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## Chapter 3

### THE ARGENTINE SMELTER

Could the old warrior Fernando Cortez arise from the tomb and visit the Argentine smelter by the light of the pale-faced moon, look around and see the piles of precious ores scattered negligently here and there, all fresh taken from the land he won by roasting the heroic chieftain on burning coals, it would paralyze him sure.<sup>1</sup>

These fitting words, spoken by Joseph Landrey, the founder of the old Argentine Republic Newspaper, reflect the great wealth of the Argentine smelter. "Argentine" is derived also from the Spanish (as well as Latin) word for silver, and the town was truly a *silvery city*. From 1880 until 1901, the Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company had its main smelter located in Argentine. For many years this smelter was the largest silver and lead smelter in the world in terms of plant size and the value of products refined. The smelter received ores from all parts of the continent and sent finished products all over the world.<sup>2</sup>  
<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/thenow/TN45.htm>  
<http://www.kclibrary.org/sc/post/nearbycities/20000156.htm>  
<http://www.atsfry.com/EasternArchive/Meades/meadp61b.htm>

The peak year of the smelter was 1898. In that year, the smelter produced 1/12 of all gold produced in the United States; 1/8 of all the silver; and 1/5 of all the lead. In addition 9,846,312 pounds of blue vitriol worth \$89,390 and 201,011 pounds of zinc worth \$4,352 were produced. Refined silver and gold were sent to such faraway places as India and Japan.<sup>3</sup>

W. N. Ewing was the founder of the smelter. Previously, he had been the superintendent of the Carbon Coal and Mining Company at Osage City, Kansas, and the superintendent of a smelting establishment in Colorado. He desired to establish a smelting works either at Topeka or some other point in Kansas City.<sup>4</sup>

Ewing had encountered financial and technical difficulties at his smelter in Colorado. He was dependent upon a single mining camp for his raw material. This was an inadequate supply. Also, labor was scarce and unreliable. The shipping facilities were monopolized by one railroad. He also did not have any way of mending broken machinery. In one instance, the breaking of a single wheel, costing only \$8 to repair, caused the suspension of work at the smelter. The company between \$8,000 and \$10,000.<sup>5</sup>

Ewing decided it would be best to relocate his smelter. It would be better to ship the ores for smelting and refining to a manufacturing center possessing all the advantages of shipment, fuel supply, and quantity of labor. He went to capitalists at Topeka and Emporia in an effort to secure financial assistance, but he received no real encouragement.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, he came to Kansas City and met some prominent businessmen. Among them were C. F. Morse, T. F. Oakes and Kersey Coates. Ewing and these men formed the Kansas City Smelting and Refining Company and Ewing became the Secretary and Superintendent of the new company.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial, Kansas City Kansas, December 1937. This unsigned editorial was found in the Argentine file of the Kansas City Kansas at 901 North 8<sup>th</sup>, Kansas City, Kansas. The exact date of the newspaper article is unknown to the author. The editorial is entitled, "A View of Old Argentine, News from Paper of 50 Years Ago Reveals Bustling Town."

<sup>2</sup> Kansas City Star, May 1, 1899, p. 24

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Wyandotte County Clippings: "Argentine, a New Manufacturing City of Great Promise", pp. 237-238. This is a news clipping from an old Kansas City newspaper, possibly either the Kansas City Gazette or the Kansas City Herald. This clipping can be found in the Argentine file of the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp. 239-40

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

It was Ewing who chose the site for the new smelter. The location was in the lowlands of the Kaw River about three miles from its mouth. At that time, the area was almost completely uninhabited. The site for the smelter was an orchard. Where the town of Argentine was to be plotted, a large cornfield stood.<sup>8</sup>

Work on the new smelter was started in the summer of 1880 and was completed by the fall. Ewing and his associates saw the need for a town to be built. Therefore, the town of Argentine was started. From small beginnings, this town evolved into a prosperous community.

The real genius responsible for the fabulous growth of the Argentine smelter was August R. Meyer. Meyer, along with N. Witherell and Theodore Berdell, purchased the controlling interest in the smelter in 1881. Meyer became the President of the reorganized smelting company which was now called the Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company.<sup>9</sup>

August R. Meyer was a wealthy and nationally known figure before he came to Argentine. He was born of German descent in St. Louis, Missouri and attended school there until he reached fourteen years of age. He then went abroad to study at the School of Mines in Freibourg, Saxony (now part of Germany), where he was graduated in 1872. Also, he spent several terms as a student at the University of Berlin. He traveled throughout Europe and became known to metalworkers throughout the continent.<sup>10</sup>

Meyer returned to America and worked for a short period of time in Illinois. In the spring of 1874, at the age of 26, he went to Colorado. He became the territorial assayer at Fair Play, Colorado. Meyer is credited with giving this rugged mining camp its first official name: Leadville. He helped to build Leadville's first sampling and smelting works. He also established an ore-crushing mill in Alma, Colorado. Meyer's old home in Leadville is now preserved as the Healy House. This house is a state museum commemorating the silver mining of the state.<sup>11</sup>

In 1881, Meyer looked for a site to build a smelter. He came to Kansas City and inspected the Argentine smelter which was then less than a year old. He was impressed with the adequate labor supply and the railway facilities. Therefore, he and his associates purchased the company.

Meyer built a beautiful home in Argentine near the smelter. This home was located on what is now 22<sup>nd</sup> and Ruby. Later it was sold and became the first hotel in Argentine. It was called the Bleaker House. The owner of the hotel used to send his children to the smelter with hot lunches for his boarders.<sup>12</sup>

Meyer later built another home at 2806 Independence Avenue. He built a final home at the corner of 44<sup>th</sup> and Warwick in Kansas City, Missouri. This dwelling, erected in the style of a German manor, is now the home of the Kansas City Art Institute.<sup>13</sup>

<http://www.kcmo.org/timeline.nsf/web/19090000?opendocument>

<http://www.kclibrary.org/sc/post/fountains/20000638.htm>

<http://www.umkc.edu/whmckc/PUBLICATIONS/MCP/MCPPDF/Serda-1-23-92pix2.pdf>

<http://www.kclibrary.org/sc/bio/meyer.htm>

<http://www.leadville.com/walktour/2.htm>

Besides his smelting interests, he was very active in civic affairs. He conceived the idea of a boulevard (Cliff Drive) along the high scenic bluffs of the Missouri River. He also proposed other parks and boulevards for the city. In 1892, he became the first President of the Kansas City, Missouri Park Board. He and William Rockhill Nelson, the owner of the Kansas City Star, were instrumental in the development of the park and boulevard system.<sup>14</sup> Meyer Boulevard was named in his honor.

Meyer also gained lasting fame from the Argentine smelter. In the smelter's first year of operation, it refined 40 ounces of gold, 463,000 ounces of silver and 3,100 tons of lead.<sup>15</sup> However, under Meyer's

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<sup>8</sup> Kansas City Star, August 24, 1901, p. 2

<sup>9</sup> Kansas City Star, May 22, 1899, p. 24

<sup>10</sup> Kansas City Times, April 10, 1971, p. 11A

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Nellie M. McGuinn, The Story of Kansas City, Kansas (Kansas City, Kansas: The Kansas City Public Schools, 1961), p. 79

<sup>13</sup> Kansas City Times, April 10, 1971, p. 11A

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Kansas City Star, May 7, 1899, p. 24. August R. Meyer is not to be confused with Alfred M. Meyers who for many years was the Chief Engineer of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company in Argentine.

leadership, this figure was to be passed many times over. The following chart shows the value of the products produced by the smelter from 1881-1898.<sup>16</sup>

Type	Amount	Price Per Ounce	\$ Value
Gold	1,103,410 ounces	\$20.67 @ ounce	22,807,434.70
Silver	117,743,515 ounces	\$.63 @ ounce	74,178,415.08
Lead	446,876 tons	\$80 @ ton	<u>35,750,080.00</u>
			132,735,929.78

The raw, unrefined ore was shipped by rail to the smelter from all over the continent. The interests of the Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company were scattered. The company also owned two smelters in Leadville, Colorado and one at Carmen and one at Chihuahua, Mexico. Sampling works were located at Salt Lake City, Utah, and in Mexico at Hermosillo, Parral, Jiminiz, Chihuahua, Pachuca, and Sabinal. The company also owned mines at Cook's Peak, New Mexico and in Mexico<sup>17</sup>

In later years, the company was merged with the great "smelter trust" owned by the German family, the Guggenheims. This trust had a combined capital stock of \$65,000,000 and consisted of twenty-two smelters. This great combine controlled over 80 per cent of the lead produced in the United States. August R. Meyer was on the Board of Directors of this trust.<sup>18</sup>

The smelting industry did a lucrative business and paid good wages. The following chart is a listing of wages for workers at the Argentine smelter in 1901.<sup>19</sup>

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Salary</u>
Vitriol plant employees	\$1.80 per day
Common laborers in other departments	\$1.50 per day
Furnace men	\$2.00 to \$2.70 per day
Gold room employees	\$2.00 per day
Blast furnace men	\$3.00 per day
Superintendents and foremen	\$75-\$150 per month

This was an extremely hazardous occupation however. Workers became ill from the sickening fumes of the melting ore. Many workers became paralyzed and died from lead poisoning. The author knows of two people who were affected by the toxic fumes. Cornelius T. Campbell, who worked at the Kansas City Structural Steel Company for many years, had a father who worked in the company's smelters in Mexico and in Argentina. His father was twice partially paralyzed as a result of lead poisoning.<sup>20</sup> The author's great-grandfather, Louis L. Johnson, was a lead burner in the Argentine smelter. Mr. Johnson died of lead poisoning on July 3, 1901 at the age of forty-nine.

The usually prevailing southwesterly winds blew the toxic fumes directly into the city. Because of fog and high humidity, the smelter fumes covered the little city for much of the year. Vegetation could not grow in many areas. The author has heard stories about the fumes being so bad that dogs and cats suffocated on the streets.

Working conditions were also poor inside the smelter. An intense heat was given off by the smelter furnaces. Coal, coke and oil worth \$753,000 was used annually. The coal came from Missouri, Colorado and New Mexico. The coke came from West Virginia and Alabama. The oil was purchased from the Standard Oil Company and its subsidiaries.<sup>21</sup>

The heat of the smelter was so intense that the men had to work in teams of four. Three men stirred the molten metal and the other man stood by with a water hose and cooled his partners. Due to the vats being wet when the hot metal was poured in, there sometimes were explosions that killed two or three men.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Due to the extreme age and poor condition of the microfilm, these figures are only approximate.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Kansas City Star, August 24, 1901, p. 1

<sup>20</sup> Cornelius T. Campbell, personal interview held in his home at 1501 Ruby, Kansas, Kansas, March 12, 1974.

<sup>21</sup> Kansas City Star, May 7, 1889, p. 24

<sup>22</sup> Terry Miller, "The Kansas City Smelting and Refining Works," p. 3. (This unpublished paper of four pages was written in April of 1948. It was found in the Argentine file of the Silver City Record, 3416 Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas.)

Due to the value of the precious ores, great security was employed at the plant. Armed guards patrolled the gates. Men were searched from head to foot whenever they entered and left the plant. Bricks of gold and silver, however, were usually left unguarded on the docks. These metals were shipped by Wells Fargo wagons to the railroad depot. All gold went to the Federal mints where they were exchanged for their value in money. Silver was stamped with the company's trademark and sold on the open market. Eventually, most of it also ended up in mints. Lead was sold on the open market although most of it went to New York. Zinc was also sold on the open market.<sup>23</sup>

The smelting grounds at Argentine consisted of eighteen acres. About 1/3 of this tract was covered with buildings. There were five general departments in the plant. They were: the assaying, sampling, roasting, smelting and refining departments.<sup>24</sup> Most of the smelting work involved complicated processes. Therefore, most of the workers were skilled laborers. When Meyer took over the smelter, the word quickly spread to the mining districts of Germany, Austria and Bohemia. Many smelter workers came over from Europe to work in the Argentine smelter. At one time, the smelter colony reached 3,000.<sup>25</sup> This was almost half of the population of the entire town. Many of these people were of European descent.

Their skills were put to good use in the Argentine smelter. For as the author has mentioned before, a detailed process was involved in the refining of the ore. This process began in the assaying department. The ores were tested and the value was determined there. Then, the ores went to the sampling department where the ores were mixed in the proper amounts for correct smelting.

From the sampling department, the ore went to the blast furnaces. Here it was mixed with charcoal, crushed stone, and other smelting ingredients and shoveled into the furnaces. It then came out of the furnaces and the finished product, the bullion, was poured into vats. The slag or refuse material from the furnaces was poured in bog bowls and taken to the slag yard. Valuable ores remained in the slag and it was necessary to allow the slag to cool in order for the valuable materials to settle to the bottom. The valuable portions were removed and refined while the slag was sold to railway companies for ballast.

Lead, zinc, silver and gold comprised the bullion taken from the furnaces. This bullion was placed in molds to cool. Each full mold was called a pig and weighed about 75 pounds. From there, the bullion was taken through the last process, that of the refining department. The gold and silver were separated from the lad and made ready for shipment.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the proudest day in the history of Argentine occurred on October 30, 1889. On that day, several Latin American dignitaries, who were in this country to form the International Union of American Republics, visited Argentine. These men were taken by several trains from Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri to the town of Argentine. There, they visited the smelter for several hours. They reboarded the train and spent the night at the Coates House Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri. The next morning they left for Springfield, Illinois. Soon, the delegates went to Washington, D.C. and on April 14, 1890, formed the International Union of American Republics. The purpose of this union was friendship and the betterment of trade between the American Republics. This union was perhaps the forerunner of the present Organization of American States.<sup>27</sup>

<http://www.scripophily.net/conkancitsme.html>

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/thenow/TN29.htm> (Largest Stack in town)

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/AA/dka2.html>

<http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/bureaus/lat/factsheets/941201OAS.html>

<http://www.oas.org/>

Silver medals were minted and presented to the dignitaries during their visit to Argentine to commemorate the event. These medals bore the profile of the heads of President Harrison of the United States and President Diaz of Mexico. One of these medals can be found in the Missouri Room Collection of the Kansas City, Missouri Public Library.<sup>28</sup>

[http://www.mexconnect.com/mex\\_history/jtuck/jtporfdiaz.html](http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_history/jtuck/jtporfdiaz.html)

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<sup>23</sup> [Kansas City Star](#), May 7, 1889, p. 24

<sup>24</sup> [Kansas City Gazette](#), December 31, 1890, p. 17

<sup>25</sup> [Kansas City Times](#), April 10, 1971, p. 11A

<sup>26</sup> [Kansas City Gazette](#), December 31, 1890, p. 17

<sup>27</sup> [Kansas City Star](#), April 16, 1962, p. 6

<sup>28</sup> [Ibid](#)

The Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company took great pride in this visit by Latin American dignitaries. The company also took great pride in the facilities that it erected for its employees. Reading rooms and recreational facilities were established. The company also had low rent housing available for the families of smelter workers. For several years around 1890, could also take pride in the statistics of the labor bureau. These statistics showed that the average wages paid at the smelter were higher than the wages paid in "any large manufacturing concern east of the Rocky Mountains."<sup>29</sup>

For the most part, the company maintained an excellent management=employee relationship. This relationship started at the top with August R. Meyer, the president, and extended on down through the superintendents, foremen and common laborers. As the author has mentioned previously, working conditions were far from good. The hours were long and the work was hazardous. Nevertheless, working conditions at the Argentine smelter were no worse than they were in most other industries in our country in the late 1800's.

The company did experience a strike in May 1886. The year 1886 was a period of great labor unrest in Kansas as well as across the country. Perhaps the most serious strike in Kansas was at the Argentine smelter. On Mat 15, 1886, the 200 employees of the smelter struck the plant. They demanded a reduction of hours worked from twelve to eight with no decrease in pay. To meet these demands, the company would have had to utilize three shifts or increase the working force by approximately one-third.<sup>30</sup>

Sheriff James Ferguson of Wyandotte County went to Argentine on the morning of May 15. He placed a force of deputies around the plant's property. The smelting company hired an additional twenty men to stand guard during nights. This they did for several days.<sup>31</sup>

A. R. Meyer was in Mexico at the time of the strike. A. F. Snyder, the plant superintendent, handled the labor negotiations for the company. The employees apparently had some legitimate grievances. The men claimed that twelve hours was too long a work day since the work was so unhealthy and exhausting. They also complained about the hospital tax of one dollar a month that they paid. The employees complained that the company did not have a hospital in case of sickness and that the company's doctor lived in Kansas City, too far away for emergencies. In many instances the workers were forced to hire a physician at their own expense. When a man was "leaded", the term applied to the disease common to the smelting industry, he did not have the time to send to Kansas City for the company doctor but had to secure one from the Argentine community. This expense he had to pay out of his own pocket. The workers also complained that in some instances, they had to pay a double tax of two dollars a month to cover hospital fees.<sup>32</sup>

The company refused to give in to the strike demands. The company claimed that the business was run on a close margin and the pay raises could not be justified. The company might have been willing to substitute three shifts for two, if the men agreed to scale their wages to eight hours. The workers, however, had struck and abandoned their work, thereby subjecting the plant to a great financial loss. Thus, the company held that they did not have any obligations to meet the workers' demands.<sup>33</sup>

Since the strikers had been given an opportunity to return to work but had refused to do so, all of them were fixed. They had to reapply for work. Company officials admitted that the work was hard, but the claimed that if the employee abstained from the use of alcohol, they would be in no danger of lead poisoning.<sup>34</sup>

After a lengthy conference, the strike was called off. Armed guards protected company property for several days. Although the ring leaders of the strike were not hired back, most of the other employees did return to the plant.<sup>35</sup> The author has no other information about the strike. Doubtlessly, however, the company's relationship with its employees was strained for some time.

In 1890, the company's financial image took a beating. The McKinley tariff on imported ores hurt the smelting industry. The high duties imposed on the Mexican ores resulted in a reduction in the volume of business at the Argentine smelter. Silver became a speculative commodity. The violent fluctuations in the price of the metal made it hard for the smelting works to plan its expenses. The company, out of necessity, had to carry a large inventory of raw materials. These ores were often purchased at what was apparently a

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<sup>29</sup> Kansas City Gazette, December 31, 1890, p. 17

<sup>30</sup> Dorothy Leibengood, "Labor Problems in the Second Year of Governor Martin's Administration," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, V, number 1 (1936), p. 191

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

low price. Yet, by the time that these ores were ready for market, their value might have decreased even more. Consequently, the smelter was often forced to sell for a loss.<sup>36</sup>

The price of silver apparently stabilized. The 1890's were the best years of production for the smelter. The peak year for the smelter was 1898. Business at the turn of the century looked promising. By the spring of 1901, the Argentine smelter could boast of a monthly payroll of \$55,000. The payroll averaged between 800 and 900 employees. One-half of the town's population was comprised of the smelter colony.<sup>37</sup>

The Argentine smelter was only one of twenty-four owned by the Guggenheim's "smelting trust", and as the trust grew larger, labor-management relations became more impersonal. To the big officials in New York, the Argentine smelter represented only a profit or a loss on the balance sheets.

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/text/guggenhm.html>

<http://www.cozine.com/archive/cc1999/00660076.htm>

<http://www.kipnotes.com/Mining1.htm>

[http://downloads.smytheonline.com/smythe\\_pdf/217\\_General.pdf](http://downloads.smytheonline.com/smythe_pdf/217_General.pdf)

For many years, ores had been sent to the plant in El Paso for reduction work. Then, they had been sent by rail to the Argentine smelter for the final refining process. Freight rates had continued to rise. It was now more profitable to send the El Paso ores by water to the trust's newer plant at Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Also, refining works were being built closer to the Colorado ore fields. Suddenly, neither the El Paso nor the Colorado ores were coming to Argentine in any great quantities.<sup>38</sup>

The days of the Argentine smelter were numbered. There had been rumors for several weeks that something was about to happen at the Argentine smelter. Many felt that lay off would be only temporary. During the annual yearly housecleaning, the plant was always closed down for a few days. During this time, the mile long tunnel leading to the smelter's smoke stack was cleaned. This tunnel was large enough for two men to walk erect standing side by side.<sup>39</sup> The soot was swept from the tunnel and the smoke stack. This soot often contained as much as 20,000 dollars worth of precious ores and these were worth recovering.<sup>40</sup>

It soon became apparent, however, that this was not just another yearly housecleaning. The smelter was to be closed permanently. Within a few weeks, the payroll of 800 men had been reduced to 400.<sup>41</sup>

More men were terminated daily. The trust finally announced that the smelter was to be closed. They did not specify whether this was to be of temporary or permanent duration. Workers were advised to secure other employment if they could.

By August 20, 1901, the situation was gloomy. Within the last few days, 150 men had been terminated. The company announced that more would go by September 15. Company Superintendent McDonald denounced as untrue rumors that the company books were short \$100,000.<sup>42</sup>

A few days later, William McGeorge, a former mayor of Argentine had this to say about the situation:

There have been periods of slackness when many of the men have been temporarily laid off and there have been occasions when the plant worked only part time, but it will be a new experience to have the works shut down altogether. The thought has a paralyzing effect. We do not understand it and the future is filled with uncertainty and dread.<sup>43</sup>

Friday, October 4, 1901, was the last day that the smelter was in operation. Only 100 men were still on the payroll. The vitriol department would remain open for almost a year. However, only fifty men were employed in that department.

Silver Avenue, the main street of the town was deserted that day. The street was seven blocks long but there were only about a half-a-dozen people on the street.<sup>44</sup> A heavy gloom hung over the town: its

<sup>36</sup> [Kansas City Gazette](#), December 31, 1890, p. 17

<sup>37</sup> [Kansas City Star](#), August 24, 1901, p. 1

<sup>38</sup> [Ibid](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Ibid](#)

<sup>40</sup> [Kansas City Star](#), August 20, 1901, p. 1

<sup>41</sup> [Kansas City Star](#), August 24, 1901, p. 1

<sup>42</sup> [Kansas City Star](#), August 20, 1901, p. 2

<sup>43</sup> [Kansas City Star](#), August 24, 1901, p. 1

<sup>44</sup> [Kansas City Star](#), October 4, 1901, p. 1

biggest employer had shut its doors. Probably the livelihood of about 700 families depended on the smelter. A few smelter employees would find work at the railroad. Many families moved away as their bread winners sought new occupations.

The entire social structure of the town had been upset. The smelter community dominated the economic, social, and political life of Argentine. They comprised about one-half of the town's population and directly or indirectly supported the other half.

Smelter officials, along with a few engineers and conductors of the railroad, were the social elite of the community. They lived on the higher ground at the east end of town. Whatever the smelter company wanted in concessions it always got without an argument. They were even able to elect one of their officials, Charles W. Green, the mayor of the town.

But now, this was all changed. The Santa Fe Railroad had always played second fiddle to the smelter. The railroad had demanded and received only a few concessions from the town. All of these concessions had been hard fought for. Ironically, it was now the previously shunned railroad that had to carry the economic fortunes of the town.

The town of Argentine went into a depression after the closing of the smelter. Some people still believed that the closing of the smelter was only temporary. Even August R. Meyer, the president of the old Kansas Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company, was optimistic. Meyer was a member of the Board of Directors of Guggenheim smelting trust and he tried for months to get the smelter reopened. As late as October 11, 1902, he announced that he was positive that the new smelter would open within a few months.<sup>45</sup> Even Mr. Meyer's efforts failed however.

The closing of the smelter was one of the major factors in convincing the town's officials to seek annexation into Kansas City, Kansas. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company was to come to Argentine in 1907. The steel plant was to become great in its own right, yet it has never had the economic impact on the community that the smelter did.

Few memories exist of the old smelter. The relatively new Silver City Shopping Center and such old streets as Silver Avenue and Ruby Avenue are namesakes of a forgotten era. For fifty-eight years, however, a huge smelter smoke stack stood on the north side of Metropolitan Avenue near 1<sup>st</sup> Street in Kansas City, Kansas. This smoke stack was built about a year before the smelter closed. It replaced the older smoke stack that was situated south on the top of a hill at what is now 23<sup>rd</sup> and Lawrence. Great care was taken in the construction of the new smoke stack. The bricks and cement mortar came from Italy.<sup>46</sup> When completed, it contained 700,000 bricks and cost \$20,000 to build. It was credited as the largest brick smoke stack in the United States. Measuring 187 ½ feet in height, the base was twenty-six feet square and fifteen feet across at the top. In 1958, the smoke stack was raxed to make room for a \$2,000,000 storm sewer.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the last vestige of a by-gone era disappeared, the era in which Argentine may have been the silver refining capital of the world.

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/thennow/images/tnsmostk.jpg>

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/thennow/TN45.htm>

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/twach/window7.htm>

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<sup>45</sup> Kansas City Star, October 11, 1902, p. 9

<sup>46</sup> Gloria A. Servos, "Argentine, the Silver City," 1962, p. 4 (This was an unpublished paper written in 1962 and found in the Argentine file of the Silver City Record, 3416 Strong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas.)

<sup>47</sup> Don Simmons, "The Smelter." (One-page paper written by Mr. Simmons, given by him to the author.)