

# THE KANSAS IMMIGRANTS



Division of Continuing Education  
and KANU

The University of Kansas

# THE KANSAS IMMIGRANTS

a series of fifty-six articles on the ethnic heritage of Kansas

The Division of Continuing Education  
KANU  
The University of Kansas

The first thirty articles in this series were prepared by KANU at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, with funds from the Kansas Committee for the Humanities.

The final twenty-six articles in the *Kansas Immigrants* were prepared by the University of Kansas Division of Continuing Education and KANU radio with support from the Kansas Committee for the Humanities, National Public Radio, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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## *The Kansas Immigrants*

Many Kansans today are rediscovering their personal and ethnic heritage. In music, art, literature, oral history and genealogy, these individuals are seeking to understand how their heritage has helped shape their lives. *The Kansas Immigrants* provides glimpses into the experiences of many of the groups that have settled this state. Together, these articles present a comprehensive view of immigration to the state.

*The Kansas Immigrants* addresses a number of issues: the efforts of immigrants to assimilate to the larger society while attempting to maintain their own ethnic identity, the occasional violence in the meeting of different cultures in formerly homogeneous communities, and the problem of understanding different family values and lifestyles from one culture to another. It also examines the difficulties in preserving ethnic heritage; the oppression, segregation, and exploitation of ethnic minorities; the contributions of ethnic groups to the arts and cuisine; and the role of the ethnic church or organization in nurturing its members.

The first thirty articles in this series were originally researched, written, and produced by David Mould for KANU, the University of Kansas radio station. That project was funded in part by the Kansas Committee for the Humanities. The final twenty-six articles appeared originally in two forms—as radio programs and concurrently as newspaper articles. This project was prepared jointly by the University of Kansas Division of Continuing Education and KANU under the leadership of Barbara Watkins and Howard Hill. Gloria Throne was the program producer. Judy Batson, Donna Butler, and Bruce Erickson helped research and write the articles in this series. Glenn Price narrated all fifty-six radio programs. Funding for this project came in part from the Kansas Committee for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Satellite Program Development Fund—National Public Radio.

*The Kansas Immigrants* was aired by twenty-five radio stations and published in eighty newspapers across the state. Because of the wide appeal of this series, we have prepared this bound volume as a permanent resource for classroom use and for those individuals who want to further explore their Kansas heritage.

Barbara Watkins  
Project Coordinator



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# 1. *Native Americans Are First Kansas Immigrants*

On August 29th, 1838, a group of Potawatomi Indian leaders gathered at a village chapel in northern Indiana. They had come to parley—to protest efforts to remove them from their lands. But it was a trick.

One hundred militiamen surrounded the chapel and captured everyone inside; some, like the self-styled Potawatomi Preacher Menominee, were bound hand and foot. Six days later, 850 Potawatomi were assembled under military guard for the long trek to Kansas. There weren't enough wagons for the old and the sick; women and children went on foot. Typhoid struck the party, and 42 persons died along the route. When they reached the Osage River reservation in Eastern Kansas in the late fall, there were no houses or cultivated land for them.

The first Kansas immigrants were not Easterners or Europeans—but native Americans. In 1825, the inhabitants of present-day Kansas and Oklahoma—the Kansa and Osage tribes—ceded most of their lands to the U.S. government, which wanted to resettle Indians from the East. Kansas became a homeland for the Cherokees, the Delawares, the Kickapoos, the Miamis, the New York Indians, the Ottawas, the Shawnees, the Wyandots—and the Potawatomis. But their trail did not end there.

Demands for Indian land were strong in the old Northwest Territory. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin all achieved statehood in the first half of the 19th century. Settlers claimed that the tribes' hunting and trapping grounds were valuable agricultural land, which should be opened up for homesteaders.

The Federal government faced a dilemma—both practical and political. Where would the Indians go? Did they have the rights of sovereign peoples? Could the government legally intervene in the affairs of a state? Should the tribes live on limited reservations—or in a new Indian territory beyond the Mississippi?

A piecemeal policy emerged, satisfying neither Indians nor settlers. It was a policy of divide and dispossess; Indian lands were whittled away by treaty, deception and bribery. But the Potawatomis were not always the helpless victims of unscrupulous whites; some stood to gain handsomely from the sale of tribal lands. Mixed bloods, many of whom had some education, acted as brokers, reaping rewards from both sides. The government exploited tribal factions to make treaties with separate bands; Indians took advantage of the confusion by claiming membership of different bands, and a share of the annuities granted to each.

But the Potawatomis often squandered the money and goods they received at the treaty sessions; many were in debt to traders, or in too frequent contact with the whisky bottle. Between 1795 and 1837, the Potawatomis, who occupied large tracts in southern Michigan and northern Indiana, entered into 38 treaties. Three ended the tribe's involvement in the War of 1812. A fourth, in 1825, fixed tribal boundaries in the region. In the remaining 34 treaties, the Potawatomis gave up their homeland.

Some Americans had misgivings about the Indian policy, and believed the Indians could be integrated in American society. They called it the civilization policy; the Indians should be converted to Christianity, educated and taught agricultural skills.

It was a noble principle, but it wasn't working. Officials feared the Indians were acquiring all the white vices and rejecting Christian virtues; for some, the life of the trader was more attractive than that of the yeoman farmer. Others held resolutely to their traditional ways. But with the surrender of the hunting grounds, the Potawatomis lost their tribal identity. Their villages became enclaves in a land of white settlers; they split into bands under different leaders. With the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the government sided with the settlers. An Indian territory was to be created west of the Mississippi and Missouri; the tribes were to surrender their lands in the east and move.

Most of the Potawatomis left voluntarily for reservations in Kansas and Iowa; some avoided removal by migrating to Canada; a few, such as Menominee's band, were forced to leave. The ideal of integration was lost; land hunger led to segregation.

The Great Plains—a barren wasteland or a Garden of Eden? For one visionary, it was the tribes' last hope; there they would forge a new Indian nation. That's the subject of our next article.

## 2. *Reservations in Kansas Seen as Indian Destiny*

By 1840, the Potawatomi Indians had bowed to pressure from the government and settlers and given up their lands around the Great Lakes. Migration was not a new experience—for two hundred years, one part of the tribe or another had been on the move. Migration was a safety valve, helping the Potawatomis to deal with internal conflicts and avoid outside threats.

But the loss of their lands destroyed what remained of their tribal unity. The Potawatomi bands were scattered; a few remained in the East; some migrated to Canada; but the majority moved West. Some accounts of the removal read like horror stories; as we heard in the last program, military force was used to expel one Potawatomi band. But most were not driven westward at bayonet point; they left voluntarily for reservations in western Iowa and eastern Kansas. For the government, their removal was a matter of public policy; but for one visionary, it was the Indian destiny.

Isaac McCoy was a Baptist missionary who had worked among the Potawatomis and other tribes in the Old Northwest Territory. For him, integration was not the answer; contacts with whites would destroy the Indians and their way of life. The solution was to establish an Indian state in the west; the Indians must move or perish. All Indians, he believed, had a single national identity that transcended tribal or village loyalties; isolated from the whites, their souls would be cleansed and an Indian nation would be born. And it was a vision that served McCoy's personal interests well; he was seeking government money for his mission work and, with his family, was engaged in land speculation.

McCoy made several expeditions, at government and personal expense, in search of the Promised Land. In July 1828, he wrote:

We are going to look for a home for a homeless people who were once lords of all the Continent of America, and whose just claims have never been acknowledged. We are limited to the regions west of Arkansas Territory and Missouri State. Should the inhospitableness of that country deny them a place there, they will be left destitute.

Many believed the country was indeed inhospitable; a popular notion had grown up that beyond the Mississippi and Missouri lay a Great American Desert—a barren wasteland unsuited for settlement or farming. But McCoy disagreed. Along the Osage River in eastern Kansas, he found good soil, ample water and wood and plenty of game. This was to be the Indian Canaan.

The Potawatomis did not share McCoy's vision. The largest group—the United Bands—settled briefly in the Platte country of Missouri before the authorities forced them to move on to the Council Bluffs reservation in Iowa; others joined the Kickapoo near Leavenworth. McCoy was convinced there

was a conspiracy to take the Potawatomi to Iowa; he wheeled and dealed through chiefs and agents to divert the stream south. His motives were not altogether altruistic; the Potawatomi received government annuities in part payment for their lands in the East—whoever attracted the immigrants attracted their money too.

The population on the Osage River peaked at 2,400 in 1840; two years later, it was below 2,000, and not all were Potawatomi. McCoy did not even have a religious monopoly; the Catholics had more missionaries than the Baptists. And there were other rivalries—between tribal groups and traders. Despite government policy and McCoy's hopes, the Potawatomi continued to move where and when they pleased. There were new arrivals on the Osage River, but some returned to the East.

The scattered bands were eventually brought together in Kansas—but not in McCoy's Canaan. In 1846, the Iowa and Osage River lands were ceded in exchange for a smaller reservation on the Kansas River, west of Topeka. It was called the Potawatomi National Reservation, but tribal unity existed only on paper. The Iowa band—now known as the Prairie People—settled on the north bank; the Citizen Band from the Osage River on the south bank. And 15 years later, they again went their separate ways.

The myth of the Great American Desert was dying. Travellers and traders reported that Kansas offered excellent prospects for settlement. The Promised Land beckoned—but, as we'll see in the next article, the Prairie Potawatomi were ready for a long struggle.

### *3. Dawes Allotment Act Marks End of Indian Kansas*

The two Potawatomi bands were brought together in the late 1840s on a new reservation west of Topeka. But they were separated by more than the Kansas River. The Citizen Band on the south bank had been exposed to white influence through missionaries, traders and agents; they were regarded as docile and cooperative. The Prairie Band on the north side were stubbornly independent, maintaining their traditional ways.

The advance of the frontier had driven the Potawatomis and other tribes from their lands around the Great Lakes. And it caught up with them again in Kansas. In 1854, Indian Commissioner George Manypenny abandoned the removal policy; there was no place in the West where the Indians could live unmolested; frequent moves and dependence on government annuities were preventing them from becoming self-sufficient farmers. Manypenny began breaking up the reservations. The process was called allotment; tribal members, and others whose claims were more dubious, were given individual tracts. The bulk of the land was sold to the government, which put it on the market for purchase by settlers, railroads and speculators.

In 1853 and 1854, Indian tribes in eastern Kansas ceded 13 million acres under this system. The publicly expressed hope that the Indians would become yeoman farmers was sadly confounded; within a few years, most of the allotments had been sold or leased.

Kansas was granted statehood in 1861, and in the same year the Potawatomi lands were broken up. The Citizen Band accepted allotment and shared the fate of other Indians; six years later, destitute and landless, many made their last move to the new Indian Territory in Oklahoma.

The Prairie Band resisted allotment. They were determined to stay, as they told the superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1858:

We are far enough west. Look over those treaties. Bear them in mind. Let them sink deep into your hearts, for they are sacred pledges, and see what is our due and your duty in them.

Under the 1861 treaty, the Prairie Band retained an eleven-mile-square reservation. They insisted on holding the land in common; individual tracts could be bought, but forcing the whole band to sell was a tougher proposition.

In 1887 the Dawes Allotment Act became law. It gave the President authority, without consulting the tribe, to allot land to individuals and make



them U.S. citizens; if an Indian refused to select an allotment, it was chosen for him.

Resistance was led by Wah Quoh Bosh Kuk, an educated man whose strategy showed he had learned the white man's ways. He travelled to Washington to lobby Congress and the Office of Indian Affairs; in an early example of Native American nationalism, he persuaded other Potawatomis to come to Kansas to join the struggle. When the exasperated Indian agent persuaded the cavalry to lock Wah Quoh Bosh Kuk up in Fort Riley, he hired two attorneys who obtained a writ of habeas corpus to secure his release.

It was no more than a holding action. Compulsory allotment was ordered in 1894. The Prairie Band's worst fears were realized; by 1896 nearly a quarter of the allotments had been sold or leased to whites.

Between 1887 and 1934, when the Dawes Act was finally abrogated, the land holdings of Native Americans were reduced from 130 million acres to 50 million. But the Prairie Band's long, and ultimately unsuccessful, struggle was not in vain. For two hundred years, Indian tribes had been deprived of their territory by ostensibly legal, if rarely honest, means. Under pressure from scheming Federal officials, Indian agents, traders and government-appointed chiefs, they had signed away their lands for a reservation in the West and a package of gifts, annuities and noble but vague promises. The Prairie Band helped to change the tactics; they wanted to maintain their traditional ways, but they fought with the weapons of the new society—nonviolent resistance, appeals to Washington, action in the courts. The lesson has not been lost on today's Native Americans.

It was the end of Indian Kansas. But for the new European immigrants, Kansas was a land of opportunity—a land where they could own a farm and worship in peace. That's the theme of our next article.

## 4. *Warkentin Spurs Mennonite Immigration to Kansas*

Suddenly the fog was gone and at seven in the evening we saw a beautiful panorama—namely the Continent of America. The place was called Staten Island. Riding at anchor we passed the night. The next morning at ten o'clock we went to land at Hoboken. From there we went to New York, and stopped at the first beer hall we found and drank to our safe arrival.

Bernhard Warkentin was 24 years old when he arrived in the New World in June 1872. He and his two companions were not among the stream of European immigrants, seeking land, jobs and freedom. Bernhard was the son of a well-to-do German miller in South Russia; he was well educated and spoke German and Russian. He'd come to see the sights. But he became a key figure in a great immigration movement that brought thousands of his people halfway across the world to settle in America, many of them in Kansas. They were the Mennonites.

The Mennonites took their name from the 16th century Dutch religious reformer, Menno Simons. They were Anabaptists—believers in adult baptism. They rejected state churches, Protestant and Catholic; to them a church was for believers; you were not born into it, but joined it voluntarily. They tried to live according to the Bible. They believed there were no just wars, refused military service and war taxes, and would not swear oaths.

Persecution drove the Mennonites to seek lands where they could worship in peace. Some came to Pennsylvania as early as 1683; others settled in West Prussia. When the Prussian government began withdrawing their privileges in the late 18th century, some accepted Catherine the Great's offer to move to the Ukraine. They were granted religious freedom, exemption from military service, and control of their own schools and local government.

But in the 1870s, their future in Russia was threatened. They began to lose control of local government; there were moves to make Russian, not German, the official language in schools; a military conscription law was passed.

Through newspapers and letters, their brethren in America told them of their liberty, and the opportunities for settlement. But where should they go in that vast continent? Was farmland available? How severe were the winters? Some answers came from Warkentin, who was writing home to his friend David Goerz.

Warkentin's travels began as a vacation; with his companions, he visited Niagara Falls, Chicago and St. Louis. Everywhere he went, he noted land conditions; in August 1872, he wrote to Goerz from Kansas:

Brookville near Salina. When we got to the state of Kansas we noticed that the whole prairie was filled with buffalo skeletons. Once in a while we saw buffalo herds in the distance.

Warkentin's letters were widely circulated. Railroad and land agents took him to be an advance man for the immigrants, and he did nothing to discourage their offers of free travel and guides.

In 1862, Congress passed the Homestead Act to hasten settlement of the Plains. The government granted the railroads alternate sections of land ten miles on either side of the tracks; they could sell the land and carry the settlers' farm produce. Every railroad wanted settlers to buy its land. In September 1872, Warkentin visited Minnesota and the Dakota Territory—courtesy of the Northern Pacific; in January 1873, the Canadian government invited him to Manitoba; the next month, he went to Texas.

Tuesday the fourth of this month. I was detained from finishing this letter by a land agent who absolutely wanted me to go with him to inspect the land in the south western part of Kansas which he said was the best in the world etc. . . . Among the thirteen letters which I received when I returned from Texas there was also one from an agent in Nebraska inviting me to come there, including also free transportation to Lincoln, Nebraska. There would be nothing else for me to do if I were to accept all the invitations.

But he did go to Kansas with an agent for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe to see land in the south-central part of the state. Looking out over the prairie, Warkentin was reminded of his home on the Russian Steppes.

The great migration was about to begin. But where would the Mennonites choose to settle? As we'll see in the next article, Kansas had an influential ally—Bernhard Warkentin.

## 5. *Entrepreneur Persuades Kansas Land Purchase*

For almost a hundred years, Mennonite colonies flourished in South Russia. Free from religious persecution and political control, the Mennonites maintained their faith, traditions and the German language. But there wasn't enough land for the growing population. New colonies were founded in Russia; some considered emigration—to Brazil, Canada or the United States. When the Russian government began withdrawing their privileges in the 1870s, many were ready to move.

In 1873, twelve delegates from the Ukraine arrived in the United States to prepare the way for migration. They wanted assurances of religious toleration, exemption from military service, control of their own schools and freedom from taking the oath. And they came to find land.

Bernhard Warkentin, a wealthy Mennonite miller's son who had spent a year travelling and inspecting land, joined the group. They went to Manitoba, Minnesota and the Dakota Territory. At first, the delegates did not consider Kansas, but Warkentin persuaded two of them to look over railroad land in the south-central part of the state. They were impressed, as he recalled:

It is to be expected that one part of the Mennonites will choose land in Kansas, close to the Arkansas River where all of us liked it very much. The climate is healthy and mild, the water good, and I believe that the soil is fertile, ready to establish a happy home and a secure existence.

That summer, the brothers Peter and Jakob Funk purchased land near Marion Center. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe wanted four dollars an acre; the Funks offered two. The railroad president W. D. Strong, realized that if the brothers went elsewhere, other Mennonite immigrants would follow them. The deal was closed at two dollars and fifty cents an acre, and the Funks paid in cash. In 1874, about 25 Mennonite families bought land around Halstead. Warkentin was among them, and he made plans to build a flour mill.

The migration from the Ukraine began in 1874. The Mennonites had to sell most of their possessions to pay for the journey. Their American brethren set up relief committees to provide food, clothes, shelter and money; the Mennonite Board of Guardians arranged cheap transportation—the passage from Hamburg, Germany, to Atchison cost just 35 dollars. As the board's business agent, Warkentin was constantly on the road—travelling between the seaports and settlements, buying tickets, arranging jobs and fending off unscrupulous land agents.

Warkentin was in a strong position to influence land purchases. In the fall of 1874, he escorted a large congregation to Lincoln, Nebraska, where the

Burlington and Missouri Railroad was offering land. The Santa Fe wanted the immigrants to come to Kansas; the bargaining began, and the price tumbled. As the Topeka Commonwealth reported:

One of the largest bona fide land sales ever made in Kansas, perhaps in America, has just been concluded by the Santa Fe railroad company with the community of Russian Mennonites who landed in New York in September. The land purchases amount to about one hundred thousand acres.

Many immigrants spent the winter of 1874 as guests of other settlers or in homes built by the railroad. But there was some suffering. On New Year's Eve, one hundred and twenty families, accompanied by Warkentin, arrived in Hutchinson, but could not find food or shelter.

I don't know what to do. I have paid seventy dollars for bread since we left St. Louis, and have offered four to five hundred dollars to pay for ovens and the groceries needed immediately, until our relief committee will take over, if only the town would let us use its buildings. However this seems to be out of the question, because they claim that they have enough people in their town already that need to be supported.

In Great Bend, Mennonite families were living in boxcars; from Fort Dodge came reports of severe cases of exposure and frostbite. At home in Halstead, Warkentin anxiously watched the thermometer and prayed for a good harvest.

The first harvest—and the Mennonites' lasting contribution to Kansas agriculture—that's the theme of our next article.

## 6. *Winter Wheat Assures Prosperity in Kansas*

In the spring of 1874, the Mennonites were preparing to leave Russia for America. They were selling their farms and possessions; out in the fields, so the story goes, children were hand picking the best wheat kernels to provide seed for the first planting in the New World.

Bernhard Warkentin, who led many of the immigrants to Kansas, was a miller by trade. His father owned a flour mill in the Ukraine, where the Mennonites had built up a large export trade in wheat. The elder Warkentin was also reputed to have been the first to introduce a new, hardy strain of winter wheat from Turkey. Turkey Red Winter Wheat eventually assured the prosperity of Mennonite farmers, and made Kansas a major wheat state.

At first, most settlers grew soft spring wheat—from seed supplied by the Santa Fe railroad. The Mennonites weren't the first to raise winter wheat. A small group of French settlers in Marion County was growing it when they arrived. With its hard kernel, the wheat had proved resistant to the extreme temperatures in the Ukraine. The first Mennonite families planted winter wheat in the fall of 1874, and the harvest was the answer to Warkentin's prayers.

Our farmers are in the process of gathering in the richly blessed crop. We can't be thankful enough for the unearned and abundant blessings. So far the weather has been most favorable and the grasshoppers have done no damage.

When Warkentin arrived in Halstead, he bought land near the Arkansas River where he built a mill. The grist mill—the first in Harvey County—was powered by water, and ground wheat with millstones. The acreage of wheat was still small, so he shipped wheat from Atchison to supply the mill. At first, the grey-speckled flour was not popular; housewives refused to buy it, and its price was below that of the soft varieties. But Warkentin was not discouraged; he changed from water power to steam, and installed steel rollers and purifiers. Winter wheat slowly gained favor; it was well suited to the climate, and one barrel of hard wheat flour made more loaves of bread than a barrel of soft wheat flour.

As his trade expanded, Warkentin found that he needed a larger mill; he moved his business, and later his home, to Newton. In 1885, on a visit with his family to Russia, he arranged to import several thousand bushels of wheat. Mark Carleton, an expert with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, went to the Ukraine in 1898 with letters of introduction from Warkentin, and imported more varieties. In 1900, Kansas millers and dealers arranged through Warkentin and Carleton to import fifteen thousand bushels of wheat for planting throughout the state. In less than thirty years, wheat, once

a relatively unimportant crop in Kansas, was on its way to becoming a major part of the state's economy.

Warkentin became a prosperous and respected man in his community. He build an eighteen-room mansion in Newton. He opened new mills in Kansas City and Blackwell, Oklahoma. He became vice-president of a bank at Halstead, and had interests in insurance and the cement industry. He helped to found Bethel College in Newton; when Bethel Hospital was established, he was among the contributors. But he was not active in Mennonite church life; his wife was a Methodist, and he may have later joined the Presbyterians.

In 1908, Warkentin and his wife left for a trip to Southern Europe and the Holy Land. On April 1st, they were travelling by train in the southern part of the Ottoman Empire. In the next compartment an Arab prince, who may have been drunk, accidentally discharged his pistol; the bullet struck Warkentin, who died in hospital in Beirut fifteen hours later. His body was brought home to Newton. The prince could not be prosecuted because he was of royal blood.

Despite the attractions of migration, most Mennonites did not leave Russia. But of the twelve thousand who came to the United States in the decade after 1873, five thousand settled in Kansas. Most came, not as individuals, but as church groups. In common with immigrants of other denominations, Protestant and Catholic, the Mennonite congregation served as a focus for many activities—it was a social as well as a religious unit. We'll examine the role of the church in immigrant life in our next article.

## 7. *Religious Views Shape Kansas Immigrant Communities*

America was a strange land for the German immigrants from Russia. And the immigrants presented a strange spectacle for the crowds that gathered on the dockside, as the New York Herald reported:

They were dressed in their primitive homespun garments, which were usually of coarse wool. Our crack tailors would have been puzzled at the droll appearance of these ancient dresses. The women and children had funny old handkerchiefs tied round their heads, and certainly no Broadway milliner ever supplied one of the quaint bonnets which the fair Mennonite beauties wore.

But the outward differences—in dress, manners and language—were not the only characteristics that set them off from ordinary Americans, or other European immigrants. Some observers mistakenly regarded them as one people. They were not. They had lived in different colonies in Russia. Some had owned large farms; others were landless laborers. Religion divided them; there were Roman Catholics and Lutherans, and Mennonites of various hues. Their views of the church and the world guided their lives—and shaped the communities they established in Kansas.

The largest Mennonite group to arrive in the United States in 1874—some eleven hundred people—was the Alexanderwohl group, led by Elder Jakob Buller. The Alexanderwohl church was not united; some chose to stay in Russia. But those who came travelled from Russia as a congregation; they worshipped, lived and worked together. The religious community was the social community; when they acquired one hundred thousand acres north of Newton from the Santa Fe railroad, they bought the land as a group, and divided it up later.

The Mennonites were in the world, but they were not of the world. Throughout their history, they had sought to re-establish the true church—the church of apostolic times, before its union with the state. Their church was a free community of believers; it was man, not God, who drew up territorial boundaries; to them, a state church could never be a true church.

While they accepted the authority of the state, they placed limits on it. It had no jurisdiction in the spiritual realm. They could not obey laws that conflicted with their conscience, and they weren't willing to take part in political life.

In Russia, the Mennonites enjoyed a separate status. They controlled their own farms, churches, schools and local government. But such isolation from the world was impossible in the United States; the land had been



surveyed, the railroad routes planned and county seats established. They had to adapt, while trying to keep the congregation together.

Staying together was easier on the land than in the cities. Urban life—in Biblical Sodom and Gomorrah or 19th-century New York—was corrupting, exposing the faithful to worldliness and sin. The Bible and the plow went together; the American Mennonite settlements were modelled at first on their farming communities in the Ukraine.

The first villages in the Alexanderwohl community were given names they'd used in Russia—such as Gnadenfeld, Rosenort and Blumenfeld. They built the church in the middle of nine villages; it was both a spiritual and a social focus.

Church membership was the bond that held the community together. All paid a membership fee to the church, plus a levy on property. By being baptized and received into the church, individuals received more than spiritual credit; if they were poor, they received assistance; if they were old or sick, they were visited or taken in by other church members.

Church discipline reached out to all activities. Premarital or extramarital sex was cause for automatic expulsion. The church elders warned of the dangers of drinking and card playing; members were advised to avoid pool tables, Sunday baseball games and band performances. For the most serious offences, the penalty was excommunication. Exclusion from the church carried with it a sense of separation from God, and rejection by God meant rejection by the community.

The church of Alexanderwohl still stands—but the closed community is no more. The Mennonites have been exposed to the influence of the 20th century—the demands of a national economy, federal and state programs, opportunities for travel and education, newspapers, radio and television. Many have left the land for the cities, where new Mennonite congregations have been established. But the pressures of modern society have perhaps made them even more conscious of their heritage—a feeling they share with other German immigrants from Russia, as we'll find out in the next article.

## 8. *Motives for Migration Vary among Immigrants*

Its towers reach high above the Western Kansas plain. Its limestone walls are solid, secure—there's a sense of permanence. For the traveller, the Romanesque style of architecture recalls other churches in far-off places—France, Germany, Italy. Saint Fidelis Church in Victoria is a monument to God and human endeavor; begun in 1908, it was built in three years with the help of every male in the congregation over the age of 12. No wonder it earned an impressive title—the Cathedral of the Plains.

Kansas received so many immigrants in the 1870s and 1880s that contemporaries may be forgiven for confusing the Catholic Volga Germans with the Mennonites. Both groups came from Russia; they were similar in dress, language and some customs—and they were looking for land.

Like the Mennonites, Catholic Germans had accepted Catherine the Great's invitation to settle in the virgin territory of the Volga region in the 18th century. They were granted free lands, moving expenses, a tax break and exemption from military service.

But their motives for migrating to America were rather different. Although the prospect of military service wasn't welcome, they did not share the Mennonites' deep conviction against it. Economic pressures were more important—a high birth rate, a shortage of new land for cultivation, declining grain prices and government efforts to redistribute land holdings convinced many to seek a new life.

One of the first groups reached Topeka in November 1875. Carl Bernhardt Schmidt—the Santa Fe's immigrant agent—took their leaders to see land near Great Bend, but the asking price of five dollars an acre was too high. Instead, they went further west, where land owned by the Kansas Pacific was cheaper, and more sections were available for homesteading. The Hays City Sentinel noted their arrival:

The whole outfit—wagons, horses, dogs, cows, women and children—arrived last Wednesday night, and a queer looking set they are. They are strong looking animals, and seem capable of any work, especially the women, who seem to perform as much menial labor as the children, which are numerous.

By the end of 1876, more than twelve hundred Catholic Volga Germans had settled in Ellis and Rush counties.

The Volga Germans were not the first settlers in Ellis County. George Grant, a Scottish silk merchant, founded Victoria in 1873 and brought in

other speculators. Grant believed the land was ideal for the raising of cattle and sheep, and he invested heavily, buying about 31,000 acres from the Kansas Pacific in five years. The railroad agreed to build a station, loading pens and accommodations for the settlers. But while some British immigrants arrived, Victoria did not live up to Grant's hopes. He died in 1878, leaving many legacies—and many debts.

The arrival of the Volga Germans changed the character of the community. They soon outnumbered the British settlers. They founded Herzog, north of Victoria. Today, the two towns are one.

Herzog was one of several villages named after Volga German settlements in Russia—others were Liebenthal, Catherine, Pfeifer and Schoenchen. But if the Catholics and the Mennonites shared an affection for familiar place-names, their visions of the community—and the church's place in it—differed sharply.

For the Mennonites of Alexanderwohl, the congregation was the community; it was a religious unit whose influence permeated all aspects of their daily lives. The Volga Germans were not a self-contained religious group; they were part of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church, with its hierarchy of cardinals, archbishops, bishops and priests. But, like the Mennonites, the Catholic view of the church in society shaped the development of the Volga German communities. That's the subject of our next article.

## 9. Immigrants' Churches Take Several Forms

The arrival of the German settlers from Russia in the 1870s and 1880s attracted widespread interest in Kansas. Newspapers remarked upon their strange dress and customs; in September 1874, crowds gathered to stare at the Mennonites who were camped out in the Santa Fe railroad shops in Topeka. Railroad agents were interested in the prospects for land sales; traders in the market for implements and supplies. In spiritual matters, the immigrants were left to take care of themselves.

But if anyone had asked them what kind of church they wanted in their new homeland, the replies would have varied. The Mennonite might have said simply that the church was where the believers were; the meeting place was not important. The Catholic, on the other hand, would have wanted a place of worship that God would think worthy.

When the Catholic settlers arrived on the Kansas Pacific land in Ellis and Rush counties in 1876, there were few places worthy of man, let alone God. The Homestead Laws required them to live on the land—so they built sod house dugouts. But soon they began constructing substantial houses of brick and plaster, or stone. And they began building churches.

Unlike the Mennonites, the Catholics had not travelled as congregations. Leaving their parish churches in Russia, they made ready to build new ones. They were not an independent religious body, and had no wish to be; they were members of a worldwide church, and would become part of the local diocese.

There was no Catholic church on the Kansas Pacific line west of Topeka, so the Volga Germans started from scratch. In each village, they erected a wooden cross with a bell, around which they gathered on Sundays and holidays. Mass was celebrated by Capuchin monks, who had been sent to the communities. In Herzog, the first services were held in a private house, but the floor proved unequal to the weight of the congregation; an extension was added, but it was still too small. Donations from British Catholics enabled them to build a small stone church in 1878. A larger church was opened in 1884; during the week it served as a schoolhouse. When it was dismantled in 1909, the construction of the Cathedral of the Plains was well under way.

By 1904, the Alexanderwohl congregation of Mennonites north of Newton had grown in numbers, and the elders wondered if more churches should be built. Most members were either opposed to the idea, or lukewarm about it. It was not until 1920 that a second church was built at Goessel.

But by the turn of the century, every Catholic community in Ellis and Rush counties had its own church. Monasteries and convents were built for

the monks and nuns who were working in the settlements. The religious year was marked by special services and processions in which the immigrants walked from one village to another—sometimes, the distance was eight or ten miles. Each May, the priests led the people around the fields of grain; they prayed for a good harvest, free from bugs, grasshoppers and worms. In 1910, the Reverend Francis Laing reported:

The attendance at divine service on the part of the settlers may be said to be exemplary. Many attend several or all Masses on Sunday, and those who can the afternoon services, vespers and benediction.

The Mennonites of Alexanderwohl built their church in open country—in the middle of their villages; the Catholics built a church in each village. The Mennonites lived on their farms and commuted to church; the Catholics lived near the church, and commuted to their farms. Both groups were deeply religious, but each assigned a different role to the church. To the Mennonites, God and the church were with them, wherever they were; the majestic Cathedral of the Plains, with its high towers and wide transept, helped the Catholics aspire to God.

One formidable barrier stood between all the German immigrants from Russia and American society—the language barrier. In 1910, Frances Laing noted that most children in the Volga German communities spoke German better than English. Many Mennonites believed their church could not survive without the German language; some considered it sacrilege to worship God in English, which was the language of the sinful world. By establishing their own schools, the Mennonites hoped to preserve both their faith and their language. But the pressures on all immigrants to adapt to the society they had joined—to become true Americans—were strong. Some turned their backs on their ethnic heritage; others attempted to combine the best of the old with the new. In our next article, we'll examine the experience of one family as it comes to terms with American society.

## 10. *The Immigrants Dream: Land and Freedom*

America . . . the name is happiness! And to my eyes the Statue of Liberty is a sweetness almost painful to behold. All at once the old yearning returns and I renew the pledge I made in Russland: unknowing like me my children shall not be. Here we will try to make something of ourselves.

This was Evaliz Becker's American dream—a dream she shared with every other immigrant who gazed upon the Statue of Liberty. A dream of land and freedom—of release from poverty and oppression. But for Evaliz, it meant something more—the chance to give her children the education she never had.

The story of Evaliz is part fact, part fiction. It is told by her daughter, Mela Meisner Lindsay, whose novel *The White Lamb* records the family's struggle to make a new life in America. It's a story of survival on the frontier—of drought and dust, grasshoppers and prairie fire, winter blizzards and summer cyclones, endless toil and endless debt. Beetles devour the potato crop-and jackrabbits the growing corn.

Evaliz was born in Russia to a German Lutheran family—the descendants of colonists who accepted Catherine the Great's invitation to settle in the Volga region in the late 18th century. A spirited girl, she wanted to learn to read and write, to be more than what she called an ox in the field. Her father refused; every able-bodied member of the family was needed on the farm.

Arranged marriages were the custom in the Volga German villages, but Evaliz married the man she loved—David Becker, the local schoolmaster. Tragedy marked the early years: two of their children died from diphtheria, the country was torn by famine and disorder, David was conscripted to fight in Russia's war against Japan. Evaliz dreamed of joining her brothers who had emigrated to America. One arranged a loan to pay for the passage and when David returned from the war in 1905, the family set out for WaKeeney, Kansas.

The family rented a farm south of WaKeeney, and the two oldest girls, Leah and Mia, went to school. At home, they copied letters from salt and pepper cartons, and tried to read the words. Evaliz was troubled:

I am so unschooled I do not know if they are right or wrong. Seeing them struggle, that old tightening feeling closes in on my heart. How will the children ever learn to be Americans so far out here on the prairie?

Other families from the Volga joined the community; on Sundays, they filled the Lutheran church, and on weekdays, their children filled the school. Leah told Evaliz that the children always spoke German on the playground; back in class, they had to learn everything again. Evaliz wanted David, a member of the school board, to ask for a ruling that would make English the only language used in school.

Evaliz was relieved when, after a series of crop failures, the family rented a larger farm nearer WaKeeney; the children would be able to go to the town school. But there was ground to clear and seeds to sow; the children worked on the land, just as Evaliz had done in Russia. Five of the eight children did not even finish grade school.

David was determined to become an American—in every sense of the word. He bought a dictionary, and began learning English. In the evenings, he prepared for his citizenship test by studying the constitution; he was moved to tears when his daughter Leah recited the Gettysburg Address. He painted a picture of George Washington on the wall of the dining room, and was proud to show it to visitors. When anti-German feeling ran high during World War One, he decided to show his patriotism—and bought a Liberty Bond. When a telephone was installed in the house, the first person he called was the man who had lent them the money for the passage; David thought the man would be glad to hear that the family was becoming more American.

The transition from the old world to the new was more difficult for Evaliz. She continued to have trouble with the English language; she liked her new sewing machine, but couldn't bring herself to use the telephone. She had an American dream, and, despite years of hardship, it was undimmed. But the dream was for her children—not for herself. It was the second generation of immigrants that would become true Americans—a theme we'll continue in the next article.

## 11. Immigrant Children Prepared to Inherit the American Dream

It was a memorable night for the small Swedish farming community in the far west of Kansas. The little sod school house was packed with parents and children. They'd come to enjoy a spelling bee, but first the new teacher, Mattie Wyman, had something important to say:

The children of the wheat country and all over the west deserve as good schools as the children in the cities of the east. These children will be the Americans of tomorrow; they will build your wheat country. You teach them the ways of the land. I will teach them the ways of books and other people.

Among the proud parents who shared her dream were John and Ingrid Halgren, who had left Sweden in the early 1880s. John's ambition was to be his own man—and to him, that meant owning land. With a family legacy, he bought a farm near Sharon Springs in Wallace County. His American dream was rooted firmly in the land.

Edna Walker Chandler's novel *Chaff in the Wind* spans four generations of immigrant life. An elderly parent dies soon after the family arrives in Kansas; at the end of the book, the Halgrens' granddaughter breaks away from the farming community to seek an independent life. The central characters, John and Ingrid, bridge the old world and the new.

John's dream did not come easily. Crops were depleted by drought, disease and insects; wheat prices were low, and the family was reduced to gathering cow chips to sell for fuel. Eventually, faced with a mortgage foreclosure and imminent starvation, John headed east to central Kansas to look for new land. Working on farms to send money home, he came close to despair:

Here, as always, he was working for another. Never his own man and not much chance that he would be. The Goddess of Liberty was only a cruel joke and America was a land of big bosses and rich people at the head of things, just like any other country.

But his determination drove him on. Learning that no land was available near the Swedish community of Lindsborg, he rented a farm near Macksville in the Arkansas Valley.

The soil and rainfall were better in the Arkansas Valley; the family worked hard and, after several good harvests, John began buying the land he had rented. Ethnically, it was a mixed community; families of different denominations worshipped together in the church. John was proud of his



heritage, but he wanted his children to be different. Sternly, he rebuked them for speaking Swedish at school:

From this time on they are not to speak Swedish any place but home, and we speak it only when we cannot find the English word we need. I have land here, now . . . good land. You children are all of this country, born here, every one of you. Now let us have no more of this mixing in Old Country ways.

While the Halgrens had Swedish friends, the idea of an enclosed ethnic community was unthinkable. John despised a German family who hung a German flag in the parlor, and wouldn't allow the children to speak English at home. When he learned that the daughters of this family labored in the fields, he refused to make his daughters do the same work; if the Germans were doing it, it must be un-American. And he would be an American, even if it hurt his pocketbook.

John became a respected man in the community. He bought more land, planted an orchard, built a new house. For the wedding of his eldest daughter, no expense was spared. Returning to Sweden in 1905, he saw what America had made him. He was farming more land than all the people in his native village. His daughter Hilda told him he could buy out the whole village and live like the king. But John had renounced the old world:

I guess I do not want to live like a king. I want to live like an American.

Some changes were hard to make. Although he learned to drive a car, he refused to buy farm machinery. In his heart, he knew mechanized agriculture would come; but he let his sons buy the machines—he was happier working with his horses. He had a strict moral code: he would not allow farmhands to drink or gamble, and there was no work on Sundays. His view of family life was traditional: the boys would inherit the farm, the girls would marry farmers' sons. But this view brought him into conflict with his wife Ingrid and his daughters, as we'll learn in the next article.

## 12. *Women Seek Decisive Role in Pioneer Kansas*

On their wedding day in Sweden, the old folk warned Ingrid that John Halgren would never stay in one place for long. He had the Vanderlust—and she would have to follow him.

You will tire of it, when babies come, but always it will be so that you pack up and go because your man says it is to be.

So far they'd been right. The Halgrens left Sweden in the early 1880s for America. John hated his factory job in New York; when he bought land near Sharon Springs in the far west of Kansas, he was sure he was doing the right thing, and the family moved again. But the land was poor, the crops ravaged by drought, disease and insects. In April 1889, he left again to look for land in the newly opened Oklahoma Strip. This time, Ingrid refused to go with him.

The role of women is a central theme in Edna Walker Chandler's novel of immigrant life, *Chaff in the Wind*. Ingrid, her daughters and granddaughter are in conflict with a male-dominated society. It's a society where sons inherit the land and daughters marry young, where women cook and clean and follow their men, where education and jobs are beyond their reach.

Once again, John asked the family to move—to a rented farm near Macksville in the Arkansas Valley. Ingrid knew they had no future on their barren land, but she wasn't sure the new place would be better.

In her mind, she vowed that this was the very last time she would go to another piece of land. If this did not work out she would return east with her children, with or without John.

But it did work out. The land was fertile, the rains came, and the crops were good; John was soon able to begin buying the land he rented. Ingrid gave him the money she had saved secretly to pay for a passage back to Sweden. John could not believe she had contemplated leaving if they failed; good women did not do such things, and Ingrid was a good woman.

The whole family worked on the farm. At harvest, Ingrid and her daughters cooked for the hired hands. Jokingly, John asked her what she should be paid for the cooking and housework. Without hesitation, she asked for stackers' wages. John was surprised:

But a woman does these things for her man, for her home. There is no thought of pay. I give you money when you need it.

But his words lacked conviction. That was the way of the old world, not the new. There were other conflicts. John wanted to use his profits to buy

more land; Ingrid and the daughters wanted a new house; eventually, the family had both. The oldest daughter Tina left to attend a course in Manhattan; John thought it was a waste of time and money—surely she'd soon be married, and wouldn't need the schooling. When he offered his sons a share of the farm profits, he was shocked when his daughter Rachel demanded a share too. And even Ingrid was taken aback when Hilda spoke up for women's suffrage:

It's coming to the whole country. We women have to clean up the mistakes the men make. Why shouldn't we help make 'em? We have as many brains as men have, too. That's why they're afraid to give us a vote.

Ingrid's reply was worthy of her husband; Hilda should get married as soon as possible to keep out of trouble.

The conflict of values reaches its climax with the next generation. Tina was happily married to a farmer, but her daughter Sara did not want to be tied to the land. She wanted to go to college and earn her own living. In a heated moment, she told her grandfather:

I'll never marry a farmer! All they can think about is work, and work, and more work. All they know is wheat! I won't be just some man's helper. I'll never get married to anyone if that's all there is in it for me. I want a life of my own first, and I'm going to have it.

Sara became a teacher; when America entered World War One, she prepared to leave to do war work. John remembered his lifetime ambition—to own land, to be his own man. He's proud that Sara has fought for the same freedom—that she is her own person. Grandfather and granddaughter share the same American dream. But women were not alone in seeking a more forceful role in society, as we'll see in our next article.

### 13. 'Pap' Singleton Boosts Plan for Kansas Settlement

Kansas was a Promised Land in the America of the 1870s. To European immigrants, settlers from the East and blacks from the South, it offered free or cheap land—the chance to make a new life. But to the freed slaves, it meant something more. It was the land of John Brown; blood had flowed freely in the 1850s to make it a free state. One ex-slave wrote the governor:

I am anxious to reach your state not because of the great race now made for it but because of the sacredness of her soil washed by the blood of humanitarians for the cause of freedom.

Kansas welcomed all settlers, regardless of race, religion and color. It offered no special inducements to freed slaves; nor, in the early years at least, did it try to keep them out. To blacks seeking release from political and economic oppression, it seemed like a modern Canaan.

The emancipation of the slaves in 1865 gave them freedom, but little else. They were still part of an economic order that depended on cheap labor and exploitation. They mortgaged their crops to pay for rent and supplies; most were never out of debt. Cotton prices varied, but the rents didn't; according to a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, prices depended on the quality of the land, the rapacity of the owner and the ignorance of the Negro. Prices in country stores were high, and interest charges exorbitant.

Landowners saw the blacks as nothing more than a labor force; but the freed slaves wanted to own farms, to save money for their old age and their children's education. Many felt that change within society was impossible; whites dominated the political system, black leaders were murdered or exiled, violence and vote-rigging were common election practices. If they could not change the society, they would have to leave it.

We do hereby call the attention of every colored man to the convention of the colored people of the State of Tennessee. Seeing that there is so much imposition practiced upon the people, day by day, in regard to emigrating, a great many have sold out and left their homes with the purpose of going to Kansas free.

The colored people's convention in Nashville in May 1875 was a response to a popular movement that had spring up the previous winter. Stories of free transportation, land and supplies were circulating. Black leaders wanted to organize the migration, and dispel false rumors. Delegates went to Kansas to study the prospects for settlement. But many did not wait for their reports; Kansas Fever had taken hold, and it had a charismatic leader in Benjamin 'Pap' Singleton.

'Old Pap' was born in slavery around 1809. Raised in Nashville, he worked as a cabinetmaker; several times, he was sold to owners in the Gulf States, but he escaped repeatedly. After fleeing to Canada, he settled in Detroit, where he ran a boarding house for fugitive slaves. When the Civil War ended, he returned to Nashville to fulfill his mission—to make his people free and secure.

Unlike other black leaders, Singleton had no faith in the democratic process. He claimed divine inspiration; God had appointed him to lead his people to the Promised Land. At a time when blacks were effectively barred from expressing their will at the polls, it was an attractive message that blended a sense of divine purpose with individual economic ambitions. Singleton became convinced that blacks could prosper only outside the old slave states. In 1873, he visited southeast Kansas, and chose lands on the former Cherokee reservation as the site for a colony. After another visit in 1877, he began circulating pamphlets and posters to encourage migration. He established the Edgefield Real Estate and Homestead Association to promote Kansas land. In April 1878, Singleton conducted 120 settlers to the Cherokee Colony, and the next year he founded the Dunlap Colony in Morris County, southwest of Topeka.

Blacks from Tennessee and Kentucky settled in Kansas throughout the late 1870s—many of them inspired by Singleton's individual brand of boosterism. Most were farmers with money to buy land; they arrived in organized groups and settled in colonies. They came before the much-publicized Exodus of 1879, when poor blacks from the Gulf States caught the Kansas Fever. The Exodus attracted widespread attention; some 6,000 blacks from Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas arrived in Kansas in the space of a few months. But that was less than two-thirds of the number that had arrived, in more organized fashion, from Tennessee and Kentucky. However, to Singleton, they all shared a common destiny—and that's the theme of our next article.

## 14. *A Self-Sufficient Black Kansas Proves Impractical*

The whites had the lands and the sense, and the blacks had nuthin' but their freedom. It was cl'ar as day to me. My people couldn't live thar. It was ag'in nature for the masters and the slave to jine hands and work together. Nuthin' but de millenium could bring that around.

Benjamin 'Pap' Singleton spoke for many blacks in the South in the 1870s. Freedom didn't mean much because it was still a white man's world. They rented their farms from white landowners; bought on credit at the white man's store; and were bullied by whites at election time. Singleton believed his race could never prosper in the old slave states; they had to find a land of their own, where they could own farms and businesses. He thought that land was Kansas.

Singleton saw himself as an instrument of God; it was his mission to lead his people to a new life. He proudly claimed: "I am the whole cause of the Kansas migration!" He wasn't. Although his circulars urging migration to Kansas attracted widespread interest, most blacks could not pay for the trip, let alone buy the land. Singleton led several parties of settlers from Tennessee to the two colonies he had established in Cherokee and Morris counties. But many other blacks found their own way. Almost 10,000 freed slaves from Kentucky and Tennessee settled in Kansas in the 1870s. The decade ended with the famous Exodus that brought about 6,000 more from Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas in the space of a few months.

But Singleton's belief that his people could never improve their lot if they remained within the white-dominated society was shared by many migrants. Some black leaders counselled against leaving the South; it was the home of the blacks, and they should stay and use the democratic process to redress their grievances. But Singleton believed his people could never achieve equality by political action; segregation, not integration, was their only hope. He had a dream—of a self-sufficient black state.

Other blacks shared that dream. In June 1879, delegates to a convention in Houston discussed moving to some unsettled area of the West where a black territory could be established. Somewhere, they said, there should be a place populated and controlled by blacks alone—free from white interference.

In 1881, Singleton, now living in Topeka, helped to organize what he called the United Colored Links. Its main purpose was to unite all colored people to achieve social and economic equality with whites; regardless of class and regional differences, all blacks would share a common identity. Singleton, who claimed divine inspiration, was not concerned with the

practical problems of achieving such unit; it would happen and then, like the New Jerusalem, last forever.

For the United Colored Links, this racial harmony was the first step towards establishing a black society that would exist alongside, but distinct from, the white world.

It behooves us as a race of color to harmonize ourselves together and consolidate as a band of brethren good, not only for ourselves alone, but for our children yet unborn.

The Links were prepared to make concessions to white working men's organizations that were angry at black laborers who worked for low wages or scabbed in strikes. In 1881, the Links agreed not to undercut white labor—an easy promise because, in Singleton's vision, the races would ultimately not compete for the same jobs. Instead, the new black society would have black industries that would employ only black workers.

It was an uplifting dream but, typical of Singleton's divinely inspired notions, totally impractical. The six-and-a-half million blacks in the United States had little sense of racial unity; they were divided by region, religion and economic status—even in Topeka, the Links could not close the gap between the colored leaders and working-class blacks. And Singleton was not consistent. While talking of a new black society, he was alarmed by the number of potential members arriving in Kansas, where there was not enough land or jobs to provide for them. He agreed with Governor St. John that more black migration would harm the state. And the pioneer black colonists of Nicodemus, in northwest Kansas, shared his fears; they were already seeking relief, and an influx of impoverished Southern blacks would threaten their future. The story of Nicodemus is our next article.

## 15. *Nicodemus: Paradise on the Prairie*

Good time coming, good time coming, long, long time on the way;  
Run and tell Elija to hurry up Pomp To meet us under the cottonwood  
tree, In the Great Solomon Valley, at the first break of day.

The poetic invitation is from a circular of July 1877, in which the Reverend Simon Roundtree urged blacks to settle in a remote part of northwest Kansas. Many thought the area too arid to support life: the soil looked poor, trees were scarce, the summers hot and dry. But it was here that the most famous black colony in Kansas was established. Nicodemus, in the words of a later historian, was a Negro haven on the Solomon.

The site of Nicodemus was chosen by a white land speculator, W. R. Hill, who wanted to bring settlers to Graham County. In the fall of 1876, he laid out the future county seat—modestly named Hill City—and the next year travelled to Kentucky to promote black settlement. At churches in the Lexington area, he captivated his audiences with tales of a paradise of fertile soil, abundant game and wild horses. In Topeka, a group of former Kentucky slaves formed the Nicodemus Town Company, with the Reverend Roundtree as secretary. They arrived on the site in July 1877, and in September were joined by the first large group of colonists—300 freed slaves from the Lexington area. Four other organized groups—two from Kentucky, one from Tennessee and one from Mississippi—arrived in the next three years. By 1879, the colony had about 700 settlers, scattered on farms in a 70-square-mile area; inside the town limits, there were 35 houses, two churches and a store.

Nicodemus was not the paradise on the prairie that Hill and his fellow promoters had promised. Building materials were scarce, so the settlers lived in sod dugouts. They were short of farming implements, teams and stock; to provide for their families, the men found work in nearby towns while women and children collected dried buffalo bones to sell to dealers. The town company had promised provisions, but there weren't enough to go around; the colony had to appeal for aid to the governor and nearby white communities.

But despite the early problems, the colony prospered. From 1881, the rains came regularly, and the crops were good. By 1887, Nicodemus boasted four general stores, a grocery, two druggists, three land companies, two hotels, two livery stables and a blacksmith shop. According to a local newspaper, the town was full of strangers looking for homes in this new Garden of Eden. And many expected a boom—the railroad was coming.

Nicodemus was never an all-black settlement; whites owned businesses, and one of the two newspapers. But it was a remarkably cohesive community, united by family ties and a sense of purpose. Many settlers had



arrived in large groups from the same area; they knew, or were related to, one another. For them, the growth of Nicodemus was not only a source of personal and community pride—it showed how blacks could prosper when isolated from the dominant white society. In a segregated community, they could better themselves morally and economically; they could acquire business and trade skills, and learn to govern themselves.

Nicodemus set high moral standards for itself. It wanted to be free of the crime and violence that beset communities of mixed race; free from white influence, blacks would become hard-working, law-abiding citizens. Saloons and liquor stores were banned; a local newspaper editor boasted in 1886 that the town had

no whiskey shop, no billiard hall or other gambling hole; no drunkenness or rowdyism, no cursing or whooping disturbs the peace of the place.

The community was intolerant of conduct that threatened its stability; people who refused to work or were considered undesirable were asked to reform or leave. This is why the Nicodemus colonists did not welcome the great Exodus of blacks from the Gulf States in 1879; not only would the new arrivals strain the state's relief efforts, but they would become a burden on the community. In common with white towns, Nicodemus did not want indigents—of any color. In its efforts to show that blacks were worthy of acceptance, Nicodemus adopted many of the values of the white society it avoided, stressing hard work, law and order, property ownership and education.

The railroad never came. Although the population of Nicodemus grew slowly until 1910, it then declined; today about 100 people live there. But the colonists' faith in the ability of blacks to improve their status was shared by others in Kansas. That's the theme of our next article.

## 16. *Author Takes Novel from Life in a Racially Mixed Community*

Newt Winger waits anxiously outside the school principal's office. After an argument with his guidance teacher, he is expecting a severe lecture—perhaps he will even be expelled. He wonders if it would be another story if he was white.

Why does our color make such a difference? Didn't God know that we'd have a lot of trouble if he made us black? Since he's white, maybe he don't care either. Never seen black angels . . . even the chariot horses are white.

Newt's struggle to understand the problems of a mixed community is the central theme of *The Learning Tree*—described by its author, Gordon Parks, as a novel from life. The choices Newt has to make are those that many young blacks face. Should he stay in the small town, or go to the city? Should he take a menial job, like his father, or seek education? Is loyalty to his race more important than justice? Newt's story is more than one individual's search for a value system; it reflects the fears and aspirations of generations of blacks.

*The Learning Tree* is set in Cherokee Flats—a town similar to Fort Scott, where Parks was born and raised. It is 1924, and our first glimpse of the town comes from Newt's father, who has climbed a church tower to repair damage after a cyclone. Cherokee Flats is divided by the railroad tracks; most whites live on the west side, the blacks and poor whites on the east side. Jack has mixed feelings about the place:

Here, for the black man, freedom loosed one hand while custom restrained the other. The law books stood for equal rights, but the law—a two-pistol-toting, tobacco-chewing, khaki-putteed, leather-leggined cop called Kirky—never bothered to enforce such laws in such books.

The primary schools and churches are segregated, but white and black children play together. They all go to the same picture show, but sit in different parts of the theater. No law prevents a black from eating in a white restaurant or drugstore, but there may be trouble if he tries.

Jack thinks Newt is a dreamer, and that education won't help him; surely, he'll stay in Cherokee Flats and work odd jobs—just like Jack and his other son Pete. But his mother, Sarah, knows him better; she has noticed his inquiring mind, his ambition to rise above the lowly status of other blacks in the town. She tells her husband:

The answers that used to satisfy us ain't goin' to satisfy Newt and the young ones comin' up now. They want proof. Some kind they can see

and feel. And they're goin' to want more out of this world than we're gettin' out of it. Time's changin', Jack.

Newt was not satisfied by the answers preached in church. If God was all-powerful, then why was life so unfair? Why, he asks his mother, were some people killed in the cyclone and not others? Sarah tells him that he shouldn't rely on God for everything:

No, son, you got to fight and hope God likes the way you're using your fists. And that goes for the boy you're fightin'. Ain't neither one of you got time for prayin' while you're flingin' fists. Too many people, especially some of ours, boy, sit round waitin' when they should be out doin'.

She tells Newt to think of Cherokee Flats as a place to prepare for life; the lessons he learns there will help him wherever he goes.

Cherokee Flats is sorta like a fruit tree. Some of the people are good and some of them are bad —just like the fruit on a tree. No matter if you go or stay, think of Cherokee Flats like that till the day you die—let it be your learnin' tree.

The Cherokee Flats of Newt's youth wasn't the same town his parents had known. Blacks like Newt's brother Pete had fought alongside whites in World War One, and weren't prepared to accept a society where they had legal equality, but were socially and economically deprived. Each character in the novel reacts differently. Newt's brother-in-law Clint drowns his sorrows in Chappie's saloon; others accept their lot because they know nothing different. Newt's arch-enemy, Marcus Savage, rebels violently; he blames whites for his misfortune, and is sent to a reformatory for beating up a farmer. Newt knows he must use his fists; he learns to box, and punches a white boy who calls him a nigger. But he rejects the role of the rebel; instead, he sees education as the way to better himself. But he has to fight for that education as we'll learn in the next article.

## 17. Parks' Hero Climbs The Learning Tree

The Booker T. Washington school for blacks in Cherokee Flats was no educational showpiece. It was the same place Newt Winger's mother had known—the same books, the same desks, the same old rickety stairs. Black and white parents paid taxes to the school district, but most of the money went towards improving education for white children.

The blacks had learned to put up with segregated elementary schooling—just as they put up with segregated churches, theaters, restaurants and drugstores in the Kansas town. But at least there was hope for the bright children like Newt Winger; all children, black and white, went to the same high school.

For Newt Winger—the hero of Gordon Parks' novel *The Learning Tree*—education is the key to self-improvement. With education, he can rise above the status of fellow-blacks; he can leave the small Kansas town for the city, find a good job and satisfy his thirst for knowledge.

And education is the issue that united the black community of Cherokee Flats. When the school superintendent announces that black children will not be allowed to enter the high school until their sophomore year, the parents are outraged; led by Jack and Sarah Winger, they form a parent-teacher association. Sarah realizes that, without education, blacks have little hope of advancement:

The more we let 'em kick us around, the more they're goin' to do it. There ain't no reason under God's sun why that freshman class shouldn't be in the high school where it rightfully belongs. There they can git all the things this school ain't got.

The superintendent says there isn't enough room in the high school for the freshman class. But the parent win their case when they show that the black school—where the pupils would have to stay for another year—is even more overcrowded. Newt goes on to the high school, where he faces a more insidious form of discrimination.

Newt's dream is to go to college—an ambition that doesn't please his guidance teacher, Miss McClinock. She tells him that most black students aren't college material; even those who go wind up as cooks or porters.

Newt holds back his anger, but his relationship with the teacher worsens. Eventually, he explodes with anger, and has to explain his conduct to the principal, Mr. Hall. But Newt does not get the punishment he expects. The principal apologizes for Miss McClinock's attitude to black students, but says that such ideas are deeply ingrained. The former school principal, he says, was more to blame than Miss McClinock,

But then, so is my father, my mother, Miss McClinock's father and mother and millions of others who helped shape the ideas that Miss McClinock so unwisely passed on to you—forgetting that time and progress must shake away such ideas.

Mr. Hall tells Newt he regrets other instances of discrimination. There is segregation in sport, much to the frustration of the school coach. The white basketball team hasn't made the state championship in ten years; the colored team has brought home the tri-state championship four times.

Newt makes the black basketball team, which goes on to more triumphs. He also gains the respect of his teachers; even Miss McClinock gives him a good report. But his greatest lesson—the highest branch of the learning tree of Cherokee Flats—takes place away from school.

In his final test, Newt makes an agonizing choice—between loyalty to his race and justice. A white man is falsely accused of murdering a farmer. Newt witnessed the crime, and his conscience troubles him; he alone knows the murderer is black. Should he risk the anger of the black community—and perhaps his own life—by exposing the criminal? Newt knows that his race has suffered many injustices; that blacks had not had equal rights under the white man's law. But he decides that justice and truth are more important than the color of a person's skin. He testifies at the trial; the accused man is discharged, and the murderer shoots himself. Most blacks in the town felt Newt had done the right thing.

When Sarah Winger dies, Newt leaves Cherokee Flats to live with an older sister in a northern city. He has climbed the learning tree; he has gained the experience and knowledge he needs to make a better life for himself. And he's made up his mind about what's right and what's wrong. But such moral standards can also generate conflict—when they're not shared by the rest of society. That's the subject of our next article.

## 18. World War I Generates Conflict for German Immigrant Families

The *Blue Danube Waltz* was not on the hit parade in 1917. The town of Hutchinson banned it in its public schools, substituting a more patriotic number. The waltz was as popular as ever, but the Blue Danube wasn't. That year, even the remotest link with Germany or Austria was suspect. The hamburger became the liberty sandwich and sauerkraut—the liberty cabbage.

After almost three years of official, if not always practiced, neutrality, the United States entered the war on April 6th, 1917. Immigrants of German descent were in a difficult position; many had opposed American intervention, and some had openly supported Germany. They were regarded with distrust: at worst, they were spies and saboteurs; at best, disloyal and unpatriotic. Even President Woodrow Wilson called them hyphenated Americans; they needed the hyphen, he said, because only part of them had come over.

German influence was strong in Kansas. Many settlers were of German, or German-Russian descent. German was taught in schools; it was used in some church services. There were German social and athletic clubs, and German-language newspapers.

The reaction of self-styled patriots was sometimes extreme. There was an outcry against the teaching of German in high schools and colleges, and in some places it was dropped from the curriculum. Churches were asked to hold services in English. Signs appeared in stores: "We are Americans, speak the American language in this place." At Aulne in Marion County, the telephone company announced that no German should be spoken on the line.

The German-language newspaper *Vorwaerts*, published by the Mennonites at Hillsboro, protested that the United States was at war with Germany, not with German language and literature. But the editor, Abraham Schellenberg, advised German-Americans to stay out of trouble:

It is best not to speak about the war to anyone who does not understand German, because there are many expressions in the English language which have different connotations, and that may be just the case that the worst interpretation is foisted on what has been said. Therefore, Maulhalten: keep your mouth shut.

The Espionage Act of June 1917 gave the government power to deal with agents, spies and traitors. But it also enabled it to effectively suppress criticism by limiting the freedom of speech, press and assembly. Jacob Frohwerk, the president of the Kansas German-American Alliance, was

arrested and charged under this act. His crime was that he opposed the war, and said so in letters and editorials published in a Kansas City German-language newspaper.

But German-Americans were not the only group whose loyalty was questioned. Socialists were suspect because they opposed the war and the draft. Several prominent Socialists were arrested after an anti-draft meeting in Topeka in May 1917; they were acquitted after a lengthy trial. Socialist newspapers and magazines were barred from the mails; the *Appeal to Reason* at Girard and the smaller *Workers' Chronicle* of Pittsburg had issues withheld, and were obliged to tone down their criticism.

If the Socialists were distrusted, the Industrial Workers of the World were hated and feared. This radical union tried to organize unskilled workers, and had some following among harvest hands in Kansas. It was dedicated to the overthrow of the capitalist system, and its tactics included strikes, boycotts and sabotage. The authorities in Kansas vigorously cracked down on the IWWs; city ordinances and the state vagrancy law were invoked to run them out of towns; there was a general round-up in November 1917, and IWWs were imprisoned in Kansas City, Wichita, Topeka and other towns. They were badly treated; a reporter who visited the Topeka jail found ten IWWs crowded in a dark, unhealthy cell. Most of those brought to trial were acquitted, because the charges were vague and the evidence flimsy. Their crime had been to belong to an organization that society feared.

With hindsight, it's easy to criticize the harsh treatment of groups whose loyalty was suspect. But individual liberty and constitutional rights meant little in the highly charged atmosphere of 1917 and 1918. The country was at war—and every American was expected to display the flag, buy Liberty Bonds, contribute to the Red Cross, and join the service if drafted. Opposition to the war—for religious or political reasons—seemed downright disloyal. Some did not wait for the law to bring dissenters to justice; instead, they took the law into their own hands in the name of patriotism. That's the subject of our next article.

## 19. Mob Violence Terrorizes Kansas Mennonite Community

On November 7, 1918, rumors of an armistice in Europe swept the country. In Kansas, a mob forced the pastor of a German Lutheran church near Kensington to ring the bell to celebrate peace. The next day, the church was a blackened ruin—destroyed by a fire that was probably started deliberately. The same night, two buildings burned in Smith Center; in Topeka, citizens fired off guns, damaging property on Kansas Avenue.

The report of the armistice was false—but the events of that night point to a hysteria that gripped many communities in Kansas. It was a feeling that led normally respectable citizens to persecute those they considered disloyal. Kansas was the stage for some unsavory vigilante justice.

In World War One, loyalty was measured by what people said or did to promote the war effort. They were expected to join the service if drafted, to buy Liberty Bonds and contribute to the Red Cross, to conserve and produce food, to attend patriotic rallies and display the flag prominently.

No law required a person to be patriotic, but the pressures to conform were strong. The U.S. Attorney, Fred Robertson, asked Kansas postmasters to act as spies and informers. The governor, Arthur Capper, encouraged citizens to report acts of disloyalty. Capper kept a slackers file; a person accused of unpatriotic conduct could expect a friendly letter of admonishment from the governor.

Historians do not agree on the extent of the campaign of violence and intimidation—most of it directed against immigrants of German descent. Homer Socolofsky of Kansas State University points out that Governor Capper, who was brought up in the pacifist Quaker tradition, had opposed American intervention; when President Wilson visited Topeka in February 1916 to campaign for preparedness, Capper received him coolly. The governor supported the administration, but tried to avoid trouble between zealous patriots and opponents of war. Kansas—in comparison with surrounding states—was, in Socolofsky's view, an island of calm in a sea of bigotry.

The Mennonite historian James Juhnke, on the other hand, comments that Capper's personal intervention in disloyalty cases set a standard of hostility toward war critics. Mob violence terrorized the Mennonite community into unwilling participation in the war effort.

To the Mennonites, war was contrary to Scripture. But their reluctance to display the flag, buy Liberty Bonds or contribute to war charities raised doubts about their loyalty. Some had supported Germany; the Mennonite newspaper *Vorwaerts*, published at Hillsboro, had consistently presented the



German version of the war, and had served as a collecting agent for the German Red Cross.

If the government had financed the war through taxation, the Mennonite conscience would not have been greatly troubled. But buying a Liberty Bond was different—it was a direct contribution to the war effort. Most Mennonites did not buy the first two issues; but by the time the third drive was launched in April 1918, many churches had relented and allowed their members to buy bonds.

Those who refused risked the anger of the mob. On the night of April 22, three recalcitrant Mennonites in McPherson County were tarred and feathered. When Daniel Diener and his son Charles still refused to buy bonds, the mob ransacked their homes and smeared yellow paint on their cars. The Dieners were stripped and whipped, and once again tarred and feathered. Deciding that this was not an issue on which they should die for their faith, they bought Liberty Bonds.

In Harvey County, slackers were lined up in the main street of Burrton, and ordered to salute the American flag and buy bonds. One man refused—the Mennonite John Schrag. Someone shouted that he had stepped on an American flag. The crowd kicked and hit him, and went for a rope to lynch him, but he was rescued by a lawman who locked him in the jail for his own safety. The incident caused a breach in the community; Mennonites took their money out of the town and did their business elsewhere.

While the authorities and the press officially disapproved of mob justice, little action was taken to prevent it. The Mennonites could not count on the law to protect them; many decided to demonstrate their loyalty by buying bonds or honoring the flag. In Butler County, a Mennonite pastor, Bernhard Harder, embarrassed an angry mob that accused him of refusing to fly the flag. Harder suggested they all join in singing *America*, and he sang four verses himself; after the first verse, the voices of the crowd trailed away—they didn't know the words. The Mennonites were no slackers; but they could not always reconcile patriotism and Christianity, as we'll learn in the next article.

## 20. Conscientious Objectors Find No Haven in Kansas

In the summer of 1917, America prepared for war. Young men left farms and factories for the military camps; some volunteered, others were drafted. But one group did not answer the call to arms. They were the conscientious objectors.

The grounds for refusing military service varied. Aliens did not want to fight or kill their own people. Humanitarian or liberal objectors held that all men were brothers, and that fraternal blood should not be shed. Political radicals and socialists were dedicated to the reform of American society, and did not want to fight in what they saw as a capitalist war. But the largest number were those whose religious beliefs did not permit them to carry arms; to groups such as the Mennonites, war was contrary to the teachings of Christ.

Religious scruples were the only ones recognized in the Selective Service Act of May 1917. The law defined a conscientious objector as a member of a religious organization whose creed forbade participation in war; at first, no allowance was made for people who objected on political or humanitarian grounds. Those who were exempted from military duty were expected to serve as noncombatants. But to the Mennonites, any kind of military work was un-Christian; to serve as a clerk, engineer or medical aide was to contribute to the war effort. Many could not accept noncombatant service if it was under military control.

Some Mennonites had difficulty persuading the draft boards that their objections were sincere. The church practiced adult baptism, and some Mennonites who were drafted had not been baptized. Many believed that even the act of registration was wrong, but church leaders persuaded most to register. They were advised to state their objections when asked to take the oath of allegiance at the draft board.

Conscientious objectors who were exempted from military service remained under military authority. When they arrived at camps, they immediately came under pressure to accept combatant duty. Army officers often used physical punishment as a means of testing a man's convictions, and some objectors were harshly treated. At the end of the war, a correspondent for the Mennonite newspaper *Vorwaerts* reported:

The brutal treatment which the conscientious objectors have suffered has not been usually reported publicly. Among hundreds of letters I have received from members of our denomination, there are many which report a treatment which one would have held impossible in this land of freedom.

Of the 315 Kansas Mennonites who were drafted, only 23 entered full military service. One hundred fifty accepted noncombatant service as quartermasters, medics and engineers. The rest refused to serve; some were given farm work, others were court-martialed. At Camp Funston, twelve Mennonites refused an order to cut down a sunflower; they were placed in confinement, court-martialed and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for refusing to work.

Of the 380 religious objectors court-martialed and sentenced in the United States, 138 were Mennonites. Most were imprisoned at Leavenworth, where the regimen was strict. If a conscientious objector refused to work, he was placed in solitary confinement and was forced to stand chained to the bars for nine hours a day. Although Secretary of War Baker ordered a halt to this punishment in December 1918, conditions changed little. Three months later, Winthrop D. Lane of the magazine *Survey* reported that prisoners were abused and beaten by guards, placed in solitary confinement and handcuffed to the cell bars. But attitudes changed; by mid-1919, most conscientious objectors were free again.

It was the threat of conscription in Russia that persuaded many Mennonites to migrate to Kansas. Forty years later, they again faced the prospect of military service; this time, a few fled to Canada, but most chose to stay. The treatment of conscientious objectors may seem harsh, but public opinion was hostile. Parents whose sons were fighting and dying in France could hardly be expected to sympathize with those who appeared to be shirkers. Clergy of other denominations did not accept the religious objections to war. True Christian churchmen were dying for Christ, said one. Another described the conscientious objector as a man who used religion to cloak a yellow streak. Such attitudes were common in wartime; when the country was at peace, unconventional views were easier to tolerate. And tolerant Kansas became the testbed for several radical social experiments; we'll examine one in our next article.

## 21. *Silkville, Kansas Envisaged as Utopia*

It was a worker's paradise. You chose your job, and the people you worked with; if you didn't like the job, you were free to change. You decided when to work; you were guaranteed a minimum wage—beyond that, you were paid for what you produced. The community took care of you—provided your meals, nursed you when you were sick, educated your children. It was a self-sufficient society where all shared the responsibilities and the rewards.

This was the utopia envisaged by the nineteenth-century French philosopher Charles Fourier. He was alarmed by the impact of the Industrial Revolution—the division of capital and labor, the monotony of factory jobs, the false god of money. In his view, governments could not change society—nor could violent revolution. Fourier proposed that men and women organize self-sufficient communities, where they would find happiness in living and working together. Free to choose and change jobs, each worker would achieve a new dignity and a feeling of responsibility to the community.

Utopian socialism was an appealing creed for those who saw the dangers of industrial society, and yearned for a simpler, satisfying life on the land, away from the pressures of the city. Fourier's ideas attracted attention in the America of the 1840s; among the converts was Horace Greeley, the editor of the *New York Tribune*. More than 40 communities modeled on Fourier's plan were established between 1840 and 1850; all of them failed, usually because of lack of money. But in 1869, the idea was revived in Kansas.

Ernest Valetton de Boissiere was a man who was prepared to suffer for his principles. He was born to an aristocratic French family, with a large estate near Bordeaux. He was well educated, and received a commission as an engineer in the French army. But despite his wealth and status, he was a staunch republican. When Louis Napoleon proclaimed himself emperor, de Boissiere was advised to leave France for the sake of his health. He arrived in the United States in 1852, and settled in New Orleans, where he had interests in property and shipping.

He was concerned for the welfare of the city's black population, and gave ten thousand dollars to help found a home and industrial school for orphans. His benevolence to blacks was not welcomed by prominent white citizens who advised him to leave the city. In 1868, de Boissiere arrived in Kansas to pursue his life's ambition—the establishment of a community according to the principles of Charles Fourier.

De Boissiere appreciated the tolerant intellectual climate of Kansas after the bigotry of New Orleans. But he didn't like the winter climate:

I am living on the wild prairie. I sleep in a small garret at the top of a rough frame house, as cold as the outside atmosphere. It is a severe life

for me, used to the mild climate and every comfort of Southern France, but I think that the sufferings of the flesh are nothing and preserve the predominance of the spirit.

In 1869, de Boissiere and two associates bought three and a half thousand acres of prairie land in Franklin County, 20 miles southwest of Ottawa. De Boissiere believed a successful silk industry could be established; in 1870, he returned to France and recruited families with experience in silk growing and manufacture. The same year, mulberry trees were planted and silkworms imported from California. The industry gave the colony its name—Silkville.

De Boissiere believed the ideal of a self-sufficient community was within his grasp. Several American families joined the colony; the settlers raised cattle and planted a fruit orchard. By 1874, residents were living in a large communal building; there were four stone barns, and a church. The community was physically isolated, but it was not immune to the pressures of a changing world. In the 1870s, the state of Kansas was booming; thousands of settlers arrived in search of free or cheap land, railroads opened up the prairie and new industries were established. It was only a matter of time before the people of Silkville became exposed to new influences and opportunities outside the community. De Boissiere never lost his faith in the utopian ideal—but, as we'll learn in the next article, he was forced to compromise to keep the community of Silkville alive.

## 22. *Compromise Keeps "Utopia" Alive Longer*

It was a long and uncomfortable journey to the colony of Silkville in Franklin County. But visitors in the mid-1870s were glad they made the effort. Silkville was no utopia; but it was more prosperous than many other settlements. The silk industry was flourishing, and more than eight thousand mulberry trees had been planted. There were four stone barns, a winery, a cheese factory and a schoolhouse. The three-story community building was completed in 1874; it had sixty rooms, a communal kitchen and dining room, and a large library.

The principles on which the community was founded were set out in a prospectus of 1873 designed to attract settlers. De Boissiere believed everyone should be free to choose an occupation, the hours to work, and the people to work with; residents could be paid for what they produced. He hoped this system would lead to friendly rivalry, in which all took pride in their work. The community should be self-supporting—providing its own food, accommodation, medical care and education. Residents rented rooms in the community building, provided their own furniture and tools, and ate in the communal dining room.

De Boissiere was a charitable man, but his utopia was not open to all. He wanted people who would work hard and become valuable members of the community. The poor were not welcome; new residents showed their commitment by making a one-hundred-dollar deposit, and paying for their room and board two months in advance. They didn't see any more silver dollars until they left; zinc money was used for community exchange.

The community earned its name from the largest industry—silk. Most of the early colonists were French silkwormers, and de Boissiere hoped to make silk products the principal money-earner for the settlement. Soon, the looms were turning out between 250 and 300 yards of finished material a day. It was of high quality, and won diplomas at fairs in Kansas. At the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, the judges ranked Silkville's products with the best from France, Italy and Japan.

Silkville was never truly self-sufficient, and could not isolate itself from the social and economic pressures of the outside world. Many of the early French settlers learned English, and discovered they could earn more money as farm laborers and mechanics; some of the French girls married local farmers. De Boissiere relied increasingly on hired help, for which he had to pay good wages. In the 1880s, cheap silk imports from China and Japan flooded the American market. With high labor costs, Silkville could not compete—and silk culture was finally abandoned in 1886.

For several years, the colony had a prosperous dairy industry, and produced fine cheese. But again the settlers were not prepared to accept de

Boissiere's plan in which all shared the profits; they wanted cash for the milk they delivered. And it was too costly to employ outside labor.

In 1884, Silkville's founder returned to France where, true to his ideals, he founded an industrial school on the family estate near Bordeaux. In 1892, de Boissiere, now 82, came back to Kansas and bequeathed the Silkville property, valued at \$125,000, to the Odd Fellows Lodge for use as an orphan's home. Two years later, de Boissiere died. A dispute arose over the title to the land, and eventually it passed into private hands.

Silkville suffered the fate of other communal experiments, although it lasted longer than most. There was no place—not even on the open prairie—where a self-sufficient community could survive. The pressures of society were too great. Silkville never provided the variety of occupations that Fourier envisaged, and it took de Boissiere's energy and personal wealth to keep the community going. Most of the colonists did not share his pessimistic view of capitalist society; they were easily lured away by the prospect of cheap land or higher wages. But if de Boissiere's solution was impractical, at least he saw the dangers of the new industrial society, and warned that it would enslave and degrade workers. Kansas attracted many industrial workers from Europe, and became one of the battlegrounds between labor and capital. That's the theme of our next article.

## 23. Mines Beckon Foreign Immigrants to Kansas

Black-faced workmen, just out of the mine, stretch in the shade. They speak in the soft accents of the Latin races, in the gutturals of Teuton. Dark-eyed Italian lads dangle their bare feet from the wagon of some farmer of New England descent or generously teach their Yankee school teacher how to read the Italian language.

May Wood Simons was writing about southeast Kansas—ethnically the most diverse part of the state. She was there in 1911, when foreign immigration was at its peak. The year before, census takers in Pittsburg had counted 51 different nationalities. In 1916, Governor Arthur Capper was greeted at a banquet in the city by people speaking 30 different languages. But it was not only the many nationalities that led a former governor, Walter Stubbs, to call the region the Balkans of Kansas. Like the Balkans of Europe, it had a reputation for trouble.

What brought immigrants to southeast Kansas? Most came to work in the coal mines that for half a century were the principal industry. The first underground shaft mine was opened near Scammon in Cherokee County in 1874; at the peak of development, there were almost 300 important, and many small, mines operating in the coalfield. They attracted Europeans who were willing to do dangerous and menial labor; they came from Italy, Austria, Germany, Slovenia, England, Wales, Scotland, France, Belgium and other countries. Some had experience; they'd worked as miners in their home countries. Industrial expansion created other opportunities. That was why two Belgian sisters, who had worked in New York, moved to Kansas.

We heard of how great Crawford County was, and how easy it was to make a living there. We packed our things and a few weeks later we were in Frontenac. Jobs were not easy to find and the pay wasn't what we heard it would be.

The motives for migration varied. A few came to avoid political oppression at home, or conscription in World War I. More came because of poverty, high taxes and unemployment in their native countries; numerically, the Italians and Austrians were the largest ethnic groups in southeast Kansas.

Most of the coal company camps were mixed communities with American whites, blacks and Europeans, but in some there were distinct sections—the Italian quarter, the Austrian end of town, the German neighborhood, the French row. And a few communities had only one or two nationalities. Chicopee, four miles south of Pittsburg, was settled by Sicilian miners. In 1911, the *Topeka Daily Capital* reinforced the stereotype of Sicilians:



Between two and three thousand miners and their families lived in Chicopee, which became known as the "Town of Mysterious Murders." The Sicilians carried their feuds with them from the homeland and many old scores were settled in Chicopee where there were never any witnesses for the police to the crime.

The coal operators had little trouble attracting labor. The immigrants kept in touch with the home country; when they saved money, they paid for the passage of friends or relatives to Kansas, and found jobs for them. By World War I, half the workforce of 10,000 were Europeans; 90 percent of the male immigrants found a job in the mines.

Life in the coal camps may have been better than conditions in Europe, but it was no paradise. The company houses were drafty and blackened with coal dust. Mining was dangerous work; accidents were common, and safety regulations were not strictly enforced. An explosion in an underground mine at Frontenac in 1888 killed 47 miners, and injured many others. The pay was low; the average wage for an underground miner in 1916 was three dollars a day. Some were paid in company scrip that could be redeemed only at the high-priced company store. In summer, when demand for coal declined, miners were laid off; many rented farming land or grew vegetables to keep food on the table. Although Kansas had a labor law that prohibited children under 16 from working in dangerous occupations, it was common for sons to join their fathers in the mines, as one newspaper reported:

Joe was reared in the strict regimen of a father who had fled from the oppressive, compulsory military system of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He never progressed beyond the sixth grade in school because it was his duty, as the eldest son, to accompany his father to the mines to bolster the family income.

The miners depended on the companies for employment, housing and sometimes provisions. To fight for better wages and conditions, they joined trade unions. The United Mine Workers of America was the largest, and Kansas miners soon gained a reputation for militancy, as we'll learn in the next article.

## 24. *Kansas Immigrant Miners Reputed to be Militant in 1919*

World War I brought prosperity to the coal mines. American industry needed more fuel for war production, and to supply the needs of postwar Europe. But the blessings were not equally shared. The miners had their last wage increase in 1917; prices went up every year and by 1920 were double the pre-war level. The United Mine Workers of America called for a 60-percent raise, and a 30-hour week to combat unemployment when wartime demand for fuel fell. The coal operators not only refused to consider the demands, but also insisted that the old contract was still in effect because the war was not officially over. The union's acting president, John L. Lewis, under pressure from the rank and file, called a national strike for November 1, 1919.

The strike pitted the union against the government, as well as the coal companies. The government knew a prolonged stoppage would harm the economy; Woodrow Wilson denounced the strike as a grave moral and legal wrong. Federal officials held that the strike was illegal under wartime legislation, and secured a court injunction ordering the union to call it off. Lewis bowed to the pressure. "We are Americans, we cannot fight the government," he said.

Despite the cancellation of the strike, many miners stayed home. In southeast Kansas, the miners, led by their militant president Alexander Howat, shut down the coalfield. It was the beginning of two years of industrial strife in the region.

Of the ten thousand miners in southeast Kansas, about half were European immigrants. Alexander McWhirter Howat was one of them. He was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1876; his parents emigrated three years later, and finally settled in the town of Franklin. Howat began working in the mines of Crawford County at age ten, and was a miner for 12 years. He became a union official in 1902, and four years later was elected president of the United Mine Workers District 14—the Kansas coalfield.

Howat saw himself as a class warrior—a crusader for the working miner against the coal owners, the government and the union hierarchy. Known more for his fiery rhetoric than his administrative ability, he clashed frequently with Lewis who, he believed, would sell out the miners for his own political ends. Howat's militancy did not endear him to the coal owners and the state officials; when he refused to obey the court injunction and order Kansas miners to return to work, he was imprisoned for contempt.

The governor of Kansas, Henry Allen, took stern action to end the strike. He obtained a court order allowing the state to take over the mines, and put out an appeal for volunteer miners:

Wanted—one thousand able-bodied men to dig coal to keep the home fires burning in Kansas. Hardy, young men, able to take care of themselves and to wield a pick and shovel preferred. Travelling expenses, and at least five dollars a day guaranteed by the State of Kansas.

The response was overwhelming. Over 11,000 volunteered in two days; the governor of Nebraska, where fuel was short, offered fifteen hundred young men. Most were ex-servicemen and college students; Washburn University in Topeka even agreed to give academic credit to students who answered the call. The volunteers were taken by train to Pittsburg, and the National Guard was brought in to protect them. The governor was heartened by their spirit.

I have never seen, even in the war, a finer spirit of patriotism than they manifested. They never inquired what the wages were to be or what the hours were. They worked from daylight to dark, lived in zero weather in tents.

State control lasted about three weeks; by mid-December 1919, the United Mine Workers and the coal owners reached an agreement that eventually raised miners' wages by 27 percent. But the end of the national dispute did not bring calm to Kansas.

The tough reaction of the authorities—the use of a court injunction to stop the national strike, and the takeover of the Kansas mines—must be seen as part of a broader picture. 1919 was a year of labor unrest—the miners' action followed a general strike in Seattle, a walkout by Boston police, and a national steelworkers' strike. The Russian Revolution was still fresh in the minds of Americans; many saw the labor troubles as a campaign to foment revolution in the United States. It was easy for employers to gloss over workers' grievances and brand union leaders as communists. In Kansas, Governor Allen exploited fears of labor troubles to push through a law that would leave the unions—and Alexander Howat—powerless. That's the subject of our next article.

## 25. *Kansas Women March to Mines in Industrial-Labor Dispute*

The women were in a militant mood. It was December 12, 1921, and the miners' strike in southeast Kansas was deadlocked. Governor Henry Allen refused to withdraw his Industrial Court Law—the issue that had provoked the walkout. The miners' leaders were in prison. Their husbands and brothers were on strike, but some miners had followed the orders of their national executive and were back at work.

The five hundred women at the meeting in Franklin decided to march to every mine to persuade the men who were working to walk out. When the protest began the next day, the number had grown—almost three thousand joined the march. From mine to mine they went; when words didn't work, they pelted the offenders with vegetables, threw pepper in their faces, or threatened them with lynching. They prevented men from entering one mine by stretching the American flag across the road, knowing no one would dare to tear it down. No wonder the women earned a formidable name—the Amazon Army.

The local police couldn't stop the marchers, so Governor Allen sent in three National Guard companies to protect the miners. The women were arrested, and some were fined. It was a sorry episode, as the Republican Clyde Knox commented in the *Independence Daily Reporter*:

Probably never before in American history has any state ever been in such a pathetic and yet ridiculous role as having to call out its state troops to control a group of women. This last development comes as a fitting chapter in two years of trouble and strife in the Kansas coal fields, every part of which has been due primarily to one thing—the effort of Governor Allen to show that he is a bigger man than Alexander Howat.

Howat was the militant president of the United Mine Workers District 14—the Kansas coalfield. The son of a Scottish immigrant, he rose to power in the union as a champion of the rank and file, opposing both the owners and the union president, John L. Lewis. His dispute with Governor Allen was over a Kansas law that virtually outlawed a union's most effective weapon—the strike.

The Industrial Court Law, passed by the legislature in January 1920, set up a tribunal to settle labor disputes, prohibited picketing, and made the calling of a strike illegal. Howat promptly called a strike to test the validity of the law and vowed:

Not one ton of coal shall be mined by the miners of Kansas until the industrial court is scratched from the statute books of Kansas.

Howat and his vice-president went to prison, and the miners walked out in protest. The executive of the United Mine Workers directed Howat to order the men back to work. When he refused, Lewis saw his chance to destroy the power of his adversary. Howat and the other Kansas officials were suspended, and new officers appointed. The union organization in Kansas was taken over by men loyal to Lewis.

The Industrial Court Law and the suppression of the women's protest were symptoms of a broader campaign against so-called subversive elements in society. In 1921, the Red Scare was its height; some believed there was a Communist plot to overthrow the government and the capitalist system, and they had no trouble identifying striking miners and marching women with it. Judge Andrew Curran imposed two-hundred-dollar fines on the leaders of the women's march, and blamed the wives of immigrant miners:

It is a known fact that there are anarchists, communists and bolsheviks among the alien women in this community. It may not be wholly out of place to suggest that it was the lawlessness of the women in this community a few months ago which made necessary the stationing of the state militia in this county to preserve law and order.

The Socialist weekly *The Appeal to Reason*, published at nearby Girard, dismissed the claim that all the striking miners were foreigners as a ridiculous pretense. And from Hutchinson, Judge Curran received this anonymous advice:

We are getting might damn tired of you and Henry Allen piling up taxes just to take your spite out on Howat. Whipping him is not stopping any strikes. Your damn law is unconstitutional, and you know it.

The women's march caused a stir, but it didn't stop coal production. Howat called off the strike on January 13, 1922, and tried unsuccessfully to regain his authority in the union. The Industrial Court Law attracted national attention, and Allen went to New York to debate the principles with the president of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers. The law was repealed in 1925 after its rulings were overturned by the Supreme Court, but the issues raised by the events of 1921 remain fundamental to the labor movement. In our next article, we turn to another struggle—but this one is in the world of art.

## 26. *Swedish Artist Finds Inspiration in Kansas*

To every settler, Kansas offered a challenge. A challenge to tame the land, to brave the weather, to build a home, to buy a farm. Immigrants faced a more difficult task; they were joining a society with a different language, culture and institutions. And for one, the Swede Birger Sandzen, Kansas posed a particular challenge—an artistic one. In 1915, he wrote:

When I came to this part of the country twenty years ago, I had much to learn over again. The atmosphere here is different from the atmosphere in Sweden. There, everything is enveloped in a soft, clinging atmosphere with colors in greens and blues. But here the air is so thin that the colors become more vivid and the shadows lighter. The colors here are purples and greens and yellows, with everything bright in this clear ringing atmosphere of the West. When I started to paint here, I had to pitch everything in a higher key.

The sweeping landscapes of Kansas were quite different from the intimate forest scenes Sandzen remembered from Sweden. But he was not discouraged; he found inspiration in his adopted land. He embarked on a dual artistic crusade—to capture the spirit of the country in his art, and to bring art into the lives of its people.

Sandzen was 23 years old when he arrived at Lindsborg, Kansas, in 1894 to take a teaching job at Bethany College. But his youth belied his artistic training and talent. His father was a pastor, and art, literature and music were part of family life; as a child, Sandzen recalled, he listened to classical music, one day Beethoven and Bach and the next day Bach and Beethoven. He was encouraged to draw by one of his father's assistants and when, at the age of 10, he went to school, he took painting and drawing lessons and studied prints. Although he went on to the university, he was not content with traditional academic studies; he left for Stockholm, where he became a student of the celebrated artist Anders Zorn. He continued his training in Paris at the studio of Aman-Jean. There, he met several American students, and his interest in the United States grew when he read a book by Carl Swensson, the founder of Bethany College in Lindsborg. Sandzen was excited by the promise of America:

A free, new country! It should be heaven for a young painter. Out there in your West an artist could develop a style of his own to fit the country.

After correspondence in the spring of 1894, Swensson offered Sandzen a teaching job at Bethany. Sandzen was to find artistic inspiration in his new home, and his reputation lent prestige to the town and college.

If Sandzen was an artist at heart, he was a teacher by choice. Besides drawing and painting, he taught art history and Romance languages. Like his former teacher, Anders Zorn, Sandzen taught and painted with his students. He did not believe art could be created in a vacuum; he would be failing in his duty if he sat alone in the studio with his brush and palette. Artistic inspiration came from the world outside the studio, and the artist should share that vision—not only with those interested in art, but also with those who knew or cared little about it.

Sandzen's view of art was democratic: he believed that art in some form—no matter how unpretentious—should enter every home. Art should not be for the rich alone; everyone should be able to afford it. Sandzen set a personal example by selling his own art cheaply; sometimes, he would give it away. He was tireless in his efforts to promote interest in art; he toured schools, churches and clubs giving talks, helped to organize exhibitions and was a popular guest lecturer at universities in the West and Midwest. Years before art appreciation classes became popular, he began an aesthetics class for liberal arts students. He welcomed visitors to his studio, and became excited when indifference to art gave way to interest. Leila Mechlin, the executive secretary of the American Foundation of Art, in paying tribute to Sandzen's work in popularizing art, said:

Birger Sandzen has lit little candles of art knowledge and appreciation all through the Middle West.

Sandzen's devotion to teaching and his crusade for art appreciation involved some personal sacrifice. His ambitions were for art—not for himself. He turned down offers of prestigious jobs at universities and art institutes; he preferred to teach and work in Lindsborg. When his first one-man exhibition was held in New York City in 1922, he was urged to attend; the public would want to meet the artist. Sandzen declined, saying he had to teach his classes at Bethany. But despite his commitments, he was a prolific artist. In the next article, we'll examine some of the themes of his work.

## 27. Sandzen Determined to Capture Spirit of the Land

Birger Sandzen was excited by the landscape of the West. The plains and the mountains, the rocks and the trees—they had a rugged grandeur quite unlike his native Sweden. He was determined to capture the spirit of the land in his art.

But, like other immigrants, Sandzen had much to learn. He did not face the hardships of the farmer; he did not have to master a new language, for he had learned English. But for the artist, life in Kansas represented a challenge. If his art was to evoke his new homeland, he had to develop a fresh style.

Sandzen's promise as an artist was recognized early in his life. He took drawing and painting lessons at school, and studied under famous artists in Stockholm and Paris. He was influenced by post-impressionist trends; the colors were subdued, the moods understated.

When Sandzen arrived at Lindsborg in 1894 to teach at Bethany College, he had to adapt his skills to a new series of subjects. The bright sunlight called for vivid colors; the broad prairie for bold brush strokes. Over the next twenty years, he developed a distinctive style, applying the formal lessons of his artistic training to the new environment.

The images of nature in Sandzen's work are both intimate and dramatic. In Kansas, he preferred to paint the countryside he knew best—the hills, trees and farms of the Smoky Valley and Wild Horse Creek in Graham County. But outside the state, he liked nature at its most majestic—the Colorado Rockies, the Painted Desert of Arizona, the California coast. His style was as forceful as his subject matter, as William Allen White remarked in 1925:

Birger Sandzen knows that mood of nature. He goes to it unafraid, and comes back triumphant, capturing it, subduing it, translating it into human terms. He grapples with its job. He translates its terror and dread without compromise, without understatement. He has come from the plains where things grow rank and strong, from Kansas where he has interpreted ugliness, disharmony, monotony in terms of beauty and yet faithfully with affectionate wisdom.

Sandzen did not believe that the artist should try to copy nature. The task was impossible, he said, because the artist was compelled to select, arrange and organize, to bring order to confusion. To him, art should not duplicate nature but convey its grandeur and energy. He stressed the abstract elements of composition, color and texture. Color, he said, should not be a mere supplement to drawing; it should have a life of its own and be used to



develop the form of an object. He was not concerned with small details; he emphasized the essentials of form through accents of light. The brush strokes were bold—his favorite tool was the short flat bristle brush, sometimes literally worn to the metal.

Although most of his early work was in oils or watercolors, Sandzen was prepared to try new techniques. In 1916, he was persuaded to work on lithographs and woodcuts. Sandzen's approach was typically direct. He often hammered out the light areas in a woodcut with a carpenter's nail and wooden paddle, a quick method that gave the effect of shimmering light.

By any standard, Sandzen was a prolific artist. More than 2,000 oil paintings, many watercolors and over 200 lithographs attest to the energy of a man who carried a heavy teaching load and rarely refused invitations to give talks and organize art shows. He took part in more than 400 art exhibitions, founded the Smoky Hill Art Club, organized the Prairie Watercolor Painters and was a charter member of the Prairie Printmakers.

In 1954—60 years after he arrived in Lindsborg—Sandzen died there. An art gallery at Bethany College is dedicated to his memory, and his work is on display in collections throughout the United States. Mark Clutter, the editor of the *Wichita Beacon*, wrote of the art gallery at Bethany as

A wonderful memorial to the gentle artist who for more than half a century proclaimed the glories of art to Kansas, a state that in earlier years must have seemed somewhat indifferent.

In the next articles, we'll examine some of the issues raised by immigration to Kansas. What was the appeal of the state? How have immigrants adapted to the society they found here? Has the desire to become true Americans eroded ethnic identity? How strong is ethnic feeling in Kansas today? Some forthright opinions on these and other questions are presented in the next articles.

## 28. Kansas: "The Lily of the West"

Come all you folks with enterprise,  
    who feel inclined to roam,  
Beyond the Mississippi, to seek a  
    pleasant home,  
Take a pioneer's advice, I'll point  
    you out the best,  
It's the good old state of Kansas,  
The Lily of the West.

Folk song: *Kansas, Lily of the West*

This was the image of Kansas in the 1870s and 1880s. A paradise on the prairie, where all would prosper. It was an image shouted by land speculators, touted by railroad immigration agents and celebrated in folk songs like *Kansas, Lily of the West*. But European immigrants would not have come—to Kansas or any other state—but for problems in their home countries, as Ann Schofield, of the University of Kansas History Department, explains.

There was overpopulation in many areas; there was political turmoil in many areas of Europe; and there was certainly far less land available for people to work, for a peasant or an agricultural people to work on. Factors pulling people to America were the new jobs, the enormous amount of new jobs created by a burgeoning industrial society, by larger amounts of land, and by the fact that people in Europe understood this to be the case . . . that the whole legend of the streets being paved with gold in America has a certain grain of truth in it in that European peoples did know that there was some degree of economic opportunity available in America.

Kansas was one of the states to attract Swedish immigrants. Emory Lindquist, professor emeritus at Wichita State University and a former president of Bethany College at Lindsborg, says economic opportunities were a strong incentive.

I think that the availability of virtually free land, the consequences of the Homestead Act, and the prospect that a poor person in Sweden who never saw the possibility of owning land could at some time own 160 acres was a very attractive factor . . . and, as far as the Swedish immigrants were concerned, to think of 160 acres of land unencumbered by stones and trees seemed almost unbelievable.

How did people in the old country hear about Kansas? Immigration agents were active in Europe, but many took the word of earlier settlers. Emory Lindquist comments:

We have a large collection of what we call America letters which portrayed life in America in rather glowing terms. These letters would be printed in regional newspapers, they might be read on the church lawn after a church service, and they tended to stimulate immigration. They wrote about life in America and used the good, solid Swedish word "Framtidslandet"; they looked upon America as the land of the future.

Many immigrants spent their savings on the passage, and arrived in America with little but their dreams. But the state offered the chance for self-improvement, as Homer Socolofsky, professor of history at Kansas State University, points out.

When they came to Kansas, they might occupy the bottom level of the social structure, but it was not rigid. There was the possibility of moving up, and one of the marks of moving up was very quickly realized by most settlers on farmland in Kansas . . . and that was being an owner of land.

But was America an open, classless society, where all could succeed? Ann Schofield thinks not.

The stereotype of the immigrant coming from a class-bound Europe into a free and open America is, I think, a very erroneous stereotype. Certainly, America had a class, or at least a status system as did Europe. It was different in that it wasn't based on inherited status, but it was based on wealth, so that when European peoples, peasant peoples, came to the United States, they had some hopes, some expectations of bettering themselves economically. But few of them believed the Horatio Alger myths that they would someday be president.

The ambition of many immigrants was to own land—not just for economic security, but for the status it conferred. Homer Socolofsky explains.

Freedom to many meant land ownership because in Europe land ownership really meant political position; you didn't have political position without land ownership.

But material success was only part of the process of becoming an American. There were other changes to make, as we'll learn in the next article.

## 29. *Kansas Immigrants Succeed despite Obstacles*

I've reached the land of short grass fine,  
And sought to make a homestead mine,  
But the hot wind blows the livelong day,  
And all my cash has passed away.  
Oh, Kansas Land, my Kansas Land,  
As on the dugout roof I stand . . .

Folk song: *Kansas Land*

The lament of *Kansas Land* was shared by all settlers on the frontier, regardless of race, color or ethnic origin. For every success, there was a failure. But one group began with disadvantages; Norman Yetman, professor of American studies at the University of Kansas, says hostility to blacks was common in Kansas.

They came with many of the same kinds of virtues, the same kinds of values, the emphasis upon education, the concern for thrift, hard work, sobriety, industriousness. However, the realities for blacks were that the caste system, the perception of blacks as being an inferior people, of not being fully American, of not being equal to white people, was a perception that was widely shared among whites—among liberal whites—and was a very pervasive phenomenon throughout the entire history of black-white relations in the state.

Kansas held a special place in the minds of the freed slaves. It was a free state, the land of John Brown. But it fell short of their hopes, as Tom Averill, of the Washburn University English Department, points out.

They found that the abolitionist tradition of Kansas was not such a powerful force that they suddenly did not encounter prejudice in the state of Kansas. In fact, in Langston Hughes' novel *Not Without Laughter*, one chapter ends with the little boy saying, "Gee, I guess Kansas is not so much different from the South, is it?"

European immigrants faced different problems in gaining acceptance. The most immediate was the language barrier. Patrick O'Brien, director of the Center of Great Plains Studies at Emporia State University, recalls his family's experience.

My family had almost no attachment to the society that they had left, and their only interest was in becoming Americans as soon as possible. And therefore my great-grandparents would not permit their children to use German in the home. My grandfather told me often of the injunction of his grandfather that you were not to learn German, you were not to use German, you're an American now.

Some historians believe that each generation of immigrant takes a different attitude to its ethnic heritage. Homer Socolofsky of Kansas State University and Jim Juhnke of Bethel College in North Newton comment:

Socolofsky:

The first-generation settlers from the old country would usually preserve the language that they'd grown up with. Their children are generally caught between the old tradition and the new. They would go to public schools and they would learn English because that was the language of instruction. And their children—the grandchildren of the original settlers—might not know the old language.

Juhnke:

In that first generation, there are a lot of letters back and forth with the people who stayed back in the old country . . . an attempt to duplicate in the new world exactly what they had in the old. The second generation, perhaps, wants to begin to forget what their fathers were trying to establish; the second generation is more interested in learning the English language and in adapting to American culture. A third or fourth generation discover that they want to recover something that is rapidly slipping away.

If first-generation immigrants could not adapt fully to the society they had joined, many believed their children would become true Americans. It's a common theme in immigrant literature, according to Tom Averill.

In all of the lip service, for example, that Evaliz Becker (in *Shukar Balan: The White Lamb*) pays to being an American, she never learns English, she never uses the telephone. But what she thinks of all the time is that her children will be Americans, her children will be citizens, her children will learn the language.

But today, the American melting pot is not the ideal it once was. That's the theme of the next article.

But in Kansas land I'm going to stay,  
For all these things shall pass away,  
Sure pleasure follows after pain,  
Next Spring it's going to rain again.  
Oh, Kansas land, my Kansas land . . .

Folk song: *Kansas Land*

### *30. Trend to Maintain Ethnic Traditions Noted*

How did the Kansas immigrants become true Americans? It was not enough to live and work here, or to take citizenship. Becoming an American implied a change in life and attitudes as Norman Saul, a history professor at the University of Kansas and an expert on Russo-German migration, points out.

Especially clear I think in the 19th century was that being an American meant adapting. This was the message that came across. You run across references to how these Germans from Russia or Mennonites are becoming American, and that usually meant learning to speak English, dressing in an American fashion, adapting American ways.

Some were prepared to sacrifice their ethnic heritage, to leap willingly into the American melting pot. But adaptation to a new society poses a dilemma for every immigrant group. Tim Miller, of the University of Kansas Department of Religious Studies, explains.

There's always been a tension between becoming American, becoming melted in the great melting pot and maintaining one's particularistic ethnic background. I don't think we've resolved that problem today. Some people in the last decade or two in fact have been championing and emphasizing the great resources of ethnic diversity in the United States. I think that we have to understand that there is a terrific pressure in America to melt into the population, and by and large the Kansas immigrants have done that, but I think in many cases they have maintained some of their distinctive traditions even while joining the larger culture.

Some groups succeeded in preserving the best of the old world in the new. According to the Mennonite historian Jim Juhnke, the founding of a college or historical library helps to keep the ethnic tradition alive.

While partaking of the old, they are not simply a means of reproducing in America what we had in the old country. They are to some extent an adaptation of our heritage to what we find in America so that the ethnic identity—the sense of being a group—is a distinctively American phenomenon, as well as a reaction against, or an attempt to maintain one's boundaries against, the general American dominant white Anglo-Saxon protestant culture.

Should the ethnic diversity of Kansas be preserved? Patrick O'Brien, director of the Center of Great Plains Studies at Emporia State University, isn't convinced that it should, because undue emphasis on ethnic or racial differences may cause conflict.

It does seem to be the more that ethnic consciousness, racial consciousness, is encouraged, the more this contributes to the judgment of human beings on grounds that they should not be judged . . . that is, that they become judged as members of a group. I think that we should, as Martin Luther King said, judge persons only for the moral content of their character and for what they are personally.

Other humanists value the diversity of Kansas. Here are the views of Bill Koch, professor of English and folklore at Kansas State University, and Emory Lindquist, professor emeritus at Wichita State University.

Koch:

I always say this sort of thing is a validation of culture: we read about it in books, and see it in the movies, but when you go to these festivals and the people dress up and they sing their songs, dance their dances and eat the food, then you see it for real. This is a wonderful thing, to keep this validation of this ethnic pioneer period. I love it, and I go to all of them I can in Kansas—the Swedes and the Czechs and the Germans . . .

Lindquist:

Part of the genius of American life has been the fact of cultural pluralism. American culture is like a great symphony, and a great symphony achieves its goals through the contribution of various instruments. The lasting contribution of immigrants to our American life came through the identification of the immigrant with his culture, maintaining it, adding it to the treasury of American culture, enriching American culture and, in turn, having his own life enriched by the contact that he had with American culture.

Tim Miller argues that, without such diversity, America would be a poorer place.

I think that there's a great impetus in American culture for what we might call centrist blandness—a belief that we should all be the same and do the same things. We should go to the same recreation spots and watch the same television shows and read the same bland newspapers. I like to think that there are other alternatives in culture, and maintaining ethnic traditions is a very important part of finding a different way of living in America today.

The ingredients in the melting pot may be ready to mix, but they don't want to congeal. According to Norman Yetman, professor of American studies at the University of Kansas, ethnicity is a powerful source of personal identity.

There's a tendency, it seems to me, for people to reject the idea that they melt into a homogeneous American culture. And I'm reminded of the quote by Monsignor Gino Baroni, an Italian-American founder of the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs. He said: "I'm afraid my nephews and nieces will grow up to be like Wonderbread. No crust . . . no identity."





## *31. Railroads Hailed Kansas' Virtues to Attract New Settlers*

I never saw finer country in the world than that part of Kansas passed over by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe road. Corn waist high, wheat in shock, oats in fine condition, and vegetables in abundance.

This Indiana newspaper editor, like many of his colleagues, had been recruited by the Santa Fe to view the wonders of Kansas and relay them to his hometown newspaper. Such tactics were designed to attract thousands of immigrants to the state.

The future of the Santa Fe, like other western railroads, was tied to the prosperity of the land it crossed. Agricultural growth meant an increase in the produce and crops that the railroads would carry. And, the Santa Fe needed to dispose of nearly three million acres of land granted by the federal government in return for building the rail line through Kansas. The Santa Fe lands stretched west from near Emporia in alternate sections ten miles wide on either side of the track.

To attract immigrants, railroad companies aggressively circulated booklets and posters depicting the state's virtues.

Kansas is just in the right latitude for the farmer to make money; it is not cold enough to require much shelter or food for cattle and sheep or much labor or expense for fuel.

Kansas offers people exactly what they are looking for. The climate is the best in the U.S.

The winters are short, dry and invigorating.

None of these circulars mentioned the droughts, grasshoppers, or summer storms. Many of those people who did come ended up burrowing into the ground in their sod huts to escape the intense summer heat and winter blizzards.

The Santa Fe Land Department offered prospective colonists half-price tickets to take in the state's prospects. Traveling agents were sent across the East, Midwest and even to Europe to drum up individuals willing to settle the railroad's lands. To entice these colonists, the railroads worked with steamship companies and European land agencies. They appealed particularly to Scandinavian, British, French, and German farmers to consider relocating in Kansas.

The rail lines brought European newspapermen to Kansas and distributed advertisements by the thousands in a variety of languages. They also sent agents to lecture to European factory workers on the merits of Kansas.

The man largely responsible for the Santa Fe's foreign operation was C.B. Schmidt, their "General Foreign Agent." Schmidt's proselytizing adventures among the Mennonites in Russia alone would make a gripping novel.

When he entered Russia in 1875, he traveled by night and hid low by day to escape the czar's agents assigned to prevent his encouraging Mennonite farmers to leave Russia. He had many close escapes.

On the platform at the Virballen station [just inside the German-Russian border] a dozen or more tall frontier gens d'armes loomed up threateningly through the driving snowstorm in their long gray coats, spike helmets, and guns with fixed bayonets over their shoulders. The travelers were ushered into a smoky room for examination as to their business and scrutiny of their passports. Fortunately, I escaped examination of my person and the danger of discovery of my many letters of introduction, which I had strung on a tape and tied around my body underneath my clothes. If they had been discovered, my mission would have been nipped in the bud.

Schmidt's mission was successful. By 1883 more than 15,000 Mennonites had emigrated to Kansas. The Santa Fe built temporary barracks for them in Topeka and provided special trains to haul the farmers and their goods and machinery to their new lands. And the company gave them free land for their churches and schools.

Observers estimated that these Mennonites brought with them more than two million dollars worth of czarist gold coins sewn into their clothes. They also brought seeds for the hard red "Turkey" wheat that would transform the state into the nation's breadbasket. As Schmidt commented:

The Mennonites have made Kansas the banner wheat state by "plowing the dew under." They have made their section of Kansas a garden of affluence and abundance.

As hoped and planned, the "Garden of the West" provided the railroad company with enormous business. And, many years later, this wheat would return to its Russian birthplace in American ships contracted to supply the Soviet Union with the basic sustenance of life.

## 32. "God Save The Queen" Resounded in Runnymede

Runnymede, Kansas, was a bit of Old England on the plains of Kansas. Settled by a group of fun-loving British, the small town flourished between 1888 and 1892 and then vanished.

Ned Turnly was an energetic Irishman who bought 17,000 acres near the Chikaskia River, fifty miles west of Wichita in Harper County. He built a general store and post office and then publicized his venture in England, hoping to attract British gentlemen with capital to invest in his enterprise.

Turnly's original plan was to encourage farming and horse ranching, but an impressive number of businesses sprang up in the small community by 1890. Entrepreneurs established meat markets, groceries, a drygoods store, livery stables, a lumber yard, creamery, the three-story Runnymede Arms Hotel, and even an aerated water plant to make carbonated soda pop.

The "boys of Runnymede," however, were better known for their adventuresome pursuits. They held horse races, steeple chases, and shooting matches and competed in tennis, polo, and rugby. Their version of the English hunt substituted coyotes or rabbits for the fox.

A staunch English spirit sparked sporting events. In one tug-of-war event, "America" opposed "England":

Twelve muscular mastodon Englishmen were at one end of a heavy doubled rope and 12 giant American plowmen and blacksmiths with a strong hold [were] on the other end. The way the boys on both sides leaned back, plowed up the ground, pulled and made the rope jingle and crack with pain was a caution while the crowd filled the air with loud hurrahs. The American side won the test in two rounds and the sad news was cabled to the Queen who ordered the flag on the house of parliament to be placed at half mast.

Sporting events, celebrations, and the comings and goings of residents were all described in the *Harper Sentinel* by a colorful character, Robert Watmough, whose pen name was the Bird of Freedom. He and his exuberant friends were, however, occasionally too much for the locals. The *Sentinel* requested:

If when the Englishmen take the town next, they would leave the uncivilized American citizens a quiet corner, the latter would be everlastingly grateful.

The beginning of Runnymede's end occurred in May 1890, when a fire broke out in a livery stable. Watmough died in the fire. Some of the spirit went out of the community after the tragedy, but Watmough's death was only one factor in the decline of Runnymede.

Turnly's efforts to get a railroad line from Wichita also failed, as did his plan for foreign investment in land and railroads. The Farmer's Alliance and the People's Party, which spearheaded a new wave of populism in Kansas, led strong opposition to foreign investments.

Runnymede could not recover. The colonists quickly dispersed when the future began to look dim. In 1892, the *Norwich News* advertised the sale of all items from the Runnymede Arms, the once-proud hotel. Some of the residents returned to England; others went to Wichita or nearby communities.

In 1912, a former resident supplied a fitting epitaph:

If anyone should find the lost town of Runnymede, ask him to mark the spot with a stone bearing the words, "We had a good time while it lasted."

### 33. Beersheba—A Jewish Agricultural Colony in Kansas

Among the hundreds of thousands of Europeans who immigrated to America in the 1880s were Russian Jews fleeing economic, political, and religious repression. Most of the Jewish immigrants settled the crowded slums of Eastern cities. Some, however, found themselves on their way to the plains of Kansas to establish Jewish farming communities.

Jewish settlers had begun coming to the New World in 1654. By the late nineteenth century they were well integrated into American society. Some established Jews viewed the immigrants as a problem and an embarrassment. The newcomers did not fit in. They established separate neighborhoods and wore distinctive clothes. They were extremely orthodox in their religious practices and spoke Yiddish. And there were too many of them—the slums of New York and other large cities were already crowded with poor, Yiddish-speaking refugees.

However, Jewish immigrants were welcome if they were willing to become farmers. To promote the establishment of Jewish agricultural communities, the Hebrew Union Agricultural Society was formed. One of its leaders was Rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise, the founder of the American reform Jewish movement and editor of *The American Israelite*, a weekly newspaper published in Cincinnati, Ohio. Wise wrote:

There is but one class of immigrants of which there never comes too many to this country, and that is the class of agriculturalists because the area of arable lands is very large on this continent. . . . There are already too many people in commerce. . . . Immigrants should not come to this country unless they are ready to enter at once upon agricultural pursuits.

In the summer of 1882 almost every issue of *The American Israelite* carried descriptions of a colony to be established in southwestern Kansas. It was to be called Beersheba.

Beersheba was the first and the most successful of eight attempts to establish Jewish agricultural colonies in Kansas. The others were also located in western Kansas—in Ford, Barber, and Comanche counties. Plans were made to locate the Beersheba colony on Pawnee Creek about 22 miles northeast of Cimarron near present-day Kalvesta.

On July 24, 1882, 24 Russian Jewish families, a total of 60 people, departed from Cincinnati for their homestead land in Kansas. They arrived in Kansas City the next night, and the event was recorded by a local rabbi in his diary:

By the liberality of our people, baskets have been filled and put on the depot for the Refugees. . . . At 9:30 P.M. the refugees arrived, men, women and children.

However, the rabbi later noted that the colonists did not immediately continue their trip westward:

We now learn that the land they had in view was situated near Dodge City, a sandy barren district which is not a fitting place for farming. The Committee for that reason has resolved to leave the poor here until further investigation can be instituted.

Charles K. Davis, a native of Cincinnati who was traveling with the immigrants, described the week-long stay in Kansas City as a difficult time for the group:

Our expense at Kansas City was enormous. Every hotel keeper seemed to want all the money we had and overcharged us in every instance. . . .

Investigators reported that the land was, after all, acceptable. The party proceeded by train to Cimarron and then by wagon to Beersheba. When Davis arrived at Beersheba on August 11, the temperature was 110 degrees. Despite the heat, he was impressed with the country.

In his diary he records that his Sabbath dinner that night consisted of coffee, antelope steak, onions and bread.

Although the dust and grass was flying all over what we ate, I never enjoyed a meal so much in my life.

To begin farming the settlers needed livestock and implements. The Emigrant Aid Committee of Cincinnati supplied almost everything they needed: steers, cows, sheep, and poultry, as well as horses and agricultural equipment. The colonists were expected to pay later for all they had received.

The settlers made rapid progress in their first few months. By October they had sunk wells and every family had a sod house on 160 acres. Leo Wise, son of the Jewish leader in Cincinnati, wrote:

None can dispute their dwelling. None can dispute their possession, none dare move or disturb them. . . .

But by 1886 nothing remained of the Beersheba colony.

## 34. *A Jewish Farming Colony in Kansas and Why It Failed*

After his visit to the Jewish farming colony of Beersheba in 1883, a representative of the Hebrew United Agricultural Society of Cincinnati seemed confident of the farming abilities of the Jewish immigrants.

. . . the great question in which we all take such lively interest—"Can Jews become successful farmers?" is virtually solved by our Beersheba colony, and . . . that the Jewish race can become again an agricultural people is established beyond any reasonable doubt. . . . We have the satisfaction of knowing that our colony is a grand success, and an honor and glory to our cause. . . .

Beersheba was established by Russian Jewish immigrants in the summer of 1882 under the direction of the Hebrew Society. During their first year the colonists dug wells and built sod houses. They also built a sod synagogue, which may have doubled as a schoolhouse, and held services in it every Saturday and on special holidays. A.J. Meyers, an early resident of the area, recalled:

This synagogue as I remember it was a long building dug in the bank of the creek about 50 feet long. It was in rooms and I think they used one to dance in when there was a wedding. I remember being there to several of these affairs. When there was a wedding everyone was welcome.

The colony's religious leader was Rabbi Edelhertz, a tall, square-shouldered man who carried himself erect and walked with his hands clasped in front of him. His appearance was distinguished by his carefully trimmed beard, skull cap, and long robe.

The colony also had a superintendent named Baum. Appointed by the sponsors in Cincinnati, Baum was a stern taskmaster. Even though the colonists were at first unruly, they became docile under Baum's leadership. "Baum was a very tall man and walked very straight and proud and they all seemed to be afraid of him," Meyers recalled.

The future of Beersheba looked promising in the spring of 1883. The official from Cincinnati reported:

There are several Americans settled in the immediate neighborhood. These gentlemen speak of our colonists in terms of highest praise. These neighbors have always done all in their power to assist with their advice.



The Jewish settlers were particularly welcome as allies in the local farmers' conflict with the cattlemen, who drove their stock along a major trail nearby. Fearing for the closing of their trail, the cattlemen had tried to prevent the Jewish colonists from settling in the area. They were unsuccessful, but the cattle trail did play a role in Beersheba's eventual decline.

In the spring of 1884, the settlers leased part of their land to a company that wanted to enlarge the trail. They did not seek permission from the leaders in Cincinnati and the sponsors were enraged at this show of willful independence. To punish the colonists, superintendent Baum was ordered to sell all of their livestock and implements.

Charles K. Davis, a native of Cincinnati who had accompanied the group to Kansas two years earlier, bitterly protested the cruelty and injustice of the sponsor's action. He argued that the neighboring farmers had also agreed to the transaction and that the colonists were left with plenty of land to cultivate. His pleas went unheard.

With no means to work the land, settlers began to leave Beersheba. Some returned to their claims when they had saved up enough to buy a few cows and horses. By January 1886, however, there was little left of the colony.

Beersheba's failure was due to a variety of causes. The settlers lacked farming experience, they were plagued by high interest rates and a harsh climate, and the nearest railroad was twenty miles away. The attitude of the Cincinnati sponsors toward the immigrants also contributed to its failure. Impatient to have a well-ordered showplace, they did not provide the immigrant farmers with money, up-to-date advice on farming, sophisticated machinery or the freedom to make their own decisions.

The colonists might have naturally gravitated into other occupations. During the last year of the colony's existence, several of the settlers had, in fact, gone into business in the nearby town of Ravanna. Eventually most of these businessmen and other colonists settled in urban areas such as Dodge City, Wichita, and Kansas City.

Rabbi Edelhertz, the religious leader of the colony, remained in the Beersheba area. Perhaps he had become attached to the country. A man who grew up in Hodgeman County recalled what his father knew about the rabbi's love for the land:

He was intoxicated with the beauty of the prairies, sunrises, and sunsets, and the acres and acres of beautiful flowers. He would sit on the bank of Pawnee Creek at night and commune with nature and the stars.

## 35. *An Immigrant Woman Found Hard, Lonely Life*

In 1908 a woman came from Eastern Europe to Chicopee, Kansas, to marry an immigrant Slovenian coal miner. She immediately regretted her decision. Her story has been told by Mary Molek in *The Immigrant Woman*. The book is fiction, but all of its incidents are based on the experiences of the author, who patterns the immigrant woman's oldest child on herself.

The biography is not a conventional one. Few of the people in the book are given names. The author described it as "Bits. Snatches. Parts. A collage. A biographical journal. . . . Not sequential; not orderly, nor logical, nor predictable. . . . A patchwork quilt."

The mother is referred to only as the Immigrant Woman. The daughters are called the Oldest, the Middle one, the Youngest. The husband, who is seldom mentioned, has no name either. Despite the disjointed nature of the story, it is held together by these constant themes: the Immigrant Woman's high ideals, her loneliness, her self-sacrifice, and, most of all, her hard work.

Her new home in Chicopee, Kansas, was a treeless mining town—crude, ugly, and inhospitable.

If I had known, I'd never have come. Never left my homeland! The promises he made! The letters he wrote! The country I'd come to! This! This isn't what he promised me!

She wanted to call off the wedding and return to her home country, but she discovered that her husband-to-be, who had taken the mining job to pay his own passage to America, had been forced to borrow money from his landlady. He admitted to her:

No, I don't have any money. Half of the money—half of the money for your steamship ticket I borrowed from Mrs. Baska. She paid your way over, really. We can't go back! Not 'till we pay up our debts!

And so the wedding went off as planned. More debts were accumulated for a dress, hat, and wedding supper.

Soon the Immigrant Woman was expecting a baby, so the couple moved from Mrs. Baska's rented room to a tiny company shack. At that time between two and three thousand miners and their families lived in Chicopee. Most lived in company houses. The Immigrant Woman's husband had written, "In America everyone lives like a king." But the company houses were no palaces. She recalled to her children:

We were stepping into pools of dust, soil pulverized by the buggy wheels that made the tracks. I looked to the right and to the left of me. Nothing but company houses. . . . Side by side—like rows of boxes with V-shaped roofs. Unpainted wood, warped and blackened. Some of them had a pathway leading up to the door; it was made of rocks. Others had nothing. No trees. Scarcely any grass. . . . I shuddered. That place was your father's home, and it would be my home, too . . .

When the baby came, the Immigrant Woman was alone. No doctor attended her. The husband was working in the mine. Not even a neighbor was there to help. The child, a girl, survived. The father was disappointed by its sex. A boy could have helped in the mines.

In a few years a boy was born. By this time the family had moved to Mineral, Kansas, another mining town in the Cherokee-Crawford coal fields. They shared a four-room house with another family.

When the baby boy was three months old, he died from pneumonia. The mother, who was ill herself, was unable to care for him. No one lent her a helping hand. Even though she had two more children, both girls, she never recovered from the death of the boy.

The Immigrant Woman came to America alone, and she lived most of her life in spiritual and psychological isolation. At first she had hoped to return to Slovenia, but inescapable debt finally made it clear that she could never go back. Her mother's death cut her last ties to her childhood home. She gained no comfort from religion; she went inside a church only to have her children christened. She had few friends among her fellow immigrant families. Many of her neighbors were saloon keepers and bootleggers, and she was too proud and protective of her family to associate with them.

Throughout her life she sacrificed everything to spare her children from the trap she found herself in. To the Oldest daughter she said:

I'm giving you the chance. I do all the work you could do to help me, just to give you time for homework. That's your only job: homework. Some day you'll have to earn your own money. You'll have to do it with learning. I can't help myself. We're all caught: can't live and can't die. Can't live here and can't go back.

## 36. *How an Immigrant Woman Survived*

The Immigrant Woman described by author Mary Molek found life in America meant constant work and constant sacrifice. The daughter of Slovenian immigrants, Ms. Molek described in her fictionalized biography, *The Immigrant Woman*, what her mother endured to keep her family clothed and fed.

She did everything, every day, year after year, from predawn to dark. She never rested. She dug in the garden; she fed the chickens; she milked the cow . . . she slopped the pigs . . . she washed out clothes and heavy overalls on a washboard in a tub . . . she made all their clothes—even their coats; she made her own soap; she ground corn into meal. . . .

The mother also worked for pay as a seamstress to help get the family out of debt. She charged a quarter to sew a simple housedress; a tailored dress was a dollar. For herself she stitched a dress out of four flour sacks and wore it day after day.

Some times were particularly hard. When her husband was on strike or blacklisted from the mines because of his union activities, there was no money. Then she had to sell the garden vegetables, eggs, and butter and let the family go hungry.

Even the children worked for pay. When the oldest was about six, she earned a few pennies as an errand girl.

After work hours, a boarder would remove the top cover from his miner's pail and order the child to the saloon across the road. For a nickel, the pail was filled with draught beer. . . . The beer delivered, she would occasionally get a tip. But always at a price. That price was amusement. The tip, a copper penny, rolled across the floor planks to the most inaccessible spot. . . . The amusement: watching the child scramble for it against all odds, never giving up, even if a finger gushed blood across the splinters. A penny was a fortune, to be retrieved at any and all costs. Into the piggy savings bank it went, along with all the others.

The five saloons in the Immigrant Woman's neighborhood were run by miners. Tired of working underground, they had converted part of their homes into saloons. During prohibition the saloon keepers became bootleggers. There was little risk since the whole community was involved and it was easy to pay off the police. But the Immigrant Woman was shocked when her husband suggested that they "go into the liquor business." She told her daughters:

I wouldn't think of it! Never! Never! I couldn't stand the disgrace that would follow you girls for the rest of your life. You'd never, never live it down. Your father said that we can't live off what other people say. But I refused, absolutely. We'll live honestly, . . . even if we all have to scrub floors.

Living in the midst of the saloons contributed to the isolation of the Immigrant Woman and her family. She disapproved of the saloon keepers and refused to let her children associate with their children.

Her pride and high principles extended beyond disapproval of her neighbors, however. Even when financial pressures were at their worst, she refused to accept even 25 cents more than she had asked for sewing a dress. And she strongly supported her husband in his union activities. She refused to compromise or court the favor of those in power to get him a better position in the mines. She told a friend:

"No Rosie, that's one thing I won't do. No matter how bad things get. I'm not giving myself to that mine boss and that one and that mine foreman, just so my husband can have a better job. Never! Not if we all starve to death."

Despite all the hard work and saving, the family was still in debt when the oldest daughter graduated from high school in the mid-1920s. Two major setbacks had occurred: a cooperative grocery store in which they had invested \$500 went bankrupt, and their barn was burned down by neighbors who suspected that a child molester was living in it. The husband, who had tried to make a living farming, was forced back to the mines.

Ironically, it was because of the debt that the oldest was encouraged to go to college to become a teacher. The Immigrant Woman reasoned:

Maybe, just maybe, if high school was completed in three years, college could be done the same way; and she'd still only be eighteen when she was all finished. Then. . ."big money" from high school teaching could really pay off all the family debts and keep the family going on from that time forward. . . .

The plan worked. With the aid of work scholarships and loans, the oldest graduated from what is now Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. After three years of teaching, the debts were "paid in full. . . . The family had its freedom from the grocer's bill."

Many years later the daughter felt compelled to tell her mother's story. In her biography she comes to terms with her own rigid upbringing and shows how so many proud, hard-working immigrant women survived during the first two decades of this century.

## 37. *Radley Jolly Club Was Social Center for Kansas Mining Community*

Marcet Haldeman, banker's daughter, prestigious girl's school graduate, actress, and manager of the family banking business in Girard, Kansas, had little in common with the poor immigrant miners for whom she founded the Radley Jolly Club.

But she did have a sense of social commitment, and in 1915 started the Jolly Club as an organization for young people in the mining camps of Crawford County, Kansas.

Haldeman described this area of southeast Kansas.

. . . the miner's rickety shanty squats next door to the comfortable, well-built farmhouse and in the pastures the Italians' goats graze side by side with the Holsteins of native Kansans. . . men from twenty countries, speaking as many languages, mingle but seldom mix—in this county is to be found every brand of lawlessness from simple traffic in corn-whiskey to the most cold-blooded murder.

She was inspired and encouraged by her aunt, Jane Addams, the pioneering social worker who had founded Hull House, a settlement house in Chicago. She was also influenced by Emanuel Julius, whom she married in 1916. Julius had moved to Girard to work on the nationally known socialist newspaper *The Appeal to Reason*. This radical paper advocated better education, shorter working hours, and higher pay for miners.

According to the 1916 story in the *Topeka Daily State Journal*, Marcet got the idea of starting a youth club while she was at a movie.

The young banker found herself depressed when she realized that a picture show such as this was the only harmless recreation available for the miners. She must act and she did that very night. Miss Haldeman arose and went from seat to seat; urging upon one miner after another the formation of a club.

The young miners in the audience responded to the idea. Haldeman made plans to locate the club in Radley, a large mining camp about 20 minutes by street car from Girard. There she rented a hall above a "nickel show" and furnished it with books and magazines, pool tables, and materials for learning homemaking skills. Since many of the young people in the community spoke little English, the hall soon became an important center to learn and practice their new language.

Marcet was determined to understand the young people of Radley. She knew French and German, but decided to study Italian as well. She also tried to learn about the mines. In one of her letters, she related:

Last Sunday a group of my boys showed me through the mine. . . . I have always had a horror of tunnels, but I felt that I simply must understand the conditions under which my boys work.

No amount of study, apparently, could have prepared her for everything she encountered at the Jolly Club. Haldeman recalled a personal experience.

Last Wednesday evening, I had some of the girls in to sew on our curtains. . . . and as we were working away Mary Lewis said suddenly:

"Say, Miss Haldeman, you know Jo?"

"Yes," I answered as the picture of that vivid, wistful Italian flashed before me, "Yes. Why?"

"He killed a girl," Mary replied. "Do you care?"

It seems the boy, Jo, had shot the girl he loved and had been sentenced to 99 years in the federal penitentiary. After serving four years, his friends managed to get him pardoned. Marcet was shocked to think that this young person could have been executed for his crime.

He is one of the best Club members I have and whenever I dance with him and realize how full of vibrant, joyous youth and strength he is and then reflect that in many states the same verdict . . . would have meant death . . . my very soul cries out against capital punishment.

Marcet never seemed to lose enthusiasm for her work at the Jolly Club, even though she got little support from her friends in Girard and had no experienced older person to turn to for advice. However, the club was a success among the people of Radley. Eventually Haldeman purchased seven acres of land for a community center building, baseball diamond, tennis courts, and recreation grounds.

Gene DeGruson, curator of the Haldeman-Julius collection at Pittsburg State University, talked to some of the surviving members of the club.

There are still a lot of people who attended that Radley Jolly Club. Those that I traced down are now retired vice presidents of banks, that sort of thing. . . . They can still give us a picture of such things as the Valentines Day Dance in 1916. It meant a great deal to them. These memories are among their family treasures.

Haldeman insisted that she was not a lady bountiful, but was merely trying to help the miners develop a community spirit. What she provided was organized recreation and social contacts for the miners of Crawford County.





## 38. *Farming Required All of Immigrants' Energy*

With a few English lessons under his belt, Erich Fruehauf, a twenty-five-year-old German-speaking immigrant, left his home, his brothers, and his mother, whom he would never see again, for the overseas journey to Hudson, Kansas.

Reaching New York by boat, he stocked up for what he thought would be the short train trip to Kansas, purchasing two oranges and three buns. As Fruehauf stepped off the Santa Fe at the Hutchinson depot May 20, 1926, at 2 A.M., he felt far removed from his Czechoslovakian homeland.

I carried my luggage to the waiting room. It sported several benches and a lone, fly-specked lightbulb on the ceiling. . . . Not a soul around. I and the dim light above represented an island in the darkness of an unknown new world. . . . Out there in the darkness must be the farm where I hoped to find a future, the farm on which I had staked all I had.

Fruehauf had earned his Ph.D. in agriculture at the University of Leipzig in 1924, but post-World War I inflation and lack of family connections had hindered him in securing employment in his field.

Swallowing his pride, Fruehauf wrote to the cousin of a friend, Robert Hupe in Hudson, Kansas, to see whether there was agricultural work in America. When Fruehauf reached his final destination in Stafford, Kansas, Hupe was there to meet him.

Robert Hupe was born in Germany's Harz Mountains in 1863. At the age of nineteen he renounced his Prussian citizenship and sailed for America. Hupe was one of the first generation of Kansas farmers. Shortly after his arrival at the family farm near Ellinwood, Kansas, his uncle died, leaving him the only breadwinner. The rest of the family included his aunt, her twelve-year-old son and her very old mother-in-law. Together they lived in a dugout in Stafford County. There they survived the famous blizzard in the winter of 1886-87, burning dried cow chips, corn fodder, and ear corn to stay alive.

In the spring, Hupe hired out as a cowboy and was given a team of oxen in payment. Fruehauf later described how Hupe and his young cousin planted a corn crop by hand.

They opened a slit in the soil with a spade, dropped a kernel of corn in it and then covered the soil with their shoe. They were lucky to have timely rains that year. The corn yielded well; they had a start.

Robert Hupe soon became a naturalized citizen. In 1892 he bought his own farm with a \$1600 mortgage. He diligently built up the farm, planting fruit trees, establishing a windbreak, digging a well, and building a barn, corral, granary, and chicken house. Like many other immigrants, he saved for years to bring his boyhood sweetheart from Germany so they could finally marry.

Later, disaster struck. Hupe lost his wife in childbirth and his son and oldest daughter died of scarlet fever. He had little heart to take on more debts or more work.

Then, Erich Fruehauf arrived to help on the farm in 1926, taking some of the burden off Hupe's shoulders. Fruehauf married Hupe's daughter Hedwig and like Hupe, became a naturalized citizen as soon as possible.

Though both men were immigrant farmers, the challenges and rewards each expected were different. For the pioneer settlers and first-generation farmers, luxuries were rare. All their energies were needed just to survive. But when Fruehauf came to the Hupe family as a second-generation farmer, he was employed on an established 240-acre farm. The back-breaking work of the pioneers was over but life was still not easy. Planting and cultivating the corn and wheat, harvesting, threshing, and plowing the stubble were all exhausting work. The sweat flowed on hot summer days until all granaries were filled.

By the 1920s, the farm family still could not expect many of the comforts of modern civilization. Electric lights, gas, city water service, and indoor plumbing were conveniences that they had only heard or read about. They were promises of the future to work and yearn for.

But in the decades to follow, technology brought enormous changes to the lives of immigrant farmers and to the whole state.

## 39. *Progress Changes the Immigrant's Life*

The ring of the phone, the combine's whirr, and the tractor's rough hum signaled a new era of life for the settled immigrants in rural Hudson, Kansas.

The telephone changed a lot of things. Now eight or nine farmers could talk to each other without hitching up the buggy and driving to a neighboring farm. It brought easy access to the outside world. With a rapid turn of the crank that set off a long signal, the operator could make public announcements along the line.

The mill has a load of coal on the track. Cheaper direct from the car.  
Must be unloaded by tomorrow.

Witt's store has just received a shipment of nice cabbage for sauerkraut.  
Come and get it.

The phone brought the world a lot closer—sometimes too close. Each party had a special coded signal but anybody could listen, and they did. Some people couldn't let a ring go by without picking up the receiver. Making a date over the phone was like putting an ad in the paper.

By the late 1920s farming had become mechanized. For many farmers, combines and tractors replaced the harvest help hired for a dollar a day. The teenage boys hired in the past now went to high school and then moved to the city. Keeping up with the new technology also required considerable amounts of cash. The old pioneer policy "Pay cash or do without" was changed to the motto "Buy now and pay later."

Then Wall Street collapsed. Along with the foreclosures and sliding prices for farm produce, Kansas farmers like Erich Fruehauf were hit with another blow: the "black blizzards" of the 1930s. The government's demand for all-out wheat production, made possible by the new machinery, combined with low rainfall to create disaster.

Fruehauf remembered how the prairie winds whipped the bare plowed soil:

In the West where there was neither trees nor vegetation on the ground to slow down the wind, the rolling sand filled in roads, piled dunes into the fence rows, buried implements in the fields. The dust entered our houses through the finest cracks around doors and windows and through keyholes. It settled everywhere. Housewives hung wet sheets inside doors and windows to trap the dust. . . . Nostrils and eyes of our cattle were encrusted with mud. . . . A rabbit running

through the pasture stirred up a trail of dust. . . . Soon [dust clouds] blotted out the sun, leaving the county in an eerie dusk reminiscent of a total eclipse. . . .

In many cases, the old immigrant pioneers and their sons and daughters became the migrants of the 1930s. Many farmers of western Kansas gave way to the Depression and dust. Some traveled east; others to California. Those who stayed faced the dangers of dust pneumonia and worse. A reporter for *Collier's* magazine found only "famine, violent death, private and public futility, insanity and lost generations."

Fruehauf stayed on his Stafford County farm, and things did get better. The 1940s brought electricity and its benefits to rural Kansas. But the new decade also brought World War II, which affected everyone. Fruehauf recalled:

In my neighborhood the farmers of German ancestry became understandably concerned and apprehensive when the Government rounded up the Japanese population of the West Coast and took them to detention camps out of fear they would sympathize with, and probably aid the enemy. I am glad to recall that citizens of German background were never openly discriminated against in Kansas.

Fruehauf weathered the Depression and the war, but his dream of handing over his farm to the third generation was shattered when his son took a job in the oil industry.

In his fifty years on a western Kansas farm, Erich Fruehauf witnessed the change from producing everything possible for the family to commercial production of cash crops for the market. The land that could be homesteaded free or bought for \$10 in 1884 now brought hundreds of dollars per acre. The single-family farm began to give way to corporate farming. A poor but resourceful immigrant could probably no longer hope to own his own farm in Kansas.

## 40. *Strawberry Hill's Ethnic Heritage Lives Today*

The name evokes images of the countryside and wild strawberry patches, but Strawberry Hill lies solidly in an urban setting, near the business district of Kansas City, Kansas. The community has been the home of Slavic peoples since before the turn of the century. Its atmosphere is distinctive. The hilly streets are lined with small houses on narrow lots, and many of the houses are so close that you could lean out of a window and touch a neighbor's home. Low fences surround the well-tended lawns and flowers. Many church steeples are visible, particularly the spire of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. Croatian inscriptions on building cornerstones and some of the business names—Skradski's Funeral Home; Grisnik's sausage shop, for example—reflect Strawberry Hill's ethnic heritage.

In the 1890s, immigrants streamed out of Yugoslavia to America seeking a more prosperous life. Many Yugoslavs, particularly those from Croatia, came to Kansas City to work in the meat-packing houses. According to Bill March, University of Kansas professor of East European Studies:

They were being supplied through the Cunard line. They hired agents in Austria, who then went out and recruited young men, and women too, to come work in the stockyards.

These immigrants worked long hours for little pay—as low as three and one-half cents an hour. The stench in the plants was often overpowering and the work was dangerous. Accidents were common, and virtually nothing was done for employees who were disabled by them. Many of the immigrants knew no English. The long hours left little time or energy to study the language of their new country.

The immigrants first settled in a small area known as "the Patch," which was little more than a collection of shacks on dirty streets near the Fowler & Armour packing plants on the Kaw River Bottoms. In this environment, it might have been easy to lose heart, but the new immigrants maintained their ties to the church, the community, and their heritage. By sticking together, they found they could adjust and survive.

The population of the Patch grew and families started moving out when they became financially able. Then, the flood in 1903 destroyed many homes on the Bottoms, so people moved up to the Strawberry Hill bluffs. As Bill March observed:

Strawberry Hill was, in its first period, before the second generation grew up, simply a transplanted village. These people lived a village life. They would still buy pigs, slaughter them in the winter in the backyard, make sausage, ham, cure ham in the attic, make their own wine in the basement.

Attracted by the availability of hillside homes and several other ethnically oriented Catholic churches in the vicinity, the Yugoslav immigrants soon wanted to establish a church of their own.

Since most were Croatian, they wanted a Croatian Catholic church where they could worship in their own language and with their own traditions. They began building St. John the Baptist in 1900 on a hill overlooking the Kaw. Father Martin Krmpotich came from Croatia in the same year to become the spiritual leader of the new parish. In 1908 a famous Croatian fresco painter arrived from Zagreb to decorate the interior. Unfortunately, many of his beautiful frescoes were severely damaged when a fire broke out in the church in 1932.

Strawberry Hill rapidly developed into a cohesive, ethnic community with St. John the Baptist as its focal point. In 1925, St. John's Catholic Club was organized. Young people were drawn to the club by the gymnasium and the numerous athletic and social activities. They organized baseball, football, and basketball teams and played against other teams in the region. Many young men from Strawberry Hill, who later participated in sports on the college and professional levels, began their training on St. John's Catholic Club teams. The emphasis of the club was not only on athletics. Maintaining and strengthening the Croatian heritage were also vitally important, and the club sponsored many cultural activities.

The 1920s were prosperous years for the people of Strawberry Hill. The meat-packing industries flourished. More than ten thousand workers were employed by the plants in Kansas City, Kansas. With money more available, Yugoslav-owned businesses sprang up. In contrast to the untrained immigrants of a few years before, the Croatians became small businessmen and skilled workers. The hard times were not over, however, for the Depression loomed ahead.

## 41. *Strawberry Hill Still a Community of Immigrants*

For the Yugoslavian immigrants who came to work in the Kansas City meat-packing plants and who settled in Strawberry Hill, the Depression years hit hard. Although the 1920s had been prosperous and the immigrants were able to enjoy some of the prosperity for which they had left their homeland, many of them subsequently lost their jobs. The ones who kept jobs suffered severe wage cuts—sometimes as much as two-thirds of their previous earnings.

In one way, however, residents of Strawberry Hill were lucky. The sense of community they had nurtured over the years meant less suffering for them than for many people in the United States. Neighbors were generous with each other, and the various social clubs organized picnics and dances where people could forget their troubles. Families became skillful in stretching their pennies. They collected driftwood along the river and chipped ice in winter. They also collected grain and coal in the railroad yards. It was a common sight to see women trudging up the hill balancing the heavy loads on their heads.

World War II brought radical changes and renewed prosperity to Strawberry Hill. Jobs became plentiful in the packing houses and other industries, ensuring an economic security unknown to the first Yugoslavian immigrants. But the war took its toll. Many of the young men who left the Hill to fight never returned.

In the late 1940s, the membership of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church reached an all-time high of 760 families. The Hill became crowded with the men who had come back from war, married and started families. Some began moving away. Increased earnings, brought about by post-war prosperity, prompted more families to move into new homes with modern conveniences, not located in Strawberry Hill. The ones who left, however, maintained many of their ties to the old neighborhood, particularly their membership in St. John's Church. But those who left were changed by their move to suburbia, much as the rest of the country changed. As Bill March, professor of East European Studies at the University of Kansas, explained:

A whole change in lifestyle started to take place in all communities, particularly working-class, blue-collar communities in the United States in the period of the 50s, mid-50s on. There was a new opportunity, a new drive to move out of these communities.

The biggest threat to the community occurred in 1957, when about 125 homes in Strawberry Hill had to be razed to make way for construction of an intercity viaduct. Many of the dislocated people had lived in their houses for



years and were reluctant to leave the area. About one-fourth of them were able to relocate on the Hill, but many were forced to leave the community. "Cutting out a good chunk of the community accelerated the outward mobility and spread it into the suburbs," March said.

The remainder of the Croatian neighborhood is now small and threatened by zoning regulations and other ethnic groups moving into the area. Yet the sense of loyalty to the community and its heritage remains. And Yugoslavian immigrants are still arriving. Many of these newer immigrants, most of whom are skilled workers, live outside Strawberry Hill. But they help maintain Yugoslavian culture through contacts with churches and social organizations.

In many ways, the life of the community still revolves around the churches, especially St. John's. Church attendance is high, and some residents attend Mass daily. St. John's Catholic Club still organizes social and cultural events and attempts to preserve the Yugoslavian heritage, primarily through a musical group known as the Tamburitzans.

Made up of young people from St. John's parish, the Tamburitzans were organized in 1968 to keep Croatian music alive in Strawberry Hill and to give the parish youth something to do. One of the volunteer workers has reported that of all the young people who had participated in the Tamburitzans, not one had ever been in serious trouble. The group performs native folk dances and plays the tamburitza, a traditional Yugoslavian stringed instrument similar to a mandolin. They give concerts throughout the Kansas City area and have performed twice in Yugoslavia. The community enthusiastically supports the group. Many people selflessly volunteer their time and talents on its behalf. Parish women laboriously make and embroider the flowing costumes, while the dancers spend hours mastering their routines.

The future of Strawberry Hill is uncertain, but for the present it remains a cohesive, ethnic community. Many people share the sentiments of Matt Skradski, who owns the local funeral home and has resided in Strawberry Hill for many years. "I was born on Strawberry Hill; I've lived here all my life, and I intend to die here."

## 42. Prisoners of War Only a Memory Now

Only the water tower stands today at the former Phillips prisoner of war camp near Salina. Cattle graze silently nearby. The blocks that once supported the barracks are still visible but have sunk several inches into the ground over the past 40 years.

In 1943 Camp Phillips was a busy place. Every week trains appeared carrying German and Italian prisoners of war. The Army decided that it was cheaper to bring the prisoners to the United States than to haul food and supplies to them in Europe or Africa. Ships that had taken American soldiers to the European front were used on the return trip to transport prisoners far from the battlefields.

About 4,000 prisoners, all enlisted men, were detained at Phillips. There the atmosphere was relatively tranquil. According to one Army officer on duty, the Germans were hard to get to know but the Italian prisoners were happy-go-lucky.

Those Italian boys were tickled pink to be in the great state of Kansas. I can still remember those spring mornings when I'd stand on the side of the road and watch a truck convoy of Italian prisoners go roaring off to work. Those boys would be singing, playing mandolins, and just shouting for the pure joy of it. If they weren't men damned happy to be alive, well, they sure didn't act like it.

In contrast to Phillips, the atmosphere was tense at Camp Concordia, which housed 5,000 Germans, including numerous officers. Many of these prisoners were members of General Rommel's Afrika Korps.

Camp Concordia was conceived as a model POW camp. In fact, however, the environment was dangerously oppressive. One prisoner remembered that, within the barbed wire, "it was Nazi Germany again." The Nazis among them subjected the prisoners to stringent control. Many prisoners were beaten up for "unpatriotic behavior," and several were tormented into committing suicide. According to Judith Gensberg, author of *Stalag USA*:

The Nazi organization was similar to the Gestapo. Courses were organized in military and ideological training; personal conversations were monitored to detect dissenters. Many prisoners kept a club by their bed for protection and used buckets at night rather than dare the dark trip to the latrine. The Nazis controlled the camp university curriculum as well. They monopolized camp media, censored reading and film material, quashed any sign of anti-Hitlerism, and threatened violence to those who dared protest.

To counteract the Nazi influence, the Army moved forty-four of the Nazi leaders away from Concordia. They also removed Nazi books, encouraged church attendance and transferred responsibility for the education of the prisoners from the prisoners themselves to the Army and the University of Kansas. KU accredited many of the camp's educational courses.

The prisoner-of-war camps had smaller branch camps in areas where the prisoners would be available for farm labor. One branch of the Concordia camp, at Peabody, contained 150–200 prisoners during the war. Some local citizens strongly opposed the arrival and supposed coddling of the POWs. Others were thankful to have the additional labor, particularly during planting and harvesting seasons.

The farmers were warned not to converse with the prisoners and particularly not to discuss political events or the war. Most often, prisoners were fed like any other farm hands and worked 10 hours a day.

The Geneva Convention forbade overwork or abuse of prisoners. But their emotional disturbance from the war was still evident. If an airplane flew over low when prisoners were working in a field, they would automatically drop to the ground.

As time passed, both the farmers and the prisoners tended to drop their guard and their relationships became more friendly. The "education" that the POWs received while working and living in close contact with small-town America was probably more enduring than any course.

By late 1945 most of the camps were closed and the prisoners returned home. Later, a few came back to Kansas to live permanently; many have come to visit; others wanted to permanently erase memories of their years of imprisonment.

Now the empty stone guard towers stand looking out over wheat fields. That's as it should be, one Army officer commented:

I'm glad it's gone back to grass out there. That's what the land was intended for, anyway, not holding men who fought.

## 43. *Equality in Education Was Sheldon's Dream for Topeka*

Despite the lip service given to freedom and equality, education for blacks was inferior in turn-of-the-century Topeka. Although many white Kansans had fought to free the slaves in the Civil War, many of these same people objected to sending their children to school with blacks; some on moral grounds, others for economic reasons. Blacks were assigned to separate and usually substandard schools.

As early as the 1860s, the Kansas State Teachers Association had resolved to admit black children to public schools on the same terms as whites. Local newspaper editors argued that if blacks grew up in ignorance, they would fill the "station houses and jails." As one editor wrote:

A community cannot afford to allow any of its members to grow to maturity without education, and as a consequence, liable to fall into the vices and crimes which ignorance generates. It is a measure of self-preservation to see that they have opportunities for instruction.

Despite teachers' resolutions, the concern of editors and others, the issue of the education of blacks in Kansas received little attention before the turn of the century. The state legislature rarely dealt with the issue until 1879.

In that year, the legislature took an important step and authorized cities with populations greater than 15,000 to maintain separate elementary schools for black children and prohibited segregated secondary schools. Although smaller communities were not legally permitted to maintain separate schools, many blacks continued to attend segregated schools because of public pressure, the potential for violence, or as a matter of choice.

Several legal cases in the 1890s provided additional sanction for racial segregation in the schools. There was also little public debate over the merits of integrated education at this time. Despite these legal setbacks, blacks continued to seek an education. They sought to use their education to prove to the white community that they were hard working, reliable and worthy of equal treatment.

This tremendous faith in the value of education was supported in resolutions of the State Mass Convention of Colored People.

We resolve that all adults, as well as children, use all means in their power to secure an education.

No race of people can prosper in this country . . . who do not cherish and foster education and no uneducated people have ever prospered permanently.

Charles Sheldon, a white minister in turn-of-the-century Topeka, was determined to better the education of blacks. He supported their efforts to prove themselves to white society. Sheldon was a clergyman who preached the brotherhood of mankind and he tried to practice what he preached.

In 1893 Rev. Sheldon opened a kindergarten for blacks in a section of Topeka called "Tennessee Town," which was settled by former slaves who left that state after the Civil War. The school, a free library and reading room were part of his Congregational Church's efforts to aid the black neighborhood.

In this venture, Sheldon met a young black named Elisha Scott. Born in 1890, the youngest of thirteen children, Elisha lived by his wits. He sold coal by the bushel and herded cows. He later worked his way through the Kansas Technological Institute. Charles Sheldon helped, supplying him with clothes, spending money and encouragement.

Scott graduated from Washburn Law School in 1916, the only Negro in his class. Although the minister had hoped that Scott would follow his lead into the clergy, Scott's fame as a lawyer quickly grew. One of the first blacks to seek state office, he ran—and lost—as the Republican candidate for state attorney general in 1930.

Despite his growing wealth and prominent status, Scott never forgot the problems of his race. In court he fought the exclusion of blacks from Newton's swimming pool, from Coffeyville's kindergarten, and from movie theaters and schools in Topeka.

As important as his battle to gain racial equality, Elisha Scott fathered three sons who also became lawyers. The two youngest, Charles and John, stayed in Topeka and continued Elisha's practice. Building on their father's work, the efforts of the Scott sons were instrumental in winning one of the most important legal confrontations in the nation's history, the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

## 44. *A Matter of Justice— Brown vs. Board of Education*

Rocking boats was not Oliver Brown's habit. In fact, except for military service, he had lived all of his thirty-two years in Topeka, without getting involved in the NAACP or any other political organization. More than most blacks, however, Brown's economic situation was secure. As a union-member welder and military veteran, he was protected against economic reprisal and as an assistant pastor of the St. John's AME church, he was part of the black establishment in the state's capital city.

But, Oliver Brown did rock the boat. In 1951 he filed suit in the United States District Court of Kansas against the Topeka school board.

There is no sense in me having a daughter who has to go clear across town, walk seven blocks up a dangerous railroad crossing, cross a busy street, stand in the cold and rain to catch a school bus, when there is a school so close by.

Brown's feelings about his daughter's schooling were so strong that he walked with her one September morning to Sumner School, the nearby elementary school for whites. When Brown tried to enroll Linda in the third grade at Sumner, he was refused. He took his case first to the NAACP. Looking back now, Linda remembers being confused because she couldn't go to school there:

I couldn't understand why we could play with [our white and Mexican] friends all summer and then I couldn't go to school with them.

Oliver Brown was joined by the parents of nineteen other black children in this suit. The focus in *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* was on whether legally enforced segregation was permissible under the United States Constitution. In the 1951 trial in the District Court, the three-judge court decided in favor of the board of education. The judges reasoned that the black and white schools in Topeka were substantially equal in physical facilities, curriculum, and teachers' qualifications. But the Court decided that segregation did have a negative effect on blacks' motivation to learn. Yet because of legal precedent and the finding of substantial equality in programs and facilities, the District Court ruled that the black children were not denied equal protection of the law under the Fourteenth Amendment.

The plaintiffs for the blacks decided to appeal their case. The United States Supreme Court heard Brown's appeal along with similar cases from South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. The case was argued before the Supreme Court in 1952 but not decided until 1954.

In preparing their decision in this "case of the century," the nine Supreme Court justices asked the question,

Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race . . . deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities?

Unanimously the justices replied:

We believe that it does. To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

Thus the Supreme Court required that desegregation be accomplished with "all deliberate speed."

Former University of Kansas law professor Paul Wilson was the state's assistant attorney general assigned to argue the case before the Supreme Court.

For me, [this case] is less important for what it says about the law than for what it says about America. . . . [T]he greater significance of Brown is its reflection of the ability of America to re-examine its cultural patterns and values and to declare new principles that seem more consistent with maturing concepts of justice.

The Brown case was, however, only part of a larger picture. For example, about the time of the Brown decision, a black member of the Kansas House of Representatives set out on a vacation trip across Kansas with his family. They were refused lodging in motels and had to sleep in their car. When restaurants refused to serve them, they bought sandwiches or food in the grocery stores. Most difficult was the refusal of service station owners to allow them to use their restrooms on the trip. For blacks, these were common experiences.

As a result of the Brown case and following decisions, the law would no longer allow white Americans to humiliate blacks by excluding them or setting them apart. Despite these gains, however, discrimination has not ended. As Wilson has commented: "The problem essentially is man's inhumanity to man. And the law isn't very good at dealing with matters of that sort."

## 45. *The Black Church: A Cultural Institution in Kansas*

For two centuries the black churches in this country have been "the most important Negro cultural institution," serving as social, political, and educational centers for the black communities.

From the 1860s, the black churches in Lawrence, Kansas, have been central to the lives of the city's black residents, providing a common meeting ground and refuge for people fleeing to the new free state. The churches were a supportive network that helped members adjust to their subordinate status. The early membership of St. Luke's African Methodist Episcopal Church, for example, included escaped slaves, ex-slaves, and their children. Many reached Lawrence through the underground railroad system. A stone building that was the church's first site served as a hiding place for many male citizens, both white and black, during Quantrill's raid.

The histories of Lawrence's thirteen black churches are also filled with stories of gospel singing, evangelizing and fund-raising activities. Later, civil rights issues, political campaigns, and interracial projects unified the church members in common causes.

The memories of some of the older members of the black churches reflect the many activities that the church provided. One prominent member of the First Regular Mission Baptist Church, Ethel Moore, 93, recalled the kindergarten class organized by her church to help educate the young black children.

Our church had one of the first kindergarten schools. The teachers were people that were members of the church or the community. The kindergarten was an outgrowth of a Sunday school. On the weekdays they would teach you your alphabet and have a big board to teach you how to print your letters.

The church was also a social center. Mrs. Moore remembers with great delight the all-night barbecue in the early fall. In a grove near the church, the men dug a pit, burned hickory logs down to coals, and hung a pig on a spit over the fire.

On Sunday night after the night service they planned to spend the rest of the night over there building up the fire and putting the pig on to roast. The ones that were supposed to be the best cooks—I can remember them having the swabs fixed on hickory sticks where they dip it in the vinegar and seasoning and things, and brush the meat and turn it when necessary. It was an all-night job and one of the things the kids liked to do. It was a good legitimate excuse for staying up late.



For Mrs. Moore and her friends church work meant making money for the church. One of the money-raising groups was the sewing circle. They bought the church bell and pulpit furniture.

But for many church members the music was the best part. Edna Wallace, a longtime member of Lawrence's Ninth Street Baptist Church, remembered.

Back then they really sang and clapped. They never took lessons or anything like that. But some of them had wonderful voices. Back then we had church! Three or four of the deacons could pray, too. They talked to the Lord and really meant it. They just went to the ceiling and came back.

Many of the black churches' younger members have urged their church to play an active political role. This is not a new idea. Black ministers led the first Negro uprising against slavery and have long worked to better the lot of their people. Especially after World War I when blacks became more urbanized, the concerns of the church became more secular: less emphasis was placed on salvation after death, and more attention was paid to the blacks' economic, social and political problems.

Since World War II the churches have led in civil-rights activities and strongly supported such organizations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In Lawrence, blacks and whites joined in the Lawrence League for the Practice of Democracy to promote the brotherhood of all races.

Paula Holmes, a young member of St. Luke's AME Church, expressed her feelings about the church's role in politics.

The church—all churches—should be involved with more than the spiritual aspects of a person's life. Children who don't have the free meal program in schools, the voting issues, the housing issues—all of those kinds of things can be addressed by the church because people come together on Sundays, on Wednesdays, for prayer meetings, for regular worship service. You've got an ideal opportunity there to address the issues that are going on in the local community as well as on a national level.

Despite occasional strife within the church membership, economic hardship and racial oppression, black churches have provided a solid foundation for the black community. Reverend W. S. Sims, retired minister of the Second Christian Church in Lawrence, described the heart of the church's mission.

The thing that's going to make us come together and be in unity, one with another, we're going to have to do what Christ told us to do in the book of books, The Bible. "Come, let us reason together," He said.

## 46. *Kansas Potawatomi Preserve Heritage*

[The Kansas Potawatomi are] one of the most stubborn people I [have] ever met; [they are] firmly, bitterly, and successfully resistant to enforced cultural change, outside domination, and assimilation. So far as they [are] concerned . . . the great melting pot is a place to cook fry bread, not to lose one's identity in.

So observed James Clifton, a historian who has studied the Potawatomi Indian tribe of Kansas, the "Prairie People." Clifton goes on to describe the Kansas Potawatomi as the "most culturally conservative of all modern Potawatomi."

Originally from the Great Lakes region, the Potawatomi were gradually pushed westward to Kansas through a series of nullified treaties and forced moves and eventually were resettled on a reservation north of Topeka, near Mayetta. As early as 1855, one agent for the Bureau of Indian Affairs reported on their resistance to change.

The Prairie Band oppose, thwart, and defeat every measure of improvement. They are hunters, despise farming, and denounce those who cultivate the soil. This band arrogantly claims ownership of all the land and declares that the other bands have no rights here, nor to the annuities, they being permitted to participate in them only as a courtesy of their condescending brothers.

Beginning in 1861, the Prairie Band leaders rejected a government plan to divide into sections the community-owned lands. As a compromise they retained an eleven-square-mile area of their old reservation north of Topeka as undivided corporate property. Later, the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 gave the president authority, without the tribe's consent, to allot land to individuals and to make them U.S. citizens. If an Indian refused to select an allotment, an Indian agent would assign him one.

Conservative elements of the Prairie Band, under the able leadership of Wakwaboshkok, successfully resisted allotment of their land until the end of the century. But the impact of this act was to force the Indians to give up their hunting life and become farmers. Marty Kreipe, a member of the Prairie Band, commented on the effects.

In the old way you have a family that includes more than just Mom, Dad, and the kids—maybe Grandma and Grandpa. They live close together and lots of people watched after the kids. When the allotment came up, they took a grid and put it over the land and then you have to live maybe a mile away. And grandpa may live way over on the other

end of the reservation. And your aunt, who the child may call "Mother" and think is Mother is going to be way off somewhere else. It splits the families up.

Historian Henry E. Fritz agreed.

The Dawes Allotment Act condemned reservation Indians to poverty for many generations. It also deprived them of the power to make important decisions concerning their lives.

Ultimately, the reservation lands were divided not only among the tribal members but also among a variety of other individuals with dubious claims to the status of Prairie Potawatomi. By 1896 nearly a quarter of the allotments had been sold to whites. Today, some 17,000 acres—22 percent of the original reservation—are still held by Potawatomi. The other 78 percent has gradually been sold to non-Indians.

Many of the land recipients did not live on the reservation. They were viewed by BIA agents as more acculturated to the dominant society, more progressive in their ways. According to Kreipe:

On all the reservations the Indians that went along with whatever the white people wanted were progressive. And the ones that didn't were the troublemakers—"progressive" implies progress and progress to the white people is intrinsically good.

Frequently, "progressive" tribal members joined hands to support the activities of the Indian agent or the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The conservative element, on the other hand, has resisted change. These members of the reservation community have promoted participation in such traditional activities as the Dream Dance religion, the Native American Church, clan ceremonies, and shamanistic practices.

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 heightened tension between the progressive and conservative groups. This legislation was designed to end the practice of allotment, improve economic conditions on the reservation, reduce the power of the agent and the bureaucracy, and initiate a system of participatory democracy. Although these were goals of Wakwaboshkok and his followers forty years earlier, the culturally conservative leaders of the Prairie Band rejected this governmental attempt to change traditional ways.

Despite the substantial loss of land and the factionalist conflict, the Mayetta Reservation has served as a refuge for the Prairie Band. The effects of the conflict seem not to have spread beyond the political arena. Several hundred tribal members live on the reservation. New housing and jobs have brought others back home. Many Potawatomi also live in nearby cities.

Although many Kansas Potawatomi are poor, their culture remains unique and viable. The ties among these people are close even though many

of the young leave the reservation community to obtain education and employment. Older individuals often return to the community when jobs become available or when they retire. The Potawatomi still hunt, trap, and fish. They plant and put up traditional Indian crops such as corn and squash. Ancestral names are commonly bestowed on the young, and native religions provide a unity for the people. In the face of formidable opposition, the Prairie Band has held to its heritage.



## *47. Lebanese Established Supportive Network in Kansas*

The year was 1902, and the ship bound for America was filthy and overcrowded. As she tried to make herself and her young daughter comfortable, Martha Fersen must have had doubts about what she was undertaking. She was leaving her husband and other children behind in Lebanon in the hope of earning enough money in America to send back home.

It was unusual for a woman to come to America by herself to earn money; however, the economic and political situation in Lebanon was dismal, and many Lebanese saw America as the land of opportunity. Some left to escape oppressive conditions at home, while others intended to stay only long enough to make their fortune and return to native towns and villages.

After arriving in America, Martha and her daughter Mary managed to get to Pittsburg, Kansas, where they had relatives. Although Martha was pregnant and knew no English, she began to work as a peddler among the towns and coal mining camps that dotted the Pittsburg area.

Many of the Arab immigrants who made their way to Kansas around the turn of the century came as peddlers. Most of them, like Martha, were from Lebanon, and they settled primarily in Pittsburg and Wichita. Peddling was dusty, exhausting work, but Michael Suleiman, professor of political science at Kansas State University, explained the benefits.

One way to make money in a hurry is to peddle—that is, to carry clothes and material that you can sell quickly. Even if you didn't have the money, then you got that from somebody else who trusted you and gave you this equipment. You went out and sold it. When you came back, you returned the money and got more.

Peddling was a new line of work for the Arab immigrants. Most of them came from a rural background and had farmed small plots of land in Lebanon. Why, then, didn't they become farmers in Kansas, as so many other immigrant groups had done? As Suleiman commented:

By and large they didn't take up farming, because farming in this country . . . meant isolation. It meant that you had to be by yourself away from many people, away from the centers of cities and towns and so on. They're not used to that. They're very family-oriented people. They're very social people. Therefore, they wanted to be where people were.

When the Arab immigrants began peddling, it was not unusual for women to peddle along with the men. In the Lebanese community there was no shame attached. Working for the financial good of the family was the important thing (although Martha's particular situation was not typical). Women were able to work outside the home because families were close knit and lived together. Consequently, there was always a female relative around to care for the children. It would have been unthinkable to have babysitters outside the family. Everyone naturally assumed the responsibility of helping other family members.

Martha gave birth to a son in 1903, the first Lebanese child born in the Pittsburg region. She returned to Lebanon in 1911 with her son, but her daughter Mary remained behind.

Now married, Mary helped her husband, Henry Farris, run their restaurant, the "Busy Bee." The business thrived. Showing the generosity so typical within Arab families, Mary and Henry encouraged her brothers and sisters in Lebanon to join them, offering both financial and emotional support. Back in Lebanon, Martha again faced separation from her children, but agreed to let some of them come. Personal considerations were not as important as a chance for a more prosperous life in America.

Mary and Henry Farris became the "leaders" of the Lebanese community in Pittsburg. When Henry's illness forced them to sell the Busy Bee, Mary set up a grocery store next to their house. Just as her mother had begun peddling with only a few items, Mary opened her store with four bottles of milk, one stick of bologna, and one case of pop. Like many other Arab immigrants, she prospered. Mary ran her store for thirty-two years.

A proud granddaughter recalled Mary's popularity.

Every child who had ever come into the store . . . loved her and called her grandma. When she died in 1958, her funeral procession was the longest ever seen in Pittsburg. Everyone came to tell "grandma" goodbye.

## 48. *Lebanese Traditions Transplanted to Kansas*

Kansas seems an odd destination for Arab immigrants, but some found their way to its cities at the turn of the century. Many Middle Eastern immigrants who came to Kansas in the early 1900s worked as peddlers, walking from town to town with a small supply of goods. According to Michael Suleiman, professor of political science at Kansas State University:

Many of the people who came to Kansas really didn't start out saying, "Gee, I want to go to Kansas." They were peddling, and they were moving out West from the East Coast. You want to hit areas where you don't have other peddlers. And after a while, you come to a community, especially if you had come to it two or three times, and you figure, "This is not a bad place to live." So you settle down.

The family is extremely important within the Arab world; as soon as one person settled in a particular spot, others followed. The early Lebanese immigrants wanted their families with them and often helped relatives back in Lebanon to emigrate. Because of this unique pattern of migration, almost the entire population of villages would be transplanted to America.

Many of the Lebanese who settled in Wichita came from Marjayoun in southern Lebanon. Others from Marjayoun settled in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Every Labor Day weekend, Lebanese Americans from these cities hold a reunion. It's a lively social occasion with Arabic dancing, entertainment, and Lebanese food: a time for fun, but above all, a time to reinforce family ties that are so important.

For almost thirty years, non-Arab residents of Wichita have had the opportunity to literally get a taste of Middle Eastern life. The two local Eastern Orthodox churches, to which most of the predominantly Christian Arab Americans belong, host Middle Eastern dinners. St. George's holds its dinner in the fall; St. Mary's in the spring. The women of the church work for weeks beforehand, preparing baklava, cabbage rolls, kibba, spinach pies, stuffed grape leaves, and lamb dishes for the 3,000 people who attend each year.

Arab immigrants who first came to Wichita started with almost nothing. They were often uneducated and unskilled, with almost no command of English. Today their descendants are represented in almost every profession: medicine, law, retailing, and food services. The Ali Baba Bakery in Wichita, which makes pita and other specialty breads, serves a six-state area and is owned and operated by Lebanese Americans. Some have become active in government.



The Lebanese have prospered in America for many reasons: hard work, closely knit group support, a common religion, and shared values. They married within their own community and so extended their family ties. They did not suffer the isolation and loneliness that crushed so many other immigrant groups.

Sometimes the large, extended family proved overwhelming, as one young woman recalled.

I grew up and was raised in Wichita, and I always wanted to leave here. I felt smothered by having so much family. I didn't feel like I had my own identity. So when I did go away to college, I think I went through some kind of identity crisis to the point where I really missed many of the things I thought I hated. When it came down to getting married and deciding where we would live and where we would raise our family, there were certain things about my background that I really wanted my children to have, and that's the strong family ties—the emphasis on family. I wanted my children to know their grandparents like I knew my grandparents. That was a very special relationship for me—it was a highlight for me in growing up.

Although the Lebanese community has remained a tightly knit one, there have been changes. Young Lebanese Americans now marry outside their nationality and religion with an ease that would have been unthinkable to the early settlers.

In addition, over the last fifty years, a new kind of Arab immigrant has been coming to America. The earlier settlers were primarily Christian. They came with limited skills and little education, and they were unaware of the meaning of nationalism. The newer immigrants are predominantly Muslim. Many come as students, and in general, they are well-educated and have entered all professions. They are politically sophisticated and have helped the older immigrants to see that being politically active is important, that it is the American way. Through them, other Arab Americans have learned to view their cultural heritage with pride and respect.

Despite changes, the Arab Americans have retained certain qualities. "By and large, the things that have been retained are good ones: the emphasis on the family, the good healthy social relationship, the concern for other people," said Suleiman. They have adapted to American life very well, but Arab Americans have not lost sight of their heritage, their rituals, and their tradition.

## 49. *Mexican Americans Are Latest and Largest Immigrant Group*

The last major immigrant group to enter Kansas—the Mexican—is also becoming the largest. Mexican-American communities can be found in all parts of the state: in the Argentine area of Kansas City and Topeka's "Little Mexico" in the east, in Wichita and Emporia in the south, and in Dodge City and Garden City in the west.

The history of Mexican immigration to Kansas is closely related to the history of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad. Most Mexicans were employed at some point by the railroad. Their communities were usually located along the railroad lines. According to Jesus Ramirez, who came to Kansas to work on the railroad in 1916:

There was much work to do for the railroad. But it is never in the books or papers that the Mexicans built the railroad. And we had no machines, only hands.

As early as 1903, the railroad began hiring Mexicans to work in its extra labor and section gangs. By 1907, Mexicans were actively recruited to come to the United States to work. They were often met at border towns by recruiters who tried to entice them into signing with their companies by promising transportation, a home, and work. One eighty-year-old man recalled his experience when he arrived in El Paso in 1917:

There were two employment offices in which Mexican people come in. You sign your name and then they tell you, "All right, you stay here. You come back to this office every day for your meals. We have to have so many men to transfer you out to where you want to work." So you stay there about a week or maybe three days—it all depends how many men they needed. . . . When they have the amount of men they needed, they shooed them out to different places, different jobs.

At first, those who ventured northward to work in Kansas were the "solos," single men or men traveling without their families. Those hired as laborers on the extra gangs were on the lowest rung of the employment ladder in the railroad hierarchy.

They were used primarily on a short-term basis to work up and down the line on repairs and to lay new track. They were laid off every fall before bad weather set in and were then taken back to Texas. Many would return to their families in Mexico to wait until they could be rehired in the spring. Some would work in the sugar-beet fields near Garden City; others were lured by jobs in the salt mines at Hutchinson and Lyons, the meat-packing houses in Kansas City and Wichita, or the coal mines of Parsons and Chanute.

The men who found work on the section crews had a somewhat more stable existence than the nomadic track workers, although they, too, normally worked only on a seasonal basis. These crews were charged with maintaining a ten-to-twelve-mile section of track. They usually lived alongside the track. By 1912, however, the Santa Fe began hiring Mexicans to work year-round as laborers in the railroad shops and roundhouses. As a result, the workers were able to settle down and form more permanent communities.

At first, Mexican railroad workers were housed in boxcars beside the tracks. Boxcar colonies sprang up along railroad sidings in Topeka, Kansas City, Emporia, Chanute, and other cities. These were replaced by section houses, crudely built but better than boxcars. The men were encouraged to send for their families. One former railroad worker remembered the section house in which he and his family lived.

It was a cement house, but it had enough rooms, and there was enough ventilation, windows, doors. We had two small rooms and a long room. The bath was the same thing—a big washtub for everybody. We didn't have no electric lights—we had kerosene lamps . . . the heat was produced by the heaters that we bought and the stove in the kitchen.

Apart from the railroad recruiters, what prompted Mexicans to cross the border in the early part of the century? Robert Oppenheimer, professor of history at the University of Kansas, offered some answers:

Most immigrants came to Kansas seeking better jobs . . . In 1907, Mexico's economy was victimized by a severe depression, and many workers . . . were laid off. By 1910, the harsh conditions of poverty and the Mexican Revolution motivated many workers and their families to leave Mexico for at least temporary, if not permanent, shelter in the United States.

With the Revolution and the disorder that engulfed Mexico, many Mexicans cut their ties to the old country. Some no longer had relatives in Mexico or had lost touch with friends. As they began to put down roots and start families here, their interest in going back to Mexico dwindled. By 1917 and the coming of World War I, even more Mexicans were attracted to the United States. Jobs became plentiful because of severe labor shortages in the railroad industry.

But the labor boom brought on by the war was followed by the Depression. Although many Mexicans returned to Mexico at this time, the majority remained in Kansas. Professor Oppenheimer described the situation:

They worked whenever possible in industry or at odd jobs. More females and children worked to help support the family. In May, for example, children often left school as their families traveled to harvest

beets and wheat, and they returned to school in October to November. Finally, families, friends, and relatives often shared their meager earnings so that all would have something.



## 50. *Equality Not Yet Realized for Mexican Americans*

The status of Mexican Americans in Kansas has improved since they first arrived in large numbers around the turn of the century to work as railroad laborers, but equality has not yet been realized.

The Mexicans settled into boxcar colonies that sprang up along railroad lines in several Kansas communities. Later, section houses were built by the railroad to replace the boxcars, and the immigrants began moving into other housing nearby. This movement took place within a small area, and the more permanent settlements took on the character of Mexican villages.

A description of the Kansas City, Kansas, community, or "barrio," known as the Argentine could also describe the barrios in Topeka, Emporia, or wherever the Mexican immigrants settled.

Segregation was the rule, whether in residential, educational, religious, recreational, or social circles. Mexicans lived in a world apart as "urban villagers" . . . they remained in a Mexican setting and continued to function more or less as they had in Mexico. . . . They remained intensely loyal to their families, their religion, and to their native communities.

Many of the residents of one barrio were from the same area of Mexico. An estimated 60 to 70% of the Mexican Americans in Topeka came from Guanajuato in central Mexico. A large number of those in the Argentine were from Michoacan, also in the central region. This wholesale relocation helped cement the bonds of community solidarity.

Mexicans have been criticized for their apparent clannishness. People complain that many immigrants never learn English or try to assimilate themselves into American life. But, what did the Mexicans have to look forward to when they ventured out of the barrio? They found they were not welcome in many restaurants, schools, theaters, barber shops, swimming pools, and churches. For example, in Lyons, Kansas, Mexican Americans recalled that they were only allowed to swim in the public pool on the day the water was changed. "We had to swim like hell before the water drained out," recalled one former resident.

When they first came to the United States, most Mexicans were illiterate in English. Children starting school were given virtually no help in English and had to struggle along as best they could. One Mexican-American recalled his experience:

I remember starting the first grade at the age of seven . . . with nothing but Spanish as my first language. They detained me in first grade two straight years, and then when I finally got into the second grade, they passed me from the second grade to the third grade. And there again, I was retained another two years. And the reason why I failed all the time was by the time I learned to speak English, to learn the alphabet, to learn to read, to learn to write, I was just getting further and further behind.

Many Mexican children never overcame the language barrier, because most schools for Mexicans were segregated. In addition, many felt that an education or even a high school diploma would do them no good. They still wouldn't be able to get better jobs.

After World War II, some of the barriers began to crumble. Returning Mexican-American servicemen were no longer willing to remain outcasts in the society they had fought for. Mexican Americans also reaped benefits from the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Slowly, Mexican Americans were becoming more visible outside the barrio.

In 1968, Jim Martinez of Hutchinson became the first Mexican-American city commissioner and mayor in Kansas. In the 1970s, D.C. Garcia became the mayor of Garden City. Mexican Americans have become teachers, social workers, lawyers, engineers, government employees, and owners of restaurants and businesses.

Through annual "fiestas" in many communities, non-Mexicans get the chance to learn about the heritage of their Mexican-American neighbors. Numerous fiestas are held on September 16, Mexican Independence Day. Garden City, the Fiesta Capital of Kansas, has had a fiesta on this day for about 55 years. The Topeka Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe hosts its annual celebration in July. The public is invited to sample Mexican food and enjoy Mexican dancing and music.

Despite some strides, professor Robert Oppenheimer believes Mexican Americans in Kansas are still subject to prejudice and discrimination.

Generally Mexican Americans remain in large numbers in the lower economic strata of Kansas society. Until prejudices are understood and dealt with, Mexican Americans will have only limited potential of upward mobility in Kansas, and as they become our largest ethnic and racial minority, their integration will become an increasingly more important issue with which we must deal.

## 51. *Ethnic Festivals Flourish in Kansas Communities*

Whether in farm towns, colleges or cities, ethnic festivals have the same function: to bring people together in a community project and provide them with a link to a common history.

Many communities in Kansas that were founded about 100 years ago by immigrants celebrate their ethnic heritage in much the same way that most Kansans celebrate their American heritage every Fourth of July and at such typically American festivals as county fairs and rodeos. So in addition to cotton candy and hot dogs, John Philip Sousa and bluegrass, the festival-goer in this state can find Russian borsch, German zweiback, Czech polka bands, and Serbian tamburitans.

Bethel College, founded by Swiss and German Mennonites from Russia in the 1870s, holds an annual two-day festival. It serves as both a college homecoming and heritage celebration for the Mennonites around Newton. Weekend activities include craft demonstrations, art exhibits, historical pageants, a learning fair, and worship services.

The highlight for many visitors is the noon meal on Saturday. More than a thousand people are served traditional Swiss, German, and Russian food including a double bun called zweiback, borsch (a vegetable soup), sausage, rye bread, and fruit soup called cherry mus.

The nearby community of Goessel, population 500, celebrates its Mennonite heritage in its July Country Threshing Days. A visit to the historic Alexanderwohl Church, named after a village in Russia, and a tour of the six-acre Mennonite Heritage Complex built in 1974 are features of the two-day festival. Farming and rural skills are celebrated at this fair, even though by 1969 only about six percent of the people living around Goessel still made their living solely by farming.

Another college event that combines fall homecoming with an area-wide ethnic celebration is the Oktoberfest at Fort Hays State University. Like the festival at Newton, the Hays Oktoberfest features outside display booths and traditional German Russian food. Hays and the surrounding small towns— Catherine, Munjor, Pfeifer, Schoenchen, Liebenthal and Victoria (originally Herzog), were founded in the mid-1870s by the Volga Germans— German Catholics who emigrated from Russia.

During this country's 1976 bicentennial year the people in each of these villages also celebrated the centennial of their ancestors' arrival in Kansas. The climax of the week-long observance was a three-hour pageant called "Exodus to Freedom," depicting the religious persecution these people



suffered before coming to America and the difficulties they encountered in farming the Kansas prairie.

Kansas also has a Czech festival. In the 1870s, Czech emigrants settled around Wilson. Each July this farm town of 900 hosts as many as 15,000 visitors during the After Harvest Czech Festival. The town comes alive with a parade, carnival, and continuous Czech music and dancing. Particularly colorful are the Wilson Czech dancers—young people who do traditional dances like the Flying Dutchman. Several local restaurants serve noon meals of traditional Czech food, and thousands of nut sugar cookies called “Kolaches” are sold singly and by the dozen.

Not all the ethnic festivals in Kansas are rural or small-town celebrations. In Topeka, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church sponsors a week-long Mexican fiesta.

The Mexican American community was established around the turn of the century when many men found work there with the railroad. Since then, the community has spread far beyond its old barrio. Still, the Mexican Americans celebrate their heritage in a fiesta which includes carnival rides, Mariachi and Conjunto bands, and lots of chili, tacos, tostados, and burritos.

In the Strawberry Hill section of Kansas City, Kansas, St. George's Orthodox Church sponsors a Serbian fair held two days in late November. St. George's was established in 1906 by Serbs who had emigrated from Yugoslavia to work in the meat-packing houses around Kansas City. Today, the Serbian population is more dispersed, but the church remains a cultural center. The fair, named “Visit a Village in Serbia,” includes a tour of the church, folk dancing, traditional tamburitza music, and the sale of Serbian pastries and crafts.

The Swedes of Lindsborg celebrate their heritage every other year in their Svensk Hyllningfest. Historian Emory Lindquist, a Lindsborg native, explains:

It reaches into various segments of the community. It brings in young people and older people. The whole scheme is attached to the origin of the community. It has been a vehicle for perpetuating certain aspects of immigrant life that otherwise might have disappeared. It has introduced a very lively, contemporary interest in the heritage and is truly representative of a legacy that has made a contribution to the American scene.

The Svensk Hyllningfest is perhaps the best known of all ethnic festivals in Kansas. Lindquist's description of it could apply to each of the ethnic festivals in the state.

## 52. *Svensk Hyllningfest and Kansas Folklife Festival Celebrate Ethnic Arts*

One of the oldest and perhaps best known ethnic celebrations in Kansas is the Svensk Hyllningfest, a Swedish festival that has been held in Lindsborg every other year since 1941. Like the fall festivals at Newton and Hays, this event is held in connection with college homecoming events—the parade, football game, and alumni get-togethers of Bethany College.

Lindsborg has a strong Swedish tradition, celebrated in the religious services, music, folk dancing, arts, crafts, and food of the Svensk Hyllningfest. One of the most popular events of the three-day festival is the smorgasbord served to more than 900 people. Prepared and served by local townswomen according to standard Swedish-American recipes, it includes such delicacies as limpa (spiced rye bread), smoked salmon, pickled herring, ostaka (cheese pudding), and fruit soup.

Folk dancers dressed in traditional red stockings, dark shirts or knee pants, white peasant blouses, and colorful vests are also festival favorites. The high school group—the Lindsborg Swedish Dancers—perform intricate routines; the grade schoolers perform simpler folk games and dances.

Even visitors from Sweden are fascinated by the festival activities. A group of native Swedish dancers who came to the festival in 1979 found that some of the customs observed are from 100 years ago—known to modern Swedes only from books.

Emory Lindquist, a native of Lindsborg and past president of Bethany College and Wichita State University, explained the origin of the festival.

The name of the festival is derived from the Swedish word "hyllning." You honor, you recognize, you esteem someone if you use the word "hyllning." So the Swedish festival is a tribute to the Swedish immigrants and their contribution to the great symphony of American life.

Lindsborg was founded in 1869 on land purchased by a Swedish colonizing organization committed to the doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Since the early days, the Lutheran church and its leaders have been important in Lindsborg history.

Pastor Olof Olsson, the first minister of Bethany Lutheran church, came from Sweden in 1869 to help found the town. In addition to being a distinguished preacher, he was the first member of the Kansas House of Representatives from McPherson County. His successor at Bethany Lutheran, Carl Swensson, founded Bethany College in 1881. In the next year, Swensson

established what is now a well-known Lindsborg tradition—the choral presentation of Handel’s “Messiah” each year at Easter.

The Swedes who settled Lindsborg were loyal Americans who appreciated the religious freedom and economic opportunities they found here, but they also were loyal to their Swedish heritage. In 1887 Swensson wrote:

We do not wish, even if it were possible, which it is not, to build a little new Sweden in this country. That would be as childish as it would be wrong, but on the other hand, we do not wish to become Americanized at the turn of the hand.

Swensson must have expressed the feeling of the majority of Swedes, for they continued to stick together and use their native language well into the twentieth century. A Swedish-language newspaper, the *Lindsborg Posten*, was published continuously from 1897 to 1930. The Bethany Lutheran Church used only Swedish in its services until 1928, when it began having one service in English and one in Swedish. Church minutes were written in Swedish until 1934. It was not until 1941, the year the Svensk Hyllningfest was established, that English was used exclusively for the major morning church services.

Many of the Swedish traditions observed in Lindsborg and in festivals such as the Svensk Hyllningfest are examples of cultural revivalism, attempts to reintroduce customs of the first-generation immigrants. For example, since the early 1960s, two traditional Swedish holidays have been publicly observed: the St. Lucia celebration, December 12, which marks the beginning of the Swedish Christmas season, and the Midsummer Day celebration, June 20. These festivals involve costumes, pageants and dancing, but are much smaller affairs than the Svensk Hyllningfest.

A unique celebration of ethnic arts is the Kansas Folklife Festival in Topeka. One of its main goals is to help perpetuate traditions that still survive in unbroken continuity from the past.

Held each September since 1979, it is a non-commercial event sponsored by the Kansas State Historical Society. Joseph Snell, executive director of the festival, describes it as

a celebration of the many cultural traditions of Kansas as seen, heard, and tasted through the music, dance, song, crafts and food of ethnic groups across the state. The rich sampling located here on the festival grounds represents a wide range of traditions brought to the state by immigrants, carefully nurtured and passed on from generation to generation.

This gathering of artists and performers in the state capital includes representatives from several communities: tamburitza orchestras from

Strawberry Hill, a Czech brass band from Wilson, a Volga German dance group from the area around Hays—to name a few.



## 53. *Kansas' First Colleges Founded by Churches*

America's first colleges and universities—Harvard, Dartmouth, Yale, and Princeton among them—were founded not by state legislatures or colonial governments but by churches. To the German Mennonites who settled in central Kansas in the 1870s and 1880s and other early European immigrants, modern-day Kansans owe a debt of gratitude. They founded the state's first colleges.

Today, a total of more than 10,000 students are enrolled in Kansas' 20 private church-related colleges, most of which were founded one hundred or more years ago.

The first colleges in Kansas were established before statehood in 1861. Baker University in present-day Baldwin City was founded by Methodists in 1858, five years before its larger neighbor 15 miles to the north, the University of Kansas, was founded by the state legislature.

Some of the earliest colleges in Kansas were founded as mission schools for Indians. St. Benedict's, now called Benedictine College in Atchison, was founded by Catholic missionaries in 1859 as a mission school. Present-day Ottawa University grew out of a mission school established with a grant of 20,000 acres of land to the Ottawa Indians in the 1860s.

It was, however, the arrival of large numbers of immigrants from Europe in the 1870s and 1880s that hastened the birth of several more church-related schools.

Typical of these was Bethel College founded by German Mennonites in 1887. Offering free land and financial assistance, Newton city officials persuaded the Mennonites to move their small academy from nearby Halstead and expand it. The officials clearly saw the advantages—educational, cultural and economic—of having a college in their community.

Another example of a college founded in the wave of European immigrants arriving in Kansas in the late 1800s is Bethany College. One young man in particular was responsible for founding Bethany College. Carl Swensson, 24-year-old pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church, thought a Christian education was essential to the well-being of the Swedish community of Lindsborg.

I saw how God had blessed our settlements in this beautiful and liberty loving state. But how our children and youth should obtain the necessary Christian education was a question not easily answered. Without the elevating influence exerted by a good school to mold the

character of students and people, we would clearly be in danger of sinking into worship of the almighty dollar and materialism.

Colleges like these and Kansas' other 15 private church-related schools have contributed to the cultural, religious, and economic life of their own communities and the state as well.

Bethany College's annual Easter Week Messiah Festival is an example of how this college contributes to Kansas. More than 400 voices from the college and Lindsborg area come together to sing Handel's "Messiah," a tradition launched more than 100 years ago by Carl Swensson and his friends.

Kansas' private colleges have also attracted and educated many of the state's most famous artists and successful businessmen. The term "private" serves only to distinguish them from "public" universities, which are supported for the most part by public monies. All of Kansas' private colleges have interdenominational enrollments, and no church affiliation is required for admission. They contribute to the economic well-being of their communities, adding some \$50 million each year to the Kansas economy. Dependent on their own resources, Kansas' church-related colleges use virtually no tax dollars to pay their bills.

Today, these colleges offer students a truly different option—an educational environment in a small community with close student-teacher relationships—and possibly even a link with their ethnic heritage.

Emory Lindquist, a native of Lindsborg, former Bethany student and president, and emeritus president of Wichita State University, said the state's private colleges contribute to educational and cultural plurality:

I feel there would be a real danger of a lower common denominator prevailing in higher education if these alternatives were not possible. Moreover, private colleges, by their very nature, are communities less populated than public universities. This in turn affords some opportunities for students to share directly in the community life of a college campus.

Dr. Lindquist sees not only a history of accomplishment but also a future of promise for private higher education in Kansas:

I am very encouraged by the vitality as well as by the achievement of private colleges in our time. This is a verification of the fact that American democracy can be enriched by providing alternatives in the field of higher education.

## *54. Haskell Indian Junior College Continues Cultural Traditions While Bolstering Curriculum*

They come from more than 100 tribes located all over the United States to attend Haskell Indian Junior College in Lawrence, Kansas, the only junior college operated by the federal government for Native Americans. The government founded Haskell as a boarding school for young Indians in 1884 to compel the Indian's assimilation into white society. The regulations of the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1884 gave clear instructions to BIA agents:

Agents are expected to keep the boarding schools filled with Indian pupils, first by persuasion; if this fails, then by withholding rations or annuities or by such other means as may reach the desired end.

In 1883 Congress appropriated money for the establishment of three boarding schools. Through the influence of a Kansas congressman, Dudley C. Haskell, chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Indian Affairs, one of the schools was located in Lawrence. Congressman Haskell succeeded in persuading his fellow lawmakers that one of the schools should be built in Lawrence because of its central location to the Indian reservations in the Midwest.

Eager to have the school located in their community, the people of Lawrence raised \$10,000 for the purchase of 280 acres southeast of town and donated it to the federal government as a site for the school. In its first year of operation in 1884, the school offered its students a regimen of agricultural training and labor. In 1890, the school's name was changed from the United States Indian Industrial Training School to Haskell Institute, in honor of Congressman Haskell.

For many of its students, living at Haskell was a traumatic cultural experience. Indian ways were discouraged. Students were required to wear uniforms and the boys were given close-cropped haircuts. They woke up early in the morning to the sound of reveille and went to bed at night to the sound of taps.

The granddaughter of a student in 1904 recalled her grandmother's experiences.

Anything Indian was discouraged. Once my grandmother was caught speaking Potawatomi. They had her write "I will not talk Indian" several hundred times on her slate.

In succeeding years, Haskell began to offer courses in teacher training, business, and trades, leading to a high school degree. It was also known for its



music program. The Haskell band, choir, and orchestra were invited to perform in cities like Chicago and St. Louis.

In the 1920s, Haskell Institute became well-known throughout the United States for its athletic teams and famous athletes. The Haskell football team played competitively with opponents such as Notre Dame, Michigan, and the University of Kansas. In its first 34 years, the team lost only three home games. Among the players were John Levi, an All-American; Rabbit Weller; Buster Charles; and Tiny Roebuck—all famous in their time. In fact, Levi and Weller have been inducted into the American Indian Athlete Hall of Fame as well as the Kansas All-Sports Hall of Fame.

Like most of America's schools and colleges, Haskell underwent dramatic changes in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1970, the school's name was officially changed from Haskell Institute to Haskell Indian Junior College. The curriculum was bolstered so that students could transfer to four-year colleges and universities after completing two years at Haskell.

The president of Haskell Indian Junior College and many of the faculty members are also Native Americans. Haskell is well equipped to teach the languages and culture of Native Americans. Among the school's academic units is the American Indian Study Division, offering courses in the languages of the Navajo, Lakota, and Cherokee, as well as Indian art and history. Rob Daugherty, chairman of the division, described the curriculum:

We offer American Indian studies as cultural enrichment to educate one tribe in the ways of other tribes. In some of the grassroots areas at home, this isn't taught anymore.

Haskell students no longer have to fear punishment for speaking an Indian language or exhibiting traditional culture.

In many respects, Haskell Indian Junior College resembles all other junior colleges in the United States; however, many of its students still face dramatic cultural changes when they arrive on the Lawrence campus. To deal with these challenges, Haskell offers its students extensive instruction in skills to help them cope with college courses and experiences.

Though many things have changed at Haskell since its founding in 1884, certainly one quality has remained constant: an unshakable pride among its students in their ethnic heritage.

## 55. *Illegal Immigrants Part of Kansas Ethnic Mix*

Each year the United States admits 750,000 immigrants. Others, perhaps many times the legal number, enter the country illegally; most of them come from Mexico. Once across the border thousands of the illegal immigrants head for Kansas, where they hope a job is waiting for them.

Robert Oppenheimer, professor of history at the University of Kansas, described the population of illegal immigrants in Kansas:

We have no way of counting who they are or when they come. In the mid-1970s, for example, as many as 10,000 migrant workers moved into the five or six southwestern counties of Kansas to do farm labor. Most of them are illegal aliens. In Kansas City there are at least 100 or more illegal aliens who come into the city looking for work and are counted every month by various agencies.

Supporters of illegal immigration argue that these people are doing jobs that native Americans are unwilling to take on. In Kansas, illegal immigrants may be found working in irrigated agriculture in the southwestern part of the state, in Kansas City restaurants, and in Garden City or Liberal meat-packing plants.

One Los Angeles garment cutter commented on the importance of the illegal alien in his line of work:

I know a little clothing factory where they rounded up 21 illegal aliens one night and sent them back to Mexico. The next week nineteen of them were back working in the same place. Of course they're going to keep coming. Without the Mexicans, our factory would have to shut down. If they don't find a way to get across, we'll help them.

Kansas has a similar situation according to Professor Oppenheimer

Kansas employers, particularly the employers in the southwest, prefer to have these kinds of people available for various reasons. One is that they create an excess of labor, which means that you can have a lower wage fare or keep the minimum in certain kinds of jobs for which you don't want to have to pay poor people high amounts of money. You can't ask a person for citizenship papers; you can't ask a person if he is a legal resident of the United States. It's against the law. The law requires that you can't have illegal aliens, but at the same time it also requires that you cannot ask people if they are aliens.

Critics of employing illegal aliens argue that they are depriving others—particularly young blacks and Chicanos—of work and are straining the nation's resources in difficult times. An official of the United States Labor Department pinpointed the problem.

Such employment [of illegal aliens] is concentrated primarily in the service, trade and other low wage industries and at the lower end of the occupational scale. Here they provide serious competition to American citizens who are unskilled and uneducated. These aliens depress wages and impair working conditions and increase the burden on American taxpayers through additional welfare costs. They constitute for employers an unskilled group, ripe for exploitation—aggressive, enterprising workers with low wage demands and few if any complaints about working conditions.

Professor Oppenheimer argued that dealing with the illegal alien would be costly.

Basically the state prefers a status quo: we won't pay attention to you if you don't pay attention to us. It costs a considerable amount of money. Once the person has been taken into custody, the law requires that he be returned to the country of origin. I don't think the state of Kansas is likely to spend the money to round them up, keep them, house them, feed them and then send them back to Mexico.

Given this difficult situation, what are the prospects for these people? Generally, for the poor people in the economy it makes it very difficult, of course, to force any kind of effort to improve labor conditions for people at the lower end of the scale, whatever their ethnic origin and background. They become in a sense a continuing immigrant force that was brought into the United States 100 years ago to have the same function. A certain significant amount of alienation exists between these new immigrants and other people at the lower end of the scale—whether they've been here in the United States for fifty years and are not citizens of the United States, or whether they are of Mexican ancestry, or black or white. The reason these people are coming is because the Mexican economy is so poor. They come largely because there is no alternative for them in Mexico.

In assessing the impact of this immigrant group, it is important, Professor Oppenheimer asserted, not to confuse the illegal immigrant with the Mexican-American community already in residence.

There's a difference between these new immigrants and the Mexican-American community, or Chicano community, which has been here for three or four generations and whose great activity is to really become a part of Kansas society. But even many of these individuals who have been here a long time still feel alienated and marginal in Kansas society. The Mexican-Americans watch the new people coming

in with no language abilities, no skills. Many of them come from a rural atmosphere and have difficulty living in an urban area. These new immigrants are as alien to the Mexican-American community as they are to the rest of the Anglo population.



## 56. *Present-Day Immigrants Contribute to Kansas' Ethnic Variety*

Kansas, largely settled by immigrants some one hundred years ago, continues to attract new arrivals, but offers them a much different life than found by their predecessors. No longer is the land wide open to settlement; no longer is government committed to the ideals of laissez-faire or society to turn-of-the-century individualism.

Early immigrants to America often crossed the ocean in a ship's steerage, risking death at sea and from disease. Then they traveled inland by rail and covered wagon. Some of today's arrivals enjoy the comforts of jets and ocean liners, while others come by bus or on foot. Some leave to escape economic hardship, political chaos, or persecution in their native countries. Others come to join relatives or because they think life is better in this country.

American TV and movies create impressions abroad of wealth, of trendy clothes, opulent living, two-car garages, and gadget-filled kitchens. But things were different in the past. Even with its wide-open prospects and promises, Kansas in the early twentieth century could be a rough and complex place. Gene DeGruson of Pittsburg State University described the population mix in his hometown.

The 1900 census delineated something like 51 different nationalities. There was a population of close to 12,000 in Pittsburg at the time. So many of the coal camps would be made up of a single nationality. Saturday nights were a free-for-all. The French would fight the Germans, who would fight the Austrians, and so forth. There was a great deal of animosity among the various ethnic groups. It wasn't the pretty picture that you so often get—of coming to America and melting together in one great group.

The risk for today's immigrants is less than for their predecessors. The adjustment process is made easier by housing and rent subsidies, food stamps, welfare, special language classes, and other government services.

Today many ethnic groups congregate in the state's cities and have become a significant influence. Homer Socolofsky, professor of history at Kansas State University, described the situation for black immigrants to the state.

Blacks have increasingly concentrated in three places: Wichita, Topeka, and Kansas City. I think two-thirds of all blacks are now in those three cities. It's been a movement to the city like in many other areas.

In Kansas, as elsewhere, young urban blacks have led the way in modeling ethnic identity. They have meshed race, class, and their African heritage into a powerful image radiating social and political consciousness.

Similarly, many other new arrivals have been attracted by the opportunities in the city. The arrival of Cubans in Kansas after Castro's takeover was described by Professor Socolofsky.

A lot of them were upper-class or from professional groups. Quite a lot of Cuban doctors worked in Topeka for instance for a long time. Now they are dispersed over much of the country.

Many of the professionally trained Cubans have blended into the urban landscape. Other more recent Cuban arrivals have come with fewer skills. Many of them congregate in Miami, living a difficult existence.

A third group, the Vietnamese, have come mostly in family units since the Vietnam War. Many of these Vietnamese were in the army or employed by the American government in their native country and would have been in danger if they had stayed.

Church groups in Kansas and elsewhere united to support a Vietnamese family or two, providing transportation to this country, housing, help in obtaining jobs and food. Like many Vietnamese, the Nguyen family of Lawrence has quickly adjusted to the American way of life. Mrs. Ngoc Tho Nguyen described her family's philosophy.

If you work hard in this country, you can have enough food to eat and a house to live in. In other countries I think they work hard but they still do not have enough food to eat. But in this country, if you work hard, you will have success.

Like many immigrants of early and current generations, the Nguyens are blending into their new environment—learning new ways, but keeping many of the old.

Together these immigrant groups bring to Kansas a rich diversity of languages, religions, and customs.

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There's more to the Kansas Immigrants than meets the eye in these articles. We hope you'll want to learn more—about immigration trends, a particular national group, or your family history. Here are some suggestions:

Public libraries are good resources for general reading on immigration, Kansas history and literature.

Universities have research libraries and archive collections, with published and nonpublished material.

County historical societies and museums provide materials for research on immigration to, and settlement of, a particular area.

Immigrant groups have been careful to preserve their heritage in archives and libraries. The Mennonites have archives at North Newton, the Swedes at Lindsborg, the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia at Greeley, Colorado.

The Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka has the largest archive collection in the state, stages exhibitions and issues publications.

*Kansas History* (formerly the *Kansas Historical Quarterly*) has articles on immigration and national groups. Consult the series index.

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