods all along the dam, the western edge of the pond was a gradual slope “covered with hazel-bushes, scrub-oaks, persimmon, and grapevines.”

“Its moonlit shores” one writer noted, “were the trysting places of young love.” While there are coy references to these secluded glades or moonlit shores in several accounts of the pond, an 1855 tabloid newspaper is less subtle. The newspaper, called *The Joker’s Budget and Mysteries of St. Louis*, is full of gossip and thinly-veiled warnings to certain readers: “Wonder who that Shanghai fellow is, that was caught with a black wench, by a crowd of little boys on Ninth street, behind the carpenter shop? Take care Jake you are watched.”

People were watching, and what they saw would make it back to *The Joker’s Budget*. The March 1856 issue features this warning: “Wonder if that driver on the Second street line gets well paid for drumming up customers for the Dutch gal on Poplar street? Mr. Driver, do you expect to get a gold watch from her in the same way you got one from a gal near Chouteau’s Pond?” While this is the only explicit reference to paid sex, the numerous references to the pond as a “romantic” spot, as well as its position relative to the city—close yet far—suggest that selling sex likely occurred there as well.

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34 Ravenswaay, *St. Louis*, 128.
36 “Wonder Who That Shanghai Fellow...,” *The Joker’s Budget*, October 6, 1855.
It’s difficult to say whether these short notes are actually paid notices (as the Joker suggests) or the invention of an editor eager to titillate and generate enough sales to print the next issue. Each issue of the Joker has one of its four pages entirely dedicated to notices of this kind. Even if some (or all) are the products of a young copywriter’s oversexed imagination, the warnings had to be believable to mid-nineteenth century St. Louisians. Reading these notices, it’s easy to imagine the fears of the respectable class: businessmen worried that their wives were “visiting” steamboat captains (the quarterbacks of the day) in shanties; mothers worried about their sons heading down to the Spruce Street brothels (which must have been close to where Easterly’s “Eighth and Spruce Street” daguerreotype was made). In a still-compact city with a fluid social structure (the product of being both an imperial outpost and a steamboat terminus), there were perhaps too many opportunities for mixing into socially-inappropriate mischief than the better sort could tolerate. In addition to shanties and alleyways in the city proper, it seems that another rendezvous location was Chouteau’s Pond. The Joker was also a warning that even though police might not be watching, someone else probably was. The low hills that surrounded the pond and its zig-zagging shore created isolated coves, but this topography both hid and revealed. A bather might not be seen from behind, but someone on the shore across the pond might see him; a couple might be behind bushes, but visible from a low ridge above them. Women having sex for money at the pond subverted two important state projects: regulating individual behavior and promoting a capitalist economy.

All the people who gathered berries may not have been merry, but their actions—and the lack of attempts by the Chouteaus to close the pond off—show that the pond had a semi-public status. The western end of the pond was also a place for another small business, washing clothes. Even before the pond was enlarged by a higher dam, washerwomen had brought clothes there to take advantage of the flowing, clean water which was “ unrivalled for laundry purposes and most of the village washing was done
there.” The pond’s gentle slope allowed the women space to put cauldrons over fires and then to build short docks out over the water, where the clothes were agitated. The surrounding woods likely provided the fuel for the cauldrons. The hazel bushes at that end of the pond then provided the perfect structure to hang the clothes out to dry. These washerwomen lived in the shanties that lined the northwestern edge of the pond, away from the mill dam and the promenading St. Louis middle class. Abigail Eliot, who had lived near the pond in the 1830s, described the area in a letter at the century’s end: “The woods [were] very thick, & Chouteau [sic] Pond almost surrounded by shanties w[h]ere the poor gathered so as to use the water for washing.” The Chouteaus’ mansion stood on a hill in between two arms of the lake and not far from either the shanties or the wash-site; likely they rented both out to the women who kept St. Louis’s middle-class clothes clean. St. Louis’s poor also rented houses built at the eastern end of the pond, near the mill. Sometime between 1822 and 1842 a lobe of the pond between Market Street and Clark Avenue was partially filled in and ramshackle abodes built there. It’s clear why the areas along the pond’s edges were the locations for the houses of the poor: the loess, always prone to crumbling, was clearly dangerously unstable when freshets filled the Mill Creek Valley. In the summer of 1848, sustained rain swelled the pond and flooded the low-lying land along its edges. The pond’s banks fell in, gullies appeared, and a number of the poor were swept away. A paper mill was “inundated, as were the numerous small tenements about; the inmates made a miserable appearance enough—while watching their little effects, gathered upon the elevations.” Even when floods didn’t wash people away, their waterlogged houses made them sick. Public health inspections in 1849 revealed that these houses often flooded when the pond’s water rose, and officials guessed

38 MHSA, Chouteau Family Papers, Box 54, “Chouteau’s Pond,” typescript, undated, 2.
39 Ravenswaay, St. Louis, 128.
40 MHSA, Henry Ware Elliot Collection, f.1 (Correspondence 1864-1899), “Abigail Eliot Describes St. Louis,” 1895, 6.
correctly that this helped spread the cholera then raging in the city.\textsuperscript{42} The borderlands of St. Louis were the edge of the capitalist frontier: subsistence became less and less possible and the work that was available was dangerous and unstable.

The pond was also the location for a much more socially acceptable form of “work,” baptisms. Though unpaid in the strictest sense, a baptism was an important moment of pastoral care for nineteenth-century preachers dependent on their flocks for a living. Just as much as their public performances on Sunday morning, baptisms were moments for preachers to earn their keep. The 1842 poem quoted above notes that converts were baptized in the pond’s waters.\textsuperscript{43} William Carr Lane owned property on the south side of Chouteau’s Pond, apparently within view of where new church members were dunked into the waters. Speaking of the Baptists in 1843, Lane noted that “there has been a great revival in that church of late, & from six to a doz. [people] have been immersed, in the Pond, every Sunday, for several weeks past—as a matter of course, the Ice has to be cut, upon every occasion.”\textsuperscript{44} This seems to have been more common than simply a one-time occurrence. In his memoirs, itinerant Baptist preacher Jacob Creath described his 1845 visit to St. Louis: he noted that he had a number of additions to his flock, and that he baptized them all in Chouteau’s Pond.\textsuperscript{45} Creath was a white American, but baptism in the pond, while perhaps not an interracial event, was at least catholic in its spatial freedom. William Carr Lane’s son, writing to him from college, describes a baptism that reminded him of “a negro baptizing in Chouteau’s Pond.”\textsuperscript{46} While some of these pond-generated

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{MHSA}, Saint Louis, Missouri, Committee of Public Health Collection, \textit{Minute Book}, 1849, July 4, 1849.

\textsuperscript{43} Anonymous, “St Louis—A Poem (Chouteau’s Pond),” 2.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{MHSA}, William Carr Lane Papers, Box 3/f.4 (Jan. 1843–April 1843), February 23, 1843, letter of William Carr Lane to Mary E. Lane, 2.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Life of Jacob Creath, Jr.}, ed. Peter Donan (Cincinnati: Chase & Hall, 1877), 144.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{MHSA}, William Carr Lane Papers, Box 3/f.9 (pre1846-July 1846), letter from Victor Carr Lane to William Carr Lane, April 6, 1846, 1.
businesses happened only during the warm season (fishing, washing, and prostitution) and others could be done in both cold and warm water (baptism and milling), the cold weather made for a few other ventures on the pond. In a family newsletter sent around by the Carr Lane family in January 1844, the anonymous editor reported that cold weather had finally arrived and “the ice-house owners are anxiously watching the tardy increase of ice upon Chouteau's Pond.”47 It’s unclear exactly how these businesses worked, as the Chouteaus still owned the pond. Likely the ice dealers, like the washerwomen, paid to use the pond in a way that did not interfere with its primary industrial purpose.

The mill was the reason that the pond existed. The waterwheel, gears, and millstones were not a machine in the garden. The garden-like landscape was part of what historian Richard White has called “an organic machine.”48 The dam, the pond, and the watershed it drained were all an integrated whole that permitted the grist mill’s grindstones to function. Ironically, the mill itself is surprisingly absent from both written accounts and images of Chouteau’s Pond. This is not accidental, but points to a certain mistrust of the pond by the middle-class white men who made these images, and their elite audiences. The English language makes a distinction between small, naturally-occurring bodies of water (ponds) and those created to provide power for factories of various types: English speakers have called the latter kind of artificial lake, since the mid-seventeenth century, a millpond. Not a single one of the many images depicting Chouteau's Pond have the word “mill” in their title, not to mention the word “millpond.”49 The paintings, daguerreotypes, and the written descriptions of Chouteau’s Pond illustrate part of an industrial complex—a grist mill—that is almost invisible in each of the representations. All the images reflect the pond’s pastoral, rather than monumental or technological aspects.49 Easterly’s daguerreotypes were taken less than a hundred yards from where

47 mhsa, William Carr Lane Papers, Box 3/f.6 (Jan. 1844- June 1844), “A Family Newsletter, for January 1844,” 2.


49 Donald Jackson has noted how images of dams could either highlight how they blended
the three-story mill stood, with its massive oak wheels and sturdy overflow shoot in the middle of the dam. And yet Easterly carefully left the mill and the dam outside of this image, keeping it pleasantly bucolic. At first glance, Chouteau’s Pond looks as if it could sit nicely inside the same category as Walden Pond or Monet’s Water Garden. And yet it’s quite different: colonial officials deeded Joseph Taillon the property bordering the Petite Rivière not for its aesthetic properties, or the possibility of quiet contemplation, but because he wanted to flood the steep, deeply incised valley. At this moment in St. Louis’s history, at mid-century in the 1800s, the city was still operating with sources of power that were rapidly becoming anachronistic in nineteenth-century America’s core industrial zones: burning wood and flowing water. Both Wild and Easterly could have changed their perspective and made it clear visually that the body of water was a millpond, or else been explicit in their works’ titles. There are two reasons that both men put the pond in the frame, but kept the mill out, and both have to do with the meanings Americans at the time would have attached to millponds.

Millponds were an important but ambiguous space in the mid-nineteenth century. These artificial lakes were fundamental until the widespread use of the steam engine, powering not only grist mills (for grinding grain), but also forges, sawmills, and textile mills. They were crucial to the growth of industry large and small, and were literally

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50 Easterly made a daguerreotype of the mill only after dam had been removed. Ironically only then, when the building had been converted for use finishing pieces of stone for buildings, did he title the image “Chouteau’s Mill.”

countless. The 1840 U.S. Manufacturing Census listed approximately 10,000 milldams in Pennsylvania alone, and recent surveys have suggested that figure might be as high as 18,000. Mills and their ponds were private property, but were part of a business that early nineteenth-century Americans had still seen as a public service, gristmills. State promotion of water-powered mills has received considerable scholarly attention, with an emphasis on the legal changes that were required to allow mills to effectively take over land used for agriculture or for fishing. Environmental historians have pointed that farmers protesting dams were not in favor of a more natural rivers, but were also asking the state to order watercourses to make them more productive and useful for extraction. Agricultural and social historians have noted that the state later intervened to drain millponds it had helped create. The stated reasons were either promoting public health or “improvement” which would be beneficial to the general public, in other words providing space for more advanced industrial corporations. Milldams were essential, and usually profitable, but they were often contentious. The owners of the St. Louis mill—Taillon, Laclède, and later Chouteau—were capitalists who used their wealth to acquire land that they then modified to suit their industrial purposes. Millponds can be drawn and photographed to look like natural spaces, but they were created by damming watercourses and flooding land that sometimes had other purposes (or belonged to other people). Because the two are interdependent, the mill and the millpond (as well as the creek that fed the pond and indeed the entire watershed the creek drained) were parts of an industrial zone. Property owners upstream rightly saw the millpond as part of the mill-factory complex, and complained about the flooding of their land, as well as fishing grounds ruined by the dams.52

The debates about whether mills really provided a public service were ultimately about whether industrial development should take precedence over private property. These debates turned into fights that often ended up in courts, and the state was the arbiter.

Court decisions about the importance of millponds laid the basis for what legal historian Morton Horowitz has called a “fundamental transformation” in American conceptions of private property. Court decisions created a “more abstract view of property that emphasized the newly paramount virtues of productive use and development” in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The use of eminent domain to turn agricultural land into industrial zones began with court battles over millponds. Millponds symbolized the transformation of America, from a country of farmers who took their grain to a mill, to a country of industry where mill owners encroached on other people’s property.53

Millponds were also ambiguous because they were threatening to the order that states wanted to maintain. Despite being the driver, quite literally, of the cutting edge of the capitalist economy in the mid-nineteenth century, millponds were potentially promiscuous places and generated extra-capitalist opportunities like other watery spaces at the edges of nineteenth-century America. Rigid separation by race, class, and sex was nowhere possible in the United States at the time, but swamps, estuaries, and even millponds were liminal spaces that were difficult to surveil and control. The fish in millponds and the small game they gave cover to were crucial subsistence resources to the working classes, both enslaved and free. Much like the marshy Fens in eastern England, Chouteau’s Pond was well-integrated into the broader economy, but in ways

that seemed increasingly threatening. If a wilderness was untrammeled land, a wasteland was a ruined one. Wastelands were pivotal places because they possessed “a capacity to trigger a strong emotional response, a response that tends towards the aversive range of the emotional spectrum [like] fear, hatred, contempt, disgust.” What started out as a state-subsidized development project to create a certain landscape ended up harboring the wrong kind of projects. In addition to driving the grain mill, the pond provided a secluded area at the edge of St. Louis. Its glens and waters allowed for this sort of sociability between races and classes, they made elite actors nervous. It also generated strong emotions: disgust at interracial socializing, contempt for subsistence activities, and perhaps fear of people making plans that were outside of state and elite control.

While millponds were the necessary engine for industry in the first half of the nineteenth century, elites saw them as suspect spaces as the century progressed. Rood suggests that nineteenth century efforts to drain millponds were not only the result of improvement, but also because they were promiscuous places. The last thing St. Louis elites wanted was liminal wet places to encourage cultural attitudes about subsistence and work that would work against production and wage labor.

54 Eric Ash has described the change in understanding of the Fens that drove the seventeenth-century Crown to begin the project of drainage. As the English state grew more centralized, the semi-autonomous Fenlands were seen by elites as underproductive, diseased, socially promiscuous, and in need of a redemptive transformation. The promise of the elites—that the draining and subsequent use would be in the common good—resemble the discourse about the draining of Chouteau’s Pond. Eric H. Ash, The Draining of the Fens: Projectors, Popular Politics, and State Building in Early Modern England (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 6–8.


It’s likely that Native Americans, whose numerous funeral mounds dotted St. Louis’s urban landscape, hunted in the valley. Once the Petite Rivière was dammed, they occasionally camped by the side of the pond, likely taking advantage of both the game as well as the pond as a place to buy and sell with St. Louisians without the direct oversight of local authorities. The memoirs cited above make it clear that middle-class St. Louisians visited the pond, but slaves and free African Americans also went there. Coroner inquests from the 1830s and 1840s note people who drowned in the pond. Of the sixteen people who met their unfortunate ends in the pond’s deep water, eight were referred to either as slaves, or as black or “colored.” Some might have been enjoying themselves, some working, but they were there, mixing with white St. Louisians. Prostitution flourished, the poor lived in hovels, and the pond provided a very real escape from wage work.

As I have shown above, colonial governors like St. Ange and his successors had been deeply involved with the creation of the millpond, St. Louis’s first industrial zone. But by the middle of the nineteenth century Chouteau’s Pond had become a place that was undermining the state’s twin projects of controlling behavior and promoting industry. A deep current of worry is apparent in nineteenth-century written accounts and visual representations about frontiers and especially frontier cities. The frontier city would civilize its hinterland, but “weak institutions of civil society could not check the natural, baser human instincts…[and] Indians presented a seductive alternative with the promise of a carefree existence.” St. Louis was at the dangerous leading edge of the frontier; Chouteau’s Pond, rather than promoting civilization, had inadvertently created a confluence of networks that undermined elite control.

57 MHSA, Coroner’s Inquests, Parts 1, 2, and 3.


59 Matthew Huber has called for an “ecology of politics,” a study of ideology is shaped by societal relations to “natural” resources. Both the creation of the pond and its draining are examples of this kind of materialist thinking. Matthew T. Huber, Lifeblood: Oil, Freedom, and the
The state helped to create the pond, and the state ultimately ordered it drained. Most histories of St. Louis agree that Chouteau’s Pond was drained immediately after the 1849 cholera epidemic because its once-clean waters had become polluted. “After a devastating cholera epidemic of 1849, with the pond a stinking sewer…the pond was drained as a menace to public health” reads a typical description from a recent history.60 This explanation is overly simplistic, and the passive voice of many of the accounts leaves out the actors—human and otherwise—that made the draining happen. As Bruno Latour has pointed out, breakdowns, accidents, and crises are perfect opportunities to view associations in networks that otherwise are not normally visible.61 The cholera epidemic and the subsequent draining of Chouteau’s Pond provide just such a moment of crisis in which the state’s connections to the pond are made suddenly visible. In that critical break, state actors reconfigured the landscape just west of the city for the arrival of a very visible network, the railroad. Even before the 1849 epidemic began, there were concerns about Chouteau’s Pond as a source of illness. An anonymous writer to the *St. Louis Weekly Reveille* in January of 1847 acknowledged that the citizens of the city had “long looked upon [the pond] as an ornament, but which we have, however reluctantly, come to regard as a nuisance.” Noting that the dam meant that the “pond itself has become a receptacle—not a drain,” the writer urged the city to drain the pond, choosing health over ornament.62 Another writer, “B.,” went even further a year later, calling the pond “a nest of disease and a breeder of pestilence.” While B. acknowledged that the pond is private property, she or he invoked the courts, calling on a grand jury to order the draining of the pond, and

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60 Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 146.


the filling so that the “impurity [is] buried deep under the ground.” While it’s possible these vociferous, emotion-laden screeds were simply in response to seeing raw sewage or animal carcasses in the pond, they may also have been motivated by the seeming social impurity of the pond. The medical profession did not yet understand the germ theory of illness and attributed the cholera to, variously, an impure diet, personal uncleanliness, and miasmas, or dangerous vapors emitted from putrefying organic matter. It seemed this public outcry had the desired effect, because a few weeks later the Committee of Public Health appointed a committee “to call upon the proprietors of Chouteau’s Pond” and see if they would sell a portion or all of the pond to the city. The committee was then to see when the pond could be drained, with the idea of creating a public park once the hollow was filled. There were no further reports from this committee, but it is important to note that the letter writers called on the city to use its power to alter the landscape for the common good. The final letter not only envisioned a preventative draining, but also the unambiguous use of the space for a public park.

In December 1848, the first cholera deaths in the city were reported. By mid-summer of 1849, hundreds were dying a week. The Committee of Public Health, meeting every day, did not understand the epidemic’s cause and sought all possible solutions. Clearly influenced by miasmatic theory, the Committee ordered all “filth and decaying matter” to be collected and disposed of; fires were lit in every neighborhood, burning coal, resinous tar, sulphur, and “other disinfectants.” Hoping for divine intercession, the Committee also passed a resolution requesting that churches declare July 2nd “a day of


64 “Chouteau’s Pond,” *St. Louis Weekly Reveille*, January 24, 1848, 1568. This proposal is much like a later proposal in Boston to convert a stinking millpond into a public park. Frederick Law Olmsted ultimately completed the project in 1889, creating one of Boston’s most-used parks, the Back Bay Fens. See Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1982).

fasting, humiliation” with prayers to the Christian god to relieve them from the epidemic. The day of prayer did not stop the deaths; on July 4th, one of the physicians employed by the committee gave a report about a part of town he said was now known as the “Shepherd’s Grave yard” because of its high mortality. It was the two blocks bounded by 9th and 11th Streets, Clark Avenue, and Market Street, precisely where a lobe of Chouteau's Pond had been partially filled in. The doctor noted that the area was “chiefly fringed by hovels of the most wretched description, each one of them a receptacle for utter destitution, while the interior of the unfilled squares present vast beds of putridity.” Referring to the miserable poor living in waterlogged homes, he said that while the area “has long existed as a nuisance,” the city should evacuate the people living there and order it properly filled and graded.” Two days later, after another dreadful report about the Shepherd’s Grave Yard, a young alderman and Committee member named Luther Kennett proposed a resolution. Kennett called on the city to act decisively for the abatement of such nuisances, and either order them filled in or undertake the filling itself.  

When the mayor and city council imposed a quarantine of all incoming ships in 1850, the disease abated. All told over 4,000 people died out of a total population of just short of 80,000. The emboldened Committee of Public Health acted decisively: all the potentially hazardous bodies of water, large and small, were to be drained. Chouteau’s Pond was now deemed dangerous by the aldermen. They agreed with young George Forman, a manual laborer then in St. Louis, who noted that in 1850 that the pond had

66 MHSA, Committee of Public Health Collection, _Minute Book_, June 27, June 29, July 4, and July 6, 1849.

67 Primm, _Lion of the Valley_, 156–57; Rosenberg is inconsistent about the number of deaths in St. Louis; both estimates are different than Primm. He says that St. Louis in 1849 lost ten percent of its population (of approximately 80,000, so 8,000), but then cites a history of the archdiocese of St. Louis history, and gives a far lower total number of deaths, 1,556. Of these, 1,182 were apparently Catholic. Charles E. Rosenberg, _The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866_ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 115, 135 f5.

68 Katharine T. Corbett, “Draining The Metropolis: The Politics of Sewers in Nineteenth-
been the scene of many cholera deaths. “In the rear of the city was Chouteau’s Pond,” which he described as “a stagnant body of water.” Forman wrote that “there in one block 40 died in one night.” Charting the change in how cholera was viewed in the United States, Charles Rosenberg has noted that while the disease was seen as the “scourge of the sinful” in the 1830s, by 1866 public health officials had realized that the disease was the consequence of inadequate public health measures. It was a change from arguments about morality to arguments about proper sanitation. That said, it’s possible that the sort of residents of St. Louis who would have been on the Committee of Public Health might have still had multiple reasons for ordering the draining of Chouteau’s Pond. They did not have a clear understanding of how the pathogen that caused cholera, *Vibrio cholerae*, was transmitted by water through the porous limestone underneath the city. But they did understand why the poor, and especially poor immigrants, seemed to be most at risk. They did not need the insights of early epidemiologists like John Snow or Robert Koch to connect the disease to the waters of the pond, and the poor that lived in shanties around it. It’s undeniable that the pond had been polluted in the late 1840s, as it became the receptacle for more and more industrial waste and human feces produced around it. Yet it’s possible that the Committee—like the writers of the letters to the editor—might also have associated the pond (however incoherently) with social promiscuity, an unnatural ambiguity about private property, and aristocratic privilege.

As William Novak has pointed out, the crucial role of public health has been overlooked in histories of state formation. Hygiene, he notes “should be expected to take a back seat to property and commerce” according to the prevailing histories of a weak American state in the mid-nineteenth century. Boards of Health across the country were

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70 Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, 5.
given broad discretionary powers that trumped private property concerns. The Chouteau family resisted the order to drain the pond, in a letter that merits quoting at length:

We would respectfully ask whether the remedy you propose is the appropriate remedy under the circumstances of the case? We do not maintain any establishment which affects the purity of the water—we do nothing that can make the pond a nuisance. But around the pond, within the city limits and consequently subject to the ordinances of the City, and the control of City Officers, are establishments of different descriptions which do all of the evil of which you complain, by discharging into our Lake. If the city authorities by appropriate action would prevent the persons having establishments near the pond from corrupting its waters, the pond itself would come to be regarded as an ornament and an advantage to the city, rather than a nuisance to be abated.

Chouteau’s letter does not deny the power of the state but instead invites the city to exercise its regulatory prerogatives on the businesses surrounding the pond, which included not one but two lead factories. The part of the letter above makes a romantic argument for the preservation of what was essentially a public park. The last part of the letter, though, showed that Chouteau meant business. He indicated to the city elders that if they insisted on draining the pond, he would claim damages for milling revenue lost. Ultimately this was a fight for what the city elite at the time would have called progress. As one of his descendants later wrote, “These pleasant sights, the boating, fishing, and picnicking at the beautiful lake and its surrounding grounds were doomed by the onward march of improvement.” The pond, once a symbol of industrial progress, was now in the


73 mhsa, Chouteau Family Papers, Box 54, “Chouteau’s Pond,” typescript, undated, 2–3.
way of development; its waters, whether murky or limpid, resisted the grid and the orderly procession of rows and columns of streets on a map.

The crisis caused by the cholera epidemic did not summon the state to the pond, but rather made the state’s presence visible. The pond was at the edge of another front that made it an unstable place; that moving edge was urbanization. An 1899 encyclopedia, while still pointing to the pond’s pollution and the 1849 cholera epidemic, connects the draining to the coming of the railroads: “the change which sanitary considerations had first suggested was ultimately effected by the demand for public improvement. The Missouri Pacific Railroad needed an outlet to the Mississippi.”74 The geographer David Harvey has suggested that studying urbanization is in fact tracking how capital changes, and the contradictions that occur as capitalists compete to extract profit in cities. Harvey recommends a study of the overlapping lines of different networks that come together on the outside edges of urban spaces, “the shifting flows of labor power, commodities, and money capital [and] the spatial organization of production and the transformation of space relations.”75 Between the damming of the Petite Riviére and the writing of the poem in 1842, what had occurred in the Mill Creek Valley was a slow process of urbanization. Other historians have pointed to the privatization of the commons as a crucial first step in dispossessing the general public. The author of the poem about Chouteau’s Pond (cited above) was clearly worried that the pond would be sold off—“partitioned out by avarice for gold.” A legal partitioning was ultimately not what the poem’s author feared: it was a reshaping of the pond due to changes in what elites thought was the best way to extract profit from St. Louis’s urban landscape. The partitioning had in fact occurred with the initial survey and distribution of land at St. Louis’s founding in 1764. An 1822 survey shows that Auguste Chouteau had already divided up the plot of


land that surrounded the pond. Reluctantly, Chouteau hired workers to tear down the dam, and the city appropriated funds for the Mill Creek Sewer to channel the springs into an underground culvert.

Before the water started to subside, a curious procession made the state’s assertion of power over the place—and its commitment to the railroad—clear. On July 4th, 1851, a parade wended its way from St. Louis’s business district to the far side of Chouteau’s Pond. That day in 1851 politicians and the Missouri Pacific Railroad officers gave long speeches, recorded nearly verbatim in the city’s newspapers. When they finally finished talking, a detachment of artillery fired cannons from a hill nearby. It’s not clear what exactly the 20,000 onlookers who were not among the city’s elite thought. The newspapers do record that the crowd cheered as St. Louis’s new mayor, Luther M. Kennett, dug into the soft soil and threw the first shovel-full of dirt into Chouteau’s Pond. More cannons, more loud hurrahs, and then some honored guests sat down to a meal. One of St. Louis’s German newspapers noted that “superb Lemp’s beer, noble Rhine wine, and sparkling Catawba wine flowed in streams,” and there were enough fried foods, ham, pies, and cakes “to provision a Prussian fort for three months.” A few years after the parade, passengers would board trains in the exact same spot, departing from the city’s first train station. The state, though, had arrived long before the first train.

The story of railroad stations includes many actors, both human and not. The people in the story are not always famous, and indeed for most we don’t even know their last names. Luther Kennett is an exception. As I noted above, Kennett, a Kentuckian moved to Missouri in 1825, where he was again a court clerk and then a partner in a business successful enough to make him rich. He was elected an alderman in St. Louis in 1842. Kennett’s service on two very different committees ultimately contributed to the draining

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of Chouteau’s Pond and the building of the Missouri Pacific’s first station in its bed. In early June 1848, Kennett was appointed to the Committee of Public Health. In the midst of the epidemic, Kennett was also appointed to a committee of twenty-five businessmen who were promoting the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Kennett later reported to the broader group that the committee recommended calling a convention of delegates from Western states to back the railroad. When it convened in October 1849, it was Kennett who reported for the Committee of Twenty-Five. His address noted that “prevalence of the cholera as an epidemic in our city, for a time interrupted the labors of the committee,” but that the committee members recommended proceeding with the railroad. He was one of St. Louis’s delegates that voted to approve a survey of possible routes. One of those routes had the train line beginning on the south side of the city’s center, in a valley where Chouteau’s Pond sat. It’s impossible to attribute the surveyor’s recommendation of the “Chouteau Pond valley” route to Kennett’s intercession alone. It was his earlier resolution on the Committee of Public Health that, once passed, enabled the city to order filled or simply fill any low-lying hollows. It’s possible that Kennett’s experience on the Committee, hearing about all the cholera deaths in the “Shepherd’s Grave Yard” near Chouteau’s Pond, that made him such an ardent supporter of draining the pond. As a member of the new class of managers in St. Louis, he might also have had less tolerance for the sort of social promiscuity that the pond offered and even encouraged. He wasn’t connected to the Chouteaus by blood, and didn’t mind being part of the government that ordered their pond drained. The creole families like the Chouteau’s still enjoyed enormous social status, but power had shifted to new settlers from the northeast and Midwest. Kennett likely had another motivation beyond curbing social mixing. He was not only

78 Linda Hall Library, Missouri Pacific Railroad Company pamphlets (1845–1853) Collection, volume 1, Proceedings of the National Railroad Convention, 12.


80 Primm shows that despite Wyatt Belcher’s thesis, the city by the mid-nineteenth century
the mayor of St. Louis in 1851 when he threw the first shovel-full of dirt into it, he was also the vice-president of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. After serving three terms as mayor, he was elected president of the Iron Mountain Railroad Company and “occupied a conspicuous place among the pioneers in the railroad development of the Southwest.”81 Whatever Kennett’s motivations, he used the power of the mayor’s office for social control and industrial development: draining the pond accomplished both goals.

People and things had made Chouteau’s Pond a specific place. Colonial administrators had set the parameters, but people like Taillon’s slaves, boys fishing, middle-class boaters, and the urban poor out gathering berries had with their repeated presence and work pushed the pond further along the spectrum towards being a public place. Ultimately, though, the state was the final arbiter of the pond’s status. The pond was too far outside of state control, and the land was much more valuable for real estate speculation and more modern forms of industrial capitalism like the railroads. In ordering the pond drained, the Committee of Public Health and the members of the city government both asserted their power to determine how space was used, but they also inadvertently created a place that would allow them to extend the power of the government even further.

was dominated politically by new arrivals from the Midwest and Northeast. Primm gives Kennet as an example of these powerful newly-arrived elites. Primm, Lion of the Valley, 223–36; See also Eric Sandweiss, St. Louis: The Evolution of an American Urban Landscape (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 42–46.

81 William Hyde and Howard Louis Conard, eds., “Luther M. Kennett,” Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis: A Compendium of History and Biography for Ready Reference (St. Louis: Southern History Company, 1899), 1167; Primm notes that Kennett’s brother was a prominent industrialist and the president of the Bank of Missouri. Primm, Lion of the Valley, 174; Kennett’s mixing of politics and personal railroad interests was not exceptional for the time. An earlier mayor, William Carr Lane, had reserved the right of operating a railroad in city streets to him and his heirs in an early addition to the city, and Sandwiss shows that a third of pre-1854 developers of subdivisions held elected office within five years before or after the date of their subdivision. Sandweiss, St. Louis, 42, 48.
Chapter 2—Towards Train Stations As Public Places, 1852-1874

In 1858, James Palmatary published a four-part lithograph of the city of St. Louis viewed from an imaginary point high above the Mississippi River (Figure 2.1). The octagonal form of the medical college, so prominent in Easterly’s daguerreotypes of Chouteau’s Pond, is still visible in the left-hand side of the image, but the pond itself has completely disappeared. Train tracks catch the viewer’s eyes, as well as a locomotive pulling out of the station, belching smoke. This is the end of the line for the Missouri Pacific Railroad, built on the bed of the former pond. The two-story freight depot stands to the left of the end of the track. Its imposing structure starts at the edge of the street, whereas the passenger station is set back from the public street. St. Louis’s station is hardly more than a small shack; what seems to be an awning is just another locomotive behind the small building. Where before in this space there was a mix of leisure and work, of different classes, now there are simply the orderly squares of still-empty city blocks. Two very visible networks, the grid system and the railroad line, intersect at the first American train station west of the Mississippi River, but the rest of the social web that had surrounded the pond is gone. Emptied of both its water and its highly inflected spaces of work and play, what was still called the Mill Creek Valley (despite the lack of
a working mill) changed dramatically. The area appeared to have been, quite literally, flattened. In 1852 this newly-flat site just outside the center of the city became the location of the Missouri Pacific Railroad depot. It was then later the site for the much larger Union Depot (in 1874) and still later the enormous Union Station (1894). One of the Chouteaus described these five decades in a few lines written around the end of the nineteenth century, worth quoting at length:

the Beautiful spot where the picturesque stone mill stood beside the clear waters of the lake, the romantic paths shaded by the forest trees, where your ancestors loved to saunter in the pleasant evening weather were soon metamorphosed into a blank and arid district thickly planted with railroad tracks, its charming view forever cut off by unsightly buildings and even the memory of its pristine beauty faded. At a still later day the territory became the location of the most remarkable and stupendous group of wholesale mercantile establishments in the west and perhaps in the world.¹

Ultimately the “district thickly planted with railroad tracks” would generate another crossroads, not only for merchants and their wares but for people. The state would take notice of this opportunity to leverage its power, and the Mill Creek Valley would again have the social complexity it had once enjoyed, though the people and things flowing through the area would be quantitatively and qualitatively quite different. Whereas the Pond was fed by a few small springs, the station would be supplied by an enormous network of train tracks, a “railroadshed” larger even than the watershed that fed rivers like the Mississippi. First, however, the station had to go from being unambiguously private space back to being seen as a semi-public space.

Dispossession of land from native peoples and that land’s conversion first to public land and then to private freeholding is a central theme in American history. Yet in the

¹ MHSA, Chouteau Family Papers, Box 54, “Chouteau’s Pond,” typescript, undated, 3.
span of the nineteenth-century the United States government conquered, surveyed, and offered for sale a hitherto unimaginable amount of land. Historians of railroads have devoted much attention to the land grants that began in the East and ultimately covered huge swaths of Western territory. These grants were undoubtedly a massive subsidy for railroad companies, but the successive changes in legal status were relatively uncomplicated: public land was given by the federal government to the states, which then gave it to railroad companies. The companies sold the land and used the proceeds to construct railroad tracks. While this literature features deep and insightful examinations of the impact of railroads on rural areas, such works have not yet considered the grants of land that were the most visible to everyday Americans, and the most complicated as
far as their status: the space that had to be devoted to train stations in cities. Urban train stations were places that were not unambiguously public or private. Social theorists and political scientists have focused in the public sphere as an abstraction, but historians, urban planners, and geographers have examined where the boundaries between public and private might be found in actual space, and how these boundaries were built and maintained. Much of this literature is concerned (in the strictest sense of the word “concerned”) with the change from previously public land to the private sphere.

Train stations in nineteenth-century America provide a much more complicated example of the entanglement—sometimes intentional, sometimes not—of private power and all levels of the American state. Stations were a private property created with the aid of enormous state intervention, and which became—through use and much debate—even more public. The supposed binary between public and private spaces is a false one. Rather than static physical entities, public spaces are defined by overlapping and conflicting ideas and actions, as well as by physical characteristics like the secluded location of the millpond or the imposing architecture of the train station. Railroads, and railroad stations, are the perfect example of this entanglement of laws, claims, people, and things. Noting that there is nothing inherently public about highways, historian William Novak has underlined the fact that that infrastructural development had economic-promotional dimensions, but also powerful social-regulatory ones as well. Train stations

Figure 2.2—Above is another representation of the Mill Creek Valley over time. The lowest map is the area after the partial draining of Chouteau's Pond in the 1850s (the shading shows the pond's greatest extent in 1840) and finally after the construction of the Union Depot in 1875. The full maps are in Appendix A.
were neither public nor private, but rather “spaces of hybrid character.” This hybridity is the result of public and private power concealing themselves in each other in vaguely “civic” space. Railroad companies leveraged state power for their own ends; in the station, municipalities got a place where they used private space to bootstrap their own power over more of their citizens.

This chapter compares the shack in the bird’s-eye view above to the two stations that succeeded it and argues that as these stations grew larger, everyday Americans began to use them (and see them) as if they were public space. Stations were a hybrid of public and private, and how public or private they were changed, not in any sort of easy linear way, but veering back and forth. Parts of the station like the platforms and the waiting room seemed public; other parts (the coal pile and warehouses) were private property but used surreptitiously and illegally. Various people—among them politicians, railroad executives, policemen, middle-class reformers, and subalterns—nudged the station one way or another by what they said about it and what they did there. The first stations, unlike the pond that preceded them, were small spaces that the public saw as private. As they grew, stations became the centers of flows of people and goods, hubs not simply for travelers getting on and off trains but also for people doing other work (licit and illicit). Anthropologist Penelope Harvey, commenting on roads, has said that they “provide tangible evidence of both technical and political capacity[,] materialize state and

corporate ambition, and transform particular territorial spaces into sites of fantasy and projection for politicians, planners, and local people.” Harvey is talking about roads, but could just as easily be describing the opportunities for all kinds of actors in train stations. The stations grew because government officials at all levels provided financing from public funds, and allowed railroads to use eminent domain to demolish urban neighborhoods for larger “union” depots, where multiple railroads came together. As the nineteenth century progressed, the railroadscape grew.

Gardner’s photograph does not show us the whole station, but rather just the passenger depot and part of the freight depot. There were likely other small buildings and a few side tracks, but the 1867 station, like many around the country at this time, covered a relatively small area of the city. As more railroads were built, there was a change from numerous small stations to a single large central station. These were called “union” stations because they served multiple railroad lines. These union stations were far more important locales of state formation than any rural station could ever be, and they were more than just the intersection of railroad tracks: they were the intersection of what has been called the “maddening plurality” of the American state. Commenting on the importance of cities, Roger Keil has noted that they are sites of “conflict and integration of scalar governance,” where the global and the private meet and the “space of everyday practices of political action.”4 People began to use these larger, more monumental stations in certain ways as public spaces, and public officials used the construction of new stations as a form of architectural boosterism. Railroad companies encouraged the idea that stations were in some way for the public good in order to justify the aid that all levels of government gave to the construction of union stations. Yet railroad companies also wanted to preserve

their right to regulate their property and exclude whomever they wanted. As in the case of Chouteau's Pond, the state was both crucial to the creation of the railroadscape, as well as the mediator of the public status of train stations. This chapter argues that the state's part in making train stations created a place that Americans came to see as public, and in which they did things as if the space were public space. When this caused conflicts (with other citizens or with the railroad company), the public expected the state to intervene. State actors' arbitration in the train station extended the reach of state power.

As with Chouteau's Pond, what kind of a place the early railroad stations were can be gleaned not only from documents preserved in archives and newspapers preserved on microfilm, but also images. In this chapter, in addition to examining documentary sources, I analyze various images of train stations to establish what kind of places they were and where on the spectrum of public and private inhabitants of St. Louis would have placed them. Palmatary's view of St. Louis (Figure 2.1) is more valuable for what it implies and assumes, rather than for what it simply depicts. In the 1858 image it seems as if Chouteau's Pond has been completely erased, and both trains and wagons traverse the space. In reality, Chouteau's Pond had not completely disappeared, and wouldn't be completely drained for decades. Removing the pond was slow work. The Missouri Pacific Railroad started laying rail in 1852, and at first had to build piles across the undrained, unfilled portions of the pond. Indeed, it doesn't seem like the water level even began to drop in earnest until 1853. That year the city engineer reported to the municipal council that the draining of the pond was still incomplete, as the floodgate of the old dam was above many of the lowest spots in the pond. This meant, he explained, that there was not "complete drainage, and leaves a large shallow sheet of water, which during warm weather becomes very offensive and injurious to the health of the neighborhood." This halfway

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5 MHSA, Frederick L. Billon Collection, f.4, “Chouteau’s Mill Pond As It Existed Prior To Its Drainage in 1853,” 1.

6 MHSA, Mayor’s Message with Accompanying Documents (St. Louis: Republican Book and Job Offices, 1853, 13.
space—no longer a place the public wanted to visit, but clearly not completely ready for development—aroused irritation among St. Louis residents. It doesn’t seem that St. Louis resident Edward Bates ever sent the letter-to-the-editor that he drafted in 1853, but it’s clear he had strong opinions about the on-going draining project. In his angry pen strokes, he referred to as an “intolerable nuisance being created” in the midst of the people of St. Louis. Bates was clearly an adherent of the miasmatic theory of disease, according to which decaying organic material caused noxious, disease-bearing vapors. The draining of the pond meant that “the consequent exposure of many acres of mud and filth to be

Figure 2.3—Thomas M. Easterly 1851 daguerreotype, “Chouteau’s Pond after Pond Was Drained,” MHSA. The image shows the Chouteau Residence and the drained pond’s bed, soon to become the right (at the right top) of the first St. Louis train station. The dam, always invisible in earlier representations, is just out of view at the right.
acted upon by the hot sun, and send forth noxious vapors to poison the atmosphere.”

Bates appealed not to the owners of the pond—still the Chouteaus—but rather to the city to complete the draining.

Three years after the Board of Health had ordered the pond’s draining and Mayor Kennett started filling it in with a shovelful of loess, Thomas Easterly made two more daguerreotypes of the area (Figure 2.3). Cows graze next to a pool of water, and the difference between the street level and the pond’s bottom are still quite large. In 1858—the year Palmatary published his image with no water in view—a local newspaper reported that a young boy fishing in Chouteau’s Pond near the Missouri Pacific Railroad’s tracks had fallen in and drowned. The water which was clearly still deep enough to drown in. A few weeks later a man fell into the pond and did not drown, but got “apoplexy of the lungs” and ultimately died. In 1863, William Glasgow Jr. sent a letter to his son about skating on the pond. In a 5-acre section of the pond that had yet to be drained, near Clark and Seventeenth Streets, a company had rented a portion of the pond and set up a skating rink which rented out skates “on subscription.” This latter report suggests that parts of the pond remained undrained and un-filled for more than a decade after the draining began in 1851.

A turn-of-the-century history notes that newspapers in 1870 heralded “the last of Chouteau’s Pond,” at the same time that the Native American structure called the Big Mound was completely removed from the city’s center. It’s possible that this mound, created by the previous indigenous residents of the place that became St. Louis, was used to fill some of the remaining low spots. The state-sanctioned removal of vestiges of earlier claimants to the city’s location was another intervention in the urban landscape, and one that possibly helped to render what had once been an illegible zone more legible to the

7 Edward Bates, Bates Family Papers, MHSa, Box 7, f.1, ca. 1853.

8 Thomas Martin Easterly, Chouteau’s Pond. View of Drained Area with Cows. Collier’s White Lead Factory in Background, 1854, Daguerreotype, 1854, Easterly Daguerreotype Collection, Missouri History Museum; Thomas M. Easterly, Chouteau’s Pond after Pond Was Drained. H. Chouteau Residence in Background, Herd of Cows in Foreground., 1854, Daguerreotype, 1854, Easterly Daguerreotype Collection, Missouri History Museum.
state. Even after the mound’s complete removal, there was still water in pools. In 1874, twenty-one years after Kennett had thrown the first shovelful of dirt into the pond, it still seemed to persist. In another bird’s-eye view of the city drawn by Camille Dry, there are several large holes on the grounds of what by then was the Union Depot, the main train station that had supplanted the Missouri Pacific’s station and become the gateway to St. Louis. In the hand-colored book version, one of the large holes is colored blue and must have still had water in it. There is a conflict between Palmatary’s flat landscape with a perfectly drained pond and the other accounts that have water in at least part of the pond until the 1870s. In addition to providing believable representations about how the landscape really was—information like when the pond was finally drained—these and other visual representations of St. Louis provide clues about how people viewed the landscape, and in particular, the railroadscape. Producers of maps and bird’s-eye views subtly reproduce dominant values about the landscape through both “subliminal geometries” as well as the things that they do not represent. Knowing exactly when the pond was drained is not ultimately important to understanding the state in the train station. Knowing how to read images for the presence of the state in the station is important.

Just as the state was invisible in John Caspar Wild’s paintings, its presence in the landscape seems difficult to discern in Palmatary’s view. In the former, Chouteau’s

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Pond looked like a place of leisure. In the latter, the Mill Creek Valley seemed like a place that had been completely converted to private land owned by private citizens or companies like the Missouri Pacific. Although Palmatary’s birds-eye view likely exaggerated the speed and quantity of fill, the space did become more or less flat and ready for development. The filled-in flatness was perfect for a new kind of mobility—the railroad—that depended on broad approaches and exceedingly small grades. Palmatary’s view is then the vision of the developers: the flat, perfect grid. It was also a place that was more legible to the state, and it was a landscape that was created by and managed by the state. James Scott has written on how the grid system not only created a “homogeneous, geometrical, uniform property” that was easily turned into a marketable quantity, but also that this simplification allowed for greater state control over economic development and restive populations. Any use value that the Mill Creek tract had offered to St. Louisians outside of the Chouteau family seems to have disappeared with the draining of the pond. The perfect rectangles that the perpendicular roads created seemed to hold value only insofar as they could be exchanged for money. These exchanges were however all mediated by the state: the trustees of the Medical College, when they expanded their campus by buying adjoining parcels, had to register the sale, obtain permission to build, and settle any disputes with the local government. The grid functioned, as Scott notes, “to make the city more governable, prosperous, healthy, and architecturally imposing.”

Modern maps are comprised of ink, paper, capital, and power. They also contain certain types of information—like property lines—and not others. Examining these maps


12 Scott, 59.
Figure 2.4—Detail from Indest & Anders’s 1841 map. The pond’s disappearance seems pre-ordained by the grid. Blocks 205, 195, 196, 188, and 189 were the location of the lobe of the pond filled between 1822 and 1841. These low-lying lots were the scene of many cholera deaths, and were known collectively as the “Shepherd’s Grave Yard.”
and bird’s-eye views requires asking who had the power to produce authorized representations of the world and how those creators determined what the legitimate objects of representation were. For the view that opened this chapter, it’s difficult to answer that question. Very little is known about James Palmatary, but his St. Louis view was a lithograph that measured four and a half feet by eight feet. Urban historian John Reps has noted about Palmatary that this lithograph “of such heroic dimensions” would have been quite expensive to print, and the price correspondingly high. The “viewmakers” that Reps has exhaustively catalogued were almost always independent entrepreneurs. That said, their views and their livelihood depended on a wide array of other people. While many were artists themselves, they often relied on assistants to help execute the views. Many of the views were printed by local newspapers, which also promoted the prints in their pages. Rich patrons—who often paid extra to have their businesses or residences highlighted on the map with a number and corresponding annotation—were also crucial to the success and wide distribution of bird’s-eye views and city maps. State actors were also crucial partners, both as consumers of maps as well as sources of information for both maps and other representations of cities. In Palmatary’s case, it’s difficult to see the direct intervention of the state in his project, but a later map by the Indest & Anders firm is not as opaque. The map’s title, quaintly long in a nineteenth-century way, is explicit: “Map of the City of St. Louis Mo., Compiled and Constructed from Materials on File in the Offices of the Surveyor General, the County-Recorder, and City Engineer.” The Indest & Anders firm has produced the map, but it’s based on information collected and made available by various state officials from the county surveyor to the Recorder’s Office staff who made it available to the draftsmen. This is an example of what political geographer Joe Painter has called “prosaic geographies of stateness,” or ways the state becomes present in everyday practices. Painter notes that rather than being a separate sphere, the state leans heavily on actors from the private and voluntary sectors, and vice versa. Here the grid system of the state and all the dreams of expansion and control of state actors move seamlessly into the representational realm of
Draining the pond did not allow the grid to be created; it permitted a pre-existing plan to be realized. Fifty years before any water was let out of the overflow, a schoolteacher’s prescient dream about St. Louis’s railroad future was reported in the Missouri Republican. A certain Mr. Russell imagined huge bridges crossing the Mississippi, and with Chouteau’s Pond drained, rails ruled.\(^{14}\) Steam engines replacing sailboats was not simply a schoolteacher’s dream published on the last page of a small newspaper: it was the dream of many people, including city officials. This is clear from maps of the city made long before the dam at Chouteau’s Mill was ordered removed. As geographer Martin Dodge has noted, “maps do work in changing the world that they only seem to be representing.” A full decade before the Fourth of July ceremony that ritualistically began the filling in, mapmakers had already predicted the end of the pond. In the 1841 Indest and Anders company’s map of St. Louis (and several other contemporary maps), the erasure of the pond seems almost preordained (see Figure 2.4). Above its winding, irregular, light-blue shading, cartographers laid down a grid. These streets—Gratiot, Twelfth, Sixteenth, Adolphe—would be floating either on water or just above it in thin air. Their existence in 1841 was a mere hypothesis, based on the attempt of surveyors to reduce the water, the mud along its edges, and the heavily wooded banks


The eventual draining was even suggested by the orientations of representations of the city. Unlike medieval maps that were \textit{orient}-ed towards the “Orient” (i.e. with east on top), or towards the north like standard nineteenth-century American maps oriented themselves, this map—like many maps of St. Louis, and all the bird’s-eye views produced in the nineteenth century—has west at the top. For white St. Louisians, West was the only cardinal direction. West was the direction of progress and empire: Chouteau’s Pond blocked the way, resisting the grid’s seemingly natural march from the river westward. The map’s title even explicitly mentions the inset of Chouteau’s Pond. At Clark Street in the lower right of the pond the first actual success of the grid over the pond is visible. A lobe of the pond has been cut off here and filled; as Dodge suggests above, this is not merely representation, but is trying to change the world. Decades later the phantom grid on this 1841 map was finally realized. The flatness made it harder to hide from view: as the city spread, so did the state, and with it, its watchmen.

The federal, state, and local governments had all contributed to creating the landscape that a huge rail complex would eventually occupy. In the 1850s and early 1860s, the station was not yet a specific place where agents of the state could exercise much power. This was mainly because the station wasn’t much of a place yet. Even its name varied: what Americans today would identify as either a “railway station” or a “train station,” they might have called a “depot” well into the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The word “depot” in reference to a place where trains stopped first appeared in American English in 1842, twelve years after the inauguration of the first steam-powered passenger railroad in the United States, the Baltimore and Ohio. It may seem odd that there was no word to call the structure at rail’s end, but oftentimes there were no buildings at the end of the line. A railroad denotes a road made from parallel rails. It’s difficult to imagine a railroad without locomotives and stations, but the earliest railroads
were just rails. The first American railroads at Quincy, Massachusetts, and Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania, were built in 1827 to transport commodities, granite and coal respectively. At one end of the rails freight cars were loaded and at the other end they were unloaded. The lack of locomotives meant that there was no need for engine houses. Railroad historians have often called Baltimore’s Mt. Clare station the first American station, but it seems that there was no building for passengers at the end of the line in Baltimore. Only when it was clear that the B.&O. would be a success did the company construct a building to shelter passengers, likely not before 1835 (five years after the railroad’s inauguration).16

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The word depot comes from French, in which it referred to a place where something had been deposited or left. “Station,” on the other hand, came into English from the Old French of the thirteenth century. The word originally just referred to a site or place, but in the early nineteenth century acquired a new meaning, “place where people are stationed for some special purpose” (first recorded 1823). It’s not surprising that when stations were either nonexistent, or nothing but a shack where the tracks ended, they didn’t have much of a name at all. Maps of railroad lines often depict stations with a simple round dot. Stations eventually became much more complicated spaces than the small black spheres at the end of a long line, but the first stations were just that. A nineteenth-century company history of the Pennsylvania Railroad, rather than mention the railroad’s station in Philadelphia, lists instead three “offices where tickets are sold. […] The traveler can enter any one of them and complete the arrangements for his [sic] journey; can procure a ticket which will carry him almost anywhere; can have his baggage called for and checked at his home; can provide for a comfortable carriage at his door when the time for departure arrives.” The offices of the railroad obviated the need for a place to buy a ticket and await the train’s departure. In 1856, a Pacific Railroad advertisement closed with a line instructing potential customers where to purchase tickets. Interested travelers were told to go either to an agent on the Levee or to “apply to the office of the Pacific R.R. Co., cor[ner of] Seventh and Poplar.” The small shack in Palmatary’s view of St. Louis was not a waiting room but simply shelter for the clerk who sold tickets. The fact that there was only a small office made it a place that was for the most part unworthy of

17 Anthony Bianculi suggests that “many stations of the pioneer railroads were primitive or nonexistent.” Trains and Technology, 3 (Tracks and Structures):139.


mention. With the crisis after Abraham Lincoln’s election to the presidency, there was a flurry of troop movements through St. Louis. Two separate articles in January 1861 mentioned troops, but neither mentioned the actual station itself. Unlike later years, when the train station would be a crucial node in the military transportation system, in 1861 St. Louis station was simply a physical space where soldiers changed modes of transportation. Cavalry and troops are described as having arrived simply “on a train,” then having marched to the Jefferson Barracks just south of the city. Only a few years later, in 1866, does the newspaper advertisement make explicit mention of a station, noting that tickets could be obtained at the Levee or “at the Passenger Depot, corner Seventh and Poplar.” Despite the newly acquired capital letters in Passenger Depot, the place at the end of the railroad line was still a non-place, though not it the way that French anthropologist Marc Augé has theorized them. Rather than being exactly the same as train stations everywhere, the American station simply didn’t exist in a meaningful enough way for it to be a somewhere.

Two guidebooks to St. Louis, both published in the 1850s, confirm both the private nature of the station and its relative unimportance. Both books list a variety of edifices in their sections on public buildings in St. Louis. These spaces—the City Dispensary, the St. Louis Medical College, the St. Louis Museum, the Mercantile Library Association, the Post Office, and various churches—were not all run by the city. Some were very much for-profit ventures, but all were seen at that time as having some sort of public function. While both 1850s guidebooks mention the Missouri Pacific’s station, neither lists it among the other “public buildings.” No images appear of the station, and no mention is made of it, apart from it being where one boarded a train. This was clearly not the case

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21 “Pacific Railroad,” *St. Louis Evening News*, January 26, 1866, 1.

solely for St. Louis. A similar guidebook for New York, published a decade before the first Grand Central Station, also excluded train stations from its section on public buildings, though it included the Merchant’s Exchange. The stations were consigned to the end of the guidebook, a two-page section entitled simply “Railroads” rather than “Railway Stations.” At least for the authors of the guidebooks, and probably for their intended audience of visitors, train stations that served only one railroad company were at mid-century still solidly in the private, rather than public, sphere.\textsuperscript{23}

Americans just after mid-century saw stations as private buildings because they looked like private buildings. The first railroad stations in American cities closely resembled, in their size and architectural simplicity, the small depots in the countryside. Railroad engineers initially did not attempt to project power with their urban terminals. They sometimes built their depots as additions to existing buildings (like hotels), or even disguised them as other kinds of buildings.\textsuperscript{24} Often they were simply the least expensive structure that would still serve, literally, as the end of the line. In a speech he prepared in 1912 for the St. Louis’ Railroad Club, an important railroad executive made mention of these insignificant early stations: “Some of the older members of your Club may still remember the unsightly and mean passenger station which the Missouri Pacific had on Seventh Street, the Iron Mountain on Palm Street, and the North Missouri (now Wabash) on North Market Street. They were such that no country village nowadays would tolerate.”\textsuperscript{25} The “Passenger Depot” referred to in the Pacific Railroad’s 1866 ad was likely a second, more permanent structure for passengers. The famous Civil War

\textsuperscript{23} John Hogan, \textit{Thoughts about the City of St. Louis, Her Commerce and Manufactures, Railroads, &c.} (StLouis, Republican Steam Press Print, 1854); Jacob N. Taylor and M. O. Crooks, \textit{Sketch Book of Saint Louis: Containing a Series of Sketches of the Early Settlement, Public Buildings, Hotels, Railroads ...} (G. Knapp, Printers, 1858), 181; James Miller, \textit{Miller’s New York as It Is, or, Stranger’s Guide-Book to the Cities of New York, Brooklyn and Adjacent Places} (New York: James Miller, 1865), 36, 102–3.


\textsuperscript{25} “Origin and Development of St. Louis Terminals, prepared by Dr. William Taussig,”
photographer Alexander Gardner captured this station in a photograph in 1867.\textsuperscript{26} It’s easy to look at this image in the twenty-first century and see just another nineteenth-century building. The station is not even a particularly impressive structure: one-story, probably brick covered with plaster to look as if it was made from stone. Indeed, it’s much less impressive than the offices of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, which Gardner also photographed. The offices, in the center of St. Louis rather than on the periphery of its business district (where the station was), occupied a three-story brick building, with a distinct front door whose lintel bore the name of the company. In the picture of the station itself, the words “Pacific Railroad” appear only on the short end of the building. They almost seem like an advertisement painted on the side of a barn: “Mounty’s Tobacco” would not seem out of place in this position. The building’s two entrances are simply marked “Ticket Office” and “Ladies [Waiting] Room.” We can see the freight depot in the back, just behind the fence that we can presume surround the platform where the passengers board. Across the street is a small stand; it’s difficult to say what’s for sale but it looks like either books or jars of food, maybe candy. The child just to the side of the stand makes the latter a good possibility.

The photograph above was no mere snapshot, and much far than a random daily scene that a Scotsman took of his adopted country. Gardner was born in Scotland but came to the United States and worked with famed Civil War photographer Matthew Brady. After the end of the Civil War, the president of the Eastern Division of the Union Pacific Railroad had hired Gardner to photograph the railroad and its accomplishments.

The resulting series of photographs was intended as evidence of the railroad’s contribution to the common good—to agriculture and town building in the West—but also as a marketing effort to entice Americans to settle along the Union Pacific’s lines. Gardner’s close cropping of the station emphasizes the railroad as a front-end business, not as entry to the expanding yards behind the station.27 Gardner’s commission from the railroad wasn’t the only parameter that framed his photographs; his photographic process also constrained his choices. He used the wet collodion process to make his enormous (16 by 20 inch) glass negatives. A gooey, sticky, and highly flammable gel was spread by hand on a sheet of glass, which was then exposed for between 5 and 30 seconds. The plate was then dipped into a solution of silver iodide to stop the process. Gardner later coated the dried plate with a protective varnish, and only then could make photographic prints from the negative. Given the difficulties (the cost and time of making even a single negative plate) of creating the photographic archive of the railroad’s achievements, “Gardner took extraordinary pains to frame his shots to illustrate the growth and spread of agriculture and town building in the state, all of which he did to highlight [the Union Pacific’s] railroad construction.”28

The station seems at first glance to be a clearly corporate and private space that has totally effaced the earlier semi-public commons that existed around Chouteau’s Pond. Unlike Thomas Easterly’s broad photographs of a large swath of the landscape, Gardner focuses his attention solely on the railroad station. While Easterly’s images were pulled back far enough to show individuals or groups around the variegated space of the pond, Gardner’s tight focus shows the flattening of the space. In contrast to all the activities that Wild and Easterly depicted people doing, Gardner’s photo looks like a random crowd. Many of the people in Gardner’s photograph seem to be looking directly at the camera, and most stood still long enough that their images have been captured without

27 Alexander Gardner, *Depot St. Louis, Missouri*, 1867, albumen silver print, Photograph Collection (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ca.).

the characteristic blur of motion that so often appears in nineteenth-century photographs. One commentator suggests that the group was posing for the picture, but equally possible is that the men were simply there, and their attention was drawn to Gardner’s awkward apparatus, or perhaps that Gardner himself arranged them for his tableaux. From the angle of the photograph it appears that he is perched on top of a building across the street from the depot. A man on top of a building would surely have attracted enough attention to hold these men’s gaze for as long as it took for the light reflected off their faces, hands, and coats to change the silver nitrate on the surface of Gardner’s wet plates. But are they a crowd assembled and posed by the photographer? They lack both the stiff formality and the tools of their trade that nineteenth-century people posed and photographed in their place of businesses so often had; the butcher with his knife, his apron black with blood; the straight-backed grocer in front of a tray of apples, piled precariously. Even the stock factory workers grouped against the brick background of the place where they worked always seem to have, in these black and white prints, a few work implements: brewery workers have mugs, leather workers their sheers.

The place Gardner portrays seems straightforwardly private—a closer look reveals that it is already beginning to recreate a complex place of overlapping networks like Chouteau’s Pond, albeit with different people and flows. Despite the fact that we see only the station building and not the yards behind it, the photograph actually presents us with a complex workscape. I will argue below that the growing flows through this space have made it a place for which the city will take a more prominent role in developing, and will provide municipal officials with a place to extend its control over these flows of people and commodities. One of the most obvious things that happens at the station is its transporting passengers: we can see the room for female passengers to wait (and to buy tickets), the regular ticket office, and we can imagine the train itself pulling up just behind the station, where the fenced-off platform allows people to get on board. Behind

29 Sherow, 28.
the main station building is the freight department, where cargo (and any non-humans “passengers”) will be loaded onto the train for their journey. “Freight” is a single, simple word, but a huge array of commodities and objects passed through the station. One subset of this freight business is the U.S. Mail, which is leaving in the wagon, headed for St. Louis’ main post office. It seems reasonable that Gardner intentionally captured the mail wagon: it represents not only the financial solidity of the railroad (a large, important client that always pays and is certain to stay in business), but also the railroad’s contribution to transportation and communication, and to the functions of the US federal government.\footnote{See Richard John’s book on the US post office’s contribution to American nationalism, \textit{Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse} (Harvard University Press, 1998); as well as David Henkin’s book, which also discusses the social space of the post office buildings themselves, \textit{The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).}

There is much more to this station than passenger and freight. Though it’s still small, the station has already begun to generate opportunities for other illicit businesses and semi-tolerated cottage industries. One space is the circle, 3 feet in diameter, around a hawker. He leans against the corner of the building, his basket of mixed goods resting at his feet. Most cities’ municipal codes allowed hawkers to move through public space, selling things out of a basket as long as they perambulated—in other words, kept moving. Their competition were people who owned shops or—in the case of the railway station—had stands. Across the street from the hawker, we can see a stand. Again, it’s hard to make out just what’s for sale, but it seems to be both books and some fruit. People about to board a train might have wanted Louisa May Alcott’s recent dime novel, \textit{The Mysterious Key}, or perhaps pamphlets on Radical Reconstruction. We can’t know what the relationship was between the hawker in this picture and the owner of the stand. Indeed, it’s not even clear there is someone in the stand: has he or she emerged from the little door on the side of the stand to interact with the child? Their movements were too quick for the photographer to capture, so all we have are shadows. It’s clear though that instead of being a monolithically corporate space, the station generates opportunities for other
sorts of work. What’s missing from this photograph is, however, as important as what is pictured in it. Gardner did not capture any of the illicit activity that clearly went on at the station. In what would be a recurring story about out-of-towners (and especially rural residents) being swindled at the station, a newspaper story in 1866 reported that a hack driver had taken advantage of a Missouri Pacific Railroad passenger who needed a ride to the river. Gardner’s photograph represents the beginning of an auto-catalytic process of the station’s growth and the state’s involvement with the station. The station, as a transportation hub, was attracting not only passengers but also flows of commodities. Many kinds of things that had once moved on horses or mules, or in boats, or on people’s backs now were brought to the station and loaded onto trains. This movement, and the money that made it possible, created opportunities. Some of the people who took advantage of the station’s position at the nexus of flows are in Gardner’s picture: hawkers, stand owners, mail wagon drivers, and some con men. Others who would take advantage of the power of the station are not in the picture: they are policemen, politicians, and judges.

Recognizing train stations’ social gravity—and the reasons they lent themselves to extending state power—means recognizing their immense size by seeing the whole station. The words “train station” conjure up images of large, ornate buildings where passengers bought tickets and waited for their train. In railroad parlance, this building is not the station but merely the “headhouse.” The “station” refers not only to the headhouse, but also to the platforms behind it and the shed that covered them, as well as what could be several miles of sidings (parallel tracks where cars were parked to be loaded or unloaded), each company’s repair shops, and warehouses (see Figure 0.1 in the Introduction). The headhouse were already large buildings, but with all their associated sidings and ancillary railroad structures, they were enormous industrial plants, covering scores of blocks of city centers. To provide a contrast, Anheuser Busch was one of St.

Louis's largest industries in the 1870s. Yet in a bird's-eye view of the city in 1875, all of the brewery structures cover just over a single city block. The broad expanse that railroad stations covered was not just in St. Louis, but in any city that had a large volume of train travel. In 1863, directors of the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad Company felt the need to justify one of the year's largest expenses in their annual report: they had made substantial purchases of new land in Chicago to expand their main station. The directors had bought entire city blocks to erect “an engine house, capable of holding ten engines, a car repair shop, and coal and wood sheds” as well as a stable, a new freight house, and a 300-foot-long transfer house. The additional space would allow the company to extend their seven miles of side tracks to eight and a half miles. Large urban headhouses were enormous, and enormously expensive to build. When the Pennsylvania Railroad Company’s Western Division joined four other companies to build the first Chicago Union Station in 1881, the brick passenger and office building cost more than $200,000. The land behind the actual headhouse was another $220,000. The case was much the same a decade later in Philadelphia. The Reading Railroad built their main station in 1891 out of imported granite and expensive terra cotta. The ten-story structure had extensive office space but cost $478,800 in 1891 dollars. But the train shed covering the platforms, the ground for a huge yard just behind the station, and the 9,300 lineal feet of rail to make sidings there cost another $1,200,000.32

Understanding the station’s status and the effect it had on American cities therefore means looking past the Second Empire or Gothic buildings to see the whole station. Art historians gaze at the façade of a train station’s headhouse: the work done in the back doesn’t interest them. Engineers concern themselves, on the other hand, with a different

set of views: their cross sections are labeled with materials and inches of fill. This is akin to looking at the trees that grow in a forest and declaring them the whole of the ecology of that place: meanwhile there are birds above and fungi below, as well as complex (and normally invisible) flows. A station—and especially a union station—is much more than a building where passengers buy tickets and wait. The principal scholars who have written about the difficulty of seeing the whole station are urban designers. In considering the station, they are less interested in Gothic or Modernist styles, through-stations, or cantilevered platform covers, and more interested in the station-in-space. The urban designer, attentive to how the building functions in the fabric of the city, doesn't stop at the monumental entrance or the span of the cast iron beams. She looks out into the marshalling yards, and how that dangerous no-man's-land divides one area from another. As urban design scholars Bertolini and Spon suggest:

> What do we mean when we call the railway station a place in the city? […]

> This description…is still too vague for research purposes. In trying to improve on it, we discover that the railway station as a place has uncertain boundaries. Where does the order lie between the station district and the rest of the city? What makes the former ‘different’ from the latter? The fact is that there are several overlapping systems […]. The influence of a railway may go far beyond its immediate surroundings.33

What’s important here is that the power of the railroad is not just the line, it’s the station. Certainly the actual railroad line divides pieces of land and cuts counties in half, but the power of a train is not only where it goes, but also where it stops.

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33 Luca Bertolini and Tejo Spit, Cities on Rails: The Redevelopment of Railway Station Areas (London: Routledge, 1998), 11–12.
Union stations differed both quantitatively and qualitatively from earlier stations. Despite everyday Americans’ perceptions and the railroad companies’ civic pretensions for their terminals, union stations were absolutely private property. They were not owned or managed by municipal authorities. The railroad arrived after many U.S. cities had already grown large and developed dense inner cores. There was a constant tension between desire to have the main station as close to the center of the city, and the difficulty with building in these central areas. A trade journal for railroad managers advised in 1853 that “the location of depots…should be made [at] the point most convenient to the road for the general transaction of business, where land can be procured with proper cheapness.” Twenty years later, the advice had changed: the only way to procure land in city centers was through “a large expenditure of capital and the co-operation of the different railroad companies.”

The combination of several railroad companies

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34 These stations were called “union” not because of the Civil War (there were union stations in the south), but rather because one station “united” in one building what had before been separate stations for each railroad company. It’s difficult to date the first union station, as many early railroads shared a small depot where their lines happened to cross. Anthony Bianculli points out that while “technically a shared facility might be called a ‘union station,’ the term really connotes a substantial edifice and track facilities, rather than lesser structures that coincidentally served more than one railroad.” The two stations most often referred to as being the “first” union stations are the union depot in Providence, Rhode Island, opened in 1848 and called by one railroad historian ‘the first major American railroad station’ or the station in New Haven, Connecticut, built in 1848 to serve both the New York & New Haven and the Hartford & New Haven railroads. That station was at the intersection of Chapel and Union Streets, and may have given rise to the moniker “union” station. Other early candidates are the station of the Indianapolis Union Railway, built in 1853 by a terminal company owned by several railroads, and the Union Depot in Troy, New York (1855), built by a company owned jointly by seven railroads. A large wave of union depots came in the 1870s, and then a second wave (usually simply making these stations larger) at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth. Many of the grand stations we know today—in Union Station in St. Louis, Grand Central Station in New York, and Union Station in Chicago—are second-wave stations that replaced earlier, smaller union depots. The first Grand Central building was originally called “Union Passenger Depot.” See “The New Passenger Depot of the Harlem Railroad,” Railroad Gazette, May 21, 1870, 180. Bianculli, Trains and Technology, 3 (Tracks and Structures):158; Meeks, The Railroad Station, 69; Alan M. Levitt, “To The Editor: On Union Stations,” Newsletter of the Society for Industrial Archaeology, Spring 1999, 5; “The New Passenger Depot of the Harlem Railroad,” Railroad Gazette, May 21, 1870, 180.

35 American Railroad Journal, September 10, 1853, 588, cited in Bianculli, Trains and
was not enough. Union stations were owned by private companies representing the railroads that stopped in them, but building these stations required the active, continued intervention of the state. Officials at all levels of government—municipal, state, and federal—combined to help railroad companies erect these union stations from Maine to California. Railroad executives who created stations often pushed municipal governments to order eminent domain and subsidize clearance closer to the core, while state officials often favored outlying areas to avoid court battles with powerful landowners and keep down the costs of eminent domain–induced demolitions. Ultimately, state legislators,  

Figure 2.5—St. Louis’ Union Depot, built in 1875, as it appeared in an 1883 souvenir book.

Technology, 3 (Tracks and Structures):168; “Railroad City Termini,” Railroad Gazette, April 10, 1875, 144.

36 In the few pages he dedicates to stations, Wolfgang Schivelbusch notes that terminals were built in the peripheries of old cities “not so much due to reverence for the historical architecture of the center…but to the high cost of real estate in the middle of town.” The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the 19th Century (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University
city councilmen, judges, surveyors, appraisers, and sheriffs had to authorize and in some cases fund demolition, and see that it was carried out, to help railroad executives carve out the huge swaths of open space needed for these stations. Buying additional land after a main railroad station had been built was prohibitively expensive, because the station made the surrounding land more valuable. Station construction manuals therefore advised that it was “a mistake to build [the station] at the start on too small outlines… as additional land can be obtained prior to the construction of a terminal depot at much less rates.” The manual’s advice uses the passive tense—“can be obtained”—to elide the central importance of the state in constructing these huge stations. The capital for these acquisitions came from various parts of the sprawling American state. Part of the money was proceeds of sales of public lands granted to the railroads. The public land that was sold was outside of the city, but the money flowed into a central fund, and railroads used it to purchase costlier urban space. Enormous eight-mile square plats in the countryside enabled buying pieces of the urban grid in the city. Municipalities often gave cash bonuses for railroads that were building stations; while small towns did this to attract the railroad, cities also provided subsidies for major stations through grants of municipal land. The city of Keokuk, Iowa, appealed to the Iowa Board of Railway Commissioners to compel the five railroads that stopped in the city to build a “suitable” Union Depot on the land the city had granted. City authorities were however not automatically in favor of union stations. For example, the city of Baltimore had partially funded the construction of the B. & O. Railroad and had intervened legally to allow it to lay tracks into the city. David Schley has shown how the city later vigorously protested the railroad building a common union depot with the Philadelphia, Wilmington, & Baltimore Railroad. Citizens too feared that a union station would mean that Baltimore would no longer be a terminus

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for rail traffic (and commerce), but rather just a way station. Hundreds of residents signed a petition against the union depot. The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company ultimately ignored both the city and the citizens and built the union depot anyway.\textsuperscript{38} Railroads were also not automatically in favor of municipal aid for building union stations. As the \textit{Railroad Gazette} cagily opined, “Two railroads are not so good as one, as long as one can do all the business.”\textsuperscript{39} Each railroad had to weigh the advantages of having a subsidized central depot with the possible benefits that would accrue to its rival companies.

Even if municipal authorities did want these larger stations, a given city’s residents did not automatically accept the legal and physical work necessary to destroy a large section of a city and give the ground over to a private corporation. Eminent domain comes to the United States from English common law, and was written into the constitution of the United States. The last clause of that document’s Fifth Amendment is the so-called “Takings Clause,” which specifies that “nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” At first, though, this clause applied only to the federal government, and did not restrain the states’ use of what we now call eminent domain. The states made use of their unrestrained power of eminent domain not only to seize land for public buildings, but also to seize land for “public benefit.” Thus, even land then granted to a private company could be seized by the government, as long as there was a benefit to the larger public of the new use of the land. In the early part of the nineteenth century state officials made much use of eminent domain—or “condemnation,” as nineteenth-century Americans called it—in canal building.


\textsuperscript{39} “Municipal Aid to Railroads,” \textit{Railroad Gazette}, April 16, 1870, 30.
Like many other states, Missouri’s legislature had cleared the way legally for cities and railroads to clear the way physically. An 1871 “Act in relation to Railroads and Union Depots” provided that any three railroad corporations with tracks leading into a city could present a petition to the relevant county circuit court. The petition had to promise to make use of the depot if it were built, and had to outline the union depot’s “public utility.” In other words, Missouri legislators assumed that train stations were private buildings, and that a public function had to be successfully argued and demonstrated. At the time three railroad lines—the North Missouri, the Iron Mountain, and the Missouri Pacific—had lines into the city, but the last of the three (perhaps because it already owned the most strategically located station) dithered.[40] The capital for a large union depot had already been subscribed, but the Missouri Pacific pulled out at the last minute, “before the company [organized by the three lines] could commence operations and condemn lands for such a Union Depot.” The president of the Missouri Pacific, Joseph Brown, also happened to be, contemporaneously, the mayor of St. Louis. While Brown apparently did not see the public utility in a union depot, he did approve a city ordinance allowing the Missouri Pacific to lay its track on Poplar Street, which a newspaper of the time called “the greatest nuisance in the city” and which led to “the utter ruin of adjoining property.”

[41] In addition to actually legally taking over land through eminent domain, railroads cajoled cities into letting them “occupy” parts of public streets with their tracks. This sometimes-unwanted occupation of urban land was contested by ordinary Americans. Urban historian David Stowell has argued that the general public’s participation in the Great Strike of 1877 was largely a protest of citydwellers not against the railroad companies in the abstract, but rather against the usurpations by the railroad of public

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[40] See the 1867 map of St. Louis in the appendix to appreciate how far apart the three stations were.

[41] The Act was approved on 18 March 1871. For a story of the betrayal by the then head of the Missouri Pacific, see “Joey, Old Boy: How the Poplar Street Track Nuisance Was Created, and How the Building of a Fine Union Depot Was Prevented,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 6, 1885, 2.
space. Street-level tracks endangered both people and property: children and adults were killed by trains rocketing down tracks laid on public streets, and buildings were regularly set on fire by cinders from locomotives. Tellingly, the occupation of railroad property by citizens during the Great Strike was rarely at stations: Stowell shows how groups of people most often gathered to stop trains at dangerous, street-level crossings. The protest was against deadly trains that careened down public streets, not the station as a place of corporate usurpation.42

In 1875, St. Louis finally got its Union Depot. Passengers switching from, say, the Iron Mountain Line to the Missouri Pacific would not have to trudge across town from

42 One of the longest-lasting strike actions during the Great Strike of 1877 was in St. Louis. See David Roediger, “‘Not Only the Ruling Classes to Overcome, but Also the So-Called Mob’: Class, Skill and Community in the St. Louis General Strike of 1877,” *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 2 (December 1, 1985): 213–39; David O. Stowell, *Streets, Railroads, and the Great Strike of 1877* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
one small station to another, but rather would just have to change platforms. The change in the name of the station likely occasioned a change in thinking. Passengers whose tickets stated that they would arrive at the Missouri Pacific Passenger Depot knew they were arriving at a private business. Passengers getting out of a train at the St. Louis Union Depot had a much more spatially ambiguous arrival. The Depot was St. Louis’s station, not the station of this or that particular railroad line. The importance of the word “union” should also not be underestimated. Even today it makes Americans think of the Civil War, and of marriage. Though the word “union” was in use before the war, and though in this case the word referred to the union of several lines, that name certainly had a deeper resonance after 1865. “Union” made the station seem like a public place, a common space of the _res publica_.

The qualitative difference between single-line and union stations was also the result of the quantitative differences. Like other unions stations, the St. Louis Union Depot not only served multiple lines—in 1875 twenty-two railroads ran trains to the St. Louis Union Depot—but was also much larger than earlier stations. Multiple lines demanded a much larger footprint, and both the enormity as well as elaborate façades injected spatial uncertainty into their architecture. The stations were legally still very much corporate spaces: the St. Louis Union Depot that replaced the Missouri Pacific station was built in 1875 by a private corporation formed by the railroads that served it. But the station’s sheer size and the activity that it drew to it likely made it seem like a public place. In the 1850s, guidebooks to the city had given the small Missouri Pacific station short shrift. Twenty years later there was a change in the iconography of public places. The souvenir “viewbooks” of the city’s monuments issued by various dry goods stores in the city in the 1870s and ‘80s all featured the Union Depot, either pointed out in the panorama picture of the skyline, or on an illustration page of its own. In Louis Glaser’s pocket-sized flipbook of images (Figure 2.6), the Union Depot took its place alongside the Museum of

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Art, St. Louis University, the Four Courts, City Hall, and Shaw’s Gardens. The intended audience for the image (the visitor to St. Louis) and the motivation (boosterism) are the same, but the view is quite different from Gardner’s photograph of the Missouri Pacific station. This wider, higher framing not only displays the size of the Union Depot, but its crucial central position in a broader network of transportation (all the wagons and drivers) and commerce (the factories and warehouses in the background). The depot was not simply a place of business or a way out of the city: it was the monumental front gate, the place cities were increasingly proud of. An 1876 “Tour of St. Louis” authored by local journalists also elevated the Union Depot to the status of a public place, putting it in the section that included descriptions of libraries, parks, public schools, markets, and fairgrounds. Descriptions of the city’s individual railroads, on the other hand, were in another section entitled “St. Louis Enterprise.” This same change was also underway in other cities. Clearly New Yorkers too had begun to see their union stations as places of civic pride. An updated 1876 version of the guidebook to New York referred to above, instead of a simple list of the locations of the end of various railroad lines, recommends a visit to Grand Central Depot on 42nd Street. 44 “This is decidedly the largest and handsomest depot in the world,” the author claimed. He notes its imposing exterior and “immense size” and suggests that it is well worth the time “for a stranger in our city to pay a visit to this rightly named ‘Grand Depot of the world.’” Union stations were becoming symbols of civic pride, not simply a place to leave a city. Some cities were even more explicit in linking their stations to the civic built environment. In a souvenir book like the one above for St. Louis, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company depicted its new Broad Street Station in Philadelphia. The sepia-colored drawing of the handsome brick depot has an inset of Independence Hall. The next page shows the “New Public Building, Philadelphia, cor. Broad and Market Streets, Built of Marble & Granite” which the caption calls the “Grandest Single Structure in the World,” already having cost over

44 As noted in footnote 5, this station was the precursor to the present Grand Central Station in New York.
fifteen million dollars. The caption notes that to the left of the Public Building was the US Mint, and to the right was the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot. Spatially linking their stations to public buildings strengthened the perception of these stations as civic places, if not actually public.45

Railroad stations, as they grew larger, generated opportunities for a heterogeneous mix of work opportunities. When we think of people working at the station, the first people that come to mind are railroad employees: the ticket takers, conductors, and perhaps even workmen who might have been visible far beyond the platforms, putting the trains together. The immense flows that crossed in that space exerted a gravitational pull. These were flows of people (both paying passengers and stowaways), flows of goods through the freight yards, and flows of money to be made and stolen (by petty crooks and by enormous corporations). These were also flows of power: The Union Depot was where people who commanded things and people arrived, were met, and were escorted away. All these flows created a complicated workscape, with respectable work out in the open along the main streams, and illicit opportunities in the eddies. The diversity of businesses that union stations sheltered also gave them a semblance of being modern-day covered agoras, places of commerce but public ones. In Gardner’s photograph above (Figure 2.5), the Missouri Pacific depot attracted two other endeavors, a hawker and a stand, and it likely pulled other businesses to locations nearby—just across the street, or around the corner. Eventually, union stations pulled these small businesses inside, like mitochondria drawn into early cells. St. Louis’ Union Depot had a newsstand, a restaurant, a fruit stand,

and a barber, as did stations across the country. The Boston & Providence’s station, built in 1875, had a hotel, a barber, a telegraph office, a bakery, a billiard room a reading room, a “periodical stand,” a café, a waiting room with maps and water fountains. The novelty of this situation should not be underestimated: the train station was the first place where one place of business literally englobed a number of small businesses. Postcards from as late as the turn of the century featured not only the elaborate facades or the huge waiting rooms, but the stands inside union stations. In addition to broad-angled views of union station headhouses in Detroit, Bangor, Denver, and Washington, D.C., these postcards showed stands where passengers could buy fruit, a newspaper, or chocolate. Historians of visual culture have long pointed out that photographs of the past are not only valuable for their ability to show what the past looked like, but also to suggest what scenes people in the past thought worthy of capturing. Postcards were an important part of visual culture in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century US: millions were produced and sent, with one billion postcards sent in 1910.

These postcards’ importance is also obvious from their existence today in archives, not only of formal institutions but their circulation in informal archives like personal collections and vendors at flea markets. To a present-day American, some of these scenes from inside train stations seem like mundane sites, and yet both postcard producers and the people who bought and sent the cards clearly thought these stands were remarkable. They are also significant because they illustrate how train stations were not simply private places like the inside of a factory or a dry goods store. Their names, their architecture, and their spaces made them more like a public park than a factory. Railroad executives were


47 Jackson points to a change in postal rates in 1873, as well as contemporary advances in print technology, as key structural causes in the creation of what David Jenkins has called the “postal culture” of the second half of the nineteenth century. Donald C. Jackson, Pastoral and Monumental Dams, Postcards, and the American Landscape (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 9–14, 46–47.
 aware of the ambiguity of the stations’ space, and used that ambiguity to advance claims of the stations as civic structures, but also to make more money. In 1898 the superintendent of the Reading Terminal in Philadelphia wrote to a senior vice president in the company to notify him that the company had “a public pay station for the Bell Telephone Company in our telegraph offices.” The Reading Railroad kept half of the receipts, and the “public” phone was doing so well that the superintendent recommended more phones be installed. The next year another official informed the upper management that the bathrooms in the station were being “used indiscriminately by people off the street. This brings in a class of men, white and colored, that cannot be handled by the Italian bootblacks.” Acknowledging the space’s seeming publicness, he underlines that “no one could object to respectable people who use the station, even though they are not passengers” but recommends that the company’s hired watchmen be directed to surveil the bathrooms more diligently. Even something as minor as a drinking fountain reinforced the idea that stations were in some way public places. Drinking water, previously associated with large public fountains, was channeled into some of the first drinking fountains. The Reading had these available in their waiting rooms.48 The union station in the 1870s already had some of the ambiguities that historians have associated with 1950s shopping malls. Both stations and malls were legally private places that citizens made spatial claims on, but they were also—crucially—places where citizens accepted constant policing.49

Ordinary Americans could make claims on the space in and around train stations. As these claims interfered with railroad business, they were put to the test and it was

48 Letter from March 6, 1899, Superintendent Horton to Theodore Voorhees, December 19, 1898, Box 1030, Folder 3, Localities and Locality Files: Philadelphia, Reading Terminal (July–December 1898), emphasis mine; Letter from E.F. Smith to Theodore Voorhees, March 6, 1899, Box 1030, Folder 4, Localities and Locality Files: Philadelphia, Reading Terminal (January–May 1899); Letter from E.F. Smith to Theodore Voorhees, April 9, 1894, Box 1028, Folder 6, Localities and Locality Files: Philadelphia, Reading Terminal (April–June 1894), Reading Company records (Accession 1520), Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

49 Stand of the Union News Co, Union Depot, Albany, NY, 1900 (?), Curt Teich Postcard Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago, Ill.; Union Station, Portland, ME, 1900 (?), Curt
the state that adjudicated. A writer who only identifies herself with the name “hawker” wrote a letter-to-the-editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1883. “Hawker” had been at the Union Depot the night before and had seen “the old lady who sells oranges” driven away by a policeman, and told not to come back. Upon making inquiries, Hawker was told that Mr. Fopiano (the man who kept the fruit stand) was responsible. This makes Hawker indignant, and she immediately connects this eviction to the right to public space. What right does anyone have, Hawker asks rhetorically, to remove anyone “from a public space like the Depot” when they’ve paid their license? “I claim when the Depot is not enclosed, it is not private property, and as long as I do not obstruct the platform, I violate no law.” The editor of the *Post-Dispatch* agreed. Commenting that “the spirit of monopoly is everywhere the same and there is…nothing too small for it to stoop to.” The Depot owners’ grasping spirit made them banish the orange lady on the account of “the baronial Fopiano at the banana stand.” The last word went, apparently, to the banana stand man himself. Signing his letter to the *Post-Dispatch* “The Baronial Fopiano,” he takes the newspaper to task. Underlining the fact that the laws of the city require hawkers and peddlers to keep moving, he suggests that since he obeys the laws, everyone else should as well. The issue then is not that the orange (or apple) lady was competing with him, but that her license only allowed her temporary access to the space inside of the Union Depot, whereas Fopiano’s gave him a stationary right to the space. The police had, apparently, sided with Fopiano.

The Depot’s opportunities for marginal labor were indeed less open to women. The orange lady was not the only hawker who haunted the Depot. In a surprisingly upbeat account, a writer for the *Post-Dispatch* drafted an article about a miserable, rainy March
day. Despite the rain, “the lounger” (as he identifies himself) traipses around St. Louis for his Sunday stroll, finding “a great deal of consolation in lonesome cogitation.” He happens on Mrs. Long, a “crepit and pitiful” old woman who is selling newspapers near the Laclede Hotel. The Lounger recognizes her as the woman that he has seen for decades, rain or shine, at the Union Depot (Sunday being the day she spends instead in front of the hotel). Despite her appearance and her decades of work at an ill-paid job (he notes that people often buy several newspapers from her, out of charity), the Lounger relates that a few little boys near her saying that she lives “in a fine house, beautifully carpeted and elegantly furnished” with, among other things, a piano. The Lounger assumes that this juvenile gossip is true, that she is indeed well off, but comments that “one wouldn’t think so to see her in a very old calico dress with [a] dilapidated plush jacket and well-worn hood, standing under the dripping walls of the Laclede Hotel on a rainy Sunday.”

The Depot was clearly a place where the poor hawker had a slightly better chance of surviving than elsewhere in the city. An 1889 newspaper article that recounted the “queer histories” of adults who sold newspapers; the first example in the series of biographical sketches is Harriet Elderfield, 52, a newspaper hawker at the Union Depot. The article claims that Elderfield is the butt of the newsboys jokes and pranks because she is “eccentric,” which may just mean that she is in a profession for which she was considered inappropriate on both age and gender grounds. Elderfield explained in a statement she herself wrote for the Dispatch that she didn’t think that a woman selling newspapers was so different than selling other things, but that doing it has brought her “a precarious livelihood…and an unpleasant notoriety.” Elderfield began by chaperoning her two newsboy sons, but began selling when she noticed that she had the ability to do so, and perhaps out of need. She noted that there was another woman who sold newspapers at the Union Depot, Mrs. Hugg, who had six children. Elderfield also specifically mentions Mrs. Long, whom the Lounger had noted. Unsurprisingly, Elderfield knows better than

51 “The Lounger,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 26, 1883, 8.
to believe the little boys’ tales: Long was an older woman, “I think about 65,” who had sold Sunday newspapers for twelve years. The reason is clear: Long has a sick husband, and her grown children do not help her. Long showed up every Sunday (rain or shine, as is clear from the Lounger), and “having good health for her age she subsists not on generosity, but hard labor.”

Though her nickname was “Mrs. Gould” (after the majority owner of the St. Louis Union Depot, Jay Gould), Elderfield underlined that selling papers is not “smooth sailing and sure money-making,” but rather hard, risky work. Apparently, theft around the station didn’t make the work any easier—Elderfield had been robbed at least once of $50. It’s unclear how many papers she had had to sell to save that money up.

Railroad companies were eager to rent out the semi-public space of their waiting rooms if they could make a profit doing so. Just after the Reading Railroad’s new terminal opened in Philadelphia, Louis B. M. Goff wrote to the company requesting permission to sell flowers in the station. The Reading agreed to lease Goff the privilege for a cool $720 annually, though when he tried to make extra money by checking packages at his stand, they company threatened to annul the agreement.

Another dangerous yet apparently legal job was train-side advertising. A recent arrival in St. Louis in 1887 took a job holding up a sign advertising sales to the windows of arriving trains. The employment ended when he was struck by a train. His horribly mangled body was taken to the city Dispensary, but he died soon after arrival. During his final convulsions he sign clutched a sign in his hand. It read: “Suits that are sold all


53 “A Young Thief,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 6, 1887, 1.

54 Letter from Louis B. M. Goff to the Reading Railroad Company, August 25, 1892, Box 1027, Folder 5, Localities and Locality Files: Philadelphia, Reading Terminal (July—December 1892); Letter from Theodore Voorhees to J.H. Loomis, April 16, 1895, Box 1029, Folder 2, Localities and Locality Files: Philadelphia, Reading Terminal (Jan- June 1895); Letter from H.W. Souders to Louis M.B. Goff, June 21, 1897, Box 1030, Folder 1, Localities and Locality Files: Philadelphia, Reading Terminal (April-December 1897), Reading Company records (Accession 1520), Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware.
over for $15 can be bought for $10 at the Globe, 705 to 713 Franklin avenue.”

Being a bootblack at the Depot was also potentially hazardous; it seems that there weren’t enough scuffed boots to go around, as there are several reports of bootblacks fighting amongst themselves. Reading Terminal in Philadelphia must have been a popular place to get one’s shoes shined, as the Reading company’s archives are filled with offers for the boot-shining monopoly. John Deluiso, who paid $1,500 annually for the right to shine anyone’s shoes in the Reading Terminal, even rented the inverted corner space outside the Terminal for yet another shoe-shine stand. The fold created by the oddly-shaped edge of the terminal was on the sidewalk but technically the railroad company’s property. The president himself was consulted about the stand, and granted permission as long as “the place [was] fitted up and kept with entire neatness, and that the manner of its fitting shall be satisfactory… We do not want something in outrageous taste.”

The shoeshining stall had to reflect the railroad’s dignity as well as its civic commitments. Hotel “runners” (agents who worked on commission trying to get visitors to go to their employer) frequently got into fisticuffs at the Union Depot.

Still on the legal end of working, but more towards the occasional were Pinkertons, the ubiquitous toughs of capitalism. While hot on the trail of train robbers, several Pinkertons attempting to keep a low profile were noticed by the St. Louis press. Well-dressed men hanging around the station for hours at a time attracted notice, it seems.

The Depot was not only a place where flows of money could be intercepted; it also was a place where the poor could intercept energy. This is clear from another job women

55 “A Pathetic Scene,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1879–1922), June 15, 1887, 5.

56 Letter from Joseph Harris to Theodore Voorhees, March 8, 1895, Box 1029, Folder 2, Localities and Locality Files: Philadelphia, Reading Terminal (Jan-June 1895), Reading Company records (Accession 1520), Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware.

57 “Cady’s Matinee: A Long and Interesting Performance Given to Crowded Houses To-Day,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 14, 1887, 5; “Runners Fight,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 19, 1887, 2.

58 “A Pointer for the Culprits,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 30, 1887, 5.
apparently took up at the Depot, coal scavenging. In addition to idle trains, marshalling yards also often had loose coal scattered across the ground. The coal available in the yards attracted the poor. Unless she were deaf (or desperate), there’s no way Bridget Mead could have not heard the train’s warning as she walked along the tracks in the marshalling yard. Missouri Pacific Railroad engineer William Kearney later testified at the coroner’s inquest that he saw Mead when there was only 100 feet between her and the train he drove into the switching yard of the Union Depot. He blew the whistle several times but Mead must have been used to hearing whistles in that part of the yard: the engineer noted that Mead “was accustomed to gather up coal that fell from the coal cars in the yard.” William Isbell, the train’s fireman, also testified that Kearney had blown the whistle more than once, and that he himself had rung the train’s bell as loud as he could and shouted, but to no avail. Isbell too had seen Mead before in the yards, picking up scrap iron. The article, by way of explanation, noted that the accident happened on the grounds of the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company, “and is not a public thoroughfare.” Whether this was an accident or whether Mead had simply tired of a life of foraging in the interstices of industrial space is unclear. The fact that the station’s yard was not a public thoroughfare probably also meant that there would be less competition for the few pieces of coal that fell from the trains. Another cold, old woman—Elizabeth Lohman, 71, of 202 South Twentieth Street—was also killed by a train while scavenging coal just west of the Eighteenth Street bridge over the railroad tracks. The cold weather and the availability of coal at the Depot meant that the station was what Mitchell and Hynen have called “an interstitial space of survival.”

The quantities of coal were apparently not small, in aggregate. In 1883, a Post-Dispatch article claimed that over $2,000 in coal was stolen every week. The railroad

59 “Bridget Mead’s Horrible Death,” *St. Louis Evening Post*, March 2, 1878, 4.

60 “The Body Identified: It Was Mrs. Elizabeth Lohman Who Was Killed at Union Depot,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 4, 1889, 10.

61 Don Mitchell and Nik Heynen, “The Geography of Survival and the Right to the City: Speculations on Surveillance, Legal Innovation, and the Criminalization of Intervention,”
director who was interviewed indicated the East St. Louis and Union Depot marshalling yards as the primary place for the theft. That poor people would steal some coal (in the middle of January, when the article appeared) already irritated him, but what most seemed to anger him even more is that the brakemen would heave lumps of coal off of the cars for people to gather later. Asked by the reporter why the railroad company didn’t prosecute for trespass, the director responded that “It isn’t trespass unless we can catch them on the cars, or in our inclosure [sic], and they evade that by pulling the coal off the cars with poles, and then picking it off the ground.” The yards, then, are by the director’s admission still some sort of semi-public space. Though he doesn’t mention the brute violence of the railroad cops, he does suggest that while along the riverfront there’s still a lot of theft going on, there has been some improvement: “It used to be simply terrible in the Union Depot yards, but we’ve got that about stopped.”

Coal was not only for the trains, but also for large urban stations that burned tons of coal each year for heating. Railroad companies had to purchase expensive urban land to store the station’s coal, but these were magnets for poor people. In Philadelphia, the Reading Terminal’s coal yard was for a time unfenced, until a station official wrote to the upper management, informing them that “a large quantity of this coal carried off, as it is impossible to keep people from stealing same, the yard being exposed as it is.”

Gathering coal was clearly an attempt of subsistence outside the capitalist market, and in this way was somewhat similar to fishing in Chouteau’s Pond. Both spaces generated opportunities for subsistence, but the Depot’s opportunities were different than the Pond’s. Railroad coal, unlike pond fish, was not a gift of nature, free for the gathering, but rather a commodity brought through the Depot’s

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Urban Geography 30, no. 6 (August 1, 2009): 611–32.


63 Letter from George Coughlin to C.E. Henderson, February 9, 1897, Box 1029, Folder 5, Localities and Locality Files: Philadelphia, Reading Terminal (July–December 1896), Reading Company records (Accession 1520), Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware.
yards because it was valuable on the market. In addition, the gathering around the Pond—whether of berries or of fish—was legal; gathering coal, someone else’s property, was clearly not legal, in addition to being quite dangerous.

Fences enclosed private space, but many nineteenth-century Americans thought their city’s central train station should be a triumphal arch, not a portcullis. The Union Depot in Detroit had gates whose guards kept anyone without a ticket out. In 1879 an elderly woman was bound and determined to get to the platform of a train heading to Port Huron, where her daughter had recently given birth. At the gate, a railway station worker blocked her way, asking for her ticket. The woman tried to explain that she did not want to get onto the train, but rather wanted to find an acquaintance who would take word to her daughter that she was happy about the birth. The guard responded that she couldn’t pass without a ticket, and her response fell on deaf ears. Frustrated, she cried “I want this ‘ere railroad to understand that I’ve got a darter [sic] in Port Huron and she gotta baby four weeks’ old, and I’m going to send her up word in spite of all the gates in this depot.” Again the official insisted on seeing a ticket, and this time the woman raised her umbrella and struck him on the head. As he staggered, she made her way past him, found someone going to Port Huron to relay her message, and left the station, the official still trying to regain his composure.

The woman’s insistence on her right to enter the station shows her perception of the station as a public place. The newspaper’s use of dialectical speech patterns may or may not reflect how the actually spoke, but it does reflect what the newspaper thought of her ideas about the station: only an ignorant hick would see the depot as a totally publicly accessible place. That said, even elites who recognized the legally private nature still thought of the stations as public. While most St. Louisians were outraged at the inadequacy of their Union Depot by 1880, city council member Moses Fraley stated that he was not in favor of “dictating to private corporations to compel them to build extravagant structures.” When asked if the small depot hurt business in St. Louis, though, Fraley replied that he did think that “it would add to the interests of St. Louis to have
all public buildings, and more especially the Union Depot buildings, as elegant and commodious as possible.”64 The other residents of St. Louis who complained publicly that the depot was inadequate as a public building and entrance to the city were likely untroubled by the constant presence of police at the station.

In the course of twenty-five years, the place where the railroad tracks ended metamorphized from a shack to a low brick building to a three-story Second Empire monument to St. Louis. These changes were not merely architectural, nor were they simply more impressive buildings on a larger piece of railroad property. Palmatary’s little shack has a few people standing around it, Gardner’s building has attracted a crowd, and the Union Depot was the beating heart of “the great arteries” through which “throngs of thousands” passed daily.65 The state—in the person of the city engineer, country surveyors and recorders, state legislators, and federal congressmen—had helped build the station. They provided railroad companies with the capital and the legal permission to buy up whole neighborhoods and demolish them, run tracks and locomotives down city streets, and create railroadscape that stretched far beyond the headhouses. Once the station’s gravity began to pull St. Louis towards it, the state again took notice. Instead of surveyors quietly reading off their transits, or legislators passing bills, the state in union stations of the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a cop. In the stories of work being done above, the scuffles were adjudicated by policemen. Other state actors would continue to be involved with the train station, but the enormous flows of money and people and goods through the station demanded a more continuous—and visible—presence. Sometime

64 “A Man and a Gate and a Woman,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 12, 1879, 2; “The Upper House: Strong Expressions of Opinion That a Real Union Depot Should Be Erected,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 1, 1880, 7.

65 Dacus and Buel, A Tour of St. Louis, 129.
after its opening in 1875, police began to patrol the Union Depot, all day and all night. In their collection on the state in U.S. history, James Sparrow, William Novak, and Stephen Sawyer have suggested that rather than searching for the timeless essence of an abstract state, historians should search for “the state in the concrete and historical sites where power originates.”

The train station, between mid-century and the 1870s, had gone from being a non-place, to being someplace that people in power built, to being someplace where power could be exercised.

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In 1874 Camille Dry, newly arrived draftsman from back East, announced his intention to create a bird’s-eye view of St. Louis drawn in perspective. Rather than one large print, Dry’s bird’s-eye view would in fact be many bird’s-eye views, each an individual plate in the book published by a local publisher. As the St. Louis Globe-Democrat noted, Dry was fastidiously precise, and any examination of the work would show its “faithfulness and accuracy.”¹ Plate number 27 provides a valuable look at the recently constructed Union Depot. Rather than the boosterish view of the façade from the front typical of souvenir books of the time (and postcards in subsequent decades), the viewer sees the Depot from the back. The back of the headhouse is in the upper right-hand corner, whereas the shed, tracks, repair shops, and ancillary warehouses fill much of the rest of the frame. The last vestiges of Chouteau’s Pond are still visible in the center of the plate, as is the back half of the gable of the 1867 station, to the right of the large

¹ Cited in John W. Reps, Cities of the Mississippi: Nineteenth-Century Images of Urban Development (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1994), 70. The date of the Globe-Democrat article was January 2, 1876. Reps guesses, given on the similarities, that Dry used a surveyors’ map of St. Louis to prepare his plates. Here again is the connection between commercial artists, state-produced data, newspapers, and representations of the city.
warehouses in the lower right-hand corner. This view of the railroadscape does several things important for this chapter. It shows graphically what written sources have already suggested: the station was at the center of a range of crisscrossing networks, and thronged with people. This view from above and back also decenters the headhouse. This forces the viewer to see how large the whole station was, but also allows the viewer to consider how the architecture of the station limits people’s coming and going.

This station’s architecture and its relation to the cityscape around it created not only ambiguity about its private status, but also opportunities for the exercise of municipal power. The Missouri Pacific station in the last chapter, and other smaller stations like it, were less articulated than the later Union Depot. In other words, there were relatively few stages or thresholds to pass through. In Alexander Gardner’s photograph, people are out in the street. They can walk directly onto the platform just inside the gate, or could go into the waiting rooms. Once in the waiting room, there was likely a small clerk’s office with a window opening onto the waiting room. From the waiting room, a person could walk out onto the platform and then board the train. It’s easy to see how many more possible thresholds there are to cross. From the street, a passenger could take one of the entrances to the first platform and there board a train directly, or could enter through the main entrance underneath the two-story clock tower. From this main atrium, one could enter the ticket room, where a ticket office opened onto a larger room, or the waiting room. Off the waiting room were bathrooms as well as a barber shop and a fruit stand. On the other side of the station was a restaurant with a separate men’s smoking room and bar. In the second and third stories of that end of the Depot were apartments rented out to restaurant and railroad staff. The tracks and the platforms run parallel to the station, and therefore necessitated crossing depending on one’s destination. Across the tracks and further away still were grain elevators, warehouses, and repair shops. Further out still—beyond the edge of Dry’s image—were yards where trains waited for lading and materials were stored. It’s around these edges of the yard that tramps gathered in their temporary “jungles,” near enough to the headhouse to catch a slow-moving train and gather things
like wood and water, but far enough away to be mostly out of sight of municipal police and the railroad police—the so-called “bulls” who also patrolled the yard.

This brief tour should make plain that there was not a neat boundary between “public” and “private” space at the station. Susan Gal has suggested that rather than conceptualize public and private spheres as separate, or even as having a shifting or vague boundary, the two statuses are dependent on context and also fractal. To take an example at the station: the ticket room is inside of the station which is on legally private property: the lack of architectural impediments to access make that waiting room a “public” space nested inside of a larger private space (the station).² Within the ticket room, however,

there is a small, walled-off office for the ticket clerk. That is a private space embedded in the pseudo-public space of the waiting room, itself embedded within the station, the private property of the railroad companies. Buildings have been said to be a technology allowing “inhabitants” to control “visitors,” but the fractal nature of the spaces in a station and the temporary visits of passengers made it difficult for the “inhabitants” (conductors, but also police) to surveil everyone.³

These fractal nestings of public and private were created by the juridical-legal apparatus of the federal government in tandem with the actual architecture of the station. The whole station is private, but the ticket office is yet more private. The areas of the station open to public access are areas the depot company allows to be accessed, but also the parts of the larger station that they are unable to control effectively and at all times. It’s clear from the many accounts of arrests that follow below that the station police made patrols out into the freight yards, but it’s also clear that they spent much more time inside the station, on the platforms, at the exits, and wandering through the waiting rooms and restaurants. Tramps, coal scavengers, and working class people looking to make a quick buck or jump a train used this liminal space to their advantage. Though close, this space was hard to get to directly from the headhouse of the Union Depot. Dry’s picture shows that trains were only about as long as the Depot itself, about a single city block or two hundred feet. From the platform, there were three easy exits: into the Depot and straight out underneath the clock tower, or out one of two exits. Because of the tracks and the relatively unobstructed view, walking back towards the left of the image above was sure to be both slow and certain to be observed. The architecture of the station—both the architecture of the headhouse but also the disposition of the tracks—funneled most passengers in and out of one of the few thresholds to genuinely public space. The power exerted directly by the state, by police but also by laws about where private property began

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and ended, placed people in and around the station in different subject positions.

The station was not only an area that was spatially narrow: chronology, represented by the huge clock on the main tower, also restricted access. The oversize clocks that were the most iconic features of late nineteenth-century were both symbols of power and the instruments of that power. What was probably the first US union station, in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1849 had an “eight-foot diameter, four-faced clock in the ninety foot high tower illuminated by gas and the bell mounted above it announced the arrival and departure of trains.”

Pictures of early union depots from all over the country almost inevitably show a large central tower with an enormous clock, its time being set each week to a telegraph signal. In Boston, the clock tower on the Boston & Providence depot had “one of the largest clock faces in the Boston, which can be seen night and day from a long distance above the surrounding buildings.” It’s difficult to make out the clock in Dry’s image, but it’s plainly visible in a Rand McNally illustration of the St. Louis Union Depot from the 1880s.

The clock is almost as tall as a horse just underneath it, at least five feet in diameter if not more. Its central position on the main tower of the station underlines the importance of time to railroads.

Clocks in commanding positions, visible far from the railroad station, tied the station and the railroads to an imagined nation and the federal government. In 1870, an article in a railroad trade journal pointed out the benefits of Greenwich which “been applied to

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the time-keepers of the English railroads, and is now even being extended into all of the
affairs of common life throughout Great Britain.” The royal astronomer would send out an
“electrical communication” and in this way regulated “the standard clocks of the railroads,
and the timepieces of the public buildings, banking houses, etc.” In Britain, the central
government provided a national standard through the time they gave the railroads. In the
United States, a US Army astronomer began a campaign in 1874 for standard time; it
was however the railroads themselves that decided on time zones and standardized time.
“Birthed in 1883 as railroad time,” comments Alexis McCrossen, “it became national
time a few years later.” The local time of church bells and circadian rhythms gave way to a
chronology of national time, transmitted through the railway. After 1883, the train station
clock literally became the clock that citydwellers heeded.6

Standardized time in the United States was created by railroads and only adopted
after the fact by the US government—even time was a fractal nesting of public and
private temporalities. Through the scheduled arrivals and departures of trains, the railroad
companies and the federal government (by its adoption of this chronological standard)
forced submission to railroad time displayed by the station tower’s clock and all the
other clocks set to it. This narrowing of access, of entrance and egress to the station via
limitations in space and time, had profound effects on local authorities’ ability to exert
power.

Despite the absolutely amazing level of detail, Dry did not attempt to differentiate
between his figures. It’s impossible to tell who the people are who swarm around the
Depot, but some guesses can be made from written accounts of the station. Zooming
in on a detail of the plate, two people on the tracks in the lower left-hand corner stand
out immediately. They are not on the platform but rather stand dangerously close to the

6 “Uniformity in Railroad Time,” Railroad Gazette, April 9, 1870, 290; Alexis McCrossen,
Marking Modern Times: A History of Clocks, Watches, and Other Timekeepers in American Life
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 113; For railway time replacing local time, see
Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America, 59–60.
tracks; a train is bearing down on them. They could be either railroad employees fixing a broken track switch, or perhaps St. Louisians down on their luck, looking for fallen coal. Nearer to the center of the plate there are a number of people who appear to be waiting for a train on the platforms. From the number of newspaper articles about con men arrested at the Depot, it’s likely that at least one of these twenty people is working a con. It might be the old check cashing scam, or perhaps the “fallen valise of bonds” con. In their 1878 book *A Tour of St. Louis*, local reporters Joseph Dacus and James Buel describe the scam. A con man approaches someone walking and hands them a valise full of valuable-looking bonds, claiming that he had seen it drop from the person’s coat. The victim knows that the valise is not his, but the con man presses him to keep it, insisting

Figure 3.2—A detail of the Union Depot in Compton and Dry’s 1875 birds-eye view of St. Louis.
that the valise is certainly the victim’s. The victim agrees, and tips the con man with cash for his insistence—only to discover later than the bonds are fakes. Dacus and Buel describe this scene in a chapter called “Ways That Are Dark: Some of the Tricks Played by Thieves and Swindlers.” The victim is “a substantial looking citizen who was hurrying away from the Union Depot.” Of course, instead of the person I imagine as a con man (one of the people in the group of three people who seems to be coming up to the other two people), she could be an older woman like Harriet Elderfield, selling newspapers in the hopes of making enough money for dinner. Everyone who worked at the Depot wasn’t poor or a thief, though. The wagons of the Union Depot Transfer Company are lined up on Poplar Street, ready to carry passengers and their trunks to their hotels. Just above the center of the detail, two people stand against the end of the headhouse (at the corner towards the platforms), clearly looking out on the platforms but also in the position to surveil everyone entering and exiting the station. While Dry didn’t assign them a specific job by their position, I think they are St. Louis city police stationed at the Union Depot. The state is no longer simply in the outlines of the landscape of the station: the state has arrived on the platform. This is a radical change from the absence of state officials at the smaller stations that preceded the Union Depot. The centralization of railroad arrivals in one place, the increase in the number of rail passengers as the century progressed, and the station’s importance as a node in the transportation of commodities as well as people made it to use the lever of power. A nineteenth-century Archimedes needed only to stand on the platform of a union station. This chapter argues that municipal governments strengthened themselves by exploiting, very publicly, the leveraging effect they enjoyed on their power in the train station.

Scholars looking for places where the state exercises obvious and overwhelming power have often followed philosopher Michel Foucault’s gaze towards state institutions of punishment. At the end of his now-famous essay on Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon,

Foucault outlined the characteristics of the various panopticons that could be found across the institutional landscape of the globe. These places of confinement turn the crowd into individuals, each with acutely restricted movement and painfully aware of the possible gaze of the all-seeing guardian. More recently other scholars have questioned Foucault’s conception of the panopticon. Pointing out that very few panopticon-like prisons were ever built, architectural historian Anna Vemer Andrzejewski has shown that surveillance was incorporated to a variety of non-state structures in the nineteenth-century American built environment. Andrzejewski’s examples, which include offices, factories, houses and even religious summer camps, all highlight that surveillance could be used for discipline but also “to enhance efficiency, forge and buttress hierarchal divisions between people and groups, and even to bond people united by shared interests.” In each of these locations surveillance was an intentional part of the environment, and all the environments were private spaces. In the train station, the architecture of surveillance was completely inadvertent, but state actors—once they noted the opportunity for surveillance—seized it.

This is another instance of the inseparability of state and private power, and how each provided cover for the other in places like the train station.

The railway panopticon is similar to the Benthamite panopticon in that it is a building in which the architecture allows a small number of guardians to surveil many people. The two panopticons have important distinctions. What I call the railway panopticon was built by a private company with state aid; the station’s original intent was to aid mobility, not arrest it. Municipal authorities may not have had the means to construct large places of confinement, but they slowly realized that they could nevertheless use their main train station to surveil and control their citizens. While the whole station was enormous, the exits for passengers from the platforms to the city

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streets were few and easily surveillable. Bentham could only conceive of his oppressive architecture holding several hundred or perhaps a thousand inmates; a municipal policeman at a main railway station could observe thousands or tens of thousands of people a month, then stop and potentially punish some of them without the expense of registering or confining all of them. Whereas Foucault imagined a place where inmates were immobile behind closed doors, the railway panopticon allowed a certain mobility, under the eye of various guardians. The mobility of those that pass through it is hardly ever restricted, but could be at any moment. In aiding the construction of these large central stations, nineteenth-century state legislators and city councilmen inadvertently created the railway panopticon. The main train station was a legally private place—built and owned by the railroads that arrived in it—but it seemed public. The station was a transportation bottleneck led to a spatial multiplier effect, which state officials used to exercise more power than they could in other places in the city. Unlike the Benthamite panopticon, the railway panopticon’s guardians were in plain sight. It was not the guardians but rather the demands of railroad time that induced people to self-discipline. Anyone who rode the rails—whether a queen, a state legislator, a washerwoman, a thief, or a hobo—had to submit to railroad time. The station clock loomed over all of them, and loomed over their ability to move. The regular arrival and departure of trains, like the limited exits, created a temporal bottleneck. The gates of the panopticon were open, but they were narrow. It also was a place where, crucially, the larger public could see the performance of state power, both with their own eyes and through the detailed descriptions provided by reporters. Journalists whose beat was the main train station reinforced the idea that this space was somehow public, and enhanced state power by amplifying its visibility.

The train station lent itself to a new form of policing that emerged in the Anglophone world in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The first example of what has been called “new police,” the London Metropolitan Police, were copied by cities in the United States beginning in the 1840s. In comparison to earlier law enforcement
which was largely reactive and ad hoc, the “Met” police had a proactive mission, to prevent crime. They did this with a new strategy, patrolling beats, and with a new organizational structure based on the military and therefore not coincidentally involving officers who were uniformed and organized in ranks. St. Louis eliminated its civilian-staffed constabulary in 1846 and created a police department. A city ordinance in 1854 made uniforms mandatory for police and made the police more visible as they walked their beats. The train station as a beat was another way that the station was a unique space in the American city. St. Louis’s police department followed the principles laid down by the London Metropolitan Police. The founder of that first modern police department called for, among other things, regular beats where police would patrol. These beats sent officers along publicly accessible roads and alleys. Police may have been able to see private property, but they were patrolling around it or near it, not inside of it. The Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution is clear about the appropriate places for searches: unless summoned by a private citizen, there were only two acceptable reasons for police to enter private property. One was a warrant issued by a judge and the other was probable cause. Large urban train stations were a surprising exception to this: here police patrolled inside of, not around, not near, private property. In the 1880s, no police patrolled inside of factories, warehouses, or large stores. In St. Louis, an Anheuser-Busch foreman might have called the police to arrest someone stealing hops; the same goes for police entering, unasked, into a saloon from which they heard the sounds of a brawl. Police may have been summoned to these places, or acquired a warrant to search them, but they certainly did not police them on a regular basis unless it was simply looking into them from the publicly accessible streets. The Federal government sent troops to occupy St. Louis’s Union Depot in 1877, but even then the justification was the protection of railroad property then in receivership with the government. The occupation of the station was in any event temporary, rather than permanent.

State power operated on a thin margin. A relatively small number of policemen worked in St. Louis in the 1870s. In an 1876 guidebook to St. Louis, the police force
was given at a total of 488 men, but only 311 of them were actually beat patrolmen. Guidebook writers and St. Louis boosters Dacus and Buel were forced to admit that “certainly this is not a large force to guard a city covering a territory of fifteen miles in length and from two to six miles in width, with a population estimated at more than half a million of inhabitants.” Despite the beat cops being spread extremely thinly, Dacus and Buel insisted that “there is not a city on the American continent where the lives and property of the citizens are more secure than in St. Louis.”

The police chief gave different numbers, and was less sanguine in his official report the same year. Because of retirement, leave, and illness, the actual police force was 322 men rather than 488. Only half of the 322 policemen were on duty at any time, as there were two shifts (day and night). Some officers worked in the ward stations and some were on details at court, parks, theatres, processions, and public gardens. When these were deducted, the chief concluded, “it is not strange that the extent of beat each man has to patrol is in many instances over a square mile.”

With a small number of policemen and a large territory to cover, the police chief surely thought about the optimal placement of his available officers. Some had to be at desks and guarding specific important locations; the remaining available officers had to patrol strategic beats. There are very few notices of arrests occurring in St. Louis’s train stations before the Union Depot was built in 1875. With a relatively small number of patrolmen available, the chief of police likely couldn’t spare one or two to stand guard over each of the small stations in the city. These many entrances to the city, all unsurveilled, clearly were a point of anxiety for the police. In December 1860, an article in the St. Louis Daily Evening News described the chief having received word that New York and other eastern cities were sending their paupers to St. Louis. The article makes reference


10 “Fifteenth Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners of the City of St. Louis (1876),” in *Mayors Message and Accompanying Documents* (St. Louis: Jno. McKittrick & Co., 1876), 31, Missouri History Society Archives (hereafter *mhsa*).
to eastern poor “being poured into our midst by Railroads and Steamboats.” The chief reiterates the ordinance the St. Louis City Council had passed the previous December, criminalizing conductors of trains and captains of steamboats who bring anyone to St. Louis who was likely to become a public charge. In addition to policemen, the ordinance made it the duty of health officials and members of the Board of Health to report newly arrived paupers to the City Recorder. An article from later in January of 1861 describes the chief ordering the railroad company that had brought a woman and her three children from New York several days before to repatriate the “Gothamites.” The time delay between their arrival and their forced return suggests that rather than police stationed in train stations and intercepting these paupers, the poor were either stopped in the street by beat cops or arrested while seeking medical treatment at public clinics. There were too many small train stations with too few people arriving at each to merit a permanent officer.

The unification of all train arrivals in one place created an easily patrolled place, and a strategic one in which to place policemen. It’s unsurprising that one of the work details that the chief of police mentioned explicitly in his 1876 report was the train station. In its first year of operation, thirteen different railroad lines stopped at St. Louis’s Union Depot. There were an average of 100 trains arriving every day; the record for that first year of operation in 1875 was 7,660 passengers arriving in one day. St. Louis is often thought of as a river city, but arrivals via the mighty Mississippi slowed to a mere trickle in the late nineteenth century, relative to the Union Depot. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported in 1886 that steamboats “literally crowded with people” had brought in 574 attendees to the


fair the previous day, whereas the number of arrivals by train before noon were placed at 12,530. The article mentioned that the total number of people arriving by train over the previous three and a half days of the fair was 112,710. While numbers for steamboats in the previous days were not given, it seems fair to conclude that the number of people arriving through the Union Depot dwarfed arrivals at St. Louis’s famous mile-long levee.

St. Louis was not alone in being an American city where the vast majority of arrivals were through a large, central train station.

The importance of large urban stations is clear when they are connected to the rise of municipal power in late nineteenth-century America. Many American cities experienced enormous population growth in the middle decades of the century; St. Louis went from 36,000 residents in 1840 to 351,000 in 1870. During this same period, many other American municipalities struggled to extend their power and control over their new residents, who flooded in from other cities and from surrounding towns. It’s unclear how many officers were actually assigned to the Union Depot just after it opened in 1875, but it’s possible to approximate a decade later. Between 1884 and 1894, the Post-Dispatch stories listed at least forty-six separate officers participating in arresting people at the Union Depot. While it’s difficult to tell when officers were assigned to the Depot or re-assigned, and so to tally how many worked there at any one time, it’s clear that the station was a heavily policed space. Many of these policemen were simply listed as “officers,” but arrests were made by patrolmen, sergeants, detectives, the chief of detectives, and even the chief of police. During the annual Veiled Prophet parade in 1889, there were a total of 180 officers on duty. The newspaper article doesn’t mention the normal complement of the Depot, but it does note that six extra patrolmen had been assigned to the Union Depot, one of only three crucial points mentioned specifically.13 It’s not clear that

13 “The Detail of Police: How the Line of March and Exchange Building Will Be Guarded,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 30, 1888, 19. This parade was in part a response by elites to the railroad strike of 1877. See Thomas M. Spencer, The St. Louis Veiled Prophet Celebration: Power on Parade, 1877–1995 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000). Plans of the 1875 Union Depot have not survived, but it seems plausible that the police had
there was any coordination between the city council and the police chief regarding the
disposition of police during the parade, though the secret group of elites who organized
the parade included both government officials and police officers. It is clear though that
the railway station had attracted the attention of state officials as a key place to station
police.¹⁴

The cops at the Union Depot were municipal police, but their decisions about who
belonged at the station were not always in the public interest. The corporations that ran
stations exploited this ambiguous status—private space perceived as public—selectively,
and always to their advantage. On a March day in 1878, a St. Louis police officer told
a hack driver (the nineteenth-century equivalent of a cabbie) to move along. The hack,
driven by John Decker, was parked on Eleventh Street, just outside of the Union Depot.
The Union Depot Company (a creature of the railroads that operated in and out of the
Depot) had made a secret deal with another company, the St. Louis Transfer Company.
Just after opening in 1875, the Depot’s board of directors agreed to the proposal of the
Transfer Company’s owner. In return for the exclusive right to solicit business inside
of the Depot’s walls, and then to carry people and their luggage to and from the depot,
the St. Louis Transfer Company would pay the salaries of the Union Depot’s baggage
masters.¹⁵ In a contemporary bird’s-eye view (see Figure 4), we can see the wagons of the
Transfer Company lined up where Eleventh Street dead-ends at the eastern end of Union
Depot. The only hacks (two-wheeled carriages) to be seen here are on the bridge that
crosses over the tracks in the top part of Figure 1. Apparently the police stationed at the
Depot had been harassing any hack drivers who tried to solicit clients there for several

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¹⁴ Union Depot Company of St. Louis, *Minutes of proceedings of the Governing Board*,
October 27, 1875, p. 27, volume 14, Terminal Railroad Association of Saint Louis Records
(Missouri History Museum and Research Center).

¹⁵ “Union Depot,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 4, 1876, 3; “A Mighty Throng: The
Carnival Attracts One Hundred and Thirteen Thousand People,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*,
October 7, 1886, 4.
months. Decker had the temerity to wait there among all of the Transfer drivers, one of whom must have summoned one of the policeman on duty at the Depot, a certain Officer Kennedy. Kennedy ordered a second officer to arrest both Decker and his passenger, John Farrel, on the charge of trespassing. In court a few days later, Judge Jecko dismissed the trespassing charge. The judge, following argumentation offered by St. Louis City Counselor Bell, said that the prosecution had been unable to prove that Eleventh Street was private property, and declared an earlier City Council ordinance granting the street to the Depot “illegal and void.”

Decker and Farrel immediately filed suit against both the Transfer Company and the Union Depot Company, claiming that the police patrolling the station were unfairly harassing the hack drivers in favor of the Transfer drivers. The most damning revelation of the case, though, was the fact that four of the police officers at the station were paid by the company that ran the Union Depot, which gave the City of St. Louis $300 a month for their salaries. Conceptually and legally, the boundaries between public and private space was hard to find in a train station; on a practical level, it was wherever police decided it was.

Even though there were likely never more than three or four officers on regular duty at the Depot, the station’s architecture gave them a multiplier effect on their ability to watch and control passengers. Especially after the Civil War, Union stations like the ones in St. Louis, Detroit, Indianapolis, and scores of other cities became transportation bottlenecks. People continued to arrive in major American cities in many ways—by boat, by horse, by foot—but the train achieved a dominance in transportation that was simply unparalleled. The major urban train stations were funnels, concentrating and focusing

16 “The Hackmen’s Complaint: Serious Charges Against the Policemen Around the Union Depot,” *St. Louis Evening Post*, March 11, 1878, 4.

17 The Union Depot pay list shows that the Depot management paid police $75 a month, compared to the Yardmaster ($100 a month) or Telegraph Operators ($70 a month). Union Depot Company of St. Louis, *Minutes of proceedings of the Governing Board*, July 14, 1875, p. 20-21, volume 14, Terminal Railroad Association of Saint Louis Records (Missouri History Museum and Research Center).
Figure 3.3—Two nineteenth-century panopticons. The layout above was designed by Jeremy Bentham to improve surveillance (of workers, or patients, or prisoners) by controlling lines of sight and exits. Below is the panopticon reorganized: the train station, with its main building (with limited points of entrance and exit) and central rotunda, then the passageway to platforms one, two, and three.
people into a relatively small and ultimately carefully delimited place (the platforms) in the midst of a large station zone. Looking at Figure 3.1, it’s clear that although the whole station was quite large, the only way out was at either end of the building, or out the front door. This is a radical compression of the actual physical space through which people arrived in a city, as well as the minutes during the day in which they could arrive. Contrast the station with the St. Louis’s levee. That riverfront space was a mile-long dock with hundreds of possible moorings. It was a space that was both temporally and spatially too vast to police: ships arrived when they arrived, and the space was simply too large. The train station by contrast was like a funnel: a comparably large surface area but one whose long, narrow platforms made panopticon-like surveillance easy.\footnote{18}

Art historian John Tagg has described the decisive shift from the seemingly boundless power of a monarch to the more limited but ultimately more powerful “small exercise of power” of the beat cop. The police, however, were made even more powerful with photography, which allowed them and other state guardians (in insane asylums and prisons) “permanent, exhaustive, and omnipresent surveillance.”\footnote{19} Tagg notes the differences in diffusion in photographic crime-fighting, but the St. Louis police by the 1880s were making and using images of criminals. In his 1883 year-end report, St. Louis police commissioner John W. Campbell, after repeating his annual lament about not having enough officers, noted an improvement to the force’s crime-stopping capabilities. He had had the photographic archive of ne’er-do-wells updated, implementing a new tri-fold system of holding the criminals’ likenesses so as to triple the number of photographs stored there. He had also ordered some unnamed officer to go through the entire archive and remove pictures of convicts who were either in jail for long sentences, or dead. The

\footnote{18} The seeming paradox between a large expanse and the relative ease of its surveillance can be seen in the landscape of the plantation South. See Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 209–43.

commissioner’s hope was that “an occasional glance at the pictures in our gallery by
our officers, helps to fix in the minds and keep green the memory of these enemies of
society.” Despite Campbell’s self-congratulatory bluster, it’s unlikely that this “Gallery of
Criminals” improved the efficacy of St. Louis’s police. Criminals could always give false
names, and from newspaper and arrest records where aliases are listed, it’s clear that this
was often the case. But whether it was an archive with 3,000 photographs (as Campbell
claimed) or three million, if police officers weren’t constantly going to police headquarters
where the archive was located and studying its contents, it’s unlikely that this gallery
enabled a higher arrest rate. Officers who couldn’t recognize every criminal that had ever
been arrested needed to trust their instincts and attempt to recognize criminal types. In
the age in which physical characteristics were often thought to be reflective of interior
desires, officers likely trusted their own judgements about who looked like a criminal.20

The superabundance of articles about arrests in train stations show that the police
who were stationed at union depots across the country were always watching. Parts of
the station that were both large and largely unpatrolled were the freight and stock yards.
Dozens of trains and hundreds of cars on parallel side tracks were usually far away from
the headhouse, where police seemed most likely to be on guard. Freight cars carried
valuable goods, and it’s not surprising that thieves were drawn to them. One of the Depot
cops spotted James Bryne and Marshall Raymond in the Depot yards one morning in
1880 as they attempted to steal heavy brass boxes. Both were convicted and sent to the

20 Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners of the City of St. Louis,
published in Mayors Message and Accompanying Documents (St. Louis: A. Ungar & Co., 1883),
439. A manuscript essay and clipping book on the St. Louis police department contains an
article from the August 6, 1949 edition of the St. Louis Star-Times. The article claims that
St. Louis was the first U.S. city to start a fingerprint identification system, suggesting that a
Scotland Yard officer guarding the Crown Jewels at the 1904 World’s Fair introduced it to
his colleagues in St. Louis. mhsa, Annette J. Morris, “The Police Department of St. Louis:
Its Development, History, Methods, and Service, from 1808 to 1919” (St. Louis: 1919), 47.
For more on the duties of the police matrons, see Chapter 5 of this dissertation and the
autobiography of a matron: Louisa Harris, Behind the Scenes: Or, Nine Years at the Four Courts
workhouse for three months. What is striking here is that municipal police were for the first time policing what was corporate space, the railroad yards. Even when police at the Depot didn’t actually see the poor stealing, they could still arrest them for vagrancy. The enormous possibilities for mobility that the railroad opened up made American elites nervous. Legislators at the state and city levels across the country responded with vagrancy laws that were broadly applied to people who weren’t necessarily without a home, but who were simply “out of place.” Union stations were the ideal places to intercept these unwanted travelers. In 1890 Judge Cady fined James Baxter $100 and sentenced him to a year at the work house after Baxter was caught in the Union Depot Yards. Officer Turley arrested Baxter after noticing him “hanging around” a Pullman car. Baxter protested that he was simply looking for a drink of water, but Turley dragged him off to the Four Courts. Baxter’s previous conviction for stealing a pillow from another Pullman car seems to have cast suspicion on his presence in the yards. Curiously, though, the charge against him was not larceny (he had no stolen property on him) or trespassing, but vagrancy. It’s quite possible that Baxter was indeed simply looking for some water: the yards were both lightly surveilled and contained a concentration of commodities that enabled subsistence for men and women who were down on their luck. Hobo encampments, called “jungles,” were often just far enough away from the headhouses to evade detection by police, but close enough to the yards to allow access to the water that Baxter wanted, or for coal for a fire. In addition to water and fuel, the railroad stations’ animal passengers awaiting transportation also attracted the less fortunate. After several instances of pigs getting stolen from the Union Depot’s stockyards, police chief Renshaw himself went down to investigate, and gave chase to Callaway Kink, “one of the suspected parties” who was encamped in the woods near the stock yards.21 That the police chief would himself patrol the private space of a company, and that there was no public outrage,

21 “Will Go Down Again,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 7, 1890, 3; “About Town,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 20, 1880, 8; “Purloining Pigs: Exciting Chase of One of the Robbers,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 1, 1880, 1.
showed that Americans to some extent accepted the train station as part of the city, a common space that needed policing.

The railway panopticon came into being when police stood not only in the liminal spaces—the back yards, the street outside, or the entry hall—but when they looked down crowded platforms and patrolled the yards behind the station. The platforms were the key spot where police scanned the crowds of arriving passengers. These uniformed cops stood looking for people who weren't quite right to stop, question, and potentially frisk. The station was a place for arriving and departing, but also a place for waiting. Many of the people on the platform were not waiting to leave on a train, but rather waiting to pick someone up, or waiting for someone from the city to come and pick them up. How did police distinguish between the worthy waiters and the indigent idlers? Loitering, or “idling” as it was often called in the nineteenth century, was admittedly subjective. Police officers at the Union Depot apparently knew it when they saw it, and like the charge of vagrancy, used it broadly at the station.

Officer Kennedy, one of the police officers paid by the train station but technically employed by the city of St. Louis, observed a man with a gunny sack one February evening. Kennedy observed the man with the sack “loafing around” and “looking rather suspicious.” Kennedy approached and asked the man where he was headed, and when he answered “Edwardsville, Illinois,” Kennedy began a game of twenty questions about the town and its residents. The man, later identified as Frank Thompson, didn't pass the test and Kennedy decided to open the gunny sack. Thompson was carrying what a newspaper article later described as “burglar’s tools.” Thompson was hauled off to St. Louis’s Four Courts, after which his fate is unknown. There is some ambiguity in this case: “burglar’s tools” could be any set of tools used by tradesman, and not answering Kennedy’s questions well might be more of a reflection of Thompson’s subordinate status than an invented destination. Still, he was perhaps a crook, waiting for his chance to break into a nice-looking piece of luggage while Kennedy was sipping his coffee that cold February night. Idling was not only a way to attract the unwanted attention of the police, it was also a
crime in and of itself. In 1888 Depot police arrested a man who was listed on the docket as “John Smith” because he was too lazy (or, more likely, too scared) to give his name. Judge Cady in 1888. When arrested for idling, he told the officer that he didn’t work because he was too tired. Cady fined him $50 and sent Mr. “Smith” to the workhouse for a month, a “vacation of work after a long and tiresome loaf.” The Depot officers also arrested Frank Miller, described solely as a 250-pound man, for idling, with a side charge of frequenting disreputable houses. The train station was an opportunity for escape, but it could be a risky point of departure for those whose clothes or race marked them as subalterns in the nineteenth century.  

Loitering was a spatial crime, and one that the judicial system could interpret amply—especially to keep African Americans in their “place.” Isaac Blackmore, a legless African American from Tennessee was described in an ironic article about a “regular visitor” who that year would not be allowed to “enjoy the sites” in St. Louis. Apparently, Isaac traveled yearly to St. Louis in fall festival season when farmers from the surrounding area and tourists from all over the country flooded into the city to see the Veiled Prophet parade and visit the fall fair. Isaac had been working at the station begging and was said to have been drunk and “boisterous” (perhaps angry or noisy), and the Depot police dragged him off to the Four Courts. He was released after a $10 fine and agreeing to leave town by 5pm that evening.  

Loitering was not limited to hanging around a certain place (like the train station), but even a whole city. Ed Black, described as “a notorious colored crook,” was arrested at the Union Depot “under suspicious circumstances.” A Four Courts judge agreed to release Cook on the condition that he leave town immediately. He apparently “lingered too long” (the headline of the article) in the city, as three weeks later he was rearrested at the Depot by Officer Johnny Hobbs. Cook’s crime was simply not having


23 “Will Not Enjoy The Sites: A Regular Fall Visitor Compelled to Return Home,” *St.
left St. Louis, as the article that describes his re-arrest doesn’t even mention a charge. Cook was sent to the city work house because he couldn’t pay the fine the judge imposed. Cook’s crime was a spatial Catch-22: he had not departed quickly enough, but when he went to the station to leave, he was arrested for not having left. The police who arrested Cook were not the only people who gave the railway panopticon its state-building power. They were helped by others whose voices are loud in the archives in comparison to subalterns (who are often silences in the archives) but who so far in this chapter have been relegated to the footnotes, or to anonymity: journalists.

Small stations did not have enough activity to merit a reporter being posted. The situation was much the same as the stationing of police in the 1860s: there were too many small stations in the St. Louis, and the hundreds of people arriving were spread out across all of them. In that era, there are very few newspaper articles about things happening at St. Louis train stations that seem to be written by an eyewitness. A report of a train delays due to heavy snowfall in 1866 were relayed to reporters by the telegraphist at the North Missouri Depot, and “accounts” from the Pacific Railroad. This changed with the construction of the Union Depot in 1874, which provided a perfect location for people with blank notebooks. Reporters who hung around American union stations unwittingly helped the state build a panopticon on private property. In Foucault’s description, part of the power of Bentham’s panopticon lay in the invisible visibility: the inmates don’t know if they’re being watched, but could be under surveillance at any moment. In the railway panopticon, reporters described the surveillance of the union station’s beat cops to a broader public. This was not a nefarious plot, but rather born of the structural needs of nineteenth-century journalism. Julia Guarneri, in her work on urban newspapers, has shown how Americans “encountered the city itself, rendered visible, audible, and

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intelligible on the page.” Late nineteenth-century editors filled their rapidly expanding papers with reporters sent to urban locations where leads were abundant. In addition to the police stations, city missions, and slums, large stations were places where things happened. The constant flow of goods and people naturally carried with it flotsam that could be woven into journalistic output. Then as now, the reporters formed close relationships with the police who were also stationed there. It’s likely that journalists were under some pressure to write occasional stories about the various railroad companies. The Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad Company issued hundreds of free passes to newspaper editors in return for publishing their timetables and inserting articles about the CB&Q in their papers. Some of these were supplied by the railroad itself, while other articles were expected from reporters. The railroads were constant advertising customers of newspapers, and large stations were an excellent place to find a story about the roads and their excellent service. By telling stories about people like John Sweeney and Michael Kelly, journalists reinforced the idea that the station was a proper place for police to patrol, and that it was a zone where criminals had better beware.\(^\text{26}\) Much as in other examples of actor-network theory, the reporters’ lack of intention to reinforce state power in no way meant that they were not active agents in doing just that.

The large, somewhat public, open station was a spatial paradox for nineteenth-century elites. Anthropologist Julie Kleinman has shown this in her work on the Gare du Nord, one of the main Parisian train stations, opened in 1864 and rebuilt in 1889. The paradox was limiting access to a space that was supposed to be open enough to allow for the fluid circulation of large crowds of people. Worried about the need for control of

various “dangerous classes,” French elites used “technologies of security and surveillance, architectural crowd control, and official and unofficial boundary-making procedures” to separate working class and country folk arriving in the city from the middle-class travelers. Yet these measures risked leading to a disruption in the “fluidity of circulation.” Class-conscious French elites wanted the Gare du Nord to be either a place of movement or a place of waiting, but the latter only for those whose waiting was appropriate.

Nineteenth-century American elites were nervous about too much social “mixing.” People in a given social station (remember the double meaning here of “social class” and “appointed place”) were supposed to be in certain places, with others of their kind. Spatial promiscuity was tolerated when it could be controlled. Doreen Massey has written that how people experience space and the degree to which they can be mobile through it is not influenced simply by capital, but rather by their gender, class, and race.27 To a certain degree ports, markets, steamboats, post offices, and theaters were places of promiscuous encounters. But the number of Americans moving through a mid-nineteenth century railroad station dwarfed this mixing quantitatively. The sheer number of people—of all classes, races, and genders—that moved through the station meant that it was a qualitatively different place as well. Stations were legally private property, and hence the state would intervene to police the boundaries of both legality and acceptable behavior.28

The train station was also a place to display the subjugation of Native Americans. The platforms were a stage and reporters often used the racist language of the day to depict indigenous people controlled by state actors. In 1886 the famous Apache chief,


Mangus, and a dozen other Native Americans. They were being transported to Pensacola by “a strong military guard.” While waiting for their next train in the cold November air, Mangus was interviewed by a Post-Dispatch reporter. The reporter wrote that Mangus “has expressed his determination not to adopt the ways of civilization” and that he would kill himself at the first opportunity.29 This was not the first group transported through the Union Depot and put on display both for those present at the station but also readers the next day. An entire party of 385 “warriors, squaws, and papooses” of Chiricarua people had arrived in September. With them were 82 soldiers, conducting them to Fort Marion in Florida. The Post-Dispatch reporter asks permission of the commander to examine the Chiricaruan’s special railroad car. The article included not only a description of two old men who “looked like a couple of old rags up-ended in front of a paper mill,” but also an offhanded comment about how little clothing the babies had and even a lascivious drawing of a young girl.30 Groups of indigenous people, stripped of their land and possessions, were a common sight at the Union Depot. The psychological value of their detention and intentional deprivation by agents of the American state was a byproduct of the pragmatic decision to transport them by train to their place of incarceration. A group of Native Americans from the then-Indian Territory arrived at the Union Depot in October of 1889 on their way to a state penitentiary in Ohio. All had, according to the news report, “committed offenses against the peace and dignity of the United States.” The federal government had chosen Ohio as their place of detention because it was the cheapest option, but also, the newspaper states without irony, because the convicts “are supposed to receive in their journey through the country some idea of the benefits of civilization.”31 The fact that everyone passing through the Union Depot had to change

29 “A Bad Indian,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 5, 1886, 8.

30 “Heap, Big Injun: Arrival of Chiricarua, En Route to Ft. Marion, Fla,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 17, 1886, 8.

31 “Indian Convicts: A Desperate Company on Its Way to Columbus, Ohio,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 3, 1889, 8.
trains, and that the station was an enormous rail center, meant that it was an ideal location for the performance of state dominance over Native Americans. Reporters wrote stories to allow others not present that day to experience the performance of dominance.

State agents like the military and police didn’t just display subjugated peoples at the station, and they weren’t just tough on crime. They also used the depot as a place to assert patriarchal authority, and a space where it was particularly easy for the state’s authority to be amplified. Looking “suspicious” had gender contours as well. Women who were “queer” in the nineteenth-century sense of odd were especially liable to be observed, stopped, and railroaded. Birdie Willis was arrested in 1885 at the Union Depot as she alighted from a Vandalia line train. One of the station’s police officers noted her “acting suspiciously,” arrested her, and took her down to the Four Courts. After a night in a jail cell Willis said that she was either remaining in town with an uncle who worked in a hotel, or heading on to Shelbina, Missouri. A brief article about her in the Post-Dispatch unfortunately does not provide details on what she did that seemed suspicious, but suggests gender profiling. After admitting that “Birdie Willis” was an alias, the young woman told the police that her husband was a clerk in a store in Eldorado, Kansas, but that she had no intention of returning there. A young, unaccompanied woman who was not using her married name and had no plans to return to her husband was cause enough for her arrest (though no specific charges are given in the article) and confinement for a night in jail. It’s possible that Willis was fleeing from an abusive husband to the safety either of her uncle in St. Louis, or friends in Shelbina. Police, arresting her, arrested her flight from mistreatment as well.

32 The first use of the verb “to railroad” in the sense of “to convict quickly and unjustly” was in 1873, and seems to have developed from an earlier meaning of “to have a mania for building railroads.” John Morris, Wanderings of a Vagabond: An Autobiography, ed. John O’Connor (New York: Published By The Author, 1873), 318.

33 There has been a recent call for historians to see beyond the binary. Rachel Hope Cleves, “Beyond the Binaries in Early America: Special Issue Introduction,” Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 12, no. 3 (2014): 459–68. Because dressing as a man enabled flight, these stories are particularly hard to interpret, but there is also the possibility of gender
The railway panopticon was a difficult gauntlet; women sometimes attempted to run it dressed as men. A few years before Birdie Willis arrived at the Depot another woman named Alice White had been stopped at the Depot by Officer Miller. Miller had realized that the “slender, boyish-looking individual” was in fact a woman dressed in soldier’s clothing. The cross-dressing warranted a ride to the police station, where the individual “confessed” to being a woman. White stated that she had been forced to leave the home of an uncle because of “bad treatment,” and her experience had been a bitter one. White told the police that she was headed to Leavenworth, Kansas, to the Home for Friendless Women. Miller seems to have allowed her to continue, but a newspaperman at the Depot recorded the story for St. Louisians not present. Ida Lewis of Southford, Connecticut, was also arrested for “masquerading in man’s attire” in Newark’s Union Depot in May of 1885 after a detective at the station realized she was female. In her deposition at police headquarters, Lewis calmly related how she had gathered enough money to be able to buy male clothes and leave her job. “I wanted to see life,” she stated, and then described how she had entered a barroom and had not been recognized as a woman. This emboldened her to “visit a number of resorts up-town…to satisfy my curiosity.”

The station police in this case acted not only as keepers of public order but as gatekeepers for a patriarchal social order. Vera Hobbs was another cross-dressing young woman arrested (on an unspecified charge) at the Union Depot while “masquerading” in men’s clothing. Hobbs clearly fit into the category of the classic economically vulnerable woman. Her mother had abandoned her when she was ten years old, and her father was

histories embedded and entangled in the railway panopticon.


an infirm veteran who lived in the Soldier’s Home in Jackson, Michigan. After having supported herself by working for seven years, Hobbs decided to set out for Texas and find her mother. She was noticed by one of the Union Depot cops, arrested, and taken to the Four Courts. While the court officers checked out her “tale” (which turned out to be true, the newspaper article relates with obvious surprise), she was remanded to Mrs. Harris, the police matron.\footnote{A thesis written in 1919 explained the job of the police matron, and their surveillance of, among other places, railway stations: “Police matrons care for children and women who are put in their charge and do all in their power for the welfare of these unfortunates. They try to find the parents of wayward girls and boys. When possible, they secure admission for them in public institutions. Women and girl prisoners are put in their charge. […] These women are under command of a man ranking as a detective sergeant, and they do such police work as is consistent with their sex. They look particularly after wayward girls and boys and those who appear to be going wrong, keeping a close watch on department stores and railway stations. […] They have been very valuable in detecting shoplifters, fortunetellers, and women criminals; and have been found to be extremely efficient in discovering sources of juvenile delinquency in dance halls, moving picture shows, parks, railway stations, and among groups of young people in factories and stores.” Annette J. Morris, \textit{The Police Department of St. Louis: Its Development, History, Methods, and Service, from 1808 to 1919} (St. Louis: 1919), p. 17, box 16, Terminal Railroad Association of Saint Louis Records (Missouri History Museum and Research Center).} It’s not clear what exactly Hobbs was wearing, but the article about her does note that she said she wore men’s clothing “for the sake of convenience.” The vagueness leaves this reason open to interpretation, but the obvious policing of young women’s movements through train stations suggests that Hobbs may have wished to avoid undue attention from police. She may also have wanted to avoid attention from men while traveling alone. Hobbs was detained, and was initially an “inmate” of the Episcopal Home, though Matron Harris did later find her a foster home in Dallas through the influence of “reputable St. Louis ladies.” The newspaper article describing Hobbs’s arrest and detention notes that she was lucky to have fallen “into such good hands.” Ida, Hobbs, and likely thousands of other woman were using the railway network to explore the world or flee tormentors, but they were captured by a net. That net was initially an inadvertent one: railroad magnates, town councilmen, municipal cops, and journalists eager for a story
wove it from the thread-like lines that intersected at the station.\textsuperscript{37}

One of those lines was the telegraph, which ran parallel to almost all train lines after the 1860s. Writing about St. Louis’s police department in the second half of the nineteenth century, historian Allen Wagner noted that the most important modern invention available to the police was not a repeating firearm or the fingerprinting system, but the telegraph. In 1868, the city government installed the police telegraph system, with two lines. The first connected the mayor’s office, the four district police stations, and three other substations. This was the command line. The second line linked the mayor’s office with police headquarters, the City Workhouse, and the three small train stations on the city’s periphery, the Pacific (in the Mill Creek Valley), the Iron Mountain (on the south side of the city near the Levee), and the Northern Missouri on Market Street north of the city center.\textsuperscript{38} This system allowed police to monitor the depots, but the small trickle of people into these three separate stations in the 1860s did not create the panopticon effect. Only the unification of passenger arrivals in the Union Depot in 1875, and police stationed at the Depot, made a bottleneck narrow enough, with enough flow through it, to constitute the railway panopticon.

In most of the stories above, police relied on their own eyes to scan the crowd and pick out those who didn’t fit. Their vision was not always 20/20 because they often relied on appearances alone to judge guilt: people with dark skin, women traveling alone, or white men with ripped clothing. John Sweeney, a confidence man who was arrested in 1888 in the Union Depot, initially avoided attracting attention. He was only stopped after he was seen talking with less than respectable people at the Depot; police then arrested him on charges of vagrancy and associating with thieves. When he appeared in court, he

\textsuperscript{37} “Vera Hobbs: A Good Home Secured for the Girl After All Her Wanderings,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, August 9, 1889, 1.

\textsuperscript{38} Allen Eugene Wagner, \textit{Good Order and Safety: A History of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, 1861–1906} (St. Louis: Missouri History Museum, 2008), x, 81. All three small stations are visible at the end of the three railroad lines in my full 1867 map of the city in the appendix.
surprised the judges with his “gentlemanly appearance and bearing” as they had “expected to see a typical crook.” Because he had not actually scammed anyone, he was fined $50 and given until 7pm to leave St. Louis (presumably from the Union Depot, under the watchful eyes of the same officers who had arrested him before).39 What was clearly even more effective in terms of number of arrests were specific descriptions of specific criminals thought to be arriving at a very specific and easily-surveilled place: the main train station. The policeman no longer needed to memorize faces, nor did he even have to have seen the criminal before: the combination of a passable telegraphed description, spatial constriction of the place of arrival and exit, and the regularity of trains emptying onto the Depot’s platforms at a certain time enabled more requests than any rogues’ gallery ever had.40 While the police at the station clearly kept a good watch on people arriving and departing, the telegraph line allowed them to be even more far-seeing. Officer Mundinger arrived at his post at the station at 6am on a May morning in 1891 to find a telegram waiting for him. Conductor Rawdon, of the No. 8 passenger train of the Missouri Pacific had telegraphed Mundinger only the cryptic line “Meet me at train this morning without fail.” Instead of a dangerous desperado, Rawdon presented Mundinger with “two bewitching bits of femininity,” Maggie Ferguson and Stella Hood. The two young women were running away to becomes actresses, but on the train a neighbor recognized them and informed the conductor, the same Rawdon who then telegraphed Mundinger. After their arrest, Chief Harrigan of the St. Louis Police received a telegram from Bernard Ferguson, Maggie’s father, stating that he would be on the next train to St. Louis to “collect” the two women. This story introduces the telegraph, a technological innovation that when combined with the spatial innovation of the union station, made the railway panopticon

39 “Will Leave The City: John Sweeney, the Confidence Man, Given Hours by Judge Cady,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 7, 1888, 2.

40 The St. Louis police created one of the first “rogues’ galleries” in the United States in 1843, initially filled with daguerreotypes. Wagner, Good Order and Safety, 3.
even more powerful.\textsuperscript{41}

American historians interested in state formation have long debated the ways in which the various levels of the state reinforced their power, and the relative strength of the U.S. federal government vis-à-vis both European central governments and the individual U.S. states. Much has been written about how the U.S., relative to other European powers, was a relatively weak state, with underdeveloped bureaucratic apparatus and poor ability to enforce its will across the expanse of the continent. While historians have disagreed about how much power the federal government really exercised, they agree that in the nineteenth century, both individual state governments, as well as municipal governments, expanded their power. Until recently, state control has been conceptualized spatially, as “a delimited territory over which it has authoritative power.”\textsuperscript{42}

The railway panopticon, however—energized and expanded by the telegraph network—extended the lines of causation. It allowed municipalities to act far beyond the city limits. When Louis Betts stepped off the train that had just stopped at the St. Louis Union Depot in February 1891, he was probably not worried about being recognized. Betts had just stolen some diamonds from the J. Donaldson Company of Minneapolis and almost certainly thought he had made a clean getaway. All he needed to do was walk

\textsuperscript{41} “Runaway Girls: The Police Capture Two Giddy Young Maidens From Joplin,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, May 20, 1891, 3.

out of the station and disappear into the crowd. In his haste to exit the station, Betts likely walked right by Detectives Allendar and Smith on Platform 2. The two policeman would have been in plainclothes, and likely would have been dressed down to avoid Betts’ attention. They recognized Betts, though: the “somewhat general description” telegraphed to the St. Louis police by the Minneapolis police chief was accurate enough. The suspect was carrying a diamond ring and a diamond stud, and admitted that this jewelry (along with the several guns he carried) had indeed come from the J. Donaldson Company of Minneapolis. Betts argued, however, that the jewels had been given to him as part of a “business agreement.” Chief of Detectives Desmond ordered Betts’ confinement, and the Minneapolis police were notified. They telegraphed back that they would issue “requisition papers,” something like a municipal extradition request, and send an officer to take the prisoner back to Minnesota. Another criminal arriving in St. Louis, Nathan Brooks, was likely as surprised as Betts: instead of a lone man in a dark coat, Brooks arrived in St. Louis along with his wife and child. The Little Rock chief of police, had telegraphed a message to the St. Louis police, giving Brooks’s description and the warrant for his arrest for embezzlement. Detective King, Sergeant O’Malley, and Officer Cassing arrested the man as his family looked on. These telegraphs were not just in response to a specific crime, but were also “preventative.” Just before the annual fall fair in 1892, Chief of Police Desmon explained that he was constantly receiving telegrams from other cities about “certain crooks” who were known to be coming to St. Louis and so stationed men at the Union Depot to intercept them. Gustave Gall, a young employee of a New York wholesale liquor dealer, was also arrested on the charge of embezzlement after alighting from a train. The telegram between police chiefs had not only specified what Gall looked like, but also the appearance of the woman who would meet him at the station. His betrothed had given him away with her salute but told the Post-Dispatch reporter that the charge of embezzlement was trumped up in order to prevent her and Gall from marrying. In these cases, the state could pretend to be enforcing a criminal code when in fact the
person caught in the panopticon had only broken a moral code.43

Some cases were less ambiguous. Officer Mundinger seems to have been an alert enforcer of public morals on his beat at the Union Depot. In 1886 he arrested Mrs. John V. Sink and E.B. Shore at the Depot as they stepped off a train. The newspaper, which identifies the woman only as “Mrs. John V. Sink,” explained that the two had been arrested “on the strength of a telegram” from Mr. John V. Sink of Murrayville, Illinois. Mr. Sink alleged that Mrs. Sink, his lawfully wedded wife, was eloping with Mr. Shore. When questioned later at the Four Courts, Mrs. Sink stated that she wasn’t eloping with Mr. Shore, but rather merely headed to Kansas in his company because her husband “had treated her so cruelly that she did not want to live with him any longer.” This apparently did not convince the judge, who decided to detain Mrs. Sink (it’s not clear if Mr. Shore was freed or not). The article concludes by mentioning that Mr. Sink was then notified of his wife’s detention, presumably by the same telegraphist who had passed the message to Officer Mundinger.44

Arrest was a possibility at the station for elopers who didn’t already have spouses. A few years after the above incidents, now Sergeant Mundinger stepped onto a train in the central depot in East St. Louis. The Vandalia line’s express out of Ohio had arrived, and on it were Charles Schwartz and Carrie Hurt. Schwartz was a mechanic and had partnered with Hurt’s stepfather (identified only as “Mr. Bendig”) in selling milling machinery. As he explained later, he had gotten to know Hurt and an attachment had sprung up between them. Hurt’s mother had no objections, and her stepfather hadn’t seemed to until Schwartz decided to sell his share of their business and move to El Paso with his soon-to-be wife. They left without saying anything to anyone, and apparently an infuriated Bendig went to the Columbus, Ohio, police. The Superintendent of police


telegrammed the St. Louis chief of police to arrest the couple. Mundinger did his duty and later at the Four Courts both young people denied any wrongdoing. The newspaper notes, without any apparent irony, that notwithstanding their protests and the fact that the original telegram “gave no particulars as to the offense charged,” the St. Louis police and courts “could but do their duty.” The police telegraphed their Columbus colleagues, but the next day the response from Superintendent Murphy was that “papers cannot be secured to extradite Schwartz. Father and mother consent to their marriage. Have them married in your presence and then release them. If not (married) hold girl.” Chief Huebler sent Schwartz and Hurt, accompanied by one of his detectives, to get a marriage license, and then before a judge. Only thereafter were the pair released.45 The station in this case was the point of intersection of three webs: a police force that was locally organized and funded but nationally connected; an insulated copper network of communication; and a series of transportation chokepoints. The station was the physical, material place where governance could be most effectively exerted.

Schwartz and Hurt’s elopement was not the last that the St. Louis police tried to prevent, on telegraphic orders from afar. Two couples—Will J. Morgan and his fiancée Maggie Clover, and Jennie Morgan and her beaux, Charles Taylor, all from Decatur, Illinois—arrived in St. Louis and immediately “tied the double knot.” The happy newlyweds then checked into Hoeffner’s Hotel, “within a hundred feet of the Four Courts, while the police were scouring the city for them on the strength of a telegram.” Their parents, none of whom had consented, had in the meantime sent telegrams to police departments around the Midwest to ask for the youngsters’ arrest. When they arrived at the Union Depot the next day to leave, all four newlyweds were arrested and dragged before Chief of Police Harrigan, “but as they were all of age, they were released again.”46 Later that summer other elopers weren’t as successful in evading the police dragnet. David

45 “A Cruel Stepfather: He Causes the Incarceration of Two Young Lovers in the Holdover,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 12, 1889, 1.

Gallagher, a prosperous farmer from Mason City, Illinois, and a long-time suitor of his neighbor Ida White (16 years old), were both arrested as they stepped off the Chicago and Alton train. They had left at midnight the night before, but White’s mother somehow knew that the couple had left for St. Louis, rather than Kansas City or Chicago. She telegraphed Acting Police Chief Reedy, who sent two plainclothes detectives to the station with a description of the elopers. They were held at the Four Courts at the request of Mrs. White, who finally relented and telegraphed to have them released if they would come home to be married.47 One of St. Louis’s police chiefs had affirmed that it was “a strict rule in this office to arrest no person on a telegram unless it is signed in full, the title of the office affixed and the specific charge indicated.”48 The national telegraph network had been completed in 1863; at least as early as 1870, the legal system had stretched sufficiently to accommodate long-distance arrests “on the strength of a telegram.” This could lead to false arrests, though, when individuals abused a power that was deemed the right of the state. In 1870, the *Journal of the Telegraph* noted that “the practice of arrest on the authority of a telegraphic message, we are glad to see, has been itself arrested.” The Superintendent of the New York City police had announced that he would not arrest anyone else via telegram unless “full particulars as to name, offense, and authority for the apprehension are given.” New York’s chief cop explained that telegrams had frequently been sent without consultation with the authorities, resulting in arrest and detention without cause, and great personal injury and embarrassment.49

It doesn’t seem that the risk of arresting someone innocent reined in the use of the telegraph by municipal authorities. In 1875 alone, the chief of police’s office received

47 “David and Ida: They Came to St. Louis to Get Married and Were Arrested,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 26, 1891, 3; “Gone Home to Marry,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 27, 1891, 2.

48 “A Father’s Long Search: Frank Triplett, A St. Louis Mining Engineer, Recovers His Child,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 1, 1890, 4.

49 “Arrest By Telegraph,” *Journal of the Telegraph*, June 1, 1870, 158.
5,240 telegraphed messages and sent another 6,127. The police commissioners’ report noted that there were another 50,000 telegrams at the other police stations across the city.\textsuperscript{50} These were not simply telegraphs between the police stations in the city, as the police had installed a telephone system in 1878 to replace their earlier internal telegraph network.\textsuperscript{51} Because only these aggregate statistics survive, it’s impossible to say how many of those telegrams were about criminals (or so-called “deviants”), but a decade later the police commissioner’s reports began to list criminals apprehended in other cities and returned to St. Louis. In 1888 there were sixteen people listed, as well as sixty people on the “List of Fugitives From Justice: Arrested in St. Louis and Delivered to Authorities of Other Cities and Counties During the Year.”\textsuperscript{52} The telegraph was a crucial technological innovation, but the main train station with its carefully funneling exits was equally important. The spatial innovation of a union station allowed the railway panopticon to emerge. Unlike canals and roads, railways had nodes; these nodes were important because they were the only places where train travel could safely begin and end. A criminal traveling by canal boat could easily hop off on a lumber wharf miles before he or she arrived in a city, whereas hopping off a moving train outside of a station required either considerable experience or considerable foolhardiness—and either way immediately called attention to the disembarking person.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} MHSA, \textit{Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Police Commissioners of the City of St. Louis (1875)}, in \textit{Mayors Message and Accompanying Documents}, St. Louis, Jno. McKittrick & Co., 1875, 92.

\textsuperscript{51} Wagner, \textit{Good Order and Safety}, 192.


\textsuperscript{53} An 1857 map of the city of Albany reveals the lack of a distinct node for what was still the country’s most-trafficked canal. The Erie Canal ended in a Canal Basin along the Hudson River, but a full mile of wharves would have allowed numerous places to disembark without notice. The Canal Basin also permitted disembarking on all sides, hence a large police complement would have been required to surveil ever packet boat’s arrival. James Hendrick, \textit{Map of the Albany Lumber District} (Albany, NY: Hoffman, Pease, and Tetley, 1857), Albany
was seemingly proportional to the size of the station. A young telegrapher who was held up by fugitives from the law “got my full revenge by telegraphing to the next station, which was of considerable size, to arrest the three.” The station’s size made it a more likely place to disembark for the criminals, but also a station large enough to have a police complement.54

While it might have appeared beside the City Hospital and Municipal Gardens in boosterish viewbooks, the main train station was qualitatively different from other public buildings. The first, small stations had seemed unambiguously private: each was building that happened to be attached to a very long, thin piece of property that stretched for hundreds of miles. But the large urban train station was more than a dot on a map of a railroad company’s lines, and had a social gravity hundreds of times stronger than a small, rural station. As the wealth and the power of railroads increased, so too did the size of stations, and power that they radiated out into the cities into which they were forced. Union stations further confused the status of train stations: they sat on ground provided, directly or indirectly, by the state, yet they were private property. They did not have locked doors, and yet their entrances and exits were few, and carefully policed. They enjoyed police protection and the constant presence of reporters created, via newsprint, the semblance of a public space. The police presence was a crucial element, but the railway panopticon was an assemblage. The architecture of the station, the ease of train travel relative to other forms of transportation, the consequent huge timed daily flow of passengers, and the thin copper wires hung across the country combined to make a railway panopticon. This place allowed the state to enforce laws and police public morals in a way not possible before, or in other spaces. Even while complaining of the lack of a sufficient number of police—a perennial lament of St. Louis police chiefs—they could

Institute of History and Art.

54 “The Station Agent’s Blacking,” Railroad Telegrapher, June 1, 1891, 259, emphasis original. As Chapter 5 shows, the railway panopticon’s effect was not directly proportional to the size of the station, but rather is best described by an inverted U curve.
surveil the entire Depot with four policemen. An 1892 article stated that the complement included “an officer at the end of the depot to watch over the trunks and to regulate bus drivers and express wagons. Another officer is necessary at the west end of the depot on Twelfth Street…to keep the cabmen off the sidewalk. One officer is left to stand at the main entrance [and] there is only one officer at this point where there should be two [on the platforms].” Curiously, the stated duty of the officers was not to protect the public but rather “to save the railroad companies damage suits, as engines and cars are continually moving through the crowd.”

Four policemen had to enforce not only the laws of the state, but also protect private property causing accidents and from subsequent legal attacks.

The police were not the only state actors watching and exerting their power at the station, and people were not the only things being controlled. Board of Health doctors at times used the station as a place to prevent the spread of the cholera virus. In 1892 a news bulletin from Toledo notified Post-Dispatch reporters that emigrants who had arrived in New York were suspected of having come from an area in Germany where there had been a cholera outbreak. The Dispatch notified the Board of Health and the next day accompanied a certain doctor Montgomery to the Union Depot. When the immigrants arrived, Montgomery gave each of the twenty-one people “a thorough questioning and an examination of the character of their luggage,” then allowed them to proceed. This was apparently not an isolated inspection, but one that city officials as early as 1893 made a regular part of the arrival of immigrants at the Depot. An article in the Post-Dispatch notes that the examiner on that particular day, Dr. Jordan, was one of three assistant City Dispensary physicians who would be carrying out these examinations “regularly and systematically” by boarding trains with “a policeman detailed for this purpose by Chief Harrigan.” The physicians kept lists of the names of the immigrants, their health, and where they planned to settle, something that citizens did not have to

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report. The train station was not the only place that a nineteenth-century doctor working for a municipality certainly exercised power to prevent epidemics inside his lab. But if the most effective way to prevent the spread of disease from new arrivals was through early inspection and possible quarantine, then the station a place that rendered more effective (and therefore amplified) the power of the doctor to do that.

The station was a tool—like a microscope or disinfectant—that made the doctor more effective at the goal the local government has tasked him with. Humans were not the only vectors for dangerous illnesses that could be tested for within the narrow confines of the railway panopticon. St. Louis’s one (and apparently only) milk inspector also used the Depot as a place to amplify his power over bacteria. In 1893 he visited the Union Depot and collected samples from cans shipped in from the countryside. He could tell immediately that the milk in several of the cans had been watered down to increase the volume, dangerous because many of the dairymen had their wells alongside manure piles. Sullivan railed against the dishonest milk producers, but promised to condemn every shipment arriving at the Depot watered down to be dumped into the sewers. The Depot was a chokepoint not only for people, but for microscopic entities. State inspectors like Jordan and Sullivan had much more power to intervene and legally halt progress—of people and microbes—at the Depot than they would have back in their labs or dispensaries.56

56 “Fumigated Emigrants: A Number of Them Arrive at the Union Depot,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 14, 1892, 2; “Examining Emigrants: The Health Department Guarding Against Cholera,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 19, 1893, 4; Catherine Boland Erkkila has written about the spatial confinement and separation that immigrants were subject to both on trains and in train stations. See “American Railways and the Cultural Landscape of Immigration,” *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 36–62; “Milk and Water: Inspector Sullivan Determined to Prevent Their
State power was not just an abstraction on a local, state, or federal level, but had to be enacted by real people in three-dimensional space through specific networks. These networks too are not simply abstract but are also physical. Railroad lines and locomotives pulling passenger cars made governance more difficult as it made certain municipal laws and patriarchal codes harder to enforce: workers could become hobos, women could flee their tormentors, and criminals could move quickly beyond city lines. Combined with the telegraph and nationwide municipal police cooperation, the station reversed that ease of flight and makes it much more difficult for those three groups to use the mobility of the iron road to escape governance. Philip Gorski has argued that power networks vary “not only in terms of their sources and composition, but along other dimensions as well, such as their scope and efficacy.”

Early unpoliced stations serving only one line did not empower municipal governments in significant ways. Later, larger stations did so by creating a kind of panopticon. The combination of the continental telegraph and the panoptic railway station dramatically increased both the scope and the efficacy of local police. Total surveillance, a feature of the Benthamite panopticon, was impossible; but what municipal government lost in quality of surveillance, it more than made up for in the volume of people and goods it could check and whose progress its officials could check. By the late 1870s, the St. Louis police department was collaring crooks, second-hand, in Seattle, Boston, and Atlanta. The railway panopticon strengthened municipal authority inside of the city, but also created a nationwide network of places that a city could act, albeit through officials of distant cities.

Mixing,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 15, 1893, 1.

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Chapter 4—Marching to the Depot:
The Train Station as the Origin of the Military-Industrial Complex

The men in the photograph above are all wearing uniforms. They are in a military band. And yet none of them are in the US Army. These nineteenth-century bands were rarely organized by the US Army. More often they were part of the state militia, of a para-military fraternal organization, or completely independent. Some band members were former soldiers, but they did not have to be. Military bands were not defined by their members, they were defined by their music. In the nineteenth-century, the overlap between popular music and martial music was near complete, and live performances were dominated by these so-called military bands. The photographer, after taking this picture in the late nineteenth-century, might have followed the band. From this alleyway where the band members posed, they might have walked around the corner and down the street to Kalamazoo’s union station. At the station they would have gotten into formation on Platform 1. Everyone at the station would have looked at them and known from their uniforms who they were and what kind of music they would play. The wool would have been hot and the band members would have shifted uncomfortably on the platform during their wait. There might not have been a breeze: the flags and red, white, and blue bunting would have hung limp. Finally, the train’s whistle—loud for the exact reason
that the brass instruments were loud—would have pierced the late morning air. The
crowd, full of those who had read in the newspaper the day before about the return of
the troops, would have pressed forward. The closer the train got, the louder the whistle.
The locomotive stopped, released its steam in a final whoosh, and as the troops got off,
the band began to play a Sousa march. Despite all the ambient noise made by the train,
the chatter of the crowd filling the platform, and heavy trunks being dragged, the band’s
music easily filled and shaped the station's soundscape. Everyone without an instrument
cheered as uniformed soldiers started to file down the platform towards the headhouse.
The journalists cheered as well, and then took out their notebooks. This chapter is about
the elements in this hypothetical scene—soldiers, reporters, and civilians as well martial
music and patriotic decorations—and the sum that these elements add up to. In 2016,
the American federal government spent $611 billion on the military, more than the next
seven top countries combined. In a country with a rapidly-deteriorating infrastructure
and substandard healthcare, it’s surprising that the current level of military spending
does not draw more popular criticism, especially when there is so much waste production
of unused weaponry that even the military does not want in its arsenal. I argue that the
idea that the state should subsidize corporations involved with “defense” was not an
elite invention but rather an inadvertent, bottom-up development. The justification for
the military-industrial complex did not simply evolve over time; it began in an actual,
physical place. I argue that the large urban train station is where late-nineteenth century
Americans learned to stop worrying and love the bomb. In other words, train stations
were the venue where Americans began to accept massive state intervention for the
benefit of private industry, with the excuse of military necessity and the “common good.”.¹

Since Dwight Eisenhower gave it a name in 1961, scholars have investigated the
origin of the military-industrial complex. Some of the scholarly debate has been about the

¹ John W. Schoen, “How US Defense Spending Stacks up against the Rest of the World,”
May 2, 2017, https://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/02/how-us-defense-spending-stacks-up-against-
the-rest-of-the-world.html Schoen cites data from the Stockholm International Peace Research
Institute.
chronological origin. The post-World War II era is usually seen as the historical moment of the complex’s birth, but historians have also pointed to the air force in World War I, or the Navy (and specifically the development of the torpedo) around the turn of the century. There has also been research on the military-industrial complex’s institutional origins, and work that suggests that the complex is less “military” than it has been portrayed. Rather than an anomaly, the military-industrial complex has been described as having superseded and strengthened the New Deal’s interventionist measures. These searches for the origin of the military-industrial complex in the United States have focused on timelines or organizational structures, rather than actual places. In looking at the spatial origins of the military-industrial complex, I also adopt a broader conception of it. Critics have mostly focused on subsidization of waste production with the excuse of defense. I show that while the core rationale was military, there was also an attempt to justify corporations that operated for the “common good.” In my conception, subsidization is not limited simply to land grants for railroad construction or waste production, but also what in the nineteenth century was called “condemnation.” The use of eminent domain to build large urban railroad stations was a fundamental legal intervention by the state, and prefigured both the post-World War II highway projects as well as the creation of vast urban and suburban military bases in and around American cities. Though historians have found the economic and technical origins of the military-industrial complex in the nineteenth-century railroad, they have not seen the station as a place where civilians joined in a military pageant, and gradually accepted the largesse bestowed upon the railroads as in part justified by military necessity.

American elites used the excuse of military necessity to create railroad space from public space, but the ideology of the military industrial complex was co-constituted by ordinary people. I build on the work of geographers writing on so-called “popular geopolitics,” the co-creation of ideas about the American state’s duties and rights in the larger world by everyday people. When World War II provided the opportunity to greatly expand the military-industrial complex from the top down, it was possible only
because Americans had been part of the parade from the bottom up for almost a century, in the train station. The American Historical Association itself has produced a pamphlet on the military-industrial complex that argues “the military-industrial complex” as a term “applies most cogently to the three decades of American history in the middle of the Cold War, roughly 1955 to 1985.” Alex Roland, The Military-Industrial Complex (Bloomington, IN: American Historical Association, 2001), 2; John A. Alic, “The Origin and Nature of the US ‘Military-Industrial Complex,’” Vulcan 2, no. 1 (June 23, 2014): 63–97; Katherine C. Epstein, Torpedo: Creating the Military-Industrial Complex in the United States and Great Britain (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Ben Baack and Edward Ray, “The Political Economy of the Origins of the Military-Industrial Complex in the United States,” The Journal of Economic History 45, no. 2 (1985): 369–75; Writing about World War II, James Sparrow argues for example that only the defeat of the Axis powers’ menace granted legitimacy to the massive extension of the federal government’s power. James T. Sparrow, Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); While he agrees with the standard post-World War II periodization of the origin of the military-industrial complex, Richard Barnet is careful to underline that while the “Armed Services have developed an elaborate packaging system to market their principal products to the public...Fear, of course, has been the biggest seller.” The Economy of Death (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 73; Gregory Michael Hooks, Forging the Military-Industrial Complex: World War II’s Battle of the Potomac (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Noam Chomsky has argued that the name military-industrial complex is a misnomer. Chomsky refers to what he calls the “federal system,” in which the main function of the military (or, more recently, other government bodies like the National Institutes of Health) “is to provide some device to socialize costs, get the public to pay the costs, to take the risks” for whatever the cutting edge sector of the

Figure 4.1—White’s Military Band in Kalamazoo, Michigan, circa 1890. Courtesy of the Kalamazoo Public Library, History Room Photograph File P-478.
are martial spaces that support war-making and militarism which are located far from battlefields, and indeed may not even seem like martial spaces. One of these places is the train station. My goal in this chapter is to connect the ideological (approval for state-subsidized pseudo-military spending) with the spatial (an actual place that this idea diffused): the connection is martial performance.

In this chapter, I analyze not only what people said, but what they did. If people in the station are waiting, I wait with them. If they are moving, I want to watch how they move, where they go, what they do with their hands and their voices, what props they use, and how the stage is set. In her book, theorist Diana Taylor has shown how attention to the repertoire of performance allows historians to access the embodied practices of repertoire as they would a documentary archive. According to Taylor, performance is “an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge.” Analyzing performances (especially those that were repeated with variations on a theme) provides a source that otherwise would not be available in other kinds of archives. Taylor’s repertoire is a compendium of verbal performances—songs, prayers, speeches—as well as nonverbal practices that are transmitted by the body. Knowledge is often transmitted

economy is in that moment: in the 1860s, the railroads. Chomsky stresses that the average person would resist the radical redistribution of wealth upwards, and so “this has to be done in a way that protects state power and private power” from what he calls “the domestic enemy”—the American public. “War Crimes and Imperial Fantasies: Noam Chomsky Interviewed by David Barsamian,” International Socialist Review, October 2004, 8; Robert Angevine has also examined the relationship between the federal government—primarily the military—and the development of the American railroads. There was not complete support, and the economic relationship between the railroads and the state were not one of simple subsidization. Rather, military and government leaders engaged in a complex and ongoing argument about the best use of resources, and the best way to prosecute the changing warfare that the U.S. Army was involved in during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Speaking in his introduction about the desire of historians to push back the date of origin of the “military-industrial complex,” Angevine notes that “the army’s experience with railroads confirms the nineteenth-century roots of military-industrial collaboration but suggests that military bureaucracies are complex institutions that do not always impose system and uniformity on technological problems.” The Railroad and the State: War, Politics, and Technology in Nineteenth-Century America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), xvii; For an example of popular geopolitics created not through marching but through collated magazine extracts, see Joanne P. Sharp, Condensing The Cold War: Reader’s Digest and American Identity (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
by performances that are part of what social scientists might call schemas, but which Taylor refers to as scenarios. Scenarios are performances that “frame and activate social dramas” and have an acceptable range of possibilities. The word “performance” doesn’t necessarily connote an intentional theatrical presentation like a play. People can “perform” certain roles in public ceremonies without thinking of their actions as a performance. It’s impossible to ask nineteenth-century Americans how they felt about the station, or what sort of associations they had with that place. By reading accounts of how they acted in and around the station, I can however make some inferences about those associations. A variety of actors, some unaware of their roles, performed there: generals, common troops, police at the stations, school children, and newspaper reporters. Their paths crossed at

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3 In his discussion of Michael Mann’s concept of infrastructural power, Philip Gorski suggests that diffuse ideological power tends to operate in habits or practices rather than commands. Gorski suggests four methodological rules to the study of diffuse ideological power: look for informal linkages rather than formal ties, for tactics of seduction and the politics of pleasure, and for cultural scripts rather than an explicit presentation of worldviews. Finally—and crucially—Gorski exhorts the historian to “be on the lookout, not just for what is said, but what is done, that is for the mute practices and rituals through which ideology acts on the body, and not just for the noisy words and phrases through which it announces itself.” Philip Gorski, “Mann’s Theory of Ideological Power: Sources, Applications, and Elaborations,” in An Anatomy of Power: The Social Theory of Michael Mann, ed. John A. Hall and Ralph Schroeder (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 130.
the station, and together they contributed—unknowingly—to the perpetuation of the martial station. Sounds are important in this chapter: very few of the sources I examine here are Gorski’s “mute” rituals—indeed, these performances were often accompanied by music, and that demands analysis. Stations were the stage for troop departures, receptions for traveling generals, Fourth of July outings, and even railroad flower collections for Decoration Day (an early iteration of Memorial Day). These not only happened in front of everyone who happened to be at the station, but they were reported about extensively for those who could not be present. Investigating why people in bands wear uniforms retraces connections that were made in the past but that are now taken for granted. To this last point, I draw on the work of historical musicologists who have recreated music’s more subtle meanings in the late nineteenth century.\(^4\) The train station was a place where the state slowly acquired the assent of everyday Americans to reach further into their lives than had been possible even in the most perfect of railway panopticons. In this chapter I show how the station was a location where a variety of actors inadvertently created an ideology of war-justified property transfer that undergirds the current military-industrial complex. Among the millions of travelers who passed through union stations in the late nineteenth century on a daily, monthly, or weekly basis, there were also thousands of soldiers. The train station as a crucial node in the military logistical system meant that it was a spatial bottleneck for soldiers to pass through.\(^5\) Like everyone else, soldiers had to sit around and wait for the train, sometimes for hours at a time. Nineteenth-century

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\(^5\) Richards and Mackenzie have also noted that in wartime, “stations have been since the days of the American Civil War an essential element in the transportation of men and materials and consequently a military target of the first importance.” *The Railway Station: A Social History* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), 14–15.
Americans saw men in uniform across the urban landscape: on boats, on the streets, in saloons. While the railroad is certainly not the only place that the martial spirit and military rituals can be found, it is the only important place where the military and the public were frequently entwined in both intentional performances and frequent quotidian mini-dramas. Unlike the courthouse or the theater, everyday urban Americans were frequently at the station, often every day. They both saw soldiers there and read about them being at the train station on a continual basis.

St. Louis is a particularly appropriate place to look at the connections between warmaking and railroad stations. The city was not only one of the most important late-nineteenth century railway centers, it was the most important base for nineteenth-century American continental imperialism. In *Nature's Metropolis*, William Cronon describes the competition between St. Louis and Chicago for possession of “the principal wholesale market for the entire midcontinent,” the gateway between the grain-producing West and the hungry East. But to see Chicago as Cronon does—the victor in a titanic struggle in which Chicago’s railways allowed it to triumph—is to misread the nature of the plains, and of St. Louis’s role in the flow of the golden stream of grain. While St. Louis’s commercial elite certainly dreamed of this stream flowing through their city and both eastward and southward, the US Army had other ideas. In 1805, the United States took formal possession of what was collectively called the Louisiana Territory. After garrisoning several different sites near St. Louis, the U.S government purchased a large piece of land just ten miles south of St. Louis. Major General Jacob J. Brown, the Commanding General of the Army, had decided that rather than spread troops out across numerous small frontier posts, he would concentrate soldiers at one strategic point. After

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6 Ports were also a military transportation hub, but one was less-frequently visited by large numbers of civilians (other than sailors and stevedores). Ports perhaps would become another place where this idea was reinforced as the US began its salt-water imperialism.


8 See Watson and Wooster, supra, and Durwood Ball, *Army Regulars on the Western Frontier*, [173]
establishing the Jefferson Barracks, the Army opened what was essentially its first basic training facility, the Infantry School of Practice there. Most of the nineteenth-century US military’s most infamous leaders—among them Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant, Zachary Taylor, Robert E. Lee, William T. Sherman, and Henry Leavenworth—were assigned to Jefferson Barracks during their careers.

The Jefferson Barracks were also the home of the US Army’s first permanent cavalry regiment, the dragoons. Initially the dragoons were merely mounted infantry, but they evolved into tactically distinct units that were ideal for defeating mounted Native American tribes. Even before the railroads allowed for rapid deployment on the Great Plains, the dragoons were sent out to negotiate treaties and intimidate their Native adversaries. The dragoons were created and stationed at the Jefferson Barracks in 1833, just after the US military staged the first of many campaigns out of St. Louis, the Black Hawk War. In the 1840s, the Barracks became the largest U.S. military installation in the country. Histories of the Barracks make much of their use as a staging ground for what are collectively called “the American Indian Wars,” the ethnic cleansing that took place as Euro-Americans “removed” indigenous plains Indians through the nineteenth century. The conquest of the West as an ongoing counter-insurgency campaign, and St. Louis was the headquarters of the Department of the Missouri, tasked with

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11 In his history of the Jefferson Barracks (which he calls the “Gateway to the West”), the curator of the Jefferson Barracks Historic Park remarks blandly that “From 1865 to 1890 the primary mission of the Army was Indian fighting.” Marc E. Kollbaum, *Gateway to the West: The History of Jefferson Barracks from 1826–1894* (St. Louis, MO: Friends of Jefferson Barracks, 2002), 196; Morris, *Sword of the Border*.
carrying out this campaign. But a look at the list of campaigns that were staged from the Barracks tells an even larger story: From 1832 onward, the Jefferson Barracks were the sally port for American imperial conquest. The troops who left from the Barracks forced into submission not only Native Americans, but also Mexicans, and Cubans—as well as recalcitrant southern Americans during the American Civil War. Well into the twentieth century the Barracks were still a major recruitment and training depot for the U.S. military’s foreign adventures. Boosters for a government-funded transcontinental railroad did not hesitate to point out the role the city could play in conquest. In an 1850 memorial addresses to Congress, Boston Merchant P.F. Degrand requested a charter “the purpose of constructing a railroad and establishing a line of telegraph from St. Louis to San Francisco.” The railroad could carry troops and munitions and would aid in the defense of US “possessions” on the Pacific and “avert all all danger of Indians wars, north and south of this line.”

All of these troops flowed through St. Louis’s main train station while traveling the rail lines that connected the city to both the West and the trans-West: Mexico, the Philippines, and the Caribbean. Chicago eventually handled much more grain than St. Louis, but that flow of grain was made possible by the campaigns carried out by the dragoons who boarded trains at the St. Louis Union Depot. Chicago prospered under

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13 The US commander in the Mexican-American War, Stephen Kearny, had been the commander of the first cavalry battalion at the Jefferson Barracks, and took cavalry from St. Louis with him to Mexico. The US’s official surveyor for the 1848 treaty boundary refused to accept the Mexican interpretation of the treaty, in part because it eliminated the possibility of an easy southern rail route to the Pacific. It should be unsurprising to learn that the Mormon Battalion of the U.S. Army mapped out some of the overland trails that would later become the Gadsden Purchase, which was deliberately shaped to accommodate building rail lines. Richard O. Cowan, “The Mormon Battalion and the Gadsden Purchase,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 37, no. 4 (1997): 48–64.

14 “Memorial of P.F. Degrand and others praying a charter for the purpose of constructing a railroad and establishing a line of telegraph from St. Louis to San Francisco,” 1, 20-21, in the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company pamphlets (1845-1853) Collection, volume 1, Linda Hall Library.
the aegis of the St. Louis’s imperial offensives. Rather than conceptualize the two cities as competing for commercial hegemony, we should think of St. Louis as an imperial center on the frontier. Further west than Chicago, and across the Mississippi, St. Louis was not yet the easternmost western city, but rather the westernmost eastern city. St. Louis was the midway point, the logistical and military linchpin, between eastern capital and western expansion. It was like Beneventum during Roman republican expansion in southern Italy or San Cristobal de Las Casas for the Spanish in sixteenth-century Chiapas: the city’s function was to dominate territory, while not necessarily reaping all of the economic benefits (to the consternation of St. Louis elites). St. Louis was the physical link between eastern capital and what has been prosaically referred to as “Western expansion.” While these troops moved through St. Louis’s succession of train stations, train stations across the country were sets for the performance of militarism. Train stations are no longer associated with the military both because they are no longer a major military conduit, but because the most important representations of the past for American—the movies—leave them out. Hollywood movies have long shaped how Americans imagine the cavalry in the American West. Decades of Westerns make Americans think of the cavalry riding for days across the plains at a fierce gallop to arrive just in time to save the besieged infantry, forgetting the trains that carried troops closer to their opponents. Even less openly martial movies like the 1990 hit film Dances With Wolves omit the trains and train stations. In that movie, Kevin Costner plays an injured Civil War officer, Lieutenant John Dunbar, who requests to be transferred to the frontier in order to see it “before it’s gone.”

15 Anne Farrar Hyde, Empires, Nations, and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800–1860 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Thomas Hietala has pointed out that even early labor organizers were in favor of expansion westward as a way keeping wages high by reducing the number of people searching for work in the East. Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

16 That westerns have occluded the importance of the train station as a staging ground is not an idle observation. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot has observed, theories of history “grossly underestimate the size, the relevance, and the complexity of the overlapping sites where history is produced, notably outside of academia.” Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 19.
In the film, the transition from the battle in Tennessee to Dunbar’s arrival at Fort Hays in Kansas is simply a cut. In the former scene Dunbar has just charged the enemy on a horse, and in the latter, he rides past a column of cavalry troops on horseback before dismounting at Fort Hays. Fort Hays had originally protected travelers on the Smoky Hill Trail, but in 1866 was given the task of protecting workers on the Union Pacific Railroad. When the army decided in 1867 to make it a supply depot for other posts in the area, it was moved five miles to be closer to a train station.\(^\text{17}\) While a movie-viewer is left with the impression that Dunbar has ridden from Tennessee to Kansas, in fact he and his trusty steed would likely have spent most of their journey on a train. Though the movie doesn’t show it, Dunbar’s fictional journey (and that of his horse, Cisco) would have included a stop in St. Louis to change trains. The Union Pacific would then have carried them not to Hays City but right to Fort Hays itself, which had its own station on the railroad line.\(^\text{18}\) Michael Blake’s original novel of the same name acknowledges the train station as a crucial martial space that his fictional Lieutenant Dunbar would have had to move through: “In his eagerness to be posted,” Blake writes, Dunbar had “gone straight from the train depot to headquarters.” After his interview he “dashed back to the train to pick up Cisco” and finally gets underway on horseback. Unbeknownst to Dunbar, the troops then stationed at the fort he’s to be posted to have just started back to Fort Hays. Their officer has decided to abandon the “fort”—more of a collection of holes in

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\(^{17}\) Military historians have long noted the importance of railroads to the conquest of the American West, and yet have not devoted much attention to the siting of forts near railroads. Matthew Flynn writes that “forts appeared along key roads” but does not discuss the planning—or indeed in this case, the moving—of forts to flank the railroad lines, or vice versa. Matthew J. Flynn, *Settle and Conquer: Militarism on the American Frontier, 1607–1890* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishers, 2016), 169; General William Sherman noted in 1866 that the railroad had killed Fort Kearny, located far from where the Union Pacific’s tracks passed. Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 59–60.

the sod than a defensive structure—and this decision is later relayed to “General Tide at regional headquarters in St. Louis.”

American movies have left the train station out the camera’s frame, giving audiences in the twentieth century the idea that the cavalry always moved on horseback. In the pre-film days if Americans actually saw cavalry, they likely saw them awaiting transport at train stations. A real cavalry lieutenant, John Bigelow, Jr., participated on the manhunt for Geronimo and his Apache followers in 1885. His journal reveals the degree which the cavalry both relied on the railroad for transportation, but also how often the soldiers were camps out at train stations, “strewn along the railroad track, asleep in the shade of freight cards, [or] lounging on the platform of the station.”

A letter from William Tecumsah Sherman, who after the Civil War was made the military commander of what became the Division of the Missouri (a military region that essentially encompassed the entire Great Plains), underlines the importance of the railroad for the military. Writing to another general at Vicksburg, Sherman tells of his support for railroad building, which “will simplify our work very much as [railroads] pass across that wide belt devoid of timber that has hitherto cost us so much time and labor to cross.”

Railroads—and ultimately railroad stations—provided a link between the resources of the federal state and private corporations. State aid to railroads came in a number of forms. A grant of federal land to railroads was the most obvious method of subsidization,

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19 Michael Blake, *Dances with Wolves* (New York: Fawcett Gold Medal, 1988), 3, 5, 14. The novel does not follow the exact chronology of the actual Fort Hays. In the book, Dunbar arrives at the Fort during the Civil War. This is impossible, as the first Fort Hays was built several months after the end of the war in 1865, and moved to the location near the train line only in 1867.


21 Map adapted from Athearn’s *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West*, 325.

22 Missouri History Museum (hereafter MHM), William Tecumseh Sherman Collection, Box 1, folder 2, Correspondence, 1866-1869, letter to General E.O.C Ord, 28 May 1867. One of Sherman’s biographers has noted the military commander’s focus on the railroads after he took command in St. Louis. Sherman “doggedly maintained his position, insisting that the railroad was the paramount consideration, and all other things were, as he said, side issues.” Athearn, 326.
but there were many others. Robert Angevine has shown how the military at West Point and the railroads were twinned at birth. Modeled on the French military academy, West Point when it was founded in 1802 had a curriculum that was more focused on civil engineering than on military strategy and tactics. Officers learned mathematics and applied that theoretical knowledge to building roads, tunnels, bridges and—crucially—early railroads. With the passing of the General Survey Act in 1824, the federal government permitted loaning out its officers to private companies, and these Army officers (all trained engineers) helped survey and build the US’s earliest railroads. When the army finally curtailed this practice in the early 1830s, a huge number of officers resigned their commissions and took well-paying jobs in the private sector. The connections between the railroads and the Army temporarily weakened in the 1840s with a renewed emphasis on coastal fortifications rather than infrastructure building, but Army engineers conducted the four federally-sponsored surveys of the Mississippi to California rail routes between 1853 and 1855. Angevine shows that the Civil War was decisive for rebuilding the close-knit relationship. Generals like Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman saw how absolutely crucial the railroads were to their plans. In the post-bellum period both made sure that there was ample federal support for railroads, especially those in the West.23

23 Angevine, The Railroad and the State, 96–97; Forest Hill has pointed out that in addition to loaning the railroads military engineers, the government also granted tariff remissions on imported railway iron for a time in the early decades of railroad construction. Forest G. Hill, Roads, Rails & Waterways: The Army Engineers and Early Transportation (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957); Collen Dunlavy cites Peter Lundgreen, who claims that the U.S. “relied longer than
The enormous grants of public land the federal government made for the Union Pacific Railroad are well-known, but a subsequent act of Congress transferred all maps, profiles, and other drawings, together with estimates and reports connected with explorations and surveys for the Pacific Railroad, made under the authority of the Government, and all other information upon the subject of said road in the possession of any department of the Government be transferred to the Department of the Interior, and that the Secretary of the Interior be authorized to furnish copies of the same, free of charge to the Union Pacific Railroad Company, so far as they may be useful in aiding said Company in determining the proper route for said road.

The early logistical support that the government had provided railroads in the East was far exceeded by its support for the transcontinental railroads. General Greenville M. Dodge, who had led a government expedition to the Rockies to survey lines of approach for a railroad in 1855, became the Chief Engineer for the Union Pacific when it began to lay track from Omaha in 1867.

Sherman made the connection between railroads and the usurping of Native American lands explicit in his final report to Congress in 1883. The army commander noted that it became far easier to supply troops and rapid movements were possible, so that “Indian outbreaks were reduced from wars to mere raids of short duration…With the aid of the railroads it is not practicable to accomplish more with a hundred men that was any other comparable country on military engineers as experts for civilian purposes.” Colleen A. Dunlavy, Politics and Industrialization: Early Railroads in the United States and Prussia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 57.

24 “An Act to Aid in the Construction of a Railroad & Telegraph Line from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean” (New York City: NYC, William C. Bryant & Company, 1865), 45, in the Union Pacific Railroad Company pamphlets (1862-1866) Collection, volume 1, Linda Hall Library.
As I discussed in the second chapter, the American federal and state governments had encouraged what would now be called “development” by granting charters and subsidizing certain corporations since the early part of the nineteenth century. The early support for canals, however, was dwarfed by the aid given to railroads. As other authors have pointed out, what was once considered the “weak” American state was an enormously strong economic partner for a number of sectors of the American economy, and especially for the railroads. The federal government gave conquered Indian land as grants to the various US states, with the understanding that these lands would then be granted to the railroads along their rights-of-way. The railroads then made it easier for settlers to invade the borderlands, and for the US Army to police the newly conquered territory. There are, however, other forms of state support for railroads that are much more visible than these land grants. An American looking out the window of a moving train

25 For more on the American government’s intervention in the infrastructural economy, see for example Carter Goodrich, *Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads, 1800–1890* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974); Harry H. Pierce, *Railroads of New York: A Study of Government Aid, 1826–1875* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Harry N. Scheiber, *Ohio Canal Era: A Case Study of Government and the Economy, 1820–1861* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012); In her chapter entitled “American Intervention and Prussian Abstention,” Railroad historian Colleen Dunlavy critiques what she calls “invisible paradigms” in American and German historiography, that “states with strong administrative capacities—above all, with well-developed national bureaucracies—tend to intervene, those without such capacities do not.” Dunlavy notes by way of comparison that the Prussian central government “adopted a largely hands-off policy towards the railroads” while the American government had taken “a comparatively interventionist stance.” This is perhaps an understatement: the American federal government granted approximately 180 million acres (or 280,000 square miles) to the railroads. The Prussian state in 1910 was 135,000 square miles. Thus the U.S. granted a total acreage of land to the railroads that amounted to an area approximately double the greatest extent of the Prussian state. While Dunlavy’s study reveals how the constitutional structure of states plays a constitutive role in industrial change, I am interested in is how justifications for the state’s interventionist role in certain sectors the economy developed from the bottom up, and how the train station was a crucial space of assent for the development of that ideology. Dunlavy, *Politics and Industrialization*, 45, 4.

26 Missouri was particularly generous with its railroad companies, giving them (in addition to the land grants) over $6,000,000 in loans and outright grants by 1861. Little of this money was ever repaid. See Margaret Fitzsmmons, “Railroad Development in Missouri, 1860-1870” (Washington University, 1931), 4–25.
would not see the legal checkerboard of alternating grants, territory that had been cleared of Native Americans by the US military and then sold off by the railroad behemoths. The traveler would look out and simply see farms, something like the right side of John Gast’s painting “American Progress.” There are no obvious survey lines in that painting, as important as land tenure was, and while there is a train visible, there is no station in sight. Michael Adas, in his examination of American technology and empire, underlines the central role of the railroad in this picture (as well as Fanny Palmer’s similar landscape, “Across The Continent”). In both paintings Adas sees the railroad as part of “the integral importance of technological prowess to American national identity [and] lofty rationales for the building of a continental empire.”

While such paintings—widely reproduced in lithograph and likely seen by millions of Americans in the nineteenth century—were surely important in providing justifications for western conquest, it was an easy sell. Asking white Americans whether the US government should use its techno-military advantage to annihilate Indians and make more cheap land available was likely a rhetorical question. Troops were also used to accompany white settlers moving onto formerly Native American land. A train bound for St. Louis and then on to Colorado left the Chicago station of the Chicago and St. Louis Railroad Company one March morning in 1870. Before the train started, the “colony” of white settlers gathered around their leader for a departure harangue. Uniformed soldiers not only looked on but then boarded the train to escort the settlers to the West. Just behind the soldiers a banner on the side of the first car reads “Westward The Star of Empire Takes Its Course.” The accompanying text shows the importance of the station: not only is the departure celebrated here, but troops await at the nearest station in

27 John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872, Oil on canvas, 11 1/2 in x 15 3/4 in (29.2 cm x 40 cm); Framed: 17 9/16 in x 21 1/2 in x 1 7/8 in (44.6 cm x 54.6 cm x 4.7 cm), 1872.

Figures 4.3 (above) and 4.4 (below)—John Gast’s 1872 painting “American Progress.” Below an illustration of settlers departing for the West, in Harper’s Weekly, 1870.
Colorado (the emigrants’ destination) to escort them to their land grant. The justification for giving railroads enormous subsidies, ceding them millions of acres of public land, but also allowing them to demolish whole neighborhoods required another kind of rationale altogether. These rationales were not intentional elite plans made through discourse or iconography, but justifications that emerged organically in part through architecture and performance in urban train stations.

What was visible to any resident of urban America was the “condemnation” of large areas of US cities, and the appropriation (with the assent of the state) of that land for train stations. Very few white Americans experienced the dispossession of Native land in a negative way, or could see the actual process; By contrast, the legalized seizure of urban land was much more obvious and destructive. That land grab—in the cities, not in the countryside—demanded justification, and the military played its role. But how did the corporate raiders who ran the railroad companies convince the public that the railroads were key to defense, and their subsidization served the common good? A key scene is the military departure (or homecoming). In the twenty-first century this takes place at airports: there are more recent images from the Iraq Wars and Afghanistan, but an iconic photograph is from Vietnam. In it, former prisoner of war Lt. Col. Robert Stirm is greeted in 1979 by his family at Travis Air Force Base, California. World War Two-era pictures depicting troops departing for battle or returning from the theater are often at docksides, with huge troop transports full of soldiers. In the late nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth century, this staging ground for troop transport was railroad stations. As fiction writer James Scott wrote in his Railway Romance and Other Essays: “Here are the soldiers and sailors, with troops of acquaintances to see them off… At another place a wife is bidding good-bye to a husband whom duty calls hence.”

This was likely an especially frequent scene during the Civil War: the Newark Daily Advertiser


30 Cited in Richards and Mackenzie, The Railway Station, 7.
noted in May of 1861 that the departure of more volunteers from the station was accompanied by music from the Second Regiment Brass Band and a large crowd collected at the depot.\(^{31}\) This very public spectacle of the station as a point of departure for the US military theatrically argued for its subsidization as a public service.

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* apparently had a reporter on duty at the Union Depot, seemingly at all hours, for the latter half of the nineteenth century. Arrivals of important visitors or of important St. Louisians returning home were often noted by the newspaper. In 1878 a “transcendent trio” of opera singers descended on St. Louis, and were met at the station by the reporter and a crowd of onlookers, though the article noted that it “was not the most favorable of conditions to look upon the three singers” as they were travel-stained and tired.\(^{32}\) Another evening the dim gaslights of the station perhaps obscured the weariness that hung heavy on the traveler: in 1878 the Right Reverend C.F. Robertson arrived promptly at 8 pm. He had just completed his last leg of a journey that begun in London, where he had been attending the Pan-Anglican Council. The reverend was met (and perhaps had his bags carried by) two other bishops, the whole divine scene recorded again by the resident station reporter.\(^{33}\) Atheist too had their retinues, or at least reception committees: In 1883 Herr Most, a “wild revolutionist” with a pear-shaped head and sandy whiskers, came to St. Louis. His physical traits must have made it easy for the group of St. Louis socialists to recognize him. Instead of accompanying him to his hotel (the standard procedure for most important visitors), Herr Most’s friends conveyed him to the bar-room of a nearby hall, where the apparently multi-ideological “anarchist, communist, and socialist agitator” answered questions on revolution in French, German, and English.\(^{34}\)

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32  “A Transcendent Trio: The Beautiful Roze, the Glorious Kellogg, the Charming Cary,” *St. Louis Evening Post*, February 18, 1878, 3.
33  “Returned Reverends,” *St. Louis Evening Post*, October 30, 1878, 4.
34  “Herr Most, The Socialist: A Talk With the Wild Revolutionist This Morning.,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 5, 1883, 1.
The most noted, and most celebrated arrivals were those of soldiers: soldiers of any rank, in any number, always made it into the newspaper. The fact that these soldiers were highly visible, often noted by the local press, and that their martial performance was often imitated by everyday people is significant. It turns the railway station from another node in the transport system to a tight performative space where the train station and military might were cemented together. If Americans later developed a love affair with highways, in the nineteenth century they saw the train station as a patriotic, martial space. Soldiers were met at the Union Depot by other soldiers, by crowds of ordinary people, and by representatives of the government, even when they weren't returning from war. Crucially, this was seemingly always noted and reported, creating a very public spectacle of military arrivals and departures even for those who weren't present at the station in the moment. A company of the Missouri national guardsmen, the Tredway Rifles, were met at the station by a detail of their fellow soldiers and publicly lauded by an aid to the mayor. They were not returning from battle but rather from the state fair in Toledo, Ohio, where they had taken first prize in a drill competition. Before dismissing, the company marched to the end of the platform and went through a short drill in front of everyone present.35

The same reception was accorded to visiting troops as well: when the Chickasaw Guards from downstate arrived for an exposition in St. Louis in 1878, the local contingent of the national guard troops were at the station to receive them. Judging by the extensive list of military units in town for the exposition (from as far away as Tennessee and Illinois), the “military week” at the fair meant a number of these military receptions at the station, all duly reported by the local newspapers and witnessed by the throngs of people in town.36 Geographers have noted that militarism intersects with patriotism and nationalism in the glorification of the soldier and of military service. Though it

35 “Successful Soldiers: The Tredway Rifles Return After Their Victory at Toledo.,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 9, 1882, 2.

was certainly not the only place this happened; the train station was an important place where rendering aid to private corporations became something that Americans took for granted.\textsuperscript{37} Reporters observing and writing about these performances of martial adoration at the train station helped this process. These journalists were not simply producers of archival traces, but participants in the performances that, by reporting, they were actively helping to reproduce.

Railroads were crucial troop transports during the military campaigns against Native Americans; even more crucially though, the military was highly visible in stations during these campaigns. In 1881 a \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch} reporter noted that the “evidences of the determination of the Government to put down the Apaches are to be seen every day at the Union Depot,” adding that there was “quite a gathering at the depot” to see off troops being rushed West. Most of the miles that the cavalry moved, they moved by rail—that morning in 1881 it was detachments from the First and Sixth Cavalry who were passing through the station. A colonel in the army explained the revolutionary effect of the railroad to the reporter: “The railroads are solving the Indian problem. It used to be a matter of several weeks and even months to get the scattered troops together to put down an outbreak. But now we can concentrate a large force in several days.”\textsuperscript{38} The railroads therefore allowed for a sort of nineteenth-century blitzkrieg: cavalry from a central garrison like the Jefferson Barracks could be loaded, along with their equipment and horses, and sent out via railroad to strategic points closest to the enemy. The decades of Indian fighting after the Civil War thus meant millions of opportunities for civilians to encounter troops in train stations, as soldiers waited to board trains in union depots across the country. The train was both literally and figuratively the vehicle of empire; the station

\textsuperscript{37} Richelle M. Bernazzoli and Colin Flint, “Power, Place, and Militarism: Toward a Comparative Geographic Analysis of Militarization,” \textit{Geography Compass} 3, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 400.

was both literally and figuratively the stage for what became a military spectacle.

There was a clear expectation that troops would be both seen off and greeted upon their return. When someone wasn’t there to greet them, they seem to have been a bit surprised if not miffed. In 1881 the “boys in red,” the Albany Burgesses Corps, arrived at the Union Depot in St. Louis and found no official reception by the local military, as they had apparently received in the other cities along their route from New York. The officers of the Missouri National Guard later explained that they had made a mistake as to which train the Burgesses were to arrive on, and looked forward to the joint military drills the next day. While the Burgesses were a corps of just under 100 men, even small groups of soldiers passing through the station merited attention from both the ever-present Post-Dispatch reporter and all the passengers present at the station. Indeed, the newspaper article notes that while they wore their handsome blue fatigue uniform while traveling, their dress uniform consisted “of a tall, black bearskin shako, with a gold tassel in the front, scarlet coat with brass buttons and gilt trimmings, blue pantaloons with buff stripe edged with red cording, [and] handsome belt and sidearms.”

It’s easy to get dazzled by the details of this elaborate uniform; imagining it requires concentration, as well consultation of a dictionary (a “shako” is a tall, cylindrical military cap). What’s important to remember is that soldiers were visible in a way different from other passengers.

Looking from Platform Five across tracks to a crowded Platform Six St. Louis Union Depot in the 1870s, ‘80s, and ‘90s, very few people’s professions would have been obvious. The Union Depot in the early morning was usually crowded with working class people, “the workman with his dinner-pail and the tool-basket [who] usually monopolizes the space.” Dressed in the same dusty overalls, a carpenter, a railroad mechanic, and a cobbler might have resembled each other enough to have been confused for each other in

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39 “The Boys in Red: Arrival of the Albany Burgesses Corps This Morning,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 10, 1881, 6.

the station—or at least would have blended into a seemingly homogeneous mass. Soldiers were the clear exception to this crowd invisibility. Their public function was constantly noted, celebrated, and applauded—and described for readers of the city’s newspapers who had not actually been at the station when they arrived.41

Even small squads of soldiers passing through the station attracted the attention of the press: eight soldiers from Columbus, Ohio, stopped at the Union Depot to change trains in 1882 and, while they waited, must have shared with a reporter that they were on their way to the federal base at Leavenworth, Kansas.42 Even a solitary officer on his way to a new posting was enough to attract attention of the press posted at the station: Lieutenant E.D. Hoyle of Little Rock, Arkansas, perhaps while eating a sandwich at the station restaurant, shared the news of his new posting to Washington, D.C.43 The only reason a young man munching on a sandwich would have been asked where he was headed by a reporter would have been some other detail that made him interesting; in this case, it was likely Hoyle’s uniform. If the officer was important enough, he didn’t even have to stay in St. Louis—or indeed, even get off the train—to be met at the station. In 1882, General William T. Sherman, then head of the US Army, returned to St. Louis on his way to Texas. Sherman was, however, on his way to San Antonio and despite the presence of all of the officers from the quartermaster’s department, does not seem to have stepped down on the platform.44 This did not preclude a description of his person and of

41 Iconographic representations of the railway station put this into relief: for example, Helen McKie’s painting “Waterloo in Peacetime,” which adorns the cover of the book The Railway Station, shows hundreds of people mill around the station, and other than nuns and railway porters, the only people whose occupation is clear are police and soldiers. Richards and Mackenzie, *The Railway Station*.

42 “About Town,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 27, 1882, 2. These mentions of troops simply passing through the station reoccur with amazing regularity: “Infantry Recruits Going West.,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 7, 1881, 7; “Depot Notes.,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 14, 1881, 7; “Changing Quarters.,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 5, 1881, 8.

43 “About Town.,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 5, 1881, 4.

his retinue. Amazingly, this attention to all things martial at the Union Depot extended even beyond actual military personnel. Former opponents from opposite sides of the Civil War lines who got into a tussle made the news, as well as a woman masquerading as a soldier, or women in St. Louis’s so-called “Broom Brigade.”

Performance theorist Diana Taylor has described “scenarios” as formulaic structures that “predispose certain outcomes and yet allow for reversal, parody, and change.” Newspaper reporters not only noted appropriate performances by the military, but also scenarios that were not the kind that soldiers were supposed to enact at the station. In 1881 a group of 50 soldiers en route for Council Bluffs had a layover at the Union Depot. The soldiers apparently sold their blankets and bought a number of bottles of whiskey, then “got on a lively tear” as the reporter phrased it. They caused “considerable trouble” and it took “several encounters” by local police to bring their decidedly un-martial behavior to an end.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has said that the modern economic city has no front and back, nor any “processional route or ceremonial gate.” Yet the train station did indeed function not only as the path of least resistance to the heart of a city, but also as its ceremonial gateway. During the American Civil War, the station was not only the place of arrival for soldiers’ bodies, but also a space for gathering family and friends to mourn the fallen man. Coffins were often transferred at the station from the refrigerated car they had been shipped in to the waiting railway car that would carry the body to the graveyard.

When the aged General Sherman died in


47 “City News,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 17, 1885, 8.

48 Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001 [1977]), 42.

49 For more on the importance of railroads with refrigerated boxcars to bringing home the
1891, the newspapers announced this his body would arrive at the Union Depot, where it would lie in state. State militiamen kept guard over the general’s body until Army regulars arrived to receive the remains and march it through the streets of the city to the graveyard. Adding to the martial tone was a military band playing “mournful music” at the Depot. The Depot was not the final resting place of the general, but it was the triumphal gate from which his burial set out. The station was not simply the place that the funeral cortège left from, however: it was the setting for the first act of a longer performance that linked the train station, the military, and patriotism.

While the railroad companies were not hesitant to assert their spatial rights to the station, they also went to lengths to establish themselves as patriotic corporate citizens who did their part for the common good. Laying flowers on the graves of soldiers and subsidizing visits to military cemeteries were just two ways they did this. Decoration Day, which evolved into Memorial Day in the United States, began as a post-Civil War holiday to remember fallen soldiers. The day was marked by placing flowers on the graves in cemeteries like the one at the Jefferson Barracks. The late nineteenth century railroads that ran into in the Union Depot used this as an occasion to display their patriotic fervor, widely advertising their services as free collectors of bouquets of flowers. In 1880 a citizens’ committee reminded the general public that the Jefferson Barracks would be the “point of interest” and that “the graves of fallen soldiers would be covered with floral offerings.” The ad went on to note that those living along the various rail lines were asked to drop bouquets off at their local station, to be sent to Mr. B. Fakenhainer, in the local mail room at the Union Depot. The ad noticed that any baskets would be promptly returned to their owners.  

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dead, see Drew Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).


The Fourth of July, the ultimate white American holiday, clearly yet inadvertently connected the patriotic, martial, and railway spheres. Late nineteenth-century residents of St. Louis flooded out of the city to celebrate the Fourth of July somewhere in the country, with picnics during the day and fireworks later as night fell. Their rural cousins made the opposite trip, heading to the city’s Fairgrounds to watch the arrival of the parade, then as now composed chiefly of military and para-military troops marching together. The result of this urban-rural trade was a Union Depot that “presented a stirring scene…the waiting rooms and the platforms crowded with patriots young and old.” The Depot had flags flying, but the railroads played up their patriotic fervor as well. Conductor J.L. Toomey’s train arrived in the Depot “profusely decorated with American flags, almost every part of the engine and tender bearing a flag.”

52 It doesn’t seem that there was any intention, on the part of St. Louis’s political and economic elites, of making the Union Depot both train space and martial space. The fact

\[\text{Figure 4.5—An advertisement requesting floral donations for Decoration Day. “Decoration Day: Preparations for Its Observance—An Appeal for Floral Tributes.” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 26, 1880, 4.}\]

\[\text{Louis Post-Dispatch, May 26, 1880.}\]

52 “As Of Yore: The Fourth of July Celebrated in St. Louis in Old-Time Style,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 4, 1892, 7.
that the station was a regular place of
performance for military personnel and
also intimately associated with patriotic
displays and marching connected these
two spheres in the minds of Americans
of the day. An article from 1882, noting
the use of “cannons and revolvers” by
little boys, in addition to the usual
fireworks, described a city that was by
mid-day mostly deserted. The majority
of the city’s residents had passed
through the Union Depot headed for
a dozen different destinations. It’s
likely that most of the people boarding
trains saw military (or para-military)
personnel at the Depot, as the article
noted that that during the day “several
military organizations made their
appearance with flying banners and
glistening guns.” The Walsh Zouaves
(in full uniform) were apparently late to
the platform but “the crowd showed its deference by giving them full headway.” Then as
now, deference was due to troops in transportation nodes.

Uniforms militarized the station grounds. Nineteenth-century Americans would
have easily recognized active-duty military personnel in train stations by their uniforms,
just as Americans do today in airports. But other people who frequented the depot also

53 “The Day In St. Louis: How The Glorious Fourth Was Celebrated In This City,” St. Louis
Post-Dispatch, July 4, 1889, 1.
had uniforms on. The band in the introductory anecdote and image all wore uniforms. That marching band members wear military-style uniforms today does not strike Americans as odd, but the reason they wear these special clothes is the tight association of band music and soldiers from the nineteenth century. Conductors and train personnel who worked in the stations also wore military-inspired uniforms, with epaulets and buttons that in many cases distinguished their rank, or place in the railroad hierarchy. The military connection was not limited to station personnel: many railroad executives in the post-Civil War years had military backgrounds, and all of them still used their military titles. As early as 1866 the governor of Missouri named Brigadier General A. Pyle as the superintendent of the Southwest Branch of the Pacific Railroad. Twenty years later, military men were still well represented in railroad companies’ upper administration. In one ten-month period from 1883 to 1884, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* mentioned thirteen different retired officers working for eight different railroads that came through the Union Depot, in positions like general manager, secretary, division superintendent, vice president, and even president. Reporters mentioned many of these executives in the context of their arrival at the station; even if they weren’t visible at the station, reporters made sure that St. Louisians knew about their arrivals and departures, further reinforcing the link between the US Army and the train station.⁵⁴

The station was also a martial place for nineteenth-century Americans because the military defended it as they would a military base. On numerous occasions during labor strikes of the late nineteenth century, federal and state troops occupied railroad stations, broke the strikes that centered on them, and even worked to keep trains moving. Railroads were fundamental for the economy of the time, and stations were crucial chokepoints and nodes in a system of national security. The Great Strike of 1877 came to a crescendo in St. Louis itself, where strikers occupied the Union Depot: the occupation

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⁵⁴ “Superintendent of a Railroad,” *St. Louis Daily Evening News*, March 1, 1866, 3. The articles in the *Post-Dispatch* that mentioned military officers appeared between August 1883 and June 1884.
was repeated all over the country, and newspapers made mention of the calm (or lack thereof) at various cities’ main train stations. While initially federal troops arrived at the Depot but left for their camp at the city’s arsenal, they later returned and occupied the main train station. This was later questioned by at least one letter to the editor of the *Post-Dispatch*; the editor replied that “United State soldiers were sent [to the Union Depot] to protect property in care of receivers appointed by United States Courts.” Even when returning from strikebreaking elsewhere, the place where urban residents saw the soldiers was the Depot. A first-page article in a March 1885 edition of the *Post-Dispatch* told of the return of strikebreaking soldiers from their work near Sedalia. The 243 men alighted from the train, formed up in line, and marched back to the Armory to drop off their weapons.

The station also remained intimately, spatially, and performatively connected to the military through its treatment of veterans. It was not totally unusual for people to “camp-out” at the station in their private cars, renting space from the depot. The British actress Lillie Langtry, who came to St. Louis in 1884 to perform, slept in her personal sleeper car in the Union Depot yards, several hundred yards from the station. The reporter who dropped in to inspect this “extraordinary departure from the mode of living generally in vogue with the traveling public” surmised that one reason was her desire to avoid the importunities of newspaper interviewers. Another reason, he speculated (as Lillie was not in her car and thus had indeed avoided his prying questions), was to reduce expenses: it seemed to him that “the cost of running a sort of female bachelors’ ball in her sleeper” cost less than the first-class hotel. The article on Langtry’s accommodations gave no report of

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56 “Home Again: The Soldier Boys Return From Their Bloodless Campaign,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch (1879–1922); St. Louis, Mo.*, March 17, 1885, 1.
how much she had paid to park her rolling private room there, but it’s clear that there was
rent involved.\textsuperscript{57}

The situation was different when those camping out were veterans of the Civil War. When the veterans in nineteenth-century equivalent of the VFW, the Grand Army of the Republic, held their annual meeting in St. Louis in 1887, the Union Depot refused
permission to the delegates (all former military men) to allow their chartered cars to
park on its sidings. The Wabash and a few other lines decided independently to allow
veterans to park, but the Depot itself did not.\textsuperscript{58} These delegates all imagined that they
as veterans had a claim on the space of the Union Depot, and clearly the article’s author
agreed. A station was a martial place almost by etymological imperative. As railway
station historians Richards and Mackenzie pointed out, the word “station” originally mean
“a stopping-place, [but] has acquired over the years a more disciplinary, structural, and
organizational connotation. It is no coincidence that the most common applications of
the word after railway station are police station and military station.”\textsuperscript{59}

All marching is not martial, but the number of groups marching to and from the
station makes clear that the station engendered some sort of military spirit. The GAR
men did not merely form ranks. For their departure for the GAR “encampment” (annual
meeting) in Jefferson City, the men had flags held high and drums beating. There were
several St. Louis GAR posts represented and the Depot “soon presented a very animated
scene.”\textsuperscript{60} The Union Depot also had a martial feel to it when foreign military men visited.
When the French minister of war General Ernest Jean Marie Boulanger committed
suicide in 1891, the Post-Dispatch recalled one of his visits to St. Louis. The militia unit

\begin{itemize}
 \item \textsuperscript{57} “A Lonely Lily: The Queer Place in Which Mrs. Langtry Secludes Herself,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, April 3, 1884, 7.
 \item \textsuperscript{58} “Side-Tracking Sleepers,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, September 2, 1887, 3.
 \item \textsuperscript{59} Richards and Mackenzie, \textit{The Railway Station}, 14.
 \item \textsuperscript{60} “The G.A.R.: The Ninth Annual State Encampment at Jefferson City,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, April 10, 1890, 4.
\end{itemize}
called the Wolf Town Rifles and a military band from the Jefferson Barracks accompanied Boulanger from his hotel to his waiting train at the Union Depot.  

Civilians also engaged in martial behavior at the station, not because they were intimidated into it, but because they wanted to participate in a kind of performance that they viewed positively.  

Here Diana Taylor’s use of the word “scenario” is again helpful. Cemeteries are an example of this sort of change in appropriate scenarios. Today in the United States there are a few scenarios that visitors to cemeteries can perform. The primary “performance” (and it sounds odd at first to think of it this way) is a visit to a graveside of a deceased relative or friend. If the visit is in the context of a burial, it might be in the company of a large number of other people. Certain clothes—mainly black—are worn, and only a very narrow set of musical choices would be deemed socially acceptable. Tones of voices are usually hushed, and attention is focused on the grave of the recently deceased. A visit to the grave on a day other than that of the interment of the body might be one person alone, or a small, intimate group, but in any event while the possibilities of appropriate dress might be wider, the reverence and seriousness would not change. Even visits to cemeteries that are touristic, rather personal, have this reverent tone. Certain graves (usually of famous “residents”) will be the object of the tour, which will be in motion most of the time.

Cemeteries in nineteenth-century America had a much wider range of acceptable scenarios. Before the development of urban parks, many peri-urban cemeteries functioned as recreational spaces. They were wide, mowed, often flat places that offered opportunities for jovial picnics and active recreation. Death was much more of a part of daily life,  

61 “On Her Grave: Boulanger Dies a Suicide at the Tomb of Mme. de Bonnemain,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 30, 1891, 1.

62 In discussing the justifications for the military-industrial complex, Barnet notes that “next to fear, pride is the Pentagon’s most potent weapon” for convincing the public to support military spending. While in the nineteenth century it does not seem like a concerted effort by elites, there was clearly a willingness of the public to “play at soldier” in the train station’s martial space. Barnet, The Economy of Death, 76.
and cemeteries in the beginning of the nineteenth-century did not have the morbid-yet-reverent aura that today hangs like a thick yet invisible fog over burying places in the United States. A careful ethnographer with no context or understanding of that society would have been able to generate some logical suppositions about Americans’ associations with cemeteries. The same thing is possible with the performances that happened at the Union Depot. These are captured in the words of newspaper reporters who included descriptions of martial happenings at the station not because they were out of the ordinary, but because they were rituals that seemed natural to enact there. Diana Taylor points out that the elements in a repertoire—we can call this particular repertoire of scenes seen at the martial station—are always “themselves the product of economic, political, and social structures that they, in turn, tend to reproduce.”

Understanding the train station as the origin of the military-industrial complex depends on recreating its soundscape. The station was the scene of martial rituals with costumes (uniforms), extras (marchers), and a score (martial band tunes). There is no legitimate reason to privilege what people saw as the only way to recover the past. Historians’ privileging of the visual likely has to do simply with archival availability: archives brim with visual descriptions, and extant images like drawings, photographs, and maps too are often preserved. These sources allow historians to recreate past landscapes and with them change over time. It is a more difficult task to imagine how quiet or noisy a train station was, how many decibels the train’s whistle blew at. Sounds are ephemeral, and too few are captured and archived. In the nineteenth century, the sonic environment was still particularly freighted with important meanings. The frequent mentions of music in connection with the Union Depot is not coincidence. The military bands of the nineteenth century—like the one in the image that opened this chapter—rebuilt the


station as a martial space. In his book on music during the 1863 Virginia encampment season, historical musicologist James Davis explains that his investigation is not of musical communities but rather of “socially and ideologically defined communities that are reaffirmed or contested through music.” Davis shows that while ensembles themselves had certain identities, the music they played and the contexts they played it in could either confirm or contest those identities. Music is not a thing but rather an activity or experience. It is not simply variations in the density of air, nor is it solely about an instrument. It is the result of a network of things and people that happens in a physical space, but also in a social setting. The actors are not just the people playing the instruments but also the onlookers—or, rather, the onlisteners—who are part of both the soundscape the instruments have created but also the social relationships that the music is mediating. Nineteenth-century military bands and their audiences created a dense web of associations between the military and militarism, the state and its actions, patriotism and civic pride, and the railroad stations that served the US’s railroad corporations. They did this through their instruments, personnel, their repertory, and the occasions on which they performed in the station.

Music had long been part of military life. Music was used to coordinate troop movements both in the heat of battle but also on long marches. Music quite literally set the tempo for moving feet, but it also shaped and defined the space troops marches through. After 1850, the introduction of valve and piston systems for brass instruments, as well as improved woodwinds, opened up possibilities for the development of ensemble playing. Unvalved brass instruments like bugles were limited in the pitches they could play; with the introduction of valves instruments, the whole chromatic scale of notes

65 Davis, *Music along the Rapidan*, 3.

66 I am indebted to Christopher Small for his neologism, “musicking,” which he defined as “to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.” Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), 9.
was available. Early brass instruments were relatively easy to learn; advances in the instruments, and addition of woodwinds expanded the repertoire. The revolutionary nature of brass instruments was not lost on military leaders: rather than changing notes through lip tension and speed of blowing air like a bugle, an instrument like a trumpet used valve changes to lengthen or shorten the distance air traveled through its tubes. The result was a suite of instruments—tubas, trumpets, and even saxophones—that armies the world over adopted after their development in the mid-nineteenth century. These brass instruments were not just novel, they were resistant. Playing in a concert hall is one thing, but it’s difficult to put an orchestra en marche. Delicate woodwinds and string instruments could not stand up to rain, cold weather, and the rough conditions of camp and campaign life. Brass instruments were, on the other hand, perfect for these conditions: many brass instruments once owned by soldiers that have made it into museums have either dents or soldered-on patches or both. The cornet below has several dents in the round curve and the left: where a wooden instrument would warp or break, brass resisted.\textsuperscript{67} General George Custer outfitted his own sixteen-piece brass band to accompany him on his campaigns; that fateful day on the Little Bighorn River the band director Felix Viniateri and the rest of the ensemble were far from the fray, waiting on the steamboat anchored in the Yellowstone River.

Brass instruments couldn’t be wielded by soldiers as a weapon, but they did help to occupy more territory, sonically. Put more simply, brass bands were loud, much louder than the drums and fifes of earlier armies. Bands took possession, sonically, of the sphere within their range: “through the band, those sponsoring the ensemble claim control of its soundspace.” The sponsoring body could be a church or a fraternal organization, but initially they were often an army. The first national conservatory was Ecole de Musique de la Garde Nationale, which was founded in 1792 to train musicians for the French military. Colonial armies, with their occupation not only the earth but also their seizure of the air,

\textsuperscript{67} Greaves & Co., \textit{Cornet in E-Flat (over-Shoulder Model)}, 1856, Nickel Silver, 60 cm, 1856, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.
were the principal disseminators of brass bands across the globe in the late nineteenth century. Shock and awe was aural before it was visual: the sound of the march was itself the avant-garde of the marching troops. Some brass instruments were shaped to project their notes backwards, and other versions were reversible. The cornet above (Figure 7) had both a forward- and backwards-facing bell. Martial music was not simply an aerial attack; it could also win hearts and minds. As a music historian noted at the end of the nineteenth century, “Appealing to the masses by the performance of bright sounds, by

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the pomp of military spectacle, and backed by a little innocent swagger, a military band materially enhances the attractions of military life, and induces many of the multitude to enlist in their country's service.”

Despite the adjective “military” that appeared in the names of so many nineteenth-century bands, very few of these bands were sponsored by the US government or even made up of active-duty federal soldiers. In his detailed case study of turn-of-the-twentieth-century bands in a rural Pennsylvania, Kenneth Kreitner notes that almost all of the band members were working class, and that their ages varied. While in the immediate post–Civil War years some band members would have been former soldiers, as the century wore on, fewer and fewer were. Thousands of towns and cities had their own bands (and often several). Bands proliferated, but “many of the best bands in the Eastern states were for a number of years the official bands of Volunteer State Militia organizations.” While these groups were “nominally military bands, they were more truly civilian units” in the sense that they both played private concerts for a fee, and accompanied many of the other organizations mentioned above in parades or marches, to the station for example. While many bands were independent some, especially in larger urban areas, were associated with or sponsored by state militia formations. These bands enjoyed a more stable source of funding, but could also hire out their services to private groups on the side. Even if the band were independent, and none of its members were former soldiers, they looked like soldiers. The uniforms which today Americans take for granted on what we now call marching bands are based on military uniforms. Uniforms were, according to Kreitner, considered essential for a properly outfitted band. Many were


probably similar to Honesdale, Pennsylvania’s “Lawyer’s Band,” whose uniforms were “fatigue style of the regular United States Army.”

Other bands belonged to what are often called “fraternal” organizations, but which could just as easily be called “paramilitary organizations” in some cases. The GAR was one openly military example, but groups like the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (whose leader was called a “general”) or the Knights Templar were explicit in their military organization and commitment to both patriotism and militarism. The Knights Templar of Kalamazoo, Michigan, outfitted their own band in 1872, called the Peninsular Commandery Band. Dressed in their stunning uniforms, they played at civic events and accompanied the rest of the Knights when they traveled to the annual conclaves. Former military men even had their own bands. Samuel Colt had the cornet above in Figure 7 made for his personal “Armory Band,” which was dressed like Prussian riflemen. A Hartford Daily Courant article noted in 1856 that the Haven and Co.’s Music Store was displaying twenty nickel silver instruments specially made for Colt, some of which were “provided with two mouth pieces [sic]—one to play in front, and one curved, to play over the shoulder, so as to adapt the Band for Concerts, as well as Street playing.” Whether the band members had been in the military or not, both the clothing on their bodies and their associations—and the names of their ensembles, and their sponsors—connected them to soldiers and war-making.

Nineteenth-century bands’ repertories also maintained their connections to their military origins, and produced a soundscape that was markedly martial. Boundaries between martial tunes and civilian music were blurry, if they existed at all, and that Americans were remarkably open to concerts with a variety of musical styles represented. The possibility for playing private engagements surely nudged these musical groups to

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72 Kreitner, Discoursing Sweet Music, 176, 183.


learn traditional tunes, but their core repertoire consisted of martial tunes. Many popular songs were military in origin, and many popular tunes were also played by military bands: the genres were overlapping and symbiotic, not distinct. As historical musicologist James Davis suggests, context is crucial: patriotic songs—halfway between military and civic—could go either way depending on the context in which they were played. In times of war, they were clearly soldierly; in times of peace, they could be heard as more civic, but still with the military connotation. Whatever the type of music, its interpretation by a self-styled military band changed its tune, and likely its reception. One style that was always present in band programs was the march. Marches as a genre have a certain tempo, meter, and rhythms. If the band was stationary, the musical possibilities were more open; no matter what the original tune, if it was arranged to accommodate feet moving, a nineteenth-century American audience would have linked it consciously or unconsciously to the military. All marching is not martial, and neither is all band music; music played while marching was inherently martial.

Brass bands, by virtue of their names, the clothed bodies of their personnel, and their music, would have made their nineteenth-century audience think of the military, as music is part of the cultural material through which certain repetitive cultural scenes are constructed. These bands’ performances on the way to and in the station transferred that association to the train station itself, and reinforced it as a martial space. The most important performances of a band’s calendar year were martial appointments like the Fourth of July and troop arrivals or departures. One of the Honesdale band’s first performances of 1899 was on March 13th at the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Station, for the return of Company E from the Spanish-American War. But these were not the only times when military bands marked the station as martial. Politicians, particularly

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77 Kreitner, *Discoursing Sweet Music*, 47.
those who were former military officers, made use of the association of patriotism, brass bands, and the military, with the station as the stage. When Benjamin Harrison was elected president of the United States in 1889, he began his trip to Washington with all of the usual fanfare: a huge crowd watched as he made his way to the train station, where the brass band of the local GAR post played for him.  

These brass bands, often connected to local militias, were often on hand at railway stations for important events. When Senator Stephen Douglas toured New England on his 1860 whistle-stop tour, the train stations were his venues for speeches, but often had a martial aura. Arriving in Providence, Rhode Island, in August, Douglas was greeted by a huge crowd, the American Brass Band, and a battalion of Rifle Companies commanded by a certain Colonel Slocum. The band was likely playing martial tunes as Douglas left the train and was escorted by the rifle company to the City Hotel.  

Bands played in the late nineteenth century: picnics, private parties, and public celebrations. The bands also accompanied “excursions” (often on trains) of various organizations.  

The participants in this martial behavior need not actually be active or even retired military men to dress up in military-style apparel and march to and from the Union Depot, or even adults. Even children formed up in military order. A number of tenement children being sent out to the rural hinterland for “Country Week” were referred to in 1891 as a “company” and after assembling at the Children’s Aid Society on North Eleventh Street were marched by their minders to the awaiting trains at the Union Depot. Military discipline broke down at the station as some of the children (perhaps sad at leaving their parents for the first time, perhaps worried about the hard work that

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awaited them) started to cry on the platforms. In 1891, the city hosted the Biennial Conclave of the Sovereign Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, one of the many national men’s social-paramilitary clubs. The individual affiliated clubs, or “cantons,” were all led by men with military titles, and their accommodations in St. Louis referred to as “quarters.” The Reception Committee of the Odd Fellows made sure to send Vogel’s Band—surely playing martial tunes—to the Union Depot to greet their General, arriving from Chicago. Even after the General’s arrival, “the blow of the trumpet and the tap of drums could be heard in the principal streets as the cantons marched to and from the depot in obedience from the general headquarters.”

In 1892 the Depot was crowded with Knights Templar on the way to the annual meeting in Denver. In addition to the uniformed Knights, the party included a number of musicians. The paper notes that the para-militaries “made quite a display marching to the trains.” A less overly military but still well-drilled organization—members of a political delegation—also made the Union Depot the end point of its marching. While one article said that the delegation would meet at the mayor’s office and then “proceed” to the Union Depot, another article specified that the delegates would march to the station. Though perhaps not intended this way, the march linked the state (the mayor’s office) and with the nascent military-industrial complex (the train station). Also heading to the country’s capital in the summer of 1887 were the St. Louis’s German “turners” (an early kind of


82 “Odd Fellow’s Conclave: Delegates From All Over the World Arriving to Attend the Sovereign Grand Lodge Meeting,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 20, 1891, 17; “Proud Patriarchs: They Make a Splendid Showing on Parade To-Day,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 21, 1891, 4.

83 “The Union Depot Crowded: Departure of Three St. Louis Commanderies of Knights Templar for Denver,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 7, 1892, 3.

gymnastics that had nationalistic undertones). After a successful showing at the Missouri Valley District Turnfest in Topeka, the Turners were set to depart for Washington for their next large competition. They assembled at their hall and then marched “with music and flying banners” to the Union Depot to depart.85 As political geographers Richelle Bernazzoli and Colin Flint have suggested, “the ‘friendly’ garrison state is made possible and more pervasive because its face is not just technocrats in suits…but also the business associations, churches, and civic organizations in many local settings.”86

The station as a martial place emerged from the assemblage of soldiers, military spending, the flag, flowers, military bands; there was no intention to create an ideology of corporate subsidization, but that is what emerged. In his book on religion in early America, historian David Hall has shown that there was a constant interaction between clerical and popular culture in seventeenth-century New England, and thus learning to read and “becoming religious” were the same thing.87 It would be an exaggeration to suggest an analogous case for making music and becoming martial. Many types of music co-existed in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet it seems reasonable to conclude that the music that organizations like the Turners, the Knights Templar, the state militia, or even a group of political delegates marched to the train station, they marched to the strains of martial music played by a semi-martial band. Civilians marching to the tune of band music, and marching towards a space that was for them already martial, likely felt like soldiers. In a process called “semantic snowballing” that ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino has shown happens frequently with music, tunes become associated with another sign or object. What the music stands for in listeners’

85 “The Turners: A Highly Successful Turnfest at Topeka--Notes,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 18, 1887, 12.


minds—in this case, positive feelings about the association of the government and the military—are then associated with the train station. The approval of the military is transferred, via the music of marching bands, to the assent to corporate subsidization of a place now indexed as martial.  

In the second half of the nineteenth-century, railroads were clearly tools of conquest and profit, but were also corporations in need of infusions of public money and public land. Railroads were enormous recipients of public largesse in the form of land grants, direct grants of money, and state-subsidized loans. This aid, however, was supposed to come at a price: railroads were to provide free transportation for US military personnel and war materiel. In reality, railroads resisted the obligation to transport troops, and used their lobbying power to force the Department of War to pay them, despite having made agreements earlier with the federal government to carry troops for free. Other historians have examined the deep institutional, political, and financial ties that the railroads and the American military had, but few have examined how this relationship was sold to a public reluctant to fund a standing army, not to mention waste production and unnecessary spending.

Most commentators point to the Cold War as the period of origin of the military-industrial complex, but few describe the ideological preparation that was largely unintentional, and had a much longer history. In his well-publicized attack on the collusion of the military and its defense contractors to sell Americans on waste spending,


89 There are clear parallels with the Eisenhower Highway System, originally known as the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. The highways were designed and justified in part to move soldiers and military equipment, as well as allow for civil evacuations and emergency aid. Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life*, Updated Edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).
Senator J.W. Fulbright fulminated on the millions of dollars spent on public relations and propaganda by the government.\(^\text{90}\) I have argued in this chapter that Americans had to be taught that “defense” justified the massive subsidization of private corporations, the gift of public lands, and the legal intervention of eminent domain. This ideological preparation took place in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it did not happen solely through discourse but also through a collection of martial and pseudo-martial performances in a physical place. The train station, as one of the most important nineteenth-century places in any American city, was a stage for a performance about good and evil, about our brave boys, about the public-minded corporation that was integral to “defense.” Railroads made use of this martial association to link their profit motive with a patriotic purpose: on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Missouri Pacific’s founding, the railroad company hired Professor Herwig’s brass band and a section of a local artillery battery to play and fire at each of the special train’s stops.\(^\text{91}\) Americans were told, in endless newspaper articles, that the condemnation and demolition of large swaths of their cities was necessary for the common good and military necessity. But the union depot as a crucial node in the military’s transportation system seemed to reinforce this argument. At every large urban station, soldiers were seemingly omnipresent. Their uniforms marked them as soldiers, and marked the station as martial space.

Each element I have described was intentional on the part of the actors involved: railroad corporations lobbied for land grants and eminent domain in cities, the Army used trains to transport troops, citizens went to the station to see their relatives off for war, and reporters wrote about the troops’ arrival. The sum of all of these intentional action—the main ideological prop for the military-industrial complex—was not intentional, but rather emerged as the inadvertent sum of the parts. Despite resistance to demolition, once built,}

\(^\text{90}\) Fulbright suggests that “the root cause of militarism is war,” whereas I would suggest (following Chomsky) that the root cause of militarism is the need to justify state support for the leading sectors of the industrial economy. James William Fulbright, *The Pentagon Propaganda Machine* (New York: Liveright, 1970), 143.

union depots became spaces of assent. They were places where at least part of the public ultimately joined up with the martial spirit with which the station had been endowed. Ordinary Americans, formed up in lines and often in paramilitary units, marched to the train station to the strains of semi-military bands playing fully military music. The station had both martial presence and performance.
Chapter 5—Draining the Station:  
The State Around the Turn-of-the-Century Station

On June 3, 1890, a cantankerous writer who identified himself only as “Old Citizen” sent a letter to the editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Complaints about “our beastly array of dripping sheds that passes for a Union Depot” excited only ridicule and contempt from out-of-towners. Little surprise, Old Citizen griped, that Chicago had won the competition to host the World’s Fair. He contended that each of its several terminal facilities were on their own finer and more capacious than those of St. Louis. The old Union Depot throttled St. Louis’s commerce, and that led to “chagrin and mortification” for all St. Louisians. Old Citizen was likely very happy to see a story that the *Post-Dispatch* proudly broke only a few months later: St. Louis was getting a new union station. Construction began in 1893, and on September 1, 1894, the St. Louis Union Station was officially inaugurated.¹ The image above (Figure 5.1) is of the new station’s midway, the vast interchange space between the back of the headhouse (on the right) and the thirty-two tracks that came in under what was then the largest train shed in the world.

¹ The president of the newly-formed Terminal Rail Road Association (TRRA), explained the name change: “depots” were for freight, while “stations” were passenger terminals. Since the new terminal would only handle passengers, the old name was inappropriate. “Will Be the Union Station,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 23, 1893, 6.
It’s surprising to find the downward arc in my history of the state in the train station in a moment—the turn of the twentieth century—in which all of the characters seem to be getting stronger or bigger or both. The new station dwarfed the old Union Depot. The headhouse and the sheds alone covered six acres, and the yards almost doubled in size. Instead of eleven platforms, the new station had first thirty-two, and then after an expansion done soon after the station opened, forty-two. From fifty-two trains arriving a day in the 1870s, the number of arrivals climbed to more than two hundred and fifty.\(^2\) The companies that operated both the trains and the stations were also much stronger than in 1875 when the old depot had opened. Despite attempts at regulation, the railroad industry was a powerful lobby. The turn of the century seemed to be the beginning of the age of the rail, with a huge increase in streetcar lines as well. Progressivism everywhere meant the strengthening of the state apparatus, especially at the local level, and St. Louis was no exception. But in this chapter I argue that these expansions, taken together, led to a decline in the power of the state in the train station. That state power—the ability of state actors like police, municipal health officers, and even semi-state officials like the “depot” matrons to observe, stop, and control everyday people—was stronger than ever, but the train station declined as a place to exercise that power. One recent book on the history of the 1894 St. Louis Union Station is divided into three sections: “A Place for Trains: A Railroad History St. Louis Union Station,” “A Place Called Union Station: An Architectural History of St. Louis Union Station,” and “A Place for People: A Social History of St. Louis Union Station.” It is a central argument of this dissertation that these are not three separate stories, but one. The architectural history of the station—where it was located, what money built it, how its entrances were configured—is part and parcel of its social history: who could be in the station, and who could not. There is also a fourth part of this history—one that has been heretofore largely unacknowledged—and that is the history of the state in the station.

\(^2\) H. Roger Grant and Don L. Hofsommer, *St. Louis Union Station* (St. Louis: St Louis Mercantile Library, 1994), 31.
Prior to the announcement of the new station, the various railroads that owned the ageing Union Depot had for months been buying up property through third parties. Once the Post-Dispatch broke the story and published a map of where the new station would be, the company had to acquire all of the buildings in the way of construction. Knowing that their properties were in the footprint of the new station, owners asked for much higher prices. Within two years of the first announcement, the property around the area of the new station had sextupled in price. At first, the state seemed to play the same role in the construction of the Union Station as it had in the earlier depot. The municipal government, eager to claim the new station as a success, began clearing the way legally and physically. A number of hold-outs were holding up the demolition for the Union Station. In November of 1891 two assessors appointed by the Circuit Clerk deposited their report for the St. Louis judge in charge of the condemnation decisions.
The commissioners gave their opinion about the value, in dollars, of eight properties for which, as the newspapers states blandly, “the owners and the Union Depot Co. could not agree as to price.”

The article, in focusing only on the owners of the property, elides the impact of the new station on many more residents of St. Louis. Thousands of people lived in the city blocks that the plan for the new train station had condemned to be demolished. Ultimately, their voices were not heard, and their opinions on the new station were not recorded. Clearly the owners of most of the buildings were able to come to an agreement on what their property was worth on the market. Even after the commissioners’ final report was delivered, property owners whose buildings had now been condemned could file “exceptions” to the commissioners’ report. These ultimately were protests shouted into the wind, as their filing would not affect the transfer of property in the slightest—the Depot Company could take possession of the property as soon as it deposited the money with the court. Some of these property owners were surely absentee, especially those listed as trustees of certain locations. Others were likely simply dissatisfied with the amount of money that the Depot Company was offering them, believing that the buildings they owned were worth more. But others perhaps experienced the same sort of nostalgia for place that the Chouteaus had expressed at the draining of their pond. The demolition of a huge, densely populated swath of central St. Louis erased places that people there had spent their lives building. The state, however, did not mediate feelings: it mediated exchanges that could be denominated in dollars.3

Eminent domain was not the only way that the government of St. Louis intervened to help build the station. Because the enormous new terminal would cover what had

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been a number of city blocks, St. Louis’s Municipal Assembly ceded almost six acres of public property, in the form of city streets which would disappear when the station was built. It also approved an agreement between what had been the Union Depot Company (now transformed into the Terminal Rail Road Association, or TRRA) and the Merchant’s Bridge over the Mississippi River. Intended as a way to break the monopoly of railroad traffic over the Eades Bridge, the Merchant’s Bridge had received both public funding and the cession of public land. Shortly after construction on the new station began in earnest, the TRRA announced that it would charge a similar fee as the Eades Bridge corporation did for all trains crossing the Merchant’s Bridge and continuing to the new Union Station. As if this weren’t enough, the TRRA devoured more public land than it had been granted. A city ordinance required the station to be set back 40 feet from the line of the sidewalk, but it was clear from the station’s plans that the ceremonial pillars and a rounded approach to the main entrance encroached on that space. As the demolition progressed, the Board of Public Improvements had the temerity to object to the construction. William Taussig, the president of the TRRA, claimed that the plans did not violate the city’s ordinance about there being forty feet, but if the plans did, he would in any event not change them.

Instead of changing the ordinance—as had happened with a similar dispute in 1874—the city commissioners balked. The President of the Board stated unequivocally that the company had to conform to the ordinance; both the Street Commissioner and the Sewers Commissioner echoed him, threatening legal action if there were not forty feet between the sidewalk and the station to allow for unobstructed traffic flow. The disagreement simmered as construction continued. An angry citizen pointed out the irony of the city’s feebleness: “The police power is ample and the courts are open and within easy reach.” The letter writer correctly pointed out that to allow the

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4 “Does Not Project: Dr. Taussig’s Defense of the New Union Depot Building,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 4, 1892; “Will Not Approve: The Board of Public Improvements Against the Depot Plans,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 20, 1892, 4.
to infringe on the public space would be to invite the same sort of disregard for obligations and dependence on public largesse from all other corporations. The mayor seemed unperturbed by the station projecting what he called “a few feet into a public thoroughfare.” When asked by a reporter about the six acres of land the city had already ceded, Mayor Noonan pointed to the other gifts of land the city had made to private corporations (he gave the example of the Fair Grounds Association and the Niedringhaus factory) and highlighted the new station’s utility and importance. “This Union Depot Company is going to give this city one of its handsomest structures” and despite the debate, “I shall throw no obstacles in [its] way.” The city’s building inspector told St. Louis newspapers that the TRRA still had not applied for a building permit, and could not continue construction without one; Taussig at first bluffed, claiming he did not need a building permit. When the TRRA finally applied for a permit, it was rejected because the plans still showed encroachment on the forty feet of public space that the city wanted in front of the station. Ultimately, the TRRA grudgingly agreed to modify their plans. This sort of interference in the station’s construction was unprecedented, but ultimately was the last assertion of municipal power over the station.

The decline of the state in the station came at a time when the railroads, even more than municipal governments, seemed more powerful than ever. Though hundreds of railroad companies had gone bankrupt or had been bought, those that were left in 1895 were much more stable and well-capitalized than earlier in the century. Maintenance of the lines and rolling stock, as well as wages for employees, remained major costs. One clear difference in costs was that in 1900, after a half century of expansion, the cost of new land was no longer a large part of railroads’ budgets. Conglomerates like the Chicago-

5 “The Union Depot Question,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 31, 1892, 4.

6 “No Interference: The Railroads May Build the Depot to Suit Themselves,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 2, 1892, 6.

7 “Must Get a Permit: Suit May Be Filed Against the Union Depot Co.,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 4, 1892, 4; “Union Depot Permit,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 6, 1892, 9.
based Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad (CB&Q) had emerged from the tangled network of smaller lines. The CB&Q stretched from the shores of Lake Michigan in a broad swath of crisscrossing lines all the way to Colorado and Montana. Despite some attempts to rein in the power of the railroads, the heads of companies like the CB&Q remained a powerful lobbying group until well into the twentieth century. The American state, too, had also increased in power. The federal government’s control over the landscape, especially the Western landscape, was more noticeable. Municipal governments were also on the rise, animated by the spirit of Progressivism. What historian Daniel Rodgers has called the *Grossstadt*, the great city, was reaching out into its citizens’ lives by regulating everything from streetcars and the water supply to housing and trash removal. Cities has always legislated some details of these services, but now they were shaping and controlling them to a much greater extent.  

The police, both in St. Louis and across the country, were more professional, better organized, and better funded in 1900 than they had been in 1875. St. Louis’s police force had grown from the 488 in 1875 to 850 officers and 250 more probationary officers authorized by the Police Act of 1895. Just two years after the inauguration of the new Union Station, the Board of Police Commissioners recommended the creation of two new police districts to the Municipal Assembly. The division of the city into six districts was insufficient. The Central District, where the Union Station was located, was “entirely too large to be efficiently patrolled.” In addition to recommending the creation of two new districts, the Board also asked for the appointment of (and funding for) two new captains, eight sergeants, and fifty patrolmen. But the police, as I’ve shown, were not the only state actors to surveil the population and enforce regulations: doctors and

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commodity inspectors had also taken advantage of the train station.

Train stations across the country were only getting larger. Cities that had not built union stations were belatedly building them, and scores of cities that already had stations were, like St. Louis, enlarging and modernizing them for increasing railroad traffic. Boston had preceded St. Louis by a year, demolishing four smaller stations and building the enormous North Union Station in 1893. Other cities too rebuilt—and always expanded—their union stations at the turn of the century: Detroit (1893), Denver (1894), Portland, OR (1896), Boston (1898, what was then called the South Union Station), Pittsburgh (1903), Atlanta (1905), and Washington, DC. (1907). New York transformed Grand Central Depot (built in 1871) into Grand Central Station in 1900, then completely rebuilt, expanded, and renamed the building Grand Central Terminal between 1903 and 1913. Paradoxically, as union stations grew ever larger, the state’s presence in the station declined. More specifically, the station as a place for the state to bootstrap its own power shrank.

With municipal governments intervening in everyday life as they never had before, an expanded police force, strong railroad companies, the decline of the station as a place for state building demands explanation. Quite counterintuitively, the expansion of train travel was part and parcel of the decline. The postcard above (Figure 5.1) is visual clue to that decline. The Curt Teich postcard company produced and sold eight different view of

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11 The station’s on Boston’s north edge also occupied a piece of land that had been tidal millpond, drained because it had become polluted and, it seems, because the city needed space for railroad stations. See Nancy S. Seasholes, Gaining Ground: A History of Landmaking in Boston (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003); The Massachusetts legislature made the construction of a single union station a prerequisite for approving the buyout of the Boston & Lowell Railroad by the Boston & Maine Railroad. Richard C. Barrett, Boston’s Depots and Terminals: A History of Boston’s Downtown and Back Bay Railroad Stations from 1834 to Today (Rochester, NY: Railroad Research Publications, 1996), 43; The first union station in the US, Providence, Rhode Island’s Union Depot, was built on the city’s cove, which was later filled to provide room for a much-expanded station. Michael Holleran, “Filling the Providence Cove: Image in the Evolution of Urban Form,” Rhode Island History 48, no. 3 (August 1990): 65–85.

the Union Station in St. Louis. Seven of those views are variations on a familiar theme, where the elaborate front façade of a large station's headhouse becomes a visual shorthand for the whole station. This synecdoche obscures the state's role in the station, but also the reasons for the decline of state power. Other images that were often on postcards of railroad stations were their enormous and often beautifully decorated entry halls or waiting rooms. Photographers of stations focused on the same spaces; most Americans have seen Hal Morey's 1930s-era black and white photograph of light beaming in through the windows of Grand Central Terminal's main hall. The space above is of the midway in St. Louis's enormous station, and is much more prosaic than the view of the station's façade or main hall. The roof here is not vaulted but rather a simple shed, held up by pillars that are undecorated steel. The new station had twenty-four tracks and half as many platforms that emptied not directly into the headhouse and the street, but rather into a midway.

The midway in railway architectural parlance is the area for where people coming from two opposite directions—the city streets and the trains—can mix and disperse. Travelers who had left the platforms into the midway could then either continue through the main hall of the headhouse or exit out of any number of exits opening off the midway onto side streets. The St. Louis midway, which was 606 feet long and 70 feet deep, was a radically different space than the old Union Depot's Platform 1, which all passengers had to pass across to get onto a train or to get out of the station.\(^\text{13}\) The Midway was a stage, but one that was too large for its players; it might have been a panopticon, but its guardians were too few and too dispersed in the crowd they were policing. This is clear not only from descriptions of the space, but also from the change in reporting about station policing. A week before the new station opened on September 2, 1894, the general manager was quoted in the *Post-Dispatch* extolling the station's enormous size. Even a crowd of 25,000 people, he claimed, could easily be in the several waiting

\(^\text{13}\) Bianculli, 3 (Tracks and Structures):168.
rooms and the Midway “with space for all of them and room to spare.” Explaining the Midway to newspaper readers, he described it as a halfway space “to protect the tracks from indiscriminate invasion of the populace.” Two blocks long, the midway not only had multiple passages to the rest of the stations’ two main floors, it also opened directly out onto Eighteenth and Twentieth Streets, which ran part up the sides of the huge new depot. “The means of exit,” the article concludes, “are many, convenient, and ample.”

Contrast this to the old depot: once on the platform, a passenger either had to go up the stairs, walk across the bridge that led over the tracks and into the station, or she had to carefully (and slowly) cross the tracks and then exit through one of the five possible exits. In the former case, she had to pass through a small space (the stairs that descended from the bridge over the tracks) in front of a policemen; in the latter, she had to move slowly across the tracks and then in any event exit in front of a policeman.

The old Union Depot was an ideal place to police both criminals and these unwanted; the new Union Station was simply too large for that, and had too small of a police force. In the Union Station police had to concentrate on scanning a large and quickly moving crowd for faces they knew, or rely on other people who recognized criminals. In 1894, a child abuser was about to board a train when the child’s father glimpsed him in the midway, and pointed him out to Officer Kentzinger to arrest.

At the old station (the Union Depot), the number of passengers had been smaller, but the exits through which they passed were also fewer. At the old Depot, Sergeant Burke seemed to have ordered his men to look out for certain typologies of people—broadly construed as suspicious—in addition to watching for known criminals. Of course, the police’s evaluation of what was “suspicious” was based on professional intuition but was also quite subjective. In 1884 Sergeant Burke had arrested both R. D. Hobbs and William Noland at the Union Depot, as they had been “acting suspiciously,” an action which, the

14 “Will Handle Large Crowds: How Travelers Will Be Managed at New Union Station,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 19, 1894, 20.

15 “Assaulted a Child,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 11, 1894, 2.
article noted, was “contrary to Sergeant Burke’s orders.” Only when the two suspicious men were taken to the Four Courts did they reveal that they were undercover US detectives, but only in the late afternoon did their boss arrive to vouch for their release.16 During the two decades of the Union Depot’s operation, from 1875 to 1894, the police made hundreds of arrests in two categories: known criminals, and people they define as suspicious but who were simply undesirable in one way or another. In the first category are criminals that the officers know personally either from prior arrests, criminals whose

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16 “Fly Cops’ in the Holdover,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 27, 1884, 1.
faces they recognize from their own “Most Wanted” list, known as the Rogue’s Gallery, or people who match the descriptions provided by telegrams from other police stations across the country. The second group, “suspicious” people are those that were itinerant workers (then called either hobos, tramps, or vagrants), people who seemed unsightly, or simply people who had stepped outside of the then-normal boundaries for their gender, race, or class.17

While there are still gates at the end of each track, the huge foot traffic and number of exits to the street meant that the panopticon would have needed ten times the number of police to have been effective. The railway panopticon worked at smaller union stations, where hundreds of trains arrived but the headhouse and sheds were not large and midways did not allow for large crowds and numerous exits. Whereas the old Union Depot and all of its yards covered around ten acres, the headhouse and shed alone at the new Union Station covered ten square acres of area. There continued to be a police presence, but officers had to be called to crimes, they couldn’t simply surveil the scene and see them. Less than two weeks after the new station opened, the leakiness of the panopticon was obvious. Officers Driscoll and Byrne were inside the station when a little boy ran up to them and said that two men were beating a third just outside the front of the station. By the time the officers got to the scene of the alleged crime, there was no third man and the two men still there denied having beaten anyone. The two officers arrested the men nonetheless, though for disturbing the peace rather than assault. A judge

17 There is an extensive literature on so-called hobos in the late nineteenth century. Many hobos were former railroad employees and so knew how to board and get off of trains just outside of the station where the locomotive slowed entering the yards, thereby evading the panopticon of the headhouse. Todd DePastino, Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Mark Wyman, Hoboes: Bindlestiffs, Fruit Tramps, and the Harvesting of the West (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010); Richard Wormser, Hoboes: Wandering in America, 1870–1940 (New York: Walker and Company, 1994); On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World (New York: Routledge, 2006); Paul Heike, Alexandra Ganser, and Katharina Gerund, eds., Pirates, Drifters, Fugitives: Figures of Mobility in the US and Beyond (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012); Susan Schweik has documented the widespread municipal legislation against “unsightly” people; the train station provided the perfect place to intercept, arrest, and send away the “ugly” from other cities. The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
later dropped the charges against the two men as the alleged victim never appeared, but they still had to pay the court costs.\textsuperscript{18} This incident shows how the panopticon had grown too large. Police still presided over the end of a funnel, but the flow was so large and broad that their power to observe and arrest was smaller.

The smaller ability to surveil was a function of arithmetic, the space to be watched divided by the number of watchers. The enormous increase in space to be surveilled and patrolled did lead to an increase in the number of eyes watching, but it does not appear to have been a corresponding increase. In the two-year period after the inauguration of the station on September 2, 1894, only ten officers’ names appeared in the newspaper as having worked in the new station. Even assuming that all ten worked the whole two years and were split into night and day shifts, it would still only mean an increase of one policeman over the complement of the old Union Depot, which had had a constant complement of four officers. The Terminal Rail Road Association (the private company that owned the Union Station) supplemented these municipal cops with a number of private watchmen and special detectives. Officer Burke, who had previously worked at the Union Depot, was now working at the new station but as a privately paid employee of the TRRA.\textsuperscript{19}

The original Union Depot had four officers on duty, and it seems that the new Union Station had eight guards between municipal police and private watchmen. Sixteen eyes, only twice as many as before, were now watching a space that was at least eight times as large, and with many more exits and entrances than the old depot. The volume of people was also apparently larger. In October 1895, the station set a new record for the number of people who passed through it in a day, with 60,000 people arriving or departing.\textsuperscript{20} Perhaps recognizing the fact that the new station was a more leaky entrance

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} “The Alleged Victim Missing,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, September 13, 1894, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{19} “About Town,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, October 24, 1894, 5.
\item \textsuperscript{20} “Crowds at the Depot,” \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, September 2, 1895, 3.
\end{itemize}
to the city, the St. Louis Chief of Detectives assigned two of his detectives to the station to help out during the autumn fair. A long laudatory article in the newspaper explained how Detectives King and Dewar, “two sleuths at the city’s gates,” caught crooks as they got off trains. Their long experience with the criminal element and their study of the photographs in the “rogues’ gallery” meant that they could spot many inveterate pickpockets and con men as they came through the gates from the platforms into the Midway. The article’s triumphalism falls flat at the end, when it states that the detectives’ sharp eyes had led to the arrest of twenty-one criminals. Some readers might have been comforted by the account of the detectives’ sleuthing, but other readers might have thought about the human masses streaming into a two block-long Midway.  

In the new Union Station, the panopticon still allowed the capture of fleeing wives, but only when they called attention to themselves. A woman identified only as “Mrs. John Craighton” asked Officer Henry for the name of the station agent in a nearby city, and Henry recognized her as matching the description of a wayward spouse. She was arrested but then released as her husband had been looking for her but had not asked for her to be stopped. Detectives from the station did shadow her when she left and notified her husband of the address of the house she entered. The railway panopticon still functioned, but it was much more reliant on telegraphed information. A decade after Louis Betts was caught with diamonds in his pockets at the old Union Depot, Frank P. Montrose was nabbed by St. Louis detectives on platform 5. The web of railway stations and telegrams was even more elaborate than the one that had caught Betts. Montrose had stolen the diamonds in Terre Haute, Indiana, and then gone into hiding. Terre Haute police knew that Montrose’s wife lived in Louisville, so they sent the Louisville police a request to shadow Mrs. Montrose. After a few days of watching her movements, 

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21 “Crooks At Union Station During Veiled Prophet Week: How They Are ‘Spotted’ and ‘Pinched’ by Desmond’s Men Is They Arrive,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 13, 1895, 25.

Louisville police were rewarded when they followed her to the Union Station. There she bought a ticket west to St. Louis. The Louisville police then alerted both Terre Haute and the authorities in St. Louis. Chief of Detectives Desmond detailed Detectives McGrath and O’Connell to get on the in-bound train in East St. Louis, just in case the Montroses decided to get off before the main station. Luckily for law enforcement, the diamond thief and his mistress didn’t suspect there would be all-seeing coppers at the end of the line, and they rode on, identified and watched by the first two detectives. The train arrived and Detectives Flynn and Teabeau showed their badges; Montrose tried to pull a gun but McGrath and O’Connell wrestled it out of his hands. At the Four Courts the thief admitted his guilt, and the string of telegrams was complete when the detectives sent one last one to Terre Haute.23 Montrose’s capture was important enough to merit several write-ups in the newspapers, but the change in stories about arrests at the new station highlight the fact that the crowds of people were forcing police to be more targeted. Telegraphed arrests, as they had before, depended on both a funnel-like end to railroad traffic but also relatively accurate information about the suspect’s arrival. With two dozen trains arriving from Chicago a day, arresting officers needed to know which line a suspect was on, not simply which city they were fleeing.

There was another set of eyes that was missing from the platforms, as the Police Matron had retired to her office. St. Louis had for years had two different jobs for women—both termed “matron”—that seemed distinct but in fact were similar in their power. The municipal police had a number of female officers on hand to search women who had somehow ended up in police custody and to accompany them to the city’s various charitable institutions. The long-serving police matron for the last twenty years of the nineteenth century was Matron Louisa Harris. Matron Harris was not simply the woman assigned to search female prisoners; she was also herself a member of charitable organizations. She was the president of the Society for the Protection of Women and

23 “Into A Trap: Frank P. Montrose, Diamond Thief, Captured,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 6, 1895, 1.
Children, as well as the Hephizah Home, which took in unmarried pregnant women. Harris was summoned frequently to the Union Depot, often by her counterpart there, Matron Frazer. Starting in 1890, the private Travelers' Aid Society had hired Matron Frazer to work at the Union Depot and help young women avoid the dangers of traveling to a city alone.

Police matrons, matronly Traveler's Aid employees, and other voluntary organizations’ representatives stationed themselves at the station for the same reason that con men and police were there. The station was a place of information asymmetry: many people arriving at the station didn’t know which they needed to go once they left the station, where to find work, or how much it would cost to take a cab ride across town. It was a particularly vulnerable spot in the city’s fabric, where nineteenth-century reformers imagined women and children were especially defenseless. In her autobiography, Matron Harris recounted various tales of women who had arrived at the Union Depot, with no one there to meet them, “a stranger in a strange city, without money or friends.” These women were likely to meet the same fate as “Laura,” whose beau Tom had promised to meet her at the station. When he didn’t appear, a friendly cab-driver offered to take Laura to an inexpensive hotel. The accommodating hostess showed Laura to her room and even offered her a large, hot meal. Later that evening—Matron Harris relates, with her omniscient narrative view—a man appeared in Laura’s room and tried to accomplish his “dastardly design.” Laura resisted, and while the man soon gave up, the hotel hostess—in reality a madam—told Laura that her reputation was now in tatters, and her only choice was to work in the house of ill-repute. Exciting cases of protecting young women seemed, from their infrequency both in Harris’ book and in newspaper accounts, to have been an exception. Most days it seems that the matrons patrolled the platforms or sat at the desk in the Union Depot’s waiting room, waiting for an opportunity to help the

24 “Matron Harris at Death’s Door: Stricken With Heart Disease at Union Station,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 4, 1896, 5.

25 Louisa Harris, Behind the Scenes: Or, Nine Years at the Four Courts of Saint Louis (St. Louis: A.
unfortunate. When poor travelers arrive at the Depot without money to purchase food for their children, the matron would often go around the station and take up a collection. The matrons also passed young children on from one main station to the next, finding conductors on the departing train who would deliver young train travelers to the matron at the next station.26

The matrons’ helpful intervention belied their power. They had their positions because they had internalized elite conceptions of the worthy poor, as well as female obedience to patriarchy. When two different men returned home to find their wives had left, both went to the Union Depot to seek out Matron Frazer. Though Frazer was not able to tell them where their wives had gone, not having seen either woman, the fact that the men thought she could help shows her position of power.27 Matron Frazer was also an ally of the state in maintaining racial, as well as gender, boundaries. In 1893 a train arrived at the Union Depot carrying a young couple, Lizzie Gifford and a man identified in the article only as “a negro.” The African-American traveling companion’s “remarks” to Gifford aroused the “suspicions” of the conductor. As soon as the train had stopped, the conductor found Officer Gannon, who stopped the couple. The police “ordered [her companion] away” and detained Gifford overnight. Learning from her that she was married to another man, the officers turned Gifford over to Matron Frazer. Frazer convinced Gifford to return to her husband. The article’s title credits only Gannon, suggesting that through his offices that Gifford was “Saved From Ruin.”28

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26 “To Start A Fund: Ladies Organize to Relieve Distress at the Union Depot,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 12, 1891, 4; “A 9-Year Old Traveler: Missed Her Train and Was Taken in Charge by Depot Matron,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 19, 1894, 11. Matron Frazer, in her interview with the reporter about the child, noted that it was a common occurrence for parents to write to her or send her a telegram asking her to look out for their traveling children.


28 “Saved From Ruin,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 10, 1893, 10.
Historian Laura Milsk has written extensively about the Travelers’ Aid Society matrons and their work to both aid travelers (especially women) and protect them from the evils of the city. Despite their omnipresence in large stations at the end of the century, and the authority in public that Milsk ascribes to these professional workers, the matrons ultimately had the power only to surveil, not to stop anyone. Their real power was in their connections to the police. Matron Frazer theoretically had no power to arrest anyone at all, but she often directed the eyes of the police at the Union Depot. Indirectly, she could use the policemen’s power to stop, search, and arrest passengers. An 1888 article describing the matron’s failure actually reveals her power. A woman had arrived at the Union Depot the night before with three children and no means to continue her journey to the Northwest. Sergeant McGraw had referred the case to the Mayor’s Office for consideration; the mayor had a small “contingent fund” that he could use to relieve the destitute. Matron Frazer apparently did not think the sergeant had made the case clearly enough, and went to the mayor’s office herself. McGraw was also at the mayor’s office and a war of words about the case ensued. The sergeant retired from the field of verbal battle, while the matron spoke with the clerk’s at the mayor’s office and then told her story to the reporters who apparently were hanging around. While the article dismisses her as overzealous and too caring, its characterization of her as having discovered “how powerless she is in some directions, even though her efforts are her best” is incorrect. Even if she was overruled in this particular instance, the matron’s power to summon police “assistance” when she deemed it necessary, and her ability to go directly to the city’s chief executive, shows the state power that even employees of charitable institutions could exercise at the station. In the new, much larger station, however, Matron Frazer’s power was weaker. In the new station, it seemed that Mrs. Frazer spent much less time


30 “Mrs. Frazer’s Woes: The Union Depot Matron Has Her First Adventure,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, September 13, 1890, 5.
patrolling, and much more time in her office. At the old Depot, Mrs. Frazer had a desk in one corner of the ladies’ waiting room; the new Station, she had an office to herself. At the old Depot the matron was always surveilling the people flowing through the Depot, whether she was out on the tracks or in the waiting room at her desk. Her new office moved her further from both the flow and the cozy relationship with the police. It was on the main floor but near the main entrance, rather than in a place to be able to surveil the midway and the tracks.\(^{31}\) Again, the expansion of the station and the availability of space for a respected member of the train station’s extended “community” meant a weakening of the railway panopticon.

Another increase that undermined the power of the railway panopticon was the spread of the streetcar system in St. Louis. An 1895 newspaper article bemoaned the dearth of early afternoon trains for shoppers or those who did not work a job within the regular hours.\(^{32}\) Despite the absolute increase in passengers coming through the new Union Station relative to the old Union Depot, it seems that the turn-of-the-century expansion in streetcar service to the suburbs of the city meant that the station was less of a bottleneck for local commuter traffic than it had been in earlier years. In 1885, the first St. Louis streetcar system changed from horse-drawn omnibuses to electric cable cars. That year all the streetcar lines had carried a total of just over 41 million passengers. An 1894 Merchant’s Exchange annual report stated that just nine years later the network had been dramatically expanded to 292 miles, and the total number of passengers had more than doubled to 95 million. As a *Post-Dispatch* article commenting on the report said, extensions into the suburbs had extended into the outskirts of the city and the ability to

\(^{31}\) “Contributions to the Flower Mission,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 20, 1895, 2; The matron’s office is marked on a map of the headhouse here: Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis, *The St. Louis Union Station: A Monograph* (St. Louis, MO: National Chemigraph Company, 1895), 33.

\(^{32}\) “Tired Feeling: Why Suburban Shoppers Get It at the Union Station,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 19, 1895, 7.
catch a streetcar had “built up new neighborhoods at an astonishing rate.”33 While some of these lines terminated at the new Union Station, their passengers did not necessarily walk through the midway, thereby evading the distracted glance of the policemen there. The article stated explicitly that the railroad companies would continue to lose commuter business to the streetcar system if they did not add new early afternoon trains. St. Louis’s population was still expanding at the turn of the century, but its suburban residents were arriving in the city via streetcars, rather than on commuter trains.

One type of passenger that the continued to pass through the station in larger numbers—and continued to be in the public eye through newspaper reports—was the soldier. With the declaration of “intervention” in Cuba signed by President McKinley in April 1898, the Union Station went from being an everyday geography of war to its main away-from-the-front stage. This seems at first counter-intuitive: the United States’ engagement with Spain was primarily naval, except for invasion forces in Cuba and, to a limited extent, the Philippines. But as Rachel Woodward has suggested, military geographies shape places distant from the actual explosions of bombs and torpedoes. The front impinges upon “other geographies, of production, reproduction, circulation, exchange and representation, of material entities and discursive constructions.”34 Military geographies can act across a large temporal distance: the battles of the Civil War reverberated in the station decades later with the arrival of veterans accompanied by flags and bands. But the fact that the station was an absolutely crucial node in the logistics of war at this time kept it a martial space far into the twentieth century. Volunteers provided soldiers passing through the station with coffee and sandwiches. Even those too young to read recognized the station as a martial place: a “bright 4-year old lad” who said his name was William Leon Meecham was picked up at the station by Policeman

33 “Good Lesson: Railroads Can Learn One From St. Louis Street Railways,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 22, 1894, 3.

Fay. Meecham resisted Fay’s gentle “arrest,” insisting that we wanted to go to war with Spain. The city elite organized both send-offs and return receptions for troops, filling the station’s enormous shed with the strident tones of not one but several brass bands. At one departure the mayor himself was on hand to present a “magnificent set of colors” to the departing soldiers at what was described as a public gathering at the Union Station. In addition to actual soldiers, the mayor had invited the local Missouri militia units, and all organized local societies—including the secret orders, the GAR posts, the “Blue and Gray Camps,” and other veterans—to be on hand for the soldiers’ departure. The military presence in the station would last at least another fifty years: the Spanish-American War was minor compared to the mass mobilizations of the World Wars. As popular histories of the station make clear, military traffic was steady even in peacetime and was enormous during the two World Wars. The armed forces relied on the railroads so heavily for transportation during the Second World War that separate counters handled military reservations and the USO took over a large waiting room just off the Midway.

The death blows to the railroad system and the importance of the main station for enactment of state authority were delivered by two other transportation systems, the interstate highway system and the jet-based air transit system. They both seem quite different from the railroad network, but both inherited from the earlier presence of the state in the station. The interstate highway system was, on the surface of things, a radically different network than trains. Financed mainly by the United States federal government with contributions from the states, it returned to the idea of a network open to all, a common carrier much like earlier canals. Rather than be under the disjointed and monopolistic control of self-interested railroad corporations, the government itself

35 “Wants to Fight Spain: Bright 4-Year Old Picked Up by a Policeman at Union Station,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 4, 1898, 2.

36 “God-Speed to the Guards: Citizens Will Unite in a Parting Display,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 24, 1898, 10.

37 Norbury L. Wayman, St. Louis Union Station and Its Railroads (St. Louis: Evelyn E. Newman Group, 1986), 104; H. Roger Grant and Hofsommer, St. Louis Union Station, 102.
would build and maintain the highway system. While thousands of exits and interchanges between the roads would be required, and parts of the system would require toll gates, there were no nexuses. The panopticon possible in the train station disappeared. A crucial element that remained was the justification for the expenditure, a massive outlay of dollars that benefitted everyday people but was ultimately a subsidy for industry, whose trucks caused damage to the road disproportionately to the taxes they paid. The system is now called the Interstate Highway System, but the law that created it was the “National Interstate and Defense Highways Act.” Highways were designed to be an integral part of military defense, enabling the quick movement of troops in the event of an invasion.38

Airports too incorporated elements that had been developed in train stations. Like the railroad system, the airways do have recognizable, semi-public, and heavily policed nodes. Airports may not be a place where police stop runaway brides, but the panopticon is still present. The security check before getting to the gates is not simply a place where X-ray machines passively inspect. Just like the station, the airport is both a place of escape for subalterns, but also a place of routine harassment and inspection. Another element of the train station that is present in the airport is the ambiguity of the space. Many airports are public-private ventures, but all airports, especially in rural areas, receive federal subsidies to make air travel affordable even to those who live outside large cities. The subsidies are also built into the travel itself: the jet engine was the product of a massive government investment in aerospace technology during the Second World War, and Boeing and the rest of the aerospace industry receive a crucial portion of their revenue

from military contracts.\textsuperscript{39}

The increased travel by personal car and by airplane took several decades to empty the train station. The total number of miles Americans traveled by personal car was larger than train miles beginning in 1924; while both continued to increase, travel by personal car continued to widen the gap over train miles traveled. In long-distance travel, however, trains still had an edge. In their book on the St. Louis Union Station, H. Roger Grant and Don L. Hofsommer note some of the actions that railroad companies took to stem the tide of falling passenger numbers. The railroads added trains that went to tourist destinations, implemented faster schedules, lowered their fares, and targeted specific market segments with increased advertising.\textsuperscript{40} They also cut local and branch service to focus on long-distance treks where they were still competitive with the costs of car travel. Tire and gasoline rationing, as well as troop travel on trains, boosted railroad budgets briefly during World War II. The war’s end, the huge increase in car sales, and the expanding interstate system and air transportation infrastructure silenced the locomotive’s whistle. Air travel became the main long-distance competitor to trains, but took much longer to start to compete with railroad travel. Between commuter and long-distance rail, Americans logged over 21 billion miles in 1960, while air travel was only 31 billion. The inauguration of commercial jet travel in 1958 caused a dramatic increase in flights. In 1959, 51 million passengers flew out of American airports; a year later the number had doubled, and air miles increased at a steady pace.\textsuperscript{41} Between 1965 and 1970, intercity

\textsuperscript{39} Oddly, Christopher Schaberg’s series of meditations on airports has no entries for “security” or “police,” and neither word even appears in the index. The End of Airports (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

\textsuperscript{40} H. Roger Grant and Hofsommer, St. Louis Union Station, 31–33.

\textsuperscript{41} Though the funding was minimal, the federal government did help build the United States’ aeronautical infrastructure as early as the 1930s. Airports were built by two New Deal agencies, the Civil Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration. Unlike the railroad employees with their military-style uniforms, stewardesses aboard early jets dressed “like runway models.” Alastair Gordon, Naked Airport: A Cultural History of the World’s Most Revolutionary Structure (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), 99–106, 174.
rail miles halved from 13 million to just over 6 million. By 2015, intercity rail travel was still around its 1970 level, while Americans were logging over 641 billion miles in the air.\(^4^2\) The Union Station slowly emptied. In 1971, the federal government formed a quasi-public train corporation, AmTrak. After arrivals declined to only eight trains a day, AmTrak installed a prefabricated building (dubbed “AmShack” and the “St. Louis Union Trailer” by St. Louisians) next to the Union Station. Train service to St. Louis stopped arriving at the Union Station and changed over to the AmShack on October 31, 1978. This euphemistically-term “modular” station was supposed to be a short-term solution, but ultimately was used until 2008, when St. Louis’s current station opened. Called the “Gateway Multimodal Transportation Center,” the station is an unabashedly road-based hub that also has train service. The Gateway station has six rail tracks but ten bus bays and over 160 parking spaces for cars. It is Missouri’s largest train station, and is one block away from the mostly-empty Union Station.

Though no longer a train station, Union Station continues to be a place where the boundaries between public and private are indistinct, and where state money subsidizes corporations. The military is no longer the excuse in this particular case, but the desire of certain state actors to intervene in the urban landscape to promote economic growth and create (or recreate) certain kinds of place is still evident. After its closure in 1978, Union Station sat shuttered. Several years later a private developer stuck in the city during a blizzard toured the old station. He then secured both public and private money and in 1985 re-opened the redeveloped building as a hotel and small shopping mall. The mall lasted only ten years until going into foreclosure. New shops were opened; while the

hotel is still open, the Midway—converted now into a series of storefronts—is quiet. The newest corporate owners hope to see trains leaving from the station’s shed again, to take St. Louis residents to Missouri’s wine country. Despite the new owners’ claim of economic viability, they have asked for St. Louis’s government to match funds for future renovations.

St. Louis’s municipal government has tried to reverse the draining of the station, and one of the city’s ideas is to refill the pond. Since 2002 state officials have joined non-profits and private investors to get federal aid to rebuild Chouteau’s Pond, though with the new name of Chouteau’s Lake. The initiative, officially called the “Chouteau Lake and Greenway Transit Project,” seems at first to put the pond’s draining in a familiar framework. While stating that “men and women alike used the pond for sport and recreation year-round,” the master development plan proposed in 2002 claimed that pollution caused a decline in water quality so significant “that Chouteau’s Pond was no longer a gathering spot and had become a threat to public health.” Over the protests of the Chouteau family and the suggestion that the city create a park there, the city government ordered the pond drained. The business community, the document suggests, had only one desire—for a railroad station—and that space ultimately “would prove to fuel the expansion for the next one hundred years.”

The reconstruction of the pond parallels the pond’s creation in the first place. St. Louis’s provincial government gave permission and land for the construction of a millpond as a way to promote economic development.

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The Chouteau’s Lake project is consciously post-industrial: though there are functional elements like storm water catchment and rationalization of railroad facilities, the project’s primary purpose is the revitalization of downtown St. Louis with a “lively, southern anchor for downtown.” The reconstruction of the pond would create a place, a residential and recreational space that would create a new neighborhood and attract people from outside of downtown. In a later, ultimately unsuccessful application for federal funds from the post-2008 recession, Great Rivers Greenway District (GRG) emphasized the role the new lake and surrounding greenways could play in linking disparate parts of the city, from the southern neighborhoods cut off by the rail yards to the other parks and waterfront attractions. In addition to beneficial social effects, the project would lead to an upgrade of existing rail facilities and the addition of several thousand jobs. Of course, state and private actors are largely in agreement that there is a certain kind of space that they would like to create. The park space is “public” insofar as it is accessible to anyone, though from the proposals it’s clear that the new lake would provide mainly recreational and commercial activities. St. Louisians and tourists to the city—the latter group mentioned frequently in the various proposals—will be able to jog, walk, and ride bicycles around the lake. The trails that radiate out from this space connect it to other city green spaces. None of the proposals envision public housing, replacing the units ordered demolished by successive city governments to provide space for train stations. The designers’ drawings of the pond include the water but neglect the re-creation of a space where people of all classes and ages would be able to come and do meaningful work. Chouteau’s Lake is a pond, but it’s not a commons like the body of water for which it was named. The project remains on the drawing board while the stakeholders wait for public—primarily federal—funding for this radical transformation of the urban landscape.

45 McCormack Baron et al., 8.

Figure 5.3—Above is a representation of what was called the Mill Creek Valley in three moments: in 1876 just after the opening of Union Depot, in 1894 just after the opening of the new Union Station, and today. The full maps are in Appendix A.
One of the trails that would radiate out from Chouteau’s Lake would connect it to St. Louis’s most iconic landscape feature, its Arch. As the main feature of what is officially called the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, the Arch is a symbol of passage. It both represents movement westward but also encourages movement both through the gateway its stainless-steel legs create, as well as to the top of its tramline. The top of the Arch is at almost the same vantage point as the imaginary point from which Camille Dry and other artists drew their birds’-eye views of the city: looking west, with nothing impeding travel to the Pacific. This was the promise of Missouri Pacific Railroad as well: a gateway to the West, access to the unceded lands of Native Americans. Yet both structures have limited access and perspectives built into them. I went to the Arch on a bright October day in 2017, a break from my final archival research in St. Louis. The flat space in between the legs of the Arch suggest two views: one upwards and one eastward. Everyone seemed to look up briefly, then back down, then up again. It’s irresistible to follow one of the legs up, but the shiny surface blinds you, and with just the sky in the background, it’s difficult to get any sense of perspective on how large the Arch actually is.

At least on this cold day, most visitors moved quickly down towards the entrance to the Arch, itself a funnel-shaped pathway that led to a security check. At the bottleneck both police and park rangers “greeted” visitors. Most of us showed a screenshot of tickets bought online, which gave timed access to the Arch’s tram. I had arrived early and so had to wait in the main underground hall. The Memorial’s museum was under renovation, so I wandered through the gift shop—private space embedded within the public park. Finally, it was time for my tram ride. Before we could go up, the other people in my group and I watched a short movie (projected on the wall) about the Arch. The movie provided surprisingly little historical context and its tone could best be described as goofy. Our guide was also goofy, entertaining us with trivia questions projected on the wall while we waited for the previous group to descend. These questions were on a variety of topics, from the name of the particular kind of arch that stood above us (catenary) to the number-one song on the Billboard Music Chart for 1965, the year the Arch was
completed (“Wooly Bully” by Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs). We finally were able to ride in small, space capsule-like pods to the top of the Arch. The observation deck at the top has windows on both sides, but like the space on the ground between the Arch’s legs, the deck suggests certain views. The view suggested at the top was West. East was flat ground, some train tracks, fields, and low forests. West was the city, and in the distance, a second city center. From the Arch’s deck we could look across the sweep of skyscrapers or down into the empty Busch stadium. I had brought some images on my phone of the current aerial view with an overlay of Chouteau’s Pond, so I could imagine where the pond had been. I took some pictures westward, like most other people on the deck, and then headed back down in my capsule. The Arch, like the station, is a symbol of mobility, of limitless expansion towards the western horizon. But also like the station, its architecture provided a place where park rangers could halt your mobility.

The railroad networks that linked factories to raw materials, cities to their hinterlands, and the two coasts of the United States have been the focus of an enormous amount of scholarly research. Historians, historical geographers, and economists have traced the contributions that the railroads made to the national economy, but also the contributions that the federal and state governments made to the railroads in the form of direct and indirect subsidies. These studies have almost always focused on the rails, and where trains went. My project turns attention to the stations, and where trains stopped. While state actors are crucial to my story, I also have shown how everyday people with little power used the train station as a place of work and a place of escape, but where they also often ran afoul of state power. The supposedly weak nineteenth-century US state was, as other scholars have pointed out, remarkably strong in some places. One of these places—an actual, not conceptual place—was the train station. Local, state, and federal actors took advantage of the networks that crossed at the station to leverage their own limited power and bootstrap the American state to its current extent.
Appendix A: Maps
The body text of this dissertation is set in Adobe Caslon Pro. The running heads are in Franklin Gothic.