Bypaths of Kansas History

ATTORNEY AT LAW AND MAKER OF AXE HANDLES

James A. Troutman, who wrote the preface to Radge's 1905 Directory of Topeka, had the following about Topeka's first lawyer:

The first lawyer who "flung his shingle to the breeze," according to tradition, displayed this unique sign: "----- -----, Attorney and Counselor at Law, Solicitor in Chancery, and Land Agent. Axe-Handles made to Order."

There are some members of the bar here now, who might pursue a side line, such as making axe-handles, without destroying the efficiency or maring the harmony of our jurisprudence.

A LONELY HEART

From the Kansas National Democrat, Lecompton, January 19, 1860.

WANTED.—A Wife, a domestic, loving one—one who would not "cry her eyes out" should I chance to stay away ten minutes longer than I promised to return. I don't want a "Butterfly," but a real wife—one with ordinary economy. I do not care for an authoress; neither do I wish for one who is too "soft," but one who has an ordinary amount of intelligence; one who can manage household affairs while I attend to business outside. I want one who is affectionate, and not too fond of scolding; but still I would wish her to have sufficient independence to stand up for what is right, nor yet a strong-minded woman. Riches I do not seek, but wish one with most of the attributes pertaining to a real woman. I do not ask for a perfect beauty, nor must she be a "fright."

With such an one, I fancy I could live a happy life, and afford her a comfortable competency, as well as a tolerable good husband, whose morals are pretty fair, and also a husband who would stay at home with his wife, and not indulge too freely in the "intoxicating bowl."

Address communications, through the Post-office, Lecompton, to X. Y. Z.

LAYING BRICK IN 1872

From The Weekly Kansas Chief, Troy, July 11, 1872.

Troy has the champion brick-layer. The other day, B. F. Calloway, in one day, on Border's new building, laid nine thousand brick, wall measurement, or eight thousand kiln count. It was a favorable piece of wall to lay brick on; yet we do not believe it can be beaten by any other man, and let him pick his wall.
BYPATHS OF KANSAS HISTORY

BEFORE MACK SENNETT

From The Kansas Daily Commonwealth, Topeka, July 18, 1873.

A DISASTROUS RUNAWAY.—Yesterday morning a team of horses attached to a lumber wagon took their bits in their mouths and started to run away down Tenth avenue. The driver, jerking them up too suddenly, lost his hat. Grabbing after his hat he fell off of the seat and out of the wagon, alighting on a nomadic pig; the pig, dreadfully frightened, struck for the sidewalk, running between a book-peddler's legs, throwing him against and through the show window of a tailor shop. The crash startled the tailor so that he dropped the hot goose on his foot, broke a kerosene lamp with his elbow, fell down on an apprentice, who rammed a two-inch needle through his own thumb and into his master's spinal column, and upset the stove on a customer with his feet in agonized contortions. What other damage was done at the tailor shop we are not prepared to state, as in our eagerness to get hold of all the consequences we hastened after the runaway team, which by this time had dashed through Mr. Maxwell's fence, converting the boards into kindling-wood, and scattering the splinters to the four winds; the next depredation was committed upon the property of Mr. Clark, where an elaborate chicken-coop was entirely demolished, and the inmates as completely stripped of their feathers as if a tornado has just passed over that particular section. Passing on down the aristocratic thoroughfare the team encountered a lime cart and upset it with very little ceremony, burying the driver beneath the lime. About a block below there another catastrophe occurred. A sweet, laughing boy of fourteen summers, the idol of his mother's heart and frequently of her (slipper) sole's devotion, had tied a clothes line across the street, in order to have a joke on the teamsters who pass that way. While the boy was aloft in the cross-trees of a tree box, tying the last end of the rope, the runaway team heretofore alluded to careened down that way like a lost comet, and two hours after he woke up that boy had no more idea how he had got into that back yard on the other side of the street than he had of how he would manage to get into old John Robinson's circus. It is seldom indeed that a runaway is attended with so many touching incidents, and the reader must pardon us for making so much of this one.

PLowing Along the Santa Fe

From the Wabaunsee County News, Alma, August 13, 1873.

The A. T. & S. F. railroad is now plowing a forty-inch furrow one hundred and twenty-five feet from the center of its track on each side, between Newton and Sargent [on the Kansas-Colorado border], and which will be burned out as a fire guard. The teams are now at work, going west at the rate of ten miles per day.
Drama on the Border

From *The Kansas Daily Commonwealth*, Topeka, September 14, 1873.

It is not necessary to name the place. Border-towns are all very much alike after the temporary railway-terminus has gone westward and they are left with only their natural resources, pervaded still by the ghost of ruffianism, possessed yet by a mania for rows, and a talent for wickedness.

But there was a theatre there. The curtain rose every night at half-past seven, and displayed a stage about seven feet by nine, bordered by the most wonderful green cotton walls, perforated by the reddest and most gigantic of doors and windows, and altogether overrun by morning-glories as big as your hat. Sometimes they would shift a scene, and stupefy the audience with the display of a dizzy battlement as much as four feet high, or run out and prop up a tree which was phenomenal in the respect of being obviously perfectly flat, any one of whose half-dozen leaves might have been economically used as a blind-board for a town cow addicted to lifting gates. They had a cabin or two, the doors of which occupied an entire end of the tenement, and beside which the swelling proportions of a tragedian were truly gigantic. They had a strip of the briny deep as much as a foot and a half wide, which washed the back of the stage with the wildest of green-and-white waves, regardless of the state of the weather. There were “exits and entrances” too numerous to mention, and wherever any sort of drapery was required about which it is unbecoming in an audience to be too particular, it was there in the shape of red calico.

I was entirely unencumbered as to engagements, and said I would go. It was offered as an inducement by my frontier friend that it should not cost a cent. “If not,” said he, “there’ll be trouble with that doorkeeper.” When we reached the principal entrance to the long, low house which did duty as the temple of the drama, my friend administered a rousing kick to the door. “Open this yar,” he remarked; “I’m a goin’ in,—so’s this feller,” and accordingly, in we went.

It was not intended for the amusement of a very large audience. One-half the available space was taken up by a bar and a big stove. There were some wooden benches and boxes to sit upon, and as the curtain had not risen, the crowd amused themselves by stealing each other’s hats, putting quids of tobacco in each other’s pockets, irrigating themselves at the bar and trying to kick over the stove. The playful and innocent badinage which went on the while; the delicate pleasantries would have made a Plüte’s hair curl.

But presently, with many a hitch and wrinkle, the curtain rose. I don’t remember the name of the play, but it depicted the evils and sorrows of a drunkard’s life to an appreciative audience of drunkards. About the third act a “supe” came on with a huge armful of prairie hay and strewed the platform therewith, and thereupon the leading actor proceeded to illustrate the characteristic symptoms of mania a potu. He rolled and tumbled and frothed. It was the hardest work I have ever seen done on any stage. It was worse than the rail pen at an Indiana camp-meeting, where the hardest cases retire to fight it out with the devil. It was done before an audience entirely au fait in such matters, and they were critical, therefore, and very exacting. They cheered him sometimes when he was seized with an unusual fit of trembling,
but finally, while he lay completely exhausted, having torn off both sleeves and ruptured his pantaloons, a young man in the audience shied half a squeezed lemon which he had taken from a tumbler, with such nicety that it took the exhausted tragedian squarely in the left eye. He got up and walked to the front of the stage, as sober a man as one could wish to see, but awfully mad. “If I knewed who threwed that,” he remarked, “I’ll be blanked * if I wouldn’t come out there and lick him so blanked bad that snakes wouldn’t be nowhar, and I’ll do it yet; blank me if I can’t clean out the whole audience.” But after all, such is professional discipline, he went back and lay down in the broken hay and finished the part, while the imprudent young man was raked down from behind and passed, with many a cuff, over the heads of the audience to the door.

Just then my chaperon sidled up to the stove and pretended to warm his hands. Then he came back and plucked me by the sleeve; “let’s git,” he remarked. We went out and stood across the street. We began to hear the beginning of a coughing epidemic, coupled with considerable profanity. The doors were flung open and the crowd rushed out, the principal tragedian at the head, the talented leader of the largest barking-chorus ever organized in the west. “They never do play the thing out,” remarked my friend; “they allers gets to coughin”—rec’n the air is too close.” I noticed that he was very much concerned in enquiring what was the matter, and expressed himself very bitterly with regard to the sneaking trick of peppering the hot stove.

That was the end of my first and last sitting in front of the foot-lights on the border. I passed the place an hour after, and the calico drop curtain was down, the benches and boxes were deserted, the temple of the drama again transformed into a “saloon,” and the leading actor, leaning against the bar, was fast preparing himself for a delineation of the drunkard’s woes not down in the bills.

JAMES W. STEELE.

* This convenient and expressive word has an illustrious ancestry. I stole it from Mr. Brett Hart; he negotiated for it with Mr. Charles Reade, while the latter confesses to have got it from one Mr. Boyle.

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FORERUNNER OF THE AUTOMOBILE TRAILER

From the Netawaka Chief, March 12, 1874.

We noticed a novel mode of traveling, this morning. A shanty built on wheels, with stove, windows, and all the equipments common to a Pullman’s Palace Car.

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PRACTICING FOR THE LIAR’S CLUB

From the Lakin Eagle, May 20, 1879.

DOES IT BLOW IN KANSAS?—As a truth and no fabrication, Kansas is not a windy country.

We have here during twelve months of the year an imperceptible circulation of air from the south, west, north and east, (varied to suit ones taste and inconvenience) that in other states as in Colorado, Illinois and Nebraska, might be called high wind, but here it is considered nothing but a gentle zephyr. In some states they have high winds but never in Kansas.
A two gallon funnel turned flaring end windward and gimlet end downward will collect enough of Kansas zephyrs in seven hours to drill a hole in solid sand rock one hundred and eight feet deep. We never dig wells in Kansas. Condensed air does the work most successfully.

It is terrible windy just across the line in Colorado but it never or we might say seldom ever blows in Kansas.

The men here are all pigeon-toed and bow-legged. This is caused from an unceasing effort to stick the toes into the earth and try to keep a strong foothold on terra firma. The gentlemen carry a pound of shot in each breeches leg to keep them (the gentlemen) right side out.

Why they are afraid of turning wrong side out we never knew, but the wind has nothing to do with it. We are often compelled to stay down town late of nights, and when we arrive home it generally strikes up a lively breeze, especially if our breath smells a little of cloves or coffee, yet strictly speaking Kansas is not a breezy country.

The fish are very tough in this country because when they walk out to eat grass the wind blows all of their scales off and makes the meat hard and sunburnt.

To see a young man out in the moon-light walking with his arm around his ‘dulcine del debos’ or in a dark corner seated closely by her side means nothing more or less than that he loves her tenderly, affectionately and devotedly, and that he intends to woo, win and wed her; not that he is alarmed as to the wind.

Our eastern friends will do well by taking our word for it that Kansas is not a windy country, and take a claim and make for yourselves homes.

From the Garden City Paper, July 24, 1879.

An eastern man writes to know if we have ‘quick soil’ here in Kansas. Quick! Well—rather. A Harrison township man was foolish enough to fertilize his garden recently, and when he went out to plant some water-melon seeds the other day, he had to run for his life to keep from being choked by the vines. Before he got over the fence he found half grown melons in his pockets.

From the Hill City New Era, June 18, 1908.

STORM STORIES.—Some pretty big hail fell during the recent storm. At Pete Prevaticaters, on Bow Creek the hail stones were unusually large and one chunk of ice fell which Pete covered with straw, using twenty-eight two horse loads of straw for the purpose, and will furnish ice to the Lenora meat shops for the next 90 days at $7.85 per ton.

At Jimmie Jinkles, on Coon Creek, a large hail stone fell with such force that it imbedded itself in the ground and is slowly melting. Jimmie thinks the lake made by the melting of the hail stone will afford water for his stock all summer and also make a fine boating pond.

At Thos. Tunks place, near Morland, large hail fell and were heard to explode with a loud report almost as soon as they fell. It seems that the rain fell from clouds very high in the atmosphere and fell so rapidly that the water, by friction, was made boiling hot, as it passed through the cold streak
in the air a thick coating of ice was formed around the heated water and this formed a sort of a bomb which was exploded by the confined steam. Only the fact that the ice was shattered into minute fragments by the force of the explosion prevented great damage being done by the flying of ice shells.

Frank Foolix says that with the hail at his place came also a small cyclone and that the twisting motion of the wind drew all the milk from his large herd of cows and sprayed it into the air where it became mixed with the small pellets of hail and made a veritable downfall of ice cream. After the storm was over he and his wife scooped up a large tub full of this ice cream and sold it to the confectioner at Togo who retailed it to his customers. If any one doubts the truth of his story he will gladly show the tub in which the stuff was gathered.

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**THIS RECKLESS DRIVING MUST STOP**

*From The Daily Capital, Topeka, June 24, 1880.*

Will people ever learn to "go slow" after a game of base ball? Will they ever learn to not turn their vehicles about and make a break for the exit? Yesterday a horse in the line of wagons and carriages became unmanageable and backed into the horses behind him, causing general confusion and resulting in damage to the boxes of several buggies, driven by high-toned young drivers.

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**AN OLD CURE FOR A KICKING HORSE**

*From The Globe Live Stock Journal, Dodge City, June 23, 1885.*

At McFarland's stables on Monday we saw a contrivance to cure a horse from kicking. It was nothing but an old wheat sack filled with hay, and suspended by a rope from the ceiling, so that the sack hung just at the heels of a vicious horse as he stood in his stall. When the sack was first placed in position the kicking equine let fly both feet at it as soon as it touched him, but after ten or twenty minutes of that kind of work he came to the conclusion that the sack would return as often as he struck it, and he finally gave up trying to "knock it out." This same horse, which has a reputation as a kicker, can now be hitched to any vehicle, and he will not kick at anything that happens to strike his heels. John McEnerny, who prescribed the treatment, says that any horse can be cured by it. One good feature about it is its cheapness.—Ex.