[In Progress] Kansas history: a journal of the central plains

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like Skirving. The claims of Edie and Kerr that Kansas was too unhealthy or otherwise unsuitable for settlement could be dismissed as "without sufficient ground" for further debate. On the other hand, MacDonald could recognize that Smellie's complaints, based on several months' residence in the West, might carry more weight with readers and could not be so lightly dismissed. Instead MacDonald tried threats. Stating that Smellie must know that his claims about the coldness of Kansas winters, the depressed state of the cattle trade, low crop yields, and the slowness of Americans to buy land in Kansas are "hearsay evidence . . . utterly false and libellous," MacDonald ended by warning Smellie "and others about bringing charges against the agent of a company like ours. . . . If he repeats this . . . he may be brought to book, not in the columns of a public newspaper, but in a court where the law of libel punishes its offenders."

Not that such threats would silence the critics. Only the editor of *The Courant* could, in effect, do that, and he was close to making that decision. Curror was given one final opportunity to respond to MacDonald's attack on him, but he chose only to list all those aspects of Kansas, its climate, soils, crop prices, and markets on which Scotsmen would need more information before deciding to settle there.[33] Once wells were sunk, shelterbelts planted, prairie fires controlled, markets established, and houses erected "in which Scottish folks could dwell" then this part of Kansas could become, in Curror's view, "an abiding-place for civilised [*sic*] beings." Likewise, Edie and Smellie chose calming language in their final responses to MacDonald's threats.[34] They could, of course, afford to lower the temperature of the debate, and merely repeated their cases against emigration to Kansas, because their objective—to sow seeds of doubt about the wisdom of Grant's colony—had been achieved.

Even the conservative journal, *The Farmer*, in an article about Grant's colony which was published at about the same time that the correspondence in *The Courant* was being drawn to a close, noted "a kind of division in the camp of Kansas" and largely repeated Curror's criticism of the inadequacy of the Skirving report as the basis for deciding if Scotsmen should join the colony.[35] Three weeks later *The Field*, a London-based countryman's magazine which kept a correspondent permanently in the American West, carried a report of his visit to Victoria.[36] Pointing out that Grant was about to depart for England "with the purpose of returning in the spring with a large party of colonists," the article presented a generally favorable picture of the progress that Grant and his wealthier colonists had made in stocking their lands with good quality cattle and sheep. Unfortunately, *The Field*'s readership would not provide the considerable number of small farmers Grant sought. Additionally, neither the decision of *The Courant* editor to close the correspondence on the colony on a strongly anti-Kansas note nor the failure of any other British newspaper to take up the story of Grant's progress with his colony helped his plan to attract more settlers. As a result, the small parties of emigrants that later set off for Victoria did so without publicity, and little more was heard of them, or of Grant, in Britain.

Without the numbers of settlers he really hoped for, Grant had to give more attention to stocking his own land and disposing of other land for stock farms to wealthy colonists, rather than to small crop Scottish farmers.[37] By 1875 the future was seen essentially in terms of developing ranches for "the landed gentry of England and the wealthy merchants of the United States," even though small numbers of British settlers trickled in each spring over the next few years.[38] As such, the progress of Victoria was no longer of any interest to the Scottish or English press. When letters appeared in *The Field* early in 1877 complaining of the grasshoppers and low profits which plagued Kansas farmers, their correspondent revisited Grant's colony only to be disappointed by the limited progress made since his visit three years previously.[39] Grant's venture had turned out to be little different from those of many other land speculators who relied more on favorable publicity than evidence of progress to give them success. Four years after the establishment of the colony *The Field* correspondent saw little evidence of cropping, and Grant still held most of the range. With only five of the original thirty families of colonists still living around Victoria he pronounced that he was "a profound disbeliever in English colonies here." It was a sentiment that, in their silence, was shared by all British newspaper editors. KH

33. Ibid., November 24, 1873, p. 7.

34. Edie's final letter appeared in *The Courant*, December 2, 1873, p. 3, with Smellie's following two days later on December 4, 1873, p. 7. At the end of that letter the editor stated that he would accept no more correspondence on the subject.

35. *The Farmer*, London, December 8, 1873.

36. *The Field*, London, January 3, 1874.

37. In February 1876, for example, the *American Agriculturalist* published an illustration of the cattle corral being constructed to house one thousand head on Grant's ranch. *American Agriculturalist* 35 (February 1876): 60.

38. *New York Tribune*, March 25, 1875.

39. The letters appeared in *The Field* on January 27 and February 10, 1877, the article by the magazine's correspondent appearing on March 10, 1877, p. 279. Because the article was unfavorable to the colony MacDonald, the Kansas Pacific Railway agent in England, wrote a refutation which appeared in *The Field*, April 7, 1877, p. 412.

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Charles M. Sheldon and the Uplift of Tennesseetown

by Timothy Miller

CHARLES M. SHELDON of Topeka was a prominent religious leader at the turn of the century, and arguably the most prominent Kansan of his era. Sheldon was a household name throughout—and beyond—the Protestant world. Although the generation which has grown up in the last half century is often not familiar with him—fame, alas, is transitory—many still remember him as a popular writer, a compassionate pastor, and a paragon of virtue in daily living.

While pastor of Central Congregational Church in Topeka, Sheldon wrote a spectacular best seller, an inspirational novel called *In His Steps* which sold tens of millions of copies—exactly how many we will never know because a defective copyright let the book be issued by over seventy publishers and no overall sales records have ever been kept. It may well still be the best selling novel of all time; at last report it was in print in some eight American editions in English and one in Spanish. The book was published in 1897, and sales reached their zenith in about 1900. Protestants, Catholics, and even many non-Christians were absorbed by the simple story of a band of midwestern Protestants who vowed to live lives in which they would do their best to act at all times as Jesus would, asking, when faced with a moral decision, "what would Jesus do?"[1]

Sheldon also received a good deal of public attention when, in 1900, he decided to apply the question "What would Jesus do?" to the operation of a daily newspaper. He had long advocated the founding of a Christian daily newspaper as an alternative to the popular press, which he considered coarse and insufficiently uplifting. Frederick O. Popenoe, then the owner of the *Topeka Daily Capital*, offered him total editorial authority over that paper for a week, and Sheldon diligently showed the world—circulation that week topped 360,000 per day—what clean journalism could look like.[2]

Most of what has been recorded of the life of Sheldon, however, quits at that point. Beyond the book and the newspaper, the record—at least in the sense of reliable scholarship—is nearly blank. This article seeks to fill one part of that gap, because Sheldon was far more than the author of a single best seller or the proprietor of a highly publicized journalistic experiment. He was a dedicated social reformer, a sometime critic of many features of organized religion, a champion of the rights of labor, minorities and women, a powerful spokesman for prohibition and pacifism, a prodigiously hardworking pastor, and a loving friend to the thousands of Topekans who adored him. Here we will examine the work of Charles M. Sheldon in his earliest major social-reform project, one in which he helped improve the living conditions of Topeka's destitute blacks.

Sheldon arrived in Topeka in 1889, having been called to pastor the newly founded Central Church, and found that the new church building, then still under construction, was located adjacent to Tennesseetown, a squalid settlement of ex-slaves who had managed to escape wretchedly poor living conditions on southern farms only to end up equally poor in the urban North. Sheldon, who from early childhood had been taught by his parents the essential equality of all human beings, spent three weeks studying Tennesseetown intensively, and by the end of that period was so appalled at what he had seen there that he was ready to undertake a major series of projects to help lead the settlement up from destitution. The projects were innovative for their day, and they provided Sheldon with his first taste of fame for they were reported throughout the Midwest and in social gospel religious publications even further afield. They also provided Sheldon with the stuff of one of his books, a thinly disguised piece of fiction called *The Redemption of Freetown*.[3]

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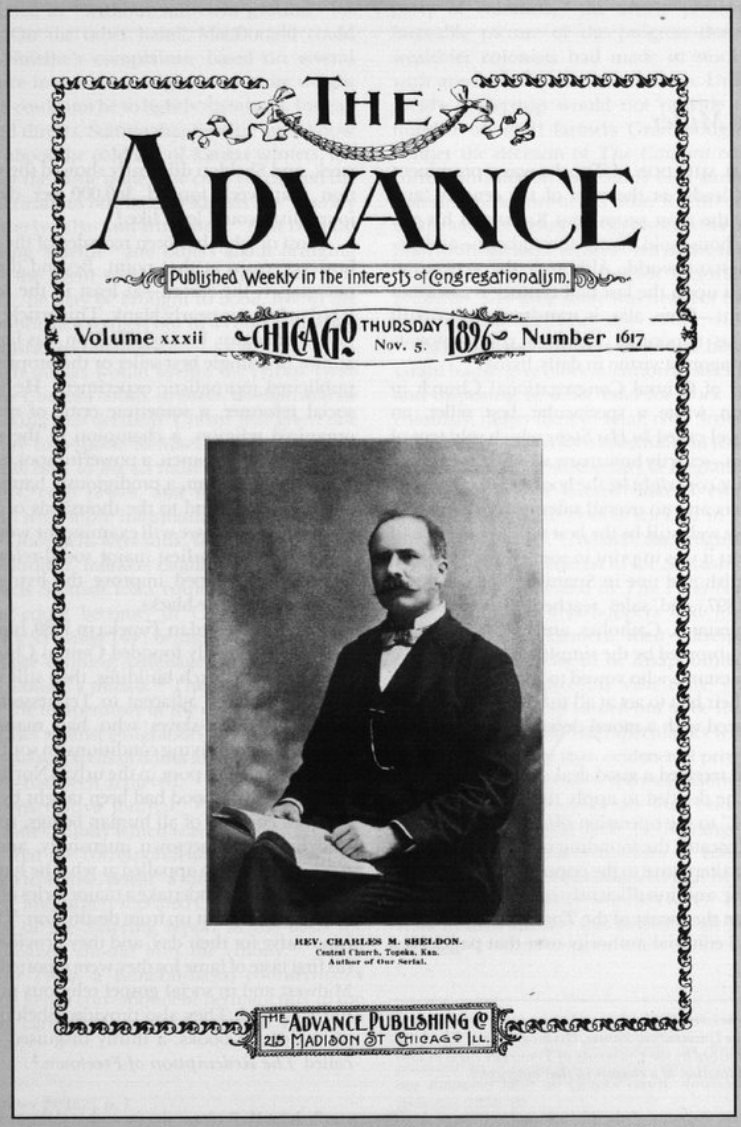
1. The two best accounts of the phenomenal success of *In His Steps* were both written by John W. Ripley. See John W. Ripley, "Last Rites for a Few Myths," *Shawnee County Historical Society Bulletin*, no. 44 (Winter 1967): 14-26, and John W. Ripley, "The Strange Story of Charles M. Sheldon's *In His Steps*," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 34 (Autumn 1968): 241-65.

2. John W. Ripley is also the author of the most complete study of Sheldon's Christian daily newspaper project. See John W. Ripley, "Another Look at the Rev. Mr. Charles M. Sheldon's Christian Daily Newspaper," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 31 (Spring 1965): 1-40.

3. Charles M. Sheldon, *The Redemption of Freetown* (Boston: United Society of Christian Endeavor, 1898).


THE ADVANCE

Published Weekly in the interests of Congregationalism.

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REV. CHARLES M. SHELDON.
Central Church, Topeka, Kan.
Author of Our Serial.

THE ADVANCE PUBLISHING CO
215 MADISON ST CHICAGO ILL.

The Advance, *a Congregational weekly based in Chicago, originally published Sheldon's* In His Steps *in serial form, and it was for this work that Sheldon became best known.*

The Tennesseetown settlement emerged as a result of the Compromise of 1877, which ended Reconstruction and led to a massive emigration of ex-slaves out of the South. Stories circulated of cheap lands in the West, and thousands of these "exodusters," as they came to be called, left the Mississippi Valley for unknown destinations. Kansas was as logical a place to stop as any; the state had been admitted into the Union in 1861, at the beginning of the Civil War, and was widely known as a bastion of antislavery sentiment. There were already a few blacks living more or less comfortably, if not elegantly, in Topeka, and so about 1879 a pilot party showed up to survey eastern Kansas and found it acceptable. The exodusters begged passage as fourth-class freight from their Tennessee homeland to St. Louis. Because they were not wanted there, they received charitable assistance which sent them on up the Missouri River to the Kansas City area.[4] Unwanted there, they were sent upriver to Topeka where some of them were taken in.[5]

By 1880 some forty thousand exodusters had passed through Topeka. About three thousand of them stayed, making their homes on the southwestern outskirts of town. A bankrupt real estate development had left some very cheap lots for sale; the exodusters congregated there in such numbers that the area has been called "Tennesseetown" ever since.[6]

Many people in Topeka were less than thrilled about the influx of large numbers of destitute and uneducated ex-slaves whose clothing was little more than rags and who had no money at all.[7] Dr. Karl Menninger has noted that white racism was rampant then: "I wish I could recall and put into words the attitude of people toward blacks in those days. It was almost as if someone had imported a lot of people with leprosy or cancer or something terrible."[8] Topeka's Republican mayor Michael C. Case and other public officials refused to spend public funds or use municipal facilities to help the strangers, stating that the time and money would be better spent sending the emigrants back to the South.

Some of the churches were not much more helpful than the government. The Board of Church Extension of the Kansas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church met in Topeka in April 1879 to address the situation of the exodusters and adjourned without providing any material relief; they instead discussed "how they shall be educated and christianized and prepared for honorable citizenship."[9] But gradually help began to emerge. First Congregational Church, true to its New England antislavery roots, provided some services and helped underwrite the construction of the Tennesseetown Congregational Church building, with the understanding that it would be a relief center as well as a religious edifice.[10]

Houses began to be built, mainly by the residents, although few of them were more than shacks hardly suitable for prairie winters. Gradually other urban conveniences—small businesses, schools, churches—came to dot the Tennesseetown landscape, and it was clear even to the hardliners that the exodusters were in Topeka to stay. In the 1880 census, blacks were found to constitute thirty-one percent of the city's population—a higher percentage of blacks than was found in New Orleans (thirty percent) that year.[11]

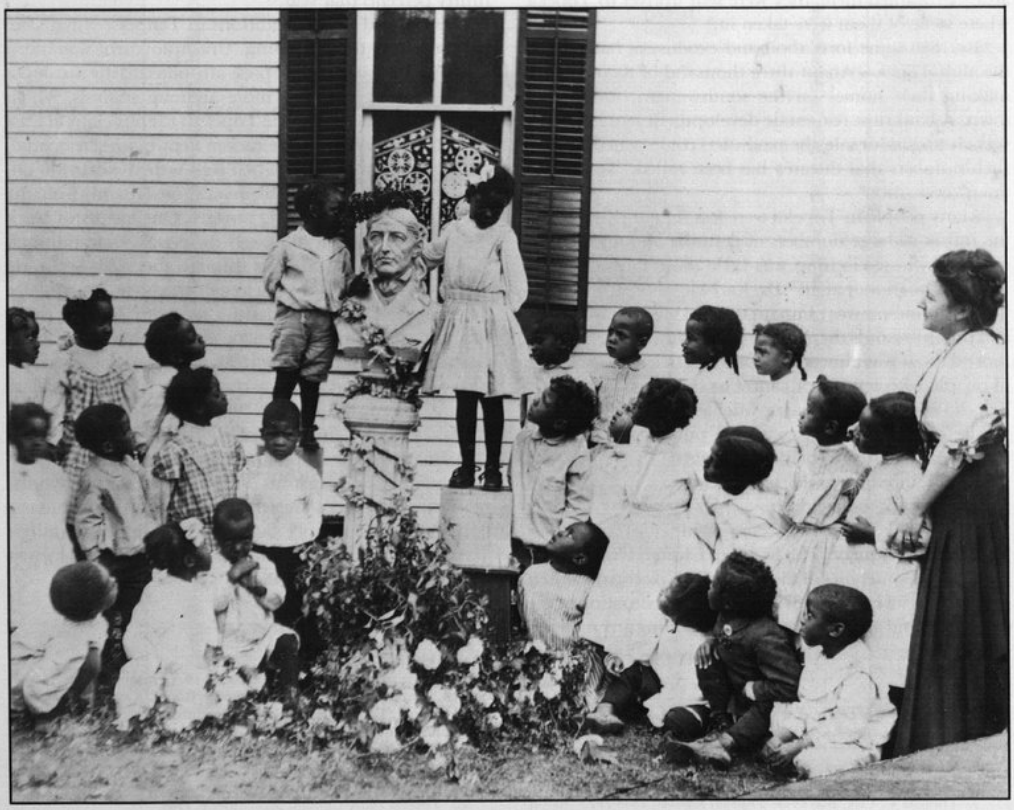
Living and social conditions in Tennesseetown were abysmal from the beginning. Unemployment was rife, a fact which the local white press attributed to the incompetence of the settlers.[12] A more accurate analysis, which Sheldon was the first white Topekan to enunciate, at least in public, was that white racism kept blacks in menial, terribly underpaid jobs, when jobs were available at all, and Tennesseetown's problems stemmed mainly from the neighborhood's wrenching poverty. One history of black Topeka reports that although there was some minimal improvement in conditions through the 1880s and early 1890s (some residents began to garden and traded produce for clothing and other necessities, for example), the district had minimal, if any, medical or educational or other basic human services, and by the 1890s it had become the center of a fair amount of illegal activity with "dramshops" and "Popular Resorts for Sports" being advertised regularly in the black press.[13] Frequent police patrols tried to contain rampant juvenile crime and gambling, and even such police duty was dangerous.[14] Perhaps the biggest symbol of Tennesseetown's freewheeling nature was Jordan's Hall, a large one-story building built by one Andrew Jordan, a black, in the middle of the settlement for use

4. F. W. Giles, *Thirty Years in Topeka: A Historical Sketch* (Topeka: Geo. W. Crane & Co., 1886; reprinted, Topeka: Capper Special Services, 1960), 152.
5. Interview with Lenore Stratton, August 19, 1981.
6. Giles, *Thirty Years*, 153.
7. Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas, 1865-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 48.
8. Interview with Dr. Karl Menninger, August 27, 1981.
9. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 52.
10. A. B. Whiting, "The Beginning of Central Congregational Church," manuscript, Sheldon Memorial Room, Central Congregational Church, Topeka. Early Topeka city directories refer to the church in Tennesseetown as the "Colored Congregational Church," but contemporary Central Church documents consistently use the name "Tennesseetown."
11. Giles, *Thirty Years*, 153.
12. *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 9, 1906.
13. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 105-107.
14. *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 9, 1906.

as a dance hall. Fights usually accompanied the weekly dances, and liquor was always for sale.[15]

The Central Church site bordering Tennesseetown gave Sheldon a good vantage point. That the ghetto was a seamy place was well enough known in Topeka, but Sheldon surprised many of his fellow white citizens by plunging into the settlement for three weeks, not long after arriving in Topeka. What Sheldon did at that time was to conduct a simple sociological study, the results of which he published in the social gospel magazine *The Kingdom* a few years later. He found about eight hundred people in Tennesseetown, divided into three "distinct classes": those raised on plantations who had come to Kansas during the Great Exodus; men and women who were children during the exodus and "have been raised under a definition of freedom which uses 'liberty' and 'lawlessness' as synonymous"; and children ten years old and under, including about one hundred between three and seven who might be considered of kindergarten age. Sheldon found four black churches which "were controlled by negro preachers, and exercising considerable influence, but not very much that could be called Christian influence." He noted seeing ignorance, poverty, vice, idleness, and rowdyism. During Sheldon's three weeks he ate, worked, and talked with the residents, spending quite a bit of time in their homes and seeing their sordid poverty up close. At the end of the period he published his conclusions, protesting the closing of decent jobs to blacks and the white prejudice which seemed so

15. Robert A. Swan, Jr., *The Ethnic Heritage of Topeka, Kansas: Immigrant Beginnings* (N.p.: Institute of Comparative Ethnic Studies, 1974), 72.



Tennesseetown kindergarteners pose with a bust of Freidrich Froebel, father of the kindergarten movement, during a school celebration of his birthday. Teacher June Chapman can be seen at right.

pervasive and finding that the biggest part of the solution lay in reforming the attitudes of whites: "I do not have much hope of Christianizing the negro until we have Christianized the Anglo-Saxon. It is a present question with me now, sometimes, which race needs it more."[16] Tame stuff now, perhaps, but in the mid-nineties Sheldon was a lot more perceptive than most members of his race.

Congregational and other Protestant missionary activity was being pursued in Tennesseetown well prior to the foundation of Central Church. In Sheldon's first study of the settlement in 1891 he found four churches there, three of them with pastors.[17] One of those churches was the Tennesseetown Congregational Church, a small missionary outpost. Tennesseetown as a whole was in any event largely unchurched, and the churches that existed were feeble, unable to combat the area's towering social problems.

Sheldon's first contacts with Tennesseetown were apparently hostile ones, as the self-described "rabid prohibitionist" urged raids on Jordan's speakeasy. But by 1891 Sheldon and a nearby Presbyterian minister, a Mr. Harris, began to give lectures every other Monday night to the men and boys of the settlement. The first one was an illustrated chemical and electrical lecture on "Light"; later ones in the series were on such topics as "One Dollar and What It Can Buy," "A Quart of Whiskey and What It Can Do," and "What Has Been Done for the Negro Since the War." The lectures were apparently popular, and Sheldon and Harris used them as a foot in Tennesseetown's door. They began to visit the homes of those who attended the lectures, as well as other homes where they might find interested persons. Thus, in fairly short order they were able to learn quite a bit about Tennesseetown.[18]

This informal survey, incidentally, was only the first of several serious efforts on the part of Central Church members to find out in detail about the needs of their black neighbors. The most important such effort was a probing house-to-house survey undertaken by Leroy Halbert and Mrs. M. L. Sherman in 1898. They visited 146 families, inquiring about religious preference (sixty-one families each for Baptist and Methodist Episcopal; six each for Catholic, Christian, and Congregational; one for Presbyterian; and five either had no preference or had not spoken to the survey takers); earnings (the average was $6.15 per week for men, $3.22 for women); average house size (3 1/2 rooms); health; marital status; birth situation (167 had been born slaves); educational level achieved (generally quite low); and a host of other things. They discovered a very few fairly prosperous Tennesseetown residents, notably John Williams who lived in a five-room painted house with a piano, made twelve hundred dollars per year, subscribed to the newspaper, and owned two hundred books. The norm, however, was a household consisting of approximately six persons with few, if any, of those goods enjoyed by the Williams family, and on the opposite end of the spectrum was the Wallace family with twenty-three children all living at home, no assets, and virtually no income. The census document recording these findings makes for fascinating reading.[19]

But we are getting ahead of our story. Sheldon's early and less comprehensive survey led him to the conclusion that several important social services needed to be supplied to the settlement, and he determined that the first would be a kindergarten. Andrew Jordan, the dance hall and speakeasy proprietor, readily agreed to lease his building for two years for the project (one must presume that the price offered him was more lucrative than income from the dance-hall business), and in the summer of 1892 fund raising was undertaken in earnest. Some of the children who would be in the kindergarten helped raise money for it; Leroy Halbert's history of the Tennesseetown projects tells that a choir of "fifteen little darkey boys" sang a program of plantation songs at Central Church and made some money for the project.[20] More substantial amounts of money were raised from white charitable organizations and from individuals.

The renovation of Jordan Hall (which for the duration of the kindergarten's stay there was known as Union Hall) was a first step; the building had never been properly finished and was in poor repair. Many Central Church young people spent long evenings working on the structure and then plastering and painting.[21] By spring the work had been finished, and the first black kindergarten west of the Mississippi opened its doors on April 3, 1893, in the hall on Lincoln Street between King (now Munson) and Twelfth. There were three teachers: Carrie R. Roberts, the principal, and assistants Jeanette Miller and Margaret Adams. By the time the lease with Andrew Jordan expired two years later, the kindergarten had become such a resounding success that more permanent quarters were established for it in the Tennesseetown

16. Charles M. Sheldon, "A Local Negro Problem," *The Kingdom* 8 (April 10, 1896): 828.
17. Charles M. Sheldon, "Sociology from the Preacher's Standpoint," *Seminary Notes* 14 (December 1891): 80.
18. Ibid.
19. 1898 Tennesseetown Census, Kansas State Historical Society. See also, *Topeka Daily Capital*, March 3, 1973.
20. Leroy A. Halbert, *Across the Way: A History of the Work of Central Church, Topeka, Kansas, in Tennesseetown* (privately printed, 1900), 4.
21. Glenn Clark, *The Man Who Walked in His Steps* (St. Paul: Macalester Park Publishing Co., 1946), 8.

"Game time" at the kindergarten brought the children out of doors.

Congregational Church building down the street to the north.

Many of the people of Tennesseetown had misgivings about the white intrusion into their community; some of them, quite naturally, saw it as an enemy invasion. But many Tennesseetown mothers had a desperate need for day care, and the kindergarten was a lifesaver for them. The children immediately liked the kindergarten, and their parents soon appreciated the colorful craft projects their children began to carry home. Soon the kindergarten's acceptance was total, and a foot was in Tennesseetown's door.[22] Dozens of Tennesseetown children were enrolled from the first; by 1900, there had been 287 of them, including 57 enrolled at that time. The school stayed in business for eighteen years, until 1910, by which time the city of Topeka had decided to support kindergartens and this one was moved to nearby Buchanan School.[23] Some of the alumni became important leaders in the Topeka black community, using the kindergarten as a first step toward formal education which would help lift them out of poverty. Probably the most prominent alumnus was Elisha Scott, in whom Sheldon took a special interest and years later arranged financial support for Scott to attend law school at Washburn University. Scott became a leading Topeka attorney, as did his sons John Scott and Charles Sheldon Scott. The Scotts argued many early civil rights and school desegregation cases. Their most illustrious moment came in 1954 when Charles Scott argued the winning side of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation case before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Scott family law firm continues to handle civil rights cases today.

Little information has been preserved about what actually was done on a daily basis in the kindergarten during its first five years. In February 1898, however, an assistant in training, Mrs. June Chapman, was promoted to the head teachership when her predecessor resigned, and she kept that job for twelve years—as long as the kindergarten lasted.[24] A good deal of information has been preserved from her era.

Chapman's first morning on the job, it appears, was chaotic with children running everywhere. As their first task, the teachers undertook to clean up their charges, washing them and putting clean aprons over their dirty clothes. Evidently Chapman's cleanliness program infiltrated the children's homes because by 1900 they were reported to be arriving in neat and clean fashion.[25] Making an impact on Tennesseetown home life, in fact, seemed to be a main point of Chapman's program. For example, she had the children eat lunch at the kindergarten every Friday in order to drill them in table manners, and once she made each child a set of cardboard keys, writing on them such things as "Good morning," "Good night," "If you please," and "Thank you."

But Chapman did not limit her interest in home life to instructing her pupils. She also made a regular practice of

22. *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 9, 1906.
23. Ibid., November 17, 1963.
24. *Topeka State Journal*, November 17, 1928.
25. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 5.

visiting Tennesseetown homes in the afternoons, and soon became welcome in homes throughout the settlement. Several of the women of Tennesseetown joined her in the visits. Among them was "Aunty" Ransome, an elderly ex-slave who also visited the kindergarten from time to time to tell stories of slavery days.

The warm response Chapman received to her home visits led her to create an organization, a sort of PTA, for the mothers of the pupils. On one Wednesday afternoon a mothers' meeting was held at the kindergarten, and so many mothers attended and voiced their enthusiasm about the project that a permanent organization was formed.[26] A December 1900 count showed forty-three Tennesseetown mothers in the Sheldon League of American Mothers.[27] By 1906, at least, the Sheldon Congress of Mothers, as it was then called, was planning its monthly meetings so carefully that an annual brochure listing meetings and topics was printed.[28] Meanwhile, Chapman organized yet another group, the Tennesseetown Kindergarten Auxiliary, from outside the settlement to provide volunteer help with the class and to help raise funds for equipment and supplies.[29]

In the summer the kindergarteners got lessons in gardening. An undated clipping from the turn-of-the-century era described the young students as getting ready to harvest the produce of their garden at King and Lincoln streets: cotton, watermelons, and popcorn, "as well as a number of other garden and field products."[30] They also grew flowers, and at least once took advantage of a *Topeka Daily Capital* seed giveaway designed to promote flower gardening among children. Chapman marched her charges down to the newspaper office to pick up the seeds, and the paper reported that "They yelled with a vim, and the boys swung their caps in the air over their heads while straining in their lungs to the utmost. They brought with them some handsome tulips which they raised on the kindergarten grounds from bulbs planted last fall."[31]

Yet another Chapman project was a kindergarten band, an ensemble of twenty-five cornets, which specialized in marches.[32] There were other outings as well, including one to the state capitol where the class visited Gov. Edward W. Hoch.[33] There were also frequent special observances at the kindergarten building. In 1898, for example, the kindergarten had a celebration of the birthday of Friedrich Froebel, founder of the kindergarten movement, with lots of colorful decorations, a new picture of Froebel, and a grand march around the classroom with the children carrying American and German flags.[34] Once a year there was a "crumb party" for feeding birds and animals in the winter.

The verdict on Chapman's leadership seems to be unanimous. She did marvelous work for the kindergarten,

26. "Kindergarten Notes," undated newspaper clipping, kindergarten scrapbook, Sheldon Memorial Room. See also *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 9, 1906.

Mrs. June R. Chapman is credited, primarily through her leadership at Sheldon's kindergarten, with pioneering early education in the Topeka school system.

27. *Topeka Daily Capital*, December 16, 1900.
28. *Sheldon Congress of Mothers, 1906-7: Parents Meeting at Sheldon Kindergarten*, pamphlet, Kansas State Historical Society.
29. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 6.
30. "Colored Children Grow Cotton Here," undated newspaper clipping from *Topeka Daily Journal*, kindergarten scrapbook, Sheldon Memorial Room.
31. "Organized the Last Juvenile Flower Club," undated newspaper clipping from *Topeka Daily Capital*, kindergarten scrapbook, Sheldon Memorial Room.
32. "Colored Children Have Cornet Band," undated newspaper clipping, kindergarten scrapbook, Sheldon Memorial Room.
33. "Governor Hoch and the Colored Kindergartners," undated newspaper clipping, kindergarten scrapbook, Sheldon Memorial Room.
34. *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 22, 1898.

and probably played no little part in convincing the citizens of Topeka to fund kindergartens in all the elementary schools of the city. Twice Chapman and her charges received recognition from other parts of the country for their work. In 1904 she packed up some of the children's arts and crafts and sent them to a kindergarten competition at the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exhibition, gaining second place in the nationwide contest. Another bundle of similar materials was sent to the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition in 1907, and another national second prize was awarded to the Topeka youngsters. Incidentally, the name of the school was changed at the time of the St. Louis competition; the proud Kansas sponsors of the entry feared that those attending the fair might confuse Tennesseetown with the state of Tennessee, and so the name of the kindergarten was changed from "Tennesseetown" to "Sheldon."[35]

Sheldon himself was held in near-reverence by the children. His frequent visits were favorite occasions in the classroom, and at least once, in 1905, when Sheldon was ill, the students made a wicker basket, filled it with a pumpkin, popcorn, vegetables and flowers they had raised, and rolled it in a wagon over to his house. Sheldon repaid the compliment by writing a verse in honor of the pupils:

> My brother of whatever tongue or race,
> Whatever be the color of thy skin;
> Tho' either white or black or brown thy face,
> Thou art in God's great family—my kin.[36]

In 1981 there was at least one surviving student from the Sheldon kindergarten, Minus Gentry, then eighty-five. His memories of Sheldon were all sweetness and light: "He was a fine man, he was. He'd come on down here to the kindergarten, to visit the kids, you know. He would talk to us and play with us, come shake hands with us. He was very generous, he was, a kind and generous man. Everybody loved him, everybody. If everybody in the world was like him, why, it would be a good world."[37]

The Library

Once Union Hall had been rented and the kindergarten established, it occurred to someone that the classroom space could be used in the evening as a library. The young people, especially the college students, of Central Church were enthusiastic about the idea and agreed to volunteer to staff the library. About the only need was for books so Sheldon announced that a social would be held, the admission price to which would be a book. The social was thronged, and the books thus collected, along with others donated by the city library, enabled the library to open soon after the kindergarten did in 1893.[38] The book social became an annual affair, and the library's holdings eventually numbered in the thousands of volumes.

At first B. C. Duke, a member of the Tennesseetown Congregational Church, was put in charge of the library; but from the outset he had trouble riding herd over the clientele, and the library quickly became a hangout for rowdies—of which Tennesseetown still had plenty. Finally one night he called the police and had six boys arrested for disturbing the peace. The publicity following that incident was disastrous, and, as Leroy Halbert reported, "the parents kept their children from the Library and it soon closed."[39]

Sheldon, however, never said die. In October 1894, the library opened again, this time with volunteer attendants from Central Church. A small social, with apples and donuts, was held for the boys who were the library's main patrons, and Sheldon gave them a pep talk, explaining why libraries had to be orderly places. Halbert dryly reported that Sheldon's earnest pleading, plus the memory of the arrests, kept the boys "to an endurable standard of order for a while." However, at least on the nights when lenient caretakers were in charge, "sometimes the Hall resembled a circus about as much as a reading room."[40]

When the lease from Andrew Jordan ran out in the fall of 1895, the library moved with the kindergarten to the Tennesseetown Congregational Church. Discipline problems continued. So far was the library from being a typical reading room that Minus Gentry remembered the library evenings as "game nights" where not-so-sedate activities, such as playing caroms, were the rule.[41] Halbert said that one volunteer staffer "needed a bottle of Paine's Celery Compound to restore his nerves after each experience in the Library." Apparently the youngsters continued, throughout the history of the library, to expand their minds mainly by throwing paperwads, pieces of coal and books, and by blowing out the lights and rattling the blinds. Periodic Sheldon lectures on order may have helped, but the level of decorum was never high. Nevertheless, Halbert, like Sheldon, was optimistic about the library's usefulness: "It is the refractory boys who attract the most attention, but there has always been an element of well behaved and studious patrons of the Library," some of whom read many books. Moreover, if they had not been in the library, what mischief might they have

35. Ibid., September 9, 1906.
36. Ibid.
37. Interview with Minus Gentry, July 22, 1981.
38. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 6, 9. See also, Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 147.
39. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 9.
40. Ibid.
41. Interview with Minus Gentry, July 22, 1981.

been causing elsewhere?[42] The library was, in fact, well patronized, and during two winters in the late nineties, Henry Burt, at that time the Washburn student hired to head the library, actually enticed a number of the young patrons to join a literary society featuring debates and recitations.[43] The library apparently lasted for many years; William H. Guild in 1981 recalled that he had surely worked in the library as late as 1909 and possibly as late as 1913, earning fifty cents a night for his efforts.[44]

Other Educational and Cultural Projects

Yet another use made of Union Hall was that of sewing classes for the schoolgirls of Tennesseetown. Ten women from Central Church, and one from a nearby Presbyterian church, supervised the project and furnished materials for the Saturday afternoon classes. By the fall of 1896 the project had become a substantial one, and Mrs. F. E. Sherman was hired to take charge of it. By the fall of 1897 attendance was up to sixty, including virtually every girl in the neighborhood.[45]

In the meantime, the boys were not neglected. Basket-weaving classes were instituted for them. The boys could buy the necessary materials for about five cents, and had no trouble selling the baskets they made for fifteen. The dime profit was a powerful motivator, and the basket-weaving classes led to the establishment of a manual training department at the public Buchanan School in Tennesseetown, with some of the classes conducted at the Tennesseetown church.[46] In November 1894, a "Boys' Brigade" was founded, featuring military marching and drilling, but discipline problems quickly did it in.[47]

Vocational education did not triumph in Tennesseetown at the expense of culture. Special musical and other programs were regular parts of the program for the uplift of the ghetto. Some of the programs involved nationally known ensembles, as in 1913 when the Fisk University Jubilee Singers gave a series of concerts to integrated audiences.[48]

Nor was the spiritual life of the settlement neglected. When Central Church was organized in 1888, some of the members were already helping with the Sunday school at the Tennesseetown church. Halbert wrote that "the first thing Mr. Sheldon ever did for Tennesseetown was to sing tenor in a quartet for the Sunday school." By the end of 1891, attendance was averaging fifty at the Sunday school; by 1899, it had topped one hundred, helped in part by a series of interclass attendance competitions. Gradually some black leadership emerged, joining the white Central members in running the program. And members of the Sunday school began to raise part of their own support. Halbert told a touching story in that regard: "One poor boy may be seen from week to week going around picking up old iron, rubber, etc. These he sells to the junk dealer to get money for the Sunday school. Some times he spends considerable time in this way so as to get at least two pennies to bring to his class on Sunday.... An example of sacrifice like this furnishes inspiration enough to overbalance a great many discouragements." Meanwhile, services were held at the church itself, as distinct from the Sunday school, sometimes with the help of a black resident minister but more often with preaching supplied from Central or other churches. Also, a Christian Endeavor Society was started in August 1899, letting thirty or so Tennesseetown children become a part of that enormous nationwide youth movement.[49]

Social Services for Tennesseetown

Even as the various educational and cultural programs were being instituted, Sheldon saw the necessity for direct social services to the destitute residents of the settlement. Many such services eventually emerged. Some of them were offered on an organized basis—for example, several physicians provided free medical care, a lawyer gave free legal help, and E. B. Merriam, Sheldon's father-in-law and a prominent banker, made small interest-free loans to individuals in need.[50] Sheldon and a group of Central Church men organized a successful effort to find jobs for the men of the settlement,[51] and Sheldon's assistant pastor Leroy Halbert helped to found a Monday-morning nursery, freeing the mothers to do their laundry in peace.[52]

But many examples of such assistance cannot be enumerated fully for it was given by individuals, acting privately. Many, for example, took to making regular Sunday afternoon calls on the elderly and ill of the settlement, sometimes staying for hours. Distribution of food and clothing took place frequently as well. Special efforts were made to check up on persons in need during the winter. A few reports of such home visitation have survived. One is Mrs. F. E. Sherman's account of her trip to

42. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 10-14.
43. Ibid., 14-5.
44. Letter, William H. Guild to Timothy Miller, November 7, 1981.
45. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 15-6.
46. Ibid., 19-20.
47. Ibid., 36.
48. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 151-52.
49. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 21-36.
50. Peggy Greene, "Dr. Sheldon and Tennesseetown," *Shawnee County Historical Society Bulletin*, no. 58 (November 1981): 119.
51. Emma Crabb, untitled manuscript notes, Sheldon Memorial Room.
52. Charles M. Sheldon, "My Most Unusual Layman," *Christian Herald* 64 (December 1941): 42.

This undated photograph shows a Tennesseetown mothers' meeting. First known as the Sheldon League of American Mothers and later as the Sheldon Congress of Mothers, this organization held monthly meetings and in 1900 had a membership of forty-three.

distribute Christmas presents which had been gathered by Central members:

> One place I found a very old lady, nearly blind, to whom I carried a Thanksgiving dinner and read to her from the Bible. Another place I found a woman and two little children living in one small room without a window. The only light she had was from leaving the door open or lighting a lamp. I gave her clothing for the baby and food for herself and the other little one. She was doing the best she could with what she had. Another place I found an old lady nearly 100 years old, very destitute. I supplied her with warm underclothing and shoes. She was very cheerful; she showed me the only dress she had, a calico wrapper all worn to pieces. She said, 'Can you get me a dress?' I told her I would. She was grateful for all the help she had. Another place an old man was very sick, a woman also sick and two little children. They were lacking almost anything to make life happy. With money received from the Ladies' Society, the whole house was cleaned, washing done and they were made more comfortable. The Christmas presents from Central Church made many hearts happy, filled many wants and were gratefully received.[53]

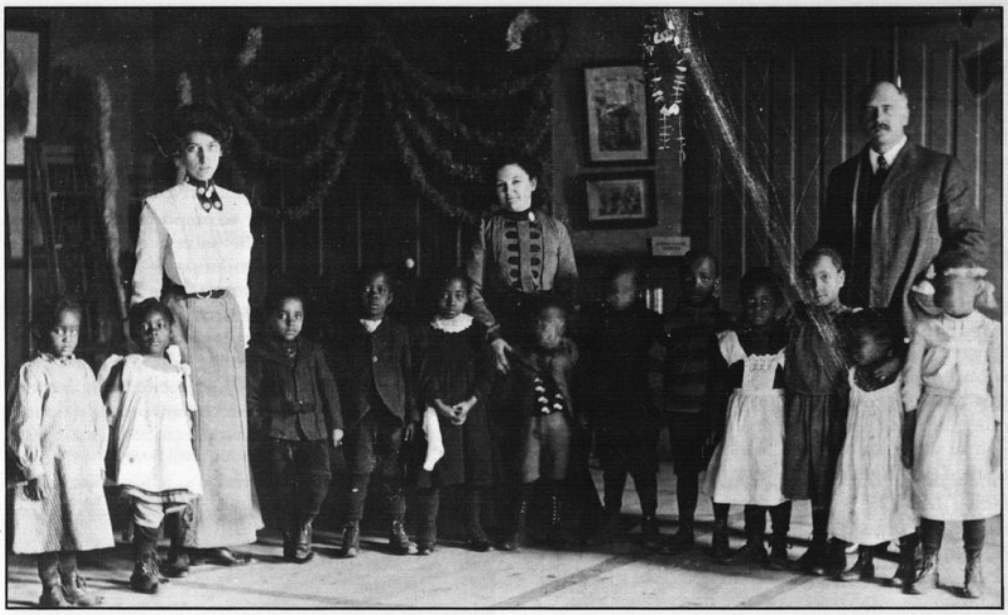
Sheldon personally, without fanfare, did as much as any member of his congregation to help where he could. His aversion to personal publicity undoubtedly caused many altruistic acts to go unnoticed, but sometimes word of them got out, as in the case of a Tennesseetown woman who was run down by a streetcar and had her leg amputated. Sheldon sent her a wooden prosthesis, one early biographical article reported.[54] The works of mercy were manifold, and they were gratefully received by people very much in need of help—and of concern.

The Village Improvement Society

One project which was relatively late in inception, but which had a major impact on the settlement, was the formation of the Village Improvement Society. Despite several years of a kindergarten, other educational projects, social services, and cultural and religious programs,

53. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 37.

54. "Rev. Charles M. Sheldon: His Life, Labors and Aims," in Charles M. Sheldon, et al., *The First Christian Daily Paper and Other Sketches* (New York: Street and Smith, 1900), 116.



Sheldon frequently visited the kindergarten, taking a special interest in the students and their classroom activities.

Tennesseetown remained physically quite unattractive with shabby houses and yards which were "for the most part, covered with tin cans, dead cats and rubbish."[55] A. B. Whiting, Sheldon's loyal energetic deacon, stepped into that breach in January 1898 with the suggestion to Sheldon that prizes be offered to Tennesseetown residents to encourage them to improve their property. Sheldon responded by calling a meeting at the Tennesseetown church the next month to discuss Whiting's ideas which had been refined into a fairly clear plan of action. The church was nearly full. Most of the ministers and other leaders of the settlement were there. Sheldon and Whiting described the physical problems of Tennesseetown and then suggested their plan to attack them.

At first the reaction was mixed, although it is difficult to imagine that by 1898 Tennesseetown would have rejected any Sheldon plan. Some rose to say that they were already working on problems relating to houses and yards and did not need any special program. There was some resentment, naturally, toward the idea of whites coming into the settlement once again, this time telling the residents how to live. Halbert said that "one woman spoke saying that she was as clean and neat as anybody and she did not need to be told to improve her place." She also worried that the do-gooders would want the people to quit keeping hogs, an important part of their winter food supply. But many others argued for the plan, and on a vote it was adopted.[56]

On March 7 another meeting was held, and prizes were set up in such categories as gardening, beautification of premises, building repair, and housekeeping. In all, twenty-seven different individuals entered the nine competitions, many entering more than one. Garden seeds were provided for contestants in the gardening divisions, as well as for other Tennesseetown gardeners. The contestants took to their work with real spirit, and on October 18 a meeting was held to award the prizes. Thirty-five dollars in cash and that much or more in merchandise had been raised from local merchants, and there was a general call for another competition in 1899, so successful had been the first one.[57] Houses had been painted; yards had been sodded; alleys had been cleaned of trash; and the spirit of the settlement was much improved.

55. Charles M. Sheldon, "Doctor Sheldon Says Victory Garden Movement Began in Tennesseetown Years Ago," Topeka newspaper clipping (n.d., early 1940s), Sheldon Memorial Room.

56. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 33.
57. Ibid., 34.

The competition was indeed repeated in 1899, and for several years thereafter. Many new categories of improvements were added, including some for food preservation. Several categories were also created especially for children. The *Topeka Daily Capital*, reporting on the fall festival at which the 1899 awards were given, counted eighteen categories of competition, covering gardening, neat premises, improvement of buildings and fences, interior house cleaning, flower gardening, and fresh and preserved garden produce for adults, and gardening, sewing, baking, and oratory for children. The second awards ceremony played to an overflow crowd which sat amid exhibitions of embroidery, quilts, fresh garden produce, preserves, handicrafts, and other such things. The boys between twelve and eighteen gave their orations; the winner in that competition receiving one dollar. Typical first prizes ran from one to four dollars in cash or such other things as six silverplated forks, a rocking chair, a pair of shoes, an umbrella, and a one-year subscription to the *Daily Capital*,[58] Halbert, describing the evening, wrote:

> the place looked like a county fair in minature.... The whole exhibition was a credit to the community. In the evening a meeting was held at the church, where the declaimers competed and all the prizes were awarded. The church was packed with people and the enthusiasm ran high. About $50 in money was given out and a considerable amount of merchandise. After the prizes were given out, the woman who had spoken against the project the first year came around and said, 'How is this? I entered for three things but I didn't get but two prizes.'... The results of the plan in the improvement of the town are plainly visible.[59]

Two years later, in 1901, at the spring meeting of the Village Improvement Society, Sheldon delivered a speech in which he suggested that the leadership of the society, mainly whites from Central Church, be turned over to blacks living in Tennesseetown. The transfer of power was quickly completed, although Central members remained active in their support of society projects.[60]

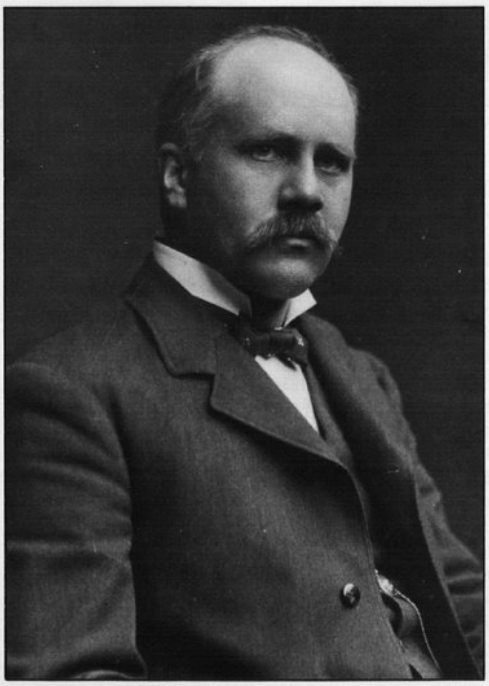
The End of the Projects

No single date marked the end of the Tennesseetown projects. Some of them faded away as local interests and needs changed. More of them never vanished at all, but were taken over by governmental bodies as permanent public responsibilities. The kindergarten and various vocational training projects serve as good examples for after the legislature, in 1907, authorized public kindergartens, the Topeka Board of Education took over the Sheldon original. It thus may be said to be very much alive today, minus his name. Eventually the Tennesseetown Congregational Church, which had never been especially strong, came to be seen as less and less necessary in light of the development of several other strong churches, notably Shiloh Baptist, in the settlement. Finally the mission church building was sold in 1911.[61]

What the Work Accomplished

At the obvious level, the success of most of the Tennesseetown projects is the measure of the worth of the effort poured into the settlement. The kindergarten was a pioneering, triumphant success story in that it served hundreds of families and ushered kindergartens into the Kansas public schools. The Village Improvement Society certainly contributed to the physical beautification of the neighborhood. The library undoubtedly made a notice-

58. *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 14, 1899.
59. Halbert, *Across the Way*, 35.
60. *Topeka Daily Capital*, March 27, 1901.
61. Untitled manuscript, Sheldon Memorial Room.



Charles M. Sheldon, at about the time his social reform programs were a major force in the Tennesseetown community, providing opportunities for "uplift" not previously available to its residents.

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able contribution to literacy and the appreciation of good books. The sewing and manual training classes helped young persons earn some money and trained them for jobs which were desperately needed. On that level alone one must conclude that it was all very much worthwhile.

Much of white Topeka was most impressed with the effects of the Village Improvement Society's clean-up program. In 1903 a Topeka newspaper beamed, "Tennesseetown has a prosperous look. Where formerly weeds grew in luxuriance, there are cane patches or cornfields or gardens. Where a few years ago there were a few old boards nailed together to represent a house, there is now a respectable little cottage. Where there was once a bare lawn of weeds, there is now often a lawn of blue-grass with park in front. There is a general look of enterprise instead of delapidation."[62] Another booster a year later noted that even though Tennesseetown's streets were not paved and there was no sewer in the neighborhood (the taxes for such things would, after all, "be a virtual confiscation of the property assessed"), "the little district has more of a thriving look and is fast losing its tumbledown appearance."[63] A 1906 visitor took delight in the fact that an active interracial baseball game was in progress near Huntoon and Lincoln streets, where a dozen years earlier one could have expected to see only crap games on the sidewalk.[64]

But there were other results as well, less obvious ones. Although statistics for the period are hard to come by, several sources report that the crime rate in Tennesseetown dropped substantially during the 1890s—a result in which Sheldon took great pride.[65] And given that other white churches eventually came to see the merit of the projects and joined in working on them, it can be fairly said that Tennesseetown provided an early, practical demonstration of social reform through ecumenical outreach. Churches proved that they could work together on worthwhile projects, and the Topeka congregations involved—at one time or another representing most of the major Protestant denominations—did the social gospel at the grassroots level.

There was always a small undercurrent of resentment towards the whites who would enter a black neighborhood in a potentially condescending manner, but on the whole Tennesseetown welcomed its benefactors. Sheldon himself was nearly deified by those who were lifted up from destitution to mere poverty. One of them once paid Sheldon the ultimate compliment: "Brother Sheldon, your face may be white, but your heart is just as black as mine!"[66]

To the twentieth-century historian, one who has the benefit of having observed a century of social change programs, Sheldon's uplift of Tennesseetown stands as a good, intelligent, balanced approach to community betterment. It did not just provide gifts, but took self-help seriously. It was not just a palliative program, but an integrated mix of relief and educational endeavors with a strong emphasis on helping people get jobs in a time and situation when they were hard to come by. The program certainly had its naive moments and some relative weaknesses, but on the whole it was more coherent and did much more good than a great many more costly and elaborate programs do today. KH

62. October 8, 1903, clipping from unspecified Topeka newspaper, Sheldon Memorial Room.
63. L. C. Hodge, "Problems of Self-Help," *Civic Pride* 1 (May 1904).
64. *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 9, 1906.
65. For example, see Cox, *Blacks in Topeka*, 147.
66. Clark, *The Man Who Walked in His Steps*, 9.

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Kansas Frontierswomen Viewed Through Their Writings: The Journal of Carrie Robbins

edited by Glenda Riley

AT FIRST GLANCE, Carrie Robbins' account of her first year in Kansas appears to be a light-hearted, superficial view of a young woman enjoying life as wife, settler, and newly transplanted Kansan. A closer look, however, discloses the types of valuable information awaiting the perceptive eye in such documents. Writings by frontierswomen like letters, diaries, and in this case, an 1887 journal, are often virtual treasure troves of historical detail.

Exactly one day after Carrie Strong Kay married Cephas Prince Robbins in her hometown of Payson in Adams County, Illinois, she began keeping a journal with irregular, but often revealing entries. Her February 25, 1887, notation, for example, described in some detail a typical wedding celebration of the period. The following pages offer insight into a "civilized" woman's introduction and adjustment to the relatively uncivilized plains of western Kansas. Her shock at the appearance of the sod dugout in which she was to live was representative of thousands of plainswomen, as was her good-natured determination to convert it into a livable and even elegant dugout.[1]

By early spring of 1887, Carrie Robbins was becoming a Kansan. After getting lost within a half mile of her own home, experiencing delight with the first religious service she attended on the Plains, and feeling lonely at the yelping of coyotes, she was gradually adapting to the Plains. Her adjustment was aided by kind and helpful neighbors, among them two bachelors with admirable cooking skills and one of the many women homesteaders who fanned out over the Plains during the latter decades of the nineteenth century.[2]

By fall, 1887, Carrie was not "feeling well." Despite this pregnancy, which she shortly discovered, she pluckily accompanied Cephas on a trip to maintain their claim to a timbered area in southeastern Colorado.[3] When her pregnancy became a certainty, Carrie Robbins returned home to Payson, Illinois, to bear her first child, Harriet Louisa Robbins, on March 4, 1888.

Carrie's journal fittingly began with her journey to Kansas and concluded with her trip back to Illinois. The original, presented in unaltered form here, is held by the Manuscripts Department of the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka.

FEB. 25, 1887. Yesterday was my wedding day. I can hardly realize that Cephas and I are really married, that we are to be together every day, sit at the same table all our lives "till death us part," but we love each other so dearly, I know we shall be very happy.

The wedding was a pleasant one. Just the relatives and near neighbors were present; all seemed to enjoy it. The ceremony was performed about eight o'clock. Mr. Alabon [the minister] was embarrassed. I began to feel that I should have to prompt him. I guess I knew the ceremony as well or even better than he did. Congratulations, of course, followed the ceremony. I was so afraid there would be an awkward pause immediately after that proceeding, so Mama spoke to Mrs. Durant and Mrs. Alabon that they stand near us and talk. Everything passed on smoothly. The supper consisting of sandwiches, coffee, pickles, cheese, and five kinds of cake seemed to be relished by all

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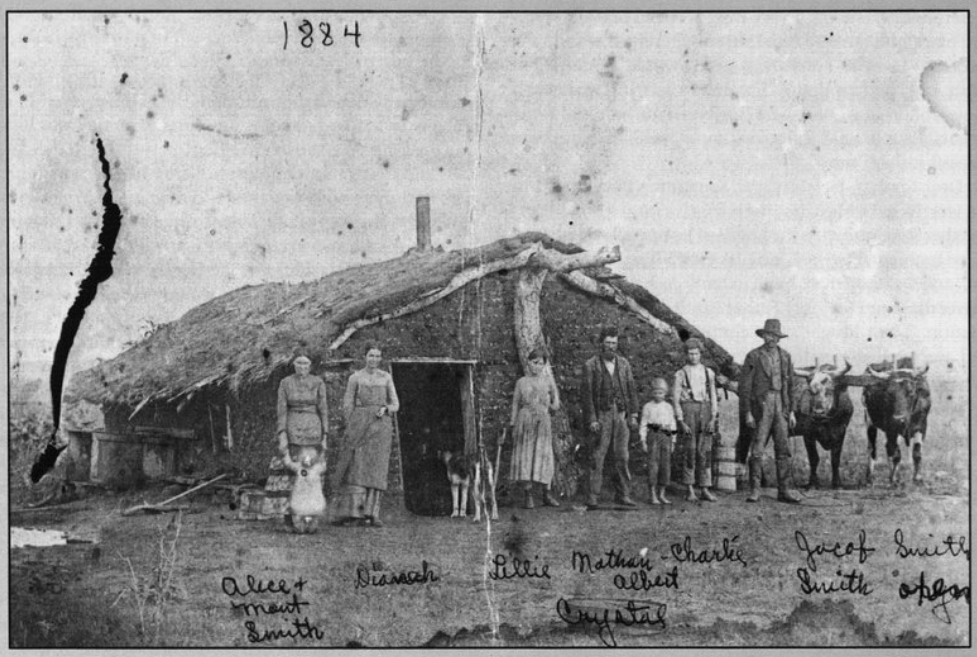
1. Angel Kwolek-Folland, "The Elegant Dugout: Domesticity and Moveable Culture in the United States, 1870-1900," *American Studies* 25 (Fall 1984): 21-37.

2. Glenda Riley, Introduction, *Land of the Burnt Thigh: Memoir of a Girl Homesteader* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986, in press).

3. The Timber Culture Act of March 3, 1873, authorized a person or persons who kept forty acres of timber land in good condition to acquire title to 160 acres of timber land. In 1878 the minimum acreage requirement was reduced to ten acres.



From her own sod house Carrie Robbins could see others dotting the countryside. Pictured here are two Kansas sod houses: the locations for both are unknown, and only one can be identified for date—1884—and ownership—the Smith family.

present. Cephas looked very nice, wore a nice black suit and black kids [shoes], standing collar and white satin tie. I wore my favorite. I had always said I would be married in white and I had my desire. The dress was a thin white with some ribbon in it and I wore flowers in my hair and at my throat. People said I looked quite well. Cephas was pleased so I am satisfied.

Dear Cephas, he is so good, sometimes I feel that I am not worthy to be his wife. Just before we started downstairs together to be united in the bonds of holy wedlock, he said, "One moment, Carrie. Let us ask God's blessing before we go," and we stood there hand in hand each offering a silent prayer that our Heavenly Father would bless us in our new relation. Then he said, "One more lover's kiss, Carrie," and we went down the stairs. And now, I think, my journal, I have given you all the particulars, save perhaps the hackneyed phrase: "The presents were numerous and beautiful." Altogether, I think it was a pleasant gathering for all present. Our only regret is that Cousin Louisa Robbins was not present. Arthur Perry called this P.M. Our reception is to be at Father Robbins tonight.

FEB. 26. Arthur Perry stayed so long we were a little late for the reception. Cousin Louisa came down in the afternoon so all our dear ones were present, also many of our friends, about eighty in all. The roads were perfectly dreadful, some of the people walked. Dr. Baker and party lost their way and wandered about in the cemetery for a time. Mrs. Robbins had nice refreshments for the company. We stood around the table. While we were eating we heard music under the window. Supposing it was some of the young people of the company, we paid no particular attention but afterward learned that the boys from town had come to serenade us. They soon called for Cephas. When we went out to see them, they asked to see his wife and called me Mrs. Robbins. They expressed congratulations, etc. After partaking of some refreshments they took their departure.

MARCH 1. At last we are fairly on our way to our new home. I feel almost worn out. We have visited and received calls constantly since we were married and have done our packing between times. Last night Cephas and Mamma packed until nearly one o'clock. We took the train from Fall Creek [Illinois] and spent the day in Quincy [Illinois], and the evening with Cousin Louisa, then took the ten o'clock train for the West.

MARCH 3. Arrived in Cimarron [Kansas] today. Spent last night at Cousin Charles Read's in Reading, Kansas. As soon as we arrived here we went to Mrs. Cook's, Cephas' friend, and this evening we had the first glimpse of one of our future neighbors, Mr. Kerr, and I was pleased. We go out to our home tomorrow. Home. Oh, how good that sounds!

MARCH 4. Well, here I am at home but I really can't say I am pleased with first impressions, but I am so tired I am scarcely in a mood to enjoy anything. The ride was long and tiresome. We had to travel so slowly through the sand hills and it was monotonous, hill after hill of sand dotted here and there with bunches of coarse grass. We did not reach Mr. Kerr's until afternoon, and there I had my first good look at a sod house, rather low, dark and gloomy looking on the outside, yet with floors, windows, and the walls plastered. They are pleasant and comfortable upon the inside. I think I can make ours seem home-like. Mrs. Kerr and family seem very kind and hospitable. They were glad to see me and did everything they could to make it pleasant for me. After dinner we drove over to our house. 'Tis a regular bachelor's sanctum and to make it worse a man had been plastering and everything was everywhere. The center table consists of a huge barrel filled with everything from a shirt to a toothpick. My first thought was, "Oh, can I ever make home out of this confusion?" "But I must not get discouraged. I think I can make it cozy with patience and perseverance."

MARCH 7. This is our first Sabbath in Kansas, we spent the day at home. I've been much interested in looking out the windows. As far as I can see 'tis brown prairie, dotted here and there with a little sod house. The prairie is covered with a short curly grass called "Buffalo Grass" with occasionally a tuft or bunch of tall prairie grass. We live in the center of a "town," but it has no officers. The inhabitants seem peaceable and very happy. We often hear them talking among themselves but strange to say they never speak to us. Perhaps not so strange either, for they could not understand us nor we them. Our neighbors are prairie dogs. The town covers about a section [640 acres] of land, mounds thrown up a few rods distant from each other. The little dogs are about as large as rabbits, the color of a squirrel and have a short stubby little tail which keeps time to its barking by little jerks. Sometimes I hear a dog bark but cannot see him at first. This coat is so near the color of the grass, but I soon see the little tail bobbing back and forth. Sometimes they stand upon their hind legs and then spring into the air, clasping their front paws together and giving a sharp squeal as they jump. I suppose this is when they are particularly happy. Altogether they promise to be very interesting neighbors.

MARCH 20. Oh! I see so many strange things. Yesterday, an ox-team passed by and the owner got out of the wagon and came in to ask me where I live. Fortunately Cephas had just taught me the numbers of our land so I proudly told the man "The NW1/4 12-28-30." Just a few evenings

ago we went to the top of the ridge just north of us to see a prairie fire raging in the sand hills. As far as we could see the sky was red with reflection of the fire and in the fore-ground we could see the little tongues of flame leaping from one bunch of grass to another and another. Happily we are in no danger for the Cimmaron [*sic*] Trail is between us and the fire and our home is protected by good fire guards.

MARCH 31. I had my first slicker ride today. But my dear journal, I must tell you what such a conveyance is. A cellar door would make a good one or a low flat sled with a ring in front to which we hitch a horse. Then we go first gliding over the prairie. Some of the people fasten a spring seat on it. But Cephas and I put a chair on and then lay a board on that. The only trouble with that arrangement is that we must sit down together and get up together, or we will be likely to sit down (on the ground) separately. We went down to Mr. Bradley's today. I was much pleased with the family and also called at Mr. Payne's. I think I shall like my new neighbors very much.

APRIL [no day given]. I am having strange experiences. I was out of gasoline [for cooking] and Ida Kerr came over to dinner. I had no bread, so I decided to go up and call on Miss Glass to see if she had some yeast. I had a nice call. She was an Indiana school teacher who came to the Western plains for her health. She lives alone on her claim with her revolver and her dog.

APRIL 14. I had quite an experience today. Cephas was busy at work on the barn and couldn't spare the time to go for the mail. But I wanted home letters so much that I decided to start out in the rain and mist for the trip to the office. Wabash [Kansas] is nearly two miles due N.W. and we can see the windmill plainly from our house, but a short distance from our house there is a lake bed where we lose sight of the mill. I started out and while crossing this, lost my bearings and didn't come in sight of the mill again. But I kept on going thinking I would surely see it soon. Finally I gave myself up as hopelessly lost. I could see nothing familiar. I thought I had gone too far north and missed the mill. After going some distance farther I saw some buildings and a man out in the yard at work so I turned my horse in that direction and drove toward it, intending to ask that man the way to Wabash. When I was within a few rods of the house, I found I was coming to my own home and the man I had seen was my own husband!!

He asked if I wanted to know the way to Wabash and I said, "That's what I came here for." I never was so bewildered in my life. I thought I had surely lost my senses. It seems I had made a complete circle, as all people do when they are lost. I had not been out of Cephas' sight at any time, nor had I been more than half a mile away from home. Oh! how Cephas has laughed at me. I don't think he will forget such a joke very soon.

MAY [no day given]. We went to Montezuma [Kansas] to attend a meeting of the district Sunday School convention. It was the first religious service we have attended and I assure you, my journal, we enjoyed it. It seemed good to hear the Word of God once again. We walked over to Mr. Parker's and went down with them and then walked home in the evening. The coyotes are yelping in all directions. The country seems full of them, but one can make itself heard for miles and as they are timid, harmless creatures, there is no danger, but they make me feel lonely and dismal.

MAY [no day given]. Our Sunday School was organized today. We are to meet in our house and Mr. Parker is the Superintendent. I am to teach the little folks. Oh, I hope and pray we may be the means of doing some good in this place.

References to the threatened destruction of home and crops by prairie fires can be found in the writings of frontierswomen, and the journal of Carrie Robbins is no exception. Under the circumstances in which she viewed a prairie fire, however, she felt safe because the Cimarron Trail separated the fire from her home.

JUNE 24. Today we had the severest storm I have ever witnessed. The hail stones were not large but came so fast and for so long a time that much damage was done. Window lights broken and garden gone, corn is nothing but stems and our oats look as if they had been mowed. Thirty-five of my chickens were drowned. We had a dreadful time—our house was just flooded and Cephas had to go down in the kitchen and bring up the supper on a moulding board. Water was a foot deep all over the yard and hail stones piled around the building six or eight inches deep. We feel very much discouraged. We have worked so hard and our crops are all gone.

JULY [no day given]. We had another hard storm. Cephas was away and I had to do the chores. I was out in the barn milking when it hailed so hard. I was so frightened and worried and had to stay alone but all things passed on smoothly and I did not feel much afraid. I was badly frightened a few weeks ago. I was alone and was awakened by a thumping and pounding at the door. My heart was in my mouth but I managed to say, "Who is it?" and "What do you want?" No answer came and by that time I was thoroughly awake. After listening a little longer I found it was nobody trying to get in, but still the dreadful racket kept on. I mustered up courage to go to the window and look out and saw the end of a broken rope trailing on the ground. Then I knew that calves had broken their rope and had come down near the house to get out of the wind. I felt relieved I can tell you. I went back to bed again but not to sleep for some time.

JULY 4. We arranged last week when we met to practice singing to have a party on the 4th at Mr. Frazier's. The gentlemen were to furnish the ice cream and the ladies the cake. There were fourteen young people present. We played croquet and had a lovely time. We came home by moonlight. Mr. Frazier knows how to do things nicely. He is so nice and we had such a pleasant time. When we were invited there a few weeks ago, he and Mr. Hull cooked the dinner themselves. Everything was well cooked and well served.

SEPT. [no day given]. I have not been feeling well for a few weeks so we have concluded to take a trip to Colorado in the wagon. Cephas is obliged to go to Colorado to plow the tree claim. I have to stay alone, we have persuaded him to let me go too. We have been very busy making preparations to start. Night before last I took my plants over to Mrs. Payne's for safe keeping during our absence. I did not leave there until dark. Mr. Payne showed me two stars in the direction of home so I drove toward them but soon it began to cloud over so my stars were hidden. I was worried a little but thought I could get home all right. Soon I saw a bright light off to my right in a direction where there were no houses as I thought. I wondered where it could be and watched it closely. Soon it began to move around and around, as if swung by some one. I then thought that perhaps that was the light in my own home so started toward it. When I got there I found the lantern on top of the house and Cephas in the barn, saddling his horse to come and hunt for me. Oh, he is so good and kind and loving. I am thankful for my good husband and that I am home tonight.

SEPT. 1. We left home about four o'clock, went to Colusa [Kansas] six miles west and obtained a good wagon sheet, etc., there, so now we are fully equipped for our journey. We go directly west so far as roads will permit. Some parts of the state are very rough and hilly. In one locality the hills are so thickly covered with sword cactus, the horses can hardly pick their way along the road. Bear Creek flows across our road several times. Its banks are covered with flowers in great profusion and variety. I have spent much of the time walking along by the wagon gathering huge bouquets of them. We are nearing the state line now and each hour's ride brings us nearer Colorado. We count the revolutions of the wheels to the mile so that we may guess something of the distances traveled when we get into a region where there are no landmarks.

In Colorado at last! By dint of much inquiry we have passed Wolf and Clay Creek and are now in the vicinity of our claim. Colorado is beautiful. The land is rolling prairie intersected by creeks along whose banks great cottonwoods grow in abundance. Many of the banks are high and rocky with wild flowers growing over them. This is glorious, the sound of running water and the rustling of the leaves of the trees never seemed half so sweet as now when we have been deprived of them so long.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 9. We camped on Clay Creek. We found a family living near and Cephas asked them about the location of our claim. The family consisted of the mother, a widow lady, and her eight children. They are English people who were formerly wealthy. They have come to Colorado to recover, if possible, their lost fortune. They dress in velvet all the time. Mrs. Henderson had on a beautiful brown velvet fastened in front with brass pants buttons. I noticed beautiful pieces of statuary and bric-a-brac on their kitchen shelf, keeping company with the lard pails and coffee pots. Mrs. H. is very kind and sent us a nice plate of fresh beef for our Sunday dinner, but she is very peculiar in her ways. She doesn't know how to economize in the least. The little boys were out hauling sand with their new shoes on today. The Sabbath has been a delightful day. We seem nearer to God than in a civilized country. We have studied our Sunday School lessons and

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read some, then spent the rest of the day climbing over the rocks and the hills and enjoying the shade of the trees.

MONDAY [no date given]. We start for our claim. We have learned from Mrs. Henderson that it is three miles east and one south, so we take the direction as nearly as possible. I drive and Cephas counts the wheel revolutions so we may go the right distance. At the end of each mile we have been fortunate in finding the corner stone, so we are sure we are right. At the last mile when we thought we had reached our claim, we camped for dinner and while I got the dinner Cephas hunted for the stone. He was wandering around over the prairie when I heard him shout and throw up his hat, hurrahing like a school boy. He was so delighted to find the stone with the numbers of our claim on it. Now we are sure and we will begin work at once.

We finished our work at last and started for Lamar [Colorado]. It is a typical Western town full of bustle and activity. Everybody is here to make money. Lots are selling for $500.00 which a year ago would have brought only one-tenth the amount.

At last we are ready to start for home. We are to go a different route by way of Johnson City [Kansas]. We stayed there a few hours. It was election day and as the principal point of contest was the county seat it was a very exciting day.

The journey thus far has been without accident and the weather has been delightful. We passed the Twin Buttes in Colorado which was more like a mountain than anything I have ever seen before.

The great elevation rises abruptly from a level plain to a height of several hundred feet, black and rocky all the way up the slope. About two-thirds of the way it is one slope and then it divides abruptly and forms two sharp rocky points which stand out in bold relief against the sky for miles around. We have seen some antelope on the

In 1887 Carrie and Cephas Robbins traveled to Colorado to find their claim and improve it. Equipping their wagon with a "good wagon sheet," the Robbins may have looked much like the Jackson County, Kansas, family pictured here.

prairie and the prairie wolves and coyotes are plentiful while the huge jack-rabbit surprises us frequently as he bounds from his hole and is soon lost to view. It is said that the fastest horse cannot keep pace with them. Their long leaps cover eight or ten feet often-times.

We passed through a little town Seesaw [Kansas] then we went north to the river which we followed as far as Pierceville [Kansas].

As we passed through Deerfield [Kansas] I wished we had time to stop and see Nettie Tandy but if we were to reach our little home before another Sabbath we had to hasten on.

Saturday morning found us in Garden City [Kansas] where Cephas had business that would keep him until noon, so it is thought best for me to go on alone, with the team, and he will meet me at Pierceville at noon. So I start soon after breakfast with many misgivings. As the river road runs by the railroad and our big Jim is afraid of trains, I decided to take the hill road. It is all new to me and the people stare at me as I pass and I hear them wondering if the man is sick.

Once I lost my way and had to inquire the road to my destination. I found I had gone six miles beyond the right turn so I had to turn about and go back.

It was a long lonely journey. At about one o'clock I was delighted to see the houses of Pierceville in the distance. Before I reached the bottom of the long hill leading to the town I saw Cephas, coat in hand, coming to meet me.

He had inquired of the railroad men and as they had seen nothing of me along or near the track, he was quite troubled about me. We ate our dinner and then started for home. The sand near the river was dreadful. It was so deep the wagon sank in almost to the hubs in places. The wind has blown it up on the sides of the hills in great waves. It is beautiful but very inconvenient to travel through. Were it not for the plank road over the worse places it would be almost impassable.

SEPT. 30. We arrived at our own little home tired out but very glad to sleep in a house once more. It seemed so good to rest on a bed again. True, humble though it may be, there is no place like home.

OCT. 1. We went to church and everybody welcomed us back.

Cephas begins teaching before long. He is to teach at the little sod schoolhouse about a mile and a half north. The little building stands right on the ridge so I can watch all the way there and see him when he starts home again.

There are three or four neighbors whom I find especially congenial. Mr. Kerr's family, poor and uncultured, but very kind and very earnest Christians and the Parkers. The father and mother, one lovely older daughter and three or four younger boys. They are all hard working good people. I am drawn to them all. To the west our nearest neighbor is Miss Glass, about a mile away, and yet so near that in this clear atmosphere I can see every time she steps out of her door.

I went up to her house to bake my bread one day. Our oven was being fixed and Cephas forgot the bread so we were in a great dilemma. I finally decided to make the bread and after it was ready to bake, Cephas hitched up and took me up there to bake it. She has a coal stove and neither of us had used one to bake with. We made up a roaring fire and put the loaves in the oven but to my dismay in about ten minutes I smelled smoke. We were afraid the house was on fire and began to look about. I soon discovered that it came from the stove and rushed to the oven door and opened it to find my lovely loaves of bread burned to a solid crisp. We carried part of the fire out to the prairie and I took off the burned outer crust and we began again, this time with better success. Oh! what fun we had over it all. I laughed until I was tired!

Miss Glass surely wants a claim more than I do, for I never would have the courage to live alone with a dog and a revolver as she does. She seems very happy and contented and we have such good times together.

And then in speaking of my neighbors I must not forget the Paynes. They are from Illinois, too, near Clayton and used to know Dr. Kay there. I like them very much. Mrs. Payne is bright and intelligent and so kind and motherly. The father is very pleasant too and I am especially fond of the young lady, May. She finds it pretty hard to live away out here away from all society. Mr. Frazier, our good neighbor on the east, is quite devoted to her. When Cephas introduced them one day at Sunday School, he said as we left them, "I wonder if anything will come of that. They seem to be quite taken with each other."

OCT. [no day given] 1887. We were invited to Mr. Frazier's for dinner with the Paynes and Miss Glass. He had a delicious dinner well cooked and well served. His table was really elegant with nice linen and silverware. He and Mr. Hull seem very happy together.

THANKSGIVING DAY. It was a real blizzard. The wind blew and the fine snow filled the air. Several people have been lost. Mr. Payne wandered about for two hours in trying to go from the house to the barn. We stayed at home that day and our thoughts wandered frequently to the dear ones at home.

One night not long ago, Miss Glass came down for her milk. A terrible wind storm came up so it was impossible for her to get home. I, of course, insisted upon her staying but how to plan I did not know; we had only one room and one bed. I fixed a bed on the floor for Cephas, but even

then I did not see how we were going to arrange it. But Cephas soon solved the difficulty by saying, "I'll go out and see how the chickens are fixed for the night and you can go right to bed." So we hustled into bed and after we were nicely fixed, the good man of the house returned after settling the chicks to his satisfaction. He blew out the light and laid himself down upon his bed in the darkness. In the morning when we woke he was not to be seen, so we dressed at our leisure.

We had had quite a joke on Mr. Frazier lately. He left the home of his lady one dark night about ten o'clock and drove and drove for miles without getting to his destination. Four o'clock in the morning found him miles south of his home, but after inquiring, he soon found his way and lost no time in getting home. . . .

We like this house so much better than the other. It is on a public road and much nearer neighbors.

DECEMBER 25th. Christmas Day and Sabbath Day too. I have taken much pleasure in making little gifts for the dear ones at home.

We had oysters for dinner, a surprise for Cephas. I had Mr. Frazier get them for me.

I have such lovely house plants. My large pot of pansies is full of bloom. It is indeed a "thing of beauty."

I am thinking of going home. We are planning for the arrival of a dear little one in our home and Mamma wants me to come home. I have not decided yet for Grandma is there and Mamma has had the care of her ever since she was hurt last August, so I hardly think it will be best. It is very hard to know what I ought to do.

JAN. 30, 1888. I start for home, take the train at Cimmaron [*sic*] at 12 o'clock at night. It was a long hard drive to town and I was pretty tired. A gentleman on the train was very kind to me in Kansas City, so I was not worried about making the change.

After her return to Kansas with her new daughter, Harriet Louisa, Carrie resumed the duties of a Kansas farm woman. On April 1, 1889, she and Cephas relocated on a farm one mile east of Oskaloosa, Kansas, near her uncle, Rice Kay. The Robbins' life on the new farm was soon shattered by a tragic accident. While Cephas was instructing the hired man in the shooting of a revolver on June 29 of that year, the gun accidentally misfired, severing Cephas' spinal cord. After many agonizing days of pain and paralysis, Cephas died on July 13, 1889.

Carrie once again returned to Illinois, this time a widow with a young daughter to raise. She lived with her family until Harriet was no longer an infant and in 1892 accepted a teaching position at the Ladies' Seminary at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. Deciding that she needed to improve her own training and education, Carrie Robbins attended and graduated from a kindergarten training course in 1896. In the fall of that year she organized the Free Kindergarten System in Quincy, Illinois, and in 1897 performed the same service in Moline, Illinois.

On February 1, 1900, Carrie Robbins married a distant cousin, Lyman Kay Seymour, and returned to Payson, Illinois, where she remained until her death on April 17, 1901.[4] KH

4. Harriet Louisa Robbins, biographical note, in Carrie Robbins, "The Journal of Carrie Strong Kay Robbins, Payson, Adams County, Illinois, 1887-1888," Manuscripts Department, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

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Book Reviews

Farming the Dust Bowl: A First-Hand Account from Kansas

by Lawrence Svobida
foreword by R. Douglas Hurt

xxiv + 204 pages, illustrations.
Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986, cloth $19.95, paper, $7.95.

THE DUST BOWL YEARS of the 1930s scarred both the land and the people. Several historians, including R. Douglas Hurt, have recently examined the "Dirty Thirties"; first-hand accounts, though, are less common. Fortunately, one fine narrative exists. This is Lawrence Svobida's *An Empire of Dust*, first published in 1940 by the Caxton Printers of Caldwell, Idaho, and reissued in 1986 under the title, *Farming the Dust Bowl*, by the University Press of Kansas.

Svobida endured the dust bowl in Meade County, Kansas. This uprooted twenty-one-year-old Nebraskan, who loved to farm, planted his first crop in 1929, but he then was "hailed out." His second effort produced a good yield, but a "bottomless wheat market" (p. 57), caused by overproduction nationally, wrecked his anticipated profits. Although fully realizing the risky nature of grain growing, Svobida nevertheless kept trying. During these years of struggle, drought ravaged his third attempt, and the fourth year he got no harvest at all. Svobida's two subsequent crops were meager. Finally, in 1937, moisture conditions improved and he combined several thousand acres, but the crop in 1938 was much less abundant and the market price also weakened considerably. Even though Svobida's next planting got off to a satisfactory start, a dry period destroyed it. "With my financial resources at last exhausted and my health seriously impaired, I am at last ready to admit defeat and leave the Dust Bowl forever." (p. 233)

This chronicle of Lawrence Svobida's years in southwestern Kansas offers more than a detailed account of a series of crop reversals, both in the field and marketplace; it provides wonderful insights into how he and fellow agrarians coped with the vagaries of weather, New Deal agricultural policies, and other aspects of life during these desperate times. A proud and independent sort, Svobida reflects the heartbreak of those who had labored for the American dream. "There were many," he notes, "who, before the successive crop failures, had accumulated wealth by years of hard work and self-denial, and were now reduced to the same level with the improvident, the foolish and the vain." (pp. 236-37)

The book's introduction by R. Douglas Hurt is excellent. He carefully and sensibly places Svobida's work into the larger picture of twentieth-century agriculture on the Central Plains. The only obvious weakness in Hurt's essay is a lack of biographical material about Svobida. Surely the publisher has a correspondence file that would indicate Svobida's subsequent fate (he renewed the copyright in 1968), and Hurt might have talked with older Meade County residents who recalled Svobida; after all, he lived in their community for more than a decade.

For those individuals who wish to learn the personal story of the dust bowl era in Kansas, this new edition of *An Empire of Dust* is essential reading, a gripping and lively account.

Reviewed by H. Roger Grant, *professor of history, University of Akron, Akron, Ohio.*

America's Country Schools

by Andrew Gulliford

291 pages, illustrations, photographs, bibliography, index.
Washington, D. C.: The Preservation Press, 1984. $18.95.

AMERICA'S COUNTRY SCHOOLS is a well-illustrated narrative describing rural education past and present. The book is based on documentary sources, photographs and oral history data which were collected while the author was director of "Country School Legacy: Humanities on the Frontier," a project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. In an age plagued with doubt about the future of public school education, which has prompted a reassessment of the academic, economic, and social issues of rural schools, Andrew Gulliford's *America's Country Schools* offers an opportunity to examine these pertinent issues from a historical perspective.

Gulliford's text fills a void in the history of country schools by combining social and cultural history with an abundance of photographic documentation to depict the students, teachers, curricula, and rural schoolhouses of America's past. This approach complements recognized reference texts on rural education such as Carl F. Kaestle's *Pillars of the Republic*, which details the history of American schooling, and Jonathan P. Sher's *Education in Rural America*, which discusses the effects of urban education on rural schools. Moreover, this work goes beyond the previous oral history recollections of rural schools published by Wayne E. Fuller in the *Old Country School*, and augments several recent studies based on more traditional sources of documentation, such as Polly Welt Kaufman's *Women Teachers of the Frontier*. Unlike these previous authors, Gulliford has interwoven evidence from oral history and popular history with local documentation, photographs, architectural artifacts and scholarly references to present the reader with a

comprehensive history of what rural education meant to the people and to their communities.

The text of *America's Country Schools* is divided into three main sections. The first part presents a concise history of the development of country schools in Colonial America and the problems facing rural education today. Highlighting the trend from rural one-room schoolhouses to the consolidated rural school systems prevalent today, this section provides a realistic portrait of the frequently isolated, overcrowded and underfunded early schools, as well as the rigors of school life on the frontier. The author documents the spartan living conditions of the teachers who worked in rural schools and describes how the rural school was a means of assimilating children of various cultural and ethnic groups into mainstream American values, and this emphasis helps dispel the bucolic stereotype of country school education. But Gulliford also underscores the importance of the rural school to community identification since the rural school often served as a multipurpose facility and the center of community life.

The second section of the book provides a descriptive and practical guide to identifying country school architecture. Numerous photographs illustrate the various architectural styles included in the text. Descriptive sections on log, earthen, frame, stone, and brick schools provide valuable information for future studies.

The third part of the book portrays rural school buildings as important architectural and cultural artifacts and provides both practical suggestions and a rationale for preserving these icons of America's nostalgic past. Local, state, regional, and national preservation efforts to restore and adapt these structures are described. The discussion of schoolhouse museums and living history programs, although not exhaustive, should spur interest in promoting continued use of country school buildings. Two specific case studies of country school preservation (one became a living history museum and the other a bank) provide technical information about interior and exterior work, furnishings, expenses, and financing which should be beneficial for communities contemplating similar projects. Ample photographic documentation of these projects is provided.

Material culture studies are to be encouraged, but Gulliford's book does not entirely overcome several inherent problems. Gulliford does not always provide smooth transitions between generalizations and supporting evidence. He sometimes moves awkwardly from one kind of evidence to another and has difficulty integrating oral history, original documents, architectural artifacts, and social history into a coherent message.

The scope of *America's Country Schools* implies its usefulness primarily as a reference. The book regrettably has no topical index which would further enhance its value as a reference tool. There is, however, an index listing the many rural schools depicted in the portfolio sections of the book. The heavy reliance on portfolio sections as chapter closings will be welcomed by those who enjoy browsing through old photographs, but these extensive sections (seventy-five pages) have not been well integrated into the text,thus creating an "album approach" which suggests that the author could not successfully utilize the photographs in more direct ways.

The author provides an overview of educational reforms in America today and draws insights from his investigation to show how modern educational reform may be emulating earlier community values seen in rural schools. He provides the opportunity for many to reminisce and others to engage in critical dialogue concerning the future of rural education. *America's Country Schools* will encourage readers to consider whether country schools are a viable educational alternative, and it should serve as incentive for rural and urban communities to become interested in restoration, rehabilitation, and reuse of these vestiges of America's past. Gulliford has managed to combine the social and cultural history of rural education with a descriptive architectural survey to create a realistic and fascinating description of early school life. The author also makes an important statement about the impact rural education has had in shaping the social and cultural milieu of the United States. Apart from the minor problems noted above, Gulliford has made an outstanding contribution to the field of American material culture studies.

Reviewed by Gordon A. Davis *who is director of University Museums, a six-museum complex at Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. One of the six museums is the one-room Eyestone School.*

The First Chouteaus: River Barons of Early St. Louis

by William E. Foley and C. David Rice

xii + 241 pages, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, Chouteau genealogy.
Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983, $22.50.

THIS IS AN attractively printed book, with clear illustrations, which manages not to get close to its subject. The prospects for this volume were fascinating; at last someone would bring the biography of the historically important, and diverse Chouteau family into perspective. Unfortunately, the authors fell short of that accomplishment in this work.

Although we are assured that the authors consulted the extensive resources available at the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, this work really seems to be a fleshed-out and extended version of Cunningham and Blythe's, *The Founding Family of St. Louis*, published by Midwest Technical Publications in 1977. I know, from first-hand experience as a researcher, of the rich resources to be found on the Chouteaus in the collections of the Missouri Historical Society. But, at critical points in the narrative, when we look for an original citation, we are usually fed a secondary source. This lack reduces the book to puffery; interesting but basically unsubstantial in and of its own research framework.

The most serious omission has to do with the importance to the later Chouteau fur trading empire of John B. Sarpy and his brother Peter A. Sarpy. They can be found, briefly on pages 38 and 190, respectively. Even Cyprien Chouteau, who was an important trader in the Missouri and Kansas areas, receives short shrift. In fact, with good original resources available, the authors fall back on Cunningham and Blythe, though better documenta-

tion exists in original form. Additionally, delineations of the Chouteau brothers' characters, especially on pages 201 and 202, and a portion of 203, are devoid of the kind of citation from original sources that one expects of mature historians.

This is not to say that this book is without merit. On the contrary, it is of considerable merit to young students and others with a surface knowledge of the Chouteaus and their place in history. It is essentially an easy to read narrative which fails to bring the personalities of either Auguste or Pierre Chouteau into full perspective.

Reviewed by John E. Wickman, *director of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.*

Book Notes

The Wake of the Prairie Schooner. *By Irene D. Paden.* (Gerald, Mo.: Patrice Press, 1986. 533 pages. Cloth, $24.95. Paper, $14.95.)

Originally published in 1943, this book is a record of the research and experiences of Irene Paden and her husband Dr. William G. Paden. In the 1920s and 1930s the couple researched the Oregon and California trails by using overland trail diaries, taking annual field trips, and retracing routes. This reprint of the Paden book includes eleven maps and twenty-two pen-and-ink drawings that were created by the author.

The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota As They Were in 1834. *By Samuel W. Pond. Introduction by Gary Clayton Anderson.* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986. xxi + 192 pages. Paper, $7.95.)

Pond's work, first published in 1908, is reintroduced in this paperback edition with a new introduction by Gary Clayton Anderson. Samuel Pond and his brother Gideon established a mission in 1834 at Lake Calhoun which is now part of Minneapolis. The two spent almost twenty years among the Dakotas. As Samuel observed the Indians' way of life eroding under the white man's influence, he wrote this account "to show what manner of people the Dakotas were." His writings remain an important source for the study of life in the upper Midwest and of Dakota material culture and established institutions.

Cities of the Prairie Revisited: The Closing of the Metropolitan Frontier. *By Daniel J. Elazar, with Rozann Rothman, Stephen L. Schechter, Martin Allan Stein, Joseph Aikmund II.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986. 288 pages. Cloth, $25.00.)

Fifteen years ago Elazar's *Cities of the Prairie: The Metropolitan Frontier and American Politics* examined the political and social changes which took place between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Kennedy Administration in the Illinois cities of Champaign-Urbana, Decatur, Joliet, Moline, Peoria, Rockford, Rock Island, and Springfield, plus the cities of Davenport, Iowa, Duluth, Minnesota, and Pueblo, Colorado. In this newest book, those cities are revisited and studied for the changes which have occurred under the policies of the Johnson and Nixon administrations and under federal and state regulations that have affected the way cities do business. The book includes maps, figures, tables, notes, bibliography, index, and four specific case studies: the interwoven changes of industry and politics in Pueblo; new responsibilities for civic government in Champaign-Urbana; the "agricommercial tradition" of Decatur; and the influence of external factors on a city, as in Joliet.

Editorial Policies

Kansas History carries scholarly articles, edited documents, and other materials that contribute to an understanding of the history and prehistory of Kansas and the Central Plains. Manuscripts dealing with political, social, intellectual, cultural, economic, and institutional history are welcomed, along with biographical and historiographical interpretations and studies of archeology and the built environment. Articles emphasizing visual documentation such as photographs or paintings are also appropriate, as are material culture studies. Originality, quality of research, significance, and presentation are among the factors that determine the suitability for publishing in the journal. Generally, genealogical studies are not accepted, although exceptionally well done reminiscences or other autobiographical writings will be considered.

The Edgar Langsdorf Award for Excellence in Writing, which includes a plaque and an honorarium of one hundred dollars, is given for the best article published each year.

Kansas History follows the *Chicago Manual of Style*, published by the University of Chicago Press (13th ed., rev., 1982), and a style sheet is available on request. Manuscripts and other editorial queries should be addressed to the editor, *Kansas History*, 120 West Tenth Street, Topeka, Kansas 66612.

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[In Progress] Kansas history: a journal of the central plains

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Kansas State Historical Society

THE KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY was organized in 1875 by the newspaper editors and publishers of the state, and four years later it became the official trustee for the state's historical collections. Since then, the Society has operated both as a non-profit membership organization and as a specially recognized society supported by appropriations from the state of Kansas.

The purposes of the Society are the advancement of knowledge about and the preservation of resources related to the history and prehistory of Kansas and the American West, accomplished through educational and cultural programs, the provision of research services, and the protection of historic properties. The Society is governed by a ninety-nine-member board of directors, elected by the membership, and is administered by an executive director and an assistant executive director.

The new Kansas Museum of History features exhibits and educational programs based on the Society's rich artifact collections. It is located near the historic Pottawatomie Baptist Mission west of Topeka, adjacent to Interstate 70. All other Society departments remain at the Center for Historical Research, Memorial Building, across the street from the State Capitol in Topeka.

All persons interested in Kansas history and prehistory are cordially invited to join the Society. Those who would like to provide additional support for the Society's work may want to consider contributions in the form of gifts or bequests. A representative of the Society will be glad to consult with anyone wishing to make such a gift or establish a bequest or an endowment. Address the Executive Director, 120 West Tenth Street, Topeka, Kansas 66612-1291.

Cover: Mentholatum—an internationally known product first produced in Wichita, Kansas—is one of the featured topics in this issue of *Kansas History*. The wintery scene advertisement on this issue's cover first appeared as a seasonal cover for an issue of the Mentholatum Company's pamphlet, *Menthology*. These pamphlets, distributed to druggists between 1916 and 1944, were just one of the successful marketing and advertising tools used by the Mentholatum Company to promote its product. *Menthology* contained "short items of interest to the retailer," common sense advice, and occasional articles on the history of the company and the life of Mentholatum's creator and company founder, A. A. Hyde.

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A Balm in Gilead

by John M. Hyde

There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.

Spiritual

IN THE LAST DECADE of the nineteenth century, there appeared a "balm—menthol-based salve—which, like that in Gilead, ministered to the soul as well as to the body. It was called "Mentholatum." Its founder, a bankrupt businessman from Wichita was convinced that his product would "sell itself" once it had been introduced to customers. Relying on local druggists to make the introduction rather than on mass advertising or extravagant claims for its healing powers, he succeeded in making Mentholatum a nationally known product within a decade of its appearance on the market. His good fortune brought with it, however, a crisis in his personal life whose resolution was a commitment to give away the wealth which had suddenly come to him. His life came to be devoted to that purpose, and inevitably, Mentholatum became associated in the popular mind with the philanthropy of its founder. Like the balm in Gilead, it healed the wounds both of the body and of the spirit.

Born in Lee, Massachusetts, in 1848, the founder of Mentholatum was named by his parents Albert Alexander, was known to his family as Bert, and was addressed by his contemporaries in a more formal manner as Mr. A. A. Hyde.[1] In 1865 he left his boyhood home to follow his brother to Leavenworth, Kansas. There he was employed as a bank clerk until 1872 when his employer decided to send him to the recently established town of Wichita to assist in the opening of a new bank. A raw, frontier town at the time of his arrival, Wichita had gained notoriety—and prosperity—as the terminus of the cattle drives up the Chisholm Trail. Upon his arrival, Hyde entered into the life of the community, which was to be his home for the rest of his life, and by 1885 he was an officer of the Kansas National Bank, a member of the board of education, a leader of the First Presbyterian Church, and the father of a growing family. Referred to in the local press as a "square-toed man of pronounced convictions,"[2] he seemed an unlikely victim of the speculative real estate "fever" which was to strike Wichita at this time.

But catch the fever he did. In 1887 he resigned from the bank and began to devote all his energies to the real estate market. As a symbol of his success, he built an imposing home on a rise to the east of town which, he assumed, would soon be reached by the expanding population and would become a highly desirable residential area which he named rather ostentatiously "Brooklyn Heights." But before these expectations could be realized, the "boom" collapsed and with it the fortune which at least on paper Hyde had accumulated. "Instead of being worth $100,000," he said in later years, "I found myself busted, and $100,000 in debt."[3] Some means of supporting his family and repaying his debts had to be found.

With Wichita's economy and population in decline and with money in short supply, Hyde's options were limited. His choice, therefore, was a modest one at the outset. In September 1889, he entered into partnership with two men who had recently arrived in the city—Walter R. Binkley and Clayton K. Smith. Each partner contributed $200 to the new venture which was to produce and sell toilet soap and was to be known as the Yucca Company.[4] Binkley was responsible for the

John M. Hyde *is a native of Wichita and grandson of A. A. Hyde, founder of the Mentholatum Company. Dr. Hyde received his B.A. degree from Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts; his M.A. from the University of Minnesota; and Ph.D. from Harvard University. He has been a member of the faculty at Williams College for twenty-seven years, and during his career at the college has served as chairman of the history department and dean of the college.*

The material for this article is drawn primarily from the author's collection of A. A. Hyde papers and memorabilia, hereafter referred to as the Hyde Collection, which is being prepared for presentation to Wichita State University.

1. George Irving, *Master of Money—A. A. Hyde of Wichita* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1936), is the only published biography of A. A. Hyde. Written as a tribute rather than as a formal biography, it is useful for accounts of the author's interviews with Hyde and some of his closest contemporaries as well as for quotations from correspondence made available to him.

2. As a candidate for mayor of Wichita in 1883, Hyde was described as a "square-toed man of pronounced convictions on the liquor traffic." See *Wichita City Eagle*, March 22, 1883.

3. *Hutchinson News*, March 4, 1924. For accounts of Hyde's real estate ventures during the "boom," see interview published in *Kansas City Star*, May 1, 1927; *Wichita Eagle*, January 11, 1935; "The Streets with Girls' Names," *Wichita Beacon*, January 4, 1925, Sunday Magazine section, Hyde Collection.

4. Day Book of the Yucca Company, August 1, 1889—January 10, 1891, Hyde Collection.