Kansas History as Published in the Press

Heinie Schmidt's column, "It's Worth Repeating," a series of historical narratives about early-day life in the vicinity of Dodge City, has continued to appear regularly in The High Plains Journal of Dodge City.


A history of the pony express, entitled "The Pony Express Starts From St. Joseph," by Olaf T. Hagen, appeared in the Missouri Historical Review, Columbia, October, 1948. William H. Russell was the chief promoter of the pony express project. He persuaded his partners in the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell to support the idea, and a new company was incorporated—the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company. The pony express went into operation on April 3, 1860, when the first pony and rider departed from St. Joseph for California. However, the income was not equal to the expense, and, beset by other misfortunes, the company soon met with financial failure, ending the venture.

"Boom or Bust in Southwest Kansas," is the title of an article by Oscar A. Kinchen published in the West Texas Historical Association Year Book, October, 1948. The boom settlement in the latter 1880's of the so-called "Dust Bowl" area of Kansas is the principal theme of Mr. Kinchen's article.

A report by Clarence Woodbury on the repeal of prohibition in Kansas, entitled, "What Happened to Kansas," was printed in the January, 1949, number of The American Magazine.
The January, 1949, Etude magazine of Philadelphia, carried a feature article, with a picture, of the late Oscar Lofgren, for many years dean of fine arts and head of the piano department of Bethany College of Lindsborg. The article stated that the story of Dean Lofgren’s life is one of the most significant in the development of music in the Middle West. It related in detail many of his achievements and contributions to music during his years in Kansas.

Two articles by Arthur Conklin published recently in the Topeka Daily Capital were: “[S. D.] Flora Finds Topeka Weather Records Almost Old as City,” January 23, 1949, and “State’s Weather Records Older Than Kansas Is Itself,” February 21. The oldest systematic weather records in Kansas were made at Fort Leavenworth, beginning in July, 1827. In Topeka the weather records date back to January, 1858.

“Kansas,” by Roy Wall, was the title of an article on the game birds and animals of Kansas and their protection, in the March, 1949, number of Sports Afield, Minneapolis, Minn. The article presented a review of the history of legislative protection for game in Kansas, and a picture of the present game situation which has been objected to by some of our other state wildlife authorities. The first protective game legislation was enacted in 1861.

The editors of the Lawrence Outlook recalled in the issue of March 3, 1949, that it was in March, 1926, when the first issue of the Outlook, then titled the Douglas County Republican, made its appearance. In a two-column editorial Edwin F. Abels, editor, and Marie R. Abels, associate editor, reminisce about the paper’s 23 years of existence.

Among historical articles of interest to Kansans in recent issues of the Kansas City (Mo.) Star were: “Home Town Doctor Plan Gains in Kansas,” by Ira B. McCarty, March 20, 1949; “A K. U. Student’s Dream Led to Empire of Coal and Chemicals,” Kenneth A. Spencer’s life plan of 25 years ago now realized, by Kay Hildebrand McLeece, and “Old ‘Gold Fields’ of Kansas To Be Covered by Reservoir,” a lake to be created by the Cedar Bluff dam will occupy the area in Ellis and Trego counties where prospectors worked a half century ago, by Cecil Howes, March 27; “Big City Restlessness Is Left Behind by a Couple [Ralph and Rosemary Hafiner] on a 1,600-Acre Kansas Farm,” by Hughes Rudd, “Shooting Lions and an Elephant With a Former Kansan [Roy Weatherby] in Africa,” by Clarence N. Cook, “Out Through Kansas on the ‘Tumbleweed Special’, a ride from Larned to Jetmore on a Santa Fe train that the troop train directors overlooked, by John T. Alexander, and “His Cast-Iron Uncle Sam Drops Pennies in a Satchel,” about some of the coin banks in the collection of over 300 of Charles Holman of Topeka, April 17; “Girl Who Liked Microscopes at K. U. To a High Post in Children’s Bureau,” Dr. Leona Baumgartner has been made associate chief of the children’s bureau at Washington, by Conwell Carlson, April 23; “Army Leaders of Western World Converge at Ft. Leavenworth,” Command and General Staff college attended by 51 foreign officers, by Robert W. Reed, April 24; “A Housing Problem in [Hutchinson] Kansas Solved by Community Action,” by Alvin S. McCoy, May 1; “The World’s Champion Cowboy [Jerry Roberts] Was Born and Bred in Kansas,” by John Alexander, and “Many Obstacles Are Met to Make Lake Elbo a Reality,” Manhattan’s first lake nears completion, May 8; “William Dean Howells Was an Exciting Dinner Guest of William Allen White,” by Everett Rich, May 16; “The King’s Horses From Vienna Now Cavort and Graze in Kansas,” John Nolan of Garden City has purchased seven Lipizzaner horses which the U. S. army “acquired” during the war from the Spanish Riding Academy of Vienna, by Hughes Rudd, “His [E. C. Buehler] Tips on the Gift of Gab Help K. U. Debaters Win,” by Howard Turtle, and “It Can Cost Your Life To Be the Law in Abilene, Kan.,” recent deaths of Sheriff Davis and his brother recall that a similar fate befall Tom Smith, marshal in 1870, by Bill Barger, May 22, and “From Death Valley to the Far North, Fred Funston Always Found Adventure,” by Everett Rich, June 6. Articles in the Kan-

Several stories of historical interest have been published in the Meade county papers in recent months. In a brief article in the Meade Globe-News, March 27, 1949, J. O. Keith described the Tuttle trail. According to Mr. Keith this trail followed the Jones and Plummer trail from Dodge City for about ten miles to a point on Mulberry creek; from there it went almost due south to Five Mile creek where it turned southwest, cutting across the southeast corner of Meade county and extending on through No Man’s Land into Texas. The Plains Journal, March 31, and the Meade Globe-News, April 3, printed a story by Mrs. Essie May Novinger about the first school in the southern part of the county. The school was held in a sod house and taught by Mrs. Jake Kolb in 1885. Mrs. Novinger was one of the pupils. In another article, appearing in the Globe-News, April 24, and the Journal, April 28, Mrs. Novinger tells of the arrival in Meade county in the 1880’s of her family and other settlers.
John E. King’s “From Texas Longhorns to Thoroughbreds,” a brief history of cattle raising in Texas from the days of Coronado through the period 1865-1880 when five million cattle were driven to shipping points in Kansas, down to the present, was printed in the April, 1949, number of Southwest Magazine, a supplement of the Panhandle (Tex.) Herald, April 15.

A series of articles by Richard W. Lewis on the early history of Home City began in the Marysville Advocate, April 14, 1949, and continued through June 2. A post office was first established near the present site of Home City in 1874, and the first postmaster was Gottlieb Messell, according to Mr. Lewis. For several years the post office was in the homes of the postmasters, and, as a result, the town became known as Home. Although a plat of the town was made and recorded in 1882, Home City was never incorporated. Mr. Lewis traced the Home City history up to 1905, when the town was almost totally destroyed by fire. Other Marshall county historical articles were printed in the Marshall County News of Marysville. On May 19, some historical information gathered by the late Mrs. A. B. Martin was printed. Brief historical sketches of Marysville, Blue Rapids, Axtell and Beattie appeared in the issue of May 30. A brief history of the Alcove Springs region is included in an article, published June 2, which enumerates reasons why the area should be made into a state or national park.

The Pratt Daily Tribune, April 29, 1949, briefly noted that Pratt had reached its 85th birthday. It was on April 29, 1884, that the first lots on the townsite of Pratt Center, platted by the Pratt Center Town Company, were put on sale. Eli P. Williams was president of the town company. The town was incorporated on October 9, 1884.

A brief biographical sketch of William F. Cody, by George J. Remsburg, appeared in the Leavenworth Times, May 8, 1949. Comments on the new book, My Life With Buffalo Bill, by Dan Muller, were also included in the article. Among recent articles by Harry H. Seckler in the Times was “Leavenworth’s 95th Birthday Will Be on Sunday, June 12,” which was printed June 5. On June 12, 1854, George W. Gist, John C. Gist and Samuel Farnandis staked off the townsite where Leavenworth now stands, and on the next day the town association was formed. In the summer of 1855 the town was incorporated and later that year the first city election was held, Thomas Slocum being elected mayor.
Special ceremonies in observance of the 91st anniversary of the Marais des Cygnes massacre were held at the site, northeast of Trading Post in Linn county, on May 15, 1949. John Pellegrino was chairman of the commemoration, and Gov. Frank Carlson was the principal speaker. A history of the massacre was published in the Pleasanton Observer-Enterprise, April 28, 1949. On May 19, 1858, about 30 Missourians led by Capt. Charles A. Hamelton arrested 11 Free-State men who were living in the vicinity of Trading Post. The captives were taken into a ravine and were lined up and shot. Five were killed, five wounded and one escaped injury. The site was later marked by two concrete slabs; in 1939 it was purchased for a park, and in 1941 the state officially accepted it as the Marais des Cygnes Massacre Memorial Park.

A brief historical sketch of Pittsburg was printed in the Pittsburg Sun and Headlight on the 73d anniversary of the city’s founding, May 20, 1949. The original town plat was recorded at the office of the register of deeds on May 20, 1876. The sketch contrasts the one or two original buildings with the industry, educational facilities, railroads, churches and municipal improvements of the present city of over 25,000 inhabitants. Tentative plans are now being made for a diamond jubilee celebration two years hence.

The 75th anniversary of the organization of Rush county was celebrated along with the annual home-coming with a three-day program at La Crosse beginning May 26, 1949. The celebration was opened by an address by Gov. Frank Carlson. Also in connection with the anniversary, The Rush County News, La Crosse, published a 184-page diamond jubilee edition on May 19, one of the largest ever issued in Kansas. Besides the regular news, and greetings from President Truman, Governor Carlson, and Senators Clyde M. Reed and Andrew F. Schoeppel, over 75 articles, covering all phases of Rush county history, appeared in the jubilee edition.

A brief article on James M. Harvey and his family, by Mrs. Lucy Pottorf, was printed in the Manhattan Tribune-News, June 2, 1949. Mr. Harvey, governor of Kansas from 1869 to 1873, brought his family to Kansas in 1861 and took a claim in Riley county. The farm remained in the family until it was sold recently. Mrs. Pottorf, a Riley county resident for 50 years, died May 31.