Kansas Revisited: Historical Images and Perspectives

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To Beth and our daughter, Elizabeth
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Preface

It is my hope that Kansas Revisited: Historical Images and Perspectives will provide a sense of the people, times, issues, and places that help make the Kansas experience meaningful. State and local history is important in understanding one’s culture and roots and in developing a sense of community and shared responsibility. History helps us recognize that life is a process and that we must constantly try to learn from experience and to exercise better judgment.

This book is not a definitive source on Kansas history. Although the selections chronologically cover Kansas history, some important people and events are neglected or omitted. Because of limited exposure in many American history and Kansas history textbooks, special attention was given Kansans of color and Kansas women, specifically in the Sheridan, Stone, Armitage, Woods, Schofield, and Coburn articles. Agriculture, also an often overlooked part of our history, is addressed in the Shortridge, Saul, Clanton, Isern, Redwood, and Bentley articles. Including a range of scholars, not just historians, gives this book an interdisciplinary flavor.

Chapter 1, “Images of Kansas: Classic and Contemporary,” is the only chapter that is not directly associated with a particular time period. It addresses age-old questions of Kansas character and image in Carl Becker’s famous characterization of Kansas as “no mere geographical expression, but a ‘state of mind’, a religion, and a philosophy in one” and in William Allen White’s famous editorial “What’s the Matter with Kansas?”

Kansas Revisited: Historical Images and Perspectives presents both positive and negative aspects of our experience. While Becker’s article
will fill Kansans with pride, Unrau’s article on the depopulation of the Kansa Indians will make most Kansans remorseful. Kansas is indeed a land of contrasts and contradictions that we continue to live with.

Each chapter introduction briefly explains the chapter contents and puts the events into historical perspective. Although I removed all footnotes and abridged some selections, the full citation for each selection will guide those who wish to read the entire piece. Each chapter concludes with a short bibliography of books and/or articles for further reading. The sources listed combine classic with contemporary scholarship. I wanted to include many of these articles in the book.

I am greatly indebted to the Kansas authors whom I contacted for ideas and articles. They provide the insight that helps us better understand our roots. A special thanks to Nancy Colyer for asking me to do this project and to Donna Butler and Nicolette Bromberg for their help in selecting photographs. Thanks are also due to Malcolm Neelley and Joan Davies, who provided word-processing and layout services. But most of all I would like to thank my editor, Barbara Watkins. Her background in Kansas history as a researcher, writer, and editor made me feel comfortable in this undertaking and grateful for the opportunity.

Finally, I hope that those who “revisit” Kansas in the following pages will gain a better appreciation for Kansas history and for the diversity of our culture and its people.
Any book of readings about Kansas must include some of the classic pieces of introspection written by such eminent thinkers as Carl Becker and William Allen White. Writing about what is the matter with Kansas seems to be a rite of passage for Kansas journalists and historians. What is there about this state that evokes such critical analysis?

Surely the answer has something to do with the birth of Kansas and its turbulent territorial period. As the focus of national attention in the years preceding the Civil War, Kansas was a symbol in the struggle for freedom and represented a new beginning, a place where great experiments could be tested. The desert myth was replaced by the garden myth. Things were happening in Kansas! After the Civil War came the railroads, the cattle drives, and the towns to support them. Settlements spread throughout the state and after a difficult birth this infant state prospered. The closing years of the nineteenth century, however, were not so kind. Several years of bad weather, poor crops, low farm prices and a depression followed the Panic of 1893.

This chapter begins with “What Happened to Kansas?”, an overview by Washburn University professor Robert Haywood. Haywood examines Kansas at specific points in its history and
addresses the love-hate ambivalence many feel about the state. His essay provides a framework for analysis.

William Allen White’s famous editorial “What’s the Matter with Kansas?” is reprinted in its entirety. This selection must be viewed in its historical context, remembering the low farm prices, bad weather, national panic, and depression of the 1890s, the Populists, the Bryan campaign for cheap money and the question of who was to blame for Kansas’ difficulties. White later retreated somewhat from his harsh assessment of the Populists, but this editorial captures the flavor of the times.

Carl Becker, a University of Kansas professor who later became one of the leading historians of his day, assesses the state and its people in a famous essay entitled “Kansas.” This provocative essay provides ideas for a lively discussion on the character of Kansans.

Finally, James Shortridge, professor of cultural geography at the University of Kansas, provides a somewhat broader framework in “Cowboy, Yeoman, Pawn and Hick: Myth and Contradiction in Great Plains Life.” He uses each of these categories to illuminate the history of the Great Plains.

This is a small sampling of articles on images of Kansas. Subsequent chapters will also focus on the state’s culture, character, and image. The nature of Kansas character, its image and what—if anything—is wrong with it continues to be a hotly debated question from the statehouse to the coffeeshops throughout the state.
What Happened to Kansas?

Robert Haywood

From time to time, paid "authorities," national humorists, native champions, visiting firemen, and those who simply love the state have taken up pen or typewriter to tell the world what happened to Kansas. Most admit to being considerably mystified by that "geographical expression" and its fate. Words like "dilemma," "ambivalence," "divergent," "strange," and "dichotomy" crop up with predictable frequency. Natives who are exposed to this rhetoric are grateful no one has as yet put a finger on the precise pulse or cleared the air of all mystery. They enjoy the effort, doubt the conclusions, and generally keep their own counsel.

A sampling of five commentaries from the vast array available are offered here in chronological order as being either typical, notorious, or somewhat close to the mark.

The first to attract national attention was William Allen White's now famous, or infamous, editorial of 1896. For White there was no mystery. He knew what the trouble was. Kansas was being made to look the fool by a crop of "shabby, wild-eyed, rattle-brained fanatics" and lecturing "harpies . . . telling the people that Kansas is raising Hell and letting the corn go to weeds . . ." This was not an analytical essay; it was a political tirade written in a fit of peevish pique during the height of the McKinley-Bryan campaign. Yet, his name-calling of the Populist opposition (who were clobbering the established Republicans at the local polls), fastened an image on Kansas that has been as tenacious as that of the Wizard of Oz, lasting because the editorial was widely circulated, cleverly written, and sounded like what a hick state ought to be.

In calmer moments, White exulted in the excellence of Kansas village life and reflected the true Progressive fear that this utopia might be subverted by industrialism and economic centralization. The public never remembered that side of the Emporia oracle. Who knows anyone who has read In the Heart of a Fool or A Certain Rich Man?

The most unlikely spokesman for Kansas was a benign Mount Oread college professor, who helped establish his reputation with a whimsical, literary apology for being in Kansas in the first place. Why, Carl L. Becker asks, as an intellectual Eastern observer, would anyone riding a train between Kansas City and Lawrence look out the window at the sunflowers and say with great feeling, "Dear old Kansas!"? It was for him a profound mystery, resolved only when he discovered Kansas roots reached deep into his own Puritan New England. Even then, he found Kansans very different from the people back East. Kansans were idealistic, peculiar, distinctive, and individualistic, although marked by "a certain uniformity . . . much after the same pattern." Clearly, Becker was having difficulty coming to grips with the strange folk on the prairies.

He did find many positive attributes. The Kansas pilgrims were blessed by an "instinct to endure" and to joke about the endurance. He marveled at their enthusiasm and their assumption that, destined to succeed, they had the right and obligation to point the way—the morally correct way—to less fortunate people. What saved this self-righteousness from becoming disastrous dogma was an abiding "passion for equality." It was a prideful virtue a New Engander could respect. Although Becker saw Kansans devoted to certain high ideals, as well as concrete principles, what made Kansans different was their being "in touch with a certain cosmic process," not something inherent in the land, but rather, a unique "state of mind."

Since Becker served the state far better than its own journalists, Kansas has frequently called in other outsiders to sort things out and tell the state where it's going. In 1954, Allan Nevins, a New York journalist turned historian, was invited to do the job for the Kansas Centennial Conference and presented several cogent, sometimes tendentious observations to mark the occasion. He found much to praise in the early, pioneer experience, from the bloody days of John Brown through the frenzied era of "Sockless" Jerry Simpson. Those early fighters and Populist hell-raisers did much to preserve liberalism
and individual freedoms. In those days, Kansas had been “a cutting force” in the American system.

Now (that is, 1954), after a hundred years, new dilemmas faced the state. The crucial challenge for Kansas, as for the nation, was to preserve the “ancient freedoms while pursuing the inexorable path of consolidation and centralization” under an expanding “militarism.” In all honesty, Nevins wasn’t very hopeful that the state, which had offered so many solutions early on, was still up to the job. Nevins found that Kansas had become over the years neglectful of the arts and culture, “relatively uneducated, unread, untravelled, and largely unaware of historic fact or current world trends.” Kansans simply weren’t qualified any longer to point the way.

More recently (1976) an expatriate voiced some of the same concerns over Kansas’ diminished capacities. Kenneth S. Davis wrote of the discontent rekindled by the ambivalent emotions he experienced on returning to his home state after an absence of fifteen years. Once
he crossed the border into Kansas, he experienced a "... sense of relinkage with a particular vitally significant space ... a sense of renewing acquaintance with a distinct personality about whom I deeply cared ... and as our tour continued, this sense, this generalized emotion, was increasingly permeated by those powerful ambivalences of pride-and-disgust, pleasure-and-exasperation, even passionate love-and-hate, which Kansas used to arouse or provoke in me when I lived within the borders." What perturbed Davis most was his awareness of rich promise unfulfilled—"the Puritan conviction turned to petty prohibition, the Populist leadership no longer in the vanguard of social progress, and civic idealism soured into unmitigated self-righteousness." He was dismayed to find "the two most publicized issues before the legislature ... were 'bingo' and liquor," an irritation shared by many Kansans.

An even more recent evaluation, by Neal R. Pierce and Jerry Hagstrom, echoed the Davis lament. They found Kansas an "eclipsed state" living "in the shadows," with its old "national role ... diminished." "Indeed," they wrote, "nowhere on the American continent can the eclipse of a region or state as a vital force—a focal point of creative change or exemplar of national life—be felt so strongly and poignantly as in Kansas." They quote a contemporary professor at Kansas University, less benign than Becker, who suggested that Kansas ought to be declared "a national monument, the best source of quality human talent—most of it for export." What is left, apparently, is the flat, mediocre center of the nation. "Take any measure of government policy and performance—from taxation to services, highways to education—and Kansas will rank midway in the fifty states."

The rest of the Pierce-Hagstrom piece was given over to a listing of Kansas assets. Many were found quite tarnished—such as an agricultural economy blossoming in the old Dust Bowl, but threatened by inflation, poor markets, and a depleted Ogallala Aquifer; and the two largest municipalities—well-managed but suffering from racial discords. Other resources could be bragged about in the old-fashioned Becker manner—aerospace plants, federal and military prisons, oil and gas wells and plants, Truman Capote's In Cold Blood, marijuana harvests, and "the largest area of essentially untouched prairie anywhere
on the continent.” Of all these good things, they judged the “amazing” Menninger Foundation to be the greatest.

You can tell the authors were trying to be kind to the old state. It’s the sort of condescending kindness Kansans have grown accustomed to ever since Dorothy flew off on the typical, calm tornadic day.

All five essayists agree it’s been a glorious past. Kooky sometimes—but entertaining, loveable, and productive. Nevins, who was especially enamored of those early fighters, was also aware that Kansas had toyed with “every incoherent and fantastic dream of social improvement and reform, every economic delusion that has bewildered the foggy brain of fanatics, every political fallacy nurtured by the misfortune of poverty and failure, rejected elsewhere . . .” There were two sides to the Kansas coin, he discovered. “If the reformer grew passionate, so did the conservative.” The good ol’ days were certainly a mixed bag.

Davis, who was nearest to understanding the Kansas psyche, agreed that Kansans always represented ambivalence. There is no coaxing uniformity of value out of the complexities of Kansas emotions and convictions. Kansans are rarely of one mind. For every virtue, there’s a favored vice, for every asset, a lateral liability.

Why Kansans were, and perhaps still are, a unique bundle of recognizable contradictions has been hard to understand. Davis spent considerable time discussing the weather and the land, and their psychological influence on Kansas’ conception of life and how to live it. “When the environed is a living entity, the environment is actively internalized, becoming part and parcel of the individualized psyche . . .” Such profound rationalization of uniqueness and territorial personification leads to many questions. Was the loneliness of the prairies of Kansas different from the isolation of North Dakota? Were Kansas grasshoppers larger and more gluttonous than Nebraska’s? Is there anything in Comanche county terrain that resembles Finney or Johnson counties? Is it not Kansans’ understanding of their environment rather than the land itself that colors their comprehension of the state?

Although each essayist was writing from his own point of time and experience, all found the passing of time had altered Kansas from the early-day freaks and fighters, and not for the better. What they are really complaining about is lost youth and the coming of maturity.
And it’s true that it’s harder to get a good bond scandal worked up these days because of the sophisticated governmental checks. It’s also true Nancy Kassebaum is following a different track than Carry Nation, and doesn’t grab as many national headlines. Most Kansans are pretty happy about that. Bob Dole’s national leadership certainly equals William Peffer’s and his oneline sarcasms are about as pungent as Yellin’ Ellen Lease’s. The mediocre ranking doesn’t always hold, either. Kansas never climbed to the national average of unemployment in the last recession, or, for all of her exported young people, lost a congressman following the 1980 census. If Jefferson’s dream of a nation of yeomen farmers has faded, western Kansas has led in pioneering farming as big-business, which seems to be the latest in ordered efficiency.

While Kansas has lost some of its flamboyancy in its middle age, there still remains something of the old psyche. Her people are not more of one mind than they ever were. Some twentieth-century puritans in the state still talk of open saloons, the evil of bingo spreading beyond church basements, and the unholy threat of a Greek goddess atop the capitol building. Others believe the millennium will come with pari-mutuel betting, liquor by the drink, and statuesque goddesses wherever you put them.

The love-hate ambivalence is still much with the natives. It is fed by history, climate, land, religion, and a mingling of races. If Kansans don’t understand it, they have come to accept, appreciate, and, just like their grandfathers, brag about it. Those who stay, in the main, seem to be enjoying the more dignified pace of mature middle age. What was lost in mystery and bombast, Kansans believe has been more than balanced by decorum and the good life.
Today the Kansas department of agriculture sent out a statement which indicates that Kansas has gained less than two thousand people in the past year. There are about two hundred and twenty-five thousand families in the state, and there were about ten thousand babies born in Kansas, and yet so many people have left the state that the natural increase is cut down to less than two thousand net.

This has been going on for eight years.

If there had been a high brick wall around the state eight years ago and not a soul had been admitted or permitted to leave, Kansas would be a half million souls better off than she is today. And yet the Nation has increased in population. In five years ten million people have been added to the national population, yet instead of gaining a share of this—say half a million—Kansas has apparently been a plague spot, and in the very garden of the world, has lost population by the ten-thousands every year.

Not only has she lost population, but she has lost money. Every moneyed man in the state who could get out without loss is gone. Every month in every community sees some one who has a little money pack up and leave the state. This has been going on for eight years. Money has been drained out all the time. In towns where ten years ago there were three or four or half a dozen money-lending concerns stimulating industry by furnishing capital, there is now none or one or two that are looking after the interests and principal already outstanding.

No one brings any money into Kansas any more. What community knows over one or two men who have moved in with more than $5,000 in the past three years? And what community cannot count half a score

William Allen White, editor of the Emporia Gazette, was a Progressive Republican who became an important influence on state and national politics. White won the Pulitzer Prize in 1922 for his editorial writing. Many journalists considered him the outstanding editor of his day, and he was one of the most widely quoted writers of the century.
of men in that time who have left, taking all the money they could scrape together?

Yet the Nation has grown rich, other states have increased in population and wealth—other neighboring states. Missouri has gained over two million while Kansas has been losing half a million. Nebraska has gained in wealth and population while Kansas has gone down hill. Colorado has gained every way while Kansas has lost every way since 1888.

What's the matter with Kansas?

There is no substantial city in the state. Every big town save one has lost in population. Yet Kansas City, Omaha, Lincoln, St. Louis, Denver, Colorado Springs, Sedalia, the cities of the Dakotas, St. Paul and Minneapolis and Des Moines—all cities and towns in the West, have steadily grown.

Take up the Government Blue Book and you will see that Kansas is virtually off the map. Two or three little scrubby consular places in yellow fever stricken communities that do not aggregate ten thousand dollars a year is all the recognition Kansas has. Nebraska draws about one hundred thousand dollars; little old North Dakota draws about fifty thousand dollars; Oklahoma doubles Kansas; Missouri leaves her a thousand miles behind; Colorado is almost seven times greater than Kansas—the whole West is ahead of Kansas.

Take it by any standard you please, Kansas is not in it.

Go East and you hear them laugh at Kansas, go West and they sneer at her, go South and they "cuss" her, go North and they have forgotten her. Go into any crowd of intelligent people gathered anywhere on the globe, and you will find the Kansas man on the defensive. The newspaper columns and magazines once devoted to praise of her, to boastful facts and startling figures concerning her resources, are now filled with cartoons, jibes and Pefferian speeches. Kansas just naturally isn't in it. She has traded places with Arkansas and Timbuctoo.

What's the matter with Kansas?

We all know; yet here we are at it again. We have an old moss-back Jacksonian who snorts and howls because there is a bathtub in the state house; we are running that old jay for governor. We have another shabby, wild-eyed, rattle-brained fanatic who has said openly in a dozen speeches that "the rights of the user are paramount to the
rights of the owner”; we are running him for chief justice, so that the capital will come tumbling over itself to get into the state. We have raked the old ashheap of failure in the state and found an old human hoop-skirt who has failed as a business man, who has failed as an editor, who has failed as a preacher, and we are going to run him for congressman at large. He will help the looks of the Kansas delegation at Washington. Then we have discovered a kid without a law practice and have decided to run him for attorney general. Then for fear some hint that the state had become respectable might percolate through the civilized portions of the Nation, we have decided to send three or four harpies out lecturing, telling the people that Kansas is raising hell and letting the corn go to weeds.

Oh, this is a state to be proud of! We are a people who can hold up our heads! What we need is not more money, but less capital, fewer white shirts and brains, fewer men with business judgment, and more of those fellows who boast that they are “just ordinary clodhoppers, but they know more in a minute about finance than John Sherman”; we need more men who are “posted,” who can bellow about the crime of ’73 who hate prosperity, and who think because a man believes in national honor, he is a tool of Wall Street. We have had a few of them—some one hundred fifty thousand, but we need more.

We need several thousand gibbering idiots to scream about the “Great Red Dragon” of Lombard Street. We don’t need population, we don’t need wealth, we don’t need well-dressed men on the streets, we don’t need standing in the Nation, we don’t need cities on the fertile prairies; you bet we don’t! What we are after is that money power. Because we have become poorer and ornrier and meaner than a spavined, distempered mule, we, the people of Kansas, propose to kick; we don’t care to build up, we wish to tear down.

“There are two ideas of government,” said our noble Bryan at Chicago. “There are those who believe that if you just legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous this prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous their prosperity will find its way up and through every class and rest upon us.”

That’s the stuff! Give the prosperous man the dickens! Legislate the thriftless man into ease, whack the stuffings out of the creditors and tell debtors who borrowed the money five years ago when money
per capita" was greater than it is now, that the contraction of the currency gives him a right to repudiate.

Whoop it up for the ragged trousers; put the lazy, greasy fizzle who can't pay his debts on an altar, and bow down and worship him. Let the state ideal be high. What we need is not the respect of our fellow men, but the chance to get something for nothing.

Oh, yes, Kansas is a great state. Here are people fleeing from it by the score everyday, capital going out of the state by the hundreds of dollars; and every industry but farming paralyzed, and that crippled, because its products have to go across the ocean before they can find a laboring man at work who can afford to buy them. Let's don't stop this year. Let's drive all the decent, self-respecting men out of the state. Let's keep the old clodhoppers who know it all. Let's encourage the man who is "posted." He can talk, and what we need is not mill hands to eat our meat, nor factory hands to eat our wheat, nor cities to oppress the farmer by consuming his butter and eggs and chickens and produce. What Kansas needs is men who can talk, who have large leisure to argue the currency question while their wives wait at home for that nickel's worth of bluing.

What's the matter with Kansas?

Nothing under the shining sun. She is losing wealth, population and standing. She has got her statesmen and the money power is afraid of her. Kansas is all right. She has started in to raise hell, as Mrs. Lease advised, and seems to have an over-production. But that doesn't matter. Kansas never did believe in diversified crops. Kansas is all right. There is absolutely nothing wrong with Kansas. "Every prospect pleases and only man is vile."
Kansas

Carl L. Becker

Some years ago, in a New England college town, when I informed one of my New England friends that I was preparing to go to Kansas, he replied rather blankly, "Kansas?! Oh." The amenities of casual intercourse demanded a reply, certainly, but from the point of view of my New England friend I suppose there was really nothing more to say; and, in fact, standing there under the peaceful New England elms, Kansas did seem tolerably remote. Some months later I rode out of Kansas City and entered for the first time what I had always pictured as the land of grasshoppers, of arid drought, and barren social experimentation. In the seat just ahead were two young women, girls rather, whom I afterwards saw at the university. As we left the dreary yards behind, and entered the half-open country along the Kansas River, one of the pair, breaking abruptly away from the ceaseless chatter that had hitherto engrossed them both, began looking out of the car window. Her attention seemed fixed, for perhaps a quarter of an hour, upon something in the scene outside—the fields of corn, or it may have been the sunflowers that lined the track; but at last, turning to her companion with the contented sign of a returning exile, she said, "Dear old Kansas!" The expression somehow recalled my New England friend. I wondered vaguely, as I was sure he would have done, why any one should feel moved to say "Dear old Kansas!" I had supposed that Kansas, even more than Italy, was only a geographical expression. But not so. Not infrequently, since then, I have heard the same expression—not always from emotional young girls. To understand why people say "Dear old Kansas!" is to understand that Kansas is no mere geographical expression, but a "state of mind," a religion, and a philosophy in one.

There are those who will tell us, and have indeed often told us, with a formidable array of statistics, that Kansas is inhabited only in small part by New Englanders, and that it is therefore fanciful in the extreme to think of it as representing Puritanism transplanted. It is true, the people of Kansas came mainly from “the Middle West”—from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Iowa, Kentucky, and Missouri. But for our purpose the fact is of little importance, for it is the ideals of a people rather than the geography they have outgrown that determine their destiny; and in Kansas, as has been well said, “it is the ideas of the Pilgrims, not their descendants, that have had dominion in the young commonwealth.” Ideas, sometimes, as well as the star of empire, move westward, and so it happens that Kansas is more Puritan than New England of to-day. It is akin to New England of early days. It is what New England, old England itself, once was—the frontier, an ever changing spot where dwell the courageous who defy fate and conquer circumstance.

For the frontier is more than a matter of location, and Puritanism is itself a kind of frontier. There is an intellectual “West” as well as a territorial “West.” Both are heresies, the one as much subject to the scorn of the judicious as the other. Broad classifications of people are easily made and are usually inaccurate; but they are convenient for taking a large view, and it may be worth while to think, for the moment, of two kinds of people—those who like the sheltered life, and those who cannot endure it, those who think the world as they know it is well enough, and those who dream of something better, or, at any rate, something different. The frontier is the seed plot where new forms of life, whether of institutions or types of thought, are germinated, the condition of all progress being in a sense a return to the primitive.

Now, generally speaking, the men who make the world’s frontiers, whether in religion or politics, science, or geographical exploration and territorial settlement, have certain essential and distinguishing qualities. They are primarily men of faith. Having faith in themselves, they are individualists. They are idealists because they have faith in the universe, being confident that somehow everything is right at the center of things; they give hostages to the future, are ever inventing God anew, and must be always transforming the world into their ideal of it. They have faith in humanity and in the perfectibility of man, are
likely, therefore, to be believers in equality, reformers, intolerant, aiming always to level others up to their own high vantage. These qualities are not only Puritan, they are American; and Kansas is not only Puritanism transplanted, but Americanism transplanted. In the individualism, the idealism, the belief in equality that prevail in Kansas, we shall therefore see nothing strangely new, but simply a new graft of familiar American traits. But as Kansas is a community with a peculiar and distinctive experience, there is something peculiar and distinctive about the individualism, the idealism, and the belief in equality of its people. If we can get at this something peculiar and distinctive, it will be possible to understand why the sight of sunflowers growing beside a railroad track may call forth the fervid expression, "Dear old Kansas."

I

Individualism is everywhere characteristic of the frontier, and in America, where the geographical frontier has hitherto played so predominant a part, a peculiarly marked type of individualism is one of the most obvious traits of the people. "To the frontier," Professor Turner has said, "the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance that comes from freedom." On the frontier, where everything is done by the individual and nothing by organized society, initiative, resourcefulness, quick, confident, and sure judgment are the essential qualities for success. But as the problems of the frontier are rather restricted and definite, those who succeed there have necessarily much the same kind of initiative and resourcefulness, and their judgment will be sure only in respect to the problems that are familiar to all. It thus happens that the type of individualism produced on the frontier and predominant in America, has this peculiarity, that while the sense of freedom is strong, there is nevertheless a certain uniformity in respect to ability, habit, and point
of view. The frontier develops strong individuals, but it develops individuals of a particular type, all being after much the same pattern. The individualism of the frontier is one of achievement, not of eccentricity, an individualism of fact arising from a sense of power to overcome obstacles, rather than one of theory growing out of weakness in the face of oppression. It is not because he fears governmental activity, but because he has so often had to dispense with it, that the American is an individualist. Altogether averse from hesitancy, doubt, speculative or introspective tendencies, the frontiersman is a man of faith: of faith, not so much in some external power, as in himself, in his luck, his destiny; faith in the possibility of achieving whatever is necessary or he desires. It is this marked self-reliance that gives to Americans their tremendous power of initiative; but the absence of deep-seated differences gives to them an equally tremendous power of concerted social action.

The confident individualism of those who achieve through endurance is a striking trait of the people of Kansas. There, indeed, the trait has in it an element of exaggeration, arising from the fact that whatever has been achieved in Kansas has been achieved under great difficulties. Kansans have been subjected, not only to the ordinary hardships of the frontier, but to a succession of reverses and disasters that could be survived only by those for whom defeat is worse than death, who cannot fail because they cannot surrender. To the border wars succeeded hot winds, droughts, grasshoppers; and to the disasters of nature succeeded in turn the scourge of man, in the form of "mortgage fiends" and a contracting currency. Until 1895 the whole history of the state was a series of disasters, and always something new, extreme, bizarre, until the name Kansas became a byword, a synonym for the impossible and the ridiculous, inviting laughter, furnishing occasion for jest and hilarity. "In God we trusted, in Kansas we busted," became a favorite motto of emigrants, worn out with the struggle, returning to more hospitable climes; and for many years it expressed well enough the popular opinion of that fated land.

Yet there were some who never gave up. They stuck it out. They endured all that even Kansas could inflict. They kept the faith, and they are to be pardoned perhaps if they therefore feel that henceforth there is laid up for them a crown of glory. Those who remained in Kansas from 1875 to 1895 must have originally possessed staying
qualities of no ordinary sort, qualities which the experience of those years could only accentuate. And as success has at last rewarded their efforts, there has come, too, a certain pride, an exuberance, a feeling of superiority that accompany a victory long delayed and hardly won. The result has been to give a peculiar flavor to the Kansas spirit of individualism. With Kansas history back of him, the true Kansan feels that nothing is too much for him. How shall he be afraid of any danger, or hesitate at any obstacle, having succeeded where failure was not only human, but almost honorable? Having conquered Kansas, he knows well that there are no worse worlds to conquer. The Kansas spirit is therefore one that finds something exhilarating in the challenge of an extreme difficulty. “No one,” says St. Augustine, “loves what he endures, though he may love to endure.” With Kansans, it is particularly a point of pride to suffer easily the stings of fortune, and if they find no pleasure in the stings themselves, the ready endurance of them gives a consciousness of merit that is its own reward. Yet it is

Western Kansas was at the heart of the “sod-house frontier” that stretched from Canada to Texas and into Colorado and Wyoming. Scarcity of wood, water, and fuel prompted innovations unique to the Great Plains—windmills and barbed wire, as well as sod dugouts.
with no solemn martyr’s air that the true Kansan endures the worst that can happen. His instinct is rather to pass it off as a minor annoyance, furnishing occasion for a pleasantry, for it is the mark of a Kansan to take a reverse as a joke rather than too seriously. Indeed, the endurance of extreme adversity has developed a keen appreciation for that type of humor, everywhere prevalent in the west, which consists in ignoring a difficulty, or transforming it into a difficulty of precisely the opposite kind. There is a tradition surviving from the grasshopper time that illustrates the point. It is said that in the midst of that overwhelming disaster, when the pests were six inches deep in the streets, the editor of a certain local paper refined his comment on the situation down to a single line, which appeared among the trivial happenings of the week: “A grasshopper was seen on the court-house steps this morning.” This type of humor, appreciated anywhere west of the Alleghanies, is the type *par excellence* in Kansas.
I have already said that the type of individualism that is characteristic of America is one of achievement, not of eccentricity. The statement will bear repeating in this connection, for it is truer of Kansas than of most communities, notwithstanding there is a notion abroad that the state is peopled by freaks and eccentrics. It was once popularly supposed in Europe, and perhaps is so yet, that Americans are all eccentric. Now, Kansans are eccentric in the same sense that Americans are: they differ somewhat from other Americans, just as Americans are distinguishable from Europeans. But a fundamental characteristic of Kansas individualism is the tendency to conform; it is an individualism of conformity, not of revolt. Having learned to endure to the end, they have learned to conform, for endurance is itself a kind of conformity. It has not infrequently been the subject of wondering comment by foreigners that in America, where every one is supposed to do as he pleases, there should nevertheless be so little danger from violence and insurrection. Certainly one reason is that while the conditions of frontier life release the individual from many of the formal restraints of ordered society, they exact a most rigid adherence to lines of conduct inevitably fixed by the stern necessities of life in a primitive community. On the frontier men soon learn to conform to what is regarded as essential, for the penalty of resistance or neglect is extinction: there the law of survival works surely and swiftly. However eccentric frontiersmen may appear to the tenderfoot, among themselves there is little variation from type in any essential matter. In the new community, individualism means the ability of the individual to succeed, not by submitting to some external formal authority, still less by following the bent of an unschooled will, but by recognizing and voluntarily adapting himself to necessary conditions. Kansas, it is true, has produced its eccentrics, but there is a saying here that freaks are raised for export only. In one sense the saying is true enough, for what strikes one particularly is that, on the whole, native Kansans are all so much alike. It is a community of great solidarity, and to the native it is "the Easterner" who appears eccentric.

The conquest of the wilderness in Kansas has thus developed qualities of patience, of calm, stoical, good-humored endurance in the face of natural difficulties, of conformity to what is regarded as necessary. Yet the patience, the calmness, the disposition to conform, is strictly confined to what is regarded as in the natural course. If the
Kansan appears stolid, it is only on the surface that he is so. The peculiar conditions of origin and history have infused into the character of the people a certain romantic and sentimental element. Beneath the placid surface there is something fermenting which is best left alone—a latent energy which trivial events or a resounding phrase may unexpectedly release.

This trait finds expression in the romantic devotion of the people to the state, in a certain alert sensitiveness to criticism from outside, above all in the contagious enthusiasm with which they will without warning espouse a cause, especially when symbolized by a striking phrase, and carry it to an issue. Insurgency is native in Kansas, and the political history of the state, like its climate, is replete with surprises that have made it “alternately the reproach and the marvel of mankind.” But this apparent instability is only the natural complement of the extreme and confident individualism of the people: having succeeded in overcoming so many obstacles that were unavoidable, they do not doubt their ability to destroy quickly those that seem artificially constructed. It thus happens that while no people endure the reverses of nature with greater fortitude and good humor than the people of Kansas, misfortunes seemingly of man’s making arouse in them a veritable passion of resistance; the mere suspicion of injustice, real or fancied exploitation by those who fare sumptuously, the pressure of laws not self-imposed, touch something explosive in their nature that transforms a calm and practical people into excited revolutionists. A people which has endured the worst of nature’s tyrannies, and cheerfully submits to tyrannies self-imposed, is in no mood to suffer hardships that seem remediable.

II

Idealism must always prevail on the frontier, for the frontier, whether geographical or intellectual, offers little hope to those who see things as they are. To venture into the wilderness, one must see it, not as it is, but as it will be. The frontier, being the possession of those only who see its future, is the promised land which cannot be entered save by those who have faith. America, having been such a promised land, is therefore inhabited by men of faith: idealism is ingrained in
the character of its people. But as the frontier in America has hitherto been geographical and material, American idealism has necessarily a material basis, and Americans have often been mistakenly called materialists. True, they seem mainly interested in material things. Too often they represent values in terms of money: a man is "worth" so much money, a university is a great university, having the largest endowment of any; a fine building is a building that cost a million dollars, better still, ten millions. Value is extensive rather than intensive or intrinsic. America is the best country because it is the biggest, the wealthiest, the most powerful; its people are the best because they are the freest, the most energetic, the *most* educated. But to see a materialistic temper in all this is to mistake the form for the spirit. The American cares for material things because they represent the substance of things hoped for. He cares less for money than for making money: a fortune is valued, not because it represents ease, but because it represents struggle, achievement, progress. The first skyscraper in any town is nothing in itself, but much as an evidence of growth; it is a white stone on the road to the ultimate goal.

Idealism of this sort is an essential ingredient of the Kansas spirit. In few communities is the word progress more frequently used, or its meaning less frequently detached from a material basis.

III

In a country like America, where there is such confident faith in the individual, one might naturally expect to find the completest toleration, and no disposition to use the government for the purpose of enforcing uniform conditions: logically, it would seem, so much emphasis on liberty should be incompatible with much emphasis on equality. Yet it is precisely in America, and nowhere in America more than in the west, that liberty and equality always go coupled and inseparable in popular speech; where the sense of liberty is especially strong, there also the devotion to equality is a cardinal doctrine. Throughout our history, the west has been a dominant factor in urging the extension of the powers of the national government, and western states have taken the lead in radical legislation of an equalizing character. This apparent inconsistency strikes one as especially
pronounced in Kansas. The doctrine of equality is unquestioned there, and that governments exist for the purpose of securing it is the common belief. "A law against it" is the specific for every malady. The welfare of society is thought to be always superior to that of the individual, and yet no one doubts that perfect liberty is the birthright of every man.

Perhaps the truth is that real toleration is a sentiment foreign to the American temper. In America we imagine ourselves liberal-minded because we tolerate what we have ceased to regard as important. We tolerate religions but not irreligion, and diverse political opinion, but not unpoltical opinion, customs, but not the negation of custom. The Puritans fought for toleration—for themselves. But having won it for themselves, straightway denied it to others. No small part of American history has been a repetition of the Puritan struggle; it has been a fight, not for toleration as a general principle, but for recognition of a civilization resting upon particular principles: in exterior relations, a struggle for recognition of America by Europe; in interior relations, a struggle for recognition of "the West" by "the East." The principle of toleration is written in our constitutions, but not in our minds, for the motive back of the famous guarantees of individual liberty has been recognition of particular opinion rather than toleration of every opinion. And in the nature of the case it must be so. Those who create frontiers and establish new civilizations have too much faith to be tolerant, and are too thoroughgoing idealists to be indifferent. On the frontier conditions are too hazardous for the speculative and the academic to flourish readily: only those who are right and are sure of it can succeed. Certainly it is characteristic of Americans to know that they are right. Certainly they are conscious of having a mission in the world and of having been faithful to it. They have solved great problems hitherto unsolved, have realized utopias dreamed of but never realized by Europe. They are therefore in the van of civilization, quite sure of the direction, triumphantly leading the march towards the ultimate goal. That every one should do as he likes is part of the American creed only in a very limited sense. That it is possible to know what is right, and that what is right should be recognized and adhered to is the more vital belief.

That liberty and equality are compatible terms is, at all events, an unquestioned faith in Kansas. The belief in equality, however, is not
so much the belief that all men are equal as the conviction that it is
the business of society to establish conditions that will make them so.
And this notion, so far from being inconsistent with the pronounced
individualism that prevails there, is the natural result of it. In Kansas
at least, no one holds to the right of the individual to do as he likes,
irrespective of what it is that he likes. Faith in the individual is faith
in the particular individual, the true Kansan, who has learned through
adversity voluntarily to conform to what is necessary. Human nature,
or, at all events, Kansas nature, is essentially good, and if the
environment is right all men can measure up to that high level. That
the right environment can be created is not doubted. It is not possible
for men so aggressive and self-reliant, who have overcome so many
obstacles, to doubt their ability to accomplish this also. Having
conquered nature, they cheerfully confront the task of transforming
human nature. It is precisely because Kansans are such thoroughgoing
individualists, so resourceful, so profoundly confident in their own
judgments, so emancipated from the past, so accustomed to devising
expedients for every new difficulty, that they are unimpressed by the
record of the world’s failures. They have always thrived on the
impossible, and the field of many failures offers a challenge not to be
resisted.

To effect these beneficent ends, the people of Kansas turn naturally
to the government because they have a very simple and practical idea
of what the government is and what it is for. The government, in
Kansas, is no abstract concept. Kansans think of the government, as
they think of everything else, in terms of the concrete. And why,
indeed, should they not? Within the memory of man there was no
government in Kansas. They, Kansans, made the government
themselves for their own purposes. The government is therefore simply
certain men employed by themselves to do certain things; it is the
sum of the energy, the good judgment, the resourcefulness of the
individuals who originally created it, and who periodically renew it.
The government is the individual writ large; in it every Kansan sees
himself drawn to larger scale. The passion for controlling all things by
law is thus not the turning of the hopeless and discouraged individual
to some power other and higher than himself for protection; it is only
the instinct to use effectively one of the many resources always at his
command for achieving desired ends. Of a government hostile to the
individual, they cannot conceive; such a government is a bogus government, and its laws are bogus laws; to resist and overthrow such a government, all the initiative and resourcefulness is enlisted that is devoted to supporting one regarded as legitimate. There is a higher law than the statute book; the law of the state is no law if it does not represent the will of the individual.

Kansans love each other for the dangers they have passed; a unique experience has created a strong esprit de corps—a feeling that while Kansans are different from others, one Kansan is not only as good as any other, but very like any other. The philosophy of numbers, the doctrine of the majority, is therefore ingrained, and little sympathy is wasted on minorities.

It goes without saying that the general level in Kansas is thought to be exceptionally high. Kansans do not regard themselves as mere westerners, like Iowans or Nebraskans. Having passed through a superior heat, they are westerners seven times refined. "It is the quality of piety in Kansas," says Mr. E. H. Abbott, "to thank God that you are not as other men are, beer-drinkers, shiftless, habitual lynchers, or even as these Missourians." The pride is natural enough, perhaps, in men whose judgment has been vindicated at last in the face of general skepticism. Having for many years contributed to the gaiety of nations, Kansas has ceased to be the pariah of the states. Kansans have endured Job's comforters too long not be feel a little complaisant when their solemn predictions come to naught. It is inevitable that those who think they have fashioned a cornerstone out of the stone rejected by the builders should regard themselves as superior workmen.

To test others by this high standard is an instinctive procedure. There is an alert attention to the quality of those who enter the state from outside. The crucial question is, are they "our kind of men?" Do they speak "the Kansas language?" Yet the Kansas language is less a form of speech, or the expression of particular ideas, than a certain personal quality. Some time since a distinguished visitor from the east came to the state to deliver a public address. He was most hospitably received, as all visitors are, whether distinguished or otherwise, and his address—permeated with the idealistic liberalism of a half century ago—was attentively listened to and highly praised. But to no purpose all these fine ideas. The great man was found wanting, for there was discovered, among his other impedimenta, a valet. It was a fatal
mischance. The poor valet was more commented upon than the
address, more observed than his master. The circumstance stamped
the misguided man as clearly not our kind of man. Obviously, no man
who carries a valet can speak the Kansas language. Needless to say,
there are no valets in Kansas.

The feeling of superiority naturally attaching to a chosen people,
equally inclines Kansans to dispense readily with the advice or
experience of others. They feel that those who have worn the hair shirt
cannot be instructed in asceticism by those who wear silk. In discussing
the university and its problems with a member of the state legislature,
I once hazarded some comparative statistics showing that a number
of other states made rather more liberal appropriations for their
universities than the state of Kansas did for hers. I thought the
comparison might be enlightening, that the man's pride of state might
be touched. Not at all. "I know all about that," he replied. "That
argument is used by every man who is interested in larger
appropriations for any of the state institutions. But it doesn't go with
a Kansas legislature. In Kansas, we don't care much what other states
are doing. Kansas always leads, but never follows." And, in fact, the
disregard of precedent is almost an article of faith; that a thing has
been done before is an indication that it is time to improve upon it.
History may teach that men cannot be legislated into the kingdom of
heaven. Kansans are not ignorant of the fact, but it is no concern of
theirs. The experience of history is not for men with a mission and
faith to perform it. Let the uncertain and the timid profit by history;
those who have at all times the courage of their emotions will make
history, not repeat it. Kansans set their own standards, and the state
becomes, as it were, an experiment station in the field of social science.

The passion for equality in Kansas is thus the complement of the
individualism and the idealism of its people. It has at the basis of it
an altruistic motive, aiming not so much to level all men down as to
level all men up. The Kansan's sense of individual worth enables him
to believe that no one can be better than he is, while his confident
idealism encouraged him to hope that none need be worse.
IV

The Kansas spirit is the American spirit double distilled. It is a new grafted product of American individualism, American idealism, American intolerance. Kansas is America in microcosm: as America conceives itself in respect to Europe, so Kansas conceives itself in respect to America. Within its borders, Americanism, pure and undefiled, has a new lease of life. It is the mission of this self-selected people to see to it that it does not perish from off the earth. The light on the altar, however neglected elsewhere, must ever be replenished in Kansas. If this is provincialism, it is the provincialism of faith rather than of the province. The devotion to the state is devotion to an ideal, not to a territory, and men can say "Dear old Kansas!" because the name symbolizes for them what the motto of the state so well expresses, ad astra per aspera.

Cowboy, Yeoman, Pawn, and Hick: Myth and Contradiction in Great Plains Life

James R. Shortridge

Anyone who lives in Kansas knows that outsiders hold strong and varied stereotypes of plains people. New residents innocently inquire about cowboys, and many visitors expect to see heroic, self-sufficient farmers, descendants perhaps of Laura Ingalls Wilder or Ántonia

Cuzak. Still others talk about "victimized" Kansans—poor peasants who suffer continuously under a series of discriminatory economic practices initiated by eastern corporations and the federal government. Finally, there is the yokel image: folks who still dress in flour sacks and know only the Kansas versions of Minneapolis and Manhattan.

These common views raise complex questions for a person wanting to understand the true cultural personality of the plains. Do long-time residents hold views similar to those of outsiders? How did the stereotypes originate? How do plains people deal with contradictions among the myths and between myth and reality?

The story can best be unraveled historically. Indians and cattlemen, in the 1860s, were the first plainsmen to attract much attention from the American public. Neither group had a positive image. Indians were usually branded as dangerous, nomadic heathens, and the cattlemen fared little better: they were "barons," monopolizing the land at the expense of small farmers. Horace Greeley provided a typical assessment in 1859:

I fear this cattle-ranching, with long intervals between the ranches, is destined to half-barbarize many thousands of the next generation, whom schools can scarcely reach, and to whom the sound of the churchgoing bell will be a stranger.

Acting on these negative judgments, the federal government passed legislation to concentrate most of the Indian groups in one place (Oklahoma) and to discourage large-scale ranching. Farmers were the beneficiaries in both cases. It is impossible to know exactly how these farmers saw themselves, but accounts of them in the popular press of the time uniformly depict a resolute, yeoman society, soon hailed as the latest and purest version of Jeffersonian democracy. Everyone could own land and thus be independent; all were ennobled by contact with the natural world. The land was rich enough to bring prosperity to a diligent worker, yet sufficiently harsh to keep one humble and self-reliant.

A special relationship has developed between the plains and the yeoman farmer myth. This myth, fundamental to American self-identity, had previously found regional expression in the South and in the old Northwest Territory. Neither location proved wholly satisfactory.
The Great Plains: Core and Periphery
Slavery and its aftermath clearly distorted the image in the South, whereas urbanization and industrialization in places such as Chicago and Cleveland challenged rural society in the North. The focus for the yeoman farmer or pastoralist rhetoric thus gradually shifted westward, first to the central plains and then to the plains generally. There it has seemed to find a permanent home. For a hundred years now the plains have stood midway, both literally and figuratively, between eastern industry and western wilderness. The wholesomeness of L. Frank Baum’s Dorothy or the ideals of “truth, justice, and the American way” which Superman received from his Kansas stepparents are still seen as quintessential human qualities of the plains.

Although pastoralism is the dominant symbol for plains culture, it has never been without challengers. The first, what I call the pawn image, was initiated in the late 1880s by economic depression and poor weather, which brought about a financial crisis. Defaults on farm loans were common and, since eastern capital had financed much of the plains development, the crisis assumed a sectional guise. Plainsmen—especially western plainsmen—suddenly seemed to lack control over their own destiny. They damned eastern businessmen as unfeeling exploiters of their condition and found convenient scapegoats for the problems in bankers, railroad owners, and even the federal government. The experience united the plains states politically, but it also created a cultural paradox that continues to blur the regional identity. How could one believe in the ideals of self-sufficiency and independence central to pastoralism and simultaneously see oneself “under the lion’s paw,” a pawn of the eastern business establishment?

Good weather and agricultural prices returned to the plains in the late 1890s. These favorable conditions placed a damper on manifestations of western discontent, and pastoralism began to reassert itself. Soon, though, perhaps in 1902—the year Owen Wister published The Virginian—a newly romanticized view of the cowboy arose as another competing symbol. Cattlemen, a group largely ignored or denigrated during its heyday, became mythic as soon as the open range had disappeared. The associated imagery—so familiar as not to need repeating here—also included values associated with the yeoman farmer, particularly independence and self-reliance. In fact, given the economic ups and downs of farming in previous years, the idealized cowboy was the more fitting repository for such traits. Hundreds of
times, in pulp novels and in the movies, cowboys and farmers met each other on the plains frontier. Most often the cowboy was the more heroic figure, triumphing over the rather dull, unimaginative creatures known derogatorily as “nesters” or “sodbusters.”

The pastoralist view of life again became ascendant during the second decade of this century. Farm prices were good, and a new generation of yeomen extended wheatfields across the Montana prairies. This mood lasted until the mid-1920s, when economic conditions again deteriorated. Hard times revived the pawn concept of the 1890s to some extent, but as depression continued into the 1930s, beliefs grew more complex. The “Okies” emerged as a new central symbol. Views toward these farmers who had failed were initially sympathetic, but perhaps only during the worst drought years. To the outsider, the gaunt faces caught in photographs suggested poor education, lack of intelligence, dependency, and even laziness—the very antithesis of a heroic yeoman.

The “Okie” image, expanded to the plains generally, continues today in modified form. Its “victim” associations receded with the

Cowboys, Wallace, Kansas, about 1873. Like the pioneers on the sod-house frontier, cowboys symbolized self-reliance and individualism.
return of prosperity, but the socially backward stereotype remained, reinforced by the dullard view of farmers commonly portrayed in "westerns." The result was the final plains stereotype: the simple-minded hick or yokel.

Oscillations among the four images characterize the recent past. Cowboy romanticism has waned perhaps, judging by the output of motion pictures on the subject. Pastoralist ideas have revived with the wave of urban disillusionment that has swept the nation. The recent crisis in farm credit has even revived the pawn concept. The Posse Comitatus, an extremist action group, sees another plot by eastern bankers to gain control of the nation’s food supply. Failures of small local banks, it argues, are part of the grand scheme.

The persistence of the four idealizations of plains life can be attributed largely to the rapid changes that have occurred during the short Anglo history of the region. Eastern sections of the country have experienced periods of relative stability, enabling a local value system and regional personality to emerge; the plains has not. The closest regional parallel may be southern California. Each place lacks a well-established past and thus has become a focus for a complex series of national myths. In California, a rapid progression of economies has led to an identification of the state with the concept of change itself and with worship of the new. The plains serves a nearly opposite function for the nation. It is the regional repository for several contradictory historical myths that apparently need to be maintained. Cowboys are perfect symbols for self-reliance and individualism, yeoman farmers for morality and democracy. The yokel appeared when urban America required a rural cousin to stand in contrast to its newly acquired sophistication.

Characteristics associated with the cowboy and the yeoman farmer, the two most positive myths, currently dominate the way plains residents and others see the region. A large national survey of college-age people in 1980, asked to characterize plains residents, produced the following familiar terms: friendly, easy-going, natural, honest, thoughtful, moral, and modest. Another set of traits traditionally associated with the plains is missing, however. Instead of imagery comparing the region to a vigorous and idealistic young adult, the identification is now with an older person. Survey participants from
the plains and elsewhere identified conservative and materialistic traits as more descriptive of the region than liberal and idealistic ones.

Living with these myths is not easy for plains residents. Youngsters and thoughtful adults alike find no satisfactory answer to questions of who they are and what they stand for. The imagery of cowboys and yeomen is somewhat flattering and therefore believed; still, they know that these myths cannot be more than partially applicable to their now largely commercial and urban existence. The hick associations too are half-believed, and plains residents fight against them feverishly with slogans such as "Oklahoma is O.K." and "everything's up-to-date in Kansas City." Overall, young plainsmen view their home region somewhat negatively and would move away from their states if they could. Such a perception of home was not found in other regions surveyed. Older plains residents seem to be happier, although no formal survey for this age group exists. Perhaps these people identify with the aging yeoman of the myth and focus on the advantages of rural life rather than on its limitations.

Some observers see signs that plains residents may eventually replace the myths with a culture more closely aligned with the realities of modern plains life. They point to the imposition of minerals severance taxes by several states. These new laws, by which the producer areas acquire money to invest in various economic development projects, let the region assume more control over its own destiny. Farmers too are becoming better organized, less willing to be under the thumb of forces beyond those of nature; this may lead to the disappearance of the pawn association. In short, it may be that enough time has passed for plainsmen to begin to develop a realistic self-identity.

The evolution of a more contemporary plains culture, however, is not yet complete; the region is still somewhat defensive and parochial. Nevertheless, there is reason for optimism. Plains life, through its isolation and agricultural heritage, is strongly connected to the land and to the past. As such, it can provide for the nation a touchstone for some fundamental values. A sense of morality survives here, along with a sense of community. Faddish, artificial values have not taken a strong hold. One key to a mature plains culture is a growing awareness that the positive values coming from a rootedness in place are important in giving meaning to life. Just as important, however, is the
simultaneous realization that these values may be maintained today without the stagnation and provincialism that traditionally have accompanied them. Modern communication and transportation systems have eliminated the extreme isolation that once produced these negative traits.

Suggested Readings


Chapter 2.

Environment and Early Peoples of Kansas

The Great Plains is the original home of man in the New World. As Roy E. Gridley, University of Kansas professor of English, explains in his article "Images from an Older Kansas," in 1898 fossil hunters in Logan County unearthed the skeleton of an extinct species of bison embedded with a man-made stone spearhead—clear evidence that man has lived on the Plains for at least ten thousand years. Gridley's article, originally published in The Kansas Art Reader, investigates "the images and perspectives that tell us what it is like to be human and, especially, to be human in Kansas." His collection of images of the land before it was settled discusses such issues as "counterfeit geography" (the desert-garden myths), pre-historic man, and early explorers and adventurers. One can see early Kansas through the writing of such early travelers as William Gilpin, Zebulon Pike, Josiah Gregg, and Francis Parkman.

James C. Malin (1893–1979), a brilliant and controversial University of Kansas historian trained in ecology, agronomy, and social science methodology, focuses his attention on "Kansas: Some Reflections on Culture Inheritance and Originality." In the study of the American West, he is part of the triumvirate, which also includes Frederick Jackson Turner and Walter Prescott Webb, from which this field of knowledge derives its theoretical constructs. Malin calls Kansas' boundaries
artificial and its environment a transition zone, a meeting ground where an intermingling of cultures occurs, where differences, not likenesses, were the rule. He traces Kansas population origins and town planning and answers the question, “How did New England wield as much influence as it did, and how was the legend about New England parentage and Puritanism imposed upon Kansas tradition contrary to so conspicuous a weight of available facts?”

The Kansa Indians are of special interest to William E. Unrau, professor of history at Wichita State University and author of several books on this tribe. Unrau concludes that while epidemic diseases such as smallpox and cholera were devastating to the Kansa, the white man’s policy of negligence and self-interest virtually destroyed the tribe. This frank account of neglect parallels the experiences of other American Indians throughout the country.

Images from an Older Kansas

Roy E. Gridley

I want to offer a collection of images of the land before it was settled and before those straight lines we call the boundaries of Kansas were drawn. It will be a brief portrait of the land before its wilderness, in the poet William Stafford’s phrase, “subsided and became a state.” I hope this perspective from an earlier time will add to the rich variety of Kansas images.

The Prairie-Plains region was the subject of a letter written to the New York National Intelligencer in October of 1857. The letter writer

was William Gilpin, who lived in Independence, Missouri. Gilpin was an interesting man. He was a visionary and a dreamer who had the habit of looking (in his mind’s eye) out over the unsettled areas of western America and imagining what the future might bring. He was also a systematic and rather tough-minded collector of information and statistics about the western regions. When he looked westward across the recently created Territory of Kansas, Gilpin did not see the bloody border warfare going on in eastern Kansas or the struggle between Free-Staters and Slave-Staters that made Kansas such an important national issue in the 1850s. Rather, he saw something that led him to attack what he called the “counterfeit geography” that had for half a century described the Plains as the Great American Desert. Gilpin recognized the fertility and future productivity of the region and was angry at Eastern misunderstanding. Three years later, Gilpin included the letter as one chapter in his geographical treatise *The Central Gold Region*, a title probably designed, as James Malin suggests, to attract public attention so that Gilpin could tell his readers of treasures other than gold that lay in the American interior. The gold was in the mountain West. The notion that there might be gold on the Plains was never seriously entertained once Coronado reported to his king that in 1542 at Quivira the “natives there gave me a piece of copper that an Indian wore suspended from his neck. I am sending it to the viceroy of New Spain, for I have not seen any other metal in this region except this and some copper jingle bells. . . .” Gilpin was but one of several writers who, in the 1850s, were revising the image of the Plains as a desert. But the prophetic tone of Gilpin’s language separates him from the more tentative and careful prose of, say, the reports of the topographical engineers. Gilpin opens his letter with a fine declamatory assertion:

There is a radical misapprehension in the popular mind as to the true character of the “Great Plains of America,” as complete as that which pervaded Europe respecting the Atlantic Ocean during the whole historic period prior to COLUMBUS. These PLAINS are not deserts, but the opposite, and are the cardinal basis of the future empire of commerce and industry now erecting itself upon the North American Continent. They are calcareous, and form the PASTORAL GARDEN of the world.
So Gilpin opens his letter. Had not events during the next three or four decades proved him a fairly accurate prophet, he might seem to be using language in a rather magical manner: by calling something by a different name he could change its reality. The Great American Desert did not immediately blossom into “the PASTORAL GARDEN of the world” because of Gilpin’s loud words to the New York newspaper. But within three, at most four decades, the “desert” of Kansas had been banished and was replaced with farms and towns. Railways, telephone systems, steam-driven farm machinery, electricity were all there before the century turned. And there were about a million people, just as many as in California.

The “counterfeit geography” that Gilpin and others had to attack so that people could even imagine such rapid settlement and development had been built up during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1810 Zebulon Montgomery Pike had foreseen that “These vast plains of the western hemisphere may become in time equally celebrated as the sandy deserts of Africa.” The region must of necessity, Pike thought, be left “to the wandering and uncivilized aborigines of the country.” A year later, 1811, Henry Brackenridge found in these grasslands a “resemblance to the Steppes of Tartary, or the Saara’s of Africa.” Stephen Long and Edwin James made the same comparisons in 1823, and James prophesied that “this region may forever remain the unmolested haunt of the native hunter, the bison, and the jackall.” By 1832, Washington Irving, with yet livelier imagination foresaw that in this region “may spring up new and mongrel races, like new formations in geology, the amalgamation of the ‘debris’ and ‘abrasions’ of former races, civilized and savage. . . .” These were the notions Gilpin challenged. As he comes to the close of his letter of 1857, Gilpin rather surprisingly accepts the comparison to the Old World deserts; but he accepts the comparison only to the extent that the ancient Middle East was the “cradle of civilization.” “The atmosphere of the Great Plains,” he writes almost lyrically, “is perpetually brilliant with sunshine, tonic, healthy and inspiring to the temper.” The region, he says,

corresponds with and surpasses the historic climate of Syria and Arabia, from whence we inherit all that is ethereal and refined in our system of civilization, our religion, our sciences, our alphabet, our
The Territory of Kansas has become in Gilpin’s imagination the future seat of a great and refined civilization.

I have lingered over Gilpin’s letter because it is a brief and forceful expression of an idea that runs through a lot of Kansas art: the dramatic change of the Great American Desert from a sterile wasteland fit only for the primitive and nomadic savage into a productive agricultural region (a kind of garden), a fertile and healthy home for farmer and townsman alike. The theme receives its fullest expression in those stories and novels in which the homesteaders coming to an empty land do—by hard work and hope—create farms, schools, churches and towns.

More recently the wilderness that was Kansas remains as a useful measure of what man has been able to make out of it. In a land where,
in the novelist Wright Morris' phrase, "there is little to see but plenty of room to look."

Before the Spanish came out onto these plains in the sixteenth century, Europeans had not known such extensive grasslands since the end of the last Ice Age when forests invaded the savannas of Europe and drove out the large grazing animals. People long accustomed to living among mountains and forests found the empty rolling grasslands strange and unusual. They still do. The historian Walter Prescott Webb comments on this experience in his *The Great Plains*. Most of Webb's book is an account of the difficulties forest men or "timber-dwellers" experienced when they tried to adapt their old ways of life to the Plains. In the final chapter, Webb allows himself to speculate on what he calls the "Mysteries of the Plains."

"It may be permitted to approach," Webb begins cautiously, "the mysterious effect of the Plains on the human mind through an inquiry into the place of man's origin or differentiation." If man's "primal home," he goes on, were the forest then man might upon encountering the Plains feel alien sensations of fear, wonder, awe and surprise so often expressed in Plains writing. But what if "he became man on the plains and not the forest?"

If man did become what he is on the plains, and not in "warm forest-clad land," then perhaps it was natural for him to reenter the old familiar environment with dim stirrings of deeply embedded racial memories; to return with a certain abandon and joy to a closer association with horses and cattle, after an interval of some millions of years in the forests.

All great ideas, we are told, are essentially poetic. The notion of grasslands as the original home for man and of that "home" persisting in racial memory is such an idea. And it is an idea that may find expression in the art of Kansas.

Not even our most imaginative artists, I suppose, would ever claim that human beings first evolved here on our own Prairie-Plains. But artists might find suggestive the thought that the Plains were the *first home for man in the New World*. In 1898 some fossil hunters in a draw above the Smoky Hill in Logan County unearthed the skeleton of an extinct species of bison. Embedded in this fossil was a man-made stone spearhead: clear evidence that human beings were hunting on
the Plains of western Kansas when now-extinct animals grazed that land.

Human beings have been making artifacts in Kansas for a long time. That spearhead found in Logan County deserves a place in the minds of people who think about art in Kansas. Numerous later finds of large bison and elephant kills have confirmed that human beings have lived on the Plains for at least ten thousand years. And it is generally assumed that these early hunters, after crossing over the Bering Straits, came directly to the Plains, then dispersed later through the mountain passes to the west, down the streams to the east, or along the mountains into Mexico and eventually into South America. These plains are the original home of man in the New World.

Recently computers have been pressed into service to try to estimate the numbers of these early hunters as well as the numbers of the animals they hunted. The question has even been raised about whether widespread early hunting contributed to the extinction of the giant bison and elephants of the Plains. This question, like the one that asks how much the prairie fires set by early man helped to keep trees out of the grasslands, is extremely speculative. Perhaps they are stuff for artists rather than scientists. How might a Kansas artist use the rich record of human experience found in Waldo Wedel's *Archeology of Kansas* or *Prehistoric Man on the Great Plains*? The only person I know who has quite literally used fossils—shark teeth, vertebra, rib bones and fins—as artistic material is the folk artist Mrs. Earnest Fick of Oakley.

In the early 1800s travellers on the Plains were curious about just where the Indians had originally come from, but these travelers were less certain about the answer than are anthropologists today. In the 1830s the notion was widespread that the Indians were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. The painter George Catlin, who had lived among the Plains Indians for nearly a decade, spent many pages of his *Letters and Notes* (1844) comparing the similarities of the Indians to the ancient Hebrews. Catlin, however, eventually rejects the idea and suggests instead that the Indians may have migrated across the Bering Straits. To Francis Parkman in 1846, the idea of ancient Hebrew descent for the Indians is an "absurd notion." Watching a group of Oglala Sioux mourn a member of their band, he comments with light humor:
... the Indians raised in concert their cries of lamentation over the corpse, and among them Shaw clearly distinguished those strange sounds resembling the word "Halleluyah," which, together with some other accidental coincidences, has given rise to the absurd notion that the Indians are descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel.

A part of the general idea was that the North American Indians, who had domesticated no grazing animals, had not only descended from but had degenerated from the Old World herding tradition of Abraham and Isaac. A year after Parkman, Lewis Garrard, watching some Cheyenne take sweat baths near the Arkansas, comments wryly:

To those fond of speculation on the origin and probability of the North American Indians belonging to the lost tribes of Israel, I would say here that these Indians purify themselves before entering upon the performance of their religious duties.

In *Commerce of the Prairies* (1844), Josiah Gregg, an older, better informed and more systematic man than either Parkman or Garrard, declined to enter into such speculations. He did, however, find in the Plains Indians "a strong resemblance to the patriarchs of old" and thought that resemblance some proof of their "Asiatic origin." Gregg, who always felt awkward and uncomfortable when forced to return periodically to "civilization," compared the Indians to the Queen of Sheba's tribe when, in a humorous passage, he expresses his desire to spread my bed with mustang and the buffalo, under the broad canopy of heaven, —there to seek to maintain undisturbed my confidence in men, by fraternizing with the little prairie dogs and wild colts, and the still wilder Indians—the unconquered Sabaeans of the Great American Desert.

Travellers on the Prairie-Plains before 1800 were not as given to comparing the Indians to more ancient and less civilized peoples of the Old World. (There are lots of comparisons to Tartars, Huns, Mongols in accounts written from, say, 1810 to 1860). In the early Spanish and French accounts life among the primitive peoples of the region is portrayed in fact, quite favorably. Indeed, in some of these accounts there appears to be something like an evocation of the Golden
Age, that ideal early world of legend in which all life was innocent, free, prosperous, and pleasant.

The acknowledged father of the Great American Desert is Zebulon Montgomery Pike. His account of his 1806–1807 expedition across present Kansas and eastern Colorado clearly fixed the image of a dry and sterile desert upon the landscape. Yet, read as a whole, his notebooks and his appendix to *An Account* (1810), "Dissertation on Louisiana," reveal rather careful discriminations in his descriptions of the grasslands as he moves from east to west. Coming up the timbered and well-watered Osage River valley, Pike had by early September, 1806, come out onto the grasslands of eastern Kansas. On September 4, on the Marmaton near Fort Scott he made this entry in his notebook:

> We found a most delightful basin of clear water, of 25 paces diameter and about 100 circumference, in which we bathed; found it deep and delightfully pleasant. Nature scarcely ever formed a more beautiful place for a farm. We returned to camp about dusk, when I was informed that some of the Indians had been dreaming and wished to return. Killed one deer, one turkey, one racoon. Distance 13 miles.

Pike’s notebook style is generally prosaic and factual. The measuring of the "bason" and the listing of the game killed and miles traveled is typical of that style. That his Osage guides had been "dreaming" and wished to return to their villages is, as subsequent entries show, not an exotic primitive phenomenon but a mere inconvenience. But the pleasant bathing in the clear water leads to unexpected dreaming by Pike himself: here nature had formed a "beautiful place for a farm." In his "Dissertation," Pike expanded and elaborated this brief note to describe the general region:

> The country around the Osage Villages, is one of the most beautiful the eye ever beheld. . . . the extensive prairies crowned with rich and luxuriant grass and flowers—gently diversifed by the rising swells, and sloping lawns—presenting to the warm imagination the future seats of husbandry, the numerous herds of domestic animals, which are no doubt destined to crown with joy those happy plains. . . . From the Osage towns to the source of the Osage river, there is no difference in the appearance of the country, except that on the south
and east, the view of the prairies becomes unbounded, and is only limited by the imbecility of our sight.

Pike moved eastward from the Marmaton, across the Flint Hills, and crossed the Smoky Hill somewhere between Lindsborg and Salina. He then turned northward, spent some rainy days in the "mountainous" terrain along the Saline, then continued through Republic County to meet with the Republican Pawnee in an effort to get them to replace their Spanish flag with an American one. Moving southwesterly from the Pawnee villages, some of his men became temporarily lost in the Cheyenne Bottoms. By the time Pike’s party came onto the Arkansas River the aspect of the country had changed. The imagined future farms to the east gave way to the version of primitive life quite similar to that we have seen in earlier Plains writing:
The borders of the Arkansaw river may be termed the paradise (terrestrial) of our territories, for the wandering savage. Of all countries ever visited by the footsteps of civilized man, there never was one probably that produced game in greater abundance.

The future herds of domestic animals Pike had dreamed of on the Marmaton have given way to wild game, the future farmers to the present savage. Farmers, Pike thinks, will never be able to make this land their own. And he believes this land will form a useful barrier to hold back the American pioneers who are too "prone to rambling and extending themselves." From the Great Bend of the Arkansas westward, the September landscape became progressively drier and more akin to the "sandy desarts of Africa."

Pike's "sandy desarts" are, of course, on the upper reaches of the Arkansas, perhaps in southwest Kansas but probably in eastern Colorado. In 1811, the year after Pike's Account, George Sibly was on the lower Smoky Hill. Sibly saw something quite different when he came over a rise from the east and looked out over the country around, perhaps, present Chapman or Solomon:

We overlooked a vast extent of level meadow ground through which were to be traced a great number of rivulets and creeks, glittering in the sunshine and hastening to the main branches of the Konza. Numerous herds of elk and antelope frisked in the gay flowering plain giving life and animation to the charming scene.

The same year, Henry Brackenridge was out on the grasslands. His assessment of the land is quite similar to that of Pike's, especially in his emphasis that the Plains will always form a barrier to farmers. However, he muses, if there are no Indians the country might support some small, widely scattered settlements:

This country, it is certain, can never become agricultural, but is in many respects highly favorable for the multiplication of flocks and herds. Those delightful spots where the beauty and variety of landscape might challenge the fancy of the poet invite the pastoral life. How admirably suited to that interesting animal, the sheep, are those clean smooth meadows, of surface infinitely varied by hill and
dale, covered with a short sweet grass intermixed with thousands of the most beautiful flowers, undeformed by a single weed.

In 1831, Josiah Gregg, a sickly Independence lawyer, made a tour onto the Plains on the advice of his doctors. He joined a Santa Fe caravan, and for over a decade he was engaged in trade between the eastern settlements and Mexico. In 1844 he published Commerce of the Prairies. The book is so full of accurate information for travelers and traders, of careful and scientific observation of geography, flora, fauna, climate, of interviews with Indians and their white captives, of anecdote and humor, that Gregg’s book remains the best ever written about the Plains. His description and classification of Indian tribes according to language and custom has not been greatly improved by modern anthropologists. It is a big, rich book; here I can only relate a few specific passages.

On his first journey, Gregg’s party was only about a month behind the party of William Sublette and Jedediah Smith. Gregg would not learn that Smith had been killed by Comanche on the Cimarron until he arrived in Santa Fe. But there was great anxiety within his party when they met nearly three thousand Comanche on the Cimarron. They parleyed with some of the chiefs, then moved into encampment; guards were doubled. That evening when some forty Indians approached the camp, Gregg’s party made ready to fire; the Indians, however, turned out to be women. They were turned away, but a horse was apparently stolen by them. The next day Gregg’s party continued into extremely dry country, south of the Cimarron. The Indians followed at a distance. When the party was rather desperate for water and feeling “lost on that inhospitable desert, which had been the scene of so many former scenes of suffering,” a couple of Indians approached. To the surprise and relief of the party, the Indians returned the “lost” horse, then led them into an “elysian vale” where there was water, wood, and grass for the stock. However, Gregg goes on, the traders were not “destined to rest long in peace”:

About midnight we were all aroused by a cry of alarm the like of which had not been heard since the day Don Quixote had his famous adventure with the fulling-mills; and I am not quite sure but some of our party suffered as much from fright as poor Sancho Panza did on
that memorable occasion. But Don Quixote and Sancho only heard the thumping of the mills and the roaring of waters; while we heard the thumping of Indian drums, accompanied by occasional yells, which our excited fancies immediately construed into notes of the fearful warsong.

Alarms and guns were raised but nothing happened. The "fearful warsong" had been but a "serenade." During the next several days the horde of Indians crowded into the party's various encampments serenading, trading, raising dust and noise, stealing a little. Soon the fearful three thousand savages had become, in their excessive friendliness, a nuisance and annoyance. The party finally stole away early one morning, glad to be rid of the Comanche.

In this incident and others Gregg successfully debunks, with humor and commonsense, the image of the Plains Indian as a dangerous and treacherous savage. He consistently counsels trade and reciprocal gift giving. Toward the end of the book he summarizes this attitude, beginning with a slightly sarcastic allusion to Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), which was but one of many books of the period to romantically exploit the dangers of the Plains:

A "tour of the Prairies" is certainly a dangerous experiment for him who would live a quiet contented life at home among his friends and relatives; not so dangerous to life and health, as prejudicial to his domestic habits. Those who have lived pent up in our large cities, know but little of the broad, unembarrassed freedom of the Great Western Prairies. Viewing them from a snug fireside, they seem crowded with dangers, with labors and sufferings; but once upon them, and these appear to vanish—they are soon forgotten.

As well as debunking popular notions about the Plains, this passage also sounds what is a persistent personal theme in the book: Gregg's almost pathological discomfort whenever he is periodically forced to live within "civilized communities." By Gregg's time the Plains have become a place of escape for civilized men, not merely a refuge for degenerate men like James Fenimore Cooper's Ishmael Bush. The Santa Fe trader or the Easterner or European tourist can now participate in the natural freedom previously reserved for the nomadic aborigine. The white man on the Plains
knows no government—no laws, save those of his own creation and adoption. He lives in no society which he must look up to or propitiate. The exchange of this untrammelled condition—this sovereign independence, for a life of civilization, where both his physical and moral freedom are invaded at every turn, by the complicated machinery of social institutions, is certainly likely to commend itself to but few, —not even to all those who have been educated to find their enjoyments in the arts and elegancies peculiar to civilized society; —as is evinced by the frequent instances of men of letters, of refinement and wealth, voluntarily abandoning society for a life upon the Prairies. . . .

By Gregg's time the wilderness of the Plains has become a place to escape to. We all know that use of the natural world. It is a place to get away from it all. This human impulse is not new or unusual. The pattern is found in all literatures, Greek and Roman classics, Shakespeare's plays, Chinese stories, modern novels. It goes something like this: people get tired and dissatisfied with the complexity and often the corruption of life in the city; they flee to the simplicity and freedom of the natural world. There in "Nature" one has the time and the peace to remember or to learn for the first time the essential simple truths of human life. In the older literature the character will usually return to the city a happier and wiser person. What Gregg learns from the wilderness is the delight of freedom from artificial social codes, and he learns the importance of relying not upon others but upon himself. For Gregg, there can be no willing return to civilization once one has known the Plains. It is rather odd to see a reversal of this pattern in later Kansas literature in which characters feel oppressed and hemmed in by the small farms and towns and escape to the city.

I must linger a bit longer with Gregg. His is a difficult book to leave. Gregg accepts the general notion that "these great Steppes seem only fitted for the haunts of the mustang, the buffalo, the antelope, and their migratory lord, the prairie Indian." Yet during his long experience he has seen changes in the Plains: increased travel, decrease in buffalo, changes in Indian ways. Toward the end of his chapter on the "Geography of the Prairies," Gregg allows himself a moment of visionary speculation about the future of these "Steppes":
The high plains seem too dry and lifeless to produce timber; yet might not the vicissitudes of nature operate a change likewise upon the seasons? Why may we not suppose that the genial influences of civilization—that extensive cultivation of the earth—might contribute to the multiplication of showers, as it certainly does of fountains? Or that the shady groves, as they advance upon the prairies, may have some effect upon the seasons? . . . Then may we not hope that these sterile regions might yet be thus revived and fertilized, and their surface covered one day by flourishing settlements to the Rocky mountains?

Gregg is one of the first to dream the dream of more trees and rainfall on the High Plains. He seems unaware, though, that a more genial climate, cultivated earth, shady groves and settlements will limit or end the primitive freedom he has elsewhere celebrated.

One of the young men of “refinement” who had abandoned society for a “life upon the Prairies” had a much different vision of the future of the Plains. He was George Catlin, who had spent nearly the whole of the 1830s living among and painting the Plains Indians. In 1844, the same year as Gregg’s book, Catlin published his London edition of Letters and Notes, Customs, and Conditions of North American Indians. Toward the end of his first volume, Catlin laments the increased slaughter of the buffalo “in those desolate fields of silence”; he knows that once the buffalo is “extinguished” so too will be the “peace and happiness (if not the actual existence)” of the Indians. Catlin then has a “splendid contemplation” about the Plains Indians as he imagines them as they might in the future be seen, (by some great protecting policy of government) preserved in their pristine beauty and wildness, in a magnificent park, where the world could see for ages to come, the native Indian in his classic attire, galloping his wild horse, with sinewy bow, and shield and lance, amid the fleeting herds of elks and buffaloes. What a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages! A nation’s Park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature’s beauty!

By the early 1840s, the “desert” and its primitive peoples are no longer thought to be a barrier to agricultural settlement; in Catlin’s mind, at
least, the Prairie-Plains were now something to be “preserved” for the future contemplation of America’s “refined citizens.” The end of the nomadic stage of human life on the Plains was in sight.

One of America’s most refined young men, Francis Parkman, visited Catlin’s London exhibition of paintings and Indian artifacts in 1844; back in Boston the following year, he made plans for his “tour of amusement and curiosity” on the Plains. By the time he left Boston for Westport in the spring of 1846, he had probably read both Gregg and Catlin. If so, Parkman came to the Plains in full knowledge that this wilderness would soon pass away; he wanted to see it before it was gone.

His *The Oregon Trail* (1849) has become the best-known book about travel on the Prairie-Plains. But the title is misleading, suggesting as it does covered wagons loaded with families making their way to the Pacific coast. Parkman never got to the mountains and almost his entire journey lay within the area that would, in 1854, become the Territory of Kansas. The book is packed with images of an older Kansas from the minute Parkman leaves the “mudholes of Westport” to ride out onto the “green, ocean-like expanse of prairie, stretching swell beyond swell to the horizon” in present Johnson County. He is lost for several days north of Leavenworth and eaten up by mosquitoes while trying to bathe near, probably, Seneca. Feeling strongly the immense emptiness of the land, he stands late at night on the Little Blue, watching a huge red moon rise and imagining that he is the only being who has “consciousness for many a league around.” Near Lakin the party fearfully prepares for a night attack from Comanche or Pawnee, who never show up. There is an especially successful buffalo hunt near Larned; they gather ripe wild grapes and plums on Cow Creek. One member of the party tries, unsuccessfully, to cadge some whiskey off the Missouri Volunteers of Price’s regiment on its way to the Mexican War. After months on the Plains, Parkman is delighted with the “forests and meadows of Council Grove . . . ash, oak, elm, maple, and hickory, festooned with enormous grape-vines, purple with fruit.” He rides out again “with regret into the broad light of the open prairie.”

Of course, we can still experience much of what Parkman did. We can watch the moon, pick wild plums, get soaked by a sudden rainstorm or bitten by mosquitoes. We can hunt deer instead of buffalo.
We can even know the fear of attacks at night by savages as the people around Holcomb knew that fear and recorded it in Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*. But the sense of the land being a wilderness is gone. It was already passing when Parkman came to Kansas. That is why he came. But Parkman was unprepared for the suddenness with which the primitive world would be swept away.

*The Oregon Trail* was published in 1849. Three years later, in 1852, Parkman added a preface to a new edition. In it he laments the loss of the wilderness:

>This, too, shall pass away, was the doom long ago pronounced on all that is primitive in life or scenery within the limits of our national domain; but no one could have dreamed that the decree would find so swift an execution. . . .

Primeval barbarism is assailed at last in front and rear, from the Mississippi and from the Pacific; and, thus, brought between two fires, it cannot long sustain itself. With all respect to civilization, I cannot help regretting this final consummation; and such regret will not be misconstrued by anyone who has tried the prairie and mountain life, who has learned to look with affectionate interest on the rifle that was once his companion and protector, the belt that sustained his knife and pistol, and the pipe which beguiled the tedious hours of his midnight watch, while men and horses lay sunk in sleep around him.

In another two years, Kansas would become a territory, stretching from Missouri to the Continental Divide. Soon it would be a state crossed by railroads, dotted by farm towns and cattle towns and rapidly filling up with homesteaders.

By 1872, Parkman added a second preface. He now recognizes that his book “reflects the image of an irrevocable past.” He complains that “buffalo give way to tame cattle, farm-houses [are] scattered along the water-courses, and wolves, bears, and Indians are numbered among the things of the past.” The “disenchanting screech of the locomotive” breaks the earlier silence; and “woman’s rights invade the fastnesses of the Arapahoes.”

Parkman, we might say, is getting a little crotchety. Twenty years later he becomes downright grouchy about rapid settlement, as he writes yet another preface, this time for the 1892 edition illustrated by
Frederic Remington. He describes the change much to the detriment of the new “civilization”:

For Indian teepees, with their trophies of bow, lance, shield, and dangling scalplocks, we have towns and cities, resorts of health and pleasure seekers, with an agreeable society, Paris fashions, the magazines, the latest poem, and the last novel. The sons of civilization, drawn by the fascinations of a fresher and bolder life, thronged the western wilds in multitudes which blighted the charm that had lured them.

The buffalo is gone, and of all his millions nothing is left but bones. Tame cattle and fences of barbed wire have supplanted his vast herds and boundless grazing grounds. . . . the wolves that howled at evening about the traveller’s camp-fire have succumbed to arsenic and hushed their savage music. The wild Indian is turned into an ugly caricature of his conqueror; and that which made him romantic, terrible, and hateful, is in large measure scourged out of him. The slow cavalcade of horsemen armed to the teeth has disappeared before parlor cars and the effeminate comforts of modern travel.
Kansas: Some Reflections on Culture Inheritance and Originality

James C. Malin

Kansas as a Geographical Area

Kansas as a geographical area is an accident of politics, or possibly, a consequence of a series of accidents. Its boundaries have not made sense according to any frame of reference based upon tangible facts and logical conclusions drawn from facts. For many reasons the eastern boundary would lie more appropriately about fifty miles east of its historical position, but repeated attempts to effect even modest adjustments were futile. In terms of types of farming, the northern tier of counties has belonged to the Nebraska corn belt. On the other hand, however, serious consideration was given at least twice to proposals for the annexation to Kansas of that part of Nebraska that lies south of the Platte river. Several plausible, if not sound, reasons were advanced for such a change. But many Kansans objected that the area in question contained too many Democrats. The southern boundary line was bungled on account of the slavery prohibition, the Indian barrier, and misunderstanding about Indian reservation limits. The territory of Kansas extended to the Rocky Mountains, but for peculiar reasons, when Kansas became a state, Kansans voluntarily restricted themselves to the country east of 102° west longitude. The foregoing citations applied to Kansas limits in relation to other states and territories, but still other boundary schemes referred primarily or only to internal matters. Numerous proposals were made to divide...
Kansas either into an East and West Kansas, or into a North and South Kansas. But tangible facts and logic made little headway against emotional attachments to the combinations of historical traditions associated with a geographical area and its people.

Subsequent to Lincoln's dictum of 4 July 1861, denying the sacredness of a state, so-called state government in the nation was restricted by successive assumptions of power on the part of the central government until all true self-government disappeared. The vestiges of state structure survived, to be sure, but as little more than administrative agencies of the central authority. Yet, the symbols and legends of state sovereignty survived, so far as they had any meaning, and were filled in by each generation and social group according to the subjective need of the hour. In states other than Kansas, each in its own peculiar character, the people behaved in a similar fashion. Persistent always, however, was an overriding loyalty to the symbols and legends embodied in its traditions. Few, and Kansas was not among them, were willing to discard even their antiquated constitutions.

**Kansas in an Ecological Perspective**

Plant and animal life of Kansas necessarily is that of midlatitudes regardless of whether or not "native," in the popular pre-Columbian discovery sense, or introduced by recent European man. Thus the species and varieties of life found in the area represent those peculiarly adapted to such a geographical habitat, as well as outliers of those most specifically adapted to the high and low latitudes. In this latter sense, Kansas lies in a transition zone, or a belt of overlapping margins of dispersion patterns occupied by marginal species of life forms. In this belt, the more distinctly northern and southern life forms meet and intermingle.

The Kansas area is transitional also in its east-west variations of both diminishing moisture and rising elevation to the westward. Thus such species as lie in the fringes of optimal environment, both in a north-south and an east-west orientation, represent elements of unusual risk as pertains to survival in relation to the short-term fluctuations of weather and other hazards.
Kansas is situated in the central portion of the North American grassland. In its mid-latitude position, between the Platte river on the north and the Canadian-Arkansas rivers on the south, both the east-west zoning and the north-south zoning of life forms are more sharply differentiated than in any other part of the grassland. This is particularly conspicuous as relates to the east-west orientation. The true forest country lies to the east, and the true moist-desert to the west.

**Kansas According to Primitive Peoples**

In this area called Kansas the occupancy by primitive peoples who had attained a Folsom type culture dates from about ten thousand years ago. Within some two thousand years of the present, later primitive cultures had invaded the area from the desert southwest, from the forested southeast, and from the woodlands of the continent east of the Mississippi river. Probably these invasions occurred more than once. If so, this central grassland was long a meeting ground where an intermingling of cultures occurred. Individual village sites reveal to the archaeologist successive periods of occupance, in some cases, interrupted by periods of apparent abandonment in which the site was covered by several inches of wind-blown material. Thus the dust-storms of the grass country, and of major proportions, are demonstrated to have occurred long before Europeans appeared on the scene. For several centuries prior to the modern European discovery of the western world, the Great Plains as well as the prairie was occupied by people living in villages and dependent largely upon agriculture for food supply, but supplemented by wild game. These were the peoples who were displaced by European culture within the four centuries usually labeled modern history and documented by written records. In this perspective it would not be unexpected if resemblances occurred in some of the patterns of behavior of European man in America.
European-American Forest Culture in the Grassland

In the process of displacing an occupying Indian population and of resettling the area with men of European-American culture, each of the invading people was a unique individual and new to the area. He brought with him his peculiar personality and his cultural heritage. By the experience of living together, diverse elements were blended into a new culture. Even people coming from the same eastern state brought variants of their unique localities. Differences, not likeness, were the rule. Railroads within land-mass interiors had not exercised extensively their leveling effects until late in the nineteenth century. These points are more than commonplaces and have usually been lost from view. More attractive have been the over-simplified generalizations about Puritan, slaveholder, abolitionist, northerner, southerner, republican, democrat, etc.

The high degree of mobility of population poses problems for the consideration of the historian. To what extent did first comers determine or impose a pattern of culture that would survive in spite of a rapid turnover of population? To be more specific, do the political institutions once established mold the culture regardless of the changing population that implements them? Stated in opposite extremes, did the changing population modify and direct the functional operation of the institutions regardless of their origin and their first institutional form as established in Kansas? If the answer rejects both extremes, may the pragmatic adjustments be determined quantitatively, or only subjectively?

The sources of Kansas population (107,209), according to the federal census of 1860, assigned to states of birth are given on the following page. The first generalization to be made from these figures is both the absolute and relative statistical unimportance of the New England contribution, 3.9% of the whole. The contribution of the strictly northern states' 16% is only slightly larger than the lower south's 13.5%. Clearly, the border states peopled Kansas and most conspicuous as a group were the three Ohio valley states north of the river of that name: Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, totaling 28.8%. A special explanation is in order about that group of states. They had been peopled largely from south of the river and south of the Mason-Dixon line. A conspicuous culture trait is critical to this discussion. Although they were antislavery in
Sources of Kansas Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern tier of states west of New England</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total, northern states</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower South</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border states east of Appalachian Mountains North</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border states north of Ohio river</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total northern border</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border states east of Appalachian Mountains South</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border states south of Ohio river</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total southern border</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total border states</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sentiment, they were even more pronounced anti-Negro. So far as generalization can be accurate in the matter, they tended to take a position that the only way in which Negroes would be tolerated among them was as slaves—but emphatically, they did not want Negroes, either free or slave. The seeming paradox involved in this situation is that people sometimes found themselves to be antislavery and proslavery at one and the same time. A similar generalization holds largely for the population of all border states, including Missouri, except that possibly after 1850 the balance turned in Ohio. It is only in this context that the position of Missouri can be reinterpreted in accordance with facts. Missouri was not so much interested in slavery as such as in being embarrassed by a large free Negro population. In this context also, Missouri’s interest in making Kansas a slave state is intelligible.

The peopling of Kansas by the border states was decisive, therefore, in giving the free white-state point of view an overwhelming majority. In December 1855, in adopting the Topeka state constitution, the freestate party voted separately on the Negro question and by a vote of three to one decided to exclude free Negroes from the state if
admitted under that instrument. The Wyandotte state constitution of 1859 incorporated a modified white-state proviso in restricting participation in political affairs to white men. This position was confirmed by popular vote twice after the Civil War, and Negro suffrage came to Kansas only with the fifteenth amendment to the federal constitution. Racial integration in the public schools of Topeka came only in 1954 in consequence of a ruling of the United States Supreme Court. The basic culture trait had a way of persisting in spite of the legends about John Brown, and the relation of Kansas to the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery.

As a whole, the Wyandotte constitution had been derived primarily from the Ohio constitution of 1850 as a model. The civil code of the territory adopted by the first freestate territorial legislature (1858) and continued thereafter under statehood was based also upon that of Ohio. The criminal code, however, followed a different pattern, being based upon the Missouri code, which in turn reached back to Kentucky and Virginia. In view of the course of Kansas territorial history and the prolonged war on the “Bogus” legislatures of 1855 and 1857 and their laws, this adoption of the Missouri criminal code in 1858 and its continuance was one of the most remarkable occurrences of the territorial controversy.

The foregoing population analyses and interpretations of culture traits and institutions are related to the census of 1860 and state beginnings. Analyses of successive census enumerations of 1870 and later, national and state, reveal a migration pattern that was little different. Thus the original culture traits were reinforced by people similarly oriented. In other words, the original culture pattern as registered in 1860 did not necessarily determine the attitude for the next century. The major additions to the population only continued in the basic pattern. But this whole situation, additions to population—and losses—, requires further consideration in its own right, featuring population structure and the meaning of mobility.

Town Planning

Another approach to the study of Kansas culture is an analysis of town planning. Three types appear: those oriented to river navigation;
to the public square; and to main streets. By coincidence, Kansas was being settled during the 1850s when the steam locomotive on rails was challenging the steam boat on rivers and before the outcome of that new technology was fully evident. The lag in culture evaluation of rail innovation was conspicuous, accentuated by the fact that the "old" system itself had been an innovation to the preceding generation. So substantial had been the advantages of steam navigation that it appeared secure. And besides, it was in the age-old tradition of water communication as fundamental to the organization of all society. The novelty of rail communication was thus doubly difficult to appraise. Familiar to all, however, was the orientation of river towns on the levee, just as on the seacoast all towns were oriented on the harbor water front. The street system must serve the river front and the levees. Wholesale and retail business establishments must occupy locations most convenient for unloading and breaking bulk for retail trade. Conversely, collecting and reshipment businesses must find places convenient for their peculiar requirements. Choice residence sites often occupied bluffs overlooking the river upstream from the commercial levee. The Kansas cities, both in Missouri and Kansas at the junction of the Kansas and the Missouri rivers, Leavenworth and Atchison, and lesser rivals on the right bank were all planned as typical river towns. Their immense advantage over inland towns was conspicuous during the first two decades of Kansas history. The coming of the railroad changed all that. Probably most town promoters thought that rails would be important primarily to supplement or complement river navigation. Only a few bold souls, who thought of rails as displacing altogether the river communication system, pointed out that in a railroad oriented culture, a river location might be a handicap—expansion being possible only in one direction. For the towns serving Kansas, on the west bank of the Missouri river, a railroad bridge was imperative, and the town that was first with such a facility might gain the decisive lead over rivals. The City of Kansas, Missouri (the old Westport Landing) dedicated its bridge in July 1869. Leavenworth and Atchison lagged, acquiring railroad bridges in 1872 and 1875 respectively.

Once the river town acquired its railroad, the next question was the effect of the new technology on the town's orientation. What, if anything, was the railroad equivalent of the levee as a unifying focus
of the whole city's activities? In the beginning, each railroad insisted upon serving itself first, and the town might be divided in support of the claims of the several roads. The idea of a jointly owned terminal railroad, switching, and transfer facility was slow in coming. Slow also was the conception of a union passenger station. Leavenworth's internal quarrels and rivalries certainly damaged its competitive strength, and to put the matter in that language may be an understatement.

The town built around a square was in the southern tradition where the county was the minimal unit of local government. This type of town planning had been carried north of the Ohio river along with other traits typical of southern culture. Thus, regardless of whether the immigrants to Kansas were from the southern states directly, or from the border states, they were accustomed to the public square orientation. Inland eastern Kansas towns of the territorial period were mostly built around squares, the so-called pro-slavery towns, and the towns founded by freestate immigrants from the Ohio river border areas.
The third type of town planning was to build the business houses along a main street: Lawrence, Topeka, and Manhattan being the most notable examples of New England design. Again, note should be taken that the New England type of planning was not conspicuous during the period of territorial beginnings. Circumstances altered cases, however, and the proslavery town of Franklin, about five miles east of Lawrence, was built along the California Road as its main street. The local situation, not imitation of New England, determined the plan.

After the Civil War, when central and western Kansas were settled, both of the latter town plans were used. County seat rivalries fostered the public square type, but often, even success in that enterprise did not always result in the dominance of the Square, as in Hill City, Ness City, Kinsley and Meade. Possibly the public square design was too pretentious. The village or small town could be accommodated in one or two blocks of business houses along a single street.

The railroad had its influence upon all inland towns. From them, unlike river towns, theoretically, railroads might radiate in all directions. In practice, where there was only one railroad, the main street often intersected it at approximately right angles, with the railway station near the point of intersection. Where there were two or more railroads, each tended to maintain its own service facilities regardless of town planning, and often destroying any unity of town orientation that might have been planned. But in these respects, after the Civil War, Kansas was no different from other western states. After World War I, motor highways have introduced a series of further reorientations of town organization, and the end is not yet. Highways might be routed through the town, around the town, or might by-pass it altogether.

Conclusion

The question that emerges from such an analysis as is presented here is not whether Kansas is a child of New England, but takes on a different form: how did New England wield as much influence as it did, and how was the legend about New England parentage and Puritanism imposed upon the Kansas tradition contrary to so conspicuous a weight of available facts?
The Civil War, the so-called reconstruction issues that came in its wake, the settlement of Kansas by an unusually large proportion of Union soldiers, the dominance of the Republican party, making Kansas virtually a one-party state, all worked to crystallize thinking along a fairly uniform pattern in which no doubt was entertained about the moral imperative—the North won the war, saved the Union, freed the slave, therefore the North was morally right, and the Republican party claimed the credit, virtually equating the Republican party with the North. In terms of the mental conditioning of a whole people, this process was most effectively carried out. The mind of the Kansan, if not committed already to this point of view before coming to Kansas, was thoroughly indoctrinated, not in the facts of this history, but in the legend about history.

In referring to the Union veterans of the Civil War in this connection, it is necessary to differentiate between Union veterans as a whole and the G.A.R. The latter as an organization had only a small membership or scarcely any representation in Kansas until late in the 1880s and 90s. Its influence even at that date lay, not in numbers, but in organization which often arbitrarily assumed the role of speaking and acting for all Union veterans, and the public and historians have tended to accept this generalization without investigation of the facts. Also, action of veterans as such was sometimes, and more often than realized by historians, erroneously attributed to the G.A.R. So far as the Civil War legend was involved, with its moral concerns, the influence that had shaped thought was not New England Puritanism in the direct conventional sense, but rather, patriotism cast in the mold of the moral imperative and associated directly with living issues, the Union and the abolition of slavery. And, parenthetically, emphasis is in order that this moral commitment even about abolition of slavery was largely in consequence of the course taken by the war and postwar retrospect, and should not be confused with the debated issue of the "cause" of the American Civil War. So much that crystallized in people's minds after the event—results—has been read back chronologically into prewar years and attributed to causes.

The complex of attitudes associated with the Civil War tradition—patriotism—attained, almost if not quite, the status of a secular religion. So far as theology in the conventional sense was concerned, to be sure, Kansans were overwhelmingly Protestant, not Puritan, in any legitimate
sense of that much-abused word. And the new scientific and philosophical ideas that were so potent in the nineteenth century in challenging theology came from Europe—Great Britain, Germany, and France. The conclusion seems justified that the challenge to theological orthodoxy by science and the higher criticism met with less intolerance than the challenge to patriotism as a secular orthodoxy.

The subject of education—formal education—would require an essay at least as long as the present paper to present even its minimal outlines—the net conclusion of such a discussion being that education was not administered conspicuously in the proper sense as learning, but illustrated rather the power of indoctrination, confused by a conflict between imitation of Eastern models and pragmatic functionalism, all of which discouraged originality.

At this point the paper is brought to an arbitrary close—time has run out with only a sampling of features of Kansas culture. In dealing with the facts of history as differentiated from the legends about them, the observation has often been made that the legends, even though false, may themselves become causes. In the present connection the argument would run, that although Kansas is not a child of New England, the legend about it being such operated as though the legend was true. From this line of reasoning a paradoxical conclusion might be drawn, that facts of history are false and that the legends, the false, are true, both in the causal sense.
Leslie Fiedler’s clever title *The Return of the Vanishing American* is symbolical of ameliorating conditions that have characterized the Native American community in recent years. It cannot be denied, of course, that many of the old problems persist. Abject poverty, lack of jobs, chronic disease, and shockingly short life expectancies are still the destiny of too many American Indians. Nevertheless, the availability of more professional health services, a recognition that traditional cultural practices are worthy of further development, and the enjoyment of an increasing share of the national government’s socio-economic cornucopia, indicate that the lot of the Indian will continue to improve. And that he will be with us in greater numbers seems apparent. Certainly it requires no expert analysis of contemporary population statistics in juxtaposition to those of the nation as a whole to realize that the “vanishing American” trend of the nineteenth century has been radically reversed.

Calculating the trend in Indian demography is a worthwhile endeavor. However, a preoccupation with its implications renders obscure all but the most monumental tragedies of the past. It is doubtful, for example, that the great smallpox epidemic of the late 1830’s, which caused the virtual annihilation of the Mandans, the obliteration of entire Aricharee, Assiniboine, and Crow villages, and the death of two thousand Pawnees in less than a year, will soon be forgotten. Or who can easily ignore the devastating epidemics in sixteenth-century Mexico, or in Canada, New England, and New York

during the early years of the French and Indian War? But less spectacular, the more sustained, and, in view of the time spans involved, the more insidious patterns of population decline have too often been ignored. It is instructive to note that two recent and widely read books dealing with the so-called "subjugation" of the plains Indians in the nineteenth century—Ralph Andrist's *The Long Death*, and Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*—do not even list the word "smallpox" in their respective indexes.

This is not to say that the basic thrust of Indian demography has escaped the attention of competent investigators, for surely the calculations of Angel Rosenblat, A. L. Kroeber, James Mooney, and Henry Dobyns are evidence of significant accomplishment. While they offer a variety of explanations for the substantial reduction of the Indian population in the wake of the white invasion—epidemic disease, ecological imbalance, and so on—their major focus nevertheless is on the quantitative dimension, i.e., how, on the basis of historical data, may we calculate the number of people inhabiting the New World on the eve of the white invasion? Dobyns' work is doubtless the most significant and controversial. Building his case on a trenchant analysis of the tendency to underestimate the aboriginal American population, he proposes that,

Approximately accurate estimates of aboriginal American population may be achieved by comparing the population of a given area at two or more times in order to establish population trends expressed as ratios of the size of the population at 1 time to its size at another. . . . Applying it [postulated depopulation ratios of 20 to 1] to more or less well-established historic nadir populations suggests that the New World was inhabited by approximately 90,000,000 persons immediately prior to discovery.

Responding to the "nadir population" thesis, one critic emphasized the difficulty of defining an Indian, since "the census definition is generally a cultural or a social one, not a biological one, but it is the 'biological Indian' with whom we must be concerned in making estimates." His point is well worth remembering, as anyone will agree who has examined the role of the mixbloods in North American Indian history at the time the alleged nadir population levels were reached.
This is only one example of the seemingly endless debate which engages the attention of the estimators, and it prompts one to wonder if ever the aboriginal population of the New World will be known with any degree of precision. Perhaps it does not really matter.

Meanwhile, barring the discovery of new documentary evidence and the construction of an estimative theory that can accommodate all the variables, might not the energies of aspiring ethno-historians and demographers be more productively applied to an appraisal of the evidence at hand, with the thought of determining not only how, but why particular groups of Indians at particular times were reduced in number? Given the simple fact that most tribes declined in population following the white invasion, is it not appropriate to inquire if these tragedies were, for the most part, unavoidable consequences of contact between alien cultures? Or, if the invading culture had the means—technical or otherwise—to check depopulation rates, why were these not more widely deployed? When it was apparent that a particular tribe had failed to accept or adjust to the cultural values of the invader, was this the signal for the frustrated "civilizer" to view the tribe's declining population with less concern, and, perhaps, to rationalize it as a normal consequence of indolence and "savagery"?

The tragic experience of the Kansa Indians suggests that tentative answers to some of these questions may be possible. One of the five tribes comprising what ethnologists have designated the Dheghia-Siouan linguistic group, the Kansa began their migration from the lower Ohio valley to present northeastern Kansas no later than the early seventeenth century. Whether they were fleeing in the face of some ominous threat to their survival, and whatever may have been their lot in prehistoric times, there is no doubt that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, depopulation for them came to be an almost routine part of their existence.

While Marquette's cartographer recorded their residence in the trans-Mississippi West as early as 1673, their first known population count was that of the French colonial official, Pierre Lemoyne Iberville. In an official mémoire dated June 20, 1702, Iberville noted that "1,500 familles" of "Les Canses" were living in the lower Mississippi valley. Utilizing Zebulon Pike's 1806 count of 1.2 children for each adult female as a guide, and assuming that each child had living parents at that time, it is reasonable to calculate the aggregate 1702 population at
about 4,800—if, in fact, Iberville’s informant, unlike subsequent
recorders, counted families and not individuals. Based on the only other
reliable account of the eighteenth century, the next half-century was
exceedingly tragic. Writing to his superiors on December 12, 1758,
Governor Louis Billourat de Kerlerec of French Louisiana reported that
the Kansa had once been a “very numerous” people, but “war that
they have had with the Pawnees and small-pox have extremely
weakened them. There remain today only two hundred and fifty to
three hundred men.” Again, applying Pike’s later ratio between
children and living parents, and in view of Perrin du Lac’s 1802 count
of 450 warriors, even a conservative estimate suggests that the tribe
may have been cut in half in less than two generations.

With the nineteenth century came the authority of the United States,
a decline in the European fur trade that had dominated the Kansa
economy for nearly a century, and more regular population counts.
As we have seen, Pike counted 1,465 persons in 1806—465 warriors,
500 women, and 600 children. George C. Sibley, the government factor
at Fort Osage, estimated the Kansa population at 1,000 in 1808, and in
1801 John Bradbury reported a total of 1,300. These figures seem
conservative, particularly in view of Sibley’s revised estimate of 1,600
in 1816. In any case, until the second half of the nineteenth century,
when their number declined drastically, the Kansa population remained
nearly constant at an average of about 1,600. Isaac McCoy, the Baptist
missionary-surveyor, reported 1,500 Kansa Indians in 1831, 1,200 the
following year, and 1,750 in 1840. Indian Agent Richard Cummins
submitted a figure of 1,602 in 1839, and on January 16, 1843, recorded
the most detailed count to that time: 290 males under ten years of
age, 346 between ten and forty, and 159 over 40; 288 females under
ten, 369 between ten and forty, and 136 over forty, bringing the total
to 1,588.

One is tempted to conclude that the consistency of these statistics
points to population stability for the first half of the nineteenth century.
Nothing could be farther from the truth. In contrast to the turbulent
conditions accompanying the international fur trade of the eighteenth
century, some natural increase should have taken place as a result of
the Indian Bureau’s self-imposed obligation to provide economic
assistance and technical instruction for becoming self-sufficient. Yet this
probable increase is difficult to measure. A comparison of Cummins’
statistics with those of Pike leads to the conclusion that there were approximately 200 more children and adolescents in 1843 than in 1806. On the other hand there is no doubt that the tribe's population was in part sustained by intermarriages with the Osages. White Plume, for example, a prominent Kansa chief in the 1820's, was an Osage by birth. In 1811 Sibley observed that the Kansa had made such "extensive connections with the Osages by intermarriages that it is scarcely probable that any serious differences will occur again between them," and an 1819 report advised that intermarriages were commonplace to the degree that the Kansa's physical features were "more and more approaching those of the Osages." Finally, and no less significant, were the mixblood marriages. As a variable in Kansa demography they are a factor to be reckoned with no later than the 1820's, and during subsequent decades were so consequential that by 1890 the "Half Breed Band" comprises fully forty per cent of the tribe's official BIA total.

It follows that the 1,600 average reported for the first half of the nineteenth century was illusory. By no means did it present a realistic picture of Kansa population, which had the potential for being dynamic. What, then, had kept the population from increasing? Who was responsible?

Conflict with the Otoes and Republican Pawnees resulted in no more than three score Kansa casualties, while the floods of 1827 and 1844 certainly killed fewer than that. Far more disastrous were the consequences of epidemic disease. During the fall of 1827 about 180 Kansa died of smallpox. At least two-thirds of the tribe were afflicted, and of those who survived many were too weak to make the semiannual buffalo hunt that fall, and thus experienced destitute conditions the following winter. Six years later cholera struck with force, and although the mortality rate was not recorded, it could not have been insignificant because of a report that there were "but two at the agency who were not down with the fever." In the summer of 1839 a raging "fever"—either cholera or smallpox, but more likely the latter—took an additional one hundred lives in a very short time. "But few families escaped the disease," reported a Methodist missionary, "and the number of deaths was great in proportion to the number of sick. The awful cries of the Indians around the dead sounded in our ears nearly every day."
Perhaps these tragedies were the cardinal feature of the Kansa population decline pattern prior to 1850. But there is evidence that chronic destitution and outright starvation also took their toll. In January 1831, for example, Secretary of War John Eaton was told that because of their “remarkable improvidence” the Kansa needed “immediate help.” Four years later, upon learning that the tribe’s entire food supply was less than twenty bushels of corn, Agent Richard W. Cummins flatly asserted that the Kansa were starving. The “autumnal diseases” he reported a short time later were surely in part the result of malnutrition, while widespread whiskey consumption made possible by lawless dramshop operators along the western Missouri border could only have aggravated the situation. Meanwhile, mounting pressure in Washington for another major land cession, the disastrous flood of 1844, and a stubborn Kansa commitment to the semisedentary life acted as powerful obstacles to any progress in agriculture. On the plains the ever-present Pawnees and the more regular appearance of the Cheyennes and Arapahoes made hunting increasingly more hazardous for the less powerful Kansa Indians. By the fall of 1844 their food supply was virtually exhausted, yet Indian Superintendent Thomas Harvey’s incredible request was for “more Christian teaching in organized institutions,” not corn. Harvey later admitted an “outright donation” was desirable, but since the tribe remained “terribly destitute” three months later, it is doubtful that any significant assistance was extended.

The new treaty concluded in 1846 authorized a massive land cession in return for a more concentrated reservation in the upper Neosho valley. Here, where they were to make the final transition to settled, agricultural life, the quality of their life was supposed to improve. To the white man the treaty was most attractive, but for the Kansa it was quite unrealistic. In addition to the absurd assumption that a few agents, missionaries, and teachers could bring about a cultural revolution in a few short years, it failed to provide safeguards against the insatiable land hunger of the white land jobbers, whose assault on the remaining Kansa domain was greatly encouraged by the creation of Kansas Territory in 1854. Then, while Territorial officials worked in concert with Washington bureaucrats and a host of national and local speculators, the tribe was confronted by what proved to be the worst
epidemic they had experienced since the middle years of the eighteenth century.

In early May 1855 Neosho Agent Andrew J. Dorn wrote Indian Commissioner George W. Manypenny that a major smallpox epidemic had irrupted in Kansas Territory. One hundred little Osages were dead, more were sick and dying, and on his own authority he (Dorn) had arranged for the vaccination of about two hundred who to that point had escaped the dreaded disease. That Dorn’s concern was genuine seems obvious. “All Indians should be vaccinated,” he warned, “for the lives of many of our fellow-beings are in imminent danger.” But the Kansa were ignored, even though their close proximity to the Santa Fe Trail made them particularly vulnerable to contagious disease. Not surprisingly, then, their ranks were reduced with a vengeance in the middle of June 1855, and before the summer was over, more than four hundred had died. Even more incredible than Superintendent Harvey’s earlier preference of Christian teaching over food for a starving people was Kansa Agent John Montgomery’s report to Washington that smallpox “has continued fatally with a greater number of them, it seems, to the great satisfaction and admiration of all those who have any acquaintance with [them].”

Subsequent population counts reflect the tragedy of 1855 and its long-range implications. In October 1859 Agent Milton C. Dickey placed the total at 1,037, or “200 less than last year.” Gleefully, a local newspaper, which repeatedly extolled Christian virtues and the cause of the white farmers, predicted that “at this rate five years will solve the Kaw [Kansa] question.” These turned out to be prophetic words. Two years later the total was down to 802, including 424 males, 379 females, and 63 mixbloods, while a slight increase to 825 by 1868 was accomplished not by a halt in the downward trend, but “by those who had joined them by marriages, such as the Potawatomies and others.” Not one Kansa male was over fifty-five years old by 1872, and one year later, after they had been removed to Indian Territory, their estimated population was down to about 700. Not even a change in environment could affect the long-range trend, as can be seen in an 1877 count of 425, an 1890 count of 227 (including 92 mixbloods), and a 1905 figure of 209 (including 92 mixbloods). Finally, a contemporary report of seventeen living Kansa full bloods confirms the absurdity of applying Professor Dobyns’ twenty to one nadir population ratio to
The Depopulation of the Kansa Indians; it also suggests that the extinction of the tribe defined in aboriginal terms is virtually imminent.

Dobyns, like other anthropologists, regards epidemic disease as the paramount cause of Indian depopulation after European contact. As we have seen, smallpox very likely accounted for more Kansa deaths in historic times than any other condition. However, if we exclude the period prior to widespread contact with the white invader, i.e., the period prior to about 1800, we find that this was not the case. In fact the three major smallpox epidemics in the nineteenth century were responsible for considerably less than fifty per cent of the population decline—perhaps no more than about seven hundred deaths. Was this because of fortuitous circumstances, or was it because of the invader’s decision to try to control (and even eradicate) this terrible scourge?

To an assembly of Indian leaders in Washington in 1802 President Jackson described the vaccination technique for smallpox as “that precious donation which the great spirit had lately made to the white man,” and he promised “that it would finally extirpate that disease from the face of the earth.” However, the public vaccination bill passed in 1813, which provided free vaccine through the postal service, applied to citizens, not Indians, and it was not until two decades later that Congress appropriated $12,000 to begin the fight against smallpox in Indian country. Significantly, actual vaccination expenditures that first year “for smallpox and certain other things” amounted to only $1,786, as opposed to $5,721 for “missionary improvement” and $9,424 for the “civilization of the Indians.” One year later, in 1833, actual expenditures were down to $721. Under such conservative administration of the Indian vaccine law it is not surprising that a small tribe such as the Kansa was ignored. Yet the need certainly was there. Isaac McCoy, who probably knew more about conditions in Kansa country in the 1830’s than any other person, asked Secretary of War Lewis Cass, on March 23, 1832, if “measures could not speedily be adopted to arrest this destroying plague by vaccination.” Because four thousand Pawnee, Omaha, Otoe, Ponca (and Kansa) were already dead from the dreaded plague, “no higher reward [could be enjoyed] than the satisfaction derived from the circumstance of having rescued thousands of men, and women, and children, from this awful calamity.”

But it was not until 1833 that the government made any effort whatsoever to vaccinate the Kansa, and even this proved abortive. In
early January 1833 Secretary Cass was informed that Frederick Chouteau, a licensed Kansa trader, had interfered with the government's medical operations. The letter came from Subagent Marston Clark, who demanded that Chouteau's license be suspended, and that he be expelled from Indian country. This Chouteau categorically challenged, with the explanation (submitted by two of his trusted employees) that he had made every effort to detain the Kansa at their villages in anticipation of their prearranged vaccination schedule. When the government physician was "5 or 6 days late," Chouteau felt justified in distributing guns, supplies, and ammunition. Almost immediately the tribe departed on a hunting expedition, and the government doctor was forced to return to Missouri without completing his assignment. The Kansa displayed no fear of the vaccine, emphasized Chouteau, and, in fact, were most cooperative. But because of their "miserable condition" they had no alternative but to accept what he stubbornly viewed as a humane gesture to a starving people.

Faced with conflicting accounts of the affair, Indian Superintendent William Clark in St. Louis took the easy way out by advising Commissioner Elbert Herring "to suspend the execution of his instructions [to revoke Chouteau's license] until further advised by the Department on this subject." There the matter rested, and it was not until 1838 that Dr. A. Chute finally submitted a register of 915 vaccinated Kansa Indians. Even so, because at least one hundred of the tribe were struck down by a "high fever" the following summer, there is reason to wonder if in fact the Kansa had been treated. In any case, the official agency records indicate that no more were vaccinated between 1838 and their removal to Indian Territory in 1873—not even during the tragic epidemic of 1855. Thus the inescapable conclusion is that many Kansa smallpox fatalities were avoidable, and that bureaucratic irresponsibility and/or outright government negligence contributed greatly to the tribe's decline.

Regretfully, the same conclusion may be inferred from an even more significant factor in the Kansa way of death. Whereas smallpox accounted for roughly seven hundred deaths in the three decades after 1825, the tribe was reduced by over one thousand in the three decades after this disease was no longer a threat. Such maladies as measles and whooping cough presented periodic threats to survival, but in the main it was malnutrition and exposure—conditions that slowly but
certainly made the afflicted individuals succumb to the ravages of respiratory and digestive disorders, as well as outright starvation. In the literature of Indian depopulation one encounters a great deal of commentary regarding these causes of depopulation, but little tangible documentation to argue for the real significance of the tragedy. Yet there is an abundance of at least circumstantial evidence for the “slow death,” as the following sample from the Kansa documents illustrates:

March, 1824:  "starving"
April, 1828:  "starving condition, truely deplorable"
January, 1831:  "remarkable improvidence"
September, 1838:  "none of the comforts of neighboring tribes"
February, 1846:  "very ill with autumnal diseases"
February, 1848:  "terribly destitute"
August, 1855:  "have lost all confidence in each other due to destitution"
October, 1861:  "many are sick and without clothes"
April, 1862:  "completely destitute"
June, 1862:  "many deaths for want of medicine"
January, 1866:  "completely destitute"
August, 1866:  "very destitute condition"
February, 1868:  "completely out of blankets and food ... have disposed of all saleable property and have exhausted their credit"
February, 1869:  "We now ask, shall we starve?" (Question posed by nine chiefs and ten warriors.)
March, 1872:  "absolutely destitute; are living on a little corn and dead animals they can find lying around"

Excluding the 1824 reference to starvation, every subsequent report of the tribe’s suffering came while they were under treaties with the United States—treaties which promised them at least the minimal means of survival in return for land cessions worth millions of dollars. It was assumed they would be converted to Christianity and then move smoothly along the road toward agrarian self-sufficiency. In the final analysis, however, the government’s real commitment was to the interests of white missionaries, traders, farmers, and speculators—not Indians—and the Kansa never were given a chance. Incredible as it
may seem, their agent could report as late as 1872 that "after all these [forty-eight] years the Kansas still do not have a physician."

Chronically sick and starving, periodically afflicted by epidemic disease, and hemmed in by a combination of land-hungry white men from the east, and more powerful tribes to the north and west, the Kansa came to be recognized as a hopeless, "beggar" tribe, whose ultimate extinction was virtually unavoidable. It seems reasonable to conclude that while the white man had the means, indeed the obligation, to alter the situation, he pursued a policy of negligence and self-interest, and finally became so accustomed to the Kansa pattern of depopulation that he really did not care.

Suggested Readings


Chapter 3.
Settlement and Statehood through the 1860s

The period beginning with settlement (1854) through the 1860s is rich in primary and secondary sources. The birth of Kansas, a state which was the focus of national attention at the beginning of a great civil war, has been written about in detail. Chapter 3 examines a few events in this turbulent decade and a half.

Richard B. Sheridan, University of Kansas professor emeritus of economics, describes the flight of black slaves to Kansas, especially to the free-state stronghold of Lawrence. He focuses on the problem of disposing of the contraband slaves who flocked to Union army camps in Missouri. He also discusses the size and geographical distribution of contraband populations in Kansas, their work, education, and social life, as well as the recruitment and deployment of black soldiers from Kansas in the Civil War. Much of Sheridan's evidence regarding the contrabands and black soldiers was generated by the colorful exploits of James Lane, military commander and first United States senator from Kansas.

Robert Stone's brief look at the Wyandotte Constitution focuses primarily on two provisions that made it unique. They both pertain to the protection of women's rights, which were almost nonexistent then. One provision, "Section 6," provides for the protection of the rights of women concerning property and possession of children, while the other,
"Section 9" (the homestead exemption), requires joint consent from husband and wife to dispose of a homestead (a maximum of 160 acres of farmland or one acre in the limits of an incorporated town) and exempts it from forced sale under any process of law. This pioneering doctrine, later adopted by the other states, was considered to preserve the family, and thus society, by protecting the home and dignifying the wife as "proprietor in her own right, part owner of her home and queen of her domain."

The Lawrence massacre was the bloody climax of the Kansas-Missouri border conflict and the most atrocious single event of the Civil War. According to Albert Castel, a native Kansan who teaches history at Western Michigan University, it gave William Quantrill a reputation as the bloodiest man in American history. Castel's article briefly summarizes the infamous career of Quantrill, the mysterious and brutal leader of the Missouri bushwhackers, whose bold and murderous raids into Kansas culminated with the August 21, 1863, raid of Lawrence that left 150 men dead and most of the town in flames.

Chapter 3 closes with a poignant account of a woman's experiences on the Overland Trail in 1867. Katie Armitage, Lawrence historian, introduces the reader to Elizabeth "Bettie" Duncan and her family through the diary that Bettie kept for the four-month overland journey to California from Lawrence. The diary chronicles Bettie's difficult journey and the tragic loss of her six-year-old daughter, Katie. Her account was similar to experiences of the thousands of travelers who made that difficult journey.
From Slavery in Missouri to Freedom in Kansas:
The Influx of Black Fugitives and Contrabands into Kansas, 1854–1865

Richard B. Sheridan

As is well known to students of American history, the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill in 1854 repealed the Missouri compromise of 1820 and built upon the Compromise of 1850. It created two new territories, Nebraska and Kansas, in place of one. It led to the negotiation of cession treaties whereby some Native Americans, or portions thereof, were allowed to remain within Kansas, but the greater number were relocated in territories outside Kansas. Moreover, the principle of squatter sovereignty which had been established by the Compromise of 1850 was extended to both territories, in which the majority of white settlers were authorized to form and regulate their domestic institutions, especially the institution of chattel slavery.

Missourians first pushed across the border to claim choice lands under the terms of the Preemption Act of 1841. Their proslavery leaders perceived the necessity of flooding Kansas with slaves and establishing a slave state. Settlers from New England and the Ohio Valley followed, motivated by the same land hunger as the Missourians but determined to withstand slavery and found a free state. For a time the struggle resulted in victory of proslavery forces who waged guerrilla warfare throughout Kansas Territory and sacked free-soil Lawrence. Reprisals

were led by John Brown, James Lane and others, whose forces plundered and killed proslavery settlers, running off their slaves to freedom in Canada. Kansas was born in a struggle for liberty and freedom, a struggle that raised the curtain on the Civil War and sounded the death knell of slavery.

The contest for possession of the Territory of Kansas has been told many times from the standpoint of white Americans who were involved in the struggle. On the other hand, much less is known regarding the black people and their role in overturning slavery, both in the antebellum and Civil War years. This paper, in five parts, is concerned with the blacks of Missouri and Kansas.

I

The slave economy of the western counties of Missouri, which was a small affair in the early decades of the nineteenth century, became of increasing importance in the years leading up to the Civil War. According to John G. Haskell, a resident of Lawrence, Kansas, who had seen military service in Missouri, the early western Missouri slaveholder was a poor man; his wealth at the time of settlement "consisted mainly in one small family of negro slaves, with limited equipment necessary to open up a farm in a new country." Owing to such factors as poor transportation facilities and limited market outlets, the typical farm was small when compared with the cotton plantations of the deep South, agricultural production was diversified, and almost all food, clothing, and shelter was of local production. Slavery in these circumstances was much more a domestic than a commercial institution.

From its near-subsistence stage, the farm economy of western Missouri grew slowly at first, but more rapidly as the Civil War approached. New markets were opened with the growth of steamboat traffic on the Missouri River, the relocation of Indian tribes from east of the Mississippi River to the territory west of Missouri, the establishment of new military posts, railroad construction, and the opening of Kansas to white settlement. Besides a variety of foodstuffs, Missouri farmers supplied these new markets with transport animals—
Just prior to the Civil War, the Underground Railroad was increasingly active in bringing slaves out of Missouri. “Stations” in Kansas, Iowa, and Illinois moved these former slaves to freedom. This 1844 Chicago Western Citizen advertisement thinly disguised its purpose by announcing the “Liberty Line” with “regular trips” running “during the present season between the borders of the Patriarchal Dominion and Libertyville, Upper Canada.”

oxen, horses, and mules. Rising farm profits led, in turn, to immigration, land settlement, and lively markets for farming tools and implements and especially black slaves. By the eve of the Civil War there were a considerable number of medium to large slaveholdings. Hemp, which was used in ropemaking, came to be grown on slave plantations of some size, although its culture was mostly restricted to the Missouri River counties.
The slave population of Missouri increased from 3,011 in 1810, to 9,797 in 1820, and to 25,091 in 1830. It then more than doubled to 57,891 in 1840, grew to 87,422 in 1850, and reached 114,931 in 1860. A disproportionate number of these slaves were concentrated in the Missouri River and western border counties. The total of the Missouri River and western border counties was 54,940 in 1850 and 75,107 in 1860, or 62.8 percent and 65.3 percent, respectively, of all slaves in the state.

Slaves who planned to permanently abscond from their masters in Missouri had several modes and courses of escape. They might be aided by relatives or friends who had successfully escaped from slavery and returned to aid others. They might be aided by white people in Missouri and elsewhere who held strong views against slavery. Free coloreds are reported to have taken fugitives under their protection, written passes, given instructions and directions, and provided temporary board and lodging. The so-called Underground Railroad was a secret system to aid fugitives bent on flight to Canada, by transporting them from station to station along well-defined trails or routes. Some slaves managed successful flight solely by their wits and luck. Slaves escaped as stowaways on steamboats. Others stole small boats or built rafts to speed their flight to freedom. The coming of the railroad furnished a new means of escape. Prior to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the runaway slaves from Missouri headed for the two contiguous free states of Iowa and Illinois, and thence northward to Canada.

Much greater opportunities for escape came with the filling of Kansas with free-soil settlers. By 1857 the problem was so great that both the federal and state governments were appealed to for protection of slave property in Missouri. Bills were introduced into the Missouri General Assembly to provide special patrols in the counties on the Illinois, Iowa, and Kansas borders. After the Kansas struggle had resulted in a victory for the antislavery forces, writes Harrison A. Trexler,

the golden age of slave absconding opened. Escapes apparently increased each year till the Civil War caused a general exodus of slave property from the State. The enterprising abolition fraternity of Kansas—Brown, Lane, Doy, and the rest—seemingly made it their
religious duty to reduce the sins of the Missouri slaveholder by
relieving him of all the slave property possible.

In 1855 one editorial writer asserted that "ten slaves are now stolen
from Missouri to every one that was spirited off before the Douglas
bill."

The raids into Missouri to free slaves struck terror into the minds
of slaveholders and contributed indirectly to black flight from bondage.
John Brown is known to have made several such raids and to have
escorted a group of fugitives from Kansas to Canada in 1859. Less
well known are the guerrilla chieftains James Montgomery and Dr.
Charles R. Jennison, whose bands of "Jayhawkers" terrorized
proslavery settlers in southern Kansas and made raids across the border
into Missouri. According to George M. Beebe, acting governor of
Kansas Territory, it was the purpose of these guerrilla chieftains
to shelter fugitives owing service to southern states, and to kill any
who should assist in attempting to enforce the fugitive-slave law;
stating that they acted upon a settled conviction of duty and obedience
to God. In short, their professions were the exact counterpart of those
of the late notorious John Brown, in conjunction with whom they
formerly acted.

In the years immediately preceding the Civil War, the Underground
Railroad was increasingly active in helping slaves escape from Missouri.
The Rev. Richard Cordley, Congregational minister and historian of
Lawrence, Kansas, said that the Underground Railroad line ran directly
through Lawrence and Topeka, then on through Nebraska and Iowa.
He had been told by people who ought to know "that not less than
one hundred thousand dollars' worth of slaves passed through
Lawrence on their way to liberty during the territorial period." Cordley,
himself, together with his wife and members of his congregation,
harbored a slave named "Lizzie," about whom he wrote an interesting
account of their efforts to secrete her from a federal marshal and his
deputies and see her safely on the road to Canada.

James B. Abbott, who was active in the antislavery movement in
Kansas, said that fear of being sold to planters in the deep South
prompted the slaves of Missouri
to secure their freedom before the difficulties were increased and the opportunities were gone, and so it is not at all strange that hardly a week passed that some way-worn bondman did not find his way into Lawrence, the best advertised anti-slavery town in the world, and where the slave was sure to receive sympathy and encouragement, and was sent on his way rejoicing either by himself or with others, as the circumstances seemed to suggest was most wise.

Abbott asserted that the slaves across the border were far from the least interested party in the Kansas conflict. Indeed, they were early taught “the places and men to shun, as well as the places and men to trust.”

Col. J. Bowles was another Lawrence resident actively engaged in the Underground Railroad. On April 4, 1859, he wrote a long letter to Franklin S. Sanborn, a leading abolitionist at Concord, Massachusetts. Bowles claimed that during the previous four years he personally knew of “nearly three hundred fugitives having passed through and received assistance from the abolitionists here at Lawrence.”

The Underground Railroad intensified the Missouri slaveowners’ resentment toward the free-state settlers of Kansas. Moreover, it carried a growing number of passengers through Lawrence and other stations in Kansas because of the fears of both masters and slaves. Indeed, it has been asserted by Wilbur H. Siebert “that the Underground Railroad was one of the greatest forces which brought on the Civil War, and thus destroyed slavery.”

II

Opportunities for blacks to escape slavery increased during the Civil War as Union armies invaded the South. Although some Union generals returned slaves when they escaped to Union camps, on grounds that the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 required that the fugitives be returned to their masters, other commanders refused such surrender lest the slave property contribute to the armed rebellion. Declaring the slaves who escaped to his camp contraband and liable to confiscation by the laws of war, Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, whose forces occupied confederate territory in Tidewater Virginia in 1861, established
a precedent which was followed by other Union generals as the war expanded into the South. In March 1862 an act of the Union government “declared contraband slaves—those belonging to persons in rebellion—henceforth and forever free,” and on January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, which declared forever free the slaves in the rebellious states.

Blacks who first escaped to the Federal lines were eagerly recruited for a variety of occupations. They built fortifications, served as teamsters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, hospital attendants, officers’ servants, and employees of the commissary and quartermaster departments. Many of those who had skills settled in cities as barbers, draymen, carpenters, blacksmiths, servants, seamstresses, nurses and cooks, of whom a large number conducted businesses of their own. In rural areas they became tenant farmers or were employed as farm laborers and woodchoppers.

The influx of contrabands into Kansas must be seen against the background of the Civil War on the Western Border. In Missouri the question of secession was decided by an elected convention that voted eighty to one against immediate secession. When Gov. Clairborne F. Jackson repudiated President Lincoln’s call for troops and intrigued to gain control of the federal arsenal at St. Louis, he and the legislature were ousted and Hamilton F. Gamble, a Lincoln supporter, was elected provisional governor. Meanwhile, Jackson, Sterling Price, another former governor, and other southern loyalists formed a breakaway government. After an ordinance of secession was adopted, the breakaway government was admitted to the Confederate States of America.

In Kansas, after years of political rivalry between proslavery and free-state factions, free-state delegates framed an antislavery constitution at the Wyandotte Convention. It was ratified by a large majority on October 4, 1859. After Lincoln’s victory, Kansas entered the Union under the Wyandotte Constitution on January 29, 1861. Charles Robinson was elected governor, and Martin F. Conway congressman. On April 4 of the same year the Kansas legislature elected Samuel C. Pomeroy and James H. Lane to the U.S. Senate.

James Henry Lane (1814–1866) was a remarkable leader whose actions as a military commander and politician were responsible for the influx of large numbers of slaves into Kansas and their recruitment
into black regiments. It is uncertain whether he was born in Kentucky or Indiana, but the latter state is usually given as his birthplace. He studied law and went into politics at an early age. He served as colonel of a regiment in the Mexican War, after which he was elected lieutenant-governor of Indiana and later represented that state in the U.S. Congress. In 1855 he went to Kansas Territory, where he soon became a leading politician and military leader of the free-state forces. Lane was a man of boundless energy, great tenacity of purpose and personal magnetism, and possessed of oratorical powers of a high order. Wendell Holmes Stephenson characterizes Lane as “a radical, an enthusiast, a direct-actionist, who tolerated no halfway measures.” Moreover, “he was rash, hot-headed, daring, persistent, subtle, provocative, warm-hearted, magnetic.” He was called the “Grim Chieftain,” a tall, thin, stern-visaged man, who, like Cassius, bore “a
lean and hungry look." It was said of Lane that no man ever had firmer friends or more bitter enemies. Lane was an ardent supporter of Abraham Lincoln for the presidency, and, as a U.S. senator, a close personal friend of the wartime President. He took his own life in 1866, in a fit of depression after losing political support in Kansas and being accused of involvement in fraudulent Indian contracts.

Lane was appointed a brigadier general of volunteers by President Lincoln in June 1861. He proceeded from Washington, D.C., to Kansas to raise volunteer regiments under the authority of Congress, at a time when Confederate armies had won several important battles. In Missouri, Gen. Sterling Price and his Missouri National Guard secession army had defeated Gen. Nathaniel Lyon and his Union army at the Battle of Wilson's Creek on August 10, 1861. The Grim Chieftain worked fast to meet the threatened invasion of Kansas by a force some ten thousand strong under General Price. Lane marched with his hastily gathered troops to Fort Scott, Kansas, near the Missouri border, where Price was expected to attack. On September 2, Lane sent twelve hundred mounted men to Dry Wood Creek, twelve miles east of Fort Scott, where a brisk skirmish was fought with Price's advance-guard. Price decided to discontinue his advance into Kansas upon learning that Lane was waiting to give battle, and turned north toward Lexington, Missouri.

"As Lane's 'Kansas brigade' marched through Missouri," writes Stephenson, "a 'black brigade' marched into Kansas." Two of Lane's chaplains wrote long accounts of the slaves who flocked to Lane's brigade and of their march into Kansas. In his The Gun and the Gospel, Chaplain Hugh Dunn Fisher tells of the trek of the black brigade. While the Kansas brigade rested at Springfield and on the march to Lamar, Lane's camp was "the center of attraction to multitudes of 'contrabands' and refugees." Lane sent for Fisher the second day out of Springfield, explaining the imminent danger of attack and the helpless condition of the great multitude of blacks. He asked Fisher, "Chaplain, what can we do to relieve the army of these contrabands, without exposing them to their enemies?" Whereupon, Fisher replied that "all the men were in the army, and the women and children in Kansas needed help to save the crop and provide fuel for winter, and I advised to send the negroes to Kansas to help the women and children." Lane's laconic reply was "I'll do it."
When the Grim Chieftain’s brigade arrived at Lamar, forty miles southeast of Fort Scott, he directed his three chaplains, Fisher, Moore, and Fish, to take charge of the refugees and escort them to Fort Scott.

Next morning early there was a stir in the camp. Fourteen men were detailed as an escort to save us from falling into the hands of the guerrillas. We had a wagon load of almost useless guns. I picked out about thirty negroes and armed them, the first negroes armed during the rebellion. We divided this company, and also the white escort, and placed half as an advance guard with orders to “scout well,” and the other half as a rear guard with orders to keep well up, and by no means to allow a surprise. Such a caravan had not moved since the days of Moses.

It was a nondescript emigration. They traveled day and night, eating only cold food until they came upon a small herd of cattle, of which three were killed and hastily broiled and eaten.

When they reached Kansas, Fisher halted the caravan and drew the refugees up in a line. He raised himself to his full height on his war horse, “commanded silence, and there under the open heavens, on the sacred soil of freedom, in the name of the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence, and by the authority of General James H. Lane, I proclaimed that they were ‘forever free.’” Immediately the blacks “jumped, cried, sang and laughed for joy.” Fisher claimed that they were the first slaves formally set free. He said it occurred in September 1861, long before Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation was issued.

After he returned to Washington, Lane told the Senate of the success of his policies and actions in Missouri and Arkansas. In a speech of May 15, 1862, he claimed that 4,000 fugitive slaves from Missouri and Arkansas were then being fed in Kansas, and two months later he said the number had increased to 6,400. In a speech to the New York Emancipation League in June he said that he had himself “aided 2,500 slaves to emigrate” during the year, and a month later he told the Senate that at one time he had 1,200 blacks in his brigade.

Later in the Civil War several groups of contrabands were brought from Arkansas to Leavenworth on steamboats. After the victory of the Federals at Helena, Arkansas, on July 4, 1863, the camps were overrun
with blacks seeking freedom. Chaplain Fisher was ordered to take control of large numbers of contrabands, who left that port and neighboring ports in three steamboats, and scatter them "throughout Missouri, Illinois, Iowa and Kansas, sending some of them as far as Ohio." Fisher said he had intended to go in charge of the slaves on the Sam Gaty, but at the last minute decided to go by rail instead to prepare for their reception at Leavenworth. Unfortunately, the Sam Gaty was captured by a band of guerrillas or bushwhackers at Napoleon, Missouri. Nine black men were killed and seven black women were shot, but none killed. The guerrillas searched the boat for Chaplain Fisher and would not be satisfied that he was not on board until they had killed three white men in his stead. When the Sam Gaty arrived at Leavenworth, hundreds of people assembled on the levee to welcome the survivors. Fisher said that the whole party of contrabands was promptly provided with homes in good families. Among other contrabands who arrived by boat, one Lieutenant Colonel Bassett is said to have returned to Kansas from a military campaign in Arkansas with over six hundred black refugees on board four steamboats.

It would be misleading to leave the impression that all of the contrabands entered Kansas under the auspices of Union military units. Many of them, perhaps the greater number, came of their own volition, either crossing along the land border or the approximately seventy-five mile stretch of the Missouri River which separates Missouri from Kansas.

Slaves even walked across the Missouri River to freedom in Kansas when the ice was thick enough to support their weight, as was reported to be the case in February 1863 when contrabands in considerable numbers crossed over on the frozen river and enlisted in the Union army. A few reportedly swam across the river at some peril to their lives, while others came on skiffs and ferries. One group that arrived by ferry at Wyandotte was said to consist of "poor, frightened half-starved negroes . . . men and women with little children clinging to them, and carrying all of their earthly possessions in little bags or bundles, sometimes in red bandana handkerchiefs."

The exodus continued at a rapid pace until the end of hostilities. That the slave population of Missouri was seriously eroded by the flight of blacks during the turmoil and destruction of the Civil War can be demonstrated by population statistics. In fact, only 73,811 slaves
remained in the state in 1863, as compared with 114,931 in 1860, or a decline of thirty-five percent. The loss was probably greater in a qualitative sense than the statistics indicate, since the greater part of the fugitives were reportedly able-bodied males and females capable of performing heavy field labor.

III

The influx of contrabands was significant from the standpoint of the numbers involved and their impact on the economy and society of wartime Kansas. The black population increased from 627 in 1860 to 12,527 in 1865, or from 0.6 percent to 8.8 percent of the Kansas population. The influx may have been as great as 15,000, since many black soldiers from Kansas were out of the state when the census of 1865 was taken. Although blacks came to Kansas in growing numbers after the Civil War, and especially in the late 1870s and early 1880s when the "Exodusters" arrived from the South, the white population increased even more rapidly. Thus, the blacks declined as a percentage of the total population—to 4.7 in 1870, 4.3 in 1880, and 3.5 in both 1890 and 1900. In the twentieth century the black population of Kansas increased from 3.5 percent of the total in 1900 to 5.4 percent in 1980. It is therefore noteworthy that the influx during the Civil War years raised the black population of Kansas to its highest level in relation to whites and Indians.

Not only did the blacks constitute a larger proportion of the total population of Kansas; they were also highly concentrated in certain towns and counties. Eight of the thirty-seven counties that were enumerated in 1865, contained 77.5 percent of the black population, and the three leading counties—Leavenworth, Douglas, and Wyandotte—contained 55.5 percent of the blacks. Although it lacked a town of any consequence, Wyandotte County had the third largest black population in 1865, with nearly half as many blacks as whites.

The "Black Brigade" was brought to Kansas chiefly to supply much needed farm labor. As more and more contrabands arrived in the state, many were dispersed over the countryside and employed as rural wage laborers. After several wagons loaded with contrabands had passed
through two of the border towns in January 1862, one editorial writer predicted that the coming crop season would find "Kansas better provided with free labor than any of the Western States." Another journalist noted that black labor, mostly that of fugitives from Missouri, was largely responsible for producing the bountiful Kansas harvest of 1863. He said that large quantities of labor were needed to harvest the wheat, since very little machinery was used on Kansas farms and the crop needed to be taken off quickly once it had ripened. Even Senator Lane was reported to have used contrabands to build a fence around his Douglas County farm and to experiment with the growing of cotton with free black labor.

Whether or not the contrabands settled on farms or in the towns depended upon several circumstances. Relatively few arrived with sufficient wealth and experience to begin as farmers. The overwhelming majority depended upon wage employment, and as the demand for farm labor was to a large extent seasonal, the contrabands' chances of obtaining work was contingent upon their arrival in Kansas during the crop season. If they arrived in the winter months the towns were most likely to supply the means of subsistence.

The contrabands came to Lawrence by the scores and hundreds, according to Richard Cordley. For a time their numbers and needs threatened to overwhelm the inhabitants. "But they were strong and industrious, and by a little effort work was found for them, and very few, if any of them, became objects of charity," said Cordley.

Recalling her girlhood experiences with the contrabands of Lawrence, Agnes Emery wrote that at the beginning and through the years of the Civil War "a veritable army of slaves drifted into Lawrence as if by instinct, to a sort of haven." She told of the contrabands who worked for the Emery family on their hilltop farm near Lawrence as follows:

"Old Mary" could get up a breakfast that we did not know was possible. She could cook in such a manner as to make food of many plants that we did not know existed. "George" who lived in our barn was trustworthy and devoted to our interests. We always felt perfectly safe to know that he was near enough [to] protect us if the need arose. . . . Emily Taylor came two days each week, for years and years, to do our laundry. She also helped in sickness and in deaths. I
well remember the day she came to tell us of the death of President Lincoln. Everyone in our family was depressed by the news.

Besides helping the contrabands secure a livelihood, Lawrence citizens made a concerted effort to teach the newcomers to read and write. While the children attended the public schools, adults were encouraged to join classes after working hours. S. N. Simpson, who started the first Sunday school in Lawrence in 1855, established a night school for contrabands which met five or six nights a week for two hours in the courthouse. Classes were taught by a corps of volunteer teachers who were described as women and men of culture, character, and consecration. About one hundred adults, entirely ignorant of their letters, applied themselves earnestly to the simple lessons given in the spelling books. Study and recitation were interspersed with the singing of familiar hymns. In the course of a few weeks several of the blacks were able to read with some fluency and were ready to commence with figures.

The contrabands who came to Lawrence were a church-going people. Cordley said that a Sunday school was organized and Sunday evening services were conducted for them at the Congregational Church. They outgrew this facility, and, about one year after their arrival, the new Freedmen’s Church was dedicated on September 28, 1862. It was described as “a fine comfortable brick Church,” believed to be the first one ever erected in the United States for fugitive slaves. Cordley said the church was “filled with an attentive congregation of ‘freedman’—all lately from bondage, and all neatly dressed as a result of their short experience of free labor.”

After the difficult period of first arrival when white paternalism was most conspicuous in the adjustment to freedom, the contrabands encountered racial hostility and reacted by drawing on their own latent but slender resources in an effort to build a viable black community. Agnes Emery recalled that the freedmen did their share in becoming good citizens. “They were kind to each other in times of illness and misfortune, their demands were few, they were strong, eager, and willing to work, and soon made themselves useful in the community.” After meeting in white churches and then in the inter-denominational Freedmen’s Church, the blacks “divided into various ecclesiastical camps” with their own preachers. They met together to celebrate such
anniversaries as the Fourth of July, slave emancipation in the British West Indies, and, beginning in 1864, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. In 1864 the black women of Lawrence organized the Ladies Refugee Aid Society to collect food, clothing, and money to assist freedmen who had fallen on hard times.

The occupations of 624 blacks in Douglas County are shown in the 1865 census, of which 349 lived in Lawrence and North Lawrence, and 275 in rural parts of the county. Soldiering was the leading occupation of the blacks in Lawrence and North Lawrence, where 95 were so designated. Following behind the soldiers were 85 day laborers. Of the 92 female workers, 49 were domestics, 27 were employed at washing and ironing or as washerwomen, 7 worked as housekeepers, 6 as servants, and 3 as cooks. In all, some 270 blacks or four-fifths of the town total, were unskilled laborers. The other one-fifth consisted of skilled and semiskilled workers. There were 23 teamsters, 8 blacksmiths, 6 porters, 4 barbers, 3 hostlers, 3 woodcutters, 2 stonemasons, 2 draymen, 2 rock quarriers, and one each of distiller, saloonkeeper, miner, harnessmaker, brick moulder, coachman, carpenter, shoemaker, printer, and preacher.

The high ratio of rural to urban black workers, or 44.0 percent of all workers, may possibly be explained by the fact that the census was taken on May 1, 1865, when much farm labor was needed. There were 145 blacks designated as farmers, 59 as laborers or day laborers, and 31 as farm laborers. Although these occupations are not defined clearly, it seems reasonable to assume that almost all of the blacks so designated performed agricultural wage labor. Thirteen other farmers and one other farm laborer were residents in Lawrence and North Lawrence. The remaining rural males consisted of 10 teamsters, 6 soldiers, 4 brickmakers, and one each of porter, blacksmith, and schoolteacher. The rural females consisted of 9 domestics, 5 servants, 1 washerwoman, and 1 employed at washing and ironing.

As the oldest town in Kansas, Leavenworth and the nearby federal fort by the same name was the largest population center in Kansas in 1865. Its growth was largely a result of its steamboat and overland wagon transport facilities and its place as a mobilization and supply center. The towns of Atchison and Leavenworth were first settled primarily by Missourians whose sympathies were proslavery. By 1858, however, Leavenworth had a free-state majority and the town hosted
a state convention that adopted a radical antislavery constitution, which, although nominally approved by popular vote, was defeated by the U.S. Congress. Within months of the outbreak of the Civil War, Leavenworth had become a cosmopolitan town with inhabitants from all quarters of the Union and refugees and fugitives from the rebel states.

Compared with Lawrence, Leavenworth had a more formal and extensive organization to provide for the contrabands’ welfare. On February 5, 1862, some of the town’s white leaders met with their black counterparts at the First Colored Baptist Church to “take into consideration measures for the amelioration of the condition of the colored people of Kansas.”

The Kansas Emancipation League’s second meeting was held on February 10, 1862. After the minutes of the preceding meeting and the formal constitution and bylaws were read and approved, Richard Hinton “brought to the attention of the League the constant attempts at kidnapping which occur daily in this city.” This matter was taken into consideration by a committee that was directed to work with police and military officials to provide protection to the black residents of Leavenworth and the state of Kansas. The object of the league, it was agreed, should be to “assist all efforts to destroy slavery, but more especially to take supervision and control of the contraband element so freely coming to our State.” Furthermore, it was “the object of the League to encourage industry, education and morality among these people, to find them employment and thus make them a benefit and not a burden to the State which shelters them.” As superintendent of contrabands, Captain Mathews was instructed “to take charge and provide for their temporary wants and in every way look after their interests.”

Beginning on February 13, 1862, and continuing for several months, the Leavenworth Daily Conservative ran an advertisement of the Labor Exchange and Intelligence Office established by the Kansas Emancipation League at the drugstore of Dr. R. C. Anderson on Shawnee Street. All persons in need of black workers, including hotel waiters, porters, cooks, and chambermaids were asked to apply at this office. Furthermore, laborers were supplied for such jobs as woodsawing, whitewashing, teaming, etc., at the same office. About a month after the first advertisement was printed the Labor Exchange general agent
reported that good work had already been accomplished, and that "over one hundred colored men have been sent from our city to labor on farms and that the demand for this kind of labor is still constant and pressing."

Although the Labor Exchange and Intelligence Office helped to reduce the number of contrabands who were dependent upon the league, it by no means eliminated unemployment since many of the laboring men not only had large families but were unable to work as a result of sickness and exposure.

IV

Soldiering was the chief occupation of able-bodied male contrabands in the war years from 1862 to 1865, and it was General Lane who led the campaign in Kansas to organize black regiments and recruit black soldiers. In a speech at Leavenworth in January 1862, Lane recalled that contrabands who came into his camps in Missouri had played at soldiering after their evening meal; he said they took to military drill as a child takes to its mother's milk. "They soon learn the step, soon learn the position of the soldier and the manual of arms." He urged the government to arm the blacks, citing as precedents the use of black soldiers in the armies of George Washington and Andrew Jackson. At a time when President Lincoln was calling for 300,000 volunteers, Lane was appointed commissioner of recruitment for the Department of Kansas. He was authorized to appoint recruiting officers, arm and equip volunteers, establish camps of instruction, and arrange for the procurement and transportation of supplies. Lane assumed that his recruiting commission, issued by the War Department in July 1862, entitled him to enlist blacks as well as whites.

Arriving at Leavenworth on the third of August, Lane appointed recruiting agents and disposed of related matters. That he took speedy action is indicated by a Leavenworth Daily Conservative advertisement that appeared three days later. It announced that all able-bodied colored men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five had an opportunity to serve in the First Kansas Regiment of the "Liberating Army," and said that one thousand such men were wanted. It went on to say that "Ten Dollars Per Month will be paid, and good quarters, rations and
clothing provided.” A similar advertisement in an Atchison newspaper promised that, in addition to the pay and rations, a certificate of freedom would be issued to each black volunteer, as well as freedom for his mother, wife, and children.

Recruiting and training proceeded at a fast pace in the weeks following Lane’s initial appeal for black volunteers. An item in a Leavenworth newspaper on August 28 said the colored regiment had received one hundred recruits within the previous twenty-four hours. At Mound City some one hundred fifty black recruits were drilling daily, and more were reported to be on their way to the camp adjoining that town. North of the Kansas River approximately five hundred blacks had been enlisted within a short time. They were instructed to rendezvous by September 10 at Camp Jim Lane, near Wyandotte bridge. Capt. George J. Martin returned from Wyandotte to Atchison on September 12, and reported the regiment to be six hundred strong, with daily additions from Missouri. “The men learn their duties with great ease and rapidity,” he said, “and are delighted with the prospect of fighting for their freedom, and give good earnest of making valiant soldiers.” On October 17, 1862, the First Kansas Colored Infantry was organized near Fort Lincoln, in Bourbon County.

There is evidence that not all of the blacks recruited into the regiment entered voluntarily. One Missourian wrote to President Lincoln, complaining that a party of some fifteen Kansans had entered Missouri to “recruit Negroes for General Lane’s Negro brigade.” They forcibly took possession of some twenty-five blacks and about forty horses. However, a company of militia captured eight of the Jayhawkers and recovered all the blacks and horses.

That the black regiment’s fighting qualities brought honor to Afro-Americans in Kansas and elsewhere is well documented. Writing from Fort Africa, Bates County, Missouri, on October 30, 1862, a Leavenworth Daily Conservative correspondent told of a campaign against a notorious band of bushwhackers. In a sharp engagement in which some two hundred thirty black troops were pitted against about six hundred bushwhackers, “The men fought like tigers, each and every one of them, and the main difficulty was to hold them well in hand. . . . We have the guerrillas hemmed in, and will clean them and the county out,” said the correspondent. Gen. James G. Blunt wrote an account of the battle of Honey Springs, near Fort Gibson in Indian Territory, on
July 25, 1863. Soldiers of the First Colored Regiment "fought like veterans, with a coolness and valor that is unsurpassed," he wrote. "They preserved their line perfect throughout the whole engagement and, although in the hottest of the fight, they never once faltered. Too much praise can not be awarded them for their gallantry." The general, who was battle-hardened from long campaigns, judged the blacks to be "better soldiers in every respect than any troops I have ever had under my command." General Lane, who continued to support the enlistment of blacks, often paid tribute to their fighting ability.

Beginning in June 1863, a second Kansas black regiment was recruited and molded into an effective fighting unit by Col. Samuel J. Crawford, afterwards governor of Kansas. Besides the Kansas regiments, a black brigade was recruited and sent into action. Altogether, a total of 2,083 black soldiers were recruited, or approximately one-sixth of the black population of Kansas in 1865. Kansas lived up to its radical tradition by recruiting the first black troops to engage in military action against confederate forces.

The black military achievement was even more remarkable when it is considered that the soldiers faced great obstacles in the form of race prejudice and bureaucratic procrastination and delay. General Lane received blacks into the First Kansas Colored Regiment under what he thought was congressional authority, only to be informed that such recruitment had to have presidential authority, which was not forthcoming for several months. As a result, this regiment was not mustered into the service until January 13, 1863. Instead of soldiering, the troops were first put to work building fortifications and in fatigue duty. This led to anger, disillusionment, and, for a time, numerous desertions. Lane had promised his black recruiting officers that they would be commissioned as officers of the companies they recruited, but this was denied and white officers were appointed in their place. Even after the regiment was mustered in, payment of the troops was delayed until June 1863. Furthermore, the Union government defaulted on its pledge to pay black recruits at the same rate as whites—actually three dollars less per month than white soldiers and a deduction of three dollars for clothing. "Not until 1864," writes Dudley Taylor Cornish, "and then only after furious debate in the army, in the press and in congress, did Negro soldiers finally get what amounted to equal pay for equal work." Race prejudice raised its ugly head, as is indicated
by the advice given by an editorial writer for the *Fort Scott Bulletin*. He advised that the black regiment be kept away from Kansas troops which were then in the field for “with one exception, there is not a Kansas regiment from which they would not have as much to fear as from the rebels.”

While the black soldiers felt insulted and betrayed by the government’s delay and discrimination in matters of mustering into service and pay, the dependents they left behind in Kansas suffered real hardships. In Leavenworth, the public was urged to subscribe clothing, food, and money to the wives and children of the men in service. When it was discovered that a group of blacks planned to hold a bazaar to raise money for a charitable cause outside the town, a public meeting of colored citizens was called. It was resolved, that since the great majority of the black population was poor, and that many continued to arrive in Kansas “destitute of money, clothing and bedding,” that the blacks should be urged *not* to send money out of town but “to do all within their power to relieve the poor and suffering among us, and urge our friends here and elsewhere to aid us in this good work.”

V

Kansas Territory attracted a small group of ardent abolitionists who, with moral and material support from the East, established stations and conducted “passengers” on the Underground Railroad to freedom. When the Civil War commenced, contrabands from Missouri made straight for these stations and other places of refuge and opportunity for employment.

Kansas became more Negrophilic during the Civil War when the contrabands supplied much needed labor to harvest crops and perform a variety of tasks in rural and urban areas. Most importantly, black men volunteered for military service and made a notable contribution. Unfortunately, race prejudice and bureaucratic delay and discrimination brought great hardships to the families of black servicemen and proved to be a serious obstacle to progress on the road toward racial integration.
Before the Civil War had ended, much of the cooperative effort that had characterized the Kansas Emancipation League and other organizations broke down and the black and white communities tended to go their separate ways. In Leavenworth, for example, the black community held public meetings to protest the treatment accorded black soldiers; the Suffrage Club was organized to agitate for an amendment to the Kansas Constitution which would extend the franchise to black males. Beginning in October 1863, the Kansas State Colored Convention met annually in the leading cities to debate and act upon such issues as equal suffrage, the right to serve in the state militia, the right of trial by a jury of political equals, and the abolition of discriminatory practices by the proprietors of stages, railroad cars, barber shops, hotels, saloons, and other public institutions.

In the face of an overpowering Negrophobic white majority, the blacks of Kansas turned more and more to their own cultural heritage, to their schools, churches, lodges, mutual aid societies, and the celebration of anniversaries that marked their progress from slavery to freedom. One such celebration was the emancipation of the slaves in the British West Indies on August 1, 1834. On August 1, 1864, the black community of Leavenworth and vicinity began their celebration of West Indian emancipation with a procession headed by the Colored Battery of Capt. William D. Mathews, followed by the Sabbath schools, and the Suffrage Club. Not less than two thousand people met at Fackler's Grove where a fine dinner, interesting speeches, and splendid music were enjoyed.

It is ironic that when the U.S. Supreme Court came to consider race discrimination a century after Kansas Territory had been a staging ground for civil war on the issue of chattel slavery, it was a case brought by a black Kansan against the school board in the state's capital city that overturned court-enforced segregation and ushered in the Civil Rights Movement.
Sources of the
Kansas Constitution

Robert Stone

When the [Wyandotte constitutional] convention convened one of the first questions which arose was whether or not to use the constitution of some other state or some former draft of the Kansas constitution as a model from which to draw the new document. On the first ballot, Ohio received 13 votes; Indiana 12; Kentucky 6; the Leavenworth Constitution 5; the Topeka Constitution 3; Pennsylvania 2; Iowa 2; Wisconsin 2; Massachusetts, Michigan, Maine, Minnesota and Oregon 1 each. On the second ballot Ohio received 25, Indiana 23, and Kentucky 1. The constitution of Ohio, having received the majority, was declared to be the proposed basis for the new document.

The greatest speech of the convention was made by Thacher in opposition to a proposal to exclude free negroes from the state. This speech forever settled the question of absolute freedom of Kansas soil, although the vote upon the proposition when taken stood twenty-one ayes and twenty-six nays.

To us of this day it seems strange that any argument was necessary to defeat the proposition. But the sentiment in favor of it was so strong in the convention that several of the members predicted that the constitution would be defeated unless the provision excluding the free negro from the state should be included in it. Their apprehension proved to be without foundation.

A very interesting discussion arose over the northern boundary of Kansas. Delegates came from Southern Nebraska and petitioned the convention to fix the northern boundary of the state at the Platte River. They argued with great earnestness that the present boundary was an artificial one, while the river was a natural boundary because it could

not be forded because of quicksand, could not be bridged because no bottom could be found for the piers, and could not be ferried because there was not enough water to float a boat. That at times it was a raging torrent and at other times a stretch of sand. They offered to give to Kansas a rich area of territory and the democratic members of the convention were unanimously in favor of the tender. But the republicans "feared the Greeks bearing gifts," they suspected the inhabitants of that land were democrats and might either defeat the constitution altogether, or elect democratic United States senators, from the new state, so the boundary line was fixed at the 40th parallel.

Nearly every section can be traced to some provision of some preceding constitution, except perhaps the provision that all bills should originate in the House of Representatives, and this provision was repealed in November, 1864.

This, however, does not mean that the instrument was not progressive in its character. On the contrary most of the constitutions from which its provisions were taken had been recently adopted by the respective states and from them were gleaned the best and most progressive provisions. The sagacity of the Wyandotte Convention consisted in its selection of these provisions and the amalgamation of them into a consistent and harmonious instrument. Most of the progressive ideas of the decade were incorporated in the instrument. Slavery was prohibited. Free negroes were not excluded. Wild cat banking paper was proscribed. Ample provision was made for common schools and higher education. The rights of women were recognized and advanced and the homestead was guarded against covetous creditors. It is true that some progressive measures were suggested to the convention which were not adopted. John Ritchie offered the following: "That the state of Kansas shall confer power on the legislature to prohibit the introduction, manufacture or sale of spirituous liquor in the state." The provision was not adopted. But twenty-one years later, in November, 1880, the prohibition amendment was passed.

Mr. Ritchie moved to strike the word "white" from the article establishing the state militia. Only six voted in favor of the motion, but the section was so amended in 1888. Mr. Hutchinson presented a petition of 252 inhabitants of Douglas and Shawnee counties asking
that the right of suffrage be extended to women. The petition was not granted, but in 1913 that right was extended to women.

There are two provisions in the Wyandotte Constitution which make it a mile-post in legislation. One is the extension of married women's rights and the other the homestead exemption. These provisions are linked together and touch the social life of the state through the family. The sections are as follows:

SECTION 6. The Legislature shall provide for the protection of the rights of women, in acquiring and possessing property, real, personal and mixed, separate and apart from the husband; and shall also provide for their equal rights in the possession of their children.

SECTION 9. A Homestead to the extent of one hundred and sixty acres of farming land, or of one acre within the limits of an

The Free State Constitutional Convention formed a state government and elected Charles Robinson governor in 1855. In this period the traditional Democratic and Republican party labels were abandoned by many. Most people were either antislavery ("free staters") or proslavery.
incorporated town or city, occupied as a residence by the family of the owner, together with all the improvements on the same, shall be exempted from forced sale under any process of law, and shall not be alienated without the joint consent of husband and wife when that relation exists; but no property shall be exempt from sale for taxes, or for the payment of obligations contracted for the purchase of said premises, or for the erection of improvements thereon. Provided, The provisions of this section shall not apply to any process of law obtained by virtue of a lien given by the consent of both husband and wife.

From early history woman has been little better than a chattel and even under the common law of England a woman upon her marriage surrendered all her right to hold personal or real property to her husband. Not only her individuality became merged in her husband, but he enjoyed the right of possession and disposition of her property. Her goods became liable to seizure and appropriation by his creditors. Through the profligacy or ill-management of the husband a women who was well-to-do in her own right before her marriage might be reduced to poverty after her marriage. Except as modified or repealed by the constitution or statutes the common law of England applied to most of the states, including Kansas. The men of the Wyandotte convention determined that no such injustice would be fastened upon the women of Kansas, and by the section first above quoted they restored for all time to their women the management and control of their own property so far as law can give it to them. By the second provision they fixed for her and her children a homestead which could not be violated or torn from her and them by the malice, ill-management or misfortune of the husband, except by the joint consent of the wife.

Homestead laws are an American institution, unknown in other lands. The first statutory provision exempting the home from execution was enacted by the Republic of Texas in 1839, and the first homestead exemption placed in a constitution was in that of Texas in 1845. In 1859, when the Wyandotte convention assembled, it was a scarcely recognized political doctrine. The leading advocate for a constitutional homestead exemption was Samuel A. Kingman. Without his great earnestness and logical argument it never would have been adopted by the convention, because other men strong in debate, such as Thacher,
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FEBRUARY 15, 1860.

Read twice, and referred to the Committee on Territories.

MARCH 20, 1860.

Reported back by Mr. Grow, without amendment, and ordered to be printed.

Public 6.

Mr. Grow, on leave, introduced the following bill:

An Act

For the admission of Kansas into the Union.

Whereas the people of the Territory of Kansas, by their representatives in convention assembled, at Wyandott, in said Territory, on the twenty-ninth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine, did form for themselves a constitution and State government, republican in form, which was ratified and adopted by the people at an election held for that purpose, on Tuesday, the fourth day of October, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine, and the said convention has, in their name and behalf, asked the Congress of the United States to admit the said Territory into the Union as a State, on an equal footing with the other States: Therefore—

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

That the State of Kansas shall be, and is hereby declared to

Sections of the act before the United States House of Representatives to admit Kansas into the Union in 1860. The struggles between free-state and proslavery settlers that erupted during the territorial period would not be resolved by statehood; within a year the new state would be deeply involved in civil war on a national scale.
Ingalls and Stinson, opposed it, claiming that the homestead exemption would enable men to avoid their just debts and would injure the credit of the state.

That was a novel doctrine then, but since that time every state in the Union, except, we believe, Delaware, Indiana, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island, has, by constitutional or statutory provision, recognized its soundness. It fosters the family as the primal factor of society and thus promotes general welfare. To protect the home is to preserve the family from disintegration. To dignify the wife is to develop citizenry. If the homes are permanent in character the community will build schools, churches, libraries. The spirit of free citizenship and patriotism will thrive, and the state will be healthy and prosperous. The Kansas courts have given liberal construction to the constitutional provision. Early in the history of the state, while Kingman was chief justice, the court declared that the wife's interest in a homestead under this provision was not an inchoate and expectant thing, a mere veto upon the right of the husband to alienate the estate, but that it was a real existing estate under which the occupation and enjoyment thereof is secure to her against any act of her husband or creditors without her consent. If her husband abandon her the use of the homestead remains to her and the family. It is not like dower depending on uncertain events, but fixed and certain without need of any statutory enactment. In later years the same court has declared that the right belongs to the wife alone, independent of any children. The great bereavement of her husband's death would not admit the gaunt grey wolf of debt to ravage the home and turn into mockery the constitutional provision prepared against the days of her adversity. On the contrary, she continues in the enjoyment of precisely the same right of immunity from the loss of her hearthstone by suit of her husband's creditors as before his death. And so the widow is protected as well as the wife. But the court has gone farther still and now holds that while the right of exemption cannot originate without the existence of a family consisting of more than one person, when the homestead character has once attached and the head of the family remains in continuous occupation of the property, though all others may die or forsake him, it is still occupied as a residence by a constituent part of the family and he may hold it sacred from invasion for his sole use and occupation.
By these provisions the wife and mother becomes a proprietor in her own right, part owner of her home and queen of her domain. The husband and father has a castle safe from invasion where he may retreat in time of storm or adversity. Failure cannot affect it, disaster cannot destroy it. Friends may desert him, but his enemies cannot reach him. He and his family are secure. For the present and for the future the permanency of the home is established. His place in the community is fixed and his interests in the state are anchored and strengthened.

No marble column or granite shaft could be so fine a tribute to the memory of the men of the Wyandotte convention as the married women and the homestead exemption provisions of the constitution. These two clauses make every happy family and peaceful home in Kansas a monument to their memory. Succeeding generations of Kansans will hold them in grateful veneration.

The Bloodiest Man in American History

Albert Castel

We like to think of the Civil War as the last romantic war—as a sort of gallant duel between gentlemen. There was a certain aura of "swords and roses" in the East, but west of the Mississippi, that neglected area of Civil War history, quite a different atmosphere prevailed. Here the fighting was grim, relentless, and utterly savage—a "battle to the knife, and the knife to the hilt."

Nowhere was this more true than in the bloody war-within-a-war that raged along the Kansas-Missouri border. There the people did not even wait for the bombardment of Fort Sumter. As early as 1855, armies of proslavery “border ruffians” from Missouri and antislavery Kansas “jayhawkers” clashed in the fierce struggle which determined that Kansas would enter the Union as a free rather than as a slave state.

This prelude to the Civil War engendered a mutual hatred and bitterness which, in 1861, flared into vicious reprisals and counterreprisals. As one Kansan later remarked, “The Devil came to the border, liked it, and decided to stay awhile.” Led by Jim Lane, Charles Jennison, and Dan Anthony, Kansan raiders swirled through western Missouri, looting, burning, and killing. Missouri “bushwhackers” in turn made quick, devastating guerrilla forays into Kansas. Soon a border strip forty miles wide was a no man’s land of desolate farmhouses, brush-grown fields, and prowling gangs of marauders.

One man rapidly came to dominate this border war: William Clarke Quantrill, chief of the Missouri bushwhackers. For dashing boldness and murderous ferocity his raids into Kansas had no parallel. In March,
1862, his men sacked the little village of Aubrey; at Olathe in October they captured 125 Kansas militiamen and shot down helpless civilians "like so many hogs"; and a month later they reduced the entire town of Shawnee to ashes. Hundreds of terrified Kansans moved to the interior or fled the state entirely.

This "fiend," as the Kansans called him, was a tall, slender young man with wavy hair and a mild, almost effeminate face. Only his cold blue eyes, half-concealed by thick, drooping lids, bespoke the ruthless killer. Born July 31, 1837, at Canal Dover, Ohio, he had spent most of his adult life in Kansas. As a boy, he is said to have delighted in nailing snakes to trees, torturing dogs and cats, and stabbing cows and horses. He received a good education for his day—his father was a schoolteacher—and for a time followed his father's profession in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. In the spring of 1857, accompanied by two other men from Canal Dover, Quantrill migrated to Kansas, where he
engaged in farming and also, apparently, got into trouble with his neighbors for stealing. In 1858 he joined an army expedition to Utah as a teamster, spent some time in the Pike's Peak gold fields, and then returned to Kansas, eventually settling in Lawrence.

There, for reasons unknown, he went by the name of Charley Hart (an alias he had occasionally used out west) or, sometimes, William Clarke. The townspeople found him somehow strange and suspicious and were inclined to shun him. Once, when out riding with a girl, he pointed to a tree and said that it would be a good place to hang a man. Ultimately he became a member of a gang of Kansas border bandits engaged in stealing Negroes and horses from Missouri; he was arrested once but jumped bail and thereafter managed to evade arrest.

Quantrill's first real notoriety came in December, 1860. He persuaded three Kansas "practical abolitionists" to accompany him on a raid into Missouri for the purpose of liberating the slaves of Morgan Walker, a well-to-do Jackson County farmer. But prior to the raid he secretly forewarned Walker, with the result that the three abolitionists walked into a deadly trap. Quantrill remained in Jackson County the rest of the winter, regaining the sympathy and trust of the Missourians by telling them he had engineered the ambush to revenge the murder of an elder brother by Kansas jayhawkers. It was a lie, but to this day many Missourians firmly believe it.

Following the outbreak of full-scale hostilities along the border, Quantrill joined one of the Missouri bushwhacker bands, then formed his own outfit. His spectacular forays gained him recognition as head of all the guerrillas, and in the summer of 1862 the Confederate Army granted him a captain's commission. Union authorities, however, regarded the bushwhackers as outlaws and treated them accordingly. In retaliation, the latter vowed to show no quarter to Federal prisoners.

Those who knew Quantrill in Lawrence afterward recalled that he did not appear to possess any special ability, and that although "somewhat of a horseman," he was "only a fair shot." But Kansans have tended to underrate him. One of his followers described him as being "a good commander and a brave man," and stated that in combat his men would try to keep him in the rear, not only so he could direct the fighting but also because they "did not want to lose him." Another guerrilla testified that with one or two exceptions Quantrill was the "fastest draw," best shot, and finest horseman of all the bushwhackers.
Quantrill’s band was composed of tough young Missourians with Southern sympathies who resented jayhawker raids, and of border ruffians and outlaws like Quantrill himself. A Confederate general who encountered them in Texas said all of them were killers who “deemed the life of a man less than that of a sheep-killing dog.” Some of the more notorious members included “Bloody Bill” Anderson (who bedecked the bridle of his horse with human scalps); the fearless, sadistic George Todd; and three young men serving their apprenticeship in outlawry under Quantrill: Cole Younger and Frank and Jesse James.

Quantrill and his men saw duty with Confederate troops at the battles of Independence and Lone Jack, Missouri, in August, 1862, and at the Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas, in December of that year. It was after the Independence clash that Quantrill received his Confederate captain’s commission, but he and his men resisted all efforts by the Confederate authorities to have them join the regular forces on a permanent basis. They were more interested in their personal war with the Kansans and with Missouri Unionists than in the Southern cause as such. Confederate generals in the West were quite willing to make use of the bushwhackers’ services, despite the atrocity stories which followed them wherever they went.

The bushwhackers dressed in picturesque guerrilla shirts—loose, gaudily beaded blouses worn over their ordinary clothes and having a low scooped neck and capacious pockets for ammunition. Much of the time, however, they wore captured Federal uniforms. So disguised, they were often able to approach within point-blank range of a Union detachment, then wipe it out. Taken as a whole, they were the most formidable “revolver fighters” the West ever knew.

After each foray across the border the bushwhackers scattered with their loot into the rugged hills of western Missouri. The intensely pro-Southern people of this region regarded them as heroic defenders against the jayhawkers, and so sheltered them and helped them evade the Union pursuit columns.

By the spring of 1863 Quantrill, with several hundred men under his command, was at the peak of his power and confidence. According to one unauthenticated account, he even journeyed to Richmond, Virginia, and had an interview with the Confederate Secretary of War in which he urged that the South wage a “black flag” war and that he
be commissioned a colonel of "partisan rangers." In any case, he adopted the title of colonel and on occasion wore a colonel's uniform. And he began laying plans for what was to be his most famous and ambitious undertaking: the raid on Lawrence, Kansas.

For years the people of western Missouri had made no secret of their determination someday to wipe out Lawrence. To them the town was the citadel of Kansas abolitionism, the symbol of all that they hated in Kansas. It had been the "Free-State Fortress" during the fifties, and it was now headquarters for the hated Kansas guerrillas known as the Red Legs. With a population of nearly three thousand, it was also one of the largest and wealthiest towns in Kansas. When Quantrill announced, "Let's go to Lawrence—we can get more revenge, and more money, there than anywhere else," his men required no further urging.

On August 19, 1863, three hundred bushwhackers began marching westward from the Blackwater River in Johnson County, Missouri. Along the way 150 more joined them, bringing their total number up to 450—the largest force of its kind assembled under one command during the Civil War. Late in the afternoon of August 20 they crossed into Kansas five miles south of Aubrey. Here they were favored by a tragic failure in the Union border defenses. The commander of the Federal post at Aubrey was notified by a scout that a large body of guerrillas was entering the state. But instead of pursuing Quantrill and sending couriers to alert the towns to the west, he merely forwarded the report to the other Union posts along the line and to headquarters at Kansas City.

Throughout the moonless night Quantrill's column moved steadily across the Kansas prairie "like a monstrous snake, creeping upon its prey." Many of the bushwhackers slept as they rode, strapped to their saddles. They made only a few brief halts, to rest the horses or to get a bearing. During one such stop George Todd went to a nearby farmhouse and with a musket stock clubbed to death a Unionist refugee from Missouri, possibly to settle an old personal grudge. The raiders murdered numerous others along the way, including ten different guides they pressed into service. Some carried lists of intended victims with them. Many Kansans saw them as they passed and guessed their identity and destination, but, paralyzed by fear, made no effort to send a warning to Lawrence.
“At the first glimmer of day” on August 21, Lawrence came into sight. Quantrill halted the column on a summit southeast of the town and sent several men ahead to reconnoiter. Some of his followers suggested turning back—surely the inhabitants had been alerted by now and would be waiting for them. “You can do as you please,” replied Quantrill. “I am going into Lawrence!” Then, without waiting for his scouts to return, he gave the order to charge.

The first inkling the sleeping townspeople had of the bushwhackers was the rattle of gunfire, the pounding of hoofs, and the agonized screams of the wounded and dying. Witnesses never forgot the sight—hundreds of bearded, long-haired, wild-looking men, in slouch hats and greasy, sweat-stained shirts, yelling, shooting, and riding with reckless skill.

Upon arriving at the Kansas River, which bordered the town on the north, they turned back and surrounded the four-story Eldridge House, Lawrence’s central building. They approached cautiously, but the occupants, bewildered by the sudden onslaught, possessed neither the will nor the means to defend the place. One guest, Captain A. R. Banks, waved a white sheet from a window and called for Quantrill.

He rode forward, attired in his elaborately ornamented guerrilla shirt, four pistols in his belt, two more in saddle holsters.

“What is your object in coming to Lawrence?” cried Banks.

“Plunder!” replied Quantrill.

“We are defenseless and at your mercy. The house is surrendered, but we demand protection for the inmates.”

Quantrill promised that they would not be harmed if they offered no resistance. He then ordered them to come down to the street, where two bushwhackers relieved them of money and valuables while others pillaged the rooms, then set fire to the hotel.

As the flames shot skyward, Quantrill rose in his stirrups, turned to his men, and shouted: “Kill! Kill! Lawrence must be thoroughly cleansed, and the only way to cleanse it is to kill! Kill!”

With a wild yell the raiders spread out through the town. Some, screaming “Whiskey! Whiskey!” broke into the saloons. Others ransacked the stores and shops. At the Johnson House, bushwhackers lined up all the male residents in an alley and mowed them down with revolvers. Farther up the street they shot and wounded two men, then threw them screaming into the flames of a burning building. And
everywhere they plundered and burned private houses, after first slaying every male occupant they discovered. They did not, however, kill or rape any women.

The panic-stricken men of Lawrence endeavored frantically to escape. Many fled to cornfields and woods, or concealed themselves along the riverbank. Others, whose dwellings were surrounded before they could get away, hid in cellars, attics, barns, and gardens, or even disguised themselves as women. Still others sought refuge under the board sidewalks.

Women who talked with the bushwhackers subsequently related that they all asserted they had come to Lawrence to avenge wrongs done to their people in Missouri by jayhawkers and Red Legs. They claimed, too, that they were being more merciful than the Kansans, whom they charged not only with robbery, arson, and murder, but also with molesting women.

Most of the raiders obtained fresh horses to replace their own jaded mounts or to bear additional plunder. What they could not use or carry, they burned. They proceeded systematically from building to building,
setting fire to each one; the smoke swirled straight up into the sky and "stood like great black columns along the street." Soon an overhanging shroud darkened the entire town.

During the early part of the massacre Quantrill sat in a hotel lobby eating a hearty breakfast and conversing with former acquaintances—many of whom hastened to claim a friendship which under other circumstances they would have denied. Later he took a buggy and drove triumphantly about the burning town. When, at nine o'clock, his lookouts atop a nearby hill reported seeing the dust of approaching Union troops, he ordered his men to form into columns of four, and almost as suddenly as they had come, they were gone.

They left behind almost total devastation. Lawrence's business center was destroyed; one hundred houses had been burned to the ground and another hundred damaged by fire. The dead lay scattered everywhere, "some so charred that they could not be recognized and could scarcely be taken up." Bones were visible among the embers, and the "sickening odor of burning flesh was oppressive." In all, 150 men of Lawrence (and one of Quantrill's raiders) lost their lives; another thirty were wounded.

Quantrill evaded the feeble Union pursuit without difficulty. By the next morning he was well back into Missouri, where his men, as usual, scattered into the hills. About a dozen of the raiders were caught and killed, but Quantrill and most of the others escaped.

The Lawrence massacre was the bloody climax of the Kansas-Missouri border conflict. It was also the most atrocious single event of the Civil War. For stark, melodramatic horror, nothing else quite matched it. It has given Quantrill a reputation as the bloodiest man in American history, and placed him in the company of Simon Girty and John Wilkes Booth as one of the great national villains.

But he was not through. In October, he and his men headed south to spend the winter in Texas. On the way, near Baxter Springs, Kansas, they came upon Major General James G. Blunt, commander of Union forces in the Indian Territory, accompanied by his personal escort. Quantrill's men were wearing Federal uniforms, and Blunt's soldiers thought they were troops from a garrison at Baxter Springs. Suddenly, at point-blank range, the bushwhackers opened fire. The survivors fled in terror, closely pursued by the exultant guerrillas, who mercilessly killed every man they overtook, including an artist from Frank Leslie's
Illustrated Newspaper and the hapless members of Blunt's headquarters band. Blunt himself escaped only because he had a fleet horse. In all, nearly a hundred Union soldiers were slain. Afterward Quantrill, ordinarily a light drinker, got roaring drunk and swaggered about the field bragging of his victory.

The bushwhackers continued on to Texas. In the Indian Territory they captured (according to Quantrill's own report to Confederate General Sterling Price) "150 Federal Indians and Negroes," but brought "none of them through." All told, counting numerous minor raids and skirmishes, Quantrill's raiders probably killed close to a thousand men during 1863.

The Baxter Springs massacre was Quantrill's last major success. In Texas dissension broke out among the guerrillas; many left Quantrill to form a separate band under Anderson, and Todd took over actual leadership of the remainder. Quantrill retained only a nominal overall command. The reason for his sudden eclipse is not clear, but apparently Todd, a man of superlative courage and dash, had become more popular with the rank and file, especially the younger, wilder ones.

During most of 1864 Quantrill hid out in northern Missouri with his mistress, Kate Clarke, who is said to have accompanied him on some of his raids dressed in men's clothes. (After the war she used money given her by Quantrill to establish a brothel in St. Louis.) That autumn Todd and Anderson, along with many other bushwhackers, were killed while participating in an unsuccessful Confederate invasion of Missouri and Kansas. This debacle, along with the general collapse of the Confederacy, broke the hold of the bushwhackers on Missouri. Early in 1865 Quantrill led a small band out of the state into central Kentucky.

They passed winter and spring there, committing petty depredations and skirmishing with Kentucky Unionist militia. Apparently Quantrill had no real plans, except to continue his freebooting career. On May 10, 1865, the inevitable end came. A party of "Federal guerrillas" surprised his band in a barn near Louisville and severely wounded Quantrill as he attempted to flee. He was taken to Louisville, where, on June 6, he died in a military prison.

"The monster is dead," rejoiced the Kansas press. But in the legends of the Missouri border he lived on. There, the stories of his dashing
exploits and hair-breadth escapes were told and retold, becoming more elaborate with each telling. To have been one of his men soon became a mark of honor and distinction; as late as 1929 those of his followers who survived the war, and escaped the fate of Jesse James, held annual reunions at Independence. There are many men still alive in Missouri who recall the thrill they experienced as children when some bearded veteran was pointed out to them and they were told in a hushed voice: "He was one of Quantrill's raiders." And such is the perversity of fame's allure that well into the present century elderly impostors occasionally appeared to lay claim to the dubious honor of having been William Clarke Quantrill himself.
“This Far Off Land”:
The Overland Diary, 1867, and
California Diary, 1868,
of Elizabeth “Bettie” Duncan

Katie H. Armitage

Introduction

When the company of thirteen, made up of men, women and children, set out from Lawrence, Kansas, for California on June 24, 1867, the lure of the West had, during the preceding quarter of a century, drawn already more than a quarter of a million people onto the Overland Trail. A leader of the 1867 Lawrence party, Wesley Harvey Duncan, had been part of this earlier migration. During the gold rush to California in the 1850s, Duncan had operated a miner’s store for a short time in California. After his first wife died, he returned to Missouri where, in 1854, he married the young Elizabeth Watts. In the next year the family moved to the fledgling city of Lawrence, Kansas.

Although he had established himself as a successful businessman during the tumultuous first decade of Lawrence settlement, Wesley Duncan by the mid-1860s again looked westward for the future. At the time of the 1867 overland journey the Duncan family included Wesley, age fifty-two; his wife Elizabeth, known as Bettie, age twenty-nine; William T. “Willie” Duncan, the twenty-year-old son of Wesley’s first marriage; and two of Wesley and Bettie’s children, Katie, who turned six en route, and Cettie, age four.

This photograph of Elizabeth and Wesley Duncan is believed to be their 1854 wedding portrait. In 1867 the Duncan family left a comfortable home in Lawrence, Kansas, for unknown fortunes in California.

Bettie Duncan began a travel diary as the Lawrence party left home for the four-month overland journey in the summer of 1867. She also kept a two-month diary while in San Jose, California, in 1868. These two diaries record a period of trail travel that is not as well documented as the earlier years of the overland migration.

In the past decade scholars have reexamined documents and produced new interpretations of the overland experience. Notable among the new studies are John D. Unruh’s The Plains Across: The
This Far Off Land

Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–1860, John Mark Faragher’s Women and Men on the Overland Trail, and Lillian Schlissel’s Women’s Diaries of the Westward Journey. Additionally, historians Julie Roy Jeffrey and Sandra L. Myres have made extensive use of women’s trail diaries for studies of women in the West.

Despite this renewed historical scrutiny of the trail, a number of primary records have yet to be examined. Among diaries that have not been analyzed are the travel and California diaries of Elizabeth “Bettie” Duncan. This article will follow the 1867 journey of the Lawrence party, compare the experiences of Bettie Duncan with similar experiences of other women on the trail, and assess the impact of the overland journey and California sojourn on the Duncan family, in particular, and on other husbands and wives who made the journey, in general.

Bettie’s initial entry in the travel diary indicated that she, as many women facing the hardships and hazards of the two-thousand mile journey, was reluctant to leave home,

Monday, June 24, 1867.
The dreaded day has at last come We are now in camp the rest are eating dinner while I write but my heart is too full of thoughts of loved ones that I have now left behind O how strong are the cords of love that bind one to those I leave with such deep feeling but I must and will brace up and fare the best I can

Public notice of the departing party appeared in Lawrence’s Kansas Daily Tribune on June 25, 1867, in a column on “Local Matters.”

A party of our citizens started yesterday for California, a portion, we believe, for permanent residence, and others with the intention of returning at some future day. The following names comprise the party: Mr. Duncan, wife, son, and two children; G. W. Berry and wife; G. W. McGrew, wife and child; Charles Babcock, Mr. Johnson and Mr. A. A. Thorpe.

They intend going the overland route.

The motivations behind this journey so late in the active years of trail use can only be surmised. The economic or personal reasons for the westward trek by the three families and three single men probably
varied. Census records show that Wesley Duncan was the most prosperous member of the party.

Leaving her comfortable home on Massachusetts Street must have been a wrenching experience for Bettie Duncan. Her daily life had followed a regular pattern of work in the house, visits to the homes of neighbors, and worship in the nearby First Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Duncans' life in their earliest years in Lawrence had been more typical of the pioneer experience. They first lived in a log cabin and later above their store. By the time of the California trip their circumstances had materially improved.

The home from which they left was spared the devastation wrought upon much of Lawrence during Quantrill's raid of August 21, 1863. In a publication on the fiftieth anniversary of the raid, Duncan's daughter wrote that the raiders came to her parents' home demanding to be led to the store. Wesley Duncan's life was spared but the store was destroyed.

Whatever the reasons for Duncan to sell his business and home and set out for California, the late 1860s seemed to have been a particularly hazardous time to travel. Indian attacks on parties on the trail escalated as post-Civil War frontier settlements pushed farther into the traditional hunting ground of the Plains Indians and the advance of the Union Pacific Railway brought many more competing hunters and settlers onto the plains. The prospective travelers certainly must have been aware of the dangers, if not of the pressures underlying the Indian attacks. The Kansas Daily Tribune of April 7, 1867, editorialized on "Indian Outrages."

Every mail coach and freighter that comes from the west, reports additional Indian outrages. Not only are single individuals and small parties murdered but entire trains, and companies, and forts, are butchered by the wholesale. One massacre after another follows so closely, that it has become a subject for only passing remark.

The writer concluded, "We don't profess to be of a blood-thirsty disposition, but we do hope that every infernal red-skin of the plains may be sent to eternal happiness before the summer is over." Although the attacks prompting this outburst were at forts north of the Overland
Trail route, the Lawrence travelers must have been reminded of the dangers of the journey only two months before they were to leave. However, as historian Schlissel observed of the determination of the emigrants: "Ignorance of the road had not stopped them in the 1840s; cholera had not stopped them in the 1850s, and neither Civil War nor Indians would stop them now."

The Overland Trail, 1867

As Bettie Duncan began her travel diary on the day of departure, neither her possible fears regarding the journey nor preparations for travel were recorded. Many other travel diaries also began at departure, but Bettie Duncan’s record is unusual for three reasons: the year in which it was written; the Lawrence origins of the party; and the fact that these emigrants were not seeking new land in the West as most earlier emigrants had been. The lone 1867 diary in Schlissel’s study was an account of travel over the southern route, not the Great Platte River route followed by the Duncans and thousands of earlier overlanders. Few diaries of any route were kept after 1867 for as Schlissel observed: “Migration dwindled after 1868. The railroad began to replace the wagon. . . .”

The 1867 Lawrence party was distinct on other accounts. None of the men were farmers. John Mack Faragher found that over half the emigrants he analyzed were farmers and only nine percent were merchants. Faragher also found that over half the overland parties were organized through kinship. Members of the 1867 Lawrence party, although surely well acquainted, were not known to be related by blood or marriage. The Duncan and McGrew homes in Lawrence were two blocks apart and the Duncans and Berrys were associated with the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Lawrence from its time of organization. In the small city these families must have known each other well.

Despite the atypical composition of the Lawrence party of 1867, Bettie Duncan’s experiences on the trail were representative of those of many other women traveling overland. As Lillian Schlissel observed:
The diaries of the women who went overland in the 1860s show how remarkably little had changed in the life of the road. . . . For most emigrants, life and death still hung in a precarious balance.

For the Duncans the "precarious balance" of life tipped to tragedy when their six-year-old daughter, Katie, died en route and was buried on the trail. Young children on the trail were at considerable risk whenever they traveled.

One major difference in life on the trail in the later years, including 1867, was the number of amenities travelers could take advantage of at stops along the way. John D. Unruh emphasized the changing nature of the trail in his study of the early decades.

Overland travel was radically altered by the Mormon hegira to the Salt Lake Valley, by the advent of profit-seeking merchants and entrepreneurs, and by the gradual extension of government services westward to the Pacific.

Another change in life on the trail for emigrants in the late 1860s was the alteration in the natural landscape caused by the westward thrust of the Union Pacific Railway. The Lawrence party followed the tracks north and west from Topeka all the way across Nebraska (newly admitted to statehood in March 1867). The appearance of occasional trains on those tracks jarred the emigrants' perceptions. Bettie marveled at the scene in her diary entry of July 17, 1867.

We have seen two trains of cars coming up and one coming down today it hardly seems possible the cars would [be] running up in this wilderness

When these travelers reached the end of the tracks in Julesburg, Colorado, on July 31, Bettie clearly appreciated the promise the railroad afforded for reunion with family and home:

they are putting down the ties very fast at 3 miles a day I trust they will hurry on as fast as possible for when it is done I will go back to dear old Lawrence
Bettie’s thoughts of friends at home were typical of those of many other women on the trail. “Women’s diaries, more than men’s, tended to focus on friends at home,” stated Julie Roy Jeffrey. “Men did not dwell on absent friends in their journals; women did.”

As did many women on the trail, Bettie also lamented the lack of regular worship services. Jeffrey observed:

Familiar patterns disintegrated under the trip’s strain, and even the comforting sense of the flow of time vanished. Most striking was the disappearance of the Sabbath, which had become by mid-century a symbol of women’s religious and moral authority.

Bettie carefully noted each Sunday of the four-month journey, even though the Lawrence party traveled on nine of the sixteen Sundays that it was on the trail. After leaving Lawrence on a Monday and traveling six days, the party rested half a day. On Sunday, June 30, 1867, Bettie recorded:
Camped near Marysville. We came from black Vermillion today got here at noon and will remain until tomorrow. This is quite a dull looking place. The stream which is sky blue is beautiful. I am more than home sick today. This is our first Sabbath out. How I miss the church, the Sabbath School, and the loved ones I have so often met there. O for grace, faith, and prayer to guard me on all my undertakings.

May the Lord keep and bless us all.

The next Sunday, July 7, Bettie recognized the necessity of Sabbath travel as she wrote in her diary, "As we are in the country where the Indians are so bad, we have traveled all day today." On Sunday, July 28, as the travelers rested for the day, Bettie lamented to her diary, "I am deprived of all church privileges," and on September 8, when they again stopped for the day, she recorded:

We have been in camp all day trying to keep Sabbath the best we could but find it pretty hard when there is no church to go to, no Sabbath class to meet, and so little to clear our mind out for good....

Near the end of the four-month journey, on October 18, Bettie recorded a personal milestone, "I am 30 years old today." No celebration marked this occasion. This was in sharp contrast to her birthday observance of 1864 when, despite the war tensions of the time in Lawrence, her nephew and neighbor took her for an outing. She also received presents, though none from her husband, Wesley.

At the time of the 1867 journey, Bettie had been married to Wesley Duncan for twelve years. The union was characterized by tensions accentuated by differences in age, temperament, and interests. Wesley and Bettie operated in different "spheres," as the different worlds of men and women were described at the time. Her life centered in her home and church; his focused largely on business and fraternal affairs.

Bettie's weekly routine and social contacts were significantly disrupted by the overland journey. Though their days on the trail kept them in close contact, the work of husband and wife differed in this environment as it had at home. Most men and women traveling overland followed this pattern. Historian Jeffrey has observed that at the beginning of the trip, men drove wagons, hunted, and stood guard while women cared for children, got the meals, and did the family...
washing. Bettie continued familiar tasks, such as washing and cooking, in the unfamiliar circumstances of the trail while Wesley hunted and looked out for the safety of the party. This typical division of labor remained operative for the Duncan party during most of the 1867 journey.

Bettie's care of the children seemed to have been such an accepted part of life that she only incidentally referred to the children in the trail diary. On the second day of the journey, she noted that she had to stop writing as "the little ones want to go to bed," and a few days later she recorded in passing, "I have just got my own little ones bathed and in bed." Later in the journey when illness threatened the lives of the children and of Willie Duncan, her stepson, Bettie's concern about their health dominated the diary entries.

Bettie's compatible relations with her stepson on the trail were in sharp contrast to the distress and pain his rebelliousness had caused her in 1864. On the journey Willie joined Bettie in sightseeing in the mountains and in Salt Lake City. Bettie's travel diary mentioned no difficulty with Willie, who had matured during the time that separates the diaries of 1864 and 1867.

Cooking, like daily child care, was also such an unexceptional part of daily life that it was most often mentioned in the trail diary in connection with other chores. Baking, washing, and other maintenance chores were accomplished when the travelers "laid over" for a few days:

Friday, July 19, 1867
Left camp at 9 drove up to Cottonwood found it a real pretty little place so clean and neat most all the buildings are made of cedar. There are quite a number of troops there I herd [sic] the music and it made me feel like old times. We drove up four miles beyond Cottonwood and camped for the day. I have been very busy washing baking and cooking all the afternoon. I am very tired tonight but still I remember my class that meets tonight at Lawrence and although I am almost 5 hundred miles from there My heart is with them

Saturday, August 3, 1867
We left camp at 6 traveled 9 miles and came to Pine Bluff and stoped [sic] to wash cook and wait for our team I have washed and baked we got some nice currants for pies this is a beautiful place so romantic beautiful pines and cedars we are all going up the bluff tomorrow
Bettie's husband, referred to as "Mr. Duncan" in the travel diary, as well as in her other diaries, appeared in the trail account frequently. After the Lawrence party joined with other travelers to form a group of seventeen wagons at Fort Kearny, Nebraska, Bettie noted that "our men organized this noon and elected Mr. Duncan captain." He stood guard at night in the area where Indians were perceived to be a threat.

Wesley Duncan frequently fished along the Platte and in mountain streams, he hunted antelope (but no buffalo, which were not mentioned in the 1867 diary), and he searched for stray mules. These active pursuits were typical of many men on the trail. Twice in the diary account Wesley Duncan appeared in an unexpected activity, food preparation. On a cold August morning in the mountains, Wesley and another man "got breakfast" before Bettie and the children arose, and in Salt Lake City, when the women returned to camp after a day of sightseeing, they found "our men had a good dinner or supper which ever it might be called most ready." Bettie continued, "we were very thankful." Such thoughtful aid was not unknown in other instances on the trail but as Julie Jeffrey observed of such occasions, "if men helped with female work from time to time, this did not mean they did it regularly."

Despite ever-present homesickness, Bettie performed traditional female tasks on the trail. She adjusted to the routine and began to enjoy many aspects. After eight days on the trail, she noted on July 2, "I stand the trip so far much better than I expected." After the first month of the journey, Bettie began to accept the challenges of life on the trail and feel comfort in her ability to perform her familiar work at each campsite. She wrote in her diary of July 23, 1867:

We have been traveling all day in the hot broiling sun through sand and dust the thermometer 106 in the shade. I have been more home sick today. I have thought today that it takes more and still [more] patience to endure all the hardships of camp life but not withstanding there is some thing kinda pleasant in this way of traveling I now begin to feel when we get into camp that I am at home and govern myself accordingly.

If the heat, dust, and mosquitoes were a tiresome part of trail life, Bettie also found the trail offered some new delights. Her entry of
July 26, 1867, written just west of Julesburg, Colorado, chronicled the river crossing and a swim the women took in the river. Not only was the swim pleasant after dusty days on the road but the social aspect of sharing the experience with the other women and girls was important to Bettie Duncan, to whom friendship meant a great deal. In Lawrence she was often in the company of female friends, and on the trail she re-created that circle of friends. Although Mrs. Berry was mentioned in Bettie Duncan’s 1864 diary, as was a Mrs. Brown, on the trail it was Mrs. McGrew, who also had a child along on the journey, with whom Bettie shared most experiences.

Most of Bettie Duncan’s reminders of Lawrence were deeply affectionate and filled with longing, but on a special anniversary she recalled a tragic event in Lawrence history. On August 21, 1867, she wrote, “I have had peculiar feelings today 4 years ago today was the Lawrence raid.” This reference to Quantrill’s 1863 raid on Lawrence, in which more than one hundred fifty men were killed, is one of the most specific recollections in the travel diary, and as such, served to demonstrate the continuing impact of that terrible event on those who lived through it.

On August 5, after some six weeks on the trail, the journey was going well for the Duncans and other members of the Lawrence party. Bettie noted on that date that the weather was “delightful,” that no one in their party had been sick, and “all our stock is looking well.” The first half of the journey had proceeded smoothly. Even the Indian threat did not materialize. Early in the journey before the party had left “dear old Kansas,” Bettie wrote, “we hear dreadful Indian stories our men keep there [sic] guns in there [sic] hand all the time,” and on July 8 she had observed “we passed several ranches today but all of them are deserted on account of the Indians. We keep continually on the watch but have seen no sign of any yet.” At Kearney City, Nebraska, the party “herd [sic] some bad Indian reports” and “concluded to wait for more company.” During the stay Bettie devoted herself to “baking cooking washing and ironing” and found herself “very tired tonight.” For the Lawrence party, as for many others, the fear of Indian attacks elicited more anxiety than proved warranted.

To counter anxiety about attacks, the small Lawrence party, at several junctures, met up with other overland travelers to create strength in numbers. On July 6, Bettie observed that “we were waiting
for some teams that was coming up to go with us.” At Kearney City, the group that joined the party did not please Bettie. She wrote on Saturday, July 13, “I find that the three teams that came up yesterday are Mormons and O what dirty wretches they are I cant see what such people are allowed to live for.” This harsh denunciation was often typical of other women when they encountered Mormons on the trail. Julie Roy Jeffrey has found that

Women’s cultural values were also revealed when they came into contact with Mormons and Indians during the trip. Unable to see Mormons as the persecuted defenders of religious freedom or Indians as either noble savages or the victims of white civilization, women perceived both as threats to domestic culture. Only when the Indian or Mormon seemed to conform to their own standards did the women have anything positive to say. Thus, they admired Salt Lake City, a stopping-off point for California emigrants, for its beautiful plan, its cozy, snug homes, its prosperous and bustling air.

Just before the Lawrence party was to begin the desert crossing west of Salt Lake, Bettie noted the illness of her youngest daughter and lamented not being “where I could have the Dr.” Until this point the Lawrence party had enjoyed good health. Bettie Duncan herself had evidenced unusually good spirits as she adjusted to life on the trail despite her initial misgivings. In her earlier diary of 1864, she had often mentioned headaches, anxiety and depression, but during the first half of the overland journey, she did not record these maladies. Everything changed, however, as members of the Duncan family fell ill in mid-September 1867.

Before the Duncans began their desert crossing, Bettie wrote on September 11:

we are going to stay here until tomorrow at 4 o clock and then start over the Desert how much I do dread it as our darling little Cettie is sick she has not been well for several days and is much worse this evening. O how glad I wo[u]ld be to have her home where I could have the Dr and me take good care of her. I try to trust my God and pray earnestly that he help in this our hour of need
Earlier, while in Wyoming, the Lawrence party had encountered a wagon train in which a sick man had died. Of that incident Bettie wrote that she was awakened by the “moans and screams of the gentleman that was taken sick yesterday.” In the next entry she wrote at daybreak, “They came and told us he was dead O how sad it seems to lay him away out here on these dreary mountains not one friend or relative to drop a tear on his grave.” The entry continued:

We buryed [sic] as best we could which was well considering the circumstances. We left camp about 2 o clock in the afternoon leaving one behind us and a grave by the road side which on rude board read

In memory of
John Scott died Aug 13 67

This reporting of the death of a stranger and recording of the legend on the marker was a common phenomenon of women on the trail. As historian Schlissel observed:

The meticulous care the women gave to recording the death toll of the journey remains one of the major sex-related differences between the diaries of women and men on the overland passage. The fact of death loomed large for the women, and they felt death to be a personal catastrophe. Whereas men in their diaries tended to record the cumulative impact of cholera, the women set themselves to note each and every grave they saw.

Bettie, like other women on the trail, also recorded passing graves. Earlier, on August 8, Bettie remarked on “the grave of a army man that was killed by Indians May 13th 1863.”

She experienced growing anxiety as several members of her own family became ill in September. As Schlissel observed, “No one who reads the diaries of women on the Overland Trail can escape feeling the intensity with which the women regarded loss of life.” Bettie Duncan became the caretaker of the sick and dying in the Lawrence party of 1867. While she cooked and prepared for the night crossing of the desert on September 12, she worried:
my little Cettie was able to be up some but about noon was taken much worse it is 3 o clock in one hour we expect to start for going over the desert we will travel all night and noon or after tomorrow. O how I hate to start with my little lamb so sick but all says it will not hurt her and I must yield as I always have to do O that the Lord will guard and protect my little one and soon make her well

This diary entry illustrated Bettie Duncan’s feelings of her own powerlessness; in her words, “I must yield.” Because the travelers were some distance from Salt Lake City there was little choice except to go on.

After traveling forty-five miles in sixteen hours, the Lawrence party reached “Fish spring campsite,” where Bettie wrote that the child had “flux of the worst kind.” Another thirty miles at “Deep Creek station” found Bettie lamenting, “I would give anything if I was home where I could have the Dr and take care of her.” The next day on Monday the 16th, as the child’s dysentery continued, the party stayed in camp trying, as Bettie wrote, “to get our little girl better.” By this time Willie Duncan, her grown stepson, and others in the party were also ill, but the travelers moved on. On September 18, Bettie wrote “with a heart full of anxiety and a boddy [sic] almost worn out with fatigue,” that her husband was “taken with pluresy very bad.” On the next day she recorded the continuing travail:

We have traveled 23 miles today I hardly know over what kind of country or anything else. My mind has all been taken up with my sick ones. Willie is very bad also little Katie. Mr Thorp[e] and Mr D are some better. My little Cettie we hope is better but is very sick yet. I myself am almost worn out

Dysentery affected almost everyone on the trail but only in severe cases was the dehydration effect of this disorder life threatening. Indeed the youngest Duncan child, Cettie, recovered, but the eldest, six-year-old Katie, who also had become ill, did not.
The Death of Katie Duncan

For eight days after September 20, 1867, Bettie Duncan’s diary is blank. When she resumed writing on September 28, she charted the course the party took to “diamond Springs Station” where they camped at the foot of the mountains, “put up our tent took our dear little Katie in made her comfortable as possible but her little spirit was not long for this world.” Writing of the death of the child, the mother wrote poignantly, “O the agony of our hearts none can ever know how we felt when we sat in that tent with our little angel and herd [sic] the pattering of rain.” Bettie continued the account of these sad events and recounted the support and aid rendered by other members of the Lawrence party:

O that God may give us grace to bear the greatest trial of our lives. On Thursday morning [September 25th] Mr McGrew and Henry went up on the mountain side and found a place where there were 2 other little graves and they dug her little grave. Mr Berry and the Frenchman there made a little pine coffin. Mrs McGrew and Mrs Berry dressed her nice and pretty and at 12 o clock on Thursday we all assembled in and near the tent to listen to Mr McGrew read a chapter and offer a prayer. O how our hearts bled within us. My heart is now to[o] full to write they tell me that it is Gods tender mercy that took my lamb my idol away but I can but feel it is to[o] hard why did he take her here away from home and loved ones there. Friday morning as Mr Duncan and me went to her little grave and there knelt I think if hearts could ever bursted with grief our[s] surely would. O that God will give us some help in this our time of need. O for faith and prayer I now feel what little hope I had of being contented in our new home is all gone O for grace and faith

This final sentiment portended the future of the trip and Bettie’s response to her California home. A sensitive person who suffered anxiety and depression when she was in her Lawrence home, this tragedy on the trail devastated Bettie Duncan. The death of her eldest child in 1867 also must have recalled her grief at the death of two children ten years before in Lawrence. Death on the trail was terrible for all mothers, who found it hardest of all the trials to bear. Schlissel described this loss as especially traumatic: “Death along the road was
a palpable wound, and it scarred the lives of emigrants who had dared to break so completely with home."

Sadness prevailed in the remaining travel diary entries as Bettie charted the last part of the journey. On October 12 she commented on the capital city of Nevada: "Carson is a pretty place with 6 or 7 thousand inhabitants there is a mint being built there now." Crossing into California and approaching the pass in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Bettie responded to the "grand scenery" and "magnificent great rocks" even as she mourned the loss of the child.

California

As the season approached late fall, the travelers worried about mountain snows. However, as they descended the mountain pass and entered the valley near Volcano, California, they found the weather warm enough on October 19 to have produced "a mess of splendid green beans and some fine tomatoes." Reaching the Stockton area on October 22, Bettie wrote admiringly of the "fine farms and good farm houses."

As the four-month journey neared an end, Bettie Duncan faced with a heavy heart the prospects of a new home. Camped near Stockton, she concluded the diary entry of October 22:

We are now just 70 miles from San Jose. Mr Duncan thinks if no bad luck happens to us we will get there in 3 days but for me I care but little when we get there we have no Katie now. No what do I care for a home with out her so I want my darling Katie. I have never had any comfort without her. O for more grace in my heart

Bettie's final entry of the travel account, Wednesday October 23, told of the Lawrence party's pleasure of boating on a mountain lake. Despite taking part in this activity, her final words were: "What would I not give to be in my beloved Kansas yes my Lawrence home tonight. Why did we ever leave there?" The question remained unanswered.
San Jose, 1868

The Duncan's arrival in San Jose and establishment of a household there were not recorded. On January 1, 1868, two months after the Overland Trail diary had ended abruptly, Bettie began a new diary in this manner:

God's goodness has spared me to see the light of another new year's day but O what a bitter and sad year this has been to me on June 24 I bade adieu to home and loved one[s] [and] with our little family started for this far off land. On and on we traveled meeting with toil and adversity but on the 25th of September our idol our lovely Katie we saw cold and lifeless before us. O the anguish of our poor hearts. What desolate hearts our[s] are. What or how can we do in this our time of trial. O for grace and faith. Today I have thought so much of home and loved ones there how far are we separated but there God is our God and in him we must put our trust. It has been raining most all day

Bettie Duncan's mood in her new California home reflected the gloomy, wet season of the year as she reestablished a pattern of work at home, worship at church, and visits with neighbors and friends.

As Bettie settled into a routine in San Jose, she experienced the recurrence of symptoms similar to those she had suffered in Lawrence and which she had not alluded to during the time of the trail. In mid-February, as Bettie spent the day at home sewing, she expressed a "deep depression in spirit." Earlier she suffered a "severe chill," "back pain," and "nervousness." Whether Bettie's ill health and unmitigated grief altered her husband's plans for permanent residence in California can only be surmised. All indications had been that the family intended to stay in the Golden State. Bettie wrote on February 21: "our boxes of goods came today what we sent from home. They came all nice and in good order. They were boxed just eight months."

On the next to last entry of the San Jose diary, after five months in California, Bettie expressed her emotional state:
Sunday, March 1, 1868
Another sabbath day has come and with it a sadness I can not shake off it is so muddy I could not go to church or Sabbath School.

Return to Lawrence

The final entry of the San Jose diary gives no clue as to why the Duncans returned to Lawrence. What is known is that within ten months of their arrival in California, they were back in Kansas.

Details of Bettie Duncan's life after the return to Lawrence are sketchy. Two more children, a son and daughter, were born to her. She presided over a grand home near Tenth and Emery Road in Lawrence. In 1874 she signed, as Mrs. Wesley Duncan, a temperance petition that was sponsored by many other Lawrence women, including her sister, Mrs. Charles S. Duncan. Five years later, on September 26, 1879, Bettie Duncan died at the age of forty-two. Her obituary appeared in both Lawrence newspapers, the Lawrence Daily Journal and the Lawrence Standard. In these death notices Mrs. Wesley Duncan was described as "a consistent Christian, a fond wife, a good mother, and a friend to the needy." Both accounts mention the journey to California and the death of the child en route. Lucetta, the child "Cettie" of the diaries, was seventeen and the eldest child in the family at the time of her mother's death. She preserved her mother's diaries.

Epilogue

Five years after Bettie's death, Wesley Duncan married for the third time. Duncan remained a prominent businessman who kept abreast of new developments. In the last years of his life, Wesley Duncan was again drawn to California, the third time he had gone West. His obituary, which appeared in the Lawrence Daily Journal, September 22, 1902, stated that in the spring before his death he made California his permanent home. He was described as "one of the best known of Lawrence pioneers."

Clearly, California, as an idea, a dream, a promise played a significant role in the life of Wesley Duncan. He apparently made the
decision that the family would journey overland in 1867, but it well may have been that his wife, Bettie Duncan, was most influential in the decision to return to Lawrence. Her difficulty in adjusting to her new home while coping with her grief over the death of the child on the trail, may have been a deciding factor in the family's return in 1868. Both Wesley and Bettie were assuredly marked by the death of this child, as was evidenced in her diary, her obituary, and his biographical sketch published in 1879.

Conclusion

The Duncan family undertook the overland journey late in the years of the trail, they enjoyed greater affluence and conveniences than many others who took the two thousand-mile journey, yet many of their experiences on the trail paralleled those of earlier families. Bettie's trail diary revealed that she, as other women, was ever mindful of family and friends left behind. Even as she adjusted to the demands of life on the trail and reveled in the beauty of mountain scenery, she felt the backward pull. She, like other women, feared Indian attack, but those trepidations for her were not fulfilled. She did find the journey over the mountains and plains perilous, however. Her child's burial, as recorded in Bettie's diary, reverberated with poignant emotions shared by other mothers who lost a child away from home. In California, in retrospect, Bettie remembered only the journey's tragedy, forgetting the pleasure of companionship of other travelers and the shared days with her husband as they met the challenges of daily trail life. In California, Bettie and Wesley resumed their separate spheres; he explored new business opportunities while she focused on her home, where grief overwhelmed her.

The motivations of husband and wife in undertaking the overland journey were different, the events along the way acted upon each dissimilarly, and the establishment of a new home affected each in diverse ways. Wesley Duncan apparently found in California, at various times in his life, adventure, opportunity, and new beginnings. He shared the prevailing American dream of a better life in the new land that drew so many westward in the nineteenth century. Bettie joined in the overland journey reluctantly. She viewed the railroad tracks on
the plains as a means to return to the home of her former life. In California, she sought to re-create the pattern of her life, at home, in church, and with friends. But, in California, she longed to return to Kansas.

The Duncans' experiences, while not typical of many of the thousands of overlanders, were similar enough to those of others to demonstrate how the journey affected the life cycle of men and women in a different manner. For Bettie Duncan the overland journey was a single event in an adult life that centered on the familiar: home, church, children. Wesley Duncan led a more varied life: he had a series of different business partners and several different businesses; he married three times; and he journeyed to California at least three times. During all the many changes in his adult life, the dream California held out to him remained a constant. As historian John Unruh has observed:

The West, as place, direction, or idea, has fascinated men since time immemorial, men who by their actions have given substance to Henry David Thoreau's poetic phrasing that "Eastward I go only by force, but westward I go free" and that "we go westward as into the future, with a spirit of enterprise and adventure."

In contrast, Bettie Duncan primarily found in California, a "far off land."

Suggested Readings


Chapter 4.

Expansion and Social Change, 1870s–1890s

The 1870s–1890s was a period of continuing expansion and change in Kansas history. This period saw the development and expansion of railroads, cattle ranches and farms; Indian-white warfare; community settlement; European immigration; racial prejudice; scandal in state government; and the beginning of populist unrest. Chapter 4 focuses on subjects that touch on several of these concerns.

Norman E. Saul, professor of history at the University of Kansas, explores the concept of myth in history. He examines the story of German-Russian Mennonites bringing sacks of Turkey Red Wheat (hard red winter wheat) to central Kansas in 1874. In his provocative article, Saul assesses how myths develop and are perpetuated; he raises some significant questions about long-held assumptions.

Randall B. Woods, professor of history and associate dean of arts and sciences at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, investigates racial conditions in Kansas from 1878–1900. Woods asserts that Kansas did not develop a rigid system of segregation because blacks did not constitute enough of a political or economic threat to warrant ostracism. Although Kansans were willing to allow blacks access to most facilities and institutions considered essential to the individual's health and safety, they were not ready to condone social equality in mixed housing, places of amusement, and fraternal organizations. This principle of
parallel development (black advancement without assimilation) was, according to Woods, a "compromise between white Kansas's self-image [frontier hospitality, openness and freedom] and its sublimated prejudices." This compromise "did much to freeze an unjust status quo."

Carol K. Coburn, professor of history at Avila College in Kansas City, examines the complex relationship of ethnicity, religion, and gender. She focuses on German Lutheran women of Block, Kansas. Her interdisciplinary approach combines aspects of history of education, social history, and women's studies to show how the Block community transmitted its culture and religion through its female members in a rural ethnic setting. Coburn describes how four generations of German Lutheran women created and participated in networks of association that collectively illuminate women's "ongoing functioning in a male-defined world."

Myth and History: Turkey Red Wheat and the "Kansas Miracle"

Norman E. Saul

In 1897, Henry King wrote an article on Kansas for the popular Scribner's Monthly that began:

There is no more enticing scene than the Kansas prairie in spring. The eye wanders out over gracefully swerving and unmonotonous

lines to what seems the very limit of things; you dare not conjecture where the earth ends and the sky begins.

Many today might second that thought after traveling westward on I-70, but perhaps, after three generations, we have lost some appreciation of that landscape. This article will examine the remaking of that landscape’s lines by new settlers and conjecture about where myth ends and history begins.

In 1873 and 1874 a number of Mennonite families in southern Russia commenced a long migration by train and steamship to America. There, after considering several possible locations, most of them chose the virgin prairie of Kansas, where railroads like the Santa Fe had many sections of land stretching in a checker-board pattern across the state to sell cheap. The largest group, from the Molochna-Ukrainian village of Alexanderwohl, bought sixty-five sections in Marion, McPherson, and Harvey counties from the Santa Fe and homesteaded quite a few more. When these people left Russia, each family (it was later believed) brought a sack or crock of wheat, a hard red winter wheat which made Kansas an economically prosperous agricultural state. The Catholic and Lutheran Volga Germans who came to Ellis, Rush, and Russell counties a couple of years later reinforced and helped spread the adaptation of “their” Russian wheat.

That is the story. It is a nice, neat one. And in 1974 the state celebrated the centennial of this event in grand style; there were parades and celebrations in practically every town; a wheat queen was crowned—Andrea Polansky of Belleville; and Highway 50 was appropriately renamed the “Wheat Centennial Memorial Highway.” A U.S. postal stamp commemorated the occasion. A paperback novel was even published with the title Turkey Red. Pamphlets, articles, and books recounted the “history” of this famous grain. One of the state’s best-known contributions to the bicentennial of the American Declaration of Independence was a liberty bell made of wheat straw. And today a wheat heritage museum in the Mennonite community of Goessel maintains the folk tradition.

The story of Turkey Red wheat is perhaps second only to Dorothy and Toto in making Kansas famous in national as well as local lore. Prominence was given to it in a 1985 article on Kansas in the National Geographic, and in March of 1989 it was featured in The New Yorker in
a three-part series on the Great Plains by Ian Frazier that later became a best-seller in book form. Quoting from the article: "As it turned out, the Russian Mennonites made ideal plains farmers—they had been practicing on the steppes for nearly a hundred years." After relating some nonsense about sod houses (the first Mennonite settlers generally did not bother with them) and an alleged ability to cope with grasshoppers, Frazier stated:

Most important, the Mennonites knew what to plant. Each Mennonite family had brought a bushel or more of Crimean wheat from Russia. This wheat, a hard, red, short-stemmed variety later called Turkey Red, was resistant to heat, cold, and drought. It was the right crop for the plains, and the Mennonites knew to cultivate it. . . .

And so the myth continues in the popular imagination today, but what does history—the search for and telling of what actually happened—say about all of this? In short, the story is largely a myth, as the historian James Malin demonstrated in the 1940s, but like all myths it has some factual basis, more perhaps than Malin was willing to grant. The real truth about Turkey Red and the Kansas wheat miracle is more complex to unravel but in its way is as intriguing and exciting as its folk myth.

The situation in Russia in the 1870s must first be examined. Dubbed "Rooshians" when they arrived in Kansas, the Ukrainian Dutch-speaking Mennonites, the Volynian (Polish) Swiss Mennonites, and the Volga German Lutherans and Catholics, who spoke a variety of German dialects, were concentrated, respectively, in substantial and relatively prosperous colonial settlements almost a thousand miles apart where they had settled about a hundred years earlier. Many of them were unhappy and restless because of population growth coupled with restricted opportunities for expansion to new lands, because of increasing Russian nationalist pressures that threatened their cultural identities, and especially because of the liberal reforms of Alexander II's government that threatened the special privileges that had been granted to them when they first moved into Russia. The chief of these was exemption from recruitment into the Russian army. The Mennonites were naturally concerned because of their pacifist religious beliefs, but even the Catholic and Lutheran Germans were afraid that
military service would mean conversion to the Russian Orthodox church. Even more, this and other actually progressive steps by the Russian government meant greater interference by the central government in the historic autonomy of these foreign agricultural colonies. “Liberal” reforms—treating everyone equally—were thus a cause of dissent, much as among the Soviet nationalities in recent years.

Also ironic was the fact that significant economic progress in Russia was now bringing these people news of the outside world through the telegraph and newspapers that included advertisements of cheap land in America, and the extension of Russian railroads to their areas provided access to cheap and easy transportation. Other factors prodding movement were religious controversy and growing distinctions between rich and poor in the communities. The Mennonites were, in fact, able to work out with the Russian government a rather progressive system of alternative service and thus avoided military conscription. Yet, quite a few of them did leave Russia, and most of these initial emigrants came to Kansas.

Why Kansas? The land agents of the Kansas Pacific and the Santa Fe, such as C. B. Schmidt, certainly were an influence because of their successful sales pitches. The Mennonites were also guided by co-religionists from Illinois and Indiana (such as the Funks, the Krehbiels, and the Wiebes) who knew good agricultural opportunities when they saw them. And the officials of Kansas, who had seen their state crippled by drought and the worst grasshopper plague in history, bent over backwards to satisfy these new, peaceful, and agriculturally experienced settlers with a flexible conscription law and welcome mats at every depot. The drought and grasshopper devastation also meant that the railroad directors were desperate to sell the land received from Congressional grants in order to meet payrolls and pay back loans obtained to build tracks across a thinly populated state.

Most of these settlers from Russia arrived in July and August and were naturally anxious to get started on their new farms. They were accustomed to growing grain, but never corn, in Russia, so the new settlers planted wheat—probably as much as 50,000 acres in the fall of 1874. One can now see a problem with the story outlined at the beginning of this article. If each family sowed fifty acres that fall and each brought one small sack of wheat—well, it just does not compute.
Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad German-language recruitment booklet. C.B. Schmidt and other land agents used advertisements such as this to attract 15,000 Mennonite families to Kansas.
A number of contemporary descriptions exist of these people getting off trains in Kansas, packed several families to a car. The local newspapers printed detailed accounts of their appearance, even their sounds and smells, and the goods they brought with them: clothing, blankets, pots and pans, and always a tea kettle, perhaps a straw mattress or two, some furniture and small tools, Bibles, but no mention of bags or crocks of wheat, which should have been of interest to Kansans. If Turkey Red came to Kansas in 1874, it was quite successfully smuggled in. The new immigrants brought what they could carry—for 10,000 miles through several stopovers, aboard crowded trains and ships.

Most had one other essential with them—money from the sale of their farms—which they used to great effect by purchasing goods in quantity and through hard bargaining: horses, wagons, cattle, chickens, plows, etc., all reported in detail by happy, economically minded and Kansas-conscious newspapers. Some even contracted with local carpenters to build houses and barns and very quickly had flourishing farms, this too reported glowingly by the press. They brought flower, melon, and other garden seeds, but not a word can be found about any new variety of wheat. In fact, in some of the surviving diaries of the settlers, it is clearly stated that seed wheat was among the items purchased that first year.

When and how did the story of Mennonites carrying wheat to Kansas gain currency? The first public references to the 1874 Mennonites bringing Turkey Red date to around 1900, especially in a Saturday Evening Post article of 1910 by F. D. Coburn, Secretary of the State Board of Agriculture, but confusion and contradiction existed in these accounts. Finally, early in 1927, Bliss Isely, an editor of the Wichita Beacon, set out to track the origins of Turkey Red for a Sunday feature article. As recounted several years later, he first wrote to Carl Warkentin, the son of a prominent miller of Ukrainian Mennonite background, but Warkentin proved uncooperative. Isely then enlisted the aid of David Richert, a mathematics professor at Bethel College, who asked his students to enquire in their communities when they went home for the weekend about the origin of Turkey Red wheat.

One of these Bethel undergraduates found an elderly woman living in Hillsboro, Anna Barkman Wohlgemuth, who recalled at age eight obeying her father’s instructions back in their Crimean village of
Annenfeld (which happens to mean Anna’s field), to pick out, quoting Isely, “the best seeds from their bins—ONE GRAIN AT A TIME.” Intrigued by her recollection that this amounted to two gallons, Isely then determined that the young Anna had selected exactly 259,862 grains, disregarding the fact that a gallon measurement did not exist in Russia.

The Anna Barkman story thus becomes an important part of the Turkey Red myth. Unfortunately, it is rather unscientifically documented, and Mrs. Wohlgemuth died shortly afterwards without apparently writing anything down. It is weakest in identifying what kind of grain was in that Crimean granary and in relating what actually happened to it in Kansas, if it ever completed the long journey from Odessa, through Breslau, Hamburg, New York, and a lengthy stopover near Elkhart, Indiana. Moreover, characteristic of myths, this story from one family of a particular Mennonite sect in the Crimea was quickly expanded to include every Mennonite family that emigrated from Russia.

A question also arises over what kind of grain was likely to be in a Crimean Mennonite granary in 1874, since in that year four times as much rye as wheat was produced in Russia, oats yields doubled those of wheat, and barley, millet, buckwheat, and other grains nearly equalled wheat. All kinds of wheat represented only twelve percent of total Russian grain production in 1870. Russia, like Kansas, was simply not a major wheat area in 1874. Mennonite agriculture in Russia was also quite diversified with emphasis upon dairying and sheep raising as much as grain production.

The Southern Russian steppe, where the Molochna and Crimean Mennonites lived, however, was the only subregion of Russia where the production of wheat exceeded rye, barley, and other grains, and reliable contemporary evidence supports the recent development there of a hard, red winter wheat, called arnautka, which was rising in importance for export to Southern Europe.

But even if we admit that these two gallons and perhaps a few other sacks or crocks of Russian wheat came to Kansas with these Krimmer Mennonites who settled Gnadenau, just south of Hillsboro, in August 1874, problems still exist: were these grains actually planted? And, if so, how was this variety—or these varieties—kept separate and distinct from the great many other acres of wheat planted by the
Mennonite immigrants that fall? Or did the “gallons” end up as chickenfeed or the first loaf of bread?

The answers, unfortunately, are elusive, but during the first couple of years, Gnadenau and other Mennonite settlements attracted many visitors and press reports. Nothing can be found in them about any new wheat. From the newspapers it appears that the Santa Fe Railroad, anxious that all their Mennonite customers get off to a successful start, provided discounted seed wheat from local stocks. Most likely it was Early Red May, a soft red spring wheat best adapted to surviving a winter in south central Kansas, though several other varieties—Lancaster, Gypsey, and White Gennesee—were grown in Marion County that fall, while next door in Harvey County, White Walker and Gold Drop were popular.

We need to ask two more questions: When does Turkey Red actually come into the picture? And what actually were the contributions of these German-speaking immigrants from Russia? The answers can be found in the time and complexities involved in the triumph of winter wheat over spring wheat, of hard wheat over soft, and of wheat over corn.

In 1873, before the Mennonites arrived, Kansas was primarily a corn state and most of the wheat was planted in the spring. But a few farmers had followed an earlier Indian practice—around Shawnee Mission—of planting wheat in the fall. In fact, one of the first documented commercial fields of wheat in Kansas, that on Judge Spicer’s farm four miles west of Lawrence, was sown in the fall of 1856. What these fall sowings suffered in the way of winter kill was often made up by better yields in a dry summer than that planted in the spring, as the winter wheat would benefit more from early spring moisture and escape summer rust damage. The main obstacles were the absence of a local market for wheat and of cheap transportation to distant markets, wheat being deemed unsatisfactory for feeding livestock and horses, and the prevalence of corn, which was usually harvested too late to allow for fall wheat planting in those fields. Winter wheat, moreover, was vulnerable to the winter and spring cattle drives coming up from Texas and Oklahoma, but once these were better controlled and fenced off, it had greater possibilities on the plains.
Then, after the Civil War came the railroads, and they brought more settlers—and distant market possibilities. Finally, T. C. Henry, an ambitious real estate agent and promoter, planted about 500 acres of wheat in a field just east of Abilene in the fall of 1873 and expanded it to 1,200 acres the following year. He used six oxen teams pulling Moline gang plows on a stretch along the railroad three miles long. Everyone travelling the Kansas Pacific (now the Union Pacific) marvelled at the scene, especially when his Marsh cutters and steam threshers produced golden piles of grain while the still immature spring wheat and corn were being devastated by drought and grasshoppers in 1874. The lesson was learned, and Henry made much of the publicity and his recommendation of Early Red May (the soft spring wheat which he considered most suitable for fall sowing). In 1875, Kansas farmers, including the new Mennonite immigrants from Russia, increased their wheat sowings substantially to 750,000 acres, two thirds of it in winter wheat.

The acreage of spring wheat continued to decline in proportion, especially when more dry land prairie was brought under cultivation. The Catholic and Lutheran Volga German immigrants coming into Ellis, Rush, and Russell counties in 1876 and after made quite an impact, quickly changing this Kansas landscape from cattle ranching to farming. This land was similar to the Volga region, but in Kansas the immigrants had the advantage of a milder winter and the possibility, which never existed in Russia, of planting in the fall to take best advantage of the snow melt and spring rains. In Russia they always had planted spring wheat, generally a hard-grained variety known as White Turkey (beloturka), a durum-type wheat, because the severity of the winter there was similar to Canada or North Dakota.

So the settlers from Russia adapted to Kansas and shifted from spring to fall and to initially soft wheat. A Hays City newspaper reported in 1883, "Our Russian friends are on the high road to fortune, raising wheat against all odds[!] is making them rich." But ample proof exists of the endurance of spring wheat and corn: in 1884 over in Russell County Christian Anschutz, the Volga-German Lutheran founder of a Kansas family that was later to achieve economic prominence, cultivated 70 acres of winter wheat, 60 acres of spring wheat, and 50 acres of corn, along with smaller fields of barley, oats,
potatoes, and tobacco. No doubt a major reason for this was the necessity for family farmers, unlike Henry, to be diversified.

In fact, in these years, after the Volga Germans arrived, one third of the cultivated land in Ellis County was in corn. Clearly, that crop was by no means beaten in Kansas and could still in a good summer grow as high as an elephant’s eye. The Topeka Daily Commonwealth reported in October 1879, “Corn is king in Kansas, so far as space is concerned. They plant it by the square mile.” Even the Mennonites around Newton and Marion grew this farm staple too—and still do. They also experimented with cotton, tobacco, flax, and even rice in their quest to find the best return. The Winfield Courier noted (March 23, 1876) that for the year after the great grasshopper plague, “Kansas produced more corn to the acre . . . than any other state in the union.” It would still be many years before Kansas would become the wheat state.

When did “Red Turkey,” as it was called in Russia because the grains were “redder” than other wheat (and to distinguish it from White Turkey) and was thought to have come from the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, or “Turkey Red,” as it was called in Kansas, perhaps to avoid confusion with a bird or a brand of whiskey, actually come into the picture? While most farmers simply planted what they had grown, the search for better varieties of grain had been going on for many years in both Russia and the United States, the two primary grain-exporting countries.

As early as 1862 the Department of Agriculture was seeking wheat samples from Russia as well as other countries, and a hard spring wheat, Scotch Fife, spread rapidly from Canada into Minnesota in the 1870s. A variety of hard red wheat called Ostery, brought from Russia in 1877, produced impressive results for the Missouri Agricultural College in 1882. But even earlier, by 1881, a hard red winter wheat from Russia was definitely established in Kansas, though probably not from Anna Barkman’s two gallons, as something called “Turkish” was listed as a local variety and as hard wheat in the Kansas City market reports. It had reached Ellis County the next year, according to the Hays City Star-Sentinel (July 13, 1882): “The turkey-beard wheat proved itself a valuable quality beyond expectation. People who attended the fair last season will remember the sample of seed exhibited.” This report also provides a clue for how it spread. In 1883, the Marion Record
compared the color of "Turkey" to Red May and concluded, "But then the contrast will disappear when the Russian wheat entirely supersedes the softer varieties, as it seems destined to do." But it would still take time.

The wheat experiments in Kansas were promoted by large farm entrepreneurs such as Henry, by the millers, exporters, and railroads, by state officials, and by cereal grain specialists. By 1887 the Kansas Agricultural College's experimental farm was testing 51 distinct varieties under the supervision of Edward Mason Shelton, who, interestingly, was originally from England. Though some of these were hard wheats with Russian, Turkish, and Bulgarian labels, Shelton still recommended Early Red May or Zimmerman, both soft wheats, for Kansas, but he noted that a Turkey wheat, which he referred to as "amber" in color, was being grown successfully in McPherson County—that is, in Mennonite territory.

Shelton also reported that the advantages of some of these new varieties of wheat were greater hardiness, and therefore less winter kill, and, for at least one Turkish variety, resistance to black rust, which was a special problem encountered by all summer varieties that ripened late in the season. But a big disadvantage remained—milling—although this is a kind of chicken-and-egg problem; which comes first, the mill or the wheat? These hard varieties were generally classified at the time as "macaroni" wheats, and indeed the primary stimulus for growing hard wheat in southern Russia was for export to Italy and other parts of the Mediterranean. One other important advantage of hard wheat was that it is richer in gluten (protein) and would produce more flour (and thus more bread) per bushel. In the United States, there was less demand for this kind of flour and consequently a lack of milling facilities that could handle hard wheat. But the spread of hard spring wheat in Minnesota led to the establishment of new milling processes in Minneapolis, using steel rollers instead of millstones and an air-forced middling process to separate the bran.

Also, a vastly increased immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe to American urban areas soon changed the American flour market. By the mid-1880s, some of this new demand was met by a Newton miller of Ukrainian Mennonite origin (though converted to Presbyterian through marriage)—Bernhard Warkentin. He, in fact, made two trips back to Russia, where his father was still in the milling
business, in 1885 and 1886 in quest of wheat varieties. In the Crimea and in the Berdiansk (Sea of Azov) exporting area, with which he was most familiar, was grown a general class of hard, red spring wheat known as arnautka, strains of which had localized names such as Krimka a turka and Krasnaia turka, or Red Turkey. He brought back a carload of arnautka—which means “Albanian” in Russian—and pioneered the further testing of samples in Kansas with the help of Shelton and his successor, Mark Carleton.

Warkentin was also important for his adaptation of milling machinery in Kansas to steel rollers of the Minneapolis kind that could grind the hard wheat more effectively. In 1886 he bought the Monarch Steam Mill in Newton and modernized and expanded it the following year as the Newton Milling Company. Soon his “Cream of Kansas” flour was being produced by several mills and sold nationally. By 1888 he had broken into the European market. That year Jannsens and Company of Antwerp (Belgium) informed Warkentin that “Kansas flour of Turkey wheat is always welcome in this country. It is the only flour that answers well the purpose.” That fall acreage devoted to hard winter wheat in Kansas and surrounding states soared.

It is important to note that other modern steel roller milling operations employing a new “middling,” or recirculating grinding process, spread across the state at that very time. In McPherson the Queen Bee Mill was remodeled and refitted in 1894 and produced flour that competed well with Pillsbury of Minneapolis. The Pearl Milling Company also commenced operations there in 1894, while nearby the Smoky Valley Roller Mills in Lindsborg, now a museum (as is Warkentin’s Newton mill), began producing its hard wheat “Golden Patent” flour in 1888. Responding to the market demand, the Inman mill began operation in 1892 and was subsequently expanded into one of the area’s largest and longest lasting mills. These wheat-processing mills that soon replaced stockyards as the economic backbones of small-town Kansas had advantages over the larger centralized flour mills in controlling quality of supply and having cheaper transportation costs.

So, perhaps in 1990 the true centennial of Turkey Red should be celebrated. This approximate date is supported by a Russian agricultural dictionary, published in 1895, which, in its detailed definition of wheat, noted that arnautka “is called red turkey in America and is grown as a winter wheat.” Certainly the dramatic expansion of
Bernard Warkentin, a Newton miller of Ukrainian Mennonite ancestry, pioneered testing of Turkey Red wheat and adapted milling machinery to grind the hard wheat more effectively.

Kansas agriculture and ranching was attracting world attention by then. Henry King quipped in 1897, "It has been asserted that the Kansan would not care to go to heaven unless he could be guaranteed an ample range to the west of it."

But that is not the end of the story, and a true centennial is further obscured by historical complexities. Wheat in the 1890s was still secondary to corn in Kansas, partly because of its vulnerability to winter kill, disease, and the Hessian fly, and to market uncertainties and milling problems, but also because of the coincidence of increasing demand for feed grain to fatten cattle and pigs for the growing urban market. Moreover, the wheat that Warkentin ground into flour at this time was listed in the market reports as No. 2 Red, which was probably a "Turkish" or arnautka variety but may not have been the classic Turkey Red that made Kansas famous. Warkentin himself recommended and planted "Oregon May" on his farm near Halstead in the fall of 1888. The search was not over.
Several more years of testing followed. In 1898, as an “agricultural explorer” for the Department of Agriculture, Carleton toured Russia extensively and brought back a very hard durum wheat from the Volga region called “Kubanka,” which was initially tried in Kansas. Two years later, Warkentin and Carleton visited South Russia together on behalf of the Kansas Millers’ Association and pinpointed a Mennonite village in the Crimea which had been practicing advanced seed selection. Warkentin apparently bought the crop, for the next year 15,000 bushels were shipped from Odessa to Kansas City (like carrying coal to Newcastle) and from there by carload lot to various points in Kansas. This was no doubt Turkey Red, but if its reign had finally begun, it was a short one. Another variety of hard red wheat, closely resembling Turkey, but labelled “Kharkov” to distinguish it, arrived in Kansas about the same time.

The Kansas Agricultural College finally realized the importance of having an experimental farm in prime wheat country and started one near Hays in 1902. Thanks to the success there of Kharkov and subsequent agricultural extension promotion, by 1909 it had swept Kansas and moved corn definitely and permanently into second rank. The Wichita Eagle reported in 1909 that wheat growers were highly interested in Kharkov wheat, and the next year the Kansas Farmer praised hard wheat of the “Turkish type” and advised all wheat growers to obtain good seed of “hard red winter wheat of the ‘Turkey type’, preferably Kharkov or Turkey,” as if this were the first time it had made such a recommendation. Perhaps, then, 1910 marks the achievement of the Kansas miracle.

Then from one mutant head of Turkey Red came what was first known as “Crimean wheat pedigree number 76.” More familiarly known as “Kanred,” it was for many years the major competitor of Kharkov, followed by other more improved varieties—Tenmarq, Kanvale, Pawnee Blackhull, and others—through the great expansion of wheat acreage during and following World War I, when grain exports from Russia were cut off by war, revolution, and civil war, and Kansas farmers (and Eastern speculators) responded to a government patriotic drive to raise wheat production.

With the state’s wheat yields doubling between 1915 and 1925, by 1924 the Kansas governor could confidently claim that “Kansas grows the best wheat in the world” and about ninety percent of it was Turkey.
The following year Kansas crowned its first “wheat girl,” Vada Watson—perhaps a clear sign that something major was happening—and it was reported proudly that she drew the biggest crowd of the year at the state capitol.

In the ten-year period from 1917 to 1927, Kansas produced, on average, 14.7%, one seventh, of the whole world’s production of wheat. But between 1919 and 1954, Turkey wheat varieties dominated the American market, accounting for twice as much acreage as the next highest wheat classification. About 1927, therefore, the time of Bliss Isley’s revealing of the Anna Barkman story, we can probably conclude that the Kansas miracle had occurred, and myth had caught up with history. If so, it was soon to be tarnished by Depression and dirtied by the Dust Bowl, which the massive conversion of rangeland to wheat helped create.

While Kansans adhere to the idea of Turkey Red arriving in the baggage of Mennonites in 1874 as part of the lore of the state, “academics” such as Malin, arguing on the basis of logic and evidence, gave the major credit to millers and agronomists (Warkentin and Carleton) and a long period of scientific experimentation. Turkey Red may, in fact, have been planted in the Barkman backyard in the fall of 1874, but it was certainly unrecognized and without effect on the state’s agriculture for several more years. By 1880, earlier than scholars of the subject have allowed, a hard red winter wheat of Russian origin, perhaps first brought by new Mennonite settlers or those visiting their Ukrainian homeland, and at least akin to Turkey Red, was well-established in Kansas in Mennonite areas. It soon spread to other quarters but did not become dominant for many years because of milling, storage, and shipping problems. The success of Turkey Red and hard wheat generally was clearly dependent on milling technology and market expansion.

This miracle of Kansas wheat achievement, and it certainly can still be called one, is thus a combination of things: determined, hardworking immigrants arriving from areas of Europe where corn was unknown; ambitious land promotion by people like Henry and Schmidt; cheap and convenient railroad and homesteading land; the drought and grasshoppers wiping out spring wheat and corn in 1874; experimenting and searching over a number of decades by millers and agricultural specialists such as Warkentin, Shelton, and Carleton for
the best wheat to plant; the industrial revolution that perfected milling and transportation technology while also packing cities with people hungry for spaghetti and macaroni and good, cheap bread; and perhaps, but not yet based on historical fact, that week or so of painstaking seed picking by Anna Barkman that provided a convenient but suitable folk image for agricultural change; but above all, the soil and climate conditions and the social, economic, and political environment of a unique part of the world.

Integration, Exclusion, or Segregation?
The "Color Line" in Kansas, 1878–1900

Randall B. Woods

Black Americans everywhere anticipated that the Civil War would bring in its wake unparalleled opportunities for their race. Had not the slavemasters been driven from the field of battle in ignominious defeat? Afro-Americans of all conditions, classes, and sections looked forward eagerly to the fruits of full citizenship. Rather quickly Negroes realized that the North’s commitment to equal rights was transitory and that the South was merely biding time, waiting for the chance to exclude the freedman from participation in the political process and

relegate him to a servile status in the region’s economic system. By 1876 North and South were ready to make their peace. Northern businessmen, a dominant element in the Republican party, were anxious to finance the industrialization of the South and were more than willing to abandon the Negro in return for that privilege. Believing the campaign for black suffrage and equal rights to be a threat to “orderly economic development” and to the survival of the Republican party in the South, northern business leaders announced that the racial question was now passé and urged the nation to move on to the more pressing problems of industrialization and commerce. Thus, reconciliation and nationalism became the order of the day, but they were accomplished at the expense of the Afro-American. Following the Compromise of 1877, the black man’s condition deteriorated not only in Dixie but throughout the country. The Negrophobia that began building with the fall of Radical Reconstruction culminated in the late 1880s and 1890s. Various southern states incorporated disenfranchisement provisions into their constitutions and mandated racial separation on railroads. School segregation and the convict lease system became widespread throughout the South. Lynchings reached an all-time high in 1892. The situation was better for blacks in the North, but even there they increasingly encountered extralegal discrimination and segregation. Their economic situation became ever more precarious as competition from millions of European immigrants forced blacks out of even menial jobs.

But what of blacks living in the American West during the last quarter of the nineteenth century? Was Jim Crow—that is, institutionalized discrimination and segregation—as pervasive for them as for their brethren east of the Mississippi? Or did the frontier environment, with its alleged emphasis on rugged individualism, enterprise, and pragmatism, allow human beings to work out their destinies regardless of race? Insofar as one western state, Kansas, is concerned, the answer lies somewhere in between.

In April 1879 the New West Monthly promised blacks intent upon immigrating to the Sunflower State that they could expect to find “a school for every child;—a field to labor; respect that sees in every man a neighbor; the richest soil a farmer ever saw/ and equal rights to all before the law.” The New West’s portrait of Kansas was overdrawn. Black Kansans encountered discrimination in public
services and in the administration of justice; segregation in hotels, restaurants, and theaters; and exclusion from white hospitals, churches, and neighborhoods. And yet, during the same period there were integrated schools at one level or another in all regions of Kansas; public facilities were open to Negroes on both an integrated and segregated basis; and all the major and minor political parties actively courted the black vote. Except in public schools in the larger cities and in the state militia for a period, legally mandated segregation and exclusion were nonexistent. While Kansans were willing, for the most part, to allow blacks access to facilities and institutions considered essential to the individual’s health and safety—on an integrated basis if necessary—they were not willing to condone “social equality,” i.e., racial mixing in neighborhoods, places of amusement, churches, and fraternal societies. In short, they were committed to what George Fredrickson has called the doctrine of parallel development. According to this white view of racial uplift, blacks would be accorded equal protection under the law and equal opportunity in the marketplace. If the proper genes and moral fiber were present, blacks would progress simultaneously, though separately, with whites.

The black community in Kansas actually began taking shape between 1860 and 1870 when several thousand newly emancipated slaves moved to the state. They were joined by a smaller number of free blacks from the North who perceived Kansas to be a land of political and especially economic opportunity. This influx was a mere prelude, however, to the in-migration of tens of thousands of oppressed blacks from the South that occurred from 1879 to 1881. The Great Exodus, as this extraordinary population movement came to be known, actually began in the late 1870s when at the urging of two ex-slaves—Benjamin “Pap” Singleton of Tennessee and Henry Adams of Georgia—several hundred downtrodden Negroes left the South and established colonies in Kansas. Among the best known were Dunlap Colony, established in 1878 in Morris County in eastern Kansas; Morton City, founded in 1877 in Hodgeman County in the west-central part of the state; and Nicodemus, established in 1877 in Graham County in western Kansas. Then, in early 1879, boatloads of indigent blacks began arriving in St. Louis from Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi. By the end of the month, anywhere from 60 to 500 were arriving daily. From St. Louis the exodusters moved on via the Missouri River to Wyandotte
Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, a former slave, returned to Tennessee to urge blacks to settle in Kansas. The "Exodusters" established colonies in several Kansas counties in the 1870s.

and the "promised land" beyond. A large number spread out and settled in the larger towns of eastern Kansas—Lawrence, Topeka, Atchison, Kansas City, and Leavenworth—where most found jobs as laborers. In October and November 1879 a group of exodusters, primarily from Texas, settled in Labette County in southeast Kansas, most of them in the towns of Chetopa, Oswego, and Parsons. Intent on becoming independent landowners, a small number of the more ambitious immigrants moved on to Nicodemus or founded new rural colonies in Coffey and Chautauqua counties. The number of blacks who arrived in Kansas during this period is difficult to calculate with any precision. Although some estimates are as large as 80,000, most sources state that between 40,000 and 60,000 made the trek.

The 1870-1882 migration of blacks to Kansas, particularly the much-publicized post-1878 phase of the movement, was the product primarily of the deteriorating racial climate in the South following the collapse of Reconstruction. It was a series of specific events in the late 1870s, however, that crystallized black dissatisfaction and served as a catalyst
for the Great Exodus. Among the most important was an 1878 crop failure, which caused widespread suffering and intense economic frustration among black sharecroppers. In addition to the economic factor, blacks in the South, particularly in Louisiana, believed that constitutional proscription was imminent and that they had best leave while they still had the freedom to do so. Still another spur to migration was the pressure exerted by special interests—land companies and railroads, for example—that would profit from rapid population of the West. No less significant was Kansas's historical appeal as the home of John Brown. The state had never permitted slavery and had consistently voted for Lincoln's party. And finally, there was what Nell Painter has dubbed the Kansas Fever idea. According to Painter, southern blacks responded to the racial violence, proscription, and economic exploitation that was their lot in the 1870s by developing and proclaiming the Kansas Fever myth, in which the federal government promised all black people who wanted to go to Kansas free transportation, free land, and free supplies and subsistence for the first year.

By 1882 the Great Exodus was over. Even before its end, however, black and white had set about working out a permanent modus vivendi. Black Kansans probably fared better at the hands of whites in politics than in any other field. The word white appeared in three places in Kansas's first constitution adopted at Wyandotte in 1859, the first time in a clause barring blacks from voting. Article V extended the franchise to every white male person of twenty-one years and upward. In 1867 Kansans reaffirmed their racism, defeating by nearly a two-to-one vote a constitutional amendment striking the word white from the suffrage clause. Indeed, Kansas voters did not actually amend the constitution to provide for adult male suffrage until 1918. Nevertheless, blacks were effectively enfranchised in 1870 when Kansans ratified the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Although there were innumerable attempts by both Democrats and Republicans to purchase black votes, there was no concentrated effort during the late nineteenth century to disfranchise Negroes. And although they comprised no more than 6 percent of the population, black Kansans cast from 15 to 20 percent of the votes; during any given year between 1878 and 1900, blacks played no small part in the political history of the state.
The political clout of the black population was enhanced by the fact that it was concentrated in the state's populous, eastern counties. In 1880 one out of every six persons in greater Topeka and one out of every five in Kansas City, Kansas, was a Negro. A decade later almost two-thirds (31,633) of the state's black population lived in ten counties, and a majority (28,170) lived in cities of over 2,500. Kansas Republicans in particular could ill afford to ignore black voters and politicians. By 1880 there were 43,000 Negroes in the state, and the vast majority consistently cast their lot with the GOP. The revival of the Democratic party in the mid-1880s and the emergence of the Populists in the early 1890s served to enhance the importance of the black vote in the eyes of the GOP leaders, particularly given the fact that the Democrats and Populists actively competed for the black vote and nominated blacks for city, county, and state office. Negroes took advantage of the situation to secure a disproportionate number of appointive positions and nominations and to compel the GOP to consult blacks in formulating policy.

The constitutional convention that met at Wyandotte not only barred blacks from voting but also excluded them from serving in the state militia. Anticipating that they eventually would be able to compel the legislature to integrate the national guard, blacks during the 1880s proceeded to organize "independent" militia units—the Lawrence Guards and the Garfield Rifles of Leavenworth, for example. And in fact, in 1888, following a concerted campaign of protest and lobbying, they persuaded the legislature to strike the word white from the militia clause in the constitution. Nonetheless, black units had to wait until the political turmoil of the 1890s made it possible for them to be officially incorporated into the Kansas National Guard. Governor John W. Leedy, a Populist elected in 1896 on a fusion ticket of Democrats and Populists, was subsequently unable to hold his political coalition together. Alarmed by McKinley's victory in 1896 and facing reelection in 1898, Leedy actively courted the black vote. As a result, when the Spanish-American war erupted and black Kansans clamored for an all-black volunteer outfit, Leedy accepted a Negro regiment as part of the state's quota and agreed to appoint only Negro officers to command.

The framers of the 1859 constitution did not exclude Negroes from public schools as they had from the polls and the militia, but they did
provide for the establishment of separate systems. In fact, the 1867 session of the state legislature enacted a law stipulating that tax monies collected for school purposes be kept separate and that each race was to benefit from only those facilities and instructors for which they could pay directly. The Kansas legislature ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 did not believe the amendment applied to public education and made no attempt to alter the state's legally mandated system of segregation. In 1874, however, Kansas solons passed a civil rights measure making it a crime for the regents or trustees of any state university, college, or other school of public instruction to "make any distinction on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." When in 1878 the legislature passed and the people ratified an amendment to the constitution striking the word white from the educational clause, it seemed that legalized Jim Crow in Kansas schools was at an end. The very next year, 1879, however, Kansas lawmakers
once again reversed themselves when a Republican legislature decided that cities of the first class (10,000 population or more) had the authority to establish separate primary schools for white and black. This was the *de jure* situation as of 1879, but Kansas school districts did not always follow the letter of the law.

Cities of the first class did generally provide separate schools for blacks. In Leavenworth, for example, black children of elementary school age were educated either in the North Leavenworth or South Leavenworth Colored School. The building in the northern part of the city was evidently quite inferior to those structures reserved for whites; one observer described it as a "hut" situated in a "low, dirty-looking hollow close to a stinking old muddy creek, with a railroad running almost directly over the building." In 1865 Topeka city officials rented a small frame building to be used as a primary school; blacks were taught in the attic while whites learned their ABCs in the lower rooms. Although the system had expanded by the 1881–1882 school year to include fourteen elementary schools, segregation still ruled supreme: two of the facilities were all black and twelve were all white. Wichita and Lawrence in the 1880s and 1890s and Atchison in the 1890s were the only three Kansas cities of the first class that boasted mixed elementary schools.

Cities of the second class, such as Ft. Scott, were divided into wards. Each ward had its own elementary school, and since blacks were concentrated in one or two areas of the city, de facto segregation was the result. Grade schools in some of the state's smaller towns, such as Hiawatha and Emporia, were fully integrated, but faculties in these mixed institutions were usually white. In a few communities the white backlash that followed the exodus of 1879 led to segregation where integration had previously existed. In Olathe, for example, whites and blacks attended the same school in the 1870s, but following an influx into the community of several hundred Negroes from 1879 to 1881, the school board decided it would be better if blacks had their own school with their own teachers. As was the case in cities of the first class, separate facilities in the smaller towns were grossly inferior.

Rural counties were divided into school districts, each having a country schoolhouse with all elementary grades taught in one room. These schools were generally mixed; it must be noted, however, that
outside the all-black colonies of Nicodemus and Dunlap, the number of blacks living in outlying areas was relatively small.

High schools in the larger cities and some Kansas colleges were integrated. Indeed, in cities of the first class the black community graduated proportionately only slightly fewer children from high school than did whites. Ironically, it was more difficult for blacks to gain admittance to secondary schools in towns of the second and third class than in those of the first. Wathena admitted colored students to its high school for the first time in 1895, and even then integration was temporary. After a number of white parents strenuously objected, the school board ordered the black scholars expelled. In Jefferson County the superintendent made certain that the high school remained all white by requiring black applicants to take a special examination. At the college level, Washburn College and the Emporia State Normal School both admitted Negroes, while the state university at Lawrence admitted and graduated blacks on a regular basis. The medical school during this period, however, drew a rigid color line.

There were definite disadvantages to attending a mixed school. One white school teacher in Lawrence discriminated in the manner and degree of punishment he administered; he whipped white transgressors with a switch and black with a cowhide. Others made derogatory statements about Negroes in class and graded discriminatorily.

Blacks seeking access to public facilities encountered exclusion, segregation, and integration. Those establishments applying the color line perhaps most frequently were hotels. When the Shawnee County delegation to the Republican congressional convention (called to elect Republican nominees for the forthcoming senate and house races) sought lodging at the Coolidge Hotel in Topeka, they were turned away because three of their number were colored. That same year no less a figure than ex-state auditor Edward P. McCabe was denied lodgings at the Blossom House Hotel in Kansas City because he was black (although he could have passed for white had he chosen to do so). In 1888 a white innkeeper in Leavenworth turned away the illustrious Frederick Douglass. The Tennessee Jubilee Singers, while touring the state in 1896, were refused accommodations by three different hotels in Wichita. In addition, a majority of Kansas restaurants either excluded or segregated blacks. One of the famous 1883 Civil Rights cases involved a Negro, Bird Gee, who was physically ejected from the City
Hotel Restaurant in Hiawatha. Restaurants in Coffeyville, Lawrence, Topeka, and Leavenworth also refused to admit Negroes. Segregation was apparently less frequent in restaurants than exclusion, but there were Jim Crow sections in some establishments.

And yet segregation and exclusion were by no means universal in hotels and restaurants. Refused accommodations in Leavenworth, Douglass moved on to Topeka, where he was received and feted at one of the largest hotels in the city. Rebuffed by the Coolidge Hotel in Emporia, the Shawnee County Republican delegation was welcomed at the nearby Merchants Hotel. In 1878 the Topeka Colored Citizen praised the Taft House Hotel and adjoining restaurant as establishments that “never discriminate as to color.” Even in Leavenworth—headquarters of the proslavery element in Kansas prior to the Civil War and a hotbed of Democracy in the late nineteenth century—there were hotels and restaurants open to blacks on an integrated basis.

In transportation, blacks could ride street cars without having to worry about being relegated to a designated section. The first separate coach did not appear on a Kansas railroad until 1892.

Black urban dwellers in Kansas, no less than their brethren in Illinois, Michigan, and New York, had to put up with residential segregation and discrimination in public services. Blacks who came to Kansas in the 1860s and 1870s and purchased homes in Topeka, Wyandotte, Leavenworth, Atchison, Lawrence, or some other eastern town tended to cluster, but they were not excluded from all-white neighborhoods. Apparently the thousands of blacks who poured into the state during the exodus heightened the white community’s desire to see blacks restricted to a certain section of a particular city and led to the creation of what could accurately be called ghettos—“Mississippi Town,” “Juniper Bottoms,” and “Rattlebone Hollow” in Kansas City, and “Redmondsville” and “Tennesseetown” in Topeka. It is unclear just what the exact tipping point—that is, the percentage of blacks in each given community necessary to trigger segregation—was for each Kansas town. What is clear is that in each town whose black population totalled 7 percent or more, residential segregation existed. Apparently, in Kansas, just as in other areas, residential segregation was the product primarily of white hostility rather than black clannishness. “To people living outside of Kansas this may seem strange but it is nevertheless true,” reported the editor of the American Citizen in 1889. “There are
houses and lots and additions in and near this city [Topeka] where no negro can rent or buy at any price, let him be ever so talented, cultured or refined, and there are others where if he rents or buys, his life and property are in danger.” John R. Davis, a black minister living in Topeka, who was warned via a note on his door to leave the white suburb of Oakland or suffer irreparable damage to his health, complained that many of Topeka’s finest white citizens—teachers, lawyers, doctors—moved into the worst white slums rather than live by a Negro. Those whites who dared to stand up for the black man’s right to live where he wanted were denounced and ostracized.

Blacks in Leavenworth, Lawrence, Topeka, and Kansas City not only had to live in designated areas, but they had to endure discrimination in public services as well. Streets in Tennesseetown or Mudville were either riddled with potholes or went unpaved completely; sidewalks were often nonexistent; and white fire departments frequently took two to three times as long to answer a call in black sections as they did to respond to an alarm in white areas.

Black Kansans applying for jobs in the public sector, such as firemen, policemen, janitors, and sanitary workers, and those seeking admittance to state institutions encountered some discrimination, but it was the exception rather than the rule. In every Kansas town of the first class and in some of the second, the police force was integrated. The city marshal of Lawrence as of 1880 was a Negro. Some of the urban fire departments were integrated, and Kansas City could boast an all-black fire company. In Topeka alone in 1889 there were thirteen black policemen and nine black firemen. Apparently all of the “charitable institutions” of Kansas, such as the State Insane Asylum, School for the Blind, and Asylum for Imbecilic and Idiotic youth, were open to blacks. These institutions were extremely crowded, however—waiting lists usually ranged from 50 to 200—and not only blacks but whites without political influence found it difficult to gain admission. There was some segregation within these institutions, but not on a systematic basis.

Equality under the law and due process were realities only for black Kansans of property and influence. The poor and undereducated—that is, the vast majority of Negroes in the state—encountered discrimination at virtually every stage of the legal process. Negroes were more likely to be lynched than whites, although the lynching of
whites was by no means uncommon in frontier Kansas. In 1879 the residents of Ft. Scott hung and then burned the body of one Bill Howard, an alleged black outlaw. In 1887 Richard Woods, a colored youth accused of assaulting and raping a fifteen-year-old white girl in Leavenworth, was taken from the county jail by a mob of white men who tied him by the neck to the pommel of a saddle and dragged him for more than a mile. Blacks accused of raping white women were lynched near Hiawatha in 1889 and Larned in 1892. And yet lynchings in Kansas were rare in comparison to the southern states, and the number per annum declined steadily from 1870 through 1900. A disproportionate number of inmates at the state prison at Lansing—approximately 25 percent of the prison population throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century—were black. This imbalance was in part due to the fact that the crime rate among urban-dwelling blacks was higher than that among whites. It must be noted, however, that blacks were more likely than whites to be arrested as suspects, they were more likely to be convicted, and they were almost certain to receive longer sentences. There was some discrimination in jury selection, but blacks served on state district court juries throughout the late nineteenth century, even in cases involving two whites. The determining factors in the selection process seem to have been economic and social standing rather than color. Black lawyers were admitted to practice in all areas of the state where there were sizable black communities, and for several years the city attorney of Kansas City was a black man, B. S. Smith.

In social organizations and institutions regarded as nonessential to the individual’s health and safety, white Kansans tended to draw the color line rigidly. Virtually all white churches in the state and several YMCA chapters excluded blacks. Theater and opera house owners generally insisted on segregating their audiences except when their facility was being used for a political gathering. Black individuals and organizations were often excluded from public functions and celebrations. In 1890 the GAR prevented a detachment of colored veterans from attending the unveiling of a monument to Ulysses S. Grant in Leavenworth. In 1889 the Topeka colored fire company was turned away from a picnic given in gratitude by a citizen whose house had been saved by local fire fighters.
Although Kansas blacks were generally excluded from white-collar jobs, virtually all types of skilled and unskilled labor were open to them. Railroads hired blacks as porters, construction workers, and brakemen. The meat-packing houses in Topeka and Kansas City were important sources of employment. The Armour facility at one time employed several hundred Negroes. Blacks also found work as hod carriers, carpenters, waiters, and stone masons. The coal mines around Pittsburg, Leavenworth, and Oswego were major employers of Negroes. One Riverside Coal Company mine near Leavenworth was worked by 126 blacks and 4 whites. The 4 whites, to be sure, were the check-weighman, engineer, pit boss, and top foreman.

While Negroes suffered from discrimination and sometimes exclusion at the hands of management, the chief hindrance to their efforts to find a secure means of livelihood was the hostility of white labor. In 1880 one C. H. Peck, who was in the process of building a meat-packing house at Atchison, hired a number of laborers at $1.25 per day rather than at the usual $1.50. Among the new employees were three blacks. White workers blamed the Negroes for their cut in wages, an angry mob formed, and the three blacks fled. The enraged workers did not stop there, but proceeded to Seip and Company Brick Yard and compelled more than a dozen black employees to run for their lives. In 1894 in Leavenworth the management of the electric streetcar system promoted James Brown, colored, from shop foreman to motorman. A majority of the white employees voted to strike, but changed their minds when management expressed indifference and publicized the fact that the waiting list for positions within the municipal transit system numbered more than 200. With the exception of the Knights of Labor and one or two other organizations, unions in Kansas excluded blacks from membership or compelled them to form separate chapters. Not surprisingly, white working-class hostility produced in Negro leaders a rather deep-seated conservatism. "It is a well-known fact," editor George A. Dudley wrote in the American Citizen in 1894, "that the opposition to and oppression of the Negro in this country do not come from the wealthy and intelligent classes but from the laboring and less intelligent masses."

There were no antimiscegenation laws on the books in Kansas. Newspapers around the state contained numerous accounts of mixed marriages, most of which were tolerated. Editorial and private
comments indicate that the lack of violent reaction to these cases was due to the fact that whites believe these relationships were aberrations limited to the dregs of society rather than the product of a commitment to racial amalgamation.

The mixed racial situation in late nineteenth-century Kansas—segregated housing, integrated police forces, segregated and integrated schools in the same community, exclusion and segregation in "nonessential" social institutions and public facilities, integrated politics—was a function primarily of white attitudes. True, blacks were hardly passive and in many instances acted collectively to determine their own fate. On a number of occasions armed Negroes intervened to prevent lynchings. Black leaders used their political clout to blunt various racist initiatives by white supremacists and to have the word white removed from the state constitution. Yet, in a state where the black population amounted to no more than 6 percent at any given time, it is reasonable to assume that the attitudes of the white majority constituted the determining factor in race relations.

There were in Kansas, of course, a group of extreme Negrophobes, ex-Confederates, Irish immigrants, and blue-collar workers who feared job and welfare competition from blacks. To one degree or another, the social status of these individuals as perceived by them depended upon the maintenance of an ironclad caste system. The extreme Negrophobes constituted a minority of the general population, however, and an even smaller minority of those who controlled the economic and political life of the state. Racial prejudice in Kansas peaked during the height of the exodus when whites—fearful that the influx of blacks would bring in its wake job competition, increased taxation, contagious disease, and a crime wave—resurrected a number of ugly stereotypes in their efforts to halt the flood. Once it became clear that the migration was temporary and that Negroes would continue to constitute only a small minority of the population, most whites ceased to feel threatened. A number of factors militated thereafter against the emergence of extreme racism. Among the more important was the state's historical background. There had never been, save perhaps briefly during the 1879–1881 period, any genuine fear of black political and economic domination. Kansas had not experienced the "trauma" of Reconstruction; there was no debt to settle with Negroes, carpetbaggers, and scalawags. For the most part, those whites
who controlled Kansas and thus who were in a position to determine racial policies, both *de jure* and *de facto*, were old Free-Soilers and members of the GAR. Eugene Berwanger points out that most Free-Soilers in Kansas and throughout the West were urban immigrants from the East or non-slaveholding southerners who hated slavery and Negroes equally. This may have been true, but following the Civil War this group was locked into a Republican party that came under repeated and sometimes successful challenge from Democrats and Populists. Prejudiced though they were, many Free-Soilers realized that one way to retain power in Kansas was to make use of the black vote. Once committed to voting rights for blacks, this element found it difficult to oppose the Negro’s civil rights in other areas. Joining the old Free-Soilers in supporting civil and political rights for blacks were the Quakers, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists who had moved to Kansas after the war and were imbued with a sense of mission toward the Negro.

Moreover, Kansans in general were self-consciously western, convinced that they had a reputation to maintain for frontier hospitality, openness, and freedom. Kansas should be to the freedman of the South what America was to the European immigrant—a refuge from tyranny and oppression, a land where due process and equality before the law were the inalienable rights of all citizens. In addition, as Kenneth Wiggins Porter has pointed out, the fluidity and individuality of the frontier made it possible for the Negro to be seen, within limits, as a distinct personality rather than a preconceived stereotype. “If a man, white or black, is decent, respectful, and respectable,” insisted a prominent white newspaper editor and Union veteran, “he should be treated in a decent and respectful manner.” Finally, the extreme prejudice against the Indian that prevailed in Kansas during the last quarter of the century may also have worked to the black man’s advantage. At least Negroes were capable of farming and laboring; at least they had sense enough to try and learn the white man’s ways and to want to become assimilated.

For most white Kansans, then, a rigid system of Jim Crow was unnecessary. Blacks did not constitute enough of a political or economic threat to warrant total ostracism. Whites were certainly anxious to control the black population, but exclusion or pervasive segregation seemed unsuited to the state’s particular history and circumstances.
The doctrine of parallel development did. According to this approach to race relations, the Negro was not genetically inferior. He possessed the capacity for intellectual development, moral growth, and material advancement common to all human beings. Whites had an obligation to provide their black brethren with an education and moral guidance, but once these services were rendered, it was the white man's duty to leave the Negro alone to pull himself up by the bootstraps. "The black man has now in his hands in this country all the resources of progress and future power," editorialized the Kansas City Star. "If he chooses to remain ignorant, he will be cheated and despoiled... but if he chooses to walk up the ascending way... then he sees into the high atmosphere of freedom and enlightenment." There was a fine line between justice and charity that if crossed would destroy the individual initiative of the Negro and negate any real chance he had for independence and self-reliance. Moreover, Negro advancement did not require assimilation. "Social equality," defined by white Kansans as racial mixing in areas considered nonessential to the individual's health and safety—i.e., neighborhoods, places of amusement, churches, and fraternal societies—was irrelevant to attainment of the American Dream. Those who advocated integration in these situations ignored the obvious natural differences between the two races.

The principal of parallel development that underlay race relations, and in fact largely determined racial conditions in late nineteenth-century Kansas, was a compromise between white Kansas's self-image and its sublimated prejudices; in practice, it did much to freeze an unjust status quo. The idea that equal rights led to equal opportunities was based on the assumption that all competitors started at approximately the same place. Whites, who controlled at least 90 percent of the property in Kansas, had not had to deal with slavery, the share-crop/crop-lien system, and pervasive racial prejudice. In brief, the theory and practice of parallel development produced a racial climate in which blacks enjoyed a relatively high degree of physical and psychological freedom, but which was hardly egalitarian.
Ethnicity, Religion, and Gender: 
The Women of Block, Kansas, 
1868–1940 

Carol K. Coburn

Ethnicity, religion, and gender shape our past, providing a richness and texture to individual and group experience. This experience creates identities and communities that in turn educate the young and ensure the transmission of values, beliefs, and culture across generations. The women of Block, Kansas, provide an opportunity to examine the complex relationship of ethnicity, religion, and gender. Beginning in the late 1860s, this German Lutheran enclave used its ethnic heritage and its religious doctrine to create a separate, distinct community in south central Miami County, Kansas. Trinity Lutheran Church and School served as focal points in the development of this rural community.

To understand fully the role of ethnicity, religion, and gender in educating four generations of Block women, I have utilized an interdisciplinary approach combining aspects of history of education, social history, and women’s studies. I use the term education in its broadest sense to include the acquisition of cultural knowledge, socialization, and the transmission of beliefs and values. By asking questions about ethnicity, religion, and gender, I intend this study to serve as a model for such interdisciplinary research. Specifically, how did the Block community transmit education to and through its female members? How did the religious institutions of church and parochial school serve as transmitters of education? How did the ethnic family function as educator? What role did the rural location and American cultural environment play in the transmission of education and culture?

To avoid entering the Block community from the front door of male domination/female victimization or the back door of female superiority/male indifference, I have attempted to construct a side door into the intricacies of the Block community. I will utilize a theoretical framework that was designed to examine women’s "networks of association" and how these networks transmit education and culture. Historian Barbara Finkelstein's "networks of association" allow the researcher to analyze the transformation in networks of association, the structures of authority, and the character of women's activities. This approach permits the historian to study the relationships between social structure and human consciousness within the context of a specific setting.

For the women in the Block community I have chosen four networks: church, school, family, and the outside world. Analyzing these networks gives me the opportunity to discuss formal as well as informal ways women functioned within this rural ethnic community. Within each of these networks, life cycle differences and continuity/change across generations can be assessed. This analysis also facilitates examining the influence of American technology and culture within the community.

The sources available for this interdisciplinary study are varied and rich. They include state and federal census data, official church records of births, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and deaths, and minutes of all formal church meetings of male, female, and youth organizations. Also, official journals, booklets, and yearbooks published by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod provide insights into religious attitudes and prescriptive literature. "Alien Registration" documents required during World War I are repositories of information about immigration, occupation, literacy, and family of the German-Americans at Block. Combined with these quantitative and literary sources are my interviews with twelve current or former Block women born between 1898 and 1920. Their stories, anecdotes, and memories enrich this study and give life to the reams of written material. Photos, personal correspondence, and newspaper accounts add to the documentation.
Community Background

Block is located in East Valley Township, eight miles southeast of Paola in Miami County, Kansas. It served as a hub for German Lutherans living on the periphery of four townships within the county. The first German Lutheran immigrants came to the Block area in the 1860s, soon after Native American tribes in the area were sent to Oklahoma Territory and land became readily available for homesteading. Most of the immigrants were farmers from Northern Germany, many from Hanover Province, who migrated in families and made brief stopovers in Indiana, Missouri, or other midwestern states.

The Trinity Lutheran Church and School were organized in 1868, and by the turn of the century the community boasted two general stores, a blacksmith shop, a creamery, and a post office. Social and recreational activities focused on church, school, and kinship networks. Church membership peaked in 1920 with 485 members, never dipping below the 400-mark through 1940. Until the advent of the automobile, travel was difficult and most members of the community were geographically isolated from other German Lutherans and from urban influences. The church was affiliated with the Missouri Synod, one of the most conservative synods in American Lutheranism.

The Missouri Synod and its attitudes concerning women shaped the roles of women in the Block community. Since its founding in 1847, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has charted its own course, often independently and at odds with American protestantism as well as with other Lutheran bodies. As an immigrant church, it long insulated itself by the creation of its own parochial school system, use of the German language, and its claim to reine lehre or pure doctrine based on divinely inspired, inerrant Scripture. The enemy was American liberalism and a secularism that destroyed God’s natural order and threatened the very core of Lutheran doctrine and beliefs. According to historian Alan Graebner, “Synod leaders attempted to maintain a social structure defined by ethnic and religious boundaries that was, save for politics and economics, as self-contained as possible.”

This highly conservative, authoritarian structure compounded problems for women in the church. Unlike their sisters in Catholicism who had a female representative in the Virgin Mary, and unlike their Protestant sisters who could participate in revivals and evangelical
practices of preaching and teaching, Missouri Synod Lutheran women operated within a structured, male-dominated world. Synod theology made clear the complementary but different calling of males and females. For women to challenge their maternal and domestic role was to question God's order and their natural subordination brought about by the sins of Eve. Compounding the assumption of women's innate inferiority, Synod doctrine exalted biblical directives of Saint Paul and excluded women from speaking, holding office, or voting in congregational affairs.

Rural congregations such as Trinity Lutheran in Block exemplified this closed, hierarchical system, content to maintain and insulate itself from outside influence and potential threats to its unity. Clergy/lay interactions were based on this respect for authority, and the continued use of the German language well into the twentieth century bolstered the local pastor's control and power. According to Protokoll (voters' assembly) minutes, all services at Trinity Lutheran were conducted in German until 1925, when English was introduced for one service per month. The last German service was held in 1950. An all-male voters' assembly, the formal male network in the church, and the all-male clergy ensured dominance in all governing bodies and church-related activities.

Church

Within a restrained, inclusive structure combining religion and ethnicity, how did the women of Block create a place for themselves, trapped between a perceived "hostile" outside world and a theology that seemed to offer few, if any, options? Block women had no opportunities to create a formal organization within the church until May 1912, when twelve women under the direction of Pastor F. Droegemueller established the Trinity Lutheran Ladies Aid of Block, Kansas. These second-generation women, mostly middle-aged or older, molded themselves into an organized group with the stated purpose "to sew and quilt for orphanages, charitable institutions and such who are in need of help." Their weekly gatherings included a business meeting with the remainder of the day spent in sewing, quilting, and socializing. Although the pastor was always present for the business
meeting, the group elected its own officers and its president ran the meetings. Local secular women and other Protestant women had a long history of charitable work, but Block women had no female role models for conducting meetings or organizing themselves into a cohesive, formal network.

After a tentative beginning, the Ladies Aid thrived in the 1920s and 1930s with the addition of younger women who expanded the group’s activities and the organization’s budget. Minutes over the years systematically documented the success of an expanding array of money-making activities. These included: sewing and making gifts for church charities; consignment work for dinners, quilts, and blankets; and monetary loans and gifts to the church, school, and synod.

Although the pastor’s presence certainly affected the group’s behavior, minutes of the meetings throughout the 1930s demonstrate the group’s growing autonomy. The group initiated its own money-making activities and accepted or rejected consignment offers for dinners or quilts. Young women learned to drive and were no longer...
dependent on husbands and sons to take them to meetings. By the 1930s, the group had its own savings account, recording secretaries began signing their own names, and women were no longer identified in the minutes by their husbands’ names. The death of a member brought a eulogy in the minutes. The group planned birthday and anniversary celebrations for the teachers and clergy as well as its own twentieth anniversary celebration, which included the entire congregation.

The character of the women’s activities varied little from the domestic chores they performed for their family or the church. As with many secular women’s organizations, however, domestic activities on behalf of the church often were “elevated” to formal status. Typically, interactions between women began in kinship networks or among neighbors caring for each other’s children and sharing domestic tasks at home and church. Nora Ohlmeier Prothe described a women’s tradition for the Saturday before Palm Sunday services.

We’d get down and take our bucket, we’d walk to church. There they’d have a black kettle and a heap of water. We’d get down on our knees and scrub the floor and wash the windows in that old church.

She went on to describe the activity as a social outing for women and children although the work was arduous and splinters were prevalent.

The formal organization of the Ladies Aid gave “women’s work” some formal status but also provided opportunities to women who previously had been given little chance to participate in church affairs. Although the organization in no way challenged male authority, women now had a place to develop skills in leadership, money management, and group interaction. The Ladies Aid also gave individual women the excuse to spend time away from family concerns, socialize with each other, and donate their work to larger charitable institutions outside the local congregation. Their donations and handmade items were sent to synod-affiliated programs primarily in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado, but also to a black congregation in Alabama, a missionary hospital in India, and a German relief fund.

For women who had little opportunity to develop skills outside their homes, the Ladies Aid provided an expanding though informal
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educational network of a sort that scholars have often ignored or not viewed as educational at all. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann proposes close examination of women's nonschool activities, suggesting that, since women have been traditionally excluded from formal educational networks and since formal education may not be relevant to their own experience, informal educational settings (like the Ladies Aid) may be more important for continued growth and development, particularly for adult women.

As the autonomy and budget of the Ladies Aid increased, third- and fourth-generation women made an easy transition to Ladies Aid from the Walther League, a formal youth program begun in 1924 to keep young people within the church, to encourage Bible study, to furnish opportunity for Christian education, to provide wholesome entertainment, and to assist in charitable endeavors. For Block girls age fifteen and older, Walther League provided a unique opportunity to participate and have equal voting power with boys in a formal church organization—an opportunity adult women rarely shared. Girls were elected as officers and committee members and served as debaters and lecturers on an equal footing with boys of the same age.

One night a month, the young people met in the schoolhouse for their business meeting and presentation of an educational topic. The church maintained a small library in the schoolhouse and presenters were expected to investigate their topics before they made their presentations. Another night during the month, they met for a social evening with entertainment of their own choosing. This included wiener roasts, ice cream socials, outside speakers, and plays presented by the young people. These educational and social activities were particularly important since most girls did not attend high school and had little opportunity to develop such skills elsewhere.

Trips to local and regional Walther League conferences exposed the girls to people and places they rarely had opportunities to visit. One interviewee stated these large gatherings were the most fun because you could “meet all the boys from other places” and see what other churches did differently. For Block girls, most of them third- and fourth-generation German-American, the league served as a valuable network to interact socially and to develop skills in leadership, organization, and communication. With the addition of Walther League,
girls now had a place upon completion of parochial school. This became an intermediary step for them before they began work in the outside world or married and joined their mothers in Ladies Aid.

School

For girls the main network of association centered on the parochial school. The synod considered the school “an agency for ideal Christian training.” Like the church, the school functioned to instill Lutheran doctrine and preserve ethnic culture and language, and theology was fundamental to the curriculum. Although the Block school taught the “3 R’s,” it emphasized religion, music, and the German language.

Based on nineteenth-century German tradition, Lutheran schools were highly structured, authoritarian, and typically taught by male teachers. Unlike their peers in public schools, Block girls learned early that all authority in church and school was male. Block did not hire its first female teacher until 1906, when school enrollment had reached seventy-six pupils. Women were hired throughout the following decades, but never to replace a male teacher, to teach the upper grades, nor to serve as principal.

Besides the formal doctrinal messages demanding female subservience, girls received informal messages concerning identity and appropriate gender behavior. As in public schools, gender differentiations were common. Boys and girls sat on opposite sides of the room and played together in separate groups at recess. Minnie Cahman Debrick described a special marching drill the children were to perform for the annual school picnic:

We’d practice and we’d practice, and the boys carried the flag and we [girls] carried a broom over our shoulder . . . I don’t know why, I guess because the boys had the flags and the girls had to have something. So since girls done the housework . . . if you can figure out that puzzle, you can do more than I can.

Lifelong female friendships began in the Block schoolroom and the experience of confirmation class solidified those early years of camaraderie. During the seventh and eighth grades, all children took
special religious training to prepare for final adult confirmation into the church. Each day the oldest classes met with the pastor to memorize and recite doctrine. The activity most remembered with terror was Christenlehre. Each Sunday the students in the confirmation class would be lined up in the front of the church and asked doctrinal questions to be answered out loud in the presence of the congregation. An incorrect answer caused acute embarrassment long remembered by the humiliated child or parent.

Confirmation was an important rite of passage for girls. They gained the right to partake in Holy Communion but also to leave school to earn money doing domestic work for other families or at least to take on more responsibility in their own homes. Until the late 1930s, when more Block girls began attending high school, confirmation and some adult status came at the age of fourteen.

Family

As was true in most rural areas, the focus and main arena of activity for Block women was the family. The farm family functioned as both an economic and social unit, producing goods for home consumption and market while socializing children in culture and gender-related roles. Block families depended on each member to carry out certain roles and duties to ensure the overall welfare of the farm and home. Woman's role within the family focused on child-bearing, on child-rearing, and on the subsistence services necessary to feed, clothe, and nurture all family members. Nineteenth-century German ideology, defining woman's role as housewife, wife, and mother, ran deep, and the Block community certainly supported and maintained these attitudes. Although young children of either sex performed many domestic duties, gender-defined activity became more prevalent as puberty approached and girls began an informal apprenticeship for future domestic roles.

As was true in many rural areas, in the early German Lutheran families at Block uncles, aunts, and cousins served as sources of support, advice, and control for children. The elderly received respect and special treatment as they continued to contribute to the household as workers and storehouses of folk wisdom and cultural heritage. Older
women usually spent their widowhood in the home of a daughter or son where they performed domestic tasks until physically unable to do so.

Child-rearing practices varied widely among families, but both parents usually disciplined children. My interviewees often described their fathers as stern and quite willing to use corporal punishment and their mothers, in contrast, as often talking with children and using a more “tender-hearted” approach. Marie Dageforde Monthey told of her mother calling her and her misbehaving siblings into the kitchen for a talk. “She took us out into the kitchen. She said, ‘You’ve all got me today yet but many a little child would be happy if they could have me as [their] mother.’ We all broke down and cried.”

A girl’s adult experiences began with marriage and childbirth. The average marital age for women in Block was 22.2 years and for men 26.6 years. Even third- and fourth-generation women typically chose German Lutheran husbands from the Block area or from another German Lutheran community closely associated with the Block Germans. After marriage, motherhood and childbirth epitomized adult womanhood and its duties and responsibilities.

Midwifery was extensively practiced in Block until Gesche Mahnken Block, one of the community’s original settlers, died in 1911. Highly respected and affectionately known as Grandma Block, she emigrated from Germany as a young wife in the 1850s. She and her husband, Dittrich Block, had sold the property to the church for its original buildings and the community was named after the Block family. When Grandma Block delivered babies, doctors were called only if she felt the mother might experience serious complications. Women essentially controlled the birth room when a midwife was present, but the growing availability and prestige of male doctors discouraged young women from taking over from the aging midwives of the nineteenth century. Accompanying this shift in birth practices, family size was beginning to decrease and by 1920, when the community was at its population peak, Block women were having fewer children. Third-generation Block women had smaller families than their mothers or grandmothers.

Throughout the female life cycle, kinship ties were important, fostering strong family and community bonds. Work sharing was not uncommon. Often a women performed one task, such as sewing, for
the entire family while other female family members divided the other domestic chores. In Marie Block Prothe’s family her oldest daughter sewed, another assisted her in the kitchen, and the youngest daughter lived with and worked for a married sister.

Sunday afternoons regularly became social events for kin and non-kin alike. On Sunday afternoons an entire family would visit another household for dinner, bringing together three generations for relaxation, recreation, and conversation. Annual mission festivals, similar to a long-practiced German custom, brought the church community together for worship services, guest speakers, and a basket dinner. Family events such as baptism, confirmation, marriage, and death carried even more meaning when church ceremonies celebrated these passages.

Such social activities were ordinarily closed to “outsiders”—the term commonly used to describe individuals not in the Missouri Synod fold. For women at Block, whose activities were already narrowly defined, this synodical warning against the “hostile” secular world kept them effectively isolated from women outside the Block community. Only in economics and politics was the secular world tolerated and customarily these were domains of fathers, husbands, and sons. Theologically and socially, outside interaction was discouraged for all members well into the twentieth century. Mildred Block related a story her mother told her about “outsiders.”

Pastor taught Mom and them in the school that if you weren’t a Lutheran you shouldn’t have anything to do with them or go to Hell. That was his philosophy. Wasn’t that something?

Relations with the Outside World

Although outside contact was minimal, Block women and girls were heavily involved in domestic production on the farm, and this created a pathway to the outside world. Women produced goods for their families, neighbors, and friends, with the surplus going to Block, Paola, and neighboring general stores that sold their products to consumers. At times, the demand for domestic goods may have outstripped the supply. Sometimes goods were bartered and at other times sold for cash. The sale of women’s domestic production was a
reciprocal exchange that took place so often, usually weekly, that money was rarely deposited in banks or documented in legal transactions. Women, unlike men, were not involved in exchanges of large amounts of cash that resulted from annual harvest or periodic sale of livestock. Although women's domestic goods brought in small amounts of money, the value of women's production lies in the fact that it provided a steady, continuous income even through the depression years.

First- and second-generation women varied in their ability to control their own production. Husbands and fathers initially took the domestic goods to market, although many wives went along and the task was performed together. Women who married after 1920 and learned to drive cars began taking their own goods to town, bartering and collecting the cash themselves. The experience of Lydia Prothe Schultz is typical of the transition between second- and third-generation women. Lydia's father taught her to drive the family car when she was seventeen, and she often ran errands to town alone. Her mother never learned to drive either a car or the family's horse-drawn wagons.

Domestic service provided women with a slow transition into the outside world. Initially, girls worked for the immediate family or relatives in the community. By the end of the nineteenth century, the neighboring town of Paola began advertising for live-in domestic servants or hired girls. Hiring out became a girl's rite of passage to womanhood and marriage.

The importance of exposure to the outside world cannot be overemphasized, particularly in its power to assimilate girls into American culture. Some scholars convincingly argue that because of this live-in experience, German-American girls had better English skills and assimilated more quickly than their brothers. For girls from Block, hiring out exposed them to their first financial and social independence. They used their wages for clothes, trips home, or for building their trousseaus. The opportunity to be in town with the excitement of new faces, shops, and movie theatres was simultaneously frightening and thrilling but always highly educational.

For girls coming of age after 1920, domestic service in Kansas City provided higher wages and better educational opportunities. The contrasts in community size and lifestyle loomed large for girls who had rarely if ever been away from home and family. For Irene Minden Prothe, her hired girl experience included her first train ride, her first
Domestic service offered Block women a transition into the outside world, womanhood, and perhaps marriage. These hired girls worked in Paola, a neighboring town.

streetcar ride, and exposure to kitchen appliances and foods she never knew existed.

Train travel home once a month provided a continuous link with Block and the family. Although most young women returned home after two or three years in Kansas City, some stayed and married men in Kansas City. Most, however, returned home to care for ill parents, help the family, or to marry local men. Hiring out definitely gave these women new perspectives upon themselves and the outside world. The combination of urban lifestyle, financial independence, and living in
the homes of non-Lutherans afforded a broad, rich experience unparalleled in the lives of their mothers or grandmothers.

In 1917, the outside world came to Block. The United States entered World War I and anti-German sentiment escalated nationally. In February 1918, the local newspaper announced President Wilson’s order for registration of “alien enemies,” or all German-born men who were not American citizens. In June, all German-born women and women born in this country but married to German-born men were also required to register as “Enemy Females.” Eighteen women from Block, including six American citizens born in the United States, came to the Paola post office to be interviewed, fingerprinted, and photographed. Threatened with deportation solely because their husbands had been born in Germany, they were doubly stigmatized by gender and ethnicity. American-born husbands of German women were not required to register. Esther Prothe Maisch reported that her American-born mother was so angry about the registration that she refused to give the family extra copies of the required photograph even though they pleaded for it as a keepsake.

The Block community had no major incidents of violent anti-German behavior during the war years. While nationally the Missouri Synod was under heated attack, the Block community struggled internally with issues of assimilation and particularly with the use of the German language. Attitudes about the war varied from anger and resentment to outward patriotic displays of American loyalty. Even as grandsons, sons, and brothers were drafted for military service, Block women were forced to deal with marginal status in the outside world where being female did not protect them from ethnic and religious bigotry.

Conclusion

The women of Block, Kansas, created and participated in networks of association that shaped and molded four generations of German Lutheran women. Church, school, family, and outside networks each played a role in the transmission of beliefs, values, and culture. The institutions of church and school functioned with unparalleled authority
in the lives of girls and women. The networks of family and the outside world provided the most opportunity for change and growth.

Church networks were gender defined, and age determined the entry and exit patterns of girls and women. The hierarchy of authority remained solidly male in a church that firmly believed in the subordination and silence of women and children. Women and eventually adolescent girls defined a place for themselves by creating church-related activities that justified separate associations. The Ladies Aid operated at the discretion of the male voters’ assembly, but in time the women achieved independence of action and governance. These women successfully combined social gatherings with domestic activities, and the girls in the Walther League combined Bible study and educational activities with social activities and trips. In true American entrepreneurial spirit, each organization learned to parlay these activities into moneymaking endeavors that increased their importance and assured their existence. It can even be argued that girls in Walther League enjoyed a closer parity to their male peers than did adult women.

Of all the networks, the church was affected least by Americanization and the passage of time. For more than seventy years, its formal networks, structure of authority, and character of activities changed only by degree. It is not difficult to understand the lack of female visibility and power. In a hierarchical world where men were often reluctant to challenge the authority of the pastor, it is no wonder that change came slowly for women and girls.

The school gained authority through its close association with the church, and girls received strong messages concerning beliefs and behavior. Young girls learned social and gender roles in conjunction with religious doctrine, firmly linking appropriate gender behavior to religious imperatives. Male authority, like the church itself, was to be unquestioned. In distinction from public schools, girls saw few female role models in the classroom. The much acclaimed “melting pot” of the public schools remained remote and had little effect until Block girls started attending public high school in the late 1930s.

Aided by rural isolation, Block’s protective and insular institutions staved off religious and cultural threats. Even if young women were tempted by the outside world, Block’s institutions remained unwavering in their authority and “truth.” For some, the protection
was unwanted and resented, but for many it offered strength, assurance, and unfailing support from birth to death. Unlike some urban environments that created dissociation and conflict between families and generations, the rural environment buffered the cultural shock many first- and second-generation Germans faced in large American cities. According to Frederick Luebke, “it seems that immigrant institutions operative in the rural and small town environment were fairly successful in easing the process whereby the newcomer was assimilated, mostly, perhaps, by slowing it down.”

Family networks functioned as productive work units and provided the arena for all manner of interactions. Women and girls worked together. As in other rural environments, when girls and women worked with males it was typically perceived as “helping out.” Because of the complexity, variability, and privacy of family life, the structures of authority are difficult to assess. Bolstered by religious doctrine, patriarchy was unmistakable; however, the German reverence for motherhood placed women squarely in the core of family interactions. Women’s public deference to their husbands in no way determined the private interactions of husband and wife or parent and child. In assessing women’s experience, Claire Farrer suggests that historians may assume that public roles are dominant over private ones simply because they are more accessible to the scholar.

As women ventured into the outside world, outside networks changed family dynamics and individual behavior. Outside activities played a large part in expanding the role and activities of Block women. Continued need for salable and consumable domestic goods kept women in the mainstream of family productivity. Improvements in transportation allowed young women to work in Kansas City as hired girls and increased their mobility through their use of the automobile. Twentieth-century Block women, like many rural women, functioned as both producers and consumers much longer than their urban counterparts.

Questions remain to be answered concerning religion, ethnicity, and gender. How representative are Block women when compared to other rural ethnic women? Nineteenth-century Kansas was replete with small rural/ethnic settlements. What made Block different from other ethnic enclaves? In many ways, Block was not different. Many such rural communities developed around an ethnic church and espoused
Ethnicity, Religion, and Gender

traditional family values. Some differences, however, are evident. For a Missouri Synod Lutheran, religion and ethnicity were inseparable. As Robert M. Toepper has pointed out, the rural immigrant character of the synod, its well-organized parochial education system, and its explicit linkage of theology and the German language, bound the Missouri Synod into "the most compact German culture group in the United States ... perhaps the only separate culture-group which has a perfect organism for self-perpetuation on such a high and well-rationalized plane."

Even if ethnic communities had foreign language or parochial schools, most did not experience the longevity or religious exclusivity of Missouri Synod schools. In many ways, Missouri Synod communities, like Block, were one pole in a continuum running from them through ethnic communities that created parochial schools but had a more mixed ethnic population to ethnic groups who sent their children to heterogeneous public schools.

Although the study of gender remains a difficult task in traditionally male-defined communities, it continues to deliver rich rewards. Additional ways must be devised to uncover the attitudes and activities of women in a strongly patriarchal community. Block women had limited personal and work options and, unlike other Protestant women, they could not resort to evangelical causes to assert their independence and worth. And, for busy rural women, reform societies such as suffrage or temperance organizations were a luxury when domestic work had to be done and families fed and clothed. Numbers alone provide limited information, particularly when much quantitative analysis has been based on male work or urban female work patterns. Also, the public/private construct fails to provide a meaningful format when discussing rural or ethnic women's experiences. More research must be focused on finding objective and subjective ways to assess rural women's work experience and attitudes.

By looking at networks of association, I have drawn a composite portrait of four generations of women in the Block community. The purpose of this study was not to create a story of female victims or rebellious heroines fighting for recognition, although individually they may be found. I chose to examine four generations of women and the nature of their everyday lives. Historian Gerda Lerner stated, "The true history of women is the history of their ongoing functioning in a
male-defined world on their own terms." The powerful combination of religion, ethnicity, and gender provides a fascinating backdrop for such a study.

Suggested Readings


Chapter 5.
Political Unrest and Modernization, 1890s–1920s

Populism, Progressivism, the Spanish-American War, the airplane, the automobile, the Great War, the Ku Klux Klan, women's suffrage, and public health reform were important issues in the decades 1890–1920. Political unrest and modernization were hallmarks of these decades. Chapter 5 focuses on the state's political, cultural, and spiritual environment.

Thomas Fox Averill, professor of English at Washburn University, provides a brief overview of early twentieth-century Kansas. William Allen White, Dr. Samuel J. Crumbine, John Steuart Curry, the Menningers, Carry A. Nation, and Dr. J. R. Brinkley are among the individuals who shaped this period.

O. Gene Clanton, professor of history at Washington State University, explains that the Gilded Age set the stage for the unrest that culminated in the rise of the Populist party in Kansas in the 1890s. Disenchanted farmers and townspeople organized for political action under the battle cry of reform. This new people's party (later called the Populist party) would challenge the Kansas governmental establishment in the interest of the working classes of farm and factory.
Ann Schofield, professor of history and women's studies at the University of Kansas, examines the "Little Balkans," an ethnic, socialist enclave in the southeast corner of an otherwise conservative agricultural state. In 1921, 2,000 to 3,000 wives, daughters, mothers, sisters, and sweethearts of striking miners marched on the Kansas coal fields for three days to support their striking men by singing, shouting, talking, and allegedly committing acts of violence to stop work that was breaking the strike. Schofield's article is a case study of the issues of politics, class, community, and feminism in the 1920s. She analyzes an early labor movement in one of the most unlikely places in the nation.

Images of Twentieth-Century Kansas

Thomas Fox Averill

The striking dual image of Kansas in the nineteenth century—the desert vs. the garden—continues into the images of Kansas in the twentieth century. But instead of referring to the land, the twentieth-century image refers to the culture, the spiritual environment of Kansas. On the one hand, for example, are William Allen White in the forefront of Progressive Republicanism, Dr. Samuel J. Crumbine in the forefront of public health reform, and the Menningers in the forefront of mental health. On the other are "goat-gland doctor" J. R. Brinkley, hatchet-swinging Carry A. Nation, and anti-cigarette conservative Lizzie Wooster. Though each person (or persons) just named sought reform,

Dr. Samuel Crumbine, a physician, became secretary of the Kansas State Board of Health in 1904. He organized campaigns to improve public health conditions and to control diseases such as typhoid and tuberculosis.

those who created the image of Kansas as a garden for reform tried to bring it about through education and a lifting of restrictions on people’s behaviors. Those who helped create the sterile, desert, “Bible Belt” image for Kansas sought reform through restriction. As always, Kansas is a land of contrasts, and in this historical portrait you’ll get a sense of some of the people and events that have shaped Kansas in the past eighty years.

Kansas and Kansans, particularly William Allen White, were proudly participating in the reforms brought by Progressive Republicanism. White, suddenly more expansive and moderate than in his “What’s the Matter with Kansas?” days, became a nationally known supporter of Theodore Roosevelt and a national speaker for reasonable government and personal liberty. He fought against restricted expression in 1922 when Governor Henry J. Allen issued an order forbidding Kansas merchants to display placards in their shop
Samuel Crumbine dramatized the need for germ control in his campaigns against public drinking cups, unscreened windows, exposed roller towels, and public spitting.

windows supporting a railroad worker’s strike. His editorial “To An Anxious Friend,” which began “You tell me that law is above freedom of utterance,” won the Pulitzer Prize in 1922. Just two years later White ran for political office for the first and only time, filing as an independent for the governorship in a well-publicized anti-Ku Klux Klan gesture. In declaring his candidacy he said, “the thought that Kansas should have a government beholden to this hooded gang of masked fanatics, ignorant and tyrannical . . . calls me out into this disgraceful but necessary task.” White did not win, but his constant ridicule of what had become a politically influential Ku Klux Klan helped break the back of its power in Kansas government. White continued to write and speak for Kansas through the 1930s and up until his death on Kansas Day (January 29) 1944.

Another spokesperson for common sense who highly influenced the way Kansans (even Americans) think was Dr. Samuel J. Crumbine, who in 1901 became secretary of the Kansas State Board of Health. Crumbine constantly promoted public health, concentrating on reform measures that would prevent disease. His first campaign was against
the housefly, for which he coined the phrase "Swat the Fly." At that time, there were no fly swatters, but they were invented shortly thereafter, in 1903, by Kansan Frank Rose. In addition, Rose's Weir City boy scout troop lobbied the city council until it passed the first anti-fly ordinance in the United States. Some of Crumbine's later campaigns were against the rat ("Bat the Rat"); against the public drinking cup (before his crusade each public water fountain had a communal cup from which everyone—including tuberculars—would drink); against roller towels; against tuberculosis, which was sometimes spread by spitting (a Topeka brickmaker manufactured thousands of "Don't Spit on the Sidewalk" bricks); and finally against venereal disease, which was spreading so rapidly during World War I that Crumbine threatened to quarantine Kansas City, Missouri, unless the city cooperated with his program to arrest and quarantine infected Missouri prostitutes. When he tried to educate Kansans about VD between 1920 and 1923, he was removed from his post and went to New York, never to return to Kansas. The conservative, small-minded attack on Crumbine was reminiscent of one that had occurred ten years earlier, and about which William Allen White had written: "No matter how highly a man may distinguish himself for efficiency and devotion to public service, he must expect attacks from pinhead politicians who want to attract a little attention. Crumbine has done more for the good fame of Kansas than all the one-horse politicians the state ever grew."

A decade later another prominent Kansan, artist John Steuart Curry, left the state never to return. Although his stature as a regionalist artist was as great as Iowa's Grant Wood and Missouri's Thomas Hart Benton, Curry had never been able to get support to be an artist-in-residence at any of the Kansas universities. In 1937, however, he was commissioned to paint murals in the Kansas state capitol. Though marvelously executed, his work was not well accepted. Curry painted a personal vision of Kansas, including a wild-eyed, flowing-bearded, rifle-waving John Brown backed by a Kansas tornado and prairie fire. People who were more concerned with their own image than with art were upset by Curry's vision of Kansas and criticism of his work was harsh. Some even said that Curry was unqualified because the tails on his pigs curled the wrong way. Curry packed up and left the murals incomplete.
But while Crumbine and Curry were leaving, taking their prominence with them, Kansas and Kansans were gaining prominence in a new industry: aviation. Early recognized for its excellent year-round flying weather, central location and good transportation facilities, Wichita has grown from modest beginnings to the "Air Capital of the World." Kansans began experimenting with aviation in 1911 when three Topekans—A. K. and E. J. Longren, with William Janicke—built and flew a biplane for six miles, the first such sustained flight in Kansas. In 1919 the Wichita Airplane Corporation began production, and in 1925 Walter H. Beech and Clyde V. Cessna formed another airplane company at Wichita. Now, with Beechcraft, Cessna, Gates Learjet and Boeing Aircraft companies, almost fifty percent of the nation's utility aircraft and sixty-five percent of all light commercial planes produced in the world are manufactured in Wichita. Air travel records were set through the 1920s and '30s, many of them by Kansan Amelia Earhart, who was born in Atchison in 1897. In 1928, she was the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. In 1932, she made another flight across the Atlantic Ocean, this time solo, setting another record for a woman pilot. In 1935, she was the first person to fly between Honolulu and California. Two years later, she disappeared somewhere between New Guinea and Howland Island while attempting a trans-world flight.

Kansas has also gained prominence in the mental health field. In 1925, the Menningers of Topeka started a sanatorium for "the care and treatment of persons suffering from illness, disease or infirmity, and particularly those afflicted with nervous and mental disorders." The sanatorium grew with the addition of a clinic, and in 1945 became the thriving Menninger Foundation, one of the nation's leading centers for treatment of mental illness and for the training of psychiatrists, social workers, nurses, occupational therapists, and clinical psychologists. The Menningers pioneered mental health as vigorously as Dr. Samuel J. Crumbine pioneered public health, and as courageously as Amelia Earhart pioneered the air. Such efforts to pioneer new areas are part of Kansas' twentieth century as much as the effort to pioneer the Kansas land is a part of the nineteenth century. There is a similar spirit, a similar reward of success.

There were also pioneers, crusaders, who gave Kansas a different image in the twentieth century. In 1900, Carrie Nation smashed her first saloon. Three years and many saloons later, she changed her name
to Carry A. Nation, hoping to do just that for prohibition. Kansas, of course, had voted in total prohibition in 1881. Carry A. Nation's crusading came as a response to weak enforcement of the law as well as a hope that prohibition would become a national reform. Nineteen years after she smashed her first saloon, the National Prohibition Amendment (the eighteenth) was passed. The "great experiment" lasted until 1933, when the states ratified the twenty-first amendment, which repealed prohibition. But that amendment still allowed local option, and Kansas stayed dry until 1949, when state-regulated stores began the sale of liquor in bottles. Kansas still does not allow sale of liquor by the drink [1979] and thus retains an image of conservatism about alcohol. This image is fostered by such antics as an attorney general's attempt to outlaw the sale of alcoholic drinks in airliners while they are passing over Kansas.

Along with other reforms passed after the First World War, Kansas banned the sale of cigarettes. Although it was not illegal to smoke cigarettes, the state superintendent of public instruction, Lizzie Wooster, announced in 1919 that "schools and colleges that permit the use of tobacco in any form by administrative heads, instructors or pupils cannot remain on the accredited list." She also tried to use her office to remove the school superintendent of Cimarron because he smoked, and several Cimarron women teachers because they danced. Her attempts were thwarted by an attorney general's ruling, but Wooster's moralistic spirit and her attempt to restrict behavior show a sort of dark counterpart to the judicious morality and fights for nonrestriction of someone like William Allen White.

Perhaps one of the most colorful Kansans of the twentieth century was John Richard Romulus Brinkley, M.D., Ph.D., M.C., D.P.H., Sc.D. Between 1918 and 1930, he performed as many as sixteen goat-gland transplants a day at his clinic at Milford. The fifteen-minute operation, which cost a minimum of $750 and involved the transplantation of a reproductive gland from the Arkansas Toggenberg goat into a human male, was guaranteed to bring about the "resumption of man's God-given role on this beautiful earth."

Born in North Carolina, Brinkley traveled west, settling for a time in Kansas City, where he received a degree from the Eclectic Medical University of Kansas City, later declared a diploma mill. His surgical experience came from his one-month employment as plant surgeon
for Swift and Company. Shortly thereafter he performed his first goat-gland operation, and in 1917 he moved to Milford. In the 1920s he built a two-and-a-half-story hospital, began operating Kansas' first radio station—the 1,000-watt KFKB, "Kansas First, Kansas Best"—and started broadcasting medical advice and prescriptions over the air. By the late 1920s Brinkley was receiving almost 3,000 letters a day asking about his sexual rejuvenation operation; by 1930 he was raking in $55,000 a week selling prescriptions over the radio. He owned a Lockheed Orion airplane, at least twelve Cadillacs, and on occasion wore $100,000 worth of diamonds.

In April 1930, the Kansas City Star reported on his activities, calling him a "super Quack." At the same time, the Kansas chapter of the American Medical Association filed a complaint against him with the State Board of Medical Registration, and the Federal Radio Commission began to move against his KFKB radio station. Brinkley packed a July 15, 1930, medical hearing in Topeka with satisfied patients, among them octogenarian fathers, and invited the medical board to witness an operation at his hospital in Milford. They did, and in September they revoked his medical license. In May 1931, his radio license was suspended. But Brinkley remained undaunted, hiring a certified M.D. to run his clinic and moving his radio station to Mexico, where he built a huge transmitting tower and continued to blast away at Kansas. Also, forty-two days before the 1930 state elections, he filed as an independent write-in candidate for governor. He promised to do away with "unnecessary boards and investigative bodies," to build a lake in every county and to pave Kansas roads. Brinkley campaigned throughout the state in his airplane with an entourage that included a Methodist preacher, gospel singers, and his own cheerleaders, who taught people how to write his name on the ballot (state law required that people write in his name exactly as he'd filed, and he was afraid many of his votes would be disqualified due to misspelling). One of his campaign slogans was "Let's Pasture Goats on the Statehouse Lawn."

Brinkley polled 239,000 votes, but 50,000 were voided by election officials and thrown out, leaving him with 183,278. In fact, bales of Brinkley ballots were said to have been seen floating down the Kansas River. Democrat Harry H. Woodring polled 217,171 votes, and Republican Frank "Chief" Haucke, 216,914, a difference of only 257
Among the turn-of-the-century Kansas crusaders were suffragettes. In the successful campaign to win the vote for women in 1911–12, they used the automobile to reach farms and communities without rail facilities. Other factors in this victory included increased education of women, experience in fighting political battles, and better financing than in previous campaigns.

votes. Because of the troublesome Brinkley ballots, Haucke didn’t dare call for a recount. Even a Democrat was better than a “goat-gland doctor.”

Brinkley ran for governor again in 1932, but without enthusiasm, and soon after his second defeat he moved to Texas. He died there of a heart attack in 1942. Many regulations covering medical licensing and advertising and a number of Federal Communications Commission agreements with foreign countries about radio broadcasting are the results of attempts to thwart Brinkley. His antics certainly gave Kansas an odd political image, which perhaps went along with the image of Kansas as a depression state affected by drought and dust and looking for help from every quarter.
Clifford R. Hope, Sr., United States Representative from Kansas between 1925 and 1957, wrote: "The great depression . . . affected Kansas just as it did every other part of the country, but on top of it there was superimposed almost a decade of drought and duststorms. . . . Kansas and the neighboring Great Plains states got a double dose of misery and calamity." The dust didn't stop blowing until 1937, by which time thousands of people had left the state. Those who stayed showed a one hundred percent increase in lung infections during the 1930s.

Kansas received attention during the depression when Republican Alfred M. Landon, governor from 1933–37, ran for president in 1936. Landon gained national prominence because he was the only Republican governor reelected in the 1934 elections and because in a time of severe economic depression he had managed to balance Kansas’ budget (though his detractors claimed he had done so with the help of federal funds). Though he lost miserably, with even Kansas voting for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Landon remained an active, moderate voice in the Republican Party and was well respected nationally.

Another politician, who was first a general, won national fame in the twentieth century. After returning from World War II in 1945, General Dwight David Eisenhower pronounced: "the proudest thing I can claim is that I’m from Abilene." In some sense, the Eisenhower image of Kansas still persists. Kansans are seen as moderate to conservative in their politics, friendly, but perhaps a little bland.

This, then, is a sketchy backdrop to understanding turn-of-the-century Kansas. All of these issues and individuals are a part of Kansas as well as American history over the last eighty years.
The Gilded-Age Background

As the last decade of the nineteenth century opened, vast numbers of Kansans would probably have been amused to learn that they were participants in an era later to be called the "Gay Nineties." Gaiety was in short supply. But whatever else it promised to be, the new decade gave every indication of being anything but dull. Kansas was in great ferment. Disenchanted farmers and townspeople were organizing for political action throughout the state. Undeniably, the masses were agitated in an unprecedented manner. The battle cry was reform; reform, they insisted, in the interest of the working classes of farm and factory. By June, 1890, this ferment in Kansas had produced a new political organization called the People's party (soon to be known more popularly as the Populist party), which would challenge the Kansas governmental establishment as it had never been challenged before.

Naturally, individuals who were fiercely attached to this establishment were alarmed by the ominous signs of impending storm. Some, of course, launched a bitter counterattack, utilizing the formidable antireform rationale of the Gilded Age. On May 14, 1890, the Topeka Advocate, then emerging as the leading journalistic voice of Kansas Populism, published a letter of one of those individuals. Using the pseudonym Justicus, the correspondent minced no words in appraising the reform movement and American society. "Hayseed and manual labor," the writer averred, "has been compelled to step down and out to make room for those who by birth and education and wealth are fitted to guide this nation onward and upward. This

inexorable law of the survival of the fittest is fully exemplified in the position occupied to-day by the various classes; it is a natural result, and all your labor organizations and gas cannot alter it.” The writer went on to assert that the laboring man’s problems were not caused by any injustice on the part of “the ruling class,” but were “directly traceable to the socialists and many reformers whom no condition could satisfy, but are ever seeking to stir up the common people, who otherwise would be content in the comfortable position they now occupy.” Turning to the demands of the new movement, the writer then stated: “The mad projects now talked of by these self-styled reformers would be enough to drive a Plato mad with envy; government ownership of railroads; government warehouses, for the farmers to stow away their crop of pumpkins; government loaning money to the laboring men; now that is rich. . . . these things will never be.” The real punch line of the letter was: “Because you have not the brains to get rich, you raise a hue and cry that those who are rich made it at your expense, when it was the natural result of their energy and superiority.”

The history of Kansas during the Gilded Age was more than just a pale reflection of the frenetic activities that affected the nation at large. In a sense, the state served as a stage upon which the rest of the nation acted out its antagonisms, hopes, and frustrations. Enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska Act had focused the sectional conflict on the territory, stimulating a movement of as determined and self-righteous a group of people to the area as existed in the nation. The resultant struggle that occurred there was never merely the product of opposing views on slavery. The conflict between the two great sections was of course never that simple, and the people, representing both North and South, who rushed to that frontier territory carried with them all the divergent views motivating those on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. As it turned out, the entrance of Kansas into the Union as a Free State was as much a victory for railroad promoters, political speculators, and land sharks as it was a victory for Free-Soilers and antislaveryites.

Destined to remain an agricultural area far into the future, Kansas was ushered onto the national stage in 1861 as a junior partner of the rapidly industrializing North in her war to save the Union from the machinations of a slave-holding, agrarian South. But if ambitions provide any guidelines Kansas was never just a junior partner. The
struggle from 1854 to 1865 served to identify the state solidly with the Republican party, the Union cause, and the wave of the future—business enterprise.

The key to the growth of industry and commercial agriculture in Kansas was clearly the development of railroad transportation. Kansans in all walks of life recognized this, and practically everybody became, in one way or another, railroad promoters. The need being immense and the recognition of that need being all but universal, it was hardly surprising that railroad builders found fertile ground upon which to operate. Even before the territorial period had drawn to a close, fifty-four incorporation charters had been granted by the legislature. Most of these early projects never got beyond the charter stage. The dream of making Kansas the commercial hub of the nation was deferred for a time as the great energies of the state and nation were absorbed by four years of Civil War. The year the war ended Kansans could boast of only seventy-one miles of single track. This was quickly remedied. Five years later they could speak of almost 1,234 miles of track; the next ten years saw this figure more than doubled to 3,104 miles. By 1890 Kansas was ranked second in the nation with 8,797 miles of track. The pace of railroad construction actually reached its height in the late eighties, and the twenty-year period following 1890 would result in only about a hundred added miles of track within the state, while in the same period the national expansion of railroads continued at an accelerated rate.

The speed with which the Kansas prairies were bedecked with rails was matched by remarkable expansion in other ways. In 1860 the population of the state was just over 100,000; by 1870 it had surpassed the 360,000 mark; by 1880, over 990,000; and by 1890 the Kansas populace had increased to more than 1,420,000. As in the case of railroad expansion, a population plateau was reached in the late eighties, as the population of Kansas remained virtually stationary through the last decade of the century. The greatest increase came in the seventies when over 630,000 people were added to the census rolls. The period from 1870 to 1890 represented an impressive increase of more than 1,060,000. The overwhelming majority of these newcomers were natives of the states carved from the Northwest Territory, although Iowa and Missouri also contributed their share to this movement of humanity between 1860 and 1890.
Most of these settlers were lured out to the Kansas plains to take advantage of her highly publicized resources. For the majority this meant agricultural pursuits. Those who survived the periodic droughts and grasshopper plagues and who managed to make the necessary adjustment for farming the plains soon created an abundant agriculture in Kansas. Wheat and corn were the principal crops. In 1878 the State Board of Agriculture reported that Kansas had advanced from twenty-fourth to nearly first in the production of wheat and from twenty-fifth to fourth in the production of corn since 1866. Other crops were grown with some success, and stock raising flourished on an excellently suited terrain; but these could not compete with corn and wheat as Kansas farmers rushed headlong into business agriculture.

As the westward-moving migrants spread out over the prairies, preceding or following the rapid extension of the railroads, and began to farm her virgin soils, they were also faced with the task of creating all the other accessories of organized society. Riding the wave of spirited optimism characteristic of the Gilded Age, these matters were dealt with in short order. By 1870 sixty-one counties were established in Kansas. The next eighteen years saw this number swell to 106. Towns sprang up all over the state. Municipal, township, and county governments were set in motion. In short, these pioneers, with the assistance of Eastern capital, converted a barren territory into a thriving state with such rapidity that many were awed by the accomplishment.

Throughout the period of great expansion from 1870–1887 there were those who continually advised circumspection and who insisted that all was not right with the world, but the great majority of Kansans who surveyed the scene, particularly in the early 1880s, were convinced that the work was good. Politically, all this “good work” was credited to the Republican party. Nationally the party may not have been as dominant as it was once thought, but in Kansas the Republican party was supreme. Kansans voted just as they had shot in the Civil War. Party regularity was a matter of great pride throughout most of the period. In the nine state elections from 1862 through 1880, Republican gubernatorial candidates carried ninety percent of the counties. The year 1882 saw the election of the first and only Democratic governor until 1912. The anomaly of the 1882 election—largely a result of a serious split in Republican ranks—was redeemed in 1884, and the next three gubernatorial contests saw the party recapture its former
supremacy. The three contests from 1884 through 1888 saw Republican gubernatorial candidates carry ninety-four percent of the counties.

Although the era from 1862 to 1890 was a period of Republican dominance in Kansas politics, it should be noted that it was also an era of steady decline in Republican strength generally. This was evident in the percentage of the vote cast for Republican presidential candidates in the state from 1864 to 1888. Beginning with just over seventy-eight percent of the popular vote in 1864, the party saw its strength diminished gradually to just over fifty-five percent in 1888.

The margin of victory had decreased over the years, but it was still substantial. Throughout the period Kansans were led, through the mechanism of the Republican organization, by a group of men who were by residence, occupation, and background closely associated with business enterprise. Of the eleven elected governors between 1862 and 1893, all save one were Republicans. Most had served in the Union Army. All were residents of the eastern third of the state. Eight of the eleven actually came from residences no farther west than Lawrence or Garnett, both towns less than forty miles from the eastern boundary. Occupationally, six lawyers, two editors, one merchant, one physician, and one surveyor-farmer provided the nominal leadership for this young but ambitious agrarian state. In addition, every United States senator from 1861 to 1891 was a Republican. Eight men represented Kansas in the senate during the period; six of the eight were residents of Lawrence, Leavenworth, or Atchison. All were intimately associated with the Kansas business community. It had been their task to promote the economic growth of the state, and by close attention to the construction of railroad transportation, more than anything else, they had assisted in the creation of an economic boom.

Numerous Kansans, and probably the Republican leadership to a man, recognized the importance of the railroad to their state and to the West in general. Unquestionably, settlement of the West was expedited by the rapid extension of the rails, but the acceleration process was not an unmixed blessing. Civilization carried forward in great haste led quite naturally to great waste, and, as this wave of settlement into an agricultural domain was spearheaded by the railroads (the earliest and more obvious representative of the modern corporation), the ingredients were there to produce a serious reappraisal of the course American society had taken since the inauguration of
Mr. and Mrs. Brew Bernett weighing Jack Bernett, Horton, Kansas, 1915. The turn of the century marked rapid changes in the lives of Kansans. The automobile brought greater mobility and access to goods. Families had more time to spend together in leisure and celebration. Photo by Jules A. Bourquin.

the age of enterprise. Edwin L. Godkin, the famous New York editor, noted contemporaneously that devotion to material pursuits became "absorbing in a country like the West, by the richness of the prizes which are offered to shrewd speculation and successful industry. Where possible or even probable gains are so great, the whole community gives itself up to the chase of them with an eagerness which is not democratic, but human." By bringing out the worst in the system, then, as well as by bringing an older agrarian world and the new industrial world into sharp relief, the West could indeed become a crucible of contention and reexamination. This reappraisal could even assume the shape of a full-scale political revolt if the forward progress of the nation, or even a segment of the nation, were seriously checked.
As long as the prospect for advancement remained real or seemed realizable, however, momentary economic setbacks, challenges to democratic institutions, and even revelations of political corruption could be overlooked or minimized. If worst were to come to worst, moreover, there was always that useful social-Darwinian rationale to supply the badly needed touch of innocence to society’s bold new course.

Kansas was served a rather large portion of the problems that afflicted the era. The hustling, bustling, scheming, frantic, heartbreaking, and hopeful years from 1870 to 1890 were years of great vitality, years that were characterized more by their dynamism than by their ethics. Most of the participants were just too busy to view closely what was taking place. As one student of the era so aptly put it, “Greedy manipulators, routine politicians, conscientious Kansas leaders, and possibly a statesman or two are all found there—but one searches a long time to locate any of the latter.”

The great speed with which local government was fashioned throughout the state was adequate tribute to the acceleration process, although not always complimentary. The difficulties inherent in rapid state-building, demonstrated with emphasis in the first sixteen years
of Kansas' experience, were reemphasized in the eighteen years following 1870 in the central and western thirds of the state as her political borders were filled in with an additional forty-five counties. Every new county went through, to a greater or lesser degree, the usual building and growing pains associated with new communities struggling to create at least a semblance of organized society. Most were successful and managed to establish viable communities; some encountered extraordinary difficulties and began under serious handicaps.

Occasionally, eager promoters of local government, at times out-and-out swindlers, took advantage of Kansas settlement to line their pockets. Officials of Barber County issued over $200,000 in warrants and bonds for the construction of a courthouse, bridges, and a railroad that were never built. In 1873 six men from Topeka concocted a scheme and netted $72,000 by traveling to what was to become Comanche County, copying names from a Missouri city directory, holding a "special election," and voting a bond issue to that amount. The state legislature, ever alert not to "scare away capital," later upheld the bond issue as having been legally issued by a de facto government. The purchasers of the securities subsequently sued for payment, and the legally organized county of Comanche was held accountable for the debt.

Fraudulent activity of this kind was by no means the rule, but it was repeated in various parts of the state and on various levels of government. There were those, too, who managed to reap handsome profits by staying within the letter of a system of laws that quite clearly lagged behind accumulating and unprecedented opportunities for money-making.

Problems of this sort were not restricted to the local scene, for the state administration, from the beginning, had trouble maintaining an unblemished reputation. To shape a state government against a background of civil strife, civil war, and reconstruction would have been difficult enough, but the men who guided Kansas politics in the early years did so amid fierce competition generated by the rich prizes to be had in connection with the distribution of lands and the location of railroads and state institutions. It was a time when politician-promoters were in great demand, and few influential souls indeed
looked with disfavor upon those who used their position or wealth to enlarge their fortune or to influence a decision.

The corrupt and ambitious intrigues of Senator James H. Lane and his rivalry with Kansas' first governor, Charles Robinson, attracted greatest attention in the early years. Rancorous intraparty struggles revolving around one political leader or another continued to plague the Republican party, and charges of malfeasance—many of which were politically inspired—were standard political fare as the warring factions competed for favors, position, or monetary rewards. They accomplished much, for themselves and for the state in the process; their actions also contributed to the creation of an image of corruption and political intrigue—real and imagined—which would subsequently provide substance to the wrath of a perturbed populace.

Certainly the record of men representing Kansas in the United States senate in the early period fell short of being illustrious. Senator Lane ended his stormy career in 1866 by committing suicide. After Senator Edmund G. Ross was denied reelection in 1871 (chiefly because of his vote for President Andrew Johnson's acquittal), he was replaced in the senate by Alexander Caldwell, who had spent $60,000 to obtain the seat. Senator Caldwell resigned following an investigation by the United States senate and the Kansas legislature. Shortly thereafter Samuel C. Pomeroy, United States senator from 1861 to 1873, with a long history of questionable deals behind him, was charged with bribery and denied a third term by the Kansas legislature.

The Pomeroy episode earned for itself a place in Mark Twain's and Charles Dudley Warner's *The Gilded Age*, but there were other occurrences that attracted less attention. In 1872 the state auditor stole $4,550 in addition to registering bonds for three nonexistent cities. In 1874 the state treasurer resigned in the face of impeachment proceedings. In 1876 the holder of that office, one Samuel Lappin by name, took flight to South America, after a series of actions that saw him resigning, breaking jail, and hiding in Chicago, rather than confront charges involving the issuance of bogus school bonds in four Kansas counties.

Who could become alarmed over such occurrences? or why should one be alarmed? Kansas was booming and the future appeared unlimited. Throughout the 1870s and well into the 1880s Kansas settlement and economic expansion were carried forward on an ever-
growing wave of optimism. After a brief slump in the early seventies, the price of wheat rose steadily, reaching its high point for the period in 1881-1882; and just as the price of wheat began a steady decline, not to be checked until well into the next decade, increasing prices for meat products created a greater demand for corn, taking up some of the slack temporarily. The population of the state was increasing at a truly remarkable rate. Railroad lines had fanned out all over the state. The majority of Kansans could appreciate the crude poetry of the editor of the Pittsburg Kansan when he wrote:

Come millionaires and scholars,
Bring your wisdom and your dollars,
To Pittsburg, Crawford county, State of Kansas, U.S.A.

Bring your money bags and learning,
Your translucent, deep discerning,
And when you plant your shinners, we will label U.O.K.

If all that glittered was not gold, who would or could dispel the illusion? The visible signs of a marked advance were irrefutable facts. That the advance had come at a high price, and was dependent largely upon factors beyond the control of the Kansas citizen, was scarcely considered. The important thing was that the myth of the Great American Desert had been laid to rest, and in its place had been raised the vision of limitless agricultural and industrial progress. Kansas, as advertised by railroad agents, Eastern moneylenders, and Kansans in all walks of life, was the land of milk and honey.

Not all Kansans were so complacent. There were those of course who refused to acquiesce, individuals who were usually identified in contemporary literature as croakers, failures, demagogues, anarchists, or communists; or at times the label Democrat by itself was deemed sufficient to cover their alleged iniquities. The course and character of Kansas growth created a number of issues that readily lent themselves to exploitation by dissatisfied elements. Such issues as currency contraction, unequal distribution of the tax burden, political corruption, distribution of public lands to the railroads, and the insecurity of
settlers on the public lands, not to mention the difficulties experienced by Kansas farmers resulting from the whims of nature, the rise and fall of the market, mounting surpluses, and their utter dependence on railroad transportation, and more, virtually assured the rise of parties seeking immediate relief.

Significant reform agitation in Kansas began with the 1872 election, when a faction of reform-minded Republicans joined with Democrats to present a Liberal-Republican slate. Defeat—measured simply in terms of offices won or lost—was the fate of the 1872 Liberal Republican-Democratic effort, as was the case of the national movement of which it was a part, but reform agitation continued without cessation and with similar results. Between 1872 and 1890 Kansas had a multiplicity of reform parties. The rise and fall of these organizations was adequate testimony to the complexity of the situation confronting those who actively sought political change in the period. The Independent Reform party followed the Liberal Republican-Democratic coalition and waged two campaigns before it went out of existence, challenging the Republicans in 1874 and both major parties in 1876. The Greenback party entered the contest in 1878 to battle the Democrats and the Republicans. In the three contests between 1880 and 1884, the Greenback-Labor party carried the reform banner. In 1886 the Prohibition party continued the agitation, and it was joined by the Union-Labor party in 1888. There were, in addition, a number of splinter groups active in several of the campaigns.

With few exceptions, all post-Civil War reform proposals in Kansas politics were introduced by the third parties rather than the two major parties. These reforms embraced a wide variety of changes involving economic, political, and social life. In fact, practically all the demands of the 1890 Populist platform had been called for by earlier third-party movements. Occasionally, one of these proposals found its way into the platforms of one major party or the other, and, even more rarely, an occasional demand was enacted into law. Much of the reform legislation demanded by the third parties and by the two major parties, however, required support and action by the national government, and on that level the matter was even further beyond the control of Kansas parties.

Reform politics was not the great concern of the vast majority of Kansas citizens. Actually, the advocates of reform came as close to
victory in the 1874 election as they would in any contest up to 1890. Even with the support of the Democratic party in that election, the Independent Reform party was able to muster only about forty percent of the vote for its gubernatorial candidate—more than thirteen thousand votes short of victory. After 1874 farmers recovered from the relatively dismal years of the first half of the decade, and the state entered into a truly spectacular period of boom settlement; in the process, political dissent became an unpatriotic profession, as the majority of Kansans busily concerned themselves with other matters. It was this trend that pulled the rug from under the Greenback party.

Like their contemporaries throughout the nation, many Kansans gambled heavily on the future. The land, they assumed, was there to be conquered, and the earlier the conquest could be completed the better. Whatever assisted in accomplishing that end was adjudged wise and good and right; whatever stood in the way was considered an obstacle to progress. Railroads received the blessing from the beginning. Kansans beckoned and they came—at times it was the railroads that did the beckoning. The roads were financed largely by grants of aid from the nation and state, and from the county, township, and municipality through which they passed. The national government gave land grants in the state, which at the average sale price of $3.50 an acre gave to the railroads well over $32,000,000. Between 1870 and 1890 municipalities contributed over $16,500,000, of which over $8,500,000 were given in 1887–88. The state contributed 500,000 acres of its internal-improvement lands, and underwrote the payment of mortgage bonds of over $27,000,000. Altogether, assistance to the railroads came to about $85,000,000, or approximately $10,000 per mile, which should have satisfied a significant portion of the real costs of building the rickety roads on the Kansas prairie. In total acreage, including about two million acres of Indian land, the railroads came into possession of over ten million acres of Kansas soil, or about one-fifth of the total acreage of the state.

Railroad expansion proceeded simultaneously with municipal, township, and county improvements of all kinds. Bond issues came in excess. At the same time, the Kansas farmer made the necessary but expensive adjustment required for the mechanized and extensive
agriculture of the plains. Debts were piled on top of debts with reckless abandon.

In the 1880s the public debt of all Kansas governmental units rose from $15,000,000 to $41,000,000, which was the largest increase of any state, and with the exception of four slightly populated states in the far West, was the largest per capita public debt.

Private indebtedness, especially among farmers, increased markedly at the height of the boom between 1883 and 1887. By 1890 over sixty percent of the taxable acres of the state were burdened with mortgage, a figure exceeded by no other state. According to Raymond Miller, "There was one mortgage for every two adults, which means more than one for every family; and the per capita private debt, counting adults alone, was over $347, about four times that of the Union as a whole. Mortgages on lands equalled more than one-fourth of the actual value of the real estate of Kansas."

Before the boom collapsed in 1887–1888, land values soared to unbelievable heights. In some cases the increase amounted to as much as four hundred percent above the original purchase price. The timing of the boom and collapse was such, moreover, that the distribution of gains and losses was clearly sectional within Kansas. The older settled counties of northeastern Kansas, in particular, and to a lesser degree the counties of eastern Kansas, generally, within a zone extending west approximately sixty miles, were in the enviable position. Eastern Kansans not only arrived early enough to reap some of the profits of the great expansion, they were, by early arrival, better able to survive the collapse. The majority of farms in the area had been purchased prior to the advance in price, and the subsequent decline in values affected the owners, for the most part, only to the extent it affected their plans for resale. Existing mortgages on eastern Kansas farms, moreover, having been contracted at an earlier date, were, by 1890 at least, only small remainders of the original sum. Once Kansas discontent was translated into political revolt, this area became the citadel of antireform politics.

It was in the middle counties of Kansas, from Marshall to Phillips in the north, and from Chautauqua to Comanche in the south, that the boom attained its most reckless proportions. Between 1881 and 1887 more than 220,000 people settled in the area, approximately 100,000 of these between 1885 and 1887. In this area mortgages were
the rule. There were counties in 1890 with three-fourths of the farms encumbered, and practically all counties had more than sixty percent of their farms mortgaged. These settlers came as land values were rising and paid higher prices for their lands than had earlier settlers. In addition, municipal improvements and railroad projects tended to soak up whatever excess capital existed locally, and many of these newcomers were therefore forced to pay more dearly for the loans they obtained. These middle counties, plus several extreme southeastern Kansas counties, provided the Populist party the bulk of its rank and file.

That portion of the state lying west of the one-hundredth meridian, roughly the western third of the state, felt the tragic impact of the collapse first. This, the more arid part of the state, was the least suitable for small-scale farming. Most of the inhabitants had just arrived on the eve of the boom's abrupt end. Many were forced immediately to vacate the land, leaving the section to those who resided there before the inflation, and to those few who were able to make the difficult adjustment. Such laconic phrases as "In God We Trusted, in Kansas We Busted" were common parting words as the discontented were swept away. With the important exception of seven counties in the extreme northwest corner, which were settled at about the same time as the middle counties, the Populist party subsequently drew little support from the area.

This boom-and-bust cycle that affected extensive areas of the West as well as Kansas has too often been written off, almost entirely, as the product of the shortsightedness of the people who participated in the westward movement. Westerners and Kansans shared the same hopes and aspirations of Americans generally. By the same token they shared the same limitations. What happened in Kansas in the 1880s was not unrelated to the great industrial changes that came over the United States in the period. Newspapers, railroads, local bond-assistance projects, or even the unlimited wealth of Kansas enthusiasm could not have produced the boom unassisted. Eastern capital flowed to the state in a steady stream, providing the means whereby the inflation could be maintained. The picture is not completed either by emphasizing the revolutionary changes in an agrarian way-of-life. Indeed there were changes, and few farmers were able to comprehend fully the significance these changes held for them. As a result, their
reaction to hard times was occasionally irrational. It must be emphasized that the circumstances were unique. The farmer's middle-class, city cousin in the West and in the East was likewise befuddled by the great changes accompanying the industrial advance.

Kansans, like Americans generally, had placed the leadership of their state into the hands of men who viewed government primarily as an instrument of material progress, men who were effective spokesmen of business enterprise but who were unable to guide and promote Kansas growth while at the same time checking abuses and offering constructive proposals to solve the unique problems confronting an agrarian state operating within a rapidly industrializing system. These men could no more escape a share in the responsibility for the course of Kansas development than could the mass of her citizens who acquiesced as long as the future appeared bright. For years the Kansan had been taught that Kansas was the land of beauty and unexcelled opportunities, and when his world came tumbling down upon him it was difficult to swallow the argument that his woes were the sole result of his own stupidity or the whims of nature.

The disillusioned were more inclined to remember they had paid too much heed to Civil War-inspired oratory. The "bloody shirt" all of a sudden seemed quite moot. They recalled they had not taken a very lively interest in politics, but they did remember the regularity with which they had cast a Republican ballot. They vaguely remember too the more sensational revelations of political corruption within and without the state. Most had quite real reminders of the high rate of interest they were required to pay on the public and private debt they had contracted. They were reminded of the taxes they were required to pay also. The tax on land seemed somewhat out of proportion. All of a sudden they were convinced railroads were evading their share of the tax load. This seemed less than fair, considering the generosity that had been shown the railroads by all governmental units. They remembered too that the railroads had been rather demanding in their rates. The state had finally created a Board of Railroad Commissioners in 1883 but they now saw this as a façade, for its powers were generally advisory. After all, the representatives of railroad interests occupied seats close to the power center of the state.

All the fuss that had been made over the tariff suddenly appeared quite silly, if not misleading, to many farmers who were having a
difficult time making ends meet. It became clear that they bought their goods in a protected market and sold their crops in an unprotected market. At the same time, the farmer became aware as never before that the very fact of his isolation made his bargaining position frightfully impotent, and although few were clear as to why, they were convinced something was radically wrong with the credit and money system of the nation. Somehow the system needed to be more flexible.

Although it was by no means the only consideration, there can be little doubt that it was mainly economic discontent that provided the decisive stimulant that agitated Kansas citizens and spurred them on to the formation of a political party that would seriously challenge the normal pattern of Kansas politics. It was the disillusionment of shattered dreams that caused them to view society as they had never viewed it before. A good many of those, perhaps even a majority, who sang “Good-Bye, My Party, Good-Bye” between 1889 and 1890 as they gathered under the banner of the people’s party, were committed to the reform cause in no greater depth than the mortgage that hung over their heads. Much of their criticism of the existing system was exaggerated and unfair and occasionally irrational—especially true considering they had shared in the responsibility for what had happened to them. In spite of all that, the reappraisal of American society made possible by that wave of discontent was no less meaningful and instructive.

The superficial commitment of much of the rank and file of the reform cause was to prove a real handicap to the fortunes of the Populist party; a brighter future could deplete the ranks almost as quickly as a dismal one could fill them. The realization that the actions of many of the rank and file were not founded upon a profound understanding of what was happening to their world, however, should come as a shock to no one. When or where has this not been the case of any large political movement? It has not been recognized to the extent that it should, on the other hand, that the leadership of the Populist party in Kansas was provided by a group of individuals the majority of whom had been committed to reform long before the Kansas boom collapsed. Their reasons for dissent were varied: most were progressive, some were retrogressive, and some were contradictory, but they were seldom superficial.
On the whole, Populism in Kansas, especially as revealed in the thought and actions of the individuals who led the movement, was a constructive response to the technological achievements that had revolutionized agriculture and industry over the course of the nineteenth century, a response which was called forth prematurely by agriculture's peculiar position in the 1880s and 1890s. It was premature in the sense that prevailing American thought was not ready to accord its spokesmen a fair hearing. Rising as they did on this wave of agrarian discontent, they were all stigmatized by the association. The brave new world of the future, revolutionized or not, was industrial, not agricultural.

Kansas Populist Leadership

The Kansas Republican press throughout the 1890s constantly labeled the leaders of the Populist party as "anarchists," "communists," "misfits," "loafers," "cranks," and "demagogues." In its efforts to down the party, this opposition repeatedly invoked the rags-to-riches or self-made-man myth, at times even the opposing yet parallel myth of rural virtue. Invariably, Populist leaders were caricatured, verbally and pictorially, in a manner suggesting that they represented the missing link in the evolutionary chain. All the intellectual equipment of social Darwinism was brought to bear in the assault on the party. The usual caricature that emerged in the period—especially in Eastern papers—pictured a weather-beaten old man with distorted features; a dilapidated hat perched atop a head that was ornamented with a long but mangy-looking beard; between a set of irregular teeth dangled a stalk of straw; and a bony frame, after a fashion, was covered with a tattered set of bib overalls, from which emerged inevitably a pair of oversized boots recognizable as "clodhoppers."

The facts of the case have been as obscure as the picture was distorted. In order to clarify the matter, biographical material was obtained on eighty-nine individuals who made up the major leadership of the party in Kansas. Included here were all elected administrative officials, congressmen, prominent leaders in the state legislature, party officials, prominent lecturers and party workers, and writers and editors of leading Populist papers. The composite picture that resulted from
this analysis revealed that the Kansas Populist leader was forty-six years old in 1890; he was most likely born in Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, or Iowa, and moved to Kansas in 1871; he was, more often than not, a lawyer, but a number combined the occupation of farming or stock raising with that of teacher or editor. Only one in five was engaged strictly in agricultural pursuits, and many of those had been lawyers, or teachers, or merchants before becoming farmers.

It should be noted that forty-six was the median age for seventy-six out of eighty-nine for whom ages could be determined. The average age was just over forty-four (44.3) and forty-one was the age of greatest frequency, seven individuals having fallen in that category. Twenty-five of these Populist leaders (33.8 percent) were fifty or older, and eight (10.5 percent) were thirty or less. Actually, forty-one out of seventy-three (56.1 percent) were natives of Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, or Iowa. The states of Indiana, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin accounted for another fifteen (20.5 percent), and the remainder were divided among nine other states and Canada. Information as to when these individuals came to Kansas was obtained in seventy-two of eighty-nine cases. Twenty-eight (38.8 percent) came before 1870 and only fourteen (19.4 percent) came in 1880 or later. Occupational analysis, based on findings in seventy-nine of eighty-nine cases, revealed that thirty-one (39.2 percent) had been admitted to the practice of law; twenty-three (26.4 percent) were teachers by profession or had taught school at some point in their lives; and seventeen (21.5 percent) were engaged exclusively in farming.

This leadership was, in other words, a middle-class leadership—rural middle-class, perhaps, but middle class nonetheless. More than half had graduated from one or more colleges, and counting those who had some college education, one arrives at the impressive discovery that almost two out of three had had some contact with the college environment. Actually, information revealing the educational background of this leadership group was available in sixty out of the eighty-nine cases. Thirty-one of these leaders (51.6 percent) had graduated from one or more colleges; another eight (13.3 percent) had attended college for varying periods of time; another seven (11.6 percent) had an academy or high school education, and fourteen (23.3 percent) were the recipients of only a common-school education. Even if the twenty-seven for whom no information was found were all
placed in the common-school category, the percentage of college graduates would remain unusually high for the nineteenth century—thirty-one of eighty-nine, or 34.8 percent. As might be expected, the college environment that these people came out of was primarily that of the Middle West; but Eastern colleges were well represented, and three of the group were graduates of Harvard, Stanford, and Oxford universities.

The composite Kansas Populist leader had also been active in reform for some time before 1890. The information pertaining to previous party affiliation, available for fifty-four of the group, revealed that thirty-two (59.4 percent) of these Populist leaders were active in the third-party reform movement before 1890. The usual route traveled had carried them from the Republican party to the Greenback party, then to the Prohibition party or the Union-Labor party, and then into the Populist party.

The rhetoric of Kansas Populist leaders was highly moral. Indeed their approach to reform was such that moral and political considerations were virtually one and the same. Christian ethics underlay their appraisal of society, and they were often ready with an apt Biblical allusion in appropriate situations. But contrary to what might be supposed, they were not religious fundamentalists. Of the twenty-two Populists out of eighty-nine whose biographies indicated a religious affiliation, five were Methodists, three were Unitarians, three were Quakers, and three were Congregationalists. The Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Christian Churches contributed one each. Included among these were two Spiritualists and two Agnostics.

There was, among these leaders, general agreement and recognition of the social derivation of evil, a conviction that the conditions of their world had pitted brother against brother and man against immoral society in a contest with the cards stacked devastatingly against society's disadvantaged legions. For this reason, in religious matters a good many Populist leaders could agree with Samuel Wood, one of their number, when he wrote that

God should be spelled with two o's (Good); devil without a d(evil). In fact, I reject all the dogmas of the church. My religion is a sincere desire to do right—to do the most possible good in this world. I
believe sincerely in the "Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

Or with Mary Elizabeth Lease when she informed religious-minded defenders of the status quo that "it was not christianity but churchanity that she assailed. . . ." Or with Kansas Populist Congressman John Grant Otis when he declared, "Our civilization demands the recognition of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, not upon Sunday only, but upon seven days in the week, and fifty-two weeks in the year." Some no doubt would have agreed with the message of John M. Dunsmore, speaker of the Populist house of representatives in 1893, which he left to be read at his funeral. Dunsmore's "Message of Love," as he called it, stated that he "came into being with a mind so constituted that blind faith in any creed or dogma could never satisfy . . . [his] desire for knowledge concerning the mysteries of life and being." He followed this with the statement: "I have never been able to accept as true the dogmas and creeds of the so-called Christian system." Religion was to him, quoting an authority with whom he was familiar, "The outcome of our ideas about the universe, our response to all that we know, consciously or unconsciously, of cosmic law." If any hint of a fundamentalist strain still remained, Dunsmore took care of that by stating: "As an evolutionist, I looked upon the story of the fall of man as a myth handed down from dead and forgotten ages, and consequently, the dogma of the atonement to be both illogical and unnecessary." But an atheist John Dunsmore was not, and he demonstrated this by quoting another authority, with whom he also agreed, who had written that "while sin remains in the universe, God is defeated: and that everlasting punishment involves an everlasting failure; that sin never injured God, except through man. That it is the God within who is injured, rather than the God without."

Apparently, quite a few of these leaders were alienated from the churches, but Christian precepts maintained a strong hold on their minds. The safest and perhaps the most accurate generalization that can be made about them is this: if the Populist leadership shared a common theological outlook it would have to be ethical humanitarianism which served as a yardstick by which they judged their world.
Undoubtedly this element of humanism conditioned their reaction to the problems they recognized were being created by an industrialized society—or was it the other way around? Either way, it is certain that both were an influence in making these leaders of Kansas Populism critical of the Gospel of Wealth. To their way of thinking the popularity of the Gospel of Wealth was merely a measure of the perversion of Christian doctrine to a selfish and ruthless industrial system. At one point Senator William Peffer stated the leadership’s attitude toward the doctrine rather well: in responding to the attack of a minister who considered the Populists anarchists Peffer stated that the minister

is not crazy, nor is he ignorant, nor do I believe he is a bad man. On the other hand, I believe he averages high with the modern Christian, that he will average well with the modern preacher, whose philosophy comes to him from the Middle Ages, and whose ideas of finance come to him through the newspapers which are edited in the business offices.
A number of the Kansas Populists, moreover, like the popular lady-orator and editor Annie Diggs, were in complete harmony with the Social-Gospel movement; and some, like Kansas Congressman Jerry Botkin, boldly and defiantly proclaimed themselves Christian socialists.

By implication of argument or by direct refutation, Kansas Populist leaders rejected, as well, the so-called philosophy of social Darwinism. The evidence demonstrating their rejection of the social-Darwinian point of view is overwhelming, although it has been largely ignored in the past. Dr. Stephen McLallin, by means of The Advocate, repeatedly assailed Herbert Spencer's doctrine. In 1891 McLallin published a letter that fairly represented the attitude of the leadership on this matter which states:

There never was, nor can there be, a more brutal, utterly selfish and despicable doctrine than the Darwinian "struggle for existence," when applied to the social relations of man. It justifies oppression, the aggregation of wealth in the hands of those able to grasp it, the occupation of everything the "fittest" are able to gain and keep.

The letter then pointed up, by inference, the tie between the Gospel of Wealth and social Darwinism by indicating that religion had until recently mitigated the influence of the Spencerian rationale, but

Now this sacred ground is invaded. The pulpit is infected with the theories of material science, infected with the crude matter of materialism, which stops short of the halfway boundary between matter and spirit, and sees in man only an objectless animal.

Kansas Populists were among the first to admit that abilities among men were not equally distributed. They were willing to concede, as did future Populist Congressman William D. Vincent on the eve of the party's formation, "that some men will grow rich faster than other men under a perfect system of law." The more industrious man, said Vincent, should receive a larger share than his "indolent neighbor." But what about "the sharp unprincipled men?" he asked. To Vincent and fellow Populists, it was clear that strong men needed no special assistance to augment their natural advantages. "They need no special
legislation in their behalf," said Vincent. "The object of law is supposed to be protection of the weak against the oppressions of the strong."

Over and over again Populist leaders stressed this view. To accomplish this purpose they unequivocally supported positive action by state and national government. In taking this position they were ridiculed repeatedly as paternalists, but they were scarcely bothered by the argument. In fact they countered with the argument that the country had had paternalistic government for years. As one unidentified Populist put it, "paternalism for the benefit of the few and powerful at the expense of the masses." Said he, "Every trust and combine, and every corporation is paternalism for the benefit of a class." Another, also unidentified, declared that those who were horrified by the paternalistic specter of government ownership of railroads, telegraph, and telephones had no fears of the centralization of power in the hands of a few irresponsible men resulting from corporate control of the same franchises, and the absorption of more than one half of the aggregate wealth of the entire country by less than 50,000 people.

Which was more dangerous to American liberty, he asked, "this latter paternalism or the paternalism of all the people?"

As a group, Kansas Populists gloried in attacking the conventional wisdom—probably because it was employed with such devastating effect against them. Judge Frank Doster, who was the intellectual giant of Kansas Populism, more than any other figure delighted in shocking his more complacent contemporaries. This character trait earned for Doster quite a reputation in Kansas politics by 1896, and in that year his fame crossed over state boundaries, as he was the man the Populists had nominated for chief justice, the "shabby, wild-eyed, rattle-brained fanatic" of William Allen White's nationally acclaimed editorial entitled "What's the Matter with Kansas?" Doster won that race, and many a conservative reporter clamored at his heels, attempting, by rather pointed questioning, to gauge the reign of terror they were sure was close at hand. The reign of terror was not forthcoming, but Doster gave some brash young reporters some pungent copy. In 1897, shortly after assuming office, the judge stated that he did not "believe in hell
fire, nor human slavery, nor high tariff, nor the gold standard, nor in millionaires, nor in the wage system.” Just as quickly he added:

I do believe in the Ten Commandments and in the Golden Rule, in the initiative and referendum, and evolution and woman suffrage, and I am edging toward theosophy and Christian science, and open to conviction in favor of any vagrant fad that nobody will admit believing in until enough do to make it respectable.

On another occasion, Doster told a reporter: “I have been an adherent of socialism all my life. Socialism is coming about through the socialization of what we call the public utilities. . . .” It was his contention that as quickly as matters become of sufficient public concern, either nationally or locally, they will pass into the hands of the general or local public, and some fine morning, if you live to a good old age, you will wake up to find yourself living in an almost communistic society, having gotten there by transitions so easy and natural you didn’t realize their occurrence until the job was done.

G. C. Clemens exceeded Frank Doster in the severity of his attack on the folklore of his times. In 1894 Clemens wrote that government, as viewed by those who controlled it, was

an ancient hand-organ, into which its ante-diluvian manufacturers put certain tunes which must never be changed. It ceaselessly grinds out the Tariff schottische, the Gold-Silver-and-Parity Waltz, the Revenue polka, the exhilarating [sic] gallop—“Our Foreign Relations,” and the soothing measures of “After Us the Deluge.”

Prior to the Populist movement, continued Clemens, political campaigns had been fought over one all-important issue, “Who shall turn the crank?” At any time in the past when the people had grown weary of the “endless monotony” and had “demanded a change of program,” the disenchanted

have been assured the trouble was with the unskilled or negligent wretch who was grinding the machine; but no matter how often the
operator has been changed, suffering humanity's ears have still been greeted with the same old tunes which were doubtless popular with their progenitors some centuries before the flood.

Finally, wrote Clemens,

a party has arisen to demand a more radical change; which says to the people, "let us remodel the old organ somewhat, so as to adapt it to modern music, and put into it an entirely new set of tunes. Let us substitute for this antiquated noise the beautiful strains of "The Earth was Made for All," and "All Men are Brothers Now," and . . . "Poverty is No More." But the champions of prehistoric melody exclaim in horror, "The impious innovators are going to change our consecrated tunes and even overhaul the sacred machine! Let us redeem the holy noise-box from the blasphemous wretches."

G. C. Clemens, as previously indicated, was later carried by the logic of his reasoning into the socialist camp. A number of the leaders of Kansas Populism identified themselves as advocates of a moderate or evolutionary socialism, and a portion of that group chose the same course as Clemens after 1898, but they were not all convinced that governmental machinery needed as drastic an overhaul as Clemens desired. Piecemeal change was unquestionably the design of the great majority.

The dominant segment of the Populist leadership in Kansas reasoned, as did Dr. Stephen McLallin, that "Competition, except in the ranks of labor, in the production of farm products, and in the retail of certain lines of merchandise," was a thing of the past. This element readily admitted the efficacy of cooperation and combination. They were willing to accept the organization of industry on a large and systematic scale. They agreed that measures were necessary so that large-scale enterprise could be made to better serve the public interest. They differed on how this was to be accomplished. One element of this group which felt that competition was no longer a practical regulator of industrial enterprise reasoned that the solution was public ownership of those enterprises that were national in scope and clearly affected with the public interest. For many of these individuals, however, as Chester M. Destler has noted, collectivist methods were simply a legitimate means of restoring free enterprise and small
competitive capitalism; in particular, they felt government owned and operated railroads would contribute to that end.

Another element of that dominant segment was reluctant to support the solution of government ownership from the beginning—or in certain cases came to that position because of pragmatic politics—and placed their faith in government regulation of large-scale enterprise. The response of this latter group would later be seen more clearly in Theodore Roosevelt's New Nationalism and in the second phase of Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom.

Another faction, whose ideas represented a minority view among the leaders but may have appealed to a significant portion of the rank and file, reasoned that large-scale enterprise in the form of monopolies should be abolished so that competition would serve as an effective regulator. Those who took this position would not admit, as many of their colleagues did, that the trust was the logical product of the principle of competition in industry. The conventional wisdom was not easily evaded. Kansas Populist William Marshall must have struck some responsive chords when he pleaded with his fellow reformers to declare:

Natural laws are good enough for us. Competition will do. The provision which God has created cannot be improved upon; neither can it be violated without injury to ourselves . . . ; consequently we will suppress that instrument of artificialism and oppression, the combine, and restore to its full function and force the natural law of competition.

The approach of this faction would subsequently find an influential representation in the first phase of Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom.

Besides these fundamental differences, party leaders were to be plagued and torn by numerous problems that can only be understood by studying the history of the party itself in its logical context—from that first whirligig campaign of 1890 to the denouement of the 1896 silver crusade and after. For the moment, suffice it to say that the leaders of Kansas Populism were by no means clodhoppers in the usual sense of that word; they were, on the whole, an extraordinary group of individuals, iconoclastic in their appraisal of society, bold and at times radical in their solutions. Their great problem derived from the
fact that they were critics of an emerging industrial order whose strength and opportunity for criticism were largely the result of a wave of discontent made possible by the frustrations and misfortunes of an agrarian order functioning within a rapidly industrializing society that paid little heed to the farmer’s plight.

The Women’s March: Miners, Family, and Community in Pittsburg, Kansas, 1921–1922

Ann Schofield

Upon opening their morning newspapers on December 12, 1921, Kansans were shocked to learn that an “army of Amazons”—two to three thousand wives, daughters, mothers, sisters, and sweethearts of radical striking miners—had invaded the southeastern Kansas coal fields. Citizens were shocked, perhaps, but not surprised, since the southeastern corner of Kansas had long been known as the “Little Balkans,” an ethnic, socialist enclave set in the midst of a conservative agricultural state. Kansans were accustomed to turmoil in the Balkans, but the large-scale involvement of women set this demonstration apart from the labor unrest that often disturbed the area. Their participation also linked the Kansas march to a time-honored tradition of women who marched bearing banners of religion or reform or shouting demands for bread. Despite the ubiquity of these incidents, however,

historians have only recently begun to analyze the collective behavior of women. Social historians, perpetually eclectic in their methodologies, have taken a lead from anthropologists in seeking clues in collective behavior about the political awareness, class consciousness, community activism, and potential feminism of working-class women as reflected in such disparate events as kosher meat boycotts, bread riots, and mining strikes.

In the following case study of the Kansas march, these issues of politics and class, community, and feminism are approached by examining three related areas of interest: 1) the conventional wisdom concerning miners and mining communities; 2) the role of the working-class wife in industrial society; and 3) the concept of work culture. The interplay of community, family, and a unique work culture likely determined the historical activity and political perspective of the female soldiers in the "Amazon army."

Labor history projects vivid images of the mining community and its inhabitants. Mining communities, whether in Europe, Pennsylvania, or Colorado, are seen as isolated company towns set apart from civilized society and marked by poverty and high fertility rates. They are customarily envisioned as collections of rough shacks dominated by brooding mine tipples. Miners are portrayed as hard-drinking individualists with proclivities toward violence, men who share the risks and the dangers of underground work exclusively with men.

Miners' wives reflect the stereotype of working-class wives who neither work for wages nor participate in production and thus have little sympathy for strikes or labor activity which might threaten their meager family incomes. Ignorant of the male-dominated world of work, they act as a conservative force in any given labor dispute. In mining towns their role evokes figures wrapped in shawls standing at the mine entrances following an accident. They wait for history to act upon them.

While the bleak image of the mining community is an accurate one, the recent work of historians such as Joan Scott, Louise Tilly, and Meredith Tax has done much to modify the simplistic conception of the working-class wife. We now know that while industrialism created an almost impassable void between the spheres of women and men in the middle-class family, the divisions between work and home were
The economic demands of working-class households continued across time and necessitated the ongoing contributions of all members. The family wage economy, as characterized by Scott and Tilly, included women as well as children who worked in factories, did seasonal work, and took in boarders or laundry to sustain the household. Working-class women directly involved in the economic welfare of the family obviously perceived class and politics differently from middle-class housewives who enjoyed more leisured lives.

The miners' wives seem to fall outside the distinctive working-class family pattern analyzed by Scott and Tilly, since a limited occupational structure and the physical isolation of the mining areas offered little opportunity for women to engage in wage labor of any kind. In the mining camps surrounding Pittsburg, Kansas, for example, census records reflect an overwhelming majority of nuclear-family households, few boarders, and a minuscule number of working wives. But in more than one instance, women of American mining communities became public activists by marching to support striking male family members. In Maryland in 1894, on the Mesabi Iron Range in 1916, and in Colorado in 1927, as well as in Kansas in 1921, women expressed community solidarity in addition to the domestic concerns of consumers. These marches indicate the potential commonalities in the relationship of women to the productive process, the impact of the household on the world of work, and the values and political consciousness within the community.

Similarly, the actions of Kansas women seem prompted by several interrelated factors. First, there was the nature of the mining community itself. Small, isolated, and highly homogeneous, it formed an unusually cohesive social unit in twentieth-century America. In many respects, its cohesion resembled that of the preindustrial village more than that of the modern town. The community was also characterized by the active participation of all members in a distinctive work culture. For men, this work culture consisted of obvious elements: a dangerous occupation in an underground work environment, coupled with the power to effect an immediate work stoppage; a shared heritage of myths, songs, and superstitions; and a focal institution, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). Women's involvement in this culture was less clear, but nonetheless important. The stark figures of women
at the mine entrances conveyed the immediacy of numerous mine accidents for miners' families, accentuated in an age which had few benefits for survivors. On a daily basis, miners' wives were responsible for having food, clean clothing, and hot baths ready for their husbands when they returned weary and encrusted with filth from the mines. Wives shopped in company stores, lived in company houses, and participated in the few social events that were sponsored by the union. Thus, although there was a strict sexual division of labor in the mining towns, the work culture of the mines permeated the community and involved both men and women.

Towns with populations ranging from one hundred to one thousand made up the coal mining area of southeastern Kansas. Centered primarily in Crawford and Cherokee counties, the region consisted of some twenty small mining camps located from two to fifteen miles from the city of Pittsburg. Strip coal mining began in Crawford County in 1850, and the first shaft mine was sunk in 1874. By 1898 fifty-three

Coal miners at a deep-shaft mine near Pittsburg, Kansas, at the turn of the century.
deep pit mines were operating in Crawford County, the leading coal producing area of the state. Production of coal increased in the county from 221,741 tons in 1885 to 4,508,747 tons in 1920, the year in which production began to decline. The market for Kansas coal included both domestic and railroad use and was dominated by seven to ten large companies.

As Kansas coal mines expanded in the late nineteenth century, the demand for labor intensified. Between 1877 and 1879, Welsh coal miners migrated from the coal fields of Pennsylvania to Kansas. Following that date until 1898, the need for workers was so great that coal companies sent agents to Illinois and Pennsylvania coal fields as well as to the port of New York to recruit miners. Agents met immigrants at the pier and promised them transportation to the Kansas coal fields if they had been miners in Europe. Miners also came to Kansas from Indian Territory (later Oklahoma) during labor disputes in that area from 1882 to 1895. Once immigrants established themselves in Kansas, they soon sent for family, friends, and countrymen to join them. By the turn of the century, southeastern Kansas was a polyglot area peopled by Italians, Germans, French, Belgians, and a variety of ethnic groups from the British Isles and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Male immigrants worked almost exclusively in the mines, while female immigrants rarely worked for wages (those who had had some form of employment in the Old Country were almost all Italian women who had worked on their fathers' farms). In 1908, 98.4 percent of all foreign-born women were found at home, as compared to 82.5 percent of American-born women. This situation had changed little by 1925. The contrast between the ethnic population of the mining camps and the surrounding environment caused one observer to note in 1911, "At no place west of the Mississippi is there a similar large group of industrial immigrants living in the very midst of a flourishing rural community."

Unlike eastern urban areas, though, work rather than ethnicity determined community in southeastern Kansas. With the exception of the Italians, immigrants did not cluster together into residential patterns, and they formed fewer distinctively ethnic organizations. The Catholic church, for example, did not send priests to minister to one particular ethnic group, and it encouraged the foreign-born to Americanize as quickly as possible. Immigrants frequently married
across ethnic lines, and a large number of ethnic men married American-born women.

Certain groups can be identified with particular trends, however. Ethnicity showed some correlation with household size, at least in 1908. The U.S. Immigration Commission found that although the average household size was 4.92 people for a foreign-born family, it was 5.79 for the Irish and 5.10 for the Slovaks. The Irish and the Slovaks also were less likely to keep boarders. The Welsh and the Irish had the highest proportion of children employed in the mines: the Italians tended to own their own homes, rather than rent. The union, the mine, and the company, though, shaped the community, particularly by the early twentieth century, to a far greater extent than did church or ethnic traditions.

The coal companies and the mines themselves dominated life in the mining camps. Coal companies built these camps—Franklin, Arma, Mulberry, Camp 50, Chicopee, and a host of others—to house workers as close as possible to the shaft mines. As one geographer explained this pattern of settlement, "There is thus created near the openings of the mines a sort of artificial city, with houses exactly alike which are the 'result' and the necessary 'sign' of the work underground." Many of these houses, or more appropriately shacks, were owned by the mining companies, as were the company stores where miners and their wives bought groceries in exchange for scrip. Some camps boasted churches, schools, and dance halls, while others were simply dreary rows of three-room shacks. There was a higher incidence of smallpox, measles, scarlet fever, typhoid, malarial fever, pneumonia, and other respiratory illnesses in the camps than in the surrounding area. Nutritional standards also were lower; stews and soups rather than meat provided the main protein source for families' diets. In a poignant testament to this fact, a Dunkirk schoolchild once began an essay on cows with the sentence: "The meat of a cow is called soup-bone." Thus, despite their proximity to a substantially sized city like Pittsburg, peoples' lives in these communities were circumscribed by a uniform poverty and insecurity.

The mine dictated the rhythms of life not only for the miners but for the entire community. Kansas was no exception to the universal statement that mining is a high-risk occupation. In 1920, for example, there were 21 fatal and 1,011 non-fatal accidents in Crawford County
mines. The 7,562 men who were employed in the mines worked an average of 181 days for an average wage of three dollars a day. Therefore, they were idle one-third of the year. When asked by a reporter how miners amused themselves when out of work, one miner testified to the economic and psychic instability of the miner's family with his taciturn reply: "What do we do with ourselves when we are out of work? . . . Why sit around or start a fight. There is nothing else to do."

Families dealt with this insecurity in a number of different ways. They frequently planted large vegetable gardens and preserved or canned the produce, which they stored in cellars behind their shacks. Italians were especially noted for growing herbs, fig trees, and grapes for wine. Mining families also kept hogs and chickens for their own use. Both the sameness of their existence and the shared insecurity drew the people of the camps into tight community networks. Unions, work, and sport bound men together, and women were connected by trading products of home manufacture and through the midwives' visits from house to house. A woman may have worked before marriage as a "hired girl," but the occupational structure of the camps and the traditional domestic obligations precluded wage work for women. When one miner's widow was asked if she had worked outside the home to help make ends meet, she answered incredulously, "of course not, no one did—who would take care of the children?"

The politics of southeastern Kansas were painted with broad, red strokes. Girard, the county seat of Crawford County, a familiar name to students of American socialism, was the site of a press which published a number of socialist periodicals including the national socialist weekly, the Appeal to Reason. Eugene Debs lived in Girard for a number of years and Kate Richards O'Hare, Mother Jones, and other socialist luminaries frequently visited and lectured in the area. "Mother" especially was well known to the members and leaders of UMWA District 14. The Socialist party had an active following and many camps had several elected Socialist officials: Arma, for example, had all Socialist officials in 1911, and Dunkirk had an entire Socialist school board in that same year. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) added to the radical activity in southeastern Kansas, although it organized primarily in the oil fields of Butler County and among migratory wheat harvest workers. By 1920, activities of the Kansas
Commmunist party attracted the attention of the state attorney general's office to Kansas' "red sector."

The Republican citizens of Crawford County were clearly distressed by this radical and foreign element in their midst. Their fear of the "enemy within" was heightened by the area's involvement in the bitter 1919-20 coal strike, as well as by the post-war "Red scare." Before the 1919 strike ended, mine operators used the National Guard and college boys as strikebreakers. The strike engendered such anti-union feelings among Kansans that in 1920 the Kansas legislature passed the Court of Industrial Relations Act, which outlawed strikes and subjected all labor disputes to arbitration by the Kansas Court of Industrial Relations.

In 1921, Alexander Howat, the colorful and controversial president of District 14, ran afoul of both the industrial court and the United Mine Workers of America. In the fall of 1921, Howat ordered a work stoppage of three hundred miners over a wage dispute involving a
young worker. Howat was tried for violating the industrial court act, convicted, and sentenced to six months in prison. On the day in September that he began serving his sentence, the miners of District 14 walked off their jobs in protest. John L. Lewis, the international president of the UMWA, condemned this action as a violation of contract and ordered the miners back to work. He suspended the district and installed a provisional president for the region, Van A. Bittner. The miners stayed out on strike without benefits from the national union. Miners' locals in Illinois, in a show of solidarity, hastened to aid the Kansas strikers and sent money as well as beans, flour, bacon, and coffee to help Kansas mining families. By mid-November, however, some miners began going back to work, and the mines were soon operating at about one-half of their capacity. The stage was then set for the women's march. Sixty years later, Anna Okorn shook her head when she recalled women's responses to the strikebreakers. "People were starving," she said, "and Mr. Howat was in jail and the women felt it wasn't fair."

On Sunday, December 11, five hundred women from the various mining camps that surrounded Pittsburg crowded into a church hall at Franklin. They issued a statement in the name of "the wives of the loyal union men of Kansas" in which they condemned both the "Alien Industrial Slavery Law" and the international union. Proudly they proclaimed "it is our duty to stand shoulder to shoulder with our husbands in this struggle." Finally, they defined their struggle as "the fight for our democracy that we was [sic] to receive after the World War." Their words echoed feelings of solidarity with male members of the mining community and rhetorically linked the miners' struggle to American democratic ideals. In so doing, the women identified with ideals of justice and democracy which they felt should have been defended by the international union and, in a larger sense, by the American government. Undoubtedly, they considered their cause one of conserving values, rather than one of revolt.

At 4:00 a.m. the following morning, between two and three thousand women assembled at Franklin and began marching to the mines. During the next three days, militant crowds of singing, shouting women marched from mine to mine, frequently separating into smaller columns. They talked to and reasoned with workers and sometimes, when reason failed, resorted to more violent injunctions. Their mission
was to stop the work that was breaking the strike. Despite the straightforward nature of the event, contemporary accounts constructed the narrative of the march in strikingly different ways, reflecting the political tensions between labor and capital. On the one hand, the New York Times, the Topeka State Journal, and the Pittsburg Daily Headlight, all "establishment" papers, stressed that the march was a male-directed "army of Amazons" (no notice given to the contradiction) which consisted of foreigners acting as a violent mob. On the other hand, the Workers Chronicle, Il Lavatore Italiano, and the socialist Appeal to Reason emphasized the spontaneous, moral, and peaceful nature of the demonstration.

The Topeka State Journal evoked a military tone as it described the first day of the march:

Headed by the girl's band of Arma, playing martial music, "General" Annie Stovich, the Joan Arc [sic] of the "Amazon army" led her invading hosts, already weary and footsore, into the enemy country, this afternoon.

The article went on to describe the "pent-up fury of the women" and claimed that "men viewed the situation with alarm, for it was believed that even bayonets will not deter the strong, highly temperamental foreign women. . . . The New York Times explicitly characterized the marchers as both foreign and unwomanly. In an editorial entitled "Extending the Sphere of Women," it condemned the Amazon warriors from the "Red sector" of Kansas, for "what they did was less a demonstration of courage than a willingness to capitalize and exploit the weakness that is ascribed to them."

The question of violence during the march sharply divided contemporary journalists—were the women acting out of an appropriate family ethic or brazenly displaying unfeminine qualities? The socialist Appeal to Reason asserted:

The whole episode of the marching women was remarkably peaceful. . . . conducted with . . . admirable restraint. The demonstration throughout was more moral than physical in its nature. The wives of the strikers wished to shame the men who had returned to work—to enforce upon their consciousness the fact that they had deserted their comrades in a righteous struggle.
The *New York Times*, however, described a different scene when women arrived at one of the mines on December 13:

The workers' dinner buckets were taken and a bombardment of bread, butter, bacon, jelly, eggs and other food was begun. The buckets, as fast as they were emptied, were smashed by the rioters. Coffee compartments were opened and the working miners as well as the Sheriff were showered with the drink intended for their lunch. Only two or three of the men resisted the women.

Stories of violence continued after the march. Richard J. Hopkins, the attorney general of Kansas, complained of the difficulty of finding prosecution witnesses. One potential witness was driving to one of the mines to work. "He was stopped and badly beaten by several of
the women and refused to file a complaint altho he knew and recognized more than one of his assailants. . . .” The fear of community sanctions seems to have superseded legal or police pressure. In another explicitly identified incident, Mrs. Nick Bossetti and Mrs. Walter Carbaugh were arrested following the march and accused of assaulting Walter Madden at Central Mine 49. They supposedly dragged him out of the mine office, beating him and tearing his clothing.

As with the issue of violence, contemporaries were divided on the leadership and the initiation of the women’s march. Officials tried to make a case that a few militants coerced many women into participating in the march, thus downplaying the significance of the size and the duration of the three-day disturbance. To this end they found several women, including one schoolteacher from Ringo, who repudiated their participation in the march and identified the speakers at the December 11 organizational meeting as Mary Skubitz, a socialist activist, a Mrs. Wilson, and a Dr. P. L. Howe.

Another effort to discredit the march, at least as an autonomous activity of working-class women, was made by the New York Times, which claimed that “the Howat forces sent their women into the fight. . . .” And journalist Henry J. Haskell wrote in Outlook that “radical Howat followers undertook a policy of terrorism. Women were incited to lead mobs and threaten miners who stood by the International organization.” In a similar vein, Van Bittner, the provisional president of District 14, censured cowardly men who sent their mothers, wives, and sisters out to riot.

In contrast to this stream of condemnation, the Appeal to Reason stated that the idea of marching was entirely spontaneous with the women. None of the Howat leaders advised this tactic, and Howat, from his jail cell, expressed his regret that the violence had occurred. Another labor paper, the Workers Chronicle, noted that men were barred from the organizational meeting Sunday night. Finally, Fannie Wimler, an active participant in the march, responded to Bittner’s charges in a letter to the Pittsburg Daily Headlight:

Husbands, sons, and brothers aren’t cowards and haven’t anything to do with our affairs. We are doing this on our own accord, and what we mean is business. . . . If you don’t think us responsible, we’ll just have to put the responsibility on you, for you are the one who is
driving us to this. . . . We don’t want any blood shed here in Kansas like there was in the Ludlow strike, and in Alabama and Mingo County, W. Va. What we want is our industrial freedom and liberty and we want our men to be good, true, loyal union men and 100 percent American citizens, not like you and your dirty bunch of strike breakers. In the World War we bought liberty bonds. . . .

In addition to its proclamation of autonomy, Wimler’s letter struck the patriotic tune of the marchers’ original statement. It reflected also a class-conscious mentality linking their actions to labor struggles elsewhere as well as a conception that their cause was truly American.

The patriotic theme was further expressed by the way in which the marchers carried an American flag during the march and sometimes stretched it across mine entrances to prevent miners from entering. In several instances they forced miners to kneel and kiss the flag. Apparently, the marchers desperately sought to identify themselves as Americans, particularly in light of such statements as Gov. Henry Allen’s proclamation that “the Kansas government does not intend to surrender to foreigners and their female relatives.”

Nor did Pittsburg plan to hang out the white flag as rumors spread that the city would be the next target of the marching Amazons. Following the December 13 march, the Crawford County sheriff (who one informant claimed was thrown into a pool of water by the women) requested a deputized force of one thousand to deal with the emergency. Veterans were recruited to defend the city, and rifles and shotguns were stockpiled in the Stillwell Hotel for their use. Local law enforcement efforts, however, did not dampen the enthusiasm of the women’s army. On December 15, three days after the disturbances began, three troops of Kansas National Guard cavalry arrived at Pittsburg and were subsequently stationed at Ringo, Mulberry, and Franklin; Lawrence later sent a machine gun detachment.

Following the march, sheriff’s deputies arrested forty-nine women on charges of unlawful assembly, assault, and disturbing the peace. They were held in bond of $750, rather than the customary $200. The harsh legal reprisals reflected middle-class fears and hostility, while the arrest lists testified to the mixed ethnic character and socialist influence of the event. Italians, French, Slovaks, Americans, and others had joined forces to express shared community and family concerns
which superseded ethnic differences. Their leaders included Mary Skubitz and her mother Julia Youvain, socialists and miners’ wives; Phil Callery, another local socialist, served as the marchers’ defense attorney.

Just as journalists couched the march in terms of gender, Callery based his case on the defendants’ maternal responsibilities. His defense for the women who were arraigned on charges of unlawful assembly, assault, and disturbing the peace was one of “mass Psychology,” which he claimed frequently led people to do things in time of labor unrest that they would not do individually. Finally, he cautioned that “the trial of the cases at this time would tend to again stir the passions of the community.” In so many words, Callery defined the collective, community-inspired, and gender-specific nature of the march. The court too seemed to understand, for the women pleaded guilty and were fined from one dollar to two hundred dollars, paroled, and ordered to pay court costs.

This spirited chapter in American labor history unfortunately must be closed on a negative note. On January 13, defeated both by local opposition and the international union, Howat ordered all striking miners back to work. The UMWA gave each local sole power to accept or reject applicants for membership in newly established locals. Each returning miner would have to pay a ten-dollar initiation fee and would be a silent, dues-paying member with no voice or vote in the union.

Following the march, Kansas authorities tightened their control of the turbulent Balkans with antilabor measures such as laws passed by Girard, Cherokee, Arma, and Mulberry, under pressure of the Kansas attorney general, which made it illegal for men to refuse to work when there was work available in the area. The penalty for noncompliance was ten to thirty days at hard labor.

The march also fanned the paranoia of local and state officials about subversive female aliens and underscored the distance that loomed between most Kansans and the mining camps. To give two examples, A. J. Curran, judge of the district court of Pittsburg, wrote to Mrs. John Tracy, chairman of the Americanization Committee of the Pittsburg Women’s Auxiliary, about the law whereby naturalization of a male alien gave citizenship to his wife, a sensitive issue in light of the political rights and privileges conferred on women by the recently
passed Nineteenth Amendment. "It is a known fact that there are anarchists, communists and bolsheviki among the alien women in this community," Curran stated. "As you know it was the lawlessness of the women in this community a few months ago which made necessary the stationing of the state militia in our county for two months to preserve law and order." In another pronouncement, Al F. Williams, the U.S. District Attorney, threatened to deport the "worst radicals" for he claimed that "when a situation like the present arises they all flock and act together like so many sheep." Faced with such sentiments, many marchers fled the area; authorities searched in vain for these women when warrants were issued for their arrest.

Despite its dismal ending, the women's march holds several important lessons for one interested in questions about American culture and women's history. As social scientists suggest, in episodes of collective behavior, ideologies and myths which lie beneath the surface of a society emerge. Thus the march discloses information about the roles, values, and political consciousness of women in this working-class community. The march itself tells in its own "language" how work, class, and politics shaped the subculture of a community while acknowledging hegemonic pressure from the surrounding district and dominant culture. The way in which contemporary observers structured the narrative of the event, evoking images of "Amazons" and foreign hordes, shows that the women's march represented a clear and distinct challenge to a social order based upon separate social roles of men and women as well as upon docile and subservient foreign workers. The women marchers symbolically used the traditional American flag to invoke a heritage of American democracy and show that they were entitled to the rights of citizens. They went to their kitchens for their weapon of red pepper, and by emptying dinner buckets they conveyed the message that they were now violently taking away the food that as nurturing women they had always given.

Finally, the actions of the women defy the interpretation of conventional labor historiography which characterizes wives of workers and strikers as conservative and frequently antiunion and antistrike. The indirect relationship of women to means of production might support this theory. The Kansas women, as indicated earlier, however, were not alone in their public expression of community solidarity. In a number of instances in industrializing America, women marched to
support the strikes of male family members. The common occurrence of women’s strikes in mining communities seems to imply that the size, isolation, and high occupational health hazards created a sense of shared community involvement in the work culture of the mines. This involvement was unequaled in other industrial settings where the public and the private spheres of life were less integrated and where the lines between the middle and the working classes were less sharply drawn. In addition, the single employment character of the communities and the fact that supplementary income and consumable items were produced in the domestic sphere increased the unity of the community.

Several issues about such demonstrations remain problematic, however. The first is the political consciousness of the marching women. In the case of the Kansas march, it is clear that miners who returned to work posed a political threat to mining-camp communities. They shattered the cohesiveness of the working-class communities and broke the balance of cooperation that sustained these communities in tension with the world around them. Women who marched certainly could have perceived the political dimensions of their actions or, like Mrs. Okorn, they could have been motivated simply by the fact that “people were starving and it wasn’t fair.”

It is tantalizing as well to speculate about the intrafamily dynamics which existed in the mining camps. Studies of the Great Depression and family life indicate that cycles of poverty and unemployment alter the decision-making process, roles, and authority relationships in the working-class family. Clearly, the organization and results of the women’s march, as well as the march itself, reflected the strength and initiative of women in the mining community within their households. As the historian Meredith Tax reminds us when writing of the collective behavior of mining women, “These women had their own reasons for wanting to fight. In the company towns and migrant labor camps of the West, people were oppressed as members of family units rather than as individuals.” Thus it would seem that much of the answer to the original question of why women marched lies within the structure of the community as well as within the working-class family itself.

The massive social changes wrought by industrialization altered the work women and men did and changed the family itself as well. These changes, whether in work, gender roles, or the family, cannot
be studied outside of the community context in which they operated, for the community at many levels provided reasons for their existence and a framework in which they functioned. It is good to remember also, in light of the preceding discussion, that women's activities cannot be placed in neat historical categories labeled "gender" without considering class. Historians of American women must be consistently aware of the very permeable membrane between the public and the private spheres of life for working-class women. They must understand that when women marched they marched for bread . . . and sometimes for roses, too.

Suggested Readings


Cordier, Mary Hurlbut. "Prairie Schoolwomen, Mid-1850s to 1920s, in Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska." *Great Plains Quarterly* 8 (Spring 1988): 102-19.


Chapter 6.
Depression and Recovery, 1930s–1940s

The problems of the Great Depression and World War II were not, of course, unique to Kansas. The accompanying Dust Bowl years, however, created extremely difficult times in Kansas during the 1930s. Chapter 6 examines the 1932 Kansas gubernatorial race and the boom years World War II brought to its largest city, Wichita.

Donald R. McCoy, professor of history at the University of Kansas, provides an in-depth look at the Great Depression’s influence on the 1932 gubernatorial election in Kansas. The 1930 gubernatorial election witnessed two rare events in Kansas history: the strong showing of a last minute write-in candidate, the infamous Dr. John R. Brinkley (for a discussion of Brinkley’s candidacy see also the article “Images of Twentieth-Century Kansas” in Chapter 5), and the election of a Democratic governor. In 1932 Dr. Brinkley again ran for governor (this time his name was on the ballot), along with the incumbent Democratic governor, Harry Woodring, and a progressive Republican, Alfred M. Landon. The election occurred in one of the most dismal years in the nation’s history, and Kansans felt the full brunt of falling wheat prices and record unemployment. The Republican party was downhearted after losing to Woodring and George McGill (United States senator) in 1930. Republican President Hoover was widely blamed for the
The economic depression of the 1930s was compounded by drought and dust storms in Kansas. Dust storms ravaged western Kansas in dry years when rangeland was converted to wheat fields, and some "suitcase farmers" and tenants did not practice soil conservation.

depression. That blame was spread to other Republicans. Professor McCoy reviews this election and the lessons it taught.

Craig Miner, history professor at Wichita State University, documents the changes World War II brought to Wichita in his book *Wichita: The Magic City* (1988). The selection excerpted here documents the economic, social, and political impact of a fifty percent population increase in three years. Wichita became a twentieth-century boom town. Military contracting for World War II aircraft transformed this sleepy prairie town into the "Air Capital of the World," producing Boeing bombers, Cessna gliders and trainers, and Beech fighter planes. The Coleman Company made ammunition chests, shell casings, fuses, and the famous Coleman portable stoves for GIs. According to Miner, by December 1944, Wichita aircraft plants had produced 22,334 planes for the war effort and employed with their subcontractors 52,000 people in the Wichita area. The boom years in the 1940s brought an end to the economic hard times of the "dirty thirties."
In 1932, the nation suffered one of the most dismal years in its history. Kansas provides a good example of how bad things were. Employment was approaching its rock-bottom low. Per capita income had dropped from $535 in 1929 to $268. Farmers often failed to earn their cost of production, with wheat prices averaging thirty-three cents a bushel and corn twenty-seven cents. Almost everyone was scrambling to keep sources of income from disappearing or, if they had vanished, to find new ones. It was a time of tremendous enterprise, but also it was a time of dismay as effort and innovation frequently failed to preserve one's economic assets.

Complaints were common, but accompanying them were signs that Kansans had abandoned neither their fortitude nor their sense of concern. Publisher Rolla A. Clymer had lamented in his El Dorado Times the demise of the old-fashioned pant hanger. An Iola storekeeper sent him two of the hangers in January 1932, observing that

the demand has decreased, due to the fact, that while there are still as many men, the men have fewer pants. . . . If you are fortunate enough to have more than two pair of pants let me know and I'll send more hangers. Thanks to Mr. Hoover, I only have one pair, and they are getting thin in places.

A publisher wrote Clymer in April, commenting that people had told him how much grief he had avoided by selling his newspaper.

They were right for the most part. The only thing I have to worry about now is to avoid starving. The property for which I traded my

paper has turned out to be more of a liability than an asset, and I can’t sell it.

He was looking for work, and all he asked was “mere living expenses.” Then there were those who were looking for jobs for others. L. N. Flint of the University of Kansas Department of Journalism wrote of his seniors, “Just what our boys are going to do for a living, I don’t know. The same question hangs over the head of every University graduate this year.” There was also the brief rage for Grohoma, a hybrid sorghum which supposedly would grow bountifully even under drought conditions. One of the sellers of its seed in Kansas complained to U. S. Sen. Arthur Capper that the Department of Agriculture was fighting this miracle crop and wanted to know why. The answer, well documented, was that Grohoma had proved a bit inferior in tests to many other sorghums. More important was that its seed price was vastly inflated, running fifty cents a pound compared to two or three cents for other sorghum seed.

Some of the bad news took the form of exchanges. One Republican worthy wrote Clymer that he could not attend his party’s national convention because “[I] am harder up than I have been for twenty years.” Clymer replied, “I, too, am lower than I have been for many years in a financial way, and the heck of it is that things are getting no better fast.” The Sage of Emporia, William Allen White, conveyed his hope to Clymer “that business isn’t as bad with you as it is with me.” It is not surprising that White had written Senator Capper, “We are faced with a condition of starvation, not with a theory of economics. And it is a matter now of weeks or at the most of months until starvation will begin to emotionalize our politics, and hell will be popping before frost.” In pressing for work for the unemployed, White warned that matters were “going to reach a breaking point . . . when the hungry and cold call in the armed gangsters and are directed by the ruthless Communists.”

What was the state of politics in Kansas in 1932, given these conditions and apprehensions? For one thing, Republican leaders were often downhearted and Democratic leaders optimistic about their election chances in November. The Democrats had won the governorship with banker Harry H. Woodring and a United States senatorship with attorney George McGill in 1930. The nation’s economy
had deteriorated badly since then, and Pres. Herbert Hoover was being widely blamed for it, a blame that was spreading to most Republicans. William Allen White believed that Hoover would be a great handicap for whichever Kansas Republican ran for the Senate. "The President is being unjustly blamed for an economic subsidence that is world wide, cataclysmic and inevitable," but blamed he was, and one would do well not to share it with him. A great deal of criticism was aimed at Congress, and not without reason. As Republican Arthur Capper conceded in a radio speech in February, "There is a lot of confusion here in Congress. There is a lot of confusion over the country. There is a lot of tumult; a lot of shouting." Collector of Internal Revenue H. H. Motter of Wichita reported to Republican Cong. Clifford R. Hope in June that "in the main Congress is not in the best standing among the common people." Hope replied, "It is certainly sad but true," adding that congressmen know they "are in a bad situation and are trying to figure some way out and, incidentally, some way out for themselves politically."

Republicans in Congress often saw themselves being burdened politically by the Hoover administration even though the Democrats had organized the House of Representatives. It was the Republicans, in control of the executive branch and, barely, of the Senate, who were being blamed for America's economic tailspin.

The idea of Alfred Landon for governor started to appear in the state's newspapers as early as April 1931. By September the former Republican state chairman began publicly discussing the problem of wheat farmers—a sure sign of impending candidacy in Kansas. Soon Landon announced his candidacy for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. His major opponent in the primary election was Lacey Simpson, a farmer who had spent eight years in the state legislature. Although Simpson had supported progressive Republican Gov. Clyde Reed for renomination in 1930, he was now the candidate of the conservative Republicans who had defeated Reed and his manager, Landon, in a bitterly fought primary election. In 1932 both Landon and Simpson would adopt the theme of party harmony.

Democratic Governor Woodring seemed a natural candidate for renomination. Yet he headed the state's executive branch in increasingly hard times, and his party was far from united. Woodring had to cope with rumors, for example, that he was at odds with Senator McGill.
When one of the senator’s enemies approached Woodring with this, he denied it strongly, writing,

Your assumption is incorrect—the news or press reports are not based on any facts—news stories that is all. There is no discord—nor change of close personal & political friendship.

McGill would have been surprised by the governor’s view of the cordiality of their relationship. Another problem was that Woodring had early endorsed Franklin D. Roosevelt’s campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. This flew in the face of the sentiment of many Kansas Democrats. As Senator McGill’s ally, Richard Long, wrote in May, “The average Kansan is prejudiced against a New Yorker and then there are the Tammany scandals.” Indeed, former Kansas Cong. Jouett Shouse, who was chairman of the Democratic National Executive Committee, was aligned with Roosevelt’s opponents. Woodring not only fought hard for Roosevelt’s nomination in June, but he carried most of the Kansas delegates in voting for Roosevelt’s choice for permanent chairman of the Democratic National Convention, Sen. Thomas Walsh of Montana, against Shouse for the job. This infuriated many Democrats. One Kansas newspaper, the Lyons News, predicted that Woodring “will not be elected again, for Kansas will not forgive him for his treatment of a man who had labored for twenty years for the success of the party.”

Most of Woodring’s conservative Democratic foes rallied behind state Rep. Donald Muir during the gubernatorial primary election. Muir campaigned vigorously against Woodring, but he was unable to stir up much interest. The governor largely contented himself with tending to state business and offering a radio program which daily indicated that Kansas was in good and frugal hands with Woodring. This conserved the governor’s resources for the general election, although it might have kept him less visible early in the 1932 campaign than he should have been. In any case, Woodring’s efforts were enough to win the nomination in August over Muir, 91,037 to 42,786.

Landon’s job was tougher, for Simpson also ran as a harmony candidate for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. It was not so much a case of the issues or even Woodring dividing them. All were for federal oil restriction, assistance to farmers and the unemployed,
industrial development, governmental economy, and lower taxes. The challenge was to convince the voters that one could achieve these promises. Simpson tried to discredit Landon by portraying him as the candidate of William Allen White, monied interests, and those of questionable party loyalty. Few took the issue of money seriously. Simpson had a point on party loyalty, however, given White and Landon's involvement with the Progressive party in 1912 and 1914 and the Emporia publisher's independent candidacy for governor in 1924, backed by Landon. Simpson's problem was that the more he stressed this in his campaign, the less he seemed to be a harmony candidate. Landon did not make this mistake by attacking Simpson's conservative supporters. During his campaign Landon was able to make good the Garden City Telegram's description of him as "a plain, everyday citizen with a lot of ability, a lot of stick-to-itiveness and a vast capacity for making and holding friends by his earnestness and
sincerity." Also attractive was his emphasis on "building up the state instead of tearing it down" at a time when many candidates were critical of everything that they did not espouse. Moreover, his energy in campaigning was impressive. In a year when candidates did an extraordinary amount of traveling, Landon outdid everyone, making as many as ten stops a day. It helped, too, that just before the primary election a daughter, Nancy Jo, was born to the Landons, and that on the way home for this happy event Landon stopped to help carry furniture out of a burning farm house. Whatever the reasons, Landon won the nomination, polling 160,345 votes to 101,019 for Simpson.

Then there was Dr. John R. Brinkley, the state's controversial, self-proclaimed rejuvenator of male potency. In 1930, after having had his

Dr. John R. Brinkley, famous for his sexual rejuvenation operation, was an independent write-in candidate for governor in 1930. Brinkley used his own radio station to advertise his "goat-gland" transplants and prescriptions and to promote his campaign. He also used other new forms of technology—including a 16-cylinder Cadillac and an airplane—to reach voters. When he ran again in 1932, however, his star was already on the wane. He finished third behind Landon and Woodring.
medical license revoked for fraudulent practice, he had run a powerful write-in campaign for governor against the political establishment which he blamed for his troubles. He had finished a strong third, probably higher had not so many of his votes been discarded as invalid, and he had contributed to Woodring's election over the Republican nominee, Frank Haucke. Stories soon swept Kansas that Brinkley would try again in 1932, this time on the ballot as an independent candidate. By 1931 the goat-gland doctor had sold his Kansas radio station and developed a powerful new station, XER, in Mexico; he only administered his Milford hospital. He was open to the idea of running again for governor, however, as many Kansans and astrologers advised him to do. Many Democratic and Republican leaders were concerned since the 1932 elections could be close; Brinkley might even win this time. By January 1932 he indicated he would run, and until the general elections in November he was very much on the minds of Kansans. Republican State Committee Chairman John D. M. Hamilton was worried by April about reports of Brinkley's rising strength and the pessimism of some GOP leaders about beating him for governor. By June Brinkley had stepped up his political efforts and issued a platform crammed full of populist-style promises. There were rumors that Brinkley's supporters, not having to nominate him by ballot, might be organized to defeat Landon and Woodring in the Republican and Democratic primary contests. There is no evidence that this was tried significantly, but it was unclear what the impact of Brinkley's candidacy would be by November. As Rolla Clymer wrote to a friend, "My reason tells me that Brinkley is a fearsome factor; my instinct leads me to believe ... that surely the star of such a charlatan must be on the wane." Clymer should have trusted his reason, as events would prove.

The Republicans began bucking each other up soon after the August primary results were in. Congressman Hope told a Republican county leader "that there are a lot of people who will abuse Hoover right up to the last minute, and then go in and vote for him." Not long afterward he advised the head of the Republican National Committee's speakers committee that Republicans must "make a most intensive campaign." Hope reported that the state and congressional scene in Kansas was in "fair shape" but "it is going to take a tremendous amount of work to carry the state for the national ticket." Rolla Clymer thought that Alf Landon's primary triumph was impressive. He wrote
the Republican gubernatorial nominee, "I think your own personality has done much toward wiping out the old bitterness. Please God, we may all forget the past—and go on to victory. . . . [I am] for you with both feet and both barrels."

Of course, John R. Brinkley's candidacy for governor complicated everything. The Hays Daily News declared after the primary elections that Landon and Woodring "may now sit back and breathe a spell while forming plans to see what can be done about the Brinkley matter in the general election. . . ." Even Senator McGill's backers worried about Brinkley. One of them wrote that the senator could lose votes because of the goat-gland doctor, and there was no way to cope with him because McGill could not afford to fight him or to join with him. The only answer was to be very careful. It is no surprise that Governor Woodring concentrated on beating Brinkley, whose forces had long been campaigning, largely through his official newspaper, Publicity, over the radio, and through popular rallies. And Brinkley had drawing power. As Clifford Stratton wrote in his column in the Topeka Capital in August:

The Milford doctor, with his airplanes, his 16-cylinder car, his loudspeakers, his minister of the gospel to open all political meetings with prayer, his crown of martyrdom and his perfect radio voice, is regarded as a formidable independent candidate for governor this year.

Not everybody was afraid of Brinkley. Will J. French, the Republican state auditor, wrote, "Some say we have Brinkley to beat, but I say we have Harry Woodring to defeat." No doubt French was right, but Brinkley seemed the spoiler to most Republicans as well as Democrats. One reason for this was the appealing nature of Brinkley's platform, which he issued in June. This document promised among other things pensions for the aged, a lake in every county, free medical care for the needy, governmental economy, reduction of automobile tag fees to three dollars, free school textbooks, and industrial development. The Milford doctor perhaps made a mistake in announcing his platform early, however, for it gave the Democrats and Republicans ample time to formulate answers to it.
Meeting in their state council on August 30, the Democrats indicated that they would carry Kansas in November by as much as one hundred thousand votes. They stressed governmental economy, standing on Governor Woodring's accomplishments in this respect in contrast to Brinkley's mere promise of economy. The Democratic platform promised cheap textbooks, industrial development, better utility and industrial regulation, reasonable lowering of automobile license fees, improved workmen's compensation, unemployment relief, and better taxation of banks. Clearly, the Democrats were picking up the populist elements in Brinkley's platform, but were couching them more reasonably as well as appealing to labor, especially, and farmers. The Democrats also endorsed state constitutional amendments to authorize an income tax and to limit local property taxes, amendments which Brinkley opposed.

The Republican State Council also met on August 30. As Woodring and his political manager, Highway Department Director Guy T. Helvering, dominated the Democratic State Council, so Landon and his campaign manager, the new Republican State Chairman Frank Carlson, dominated the sessions of its GOP counterpart. The Republicans proposed a graduated automobile tag fee starting at sixty cents; the income tax amendment; local tax limitation, by legislation instead of amendment; government economy and reorganization; cheaper textbooks; industrial development; utility and other business regulation; better workmen's compensation; and an investigation of the state Highway Department. As the Democrats intruded an irrelevant issue, low tariffs, in their state platform, so the Republicans opposed the repeal of national prohibition. The Republicans vouchsafed their concern for agriculture, especially, and labor. Plainly, the prime gubernatorial campaign issues would become credibility and responsibility.

The campaigns of Brinkley, Landon, and Woodring were hard fought. Brinkley's strategy was to promise the most and to damn the major party nominees. Landon's was to emphasize his responsibility and occasionally to attack his opponents. And Woodring's was to stand on his record and to condemn Brinkley more than Landon. At the formal opening of his campaign on September 16 in Abilene, Landon declared that the three main issues were taxes, political scandals in the Highway Department, and prohibition. He would lower the first,
investigate and remedy the second, and uphold the third. He brushed Brinkley aside as being “responsible to no organization.” Woodring answered Landon’s attack by saying that the political funds collected from state employees by the Highway Department reflected forty years of practice in Kansas; he suggested that was a better way to finance campaigns than accepting corporate contributions. The Brinkley campaign exploited the issue by running advertisements condemning the corruption of “the old parties that the people are sick and tired of.” Kansans were informed that Brinkley would not be a party to a sell-out.

The gubernatorial campaign was well under way and attracting a great deal of attention by late September. At least one observer, Clifford Stratton of the Topeka Capital, could see absurdities in the campaign. He pointed out that Brinkley was ahead of Landon in one respect: Landon was going to reduce expenditures $5 million by lowering automobile license fees, while Brinkley “is going to have free textbooks, free clinics, lakes in every county—and reduce taxes anyway.” As the campaign developed it became evident that the three candidates had distinctive approaches. The diamond-studded Brinkley would arrive in an airplane or a limousine. After entertainers had provided music and a preacher had introduced him, he would tell of the trickery of the two old parties, of his persecution for pursuing medical “truth,” of his vision of a Kansas wonderland under his administration. He then departed hastily with scarcely a farewell. Woodring would arrive, nattily dressed, in his official limousine. He would saunter down the main street, patting people on the back and exchanging words in a hearty manner. Then the governor would expound on his administration’s record of economy, the promise of his “second” term, and the weaknesses of his opponents. Often dressed in rumpled clothes, Landon would arrive in a 1928 car. He would accost friends and strangers, hear them out, tell them an appropriate campaign idea, and perhaps cadge a cigarette. At a meeting, he would talk sometimes stumblingly, but always bluntly about tax relief and efficient government. All three struck the public as being unusually well motivated, and with good reason. Brinkley might pull off the political coup of 1932 by being elected. Woodring could pull off his own coup by being the first Democratic governor to be reelected in Kansas.
Landon could be a rarity, a Republican elected to a governorship at the depth of the depression.

This suggested how the political wind was blowing in Kansas. As William Allen White reported to one of President Hoover's aides in September, "It is blowing a pretty stiff gale and it is all against the government. I cannot see how Hoover can carry anything between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains" unless farm prices rise. Democrats did not see things much differently. Senator McGill reported to Sen. Claude A. Swanson, the chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, that "prospects for Democratic victory in Kansas are more evident than at any time in my recollection." This he ascribed to the people believing that Republican policies "have brought ruin and disaster to every line of endeavor." This was confirmed by E. J. Smiley, the secretary-treasurer of the Kansas Grain Dealers Association, who wrote Congressman Hope about what he had observed in western Kansas.

I found that a goodly number of farmers and business men were not favorable to the Administration. After talking to farmers, and knowing the conditions in the S.W. part of the state, it make[s] my heart ache to know that these people were unable to procure relief, from any source. The country is in a deplorable condition and I am afraid of the outcome.

September 14 was a great day for Kansas Democrats and a depressing one for Republicans. The Democratic presidential nominee, Franklin D. Roosevelt, spoke in Topeka to a crowd of some ten thousand people and many thousands more over the radio. He called for "national planning in agriculture" and charged that President Hoover had "failed utterly" on farm relief. Roosevelt later briefly visited Colby and Goodland to point up his concern for agriculture, although the main beneficiary of these stops was Democratic congressional nominee Kathryn O'Loughlin, who introduced him. His was an effective appeal to the farmers and the women of Kansas. Even the Topeka Capital, Senator Capper's newspaper, conceded that the New York governor had made a good impression. By October most Democrats and many Republicans probably agreed with William Allen
White that the Democratic presidential nominee was forging ahead of Hoover because "Roosevelt will represent protest."

White's views did not stop most Kansas Republicans from working for Hoover, partly to help Charles Curtis (the Kansan serving as vice-president), partly out of hope and habit, and partly out of the conviction that by supporting the national ticket they would strengthen the appeal of their state and local candidates. Senator Capper told a Republican rally in Topeka in late September, "I feel sure the crisis has passed. But we are still in a precarious situation and one false step may bring on a relapse that could plunge us into chaos." It was clear to him that Americans must solve their problems "in a safe and sane way" by electing the westerner, Hoover, who had held things together. Many of the state's newspapers took a similar line. The Salina Journal, for example, saw the president in early October as the "firm hand in control," the man who offered "safety and security." The newspaper declared that "sentiment was rapidly changing" in Hoover's favor. Yet Republicans were privately far from optimistic. Landon saw Hoover being hurt badly by the continued decline in farm prices, although this did not stop the gubernatorial nominee from seeking a presidential visit to Kansas. Rolla Clymer wrote of Hoover to a friend, "I am afraid that the great national bellyache may defeat him in the nation, and then God help us for four years." At the end of October one county judge wrote, "I believe Hoover is climbing fast, but still I presume his final success is too much to be expected by one who does not believe very much in miracles. However here's hoping."

The presidential campaign went into a grand windup. Kansas Democratic candidates tied themselves securely to Roosevelt's coattails and plumped hard for his election. The flamboyant Louisiana senator, Huey Long, came into Kansas to speak for him and McGill, appealing to the populist elements in the state. The Curtis clan returned to the state, too. The vice-president's energetic sister, Dolly Gann, stumped the state for Hoover and Curtis. And Curtis, after speaking in twenty-four states, finished his campaign in Kansas. He blamed the depression on World War I, and he chided the Democrats for excelling themselves in lying. The Topeka State Journal made good use of his presence on the Republican national ticket, declaring that a vote for Roosevelt was a vote against the state's darling, Curtis. Not surprisingly, both
Democrats and Republicans claimed victory for their presidential tickets in Kansas the day before election.

Clearly, the biggest political question in Kansas in 1932 concerned the outcome of the gubernatorial election. The basic outlines of the contest seemed to have been set by September in terms of substantive issues. Moreover, there were Landon’s emphasis on organizing Republicans along harmony lines; Brinkley’s use of unusual campaign techniques; and Woodring’s standing on his record as governor. All three candidates campaigned hard, but by October Landon seemed ubiquitous, making as many campaign appearances as his two opponents put together. The Republican also had more newspaper support and advertising than either Woodring or Brinkley. As the campaign went on, there was an increasing focus on Brinkley. It was not just a question of whether the Milford doctor could throw the election to Woodring or Landon, but the possibility that he could be elected governor. A Whitewater banker feared Brinkley because he believed him to be “a man lacking all sense of honor although extremely cunning.” Another Kansan, referring to the flamboyant gubernatorial candidates to the south, declared, “What a combination. Murr[aljy, Ma Ferguson & Brinkley would make if they should all become Governors. It would set Okla, Tex & Kans back 40 years.”

These fears of Brinkley had their effect. On September 20 the Republican state publicity director, W. G. West, mailed a form letter toGOP leaders, indicating that “the Independent candidate for Governor should not be overlooked. You likely know how best to treat the Brinkley stuff in your locality.” Woodring declared all-out war on the goat-gland doctor. The governor’s initial tactic was to attack utility magnate Henry L. Doherty, who seemed to be Brinkley’s chief financial backer. On September 16, Woodring called the attention of Kansans and specifically state Attorney General Boynton to alleged violations of corporation laws by Doherty’s gas companies. Three days later a gubernatorial spokesman charged that Doherty was financing the Milford doctor; Brinkley responded by declaring that Woodring was the creature of the out-of-state Kansas City Star. Backed by Republican purses, Topeka’s pen for hire, Charles H. Trapp, spared neither imagination nor fact in attacking Brinkley in his weekly newspaper, the Pink Rag. For example, on September 23 Trapp informed his readers that Brinkley was a millionaire, paid no taxes, was a Klansman, had
been a drunkard, is slipping politically, and had twice been divorced
(although the fine print indicated that it was a case of his first wife
divorcing him and he in turn divorcing her). On top of it all, Trapp
asserted, "Doc is all bluff and bluster." Woodring continued his
campaign against Brinkley to the end, pounding home the point that
Doherty’s immense wealth and allegedly shady interests were behind
the doctor. The governor added that Brinkley was “the billboard man,”
calling attention to his large amount of outdoor advertising, and he
called the doctor’s well-staged campaign meetings “Punch and Judy
shows.” The Wichita Eagle in supporting Woodring played up the
supposed connection between Brinkley and odiferous Wall Street
interests.

There was more to Woodring’s campaign, of course, than attacks
on Brinkley. Among other things, Woodring promised to reduce
telephone rates as well as taxes. The Democratic governor often referred
to his record, especially the fact that he had slashed the state budget
by $4 million below the figure set by the Republican legislature.
Moreover, Kansas had surfaced more roads during the past year than
any other state in the nation. His administration, he declared, was one
of which Kansans could be proud. As Woodring emphasized in his
advertisements, “He Does What Others Promise to Do.” He talked
“FACTS; NOT RADIO ‘HOOEY.’”

Brinkley generally contented himself with his radio, billboard, and
medicine-show approach to the public’s heart. His campaign
appearances drew huge audiences. People came to see the show the
doctor and his supporting cast put on and to be beguiled by his
promises of a utopia in Kansas, of a state government that would oust
those who had persecuted him and denigrated his supporters. As for
Woodring’s charges that Doherty backed him, Brinkley snorted, “That’s
about as wild a jackass story as I ever heard of.” He endorsed Landon’s
charges of corruption in the Highway Department. Indeed, he turned
them against his Republican opponent by declaring that Landon, too,
had assessed state employees for political contributions when he had
been the GOP state chairman. It was all part of Brinkley’s repeated
charge that the two old parties of wealth and corruption were up to
their old tricks and would stop at nothing to prevent the voters from
electing a government for the people.
While Woodring and Brinkley concentrated on attacking each other and trumpeting their virtues, Landon stressed telling what he could do. His chief issue was governmental economy, which he indicated would be impossible with Brinkley and had left much to be desired under Woodring. Wearing often rumpled clothes and driving around in an old car, he made the point that he practiced what he preached. As he said, "If you don't need it, don't buy it; if you can't afford it, don't buy it; if you do buy it, get your money's worth." He usually left attacks on Woodring and Brinkley to others until toward the end of the campaign. Republican State Chairman Frank Carlson accused Woodring of being against prohibition and with wasting state revenues in the administration of the Highway Department; Brinkley had no practical program. Chairman Jess Greenleaf of the Public Service Commission added that the governor was bungling utility rate reductions. Landon's campaign forces emphasized that no Democrat had ever been reelected governor in Kansas; that Woodring was with the "ins" and thus was responsible for the state's problems; and that there was a rising tide of voters for Landon. Plainly, the objective was to scare independents from Woodring to Landon in order to beat Brinkley.

The last two weeks of the gubernatorial campaign became a free-for-all. The Landon campaign was spurred to greater efforts by reports that the Republican nominee's election was in doubt. Landon began paying more attention to his opponents, calling Brinkley the "great promiser" and Woodring "the greatest little claimer Kansas has had in a long time." Moreover, Landon charged that under Woodring state tax reductions had been negligible, the number of public employees had increased, and the governor had indulged in personalities in his feud with Brinkley. There were also surprise developments. The Kansas City Star endorsed Woodring; former Democratic Gov. Jonathan Davis announced for Brinkley; and former Republican Gov. Clyde Reed refused to come out for Landon. This did not stop Landon's advertisements from declaring that the election was a choice between "LANDON or BRINKLEY" because the "Republican party is the dominant party in Kansas this year—a United party…. The way to beat Brinkley is vote for Landon." William Allen White backed this up with his widely reprinted statement that "every patriotic voter who fears the domination of Brinkleyism must play safe, cast his vote in
the largest pile and vote for Landon.” White conceded that Woodring had been a “good governor,” but he asserted that “every vote for Harry Woodring exposes Kansas to the menace of John R. Brinkley as governor of Kansas.” It was an effective combination of the bandwagon and bogeyman appeals.

Brinkley hewed to his line of marvelous promises, and he usually refused to be put on the defensive. The Democrats took on Landon, however, and continued as well to attack Brinkley and Doherty. Woodring accused Landon of spreading “half-truths and distortions” on tax figures, but the Republicans pressed the issue that the governor was unfairly taking credit for county and local tax reductions. The governor’s late campaign advertisements declared that “IT’S A LANDSLIDE TO WOODRING! . . . IT’S NEITHER BRINKLEY NOR LANDON. KANSAS WILL WIN WITH WOODRING!” Word circulated that Landon was supporting Woodring in order to defeat Brinkley, that Brinkley would be counted out by election judges, and that anti-Woodring Democrats were backing Brinkley, as supporters of each of the three candidates tried to create psychological backfires that would benefit them at the ballot box. The press, radio, and billboards were cluttered with appeals for or against Brinkley, Landon, or Woodring as everyone involved seemed to get increasingly desperate during the week before election. As A. L. “Dutch” Schultz observed in his newspaper column,

Everyone has in the back of his mind the feeling that someone is about to do the Cause some Great Dirt. So the various party bombing squads are out for reprisals and no one knows whose shanty is going to be dynamited before sundown.

Coming down to the finish line, predictions of the election results varied. A Democratic State Committee official told the chairman of Senator McGill’s campaign that “things generally look very good and I feel confident of victory for the Democratic ticket from the top to the bottom.” Republican State Committee Chairman Frank Carlson predicted a 6,500-vote plurality for Landon and victory for the Hoover-Curtis ticket. Clifford Stratton of the Topeka Capital wrote that Brinkley, Landon, and Woodring were so close together that each had a chance for victory. The gubernatorial candidates apparently agreed with
Stratton, for their campaigns continued unabated right down to election day.

The November election results showed conflicting patterns, indicating that ticket splitting was widespread. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s appeal was transcendent as the Democratic presidential ticket defeated Hoover and Curtis by 424,204 to 349,498 votes. The gubernatorial campaign was as close as Stratton predicted. In a record turnout of Kansas voters, Landon won with 278,581 votes to 272,944 for Woodring and 244,607 for Brinkley.

How did leaders of sentiment view the election results? The Wichita Eagle declared that Herbert Hoover “was in 1928 the chief recipient of a rich materialistic harvest; so in 1932 he became the victim of its inevitable counter-balancing dearth.” The Salina Journal contented itself with saying “the voters wanted a change.” It did, however, have the grace to congratulate Kathryn O'Loughlin on her election, which it thought fairly won. The Topeka State Journal opined that there were many causes for the Democratic victories, chief among them “the resentment against hard times.” William Allen White wrote Henry J. Allen, “Aren’t you glad you were not carrying the banner. . . . the state was dead set and sour on the national Republican party. . . . Alf won because state issues were distinct and the fear of Brinkley was in the hearts of Republicans.” White thought it possible that the party would not recover in his lifetime, in which prediction he was correct. Rolla Clymer asserted that “the Republican party in Kansas should take its licking much in the same fashion that an ailing man takes castor oil. We have been riding for a fall as a party, not only in Kansas but in the nation.” As for the country’s problems, the El Dorado publisher believed that miracles were needed, but he doubted that they would be found. Senator Capper announced to a radio audience that “With all of us it should be country above party. And I trust that Republicans and Democrats alike, in congress . . . , will lay aside their partisanship and all work together for the common good. . . . I am not so much concerned about who gets credit; what I want is results.” Congressman Hope agreed, writing to a supporter that Roosevelt was entitled to everybody’s help, that there must be a cooperative spirit in this crisis. Yet this did not mean that many Kansas Republicans had given up hope for their party’s future, however glum things looked.
Hope told another backer that “we ought to start right in and re-build from the ground up.”

In a sense, this process had already begun in Kansas. Landon’s harmony campaign had brought the state’s Republican leaders together as perhaps never before, and the threat of Brinkleyism had gotten them to work with unusual zeal. They would not forget the need for unity and hard work during Landon’s governorship. Moreover, the death of National Republican Committeeman David Mulvane the day after the election symbolized the passing of the old guard and led to Landon’s selection of John Hamilton to replace him. Hamilton was quite as conservative as Mulvane, but he was young, energetic, and better aware of the need for party harmony. He had worked hard for his erstwhile foe, Landon, and he asked the governor-elect to repay him by not acting factionally in his management of the state and the party. “Let your policies and your patronage be directed with a broader vision.” On this basis, the party could reelect Landon “and even send you further.” Landon had laid a good foundation for following Hamilton’s advice. As a Topeka publisher’s representative wrote in November, he had opposed Landon in the 1932 primary election because he believed him to be a factional candidate. “How stupid I was. . . . I didn’t recognize his initiative, his independence, his courage or his party loyalty. . . . Through him and his efforts we now have a party of solidarity so far as Kansas matters. . . .”

Landon would build on the accomplishment of 1932. He distributed his patronage broadly. He was evenhanded in dealing with factions in the legislature and in state, county, and local governments; he even got along reasonably well with many Democrats. He had shifted from being a progressive Republican to being a moderate, and the change paid off for him and his party. It would lead Landon to reelection in 1934 and to the Republican presidential nomination in 1936. Although the Republicans would lose control of the governorship in the Democratic tidal wave of 1936, the bases were there for them to reclaim the office in 1938 and to retain it until 1956, when it became subject to two-party contests. Only rarely after 1936 would the Republicans lose control of other state offices, the legislature, or seats in the national House of Representatives, and never a U. S. senatorship. Of course, there were other people like Clifford Hope who contributed to this and who rebuilt in their own constituencies, and like Arthur Capper
and Frank Carlson, who moderated between the extreme wings of their party.

What of the Democrats? Woodring used his high standing with Roosevelt to become assistant secretary of war and later secretary of war. Neither he nor Walter Huxman, who was elected governor in 1936, was able, however, to develop his party so that it could replace the Republicans as the major party in Kansas. None of the Democratic congressmen elected from Kansas during the 1930s survived beyond 1942. Later neither the times nor the leadership emerged that could bring about a repetition of the level of Democratic success of the 1930s. When Democrats did succeed it was usually when they convinced the voters that they could run Republicanism right, as Gov. George Docking did during the late 1950s. Of course, there was a great deal more involved in terms of issues, personalities, and campaign resources. But one factor that should not be overlooked was the great lesson of 1932; a candidate could do better the broader one's appeal to party elements and the public and the closer in touch one was with currents of opinion among constituents.

Yet there was another lesson. The Republicans had been preponderant in Kansas politics from the beginning of statehood. This was a traditional edge that paid off for them even in the 1930s when the Democrats could, despite depression and Brinkleyism, do no better than temporarily achieve equal footing. When or whether the Democrats will tip the balance in their favor depends on so many things—not least of all the ability of their own and Republican leadership—that only a fool or a charlatan would make a prediction. Let the historian stick to the past and be content to say that 1932 was an exciting year for politics, a depressing year for economics, and finally a year that was an overture to our times, even though the politicians and the people knew not what lay ahead of them. The changes would be painful for some, though less dire than many anticipated. Whatever happened, the politics of 1932 confirmed much about the traditional relationships between Republicans and Democrats in Kansas.
Even the most confident, loyal Wichita residents must have been surprised at the enormous rush with which local prosperity returned as military dictatorship swept Europe. The Stearman biplane was ideally suited as a primary trainer when the time came that older model warplanes were taken up in the mobilization and could not be used for this purpose. The first military contracts came to the plant in June 1934, and delivery of the Stearman trainers, called PT-13s by the army and better known as Kaydets, began two years later. Before the end of the war more than 10,000 of these would be constructed in Wichita. Rumor had it that Cessna and Beech would also soon be in for large military contracts. Wichita aircraft factories were working at only one-quarter capacity in 1939. Cessna was trying to tap the low end of a weak market with the 145 h.p. "Airmaster." Beech tapped the high end with the twin-engined Model 18. This small production could not last when one aircraft plant in England employed in warplane production nearly as many people as worked in aircraft plants in the entire U.S. In 1937, the Eagle printed a photographic supplement showing the airplanes produced locally, with the headline "War Clouds Rain Dollars Into Wichita." Had it been known just how many dollars were on the way, isolationist sentiment in town might have all but disappeared.

Besides Wichita's existing aircraft production capacity, there were security reasons for making it into a major defense production center. Its location toward the middle of the country made it less vulnerable to attack by Germans or Japanese than manufacturing cities on the coast, and the population of the region was perceived by Washington

to represent perfectly the loyal heartland, an image city leaders lobbying in Congress did nothing to contradict. Also Wichita, with its alien population in the early 1940s consisting of 317 Germans, 272 Mexicans, 173 Canadians, 170 Russians and 123 Syrians, had one of the lowest alien population percentages of the nation's large cities. In the 1940 census, Wichita had 114,966 people and only 910 aliens. Topeka, a little over 100 miles northeast, had 7,013 aliens in a population of 67,833. So important was this to Wichita's status as a defense center that the city commission regularly rejected throughout the war appeals from church groups to allow relocation in Wichita of Japanese Americans being forced into detention camps in California. In replying to the Peace and Service Committee of the Society of Friends in 1943, city manager Russell McClure stated strongly his objection to locating any Japanese in a war production zone. Besides, he added, "on the basis of a few previous experiences we have had,

By the end of World War II, more than 10,000 Stearman trainers had been constructed in Wichita. The city's aircraft production capacity and location in the middle of the country made Wichita an ideal site for military contracts.
we know that our regular citizens here will not accept these Japanese and trouble would result." Wichita was from the beginning of the conflict "war-minded."

When a group of Wichita Indians from Anadarko, Oklahoma arrived in 1940 at the city where seventy years before their ancestors had pitched tents, they were surely flabbergasted. The U.S. army appropriation bill for fiscal 1941, passed in June 1940, was an unprecedented $1,822,522,959, and provided for the construction of 2,566 new military airplanes, 2,200 of which were to be trainers of the type Wichita plants could build. And that was only the beginning of the expansion. The production figures began to be classified, but it was clear that contracts in huge dollar amounts came to Wichita aircraft companies that year. William Knudsen, chairman of the National Defense Commission, estimated that within a year American aircraft factories would be producing 2,000 warplanes a month. By fall Stearman already had 1,200 employees and was working three shifts, twenty-four hours a day. Beech had 1,260 at work, was building 70,000 square feet of additional space, and estimated employment of 4,000 to 5,000 by spring. Payrolls at the three major plants were $400,000 a month. Suddenly, for Wichita, the Depression was over.

Such runaway, crisis expansion required that local and national government and the entire population support the war industries in every way possible. As was true of defense plants across the country, Wichita companies received large loans from the federal government to expand their plants, with the option of keeping these plants after five years at favorable rates or, if postwar production did not justify this, transferring title back to the government. Military funds were also useful for research and development that could later be applied to private advantage in commercial production. Boeing especially was able to insure its dominance in commercial aviation after the war with modifications of its military designs, first the B-29, and, when the era of jets and the Korean war contracts arrived simultaneously, with the transformation of B-47 and B-52 technology to the 707 airlines. In December 1940 Beech received a loan of $13.5 million from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (R.F.C.) for plant expansion, and to provide working capital. The vocational education division at East High School, where tool makers were being turned out as quickly as possible, was greatly expanded. Lines of people crowded to the air
plant employment offices with their birth certificates for a security check, while armed guards patrolled the corridors. Auto license sales in Wichita set an all-time record in 1940, and city business increased so much the clerk authorized the Fourth National Bank to use an automatic check writing machine in meeting the payroll.

The statistics for the war years at Boeing-Wichita, as Stearman was officially renamed in 1941, were staggering. Plant II itself, originally estimated to cost $17.5 million, eventually absorbed nearly $27 million of the taxpayers' money. Tools and fixtures inside were worth $20 million. By the end of the war Boeing-Wichita had 3,000,000 square feet of production and storage space (i.e. about sixty-five acres of it), and the largest steel trusses ever fabricated (300 ft. long, 128 tons each) spanning the final assembly bays. The company’s electric bill in 1944 ran over $35,000 a month; it used 36,000,000 gallons of water a month and 65,576,000 cubic feet of gas despite burning supplementary oil at a rate of 20,000 gallons per day. The Plant II cafeteria was the biggest restaurant in Kansas. As early as 1941 it was equipped to serve 15,000 hot meals a day to workers at their places on the line, using twenty portable units, and at a price averaging twenty-eight cents a meal. In 1941, it used every day 5,000 pounds of meat, 3,500 pounds of potatoes, 100 gallons of navy beans, 200 gallons of soup, 7,500 salads, 1,875 loaves of bread and 1,250 homemade pies. Peak employment in December 1943 at Boeing-Wichita was 29,795, half of these women. Plant II produced over 1,000 (the highest estimate is 1,400) B-29s. Plant I manufactured 10,346 Kaydet trainers as well as some gliders for the D-Day invasion. Wages, which began in 1941 at sixty cents an hour, were regularly increased, and were spent with Wichita merchants. The company had a golf course, a baseball league, bowling alleys, a private lake, shopping centers and a housing development. Truly it was a city within a city, and by itself ranked as one of the major population centers of the region. During the war’s last days bumper stickers were seen on cars in town showing B-29s dropping bombs and with the legend: “From Wichita to Japan. Excuse please.”

Of course Boeing was only one aircraft plant and aircraft was only one of Wichita’s industries. Wichita’s population, which stood at 114,966 in 1940, grew to an estimated 135,000 in 1941. A ration census in March 1943 placed it at 189,910. Over 225,000 people by that time resided in the metropolitan area. Cessna helped with the glider contracts and built
subassemblies for Boeing bombers, many trainers, and even a cargo plane. Cessna during the war years produced over 5,000 twin-engine trainers for the U.S. and Canada. At its peak the plant made ten twins a day. Beech constructed both the AT-10 and the AT-11, plywood and metal versions respectively of its pre-war Model 18. It also made wing assemblies for the A-26 attack bomber, assembled in Tulsa. At Beech, workers, who had agreed to no strikes for the duration of the conflict, worked under a "Beechcraft Busy Bee" symbol created for the company by Disney studios. Like Cessna, Beech had several subassembly contracts and now and then did a secret special design for some particular military purpose. Several smaller local aircraft plants, like Culver and Rawdon, thrived also in the war environment. The Coleman Company had over $1 million in defense contracts in 1941, and through the war provided ammunition chests, shell casings, fuses, and, most

Women, as well as men, worked around the clock in Wichita's aircraft plants to meet wartime contracts. In December 1943, the peak of wartime employment, half of the 29,795 employees at Boeing-Wichita were women.
memorably to many servicemen, the famous Coleman portable stoves. The tiny one-man gasoline stove, which Coleman officials modestly called “God’s gift for the G.I.s,” was used all over Europe. When Ernie Pyle wrote an admiring column about it, he received from Wichita a special version of the product with chrome plating and his name engraved. In 1945 Dwight Eisenhower received a similar decorated Coleman stove, the one millionth produced. So familiar were these Wichita products that once during the Battle of the Bulge, the password was “Coleman,” and the countersign was “lamp.” No German could come up with that combination, but presumably every American could.

In December 1944 Wichita aircraft plants had produced 22,334 planes for the war effort and employed with their direct subcontractors 52,000 people in the Wichita area. They were working at that time on contracts totaling $2,160,000,000, and Wichita had the highest amount of per capita airplane contracts in the country with $10,800 per person. It was production decentralization at its most extreme.

The social and political impact on Wichita of a population increase of over fifty percent in three years, eight times the increase for the total decade of the 1930s, was tremendous, added as it was to the excitement created everywhere by a world war. Bus service, languishing through the 1930s, now faced enormous loads on new routes to the southeast part of the city that had hardly been developed a few years earlier. Traffic in general became such a problem that in 1941 Wichita created a twenty-one member city traffic commission and hired Dr. Maxwell Halsey to try to survey flow through the town’s 383 miles of streets and 2,500 intersections. The next year Wichita employed J. L. Jacobs & Co., Chicago consultants in municipal administration and finance, to make recommendations for streamlining the city administrative organization so as to better deal with the crunch.

No longer in typical midwest fashion did Wichita roll up its sidewalks at ten p.m. Late in 1943 Boeing began working two ten hours shifts rather than the three seven-and-one-half hour shifts people were accustomed to. One of these began at 5:15 a.m. City buses for the plants left the garage at 2 a.m., evening movies and wrestling matches were scheduled to start an hour earlier, and day care centers received tiny tots from their working mothers in the darkness at 4:30 in the morning. Grocery stores and restaurants stayed open all night, though they often had to curtail their service because employees quit to work in the plants.
and rationing limited supplies. People kept careful track of the selective service rules that determined what age men would likely be able to stay at home, while at the Boeing plant men and women workers were often separated for fear that the proximity of women might "cause a disturbance." A New York Herald reporter, sent to survey the scene, described it well. He wrote in May 1942:

A few months ago, Wichita, a rambling overgrown country town of 120,000, nearly seventy-two years old, was placid and unspoiled. It had been measuring good years by bumper wheat crops and gushers, and bad ones by dust storms, Hessian fly and dry wells. . . . Over night it has been metamorphosed into one of the leading war-production centers of the country. . . . There are too many people in stores, on buses, at the bank, gas, water and electricity pay windows. It takes forever to get nothing done. There are too many traffic tangles and accidents, too few lodgings for airplane workers, too few seats in school rooms. There is increase in crime, and streets are now trash-laden. It is a heartache to try to telephone. . . . Meanwhile planes zoom constantly above in flocks. Motor drone is an all-day and most of the night noise. No one pays any attention any more.

Fulton Lewis, Jr. in a broadcast on the MBS radio network from Wichita in 1941 called it "America's newest and most virile industrial city, one of the greatest cultural centers of the Middlewest." Perhaps his estimate of the culture was overstated, but virile and industrial Wichita certainly was.

Wars do end, and this one did. With V-J day there were no more crowds of 20,000 to greet a battle scarred Wichita-built B-29 on a visit for repairs, or to cheer local heroes returned from afar. The population of Wichita did not drop as rapidly as expected, many stating they liked the town and would stay until they ran out of money. Still, in September 1945 about 1,500 units in the war housing projects were vacant. About 20,000 people had lost their jobs in Wichita; 10,000 in a single week in August. There was no shortage of optimistic estimates of Wichita's future. The city's debt had been reduced forty percent during the war, leaving it in better financial condition than in some time. One analyst said that it would be one of several "new air centers" that would specialize in world trade and replace the ocean port metropolis of old. There was hope, as there had been after World War
I that the number of pilots trained in the conflict would cause a huge increase in recreational and business aviation. But businessmen were cautious. Cessna and Beech narrowly missed merging in 1944 to meet the expected postwar crisis together. Beech began seriously looking into using its plant capacity for something other than the manufacture of airplanes. Many of the housewives and older people who had been part of the wartime work force did not seek jobs after the war, but still the local employment outlook was not cheery.

Earl Schaefer at Boeing expressed the universal feeling that he did not want the war prolonged merely to build more B-29s, but as he walked through empty Plant II in September 1945 with a reporter, there was something sad about it. The bell, hauled in from a church to ring out the completion of each B-29, was silent and the cavernous factory structure seemed suddenly so much dead weight. Sixteen “Superforts” in various stages of completion were shoved up near a door, their immediate purpose gone. Some said that with atomic weapons and missiles they would be the last of their big bomber kind. “What of these superforts?” the reporter asked. What of Wichita?

There was an awkward time, but what is remarkable, considering the speed and size of the emergency buildup, was how brief and comfortable the adjustment was. Population of the city proper, not including the war housing districts, dipped from 184,115 in 1943, to a minimum of 153,411 in 1946. By 1947 it was on the rise again, and the city’s population stood at 192,155 in 1950 and was expanding as factories hummed again to produce airplanes for a new crisis in Korea. Years before there was a hot war in Korea, however, there was a Cold War with the imagined Soviet monolith, and at the same time a massive changeover in weapons systems dictated by advances in technology, particularly atomic energy and the jet airplane. So logical was it to utilize Wichita for these new federal purposes, and so massive was federal World War II investment here and therefore momentum toward such a policy, that the city hardly had time to notice the transition from one war to the next. Nor was there time to miss the massive federal involvement that had been with it since Franklin Roosevelt started attacking the Depression in the cities in 1933. Wichita was “over the top,” so to speak, in federal installations: henceforth it could only be among the rich which, partly because they were rich, got richer. Manufacturing employment in Wichita increased 487% between 1940
and 1955; retail sales were up 787%; bank clearings rose 745%. In each case approximately half the increase came between 1950 and 1955. Many of city’s plans for “peacetime conversions” remained on the shelf for many years. And never again would it operate even close to the entirely “private city” it had once imagined itself as being.

The construction of McConnell almost guaranteed that it would continue to be used long after its original purpose was fulfilled, and the use would insure that Wichita would continue to be “one of the greatest centers of military activity in the North American continent.” In 1958 McConnell became a Strategic Air Command (S.A.C.) base and was expanded. In 1963, when the last B-47 left, after the base had trained 8,000 men to fly them, it was taken over by the Tactical Air Command. The T.A.C. continued the construction of eighteen Titan II missile silos around Wichita, which it was the base’s duty to man and maintain, and began training first with the F-100 Super Sabre fighter and then with the F-105 Thunderchief. In 1971, the base’s mission changed to include groups training in refueling with the KC-135 tanker, and in 1972 S.A.C. took over again. In 1979 training began at McConnell with the F-4 Phantom, and it was estimated by then that McConnell personnel contributed $59 million a year to Wichita’s economy, or over $240 for every man, woman, and child living in the city. No real wonder the public relations were good. Brig. General Kenneth Sanborn, the commander of the base in 1960, said at that time he had never seen a better relationship between a military base and a city:

Wichita is air-minded. It is, after all, the “Air Capital of the World.” The people are interested in planes. Many of them earn their living by making planes. They understand the base, and they are proud of it. Wichita and McConnell were just made for each other.

At least it must have seemed that way in retrospect.

Wichita’s other aircraft plants boomed also, so much so that Wichita began to be called the “Detroit of the Small Plane Age.” Beech and Cessna accounted for seventy percent of the light plane sales in the U.S. in 1958, and continued at the same time their World War II tradition of direct military contracting and subcontracting to Boeing and others. Beech began selling a French business jet in 1955. Cessna followed suit with first a successful jet trainer, known as the T-37 and
introduced in 1953, and then a business jet modeled on it. Cessna made parts for the Lockheed F-94, and later in the 1950s for the F-84F "Thunderjet," and the F-105. This allowed the company to experiment with products like its small helicopter that were great marketing risks. Beech made a piston trainer called the T-34 and a target called the XKDB-1 for its military bread and butter, and also introduced the highly successful "Bonanza" V-tailed line of business planes. Beech had a tradition of getting attention through stunts. It was no stunt that Olive Ann Beech, taking over the company after her husband's death in 1950, drew attention as the only female aircraft chief executive in the country. But it was a stunt, and a good one, when in 1949 Bill Odom flew non-stop from Honolulu to New York in a famous plane called the "Waikiki Beech." He toured the country afterward, his route often paralleling that of Dr. Leslie Thompson of Cessna's "air age education department," to speak about how strong small planes were. "When they say 'Where is the postwar airplane?'," Odom wrote, "I'll point to the 'Waikiki Beech' and say 'There it is.'"

One can exaggerate easily the negative effect of the Depression on Wichita. Population did not decrease during the decade. There can be no question of the positive effect of federal funding, justified by that economic crisis, on Wichita's preparation for the future 1940s boom, which was also based on crisis of a different sort, and on federal funding.

Wichita's experience with the federal government in the 1930s was not significantly different from other urban areas: in fact Kansas' support of Alf Landon and other Republicans may have slowed the flow comparatively. The story in the 1940s and 1950s, however, was quite different. Wichita's sudden jump from 100,000 to 200,000 population came largely as the result of military contracting, and the continued health of the city at that level of population depended greatly on repeated transfusions of federal money.

Wichita in the 1950s was a true metropolitan area. It got one-way streets (First and Second) to move traffic in and out of downtown and bank by mail, for those who didn't want to try the drive anyway, in 1950. But whether it was streets for the new population to drive on, highways and bypasses to feed them around the city, or water for them to drink, the federal government was there with money to support the big town it had partly created in the center of the country for its
own purposes. It was the fruits of victory. An editorial in the *Eagle* in 1950 notes that the new highway system "cost like fury" and that some doubted if Wichita or Kansas or the United States could afford it. The local response to that question was a slightly modified version of the confident boosterism that had always been typical of the town. "If America can't afford them" the writer said, "then it can't afford its present standard of living. And America would surrender its standard of living only after blood, tears and agony." The same went for Wichita, Kansas.

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**Suggested Readings**


Continuing Education/KANU. *Making Do and Doing Without: Kansas in the Great Depression.* Lawrence, KS: The University of Kansas Division of Continuing Education, 1983.


Chapter 7.
Modern Kansas in Transition, 1950s–1970s

The transition during the decades 1950s–1970s took many forms: rural areas lost population as Kansas became more urbanized and industrialized; the issue of reapportionment dominated the legislature; the uniform school district system was established; interstate highways 70 and 35 opened; and farming was transformed into a highly commercialized "agribusiness."

This was also a period in Kansas, as in the nation, of transition in race relations. The Supreme Court decision of the century, Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education (1954), ended legally sanctioned racial segregation in public schools. Paul Wilson, University of Kansas School of Law professor emeritus, served as assistant attorney general of Kansas in the 1950s and represented the state in support of the Topeka Board of Education. He provides the answer to "why Kansas?" and offers a firsthand report of his involvement in this case. Professor Wilson explains that he is often introduced as the lawyer who was on the wrong side of Brown v. Board of Education. His eloquent response provides a personal perspective on this important aspect of Kansas history.

Thomas D. Isern, chairman of the history department at Emporia State University, investigates the cultural heritage of Flint Hills farmers and ranchers. He describes the accommodation they made to
geography, the impact of technology, and the influence of external forces that document an integration of ranching (cattle) and farming (crops).

William M. Tuttle, Jr., history professor at the University of Kansas, and his daughter, Catharine Tuttle, a recent graduate of the University of Kansas, explore the implications of David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950). Riesman wrote that parents were losing authority over their children and were challenged by peer group and mass media pressure. The students of the 1950s were called "the Silent Generation"; they were characterized as conformist and conservative, shallow and apathetic. The Tuttles assess these generalizations by examining essays written by KU students in the summer of 1956 about their hometowns. The students' essays and the Tuttles' analysis provide insight into this age of transition.

Finally, Kenneth S. Davis, a prize-winning freelance writer, native of Salina, and graduate of Kansas State University, analyzes the most widely known Kansan of this period, Dwight D. Eisenhower, in this excerpt from his book *Kansas: A History* (1976). According to Davis, many of the qualities that enabled Eisenhower to be an effective Supreme Allied Commander are distinctively Kansas traits, and Eisenhower was acutely aware of this. Eisenhower's success in World War II, election as president, and worldwide fame led to a resurgence in state pride.
Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka: A Personal Perspective

Paul Wilson

Brown v. Board of Education is the case that ended legally sanctioned racial segregation in the public schools of this country. Brown was not one case, but five. Along with Kansas in defending state statutes that produced racial segregation in public schools were Virginia, South Carolina, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia case involved an issue somewhat different from those in the state litigation, but each of the cases raised the ultimate issue of whether the Constitution permitted racial segregation in the public schools.

The state cases were disposed of in a single opinion which is captioned Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. We call the case Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, but obviously the South Carolina and Virginia cases affected more people and were more spiritedly contested. It's just a matter of chance. The Kansas case happened to be appealed first; it occupied the highest position on the docket of the Supreme Court. Therefore, it provided the name by which the consolidated opinions in the four state cases have from that time been known.

There were some other matters of chance, matters of fortuity, in this case that have interesting if not significant implications. For instance, Linda Brown is a folk heroine of the civil rights movement. There is talk of building a statue of her on the campus of Washburn University. Actually, Linda Brown was only one of many plaintiffs in these cases. There were 20 plaintiffs in the Kansas case and there were

multiple plaintiffs in each of the others. But whoever heard of Victoria Lawton, or James Emmanuel, or Nancy Jane Todd? But we’ve all heard of Linda Brown for the purely fortuitous reason that her name appeared first in the list of plaintiffs in the first case to be docketed in the Supreme Court. We may have thought that her name appeared first because Brown appears earliest in the alphabet, but the attorney who prepared the complaint in the Topeka case told me that they put the names on the pleading at random, and the way the ball bounced put Linda at the head of the list.

There was another fortuitous circumstance: my own role in the case. Certainly I had not planned on it, nor was I prepared for it. There was nothing in my professional experience that indicated that I was an appropriate person to even participate in a case of this magnitude. I just happened to be the person that was beckoned.

Why Kansas? After all, Kansas is the bastion of freedom. In proportion to its population, Kansas sent more men to the Union Army than any other state. Kansas is the place where John Brown got his start. How in the world did Kansas happen to be aligned with Virginia, South Carolina, and Delaware in defending this vestige of black slavery? In order to answer that question, let us look briefly at history.

School Segregation in Kansas

In territorial days no provision was made for the schooling of black students. This may not have been very significant, because there were very few blacks in the territory. When Kansas became a state, the laws generally provided that local districts could determine their own policies and might or might not establish racially segregated schools. In 1876, the Kansas school laws were codified and the new school code contained no express authorization for the maintenance of separate schools, creating the inference that Kansas had abandoned the policy of segregation.

In 1878 and 1879, a phenomenon occurred that history sometimes calls the “Black Exodus.” Due to black apprehension at the ending of Reconstruction and due to the effective promotion of counterparts of our present day real estate developers and travel agents, many black people migrated from the South to Kansas, Nebraska, and other states
in the area. It is estimated that in 1878 and 1879 30,000 (there is no accurate census) blacks moved from Mississippi and Tennessee and elsewhere in the South to Kansas. Thirty thousand may not seem like a very large number, but Kansas was not as heavily populated then as now, and the migration did produce an impact. These people were poor; many came up the Mississippi and Missouri rivers in boats, getting off in Kansas City, Leavenworth, and Atchison, and working their way into Topeka and beyond. At least a third became objects of public charity, and this aroused the resentment of the people in the towns. This resentment may have led to the passage in 1879 of a law permitting, but not requiring, cities of the first class (over 15,000 people) to maintain separate schools on the elementary level only. You may think the impact of that legislation was fairly limited, but for the black people it was not limited, because most lived in cities of the first class.
and most black students who went to school did not go beyond the elementary grades. Therefore, this limited legislation permitted the racial segregation of most of the blacks who went to school in that day. That 1879 law remained the law of Kansas until 1954, when it was struck down in Brown v. Board of Education. There was only one amendment before 1954, which permitted Kansas City, Kansas, to maintain a black high school also.

Segregation in the public schools was assumed at that time to be a valid policy. It was justified on the basis of Plessy v. Ferguson, decided in 1896, in which the Supreme Court said that so long as public facilities were equal in their objective characteristics, there was no denial of equal protection of the law because of mere separation. Plessy v. Ferguson involved public transportation, not public education. Nonetheless, on the basis of the opinion, the courts justified separate but equal segregation policies in many different areas. Around the fourth and the fifth decades of this century, blacks became increasingly impatient with the results of separation in public education because, in most parts of the country, the facilities for the blacks were not equal to those provided for others. They were separated, and then neglected. Under the leadership of the NAACP in the 1930s and 1940s, black plaintiffs successfully carried a great deal of litigation to the Supreme Court attacking racial separation in public education. You remember some of these cases: Missouri ex. rel. Gaines v. Canada; Sipuel v. Oklahoma; Sweatt v. Painter; McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents. All of these cases, though, involved higher education, and each involved something more than mere separation, usually inequality or actual discrimination. Therefore, none of the cases brought into issue the constitutional validity of the separate but equal doctrine in public education. By about 1950, the NAACP was ready to test the validity of separate but equal on elementary and secondary levels. They filed several lawsuits, one in Topeka.

In 1950, there were twelve cities in Kansas that were authorized to maintain separate schools, and of course, Topeka was one of those cities. There were then twenty-two elementary schools in Topeka; eighteen were white and four were black. Both sides conceded, and the federal court found, that they were of equal quality, according to objective criteria: they had equally good buildings, equally good equipment, equally qualified teachers. The only difference in the
treatment of the black and the white students was that the blacks were bussed. The four black schools were scattered throughout the city, and consequently the Board of Education provided the black students with bus facilities that were not provided to the whites who attended school closer to home. Of course, this was quite a different bussing than we now experience in litigation, because bussing was then employed to implement a policy of segregation, not integration.

Topeka was selected as one of the target areas for the attack upon separate but equal because it was one of the few districts in the country where there were separate schools which were in fact equal. Therefore, it was one of the few places where the doctrine of separate but equal could be challenged without some extraneous considerations of inequality.

Early in 1951 a group of plaintiffs in Topeka, with the assistance of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, filed a case in the federal district court seeking to enjoin the maintenance of separate schools in Topeka on the grounds that the statute was unconstitutional. In a case like this, a three-judge federal court is convened. And when a suit seeks to enjoin enforcement of a state statute on the claim of unconstitutionality, notice must be given to the governor. Notice was given to the governor, and he was given the opportunity to answer the suit and defend the statute. The governor and the attorney general had a conference. They decided the attorney general would file an answer, and he did file an answer, but in that answer he simply denied that the statute was unconstitutional. The trial was in the summer of 1951, and the Attorney General's Office did not participate in the trial, except to enter an appearance. Eventually, after the trial was ended, the case was decided by the three-judge court in favor of the Board of Education and against the plaintiffs. But the three-judge district court made one interesting finding, which later assumed significance in the opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States.

The district court found that the "segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. Further, the impact is greater when it has the sanction of law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. This sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to retard the education and mental
development of the Negro children, and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system." In spite of that finding, the district court felt that it was obligated to find for the Board of Education based on *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and because by objective standards the schools were equal. The Supreme Court of the United States relied on this same finding to find a denial of equal protection under the law. You may be wondering when and how I get into this case. From here on, it is kind of a personal memoir.

In late 1951, I went to work in the Attorney General's Office. I was not particularly young. Professionally, I was kind of a slow starter. I had been out of law school for twelve years. I had been in the military service four years, and I'd practiced down in Osage County, south of Topeka. I'd been a county attorney. I'd been an attorney for a state department. And in 1951, I went to work in the Attorney General's Office. One of the reasons I went there was that I had no appellate experience, and I wanted to get some experience on that level. Shortly after I got into the office, the attorney general had a conversation with me.

I neglected to mention that the plaintiffs who lost in the district court appealed to the Supreme Court. In the case of a three-judge district court, you don't go through the court of appeals but appeal directly to the Supreme Court. Anyway, the attorney general said that we had this case, and he wanted to go and argue it, but he wanted me to work on the brief. He also wanted me to go to Washington when he argued it, and he would get me admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States. And of course I was overjoyed. There are lots of lawyers who practice a lifetime and are never admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States, and here I was on the threshold of that achievement. So, I began to get familiar with the case; I began also to get familiar with the rules of the Supreme Court. I got my papers for admission on file, so I would be ready to be admitted when I arrived there. Then, to my dismay, I discovered I didn't have anything to wear.

The traditional dress before the Supreme Court is a black morning coat and gray striped trousers. But I was so recently out of Osage County, Kansas, that I suppose it is understandable that my wardrobe did not include garb of that kind. As an alternative, the rules permitted appearance in a dark business suit, but I didn't have that either. I had
a tan gabardine, I had a black and white, known as a pepper-and-salt tweed, I had some sport jackets and some miscellaneous pants, but nothing that would fit the rule. So, I decided I'd better get a dark suit. I went down to the Palace Clothing Company that used to be in Topeka, as some of you may remember; it was kind of a poor man's Jack Henry. I looked around and I found a double-breasted, dark blue suit, that then fit me like a glove, and I decided, that's what I am going to wear to the Supreme Court. So I had them lay it away for me. It cost $40, and I didn't have $40 available then. And besides, I wanted it to be new when I wore it to Washington, so I paid $5 and had them lay it away.

Then some things happened that I had not anticipated. Segregation had been a controversial matter in Topeka, and there was a vocal minority of the school board that wanted to eliminate segregated schools as a matter of local policy. In the election in the spring of 1952, the anti-segregation minority became the majority and took control of the Board. Shortly after the Board was reorganized, it announced its intention not to resist the appeal in Brown v. Board of Education. The attorney general was dismayed when he learned of this. He had many friends in the black community and he had always enjoyed their support and prized their friendship. So, he announced that this was the Board of Education's case, and if they were not going to resist it, then the attorney general was not going to take care of their dirty linen for them by making an appearance and assuming responsibility for defense of the trial court's decision. He told me to put the file aside.

So, I stopped work on Brown, but it caused me a lot of misgiving. It seemed to me that as a matter of professional responsibility, when you have a case in the Supreme Court of the United States, you ought to do something about it: you ought not to let it go down the drain, summarily. And besides, I had my blue suit laid away, and it didn't look like I'd have anywhere to wear it.

There was a lot of concern expressed by the southern lawyers, because these cases were assigned for argument one after the other: the first Kansas, then South Carolina, then Virginia, then the District of Columbia, and then Delaware. Virginia and South Carolina thought that if Kansas failed to appear and let the matter go by default, it would not do much for the atmosphere in which their cases were to
be heard and decided. They exerted all kinds of pressures on people in Kansas to get the attorney general involved, but he was determined that he would not.

The case was set for argument on December the 8th, 1952. On November 24 of 1952, The Supreme Court made an interesting order. It is found in the U.S. Reports, at 344 U.S. 141. It concludes:

Because of the national importance of the issue presented, and because of its importance to the state of Kansas, we request that the state present its views at oral argument. If the state does not desire to appear, we request the attorney general to advise us whether the state’s default shall be construed as a concession of invalidity.

Kansas was on the spot. At the time the order came over the wire, the attorney general was out of state. He didn’t get back until two or three days later. Obviously, we could not concede the invalidity of a statute that had been passed by the legislature and in at least six cases had been held valid by the supreme court of the state. We had to do something. So, the attorney general sent a wire to the Clerk of the Supreme Court saying: Kansas will be there. Kansas will appear and argue and file a brief.

Then, he called me to his office, pointed to a stack of files, and said, “Take the damn thing and do what you can with it.” When I think of these events, I am reminded of something that I read long ago in my course in Shakespeare Rapid Reading: “Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.” I went to work. My first act was to go to the Palace and pick up my blue suit. The next thing to do was to write a brief, because I had no brief.

I worked weekends, and I worked during Thanksgiving vacation; there really weren’t very many weekends. I want to read you here a quote from a book, mainly to call your attention to the fact that I’m mentioned in a book. This is Kluger, *Simple Justice*. He said: “Working steadily, sleeping little, Wilson turned out a concise, direct, and clearly competent brief. Kansas was not coming to the Supreme Court to argue the economic, sociological, ethical, or religious desirability of school segregation. Its only concern in appearing was to defend the state’s right to permit such a practice.” Then he further discusses our
argument, but that, of course, was the gist of it: under the federal concept, under all the precedents that we knew, the maintenance of public education policy within a state was the business of the state, not of the Supreme Court of the United States.

I got my brief written. I had arranged with the state printer to expedite its printing. On a Saturday morning, before the case was set to be argued on Tuesday, I got on a train headed for Washington, with forty copies of my brief in my briefcase. I wanted to go on the train because I hadn't had any time to think about my argument, and it took 28 hours for the train to get from Topeka, Kansas, to Washington. I had a drawing room, and in that 28 hours, I thought and made notes and arrived in Washington on Sunday evening, ready to argue in the Supreme Court.

When I got off the train, I bought a newspaper in the station. I looked at the headlines and it said, "Legal Titans to Do Battle in the Supreme Court." I began to read, and it occurred to me, "Why, they're talking about me." But I read a little further, and I discovered they were really talking about the attorneys in the Virginia and South Carolina cases: John W. Davis, Thurgood Marshall, Spottswood Robinson, and Attorney General Lindsay Almond. In the last line it did say, "The State of Kansas will be represented by Assistant Attorney General Paul Williams."

From the station I went to the hotel—the Carlton Hotel, a gracious old hotel. When I registered, there were two messages waiting for me: one from my adversaries, who wanted to get a copy of my brief, and one from the attorneys for the other states, who wanted to be sure I was really there, and that there was such a person as I. So I went first to the hotel of my adversaries across the street, and there I met men who have since become great. Actually they were great then—Thurgood Marshall, Robert Carter, and Spottswood Robinson III. They were confident, cordial, agreeable men.

I delivered my brief to them and went back and made contact with the attorneys from the other states, who, if not my colleagues, shared a common interest with me. And they, too, were clearly confident, gracious, and agreeable men. I delivered my brief to them, and we agreed to meet the following evening to plan our strategy.

The next evening I met with my colleagues. Included in that group was John W. Davis, who was representing the state of South Carolina.
John W. Davis was perhaps the greatest constitutional lawyer of this century. He had held numerous high positions in the government, he had been the Democratic candidate for President in 1924, and, after his defeat, he had gone to New York and become the head of one of the great Wall Street law firms.

He was in the case because he was the personal friend of the governor of South Carolina. He was then in his eightieth year. That evening for two hours, he took me under his wing and gave me a course in appellate argument; I had never argued an appeal. I hadn’t even had a course in appellate advocacy. But here I was, ready to go to the Supreme Court of the United States, in the case of the century, being instructed by the greatest constitutional lawyer of the century. It was great! When we separated, he inquired if I had been admitted to the bar of the Court, and I replied I had not. He said that he’d be glad to move my admission. I had made arrangements for someone from the office of Senator Schoeppel to move my admission, but when Mr. Davis made his proffer, I thought, “To hell with Andy Schoeppel.” The next noon when the Court convened, Mr. Davis stood up with me and vouched for my character and professional qualification, and his name will always appear on my certificate of admission to the Supreme Court.

Eventually, the cases were called for argument. My case was first, but fortunately I was the appellee, and my adversary, Mr. Robert Carter, had to speak first for the appellant. So I got to observe him, and the Court’s treatment of him, before I had to stand on my feet. All this time I was sitting beside John W. Davis, and he was passing notes to me, telling me what to say in response to the argument, and if the Court asked me this question, what to say in answer to it. It did give me some security, but not much. Finally Mr. Carter sat down, and the Chief Justice, who was then Fred Vinson, smiled at me and said, “General Wilson.” I was an assistant attorney general, and he was giving dignity to my dubious status. And so I stood up and began to talk. Surprisingly, I could make sounds, and the sounds were relatively coherent. Mr. Kluger says about my argument: “Paul Wilson climbed to his feet for the first time before the Supreme Court, and proceeded to deliver a perfectly able, if somewhat simplistic, argument for the State of Kansas, following closely the arguments he had made in his brief.” Kluger was writing in 1975, and we’ve become a lot more
sophisticated than we were in 1952. Maybe if he'd been writing from the perspective of 1952, he wouldn't have found my argument so simplistic. I don't know whether Kluger liked me or not. In his book, at one point he made this, I guess, unsympathetic comment: "By eastern standards, Paul Wilson was a hayseed. His background and practice as a lawyer did not seem to qualify him very well for the role thrust upon him, as a reluctant dragon defending his state's Jim Crow public schools." But still, in his book generally he treated me kindly, so he may have felt sorry for me.

At the argument, after I began to talk, I enjoyed it. The Court asked me many questions, and they were kind questions. They seemed designed to help me develop my argument. After using not all of my time, but as much as I needed, I sat down. And the next cases were heard.

I came back to Kansas, and we waited until spring for word about the case. Finally the word came, and the cases had been restored to the docket for further argument the next December. This time the Court had directed that the arguments focus on the intent of the Congress that proposed the Fourteenth Amendment, and the intent of the legislatures that ratified it, as to its effect on public education. This time, of course, I had plenty of time. I was an experienced Supreme Court advocate. I was in touch with the outside world.

So I prepared a brief during the summer and got ready to go back and argue. But in the meantime, the city of Topeka pulled the rug out from under me by announcing that they were going to abandon the policy of segregation. Still they hadn't abandoned it, and the plaintiffs still claimed that the statute was unconstitutional, so I felt the case remained alive. Anyhow, I went back to Washington this time and did not experience the uneasiness that I'd experienced on my first trip, but instead I felt quite secure. Also, I had with me a prepared argument, a prepared speech, and I was going to stand there, and, unless the Court digressed too much, I was going to present my prepared speech. The other time I had only some notes on the margin of my brief.

Again, Brown v. Board of Education led off. Mr. Carter began to argue, but Justice Frankfurter interrupted him, and he said "Mr. Carter, isn't your case moot?" Justice Frankfurter apparently read the newspaper. And Mr. Carter very graciously said, "Well, I'd like to have General
Wilson address that question." There was nothing at all about mootness in my prepared speech. I responded as best I could, and finally Earl Warren, who had become the Chief Justice after the death of Fred Vinson, said, "I don't think the case is moot. We've invited General Wilson to come here and speak, and I propose that we let him present his argument." And Justice Frankfurter said no more, but it was obvious to me that they did not want to hear extended argument in this case. So the argument I gave was quite an abbreviated one, and not the one that I had prepared. For 28 years I have cherished the manuscript of that speech, hoping to find a place to give it.

Again, the Court took the case under advisement, and again it was spring before an opinion was announced, and you know of course what the opinion was. There were further arguments, directed at how the decree should be implemented, that is, how segregation should be phased out. Those arguments were in the spring of 1955, about a year after the decision. But during these first two arguments I'd gotten pretty good press in this part of the country, so the third argument was made by my boss. I went along, but I just carried the papers. Anyhow, it was all a great experience.

Now, when I make these presentations, I ask a bit of personal license, to say a word in my own defense, my own behalf. It is commonly assumed that I was on the wrong side of this case. From the standpoint of winning or losing, I was. From many standpoints I was. You know, my children have always been kind of embarrassed about the role their daddy had in standing before the Supreme Court defending racial segregation. They feel about this like they feel about all those times that daddy voted for Nixon. Frequently, I have been introduced at meetings as the lawyer who was on the wrong side of Brown v. Board of Education, and people look at me as though I must be some kind of a racist. My response is that I'm not a racist, I am a lawyer, and in our society a lawyer's role is a useful and honorable one. We choose to decide issues of this kind in an adversary process, and before wise decisions can be made by courts, the courts must be fully informed. The job of the lawyer is to inform the court as to the merits in the position he represents. Here, the Supreme Court was being asked to decide one of the most important issues of the century. It was being asked to reverse the trend of the law, because our decisions did support the policy that was under attack. It was being asked to
reverse a trend that was supported by the values that society had traditionally held. If it was to decide the issue correctly, the justices needed to be fully informed. The Kansas position was not a frivolous one. It was supported by precedent, by tradition, by history, and by the values in our culture. I think I probably said all that could be said for the State of Kansas. I said it as well as I could say it, and in doing that, I think I performed a service to the Court and to the State of Kansas.

And now, if I may exhibit a bit more paranoia, I suppose the person who was best able to evaluate my performance was my adversary, Robert Carter. After the decision, we corresponded. In his first letter to me he said: "We are certain that your purely lawyerlike examination of constitutional power, unfettered with emotions and demagoguery, helped embolden the court to make its courageous and statesmanlike declaration of May 17. However poorly stated, this is meant as a tribute to your honesty and integrity as a member of the bar and an official of the State of Kansas." He may have been just being nice. I hope he meant it.

Farmers, Ranchers, and Stockmen of the Flint Hills

Thomas D. Isern

The Flint Hills are a region of rolling hills and rough country in east-central Kansas, embracing all or parts of the counties of Butler, Chase, Chautauqua, Cowley, Elk, Geary, Greenwood, Lyon, Marion,
The Flint
Hills of
Kansas

Flint Hills Boundary • • • •
Morris, Pottawatomie, Riley, and Wabaunsee, comprising some five thousand square miles. (Osage County of Oklahoma is contiguous and is environmentally similar, but political lines have imposed on it a somewhat different historical development.) The valleys of the creeks and rivers—tributaries of the Kansas and Arkansas such as the Big and Little Blue, the Neosho, the Cottonwood, the Verdigris, the Fall, the Elk, and the Big Caney—contain good, black ground suitable for intensive farming. The upland soils are loose, littered with fragments of limestone, and laced with pale, outcropping ledges of the same stone.

Most of the uplands—the slopes and divides that define the watercourses—remain tall grass prairie. The principal grasses are big and little bluestem, Indian grass, and switchgrass—species excellent for summer pasture and for prairie hay, but less nutritious for cool-season grazing. Consequently, the region is sparsely populated, except where county seats or oilfield developments have concentrated population disproportionate to the agricultural use of the land. In counties economically devoted almost exclusively to agriculture, even county seats are small towns: Sedan, seat of Chautauqua County, had 1,579 people in 1980; Cottonwood Falls, Chase County, 954; Alma, Wabaunsee County, 925. Cities and good-sized towns such as Winfield, El Dorado, Emporia, Manhattan, and Topeka lie on the fringes of the Flint Hills, not within them.

Although tied economically to adjacent regions at first by railroads (particularly the Santa Fe and the Missouri Pacific), and in more recent times by major highways (prominently the Kansas Turnpike), the Flint Hills remain in many ways an agricultural enclave distinct from other areas. To the west lies cash grain farming characterized by winter wheat in rotation with grain sorghum; to the east are corn, stock farming, and outreaching bands of deciduous forest. Within this enclave a number of distinct classes of agricultural operators have developed. Relations among these operators have changed through the years and often have been misunderstood, even by residents of the region. These agriculturalists have sought their own discrete niches in the Flint Hills according to a web of determinants, including their own cultural heritage, the environment they encountered, innovations of technology, and economic and cultural forces external to the region. A study of these elements in the Flint Hills may provide a useful format for considering agricultural subregions elsewhere in the West.
With establishment of the Territory of Kansas and quick extinguishment of Indian titles, settlement of the Flint Hills got underway in the late 1850s. Settlers in numbers sufficient to effect county organizations took claims of bottomland. Immigration ceased during the Civil War, but during the late 1860s and the 1870s farmers filled the valleys. Their farming was diversified: they raised corn on the bottoms, made hay on the slopes, maintained modest herds of Shorthorns, fed a few over the winter, kept Poland China hogs to follow the cattle in the lot, and scattered feed to some Rhode Island Red chickens. On the unenclosed uplands their loose stock grazed under the eyes of a herd boy. Both cattle and hogs reached railroad corrals by drives to towns such as Burlington or Emporia.

Most of the early bottomland farmers were Midwesterners by birth, but among them were identifiable cultural groups that originated not only from the Midwest but also from other regions or nations. Examples were the Quakers from the Ohio Valley states who settled on the Cottonwood, the Norwegians on the Fall, the German-Swiss on the Verdigris, and the Swedes on Diamond Creek. Many of the Europeans were second-stage migrants, having lived previously for a time in the midwestern states.

During the late 1870s and the 1880s, the proliferation of railroads brought both easier access to markets and a new wave of agricultural settlers—the upland farmers. The uplands, where not tied up in railroad land grants or snapped up by speculators using veteran’s scrip and other devices of acquisition, were the subject of considerable debate in local newspapers. Hopeful editors and correspondents regarded them as good wheat ground to complement the feed fields of the bottoms.

Judging by occupations listed in the manuscript state census, the preponderance of upland farmers fell into one of two groups. The first comprised those who were not farmers by trade. Carpenters, merchants, and others probably came intending to preempt claims in a developing area and then sell out at a profit. Others, though, may have had intentions of permanence. They generally had ties of kinship or intermarriage with families in the bottomland.

Fewer ethnic communities were visible in the uplands. One exception was blacks, who had a settlement of several hundred near Dunlap and smaller groupings elsewhere, such as southwest of Eureka.
Their lack of ties to the bottomland and their shortage of capital made upland farming particularly hard for them. Upland farmers in general found cash crops, largely limited in early years to ill-adapted spring wheat, inconsistent and difficult to market by wagon. Grazing on the unenclosed grasslands was important to them. The ones with kin in the bottoms could work out mutually beneficial arrangements, herding loose stock from the bottoms on the abundant range, supplementing their own meager millet and other upland feed grains with corn from the bottoms.

Farmers were not the only parties to recognize the grazing value of the uplands. During the late 1860s and early 1870s drovers from Texas had arrived on their way to Abilene and other railheads. They lingered for cattle to take on weight and even attempted to winter herds in the hills, although cattle that wintered on bluestem suffered losses. At least a few droves of sheep also arrived from the Southwest. These arrivals precipitated animosity reflected in news columns and in legislative action. Farmers with their small herds of Shorthorns and other eastern stock blamed losses from Texas fever on contact with Texas herds on the uplands. The state quarantine laws that resulted, however, were less important as exclusionary forces than were the herd laws. The state legislature in 1872 empowered the county commissions to enact herd laws, much to the pleasure of farmers in the Flint Hills. One from Chase County wrote in 1872:

We want this law to protect us from the large herds that are driven in here by men who do not settle and help to improve the country, but merely turn non-residents' and railroad lands into stockyards, and allow their cattle to run at large, destroying all crops that are not strongly fortified. . . . It is the interests of the many, instead of the few, that should be protected.

Most counties of the Flint Hills enacted herd laws by the early 1880s. The parties with most at stake in this sort of controversy, though, were not the small farmers, but another class of operators that had moved in alongside them—the big-time stock farmers. These capitalists bought up claims in the bottoms, accumulating ground for cornfields, barns, and lots. They had herds of purebred stock, Shorthorns predominantly at first, Herefords increasingly by the 1890s. Although
they might graze some Texas steers on upland pastures (pastures perhaps carved from railroad lands), cattle breeding and feeding were the mainstays of their operations. Their capital came from success in other endeavors—banking, commerce, railroad construction, or trading in Texas cattle. William McBrown, a successful merchant in Woodson and Greenwood counties, began investing in land in 1870 and stocked it with Durham cattle. In 1897 he initiated a Hereford breeding program, and he left to his sons a prosperous stock farm. Fred Harvey, provider of elegant dining on the Santa Fe Railroad, established a stock farm in western Lyon County. The greatest of all stock farms, at least in reputation, was Hazford Place near El Dorado, home of champion Herefords and of attorney and land speculator Robert H. Hazlett. Less well known than these cattlemen were the sheepmen who brought flocks of Merinos from the upper Mississippi Valley. They acquired bottomland to raise feed, bought some pasture, and also made use of free grass on the “back range,” as they referred to the unenclosed uplands.

Big and small operators alike were engulfed by change during the mid-1880s. The question at issue was the disposition of the uplands. Texas cattle were for the moment excluded. Upland farmers, although hanging on, exhibited no such success that they might fill the uplands. Technology meanwhile reached into the hills. East-west railroads built branches that fingered out in the hills, such as the Santa Fe branch from Strong City down to Bazaar. Most important, barbed wire became available.

Overnight, historically speaking, the uplands were fenced. In 1964 Henry Rogler, a well-known rancher from near Matfield Green, could still recall when the first black, ungalvanized wires went up in his area. By the close of the 1880s the open range was no more in the Flint Hills. Fenced pastures, though, were large: a section was a small parcel, and ten might be enclosed by a single fence.

The big pastures were owned largely by absentees—capitalists who lived in Emporia and other towns in the area, generally not distant. They bought out small claim holders, acquired federal land where available, often through exchange of veteran’s scrip, purchased states’ Morrill Act lands, and bought railroad lands—a particularly good option in places where one land grant crossed another, such as where the Katy intersected the Santa Fe, the overlapping land grants filling
in the checkerboard pattern. The owners leased the pastures to cattlemen to fatten steers on grass. Thus began a long-term control of upland pastures by absentee, urban owners. As late as 1965 geographers studying Chase County, which was generally regarded as a classic big-pasture county, found that parties residing in cities and towns outside the county owned 51 percent of all lands and 57 percent of the grassland.

The lessees were mostly cattlemen from Texas, now able to ship aged steers (four- and five-year-olds) by rail into enclosed pastures. The hills became a bovine cosmopolis: whiteface Herefords gradually displaced longhorns, but mingled among them were strange-looking Brahmas and other critters of uncertain parentage from Texas, Arizona, Colorado, or even Mexico. From the early 1890s on, every village, every siding in the Flint Hills had a cluster of chutes and pens that each year became a mass of mud when the cattle arrived, in March and April, and a cloud of dust when they were shipped out to commission men in Kansas City, beginning in late July. The otherwise remote village of Bazaar, in southern Chase County, became the greatest shipping point for cattle on the entire Santa Fe system. The number of cattle shipped into the Flint Hills swelled year by year until by the 1920s it consistently exceeded 400,000 annually. The number of stockers shipped annually into the Flint Hills was particularly impressive when compared to the number of “Other Cattle”—beef cattle of all ages—reported present in the entirety of Kansas by the State Board of Agriculture: 1,967,201 in 1925.

The common arrangement bringing together steers and pastures, cattle owners and pasture owners, was through a pastureman. The pastureman occupied one of two niches in the system. One was to lease the pasture from its owner, then to sublease it to a cattle owner. The other was to be an employee of the pasture owner, who leased directly to the owner of the cattle and hired the pastureman to handle them, a job known simply as “taking care of cattle.” In either case the pasture owner just delivered a pasture with a good fence in the spring. The pastureman received the cattle at the siding, drove them to pasture, saw that they had water and salt, kept the fence up, and drove the cattle back to the siding for shipping out. The subleasing pastureman sought the best margin of profit he could get for his trouble. The employee pastureman generally got “ten percent of what the grass
brought," meaning 10 percent of the lease money. Although some pasture was leased by the acre, more commonly it was let on the basis of "so much per animal," with varying rates and acreage allotments for different ages of cattle. The pastureman was the key figure in the scheme. He accounted for every animal; if one died by some act of God, he brought in the hide.

The establishment of this system of transient grazing had far-reaching effects. Some were environmental. The requirements of the Texas stockmen dictated certain practices of range management that did not conform to local opinion. For instance, the Texas "steer men," as they were called, demanded early spring burning of pastures to promote quick grass growth and rapid weight gains. Although resident owners also practiced burning, they were more discriminating, tending to burn only when the accumulation of mulch warranted it, and generally burning later in the spring in order to achieve better control of weeds.

Still greater effects were social. Upland farmers were casualties of the system of transient grazing. The speculators among them sold out and departed happy, but the ones who intended to stick it out suffered. The herd law and enclosure may have driven out the drovers, but it also deprived farmers of free grazing. With cash grain farming inconsistent, with upland feed crops insufficient for large-scale finishing, and with no further possibility to serve as herding outposts for bottomland kin, upland farmers dwindled in number. Curious cattle rummaged among their abandoned homesteads.

The majority of upland farmers who survived (and some do to the present day) did so by adapting to the new order. Most supplemented their farm incomes through other work. Many of the blacks of Dunlap became expert stonemasons. Other men from upland farms drove teams or entered other trades in the developing oilfields of Butler and Greenwood counties and then stayed on to pump wells. Still others handled a few thousand acres of pasture as pasturemen. On their farms, they learned that kaffir-corn excelled corn for feed grain on the uplands.

Bottomland farmers also felt the squeeze, but not so badly. They suffered the loss of free grazing, but for most, upland grazing had been ancillary anyway. They continued to practice diversified farming and to market stock. A new element in their operations, with the shipment of Texas cattle in by rail, was buying steers to fatten on
whole-ear corn broken on the edge of the trough. At the turn of the century they added alfalfa to their crops, first for local feeding, but also, especially during World War I, for cash sale. Almost as early they began erecting wood, tile, steel, or concrete upright silos and filling them with Orange cane, which many found a more economical feed than corn.

Strung along the watercourses, the bottomland farmers had well-knit communities. They passed one another whenever they went anywhere, they performed the same agricultural tasks simultaneously with their neighbors, they supported neighborhood churches and schools, and they formed concentric circles of cooperation to accomplish such operations as driving cattle, threshing oats, putting up hay, and filling silos.

On the other hand, many of the big-time stock farms of the late nineteenth century dispersed within a generation, for a variety of reasons. Sheep raisers, deprived by barbed wire of their back range, liquidated their flocks. Cattle raisers suffered similarly but to a lesser extent. Big stock farms also were split through inheritance or dispersed because of reversals in the other business enterprises of the owners.

Nevertheless, after enclosure there emerged, mainly from the ranks of the big stock farms and bottomland farms, a class of operations referred to as ranches. The Moxley Ranch in Morris County, for instance, made the transition; so did the Huntington Ranch in Greenwood County, as well as the McBrown Ranch, eventually inundated by Fall River Reservoir. The owners of these ranches were all large landholders to begin with, but also there were many who had been simple farmers financially able to buy or lease substantial acreage of pasture and to shift the emphasis of their operations from feeding to grazing. For instance, from the humble claim of their father, E. B. Crocker, on the Cottonwood, Edward and Arthur Crocker in 1895 began to acquire grass and to build a herd that eventually would number five thousand head of registered Hereford stock. The Crockers and the others called their operations ranches, and their employees considered themselves cowboys, no matter if they had to pitch in once in a while to pick corn or put up alfalfa.

Many of the ranching families initiated a kind of integration whereby they incorporated the advantages of both the resident rancher and the transient grazier. They bought ranches in the Southwest, mostly
in Texas, where they maintained sizable breeding herds. They also had cow herds in the Flint Hills, and in summer they put stockers from both herds on pasture in the Flint Hills. The Crocker brothers owned a ranch in Arizona that eventually grew to 800,000 acres. The Wheat and Price families, resident in northern Lyon County, were among those who had ranches in Texas.

So in the Flint Hills during the early twentieth century, as the diverse agricultural operators in the region dealt with both changing economic systems and constant environmental conditions, a general dichotomy developed based on geographic differentiation between the bottomlands and the uplands. Even so, variations existed within the two areas. The uplands were largely the domain of absentee pasture owners, absentee cattle owners, and pasturemen, but the pasturemen operated in different legal relationships with the owners. The bottomlands were the home of farmers and the headquarters of ranchers, whose holdings by lease or purchase stretched out towards the divides. The difference between the farmers and the ranchers was first one of proportion, that is, whether they emphasized feed or grass, and second one of self-image. "In fact, I guess from the very start most of the farmers and the cattlemen were the same ones," said an old farmer from the Verdigris Valley. "Even the big cattlemen farmed and the little farmers had a few cattle."

In subsequent years the differentiation among the dwellers of the bottomland became yet less distinct. Both groups began to seek more integrated, diversified operations. For the ranchers this meant more cropland, especially for alfalfa. For the farmers this meant more grass, whether by purchase or by lease. These simultaneous trends made possible the building of cow herds and a lessening dependence on imported steers.

Such integration started slowly, but the drought of the 1930s encouraged it. The steer men were hard hit, not so much by the lack of grass as by a shortage of water on upland pastures. The depressed market provided little incentive to make costly accommodations to get water to steers; it was better to liquidate, selling to the government if necessary, and then keep cattle off pasture for a while.

Resident operators who had cow herds in the Flint Hills, however, survived the hard times and refined their operations. Most of them began filling silos, especially more efficient, less expensive trench silos,
A. G. T. Cooper ranch. Many ranching families integrated cattle herds in the Southwest and Flint Hills. Drought in the 1930s prompted ranchers to add cropland operations. After the 1960s many ranchers shipped cattle to large commercial feedlots or fed them on grain or silage. Photo by Leslie Halbe, 1911.

since Atlas sorgo had become available for silage. Creep feeders came into common use to get calves started on grain more quickly. Cottonseed cake provided a cheap, protein-rich ration.

Moreover, especially after the 1960s, fewer cattlemen attempted to finish cattle on grass. Instead they either provided feeders to men with lots or fed them out themselves on grain or silage. Large commercial feedlots came into existence, either by farmers expanding feeding operations in an area of abundant feed, as was the case with the Crofoot family of the Cottonwood Valley, or by capitalists developing yards in areas convenient to rail transport, as was true of the feedlots on the west side of Emporia. The aged steer became identified only with the transient cattle business on leased pastures, and even there his numbers diminished. Early finishing of young steers and heifers was elevated from the status of 4-H Baby Beef projects to standard commercial practice.
Pasture leasing, transient cattle grazing, and pasturemen survived the hard times of the 1930s, resurfaced during the 1940s, and evolved into truck transport in the 1950s and early 1960s, and remain important parts of land use in the Flint Hills today. The Crop and Livestock Reporting Service still issues a "Bluestem Pasture Report" reporting on rates and progress of leasing pastures in the Flint Hills. The relative importance of this activity has declined, however, with consumer tastes having abandoned grass-finished beef, and with the cost-price squeeze having made it simply uneconomical to mature cattle several years, the function of leased pastures has become to provide feeders ready for the lot. Resident farmers and ranchers, on the other hand, although diminishing in concert with national trends of migration of population out of agriculture from the 1940s through the early 1970s, have relatively stable operations. Controlling their own land use, unlike the case on the leased pastures, they have implemented more sophisticated practices of range management, including deferred or rotational grazing and more discreet burning. Conservation and control of farm practices by owner-operators are not enough, however, to stem the attrition of farms in the region, for local operators are subject to the national cost-price squeeze in agriculture. From 1890 to 1980, for instance, the number of farms in Wabaunsee County—a county without substantial economic activity other than agriculture—declined from 1,709 to 690; population declined from 11,720 to 6,867. The relative stability during the same time of the population of Alma, the county seat—a decline only from 1,125 to 925—showed that it was the countryside and farm villages that suffered the most serious depopulation.

To term the present agricultural situation of the Flint Hills "stable" is foolhardy, considering the history of land use recounted here. Agriculture in the region has evolved continually, not only in degree, but sometimes also in its basic nature. Farmers, ranchers, and farmer-stockmen—whichever the producers of crops and livestock choose to call themselves—may contend that today they are bringing agricultural endeavor in the region to an ecological climax, to a stable state conducive to both environmental preservation and economic productivity, but this is a matter of faith, not historical analysis.

This survey of the agricultural history of the Flint Hills does suggest an outline for the study of regional farm culture in the West, including
land use. The first point here is that many practices and customs were the result of cultural infusions from other regions. The Midwesterners who introduced corn culture, shorthorn cows, and Poland China sows were an obvious example. They hoped to replicate the sort of farm culture they had known in their previous places of residence. Likewise, southwestern culture came to the region through the arrival of Texas stockmen using the big pastures and through the acquisition by Kansans of ranches in Texas.

Every agricultural operator in the Flint Hills, however, had to find a place in the region’s geography and in the evolving economy influenced in turn by geography. The early midwestern immigrants
found their bottomlands, the Texans their big pastures. The upland farmers enjoyed no comparable success, and as the agricultural system changed around them, they made their individual accommodations to it. Farmers and ranchers today make conscious efforts to achieve diversification in their operations by exploiting the diversity of the region's geography.

Technological change, although generally not originating within the region, profoundly affected the developing relations between culture and environment. Hedge, stone, and timber were inadequate to fence the upland; barbed wire made it possible. The extension of railroads into the region and their eventual supplantation by trucks changed agricultural operations and determined the fates of towns dependent on the regional agricultural economy.

Finally, some developments in the region were the product of external forces heedless of, but nevertheless relevant to, the agricultural situation in the Flint Hills. Chief among these were the vagaries of the national economy. Capitalists successful in the marketplace elsewhere poured money into agricultural enterprises in the Flint Hills. Economic depression, while a hardship for all, strengthened the stance of certain agricultural groups in relation to the others. Changing consumer tastes dictated how long cattle should be kept on pasture.

These four interpretive points—the cultural heritage of agriculturalists coming to the region, the accommodation to geography, the impact of technology, and the influence of external forces—provide useful lenses for future examination of the agricultural history of the Flint Hills and other subregions throughout the West, histories yet largely unwritten.
In 1950, David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* asserted that the American character had changed. The "inner-directed" Americans of the Victorian Age, "self-willed," "aggressive" and sexually inhibited, practiced such "production values" as hard work and self-denial. By the mid-20th century, however, the society demanded a more conformist "other-directed" man or woman, someone "shallower, freer with his money, friendlier, more uncertain of himself and his values, more demanding of approval." As part of this change, Riesman explained, parents were losing authority over their children; undermined by more permissive canons of child rearing, parents were being replaced by the peer group and mass media.

The generation Riesman studied comprised women and men who were college students in the 1950s: the Silent Generation, conformist and conservative, shallow and apathetic. These students, the literature stated, were thoroughly in tune with the slogans of their era: "family togetherness," "the man in the gray flannel suit," "the feminine mystique" (a 1963 coinage of Betty Friedan's).

Are these generalizations valid? One way to assess them is to consult the research papers of KU emeritus professor of psychology Herbert F. Wright. In the mid-1950s, Wright made a request of the Department of English. To evaluate students' proficiency, would the department have students write an essay on "My Home Town"? Thus, in summer 1956, 90 students wrote about the town they'd lived in the
longest prior to adolescence. Each described the town’s appearance and its people and evaluated, according to instructions, “from your present point of view the advantages and disadvantages in its size as a place to grow up in.”

(Essayists were identified by number only—there was no list kept of their names—making it impossible to conduct follow-up interviews today. Should you have been a participant, please contact us. Because of the lack of biographical information, we’ve had to infer the gender of essay writers. We thank Mrs. Herbert F. Wright for her hard work in judging age levels and sex of participants.)

The students’ towns were “small” (under 2,000 residents), “large” (up to 45,000) and “great” (up to 914,800). Of the 90 essays, 30 fell into each category. In every category, the essayists seemed “other-directed.” Their parents’ values and concerns were also theirs. A third deplored juvenile delinquency as a pernicious problem in their town, more distressing than racism, poverty, or the Cold War. Even small-town students who knew about teen-age “hoods” only through such

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts march in Salvation Army parade, 1955. Hometown size helps shape a child’s world and how that child responds to new experiences. For many Kansans small-town life is intimate and nurturing.
Heartland Memories: A Less Lonely Crowd Speaks for Itself

films as Rebel Without a Cause expressed concern. One young man from Buhler, Kan. (700 people), was relieved that the people in his town were “friendly and the children played together instead of forming gangs and fighting.”

Consensus also existed regarding the ideal-size town in which to live and raise children. Appropriate to this age of moderation, most students described that town as having between 15,000 and 25,000 residents: a town that was “neither too large nor too small”; one that could “offer samplings of both large and small town environments”; one that was “progressive, clean, urban enough for a person to feel he has his own life to lead, and small enough that he feels he belongs.”

Yet consensus wasn’t universal. Eighty-three essayists recommended their home towns for raising a family, yet some of these deplored conditions in their towns. The split is felt in the essay of a woman who wrote that Kansas City, Kan., could

never know the feeling of community unity. I see no hope for its ceasing to teach its children prejudice and fear of those unlike themselves. The atmosphere there is “every man for himself.” That atmosphere is . . . too unwholesome for the good mental health of a child.

Still, the essay concluded, “a child growing up in . . . Kansas City, Kansas, has excellent opportunities for growth and happiness.”

The essays reveal striking variations in childhood experiences in towns of different sizes, variations that Riesman and others had overlooked. One small-town product grew up with “no playground for children, except the one at school; no swimming pool, except a creek nearby.” Small-town social activities centered on church and school. Seventy-three percent of the small-town essayists portrayed the church as the central community institution. A Norwich, Kan. (400 people), student labeled it “the first important place in my life” and “the only place available to pre-school age children for social purposes.”

On the other hand, of the 60 essays by teens from the large and great towns, only six mentioned the church. For them, the school was a community center, and parks, libraries, and other public institutions supplanted the church’s functions. The neighborhood took on great significance; it was there, wrote a young man from Kansas City, Kan.,
"that I played and learned." A woman student from a large city, however, felt isolated within her neighborhood and cut off from other parts of the city. "I realize that I lived a very sheltered life in the city," wrote the woman, who had grown up in Cleveland, Ohio, but moved to Neodesha, Kan. (4,500 people), in high school. "I plan to raise my children in a small community where they can do some growing up on their own."

Just as home-town size shaped the child's daily world, so too did it affect how the child experienced new settings. Freshman year at KU posed difficulties, especially for small-town youth. One student described adjustment problems: "I was lacking in many social mannerisms and I felt very inferior to those who came from larger cities." One large-town product wrote that classmates "who come from the farm [or from] a very small town are many times awed and frightened by the big city."

Also common, however, was the small-town youth who had gained self-confidence by knowing who she was and where she belonged. "No matter where I go," wrote a young woman from Dighton, Kan. (1,000 people), "I will always have a feeling of security; I will always know that I have a friendly town to call home, where the people are interested in what happens to me." One young woman explained, "I feel closer to my family and more concerned with people than many girls from larger cities. . . . Children are more secure and happy when they grow up knowing their neighbors' names."

Today's scholars can use these essays to correct the scholarly literature that has formed our understanding of this period. Riesman and others distorted reality by portraying the United States as culturally homogeneous, a society in which the "ideal type" was the white American family comfortable in suburbia. Urban and suburban residents themselves, Riesman and peers made only perfunctory efforts to understand people's lives in small midwestern or Plains towns or on the surrounding farms.

Today, there is a special urgency in understanding rural and small-town life. With farm and bank failures, we are in danger of losing a way of life that has sustained the nation throughout its history. What would then be lost? In the words of a young woman from Dighton, one casualty might be the summer evenings spent talking and rocking on the front porch with family and friends. She wrote that what she
missed most about her home town was "the unifying influence of such evenings." Such shared experiences, including the "wonderful closeness of common people who have been through the hardships of years of drought, good wheat crops hailed out, blizzards and dust storms together, give a growing child a feeling of security, kindness, and the basic generosity of human nature."

Clearly, both closeness and generosity had their limits in many of these rural areas, as both Afro-Americans and Catholics could attest. Still, as the essays on "My Home Town" make clear, small-town life generally was intimate and nurturing. "The small town way of life is the best insurance against" the United States' "becoming a nation of spectators instead of participants, machines instead of people," wrote the student from Dighton.

The name "Eisenhower" was quite widely known in Kansas when America entered World War II. David Eisenhower, who had come as a boy with the large colony of Pennsylvania River Brethren that settled in Dickinson County in 1878, married Ida Elizabeth Stover (she, too, was of German Mennonite stock) and became the father of six sons who grew to maturity in Abilene. These six sons made careers in six different fields of endeavor, each of them succeeding beyond the average. Especially well-known by 1941 were the eldest son, Arthur, executive vice-president of one of the largest banks in Kansas City,
and the youngest, Milton, a Kansas State journalism graduate who, aged twenty-six, had become information director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and then, during the New Deal, an outstandingly effective "trouble-shooting" administrator of large governmental programs and agencies. Within a few months after Japanese bombs fell upon Pearl Harbor the Kansas press announced that Milton Eisenhower had become associate director of the Office of War Information; in the spring of 1943, that same press announced under large headlines that Milton had resigned his O.W.I. post in order to return to his native state as president of Kansas State College, his alma mater.

But by that time the Eisenhower name was not just "well-known"; it had become one of the most famous in the world. On June 25, 1942, a War Department communique had announced "the formal establishment of a European theater of operations for the United States forces" with the theretofore unknown Maj. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, already headquartered in London, as theater commander. Ever since, General Eisenhower had been continuously at the top of the world's most important news. By his command were conquered North Africa and Sicily. He accepted Italy's surrender after the fall of Mussolini. He ordered the landing at Salerno. He directed the initial slow drive up the Italian boot toward Rome. Then, on Christmas Eve, 1943, came the beginning of his climactic fame. In London, in Washington, the announcement was made that a Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) was being established, obviously to prepare and launch the long-awaited cross-channel assault upon Hitler's fortress Europe. The supreme commander of this unprecedentedly huge and complicated allied operation, headquartered in London, was Dwight D. Eisenhower.

A Kansan had become the supreme soldier of the greatest war in history! The subsequent crushing of Hitler was rendered, thereby, a peculiarly Kansan triumph!

For certainly many of the qualities that enabled Eisenhower to make SHAEF the uniquely integrated and effective allied command that it became were distinctively Kansas qualities, as he himself appeared to be, in several respects, the archetypical twentieth-century Kansan. The wide and sunny skies of his state, and the width and openness of the Dickinson County landscape, might be seen in his wide sunny grin, in
President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The only Kansan elected to the nation’s highest office, Eisenhower served as president from 1953–1960.
his seemingly invincibly sunny and open disposition. Similarly with his basic mind-set and attitudes. He had grown up in a small town that was notorious historically for wild western violence and wickedness, Wild Bill Hickok its most famous citizen until Ike Eisenhower came along, but a town also remarkable for the number of its churches and the general piety of its citizenry. He had been raised in a family of the strictest Bible-reading religiosity, his parents being Puritans in the most literal meaning of that word, with extreme pacifism a cardinal article of their faith (both ultimately became members of the sect now known as Jehovah’s Witnesses); yet these same parents had trained their sons to the hardest kind of physical self-reliance and had done nothing to discourage the development of a combative toughness, a physical self-assertiveness and self-defensiveness, which involved frequent savage fist-fighting. His family had certainly not been well-to-do, even by Abilene standards, had in fact been on the lower side of the town’s income median, as the plain frame house in which they lived was on the “wrong” side of the railroad tracks; but on the other hand, the family had not been accounted actually poor in a community inclined to regard property as a sign and consequence of virtue. And within one hundred miles of the family home was the exact geographical center of the United States, which is to say that the physical environment of the boy’s growth to manhood was balanced precisely halfway between every pair of national geographical extremes. All this seemed designed to develop in him a balanced tension between frontier pragmatism and religious idealism, with the balance tipped toward the former by a revulsion against the rigid pieties imposed upon his boyhood—seemed designed in general to promote a psychology of “middleness” or “togetherness” that worked against unequivocal either-or choices and for coalitions, amalgamations, and homogenizations on the basis of perceived common denominators among diverse people and things and forces. Such twentieth-century “Kansas” qualities had not theretofore been deemed heroic by the multitude. They were the essentially conservative attributes of a successful “chairman of the board,” which is what Eisenhower frankly said he was. A hostile critic might even see them as pernicious insofar as they encouraged halfway measures—measures that were, in effect, affirmations of the status quo—in situations demanding bold decision on the side of change, of novelty.
In 1954 President Dwight D. Eisenhower addressed townspeople in his hometown of Abilene, Kansas. His wife, Mamie, is to his right.

Yet the possessor of these qualities had become, and by virtue of his exercise of them, the greatest hero of the Western world!

From this heroism Kansans could and did draw a spiritual sustenance that went far toward overcoming the formerly prevailing sense of state inferiority. Instead of being backward and “out of things,” contemptuously ignored by current history, Kansas was, or could feel itself to be, again in the thick of things, a focus of national and even world attention. Ike himself encouraged this resurgence of state pride. He seemed in his own person proof positive of the truth of Ingalls’s assertion that “no genuine Kansan can emigrate,” however far he roams, for Ike repeatedly and emphatically identified himself with Abilene, a town of five thousand souls near the center of the most central state of the Union, and did so on occasions of the greatest possible publicity. Thus, in his famous Guildhall speech during his London triumph in June of 1945 he spoke of a “kinship” between London and Abilene that consisted of a shared commitment to free speech, religious freedom, and mutual respect. When he returned to America later that month and received the greatest triumph New York
City has ever given any man, he said that "New York simply cannot do this to a Kansas farmer boy and keep its reputation for sophistication." And it was in Abilene, a few days afterward, that his triumphal return achieved what he himself stressed as its supreme moment. To the largest, most joyous throng in the town's history (it was four times greater than Abilene's resident population) he said, and almost tearfully, "... the proudest thing I can claim is that I'm from Abilene."

Nor was it only through this kind of radiational elevation of the psychological temperature, promoting a renewed glow of state pride (a "positive" rather than "negative" mood) conducive of fresh, self-confident initiatives—it was not only in this way that General Eisenhower contributed to his home state's salubrious change of phase. He made also an explicit direct contribution. Widespread among the historically minded had been a fear that the American people, and especially those at the center of the nation, would again draw back into an isolationist shell once the war was over and certain inevitable disillusionments concerning it had occurred. The returned hero deliberately employed his heroism to prevent this happening. Thus, in his speech at Kansas City on the eve of his Abilene homecoming in late June 1945, he said to thousands gathered before him and millions listening over the radio:

This country here, this section, has been called the heart of isolationism. I do not believe it. No intelligent man can be an isolationist. ... The world today needs two things: moral leadership and food.

And of both, he indicated, the Midwest (especially Kansas) had abundant supplies, of which it would surely freely give. He elaborated on this theme in Abilene the next day, saying:

No longer are we here independent of the rest of the world. ... Our part is most important. There is nothing so important in the world today as food, in a material way. Food is needed all over Europe and must be sent to preserve the peace. In that way you see immediately your connection with the problems of Europe. ... In a more definite way, since I am now a citizen of New York City, that city is a part of you—one of your larger suburbs. ..."
And from the postwar career of General Eisenhower, Kansas continued to draw a prideful spiritual sustenance. When he launched his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination on June 4, 1952 (he had first publicly declared his allegiance to the Republican party and his willingness to accept its nomination barely five months previously), he did so, on a day of torrential rain, in Abilene. On that same day he participated in the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone of the Eisenhower Museum, which was to rise on what had been the family's garden plot when he was a boy, just east of his boyhood home. This last was dedicated that day as a historical monument, having been purchased for that purpose by leading citizens. His subsequent political conquests—of the nomination, in a contest with Robert Taft; of the presidency in two election victories over Adlai Stevenson—could be deemed and were felt to be a continued national popular approval of Kansas qualities and principles, especially since he as president, and after, continued to identify himself with Abilene, and to return there on hugely publicized occasions.

He made his last, his permanent return in April 1969, when he was buried in Abilene. Today, the Eisenhower home, museum, and chapel are leading Kansas tourist attractions, bringing many thousands of visitors to Abilene from all over the country every year, while to the Presidential Library come hundreds of historians for scholarly research.

Suggested Readings


Wright, C. O. *100 Years in Kansas Education.* Topeka, KS: Kansas State Teachers Association, 1963.
Writing about the recent past (1980s), the present, and the future is difficult at best. For historians these subjects are not as tempting as the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Good history requires perspective. Therefore, Chapter 8 relies on economists, social scientists, and literary writers to analyze this period and to make comments about the future of the state.

Anthony L. Redwood, professor of business and director of the Institute for Public Policy and Business Research at the University of Kansas; Charles E. Krider, professor of business and director of business research for the University of Kansas Institute for Public Policy and Business Research; and Gary R. Albrecht, University of Kansas research economist, provide a comprehensive look at the Kansas economy and identify choices facing Kansas decision makers. Their findings are based on "an analysis of the evolution, current status, and outlook of the state's economic and demographic environment." They conclude that the Kansas economy is not well positioned for the next decade and that restructuring the economic sector is a primary challenge for Kansans in the years ahead. Some changes have been made in both the public and private sectors since this article was published in 1986, but their fundamental concerns are still valid.
Fred Bentley, administrator of the Kansas Rural Center, analyzes the poor economic conditions in the 1980s that have "accelerated a chronic, long-term trend of farm consolidation, closure of small-town businesses, and emigration." Bentley notes that three strategies for the future seem to have the widest currency: 1) to "stay the course," concede that consolidation is inevitable, and develop an industrial agricultural model; 2) to expand the small farm sector by encouraging greater diversification and enhanced marketing; and finally, 3) to emphasize the development of organic farming systems and improved local marketing.

Thomas Fox Averill, professor of English and coordinator of the Center for Kansas Studies at Washburn University, discusses how Kansans today deal with "The Wizard of Oz," a phenomenon that is part of our national, as well as Kansas, culture. Averill recounts the history of L. Frank Baum’s books, the various plays, and the MGM movie ("The Wizard of Oz" was released in 1939 and has been widely shown in theaters and on television in the last 50 years) and provides a fascinating analysis of its effects on the people of Kansas. He closes with an assessment of Dorothy, the "quintessential" Kansan.
The Kansas economy has provided a good standard of living for the people of the state during this century. As well, because of its traditional structure, the state economy did not suffer the degree of volatility resulting from national business cycles that were experienced by the industrialized states. However, significant changes have occurred in the national and international economic order that raise serious questions concerning the capacity of the Kansas economy to underpin adequately the welfare of Kansans in the future if present trends continue.

The purpose of this article is to assess the Kansas economy and identify policy choices now facing Kansas decision makers as they seek to position the state for the next century. This analysis will be based on an analysis of the evolution, current status, and outlook of the state's economic and demographic environment. The bottom line is that the Kansas economy is not well positioned to go forward strongly in the next decade, so that restructuring the economic sector for a more prosperous future constitutes a primary challenge for Kansans in the years ahead.

Long-Term Structural Changes

Significant long-term changes have occurred in the state's economic structure over this century, and since World War II in particular. These

Table 1

Kansas and U.S. Gross National Product
by Selected Industries (%)

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<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
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<td></td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
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<td>13.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>25.6</td>
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<td>9.4</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


changes have brought in their wake a profound, albeit gradual, transformation in the state's economic character and demographic composition. The Kansas economy has evolved from a predominantly agricultural one to a mixed form somewhat like that of the national industrial structure. The trend has been one of long transition from farming to other forms of economic activity, so that today farming produces about 9 percent of state products while manufacturing produces 20 percent (see Table 1). These figures would have been reversed fifty years ago. This pattern of long-term structural change may also be illustrated through trends in income and employment since 1950, with particular emphasis on agriculture.

Personal Income

Personal income in Kansas has grown substantially in recent decades, while farm-related personal income has increased only slightly. Indeed, nonfarm income grew from $2.5 billion in 1950 to more than $30 billion in 1984; farm personal income never exceeded $2 billion in this period. The relative decline in the importance of the farm sector is confirmed by the fact that farm personal income accounted for more
Figure 1

Earnings in Selected Industries as a Percentage of Total Earnings in Kansas, 1950–84

![Graph showing earnings in selected industries from 1950 to 1984. The graph includes lines for Manufacturing, Services, Farm, and Mining.](image)

Source: Calculated from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis data.

Table 2

Composition of Employment in Kansas and the U.S. by Industry (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

than 20 percent of total income in 1950 but represents only 5 percent today.

Dramatic changes have taken place in the contribution of the major economic sectors to the earnings of Kansans (see Figure 1). Concurrently with the decline of the farm sector, manufacturing has emerged as the largest earned income generator, though this has leveled out somewhat; the service sector has continued to increase until recently and is likely to stabilize at around the U.S. average. At the same time, mining, the other key sector in the Kansas economic base, exhibited steady decline from 1950 to 1970, a resurgence to a 1982 peak, and then another decline, all within a range of 2 to 4 percent of Kansas earnings. The pattern is clear. Agriculture and mining, two key elements of the Kansas economic base, together contribute less than 10 percent directly to earnings in Kansas, and the proportion is likely to decrease further in the years ahead.

**Employment**

The most important employment-related measure of structural change is the distribution of jobs among different economic sectors. The significant shifts in Kansas sectors, as well as sector comparisons with national averages, are shown in Table 2. Kansas farm employment has decreased from 15 percent of total Kansas employment in 1960 to 5 percent in 1984 but remained above the national average of 3 percent. On the other hand, Kansas manufacturing employment increased slowly over this period from 14 to 16 percent of the total, while the national proportion declined from 25 to 18 percent. Employment in other Kansas sectors has increased in the same manner as nationally, and the respective distributions tend to converge.

Two main points can be made in relation to these changes. First, in 1960, the Kansas economic bases—agriculture, mining, and manufacturing—employed 31 percent of the state’s work force, compared to 35 percent for the U.S. In 1984, these key economic sectors of Kansas employed 22.4 percent of the Kansas work force, the corresponding national figure was 22.6 percent, so the convergence is occurring. Supporting sectors in Kansas, such as service, trade and
government, therefore serve an economic base today that more closely resembles the national base than ever before.

Second, the decline in agricultural employment has been steady, and employment growth in manufacturing and other expanding sectors has been chronically inadequate to offset the displacement of labor from Kansas farms. While the supporting sectors also have grown, their size is limited by growth in the primary economic base. However, as the economic bases converge, the intensity of this problem may now be lessening.

Mining employment in Kansas has been relatively insignificant, ranging around 1 or 2 percent of total employment (see Table 2). While still proportionately greater than the national average, Kansas mining employment has also converged with the national pattern of mining employment. In addition, employment in Kansas mining, which is predominantly oil and gas, has exhibited considerable sensitivity to price changes, which are beyond the control of Kansas producers.

Manufacturing as a percentage of total employment for the U.S. has seen a steady downward trend since 1960 (see Figure 2). In Kansas, manufacturing has remained a more stable proportion of employment, although it has also experienced a slight downward trend. Fluctuation in Kansas manufacturing employment has been substantial. This volatility reflects movements in the aircraft component of durable goods manufacturing, beginning in the early sixties. Coincidental with the Vietnam War, a major expansion in aircraft employment in Kansas occurred, lasting until the late sixties, and followed by a dramatic fall in the early 1970s, a further surge about 1980, and a significant decline thereafter.

The manufacture of durable goods constituted 60 to 70 percent of Kansas manufacturing, and one subsector, aircraft, has comprised over 20 percent of total manufacturing employment. The nondurable component, dominated by food and meat products, also has exhibited greater volatility than the U.S. average, but its decline has been much more modest than nationally (see Figure 2).
**Figure 2**

Employment in Manufacturing, Durable Goods Manufacturing and Nondurable Goods Manufacturing as a Percentage of Total Employment, for Kansas and the U.S., 1960–84

Source: Calculated from data collected by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Kansas Department of Human Resources.
The Kansas Economy: Past, Present, and Future

Economic Outlook

The wealth-creating industries in Kansas, which serve as a foundation for the Kansas economy, are currently weak. Historically, the basic industries of aviation, oil and gas, and agriculture have served Kansans well. However, recent trends and current performance of these industries raise policy issues for Kansans with respect to future economic development. This section examines these industries, their inherent strengths and weaknesses, and their outlook for the future.

Traditional Industries

The traditional Kansas industries of aviation, oil and gas, and agriculture are not currently in a strong position. A key question in the economic development of Kansas is whether further decline in these industries is anticipated.

Aircraft. The aircraft industry in Kansas consists of two elements, commercial aviation and general aviation, the former being large commercial-transport aircraft, that is, large commercial jets, and the latter being smaller recreational, business, and regional-carrier aircraft.

The commercial aircraft industry delivered an estimated 275 aircraft in 1985, up sharply from the 188 units delivered in 1984. The Boeing 737 is a particularly successful model in this market. Fortunately for Kansas, a large portion of the assembly of 737s occurs at Boeing’s Wichita plant. The U.S. Department of Commerce predicts that world traffic growth and the need for replacement aircraft will keep demand strong for large transport aircraft. Due to the fact that Boeing and McDonnell-Douglas are the only domestic builders of these large transports, Boeing in Wichita will be anticipated to provide growing employment opportunities.

The vigor of the commercial transport market contrasts with general aviation. Approximately 60 percent of general aviation aircraft that are produced in the United States are made in Kansas. In 1979, 17,048 general aviation aircraft were shipped; this number fell to 2,691 by 1983 and to 2,050 by 1985. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that 2,200 units will be produced in 1986.
The reasons for this decline are not clear. Initially, the market downturn for general aviation aircraft was believed to reflect the general downturn of the 1980 and 1981–82 recessions. Evidence now suggests that, although the recessions may have aggravated the negative trend, there are other factors involved.

Partial explanations of the reduction in general aviation aircraft shipments include the changing nature of the regional airline industry, the strong dollar favoring increased imports of foreign-produced aircraft, and declining demand being satisfied by products in service. In 1980, imports of general aviation aircraft accounted for 20 percent of the market; in 1985, imports increased to 37 percent of the market. Several foreign manufacturers are aiming at the growing market of aircraft with twenty to sixty seats.

The U.S. Department of Commerce expects more structural shifts in the general aviation industry; in particular, the department forecasts a growth in the industry of 3.6 percent for each of the next five years. In terms of units, this growth would be quite small since current production is low. Consequently, the general aviation industry is unlikely to attain in the near-term its former level of production.

The prospects for the aircraft industry in Kansas are mixed. The general aviation sector has been weak, and the first quarter of 1986 was the worst ever for the industry and for the production of general aviation aircraft. However, the recent decline in the strength of the dollar will be a source of strength for general aviation. Kansas should continue, however, to benefit from the strong market for large transports.

Oil and Gas. As noted above, the Kansas petroleum industry is extremely sensitive to variations in the price of crude oil. When oil prices fall, the number of operating wells drops rapidly. One study estimates that, when the price of crude falls to $18 a barrel, over 15 percent of Kansas wells will be abandoned; if the price falls to $15 a barrel, approximately 23 percent of the wells will be abandoned. Another measure of the sensitivity of the Kansas petroleum industry to prices is the correlation between the number of active drilling rigs and the price of crude oil. In 1979, when the well-head price of oil averaged around $13 per barrel, the average rig count for Kansas was 66; in 1980, when the average price jumped to $22 per barrel, the number of rigs was 120. More recently,
rigs has been declining steadily from a high of 224 rigs attained in 1984. In mid-February 1986, the count of active rigs fell to between fifty to sixty as oil prices continued to fall. Estimates indicate that for every dollar change in the price of well-head crude, the rig count will change by ten in the same direction.

During the second half of the 'seventies, many developing countries became dependent on oil revenues. The demise of the oil cartel—with the resulting price decline—has forced these countries to attempt to maintain oil revenues by increasing output. The chronic oversupply of oil will keep downward pressure on the price of oil. This price consideration, combined with the nature of the Kansas oil industry, suggests that this important source of wealth for Kansas cannot be relied upon to generate income much greater than the present level.

Agriculture. Wheat and cattle have been the mainstays of Kansas agriculture, historically producing 70 to 75 percent of agricultural receipts. The worldwide supply of wheat has been continuously increasing. Countries such as India and China, which historically imported wheat, now export it. This increasing supply of wheat has outpaced the demand, and stockpiles have been increasing, as shown in Table 3. Unless there are interruptions in the worldwide supply, a continuing increase in the stock of wheat is anticipated. This growing wheat surplus will, of course, put downward pressure on price. The decline in the value of the dollar will offset partially the effect of growing wheat surpluses and increase the demand for U.S. wheat. As a result, further significant decline is unlikely, but little improvement in the current situation is foreseen.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture anticipates rising beef prices, which is certainly good news for cattle producers. This improvement will not solve the agricultural problem in Kansas; it will, however, help offset weaknesses in other economic sectors.

Kansas as a Place to Do Business

While Kansas faces adverse economic and demographic trends, the state has important strengths to build upon in formulating economic development policy. One of the most important strengths of Kansas, if
Table 3
World Supply and Demand for Wheat (metric tons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Exports(^a)</th>
<th>Consumption(^b)</th>
<th>Ending Stocks(^c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979–80</td>
<td>422.8</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>443.5</td>
<td>80.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980–81</td>
<td>442.9</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>445.7</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981–82</td>
<td>448.4</td>
<td>101.3</td>
<td>441.4</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982–83</td>
<td>479.1</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>467.9</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983–84</td>
<td>491.0</td>
<td>102.9</td>
<td>486.6</td>
<td>100.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984–85(^d)</td>
<td>513.9</td>
<td>107.2</td>
<td>500.6</td>
<td>114.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985–86(^e)</td>
<td>505.2</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>494.2</td>
<td>125.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Note: Data not available for all countries.

\(^a\)Excludes trade within European Common Market.

\(^b\)Where stocks data are not available (excluding USSR), consumption includes stock changes.

\(^c\)Stocks data are based on differing marketing years and do not represent levels at a given date.

\(^d\)Estimated.

\(^e\)Projected.

not the most important strength, is its people. Kansans have a strong work ethic: they perform a day’s work for a day’s pay.

Kansas has a relatively high wage rate, but this should not impede development. Kansas and neighboring states have hourly manufacturing wage rates higher than the U.S. average, and, regionally, Kansas is second only to Iowa (see Table 4). However, the average hourly wage rate in Kansas is distorted by the high-paying aviation, auto, and rubber industries. The frequency distribution of hourly wage rates in Kansas is bimodal: there is a large group of Kansas workers who are highly paid and a large group with moderate wages.

For every dollar paid to a Kansas manufacturing employee, dollars are added to the value of the product. In terms of productivity, Kansas ranks higher than any of the neighboring states and fifth among all states based on the value added by manufacturing employee per dollar.
Table 4
Average Hourly Manufacturers Wage Rates, 1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Hourly Wage</th>
<th>State Rank^a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>$ 9.28</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>8.97</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>10.09</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>8.71</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


of payroll. These data demonstrate that Kansas workers are productive in return for being well paid (see Table 5).

Many manufacturing firms prefer to locate where the unemployment rate is high, thus ensuring an adequate supply of labor. While, historically, the unemployment rate in Kansas has been lower than in the nation, a hidden supply of labor is available in many counties of the state. The low unemployment rate for Kansas may be misleading concerning available labor supply. In many counties, a large supply of “latent labor,” persons who would enter the labor force under certain economic conditions, exists. Therefore, low unemployment should not be a constraint on attracting new industry to Kansas.

The high educational level of Kansans constitutes another quality of the Kansas work force. Most firms seeking a location require the availability of a technically qualified, trainable work force. Kansas ranks seventh in the U.S. in median years of schooling. A higher proportion of Kansans also pursues graduate and professional work, such as engineering and business degrees, than in the U.S. population as a whole.

Concerning the weight firms attach to taxes when making location decisions, the evidence is mixed. Certainly, however, any expense of
Table 5
Value Added by Manufacturing Employee
Per Dollar of Production Payroll, 1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value Added</th>
<th>State Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


doing business affects the bottom line and will influence location decisions to some degree. Experience suggests that a state’s taxes should not stand out on the negative side. In general, Kansas taxes do blend with those of neighboring states. There are exceptions, however, which form barriers to development and should be removed. For example, Kansas is one of the few states in the nation that have a sales tax on machinery and equipment used in manufacturing. Another tax detrimental to business development is the property tax on inventories. Kansas is unique in the region for having this tax. Although Kansas taxes tend to be slightly high for business, removal of these anomalies, which is under consideration, will bring Kansas more into line with neighboring states.

The geographical location of Kansas is often cited as an advantage Kansas holds in attracting firms. However, exploiting geographical location requires a good transportation network. Kansas must maintain its highway network to take advantage of this inherent strength and find resources to fund major highway access to the southeast and southwest regions of the state. Further, many areas of the state lack air service.
In sum, further deterioration of the industries that have historically served Kansas well is not anticipated, but growth will be modest. These industries remain an important feature of the Kansas economy but should not be relied upon to provide sufficient employment opportunities for Kansans in the future. By building upon the strengths that Kansas has, the state can succeed in the competition to provide economic opportunities for its citizens.

Policy Choices for Economic Growth

The preceding analysis raises certain policy issues concerning the economic future of Kansans. Will a continuation of existing economic trends provide an acceptable level of social and economic welfare for Kansans? Should Kansas allow these trends to continue or attempt to influence them for the better? What is the cost of “doing nothing”?

With few exceptions, Kansas economic performance has been below the U.S. average during the 1980s with respect to income and employment. From 1979 to 1985, personal income grew at an average annual rate of 2.57 percent in the U.S., while for Kansas it grew at 2.06 percent. If Kansas had grown at the same rate as the U.S. over this period, Kansas personal income would be larger by $4.6 billion in 1985 dollars. This level of income would have meant an additional 40,000–50,000 jobs and additional revenues of $240–250 million (1985 dollars) for state government. These rough estimates are indicative of the consequences of relatively weak economic performance. This revenue “loss,” for example, seriously affects the capacity of the state to provide basic social services to those in need, to fund public schools and higher education, and to maintain roads and other physical infrastructure at a level enjoyed by other Americans.

Through extrapolation from these figures, it is evident that for the balance of this decade, if Kansas could achieve a 0.5-percent increase in the annual growth rate of personal income for 1986–91, that is, approximate average U.S. performance, personal income five years hence would be greater by $2.7 billion (1985 dollars), 30,000–40,000 more jobs than expected would be created, and $135–140 million (1985 dollars) in state government revenues would be added, based on tax
provisions prevailing prior to the 1986 changes. These ballpark estimates illustrate the serious consequences for Kansans if recent trends continue into the 1990s.

Potential Economic Structure

What form of economic development is feasible for Kansas in the future? What type of economic structure can the state realistically develop? Should an industrial structure based on our existing economy be envisioned, or is it feasible to aim for a relatively different economic composition based on new industry?

The state’s economic base provides the ultimate source of jobs and income in Kansas. The economic base comprises those industries that produce goods and services that are “exported” from Kansas to other states or countries and hence bring new money to Kansas. Also included are those industries that supply other Kansas industries with goods and services, which would otherwise be imported, and economic activities, such as tourism, in which services are provided to non-Kansans.

All other industries can be characterized as the local-market economy, which involves trade within the state. They do not bring new money into the state, but simply recirculate that which is already here. The size of the local-market economy is largely determined by the size of the economic base and will contract or expand in response to changes in that base.

A state achieves economic growth, therefore, by increasing the value of output from its economic base. The increased earnings of Kansans arising from that expansion then circulate in the local-market economy, creating additional jobs and income in that sector. The primary focus of a successful economic development strategy, therefore, must obviously be on the expansion of the state’s economic base.

The Kansas economic base consists of agriculture, mostly wheat and beef; mining, primarily oil and gas; manufacturing, particularly aviation and food processing; and exported services, such as engineering, software development, and tourism. Kansas has clusters of producers, suppliers, skills, knowledge, infrastructure, and institutions that are geared to these industries. The attributes of our state have
provided a competitive advantage in the past to the production of these particular goods and services within Kansas compared with other localities.

The outlook for this Kansas economic base suggests, at best, relatively weak growth in the future. This base has not been able to generate adequate income and employment in the recent past, nor will it provide a sole foundation for the future. In essence, the vision of a future Kansas economy with the same structure as today does not represent a viable alternative in itself. The traditional sectors can no longer carry the state as they did in the past.

Should Kansas countenance an approach of allowing its current base to fade away and be replaced by a completely new structure? This situation could occur only if the substitute industries were also based on comparative advantage. If a substitute economic structure were based on artificial comparative advantage, such as developing a wine industry in competition with California, it would be expensive and vulnerable. Abandoning its traditional sectors is simply not a viable option for Kansas.

Kansas cannot rely on its traditional base, nor can the state depend on the development of a radically different industrial mix. A realistic form of economic development for Kansas must incorporate the old into the new. If the current economic base of Kansas is conceived of as a “stool” having three legs, namely, agriculture, oil and gas, and manufacturing (particularly aviation and food processing), the future stool must have a foundation of four legs, the present sectors plus a fourth sector comprising some share of the new evolving industries in this era of technological development and application. Kansas has important traditional industries, yet these industries need to be enhanced with new basic industries.

A Kansas Economic Development Strategy

What strategy will produce an expanding economic base for the future comprising a mix of traditional industry and new development? How can Kansas retain, nourish, and strengthen traditional sectors and concurrently attract and nurture new industry?
The traditional sectors will survive and remain as the primary components of the economic core only if they become the gateways or conduits through which new products or processes emerge. This course necessarily involves the application of science and technology to the core industries so that resources are utilized to compete in world markets in the most competitive and innovative manner.

Fostering timely adaptation to change therefore becomes a leading objective of an economic strategy for Kansas. The harsh reality of the world economic order is that those industries which develop and apply new and existing knowledge rapidly and efficiently will be the ones with a competitive edge. In order to develop new industry, Kansas will need to provide an environment and support for innovation in, and the application of science and technology to, the existing economic base.

Where will the impetus come from? What is the role of the state, the private sector, and other key institutions and groups in Kansas? First, the role of the state is limited, but it is vital. State government does not have the capacity or power to conduct a comprehensive industrial policy that makes broad, strategic allocation decisions affecting all aspects of economic development. Nor does the state have control over commodity markets, tariffs, capital markets, or the money supply. Moreover, the prevailing philosophy of free enterprise and the traditional perception of the function of state government limit the scope of state government as an active partner in the development of business enterprises. The state can, however, play a vital role by creating the preconditions for economic development to flourish, which are

1. establishing an optimum foundation for development, such as tax structure and physical infrastructure;
2. fostering productive linkages, for example, private sector-state government cooperation and university-business research;
3. cultivating a favorable business climate; and
4. removing barriers to entrepreneurship and innovation.

While state government can and must establish the preconditions for economic growth, the state cannot be the main party to development.
The private sector and other groups must respond to the opportunity that the state will open for profitable venture.

Consequently, an optimum strategy for the economic development of Kansas should emphasize a balanced approach of supporting the existing economic base as well as fostering growth through the expansion of old, and the attraction of new, industry. Such an approach could incorporate the following thrusts:

1. **Enhance and extend the traditional sectors**, for example, through diversification into new agricultural products and greater value added in processing. The future viability of these sectors will depend on their ability to adapt to new products and processes, as well as on their competitiveness with current products.

2. **Retain, sustain, and expand existing industry.** Businesses of small-to-medium scale seem to be highly compatible with the Kansas environment. Given that 70 to 80 percent of new job creation occurs in small businesses, Kansas provides a favorable basis for vitality through expansion based on modernization and enhanced competitiveness and new business formation through entrepreneurship.

3. **Develop new industry.** Despite sound fundamentals, important strengths, and limited barriers, the state is not overly attractive to outside industry. Some improvement in attractiveness will occur with any enhancement of the fundamentals and strengths or removal of barriers. In seeking new industry, the state should recognize that only certain types of industry will find Kansas attractive and that foreign investment represents an important source for job creation, one being actively pursued by other states.

Given this focus on development from within, complemented by the attraction of new industry to the state, the key elements of an optimum strategy for Kansas would seem to be as follows:

1. **Foster competitiveness through innovation.** Individual firms, particularly small business, often have insufficient resources and technical capacity to learn about new technological developments and capitalize on new ideas. New technology will not be a separate industry but will rather be at the heart of every industrial sector. Existing Kansas industry will not survive, let alone expand, unless
it innovates, and the future viability of the weakened traditional sector depends on it.

Economic development initiatives to foster competitiveness and create a culture of innovation would include: increasing the pool of innovation, through university research, both basic and applied, and joint university-business research; improving access to innovation, through mechanisms for technology transfer and industry liaison; and creating incentives to innovate, such as tax credits for research and development and tax exemptions for research and development facilities.

2. Foster appropriate linkages and interrelations. Success will depend on committed and cooperative work by many groups and purposeful leadership at many levels. The lack of an integrated approach has handicapped the state program to date in terms of level, direction, and effectiveness. Linkages and organization can be improved significantly by more directed policy formation, through legislative committees and the establishment of a blue-ribbon policy-advising group; by broader input to policy formulation, through private sector and other key group participation; and by greater operational effectiveness, through better organization of the state effort, and closer involvement of and with the local communities.

3. Encourage entrepreneurship. Kansas will need imaginative, risk-taking entrepreneurs who are able to turn ideas for new products and processes into successful business ventures. Entrepreneurs exist in all communities, but the vigor with which they emerge depends on the entrepreneurial environment—the availability of the role models, access to financial institutions, rewards for risk taking, and above all the absence of barriers. The availability of capital is critical to new business development and expansion, and the lack of capital constitutes a primary barrier to the growth of small business in Kansas. A primary cause of failure is lack of managerial competence and know-how. Initiatives to cultivate homespun entrepreneurship include encouraging university connections and settings, for example, research parks and research incubators; developing risk- and venture-capital pools; and providing technical assistance and support for managerial development.

4. Provide the optimum infrastructure and business climate. A key objective of infrastructure development and business climate enhancement is to improve the competitiveness and profitability of existing and potential Kansas industry. The task is to cultivate both the notion and reality that Kansas is a good place to locate
economic activity. If the business environment is rewarding to existing industry, it will also be attractive to new industry. Kansas will lose attractiveness relative to other states if its tax structure and levels contain significant anomalies or fail to send the right "signals" about business climate. In particular, the state must avoid having a tax that generally is not found in competing states and negatively affects business in a significant way. Initiatives of the following kind can improve the business environment:

a. making physical infrastructure development compatible with state economic goals, by supporting infrastructure development related directly to business activity, loan pools for transportation, and industrial park development and by establishing priorities for road and other physical investment based on economic purpose;
b. moving the state tax structure into line with regional patterns, for example, through sales tax exemption for purchase of capital equipment and removal of the property tax on inventories;
c. providing special assistance for individual firms and small businesses, for example, information and technical services and marketing support;
d. creating relevant and effective incentives to encourage business location in Kansas, for example, an option for property tax abatement to local government, venture capital, and tax credits for research and development;
e. retaining commitment and support for public schools and higher education, to maintain one of the state's greatest assets;
f. ensuring that work-skill development meets industry needs; and
g. enhancing the quality of life.

5. Remove barriers to development. Significant impediments to business development, which retard expansion and discourage new industry, can be found in the Kansas business environment. Examples include tax measures impacting Kansas business unduly, for example, the sales tax on plants and equipment and the property tax on inventories; lack of nontraditional capital; lack of technical assistance and support for small business management; and constitutional limitations on the involvement of state government in economic development. Removal of such barriers is crucial to the release of entrepreneurship and enhancement of business confidence.
Economic development initiatives should be evaluated in terms of their contribution to these basic elements of strategy.

Conclusion

To achieve long-term improvement in the economic base, the state will need to make a large and sustained funding investment over the next decade to support a well-designed package of economic development initiatives. Even so, there is no absolute guarantee of success from a large-scale effort. Patience will be necessary because the specific payoffs will be long-term and uncertain.

In addition, transition through structural change can be uneven and painful. While the strategy outlined above provides the opportunity for development anywhere in the state, success is more likely in certain parts than in others. Appropriate social policies may therefore be necessary to ensure that all Kansans share the fruits of economic development, with a particular focus on displaced persons and distressed areas.

While the challenge facing Kansas is not an insurmountable one, it will be difficult. The path to progress will require substantial investment, patience, leadership, and commitment. It can be done.
Agriculture and rural communities across Kansas are in a state of transition. Poor economic conditions in this decade have accelerated a chronic, long-term trend of farm consolidation, closure of small-town businesses, and emigration.

Predictions that only 25 or 35 farm service centers and that just a few thousand farmers will dominate the state's rural economy in the 21st century have prodded government, institutions, and citizens' groups to determine how to hold onto the family farms and rural communities in the years ahead. Three strategies for the future seem to have widest currency.

One strategy is to "stay the course," conceding that a greater concentration of farm and rural business ownership is "inevitable" and should be accepted. The model of development for this strategy is the industrial agricultural system of southwest Kansas. Key elements in this plan are a loosening of the Kansas corporate farming law with regard to swine production, encouraging large-scale hog and poultry processing plants to move into the state, and the improvement of international markets.

Another strategy is to beef up the small farm sector by encouraging farmers to develop a niche in the marketplace. This strategy recognizes that the nature of farming is changing and that many opportunities exist on Kansas farms that weren't widely considered in the past. Although there is no single strategy that will work for every farm, greater farm diversification and enhanced marketing assistance can help many farmers survive.

A third plan is a low-input strategy to help small and mid-sized farms cut production expenses and conserve resources by converting

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to lower input methods of farming. This approach encourages diversification of traditional grain and livestock production, with an emphasis on greater development of organic farming systems and improved local marketing for a variety of farm products. This strategy emphasizes that mid-size farms must survive and flourish to give rural communities the opportunity to rebuild.

To help shape the debate and to evaluate the merits of these three directions, and to show that state institutions and citizens have considerable power to affect the structure of farms and rural communities, at least four issue areas must be discussed in the context of the traditional values that have so long characterized rural Kansas: corporate farming, farming practices, farm credit, and marketing.

The "stay the course" strategy believes that the current trends toward an industrial agricultural system cannot be changed. Although widespread ownership of land, businesses, and the means of production is one of the fundamental values of our democratic, agrarian tradition, only about 1 percent of the largest farms (about seven per county) produce nearly 50 percent of the state farm receipts. On the other end of the spectrum, 70 percent of the state's farmers, or 49,000 farmers, produce only 14 percent of the farm receipts. With this disparity in purchasing power, it is no surprise that small-town businesses from equipment dealers to grocery stores and variety stores are going out of business and are being replaced by conglomerate-owned, regionally located businesses and services.

The terms of the stay-the-course strategy would foster corporate development of family farms and businesses, in processing industries and in the infrastructure of support for rural people. This would hasten the decline of the mid-sized family farm and the erosion of small-town businesses, churches and schools that provide the basis of support for more than a million Kansans.

In contrast, the other two strategies offer a new direction for the survival of small and mid-sized farms and locally owned small businesses. The niche and low-input strategies recognize that for rural communities to survive those 49,000 farmers who make only 14 percent of the sales must increase their farm income in order to put more dollars back into the local economy.

State policy can effectively address the trend toward fewer farmers and larger farms by strictly regulating corporate entry into agriculture.
and vertical integration of businesses that serve farmers and rural residents.

As far as farming practices are concerned, agriculture of late has adopted practices that fly in the face of traditional family farm values of resource conservation and land stewardship. Conventional contemporary farming practices rely significantly on imported petroleum, petrochemical products, and sophisticated technology. The high cost of using these products has been a major contributor to escalating farm expenses and a principal cause of the cost-price squeeze that has plagued agriculture for many years.

At the same time, there is growing evidence that these farming methods are having a negative impact on human health and the environment. Heavy losses of topsoil, depletion of water resources, and contamination of food and water supplies constitute a "resource crisis" as severe in magnitude as the human side of the farm crisis. The need for farmers to cut production expenses and to preserve natural resources for the future, as well as public demands for safe food and a cleaner environment, is creating pressure for changes in farming practices.

The stay-the-course strategy ignores the resource crisis and exhorts farmers to become better managers by using conventional farming techniques more efficiently and effectively. Implicit in this strategy is a belief that technology should be pushed to its limits and that it can solve any problem or fulfill any need that agriculture might experience in the future.

The niche strategy does not directly address farming practices and resource policies. It does recognize that diversity of farm production is crucial to the survival of many farmers and that consumer demands must be met to be successful in specialty markets.

The low-input strategy is based on a strong conservation ethic that advocates a diversified farming operation of crop rotations, legumes, and the avoidance of high-cost chemical and mechanical inputs. This is a beginning in the process of weaning agriculture from what are sure to be increasingly expensive petroleum products.

The low-input strategy also implies a strong sense of responsibility to future generations by protecting soil and water resources. Low-input farms are typically smaller operations that can be managed with greater
care and concern for the land. This condition in turn makes it feasible for more farmers to engage in agriculture.

Public policy can address the issue of farming practices through regulation of state water policy, funding of cost-share conservation programs and sustainable agriculture research and education programs, regulation of health and environment, programs to assist farmers who want to make a transition from conventional farming practices, and consumer protection policies. Individual farmers also have considerable power and control over the way they manage their farms.

The stay-the-course strategy regarding farm credit assumes that current trends in the structure of agriculture will continue. This tendency would mean an increase in the numbers of large-scale farms, which normally are highly leveraged operations. These farms, as we have witnessed in the 1980s, are vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the marketplace, which increases the risks and liabilities of doing business. If these farms can show a profit, and if current lending policies and practices continue, capital will remain available.

The other two strategies assume that current trends can be resisted. The niche strategy may be difficult to finance because of the risk and uncertainty of developing a new product or service. For this reason, the state has promoted the formation of private and quasi-public venture-capital companies to provide operating funds for niche farmers. Venture-capital companies, though, expect a greater than normal return on investment that would take more dollars out of local circulation.

The low-input strategy relies less on borrowed capital but more on greater labor inputs to provide a quality of farm management and land stewardship that is frequently lacking in an industrial operation. Low-input farmers are typically cautious borrowers; many have no debt at all. This tendency leaves more dollars for farm improvement and local circulation.

State government has significant power over farm credit and rural development issues through the regulation of state banking laws, funding of programs that provide research, education, assistance and financing for economic development, and initiation of farm credit reforms to provide equity under the law for farmers and to help them remain in agriculture.

Marketing of agricultural products, however, is the key to further development of each of the strategies identified above. Agricultural
Local markets—such as this Lawrence, Kansas, farmers’ market—help farmers cut transportation time and costs and provide a higher quality product for consumers. These marketing cooperatives give producers more control and increase local income.
marketing is presently dominated by powerful corporate interests that have eroded the independent and self-reliant values of farmers and rural people. Since the 1970s the international market has dictated nearly all agricultural marketing strategies. The overexpansion of the 1970s was fueled by a tremendous increase in farm exports, but a steep decline in foreign sales followed in the 1980s.

The stay-the-course strategy holds that the internationalization of agriculture is one of those "inevitable" developments that cannot be altered. This strategy is based on regaining and expanding export markets at any cost, even if the competition of low-price markets drives more farmers out of agriculture. The niche strategy also emphasizes the world marketing, but it recognizes the growth possibilities in domestic and local markets.

The export emphasis of these strategies may increase the opportunities for income enhancement at the local level, but it also subjects producers to the whims of an unstable world economy, increasing the risk factors for farmers and communities that rely on such trade for their well-being.

The low-input strategy emphasizes the development of marketing cooperatives to serve primarily a domestic market. It seeks to minimize risk factors by exerting more producer control over the marketing process. This strategy pays particular attention to development of local markets, such as farmers' markets, to cut transportation costs and offer a higher quality product to consumers.

State policy has a great influence over marketing strategies. State activities have included increased promotion of Kansas-grown products at trade shows and the making of marketing agreements with foreign and domestic corporations. Public institutions can provide important research, producer education, technical assistance, and consumer information to help in development of marketing plans.

Each of these strategies probably will develop further in the future. The policies and actions of government, institutions, and individuals will play a pivotal role in this development.

Kansas and her people must work hard to affect farm policy and the structure of agriculture and rural communities. We must be careful to adopt that strategy that has the greatest benefits over time for the majority of Kansans.
Oz and Kansas Culture

Thomas Fox Averill

One can walk into any gift or souvenir shop in a Kansas town, or drop into one of the tourist traps along a Kansas highway, and find Dorothy and other characters from *The Wizard of Oz*. They are reproduced on postcards, T-shirts, mugs, posters, plates, or whatever holds their images or our image of ourselves. The people of contemporary Kansas are intricately, ambivalently, and inevitably linked to *Oz*.

Kansans have not always been. When L. Frank Baum published *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in 1900, neither national nor Kansas journalists noted as significant that Dorothy was from Kansas, even though Baum’s depiction of the state is one of the bleakest literary portrayals in Kansas literature. Dorothy lives "in the midst of the great Kansas prairies," where there is "nothing but the great gray prairie on every side." Baum uses the word "gray" eight more times. Aunt Em is "thin and gaunt, and never smiled, now." Uncle Henry "never laughed. He worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was."

Baum humorously depicts the differences between *Oz* and Kansas. In the fourth chapter, after Dorothy tells the Scarecrow about "Kansas, and how gray everything was there," he responds:

"I cannot understand why you should wish to leave this beautiful country and go back to the dry, gray place you call Kansas."

"That is because you have no brains," answered the girl. "No matter how dreary and gray our homes are, we people of flesh and blood would rather live there than in any other country, be it every so beautiful. There is no place like home."

Dorothy, in L. Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900), is, for many people, the quintessential Kansan. She has brains, heart, and courage and her greatest wish is to "get back to Kansas."
The Scarecrow sighed.

"Of course I cannot understand it," he said. "If your heads were stuffed with straw, like mine, you would probably all live in the beautiful places, and then Kansas would have no people at all. It is fortunate for Kansas that you have brains."

Similar passages pepper not only the rest of The Wizard, but Ozma of Oz (1906), Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz (1908), The Road to Oz (1909), and The Emerald City of Oz (1910).

In The Emerald City, Dorothy takes up permanent residency in Oz, bringing Aunt Em and Uncle Henry with her. Henry is broken, tired, and in poor health, about to lose the farm to a mortgage company; Em is careworn, still thin and gaunt, but hardworking. When transported, clad in her apron, she is holding a just-dried supper dish. They immediately begin a tour of the magical fairyland. Uncle Henry loves Oz, pointing out to Em how beautiful, wonderful, exotic, and, best of all, work-free it is. Em is a grump. Without work, she finds no pleasure or meaning. The Ozites let her care for the single chicken, Billina, who has just had her first chicks. The two have rich arguments over chick care (all animals in Oz can talk), Aunt Em insisting on her superior knowledge after having raised chickens for over fifty years. Baum’s comic portrayal shows that Kansans do not retire easily and tend to remain Kansans wherever they go, just as Dorothy did in the first book.

Still, in spite of Kansas characters and themes in the fourteen books from The Wizard of Oz in 1900 to Glinda of Oz, published posthumously in 1920, nobody, inside Kansas or out, chose to highlight the Kansas/Oz connection. In fact, after Baum’s second in the series, The Marvelous Land of Oz (1904), the books were ignored by all reviewers—no citations exist for them in Reader’s Guide to Periodicals or Book Review Digest.

Kansans, or at least the Kansas press, saw no need to respond to Baum’s image of Kansas and Kansans. Kansas was experiencing a fine couple of decades: crops were relatively good; the economy was fairly stable; the state had nationally prominent journalistic spokespersons in William Allen White and Edgar Watson Howe; and Kansas was on the cutting edge of much social reform—Carry A. Nation with prohibition, Samuel J. Crumbine with public health, and William Allen White leading Kansas into the era of Progressive Republicanism.
Additionally, readers of the Oz books were young, not shapers of a national image of Kansas.

The most pertinent question at that time, though, might have been why Baum set the book in Kansas in the first place. Surely, he had no idea his book would play such an important part in Kansas’ identity, that through The Wizard of Oz Kansas would be defined, remembered, reviled, and ridiculed by people from New York to Hollywood, from Japan to Australia to Africa and all around the world. It was impossible for Baum to foresee that, for out-staters, Kansas would become synonymous with grayness, tornadoes, Dorothy, and the Scarecrow, even confused with Oz itself. Nor could he have known how confused Kansans themselves would become. One wonders if Baum’s decision to choose Kansas as the “realistic” location of the book was arbitrary, or if he had reasons. It seems he had reasons, and plenty of them. Baum showed that he had brains when he chose Kansas.

Contrary to popular belief, as well as the many biographies and articles, L. Frank Baum did experience Kansas. His first success as a playwright and actor was The Maid of Arran, a sentimental, romantic, five-act, Irish drama: “a play to ensnare all hearts and leave an impress of beauty and nobility within the sordid mind of man.” The Maid took him on tour from New York, to Chicago, and as far west as Lawrence, Kansas, in the winter of 1882. His troupe of actors, including “Four recognizable stars” (the Misses Agnes Hallack and Genevieve Rogers, Mr. Frank Aiken and Baum himself), came to Lawrence from December 4 to 6, playing Monday and Wednesday evenings at the Bowersock Opera House. From there, the show played Olathe and points east.

The Monday night performance was a success. On Tuesday it began to rain, and by Wednesday the rain turned to snow. After The Maid of Arran’s second performance, the Lawrence Daily Journal reported: “Yesterday was a dismal, dull day.” About the show, it reported: “The troupe that presents this play was unfortunate as to weather. Owing to the extreme cold the house was not so large as the one that met it on Monday night.” At noon Wednesday, the temperature was twenty-four degrees. The paper’s weather report seems echoed, though very faintly, in the opening description of Kansas in The Wizard of Oz.

The second terrible thing in the book (the first being Kansas itself) is the tornado. Kansas often averages fewer tornadoes per square mile than several other states, including Georgia, but quite close to Baum’s
Kansas tour, one of the most frightening, devastating, and noted tornadoes of the nineteenth century struck Irving, Kansas. On May 30, 1879, Irving became the only town hit twice by a tornado in one day. The town of four hundred had been touted that same year by *The Emigrant Guide or Hand-book of the Central Branch of the Union Pacific Railroad*: "It is one of those places where seems to dwell something in nature that imparts the best of thoughts and feelings." But the double tornado levelled thirty-four homes and businesses, and killed nineteen people. The disaster was covered by the national press, and circulated reports fixed the event in the national mind:

The effect upon the people was pitiful. Night after night hundreds of people never went to bed, but remained dressed and with their lanterns trimmed, watching for a fresh onslaught, which they expected momentarily. Every dark cloud seemed to them filled with forebodings, which could not be allayed until every vestige of the supposed danger had vanished.

The Irving tornado became legend, creating a close connection between violent wind and Kansas. Baum, as editor of the *Saturday Pioneer*, published many stories about tornadoes, sharing the Great Plains residents' fascination with the weather and all its doings.

Irving had literary connections, having been organized on the day of Washington Irving's death, November 28, 1859. Also, among the nineteen Irving dead, six were members of the Gale family, a fact Baum must have been unaware of when he finally gave Dorothy a last name in the third *Oz* book.

Every writer needs to create a landscape. Baum conjured Oz. For the "real" place, he needed another place to conjure. Kansas is the geographical center of the contiguous United States, as the Emerald City and the Wizard are the geographical center of *Oz*. Kansas had prominence in the national consciousness, with its "Bleeding Kansas" Civil War connection, its place in the rapid expansion into the West after the Civil War, its grasshopper invasions and legendary blizzards, and its place in the saga of cowboys and cattle towns. Kansas was also important because of its early experiments in prohibition and woman suffrage (Baum's mother-in-law, Matilda Joslyn Gage, was a prominent suffragist and friend of Susan B. Anthony, who traveled in
Kansas, and whose brother, Daniel Anthony, settled in Leavenworth), as well as because of its prominence in the national politics of Populism.

Interestingly, Henry Littlefield, a New York high school teacher, wrote in 1964 a Populist interpretation of Baum’s novel as midwestern political allegory, with Dorothy as the “everyperson” from the Populist heartland who joins with a brainless farmer, a mechanized laborer, and a regal, pompous and finally cowardly buffoon (William Jennings Bryan) to regain her place in the world. During her journey, she kills the Wicked Witch of the East, who, with her silver slippers, represents the stranglehold of the eastern money moguls on capital. Dorothy meets an ineffective ruler unable to control either the East or the West (this could be any of the Republican Presidents between Lincoln and McKinley). She also encounters the winged monkeys, whose story sounds very familiar to one any Native American might tell. Dorothy conquers the West with water and leaves each of her companions to rule a different sphere of Oz. Then, with the power of the silver slippers, reflecting the free silver issue of the Populists, she returns home for a happy ending. The Populists, of course, were not as successful.

Littlefield’s interpretation points to one reason Baum might have chosen Kansas as conjure-name for the book. But, whatever the reason, Kansas has never been quite the same, especially since 1939, the year of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s great movie. By then, Kansas was a different place than it was when the Baum books first appeared, a place ready to bow its head to, even accept, the image of careworn, gray flatness beset with the difficulties of poverty, dust, and erratic weather. Ten years of the Great Depression and six years of Dust Bowl had taken their toll. Kansas was less a cutting edge and more a bludgeon for social reform. William Allen White ruminated about this loss of power and cultural distinctiveness as early as 1934, in a magazine article entitled “Just Wondering?”

Coincidentally, in 1939, Dr. Karl Menninger wrote “Bleeding Kansans” for the Kansas Magazine. He speculated that Kansans have gone off the deep end with desperate seriousness, and in so doing earned for themselves the name of being a humorless,
puritanical people, incapable of joy and grudging in their attitude towards those happier than themselves.

This is not a pretty reputation and naturally one shrinks from accepting this description of oneself and his friends and neighbors. Oddly enough, however, we do accept it almost unanimously and meekly endure the opprobrium and ridicule of other states. This I believe to be due to a humility and self-distrust so great as to be crippling to our energies.

Dorothy never experienced self-distrust in Baum's books. She was proud of Kansas. But the movie image survives, hitting home for a people who, as Menninger also wrote, "had an ascetic disapproval of joy or anything that would make it appear that we were a happy, progressive, successful state."

Menninger's analysis helps explain why the MGM movie had such an effect on Kansas and Kansans: it hit home, but not immediately. Although successful in first release, the film was not shown again until a celebrated re-release in 1949. A 1955 showing was unsuccessful, and in 1956, the rights sold to CBS, it appeared for the first time on national television, the first of over twenty-five showings over the last thirty years. The Wizard of Oz has been seen by more people than any other movie. It is a part of the national culture, part of America's sense of self, and of Kansas.

Baum would have been celebrating in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the reprinted books with their serendipitous television/film tie-in insured his American fairy tale's endurance in the national mind.

It also insured a Kansas image, one based on the book and movie. During the 1950s, Kansas was starting to look closely at itself. Dwight Eisenhower was in the White House. William Inge's Kansas plays were top draw on Broadway. At home, Kansas was between centennial celebrations, territorial (1954) and statehood (1961). It is no wonder Kansans were self-conscious and began reacting to and exploiting the Oz image.

A dual image emerges: first, that Kansans are innocent, virginal, and wide-eyed in the face of anything exotic—hence the most quoted line from the movie, "Gee, Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore"; second, that Kansas is not Oz and is, in fact, the opposite—a bleak, harsh, flat, boring land from which anyone would do well to
be removed, even by a tornado. In both cases, Kansans are the butt of jokes: on a postcard from a San Francisco gay leather bar, Dorothy utters her famous line to Toto; her innocence and love for home are questioned by T-shirts that read, “Dear Aunt Em, Hate you, Hate Kansas, Taking the dog”; and there is the postcard from the Motel of Oz, Emerald City, that reads, “Dear Dorothy, Sorry about last night. Hope you will still respect us in the morning. Scarecrow, Tin Man, Lion.” The image of landscape appears in a T-shirt cartoon by Guindon of a dumpy bag lady with a black dog in her shopping bag on a brick road leading to nowhere. The simple caption says: “Kansas, gateway to Oz.”

This leads to the campaign designed to exploit Kansas’ Oz fame, mounted by the then Kansas Department of Economic Development: the slogan, “Kansas, Land of Ah’s”; its purpose, “To dispel the image of the State of Kansas as dry, flat and boring in the minds of Kansans and potential tourists and tour companies.” The KDED initiative was both well received and highly criticized. Geared at first to Kansas residents, it confused people about whether Kansas was or was not Oz. Kansas was both “over the rainbow” and “home.” When the nation sniffed out the campaign, Kansas was upbraided in a Wall Street Journal article which could not understand why Kansans would take the most negative association, their albatross of the past thirty years, and use it to promote the state. In the Journal’s opinion, the campaign could only reinforce the dual images: that Kansans are naive, wide-eyed hicks and Kansas is a place to escape from. From inside the state came similar

Welcome to the Land of Ah’s!

Come to Kansas and discover a vacation at the rainbow’s end. It’s a pot of gold rich in recreational, historic and cultural attractions.

The images of Oz sell postcards, t-shirts, mugs, and posters. Oz bumper stickers entice tourists to come to Kansas.
complaints. Kansas had better images to promote. Reminding people of the Oz image could only hurt Kansas. But many Kansans put bumper stickers on their cars and appreciated the pun. The legislature designated U.S. 54 to be "The Yellow Brick Road," but stopped short of funding the highway signs to christen the route. Recently, the "Land of Ah's" slogan was dropped in favor of "Ah Kansas!" Asked about the campaign, Cathy Kusick of the Kansas Department of Commerce said that it was better received than not, and that Kansans seem more disturbed by the Kansas image projected by The Wizard of Oz than non-Kansans, who see it simply as an image, rather than a slur.

Kansans both love and hate the Oz image in the ascetic, self-denying way Dr. Karl Menninger analyzes. Kansans do not want to enjoy themselves, to find the positive image, and need The Wizard of Oz exactly so that they can complain about it and embrace it furiously at the same time. Kansans also want to claim their innocence and deny it at the same time. Kansans want to live in Kansas, but they also want everybody to know how hard it is. That is just like Kansans—they have had the same relationship to alcohol and its prohibition all these years and, as Menninger points out, to most other pleasures, too. Perhaps Kansans need to be psychoanalyzed to get over this great schism in their personality.

Ironically, in the recent Disney movie, Return to Oz, Dorothy is seen as a very disturbed little girl and is taken to an electric healer, who promises Aunt Em he will drain the excess electrical currents out of her head and make it so she does not dream about Oz anymore. He looks very Freudian—short beard and pipe—and Dorothy escapes just in time, when a thunderstorm cuts the power of this doctor's terrible machine, and the subsequent flood carries her to Oz. In Return to Oz, Kansas is bleak, but the new Oz is worse. The talking chicken, Billina, says, "If this is Oz, I'll take my chances in Kansas."

It would be nice to enjoy Kansas and Oz, at the same time, for Kansans to be at home with what they are, rather than to complain about how others see them. After all, it is others who have been reinterpreting Oz. Kansans have only been reacting. They steam when people in New York ask them how Dorothy is, if their dog is named Toto, or if they have an Aunt Em. Kansans have been trying to control the Oz image rather than trying to understand, appreciate, and reinterpret it and its part in Kansas culture.
Kansans should remember that Baum himself was ambivalent about the Great Plains. He tried to live there and failed. Yet he returned for the setting of his best novel. Perhaps Baum needed only a gray contrast to the beautiful, colorful, water Oz. Perhaps, too, he was examining the brains, heart, and courage it takes to survive the Great Plains and Oz. This leaves readers with Dorothy—more the center of the book than either of the landscapes. One cannot think of a better representative for Kansas, considering her behavior after she kills the witch:

...the Witch fell down in a brown, melted, shapeless mass and began to spread over the clean boards of the kitchen floor. Seeing that she had really melted away to nothing, Dorothy drew another bucket of water and threw it over the mess. She then swept it all out the door. After picking out the silver shoe, which was all that was left of the old woman, she cleaned and dried it with a cloth, and put it on her foot again. Then, being at last free to do as she chose, she ran out to the courtyard to tell the Lion that the Wicked Witch of the West had come to an end, and that they were no longer prisoners in a strange land.

Later, Dorothy explains again her desire to return to Kansas:

“My greatest wish now,” she added, “is to get back to Kansas, for Aunt Em will surely think something dreadful has happened to me, and that will make her put on mourning; and unless the crops are better this year than they were last I am sure Uncle Henry cannot afford it.”

Dorothy is loyal, logical, considerate, practical, sympathetic, straightforward, strong. She is unafraid to show her anger when necessary, and when she does, she finds positive results: Dorothy exposes the lion for a coward and melts the Wicked Witch of the West. She solves problems, moves steadily ahead no matter the odds, and, most important, she triumphs.

Kansans might not always appreciate Baum for choosing Kansas as the setting for *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. But they should at least appreciate that Baum also gave them Dorothy, a person strong enough,
with enough brains, heart, and courage to endure the bleak and forbidding Kansas he created. He also gave us a big portion of Kansas folklore, and a genuine part of the Kansas and American mind.

**Suggested Readings**


"It is my hope that Kansas Revisited: Historical Images and Perspectives will provide a sense of the people, times, issues, and places that help make the Kansas experience meaningful. State and local history is important in understanding one's culture and roots and in developing a sense of community and shared responsibility. . . . I hope that those who 'revisit' Kansas in these pages will gain a better appreciation for Kansas history and for the diversity of our culture and its people."
—from the preface by Paul K. Stuewe

"Kansans have long needed a book of readings on the history of their state. Kansas Revisited: Historical Images and Perspectives, edited by Paul K. Stuewe, fills the bill admirably. This volume, containing twenty-six pieces by various authorities, covers a surprising amount of the state's social, political, economic, and even cultural history. Both highly informative and interesting, Kansas Revisited is must reading for anyone concerned with the state's past and future."
—Donald R. McCoy, University of Kansas Distinguished Professor of History

Paul K. Stuewe, a native Kansan, teaches history and government at Lawrence High School. He is an author of Kansas in the World, published by the Kansas State Department of Education.