

Autumn 2014

Reflections

A publication of the Kansas Historical Society and the Kansas Historical Foundation



REAL PEOPLE. REAL STORIES.

Autumn 2014

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 4

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On the cover: George Washington Carver, featured in *Real People. Real Stories.* gallery at the Kansas Museum of History, was among the most respected scientists of his day. See page 8.

Reflections

The Kansas Historical Society comprises five divisions and many different programs that serve the people of Kansas. This issue highlights a program in the Kansas Museum of History.

Special Exhibits Gallery Tells Kansas Stories

The Kansas Museum of History, which opened in west Topeka in 1984, was designed with two galleries to tell the story of Kansas. The main gallery features ongoing exhibits from the earliest times to recent past. The special exhibits gallery offers a way to tell in-depth stories about specific topics from the past and to highlight Museum collections not already on display. Through the years, the award-winning Museum has presented a range of popular special topics from cowboy boots to quilts.

The special exhibit, *The Great Soldier State: Kansas and the Civil War*, commemorates the 150th anniversary of the war and the legacy of the soldiers who later settled in Kansas. The exhibit also highlights the Museum's extraordinary collection of Civil War flags, including those of African American units, as well as personal objects from the war.

John Conover and John Martin both served with the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry. Both men arrived in Kansas in 1857—Conover, age 21, to Leavenworth and 18-year-old Martin to Atchison. Conover became a salesman for a hardware firm, and the politically-minded Martin

Officers of Eighth Kansas Infantry, August 1863, with Colonel John Martin, center, and Captain John Conover, right front.



was owner and editor of a free-state newspaper. They enlisted in the Eighth Kansas in 1861, saw action at the battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga, and were present at the siege of Atlanta. Conover achieved the rank of brevet colonel; Martin climbed the ranks to brevet brigadier general. After the war, Conover returned to Leavenworth as a junior partner in a hardware firm and co-owner of the successful Richards & Conover Hardware Company. Martin resumed management of the newspaper

and was elected governor of Kansas in 1884 and 1886.

The saddle and saber Conover used during the war are both featured in the special exhibit. Numerous Civil War battle flags are featured along with a spyglass used by Major General James Blunt at the Battle of Mine Creek and a desk belonging to the Sixth Kansas Cavalry.

The exhibit, which opens October 3, continues until May 24, 2015.



Top to bottom: Conover's saber, flag of First Kansas Colored Infantry, Conover's saddle.

Model T of the Skies

Albin K. Longren was a visionary who pictured an airplane in every garage and flights as common as road trips. While part of Longren's dream failed to become reality, his innovations proved revolutionary. This 20th century airplane manufacturer developed processes and composites that helped to change the industry.



Model AK prototype. In 1938 the family of aviator Philip Billard donated Longren's 1914 biplane to the Historical Society.

A self-trained machinist who built his own car and motorcycle, Longren sold automobiles in Clay Center in the early 1900s. He was inspired to build airplanes after watching earlier failed test flights in Girard and Topeka. Moving to downtown Topeka, Longren, his brother E. J., and a friend, built a pusher-type biplane with rear propeller. In 1911 he flew this aircraft in the first successful flight of a Kansas-made plane.

Building on his success, Longren opened a factory at 420 SW Jackson and produced five different models from 1914 to 1917. He left Topeka briefly during World War I to work at a munitions company in Denver and later as a military test pilot and chief inspector at McCook Field in Ohio.

Following the war, Longren opened a factory at 1401 NE Winfield. The Topeka airport was nearby so



Left to right, fold-wing plane, in front of the house he and his wife, Dolly, lived in, 1921; Longren pictured circa 1914; after Longren's death, Dolly Odonated numerous photographs and documents to the Historical Society.

planes could be taxied to the runway for test flights. "Longren demanded perfection," said Charles Wood, a former employee. "He could not build two planes alike because the next one always had improvements." There Longren built the Model H-2, nicknamed the white devil for its color and sleek lines; and the affordable New Longren, Model AK, both featuring bodies made of Longren's vulcanized patented fiber material.

The Model AK, introduced in 1921, was the perfect "vehicle for the doctor, the ranchman, the traveling man and the farmer," Longren said. He hoped it would become the Model T of the skies. It was priced to be affordable at around \$2,500. With foldable wings, the plane could be towed behind a car and stored in a standard garage. It had optional three- and six-cylinder engines, burned regular gasoline, and flew about 100 miles an hour. The *New York Times* and newsreels of the day featured Longren refilling the plane at a gasoline station.

An inspector for the U.S. Navy visited the factory in 1923 and found the patented fiber body to be

"phenomenal in its strength," which "toughens with age. . . . I am more firmly convinced than ever that Mr. Longren has hit upon a method of construction particularly adapted to war time conditions," wrote Karl F. Smith. "I strongly recommend the purchase of 8 or 10 of these ships immediately." Despite the recommendation, only three planes sold to the navy, with 21 total sales. In 1924 Longren was forced to close the business.

Cessna Aircraft Company hired Longren as vice president in 1934. Using Longren's patent, Cessna built a reputation for reliability and in 1940 received military contracts from the U.S. Army and Royal Canadian Air Force. In the 1940s Longren moved his business to Torrance, California, where he was a subcontractor during World War II. Longren's efficient method for shaping sheet metal was eventually adopted by all of the leading aircraft manufacturers.

Kansas Heritage Circle

A small group of people are planning to save precious pieces of Kansas history. These members of the Kansas Heritage Circle, our bequest recognition society, have invested in the future. They are including the Kansas Historical Foundation in their retirement plans, life insurance proceeds, and estates. For some, this is the largest gift of their lifetime.

Bequest donors occasionally notify the Foundation about their intentions. Bill and Susan Bunyan, who decided to include the Foundation in their will, share a passion for the history of the Old West. As teachers in the same Dodge City school, the Bunyans shared their interests in the classroom for three decades. Bill taught fifth grade for 29 years. "I taught Kansas history to my students, Bill said. We didn't have children, so we attended the football games, basketball games, and activities of other people's children." Susan taught kindergarten for 32 years. "I taught a lot of Kansas history to kindergartners," Susan said. "I just scaled it down to their level."

Bill served one term on the board of the Kansas Historical Foundation, where he learned about the Historical Society's programs. "We both have a great love of Kansas history and we want to share that with others." They hope to encourage young people to join them in preserving Kansas history.



Bill and Susan Bunyan

Kansas Heritage Circle

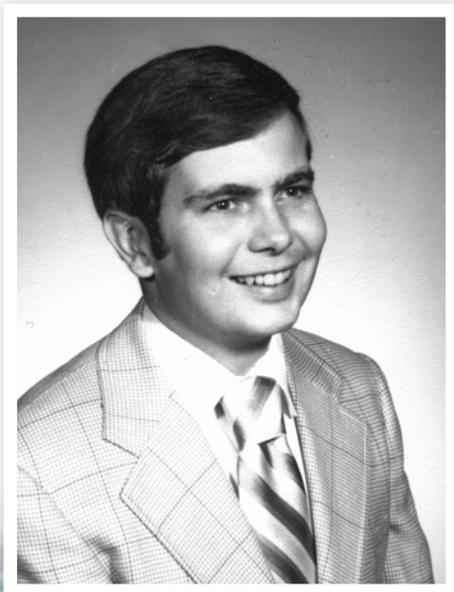
Find out how you, too, can become a member of the Kansas Heritage Circle and leave a legacy to Kansas history. Contact Vicky Henley, executive director & CEO, 785-272-8681, ext. 201; vhenley@kshs.org.

More often, the Foundation is unaware of an estate gift. Richard A. Mermis, Jr., was a descendent of the Pratt family, which established Cottonwood Ranch in Studley. In addition to its sheep operation, the Pratt's Yorkshire style ranch in Sheridan County was known for its garden where apples, apricots, cherries, raspberries, currants, gooseberries, and grapes were grown. Mermis was inspired by his family's love of the ranch and gardens. "Their home and all of its surroundings reflected care, attention, and enjoyment," Mermis commented before his death. "Within that home one always found a hearty welcome."

Inspired to invest in his family's history, he provided a bequest of \$850,000 for the state historic site. This gift will

cover maintenance at the site into perpetuity. The Foundation did not learn about Mermis' generous bequest until after his unexpected death in 2006.

Planned gifts through the Kansas Heritage Circle support particular areas of interest like education, preservation, and collections. Donors can choose more specific areas of interest by providing a letter of gift. For bequests more than \$10,000, the Foundation board will establish a fund in the name of the donor. These types of bequests can offer significant estate planning rewards for donors and they ensure that Kansas history will be preserved for future generations.



Richard Mermis, and Cottonwood Ranch State Historic Site, Studley.



A special thanks to the sponsors of A Taste of Southeast Kansas in September.

George Nettels, Pittsburg

WATCO Companies, Pittsburg

Bedene Funeral Home and Barry Bedene, Arma
Donita and Jim Barone, Frontenac

Their support helps to ensure the success of the road trip program, which replaces the spring members meeting.



Beehives and Dog Ears: Football Helmets in Kansas

For more than 100 years, Kansans have recognized the need for football helmets to guard against head injuries. Much of the credit for these safety measures goes to Dr. James Naismith, who designed and wore an early helmet himself.



A helmeted football player in Gray County, circa 1895.



Before Naismith was hired by the University of Kansas to coach basketball, he earned a bachelor's degree in physical education. A professor at the Young Men's Christian Association training school in Massachusetts, he also participated on the football team. Too many blows to his head injured an ear so severely that Naismith developed hematoma, or "cauliflower ear." He was kicked in the face and suffered short-term memory loss. Naismith was convinced that protective headgear was needed for this type of contact sports. His girlfriend helped create a helmet, using flannel for earmuffs, and later a rugby ball fitted to the head with flaps covering the ears.

In 1893, around the same time as Naismith was designing his helmet, a player wore a helmet in the Army-Navy game. Navy Midshipman Joseph Mason Reeves was advised by his doctor to wear a helmet to avoid another hit that would cause “instant insanity” or death. His leather helmet was commissioned by an Annapolis shoemaker.

Naismith brought his ideas about helmets to Kansas in 1898, along with his new game, basketball. Football was already popular in the state when Naismith arrived. A football rivalry between Abilene and Chapman high schools began in 1892 and communities across the state rooted for their local high school football teams.

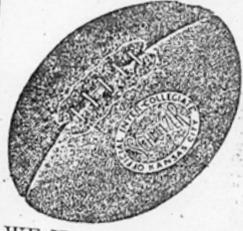
Kansas companies began to offer products to supply the teams. Schmelzer Arms Company, established in Leavenworth in 1857, originally sold firearms, and broadened its line to include athletic goods. In 1886 the company moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where it claimed to be the “greatest exclusive sporting goods house in the whole world.” Its offerings included leather helmets along with footballs, baseball gloves, and golf equipment. Nicknamed “beehives,” leather helmets like those made by Schmelzer were sported by many early football players.

A 1920s Schmelzer’s football helmet was donated to the Kansas Historical Society in 1978. The leather helmet has elastic adjustment, ventilation holes on top and in the ear flaps or “dog ears,” and thick felt lining.

In the 1930s, when helmets were more widely used, the soft leather helmets were replaced by a harder shell, and face masks were added. The changing styles can be viewed through the many photographs in the Historical Society collections.

The Most Interesting Store in Kansas City.

Schmelzer's



WE HAVE THE BIG STOCK OF FOOTBALL GOODS.

We don't say to you, "Wait, we will have them made—only a day or two."

WE'VE GOT 'EM

PANTS
75c, \$1.25, \$1.50, \$2.00.

UNION SUITS
\$2.00, \$3.50, \$5.00, \$6.00.

WORSTED SHIRTS
All Colors and Stripes,
\$.25, \$3.00, \$3.25.

SHOES
\$2.00, \$3.50, \$4.50, \$6.00.

WOOL STOCKINGS
75c, 85c, \$1.00, \$1.50.

MORRILL NOSE MASK
50c.

Schmelzer's
OFFICIAL BALL
\$5.00.
Others Down to 75c.

HEAD HELMETS
Eight Styles, 75c to \$3.50.

CATALOGUE

Schmelzer's

710 to 718 Main St.
1216-1218 Grand Ave.

Schmelzer Arms Company advertisement in September 24, 1911, Kansas City Star.

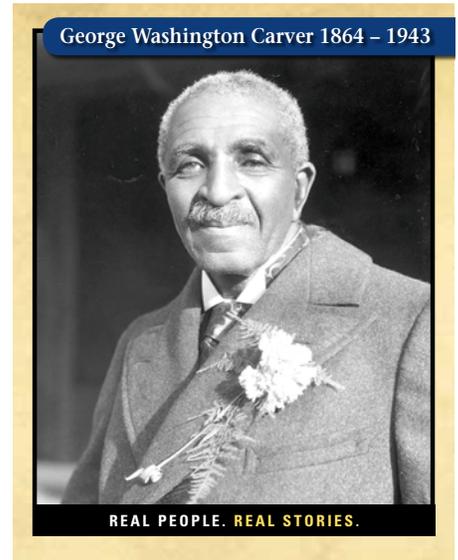
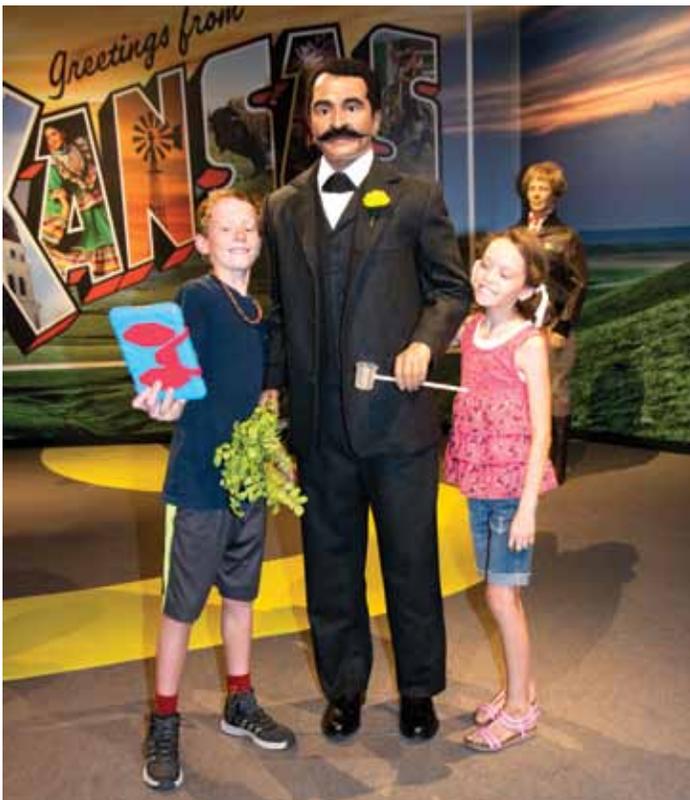


Alma High School football team, 1907. Several players are holding leather helmets.

George Washington Carver

One of the world's most important agricultural scientists spent his formative years in Kansas. George Washington Carver invented new uses for various crops, such as making sweet potatoes into cereal. He created more than 300 by-products from peanuts, including milk, coffee, and shaving cream.

Born into slavery in Diamond Grove, Missouri, around July 12, 1864, George Washington Carver was purchased by a Missouri farm couple named Carver. After slavery was abolished, he continued to live with the Carvers until he moved to Fort Scott, Kansas, at age 13. There he attended school and worked at a local hotel doing laundry. He moved several times as a teenager. In 1880 he arrived in Minneapolis, Kansas, with ex-slaves Ben and Lucy Seymour and finished high school.



Carver was accepted into Highland Presbyterian College in northeastern Kansas. However, he was rejected upon his arrival at the school when officials discovered he was African American. Discouraged, he took up farming in western Ness County near the town of Beeler. Interested in many aspects of nature, Carver examined and sketched plants and animals in all the places he lived, including his brief time working on railroads and ranches in southeast Kansas and New Mexico in the 1880s.

In 1888 Carver began classes at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa. He later transferred to the state agricultural college, Iowa State University, and upon graduation received a teaching position in that school's botany department. He moved to Alabama in 1896 to lead the agriculture department at Tuskegee Institute and remained for almost 50 years, teaching and pursuing his scientific studies. He found more than 300 uses for the peanut. His inventions included turning wood shavings into synthetic marble, cotton into paving blocks, and soybeans into plastic. He also presented his extensive agricultural research to farmers through conferences and demonstrations.

When he died January 5, 1943, Carver was widely recognized for his intelligence, humility, and inventiveness. President Franklin D. Roosevelt called him one of the world's most significant scientists.

George Washington Carver, featured in the Real People. Real Stories. gallery at the Kansas Museum of History, Topeka, offers great opportunities for selfies.

Kansas Flag

As mission specialist on Space Shuttle *Discovery's* maiden voyage in August 1984, Steven Hawley took along pieces of his Kansas roots. The Kansas astronaut carried 1,800 state flags on board during the five-day flight.

Hawley was born in Ottawa in 1951 and grew up in Salina. After graduating from Salina High School, he earned degrees in physics and astronomy from the University of Kansas (KU), and went on to receive a doctorate from the University of California, Santa Cruz. In 1978 NASA selected him for the Space Shuttle program.

Hawley flew five shuttle missions, including *Discovery* STS-41D in 1984, which deployed three communications satellites. The shuttle orbited the earth 96 times before landing at Edwards Air Force Base. Those Kansas flags were distributed to schools by Kansas Secretary of State Jack Brier. The youth center in Atchison donated one of these to the Kansas Museum of History in 2012.

Hawley retired from NASA in 2008 and returned to Kansas to promote education in science and math as a professor at KU. After *Discovery* completed 39 missions, it was retired in 2011, and placed on display at the National Air and Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center in Virginia.



Above, astronauts Steven Hawley (left) and Gregory Harbaugh participate in a training session at the Johnson Space Center integration facility in Houston, Texas, 1996; left, Kansan Steven Hawley carried this state flag on the first mission of the Space Shuttle *Discovery*.



Devoted to the Free-State Cause

From the frontier of Kansas Territory, Sara Robinson's voice resonated around the nation. As a witness to the violence of Bleeding Kansas, Robinson published her diary to tell the plight of the free-state movement. She inspired others to join in the fight. She also became known as a gracious host, providing delicious meals to her guests.

Sara Tappan Lawrence Doolittle was well educated at schools in her native Massachusetts. She moved to Lawrence, Kansas Territory, in 1855 to join her husband, Dr. Charles Robinson. She believed in the abolitionist cause, as did her husband, who was a prominent free-state leader. Their house and belongings were burned during the Sack of Lawrence, while they were away from home. When Charles was arrested for treason by proslavery leaders in 1856, Sara appealed to congressional representatives and leaders with the New England Emigrant Aid Society. Through these efforts, Charles and other imprisoned free-state leaders were released.



A number of letters written by Sara Robinson are in the Historical Society collections.

Robinson's diary, published after their release, rallied abolitionist passions across the country. *Kansas, Its Interior and Exterior Life*, was often compared with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for its influence in strengthening the Northern cause. Robinson refuted those who credited John Brown as a hero, calling him "a murderer and midnight assassin."

Sara's correspondence, written in a bold, condensed script, revealed her longings for the comforts of home in the East. "Were it not useless & hopeless I should often find myself pinning [*sic*] for such homes as the old states furnish—simple though they may be both in inner & outward adorning," Robinson wrote. "Large roomy dwellings with trees, shrubs & flowers around them are almost a necessity to the healthful tone of one accustomed always to them."

In 1861 Charles became the first governor of Kansas; he served one term and she became the first First Lady.

After Governor Robinson's political rivalry with Senator James Lane led to his impeachment, Sara devoted her life to ensuring her husband's rightful place in history. In 1863, during Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, Sara and her housekeeper watched from their home on south Massachusetts Avenue. Fortunately, their home was spared from attack.

Sara worked to maintain "a balance of native refinement, sensibility, and modest dignity of a true woman." At Oakridge, the Robinson's farm near Mount Oread, she had the opportunity to recreate some of the comforts she had enjoyed in Massachusetts. While they had no children, the Robinsons welcomed guests to their farm, gaining the reputation for hospitality and fine cuisine. Before her death in 1911, Sara donated their private papers to the Kansas Historical Society.

Among the extensive correspondence in the Robinson collection are two small pieces of paper containing a few of her recipes.

Escalloped Potatoes

Par and cut into thin slices as many potatoes as will be needed. Cover the bottom of the pudding dish with bread or cracker crumbs and some scraps of butter, a little salt and pepper and one slice of onion. Add a layer of raw potatoes and fill the dish with alternate layers, having crumbs at the top. Pour in as much milk as it will hold and bake from one to two hours. Have this for supper on some cold night, adding a little cold meat cut in squares to the potato layers. Bake three-fourths of an hour.



Tomato Pudding

Remove the skins from the tomatoes. Put in the bottom of the pudding dish some bread crumbs, slice the tomatoes on them, season with a little sugar, butter, pepper and salt, add more bread crumbs, sliced tomato and seasoning, being careful not to get in too much seasoning. Add a little water if the bread is not sufficiently moistened by the tomatoes. Beat up two eggs and pour over the top. Bake about twenty minutes.

Black Fruit Cake

1 pound of flour
1 pound of sugar
14 ounces of butter
10 eggs
3 pounds of seeded raisins
3 pounds currants
1 pound of citron
1 wine-glass of wine
1 wine-glass of brandy

1 wine-glass of milk
1 teaspoonful of saleratus
[baking powder]
1 tablespoonful of molasses
1 tablespoonful of
cinnamon
1 teaspoonful of cinnamon
1 teaspoonful of cloves
½ ounce of nutmeg

The sugar should be brown and stirred a few minutes with the butter then the eggs beaten light and stirred in. Brown the flour in a pan over a few coals, stirring it constantly to prevent burning. This should be done before you commence making the cake so as to have it quite cold. Stir it in the butter and sugar gradually, then add the molasses and spice; dissolve the saleratus in the milk and mix it with the brandy and wine to curdle them; stir them into the cake. Stir in the fruit gradually just before putting it in the pans. Stir it until well mixed and bake from two and one-half to three hours in a moderate oven. This cake is best when 3 or 4 weeks old.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Online at kshs.org/events

October 3 – May 24, 2015

The Great Soldier State: Kansas and the Civil War exhibit • Kansas Museum of History, Topeka

October 11

Autumn Campfire and Storytelling • Grinter Place State Historic Site, Kansas City

October 18

Día de los Muertos at the Ancestor Fair • Kansas Historical Society, Topeka

October 18

150th Anniversary Commemoration • Mine Creek Civil War Battlefield State Historic Site, Pleasanton

October 19

Kansas Cooking: Making Molé • Kansas Historical Society, Topeka

October 25

Graveside Conversations • Fort Hays State Historic Site, Hays

November 1

Chili Supper • Grinter Place State Historic Site, Kansas City

November 2

Bleeding Kansas Characters • Constitution Hall State Historic Site, LeCompton

November 2

Scan and Share: Recording Topeka's Mexican American Heritage • Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, Topeka

November 7

Kansas Historical Foundation Annual Meeting • Kansas Historical Society, Topeka

November 8

Historic Sites Board of Review meeting • Kansas Historical Society, Topeka

November 18

Follow the Buffalo • Pawnee Indian Museum State Historic Site, Republic

Check online for a number of holiday events in December at the state historic sites.

Save the Date!

November 7

Kansas Historical Foundation Annual Members Meeting • View nominees to the board of directors and executive committee online at kshs.org/18981.

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Kansas Memory

The battle at Mine Creek in a painting by Samuel Reader. Reader served in the Kansas militia and was captured before the battle. On October 25, 1864, he observed the battle from the Confederate lines.

kansasmemory.org/item/206900/page/319