Bypaths of Kansas History

This Name “Kansas”

The state and river of Kansas were named for the Kansa or Kaw Indians, a southwestern Siouan tribe, whose home for centuries was in present northeastern Kansas. A map by Marquette, about 1673-1674, is one of the earliest to show a village of Kansa Indians in what is now Kansas. John Senex’s map of Louisiana territory in 1721 shows the “Great River of Cansez.”

The word “Kansas” has been given various meanings, including: South wind people, fire people, swift wind, smoky, swift, or “a troublesome people . . . who continually disturb or harass others”!

Through the years writers have spelled Kansas more than eighty different ways. Among these are: Acansis, Akansa, Akansea, Canceas, Cancez, Canceze, Cancezs, Canchez, Canips, Cans, Canza, Canzes, Cansez, Canzan, Canzas, Canze, Canzes, Canz, Canzon, Caugh, Cauzes, Caw, Chanze, Ercansaques, Escajnaques, Escanxasques, Escanxasques, Estaxaques, Excanaques, Excanaques, Kah, Kans, Kansas, Kance, Kanche, Kans, Kansas, Kans, Kansas, Kans, Kansas, Kans, Kansas, Kansas, Kansas, Kansas, Kansas, Kansas, Kansas, Kansas, Kansas, Kansa, Kansas, Kanza, Kanz, Kanzas, Kanze, Kanzeis, Kanze, Kanzon, Kansa, Kansa, Kash, Kathagi, Kau, Kaus, Kausa, Kauz, Kaw, Kaws, Kawsa, Kawse, Kawza, Konaz, Konsa, Konses, Konza, Konzas, Konzo, Kunza, Okames, Okams, Okanis, Quans, Quauns, Ukasa, and Ukasak.

One of the earliest mentions in the newspapers of this area of a proposed Kansas territory was in the St. Joseph (Mo.) Gazette, January 18, 1854 (no Kansas newspapers were published this early), when it was reported that congress was considering the organization of the large Nebraska territory into three territories, to be named: Cherokee, Kausa, and Nebraska. On February 8, the Gazette mentioned Sen. Stephen A. Douglas’ substitute bill to divide Nebraska into two territories, Kansas and Nebraska. And this became the Kansas-Nebraska act under which Kansas and Nebraska were organized into separate territories upon the signing of the bill by President Pierce on May 30, 1854.

Kansas City, Mo., when started in 1858, was named Kansas. It officially became the “Town of Kansas” in 1850, the “City of Kansas”
in 1858, and "Kansas City" in 1889. The following reference to the name appeared in the Kansas City (Mo.) Enterprise, December 18, 1856:

A MISTAKE.—We are often asked, "Why do you call your city Kansas?—it is stealing a name which does not properly belong to you but to the Territory." Such is not the fact. When this city was laid off and named, it was called after the river at whose mouth it is situated, and the immense trade of whose valley it controls. Kansas Territory was then called Nebraska, and when it was divided by act of Congress, they stole our name. We trust the public will hereafter stand corrected. We are the original and genuine Kansas, and intend so to continue.

The Kansas City (Kan.) Town Co. was formed in 1868. The townsite was surveyed in 1869 and Kansas City, Kan., became a city of the third class in 1872. It and the adjoining old town of Wyandotte and Armourdale were consolidated under the name Kansas City, Kan., in 1886.

It Was Also a Cow That Started the Chicago Fire

From the Georgetown (Ky.) Herald, August 10, 1854.

"How to Catch a Yankee.—A letter from Whitehead, in [Doniphan county] Kansas Territory dated 1st inst., to the New York Herald, says:

"The amount of immigration in the way of men and cattle is surprising. Thousands and thousands are pouring in from all portions of the Union, but more especially from Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee. It seems to be a purpose propensise to have it a slave State. There is a story abroad, that at all the ferries over the Missouri River they have a cow tied and a committee to watch all immigrants. The committee ask of each immigrant what animal that is. If he says 'A Cow' all well—he goes over. But if he answers, 'A cow,' they turn him back."

A Real Digger

From the Fort Scott Democrat, September 22, 1860.

What Industry and Perseverance Can Accomplish.—Mr. John McDonald, living about two miles South-east of town, has just finished the digging of a well on his claim. The well is thirty-two feet deep, mostly through solid rock. Mr. McDonald dug the well himself, and Mrs. McDonald hoisted the stone out of the well with a common pail. It is very tastefully walled up, with a mound of black slate-stone three feet in height around the mouth of the Well which prevents any dirt or surface water from getting into it. Mr. McDonald is fifty-six years of age and his lady is not far short of fifty. We wish them health to enjoy the fruits of their toil.
Freighting on the Frontier

From the Newton Kansasian, February 4, 1875.

In the Snows Near Dodge City.—From Mr. J. C. Brooks, of this township, who in company with several others returned home last week Tuesday, we gather a history of how they passed the notorious cold Friday of some three weeks ago. Their company consisted of Mr. Brooks, Ed C. Munger, R. Cook, Chas. Cotthbert, John Long and F. M. Moore, of this county, two men from Cowley county, two from Colorado, one from Fort Dodge, and the balance from Sedgwick county—twenty three in all—who were engaged in hauling Government freight from Dodge City to Camp Supply, about one hundred miles south:

“We left Dodge City on the 7th of January, going via Ft. Dodge, and aiming to drive to a little stream called Hackberry, 12 miles from the Fort Dodge. Having some trouble in crossing the river, we failed to reach Hackberry, and therefore we camped in Seven Mile Hollow. We got our supper and all prepared beds on the ground except the two Colorado men, who slept in their wagon. About the time we were going to bed it commenced to snow and blow; the storm increased till it was fearful. During the latter part of the night the drifts of snow got so heavy and packed so tight on our heads that some of us began to smother and some to freeze.

Things began to look dangerous. Three or four men from Sedgwick county getting so cold that they could not stand it any longer in their beds, crawled out and climbed into a wagon, with a blanket apiece, leaving their boots and coats fast under the snow, which was so hard that a horse could walk over it without sinking, and the drifts appearing to be from three to seven feet deep. The men that got into the wagon before daylight began to beg for help, but the other men all being fast under the snow could not help them, so they begged in vain. Early in the morning of the 8th, one of the men from Colorado got out of his wagon and helped one of the Cowley county men out from under the snow, and the two went to work in the storm, digging with a spade to get some of us out from under the snow. Finding it so cold that they could not stand it they tried to build a fire, but failed. I told them to dig the snow off my bed, so that I could get out and help them. They then dug me out, finding one of my boots on the bed. I then got out, and said to them, 'a fire we must have or we will all perish.'

By this time nearly all of the men were begging for help; crying that they were freezing to death. We rolled a bale of hay off a wagon, and got some matches by digging a mess box out from under the snow. We then tried to set it afire, but failed, wasting the matches by letting them get wet. I called to the men for more matches, but they could not find any. After a few minutes I happened to think that I had a box of matches in my wagon. I got in and found them all dry; got some hay and an old coat; pulled some cotton batten from it, and then tried to set it, hay, wagon, corn, and all afire. The snow was blowing so bad that it was impossible to set anything afire. I could light the matches, but could not set anything afire, so I gave it up.

I then took a lantern and matches to where I got out of bed, and handed it into the bed to Mr. Corey and the mail carrier from Fort Dodge; they succeeded in lighting it, and the lantern having a piece of the globe broken out, they wrapped a sack around it and handed it to me. I then tried to set the bale of hay afire, and the lantern went out. I threw it down and said to the other two men, that it was the last chance, and that I was freezing. They
stood by the side of a wagon, stamping, with apparently but little strength; I proposed to them to go with me and get into our beds, taking some corn to eat, and save ourselves as long as possible, but they thought they might as well freeze standing as laying, so I went to the bed, crawled in with Long, Mr. Corey and the mail carrier.

We took some barrel staves, set them on end to our backs to hold up the sheet as we set in the huddle together. The wagon sheet over our bed was froze fast under the edges of the wagon sheet, with at least five feet of snow on the edges. I pulled my boots, and had one foot nearly frozen; they sat on my feet and warmed them. I then suggested that if we had something to eat, we could fight one another and live till night, so we called Mr. Corey telling him to bring a bucket of corn for us to eat and get in with us. He brought the corn, but would not get in with us; I asked him if he could go to town; he said he was very cold, and left us, the other men all crying for help, but he said he could not help them. I then said to the mail carrier, what can we do? He said, if I had my overcoat I would try to go to town, but it was froze fast under the edge of the bed where our heads laid. He and I done our best to get it, but failed.

After studying about half an hour we fell on another plan to build a fire—we called the Colorado man to bring a skillet and a piece of pine wood, but finding no skillet he said he could not hunt any longer. I called to him for a bucket, which he brought, and some pine; we whittled some pine kindlings, filling the bucket and then set it afire. By the time it was afire sufficient to start out in the storm we were nearly smothered by the smoke. We crowded it out at a hole just as big as the bucket; Corey and Colorado stuck it to the bale of hay and set it afire. Corey, (the other man's brother) who was still in with us, asked for my boots telling me to warm my feet while he went out and helped them, for fear they would let the fire go out. He put on my boots, and I waited till I got my feet thawed out, and he not coming I asked the mail carrier for his overshoes while I could go and knock a wagon to pieces and build a good fire, and try to save the balance of the men. I put on the shoes and went out and mounted the nearest wagon, which was Mr. Long's, put it on the fire; then we carried Government corn and piled on top.

After this we went to pulling and digging out the men from their beds and taking them to the fire. It being 2 o'clock we had to hurry in order to get through by night. Getting them all out but Charley Cuthbert, some one said that he must be dead, for he had not been heard for two or three hours. Two of us then started out to look for him but could not find him. We came back and all concluded he was dead. In a little while the horses all crowded up between two wagons. Some of the men said that the horses were standing on him, whenupon I went out drove the horses off and took a barrel stave and began digging around for him. Finally finding him I called for help, and Colorado came and we after hard work got him out. Being like the most of us he was unable to walk much.

He being the last, we built another fire, drank a little whisky, eat a little corn, and our conversation turned upon the subject as to who would go to town for help; Mr. Cook and Jesse Corey offered to try providing we would let them have some overcoats. We tied some gunny sacks over their boots and bundled them up the best we could, put them on two good horses, they saying if they could not get help they would come back that night. Colorado, one of the Corey boys, one man from Wichita, who was nearly played out, and I agreed
to fire till morning, the rest of the men not being able to help us. The night thus passed away, and a dreary one it was, too.

In the morning, as the Morning Star made its appearance, we discovered a bright light in the east. Some one said there they come, while some said that's the wrong course, others that they were lost, but everybody said that it was undoubtedly a headlight. I picked up a torch, got up on a drift, and with tears running down my face for joy, waved my light and everybody tried to hollow, but could not, being so hoarse. After watching the light appear and disappear for a long time our hopes were terribly blasted when we discovered it was only the Morning Star shining through the storm. Between that and daylight the wind fell and then we had a fine fire. By this time I had about played out and sat down with the understanding with Colorado that he would keep a fire a while and rouse me to take his place.

The next thing I remember hearing was a sergeant, who rode up and hollowed "How many of you are dead?" Some half a dozen or more answered "not any!" Four or five wagons then made their appearance loaded with wood, etc., for our benefit; a lieutenant then ordered the soldiers to throw a half a cord or more of wood on the fire, after which a surgeon ordered coffee made; about the same time the sergeant ordered the men to dig out our beds, but finding it almost impossible the lieutenant countermanded the order, and instead ordered us placed in the wagons as soon as possible, after which we were wrapped up in almost innumerable blankets, given a drink of hot coffee, and then driven to the Fort on double quick, leaving our camp at about 9 o'clock. The soldiers drove our horses in. We burned two wagons, one wagon bed, all the meat we could get hold of, all the feed troughs, spring seats and several loads of corn.

After getting us to the Fort the officers and soldiers treated us with great kindness, and I can say for one that I shall never forget them for it; also Messrs. Rath and Wright, and in fact all at the Fort. Nearly all of our men were frozen some, but the chill and smoke hurt us more than the freezing. I don't think any will lose limbs from freezing. All from this county are now at home but three. Mr. Munger is still at the hospital but was able to sit up when I last saw him, which was on the 17th of this month. Messrs. Cook and Cuthbert loaded again for Supply. We laid at the Fort nine days, being doctored up so we thought we was able we started for home, arriving at Newton on the 26th ult., poorer than when we left.

So much for freighting on the frontier. My advice to farmers is to attend their farms and let freighting alone. In conclusion we will say that we are very thankful to be at home with our friends once more, even without wagons.

Spring in Kansas, Isn't It Wonderful?

From the Hugo (Hugoton) Herald, February 20, 1886.

Spring has come, gentle Annie, and don't you forget it! The time for spring to come on the calendar has not quite arrived, but in this Italian climate the season of spring kind of forces itself and puts on its linen duster earlier than it did back where the men lived who located the seasons. We know spring has arrived for the housewives are out looking after their lettuce seed planted before the last blizzard, old maids are out looking after their claims and pre-
paring to go barefooted as they did back east, the prairie dogs are out gossipping, and the rattlesnakes and centipedes are bathing themselves in the warm sunshine, preparatory to tickling the legs of the tenderfoot. The old bachelors who went into winter quarters last fall are seen scratching their backs against a friendly wagon wheel or house corner, and from various other signs including the breaking of prairie, the cackling of hens, the lasciviousness of roosters, the energy of homesteaders who have been off their claims for six months or more, and from various other signs, tokens and indications we know that spring is here.

Spring is here and here to stay. Let her stay! We would much rather take a nap in the lap of an early spring than to rustle our neighbor’s coal pile to entertain another end of such a winter as we have just passed through. Soon you will see the granger out stabbing his corn into the sod and he will confidently tell you that he expects to gather sixty bushels to the acre (This is a low estimate). He will tell you that this [is] the finest soil he ever stuck a plow into and the easiest cultivated; that this climate is the most delightful he ever lived in; that his wife has her health better out here than she had back east and he expects to send back for his father and his mother-in-law and have them take up claims adjoining his own; that he likes the society better here than he did back in Missouri and that people mind their own business and are not stuck up nor selfish out here. He will tell you that the water is better, the air purer and that sow-belly fried over a buffalo-chip fire tastes better than brandy pudding or peach cobbler did back where he came from. A variety of things he will tell you and if you are a stranger you may be inclined to doubt his statements, but they are truths—gospel truths.

Costly Hugging

From the Minneapolis Messenger, December 12, 1895.

The case of a Leavenworth young woman is worthy of serious consideration. During the apple carnival in that city, it appears that hugging was a very pleasant and frequent feature of the affair. A young man named Willie hugged a young woman named Morley, but the report does not say whether he did it as a carnival duty or simply for the fun of the thing. At any rate the embrace resulted in a severe nervous attack for the girl, and she has sued Willie for five thousand dollars damages. He explained to the girl that he hugged several other girls during the carnival without any serious result to their nerves, and that they were able to subdue their nervous attacks, but she was remorseless, and placed the matter into the cold and chilly hands of the law, which is notoriously indifferent to the squeezeful impulses of warm-hearted youth. We have not heard whether the case has been settled or not, but if a girl can obtain five thousand dollars for just one little squeeze, the fortune of a Vanderbilt would not put some men on a sound financial basis. It would be dribbled out in little five thousand dollar dabs. The writer is not personally interested in the matter, but as sure as you live five thousand dollars is too much.