KANSAS HISTORY

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WPA Children's Playground and Recreation, Leavenworth "Colored" Center, ca. 1940

One of the most innovative characteristics of the WPA was the multiplicity of its goals: create opportunities for work relief or meaningful employment and provide valuable services to people throughout the United States. The Recreation Project was typical. It was "designed to provide a quality-service program to communities by employing persons in need, who are qualified to furnish leadership in organizing activities of a recreational nature and in directing group participation."

New Deal efforts in this area originated in 1933 under the Civil Works Administration and continued as a WPA program after that agency's creation in 1935. The Recreation Project operated on a statewide basis. In Kansas this meant that the state superintendent of public instruction and appropriate individuals or institutions within participating communities sponsored the program. In large part, their success is reflected in the number of people served: by 1940 Kansas had 189 recreation units employing 405 people, and "approximately 45,000 persons participate monthly in sports, games of many kinds, folk dancing, crafts, children's play centers, and other supervised leisure-time activities."

Officials recognized the need to adapt the various recreational programs to the needs of a given community and also believed it necessary to target the special needs of certain groups of individuals. According to the Manual for Recreation Supervisors, *special attention was to be given in some cases "to the minority groups (racial, economic, etc.), areas of high delinquency as a preventative rather than cure for crime, to rural areas with their particular problems, and to certain individuals in need of recreational therapy." On occasion and in keeping with the racial attitudes of this era, "special attention" meant separate recreational or playground facilities for white and black children.*

The above photograph is the fourth and final image in a series featuring WPA programs in Kansas during the 1930s and early 1940s.

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Cover: *Poster by Adam Rohe produced for the Lawrence Semi-Centennial in 1904. An article on Rohe, "Forgotten Kansas Artist," is featured in this issue.* Back cover: *A page from the journal of Jotham Meeker. Meeker's work as a physician is the subject of "Physician to Body and Soul" in this issue.*

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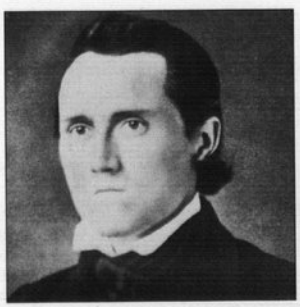

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1850. Jotham Meeker's Journal, No. 3.

May 22. With two Ottawa men finish my cellar drain. Commence filling my old well. Clean out another well. Hunt for men to assist me on to-morrow at replanting my corn field.

23. Work hard all day at furrowing & planting my corn field.

24. Finish replanting corn at sunset. Mr. Jones moves his family to Ottawa. The weather is becoming very warm.

25. Feel very sore all day from my yesterdays work. Stay about home, and do a few small jobs. Send to Kansas for my furniture, Groceries, &c. Two weeks ago we had frost. Yesterday and to-day the mercury is at 86 & 87. The earth is very dry.

26. Lords Day. Preach to 50 Ottawas from the 4th Chap. of Daniel. After an intermission of near half an hour Missos and Pahtee speak.

27. Have Jacob to assist me at translating in Lukes Gospel. Give out medicine to several of the Ottawas.

28. Jacob and I complete the translation of Luke, or such portions as are omitted by Matthew and John.)

29. Am engaged nearly all day at setting types. A Catholic priest from Potawatomie calls on us J. B. Deverineck.

30. Work in the office. Attend Pr. meeting at Shawbonees. Learn that a general war between the Pott. Kansas, Osage, Kickapoo, Delawares, Shawanoe, Sauk & Fox tribes on the one side, and the Pawnees on the other is being raised forthwith.

31. Work all day in the Office. Several of the Ottawas start to attend the Potawatomie annuity payment.

June 1. Finish the setting of the types of the translation of