

One Hundred and Fifty Years of Change on the Great Plains

A. Townsend Peterson
University of Kansas



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Foreword

Attending and participating in local Lawrence, Kansas “Final Friday” art sales for many years leading up to the mid-2010’s, I was accustomed to speaking with many fascinating, curious art fans that loved to walk around the historic downtown district, imbibe and shop at the many venues displaying and selling local amateur artists’ wares at the end of each month. Of special interest to me always was repurposing found objects from old country roads into something new and interactive or kinetic for people’s homes or yards. Although just a hobby for my own entertainment, it was always enjoying to hear someone else who could relate to the junk and salvage pieces and the origin stories related to them, although this was a bit rare.

My wife Cindy and I had always liked being on the road with our young kids, especially across the broad state of Kansas, usually taking the longest possible routes to get to our destinations for camping or kayaking, avoiding major highways and seeing the many, many old and forgotten towns and relics of the great Wheat State. So in the mid-2010’s one Final Friday, a nice couple, introduced to me as Town Peterson and his wife Rosa Salazar, were inquiring about some of my pieces on display and a short chat fired up that led to several commissioned sculpture pieces in their beautiful East Lawrence historic 1860’s-built home yard soon after.

Although the couple traveled extensively and often, we would occasionally all meet up at the home during an yard-art installation and discuss our travels, common interests, and love of all things off the beaten path. About this time, I had inexplicably dived head-first into the world of bridge-hunting, a niche hobby in which one travels many backroads and byways specifically in search of bridges; open or closed, abandoned, forgotten, hidden, the older the better. My best guess is that it started with some posts viewed on social media by folks doing a similar thing. I then began to travel, usually alone, nearly every weekend for an entire year following, knocking on doors for permission to inspect people’s old creek crossings and such, I soon had 150 bridges found in Kansas, and it was only just beginning – inadvertently becoming a “pontist,” a term used for a bridge enthusiast.

It would be this strange hobby, along with Town’s seemingly insatiable curiosity with so many different topics travel- and humanities-related, that would soon lead to an odd but satisfying symbiotic relationship. Getting to know Town better, the thrust of our discussions was usually about general history or particular areas of the state to visit; our actual occupations seemed irrelevant.

I had heard second hand he was associated with the University of Kansas, and that he had family ties in Chicago and Mexico. But really it didn't seem important to know what he did for a living, and I assumed he didn't need to know about my decades of driving a forklift in a local distribution center warehouse.

After many messages were passed along back and forth via social media regarding the history and locations of many of the bridges I had visited in the region for "a project" Town was working on, I became more curious about his career. He would often send me new drone footage from the backroads of one of his long Kansas road trips, an idea I had never entertained when hacking out a swath of old cedar trees to get a glimpse of an old bridge that may or may not be there. So with a few simple clicks (all it takes anymore, of course), I was quickly informed of a distinguished professor at the University of Kansas in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, with his own lab for many years, who works with students on ecology and biology projects around the world.

As time went on, "the project" became clearer and clearer; receiving a final copy of the work, it is a wonderful book that covers the very earliest days of a new U.S. state. It illustrates the big dreams of many big thinkers who were bold enough to think about building a railroad line across it, linking the eastern and western parts of the growing nation. The book is richly illustrated with original photographs from 150 years ago, accompanied by comparable or contrasting views of the same locations photographed today. This book reads beautifully, both in its sequencing of the railroad built from Kansas City, Kansas, across the great state of Kansas and into eastern Colorado, west all the way to Denver, and in the moving photography and narrative by Town, highlighting the changes over the century and a half in the topography and overall landscapes. Town, through his many years working in his field, and mentoring a generation of like-minded, curious young fact-seekers, has created a beautiful work on the following pages. He offers a wonderful visual and historical look at progress, replete with all the hardships, displacement, and disillusionment of many people, contrasting with the "modern progress" and enrichment of life for many others.

Nick Schmiedeler

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Introduction

This book explores the past century and a half of the history of the Great Plains. Specifically, I take advantage of an important historical visual resource regarding Great Plains landscapes and environments in the 1870s, and replicate the historical materials with a new sequence of matching photographs. This technique of repeat photography has been explored many times and in many contexts, and offers an immediate and tangible understanding of how landscapes have changed in a region.

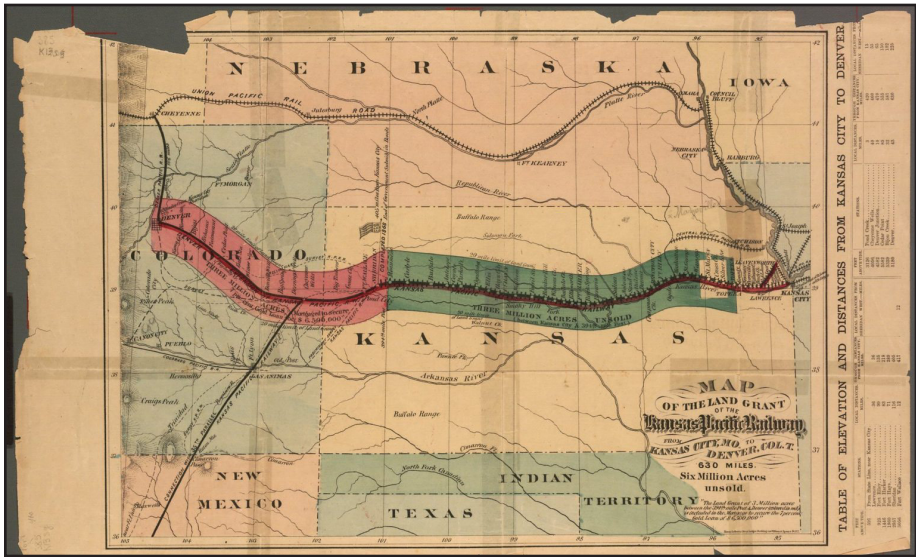
I have been working with repeat photography for a number of years now, and have assembled hundreds of pairs of old and new views of sites across Kansas, Colorado, and Mexico. The biggest challenge, inevitably, however, is that of assembling the historical series of photographs into coherent units and groups. Too often, the historical views are a hodge-podge of what happens to exist, or what one happens to find, which makes for difficult or uncertain interpretations of patterns of change.

This book, however, is based on a single series of historical photographs taken by a single photographer that were taken during a single outing in late 1873 and perhaps early in 1874. Specifically, in this book, I have replicated photographs taken by Robert Benecke, who was hired by the Kansas Pacific Railroad to travel the length of the company's new rail lines, and take photographs of interesting sites and views along the way. The Kansas Pacific Railroad extended from Kansas City, Missouri, west across Kansas into eastern Colorado, and ended in the frontier city of Denver.¹

The Kansas Pacific Railroad was actually quite well documented with early photographs. The famous photographer Alexander Gardner had surveyed and photographed the proposed route of the Railroad in 1867, producing an impressive series of about 150 photographs along the proposed route. Gardner's photographs were the subject of an important repeat-photography study that was completed in the beginning of the twenty-first century,² such that that set of Gardner's views is quite well documented and explored.

¹ Collins, R. 1998. *Kansas Pacific: An Illustrated History*. South Platte Press, David City, Nebraska.

² Sherow, J.E. 2014. *Railroad Empire Across the Heartland: Rephotographing Alexander Gardner's Westward Journey*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.



Map of the land grant of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, dating to 1869-1880. Source: Kansas State Historical Society, <https://www.kshs.org/km/items/view/213537>.

Robert Benecke’s photographs, however, have not had the same attention, to the point that I only learned about his work relatively recently. Thankfully, his photo series from the entire railway stretching from Kansas City to Denver has been conserved by the Southern Methodist University libraries.³ Southern Methodist University’s dedication to open sharing of knowledge and information is much to be admired, and they certainly have my deepest gratitude, as they have made this book possible. Benecke’s photographs are not as numerous as those of Gardner, but they show a slightly later point in time, when the Railroad was better established, and (thankfully for my work!) are better described in terms of the sites that they show.

³ Southern Methodist University; <https://www.smu.edu/libraries/digitalcollections/rwy>.

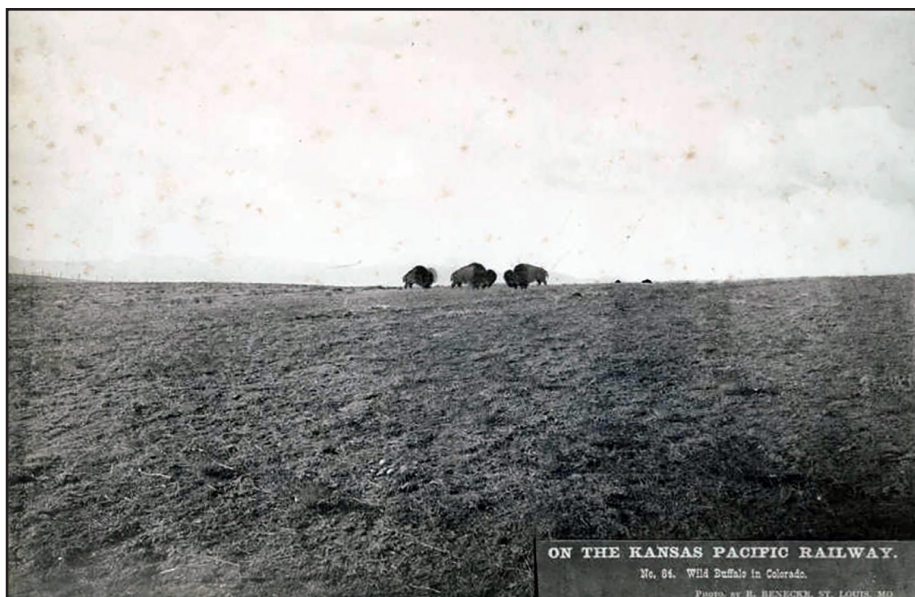
An Odd Point in Time

1873 is an odd moment on the Great Plains, and particularly in Kansas. The Bleeding Kansas era of pre-war conflicts between abolitionists and pro-slavery elements in the region had ended, and the Civil War had just been won by the North. Reconstruction was happening in the South, and the Great Plains were a thoroughfare for massive westward colonization and expansion of white (and other non-Native) citizens of the United States. Many people wished only to cross the Great Plains, to arrive in California, Oregon, New Mexico, or other points far to the west; others were busy colonizing the Great Plains per se. (Indeed, the land grants to the railroads led to large-scale promotion of settlement of the region by the railroads themselves, given an enormous profit motive for creating settlements along the way, and selling that land to settlers.) Benecke's photographs capture this moment of massive flux in Kansas and eastern Colorado: in many cases, bridges were still being built (e.g., see, "Passenger Bridge over the Kansas River and Waterworks Dam, Lawrence," below), and towns were just being set up farther west.

One element that is conspicuously absent from Benecke's photographic series, however, is Native Americans. Numerous tribes were still present across the region, or in some cases recently had been removed from the landscape.⁴ Increasingly, though, they had either been forced to move to other regions (e.g., Oklahoma), or were crowded onto reservations scattered across the region. As a consequence, in spite of the recency of white European presence across the Great Plains, Native Americans will be largely absent from this book, simply as a consequence of the fact that they were absent from Benecke's photography. This omission does not reflect a lack of awareness or appreciation on my part of the history of the land in question, which had long been the home of many groups of Native America.

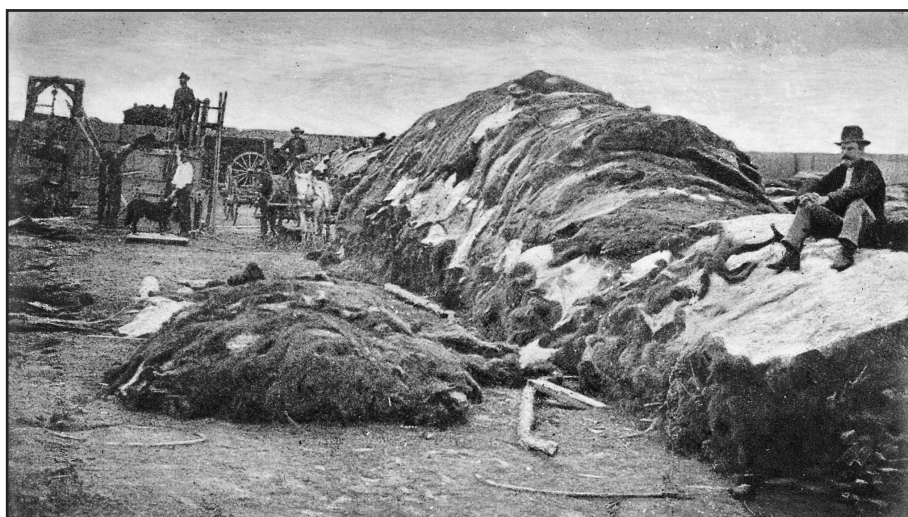
Related to the absence of Native Americans from Benecke's view of the Great Plains is, similarly, the general absence of bison from Benecke's landscapes. By the 1870s, bison had already been reduced massively in numbers, and what bison remained were farther to the west than they

⁴ Deer, S. 2023. The Second Trail of Tears: Muscogee Exodus to Kansas (1861); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SB2Tc-It620>.



had been previously. One Benecke photograph shows 3-5 bison, somewhere in eastern Colorado (see above), but the view is of a few, rather than thousands of individuals; no bison appear in any view of Kansas landscapes.

Bison were the subject of massive-scale slaughter, for hides and for meat, or simply for sport. A further motive may have been to make the region less welcoming to Native Americans. A photograph, not taken by



Benecke, shows “Rath & Wright’s buffalo hide yard,” in Dodge City, Kansas, in 1878. The view (see above) shows a massive mound that apparently numbered 40,000 bison hides,⁵ and illustrates the enormous scale on which bison were being eliminated.



The Kansas Pacific Railroad was certainly part of the system that made this large-scale slaughter possible. Although I have not found explicit mention of a Kansas Pacific Railway role in transportation of bison hides, given the timing and the crucial west-to-east connection that the Railway provided, it is quite likely that large amounts of bison material were moved along the its rails. One of Benecke’s Kansas Pacific Railroad photographs (see above) shows the Railway’s headquarters and general offices, with the caption, “Taxidermists Department of the Kansas Pacific Railway. Buffalo Heads used for advertising purposes.” Doubtless, these displays contributed to an impression of a Great Plains that had been “civilized,” and was now a place for white settlers, farming, and cows.

⁵ <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/520093?objectPage=2>.

Landscapes Across the Great Plains and Through 150 Years

The view that Benecke gives to the viewers of his photographs is one of a broad gradient in the region's landscapes. Excepting the large cities at either end of the Railway, the transition is from a region with prairie uplands and forested bottomlands, to a prairie-dominated landscape with slender lines of trees along rivercourses, to an entirely treeless and open landscape. In fact, few trees are visible in any of Benecke's photographs from western Kansas and eastern Colorado, underlining how open the landscape of the Great Plains was at that time.

One-hundred and fifty years later, things are quite different. Not only have the railroad stations and small settlements become cities, they have also transformed into green, tree-covered islands in the prairie. Areas in between the towns have also filled in with trees, as bottomlands in many cases are now full of deep forest (e.g., in the vicinity of St. George). Even the uplands, however, are now becoming forested: with suppression of wildfires, woody vegetation has invaded into the prairies. The first invaders are usually red cedars, and, once they have established, broad-leaved trees soon follow. Now, after decades of this invasion process, termed woody plant encroachment, much of central and eastern Kansas is covered by low and scrubby forest. These changes are clearly evident in many of the new photographs that I have assembled in this book.

I offer this book as a touchstone for pondering environmental change in the Great Plains over the past 150 years. That is, too many people only drive across the Great Plains on Interstate 70, or live in Kansas City or Lawrence or Hays or Denver without getting out and exploring the landscapes on which they live. Only a lucky few get out and really experience this unique region. Even fewer people have an appreciation of what those landscapes looked like in the past. This book attempts to line up the present and the past, in the form of 47 images for which I was able to find a modern view that matches the historical one. My goal throughout is to give the reader a basis for comparing, contemplating, and maybe even understanding how this region has changed over a century and a half.

Acknowledgments

This book is the product of my curiosity, and the freedom that the University of Kansas has accorded me to pursue those interests. I have been assisted massively by a broad array of friends, colleagues, and generous Kansas. Among this suite of amazing people, I must fundamentally thank John Schukman, for bringing the Benecke photographic series to my attention, his expert assistance with locating cryptic landscape features in the Ellis County region of central-western Kansas, and for his enthusiastic exploration of all things Great Plains. Nick Schmiedeler helped immensely with locating several of the bridges featured in some of Benecke's photographs. Erin Saupe and Cori Myers generously helped with improving my treatment of the deep-time background of the Great Plains.

I also thank the DeGolyer Library at Southern Methodist University for its generous dedication to open sharing of its collections resources: without such dedication, this and many other research efforts would be far less efficient, or even impossible. The University of Kansas Libraries (Josh Bolick, Eric Bader, and Marianne Reed, in particular) provided significant expertise in the development of this book, particularly as regards how to create an e-book that is open, and available in multiple formats that are maximally useful and accessible to everyone. My new colleague Carlton Shield Chief Gover provided helpful guidance on the introductory content.

The University of Kansas, and particularly the Office of the Provost of the University of Kansas, provided funding that made the field work for this project possible. Parts of the photography for this book were completed during the course of a creative residency at Volland, in Wabaunsee County, thanks to the Volland Foundation. Parts of the writing and preparation of this book were completed as part of a creative residency at Mother's Milk, in Newton, Harvey County, Kansas. My deepest gratitude to each of these sources of support, as they have given me freedom to explore and develop this work.

I also thank the many local residents, landowners, and passersby, for their kind assistance with dozens of questions and requests for directions or opinions. These individuals, when I have a name to thank, are acknowledged individually in the accounts regarding each individual

photograph; many more people offered advice or assistance or knowledge without even an introduction. The wonderful people of the Great Plains were consistently hospitable, welcoming, and helpful, throughout this project, for which I am greatly indebted.

Finally, I thank my inveterate companion in endless Kansas adventures, my wife and partner in life, Rosa Salazar. Rosa was in constant wonder and marvel at the subtle, but beautiful, landscapes and history of Kansas, Colorado, and Missouri, a source of energy that made this project a joy to complete. Sharing these adventures with Rosa made this labor-intensive project possible, and... indeed... a lot of fun.

The Great Plains

The Kansas Pacific Railroad extended from Kansas City to Denver, in effect spanning the entirety of the vast region that is the Great Plains. It was long seen as uninhabitable, or minimally desirable at best, for European (white) settlers, but it was nevertheless settled as gentler and easier lands to the east filled up, with settlement of the Great Plains by Europeans beginning in earnest in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Projects like the Railroad placed a premium on this settlement: stations had to be maintained and manned, to allow trains to stop to refuel and take on water, and passengers needed to embark and disembark, rest, and eat. What is more, the vast lands granted to the Railroad project represented massive potential for profits, if the land could be sold to settlers.

This book covers changes in the past 150 years across the Great Plains. It is, however, worth looking farther into the past, to set the stage for the period that is the scene of our play here. In this chapter, I explore briefly several swaths of Great Plains history: its geological origins and evolution over past many millions of years when it was a vast sea, what it was like in the Pleistocene (i.e., the past 1-2 million years) during the glacial periods, and how it changed within recorded history. Writing such broad historical summaries is no simple task, I will warn the reader: I am not an expert in any of these fields, so I have provided a brief outline of each of these historical periods, plus links to useful summaries written by individuals with much deeper expertise than my own whenever possible.

Origins and Deep History

The Great Plains have a long history of being under water. That is, until about 70 million years ago, it was covered by shallow seas. This oldest history explains the many layers of sediments that cover much of the region, which represent the sea bottom and the detritus that accumulated there over millions of years, now mineralized and made into layer upon layer of rock. It also was the source of the marvelous Kansas limestone that is such an excellent building material, and that is the subject of several of the photographs that are featured later in this book.

The approximate distribution of the vast water bodies in the deep past is shown in the map visualization below.



Map of the central and western United States, showing its coastlines and the distribution of shallow seas in the Middle Campanian period, approximately 80 million years ago.¹

¹Reprinted with permission of Colorado Plateau Geosystems Inc.™

Beginning about 70 million years ago, however, as the continent of North America was uplifted generally, the Great Plains seas receded, and the broad outlines of the flat, open basin that is now the region began to emerge. That is, between the Rocky Mountains to the west and the Ozark and Appalachian mountain ranges to the east, is a massive, relatively flat swath of land that extends from northern Mexico to southern Canada. Of course, these landscapes were sculpted further by uplift, erosion, and other geological processes, but the basics of the origin of the region lie in it having been a massive sea for most of history. More detailed, but accessible, reading on these topics can be found in a U.S. Geological Survey report on the topic.²

More Recent History: The Pleistocene

The Great Plains were flat and open land, yes, for the past several tens of millions of years, but they were far from static. In that period, there were major changes in global climates, with the Earth shifting between warm and cool periods. Fast-forwarding until relatively recently (geologically speaking, at least), we come to a fascinating point in Earth history, which is termed the Pleistocene. Commonly referred to as the “Ice Age,” the Pleistocene actually lasted over much of the past two million years. What is more, rather than being *an* ice age, the Pleistocene actually comprised a long sequence of ice ages, or glacial periods, interspersed with interglacial periods that had climatic conditions that more or less resembled present-day conditions. These glacial periods numbered perhaps 26 in the full course of the Pleistocene period.

Of these glacial periods, the most accessible to us in the present day is the last (most recent) one. This “Last Glacial Maximum” reached its coldest temperature conditions only about 20,000 years ago. At and around the Last Glacial Maximum, the Great Plains were quite different from how they are now. Although no one now would imagine the Great Plains as they were just a few tens of thousands of years ago, the effects of Pleistocene climates were very important in shaping current landscapes and environments.

First of all, and most simple, with large-scale global cooling, glaciers

² Trimble, D.E. 1980. The Geologic Story of the Great Plains. U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1493, pages 1-55.

extended massively southward in North America. Glaciation at the Last Glacial Maximum reached only into northern Nebraska, but older glaciation events deeper in the Pleistocene brought glaciers well into northern Kansas, close even to Lawrence, where much of this book was written. The enormous extent of Pleistocene glaciation in North America can be appreciated in the map below.



Extent of glaciation in North America at the Last Glacial Maximum, shown in white. The dotted white line indicates maximum extent of older glaciations earlier in the Pleistocene.³

³ Reprinted with permission of Colorado Plateau Geosystems Inc.™; as modified by Lyle, S.A., and A.L. Layzell, *Glaciers in Kansas*. Kansas Geological Survey Public Information Circular 28. <https://www.kgs.ku.edu/Publications/PIC/pic28.html>.

These glaciation events had much to do with creating current patterns of topography in the region. Regions that saw glaciation tend to be flatter and less dramatic in their topography (although perhaps not much in the Great Plains could be considered to have dramatic topography!). In eastern Kansas, the line of maximum extent of glaciation reaches approximately the route of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, such that areas to the north of the Railroad's route in northeastern Kansas tend to be flatter and more open, whereas areas to the south tend to be hillier. A more detailed summary of glacial phenomena in the Kansas region can be accessed via a publication of the Kansas Geological Survey.⁴

Habitats and vegetation patterns changed rather dramatically in the Great Plains during the Pleistocene glaciations. Given the colder climates during glacial periods, vegetation types currently typical of regions to the north expanded southward into the Great Plains. In fact, during the period around the Last Glacial Maximum, spruce forest covered much of the eastern and central United States west all the way to northeastern Kansas. To the west, it appears that sand dunes were dominant.⁵ These vegetation formations shifted dramatically in the face of the warming climates after the Last Glacial Maximum, arriving eventually at an immense sea of grass, which was as the Great Plains were when Native Americans lived in the region, and later when people of European descent arrived.

Perhaps most impressive was the megafauna that was present in the Great Plains region. At present, when someone mentions "megafauna," we think of the East African savannas and the impressive diversity of antelope, elephants, rhinoceri, zebras, warthogs, ostriches, and many other large vertebrates. North America, however, in a 21st century view, would seem to be devoid of such amazing large animals: at best, North America has bison and deer, one antelope, moose, elk, bear, and not a whole lot more.

Actually, the Great Plains had its megafauna as well, to the point that one could say that we in the 21st century have missed out on a lot. In

⁴Lyle, S.A., and A.L. Layzell. 2020. *Glaciers in Kansas*. Kansas Geological Survey. Available at <https://www.kgs.ku.edu/Publications/PIC/pic28.html>.

⁵Wright, H.E. Jr. 1970. Vegetational history of the Central Plains. Pp. 157-202 in *Pleistocene and Recent Environments of the Central Great Plains* (W. Dort Jr. and J.K. Jones Jr., eds.). University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

the last glaciation, around the Last Glacial Maximum, the Great Plains held large populations of quite a number of large-bodied vertebrate species. This diversity includes not just the expected bison, bear, deer, elk, and wolves, but also a giant beaver, one or two more bison species, a giant bear, a sloth species, another species of wolf, a couple of species of mammoths, a camel, a few more antelope and deer species, two species of wild horses, and musk oxen.⁶ Needless to say, if this fauna were present today, there would be safari companies taking tourists out to see the incredible diversity of large mammals at sites across the Great Plains.⁷

Native Americans, Lewis and Clark, Other Early Travelers, and White Settlers

The Great Plains early in the Pleistocene would seem to have been a natural wonderland with an impressive diversity of landscapes, vegetation formations, and a rich biota. At some point, likely well after the Last Glacial Maximum, Native Americans began to populate the region. They clearly overlapped with at least the later remnants of the Pleistocene megafauna, as evidenced by dart points found in association with horse and camel bones in a southeastern New Mexico cave, in deposits that date to 7800-8000 years before present.⁸ Oral histories of some Great Plains tribes include references to mammoths and other megafauna that disappeared from the region relatively soon after the Last Glacial Maximum.⁹ Evidence of a much-older human presence in central North America was suggested by radiocarbon dating of material from a site near Lewisville, Texas, interpreted as documenting human presence

⁶ Schultz, C.B., and L.D. Martin. 1970. Quaternary mammalian sequence in the central Great Plains. Pp. 341-353 in *Pleistocene and Recent Environments of the Central Great Plains* (W. Dort Jr. and J.K. Jones Jr., eds.). University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

⁷ Flores, D. 2017. *American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains*. University Press of Kansas.

⁸ Schultz, C.B., and L.D. Martin. 1970. Quaternary mammalian sequence in the central Great Plains. Pp. 341-353 in *Pleistocene and Recent Environments of the Central Great Plains* (W. Dort Jr. and J.K. Jones Jr., eds.). University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

⁹ Wishart, D.J. ed. 2011. *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains: Native Americans*; <http://plains-humanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.na.001>. University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

back perhaps 37,000 years or more,¹⁰ but the veracity of the human association of this material has proved to be controversial.¹¹ In short, Native Americans clearly shared the Great Plains with at least the longest-lasting parts of the Pleistocene megafauna, but the details of when, where, and how they arrived in the region remain obscure.

European presence on the North American mainland began in the early 1500s, and relatively soon thereafter their impacts on the Great Plains would begin. Initially, it was not about actual settlement, but rather a series of indirect effects that nonetheless had massive-scale impacts on the region. One that would come to be emblematic of the Great Plains region was that of the Spaniards re-introducing horses to North America: recall that horses had been present across the region just a relatively few thousand years before, but disappeared. Native Americans had access to horses and were trading them actively by the late 1600s, if not before.¹² Whereas horses became a central element in Native American life and culture, other introductions resulting from European presence (accidental or deliberate) were catastrophic: a series of disease outbreaks swept through the Native populations of the region, including cholera, influenza, measles, smallpox, and others. Between 1730 and 1877, dozens of epidemics swept across the Great Plains. One 1837 epidemic, for example, killed more than 17,000 Native Americans.¹³ A further impact of European presence on the continent was that of displacing Native American populations that had previously lived further to the east into the Great Plains: tribes including Cheyenne, Arapaho, Iowa, Missouri, Omaha, Osage, Otoe, Ponca, and Quapaw all moved westward into the region. Finally, but certainly not least among the impacts of European presence, was outright war, with its concomitant killings, as well as forced migrations that increasingly corralled the Native Americans

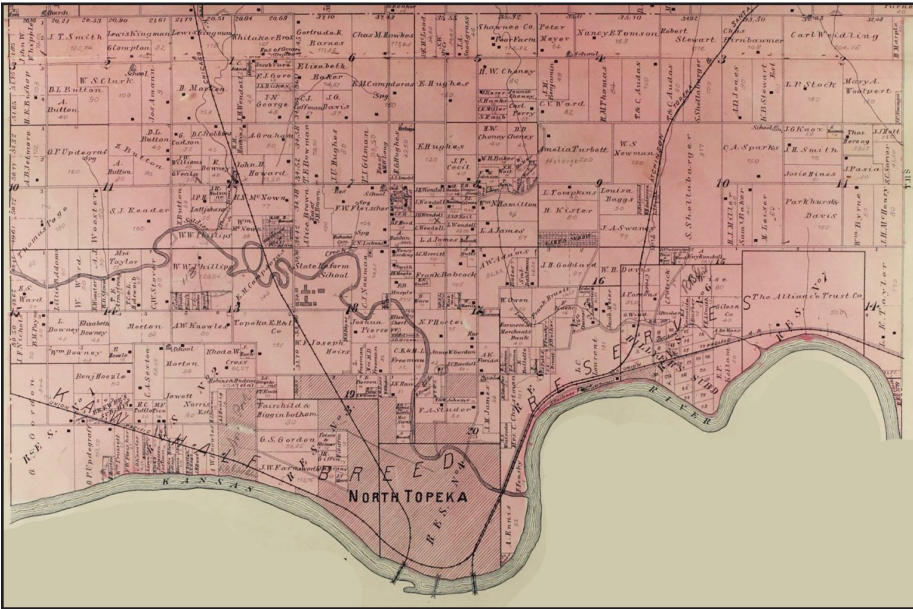
¹⁰ Crook, W.W. Jr., and R.K. Harris. 1957 Hearths and artifacts of early man near Lewisville, Texas, and associated faunal material. *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society* 28:7-97.

¹¹ Banks, L. 1995. Lewisville site. In *Handbook of Texas*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/lewisville-site>.

¹² Wishart, D.J. ed. 2011. *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains: Native Americans*; <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.na.001>. University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

¹³ Wishart, D.J. ed. 2011. *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains: Health*; <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.na.034>. University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

on reservations. See the map below, of the area of Shawnee County just north of Topeka for a rather graphic, and perhaps unpleasant, example of the outcomes of this policies.



Map of the North Topeka region, from 1898, from the Standard Atlas of Shawnee County, Kansas, published by the George A. Ogle & Co., of Chicago. Note the terms for the “reserves” for Native American populations. Modified from digital copies of the original publication provided by the Kansas State Historical Society.¹⁴

European presence in the Great Plains began with explorations, including those of Lewis and Clark, Zebulon Pike, and others. By the mid-1800s, however, exploration gave way to transit: the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon trails linked jumping-off points in the Kansas City area to points southwest and west. This change turned the region from frontier into a region of passage; indeed, the European travelers had to cross the Great Plains quickly and efficiently, or they risked not completing the crossing of the mountain regions to the west before winter set in (witness the terrible fate of the Donner Party, who made slow progress across the Great Plains in 1846, and were then trapped in the California

¹⁴ <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/223961/page/29>.

mountains in the winter of 1846-1847). Although this “trail” period did not last long, it is symbolic of the region, and many people in the Great Plains today still have an image of the Great Plains that centers on caravans of horse-drawn wagons struggling to cross the inhospitable plains.

The subject of this book, in fact, is the conjunction of at least two elements that helped to end the “trail” period in the Great Plains. First, the Kansas Pacific Railroad was one of the first railroads that offered quick transit across the region, linking Kansas City (and points east) west all the way to Denver (see map below). Travel by train was far faster and safer than going by wagon, and travelers were happy to take advantage of this new mode of transit. Second, the Railroad also was responsible for promotion of the idea of actual settlement of the region by white Europeans. Recall that the U.S. Government had given massive land concessions to the Railroad: if the Railroad company could sell that land to settlers or investors, they could reap enormous profits. In this sense, one can look at the photographs in this book as promotional material for settlement.



The route of the Kansas Pacific Railroad (dashed blue line) overlaid on satellite imagery from Google Maps. The eastern terminus is Kansas City, whereas the western terminus is in Denver. The forested Ozark Mountains are visible as darker shades of green in the lower right portion of the view, and the forested parts of the Rocky Mountains are visible as the dark green areas across the left-hand parts of the view.

Robert Benecke, The Photographer

The “star” of this book is Robert Benecke, an early photographer in the central and western United States. Benecke is perhaps not a very famous figure in history, such that few sources are available from which to summarize his biography. As such, the account that follows is based in largest part on the most complete biographical sketch that was available to me.¹ A few additional sources were consulted, which are cited in the text below.

Robert Benecke was born in 1835, in northern Germany. In his late teenage years, he served in the army, during which time he apparently happened on a display of early photographs (daguerrotypes and ambrotypes); he even had his image captured in an ambrotype. This moment was apparently deeply inspiring to him, and he soon returned to the same photographer’s studio to learn photographic techniques. In fairly short order, he built his own camera, so that he could pursue this intense interest.

Benecke emigrated from Germany to the United States by 1856, and settled in Missouri. Although he cast about in various occupations in his initial years in the United States, he soon formed a partnership with an E. Meier and Joseph Keyte, early photographer and landscape painter, respectively. In the context of this partnership, he created a photographic gallery in Brunswick, Missouri. The ending of this partnership was a bit unclear, but by 1859 there were apparently at least plans to move the business to Colorado. By 1860, however, Benecke was working for a photographer in St. Louis.

New partnerships emerged: Benecke teamed up with Hermann Hoelke by 1861 or 1862 to create a St. Louis gallery, and also married a Mary Koenig in 1865. Benecke did a short stint in the Union army during the Civil War, but left the service after just a few months, when he was incapacitated by the explosion of a flintlock rifle.² With Hoelke,

¹ Palmquist, P.E., and T.R. Kailbourn. 2005. *Pioneer Photographers from the Mississippi to the Continental Divide: A Biographical Dictionary, 1839-1865*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.

² Anonymous. 1903. *Reminiscences of Robert Benecke, Oldest St. Louis Photographer*. *The Republic*, 27 September 1903, p. 2.



Self portrait of the photographer, Robert Benecke. The photograph has a caption (not shown) that reads “the Champion Shot of America.”

his photographs began winning prizes at the St. Louis Fairs, particularly for an 1870 panoramic view of St. Louis and impressive photographs of the St. Louis bridge over the Mississippi River (1871).

Crucially for this book, Benecke was hired in 1873 to travel from Kansas City to Denver on the Kansas Pacific Railroad, taking photographs, which he apparently did in late 1873 and/or early 1874. The trip resulted in more than 100 photographs. The trip apparently lasted six weeks, and Benecke was paid \$15 per day, plus 50 cents for each photograph that was printed.³ The Kansas Pacific Railroad series was apparently taken as a way of creating promotional views for the railroad to use.

³ Anonymous. 1903. Reminiscences of Robert Benecke, Oldest St. Louis Photographer. *The Republic*, 27 September 1903, p. 2.



This photograph shows the Kansas Pacific Railroad “photograph car,” in which Robert Benecke created the photographic series that is the basis for this book. The train is at a stop at Ellis, Kansas.

Benecke experimented with other technological approaches in photography, and appears to have moved around a fair amount in the middle part of his life. Among his later enterprises was as a plant manager and chemist for a St. Louis dry plate manufacturer. He died on 3 November 1903, after a short illness,⁴ survived by his wife and four children. Benecke is buried in Bellefontaine Cemetery, in St. Louis.⁵

⁴ Anonymous. 1903. Obituary: Robert Benecke. *Wilson's Photographic Magazine* 40:571.

⁵ Find a Grave Memorial: Robert Benecke. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8202660/robert-benecke>.

Methods

This book has been made possible by the generous investment of universities, museums, and historical societies in conserving history, in the form of books, photographs, and other archival materials. Increasingly, these institutions have taken a crucial further step, passing the historical resources to digital formats, and making them openly available to the broader public around the world. [On a personal note, whereas my father's generation of scholars traveled from library and archive to library or archive, my generation and those in the future are able to work via Internet, and access many of the crucial resources for our research.]

This book has been made possible in particular by a generous investment by the Southern Methodist University, in particular its DeGolyer Library,¹ an archive of special collections in the humanities, the history of business, and the history of science and technology. The DeGolyer Library holds more than a million photographs (and related items, such as negatives), and has made them broadly and openly available to the general public around the world.

The DeGolyer Library holds important collections related to the history of the western United States, including the unique Robert Benecke photographic series of photographs taken along the Kansas Pacific Railroad in 1873. This material is provided by the Library with an open license, in view of the age of the source material. I searched all of the Benecke photographs served on the DeGolyer Library site, and identified all that showed recognizable, locatable landscape views for potential repeat photography and inclusion in this book.

For each of the Benecke landscape photographs, I captured the information associated with the photograph (generally via a label that is included in one lower corner of the photograph), and organized all of the photographs in a table, a version of which is provided in the Appendix to this book. I then created summaries of each photograph's data, in the form of state, county, named locality, and remarks about the likely location. In many cases, the likely location was not immediately evident, and considerable research was necessary. In the end, however, for essentially all of the photographs, I derived a likely geographic position via

¹ <https://www.smu.edu/libraries/degolyer>.

consultation of Google Maps and Google Earth. An additional important source were the historical plat books for each of the Kansas counties that have been digitized and are generously made openly available by the Kansas State Historical Society. In a few cases, each noted carefully in the text of this book, and particularly in central Kansas (e.g., sites near Bunker Hill and Wilson), determination of the exact site proved impossible, but I took representative views that captured at least the flavor of what the historical site would look like now.

I traveled across the Great Plains several times in the course of 2022 and 2023 to capture images showing the present state of each of the historical views. These repeat photographs are certainly not works of art, as no dimension of creativity is among my gifts in life. Rather, they are designed to replicate the historical view, and provide the viewer with an illustration of how the landscape has changed. Most of the views were taken with a handheld, high-end digital camera. However, some views had to be taken with a camera mounted on a drone, to permit an elevated viewpoint from above trees, walls, or other obstructions.

Once historical photographs were downloaded and recent photographs captured, I used a simple protocol to create photo pairs that matched one another as closely as possible. That is, I trimmed the historical photographs to the extent of the photograph, and optimized contrast, color balance, and other details, aiming always to modify the image for greatest clarity. Once the historical photo was improved as much as was possible, the recent photograph was cropped to match the historical view as closely as possible, whenever possible to the same dimensions to make the two views as directly comparable as possible.

General Offices of the Kansas Pacific Railway, Kansas City



Benecke photo, taken at Kansas City, Missouri, in 1873.

Kansas City had early beginnings, with European presence dating back to the early 1800s. The first white settlers were apparently fur traders, but, by the middle nineteenth century, small settlements had been established. The city was the site of considerable tension during the Civil War period, with the bloody Battle of Westport taking place within the current city limits. The downtown Kansas City area was small at the time of Benecke's trip, concentrated in what is now the vicinity of City Market.



Recent photo, taken in Kansas City, Missouri, 12 February 2022. Photo taken from 39.106489 -94.587969, from the southeast corner of 6th Street and Broadway Blvd., looking northwest.

This view shows the general offices of the Kansas Pacific Railway, which were located near downtown Kansas City, on Broadway Blvd., between 5th and 6th streets. The specific location literally no longer exists, as Interstate 70 was brought directly through downtown Kansas City sometime in the late 1950s or early 1960s, passing precisely through the block where the Railway offices once stood. As such, the exact view in the photograph is radically changed, although 19th-century buildings are still standing within a block of where the Railway offices once stood.

General View of Kansas City



Benecke photo, taken at Kansas City, Missouri, in 1873.

Early Kansas City grew up along the shores of the Missouri River, particularly in the area around and north and east of the present-day City Market. The city grew initially in the low areas along the river, as that was where the commerce from river traffic was concentrated. As such, in the Benecke photograph, one can see a bit of the Missouri River in the center (no bridges visible), just below the horizon, and also the Pendleton Heights area towards the right, also along the horizon. Given the horse stable visible in the foreground (i.e., near the intersection of 10th Street and Broadway Blvd.), it is clear that intensive development



Recent photo, taken in Kansas City, Missouri, on 7 November 2023, with a drone at about 30 m above the ground. Photo taken from 39.103037, -94.587504, from a parking lot just north and east from the corner of 10th Street and Broadway Blvd., looking northeast.

of Kansas City in 1873 was only beginning to advance up the hillsides, toward the current position of downtown Kansas City.

This view shows a very different Kansas City, in 2023. The historical Savoy Grill is in the first floor of the red building in the foreground of the photo. The Missouri River now has multiple bridges, and a complex of highways (Interstate 70 and Interstate 35) is visible in the middle part of the view. Although Pendleton Heights is still green in the photo (thanks to a small complex of city parks there), it is now heavily built, as is the entire foreground of the recent view.

Railway Bridge over the Missouri River, at Kansas City



Benecke photo, taken at Kansas City, Missouri, in 1873.

These large, permanent bridges over the Missouri River were crucial pieces of infrastructure in early Kansas City. They turned the once-significant barrier of the great river as the western border of the growing city into a relatively minor crossing, if by train or by other vehicle. Indeed, the building of this bridge was such a significant achievement that a book was written about it by the engineers who designed and built it, Octave Chanute and George Shattuck Morison.¹

¹ Chanute, O., and G.S. Morison. 1870. *The Kansas City Bridge: With an Account of*



Recent photo, taken at Kansas City, Missouri, on 5 June 2023. Photo taken from 39.110434, -94.588723, from underneath the current US-169 highway (Broadway Blvd.) bridge over the Missouri River, looking north. Nick Schmiedeler provided valuable assistance in figuring out the identity of this bridge.

The book begins with the sentence, “The Missouri River has long been known as so turbulent and unstable a stream, that it was considered by many of those best acquainted with its character, as almost incapable of being bridged.” The idea of such a bridge apparently dates to the 1857 incorporation of the Kansas City, Galveston, and Lake Superior

the Regimen of the Missouri River, and a Description of Methods used for Founding in that River. D. Van Nostrand, New York. The book is available at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011538486>.

T H E
KANSAS CITY BRIDGE,

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE REGIMEN OF THE MISSOURI RIVER,
AND A
DESCRIPTION OF METHODS USED FOR FOUNDING IN THAT RIVER.

BY
O. CHANUTE, CHIEF ENGINEER,
AND
GEORGE MORISON, ASSISTANT ENGINEER.

ILLUSTRATED.

NEW YORK:
D. VAN NOSTRAND, PUBLISHER,
23 MURRAY STREET AND 27 WARREN STREET.
1870.

Digitized by
INTERNET ARCHIVE

Original from
THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Frontispiece of the Chanute and Morison book, published in 1870, that documented the details of the achievement of building the Kansas City railroad bridge over the Missouri River.

Railroad, by the state of Missouri. Although construction began around 1860, the project was suspended during the Civil War, in view of the massive violence that spread across much of the country.

An 1866 act of Congress, however, revived the bridge project, though subject to several conditions about lengths and heights of spans that made the enterprise quite a bit more complicated. A further challenge was a race with the city of Leavenworth, which came close to winning out over Kansas City in getting the contracts for this bridge. Regardless, by 1867, the railroads had arrived at the northern shore of the Missouri River, but passengers still had to be ferried across the actual river to get to Kansas City proper. Construction was rapid, and the bridge opened officially on July 3, 1869.

Although this bridge was not actually part of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, it played a key role in linking the major railroad projects in the region. Specifically, this bridge connected Kansas City to the Missouri River, Ft. Scott, and Gulf Railroad; the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad; and the Pacific Railroad of Missouri / Missouri River Railroad. The result was a first major step toward full integration of the diverse elements of the transportation network in this part of the United States.

Benecke's photograph shows the bridge, now in full operation, but clearly in a zone of active building and construction still. In the foreground are utility buildings and roads, and earthworks erected in the course of construction of the bridge. On the far side of the river, the edges of the river appear to be wooded. The same views now are perhaps not much different: a bleak urban landscape extends on the near side, to the point that the photographs had to be taken from under the US-169 highway bridge.

Railway Bridge over the Missouri River, near Kansas City



Benecke photo, taken at Kansas City, Kansas, in 1873.

The early Kansas Pacific Railroad crossed the Missouri River and then the Kansas River, as trains departed Kansas City, Missouri, and began their journey westward into and across Kansas. The town of Wyandotte was located close to this spot, at the junction of the Kansas and Missouri rivers, and the town of Kansas City (Kansas) was decreed in 1869, such that this was an area of rapid colonization and expansion of white settlers.¹ This photograph and the similar Missouri River photograph show crucial initial infrastructure for the railroad in penetrating westward into the Great Plains.

The Benecke photograph shows the railway bridge crossing the river

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.

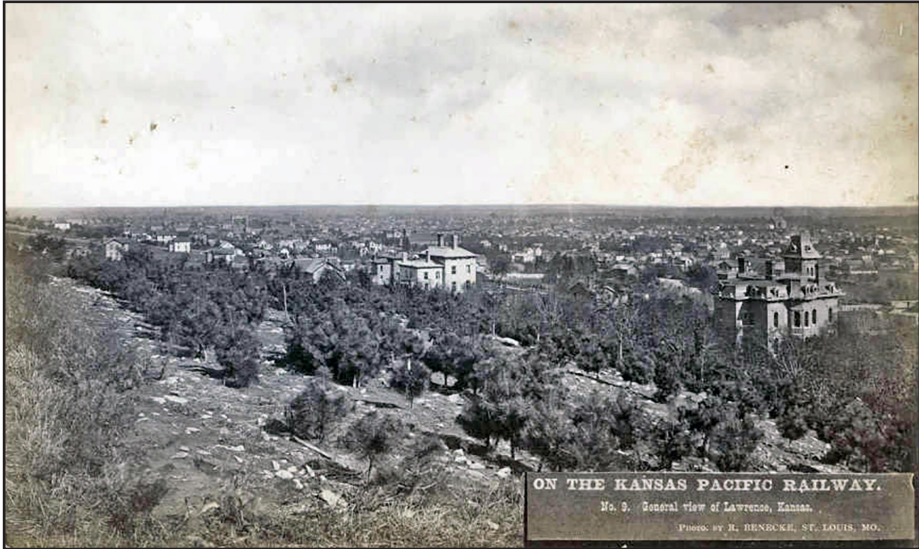


Recent photo, taken at Kansas City, Kansas, 30 June 2022. Photo taken from 39.088583, -94.610238, from near the highway bridge (Avenida Cesar E. Chavez over the Kansas River), looking to the northeast. Nick Schmiedeler provided valuable assistance in figuring out the identity of this bridge.

at a point of low water, with broad mud flats in the foreground. Trees line at least the southeast bank of the river, and potentially the northwest bank as well. The river's course is wide, with mud flats and "playas" visible just in the narrow scope of this view.

The recent photograph shows a replacement bridge for the one photographed by Benecke. Trees are also visible on the southeast bank of the river, as well as on the northwest bank. The river's course, however, is now much more confined and controlled, with a narrow channel and little space between the banks and levees that have been constructed since when the old photograph was taken.

General View of Lawrence



Benecke photo of Lawrence from Mt. Oread, taken in 1873.

Lawrence is located at a key, logical location, at the first major rapids as one ascends the Kansas River from its mouth in Kansas City. The location had earlier been settled by the Kaw or Kansa people, but the Kaw were expelled in 1830 by the U.S. government to make room for a reservation for the Shawnee. In 1842, John Frémont described the general location of Lawrence as "... the river valley, here from four to five miles wide. The central portion was occupied by a broad belt of heavy timber."¹ By the middle 1800s, the Oregon Trail ran through the general area, and Mount Oread, where the University of Kansas currently sits, was a key landmark for trail travelers. Lawrence was founded soon thereafter (1854) by settlers from New England.

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.

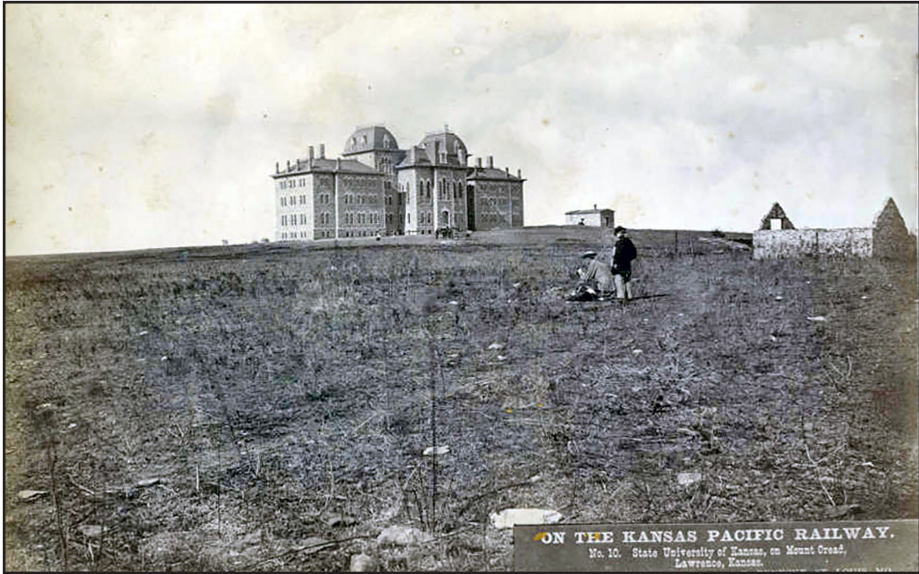


Recent photo, taken in Lawrence, Kansas, 26 October 2022. Photo taken from 38.954286 -95.241076, via drone flown from a residential area on the upper slopes of Mt. Oread, just below the Chancellor's Residence on the University of Kansas campus.

The Benecke photo shows Lawrence in its early years. The city is extensive, yet is concentrated clearly in the region north of the present-day 11th Street, extending north to the Kansas River. In the foreground are young trees, pretty clearly planted, that would provide windbreaks and cover for the growing community.

The recent photo shows a much-changed landscape. The city has clearly expanded in every direction, but particularly towards the south (to the right in the view). The trees have grown up universally within the city, to the point that this view appears more like forest than a city. A subtle, but important point is that, along the horizon of the view, one can discern bare bluffs forming the north wall of the Kansas River Valley in the Benecke photo, which are forested in the present-day view.

State University of Kansas



Benecke photo, taken at Lawrence, Kansas, in 1873.

The University of Kansas was founded in the mid-1850s, based in a building at the north end of the ridge called Mount Oread. Once “Old North” hall started to age, Frasier Hall was one of the most famous of the next generation of buildings on the campus. Old Frasier Hall was designed to be the utmost in modern, comprehensive, university education at the University of Kansas. In fact, the Fort Scott Daily Monitor published the statement, “Harvard College has existed more than two hundred and thirty years without having a building equal to this...” when “Old” Fraser first opened in 1872.¹ Old Fraser had classrooms, offices, and a 700-seat theater, such that, when Benecke visited in 1873, this

¹ <https://kuhistory.ku.edu/articles/let-us-raze-historic-halls>.



Recent photo, taken at Lawrence, Kansas, 9 June 2022. Photo taken from 38.95679, -95.242945, from in front of Watkins Scholarship Hall, to the south and east of current Fraser Hall, looking toward the northwest. The original photograph was probably taken from quite a bit farther back, but a combination of treed areas and residence halls prevent any view from those positions.

building would have been heralded as the most modern and exciting.² Old Frasier Hall was quite a beautiful work of architecture, a feature that one could not even conceive of applying to its remarkably boring replacement on the University of Kansas campus, “new” Frasier Hall.

The Benecke photograph shows a broad, open, bare top to Mount Oread. No trees are visible, and indeed few other structures are visible. Rather, the earliest buildings on the University of Kansas campus were to the north, more or less where Corbin Hall is presently located. The view now is massively different, with trees on all sides and a much more built-up set of surroundings.

² McCool, J.H. 1962. Let us raze historic halls. <https://kuhistory.ku.edu/articles/let-us-raze-historic-halls>.

Stud Farm and Race Track, Lawrence



Benecke photo, taken at Lawrence, Kansas, in 1873.

This photo shows the Akers House, at 17th and Louisiana streets, which was the ranch house for the Sprague and Akers Stock Farm, one of the leading horse breeders in the 1870-1880s.¹ Benjamin Franklin Akers had come to Lawrence in 1870, with a background in horses, and set out to create one of the country's premier horse farms. The bulk of the land was bought in 1872, and the beautiful Italianate style house was built soon after. The ranch kept about 300 horses, including a famous champion named Ethan Allen. Nonetheless, the ranch fell on hard times by the late 1870s, and was sold in the 1880s.

¹ Alison Smith (1988) A History of the University Place Neighborhood, https://upna.wordpress.com/welcome/history/history-1853-1988/?fbclid=IwAR3vdoUjzm-Ao-2MtLnSSIT0U_jY1TKkBWlJ6QVKTIUQTU7B3gMEbNp_7PC8.



Recent photo, taken at Lawrence, Kansas, 26 October 2022. Photo taken from 38.955236 -95.241646, via drone at about 30 m altitude, looking west-south-west down the hill that lies south of the University of Kansas main campus. Thanks to Grant Ritchey Jr. and David Unekis for assistance with locating this site and understanding the view.

Benecke's photograph shows a mostly open landscape, with a large racetrack in the midground. The western extreme of Mt. Oread (where the older parts of the University of Kansas sit) is visible at the right extreme of the photo, and the Akers House is the centerpiece of the view. Currently, the view is quite different: trees dominate the view, such that the Akers House (still standing) is invisible in the trees at the center-right of the view. In fact, in the recent photograph, the entire landscape is covered in forest, save for part of the University campus at the right, and distant parts of the Wakarusa River Valley in the background.

Passenger Bridge over the Kansas River and Waterworks Dam



Benecke photo, taken at Lawrence, Kansas, in 1873.

This Benecke photo shows one of the early bridges over the Kansas River, at the site of the current Massachusetts Street bridge that links Lawrence and North Lawrence. This bridge was chartered by the territorial legislature in 1859, and work was progressing during the 1860s. Although eight of the bridge workers were killed in Quantrill's Raid, the bridge was completed by the end of 1863.¹

The label of Benecke's photograph indicates that the "waterworks dam" was in the course of construction when Benecke made his visit to Lawrence. First efforts towards developing the hydro-power facility began in 1874, when an Orlando Darling tried to build the dam; the effort became a reality a few years later thanks to the efforts of J. D. Bowersock, and the dam and power facility have been in the Bowersock and Jackman

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken at Lawrence, Kansas, 16 April 2022. Photo taken from 38.972478, -95.230195, on the south edge of the Kansas River, from just east of Marriott Hotel building, looking westward along the south shore of the river towards the Bowersock Dam.

families ever since.² As such, the photograph documents a key moment in Lawrence's development, in which it took advantage of a rich and renewable energy source long before those ideas became fashionable.

Benecke's photograph shows the north and south banks of the Kansas River as bare of trees, although a patch of trees is visible beyond the bridge, likely in the area of what is now Burcham Park. Closer to the bridge, however, no trees are present. This idea of a largely treeless Lawrence landscape is corroborated by earlier depictions of Lawrence, such as in the "birdseye view" maps that were produced for the city in 1869.³

² <https://www.bowersockpower.com/>.

³ Ruger, A. 1869. Bird's eye view of the city of Lawrence, Kansas. Available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/73693409/>

Hotel and Railway Station at Topeka



Benecke photo, taken at Topeka, Kansas, in 1873.

Topeka was founded at a logical site for a city, as there was an early (1840s) ferry across the river there, with associated trading posts. Topeka began more formally in 1854, and by 1855 it had a post office.¹ By the 1850s and 1860s, Topeka had become a commercial nexus for the new Kansas Territory, falling firmly on the free-state side of the emerging conflict in the state. After an extended, tense period of conflict between free-staters and pro-slavery communities in the state, largely manifested in conflicts farther to the east, Topeka was made the capital city for the new state of Kansas.

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken at Topeka, Kansas, 3 November 2022. Photo taken from 39.066563, -95.67099, from the west end of the train station parking area, looking back toward the station, a bit north of east.

This photo shows Topeka's train station and associated hotel in North Topeka, as they were in 1873. Those early buildings are long gone, but the present Union Station apparently stands in much the same place as this early station.

Passenger Bridge over the Kansas River, Topeka



Benecke photo, taken at Topeka, Kansas, in 1873.

This photo shows a view from one brushy and unkempt bank of the Kansas River across the river to the other, rather similar bank. A relatively few, rather scraggly trees are visible along what is assumed to be the north bank (i.e., across the river from the photographer). Not much has changed over the 150-year span in this view: the vegetation is about the



Recent photo, taken at Topeka, Kansas, 3 November 2022. Photograph taken from 39.061117 -95.668428; the bridge in the view is the present-day Kansas Avenue bridge. The view in this photograph is from south to north, based on the assumption that the south end was more built-up than the north end in 1873. Photo taken from just east of the south base of the Kansas Avenue bridge, but the view was quite constrained by all of the trash and the levee wall.

same, with scattered trees along the north bank, and neither bank particularly attractive. Clearly, though, the levee and riverwall system that has been constructed has constrained the flow of the river more than was originally the case, which changes the vertical angle of the view: a river-level shot is simply no longer possible.

The Mid-day Rest: Quail Shooting at St. George



Benecke photo, taken at St. George, Kansas, in 1873.

St. George as a community was laid out in 1857, although the town was later moved by about a mile in 1879, to align with the new railroad. The early settlers of this site had great plans for a railroad connection to St. Joseph, Missouri, that would run through St. George.¹ Although that connection never happened, the town was well positioned as a stop along the Kansas Pacific Railroad.

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken at St. George, Kansas, 27 May 2022. Photo taken from 39.189692, -96.422848. View is taken looking just north of east and across the railroad tracks, taking in part of the city of St. George.

Benecke's photographs of St. George are among the a relative few of his photographs that show trees in abundance. St. George being located on the shores of the Kansas River, it likely had forest around it since its beginning. In this case, in the historical photograph, trees can be seen on what is likely an upland area 100-200 m back from the river edge. The recent photograph shows forest as well, but far thicker—indeed, St. George is surrounded by very dense forest growth at present.

The Valley of the Kansas River, Looking East from St. George



Benecke photo, taken at St. George, Kansas, in 1873.

This photograph shows a view eastward from St. George along the Kansas River, showing the relatively thick forest that lined the river's course, with fields on the higher ground to the south of the river. This view is similar at present, but the tree cover is still broader and heavier along the river, and now extending farther out into the uplands away from the river. Indeed, although the site from which the recent photograph was taken is likely the correct location from which the historical photograph was taken, finding a high-enough viewpoint from which to see above the treetops was quite challenging.



Recent photo, taken at St. George, Kansas, 11 November 2022. Photo taken from 39.185563, -96.409528, from the lower end of an open field at the edge of a subdivision, just above trees lining the lower edge of the bluff.

The Kansas River, Looking West from St. George



Benecke photo, taken at St. George, Kansas, in 1873.

This photo shows a river-level view of the Kansas River and its forested banks, from the river edge directly in front of the St. George train depot. Benecke's photograph shows, as with the photograph showing an eastward view from a higher viewpoint, very well-developed forest along the river. This forest is perhaps even thicker and taller, but the westward view in this old-and-new pair of photographs is closely similar.



Recent photo, taken at St. George, Kansas, 11 November 2022. Photo taken from 39.187076, -96.421883, looking westward along the north bank of the river from the city boat ramp.

Manhattan, Taken from the Summit of Mount Prospect



Benecke photo, taken at Manhattan, Kansas, in 1873.

Riley County was the westernmost county in Kansas until the late 1800s. Fort Riley had been established in 1852, with construction led by a Major Ogden, who nonetheless died of cholera in 1855. Manhattan had its earliest roots in 1854, with the creation of the short-lived towns of Poleska and Canton. In 1855, a group of colonists set out from Cincinnati to establish a town called Manhattan at the site of what is now Junction City, but it was delayed by a series of happenstances. The steamer grounded a bit above the mouth of the Big Blue River, and passengers and freight had to go ashore. Although members of the group went to check out the Junction City site, a deal was struck with the inhabitants of the Manhattan site, and Manhattan was situated where it is presently,



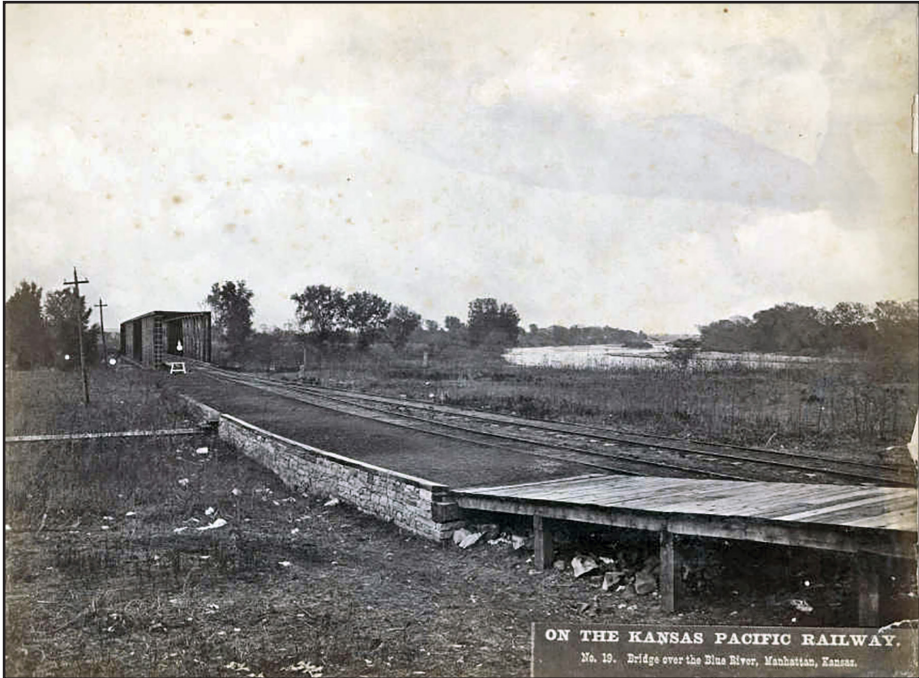
Recent photo, taken at Manhattan, Kansas, 12 November 2022. Photo taken from 39.172052, -96.552127, from the top of the “K” in the big letters on Prospect Hill, looking northeast across the river towards Manhattan.

rather than at Junction City.¹

This view shows the panorama across Manhattan, looking out northward across the valley of the Kansas River. In the historical view, the immediate vicinity of the river is heavily forested, but prairie dominates areas away from the river. In contrast, in the recent view, the entire landscape is forested, including the far-off hills and the town *per se*, relatively far from the river.

¹ Kansas City Public Library. N.D. Civil War on the Western Border: The Missouri-Kansas Conflict, 1855-1865. Available at <https://civilwaronthewesternborder.org/map/manhattan-kansas>.

Bridge over the Blue River



Benecke photo, taken at Manhattan, Kansas, in 1873.

This Benecke photo shows the Kansas Pacific Railroad bridge over the Big Blue River, at the point where it empties into the Kansas River, just east of Manhattan. Although the Big Blue River is not visible in the historical photograph, it is that river that the railroad bridge crosses; the eastward view shows the Kansas River along the right side of the photograph. The tree cover along both rivers is rather sparse, and the trees are not particularly tall.



Recent photo, taken at Manhattan, Kansas, 12 November 2022, from 39.187074, -96.533194. Although the present railroad bridge lies higher up on the Big Blue River, the older bridge was closer to the mouth of the Big Blue River into the Kansas River. This photo was taken from the levee just west of where the Big Blue River empties into the Kansas River. The angle of the photo is not quite right, and one sees more of the Big Blue River than in the older photo, thanks to the use of a drone.

Benecke's photograph shows the railroad bridge and the mouth of the Big Blue River in close proximity, although now the railroad bridge is about a kilometer farther up the Big Blue River. Likely, railroad engineers judged the upriver site to be less prone to flooding and erosion, and made the shift in the path of the tracks. The two rivers are now thickly lined with tall forest, as can be appreciated in the recent photograph, even though it was taken in the late fall, and the trees have few leaves on them.

Kansas River and Passenger Bridge Looking West, Manhattan



Benecke photo, taken at Manhattan, Kansas, in 1873.

This photo shows a view upriver along the Kansas River, showing an early bridge at the site of what is now the 177 Highway bridge over the river. Two men are seated along the north bank of the river, and Prospect Hill is visible (at least in the Benecke photograph) to the left of the bridge. Notably, Prospect Hill is covered with grass only, and no trees are present.

Benecke's photograph shows the Kansas River with a line of trees (likely cottonwoods) along either bank. The trees are clearly more nu-



Recent photo, taken at Manhattan, Kansas, 12 November 2022, from 39.181156, -96.551915. Photograph was taken from the river edge, across the levee from the Discount Tires shop parking lot, and downstream about 150 m, with a view toward the southwest.

merous and taller in the recent photograph, and the contrast regarding Prospect Hill is striking: Prospect Hill is now entirely covered with trees (mostly red cedar). The most notable aspect of this pair of photographs is the difficulty of taking the recent photograph, owing to the thick vegetation and deeply incised banks now present all along this particular stretch of the river.

Valley of the Kansas River from Mount Prospect, Manhattan



Benecke photo, taken at Manhattan, Kansas, in 1873.

This photo shows a broad view eastward from Prospect Hill, just southeast across the Kansas River from Manhattan. The open plains that make up the valley of the Kansas River are visible, with a road, a rock fence line, and hedgerows breaking up the open fields. The Kansas River appears to be visible below the horizon on the left side of the photograph.

Benecke's photograph shows an open agricultural region, with trees only in hedgerows and gallery forest along the Kansas River. The region



Recent photo, taken at Manhattan, Kansas, 12 November 2022. Photo taken from 39.172433, -96.55176, flying a drone from along the fence around the microwave tower, and looking eastward.

in the view has filled in with trees rather dramatically, with much thicker forest lining the river, and fields (at least in the foreground) now covered with open forest. The tree cover can be seen across the entirety of the field of view, changing the landscape considerably from how it looked in 1873.

Railway and Passenger Bridge over the Republican River



Benecke photo, taken at Junction City, Kansas, in 1873.

Junction City is located at the spot where the Smoky Hill River and the Republican River join to form a much-larger Kansas River. John Frémont's expedition stayed there for some time in 1843. A community had been planned at this site as early as 1854, and the settlement proceeded in fits and starts until first buildings were built in 1858 and the town was formally incorporated in 1859. By 1867, the southern branch of the Union Pacific and the Kansas Pacific Railroad were routed through the site of Junction City, which brought considerable prosperity to the town.¹

A detail that is worth recounting here is that the original 1855 designation of what is now Geary County was as Davis County. It was named, of course, after Jefferson Davis, who at that time was the U.S. Secretary of War. When Davis later became president of the Confederate States

¹ Cutler, W.G. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



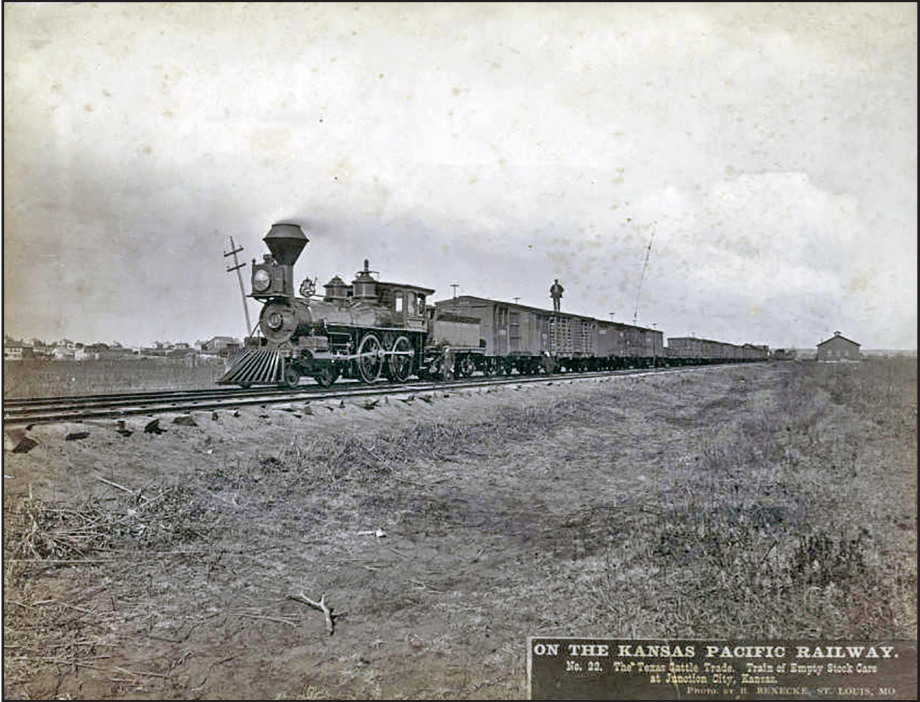
Recent photo, taken at Junction City, Kansas, 24 April 2022. Photo taken from 39.060115, -96.803123, from the south end of the Grant Avenue bridge over the Republican River, looking northeast across the river.

of America, the abolitionist-leaning Kansans were understandably scandalized. After a number of attempts, in 1889, the name of the county was changed to Geary County, after a previous governor of the state.²

The Benecke photograph shows the railroad and road bridges over the Republican River, going northward out of Junction City. In Benecke's time, the trees were sparse, to the point that the bluffs back from the river within Fort Riley were clearly visible in the background of the photograph. The trees today are qualitatively taller and more numerous, entirely obscuring the hills that would otherwise be visible in the background.

² Kansas State Historical Society. 2023. Kansas Counties: Davis County, Kansas [defunct]. Available at https://www.kshs.org/geog/geog_counties/view/county:DV.

The Texas Cattle Trade: Train of Empty Stock Cars at Junction City



Benecke photo, taken at Junction City, Kansas, in 1873.

This photo shows the trajectory of the Kansas Pacific Railroad across one edge of Junction City. The depot is visible on the eastern (right) side of the tracks, and low houses are visible on the western (left) side of the tracks.

Benecke's photograph shows an open landscape with few or no trees,



Recent photo, taken in Junction City, Kansas, 10 August 2022. Photo taken from 39.030415 -96.824059, from the railroad crossing of East 8th Street, looking north along the railroad tracks towards where the railroad depot used to be. Heather Hagedorn, of the Geary County Historical Society, was instrumental in understanding from where in terms of current geography the older photograph was taken.

which is logical because the photograph was taken only a relatively few years after European settlement, and the site of the photograph is not particularly close to any of the three large rivers in the area. The same locations today are all heavily treed, in and around residences and city structures, as with most urban areas across Kansas.

Grist Mill at Solomon City



Benecke photo, taken at Solomon, Kansas, in 1873.

The small city called Solomon is located along the lower part of the Solomon River, indeed just a few miles before its confluence with the Smoky Hill River. The Solomon River is one of the most convoluted in its course across Kansas,¹ which can be a challenge for any village located next to it. Solomon was founded in the 1860s: a post office was located there in 1860, but the city not founded until 1866. The precise location of Solomon was apparently decided by the Kansas Pacific Railroad.² As such, the city was less than a decade old when Benecke visited and took several photographs of different aspects of the city.

Benecke's site for this photograph was not easy to relocate. There is a mill race shown on older maps that was on the southwest side of the city, and ran on the north side of the railroad tracks. On later maps, it was clear that the mill race had dried up. "The water power of Solomon

¹ Dort, W. Jr. Historical Channel Changes of the Kansas River and its Major Tributaries. American Geographical Society.

² Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken at Solomon, Kansas, 27 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.916021, -97.374787, from the south end of Chestnut Street, looking south along the previous course of the mill race towards the Solomon River. Note that this view may well have been taken from the river edge looking northward, but the view would be much the same.

is excellent, but was allowed to go to waste until 1872, when Wm. Smith built a grist and saw mill, a valuable aid to the town as farmers for miles around now brought their grists and did their trading at this place.”³ The millrace is also visible on an old Saline County map.⁴

The contrasts between old and new photographs are perhaps too stark in this case. The millrace in Benecke’s time was deeply incised, and apparently flowing strongly. At present, however, it is barely visible, a lower-lying swath across one edge of the city. A small farmstead is located where the photographer perhaps stood.

³ 1885 Solomon City Business Directory, as published in the 8 January 1885 Abilene Reflector; <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~ksdickin/directories/1885solomonbusdir.html>.

⁴ <https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/223999/page/15>.

Falls of the Solomon River at Solomon City



Benecke photo, taken at Solomon, Kansas, in 1873.

This photo shows the “Falls of the Solomon River,” which is apparently not a place name that was ever actually used to refer to the site; rather, it appears to be a name that Benecke applied. A bridge appears in the background, which was crucial in locating the site of the photo unambiguously. The bridge is at the southern end of Field Road, along the western edge of Solomon. The “falls” are probably the millrace that previously emptied into the Solomon River roughly at the southern end of Chestnut Street, but the millrace is among the many parts of the Solomon River that have been unstable, and it is now almost unrecognizable.



Recent photo, taken at Solomon, Kansas, 14 August 2022. Photo taken from 38.914003, -97.372898, from the southern end of Poplar Street, which is a city storage yard for electrical equipment. The view is from a drone, which was flown vertically from this point to an altitude of 40 m, looking just north of westward, out over the bend of the Solomon River. Andrew Pankratz, Dickinson County Historical Society, gave valuable guidance in locating this photo.

Benecke's photograph shows a curve in the Solomon River, with a "waterfall" that is perhaps a meter in height. The landscape is quite bare: a few trees along the Solomon River, and a few houses to the north, which would have been west of the main part of Solomon City. This landscape has changed massively: not only has the rivercourse turned into a densely forested landscape, but the city as well now has trees throughout. The bridge is long gone, and the main road from Solomon to the south is located behind (east of) the photo vantage point.

Salt Works at Solomon City



Benecke photo, taken at Solomon, Kansas, in 1873.

The Solomon Salt Works had its origins in the 1860s; A William Taylor, of Massachusetts, visited Solomon City, and became aware of the city's salt spring. As a result, the Continental Salt Company drilled a well and established a factory in 1866.¹ By 1874, a second factory was set up with a new well, including a solar plant under the name of the Wimsatt Salt Works. Eventually, in the 1880s, the two plants were consolidated, and then closed owing to low salt prices.²

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.

² Connelley, W.E. 1918. A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans. Lewis Publishers, Chicago. Available at <http://www.ksgenweb.org/archives/1918ks/v2/996.html>.



Recent photo, taken at Solomon, Kansas, 27 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.913002, -97.401213, from under a small grove of trees, looking southward towards the railroad tracks.

The Benecke photograph shows the salt works, possibly with a line of trees behind the buildings. This view was not easy to replicate and orient for the new photograph, although the site is apparently the correct one. Regardless, clearly, the Solomon River has its line of trees, likely broader and taller now than then, and the site is otherwise mostly unrecognizable as the previous location of the salt works.

Brookville



Benecke photo, taken at Brookville, Kansas, in 1873.

Brookville came into existence in 1870, when the Kansas Pacific Railroad reached this far west. The village got its first post office in that same year. Indeed, the railroad company laid out and surveyed the town site in 1870, establishing it as a large-scale roundhouse facility, such that this site was an important maintenance node along the railroad.¹

Benecke's photograph shows a man relaxing in the foreground, and a train passing in front of the city of Brookville in the middle ground. In

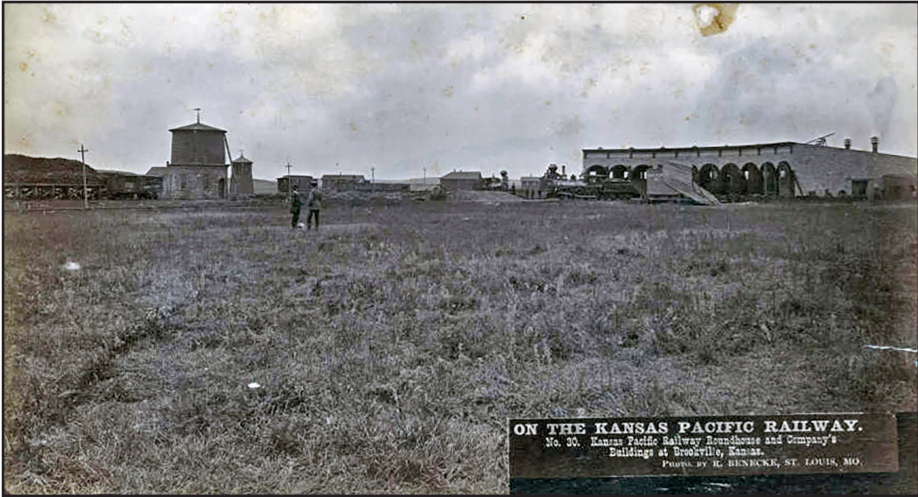
¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken in Brookville, Kansas, 25 April 2022. Photo taken from 38.769407 -97.87032, with a drone at approximately 35 m of altitude, with view northward towards Brookville. Vantage point is approximate, in view of major changes to the landscape.

the background are hills covered with prairie. Nowhere are there trees visible. The view now is one of forest, with the trees covering the view of Brookville and of the hills in the background almost entirely, even with the greater elevation that is possible with a drone than with a ground-based photograph.

Kansas Pacific Railroad Roundhouse and Company's Buildings at Brookville



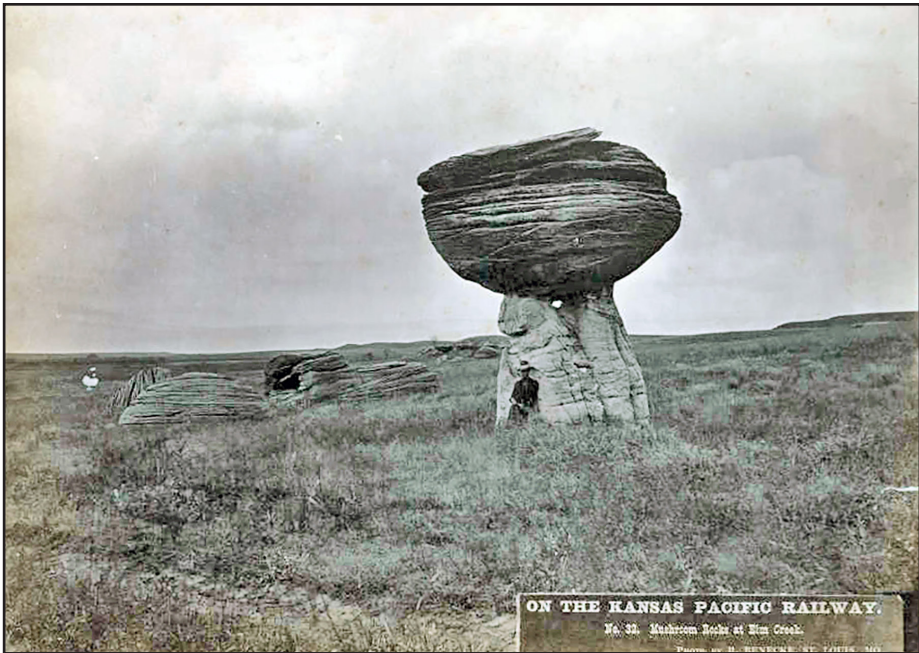
Benecke photo, taken at Brookville, Kansas, in 1873.

Benecke's photograph shows the actual roundhouse, as well as water tanks and other facilities crucial for the functioning of the railroad. Visible in the background are bare hilltops, and indeed no trees are visible anywhere in the historical photograph. The present view is radically contrasting: the railroad facilities are entirely gone (foundations of some of the buildings are apparently still visible on the ground, according to a local resident), and the entire southern portion of Brookville is heavily wooded. Indeed, south of Noble Street is nothing short of a forest.



Recent photo, taken at Brookville, Kansas, 24 April 2022. Photo taken from 38.773446, -97.872079, looking southward towards Noble Street.

Mushroom Rocks at Elm Creek



Benecke photo, taken at Mushroom Rocks, Kansas, in 1873.

The strangely shaped “mushroom rocks” in Ellsworth County are composed of sandstone from the Dakota Formation. The sandstone formed from sand and other sediment deposited along the shores of a Cretaceous sea about 100 million years ago. Some parts of this formation were cemented into a harder matrix, creating masses called concretions; when the softer parts eroded away, the result were these crazy, mushroom-shaped rocks.¹

¹ Kansas Geological Survey. N.D. Mushroom Rock State Park. Available at <https://geokansas.ku.edu/mushroom-rock-state-park>.



Recent photo, taken at Mushroom Rocks State Park, in Ellsworth County, Kansas, 27 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.724509, -98.030641, from along the southern edge of the state park, looking north towards the iconic mushroom rock.

Benecke's photograph shows an unidentified man standing in front of one of the most iconic of the mushroom rock formations, and the open prairie in the background (Elm Creek is not visible, but is in a ravine close behind the formations in the photograph). The recent photograph shows an identified woman (my companion in life, Rosa Salazar) in front of the same rock formation, but with the heavy woodland along Elm Creek now clearly visible in the background.

Ellsworth, the Great Shipping Point for Texas Cattle



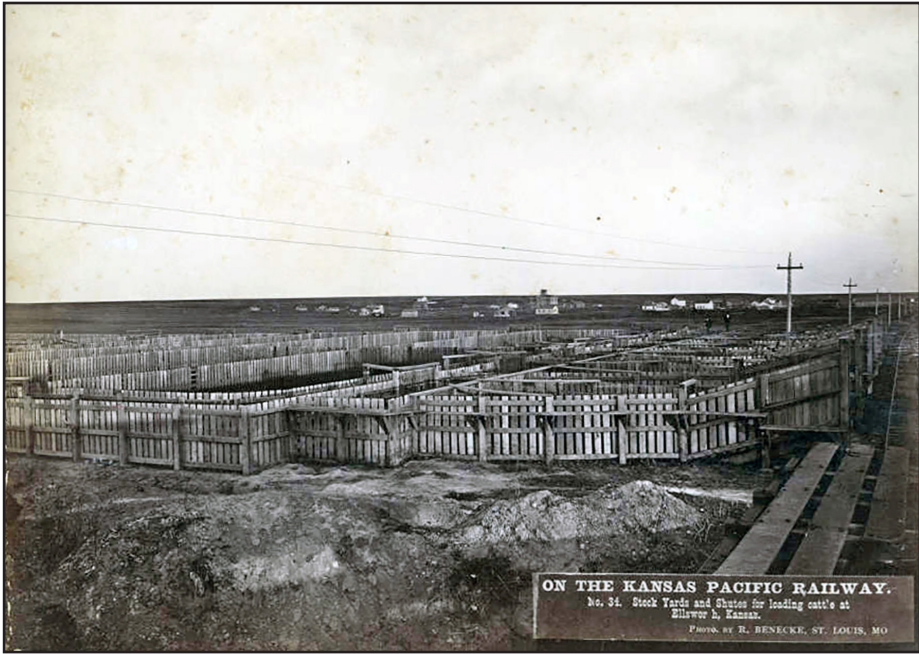
Benecke photo, taken at Ellsworth, Kansas, in 1873.

Ellsworth was named after Fort Ellsworth, which was built in 1864. Ellsworth was incorporated as a city in 1867. The Kansas Pacific Railroad created a station and cattle yards at Ellsworth, making it an important destination for cattle drives coming up from Texas. The railroad closed its cattle pens by 1875. Benecke's photograph shows a busy train station in the middle of Ellsworth, with commerce lining both streets on both sides of the railroad tracks. In the present day, most of the commercial buildings along the railroad tracks are empty or under-utilized.



Recent photo, taken at Ellsworth, Kansas, 24 April 2022. Photo taken from 38.727635, -98.230311. The railroad station was on the northeast side of the tracks at Court and Main streets, so the view was from the northwest to the southeast.

Stock Yards and Shutes for Loading Cattle at Ellsworth



Benecke photo, taken at Ellsworth, Kansas, in 1873.

Ellsworth was a large-scale cattle town for perhaps a decade, and the Kansas Pacific Railroad included a stop to serve the city's stockyards.¹ The cattle were driven up from Texas each year, and loaded onto trains to serve the eastern cities. By the mid-1870s, however, the railroad moved its cattle operations to other cities, and Ellsworth's cattle boom ended entirely within another decade.

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken at Ellsworth, Kansas, 27 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.730495 -98.235464, looking east-southeast along the railroad tracks.

Benecke's photograph shows the railroad along the right edge of the view, the stockyards in the foreground, and parts of the city in the background. No trees are visible whatsoever, and the view is of a wide, open plain. In the recent view, no trace remains of the stockyards, and trees are now visible (and are quite pervasive) across the city.

Freucher Settlements.

No. 1. Wilson



Benecke photo, taken at Wilson, Kansas, in 1873.

A stagecoach station was established a bit south of present-day Wilson in 1865; in 1868, the Kansas Pacific Railway created a station at the actual present-day site. The original name of the townsite was “Bosland,” apparently in reference to an imagined rich future with cattle ranching.¹ The area was initially colonized by immigrants from the eastern United States; however, beginning in 1874, colonization was by Czech immigrants, who had found work on the railroad. Wilson got its first post

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken in Wilson, Kansas, 13 August 2022. Photo taken from 38.821288 -98.46765, from 2nd Road south of Old U.S. Highway 40, looking west towards Wilson. The two-peaked building at the left end of the historical photograph was the school, which was at the site now occupied by the high school. Cherilee Ward (Librarian, City of Wilson Library) and David Trowbridge (Wilson Heritage Museum) helped enormously with understanding the location of the historical view.

office in 1873, and was incorporated officially as a city in 1883.

Benecke's photograph is striking in showing the city as a cluster of houses and other buildings, in the middle of a broad, open plain. The school at the left end of the city was apparently built starting in 1872.² Not a single tree is in the historical view. Another Benecke photograph is a similar view, though from closer to the city (see below). It is entitled, "Arboriculture on the prairie—2 1/2 years from the seed at Wilson, Kansas."

² Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



ON THE KANSAS PACIFIC RAILWAY.
No. 35. Arboriculture on the prairie—2½ years from the seed
at Wilson, Kansas.
Taken by D. BENECKE ST. LOUIS, MO.

Benecke photo, taken at Wilson, Kansas, in 1873. Note that this view of Wilson is quite similar to that in the previous photo pair.

Tree farms were apparently a common feature in the early years of European settlement of the Great Plains. A prominent figure in this movement was Julius Sterling Morton, a Nebraska newspaper editor and politician, who started the tradition of “Arbor Day” that became a major yearly celebration across the country. (Morton’s fanatical obsession with foresting the Great Plains was so extreme that he argued vigorously against the tradition of cutting trees for Christmas celebrations.³) Although a major focus of this book is on the dominant process of afforestation in the Great Plains, many of these tree farms were planted with the wrong species, or the trees were unable to cope with droughts, heat, and cold, and the plantations were gone relatively soon.

The present-day view is quite contrasting to the historical view, even beyond the tree farm being gone. The landscape is still, of course, quite flat. However, the village of Wilson has expanded northward and southward, and has filled in with trees rather thickly.

³ History Nebraska. 2023. J. Sterling Morton’s War on Christmas Trees. Available at <https://history.nebraska.gov/j-sterling-mortons-war-on-christmas-trees/>.

View on the Smoky Hill River at Wilson: Captain Matthew's House and Coal Mine Bluff



Benecke photo, taken south of Wilson, Kansas, in 1873.

Although no mention is made in the biographical section of Cutler's History of the State of Kansas for Ellsworth County, under Russell County, an A.E. Mathews is listed as having settled on a claim about 3 miles southwest of Wilson. Mathews apparently was more interested in coal mining (see Coal Canon photo) than in ranching or farming, and was indicated as having been the first white resident of Russell County.¹

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken south of Wilson, Kansas, 26 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.785988, -98.489428, looking southeast along the Smoky Hill River, toward the bluffs along the south rim of the river valley. Note that the actual historical photograph was taken from the river bed, about 120 m to the photographer's left, but that view would be entirely obstructed by the thick forest vegetation currently lining the river.

Benecke's photograph shows a wide, open valley, with only sparse trees along the river. The hilltop and much of the river bank are open grassland. The recent view is massively different: not only is the river thickly lined with trees now, but the bluff is covered with forest as well, all the way up almost to the top. It is not clear whether the house in both photographs is the same one, but its position is at least similar.

Coal Canyon at Wilson



Benecke photo, taken south of Wilson, Kansas, in 1873.

Benecke's photograph shows a "canyon" (more like a valley) that was clearly being mined for coal. The view is of the rolling bluffs constituting the southern wall of the Smoky Hill River Valley, south of Wilson. Of considerable interest is that along Coal Creek, visible in the photograph, are only low shrubs and no erect trees. The recent photograph shows gallery forest of erect trees along the creek, as well as broad invasion of trees upslope from the creek onto the bluffs and hills.



Recent photo, taken south of Wilson, Kansas, 27 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.785824 -98.490478, looking southward across the fields to the line of hills along Coal Creek.

No. 2, Frontier Settlements, Bunker Hill



Benecke photo, taken at Bunker Hill, Kansas, in 1873.

Bunker Hill was founded at a site along the Kansas Pacific Railway, in 1871; for a short time, it was even the county seat. The townsite was colonized in the early 1870s, by a group from Ohio who named it Bunker Hill.

Benecke's photograph shows what appears to be a rather busy train stop, with a small village built around the train depot; not a single tree is visible in the entire view. The modern landscape at the same place is quite contrasting: now, no depot is present, and the trains simply pass through the town without stopping. Trees are scattered across the entire view, but particularly on the right side of the photograph, where the residential part of the town is located.



Recent photo, taken at Bunker Hill, Kansas, 26 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.875783, -98.706643, from the Winthrop Street railroad crossing, looking eastward along the railroad tracks.

Valley of Cedar Creek, Bunker Hill



Benecke photo, taken north of Bunker Hill, Kansas, in 1873.

Cedar Creek is north and west of Bunker Hill, but cuts a wide swath across the region. As of 1901, the only road from Bunker Hill in 1901 went straight north from the village, with side roads here and there. Although it is not 100% certain that this photograph is from the exact same spot as where Benecke's photograph was taken, the view up the Cedar Creek Valley appears to be from the same angle.

Benecke's photograph shows a broad, open valley, with a slender line of trees along the creek, and particularly in the lower parts of the creek



Recent photo, taken north of Bunker Hill, Kansas, 13 August 2022. Photo taken from 38.920147 -98.724758, a bare hilltop, looking roughly northward along the Cedar Creek Valley.

bed, where the creek is incised deeply into the valley floor. Other than those trees, the view is one of close-cropped prairie grassland, all the way out to the rolling hilltops. The recent photograph is quite different: trees line all of the creek beds thickly, including in areas that are more exposed. Furthermore, hillsides in the background and in the foreground can be seen now to hold scattered trees, well above the valley floor.

The “Burnt City” near Bunker Hill



Benecke photo, taken north of Bunker Hill, Kansas, in 1873.

This site, known in Benecke’s time as “Burnt City,” is now part of the Rocktown Trail near the Lucas Recreation Area, on the east shore of Wilson Lake. The Benecke photograph shows a barren and rocky landscape, but the entire scene (except possibly the hilltops in the background of Benecke’s photograph) is now under the surface of Wilson Lake.



Recent photo, taken at Wilson Lake, Kansas, 26 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.950323 -98.547886, looking generally to the southwest. Note that the name “Burnt City” has not been in use for a long time. Indeed, the site was locatable thanks only to an archaeological site that was named thus, which was traceable to this site.¹ The site where this photograph was taken is on the lakeshore, but the original photograph was likely taken from a point currently under water.

¹ Kansas Memory. 2024. Petroglyphs from Russell County, 14RU12 and 14RU13. Available at <https://www.kshs.org/km/items/view/315384>; see maps in Blakeslee, D.J., R.K. Blasing, and H.F. Garcia. 1986. Along the Pawnee Trail: Cultural resource survey and testing at Wilson Lake, Kansas. U.S. Army Engineer District, final report on contract DACW41-85-C-0135.

Valley of the Saline River and Old Buffalo Trails near Bunker Hill



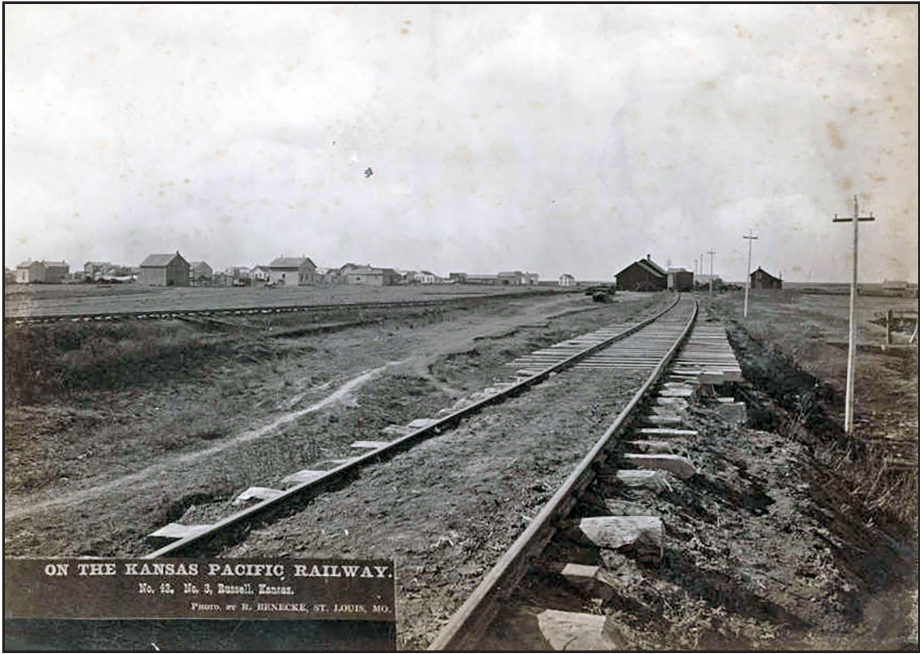
Benecke photo, taken north of Bunker Hill, Kansas, in 1873.

Benecke's photograph shows a broad, open valley covered by grassland. In the foreground are old buffalo trails, and in the background may be a few sparse trees along the course of the stream or river. In the recent view, obviously, the buffalo trails are long erased, but more dramatic are the abundant trees along the stream, filling much of the lower parts of the valley.



Recent photo, taken north of Bunker Hill, Kansas, 26 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.937902 -98.71407, looking north across the Cedar Creek Valley; Cedar Creek is an affluent of the Saline River. Although it is not certain or even probable that this is the exact site of the historical photograph, it is the only site along what was the historically existing road north from Bunker Hill that has something close to the right form of the skyline.

No. 3. Russell



Benecke photo, taken at Russell, Kansas, in 1873.

In the 1860s, both the stagecoach line and the Kansas Pacific Railroad established stations in the vicinity of what is now Russell, Kansas. When the Kansas Legislature created Russell County, a permanent village was established at what had previously been called Fossil Station, now calling it Russell.¹ The town was founded by the Northwestern Colony Association, mainly by people from Wisconsin, on land gifted by the Railroad. When Benecke visited, Russell and Bunker Hill were competing to be the seat of Russell County; eventually the former won out,

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken at Russell, Kansas, 26 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.895479 -98.856303, from the N. Fossil Street railroad crossing, looking westward along the railroad tracks.

guaranteeing a bit more vibrant economy to Russell, at least compared with Bunker Hill.

Benecke's photograph shows the Russell Depot, with the town of Russell extending southward from the railroad tracks. A good number of houses and other buildings is visible, but no trees. Presently, much of the background of the photograph is lined with trees.

View on Big Creek, Russell



Benecke photo, taken on Big Creek, southwest of Russell, Kansas, in 1873.

Benecke's photograph shows a narrow line of trees along the course of Big Creek, with low, shrubby trees on the immediate banks of the creek. In the modern photograph, and indeed along the entire course of the lower parts of Big Creek, the trees are taller, and the forest band is considerably wider, than in the historical view.



Recent photo, taken southwest of Russell, Kansas, 13 August 2022. Photo taken from 38.80417, -98.946642, from a small road crossing over Big Creek, looking westward. Note that the original site of the historical photograph is impossible to locate, given the rather small scale of the view, and given the dynamic nature of the creek's course. This modern view is, therefore, a representative spot on the lower part of Big Creek, and probably is similar to the site of the original photograph.

Duck Shooting on Big Creek, Russell



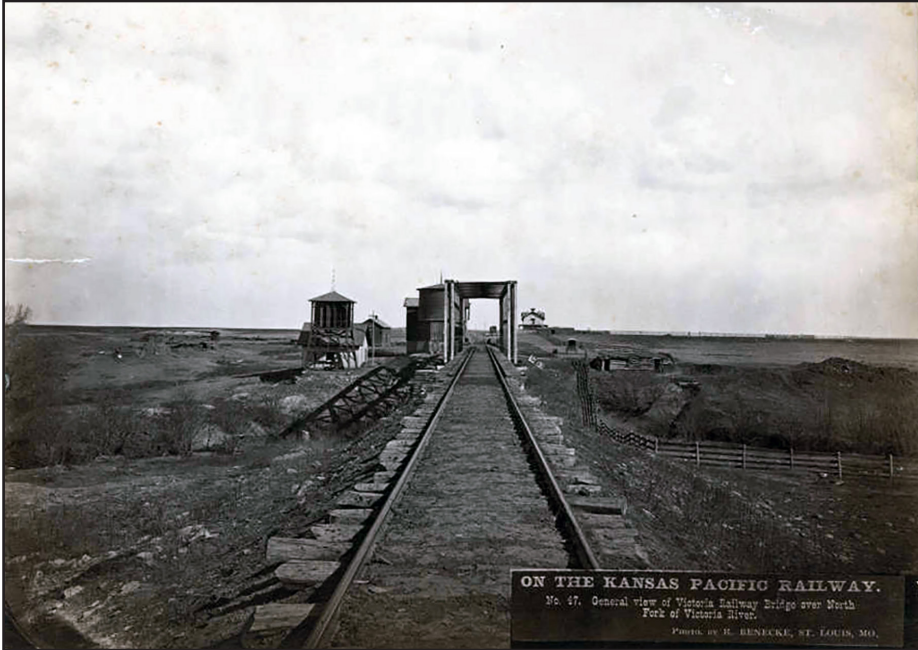
Benecke photo, taken southwest of Russell, Kansas, in 1873.

It was not clear whether it was a good idea to include this photograph in this collection, as the view is quite narrow and small-scale. The view is interesting, however, as it shows detail on Big Creek, also featured in the photograph entitled View on Big Creek. Exploring up and down the lower parts of the creek, the entirety of the creek is much like the view in the modern photograph: thickly wooded on both side, with trees grown quite tall. Nowhere along the creek's course is it open as in the historical photograph.



Recent photo, taken southwest of Russell, Kansas, 13 August 2022. Photo taken from 38.803616, -98.947619, looking roughly northwest, along Big Creek. Note that the location of this view is certainly not that from which the photograph was taken, but it is more or less typical of the entirety of the lower parts of Big Creek.

General View of Victoria Railway Bridge over North Fork of Victoria River



Benecke photo, taken at Victoria, Kansas, in 1873.

Victoria was established in 1873 by a George Grant, from England, on land that was bought from the Kansas Pacific Railway. Wishing to found a colony from England, the town was named after Queen Victoria. Later, in 1876, another village, Herzog, was established just a half-mile north of Victoria. Although Herzog grew faster than Victoria, the combined village was renamed Victoria in 1913.

Benecke's photograph shows the North Fork of Big Creek as holding just low trees and shrubs, such that the railroad hotel and parts of



Recent photo, taken from just west of Victoria, Kansas, 26 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.846847 -99.151579, looking eastward toward the bridge over the North Fork of Big Creek, on the west edge of Victoria, Kansas. Looking at the old plat maps,¹ Victoria was originally located south of the railroad tracks, and the hotel was set back a bit, but on the south side of the tracks. As such, the photo was likely taken looking east. Location confirmed thanks in part to consultation with John Schukman.

the village are visible in the background of the photograph. The view is now quite different, with tall trees lining the creek, leaving a much more closed view, and shielding from view the entirety of the village of Victoria.

¹ Standard Atlas of Ellis County, Kansas. George A. Ogle & Co., Chicago, 1905. Available at <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/209418>.

Railway Hotel at Ellis, Built of Stone from the Ellis Quarry



Benecke photo, taken at Ellis, Kansas, in 1873.

Ellis had its origins when the Kansas Pacific Railroad created a water supply point there in 1867. The town was laid out in 1873 by the Railroad, with businesses along the north side of the tracks and residences along the south side.¹ By 1875, Ellis was a locus for cattle drives from points south to be loaded on trains. A post office opened there in 1870, and a first church in 1873. The city was incorporated officially in 1888.

¹ Cutler, W.G. 1883. History of the State of Kansas. A.T. Andreas, Chicago.



Recent photo, taken at Ellis, Kansas, 26 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.937704, -99.561358, from the coordinates, on the railroad tracks between Dorrance and Washington streets, looking to the northwest across the tracks.

Benecke's photograph shows a large, stone building that was the combined depot and railroad hotel in the 1870s. According to the photograph's label, the stone for the hotel was quarried locally, perhaps at the site of the photo entitled Quarry of White Magnesium Limestone. In the background of the photograph, the open, treeless landscape is clearly visible. The view is quite different now: the railroad hotel is long gone, and trees fill the entire urban area.

Quarry of White Magnesium Limestone at Ellis



Benecke photo, taken east of Ellis, Kansas, in 1873.

Benecke's photograph shows a landscape with what is clearly a working quarry, and with short-cropped grassland in the foreground. Only a few scattered trees were visible in the ravine. This same site at present is now much more heavily grown in taller grass, with little or no active grazing. It is also now thoroughly overgrown with trees, to the point that the topographic features are, at first glance, hard to discern.



Recent photo, taken about 1.5 miles east of Ellis, Kansas, along Old Highway 40, 26 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.930613, -99.528687, looking south from the highway. John Schukman was crucial in locating the site of this photograph.

The “Hog Back” at Ellis



Benecke photo, taken near Yocemento, Kansas, in 1873.

Tiny Yocemento nevertheless has a long and rich history. Tensions among Cheyenne tribes in the area caused by railway construction broke out in 1867, with the Battle of the Saline River 12 miles north of Yocemento and an attack on Park's Fort soon after, which together led to a halt in railroad construction near what would eventually be Yocemento. The most famous early Great Plains railroad photographer, Alexander Gardner, took pictures featuring the Hog Back ridge during this halt in railroad construction.



Recent photo, taken near Yocemento, Kansas, 26 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.908230, -99.433500, from the south side of the road looking east. Note that the railroad tracks originally swung much closer to the bluff than the current road bed does. The historical railroad bed (elevated) is visible near the right-central part of the photo, passing under what are now the tallest of the trees. This location was found thanks to John Schukman.

Benecke's photograph shows the Yocemento bluff, then called Hog Back. The ridge is bare of trees, and covered with grassland; indeed Big Creek, at the left of the photograph, was then also mostly devoid of trees, with only two trees along the railroad tracks. The current view is quite different: trees line Big Creek thickly, and cover the part of the railroad bed in the foreground of the photograph. Indeed, the trees now cover the Hog Back hill most of the way up to its top.

Wallace Station and Railway Hotel



Benecke photo, taken at Wallace, Kansas, in 1873.

Wallace is a tiny village in western Kansas, with a present population of 41 persons. Wallace came into being in the form of early stage-coach stations, including Pond Creek Stage Station, close to present-day Wallace. This station was the subject of numerous attacks from Native American groups, so a military encampment was established next to it. This post was eventually renamed Fort Wallace, in honor of W.H.L. Wallace, a general who died at the Battle of Shiloh.



Recent photo, taken at Wallace, Kansas, 25 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.911160, -101.593181, from next to the grain elevators, looking eastward along the tracks.

Benecke's photograph shows the Wallace train depot, with a busy set of tracks, comprising at least three separate sets of rails. The photograph is taken from relatively close-up, and for that reason does not show much of the surrounding landscape. The same view almost 150 years later is not much different, although some trees are now visible in the background.

Carson, the Northern Terminus of the Arkansas Valley Railroad



Benecke photo, taken at Carson, Colorado, in 1873.

Carson, Colorado, as a European (white) settlement, dates back to as early as 1838. By 1872, it had grown considerably, particularly with the arrival of the railroad. The town was moved down the road a bit over time, such that the present site is shifted somewhat from the original site.

Benecke's photograph shows the railroad depot along the tracks, and the original town to the south. No trees are visible anywhere in the pho-



Recent photo, taken at Carson, Colorado, 24 May 2022. Photo taken from 38.762417, -102.795484, from just north of the West Street railroad crossing, looking west-southwest across the tracks. Penny McPherson, of Carson, was an enormous help in locating key elements in the historical photograph.

tograph. A curious detail is that the photographer's shadow is visible in the left foreground. In the modern photograph, the view is towards the west of the current version of the city, with a view out over what was the original townsite. Trees are visible at the right side of the photograph, and the current version of the city is fully treed.

Railway Hotel and Station at Hugo



Benecke photo, taken at Hugo, Colorado, in 1873.

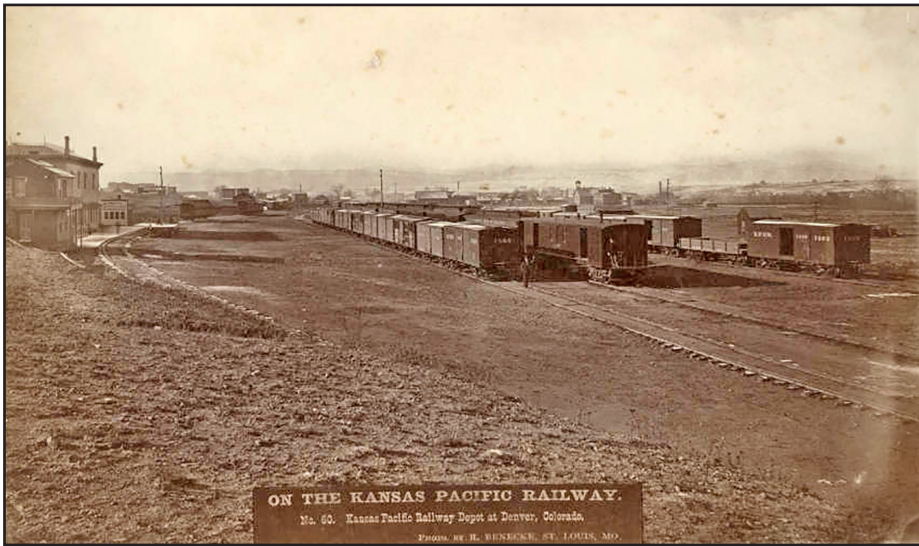
Hugo was a tiny cowtown settlement that had been established by 1859. It was founded in 1870. It ended up as a stop along the Kansas Pacific Railroad, and indeed was the location of a five-stall roundhouse for the Railroad during 1870-1890. The town is still tiny, with a population of about 800 today.



Recent photo, taken at Hugo, Colorado, 24 May 2022. Photo taken from 39.133863, -103.471689, from the 3rd Street railroad crossing, looking eastward towards the depot, which was on the north side of the railroad tracks. Dee Ann and Terry Blevins, of the Hedlund House Museum, were enormously helpful in figuring out the location of the depot.

Benecke's photo shows a hotel next to the railroad tracks, and perhaps five other buildings within the view. No trees are visible, and the vista of Hugo is simply a flat, open plain. Hugo is not a lot larger now, but is more built up (a bit of which is visible in the recent photography). The town has ample trees in and among the residential areas.

Kansas Pacific Railway Depot at Denver



Benecke photo, taken at Denver, Colorado, in 1873.

Denver sits on land that, under the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie between the United States and various Native American tribes, was Cheyenne and Arapaho territory. However, with the 1858 discovery of gold deposits in the Colorado portion of the Rocky Mountains, federal authorities were urged to reduce the Native American lands. Also in 1858, the first settlement was established more or less at the future site of Denver. After a few fits and starts, the town was named after Colorado Governor Denver, and by 1861, the Native Americans were coerced into ceding most of the previous territory allotted to them, including the site of Denver, in the Treaty of Fort Wise. Denver was disappointed to see the nation's first transcontinental railroad go through Cheyenne City to the north, but the Kansas Pacific Railway went to Denver, and Denver linked to the transcontinental railway to the north by the 1870s. A rather thorough, if unreferenced, summary of early Denver history is available online.¹

Benecke's photo shows the quite-new Kansas Pacific Railroad Depot

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Denver.



Recent photo, taken at Denver, Colorado, 9 September 2022. Photo taken from 39.758469 -104.993273, from the 22nd Street bridge over the railroad yards, looking southwest along the railroad tracks and with Coors Field to the left end of the view.

in Denver, with extensive rail yards in front of the depot. Hints of the city are visible in the background of the view, and the remainder of the view is quite flat and barren. Locating this early depot was not easy, but was made possible by an 1889-vintage “birdseye view” that shows the depot at approximately this site.²

The area shown in this view has changed much, and at the same time changed little. That is, whereas it is still a busy railroad yard and crossroads for rail traffic through central Denver, the site is now heavily built up and urbanized. At the left of the photograph is Coors Field, home of the Colorado Rockies, and in the background (i.e., beyond 20th Street) is the historical part of downtown Denver, including a more recent train station (Denver Union Station). It is, nevertheless, still a massive railroad yard, and a conduit through Denver for rail transportation.

² Wellge, H. 1889. Perspective map of the city of Denver, Colo. American Publishing Co., Milwaukee. Available at <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4314d.pm000650/>.

General View of Denver, looking North-west



Benecke photo, taken at Denver, Colorado, in 1873.

This photograph shows a view across Denver towards the north-west, showing the low-profile, rather dispersed nature of early Denver. Trees had been planted along the city streets, but were still short in stature. Denver was very open at this point. The recent version of this view shows relatively few trees, as the region is heavily built-up and industrialized. This part of Denver is the typical inner-city mixture of highways, railroads, warehouses, and commerce.



Recent photo, taken at Denver, Colorado, 9 September 2022. Photo taken from 39.758234, -104.991491, from just northeast of the intersection of Wazee and Park streets; photograph taken from Wazee Street, looking northwest across the rail yards.

Highland View Hotel and Denver looking East



Benecke photo, taken at Denver, Colorado, in 1873.

The Highland View Hotel featured in the Benecke photograph was prominently placed west of the main, downtown area of Denver, at West 17th Avenue and Federal Boulevard. It was later (or also?) known as the Grand View Hotel.¹ The small body of water in the foreground of the photograph corresponds to what was then known as Cooper's Lake, and is now part of Sloan's Lake.

¹ <https://digital.denverlibrary.org/digital/collection/p15330coll22/id/23253>.



Recent photo, taken at Denver, Colorado, 9 September 2022. Photo taken at 39.74795 -105.0434017, from the northeast side of Sloan's Lake, looking slightly east of southest across the lake.

The Denver shown in the Benecke photograph has not a single tree visible. Rather, it is a relatively flat, and completely open landscape, on which the multi-story hotel building stands out markedly. Today, the area is heavily forested, to the point that many of the buildings around the 17th and Federal corner are not even visible in the recent photograph.

Appendix: Summary of Photo Sources and View Locations

| Benecke no. | Title | ATP# | Link | State | County | Location | Latitude | Longitude | Notes |
|-------------|---|------|----------------------|-------|-----------|---|-----------|------------|---|
| 1 | General Offices of the Kansas Pacific Railway, Kansas City | 2404 | link | MO | Jackson | Fifth and Broadway streets | 39.106489 | -94.587969 | Building faced Broadway. 6th Street is at left edge of picture, 5th Street is to the right. Now is the Broadway Bridge over I-70. Taken from the southeast corner of 6th and Broadway, looking northwest. |
| 3 | General View of Kansas City | 2415 | link | MO | Jackson | Tenth and Broadway streets, looking northeast | 39.103037 | -94.587504 | Taken via drone flight, from a parking lot just northeast of the intersection of 10th Street and Broadway Blvd., looking northeast |
| 4 | Railway Bridge over the Missouri River, at Kansas City | 2395 | link | KS | Wyandotte | Kansas River bridge | 39.108895 | -94.5885 | Taken from a high buttress under south end of the US-169 / Broadway Blvd. bridge over the Missouri River, looking north. |
| 5 | Railway Bridge over the Kansas River, near Kansas City | 2396 | link | KS | Wyandotte | Kansas River bridge | 39.090176 | -94.609796 | Taken from near the highway bridge, looking northeast across river to the railroad bridge. |
| 9 | General View of Lawrence | 2397 | link | KS | Douglas | Lawrence | 38.954286 | -95.241076 | View is from coordinates, which are behind an apartment building, looking northeast. Note the tower of the Maupintour House in foreground to right. |
| 10 | State University of Kansas | 2398 | link | KS | Douglas | Lawrence | 38.95679 | -95.242945 | View is from in front of what is now Watkins Scholarship Hall, to the north of current Fraser Hall, looking towards that hall, which is to the northwest. |
| 11 | Stud Farm and Race Track, Lawrence | 2399 | link | KS | Douglas | Lawrence | 38.955236 | -95.241646 | View is from same point as the General View of Lawrence shot, but looking west-southwest, so that Louisiana Street is visible in front of the house. |
| 12 | Passenger Bridge over the Kansas River and Waterworks Dam, Lawrence | 2400 | link | KS | Douglas | Lawrence | 38.972478 | -95.230195 | Taken from south side of Kansas River, just east of the current Marriott Hotel building, looking westward towards the Bowersock Dam. |

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|----|--|------|----------------------|----|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|--|
| 13 | Hotel and Railway Station at Topeka | 2401 | link | KS | Shawnee | Topeka | 39.066563 | -95.67099 | View is from the west end of the train station parking area, looking back toward the station to the east-northeast. |
| 14 | Passenger Bridge over the Kansas River, Topeka | 2402 | link | KS | Shawnee | Topeka | 39.061117 | -95.668428 | Bridge is at the site of the present-day Kansas Avenue bridge. Not 100% clear whether the view is from south to north, or what. Some buildings are visible on the far side in the Benecke photo, but both sides were built in 1873. Assumed the view is northward, so photo taken from just east of the south base of the Kansas Avenue bridge. Photo was constrained by trash and the levee wall. |
| 15 | The Mid-day Rest: Quail Shooting at St. George | 2403 | link | KS | Pottawatomie | St. George | 39.189692 | -96.422848 | View is east-northeast from the coordinates across the railroad tracks. |
| 16 | The Valley of the Kansas River, Looking East from St. George | 2405 | link | KS | Pottawatomie | St. George | 39.185563 | -96.409528 | Coordinates correspond to a likely vantage point, presently in the middle of an overgrown field, though likely a future subdivision. Photo taken from lower end of present field, just above trees lining edge of bluff. |
| 17 | The Kansas River, Looking West from St. George | 2406 | link | KS | Pottawatomie | St. George | 39.187076 | -96.421883 | Photo taken from city boat ramp, looking west. |
| 18 | Manhattan, Taken from the Summit of Mount Prospect | 2407 | link | KS | Riley | Manhattan, from Mount Prospect | 39.172052 | -96.552127 | Photo taken from the top of the "K" in the big letters on Mt. Prospect, looking northeast across the river. |
| 19 | Bridge over the Blue River, Manhattan | 2408 | link | KS | Riley | Manhattan, Blue River bridge | 39.187074 | -96.533194 | Original bridge was closer to the Kansas River/Blue River fork than the present bridge is. Photo taken from the levee just west of where the Big Blue River empties into the Kansas River. The angle of the photo is not quite right, so one sees more of the Big Blue River than in the photo |

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|----|---|------|----------------------|----|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|--|
| 20 | Kansas River and Passenger Bridge Looking West, Manhattan | 2409 | link | KS | Riley | Manhattan, Kansas River bridge | 39.181156 | -96.551915 | Photo taken from the banks of the Kansas River. Access was from the Discount Tires parking lot, crossing the levee, and upstream about 150 m. |
| 24 | Railway and Passenger Bridge over the Republican River, Junction City | 2412 | link | KS | Geary | Junction City | 39.060115 | -96.803123 | The bridges in these photos are in the same places as historically, just outside of the Grant Gate into Ft. Riley. |
| 21 | Valley of the Kansas River from Mount Prospect, Manhattan | 2410 | link | KS | Riley | Manhattan, Mount Prospect | 39.172433 | -96.55176 | Photo site is now quite overgrown, so drone flown from one side of the fence around the microwave tower, with the view to the northeast. |
| 22 | The Texas Cattle Trade: Train of Empty Stock Cars at Junction City | 2411 | link | KS | Geary | Junction City | 39.030415 | -96.824059 | The train depot lay near the intersection of 9th and Monroe streets, at 39.031940, -96.823703. |
| 26 | Grist Mill at Solomon City | 2413 | link | KS | Dickinson | Solomon | 38.916021 | -97.374787 | A mill race is shown on older maps on the southwest side of the city, on the north side of the railroad tracks. Photo taken from the south end of Chestnut Street, looking south towards the Solomon River. This view may have been taken from south to north instead. |
| 27 | Falls of the Solomon River at Solomon City | 2416 | link | KS | Dickinson | Solomon | 38.914003 | -97.372898 | This photo likely refers to the millrace emptying into the Solomon River, on the south side of Solomon City. As the entire area is now heavily overgrown, a drone was flown from the electrical supply yard at the south end of Poplar Street, looking west. |
| 28 | Salt Works at Solomon City | 2435 | link | KS | Dickinson | Solomon | 38.913002 | -97.401213 | Salt works were at 38.912553, -97.402011 or at 38.907878, -97.409264. Photo taken from coordinates looking southward towards railroad tracks. |
| 29 | Brookville | 2424 | link | KS | Saline | Brookville | 38.769407 | -97.87032 | View is from the coordinates towards the north. |

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|----|---|------|----------------------|----|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|---|
| 30 | Kansas Pacific Railroad Roundhouse and Company's Buildings at Brookville | 2438 | link | KS | Saline | Brookville | 38.773446 | -97.872079 | View is from along Clement Street, looking towards the south. |
| 34 | Stock Yards and Shutes for Loading Cattle at Ellsworth | 2418 | link | KS | Ellsworth | Ellsworth stockyards | 38.730495 | -98.235464 | Photo taken from coordinates, looking east-southeast along the railroad tracks towards the historical location of the stockyards. |
| 32 | Mushroom Rocks at Elm Creek | 2439 | link | KS | Saline | Mushroom Rocks State Park | 38.724509 | -98.030641 | Photo taken from the fenceline looking back north towards the iconic mushroom rock, in the southern part of the state park. |
| 33 | Ellsworth, the Great Shipping Point for Texas Cattle | 2417 | link | KS | Ellsworth | Ellsworth | 38.727635 | -98.230311 | Original depot was between Lincoln and Douglas on the south side. |
| 35 | Freucher Settlements. No. 1. Wilson | 2419 | link | KS | Ellsworth | Wilson | 38.821288 | -98.46765 | Picture taken from coordinates, looking west toward Wilson. |
| 37 | View on the Smoky Hill River at Wilson: Captain Matthew's House and Coal Mine Bluff | 2421 | link | KS | Ellsworth | Wilson | 38.785988 | -98.489428 | Photo taken from Lincoln Road, at the coordinates. Actual site would be 100 m to the photographer's left, on the river, but tree cover complicates photos from there. |
| 38 | Coal Canon at Wilson | 2422 | link | KS | Ellsworth | Wilson, Coal Canon | 38.785824 | -98.490478 | Photo taken from coordinates along Lincoln Road, looking south. |
| 39 | No. 2, Frontier Settlements, Bunker Hill | 2423 | link | KS | Russell | Bunker Hill | 38.875783 | -98.706643 | Photo taken looking west to east from the Winthrop Street railroad crossing. Depot was on north side of tracks, and the town on the south side. |
| 40 | Valley of Cedar Creek, Bunker Hill | 2425 | link | KS | Russell | Bunker Hill, Cedar Creek Valley | 38.920147 | -98.724758 | Cedar Creek is north and west of Bunker Hill. Photo taken from hilltop at coordinates, which gets the topography of the valley correctly. |
| 41 | The "Burnt City" near Bunker Hill | 2426 | link | KS | Russell | Bunker Hill, Burnt City | 38.950323 | -98.547886 | Photo taken from the lakeshore in the Lucas Recreation Area, on the north side of Wilson Reservoir, near the dam. Burnt City is now under water; photo shows some of the formations that were at that site. |

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|----|---|------|----------------------|----|---------|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|---|
| 42 | Valley of the Saline River and Old Buffalo Trails near Bunker Hill | 2427 | link | KS | Russell | Bunker Hill, Saline River Valley | 38.937902 | -98.71407 | North of Bunker Hill is a possible view, although it is a side branch of the Saline River. Maybe not the view in the photo, but as clear as can be had along the road that existed historically. Looking north. |
| 43 | No. 3. Russell | 2428 | link | KS | Russell | Russell | 38.895479 | -98.856303 | Photo taken from the N. Fossil Street railroad crossing, looking west along the railroad tracks. |
| 44 | View on Big Creek, Russell | 2429 | link | KS | Russell | Russell, Big Creek | 38.80417 | -98.946642 | Big Creek is a northward branch of the Smoky Hill River, splitting off at 38.790421, -98.919814. Photo certainly not taken from the exact spot, but this site is typical of this creek. Photo taken from coordinates, looking west. |
| 45 | Duck Shooting on Big Creek, Russell | 2431 | link | KS | Russell | Russell, Big Creek | 38.803616 | -98.947619 | Big Creek is a northward branch of the Smoky Hill River, branching off at 38.790421, -98.919814. Photo certainly not taken from the exact spot, but this site is typical of this creek. Photo taken from coordinates. |
| 47 | General View of Victoria Railway Bridge over North Fork of Victoria River | 2430 | link | KS | Ellis | North Fork, Victoria River | 38.846847 | -99.151579 | The Victoria River is the North Fork of Big Creek, which runs through Victoria. Photo taken from along the railroad tracks at coordinates, looking east toward the railroad bridge. |
| 49 | Railway Hotel at Ellis, Built of Stone from the Ellis Quarry | 2432 | link | KS | Ellis | Ellis | 38.937704 | -99.561358 | The hotel was located east of Dorrance Street, between 9th Street and the railroad tracks. View is to the northwest. |
| 50 | Quarry of White Magnesium Limestone at Ellis | 2433 | link | KS | Ellis | Quarry near Ellis | 38.930613 | -99.528687 | This quarry was located ~3 km east of Ellis on the south side of old Highway 40. The view is roughly southward. |
| 51 | The "Hog Back" at Ellis | 2434 | link | KS | Ellis | Hog Back | 38.90823 | -99.4335 | This view is from along the current course of Old U.S. Highway 40, where it passes close to a bluff, looking east. |
| 57 | Wallace Station and Railway Hotel | 2437 | link | KS | Wallace | Wallace | 38.91116 | -101.59318 | Photo was taken from along the railroad tracks just south of the southern terminus of Main Street, looking eastward. |

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|----|---|------|----------------------|----|----------|--------|-----------|------------|--|
| 58 | Carson, the Northern Terminus of the Arkansas Valley Railroad | 2526 | link | CO | Cheyenne | Carson | 38.762417 | -102.79548 | Photo taken from coordinates looking west-southwest across tracks. |
| 59 | Railway Hotel and Station at Hugo | 2527 | link | CO | Lincoln | Hugo | 39.133863 | -103.47169 | The hotel was on the north side of the tracks just before 4th Street, so photo was taken from where 3rd Street crosses the tracks, looking east. |
| 60 | Kansas Pacific Railway Depot at Denver | 2529 | link | CO | Arapahoe | Denver | 39.758469 | -104.99327 | Photo was taken from the 22nd Street Bridge, just north of Coors Field. The historical viewpoint was probably somewhere near where Coors Field is now. View is looking west back towards Coors Field and the railroad yards. |
| 61 | General View of Denver, looking North-west | 2530 | link | CO | Arapahoe | Denver | 39.758234 | -104.99149 | Photo taken from just northeast of Wazee and Park streets on Wazee Street, looking northwest across the rail yards. |
| 62 | Highland View Hotel and Denver looking East | 2531 | link | CO | Arapahoe | Denver | 39.74795 | -105.0434 | Photo taken from the northeast side of Sloan's Lake, looking east-southeast across the lake towards the corner of 17th and Federal streets. |

Robert Benecke (1835-1903) was a St. Louis photographer who was hired by the Kansas Pacific Railroad to take promotional photographs along the entire length of the Railroad. Benecke traveled from Kansas City to Denver in the early 1870s, creating a rich legacy of views of the Great Plains at a very early date. In this book, Benecke's landscape photographs are paired with new photographs of the same views. Comparing the old and new photographs, the reader can appreciate how the region has changed over the 150 year time span.

