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History of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway

Keith L. Bryant Jr.

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In 1859, Cyrus K. Holliday envisioned a railroad that would run from Kansas to the Pacific, increasing the commerce and prosperity of the nation. With farsighted investors and shrewd management, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad grew from Holliday's idea into a model of the modern, rapid, and efficient railroad.

There were many growing pains. Rustlers, thieves, and desperadoes were as thick as the cattle in Kansas when the first rails were laid. When a conductor, toting a pistol, asked a grizzled prospector where he was heading, the old man replied, "Hell." "That's 65¢ and get off at Dodge," the weary conductor declared.

Once built with rails from Wales laid on ties of oak and walnut, the railroad survived the economic and climatic hardships of the late nineteenth century, and eventually extended from Chicago to San Francisco, with over 12,000 miles of track and substantial holdings in oil fields, timber land, uranium mines, pipe lines, and real estate.

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