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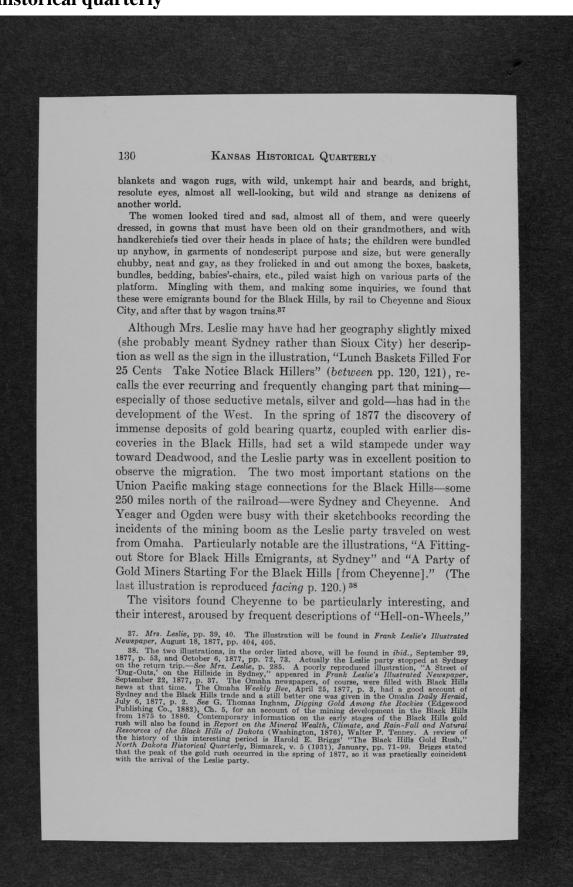
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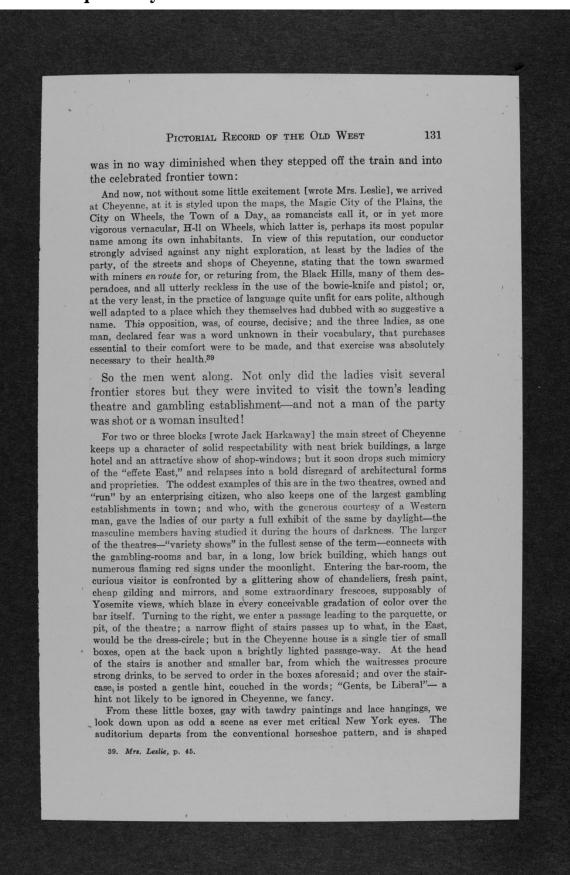
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# KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

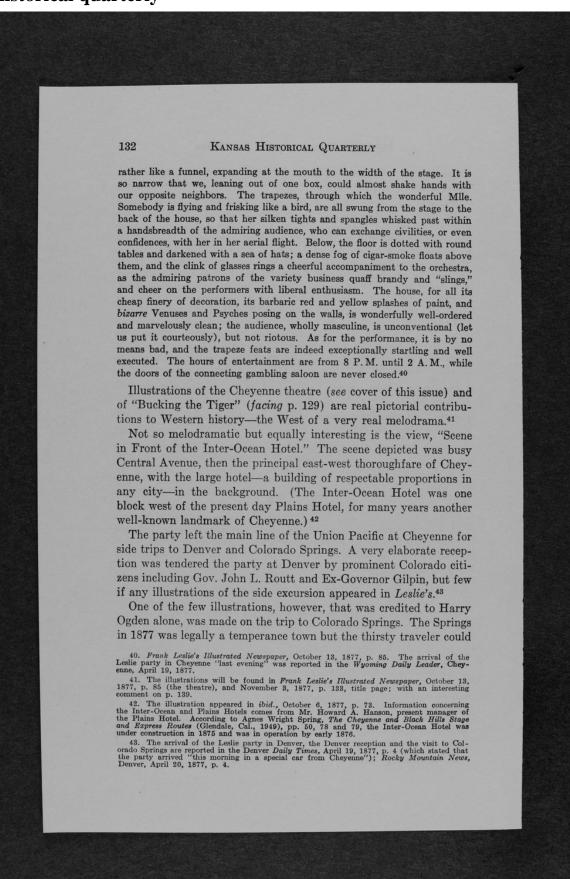




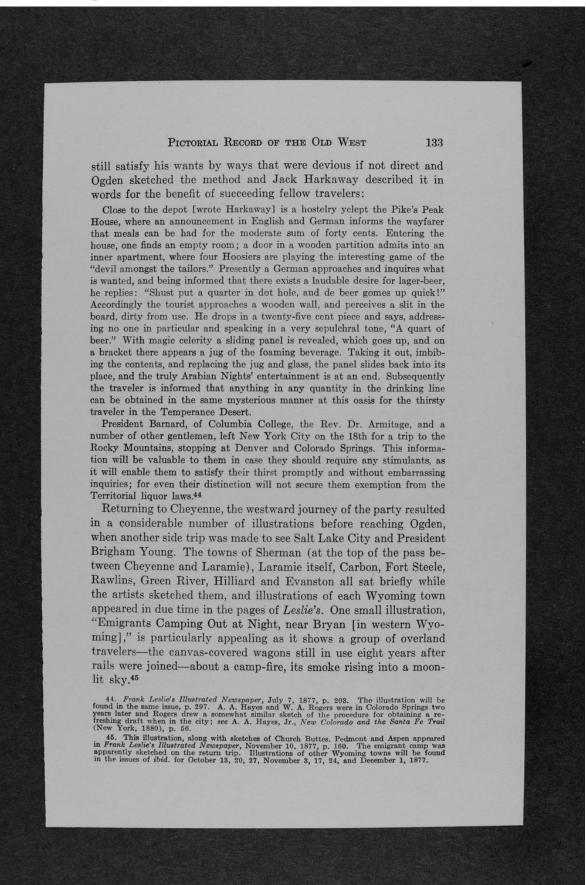




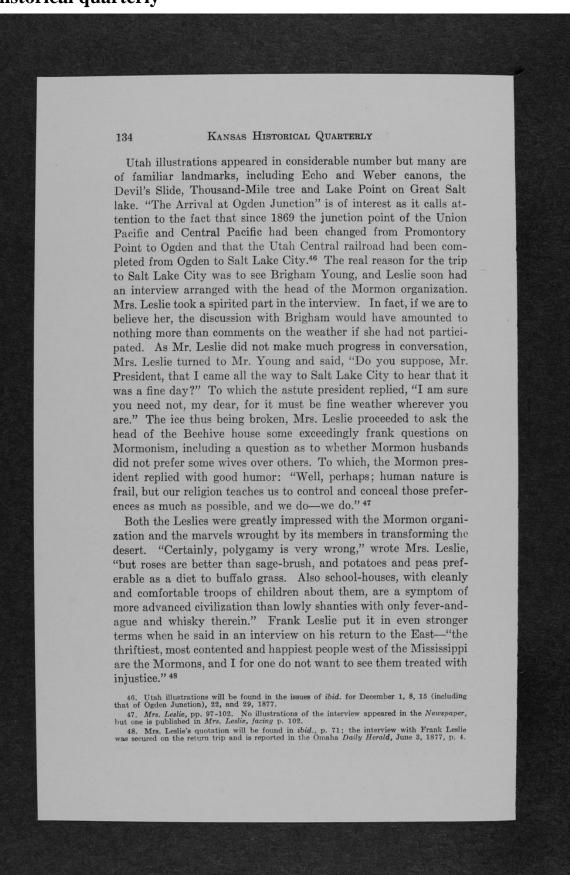




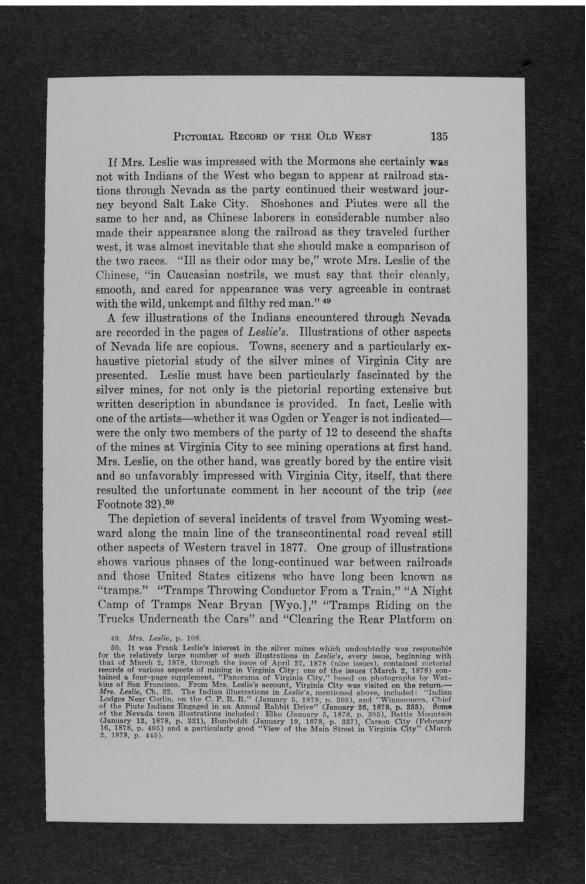




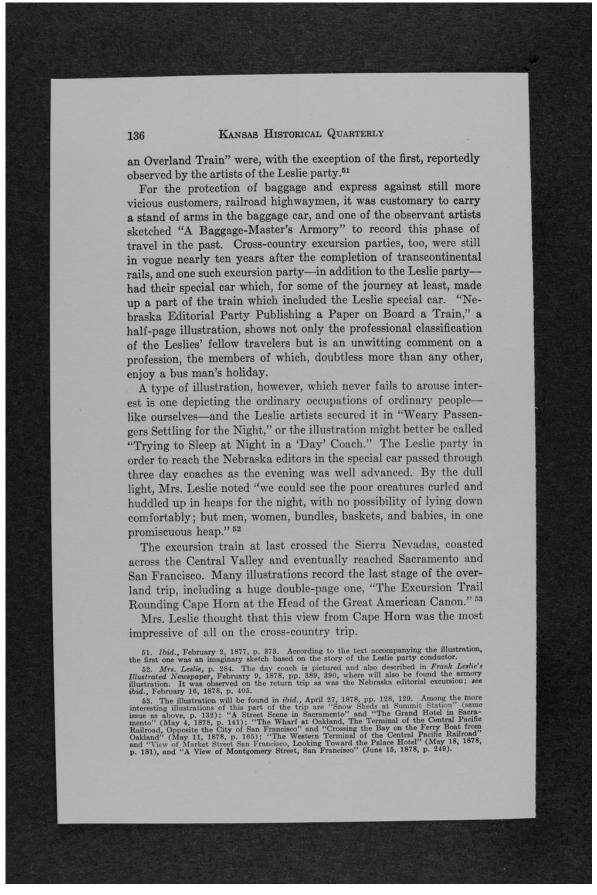




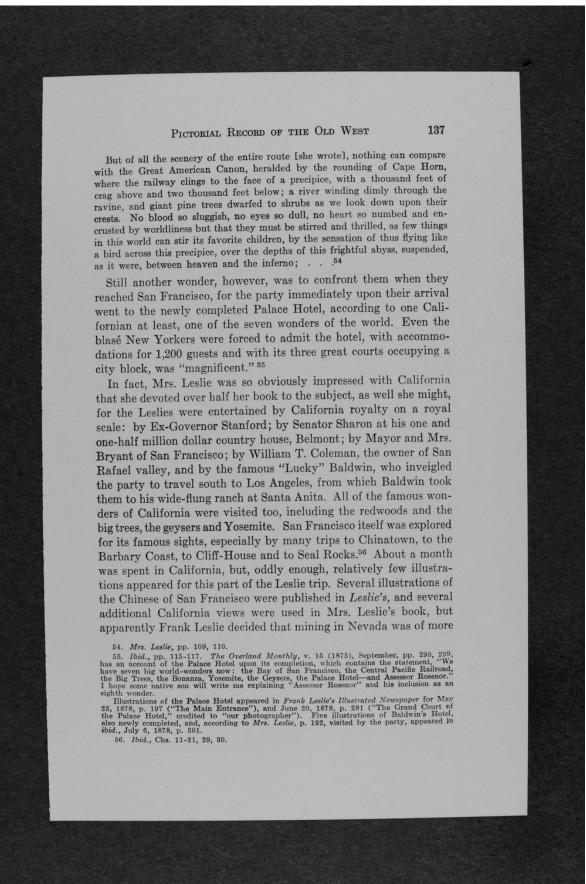




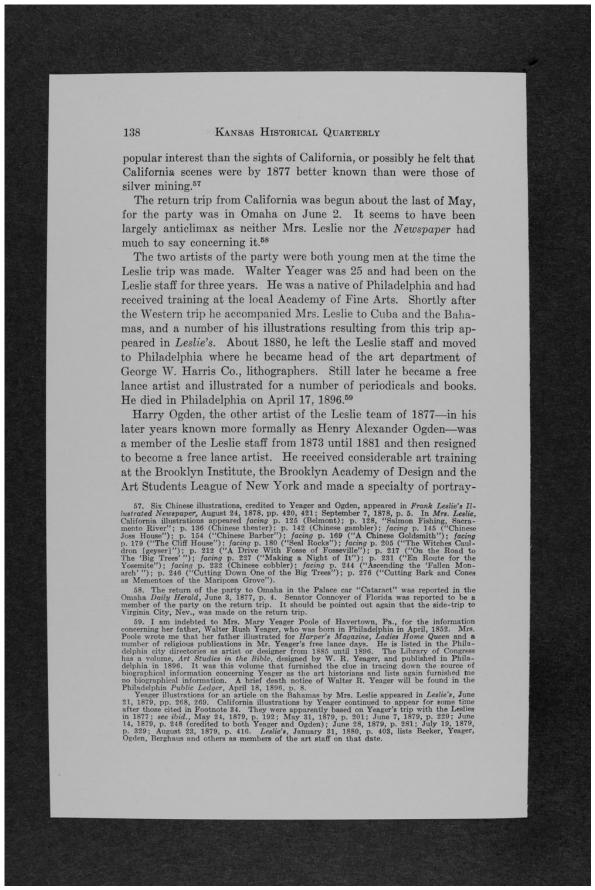




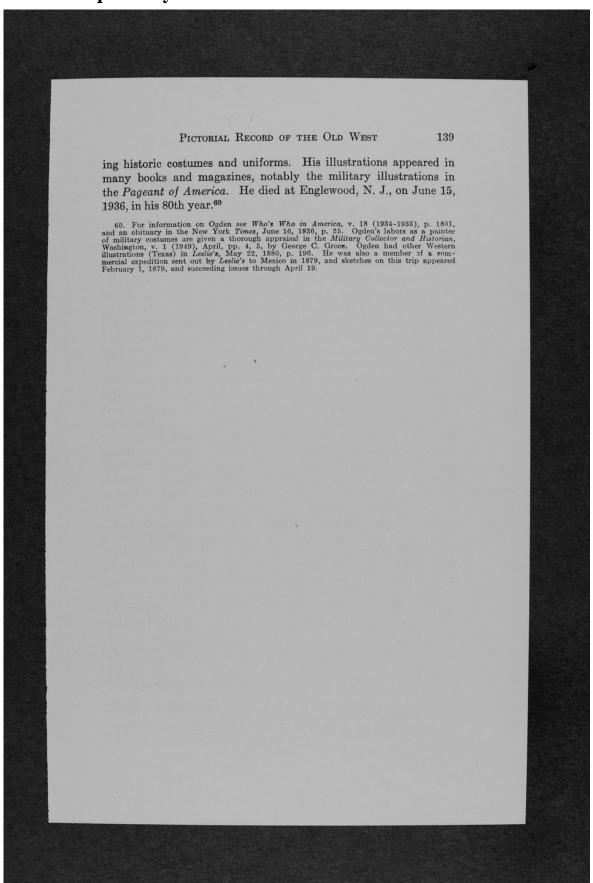














Kansas historical quarterly

#### A Review of Early Navigation on the Kansas River

EDGAR LANGSDORF

BEFORE the establishment of Kansas territory in May, 1854, little exact information about the Kansas river was available. Exploration in the 18th and early 19th centuries was concerned chiefly with following the upper Missouri, and the Kansas was hardly known above its mouth. Reports about the river were based, for the most part, on statements by Indians—who usually were reluctant to divulge details of their own country-and on observations of the early fur traders. Despite the handicap of describing and mapping a region which they had not seen, several of the early explorers were able to produce reports of surprising accuracy.

One of the earliest maps of the trans-Mississippi area, drawn by Father Marquette in 1673-1674, although it fails to show the Kansas river, does locate the Kansa and other tribes in approximately their true positions. This map, based upon information secured from Indians with whom Marquette could converse only in sign language, places the Kansa on the 39th parallel, directly south of the Omaha and Pawnee tribes and west of the Osage, thereby indicating that they were then living on the Kansas river. Joliet's map of the same date shows the Kansa in much the same relative position, though farther south, between the 36th and 37th parallels.1

The first map showing the Kansas river is Guillaume de l'Isle's "Carte de la Louisiane," which was drawn about 1718. On it the "Grande Riv[ière] des Cansez" flows into the Missouri at about the 40th parallel and a large village of "les Cansez" is located at a prominent fork in the river, perhaps the junction of the Smoky Hill and the Saline or the Solomon.2 This map, with virtually no changes except for the translation of French into English, was published by John Senex, a London cartographer and engraver, in 1721.3 One of

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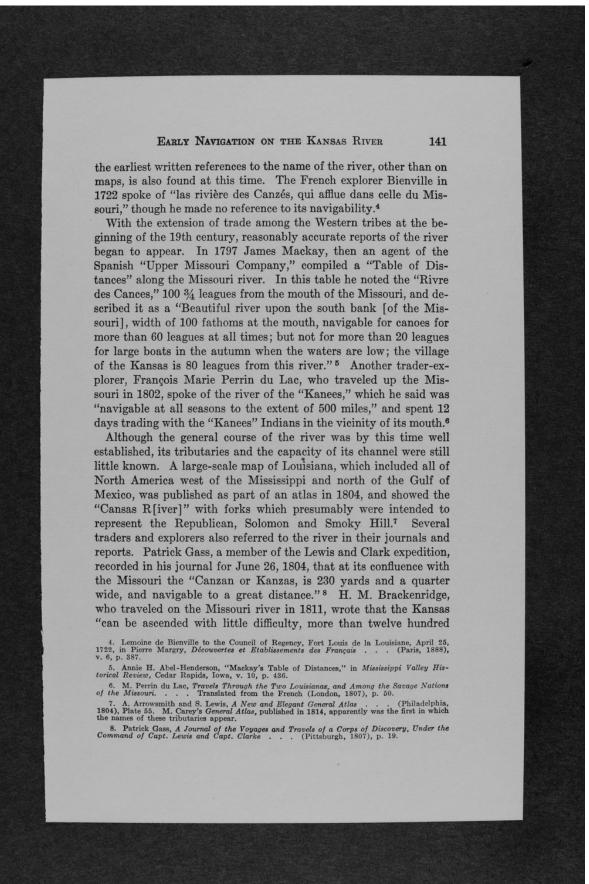
1. These maps are reproduced in R. G. Thwaites, Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France (Cleveland, 1900), v. 59, facing pp. 86 and 108. Marquette's map is also reproduced in Kansas Historical Collections, Topeka, v. 10, facing ps. 80. Cf. F. W. Hodge, ed., Handbook of American Indians . . . , Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 80 (Washington, 1907), Pt. 1, p. 653. For a list of early maps locating the Kansa nation see George P. Morehouse, "History of the Kansa or Kaw Indians," in Kansas Historical Collections, v. 10, pp. 344, 345.

2. Reproduced as the frontispiece in B. F. French, Historical Collections of Louisiana . . (Philadelphia, 1850), Pt. 2. Delisle (1675-1726) was one of the most important French cartographers of the 18th century.

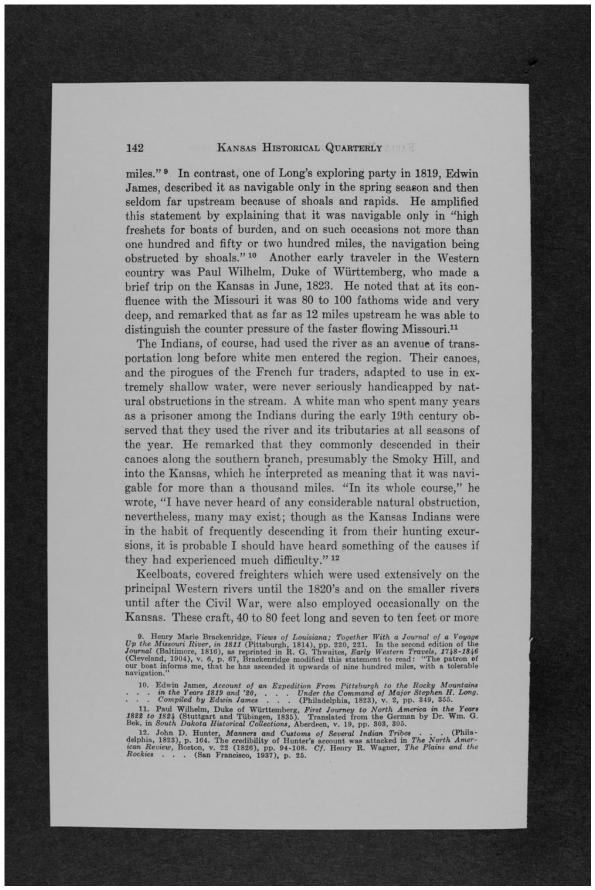
3. John Senex, "A Map of Louisiana and of the River Mississippi," from A New General Atlas (London, 1721), facing p. 248.

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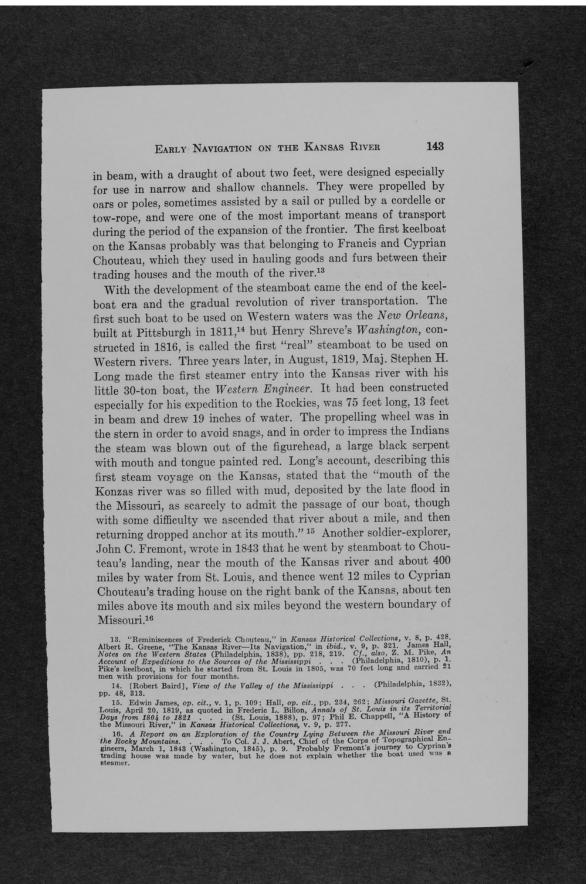




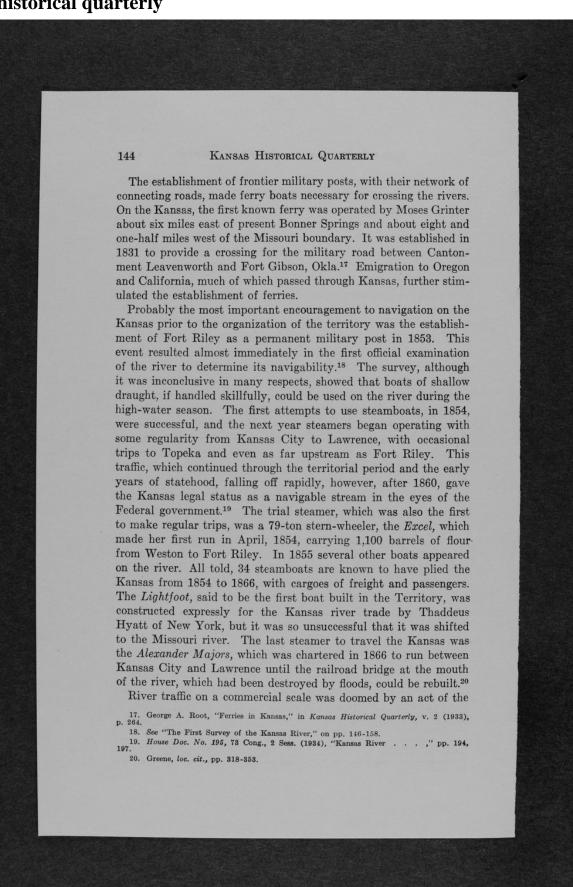




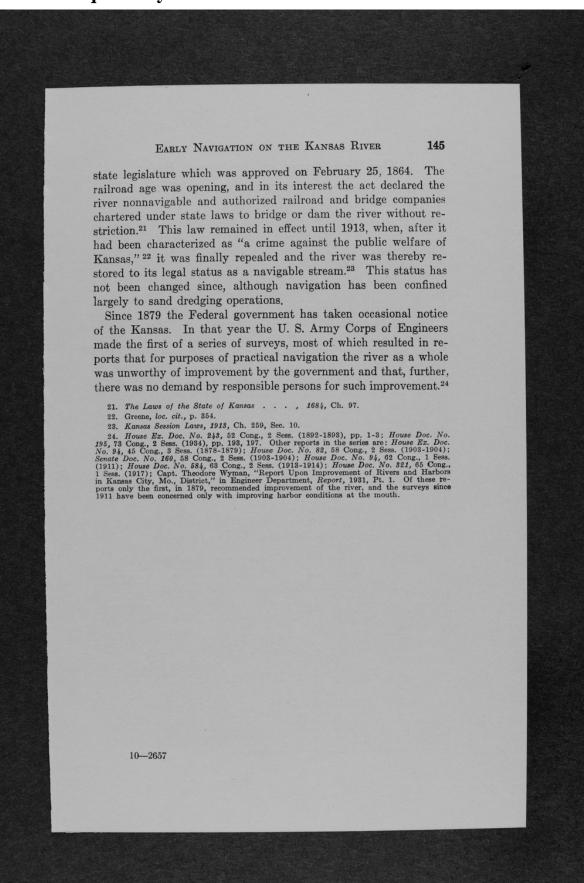




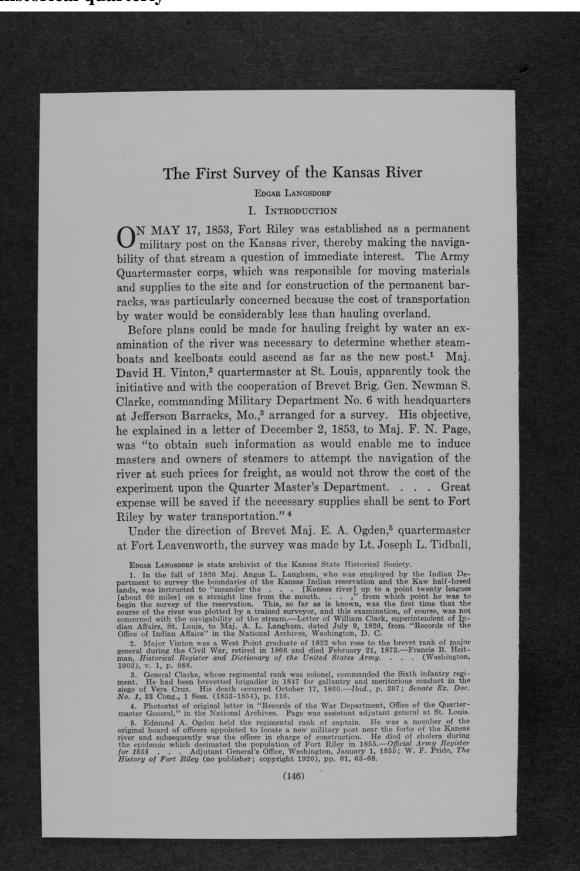




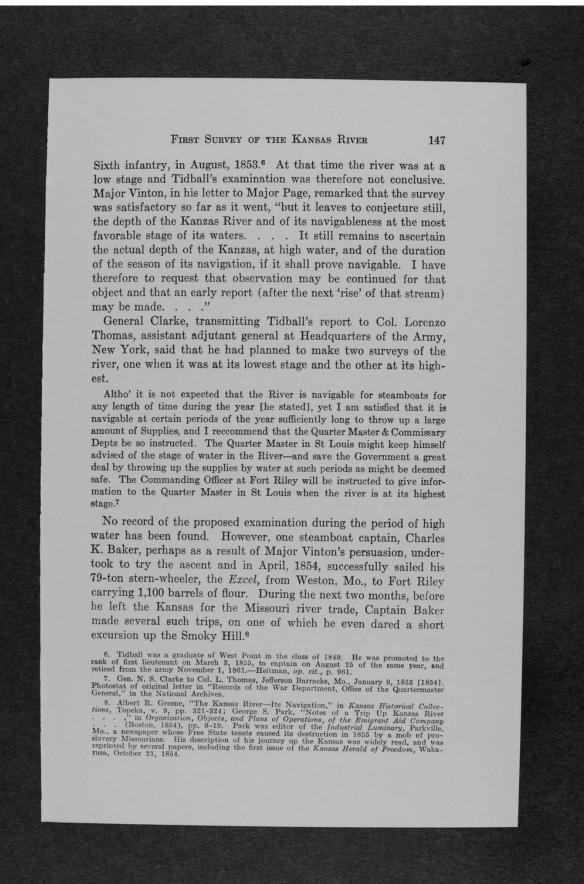
















KANSAS HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Copies of Tidball's report to Major Ogden, with a map which he made to illustrate it, were sent to Headquarters of the Army at New York, to Headquarters of the Department of the West at Jefferson Barracks, and to the Quartermaster General at Washington. The copy to the latter is on file among the "Records of the War Department, Office of the Quartermaster General," in the National Archives.9 The copy from which the text below is taken was received by the Historical Society on February 25, 1878, with other papers of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, from J. M. Forbes, president of the board of trustees.

> II. LIEUTENANT TIDBALL'S REPORT Fort Riley Indn Terry Oct 10, 1853

Major:

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The duty of prosecuting the survey of the Kansas river, ordered to be made under your supervision, having devolved on me, I have the honor to communicate the following report of my investigations.

As the principal object contemplated in this expedition was to determine the practicability of navigating the river by steamers or keel Boats, my attention was chiefly directed to collecting facts and obtaining information bearing on this point, and less particularly to other matters mentioned in your letter of instructions.<sup>10</sup>

The place selected for departure is a point of the river about two miles below the junction of the Smoky Hill Fork and Pawnee river, estimating the sinuosities of the river, and about a mile from, and nearly East of, this post.11 It was not deemed important to commence operations higher up, as the place selected possesses as many advantages for a Steam Boat landing as any point above, and is more easy of access from the fort.

The turbid cast of the water rendering it next to impossible for my Steersman, in his position close to the surface, to determine where the main channel lay, to enable me to keep in it, I found it

10. The instructions referred to have not been found either in the files of the Society or use of the National Archives.—Ibid.

<sup>9.</sup> Letter from E. G. Campbell, director, "War Records Division," The National Archives, Washington, D. C., December 19, 1947.

those of the National Archives.—*Ibid.*11. The Smoky Hill and Republican rivers join at Junction City, near Fort Riley, to form the Kansas. The Republican took its name from a branch of the Pawnee confederacy known as the Kitkehahki or Republican Pawnees who lived along its banks until about 1815, but it was also called the Pawnee by several early explorers, including John C. McCoy, who performed many of the surveys of Indian reservations in present Kansas. He stated that the river was called Pa-ne-ne-tah or Pawnee by the Kansas Indians.—See John C. McCoy, "Survey of Kansas Indian Lands," in Kansas Historical Collections, v. 4, p. 305; Frank W. Blackmar, Kansas, A Cyclopedia of State History. . . . (Chicago, 1912), v. 2, p. 577; George A. Root, "Ferries in Kansas," in Kansas Historical Quarterly, v. 3, p. 246; F. W. Hodge, ed., Handbook of American Indians . . . , Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 30 (Washington, 1907), Pt. 1, p. 707. Tidball's point of departure was at or near the point where One Mile creek enters the Kansas.



