

The Capitalists

In 1821, French fur trapper François Chouteau established a trading post on the Missouri River. By 1827, settlers from Kentucky and Tennessee, most of Scotch-Irish descent, established Jackson County and the city of Independence. Settlers such as William McCoy, Lillburn Boggs, and Samuel Owens became prominent in local affairs, and in the Santa Fe trade with Mexico. Prosperity, built on the trail economy, grew.

Missouri merchants already exercised strong influence in local politics—but they soon learned that international trade required international business alliances. Partnerships between Missouri and New Mexico merchants helped both to negotiate the legal systems of two countries. Alliances were also forged in other ways. Eugene Leitensdorfer married

Soledad Abreu, daughter of a former New Mexico governor. Maria de la Cruz Carmen Benevides, whose family was prominent in New Mexico business and government, married trader and trapper Antoine Robidoux, who became *alcalde* (mayor and magistrate) of Santa Fe.



Independence Square was the eastern hub of an extensive global trade network.
Independence Square - Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society



Santa Fe, Oregon, and California
National Historic Trails
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“[Independence] is a fine place to observe the differences of individual character. We have an incongruous assortment at all times here. The mountain & Santa Fe traders...are frequently here.... Mexicans, Californians and strangers from every state in the Union find their way thither.”



Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, Neg. #15817

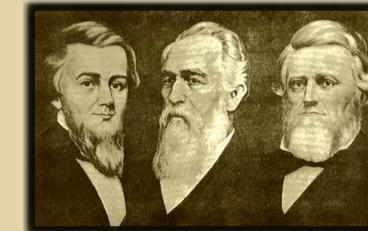
While a few trail travelers were rich merchants, most, like these teamsters, were paid laborers.



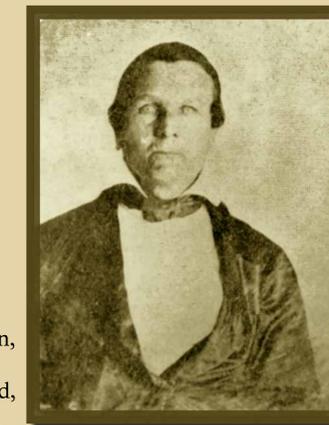
French Canadian François Xavier Aubry became a successful trader through hard work—and the financial backing of Moise Lamoraux and other investors.

Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society

The firm of Russell, Majors, and Waddell—a major government contractor—reportedly owned 3,150 wagons and more than 40,000 oxen, and operated 125 caravans that transported military goods over the Santa Fe Trail, and over the Oregon Trail to Salt Lake City.



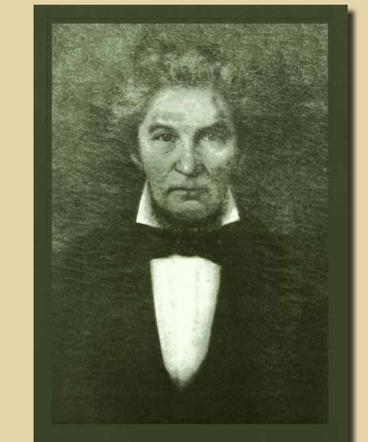
Courtesy Alexander Majors Historic Trust



François Chouteau's brother, Cyprian, ran a trading post just west of the Missouri border. When François died, Cyprian took over his brother's post.

Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society

David Waldo promoted his financial interests by using his business ties in Missouri, New Mexico, and New England—and by converting to Catholicism, so he could become a Mexican citizen.



Courtesy Annabelle Cartwright