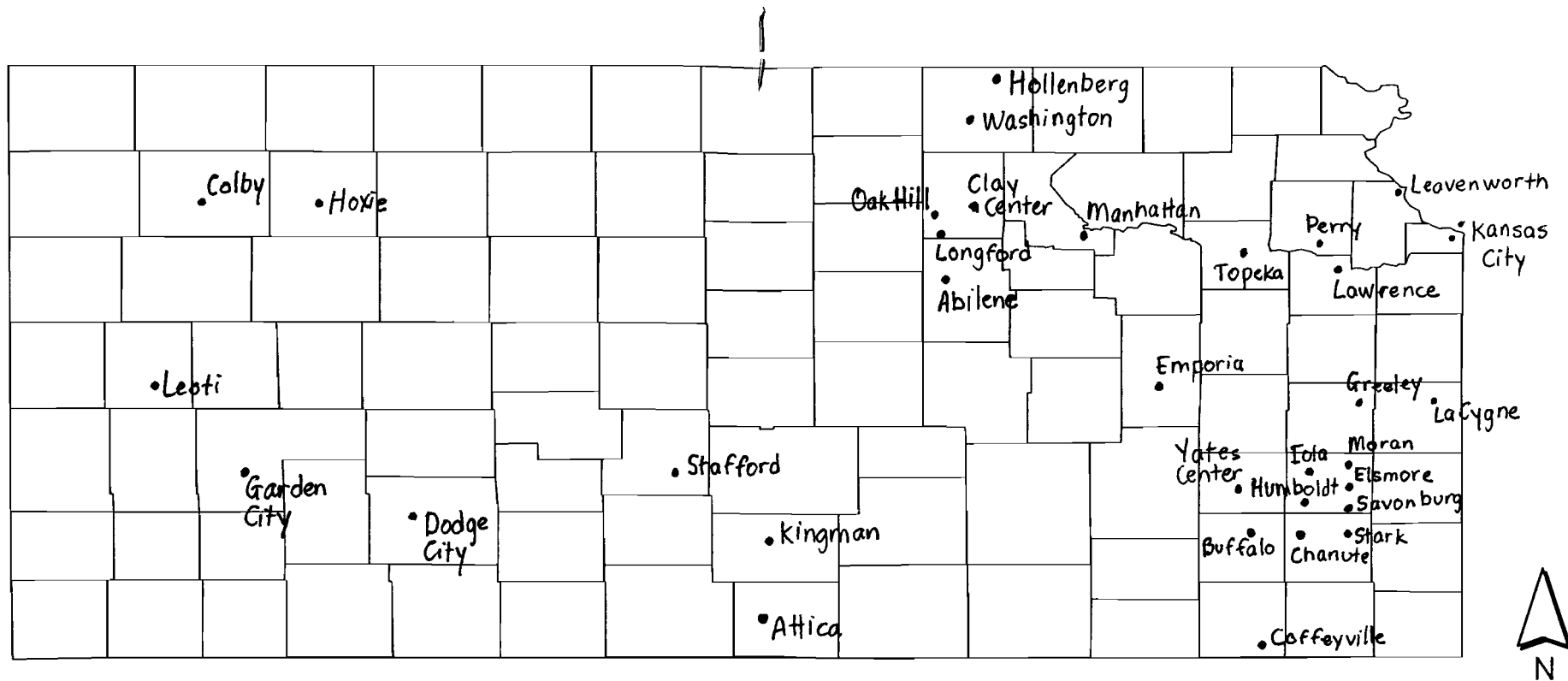


KANSAS



Places mentioned in the stories.

(Not all places appear on the map.)

MARGARET SORENSON, GRANDMOTHER

by

Courtney Black, grandson

My grandmother defined the Great Plains in the following way: the region reaches west to the mountains of Colorado, east to the Kansas border, south it stops at the border of Texas and Mexico, and north into Nebraska. I don't think she has been north of Nebraska, so she doesn't know that according to some people the Plains extends into Canada.

Margaret Sorenson was born to proud parents Walter and Melva Reavis on the twentieth day of July 1924 in Fostoria, Kansas. She had four siblings—two sisters and two brothers. Margaret attended grade school in both the small towns of Grantville and Muncy. She attended high school in Perry, Kansas. All three towns are located in northeastern Kansas.

She remembers traveling in horse-drawn wagons. Her aunt used to travel from Colorado to Perry every year in a covered wagon to visit the family. During the summer when she was a kid she used to be outside most of the day playing and doing chores. At a young age she helped her mother cook for the thrashers—the workers who came through to thrash the wheat. She remembers, when she was young, the family sitting around the radio and listening to different shows.

She said the summers were hotter then than they are now. Her Grandpa during the winter used to saw ice blocks and store it along with food to sell during summer. She said that fewer tornados used to hit the area back in those days. During the summers the area experienced terrible thunderstorms with lots of lighting. In one summer storm her family's house and barn were struck by lighting and burned to the ground.

Courtney Black graduated from Emporia State University in May 2000 with a Bachelor of Science in Business, with a Management major.

In 1929, the bank in Municy went bankrupt and the railroad moved. The family moved to Perry where they shared a house with another couple. Margaret recalls that the other family was getting WPA help, which was like welfare payments. Her family used to trade food with the other family because they were tired of eating the same thing everyday.

She said her family was not affected by the Depression that much, because her father had a job working as section foreman for the Union Pacific Railroad and made decent money. Also, during the Depression her mother made all the clothes, saved what money she could, and made all their bread. They had a wood stove to cook on so they saved money in this way, and they raised chickens, hogs, and other animals to eat. Her father would ask neighbors' permission to cut wood on their property, as they only had four acres of land. Grandmother's father had a good job, but other members of the family were struggling, so they never knew how many people would show up for dinner.

According to my grandmother, when the grasshoppers moved through Kansas, they weren't too bad where she lived. She went to visit her aunt and uncle in the town of Fostery and recalled, "The grasshoppers were bad there, they ate everything—the wood posts, clothes, trees and the fence posts. They would find the smallest cracks, then they were inside. There was a wide bare streak left across the land."

While at Perry High she was an all-star basketball player. She set and still holds many basketball records at the high school. After she graduated Margaret went to the local beautician school and upon graduation became a beautician. She married Lloyd Black on September 12, 1943. They settled in the Kaw Valley area, the meeting place of the Delaware, the Wild Horse and Spring Creeks with the Kansas River. They had three children: Lolita, Joyce and Lloyd Jr.

In 1951, there were two floods in the Kaw Valley. The first flood came up to the front steps of Margaret's home and then receded. However, two weeks later it flooded again and that time they were not so lucky. The water stood four feet deep in the house and then proceeded to move the house off its foundation. After this, Perry Lake

reservoir was built for flood control and there were no more major floods in the area.

Margaret divorced Lloyd in the early 1950s and married Keith Sorenson on May 16, 1957 in Yates Center, Kansas, where she currently lives. Keith and Margaret had two sons—Larry and Brian. They lived on a small farm east of Yates Center. Margaret is twice divorced and currently resides in Yates Center. She is actively involved in her church and makes crafts to sell at craft shows.

My grandma thinks that women played a major role in the development of the Plains, because women did all the cooking, cleaning, and helping the sick. They also tended to livestock and did chores such as feeding and milking. She says that things have changed now. She told about a time when she was at my parents' house for supper. She sat talking to my mother while Mom was rinsing the dirty dishes and then putting them in the dishwasher. Grandma said "I could have had all the dishes done by the time she was done rinsing them off and putting them in the dishwasher."

Grandmother's hope and dreams in the past were to have a family, home, and to be happy, and I believe she has succeeded in doing all of these. Her family is thirty-eight members strong and growing. Her current hopes and dreams for the future are for everyone in our family to have a happy and fulfilling life. For herself she would like to have a log cabin on small plot of land in the country.