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A New Order of Things: St. Louis, Chicago, and the Struggle for Western Commercial Supremacy

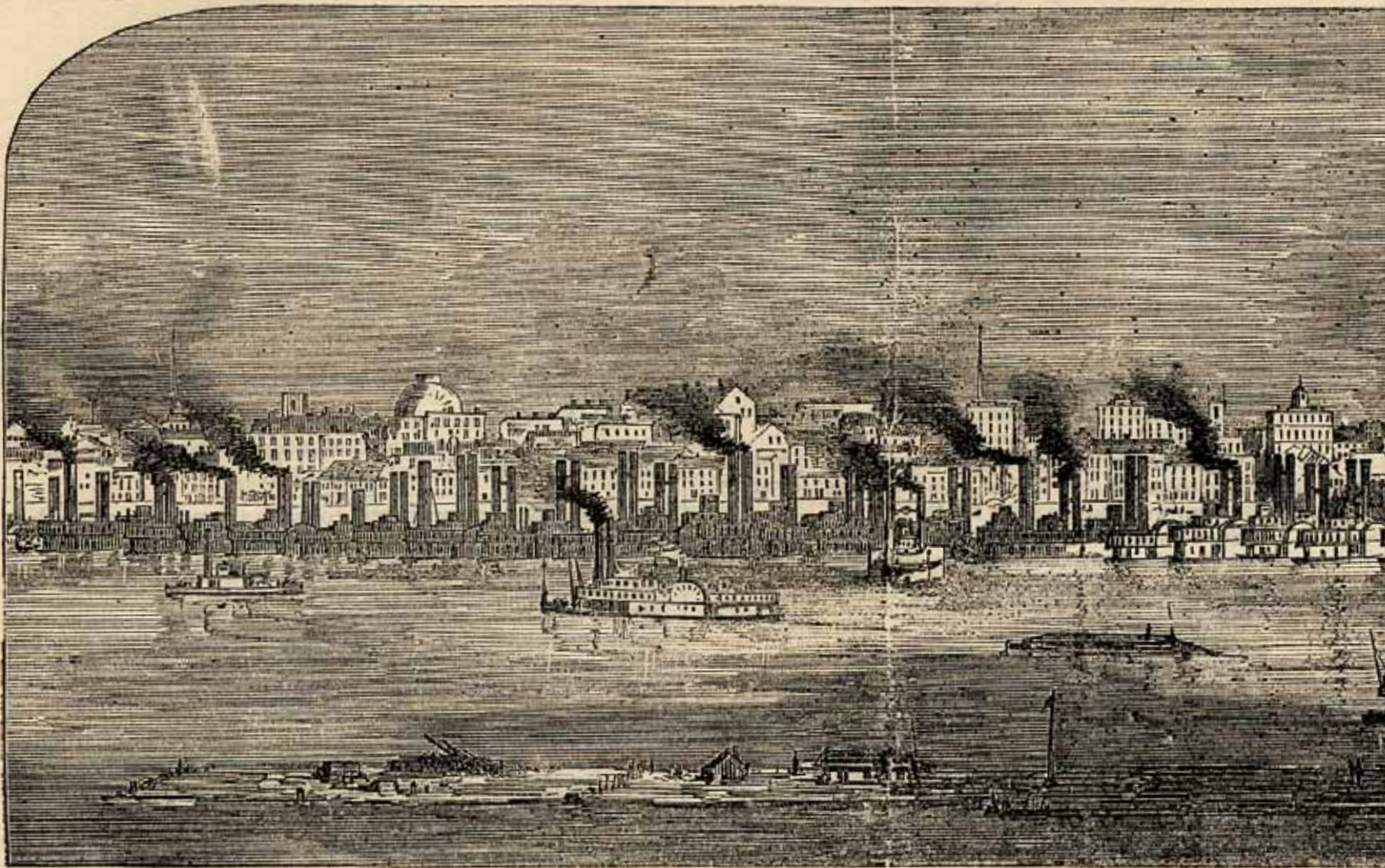
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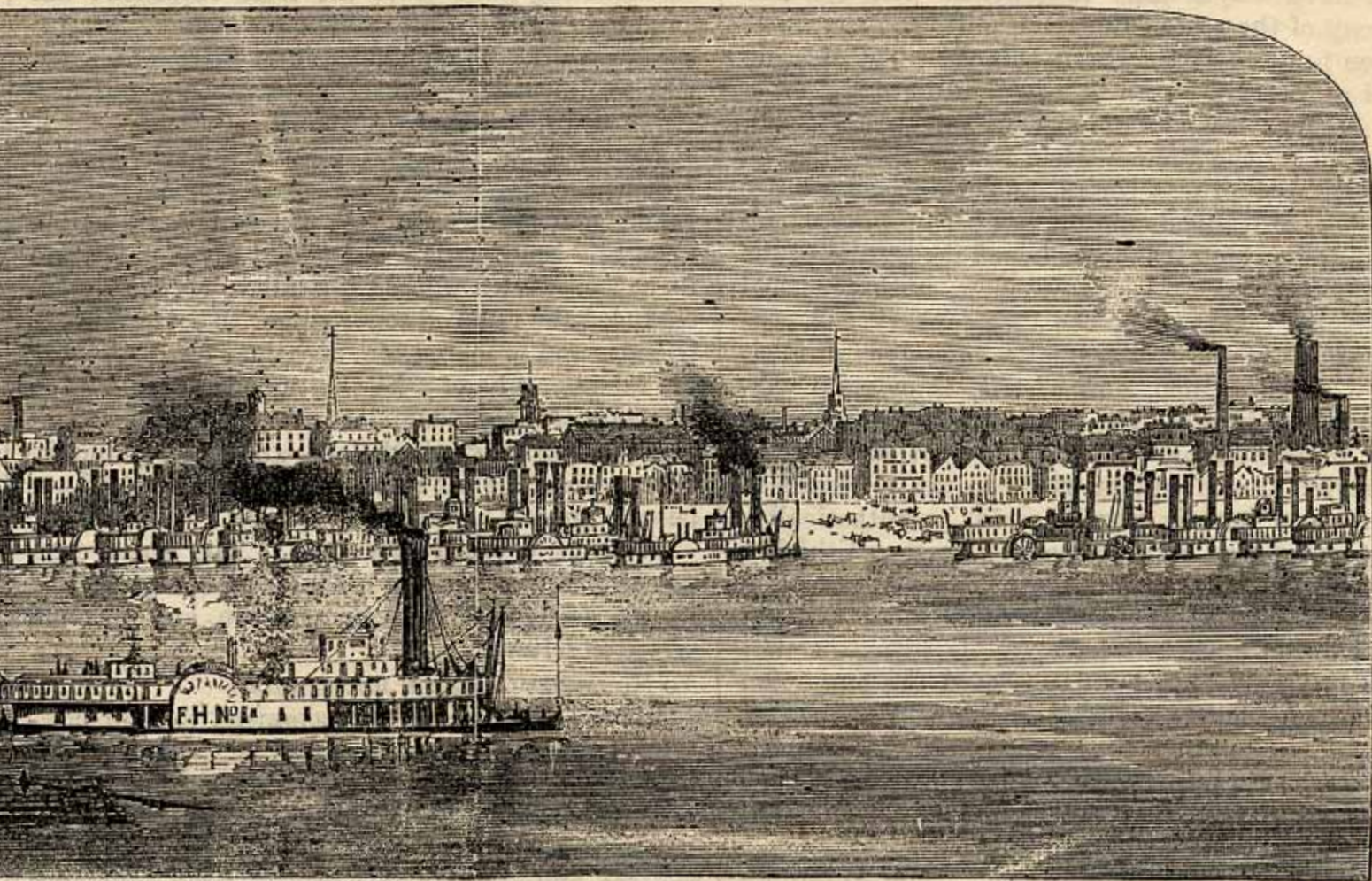


ST. LOUIS, 1

“A New Order of Things”:

St. Louis, Chicago, and the
Struggle for Western Commercial Supremacy”

BY DREW VANDECREEK



MISSOURI.

In its article, "A Railroad Pleasure Trip to the West," the July 4, 1857, issue of *Harper's Illustrated Weekly* featured an illustrated journey between Cincinnati, Ohio, and St. Louis, demonstrating the city's economic focus on river traffic. *Harper's* was one of two large national illustrated newspapers that were published starting in the 1850s, somewhat akin to today's *Time* and *Newsweek*. *Harper's* dubbed itself "The Journal of Civilization." (Image: St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri-St. Louis)

In the antebellum period, St. Louis' boosters crowed about the city's advantageous position on the emerging North/South axis of the nation's western trade: the Mississippi River. Many boasted that their hometown would become the leading city of the West. As the Civil War approached, Chicago, approximately 300 miles to the northeast, emerged as the city's bitter rival for western commercial supremacy. The conflict dealt St. Louis interests a devastating blow with the Mississippi's closure, but equally damaging was the rapid increase in railroad construction that it occasioned in the North. At the end of the Civil War, St. Louisians mustered their political forces for a new round of river and harbor improvements to bolster their competitive position. Yet they often struggled to grasp the fact that Chicago was well on its way to securing its position as what William Cronon has called "the greatest metropolis in the continent's interior, with all the Great West in some measure a part of its hinterland and empire."¹ Indeed, led by the indefatigable Logan U. Reavis, St. Louis promoters mounted a campaign to move the nation's capital to their city.²

Reavis and his collaborators emphasized several factors

in their quixotic initiative, including St. Louis' central location and commercial primacy. They also developed a subtler argument designed to appeal to the ascendant Republican Party and a war-weary nation. The antebellum political arrangements that Reavis identified as the "Old Government" had been a product of a nation originally bounded by the Appalachian Mountains and tainted by slavery, he maintained. Washington, D.C., had become the nation's capital in 1800 as part of a delicate balancing act between northern and southern interests. Its location near the border between the regions also saved many legislators and other members of the government needless travel. Western expansion placed an increasing number of federal officials at greater distances from Washington, and the Civil War swept away the larger political context that had helped it to become the seat of the federal government. The Union's victory in war announced an opportunity for a fresh start, for the construction of what Reavis called "a new order of things," with St. Louis becoming the capital of a reconstructed, expanding nation that he called the "New Republic." In 1869, he boldly predicted that the national capital would reside in his city within five years.



Maps such as this one were published in *Official Time Tables of Railways in the United States and Canada*, this one from 1871. They provided not only a map of the route, but also suggested the ways city boosters in places like Chicago saw themselves and their role in national progress. (Image: St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri-St. Louis)

Efforts to move the capital to the West fizzled by 1871.³ Reavis and other boosters often acknowledged Chicago's recent advance, even as they reasoned that their city's natural geographic advantages would surely help it to reclaim a position temporarily undermined by the wartime closure of the Mississippi. Yet even as they maintained this brave face, Reavis and several collaborators recommended that the city's businessmen expand their relationships with regions south and southwest of St. Louis, rather than face Chicago's withering competition for the northern trade. They argued that the nation had reached a point at which its leaders, both in the business community and government, must decide if its commerce would principally travel east-west across the continent by railroad, or north-south by a combination of railroad and water transportation. In regard to the emerging issue of the nation's foreign commerce, they suggested that trade within the Western Hemisphere favored St. Louis, situated as it was on a north-south transportation artery. By contrast, commercial relationships with nations beyond the west coast represented an inconceivable fantasy. Reavis and his fellow boosters' qualifications represented an acknowledgement, however implicit, that Chicago had

assumed the leading position in the trade of the American West and beyond.

The river trade proved unable to sustain St. Louis' growth in the Gilded Age. Mark Twain chronicled its decline when he returned to the valley in 1882. The author and his party arrived in St. Louis, where they quickly concluded that "the most notable absence observable... was the absence of the river-man. If he was there... he was in disguise." On the city's celebrated levee, the travelers found "half a dozen sound-asleep steamboats where I used to see a solid mile of wide-awake ones! This was melancholy, this was woeful. The absence of the pervading and jocund steamboatman from the billiard-saloon was explained. He was absent because he is no more. His occupation is gone, his power has passed away, he is absorbed into the common herd.... The towboat and the railroad had done their work, and done it well and completely." Twain concluded that "Mississippi steamboating was born about 1812; at the end of thirty years it had grown to mighty proportions; and in less than thirty more it was dead!"⁴

The stagnation of the river trade signaled an end to St. Louis' claims of western economic supremacy. Although

die-hard boosters continued to insist that the city would eventually surpass Chicago as a rail hub, the massive infrastructure represented in the continental railroad had already been built. A prostrate South proved incapable of providing St. Louis with sufficient economic sustenance to bolster its deteriorating position. The nation's commerce increasingly moved back and forth between the east and west. Even an 1883 history of St. Louis, published in the city, concluded that Chicago had gained control of the trade to its north and west and competed evenly with St. Louis for trade as far south as Texas. As the realization that Chicago had become the primary link between the Atlantic coast's financial and industrial centers and the American West set in, St. Louis boosters came to characterize their nemesis as the fortunate beneficiary of eastern financial largesse, doubtlessly referring to the investments that had built the city's railroads and the contributions that had helped it to rebuild after the disastrous fire of 1871. Only fate and outside influence, it seemed, could trump St. Louis' immense geographical advantages. In the 1890s, St. Louis authors continued to emphasize the city's economic ties to the south and southwest, and they urged travelers from those regions on their way to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago to stop over in their city for a few days. As Logan U. Reavis had imagined, a new order had emerged as the United States moved on, through

time and space, from the Civil War. For denizens of the trans-Mississippi west, that new order revolved around Chicago.

What follows is a series of documents tracing the thinking at the time examining boosterism both in and about St. Louis.

W. D. Skillman

The Western Metropolis; or, St. Louis in 1846
(St. Louis: Skillman, 1846)

The location is a most admirable one in every point of view. Its commercial advantages of position have already placed St. Louis in a high rank among business places, and it is now universally acknowledged that the "Mound City" must eventually become the "New York of the West."

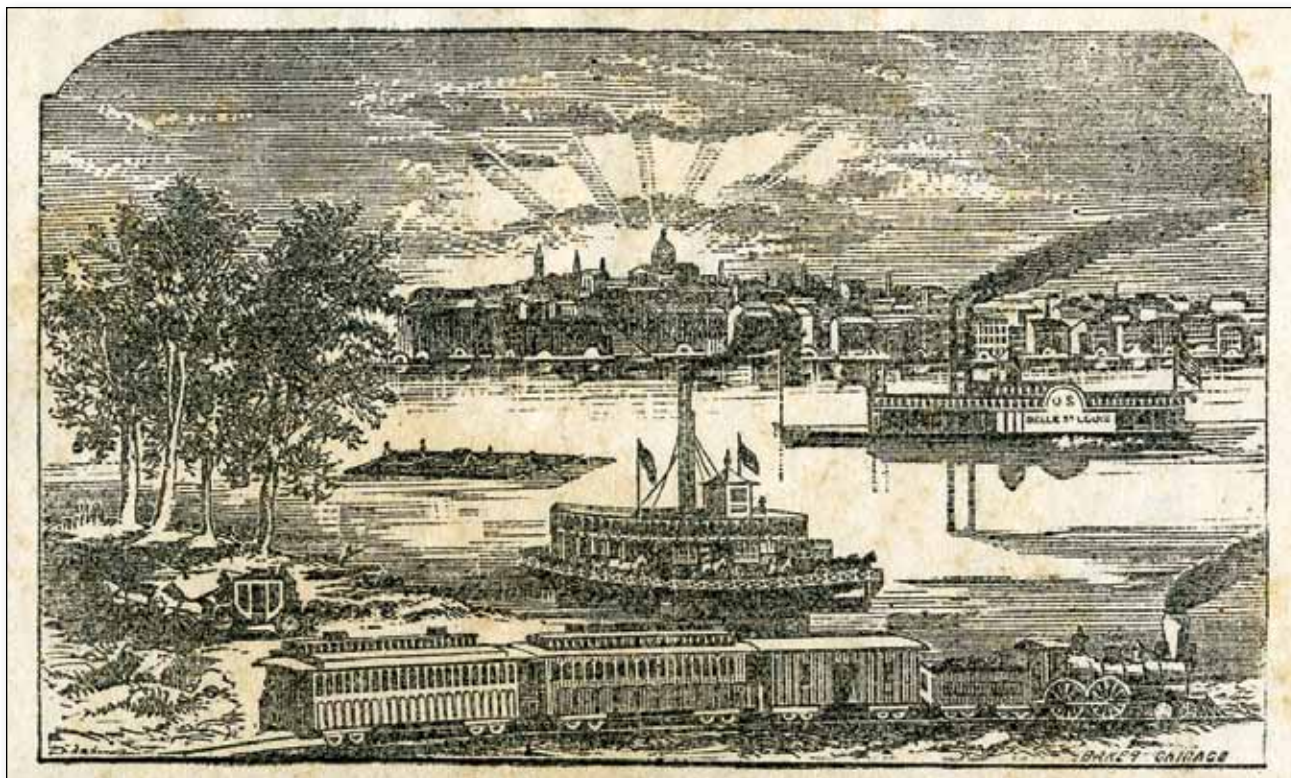
S. Waterhouse and William B. Dana

"Missouri—St. Louis, the Commercial Centre of North America"

Merchants Magazine and Commercial Review
(July, 1866)

St. Louis is ordained by the decrees of physical nature to become the great inland metropolis of this continent. It cannot escape the magnificence of its destiny. Greatness is the necessity of its position. New York may be the head, but St. Louis will be the heart of America.

In this engraving from Nathan Parker's 1867 book *Stranger's Guide to St. Louis: Or What to See and How to See It, in and Around the City, comprising Notices of Every Object of Interest to Strangers, with City Map and Illustrations*, railroads and steamboats are juxtaposed with a rising sun over American democracy and progress. While steamboats may have been "strangers," the train in the foreground is the symbolic tool of the future. (Image: St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri-St. Louis)



Chicago is an energetic rival. Its lines of railroad pierce every portion of the Northwest. It draws an immense commerce by its network of railways. . . . Chicago is vigorously extending its lines of road across the Missouri River. The completion of these roads will inevitably divert a portion of the Montana trade from this city to Chicago. The energy of an unlineal competitor may usurp the legitimate honors of the imperial heir. St. Louis cannot afford to continue the masterly inactivity of the old regime. A traditional and passive trust in the efficacy of natural advantages will no longer be a safe policy. St. Louis must make exertions equal to its strength and worthy of its opportunity. It must not only form great plans of commercial empire, but must execute them with an energy defiant of failure. It must complete its projected railroads to the mountains, and span the Mississippi at St. Louis with a bridge whose solidity of masonry shall equal the massiveness of Roman architecture, and whose grandeur shall be commensurate with the future greatness of the Mississippi Valley.

The march of St. Louis will keep equal step with the progress of the West. Located at the intersection of the river which traverses zones and the railway which belts the continent, with divergent roads from this center to the circumference of the country, St. Louis enjoys commercial advantages which must inevitably make it the greatest inland emporium of America. The movement of our vast harvests and the distribution of the domestic and foreign merchandise required by the myriad thousands who will, in the near future, throng this valley, will develop St. Louis to a size proportioned to the vastness of the commerce it will transact. This metropolis will not only be the center of Western exchanges, but also, if ever the seat of Government is transferred from its present locality, the capital of the nation.

Logan U. Reavis

The New Republic, or the Transition Complete, with an Approaching Change of National Empire, Based Upon the Commercial and Industrial Expansion of the Great West: Together with Hints and National Safety and Social Progress

(St. Louis: Jos. F. Torrey and Co., 1867)

Nations and men, by an inherent law of progress, are compelled, as they approach riper years, to out-grow the errors contracted in infancy and early life, and those errors that are not disposed of in a legitimate and lawful way are disposed of by penalty and by revolution.

The United States has not escaped this certain and infallible law of correction, and what she failed in due time to do by legislation, Providence has done for her by revolution. It was a heathen custom to expiate great crimes by a paramount sacrifice. Such has been the obligation imposed upon the United States by Him who sits on the high and holds place, and sends his rains upon the just and the unjust.



When Logan Uriah Davis (1831-1889) died in 1889, the *New York Times* described him as "a conspicuous and well-known citizen." One of the great boosters of St. Louis, he was best known for his proposals to move the nation's capital from Washington, D.C., on the east coast to the more central (and prosperous) St. Louis area. (Image: State Historical Society of Missouri Photo Collection)

The Republic having made the heathen sacrifice and atoned for the sin of slavery, and cleansed her garments of its stain, it is now to be seen whether we are not on the threshold of a new era, pregnant with unlimited political progress and commercial expansion. Let us see with the eyes of Cassandra what is in the future.

Looking forward to the presidential election of 1868 –

Among the many great advances that will be made under the new President will be the removal of the Capitol from Washington to the banks of the Mississippi.... The commercial expansion and multiplication of new States in the great West, and their preponderating millions of industrious and intelligent people dwelling in the Mississippi valley, will claim its removal.... Not even a wall around the city of Washington, with a cherubim and flaming sword upon its ramparts, can hold the seat of Empire from the Great West.

With the development of the whole country and its commerce, will also come the development of commercial centers, or great cities, monopolizing and controlling the trade of the country. Geographical conditions, and the inevitable tendency of the future commerce of the United States and the world, point to New York, San Francisco, Chicago, St. Louis and

Orleans [sic], as destined to be the great depots and entrepots for the external and internal commerce, seeking markets to and from this country.... New York, as she is now, will remain a great American city, but with the civilizing growth of the continent, and the change of commerce, she will be shorn of her controlling influence and leading greatness. The completion of two great internal works – the Pacific railroad to California, and the ship canal from Chicago to La Salle – will change the internal and foreign commerce of the country, and divide between New Orleans and San Francisco one-half the trade that now, or hence, would go to New York.... St. Louis, occupying, substantially, the geographical and commercial center of the country, and in the heart of the richest agricultural and mineral lands on the continent, is destined to be the great central depot of the United States, and the seat of national empire. She is the Babylon of the New World, not standing on the Euphrates, but upon the banks of the great Mississippi.

With all this great advance, this magical transfer of power, who can be so simple as to rest in the belief, that with it will not come a change of national empire, or a removal of the Capital of the Government to the banks of the great Mississippi? Who is so foolish as to think that an ambitious, industrious and successful people, with millions of population, and millions of treasure in their favor, will not demand, in due time, the removal of the Capital from its present location to their midst? It will come, and come soon. National gravity will bring it.

“The revolutions of the human mind,” says Lamartine, “are slow, like the eras in the life of nations.” It is no ordinary work for a great nation to pass a transition—to revolutionize the mental status of its people, to cool passions and remove prejudices, kindled into heat and produced by destructive and unrelenting war—and, by reorganization and new legislation, set up a new order of things. It is not the work of a day, nor a year, but the work of time and deliberate and far-reaching statesmanship. In every great movement mistakes will delay a success or a victory, while wise counsels will accelerate them. Whatever may be the anxiety of statesmen to heal up the wounds of the rebellion and to restore the revolted states to political equality and harmony in the Federal Union, the completion of the work is still in the distance. As we go forward to its end, “hills peep o’er hills, and Alps o’er Alps arise.” Difficulties in the machinery of the government, arising out of unexpected interpretations of its law by men of diverse opinions, prolong the work of reconstruction. Nor can the work be thoroughly completed until an entire change and reorganization of the government has fully taken place and a new order established, substantially as follows:

I. The election of a new president and his instalment into office.

- II. The formation of a new national constitution, and, under it, the reorganization of the Supreme Court, and the making of such other changes as seem best for the safety and perpetuity of the Republic.
- III. The removal of the National Capitol [sic] to the Great West.

It is not possible, in the nature of things, that a Constitution framed in the infancy of a nation, and by its own weakness and the error of laws enacted under it, sustaining and spreading the greatest moral deformity of the nineteenth century, is a fit fundamental law for the nation after having thrown off, by revolution, that great moral deformity.

Logan U. Reavis; S. Waterhouse, William H. Seward; Orville Hickman Browning
A Change of National Empire; Or Arguments in Favor of the Removal of the National Capitol [sic] from Washington City to the Mississippi Valley
 St. Louis: J. F. Torrey, 1869

That the argument may be made stronger in favor of the removal of the National Capital from its present place to the Mississippi Valley, two maps of the country are submitted, with accompanying statements.

The first map represents the territorial extent of the United States Government at the time of the adoption of the Federal Constitution, and when the first Congress, sitting at New York, located the seat of government at its present place. In addition to the first map showing the territorial extent of the government at that period, it also shows the vast extent of wild country which has, since the incoming of the present century, been acquired by our government.

The first map represents the Old Government.

The second map represents the New Republic, or the territorial extent of the United States government as it now is, and in contrast with the Old Government we behold the growth of the American nation.

The debates upon the bill locating the seat of government at its present place show three considerations involved in the discussion:

First, that common selfishness which is everywhere seen in the acts of men. Many desired its location where it would build up local and personal interests.

Another argument was in favor of putting the Capital where it could be easily defended in time of war.

But the most important consideration was that which required its location in a central position, so as to accommodate the States as they were situated along the shore of the Atlantic. This, I repeat, as the debates upon the removal of the seat of government from New York to its present place show, was the most important consideration. The Constitution had just been adopted and the new Government took its place among the nations of the earth, and the representatives of the people at once sought to permanently locate the seat of government at such a place as would be most central to

the States and the business interests of the people. Such was the wisdom of the representatives of the people at the foundation of the Old Government, and such ought to be the wisdom of the representatives of the people at the foundation of the New Republic. Passing from a consideration of the Old Government, let us now turn to a consideration of the New Republic, or of our country as it is now, in all its broad extent. . . .

By reference to the map it will be seen that the New Republic, or the territorial extent of the Government as it now is, spans the continent in extent from ocean to ocean, and in breadth reaches from the lakes to the Gulf. Instead of the old thirteen States and one Territory, which constituted the Old Government. . . .

Besides the immense acquirement of natural wealth, to us are given the wonderful creations of genius. We have the railroad traversing our lands everywhere; we have the steamboat upon all our navigable rivers; we have the telegraph connecting our cities, and the steam-engine doing our bidding in almost every phase of industrial enterprise. Thus we are, with all our continental growth, a new nation, requiring new laws, new advantages, and more appropriate uses in governmental affairs. Our limited sea-coast uniting us with all the commerce of the world, and our vast domain putting us within reach of every climate on the globe, and all our natural advantages combined, point to our future imperial greatness; and at every step we take forward wisdom tells us that the conditions and regulations of Old Government are not adapted to the wants of the New Republic, for they were only the regulations and conditions of childhood, and not suited to the growth and maturity of manhood. It will be found, on examination, that we are met everywhere with evidence demanding a change of the National Capital from the Old Government to the New Republic.

At this time there is a continental strife for commercial supremacy inaugurated between the Atlantic cities and the people of the West. The contest is for the purpose of determining whether the trade of the West shall go across the continent to the Atlantic cities, or whether it will go down the Mississippi river and her tributaries to the Gulf, and from thence to the markets of the world. In this contest the West will triumph and her products follow the water courses. The question will be settled in the next three years.

Following this contest will come that long-anticipated change, or at least the time for it, when a railway is completed to the Pacific Ocean, and we look for our trade with China and India to find its way to us through different channels. In this matter the people have no doubt over-estimated the importance and magnitude of that great continental change in our foreign commerce. It is true the completion of those great railways will be a wonderful triumph of American industry; but their completion will not bring such a change and such

an era in our continental development as many have anticipated. On the other hand, the great commercial and civil era to which we are approaching will come, with our industrial and commercial tendency, to the tropics of our own hemisphere. In industry the destiny of this people is a continental conquest. Nothing but wild and foolish extravagance and impracticability will lead our people over distant oceans to distant lands for products, when we have at home all the climates, all the soils, and all the advantages that the globe can afford. Nor will the American people act so foolishly. It is not in their experience to do so. They will do otherwise. Already there is a great trade in the tropics, which our people can easily command if they do but make the proper use of the means within their reach.

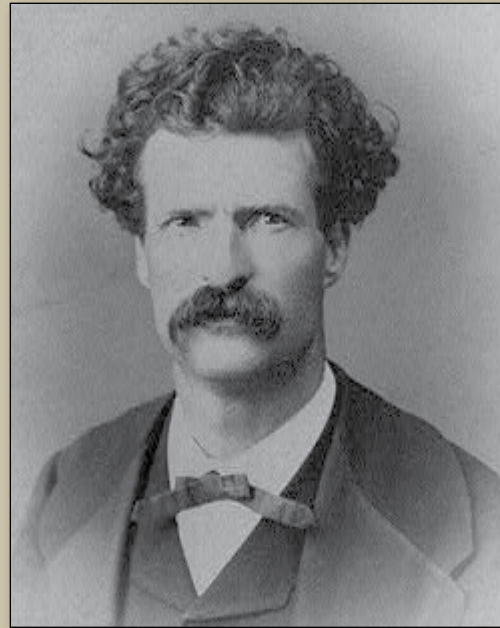
The people of St. Louis and the West must learn that next in importance to the Mississippi river is a railway through the Southwest to Galveston, thus making a great trunk line from Chicago *via* St. Louis to the Gulf, and uniting the Gulf and the lakes at a distance of about 1,000 miles, and St. Louis to the Gulf at a distance of about 700 miles. Akin to this road in importance will be another from Denver City into Mexico. By these means will be won a commerce from the tropics and South America surpassing the distant trade of the Orient. With all these future developments of our continental and foreign trade, St. Louis will still remain the central city and commercial depot of the country; and with the minerals and coal of Missouri and Illinois, the timber and the water, the great workshops of the country will be hers.

Chicago, on the completion of the Illinois canal, may command, in its exchange of agricultural for manufactured products, an extent of territory as large as that controlled by Maumee. Admitting it to be larger, and of this our readers must judge for themselves, it does not seem to us probable that within the forty-seven years it can even approximate in population or wealth to the comparatively old and well-peopled territory that comes within the range of the commercial influence of Maumee. We have not sufficient data on which to calculate the extent of country that will come under the future commercial power of Chicago. That it is to be very great seems probable from the fine position of that port in reference to the lake, and an almost interminable country southwest, west, and northwest of it. An extension of the Illinois canal to the mouth of Rock River seems destined to give her the control of the Eastern trade throughout the whole extent of the upper Mississippi, except what she now has by means of the Illinois River. She will also probably participate with Maumee in the lake trade with the Missouri river and St. Louis. On the whole, we deem Chicago alone, of all the lake towns, entitled to dispute future pre-eminence with Maumee. The time may come, after the period under consideration, when the extent and high improvement of the country making Chicago its mart for commercial

All of the materials examined in “A New Order of Things”: St. Louis, Chicago, and the Struggle for Western Commercial Supremacy” are drawn from the collections of the Mark Twain’s Mississippi Project (<http://dig.lib.niu.edu/twain>), an online resource developed by Northern Illinois University Libraries with funding provided by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (<http://www.imls.gov>). Institutions contributing materials to the project include the St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri-St. Louis; the Newberry Library; Tulane University Libraries; and the Mark Twain Project at the University of California, Berkeley.

The Mark Twain’s Mississippi Project website presents users with materials shedding light on the historical setting in which Samuel Clemens grew to maturity, and which he remembered and imagined as Mark Twain in a series of celebrated works based in the Mississippi River Valley of the mid-nineteenth century. Twain first evoked this landscape in his essay “Old Times on the Mississippi” in 1875.¹ He then revisited it through the youthful exploits of Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, and their young accomplices. With *Life on the Mississippi*, which built upon his “Old Times” essay, Twain explored how rapid technological and economic developments had changed the Mississippi Valley of his youth. Finally, in Huck and Jim’s raft voyage down the river in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, he addressed one of his era’s central social and political problems: the pervasive taint of slavery and racism in America.

While Twain’s fiction provides a uniquely vivid introduction to these topics, many other authors described them in works pertaining to the nineteenth-century Mississippi Valley as well. Presented in a searchable format on the Mark Twain’s Mississippi Project website, these accounts, drawn from the collections of the collaborating institutions, provide readers with a richer, more detailed aggregate picture of society and culture in the Mississippi Valley than do Twain’s works alone. A set of nearly 2,000 images makes up another set of primary resources available on the project website, providing users with vivid depictions of locations along the river and the dynamics of river life. These materials include images drawn from the pages of the above texts, as well as others selected from participating institutions’ collections of visual resources. Available images include maps, photographs, engravings, and drawings as well as



Samuel L. Clemens (1835-1910), better known as Mark Twain, grew up in the Mississippi River town of Hannibal, and spent part of his early adult years as a riverboat pilot. Despite moving to Connecticut, Clemens never lost his affinity for the Mississippi River and its symbolism. (Image: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division)

musical scores. The Mark Twain’s Mississippi Project also provides its users with spatial representations of demographic/census data via an interactive map interface using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology and sound materials comprised of latter-day recordings of period sheet music.

In addition to the above resources, the project website also features original interpretive material in text and video formats, contributed by leading students of Twain’s works and nineteenth-century America. Together, these tools make the Mark Twain’s Mississippi Project website a broad and deep repository of materials pertaining to the river, its cities and towns, and its people in the nineteenth century. You can also access Mark Twain’s Mississippi Project through the *Confluence* website.

ENDNOTES

¹ Mark Twain “Old Times on the Mississippi,” *Atlantic Monthly*, January-June, 1875.

operations, may enable it at least to sustain the second place among the great towns of the North American valley, if not to dispute pre-eminence with the first.

The reader of this little pamphlet will no doubt be desirous to know what time the seat of government will be moved from its present place to the Mississippi Valley, or, at least, will be anxious to know what time one so sanguine as the writer has fixed for the change. I unhesitatingly answer that the change will be made within five years from January 1, 1869. Before two years from January 1, 1869, Congress will authorize, by its own act, the removal of the seat of government from its present place, and soon will follow the President, national archives, and the legislature of the Republic.

Logan U. Reavis; Nathaniel Holmes; William T. Sherman, J.W. Scott; Horace Greeley; William Darby; G. Gratz Brown; Charles Gibson

Saint Louis: The Future Great City of the World
St. Louis: Gray, Baker and Co., 1875

The great cities of the world were not built in a day.... It is not impossible that our city of St. Louis may be "the future great city of the world," but if we are to come to practical facts for our day and generation, and take the safe and sure way. I think we may be content to set it down as both the present and future great city of the Mississippi Valley.

The first leading feature that impresses me is this: that St. Louis is a central mart, seated on the great southern water line of transport and traffic, by the river, the gulf, and the ocean; and that Chicago is another, less central or quite eccentric, situated at the end of the great northern line of traffic and travel, by the lakes, canals and rivers to the sea. Both are, and will be, great centers for internal distribution; but St. Louis is, or will be, in all the future, in this, the more central and important of the two. For exportation of products, Chicago has been, of recent years, the greater in quantity and value: but St. Louis, in this, has of late rapidly approached her, and in the near future may be expected even to surpass the City of the Lakes. Both were exported mainly by the same channels. Such manufactures as could be made here, and were in demand for the Western country, rapidly grew up, and the manufacturers (as of stoves, castings, saddlery, mill machinery, steamboat machinery, white lead and oil, refined sugar, bagging and bale rope, tobacco, etc., etc.) grew rich. And St. Louis had overtaken Cincinnati before the war. Five years ago, the value of the imports paying duties here or at New Orleans, was five millions; this last year it was eleven millions. This must be taken as simply the small beginnings.

The railroad system, in its westward movement, embraced Chicago first; the regions immediately around Chicago first became the more densely settled and cultivated; and Eastern capital pushed her railroads out in all directions, largely taking away the trade of the Northwest from the rivers and St. Louis, and they

had extended them even into Northern Missouri when the war shut up the Mississippi, and also stopped the progress of our incipient railroads; and then, of course, the larger part of the trade went to Chicago, because it could go nowhere else. ("Letter from Judge Nathaniel Holmes," xiv-xv)

Commercially, St. Louis is scarcely one generation old. In the Eastern cities are the accumulations of one or two centuries. The capital accumulated here, however large, is all employed in the immediate business of the city. The vast amount required for this rapid construction of long lines of railroad, must come chiefly from abroad. Meantime, it is not surprising that the business men of St. Louis turn their faces to the South and Southwest, where they have an almost exclusive monopoly of the trade, rather than to the North and Northwest, where they come into more stringent competition with Chicago and the Eastern cities. ("Letter from Judge Nathaniel Holmes," xvi)

Chicago, the pampered child of a rich and indulgent East, may boast her railways and enviable position for freighting on our inland seas; and yet the fact remains that she draws trade and distributes supplies to a section which lies almost entirely on her west and north, and is included in an angle which is but little more than the one-fourth of a great circle.

Alexander D. Anderson

The Mississippi and Tributaries: A Commercial and Statistical Review

(Washington, D.C.: National Republic Printing House, 1881)

Under the stimulating influence of American enterprise the commerce of the Valley rapidly developed. In 1812 it entered upon a new era of progress by the introduction, for the first time upon the waters of the Mississippi, of steam transportation.

The river trade then grew from year to year, until the total domestic exports of its sole outlet at the seaboard — the port of New Orleans — had, during the fiscal year 1855-6, reached the value of over eighty million dollars. Its prestige was then eclipsed by railways, the first line reaching the Upper Mississippi in 1854, and the second, the Lower Mississippi, at St. Louis, in 1857. Says Poor: "The line first opened in this State from Chicago to the Mississippi, was the Chicago and Rock Island, completed in February, 1854. The completion of this road extended the railway system of the country to the Mississippi, up to this time the great route of commerce of the interior. This work, in connection with the numerous other lines since opened, has almost wholly diverted this commerce from what may be termed its natural to artificial channels, so that no considerable portion of it now floats down the river to New Orleans."

J. Thomas Scharf
*History of Saint Louis City and County, from the
Earliest Periods to the Present Day, v. II*
(Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts and Co., 1883)

Mr. Joseph Nimmo, Jr., chief of the Bureau of Statistics of the Treasury Department, Washington, in his very comprehensive and suggestive report on the "Internal Commerce of the United States," submitted to Secretary of the Treasury Windom, July 1, 1881, attempts to define the "territorial limits of the commerce of St. Louis." What he says is as follows:

"The commerce of St. Louis west of the Mississippi River and north of the State of Missouri is quite small, the city of Chicago having secured the principal control of that trade by means of the system of east and west roads centering in that city."

"St. Louis competes sharply with Chicago for the trade of Northern Missouri, Kansas, Southern Nebraska, Colorado, the Territories tributary to the traffic of the Union and Central Pacific Railroads, and for the transcontinental trade with the States of the Pacific coast, and mainly controls so much of the trade towards the Southwest as is embraced in the southern and central portion of Missouri, the State of Arkansas, the larger part of the State of Texas, and the northwestern section of Louisiana. For the trade of Kansas, the northern part of Texas, and the Indian Territory, St. Louis meets an active competition in the commercial enterprises of Chicago."

Author unknown
*Pen and Sunlight Sketches of Saint Louis: The Commercial
Gateway to the South*
(Chicago: Phoenix Publishing Company, 1892)

Spread on the west bank of the far-famed Mississippi River, "the father of waters," is the city of St. Louis, the commercial "Gateway of the Sunny South," and one of the most populous, progressive business centers on the American continent.

This northernmost southern city maintains the confidence of the entire South....

James Cox
St. Louis through a Camera
(St. Louis: Woodward and Tiernan, 1892)

A perusal of the pages following will show the reader that St. Louis is a cosmopolitan city in every sense of the word. Its manufacturing establishments rank among the very best in the world; its streets are

the best paved, cleaned, sprinkled and lighted on the Continent; its public and office buildings are costly, modern and magnificent; its dwelling houses are admitted by visitors to represent a greater number of types of architecture than those to be found in any other city in America; its system of rapid transit is the best in the world, and some of its electric cars are best described as palaces on wheels; its parks are scenes of beauty, and are maintained in the highest possible condition of cultivation and adornment; its stores are among the finest and best stocked in the world; its libraries are convenient of access, luxuriously appointed and supplied with the best collections of modern and classical literature that money and research could procure; its clubs are models of elegance and comfort; its schools are the admiration of a Continent, and its system of tuition is admitted to be the best yet perfected; its churches are numerous and beautiful; its water supply is never-failing and of admitted purity, and its climate is at once healthful and delightful.

It is to a city blessed with these and a thousand other advantages that St. Louisans bid the visitor welcome. Those attending the World's Fair are especially invited to secure transportation reading "via St. Louis," in order that a few days may be spent here either going to or returning from the Fair. The railroad companies recognize in the City of Conventions a place well worth a visit, and will issue tickets with stop-over privileges at St. Louis if desired. That hundreds of thousands of visitors from all parts of both the Old and New Worlds will take advantage of this opportunity to remain for a time in the great city on the banks of the mighty Mississippi is an assured fact, and to each visitor the city of St. Louis extends in advance a cordial Welcome.

St. Louis is the acknowledged metropolis of the West, the Southwest and the South. It has absolutely no rival, so far as the South and the Southwest are concerned, and when it is remembered of what the new South, and the still newer Southwest, are composed, it will readily be seen that no city in the world is more fortunately located. The awakening in the South during the last five years, and the general tendency towards the encouragement of manufacturing interests and the abandonment of cotton growing as a sole source of income, have resulted in a demand for a higher class of mercantile products in all the Southern States, and the shipments south from St. Louis, are, in consequence, five times greater to-day than what they were but a few years ago.

NOTES

¹ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1991), 26.

² Patrick E. McLearn, "Logan U. Reavis: Nineteenth Century Urban Promoter" *Missouri Historical Review* 66, no. 4 (1972), 567-88.

³ *Ibid.*, 578.

⁴ Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1883), 210.