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Highlights of Kansas History

by

Robert Richmond

Every speaker may legitimately be expected to bind together his remarks, on whatever subject, with a theme. Comments on the history of Kansas could of course be clustered around a great variety of central ideas. One, however, appeals to me because of its certain validity—that is, Kansas as a study in contrasts. For Kansas history throughout is a study in contrasts. And I thought that this morning we would examine the history of the state in that light, using some contemporary views and opinions as we go; it seems to me that the contemporary document is always the finest source of history.

Certainly, this particular plan of attack is not unique—it has had broad application, because the situation that existed in Kansas through the years was true also in much of the history of the West, indeed, in much of the world. That is, contrasts are everywhere around us. But so much for the theme. Now to the story of Kansas, and the elements of contrasts in its development.

Let's begin with its geography and its topography, which vary from the Ozarkian-like hills on the eastern border and Flint Hills of East-Central Kansas to the flat Arkansas Valley and high plains of the western part.

The first man in Kansas, the first white man who would have any historic record, was of course Coronado, and he provides the first commentary on Kansas, a commentary which is to be contrasted with one of some years later. He came searching for gold; as you know, he found none. But perhaps he found something which is more valuable. That was the fertile land of Central and Southwestern Kansas. He wrote to his king, after visiting this area in 1541, that the soil itself ". . . was the most suitable found for growing all products of Spain, for besides being rich and black, it is well watered by streams and rivers. I found plums like those of Spain, nuts, fine sweet grapes, and mulberries . . . ."

Fifty years later, another Spaniard, Juan de Onäté, visiting Indians in what is now the Sedgwick-Kingman County vicinity, had similar comments to make on the fertility of the soil: The cornstalks were as tall as those in New Spain, and in some places, even taller. The land was so fertile that even though the corn had been harvested, there was a second crop about six inches high, without other cultivation or preparation of the soil than pulling up the grass and making some holes in which the corn was planted; there were many beans and some calabashes and plum trees between the

fields; these were not irrigated fields, but depended on seasonal rains, which, as we learned, must be very regular in that land.

This was to be the opinion which existed for two centuries, until the coming of the American explorers. Lewis and Clark, on their way up the Missouri north to examine Mr. Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase, did not come inland into Kansas far enough to really get an idea of what it was like. But in 1806 a young army lieutenant, Zebulon Pike, did come through the area and found the land, in his words, a desert, generally speaking. And Stephen H. Long, in 1820, first put the name "Great American Desert" on a map of the United States.

Long wrote, referring to the Kaw Valley: Its valley, like that of the Missouri, has a deep and fertile soil, bearing similar forests of cottonwood, sycamore, and interspersed with meadows, but in ascending, trees become more and more scattered, and at length disappear almost entirely, the country at its source being an immense prairie. The character of this river and its branches is similar to that of the Platte and its tributaries; woodlands are seldom to be met . . . . Much of the country is said to be possessed with good soil, but it is rendered unhabitable for want of timber and water. The bottoms are possessed of a light, sandy soil, and the uplands in many places characterized by aridity and barrenness.

So we have turned full circle in two hundred years, from the good impressions of the Spaniard to the poor impressions of the American. It may be said that perhaps Mr. Long didn't always know what he was talking about, for he was sent out here primarily to find the source of the Red River, which he never found; in fact, he thought the Canadian River was the Red. So perhaps we can take his opinions with a grain of salt. And it did so happen that by the middle of the century the opinion of the American explorers was again refuted, so we have come back to the original idea of fertility.

Horace Greeley, who took his own advice to "Go West," was here in 1859, and he said of Eastern Kansas, "if the Garden of Eden exceeded this land of beauty and fertility, I pity Adam for having to leave it." And a writer in the Boston *Commonwealth* of April, 1854, termed Kansas the very garden of the world, and said that "all this region is superior to that of any I ever saw for cultivation, and if it were occupied by a New England society, I would never think of visiting California." Now these would be strong words in these days of Chambers of Commerce, but this again was all to turn.

For in 1957, Walter Prescott Webb, of the University of Texas, who is a very competent and eminent historian, pointed out that indeed Western Kansas is a desert land, for water—or at least that search for it—is always a problem. And Mr. Webb is right; certainly in the years since the opening of the territory, more than once drouth has visited Kansas, and

the western tier of counties are at times very desert-like; however, Mr. Webb did not mean to say—and I don't think anyone else does— that the desert has not been made to bloom. For certainly it has advanced agriculture; irrigation, the drilling of wells—thousands of them put down just at the close of World War II—has certainly turned what was once a dust bowl back into a blooming area.

To turn from weather and soil to people, we find that the Indians of this area also provide comparison. The native tribes, the Kiowa, Comanche, Arapahoe, Wichita, Osage, Pawnee, Kansa, Otoe, and Missouri—those tribes which we consider native in this area—were in themselves different, for within these tribal groups historians have documented three different ways of life. There were pure nomadic tribes in the western part, where subsistence depended entirely upon the buffalo; and the village tribes in the eastern part, such as the Pawnee, and the Osage; and a combination of the two, which included segments of all of these tribes, but more particularly, the Kansa, for whom the state was named. And an even greater contrast is provided by the United States plan of Indian removal, which began in the late 1820's and ran into the 30's. For then we see arising what have been known as the immigrant Indians, twenty some tribes—to name a few, the Pottawatomie, the Kickapoo, the Shawnee, the Sac and Fox. These were woodlands Indians of the East, from places like Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin, who brought with them their own culture, their own religion, and their own way of life. So we not only had differences among the natives—we most certainly had them when the woodlands Indians of the East came into this area.

Kansas, of course, after the reports of people like Pike and Long, had been considered a good, permanent home for the American Indian. This idea of the Great American Desert seemed to mean to a good many people in the East that this land was not habitable for the white man and could not serve agricultural purposes; therefore, Easterners seemed to think, let's remove the Indian to it, so that their lands in the East, which are richer, will be open for white settlers.

This attitude, then, started the long series of treaties which always promised, but never fulfilled. There were people in the United States in the 1820's and 30's who thought that manifest destiny was absolutely not good, and that if this plains area were set up as a permanent Indian home, then the expansion of the United States would end at the Missouri and that we would not have to worry about anything west of that. This idea, of course, fell by the wayside and, in so doing, provided greater problems for the Indians, who were shoved farther to the south, west, and north. And the treaties which always read "As long as the water runs and the grass grows . . ." were not worth the paper that they were written on. And in the 1860's and 1870's the Indians, with the exception of a few remnants

which remain in northern Kansas today, were removed in a wholesale manner, most of them to the Indian territory which became Oklahoma.

The Indian removal gave rise to the mission movement—institutions such as the Shawnee Methodist Mission in Johnson County, the Kaw Methodist Mission in Council Grove, the Catholic Mission of the Pottawatomies, which moved from southeastern Kansas to Saint Mary's, and a Quaker mission to the Shawnees in northeast Kansas. All of these were efforts to Christianize the heathen as he came here to his new home, for all of the missions—I shouldn't say all, but practically all—were among Indians who had come from the East. The founding of the missions gives rise to a rather interesting comparison: that is, the slave-holding propensities of some of the missionaries who came to Kansas, on one hand, trying to bring God, the white man's God, to the American Indian, on the other hand, keeping the Negro in servitude. Such contrast does not seem quite to add up; indeed, this very contrast brought forth some rather indignant comment.

Richard Mendenhall, one of the pioneer missionaries of the Society of Friends who worked among the Shawnees in northeastern Kansas prior to the opening of the territory, was extremely upset about the slaves which were held at the Shawnee Methodist Mission. And let me point out that at this time the Methodist Church had split, and the mission was an institution which was being run by the Methodist Church South. They had brought their ideas with them from their native areas. In 1854, the Rev. Mr. Mendenhall addressed a letter to the Washington, D.C. *National Era,* in which he strongly protested the activities of the Shawnee Methodist Mission. The letter was published on June 8; it said, in part, that there was in the territory an extensive missionary establishment under the Methodist South at which slaves were kept to do the menial services of the mission. These slaves, it went on, have been kept there in utter disregard of the Missouri Compromise. It would seem to a candid thinker a difficult matter to conceive a grosser inconsistancy than to go forth to preach Christianity to the heathen and to carry slaves along to assist in the glorious work. Thus while they would hold up the gospel to the heathen with one hand, with the other they bind fast the yoke of bondage on the neck of the poor slave.

There was another thing about the missions which was common, and that was their lack of success. I do not, however, mean to minimize their importance, for they did provide a nucleus for settlement, a point of trade, way stations on the great immigrant trails—such as the Santa Fe and the Oregon—and certainly they brought civilization into a new land. Generally speaking, they had little success in Christianizing the Indians. A few were willing, but most did not think that their children needed the white man's school, nor did they think they needed the white man's church. And one of the best examples of the missionary versus the Indian took place at Mission Neosho, a mission which existed only five years, from 1824 until 1829,

in what is now Neosho County. Nonetheless, it was a mission of historical significance, being the first mission station in what is now Kansas and one of the first white settlements of any permanent kind to be established west of the Missouri line.

There was a great deal of resistance to the mission work at Mission Neosho. The man in charge, a representative of the Presbyterian Church, found his task an extremely difficult one. He made an honest effort to learn the language of the Osage, among whom he was working; he tried to preach, and he tried to teach, and he tried to show them agricultural methods which he thought were better than theirs. He was a very conscientious man, but he was doomed from the beginning, as was the mission. He was caught up in Indian politics. He had a poor Indian agent, who gave him no assistance.

Yet Mr. Pixley's letters and reports give us the best picture of what the Indian tribes like the Osages were like in Kansas as early as the 1820's. He wrote of them: You ask how these people live. In the summer, it is on the prairies; in the winter, it is in the villages—three months, perhaps, it is in huts, and between two and three months on the prairie. The rest of the time they are scattered here and there, a few families together, hunting, moving every day or two, and lodging wherever night overtakes them. Accommodations are few and simple: a few wooden dishes, two or three horn spoons, and a kettle or two make up the amount of their household furniture. Their houses, and manner of building them, are equally crude. Their food while in the town is principally jerked meat, boiled corn, dried pumpkins, and beans, wild fruits, and acorns. Similar foods, in their season, make up for what is lacking. And when their provisions are exhausted, they move off on their hunt. If they kill nothing the second or third day, they are not alarmed. Acorns or roots of the prairie are still at hand to supply them with a supplement, so that the fear of starving would be the last thing to enter into the Osage mind. The women plant the corn, fetch the wood, cook the food, dress the deerskins, make the mocassins, dry the meat, do all the business of moving, pack and unpack their horses, and even saddle and unsaddle the beasts upon which their husbands and other male kindred ride; while the men only hunt and war, and when they're in town, go from lodge to lodge and eat, smoke, drink, talk, and play at cards and sleep. For with them it is no mark of ill manners to waste the day in their neighbor's lodge. Were you here now, just going through their towns on a tour of observation, you would probably find more than four-fifths employed in gaming and scarcely one engaged in any useful purpose.

Writing of their religious knowledge, Pixley later said: When I tell them that I came to teach them the word of God, they sometimes sneeringly ask, Where is God, have you seen Him? And then they laugh to think that I should think of making them believe a thing so incredible . . .They indeed call the earth, the sun, moon, thunder, and lightning, God, but their

conceptions on this subject are altogether indefinite and confused. Some old men who are more given to seriousness and reflection frankly declare that they know nothing about God, where He is, or what He is, or what He would have them do. They speak of Him as being hateful and bad, instead of being amiable and good, and they often say they hate Him, that He is of a bad temper, that they would shoot Him if they could see Him.

This is evidence, it seems to me, that the lot of a missionary working with people who had no desire to be Christianized certainly was not an easy one.

Probably the next thing to happen to Kansas, chronologically, after the Indian, was the laying out of the trails, haphazard as it may have been, and the use of them. And here again, we have a basis of comparison, for the Santa Fe Trail, which was first used regularly in 1821 and existed until 1872 when the Santa Fe Railroad crossed the state, was primarily used for trade. On the other hand, the Oregon Trail, used between 1831 and 1869, was primarily an immigrant trail. So the two greatest highways in the West existed, basically, for two different purposes. A third trail, the Smoky Hill, which is almost entirely a Kansas thing, was used primarily by gold seekers on their way to Colorado in the late 1850's. So trade, immigration, and gold—three different things for which people searched—gave birth to the three great trails of Kansas.

One interesting thing about the Santa Fe Trail is this: when it was surveyed by the federal government in 1825, a treaty was signed with the Kansas or Kaw Indians in what is now McPherson County. For a consideration of only $800 and some paltry bits of merchandise, the Kaws were compensated, and in turn they were to give free right-of-way and access to the trail so long as they held the land. The first caravan to cross the trail, the first full-scale wagon caravan, in 1824, all by itself brought back to the United States $180,000 in gold and silver. A rather ridiculous exchange—$800 to the Indians who held the land, and $180,000 to the white traders who used it. But such is the sort of thing that existed throughout the history of the West.

In 1854 an event took place which was to shake the United States to its very foundations—the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It created the two territories, on May 30, 1854, and opened the land for settlement, repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had stated that no slavery should exist in the Louisiana Purchase, north of 36-30, which is the line of the southern boundary of Missouri. It provided for popular sovereignty, or what became more familiarly known as squatter's sovereignty. The bill further stated that the people should have the right to determine what sort of government they should have, that they themselves would decide whether or not slavery should exist in Kansas and Nebraska. To the rabid abolitionists in the North, this was treason; slavery had been prohibited north of this line in 1820, and it was the understanding of the

people of the United States, at least those in the North, that this would end the question forever, as far as the West was concerned. But this re-opened old wounds and also called into action the pens of editors in both the North and the South, who had a great deal to say about the Kansas-Nebraska Act, both before and after its passage.

In the North, the rabid abolitionists screamed "treason"; in the South, the rabid Southerner, supporting the slaveholders, screamed "treason" at the abolitionists. But during the period of congressional debate on the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, meetings were held and resolutions were passed throughout the North in opposition to the bill. On the other hand, anti-slavery and anti-Nebraska groups were voluble in their denunciation of the proposed act. The reports of all proceedings found ready space in the newspapers.

The Boston *Liberator*, the newspaper of William Lloyd Garrison and probably the most outspoken of all the Northern newspapers, reported on a resolution that was passed by a Pittsburgh abolitionist group in February of 1854, which read: Resolved, that the disgrace clinging to the name of Benedict Arnold will lose its pre-eminence in American history and be measurably hid in a blacker and more hideous infamy that will forever stamp the characters of Northern statesmen who sell themselves to pro-slavery fanatics and aim a fearful stab at the union of these states whose value the people of the North have ceased to consider as greater than human liberty and American honor.

Apparently some of the residents of Boston thought that a comparison between Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois with that of Benedict Arnold was an apt one, because an effigy was found hanging on a flagpole of Boston Commons labeled Stephen A. Douglas, author of the infamous Nebraska Bill, the Benedict Arnold of 1854.

Added to the chorus of Northern dissent was a group of four resolutions passed by the Massachusetts legislature in February, 1854, and forwarded to the state's congressional delegation. This state law-making body viewed with apprehension and alarm the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which was considered a flagrant act of injustice. In Concord, New Hampshire, twelve clergymen issued a memorial to President Pierce in March, asking that he kill the Nebraska iniquity by his veto. And the press noted that among the twelve was the pastor of the church at which the President worshipped. This activity of objection was not confined to New England, and Douglas did not escape criticism in other areas. In Alliance, Ohio, a group of women wrote to Senator Douglas and enclosed thirty new three-cent pieces. The *Liberator*, March 17, reprinted the letter, which said, in part: If Judas was worthy of his reward for betraying one in whom he had full confidence . . . then much more are you worthy of this reward; for this betrayal of liberty, without portraying this horrid picture further, may you receive the enclosed thirty pieces of silver as a testimony of our regard; ere

you follow the last act of Judas, may you repent in deepest sackcloth this most nefarious betrayal of liberty.

Well, this should give some idea at least of the first round in the battle of words over the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

However, this didn't end it, and a little later in the spring, the same sort of thing continued. Again Mr. Garrison's *Liberator* had comments to make, saying that Franklin Pierce, the President, "an obscure gentleman residing at Washington, has been using his frank to send a lot of electioneering documents into New Hampshire. This man is supposed to be a late resident of Concord, in that state where he was known as a third-rate lawyer. He has since been promoted, occupying the place which was formerly filled by the President of the United States. And his main business is that of being stool-pidgeon to the South."

The South's newspapers were, of course, not completely silent during this period either. . . .And the abolitionist meetings which were being held in the North afforded the deep South ample opportunity to express itself. The same edition of the Boston *Liberator* which had carried the piece about President Pierce gave space to an editorial quoted from the Richmond, Virginia *Whig*, which referred to an anti-Nebraska meeting held in New Haven, Connecticut, the seat of Yale University. And the Southern editor wrote: We have only to ask whether after a public exhibition of sentiments on the part of Northern professors, the South will longer submit to the degradation of patronizing Northern colleges. It has institutions of its own, worthy of support, because no wild folly or dangerous fanaticism is there installed. They are especially worthy of it, because we should zealously aim to rid ourselves of all slavish dependence upon the North. Better in our judgment, that the children of the South should live and die in ignorance of even the letters of the alphabet than be subjected to the contaminating influence of Northern instructors.

So it went. And there have been people in more recent times who have made comments on the education of the South which undoubtedly would have bothered that same Richmond, Virginia editor.

Once the territory was open, settlement began. And soon after the first settlers came in, a great field opened up: this was one of town promotion, something which was to be carried on throughout Kansas and the West for a good many years. But activity among the promoters was probably most feverish during the territorial years. A new land is always an excellent field for the promoter, and they swarmed into the Kansas area by the dozens. They promoted towns, banks, railroads, schools, churches—anything they could think of. Some of them did it honestly; others did it dishonestly. In any event, the promotion of towns, especially, was a thing which at times had far-reaching effects.

One of the favorite tricks of the town promoter was to prepare a beautiful colored lithograph of a city—for example, the town of Sumner, in

Atchison County, which has been dead for many years, was pictured on a lithograph with some ten or twelve Missouri River steamers at its levies, three- and four-story brick buildings, churches, a university, hundreds of immigrants wending their way west through the streets. That sort of thing was done time and time again for towns like Doniphan City, Delaware, Sumner, and Kickapoo, none of which exist today—or if they do, grass grows in their streets. Yet when people in the East saw these, they were excited. They thought, My, this is a booming land. So West they came, and they arrived at a dusty crossroads with perhaps one building, but certainly not anything like had been pictured in the scene they had seen in Ohio, or Illinois, or Indiana.

One example of this type of propaganda was a piece which appeared in the Lawrence *Herald of Freedom* in May of 1857, concerning the town of Sumner. It said: We learn that a new town has been located on the Missouri River, three miles below Atchison, with the name of Sumner, which bids fair to occupy a firm position as regards river towns. The company of businessmen who have taken hold of the enterprise with energy have already struck a deadening blow at Atchison, which must be effective in destroying that town unless it passes into other than pro-slavery hands. The truth is there is a fatality hanging over the pro-slavery towns of Kansas which will always prevent their prosperity. The people of Lecompton are actually tremulous at the approach of rain in warm weather, as they know that grass will grow in their streets this summer in spite of every effort of theirs to the contrary. As to Sumner and the enterprising company who have projected the town, we waste an abundance of prosperity.

Well, part of this is motivated by free-state, pro-slavery attitudes, as you can tell by this quotation. Sumner was a free-state town; Atchison, along with Leavenworth, was a stronghold of pro-slavery politicians. Lawrence, of course, where the newspaper ran the article, was the citadel of the free-staters. So part of this was motivated by this desire of each political party to outdo the other, and this, of course, helped them in their promotion.

While we're on propaganda, I should like to read you part—this has nothing to do with towns—but part of a description of a pro-slavery man which appeared in the New York *Tribune,* Horace Greeley's newspaper, in April, 1857, a description which certainly was not aimed at cementing Kansas-Missouri border relations. The free-stater wrote: I have taken occasion of late to visit some of the border towns in Missouri and inspect the inhabitants. They are a queer-looking set, slightly resembling human beings, but more closely allied in general appearance to wild beasts. An old rickety straw hat, ragged shirt, buttonless corduroys with a leather belt, and a coarse pair of mud-covered boots constitute full dress. They never shave or comb their hair, and their chief occupation is loafing around whiskey shops, squirting tobacco juice and whittling with a jack-knife.

They drink whiskey for a living and sleep on dry-goods boxes. All are National Democrats and delight in robbing henroosts and pilfering from free-state men. They generally carry a huge Bowie knife and a greasy pack of cards, and expound at length on their exploits in Kansas among the damned abolitionists. They are generally about six feet high, spindle-shaped, and slab-sided. It would be an insult to the brute creation to call them brutes, although it must be confessed that there seems to be no little congeniality between them and the porkers, so much so, indeed, that they frequently spend the night in close proximity in some convenient mud-hole. Their conversation is interspersed with original oaths and generally ends in a free-fight. They are down on schools, churches, and printing offices, and revel in ignorance and filth. After visiting them, one cannot but feel the truth of the doctrine of total depravity, so far as it applies to parts of the human family.

To return to the towns briefly. In contrast to the high-flown pieces which were written about these villages, consider what Sol Miller wrote. Miller, who was one of the most witty and, often, vitriolic editors of territorial Kansas, and editor of the *Kansas Chief* at White Cloud, got sick and tired of hearing of town promotions, which were outright lies at times. So he wrote two pieces in his newspaper, in 1857, which lampooned town promotion in general. These certainly must have taken the wind out of the sails of some of the windier promoters, and they provide a different light on the subject of false advertising. He first wrote: Strangers have no idea how thickly settled Kansas already is. The towns spread over her surface as thickly as flees on a dog's back. We said towns, we meant to say cities; we have nothing but cities out here, and the proprietors are bound to let people know it, for they stick cities to the name of every town. We venture to say there is scarcely a store or tavern in the Union in which there is not posted in a conspicious place, town plats of some large city in Kansas or Nebraska, a majority of which do not contain a single house. Travelers out here are not aware, unless they are told, that they are passing through cities every few miles of their journey. Tadpole City, Prairie City, Opposum City, etc.—each one is bound to make the most important place in the West.

He wrote a second item, which read: A company of capitalists from Bunkim County, North Carolina, have recently arrived in the territory and purchased a gopher hole on a high bluff on the river, where they have laid out a new town which they have appropriately named Gopher City. The place already contains a first class whiskey shop, kept by a church member in good standing, a gas mill, one dry goods store, one ox team, three speculators' offices, and one private residence. A large hotel is just being finished, where persons can obtain the best of accommodations at 10 dollars a week. The town must necessarily become the most important point on the Missouri River above New Orleans. A glance at the town plat, which can

be seen in all country groceries throughout the Union, will convince anyone of this fact. It has a permanent landing at all seasons, as the bluff during high water is very near the river. It will certainly be the terminus of the Wind Line and Gasport Railroad, and the entire country back of the Pacific Ocean must necessarily be dependent upon it for supplies of grog and tobacco. One great advantage possessed by this city is that, from the bluff, you can see the towns of Hardscrabble and Groundhog's Glory. A vast amount of building is talked of this summer, and persons desiring to purchase shares will do well to invest soon, as there is great excitement in regard to the place, and every time a stranger inquires the price of shares, they advance fifty per cent. Persons wishing to invest will call at the office of Messrs. Blow and Skinner, Bullfrog Street, Gopher City.

To return to politics, not the politics of the East, but the politics of Kansas, we certainly find a great many contrasts. First, there was the appointment of Governor Reeder, who came to Kansas as a National Democrat. When he saw what was going on, he changed his mind and became a free-stater. He entered the state—the territory, I should say—as its first governor and a hero; in less than two years he left as a thief would have left, going stealthily in the night, in disguise, to escape the wrath of pro-slavery partisans who had changed their minds about him. This is a man, appointed by a Democratic president, who came here to do a good job conscientiously; by the time of the meeting of the first legislature, in July of 1855, the pro-slavery press in Kansas was to write that the people would rather see him hanging from a tree than occupying the gubernatorial chair.

Governor Reeder was not alone; a great many of the governors who came during the territorial period came with one idea in mind and left with another, most of them trying to do a decent job and many changing to the free-state cause before they departed.

The rivalry between free-state and pro-slavery factions was, of course, bitter, but the idea of "bleeding Kansas," which has been perpetuated through the last century, was at many times a false one. For while blood was shed on Kansas territorial soil, the Kaw Valley was not a mass of burning cabins or of dead bodies killed by either faction; in fact, bloodshed did not play a very big part in the seven years of territorial history. So this has been an misnomer applied to the state. It bled more through the pens of newspaper editors than it did through the skins of men, and it made excellent copy, particularly in the more rabid newspapers of the East, whichever faction they happened to be supporting. So we see that a 100 years ago, as indeed today, there was support of the idea of "Bleeding Kansas"; the truth, however, seems to be that, as in the case of the town promoters, there was not as much to it as was often written.

One thing we had lots of in territorial Kansas was legislative action and the formation of constitutions. This was something which occurred

time and time again. First, there was the extra-legal free-state government in Topeka, which thought that everything that the legal pro-slavery government did was wrong. They wrote the Topeka Constitution, which was submitted to Congress and got nowhere; in turn, in 1857, the pro-slaveryites wrote the Lecompton Constitution, the document which would have admitted Kansas into the union as a slave-holding state, but again no success in Congress. Then came constitutional conventions at Mineola, in Franklin County, and Leavenworth, neither one of which amounted to anything. Finally, in 1859, we were to have the Wyandotte Constitution, which was to bring us into the Union in 1861 and was to prove to be the document which is still in use today, basically. But all through the territory we have, on the one hand, the free-staters, and on the other, the pro-slavery partisans, arguing to establish the laws.

I have said much of it was a battle of words; yet there was some action: Lawrence was sacked by pro-slavery forces, at one time; there were individual murders, but some of them were the kind of thing which would undoubtedly have taken place without political controversy.

Yet there were two incidents in territorial history which were acts of bloodshed in a big way, and provide a comparison with things like the Battle at Hickory Point, where many shots were fired and no one was hurt. But these two things, which came to be known as the Pottawatomie Massacre and the Marais des Cygne Massacre were things which found their way into the newspapers with good reason and which, at least for a brief time, made the name "Bleeding Kansas" a reality. They were done, one on each side, the first being the Pottawatomie Massacre, which took place in May of 1856 and involved that arch abolitionist, John Brown. He was the leader of a party of free-staters who disposed of a group of pro-slavery settlers in Franklin County. He was accompanied by four of his sons and three other men. They had been on their way to assist in the defense of Lawrence, when word was received that the difficulties had been settled there. The main party decided to continue to Lawrence, but the senior Brown and his seven followers turned back toward Pottawatomie Creek. And it has been written that he then announced that he would rid the vicinity of its pro-slavery settlers. They arrived at the home of one James Doyle, where they took into custody Doyle and his two sons, and killed them. They then proceeded to the home of Allen Wilkerson, a member of the pro-slavery legislature, and he too was killed after he had traveled with the group a short distance. The final stop on this bloody expedition was at "Dutch Henry" Sherman's Crossing, where William Sherman, brother of the man who lived there, was murdered. Henry Sherman himself escaped, thus robbing the Browns of their last intended victim.

This incident added fuel to the smouldering fire of political controversy and did set off some acts of guerilla warfare, none of which, however, was on the same level as this particular deed. Many free-staters felt that

this was a good answer to the so-called border ruffians who had used high-handed methods in dealing with the free-state voters and property. And one writer wrote "that no other act spread such consternation among the ruffians or contributed so powerfully to make Kansas free. Hitherto, murder had been an exclusive Southern privilege; the Yankee could argue and make speeches, but he did not care to kill anybody." Of course, the pro-slavery press was more than indignant. They did not know at first that it was John Brown who had done this, but when they found out, certainly he was condemned far and wide for the action. Two years later, almost to the day, the Marais des Cygne Massacre took place, a mass killing which occurred four miles east or northeast of Trading Post in Linn County and which resulted in the death of five free-state men and the wounding of five others. And it has been written that nothing in the Kansas struggle did more to inflame the nation. This time the murders were committed by pro-slaveryites from Missouri under the leadership of a captain of the guerillas, one Charles Hamilton. The massacre was widely publicized in the Eastern press, and John Greenleaf Whittier felt called upon to write a poem commemorating it. The free-state press, of course, could not say enough in condemnation, labeling it a fiendish murder with no parallel in the history of assassination. And certainly this sentiment was carried throughout the United States.

But a change is noticeable in two years, for now the pro-slavery press is more temperate and even the Kansas *Weekly Herald,* at Leavenworth, which was ordinarily one of the most rabid of pro-slavery newspapers, carried this critical article in May of 1858: The details are horrible in the extreme and revolting to anyone who has not the heart of a savage. The report states that these men were made prisoners one by one, and their captors, when a fit opportunity and place was presented, shot them down in cold blood. Such cowardly proceedings as these are a disgrace to a civilized country and only in keeping with the characters of fiends and monsters. No excuse can be offered in justification. We believe that the pro-slavery men of that quarter had been harrassed and persecuted by their enemies, but no principle of retaliation can justify them in such acts of cowardly murder.

Two years before, this kind of an opinion would not have been expressed by a pro-slavery newspaper. It would have been crying for retaliation, instead of offering just criticism. So in two years something had changed in Kansas. And, in fact, the Marais des Cygne Massacre, which did receive national attention, marks the final chapter, really, in whatever violence may have occurred.

The defeat of the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution in '57 quieted some politicians, and this pretty well wound up actual armed conflict. From 1858, through the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention and its successful outcome in '59, to January 29, 1861, when Kansas was admitted

to the Union, things were relatively quiet in Kansas territory, and the days of struggle were generally over.

The Wyandotte Constitution in itself did provide one interesting comparison, in that although these people who wrote it were primarily free-state sympathizers and for the abolition of slavery, they were not interested in admitting the free Negro into Kansas: this is a rather unusual thing for these people who had spoken so long and so loud for the Negro's freedom; once the time came to write a constitution, they were not willing to admit this same person into the state, as a voter. A compromise finally was reached whereby Negro suffrage was prohibited; slavery was also prohibited in the territory. But this was not the liberal document that one would expect from these people who had had so much to say only a short time before about the South.

It is also interesting to note that Lincoln visited Kansas in 1859 and, of course, there was no more outspoken foe of the extension of slavery, although at this time he certainly was not an abolitionist. And even though he was well received wherever he spoke, the Republican press of Kansas ignored his visit, generally speaking, for the Republicans of Kansas were solidly behind Mr. Seward, and the young lawyer from Illinois held no great charm for them. At Atchison, where he spoke to an overflow crowd and received great ovations, the newspaper carried not one mention of Abraham Lincoln's being in Kansas. In fact, a couple of Democratic papers did, an interesting situation. And although he did make an impression when the Kansas Republican delegation went to Chicago in 1860, they stayed solidly behind Seward throughout the balloting, even when the convention went to Lincoln. So this is a rather unusual footnote to territorial history, and it points out again the strange conflict of ideas between members of the same party.

I should like to mention briefly the Kansas gold rush of 1858-59, for it was at that time that Kansas gold was found at the base of the Rockies, now in Colorado. But at that time, when Kansas extended to the summit of the Rocky Mountains, it was Kansas gold, and it electrified the nation and brought thousands of people through here in 1858 and 1859 to seek their fortune. Unfortunately, the first year in Colorado, or what is now Colorado, was a difficult one. Gold was not lying on the ground to be picked up by anyone who came. A good deal of suffering took place almost immediately after people arrived in the Cherry Creek and Pike's Peak region. As a result, a good many people turned around and headed East almost immediately. The '58ers and '59ers, many of them were busted, to use their own terms, and those who had gone on a year before were trailing back in the summer of 1859, and they received some space in the Kansas newspapers, the same papers who had reported the thousands rushing west a year before. The Leavenworth *Times* quoted a contemporary—they didn't name him, but they said he had come up with this particular description of what

is known as an "infit" from the mine, as opposed to an "outfit." The editor said: We are now able to give a description of an infit we saw exemplified yesterday by one who has been there and got back. One ragged coat with collar and tail torn off, one pair of pants hanging together by shreds, one hat without the rim, one and one-half shoes looking like fried bacon rind, one and one-quarter pounds of raw beans, one and one-half pints parched corn. In answer to our question whether he designed returning to Pike's Peak shortly the traveler responded, "Not by a jug-full." The *Times* bears witness to the truth of the infit; we have seen immigrants by the hundreds exactly thus equipped.

The *Kansas News* of Emporia, in July, 1859, wrote: Notwithstanding the thousands of wagons daily returning from the West and the thousands of persons who are heartsick, weary, and footsore, a slight tinge of humor is frequently manifested by various devices on the wagon covers. For instance, we saw the other day a weatherbeaten wagon on which the following letters stood out in bold relief, P P B D. Our curiosity was excited. The initials were too much for our comprehension, and we were fain compelled to inquire their meaning. The teamster responded, in a voice husky with emotion and indignation, "What does these here letters mean; them letters, Sir, expresses my sentiments and means Pike's Peak, Be Damned." We would have lectured this here immigrant on the sinfulness of depression, but on the survey of his exterior came to the conclusion that it would be thrown away to no purpose, and let him pass.

The railroads, as they came, provided another contrast. Here again we have the heroic saga of the railroad builders, who came bringing transportation and communication to a land that was without it. But within two decades, the railroads had turned from hero to villain; they became probably the most ogre-like business establishments in the West, condemned thoroughly by the farmers who did not feel that the freight rates, charging all the traffic would bear, were just and equitable, nor did they feel that the railroad land grants which were sold were part of an honest piece of business. Eventually, however, the railroads did prove to be heroic. During times of drouth and depression they often provided free transportation for seed wheat and corn and that sort of thing. Now in this day and age, it seems that the railroads, according at least to their own reports, are again fighting for mere existence: this again provides an interesting comparison with railroading in Kansas in the 1860's and 70's.

Now to move to another area of consideration. The cycles of settlement and weather have kept turning throughout the time since Coronado, of course. Immigration in the 50's and 60's was extremely heavy, and the census of 1870 revealed an increase in population of 239 per cent over the preceding decade. Between 1861-1873 thirty-five new counties were organized. And so with the coming of the 1870's, Kansas was a land of boom and bumper crops. But all of a sudden, things changed, for in the early

1870's both settlement and agriculture were checked, and in some cases virtually annihilated by three things: the depression of 1873, the grasshoppers of 1874, and the drouth of two or three years in the first half of the 1870's. Perhaps of all these terrible things the grasshoppers were the worst, because such a plague as this was a phenomenon totally unknown to those poor settlers from the East or from Europe who had just come to Kansas. People knew about drouth and people knew about great depressions, for they had occurred before throughout the United States. But this insect plague, which was to visit Kansas in the summer of 1874, was something entirely different and, in some cases, struck real fear in the hearts of the settlers in Western Kansas. The insects came suddenly and came so thickly that at times they blotted out the sun, and they spread their desolation from the Dakotas to the plains of Texas; Kansas was right in the middle of it. Sometimes the residents of the West mistook the advancing insects for an approaching rainstorm, and sometimes their steady hum actually sounded like hard rain in the distance. In some places Kansas farmers reported a crawling mass of insects covering the land to a depth of four or six inches. One observer commented that they seemed to cover the face of the earth. There was one fortunate note in this disaster: they came in July and August, after the completion of the wheat harvest. But they attacked the corn, and in some places the corn which the farmer had was the staff of life. They destroyed vegetable gardens, they ate pasture grazing lands, which in turn meant that cattle and horses had no grass on which to feed.

One William Meredith, a settler in Kansas, left a rather graphic description of the arrival of the grasshoppers in his home. Mr. Meredith wrote: We were at the table where the usual mid-day meal was being served, when one of the youngsters who had gone to the well came hurrying in, round-eyed with excitement. "They're here, the sky is full of them, the whole yard is crawling with the nasty things." Food halfway to the mouth fell back upon the plate, and without speaking, the whole family passed outside. Sharp spats in the face, insects alighted on the shoulder and in the hair, scratchy rustlings on the roof, disgusted brushing of men's beards, the frightened whimper of a child, "Are they going to eat us up?" Overhead the sun, dimmed like the beginning of an eclipse, glinted on silvery wings as far as the eyes could pierce. Leaves of shade trees, blades of grass, and weed stems bending with the weight of clinging, inch-long horrors, a faint sickening stench of their excrement. The afternoon breeze clogged with the drift of the descending creatures. The garden truck had disappeared; even the dry endings were gone, leaving smooth molds in the ground, empty as uncorked bottles. The woods looked thin as in late autumn; water troughs and loosely covered wells were foul with brown hoppers. Neighbors passing spoke of strange happenings: a young wife awaiting her first baby in the absence of her husband had gone insane

from fright all alone in that sun-baked shanty on the bald prairie. If the winter didn't kill them off, it was all up with the people. There'd never be another harvest in Kansas.

There were a good many strange happenings. Some of the stories which came out of the grasshopper years were, of course, tall tales, but some of the tallest ones happened to be true. For instance, trains were stalled on greasy tracks at some spots in Kansas. On an occasion or two it was known that the grasshoppers actually ate parts of the clothing off of people, as they stood watching them. Of course, one farmer also reported that the grasshoppers took the wool off his living sheep, and another insisted that the hogs' noses were eaten away--I think we can discount this. But as one old timer who had experienced the invasion once said, "No matter what is told you about the grasshoppers, believe the story." And it seemed to be so.

Stories of the depression, drouth, and grasshoppers drifted East in the 70's and kept immigration from beginning again until the mid '70's. The year after the grasshopper year, 1875, was a good one. There were bumper crops, a mild grasshopper scare amounted to nothing, and before long another great Kansas boom was underway. It was a boom which extended into the '80's, when population reached what to that point was its greatest density. Only 17 counties no longer had no permanent residents. Crops were good, prices were high, and everyone made money. Of course, in 1887, depression again hit, with mortgages reaching fantastic figures. And all this depression trouble bore fruit in the Grange and Populist movements of the '90's, a decade which saw another depression, another boom time, and actually the end of what we have come to know as the old frontier.

Two things were strong in this latter part of the nineteenth century, Prohibition and Populism. Prohibition is something which has carried through all of Kansas history, from the territorial period to the post-World War II era—from the smashing of dram shops in Lawrence and Leavenworth, to Carrie Nation, to legal liquor with state control in 1949. We had constitutional prohibition, we had a governor elected on a prohibition platform, John P. St. John. Under St. John, a law was passed forbidding the sale of alcohol for any except medical, scientific, and mechanical uses. Later, under Governor Stubbs, there came a law forbidding the sale of liquor for any purpose.

Populism, later than Prohibition and shorter-lived, had its genesis in the hard times of the 80's. By the middle 90's it had reached its full flower in Kansas, during the McKinley-Bryan campaign when the Democrats and the Populists formed a fusion party. The intensity of the campaign brought forth what is probably the most famous political editorial in the history of newspapers—"What's The Matter With Kansas?" by William Allen White. It was a brilliant piece of writing, but perhaps it was too much of a con-

demnation of what was going on. Certainly some good came out of these early reform movements.

White wrote:. . . .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 the praise of her, to boastful acts 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 mossback Jacksonian who snorts and howls because there's a bathtub in the state-house; we are running that old jay for governor. We have another shabby, wild-eyed, rattlebrained fanatic who had 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 ash heap 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 portion 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. (This refers, of course, to Mary Elizabeth Lease, "Farmers should raise more hell and less corn"—a statement which incidentally has yet to be proved, but which makes good quote.)

Oh, this is a state to be proud of, we are a people who could 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 the 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 idots 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 cities on the fertile prairies; you bet we don't. What we are after is the money power. Because we have become poorer, 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.

Well, he went on and on in that vain, lambasting the Populists, some of whom deserved it, others who didn't. Mr. White himself proved to be a source of interesting study in contrast; he certainly was a man who changed his mind more than once, politically.

While Populism didn't really accomplish much in the way of reform, it opened the way for a Republican progressivism of the early Twentieth Century which brought forth excellent new legislation and two fighting, boss-busting governors, Walter Stubbs and Edward Hoch. Their administrations brought out child labor legislation, juvenile courts, congressional reapportionment, maximum freight rates, bank guarantee laws, and direct primary laws, civil service and tax reforms. Republicanism in Kansas had created its own contrast, and a happy one it was, in comparison to the machine-ridden party of the years before. There has been much progressive legislation through Kansas history from 1900 on; most of it has been Republican.

This is in contrast to the extreme conservatism apparent in national and international affairs: liberal at home, conservative in the world—this was the pattern in Kansas until the close of the World War II and the years following.

The change was apparent by the late 1940's, however, and this change prompted Kenneth Davis to write in 1949: Another trend of pleasant significance is seen in the fact that Kansas, once notorious as a hot bed of isolationism, now expresses on the popular level a burgeoning internationalism. The Kansas response to UNESCO, for example, has been so remarkable that the state department issued the other day a special bulletin on it. All over the state, one hears sharp condemnation of isolationism.

The last comparison that I should like to make is one which has come to the front recently, that of the cowtowns of Kansas of the '60's, '70's, and '80's and what TV had done to them. Nyle Miller, Secretary of the Historical Society, has done considerable research along these lines, and I'm sure that if he were here he would be interested in pointing out some of the contrasts in that field. A paper which Mr. Miller read to a Kansas City group in the past year sums up the situation admirably; Mr. Miller illustrates how the facts of history have become distorted unnecessarily. For it is unnecessary to fabricate stories about Kansas cowtowns; after all, they were fabulous as they actually existed and they need no fictionizing. The first program which I would like to mention is about Wyatt Earp, one which I watched quite faithfully when it began, but one which got a little more disgusting to the perhaps too pedantic, western scholarly part of my mind. As those of you who have seen it know, here is a western hero, wearing a halo, who can do no wrong; he was a good police officer, we will not take that from him. But one of the strange things is that if Wyatt Earp has

any claim to fame, it should be written about him at Tombstone, Arizona, not at Wichita, or Dodge City, Kansas, for while he did a capable enough job in those two towns, certainly he was not the whole show. Mr. Miller has written: Wyatt Earp, one of the top cowtown police officers on TV today, was televised for a couple of years as the marshal of Wichita, with Marsh Murdock, publisher of the Wichita *Eagle,* following him around from one demonstration of mastery to another, recording his good deeds in the columns of the *Eagle*. How much space did the *Eagle* really give to the work of Wyatt Earp? A check of the files during Earp's actual ten years in Wichita shows the *Eagle* giving him a couple of brief mentions, and that was all. There were no long stories in the *Eagle* covering Wyatt's supposedly brilliant police work, even though viewers received that idea from television. The Wichita *Beacon,* on the other hand, mentioned Earp four or five times. The longest favorable article, giving Earp full credit for an arrest, appeared May 12, 1875. "On Tuesday evening of last week, Policeman Earp on his rounds ran across a chap whose general appearance and get-up answered to the description of one W. W. Compton, who was said to have stolen two horses and a mule from the vicinity of LeRoy, in Coffee County. Earp took him in tow and inquired his name. He gave it as Jones. This didn't satisfy the officer, who took Mr. Jones into the Gold Room on Douglas Avenue in order that he might fully examine him by lamplight. Mr. Jones, not liking the looks of things, lit out, running to the rear of Dennison's Stables. Earp fired one shot across his poopdeck to bring him to, to use the nautical phrase, and just as he did so, the man cast anchor near a clothes-line, hauled down his colors, and surrendered without firing a gun. The officer laid hold of him before he could recover his feet for another run, and taking him to jail, placed him in the keeping of the sheriff. On the way, Jones acknowledged that he was the man wanted."

The *Beacon* carried three more mentions of Earp and his work before this unfavorable report appeared on April 5, 1876: "On last Sunday night, a difficulty occurred between Policeman Earp and William Smith, candidate for city marshal. Earp was arrested for violation of the peace and order of the city, and was fined on Monday afternoon by His Honor, Judge Atwood, thirty dollars and costs and was relieved from the police force. Occurring on the eve of the city election and having its origin in the canvas, it aroused general partisan interest throughout the city."

Thus you can see that Mr. Earp was not always on the right side of the law in Wichita, and if we go a little further to see what the official city records say about Wyatt Earp, we find that the journals of the city commission show that he was elected as one of the two policemen on April 21, 1875, and that he was third or fourth man on the law enforcement totem pole in Wichita. A year later, on April 19, a few days following the election eve rumpus which was described by the *Beacon,* and despite the fact that Wyatt's friend was re-elected marshal, the city commission voted two for

and six against rehiring Wyatt Earp. On motion, the vote was reconsidered, and the balloting showed a tie. The matter was then tabled. A report of the police committee on May 22, 1876, recommended that the pay of Wyatt Earp be withheld until all money collected by him for the city be turned over to the city treasurer. The report further stated that the vagrancy act should be enforced against the two Earps. Thus Wyatt Earp bowed out of Wichita's contemporary records.

Since then he has received a lot of embellishment from Stewart Lake, TV, and movie script writers and others, perhaps, shall we say, even from Mr. Earp himself.

Another thing which comes to light on the television program, is the immaturity of Bat Masterson, who, in fact, was a far more experienced police officer than Wyatt Earp was, and if anybody learned anything from anybody else, it was Earp who took lessons from Masterson, and not Masterson who took lessons from Earp. Wyatt was only a policeman in Wichita; he held a similar situation in Dodge City. There, he was never a city marshal but only an assistant. Of course, I realize, that the television hero must certainly be the top man, but historically it wasn't always true.

Mr. Masterson, while being a good law officer, also had his troubles. He was arrested for being drunk, for shooting up the town, and various other things in Dodge City, while, of course, the next weekend he might be doing the same thing to some Texas cowboy.

Well, so much for it. I wanted to point out, at least very briefly, this last contrast between what actually happened and what has been pointed out in both the media of movie and TV. Fact vs. fiction, and as I said before, I should like to repeat, Kansas history, especially that period of the cowtown and the cattle trails, needs no embellishment. For one look at the newspapers of Dodge City certainly proves that for ten years it was as wild and rough and tumble as any town could have been.

Well, whether or not I have proved anything in this talk, I can't say. It certainly is not possible to consider the entire history of any state in so brief a span. But perhaps these highlights and quotations of four hundred years of history will serve to illustrate a little bit of the kinds of events and, indeed, entire eras that have come and gone in that time.