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The origins of this project—a partnership between the Center for Midwestern Studies at the University of Missouri–Kansas City (UMKC) and the Kansas City Public Library—trace to a previous collaborative effort that reexamined and commemorated the sesquicentennial of the Civil War era along the Missouri-Kansas border. Crossing the state line, the project disseminated new insights and sparked discussion among scholars, educators, museum professionals, archivists, and general enthusiasts. In the spring of 2011, a group of Civil War scholars convened at the Hall Center for the Humanities at the University of Kansas for a peer-review workshop during which they read and critiqued each other’s original scholarship. The following fall, these historians shared their findings in a public symposium at the Kansas City Public Library. The product of this work was the award-winning anthology *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border*, edited by Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke (University Press of Kansas, 2013). The project continued with an interactive website, Civil War on the Western Border: The Missouri-Kansas Conflict, 1854–1865 (www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org). This heavily visited website won multiple awards for digital and public history, including the prestigious Roy Rosenzweig Prize for Innovation in Digital History from the American Historical Association.

In consideration of the high level of public engagement with the Civil War project, the Center for Midwestern Studies and the Kansas City Public Library again partnered to explore a regional history project of national importance. We did not have to search long for a topic to succeed the Civil War. In the last decade, the revitalization of Kansas City’s urban core has correlated with a resurgence of awareness and interest in the city’s history and culture, especially the boom period between the two world wars when Kansas City developed a national reputation as a “wide-open town.” In this era, the city’s economy boomed and culture flourished, even as residents struggled with mob rule and ongoing strife along the lines of race, class, and gender. The current public conversation about this era often focuses more on
the “colorful” aspects of this history rather than issues such as the dangerous consequences of corruption or racial discrimination. But if the present interest in this era lacks nuance, the focus on this city and this period provides a moment to better investigate the parallels between the present and the past.

This anthology, alongside its companion projects, seeks to fulfill several objectives. The first is to encourage conversations among scholars who research the history of this region. Our hope is not only to support the development of new research on the city but also to direct this work to a deeper understanding of how diverse historical populations navigate and influence the political, economic, and cultural life of urban America. A second, and in many ways more important, goal is to use this volume to create a public forum for an ongoing discussion of the historical and contemporary issues raised by Kansas City history. With resources that we hope will find a home in all educational levels, this project attempts to build on the widespread interest in this era and use historical scholarship to contribute to a more complete understanding of regional culture and politics.

With these goals in mind, we issued a call for new scholarship to challenge and deepen our understanding of this period. A range of scholars from several disciplines responded, and following the model of the Civil War project, we brought these researchers to UMKC for a peer-review workshop in the fall of 2015. In the spring of 2016, the group presented their work at a public symposium at the Kansas City Public Library. Nearly 1,000 patrons attended the two-day symposium that included a keynote address on the Great Depression by Stanford University’s Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David M. Kennedy. We also incorporated a special workshop for K-12 educators from around the region. The revised public presentations form the core of this volume. Several scholars associated with this project also created versions of their work that appear on the Kansas City Public Library’s website, The Pendergast Years: Kansas City in the Jazz Age and Great Depression (www.PendergastKC.org). This site takes advantage of multimedia features and a vast collection of primary documents to create a vibrant research tool for use by academics, educators, students, and the general public.

None of these pieces could have come together without the significant contributions of our organizational partners, funders, and of course, the scholars, librarians, and archivists who made this project a reality. We would like to extend special thanks to Executive Director R. Crosby Kemper III and Deputy Director of Public Affairs Carrie Coogan of the Kansas City Public Library for hosting the public symposium and providing ongoing support to the larger endeavor. The library’s exceptional staff, including Steve Woolfolk, Andy Dandino, Leslie Case, and others from the public affairs department, as well as the staff of the Missouri Valley Special Collections, including its manager, Jeremy Drouin, and senior archivist Kate Hill, provided critical research support for the symposium and book. David LaCrone, digital branch manager, supported much of the labor for both the symposium and
the website. Special thanks are owed to Eli Paul, retired manager of the Missouri Valley Special Collections, who was instrumental as a project advisor.

The symposium also received a boost from Tom’s Town Distilling Co. The downtown distillery inspired by “Boss” Tom Pendergast hosted the participants and organizers of our symposium in a special venue complete with portraits of machine leaders (and mounted heads of goats and rabbits representing the various factions of local political parties) adorning the walls. In a final perfect touch, Tom’s Town also provided drinks, including McElroy’s Corruption Gin and Eli’s StrongArm Vodka, to more than 400 guests at the symposium’s keynote address.

We also appreciate the support of UMKC’s vice chancellor for research and economic development Lawrence Dreyfus, who recognized the significance of this work and championed the project through a Funding for Excellence Grant. Chelsea Dahlstrom, grants and contracts administrator in UMKC’s Office of Research Services, played a crucial role in the submission and administration of the various grants for this project and assisted with the keynote address dinner. Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Wayne Vaught has long supported the initiatives of the Center for Midwestern Studies and generously underwrote the teacher workshop and the David Kennedy lecture through the Bernardin Haskell Lecture Fund. Carla Mebane and Cynthia Jones of the High School College Partnerships assisted us in the organization of the teacher workshop. Thanks also go to the UMKC History Department, and in particular Christopher Cantwell, for its support. We would like to express special gratitude to Amy Brost, formerly the director of programs and development for the Center for Midwestern Studies, who successfully orchestrated grants and fundraising avenues for the workshop and symposium in addition to arranging travel, dinners, receptions, and other logistics for all of the participants.

We are also grateful for the support of Bryan Le Beau, retired provost and vice president for academic affairs at the University of Saint Mary, who played a crucial advisory role for the scholarly content in the book and the Pendergast Years website. Jennifer L. Weber, associate professor of history at the University of Kansas, participated in both the workshop and symposium and offered key insights as the project took shape. Gary Kremer, the executive director of the State Historical Society of Missouri, also offered his support of this work. In addition to the staff of the Missouri Valley Special Collections, archivists who assisted with this project include Stuart Hinds from the LaBudde Special Collections at UMKC, Chuck Haddix from the Marr Sound Archives at UMKC, Lori Cox-Paul and Elizabeth Burns from the National Archives at Kansas City, and Lucinda Adams and Whitney Heinzmann at the State Historical Society of Missouri, Kansas City Research Center.

A project of this scale is made possible only through the generous financial support from several sponsors. The Missouri Humanities Council provided significant program support for the Wide-Open Town symposium, as did the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. The UMKC Office of Research Support, Bernar-
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din Haskell Lecture Fund, and High School College Partnerships also provided resources to offset the symposium and public presentations. The Missouri Valley Reading Room at the Kansas City Public Library helped underwrite the scholars’ travel to Kansas City, and the host institutions contributed both space and considerable staff hours to the workshop and symposium.

Planning an event of this size and scope (and bringing this project to its conclusion) has required countless hours of collaboration and work. We want to thank our families for their support and indulgence throughout the process.
Wide-Open Town
Greater Kansas City Neighborhoods and Districts

1. Little Italy
2. 18th and Vine
3. Garment District
4. Westside
5. West Bottoms
6. Armourdale
7. Argentine
8. University of Kansas City
9. Country Club Plaza
10. Mission Hills
11. Armour Hills

Greater Kansas City Map, Gallup Map Company, 1929. Courtesy of the Gallup Map and Art Company, Kansas City, Missouri
Pendergast-Era Kansas City

1. Dante’s Inferno
2. Federal Reserve Bank and the Woman’s City Club
3. Hotel Muehlebach
4. Orpheum Theater
5. Donnelly Garment Company
6. Livestock Exchange Building
7. Paseo Hall
8. Jeffersonian Democratic Club (Cas Welch’s Office)
9. Jackson Democratic Club (Tom Pendergast’s Office)
10. 18th and Vine District (Kansas City Call Office)
11. Hospital District (Hospitals #1 and #2)
12. Union Station & Liberty Memorial
13. Guadalupe Center
14. El Torreon Ballroom
15. The Athenaeum
16. Thomas Hart Benton Home
17. Arts District (Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and Kansas City Art Institute)
Introduction

Diane Mutti Burke, Jason Roe, and John Herron

Near the corner of Twentieth and Main—on the same block as “Boss” Tom Pendergast’s still-standing political machine headquarters—is the Rieger Hotel. The bustling hotel, which first opened in 1915, was built by Alexander Rieger, son of the founder of a popular whiskey company located in the city’s West Bottoms district. The budget hotel catered to the many railroad workers and traveling salesmen who passed through the city in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Today, the Rieger is an upscale restaurant that serves a decidedly different clientele. On any given weekend evening, the place teems with attractive young professionals who, in recent years, have flooded back into downtown Kansas City.

Despite the building’s refurbished appearance and hipster patrons, the place remains awash in history. Mosaic tile work, plaster moldings, and a hand-carved bar all remain from the original structure, but here history serves a different purpose. Look, for example, to Manifesto, a straight-up-no-chaser speakeasy in the building’s basement. To get a reservation, guests text a “secret” code to the manager. To then get access to the space, these same guests must weave through the back of the restaurant and buzz a speaker box beside an unmarked door. A bouncer meets your party and leads you down a steep stairway and through a long narrow hallway into a nicely appointed but dimly lit cellar with less than fifty seats. Once at your table, a dapper waiter will offer an extensive list of handcrafted cocktails, many named for figures from Kansas City’s colorful criminal past. This is how to drink like a mobster. Indeed, patrons visiting the men’s restroom will find proof: an “Al Capone Pissed Here” plaque hangs above the urinal.

That the famous Chicago mafioso may have drunk in this bar is part of the appeal of the establishment and, perhaps now, even the culture of the city. The popularity of the Rieger, and the many storefronts just like it that blanket downtown, suggests that many local residents really do want to party like it’s 1929. The embrace of the “wide-open” history of this community is far from universal, however. A quick survey of the traditional scholarly literature on urban development
reveals that many American cities, including Kansas City, are “at war with their own pasts.” Cities, historian Thomas Frank argues, “have proceeded through the years in a frenzy of building, razing, and reconstruction, continually wrecking and then reconstituting themselves elsewhere, expanding over the surrounding countryside like an ever-spreading infection.” Such sprawl, that includes a purposeful neglect of the city’s downtown core, “involves more than mere physical growth,” as the “character and design of the new metropolis” takes definition from “the razing of the old . . . [and the] indiscriminate destruction of obsolete buildings and neighborhoods.” Frank is skeptical of any community that adopts such practice as a “blueprint for civic organization,” but he is especially pointed in his criticism of Kansas City, his hometown. Kansas City, he notes, has long prioritized blandness and property values over history and the cultivation of a distinctive urban culture. “Detached from the particularities of time and place,” contemporary Kansas City, he concludes, advanced urban renewal projects that deliberately obscured the city’s “now-vanished cultural inheritance.”

Frank’s critique is not without standing, and others have made similar points with even more force. Nearly thirty years ago, for example, Pulitzer Prize–winning historian—and Kansas City native—Richard Rhodes authored a cutting assessment of the city entitled “Cupcake Land,” his term for the rolling “vanilla suburbs” of metropolitan Kansas City. The defining feature of the region was, he noted, a desire to disconnect from history: “Kansas City renounced its heritage when it pledged allegiance to Cupcake Land.” In the middling decades of the twentieth century, city fathers led an effort to obscure the region’s “bawdy history.” The goal was to attract the kind of investment that could transform a midwestern cowtown into a “regular” American city, a telos best accomplished with a strategy of separation and historical denial.

Frank, Rhodes, and others who comment on Kansas City’s “everyplace” character make a significant, if still somewhat controversial, point. In their defense, their criticism was directed at the city’s ever-expanding suburbs, and in the mid-twentieth century, there is little question that Kansas City accelerated its outward reach. When combined with a drop in corporate investment and white flight, the result was a central city marked as a place of indifference and neglect. In more recent times in Kansas City, however, residents have engineered a community revitalization that, perhaps ironically, takes its cues from the exact history now celebrated in places like the Rieger restaurant. Sprawl and conformity defined the city in the second half of the twentieth century, but in the years between the two world wars, the town was marked by a competitive brand of politics and a vibrant culture—an age that was anything but ordinary. To travel to any of the revitalized neighborhoods of the city today—the Crossroads Arts District, the West Bottoms, the Garment District, River Market, Eighteenth and Vine, Westport, and the Country Club Plaza—is to see ample evidence of a community that finds contemporary significance in the
long tale of this distinctive history. Importantly, much of the recent focus on urban renewal has centered on the rejuvenation of the neighborhoods and public places that were first promoted by city boosters in the 1920s and 1930s. Developers now use carefully selected elements of history to reimagine many of the city’s once over-looked landmarks and neighborhoods. To be sure, some of these efforts serve an entrepreneurial purpose, with boosting tourism and downtown business development a primary goal. It is not unexpected to see artisanal juiceries and craft distilleries sharing refurbished neighborhood spaces with architectural firms and digital technology companies. Yet as a new generation of city residents search for meaning beyond suburban Cupcake Land, they have increasingly embraced the city’s spirited past, focusing on the period they imagine to be their city’s “golden age.”

That a curated history could be used to sell the image of a revitalized city should not surprise us, but the results can lead to unexpected conclusions. For a city that rightly advertises itself as progressive, the continual backward glances to the Jazz Age contribute to an understanding of the present that is as messy as it is incomplete. Finding proof of contemporary significance in the form of an animated past is not standard form for glossy Chamber of Commerce promotional brochures. Yet as this project illuminates, the border between nostalgia, history, and memory is often muddled, and in this gray space lies the importance of this period to understanding Kansas City. Our goal in Wide-Open Town is to reexamine this critically important time in Kansas City history and to investigate how this city shaped national narratives.

At the crossroads of American transportation networks and cultural norms, Kansas City in the 1920s and 1930s typified broad trends in American history. The decades bounded by the world wars were marked by intense political, social, and economic change as the United States reluctantly took its place on the world stage while simultaneously struggling with significant challenges at home. The upheaval of World War I, the massive migration of people of color into urban America, the entrance of women into both the labor force and electoral politics, resistance to Prohibition and changing social mores, and an economic collapse and near revolution in national politics, all redefined the national character. How these changes influenced Kansas City—and how the city responded—helps us understand how citizens of the age adapted to the rise of modern America.

Kansas City’s place in this larger national story has already received considerable scholarly attention. We encourage readers interested in popular topics such as crime, the political machine, Harry S. Truman, race relations, and jazz to consult this growing and increasingly sophisticated body of regional history. The chapters in Wide-Open Town, however, approach subjects that, although less known, reveal a complicated past. During this period, for example, Prohibition was barely (if ever) enforced; the mob was in ascendancy; and gambling, prostitution, and other hallmarks of urban vice were easily visible. All of that is true, yet this same “openness”
allowed many of the city’s residents to carve out autonomous spaces and challenge conventional social boundaries. Kansas City remained a community divided by the hard lines of race and class, but it was also a city of possibilities where the restrictions that governed life in a segregated state were often more fluid. With this premise as a foundation, *Wide-Open Town* explores how local residents navigated a city in transition. We believe this project will contribute to an ongoing conversation about the costs and consequences of Kansas City’s maturation into a modern American city.

The volume is divided into three sections, each highlighting a key theme—politics, diversity, and culture—of the era. The first, “Politics and Progress in Kansas City’s ‘Golden Age,’” suggests that Kansas City of the early twentieth century stood on the leading edge of national political and economic change. Chapters from John W. McKerley and Jeffrey L. Pasley explore how the racial politics of the city transformed both the Democratic and Republican Parties. McKerley shows in Chapter 1 how the ability of African Americans to maintain the vote in Missouri provided them with opportunities for political influence that were not available to many other black citizens of this era. In Chapter 2, Pasley argues that the unique social and political structure of Kansas City’s Democratic machine forged a demographic coalition—“blacks, immigrants, workers, and just enough partly reconstructed southern whites”—that would eventually dominate national Democratic Party politics in the age of Franklin D. Roosevelt. From these larger political shifts emerged an alliance of convenience between the corrupt Pendergast machine and the Kansas City business community as together they worked to promote their city as a major midwestern metropolis. Sara Stevens illustrates in Chapter 3 how the city’s pioneering urban developer, J. C. Nichols, used aesthetic conventions and racially restrictive real estate covenants to create a model of American suburban development that was replicated throughout the nation. And in Chapter 4, Jaclyn Miller shows how city leaders used Kansas City’s position as a national economic leader to demand the establishment of a branch of the Federal Reserve Bank. City boosters used similar logic to attract additional national attention, including hosting the 1928 Republican National Convention, a topic explored by Dustin Gann in Chapter 5. Civic leaders would leverage this moment of triumph to enact a long-term vision for city development, creating a template for federal investment in local affairs during the New Deal.

In the second section, “Breaking Barriers in a Segregated City,” the chapters shift to the residents who altered social norms in the city. Kansas City’s unique political environment created opportunities for historically disenfranchised residents to advocate for improved social welfare and civil rights. In Chapter 6, John Herron investigates Kansas City’s first major industry, meatpacking, illustrating how workers, especially black laborers, attempted to organize for improved work-
ing conditions. Kyle Anthony follows with an examination of the city’s other industrial power, garment making. Chapter 7 reveals that unlike the laborers in the packinghouses, garment workers were unable to organize at the Donnelly Garment Company, one of the foremost dressmaking companies in America. The organizers ran up against the maternalistic management style of the company’s owner, Nell Donnelly Reed, one of the nation’s most successful female business owners. In Chapter 8, David Hanzlick reveals how elite Kansas City women expanded their power and influence from traditional social and philanthropic clubs into the realm of party politics. Although they did not meet with significant electoral success, they forced political leaders to recognize women as an important constituency. Indeed, it would be women from Kansas City’s Republican Party who played a key role in bringing down the Pendergast Democratic machine. Another prominent Kansas City woman, Lucile Bluford, managing editor of the city’s main black newspaper, The Call, challenged racial segregation in Missouri when she attempted to enroll in the University of Missouri’s prestigious journalism school. In Chapter 9, Henrietta Rix Wood explores how Bluford used rhetorical strategies in the pages of the paper to encourage readers to support her campaign for civil rights. In Chapter 10, Jason Roe shows how black community leaders pressed for the construction of a new public hospital to treat the city’s residents of color. The result was a state-of-the-art hospital entirely staffed by African American doctors and nurses that reflected the newfound political influence of black Kansas City. Valerie M. Mendoza concludes this section by illustrating how the effort to build stronger ethnic communities was not limited to African Americans. She reveals in Chapter 11 how the Mexican community, the largest immigrant group in the city, reshaped a settlement house first established by white philanthropists into a community institution that reflected its own priorities.

In the final section, “Culture at an American Crossroads,” the authors explore how Kansas City, one of the nation’s primary transportation hubs, emerged as a significant site of cultural production. The city would use its central geography not only to blend diverse regional influences but also to export a distinctive brand of artistic expression. Kansas City is well known for the development of jazz, a trend best illustrated by the nightlife of the Pendergast years, but Marc Rice reminds us in Chapter 12 that the early luminaries of the music scene were sustained by elite black Kansas Citians who employed them at various charity and social events. Kansas City’s famous black jazz musicians such as Bennie Moten, Count Basie, and Charlie Parker are rightly remembered as the founders of the Kansas City jazz style. Chuck Haddix argues in Chapter 13 that to national radio audiences in the 1920s, however, an earlier “Kansas City sound” was first introduced by a now-obscure local white dance band called the Coon-Sanders Nighthawk Orchestra. A few years after the Nighthawks left Kansas City in search of larger audiences, the internationally renowned artist Thomas Hart Benton returned to the Midwest from the East Coast
in an attempt to elevate Kansas City into a cultural mecca. In Chapter 14, Henry Adams explains that Benton used his position as a prominent artist of American regionalism and the son of an influential Missouri politician to forge relationships with the city’s cultural leaders and social elite. For a brief period, the Benton house was home to an avant-garde community of artists and expats. In a colorful example of the city’s open cultural mores, Stuart Hinds examines in Chapter 15 how female impersonators performed in Kansas City’s vaudeville theater and club venues long after similar performers were forced off the stages of many other American cities. And in the final chapter in the volume, Keith Eggener traces the construction, decline, and resurgence of Kansas City’s Liberty Memorial. The monument, built with local funds and erected in the 1920s, was intended to honor the sacrifice of millions in World War I. Just as important, the impressive site was also meant to announce the arrival of Kansas City as a national economic and cultural power. The memorial was long a point of civic pride, but in the mid-twentieth century, the complex fell into disrepair, matching a similar decline of the downtown core. In the early years of the new millennium, however, Kansas City’s leaders once again raised funds for the memorial, this time to refurbish the site in hopes of inaugurating a new golden age for the city.

With its heartland location, mild manners, and expansive suburbs, Kansas City has been stigmatized as generic “flyover” country. A look beneath the surface, however, reveals a much more complex and captivating story about American economic development, race relations, and cultural transformation. In an inversion of the everyplace narrative, the chapters in this volume illustrate that Kansas City holds significance to our understanding of America’s past.

Notes


8 Diane Mutti Burke, Jason Roe, and John Herron

PART ONE

Politics and Progress in Kansas City’s “Golden Age”
In the spring of 1908, Democrat Thomas T. Crittenden Jr., the son of a former Missouri governor, handily defeated his Republican opponent to become mayor of Kansas City, Missouri. His election marked a partisan as well as personal victory. Crittenden became only the second Democrat to win the mayor’s office since 1894, and Democrats also took back both houses of the city council, including seats in several reliably Republican wards on the expanding south side. Crittenden and his allies had achieved this remarkable success by explicitly playing on white Kansas Citians’ racial fears, turning white anxiety about crime, racial integration, and black political empowerment into votes. Over the next several months, they attempted to expand their local victory into a model for the entire state, pressing Missouri Democrats to commit the party to a vision of white supremacy centered on black disfranchisement.1

Crittenden’s surprising 1908 election victory both reflected and responded to a system of racial and electoral politics that stretched back almost half a century. In the wake of the Civil War, Missouri Democrats had reorganized their party around opposition to Radical Republican rule and the threat of black suffrage. In 1870, with ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the US Constitution providing for black men’s voting rights, they lost the fight against black suffrage but won, at least temporarily, against Republicans, with Democrats taking back statewide political control for the first time since the war. They were successful because of the assistance of self-styled Liberal Republicans, who supported black suffrage but broke
with the Radicals over voting restrictions on white wartime “disloyals.” Although postwar Democrats had initially organized against such political liberalism being extended to black people, over the next several decades, they largely accommodated themselves to black men as voters, even appealing for black votes at election time.

Democrats took such an unprecedented step because they needed all the votes they could get. Although it would take Republicans decades to rebuild the statewide strength that they had wielded during the 1860s, they quickly recovered in Kansas City and other urban areas, where waves of black migrants joined with white newcomers to produce an exceptionally competitive urban political landscape. While Republicans downplayed their relationship with black voters to court the state’s racially conservative whites, Democrats approached the same goal from the opposite direction, reaching out to black voters while assuring white Missourians that they
were still the party of white supremacy. Over time, these political shifts produced a new “liberal” order. Eschewing a clear economic ideology or partisan orientation, this new liberalism was a style of politics rooted in city life that mixed elements of pluralism and paternalism with the social, political, and economic preeminence of white male property holders, especially those with political connections.3

This new order allowed Democrats to compete with Republicans in urban Missouri, but it failed to restore uncontested Democratic dominance and produced its own critics from within the party. Such criticism was particularly fierce from the generation of aspiring young white men who, like Crittenden, came of age at the turn of the century. In these years—from roughly the 1880s through the 1910s—new white supremacist political movements swept the former slave states, and anti-immigrant groups argued that “racial” hierarchies could be found even among otherwise “white” Europeans.4 For many of these young white men, their fathers’ generation—and its “boss” politicians in particular—had threatened white supremacy and good government through corrupt deals with working-class and black men in return for political power.5 For Crittenden and his allies, black political equality necessarily entailed black social equality (whatever the denials of the boss politicians), and they were determined to demonstrate that they could seize and wield political power in the name of honest elections and the security of white, middle-class homes and families.6 Their failure would establish Kansas City’s place within the racial geography of the urban Midwest as well as set the stage for the rise of another “Tom,” Thomas J. Pendergast, whose system of twentieth-century urban liberalism drew heavily on the lessons of its predecessors.

Race and Partisanship in Late Nineteenth-Century Kansas City

In 1863, when Crittenden was born, Missouri’s laws restricted voting rights to white men.7 Although the wartime struggle over slavery had begun to present black Missourians with opportunities to claim new rights, such as the right to testify against their white owners in Union military courts, the overwhelming majority of white Missourians still opposed full legal and political equality for black people.8 As the war ended, however, Missouri’s newly ascendant Radical Republican majority began to press for greater black rights—both on the grounds of resolving emancipation and as a result of persistent lobbying on the part of black Missourians—with Democrats rallying in opposition. As early as October 1865, over a hundred delegates to a meeting in Kansas City resolved “that the Constitution and Government of the United States were ordained and established by white men for the benefit of themselves and their posterity.” The delegates further resolved that they were “opposed to negro suffrage, negro equality, miscegenation and all the kindred negroism of the Radical [Republican] party.”9