



RIDING: Post-Civil War Missouri

- Reconstruction started early, under Radical Union party.
 - 1865 constitution ended slavery, ousted all previous officials, imposed test oath to disfranchise Confederates.
 - Radical drive to modernize state brought 1st real public education system & aggressive efforts to develop econ. by linking MO closely to world markets.
- The Railroad Boom: pre-war beginnings
 - Benton & William Gilpin promoted urban development & funding for Pacific R.R. (the middle route) with creative geographic theories (like the "isothermal zodiac.")
 - Hannibal & St. Joseph R.R. created with eastern to help Chicago.
 - State began supporting a whole of network of r.r.s in 1851, which got built but with many problems. Most ended up defaulting.
 - Construction slow. **Gasconade bridge disaster** 1855. Confed. attacks.
 - State lost \$25 million on early r.r.s. did not pay off debt until 20th c.
- Massive gov. funding of r.r.s during Radical era & after.
 - State r.r. funding banned in 1865 constitution, so land grants & bonds by cities & counties filled gap, often issued w/o or votes.
 - Heavy corruption in the railroad-building process
 - Real estate development by r.r. executives & favored landowners was often true goal. Joplin, Sedalia, Rolla & many other towns literally created by railroads.
 - Manipulations, extortion of earlier settlers. North Springfield & Pierce (not Peirce) City on Pacific S.W. / STL & San Francisco (Frisco.) r.r. line.
 - Officials and editors bribed with \$ & free passes, communities threatened with bypass if they did not fund r.r. construction.
 - Sometimes the corruption went the other way: KC's phantom railroads



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Tremendous growth at enormous cost, bankrupting many localities but leaving no r.r. connection or weak one, spreading suspicion toward government & new corporations.

- Railroads inflated land prices, seemed to charge unfair rates, brought new people, new kinds of work, more pressure to compete.
- R.R.s lowered wages for massive workforce during 1870s depression, setting off massive strike in 1877, "general strike" in STL.

In response, angry Missourians turned to old "Jacksonizing" tradition of violent direct action, in name of community values & opinions.

- Pervasive distrust/disinterest in legal & political institutions as means of dealing with problems.
- Vigilante groups sought to force local governments to stop issuing bonds or laying taxes to pay them back.
 - Theft of tax list, **murder of Cass County officials at Gunn City** (1872).
- Local communities protected vigilantes and criminals they saw as "local boys" working against community enemies, Jesse James & friends [**PBS film**.]
- Local govs gave in, but outside investors, larger finance system could not allow MO debts to go unpaid if any sort of economic development was to continue.
 - Pinkertons, police, Baldknobbers used in MO version of the "Western War of Incorporation."

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- Despite corruption & problems, **railroads** made MO as we know it
 - Growth of all MO cities except STL, plus geographic patterns & rise of many industries (meatpacking, logging, mining, manufacturing, cotton growing) can be traced to railroads.
 - Sharp population shift to towns & cities. KC & Springfield boomed.
 - Older river towns & older r.r. towns (St. Joe) hurt.
 - STL temporarily became "The Fourth City" in 1870, sought to become U.S. capital.
 - Ultimately lost out to Chicago (where eastern money was invested) as metropolis of Midwestern.
 - The rivalry: Chicago tried to stop **Eads Bridge** & other MS River crossings. **STL started pro baseball team** to match Chicago.
 - STL doomed by ties to southern markets & MS River orientation, focus on western r.r.s
 - Rail **network** was grossly over-built by early 20th century, because money was made more in building r.r.s than running them.
 - Heavy maintenance costs of railroads & cartel-like behavior made their reign short-lived.

