Remembering These Marble Halls

Reflections on the Memorial Building

It All Began at Tenth and Jackson
by Dudley T. Cornish

This Grand Structure
by Robert W. Richmond

Memories of the Memorial Building
by Clifford R. Hope, Jr.

It Was My Good Fortune: A Memoir
by Joseph W. Snell

Beginning One Childhood Summer
by Homer E. Socolofsky
Remembering These Marble Halls

Reflections on the Memorial Building

It All Began at Tenth and Jackson
by Dudley T. Cornish

This Grand Structure
by Robert W. Richmond

Memories of the Memorial Building
by Clifford R. Hope, Jr.

It Was My Good Fortune: A Memoir
by Joseph W. Snell

Beginning One Childhood Summer
by Homer E. Socolofsky
It All Began at Tenth and Jackson

by Dudley T. Cornish

Aha! I hear my severest critic cry: "The ubiquitous 'it' once more!" And of course he demands to know what "it" was that all began at Tenth and Jackson.

He might just as well have asked what and where are Tenth and Jackson; we paid-up members know already: world headquarters of the Kansas State Historical Society. My critic demands to know "what" began at that historic corner directly across from the state capitol. What began, he asks persistently. "My interest," I answer, "my interest in Kansas history, of course." In a sense, my career as a Kansas historian.

In late 1947, as a young graduate student from New York, I had begun serious research at the University of Colorado on the largely neglected subject of black troops in the Union army, having finally convinced my faculty advisor that there was or ought to be sufficient material to make possible the completion of a respectable study of the subject. "See what you can find," he challenged, and I headed for the library. In less time than it takes me to tell it, I discovered Fort Scott, Kansas. Quite an intriguing collection of enterprise and uninhibited individuals had a hand in founding the fort. There were those dragoons who first camped there in 1842—appropriately calling it Camp Scott. There was Captain Thomas Swords, the New Yorker who deserves primary credit for the classic design of the post and its solid federal look. And then there came down from Mound City one James Montgomery who tried to burn the fort to the ground. And there was also another James—James Henry Lane, the Grim Chieftain—who came close to burning the fort to the ground in September 1861.

Flushed with boyish enthusiasm at the new acquaintances I had just discovered (not to mention Charles Robinson, Charles Jennison, James Williams, James G. Blunt, and a platoon of other Kansas heroes), I rushed to report to my faculty advisor. Because beyond the excitements of those Kansas statesmen, jayhawkers, bluebelles, and wild men was this major discovery: Fort Scott, Kansas, was the historic site where the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry had been mustered into federal service on January 13, 1863.

My advisor took the astounding revelation calmly. "Well, Dudley," he suggested, "you ought to go down to Topeka and see what materials they have in the Kansas State Historical Society." The corner of Tenth and Jackson. "There is one of the very best state historical societies in the country," he asserted. "The people there know what they have in their collections, and they give the impression of being ready, willing, and able to help researchers." Little did I realize that he was not exaggerating, not even a little bit.

So to Topeka I must go. Christmas break loomed, and I began to scheme to seek a solution to the major

A longtime professor of history at Pittsburg State University, Dudley T. Cornish was president of the Kansas State Historical Society from 1939 to 1944. This article was an address delivered at the Society's spring 1944 meeting held at Fort Scott.

Where "it" all began for young researcher Dudley Cornish in the winter of 1947—the Memorial Building, a majestic structure located at the corner of Tenth and Jackson Streets in downtown Topeka.
It All Began at Tenth and Jackson

by Dudley T. Cornish

Aha! I hear my severest critic cry: "The ubiquitous 'it' once more!" And of course he demands to know what "it" was that all began at Tenth and Jackson.

He might just as well have asked what and where are Tenth and Jackson; we paid-up members know already: world headquarters of the Kansas State Historical Society. My critic demands to know "what" began at that historic corner directly across from the state capitol. What began, he asks persistently. "My interest," I answer, "my interest in Kansas history, of course." In a sense, my career as a Kansas historian.

In late 1947, as a young graduate student from New York, I had begun serious research at the University of Colorado on the largely neglected subject of black troops in the Union army, having finally convinced my faculty advisor that there was or ought to be sufficient material to make possible the completion of a respectable study of the subject. "See what you can find," he challenged, and I headed for the library. In less time than it takes me to tell it, I discovered Fort Scott, Kansas. Quite an intriguing collection of enterprising and unimpressed individuals had a hand in founding the fort. There were those dragoons who first camped there in 1842—appropriately calling it Camp Scott. There was Captain Thomas Swords, the New Yorker who deserves primary credit for the classic design of the post and its solid federal look. And then there came down from Mound City one James Montgomery who tried to burn the fort to the ground. And there was also another James—James Henry Lane, the Grim Chieftain—who came close to burning the fort to the ground in September 1861.

Flushed with boyish enthusiasm at the new acquaintances I had just discovered (not to mention Charles Robinson, Charles Jennison, James Williams, James C. Blunt, and a platoon of other Kansas heroes), I rushed to report to my faculty advisor. Because beyond the excitements of those Kansas statesmen, jayhawkers, bluebells, and wild men was this major discovery: Fort Scott, Kansas, was the historic site where the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry had been mustered into federal service on January 13, 1863.

My advisor took the astounding revelation calmly. "Well, Dudley," he suggested, "you ought to go down to Topeka and see what materials they have in the Kansas State Historical Society." The corner of Tenth and Jackson. "There is one of the very best state historical societies in the country," he asserted. "The people there know what they have in their collections, and they give the impression of being ready, willing, and able to help researchers." Little did I realize that he was not exaggerating, not even a little bit.

So to Topeka I must go. Christmas break loomed, and I began to scheme to seek a solution to the major
 logistical problem. As a graduate student on the GI Bill I had no discernible cash flow, and we tended to devour my wife, Maxine's, meager salary. What to do? Poor, hungry, but indomitable—and blessed with friends in the finest frontier tradition. Some of our friends were driving home for Christmas. Where do you suppose their home was? Yes, Topeka. Topeka, Kansas. In no time at all we had volunteered to accompany our new Topeka friends, the Shakeshafs, Jerry and Dick, home for Christmas.

We departed Boulder, Colorado, at 1:30 the Saturday morning before Christmas. Bundled in surplus army blankets, we raced through the frigid dark in the Shakeshafs' 1936 Plymouth. It was pitch black Saturday night when we finally arrived in Topeka. Too late, alas, to get any research done that day. And the next day was Sunday. What planning! At that point in our desperate young lives, every day mattered. The Kansas luck prevailed. Again. The first was the great good fortune of meeting the Shakeshafs. But that was only the beginning. They had friends in Topeka, and they delighted in persuading their friends to come to our rescue. Here is the incredible part of the story. Thanks to the importunity of Jerry Shakeshaft, the secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society met us at the corner of Tenth and Jackson early the next morning and personally introduced us to the appropriate (and rich) materials. This was the great Kirke Mechem, an almost mythical figure in my pantheon of Kansas heroes.

Very nearly stunned by this happy turn of events, we went to work enthusiastically on those "rich materials." Maxine read newspaper files while I greedily explored manuscript collections. In no time at all I was making the acquaintance of the key men of early state history, which is to say the first months of the Civil War. And what manner of men were these? Unusual, to say the least, men with a variety of backgrounds and a choice collection of programs. Fundamentally, of course, they were dedicated to the Union and to protecting the sacred soil of Kansas from invasion and domination by border ruffians. They had learned about these intruders during that period we call Bleeding Kansas. They knew that the Civil War had really begun out here on the Kansas-Missouri border in 1855, right after passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. Montgomery, Lane, and Jennison had learned the basic lessons of border warfare long before Gus Beauregard opened fire on Fort Sumter.

And now—or rather then—these Kansas movers and shakers were involved in building a new state and waging a dirty kind of war, with minimum supplies of war materiel but with maximum imagination and passionate ambition. Personal ambition. These few points picked up during that first venture into the Tenth and Jackson warehouse of evidence—of public and private correspondence, personal diaries and journals—illustrate the richness of the material and the total confusion dominant in the new state waging politics and war simultaneously.

Senator James H. Lane had been authorized by Secretary of War Simon Cameron to raise two regiments of volunteers. Competition for commissions in Lane's regiments, whether white or black, was keen as the threat of Confederate invasion warmed up after the Union loss at Wilson's Creek on August 10, 1861. One year later, with or without authority, General Lane was recruiting blacks as well as whites.

Neither Jennison nor Montgomery seems to have given Lane more personal loyalty than momentary experience required; behind each other's back they plotted for personal advancement. On August 3, 1862, for example, Montgomery blasted Jennison in a letter to Governor Charles Robinson as "an unmitigated liar, blackleg and ROBBER." Montgomery was urging his own candidacy as colonel of the black troops being raised. On August 12, 1862, George H. Hoyt, a friend of Jennison's, wrote Robinson that while Jennison was working with Lane (no friend of Robinson's) he "takes hold of this work, not as a Lane man, but altogether on the Jennison basis." Jennison wanted to be colonel too. On August 22 Jennison wrote Governor Robinson to report that he had discovered "at all points in Southern Kansas a general feeling that Lane is a great humbug," Jennison did become a colonel but never of a black regiment; his Seventh Kansas Cavalry wrote a new and comprehensive definition of the word and practice of jayhawking. In disgust Montgomery went to Washington, D.C., in late 1862 and eventually became colonel of the Second South Carolina Volunteer Infantry, later the Thirty-fourth U.S. Colored Troops. Captain James M. Williams won command of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry, later the Seventy-ninth U.S. Colored Troops. Under Williams' leadership, the regiment—the first black regiment in the Union army—mustered by a northern state—compiled a distinguished combat record but at heavy cost. The First Kansas Colored lost 156 men killed in action; 26 died of wounds, while disease took over 350 more. Battle fatalities were the highest of any Kansas regiment, white or black.

The various records collected and maintained by the Kansas State Historical Society range far beyond the narrow selection mentioned here. But my point is that it was at and through that Society—our Society—that I first began to develop a deep and abiding interest in the Civil War and, most particularly, in the records of Kansas individuals and units in those four long years. The materials
logical problem. As a graduate student on the GI Bill I had no discernible cash flow, and we tended to devote my wife, Maxine's, meager salary. What to do? Poor, hungry, but indomitable—and blessed with friends in the finest frontier tradition. Some of our friends were driving home for Christmas. Where do you suppose their was their home? Yes, Topeka. Topeka, Kansas. In no time at all we had volunteered to accompany our new Topeka friends, the Shakeshafts, Jerry and Dick, home for Christmas.

We departed Boulder, Colorado, at 130 the Saturday morning before Christmas. Bundled in surplus army blankets, we raced through the frigid darkness in the Shakeshafts' 1936 Plymouth. It was pitch black Saturday night when we finally arrived in Topeka. Too late, alas, to get any research done that day. And the next day was Sunday. What planning! At that point in our desperate young lives, every day mattered. The Kansas luck prevailed. Again. The first was the great good fortune of meeting the Shakeshafts. But that was only the beginning. They had friends in Topeka, and they delighted in persuading their friends to come to our rescue. Here is the incredible part of the story. Thanks to the importance of Jerry Shakeshaft, the secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society met us at the corner of Tenth and Jackson early the next morning and personally introduced us to the appropriate (and rich) materials. This was the great Kirke Mechem, an almost mythic figure in my pantheon of Kansas heroes.

Very nearly stunned by this happy turn of events, we went to work enthusiastically on those "rich materials." Maxine read newspaper files while I greedily explored manuscript collections. In no time at all I was making the acquaintance of the key men of early state history, which is to say the first months of the Civil War. And what manner of men were these? Unusual, to say the least, men with a variety of backgrounds and a choice collection of programs. Fundamentally, of course, they were dedicated to the Union and to protecting the sacred soil of Kansas from invasion and domination by border ruffians. They had learned about these intruders during that period we call Bleeding Kansas. They knew that the Civil War had really begun out here on the Kansas-Missouri border in 1855, right after passage of the Kansas—Nebraska Act of 1854. Montgomery, Lane, and Jennison had learned the basic lessons of border warfare long before Gus Beauregard opened fire on Fort Sumter. And now—or rather then—these Kansas movers and shakers were involved in building a new state and waging a dirty kind of war, with minimum supplies of war matériel but with maximum imagination and passionate ambition. Personal ambition. These few points picked up during that first venture into the Tenth and Jackson warehouse of evidence—of public and private correspondence, personal diaries and journals—illustrate the richness of the material and the total confusion dominant in the new state waging politics and war simultaneously.

Senator James H. Lane had been authorized by Secretary of War Simon Cameron to raise two regiments of volunteers. Competition for commissions in Lane's regiments, whether white or black, was keen as the threat of Confederate invasion warmed up after the Union loss at Wilson's Creek on August 10, 1861. One year later, with or without authority, General Lane was recruiting blacks as well as whites.

Neither Jennison nor Montgomery seems to have given Lane more personal loyalty than momentary experience required, behind each other's backs they plotted for personal advancement. On August 3, 1862, for example, Montgomery blasted Jennison in a letter to Governor Charles Robinson as "an unmitigated liar, blockhead and ROBBEE." Montgomery was urging his own candidacy as colonel of the black troops being raised. On August 12, 1862, George H. Hoyt, a friend of Jennison's, wrote Robinson that while Jennison was working with Lane (no friend of Robinson's) he "takes hold of this work, not as a Lane man, but altogether on the Jennison basis." Jennison wanted to be colonel too. On August 22 Jennison wrote Governor Robinson to report that he had discovered "at all points in Southern Kansas a general feeling that Lane is a great humbug." Jennison did become a colonel but never of a black regiment; his Seventh Kansas Cavalry wrote a new and comprehensive definition of the word and practice of Jayhawking. In disgust Montgomery went to Washington, D.C., in late 1862 and eventually became colonel of the Second South Carolina Volunteer Infantry, later the Thirty-fourth U.S. Colored Troops. Captain James M. Williams won command of the First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry, later the Seventy-ninth U.S. Colored Troops. Under Williams' leadership, the regiment—the first black regiment in the Union army—was a northern state—compiled a distinguished combat record but at heavy cost. The First Kansas Colored lost 156 men killed in action; 26 died of wounds, while disease took over 350 more. Battle fatalities were the highest of any Kansas regiment, white or black.

The various records collected and maintained by the Kansas State Historical Society range far beyond the narrow selection mentioned here. But my point is that it was at and through that Society—our Society—that I first began to develop a deep and abiding interest in the Civil War and, most particularly, in the records of Kansas individuals and units in those four long years. The materials
here briefly described—and the amazingly hospitable treatment this New Yorker received at the hands of his new-found Kansas friends—were only the beginnings. The Kansas luck held strong and true in a variety of totally unexpected ways.

**Instance:** In the summer of 1949 with my doctoral program all but complete and the question of rations for the fall campaign more than academic, my chairman called me into his office one July morning to tell me of an opening in American history at the teachers' college in Pittsburg, Kansas. “Pittsburg?” I queried. “Show me on the map.” He showed me. “And before you start in on teachers’ colleges,” he warned me, “let me tell you two things: jobs are very scarce this year, and I have already written a letter in support of your application.” So to Pittsburg. But I never got away from Topeka and our Society. Kansas luck—my Kansas luck—again and again.

**Instance:** In my second year on the faculty of Kansas State Teachers College at Pittsburg, I was permitted to read a paper at the Kansas State Historical Society’s annual meeting—held, of course, in the marble halls at Tenth and Jackson. My subject: “Kansas Negro Regiments in the Civil War.” Seated in the front row were Kirke Mechem, editor of the *Kansas Historical Quarterly,* Professor James C. Malin, associate editor; and Nyle Miller, managing editor. A formidable trio; in my mind’s eye, a murderers’ row. Wrong. The only word from the great Malin was to assist me in answering a question from the floor. And all I got from Editor Mechem was an invitation to submit my manuscript to him for possible publication. Yes. In the May 1953 issue. That was three years before my book *The Sable Arm* was published in New York.

**Instance:** About 1971 came a totally unexpected, unwarranted telephone call from Topeka. The Society’s nominating committee had suggested my name for the office of second vice president. That meant (barring any indictable offense) eventual automatic elevation to the presidency of the Society. With pardonable alacrity I accepted. In the fullness of time I did become president, in the fall of 1973. By that time I had become familiar with the wheelhorses of the enterprise: Nyle Miller, who served some forty-five years as secretary; Edgar Langsdorf, assistant secretary and productive scholar and authority on nineteenth-century Kansas; Tom Barr, archeologist; and of course the incomparable Robert W. Richmond, state archivist for many years. I must admit that I got my presidency off on the wrong foot when I interrupted Nyle Miller’s introductory tour of the headquarters to ask for the location of my office. Thus began an exciting year. It might have been more exciting and productive had I seriously and persistently dug deeper into the Civil War history of my adopted state. But let’s face it: I can never belong to the Native Sons. My ancestors having been Loyalists, I can hardly get into the Sons of the Revolution. To his dying day, Nyle Miller thought of me and often referred to me as “that young fellow from New York.” He resented, I think, the lamentable fact that I had not been born in Anthony, Kansas, as had he.

We can’t have it all. But I got far more than my share. Directly following my stint as president, two governors honored me by appointing me to the state commission for the American Revolution Bicentennial, which had something to do with my selection to teach military history at the United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth; 1978–1979 was a very good year.

My chief regret is, as I have already hinted, that I did not make better use of all those rich materials that Kirke Mechem introduced me to back in 1947. But how, I ask, how could a mere graduate student have anticipated, as Mr. Mechem and the Society’s librarian Helen McFarland showed me those riches, how could anyone have looked ahead and seen all those good things, honors, and offices, that flowed from that first fortunate venture? Truthly, it did all begin for me at the corner of Tenth and Jackson.

**Reminiscing These Marble Halls:**
here briefly described—and the amazingly hospitable treatment this New Yorker received at the hands of his new-found Kansas friends—were only the beginnings. The Kansas luck held strong and true in a variety of totally unexpected ways.

_instance:

In the summer of 1949 with my doctoral program all but complete and the question of raising for the fall campaign more than academic, my chairman called me into his office one July morning to tell me of an opening in American history at the teachers' college in Pittsburg, Kansas. "Pittsburg?" I queried. "Show me on the map." He showed me. "And before you start in on teachers' colleges," he warned me, "let me tell you two things: jobs are very scarce this year, and I have already written a letter in support of your application." So to Pittsburg. But I never got away from Topeka and our Society. Kansas luck—my Kansas luck—again and again.

_instance:

In my second year on the faculty of Kansas State Teachers College at Pittsburg, I was permitted to read a paper at the Kansas State Historical Society's annual meeting—held, of course, in the marble halls at Tenth and Jackson. My subject: "Kansas Negro Regiments in the Civil War." Seated in the front row were Kirke Mechem, editor of the Kansas Historical Quarterly; Professor James C. Malin, associate editor; and Nyle Miller, managing editor. A formidable trio; in my mind's eye, a murderers' row. Wrong. The only word from the great Malin was to assist me in answering a question from the floor. And all I got from Editor Mechem was an invitation to submit my manuscript to him for possible publication. Yes. In the May 1953 issue. That was three years before my book The Sable Arm was published in New York.

_instance:

About 1971 came a totally unexpected, unwarranted telephone call from Topeka. The Society's nominating committee had suggested my name for the office of second vice president. That meant (barring any indictable offense) eventual automatic elevation to the presidency of the Society. With pardonable alacrity I accepted. In the fullness of time I did become president, in the fall of 1973. By that time I had become familiar with the wheelhorses of the enterprise: Nyle Miller, who served some forty-five years as secretary; Edgar Langsdorf, assistant secretary and productive scholar and authority on nineeenth-century Kansas; Tom Barr, archivist; and of course the incomparable Robert W. Richmond, state archivist for many years. I must admit that I got my presidency off on the wrong foot when I interrupted Nyle Miller's introductory tour of the headquarters to look for the location of my office. Thus began an exciting year. It might have been more exciting and productive had I seriously and persistently dug deeper into the Civil War history of my adopted state. But let's face it: I can never belong to the Native Sons. My ancestors having been Loyalists, I can hardly get into the Sons of the Revolution. To his dying day, Nyle Miller thought of me and often referred to me as "that young fellow from New York." He resented, I think, the lamentable fact that I had not been born in Anthony, Kansas, as had he.

We can't have it all. But I got far more than my share. Directly following my stint as president, two governors honored me by appointing me to the state commission for the American Revolution Bicentennial, which had something to do with my selection to teach military history at the United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth; 1978-1979 was a very good year.

My chief regret is, as I have already hinted, that I did not make better use of all those rich materials that Kirke Mechem introduced me to back in 1947. But how, I ask, how could a mere graduate student have anticipated, as Mr. Mechem and the Society's librarian Helen McFarland showed me those riches, how could anyone have looked ahead and seen all those good things, honors, and offices, that flowed from that first fortunate venture? Truly, it did all begin for me at the corner of Tenth and Jackson.