

Speaking of Kansas

Washburn Center for Kansas Studies



Kansas Studies Newsletter

Fall 2013

Kansas Studies Courses Spring Semester 2013

- EN 138 *Kansas Literature*** 1-3:40, T, HC 206, Averill
GG 304 *Geography of Kansas* 1-2:15, MW, HC 307, Schmiedeler
GL 103 *Historical Geology* 5:30-6:45, MW, ST 118, Gilliland
HI 322 *Kansas History* 1-2:15, TR, HC 008, Mactavish
HI 397 *Internship in History Agencies*, Beatty
PO 106 *US Government* 12-12:50, MWF, HC 208, Beatty
PO 107 *American State & Local Government*, Online, Hamilton
PO 307 *Internship in State & Local Government*, Peterson
PO 309 *Kansas Legislative Experience* 4-5:15, R, HC 203, Beatty

Governor Graves Article Published

The Center Fellows Beatty and Dean article on former Kansas Governor published in Autumn *Kansas History Journal*

The autumn edition of *Kansas History, A Journal of the Great Plains*, features the article “**Doing What Needed to Get Done When It Needed to Get Done’: A Conversation with Former Governor Bill Graves.**”

The publication, edited by Center Fellows **Bob Beatty** and **Virgil Dean**, originated from an extensive interview conducted by Beatty and Fellow **Mark Peterson** with former Kansas Governor Bill Graves, who served from 1995 to 2003. Partial funding for the research came from a grant by the Center. The article was the fifth in a series published by *Kansas History* on Kansas governors including **John Anderson**, **William Avery**, **John Carlin** and **Mike Hayden**.

According to Beatty, “Virgil Dean and I were able to edit hours of interviews



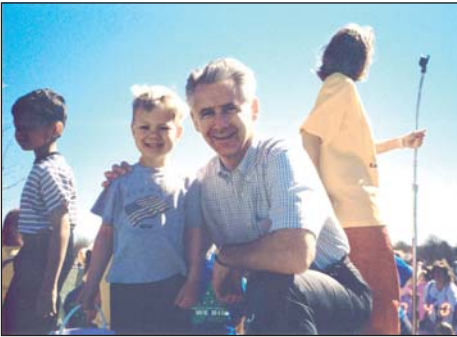
—Continued on p. 2...

Tom Schmiedeler, Director
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Deborah Altus, Human Services
Tom Averill, English
Bob Beatty, Political Science
Patti Bender, Health
Roy Bird, KHC Speaker
Marcia Cebulski, Playwright
Jeannie Chinn, KSHS
Charles Cranston, Mass Media
Virgil Dean, KSHS
Tambra Eifert, Geology
Kelly Erby, History
William Gilliland, Geology
Rachel Goossen, History
Chris Hamilton, Political Science
Robert Hull, Finance
Reinhild Janzen, Art
Jim Kelly, KTWU
David Kendall, KTWU
Gabrielle Lunte, Modern Languages
Bruce Mactavish, History
Judith McConnell-Farmer, Education
Eric McHenry, English
Linsey Modellmog, Political Science
Marguerite Perret, Art
Mark Peterson, Political Science
J. Karen Ray, English
Leslie Reynard, Communication
William Roach, Business
Tom Schmiedeler, Geography
Robin Shrimplin, History
Bradley Siebert, English
Sarah Smarsh, English
Margaret Stewart, English
William Wagnon, History
Marydorsey Wanless, Art
David Winchester, Mabee Library
Margaret Wood, Soc./Anthropology
Carol Yoho, SCHS

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Graves —cont.

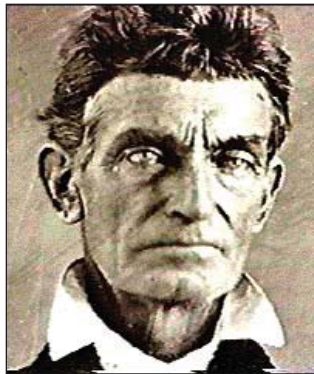


with Governor Graves into what we think is an interesting history of not only his career but the period in Kansas history in which he was Kansas' Secretary of State and Governor. He talks about how he won office, and his accomplishments such as the comprehensive highway plan, but also goes into detail about his disagreements with the conservatives within his own party. I think anyone interested in Kansas history and politics will find it fascinating.”



New Course: John Brown

Washburn's Department of History offered a new special topics course this fall, “**John Brown**,” in which students learned about the life of one of the most controversial figures in Kansas and U.S. history. Through close readings of primary sources, students investigated Brown as a family and businessman, in addition to a committed and,



eventually, militant abolitionist. The course included such highlights as fieldtrips to the John and Mary Jane Ritchie House in Topeka, as well as to the John Brown Museum in Osawatomie. Students also received a surprise visit from Brown himself (Topeka re-enactor Steve Germes, accompanied by his wife Suzanne as Mary Brown) and they engaged in archival research using the impressive digitized collections related to Brown available on the Kansas Territorial website. Later in the course, students considered Brown's place in America's historical memory and the various ways in which his story has been appropriated both during his own time and in the 150 years since his execution. The course was taught by **Kelly Erby**, CKS Fellow.

Gillilands receive 4-H honors

Fellow **Will Gilliland and his wife, Pat**, received a **2013 Distinguish Service Award** at the annual 4-H Emerald Circle Banquet in Manhattan on May 20, 2013. Will and Pat were both members of 4-H clubs growing up and were in the Collegiate 4-H Club at Kansas State University. Pat is also an alumni of Clovia 4-H House at Kansas State University.

The Gillilands have been 4-H leaders at project, county and state levels for more than 30 years. They have been active as participants or leaders of the annual State 4-H Geology Field Trips since 1991. They participated in the writing of the Kansas 4-H *Geology Handbook*, for which Pat was an editor. Both are 4-H geology project judges at the Kansas State Fairs and judge at some county fairs. In 1995, along with their children, they were named Shawnee County 4-H Family of the Year. In 2012 Will was named the Honorary King of the Shawnee County Fair.



Watching Curry Work: --- Sketches for the Kansas Capitol Murals

In honor of the completion of the renovation of the Kansas State Capitol, the **Mulvane Art Museum** at **Washburn University** is pleased to present ***Watching Curry Work: Sketches for his Kansas Capitol Murals***, an exhibition of drawings and watercolors that Kansas artist John Steuart Curry made in preparation for his murals *The Tragic Prelude* and *Kansas Pastoral* on the second floor of the Kansas Capitol. The exhibition will run from **Friday, December 20 through Sunday, February 23, 2014**.

On **February 4 at 6:00 p.m.**, **Don Lambert** will perform his one-man show in which he appears as Curry. A reception for the exhibition will follow. On **February 11 at 6:00 p.m.** Visiting Curator **Julia R. Myers, Ph.D.** will give a lecture titled "Controversy and Compromise: John Steuart Curry's Kansas Capitol Murals." The drawings in the exhibition are on loan from the collection of the Kansas Museum of History.

Curry's Capitol murals have a controversial history. Despite being the most well-known Kansas artist in the 1930s, Curry did not always find favor with Kansans, who thought he portrayed the extremes of life in the state, such as tornadoes, the KKK, and Pentecostal religion. His original 1937 commission for the Capitol included painting both *Kansas Pastoral* and *The Tragic Prelude*, his fiery depiction of abolitionist John Brown, as well as eight scenes for the dome's rotunda. However,

because of public reaction the rotunda scenes were never finished, and Curry refused to sign the murals he had already completed.

Drawings and watercolors in *Watching Curry Work* allow the viewer to see options Curry considered as he planned the murals. Looking at the drawings, one can sense the artist's thought processes as he made his aesthetic decisions.

Watching Curry Work is supported by the Center for Kansas Studies, Washburn University.

The Mulvane Art Museum is located at 17th and Jewell Streets on the campus of Washburn University. The hours of the Museum, ArtLab, and Gift Shop are **Tuesday 10-7, Wednesday-Friday 10-5, Saturday and Sunday 1-4**.

Admission to the Museum and ArtLab is free and open to the public. Free parking is conveniently located to the west of the Mulvane.

For more information and digital images, please contact Julia R. Myers, Visiting Curator, julie.myers1@washburn.edu. You may also call 670-1124 or check the website: <http://www.washburn.edu/mulvane>. 



John Steuart Curry
Figure study for *The Tragic Prelude: Coronado*, c. 1938-1939, Kansas Museum of History



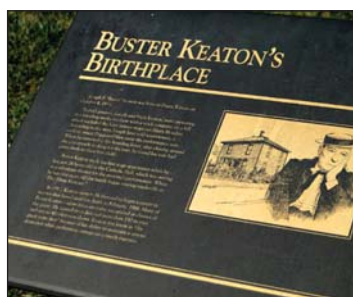
John Steuart Curry
Figure study for *The Tragic Prelude: John Brown* c. 1938-1939, Kansas Museum of History



Kansas Connections: Buster Keaton Celebration

Buster Keaton was a film star in the days of the silent screen. He was an expert physical comedian also known on television and in movies of the 1950s and 1960s. Keaton was born in Piqua (pronounced “Pick-way”), Kansas, in October, 1895, while his parents were traveling through the state as part of a medicine show that had originated in Oklahoma. Shortly after his mother recuperated from his birth, the Keatons moved on to the vaudeville circuit. Buster was only three years old when he joined the act and became one of ‘The Three Keatons’. He attended school for only one day of his childhood because he was busy performing on-stage at a variety of locations including the best vaudeville theaters in New York City. The act broke up when Buster was in his late teens. He began working in films with his friend and mentor, Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle, another native Kansan. He served in World War I and then continued work in film comedy, eventually inheriting Arbuckle’s studio and becoming internationally famous as a silent film comedian.

Buster did not go to Piqua again until September, 1963, when after an appearance at the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson, his wife, Eleanor, saw a road sign for Piqua as they travelled along Highway 54. Buster was unaware that Piqua still existed, so the couple stopped and Eleanor took photos of Buster posing near the town’s train depot. Keaton remained busy with filmmaking and television appearances until he died of lung cancer on February 1, 1966, at the age of 70.



Commemorative marker to Buster Keaton's birth, Piqua, KS

The Keaton Celebration, Iola, Kansas

A modern Keaton connecting story began one evening in 1991 when Clyde Toland of Iola, Kansas, attended a presentation at the Iola Public Library by Gene DeGruson, Curator of Special Collections at Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg,

by **Carol Yoho**
Adjunct Faculty,
CKS Fellow

Kansas. DeGruson spoke that evening about the life and work of Keaton. Toland, a fan of Buster Keaton, knew that DeGruson had helped start an annual “Inge Festival” in Independence that celebrated the life of playwright

and native son, William Inge.

After the presentation, Toland approached DeGruson and asked, “If I were to start a Keaton festival here in Iola, would you help me with planning?” The answer was an immediate affirmative.



Bowlus Arts Center, Iola, KS
Home of the Keaton Celebration

Toland began by assembling a cast of enthusiastic helpers from Iola and Piqua. One volunteer was Mary Martin, then director of the Bowlus Fine Arts Center of Iola. The Bowlus became the site of the first Buster Keaton Celebration, held in late September, 1994, and has been the site of all twenty-one of the celebrations since.

Although Keaton had been gone for decades, his widow, Eleanor, attended the Buster Keaton Celebration in 1994 and in 1995. Movie actor James Karen, a friend and co-actor with Buster in the 1950s, accompanied her to both events. Karen had toured with Keaton in the play *Merton of the Movies*, and appeared with Keaton in Samuel Beckett’s film entitled *Film* (1965). His acting career now includes over one hundred television shows, thousands of commercials, and over eighty movies.

Eleanor and James bridged the gap into the past for Keaton fans



James Karen, Eleanor Keaton & Kenneth Mars, 1994

Kansas Connections: Buster Keaton Celebration



who'd come to Iola to celebrate his comic genius. Both went onstage at the events and reminisced about Buster's life and work. Although Eleanor planned to attend the Kansas celebration in the fall of 1997, her failing health prevented her from doing so. She died of cancer early in 1998, but James (known at the celebration as "Jimmy") returned in 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2012 and 2013. He often brings his wife, actress and textile artist Alba Francesca.

Each celebration has had a theme. They've included: "Keaton Festival" (1993), "Keaton and the Machine of Dreams" (1994), "Hero Behind the Clown" (1995, centennial of Keaton's birth), "Keaton and Arbuckle" (1996), "Keaton and Chaplin" (1997), "Keaton and Pickford" (1998), "Keaton and Lloyd" (1999), "Keaton and Laurel and Hardy" (2000), "A Keaton Odyssey" (2001, all Keaton), "Keaton in the Age of Toons and a Celebration Retrospective" (2002, 10th annual celebration), "Buster's Vaudeville" (2003), "Keaton and Ernie Kovacs" (2004), "Keaton and W.C. Fields" (2005), "Keaton and the Funny Ladies" (2006), "Keaton and Fairbanks" (2007), "Keaton and Will Rogers" (2008), "Keaton and WWI—Dark Comedy and Film" (2009), "Keaton and the Tragic Clowns" (2010), "Keaton and the Kansas Filmmakers" (2011), "Timeless Comedy of Buster Keaton" (2012, 20th annual celebration), and "Keaton, Chaplin and the Fabulous Fifties" (2013).

Although the Keaton Celebration has long had financial support from the Kansas Humanities Council, it was still difficult in the beginning to convince scholars to consider sharing their knowledge of Keaton and the silent film era with Iola audiences. Eventually, though, the large audiences and expand-

ing media coverage changed perceptions of the event so that by 1995 the Iola celebration could tout the presence of an array of prestigious scholars and performers who lent their various expertise to the planned themes. An occasional "Buster Award" given to a featured speaker further strengthened commitments.

Kenneth Mars, well known for his performances in Mel Brook's *Young Frankenstein* and *The Producers*, came in 1994. Internationally-known film preservationist David Shepard first attended in 1995 and accepted the first 'Buster Award'. He returned in 1996, 2000, 2009 and 2012. Physical comedy actor Dan Kamin (and close friend of James Karen) attended in 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2003. Canadian film director Gerald Potterton, who worked with Keaton in *The Railrodder* (1965), attended in 2002. Patricia Eliot Tobias, president of the Damfinos, an international Keaton fan club, attended between 1995 and 2002. President of Britain's Buster fan club, The Blinking Buzzards, is David Macleod. He has attended as a speaker



David & Graceann Macleod from London at the Keaton Celebration

from London every year since 1995. (One year he brought along his mother, and he has often brought along his wife, Graceann, whos is also a Keaton fan.) Film collector Robert Arkus has shared rare film footage, with personal introductions, at 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 celebrations. Keaton historian Martha Jett has shared her research in 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2011 and 2012. Film reviewer Leonard Maltin accepted the "Buster Award" in 1996, and Keaton biographer David Robinson accepted the 1997 award. Steve Allen attended in 2000 and, sadly, died suddenly only a few weeks after his trip to Kansas. Ernie Kovacs' widow, Edie Adams, was the life of the party in 2004.

Kansas Connections: Buster Keaton Celebration

One of the Celebration's most distinguished guests was London-based, film historian and silent film preservationist Kevin Brownlow who attended in 1999, and again in 2012 when he shared the stage with David Shepard. The two were interviewed by popular Keaton lecturer Hooman Mehran. Brownlow received an honorary Academy Award for lifetime achievement in November, 2011, just ten months before his most recent visit to Iola. His Academy Award was presented at the Academy's annual Governor's Dinner. Brownlow and his work were introduced to the audience that night by actor James Karen!

Keaton's first wife was Natalie Talmadge, sister of silent stars Norma and Constance Talmadge. Buster and Natalie married in 1921 and divorced in 1932. At that time Natalie legally changed the surname of their two sons, James and Robert, to "Talmadge."

Iola is always proud when members of the Keaton/Talmadge family attend the celebrations. In early years, Buster's first cousins Ted Keaton and Jeanne Keaton Holler attended. Sadly, Ted had to stop attending after 2004, and has since passed away. Jeanne's poor health has kept her from attending since 2007. Keaton's only granddaughter, Melissa Talmadge Cox, first attended the celebration in 2000, and has returned in 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2012 and 2013. Melissa's mother, Barbara Talmadge, widow of Buster's son James, attended the celebration with Melissa in 2012 and 2013. They shared fascinating family memories onstage in live interviews.

Interestingly, Barbara told the audience that she did not know her husband was the son of Buster Keaton until the family made connections and she was eventually introduced to her father-in-law. She and James took their children along and introduced them to their grandfather. Thereafter, James and Barbara often played bridge with Buster and Eleanor accompanied by their children. Melissa knew Keaton as "Grandpa" long before she understood much about his career as a vaudevillian or movie star. Because her two great aunts were also international movie stars,

she now has many insights into the roots of her movie star heritage.

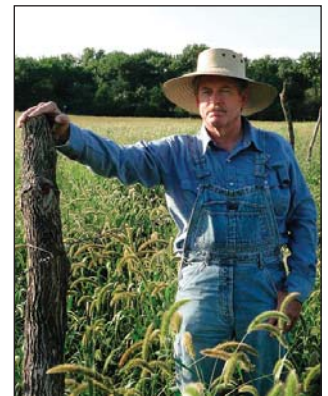
Many people have attended the Keaton Celebration in Iola because they are huge fans of Keaton and his work. Regular attendees come from all over Kansas and from states such as Minnesota, West Virginia, New Hampshire; and from cities like Dallas, Los Angeles and New York City; and from many points between. In certain years fans of other silent film performers gather in big crowds. In 2000, when Keaton was paired with Laurel and Hardy, eight hundred people from 18 states, 61 Kansas communities and from England attended the two-day celebration.

Washburn ties to Keaton Celebration

Bill Shaffer, producer-director at KTWU, Washburn's public television station, has attended the Keaton Celebration since 1994. Since then he has been a member of the Keaton Committee and helped plan each celebration. Bill also helps manage film and video projection at each year's event and is often onstage, introducing speakers and the films that will be shown. He has developed a close working relationship with Iola citizens, guests and visitors, and is an integral part of making each event a success.

I became a Keaton fan while finishing a BFA degree at Washburn in 1971. I had family ties through my first husband to Piqua and now have ties to the Iola area through my current husband, Max Yoho, who was born and raised to the age of ten in Colo-

ny, a town just north of Iola. I once had a personal tour of the street in front of Keaton's birthplace, led by a Piqua citizen who claimed a family member had helped deliver baby Buster at that rooming house on October 4, 1895. Unfortunately, the



Bill Shaffer in denim as he plans for role as "extra" in the Bender movie.

Kansas Connections: Buster Keaton Celebration

house was long gone before the first Keaton Celebration. I became a fan of silent films by reading about Keaton and his part in the era. I watched an extensive documentary series, *Hollywood*, produced by Kevin Brownlow for Thames Television. Thirteen one-hour episodes were shown late at night in 1988. I purchased and read every book Brownlow has written about the silent era, wrote fan letters to Mr. Brownlow, and even met him twice for coffee in London—long before the Iola events. I've attended all 21 Iola celebrations and designed 21 Keaton Celebration buttons, given each year in appreciation to those who plan and present each event.

More Connections: *The Bender Claim*

The Keaton Celebration has twenty-one years of rich and entertaining history that was recently enhanced by another Hollywood tie to southeast Kansas and specifically to persons involved with Iola's Keaton Celebration. This story begins with folklore surrounding the legend of the "Bloody Benders."

The Wikipedia entry for the "Bloody Benders" states that they were a

"family of serial killers who owned an inn and small general store in Labette County of southeastern Kansas from 1871 to 1873. The family consisted of John Bender, his wife Mrs. Bender (later referred to as Kate, Sr., since no one knew her given name), son John, Jr., and daughter Kate... They are believed to have killed about a dozen travelers before their crimes were discovered and the family fled, with their fate uncertain."

In summer, 2013, a pair of Los Angeles-based independent filmmakers came to Kansas with plans to shoot a movie, *The Bender Claim*. The film's director, John Alexander, calls the project "a Hitchcock-like psychological thriller set in the Old West." He joined forces with J.C. Guest, of Ashville, North Carolina, who produced the film. Filming began on July 10 and took the crew to locations in Grand Island, Nebraska, and to El

Dorado, Cowtown in Wichita, and to the Geary County area. Hollywood veterans and local professionals comprised the cast. Seven professionals comprised the technical production crew. Keaton Celebration attendee James Karen played Pa Bender. He grew a full beard and came to Kansas in early July to begin shooting.

By early August production had moved to a church at Rock Springs just south of Junction City. KTWU producer/director Bill Shaffer traveled there to be an extra in some scenes. Being on the other side of the camera was a new experience for Bill. He portrayed a Kansas farmer who, according to the script, was among those called to the church by a local sheriff who was investigating reports of missing travelers along a particular portion of the Great Osage Trail where the Benders operated their inn. The Bender fam-



Bill Shaffer with his fellow movie extras. Bill is second from left. James Karen, who played Pa Bender, is fourth from right.

ily attended the gathering to allay any suspicion of involvement in such disappearances.

Prior to filming at the church Bill had been asked to send costumed photos of himself dressed as a farmer. As Bill's friend, I accompanied him to the Kansas State Historical Society grounds one summer evening and shot some photos of him in character, wearing overalls and a straw hat. Upon Bill's arrival for the two-day shooting, professional Kansas area reenactors took him under advisement, loaning him a felt hat and some wool clothing—an outfit more likely to be worn by a farmer of the early 1870s than the bib overalls and straw hat. Some reenactors were from a group called

Kansas Connections: Buster Keaton Celebration

Border Creek Raiders, including Brett Dawson, his wife, Deborah, and son, Josh. Others came from the Junction City area. Church-scene extras included Cheryl Hudson of Dwight, and Kim Snider, her husband, Scott, and their 16-year-old son, Zachary, of White City. They are members of the Flint Hills Gunslingers reenactment troupe.

Bill explained that the weekend was filled with long waits between shoots inside the church. The producers had erected an outdoor tent where extras could eat, drink, and relax between scenes. As part of the adventure, the group of extras posed for candid photos in costume. Bill was pleased to be captured in photos with actor Buck Taylor, who played the local lawman, and with his Iola pal James Karen. He reported that both days were long, and he found it amazing how much care went into the planning and shooting of a scene not likely to take more than five minutes of screen time in the final cut.



Bill Shaffer with actor Buck Taylor.

One unanticipated aspect of the filming is that the last half of July in eastern Kansas was unseasonably cool and so wet that rain and mud bogged down production. James Karen told Kansas friends that this was the toughest location shoot in which he had ever been involved. Jimmy told the story of how one pig involved in an outdoor shoot “drowned” in mud! Bill verified that Jimmy “did say it was a mighty rough shoot, but the ‘kids’ involved in making the movie were so nice and so committed to making the movie, he felt it was necessary to do the best job he could under the circumstances.”

Bill noted that Jimmy had a tendency to stay in character as Pa Bender, even during breaks in filming. He spoke very little, kept to himself and did not look people in the eye as they spoke to him, a demeanor very unlike that of the real James Karen! Bill said that Pa Bender and the other Bender family “would all be ‘in character’ entering or exiting a scene. They would start from

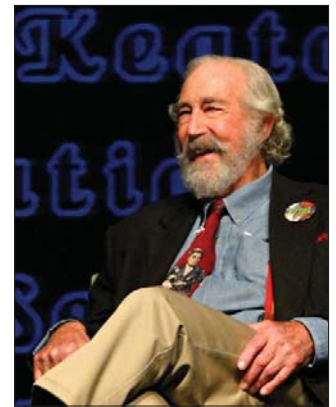
some distance away and walk in and take some time walking out of a scene.”

Bruce Davidson (from *X-Men* and *Willard*) portrayed the preacher at the church. Bill said, “We shot around him on Saturday, then shot all of his scenes on Sunday. He was there only for that one day. Buck Taylor was there for Saturday only. Jimmy was there both days.”

Jan Biles, in “Filming Wraps up for Movie about Bender Family,” published on August 17, 2013 in the *Topeka Capital-Journal* wrote: “The film, which will have an original score, is expected to be completed next year. Alexander and Guest plan to take the movie to international film festivals, including the Tallgrass Film Festival in Kansas.”

Wrap-up

So, when James Karen returned to Kansas in September for the 2013 Keaton Celebration, he still wore his Pa Bender beard. Some regular attendees had to stare at him awhile before recognizing him as the James Karen who had attended



James Karen at 2013 Keaton Celebration wearing his Pa Bender beard.

so many previous celebrations. Unlike in summer, Jimmy was back to playing himself—bright, outgoing and smiling. He again brought along his wife, Alba. Bill Shaffer introduced movies and speakers from onstage, this time wearing his Buster Keaton flat-hat. And I passed out celebration buttons and took photos for my 21st annual Keaton Celebration web page published on the Washburn University web site: <http://www.washburn.edu/cas/art/cyoho/archive/Events/KeatonCelebration>

May the magic continue. 

A special “thank you” goes to **Clyde Toland** for his review of the history of the Keaton Celebration, printed in the 20th Anniversary Celebration program in 2012, along with a list of celebration years/themes/speakers/special guests. This report depended on information found in Toland’s accounting.

“A Long and Winding Walk to Wichita”

CKS Kansas Day Celebration: More About Henry Fortunato

Henry Fortunato, chosen as the Center for Kansas Studies Kansas Day speaker, is director of public affairs at the Kansas City Public Library. He guides a 14-person department with an annual \$1.1 million budget responsible for developing, orchestrating, and executing the Library’s special events programming, marketing, print publications, media relations, community affairs, online communications, social media, and exhibits – a massive public outreach effort that in aggregate draws a yearly special events door count of approximately one hundred thousand.

Mr. Fortunato is one of five members of the Library’s senior management group. He acts as emcee at some one hundred library public events annually and serves as the one of the Library’s primary media spokesmen. During his tenure, the Library received a \$4 million grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation to support public programming, and was awarded the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation’s highest honor for museums and libraries, by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).


Additionally, Mr. Fortunato conceptualized and directed the Library’s regional Emmy-nominated KCPT television series *Meet the Past with Crosby Kemper III*; developed numerous successful ongoing speakers series including the Hail to the Chiefs presidential lectures with the Harry S. Truman Library Institute and the Script-in-Hand performances by the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre; orchestrated



efforts that led to programming partnerships with more than one hundred Kansas City-area organizations; and obtained more than a dozen programming grants from the American Library Association, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, and other foundations and donors.

Prior to joining the library in June 2006, Mr. Fortunato served as the creator and project director/editor-in-chief of two public history initiatives at the University of Kansas—KUhistory.com and KansasHistoryOnline.

Mr. Fortunato has also worked as a senior corporate executive in the financial services industry; marketing consultant; magazine editor; public radio commentator; and freelance writer. From 1980-85, he was founding editor of *Regardie’s*, a bimonthly magazine in Washington, DC that was twice named best local business publication in the country by the Association of Area Business Publications and twice a finalist nominee for a National Magazine Award.

Mr. Fortunato earned a bachelor of science in foreign service from Georgetown University and a master of arts in American history from the University of Kansas. He is an avid walker and recently completed a 240-mile trek from Overland Park to Wichita. Fortunato is the 2013-14 Simons Fellow in Public Humanities at the University of Kansas, where he is conducting research for a forthcoming book on his Kansas rambles. 



Helping inform students of the versatility and flexibility of acquiring a Kansas Studies minor as they plan their spring class schedules. Stop and enjoy our new display on second floor, Henderson Hall, south end of the building.



CKS Meeting Summaries

August 29, 2013

Fellows for the Center for Kansas Studies met at a luncheon meeting held at the Cottonwood Room of the Washburn Union. Attending the meeting were **Tom Schmiedeler, Jim Kelly, Carol Yoho, Marcia Cebulka, Will Gilliland, Tom Averill, Marguerite Perret, Bob Beatty, Sarah Smarsh, Margaret Wood, Bruce MacTavish** and **Connie Gibbons**. Director **Tom Schmiedeler** announced that he will issue a call for nominations for Kansas Day speaker in the next couple of weeks and reminded everyone to contribute to the forthcoming fall newsletter. He also discussed the Center's five-year review process completed over the summer and submitted to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Out of this process emerged several projected goals, including an increase in students who minor in Kansas Studies. Tom encouraged Fellows to become more active in the recruitment of minors by announcing the minor to students in their classes and to include the paragraph describing the minor in the syllabi of their Kansas Studies courses. Tom also requested approximately \$200 for a short research trip to the Register of Deeds Office in Beloit, Kansas to research the original plat and deed records for his hometown of Tipton. He intends to write an article for the Tipton Times describing the meaning of the original layout of the town and the efforts of the town fathers to promote the town. Fellows approved the request for funding.

In an absentia announcement made by Tom Schmiedeler, **Rachel Goossen** wanted everyone to know that regional **History Day** will be held at Washburn on Saturday, February 22, in the Memorial Union. Rachel and the History Day staff are soliciting volunteer judges. Those interested should contact her. **Tom Averill** requested funding for a poetry reading on November 7 by Kansas poet Stephen Meats <http://150kansaspems.wordpress.com/tag/stephen-meats/>. Tom also requested support for a **celebration of the life of poet William Stafford on the 100th anniversary of his birth** to be held on Friday, April 14. Stafford's son, **Kim**, also a poet, will be among those present at the event. Fellows approved funding for \$500 for the event which is further supported by the English Department and the Kansas Studies Collection at Mabee Library. For more information on William Stafford see <http://www.williamstafford.org/spoems/>

Sarah Smarsh asked for financial support for

a start-up publication to be called the **Free State Press**. Sarah described the *Free State Press* as a "nonpartisan, multimedia story-telling platform sharing contemporary Kansas narratives to facilitate community understanding, civic identity and democratic dialogue." Publications will include creative nonfiction through the web site freestatepress.org; *Free State*, a monthly print broadsheet newspaper, and "Kansas Speaks for Itself," a statewide, live, story-telling event series featuring true, first-person accounts of modern Kansas life. Requested funding from the Center was for \$1,000 toward costs associated with website construction for launch of the *Free State Press*. Additional funding is to come from a major Kansas Humanities Council grant (\$10,000). Fellows approved the request.

Marguerite Perret requested Center funding for printing costs for two copies each of eight booklets that are part of the "Speak Loudly Reading Series" that will be exhibited at the Mulvane Museum and Salina Art Center this fall. Currently a set of booklets is on view at the University Museum at Groningen, the Netherlands, where Marguerite visited this past summer as part of a Sweet Sabbatical. She and her husband, Bruce Scherting, participated in a session on "The Waiting Room and other Medicalized Spaces" at a conference on Emotional Geographies at the University of Groningen (see <http://www.rug.nl/research/ursi/events/emospa/programme>)

The booklets represent an expansion and elaboration on ideas originally outlined in the **Waiting Room**, published in 2012. Writers and contributors include current and former Washburn students and faculty. Marguerite conceptualized the booklet and Emmy Rice, graphic design faculty member in the WU Art Department designed it. Fellows approved the \$500 request for the cost of producing the booklets.

In round-the-table news of the Fellows, **Bruce MacTavish** announced the Lincoln Lecture: Bleeding Kansas and Border Wars bus tour on February 14. He asked that Kansas Studies support an on-site lecturer at one or more of the venues that will be part of the tour. Fellow and playwright **Marcia Cebulka** and her husband **Tom Prasch** enjoyed a Sweet Sabbatical in the Azores, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. Marcia is beginning work on a novel with Kansas sources, as she tries on a different literary hat. **Will Gilliland** and his wife **Pat** received a

CKS Meeting Summaries —cont.

distinguished service award for thirty years of service from the 4-H organization. Will announced that the **Lee Roth fossil collection** has been given to Washburn by Lee's son, **Marvin**. Lee, a math teacher at Fort Hays State University, was a renowned fossil collector in the region.

Carol Yoho reported that the 21st annual Buster Keaton Celebration, held on September 27-28 in Iola, will focus on "Keaton, Chaplain and the Fabulous Fifties." For more information see <http://iolakeatoncelebration.org/> As part of promoting the Center, Director Tom Schmiedeler has asked Carol to design an information display on the Center at two glass showcases opposite the Director's office at Henderson 225. **Margaret Wood** discussed her participation with the National Park Service in a possible expansion of the Nicodemus National Historic Site.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 P.M.
—Minutes submitted by **Tom Schmiedeler**

November 21, 2013

Fellows of the Center for Kansas Studies met at a breakfast meeting on Thursday, November 21. Attending the meeting were **Kelly Erby, Chris Hamilton, Will Gilliland, Tom Averill, Carol Yoho, Julie Myers, Judy McConnell-Farmer, Maguerite Perret, Connie Gibbons** and **Tom Schmiedeler**. Director of the Center, **Tom Schmiedeler**, spoke briefly on the status of the Center budget, the Kansas Day presenter, and the forthcoming fall newsletter. Tom also discussed the Program Review Committee Report and Recommendations he received on November 11 from the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. According to the report, the Center for Kansas Studies has received a rating of "Meets Expectations" and the "rating reflects the committee's view that your Center is functioning effectively." Tom provided a one-page copy of comments and recommendations of the review committee for those attending the breakfast meeting and he noted that several of the recommendations have already been implemented. One of them was to "explore various methods to increase visibility of the minor and of Kansas Studies courses." In this regard, Tom has invited Fellows of the Center to view the new poster created by **Carol Yoho** announcing all Kansas Studies courses that are offered, those offered for the next semester and the most recent newsletter. The poster is housed in a double-glass case mounted on wall opposite Tom's office in room 225 Henderson.

Judy McConnell-Farmer reported that she co-authored the chapter "Selected African American Pioneers of Early Childhood Education" in the book **Hidden History: American Pioneers of Early Childhood** published recently by Routledge Press. Her research began when she discovered the writings of educator and pioneer Lula Sadler Craig, in a plastic container located in a basement storage area of the Graham County Historical Society in Hill City, Kansas. Born in 1867, Lula Sadler Craig migrated with her family in 1877 to Nicodemus, Kansas, settling in the oldest African-American community west of the Mississippi River. Lula became a school teacher at the age of 16 and taught for a total of 55 years. Her writings demonstrate her sensitivity to individuals and an attention to detail revealing a highly intelligent and caring personality well-suited to working with young children. The chapter attempts to elucidate a portion of the more than fifty years during which Lula taught school and wrote about her experiences in the form of diaries and essays. She led a fascinating life, living to 104 years of age. A glimpse of her writings are shared in this chapter.

Tom Averill discussed the **William Stafford Conference** to be held on March 31, 2014, at the Washburn Union to help launch National Poetry Month. Among activities scheduled for the Conference will be a showing of the film **Every War Has Two Losers**. <http://www.cafilm.org/rfc/films/1392.html> **Kim Stafford**, William Stafford's son, will be at the conference along with people from all over the country who will bring with them a variety of documents on the works and life of Stafford. The *North Dakota Quarterly* will publish a special edition on the writings of Stafford. Tom also mentioned that he will be teaching Kansas Literature in the spring semester and that he has a Washburn student assistant working six hours a week to compile pages for the Map of Kansas Authors web site. Tom noted that the web site has been very successful in not only attracting visitors but engaging them for an average of 15-30 minutes at the site.

—Minutes submitted by **Tom Schmiedeler**

LAUNCHING NATIONAL POETRY MONTH:

William Stafford Conference

March 31, 2014, Washburn Union

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



2014 Kansas Day Celebration

“A Long and Winding Walk to Wichita”

Mark Your Calendar!
More about Fortunato, p. 9

Our guest speaker, **Henry Fortunato**, is director of public affairs at the Kansas City Public Library and 2013-14 Simons Fellow in Public Humanities at the University where he is doing research for a forthcoming book about his Kansas walks.

3:30 PM, Mon., Jan. 27, Henderson 208, Washburn U.

He was escorted to the county line by a sheriff's deputy, clambered across creaky old railroad bridges that couldn't pass an OSHA inspection, and dined with two women who channeled the spirits of Amelia Earhart and Calamity Jane.

Along the way, he spent a night at a rural motel version of the Hot L Baltimore, learned how to use his walking stick to scare off coyotes, visited the home of William Allen White, and learned a little more about his own personal journey that transformed him from a dyed-in-the-wool denizen of the East Coast into a most unlikely Kansan.

It wasn't exactly akin to the scaling the Matterhorn, but for noted pedestrian **Henry Fortunato**, his **Long and Winding Walk to Wichita** was quite the amazing—and often amusing—adventure nonetheless. Fortunato will present an illustrated talk about his 240-mile trek in October 2012 that began at his front door in Overland Park and ended in downtown Wichita 13 days later.



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Fall 2013

Speaking of Kansas

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