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KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## ARTHUR CAPPER DELIVERING AN ADDRESS ON TUBERCULOSIS

View of Kansas Senator Arthur Capper at a WMAL Radio microphone delivering an opening address in the world-wide campaign to stamp out tuberculosis. Doris Mead Gasque is standing behind him dressed in a white robe with red cross. Capper, 1865-1951, a native of Garnett, Kansas, served Kansas as Governor, 1915-1919, and U. S. Senator, 1919-1949.

**Date:** June 24, 1930  
**Creator:** Underwood & Underwood

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### About this item

**Item Number:** 208993  
**Call Number:** B Capper, Arthur \*87b  
**KSIS Identifier:** DaRT ID: 208993

### Categories

[Business and Industry - Media/Communications - Radio Collections - Photograph](#)  
[Community Life - Community services - Public health](#)  
[Date - 1930s - 1930](#)  
[Government and Politics - Federal Government - Congress - Senate - Capper, Arthur](#)  
[Home and Family - Daily life - Health and Hygiene](#)  
[Objects and Artifacts - Communication Artifacts - Documentary Artifact - Photograph](#)  
[People - Notable Kansans - Capper, Arthur, 1865-1951](#)  
[Thematic Time Period - Great Depression and Dust Bowl, 1929-1941](#)  
[Type of Material - Photographs](#)



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As a teaching historian, I have accessed dozens of online digital history projects. They are often useful in my research and constantly helpful in the classroom. One of the great benefits of the Internet is the ability it gives students to obtain primary documents they could never have accessed a decade ago, unless they had been able to travel to distant archives.

The downside of this trend is that students tend to think of research as a “hunt and click” operation. Rather than deeply engaging with textual sources, they pull out a short document excerpt here and a Wikipedia entry there, which often leaves them with shallow and sketchy conclusions. Thus, the best online sites—like the Digital Library of Georgia, and Maryland’s new database “Beneath the Underground Railroad”—offer more than a few historical bits and pieces. Instead, they give researchers access to a large

online archive of information. Users of these sites can assemble a substantial body of documents, and conduct in-depth research, in order to tell their own stories about the past.

The Kansas Memory site, developed by the Kansas Historical Society, easily falls in this category. It is extremely rich; better yet, the designers clearly plan to make steady additions of more images and documents. Given the unparalleled holdings of the Kansas Historical Society, as well as the central place of Kansas in U.S. history from the Civil War era to the rise of the aerospace industry, this promises to be an invaluable long-term resource for researchers, teachers, and students nationwide.

Some idea of the site’s richness can be gained by exploring the many documents already online. Kansas Memory contains almost 3,000 items related to business and industry; 240 on recreation

and sports; 730 on the era of "Bleeding Kansas"; and 215 on the Dust Bowl. Many of these are substantial sources, such as lengthy memoirs and diaries. In most categories there is a helpful mix of visual images and texts. Researchers can read the full transcript of a debate that included famous Populist Mary Elizabeth Lease. They can view aerial photographs of the Flint Hills. They can trace African-American history in Kansas, from runaway slave advertisements to the NAACP's victory in *Brown v. Board of Education*. They can compare Main Street architecture of the 1870s to that of the 1930s and trace military and civilian mobilization from the Civil War to Vietnam. Many fascinating documents, such as tourist advertisements published by the Union Pacific Railroad, will be of great interest to researchers beyond Kansas, since they relate to broad themes in the history of such fields as technology, family life, and the American West.

I know for a fact that students can use Kansas Memory to write effective research papers. Last fall one of our most accomplished senior history majors, who took my course "Peoples and Environments in the American West," drew on documents from the site (including several memoirs and a wonderful cartoon) to write an outstanding paper on the gendered rhetoric of pro- and antislavery forces in Kansas. I did not send her to Kansas Memory. She found it herself, and then came to my office hours to report, "I found this fantastic site with all these *great* documents."

Kansas Memory offers an array of special features. These include blogs, some of which will generate new historical content themselves (such as one that invites visitors to submit their own memories of the Dust Bowl). I especially appreciate the site's links to current exhibits at the Kansas Museum of History. These enable me to "visit" the museum from my office in upstate New York, while they may also prompt Kansas residents to go to the museum itself and take a look around. (They should—based on my experience, which admittedly does not include all fifty states, Kansas has one of the best state museums in the country!)

The site includes an especially clever resource for Kansas teachers: by clicking on a button, they can arrange for the site to reveal additional information about each document's relationship to the 7th and 11th grade Kansas history curriculums. Other site users, in the meantime, never even know the information is there. Very handy, and curriculum outlines are included for good measure.

Last but not least, I really enjoyed some of the site's podcasts, especially "Cool Things." These interviews with museum curators introduce visitors to notable and unusual artifacts held in the Kansas Museum of History, ranging from a World War I quarantine sign to a silver-and-blue aluminum Christmas tree. This feature suggests, again, the designers' dedication to recreating and interpreting the daily experiences of ordinary people. In a section called "Letters of Hardship and Difficulty," digital coordinator Michael Church addresses this very issue. He writes that "materials that reflect the lives of regular, everyday folk can be easily overlooked or under appreciated." He then points site visitors to several extremely poignant documents. They include a petition from Mexican railway workers in Hutchinson, Kansas, appealing to the Mexican consulate for protection from Anglo violence, and a letter from an abandoned wife in 1906, seeking the governor's

permission to wear male clothing so she could obtain employment at decent (male) wages.

Several aspects of the site design deserve praise. First, it provides clear and very detailed navigation tools. Users can search for a particular word or name, and they can also choose from a series of categories and sub-categories, such as "The Environment" and "Community Life." These are interactive: after you choose "Courtship and Marriage," you can select *within* this category for the years 1854–1890, and then select again for more sub-categories, such as "African-Americans" or "Clothing." This feature takes a bit of time to learn and grow accustomed to, but it will serve users extremely well as Kansas Memory grows. One of the challenges of very large sites, like American Memory at the Library of Congress, is helping researchers locate documents in specific categories when they are not starting their search with a geographic place or personal name. Kansas Memory is set up to do this effectively on a continuing basis, no matter how large the site grows.

Kansas Memory also provides clear, readable images of manuscript pages, which is no small feat. A researcher who uses, for example, Samuel Reader's 364-page *Autobiography* can view the original document in Reader's own handwriting, complete with inkblots and crossed-out words. The site contains many sources of this kind, including a dozen personal diaries that shed light on such diverse experiences as abolitionist activism, pioneer life, and the Dust Bowl.

There are a few things about Kansas Memory that I would change. The homepage contains so much information that it feels rather busy; the information on the left side of the screen is essential, but I might dispense with most categories on the right. It does not seem necessary, for example, to let users change the background color from blue to copper. The "most popular" lists might also be moved away from the homepage to a spot of their own. This would streamline the homepage, make it visually cleaner, and help visitors concentrate on the most important information. I also had some difficulty using the site from my Firefox browser, on a Macintosh computer, though the problems vanished when I used Safari software instead.

These sort of glitches always plague ambitious new sites, especially those that are, like Kansas Memory, set up to handle very large amounts of data over the long term. These issues will be resolved over time, and I am already deeply impressed with what the Kansas Historical Society has accomplished. As a scholar of Kansas history, I am always seeking ways to get my students and fellow East-Coasters deeply engaged in studying one of our most important heartland states. Kansas Memory is a wonderful tool to accomplish this, and from now on I will refer students and colleagues to it on a regular basis. It is an outstanding contribution to the web-based resources that are making history more accessible to all Americans, and to students and historical researchers around the world.

*Reviewed by Rebecca Edwards, Eloise Ellery Professor of History, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York.*