



Speaking of Kansas

Washburn University Center for Kansas Studies Spring 1997

Retracing the Underground Railroad

by William Wagon

The Center for Kansas Studies sponsored a tour of sites on the underground railroad in Douglas and Shawnee counties.

The tour focused on the sites that were important in early Kansas history and in the antislavery movements which were organized in this area prior to the Civil War. Many of the locations were vital points in the abolitionist activities on the Underground Railroad through which fugitive slaves from Missouri were spirited from their bondage and north to freedom.

Martha Parker guided the tour in the Clinton area. Richard Sheridan, retired KU professor, was the guide in Lawrence, and Bill Wagon guided the group through the Ritchie house in Topeka.

Center for Kansas Studies on the World Wide Web

<http://www.wuacc.edu/cks>

The Center has a homepage that makes it easier for interested persons to access information about Kansas Studies. The contents include news about the minor in Kansas studies, a list of fellows, bibliography of Kansas literature in print, bibliography of Kansas books in print, a list of movies made in and about Kansas and an historical bibliography of works about Kansas.

Tom Averill, professor of English, maintains this homepage and continues to add documents and information to it.

Readers may e-mail comments or suggestions for material to add to the web site to Tom Averill at zzaver@acc.wuacc.edu.

Minor in Kansas Studies

Three courses for the minor in Kansas Studies are being offered in the Fall 1997 semester. Students can enroll in PO107 State and Local Government, EN 138 Kansas Literature and GG 300 Geography of Kansas.

EN 138 Kansas Literature is taught by Tom Averill. The class will meet Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons from 1:00-2:15 p.m. This course is part of the general education program.

Two sections of PO 107 State and Local Government will be taught by Loran Smith. It will be offered on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10:10:50 a.m. and on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5:30 to 6:45. This course is part of the general education program.

GG 300 Geography of Kansas will be taught by Tom Schmedeler. The class will meet on Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 1 to 2:15.

To minor in Kansas Studies, a student must complete five courses from the list of 11 courses. In addition to the two offered in the Fall, the other courses include AN 225 Kansas Archeology, BI 170 Kansas Ecology, EN 190 Film Appreciation when taught as Kansas in the Movies EN 199 Special Topics when taught as Kansas Folklore, HI 317 Topeka and the Urban Experience in American History, PO 307 Internship in State and Local Government, HI 397 Internship in Historical Agencies, and the newly approved IS 199 Kansas Studies.

A short description of the minor and a list of the requirements can be found in the 1997-1998 Washburn University catalog on page 120.

Students who have questions about the minor can contact Bill Wagon (x1316), director of the Center for Kansas Studies and chair of the History Department, or Barbara Burgess (x1801).

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Fellows

Tom Averill
Lyle Baker
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Bob Fidler
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Robert Hull
Sara Keckeisen
J. Karen Ray
Tom Schmedeler
Wayne Sheley
Bradley Siebert
Loran Smith
Glenda Taylor
Sara Tucker
David Vancleaf
William Wagon
Ron Wasserstein
Tom Wolf

(This issue designed by Brenda Reis)

Remaking television series on state's history and culture

by William Wagon, Director

The fellows of the Center for Kansas Studies have made the reproduction of the television series and course Kansas History a priority item. The course originated as a pioneering educational television project with Robert Richmond as the instructor in the 1970s. It was once reproduced and telecast over KTWU-TV until the tapes literally expired.

The course continues to be offered periodically on campus and draws a substantial enrollment. Were it to be reproduced, updated and telecast, it would have a much wider appeal. Given the pending sesquicentennial of territorial inception in 2004, we expect the event to be widely celebrated, leading to an expanded demand for Kansas history materials. That can expect to run at a heightened level throughout the 150th anniversary of statehood in 2011. Given the significance of "bleeding Kansas" to the nation's trauma leading to the American Civil War, this country will have itself as a leading source for that information.

Previous efforts to move this project forward have met with limited success; however, the current situation holds much promise. A committee of the Center, together with Bob Fidler of KTWU, met with a consultant, Thomas Isern of North Dakota State University, in February to explore various possibilities. Isern is one of the Great Plains' leading scholars with an impressive list of achievements that combines a history of the states with experience in electronic instruction. As a result of this conference, the project was determined to be both feasible and worthwhile for the university and its mission.

The Center proposes the production of 26 half-hour televised programs to be the basis of a televised course in the history of Kansas, a web site for students enrolled for credit as a study guide and course requirements, and publication of a reader to complement the televised sequence. Following the successful development of the university-level curriculum, the program would next develop materials for secondary and primary schools through distant learning. The project entails three phases: planning, course series production including the web site, and reader and school curriculum development.

The Center seeks funds to begin planning which includes the production of one 30-minute pilot program; the development of a budget for the whole project; development of a work plan for the project; development of an outline for all television programs; compilation of course reader; and outline for web site creation.

With a pilot, research identified and work plan for the program series, the university will be positioned to solicit

external underwriters to complete the project. With approved funding, the Center is confident it will be able to complete the planning phase during the first five months of 1998.

Center for Kansas Studies brings speaker series to campus

The role the environment has played in influencing the artistic expression of Kansas native Glenda Taylor was the focus of a discussion, "Prairie Memories," she presented April 10. As an associate professor of art at WU, Taylor creates ceramic works. She talked of how the landscape near her hometown of Chapman inspired the series of three dimensional clay forms she exhibited last fall.

Rob Prince, an anthropologist at Metropolitan State College in Denver, presented a talk, "The Cutting Edge: The 1890s Debate Over Eugenic Castration at the Winfield Mental Hospital" Thursday, Feb. 27. Prince's talk was drawn from his research of Kansas as a case study in the history of eugenics. The research focuses on a series of castrations performed at the hospital during the 1890s by the eugenics-minded physician in charge. Those castrations became a cause celebre which focused national attention on Kansas. The resulting debates revealed much about populat politics, the medical community and eugenics movements.

Folk songs which illustrate the historic and contemporary culture of the Great Plains was the focus of "Nowhere Over the Rainbow," a presentation by Tom Isern which took place on Feb. 12. Isern, a member of the faculty at North Dakota State University, is a noted scholar on the history and culture of the region and co-writes the syndicated column "The Plains Folks" with Emporia State University Professor Jim Hoy. A native Kansan, Isern performs as a singing historian, presenting a mixture of songs, commentary and discussions to detail experiences of Plains living, relating the tales through the performance of classic and less familiar folk songs.

Washburn University English professor, Thomas Fox Averill, portrayed the literary character William Jennings Bryan Oleander at a special Kansas Day celebration Wednesday, Jan. 29. Averill read excerpts from his new book, "William Jennings Bryan Oleander's Guide to Kansas," in which he presents unique observations of life in the Sunflower State.