Kansas History off the Press

“Early Kansas Journalism or the Vanished Days of Those Two Fisted Lop-Eared Lepers” was the subject of a speech by David Dary of the University of Kansas School of Journalism printed in a recent issue of the Shawnee County Historical Society Newsletter. Dary’s history of Kansas newspapers interspersed with anecdotes was given at the annual meeting of the Shawnee County Historical Society December 3, 1976, in Topeka.

L. A. Goode’s reminiscences of a covered wagon journey from Missouri to northwestern Kansas in 1897-1898 when he was nine years old, were printed in the Columbus Modern Light, December 28, 1976. Goode now lives in Columbus.


Conversion of a historic church into a community theater and meeting place is the goal of the Olathe Community Theatre Association. An article on the history of the Olathe Reformed Presbyterian church, founded in 1870, was in the Olathe Daily News, February 22, 1977. The building was put up for sale in 1974 when the congregation merged with the Shawnee Reformed Presbyterian church.

Burden, first called Burdenville and founded in 1879, is one of the few towns still in existence after the boom times in eastern Cowley county that came with the building of the Kansas City, Lawrence, and Southern Kansas railroad. An article on the history of the town which originally appeared in the Burden Times, September 14, 1939, was reprinted in the Winfield Daily Courier, February 23, 1977.

Lost Spring in northern Marion county was one of the more important waterholes in the long history of the Santa Fe trail. Now listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the spring was the site of a station as early as 1859. The town moved and
changed its name to Lost Springs when about 1880 the Rock Island built south, crossing the Santa Fe two and a half miles east of the spring. An article by Forrest Hintz on the oasis that served Indians, Spanish traders, and settlers moving west was printed in the Wichita *Eagle*, February 28, 1977.

St. Patrick’s Catholic church of Ogden was the subject of a two-part series in the Ogden *Sun*, starting with the March 10, 1977, issue. Cost of the original stone church building was $1,500 in December, 1866, and according to the history, the Ogden parish in the early days was made up of 27 families.

Glasco celebrated the 100th anniversary of the city’s incorporation March 16, 1977. Mrs. L. W. Sheets, in a history of the city which was published in the Glasco *Sun*, March 14, 1957, told the beginning of the story when the town was first built on the Joseph Biggs homestead and known as Dell Ray. The *Sun* reprinted Mrs. Sheets’ article March 10, 1977. In its issue of March 17, the *Sun* printed a history of the city’s last 20 years written by Charles Studt.


Archeological explorations in Labette county were the subject of several articles in a series by Wayne A. O’Connell, “Random Samplings From the Timetable of Labette County,” appearing in the Altamont *Journal* beginning with the March 24, 1977, issue. Digs by State Historical Society and University of Kansas archeologists in the county have located artifacts dating about A.D. 500, according to the first article in the series.

Ottawa history as pieced together from old maps was the subject of an article March 28, 1977, in the Ottawa *Herald*. Don Lambert, writer of the article, examined three old maps owned by local residents and described the growth of the city from the earliest map probably published in 1864 when Ottawa was incorporated.

The last log cabin in Cowley county, built in the early 1870’s, is nestled in the woods by Cambridge, a mute reminder of the pioneer past. Judy White interviewed relatives of former owners and reported their reminiscences in an article in the March 28, 1977, Arkansas City *Daily Traveler*. 
Ninety-year-old Harry Perico, son of White Horse who was a chief lieutenant of Geronimo during the Apache Indian wars, told a grim story of the captivity of the Indians, life on the reservation, and his personal struggle for education and full participation as an American citizen to Judy Welch, staff writer of the Arkansas City Daily Traveler. A long-time resident of Arkansas City, Perico was for 39 years in charge of the commercial printing department of the Traveler. His story appeared in the March 29 and 30, 1977, issues of the newspaper.

A log structure called Perry House was the first school at Codell. The school was supported by subscriptions when Rooks county settlers were first arriving in numbers in 1877 and 1878. A list of teachers up to 1915 and their terms of service are included in a history of Codell schools which was published with pictures of the schools in two parts by the Plainville Times, March 31 and April 7, 1977. The account originally appeared in the Codell yearbook, The Comrade, published in 1915.

Cowley county has had three courthouses in its history, all on the same block in Winfield, after that city won the fight in 1870 and 1871 for the county seat. Pictures of the three courthouses and a story by Roland Mueller about how growing county business required the construction of new buildings are in the Winfield Daily Courier issue of April 4, 1977.

The contribution of blacks to Iola history was the subject of a guest editorial by Phyllis A. Bass in the Iola Register, April 6, 1977. Black churches, businesses, community leaders, and groups including a marching band and athletic teams are part of the “roots” traced in the newspaper article.

The Hays Ellis County Star, April 7, 1977, printed a story on the Cheyenne Indian trail written by 96-year-old W. A. Earnest of Hays. Earnest’s parents settled in Osborne county in 1885 “right on the Cheyenne Indian trail,” according to the article.

April 7, 1977, the first issue of the Linn County News, Pleasanton, was published, a merger of the Mound City Republic, La Cygne Journal, and Pleasanton Observer-Enterprise. In their last issues published March 31, the three newspapers carried a history of Linn county newspapers by Anna Mary Crawford, president of the county historical society. In addition to listing the newspapers and dates of publication, the article commented on problems of the pioneer editors and their personal journalism.
A history of Rooks county which appeared in the Stockton Review and Record, March 1, 1928, was reprinted in several installments by the Rooks County Record, Stockton, beginning with the April 7, 1977, issue.

A Queen Anne-style mansion in Wichita has been that city’s first historical restoration project undertaken by the Urban Renewal Agency. Tours of the Sternberg mansion were conducted by the Victorian Society April 15, 16, and 17, 1977. A history of the mansion, built in 1886 by William H. Sternberg, Wichita contractor, appeared in the Wichita Eagle and Beacon, April 10, 1977.

Two churches organized in 1877, the Swedish Baptist church and the First Baptist church, merged in 1924 to form the Baptist Church of Concordia. The church celebrated its centennial April 16, 1977, and a history of the church was published in the Concordia Blade Empire, April 15, 1977.

An Ottawa couple, Betty and Darrell Salsbury, have been restoring their Victorian home built in 1890. Their explanation of the tedious and frustrating process was part of an old house workshop sponsored by the Ottawa Library April 17, 1977. An article by Don Lambert in the Ottawa Herald, April 18, 1977, reported on the problems and rewards of buying and restoring old homes.

“Webster House,” a Queen Anne-style mansion in Leavenworth, has been restored by its present owners, Dr. and Mrs. William McCollum. The house, built by Andrew Jackson Angell, Leavenworth lumber baron, in 1885, features the use of fine woods. The Lawrence Journal-World, April 20, 1977, carried an article on the historic home.

From 23 charter members, the membership of the Kinsley United Methodist church has grown to about 400 presently. A history of the church’s 100 years of growth in three buildings was printed in the Kinsley Mercury and the Lewis Press, April 21, 1977.

The oldest church in Decatur county celebrated its 100th anniversary April 24, 1977. A history of the Lyle United Methodist church which in early days met in a log building, later a sod church, and for a time in a store building, was printed in the Oberlin Herald, April 21, and the Norton Daily Telegram, April 22, 1977.
Much of the old Santa Fe trail has been obliterated, but more ruts remain than most people realize, according to Roe Groom of Council Grove who at 77 has made a long-time study of the trail. He debunks some of the myths and shows people how and where to look for the ruts that are still there. An article on Groom and the Santa Fe trail by Forrest Hintz appeared in the Wichita Eagle and Beacon, April 24, 1977.

Barbara Burgess is the author of a recent series of articles in the Wamego Times on the history of the Wamego area. Stories of how the town got its name were recounted in the first of the series appearing April 28, 1977. Founders of the city considered naming it Lincoln but as some other towns in Kansas already had the name, they settled instead for the Indian name that appeared in a treaty between the Pottawatomie and U. S. government.


This year Gypsum will celebrate its 90th anniversary as an incorporated city. After a struggle in 1886 to gain a depot and railroad facilities, the town was incorporated as a third class city, and the first city election was held April 25, 1887. The 90th birthday celebration will be observed along with the town’s annual Halloween festivities in October. The Gypsum Advocate carried an article May 3, 1977, on the town’s history.

George P. Washburn, Ottawa architect best known for his work in the late 1880’s and early 1900’s, designed 13 Kansas courthouses including the one in Franklin county which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Miami county courthouse which is being renovated at Paola. The Ottawa Times, May 5, 1977, carried a feature article by Lois Smith on Washburn’s life and work.

Linn county’s courthouse, the second oldest in the state and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was built in 1885-1886 after a bitter county-seat controversy. When a county-wide vote was taken to build the courthouse, the proposal was defeated. Most of the final cost of the courthouse was raised by private subscriptions. An article on the historic courthouse appeared in the Linn County News, Pleasanton, May 5, 1977.
Fort Leavenworth celebrated its 150th anniversary with a week of special events in May, 1977. Now a national historic landmark, the army post has been in continuous existence since Col. Henry Leavenworth established it for protection against Indians in May, 1827. The fort is now the site of the world-famous U.S. Command and General Staff College. Margot Desannoy wrote two articles on the history of the fort which appeared in the Leavenworth Times, May 5 and 6, 1977.

The story of how Pretty Prairie got its name is told by Tom Fesperman in the Wichita Eagle and Beacon, May 8, 1977. According to the article it was named by a courageous widow who with her children homesteaded in the area, having come west with a dream of a prairie where no hills, or rocks, or even trees hindered farming. She was Mary Newman Collingwood, grandmother of Merle Young, retired wheat farmer, who still lives there and told the story to Fesperman.

Centennial cabin was originally built by a German immigrant, Jacob Dietrich, southwest of Princeton. It was moved to Ottawa after the Kansas centennial in 1961, restored and furnished, and is kept open on Sunday afternoons during late spring and summer by the local D. A. R. and the Franklin County Historical Society. An article about the cabin was printed in the Ottawa Herald, May 13, 1977.

The Paxico Hotel was first built on the townsite of Newbury in Wabaunsee county about 1875, then later moved to the new town of Paxico one mile south. The history of the hotel is told by Nick Clark in his two-part article in the St. Marys Star and Valley Ho! beginning in the issue of May 17, 1977.

Homes were status symbols to the pioneer. Prominent among town builders, and the builder of a fine home still in use in Marion, was William Kellison. His home built of native limestone in 1879 is featured in the first of a series of articles on century-old Marion homes in the Marion County Record, Marion, May 18, 1977. The article is by Ruth Meyer.

“Monument Rocks,” north of Scott City, that rise steeply from the Kansas plains are the subject of an appreciative essay by Donald Mrozek, art critic of the Manhattan Mercury, in the newspaper’s May 22, 1977, issue. The article tells the best way to get to the Kansas “Pyramids” and suggests that tourists also visit the nearby reconstructed ruins of “El Cuartelejo.”
Antioch Cemetery, Overland Park, established by a group of Quaker pioneers in the early 1850's, has a small chapel, a replica of the early church that once stood there, and is a favorite spot for Sunday painters. A history of the cemetery and church, by Judy Katz, was carried in the Johnson County Sun, Overland Park, May 25, 1977.

Forest Park Cemetery in Anthony was established in 1891. The 40-acre site dedicated to the memory of Harper county pioneers has been a nonprofit and volunteer effort from the beginning, according to an article by Tom Dobbins in the May 25, 1977, issue of the Anthony Republican.


Scandia's United Methodist church observed its centennial June 4 and 5, 1977. The church was first organized by Swedish settlers as the Swedish Methodist Episcopal church and the English language was not used in services until 1919. A history of the church appeared in the May 26, 1977, issues of the Scandia Journal, and the Belleville Telescope.

"Rock City," the unique geological formation in Ottawa county, has been designated a national landmark by the Department of Interior, National Park Service and was dedicated May 29, 1977. A description of the formation consisting of a group of Dakota sandstone concretions and a history of the efforts of Kansans to get Rock City nationally recognized and preserved appeared in the May 24, 1977, issue of the Clay Center Dispatch.

In 1879 thousands of former slaves fled the South, heading up the Mississippi river to Kansas. The story of this movement is told by Nell Irvin Painter in a 288-page volume entitled *Exodusters—Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction*, published in 1977 by Alfred A. Knopf, New York.


A 293-page compilation entitled *A History of Sabetha, Kansas, and Surrounding Area, 1854-1976*, was recently issued by the Sabetha history committee as a bicentennial project. Capt. Arthur W. Williams, who came in 1857, was the first settler on the Sabetha townsite which was laid out in 1858.

Weir, first incorporated as a third class city in 1875, is the subject of a history, *Weir, Kansas, 1776-1976 Bicentennial Salute*, which was a project of that community’s bicentennial committee. Ruth Turner is the author of the 148-page, paperbound book published in 1976. The book has black and white photographs and is divided into sections on the city’s early history, coal industry, businesses, clubs, schools, and churches.

*Black Jack Country*, stories about pioneer days in southeast Kansas, is based on the memories of the author’s parents and grandparents. These reminiscences as retold by Jessie Vanhaverbeke concern the first homestead, a cabin made of black jack logs; the notorious Bender family; a smallpox epidemic, flood, tornado, and prairie fire. The 138-page, paperbound book was published in 1976 by Green’s Custom Printing.