

Kansas the beautiful

Distributed by the Kansas Chamber of Commerce, this small pamphlet, written by Paul Jones, answers New York critic Heywood Broun's criticism of Kansas, citing that Broun "writes with authority about things with which he is not thoroughly conversant" and that when he rendered his decision on Kansas that it was quite possible that "his liver was sluggish, he was slightly constipated, he had a dull headache, his berth had been too hot or too cold the night before and his sleep had been troubled."

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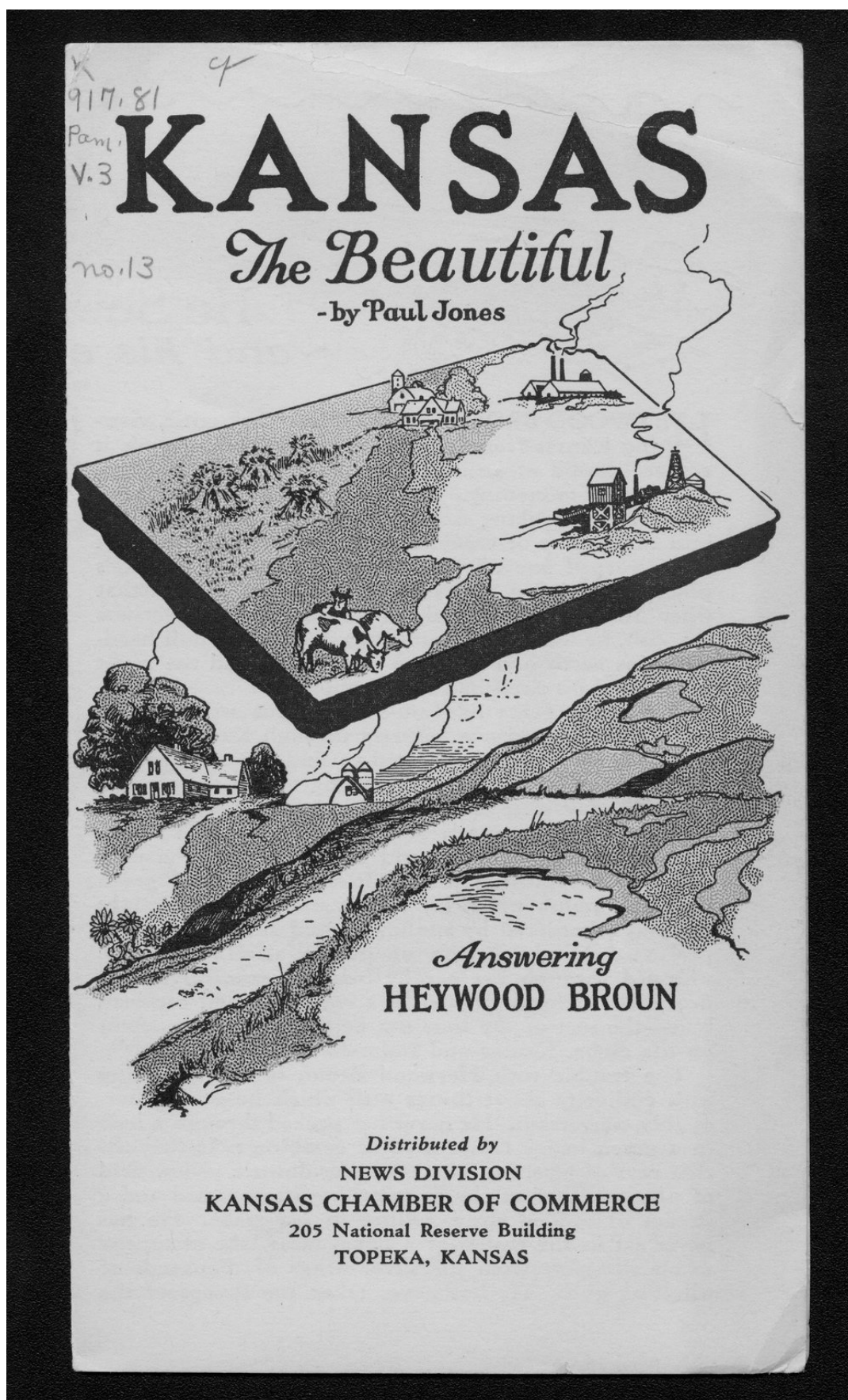
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HHEYWOOD BROWN, famous New York critic, viewing Kansas from a Pullman car window, brands it a place devoid of beauty, where existence is an endless and deadly monotony. Beauty generally can be found where one is looking for it. Inversely the same can be said of ugliness or trouble. And one's judgment is apt to be warped one way or the other according to one's physical condition at the time. It is quite possible that when Mr. Brown rendered his decision that his liver was sluggish, he was slightly constipated, he had a dull headache, his berth had been too hot or too cold the night before and his sleep had been troubled.

Not many years ago another famous writer, Nina Wilcox Putnam, drove leisurely through Kansas in her automobile. She had expected to find the state as Mr. Brown describes it. But Nina, being out in the air and sunshine, day after day, was feeling fine. Her car took her into winding roads along tree bordered streams, through rocky declivities and over hills into the wide sweep of the prairies where alternate checks of green corn and yellow wheat lay to left and right of straight roadways, bordered by sunflowers and sweet clover and perfumed by the breath of purple alfalfa blossoms, whipped through her car by brisk breezes. Overhead fleecy white clouds drifted in a sea of deepest cerulean blue—the sort of sky that can be seen in but two spots on the globe, Kansas and Italy.

The trouble with Heywood Brown is that he writes with authority about things with which he is not thoroughly conversant. He never has peeked through a hole in a green hedge to see a silver combine reflecting the rich rays of a setting sun, sweeping down a yellow field of wheat, with dust clouds spiralling heavenward and a stream of golden straw rolling in her wake. He has never sat in the rushes of a flat Kansas lake at sunrise to see the glint from the silver wings of thousands of wheeling gulls. He has never taken the sweeps of the

road from Sedan to Independence or followed the creek valley from Marion to Cottonwood Falls. He has never dropped from the hot parched prairie into the historic oasis of El Quartejejo. He probably never has heard of El Quartejejo. He has never stood on Coronado Heights, gazing first upon the serpentine Smoky Hill valley, then through the hazy blue breaks of what the Spaniards thought was a mountain range. He has never opened the gate of Charley Jackson's ranch to drive across short buffalo grass to enjoy a bit of life that has existed nowhere else since Chisholm trail was closed.

Heywood Brown's only distinction from hundreds of fellow writers in Kansas is that he lives among skyscrapers, where humanity is more closely packed, and is brought into contact with continental influences a bit sooner. He buys his liquor from a bootlegger. So do we. He enjoys the latest books. So do we. He reads the New York Times. So do we. He looks at Hollywood pictures. So do we. He hears Kansas country girls, transplanted to grand opera, sing over the radio. So do we. He plays bridge and golf. So do we. He sees men in red coats riding through dales, hoping to bag a fox. We see men galloping behind fleet greyhounds and bringing in a half dozen coyotes at eventide.

If the prairies of Kansas and the surprises and beauties they hold for those who know them are monotonous, then what must we term the noise wracked, artificial canyons of Mr. Heywood Brown's metropolis?

