



Speaking of Kansas

Washburn Center for Kansas Studies Fall 1999

Speaking of Kansas Series

Rural Life and the 21st Century: Growth, Conflict and Diversity

The Washburn Center for Kansas Studies has scheduled the following programs for 1999-2000. All programs will be held on Thursday afternoons at 4 pm in the Kansas Room, Washburn Memorial Union. All programs are free and open to the public.

December 9 Phillip Thomas "Follow the Yellow Brick Road: Kansas at the Millennium." Thomas, from Wichita State University, has broad interests in the history of science, art and the West.

February 3 Steven Lickteig "Lebanon, Kansas." A native of Kansas, Steve Lickteig produces documentaries for public radio.

March 2 Donald Stull "Old Places, New Faces: Rural Communities in the 21st Century." Stull, from the Anthropology Department at the University of Kansas, studies growth, rural industrialization, ethnic and community relations in Kansas towns.

April 6 David Procter "Sticks and Stones Might Break a Town" (Creation of Rural Identity/Community Conflict). Procter teaches speech communication at Kansas State University and assists Kansas towns in strategic planning.

Spring 2000 Kansas courses

AN 225 EA Kansas Archaeology	T 5:30-8	R. Thies
BI 180EA Birds of Kansas	M 4:30-7	J. Ramberg
EN 138/399B Kansas Literature	T 1-3:40	T. Averill
MM 393 Kansas and the Media	TR 11-12:15	B. Burgess
PO 107A State & Local Govt	MWF 10-10:50	L. Smith
PO 107B State & Local Govt	MW 1-2:15	L. Smith
HI 397 Internship Historical Agencies	ARR	W. Wagnon
PO 307A Internship State & Local Govt.	ARR	L. Smith

Kansas Day program

Zerf, a Kansas singer, songwriter and song researcher, will be featured at the annual Center for Kansas Studies Kansas Day Celebration. This year, Washburn will celebrate the state's birthday on Wed., Jan. 26 at 4 p.m. in the Kansas Room of the Memorial Union.

Following a 45-minute program, Zerf will take questions and requests, and refreshments will be served.

Kansas literature in print

WEST WIND RISES, MASSACRE AT MARAIS DES CYGNES

by Tom Averill

The Washburn University Center for Kansas Studies announces the publication of *A West Wind Rises, Massacre at Marais des Cygnes*, by Bruce Cutler.

First published in 1962, this classic of Kansas territorial literature, by a master of the narrative poem, sees print again. *A West Wind Rises* charts the events of 1858, when Charles Hamilton and a group of followers perpetrated a bloody massacre on the soil of an already "Bleeding Kansas."

The *Missouri Historical Review* wrote: "With skill and imagination the poet has woven a tale of almost epic proportions based on historical fact" (1963).

And *The Midwest Quarterly* summarized: "[A *West Wind Rises*] introduces the reader to the background of the struggle, to the strong, grim men who carried on the fight, to the hopes and dreams of the people involved in the tragedy, the people who lived and died for the land that one day would be ours."

The book is available for \$7.50. (To bookstores at the usual 40% discount.)

Also available from the Washburn Center for Kansas Studies in this Kansas Literature reprint series:

The Kansas Poems, by Kenneth Wiggins Porter. These evocative poems from the Kansas Dust Bowl were put together by Kenneth Porter just before his death. \$5.00.

As Grass, by Edythe Squier Draper. With an introduction by Jeffrey Ann Goudie. These short stories are some of the best ever written by a Kansas writer. Set in the small town, depicting the lives of minorities, women and those not usually seen as heroic,
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Draper's stories shine as both literature and human drama. \$6.00

In A Place With No Map, by Steven Hind. New and selected poems make up Hind's third collection, and further his ever sensitive and wise sense of his place, the Kansas Flint Hills. \$7.00

Dust and Short Works, by Marcet and Emanuel Haldeman-Julius. The novel *Dust* challenges our traditional notions of pioneering, showing the spiritual costs of agricultural life. *Short Works* is a collection of short stories and plays that comically depict life in a small town in Southeast Kansas. \$12.00

(For information about these books contact Tom Averill at Washburn University (785) 231-1010 x 1448 or e-mail zzaver@washburn.edu)

Kansas and the Media class offered in spring

In MM 393 *Kansas and the Media*, students will study the mass media in Kansas, how the media has impacted Kansas, and how the media professionals in Kansas have impacted the developments in the mass media industries.

The class will be taught by Dr. Barbara Burgess who returned this semester from sabbatical. During the Spring semester 1999, Burgess traveled throughout Kansas gathering information for this class.

Kansas in film:

Ride with the Devil

Review by Thomas Prasch

Ride with the Devil. Directed by Ang Lee; screenplay by James Schamus (based on the novel by Daniel Woodrell, *Woe to Live On*); produced by Robert Colesberry, Ted Hope, and James Schamus.

Ride with the Devil, Ang Lee's powerful new film about the border wars between Missouri and Kansas that preceded and continued through the Civil War, is only the most recent episode in a long-running series of Hollywood engagements with the events of Bloody Kansas, and in particular William Quantrill's violent raid on Lawrence in 1863. The history of Hollywood's histories of these events, from the silent era forward to such films as *Dark Command* (1940, starring John Wayne) and *Jayhawkers* (1959) and, less directly, *Outlaw Josie Wales* (1976) and *Long Riders* (1980), has recently been examined in detail by John C. Tibbetts ("Riding with the Devil: The Movie Adventures of William Clarke Quantrill," *Kansas History* 22:3 [Autumn 1999], 182-199); Tibbetts demonstrates not only how Hollywood has distorted the historical record but, more interestingly, how the changing emphases in the narrative reflect the filmmakers' own times as much as they do the Civil War-era past, variously reflecting contemporary concerns about national unity, the Cold War, or juvenile delinquency, for example.

Lee's film does not break with this tradition. His work is a take on Bloody Kansas that speaks to

the age that has witnessed the ethnic cleansing operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. A decidedly post-ideological perspective on the border wars, *Ride with the Devil* does its history from the ground up, focusing on the personal and familial far more than the social or political in explaining the motivations of those who joined the guerilla bands that besieged freestate Kansans.

Filmed largely around Lawrence, Kansas, the movie makes excellent use of the Plains landscape.

In its move away from a history-by-the-victors approach that valorizes Kansas abolitionists and dismisses Missourian bushwhackers as dissolute, drunken, rowdy, and brutal defenders of Slavocracy, *Ride with the Devil* in some ways resembles Jane Smiley's novelistic take on territorial Kansas, *The All-True Adventures of Lydie Newton* (1999). There, as here, the personal defines the political, and Smiley makes an effort to understand both sides in the border conflict on their own terms. Lee's interpretation, however, constitutes an even more dramatic break with historiographic (and filmographic) traditions: ideology has no place whatever in his view. The guerrilla partisans join no defined cause, waste no time defending slavery or attacking abolitionist ideas, and seem unaware of the broader meaning of the events in which they participate.

Ride with the Devil

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Even the Civil War itself is a distant event, largely disconnected from local realities; Quantrill, for that matter, provides an isolated guerrilla band with a momentary leader, and figures only in the film's brutal climax. What brings most of the guerrillas to their cause is more simple, and more blunt: in border wars that featured plentiful atrocities on both sides, in which attacks on civilian populations defined the conflict, they are in it for personal revenge.

The story that unfolds in Lee's film focuses on individuals well placed to undermine received certainties. The central figure, Jacob Roedel, is the son of a German immigrant, most of whom ended up on the other side in the conflict. Indeed, Jacob's father takes refuge among the German-Americans sheltered by federal troops and angrily opposes his son's choice; his own allies, who call him "Dutch," distrust his commitment to their cause.

But the Jayhawker's attack on a friend and neighbor's family home brings Jacob to the Bushwhacker side. There, he finds himself in an accidental alliance with a small band of men--most scarcely more than boys, in fact--fighting an arbitrary and unplanned series of skirmishes with the enemy while trying to survive on the harsh plains.

Among his close allies is Daniel Holt, a freed slave who has joined the Bushwhacker cause out of loyalty to the white man who bought his way to freedom; Holt, fighting on behalf of slavers against the Abolitionist cause, constantly finds his

loyalty questioned, and as constantly questions his own allegiances. The love interest provided them, Sue Lee, is widowed by the war within weeks of her marriage; her main motivation is a self-interested search for an alternative mate.

The brutality of Quantrill's climactic raid on Lawrence does not so much change these ragtag heroes as give them an excuse to give up a cause in which they scarcely believed in the first place, killing off the last links that held them in the conflict, those individuals to whom they were loyal.

Lee's film is a stark portrait of a muddled conflict whose main victims on both sides were too seldom soldiers, a film that takes no sides save some side--not available to those at the time--that stands appalled by such fratricidal brutality. That it closes on an image of hope--Jacob putting down his gun when revenge was there for him to take; Daniel heading off to seek his mother, sold off as a slave to Texas; Jacob and Sue Ellen heading further west, hoping to find new, untainted space to settle in California--does not quite relieve the film's far more potent image of war for no cause, brutality for the fun of it, despoliation detached from any possible higher good.

Filmed largely around Lawrence, Kansas, the movie makes excellent use of the Plains landscape to shape its tale of survival against the odds. The cast consists for the most part of little-known actors--the most famous probably the pop singer Jewell, making her screen debut as Sue Lee--but a film without stars seems best to fit a war without heroes.

Kansas geography field trip to northeast Kansas

by Tom Schmiedeler

The third annual Kansas Geography Field Trip was held on Saturday, Oct. 2. This year's trip involved the historical geography of northeast Kansas. Two vans loaded with Kansas geography enthusiasts departed the Henderson Hall parking lot at 8:00 A.M.. At the first stop, the town of Ozawkie, Tom Schmiedeler, assistant professor of geography, discussed the historical geography of big dam construction within sight of Perry Reservoir.

After crossing the reservoir the group proceeded to the location of a round folk barn, the farmstead of Dixie and Larry Elkington about two miles east of Oskaloosa.

After leaving the Elkington farmstead, the group proceeded to the town square of Oskaloosa where Dr. Schmiedeler discussed the origin, evolution, and meaning of central court-

house square towns on the American frontier.

Next the group traveled to Atchison and the Benedictine College campus. Dr. John Settich, chair of the Political Science Department at Benedictine, discussed the origins of Benedictine and the historical and economic geography of Atchison.

After departing Benedictine, the group arrived at Ft. Leavenworth for a professional tour of the old military post led by retired army colonel John Reichley. Colonel Reichley's tour was lively, entertaining and chocked full of interesting history and anecdotes about French cannons, one of the base's historic chapels, the military correctional facility and the fort's haunted quarters. The group returned to campus at about 5:00.

Next year's field trip is already in the planning stage and will probably be in the region southeast of Topeka.

PO 107 State and Local Government class

by Loran Smith

State and Local Government (PO 107) is a survey course concentrating on American subnational government. While the course provides a broad overview of the varieties of state and local government structures and procedures, the emphasis is placed on Kansas state and local government. The course concentrates on an analysis of the Kansas Constitution, the Kansas political party structure, the Kansas legislative process, the Kansas judicial structure and Kansas local government.

During the course, special attention is given to those areas in which Kansas has been innovative among the states in dealing with issues or problems. The Kansas Constitution is cited as one of the shortest state constitutions containing several innovative ideas such as a cap on the size of the legislature, the flexibility in the length of legislative sessions, and the limitation on the

number of proposed amendments that can be submitted to the voters in one election.

The fact that Kansas was one of the first states which initiated the "legislative council" as a means of equipping its citizen legislature to cope with complex issues is emphasized as a major contribution to the legislative process in the states. Kansas government is also recognized for being ranked fifth in the nation in the number of women serving in its state legislature; a fact that was perhaps created by its innovative political party structure which mandates gender equality.

Finally, the Kansas Home Rule provisions are cited as a model for all the other states. Unlike most states with home rule, Kansas home rule has not been vitiated by the courts or circumvented by the legislature. As a result, Kansas cities have greater opportunity to determine their own local affairs than the overwhelming majority of other cities in the U.S.

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1998-1999 Fellows
Tom Averill, English
Roy Bird, English
Barbara Burgess, mass media
Jenny Chinn, KSHS
Virgil Dean, KSHS
Amy Fleury, English
Marilyn Geiger, history
Robert Hull, business
Reinhild Janzen, art
Jim Kelley, KTWU
Bruce Mactavish, history
J. Karen Ray, Dean CAS
Michele Reid, Mabee Library
Tom Schmiedeler, geography
Bradley Siebert, English
Wayne Sheley, VPAA
Loran Smith, political science
Glenda Taylor, art
Sara Tucker, history
Bill Wagnon, history
Tom Wolf, biology

The Washburn University Center for Kansas Studies works to encourage Kansas studies, to create resources and provide information about Kansas resources at WU and around the state, to offer programming and courses on Kansas topics, and to conduct outreach programs that focus on Kansas.