"Westward, the Course"

Alexander Gardner’s 1867 Across the Continent on the Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division Photographic Series

by John Charlton

The 1867 photographic series made by Scottish immigrant Alexander Gardner across the state of Kansas along the newly constructed Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division (ED), has been described by the author of Photography and the American Scene, Robert Taft, as the most historically valuable set of photographs in the collection of the Kan-

John Charlton is a graduate of the University of Kansas and is photographer and research assistant at the Kansas Geological Survey. His photographs have illustrated many publications, including Kansas Geology: An Introduction to Landscapes, Rocks, Minerals, and Fossils and "Portraits of Change: Rephotographing the Chalk Monuments of Western Kansas" with James McCauley and Rex Buchanan, published in the winter 1992-1993 issue of Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains.

The author acknowledges the support and assistance of: Nancy Sherbert, Virgil W. Dean, and Ramon Powers, Kansas State Historical Society; Kirsten Hammerstrom, David Shultz, and Duane Snedeker, Missouri Historical Society; Jacklyn Barnes, Julian Cox, and Weston Naeff, J. Paul Getty Museum; Kay Bost and David Farmer, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University; Sheryl Williams, Kansas Collection, University of Kansas Libraries; Stan Oliner, Colorado Historical Society; and James McCauley, Rex Buchanan, and Liz Brosius, Kansas Geological Survey, University of Kansas.

"Westward the course of empire takes its way," Laying Track, 600 miles west of St. Louis, Mo./October 19th, 1867. The railhead was a few miles west of Fort Hays when Gardner made this photograph. It was used in William J. Palmer’s Report of Surveys Across the Continent in 1867-68, facing page 180, and is in all editions, including the Imperial prints in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Calif.
"Westward, the Course of Empire Takes Its Way"
sas State Historical Society. Taft was certainly right in regard to the collection’s importance as pictorial documents of the early history of Kansas. This series of stereographic images begins at the Union Pacific Railway, ED, company offices and depot in St. Louis, Missouri, and follows the railroad’s construction progress westward between Kansas City, Missouri, to just past Fort Hays, Kansas, on the High Plains. Taft was historical documents, published and unpublished, will provide a greater appreciation of this earliest and most extensive photographic documentation of Kansas and the American West. These images offer vivid illustrations of that era’s vision of the fulfillment of the nation’s manifest destiny in westward expansion and reflect upon our perspectives of this history now, 130 years later.

Col. Chas. B. Lamborn & Friends, St. Louis, Mo. This stereographic view from the east bank of the Mississippi River is a portrait of the major St. Louis Union Pacific, Eastern Division, company officials; vice president Adolphus Meier, secretary Charles B. Lamborn, and president John D. Perry.

the first historian to appreciate the significance of this series, which is now seen as one of the most important early photographic documents of the American West. We have much more to understand about the scope and scale of the entire series, as well as the circumstances involved in the creation of these images. A thorough review of the complete editions of Gardner’s series, including the Kansas stereographs, and the corroboration of these photographs with related

Gardner’s photographs in Kansas, and his photographs along the survey for the railway company’s planned future route, were made in late summer of 1867 through the winter of 1868 between St. Louis, Missouri, and San Francisco, California. He was commissioned by Union Pacific officials to make this photographic series to illustrate the company’s report of its survey of a southern railroad route across the continent with the goal of gaining congressional approval of federal funding for construction. The Union Pacific Railway, ED, line was in close competition with the Omaha-based Union Pacific Railroad to build the first transcontinental railroad.

1. Robert Taft, “A Photographic History of Early Kansas,” Kansas Historical Quarterly 3 (February 1934). Taft cataloged the stereographic Kansas series for the Kansas State Historical Society when he was its president and discussed the series in his classic history of American photography. He did not, however, realize the truly monumental scope and scale of Gardner’s entire transwestern series.
The Union Pacific Railway, ED, later renamed the Kansas Pacific Railway, eventually was completed to Denver but never extended around the Rocky Mountains and on to the Pacific Ocean as surveyed. Later southern lines were built by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific Railroads along routes similar to the Kansas-Pacific surveys. Remaining from this original survey are reports, maps, albums entitled Across the Continent on the Kansas Pacific Railroad (Route of the 39th Parallel) for the recently renamed company. Some of these albums now exist in collections around the country in varying conditions and completeness. A complete collection of these photographs based upon all known partial albums will present the earliest, largest, and most diverse series of photographic images of the West.

View Looking Across Turnpike Bridge at Lawrence, Kansas. In the foreground is Alexander Gardner with a portable darkroom used in nineteenth-century field photography for coating and developing glass wet-plate negatives on location. This is stereograph 29 in the series Across the Continent on the Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division.

These images portray the railroad’s initial dramatic impact upon the American frontier and offer a vivid visual narrative of the early European transformation of frontier wilderness into immigrant farms, towns, schools, and government allocated tribal reservations. Also shown are newly developed market and transportation systems and exploitation of pristine

2. Fifty-four large Imperial format (sixteen-by-twenty-inch albumen prints) Union Pacific Railway, ED, series prints are now in the Crane Collection, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Calif. The most complete stereographic Union Pacific Railway, ED, series (150 three-by-six-inch cards) is at the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka. Kansas Pacific Railway albums (127 six-by-eight-inch albumen prints) are in the, St. Louis Mercantile Library and the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis; the Degolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas; and the Boston Public Library. Miscellaneous prints from these series are in various collections around the country, such as the George Eastman House Collection, Rochester, N.Y.
natural resources along the new railroad. These subjects embodied the symbols of westward expansion and progress that the railroad company hired Gardner to portray to their intended eastern audience: investors, immigrants, and congressmen.

The Gardner series in Kansas was made with both stereographic format and Gardner’s signature large-format Imperial portrait camera. The nineteenth-century photographic technology of collodion wet-plate process had to be performed in often unfavorable outdoor conditions and required a great deal of experience and skill. These techniques involved mixing and coating the chemical emulsion onto glass-plate negatives, intuitive exposure based upon climate and light, on-the-spot development of exposed plates in a portable darkroom, and careful handling and storage of the delicate glass negatives until they could be contact printed on photographic paper.

Gardner was hired by the railroad company, following his years of experience producing Civil War battlefield images as official photographer for the Army of the Potomac, to replace the inexperienced amateur William A. Bell, hired earlier in the summer of 1867 as the company’s photographer. Gardner was valuable to the railroad company because of his unique Washington, D.C., reputation, which included Secret Service clearance for making official presidential portraits of Abraham Lincoln, the cabinet, senators, and the same generals who, after destroying the Confederacy, were about to deal with the “Indian problem.” Gardner was well known to General William Tecumseh Sherman who later made him official photographer for the Treaty of Fort Laramie signing. Gardner accompanied General Sherman on the Omaha Union Pacific line to Wyoming in the spring of 1868. For the five generals present at the signing, he produced a photographic album of that event entitled Scenes in the Indian Country, which also included many of his earlier Kansas views. These western albums present bold visual narratives of American history similar to his famous Civil War album Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the Civil War, produced in 1866. All of Alexander Gardner’s monumental series album images offer his unique accessibility to the best vantage points to capture and portray the unfolding story of the nation’s changing boundaries and identity. He presented his pictorial stories with an artist’s vision and an immigrant’s faith in the nation’s future.

Ironically, just as Gardner’s Civil War photographs and portraits of Lincoln have long been erroneously attributed to his earlier employer, Mathew Brady, the western railroad series has often been mistakenly attributed to William A. Bell. Attribution of Gardner’s photographs to Brady resulted from common copyright laws making employers owners of photographic reproductions. When photographs from Brady’s studios were widely reproduced by Harper’s Weekly, they were simply called Brady photographs. The railroad company owned Gardner’s western series and provided Bell use of the images for reproduction in his book New Tracks in North America, which became popular in both Europe and America and was reprinted as an enlarged 1870 edition in German and English. Bell never named Gardner as the official company photographer, and his readers were allowed to assume the book’s illustrations came from Bell’s own photographs. Gardner’s original albums and stereographs, by contrast, were printed in early limited editions at company expense by Gardner’s studio, but they were not further reproduced after the company failed to gain support for its transcontinental route.

Gardner’s western railroad and survey photographs served to illustrate the company’s Report of Surveys Across the Continent in 1867–68 on the thirty-fifth and thirty-second Parallels For a Route extending the Kansas Pacific Railway to the Pacific Ocean at San Francisco and San Diego by General William J. Palmer, December 1, 1868. This report, addressed formally to John D. Perry, president of the Union Pacific Railway, ED, in St. Louis, Missouri, accompanied the company’s lobbying campaign for congressional approval of federal support for the projected southern trans-

3. William Abraham Bell’s New Tracks in North America: A Journal of Travel and Adventure Whilist Engaged in the Survey for a Southern Railroad to the Pacific Ocean During 1867–8 was first printed in London by Chapman and Hall in 1869 and was so popular it was reprinted in an enlarged edition in 1870.
continental route. At stake were important federal subsidies, enormous tracts of lands, natural resources and markets along the projected line, the capital value of the company's stocks and bonds, and the company's own immediate windfall profits in subcontracting virtually the entire railroad construction to its own subsidiaries. At stake also was the immediate viability of the line construction between Kansas City and Denver, which involved ever longer trips for the construction trains and increasingly violent conflicts with Plains Indian tribes resisting the road's bisection of the ancient buffalo migration lands. This last issue was repeatedly emphasized in Palmer's report, which presented the railroad as the fulfillment of the long-sought trade route between Europe and the Orient.

Because the railroad is the only reasonable plan that has been presented for the final settlement of the Indian question, which, apart from the cost, is a problem of great concern to the nation—afflicting the honor and conscience, as well as its growth. Build the road and the tribes of the Plains and mountains will give no further trouble than the Indians now do in eastern Kansas and in California... It will be singular if our people, ready as they are to protect the person of a single citizen abroad, if need be by a war costing hundreds of millions, should continue to gaze with indifference upon the yearly murder, by a barbarous enemy, of thousands of her hardy western pioneers, when assured by the leading military commanders that there is a way, and an economical way, to stop it—that way being the construction of a railroad through the territories.'

Palmer's report also was an attempt to merge the Union Pacific Railway, ED, company's interest in constructing the transcontinental railway with the government and military concerns about dealing with the Plains tribes' obstruction to the settlement of the West. General Sher-

4. William J. Palmer, Report of Survey Across the Continent in 1867-68 on the thirty-fifth and thirty-second Parallels For a Route extending the Kansas Pacific Railway to the Pacific Ocean at San Francisco and San Diego (Philadelphia: W.B. Selheimer, 1869), 188. Besides Gardner's topographic views along the route, this report contains detailed descriptions of regional natural resources and a historic map of the American West.
 Illustrated a news account of a violent engagement a month earlier between a large Cheyenne war party and Company G of the Seventh United States Caval-

ry near Fort Wallace, Kansas. The body of Sergeant Wyllyams was the title of the engraved illustration made from a much more graphic photograph taken by William A. Bell, used in a story written by journalist Major A.R. Calhoun. The story described one in a continuation of similar confrontations that had occurred since spring that year as the Union Pacific Railway, ED, advanced its westward construction between Forts Harker, Hays, and Wallace along the Smoky Hill River route. Bell, a young Cambridge-educated physician, was hired as the photographer by the railway’s survey party in the early summer, even though he had virtually no previous knowledge of or practice in photography. This was the only survey position open at the time, and he took it to explore possibilities for potential British investment in the American West.

Bell wrote about his western travels in his popular New Tracks in North America, first published in London in 1869. He used another similarly modified engraved view from his photograph The Mutilated Sergeant to illustrate his written account of that incident. The book’s title page was illustrated by an engraving entitled Laying the Track, made from a photograph of railroad workers laying iron track on a newly tied grade before a steam-engined construction train a few miles west of Fort Hays. The original photograph was made by Alexander Gardner, who entitled it “Westward the course of empire takes its way.” Laying track 600 miles west of St. Louis, Mo., October 19th, 1867. The phrase in this title had become an anthem for the fulfillment of the nation’s manifest destiny, the European settlement of the American West, with the construction of the nation’s first transcontinental railroads.

Earlier connotations of manifest destiny included the British colonial imperialist ideal of the naturally superior Anglo-Saxon

5. Dr. Bell provided a fascinating, although perhaps apocryphal, interpretation of the ritual nature of Sergeant Wyllyams’s mutilations in context of Plains Indian politics of those times. See William A. Bell, New Tracks in North America (London: Chapman and Hall, 1870), 62-64.

6. Gardner’s title likely was inspired by Emmanuel Leutz’s famous giant mural painting Westward, the Course of Empire Takes Its Way, originally exhibited in the congressional building in 1862. Gardner came west with the popular nineteenth-century eastern vision of westward expan-
culture dominating native cultures worldwide; exploiting natural resources while providing the benefits of transplanted British culture. English-language education, religion, industry, agriculture, and commerce were to replace primitive indigenous cultures. This was seen as morally and culturally superior to earlier Spanish colonial practices of enslaving native populations to exploit their natural resources, particularly in the search for gold. The mid-nineteenth-century northeastern American version of this progressive paternalistic exchange came into crisis when the Plains tribes violently rejected the steady encroachment of new railroad settlements upon their buffalo hunting lands in exchange for the prospect of possible assimilation into the emergent European immigrant culture.

It was in this historical context that Dr. Bell’s photograph of the mutilated body of Sergeant Wylyams became included as plate number 44, *On the Great Plains in Kansas*. “Sergeant of the Escort” in Gardner’s 1868 album *Across the Continent on the Kansas Pacific Railroad (Route of the 35th Parallel)*. This horrific image evidently was included to promote the company’s interest by shocking eastern policy makers and compelling members of Congress and the military to support the railroad’s construction across the Plains and on to the Pacific Coast. This had been the reaction of Dr. Bell and Major Calhoun to the atrocity when the photograph originally was made, and also of Captain Albert Barnitz of the Seventh Cavalry at Fort Wallace who wrote to his wife on June 28, 1867:

‘‘Westward, the Course of Empire Takes Its Way’’

Dr. Bell (W.A.) of Phila., an amateur photographic artist with the engineering party, took a photograph of myself and the other officers of the post, sitting in front of the commandant’s quarter, with cavalry horses, and the boundless prairie in the background, on the afternoon of the day of the battle. He will print some copies for us when the days are less light. He also photographed the body of Serg’t Wylyams, after it was brought to the post, just to show our friends in Washington, the Indian Agents, what fiends we have to deal with!”

Bell’s photograph is the final Kansas image in the east–west geographic sequence of Gardner’s album. The company evidently became persuaded by the time the complete Kansas–Pacific album was produced that this photograph was useful for maintaining the military’s protection of the railroad against the warring Plains tribes. The subsequent removal of this plate from nearly all the albums may be the result of a general revulsion to the image and the issues associated with it, similar to postwar public attitudes toward Gardner’s grim images of battlefield dead at Antietam and Gettysburg. Gardner’s access to Dr. Bell’s photograph, along with others made at Fort Wallace, came through the company’s possession of all photographs made for it on the survey.9 Gardner probably included Bell’s photograph in the album at the company’s behest to retain military protection of the railroad’s construction across the High Plains.

Company officials in St. Louis generally had been dissatisfied with the quality of Bell’s photographs, which were included in the album only when they covered areas Gardner did not later travel such as embattled Fort Wallace. The original publication, in July 1867, of the dead sergeant’s story in *Harper’s Weekly* initially upset company offi-


9. This plate is absent in all but one of the albums previously mentioned, that in the St. Louis Mercantile Library. Gardner must have reformatted this plate, as he later did with his large-format Imperial prints, from an original Bell print obtained from the St. Louis Union Pacific Railway, ED company office for the Kansas–Pacific album’s format. The 127 prints constituting the album are contact printed from approximately sixty-eight-inch negatives.
cials who sought to manage the eastern news stories about the railroad's construction progress in Kansas. Union Pacific company secretary Colonel Charles B. Lamborn wrote to General Palmer in southwestern Kansas in a letter dated July 31, 1867, "How did the publication of the dead sergeant get into Harper's responsible party and have all photographs, etc., retained for use of the Company. Wright intimated that Dr. B. was desirous of using them for purposes of private speculation."10

Palmer acknowledged receipt of the letters presented to him by Alexander Gardner in a letter ad-

several of our parties have asked here." The company was highly sensitive to this negative publicity appearing in newspapers in 1867 and never forgave Dr. Bell or Major Calhoun for publishing this story without prior approval. Alexander Gardner presented this letter, written on behalf of the St. Louis company's president John D. Perry by Secretary Lamborn, to General Palmer, who also was treasurer for the railroad company. Lamborn's letter emphatically states, "you must not forget to establish the status of Mr. Gardner as Chief Photographer before you leave in case your stay should be short and make him the re-

Surveyors at Work appears as a chromolithograph facing page 402, which describes the survey of the thirty-fifth parallel, in the 1870 edition of Bell's New Tracks in North America. Surveyors at Work was made from Gardner's photograph on the thirty-fifth parallel.

dressed to "Company President, John D. Perry, dated August 5th, 1867, On the Santa Fee [sic] Road in Arkansas Valley, 7 m. west of Aubrey and 81 miles from New Fort Lyon and 163 m. west of Larned, and from old Fort Lyon." This letter, the first in Palmer's collected correspondence from along the southern route survey to the St. Louis company officials, opens; "Dear Sir, This is the first opportunity I have

10. The company's unpublished correspondence to General Palmer is in the William Jackson Palmer Collection, Colorado Historical Society, Denver. Colonel Charles B. Lamborn, Union Pacific Railway, ED, secretary and Palmer's longtime personal friend, wrote the official company correspondence to General Palmer on the survey.
had to write since leaving 'Fort Larned' except a note for Col. Lamborn, sent from Ft. Dodge.' We left 'Larned' at 7 am August 3rd, the escort to both stages being a Sergeant and 10 men. Gardiner [sic], the Photographer joined us there bringing your letter and others to me."  This is the earliest documentation of Gardner's contact with Palmer and indicates that they met and traveled with the survey in southwestern Kansas, southeastern Colorado, and northern New Mexico prior to Gardner making his photographic series across Kansas along the Union Pacific Railway, ED.

Palmer's letters include additional references to Gardner's presence at the camp at Fort Union, New Mexico, on August 23, 1867. Gardner may have encountered Dr. Bell during this period. Bell had accompanied General Wright's survey along the Smoky Hill River route with the survey's geologist Dr. John LeConte, who was Bell's original contact in Philadelphia for joining the survey. Their company met Palmer's survey, accompanied by Gard-

ner, which had surveyed another line along the southern Santa Fe Trail route. The companies camped together for two weeks at the foot of Trinchera Pass. Bell's book referred to this meeting with Palmer's company on August 7 without mention of the new chief photographer for the survey.

11. The Letters of Genl. W. J. Palmer, Treasurer, from Colorado and New Mexico, hereafter cited as "Palmer Letters," are dated between August 5 and October 7, 1867. These unpublished letters, primarily addressed to Union Pacific Railway, ED, company president John D. Perry, are in the Degolyer Library.

12. Palmer wrote to Perry, "Gardner is here in camp all night" during the surveys of Trinchera Pass over the Raton Mountains and further recommended that Major Calhoun be fired for his negative press coverage of the survey. See "Palmer Letters," 63.

13. Bell, New Tracks in North America, 100-1. The young Bell and Palmer later became lifelong friends and business associates after their meeting on the Kansas-Pacific survey. Palmer wrote to Perry on August 13 from Trinidad, Colorado, "Dr. Bell does not expect pay & has mounted himself well. He might go on the other route beyond Albuquerque." See "Palmer Letters," 36. Palmer's engineering experience and Bell's connection with British capital lead the two to eventually develop the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, as president and treasurer. Palmer most probably provided Bell access to the Kansas-Pacific photographs for New

"WESTWARD, THE COURSE OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY"
Gardner spent the next few weeks traveling with the surveyors as they established a route through southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. He rejoined Palmer's reorganized party near Fort Craig, New Mexico, as the company's photographer for the survey of the thirty-fifth parallel and photographed along the survey line until they reached the Pacific Ocean at San Francisco in February 1868. Palmer relieved Bell of his role as photographer at Fort Craig, where Palmer also relieved General Wright as superintendent of the surveys, thereby taking charge of the survey himself. Palmer also replaced Wright's survey geologist LeConte with the survey's botanist Dr. C.C. Parry, and he reassigned Bell as the physician for the survey of the thirty-second parallel. Palmer referred to the photographic reassignment at the end of a long letter to John Perry: "Santa Fe, September 14th 1867. I also sent a small box of the photographic negatives by Dr. Bell (taken) since leaving Vegas, as Gen Wright comes over pretty much the same line. The topographical views were left for Mr. Gardner to take. I have directed all that have been taken since they started to be exported to you from Albuquerque. The photographic paper has given out."


Colonel Lamborn continued to correspond with General Palmer and informed him of Gardner's progress photographing along the line in Kansas prior to Gardner's reconnoiter with Palmer's survey in New Mexico. Gardner eventually

would accompany Colonel Greenwood's escort to Fort Craig to rejoin Palmer's survey and photograph the route of the thirty-fifth parallel to the Pacific Coast. Colonel Lamborn's letters to General Palmer relate Gardner's Kansas itinerary from September 16:

"Gardner the Washington photographer is now in Kansas with his assistants with full outfit—and will spend four or five weeks. I had him accompany the Commissioners to the end of the track and take 'the Govt. in the act of inspection.'" The railroad commissioners' inspection of new stretches of the constructed line was critical for renewed federal support of the Union Pacific Railway, ED's, competition with the Omaha-based line.

Gardner's direct east-to-west itinerary seems to have been interrupted by the company's request to photograph important people at specific locations, such as the commissioner's inspection. Gardner's schedule apparently was also hampered by the Kansas climate, which had plagued Dr. Bell during his photographic efforts earlier that rainy summer. Colonel Lamborn wrote to General Palmer on September 21: "Gardner the photographer is still in Kansas and is making considerable progress. The high winds and consequent dust are a serious drawback. I had a note from him this AM. He has gone up the [illegible] Valley and now goes back to Lawrence & Leavenworth. He took the Commissioners at end of track."

Gardner completed documenting the railroad's construction in Kansas to the company's full satisfaction before rejoining Palmer's survey. Near the end of Gardner's work in Kansas, in an October 26, 1867 letter, Lamborn wrote Palmer to chastise Dr. Bell for his failure to provide usable topographic views:

Gardner is still in Kansas—has taken about 400 excellent pictures—about 100 negatives have been received from your survey and I am having pictures struck off. I will retain full set for you. The pictures taken by Dr. Bell are not of much account—most of them are too dim or will not finish and the photographer here complains much of the negatives & says the result is caused by carelessness—now and then he shows he can take a good picture and such magnificent subjects should be carefully treated. The pictures taken from Las Vegas to Santa Fe are almost worthless—with perhaps half a dozen exceptions.

William Bell reluctantly lost his role as photographer on the thirty-fifth parallel; however, he made some additional photographs on his trip along the thirty-second parallel, which also were reproduced as chromolithographs in his book along with engravings made from Gardner's views in Kansas and on the thirty-fifth parallel. Bell acknowledged the second-hand nature of his accounts of Palmer's survey and described his reassigned role in the survey in relation to the new official survey photographer; however, he never referred to Gardner by name:

I devote this chapter [chapter 11—"How the Surveyors Fared on the thirty-fifth parallel"] to a brief notice of some of the most interesting features met with by the surveyors on the 35th parallel. The region they traversed was far richer in objects of interest than that farther south, by which I completed my crossing of the continent. My original intention was to have taken this more northern route, but a doctor was wanted on the 32nd parallel, and as a professional photographer arrived from the States just in time to accompany the parties on the 35th parallel, I found it advisable to alter my plans, and to become doctor and photographer of the southern half of the expedition."

This reference confirms that Bell's book of illustrations along the thirty-fifth parallel were made not from his photographs, but from those taken by the new official photographer for the survey, Alexander Gardner. The 1870 second edition of Bell's book included additional appendixes of the formulas Bell had been given for making wet-plate negatives and printing, the botanical report of Dr. Parry, and the first published account by John Wesley Powell of his 1869 trip down the Colorado River. Bell ended his

15. Colonel Lamborn's letters to Palmer are in the Palmer Collection.

16. Sixty of Bell's small-format photographs made along the thirty-second parallel are in the William A. Bell Collection, Colorado Historical Society. None of these photographs is in Gardner's albums of the route of the thirty-fifth parallel.

travel narrative with an account of his return trip from San Francisco to St. Louis by coach to the railroad’s terminus in western Kansas, ninety-two miles east of Fort Wallace. He stopped at the fort to find a new hospital built with native building stone and recalled with the officers the deaths of the soldiers in the June 1867 attack.\(^9\) The fort cemetery had a memorial built for the soldiers killed in action, including Sergeant Wylyams. This memorial, carved from hardened Fort Hays Limestone of the Niobrara Chalk formation, is now all that remains of Fort Wallace.

Gardner probably also returned on this route to St. Louis from San Francisco in late winter of 1868. Upon returning to Washington, D.C., Gardner had printed the remainder of his negatives made along the survey, including Dr. Bell’s controversial image of the slain sergeant and another image taken by Bell of a Yucca plant blooming in late June on the far western plains of Kansas, to include in the album. The differently formatted original images were reformatted to a single size and mounted onto titled boards bearing the new name of the railroad company and Gardner’s name as photographer with his Washington, D.C., studio address. These images, along with the other Union Pacific Railway, ED, Kansas views, form the earliest large-scale series of photographs made across the western North American continent, documenting the transformation of these western landscapes and illustrating the new railroad’s role in fulfilling America’s manifest destiny.\(^19\)

A Union Pacific-sponsored promotional publication *Kansas and the Country Beyond*, by Josiah Copley, was published in Philadelphia while Gardner was completing his photography in Kansas. Gardner’s Kansas views could illustrate the many gazetteers published in the company’s eastern publicity campaign to promote immigrant settlement along the new western railroad.

The railroad is the great agent and pioneer of civilization. Let any one go away beyond the Missouri, as we did, and behold a mighty tide of civilization—comfortable and well-furnished dwellings occupied by intelligent, refined and happy people, all the useful industries of life, with schools, colleges, churches, and every institution of an advanced social condition—following closely behind the track-layers, and, in some instances, going ahead of them, causing the music of busy life to be heard on those beautiful prairies, where only yesterday silence and solitude reigned, save only as they were broken by the cry of the savage or the wolf, or the impetuous rush of herds of buffaloes, and he will have some conception of what is now meant by the March of Empire.\(^20\)

Alexander Gardner’s western images portray the transformation of the landscapes and people of Kansas and the American West and tell a story about westward expansion from Gardner’s unique perspective. This included not only the railroad’s promotional gazetteer publicity campaign for eastern investors but the immigrants’ challenges and faith in the future and the desperate crises that American manifest destiny presented to the Plains tribes. Gardner’s western railroad series is the earliest, largest, and most diverse photographic documentation across the West. It is also a major achievement in the life’s work of a photographer who used his camera to tell an enormously complex and amazing story about a changing nation.

---

18. Ibid., 470.
19. According to Robert Sobieszek, *A. Gardner’s Photographs Along the 35th Parallel* (Rochester, N.Y.: George Eastman House, 1971), 5. “The Garden pictures were the first, large-scale photographic presentation of the generally uncharted terrain beyond the frontier. When finally published in 1868, Timothy O’Sullivan was still with King’s expedition to the 40th Parallel, and would not make his incredibly powerful images of Arizona’s Canion de Chelly until 1874. John K. Hillers would bring back his pictures of southern Utah, Arizona and New Mexico during the mid-Seventies. Maybury first enters Yosemite Valley in 1866, while Jackson photographs the Rocky Mountains from 1870 to 1879 along the Hayden surveys. The photographs of Alexander Gardner from the portfolio *Across the Continent on the Kansas Pacific Railroad* are therefore the beginnings of a long and considerably fruitful tradition of Western landscape photography.”

20. Josiah Copley, *Kansas and the Country Beyond* on the line of the Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division, from the Missouri to the Pacific Ocean. Partly from Personal Observations, and partly from information drawn from authentic sources (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1867), 84-85. The publication also includes the most detailed map of Kansas at the time by William Keeler of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and extensive excerpts from the first geological report by Kansas State Geologist Benjamin F. Mudge.

---

128. KANSAS HISTORY