

Bypaths of Kansas History

EMIGRANTS CROSSING KANSAS IN 1853

From the *Daily Missouri Republican*, St. Louis, May 10, 1853.

The steamer *Alton* arrived from St. Joseph yesterday with a very light cargo. Her officers inform us that they were employed at that point three days in ferrying emigrants over the river. During which time they took over 7,563 head of cattle, 382 head of horses, and 212 wagons. The emigrants had nearly all started for the Plains on Friday last when the boats left St. Joseph. The *Alton* made a very quick run down—fifty-two hours was her running time from St. Joseph to this city.

A VALUABLE WALNUT TREE

From the *Kansas Weekly Tribune*, Lawrence, August 17, 1865.

We were shown some walnut boards of the very best quality we have ever seen, three feet wide. They came from a tree which measured eighteen feet in circumference. It was sawed at Zimmerman's mill on the railroad, ten miles east, and the lumber measured full five thousand feet. This lumber is cheap at fifty dollars per thousand, and at that rate the whole products of this tree would amount to two hundred and fifty dollars. That is the value of the lumber alone. How much cord-wood and veneering the balance of the tree will make has not been estimated. We call that a valuable tree.

STYLE NOTE FROM LINN COUNTY

From the *Fort Scott Monitor*, November 7, 1867.

Some fifty ladies in the vicinity of Trading Post, Linn county, have adopted short skirts, which fall about to the knee. Their nether extremities are encased in pants of the same material, many of them cut very like the unmentionables of the sterner sex, while some are gathered at the ankle in genuine turkish style.

IN 1870 THIS WAS NEWS!

From the *Abilene Chronicle*, November 10, 1870.

HOW SAMBO VOTED IN ABILENE.—There was but one darkey vote cast in Abilene, at the recent election, and the foolish "cuss" voted an unscratched democratic ticket. He did it under the plea that he had "promised Massa Kuney dis mornin' dat he vote de demycrat tick sure—and dat he mus' keep de promise." We admire the darkey's pluck in keeping his promise, but he's evidently "raw," and ought to see the inside of a school house for a term or two. This case demonstrates one fact pretty clearly, namely, that if a darkey votes a democratic ticket his vote counts as much as that of a white man voting the same, or any other ticket! It's wonderful, but it's true.

REAL LONG HORNS

From the *Ellsworth Reporter*, December 21, 1871.

Last fall during the shipping season, three steers were found with horns of such enormous length that they could not get into a car, with a five-foot door, 'til after five inches was sawed off of each horn.

SURVEYING IN THE WILDS

From the *Seneca Weekly Courier*, October 11, 1872.

Armstrong's surveying party, which left Centralia last summer, have finished their work, and are coming home. They had a good time. They saw lots of wild horses, some of which were very nice. A Leavenworth man offered \$1,000 for one if it could be delivered there. The Indians gathered around them near the last, and gave them five "sleeps" to get through and leave, or off would come their scalps; and they showed them how it was done! But the surveyors succeeded in getting ten "sleeps," and by working late and early got done, and crossed the Arkansas river September 28. Part came home by rail, and some overland with teams.

CIRCUS TROUBLES

From the *Junction City Union*, August 16, 1873.

There was a big trouble at Hays the other day, caused by a locomotive trying to go into John Robinson's show without paying. The forward section of the train went too slow, and the second section too fast, the consequence was a collision, which waked up the largest and most varied collection of animals ever shown under fifteen tents, and gathered from all parts of Asia, Africa, Europe, and Billings county, to an unprecedented extent. Several cars were jammed up, and it looked at one time as if Robinson would have enough tiger steaks and monkey cutlets to last him all summer. The gorilla was heard to remark that he was mighty glad he had left off "showing," and gone to driving a team this season. Fortunately neither man nor beast was injured. The precise cause of the accident is not known. Some say one of the engineers had gazed too long at the "one-fifth of a mile" of serpents, but this is contradicted.

HOLDING COURT IN EARLY-DAY WICHITA

From the *Wichita City Eagle*, April 6, 1876.

The first term of the district court began on the 13th day of June. It was held in the attic of a livery stable, nearly opposite the Empire House. Hon. W. R. Brown, of the 9th district, which included Sedgwick county, was the judge. The other officers present were W. N. Walker, sheriff, F. J. Fulton, county attorney, and C. S. Roe, deputy clerk. The attorneys of the Wichita bar present, besides Fulton, were Reuben Riggs, P. T. Weeks and H. C. Sluss. The attorneys from a distance present, were D. C. Hackett, Esq., of Emporia,

and W. P. Campbell, of El Dorado. The court room was provided with one chair which was occupied by his honor the judge. The table for the accommodation of the lawyers consisted of two goods boxes set "end for end." The seats for the bar consisted of a two by six cottonwood scantling resting at each end on cracker boxes, and placed at a convenient distance from the table, and along which ranged the lawyers. Behind the boxes sat the judge in his solitary chair with his right heel resting gracefully over his left knee, his right elbow resting upon the arm of the chair, and his chin firmly planted in his right hand, and his left hand in his pants pocket. The seats for the bystanders consisted of the same material and pattern as that for the bar, and ranged around the wall. The trial docket consisted of a single sheet of foolscap paper, and the bar docket and the journal of the same. The cases at issue were three: one a murder case, one a state case against . . . Alexander Jester, charged with an assault with intent to kill, and the other a divorce case. The divorce case was tried, witnesses examined and a decree for the plaintiff, which was the husband. It was developed on the trial that the defendant in her playful mood had kicked the plaintiff out of bed and compelled him to sleep on the floor, and as they lived in a dugout, this was adjudged a sufficient "ground" to justify a divorce. The case of murder was taken, by change of venue, to Butler county. In the assault case the defendant interposed a motion to "squash" the information, which was done. It is a curious fact that no record of the proceedings of that court was made, and not even the scratch of a pen remains to tell the fact of the granting of that divorce.

Yoo, Hoo!

From the *Garden City Paper*, May 1, 1879.

The boys must be getting hard up for seeing girls when they will go two miles to an emigrant camp to see one, as some of the boys did here last Sunday.

PLAYING INDIAN

From the *Dodge City Times*, November 29, 1879.

The "Indian racket," once a favorite sport in Dodge City, was indulged in on Monday last. A party of three citizens leisurely took a ride over the hills in search of antelope, as it was stated to the young man who was to be made the victim of the joke. The antelope hunting party discussed the probability of Indian wars and redskins generally, and all at once ran across five persons dressed in Indian costumes and war paint, who gave the antelope hunters a chase for about two miles, until within a half a mile of town, the deception being uncovered by a proceeding most "fowl." A number of citizens had gathered on boot hill to witness the Indians drive in the antelope hunters, but the latter discovered the deception before they reached the city limits. This game has been played successfully many times before. The practice had been to give the "Indian racket" to a conceited or cheeky person, and subjecting him to this scare would take the "starch out of him." In his humiliation and feelings of disgrace the victim of the joke would take the first train out of Dodge. But the old practices in Dodge are fast fading away.

A LAWYER'S COMPETITION

From the *Phillips County Herald*, Phillipsburg, March 11, 1880.

Geo. W. Stinson was suddenly shut down on last week. He was arguing a point of law with much earnestness before Esq. McCormick when Mr. Lowe, the county clerk, rushed in in great haste, exclaiming: "Mack, your office is on fire." Stinson finished his sentence as he followed the court out at the door. Six years ago he says he was suddenly interrupted in his argument by a herd of buffalo rushing into town.

EXCITEMENT IN LOGAN

From the *Logan Enterprise*, June 17, 1880.

On Monday a jack rabbit hailing from Iowa and going west to escape the drought, passed up Main street with all the dogs in town after him. He happened to pass by the place where city election was being held and in less than three shakes of a dead lamb's tail the judges and clerks of election and candidates for mayor had joined in the chase. It is needless to add that the jack made a better run than some of the candidates.

NEGROES IN GRAHAM COUNTY

From the *Seneca Weekly Courier*, September 17, 1880.

A gentleman from out west named Gregory . . . tells some queer works by the negro colony in Graham county. There are 800 in the colony, and all are doing well. One negro has a cow with which he broke and improved twelve acres of prairie and cultivated eight acres of corn; his wife drives the cow and keeps the flies off. Another one spaded a four-foot hedge row around 160 acres of land.

A SHORT CROP

From the *Norton County People*, Norton, September 23, 1880.

Peter Smoker, who resides one mile east of the Catholic church, near Almelo, has the right kind of grit for this country. His wheat being so short that it could not be cradled, he harvested three acres by cutting it with a butcher knife.

SOME SNOW!

From *The Buckner Independent*, Jetmore, February 18, 1881.

One of Lillard Sanders' horses was drifted up against the roof of his stable, inside, on Monday last. The snow drifted in behind the animal and was packed down under its feet as fast as it came in, until the animal was jammed up against the roof. Lillard procured a shovel and worked faithfully until he rescued the horse.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN BOOGIE-WOOGIE

From *The Globe Live Stock Journal*, Dodge City, February 23, 1886.

The buffalo that runs about town is accustomed to the music of the Cowboy band; it's Western in appearance and does not interfere with the peace and happiness of the buffalo, but there are some things that the buffalo won't stand, and among them is a strange lot of men blowing horns marching through the streets, headed by a drum major dressed in red trimmings and a woolly hat. Yesterday the buffalo observed the Simon Comedy Company's Hussar band parading the streets and took exceptions, and with head down and tail up charged that band. The music ceased with the first bellow of that wild animal, and the band done some excellent running. It was the worst broke up parade you ever saw. The buffalo took possession of the street, while the band roosted on fences, porches and small shanties.

SODA FOUNTAINS AND PEANUTS FIRST

From the *Ford County Republican*, Dodge City, June 8, 1887.

The city council have shut off the soda fountains and peanut stands on Sunday, but the whisky joints go unmolested. There is a belief that this action was taken to relieve the police from watching the soda stands so they could give their exclusive attention to the joints. We can now look for some decisive action. The joints must go.

PIONEERING IN MORTON COUNTY

From the *Harper Sentinel*, November 28, 1889.

November 15, 1889.

I am writing in my far western home, the one I love best. Let me describe it to you. It is what we call in Morton county a dug-out. Ours is dug four feet down, and has a frame part about five feet high on top of the ground. It is 12 x 20 inside, with a white-washed ceiling and a canvas partition. The door, a "shoot" as we call it out west, is in the east end. There is a whole window in the north side, a half window in the west, and a whole window and two half windows in the south. The last three are filled with house plants—they do splendidly in a dug-out. I have a canary bird to sing to me; a pet skunk, a dog and a cat. I was raised in the city; never saw a cow milked until I was past sixteen. It is hard work to come west to make a home. Few have the vim and back-bone to stay long enough to prove up their land under the homestead law. I don't want to brag, but we are going to try to be among the few. I'll tell you how we manage: There are four of us. My husband and two little boys (most too small to be of much use, but a great comfort) and myself comprise our family. This year everything was a failure in this county. Everybody left that could, but we have a few

cattle and enough corn stalks to keep them alive till grass comes. I said "we must stick to the land, old boy, just as long as we can raise the roughness to winter on." Some mornings there would be fourteen wagons going east, but they are not all gone, for we are here yet. Last spring everything was fine; good prospects for plenty in the fall; but the hot winds came and the rain did not. Out of the eighty acres of spring crops we planted we got nothing but corn stalks, not an ear of corn or a kernel for the seed. We may be thankful for the stalks, as some did not even get stalks. We are 47 miles from the railroad and the only way to get a living is to freight. It takes four days to go to the railroad and back with a load. My man has gone for a load now. While he is gone I take care of thirteen head of cattle, two pigs, one colt, and milk four cows, do my house work, make lace and crazy patch. This morning I sawed a new stove-pipe hole through the roof and put up a tin to run the pipe out through. The boys are at school. I sleep with a double-barreled shot-gun loaded in the closet and a revolver handy. I hear some one say, "Of course, she's afraid of those horrid cowboys." No, that is not what I'm afraid of; the cowboy is a gentleman; if you treat him as such you will never have a better friend. It is the out-law that people fear "out west." The outlaw will dress much like the cowboy, and an inexperienced person will take him for one, but there is a vast difference. We are near the "Strip," or "No Man's Land," as it is called here. This "No Man's Land" is a place without government. Everyone does as he pleases, so of course it is the abode of criminals, who break out once in a while and make a raid through the country. Stealing mules was their last meanness. In this country a man's team is his living, and anyone stealing it takes the bread and butter out of his little children's mouths, making them as well as their parents suffer. We have a good span of mules and sometime I'm afraid they will come to steal them. If they should not find the mules they might try to carry us off. In that case, they would strike a Tartar, someone would get hurt. My nearest neighbor is one mile northeast. Our nearest town is Richfield. The people east are sending aid to Morton county, and it needs it bad. There are a great many people here that can't get away, and can't make a living here, for there is nothing to do. Fortunately we have not had to be helped yet, but I don't know how long we can keep up. It is hard work, hard work, I tell you, and little pay. We have already had a bitter touch of winter. It began by raining, and rained two weeks steady. Then the snow came and the wind with it, and for four days and nights kept snowing and blowing. We were literally snowed under. Through it all the stock had to be looked after and run under shelter. When they get out in a storm they drift with the wind, and get lost, often killed. Times are hard, but I am generous and when you come "out west" just stay awhile at our dug-out.

You shall have pancakes and meat grease for breakfast—maybe a little coffee. Light bread for dinner, and mush and milk for supper the year round, with occasionally a young jack-rabbit fried with some milk gravy. . . .
P. E. T.