Kansas History as Published in the Press

The story of Robidoux, a Missourian of French ancestry who was the earliest trader in western Nebraska, operating trading posts and blacksmith shops during the gold rush of 1849 era, is told in “Robidoux’s Trading Post at ‘Scott’s Bluffs,’ and the California Gold Rush,” by Merrill J. Mattes, printed in Nebraska History, Lincoln, June, 1949. Mattes made an interesting discovery as a result of one of Dr. Robert Taft’s articles in The Kansas Historical Quarterly. Taft’s story on Heinrich Balduin Möllhausen, appearing in the August, 1948, number, featured a picture of one of Robidoux’s trading posts. It was the only known contemporary picture of a post he had at Scotts Bluff, and with this picture in hand, Mattes was able definitely to establish the site of the 1851 post in Carter canyon.


The life of Carry Nation was the subject of a stage production, “Cyclone in Petticoats,” created and presented by Barbara Gene Corey of Topeka as her senior project at Bennington College, Bennington, Vt., where the play was staged in June, 1949. Miss Corey’s story of the play was told in the Wichita Sunday Eagle, August 7, 1949.

A history of Morton county was published in the Morton County Record, Rolla, June 3, 10, 17 and 24, 1949. The Record reported that the first permanent settlement in the county was made in 1879 by the Beatty brothers.

The Johnson County Democrat, Olathe, June 9, 1949, reprinted from the Kansas City (Mo.) Star a brief historical sketch of Countryside addition in Johnson county. A stone and mortar wall, said to be the foundation of a house built by John Prophet, a Shawnee Indian who once held title to 2,000 acres in the area, still remains.
The addition was acquired about 20 years ago by Frank Hodges, Olathe lumberman, and is now covered by homes. An article on the Silverheels family, by Mrs. Tom Davis, appeared in the *Johnson County Herald*, Overland Park, July 28. Moses Silverheels, a Shawnee Indian, received land in present Johnson county under the treaty between the U. S. government and the Shawnee Indians concluded May 10, 1854. A packet of historical documents, including Olathe's incorporation documents of 1859 and 1868, was recently discovered in the Johnson county probate court.

Historical articles of interest to Kansans in recent issues of the Kansas City (Mo.) *Star* included: “Chautauqua Brought Cultural Life to the Middle West in the Last Century,” Ottawa was the center of the movement in the Middle West, by Charles Arthur Hawley, June 14, 1949; “Hard Work Is Real Route to Success, Says a Woman Who Has Achieved It,” the success story of Mrs. Olive Ann Beech of Wichita, by John Wheeler, June 20; “Amelia Earhart’s Fate Still Debated Twelve Years After Her Disappearance,” July 2; “Kansas City May See Its Own History in the Railroad Fair’s Pageant,” a description of the historical pageant “Wheels A-Rolling,” by E. B. Garnett, and “The Once-Arid Plains of Kansas Now Are Dotted With Shimmering Lakes,” with photographs, by Hughes Rudd, July 10; “Famous Points in Germany Visited by U. S. Children,” under the direction of Fred L. Miller of Topeka, American children going to school in Germany are visiting famous places, August 7; “Mother Bickerdyke Helped Kansas After Heroic Service With the Union Army,” by Louis O. Honig, August 19; “Saga of a Boilermaker—Harry Darby,” by Richard B. Fowler, and “A Bottle-Throwing Bird Man [Ralph Ellis] Stirred Up Legal Row at K. U.,” the story behind the court fight between Ellis’ widow and the University of Kansas over 65,000 books on birds, by Alvin S. McCoy, August 21, and “In a Booming Season of Mid-Western Fairs, Abilene, Kas., Stages Its 80th Celebration,” pictures of exhibits with brief comments, August 28. Articles in the Kansas City (Mo.) *Times* included: “Only Two Survivors of Quaint Dutch Windmills Which Ground Kansas Grain,” Wamego and Smith Center have pioneer structures preserved as historical relics, by Margaret Whittemore, July 22; “Wing of Memorial on Oregon Trail Honors William H. Jackson, Pioneer,” a wing of the Scottsbluff (Neb.) National Monument museum dedicated to honor Jackson, by Col. E. P. Gempel, July 27; “Little Remains of Town [Quindaro] Which Was an Outpost of Free-Staters,” July 29; “Landmarks

Historical sketches of several towns near Emporia appeared recently in the Emporia Times. Included were: Hartford, June 16, 1949; Miller, June 23; Dunlap, June 30; Saffordville, July 7; Admire, July 14; Neosho Rapids, July 21; Bushong, July 28; Americus, August 11, and Olpe, September 1.

The Atchison Daily Globe noted on June 19, 1949, that the oldest house in Atchison is now being restored by Mr. and Mrs. John M. Price. It was built in 1855 by Dr. J. H. Stringfellow. The Prices plan to furnish the restored building with antique furniture.

Early county-seat fights in Linn county were discussed by Douglas Gleason, Ottawa attorney, in the Mound City Republic, June 30, 1949. Mr. Gleason’s information was from volumes 14 and 15 of the Kansas Reports.

The story of one of the first Russian Mennonite migrations to Kansas, including facts about the origin of the Bruderthal Mennonite Church, is related in “Bruderthal—Seventy-Five Years Ago,” by Ray Funk, in Mennonite Life, North Newton, July, 1949. The settlement of the Bruderthal community was begun in 1873 by Peter and Jacob Funk. On December 26, 1874, the Bruderthal Mennonite Church was organized, but the congregation met in schoolhouses and homes until a schoolhouse was purchased in 1885 to be used as a church building.

A history of the Fred Harvey hotels and restaurants is told in an article, “The Fred Harvey System,” by Charles W. Hurd, in The
Colorado Magazine, Denver, July, 1949. The first Harvey house, a part of the Santa Fe depot at Topeka, was opened in 1876.


The history of Augusta’s historical museum on South State street was sketched in the Augusta Daily Gazette, July 5, 1949. The log building which houses the museum was built in 1868 by C. N. James and Leonard Shamleffer and used for a school, a church and a Masonic hall in the early days. The Augusta Historical Society acquired the building in 1938, made necessary repairs, collected antiques and relics representing Augusta’s early history and officially opened the building as a museum in 1941.

A historical sketch of the Barneston Presbyterian Church was printed in the Marysville Advocate, July 7, 1949. The church recently celebrated its 60th anniversary, the first church building having been dedicated June 30, 1889, four years after the congregation was formed. “A History of Beattie” is the title of a series of articles by J. D. Stosz which began to appear in both the Advocate and the Marshall County News, Marysville, on July 14.

Three special sections were published by The Phillips County Review, Phillipsburg, July 7, 1949, on the occasion of the dedication of a new general office building at Phillipsburg by the Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Co. The special edition was devoted principally to the history of the gas company which was founded in 1936 by L. E. Fischer.

“Early Day History of Vernon Telling of Its Early Industries and Social Life,” is the title of a four-column article by Elizabeth E. Clawson in the Yates Center News, July 7, 1949. Vernon first became a recognized townsite in 1888, and has become important as a prairie hay market and shipping point.
The life of Rex Stout was featured in “Profiles,” by Alva Johnston, in The New Yorker, July 16 and 23, 1949. Stout was born on December 1, 1886, in Noblesville, Ind., and in 1888 his family moved to a farm near Topeka. He remained in Kansas until 1906 when he enlisted in the navy where he served two years. In 1916 he began organizing a thrift system for the saving of money by school children. By 1927 he had accumulated a substantial fortune, and he retired from business, taking up writing again. Shortly before and during the war years he engaged in propaganda work in favor of preparedness, lend-lease, the draft and the war effort. Since the war he has returned to his writing.


The history of Sedan was featured in the Sedan Times-Star, July 28, 1949. Included are sketches of the town’s newspapers, churches and clubs.

A history of Poheta school, District No. 16, Saline county, by George H. Shier, was printed in the Gypsum Advocate, August 4, 1949. The district was organized on June 19, 1869, and now is being disorganized and the area divided among adjoining districts.

“Oscar Wilde Still Popular Abroad, But Leavenworth Didn’t Like Him,” was the title of an article by Charles G. Pearson in the Leavenworth Times, August 7, 1949. Wilde lectured in Leavenworth April 19, 1882.

“Last Indian Raid Here 81 Years Ago,” is the title of a brief article which appeared in the Beloit Daily Call, August 12, and in the weekly Call, August 18, 1949. The last serious Indian raid in the Beloit area occurred on August 12, 1868, and, according to the article, three persons were massacred and two small girls taken captive by the Indians.

The story of the Leoti Old Settlers’ picnic, held this year on September 12 and 13, 1949, was featured in the Leoti Standard, August
25, 1949. The gathering was first held in 1890 at Burr schoolhouse and was called the Harvest Home picnic. It was a Thanksgiving for the bountiful crops harvested that year.

A history of Marquette by James Lindstrom was published in the Marquette Tribune, September 1, 1949, in observance of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the town. The first permanent settlers were John Hughes and J. M. Claypool who walked from Junction City in the late 1860's. Mr. Lindstrom mentioned the names of several of the early settlers in the area, related a number of their experiences with the Indians and described the establishment of schools and churches and the progress of industries, businesses and agriculture in the community. The town, named for Marquette, Mich., was founded in 1874.

The Kiowa News published an 88-page diamond jubilee edition, September 1, 1949, in connection with the celebration, September 3-5, of the 75th anniversary of "the establishment of the first post office called Kiowa," which was located about five miles northwest of present Kiowa. The jubilee edition included historical sketches of Kiowa clubs, churches, schools, businesses and other institutions. Articles on some of the neighboring communities and ranches were also included.