

Kansas History

A Journal of the Central Plains

Volume 46, Number 3 | Autumn 2023



A Collaboration of the Kansas Historical Foundation
and the Department of History at Kansas State University



Eva Jessye

We continue our survey of influential Kansas entertainers with Eva Jessye, the famous choral director born in Coffeyville, Kansas, in 1895. She was educated at the all-Black Western University in Quindaro and later at Langston University in Oklahoma. As an art aficionado, she sang, wrote, acted, composed, and directed, as displayed in the collage above. She started work as the choir director at Morgan State College in 1919. Her career continued into her eighties, ending at Pittsburg State University in Kansas and the University of Michigan. She started music collections at both institutes that still carry her name.

Outside academia, she founded the Original Dixie Jubilee Singers, whose name changed to the Eva Jessye Choir to distinguish it from Western University's Jackson Jubilee Singers and Fisk University's Jubilee Singers. They performed at the Capitol Theatre in New York City and on NBC and WOR radio, singing in a variety of genres. In 1927, she published a collection of songs titled *My Spirituals*. As her work received recognition, she served as choral director for two major operas, *Porgy and Bess* and *Four Saints in Three Acts*, and the musical motion picture *Hallelujah*. Between 1935 and 1965, she was involved in almost every *Porgy and Bess* production worldwide. As

a result, people started calling Jessye the "curator and guardian of the score." Toward the end of her career, she composed three of her own oratorios, including *Paradise Lost and Regained*, based on the John Milton poem.

During the Civil Rights Movement, she worked with many notable figures. At Martin Luther King Jr.'s request, the Eva Jessye Choir sang at the March on Washington in 1963. Her choice of "We Shall Overcome," performed by Joan Baez, became a favorite musical inspiration for freedom movements of the late twentieth century internationally.

Jessye received honorary degrees, including a doctorate, from three universities. In 1981, Kansas Governor John Carlin named her the Kansas ambassador of the arts. She passed away in 1992 at the age of ninety-seven. To learn more about Western University's prestigious music program, consult Paul Wenske's "Western University at Quindaro and Its Legacy of Music" in our Summer 2019 issue, available at www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2019summer_wenske.pdf.

September Gering
Editorial Assistant

Kansas History

A Journal of the Central Plains

Volume 46, Number 3 | Autumn 2023

Kristen Epps
Editor

Eric Brandom
Associate Editor

Kelly Erby
Chase Billingham
Book Review Editors

Jacob Brown
September Gering
Editorial Assistants

Connie Oehring
Copy Editor

Joshua A. Smith
Designer

Editorial Advisory Board

Eric Anderson
Julie Courtwright
Kenneth M. Hamilton
David A. Haury
M.H. Hoefflich
Thomas D. Isern
James N. Leiker
Jay M. Price
Vanessa Steinroetter
Juti Winchester
Patrick Zollner

Front cover: *The law school at the University of Kansas during Carl Becker's time in the history department, c. 1910. Despite the label of "Kansas State University," this was in fact a building in Lawrence.*

Back cover: *Arthur L. Stokesberry's song, reprinted in the *Ninnescah Herald*, July 28, 1887.*

Copyright ©2023
Kansas State Historical Society, Inc.
ISSN 0149-9114

Printed by Sheridan Group, Hanover, Pennsylvania.

With support from the Kansas Studies Institute at Johnson County Community College, the Center for Kansas Studies at Washburn University, and the Department of History at Wichita State University.



p. 150



p. 162



p. 180

The Stern Old Bachelor, Arthur L. Stokesberry, and His Ballad: Reigniting Research in Great Plains Folksong

by Thomas D. Isern

150

Blue Sky, or Buyer Beware: The Mound Day Investment Scheme Tests Kansas's Pioneering 1911 Regulation

by David Ress

162

"Americanism Transplanted": Carl Becker's Kansas

by Carl L. Becker, with a foreword by Eric Brandom and Kristen Epps

180

Editor's Note

200

Book Reviews

202

Book Notes

207



Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains is published quarterly through a partnership between the Kansas Historical Foundation and the Department of History at Kansas State University. The Kansas Historical Foundation serves as a fundraising, fund management, membership, and retail organization to support and promote the Kansas Historical Society, a state agency that safeguards and shares the state's history through the collection, preservation, and interpretation of its past. The Society's collections and programs are diverse and are made available through its library and museum in Topeka, historic sites and classrooms across

the state, and publications and web-based resources accessible everywhere. The Department of History at Kansas State University is especially well-suited to the study of Kansas, agricultural, and environmental history. As a Land Grant school whose culture and economy have historically been shaped by the economy in the state, the history of Kansas holds a venerable place in the academic offerings of the University. Environmental history, with a particular focus on agricultural, water, and grassland issues in Kansas, has become increasingly more important to university research and curricula worldwide.

The journal is available as one of many benefits of membership with the Kansas Historical Foundation. Find more information online at kshs.org/11413.

Follow us on Twitter (@kshistoryjrnl) and on Instagram (@kshistoryjournal). You can also find us on Facebook!

The journal publishes scholarly articles, edited documents, and other materials that contribute to an understanding of the history and cultural heritage of Kansas and the Central Plains. Political, social, intellectual, cultural, economic, and institutional histories are welcome, as are biographical and historiographical interpretations and studies of archaeology, the built environment, and material culture. Articles emphasizing visual documentation, exceptional reminiscences, and autobiographical writings are also considered for publication. Genealogical studies are generally not accepted.

Manuscripts are evaluated anonymously by scholars who determine their suitability for publication based on originality, quality of research, significance, and presentation, among other factors. Previously published articles or manuscripts that are being considered for publication elsewhere will not be considered. The editors reserve the right to make changes in accepted articles and will consult with the authors regarding such. The publishers assume no responsibility for statements of fact or opinion made by contributors.

Kansas History follows the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). A detailed explanation of the journal's editorial policy is available at kshs.org/12447. Articles appearing in *Kansas History* are available online at the Kansas Historical Society's website (kshs.org/12445) and from EBSCO Publishing. They are available on microfilm from ProQuest Microfilms.

The Edgar Langsdorf Award for Excellence in Writing, which includes a plaque and an honorarium of two hundred dollars, is awarded each year for the best article published in *Kansas History*.

The editors welcome letters responding to any of the articles published in the journal. With the correspondent's permission, those that contribute substantively to the scholarly dialogue by offering new insights or historical information may be published. All comments or editorial queries should be addressed to the editors, *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*, Department of History, 201C Calvin Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-1002; 785-532-0375; email: khjournal@ksu.edu.

Illustrations appearing in the journal, unless otherwise noted, are from the collections of the Kansas Historical Society. Reproductions of images from the Society's collections are available for purchase. Please contact the State Archives Division for ordering information: kshs.org/14154; 785-272-8681, ext. 132.

Kansas History (USPS 290 620) is published quarterly by the Kansas Historical Foundation, 6425 SW 6th Avenue, Topeka, KS, 66615-1099 (kshs.org), officially the Kansas State Historical Society, Inc., an IRS determined 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. It is distributed to members joining at the Associate level or higher. The giving levels are: \$35 contributor, \$80 family, \$100 associate, \$250 ambassador, \$500 patron, and \$1,000 builder. A 20% discount is available for teachers, students, and librarians. The annual membership rate for historical societies, museums, libraries, colleges, and universities is \$60. The annual corporate membership rates are \$1,500 for the 1875 Founders' Club and \$5,000 for the Kansas Pioneer Society. Gift memberships returned to the Foundation from donors may be available for those unable to pay for an associate level membership. Contact Caryn Kramer, Programs and Membership Coordinator, Kansas Historical Foundation, at 785-272-8681, ext. 209, membership@kshistory.org, or visit us online as kshs.org/11413 for further information.



The Center for Kansas Studies at Washburn University in Topeka, KS, promotes research, teaching, and creative work on the culture, history, politics, economics, and natural environment of Kansas.

Follow us on Facebook for news on free upcoming events or contact us at cks@washburn.edu to subscribe to our newsletter and find out more about our Kansas Studies Minor program.

Learn more at www.washburn.edu/cks



History at Wichita State Practical Skills, No Expiration Date

Take an important first step toward lifelong learning in the Department of History at Wichita State University. Studying history enlightens us about the past – and the present. It also helps develop crucial skills in thinking critically, gathering and processing data and communicating effectively in writing and orally.

The department publishes a journal, the Fairmount Folio, and we offer a range of awards, scholarships, conference funding and graduate teaching assistantships.



Our full-time, Ph.D. faculty have strengths in American, African American, Modern European and local and community history, offering classes such as constitutional and legal history, the Mongols, the history of baseball, epidemics in modern society, ethnic entrepreneurship and rock 'n' roll. We also house the geography and religion programs.

Our faculty, students and alumni publish award-winning scholarship, photo histories, graphic novels, even historical romances. Recent work includes documentaries, museum exhibits, oral histories, community projects and television.

Alumni have successful careers in everything from the law to the medical profession.

We offer bachelor and master's degrees as well as minors, field degrees and certificates. We'd love to talk to you.



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

FAIRMOUNT COLLEGE OF
LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES
Department of History



Contact us:



(316) 978-3150



wichita.edu/history



[/history_wsu](https://twitter.com/history_wsu)



[/HistoryatWichitaState](https://www.facebook.com/HistoryatWichitaState)



Connect to Your Kansas Roots

Explore content that inspires on the Kansas Studies Institute's YouTube playlist.

Discover the dynamic freethinkers that shaped this state:

- Dive into film history with Oscar-winning director Kevin Willmott.
- Listen to the compelling narratives of Kansas veterans.
- Award-winning author CJ Janovy uncovers our powerful history of activism.
- Take a master class taught by renowned landscape artist Wilbur Niewald.

A world of history, art and ingenuity awaits at jccc.edu/KansasStudies

The **Department of History at Kansas State University** offers students a rewarding educational experience. We seek to recover and interpret the past in all of its messy and fascinating manifestations, offering courses ranging from the Middle East to the American West, on topics like technology, gender, foreign policy, immigration, and race.

Our students develop marketable skills in **research, critical thinking, and communication** that allow them to pursue successful careers not only as historians, archivists, and museum professionals, but also as lawyers, entrepreneurs, government officials, and leaders in the nonprofit sector.

We offer a minor, B.A. and B.S. undergraduate degrees, and M.A. and Ph.D. graduate degrees. **Find out more at <https://www.k-state.edu/history/> and on social media (@KSUHist).**



KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Department of History

CHAPMAN CENTER

FOR RURAL STUDIES

RESEARCHING, PRESERVING, & SHARING
the history of rural Kansas

WHAT WE DO:



CONNECT STUDENTS AND
COMMUNITIES FOR
INTERNSHIPS IN MUSEUMS
AND MEMORY

HOST DIGITIZATION DAYS TO
HELP COMMUNITY MEMBERS
ORGANIZE AND PRESERVE
HEIRLOOMS WITH SCANNERS
AND OTHER TECHNOLOGY



SUPPORT RESEARCH TO
CELEBRATE THE HISTORY AND
CULTURE OF SMALLTOWN
AND RURAL KANSAS

CONNECT WITH US:



@ChapmanCenter



@KSUchapmancenter



@ChapmanCenter1



@ChapmanCenter



Our digital exhibits site showcases stories about the
Great Plains and provides space for students,
faculty, and community members to share their
research with a broader audience.

DISCOVER
OUR
NEW WEBSITES:



The East Kansas Communities digital archive was
conducted by undergraduate students that explored
and documented small towns, villages, and named
crossroads that existed at one time in Kansas.

CONTACT US:

k-state.edu/chapman

chapmancenter@ksu.edu



Make sure you follow *Kansas History*
on social media!



@kshistoryjournal



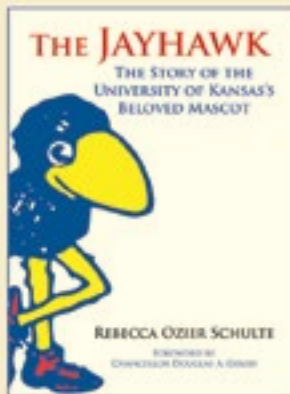
@kshistoryjrnl



@kshistoryjournal



NEW BOOKS ON KANSAS



The Jayhawk The Story of the University of Kansas's Beloved Mascot

Rebecca Ozier Schulte
Foreword by Chancellor
Douglas A. Girod

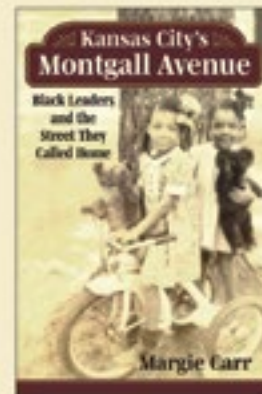
176 pages, 301 color photographs,
17 black-and-white photographs,
9" x 12", Cloth \$34.95
Not available in ebook



The Life and Legacy of Elizabeth Miller Watkins

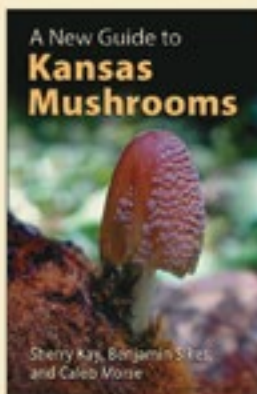
A Pioneering Philanthropist
Mary Dresser Burchill and
Norma Decker Hoagland

240 pages, 70 photographs,
Paper \$24.95



Kansas City's Montgall Avenue Black Leaders and the Street They Called Home

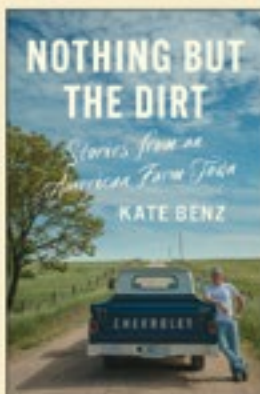
Margie Carr
296 pages, 43 photographs,
1 map, Paper \$26.95



A New Guide to Kansas Mushrooms

Sherry Kay, Benjamin Sikes
and Caleb Morse

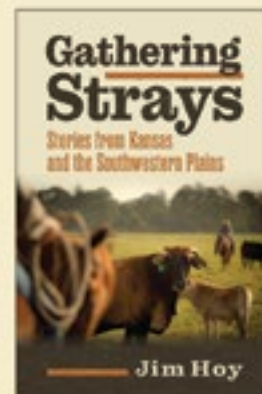
320 pages, 153 color photographs,
8 black-and-white photographs,
6 figures, Paper \$29.95



Nothing but the Dirt Stories from an American Farm Town

Kate Benz

254 pages, 29 photographs,
Paper \$24.95



Gathering Strays Stories from Kansas and the Southwestern Plains

Jim Hoy

406 pages, Paper \$34.95

Ebook editions available from your favorite ebook retailer.



University Press of Kansas

Phone (785) 864-4155 • Fax (785) 864-4586 • www.kansaspress.ku.edu

Kansas Bachelor Song.

By A. L. Stokesberry.

I am a stern old bachelor
My age is forty-four,
I do declare I'll never live
With woman any more.

CHORUS.

Little sod shanty,
Sod shanty give to me,
For I'm a stern old bachelor
From matrimony free.

I live upon a homestead claim
From woman I am hid;
I do not have to dress a wife
Or take care of a kid.

I cook my dirty little bite
Three times or less a day;
I lick my plates to keep them clean,
And just shove things away.

I have a stove that's worth ten cents
A table worth fifteen,
I cook my grub in oyster cans
And always have things clean.

On Sunday morn I go to church
Without a wife to storm;
My latest paper is not rolled up
To beautify her form.

I go to bed when'er I please
And get up just the same;
I change my socks three times a year
With no one to complain.

And when I die and go to Heaven,
As all old bachelors do,
I will not have to grieve, for fear,
My wife won't get there too.