
The English Colony at Victoria, Another View

by James L. Forsythe

THE ENGLISH COLONY at Victoria, Kansas, in the eastern part of Ellis County, has long been of interest to Kansans and others who are interested in Kansas history, the frontier, rural immigrant settlement, the cattle industry, and agricultural history. The colony has maintained a popularity in the press though the colony ceased to exist as a recognized entity over a century ago.¹

It is difficult to know the real reason for the popular interest in the colony. However, contemporary newspaper accounts of the nineteenth century, as well as those written in the twentieth century, would lead one to believe that the English colonists lived in the village of Victoria and left the village to engage in various sporting events, using the word sporting in its broadest sense for some of the young English colonists, participating in drinking bouts with the soldiers, citizens, and the denizens of wicked Hays City to the west along the Kansas Pacific Railway, and to engage in general hellraising when possible. In other words, it appears to be the drinking and whoring in the saloons of Hays City and the bagnios of Kansas City that have been of popular interest.² Historians who are interested in agricultural history in Kansas and on the American frontier have

other reasons for studying the development of the English colony at Victoria.³

For this article, only three aspects of the British settlement at Victoria, Kansas, in the 1870s and early 1880s were studied. First, George Grant, the founder of the colony, will be considered briefly. Second, one of the Englishmen who farmed large acreage in the colony will be evaluated. Third, some of the individuals who came to work in the colony and who remained as residents for various periods of time are considered for their contributions to the settlement.

The Victoria colony is best known for George Grant. Many newspaper, magazine, and scholarly articles have been written about Grant, the settling of Victoria colony, and the play of the fun-loving redcoated British colonists. One reason for his popularity was the efforts of Kansas newspapers to promote Kansas in the 1870s. Grant's purchase of land from the railroad was the only one made in Kansas during the year of 1872, and the arrival of the optimistic colonists in 1873 contrasted with the severity of the Panic of 1873. The destitution of the Kansas frontier in 1874 was offset in newspapers with good news about the colony. So the spreading of good news during bad times aided in the development of a positive image for Kansas when better times returned, and the good news also was used by Grant in an attempt

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1. *Wakefield Advertiser*, January 21, 1898; *Kansas City Star*, June 5, 1919; *Kansas City Times*, May 10, 1952; *Hays Daily News*, June 6, 1954, September 8, 1957, and February 16, 1958; and *Great Bend Daily Tribune*, April 27, 1958. See also, "Appropriate Marker for Grave of Man Who Gave America Our Aberdeen-Angus Cattle," *The Kansas Stockman* 26 (August 1942): 7.

2. Charles M. Daugherty, "The Jolly West," *Tradition: The Monthly Magazine of America's Picturesque Past* 2 (March 1959): 30-43; *Kansas City Times*, January 10, January 20, 1880.

3. Alvin H. Sanders, "When the Black Bulls Came to America," *The Country Gentleman* 93 (May 1928): 17, 54-55; Alvin Howard Sanders, "Beginning of the Black Cattle in America," *Livestock Markets* 43 (January 12, 1933): 8-9; Alvin Howard Sanders, *A History of Aberdeen Angus Cattle* (Chicago: New Breeder's Gazette, 1928), 136-49; Charles L. Wood, *The Kansas Beef Industry* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1980), 30; Theodore Rosenof, *Cultural Sensitivity to Environmental Change: The Case of Ellis County, Kansas, 1870s-1900*, Report 3 (Madison: Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin, Madison, April 1973), 6; James L. Forsythe, "George Grant of Victoria: Man and Myth," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 9 (Autumn 1986): 102-14.



Although reports of jolly Redcoats drunkenly pursuing sport over the prairie were exaggerated, incongruous sights, such as British colonists playing cricket on the plains, could still be seen.

to secure funds and colonists for his enterprise, though he was not very successful.⁴

One aspect of the George Grant enterprise in Victoria, which always has been intriguing, has been Grant's proposal to sell only large tracts of one or more sections rather than to sell smaller parcels such as quarter sections. Historians are familiar with the many stories of Grant's desire to have the colony populated by British gentlemen who appeared to the locals as happy British Redcoats in various states of inebriation dashing across the prairie in pursuit of antelope.⁵ Unfortunately, the one big hunt, which did not occur as planned, was blown out of proportion by newspapers and writers who later incorporated the hunts into stories about the English colonists.⁶

Regardless of the stories, one of the reasons that the type of colony originally planned is still unclear is that

George Grant had close contacts with the Wakefield colony, which had been founded in Clay County, Kansas, in 1869 by Englishmen. Grant even wintered his blooded livestock at Wakefield in order for the cattle and sheep to survive the severe winters on the western plains. Some of his colonists moved to Wakefield later. If Grant was close to the Wakefield colony, one might ask why he proposed a colony different from the one at Wakefield.⁷

Evidence from 1872 and 1873 implies that Grant planned not a colony of wealthy, landed gentry, but a colony of small landholders or "small farmers." One early proposal was for Grant to have a nine thousand-acre estate which would be surrounded by agriculturalists on small plots. This colonizing proposal was suggested before Grant left the United Kingdom to search for land. After the first colonists arrived in Kansas, J. D. Smith of Lanarkshire, Scotland, and Grant's agent who had arrived with the colonists, wrote to David Curror of Edinburgh, who was initially involved with

4. Marjorie Gamet Raish, *Victoria: The Story of a Western Kansas Town*, Language and Literature Series No. 3, Fort Hays Kansas State College Studies (Topeka: State Printer, 1947), 7-48; Forsythe, "George Grant of Victoria," 102-14.

5. The terms "gay Englishmen" and "merry men" were sometimes used in the newspapers of the time and later, but today the terms have different meanings. "Victoria—Gay Englishmen, Serious Russians," *Great Bend Daily Tribune*, April 27, 1958; "Hard-Riding Red Coats Put Gay Touches on Kansas Plains," *Kansas City Star*, March 11, 1928; "Merry Men of England Wrote History on the Prairies of Western Kansas," *Hutchinson News-Herald*, February 10, 1957; Daugherty, "The Jolly West," 34-35; and *Hays Daily News*, September 8, 1952.

6. See below under the material on Henry E. Smithes.

7. *Kansas Daily Commonwealth*, Topeka, December 7, 1869; *Clay Center Dispatch*, October 11, 1965; William J. Chapman, "The Wakefield Colony," *Kansas Historical Collections, 1907-1908* 10 (Topeka: State Printing Office, 1908): 485-521; W. Weston, ed., "The Wakefield Colony," *Weston's Guide to the Kansas Pacific Railway* (Kansas City: Bulletin Print, 1872), 51-52; Nell Blythe Waldron, "Colonization in Kansas From 1861 to 1890," (doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1923), 53-62.

Grant's efforts, that Grant would sell the nine thousand acres of bottomland that he had reserved for himself. Grant would then relocate to the Smoky Hill River. This colonizing plan differs from the plan for a colony of nobility and of the wealthy that was popularized by the Kansas newspapers. The issue of Grant's plans in 1872 and early 1873 will take yet more research to resolve. However, if the planned colony had been for small landholders, mechanics, and tradespeople as well as the "better class," then the history of the Victoria colony, as well as the settlement of Ellis County, might have been different.⁸

8. A copy of a clipping in the D. Curror Scrapbook, dated August 24, 1873, announced the arrival of Grant and his party in St. Louis. The article noted that a working club had been formed in London and, in connection with it, there was being organized a mechanics' and farming club. It was proposed that each member receive a lot of from 10 to 160 acres but not less than 10 acres for the purpose of actual settlement in Grant's property. The article noted that about three hundred of these persons had made arrangements to come to Ellis County in the spring of 1874. "D. Curror, India Building, Edinburgh, Scotland [scrapbook of clippings concerning Victoria, 1872-1874], Library, Kansas State Historical Society [hereafter cited as D. Curror Scrapbook]. A similar story appeared in the *Topeka Daily Blade* the same month. The newspaper noted that "Mr. Grant has withdrawn the right to buy less than one square mile excepting to a working man's colony now forming in London, and who have already, among them, purchased five thousand acres." *Topeka Daily Blade*, August 27, 1873, D. Curror Scrapbook. No purchase record was located in the Register of Deeds Office in the Ellis County Courthouse.

The *Courant*, of Edinburgh, Scotland, in December 31, 1872, carried a story from W. Carr, Hillhurst, Lower Canada. In this news item, Grant was quoted as stating that "many very worthy working men who now earn but a mere subsistence at home would gladly emigrate to America, could they feel reasonably sure beforehand of securing a foothold there." How would he do this? "By offering inducements to a better class of persons to come here, and by practically [sic] helping them to get along." These working men could also labor for the large landowners and make additional income. *The Courant*, December 31, 1872, D. Curror Scrapbook.

An article from the *Salina Herald*, June 21, 1873, noted, "Mr. J. Bates, of Westminster St., London, England, agent for the Foreign and Colonial Estates Agency Co., (Limited), is negotiating with Mr. Grant for seven sections—4,480 acres—for a club farming settlement.... The members will comprise men with small but competent means," D. Curror Scrapbook.

See also Brian P. Birch, "Victoria Vanquished: The Scottish Press and the Failure of George Grant's Colony," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 9 (Autumn 1986): 115-24. Birch noted that by 1875, Grant shifted from trying to attract small farmers to attracting wealthy Americans and Englishmen as investors.

For the plan for the nine thousand-acre estate surrounded by small farms, see copy of a letter by David Curror, June 19, 1873, and a copy of a letter from J. D. Smith to David Curror, May 24, 1873, Curror's Victoria Pamphlet file, Archives, Ellis County Historical Society, Hays, Kansas [hereafter cited as Curror's Victoria Pamphlet]. The two letters have a note at the top that states that the copies were sent by Maggie Reece.

See also *New and Attractive Field for Emigrants. Important Information Concerning the Best and Cheapest Farming and Grazing Lands in Kansas, the Central State of the United States, viz., Victoria, The Property of George Grant, (Late of Grant & Gask, London.)* (no imprint, ca. 1873), D. Curror Scrapbook.

After Grant's death the lands he had purchased from the railroad and which remained unsold were either sold by the executor of his estate, Margaret Grant Duncan, or sold at a sheriff's sale in early 1884. Most of the land sold was purchased by English and Scots colonists who made large purchases. Among the chief purchasers from the estate were Walter Maxwell of Eveningham Park, Yorkshire, England; Arthur B. White of London; John Bowman of Cumberlandshire, England; William Ratcliffe of Limes, England; A. Bethune, Blebo, Scotland, deputy-lieutenant of Fifeshire, director of the Scottish Chamber of Agriculture, and associated with the Scottish Steam Cultivator Company; and W. J. Gordon of Cairnfield, Baniffshire, Scotland.⁹

Later sales were made to other Scots and Englishmen or were made to individuals who had purchased lands earlier. For instance, one of the later sales was to David Logan, Sr., Berwick, Kingdom of Britain. Another of the later sales increased the holdings of the White Stock Ranch, owned by English colonist Arthur B. White.¹⁰

One of the deeds by the executors of Grant's estate was to a Scotsman, Robert Cox of Gorgie, near Murrayfield, Edinburgh, Scotland. Cox made two purchases from Grant in 1876 for a total of four sections. The amount of the first purchase was paid directly to Grant with a check drawn on the National Bank of Scotland. The amount of the second purchase was paid to Mr. Charles Gask of London on January 11, 1877. At the time of the second purchase, an agreement was entered into for the second purchase, which was for three sections. Under the terms of the agreement, Grant would not give title to the three sections until January 1, 1880; Cox paid the purchase price of £1440 on January 11, 1877. The agreement also provided that Grant could use the land for three years, that he would pay the taxes, and that he would pay interest to Cox on the purchase price at the rate of six percent per annum. Cox would not sell or lease the land for three years, and Grant would have the option to purchase the three sections back at the original sale price on January 1, 1880. Research has not indicated any other aspects of Cox's financial relationship with Grant, but he did visit Ellis County in 1876 prior to purchasing the property. Nor is it clear as to the

9. The deeds are recorded in Book B, Register of Deeds Office, Ellis County Courthouse, Hays, Kansas, and are dated from 1873 through 1877 [hereafter cited as RD]. Margaret Grant Duncan was Grant's niece and the wife of John Duncan.

10. See Warranty Deed, Grant to James Murdock, Dumfries, Scotland, April 5, 1876, Book D, p. 86, RD, and Warranty Deed from Grant to Arthur B. White, London, dated January 22, 1878, Book D, p. 28, RD.

role of Charles Gask, apparently the former partner of Grant, in this transaction with Cox.¹¹

The lands sold at sheriff's sale after Grant's death were good sections. Those sections along the railroad and south of Victoria are relatively flat and are used for wheat farming today. The sections along and near Big Creek are good for cattle as the bluffs give way to grass, and the upland fields now are used for wheat production. Volga-Germans began homesteading in the area of these sections in 1876, thus ending open grazing and thwarting ranching in that area.¹²

Several individuals from England, Scotland, and the United States purchased tracts of land from Grant during the first years of the colony. One of the largest and earliest purchases was made by Henry Smithes, of London and Laurie Park, Sydenham, County Kent, England. After Smithes' death, his son Henry Edward Smithes inherited the Ellis County property. The son developed the Mount Pleasant Stock Farm.¹³ One account states that Smithes, the son, was part of the colony, and another says not. Henry Edward Smithes was from England, the son of a wealthy London wine merchant, and was himself wealthy. French personal servants, Marechal and his wife Victorine, a cook, an overseer, and stablemen attended to the needs of the family. Henry Smithes married Lucy Buckstone, reported to be the daughter of an English playwright. She had problems adjusting in Ellis County and was not able to survive the Kansas plains in a rational manner.¹⁴

11. See Book F, p. 58, 581, RD. The Memorandum of Agreement is in Book E, p. 158, RD; the Executor's Deed is in F-581, RD. See also copy of letter from Robert Cox to George Grant Estate, July 4, 1878, Curror's Victoria Pamphlet. The first purchase was on February 14, 1876, and the second purchase agreement was dated November 14, 1876. The Executor's Deed for the three sections was dated January 24, 1880.

Cox later sold the land to several Volga-Germans in the county. Some sales were on contract for ten years at an interest rate of six percent per annum. For instance, see deed in Book 5-3, Miscellaneous Records, RD.

12. This information was compiled from the announcement of the sheriff's sale and from the Tract Books, vol. 65, microfilm, Forsyth Library, Fort Hays State University [hereafter cited as Tract Books FHSU]. For legal notice of the sale and the legal description of the land, see the *Star-Sentinel*, Hays City, December 6, 1883. The remainder of Grant's lands were sold at a sheriff's sale on January 7, 1884, the same date that at another sheriff's sale in the county, Sidney Smithes made the highest bid for the Mount Pleasant Stock Farm of his brother Henry Smithes.

13. Trustees and Executor of Henry Smithes to Henry E. Smithes, Book D, p. 15, RD.

14. Raish, *Victoria*, 41-46; "Paul Binders Now Occupy 'Mt. Pleasant Stock Farm' of the Fabulous Smithies [sic]," *Hays Daily News*, February 21, 1954. Although Raish and this newspaper account gave the spelling as Smithies, other sources, including legal documents, give the name as Smithes.

The ranch was adjacent to the Fort Hays Military Reservation on the southeast side. Big Creek flowed through the property. Henry Smithes built a large house near Big Creek, a very large barn, and erected wooden and stone fences. The house was decorated with fine china, an ebony Chickering piano, and fine furniture. The family enjoyed entertaining and imported liquor from Denver to meet the demand for parties.¹⁵

By 1877, Smithes had established himself in Ellis County and entertained the locals. Part of the stories about the fun-loving British come from the social events which he sponsored. For example, the initial hunt held by the Victoria Hunt Club, or Sporting Club, was conducted from Smithes' ranch, with a ball at the Ellis County Courthouse after the hunt. There were no foxes for the Redcoats, so they planned to hunt antelope. The sight for the eyes to behold in the early spring of 1877 was English—black derbies, ladies on English sidesaddles, scarlet swallow tail hunting coats on the men, and a redcoated bugler with a new horn—all ready for the hunt. After several stirrup cups of wine, the group was ready. However, the overcast skies of the March morning had darkened as the day progressed, and the leaden skies gave portent of events to come. The hunt halted abruptly as the wind brought snow.¹⁶ A hunt was later held, after two postponements, but the group departed from Victoria Manor, that is, the railroad station at Victoria.¹⁷

Although that first hunt was off, the ball was on, and was held that March evening in the Ellis County Courthouse. The ladies were in their finery, and locals watched the festivities and the ladies. The *Ellis County Star* reported, "so perfect and attractive were their toilets, so accomplished [were they] in the etiquette [sic] of the ballroom" that they made a good impression.¹⁸

Smithes continued to develop his ranch. With the arrival of the Volga-Germans, labor was plentiful and cheap. Smithes used their labor to construct a dam on Big Creek, using limestone quarried nearby. Contemporary reports estimated that the lake formed by the dam varied from one-half mile to eight miles in length, though the former estimate probably was more realistic. Later, the dam washed out during a flood. In the meantime, a boat arrived in Hays City for Henry Smithes, and on May 23, 1878, *The Jolly West* was launched.¹⁹ A steam

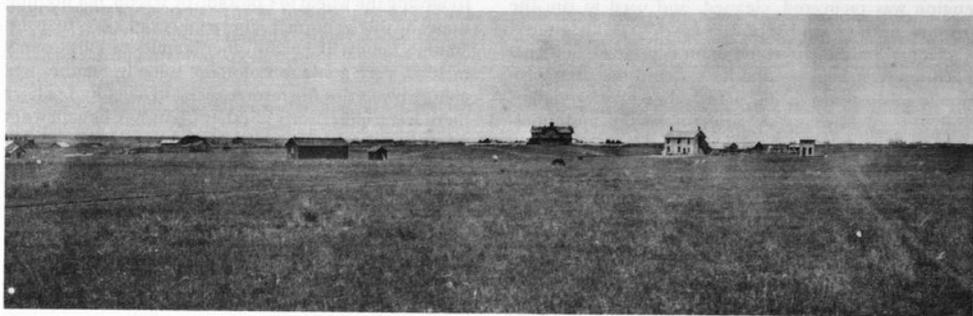
15. Raish, *Victoria*, 45. For a description of the building, see *Star-Sentinel*, December 6, 1883.

16. *Hays City Sentinel*, March 30, 1877; *Ellis County Star*, Hays, March 15, 22, 29, 1877.

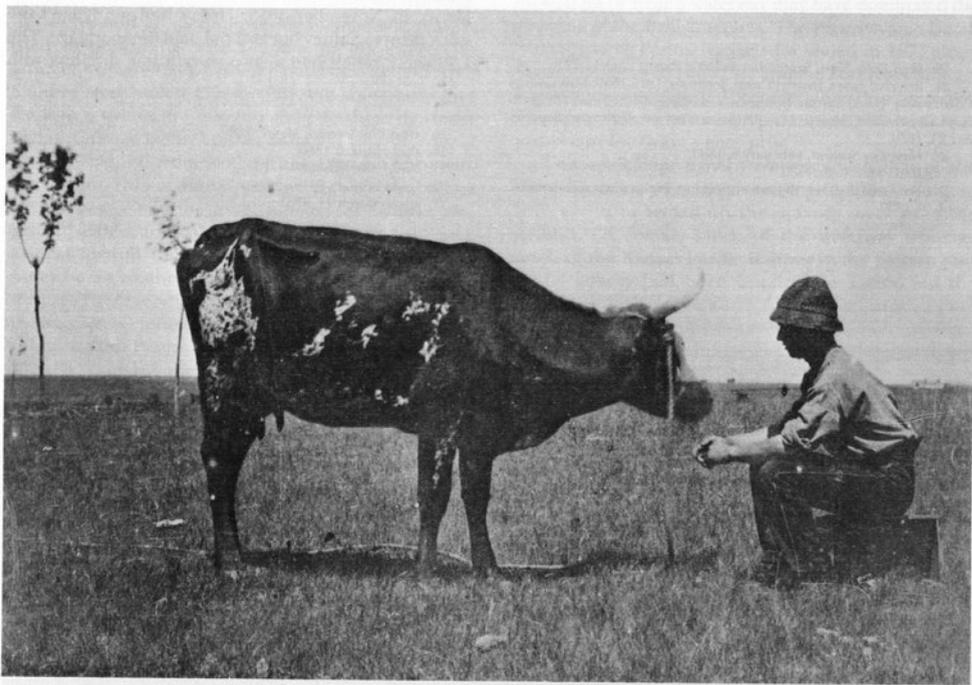
17. *Hays City Sentinel*, April 13, 1877; Raish, *Victoria*, 53-55.

18. *Ellis County Star*, Hays, March 29, 1877.

19. Raish, *Victoria*, 76-77; Daugherty, "The Jolly West," 42-43; *Hays Daily News*, September 8, 1957; "Hard-Riding Red Coats Put Gay Touches on Kansas Plains," *Kansas City Star*, March 11, 1928.



In the background of this sweeping view of Victoria colony, a building critical to the colony's economic life is visible—the railroad depot that also served as George Grant's headquarters.



The introduction and raising of livestock was an important aspect of the Victoria colony, and one of the largest livestock holdings became the Henry Edward Smithes Mount Pleasant Stock Farm.

engine powered the boat. Later it sank and the steam engine was recovered, cleaned, and used to run the printing press of the *Hays City Sentinel*.²⁰

Henry Smithes soon fell upon economic and legal hard times. It appears that he suffered the same economic misfortunes as did many other Ellis Countians and western Kansans. A series of lawsuit announcements against Smithes appeared in the *Hays City papers*; Smithes would win some and not be successful in others.²¹ He also entered local politics, and in 1880 was elected justice of the peace in Wheatland Township.²² He expanded his farming operations and, with his brother Sidney Fenwick Smithes, opened a country store near Munjor, one of the Volga-German villages.²³

Smithes worked to make his operation a success. He used modern equipment and diversified. Advertisements in the local papers noted the variety of livestock and grain raised on the Mount Pleasant Stock Farm.²⁴ Smithes bid on the beef contract for Fort Hays in May 1880,

but lost.²⁵ He proposed grinding wheat into flour and freighting the wheat to Colorado by wagon, but nothing came of this venture.²⁶ The papers did note that the Smithes family, like many other families in Ellis County in 1880, were going to Colorado. Initially, Smithes was going only to visit the resorts, such as Lake City, but later there were indications of other plans.²⁷ A large lawsuit was entered against Smithes in January 1880, and on November 1880, the local paper reported that Smithes had moved to Colorado.²⁸

Smithes established a business in Denver, but he continued to maintain contacts with Ellis County. The ranch was operated for him during the litigation, and he tried to contract with Ellis Countians for eggs and butter which would be shipped to him in Denver. His efforts were not successful, and he had further financial and legal setbacks.²⁹

The Mount Pleasant Stock Farm of Henry E. Smithes was purchased at a sheriff's sale by his brother Sidney F. Smithes on January 7, 1884, after a court decision against Henry in November 1883. Henry had mortgaged the stock farm to Sidney but had not paid the mortgage. The 1,760-acre ranch had a "two story frame dwelling with

20. *Hays Daily News*, September 8, 1957; Raish, *Victoria*, 77.

21. See civil cases, District Court, Journals, 1877-1883, Ellis County Courthouse, Hays, Kansas. See also as examples of civil case filings in *Hays City Sentinel*, May 9, May 16, September 19, 1879, and September 24, 1880.

22. *Hays City Sentinel*, February 6, 1880.

23. *Ibid.*, March 26, 1880.

24. For instance, see the advertisement in the *Hays City Sentinel*, April 30, 1880.

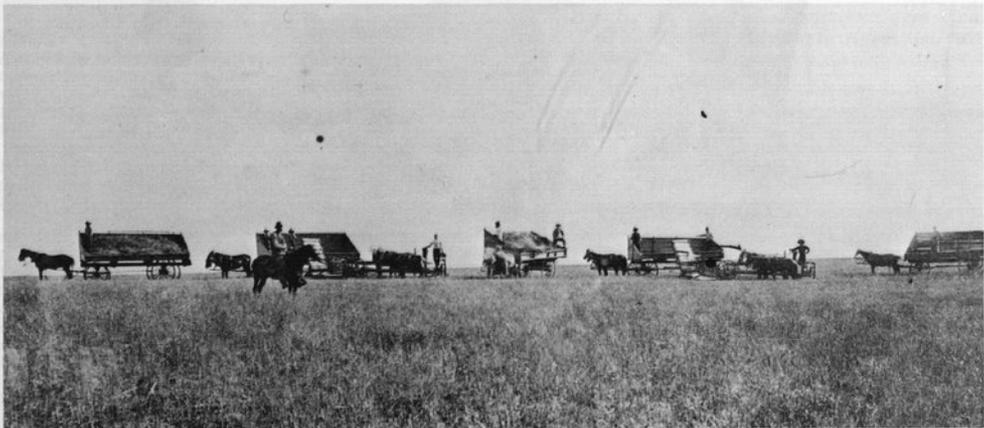
25. *Hays City Sentinel*, May 7, 1880.

26. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1880.

27. *Ibid.*, June 25, 1880.

28. *Ibid.*, January 9, November 26, 1880.

29. *Ibid.*, March 11, 1881.



These Victoria harvesters faced difficult times. In 1880 the winter wheat crop plunged by fifty percent, and the corn crop the following year was equally devastating.

basement kitchen and dining room, one [1] story frame house with stone cellar (mess house), one [1] frame granary building, one [1] two-story frame stable, two [2] one-story stone stables, sheds," fenced pastures, gardens, and yard.³⁰

Sidney Smithes, though he owned the ranch, lost the personal property on the Mount Pleasant Stock Farm. The following property was sold at another sheriff's sale as a result of a civil case against Sidney: 3 horses, "1 wagon, 1 cultivator, 8 section harrows, 1 sod cutter, 2 French & Adams Self Binders, 2 Buckeye drills, 1 Champion combined Mower and Reaper, 1 desk." The list of farming equipment indicated that the Mount Pleasant Stock Farm was a well-equipped operation for Ellis County at the time.³¹

Local accounts record that when Henry Smithes finally left Ellis County he traveled by wagon, not by train, to Colorado, and to earn money he carried flour to sell in Pueblo, Colorado, during a flour strike. Local accounts also state that his wife later acted on the stage in Denver and London to provide income and that he tried to poison his wife because of his interest in another woman. Little has been published about Henry Smithes after he left Ellis County, but court cases give leads to activities in Colorado and elsewhere by Henry and in Chicago by his brother Sidney.³²

The colonists from Scotland and England who came in 1873 and 1874 to the Victoria colony were never great in number. While the exact number of Scottish and British settlers and colonists in Ellis County who were associated with the enterprise of George Grant may never be ascertained accurately, one can develop a list for use. There is a partial list of names of most of those in the colony. Jennie Ward Philip, daughter-in-law of colonist Alex Philip, prepared a list many years ago. The list contains the names of those that she could remember in the colony. Notes indicate that she had questions about activities of several on her list. That list plus the 1875 Kansas census and the 1880 federal census provides names, and some names can be gathered from reading the deeds from the purchase of land from the Kansas Pacific Railway or from George Grant, as the place of permanent residence was usually stated. Between late 1875 and about 1880, names were given in the two county newspapers when stories were printed about the Victoria colony, or as colonists left or arrived in the county. The names which can be derived from these

various sources permit one to cross-check the names with deed and mortgage records in Ellis County and with the entries in the tract books to determine where the English homesteaded, took timber claims, preempted land, or purchased land in the late 1870s.³³

The British colonists who came to work in the Victoria colony acquired land from the federal government along Big Creek, the North Fork of Big Creek, and the Smoky Hill River, or they acquired land within about a mile of one of the streams. All properties entered were within the area purchased by Grant from the Kansas Pacific Railway or, if outside the area, were adjacent to the sections purchased.³⁴

The relatively flat uplands between Grant's sections were not homesteaded by the English colonists though the land was excellent for grain crops. Perhaps Grant discouraged settlement, thus keeping the range open between his sections and those he had sold, but there is no evidence to support this contention. The desire to be located on or near a waterway may have dominated the thinking of the British settlers. The Pennsylvania Dutch from Altoona, Pennsylvania, who settled in 1877 along Big Creek south of Hays City and the Fort Hays Military Reservation, also selected property along the waterway.³⁵ The waterways were stressed prominently in the annual prospectus for Grant's enterprise.³⁶

This settlement pattern contrasts with that of the Volga-Germans who began settling in Ellis County in 1876 and who settled on the uplands away from the streams. Of course, much of the waterway frontage south of the Kansas Pacific Railway in the eastern part of the county had been acquired by Grant, but the upper two-thirds of the North Fork of Big Creek had not been taken and public lands along the railroad from Hays to Ellis were not entered when the Volga-Germans

33. Many names can be found in Raish, *Victoria*, and in many of the newspaper articles cited in the other footnotes. See also "The Victoria Colony: A Roster of the Colonists," by Jennie Ward Philip, which was transcribed by the Rev. Blaine E. Burkey, historian, Ellis County Historical Society, November 6-8, 1973, with permission of Mr. and Mrs. Doug Philip of Hays, Kansas; copy in possession of the Rev. Burkey. See also, Ellis County, Kansas State Census, Population Schedules, 1875, microfilm, and U.S. Tenth Census, Population Schedules, Ellis County, 1880, microfilm, Forsyth Library, Fort Hays State University, and Archives Department, Kansas State Historical Society.

34. The settlement patterns were determined by plotting all transactions on a county map and relating those settlements to the streams. Records used from Deed Books, RD, and Tract Books, FHSL.

35. James L. Forsythe, "Environmental Considerations in the Settlement of Ellis County, Kansas," *Agricultural History* 51 (January 1977): 38-50.

36. See *English Enterprise in America. Notes Addressed to Investors and Settlers Concerning the Estate of Victoria (Ellis County, Kansas, U.S.) The Property of Mr George Grant (Late of the firm of Grant & Gask, now Gask & Gask, Oxford Street, London)* (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, March 1874).

30. Sheriff's Deed, Charles Howard to Sidney F. Smith, H-482, RD; for the mortgage, see D-87, RD; *Star-Sentinel*, December 6, 1883.

31. *Star-Sentinel*, January 10, 1884.

32. Raish, *Victoria*, 80; *Ellis County News*, Hays, April 12, 1951.

With the economic setbacks of the early 1880s, colonists began leaving. Some went to other states, while others stayed nearby in Hays City.

George Philip, with a partner, opened this general store in Hays City; his brother Alex remained in Victoria and became prosperous as he bought cheap land from departing colonists.

It is believed that the woman (center) in the picture is Jane Hardie Philip.



arrived in 1876. They settled these available lands. Waterways did attract the Volga-Germans when adjacent lands were available. A number of Volga-Germans settled immediately south of Ellis County in Rush County, along Timber Creek. Others settled in extreme southern Ellis County along the Smoky Hill River.³⁷

The English colonists who came as small farmers, merchants, or herdsmen used federal land laws to acquire property rather than purchasing from the railroad or from Grant. They also learned, like American frontier settlers, how to use the land laws to their best advantage. Section 22 in Township 14, South Range 16 West offers a good example of the transactions by the English colonists on federal lands. The southwest quarter of the section was initially entered as a timber claim by John Yoxall on August 4, 1874. The claim was relinquished

on August 12, 1875. A month later, September 7, 1875, George Grant, founder of Victoria colony, entered a timber claim on the quarter section. His entry was cancelled on October 3, 1878, six months after his death. A week later, Alex Grant, George Grant's nephew, entered a timber claim. That claim was soon relinquished, and another English colonist, William B. Faulkner, entered a timber claim. Two years later, Faulkner relinquished his timber claim and on May 20, 1882, filed a homestead entry on the land. On July 9, 1883, the homestead entry was converted to cash entry, with Faulkner paying four hundred dollars for the quarter section. Through the various transactions, English colonists had held the land for eight years, used it, and finally took title to it. This process was no different from what other settlers did in Ellis County and elsewhere on the frontier.³⁸

37. The acquisition of lands was plotted on an Ellis County map to determine the settlement pattern.

38. See entries for Section 22, Township 14 South, Range 16 West, Tract Books, FHSU.

The northeast quarter of Section 22 of 14-16 had a similar history, but there were only four transactions on the quarter section before a patent was granted in 1883.³⁹ All entries on the quarter were homestead entries. Usually timber claims were the entry of choice in Ellis County and elsewhere when someone was not sure of plans for permanent settlement—or were interested in speculation. The public land law was changed in 1873, the year the first English colonists arrived. The Timber Culture Act of 1873 assisted the English settlers in the colony as little actual work had to be done to maintain a timber claim unless challenged.⁴⁰

Nearby on Section 20 in 14-16, Henry G. Grocock, one of the English colonists who used the public land laws, had control of over two hundred forty acres of public land in a double entry area at one time. He entered a timber claim on the southeast quarter on April 9, 1878. There had been a timber claim entry in October 5, 1877, but it had been relinquished, so Grocock was free to make an entry. Grocock then relinquished the timber claim, and on April 9, 1888, he purchased the quarter section under the Preemption Act of 1841. He also homesteaded the south one-half of the northwest quarter of 14-16. The homestead was entered June 7, 1881, and the patent was issued in 1887.⁴¹

The optimism of the larger landholders, as well as that of the homesteading British colonists, gave way by 1880. For the early arrivals, the hardships began immediately in the summer of 1873 when drought dried up Big Creek. Prairie fires and grasshoppers in 1874 discouraged the settlers arriving that year. Better years in 1875 and 1876 were good news, but the winters were harsh. New colonists with money arrived in 1877, but the environment began to take its toll. Though Grant died in 1878, the colony persisted a few more years.⁴²

The key year for the colonists, who were trying to farm, and for Victoria colony was 1880, a mixed drought year with the spring of 1880 being very dry. Farmers had been tested by drought conditions in 1879, but the real crop devastation came in 1880 and 1881 because of irregular rainfall. Winter wheat in Ellis County was adequate in 1879 with 90,965 bushels produced on 12,995 acres, or 7.0 bushels per acre. In 1880, 65,928 bushels were produced on 21,976 acres, or 3.0 bushels

per acre. The corn crop in the county was devastated the following year. Where 203,880 bushels at 15 bushels per acre were produced in 1880 after good summer rains, only 120,488 bushels, or 8.0 bushels per acre, were produced in 1881. The 1880 corn crop in the county was exceeded only five times during the next twenty years.⁴³

The climate did have an impact, and colonists began leaving. The *Ellis County Star* editorialized in the early spring of 1877 that those who complained about the climate were "lazy...grumblers" and were better off back east. Wait, the editor urged, and the climate would change. But the British could not wait.⁴⁴ Arthur White sold out the White Stock Ranch and returned to England.⁴⁵ Smithes, after financial and legal difficulties, moved to Colorado, and Sidney moved to Chicago. Walter Maxwell, son of Lord Herries of Everingham Park, Yorkshire, sold out for about twenty-five cents on the dollar and moved to Scotland.⁴⁶

Others left for Florida, Missouri, Colorado, and the eastern parts of Kansas. Some moved about eleven miles west to Hays City. George Philip moved from Victoria to Hays City and opened a mercantile facility at the site of the former land office; the building is now on the National Register of Historic Sites. Thomas Carrick moved his meat market from Victoria to Hays City. The Behens and Chittendens also moved to Hays City.⁴⁷

The one family to stay and persist was the Philip family. Two of the brothers, George and Alex, married the two Hardie sisters, Jane and Annie. Jane came the first year as a colonist, and Annie came in 1880 to visit her sister; the Philip and Hardie families lived three miles apart in Morayshire, Scotland.⁴⁸ While George

43. Rosenof, *Cultural Sensitivity to Environmental Change*, 7-13; Kansas State Board of Agriculture, *Second Biennial Report, 1879-80* (Topeka: Kansas Publishing House, 1881), 110, 121, 122; Kansas State Board of Agriculture, *Third Biennial Report, 1881-82*, (1883), 230. See the agricultural report for Ellis County in the biennial reports for subsequent years.

44. *Ellis County Star*, May 3, 1877.

45. Raish, *Victoria*, 79.

46. *Ibid.*, 79-80; *Ellis County News*, April 12, 1951.

47. *Ellis County News*, April 12, 1951; "Hard-Riding Red Coats Put Gay Touches on Kansas Plains," *Kansas City Star*, March 11, 1928.

48. George Philip married Jane Hardie on September 30, 1873, in the parlor of the Cass House; they were the first couple married in the colony. Alexander Philip married Annie Hardie on April 26, 1881, in St. George's Chapel. George Philip came with the first colonists. Alex, a clerk in the Bank of England, came later for his health. Marriage License Record, Ellis County Courthouse, Hays, Kansas; "He Saw Kansas Develop," *Kansas City Star*, June 5, 1919; Jane Hardie Philip, "History of the Early Days of Victoria," *The Club Member* 7 (November 1908): 5-7; *Ellis County News*, April 12, 1951; Raish, *Victoria*, 78-79; and *Hays Daily News*, October 17, 1954.

Alexander Philip is referred to in sources as Alex and Alec; the *Ellis County News*, April 12, 1951, for example used both spellings within the same story.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Paul Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington: Public Land Law Review Commission, 1968), 282; John Opie, *The Law of the Land: Two Hundred Years of American Farmland Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 78-83, 101.

41. See entries for Section 20, Township 14 South, Range 16 West, Tract Books, FHSU.

42. Robert W. Richmond, *Kansas: A Land of Contrasts*, 2d ed. (St. Louis: Forum Press, 1974), 158-59.

moved to Hays City, Alex remained on his ranch on Big Creek between Hays and Victoria. He had started a ranch from the original 320 acres that the couple homesteaded—160 acres homesteaded by Alex plus an adjoining 160-acre section homesteaded by his wife.⁴⁹ As the other colonists left, Philip purchased their land at cheap prices and his holdings increased. The misfortunes of others became the fortune of one of the Philip boys from Scotland who had come to the barren lands of Kansas to die but who survived and prospered.⁵⁰

In conclusion, more research must be done on George Grant before the complete story is revealed. The manipulation of the funds of investors, false claims of large numbers of livestock, and issues in court cases must be clarified. The impact of efforts by the home British market to contain cattle disease, of the changing nature of the importation of cattle on the hoof and dead meat as refrigeration improved the marketability of chilled meat, and of the changing patterns of beef consumption in England by various economic classes all must be considered.⁵¹ The Smithes brothers and other large landholders and investors in the Victoria colony from England, Scotland, and America must be studied to determine if they really wanted to farm and ranch, or if they were also speculators.

The colonists who came as workers and herdsmen need further study. Life on the barren plains was not fun, even if the newspapers said it was. It was especially difficult for the women. Jane Hardie Philip, one of the first year colonists, wrote in 1908 that life had been hard

in the colony. There was only the station at Victoria and no houses when the colonists arrived. The women in the colony were ill-prepared for the spartan frontier life. Some, such as those from the upper classes, had never done housework, and apparently none could cook, at least cook using the provisions at hand. Mrs. Norton, an Irish woman and wife of the railroad section boss, taught these women colonists to cook and bake using local provisions. There were hardly any provisions available, and those that were available were expensive. Frontier life in Ellis County was not easy on the hardy English and Scots women.⁵²

Mrs. Philip on another occasion, in 1908, responded to a question in *The Club Member* by Judge Jacob C. Ruppenthal, historian of the Russian-Germans in Ellis, Rush, and Russell counties. The judge asked if pioneer women were contented in Ellis County. Her answer was "No! We couldn't have stood it had it not been we were so full of hope of what that near future held for us; but I think had we seen the many disappointments in store we would have gone back where we came from."⁵³

After thirty years, none of the colonists lived in Victoria, and only three of the original colonists of 1873 remained in Ellis County: George Philip from the initial group which arrived in April 1873 (his brother Alex arrived later); W. T. L. Mack, who would move to Cherryvale, Kansas; and Jane Hardie Philip from the group that arrived in the summer of 1873.⁵⁴ By the beginning of the twentieth century, the dream of the Redcoat empire on the Kansas plains was gone. The town remained, and so did the memories. Newspapers still print stories about the fun-loving English colonists or reprint old stories. Historians still find the colony interesting as new facts and interpretations emerge.

As new information is discovered about the English colony at Victoria, historians will have a more complete picture of George Grant and his colony, of those who invested in Grant's venture, and of those who came to provide the labor to make Grant's vision a reality. And as the full story emerges, historians will have a better understanding of the contributions of those who were associated with the English colony at Victoria and the role of those contributions in the development of western Kansas in the 1870s. KH

49. See Section 4, Township 15 South, Range 17 West, Tract Books, FHSU. Alex entered his homestead on July 18, 1879, and Annie entered hers on April 21, 1881. See also Patent Record Book 1, pp. 138 and 157 for the filing of the Patent, RD. Alex had filed under the Preemption Act of 1841 on September 24, 1878, but the entry was cancelled on July 11, 1879, as illegal. See Tract Book, FHSU, for Section 4 as noted above.

50. *Ellis County News*, April 12, 1951; Raish, *Victoria*, 79; "He Saw Kansas Develop," *Kansas City Star*, June 5, 1919.

51. J. R. Fisher, "The Economic Effects of Cattle Disease in Britain and Its Containment, 1850-1900," *Agricultural History* 54 (April 1980): 278-93; John P. Huttman, "British Meat Imports in the Free Trade Era," *Agricultural History* 52 (April 1978): 247-62; W. Turrentine Jackson, *The Enterprising Scot: Investors in the American West After 1873* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), 73-76. Jackson presents the prevailing thought in Scotland about investment in the United States at the time of Grant's colony and later. Also important for an understanding of the concern over importation of American cattle is James Macdonald, *Food From the Far West, Or American Agriculture with Special Reference to the Beef Production and Importation of Dead Meat from America to Great Britain* (London: William P. Nimmo, 1878). Much of the material was published initially in *The Scotsman*, an Edinburgh newspaper, as a series of letters. Macdonald was sent by the newspaper to the United States to report on the American cattle industry and its potential impact upon British farmers.

52. Philip, "History of the Early Days of Victoria," 5.

53. J. C. Ruppenthal to Lilla Day Monroe (editor, *The Club Member*), October 19, 1908, in *The Club Member* 7 (November 1908): 29; "Letters in Reply to Judge Ruppenthal's Query," *The Club Member* 7 (January 1909): 7.

54. Raish, *Victoria* 79-80; Philip, "History of the Early Days of Victoria," 7.