
B O O K N O T E S

Ad Astra: 161 Adventurers, Astronauts, Discoverers, Explorers, Pilots, Pioneers, Scientists. By Dave Webb, Terry Rombeck, and Beccy Tanner. (Dodge City: Kansas Heritage Center, 999 Kansas Characters Series, 2014, viii + 144 pages, paper \$34.94.)

This addition to the 999 *Kansas Characters* series not only collects the most recent findings on famous Kansans like Amelia Earhart but also introduces readers to more obscure figures, including daring (and often doomed) aerial stuntwomen and -men, feuding meteoritologists, numerous contemporary scientists, and a pioneer woman known for decades only as the “Cow-Chip Lady.” Every page in this full-color, richly illustrated volume features a fascinating story about an aviator, anthropologist, conservationist, explorer, educator, innovator, traveler, or settler with ties to Kansas. These 161 concise biographies are enhanced with historical images, colorful design, and elegant watercolor portraits and packed with compelling details appropriate for all readers, especially younger students of history. *Ad Astra* is not purely historical, however; the authors note that about a quarter of the book’s “characters” are alive today—a testament to the living character of Kansas history.

Chasing Weather: Tornadoes, Tempests, Thunderous Skies in Word and Image. By Stephen Locke and Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg. (North Liberty, Iowa: Ice Cube Press, 2015, 160 pages, paper \$25.00.)

What true Kansan is not interested in the weather? I am not sure we are any different in that regard than anyone else, but most of us think we are, and weather—tornadoes, tempests, and thunderous skies—certainly defines all of our lives in Kansas and throughout the Great Plains region. And, of course, to live in western Kansas, or anywhere on the High Plains, especially, one must love the sky. Stephen Locke and Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg offer here their impressions of this phenomenon through stunning photographs and beautifully crafted verse. Mirriam-Goldberg, whose many publications include *Poem on the Range: A Poet Laureate’s Love Song to Kansas*, was Poet Laureate of Kansas from 2009 to 2013. Locke is a Kansas City-based photographer who has focused on storm imagery throughout the Great Plains; his remarkable selections for this volume are mostly Kansas scenes, but several other plains states, from Texas to Minnesota, are also represented.

Kansas Trail Guide: The Best Hiking, Biking, and Riding in the Sunflower State. By Jonathan Conard and Kristin Conard. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015, x + 288 pages, paper, \$24.95.)

Dull, flat, boring. Such are the adjectives typically used to describe the topography of Kansas. Brother-and-sister team Jonathan Conard and Kristin Conard demonstrate just how inaccurate this image of Kansas is. The photographs alone in this vividly illustrated guide provide an altogether different view, showcasing the state’s rolling hills, dense woodlands, tallgrass prairies, and spires and towers of limestone, sandstone, and shale. The Conards include full-color maps, GPS coordinates, and extensive route descriptions to help hikers, bikers, and horseback riders see this natural beauty for themselves. Besides appreciating the great outdoors, the guide also features plenty of trails for history lovers. This book will help readers explore Kansas and should correct inaccurate stereotypes about what Kansas is like.

Conflicted Legacy: How a Missionary’s Daughter and Young Jewish Man from Odessa Met in Minneapolis, Married in China, and Raised an American Family. By Oliver Hanson Woshinsky. (Rockland, Maine: Indie Author Warehouse, 2015, 328 pages, paper \$19.95.)

Oliver Hanson Woshinsky begins his unusual family history by comparing a photograph of his mother’s large family in Iola, Kansas, in 1911 with an image of his father’s forlorn parents and siblings in Odessa in 1928. For Woshinsky’s mother, Ada, the daughter of Methodist missionaries to China, Iola represented the American dream, and stories of its small-town values loomed large in the author’s childhood. Woshinsky’s father, Aaron, fled communist rule as a child and spent years living with an uncle in China before moving to the U.S. to attend the University of Minnesota. Although they went to the same boarding school in China, the pair did not meet until Aaron’s arrival in the U.S., when his friendship with Ada’s younger brothers led to their unlikely courtship. Oliver Woshinsky chronicles his parents’ life during the Depression, World War II, and his own childhood in the 1950s. Parts of his narrative come directly from his mother, a skilled storyteller who saved many of her papers.

A Carol Dickens Christmas. By Thomas Fox Averill. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014, viii + 237 pages, paper, \$19.95.)

This latest novel from Washburn University’s writer-in-residence Tom Averill is the perfect holiday reading; it is a story of family and food, community and tradition, and it captures the wistful melancholy of the season as well as its hope and cheer. Protagonist Carol Dickens seeks solace from a life in transition in her yearly ritual of cooking the perfect series of holiday meals inspired by Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*. First the Scrooge meal: “a bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of underdone potato.” Then the Cratchit meal, with its small goose, dressing, and mashed potatoes. Later, there was the Fezziwig meal, “as though generosity could abound so simply,” and then the Christmas Day feast that “followed the rich abundance of Christmas Future.” Finally, on the Twelfth Day of Christmas, “a bowl of Smoking Bishop and an immense twelfth-cake” before Christmas was put away for another year (p. 7). A creative amalgam of Dickens and Hispanic American culture, the novel features recipes for those who want to join Carol in the kitchen.

Field Guide to the Common Grasses of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska. By Iralee Barnard. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014, x + 246 pages, paper, \$24.95.)

Has identifying grasses ever puzzled you? When hiking the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, Konza Biological Research Station, or other trails through native grasslands, have you ever been confused about whether or not you are looking at blue grama or hairy grama? Few people are better qualified to help one out of this predicament than Iralee Barnard. She is an exceptionally qualified botanist who knows grass species, literally, inside and out. Her work is an indispensable guide for anyone wanting to know, understand, and recognize the native grasses of Kansas.