

# Kansas City Garment Industry Project

## Transcript of Interview with Sally Schwenk

John A. Dvorak: Welcome to another interview for the Kansas City garment industry project. Today is April 26, 2010. I'm John Dvorak and I'm interviewing Sally Schwenk, a historic preservation consultant and an expert on Kansas City history. The videographer is Mark Titus. Sally, is there much of an understanding in the Kansas City area about the importance of the garment industry to Kansas City's past?

Sally Schwenk: I don't think so. I think those of us who are interested in local history and make an effort to do and participate in events, or historic walks, or that sort of thing know about it. Certainly the history books talk about it, local history. But I don't think there is a wide spread understanding.

Question Why is that so?

Answer Oh I think it's what we communicate and what's hard to communicate. And it's a fascinating story, and it's a story that can be communicated, because there's a lot of that built-in environment that's still here, and there's a lot of wonderful tales that are very interesting that can be taught in schools, can be included in local histories—the unionization of garment workers, the garment workers themselves, the stories of the immigrants, the incredible role the Jewish community played in the garment district. Those are all themes that we touch on but never go in depth on.

Q So much of the industry is gone now, why should we care about all of this?

A I think that part of it is because, if we have visions for the future, and if we understand where we need to go and if we're going to deal with the investment in the urban core that has been made as taxpayers—we have inherited large buildings, huge factories and warehouses—we have to look at creative ideas about what was here. Know your history, don't repeat the bad part of it, and use it as asset. And that's probably the hardest thing to communicate. The ability to recognize assets and to incorporate what's left and the stories that are left, and to incorporate those. It boils down to one thing. People like history. One of the wonderful things we have and that we keep addressing is how to tell the story of Kansas City. We sit with the Union Station, which is the reason why there was a garment district, the fact that Kansas City was the second largest rail head and had connections between Los Angeles and New York and Minnesota and the Gulf of Mexico, allowed the garment district to form and to flourish. And that story of the garment district is part of a much larger story of Kansas City's role in warehousing and jobbing and manufacturing, of a major rail head in the United States. That's a fun story to tell. And I think one of the reasons why the story isn't told is that we haven't found a unified way to tell Kansas City's story. Other communities have. One suggestion that came up years ago is to tell Kansas City's story through technological change as a theme. But we don't have a museum, or a place to go, or a coordinated approach to teaching the history to visitors, to tourists, to school children. And the garment district is an important lynchpin that story.

Q Is it true that the Hannibal Bridge actually helped bring about the garment industry?

A Well, the Hannibal Bridge brought the railroad, and you have to realize in 1855 all the maps were published and the Hannibal Bridge, the bridge across the Missouri River, was shown to be in Leavenworth on all the maps. So the coup of getting the Hannibal Bridge created Kansas City, Mo., as a major railhead, instead of Leavenworth and other cities like St. Joseph that were competing for it. So it is the railroad that was the basis of the birth of manufacturing, and wholesaling jobbing industries which were just as important as manufacturing.

Q Isn't there a story about how the people of St. Joseph didn't want the railroad coming through town?

A Yeah, and I cannot repeat it. I don't know enough about it. But essentially Mr. McGee and a bunch of—you realize this was around the time of Civil War—a bunch got together and bought up all the land for the Hannibal Bridge. And just like politics today, it's all local, and it's all about land, and it's all about money, and Kansas City's birth as a major railhead has to do with all of those issues, and who could go and convince the banks back East to make a major investment and to convince the railroads to come. So who can give the most incentives to the railroad companies—just as we fight over incentives today, whether it's going to be on the Kansas side or the Missouri side—was what was going on with the Hannibal Bridge.

Q Could you explore more specifically, some of the factors that helped bring about the industry from nothing to the point where it was significant?

A And I think we've covered it. First of all the distribution through the railroads was ideal, it was in the center of the country. It gave access to St. Louis, to Chicago, to the eastern market, as well as the western market. I think there are probably three major factors, I may go to a fourth if I count right. One is, the garment district was somewhat decentralized and so there was an ability to locate and to develop here in competition with the already established garment industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the eastern part of the United States. Kansas City didn't have a lot of skilled workers, but very quickly, they knew enough, and remember it's happening in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they're learning the lessons of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, so Ford's assembly line, the ability to break tasks down into manageable tasks and to teach unschooled workers how to put in a zipper or how to sew on buttons and put it on an assembly line basis really was an important factor in it taking hold in Kansas City. Because they did not have the skilled workers and the immigrants and the variety of skills that they had in the eastern United States. Lower wages, you could pay lower wages in the Middle West. Adding those three factors to the rail corridors were really important. And it's interesting that the industry grew to have 200 to 1,300 employees very quickly after the turn of the century. Where sometimes in one company, you had, I mean, it was not unusual to have a company with 200 to 1,300 employees. Whereas on the East Coast you would have a max of 100. And so what they called the "section system" of allocating certain tasks on an assembly line basis, and the ability to build buildings that could accommodate that kind of an assembly system, to have open ground near railroad lines. The garment district moved from the West Bottoms up into the area around Broadway and 8<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> streets, and the ability to build large size buildings that close to rail connections was really important. So a developing community, and Kansas City was a developing community in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was really important. The other thing is, Kansas City, because it was a rail head so early, it had a lot of jobbers. And jobbers were manufacturer's reps, companies had their regional headquarters here, whether it

was farm implement companies or pharmaceutical companies, and they had their showroom here. Why, the big buildings in the West Bottoms, and these big buildings in what we call the garment district, with their big entrances, they were corporate headquarters, regional headquarters. So Kansas City knew how to market. They had companies that had wholesale jobbers going out, salesmen, and selling and distributing throughout the region. And so they, the garment district didn't use those middlemen, they had their own sales force, the company had their own sales force that went out and didn't have to go through a wholesaler— middle man—to ship the underwear to, and then have them go out and sell it. They did it from their regional headquarters. And that was an important business strategy, kind of a boring one, but an important one.

Q In what decade did the industry, was the industry really get rolling in Kansas City?

A It really occurred nationwide after World War I, and the demand for clothing for the military in World War I, just as in every war you get new innovation. Certainly by the 1870s, 1880s, factory made clothes were available. Certainly work uniforms were made, and manufactured, and title ability to do ready-to-wear as they called it, for the everyday person, really mushroomed after World War I. And a lot of that had to do with just technological changes. But also innovations like the Goodenow underwear company I talk about, was one of the larger garment businesses in the area, they manufactured 750,000 suits of underwear for men a year and, but it was in the Navy that they went from the long johns into separate undersuits and pants with buttons. And that kind of innovation stimulated an easy way to manufacture men's underwear, so it was that kind of funny technological changes. Also the appearance of new machines that could do knits, and the types of fabric that could be utilized, were really important. So World War I was the really important, post World War I era was an important time in Kansas City. I was trying to think, around 1900 there were 11 major garment manufacturers and by 1945 there were over 80, so you can see, and the Depression slowed that down.

Q So even though the industry got going in the 1800s, it really was the 1900s that were the high time for the industry?

A Yes. And you see by 1945 I think we're over \$100 million to \$200 million in revenue locally in the garment district itself.

Q Did we specialize in Kansas City in any particular aspect of garment making, like hats, or underwear, or suits?

A Actually we did almost everything. But the biggest companies were, of course, Donnelly, Nell Donnelly clothing, the housewives with ready-to-wear dresses that were attractive. And she of course was one of the largest companies in Kansas City, certainly was the target for unionization and landmark Supreme Court decisions on unionization, which is fascinating history. She was the wealthiest businesswoman, according to Fortune Magazine. The other was the H.D. Lee Company, which manufactured work uniforms, working clothing for different trades. And then as I said the Goodenow underwear factory was another of the major. We also had, if you group them together, women's clothing, partially because of Nell Donnelly. But also, there's a cluster, particularly the buildings that are still extant that you can still see down here, of women's clothing, women's suite. Suite, women's suite were a big thing. Multiple companies were involved in those.

Q Kansas City made hats too.

A Oh yes. And I think if you go through the garment district I have forgotten the count, but you'll see again and again and again the hat manufacturers.

Q Are shoes not really considered garments?

A I don't know, that's an interesting question.

Q We didn't make shoes to a great extent here.

A Not to a great extent here. And I don't know enough about the manufacture, to be honest, about the manufacture of shoes. You don't see them popping up, other than one or two, but they're pretty incidental.

Q Shoes are very important in Missouri but not in Kansas City.

A Yes.

Q One perception of the garment industry is that it was dominated by Jews. Is that true?

A Yes.

Q And if so how did that come about?

A Well I'm not sure I know all the answers. But the garment district was dominated, in fact, I think the Thayer Place building is one of the few buildings that I'm aware of that was owned by a non-Jewish garment manufacturer in the garment district. A lot of this had to do with Leavenworth. The military installation in Leavenworth was the head quartermaster's office for the U.S. Army for all of the western forte, west of here. A generation before Kansas City had a garment district, investors, cartels almost, of Jewish investors, went into Leavenworth to broker and sell commodities to the quartermaster general of the United States Army. Clothing and shoes. A side issue, Lone Jack, Mo, supplied most of the mules, as did Liberty, Mo. A lot of the livestock from this area was bought by the quartermaster. And that's why Kansas City also grew, because of its agrarian economy. But a lot of money was made, and a lot of businesses were established, out of Leavenworth. The second and third generations came into Kansas City and established a number of businesses—manufacturing, jobbing, and wholesaling. And among them was the manufacture of garments.

Q There was obviously some very strong antisemitism views in the early part of the 1900s. How did that play into the development of the industry in Kansas City?

A I'm certainly not comfortable or educated enough in that area to talk about how it worked. What I think is interesting is that business history and ethnicity are not subjects explored, except in doctoral theses, and are not part of common knowledge. I think that's why it's important when we tell these stories that we acknowledge that history's kind of funny. You, in the 1920s, you could not have economics as a major and get a degree in history and then teach economics in the context of history or history in the context of economics. And the same is true with ethnicity. It was really not until I was working for the Jackson County Historical Society and they published the book "At the River's Bend" did they hire Sherry Schirmer and the late Dick McKinze to look at the ethnicity and the ethnic history of Kansas

City and the immigrant history of Kansas City. And really that's the first time that a local general source was published that broadly addressed—I think they called it "Threads in the Tapestry"—those issues. And I haven't read a lot about how that affected the business community other than it was a large business community. And the role of people of the Jewish faith and the immigrants who came in here—first, second, and third generations— on the business climate, manufacturing, jobbing, wholesaling, is tremendous. It's a story that has yet to be told.

Q There are many stories within the story of the garment industry.

A Uh huh.

Q One story is labor unions. At what point did unionization begin to become an issue in the garment industry here in Kansas City?

A You see early on part of the national phenomenon around World War I, the Russian Revolution, the rise of the American union, you had people like Red Kate, who was trying to unionize in the garment district, so Kansas City pretty much followed the national rise of unions. And, in fact, the Donnelly garment company by the '30s was so big that the garment workers union targeted it at a national convention and allocated over \$100,000 to unionize it. And so, you see it beginning again, coinciding with the rise after World War I, you look at the Russian Revolution, you look at the rise of unionism and the Socialism Party and the activities of the Communist Party and I put this all in quotes because they don't really apply to today. But what was going on is for the worker, and the workers' movement, and this was happening in farm movement, as well as in manufacturing, there is a movement as part of the populist movement of the United States. That includes the rise of the unions. And Kansas City, because it had a significant manufacturing and wholesale distribution and railroad center, was certainly part of that. And that story isn't very well told either.

Q The unions did get a pretty good foothold in the garment industry here in town?

A Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q Was there much of the raw violence that we saw in unionism in other cities?

A No. No. You didn't see the riots. I think there was as much emotional intensity. I think it was part of a larger movement, and a component of that, but it certainly was not what you were seeing. Although Red Kate and Emma Goldman both were residents of the Missouri Penitentiary in Jefferson City. So the labor union in Missouri is not, the history of labor unions is not without some pretty serious activities going on, particularly during the Wilson Administration with the Sedition Act that was used to pretty much squelch the unions, and of course was later ruled unconstitutional.

Q Was there a particular time when the unionization became fervent here in Kansas City?

A I think the Donnelly case. James A. Reed became the attorney for Nell Donnelly, and he had a reputation before coming to Kansas City, becoming involved in very sensational and controversial issues. He came back from 18 years in the U.S. Senate to do that. He also was known for suing Warner Brothers for Harry Warner and suing Standard Oil and another oil company and getting a \$30 million judgment. So the fact that the Donnelly unionization became a national story because it was a very successful business and on top of it, had the

cachet of having a female owner and a attorney of considerable renown nationally, a very conservative Democrat, certainly stirred the fires. The fact it led to a Supreme Court decision, all of this in the 1930s, is I think perhaps the most visual and well-known union story in Kansas City.

Q And the union was ultimately successful.

A Ultimately, after she left the company, after Nell Donnelly retired and it was purchased it was unionized.

Q I didn't realize it took that long.

A Uh huh. I'm not going to quote my dates.

Q We mentioned Nell Donnelly's company, and that's sort of I guess the most famous company in the Kansas City garment industry. Was it a leading company as well?

A Yes, I would say it's in the top five.

Q What were several of the really top companies?

A H.D. Lee was one, Goodenow was one, I'd probably have to go back and look at my list because there's some wonderful figures on who was manufacturing what in what years and what was growing.

Q You mentioned the underwear company. Can it be said that Kansas City was a leader in the underwear industry?

A Yes you can. In men's underwear and sleepwear. They branched out with the new knits that could be done in the 1920s in sleepwear and were very successful.

Q I'm compelled to ask what men did before this time?

A Well we all know about the long-johns. And if you go to colonial times, you wore a nightshirt to sleep in, and that doubled as your underwear during the day. And then the long-john, the woolen. And working class men wore woolen underwear for years because it absorbed sweat. From the 1850s most people had woolen, most men, farmers, people who worked in factories, wore wool underwear.

Q Was Kansas City not a leader in the women's underwear trade?

A I wouldn't say it wasn't. I think Goodenow kind of got the patent on the design of briefs. There was some women's underwear, but no factories that specialized only in that to any great extent, so Goodenow was an interesting story in setting up an assembly line. I think it's also an interesting story of how workers were treated. By the 1920s, when they moved from this downtown-Broadway area, and they moved out to 37th and Central, and then they moved to Main Street. They made sure to have an open rooftop for fresh air for the workers, most of whom were women workers. You get the shift from the narrow tall windows to whole walls of windows that can open, that are pivoted. Fresh air, and sunshine, and good light are really important in having breaks and having, they even had bad mitten courts up on the roof to get physical exercise, to get fresh air, were very much part of that whole labor movement, and the whole progressive movement, that occurred between 1900 and the 1920s.

This is not to say that this was all arising from a concern just for the care of workers. It also had to do with efficiency studies that had shown that if you have light and air and fresh air and breaks and certain amenities, your workers work harder. Efficiency studies went along with Ford's assembly line and concrete design for factories was, you know, how do we produce. It was happening in schools, it was happening our schools when kids began to line up to go to the bathroom, they didn't ask to go individually, you waited, because we had to prepare children to work in factories. So all of that is going on as a part of what was it like to manufacture and what was it like to work in a manufacturing building, and how did that change from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the garment manufacturing and distribution that we had in Kansas City is a wonderful microcosm to look at that era.

Q In the heyday, in the 20th century, as a garment city, where did Kansas City fit in the national picture? I presume New York was always considered the No. 1?

A Yeah, but Kansas City was up there, and mainly because its factories were so large, and mainly because of the amount of goods that could be distributed out of Kansas City in the middle of the United States. So these colossal buildings we have are also important for warehousing and distribution, and so Kansas City ranked right up there with Chicago and the East Coast.

Q So Kansas City was a very major player?

A A major player.

Q When did the decline start?

A Well I think the depression hit everyone. And you have to remember, by the time you had gone through the depression and immediately after that the advent of World War II which shut down all private manufacturing and building, and everything converted to a wartime economy to manufacture the goods the Army and the military would need. That's 20 years interruption. And so, by the '50s you see the garment industry in Kansas City did recover and there was more of a focus on women's clothing and coats and all of that, it did reestablish itself. But at the same time you also see, by 1953, for regional distribution of goods, trucking had taken over and was running neck and neck with the railroads. So you have, not a railroad head, but you have, whether it's livestock or whatever, factories beginning to locate out of the city center where the rail lines were, along with a major road situation, and you have the benefit in Kansas City of Jackson County's, Harry Truman's, all-weather road system, which stimulated small factories. I think of the Grace Factory in Belton, Mo., that manufactured children's clothing. You see that change occurring after the war. So, the garment business, in, you know, the central core of Kansas City, Kansas City, Kan., along the Kaw and the Missouri rivers and where they meet, that era slowly is over as trucking becomes a major industry and railroads begin to recede.

Q Was Kansas City important as a supplier of military oriented garments during World War II?

A I don't know. Because many of the factories switched over, ended up doing something different, and non-related to what they had been doing.

Q They tried to stay in operation but not necessarily making garments?

A Yeah, and all of that was controlled by the wartime industries board, and you had a local representative who decided who made what where. And so, aeronautics manufacture was at the Fairfax Airport. So a lot of those decisions were not made based on what the factory had done but what could the factory be converted to, and how could you concentrate all those resources in a certain area.

Q Today, imports are obviously an enormous issue in the garment industry. When did it begin to be so?

A I wouldn't say in the '50s that it began to be so. It's hard to think about global economy and imports in clothing. Certainly it's in the '60s rather than the '50s, and I say that because the biggest importers were Japan and China, and those economies had not recovered from World War II and the occupation in the '50s to any extent to compete in that arena.

Q Approximately when would you say the Kansas City garment industry had pretty well sunk?

A I would say by the late '60s, you're seeing the buildings that were used to manufacture goods now becoming outlets. They're still manufacturing, but part of their space is taken out to being an outlet store for so-and-so's coats or so-and-so's this. And again, you don't see them as distribution centers and warehouses, they have been ratcheted down to manufacturing at a much lower level and a much reduced variety by the late '60s, and perhaps earlier. I think some industries didn't recover from the war and the shift.

Q The garment district, as we perceive it, is, how would you describe it geographically?

A Well the National Register district we have runs along Broadway, along 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, it's stretching it to go to 11<sup>th</sup>, on either side of Broadway to Wyandotte.

Q But the industry was never located only in that area was it?

A No. No. It had its origins with the wholesale distribution and manufacturing businesses in the West Bottoms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first located there. Quality Hill as it was called, which is the area around 9<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, and the Coates House and all of that, was a residential area, and by 1900 there began to be some encroachment of commercial, certainly more hotels, retail things, and certainly by prior to World War I and right afterward you began to see the colossal buildings, like the Poindexter. It's kind of fun to look at Thayer Place, which is an Italianate 1880s, '90s building. So the core and I think of it as the core is right there at 8<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, and that whole row of massive buildings began the era, the rise of the garment district as we think of it in Kansas City.

Q It eventually spread all over Jackson County, and some in Wyandotte County?

A Oh yeah. And I think you have to think about what modes of transportation. Certainly before the great depression you will see manufacturing buildings occurring wherever there are street car lines to get workers to work. They'll be on the public thoroughfares, the commercial thoroughfares, like Main Street, then you'll see two or three blocks of apartments. And then you'll see single family. So very much the street car system dictated, and road systems, eventually. You gotta be near rail lines. Or you have the ability to truck in and truck out.



Q You mentioned a company that was located even in Belton, they were that far out from downtown Kansas City?

A Yes, and that was a local born person that established that factory.

Q Let's talk a little bit about the garment district, the buildings. Should more have been done earlier to try and preserve the district?

A Well, I'm a preservationist, so I always feel it's never too early to incorporate preservation in land use planning. That's the whole point of the preservation movement, it's not just to save well designed buildings that are aesthetically important, but also to capture our history and to reuse those buildings and recycle those buildings as part of land use. I think the garment district had lots of loss. That loss occurred right after World War II when we began to build the freeway system. Obviously the gap between the River Market and what we call the garment district today, there was no gap. There was a continuing of industrial stuff all the way down to the railroad tracks and to the river. So our concept of what is, is very much changed because of the freeway system that evolved after World War II. And that came early and that came fast and that came at a time when we had 10 million returning soldiers and military personnel looking for houses and jobs, and nothing had been done to the infrastructure or the building inventory for 20 years. So there was really a pent up desire, and also somewhat of a need to build new. And that's when the preservation movement was born, was in reaction to some of the excesses of that era. And so I think that we didn't think about, I think everybody who sees these wonderful colossal buildings in the garment district thinks that they are great and thinks that they should be saved, and probably in 1953 thought that they were great and worthy of saving. I think to a certain extent they were such white elephants that the cost of demolishing them was so high that perhaps they saved themselves instead of the movement to save them. But I really think the early identification by the Kansas City Landmarks Commission, the preservationists in the late '70s and the early '80s as being of worth was very important in their remaining.

Q Has Kansas City lost some really large, important garment district buildings?

A Oh I think the worst we went through was losing the Octave Chanute Building, which was right down off of Broadway. It was replaced by a parking building. It would have been nice to be able to save that. That was one I cut my teeth on after first coming to Kansas City. When it was all over, the point was, as they were tearing it down, there had been a fire and it had been horribly structurally damaged and probably couldn't have been saved anyway. So, when you lose big ones right in the middle of the whole block, it's kind of like, you know, losing a tooth in the middle of your smile. Those are the ones that really have an impact visually. We've lost lots of end pieces. What we have left gives us an idea of visually where these people worked, how big they were, how important the manufacture of garments and the distribution of garments was. But we've lost a lot of that picture through our freeway systems and various stages of development.

Q Do you feel we have a lot left though?

A I think yes. I think that we have a lot left, and a lot to talk about and a lot to interpret and a lot that you can build a story. I think it's a financial benefit Heritage tourism is the fastest growing field of tourism. There's a foreign audience in tourism. I've run museums. I know

where those audiences are. But until a city like Kansas City can present a cohesive picture that orients visitors to the city and then to those sites throughout the city that connect a tale, the tourist doesn't have time to seek and find. I think if we're going to tell the story, it has to be comprehensive. The garment story is a context of a larger context. When you tell the story correctly, it is a fun story and people like it.

Q We do have a small museum don't we?

A There is a small museum.

Q That is not open?

A Not open regularly and it's a wonderful collection. I think the sad thing, that hidden in local historical societies and some of the historical collections in Kansas City, are some of the most incredible collections of garments that are never seen. They sit in boxes for 20 years. The Jackson County Historical Society has fabulous collections of clothing. The Kansas City Museum over on Gladstone has a fabulous collection of garments. When I used to do museums, I've done wedding dresses, I've done an exhibit on "Independence goes to the Inauguration" and what all the women wore to Harry Truman's inauguration. That little museum could be the kernel of a larger collection. One of the most popular exhibits at the Smithsonian is the First Ladies' dress collection. There is an audience to see what was made, and to understand that. With my gray hair, 1950s coats don't seem that unique any more than a ranch style house does. But there's a whole generation, and two generations, behind me, that are crazy about mid-20th Century. So, the collections are there, more than we could ever handle. And they are stunning collections, and we're not seeing them.

Q What do we need to do?

A Well, it takes vision and organization and money. You know, during the first stages of "what are we going to do with the Union Station?" I sat with 500 people in various sessions of what should be exhibited, and could the Union Station be part of a plan. And I think it's going to take a coordinated approach to how we interpret all our historic sites and places of interest. And to tell the story of Kansas City, not from the standpoint of who was that group of men who got the money together and politically lobbied to get the Hannibal Bridge. We need to tell the story of how Kansas City developed and the technology and the changes that caused it to develop. Then there's a place to talk about garment district, wholesale distribution, in the context of railroads.

Q Do you have optimism that this will come to pass at some point?

A At one time I did, I don't now. I think at one time we had the leadership in City Hall. I think the enthusiasm was generated by Focus, the comprehensive plan, and heritage tourism being an important component of the city's programmatic planning in the future. But Focus is over. For all intents and purposes, you don't mention that to elected officials and you don't mention that in City Hall. There was enthusiasm and organization at one time. I think the success on the other side of the state line in getting a national heritage area to talk about the civil rights and the Civil War is the last really good group effort I've seen. Kansas City deserves to have a heritage corridor. It certainly could qualify for national funding, but there has to be people who understand that, who are empowered by decision makers to make that happen.

Q You were just referring to a major comprehensive planning effort for the city that you were involved with some years ago. Did that get into the garment district among a number of other issues?

A The garment district was certainly recognized as an asset to be built upon, and to use, and to capitalize on. And heritage tourism, in the aftermath of that, we looked at a very regional approach because of the river to interpreting the history of this region. It all comes together at the Kaw and the Missouri, and so those railroad tracks follow those riverbeds because of the degree of slant, and rise and fall. It's not happenstance that the Union Station was built and that this was a rail center. We had the geographic and the topographical features to make that work. You know, Kansas City is a place where throughout time, and going way back, different people have come and merged and left. And it's because of the transportation route, and because of its central location, and because of its topography. So there is a story to tell. The rise of the garment district is very much a part of the story of the rise of the railroads, and its important role that it gave to Kansas City and its important role in the nation. It's also a story of immigrants. It's also the story of new people coming to an area, and technological change, the effects of world events on this community. All of that is woven into a story that is not well told, and is not capitalized, and it is an asset certainly that the city, and the county and the region ought to be collectively looking at,

*(transcript has been edited slightly for clarity)*

guest: Sally Schwenk (d.o.b. May 23, 1945) Kansas City, historic preservation consultant

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interviewer: John A. Dvorak, Kansas City

videographer: Mark Titus, Prairie Village