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# River City Blues: The Quest for Municipal Home Rule & Economic Security in St. Louis

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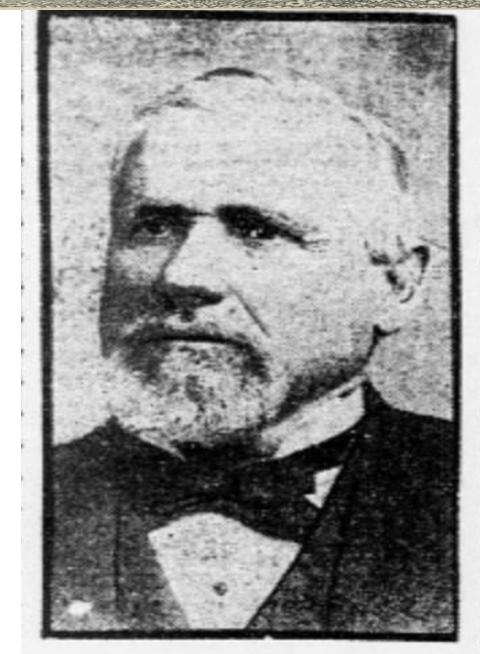
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# River City Blues: The Quest for Municipal Home Rule & Economic Security in St. Louis By: Josef Wibbenmeyer

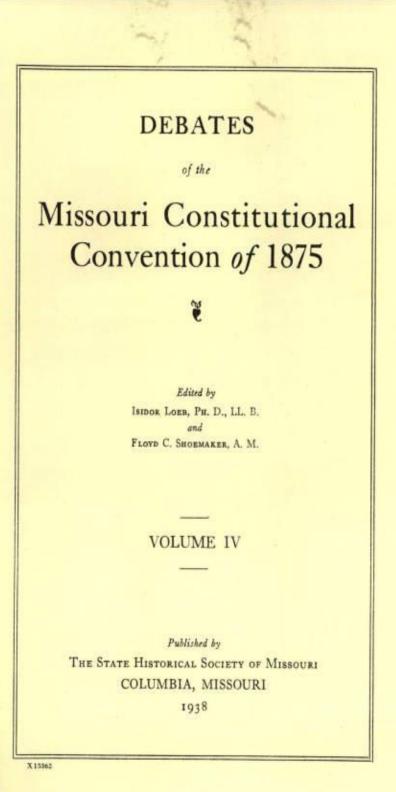
- City had been reliant on MO State approval of budget items in the time prior to the split
  - Tax changes, even bond issues had to go through the MO legislature as a bill as
     if it were a law of statewide pertinence
  - Legislators usually did what the St. Louis lobby wanted, but there was always the possibility the State of Missouri could outright reject the wishes of St. Louis or its lobby
- City was constantly needing more money to improve & expand infrastructure of all kinds, needed to move quickly due to city's sustained growth
  - Need for infrastructure made debt & which was worsened by the economic downturn that was the Panic of 1873
  - People believed change was needed, & had a belief growth would not stop
- City & County relations always tenuous
  - Corruption issues made this worse such as the vast discrepancy in pay for
     County officials over City officials like the mayor
  - Numerous funds known to go fund projects that largely helped non-City residents in the County.
  - Tensions flared up when MO give County tax apportionment auth over City
  - Recount & vote fraud in Scheme & Charter for separation polling showcased the corruption not only in the County, but the City too, in wards under men like Edward Butler
    - The results of the 1<sup>st</sup> vote in 1876 showed the separation measure failing
- Some in City felt removal of Jefferson City & County influence needed for achieving civic & financial goals, thus preserving future growth City needed the ability to make its decisions independent of its state's government, AKA: Home Rule
- Opponents stood to lose their position or a large tax base that supported them, some favored options other than separation (such as a merger of City & County)
  - County officials stood to lose their position as their office would no longer exist
  - Some political bosses like Ed Butler stood to have reduced influence as City
     Charter's new wards reduced the zones he'd have under his thumb

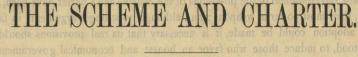












To the Voters of the City and County of St. Louis.

On the 22d day of August there will be placed before you, for your ratification or rejection, a document of such vital importance to every citizen of this County as has never before been presented to them for their expression of opinion. It is the Scheme and Charter providing for a separation of the City from the County, containing the fundamental laws for the government of both, after their separation. Prepared by Thirteen well-known citizens whom you have entrusted with this work, it is now presented to you for your approval. As the Document itself has been widely circulated by the press and by the authorities, it becomes unnecessary to enter into a discussion of the details of its provisions; but we feel it incumbent upon us to call your attention to some of its prominent features, as also to the fact that if this Scheme and Charter be not adopted by the people, it will forever prevent a separation of the City from the County of St. Louis, unless the State Constitution be amended.

If the document presented to you is defective—and no one claims that it is perfect—the remedy to perfect it is with the people who live under and are governed by it. It can be amended at the end of every two years. In this the proposed Charter differs from any similar instrument ever framed for the City, as all former Charters were prepared by committees of the City Council, or by city officials, who generally took their finished work to the General Assembly, and that body passed upon its merits. There is no doubt that the country members of the Legislature understood the wants of their own counties; but it is equally certain that they are not expected to know the requirements of a large city. By a provision of the Constitution, the people of St. Louis were privileged to select Thirteen men from among themselves, and entrust to them the framing of laws for their own government.

This work is now before you, and requires your approval, to become the fundamental law of the City and

