

K Kansas Town Company Records, 1839-1957
0352 0.27 cubic feet
NSA

MICROFILM

This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri-Research Center, Kansas City](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at shsofmo-kc@umsystem.edu.

INTRODUCTION

The collection contains original Kansas Town Company records and research materials compiled by the Native Sons of Greater Kansas City and Mildred C. Cox.

DONOR INFORMATION

The collection was donated to the University of Missouri as part of the collection of the Native Sons of Greater Kansas City on July 17, 1990 (Accession No. KA0590).

COPYRIGHT AND RESTRICTIONS

The Donor has given and assigned to the University all rights of copyright which the Donor has in the Materials and in such of the Donor's works as may be found among any collections of Materials received by the University from others.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

On February 1, 1831, French-Canadian fur trader Gabriel Prudhomme patented 271 acres of land in Jackson County, Missouri, for \$340.00. The land, originally part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, contained a natural rock ledge on the south bank of the Missouri River that would later be known as "the levee," which proved to be an excellent steamboat landing site. After an altercation in 1831, Prudhomme died leaving a complex legal battle among his heirs. The courts finally declared that the land should be auctioned-off and the proceeds equitably distributed among his children.

On July 7, 1838, James H. McGee, as a guardian for the Prudhomme heirs, auctioned the land. He received \$1,800 for the land from Abraham Fonda, but the courts ordered a new sale due to charges of a lack of adequate advertising and a suspicion of collusion between the two men. The second auction of the estate was advertised as far away as St. Louis and cried-off on November 14, 1838. A group of men, led by William M. Sublett, made a bid of \$4,220.00 and successfully purchased the tract of land. The group formed a corporation with the intent of using the landing and its nearby surroundings as a business settlement, complete with warehouses.

The Kansas Town Company originally consisted of fourteen members. Shortly after the initial sale, three additional members joined the company. Members included John C. McCoy, the city's first surveyor; Fry P. McGee, the group's first financial officer; and William M. Chick, Kansas City's first Postmaster. Other members of the group included: Oliver Caldwell, William Collins, Abraham Fonda, William Gillis,

Russell Hicks, Samuel C. Owens, Jacob Ragan, James Smart, George W. Tate, and Moses G. Wilson. The three additional members included Robert Campbell, William B. Evans, and Henry Jobe.

The initial order of business for the group was to name the proposed town. "Town of Kansas" was selected because of its location near the Kansas River and the Kansas Indians. The next order of business was to survey and plat the land, which McCoy accomplished in early 1839.

By May 1839, the first land sale was offered. The population of the new town remained at a few hundred because of complications surrounding the filing of the deed to the land. By 1846, this issue was settled, and the Kansas Town Company offered a second sale on April 30, 1846, with Pierre Chouteau acting as an attorney-in-fact for the company and handling the deeds.

The last meeting of the organization occurred on September 30, 1847, recording the sale of the remaining lots. On February 14, 1850, the Jackson County Court incorporated the town as the "Town of Kansas." This incorporation, however, was declared void and the town was re-incorporated on June 3, 1850. Three years later on February 22, 1853, the town, with a population now in the thousands, was again incorporated but this time as the "City of Kansas" by a special act of the Missouri State Legislature.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection has been arranged into the following two series.

Kansas Town Company records

The Kansas Town Company records series includes two bound volumes recording the minutes and financial accounts of the corporation. Book 1 contains a list of lots sold in the Town of Kansas, covering the period 1839 through 1847. The volume lists lot numbers, names of purchasers, and purchase prices. Book 2 contains minutes from the meetings of the proprietors of the Town of Kansas and an account of expenses, covering the period 1846-1850. The series includes transcripts of both volumes compiled by Mildred C. Cox.

Research materials

The research materials series contains miscellaneous items related to the history of the Kansas Town Company compiled by the Native Sons of Greater Kansas City and Mildred C. Cox. The series includes reproductions of an 1838 land sale notice and advertisement; plat maps for 1839, 1846, and 1847; and miscellaneous drawings and newspaper clippings. Other materials include compiled research and working papers on a number of topics, including the history of the Kansas Town Company and the Town of Kansas; James H. McGee; and Gabriel Prudhomme.

PREFERRED CITATION

Specific item; box number; folder number; *Kansas Town Company Records* (K0352); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-KC].

FOLDER LIST

The entire collection is available on microfilm.

Kansas Town Company records

- f. 1 Book 1, memorandum of the sale of lots in the Town of Kansas, 1839-1847 (portion of microfilm is illegible)
- f. 2 Transcript of Book 1, 1957
- f. 3 Book 2, memorandum of proceedings of the proprietors of the Town of Kansas, 1846-1850 (portion of microfilm is illegible)
- f. 4 Transcript of Book 2, 1957

Research materials

- f. 5 Land sale notice and advertisement, September 29, 1838 (photocopies)
- f. 6 Town of Kansas plat maps, 1839-1847 (portion of microfilm is illegible)
- f. 7 Prudhomme estate abstract and Prudhomme research compiled by Mildred C. Cox, 1954
- f. 8 Kansas Town Company research material compiled by the Native Sons, ca. 1950s
- f. 9 James H. McGee research materials compiled by Mildred C. Cox, 1955
- f. 10 Working paper on Town of Kansas history by Mildred C. Cox, 1957
- f. 11 Drawings and newspaper clippings, 1899-1946

LOCATION NOTE

Original materials in this collection are housed offsite and will need to be retrieved before viewing. Microfilm is housed onsite.

SUBJECT TERMS

Corporations – Missouri – Kansas City
Land use – Missouri – Kansas City
Real property

Processed December 2015