

Kansas History

A Journal of the Central Plains

Volume 47, Number 1 | Spring 2024



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



Our visual essay theme for this year focuses on community events across Kansas. Community events offered a way to bring rural Kansas communities closer together and included activities such as fairs, circuses, dances, exhibitions, and various contests. Our first highlight is a cow milking contest at the Kansas Free Fair in Topeka, c. 1900 to 1920. First organized in 1880, the Kansas State Fair Association brought together representatives from each county in Kansas for the purpose of holding a statewide fair in Topeka, the first of which was held September 12–17, 1881. Renamed many times since 1915, the Shawnee County Fair continues to be held annually on the grounds.

While limited information exists on this specific photograph, similar contests at the Kansas Free Fair were reported in local newspapers. In July 1923, the *Kansas Farmer and Mail and Breeze* reported on seventeen-year-old Topeka native, Elsie Krasny, who for multiple years won first honors in milking contests held at the Kansas Free Fair. She was dubbed by the article a “national champion”:

A national rating as a milk maid was won by Miss Elsie Krasny, of Shawnee county, Kan., in a contest at the recent national meeting of the American Jersey Cattle Club. Two or three years in succession Miss Krasny had won first honors in milking contests held at the Kansas Free Fair in Topeka. Therefore, when the governor of Kansas was asked to appoint a representative of the state in the American Jersey Cattle Club contest to be held at Kansas City, Miss Krasny was appointed. . .milking Jersey cows in competition furnished one of the best entertainment features provided by the Southwest Jersey Breeders’ Association in its role as host to the American Jersey Cattle Club. Miss Krasny won.

Elsie herself had a high opinion of her accomplishments, claiming she would rather be known as the best milker in Kansas than win a prize in a beauty contest. “By being a good milker one does some good in the world. By simply being pretty, one does not accomplish much.”

Meghan Ward
Editorial Assistant

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Front cover: *Ernst Ullmer's 1991 painting of Quantrill's Raid, Blood-Stained Dawn, is the northeast Kansas artist's largest historical scene. Here he depicts the moment when residents of the Eldridge at Massachusetts and Seventh Streets were evacuated from the building. Courtesy of the Watkins Museum of History.*

Back cover: *Many nineteenth century vegetarians also put stock in the water-cure. This illustration comes from the 1842 Hydropathy; or, The Cold Water Cure.*

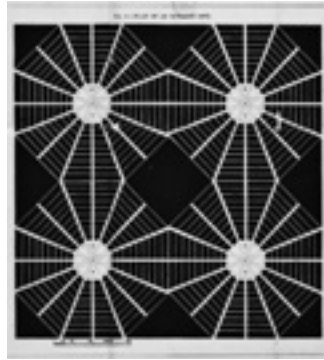
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Kansas State Historical Society, Inc.

ISSN 0149-9114

Printed by Valley Print Logistics, Valley Center, Kansas.

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. 2

The Vegetarian and Octagon
Settlement Companies

*by Russell Hickman, with Albert Gambone,
and a foreword by Adam Shprintzen*

2



p. 18

Little-Known Accounts of the Lawrence
Massacre

Edited and introduced by William D. Haynes

18



p. 30

Marines with Marine Training:
Pete Ellis and the Transformation of the
Marine Corps

by Andrew Soneson

30

Book Reviews

50

Book Notes

57



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 ksks.org/11413.

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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.

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 ksks.org/12447. Articles appearing in *Kansas History* are available online at the Kansas Historical Society's website (ksks.org/12445) and from EBSCO Publishing. They are available on microfilm from ProQuest Microfilms.

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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.

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Kansas History (USPS 290 620) is published quarterly by the Kansas Historical Foundation, 6425 SW 6th Avenue, Topeka, KS, 66615-1099 (ksks.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 Mallorie Mendoza, Operations Manager, Kansas Historical Foundation, at 785-272-8681, ext. 209, membership@kshistory.org, or visit us online at ksks.org/11413 for further information.



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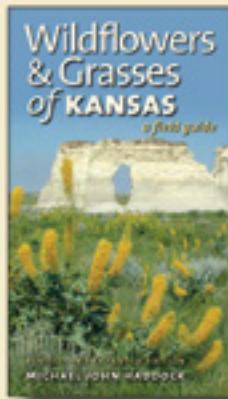
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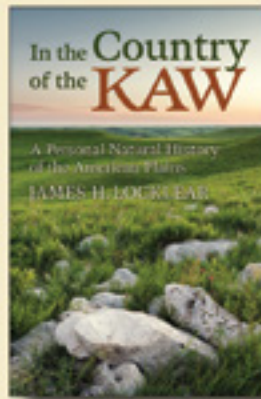
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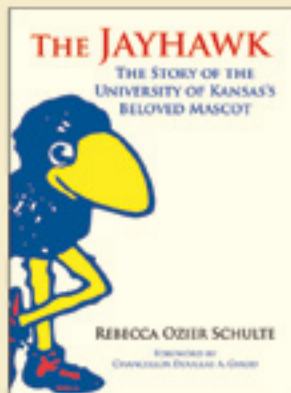
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