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86th year of Montgomery family ownership. The first issue of the *Smoky Hill and Republican Union*, the forerunner of the present *Daily Union*, was published September 12, 1861. The newspaper, with John D. Montgomery as its present president and editor, is now in its fourth generation as a family operation, according to an article by Deborah Neff in the paper's anniversary issue.

By 1870 there were about 600 Welsh in the Emporia neighborhood of Lyon county plus some 400 in or near Arvon, now an almost abandoned Osage county town north of Lebo. A series of four articles about the Welsh settlers written by Minnie Miller appeared in the *Emporia Gazette*, September 9, 10, 11, and 12, 1981. The articles included sketches of several prominent Welsh families and information on Welsh businesses and churches.

An "Old Settlers" section of the *Olathe Daily News*, September 10, 1981, included an article by Jim French on the Rev. Hugh D. Fisher, an Olathe minister who served as chaplain for the Union army during the Civil War. According to the article, he was known as "the fighting parson," who later chose to remain a Methodist minister even when offered a U. S. senatorship.

In recognition of its 100th year of publishing the *Independence Reporter*, September 13, 1981, printed a special centennial edition with sections on the history of both the newspaper and the city. A facsimile of the four-page first issue dated September 12, 1881, and biographical sketches of the paper's 10 publishers were in the section on the history of the newspaper. Other sections featured the history of the city and the activities and achievements of its people over the past 100 years in such fields as entertainment, religion, commerce, education, and recreation.

Marie Janssen Conard of Wymore has written a history of Eighteen School, District No. 69, which has been filed with the Marshall County Historical Society Library in the historic courthouse at Marysville. An article by Oretta Ruetti on the school and Mrs. Conard's reflections as both pupil and teacher there was in the *Marysville Advocate*, September 17, 1981.

Ward High School in Kansas City, Kan., observed its 50th anniversary in 1981. An article on the Catholic school which was built during the depression was in *Wyandotte West*, Kansas City, Kan., September 17, 1981. According to the article, the school was named for Rt. Rev. John Ward, bishop of the Leavenworth diocese, who died in 1929, before his dream of a new Catholic high school became a reality.

A series of articles in the *Wichita Eagle-Beacon* on the vanishing towns of Kansas started in March and ended November 2, 1981. Forrest Hintz, the author, concluded the series with a story on Elbing, a town in Butler county that almost died in the 1940's but revived. The community was founded in 1886 by a group of Mennonite settlers from Elbing, Germany. Other towns that have been featured in the series include: Wonsevu, September 28; Englewood, October 5; Galatia, October 21; Anness, October 19; and Elmo, October 26.

W. Harvey Brown, an undergraduate student at the University of Kansas, kept a diary during an expedition in 1886 to obtain specimens of the American bison for the Smithsonian Institution. John M. Peterson edited the diary and included excerpts in an article, "Buffalo Hunting in Montana in 1886," in the autumn, 1981, issue of *Montana, The Magazine of Western History*, Helena, Mont. A current project of cross-referencing and indexing photographs in the depository at Custer Battlefield National Monument, Montana, has resulted in corrections of published dates and identifications of subjects in the photographs. Neil Mangum is the author of an article on the mislabeled photographs, "Solving Custer Photo Puzzles: Some New Dates and Identifications," in the same issue of *Montana*.

The first in a series of seven articles on the history of Eureka schools was in the *Eureka Herald*, October 22, 1981. Written by Helen Bradford, the series concluded in the *Herald* December 3. The final installment discussed school unification and bussing, and suggested that current economic conditions have aggravated the problem of funding for new school buildings.

Memories From the Heart of Rose is a reminiscence of Rose Evelyn Domer who grew up



on a farm near Centralia in the 1920's. Short chapters describe such memories as the party line telephone, the country store, butchering time, the first radio, grandma's quilts, and the little white church on the corner. The author also includes some of her poems, recipes, old time remedies, and household hints. The 196-page paperbound book was issued by the author at Kansas City in 1978.

Perils of the Old West, by Forest E. Buffum, was issued by the author at Kingman, Ariz., in 1979. The 153-page paperbound book includes the writer's memories of boyhood days on a ranch near Hays, Kan., in the early 1900's. "Times were hard" and the family moved about, learning later that oil was discovered on the ranch they once owned. The author intersperses reminiscences of wheat harvests and rabbit drives with comments on child discipline and prairie songbirds. A section of black and white photographs includes family pictures and farm scenes.

For the Sake of Art: The Story of an Art Movement in Kansas, by Cynthia Mines, was issued by the author at McPherson in 1979. The book examines three elements that worked together to produce an enthusiasm for art in the McPherson area in the 1920's: an era of art exhibitions in the public schools; a crusade for original art in Kansas by Carl Smalley, McPherson art dealer; and the "years of renown" of Birger Sandzen, Lindsborg artist. In addition to placing the central Kansas cultural awakening in art in perspective, the author provides a history and reference guide for the permanent art collection of the McPherson public schools. The 80-page paperbound book is illustrated with drawings by Salvador Estrada and black and white photographs.

The Detroit Community is a 13-page pamphlet by James J. Dunlop issued by the author at Abilene in 1979. Originally known as Newport, the Dickinson county community was established in 1857 north of the Smoky Hill river about one and one-half miles east of the town's present location. It was never incorporated, and the population probably never exceeded 200. The brief history was compiled by the author from early records and recollections of people in the community.

Jay Nelson is the editor of *A Centennial*

History of Olsburg, Kansas, a 68-page book published by the Olsburg Centennial Committee in 1980. The major portion of the narrative provides an overview of the town's history going back to the early Scandinavian settlers of the area. There are a number of short historical articles also on Olsburg churches, schools, organizations, and neighboring communities in Pottawatomie county. The editor credits Gerry and Lois Westling, compilers, for bringing together much of the material and for originating the idea of a centennial book in their Olsburg Rural Educational Opportunities (OREO) history class. The book is illustrated with many early photographs.

Burns, Kansas, 1880-1980 was published in 1980 by the Burns Centennial Committee. Early Catholic settlers called the community St. Francis City, but the name was changed to Burns when the Santa Fe railroad built through the town and there was another St. Francis in western Kansas. A major portion of the 100-page paperbound book consists of items taken from 100 years of Burns newspapers. A chapter describes the business community in 1980, and there is a section of family stories and reminiscences. The book is illustrated with early photographs, reproductions of newspaper pages, and maps.

Territorial Days: A Story of Historic Lecompton, Kansas, was published by the Lecompton Historical Society in 1980. The 28-page pamphlet includes a brief history of the town which was for a time the capital of Kansas territory. Other short chapters sketch the background of community churches and schools and such historical landmarks as Lane University and Constitution Hall. There are a number of black and white photographs.

The Wichita County History Association, Leoti, published a *History of Wichita County, Kansas, Volume I*, in 1980. The 508-page volume is a compilation of material submitted by many contributors in a community effort to preserve the stories and memories of county settlers and their descendants. Clyde Blackburn, president of the history association, wrote the introductory article on the early history of the county. Other articles recall skulduggery in the early days, and tornadoes, blizzards, and other perils of pioneering. Profusely illustrated with black and white photo-

graphs, the book also includes short histories of schools, churches, cemeteries, lodges, and organizations. Other features are a list of county teachers, a genealogy section, and a name index.

With few exceptions the obsolete currency of Kansas is rare and seldom encountered according to a catalog published in 1980 by the Society of Paper Money Collectors, Inc., Glen Ridge, N.J. The catalog, *Kansas Obsolete Notes and Scrip* by Steven Whitfield, is combined in one volume with *Indian Territory and Oklahoma Obsolete Notes and Scrip* by Maurice Burgett. The section on Kansas includes a brief history of banking in the state and a list of banks and bankers that operated in Kansas prior to 1864 for which there are no known issues of obsolete notes. Organized by cities of issue, the catalog is illustrated with photographs of the notes and scrip and provides a code of rarity and value. A miscellaneous section lists Kansas "paper" issued after 1870 which was not designed to circulate as money among the general public such as advertising notes and coal company scrip. There is also a section of depression scrip issued in Kansas in 1907, 1914, and 1933.

Discovering Dodge City's Landmarks, by Timothy F. Wenzl, was issued by the author at Dodge City in 1980. The 85-page paperback book sketches the background of famous and less well-known landmarks of the historic cowtown, including Boot Hill, the Sughrue home, the Plainswoman statue, Coronado Cross and Historical Park, and Santa Fe Trail Remains. In his preface the author suggests that Dodge City's current cultural renaissance is evident in such landmarks as the stagecoach mural by Stan Herd, the bronze longhorn steer sculpted by Jasper D'Ambrosi, and the preservation and restoration of the Carnegie Library. His book, illustrated with black and white photographs and location maps, provides an additional perspective to the city's community spirit and heritage.

During the U.S. celebration of the bicentennial in 1976, Kansas Volga-Germans celebrated the centennial of their ancestors' arrival from Russia. *Our Ancestors' Quest for Freedom Realized in Schoenchen, Kansas*, published in 1979 by the Schoenchen Centennial Committee, Hays, is the story of one of the Volga-Ger-

man communities established in western Kansas, the people who settled there, and the church they built at the center of their community life. Written by the Rev. Alvin V. Werth, the 161-page paperbound book contains introductory chapters on the German migration to Russia, the exodus to America, and the founding of Schoenchen in Ellis county. In addition to notes and references and a bibliography, the author provides a 25-page section on the genealogies of the founders and early settlers.

Buck's Grove United Methodist Church, 100 Years of Service, was published in connection with the centennial of the church in the Buck's Grove community in Jackson county. The 110-page paperbound book contains the history of the church from 1879 to 1979, information on community schools, the grange hall, and area families. Interspersed with the historical material are poems, trivia, reminiscences, and articles from area newspapers. The book is illustrated with a number of photographs.

The Mormon people used at least a dozen well-known and not-so-well-known trails and roads from New York to California, from 1831 through 1868, in their emigration to Utah and the West where they sought to establish the new state of Deseret. *Discovering Mormon Trails, New York to California, 1831-1868*, by Stanley B. Kimball, sketches the history of these trails and provides maps to enable modern-day travelers to retrace them. Two of the chapters describe the Mormon battalion march, 1846-1847, from Iowa to California, crossing Kansas, and the Mormon Grove Saints trail, 1855-1856, beginning at Mormon Grove, Kan., in Atchison county, where an unmarked cemetery is all that remains of the site. The 50-page paperbound book is illustrated with maps by Diane Clements, cartographer. It was published in 1979 by Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City.

The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912, by Francis Paul Prucha, concerns the tension and conflict between Protestants and Catholics over Indian mission schools at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The period of conflict from 1888 to 1912 witnessed the end of direct federal appropriations for mission schools, the

fighting waged by Catholics for their schools and such other aims as Catholic instruction in government schools. The success of the Catholics in these struggles after 1900 indicated their growing weight in the political life of the nation. Published in 1979 by the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, the 278-page book has several illustrations, a section of notes, bibliography, and index.

Chronological List of Actions, &c., With Indians From January 15, 1837 to January, 1891 was published in 1979 by the Old Army Press, Fort Collins, Colo. The 79-page book reproduces two lists of battles between the regular army and Indians which were compiled by the War Department at different times. It was published as an office memorandum of the adjutant general's office in 1891. All of the information in the list was taken from official sources that were in the custody of the War Department in 1891 and have since then been transferred to the National Archives. The list provides the date of the action, the name or location, the commanding officer, casualty figures, and pertinent remarks.

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad has been a vital part of Shawnee county history since the 1860's, when the expansion of a rail network was of incalculable value to the rapidly expanding United States. *The Santa Fe in Topeka*, the December, 1979, *Bulletin* of the Shawnee County Historical Society, examines the railroad's history, particularly as it related to the county and its residents, past and present. The 196-page paperbound volume includes standard historical material, some personal views, and many photographs. It also deals with some interesting aspects of the road's development which were at times dramatically innovative in the industry, including the company's apprentice system, reading rooms, and athletic teams. John W. Ripley is the editor and Robert W. Richmond the associate editor, of the publication, which is No. 56 in a series.

Howard C. Raynesford spent the last 40 years of his life before he died in 1967 researching the history of the Butterfield Over-

land Despatch through western Kansas. Wayne C. Lee was so grateful for the trail Raynesford blazed, he listed him as coauthor of his 235-page book, *Trails of the Smoky Hill*, published by Caxton Printers, Ltd., Caldwell, Idaho, in 1980. The Smoky Hill valley was one of the best buffalo pastures in all the Great Plains, and Indians fought some of their bloodiest battles against the invading whites along the banks of the Smoky. This history of the Smoky Hill covers the trails of explorers from Coronado to Fremont, trails of the gold seekers including the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express, the trail of the Butterfield Overland Despatch, and finally, the trail of steel laid for the railroad, which spawned such roaring cowtowns as Abilene and Ellsworth.

Thomas J. Schlereth is the author of *Artifacts and the American Past*, published in 1980 by the American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, Tenn. The 294-page book includes 10 essays on material culture, most of them presented first by the author at professional meetings and conferences, and later printed in various journals. An introduction to the text discusses history outside the history classroom, and a final chapter is concerned with the collecting of ideas and artifacts and the common problems of history museums and history texts. Other chapters consider graphics as artifacts, historic sites as artifacts, and landscapes as artifacts.

The railroad brought to Kansas not only a new age in transportation, but an exposure to a different culture and people, an ethnic experience not welcomed by everyone in the small Kansas towns early in the 20th century. *Riding the Rails to Kansas: The Mexican Immigrants* by Cynthia Mines is a study of how closely intertwined are the histories of the railroad and of the Mexican-American in Kansas. The book, issued by the author at McPherson in 1980, also shows through several character vignettes the experiences of individual Mexicans who came to work on the railroad. The 123-page paperbound book is illustrated with photographs and maps, has several tables, a section of notes and bibliography.



ERRATA, VOLUME IV

Page 15, col. 1, line 22, Henry Castor should be Harry Castor.

Page 191, col. 1, title-page photo caption, line 7, Laura Elizabeth should be Anna Elizabeth.

Page 204, col. 1, line 10, Rock Island Railroad should be Union Pacific railroad.

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ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

A native of Logan county, JOHN M. PETERSON has B.S. and M.A. degrees from the University of Kansas, Lawrence. Now retired from employment in budget work for the U.S. government in the Washington, D.C., area, he lives near Lawrence, and devotes much of his time to gardening and Kansas history. He is a frequent contributor to *Kansas History* and his article, "The Lawrence Windmill," won the Edgar Langsdorf Award for 1980.

CHARLES HARMON CAGLE is associate professor of English at Pittsburg State University. A native of Texas, Cagle has studied at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford, the University of Oklahoma, Norman, and the University of Iowa, Iowa City. He is the author of stage and television dramas, numerous novels and short stories, several scholarly articles, and a textbook on writing fiction. In 1980 Cagle was the first-prize winner of the

Seaton Fiction Award given by the *Kansas Quarterly*.

JOSEPH MANZO is assistant professor of geography at Concord College, Athens, W. Va. He attended Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, and has a Ph.D. from the University of Kansas, Lawrence. Dr. Manzo has presented reports at meetings of the Kansas Academy of Science and the Association of American Geographers, and is the author of an article on the Strawberry Hill section of Kansas City, Kan., in the spring, 1981, issue of *Kansas History*.

SARAH SHIELDS of El Dorado, is a native of Rochester, N.Y. She has a B.A. degree from Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., a M.A. from the University of Kansas, Lawrence, and is currently working on a Ph.D. in history at the University of Chicago.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Dr. William E. Unrau's presidential address before the annual meeting of the Kansas State Historical Society, October 20, 1981, on "Indian Water Rights to the Middle Arkansas: The

Case for the Kaws," will appear in the spring issue of *Kansas History*. Also featured will be an article on gambling in Kansas cowtowns by Dr. Gary L. Cunningham.

KANSAS HISTORY

A JOURNAL OF THE CENTRAL PLAINS



Volume 5
Number One
Spring 1982



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THE COVER

In the Strawberry Hill area of Kansas City, Kan., the cultural traditions from the Croatia sections of Yugoslavia have been preserved. This painting is entitled "Musical Heritage of Strawberry Hill," by Marijana Grisnik. The painting might be considered a self-portrait of its creator. Marijana is pictured painting in the foreground, surrounded by the intertwined cultures of Strawberry Hill and Yugoslavia.



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Forrest R. Blackburn,
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Dot E. Taylor,
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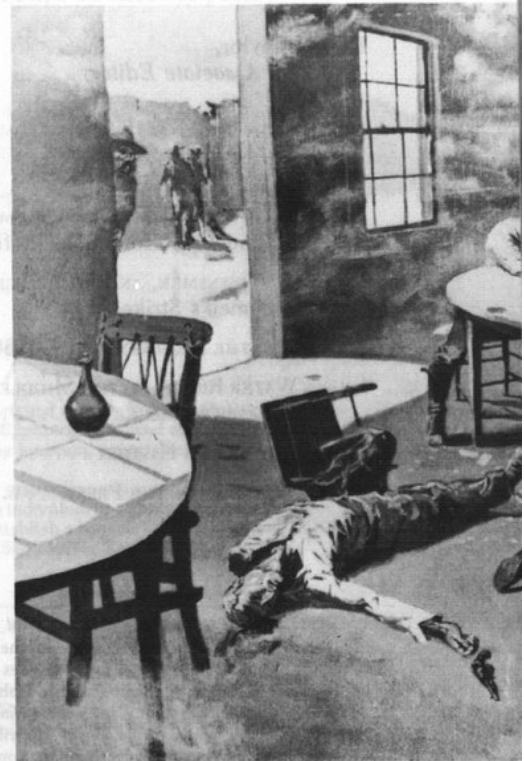
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GAMBLING IN THE KANSAS CATTLE TOWNS: A PROMINENT AND SOMEWHAT HONORABLE PROFESSION

GARY L. CUNNINGHAM

WHEN FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER wrote that he had admittedly “refrained from dwelling on the lawless characteristics of the frontier, because they are sufficiently well known,” he inadvertantly anticipated the prevailing assessment of much of subsequent Western historiography.¹ Turner’s reluctant acknowledgement of this subject was contained in a single terse and encompassing judgment: “The gambler and desperado . . .,” he said, “are types of that line of scum that the waves of advancing civilization bore before them. . . .”² It is my contention that the activities and significance of one such group possessing “lawless characteristics”—professional gamblers—is not “sufficiently well known,” and that rather than being the flotsam of the frontier process was, instead, surprisingly representative of it. For as Ray Allen Billington partially defined it, the frontier was a place “peopled by a variety of individuals bent on applying individual skills to the exploitation of unusually abundant natural resources.”³ In the cattle towns of Kansas, as in much of the American West, gamblers were able to fully exploit the most natural and limitless resource of all—human frailty.

Gambling may not be the world’s oldest profession but it is probably its oldest obses-



1. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1921), pp. 32-33. A notable exception to the general position would be Philip D. Jordan, *Frontier Law and Order: Ten Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970).

2. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, p. 33.

3. Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 3.

LONG BRANCH SALOON.

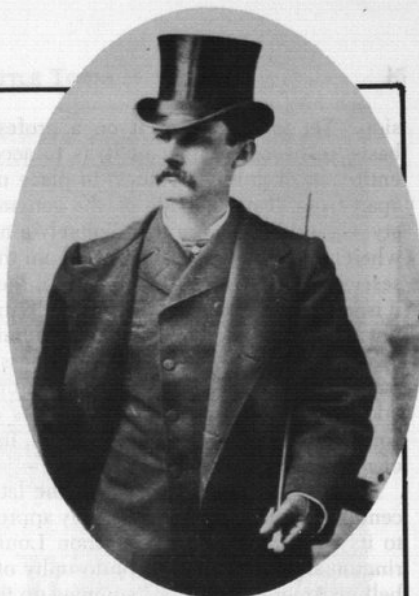
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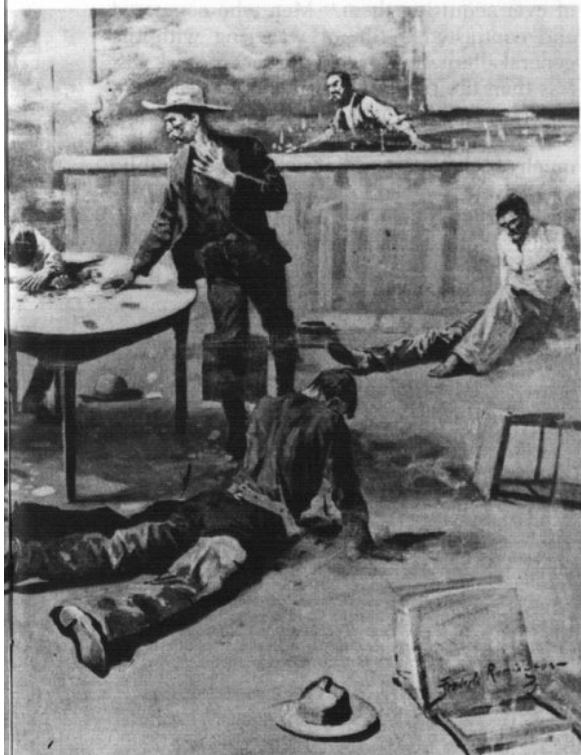


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a Club Room.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS OF STOCKMEN.



Luke L. Short
(1854-1893)



The gambler in Kansas cattle towns enjoyed a local status which transcended the nature of his calling. He often was a man of property, perhaps a partner in the saloon where he plied his trade, and was considered a leader in local society. Like Luke Short, above, he could ooze charm, dress like a dandy, and was an asset to the community. His occupation might be hazardous, however, as is apparent in Frederic Remington's *Misdeal*, reproduced from Remington's *Drawings* (New York: R. H. Russell, 1897).



sion.⁴ Yet to engage in it on a professional basis, to become a part of it, is to accept an entire set of cultural values, to place oneself apart from, if not outside of, the general society. Gambling is more than "merely a method whereby wealth is redistributed from the possession of the many into the hands of the few," it is more than a means of making a living, it is a way of life.⁵ If seen from an economic perspective, it is fundamentally a business occupation, and as such can hardly be deemed at odds with a society in which values are so commonly expressed, if not professed, in terms of monetary standards.

In the larger historical setting, the late 19th century, gambling was particularly appropriate to its societal context. As Vernon Louis Parrington argued, the social philosophy of post-bellum America could be "summed up in three words—preemption, exploitation, progress. . . . Preemption meant exploitation and exploitation meant progress."⁶ These were basically "the days of an acquisitive individualism . . . an age vastly concerned with getting on."⁷ There is much that is subject to debate in Parrington's perhaps overharsh view of the period, but his fundamental assessment, that "the Gilded Age threw itself into the business of money-getting," is difficult to quarrel with.⁸ After all, this was a time that saw John Morrissey become the first former prizefighter and professional gambler to be elected (and reelected) to the congress of the United States.⁹

In such an era, the gamblers who worked the Kansas cattle towns were clearly as much a part of their age as were their more conventional contemporaries. Who they were and what they struggled for and aspired to were recognizable products of the churning forces of post-bellum America.¹⁰ Their notable contemporary Henry George wrote in *Progress and Poverty*, "Get money—honestly if you can, but at any rate get money! This is the lesson that society is daily and hourly dinning into the ears of its members."¹¹ Far better than most, the gamblers understood. To them, money, to paraphrase the legendary Nick the Greek, had always been *the* means of keeping score.¹²

"Gilded Age" gamblers were men who shared their society's goals, who had internalized a desire for its acknowledged symbols of success but for varying reasons had little hope of ever acquiring them.¹³ Men who compared and contrasted a life of wagering with the general alternative, concluded that the risk was less than the potential gain, and proceeded to act accordingly. For those who were susceptible, the wagering profession seemed to offer much of what more ordinary lives, both public and private, seemed to lack—change, independence, escape, a life of zestful self-indulgence which contrasted vividly with the numbing tedium that was all around them.¹⁴ For gam-

9. *Dictionary of American Biography*, v. 13 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), pp. 233-234.

10. Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 44. Milton H. Smith, head of the Louisville and Nashville railroad during this period, said "Society as created, was for the purpose of one man's getting what the other fellow has, if he can, and keep out of the penitentiary."—Ginger, *The Age of Excess*, p. 20. Judging from their own activities, one doubts that the gamblers would have found much fault with Smith's assessment.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

12. Robert D. Herman, *Gamblers and Gambling: Motives, Institutions, and Controls* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1976), p. 6.

13. Illegitimacy adjustment is the contemporary phrase for it, signifying in this instance that "the individual has assimilated the cultural emphasis on success without equally internalizing the morally prescribed norms governing means of attainment." In other words, socially approved ends are known and acknowledged desirable, corresponding means are, for all practical purposes, not. What is involved is the "use of conventionally proscribed but frequently effective means of attaining at least the simulacrum of culturally defined success—wealth, power, and the like." Without violation this can be reduced to society offers, environment or circumstances deny, gambling bridges; or from the perspective of our concern, what virtue ultimately promises, vice seems immediately to provide. Limited occupational opportunities and their concomitant mediocre wages simply are unable to compete "in terms of conventional standards of achievement" with the more obvious rewards promised by gaming.—Robert K. Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," in Mark Lefton et al., eds., *Approaches to Deviance: Theories, Concepts, and Research Findings* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), p. 39.

14. Of course upon arrival the West might well turn out to be something less than envisioned. But then, if the gamblers misperceived the nature of life in the West, that would hardly be different from what other, more conventional, immigrants did.

4. Although the present author is inclined to relegate the psychological component to the ranks of the inconsequential, there is a body of work that stresses the obsessional aspect of gaming. Robert M. Lindner in his "The Psychodynamics of Gambling," for instance, has a classic Freudian interpretation of slot machine playing as symbolic and/or substitute masturbation, beginning with the tantalizing, suggestively inviting aura of the machine itself, followed by the rhythmic, methodical motion of the handle—not to mention its rather specific shape—and finally culminating with the ejaculatory spewing forth of money. In between he also manages to discover symptomatic evidence of bedwetting, oedipal desire, and a death wish for one's father.—*Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Philadelphia, v. 269 (May, 1950), pp. 93-107.

5. Virgil W. Peterson, "Obstacles to Enforcement of Gambling Laws," *Ibid.*, p. 17.

6. Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, v. 3, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: 1860-1920* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956), p. 9.

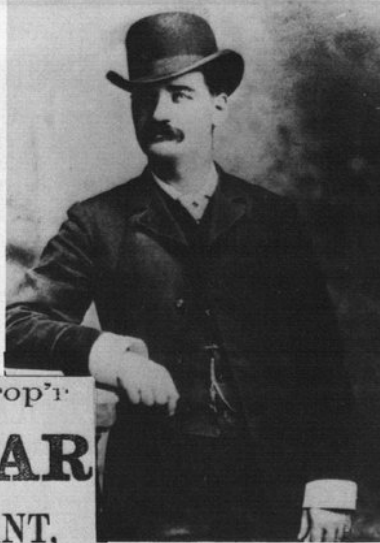
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 69.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 17. "Doubtless men tend to think always that an earlier time was a happier time, a more innocent time. . . . The Mark Twain who wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was certainly aware of the human evil in the Civil War. But he recalled that nobody in his youth had worshiped money. . . . Twain, along with other observers so diverse that they would have agreed about little else—Henry Adams, Willa Cather, William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, Walt Whitman—thought that the acquisitive spirit increasingly held dominion."—Ray Ginger, *The Age of Excess: The United States From 1877 to 1914* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1975), p. 19.

GAMBLING IN THE KANSAS CATTLE TOWNS

5

William B. "Bat" Masterson (1853-1921), Indian fighter, gambler, sheriff, and newspaperman, recalled that gambling "was not only the principal and best paying industry . . . it was also reckoned among . . . [the] most respectable." At one point in his Dodge City career he was part owner of the Lone Star saloon and dance hall, and in 1885 was elected the most popular man in town.



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bling, based as it is upon a primal affinity for games of chance, has a timeless appeal, conjuring images of success without struggle or sacrifice repeatedly achieved against a backdrop of sustained, intense excitement. An activity grounded in fundamental human emotions, it is capable of assuming almost mystic proportions, transcending even the limits of want and greed. "Gambling," wrote Theodore Reik, "is a sort of question addressed to destiny."¹⁵ If so, regardless of the answers received, much of mankind has yet to tire of asking the question. For those who were especially subject to its allure, once it was envisioned as a personal and occupational panacea, gambling beckoned irresistibly.¹⁶

15. Richard A. Epstein, *The Theory of Gambling and Statistical Logic* (New York: Academic Press, 1967), p. 433.

16. No attempt is made here to provide a conclusive assessment of gambling in the "Gilded Age." However, the following personal analysis by the contemporary professional Walter Clyde "Pug" Pearson is perhaps representative of more than one man and more than one time: "When you're a kid, you got no sense of time. And time just naturally passes quickest in a poker game. You know, it seems like I got in one game, fooled around winning and this and that—and five or six years had gone by."

"What was it all about? . . . The truth is, there in the beginning, it was a matter of gambling from necessity. [It] is just another kind of business. Like running a store. You buy and you sell; pay the going price for your cards and then try and sell them for more than you paid. If I can do it at a poker table, I know damn well I could do it somewhere else. [Of course no where else ever mattered.]"—Los Angeles Times, June 22, 1976, pt. 1, pp. 20-21.

However, by the late 19th century the sporting fraternity was well on its way to becoming corporate and controlled, to becoming the mass impersonalized activity that it is today, a conglomerate industry whose basic unit is no longer the professional gambler but that marvel of symbolic technology, the slot machine. Due in part to this process of modernization, numbers of careerists unable to become, in effect, franchised gamesters, set out for the West, to its relatively unencumbered boom camps and towns, including those of Kansas.¹⁷

IN ABILENE, the first of the Kansas cattle towns, a resident and chronicler recalled the

17. "Pioneers normally chose to settle where they believed they could continue their traditional ways of life and thought without serious disruption, but where their own status in the social group would be elevated."—Ray Allen Billington, *America's Frontier Heritage* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), p. 28.

The cattle towns of Kansas—Abilene, Ellsworth, Wichita, Caldwell, Newton, and Dodge City—were chosen as the milieu to be specifically surveyed in this article because they were in many ways typical of frontier boom areas and were at varying times in their history populated and visited by a representative sample of Western gamblers, see, for example, *Ellsworth Reporter*, July 7, 1872. Positioned in the midst of the expanding agricultural development of the Great Plains and nexus-like between disembarking centers of the East and the gold and silver regions of the Rocky mountains, and the Texas borderlands of the South and the mining areas of the Dakotas to the north, the Kansas cattle towns witnessed much, if not all, that these great movements of men, money, and empire, i.e., the farming, mining, cattle, and transportation frontiers, had to offer.



The gambler's main business was the pursuit of money, the ultimate status symbol. Saloons where the business was conducted varied greatly. Some were designed for subdued and congenial conversation, while others seemed dedicated to promoting such manly arts as drunkenness and fisticuffs. Representative institutions of the latter persuasion were common, those of the former were rare. Pictured here is the Varieties, a Dodge City dance hall.

impact and appropriateness of the gaming spirit to local life:

Men and women trusted in Luck, loved it, feared it, cursed it. They bet on it, not on Jehovah or the Devil. What made Luck popular on this lonely advancing . . . border was its "chumminess." It lent itself and suited itself directly to the informal daily intercourse. . . . A deck of cards on a table or plank displayed on the Plains the altar of this deity, and card games constituted its rites. . . . Can the god hidden among the aces and deuces be other than Luck? . . . How pat the ceremonial . . . fitted into the widespread betting habits in the cult of Luck!¹⁸

Like the locals, the gamblers who sojourned in the Kansas cattle towns possessed that qualification so characteristic of the pioneer, the "urge to reach beyond the monotony of life by

deliberately embracing the unpredictable."¹⁹ They were men who correctly saw in the risk-oriented frontier an unbounded field for their talents, professionals who would gamble on the fortunes of those gambling on the fortunes of the West.²⁰ Having made their decision, they simply transferred their pursuance of that particularly American deity called Luck to the plains of Kansas where some of the more orthodox seekers of fortune's favors, called frontiersmen, awaited them.

19. Adrian Waller, *The Gamblers* (Toronto: Irwin Clark, 1974), p. 14.

20. "Most [urban pioneers] were restless seekers after wealth who, driven onward by failure at home or the hope of greater profits in a new country, deliberately selected a promising frontier community as the site of their next experiment in fortune making."—Billington, *Westward Expansion*, p. 7. The West naturally loomed before the enterprising as a magnificent land of plenty. Money and freedom it proffered, a combination that few of any persuasion, conventional or otherwise, find unappealing.

18. Stuart Henry, *Conquering Our Great American Plains: A Historical Development* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1930), p. 241.