

Kansas History

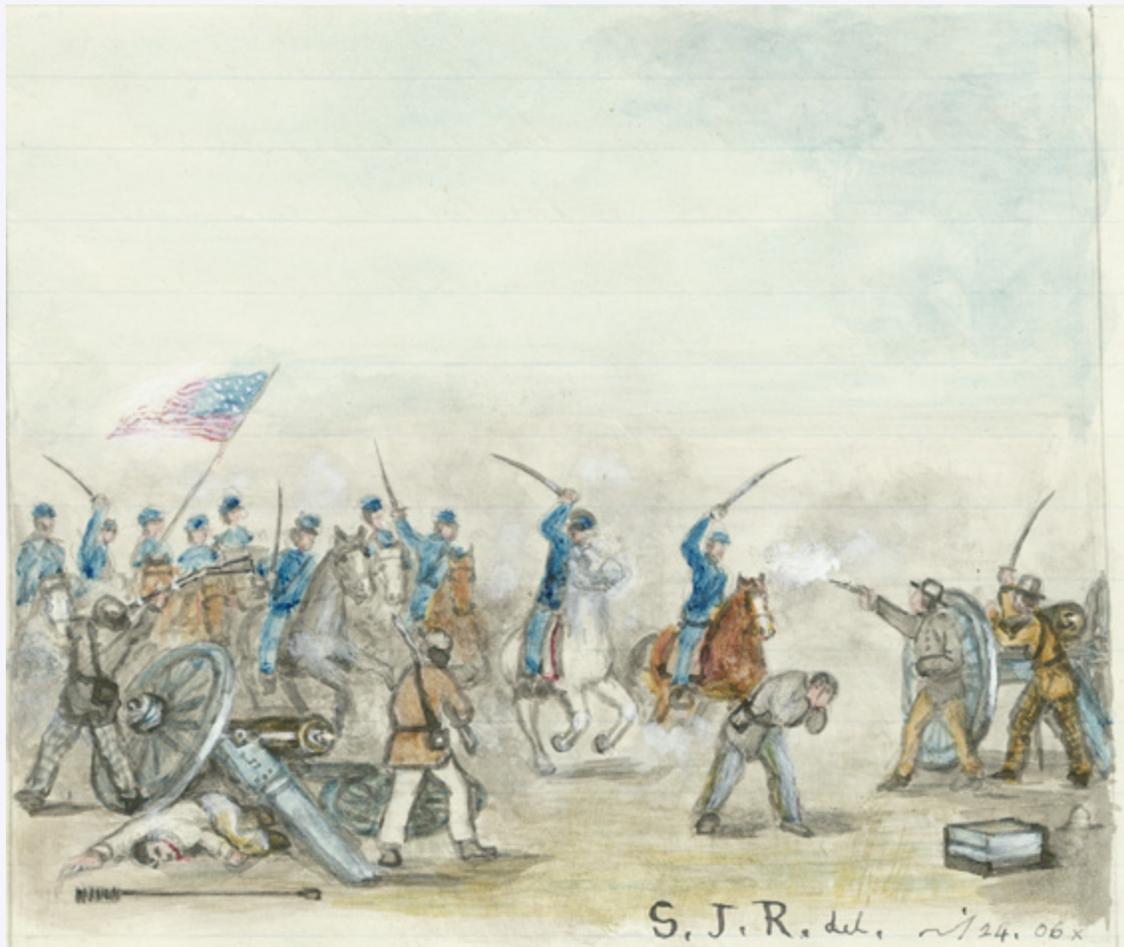
A Journal of the Central Plains

Volume 37, Number 2 | Summer 2014



A collaboration of the Kansas Historical Foundation
and the Department of History at Kansas State University

The Battle of Mine Creek, October 25, 1864



A month after General Sterling Price launched his 1864 campaign to “rally the loyal men of Missouri,” fill his ranks with fresh recruits, and capture much needed supplies, he approached the Kansas border with a secondary objective in mind. If compelled to withdraw from the Show-Me State, Price was to make his “retreat through Kansas and the Indian Territory, sweeping that country of its mules, horses, cattle, and military supplies of all kinds.” Turned back at Westport, the Confederate general moved his troops and booty laden wagon train south down the state line and crossed into Kansas at Trading Post in Linn County. The campaign’s final, decisive battle came on October 25 at Mine Creek. Price’s retreat had been slowed when his wagons became bogged down in the creek, and two of his division commanders were forced to make a stand and execute a rear guard action on the north side of Mine Creek. The Confederates numbered about 7,000 men and ten artillery pieces, but before they had fully prepared their position,

Colonels Frederick W. Benteen and John F. Phillips attacked on the Union left; Colonels Samuel J. Crawford and William F. Cloud in the center; and Colonel Charles W. Blair on the right. A brief but by all accounts fierce fight ensued, and the Confederate troops broke in panic, fleeing across Mine Creek “in utter and indescribable confusion,” according to Price’s official report.

The artist, Samuel J. Reader, a private in the Second Regiment, Kansas State Militia, made this rendering of the victorious Union cavalry charge years later for his illustrated autobiography. Reader, who had been taken prisoner during the Battle of the Big Blue three days before, was well south of Mine Creek with the main body of the retreating Rebel army, so he did not personally witness the battle. Since the first reports that he received were those of his captors, Reader titled the watercolor, quote, “It Went Against Us.” The original as well as the complete autobiography can be found on Kansas Memory at <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/206900>.

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watercolor by Samuel J.
Reader, dated February 13,
1865. Back cover: "Free!"
From the lithograph,
"Journey of a Slave,"
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Congress.

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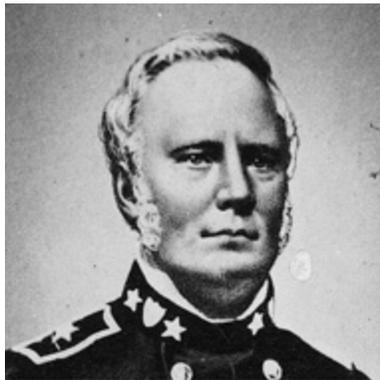
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p. 66

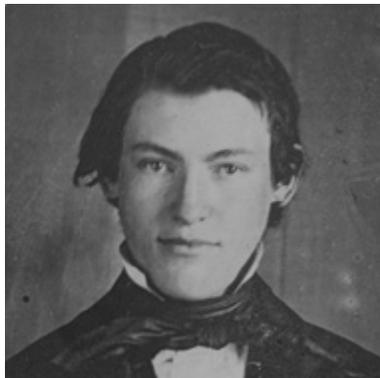
Fleeing Missouri Bloodhounds: 66
Pappy Carr's Escape to Free Kansas
edited by Mark Chapin Scott

Price's Raid and the 78
Battle of Mine Creek
by Edgar Langsdorf



p. 78

"I was a prisoner of war." 100
The Autobiography of
SAMUEL J. READER
edited by Virgil W. Dean



p. 100

Reviews 122

Book Notes 127



Department of History

Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains is published quarterly through a partnership between the Kansas Historical Foundation and the Department of History at Kansas State University. The Kansas Historical Foundation serves as a fund raising, fund management, membership, and retail organization to support and promote the Kansas Historical Society, a state agency that safeguards and shares the state's history through the collection, preservation, and interpretation of its past. The Society's collections and programs are diverse and are made available through its library and museum in Topeka, historic sites and classrooms

across the state, and publications and web-based resources accessible everywhere. The Department of History at Kansas State University is especially well suited to the study of Kansas, agricultural, and environmental history. As a Land Grant school whose culture and economy have historically been shaped by the economy in the state, the history of Kansas holds a venerable place in the academic offerings of the University. Environmental History, with a particular focus on agricultural, water, and grassland issues in Kansas, has become increasingly more important to university research and curricula worldwide.

The journal is available as one of many benefits of membership with the Kansas Historical Foundation. Find more information online at kshs.org/11413.

The journal publishes scholarly articles, edited documents, and other materials that contribute to an understanding of the history and cultural heritage of Kansas and the central plains. Political, social, intellectual, cultural, economic, and institutional histories are welcome, as are biographical and historiographical interpretations and studies of archaeology, the built environment, and material culture. Articles emphasizing visual documentation, exceptional reminiscences, and autobiographical writings are also considered for publication. Genealogical studies are generally not accepted.

Manuscripts are evaluated anonymously by scholars who determine their suitability for publication based on originality, quality of research, significance, and presentation, among other factors. Previously published articles or manuscripts that are being considered for publication elsewhere will not be considered. The editors reserve the right to make changes in accepted articles and will consult with the authors regarding such. The publishers assume no responsibility for statements of fact or opinion made by contributors.

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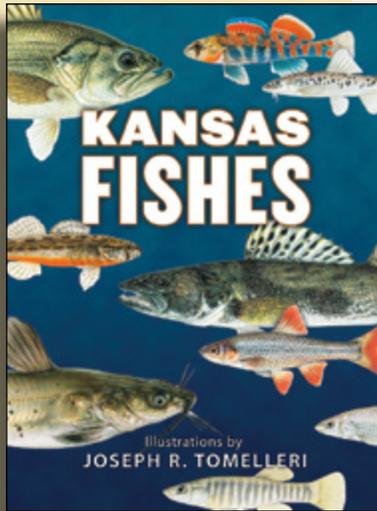
The Edgar Langsdorf Award for Excellence in Writing, which includes a plaque and an honorarium of two hundred dollars, is awarded each year for the best article published in *Kansas History*.

The editors welcome letters responding to any of the articles published in the journal. With the correspondent's permission, those that contribute substantively to the scholarly dialogue by offering new insights or historical information may be published. All comments or editorial queries should be addressed to the editors, *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*, Department of History, 208 Eisenhower Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-1002; 785-532-6730; email: KHJournal@k-state.edu

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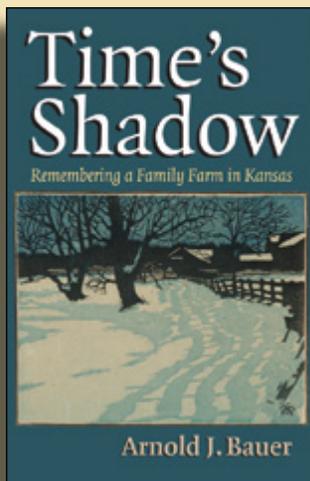


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