A Kansas Wheatfield, Herschel C. Logan (1923)
Kansas:
A Centennial Portrait, Part Two

by Emory Lindquist

Kansas History plans to offer its readers a special "Kansas at 150" issue next spring. In the meantime, we decided to look back fifty years. What were Kansans saying about their state as they reflected on the first one hundred years of statehood? In answer to that question, we published part one of Emory Lindquist's 1961 essay in our summer 2010 issue and offer up the conclusion here.

The essay, first published in Kansas Historical Quarterly’s spring 1961 issue, has been illustrated with selected prints by Kansas artist Herschel C. Logan, lightly edited for style, and a few notes have been added (in all italics so as to be distinct from Lindquist’s original notes) where considered necessary. For the most part Lindquist’s piece is presented here as originally published. Understandably, due to the passage of time, a few of his comments are dated, but for better, and occasionally worse, most remain remarkably prescient.

Dr. Emory Kempton Lindquist (1908–1992), a native of Lindsborg, Rhodes scholar, and former professor and president of Bethany College (1933–1953), served as a professor, a dean, and president at Wichita State University from 1953 to 1978. He authored numerous articles and books, including Smoky Valley People: A History of Lindsborg, Kansas (1953), Vision for a Valley: Olof Olsson and the Early History of Lindsborg (1970), Bethany in Kansas: The History of a College (1975), and G. N. Malm: A Swedish Immigrant’s Varied Career (1989), and in 1962 served as president of the Kansas State Historical Society.
A century ago the dominant factor in Kansas was the potentialities for agricultural production. Kansas has lived up to those expectations beyond all reasonable hopes; the achievement has reached magnificent proportions. The year 1958 witnessed an all-time record in volume, though not in income, of farm production; the total exceeded the previous record year of 1952 by 29 percent. Record receipts for farm products in 1947 are expected to be exceeded by the 1960 total. Kansas continues as the number one wheat state. The biggest wheat crop was harvested in 1952, the “bin-buster” year, when 14,649,000 acres produced 307,629,000 bushels for an average of 21.0 bushels per acre. It was harvested by 85,000 combines, and would have filled 180,958 boxcars, reaching 1,508 miles. The 1960 wheat crop of 281,848,000 bushels was 60 percent above average, and the state’s fourth largest crop, exceeded only in the years 1947, 1952, and 1958. The average of 28 bushels per acre tied with that of 1958 for the record high yield. A great transformation has taken place since the Mennonites brought small amounts of hard winter wheat in trunks and sea chests to Kansas from Russia in 1874 to be planted in small allotments.

Kansas has shared in the trend toward larger farms and fewer farmers. In 1930 there were 166,000 Kansas farms, but the number had dropped to 115,000 in 1959. The average size of a farm had increased in the three decades from 238.6 acres to approximately 440 acres. In the period from 1920 to 1950, the population on Kansas farms decreased from 735,884 to 443,739, or from 41.6 percent of the total population to 23.3 percent. It is now about 365,000 or 20 percent of the state population. In the half-century from 1909 to 1959, the labor force on Kansas farms has decreased by more than 40 percent from 282,000 to 165,000. The amount of land in farms has remained fairly constant at about 50,000,000 acres. Farmers have invested $6,000,000,000 in land, machinery, and other facilities. Kansas is more than “the wheat state.” In 1960 Kansas reached an all-time high with 4,700,000 head of cattle within its boundaries, ranking fourth among all the states. The value of livestock and poultry on Kansas farms on January 1, 1959, was more than $735,000,000. The high national rating of Kansas agriculture is recounted in part by the following, in addition to its first rank in wheat production: first in silage production, second in brome grass seed and dehydrated alfalfa, third in lye, fourth in wild hay, fifth in alfalfa seed and broomcorn.

The cycles of change have been a part of the pattern of agricultural developments. Times of prosperity have yielded to times of depression. The dominant emphasis upon agriculture until recent years has made Kansas subject to the vagaries of nature and of the price structure. Periods of drought produced great hardships. The variations in prices were equally disastrous. For instance, using the index of 100, based on the years 1910 to 1914, the price of all farm commodities has varied in less than two decades from a low of 55 in 1932 to a high of 313 in 1951. The season average price of wheat has ranged from 33 cents per bushel in 1931 and 1932 to $2.25 per bushel in 1947.

Agriculture was not replaced as the largest source of income in Kansas until 1953, when the production from manufacturing exceeded that of agriculture. Kansas has a larger percentage of her people engaged in manufacturing than any of the surrounding states with the exception of Missouri. Nonfarm employment has been steadily increasing, reaching 553,000 in 1959, a 24.1 percent gain in the last decade. The largest nonfarm employment was 557,900 in 1956. The industrial growth of Kansas is shown in a striking manner by the following index comparison with national growth: value added by manufacture, 1947–1957, Kansas, 167, United States, 95; payrolls, 1948–1958, Kansas, 142, United States, 65; capital expenditures, 1948–1958, Kansas, 115, United States, 90; employment, 1949–1959, Kansas, 37, United States, 11. The $623,000,000 Kansas payroll in 1957 was a record high for all manufacturing. Employment in manufacturing reached a high of 137,900 in 1953. The most outstanding...
Noonday Rest, Herschel C. Logan (1938)
Kansas produced 35,000,000 sacks of wheat flour in 1958, most of any state in the nation.  

Mineral production in Kansas has exceeded $500,000,000 annually since 1956. Twenty-two minerals are produced commercially. The largest percentage of income is from crude oil, which in 1959 had a value of $345,000,000. The 120,000,000 barrels produced in 1958 placed Kansas fifth in the nation in crude oil production. Oil is produced in seventy-six counties. Facilities in Kansas process 87.6 percent of the total crude oil production in the form of motor oil, gasoline, grease, and other petroleum products.


The Santa Fe, Oregon, Chisholm, and other important trails crossed Kansas in early days as thousands of people moved west to share in the promise of a new life. Railroads came later to carry the heavy traffic of passengers and goods. Kansas today ranks sixth among the fifty states in total railway mileage, carrying 15,000,000,000 ton miles of freight. Only Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, and Texas have more miles of railways. A network of highways, totaling nearly 125,000 miles, including federal, state, and county, create second place for Kansas among all the states in total rural mileage. One hundred and seventy-one airports serve military, commercial, and private planes.

The greater diversification in economic activity in recent years may bring greater stability. The United States Department of Commerce reported that the total personal income of Kansans for 1958 had reached $4,234,000,000. A new record of $2,001 per capita was achieved that year, ranking Kansas nineteenth among the states on the American continent. Kansas has not equalled the average nationally in per capita income since 1921, although it has regularly been close to the average.

The development of organized labor in Kansas depended upon the growth of industry. The Lecompton and Leavenworth typographical unions were organized in 1859, the earliest in the state. In the 1880s the Knights of Labor, who included skilled, unskilled, and agricultural workers, gained a substantial following, but a decline set in after 1886. The United Mine Workers came to the coalfields of southeastern Kansas in 1890. This organization later produced considerable gains for the miners under the leadership of Alex Howat from 1906 until 1921. The Kansas State Federation of Labor, organized in 1890, survived only to 1896. It was reorganized in 1907 and served as an effective agency for organized workers. The CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] came to Kansas in 1937, and established its own state organization in 1940. The impact of industrialization, and especially the tremendous expansion during World War II increased decisively the role of the unions. The report of the state department of labor for the biennium ending June 30, 1956, showed the following pattern of labor unions in Kansas: international unions, 90; state organizations, 29; district organizations, 17; city organizations, 30; local unions, 952. At the time of the merger of the CIO and AFL [American Federation of Labor] in 1957, the membership in Kansas was 125,000. The membership in 1960 was approximately 115,000. The statistics for 1959 show that only five hundredths of one percent of “the estimated working time” of all employed persons was lost by strikes or lockouts in contrast to sixty-one hundredths of one percent nationally. There were only fifteen work stoppages in manufacturing and eleven in nonmanufacturing in 1959 lasting a day or a shift or a longer period in situations involving six or more workers. The twenty-six work stoppages actually involved only 6,440 persons.

The most controversial labor issue in Kansas history is associated with the Kansas industrial relations act of 1920, which resulted in the court of industrial relations from 1921 until 1925. Governor Henry J. Allen was the principal figure in this contest. The court received extraordinary power to deal with labor and industry. William Allen White took issue with Allen and was arrested for placing a placard favorable to the railroad workers in the Gazette office at Emporia. On July 27, 1922, White’s editorial in the Emporia Gazette, “To An Anxious Friend,” written in acknowledgment of a letter from a friend who was critical of White’s position, described in convincing language the nature of freedom: “You tell me that law is above freedom of utterance. And I reply that you can have no wise laws nor free enforcement of wise laws unless there is free expression of the wisdom of the people—and, alas, their folly with it. But if there is freedom, folly will die of its own poison, and the wisdom will survive. That is the history of the race.” This editorial won the Pulitzer Prize in 1922. The court was bitterly opposed by the unions, and by some employers. The experiment was abolished by the legislature in 1925. The Kansas attempt to legislate reform had met with failure.

The “Right to Work” legislation provoked much discussion and action in the 1950s. Designed to eliminate the closed shop, unions opposed it strenuously, while many employers marshaled their resources for its achievement. Vetoed by Governor Fred Hall, a liberal Republican in 1955, it was added to the constitution by a vote in 1958.


One of man’s ceaseless quests across the centuries has been to preserve, create, and transmit knowledge. The annals of Kansas contain many interesting chapters in the history of education from the first Protestant Indian mission school founded west of Shaw in Neosho County in 1824, under the auspices of the United Foreign Missionary Society, and the first free school for Indian and white children established in present Wyandotte County in July 1844, to today’s system of elementary, secondary, and higher education. In the earliest era of Kansas, education was a private affair as families organized schools on a voluntary subscription basis. The Wyandotte Constitution of 1859 authorized the legislature to “encourage the promotion of intellectual, moral, scientific, and agricultural improvement, by establishing a uniform system of common schools, and schools of higher grade, embracing normal, preparatory, collegiate, and university departments.”

Education was viewed essentially as a matter of local concern in the early years. Territorial Kansas included more than 200 districts. This number grew to 6,134 by 1880, reaching a peak of 9,284 in 1896. Voluntary reorganization, and developments related to the reorganization law of 1945, reduced that number to 2,800 by 1958–1959. The State Board of Education was created in 1873 to issue teaching certificates. In 1905 it was

68. Proceedings and Debates of the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention, July 1859, Art. 6, Sec. 2, p. 583.
given power to prescribe the curriculum and accredit schools, and in 1915 additional authority was given to the board. The State Department of Education was organized more effectively in that year. A lay board of education was provided in 1945.\textsuperscript{70} 

The story of education in Kansas reflects the struggle of local authority and sentiment with the need for providing adequate educational opportunity for all children. State Superintendent Isaac T. Goodnow observed in 1863 that it was “far better for a scholar to walk three or four miles to a first-rate school than 40 rods to a poor one.”\textsuperscript{71} The developments in transportation and the decrease of rural population has established convincingly the need for further consolidation as recommended in the comprehensive survey of education in 1960. The red or white one-room schoolhouse, which served Kansas so magnificently for most of her history, a symbol of a local, grass-roots culture with many sources of strength, will soon be enshrined only in the temple of memory as Kansas parents send their children with pride to modern schools with rich curricula taught by well-educated teachers.

Kansas has depended heavily upon supporting education by property taxes. In 1957–1958, only five states had greater support from this source than the 77.7 percent received in Kansas. Kansas ranked forty-fourth in revenue derived for school purposes from state sources. Moreover, expenditures for education have not kept up with gains in personal income. In 1929, for instance, when the Kansas per capita income was $535, the expenditure for elementary and secondary schools was 4.03 percent. In 1958, with a Kansas per capita income of $2,001, the expenditure was 3.12 percent, lower than the national average of 3.6 percent.\textsuperscript{72} Kansas ranked thirty-third among the forty-eight states in 1958–1959 in expenditures for teachers’ salaries. On the basis of personal income per child of school age, Kansas ranked twenty-fourth. An increase of 15.3 percent would be required to place teachers’ salaries at the average for the entire nation. Moreover, although substantial gains have been made in the qualifications for teaching in Kansas, in 1958–1959 39 percent of the state’s elementary teachers, 5,129 out of 13,370, did not have a baccalaureate degree.\textsuperscript{73} 

Kansas ranked eleventh in 1950 in median years of schooling completed by persons twenty-five years of age and older. Utah was highest with 12.0 years; Kansas had 10.2 years; the national average was 9.3 years. Kansas ranked tenth in 1950 in the percentage of population of twenty-five years and older with at least four years of high school, 39.5 percent of the population having that achievement. Kansas ranked twenty-second, however, in the percentage of the adult population with four or more years of college, with the neighboring states of Colorado and Oklahoma rating higher. The statistics on education show a great disparity in median years of schooling for urban residents at 11.2 years, rural nonfarm residents at 9.4 years, and rural farm residents at 8.9 years. The range in counties in 1950 was from 12.4 years in Johnson County to 8.8 years in thirteen Kansas counties.\textsuperscript{74} 

A critical factor in education for the future is the rapid increase in the population. The greatest increase since 1900 was between 1950 and 1958, when it amounted to 11 percent, 80 percent of which were persons under eighteen.\textsuperscript{75} In 1920 the birth rate for Kansas was 22.7 per thousand; in 1940 it was only 16.1. In 1956 it was 26.9, the highest level in the history of the state. The 55,862 births in 1956 set a new record for the number of births in a year. In September 1958 there were 486,596 pupils in the elementary and secondary schools of Kansas, 441,883 (90.7 percent) in public schools and 45,763 (9.3 percent) in parochial and private schools. The projected enrollment in elementary and secondary schools for 1969–1970 is 523,286. This will represent an increase of 15.5 percent in the first eight grades and 34.6 percent in grades nine to twelve.\textsuperscript{76} 

Kansans early demonstrated an interest in higher education. Highland College and Baker University, founded in 1858, and St. Benedict's College in 1859, are the three oldest colleges in Kansas. Kansas State University of Agriculture and Applied Science traces its origin to Bluemont College, founded by the Methodists in 1859. It became Kansas State Agricultural College in 1863, the first land grant college in the United States under the Morrill Act. Provision was made for a state university in the Wyandotte Constitution of 1859. The University

\textsuperscript{70} Educational Planning Commission, Kansas State Teachers Association, \textit{Source Book of the School of Tomorrow for Kansas}, Revised May, 1960 (Topeka: Educational Planning Commission, 1960), 8, 9. 


\textsuperscript{72} Educational Planning Commission, Kansas State Teachers Association, \textit{Source Book of the School of Tomorrow for Kansas}, Revised May, 1960, 57, 63. 

\textsuperscript{73} Kansas Legislative Council: Committee on Education, \textit{Comprehensive Educational Survey}, 2:69, 75, 76. 

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 1:25–27. 

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 1:46. 

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 1:23; Kansas Legislative Council: Committee on Education, \textit{Comprehensive Educational Survey}, 2:14, 60.
of Kansas was authorized in 1864 by legislative action. Classes began in 1866. The pattern of development has included not only state supported and privately controlled colleges, but also public junior colleges and municipal universities. Junior colleges were established at Fort Scott, Garden City, Holton, and Marysville in 1919. Only the first two maintain colleges presently. The University of Wichita, a municipal institution, was the first of the universities of this type in Kansas, established by referendum vote in 1926, on the foundation built by Fairmount College, a Congregational institution established in 1895. In the centennial year, Kansas makes available a variety of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs through five state, two municipal, twenty-one private church-related, and fourteen public junior colleges and universities accredited by the Kansas State Board of Education. The ratio of enrollments to college-age population was 45.1 percent in Kansas as compared to 34.6 percent for the entire United States in 1957. In 1960–1961 the actual enrollment in colleges and universities was 51,329. The projected enrollment of 1975 is in excess of 70,000.77

Excellent leadership for education in Kansas is provided by several organizations. The oldest is the Kansas State Teachers Association, founded at Leavenworth in 1863. The permanent staff and committees provide fine sources of information and support for members and the citizens generally. The Kansas Congress of Parents and Teachers and the Kansas Association of School Boards also have fine records of achievement. Other lay groups and committees of various organizations share effectively in interpreting the possibilities and problems of education in Kansas. There is much unfinished business for education in Kansas. The greatest problems are related to the equalization and elevation of educational

opportunity and better financial support for education on all levels.

The life of man includes the abiding resources that come from religious faith. Heroic men and women of Kansas bore witness to their faith long before statehood was achieved. In September 1824 the Reverend Benton Pixley established a mission among the Osage Indians under the auspices of the United Foreign Missionary Society in present Neosho County west of Shaw. Thus was initiated a widespread missionary endeavor that was developed among the Indians throughout the future Kansas area by Roman Catholic and Protestant groups. Father Padilla, a Franciscan, accompanied Coronado to Kansas in 1541, and returned later to become a Christian martyr. The first Jesuit Indian mission was established at Kickapoo in June 1836.78

The available evidence indicates that W. H. Goode preached the first Methodist sermon to white settlers in Kansas at Palmyra (Baldwin) in July 1854. On October 15, 1854, the Reverend Samuel Young Lum organized the Plymouth Congregational Church at Lawrence.79 Soon the American Home Missionary Society established permanent work on the Kansas frontier with real energy and planning. The pluralistic pattern of American religious life was soon manifested in the diversity of the Christian witness in Kansas in liturgy, polity, doctrine, and faith.

The Christian witness manifested itself beyond worship services, Sunday School classes, and specific church activities. The religious forces sought to strengthen the moral fiber of the people. There were great problems on the frontier as indicated by the Reverend S. Y. Lum when he wrote to the American Home Missionary Society in April 1855: “The circumstances under which mind is thrown in this wild frontier life . . . engenders a recklessness, & freedom from restraint, that too often, prove fatal to the principles, as well as the practices of a home society & it is not too much to say, that we have the material, for either the worst, or the best, state of society in our country.”80 The gains in membership were modest, but the foundations were laid as the frontier church called men to abandon their reliance on secularism and materialism. The churches, except the Methodist Church South, identified themselves with the Union cause in the slavery conflict. As indicated earlier, churches shared in the crusade against King Alcohol.

Kansas churches, Protestant and Catholic alike, have rendered distinguished service to the state through a wide variety of institutions. Academies, colleges, hospitals, homes for the aged, children’s homes, and other agencies devoted to the ministry of mercy have brought great blessings across the years. The churches have a continuous record of constructive service to humanitarian causes in various relief and aid programs. In recent years, the churches have distinguished themselves by service to stricken peoples abroad through the Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, CROP (Christian Rural Overseas Program), settlement of refugees from political tyranny, and other works for the family of man.

Protestantism in Kansas has largely been related to the conservative position. The state is usually identified with the “Bible Belt,” so called because of its literal acceptance of the Holy Scriptures. Only rarely has Kansas been affected by any violent controversies related to the issues of modernism and fundamentalism. There has been generally a clearly identifiable strain of moral and theological dogmatism. The rural character, historically, of Kansas may be an important factor in the generally conservative position of Kansas church people.

Although the Congregationalists had the advantage of the momentum of an early start, the position of leadership soon passed to the Methodists. The Methodist church has the first rank in numbers among all denominations in Kansas. According to a study made by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, based on 1952 yearbooks, the Methodist Church not only outranked all other denominations in Kansas but was also the largest Protestant denomination in 97 out of the state’s 105 counties. The same study showed a surprising result for many Kansans, namely that twenty-three states had a higher ratio of church members to the entire population than Kansas.81 In 1958 Professor Donald O. Cowgill and LaVerna F. Wadsworth published a study of the religious preferences of Wichita families based upon a survey by 5,500 volunteers of 65,000 households under the auspices of the Wichita Council of Churches. The findings indicated the following: Methodist, 21.0 percent; Baptist,

Victim of the Dust, Herschel C. Logan (1938)
18.6 percent; Roman Catholic, 11.8 percent; Disciples of Christ, 11.0 percent; Presbyterian, 7.9 percent; Lutheran, 3.8 percent; and a variety of other groups with smaller percentages. The total Protestant was 81.5 in 1958 in contrast to 66.2 percent in the United States, based on statistics for 1957, one year earlier than the Wichita study. According to the National Catholic Almanac, there were 267,850 Catholics in Kansas in 1959, or 12.77 percent of the population. There were 353 parishes and forty-two missions. The first Jewish congregation was organized in Leavenworth in 1859. The estimated Jewish population in Kansas in 1959, according to the American Jewish Year Book, was 3,400 or 0.13 percent of the total population.

Cooperative efforts among Protestants were given official recognition when the Kansas Sunday School organization was formed in 1865 at Bismarck Grove near Lawrence. In 1921 the Kansas Council of Christian Education was formed. Six years later denominational executives formed the Kansas Council of Churches for the purpose of fellowship and the exchange of ideas. This organization and the Kansas Council of Religious Education merged into the Kansas Council of Churches in 1942. The council consists of hundreds of churches in ecumenical fellowship. When the Reverend F. S. McCabe addressed the quarter-celebration of Kansas in Topeka on January 29, 1886, he declared: “If we should ever inscribe a supplementary motto on our coat-of-arms and if the clergy should be allowed to select the legend, I believe that it would be the golden phrase that has come down to us from the seventeenth century: ‘In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus, caritas!’ —In things essential, unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things, charity.” Although there are many exceptions to this admirable declaration, the relationship of the churches of Kansas is quite well described, at least theoretically, by these words.

The resources of music came with the earliest settlers. The beginnings were humble but important as the pioneer mother hushed the fear of the infant on her knee by the tune of a favorite lullaby. Old and familiar hymns were sung, some in English, others in the language of the homeland, in cabin, dugout, and sod house. Church choirs were organized to enrich the service of worship. As early as the autumn of 1854, Forrest Savage, a member of the second party of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, organized a small band at Lawrence. In September 1869 the Kansas State Musical Convention met at Leavenworth. There was a growing interest in music as clubs were organized in various communities including the Topeka Musical Association that was formed in January 1869.

Colleges and universities have furnished fine leadership in this phase of the humanities. Lessons on the melodeon and piano were given at Baker University from the date of its founding in 1858. The most distinctive musical development in Kansas is related to the founding of the Bethany College Oratorio Society at Lindsborg by Dr. Carl A. Swensson, president of Bethany College, and Mrs. Swensson, in 1881. In March 1882 the strains of Handel’s Messiah were first heard in the Smoky Valley of central Kansas. A tradition of excellence has characterized this organization that has rendered the Messiah more than two hundred times in the great Holy Week tradition on Palm Sunday and Easter, and Bach’s The Passion of Our Lord According to St. Matthew on Good Friday. Thousands of people make an annual pilgrimage to Lindsborg to share in what the New York Times has described as “an expression in song from voices schooled to near perfection through years of training. But it is more than that. In Lindsborg, the ‘Messiah’ is religion—as much a part of the people’s worship as the church services which they attend every Sunday.” The Lindsborg Messiah has also furnished leadership for the organization of other groups and festivals in the state.

Many forces have been joined in promoting an interest in music. The Welsh influence in the Emporia area resulted in the traditional music festival, the eisteddfod, brought from native Wales, and maintained enthusiastically almost until the end of the last century. The Kansas Federation of Music Clubs has conducted auditions leading to scholarships for Kansas youth since 1927. The early leadership given to high school music festivals by the Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, has resulted in a statewide program that brings thousands of students together for solo and ensemble participation under the sponsorship of the Kansas State High School.


85. Edna Reinbach, Music and Musicians in Kansas (Topeka: State Printer, 1930), 2, 3.

Activities Association. The colleges and universities present effective curricula, artists, and ensemble groups. Many private teachers join with the public and parochial school programs to provide a fine opportunity for musical development. The Wichita Symphony Society has gained considerable praise for its civic orchestra. Topeka and other cities also support commendable orchestral and choral groups.

The achievement in the field of composition has been modest among Kansans across the years. The Indian theme was developed effectively by Thurlow Lieurance while he was teaching at the University of Wichita. Included in his works are a symphonic sketch Minisa. His best-known work is titled “By the Waters of Minnetonka.” Arthur Finley Nevin wrote an Indian opera called Paia and another opera The Daughter of the Forest. Charles Sanford Shelton, associated with the University of Kansas, also used Indian themes in his compositions.87

The most famous Kansas musical composition is “Home on the Range,” originally known as “Western Home,” adopted by the Kansas legislature as the official state song in 1947. The background factors related to the writing of the words and music are described in a fascinating account by Kirke Mechem.88 The words were composed by Dr. Brewster Higley in his one-room cabin on Beaver Creek about twenty miles from Smith Center. Higley, born at Rutland, Ohio, had a good education, being a graduate of a medical college at La Porte, Indiana, and had practiced medicine for many years when he moved to Smith County in 1871, at the age of forty-eight. The melody was composed by Daniel E. Kelley, who was born at North Kingston, Rhode Island, in February 1843. He came to Kansas in 1872 at the age of twenty-nine, settling at Gaylord, in Smith County. He was a member of an orchestra in which his wife and his two brothers-in-law participated. Kirke Mechem points out that there is no reason to believe that the notes that form the melody were ever transcribed by Kelley. Both Higley and Kelley lived in Kansas many years after “Home on the Range” was created. They never knew how famous their composition was destined to become.

The frontier world did not generally prove hospitable to the arts, but it did offer much subject matter. Professor Robert A. Taft of the University of Kansas, a distinguished Kansas writer and educator, has portrayed effectively the frontier sources for artists in his splendid volume, Artists and Illustrators of the Old West (1953). The author points out that the first setting for a Kansas drawing was “War Dance in the Interior of a Konza Lodge,” sketched by Samuel Seymour near present Manhattan in August 1819. This was the beginning of the Kansas locale in art that included the work of the famous early Western artist, Frederic Remington, who spent the period from March 1883 to May 1884 on a sheep ranch in Butler County. Henry Worrell, who created many illustrations for Harper’s Weekly and Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, has been described by Professor Taft as “the only Kansas artist and illustrator in the period under consideration [1850–1900] to achieve recognition on anything approaching a national scale for his portrayal of Kansas life.”89 In more recent times the theme of Kansas history resulted in the distinctive and controversial murals in the Kansas capitol, painted by John Steuart Curry, who was born in Jefferson County, but lived out of the state during his distinguished professional career.

The most famous Kansas artist was Swedish-born Birger Sandzén, who joined the faculty of Bethany College, Lindsborg, in 1893, and for more than half a century served the college and Kansas with distinction. Sandzén was an enthusiastic Kansan who loved the West and transmitted his response in hundreds of paintings and prints. William Allen White has written: “Birger Sandzén knows that mood of nature. He goes to it unafraid, and comes back triumphant, capturing it, subduing it, translating it into human terms. He grapples with its joy. He translates its terror and dread without compromise, without understatement. He has come from the plains where things grew rank and strong, from Kansas where he has interpreted ugliness, disharmony, monotony in terms of beauty and yet faithfully with affectionate wisdom.” Sandzén enriched the life of Kansas immensely by his promotion of interest in art. He was an apostle of beauty, who insisted upon no artistic creed except integrity. He organized the Smoky Hill Art Club and the Prairie Water Color Painters, and shared in founding the Prairie Print Makers. It is true as Leila Macklin has said of him: “Birger Sandzén has lit little candles of art knowledge and appreciation all through the Middle West.”90 The Graphic Work of Birger Sandzén (1952), prepared and edited by Charles Pelham Greenough III, presents valuable information on the

87. Reinbach, Music and Musicians in Kansas, 39–41.
90. Lindquist, Smoky Valley People, 211, 212.
career of the great Kansas artist. Kansas has produced many other artists who have gained considerable recognition in various artistic media.\textsuperscript{91}

Colleges and universities have played leading roles in art ever since the first instruction in that subject at Baker University in 1858. The Kansas State Art Association was organized in 1883. The University of Kansas with its Thayer collection and other sources has been a center for the study and appreciation of art. The Mulvane Art Museum at Washburn University and the Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery at Lindsborg provide fine opportunities for developing art appreciation. The Murdock collection at the Wichita Art Museum, made possible by a grant from Mrs. Louise Caldwell Murdock, has a distinguished collection of masterpieces inadequately housed.\textsuperscript{92} The Kansas Federation of Art, founded in 1932, and the \textit{Kansas Magazine}, edited and published at Kansas State University, have fine records of achievements in promoting interest in art.

Kansas has produced a variety of writers who have dealt with a wide range of subjects in many literary


\textsuperscript{92} Within a decade of this article’s publication, the city of Wichita took steps to address this “inadequacy,” constructing a fine new building for its invaluable collections during the 1970s; a state-of-the-art multi-million-dollar addition to this structure was completed in 2003. Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, Kans., http://wichitaartmuseum.org/wamInfo.html.
forms. The Civil War era furnished the source for several books by leading participants such as Governor Charles Robinson, Sara T. D. Robinson, W. A. Phillips, and others. The Kansas locale has furnished the theme for novels ranging from Margaret Hill McCarter’s portrayal of life in Kansas during the Civil War era in The Price of the Prairie (1910) to Kenneth S. Davis’s realistic portrayal of life in a rural Kansas town in the Flint Hills in The Years of the Pilgrimage (1948). Ed Howe, editor of the Atchison Globe, became nationally famous for his first novel, The Story of a Country Town (1883), describing the somber aspects of life in Kansas. In contrast is Charles M. Sheldon’s religious theme, In His Steps (1896), a portrayal of the response of Jesus to everyday living, which was published in millions of copies and in several languages. Frank Harris, an interesting and controversial literary figure, attended the University of Kansas in the 1880s. He later worked on a Flint Hills ranch, an experience that he described in his book, My Reminiscences as a Cowboy (1930).

Many Kansas poets have turned to the great Muse from earliest times to the present. Several anthologies of Kansas poetry have appeared including the volumes edited by the following: Hattie Horner, Kansas Poetry (1891); Thomas W. Herringshaw, Poets and Poetry of Kansas (1894); Willard Wattles, Sunflowers: A Book of Kansas Poems (1914), which included the well-known poems, “Opportunity,” by J. J. Ingalls, and “Each in His Own Tongue,” by W. H. Carruth; Helen Rhoda Hoopes, Contemporary Kansas Poetry (1927); and May Williams Ward, Kansas Poets (1953). William Herbert Carruth edited a two-volume anthology titled Kansas in Literature (1900). William Inge, who was born at Independence and graduated from the University of Kansas, has gained national recognition for his plays, Come Back Little Sheba (1949), Picnic (1953), and Bus Stop (1955). Inge often uses the Kansas locale for his writing. Picnic won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1953.

The greatest name in Kansas literary circles is William Allen White. As editor of the Emporia Gazette, he became an effective ambassador-at-large for Kansas. Friendly critic, devoted enthusiast, and Pulitzer Prize winner, he interpreted Kansas and America by novels, essays, poems, special articles, and editorials in a magnificent manner. One bibliography of his works includes almost five hundred items. His Autobiography (1946) contains an intimate and interesting portrayal of the life of a great and famous Kansan from his birth, in 1868, to 1923. William L. White, the son of the great Emporia editor, has written a number of well-known books including What People Said (1938), Journey for Margaret (1941), and They Were Expendable (1942).

The career of Dr. Arthur Hertzler, MD, famous Halstead surgeon, received a dramatic portrayal in the interesting autobiographical work Horse and Buggy Doctor (1938), a striking success nationally. Dr. Hertzler was the author of many books on surgery. Dr. Karl Menninger, MD, Topeka, is the author of such well-known books as The Human Mind (1930), Man Against Himself (1938), and Love Against Hate (1942), in collaboration with Jeanetta Lyle Menninger. Frank W. Blackmar, Frank H. Hodder, William E. Connelley, and James C. Malin have made extensive contributions to the knowledge of Kansas history.

The Kansas Magazine, a periodical devoted to literature and art, was published intermittently until 1933. The first series, 1872–1873, was in four volumes, and was referred to as “The Kansas Magazine of blessed memory. . . . Its flight was brief but glorious, and the light of it still lingers in the western sky.” The new series appeared in two volumes, 1886–1888, and the third series in six volumes, 1909–1912. The Kansas Magazine was reestablished in 1933, this time under the leadership of faculty members at Kansas State University. The magazine has maintained since that time a splendid pattern of achievement for literature and art in Kansas. The Agora was published in five volumes, 1891–1896; it contains interesting material for that period.

Kansas has been singularly fortunate in its editors and newspapers across the century. It is true, as D. W. Wilder, a pioneer Kansas editor, pointed out at the quarter-centennial celebration of statehood, that Kansas, in a sense, is the child of newspapers. Editors Horace Greeley, Joseph Medill, Charles A. Dana, and many others served the cause of future Kansas in pre-statehood days. William A. Phillips of the New York Tribune and James Redpath of the St. Louis Democrat and the Boston press were also closely identified with territorial Kansas.


The press came early to Kansas. The Kansas Weekly Herald, the first regular newspaper, appeared at Leavenworth, under the dateline of September 15, 1854.96

In 1860 there were twenty-seven newspapers in Kansas.97 A century later there were 346, including 53 dailies, 13 semiweeklies, and 272 weeklies. The editors have generally been Kansas enthusiasts. Closely identified with the political life, they have constituted a fraternity of ability and dedication. There have been real individualists among them. The encroachment of business demands have made the newspaper editor less colorful in recent decades than were his predecessors in early Kansas years. There have been conflicts within the ranks as should be expected when men of independence clash. The Kansas Editorial Association code of ethics, dating from 1910, was a pioneer statement in that field. Many great names are found in the Editor’s [actually the Kansas Newspaper] Hall of Fame established in 1931 at the University of Kansas, and a large number could be added. Kansas has been served well across the century by editors and the press.

An unusual literary and publishing venture was established in Kansas in 1919 when E. Haldeman-Julius pioneered in inexpensive paperback books, known as the “Blue Books,” which sold for five cents each. Millions of copies of hundreds of titles, including well-known classics, came from the presses at Girard. National advertising and promotion boosted sales. The publication of the “Blue Books” continues in the family tradition at Girard.

The Kansas State Historical Society owes its origin to a meeting of newspaper editors and publishers in

Manhattan in 1875. As early as 1855 the first charter for a historical society was granted, and attempts were made again in 1859 and 1867 to establish such an organization. The editors pleaded at the meeting in 1875 to provide the historical society with copies of papers published in the state. This pledge has been maintained. The Society has been the official archives for the state since 1905. The excellent library, newspaper collection, publications, museum, and services of the staff provide rich resources for the study of Kansas history.

A quaint contradiction prevails in the view of Kansas first dramatized by William Allen White in his famous editorial, “What’s the Matter With Kansas?,” in the Emporia Gazette in 1896, circulated in a million copies by Mark Hanna in the campaign to elect William McKinley, and its contemporary expression in a feature article by the same title in the New York Times Magazine in 1954 by Kenneth S. Davis, distinguished Kansas novelist and biographer. The latter lamented the conformity and drabness of Kansas in our time in contrast with the colorful individualism and dynamic radicalism of the Populists that White attacked so scathingly in his editorial. Regardless of the background factors, our generation seems enthralled to repeat the old question, “What’s the Matter With Kansas?”

The question, with its chafing tone of despair, repeated in our time, demonstrates inadequate understanding of history and of the forces over which Clio’s Muse presides. Kansas has had times of distinctiveness, periods characterized by a kind of “momentous now,” and it may have such times again, when men and events join to provide a forward thrust that a later generation applauds. Other states have also had those all too fleeting times of distinctiveness. Virginia once had a great dy-nasty of talent—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and others. Governor J. Lindsay Almond, Jr., and Senator Harry Byrd are scarcely leaders of equal stature. Do Virginians join in a lugubrious lament, “What’s the Matter With Virginia?” There was once a time in the northeastern states, when greatness flourished, and the “flowering of New England” was identified with the genius of Emerson, Lowell, the Adams family, and other celebrities. The memory of that era looms large in contrast with contemporary achievement. Should a national chorus swell with a great crescendo, “What’s the Matter With New England?”

When Carl Becker wrote his famous essay on Kansas fifty years ago, emphasizing the idealism and individualism of the people, he concluded with this observation: “The Kansas spirit is the American spirit double distilled.” Perhaps this interpretation, placed in the context of our time, is still valid. The faults of Kansas are the faults of America. Alexis de Toqueville observed about America in the third decade of the last century that the American passion for equality would result in conformity. Kansas, like America, is characterized by conformity, and, at times, there seems to be no plurality of paths. The citadel of conservative Republicanism in Kansas had some breaches recently, but strenuous efforts were made to repair them. Protestantism, the dominant religion of Kansas, which is not now characterized by any distinctiveness, both reflects and promotes a traditional pattern of value. Moreover, an aggressive right-wing fundamentalist emphasis seems to be gaining strength in some quarters. The schools faithfully transmit the prevailing image of America. The colleges and universities struggle long and learnedly with internal business, and generally respond on controversial issues with the considerate restraint the people expect. In 1958, when a group of professors, largely in the fields of economics and political science, from a few of the institutions, publicly proclaimed their opposition to “Right to Work” legislation, there were protests from influential people and groups that the professors were out of bounds. However, the knowledge and skill of the professors are gladly sought in the promotion of scientific, engineering, and business enterprises.

Kansas has abandoned largely the extreme isolationist position that characterized its citizens prior to World War I, although the vestiges remain. Two World Wars, in which Kansas made distinguished contributions through her sons and daughters on far flung battlefields and in agricultural and industrial production at home, have created new world horizons. Towards the middle of the century, under the leadership of Milton Eisenhower, president of Kansas State University and chairman of the National Commission of UNESCO, there was heartening

101. Alexis De Toqueville, Democracy in America was published in two volumes, the first in 1835 and the second in 1840. Many editions have been published.
interest and support for this important international approach to life and learning. Kansas State University recently sent a large team of experts under the auspices of the Department of State to aid in strengthening the agricultural production of India. Alf M. Landon, two-term governor of Kansas and the Republican candidate for president of the United States in 1936, has provided enlightened leadership for Kansans in international affairs during the last decade.

Kansas was the center of the national controversy over slavery, but the commitment to freedom for the Negro was not inclusive. The Wyandotte Constitution of 1859 restricted the franchise to “white male persons,” by a vote of thirty-seven to three, after William Hutchinson had pled with the convention that unless the franchise was granted, “We must go back to the work of this morning, and revise and change our declaration of rights.” The Negro received the right to vote in Kansas as a result of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. School segregation was the policy in several cities in Kansas. It was somewhat ironical that Kansas should furnish the occasion for Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, which resulted in the famous United States Supreme Court desegregation case in May 1954. Approximately a century after Kansas had been the focal point in the struggle for freedom, the elementary schools in the capital city were desegregated by court order; the other levels of instruction were not segregated. In 1953 legislation became effective designed to prohibit discriminatory practices in employment based upon race, color, religion, or country of ancestral origin. Kansas joined eleven other states in establishing a commission to carry out the intent of the legislation, although Kansas was one of four states that provided no regulatory or enforcing power. In 1959 a law became effective making it a misdemeanor to discriminate because of race, color, religion, or country of ancestral origin in hotels and restaurants, in places of public amusement or entertainment, and on transportation facilities. The legislature in 1959, however, failed to pass an act based upon legislation in seventeen other states, which, if passed, would have given Kansas excellent fair employment legislation. The Kansas mind is generally conservative. This understandable response by a generation that has listened to graphic descriptions, or witnessed directly the hard won conquest over nature and circumstances. There have been times of great adversity when man or nature seemed to conspire against the present and endanger the future. The annals of Kansas include the great drought of 1860, the great grasshopper invasion of 1874, the great economic collapse after 1887, and the Great Depression of the 1930s. But the Kansas spirit has shown unusual capacity to triumph over what seemed to be insuperable odds. Times of hardship yielded to times of rejoicing, and the good years far outnumbered the bad years. The state’s motto, Ad Astra Per Aspera, suggests the true facts of struggle, and, if the stars have not been reached, in certain areas of life, more than flickering glimpses have been seen. Kansas has arrived at a point of stability and progress. Less friendly observers might contend that it is on dead center. If so, it need not stay there.

Kansans have not really expected very much from their state, and some of them are almost unbelieving about her achievements. The net result has been a kind of quaint conservatism. A symbol of it is found in a well-established bank in a Flint Hills town. The new building is beautifully designed and effectively equipped with central air conditioning, central heating, a strong vault, and electric machines for efficient maintenance of records. However, on an attractive turquoise wall is a circular tin plate, covering a hole that leads into the chimney. The board of directors insisted upon this item, based on the consideration that possibly some time in the years ahead it would be necessary to install an old-fashioned stove with pipes. This alternative was taken into account in the midst of all the other modernity. Possibly this kind of conservatism has made the bank a sound financial institution, and symbolically, it may be written large in Kansas life and thought. This conservatism, however, is brought to the straining point in contemplating the century-old constitution of Kansas, which needs drastic revision demanded by the onward rush of change.

The rugged spirit of independence, which characterized the pioneer era, has yielded generally to the inroads

made by changes chronicled across the years. Although often professing personal opposition to the role of centralized government, Kansans have been recently as eager as residents of neighboring states in the quest for federal funds for highways, flood control, government contracts, and support for social agencies. Kansas has shared annually, and rightly so, in the multibillion-dollar federal agricultural program that, although piling up huge surpluses, has also built up the physical resources of Kansas soil and enabled the vital role of agriculture to be maintained. The good earth of Kansas will also be needed to feed the far-flung members of the family of man. The need will be greater in the decades that belong to the future.

Kansas is generally slow to respond, but when aroused, the results are sometimes gratifying. A leading example is found in the substantial progress that has been made in recent times in the field of mental health. The great Menninger Clinic in Topeka has furnished inspiring leadership in this great area of concern. In Wichita the Institute of Logopedics, founded in 1934 by Dr. Martin F. Palmer, and directed by him, with its splendid program in rebuilding people through speech and language habilitation, is another example of the response of Kansans to the needs of man. Recent gains in several phases of education are encouraging portents for the future.

Kansas has a full quota of organizations. Optimists, Rotarians, Kiwanians, and Lions meet with unfailing regularity, and the “tail twisters,” or their counterparts, must be about equal, on a per capita basis in Kansas, with those of neighboring states. Youth find opportunities for sharing in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire groups, 4-H Clubs, Boys’ State, Girls’ State, Y-Teen, Hi-Y, and many other fine organizations with impressive records of achievement. Kansas has an unusually large number of excellent community, county, and district fairs, climaxed by two great statewide fairs, which appropriately emphasize the outstanding role of agriculture in the state. Patriotic, fraternal, and women’s organizations are numerous, and make an appropriate contribution to the life of the state. In the cities, country clubs multiply, and new and smaller replicas are organized to give the middle-class mentality a glimpse in part of what that kind of life is supposed to be like.

The tastes of Kansas are fashioned in part by the forest of television antennas and, to a lesser degree, by radio receiving sets. The TV listener can relive, if he chooses, and many so choose, the exploits in Kansas of Wyatt Earp and his contemporaries, some real, some fictitious. The culture of old Dodge City and Wichita town are transmitted weekly to millions of eager viewers in the nation. In a few places in Kansas, Great Books discussion groups rival the heroes of the Old West for attention. The Puritan emphasis on thrift and hard work has yielded somewhat to the new leisure of the forty-hour week. Although libraries report a flourishing business and book and record clubs have their patrons, golf courses, bowling alleys, and boating docks also have their faithful disciples.

Things do change in Kansas. Cocktail parties and drinking in homes and clubs are fairly common practices in the state of Carry Nation. It is somewhat ironical that the monument which was raised with great ceremony in Wichita in September 1918 to honor Carry Nation was knocked over accidentally and unceremoniously years later by a beer truck. It now rests undisturbed and unappreciated in a warehouse.

The physical countenance of Kansas has changed too. Winding trails and, later, inadequately drained dirt roads with narrow bridges have yielded to the magic of macadam and cement, and a system of county, state, and federal roads has been climaxed by a four-lane turnpike running southwest 236 miles from Kansas City through Wichita to the Oklahoma state line. Even the hurried traveler sees many vacant farm houses, or the area of the former farmstead outlined by old cedar trees, the only memorial of earlier years to mark the place where children played and their parents dreamed dreams about the future. There are towns, almost deserted, and bulging cities, with great problems, symbols of the end and the beginning of an era whose secrets have not yet been revealed to mortal man.

Thousands of miles of transmission lines crisscross the Kansas landscape, thanks to an effective Rural Electrification Administration program, and private and public sources of power, so that over 95 percent of Kansas farms are electrified. The countryside shows a heartening response to sensible conservation practices, as the erosion of soil is stopped by terracing and contour farming. Ponds and lakes dot the landscape in all parts of Kansas, and west of Marquette is the Kanopolis Reservoir, one of six federal reservoirs in the state designed effectively for flood control and recreation, with additional resources for irrigation to improve upon the bounty of nature. Kansas, like many other states, joins in the quest for more adequate water resources. In some areas of the state, giant power plants loom on the horizon, generating the energy to move the wheels of industry, symbols of the changing nature of the Kansas economy.

Kansas can scarcely be described as Dorothy Canfield Fisher described New York, “a glowing queenly creature,” or like Virginia, “a dignified grande dame with ancient, well-mended fine lace and thin old silver spoons,” or like Massachusetts, a man with “hair thinned by intellectual applications.” Kansas is like a man returned from a long journey that has covered vast stretches of time. He has witnessed the conflict of the real and the ideal, the extremes of poverty and affluence, the ebbing tide of despair and the rising tide of hope. He is glad he made the journey, but he isn’t sure what it really meant, nor does he know how to profit fully from it. He wasn’t the most brilliant in the company of travelers, but he was respectable, and generally, quite a decent fellow. He had always worked hard, and he could be justly proud of the labor of his hands. He would do things differently if he could go again, but really not too differently. He was glad to be back home, and reflect on what he had seen. And what he saw looked good to him.  

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