



Our Kansas Stories

Abbie Bright's Adventures
on the Frontier

YOUR
STORIES
OUR
HISTORY

KANSAS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

HONOR
EDUCATE
INSPIRE

KANSAS
HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION

Abbie Bright grew up on a Pennsylvania farm full of beautiful flowers and fruit trees. Her innocence was shattered at age 12 with the outbreak of the Civil War. Her three brothers, Dennis, Hiram, and Philip joined the Union army. Hiram contracted a serious disease and was discharged early. Dennis and Philip were wounded. Abbie and her three sisters stayed close to home, working with their mother to care for patients at the local hospital.

Once the Civil War ended Kansas began to beckon.

Union veterans found Kansas a good place to settle. Here they established farms and businesses, taking advantage of the opportunities offered here. Under the federal Homestead Act settlers could claim 160 acres of public land for a small filing fee. If they lived on the 160 acres for five continuous years, built a residence, and grew crops, they could file for the deed, owning the property free and clear. Any citizen, or person intending to become one, was eligible to claim land under the Homestead Act.

The act was amended for Civil War soldiers with two years of service to acquire land after a one-year residency. Many Union veterans took advantage of the opportunities in Kansas. This became known as the Great Soldier State.

FREE HOMES
Along the Line of the ATC

30,000 FREE HOMES
In one of the Richest Valleys in AMERICA are
WAITING for OCCUPANTS.

MAP OF KANSAS
ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILROAD.

The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Company is now offering for sale, in tracts to suit purchasers, on *Eleven years time*, and at low prices, 1,600,000 acres superior farming lands, for fruit farms, grain farms, splendid stock farms and lands of every grade, at from \$2.00 to \$8.00 per acre.

For further particulars see the back of this map and address,
D. L. LARKIN,
Land Commissioner, Topeka, Kan.

This road is now completed from ATCHISON via TOPEKA, EMPORIA, FLORENCE, NEWTON to WICHITA, and via HUTCHINSON, PEACE, RAYMOND, GREAT BEND and PARKER ROCK to LARNED, being the only All-Rail Route to the GREAT ARKANSAS VALLEY.

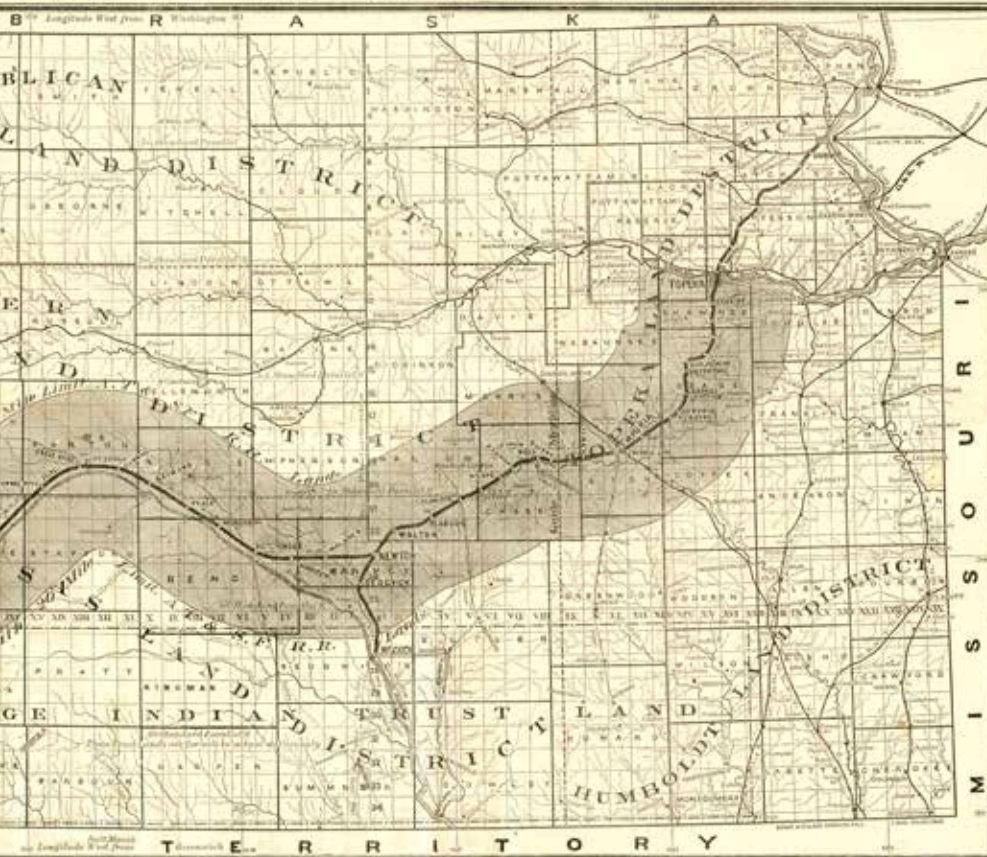
Lowest special rates made for immigrants and their outfit. For further information address
M. L. SAWGENT, Gen'l Freight and Ticket Ag't, Topeka, Kan. **GEORGE M. NEWBLETON,** Superintendent, Topeka, Kan.

The ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE R. R. Co.
are now offering on **ELEVEN YEAR**

By the 1870s the railroads were selling land in Kansas and providing maps of the state to potential settlers.

RESOURCES IN KANSAS

CHICAGO, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILROAD.



Subject to Homestead and Pre-emption in the Great
Arkansas Valley along the line of the Railroad.

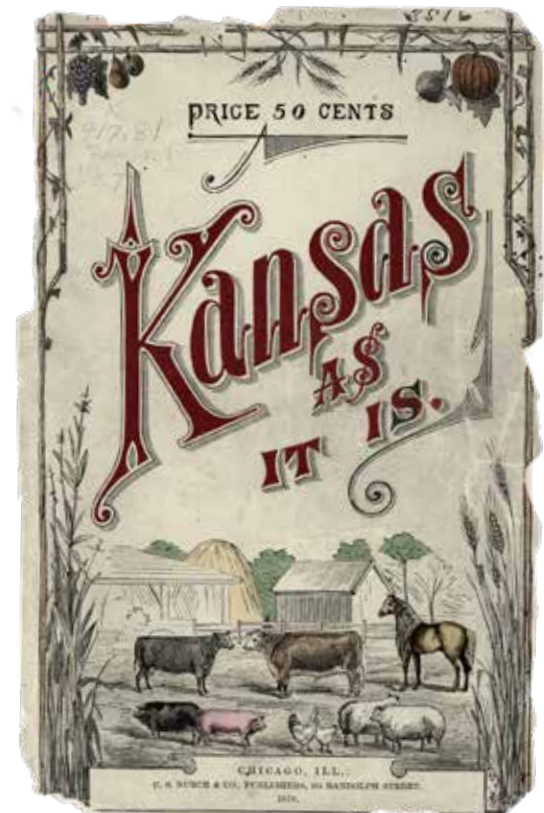
1,500,000 ACRES

R. COMPANY has **3,000,000** Acres of Land in KANSAS which
S TIME. **7 PER CENT.** on DEFERRED PAYMENTS.

Written as a guide for people seeking lands in the new West, this 1878 book contains statistics on population, crops, schools, churches, and other information needed for those looking to resettle in Kansas. It is subtitled, "Resources, Advantages, and Drawbacks of the Great Central State."

TIMELINE

- 1848** | Abbie Bright born on a farm in Pennsylvania
- 1861** | Kansas becomes a state
- 1861-1865** | Civil War
- 1862** | Homestead Act signed into law to encourage western settlement



The **Victorian Era**, named for the queen of England, was a time of urbanization and industrialization in American cities. But most Americans continued to live a rural life.

Young women of Abbie Bright's age learned the expectations of womanhood through the customs and morals of the era. Women were defined by their roles in the domestic sphere, which was centered on home and family. Although all members of the family did farm work, including the women, it was the domestic sphere that defined women's place in society.

If young rural women were not married and inclined to find a job they most often became teachers. This was consistent with Victorian ideals, which placed women at the center of childrearing. At the age of 15 Abbie Bright followed this path. She began her advanced education at an institution not far from home. She later left to attend Keystone State Normal School, now called Kutztown University. This took her 70 miles from home, offering her more independence.

Students and their teacher in front of the District 60 schoolhouse in Thomas County. The use of sod to build homes and schools was common in western Kansas where timber was scarce.



Abbie soon took a teaching job but she eventually longed to see more of the world and decided to journey west.

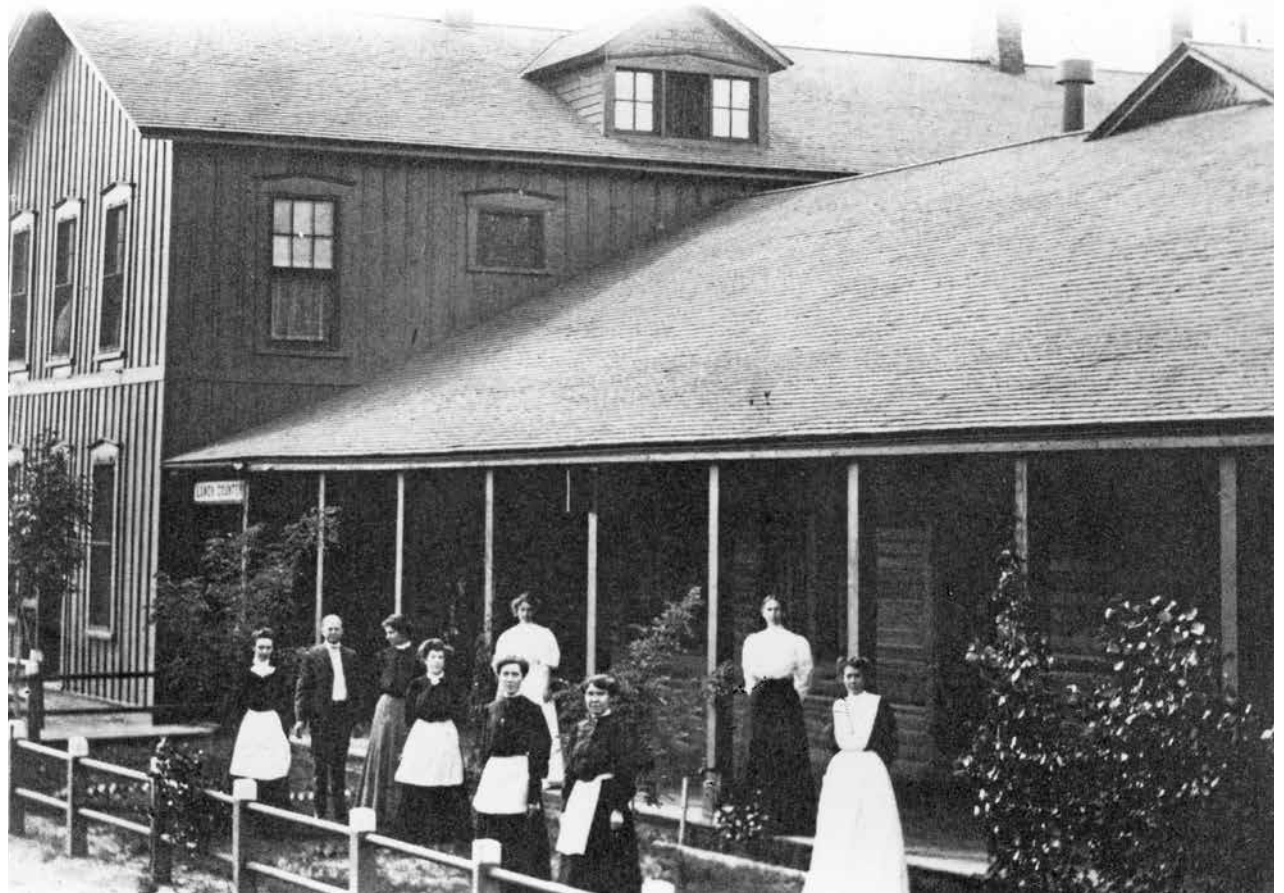
Young women of Abbie's day didn't commonly travel on their own. Her brother Hiram had already established a home west of Pennsylvania in Indiana. Abbie arrived there in early September 1870. About this same time her brother Philip moved much farther west, to Kansas.

TIMELINE

1837-1901 | Victorian Era

1878 | First Harvey House established in Topeka

To serve hungry travelers in comfort Fred Harvey of Topeka opened a series of Harvey House restaurants along the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway. Young, unmarried women were recruited to serve as waitresses. The women, referred to as Harvey girls, wore modest Victorian clothing appropriate for their jobs, mimicking women's wear in the domestic sphere.



Lands in Kansas belonged to native peoples long before Americans were encouraged to come here. As the population of the eastern United States grew government policies moved Indian tribes off their ancestral lands. Many eastern tribes were forcibly removed to Kansas. This resulted in Kansas tribes also being displaced. Once Kansas Territory was formed new treaties further diminished Indian lands in Kansas.

Homestead claims could be purchased from the government for \$1.25 per acre after living on the land for six months. Philip, Abbie's brother, bought land from the U.S. government that was once part of the Osage Diminished Reserve.

Osage Trust Lands.
CERTIFICATE
No. 1344 }
Whereas Philip T. Bright, of Sedgwick County, Kansas,
has deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States a CERTIFICATE OF THE REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at Augusta, now Wichita, Kansas,
whereby it appears that FULL PAYMENT has been made by the said Philip T. Bright, according
to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An Act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for and the act of the
15th of July, 1870, for the west half of the south-west quarter of section twenty-
seven, and the east half of the south-east quarter of section twenty-eight,
in township twenty-nine south, of range two west, in the district of lands
formerly subject to sale at Augusta, now Wichita, Kansas, containing one
hundred and sixty acres,
according to the OFFICIAL PLAT of the Survey of the said lands, returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, which said Tract, has been purchased by the said
Philip T. Bright:
Now, know ye, That the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several Acts of Congress in such case made and provided,
HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said Philip T. Bright,
and to his heirs, the said Tract, above described; To Have and to Hold the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances, of whatsoever nature,
thereunto belonging, unto the said Philip T. Bright, and to his heirs and assigns forever.
In testimony whereof, J. Ulysses S. Grant PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
has caused these letters to be made Public, and the Seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

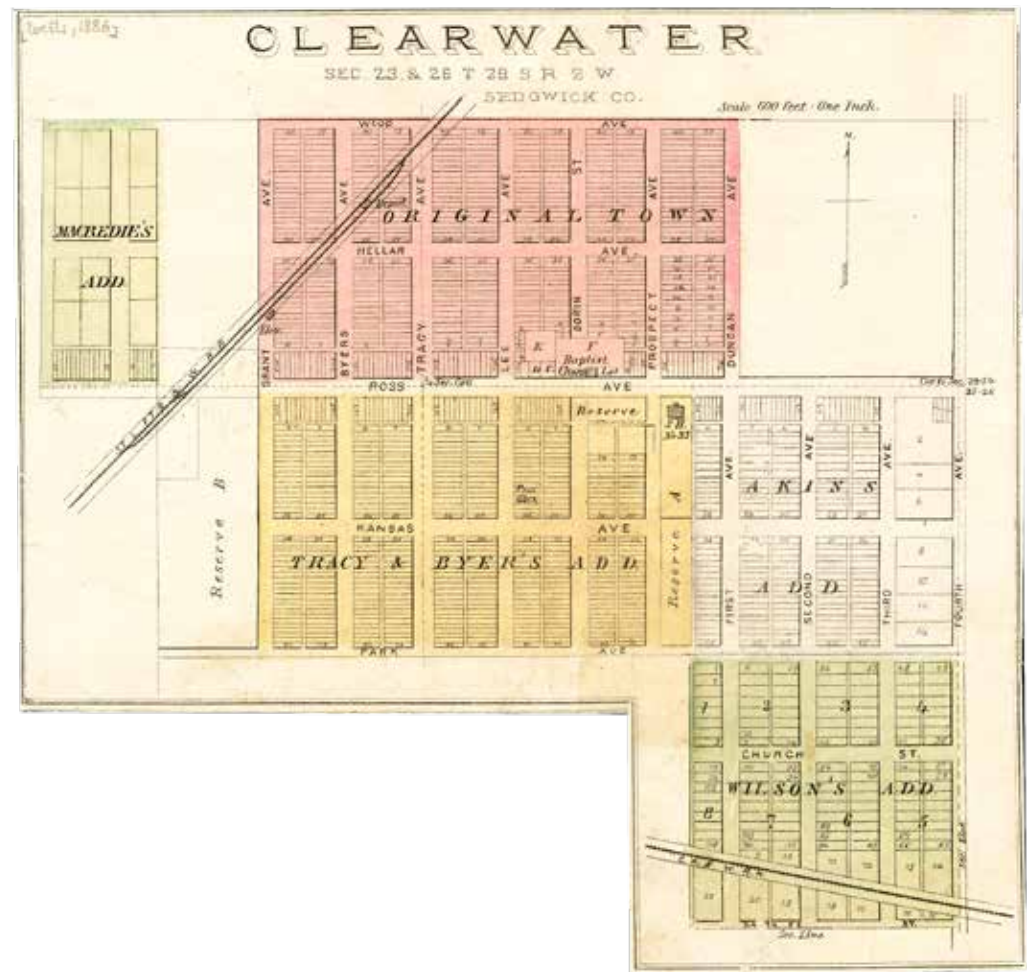
Through a series of treaties with the United States government the Osage were forced to give up their lands in Kansas. Lands between the southern border of Kansas, the Canadian River in Oklahoma, the eastern edge of Missouri, and much of the central part of Kansas were surrendered in sections between 1825 and 1839. Additional Osage lands in Kansas were eventually ceded to the federal government as well.

Settlers like Philip Bright took claims on the Osage trust lands. He used an option in the Homestead Act that allowed him to buy the land after living on it for six months. Philip's claim was near Clearwater in Sedgwick County.

TIMELINE

1870 | Osage lands in the southern half of Kansas ceded

1874 | Philip Bright receives ownership of his claim on land previously belonging to the Osage

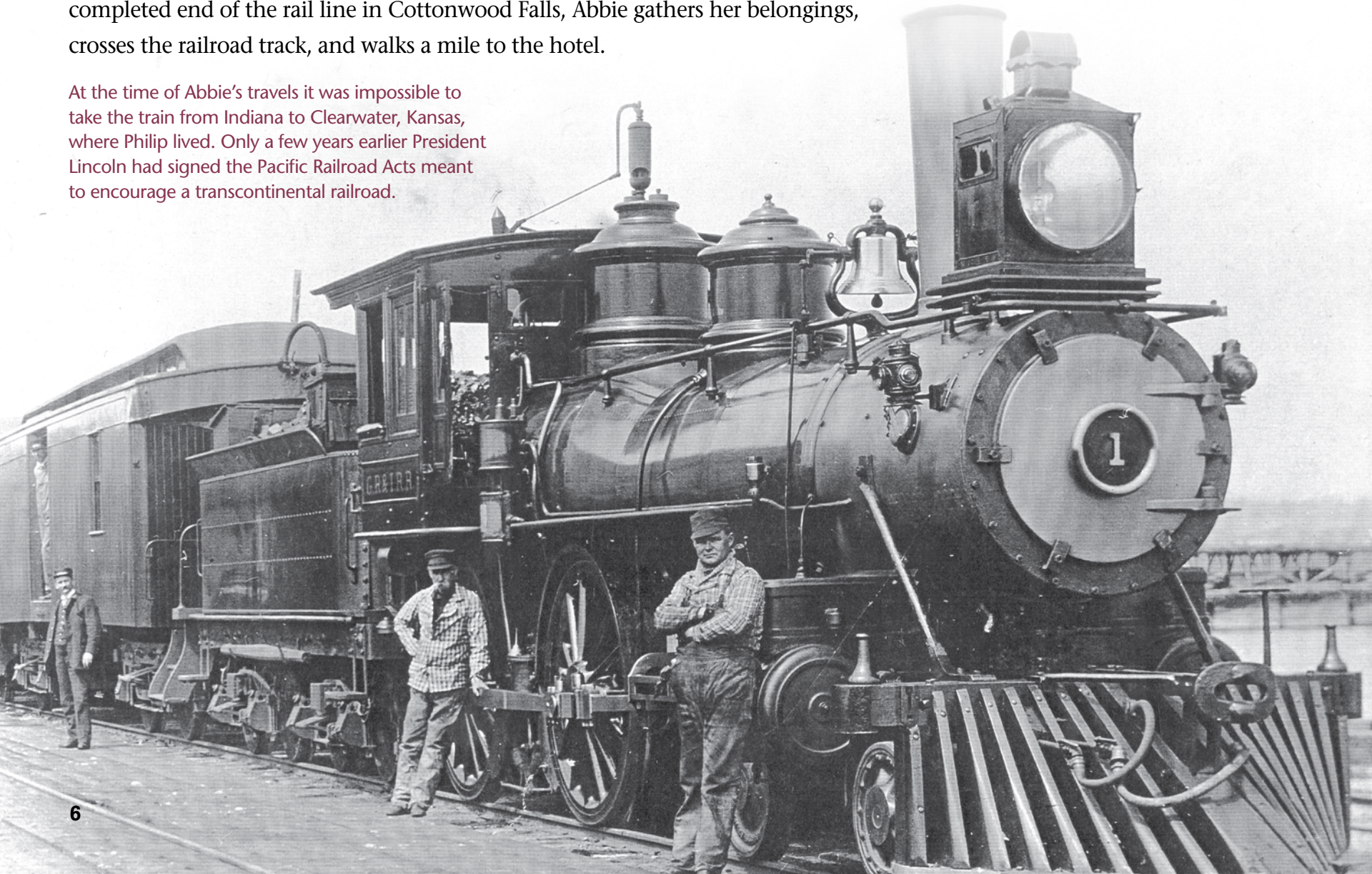


4 Layed a foundation
for my home, and
helped skin and
quarter a buffalo,
and make hay.

Philip's diary on October 4, 1870, states, "Layed a foundation for a house, and helped skin and quarter a buffalo and make hay."

Abbie writes to her brother Philip in April 1871 saying she is **coming to Kansas**. A week later, without knowing if the letter had reached him, Abbie leaves Hiram's home in Indiana alone and ready for adventure. She travels by train to Kansas City and switches trains to continue to Topeka, where she changes trains again. Finally reaching the newly completed end of the rail line in Cottonwood Falls, Abbie gathers her belongings, crosses the railroad track, and walks a mile to the hotel.

At the time of Abbie's travels it was impossible to take the train from Indiana to Clearwater, Kansas, where Philip lived. Only a few years earlier President Lincoln had signed the Pacific Railroad Acts meant to encourage a transcontinental railroad.



1861 | Pacific Railroad Acts are created**1871** | Abbie Bright travels to Kansas

The hotel clerk puts Abbie in a room with another young woman who arrived on an earlier train. The two strangers soon become acquainted. Afraid they will miss their morning stage, they keep the light burning all night. Abbie arises in time for breakfast, her first full meal since leaving Indiana. By 5:30 a.m. two stagecoaches arrive, each pulled by a team of four horses. Abbie, with two other women, crowds into the back seat of one of the coaches and continues southwest on her journey.

Every 10 or 12 miles the stagecoach stops at stations to change passengers or horses. The route is rough and occasionally Abbie's head strikes the roof of the stage. When the ride becomes extremely difficult the driver yells, "Make yourself firm." Abbie reaches for leather straps or supports in the coach to keep from getting tossed about.

The coach pulled by six horses carries Abbie from El Dorado to Augusta, the only coach on the road. Now with 15 passengers on board, Abbie is the only woman. After passing Augusta they cross the Whitewater River. Abbie has never experienced anything like this before. The recent rains made the river rise and water comes pouring into the coach, soaking her skirt.

The river now behind them, the travelers see nothing but prairie. Finally, the lights of Wichita appear in the distance. Abbie exits at the first stop not knowing if she is in the right place. She wonders how and when she will ever find her brother. When she questions a clerk at the nearby hotel he tells her Philip's place is still 20 miles away, along the Ninnescah River.



About the same time Abbie was traveling in Kansas this coach was providing service from Oswego to Independence to Coffeyville.

Abbie is eager to see her brother Philip. But she is also exhausted from her travels. She checks into her room at a hotel and sleeps through the night. The next morning the clerk tells her the letter she sent Philip is still unopened at the Wichita post office. She realizes that Philip is not coming for her.

Being a **resourceful woman** Abbie decides to take matters into her own hands. She hires a young boy to drive her to Philip's claim. The boy's open wagon, pulled by a pair of mules, crosses more prairie and more streams. About two miles from their destination the driver stops at a supply house. They learn that the river is too high to cross that day. Abbie is forced to stay with the owner of the store and his wife. The man's wife is delighted to see Abbie since she has not talked with another woman in some weeks.



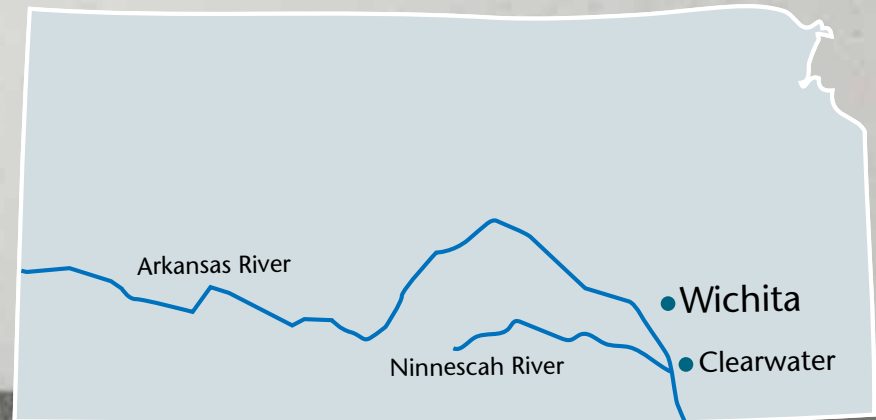
The next morning Abbie is thrilled to see wagons crossing the river one at a time. One man agrees to give her a ride across the river in his wagon. When they arrive at a frontier store the storekeeper kindly loans Abbie a pony to ride on to her brother's place. She agrees to deliver a letter for him to Robert West. Growing more excited, she guides the pony along the short ride north, skirting a strip of trees. She had come so far, soon she will see her brother.

When Abbie crossed the Ninnescah River on the way to her brother Philip's claim she remembered, "I was helped to a place on top of perishable goods that were piled high and [roped] on. Those in the wagon box got partially wet." This wagon crosses the Arkansas River near Great Bend, 1872.

TIMELINE

1870 | City of Wichita incorporated

1872 | *Wichita Eagle* and *Wichita Beacon* newspapers begin publication



Abbie holds tight to the pony's reins as she nears the West's house. To keep the pony from barging through their garden she stops a distance away. She calls to a woman standing at the door, who eagerly greets her. Abbie offers the letter and asks for help finding her brother Philip. "He is here," the woman replies and calls out his name.

At last, Abbie thinks, as she spots her brother. Recalling all she had experienced on this journey she sheds a few tears of relief. Confiding in him, she tells Philip she felt out of place while traveling because there were so few women. But the men she met could not have been more gracious. She vows to always remember what Philip says next, "Behave like a lady, and you will be treated like one."

Philip arranges for his sister to stay with Mrs. West. Abbie describes her as "a genteel woman from Ohio, beautifully fitted for a pioneer wife." However, Mrs. West is anxiously awaiting the day they pay off their claim and move to town. According to Abbie, she is a "talker," so Abbie learns quickly about Clearwater and her new neighbors.

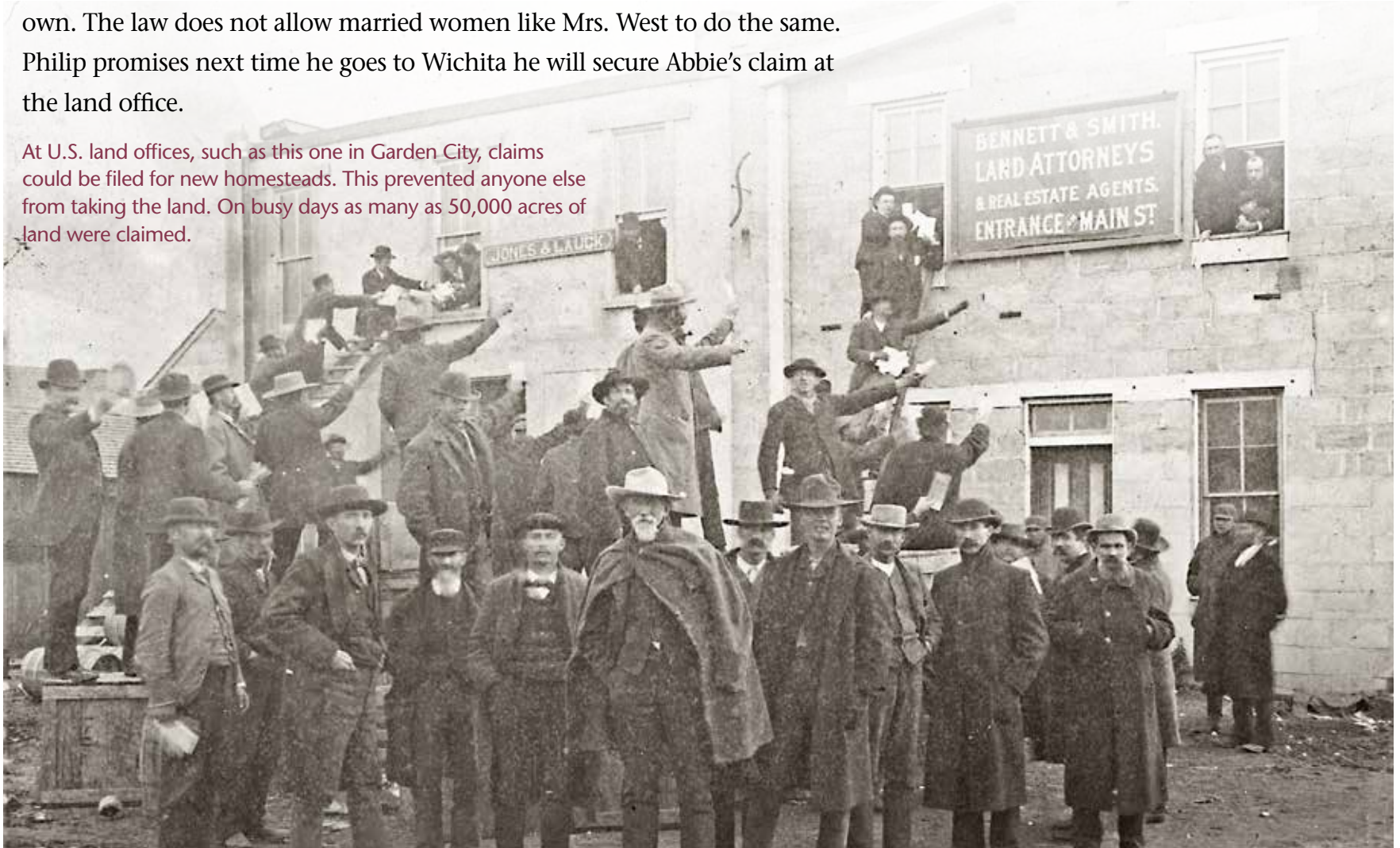
Although many families homesteaded in Kansas, most single settlers were male. This sod house belonged to brothers Frank, Henry, and Otis Burrell, in northern Ness County. Abbie Bright often reflected on being one of only a few single females on the Kansas frontier.

I have not seen a single unmarried woman since I am here. There are seven married women in this neighborhood, and I will not likely see another all Summer. They all tease me, and say I am a curiosity to many of the bachelors around here.



The West's house is one room, constructed from cottonwoods found along the river. Tucked in its 14 by 12 feet space are a bed, stove, two stools, table, trunks, and a few cooking tools. A dugout stores their provisions. Abbie stays with Mrs. West while Philip completes work on his cabin. Philip **selects a claim for Abbie** since single women could acquire 160 acres on their own. The law does not allow married women like Mrs. West to do the same. Philip promises next time he goes to Wichita he will secure Abbie's claim at the land office.

At U.S. land offices, such as this one in Garden City, claims could be filed for new homesteads. This prevented anyone else from taking the land. On busy days as many as 50,000 acres of land were claimed.



TIMELINE

1870 | First settlers arrive in Clearwater, 20 miles south of Wichita

1872 | Clearwater platted as a city

In early summer Philip finishes his cabin and Abbie moves in to keep house for her brother. Abbie writes in her diary.

Keeping house at last; moved last week. The cabin is back from the river, with big cottonwood trees in front. The wind in the tree tops keeps up a constant sing-song. The cabin is 12 by 12 feet, with a fireplace made of sticks daubed with mud. The roof is split timbers covered with dirt, and now there is a growth of sunflowers and grass on it. ... Cook in the fireplace. Have a dutch oven, a skillet, teakettle, and coffeepot. When Philip [lived here alone] he had a kettle in which was water and flour, hanging up outside the house, when he wanted biscuits, he poured [off] the sour water. Now we have yeast bread, and don't need anything of the kind.

In the early days of Kansas settlement houses were made of dirt, sod, rock, or timber, depending on the geography. W. J. Campbell built this log cabin in Allen County.

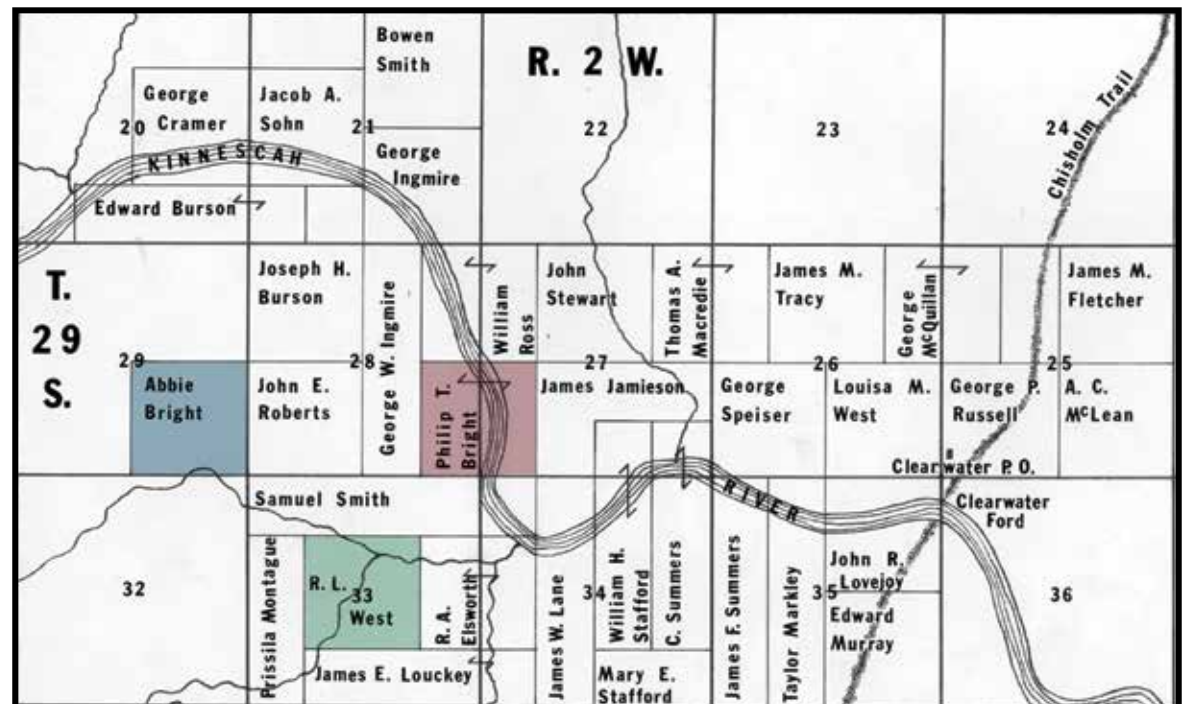


Abbie seems to be **adapting to life** in Kansas. She keeps busy sewing, cooking, and gardening. She makes friends with other women who give her advice. They tell her how to make pie from edible plants such as sorrel leaves or wild oxalis. Mrs. West takes the opportunity to move to town, leaving her cat with Abbie. Philip's friends sometimes stop by to stay at the cabin, which Abbie considers an inconvenience. She finds baking to be tedious, mainly because the cabin is ill-equipped for such an activity.

TIMELINE

MAY 1871 | Abbie moves to Philip's completed cabin

Can only bake one loaf at a time in the dutch oven. I knead a loaf out, when that is light, I put it in the oven, and knead out another and when the first is baked, the second goes in the oven, and the third is kneaded out. All the time I must keep the oven hot enough to bake and brown the bread, which is quite a task and takes three hours or more. But Philip likes it, and so I enjoy baking. It takes me all fore noon to bake a batch of cookies. Can only bake five at a time.



Abbie moved from the West's cabin to Philip's claim before she and Philip occupied a dugout on Abbie's land. Notice how close Abbie lived to the Ninnescah River and what we call today the Chisholm Trail.

Abbie Bright's detailed diary provides a great amount of information about Kansas. It offers insights into major themes in Kansas history. On June 4, 1871, Abbie writes about the cattle drive.

The heavy rains raised the river, and a [herd] of cattle in crossing, stampeded, and 15 or 20 [drowned]. Every week seven to ten thousand of Texas cattle are driven north over the trail. If the cattle stampede, and don't want to cross the river, the [herders] yell and fire off their revolvers. Sometimes we hear them here, and it sounds—as I suppose a battle does. It is the cattle that keep the trail worn so smooth.



Texas longhorn cattle being driven across the South Fork Solomon River in Sheridan County.

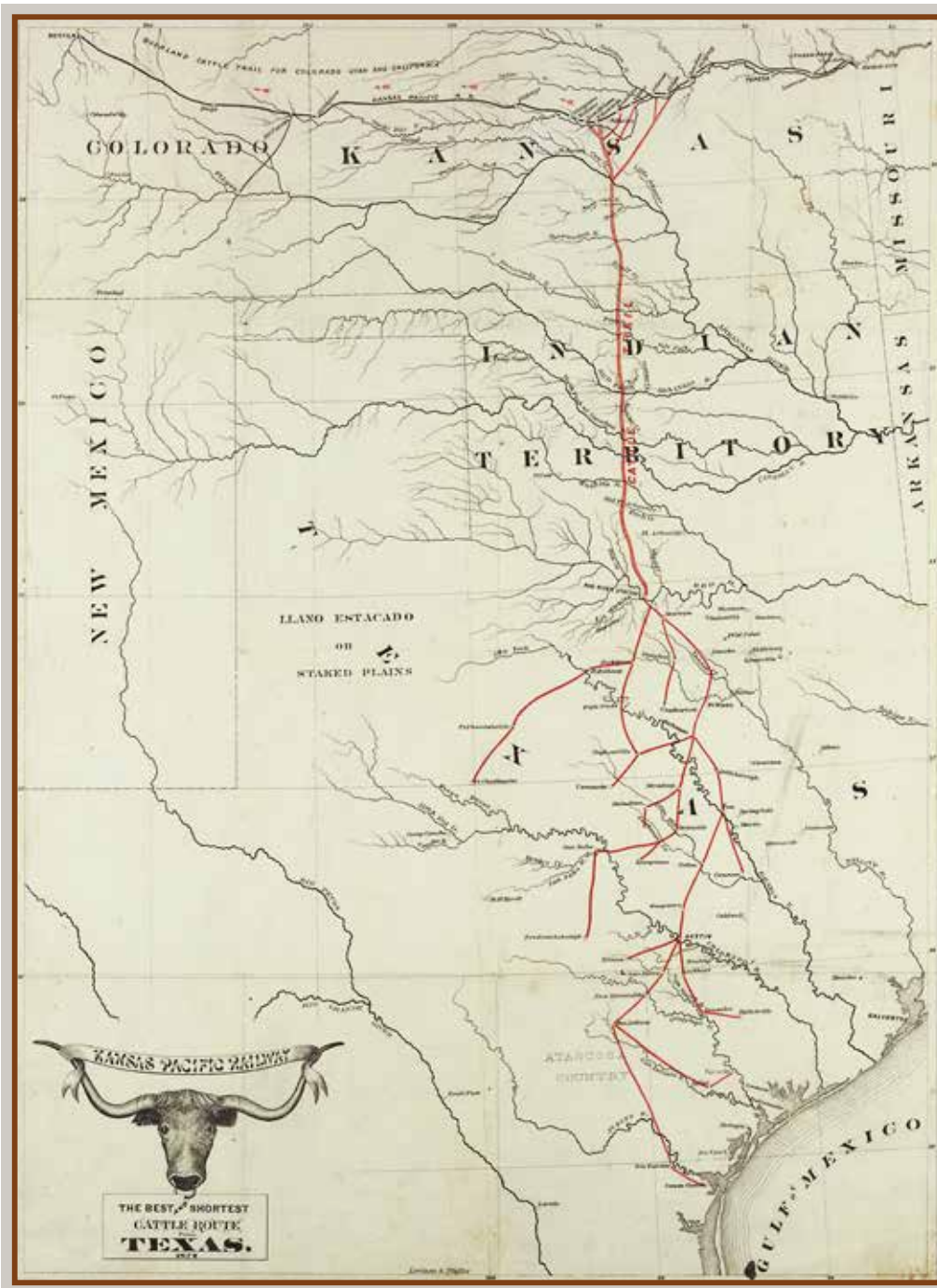
TIMELINE

1855 | Kansas Pacific Railway established

1867 | Joseph McCoy builds stockyards on the Kansas Pacific Railway in Abilene encouraging Texas herds to be driven north



In 1871, the year of Abbie's diary, more **Texas longhorn** were driven north over what is called the Chisholm Trail than any other year. Beef was a much sought after commodity in the Northeast after the Civil War. Millions of longhorns could be found on the Texas prairies. Due to the disruption of the war cattle ran wild and their numbers increased dramatically. Confederate soldiers returning home to Texas had little opportunity to make a good living. These veterans found profit by rounding up Texas cattle and driving herds to railheads in Kansas. Cowboys could sell cattle for \$40 to \$50 a head in the East, while at home they might make only \$4 dollars a head.



The distance traveled on **cattle drives** averaged 520 miles; most drives from Texas to Kansas lasted 30 to 40 days. Some cattle owners organized their own drives, in other cases agents purchased cattle and resold the animals for profit in Kansas. But most cattle were driven north on a contractual basis for an established fee. Cowboys were usually young and single, often in their early 20s. Cattle stampedes, hazardous conditions, all types of weather, and long hours in the saddle brought both adrenaline rushes and extreme boredom to their days.

Cowboys performed important roles in guiding long-horns over the trail. The size of herds ranged from 1,000 in the early years to 3,000 or 4,000 later. A dozen cowboys worked the larger herds, riding point, swing, flank, and drag. For their labor cowboys earned about \$40 a month, plus food. Chuck wagons carried their meals and proved to be efficient portable kitchens, serving up bread, meat, beans, bacon, and coffee to the hungry crew. Payment came when the cattle were sold at the end of the trail. Eager to spend their hard-earned wages, they quickly paid for meals, supplies, and entertainment, bringing an economic boom to Kansas cattle towns. Abilene was among many cattle towns that gained prominence during this period.

Ellsworth, Brookville, Wichita, Caldwell, Newton, and Dodge City all became legendary.



Many working cowboys were African Americans, Mexican Americans, or immigrants. Abbie calls the cowboys "herders" in her diary, "Four [herders] came there on horseback. ...One of them was Mexican. They have straight black hair, and dark [complexions]."

As settlers claimed lands in parts of Kansas conflicts arose. Farmers and ranchers needed open range to drive their herds. On July 10, 1871, Abbie paid a visit to Mrs. Markley whose husband was away.

While we were eating dinner, we heard a noise, and some dozen [longhorns] had come over the river and were in [Mrs. Markley's] garden—We yelled—and with [a] broom tried to drive them away[.] Then they went to the corn patch, and it was not safe to leave the house—as they get cross—and their immense horns are wicked looking. ...Well it was 4 p.m. when some men came riding [across] the river for the cattle, and in that time they had nearly destroyed two acres of corn.

The next day Abbie writes that Philip heard a cowboy say 2,000 cattle had stampeded at night on Slate Creek. The cattle scattered in all directions and Abbie thought they'd never all be found. She frequently mentions her fear and dislike of the longhorns.

A cook and chuckwagon traveled with the cowboys. They believed a good cook could attract the best cowboys.

TIMELINE

1866 | Cattle trail chuckwagon invented in Texas

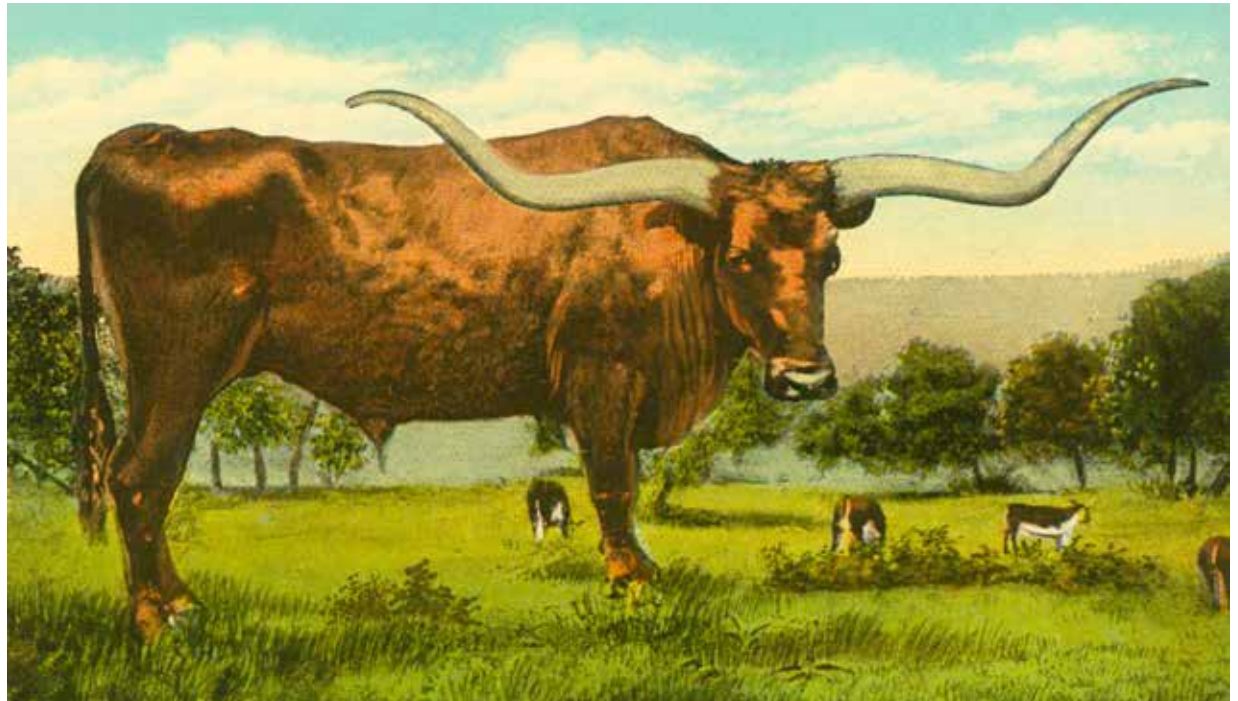
1871-1873 | Peak cattle driving years



Abbie's concerns about longhorns proved valid. Longhorns carried a disease called **"Texas fever,"** although they were immune. Caused by ticks, the "fever" killed Kansas cattle. Settlers didn't know the source of the disease at the time, but they understood it was the Texas herds that were infecting their cattle. On August 23 Abbie writes, "One of Philip's steers died, they think [*it is*] Texas fever. It is such a pity. He was a good worker—Now the yoke is spoiled." A few weeks later Abbie writes again about Texas fever echoing the rumors settlers were hearing.

Thousands and thousands of Texas cattle were driven north this Summer. Some have been allowed to graze on this side of the river before crossing. Texas cattle generate—I think that is the word—in their feet during the long trip, a substance that [poisons] the grass—This does not hurt them—but if native cattle eat that rass it [poisons] them and they die of [what] is called Texas fever. That is what killed the one ox.

"There is a large herd of Texas cattle grazing South of here. It is not safe for a woman to be out where they can see her. ...The have such big horns, they look frightful." Abbie Bright, June 11, 1877





A round-up herd of about 1,200 cattle south of Coldwater

The Kansas territorial legislature passed a law prohibiting infected cattle from entering the territory. The law was amended several times to restrict cattle east of a quarantine boundary called the “dead” line. This line was moved steadily west to the shipping points where the trail met the railroad, creating many “queen” cattle towns.

Settlers were also moving west and fencing in their crops while proving up their lands. As they claimed more and more lands in the west the dead line moved to the southwest border of the state. It became obvious—the cattle trails and the homesteaders could not coexist. Although relatively brief, this era of the long cattle drives was significant to Kansas history.

TIMELINE

- 1859** | Territorial legislature prohibits infected cattle from entering Kansas
- 1867** | Law amended to restrict Texas cattle west of the sixth meridian, near McPherson
- 1872** | Wichita and Southwestern Railway line reaches Wichita, linking to the Santa Fe Railway, which carries cattle east
- 1885** | Kansas closes its borders to Texas cattle to prevent Texas fever



Looking north along Caldwell’s main street on the Chisholm Trail. Its location near the Oklahoma border made Caldwell an important cowtown.

Abbie's diary entries in July provide an indication that she and Philip are not intending to remain in Kansas. They are most likely **speculators**, obtaining land as an investment with the intent to resell for a profit. She first mentions work on her claim on July 6, 1871, writing,

While I am not living on my claim it is [being] improved all the time. The dugout will soon be finished, and for Philips sake I will be glad to get away from the river. ... the neighbors said, 'if you are only going to stay six months, I would not get this, or that, it won't be worth while, and we will lend you those things.' So we get along with few, and don't borrow much either.

Abbie and Philip had few belongings, which might indicate their stay would be brief. Like others, the Brights may have taken a temporary economic advantage of staking a claim, which required building a house.



Settlers in some parts of Kansas lived in dugouts, built into the earth. The Meade family settled in Finney County. Judging from the number of items inside their dugout, they were likely planning to be permanent residents of Kansas.



Philip has been sick with what Abbie calls “ague,” known to cause alternating high fever, and chills, bringing on sweating and shivering. She is not certain about the illness, but the symptoms are consistent with malaria. Abbie worries about her brother and is anxious to move off Philip’s claim and farther away from the river. By July 10 Abbie herself is feeling feverish, she writes,

Baked yesterday, in p.m. fever came worse than ever. Philip said I was getting ready for the ague, and had better take quinine [medicine]. So I did, and this a.m. another dose, by tomorrow I think the quinine will help me. I do not have chills. Shall not tell the home folks, it would only worry them.

In a little over a month the siblings move to Abbie’s claim and into her dugout. The claim is about a mile from the river and the land is level enough for a garden. There is a small meadow next to the dugout and behind it a rolling prairie. Abbie describes the building of her new home.

The men first dug a well, and at 6 or 7 ft. found plenty of water. They covered it, and it is reasonably cool. Not far from the well they dug a trench like walk into the bank, when the sides were 4 ft. high a 12 by 14 ft. hole was dug out, logs laid to fit the sides. When high enough--a big log was laid [across] the middle the long way, then split limbs and brush were fit on top for a roof, and that covered with dirt piled on and pressed down. A fire place, and chimney were dug out and built up, at one end, plastered with mud and it answered well. ... The room is a little larger than [Philip’s] cabin.

TIMELINE

AUGUST 1871 | Abbie Bright moves into her dugout



Digging a well in Logan County several years after Abbie moves on to her claim.

The evening of August 25 a wagon drives up to the door of the dugout. Mr. Ross brings two surprise visitors; one is Abbie's older brother Hiram from Indiana along with her cousin Tom Evans from Illinois. A few days into the visit Abbie makes note in her diary that it is tough to continue to make bread for so many hungry men when she only has a dutch oven in which to bake.

The men arrange to go **buffalo hunting**. Abbie is asked to bake more bread. Two wagons are loaded with provisions and bedding. An open barrel, used to pack the buffalo meat, a sack of salt, and wood to cook with are included. From Abbie's claim they head southwest, away from the Ninnescah River. Buffalo had been spotted within six or eight miles of Abbie's claim a couple of days before. But now the group is not certain how far they need to travel to find the herd. The wagons pass by prairie dogs, antelopes, prairie chickens, and a gray wolf. The prairie is filled with short grass without a tree in sight.

Wagons represented a sense of freedom for early settlers. This family is on the way to church near Colby.



1881 | Buffalo in the southern plains hunted to near extinction

All watched to see the first buffalo—which we spied some five miles on, and to our left. We went on, and soon saw five more, within 3/4 mile. ...the hunters would try to get one or more of those, and go no farther. ...Philip and Jake being the best marks men—started in the direction of the buffaloes.... The one Philip shot had its leg broken and went a little farther, but the other one though wounded went [about] a mile....We were all looking at the fallen [buffalo], when unexpectedly he jumped up made a dash toward the team [of horses], which in turn dashed to run, I being near [I] grabbed a bridle, and managed to hold them. That was the buffalos last effort, he fell and was dead.

The hunting party begins to cut up the meat, saving only the hind quarters. Back at camp the buffalo meat is cut into pieces to cool. That night the party dines on buffalo steak, bacon, bread, and coffee. The next day the meat is salted and packed. Upon returning home the group shares the buffalo meat with some of their neighbors, as neighbors had done with them before. Abbie begins to mix more bread dough because her brother and cousin are preparing to leave in the morning. She bakes late into the night.



During the 1870s American hunters decimated the buffalo herds, leaving Native Americans without their primary sources for food, clothing, and tools. Unlike the Indians, who used all parts of the buffalo, many white hunters tended to take only a small portion of the animal, sometimes only the hide, and leave the carcasses to decay. Settlers like Abbie's hunting party were looking for meat, but they still discarded much of the buffalo. Buffalo hides in Dodge City were shipped to buyers in the East.

When autumn begins to transform into winter Abbie makes plans to begin **paying off her claim** and leave Kansas. She has lived here for seven months.

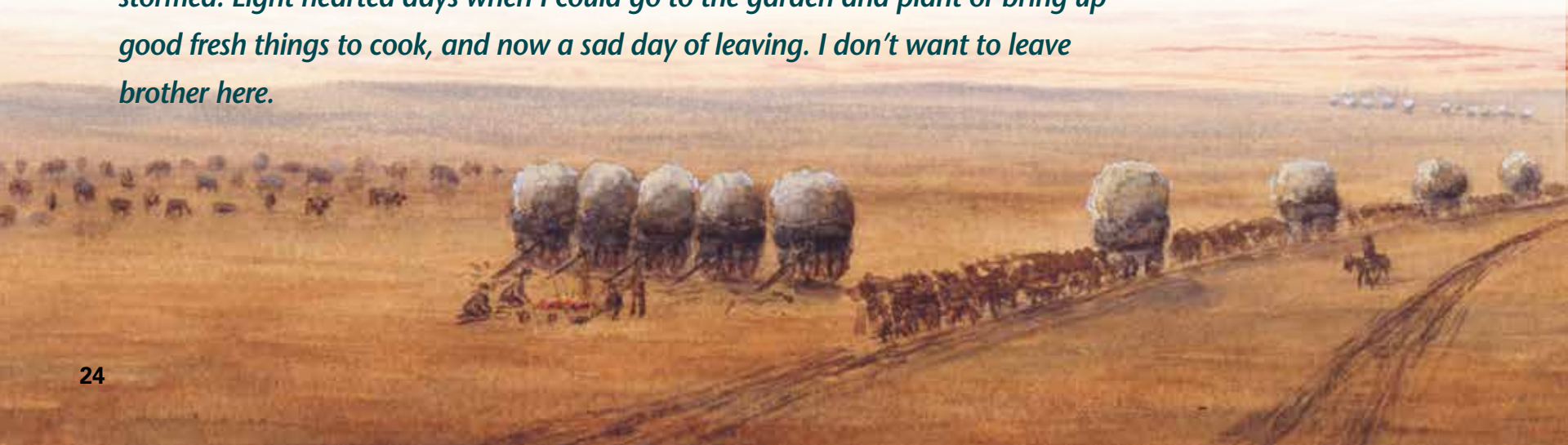
In November Philip and Abbie head to Augusta. For most of the journey there is no road and Abbie comments on seeing very few settlers. The land office is quite busy, but Philip knows one of the clerks, allowing them preferential treatment. Abbie writes,

Philip had attended to all of the [preliminary] parts, before I was called in. I had little to do, beside sign my name and pay \$1.25 an acre or \$200, and some office fees, after which we received a certificate. The patent will be made out in Washington D.C. and sent to us. Now I am owner of 160 acres of land.

The night before Abbie leaves Kansas she writes,

When done packing, I made a can of chocolate, and ate some ginger snaps. There I sat by the fire, and went over the days I had spent in the dugout.... The slow way of baking took so much time... Trying days when Philip was sick. Exciting days when brother Hiram and cousin Tom came... Dreary days when it stormed. Light hearted days when I could go to the garden and plant or bring up good fresh things to cook, and now a sad day of leaving. I don't want to leave brother here.

Artist Henry Worrall came to Kansas in 1868 for health reasons and became a regular contributor to Eastern journals, such as *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. This painting is from 1890.



How does the story end?

Abbie eventually marries William M. Achenbach, a mathematics instructor at Keystone State Normal School in Pennsylvania, Abbie's alma mater. The two settle in Gladbrook, Iowa, and raise three children. Abbie's diary and other family papers come to the Kansas Historical Society through her grandson, Donald G. Fairchild.

Philip's story is far more tragic. He leaves Kansas for the diamond fields of northern Arizona Territory. At some point Philip travels to Prescott and eventually Phoenix. According to Abbie, her brother camps near an irrigation ditch with a group of men on the south side of town in spring 1873. She believes Philip is the only one of the men with money. The other men take on work during harvest and leave Philip alone in camp. He is murdered, his body discovered in a nearby ditch, probably shot through the head while he slept. No one was ever tried for his murder, but robbery was considered to be the motive in his death.

Abbie appears to have inherited Philip's Kansas land, which she rents to tenants for the next 30 years.

TIMELINE

November 20, 1871 | Abbie Bright pays off her claim

November 24, 1871 | Abbie spends her last night on her Kansas land

June 24, 1873 | Abbie marries William Achenbach

Spring 1873 | Phillip Bright is murdered in Arizona Territory

May 6, 1926 | Abbie dies of natural causes in Iowa



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Abbie Bright left valuable insights into Kansas settlement through her diary, letters, and a few newspaper articles. Parts of her diary seem to have been written at a later time, containing elements of a reminiscence. Abbie's and Philip's time in Kansas was somewhat typical, which make their story important to our Kansas story.

Most of the collection items features can be found at kansasmemory.org. For more information on these topics visit kshs.org/20236. To receive this publication quarterly we invite you to become a member.

ON THE COVER: Abbie Bright and her diary from Kansas in 1871.

