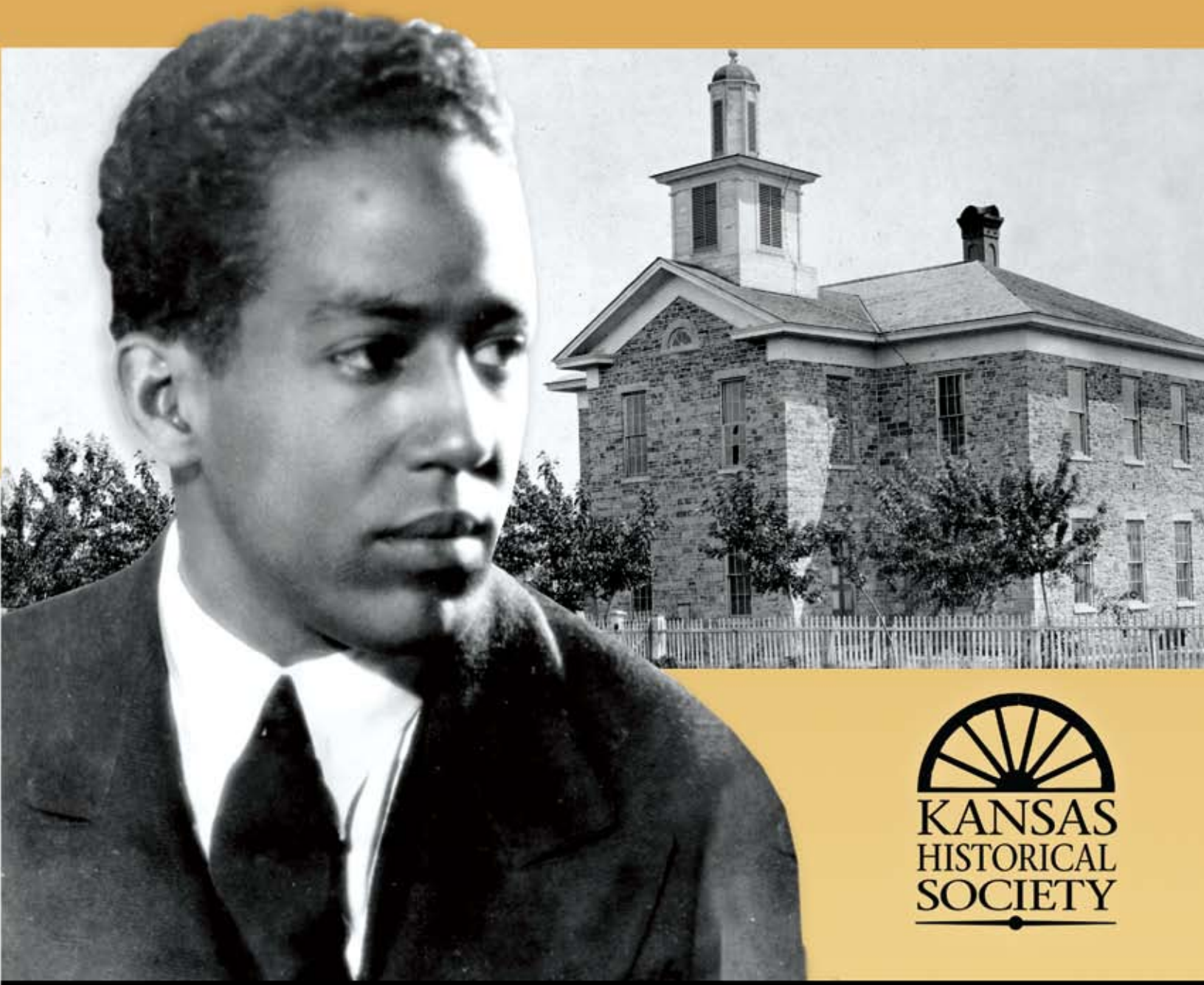
Autumn 2008

Reflections



KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REAL PEOPLE. REAL STORIES.

Autumn 2008

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3

CONTENTS

2
A School for Kansa Students: Kaw Mission

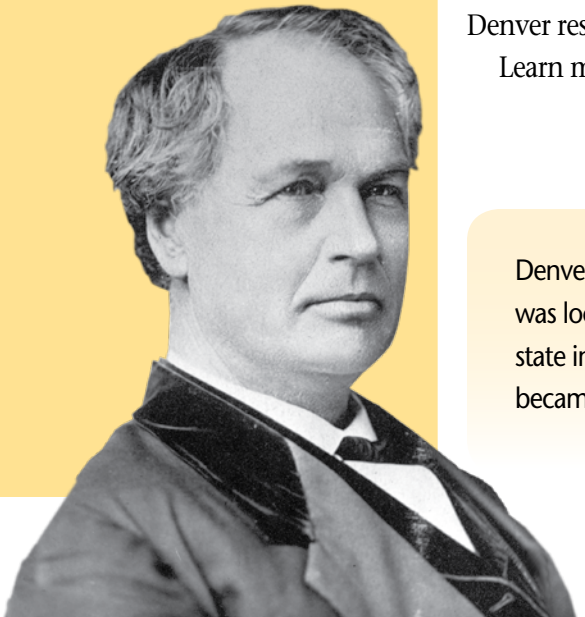
6
Sisters of the Santa Fe Trail

10
Riding the Range: A Kansas Cowboy

Departments

Save Our History 4
Real People. Real Stories.. . . . 5
History's Heroes. 8
Meet Our Members 9
Happening at KSHS. 12
Calendar 13

On the cover: Langston Hughes, poet, and Harrison Street Elementary School in Topeka. Hughes attended Harrison after his mother struggled with school officials who wanted to send him to an all African American school that was farther away.



Reflections

In 2011 Kansas will celebrate its statehood sesquicentennial. "Countdown to Statehood" is a series of articles depicting key events from Kansas' territorial days and related commemoration events sponsored by the Kansas Historical Society.

Countdown to Statehood:
Governor James W. Denver resigns, Autumn 1858

The tumult surrounding Kansas Territorial politics created a frequent turnover in territorial governors. Ten different men served as governor or acting governor of Kansas Territory, some multiple times, and one sitting in office less than 20 days.

James W. Denver of Virginia was U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs in December 1857 when President James Buchanan appointed him secretary of Kansas Territory. He immediately took over as acting governor and took the oath of office as territorial governor on May 12, 1858.

On January 4, 1858, the same day Kansas voters rejected the proslavery Lecompton Constitution, Denver wrote to his wife with dreams of a quick resolution of the Kansas troubles:

… I am greatly in hopes that the whole thing will be closed up in this month and let me off. If they will only let me turn over the government to some of them in four or five weeks I will give them a pledge never to put my foot inside of their Territory again. Confound the place it seems to have been cursed of God and man. Providence gave them no crops last year scarcely and now it requires all the powers conferred on me by the President to prevent them from cutting each others throats.

It would be nearly a year and a half before the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention adopted the document under which Kansas became a free state. Denver resigned October 10, 1858.

Learn more about the governors of Kansas at kshs.org/people/governors.htm.

Denver, Colorado, was named for James Denver as the town was located in western Kansas Territory. When Kansas became a state in 1861 the far western portion was not included, and later became part of Colorado Territory.

Welcome

The Autumn issue of *Reflections* focuses on Kansas as a crossroads. From the earliest times immigrants have reached the area via one of many trails and travelers have passed through to new land. You can follow these Kansas trails, interstates, and byways to explore the beauty of fall and celebrate events of the season. We invite you to visit some of the fall festivals at our state-owned sites, listed on page 13.

In our continuing series on Historical Society staff, we are pleased to feature Blair Tarr, a curator for the Kansas Museum of History.

Blair joined the Historical Society in 1982 when the museum was located in downtown Topeka. He is responsible for the museum artifacts that include household, transportation, military, and art collections.

"It's been a time of interesting transitions," Blair said. "I arrived in Topeka to take part in the move from the Memorial Building to west Topeka and the changes the new museum brought to the Historical Society. Now it's about the changes the Information Age brings to museums."

Blair is particularly interested in the preservation of the museum's Civil War battle flag collection and Abernathy furniture, made in Leavenworth and Kansas City. He became fascinated with Valentine diner buildings, which were manufactured in Wichita and distributed throughout the United States. Thanks to a Valentine diner section on the Historical Society's web site, enthusiasts around the nation have contacted Blair.

Blair Tarr shows off the museum's Valentine diner exhibit.

A native of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Blair earned a bachelor's degree at Heidelberg College, Tiffin, Ohio, and a master's at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston. He previously worked in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and Virginia before joining the Historical Society.

The Kansas Historical Society is a state agency whose vision is to enrich people's lives by connecting them to the past. The Historical Society operates 16 state historic sites in communities across Kansas, as well as the Kansas Museum of History, Kansas State Capitol Tour Center, and State Archives & Library in Topeka. KSHS, Inc., is a non-profit organization that works to financially support the programs of the state agency.

From Our Collections

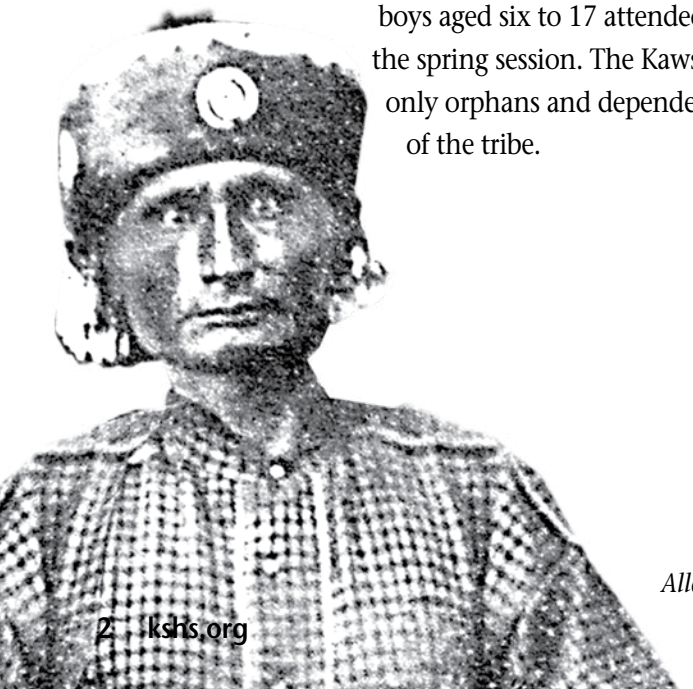
A School for Kansa Students: Kaw Mission

Over the course of just five days, Kansa chiefs reached an agreement with Indian agents to move their 1,600 people to a reservation near Council Grove. As part of the 1846 treaty, the Kansas (or Kaws) sold their 2,000,000-acre reservation in the Kansas River Valley to the government for just more than 10 cents an acre and moved to the 256,000-acre Neosho River Reservation. Part of the proceeds covered $1,000 annually to build and operate a mission to educate Kaw children "in their own country."

The new reservation was located along the Santa Fe Trail, a busy commerce corridor. The three Kaw chiefs, Peggahhoshshe (Big John), Ishtahleshyeh (Speckled Eye), and Kahegawachecha (Hard Chief), established separate villages downstream from Council Grove.

At their new home the Kaw women planted crops in early May. When planting was complete, they traveled to the hunting grounds in present-day McPherson, Rice, and Barton counties. Men were responsible for hunting. After several weeks the Kaw families returned home. Following harvest in October, they again headed to the hunting grounds, returning home by late December.

Operated by the Methodist Church, the new mission was completed by February 1851 and missionaries arrived just as the Kaws returned from the spring hunt. Approximately 30 boys aged six to 17 attended the spring session. The Kaws sent only orphans and dependents of the tribe.



Allegawaho, head chief of the Kaw, 1867

The mission, under the direction of Thomas Huffaker, quickly began converting the students' clothing, hair length, language, religion, education, and vocation to those accepted by American society. Language was a difficult barrier and Huffaker turned to a Kaw interpreter for assistance. The semi-annual hunting trips interrupted the school session and allowed the students to return to their earlier way of life.

"The branches taught were Spelling, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic," wrote Huffaker. "None of them received instructions in the trades. The boys worked well on the farm."

The students were responsible for farming 100 acres of land near the mission. Rather than eating the crops themselves or sharing with family and friends, the mission expected the students to sell their crops.

By fall 1851 only 15 students were in attendance. "The number might have been much larger," wrote superintendent Thomas Johnson of the Shawnee Methodist Mission who oversaw Kaw Mission, "but ... everyone of the Mission family was sick & they could not take a large number & many of the Indian children were sick also, & their relations insisted on taking them with them on their buffalo hunt."

At year's end the mission was discouraged about its efforts. "But I hope in the future we may be able to do

better;" wrote Johnson in January 1852, "though I am compelled to acknowledge that the prospect is not very encouraging."

Attendance continued to decline and the mission faced financial difficulty. In 1854, after only three years in operation, Kaw Mission ceased to function. Neither the missionaries nor the Kaws were satisfied with the end result in educating the children. "At present [the Kaws] have no school, and it seems that what they have had has been only a dead expense to the government;" wrote a Kaw agent in 1855, "those who have enjoyed the privilege of the school heretofore are now no more than common Kaws in dress, manners, and everything else."

The Kaw leadership tended to be ambivalent about the effects of the mission, but seemed to trust Huffaker and his family in spite of the conflicting cultures. In 1857 Kaw chiefs Hard Hart, White Hair, and The Wolf told the Indian commissioner that young Kansa students were forced to work in two fields "the size of Washington" where corn and other crops were raised for sale to the white settlers.

The Treaty of 1859 reduced the Kaw Reservation to a nine by 14 mile tract, opening Council Grove to white settlement. In 1873 the Kaw people made their last hunting trip to western Kansas and in June the remaining 600 people were moved to their new reservation in Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma.

Studio portrait of Josiah Reece and his wife, members of the Kaw Nation, 1875–1889

VISIT | KAW MISSION STATE HISTORIC SITE

Kaw Mission State Historic Site tells the story of the building that was home and school to 30 Kaw boys from 1851-1854. Exhibits focus on the Kansas who gave our state its name. You can visit this place where the Kaws lived for less than 30 years. Despite an impassioned plea by Chief Allegawaho, the U.S. government removed the Kaws to Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma.

kshs.org/places/kaw

BROWSE | KANSAS MEMORY

Kansas Memory offers a number of photographs and illustrations of people from the Kaw Nation. Included among the online digital collection are records from missionaries, correspondence about interactions with the Kaw people, a U.S. treaty with the Kaws, and a song prayer chart. Browse this digital collection of images and documents on Kansas history to discover more about the Kaw people.

kansasmemory.org

A portrait of Kansa men who lived on the reservation near Council Grove

DISCOVER | COOL THINGS

Frank Haucke grew up near the Kaw Reservation at Council Grove and was an unsuccessful 1930 Republican gubernatorial candidate. The Kaws bestowed on Haucke an Indian name, "White Chief," and gifts for his help in preserving their culture and erecting a monument to an unknown Kaw warrior. Haucke donated this red pipe and fringed pipe bag to the Kansas Historical Society.

kshs.org/cool2/coolpipe.htm

SAVE OUR HISTORY | SUCCESS

K.T. Wiedemann

Karl T. and Gladys Wiedemann shared a deep love for the Flint Hills. To help support the place in which they lived and operated their business, the couple established a foundation in Wichita in 1959.

The Wiedemanns had worked in the oil and gas, ranching, and gasoline distribution business, and held extensive land in the Flint Hills. Their vision for the foundation was to improve the quality of life within Wichita and the state of Kansas. During Mr. Wiedemann's lifetime, the foundation supported hundreds of charities in areas relating to the arts, health, children and youth, the elderly, and the disadvantaged. During that time the foundation contributed tens of millions of dollars to worthy causes primarily in Kansas. Mr. Wiedemann died in 1961. Mrs. Wiedemann carried on the vision of the foundation until her death in 1991. The foundation continues today with Doug Pringle as the foundation president.

Karl T. Wiedemann

Photo credit: Butler County Historical Society/ Kansas Oil Museum

When KSHS, Inc., requested support for the William Allen White House State Historic Site in Emporia, the K.T. Wiedemann Foundation responded with a $50,000 gift.

"William Allen White was not only a great Kansan but his saga is so deeply entwined with the history of the Flint Hills," said Pringle. "I am confident that Mr. and Mrs. Wiedemann would have enthusiastically supported this grant for the preservation of such a wonderful home."

The Historical Society will use the funds to expand the site's audience base through school programs and other outreach opportunities. The Historical Society operates the site in cooperation with the non-profit William Allen White Community Partnership.

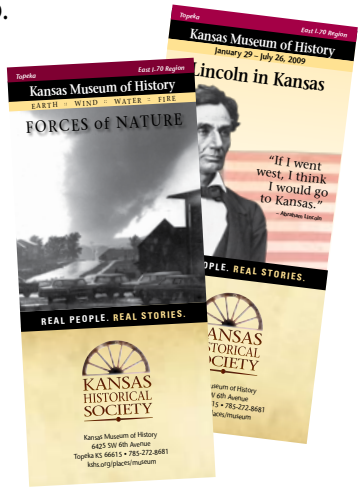
SAVE OUR HISTORY | NEEDS

Special Exhibits

We need your help in creating new special exhibits for the Kansas Museum of History. Each year nearly 50,000 people from Kansas and around the world view the museum's exhibits. Your assistance can help connect Kansans with their past and show people from across the globe the unique heritage of Kansas.

The Kansas Historical Society is looking for partners to help cover the cost of interactive elements to enhance the learning experience in the Special Exhibits Gallery. The current exhibit is *Forces of Nature*, highlighting the extremes in Kansas weather. *Lincoln in Kansas* opens Kansas Day, January 29, 2009. We are currently looking for a partner for the exhibit that opens in August 2009. This display, called *The Need for Speed*, will focus on cars, racing, and roadside culture in Kansas.

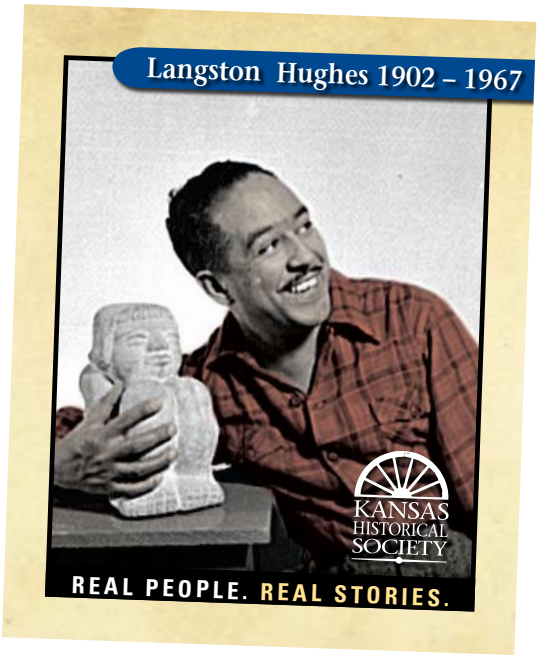
A private contribution of $20,000 for the special exhibit would be used for video and interactive displays to provide educational experiences. Visitors would see film footage of various forms of racing. Funds could be used for loan of racing equipment, perhaps a racecar. A computer interactive station could offer visitors a fun way to discover more about racing and roadside culture. A corporate or individual sponsor of $20,000 will be identified in the Special Exhibits Gallery and on all promotional materials.



Additional funds of $10,000 are needed for an expanded publicity push to bring in even more visitors to our award-winning facility. If you know of a corporation or an individual looking for this kind of educational partnership or if you wish to help, please contact Vicky Henley at 785-272-8681, ext. 201, or vhenley@kshs.org.

Real People. Real Stories.

Langston Hughes

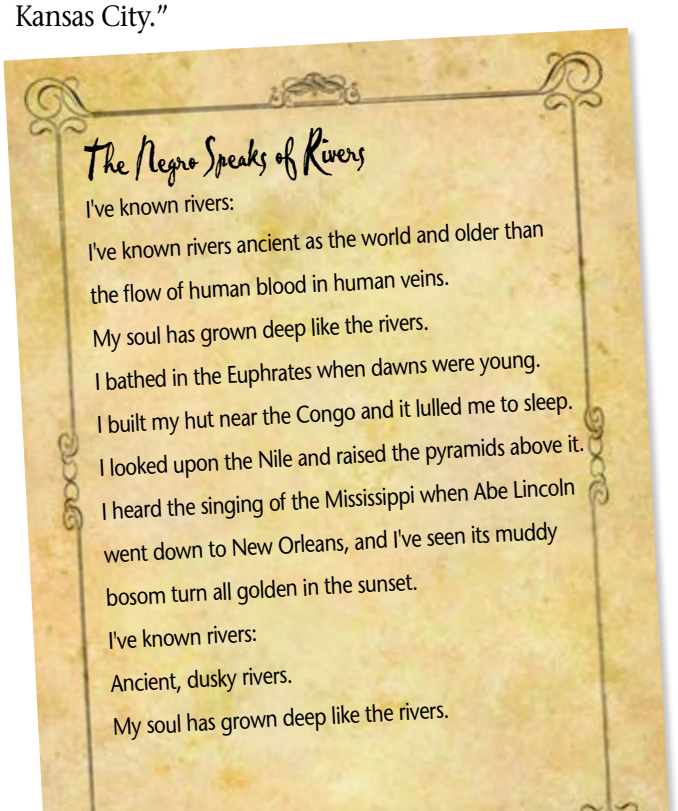


Langston Hughes was born in 1902 in Joplin, Missouri. His parents separated shortly after his birth. Early in his life, Hughes' mother fostered within him a love of the written and spoken word by introducing him to books and taking him to see plays.

When he was six his mother tried to enroll him in the Harrison Street School near their home in Topeka. She was told that all African American children attended Washington School, considerably farther away. Langston's mother argued for his enrollment at Harrison, and he was eventually admitted.

When Hughes' mother moved to Kansas City for work, she left him in the care of his elderly maternal grandmother in Lawrence. She wrapped young Langston in a shawl that had belonged to her first husband, Lewis Sheridan Leary, who had been killed helping John Brown in the raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry.

Although he lived in several places throughout the Midwest during his youth, Hughes always considered Kansas home. He once told a Lawrence audience, "I sort of claim to be a Kansan because my whole childhood was spent here in Lawrence and Topeka, and sometimes in Kansas City."



The Negro Speaks of Rivers

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than
the flow of human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.
I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Hughes' first published work, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," appeared in the NAACP magazine, *The Crisis*, in 1921. It became his signature poem. Hughes attended Columbia University until he left in 1922 due to racial prejudice within the institution.

Hughes wrote poetry that reflected the Harlem neighborhood that surrounded him. Although he was considered part of the Harlem Renaissance, he found himself at odds with those who gave birth to it. Hughes believed they sometimes compromised the cultural identity of African Americans in order to achieve social equality. Perhaps because of his own upbringing, Hughes had a strong connection to those in the lower social-economic strata and he dedicated his life to not only writing about their struggles, but to advocating for equality and justice. He was called the "O. Henry of Harlem," and the "Negro Poet Laureate."

Hughes' works – poetry, plays, short stories, novels, autobiographies, children's books, and newspaper columns – enjoyed worldwide popularity and were translated into 12 languages. M. Bekker wrote in the introduction to a Russian edition of Hughes's work: "The poetry of Langston Hughes is simple and beautiful, like life itself. On whatever subject the poet writes – love and tenderness, degradation and violence, joblessness and the Lynch law, anger and the struggle for freedom – his poems are always imbued with the people's sorrows and joys. For this reason his poems go unfailingly to the heart of the common man, be he black or white, American or Russian."

Langston Hughes died in New York in 1967.

Sisters of the Santa Fe Trail

Arrival of the Caravan at Santa Fe *by Josiah Gregg*

Katie Bowen traveled the Santa Fe Trail in 1851 with her army officer husband, Captain Isaac Bowen. Harriett Bidwell Shaw and her husband, Milton, a minister, traveled the trail in a wagon train in 1857. These women never met, but their letters and journals reveal many shared experiences.

Bowen kept in touch with her family in Maine through a series of letters. She wrote several times from Fort Leavenworth in the spring of 1851, as weather and other circumstances postponed their trip. Finally, on June 20, Katie wrote her mother that they were on their way and promised to send "a faithful account of everything."

Harriett Bidwell Shaw kept a journal while on the trail. She noted that she was "the only white woman on the train" and that they began their trip at the Shawnee Mission. Bowen and Shaw wrote about many of the same topics, including mosquitoes, American Indians, and the weather.

… went early to bed but neglected to pin up our muskito net and the consequence was that we slept very little. (Bowen)

While I prepared our bed in the carriage & committing ourselves to the care of our Heavenly Father felt safe & tried to sleep but could not much on account of Musquitoes which annoyed me constantly. (Shaw)

While getting our supplies an Indian came with a very fine looking horse ... His dress consisted of pants and a blanket thrown over his shoulder. His head was mostly shaven only a braid on top like the pictures we have seen. (Shaw)

… a bright scarlet color all over their faces, hair cut over the crown of the head, quite like a cropt mane, feathers stuck in the back of the hair, bodies entirely naked, with the exception of a piece of red flannel or cloth answering the purpose of a fig leaf. (Bowen)

There were differences in the ways the Bowens and the Shaws traveled. Bowen and her husband were in the company of soldiers and had a servant woman to help with chores. They slept in a nine-feet square tent and dined on eggs, waffles, boiled ham, and fresh fruit and cream. Shaw and her husband slept with their belongings in their wagon; Harriett refers to meals consisting of crackers and coffee or tea. Both women were pleased when they came upon buffalo and were able to add it to their diets. Bowen wrote about a failed buffalo hunt:

I watched the chase with delightful visions of smoked tongue and the delicious hump of one of them for dinner ... I saw Isaac turn his horse and with a disgusted pace, return to the carriage.

When he got within hailing distance he said, "You man, when next you send me after buffalo, be first assured that it is not a man or two on horseback."

Bowen's trip lasted about 60 days. Shaw's took about a week less. Both grew weary of the journey before it was over.

… when we think of the distance and how easily we might pass over it in a day on some of our railroads at home, it seems awful to be poking along at this rate ... the same routine each day. (Bowen)

Almost impatient at our frequent stoppings ... O when shall we leave this wicked train & find a great resting place. (Shaw)

On August 24, 1851, Katie Bowen wrote her mother from Fort Union, New Mexico, to let her know the journey was over.

At last we are at our destination, safe in every particular, in health, and our goods in as good order as anything could possibly be after the hard journey they have had.

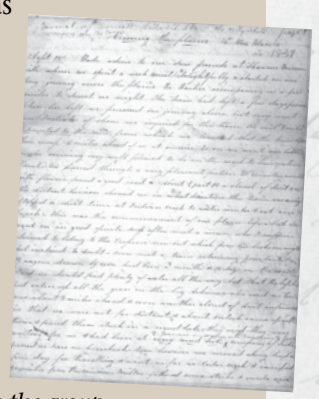
Four and a half months later, Bowen gave birth to a son, the first child born at Fort Union.

You can read excerpts from Katie Bowen's letters in the Winter 1996-1997 issue of the Kansas Historical Society's *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*. Harriet Bidwell Shaw's journal is in the collections of the Kansas Historical Society and can be viewed online at kansasmemory.org.

(Right) Pawnee Rock was a landmark for travelers as it marked the halfway point on the Santa Fe Trail. This photo, taken in the 1870s, shows several people enjoying the vantage point reportedly used by Plains Indians to spot buffalo herds. (Below) Pawnee Rock State Historic Site, today.

BROWSE | KANSAS MEMORY

Explore *Kansas Memory* to discover maps, photographs, and documents from our Santa Fe Trail collection, including Harriett Bidwell Shaw's Santa Fe Trail journal. *Kansas Memory* is the largest digital collection of images and documents pertaining to Kansas history. Use our unique browse feature to narrow your results by time period, geographic location, theme, and more. kansasmemory.org



The first page of Harriet Bidwell Shaw's Santa Fe Trail journal reveals that they left Shawnee Indian Mission on September 18, 1857, and that she was the only white woman traveling in the group.

LISTEN | KANSAS MEMORY PODCASTS

You can listen to first-hand accounts of Kansas history when you subscribe to the *Kansas Memory* podcasts. Hear Harriet Bidwell Shaw's words as she witnessed a buffalo hunt on the Santa Fe Trail. Listen to a letter written by a very young Dwight D. Eisenhower to Kansas Senator Joseph L. Bristow, asking for an appointment to either the Naval Academy or West Point. kshs.org/audiotours

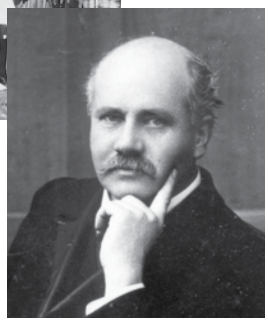
Kansas Memory PODCAST

VISIT | STATE HISTORIC SITES

Harriett Bidwell Shaw mentioned three places in her Santa Fe Trail journal that are now state historic sites operated by the Kansas Historical Society. She began her journey at Shawnee Indian Mission near Kansas City (right), stayed overnight at Kaw Mission in Council Grove (page 3), and passed by Pawnee Rock (left). You can learn more about the Santa Fe Trail when you visit these sites. kshs.org/tourists/theme/forts

HISTORY'S HEROES | THEN

Sheldon Kindergarten



Charles M. Sheldon

Charles M. Sheldon wanted to improve the quality of life for African Americans in Topeka's Tennessee Town community. Sheldon was a newcomer to Topeka, having been hired in 1888 to serve as pastor of Central Congregational Church. He established a kindergarten in 1893 to serve the young children of Exodusters who had moved to the area from the South.

The kindergarten movement was a new concept and Topeka schools had no such programs. Three female staff members taught students the alphabet, numbers, beginning reading, hygiene, and occasionally took them on field trips. Average attendance for the morning kindergarten was 28 students. By 1900, 287 students had attended the program. The Sheldon kindergarten was incorporated into the Topeka school system in 1910.

With the success of the kindergarten, other programs were developed including an auxiliary for mothers, school band, and sewing and weaving classes for older children.

One of the school's many students was Elisha Scott, who went on to earn a law degree from Washburn College and argued many civil rights and school segregation cases throughout Kansas and the Midwest.

The Central Congregational Church preserved the many photographs and records of the Sheldon kindergarten before donating the materials to the Historical Society. Many of these can be viewed online at kansasmemory.org.

HISTORY'S HEROES | NOW

Nancy and Ramon Noches

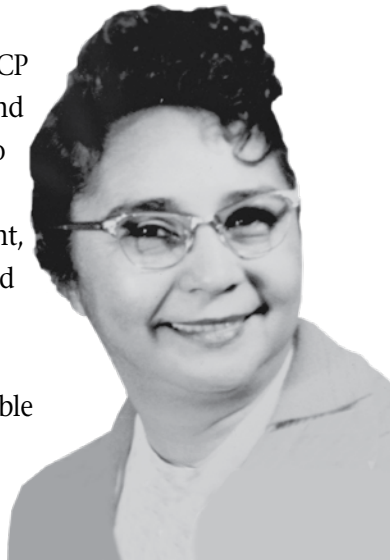
Nancy and Ramon Noches wanted to share a valuable gift with the people of Kansas. Nancy is the daughter of Lucinda Todd, secretary of the Topeka branch of the NAACP and the first plaintiff to volunteer in the lawsuit against the Board of Education of Topeka to desegregate schools. Nancy had inherited key pieces of civil rights history from her mother and on July 2, 2008, the Nocheses donated the collection of papers and photographs to the Kansas Historical Society to be made available to the public.

As a young girl, Nancy Noches was a witness to the planning and struggles that led to the landmark Supreme Court decision. "I believe I am the only native Topekan now living who witnessed those meetings," Noches said. "For this reason, I think it most important historically to provide my mother's records where they may be more widely viewed and studied by others in an effort to ensure historical accuracy about one of America's most important legal events."

Ramon's career with the Air Force included managing some of the Pentagon records retention and archiving. Using his archival knowledge, Ramon did an extensive inventory of the Todd materials, chronologically organized the records, and prepared a detailed index. In a 1950 letter to Topeka NAACP attorney Charles Bledsoe, attorney Robert Carter proposes strategies and visions that were carefully followed as the case progressed from the district court to the Supreme Court.

"The members of Topeka's NAACP worked hard to gather the forces and support needed to bring the case to court," Ramon said, "especially McKinley Burnett, chapter president, Lucinda Todd chapter secretary, and Charles Bledsoe and Charles Scott, chapter attorneys."

Many of the items will be available online at kansasmemory.org.



Meet Our Members

Clara Dubbs

Minnie Dubbs Millbrook gave her niece a gift of lifetime membership to the Kansas Historical Society in 1983 and passed along a lifelong interest in history. Clara Dubbs appreciated her aunt's interest in Kansas history, particularly her fascination with Elizabeth Custer, wife of General George Armstrong Custer.

Clara Dubbs visited the archeological investigation in Nicodemus in 2007.

Dubbs and her aunt enjoyed their shared interest in history as she took up residency with Millbrook in Detroit, Michigan, while attending college to study occupational therapy. Millbrook had moved from Kansas to Michigan with her husband, but returned to her native state after retirement. Dubbs visited her aunt frequently at a retirement facility in Topeka, where they discussed Custer and homesteading on the Kansas prairie, and pored over scholarly articles in the Historical Society's journal, *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*.

The interest in history continues in Dubbs' life as she participates in the Historical Society's programs and activities. Last year she attended the KSHS, Inc., spring meeting in Hays, especially enjoying the archeological investigation at nearby Nicodemus, an African American settlement. "My grandfather was a homesteader," Dubbs said, "and that is why Nicodemus was so interesting to me – they were homesteaders."

A Ness County native, Dubbs grew up in Arnold, attended college at Kansas State University and in Detroit. She worked as an occupational therapist for more than 30 years, mostly in the Wichita area. In 1970 she moved to Ransom after her father died.

Today her interest in Kansas extends to the Ness County Historical Society, of which she remains a vital supporter, and the Kansas Occupational Therapy Association, serving as its international liaison. Her role is to promote the organization's international exchange program for students and professional therapists. Involving more than 66 countries, the program's annual meetings are held around the world, and Dubbs has enjoyed traveling to many of them.

Placing a high value on that lifetime membership that sparked a lifelong connection to Kansas history, Dubbs enjoys the Historical Society's magazines and programs and the opportunity to meet other members at the annual events.

BECOME A MEMBER

Membership support enables the Historical Society's programs to continue. The cost of membership remains only $40 annually, members receive free entrance to the museum and all state historic sites, a discount at KSHS stores and on online purchases, as well as quarterly issues of *Reflections* and the award-winning *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*. More information available at kshs.org/joinkshs, by calling 785-272-8681, ext. 209, or membership@kshs.org.

From Our Collections

Riding the Range: *A Kansas Cowboy*

Gus Bellport knew the trail as well as any cowboy. He traveled the Old West from Kansas to Wyoming, Colorado to Texas and his adventures crossed paths with William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, General George Armstrong Custer, and William "Wild Bill" Hickok. A witness to the Medicine Lodge Peace Treaty, Bellport enjoyed sharing stories about the adventures he had experienced.

Gus Bellport pictured in the saddle on his horse.

In 1866 Bellport left his home in Ohio in search of gold in Montana. When he reached the end of the train line in Leavenworth, he and three friends chose one of the few options to continue their trip west. They joined a U.S. Army freighting unit that supplied forts in present-day Utah and Wyoming.

Bellport drove a mule team pulling a supply wagon. "A six mule team is not easy for an inexperienced man to handle," he wrote in his memoir. "He must drive from the left hand rear mule which he rides. This mule is called the saddle mule and with a strap to the bit of the right hand rear mule which is called the 'wheeler' he guides the wagon with a single line to one of the lead teams."

Gus Bellport pictured in 1877 on the day of his wedding to Magdalene Bower.

Becoming adept with the teams, Bellport continued his work as a teamster, delivering goods to forts in Kansas and Colorado Territory. Quarantined at Fort Harker during a cholera epidemic where nearly 900 soldiers died, Bellport successfully avoided the illness. Here he met James Butler Hickok whom he considered a "bully and not worthy of the reputation that he gained for himself."

Bellport also came to doubt the character of General Custer whom he encountered at Fort Hays. He noted that Custer was returning from a buffalo hunt, splattered with blood and carrying three tongues, the only parts of the animals that were utilized from the kills.

The Medicine Lodge Peace Treaty in 1867 brought together the U.S. government and five Plains Indian tribes. The treaty cleared the way for white settlement, allowed railroad expansion, and resolved the southern Kansas border. As part of the treaty, Bellport delivered clothing, arms, and ammunitions to the 13,000 American Indians gathered there.

Bellport then operated a livery in Leavenworth; among his regular customers was William Cody. Bellport next turned to the cattle industry. The Powers Company named him foreman of a ranch near Ellsworth. Bellport and a team of cowboys traveled to San Antonio where Texas longhorns had been gathered. They drove the herds north along the Chisholm Trail to

Gus Bellport, at left, at the 60th anniversary of the Medicine Lodge Peace Treaty, the only person who had been present at the original event.

the trail's end at Ellsworth. Bellport learned the rules of cattle herding, offering special attention and cowboy songs to calm the cattle. "And the riders are stationed far enough apart that the singing of one is heard by the next one down the line," Bellport recalled, "and they keep in contact this way."

After spending five years on the trail for the Powers Company, Bellport started his own ranch in Rush County. He and his wife, Magdalene, operated the ranch until the 1880s, when they opened a butcher store in LaCrosse, and later an icehouse. In 1927 Bellport attended the 60th anniversary of the Medicine Lodge Peace Treaty. He was the only person at the celebration who had been present at the original event. He continued to be known as a source for stories about cowboys and the Old West throughout his life.

VISIT | KANSAS MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Gus Bellport purchased his Texas-style leather saddle (below) on a trip to San Antonio. It features a short horn, high cantle in the rear for support, wide adjustable fenders for protection from brush, and leather straps to secure tools of the trade. Donated in 1934, it is on display in the museum's Main Gallery. kshs.org/places/museum

SHARE | KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Stories, photographs, and objects from Bellport and many other cowboys are preserved for future generations at the State Archives & Library. We encourage you to consider sharing your own stories with future Kansans. Your personal items, memoirs, and photographs could be the windows to the past for the next generation. kshs.org/involved/donate/collections.htm

BROWSE | COOL THINGS

Gus Bellport's saddle is featured among the *Cool Things* in the Museum collection. Saddles were essential tools on the trail, often carefully chosen by the rider for comfort and function. This saddle is well worn, suggesting that Bellport used it both on the trail and later on his ranch. kshs.org/cool

Gus Bellport acquired this saddle on a cattle drive to San Antonio in 1867.

Happening at KSHS

Freedom Festival at John Brown Museum State Historic Site, Osawatomie

Explore Bleeding Kansas history September 19 – 21. Event includes first-person re-enactors, weapons and drill demonstrations, an arts and crafts fair, music, and children's activities. kshs.org/places/johnbrown

Fall Festival at Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Site, Fairway

This event, October 11-12, is free and includes family-friendly fun, crafts, entertainment, and food. See living history re-enactors, mountain men, American Indian dancers, spinners, weavers, blacksmith, storytellers, musicians, traditional craftsmen, pony rides, and a quilt show. kshs.org/places/shawnee

Holiday Open Houses at our State Historic Sites

Our state historic sites are ready to celebrate with events throughout the holiday season. Depending on the site, look for period decorations and traditions, holiday goodies, or specials in the stores. Visit the following sites during their open houses to get in the holiday spirit:

Pawnee Indian Museum, Republic, November 30
kshs.org/places/pawneeindian

Kaw Mission, Council Grove, December 4
kshs.org/places/kaw

Fort Hays, Hays, December 5 – 6
kshs.org/places/forthays

John Brown Museum, December 6
kshs.org/places/johnbrown

Shawnee Indian Mission, December 6
kshs.org/places/shawnee

Hollenberg Pony Express Station, December 6
kshs.org/places/hollenberg

Mine Creek Battlefield, December 20 – 21
kshs.org/places/minecreek

Cottonwood Ranch, Studley, December 27
kshs.org/places/cottonwood

Official Meeting and Election Notification

We invite you to join us for the KSHS, Inc., Annual Meeting, November 7, 2008, at the Kansas Historical Society in Topeka. This meeting includes the election of board members. You can find the slate of nominees online at kshs.org/joinkshs. Online registration for the meeting begins September 15. If you wish to receive a registration or slate of nominees by mail, please call Elizabeth Page, 785-272-8681, ext. 209.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Online at kshs.org/calendar

Through January 4, 2009
Forces of Nature
Exhibit at the Kansas Museum of History, Topeka

September 5 – 6, 2008
Apple Fest
Grinter Place State Historic Site, Kansas City

September 12 – 13, 2008
Voices of the Wind People
Kaw Mission State Historic Site, Council Grove

September 19 – 21, 2008
Freedom Festival
John Brown Museum State Historic Site, Osawatomie

September 26 - 28, 2008
Bald Eagle Rendezvous
Constitution Hall State Historic Site, Lecompton

September 26 - 27, 2008
Historic Fort Hays Days
Fort Hays State Historic Site, Hays

October 11-12, 2008
Fall Festival
Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Site, Fairway

October 25, 2008
Graveside Conversations
Fort Hays State Historic Site, Hays

October 25, 2008
Haunted History
Kansas Historical Society, Topeka

October 26, 2008
Pawnee Star Show
Pawnee Indian Museum State Historic Site, Republic

October 31, 2008
Tricks & Treats at the Boo-seum
Kansas Historical Society, Topeka

November 7, 2008
KSHS, Inc., Annual Meeting
Kansas Historical Society, Topeka

Enjoy a "not real scary" good time at the Kansas Historical Society's Haunted History and Trick & Treats at the Boo-seum.

Autumn 2008

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3

Kathleen Sebelius
Governor of Kansas

Kansas Historical Society
Jennie A. Chinn, Executive Director

Editor, Bobbie Athon

Assistant Editor, Teresa Jenkins

Designer, Linda Kunkle Park

KSHS, Inc.
Vicky Henley, CEO/Executive Director

Executive Committee:
Jack Alexander, Deborah Barker, Hon. Paul Buchanan, E. Dean Carlson, J. Eric Engstrom, Cynthia Haines, Kathleen Holt, Rep. Annie Kuether, James K. Logan, Brian J. Moline, Barbara Morris, Dru Sampson, Donald Schepker, Sen. Derek Schmidt, Clinton L. Stalker, Mary Turkington, Dennis A. Vasquez, Shari Wilson.

Copyright © 2008 Kansas State Historical Society, Inc.

Reflections is published quarterly by the Kansas State Historical Society, Inc., 6425 SW 6th Avenue, Topeka KS 66615-1099. It is distributed to members of the KSHS, Inc., and at many KSHS sites. Membership information is available by calling Elizabeth Page, KSHS, Inc., 785-272-8681, ext. 209; reflections@kshs.org; kshs.org.

Paid for with private funds by the Kansas State Historical Society, Inc.

KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Kansas Memory

November is American Indian Heritage Month. You can access hundreds of photos, documents, and manuscripts that tell the story of Indians in Kansas when you visit kansasmemory.org. This photo, taken between 1870 and 1890, features the last full-blood Kaw delegation to go to Washington, D.C.

Kansas State Historical Society, Inc.
6425 SW 6th Avenue
Topeka KS 66615-1099

NonProfit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No 299
Topeka KS