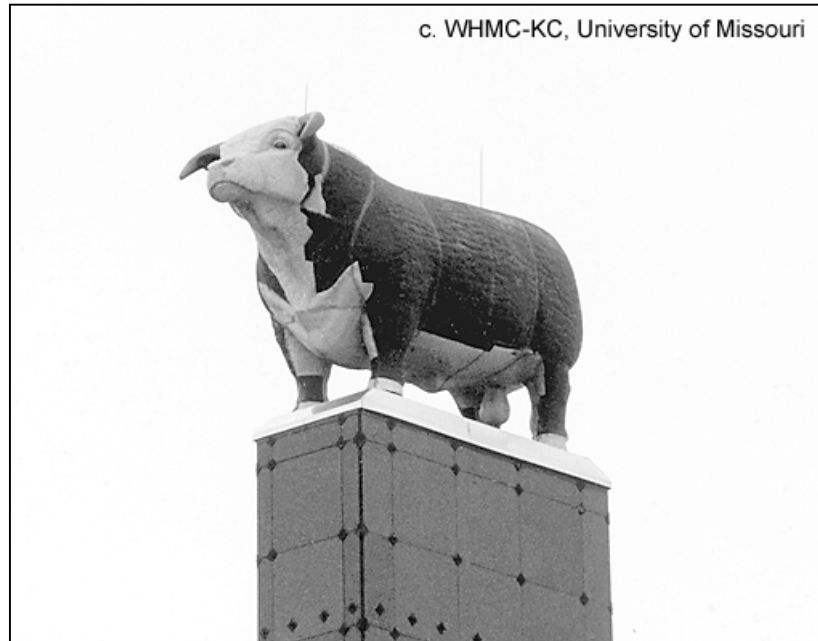


It's All About Eating: Kansas City's History and Opportunity



*Western Historical Manuscript Collection
Kansas City*

Charles N. Kimball Lecture

Mr. John A. Dillingham

President and Director, Dillingham Enterprises, Inc.

October 21, 1999

The Charles N. Kimball Lecture Series

is a tribute to our late friend and civic leader, Dr. Charles N. Kimball, President Emeritus of the Midwest Research Institute, to acknowledge his support of the Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City and his enduring interest in the exchange of ideas.

Charlie Kimball was a consummate networker bringing together people and ideas because he knew that ideas move people to action. His credo, “Chance favors a prepared mind,” reflects the belief that the truest form of creativity requires that we look two directions at once – to the past for guidance and inspiration, and to the future with hope and purpose. The study of experiences, both individual and communal – that is to say history – prepares us to understand and articulate the present, and to create our future – to face challenges and to seize opportunities.

Sponsored by the Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City, the Series is not intended to be a continuation of Charlie’s popular *Midcontinent Perspectives*, but does share his primary goal: to encourage reflection and discourse on issues vitally important to our region. The topic of the lectures may vary, but our particular focus is on understanding how historical developments affect and inform our region’s present and future. The Lectures will be presented by persons from the Kansas City region semi-annually in April, near the anniversary of Charlie’s birth, and in October. Additionally, presentations may occur at other times of the year, if opportunities present themselves.

WHMC-KC appreciates the substantial financial underwriting and support for this Series provided by the **Charles N. Kimball Fund** of the Midwest Research Institute and by other friends of Charlie Kimball.



1911-1994

INTRODUCTION

to the October 21, 1999 Charles N. Kimball Lecture

Mrs. Gerald W. Gorman

Commissioner of the Missouri Department of Conservation

Introducing John Dillingham is no ordinary task. It is even less so when the occasion is the Kimball Lecture – one of that remarkable series of lessons delivered to us by remarkably gifted citizens of our community. These speakers have been experts in their fields who have honed their expertise by work in the real world. Thus they have been able to impart a depth of knowledge and experience well beyond that available merely from books. It is entirely fitting that such speakers should teach us under the aegis of Charlie Kimball. Charlie was a legendary combination of scientific knowledge and civic involvement. Our community will be forever indebted to him for many things, and the Kimball Lectures are certainly not the least of his legacies.

But if Charlie was a legendary figure of his times, John is the son of a living legend. Jay Dillingham is a truly towering figure of our community. Former President of the Kansas City Stockyards Company, the only person ever to have been president of the Chambers of Commerce of both Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas, honored as Mr. Kansas Citian by the Chamber of Commerce and as honoree of virtually every other award bestowed by organizations on both sides of the state line, Jay has led an incredible number of campaigns for good causes and community betterment.

Fortunately, Jay's character has rubbed off on his only child, John. A director of several business corporations, John has also given generously of his time and talents to community activities. He is a director of the American Royal and Chairman of its History Committee. He is Chairman of the Clay County Industrial Development Authority and the Kansas City Municipal Assistance Corporation. He is a past Chairman of the Clay County Economic Development Council, the Missouri 4-H Foundation, and numerous civic cause committees, such as his chairmanship of the campaign to pass the levy for a new Clay County jail – a campaign which was successful after several prior attempts had failed. He is a former member of the Kansas City Board of Police Commissioners and the Kansas City Agribusiness Commission. His efforts have been recognized by numerous honors from many civic organizations.

Despite his successes in more sophisticated worlds, John has never forsaken his agricultural ties. He is an Honorary American Farmer of the FFA. He remains unabashedly proud that his childhood upbringing was not in a Country Club estate mansion but rather in the then wholly rural area of Smithville, where he lived on a farm and attended Smithville High School, before proceeding on to Wentworth Military Academy and ultimately the University of Missouri at Columbia.

Indeed John can make one remember an oft-told story about President Truman. Everyone here my age has heard it often, but perhaps some of our younger audience may not have. Supposedly Mrs. Truman was conducting some of her friends from Independence on a tour of the White House. Mr. Truman walked by, in animated

discussion with another man, and the ladies overheard Mr. Truman say angrily, “Tell him that’s just a bunch of manure!” This was in the 1940s, before television and movies had so egregiously debased our conversation. One of Mrs. Truman’s friends suggested the President should be cautioned about such language. Bess responded, “My dear, you have no idea how long it took me to get him to say ‘manure.’”

Well, John’s vivacious wife, Nancy – a community leader in her own right – has been working on John a long time. So let’s give John a chance to talk, and see how well she’s done.

Editor’s note: Gordon H. Lamb, Ph.D., Interim Chancellor of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, welcomed the gathering and introduced Mrs. Gorman.

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American Royal



1899 - 1999

It's All About Eating: Kansas City's History and Opportunity

Mr. John A. Dillingham

October 21, 1999

It is an honor to be selected, or as Mayor Wheeler suggested, drafted to deliver the last Kimball lecture of the 20th century. Of course, to have my longtime friend, neighbor, and Northland partner, Anita Gorman, tender my introduction seems only appropriate.

Back in the mid-1950s during my high school days at Smithville, I had an interest in Math and Science. Dad thought his friend, Dr. Charles Kimball, might be helpful to this farm boy from the newly annexed Northland portion of Kansas City. Dad had traveled with Marvin Marsh, Robert Long, and Charlie Kimball to Washington to successfully capture the first government contract for MRI. Thanks to Dr. Kimball's advice, my two college years at Wentworth Military Academy included a lot of Math, Physics, and Chemistry, and enabled me to win a Physics scholarship to the University of Missouri. Then, when serving on Senator Stuart Symington's staff in Washington at the beginning of the New Frontier, Dr. Kimball and our staff, led by Stan Fike, worked to land the NASA Manned Space Flight Center for Missouri. In hindsight, that effort was silly, since Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson headed the Space Council. The only question was where in Texas it would be? Houston won out.

I share some personal relationships with a man called Charlie Kimball, who played a big role in making Kansas City a major league town. He was especially nice to me and we now honor and thank him with this lecture series.

After the shock had worn off and knowing I would speak today on a subject that has directly involved our family for seven generations in Clay and Platte Counties, I started, over the last year, to reach out to potential soul-mates. I felt like an end-of-the-bench basketball player on a team loaded with all-Americans and with a winning record, when Coach Williams or Stewart looked my way, pointed at me, and said, "You! Get in there!" There are lots of experts who should be here today to carry the ball on the subject of agriculture's impact on Kansas City, but they weren't able to be here or play anymore, so this sub is going into the game. I asked former Kansas Governor and Congressman Bill Avery, who shipped cattle here for thirty years, for some sound bytes. He told me, "John, it's up to your generation, ours is too long in the mouth and smooth-toothed."

I'd like to thank Dave Boutros, our host; former Kansas Governors John Anderson and Bill Avery; and Missouri Treasurer Bob Holden, whose parents first met working in the Laird Brothers commission firm in the Livestock Exchange Building; friends in agriculture from Kansas and Missouri, including those great nearby land-grant universities of Missouri and K-State; and obviously friends and family relating to the American Royal and the former Kansas City Stockyards Company.

On to my subject – “It’s All About Eating.”

America is blessed with an abundance of good, relatively inexpensive food when compared with the rest of the world. Twenty-five years ago I served on Kansas City’s official Agribusiness Commission that touted KC as the World’s Food Capital. I felt then, and do so today, that we are or could be the food “King of the Mountain” on this planet called Earth.

I challenge you to compare Kansas City and the 500-mile radius around it to anywhere in the world when it comes to getting food on your plate cheaply. We’ve got the climate, global latitude, crop and livestock variations, land-grant universities and their extensions, transportation, communications, marketing, and distribution. Adding those to the beginning producer and his equipment means that our field, pasture, or feedlot path to our dinner plates, and all the steps necessary in between, cannot be matched. We don’t have shortages or food lines. Grocery store shelves are full in America.

America is especially blessed to have abundant water in rivers and underground aquifers, and even though erosion is a problem, we’re blessed with “new” land, compared to the land of the Old World – that is, land that has not been depleted of its nutrients and minerals.

Some feel the “Green Revolution” of the 1960s and 1970s that increased food production dramatically has reached its limit with yields leveling off and per capita food production falling since 1983. As the world population increases and land availability shrinks, does that eventually make a growth opportunity? Does Kansas City have a world-class asset or raw potential and not know it?

Agriculture is the leading industry in Missouri and Kansas. Thanks to the evolution and the efficiency of agriculture and agribusiness, one farmer feeds 100 to 125 people, depending on which sign you believe. The disturbing news is that the folks who feed us all, the folks with stuff on their boots, are not usually invited to dinner. They are not usually included in the making of public policy or the natural evolution of society, much less consulted or remembered. People seem to assume we get our food at Price Chopper, HyVee, or Bob’s IGA. Our culture doesn’t look out for the one segment of society that is the annual renewer of assets and is the real backbone of America’s greatness, with its ability to deliver the best, the most, the safest, and the least-expensive food to its people.

Before I speak to the potential of our region’s future, a little history of the livestock industry would be helpful on this 100th anniversary of the oldest livestock and horse show in America – Kansas City’s own American Royal. My interest is historical and personal. Even though I serve as a Royal director and governor, these thoughts are my own. This cup for the Grand Champion Feeders of Galloway cattle, my lucky reminder, was won at the American Royal in 1907 by my grandfather, Allen Thompson. That was also when he married, so he won a grand championship and my grandmother the same year. He was president when the Royal first incorporated in 1905, and had been involved since the beginning until the 1940s. He’s been gone over fifty years, but we’re still here to carry his name, with my middle name and our oldest son’s first name. I know he would be pleased and proud we are carrying on and meeting today, just two days from the 100th anniversary, on October 23rd.

Dad's grandfather, Sheriff John Dillingham, rode in the horse show in 1898 at Fairmount Park before the horses and cattle merged in the Stockyards at the show we know today. With a father and grandfather as past presidents or in some official capacity – they alone have touched perhaps all 100 years since 1899 – our family has five generations of American Royal involvement, including my BOTAR president and wife, Nancy, and two BOTAR-escort sons, Allen and Bill. (I should mention that Mother and my Aunt Louise were my grandfather's official hostesses during the 1930s as well.) Anyway, this Clay County 4-H Angus calf exhibitor of the mid-1950s has experienced or heard about the American Royal all his life.

A hundred years is a long time for one entity to exist – especially with the same general product. I marvel at the vision and cooperation exhibited. Around the turn of the last century, my grandfather Thompson and his father reportedly had the largest Galloway herd in the country at Maple Grove Stock Farm on the Clay/Platte Line, due east of the KCI airport. His father had traveled to Scotland to start his herd in the 1890s. A Galloway looked like a cross between a black Angus and a shaggy-looking small buffalo. Hereford and Shorthorn breeds were larger and more popular, and the Angus was growing in popularity.

In 1922, some fifteen years after the American Royal was incorporated, Allen Thompson, then manager of the horse show, was asked by the Breed Associations and Stockyards Company to go to Chicago to see the Morris family (the largest stockholder in the Kansas City Stockyards Company) about constructing a new American Royal building. He met with Thomas Wilson, president, who later was chairman of the Wilson & Company meat packing establishment and an exhibitor of Shorthorn cattle at the American Royal. Mr. Wilson approved the building – a contribution of \$7-800,000 of Yard Company money that could have otherwise gone to the stockholders.

I find it interesting that my grandfather went, instead of the presidents of either the Royal or Stockyards. I am also intrigued that in 1905, the larger and more prominent breeds selected Allen Thompson, a Galloway breeder, to be their leader. Imagine George Steinbrenner of the New York Yankees, Ted Turner of the Atlanta Braves, and Marge Schott of the Cincinnati Reds asking Mr. Kauffman of the Kansas City Royals to be President of Major League Baseball. The cooperation exhibited 100 years ago, if present today, would produce revenue sharing in baseball. To me these early examples of teamwork and trust allow us to enjoy the Royal today. The breeders knew that by working together, the sum of the parts would be greater than the whole.

Why did the Royal start? We need to first quickly review the history of the Stockyards to clarify that story. As you know, Lewis and Clark started the quest almost 200 years ago when the only interstate out of St. Louis was the Missouri River, and with all due respect to the Arch, the West started here where the Kaw ends and the Mighty Missouri turns north. Here was the kick-off point for the great trails that led to the development of the western United States – a place that has become known as Kansas City – now 150 years young as we celebrate KC150.

Before a national transportation network formed, meatpacking was local within a 150 miles radius. New York, at that point, led the nation in animals slaughtered.

However, with canals and then railroads, meatpacking of cattle and hogs began the move toward the producing areas of the West.

Prior to the Civil War, as the country reached to the Far West, demand for beef increased. Cattle purchased here for ten dollars sold for \$150 a head in the California mining camps. The Santa Fe Trail was leaving from Westport, and Alexander Majors (also one of the founders of the Pony Express) at his zenith had 75,000 oxen in this venture – that’s almost one for every Chiefs fan at Arrowhead, yet it was 150 years ago. The wagon trains outfitted in Liberty, Independence, and Westport, and headed southwest and northwest. Ferries at places like Harlem were the only connections across the wide Missouri.

After the 1845 annexation of Texas, the overland cattle drives to Missouri greatly expanded. Great herds were driven north to the river at points from Kansas City to Boonville. Unfortunately, tick fever, to which the tough Texas Longhorn was immune, caused great losses among northern cattle, bringing about a Missouri legislative quarantine that was finally enforced at the end of the Civil War. Originally, St. Louis was the destination of the Texas Longhorn – they had stockyards in 1845 but the buyers were scarce and the demand was low, so drovers traded in Western Missouri. By 1855, Robert Van Horn’s *Enterprise* printed a letter stating that “At Kansas City will be located the great meat market for a large portion of the United States.”

As the country moved west, so did the western cattle trade – the Scioto Valley of the Ohio, next the Illinois prairies with Chicago as a market, then, thanks to the railroads, the shift to the Kansas-Missouri border. It was believed that here was the best stopping point because beyond Kansas City lay the prairie grass plains, 800 miles wide by 1600 miles long. This vast region is preeminently adapted by nature to forever be the world’s great pasture.

The 1860s, beginning with a national Civil War and Kansas Statehood, proved to be crucial years for Kansas City. The war caused a virtual collapse of the livestock business in Kansas City, which was then ten years old. However, it also created a demand for meat products in the East. Since St. Joseph completed the first eastern railroad connection in 1859, cattle and hogs left there for Chicago – even though many had to be ferried across the Missouri River.

The Union victory at Vicksburg cut off the supply of cattle to the Confederacy. At war’s end, three to five million cattle were estimated roaming the Texas ranges. Though priced at one to two dollars per head there were no buyers and no transportation to the Northeast where they would sell for nearly \$100 per head. This was the business opportunity that drives this story.

In 1866, the long cattle drives were revived, destined again for the Missouri River towns and also the newer railroad centers like Sedalia on the Missouri Pacific line. But again cattle fever was a major problem. All the Midwestern states enacted new legislation in an attempt to prohibit the herds from entering. Yet the St. Joseph *Morning Herald* reported ferrying 25,000 Texas cattle across the river for rail shipment east.

Kansas law offered a loophole allowing herds to enter the central portion of the state to be loaded on what would become the Kansas Pacific and sent east. Even during the border violence in 1861, tracks were laid west of Twelfth Street here toward Topeka – the

new capital to be – and then to protective Fort Riley and the first Kansas state capital, Ogden, then on to Abilene.

The Chisholm Trail from Texas to Abilene was from 700 to 1,000 miles long and took sixty to ninety days. There were perhaps 5,000 cattle in a drive, on a dusty sagebrush prairie highway prone to Indians, bad weather, and dry watering holes.

The man credited with the eventual development of Kansas City as the major cattle market of the West was Joseph McCoy. He selected Abilene as the site for his cattle market, and invested, built facilities, and successfully promoted his product to Texas in the late 1860s. The first shipments on the Kansas Pacific from Lawrence went to Leavenworth, St. Joseph, and on to Chicago. That route didn't work, so Kansas City took Leavenworth's place, even though at war's end she had 18,000 citizens while we had less than 2,000. The final icing on the cake was the completion of the Hannibal Bridge in 1869 – the first railroad bridge across the Missouri River – which gave our city an enormous jump on our rivals. This dramatic victory is a powerful example of the role of personal leadership in the promotion of economic development, coupled with fate and good luck. McCoy's venture in Abilene failed in 1874, but his prophetic writings, similar to pre-war Van Horn's, suggested Kansas City's future.

Another major factor that made Kansas City was the evolution of the Stockyards, which later in its heyday, was the largest stocker/feeder market in the world. Again, luck and fate played a role. As late as 1870, Kansas City was merely a point for feeding, watering, and re-shipping through small railroad owned and run yards. Anticipating an expansion of cattle and the need for land, pens, unloading chutes, and a Fairbanks scale to replace the country "eyeballing" method of weighing, the Kansas Stockyards was formed in 1871, and an exchange building was built just west of the state line on Sixteenth Street.

By 1872, business had doubled, and so did the exchange building. By 1876, reorganization created the Kansas City Stockyards Company and brought in the eastern capital of the prominent Bostonian Adams family of presidential fame. Growing from thirteen to fifty-five acres, new pens were built, loading docks were constructed on both the Kansas and Missouri Pacific tracks, and four new 6,000-pound Fairbanks scales were installed. Also, for the first time, there were sheds for hogs and sheep. In 1878, the first purchase of land on the Missouri side made the Yards a bi-state operation. It was also time to branch out to activities that would improve the quality of western livestock and produce profit – thus began the Fat Stock Show.

Native western cattle, being leggy, angular, and long-horned, left much to be desired when reduced to beef. To represent those times, the American Royal (thanks to a gift from the Kansas City Stockyards Company) possesses in its front lobby a famous and valuable large oil painting depicting an early cattle drive, along with supposedly the world record collection of mounted Texas Long Horns. The West, therefore, was a ready market for purebred beef animals from older states. Shorthorns, Herefords, Angus, and Galloways all were introduced following the Civil War and worked wonders as extra profit producers, both by themselves, and when crossed with native stock. The show was planned as an educational feature to further demonstrate the value and promote the use of the bred-for-beef type. The Kansas City Fat Stock Show Association was formed in 1882 with \$5,000 capital subscribed. Colonel C.F. Morse, Manager of the Kansas City Stockyards Company, was president.

The first five annual shows, through November of 1887, were held at the stockyards at Riverview Park, just south of the present Livestock Exchange building. By the 1890s, a series of just purebred shows were held. Both the shows and sales greatly enhanced the reputation and growth of the Kansas City market and influenced its growth in succeeding years.

Early on, there was no governing body for the trade, no organization to establish standard prices and practices to protect the shippers or buyers against unscrupulous traders. This lack led to the first Livestock Exchange in 1886.

By 1895 the building was enlarged again; land along the Kaw was reclaimed for an independent railroad switching system completely under Stockyards control; double-decker hog and sheep houses were built; more land in Missouri was acquired; and a new private water system from zone wells and miles of pipe supplied an abundance of free water to all parts of the Yards.

By the end of the 19th century, a livestock market of the West had come of age! For the first twenty-five years – 1871 to 1896 – we saw continued expansion of the Kansas City livestock market. The country was being settled more rapidly, more land was being put to use, and individual land holdings were becoming smaller, which meant more crops and more livestock of all kinds were produced. With the terrific growth of the livestock industry came the creation of a great central market in Kansas City, the firm establishment of the Kansas City Stockyards as a marketplace and a promoter of shows and sales. That resulted in livestock improvements, the inducement of locating more buyers here, and thus the encouragement to establish substantial packing companies along with the extension of transportation facilities that set the pattern for the future. As the livestock market developed, so did financing which allowed Kansas City to become a major distribution center, as well as a major financial center for the entire West and Southwest.

Financing for the livestock industry was solved in part by the Armour family's founding a bank that had a more national capability. This was crucial to meat packers, and they adopted an early policy of creating their own banks when adequate local resources did not exist. This led to the establishment of new meatpacking firms shortly after the Civil War.

Conflicts arose between the large national packing firms and local packers. The national firms developed primarily as the center of livestock production shifted west and hauling distances for the meat products became longer. The products were perishable, and therefore efficient distribution was the key to success (previously only possible in the thickly populated eastern sections of the country). In the early days one of the first post-Civil War packers to arrive in Kansas City was Edwin Pattison. Like McCoy, he had put up a packing house in Junction City, and in the years to follow a large number of consolidations occurred as the industry developed. The second of these pioneer packers was Thomas Bigger, an immigrant from Belfast who came to New York during the Civil War planning to prepare meats especially for the Irish market. Realizing the industry was moving west, he looked at a number of alternative sites and settled in Kansas City. This is of personal interest to me, because in my family genealogy study I noted that my wife Nancy's great grandfather, William Bigger, had married in 1876 in Belfast and stopped in

Kansas City on his way to honeymoon in Colorado. After a few short years he moved back and permanently settled in Kansas City, Kansas. I often wondered why anybody from Belfast would want to come this way for a honeymoon. In my research I found the reason, obviously, was to introduce his new bride to his brother. That connection developed into a packing, real estate, and insurance business that lasted until the 1980s in Kansas City, Kansas.

After the 1880s, most of the smaller firms were absorbed as national packinghouses moved into the area. One of these small packers, Dr. F.B. Nofsinger, was the first of the local packers to experiment with shipping fresh beef with ice in refrigerated cars. George Hammond made similar attempts in Chicago, and while he was not successful, eventually this innovation was perfected by Gustava Swift and revolutionized the industry.

The decision of Plankinton and Armour to build a plant in Kansas City in 1870 was timely. Their success in the next decade resulted in the establishment of branches of other major national packers. A decade earlier, one of the Armour brothers, knowing the Civil War was about to end and that meat prices would fall, took a trip east and sold short on a vast quantity of pork to an eastern pool. This venture made the firm a huge profit of somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1.5 million, giving the partners the additional capital necessary to vastly expand their operations. After the war they opened branches in Chicago and New York, and then in Kansas City where at full capacity they required more than 600 men. One writer remarked that it was “impossible to estimate the enormous value of this gigantic enterprise to the city.” The firm had the largest beef packing plant in the world.

In the 1870s, salting beef and pork was the only way to move the product. With the adoption of refrigeration sometime after the mid-1870s it is interesting to note that fresh beef shipments grew from almost nine million pounds to 211 million pounds in 1890. Also, Kansas City’s significance in pork packing became evident in the 1880s when it bypassed Cincinnati and St. Louis to become second only to Chicago. At one point, in the 1940s, a million dollars (1940s dollars) a day in transactions at the Stockyards was being made by a mere handshake.

With the success of the Kansas City plant, Armour decided that it should enlarge at Kansas City rather than Chicago. The expansion of Armour & Company in 1892 marked Kansas City’s meat packing maturity.

By the 1890s, the Kansas City Stockyards Company had approximately 300 men in its operations. Seven and one-half million dollars invested in that enterprise, coupled with the \$25 million invested in the packinghouse industry, accounted for almost eighty percent of the total capital in manufacturing in Kansas City. I read with interest a recent article that voiced concern about Sprint having upwards of ten percent of the office space in Kansas City. That’s nothing compared to knowing that a hundred years ago eighty percent was located in what is now called the “West Bottoms” in one industry – all within sight, sound, or smell of both downtowns. Isn’t it comforting to know today that our remaining ninety percent, like Farmland, Hallmark, Ford, GM, and the federal government, is diverse, growing, and still here?

During the first years of the local industry, most of the cattle offered for sale came from Texas, but by the 1870s, they had all but disappeared. By then the spread of cattle had increased in our neighboring states of Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado, and therefore most of the stock marketed in Kansas City was considered native. This improved the quality of the Kansas City market, and territories as far distant as Utah, Wyoming, and Oregon began very early to patronize the market because of that quality. The development of ranches in the local producing area also gave greater stability to the Kansas City market by establishing a narrower annual fluctuation in volume and more orderly marketing procedures.

It should be mentioned that we had one of the largest horse and mule markets in the country. During the early part of this century, Guyton and Herrington of Lathrop, Missouri, had a major presence locally. Later there was Ferd Owen (for those who remember, across the street east from the Royal – and next to the only Sutherland lumberyard then in Kansas City) with branches in Memphis and Shreveport. Many of these animals were needed for hauling, tilling the soil, and the war efforts in Europe.

Just a month ago in the 100-year-ago column in the *Platte City Landmark*, mention was made of the English agent who visited Kansas City in September 1899 and spent \$170,000 purchasing for the British army packinghouse products, canned beef, and 200 Missouri mules. Here's evidence of international trade one month before the Royal began.

If a hundred years ago eighty percent of the invested capital of Kansas City lay in the stockyards and livestock industry and some successful stock shows had already been held, it would only seem natural to create a new show that would broaden the awareness of the industry, as well as the town itself. And so under a tent in the fall of 1899, the Hereford breeders began what we today celebrate as the American Royal Livestock and Horse Show.

To me, the Livestock and Horse show stands for eating and transportation, for goods and individuals. Later on, horses assumed an entertainment role when, thanks to Henry Ford and others, their working function was replaced with the “mechanical” horsepower of cars, tractors, and trucks. Entertainment has played an enormous role in all 100 Royal years by attracting crowds who were then exposed to our agricultural heritage and assets. But nothing has ever replaced the competition of livestock, or the purpose for which it was started – eating – whether at the show or in our nation.

Remembering our roots, J.C. Nichols once said publicly that there never would have been a Country Club Plaza had it not been for the Stockyards in Kansas City.

In the beginning the American Royal adopted Kansas City as its home and remained loyal to the city through many tribulations. It got bigger every year, and yet it was the last of the big livestock shows to have a permanent and adequate home. An article in 1933 referred to the American Royal as a “stray cat” who camped on Kansas City's doorstep and refused to be shooed away. Cold and hungry, it would not be enticed away by offers of warm shelter and abundant food by the neighbors. It came uninvited and remained, notwithstanding the absence of any effusive welcome. It knew what it wanted – to make Kansas City its permanent place of abode. It knew that Kansas City needed it and it had implicit faith that the city eventually would realize this fact, which

Kansas City did after so long a time. But the American Royal adopted Kansas City long before Kansas City adopted the American Royal.

The American Royal is the mother of all American livestock shows. Prior to the holding of the National Hereford Show there was no permanent distinctive national livestock show. The Royal was devoted primarily to the interest of purebred breeding livestock in the United States. Its only counterpart in the world, in fact, was the annual exhibition of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, known as the English Royal, which moved around the country. Our forefathers thought we ought to have an American Royal patterned after that great tradition in England. Beginning in the early 1890s, shows and expositions that featured purebred livestock exhibits were held at various places, such as Chicago and Omaha. C.R. Thomas, then secretary of the American Hereford Cattle Breeders Association, had been very successful in these exhibits. He asked why a show should not be held at the same time as the annual national exhibition of Herefords. Kansas City was the logical place to hold such a show since here was the headquarters of the Hereford Association and the leading market for the cattle growers of the Southwest and West. And so it came about – the National Hereford Show, held in a tent at the Kansas City Stockyards Company, October 23-28, 1899 – 100 years ago this week. All of the judges in this National Hereford Show were breeders of beef cattle other than Herefords, thus giving the appearance of fairness and objectivity. As far as I know, the integrity of the show has never been compromised.

This show was so successful that it attracted nationwide attention, making other cities quite envious of the advertising it gave Kansas City. There was little question about whether the next show would be held. Rather, the question was only where, since there were numerous bids to hold the show in other cities such as Chicago and Minneapolis. Luckily the Hereford people were thoroughly sold on Kansas City.

In 1900 the Shorthorn breeders, seeing the success of the Herefords, questioned entering the show. Some were not sure but a former Kansas governor and Shorthorn breeder said, “If we think we’re good, let’s enter and find out.” One needs to remember that 100 years ago, many businessmen owned a herd of cattle. William Rockhill Nelson, publisher of *The Kansas City Star* and *Times*, who raised Shorthorns on his country Sni-A-Bar farm, is a good example.

By 1901, the Galloways had been included in the show, and the next year all four breeds, including the Angus, rounded out a real livestock exhibition. And they adopted the “American Royal Livestock Show” name. In 1905 the Royal, still in a tent in the Stockyards, was moved forward a week because other events held simultaneously overcrowded the hotels.

Prior to 1905, a committee of representatives of the several cattle breed associations and the Kansas City Stockyards had operated the Royal. When it incorporated, the new board of directors was also composed of representatives of the breed associations and the Stockyards Company, with the presidency rotating among the several interests.

The first night Horse Show of the American Royal was held in the tent in 1905, and eventually the uptown Horse Show held at Convention Hall was abandoned in favor of a combined Horse Show at the Royal.

Gone but not forgotten is Mr. Eugene Rust, former general manager of the Kansas City Stockyards, who played an enormous role in the first twenty-five years in American Royal operations and building construction, and who history records as one of the "Fathers of the American Royal." Following the 1900 tragic burning of Convention Hall, Mr. Rust supervised its rebuilding in ninety days in order for the Democratic National Convention to be held as scheduled and on time.

To envision the times, cattle receipts at the Stockyards in 1907, just thirty-six years after it opened, had jumped to 2.7 million head. At the same time they were handling about 4.8 million head of other livestock, including calves, hogs, horses, sheep, and mules, for a total of 7.5 million animals, or about 20,000 animals a day. It took a lot of space and people that year, and almost 150,000 railroad cars.

Two humorous events in the early years caught my attention: a mule show was going quite well until someone opened the gate and pushed in a zebra. The mules all ran to the opposite end of the arena, dragging their handlers and looking very concerned at this strange looking horse. Secondly, the ladies had installed bunting throughout the ring when in came Angora goats who proceeded to eat the bunting and then some official's clothing. (I didn't want you to think things were dull.)

After the flood of 1903 the buildings for the Royal and Stockyards were left in such a weakened condition that new ones had to be built. The primary outcome was the current Livestock Exchange Building, in 1910 the largest in the world devoted to livestock, and perhaps the largest office structure in Kansas City at that time. It was built a block east in Missouri, due to long-standing legal problems with the state of Kansas, and it was the last Kansas City investment by the Adams family of Boston. I believe the Morris family purchased the Adams interest in 1913, and the Company was reincorporated in the state of Maine as the Kansas City Stockyards Company of Maine. The Yards grew to encompass 238 acres.

Also owned by the Stockyards, the Kansas City Connecting Railroad Company became an efficient way for the Stockyards internally to move various shipments. Completed in 1915, it enabled stock brought by train to the Stockyards to be transferred and unloaded without delay and switching changes. At one time there were over ten miles of track and thirteen incoming railroads. At its height in 1943, one thousand cattle cars were loaded in one night. There were almost 64,000 cattle and calves that day in the Yards.

As a network of highways spread throughout the country and smaller individual livestock holdings became the rule, truck shipments grew in popularity, and Kansas City's livestock market gained in importance. Its territory was nationwide, for Kansas City shipped livestock to or received livestock from all forty-eight states.

But growth sometimes causes problems as well as benefits. In the early years, as the show grew, even while being held in a tent, it inconvenienced commission firms to transact business and therefore became less welcome at the Stockyards. When attendance exceeded 100,000 persons in 1913, the Stockyards Company served notice on the show management that it would have to look for another location. The Company relented, however, and the 1914 show would have gone on as scheduled (moved back to mid-November) but for a serious nationwide hoof-and-mouth disease quarantine that

caused it to be called off. The next year the Stockyards again said they definitely would refuse to entertain the American Royal. There was talk on the street that \$100,000 could be raised to have a permanent home for the Royal at Electric Park but the pledges never came through. The Chamber of Commerce even became interested and went to Chicago to study the International. Everybody there said the show needed to be located in the Stockyards, and that the Stockyards Company should provide a home for the American Royal at its expense.

The Royal treasury in 1913 was nearly empty and preparations for the 1914 show (which was not held) exhausted the funds and created a deficit – and they didn't have a place to hold the show. The 1915 and 1916 shows were held at Convention Hall, north of the current Municipal Auditorium, and were complete fiascos. The 1917 Royal was held at Electric Park, but the facilities were entirely inadequate and attendance was the smallest in years. One of the show's most important features, a car lot exhibit of fat and feeder cattle, had to be abandoned for lack of space.

Then in October 1917, twenty-five acres of stockyards cattle pens and 12,000 animals were destroyed by fire. The Hartford Insurance Company fully covered the million-dollar livestock loss. Kansas City businessmen brought great pressure to bear on the Stockyards to again hold the show in 1918. As the decision was made late, there were inadequate preparations, and only three beef breeds were shown and the car lot was not shown. The Liberty Loan and Red Cross drives were in full swing and therefore no contributions for the Royal came from businessmen. From the standpoint of the number and quality of beef cattle exhibits, the 1918 show was a success, but the attendance was pitifully small. The 1919 show was again held at Convention Hall because the Stockyards refused to provide space. Wherever one looked, the show had outgrown every facility. There was renewed talk for a permanent home for the American Royal, and this time the Stockyards Company yielded to the appeals of the uptown business interests and the breeders.

The 1920 and 1921 shows were held at the Yards, where one of the sheep barns was made into a fairly adequate pavilion. It could be heated after a fashion, which was necessary because the show's date had been moved back to late November.

Following the fiftieth anniversary of the Stockyards, the idea of a new home had finally crystallized. In 1922 the show was held in a new American Royal Show Pavilion at the Stockyards with seven and a half acres of floor area – the largest and most modern building of this character in the United States. As mentioned earlier, the Kansas City Stockyards Company primarily financed construction, their greatest single expenditure for the Royal to date – the \$7-800,000 contribution Allen Thompson sought and was approved by Thomas Wilson of the Morris Company, the Yards largest stockholder. When an automobile show in 1925 sparked a fire causing great damage, the building was rebuilt, a better structure than the original.

The American Royal was no longer just a beef cattle show, it was a great national exposition of farm and ranch activities. But though the Royal did much to enhance the city's reputation and pocket book, it was that "stray cat." Other cities appreciated what the American Royal was better than Kansas City and imitated it with offspring shows of their own for which they showed their support more broadly and in a more substantial

manner. Everyone realized these kinds of shows needed to be at the stockyards to be successful, but in other cities the entire cost of pavilions was borne by the businessmen and taxpayers, as well as by the stockyards companies. One of the reasons, perhaps, that this didn't happen in Kansas City was because of the independence, modesty, and self-reliance of the American Royal and the Stockyards Company. In order to enlarge its support, when the American Royal's permanent home was constructed, its management was extended to also include a number of prominent Kansas City businessmen, representatives of the several breed organizations, and instructors in the agricultural colleges.

Several interesting things occurred after the building was redone following the 1925 fire. Mrs. Carol Durand, the first woman to ride with the United States Equestrian Team, opened the door for women into what was then a man's world of riding when she won her first show at the American Royal. The next year the first nationwide Livestock Judging Contests were held in Kansas City, the American Royal Parade first took to the streets when two bands marched together, and the first American Royal Board of Governors was formed.

By 1928, because of the Royal, the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization was founded in Kansas City and stayed seventy years. We miss the blue jackets, which I wore in 1953 as a "Greenhand" under the local leadership of Jim Leathers, and would welcome them back home someday soon. The 4-H movement in the Midwest was also growing and continues strong today. It has always been an integral part of the American Royal.

In 1934, the great African-American horseman Tom Bass died. Will Rogers commented about this man who had trained thousands and thousands of horses so the society folks could perform on beautiful three- and five-gaited horses:

My, what skill and patience they must have had to train that animal. Well, all they did was ride him. All that Tom Bass did was train them. He trained thousands for which others were applauded. A remarkable man, a remarkable character. If old St. Peter is as wise as we give him credit for being, Tom, he will let you go in on horseback and give those folks up there a good show and you'll get the blue ribbon yourself.

It was noted, at that time, that Mr. Bass was the only Black ever to exhibit at the American Royal.

Mr. Kemper stated in 1939 that he was very much in favor of putting more glamour into the American Royal and suggested an American Royal Queen. It would begin in various counties within our trade territory with contests that would arouse great interest, and would serve to bring people to the show. The first American Royal Queen was from Claremore, Oklahoma, and was chosen from thirty-eight candidates. Also included that year was a drill unit from Ft. Riley, The Second Dragoons, flashily outfitted and well-trained.

By 1941 and the beginning of the Second World War, the Saddle and Sirloin Club was founded in an effort to unify the downtown interests of Kansas City with the Stockyards and livestock industry, and to help improve and perpetuate the American

Royal. By that time the show had 6,000 animals and about 200,000 spectators participating in a ten-day event. That Royal Week would see the largest number of farm youngsters ever assembled in Kansas City. Another first was the presence of a woman judge in the Royal Horse Show ring. Due to the war the largest hog display in Royal history was held, fueled by Great Britain's need for nine million American hogs in the coming year.

No shows could be held during the war years of 1942 to 1945 due to government restrictions and regulations. The Stockyards Company leased the arena to be used as a glider plant for war production and no other facilities were available for the show. Following World War II, the show was held under the auspices of the American Royal Association, and the great Loula Long Combs, celebrating her fiftieth year as an exhibitor, was recognized on Kansas Day in a jam-packed American Royal arena.

By 1949, civic and social leaders created the BOTAR organization as a subsidiary of the American Royal. We're celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year. A very unique, strong metro-wide organization of talented women, it has become one of the largest yearly sources of financial support to the Royal. It has involved many young men and women who have grown to be the leaders of Kansas City, including a governor and lieutenant governor of Missouri. As Senator Harry Darby, Chairman of the Royal and one of the founders of BOTAR, pointed out, we knew that if we had the girls we would get the boys.

I remember anchor Randall Jesse of WDAF-TV doing Kansas City's first live television broadcast from the Royal, interviewing Senator Darby, my dad, and Roy Roberts, publisher of *The Kansas City Star* which owned WDAF-TV – another fifty-year milestone.

On Friday, July 13, 1951, when the Kaw River could not flow into the Missouri, the flood inundated and damaged much of the Royal, along with the Kansas City Stockyards and packing plants. Undaunted, the officials pushed the cleanup efforts. Joyce Hall commissioned Norman Rockwell to paint the "Kansas City Spirit," the figure with the rolled up sleeves who told the world we were "back in business." The American Royal opened on schedule that year and to a packed house.

But this great flood, coupled with refrigerated trucks on growing highways and later interstates, was the beginning of the end of the Stockyards and the meat packing industry, as we knew it. The Stockyards and related industries just "below downtown" had accounted for a workforce of 25,000 – equivalent to a payroll of \$1.2 billion in today's dollars. The flood had a dramatic effect on downtown and Kansas City, Kansas, and contributed greatly to today's urban sprawl. When these workers left, their salaries and spending money left with them. What remained was a big doughnut with a hole in the middle. This doesn't include the 25,000 defense workers who were out of work a few years earlier. No wonder it influenced downtown Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri. What didn't happen, fortunately, during both the Eisenhower and Nixon administrations, was the attempt to move all 25,000 federal government employees to Colorado.

I should mention as we try to reinvent the concept of "bi-state" that the Stockyards, for over 110 years until it closed operation in Missouri and Kansas, included on its Board very prominent men from both states: names like Darby, Kemper,

Sutherland, House, Adams, Morris, and Bever. Straddling a state line, the Stockyards was represented by two governors, four senators, two congressmen, six county “Judges,” and two mayors. When you add an industry of 25,000 people in two states, they got action when and where needed.

I should digress to also mention that those clouds that brought the flood waters had a silver lining, and thanks to having the Presidency in Kansas City, so to speak, for fifteen years (from 1945 to 1960) a great deal of bi-state political cooperation took place that would be impossible in today’s political climate. You need to remember the leaders of the Royal, the Stockyards, the livestock industry, and public officials of Kansas and Missouri, all were relatively close socially and business-wise. Thanks to the cooperative efforts of Mr. Truman and the Republican members of the Congress from Kansas, and later President Eisenhower and the Democratic members from Missouri, the way was paved for the great flood control projects – lakes, dams, and reservoirs in both states. Out of the mud grew the important industry second to agriculture in both Kansas and Missouri – recreation and tourism. (ABC news just recently stated that there is more money spent in America on fishing than on golf and tennis combined.) These partisan politicians had a bigger vision – they were Americans first (both Presidents were U.S. Army officers in Europe in WWI, along with Senator Darby). They put aside their differences and worked as a team, backing each other, and created all those lakes and dams that we take for granted for our boats, for fishing, and for flood control, beginning with Tuttle Creek in Kansas, Table Rock in Missouri...should I mention Branson? Dad served on the Water Resources Board of Missouri when most of the flood control projects were approved.

It couldn’t be done today because of all the partisan mistrust and so-called environmentalists. You can’t go out and start new dams – it just wouldn’t happen. And do we enjoy this important industry! So out of the unselfishness of these statesmen grew this important industry – just as happened in 1899 when the Hereford, Shorthorn, Angus, and Galloway owners said, “You know, we’ve got something bigger than us, and if we work together, what could we do? We can better our product, our industry, our town.” It was quite a vision.

One of the highlights for me personally following the flood in the early 1950s was the railroad dining car and lounge owned by Missouri Pacific parked on Stockyard’s tracks along the west side of the arena building during the show week. This was the only place at the American Royal for exhibitors, Royal and Stockyards officials, families, and guests to the Show to dine and relax in a quality atmosphere. As one might expect, this required hookups of electricity, hot water, and sewers from some place.

In 1953, it was an honor and great pleasure for me to see President Dwight Eisenhower, guest of Senator Harry Darby, at the opening performance of the American Royal. What a sight in the darkened old Royal building to see the arena filled with Hereford cattle, each with two handlers in long white jackets under the bright lights, and to hear “Hail to the Chief” and see the President of the United States enter the show ring. You might remember that Ike in his retirement had an Angus herd in Gettysburg. He had also been in town to address the FFA Convention and dedicate the Hereford Building uptown with the great Hereford bull on top, a great tribute to Kansas City which, with Bud Snidow’s leadership, was built for \$50,000. Imagine a President in Kansas City for

three days. President Eisenhower told the delegates at the FFA Convention that “no plans would be sent to Congress that do not provide firmly for the national interest by encouraging prosperity in American agriculture.”

In 1954, NBC agreed to broadcast the Today Show from Kansas City and feature the Royal. In 1955, the American Royal boasted having more entries of horses and livestock than any similar show in the world, and it was the first time that a show of any comparable stature had introduced a heifer classification for junior exhibitors in the purebred division. As a 4-H project, I had the privilege of showing in that category an Angus heifer named Trixie, as well as steers “Big Stuff” and “Fat Stuff.” These were pets after I raised, groomed, and fed them for a year. I took Trixie home to start my herd, but the steers were sold at auction. Their halters were removed, and I walked away, knowing their fate. These ribbons, signs, and pictures are my reminders today.

Gene Autry entertained at the Royal in 1956, and the Missouri mule, symbol of Missouri, disappeared from American Royal competition. In 1957, George Shepherd, “Old Pancho” from Ft. Worth, was named Executive Secretary – he and a secretary were the only full-time paid staff, with the Stockyards furnishing other necessary employees. In 1959, the BOTAR’s had been successful enough that they won approval to be an organization on their own.

The American Royal Association for the first time financially struck out on its own and signed a lease with the Kansas City Stockyards in 1962. The Royal broke ground for a million-dollar livestock Governor’s Exposition Building in the Stockyards – the Royal’s first step in separating from the Stockyards Company. To assist in this, my father representing the Company, at the personal request of Campaign Chairman George Powell, and without asking for Board approval, forgave a \$400,000 debt owed in past lease payments by the American Royal. Again, that was money that would have gone to the stockholders.

Former President Harry Truman and others asked if the Royal would hold a special exhibition for the Missouri mule, after an eight-year absence, on Missouri Day 1963. Mr. Truman rode around the ring on a wagon, while the band played the *Missouri Waltz*. He then personally presented ribbons and awards to the winning mules, and reportedly remarked how easy this would be inasmuch as he had decorated many similar type persons throughout his political career.

In the 1960s, after a twelve-year absence, big-time championship rodeo returned, Andy Patterson formally retired, and in 1968, thanks to friend Senator Harry Darby, Bob Hope came to Kansas City for a big \$100-a-plate mortgage-burning dinner at the Muehlebach Hotel for the new Exposition Building.

Most people then, and even more today, would not understand or appreciate the national stature of American Royal President and Kansas U.S. Senator Harry Darby. I remember that at one evening performance of the Horse Show, the Senator hosted in his President’s box at least a dozen sitting governors, U.S. Senators and Congressmen, and presidents of railroads. Imagine anyone today doing that!

By 1970, after twenty-eight years of existence, the American Royal Coronation Ball was replaced by the profitable BOTAR Ball, raising more than \$1.5 million to date

for the benefit of the American Royal. That year Roy Rogers and Dale Evans rode and sang, and Miss Loula Long Combs, the undisputed grand dame of the hackney horse and pony show ring for some sixty years, passed away at the age of ninety.

Feedlot operations had become prominent throughout the area during the fifties and sixties, and fat cattle receipts were dropping. Because of this trend, in 1970 we saw the construction and operation of a new ultra-modern livestock sales center in the Auction Pavilion. Also, diversification in the Stockyards operations that had begun in 1949 saw the creation of the Golden Ox Restaurant, “where the steak was born,” which this year also celebrates its fiftieth year. It helped promote our own special cut, the boneless Kansas City Steak, which Lou and Eddie Williams helped make famous. Eddie, who left us nearly three years ago, the dean of Royal Livestock auctions, with over sixty-two years of involvement and \$3 million of winning bids, was committed to helping young people fund their education.

In 1972, following the death of long-time Royal supporter R. Crosby Kemper, Sr., the Kemper family announced the first major gift to the American Royal Association for use in constructing a new Royal arena in the Stockyards. After months of disagreement, the Royal, Stockyards Company, and the Kansas City Council, under the able leadership of Mayor Charles B. Wheeler, agreed to terms involving 53 acres, buildings, and \$5.6 million from the sale of bonds. In 1973, the 75th Annual Diamond Jubilee Show marked the end of an era because the next year the Horse Show and other events would move into the Royal’s new home – a \$20 million facility being built next door, Kemper Arena. But in 1979, the collapse of the Kemper arena roof forced the show back to the old American Royal Arena for one last curtain call.

The American Royal Barbecue began in 1980, and this year (1999) saw more than 370 teams in the competition, and reportedly 60,000 people attending before the police closed all the roads into the Bottoms to stem the tide. It honors the century-long, bred-for-quality vision of our founders. Boy, do we “pig out.” And its taste, what a tribute! Aren’t you glad they improved the Longhorn? How’s that for progress? And the smell over the West Bottoms is different. I often think our friend Ollie Gates must have heard the echoes of Charles Thomas and Eugene Rust saying in 1899, “Hi, may I help you?”

By 1984, the American Royal had been named one of the top ten events in North America by the American Bus Association. In 1988, a forty-nine-year tradition would end when the American Royal Queen was crowned. The following year a young man and woman would be chosen to represent the Royal as Student Ambassadors, not as king and queen.

After a forty-one-year absence the mightiest horses in the world returned to the American Royal – Clydesdales, Belgians, Percherons, and Shires – the strongest and heaviest of all horse breeds. Governor Avery recalled proudly how his grandfather introduced the first purebred Percheron to Kansas in 1877, and later received national recognition at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair.

Bill Harsh in 1991 stepped down after twenty years of involvement in the American Royal Horse Show. As one of the founders of the Concert for Champions and a past president, he played a key role in developing the Horse Show into a nationally recognized event.

The construction of the new American Royal complex was officially launched in 1991 and opened in November of 1992. A \$12.2 million phase would include a new arena with ice floor and new office space. The second phase would involve construction of a two-story exhibit hall and renovation of a Governor's Exposition building. In 1998, Tom Scott made another new building possible.

Looking toward the 21st century and celebrating our 100th birthday, the Centennial Metro Scholars Program was launched, the very first history of the Royal was written by Heather Paxton, and Mary Hunkeler ably serves as our Chairperson of the Board of Governors. The folks planning the Centennial want to know, "Are you ready for the Royal?"

By Halloween of 1991 – forty years after the 1951 flood – the Kansas City Stockyards closed its doors and ceased to exist. After the auction, the remains of the Kansas City Stockyards, in its heyday the second biggest, looked like a 200-acre ghost town on brick pavers. The Royal is on its own now with the citizens of Kansas City as landlords of the property. "The King is dead – long live the King."

It's amazing how a major food industry can almost vanish, and yet it appears no one here has missed many meals. With that history of the Stockyards, packing plants, and the Royal, let's get back to the Business of Eating...

Agriculture, the world's oldest, largest, and most essential industry, encompasses all the processes necessary to bring food and fiber products to the consumer, including research, development, production, processing, distribution, and marketing.

I think it's important to remind ourselves that farming is more than food. Many products we use in everyday life come from plant and animal by-products, from medical products (sutures, x-rays); to construction (lumber, paints, brushes, tar paper); to printing (paper, ink, film); to personal care products (shampoo, cosmetics, toothpaste); to entertainment (film, strings for musical instruments). It's necessary to say that agriculture and economics are inter-dependent. Throughout history the development of cultures and economies have been based on agricultural practices. The managing of income and resources of any household, community, or government depends first on meeting the people's basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter, in that order.

Agriculture is the foundation of the nation's standard of living. By providing the basic needs, it permits individuals to pursue other interests and activities. To continue meeting society's basic needs, agriculture must sustain, conserve, and replenish resources.

The majority of the world's people still work directly with the land. As Vice President Gore noted recently, "Approximately 22 million jobs in the United States are related to the farm." In developed countries like the United States, less than 2% or five million people are involved in agricultural production, even though 27% live in rural areas (many rural people work in non-production aspects, including processing). About 50% of the jobs are in wholesale and retail trade of agricultural products in many metropolitan areas. Processing and market distribution account for 30% of all agricultural jobs, while the remaining 20% are in production.

The American agriculture system is perhaps the most efficient in the world. U.S. citizens spend the smallest proportion of income on food. Approximately 35¢ of each food dollar pays the actual production cost. The ability to provide for future generations concerns many people today, and many agriculturists have made improvements toward a more sustainable agriculture system. Over time human ingenuity has solved numerous problems of food production, storage, and preparation. I'm certain that space and the oceans will challenge our grandchildren with new opportunities.

Continued growth in the world population means a greater demand for food and fiber. It also means a growing demand for qualified people in the agricultural industry – more than 8,000 agricultural job titles exist. It's changing rapidly, and many non-traditional agriculture careers exist in technology, science, engineering, and related fields. Almost 10% of today's professional jobs in agriculture go unfilled because more jobs are available than there are people who understand agriculture. Perhaps this is a vacuum that can be filled in part by our own growing Agriculture Future of America (A.F.A.), begun by Crosby Kemper and run by my longtime friend, Russ Weathers.

Food is the most affordable item in the United States as a percentage of family income. Of the leading fourteen world economies, the United States ranks the lowest, leaving the rest to strive for our standard of living – only 10% of our income is spent on food, compared to Italy, Germany, and Japan at 17%; our NAFTA partner, Mexico at 33%; and India at 50%.

It is interesting to note that the value of United States agricultural products a few years ago reached \$185 billion dollars. While there are a little less than one billion acres of total land, almost a third of that have crops harvested. There are 1.9 million farms in the United States, of which 338,000 had sales of \$100,000 or more. And many people don't realize that the number of farms in Missouri ranks second only behind Texas. Individuals, family partnerships, or Sub Chapter S Corporations own 99% of U.S. farms; and 145,000 farms are operated by women. Of concern, however, is the fact that in 1996 nearly 30% of America's farmers were 65 years of age or older.

I want to go back and remind you that IT'S ALL ABOUT FOOD – to reinforce the reputation of Kansas City and what we've always stood for. Senator Harry Darby used to remind me that Kansas City is rightfully the front door to the West, not the back door to the East. Today, thanks to cheap, plentiful food, we're so involved with numerous areas of urban society that we have forgotten what we were originally all about – what made us great. We **ARE** the opening to the West, so why not play up this image? Convert it to businesses, conventions, tourism, research – reinvest ourselves in our heritage – all leading to food. What else could be more important for future generations? We should take advantage of our history and geographical location.

A Special to *The Kansas City Star* earlier this year suggested a major worldwide tourist destination where people can experience the Old West in Kansas City's "Cow Town," an interactive, bigger-than-life place with a character paralleling Science City. There is magic in the names, places, and things connected to our area. That *Star* article suggested that more than any other place, WE are the REAL GATEWAY to the WEST. People worldwide are fascinated by the Pony Express, Jesse James, Stetson hats, Wild Bill Hickok, cowboys and Indians, buffalo, steamboats, wagon trains, etc. And along

with an exhibit depicting our old “cowtown” image for education and entertainment, could there be a new image – that of “center of technological agribusiness?”

There are some excellent ideas being advanced. Some cities are not sitting still. First – an important, related development on the other side of our state: last year Governor Carnahan and former President Jimmy Carter announced the establishment of a \$146 million plant science research center in St. Louis, a facility that is expected to position Missouri as the “Silicon Valley” of plant biotechnology. Governor Carnahan commented that this is a project that indeed has global implications as world leaders seek new ways to feed a growing population with a shrinking supply of tillable land. By bringing the world’s top plant scientists together, Missouri would have the opportunity to take the lead in this emerging science and create the food products to feed a hungry world. This is a not-for-profit plant science center that will combine the resources of five of the nation’s top plant science research organizations – the Missouri Botanical Gardens, the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Agriculture, the Monsanto Company, the University of Illinois, and Washington University. It will be built on a forty-acre tract in Creve Coeur that was donated by Monsanto, and assisted by the Monsanto Fund and the Danforth Foundation.

The focus of the Plant Science Center will be the production of new crop varieties that are pest and disease resistant and contain a higher nutritional content. Additional areas of study might include such fields as the production of pharmaceuticals and new applications for organically produced products. To help get the project started, the State of Missouri, through the Missouri Development Finance Board, has approved \$25 million in tax credits which is expected to leverage \$50 million in private contributions. This is the largest single allocation of tax credits in the state’s history.

The Governor went on to say that this investment, in essence, is planting the seeds for Missouri’s future. Just as California’s Silicon Valley produced the technology that today is on every desktop, in the next decade we will see products in every cupboard that were produced with the help of Missouri technology.

You can see by now that the historical evolution of the economies of the meat packing industry, the Stockyards, and the related farms and ranches in this territory lead us to the conclusion that something important exists in Kansas City’s midst – perhaps something that we take for granted.

Our family’s farm partners, Rodney and Lanny Meng of Holt County, Missouri, reminded me recently that roughly half of our corn is used for animal feed. The other half is split almost equally among American consumption, exports, and carryover. In economic terms, we are talking about wise economic conversion of assets. It takes five pounds of corn to put on one pound of cattle weight gain. Corn by itself has a protein content of nine percent while steak is twenty-six percent.

If we do not utilize the millions of acres of the Great American Prairie to graze cattle, what other economical use is there? Since most is not suitable for plowing, its best use is for cattle to graze.

If we don’t have the cattle and hogs to eat half of our corn production and graze our prairies, the negative domino effect of money flow from small towns to large would

be unthinkable for all walks of life. It should be evident that to maintain the Midwest's standard of living we must maintain and improve the current food chain by effectively using the assets that surround our towns and cities. William Jennings Bryant once said, "Cities can burn, they will be rebuilt. But burn the farms, and grass will grow in the streets."

Without the vision and the teamwork of some men of the Hereford industry a hundred years ago this week, we perhaps wouldn't be here today. Now is the time and the opportunity for us, led by the spirit of the American Royal, to dream, to plan, to have a vision of what is possible for Kansas City. As the great K-State dean, Don Good, put it, "I hope Kansas City has the vision to create for the Midwest a world center for food production, processing, and distribution."

Nearly twenty years ago, Joel Garreau in his *Midcontinent Perspectives* lecture, *The Nine Nations of North America*, suggested that Kansas City was the capital of the Breadbasket "Nation." Working with the United States Department of Agriculture we should find greater ways to involve the land-grant colleges, breed associations, agricultural industry, and the public to work as a team. All livestock, including fish and poultry, must be bred in the quickest time to be the most efficient in feed conversion, the most disease resistant, the most economical, and the most consumer acceptable.

Looking at the other side for a moment, especially being outnumbered 125 to one in today's one-person-one-vote world, we producers must listen to the consumer. Our overall goal should be to create and implement entrepreneurial, value-retained agricultural projects and products. I often wonder why cattle feedlots produce "couch potato" livestock – and without television. The public wants lean, fat-free meat. One hopeful article attests to progress in genetic testing of cattle to identify leaner, more efficient, yet tender lines. Current results have shown seven percent more edible lean meat and fourteen percent less overall fat.

A public showplace would be as much in demand today as it was in 1899 where the best breeding stock could compete on what has been accomplished and are judged by objective, honest experts – even though they may use electronic gadgets to determine the results.

One possibility to our becoming "The World Food Capital" is to create what I will call the World Food Institute. Can you imagine a think tank of world agricultural scientists convening in Kansas City – not in Washington but here in the Heart of America, with originating copywritten articles and TV shows, led by *The Kansas City Star*, a great historical booster of the American Royal and our heritage? This could be a place where all the great agricultural minds from around the globe gather on a regular basis to meet at a summit to research, debate, and announce the latest trends and findings relating to global food. Our able journalists would tell our story to the nation and the world, as their forefathers did. They are on the same team, wear the same uniform, and play a major role as Kansas Citians, too.

We are on the NAFTA Highway, I-35, and with great corporations in Kansas City like the Kansas City Southern Railway, we have the capability of transporting goods and services throughout North America from Canada to Mexico, and are bound by only one or two different languages. We are the Heart of America, and have more interstate

highway miles per capita than any other city. We have a growing, centrally located international airport. However, our earliest interstate, the Missouri River, on which Kansas City is its largest city, is unutilized and under appreciated.

Why can't we have a destination point in Kansas City like an Aspen Institute, Hollywood, Opryland, Cooperstown, Research Triangle, Silicon Valley? Why is there a respected *New England Journal of Medicine*, and yet not a *Kansas City Journal of Food* – which is historically more imaginable? Surely the subject of the world's food supply ranks up there someplace.

I envision also a livestock biotechnology center. Imagine the State of Missouri leading the world in biotechnical research – crops in St. Louis, livestock in Kansas City. I hope that in the next hundred years our great grandchildren will look back and see us working as a team, saying, "This is a world showplace for American agriculture." Why couldn't Kansas City and maybe Omaha and St. Joseph, as the historical "kicking off" points for the great trails to the Southwest, West, and Northwest, work together to make this GATEWAY TO THE WEST a true world food capital? We all have the Missouri Riverfront in common, and we're all on I-29. If you look at the globe, we're basically in each other's backyards – next-door neighbors. If out of the mud of the flood all of those partisan politicians could come together and work in non-partisan ways to accomplish a bigger and more important vision, the same thing could happen again. It would take a lot of effort. But look what it could gain, not only for Kansas City and the Midwest, but the world. After all, we still have to eat! There are people starving all over the world – why can't we be the leaders in trying to solve that problem? We have all the tools.

We are the home of the nation's Agricultural Hall of Fame, as well as the world-renowned Board of Trade, itself almost 125 years old.

I suggested earlier working with the land-grant universities of Missouri, Kansas State, perhaps Iowa State, Nebraska, Oklahoma State (whose Deans of Agriculture already meet informally in Kansas City), and with the great industries that bring so much of the food production to the dinner table, such as our own growing Farmland Industries and ConAgra in Omaha, among others. I hope our great local financial institutions will play a part in this vision, as their forefathers did in being a part of the American Royal, the Stockyards, and other industries a hundred years ago. Dad reminds me when he was hired at the Stockyards in 1937, that four leading bankers were Directors, including W.T. Kemper, great-grandfather of Jonathan and Sandy. Many Kansas Citians realize the wealth of our city has been, and may continue to be, grown on the farms and ranches that buy and sell through our companies.

The Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau should have agriculture-related committees as they once had. I served as chairman of one of them – and they were effective. I noted with interest a Chamber delegation went to Israel last month to attend an ag-related expo to promote local industries. At one time there were 1,000 ag-related conventions held annually in the U.S. Even though some are regional, they could meet here at Royal time, for instance, as some now do.

Dr. Rich Davis had an idea you may remember from earlier this decade called "Food World." He envisioned a unique entertainment, education-science center, a state-of-the-art EPCOT-like complex telling the story of food from farm to table – a marvel of

modern technology that would focus on the contribution of agribusiness and its workers and farmers in the world of food. It would offer agriculture and agribusiness the finest opportunity to tell its story, allow corporate entities a place to exhibit their products, and create a symbol for Kansas City easily recognized around the world. This concept could be an integral part of Kansas City as The World Food Capital.

Our growing Kansas City community foundations could play a role as was evidenced in St. Louis. We have all of the members of the team present, but not assembled. We need leadership, we need a world-class staff to put it together, and we need good financing with courage, patience, and persistence to pull it off.

We can be “king of the mountain” and become the best of the best in all facets of the food chain. It’s ours to lose!

As a first step, I propose a summit of agriculture-related interests convening in Kansas City, which could lead to a bi-state commission, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Midwest Research Institute. Its members in the beginning could be appointed in a bi-state spirit by the governors of Missouri and Kansas, with assistance from our mayors of Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas, as well as area county commissioners – a concept similar to the Mid-America Regional Council. Their task would be to inventory our assets, synergize our thoughts, and propose action. This group would represent numerous private and public leaders from numerous related fields. We need to put those seemingly unrelated parts of the puzzle on one table and see, as we begin to put them together, what picture emerges.

At a luncheon several years ago, Don Hall suggested for our 150th birthday we address some of our opportunities. He issued a challenge to Kansas City to gear up to celebrate our sesquicentennial – KC150 as it is now called – and meet him under the clock in June of the year 2000 to celebrate who we are and who we might be. “Through the energy and enthusiasm of individuals in this room,” he said, “and others not with us today, we can celebrate our past and create a legacy for future generations.” He challenged us to begin to dream and to plan.

How can we make Kansas City and the surrounding area a better place for all its citizens? How can we create this legacy? I would paraphrase to ask those who are interested in the opportunity of a worldwide center for food to meet in the near future, perhaps symbolically under that Hereford bull on the hill – the one that President Eisenhower some forty-six years ago dedicated – the tribute to Charles Thomas and those breeders with the red and white cattle.

Since the subject of agriculture, especially given by this Northlander, is a rare, perhaps endangered commodity, I felt it important to give you “the whole load of hay.” We have the opportunity to get back to the basics – our roots. We have something important, and it’s where we need to be. Perhaps the phrase “location, location, location” isn’t outdated at all. It’s what this vast crop and grassland around us in the Heart of America was created for. There is no other place in the world that can match our collective treasures. We can come together using this vehicle to make this, as Mayor Cleaver dreamed, “A World-Class City.” We can all help create what probably would be the most important world effort ever attempted. Can the example that created the Final 4

of basketball in Kansas City be used again for a “final four” of the world’s most important industry? Can we field this important team?

Dr. Kimball, as a scientist, was always looking to technology and its role in our future. While straight agriculture may have fed the negative aspects of “cowtown,” the growth of technological agribusiness innovations and the ongoing replacement of human labor with technical capital may allow Kansas City to properly focus our energy over the long run. The institution of the American Royal over the past century has served us as one of the most visible reminders of the debate regarding the tension between our “cowtown” image and that of “city of the future.” Most of us have experienced or directly observed not only the growth and decline of the stockyards and meatpacking industries but the changing significance of the direct links between city and country over the past half century. I have to say, it’s not what is on our boots that matters, it’s what is on our plate that counts. Maybe what we’ve been tripping over in recent years wasn’t buffalo chips, but really gold nuggets.

As we end this Kimball lecture, can we use the vision of Dr. Kimball, when he created the research institute of the Midwest, called MRI, coupled with our own growing research university, UMKC, to research and promote what I feel to be Kansas City’s greatest untapped asset?

Before closing, I’d like to read to you a poem penned this April for this occasion by Rich Hawkins, WHB Farm Radio, the “last Kansas City farm broadcaster”, who ironically went off the air at the end of September when the station was sold and converted to sports.

THE SPIRIT OF THE ROYAL (A hundred years of growin’)

All bricks are bare now, where a thousand cattle bawled.
The window signs are changed where all the packers called.
Though the yards which penned the critters now are bare,
the heartbeat of a city and its spirit linger there.
The ghost riders come at midnight with jingle in their gait,
The agents and commission men are getting figures straight.
Calloused hands with stubby pencils working numbers in their heads,
Hot coffee and cigar smells rousing buyers from their beds...
You can’t quite see their faces or the color of their eyes,
But you know they remember things that you can’t realize.
They keep the blood a flowing... through the city’s veins,
As they lean back in the saddle, look up the hill across their reins...
And see the city growing, see the concrete sprawling out,
Covering up the grassland where they used to ride and shout.
They think about their bellies and the beans they used to eat,
They put the bull on the east horizon, and brought the nation meat.
They are the founders of the city with the cow stuff on their feet,
The echoes of what they did rebound from every wall,

They're the soul of the American Royal,
They're the ones who built it all!

Rich Hawkins

4/27/99

The Royal is the symbol of our past; but more importantly, it is the symbol of our future.

I thank all of you for coming and listening. It's an honor for me to deliver the last Kimball lecture of the 20th century on a subject that could be our shining star for the 21st century. Let's invite the folks who feed us all to dinner. After all, we still have to eat... and I remind you, **"It's All About Eating!"**

WHMC-KC

The Western Historical Manuscript Collection, a joint collection of the University of Missouri and the State Historical Society of Missouri, contains primary source materials for research and welcomes use by scholars, students, and the public. Our network allows for the full resources of the Collection – the holdings of all four branches in Columbia, Kansas City, Rolla, and St. Louis – to be available to researchers throughout the state.

The Kansas City office opened in 1980 with a mission to collect, preserve, and make available for research, documents relating to the history and culture of Kansas City, western Missouri, and the Midwest. Since that time approximately 7500 cubic feet of documents has been acquired. The Collection owns the papers of important **civic and political leaders** such as Charles Kimball, Ilus Davis, Charles Wheeler, Oscar Nelson, H.P. Wright, Lou Holland, William Volker, and L. Perry Cookingham; the records of **businesses and industries** such as the Kansas City Board of Trade, the Kansas City Stock Exchange, and the J.C. Nichols Company; a very large collection of materials relating to **Kansas City's built environment**, including the records of the architectural and planning firms of Hoit, Price and Barnes, Wight and Wight, and Hare and Hare, among others; the records of **not-for-profit civic and social organizations**, including the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City; the Kansas City PTA, the Woman's City Club, and the National Council of Jewish Women; the papers of **scholars and historians** who have researched and written on Kansas City's history, including materials from the Kansas City History Project, and the papers of Bill Goff, Lyle Kennedy, A. Theodore Brown, and James Anderson; and a variety of other collections dealing with such diverse topics as labor unions, the Battle of Westport, music and cultural arts in Kansas City, neighborhood development, civil rights, Kansas City school desegregation, and the overland trails.

Questions about the use of or donations to the Collection should be directed to David Boutros, Associate Director of the Kansas City office. (816) 235-1543.

Cover Photo: The Hereford Bull atop his tower at the former American Hereford Association National Headquarters Building at 11th and Summit on Quality Hill.
Photograph Collection (KC26), WHMC-KC.

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