

KANSAS HISTORY

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Damon Runyon House, 400 Osage, Manhattan, June 2004.

One seldom associates "Broadway" with Kansas, even though it is located in that other Manhattan (the "Big Apple," as opposed to the "Little Apple"), but the father of Damon Runyon, well-known journalist, author, and Hollywood screenwriter, built this house in Manhattan, Kansas, in 1880. Alfred Damon Runyan was born here on October 4, 1880, and lived in the modest, middle-class house until the family moved to Clay Center. Subsequently, they also lived briefly in Newton and Wellington, Kansas, and Pueblo, Colorado. As Damon Runyon (he dropped his given name and changed the spelling of his surname early in his profession), he launched his career in journalism while still in his mid-teens and is remembered for musicals such as *Guys and Dolls* and as the "father of Broadway." Throughout a highly successful career, much of his writing, although set in cosmopolitan New York, was infused with his, as well as his father's and grandfather's, Kansas and western experiences.

Alfred Lee Runyan, who with his wife, Libbie Damon, built the wood-frame, American Folk style house, moved to Manhattan with his father in 1855 aboard the steamship *Hartford*, and thus can be counted among the town's founders. By the late 1860s the younger Runyan had followed his father into the printers' trade and worked as a journalist in Manhattan and Junction City before co-founding in 1876 the *Manhattan Enterprise*, a predecessor of the city's present daily, the *Manhattan Mercury*.

The Runyon House, which was considered one of Manhattan's most interesting attractions at the time of Damon Runyon's death in 1946, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in December 2004, after narrowly escaping demolition just a few years before.

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of downtown Wichita. A review
essay on the urban history of
Kansas begins on page 274.

BACK COVER: The Army– Navy
E Award was presented to
Kansas City's bomber plant
during World War II. "We All
Had a Cause" details this
home-front industry.

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