

Southern Kansas Heritage

Contributed by Bob Burton

Before 1879, the construction program of the Santa Fe System had been straight forward. The objective was to build west and southwest. Little construction was accomplished in Kansas aside from the main line. The little bit that was accomplished was to secure eastern terminals, protect the cattle trade, and one short branch to serve an agricultural area. But in 1879, the Santa Fe began dropping lines southward from several places on the main line, building a fortress against invasion of south central Kansas by other railroads. One of the two principal invaders was the Frisco. Relations between the Santa Fe and the Frisco were semi-friendly at that time, and soon blossomed into a partnership that pushed rails to California. The Santa Fe's real concern was the Kansas City, Lawrence and Southern Railroad. This active competitor would eventually become a major part of the Santa Fe System. Its history was convoluted

During the chill winter of 1858, leading citizens of Leavenworth, Kansas met and debated and schemed. A railroad was in the offing. The charter obtained on February 12 outlined a railroad down through Lawrence to the Neosho River. Once in the valley, it would run northwest to Fort Riley and southeast to Fort Gibson, head of navigation on the Arkansas River. It was hoped that this railroad would help establish economic bonds with the South and that it would link the Cotton Kingdom to the transcontinental railroad then being projected across Kansas. The name of this ambitious project was the Leavenworth, Lawrence and Fort Gibson Railroad. As the weather warmed in 1858, cities in southern Kansas warmed to the project. Prairie City, just south of Lawrence, became the corporate headquarters in August. Prairie City lacked a political and economic base and Lawrence took the headquarters a year later. However, the developing Civil War delayed further progress.

Ongoing efforts to acquire part of the Osage Indian lands in southeastern Kansas finally bore fruit. In the fall of 1865, an agreement was established with the Indians and the resulting treaty was sent to Congress for approval. That legislative body procrastinated and debated. During the wait, squatters moved onto the Indian land and responded with violence when the railroad tried to remove them. The Osage Lands problem was further complicated in 1868 when the railroad negotiated a new treaty with the Indians. Congress settled into gridlock over whether an Indian nation could make a treaty with a corporation instead of a sovereign government. Controversy in government and squatter violence snarled the railroad's claim to the Osage lands for years.

During the final years of the Civil War, the LL&FG had come under the control of Senator James Lane, but not without difficulties. Two boards of directors were elected at the same time. Lane was president of one set of officers while the old president sat on the other board. Control of the company was in doubt until another election placed Lane firmly in place. It was Lane's intent to make Lawrence into an important city by building

railroads in all directions from that place. By his efforts the Union Pacific, Eastern Division, (Kansas Pacific) was induced to pass through Lawrence instead of passing a few miles to the north, and also made Lawrence the junction of the UP, Eastern Division Leavenworth branch. Since operating rights could be obtained over the Leavenworth-Lawrence line, the LL&FG would not need to construct its own line between those places. Senator Lane also obtained a Federal land grant for the LL&FG, but it was not as good a grant as he had planned. The bill he introduced to Congress granted ten sections of land for every mile constructed of a railroad south of Lawrence. The bill also provided for a branch of that railroad to the western boundary of Kansas. However, Senator Samuel Pomeroy, who was interested in the Atchison and Topeka Rail Road, amended the bill. As altered, the Leavenworth-Lawrence-south railroad obtained a grant only for the southward line. A new provision of the bill allowed a grant to a separate railroad from Atchison to Topeka and westward. The amended bill reached President Lincoln's desk and was signed into law on March 3, 1863. The Atchison and Topeka added "Santa Fe" to its corporate title on November 24. In February 1866, the LL&FG won a share of federal lands awarded to the state for internal improvements. Lane then changed the corporate name to the more ambitious Leavenworth, Lawrence & Galveston Railroad on February 24.

In July, the residents of Indian Territory agreed to let one and only one railroad cross the territory. A few days later, the federal government designated the LL&G to be one of three contending companies for the prize. It was only necessary to be the first railroad to reach the designated spot on the border. This good news, however, was tempered by tragedy: Political reverses caused Lane's suicide. The senator had been attempting to induce the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, an affiliate of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, to cross the Missouri River at Leavenworth. This would route H&StJ traffic through the UP, Eastern Division's Lawrence junction. Also, Lawrence would become the logical start of an H&StJ branch to the south if that company agreed to operate to that point over the UP. Ed Lane's successors failed to prevent the H&StJ from crossing the Missouri at Kansas City instead. The H&StJ's backers planned a line south of that city, leaving Lawrence and the LL&G to the side. The LL&G sought eastern financing and found a group headed by William Sturges willing to build the railroad. Sturges, soon after becoming president, demanded ever larger bond issues from the counties along the proposed route. At one point, he asked Congress for a land grant if he built in the direction of Guymas, Mexico. He did not get the grant, but the local bonds were approved and southward construction began.

The first locomotive crossed the Kansas River at Lawrence on a temporary bridge November 1, 1867. Trains had to reach Ottawa by the end of the year in order for the railroad to receive the bonds. To meet the deadline, the last few miles into Ottawa were hastily and poorly built, but the train arrived on time. The railroad was supposed to receive \$300,000 in Douglas County bonds with the completion of the line this far, but the citizens claimed that the railroad was not complete. The company had not erected a depot at Lawrence and the bridge and much of the track within town was only temporary. Heavy grades had been used and the line was generally poorly constructed, particularly

the last few miles. Citizens filed repeated injunctions against delivering the bonds. Sturges immediately halted construction south of Ottawa and dismantled the bridge at Lawrence. A noisy stalemate existed for almost two years. One of the more notorious incidents of this period occurred when the county commissioners issued a single \$300,000 bond in the dead of night and delivered it to an LL&G representative who promptly vanished over the state line. The bond was illegally issued and had no value. The LL&G had been the first railroad south of the Kansas River, but the long halt in construction while the bond issue was settled allowed other railroads to claim the LL&G's intended territory. The Missouri, Fort Scott and Gulf Railroad, a creature of the CB&Q, built southwards out of Kansas City. To the west, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Rail Road built southwestward. The LL&G had lost its opportunity on both routes, though at the time it was thought that the company still had a bright future.

Sturges finally stepped aside and James Joy bought the LL&G. The long delayed bonds were legitimately delivered to the company soon afterwards. Joy was one of the earliest railroad empire-builders in the West. His efforts produced such notable properties as the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad and the Hannibal and St. Joseph, and others. He also controlled the Missouri River, Fort Scott and Gulf Railroad, the railroad south from Kansas City. The MRFS&G was having considerable trouble with squatters on its own Indian lands in southeastern Kansas. Violence and destruction eventually halted construction. Joy's troubles with the MRFS&G were such that he purchased the LL&G in June of 1869 and threatened to build it instead. Problems along the Kansas City railroad faded almost immediately and the road from Kansas City was built as intended.

Joy did not neglect his new property at Lawrence, however, and he quickly showed what a professional railroad builder could do. A ferry for rail cars was quickly established on the Kansas River at Lawrence. Also, Joy pushed the railhead to Richmond before the end of 1869. Another Joy road, the Kansas City and Santa Fe Railroad and Telegraph Company, had been formed March 25 of 1868. Although stated plans were to serve its namesakes, the line only extended from Olathe on the MRFS&G to just north of Ottawa on the LL&G. The line opened for business under an LL&G lease August 21, 1870. Trains ran into Kansas City over the MRFS&G. The LL&G reached the state line at Coffeyville September 3, 1871. Only one railroad could continue south across Indian Territory but both Joy properties had lost the race to the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway. New goals had to be set. The LL&G turned westward. However, in order to obtain the necessary charter, Joy had to agree to build a permanent bridge at Lawrence. This was done and a new LL&G subsidiary obtained a charter on June 26, 1871, to build westward along the southern boundary of Kansas. This appropriately named company was the Southern Kansas Rail Road. It stretched the ten miles between Cherryvale and Independence by New Year's Day and advanced no further.

Joy's star was setting. His railroads were only loosely associated and in 1871 Jay Gould snatched the valuable Hannibal and St. Joseph, isolating the Kansas properties from the rest of the Joy system. Continued trouble over the Indian lands and the financial panic of 1873 aided his fall. Irregular dealings on a construction project precipitated Joy's ousting

from the Burlington, along with a number of lesser figures including H. H. Hunnewell. Joy, Hunnewell, and the others still controlled the Kansas lines, but the vengeful fellow exiles immediately removed Joy from these companies. Receivership began March 10, 1875, and both major Kansas properties were foreclosed in 1878. Hunnewell retained control. Under the reorganization, the Leavenworth, Lawrence and Galveston Railroad became the Lawrence and Galveston Railroad March 5, 1879. The companies that had been operated by the LL&G; the Southern Kansas and the Kansas City and Santa Fe; consolidated March 29 with the L&G. The result was called the Kansas City, Lawrence and Southern Railroad. The troublesome Indian lands and government land grant were voluntarily surrendered to the state. Congress had never ratified the Osage treaties. The two parallel railroads from the Kansas River to the Indian Territory border, although under the same management, remained separate companies and developed in different directions. The Kansas City, Fort Scott and Gulf, descendant of the MRFS&G, turned eastward, probing into Missouri and Arkansas. The Kansas City, Lawrence and Southern faced westward.

Since the old Southern Kansas company had been eliminated, a new affiliate would stretch westward from Independence. This child of February 11, 1879, was named the Southern Kansas and Western Railroad. The western extension encountered Santa Fe System branches at Winfield and Wellington in spring of 1880. End of track attained virgin territory at Harper, September 20. Invasion of the Santa Fe's domain did not go unchallenged. As work progressed to Harper, Santa Fe-affiliated Wellington and Western Railroad began constructing along a parallel path. When citizens of Caldwell, on the state line, attempted to lure the KCL&S to their burg, the Santa Fe promptly built south from Wellington to Caldwell. However, the KCL&S had enjoyed a modest cattle trade at Coffeyville, and was eager to tap the main artery of this traffic: the Chisholm Trail. The way to do this was to build a line to where the herds from Texas approached the Kansas border. Caldwell again tried to woo the company, but was outbid by townships to the east. A new subsidiary, the Sumner County Railroad, obtained a charter on April 5, and track reached the state line June 16, 1880. The new town of Hunnewell became the railhead. The rival towns and railroads fought bitterly for the cattle trade. Rates dropped from \$40 per carload to \$10. The KCL&S sped the longhorns to market at the highest possible speed, even sidetracking passenger trains. The rate war did neither company any good and managers of both lines talked peace. Hunnewell decided that the KCFS&G was the more promising property and resolved to sell the KCL&S. Hunnewell eventually extended the KCFS&G to Birmingham, Alabama. It became part of the Frisco. The Santa Fe's affiliated Kansas City, Topeka and Western Railroad ran between Kansas City and Topeka via Lawrence. The subsidiary and the parent company issued new stock in the amount of existing KCL&S securities. The two companies then traded the new stock. Then the KCT&W traded the Santa Fe stock for KCL&S securities. This deal, transacted on December 15, 1880, placed the KCL&S under control of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Rail Road through the KCT&W. The next day, the KCL&S and its two subsidiaries -- the Southern Kansas and Western and the Sumner County -- combined as the Kansas City, Lawrence and Southern Kansas Railroad.

Santa Fe control ended the rate war and halted construction on the Wellington and Western. Operating personnel, however, remained rivals for years. Within months, the KCL&SK began to collect affiliates, the first being the battered remnant of an old rival of the Santa Fe. Dating back to February 4, 1870, the Kansas City, Burlington and Santa Fe Railway had once dreamed of connecting its namesakes but by 1878 had only stretched the forty miles between Burlington, Kansas, and a KCL&S connection just south of Ottawa. A subsidiary, the Kansas City, Burlington and South-Western Railroad planned to complete the project. Despite much promotion and effort, the company did not gain the public support that the Santa Fe, the Frisco, and the KCL&S won. As those companies claimed the South-Western's projected territory, the KCB&S-W and the parent company entered receivership. The KCB&SF was purchased by Alden Speare in January of 1881. It was briefly operated as the Ottawa and Burlington Railroad before being leased by the KCL&SK in April. Ownership soon followed. Nearby, the Santa Fe was displeased with the KCL&SK's entrance to Kansas City, which ran over the KCFS&G, a non-Santa Fe company, east of Olathe. Rumors circulated that the Ottawa-Olathe line would be abandoned in favor of an all-Santa Fe route via existing track through Lawrence. That route was roundabout, so the Santa Fe made other plans. On the first of June, 1882, a connection opened between Olathe and Holliday on the Santa Fe's line into Kansas City. The June 18, 1881-created Kansas City and Olathe Railroad built the connection. The Kansas City, Lawrence and Southern Kansas Railroad and its two small companions merged July 16, 1883, as the Southern Kansas Railway. The new company quickly began accumulating affiliates. Very little is known about the colorfully-named Nebraska, Topeka, Iola and Memphis Railroad, which opened sixteen miles between Girard and Walnut in May of 1883. It had been around since June 17, 1881, in un-constructed form and may have been a planned extension of a Frisco branch from Joplin, Missouri. The company's independence lasted only until New Year's Day of 1884, when it was leased by the Southern Kansas. Foreclosure came three weeks later, and the company emerged February 6 as the Crawford County Railroad. On the fifteenth, the company was consolidated into the Kansas Southern Railway. The Kansas Southern began corporate life as a "Railroad" on June 6, 1883. Operational life between Chanute and Walnut began under lease to the SK on New Year's, the same day the NTI&M had been leased. Once the smaller company had been reborn, it and the Kansas Southern Railroad combined as the Kansas Southern Railway, allowing the SK to penetrate the coal mining region of southeastern Kansas. On December 26, 1885, a coal company was formed under SK ownership. The Cherokee and Pittsburg Coal and Mining Company was still part of the Santa Fe family over a century later, although the name had been changed to "Santa Fe Pacific Mining. The "Railway" also inherited from the "Railroad" an unfinished roadbed between Independence and Elgin. This line was left unfinished. Also on New Year's, the SK began operating the Pleasant Hill and De Soto Railroad, which was a rickety track from near Corlis on the Kansas City, Topeka and Western to Pleasant Hill, Missouri. This unfortunate line was owned by the Santa Fe, which compensated the SK for operating losses on this line. With scant days left in 1884, the line was sold outside the Santa Fe family without regrets.

A more important line was the Kansas City and Emporia Railroad. Incorporated December 12, 1880, this line opened under SK lease the first of February, 1884, and connected its operator at Ottawa with its owner, the Santa Fe, at Emporia. Out on the western end, the Harper and Western Railroad came into being July 1. Attica was connected to Harper in November. Construction continued westward towards Medicine Lodge and southwestward towards Kiowa. On July 4, Congress authorized the Southern Kansas to build south from Arkansas City, a point on the Santa Fe but not on the SK, down to Denison and Fort Worth in Texas. Another line was approved to extend southwestward towards the Texas Panhandle. This busy year, 1884, had been further marked by the Southern Kansas Railway and the owning Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Rail Road becoming so interwoven that their financial statements were combined. Separate operation continued though. True to precedent, on April 16, 1885, the operating road combined with the leased roads to form a new company. Thus, the Harper and Western, the Kansas City and Emporia, and the Southern Kansas Railway became The Southern Kansas Railway. The new company was subtly designated by "The" instead of "the." Former Harper and Western lines to Kiowa and Medicine Lodge were completed in August and January. Further extensions of these lines were underway. The line south of Arkansas City had been chosen from among several different routes because it passed through lands not assigned to any particular Indian tribe. If any part of Indian Territory were opened to settlement, reasoned railroad officials, this would be the place. The Southern Kansas Railway built southwards about forty miles east of the Chisholm Trail. Coming north to meet the SK was another Santa Fe property, the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway, which had also received its Congressional permit on July 4, 1884. Track met at Purcell and the through route to Texas opened on June 12, 1887. Construction southwestward from Kiowa continued to Texas. Under state law, a Texas corporation had to own and operate the track in Texas. Therefore the Southern Kansas Railway of Texas was created in Austin on November 2, 1886. The line from Kiowa, Kansas, to Canadian Texas, opened September 12, 1887. Two months later, this line was in Miami, and in another two months, January 15, the track opened to Panhandle City. Early plans called for the Panhandle line to continue into the mining region at White Oaks, New Mexico. Another line was to split off and connect with the Santa Fe's main line to the Pacific Ocean. However, an agreement was made with the Fort Worth and Denver City Railway, with which a connection was made at Panhandle City, whereby the SK of T would not build beyond that place. A traffic agreement with the FD&DC allowed the SK to dominate cattle shipping over most of west Texas and east New Mexico. These Texas lines crossed raw, unsettled lands. The SK hired men to build towns along the track, which had not been done in comparatively settled Kansas. Further SK expansion included extending the Girard branch to Frontenac in June of 1887. The following year, a few further miles to Pittsburg were added to this line. That accounts for all expansion carried out under the Southern Kansas name.

During the mid-1880s, the Santa Fe became embroiled in a war of occupation against the Missouri Pacific Railway. The two systems took to crossing and re-crossing each other and to racing each other to enter new territory. Most of the Santa Fe's expansion during this era was undertaken by the Chicago, Kansas and Western Railroad, which was formed

by combining the charters of ten smaller railroads on May 31, 1886. This company built many disconnected lines all over Kansas and leased them to the Santa Fe or to the SK as convenient. One line connected Chanute on the SK's north-south line with Longton on the East-west line on the first day of 1887, forming a cutoff. On the same day, a line opened from Independence to Cedarvale. This branch crisscrossed an MP line which was paralleling the SK's east-west line on the south. The right of way as far as Elgin was owned by the SK and part of the roadbed dated back to the Kansas Southern Railroad of 1884. A short extension of the Burlington branch to Gridley in May crossed two MP lines. By August, a twenty-five mile line from Colony, where the MP crossed the north-south line, extended to Yates Center, the junction of two MP lines and midway crossed another MP-controlled line. A CK&W line that the SK may have operated ran from Osage City, on the Santa Fe, to Quenemo. Connected by the SK to Ottawa, this August 1, 1886, line paralleled an MP line between Ottawa and Osage City. Another line that the SK may have operated opened in October 1887. Running from near Benedict on the Chanute-Longton cutoff, this line crossed the MP three times in the forty miles to Madison, on a Santa Fe branch from Emporia. The SK itself started and later aborted a line westward from Medicine Lodge. This line would have joined a CK&W line headed for Englewood. The last few miles of the line into Englewood were constructed by the Southern Kansas and Panhandle Railroad, which had been created July 28, 1886. Several surveys extended this line into New Mexico, but Englewood remained the terminal. Oddly this spot was the projected terminal of the Southern Kansas Rail Road back in 1871. Plans were laid to extend the SK from Lawrence to Atchison to obtain a better route to Chicago. However, that plan was abandoned when the Santa Fe built its own line between Kansas City and Chicago. Further construction was stifled by failing finances. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe leased the Southern Kansas May 1, 1888. Separate operation had ended, but the corporation survived until merger on February 15, 1899.

The gentlemen who had gathered in Leavenworth in 1858 would hardly have recognized their brainchild thirty years later. It served few of the intended locations. It even failed to serve Leavenworth. The name was different. Yet it was a proud enterprise that spun a web of steel over much of Kansas and stretched down into Indian Territory right to the border of the Lone Star State, where, by law, another company had to take over. At the time of lease, only three of its components were considered of great importance. Between Holliday and Emporia, the SK was part of the Santa Fe System's main line. South of Arkansas City was the main to Texas. Also important were the lines to the southeastern Kansas coal mines. All else was agricultural branch. Later, the original north-south line would become the main line to Tulsa, Oklahoma. The very long branch from Wellington, Kansas, to Panhandle City, Texas, would in 1908 be connected in New Mexico to the main line to the Pacific, and would itself become the new main line. The Southern Kansas Railway of Texas would change its name June 5, 1914, to the Panhandle and Santa Fe Railway. It would come to control track down to the border of Mexico, and survived as a corporate entity until June 11, 1965. The lines in southeastern Kansas would carry the proud title, Southern Kansas Division, until 1948. In the 1930s, the Santa Fe's bus affiliate would also bear the Southern Kansas name, but that was an accident. Long after that had been changed, a joint Santa Fe-Greyhound bus line between Kansas

City and Tulsa, mostly running alongside shining rails of the old Southern Kansas Railway, would be known as the Southern Kansas-Greyhound. In the last years of the twentieth century, much of the former Southern Kansas Railway remains as heavy traffic main line. However, many of the other lines have either been abandoned or sold. In the heart of former SK territory, the principal owner of the property is the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad. One might wish for this company, aside from prosperity, the addition of "-ern" to the name. It is a heritage of pride.